



LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

--Just Bill--

Is how he referred to himself, the first day that I met him...so began the relationship with my mentor and friend, The Rev. William R. Payton, rector of St. Edward the Confessor Episcopal Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia. The circle of friendship grew to include Joan, Wynn and Ramsay Payton over these last 20 years. Bill died a mere two years after his retirement from the priesthood, having served our church 40-some years. And the day that I first met him, he reminded me to “just call him Bill”, such an insightful hint to the humility underscoring his ministry.

Wayne and I drove to Atlanta to be among Bill's family and friends, who were converging on the cathedral for his funeral. The service began with Friday night Compline, Bill decked out in his ordination chasuble and stole...following Compline the Episcopal Cathedral in Atlanta, kept vigil all through the night, marking time with the refreshment of incense and ringing of the bells. Bill was escorted into the main nave of the cathedral the next day at noon, the Bishop of Atlanta and cathedral clergy in procession. In my last conversation with Bill, he wanted to make sure I would be at the funeral, “It's going to be glorious”...and it surely was and he served as mentor all the way through the service, reminding me of the ways in which liturgy provides the container for our life experiences--the emotional, spiritual and relational ways of navigating our individual and corporate lives with God and with one another.

Bill was a spiritual artist of life, not to mention usually the first one on the dance floor with Joan...Bill taught me the centrality of prayer-life, and that all else is dust without it! And his prayer-life was a palpable part of the way he moved around life...whether it be cooking up some of the finest meals I've ever wrapped my mouth around, coaching me through the prayer book, gently reminding me to ‘remain quiet’ in whichever setting we happened to be in at the time, to giving me a list of great vacation spots that were essential for me to get to “this year”—now damn it!”

Bill's funeral was his last word to us...I've studied and remembered, thought and reflected on these last three hours of our earthly time with him—still the teacher/mentor/priest and pastoral presence. The music and choreography of the service was as brilliantly pastoral as were his last days of dignity which defied the assault of pain in response to chemotherapy, designed to conquer an aggressive leukemia. Leukemia was the victor in the design of this death from cancer. Bill the victor in a life lived well with God and neighbor. I grieve him as deeply as I loved him...so it is the way with love that resides in the deepest parts of our soul and those loves that are essential to our spiritual fabric of life.

...and in this sharing of a bit of our relationship with you, my own spiritual community, I'll share some of Bill's last reflections, from the opening hymn that served as the Opening Salutation with his gathered community, the funeral which celebrated a priests life...

The King of Love my Shepherd I, Whose goodness faileth never; I nothing lack if I am his, And he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow, My ransomed soul he leadeth, And where the verdant pastures grow, With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, But yet in love he sought me, And on his shoulder gently laid, And home, rejoicing, brought me

Next Step Breakfast

Samaritan Ministry's Annual Next Step Breakfast is set for The National Press Club, 529 14th Street NW, Washington, DC 20004 on Thursday, May 8th from 8:00 - 9:00 am. Broadcast Journalist Judy Woodruff will be the Mistress of Ceremony.

Hear remarkable true-life stories from *Next Step Program* participants, volunteers and others. We'll also share our vision for addressing homelessness and poverty in our region and our commitment to helping people believe in their ability to transform their own lives. The event promises to be moving and inspiring.

This is a complimentary fundraising event with no expectations for minimum or maximum giving.

Lives are changing. Please join us to find out how. Visit www.samaritanministry.org for more information or contact Diane Aten at 202-722-2280 or daten@samaritanministry.org to reserve your space for this exciting event.

Summer Volunteers needed

Make the most of your summer by volunteering at Samaritan Ministry. Your time will be of great service when many of our weekly volunteers are on vacation. We'll train rising juniors and

seniors in high school or college students at home on break as administrative aids to answer phones, sort mail, help participants with computer applications and more. It's also an opportunity for you to fulfill community service requirements. Four-hour shifts from 8:45 am - 1pm are available Monday-Friday at all three office locations. At Samaritan Ministry we work with homeless people and others who are trying to change their lives for the better. Through this work, our lives are also enriched. Come and help in our ministry.

For more information on volunteering, contact Dianne Lewis at dlewis@samaritanministry.org or 202-722-2280 x 319. Visit www.samaritanministry.org.

Outreach Servathon 2008

On Saturday, May 3, 2008, join us for Servathon 2008, presented by Greater DC Cares and Fannie Mae. Connect with thousands of other volunteers in service at DC Public Schools and help make our community a great place for all who live here! Greater DC Cares has declared 2008 our "Volunteer for DC Public Schools" Campaign. The state of the DC Public Schools is a regional issue about which we all can have a massive impact. Together, we will provide the schools with over 11,000 hours of volunteer service...in one marathon day! Our service would include painting, patching, gardening, etc.

