



ST. JOHN'S NEWS

Volume 8 Issue 2

Mar/Apr 2009

St. John's Episcopal Church, 4 Church Street,
Essex, New York, 12936
The Rev. Margaret E. Shaw

Website: www.StJohnsEssexNY.com Email: stjohnschurch@willex.com
518-963-7775

- ✓ SERMON BY
KATHARINE
PRESTON
- ✓ ABOUT OUR
NEW PRIEST
MARGIE SHAW
- ✓ MOVIE REVIEW
- ✓ VESTRY
HIGHLIGHTS
- ✓ RENEW NEWS
- ✓ CIRCLE YOUR
CALENDAR
- ✓ BOOK REVIEW
- ✓ THE BEAUTIFUL
HANDS OF A
PRIEST

ON THE WAY

A sermon offered by Katharine Preston

So – this is what is happening near us: The male red-winged blackbirds insist “con-ker-ree”, (which basically means “see-how-much-redder-and-bigger-my-shoulder-epaulets-are-than-yours!”); the mourning doves squeeze their nest in an outside crack of the hay barn and peer disdainfully on the construction going on in the adjacent tractor barn; the swallows soar around with a lot of chatter, putting on this act: “where-shall-we live?” – as if they might not take up residence in the exact same nesting boxes they have been in for years!

This is all very reassuring to me. The expanded seasonal vibrancy of this time of year reminds me that our farm is enfolded in a much larger space-time continuum. I just have to flow with it, and remember that it will go right on without me.

Which is a good thing – because something dawned on me a couple of weeks ago that gave me a bit of a shock. I realized that I would probably not be alive to see if we successfully protect the planet from the extremes of global warming by reducing carbon emissions 80% by 2050. I know this may seem silly, but it just hadn't occurred to me that I would have to reach 101 to see that.

There you have it: Turning sixty makes you realize that you may not see the Promised Land.

There are other things I may not see in my lifetime: like the poverty rate for

**Living green one
day is not going to
save the planet.
Earth Day is
obsolete and
maybe even
counterproductive.
How about “Earth
Way”!**

kids under 18 in Essex County reduced to zero from 14.5 %. And although I remember well there was a time when we all thought the Berlin Wall was impenetrable and apartheid in South Africa insurmountable, I am not so sure that I will live to see lasting peace in the Middle East.

So, the return of the phoebe – repeating his name “phoebe phoebe, phoebe phoebe”, tirelessly, on a campaign for recognition, I find reassuring. They all will outlast the hate, the human poverty – although they might have to move northward a bit before 2050.

Reassurance is what our scriptural readings for today are all about. Most, with the exception, of course, of the psalm, were written around the end of the first century. They were meant to be balm for a scary situation: the crucifixion, a rug-pulled-out-from-under-you moment; the resurrection, an unexpected anomaly and events during the decades following were not proceeding at all as expected. The second coming was late. It is easy enough for us, 2000-odd years later, looking back, to at least think that we “get it” – that we understand the concept of a “living Christ” - but I suspect Thomas was only one of many early Christians saying: “Huh?”

So the scriptural words were meant to remind the early Christians - as they are meant to remind us today - that we are enfolded in a space-time continuum characterized by especially by -- love:

“Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.” (Acts 4:32)

“ . . . if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another . . . ” (1 John 1:7a)

This probably didn't and doesn't, to this day, satisfy everyone. We look for answers, for resolution, for instance, on the economic crisis. Friends are losing jobs. Friends are using the food pantry. Friends may not be able to keep their home. Or maybe these things are happening to us.

But Jesus reminds his disciples a bit earlier in the Gospel of John: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.” (John 14:27)*

“I do not give to you as the world gives.” Jesus did not and does not bring solutions, fixes, resolution. Thinking that is one of the pitfalls of a number of fundamentalist and even some mainstream denominations. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas says “Christianity is fundamentally a sign that enables you to live when you know no solution.”(*As quoted in April 09 Sojourner's article.)

