

THE GOOD NEWS



ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH VOL. 18 ISSUE 11 NOVEMBER 2011

Rector's Musings

As we enter the month of November, we begin to think about Thanksgiving Day, that single day when it is mandated that we give thanks to God for all the blessings of our daily lives.

I do not know where I picked it up, but I once heard a comment that still rattles around my brain, "What if all you were given tomorrow was what you gave thanks for today."

Food for thought in this season of thanksgiving.

Bishop's Address to Diocesan Synod 2011

I have to begin by telling you how completely thrilled I am to be standing before you at this moment doing what I'm doing. A year ago, I got to speak to you briefly as your Bishop-elect. There was an air of cautious optimism in the room, and I was very excited about what lay ahead. But we didn't know each other well then, so there was a certain reserve in our embrace of one another. Now I have some nine months on the ground in the diocese. I've logged about 20,000 miles on the vehicle you all own, and I've visited all but a handful of our churches. So I'm overjoyed to be able to tell you: I still go to bed every night and say a prayer of thanksgiving that I have the best job in the entire world, so I thank you and I thank the Holy Spirit for the trust that has been placed in me!

There is a great deal that I could talk about. But my remarks this afternoon are an exercise in triage—omitting much that is good and worthy of being said in order to focus on the one thing needful. So I would like to tell you a story. I believe it's a true story, though I can't be certain because it takes

place in the future. And I'm not really going to tell you the whole story, I guess, but pretty much just the ending, because it's important that we all know that the story does have a happy ending, since the chapters leading up to the last one ... well, they are a little scary! Oh ... and I should probably mention that we are all characters in this story. Only the names have been changed to protect the unsuspecting.

Lisa and Jeff live outside of Sharpstown in Jones County—check me out, there are no such place names in Illinois; I told you the names had been changed—about 14 miles from the county seat city of Pinehurst. Jeff works in his father's retail farm implement business, and will one day own it; Lisa works in a local beauty parlor. They have two kids in high school, which can get a little expensive, so a couple of years ago they found themselves in nearly \$50,000 of revolving credit card debt. It seemed that they just weren't very good at managing their finances. Through one of Lisa's clients, they heard about a series of seminars being held down at the VFW Hall. They were feeling just vulnerable enough that they were willing to accept help from just about any direction, so they attended the meetings.

Doing so not only turned their financial life around—now their debt is less than \$20,000, they're living within their means, and they're looking forward to actually opening a savings account—not only is their financial life turned around, but they made some new friends who were also part of the group. Lisa and a couple of the other women are talking about starting a support group for mothers of teenagers. What she and Jeff learned about halfway through the financial management series was that it was sponsored by St Gabriel's Episcopal Church in Pinehurst. Lisa's client, in fact,

the one who told her about the seminar, is a member of St Gabriel's.

Now, Lisa's parents were Methodists when they were kids, and Jeff's were Catholics. But neither Lisa nor Jeff ever had any experience with any church, except for the occasional wedding or funeral, where the religious talk never made any sense to them. But a couple of their new friends invited them to come to a group meeting in their home, right there in Sharpstown. There was some good food, good fellowship, some conversation about the big issues of life, and always a short prayer at the end, led by the host couple, Julie and Mark. Jeff and Lisa were a little skeptical at first, but they really liked the people, and found that they enjoyed exploring the spiritual dimension of their lives, which they had never done before.

After about three months of coming to these week night home group meetings, there was a special visitor. Julie introduced him as Father Cliff, the priest from St Gabriel's. Over dinner, Lisa and Jeff learned that Fr Cliff actually had a day job as an administrator at Pinehurst High School, and took care of St Gabriel's in his "spare time." At the discussion time, Fr Cliff informed the group that he had rented the VFW Hall on every other Sunday night beginning the following month, and wanted to know whether anyone in the group would be interested in joining him for a simple service of worship and instruction—a little music, some prayers, and a time of teaching about the basics of Christian faith, and, of course, some food. For those who continued to be interested, this could lead to baptism. On their way home that night, Jeff and Lisa agree that they would begin to attend those services.

So they do. And they find that they actually enjoy the experience. Much to their surprise, they begin to pray, on their own, at home. Not too much, but some. They also find that their relationship with their kids begins to be a little less stormy, and is sometimes even a little sweet. Nobody knows quite why, but both parents and kids are happy about it. The kids begin to join their parents at the VFW Hall on Saturday nights.