To join us, please go to www.servathon.org, click on "Register Now!" and pick our team, "Saint Thomas Episcopal Parish." There is a registration fee of \$20.00. The site also asks that you raise sponsorship funds...although this is not necessary. Our donations (other than our registration fees) are in our hands and feet! At this writing, our school location has not yet been determined, but should be by April 2.

If you have any questions, please contact David Swanson at 202-607-8972, or StThomasParishOutreach@yahoo.com, or dswansondc@aol.com. Registration closes on Friday, April 28th.

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St. Thomas' Spring Hike to Kennedy Peak on Massanutten Mountain in Virginia

Come join us on Saturday, May 3, 2008 for a nine-mile circuit hike to Massanutten's Kennedy Peak, just west of Shenandoah National Park.



The view from Massanutten's Kennedy Peak

We will ascend Stephens trail to the peak's observation tower and great 360-degree view of the surrounding Shenandoah Valley and the Blue Ridge mountains to the East. We will descend Massanutten trail along the mountain

ridge back to the trailhead. This trip provides a spectacular day in the mountains and a wonderful opportunity to get to know fellow parishioners!

This moderate hike will cover approximately 1,400 vertical feet and take around 5 to 5 ½ hours, including breaks. We will carpool from the church parking lot at 8:00 AM SHARP and drive to the trailhead near the Camp Roosevelt Recreation Area near Luray, VA.

Bring plenty of water, pack a lunch, and wear appropriate footwear (we may need to hop scotch across small streams at times). Clouds and sprinkles will not deter us! Have a favorite verse or poem on God's earth and the gift of nature? Bring it to share at rest breaks.

Please sign up on the sign-up sheet posted at church (look for it on the bulletin board or door into the Guild Room) and indicate if you can drive! For further information, call Jerry Donahoe at (202) 543-1339.

Sacred Grounds: Cinco De Mayo Extravaganza

May 2nd

8pm to Midnight ~ Every First Friday of the Month ~ Evening Prayer at 7:00pm~ How many climates are there in Mexico? What is the Nickname of Mexico-City? What day is considered to be the unlucky day in Mexico? Find out the answers to these questions and so much more at our annual CINCO DE MAYO EXTRAVAGANZA!!!

We will have Mexican style food, refreshments, and even PRIZES!! Oh yeah, that's right, PRIZES!!! We will be having a TRIVIA CONTEST on Mexico....so study up for your chance to win PRIZES!!!

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 at (202) 441-0907 or dustindc@gmail.com for more information.

What's Your Story?

Please join us on Sunday, May 11, following the Taize service, for the third in the St. Thomas' series, "What's Your Story?" These spiritual, inspirational, and entertaining evenings focus on the family of St. Thomas' and what it is that brought us here -- and keeps us here. May 11 is Mother's Day, and we will have a special emphasis on mothers and families in the parish. All are welcome, new and old. Light refreshments and food will be provided.

3rd Annual St. Thomas' Parish Retreat May 23-25, 2008

From Matt Cloninger

What does it mean to find favor and rest in God? What does this mean for us today? Come join us as we reflect, share and grow together while pondering these questions and more at the St. Thomas' Parish Retreat. This is your opportunity to get away for a weekend to a place where you can relax and be refreshed physically, mentally and spiritually.

The weekend will begin Friday evening with dinner together at the Shrine Mont Retreat Center in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley of western Virginia. Throughout the weekend we will have times of spiritual reflection, recreational activities (everything from hiking to sports to board games), food and fellowship. This is truly an event you will not want to miss! The weekend will culminate with Sunday morning Eucharist and lunch together. This will still allow you to have the remainder of a long weekend (Memorial Day) once we return.

The cost for the entire weekend is only \$140 per person. This covers the cost of your lodging (double occupancy) and all meals. You will be hard pressed to find another weekend getaway package this inexpensive!



The Cathedral Shrine of the Transfiguration

We only have openings for 30 individuals! For more information or to guarantee a spot for yourself please contact Matt Cloninger at mecdaltx@yahoo.com. If you are interested in attending but in need of financial assistance, please let us know so that we can assist you. Please hurry while openings still remain for this event!

The Blessing of Couples

From Louie Stewart

Plan to be part of our Second Annual Blessing of Couples living out their lives in committed relationship which will be held in our park on **June 8th at 6:30pm**. For those members who are new to the parish, the participants last year found the service to be a moving and affirming celebration. This was true for both the couples and their friends who attended to be a part of this special day. It reaffirmed the importance of our spiritual community in our lives and provided us with a great opportunity share our radical hospitality with our guests.

I was so impressed last year by the work of the single members of our parish who worked so hard getting the park ready for this event. It is not just for couples but everyone! I recall Dustin and Brock working to the last minute before the service before they donned their vestments for the procession into the park. They were assisted by many of our other single parishioners.

