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### A Sermon by Rt. Rev. William Persell

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Last Sunday when our Senior Warden, Lynne Goepper, asked if I would preside this Sunday she suggested that I draw upon my years of experience, most recently as Bishop of Chicago, to speak about the interim period of St John's, now between Rectors. Lynne asked that I say something which would be reassuring to those who are anxious or concerned about the search process and what will come from it. I'm happy to share from my thoughts and experience. Whether or not this will allay anxiety, I have no idea. I was struck by our first reading from Genesis. It's sort of a search process, in this case to find not a Rector for St John's but a suitable wife for Abraham and Sarah's son, Isaac. Would that the search for a new Rector were this simple. Abraham's servant travels to their home country and makes a deal with God. The servant will stand by the spring and ask the women who come there for a little water to drink. The one whom God has chosen for Isaac's wife is to respond "Drink and I will draw for your camels also." Sure enough, Rebekah appears, offers the servant a drink and water for the camels. Rebekah is the one and she becomes Isaac's wife.

To St John's search committee I think I can safely say, "It's not going to be this easy..." However, there are things you can take from this passage. The servant knew the territory where he was to search. He would not find a bride among the Canaanites who did not share their faith. The servant surrounded his mission in prayer, trusting in God's guidance and good will towards him and his master, and after finding Rebekah, worshipping and blessing God. Rebekah submitted to questioning about her loyalty and truthfulness. Could she in good faith make this commitment? She was asked if she would do this and she responded, "I will."

Our clergy search processes, over the years, have grown more and more complex. They've also become much more participatory and democratic. The whole congregation has a say in developing the profile of what the congregation needs and wants in a Rector to help carry out its mission. The diocese, in the person of the Bishop, has a say because the parish priest is also a priest of the diocese, serving under the Bishop.

Each diocese has a person responsible for clergy deployment. These persons meet with their counterparts regularly and share information about clergy

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who are seeking a move, and congregations with openings. The Episcopal Church also has a rich data base of available clergy - but you need not limit the search to those currently looking. It might be that an appropriate candidate could be prevailed upon to consider a move.

Much of the search process must remain confidential to protect the ministries of those involved. Therefore the Search Committee won't report on who is being considered. But it is important for the Committee to keep the parish informed in general terms of where they are in the process. The whole parish needs to hold the Committee and those being considered in prayer.

From my experience I'd offer a few words of advice to the Search Committee. First, do not limit your pool of candidates by arbitrarily eliminating whole categories of persons by gender, race, marital status, sexual orientation or age. Congregations which cast the widest possible net generally wind up with the best results, sometimes to their great surprise and future growth.

When checking references in the final rounds, talk with persons who are not on the applicant's list but who should know the person and his or her ministry.

When questioning clergy candidates pay more attention to what they have and have not done, rather than what they think ought to be done regarding such issues as congregational growth and development, work with youth, Christian formation for all ages, stewardship and ecumenical and interfaith outreach.

Find a priest with skills, compassion, intelligence and a sense of humor, all grounded in a deep prayerful commitment to Jesus Christ and to the Episcopal Church.

In my experience in the Diocese of Chicago which has a wide diversity of congregations -- urban, suburban, small town and rural, African, African-American, Hispanic, Korean, Anglo, rich and poor -- the congregations which did the best in confronting the turmoil of the past five years were those where the Rector or Priest-in-Charge was clear about where s/he stood on the issues and made it clear that it was alright for others to disagree. Parishes had difficulty when the priest was not faithful to the ordination vow of being loyal to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church, or when the Rector tried to lead the congregation against the Church, or was confused and ambivalent about the actions of our Church. Rather than being a strong non-anxious presence, those clergy fed into the anxiety of their congregations, sometime with disastrous consequences.

