



St. John's Eagle from The Book of Kells

The Eagle

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The EAGLE

Volume 12, Number 9, May, 2012

“Optional” Community

Over the next few months—or perhaps longer—look for this space to have a distinct buzz to it. Out at our little farm in Hardwick, there is suddenly a hive of bees. And I am finding myself completely fascinated with these creatures.

I would never have expected that bees come in pretty much the same way that shoes, toner cartridges, or pizzas come; in a box. Specifically, in a box with three pounds of bees, in the midst of which is a tiny box containing the queen, who makes the whole colony possible. Three pounds of bees means you get about sixty thousand bees.

After preparing their new home to the extent we could—basically preparing the frames on which they will build honeycomb, in which the queen will lay eggs and the rest of the colony will store pollen and nectar—all there was left for us to do was to shake the bees out of the box and into the hive. You’d think they’d be pretty unhappy about this process. But they’re not, really—as long as they know the queen is among them.

There’s a lot to say about how amazing the community of bees is, and how it does its work together. You might as well prepare yourself for hearing more about this from time to time. But for now, I’ll limit myself (lucky you!) to one simple idea.

Recently I was in a conversation with a member of the parish about why it is some people come to church and other people don’t. One of the things we identified is a difference in the felt need people have for membership in a community; some people are really seeking community, and know themselves to be happier when they are in one; while others just don’t sense in themselves a need for this sort of sociality. We are all different on that scale—that was pretty much the gist of our conversation.

Now, that’s an interesting idea. We could leave aside the mounting scientific evidence that suggests people who are engaged in communities—church, service clubs, shared-interest organizations (like the Worcester County Beekeepers’ Association, of which I am now a card-carrying member)—are generally healthier and happier. There seems to be a pretty clear-cut case that community is good for us.

But just because something is good for us doesn’t mean we want to do it, or enjoy participating in it. Like eating broccoli or getting regular exercise. And, of course, we have to respect people’s rights not to do something they don’t enjoy. When there was a strong social norm for church-going, a lot of people were sitting in pews who didn’t necessarily want to be there. So at least



The Rev. Mark Edington

they’re happier.

Or, they think they are. It may not be that simple.

Here’s the bee story. Bees have pretty simple needs. They’re marvelously specialized creatures. They need a relatively large amount of carbohydrates to do all that buzzing; they get it from nectar. They can make wax, the raw material for building their houses, just by means of glands on their sides.

But imagine that you took fifteen or so healthy bees out of the hive and put them in a safe place. You give them all the food and water they need, and a place where they will be safe from predators. It’s even (let’s say) a place that they could do what bees naturally do, which is to build honeycomb. What do you would think would happen?

Well, they’ll die, that’s what. Bees, even really healthy bees, just can’t live outside the community of the hive. They can’t exist on their own.

Of course, I get it that people aren’t bees. But it does seem to me there’s something worth thinking about here. We are amazing creatures, too, able to chart our own path through life and follow it. We can even decide to check out of the communities around us—or, for that matter, never check in. And we can tell ourselves that this is an expression of our individual preferences. Individual preferences, of course, are sacrosanct in our country, and nowhere more than in New England.

Yes, we can decide that. But it doesn’t mean we will flourish with our choice. Every day we decide to do things that don’t really serve our best interests; we value the ability to make the choice over the value of the outcome, in fact so much so that we will sort of celebrate the freedom to choose specifically by doing things that put us at some risk. “Live free or die” might be momentarily satisfying ideology, but it’s really pretty terrible theology.

Concluded on page 6



**Patty Schoeck
Senior Warden**

Have you noticed the striking Compass Rose poster on the bulletin board in the long hall? It is one of Alastair's creations with names and pictures of Mark and all Vestry members as well as their special area (s) of interest at St. John's. Given our evolving model of how we "do church" – clergy and laity are all ministers who work in the world during the week and come together on Sunday for spiritual refreshment and renewal – we would like all members of the parish to identify with one of these interest areas.