No solution. Rather – Jesus suggests a bearing, a way of being for the journey: a practice that emphasizes peace, fellowship, sharing and unity. It was, and is, radically different (because it does not involve traditional use of power), radically inclusive (because sex, profession, national identity and economic status are not the measure of a person) and radically communal.

Jesus does not call us to save ourselves, but to save each other. We are called – by our faith – “*to walk in the light as he is in the light*” and to “*love one another as he has loved us.*”

Northwest of Jerusalem is the city of Jaffa. It is here that the apostle Peter has a vision in which God tells him not to distinguish between Jews and Gentiles, and to abolish some of the food rituals followed by the Jews, so that all people can sit down and eat together. How appropriate, then, that a group called Sulha today has its headquarters in Jaffa. Sulha is a Mid-Eastern indigenous process of mediation, in this case, for the healing and reconciliation of the children of Abraham: Jews, Muslims, Christians. Sulha tries to embody “a new language of peace, developing a culture of co-existence.” Gatherings are sponsored that are set in familiar cultural environments – with food, music, dance, dialogue circles and sacred rituals from all of the Abrahamic traditions. The gatherings include groups like the Bereaved Family Forum – made up of Israeli and Palestinian parents who, instead of seeking revenge for the deaths of their children at the hands of the other side, choose to sit down and share in their sorrow, to tell, to listen.

But the thing that impresses me most about this group is their upfront acknowledgement that they are only a process, not a solution. The gatherings are called “On the Way to Sulha”, even as the conflict and the killing continues around them. They are “on the way . . .” What does being “on the way” look like closer to home?

Well, at the top levels of our government, I see an attitude change – especially in our relationship with other nations. There is a lot less talk about “this is what must be done, because America knows best.” We are beginning to listen, to be “on the way” with others – Iran, Cuba - not so hung up on reaching a particular end point as to journey productively, in fellowship with each other – most importantly, with those people we previously called our enemies.

Here in the Champlain Valley we are blessed with peace. Our challenges are not matters of life or death, neither as in Israel and the Occupied Territories nor in matters of state. But our challenges are deep, because our neighbors are in want. We’ve talked about food insecurity before, the lack of access to affordable, healthy food, often resulting in obesity, health issues.

There is no fixed resolution. Poverty is too complex. But there is a way of communal living that can make a difference. Encouraging local food production and consuming local foods is a way forward. Subsidizing the cost of fresh local foods for the food shelf, as this church has begun doing, is a way forward. Making sure taxes and land values don’t overpower the young farmers who are coming here now by the dozens, is a way forward. This is “on the way.”

I do not give to you as the world gives, says Jesus. I give you a Way.

Why has this congregation not dissolved over the last few months, being without a full-time priest? Partly, to be sure, because of the selfless contributions of a few, but also because as a congregation, we are “on the way” together.

So what about Earth Day? You all know I don’t like it, and you know why. Living green one day is not going to save the planet. Earth Day is obsolete and maybe even counterproductive. How about “Earth Way”!

So I may not see the Promised Land. But – what of it? I am enfolded into a space-time continuum striving to “*love one another as he has loved us*” and imagining that “one another” includes red-winged blackbirds, local farmers, the poor and our “enemies”. Times are changing. We may not live to see ultimate resolution on many problems, but praise God, we can witness and participate in a forward leaning process, a way that is, in and of itself, affirming and willfully hopeful.

May it be so.

EARTHWAY EVERYDAY!



<St Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor by promising to:>

- **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God’s creation and the poor and vulnerable;
- **LEARN** about and educate others on both the reality of climate change and its moral dimensions;
- **ASSESS** your participation in contributing to climate change (i.e. consumption and conservation);
- **ACT** to change your choices and behaviors contributing to climate change and;
- **ADVOCATE** Christian principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact the poor and vulnerable.



THE REV. MARGARET E. SHAW

Our new rector, "Margie" Shaw is currently serving as priest-in-charge at St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church in Culver, Indiana. She also serves as Chaplain at a hospital in Plymouth, Indiana. She is married to Terry Shaw. They have a grown son and a daughter.

