

THE MESSENGER

A Monthly Publication of Historic Saint Anne's and Saint John's
Episcopal Churches, Lowell
Summer, 2009

RAMON'S REFLECTIONS



It might be almost the end of June but you would never know it from the weather. I just heard that summerlike weather is around the corner so hopefully you and your family and friends will be able to do some of those things that we look

forward to doing during the lazy days of summer. Be sure to take some time for personal renewal and recreation and to reconnect with those who are important in your life.

I know that traditionally many churches cut back on their number of Sunday services during the summer. At Saint Anne's and Saint John's, that has not been the case, so be assured that during most of the summer (with the exception of the last Sunday of July which is Lowell Folk Festival Weekend) our Sunday schedule of services will remain the same. In fact, as you probably already know, Saint John's has added a service on Sundays for our Ugandan brothers and sisters who have begun to worship under the leadership of the Rev. Mary Tusuubira, the first woman ordained to the priesthood in Africa. She is a dynamic and spirit-filled person and has already begun to make a difference in the life of Saint John's and of the Lowell Community at large. An article about Mary and her ministry appears on the pages of this newsletter.

Another featured article is about the Taize Service that Beth and Don Parsons have been facilitating over the last 4 months. Those of you who have participated in them have found them to be very enriching and spiritually rewarding and healing. If you happen to be watching Lowell's public television (channel 8) you might spot Don, Beth, Paul Achin and myself talking about the service and inviting the viewing audience to join us every last Saturday of the month at 7 p.m. in Saint Anne's Chapel. Please consider coming to one of them during the summer months. You will not regret it.

Finally, some of you might be surprised to read in the pages of this newsletter that our very wonderful and faithful church secretary, Muriel Moge, is going back to retirement and leaving her ministry at the end of July. The office will be very different without her. She has been extremely faithful and efficient in the discharge of her duties. I just want to publicly thank her for all she has done for me and for the church and tell her that we love her dearly and will miss her greatly. While I am currently looking for someone to take over her job, she will never be replaced by anyone else.

Please enjoy the rest of the newsletter. It is filled with information about the events that have taken place over the last several months. And again, please enjoy the summer but do not forget your church home, whether Saint Anne's or Saint John's. May God continue to bless you and yours.

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN THE MERRIMACK VALLEY

By the Rev. Tom Barrington

A Cuban, a Sri Lankan, and a Ugandan priest, two male, one female, celebrated the Eucharist together in front of historic St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Lowell on Thursday, May 21st. The event was a gathering of the Episcopal Churches in the Merrimack Valley for the Feast of the Ascension that commemorates Jesus' bodily ascending into heaven 40 days after Easter.

St. Anne's Church was built by the mill owners when Lowell was first established. It was partially paid for by the mill girls who had "pew rent" deducted from their wages. Lowell and the Merrimack Valley have grown into a region of immigrants. In the story of Jesus ascension he tells his disciples that he is sending them to all nations. It seems like all nations have come to Lowell.



The Rev. Ramon Aymerich was born in Cuba and came to the United States after Castro came to power. He is currently the Rector of St. Anne's and St. John's churches in Lowell. The Rev Chitral DeMel is from Sri Lanka and is serving as the Urban Missioner at St. Anne's and St. John's. The Rev. Mary Tusubira will be beginning a Ugandan Anglican Service at St. John's Church on May 31st. She was the first woman ordained in the Anglican Church of

Uganda. She is also Co-Pastor of a vibrant Ugandan congregation in Waltham.

It is hard to know if those titans of industry who built Lowell could conceive to the diversity of cultures and peoples that would settle here. As the congregation gathered last Thursday to worship in English, Spanish, Sinhalese, and Lugandan, they knew a piece of Jesus commandment to spread God's word to all nations is being lived out in their presence.

TAIZE AT SAINT ANNE'S

By Beth Parsons

Last fall, I began to feel a call to hold a service of Taize at St. Anne's. I felt that this service would fill a spiritual need in the church that sometimes just cannot be filled through Sunday worship alone. I also saw it as an opportunity to reach out into the community, to again open our doors and invite people to come in and encounter the presence of God in an entirely different way. On the last Saturday of January, we held our first service of Taize in our chapel with the idea that we would see how it goes and then decide if we would hold another one.

The response to that first service was incredible. Nearly 50 people came to the service and everyone was touched in some way by the presence of the Holy Spirit. There was no doubt that we had started a very special ministry through Taize, and decided immediately that we should do this monthly, on the last Saturday of the month. Most of the time we have a small group, but those who come have a very real need to be there.

