



LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

July 18, 2008

Dear Friends,

On this eve of my leave taking for spiritual formation and education, I wanted to take just a moment to thank you for your commitment in the current discernment process.

Whether your 'official' term has been completed and/or you are beginning with the next phase of discernment, thank you. It continues to warrant repeating, the more voices we have involved, the more imaginations we have engaged, the more prayers that are prayed, the more faithful and full will be our 'work'. I hope that each of you will also take the opportunity to continue to invite members of the parish to be involved in this important and historic conversation...and remind our community, that ALL ARE WELCOME!

May God continue to bless our spiritual journey together and each of you.

Nancy Lee+

LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Where does the summer go? This is a common refrain I hear from people. I often times say it myself too. Summertime can just fly by, with many people trying to squeeze in vacations with families or friends or sometimes alone. These times away are often meant as times to refresh, rejuvenate and enliven the spirit

within us, allowing for us to face the coming months of autumn. There are times when that can prove impossible and we feel like we need to take a vacation because of the vacation we just finished! My hope and prayer for all of you is that, if you vacationed this summer, it was a peaceful and lovely time for you.

One of the fallacies of summertime is that things slow down. That is certainly not the case around here! Things are hopping. Committees continue their regular monthly meetings, planning for the fall continues, pastoral care of parishioners continues and the Discernment Committee is finalizing their work and report for the vestry. This is truly a blessed time at St. Thomas'.

Please note your calendars that our Program Year begins on Sunday, September 7th with a return of the 9:00 and 11:00 Eucharistic Services, with the Annual Parish Picnic taking place after the 11:00 service. More details will be provided as we get closer in time to the beginning of September. The Taize Eucharist will continue at its usual time at 5:00 pm. Godly Play will start up the following Sunday, September 15th. There are events planned for much of September so please keep an eye out for our email blasts as well as check our website on a regular basis for announcements.

On a personal note, please keep Cindy Pettigrew, our Parish Executive Secretary, in your prayers. She came through her shoulder replacement surgery with flying colors, but has a long road of rehabilitation ahead of her. Pray that she continues to heal and that she will continue to have the strength and courage to do what she must to get better. We miss her very much!

God's Blessings and Peace,

John+



Samaritan Ministry's Urban Experience Explores Homelessness

"I had always prided myself on 'knowing' Washington. But now I realize that there is more to the city than just fancy restaurants and monuments. Having a chance to explore different parts of the city has shown me a new Washington – a city of vast beauty and diversity." Student from St. Patrick's Episcopal School

What is it? Samaritan Ministry's Urban Experience workshop is an introduction to the diverse neighborhood of our Northwest office—and it is an invitation to learn more about local issues of homelessness, poverty and hunger. The Urban Experience is geared toward middle to high school students.

How does it work? The Urban Experience begins with an exploration of the neighborhood around Samaritan Ministry's Northwest office. Urban Experience participants get more familiar with the area, the people, and what it feels like to live here. As one student observed, "I never knew that such different conditions and needs could exist so close in one city." The workshop concludes with lunch at "Loaves and Fishes" located at St. Stephen and the Incarnation Church on 16th Street. This meal program provides hot

meals to the poor and homeless each weekend. Instead of preparing or serving food at the meal program, Urban Experience participants share a meal and have conversation with the meal participants. This conclusion to the morning provides a significant way for students to connect and find commonalities with others, in spite of the differences they may observe or believe to exist.

To schedule an Urban Experience for a small group of young people for a Saturday or Sunday morning contact Dianne Lewis at 202-722-2280 x 319 or dlewis@samaritanministry.org.

Help the Homeless Walkathon

Mark your calendar now for the Help the Homeless Walkathon on the National Mall November 22. Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington invites you to walk under the Samaritan Ministry banner. Save the date with more information about registering to come as soon as it is available.

Our parish plans to hold a mini-walk in support of Samaritan Ministry on a weekend this fall. We hope you will join us for that as well. Over 12,000 people in the Washington Metro region have no place to call home. Let's show our support as a parish and help Samaritan Ministry continue to offer the Next Step Program helping people make changes in their lives toward housing, employment and more.

