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Rector's Notes for June 2007

March 3 is designated in our Episcopal calendar as “The Feast of John and Charles Wesley, Priests.” It sometimes comes as a surprise to Episcopalians to learn that the founders of Methodism did not set out to start a new denomination. In fact many of the reforms they sought, especially their commitment to social justice, have in fact come to be seen as normative within The Episcopal Church. Only John Mason Neale has more hymns in our Episcopal hymnal than does Charles Wesley.

When I approached the Diocese of Connecticut fourteen years ago about leaving the United Methodist Church to become an Episcopal priest, the Suffragan Bishop at the time was a man named Jeffery Rowthorn (a hymn writer in his own right; he wrote “Lord You Give the Great Commission.”) Bishop Rowthorn told me that he hoped I would never forget my Wesleyan roots as an Episcopal priest; I assured him I would not.

That promise was made easier when I asked the Rev. Dr. Darrell Huddleston, also a former United Methodist pastor, to join the staff at St. Francis as our Associate Rector. Immediately we became known around the diocese as “the Wesley boys” (although it has never been clear which of us is John and which Charles!) Darrell is older than my father would be—a detail I take great pleasure in reminding him of from time to time. But truth be told, I consider him much more of a brother in Christ. I consider him a colleague and friend. As he and Bunny depart for New Hampshire and settle into retirement I am going to miss them both a great deal.

We will have an opportunity to say goodbye to Darrell and Bunny after services on the weekend of July 28/29. I will be on vacation during the month of July as Darrell and Bunny transition to New Hampshire. Because I will be out of the country for part of that time, Darrell has graciously agreed to be on call that month for pastoral emergencies and to preach and celebrate on two of the first four Sundays in the month. (Two of our retired clergy, the Rev. Ted Harris and the Rev. Richard Hennigar, will serve on the first and fourth weeks of July respectively.) I will be back on the 28th and 29th and we'll have a chance to say goodbyes then.

Transitions always lead to a certain amount of grief. Darrell and Bunny have both been hanging around St. Francis for some time—as parishioners when I arrived at St. Francis. At that time Darrell was still a Methodist pastor serving at Heifer Project, and Bunny was serving on the vestry. (She became an Episcopalian before he did!) They left when Darrell was called as priest-in-charge in Clinton and then returned when he retired from full-time ministry. They are part of our extended family and we will feel a sense of loss, to be sure.

But transitions also represent opportunities for new ministries and new gifts to be shared. I have already met with wardens and executive committee and by the time you read this will have appointed and met with a small discernment committee to find a new associate rector. (Members of this committee are Robin Carlo, Michael Delorme, Mary Jane Anderson, Joe Grinstead, and Sam Davenport.) I hope to be able to share news in the not-too-distant future. In the meantime I ask for your prayers.

This month's notes focus of necessity on staff changes. Changes related to our worship space are also in the air. In every end, however, there is a new beginning. We look toward to the fall and to a newly refreshed and renewed worship space. We look toward the fall and to welcoming a new member of the staff. We look toward the fall, and always to the God who goes before us—preparing the way and making all things new.

Peace in Christ,
Rich

Refresh, Renew, Rejoice! Capital Campaign Moving Full Speed Ahead!

We are well under way with the renovation of the sanctuary and some of the most significant repairs. The vestry has chosen Cristosal Foundation as the mission which will receive our tithe. You will be hearing more about this exciting ministry.

Our goal is to have pledges from all parishioners by May 31st. This is going to print as of May 21 and we have raised \$239,575 of our \$325,000 goal as of this date from only 70 parish households plus several non-member gifts. We need all in the parish to participate by making their prayerful pledge, which, if desired, can be paid over the next three years. If you have not done so yet please send it in immediately so that we can move ahead with the next phases of our plans. Pledge letter forms were mailed to all, are in the Narthex and Fellowship Hall and on the website. To those who already have made their commitment to this aspect of our life together, Thanks!!

Kathleen E. O'Connor for the Capital Campaign Committee

Church School Banner Parties

All children are invited to our banner making parties on June 9th and 10th during the 5:00 PM and 10:00 AM services. We will meet in the Narthex and Library to present “thank you” gifts to the teachers, sing songs, and create this year’s banner. All members of the congregation are invited to join us for cake and juice (or coffee) after the service! We hope all of the children in our Church School program will come and celebrate another wonderful year of learning and growing together in Christ!

Youth Group

All are welcome at the year-end party Sunday, June 3rd at 5 p.m. here at St. Francis. Please come!
Thanks to everyone for a GREAT year!

Peace,
Lori Churchill, Youth Minister

Coming this summer.....Wizards and Wonders Vacation Bible School for kids ages 4-12. The program will be offered at St. Francis from July 9-13th and will run from 9 am-3 pm (optional after-care available until 5 pm). The program will also be offered at St. John's Episcopal Church in Worcester from July 30-August 3rd. Sign up for either session soon in the narthex-SPACE IS LIIMITED! Questions? Contact Robin Carlo at rcarlo5@mac.com or at 508 829 0363.

Mission Matters

“How shall a church called to the ministry of reconciliation respond to a world in which 10,000 of God’s children die of AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria each day? How are we to respond as poverty and disease create a generation of orphans in the developing world? What is our calling when education, health services, and access to clean water and sanitation—basic human rights are unknown to large segments of God’s creation?”

The Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold, 25th Presiding Bishop

Mission Stitchin’

There is still time to drop off your finished baptismal gowns for the Haitian Health Foundation. A special blessing will take place in the near future. Thank you for the gowns received to date—they’re beautiful!!

10 Top Foods for the Summer ~ A Tradition of Help

This summer, July and August, we will again collect a special nonperishable food item each week for the Wachusett Food Pantry. More details in the next Little Portion.

