

THE MESSENGER

A Publication of Historic Saint Anne's Episcopal Church
Lent, 2008

RAMON'S REFLECTIONS

Before we know it, Lent will be here. It not only seems but it is a fact that we just barely concluded the Season of Christmas and on January 6th started the Season of Epiphany, and yet Lent is almost here.



This year Ash Wednesday, which ushers the 40 very Holy Days of Lent, falls on February 6. What follows is a list of the opportunities that we invite you to participate in to help you grow in a number of ways during this very important season of the Liturgical Year:

Tuesday, February 5th (also known as Shrove Tuesday):

6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Parish Pancake Supper (free of charge for all)

Performance by Young Cambodian Dance Troup

Annual Parish Meeting – Reports, Budget and Election of new Vestry

Wednesday, February 6th (also known as Ash Wednesday)

7 a.m. Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes at Saint Anne's

12 noon Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes at Saint John's (Gorham Street)

7 p.m. Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes at Saint Anne's

Tuesdays of Lent Programs: 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., beginning with a Bread and Soup Supper.

Tuesday, February 12: Global Mission Program at Saint Anne's, N. Billerica

Tuesday, February 19: Diocesan Jubilee Ministries Program at Saint John's, Lowell

Tuesday, February 26: Mission and Relationship with El Salvador at All Saints, Chelmsford

Tuesday, March 4: Deanery Wide Convocation on Missions at Saint James, Groveland

Tuesday, March 11: Medical Needs in Africa, at Saint Mark's, Westford

Tuesday, March 18: Conclusion of Lenten Program with Solemn Evening Prayer at St. Anne's (Lowell).

Additionally, on the Fridays in Lent, there will be an informal Eucharist (Communion Service) at 7 p.m. in Saint Anne's Chapel.

Once we get closer to Holy Week, we will send you a letter reminding you of the opportunity to offer flowers for Easter and letting you know about the exact schedule of the Services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

There is a lot being offered this Lent. All of those programs are meant to help us know more about mission opportunities as we continue to reach out to brothers and sisters far and near.