For those who haven't seen the poster, here is a brief description of each person's role:

Mark Edington – Priest of the Parish – Worship, Pastoral Care, Christian Formation

Patty Schoeck – Senior Warden – Worship and music, the rota, Memorial Garden

Alastair Battson – Junior Warden – Property, Ushers

Janet Bessmer – Clerk – Gift & Thrift

Kevin McGee – Treasurer – Budget, Finance

Peter Brown – Property, Bowen School lease

Charlie Hull – Buildings and Grounds

Laura Crain – Inreach to the Parish, Fellowship Groups

Lisa Moore – Outreach to the community, especially Centre Street Food Pantry

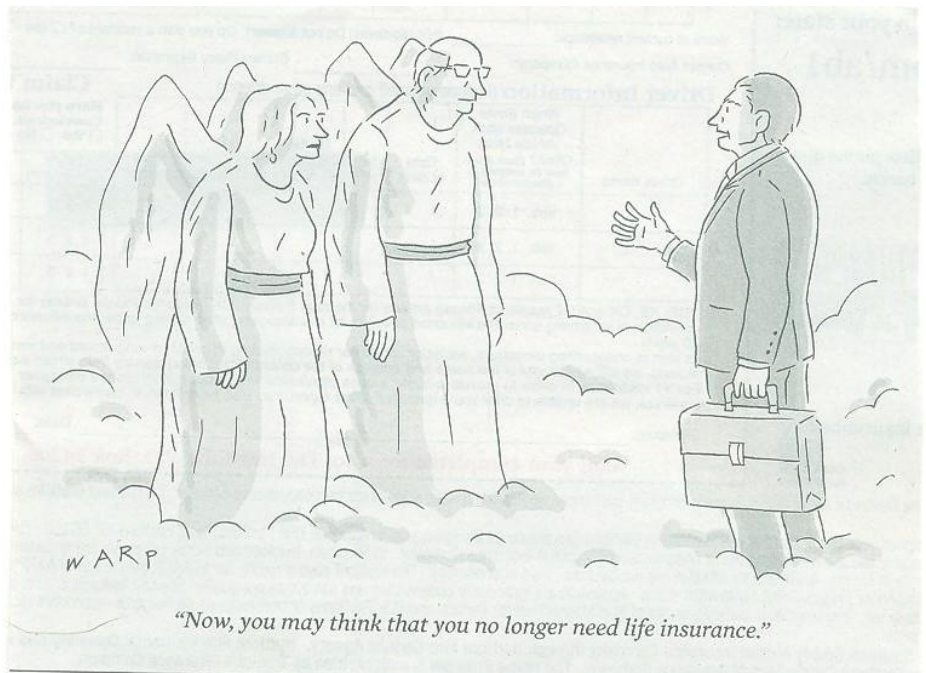
Tim Strayer – Stewardship, proposed capital campaign

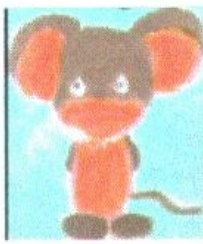
Cate Drislane – Outreach to the community and homebound elderly members of St. John's

This structure naturally forms into 7 committees: Worship, Education, Property (Buildings and Grounds), Finance, Stewardship, Outreach to the community, Inreach (including Pastoral Care) to the parish. Where do you see yourself fitting in? These aren't rigid committees that meet every

month with a particular agenda (that's the Vestry) but on a seasonal or ad hoc basis. Please consider this prayerfully and speak to the vestryperson who is responsible for your area of interest. I promise this won't be a burden. Consider the recent Parish Work Day which was orchestrated by the Property committee. With about 12 people under Rose Yevich's guidance, we worked in the Memorial Garden and in the beds around the parish office door for about an hour and accomplished an amazing amount of work. And it was fun!

Please do take a minute and look at the poster the next time you are at church. We all need to offer our time and talent whatever that might be in order to keep our parish the welcoming, friendly (and all the other adjectives that describe St. John's on our outdoor banner and our coffee cups) place we call our church home.





Anonymous

Energized by the radiant weather, St. John's saw a flurry of activity in April, beginning with Easter week and ending with a very productive workday Sunday on April 29. Easter week was a beautiful experience, from the soberness of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday to the Great Vigil held at St. Paul's (a joint celebration with St. Paul's, the Messiah and Trinity) to a jubilant Easter Sunday at St. John's. I didn't see a big Easter egg roll this year, but incredibly colorful flowers (thanks to our gardening committee, chaired by Rosemarie Yevich) encircled the church with the joy of the Easter season. The sanctuary itself overflowed with lilies and soft blue hydrangeas.

