

Dear Companions on the Way...

It's possible you've seen a letter to the editor in *The Durango Herald* from me. I've included my submission below so you can read it here.

Thank you for your editorial regarding Glenn Beck and the place of "social justice" in churches. As the primary preacher at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, and being part of a great lineage of those who believe that presenting the gospel compels us to speak of justice, I have reported myself to Glenn Beck as one who preaches on social justice. Apparently, so many of us did so that his email server crashed. I have also reported myself to my Bishop and perhaps I should report myself to the *Herald* readers too.

I try to proclaim Jesus in my sermons, but Jesus, of course, got himself crosswise with the opinion makers and moralists by hanging out with lepers, tax collectors, drunks, Samaritans, women, and fishermen. Jesus calls his followers to leave their comfortable churches and visit in jails, share food with the hungry and minister to the sick. He asks us to love our neighbors, to go to the needy with compassion and work to meet their needs; and he asked at least one would-be follower to sell all he had and give to the poor.

When I mention this to the people in church, some are indeed discomfited; but many seem inclined to see the people around us with new eyes. We discover that God seems particularly active in the lives of the poor, the marginalized and the outcasts of society. The impoverished among us teach us about faith and hope and reveal to us more of the face of God. To that end, all Episcopalians make vow to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

Over the years, that respect has caused many of my heroes to be pioneers in changing our culture for the better. Wilberforce spoke against slavery, Tutu spoke against apartheid and countless others have spoken out against oppression of women, poor, immigrants, minorities, disabled, gay men and lesbians. So I'd like to think that Glenn Beck is correct; belonging to a church could be dangerous to those who would want to close their eyes to the needs of the people around us.

The Rev. Andrew A. Cooley

It's a tricky thing to write a letter to the editor and I don't do it very often. How do you make a point in 350 words for an audience that doesn't otherwise

See *Companions*, page 2

Companions *continued from page 1*

know you? It is so hard to make a strong point and also include nuance or subtlety. I want to be heard and be memorable, but in doing so, it's so easy to overstate my case. I like the challenge though and try to write a letter to the editor every few years.

This issue is also tricky in that it ventures into politics. Glenn Beck associated social justice and the churches that promote it with Nazism and Socialism and urged members to leave those churches. If he was trying to bait me (and others like me), it worked. I really don't like being called a Nazi, even obliquely.

On the other hand, it might be argued that Glenn Beck was focusing on a narrow class of churches that are extremely politically active and look primarily to the enactment of laws and policies as the means by which God's kingdom comes on earth as in heaven. I'm not naïve enough to look to the government as the means to create God's kingdom, but I do look to government to protect the powerless and ensure fair opportunities exist for the marginalized. So was Glenn Beck pointing at me or not? I identify with people like Desmond Tutu, William Wilberforce and Jim Wallis though, so maybe I'm choosing to be judged by the company I choose to keep.

In my role as Rector, I generally try to stay out of political debates and recognize that among the very faithful and active members of St. Mark's are active and passionate Republicans and Democrats. Yet, as a citizen, I am active in the political process and have strong opinions about policies and political agenda, but I don't want to abuse my privilege

as a preacher of the Gospel by being politically partisan from the pulpit.

That being said, I do have a perspective on what the separation of Church and State means to me. I would argue that our religious faith should inform and influence our behavior as citizens. I think, for instance, that it is my faith and my relationship with Jesus that most strongly guides my attitudes toward what could be called civil rights and influences my political involvement in those issues. But I also don't believe that it is the role of the state to promote or benefit one faith over another. I'm OK with ending school-sponsored sectarian Baccalaureate assemblies or blue laws forbidding the sale of liquor on Sunday for religious reasons.

And so, I will venture to share my feelings in *The Durango Herald*. If by doing so I have offended anyone, I apologize. I certainly didn't want to write to the paper on behalf of anyone other than myself, and yet I know that I'm a public figure and the paper and others will make sure that my title and position in the community is noted.

If you have feelings or thoughts about these matters, I hope you will feel free to communicate with me, and disagree or correct my errors as you see them. I urge you to consider writing to the paper from time to time; it's a great exercise; but here I am now at over 900 words and I'm just getting started; so I better quit here before I get into more hot water.

Shalom,



Andrew



The Colorado Episcopal Newspaper is available online at
http://www.coloradodiocese.org/06_newsandevents/episcopalian.html

Holy Week & Easter Schedule

Palm Sunday

March 28, 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.

The Liturgy of the Palms begins in the Parish Hall followed by a festive entry into the Sanctuary. The service then shifts its focus to Christ's passion and death highlighted by the congregational Passion reading.

Monday of Holy Week

March 29, 5:30 p.m. – Vespers

Wednesday of Holy Week

March 31

Noon – Healing Eucharist

5:30 p.m. – Soul Break

Maundy Thursday

April 1, 5:30 p.m.

Eucharist, Foot Washing and Gethsemane Watch. We remember the Last Supper with a simple Eucharist as we gather around the altar with foot washing for those that choose it. There will be contemplative music, including several Taizé chants. The service continues with the traditional “stripping of the altar” and the watch through the night.

Good Friday

April 2

Noon – Ecumenical Service at St. Mark's

5:30 p.m. – Stations of the Cross at St. Mark's

We gather to reflect and pray at the stations around the sanctuary using contemplative devotions.

The Great Vigil of Easter

Saturday Evening, April 3, 8:00 p.m.

The Great Vigil is our most vivid and ancient worship. The service includes candlelight, readings, two baptisms and the first Eucharist of Easter. We are planning to use incense. No nursery available.