Samaritan Ministry Wish List

- Day planners for program participants
- White, button front dress shirts for men and women, all sizes
- Dress socks for men and women.
- Black or Khaki Chino pants for men
- Reading glasses, all powers from +1.00 to +4.00
- Deodorant – regular sized stick deodorant
- Small folding umbrellas
- Brief cases or portfolios for carrying papers
- \$10 gift cards to grocery stores, restaurants, coffee shops, etc.
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For more ideas on how you can help, visit www.samaritanministry.org

Meal Program Volunteers Needed

Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington is seeking Meal Program Volunteers to get to know meal guests at Loaves and Fishes, Charlie's Place and Church of the Epiphany's Street Church to help attendees connect with local resources and programs like Samaritan Ministry's Next Step Program.

Interested persons should have good interpersonal skills and a desire to work with individuals who are homeless, hungry and poor. Volunteers will receive specialized training including information on issues relating to homelessness as well as basic community resources. This is a good opportunity for those looking for a weekend volunteer position.

A training session will be scheduled for a Saturday in September from 9:30-2:00pm at St. Stephen and the Incarnation Church (1525 Newton Street NW). For more information or to register, contact Catherine Rodman at crodman@samaritanministry.org or 202-722-2280.



St. Thomas' Park/Garden Update

From Barbara Hays

All spring and summer, members of the parish have been weighing in – one way or another – on the park/garden in front of the ruins of our church.

Articles about the park's history, along with a review of the escalating problems of abuse of the grounds by pet owners in the area, have been brought to the parish members through the Phoenix and in the form of displays of photos of the problems and potential solutions set up in our Guild Room for the past several months.

A meeting scheduled for and held on July 13th following the 10 o'clock service brought both newer members and people who have invested considerable time and work into the church grounds together for an in-depth conversation. While the more prominent discussion of how to deal with dog owners who don't clean up after their animals has been widely discussed, larger issues emerged during our discussion, such as emptying the trash left in the receptacles in the garden, which is a very unpleasant task for our sexton (a few days in the summer heat for bags of dog waste, food and paper trash, and paper can really smell!). We also came to understand that the grassy area isn't the only space dog owners use to allow their dogs to relieve themselves – some allow their dogs off leash over the whole park/garden area, including the mulched area under the bushes and trees, as well as in the ornamental grasses.

A summary of the meeting's discussion follows, drawn by notes taken by Building and Grounds Co-Chair, Pepin Tuma.

- We need to involve the community in the larger conversation, looking at how other groups have addressed similar problems on their grounds and property. Approaching the various neighborhood groups is a must. Clearly, not every person who comes into the garden area brings a dog, and for those who do, most do not behave irresponsibly about cleaning up after their animal. And there are those who use for the park gardens for contemplative prayer and meditation – purposes for which it was intended.

- Cost concerns were on everyone's minds. With our discernment process about our space in progress, no one wanted to spend a great deal of money on a solution that will be moot once decisions are made about our space. Costs of maintaining the space exist regardless of what we do, including doing nothing.

- Everyone felt that the ideas suggested by various parishioners each had important downsides: high cost and installing something that might fix the pet problem but would make the space not usable by the parish, such as thorny flowering bushes. The options involving hardscape were generally considered too expensive as short term solutions.

- Lastly, a number of parishioners felt that we needed to try instituting a policy of "No Pets" in the garden, period. Creating and enforcing that policy (signage, patrols of the area by off-duty police or parishioners, and ensuring that rectors and staff are not additionally burdened) all involve challenges.

The Building and Grounds Committee will meet on August 10th after the 11:00 service to discuss various tasks involved with such a policy and prepare a report

for the Vestry's meeting on August 27th, among other agenda items. The committee welcomes new members and hope anyone interested will join us – not only for this meeting, but to become active on the committee.

We do want to thank all the members of the parish who have expressed their concerns, given us ideas for consideration, and who have work so hard over the years to maintain St. Thomas' lovely garden area.

Tour of the National Cathedral



Take an in-depth tour of the Washington National Cathedral given by Parishioner Louie Stewart on Saturday, August 9th at the west entrance to the Cathedral at 10:00 a.m. Learn about the history, architecture, iconography and art surrounding this sixth largest cathedral in the world. Optional lunch will be held at Cafe Deluxe nearby the Cathedral after the tour. There is a suggested five dollar donation to the Cathedral at the time of the tour. Please let Louie know if you would like to participate in this outing.