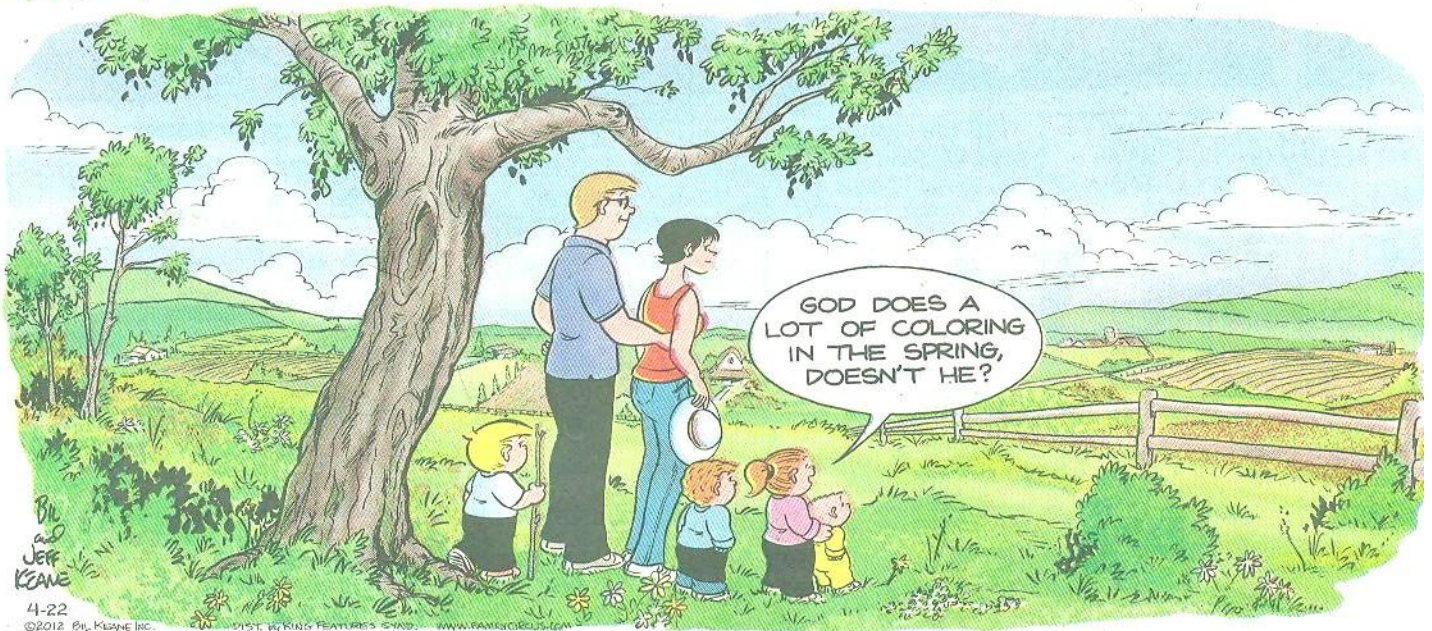
Many of the "young people" – children who grew up at St. John's and are now adults – returned to their parish home for Easter, including Jackson Brewer. Not yet 20 years old, Jack and three other friends on ice hockey teams have launched a venture enterprise which markets inspirational clothing with the logo Prove People Wrong. Their mission is to spread the Prove People Wrong philosophy, and help

people overcome adversity through dedication and hard work. The Bruins' Tim Thomas asked to be part of their team and they were formally recognized at a recent Bruins game. Anyone who has come into contact with Laura Brewer over the years has no problem believing in Jack's success.

Midmonth there was a bit of a lull in activity as St. John's parishioners scattered for school vacation. The McGee-Matuzek family journeyed to Florida, saw Legoland and other sites and then embarked on a Disney Fantasy cruise to the Western Caribbean, neatly coinciding with the anniversary of the voyage of the Titanic, though thankfully there were no icebergs in sight. Ask Marina about the Titanic exhibit in port. The Gilpins, too, traveled to Florida for a stay at Disneyworld. Sarah McKay visited Skidmore, Mount Holyoke, University of Connecticut, to decide on her choice for college, and Libby Seaman flew to London and heard the Banns read at St. John's in Hyde Park.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS™

By *BIL KEANE*



Treasurer's Report May 2012

It was too good to last. After the costs of asbestos removal, the insurance bill, and the inevitable dropoff in church attendance after Easter services, our budget has come back down to earth. We are still on track based on our projected budget we do not have the rosy surpluses of previous months. However, after one more round of oil and gas bills, we should be with heating season – and we did have a very mild winter in terms of both temperature and snowfall.