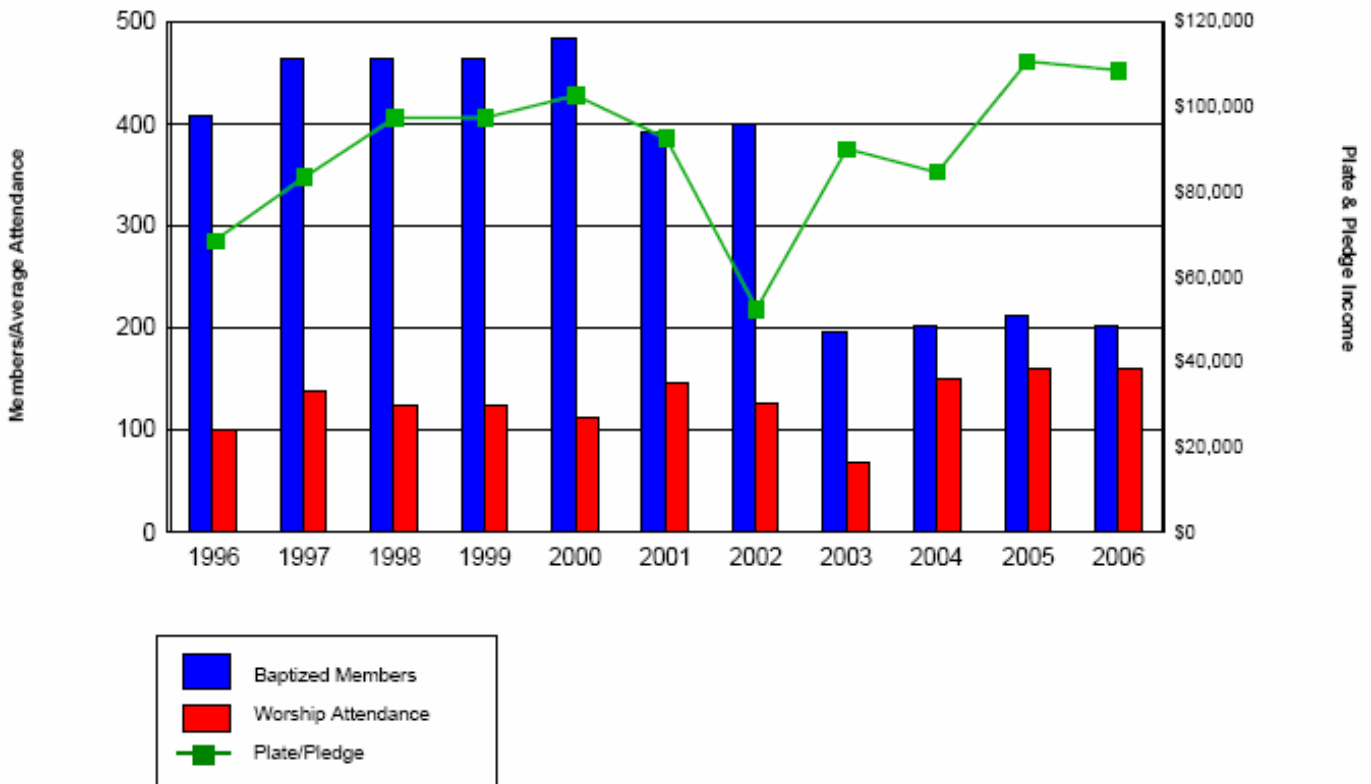
FACTS AND FIGURES

I just recently became aware that the National Church Center publishes statistics about all the Episcopal Congregations connected with the Episcopal Church USA. Out of curiosity, I decided to check Saint Anne's and found out the following which you can examine for yourself in the chart that follows:

1. ASA (otherwise known as average Sunday attendance) is the highest since these figures began to be tracked in 1996.
2. In 2002, Saint Anne's (as well as many other churches) decided to purge their records to reflect actual church membership versus people whose names were still kept in the church records but who could not be considered as "communicants in good standing". Consequently, the drop in the "blue line" between 2002 and 2003. (According to the Canons of the Church, a "Communicant in Good Standing" is anyone who for the previous year has been faithful in corporate worship and has been faithful in working, praying and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God.)
3. The last 2 reported years (2005 and 2006) show the highest amount per year in pledge and plate since 1996.

Participation & Giving Trends

St Annes Episcopal Church, Lowell, MA (8692-4438)



Additionally, the Episcopal Church Center site offers some very revealing information about the religious make-up of those living around the area of Saint Anne’s.

As Tim Belevetz so well observed recently on one of his many visits to the area from Virginia: “Father Ramon, Lowell is not a hot-bed of Episcopalians.” Consequently, Lowell is made up of people who are very faithful to their religious roots and often stay with “their church” even if not satisfied. Luckily, we have been blessed with many courageous Christian who have opted to leave their denomination of birth and become members of our congregation.

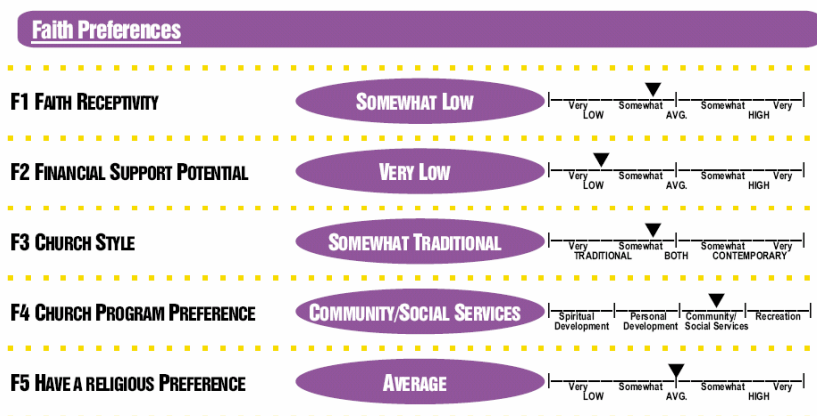
While the “Financial Support Potential” is reported as “very low” in the scale below, Saint Anne’s has done very well over the last 3 to 4 years. This in spite of the fact that the economy is presently hurting and that many of our new parishioners do not have the kind of job or income that can generate a substantial tithe to the church.

We have attempted to provide somewhat of a traditional church style while keeping in mind that many come to church looking for something different and unique. And so, we have attempted and will continue to attempt to strike a balance between the traditional and the innovative, between the hymnal and “Bluegrass”, between the Book of Common Prayer and spontaneity, between the formal and the informal, between holding our hands folded in prayer to God and holding the hands of those around us.

Where we have excelled has been in what also is the highest in the chart below: our outreach to the community through direct and indirect programs. I am so happy to see how many of you are bringing food on a weekly basis for the Food Bank.

In the last 3 years, we have responded very generously to the needs caused by Katrina, have supported 3 mission trips - to New Orleans, to Washington DC and to the Dominican Republic, have provided space for Merrimack Valley Project, supported a dinking-water project in Africa, have sponsored a Scout Troop and a Cub Scout Pack, have trained 30 high school students in computers skills, have stood up against Hate Crimes in our city, have provided space where Gay, Lesbians and Trans- gendered persons can feel safe and accepted, host the Merrimack Valley Chapter of the Nigerian Association, have hosted the summer program of the African Assistance Center, have provided mentoring, tutoring and lunch to thousands of youth, and have offered our facilities to support City of Lowell events, the ArtVentures and the annual Lowell Folk Festival.

