

THE EPISTLE

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News and Views from St. Paul's Episcopal Church • Easter 2010



The Path is Not Always Straight *Seeking a Resurrection of Faith*

By **Debbie Buese**

The church that I belonged to as a child was built on solid ground and my Dad was the pastor. The world had been created in seven calendar days and Jonah was swallowed by a real whale. I trusted that my Dad's faith was strong enough that he wouldn't be asked to sacrifice me as a burnt offering like Abraham had been asked to do with Isaac, and I was relieved that God promised that He would never again send a flood to cover the earth. I knew that Jesus loved me for the Bible told me so and my whole Lutheran family was going to pass through that narrow gate and be together forever. I was so sure of these things that the faith of my childhood sustained me through the unexpected death of my Dad when I was 17 and the long, debilitating illness that led to the sorrowfully anticipated death of my Mom when I was 21.

+ *Proclaiming God's Love*

+ *Celebrating the Image
of God in Every Person*

+ *Serving Those in Need*

My faith grew up as a Presbyterian. I married, had two babies, and went back to church with a mission. I wanted my children, and everybody else's children, to know the Jesus that I knew. I was tireless in my work with young people as they became teenagers. It was here that my growing faith became problematic. I felt compelled to teach that Christ's love was boundless while my leadership was portraying a much more exclusive Jesus. My church family became increasingly conservative and I felt that the success of the youth program was measured by the size of their huddle in prayer. It was time for me to move on.

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Kathy Biele called me in 1999 and told me that I was an Episcopalian and should come and lead the children and youth of St. Paul's. Which is often the case in youth ministry, I learned more than I taught and received more than I gave. My communion with the people of St. Paul's has been extraordinary. Ultimately, it was the time that I spent in fellowship with our young people that nurtured my maturing faith. I was finally able to own my beliefs based on a church of tradition, with an inclusive faith in Christ, and the use of God given reason.

Two years ago I took this grown up faith to rural Maine. I made a very intentional move to be by my daughter and know my grandchildren. My husband was to follow, and the last decades of our lives would be spent exploring a new part of the country with our family within reach. I felt God was near as I snow-shoed in the woods, kayaked on the lakes, and held baby Ada at will.

I didn't see my sister Becky's disease coming. She feared that she may have a form of Multiple Sclerosis, not as debilitating as the form our

RESURRECTION continued ...

W O R S H I P

• “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” — Romans 15:13

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mom had, but still she was growing weak and losing the use of her left arm. It would be manageable, but it turned out to be worse.

She was diagnosed with ALS, Lou Gehrig’s disease, in May of 2008. Having been a hospice nurse for many years, and caring for several ALS patients to their deaths, I knew the decisions that this horrifying disease was going to make for her. My adult Christian faith unraveled overnight. A tsunami of oddly familiar grief overwhelmed and astonished me. I was unable to figure out how to be in two places at one time so I brought half of my heart back to Salt Lake to be near her. Becky mandated love, joy and humor as she declined and I did my best to honor that. I didn’t tell her that my faith in God was buried so deeply that I felt absolutely no comfort

when I prayed. Instead, I read the devotions by her bed to her, and listened as she told me that her yearning to be with God and lost loved ones was growing, and easing some of the sorrow that she felt in leaving her family.



**Debbie with her sister,
Becky McAllister**

Becky died on January 23, 2010. I am trusting that she is with God. I know that I believed it when I told our youth that there would be times that God seemed distant or nonexistent, but was silently grateful that it hadn’t happened to me. Now my longing for God’s peace and grace is real so I hope that I still believe, while trying to figure out who I am if I am no longer the spiritual woman I was. Meanwhile, I have a new

baby grandson named Logan. Becky will have a new baby granddaughter named Becca in July.

Maine suddenly seems much closer than heaven.

S T E W A R D S H I P

• “The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.”
Proverbs 11:18

Easter Remains Principal Feast

In the beginning there was Easter, and only Easter. Easter was, and is, the principal and primordial Christian feast. From earliest times Christians gathered on Sunday, the day of the resurrection, to offer *eucharistia*, thanksgiving, to the Father for the saving work accomplished in Christ. Each Sunday came to be seen as a “little Easter.” But things didn’t remain this simple for long. As Christianity spread throughout the Mediterranean region, and especially as Christians were allowed to live their faith openly (commonly dated from the signing of the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E.), liturgical observances, ritual practices, and theologies to support them began to grow.

By the end of the 4th century, when a well-educated abbess from Gaul named Egeria made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (381-384 C.E.), she was able to report in the annals of her trip a number of practices that had developed mainly among Christian believers living in Jerusalem during this liturgically creative and fertile period.



It should be noted that originally Christian feasts did not commemorate simply one event of salvation history but a cluster of distinct events all at once. Egeria recounted, for example, how the feast honoring Christ’s birth, Theophany on January 6th, celebrated not just the event of Jesus’ birth but also that of Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan. The same was true of the observance of Easter, which celebrated not just the resurrection, but the entire Paschal Mystery of Christ from his passion and death on the cross to his descent to the netherworld and resurrection on the third day. It was

among these liturgically inventive Christians of Jerusalem that the first observances of what we now refer to as Holy Week began to develop.