Margie has a BA in sociology from Cornell College (Mt. Vernon, IA) and a MS in counseling from Indiana University. She attended Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Northern Indiana School of Theology. Initially she worked as a counselor in private practice and then became a hospital Chaplain.

Her heart is in parish ministry. However, in all her ministry she is led by Jesus and is dependent upon prayer. She wants to model and teach God's love. (From her profile).

The vestry had received a number of candidate resume's prior to Margie's. Her credentials and presence made a very positive impression on vestry members and the wardens. After a number of phone conversations and then a visit to St. John's, we all agreed that Margie's profile match the church profile.

We believe Margie Shaw will meet our needs to grow. She currently is endeavoring to grow a small church in a small lake resort town. She has experience in: program and budget development, Christian education (Sunday school and Bible study) counseling, conflict resolution, pastoral care, and group dynamics. Note her Bishop, Edward Small, was mentor to our Bishop, William Love!



The Rev. Margaret E. Shaw

MOVIE REVIEW

With perseverance, commitment and faith, accompanied by God's amazing grace, people of passionate convictions can indeed change the world. This theme permeates the film, *Amazing Grace*. Two hundred years ago in 1807 the first anti-slave trade bill was passed by England's Parliament, ending 400 years of slave trading. A brave force led by one persistent man, upheld by moral integrity, inspiring friends and a driving faith, paved the way for this world-changing, history-shaping milestone. The film celebrates the 200th anniversary of this accomplishment and a Christian hero who fought to end a horrible evil of his time.

Amazing Grace



Rating ★★★★★

VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Finance:** March meeting – the budget was accepted with zero allocation for diocesan assessment. This action was amended to quarterly payments. Due to reduced income we need to keep church expenses “in tow”.
2. **Plate:** There seems to be a bit of confusion over where “loose” plate monies go. The *first* Sunday of every month is for Rector’s Discretionary Fund. Monies are kept in this account to help local people in temporary need. The *second* Sunday supports the food shelf in Elizabethtown. During June, July, and August, the *third* Sunday’s plate is for missions offering; Dominican Republic, Sudan, Episcopal Development and Relief, etc. *Other* Sunday monies will go to the budget
3. **New Rector:** Bill Finucane wrote a covenant (contract) using the diocese’s format. This agreement spells out our mutual responsibilities and financial commitment, housing, etc. The Rev. Margaret E. Shaw has signed it and also the Wardens. The vestry received copies and approved the covenant. Rev. Margie begins with us on June 7th.

4. **Easter Preparations:** The vestry decided to limit our Lenten observance to having a guest celebrant for Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Father Rick Dennis will continue to fill-in April 26 thru May 31. For April 19th, Claudia Caveney was our lay reader and Katharine Preston gave the sermon (on front cover of this newsletter).

5. **Vestry Terms:** Last year as we began our search for a new vicar, the diocesan deployment officer told the vestry/search team to keep the group in tact through the process. As we approach the July annual meeting we acknowledge the extension of terms and will need only to have a one year replacement for Bruce Stephen.

1. **Other business:** An Ecumenical Taize service was held at St. John's on March 29th. St. John's provided the music and each church's minister/priest shared in the readings. All the churches in Essex-Willsboro were represented at this very moving/inspiring service.
2. Pledges are now at \$97,000. We hope that those who have not yet made a commitment to sustain our expenses will soon do so.
3. ReNew at the "Yellow Store" will soon resume operation. Please do NOT leave goods for ReNew at Persell Hall! Wait until Helene Gray, business manager announces when and where to take things. Helene is looking for volunteer workers. Call her @ 963-7716
4. "Margie" Shaw will be arriving in Essex during the first week of June. It would be thoughtful if we could prepare a few meals for her to have on-hand the first few days. Call Kathy Henderson in the church office @963-7775, between the hours of 2:45 PM – 4:45 PM or leave a message.
5. June 7th is going to be a GREAT occasion! Margie will be celebrant. There will be a special coffee hour following Holy Eucharist. Later in the day we will gather with church members, community friends and special guests at the Club Normandy.
6. Save July 19th. Bishop William Love and other dignitaries from Albany are coming to "install Margie Shaw as our rector. The service will take place in the afternoon.