This goes on for a couple of years. The VFW Hall meetings are now held every week. The oldest child is now away at one of the state universities. It's fall,

and Fr Cliff begins to gently raise the question: Who feels ready for baptism? By this time, there are over 20 adults in the group, none of whom had any previous ties to a church. To Fr Cliff's delight, the response is, "We thought you'd never ask!" So the instruction becomes a little more intense. They begin to read more scripture in their worship. By this time, both Jeff and Lisa have each gotten hold of a Bible for their own personal use, so they notice that the passages of scripture that are read are not chosen randomly, but follow a pattern. Some people from St Gabriel's quietly begin to show up and assist Fr Cliff with the teaching by leading small group discussions. New songs are introduced in their worship—songs with unfamiliar language and vocabulary that the catechists need to explain the meaning of—and the group is taught to give responses to various things the leader might say.

At the beginning of December (or, as the group is told, "Advent"), each of the candidates for baptism is paired with a sponsor from St Gabriel's, someone who listens to them and prays for them and emails them and talks by phone at least weekly. About ten weeks later, at the beginning of Lent (which Jeff remembers his Catholic grandmother talking about, though he never knew what it was), the 20 candidates solemnly sign their names in a special book that has been prepared for that purpose, as their sponsors vouch for the fact that they have been faithful in attending worship and instruction, and have lived in the world in a manner worthy of a follower of Jesus. Fr Cliff and the other catechists begin to mention something called the Eucharist, though whatever they say about it is kind of vague, and they never teach about it directly. But Jeff and Lisa and their other friends get the distinct impression that it's pretty important, and that, after they are baptized, it will be a regular part of their experience.

Around the middle of Lent, everyone is given a special hand-calligraphied copy of the Apostles' Creed and the Our Father, and told to memorize them. Then, on the night before Easter, a bus appears in the VFW Hall parking lot, which takes everyone to Pinehurst, and St Gabriel's Church. They're ushered into the back of the church and given a hand candle. It's very dark. A lot of scripture is read, and the passages are very long. But the catechumens have heard them all before. It is in these stories that the gospel has been explained

to them: the Creation, the Flood, Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac, the Exodus, the Valley of the Dry Bones. Then their sponsors present them to Fr Cliff, who is dressed up in a way they've never seen him before! He asks them if they renounce the ways of this world, and if they promise to follow Jesus as Lord. Then the whole congregation says the Apostles' Creed with them and answers some more questions. Then, one by one, Fr Cliff baptizes them, and pours oil over them—generously—and tells them that they have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever. Then, for the first time, they give and receive the Sign of Peace, and finally, are actively present as heaven and earth are joined and death and life become indistinguishable from one another, and they dine on the Body and Blood of him whose true members they have now become.

The next Sunday, they gather for the Eucharist once again, only this time back in the familiar VFW Hall in Sharpstown. The Bishop is there, somebody they've only heard rumors about until this point! He leads them in a discussion about becoming their own Eucharistic Community, and, together, they decide on a name: the Church of the Advent, Sharpstown. The Bishop goes on to tell them that they are now part of an entity known as Jones County Parish, which is now comprised of two Eucharistic Communities: St Gabriel's, Pinehurst and Advent, Sharpstown. Members from both Eucharistic Communities will be elected to serve on a single Mission Leadership Team, which is responsible for planning and advancing the mission of the Diocese of Springfield in Jones County.

Soon thereafter, Lisa and Jeff make plans to host a home group of their own. Their hope is to conceive and give birth to yet another Community-in-Formation in Jones County Parish, since there's a new bio-fuel plant set to open in the community of Larkspur, about 17 miles north of Sharpstown. And so it goes.

In the meantime, a hundred miles to the northwest, in Gibson County, a more urban area, two long-established Eucharistic Communities in the city of Parkerville, Incarnation and St Margaret's, have reconfigured themselves into Gibson County Parish, merging their vestries into a single Mission Leadership Team. This is not yoking, in the sense in which we have used that term. This is getting

organized for effective coordinated and collaborative mission in Gibson County. Sunday services will continue at both Incarnation and St Margaret's, both in the distinctive styles to which they have become accustomed. But now they're working together to find ways of serving a growing immigrant population, many of whom seem to be sitting lightly to their traditional religious heritage. They're talking about establishing a literacy program for parents and advocating on their behalf with the local school system. Serving the marginalized openly in the name of Christ, announcing good news to the poor and recovery of sight to the blind—the people of St Margaret's and Incarnation, who only a little while ago thought of themselves as rivals, are energized by their participation in fundamental Christian mission.