We have done very well in the area of outreach. After all, this is really what pleases God. James 1:27 states: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”



A Few Notes About Music

By Beth Parsons



As the Music Director of St. Anne's, I am charged with a very special responsibility – to help us to experience God's presence in our worship, in our lives, through music. I've often thought about what the role of music in worship really is. After all, I would think that God is no more present when music is being made than when it is not.

One of the things I have always heard a lot from people is "I really liked the music this morning", "we need to do more of those wonderful old Scottish hymns" and so on. Whereas I am not ungrateful for comments and thanks, I don't want our worship to be judged by whether or not people like a particular style of music. Music is not always worship, but it CAN be worship when it is offered by

Christians, offered intentionally and in faith. We make music and we sing because God is here.

Music can move us emotionally in very strong ways. If it is used correctly, it can enhance worship. Used incorrectly, it can destroy it. Music invokes and expresses our emotions, it heightens our sense of unity with one another and it manifests the multi-faceted nature of God's Glory. There are many references to the use of music in worship in the Bible. Psalm 66 says to "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord", as do Psalms 81, 93, 95, 98 and 100. The word "noise" is translated from the word "teruah", whose root "ruah" describes the sound of trumpets blaring, or people shouting in triumph, joy or alarm. It also means a war cry. However, in Psalm 98, it says to "make a loud noise". This word "noise" is translated from the word "patsach" which means the sound of something breaking. Although the sound of something breaking is not exactly harmonious, especially combined with trumpets blaring and people shouting, ALL noise is pleasing to God. There is no more Honor given to God than praise and a joyful noise given from a humble heart regardless of whether or not one can "carry a tune in a bucket"!

At St Anne's, we are using a variety of musical styles from Renaissance to contemporary. We are having a "Bluegrass Mass"; St. John's just had a "Jazz Mass". Father Ramon and I have learned about the use of Hip-Hop in worship which the children at their Eucharist on January 20th used. And I am planning for a springtime service using what I like to call "Southern Baptist Gospel" music. The "U2Charist" is making the rounds, most recently at St. Anne's in North Billerica. No one musical style or venue is any more "right" or "wrong" than the other. Because music speaks to our hearts, it affects us in a way that spoken words cannot, and it speaks to each person differently.

God has given us a precious few ways to express our relationship with others. We can touch, we can speak, read and write, we can gesture. And we can sing. Let us sing of God's works, give Him thanks and praise and encourage one another to live for HIM. Soli Deo Gloria!

Forming And Transforming Christian Lives

By Deacon Gay Cox



Hello everyone at St Anne's, Lowell! It has been a very full few months as I have begun my new diaconal ministry at St. Anne's N. Billerica and also begun here under what seems a very 'grand' title of Minister for Christian Formation!

After all the 'dust' has settled during the fun and preparations of Advent and Christmas, the time I am spending here seems destined to be interrupted by snowstorms. However despite such difficulties a somewhat regular routine seems to have taken shape. Unless otherwise dictated by holidays or storms, I am here on Mondays, comfortably settled, in a corner of Fr. Ramon's office, with access to computer and Muriel. The staff all has lunch together at 12 noon, then we have a staff meeting, and then Fr. Baker, Fr. Ramon and I have a clerical 'round table' as we discuss the readings for the next Sunday and the ongoing effectiveness of our various ministries. I have found all this fun, informative and very helpful: With a real sense of being a team together, staff and clerical. For 2 hours in that afternoon I continue to clear and arrange the children's area of the Hall, meeting with the Children's Leaders the first Monday of the month 6:30-7:30. I do hope, on those Mondays I am here, you will come by and visit my corner of Fr. Ramon's warm office between 4 - 6pm, I would love to spend more personal time with you.

The Christmas Pageant came together well with a lot of help from many people and little or no work from me: Thank you! The dancing angels were one of the highlights. We are hoping to have some speaking parts next Christmas.

As part of my role here we are going to develop a children's Sunday every 3rd Sunday of the month. Especially exciting to me is the opportunity to explore the creativity of our younger members as we prepare on every 3rd Saturday, from 10 - 1 with brunch, to create reverent and beautiful offerings for Sunday's Eucharist. Come prepared for a closer and more 'friendly' seating arrangement in our beautiful chapel (warmer too) and for variety in music practiced with Beth on Saturday. This is NOT a time of 'dumbing down' but of creative and yet accessible worship together. Saturdays are a 'multi-generational time as we also host adult formation. During Jan-Mar it will focus on enquirers and those seeking confirmation in April; but I would encourage anyone interested to come, even if you are not seeking confirmation. This Saturday (Jan 19) saw our children from both 10 and 12, making Eucharistic bread, banners, arranging the flowers and preparing to read the lessons and lead the prayers on Sunday Jan 20. Meanwhile after introducing the symbols and meaning of Epiphany, the adults/youth left to examine their information packets and 'grill' Frs. Ramon and Frank with their questions while I and later Beth worked with the children.



