

Dear Companions on the Way...

In July, I will be attending my seventh General Convention of the Episcopal Church, my sixth as an elected representative from the Diocese of Colorado. This ten-plus-day convention will be in Anaheim, California (right next to Disneyland – which some think is fitting). Convention is very big and very long and seems cumbersome at first. Washington socialite and businesswoman Betty Talmadge said, “If you love the law and you love good sausage, don’t watch either of them being made.” But I have to confess that I do enjoy it.

I am writing to tell you of some weighty decisions that will face us at Convention. I find that this has resulted in a longer message than I usually include in the newsletter but I ask you to bear with me as I discuss two possibly contentious issues. Additionally, I suggest that we meet together between services on June 21 and 28 to discuss these issues. I also welcome any private communication any of you might want to share with me.

Some have compared Convention to a giant family reunion, though some of the family ties have been strained by recent conventions. Often Conventions have come and gone with rather little impact on the local church, but six years ago, we endorsed the decision of the people of the Diocese of New Hampshire to elect Gene Robinson to be the Bishop of New Hampshire. Bishop Robinson is a gay man living in a committed relationship with another man. Every Episcopal church felt some impact because of his election and consecration. St. Mark’s lost about a dozen families who felt such a decision violated essential values held in scripture. We’ve also grown with new families and individuals who find our commitment to welcome all people refreshing; yet many at St. Mark’s are still torn over the issue, including some of our new members.

This convention will deal with several hundred resolutions which will address such things as health insurance benefits for employees, adding several commemorations to our calendar of lesser feasts (which we sometimes call our calendar of saints), revising our canons for disciplining bishops who are charged with misconduct, establishing full communion with the Moravian church, and adding an additional memorial service the church can offer in circumstances of stillbirth, to name just a few.

These resolutions will not generate much attention in the national press, however. We will undoubtedly generate national attention as we look at two related issues. The first set of proposals will be to end a moratorium we enacted last convention on dioceses electing or approving any more bishops “whose lifestyle presents a problem for the rest of the Anglican Communion”

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(clearly understood to mean partnered gay or lesbian bishops). The other set of controversial resolutions will be to either call on the church to develop a rite of blessing for same-sex couples or alter the language in the marriage ceremony so that the Church may offer God's blessing on the lifelong, committed relationships of gay and lesbian couples.

I generally intend to support these proposals. We enacted the moratorium in 2006 with the expectation that it would stop other worldwide members of the Anglican Communion (especially in Africa) from setting up alternative Anglican Communion churches that were in a kind of competition with the Episcopal Church and also to create a climate for prayerful listening and interchange between parties and provinces with differing views on the subject. That clearly did not work. The Diocese of Colorado, for instance, just won a very expensive lawsuit to recover a church building in Colorado Springs whose rector and vestry attempted to transfer to the Nigerian Anglican church two years ago.

But the bigger issue for me regarding both of these proposals has to do with the church's ability to include gay and lesbian persons in the full sacramental life of the church. A sacrament is an affirmation that we can see God's action and presence in the lives of God's people. I suspect most of us would agree that it is appropriate to baptize and confirm persons who are gay or lesbian. I would point out that the church (including St. Mark's) has been blessed by the ministry of gay and lesbian persons who serve (or served) the church as lectors, Sunday school teachers, music ministers, Eucharistic Visitors, vestry members and priests. Yes, priests. I can name priests who have served St. Mark's – who have acknowledged (some privately to me) that they are gay or lesbian – who served with great distinction and respect, and faithfully administered

the sacraments of the church.

I have come to believe that God can use a qualified gay or lesbian person to offer the ministry the church needs from its bishops. I find Bishop Gene Robinson – who I've known personally for over ten years – to be a godly person who is well suited to be a Bishop. I can name other priests who might also be called to be a Bishop who are gay or lesbian. The church would be blessed to see them called forward to serve as Bishops. I am also satisfied that we can see God's loving presence manifested in the lifelong, committed relationships of gay or lesbian couples.