The service of Taize has its beginnings in the small town of Taize, located in the Burgundy region of France. It was founded in 1940 by Roger Louis Schutz-Marsauche (known as Brother Roger) a Swiss Protestant theologian, who decided to live in France, the

country of his mother. He had felt the calling for several years to begin a community where reconciliation among all Christians would be lived out in daily life. He wanted this community to be located in the midst of suffering at the time, so he chose the village of Taize, only a few miles from the line of demarcation which divided France during the war. His home became a refuge for the victims of war, and he was able to hide refugees, particularly Jews, who fled the occupied zone.

On Easter Sunday in 1949, the first brothers of the community made their commitment to a life of celibacy, to community of possessions and to simplicity of life. Today there are over a hundred brothers from all branches of the Church; Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox, making it a truly ecumenical community. Through their work, the center at Taize began to be known, and people began to visit the community. Today, over 100,000 people a year, mostly young people, make the pilgrimage to Taize to live, worship and work with the brothers.

The service of Taize is extremely simple; the beauty of the service is in its simplicity. People enter and leave the chapel in silence, which is illuminated by over a hundred candles on and in front of the altar. The candles draw your attention to the altar and help you to focus. The service itself consists of singing, intercessory prayers, readings from the Scriptures and long



periods of silent meditation. The songs are

not meant to be sung as hymns, but as a series of simple prayer-chants in either English or Latin, repeated many times which transform them into a kind of mantra, making them prayers of the heart. Silence is a central part of the service, and it is in this silence that God speaks to us.

It was not my intention to recreate the services at the community of Taize, but to offer the elements of Taize: candles, repetitive music, antiphonal prayers and silence as a means of inviting people who are stressed, tired, or in need to come into a relaxing atmosphere in the presence of God. We have also added the laying on of hands healing as part of our service, where we pray over one another and together feel the love and presence of God as He responds to our needs. Many times, people remain in the chapel for a time after the service, in silent meditation.

We will continue to hold our services of Taize on the last Saturday of each month in the chapel, with the exception of a couple of Saturdays which conflict with other happenings at the church. It is my hope that everyone at St. Anne's will come and experience Taize at least once. It is my prayer that this ministry will reach many lives, both inside and outside of St. Anne's, and that all who come, will experience firsthand the profound Love of God.

LET'S BE THE MUSTARD SEEDS

By Father Chitral De Mel

On Sunday the June 14th I preached at Christ Church, Andover, MA on the parable of the mustard seed. I was invited to preach at Christ Church by the diocese as part of their efforts to create more awareness about the Urban Resident program in the diocese as well as to raise funds for the program.

I preached about the struggles and challenges of the people in Lowell and our responsibility as people of God not only to be sensitive to

the needs of the people but also to respond by doing what we can as a church community.



As in the parable of the mustard seed, all we can do is to scatter little seeds and let God do the rest. As urban parishes we need God more than anything because we do not have enough resources and challenges are enormous and sometimes all we have is our faith in God. Congregations like us, need to pray a lot because like mustard seed we plant new seeds and pray that God will take care of the rest. Of course we will have to do our part. Of course there will be other partners who will help in God's name.

As we continue to engage in our ongoing outreach efforts as a church community we also need to look for areas where the community is hurting and need our engagement to bring healing even in a very small way. We can do great things for God if we are willing to offer ourselves to one who has planted in us the tiny seeds of love, generosity, mercy, justice and kindness.

The parable of the mustard seed reminds us that God's beginnings may be small, but His results are great. If you believe that this is how God does things, then you will begin to look for the mustard seeds. You will look for the first signs of this kingdom with faith and optimism. You will not be too quick to dismiss the small and insignificant. You will not give up on yourself, on others, on the

church, or even on the world just because you see many signs of sin and brokenness. Rather, you will believe in God's possibilities even if the evidence is as tiny as a mustard seed.

Jesus Christ is calling you and me to be the mustard seed. He calls St. Anne's to be the mustard seed. The actions God may call you and me to do may look insignificant to us but with God's help our actions can become real signs of God's kingdom.

Let's stay open for God's calling to be the mustard seeds.

CAMPING FOR A GOOD CAUSE

On a pleasant Memorial Day Weekend Saturday evening, the sound of spirited music spilled out into Shattuck Street, as local artists entertained guests at the "Street Beat" Homeless Benefit Concert at Lowell's Revolving Museum. The event, organized and sponsored by the Tent City Homeless Coalition, also included a "sleep-out" for the homeless, hosted by St. Anne's Episcopal Church just a block away on Merrimack Street.

