

The Epistle

SAINT PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

March 2007

FOUNDED 1883

The Reverend Dr. Carol M. Flett
Priest-in-Charge

Dear Friends:

As most of you know, I have had two extensive and incredible travel opportunities within the last two months. In January, I spent two full weeks of vacation touring parts of Spain with a group of 10 women friends from my interfaith women's group, the Daughters of Abraham; and in February, I had the gift of a week of continuing education touring Israel with 12 Christian clergy, as guests of the American Jewish Committee. I would like to share my reflections on these experiences with you in this issue of the Epistle.

In September 2005, I started a women's interfaith book group in Newton, modeled on a friend's book group in Cambridge. My Newton group consists of 7 Jewish, 5 Muslim and 8 Christian women, some ordained, but mostly not. There are now six of these groups in the Boston area and the leaders of each group meet regularly to respond to requests from PBS, Hallmark Network, authors of books we have read, and potential new members who contact our website www.daughtersofabraham.info. Nora Gallagher, author of *Things Seen and Unseen*, recently requested a meeting with us when she was in Boston on a book tour. Each month we read a book, either fiction or non-fiction, about one of our faith traditions. One month we read *The Vanished World*, by Chris Lowney, about how Christians, Jews and Muslims mutually benefited from living together during the Golden Age of Spain, prior to the expulsion of the Jews and Muslims in 1492. We had a lively discussion and were so fascinated by the art, history and religious cooperation of the "three religions of the Book", that we decided to travel together to Spain and visit the historical and religious sites in Sevilla, Cordoba, Granada, Toledo, Avila and Madrid. One member of our group had lived in Spain, planned the trip and was our official translator. Although I had taken four years of Spanish in High School and have visited Mexico and Honduras, I can only inquire in Spanish about the essentials of life: bathrooms, food, and vino tinto! I am a quilter and have always loved geometric patterns, and so I was especially fascinated by the complex geometric patterns of the Islamic art and architecture that remains intact from when Spain was the "ornament of the world". Therefore, it was very disturbing to see the beautiful Islamic architecture of former mosques now being used as the Cathedral in Cordoba and the Cathedral in Sevilla, where the former mosque's minaret became the cathedral's bell tower - all signs of Christian triumphalism, which displaced millions of Muslims and Jews. We visited the three remaining synagogues from that period that were transformed into churches in Toledo and Sevilla. But Jews and Muslims are returning to Spain, as they are to many other countries in Europe. We were the guests of a very large, brand new mosque in Madrid and of a small Jewish congregation in Sevilla. Both groups were intrigued by our interfaith women's group! We also visited the Christian convent where Teresa of Avila began her radical ministry of intercessory prayer and spiritual direction. It was an inspirational trip!

In February, I made my fourth trip to Israel in 14 years. Previously, I had followed the "footsteps of Jesus" with my family led by an Israeli guide; then I led a group from my parish in Burlington; then in April 2005 I took a two-week course at a college in E. Jerusalem, where I witnessed the struggles of Palestinians who are confined to their villages because of the history of suicide bombers coming from their territories. The suicide bombings have stopped, so the "security fence" built by the Israeli government is effective, but innocent Palestinians are suffering. On this trip, the American Jewish Committee designed a well-balanced tour of Israel, arranging for us to meet the people of Israel and Palestine. Whenever any of us tour a country, we usually have specific historic sites to visit: museums, restaurants, etc. Rarely do we get to know the people of the country we are visiting. On this trip, each day we visited 5-6 social service agencies, clinics, hospitals, colleges, schools, interfaith villages, after-school programs, etc. where the *people of Israel*,