Across the state laterally now, the people of Fawcett County Parish, meeting for worship in historic St David's Church in the county seat town of Reedsport, have done a sophisticated demographic survey of their parish, and discovered a significant population of unchurched, and economically marginal, households living in mobile home parks tucked away in various corners of the county. So they picked one, and got permission to hold a Vacation Bible School in the park's community building. Nearly 40 children showed up, which enabled them to establish relationships with their parents. One of these parents, a single mother, agreed to host a bible study in her trailer if somebody from St David's would come and lead it. There is hope that a Community-in-Formation might soon be established in that area.

And so the church's mission is pursued across the diocese. It's not done exactly the same way in any two places. There's a huge amount of trial and error ... especially error! More attempts at mission fail than succeed, but there's a sense that, at least we're "failing forward." More to the point, there's a sense that we're all doing this together. We're mutually accountable. The people at Reedsport in Fawcett County are vitally interested in what's happening down in Jones County, and both are keeping tabs on how the Eucharistic Communities in Parkerville are pursuing the whole church's mission in Gibson County. They are interested in one another's mission because they know themselves to all be members of one church—the Diocese of Springfield.

My brothers and sisters, about six weeks ago the members of our Department of General Mission Strategy met in working retreat over a Friday night and a Saturday up in Springfield. I met with them. Naturally, we talked about ... mission strategy! With the able assistance of Mr. Mark Waight of St Michael's, O'Fallon, we emerged from that meeting with a draft Vision Statement for our diocese. I haven't read it to you yet. But you already know it, because I've just described it to you. But here it is anyway:

The Diocese of Springfield in one church, organized for mission into geographic parishes, manifested in Eucharistic Communities and communities-in-formation, with a goal of being concretely incarnate in all of the 60 counties of central and southern Illinois.

"The Diocese of Springfield is one church..."
That's not a novel concept. It's what our basic Anglican theology tells us about any diocese, because the diocese is the fundamental unit of the church. Anything either smaller than that or larger than that is just a matter of expediency. Within our diocese, we have everything we need to effectively pursue our mission. Everything. That may not be the way we're accustomed to thinking. But it's time we claim who we know we are, and begin to live that way.

"...organized for mission into geographic parishes." In the Episcopal Church, we use the word "parish" synonymously with "church" or "congregation." But that's not what the word means. Traditionally, it refers to a specific piece of geography; a parish has clear boundaries. This vision statement allows us to reclaim that heritage, and use it as a way of being accountable to one another for mission. Within a geographic area, who is responsible for organizing and pursuing the church's mission in that area? The congregations in that area! This is just a "back to the future" thing.

"...manifested in Eucharistic Communities..."
Notice that the 'E' and the 'C' at the beginning of 'Eucharistic' and 'Community' are capitalized. This suggests that we're not just being descriptive here, but floating the idea that Eucharistic Community might be a more useful formal term by which to speak of the people who habitually worship together

at the same altar week by week, the people who make up what we presently would call the "congregation" of a Parish or Mission. In the terms of this proposed Vision Statement, there will, at first, usually be a one-to-one correspondence between Parishes and Eucharistic Communities. But if this vision grows wings, we will many instances of two or more Eucharistic Communities in the same parish.

"...and communities-in-formation..." In my story, the group that eventually became the Eucharistic Community in Sharpstown, the Church of the Advent, was for a couple of years a Community-in-Formation. The Eucharistic Community of St Gabriel's in Pinehurst, acting through their Mission Leadership Team (formerly known as the Vestry) of the mission of the diocese in Jones County Parish, conceived a new Community-in-Formation when they rented the VFW Hall for the personal finance seminar, and gestated that new community through the home group hosted by Julie and Mark, and gave birth to that Community-in-Formation when the Saturday night worship and teaching sessions began. Simply put, a Community-in-Formation is the child of a Eucharistic Community, and when that child grows up, it becomes a Eucharistic Community in its own right.

"concretely incarnate in all 60 counties" Did you know that 60 out of the 102 counties in Illinois are within the territory of the Diocese of Springfield? At present, we have 37 churches at which the Eucharist is regularly celebrated on Sunday. But four of those are in Madison County, three are in Sangamon County, and two each are in McLean, St Clair, and Marion counties. So do the math: This means that we have no mission work established in 31 of our 60 counties. I realize, of course, that some people cross county lines to go to church, but I think you see my point. One of the fruits of pursuing our mission more effectively will simply be that we are visible in more places.