A Gift that Matters

During the past months the Vestry asked the Mission Team for mission suggestions for tithing money pledged to the Capital Campaign Fund. Our recommendation of “Fundación Cristolsal” was chosen. Be sure to read more about this on page 5.

Millennium Development Goals

In 2006, the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) as a mission priority for the coming triennium. The MDG’s are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

There are no easy answers or quick fixes to achieve these goals. Your Mission Team is committed to making some progress towards them one step at a time. With your prayers, talents and resources we can continue to respond. Please stop by the Mission Table in the narthex to see our achievements to date and to learn more about the Millennium Development Goals.

Don't forget the next Prayer Shawl Meeting will be Monday, June 18th at 10:00 a.m. in the Narthex. Hope to see you there.

The next Mission Meeting is Monday, September 10th.

Vestry Chooses Recipient of Capital Campaign Tithe

When the Vestry of St. Francis Church decided to go forward with the capital campaign to remodel and repair our parish buildings and memorial garden, a tithe, or 10% of the funds raised, was designated for mission giving, a thanksgiving offering for the abundant gifts we have as a parish. The Vestry asked the Mission Committee to research and recommend a recipient of this financial gift which will, if we reach our goal of \$325,000, amount to more than \$30,000. At its May meeting the Vestry approved the designation of the Fundación Cristosal, or Cristosal Foundation, as the recipient of the St. Francis Capital Campaign Tithe.

The Cristosal Foundation is organized to support the work of the Episcopal/Anglican Church of El Salvador. It does this by

- serving as a communication resource for North Americans about the church and society in El Salvador, through regular newsletters and bulletins;
- building bridges between Salvadorans and North Americans through exchange visits, work projects and educational experiences; and,
- serving as an educational and awareness source about the mission of the Salvadoran Church for interested people in North America; and offering support through fundraising efforts for identified needs and emerging projects, and being advocates in our church and beyond for Salvadoran issues and concerns.

The opportunities to put our tithe to good use in El Salvador through the programs of the Episcopal/Anglican Church are many. The annual budget for the Cristosal Foundation, which does not include salaries as all their personnel are volunteers, is just \$100,000. Thus, a \$30,000 gift will be significant. The first step in our involvement is for our parish to send a small group of people to El Salvador to meet with the people there regarding how we can best support their projects. Until this happens we do not know the specifics of our mission there.

For now, we can say that St. Francis Church has made the commitment to “stand with” the new Anglican Church in El Salvador with the help of the Fundación Cristosal.

Congratulations and Good Luck to our High School Graduates!!

Jena Bastardo will attend Rhode Island College
Burt Grinstead will attend the American Academy of Dramatic Arts
Eric Jones will attend Northeastern University
Connor Joyce will attend Clark University
Ryan Letourneau will attend Bryant College
Jacob Monroe will attend Penn State University
Alex Olesin will attend the University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Adam Schmidt will attend Westfield State College
Adam Shulman will attend Assumption College
Liz Tripp will attend Mount Holyoke College

If any graduating high school senior has inadvertently been missed please accept our sincere apologies and notify the church office.

The deadline for the Summer Little Portion is Thursday, June 21st

Please have all information to the office by this date. You can leave it in the Office mailbox or email it to stfran@verizon.net.

The Little Portion will be mailed on Thursday, June 28th.

(Please note this issue is for both July and August.)

Letter from the House of Bishops

The following letter has been sent from The House of Bishops to members of the US Congress. Our bishop, The Rt. Rev. Gordon P. Scruton, joined his colleagues in signing this letter.

Dear Senator/Representative:

In October of 2002 we, the bishops of the Episcopal Church, wrote to Congress expressing our belief that going to war with Iraq was not justified, noting that “the wisdom of our own Christian faith, as well as other religious traditions, teaches us to demonstrate the greatest prudence and caution when the lethal force of war is contemplated.”

We offered our prayers and support as Congress made “this difficult decision, not just for our country, but also for the people of Iraq and the peace of the world.” We noted that we respected “the seriousness of your responsibility to protect the lives of our citizens” and we condemned “the brutality of Saddam Hussein and his regime.” We included prayers for “members of the armed services and their families in the midst of international crises and possible military action.”

Now we write again to express our deepest concern for the situation in Iraq and for our servicemen and women. We are filled with sorrow as we witness how our worst fears of what might ensue from war in Iraq become reality. Families and communities have been broken both in body and in spirit as service members are separated from their families for extraordinary periods of time, suffer mounting casualties, and all with no end of violence in sight. The respect our nation once enjoyed and our relations with allies have been seriously undermined.

As Congress and the Administration consider the future of Iraq, we urge a careful and reasoned debate that avoids the partisan and harsh rhetoric that would diminish the important issues before our nation. That debate did not occur in 2002 and, with the notable exception of the Iraq Study Group, it is only marginally occurring now. For the sake of all those involved, and to honor these brave women and men who have been maimed and lost, we encourage full and open discussion that acknowledges our mistakes as well as our responsibilities. It is our hope that this discussion will lead to policies that will end the violence in Iraq and bring stability and a just peace to the region.

We believe it imperative that the United States now:

- Map out a strategy for a responsible transition to Iraqi governance, making clear that we do not have long term interests in occupying Iraq
- Join those in the region, including Syria and Iran, in seeking security and economic recovery for Iraq
- Provide the women and men of our military and their families with the sustained and responsive care they need
- Work for religious freedom and protection of religious minorities in Iraq
- Serve the needs of Iraqi refugees wherever they may be
- Seek peace in the region, including a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians.

In the Episcopal Church’s Book of Common Prayer, we ask that the spirit of wisdom be given to those whom we entrust with the authority of government; with that authority comes great responsibility. We pray that the spirit of wisdom will be with each of you and help guide us to a just and lasting peace.