The proceeds of the event will go toward purchasing and installing washers, dryers and showers for use by the area's homeless community at Living Waters Ministry of Hope at 9 West Adams Street in Lowell.

The Tent City Homeless Coalition was formed by UMass Lowell graduate student Allegra Williams and history professor Chad Montrie in the wake of the eviction of 10 homeless people from a tent city along the Concord River off Rogers Street last November [See Lowell Sun article on December 10, 2008 by Jennifer Myers]. The Coalition has been collaborating with the Living Waters Ministry of Hope since its inception, recognizing that the Ministry supports the Coalition's objectives of "finding a solution to homelessness in the city

of Lowell that is both ethical and practical, through coordination with already existing public and private agencies and advocacy of the rights and interests of the homeless”.



Living Waters Ministry of Hope, a non-denominational Christian outreach staffed and funded by volunteers, has been operating in Lowell since 1997. Director Diane Waddell began the ministry out of the back of her car after a time of intense prayer and discernment. Living Waters provides a safe, clean and pleasant place for the area's homeless, where they can gather and receive much-needed help and support in an atmosphere of Christian love and acceptance.

To raise awareness of the issue of homelessness [and to raise pledges], the Coalition also sponsored a “Sleep-Out for the Homeless” event hosted by St. Anne’s Episcopal Church. Father Ramón Aymerich and members of the parish opened their Church to the campers, who pitched tents, and even a cardboard box, in the Churchyard right on Merrimack Street. The participants included UMass students, members of St. Anne’s parish, Directors and volunteers from Living Waters Ministry of Hope, and members of the Secular Franciscan Order from Andover.

To further awareness, the Tent City Coalition will participate in the Revolving Museum exhibit, "Show and tell: The Art of

the Narrative", which begins Friday, May 29th with an opening celebration from 7:00pm-9:00pm. The Coalition’s entry in the exhibit will be artifacts collected from the Rogers Street campsite after the eviction of November 20, 2008, and narratives about the items shared by participants in the “Street Beat” benefit concert on May 23rd.

For more information regarding the Tent City Homeless Coalition and Living Waters Ministry, visit their websites at tentcitycoalition.org and livingwaterslowell.org.

TIME TO RETIRE (AGAIN)

By Muriel Moge



Four and one half years ago I started working in the office at St. Anne’s. I was at a point in

my life where I needed to be needed.

There was a new challenge every day. There were many obstacles to be dealt with but one by one I managed to conquer them. (Not always as desired.) I can’t count the things I have learned in those four and a half years. Things I didn’t know I was capable of learning. I have a lot of people to thank for helping me; Paul who was my greatest source of information and always available to help me. Jeff with the financial portion of my job certainly had his share of patience with me. I could always come up with a problem on a daily basis whether it be not knowing the right category for the invoice or panic because we needed more money in the account. Josefina who folded bulletins, prepared lunch every day and did all the odd jobs she could handle, even though I could

not get her to touch the computer. Last but not least I need to thank Father Ramon for his faith in me and giving me this opportunity to discover that I was capable of learning. We did not always agree on matters and I know there were times when we were frustrated with each other. Most of this was because we both had to be right. Having said that I must add we had a lot of respect for each other's position and there were many happy days. I was proud to say I worked at St. Anne's and I have so much to be thankful for including having an extended family. It will feel very strange being just one of the parishioners but I truly feel that is where I belong now.

I have made so many wonderful friends along the way, parishioners, people from the street, even business people that I have dealt with.

As many of you know I have decided to return to retirement and my last official day will be July 31st. I will still be living in Dracut and attending St. Anne's so you may see more of me than you do now. I will stay in touch and please feel free to call me and I will try to be of some help if I am able.

JOURNEY OF FAITH

By Vyonna De Mel



'Journey of Faith', Children's ministry at St. Anne's had celebrated the completion of its first year by having a family Fun Day on June 7th. At the combined service held prior to the Family Day Picnic, children were given

gifts and certificates for being of the Journey of Faith. The church school presently has about 40 children.

On Palm Sunday, children performed a Passion Play. There were about 15 children who were part of the Passion Play. The congregation was moved by Children's wonderful performances. On Good Friday, children performed the Passion Play at St. John's Church. 'Lowell Sun' carried a front page photograph of the Passion play, giving community wide publicity to children at St. Anne's.

Plans are underway to have a one week long vacation Bible school on August 3rd to August 7th 2009. More details will be made available soon.

We are fortunate to have Paul, Paula, Diana, Bendu, Olissa, Cindy and Arlene who teach and assist children in many ways in their journey of faith. We are also very happy that Erica Whitesell, who is a high school teacher in Lowell will be joining us to be part of our journey of faith.