I hope your head is spinning right now. I hope you're disturbed. I hope you're apprehensive about what I'm saying. Because if you're not all those things, then you're probably not grasping that the vision I'm laying out is a many times more serious challenge to the status quo of the way we "do church"—in this diocese or elsewhere—than anything we've ever encountered in our lives. We

could spend the rest of today, and all of tomorrow, and not even begin to tease out all the implications. Unfortunately, we've got other stuff we need to do. But make no mistake: This is a game-changer.

And I'm more than aware that, at this point, everything I'm talking about is only a trial balloon. Before any of it can happen, there needs to be a very deliberate process of conversation and buy-in. If it's just my vision, or just the vision of the DGMS, it won't get to first base. There's enough here to make everyone in this room hugely uncomfortable, at the very least. But nothing less drastic than this is called for at this hour in our life together. I, for one, am scared to death. But I'm also excited beyond words. What an opportunity to be on the cutting edge of the Lord renewing his church, and through the church being renewed, having the world be renewed. As the Lord tells us, "Behold, I make all things new."

**ALL SAINTS' DAY
ALL SOULS' DAY**

Service will be held for All Saints' Day on Tuesday, November 1, at 7:00 PM.
All Souls' Day service will be held on Wednesday, November 2, at 7:30 AM.

2012 SYNOD

St. Matthew's has been asked to host the Diocesan Synod for 2012. We are looking for a volunteer to lead the coordination of this event. Please see Fr. Dave or one of the wardens if you are interested.

SATURDAY EVENING SERVICES

Weekly Saturday evening service commenced in September. The service is held at 5PM each Saturday, holidays excepted. If you cannot make Sunday service, you are invited to partake of this low-key and less formal gathering.

MUSIC NOTES



The children's musical offering October 16 was a medley of three songs on the theme of the Great Commandment. Two of the sections, "This is my commandment, that you love one another" and "Love, love... the Gospel in a word is love" were probably familiar. The medley began with a call and response song "The Great Commandment" written in conjunction with our Sunday School curriculum. The children enjoyed adding hand chimes to their singing.

November 13, Mark Smith will be guest organist. Mark has been attending St. Matthew's since last spring. Please join me in welcoming him to share his talents in the service. Amy Halt will lead the Chancel Choir that day. I will be at St. Paul's, Alton, along with other Bells in Motion members, preparing for a handbell concert. St. Paul's is celebrating the 175th anniversary of their founding. Bells in Motion played there several years ago, and the group is honored to be invited back as part of their anniversary celebration.

November will wrap up another year in our liturgical cycle, which means the choirs will very soon start preparations for Advent and Christmas. If you have a favorite hymn or anthem, let me know. Hymns are reviewed for connection with the lessons, so that will influence the date. We've begun using the *Lift Every Voice and Sing II* hymnals for some services on Saturday evening. This alternate hymnal includes some hymns that are also in Hymnal 1982, and many others that are familiar, especially to those with experience in other denominations.

~Melody Palm, Choirmaster

Calling All 20/30 Somethings!!

Upcoming events for the 20/30's Club:

- Nov. 19: St. Matthews Thanksgiving Dinner
- Dec. 17: Holiday Party

YOUTH NOTES

First of all, a big thank you to everyone who helped make the Halloween Party a roaring success. Members of the youth group were here for nine hours decorating and getting ready for the party. We had a great time and I hope to see the rest of you next year!



I know it sounds crazy but next week we'll start practicing for the Christmas Pageant. We'll practice between Sunday school and the 10:00 service. That means we'll meet at 9:45 to practice and sing in the children's chapel room in the center of the basement of the fellowship hall. We'll need as many voices as possible to join in. If you or someone you know is between one and eighteen years of age, invite them to join us for Sunday school at 9:00 and practice at 9:45. Adult type people can meet in the fellowship hall for adult Sunday school. I hear it's a great time too! Thank you all and God Bless!!

~Terra

tswisher@stmatthewsbloomington.org

PURCHASE PROCESS

In an effort to be careful stewards of the Parish finances, the Vestry is implementing an approval process for purchases made for St. Matthew's. **Purchases totaling \$50 or more must be pre-approved by the appropriate Vestry liaison, a Warden or the Rector.**

For ALL purchases: Complete a Request to Purchase form and obtain the approval before placing an order or making the purchase. This includes all areas of St. Matthew's, including, but not limited to coffee hour supplies, music, Altar Guild, etc. The Book Store is exempt from approval at the \$50 limit as they use their own funds for ordering.