From what I can see and hear, St John's is in a good place. Lay leadership is strong. The buildings and grounds are well cared for. Worship and music involve everyone. St John's is seeking to be a better steward of God's creation. This church offers hospitality to the wider community, spiritual and educational programs, and outreach to persons in need through the food shelf, the new second-hand store and other programs. St John's supports the worldwide mission of the Episcopal Church. We have much to offer a new priest who comes to join and lead us in worship and mission.

I started attending St John's with my family in 1952. Over the years I've been an acolyte, bell-ringer and sweeper of the walks. For four years I served as a summer supply priest. I'm filled with many fond memories of this place, and the people I've known here. I give thanks for St John's, Essex, and have great hope for our future. I'm also proud and thankful for all that the Episcopal Church has represented in this nation and throughout the world, and the leadership we are offering now. We no longer call ourselves the Episcopal Church - USA, or ECUSA for short, because we have dioceses in some 14 nations from Taiwan to Central and South America to Europe. House of Bishops and General Convention and other meetings are done with simultaneous Spanish translation; our largest diocese, Haiti, is French-speaking.

We also have a very strong organization which we generously fund: Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD.) It's my privilege to serve on the ERD board. We currently have programs with mostly Anglican partners in 40 nations around the globe directly impacting over 2 million people a year. Episcopalians have donated millions of dollars for recovery from for recovery from the Asian tsunami, millions more for work in the Gulf Coast - USA,

and millions more for Nets for Life, anti-malarial programs throughout Africa and the Caribbean. Episcopal Relief and Development has a highly motivated, skilled staff who represent our church well as they respond to disasters and build for long term development capacity with our partners.

(And now I bring us back to where we started this morning...) When Abraham's servant brought Rebekah back and she became Isaac's wife, we are told "he loved her." When the Search Committee and Vestry bring us a new Rector, may we grow to love him or her, as we did Eileen. In the interim, be strong and of good cheer, faithful in prayer and worship and service, ready and eager to join in the dance as we are summoned by our Lord Jesus Christ.

## WHY THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION MATTERS

*Frank Strasburger served as Episcopal chaplain at Princeton University and associated rector of Trinity Church, Princeton, New Jersey. Now retired, he lives in Maine.*

This isn't just a battle between the bishop of New Hampshire and the archbishop of Nigeria, but a struggle to preserve the very possibility of a church inspired by paradox rather than dogma and ambiguity rather than certainty.

When the Apostle Paul addressed the church at Corinth, he must have had in mind something like what Anglicans are now experiencing. The reason he gave priority to love over faith and hope is that while neither faith nor hope guarantees love, love engenders faith and hope. Faith and hope can become ego-based: "I believe;" "I have a dream." But when we say "I love you," the *I* disappears into the *you* and creates what Martin Buber understood as a new relationship, *I-Thou*. Paul must have known that sometimes faith and hope can be obstacles to love and today's Anglicans bear witness to that. We have come to a crossroads at which we must decide whether we are willing to let go of our particular understandings of faith and hope long enough to honor the commandments to love God and one another.

This is why the Anglican Communion matters. Anglicans are bound together above all not by faith or hope, each of which may be variously understood, but by the love that miraculously breaks down the walls sometimes erected in the name of faith and hope. Despite our differences—and they are difficult and significant—we are sisters and brothers, children of God. If we can't keep faith with that essential truth and act on it, how can we expect the rest of the world to believe it?



*For he is our peace; I his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups*

*To God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death the hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. —EPHESIANS 2:14-22*

# EPISCOPAL TRIVIA

## TRUE OR FALSE?

1. The Vestry, as a body, is the legal agent for the parish in all matters concerning its corporate property and relations of the parish to the clergy.
2. No one shall be ordained priest until reaching the age of 21.
3. No one shall be ordained and consecrated bishop until the attainment of 30 years of age.
4. The Ministers of the church are all people over the age of 18.
5. No one but a priest or bishop can baptize.
6. A diocese may elect up to four Suffragan bishops.
7. There is no provision in the Book of Common Prayer for making a private confession to a priest.
8. The date for Easter in the year 2037 is April 5th.
9. It is perfectly appropriate that parents be included as godparents in a baptism.
10. The mandatory retirement age for clergy is 68.

