

THE LION

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Issue 3

Message from the Rector

“...let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak...”

St James 1:19

(Part II)

Let me tell you a little story; and this is a true story, and it is something that happened here at St Mark's a long time ago, long before I got here and even before Fr. Rennie Coats became the first Vicar of this church – over 33 years ago. But even though it was a long time ago, we are still carrying the echoes of the event today.

It seems that a long time ago Fr. Fred Basil, of blessed memory, came to St Mark's to interview with what was then the Mission Committee of this church. The position of Vicar was open and, in consultation with the Bishop, Fr. Fred came to interview and be considered for that position.

Now at the time Fr. Fred was young, married, with four little children, and from what I understand everything was going very, very well until the Sunday morning service. It seems that Fr. Fred's wife and children were sitting on the back pew of the church, like families with young children generally do, when one of his sons began to run a little race car up and down the back of the pew. Vroom, vroom, vroom. No big deal, right? Children do that. They have short attention spans, and can't be expected to sit quietly and act like little adults or little statues in the church.

But evidently some did; so it wasn't long before a few people started to turn around and look at Fr. Fred's wife and children with that “Grumpy Ol' Scowl” that so many of us have seen before. And, as if that wasn't enough, one of our members—also of blessed memory—walked up to Fr. Fred after the service, and she said to him, “You don't belong here. We don't want children in this church, making noises and disturbing *our* worship”—as if the worship service of the Church isn't for everyone, *children* as well as adults. But that is what she said: “You don't belong here.”

That was, as I said, a long, long time ago.

Now look at the attitude of Jesus. His attitude was completely the opposite: he welcomed children into his arms. He even went so far as to rebuke those who wanted to keep children away from him. “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not,” Jesus said, “for to such belongs the kingdom of God” (Mk 10:14).

As a matter of fact, Jesus even commended children as an example of what true Christian faith really is—you know, innocency, trustfulness, dependency, and things like that. That is what Jesus meant when he took that child into his arms that day and corrected his errant disciples by saying to them, “...for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” He is telling us that we too need to come to him in innocency, and in trustfulness, and in dependency, and things like that. We *all* need to come to Jesus in that way; and that includes men, women, *and children*.

Now, please don't misunderstand what I am saying here. I don't think that Jesus had any illusions whatsoever about the fact that children can be just as stubborn, just as surly, just as thankless, and just as selfish as any one of us can be as well. Nor do I think that he had any illusions about the fact that children can be just as noisy and just as distracting and just as disturbing as any one of us can be as well. But he made room for them by welcoming them into his arms

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And the church has to do the very same thing. We have to make room for families with children, and allow those children to be just that: children. And how do we make room for families with children so that we, a church that is comprised predominately of older people, don't risk returning to the way things were a long time ago?

First, I think we need to do the little things that need to be done to make families with children feel comfortable and welcome in our midst instead of always being on edge or worrying that their children should only be "seen but not heard." When Jesus said to his disciples, "Let the little children come to me," he knew they were messy and noisy and disruptive and things like that. And so do we. So we too need to make room for both parents and their children to thrive amongst us—especially if we are going to pass our very unique Anglican tradition down to the generations that follow. So that is the first thing we need to do: we need to be mindful of being a welcoming place.

The second thing that we need to do follows very closely on that: we need to be quick to hear and very, very slow to speak. And more importantly, we need to make sure that we *never* make that "Grumpy Ol' Scowl" when we see or hear something that we don't particularly like. Neither of those things—our negative words or our grumpy expressions—have any place in "making room" for *anyone*, much less young people with children. So let's keep our words and our expressions to ourselves, and make everyone—men, women, *and children*—feel welcome in our midst.

And finally, what we need to do is both "do" and pray. If we find that our patience isn't what it used to be, we need to pray that our Lord would change our hearts, and we need to do the things we need to do in order to change our words, our expressions, and our actions. We may never be a church that is full of young people doing great things for our Lord, but the last thing that we want to do is give the impression that families aren't welcome here. As I said, the incident with Fr. Fred happened a long time ago. Let's be sensitive to keep it that way.

For the past twenty years or so I have heard time and time again that we—St Mark's—probably won't be around in another five years or so because there just aren't that many young people sitting in our pews. Since I have heard that prediction for so long, and since we are still here, I take that prediction with a grain of salt. Furthermore, I also know our place in our community, and it seems like for every eighty-five year old we bury, a sixty-five year old takes his or her place. That has always been the trend at St Mark's.

But that is not a trend that we can simply take for granted. Nor do I think that we should make the prediction of our extinction some sort of self-fulfilling prophecy by not making space for everyone. That is simply *not* what God's family looks like. Men, women, and children—of all ages—that truly is the family of God. Amen.