Contact: jsclms@verizon.net

Music Notes – Maurice Ravel

From Timothy Hagy

The congregation of St. Thomas' Parish is so appreciative of music that it is a true joy to serve as Music Director. On Sunday, July 27, the piano music of Maurice Ravel made a particularly strong impression with many, and so it seems appropriate to share a few details concerning the composer and his music.



I should begin by saying that our Kawai grand piano is a stellar instrument. The silky action and bright tone quality remind me of the Pleyel pianos that I once practiced on in Paris, and so it lends itself favorably to the interpretation of French music. Steinways, by contrast, tend to be darker in tone, and the action heavier.

The Ravel Sonatine pour piano was written between 1903 and 1905, at a time when the composer had returned to classical musical forms. The three movements – Modéré, Mouvement de Menuet, Animé – could have been formulae used by Mozart. The difference, of course, is to be found in lush harmonies and sensual phrases that create an ethereal beauty, almost timeless, and most certainly bewitching.

Recent biographies of Ravel have focused on his sexuality, notably the theory that he was in likelihood gay, though there is scant evidence in letters, or in the diaries of Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes, to prove what has long been suspected. Viñes premiered several of Ravel's compositions, and remained in the composer's inner circle for over twenty years. It is certain that Ravel dressed in velvet suits and polished shoes. The company he kept, the Ballet Russe, Diaghilev, and the all-male society Les Apaches which met each Saturday, offers further enticing evidence. Ravel Biographer, Benjamin Ivry, argues that Ravel's hidden homosexuality was central to his life and therefore to his art, that it explains both the aridness of his human relationships and the sensuality of his music.

Whatever the truth may be, Ravel is a personal favorite of mine, and his music has the power to touch the soul.



Faces of St. Thomas' Parish: Dave Vanneman

From John Trumbo

Like many of our parishioners, Dave Vanneman had visited several other parishes before settling at St. Thomas' nine years ago. He was attracted to St. Thomas' community outreach mission and the intimate feel of the worship space. "This is where I felt most welcomed," he says. Raised in the United Church of Christ, Dave was drawn into the Episcopal Church as a music student at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, and later as a paid chorister at Christ Episcopal Church.

"Over the next several years I sang professionally at other Episcopal churches: Old St. Paul's, St. David's Roland Park, and Mt. Calvary Church in Baltimore," he explains. "Eventually, I was confirmed as an Episcopalian."

Dave was born in Baltimore where most of his family still lives; his parents have been happily married more than 60 years! He has six siblings and is the proud uncle of 13 nieces and nephews. As a sales executive, Dave has worked in many industries including international shipping, telecommunications, insurance, financial services, medical consulting and information technology. Currently, he's President and CEO of Health Claim Resources, LLC, a medical services company headquartered in Baltimore.

What people may not know about Dave is how active he is in the parish life of St. Thomas'. He is Co-Chair of the Pastoral Care Committee and serves on the Discernment Committee. Dave has been a Vestry member, served as Vestry Secretary, Building & Grounds Committee member, and Chair of the Hospitality Committee (now known as Parish Life).

On top of his busy work and church life, Dave is also active in the Johns Hopkins University Alumni Association. He lives in Alexandria, VA with his dog Lazlo and cat Hector.

Thanks, Dave, for all the ways you contribute to the health and vitality of the St. Thomas' Parish family!

SACRED GROUNDS – BBQ & Film In the Park



8pm to Midnight ~
Every First Friday of
the Month

~ Evening Prayer at
7:00pm~

Friday, August 1st

Please join us this Friday in St. Thomas' park for a delicious BBQ (with veggie options), cold drinks, and a movie! Although we are not sure what the movie will be, we are certain you will not want to miss it! Besides, there will be plenty of free food and ice cold drinks....what more could you ask for? Sacred Grounds, a monthly event held at St. Thomas' (Episcopal) Parish, all Christians and those exploring their spirituality in their 20s & 30s are invited. Contact Dustin Cole for more information.