(To find out how well steeped you are in Episcopal tradition and governance, check your answers below.)

## *A Trivia Quiz for Episcopalians - Answers*

1. TRUE - The vestry does serve as legal agent for the parish. (Title I, Canon 14, Sec.2)
2. FALSE - The youngest age at which a person can be ordained to the priesthood is 24. (Title III, Canon 7, Sec. 10)
3. TRUE - A person can be consecrated a bishop as early as age 30.  
(Constitution, Art. II, Sec.2)
4. FALSE - "And a child will lead them" All baptized persons are ministers of the church.  
(Book of Common Prayer, "Outline of the Faith", page 855. Also Title II, Canon I)
5. FALSE - In an emergency, any baptized person is authorized to perform a baptism.  
(Book of Common Prayer, page 313)
6. FALSE - When it comes to Suffragan bishops, two is the limit unless special permission has been granted.

(Title III, Canon 24, Sec. 3)

**7. FALSE** - Though the Eucharist includes a corporate prayer of confession, the Episcopal Church does offer Reconciliation of a Penitent, a private confession, to all who desire it.

(*The Book of Common Prayer*, page 446)

**8. TRUE** - The dates of Easter each year from 1900 to 2089 can be found in *The Book of Common Prayer* on pages 882 - 883.

**9. TRUE** - It is perfectly appropriate that parents be included as godparents in a baptism.

(*The Book of Common Prayer*, page 298)

**10. FALSE** - Clergy must retire on or before their 72nd birthday.

(Title III, Canon 16, Sec. 5)

### **If You Answered:**

**1 - 5 correctly** - You're in the good company of many Episcopal souls.

**6 - 7 correctly** - You must have been born in an Episcopal cradle.

**8 - 9 correctly** - Get measured for a collar. You're on track for ordination!

**All 10 correctly** - Move over, Bishop. You've got company!



## **A HOMILY BY PETER SCHULTZ July 27, 2008**

Am I a *truly* a Christian? This is a question I have asked myself often over the past few years. I don't mean "Do I live a moral life following Christian ethics?". I do try to do that. No, I mean "Do I *truly believe* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, sent to our earth in human form to teach us The Way and that He was resurrected after dying on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins and to give us the hope of a life everlasting.

Now, I have never *ever* doubted the existence of God. As a scientist, I look in absolute awe at the beauty and complexity of our natural world around us, our solar system and the universe and *just know* that such a grand design could not have happened by chance. How else can we explain its wondrous construction, from the smallest invisible quantum particles within an atom to the myriad of galaxies and unfathomable distances of interstellar space, to the elegance of DNA and genetic codes, to the glorious marvel called "life"? There *must* be a God behind this grand scheme.

But for me, and I am sure for many others, it requires a much greater and more difficult “leap of faith” to fully accept the idea that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God. After all, I wasn’t there to see Him perform miracles with my own eyes or to hear Him speak with my own ears or to witness His resurrection. To believe that He is the Son of God means I must accept the word of others...the disciples who *were* eye witnesses to the actual events two thousand years ago and who speak to us today... bridging the ages... through the Gospels. It took me many years to *really* accept and take that “leap of faith”. I would like to take you now on the life and religious journey that got me to finally “jump”.

My parents were both first generation Americans. My mother was Catholic. Her parents came to America in the early 1900’s from Czechoslovakia. My father was basically a skeptic when it came to organized religion. His parents came to America from Germany, also in the early 1900’s. When my parents married, my mother was excommunicated from the Catholic Church, much to the dismay of her family. I was born in Brooklyn, NY in 1942, in the midst of WW II and was baptized in the Episcopal Church (as close as my mother could get me to Catholicism at the time). Although neither of my parents attended church, I was dutifully sent to Episcopal Sunday school and summer bible camp and have still got old photos of me as a small child attending church events and marching in church parades (with crepe banners proclaiming “Onward Christian Soldiers” hung across my chest or strung through the spokes of my bicycle).