Without further ado – here are the numbers (all figures for the period January 1, 2012 through April 29, 2012).

Yours in Christ

Kevin McGee

CATEGORY	BUDGETED AMOUNT	ACTUAL AMOUNT (4/29/12)	DIFFERENCE
INCOME			
Bowen School and Other Rentals	\$13,536.00	\$13,345.00	-(\$191.00)
Collections and Pledges <i>(including Open Plate, and Flower Reimbursements)</i>	\$32,643.00	\$31,636.00	-(\$1,007.00)
Endowment Income & Draws <i>(including Christian Ed Bequest)</i>	\$10,046.00	\$8,353.00	-(\$1,693.00)
Fund Raising <i>(includes Gift and Thrift,)</i>	\$2,144.00	\$40.00	-(\$2,104.00)
Special Offerings & Miscellaneous Income <i>(not dedicated to specific gifts) – includes insurance reimbursements</i>	\$989.00	\$1,956.00	\$967.00
Outreach Offerings	\$331.00	\$1,295.00	\$964.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$59,689.00	\$56,625.00	-(\$3,064.00)

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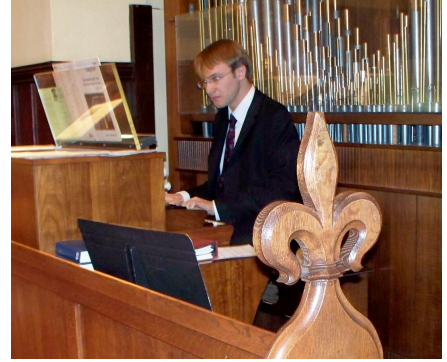
CATEGORY	BUDGETED AMOUNT	ACTUAL AMOUNT (4/29/12)	DIFFERENCE
EXPENSES			
Employee Salaries and Expenses (including Substitute Clergy & Organist)	\$26,115.00	\$23,631.00	\$2,484.00
Utilities	\$13,772.00	\$13,499.00	\$273.00
Building Expenses (including insurance and Sexton)	\$10,079.00	\$11,846.00	-\$1,767.00
Capital Expenditures (includes flood repairs)	\$1,322.00	\$1,388.00	-\$66.00
Office Expenses	\$1,261.00	\$1,765.00	-\$504.00
Worship and Music Expenses	\$2,660.00	\$3,341.00	-\$681.00
Miscellaneous Expenses (bank fees, vestry, search committee expenses, fundraising expenses)	\$555.00	\$607.00	-\$52.00
Assessment	\$4,846.00	\$0.00	\$4,846.00
Outreach Expense	\$1,791.00	\$1,995.00	-\$204.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$62,401.00	\$58,072.00	\$4,329.00

CATEGORY	BUDGETED AMOUNT	ACTUAL AMOUNT (4/29/12)	DIFFERENCE
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	-\$2,712.00	-\$1,447.00	\$1,265.00

MUSIC

Dear all,

This week marks two years since my arrival at St. John's. And they have flown by. I thank you all for making them so pleasurable, and for the many kindnesses you have shown me over that time. Holy Week and Easter Sunday seem a long time ago. I'm so grateful to the choir for all the work they put in to the music for these services. Now we turn our attention to the Pentecost service, for which we'll be joined by choir members from other local churches. This should be a wonderful occasion, to which I'm looking forward very much.



Joseph Fort

See you in church. Joe

Conclusion of Mark's column

I acknowledge that the church has well more than its share of responsibility to accept for reducing the value of being part of the community—for driving people out of the hive. Too often we go about our hopes for social change relying on messages of critique instead of hope. Even more troubling, too often we put our hopes for social change ahead of a message of eternal and unchanging significance. And we could all, I am sure, list other complaints.

But the fact is, we need the church more

than the church needs us. God's truth stands, whether or not we are part of the gathered community of worship. That is actually good news, if you think about it, because it means that the truth that has been shared with us, the truth we proclaim, stands by itself.

But it also means that sometimes community is something we need—and sometimes it is something we struggle with. Both of those statements can be true without touching the truth of the reconciling, transforming love God offers us through the faithful community, the body of Christ—the church.

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