2008 Dupont Circle House Tour Wants Your Home!!

Would you be interested in having your Dupont Circle home featured on the *2008 Dupont Circle House Tour and Tea*? This is the 41st year of the oldest continuous house tour in DC, and will take place *Sunday afternoon, October 19, from noon to 5 p.m. *

This is a major fundraising event for the year sponsored by the Dupont Circle Citizens Association (DCCA) that supports neighborhood activities and charitable contributions for the benefit of the entire Dupont Circle community.

This year's tour, as always, promises to be a very special event. House monitors will staff each featured home to guide visitors and provide needed security. On the day of the tour, homeowners are invited to a special brunch and then join all our volunteers for a festive party that evening. Homeowners also receive two free tickets to the tour and an original drawing of their home by well-known artist Nicolas Shi, a Dupont Circle resident.

Our contact information is below: please call or email if you would be interested in having your home considered as one of the 2008 featured houses, or feel free to be in touch if you have additional questions. If you decide to participate, a committee member will visit you to discuss details and gather information about your house for the tour brochure. And, please pass this information on if you know of someone else who might like their home considered for the tour.

We appreciate your consideration of this opportunity to help a great cause...in this great neighborhood that we live in... and love!

Contact:

Patty Friedman Marcus, *Chair, 2008 DCCA Dupont Circle House Tour**

202-489-5114, balibliss@yahoo.com

Tony Pollitt, *Chair, 2008 DCCA Dupont House Selection Committee**

*240-426-3119, fanthony6140@comcast.net** *

Jenny Allan, Committee member and St. Thomas member**

301-520-4632 or 202-349-1147, allan@lupus.org

The Benefits of Brain Trainers

From Ron Wilson

I am a member of the Public Health Service which composes three federal agencies: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), The National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Center for Disease Control. NIH is largely an agency that is research oriented and FDA is largely a regulatory agency. I work for FDA in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research as Director of Small Business Assistance. As part of my responsibilities I scan the NIH website frequently for information that could be useful to small pharmaceutical businesses. While looking at the NIH website recently I became aware of a study supported by NIH involving older adults who were otherwise healthy and living independently received training focused on targeted cognitive skills.

The participants were divided into treatment groups to receive cognitive training in one of the three target skills. The memory training focused on methods to learn and remember new information such as word lists and short narratives; the reasoning training emphasized pattern detection and inductive skills to solve problems; and the speed-of-processing training addressed the speed of responses to visual and manual prompts on a computer screen. Only the memory training component relied on the participant's declarative memory ability. Training was conducted in 10 sessions of 60-75 minutes over a period of 5-6 weeks. Compared to a control group that received no training, participants who received the memory training and had normal memory ability at the start of the study showed significant improvement in memorization skills. However, among the participants with declines in memory function, those in the memory training group showed no benefit, while those who received the reasoning or the speed-of-processing training showed improvement in these areas comparable to normal-memory participants.

In reference to this study, the Director of National Institute of Aging at NIH stated "that interventions can be designed and demonstrated to maintain cognitive skills with age is of enormous interest in the research community right now. This study tests hypothesis and shows the potential promise of continued research in this area."

As result of emerging information of reasonable evidence that challenging the brain can stave off cognitive decline there has been a "brain fitness" explosion. And it is not only the elderly but teenagers and athletes who are using brain fitness software to increase their performance in school and/or sports. There are several software programs available that provide cognitive exercise programs. Three of the popular brain fitness software programs are:

<http://www.happy-neuron.com>

<http://www.mybraintrainer.com/main.asp>

http://www.lumosity.com/landing/1_brain_games?refer=7357&gclid=CKaZuKnT3ZQCFQRJFQodayuPSg

As a footnote I would appreciate your feedback on the articles that I provide in the Phoenix.

RWilson920@aol.com

And that's all for the August edition of The Phoenix (did anyone know Ravel was such a looker?). A very big thank you to those who continue to contribute articles -- otherwise we'd have to deal with all my drama. As you may be reading this I'm in Tampa, Florida visiting my parents. My Mother needed a date to the George Michael concert, and how could I refuse? Hope everyone, especially my fellow leos, has a wonderful August!

Gregory M.