When I was 9 years old, we moved to NJ and my mother continued to send me to Episcopal Sunday school, but when I made friends with a Presbyterian boy in my neighborhood, I began going with him to his local church instead. This continued through my early teens, when I stopped going altogether after the minister openly admonished me and my buddy during a sermon for wearing white suede shoes to church.

No one in my family had ever gone to college, but after my Junior High guidance counselor told me I wasn’t really college material, I devoted more time to my studies, thanks also to an encouraging mother, and by HS graduation I was accepted in several colleges with scholarships to cover most of the costs. Two events in my latter days of college had a big effect on me: within the span of one year I was involved in two very serious car crashes that were entirely my fault. My cars were totally destroyed and I should have been killed or crippled, but I walked away from both crashes virtually unscathed. I remember asking myself...why? Why was I saved from certain disaster? ...but I had no answer at the time.

Several years later in 1967, following graduation from Rutgers with my PhD in engineering, I began a career as a research scientist at Corning in upstate NY. One of the very first projects assigned to me was to try to invent a way to make fiber optics for telephone communications using laser light for signals. Despite the fact that every major communication laboratory in the world was working on the same thing, after three years of hard work, I succeeded in beating them all to a solution to the problem. To this day, every fiber optic cable laid around the world (and there are now ~700 million miles of them) are still made using the same design and manufacturing process that I co-invented in 1972. Because of fiber optics communications, coupled with personal computers and user-friendly software, the internet

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was born in the 1990's, leading to a paradigm shift in how mankind can work and cooperate. I am not the father of the internet (not even close), but I am one of the key enablers. I am absolutely convinced that God saved me from certain disaster several years earlier...twice... so that I could accomplish this important task.

Fast forward to 2002: I retired from full time work in Atlanta and my wife Mary Anne and I moved into our second home here in Essex, NY. Through the intervening years I still didn't attend church very often, but I tried to lead my life according to the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule. I had a successful and fulfilling 35 year career as a scientist, business executive and father, but felt something was missing from my life. One day a few years ago, Mary Anne and I attended our first service together here at St. John's. We have both been devout church goers ever since. Our Episcopal Church families, both here and at our winter home in St. Thomas, have become important parts of our lives and I have personally found, through church, God and Christ that the missing part of my life has been made complete.

Over the past few years, we have had several serious crises in our lives. Church and prayer have played crucial and comforting roles in helping us through them. One of our sons miraculously survived a serious motorcycle accident and has now fully recovered thanks to the power of prayer. The second crisis was mine: I was diagnosed last Fall with prostate cancer. Thanks to God, it was detected in an early enough stage to be treated through surgery and now ongoing radiation treatments. I am in God's hands, no matter what happens in the future, and I am not afraid. This crisis made me more mindful of how precious every day we have here is and intensified my desire to do more for others, using my God-given skills as best I can to help those in need around me. I am certain that it was not just by chance that I was reunited with God and joined our church just before these crises arose. They gave me great comfort and a sense of peace that helped me through them.

And so, I return to my first question: Am I truly a Christian? As I reflect on the many events in my life journey so far, I see clearly the guiding hand of a Divine Presence at many points along the way. God's power is truly awesome....so awesome that I now have no doubt He could send His son to try to guide us all. As for the miracles of Jesus' birth, life, and resurrection, I also have no doubts. Just think about the Apostles, witnesses to many of these events. They were just plain folk like you and me before they met Christ, yet after His resurrection, they became so dedicated to spreading the message they had heard and seen, that every one of them, save two (John and Judas), died a martyrs' violent and painful death rather than renounce their faith! And of the two, John was banished for his faith. Common rational people just don't behave this way for no reason. How powerful...marvelous...that experience of being in the presence of Jesus must have been to inspire them to so successfully spread the Word after His death and then give up their own lives in support of it. No, I have no doubt that Jesus Christ is the son of God.