It is my hope and dream that this will become a time of the children from both 10 and 12 meeting and getting to know each other as they have fun and prepare for worship; and that perhaps, as we move forward, adults too might enter into a season of creativity and rejoicing together. **February 16** we'll focus on Lent and perhaps even make Anglican Prayer beads. **March 15 is Palm Saturday**, so let's prepare banners and even a drama around the themes of Palm Sunday. It is my experience, born out by others who work with children in their spiritual formation, that often they show us a depth of wonder and joy as well as understanding, in their relationship with God, Father, Son and Spirit, that we adults have let grow dim.

As part of my role here in adult formation we have put together a 6 Churches Lenten Forum. We'll meet on **TUESDAY EVENINGS** from 6:30-8 pm as in other years, starting with a simple soup and bread supper – always delicious and a good time to renew friendships and make new ones.

The theme is Missions. At the time of this article this was the order of events.

February 12: Global Missions presented by Rev. Ted Gaiser at St. Anne's, N. Billerica.

February 19: Jubilee Ministries (Africa) presented by the Rev Maggie Geller at St. John's Lowell

February 26: Paul Pyzowski will present on El Salvador and having a sister relationship with a church in another country. This will be at All Saints Chelmsford

March 4: We invite everyone to go to the Deanery presentation on Missions at St James Groveland

March 11: Medical needs in Africa, short term missions involvement and also El Salvador experiences will be presented by Diane Smith, newly returned from Kenya. This is at St Mark's, Westford.

March 18: Conclusion of our Lenten Program with Solemn Even Song as Saint Anne's (Lowell).

I am so grateful for the possibility to serve here and continue to be encouraged by and enjoy serving all of you. "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice"

Organ Restoration Fund Established

By Gloria Schoen



Our 123-year-old rare and valuable 4-manual Hook and Hastings organ, installed in 1884, is in need of repair. There are over 3000 metal and wooden pipes in three tiers in the enclosed space. All the pipes you see are working parts of the organ. These wonderful pipe organ is currently unable to operate to its full potential. The repairs will be very costly, but the organ is as important a treasure as the Tiffany windows. We can't let the condition deteriorate any further. This will be an ongoing project and we will keep you updated with periodic progress reports.

Since we established the Organ Fund, just a few months ago, several parishioners have already contributed. Your contribution need not be large. Any amount no matter how small will be welcomed. We are pleased to announce that the children of St Anne's Sunday School are contributing their pennies. We all want to continue to **MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE** and with your help we will.

From Saint John's Senior Warden



Hello, my name is Jeff Estrella and I'm the Senior Warden at St. John's Lowell. Ramon asked me to put down some thoughts about the new arrangement between our two churches. I am encouraged about the new shared clergy arrangement and I'm hopeful that we'll be able to support each other and work together. The leadership from the two churches will be meeting soon during a day-long retreat facilitated by Bishop Cederholm and we hope to explore new possibilities and new opportunities to serve God in Lowell as Spiritual Leaders.

Both churches have unique gifts. By working together we can use those gifts to bring honor to the one God who has blessed us. I'm looking forward to finding new opportunities for ministry that both congregations can embrace and find success with. I pray that this new arrangement will be successful and that it will provide new growth for the building up of God's kingdom. For His Glory Alone!

Annual Meeting Announcement

Saint Anne's Annual Meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 5, 2007 beginning at 6 p.m. with a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper which will be free for the entire church membership.



Towards the end of the Pancake supper, a group of young Cambodians who called themselves "Teen Rhythm" will perform for our enjoyment and entertainment.

At 7 p.m., the official business of the Parish Meeting will begin. During it, we will To hear the report of the parish officers, elect all parish officers and vestry members according to the bylaws, elect all delegates and alternates as required for the next Diocesan Convention and the Merrimack River Deanery, adopt a 2008 Parish Operating Budget, and transact such other business as should come before the meeting.

We hope that you will come and enjoy some good food, fellowship, entertainment and that you will participate in this very important annual meeting of the congregation.

Rick Warner has offered to arrange transportation for those who wish to come but do not like to drive at night. Please contact the Church Office (978-452-2150) if you need transportation.