regardless of their religious tradition are working together to care for children and raise families, find employment, and seek education and medical care – the things that we all want. It is important for everyone to understand two things about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict: First, that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is a conflict between two competing nationalistic movements, the State of Israel and the state of Palestine. It is NOT a religious conflict. If a two-state solution is what is hoped for, the challenge for both nations to agree on the boundary between them. Second point, that NOT all Israelis are Jews – there are Muslim and Druze Israelis; and NOT all Palestinians are Muslim – there are Christian and Jewish Palestinians, although both are decreasing in number as they are both leaving the Occupied Territories, if they can. E.g. the relative minority of Jews who lived in Gaza have withdrawn and moved out. E.g. The number of Christians in Israel has decreased to the point that the future voice of Christians in the “Holy Land” is now a concern. We visited an Immigration-Absorption Center in Haifa (there are 20 centers throughout Israel) and met newly arrived Jews from Bulgaria, Argentina, Paraguay, France, Ethiopia and Britain. Israel has a “Law of Return” so that Jews from all over the world may immigrate to Israel and claim citizenship. The government places them in Absorption Centers where they learn Hebrew and get help finding employment and housing. Thus, Israel is a very diverse country, although the majority of Jews in Israel are from eastern Europe and Russia. When you walk through Jerusalem, you see the varied faces of Israelis and *Russian* is the next most frequently heard language, after Hebrew and Arabic.

I plan to show slides of my trip to Israel on Palm Sunday, April 1 after the 10:30 am service. Bring your lunch and learn about Israel as we begin our journey toward Jerusalem with Jesus during Holy Week and Easter.

There will be one service on Palm Sunday, April 1 at 10:30 am and one service on Easter Day, April 8 at 10:30 am, preceded by an Easter Breakfast of sausage and pancakes at 9:30 am. It is important for St. Paul’s to worship as a *whole* community on the most sacred days in the Christian year.

Peace,
Carol

LENT AND HOLY WEEK SERVICES

In an effort to deepen our collaborative relationship with St. John’s, we have divided up the worship services for Holy Week:

Maunder Thursday, April 5 **6:00 pm** Middle Eastern supper

7:30 pm Liturgy of Foot Washing and Holy Eucharist at St. Paul's

Good Friday, April 6 **7:30 pm** at Trinity, Newton Center

Holy Saturday, April 7 **8:00 pm** at St. John's

Easter Sunday, April 8 **9:30 am** Easter Breakfast at St. Paul’s

10:30 am Easter Service at St. Paul’s

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

"The United Thank Offering invites people to offer daily prayers of thanksgiving to God and outward and visible signs of those prayers which will benefit others."

Betty Murray has asked the children of the church school to make United Thank Offering (UTO) their Lenten project for 2007. However, we started a little earlier than usual this year! On February 4, the children decorated "treasure boxes" with pictures cut out of magazines and flyers of things for which they are thankful. Beginning that day and continuing through March 31 the children are to think of something or someone for whom they are thankful each day, write it on the "Thank you, God" calendar they were given and add \$1 to the treasure box. On Palm Sunday, April 1, the children will bring the boxes back and offer them up to God with thanks during the offertory. The money raised will be given to the UTO organization, which will in turn give the donation to those in need. Palm Sunday will be noted as UTO Sunday with a special prayer included during worship and with a cake at coffee hour.

OTHER HAPPENINGS:

A Christian Formation committee meeting will take place on March 7 beginning at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be at Joan Brandmahl's house (next door to the church). Topics include UTO presented by Betty Murray, a possible field trip to the aquarium in May to celebrate "Earth Day" organized by Maeve Ward, a joint worship service and church school with St. John's on March 25, and an outdoor service and picnic on May 20 also with St. John's.

- Lynette Banks

Christian Formation director

ADULT FORMATION

Sunday morning at 9:15 am – Join the discussions on religion, world events and the language of God. The group listens to NPR recording of "Speaking of Faith" interviews with authors, clergy and political and religious leaders, and then discusses the ideas presented. The group also is reading a chapter or two of a book, *The Language of God* - Reconciling God and Science. Genome mapper, Dr. Francis Collins is also an evangelical Christian. His new book says that's not a contradiction. Pick up copies of four chapters of his book and join the discussion on atheism, agnosticism, creationism and intelligent design.