For those who had their relationship blessed last year, we hope you come back for an annual tune-up. John and I were moved to tears as we affirmed our relationship of over two decades. Couples sometimes forget the blessings that they have living out their lives together and this service provide you with a time for reflecting and rejoicing on those unions. Last year, we had an elderly couple, married couples with children, and many gays and lesbians who chose to affirm their love of each other and their love of God.

We forget sometimes how blessed we are to be a part of the unique family that is St. Thomas'. It is important that we share in this opportunity of parish worship, love and hospitality. See you there.

For more information contact Louie Stewart at pride@stthomasdc.org.

Faces of St. Thomas' Parish: Byron Smalley



Byron Smalley has been attending St. Thomas' for almost four years, having moved to the DC area from San Francisco in 2003. He was baptized and confirmed in his late 30s at a small, very intimate parish while living in San Francisco.

"I will always remember and treasure the words of the priest who baptized me," Byron explains. "Right before my first Eucharist, he pointed at the altar and said, 'This will always be your table.' I believe that spirit is what the Episcopal Church offers to the Christian communion." Byron is currently co-chair of the Stewardship Committee, a service he finds both enjoyable and challenging. He realizes that it takes financial contributions to make the parish and its many ministries possible, but that "Money is only one part of the time/talent/treasure commitment that God asks of us. All three contributions are needed to make St. Thomas' what it is today."

Much of what is important to Byron about St. Thomas' is the people and personal connections we make and share. On his first visit to St. Thomas' in 2004, he ran into two old friends,

not realizing they were parishioners. One was Larry Bradley, a college fraternity brother; the other was Louie Stewart, a former co-worker. "Both Larry and Louie were very gracious in bringing me into St. Thomas' family." Byron has been an attorney for the IRS for 20 years. In addition to Alexandria and San Francisco, he has lived in Richmond, Memphis and Cincinnati. He loves wine tasting and especially the California wine country. Byron also enjoys travel and has recently visited Taiwan, Thailand and Barcelona.

Thank you, Byron, for your service and dedication to the health of St. Thomas'.

St. Thomas' Parish 2008 Rites of Spring Gala

Saturday, April 26th saw the third annual "Rites of Spring Gala" for St. Thomas' Parish. There were many in attendance and the HRC facilities were wonderfully suited to our needs. I love events like this where you get to see everyone let their hair down (and it was down, believe me!). There are many great pictures taken by Louie Stewart in our online gallery.

There was good food and wine (I really wish I'd had more of the former than the latter). There was an excellent drag performance by "Jezebel"--you can see her fantastic silver gown, my favorite of the three costume changes, in the pictures online! I believe the Live Auction, with Benny Young as our accomplished Auctioneer, was a great success (I know I was outbid on everything), but my favorite part of the evening, without a doubt, was the dancing...

I loved the idea of singing lessons and I did bid on them, but I think we can all agree that I'd benefit most of all from some DANCING lessons ~ can we plan to offer those at our next event? I guess it could be said I made up for my ability with my enthusiasm, at least that was my intent.

"I think Benny missed his calling! He's a natural." said Nate West, of the skillful way in which Benny called the auction.

There was a rumour going around as to the shocking parentage of our fabulous entertainer, but you'll have to see me or Phillip Kronstein after services to hear that one!

The rain was coming down in buckets by the end of the evening, but it was not enough to dampen our spirits. What I observed was a joyful time being had by all in the company of friends and spiritual family.

I believe Nancy Lee summed it up best when she said the following about our evening, "It's as important to the fullness of our lives together, as a religious community, that we not only pray together-we play together as well...in the community of faith, we deepen our relationship with one another and God, in sharing the full texture of life!"

Gregory Mackmin
Editor

That's all for this edition of The Phoenix. I hope you all have a splendid month of May, especially our mothers, and I look forward to seeing some of you on the mountain this weekend! (I don't think I'll be wearing a suit for this one...)
GM

Submitting Announcements and Articles

Please use the following email addresses to communicate your Parish news....

- **Phoenix articles** should be sent phoenix@stthomasdc.org. The Phoenix is published on the first and fifteen of the month. Articles should be submitted a week before publication.
- **Announcements** for the website and the Sunday Bulletin should be sent to announcements@stthomasdc.org. Announcements received by Wednesday by noon will appear the following Sunday, otherwise, they will appear the week after that. Announcements will be posted to the website within two days. These announcements will also be added to the online parish calendar.
- **Requests for "blast" emails** that are sent to everyone on the Parish mailing list should be submitted to communications@stthomasdc.org. Requests are considered on a case by case basis and will be sent out within a week of receiving the request, if appropriate.
- If you would like to set up a **dedicated email address, email list or have printed signs, fliers, or letters** made, please contact communications@stthomasdc.org. These requests are considered on a case by case basis and handled as quickly as possible by our volunteers.

All other inquiries can also be sent to communications@stthomasdc.org.

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