The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

Dating from the 4th century, the observance of Palm Sunday introduces us to Holy Week. The distinctive ceremonies of the day are 1) the blessing of the palms and the procession, representing Christ’s triumphal entry into

FEAST continued

E D U C A T I O N

• “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!” — Isaiah 52:7

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Jerusalem, and 2) the proclamation (chanted or otherwise) of the Passion of Our Lord.

The Easter or Paschal Triduum

In the spirituality of the ancient Church, the services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter were not seen as separate entities, but as a unity separated by time (you may notice that there is no dismissal by the deacon on Maundy Thursday, nor is there one on Good Friday). These three observances—Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter, like a triptych, comprise what is known as the Easter or Paschal Triduum—three solemn observances that form one celebration of Christ’s passing from death to life. If at all possible, Christians should celebrate them as a unity and participate in all three.

Dating from the 4th century, the observance of **Maundy Thursday** (from *mandatum*, the new “commandment” of John 13:34) commemorates Christ’s institution of the Eucharist. The humble service expected of every Christian is expressed through Christ’s washing of his disciples’ feet and our Lord’s invitation to us to serve one another in the same way. According to a tradition dating back to the 8th century in the Christian West, the Holy Oils (Sacred Chrism, the Oil of the Sick, and the Oil of the Catechumens) are blessed on this day. The blessing of Sacred Chrism was later reserved to the Bishop.

Also dating from the 4th century is the observance of **Good Friday** (or Great Friday, as it referred to in the Christian East). Traditionally, the liturgy of Good Friday has had two principal points of focus: 1) the ancient custom of the proclamation of the Passion and 2) the veneration of the cross. There is no celebration of Holy Eucharist on Good Friday. Instead, consecrated bread and wine remaining from the Maundy Thursday Eucharist may be given in Communion. The church remains stripped of all decoration. It continues bare and empty through the following day—a day without liturgy.

Easter Day completes the observance of the Paschal Triduum and, as indicated earlier, is Christianity’s oldest and greatest feast. The earliest observance of Easter consisted of a vigil of watching and waiting through the hours of darkness before dawn, all the while recalling the story of God’s saving deeds and the events of salvation history: creation, the covenant, the exodus, the sending of the prophets, through to Jesus’ death and resurrection. Then, timed for the appearance of the first rays of sunlight on Easter morning, came the joyous proclamation of Christ’s resurrection: “Alleluia. He is risen!”

He is risen indeed! May the hope and joy of Easter be with you and those you love.

Emil+

New Postulants Called

The Rt. Rev. Carolyn Tanner Irish granted postulancy to five nominees. They are Aimee Altizer; St. Luke’s, Brin Bon; St. Mark’s, Julia Cole; St. Paul’s SLC, Bert Hall; St. Michael’s, Sandra Jones; St. Luke’s. With these new postulants, the Diocese of Utah has nine postulants. Two are studying for the vocational diaconate currently and seven are studying for the priesthood.

W O R S H I P

• “Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.”
Luke 6:30

Virtually St. Paul's

When were you last online, visiting St. Paul's website? Do you know that we are now podcasting sermons? Do you know that we post weekly announcements? Do you know that we have a photo archive and updated information on St. Paul's Preschool? Take a look, and tell us what you want to see at <http://www.stpauls-slc.org>

St. Paul's is also on Facebook, as individual parishioners, the parish, the Youth Group, the Choir and more.

St. Paul's is reaching out to you!

Bishop Search Update

The Nominating Committee plans to release the names of the finalists at the end of the first week of April. The Transition Committee will then conduct “walk abouts” throughout the Diocese. The Transition Committee has announced the schedule for all to meet candidates, listen to remarks, and ask questions of the finalists. The Committee is asking that questions be submitted to “walk about” chair, Wim Ray, in care of the Diocese of Utah. Please notify your own church office if you plan to attend.



May 4 at St. Mark's Cathedral, SLC; 6:30-9 p.m.
(rooms may include ECCU rooms).

May 5 at St. Elizabeth's, Whiterocks; 6:30-9 p.m.

May 6 at Good Shepherd, Ogden; 7-9 p.m.

May 7 at St. Matthew's, Price; 7-9:30 p.m.

May 8 at Grace Church, St. George; 2-4:30 p.m.

The election of the 11th Bishop of Utah will take place at St. Mark's Cathedral on May 22.

To gather feedback from St. Paul's parishioners prior to the Electing Convention on May 22, a special open forum will be held in the Parish Hall after our 10:15 Eucharist on **Sunday, May 16**. This will provide you with an opportunity to express your preferences and concerns to our Delegate/Electors prior to their vote.

The House of Bishops has just elected the Rev. Canon David Bailey to be Bishop of Navajoland. The vote was 104 in favor with one abstention. We know all Utah Episcopalians offer prayers of thanksgiving for Canon Bailey's service to the Diocese of Utah over the past 12 years and we also offer our prayers of support for his new ministry. A majority of standing committees from the whole Episcopal Church must now approve his selection. A tentative date of consecration has been set for August 7, 2010.