And so, here I am, ready to do my best to live the life of a true Christian. I look forward to what God has in store for me next. I appreciate the opportunity to share this story with you. Amen

# VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

By Lynne Goepper (Warden)

June and July went like a "Flash" for the vestry! Members were hard at work many days (and mostly at 8 AM !) to complete the paper work required by Albany. Your participation via survey or oral response was included in the vestry's final profile. We now anxiously await word from the diocese.

Other items which the vestry acted on: raising supply priest pay from \$100 to \$150 with additional for mileage; hired a person to put finishing touches on our church profile; purchased a new computer for the office and have Bill Morgan updating our website. We also discussed the importance of the building improvements with the volume of fuel and electricity used. Hopefully we are requiring less.

We are most appreciative for the time Dick Close is spending to make changes to a video he produced in 2000. In anticipation of a priest candidate visiting off season he wants to have good footage of summer as well as winter!

Mary Anne Schultz announced in June that her concept for "ReNew" (an exchange shop for a variety of goods) had been awarded \$1,000 to pay some of the rent for the old Harold Tart grocery by the Essex Community Fund. In July she reported that the concept was a "winner" bringing items and people together, to have funds to help get neighbors in need through the coming winter. All the local churches are participating (Essex Community, United Methodist, Congregational, and both Catholic churches). Please visit the store and consider donating a few hours of work.

## ESSEX DAY

Saturday August 3rd started off with everyone praying for the weather forecast was not encouraging. Despite the clouds The Essex Initiative committee headed by Katharine Preston and John Bingham were overseeing the "awning city" going up behind town hall before 9 AM. The main street was filling-up with vendors and visitors. All went well until about 1:30 PM when the rain finally came down.

St. John's had a table in front of "ReNew". Claudia Caveney and others from church spent the morning selling a variety of baked goods which volunteers had made. And Antonia Bullard, who returned late on Friday from Bahrain, came with freshly made cookies and her daughter, Sophie with three friends. Antonia made

tea sandwiches while her hardworking crew made large signs advertising the baked Sophie goods,



afternoon tea, and Betsy Tisdale's quilts. Walt Gladding spent the day in church answering questions about the church and also selling some quilt items (Betsy gives half of her proceeds to church,,,, this year for the food shelf). Many, many thanks to all who baked, volunteered time or did both. Your efforts yielded \$483 for the food shelf!!

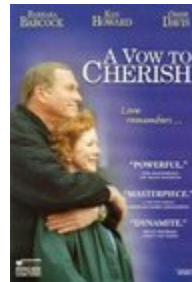
# MOVIE REVIEW

## A VOW TO CHERISH

This is a very rare film which illustrates the devotion of a husband to his wife through "sickness and health, in good times and bad," as he leans on the Lord for his strength. The 50ish wife contracts Alzheimer's Disease and this excellent movie shows the awful devastation and immediate changes within a family that this disease brings.

This movie is an excellent portrayal of the deep faith and deep love a husband had for his wife and for his belief in Christ. . It shows that we can't do life alone, and that God truly will never leave us or forsake us. We have to run to Him. We must place our burdens on Jesus' strong shoulders because we were never meant to carry them alone. He truly offers us a peace that passes all understanding when we give our worries and hardships to Him.

STARRING Ken Howard  
Ossie Davis  
Donna Bullock  
David Morin



**WELL THAT'S ALL FOLKS, HOPE YOU ENJOYED OUR NEW WEB NEWSLETTER. IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE PLEASE GIVE US A CALL AT THE OFFICE, 963-7775. PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE AND WE WILL GET BACK TO YOU AS SOON AS WE CAN.**

Extra note: Kathy will be out of the office from August 11 until the 19<sup>th</sup>.