We thank all the parents who brought their children to the church to be part of the Journey of Faith. Journey of Faith will be resumed in early September. A staff meeting will be held on August 2nd at 11:15 AM to plan the next year.

FAREWELL TO PAM GARDINER

After 40 years of faithful membership and the gift of her voice to enhance our worship, Pam Gardiner and her husband Ernie have decided to relocate permanently to South Carolina where they have been hibernating for the last several winters.

There is no doubt that Pam will be greatly missed. However, she now takes the gifts that she has been so blessed with to another diocese and parish. We hope that that congregation and the diocese will be just as blessed as we have been.



FATHER FRANK BAKER
CELEBRATES
50 YEARS OF FAITHFUL MINISTRY



On Wednesday, June 24th, the Feast of Saint John the Baptists, a number of family and friends gathered with Father Frank Baker to celebrate his 50th ordination to the diaconate

and 49th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. The celebration, in the form of a Eucharist and a very nice brunch afterwards, took place at Trinity Church, Milford, the parish where his daughter Beth Washburn is a member. Prior to this retirement, Father Baker was rector of Emmanuel Church in West Roxbury for 21 years. He presently lives in Lowell with his daughter Cindy and very close to his son Peter and daughter-in-law Diane.

PENTECOST SUNDAY:
A NEW BIRTH FOR SAINT JOHN'S
(The Ministry of Mother Mary)

By David Stuhr

On Pentecost Sunday, May 31, the ministry of Mother Mary began at St. John's Episcopal Church. It has been exciting and a pleasure for me to see Mother Mary in action as she conducts the 12 PM Sunday services in Lugandan and some English, to hear the congregation sing familiar tunes in a language that is foreign to my ears, have her call upon members of the congregation to read the daily readings, gather the offering and to assist at the altar. She frequently asks questions and expects answers from the congregation as she delivers her sermon. The service that Mother Mary conducts is based on the Book of Common Prayer but it has been filtered through the society and culture of Uganda; it is different but it is the same. It brings a smile to my face to observe as she greets and interacts with new and old familiar faces found in the members of the congregation after a service. It has been a great experience to learn about her husband and his ministry, her family and her homeland of Uganda. The enthusiasm with which Mother Mary conducts her ministry is contagious.

I and others have been lending a hand to Mother Mary before and after the Lugandan service; there are just too many things for her to do by herself. I personally had never really given much thought to all the things

that must be done to prepare for a service and the things that must be done after the service until I offered to help. Doors have to be opened and closed, PA systems turned on and off and microphones put out and safely put away, the altar prepared for communion and after the service the communion ware washed and made ready for use the following Sunday, people new to Lowell and St. John's need to be greeted and assured that they are in the right place and that their cars are parked in an OK location and shown where the main door to the church may be found (many of us who have lived in the community for years may have forgotten how difficult navigating in Lowell can be), the collection has to be counted, recorded and put in a safe place and a few refreshments made ready for those who may have traveled many miles to worship with Mother Mary and have those same miles to retrace to return safely to their homes. Also until Mother Mary relocates to the Lowell area she often needs transportation to and from her home in Waltham. Sunday is usually seen as a day of rest for most of us but it also is a day on which to do the work of our Lord and Savior.



As a new member of St. John's, I feel with the financial support of our Bishops and the congregation of St. Anne's and the moral and spiritual support of Father Ramon and Father Chitral this new ministry of Mother Mary is off to a good start and as she has said to me more than once, "be patient, they will come". Please consider giving an hour or two of your time to support this new mission journey and outreach that has started in our midst.

THE MARRIAGE OF JOE GODFROY AND PRISCILLE MATTE

As many of you know, Joe Godfroy has been battling liver and pancreatic cancer since diagnosed in October of last year. Almost a month ago he suffered another setback due to a stroke.

For 19 years, Joe and Priscille have been living out a wonderful and faithful relationship but without the benefit of marriage. The circumstances that he now faces provided an opportunity for them to think about whether they wanted to officially ratify their relationship, something which they did with the assistance of the chaplain of the Boston Medical Center and a team of nurses and doctors that provided everything needed for a very emotional and beautiful wedding ceremony which Father Ramon officiated by his Joe's bedside in the company of some family and friends.

Joe is now at Northeast Rehab center in Salem (NH) and making great progress. He and Priscille are deeply grateful for your prayers and well-wishes and ask you to continue to keep them in your prayers.



We at Saint Anne's have been blessed by their presence and generosity. We wish them well as they begin this new phase of their relationship and wish Joe renewal as he works out daily and looks forward to going home to the wife he so loves.