*Join Father Andrew for two forums
Sundays, June 21 and 28 at
9:15 a.m. in the Parish Hall
to discuss issues upcoming
at Convention in July.*

To use an example known to many of us, Vern Hughes and Ralph Huesing have been together for over 50 years as a loving and faithful couple. In recent years, we have welcomed several other committed gay and lesbian couples into the life of our congregation. I believe that the fruit of their relationships reveals the kind of faithfulness, grace and love that we commend to couples who would consider Christian marriage.

I have run out of reasons to deny gay and lesbian persons the full participation in the life and ministry of the church that is available to me and the majority of us. I had previously been persuaded (and thus my positive vote for the moratorium three years ago) that sacrifice was necessary from all of us for the sake of preserving the unity of the Anglican Communion. The sacrifice some were being asked to make was unequal, but might have been worth

the benefit. I have now come to see that the benefit of waiting doesn't seem so obvious and the burden seems too great to put on our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. I cannot see Jesus withholding God's grace in these sacraments, and for me (and the church) to be a part of withholding them feels like an injustice.

At convention, I intend to participate in the debate and prayerfully evaluate the proposals as they come forward. I hope there is a generous spirit in our proposals, including to the more conservative of our members, so that we can respect the conscience and integrity of those who might be troubled. The legislation has not yet been crafted, so I'm not able to tell you how I will vote on any specific proposal. The struggles for me will most likely be in the details.

As I prepare for convention, I welcome your opinions and thoughts. I'm sure some of you might

disagree with my inclinations: I want to hear your concerns and fears and be able to consider them as I deliberate the proposals that come forward. The Vestry is also going to be looking carefully at these issues with me and would welcome your input. I do hope you will attend the forums and communicate with me about your thoughts and concerns.

In the meantime, keep me in your prayers. This is obviously a weighty responsibility. I hope all I do honors God, promotes the ability for God to be glorified in God's people and enables God's mercy and compassion to be made known to God's people at St. Mark's and in the Diocese of Colorado.

Shalom,



Andrew

Summer Adult Education

Beginning May 31 and continuing through the summer at 9:15 a.m. in the downstairs conference room we will study Gospel-Based Discipleship. This is a form of Bible study based on the idea that when people engage with the good news of Jesus, transformation takes place. We will read the gospel for the day and engage in discussion about what we are hearing and how God is calling us through the text.

Trimble Lane Clean-up: Sunday, May 31

Following the 10:30 service we will head up north to clean Trimble Lane on the east and west sides of the highway. The city requires anyone who participates in the activity to sign a waiver first, which are avail-

able in the church office. Because the road is next to a golf course, the potential to collect a treasure of golf balls is high. It's a fun activity to do together while we help beautify our community.

Women's Spiritual Retreat Update

Due to low registration numbers, the women's two-day retreat in Pagosa Springs has been cancelled. However, Mary has graciously agreed to spend half a day with those who wish to participate on Saturday, June 6 at the Kiely residence in Durango. The focus of the morning will be contemplative prayer. We will meet at 8:30 a.m., and urge everyone to bring their lunch to enjoy in their wonderful yard. A suggested donation of \$20 will benefit Mary's ministry. E-mail Ruth at olsons@gobrainstorm.net for a map with directions to the Kiely home.

Kids and Youth at St. Mark's

Vacation Bible School

Register now! VBS is set for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday June 8, 9 and 10 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Children from the ages of three to those entering third grade in the fall are welcome at VBS. The theme for this summer is "Fun Under the Sea," and we'll learn songs, play games, make crafts, and



take part in fun activities. It will be a guaranteed good time for all! Adults are needed as teachers, and older elementary- and middle-school students are needed as student assistants and will play a special role each morning. Sign up your child (and their friends!) on the registration form available online at www.StMarksDurango.com/VBS.pdf and on the information table in the Parish Hall. If you are interested in teaching or serving as a student assistant, please contact Trisha Rickey at 247-0817.

We Need Teens to Help with VBS!

We need teenage volunteers June 8, 9, and 10 from 8:45 a.m. to noon to help with games, crafts, and skits. You don't need to help every day but if you can that would be great! There will be a meeting for teen helpers on Sunday, June 7 after the 10:30 a.m. service. Lunch will be provided and the meeting should last no longer than 45 minutes. Please contact Renée Knight at 259-6109 as soon as possible.

