

E-Portion for March 2007

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Associate Rector's Column

One of the joys of being part of the St. Francis community is the commitment to mission by this congregation. We gave around 20% (\$55,500) to missions both here and globally in 2006, not counting some of the donations I mention further down in this article. And, this year we have designated a tithe (10%) of the amount we raise for our capital campaign to go for missions. This will be in addition to what we normally do through our budgeted outreach and the many special offerings and hands-on mission efforts we hope to do in 2007.

I do not mention all this in order to give ourselves a pat on the back, but as a sign that St. Francis is a "healthy mission focused congregation." That latter phrase is the goal of our bishop and the diocese for each one of our 68 congregations comprising the Diocese of Western Massachusetts.

I'm sure you've all read the Mission Committee report for 2006. In that report it spells out to whom we gave much of that financial support and the various other ways we supported people in need with school kits, liturgical supplies, first aid kits, donated food items, money raised by the Church Mouse Fair to fund the Mustard Seed feeding program, the youth group's support of World Vision and Souper Bowl of Caring and Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, not to mention all those in our parish who volunteer their time for various programs and agencies.

There are a couple of sayings about churches and missions: "If a church is not mission-minded it needs missionaries sent to it," and, "Mission is to the church as a fire is to burning" (Emil Brunner). Being involved and committed to missions is one of the marks of a church that is alive and well, is full of energy and the Holy Spirit, is a place that people want to be a part of because it is doing as the letter of James puts it: "*be doers of the word and not merely hearers.*" (1:22)

Have we reached our limit in being "doers of the word?" I trust not. We are a growing congregation which means we have increasing opportunities to serve Christ in the world. It's an exciting and meaningful time to be part of the St. Francis community, to be living the baptized life with one another and for those in need beyond our walls.

Darrell+

Youth Confirmation Retreat

The Confirmation Class will go on retreat to Bement Camp and Conference Center from Friday, March 10th through Sunday, March 12th. More information will be sent out.

Adult Catechumen Classes meet at 7:30 p.m. in the narthex.

The schedule for March will be as follows:

March 21 – Reading the Bible

March 28 – Prayer and Worship

Capital Campaign Update

REFRESH, RENEW, REJOICE....

The highlight of the Annual Meeting was a presentation of the various aspects of the Capital Campaign. After several years of congregational input and planning by the Vestry and many others, the parish is moving forward with the renovation of the worship space, long deferred maintenance including roofing, repainting, bathroom upgrades, ensuring all-person accessibility to the buildings and grounds, and improvements and landscaping of the Memorial Garden. The fourth aspect is a tithe of the funds raised to mission.

Thus far, the Clergy, Vestry, Capital Campaign Committee and other leaders involved in the planning have put forth leadership pledges of \$130,000 towards our goal of \$325,000! Going forward, we will need the commitment of everyone in the parish. For those of you who were not at the Annual Meeting, there will be other opportunities to learn about the details of this project during the month of March. We look forward to sharing the excitement with you all!

Kathleen O'Connor for the Capital Campaign Committee

Church School News

Eucharist Instruction Program

This program will begin on March 4th with an informational meeting for children and parents after the 10:00 a.m. service. We will use a home program designed for children ages 8-10. The program is appropriate for children who have not yet received communion as well as for those who have received but who are ready for more formal instruction. Please sign up in the narthex and take an information sheet with program dates.

Palm Saturday

Our sixth annual Palm Saturday program will be held Saturday, March 31st from 9:00—12:00.

Children (age 3 through grade 6) will have a variety of Lent/Easter activities to choose from such as planting, painting, cooking, dyeing eggs, and other crafts. Small groups will also take turns in a “prayer walk” which will help them to experience Holy Week in a dramatic way (e.g. walking into Jerusalem with palms, sharing bread and “wine,” participating in a Tenebrae service and crawling into the tomb.) Activities could get messy and the “tomb” (St. Clare basement) will be cold so please dress in warm play clothes! Children should bring a lunch. Drinks and cookies will be provided.

A sign up sheet is on the table in the narthex.

Mission Matters

Good Friday Offering

Since 1922 Episcopalians have supported the ministries of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East through the Good Friday offering. The Diocese of Jerusalemis comprised of churches in Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Diocesan schools provide an education to over 5,000 students and diocesan hospitals and clinics serve the health care needs of tens of thousands of people.

Mission Stitchin’

The annual Mission Stitchin’ for Baptismal Gowns for new mothers in Haiti is being promoted as usual this spring but collection of gowns won’t be until May. So there is ample time to cut out, assemble and decorate fine white gowns. If a pattern is needed, call Eleanor Bird at 978-464-5564.

Heart to Heart

Thank you for your generous response to our Kids Kits—we are now in the process of putting all our boxes together. More information will appear in the next Little Portion.

Five Talents International is an organization whose mission is to provide small amounts of capital to the poor? This form of microcredit helps those less fortunate establish small home industries and jobs for those in need. A help up, not a hand out. Five Talents has been a Mission focus of the Diocese of Western Mass as well as the St. Francis Mission Team.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Next Prayer Shawl meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 19th at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Disbursements ~ At our last Mission Team meeting the Team voted to assign \$40.00 to ECW (Episcopal Church Women of Western Massachusetts).

Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, in order to address the challenge of global poverty, world leaders created the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) which envisioned rich and poor nations working together to combat global poverty by 2015. In 2006, the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopted these MDG's as a mission priority.

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

Mission Focus for Easter

Easter Offering ~ A Gift for Life—a water well—to help ensure a clean water supply for an entire village through the efforts of ERD (Episcopal Relief and Development)

Water is essential to life, but I can also spread deadly diseases. Approximately 5 million people, mostly children, die each year from waterborne diseases. Contaminated water contributes to approximately 80% of all disease in the developing world.

ERD is improving access to safe, clean drinking water. They are digging wells, building water systems and teaching proper sanitation and hygiene in countries like Nicaragua, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Belize, Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Haiti and India.

With a contribution of \$5,000, we at St. Francis can support the building of a hand dug well that will provide clean water and sanitation for an entire community—giving families the gift of better health and vitality.

Your compassion and generosity can make it possible for ERD to partner with local communities to help families climb out of poverty around the world.

Submitted by Jeanne Schutte for the Mission Team.

Bunny Huddleston, Chairperson 508-886-4969 – darrellandbunny@msn.com

The next Little Portion deadline is Thursday, March 22nd.

Lenten Schedule

Lenten Soup Suppers: Wednesday, March 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th

6:00 p.m. – Soup Supper Please see the sign up sheet in the narthex. If you would be willing to provide soup for one of the evenings please see the sign up sheet for that as well.

Holy Eucharist with Prayers for Healing: Every Wednesday in Lent at 7:00 p.m.

Lenten Quiet Day

Saturday, March 17th, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at St. Clare House. Meditations will be led by the Associate Rector. Please see the sign up sheet in the narthex for details.

Fridays in Lent: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. *The Way of the Cross* (Stations)

The church will be open for personal prayers each Friday in Lent. Stop in at the church and, using a prayer booklet, pray the *Way of the Cross*.

Thank You

Many thanks to all of you for the wonderful reception, gift of money for Stoles and the Dictionary of Episcopalians. I appreciated all the cards and well wishes I received from many of you on my ordination as a Deacon. As of February the Bishop has assigned me to Christ Church, Rochdale but I'm sure there will be occasions when I will visit St. Francis Church. As a long time member of St. Francis Church, I will continue to keep all of you in my prayers.

Fondly,
Audrey Cronin, Deacon