Purchases requiring contractual agreement with the vendor must have Vestry approval. Vestry meetings are the 4th Thursday of each month. Requests should be submitted in writing no later than one week prior to the meeting.

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Forms and complete information are in the bin outside the parish office.

PARTNERS IN HEALING



Every month churches throughout our area pray for the patients and staff of Advocate BroMenn Regional Medical Center and Advocate Eureka Community Hospital. During November 2011 St Matthew's will pray for the staff and patients of the **Inpatient Unit**.

The 25-bed inpatient unit at Eureka Community Hospital carries an average census of 10 patients. The unit services all kinds of patients, including surgical, cardiac and general medical patients.

Please pray for patients, their families and the staff in the **(IU) Inpatient Unit**.



MEN'S BREAKFAST

No Men's Breakfast in November.

The Men's Club typically meets every month on the third Saturday - watch the bulletin for the location. All men are invited to join us for food, fellowship, and prayer.

Donation of Projector

An Epson EX3200 Multimedia Projector has been donated to the church for program use by all church groups. The donor requests that it also be made available for members' home use for a \$10 per 2-day use fee for maintenance and bulb replacement.

Contact the office for more information or to reserve the dates.



**ITEMS OF THE MONTH
THANKSGIVING BASKETS**

The Outreach Committee is asking for donations of canned and dried goods, as well as money to buy turkeys for our Thanksgiving baskets to be given to St. Matthew’s parishioners in need. When your generosity creates more than is needed for our own people, we donate baskets to folks outside our parish.

If you know of a family or a single in need, please contact Linda Stawick (828-7422) or the church office (662-4646).

Your suggestions will be confidential. Grocery sacks for the donations will be available November 6, 13 and 20. Please have your groceries to the church by Sunday, November 20th. We will deliver on Monday, Nov. 21st.

Thank you for your generosity.
~ **The Outreach Committee**

COATS---COATS---COATS



Is your coat closet bulging with coats and jackets you never wear? Have your kids outgrown their coats, hats, and mittens? Give these garments a new home with someone in need. Bring them to St. Matthew's and place them in the big white box in the upstairs hallway opposite the sacristy. Do make sure that they are clean and in reasonably good shape, and don't bring other types of clothing. The Outreach Committee will deliver them to The Salvation Army for

distribution, starting in October and continuing through January 2011. Thanks so much for helping needy children and adults stay warm this winter!

Thank you for your generosity,
~**Outreach Committee**



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Bob Kohlhase	1
Dale Blackley	4
Sandy Kohlhase	9
Polly Price	10
Ben Johnson	13
Brittany Thomas	14
Sylvia DeGooyer	17
Elvis Forde	18
Tom Dean	19
Jayne Johnson	23
Grace Johns	24
Cynthia Strickley	24
Carol Montague	25
Jim Messer	25
William Sharpton	26
Merrill Lucey	28
Jack Pitts	29



WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Kenneth and Donna Mann	18
Paul and Lorinda DeMeritt	19
William and Anne Sharpton	20
John and Monica Iliff	25
Clark and Jan Johnson	26

PRAYER FOR OUR TROOPS
Lord, hold our troops in your hands.
Protect them as they protect us.
Bless them and their families for the
selfless acts they perform for us
in our time of need.
And give us peace.
I ask this in the name of
Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.



Our troops:
 Aaron Bivins,
 T.J. Correll, Mark D. Hill,
 Shane Kupferschmidt,
 Jason Lynch, Jeff Riggs,
 Anthony Ryan

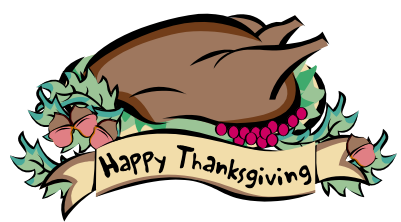
BULLETIN GOES ELECTRONIC!

Beginning the first Sunday in October, our weekly bulletin will be uploaded to the St. Matthew's website in PDF format. Soon, you will be able to access St. Matthew's weekly bulletin lessons, schedules, announcements and more from your home computer, laptop, smart phone, iPad, etc. Before you know it, there'll be an app for that!

www.stmatthewsbloomington.org

THE GOOD NEWS

The deadline for submitting articles for the December edition of The Good News monthly newsletter is Wednesday, November 16 at noon. Articles are now being accepted for the November issue of The Good News. Please submit to the Parish Office: 662-4646 or info@stmatthewsbloomington.org



*Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours
 from St. Matthew's!*