Summer Camp for the Kids

Sonlight Christian Camp located in Pagosa Springs has excellent summer camp programs for middle-school through high-school-aged kids. The camps include Discovery camps, Adventure camps, Backpacking trips for high schoolers, and more. Sonlight camp also has scholarships available.

You can read more about Sonlight at www.sonlightcamp.org or give them a call at 264-4379. Online registration is available. Several registration forms are available in the Parish Hall on the information table.

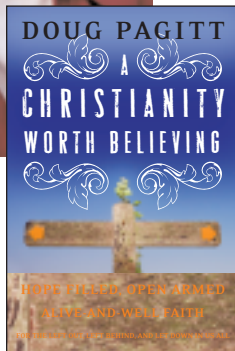
Calendar of Upcoming Events

May 30 Bishop's Regional Confirmation
May 31 Trimble Lane clean-up
June 5 St. Mark's day at
Manna Soup Kitchen
June 5 Animas Music Festival
June 6 Women's Spiritual Retreat
June 6 Fr. Mike Memorial Garden
work day, Mancos

June 7 VBS teen volunteers meeting
June 8 – 10 . . . Vacation Bible School
June 12 – 13 . . . American Cancer Society
Relay for Life
June 12 Doug Pagitt, Live Occurrences
June 19 Ruth Wilson Francisco in recital
June 24 Blood Drive
July 3 St. Mark's day at
Manna Soup Kitchen

Animas Festival Concert at St. Mark's June 5

Enjoy music on the flute and harp by Rochelle Mann and Rosalind Simpson Friday, June 5 at 7:00 p.m. here at St. Mark's. You'll hear an extraordinary presentation of Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Harp. This remarkable duo has enchanted audiences for many years with their unique collaborations. Tickets are \$12 and \$5 and are available from the Concert Hall box office at 247-7657 or online at www.DurangoConcerts.com.



Soprano Ruth Wilson Francisco to Perform June 19

You might remember her from her performances on the 2008 Bach Festival; Ruth sang a lovely aria on one of the Bach's Lunch recitals, and performed in the Coffee Cantata quartet. Ruth Wilson Francisco will perform a solo recital on Friday, June 19 at St. Mark's. Keep an eye out for ticketing details and repertoire; we'll put them in the Sunday bulletin and Thursday e-bulletins.

Experience the Emerging Church Live!

St. Mark's will host Doug Pagitt, author of *A Christianity Worth Believing*, on Friday, June 12 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Doug will offer an event called Live Occurrences, part one-man show (but there are two), part revival, part book reading, part hootenanny, part communal gathering, and they include impassioned invitations to be part of the common good. Live Occurrences are specially formulated for the Left-out, Left-behind and Let-down, and will be suitable for one and all regardless of background. You can find more information at www.dougpagitt.com/live.

We need a family to host Doug Pagitt and Erik Johnson the night of June 11 and we need at least two people to help set up and run the event on Friday, June 12. Please contact the church office, 247-1129 or CherylW@StMarksDurango.com or e-mail Charlie Pepiton at cpepito@gmail.com or call 782-6586 or 264-0264.

Mike Darmour Memorial Garden

On Saturday, June 6 at 9:00 a.m., members of St. Paul's, Mancos and friends of Fr. Mike Darmour will work on the Garden dedicated to the memory of Fr. Mike. The "back yard" of St. Paul's will be transformed into a meditation garden and planted with many of his favorite flowers. All are invited! Please bring a sack lunch; drinks and other goodies will be provided. Bring garden tools and gloves, too. We are still accepting donations for flowers and a bench. The church is located on Bauer Ave. Turn left at the signal light, then right on Bauer.

Relay for Life: Join Our Team!

St. Mark's team for the American Cancer Society Relay for Life needs you! Please sign up in the Parish Hall to walk or donate. The event is Friday, June 12 from 6:00 p.m. until June 13 at 8:00 a.m. Cancer survivors are invited to a special reception in their honor on that Friday evening at 6:00 p.m. For more information, talk to Sue Evans, 764-5941 or Jim Bundy, 779-8273.