Curate's Corner

Rev. Mr. Randall Russell

I've heard the last Sunday of the church year called a lot of different names such as Christ the King Sunday, The Sunday Next Before Advent, and, of course, "The Last Sunday of the Church Year", but I had never heard it called "Stir Up Sunday" until fairly recently. Apparently in England there is a tradition that on the last Sunday of the church year one would begin to make or "stir up" their bowl of Christmas pudding (which according to my wife is actually more of a cake) and save it until it would be served on Christmas Day. However, this actually has very little to do with how the last Sunday of the church year became known as "Stir up Sunday".

The main reason the last Sunday of the church year became known as "Stir Up Sunday" has a lot more to do with the assigned collect for that particular Sunday than it does pudding (which is really more of a cake). Every year on the Sunday before Advent our collect reads: "STIR UP, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." And why are

(Curate's Corner continued)

we asking God to “stir up” our wills right before another season of Advent begins? We are asking God to “stir up” our wills in order to find the strength and the resolve to prepare for our Lord’s coming. After all, the Latin word “adventus” actually means “coming.”

You see, Advent isn’t so much a season that is meant to get us in the “mood” for Christmas as it is a season that is meant to “prepare” us for our Savior’s coming. Advent is actually supposed to be more of a call to action than it is a feeling, which is why so much of the season focuses on John the Baptist telling us to repent and prepare the way of the Lord. Therefore, during the season of Advent we are encouraged both to prepare for our Lord’s coming at Christmas, as well as prepare for our Lord’s coming again on the Last Day. Yet, historically the way advent prepared us for our Savior’s coming is a lot different than how so many often prepare for it today.

There was a time when Advent was not all about Christmas parties or holiday snacks or sweets. One was actually encouraged to save all that stuff for the twelve days AFTER Christmas, a time when one could have his or her pudding (which again, is actually more of a cake) and eat it too. But historically speaking, Advent was always meant to be more like Lent. Advent is actually supposed to be a season of self denial, a time for fasting and prayer with special emphasis on increased acts of charity and mercy and devotion as we prepare for our Savior’s coming; as we remind ourselves that our greatest treasure is not the stuff of this world, but the One who comes to set us free.

Therefore, before we dive head first into another Christmas season, let us all pause and take some time to ask ourselves, “Are we spiritually prepared for our Lord to come? Are we ready for His coming at Christmas? Are we ready for His coming again in glory on the Last Day?” And so, on every last Sunday of the church year, before another season of Advent begins, we pray in our collect: “STIR UP, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Music Notes

Kathleen Knott, Music Director/Organist

“Picardy”

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence
And with fear and trembling stand
Ponder nothing earthly minded,
For with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand

“Let All Mortal Flesh” (#324 The Hymnal 1982) is one of the earliest Christian hymns still in modern usage. The text and tune are a combination of ancient and modern. The text dates back to the 4th century and is based on the Greek “Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn” in the Liturgy of St. James. This Liturgy is also called the “Liturgy of Jerusalem” and is attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 347). The tune is called “Picardy” and is named for the province in France from which it originated. The 17th century tune was originally associated with a French folk song in a minor key. The tune was first published in an 1848 collection of French songs. In 1906 the great English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams married the tune and ancient text. Since publication in The English Hymnal, it has become a popular Communion hymn. This Liturgy was originally spoken just prior to the celebration of The Eucharist. This hymn beautifully sets the tone for the sacrament of Communion. Verse 2 reminds us that Jesus is a King born of Mary, and illuminates His significance in the feast. “He will give to all the

(Music Notes continued)

faithful his own self for heavenly food.” In verse 3 we have the vision of the “rank of host” covering the earth and “the Light of Light” clearing the “darkness away.” Verse 4 paints a picture of “the six winged seraph” and cherubim crying “Alleluia” in ceaseless praise.

We will be singing this hymn during Communion on Christmas Eve. Hopefully this short explanation will provide some inspiration.

Daughters Of The Holy Cross

We look forward to seeing you on the first Sunday of each month for fellowship, coffee and refreshments. Please bring a friend or invite a newcomer.

- December 6th
 - January 3rd
 - February 7th
 - March 6th
 - April 3rd
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Upcoming Holy Days

December/January/February

December 21 (noon) – Feast of St Thomas the Apostle

December 24 (11:30 p.m.) – Carols/Midnight Mass (with incense)

December 25 (10:00 a.m.) – Christmas Day

December 26 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of St Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

December 28 (noon) – Feast of the Holy Innocents

January 1 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord (obligation)

January 6 (noon) – Feast of the Epiphany

January 25 (noon) – The Conversion of St Paul

February 2 (noon) – The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary

February 10 (noon and 6:00 p.m.) – Ash Wednesday

February 24 (noon) – Feast of St Matthias the Apostle

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