

Parish of the Good Shepherd

(this is Fr. Welch's annual report to the parish)

DEAR FRIENDS,

I will resist the temptation to make this report about the thoughts and feelings I'm having about my retirement as rector of the Parish of the Good Shepherd. What I'd rather do is to reflect on some things I think make Good Shepherd the kind of parish it is, and therefore some things I think worthy of celebration and preservation. All of these characteristics pre-date my coming as rector and to the extent I deserve credit for anything it is for being a steward of what I received.

The first thing I would like to celebrate is Good Shepherd's lack of pettiness. Churches are notorious for exhibiting a kind of small mindedness and pickiness that wouldn't be tolerated almost anywhere else (other perhaps in the academic life). People in churches can get killingly protective of their small domains and jealous of what they see as other people's undue recognition. Because we are a congregation of sinners some of this happens at Good Shepherd, but of all the places I've served, Good Shepherd is the freest of this kind of spiritual pollution.

Another thing we are relatively free of is politicization. It is a great temptation these days for churches to politically identify themselves as being liberal or conservative or pro-this or anti-this. Good Shepherd has people who are very liberal or very conservative, with most of us coming somewhere in between. I myself have some pretty strong political opinions and convictions (you might be surprised to find out what some of them are!) but I try to be discreet about them and keep them out of my preaching. There is nothing wrong with having political convictions but when convictions become ideology and when ideology becomes theology very bad things happen, with churches becoming clubs of the like-minded rather than places where all sorts and conditions of men and women are at home.

The third and most defining thing about Good Shepherd is its character as an Anglo-Catholic Episcopal parish which is also a neighborhood Episcopal parish. We worship using the forms and ceremonies of the Book of Common Prayer, with an emphasis on the Catholic heritage of the Anglican-Episcopal tradition. That has been a characteristic of worship at Good Shepherd from at least the 1930's and that is why people from Brookline and Southborough and Dover and places outside what would be considered our normal orbit come Sunday by Sunday to this parish church. But we also are one neighborhood parish, which serves people from Waban and Newton just wanting a place to worship God and raise their children.

The fact that we are healthy and prospering has everything to do with that dual character. There are too many Episcopal churches in Newton (7 of them!) and none can survive by servicing one neighborhood. At the same time, a Newton parish which only attracts those looking for a traditional High Church liturgy couldn't survive either.

There have been times in Good Shepherd's history when it became too exclusively Anglo-Catholic and there was a time in the 1960's when the rector decided to purge Good Shepherd of its Anglo-Catholic heritage. In the first instance decline set in, in the second, parish closure became a real possibility.

My job from the beginning has been to chart a middle course, keeping always in mind that the Anglican tradition of which we are a part sees compromise not as a weakness but as the humble recognition that no point of view and no set of practices has a monopoly on the truth. That this middle way is not only theologically desirable but also practically effective is testified to by the fact that 22 years ago we were the second smallest among the Newton Episcopal churches while today we are the second largest.

It is my prayer that as you go into the interim period, these defining characteristics of Good Shepherd will be something you treasure and conserve, as it has been my great privilege to nurture and preserve them. May God draw us ever closer to the heart of Jesus who is the Good Shepherd of our souls, and may God continue to bless the Parish of the Good Shepherd.

Peace, Truman

The annual meeting of the parish is on Sunday, January 26, 2014 following the 10:00 a.m. service.

PARISH NEWS – January 22, 2014

WARRANT

Pursuant to the By-Laws (as amended) of the Parish, the Annual Meeting of the Parish of the Good Shepherd of Waban, Massachusetts will be held in the Common Room of the Church on Sunday, January 26, 2014 following the 10:00 a.m. service.

The business to be transacted is:

1. The receiving of reports;
2. The election of three members of the Vestry (class of 2017);
3. The election of clerk and treasurer
4. The adoption of the budget for 2014;
5. The transaction of any other business that may properly come before it.

Terry Robinson, Clerk

The Flower Chart for 2014

A new flower chart is posted downstairs in the Common room if you would like to sign up to give flowers in memory of, in honor of or in thanksgiving for a loved one. Suggested donation is \$75.

Something new at Good Shepherd

Please note that Good Shepherd now offers parishioners who can't attend the service the option to view live or recorded versions remotely over the internet on a password protected website. If you would like access, please email Lynette at office@goodshepherdnewton.org.

Forum

Coming up soon! "This is my church too": An exploration of still-hot issues concerning God and the place of women in the Church, in liturgy, theology, and the life of the parish, now and in the past. We will look at everything from the names of God to the still evolving role of women in the Episcopal church.

looking ahead...

In April we will be having a series of 3 forums on religious art. On successive weeks, Nancy Ketterer, Pam Rothwell, and Charles Foster will each discuss one or two works of art of their own choosing. The point is not only to develop our understanding of religious art—the ways artists make a point and tell a story—but also to open up our understanding of religion and perhaps our own spirituality.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & PROGRAMS

Nursery is available every Sunday for infants through 4 year-old. Atrium Levels I & II are open each Sunday at 8:45 AM - children age 3-8 are welcome after they have been oriented to the learning space (scheduled separately). Please speak with Mary Ann Stewart with any questions about our Christian Education Program (ce@goodshepherdnewton.org)

JANUARY

26 - The Third Sunday after the Epiphany
8:45 AM: Level I & Level II Atrium
10:00 AM: 3rd-5th gr to Loring Room
6th-8th gr to Youth Room

Annual Parish Meeting follows the ten o'clock service in the Common Room. If you require childcare for your child, please speak with Mary Ann Stewart.

FEBRUARY

2 - The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany: The Presentation Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple
8:45 AM: Level I & Level II Atrium
10:00 AM: 3rd-5th gr to Loring Room
6th-8th gr to Youth Room

9 - The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
8:45 AM: Level I & Level II Atrium
10:00 AM: 3rd-5th gr to Loring Room
6th-8th gr to Youth Room

16 - The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany
8:45 AM: Level I & Level II Atrium
10:00 AM: 3rd-5th gr to Loring Room
6th-8th gr to Youth Room

Church School & Atrium: Children will convene each Sunday of Block III (current block): January 26; February 2, 9, 16. Block IV begins Sunday, February 23. Please speak with Mary Ann Stewart about your interest in substitute teaching or teaching a class.

Confirmands: Our overnight retreat will be here before you know it! Watch for materials and details to be mailed out next week.

It has been said that North Americans are more likely to introduce themselves by sharing their name and occupation than any other personal characteristic. But Jesus called the first disciples away from their work as fishers to follow him and "fish for people" (Matthew 4:19), suggesting that there is sometimes tension between the requirements of our careers and our calling as Christians. How do we deal with such conflicts when they arise, particularly in a culture that defines us by our work? How do we live out the truth that our baptismal identity has a greater claim on us than our jobs do?

*In faith,
Mary Ann.*