Easter Day Services

April 4, 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.

Our festival worship will be particularly welcoming to visitors and children. Following the 10:30 service, the children will hunt for Easter eggs. We expect many visitors and hope you will invite many of your friends, family and neighbors. The choir will sing at both services and we will use the same liturgy and music at each. We hope many of you will choose to come at 8:00, which will be a little less crowded.

Easter Sunday Kids Update

There will be no Godly Play or Living the Good News on Easter Sunday. Nursery will be available for younger kids. There will be an egg hunt following the 10:30 Easter service. It's BYOB (bring your own basket).

Where Do St. Mark's Outreach Dollars Go?

For many years St. Mark's has been a supporter of the Volunteers of America Durango Community Shelter which serves the homeless in the area. In fact, St. Mark's, by opening its Parish Hall to homeless people more than 20 years ago, was a major impetus in the establishment of the shelter in Durango. The shelter provides a 24-hour/7-day-a-week warm, secure place for homeless families, women, and men to stay, with three meals a day, bathing, and laundry facilities. Staff counselors are on hand 24 hours a day and offer counseling and assistance in finding permanent housing, jobs, or medical or legal help. The shelter also acts as a community resource center by administering CEAC, Salvation Army, and other assistance funds. It serves as an advocate for the homeless in our area and provides community education. Most importantly, the Durango Community Shelter treats those who are in need of help with dignity and respect.

There are many volunteer opportunities available at the shelter from working in the office to cooking an evening meal. Painters, gardeners, or carpenters are often needed as well!

An Evening in Memory of Holocaust Victims

Yom Hashoah, an evening in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, will be held on Saturday, April 10 at 6:30 p.m. at Congregation Har Shalom (2537 County Road 203, one mile north of Sweeney's). Local resident Eric Greene will share his story as a survivor. Rabbi Elliot Baskin will provide an "end of Sabbath" prayer service. The PEAT (Prejudice Elimination Action Team) students from Durango High School will do an interactive presentation. Please RSVP to Enid Brodsky, 247-9266 or eandh@bresnan.net.

Daughters of the King Annual Meeting Announced

The Annual Meeting and Spring Retreat of the Colorado Assembly of Daughters of the King, will be April 30–May 2 at Spring Canyon Ranch in Buena Vista.

Mark your calendars for a weekend of renewal and learning at Spring Canyon Ranch near Buena Vista Friday evening, April 30 through Sunday noon, May 2, 2010. Leading us will be retreat speaker The Rev. Michelle Danson. This is a wonderful opportunity to discover, delight and dialogue as we commune together. The cost is \$165 for the weekend, including five meals. Registration forms will be available soon. However, early birds can send name, address, phone, chapter affiliation and e-mail info, along with \$65 down payment to: Sue Kuhl, Registrar, 13406 York Way, Thornton, CO 80241. For more information, contact Nancy Severin, Assembly President at (970) 867-6826 or nssfhs@bresnan.net.

Next on the Recital Series



Oboist Danielle Menapace will perform the final recital on St. Mark's 2009–2010 Recital Series. The recital is set for Friday, April 30; however, due to impending surgery,

Danielle may need to reschedule. We'll keep you posted via weekly bulletins and e-bulletins.

Safeguarding God's Children Training

A Safeguarding God's Children training will be held on Sunday, April 25 from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at St. Matthews in Grand Junction. For information about the training, please contact Meg Stern at the Colorado Diocese Office for Faith Formation at mstern@coloradodiocese.org. For more information or to register, please call (970) 242-3293. All who work with children or youth are required to take a Safeguarding God's Children training; it is also recommended that members of the vestry attend. There will most likely be other trainings this year that will be closer to, if not in, Durango.

On your Mark... Get Set... Relay for Life!

Team Captain Annie Simonson is forming the St. Mark's team for the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. St. Mark's team name is "Miracle at St. Mark's" and you can sign up for the team or donate by logging on to http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR?pg=entry&fr_id=21796 or contact Annie Simonson at a_simonson@hotmail.com or call her at 799-3304. You don't have to be a member of St. Mark's to be on the team and if it happens that you can't participate during the relay, June 11 and 12, then consider participating in recruiting people for the team or help with a fundraiser to collect donations. Many of us have been touched in some way by cancer; now we have the opportunity to fight back by supporting this annual event.

Adult Day Care in Durango?

First United Methodist Church is in the process of assessing the needs and feasibility of an adult day-care program in Durango. In this process they have provided us with an Adult Day Care Services Survey to help them plan. The surveys are located on the welcome and information table in the Parish Hall. If this service is something that would help you, please fill out the survey (or pass one on to a friend that could benefit) and turn it in at the office and Cheryl will get them to the Methodist Church.

Deadline for the Next Newsletter

The deadline for the May newsletter is April 22. E-mail information to CherylB@StMarksDurango.com

Upcoming Events

April 1 Eucharist, Foot Washing and Watch through the Night, 5:30 p.m.

April 1 Funeral service for Joe Dunne at Sacred Heart

April 2 Good Friday Ecumenical Service, 12:00 noon

April 2 Good Friday Stations of the Cross, 5:30 p.m.

April 3 Easter Vigil Service, 8:00 p.m.

April 4 Family Easter Sunday Worship at 8:00 and 10:30 and Easter Egg Hunt following the 10:30 service

April 16–17 . . Hospice Training at Mercy

May 7 St. Mark's day at Manna Soup Kitchen

June 11–12 . . Relay for Life

June 28–30 . . Vacation Bible School