Next Blood Drive is June 24

St. Mark's next blood drive will be held in the Parish Hall from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 24. Donors must weigh a minimum of 110 pounds. If you have questions about your eligibility to donate blood, please call the Durango United Blood Services office at 385-4601. You can donate one pint of whole blood (or double red blood cells if you weigh 150 pounds or more). There's a bonus: when you donate blood with United Blood Services, free cholesterol screening results are made available to you by password access on their website.

Giving blood is simple, free and a gift to all who receive it. The sign-up sheet is in the Parish Hall on the Outreach bulletin board.

Save August 22 for Habitat

Habitat for Humanity of La Plata County is building two more duplex housing units this summer on Fox Farm Circle in Bayfield. St. Mark's is planning a special work day on Saturday, August 22. If you would be interested on other days this summer, please call volunteer coordinator Jen Nail at 382-2215.

Thinking of Joining the Choir?

If you're interested in joining St. Mark's Choir, please set aside Friday evening, August 28, and all day Saturday, August 29. We begin each choir season with a retreat to help get a jump on the music. This year's retreat will be in Durango. Please contact Scott at 247-1129, ext. 14 or via e-mail, ScottH@StMarksDurango.com, and let him know you are interested or for more information.

Deadline for July Newsletter

Deadline for the next issue is June 20. Submit information for the newsletter to Tonya Wales at 259-4166 or detwales@msn.com or contact Cheryl at CherylW@StMarksDurango.com.

Parish Nurses' Notes – Summer Safety for Families

It's time for families to get back outside and enjoying our beautiful Four Corners area. Here are some ways you can keep your family safe during those summer activities:

Sunscreen: For infants under six months, the best advice is to keep them covered. Dress infants in long-sleeved shirts and pants and a hat that covers head and neck. The best defense for people of any age is to cover up. Wear a hat with at least a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward. Stay in the shade whenever possible, and limit exposure during the peak-intensity hours between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater, and be sure to apply enough – about one ounce per sitting for a young adult. Reapply sunscreen every two hours or after swimming or sweating.

Heat Stress: Intense activities lasting 15 minutes or longer should be reduced when heat is intense. Make sure to drink plenty of water before and during activities, even if the child doesn't feel thirsty. Remind your out-of-town guests, especially those from wetter climates, how dry it is here and that they will need more water than they're used to.

Water Safety: Never leave children alone in or near the pool, even for a moment. Keep rescue equipment (a shepherd's hook and a life preserver) and a portable phone near the pool. Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as 'floaties'; they aren't a substitute for approved life vests. Children may not be developmentally ready for swim lessons until after their fourth birthday. Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."

Bug Safety: Avoid areas where insects nest or congregate – such as stagnant pools of water. Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective against ticks, which can transmit Lyme Disease, and mosquitoes, which can transmit West Nile Virus and other viruses. Avoid sunscreen containing insect repellent as sunscreen should be reapplied more frequently than insect repellent. For children over two months use 30 % DEET. DEET shouldn't be used on children under two months of age. DEET comes in different strengths – 10% only protects for about 30 minutes, so read the labels.

Bike Safety: Take your child with you to purchase a bike so that you can get the right size. Do not get a bike that the child can 'grow into'. Children need to wear a helmet on every bike ride, no matter how short or how close to home. As a parent, be a good example and wear your helmet. When purchasing a helmet look for a label or sticker that says the helmet meets CPSC safety standard. Helmets protect riders from serious injury and should always be worn. Helmets should be worn so that it is level on the head, not tipped forward or backward. The strap should be securely fastened and shouldn't move freely in any direction.

For more safety tips for summer, go to www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/summertips.cfm

We hope you all have a wonderful and safe summer.

—Lynn and Carol

The Omnipresence

by Luci Shaw

Reminders flicker at us from
odd angles, nor will he be ignored;
we sight him in unlikely places,
oaths and dates and empty tombs.
God. His print is everywhere,
stamped on the macro- and the microcosm.

Feathers, shells, stars, cells speak
his diversity. The multiplicity of
leaf and light says God. Wind,
sensed but unseen, breathes the old
metaphor again. Seasons are his
signature. The double helix
spells his spiral name.
Faith summons him, and doubt
blows only the sheerest skein
of mist across his face.

Poet's Corner

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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