More to follow.....

ReNew News

May is close to arriving with tourists and Essex "returning to life". That means getting the "Yellow Store" ready for business! While Mary Anne Schultz is hiring Helene Gray to be the manager of the operation, Mary Anne will now have more time to organize special activities to lend more financial support for rent, etc.

Soon Helene will be asking for volunteers to prepare the store for opening and to serve as "clerks" once the store opens for the season.

Volunteer some time by calling Helene @ 963-7716.

Your participation makes a difference!

A number of people were helped over the winter with food, clothing and heating. All monies go to helping community members in need.

CIRCLE YOUR CALENDAR

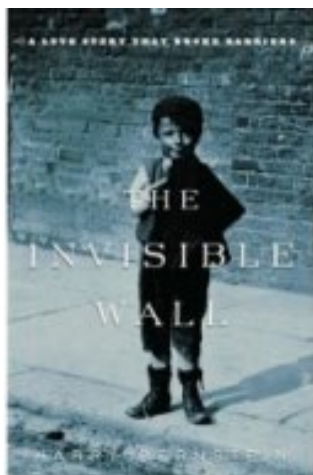
St. John's has some notable occasions coming up that you should make sure to save!

On June 7th our new priest, The Rev. Margaret E. Shaw, will begin her "tenure" with us. Her first official service will be on the 7th at 9:15 AM. A special coffee hour will follow so you will have an opportunity to meet our new rector!

That afternoon we will have our annual party at Club Normandy. As soon as the specifics of time and price are finalized, you will receive all the details.

Bishop Love has written to the vestry, he plans to install "Margie" Shaw on July 19th in the afternoon. Please make every effort to attend this service, to greet the Bishop and Cathedral visitors from Albany. This special service will mark our priest's official start.

BOOK REVIEW



The writer, Harry Bernstein is 95. This memoir is his first book. And it is a groundbreaking story of family secrets and forbidden love told in plain, beautiful prose through the eyes of a young Jewish boy, Harry, growing up in an English working-class neighborhood near Manchester on the eve of World War I. On one side of the street are the Jews; on the other side are the Christians. There is no violent hostility like the pogroms that drove Harry's parents from Eastern Europe, but an invisible wall keeps the two sides totally separate. "The one thing the two sides have in common is poverty." And prejudice. Then Harry's gifted older sister, Lily, falls in love with brilliant Arthur from the other side. They meet in secret, trusting Harry not to tell. When they are found out, the distraught family tries to send Lily to America: "A child who marries a non-Jew is dead." Far from rambling oral history, the chapters are tense with danger and with tenderness, especially Harry's family life: his brutal, distant father ("I never talked to him, nor he to me"); his loving mother; and Lily, who wins a scholarship and the chance to become a teacher until her father drags her to the tailor shop by her hair. Meanwhile, in the larger world, the question lingers, Will the war in Europe really end all wars? A great book for discussion groups.

THE BEAUTIFUL HANDS OF A PRIEST

We need them in life's early morning,
We need them again at its close;
We feel their warm clasp of true friendship,
We seek it while tasting life's woes.

When we come to this world we are sinful,
The greatest as well as the least.
And the hands that make us pure as angels
Are the beautiful hands of a priest.

At the altar each day we behold them,
And the hands of a king on his throne
Are not equal to them in their greatness
Their dignity stands all alone.



For there in the stillness of morning
Ere the sun has emerged from the east,
There God rests between the pure fingers
Of the beautiful hands of a priest.

When we are tempted and wander
To pathways of shame and sin
'Tis the hand of a priest that absolve us.
Not once but again and again.

And when we are taking life's partner
Other hands may prepare us a feast
But the hands that will bless and unite us,
Are the beautiful hands of a priest.

God bless them and keep them all holy,
For the Host which their fingers caress,
What can a poor sinner do better
Than to ask Him who chose them to bless.

When the death dews on our lids are falling,
May our courage and strength be increased
By seeing raised o'er us in blessing
The beautiful hands of a priest.