Tuesday evenings from 7- 9 pm – **new unit of Bible Study: the Book of Job began on January 16.** The program is based on a 8-session curriculum published by Kerygma, "Job and The Life of Faith", which costs \$20 per person. Please email Carol at revflett@yahoo.com, if you are still interested in attending so she can order additional books. No previous Bible Study experience expected or required. Drop in and see if you like it. Bring a friend. Members of St. John's Church are especially invited.

BEYOND THE DAILY GRIND

"Successful Stepfamilies: Yours, Mine, and Ours."

March 27th 7:00pm – 9:00pm

On Tuesday, March 27 from 7-9pm St. Paul's is opening its doors to the larger community continuing the exciting series of grant-funded evenings with Dr. Judy Osborne, founder of Stepfamily Associates leading a casual conversation entitled "Successful Stepfamilies: Yours, Mine, and Ours."

The US Census reports that slightly more than 40% of all current marriages are second or third marriages. With other statistics pointing to well over 50% of families involving some sort of divorced and/or stepfamily relationship, it is not surprising that we all struggle at times with creating harmony. Judy will lead a lively exchange about the rewards and challenges of stepfamilies followed by a question and answer session.

Contact Karin Riley at 617-916-9241 to **reserve your seat** and if you have any questions about this evening.

FAITH & THE ENVIRONMENT

“Behold, my brothers, the spring has come; The earth has received the embraces of the sun And we shall soon see the results of that love!

Every seed is awakened and so has all animal life It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being.

And we therefore yield to our neighbors, Even our animal neighbors, The same right as ourselves, to inhabit the land,”
Sitting Bull

“GOD AND WILDERNESS: The National Council of Churches has selected wilderness protection as one of its top-priority issues for 2006-2007. ‘Stewardship of the lands and wild places God has entrusted to our care is both a critical part of our call to protect creation and a responsibility shared by all citizens,’ the Council says. ‘This is particularly true in the case of our national network of public lands....If managed conscientiously, public lands help up to answer God’s call to equality among people by providing shared resources that nurture our communities. In a world broken by strife and pollution, public lands offer beautiful places to heal and invigorate the soul, which can be enjoyed by people from all walks of life for generations to come.’

“The second-largest religious organization in the United States, the Council represents 35 Protestant denominations and more than 100,000 churches. [The Council] is producing an eight-page theological study guide, [that will be available both to members and to the public]. (...go to www.ncc.ecojustice.org.) ‘Just as people experience a painter by looking at his paintings, many people experience God through God’s creation,’ explains Cassandra Carmichael, director of the NCC’s Eco-Justice Programs.

“Interestingly [environmental organizations are] working with the NCC...to broaden support for land and wildlife protection. ...the Episcopal Church for example is an active member of [a] coalition that [helped] prevent oil drilling inside the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Biblical underpinnings for the sanctity of the land include the Book of Leviticus, where God directs the Israelites to care for the land: ‘the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.’ (Lev. 25:23-24, New Revised Standard Version.)” (“Wilderness,” The Wilderness Society, 2006-2007.)

DID YOU KNOW?

**Researchers have added up \$57 billion in useful services that beneficial native insects perform each year in the United States? (and you don’t have to thank them!).

**Participate Net gave teachers 50,000 free copies of “Inconvenient Truth”-- rejected by the National Teachers Association after apparent pressure from extractive industries.

**2006 was the warmest on record for the United States.

**53 percent of the pesticides used by a well-known lawn-care service are listed as possible carcinogens by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. FYI: for information on nontoxic landscape care, contact Maeve Ward.

L. Maeve Ward, Coordinator

GULF COAST MISSION TRIP

St. Paul's and St. John's parishes are developing a plan to send a mission team in June to the Gulf Coast to assist in the recovery and rebuilding efforts. The diocese of Massachusetts has a program and several parishes have made successful and meaningful trips. The Lenten program is designed to provide inspiration, education, and community-building for both parishes on the issues that Hurricane Katrina surfaced.

Both parishes will meet on Sunday evenings from 5-7:30 pm for a brief but creative worship experience, a potluck supper, followed by discussion and an activity that will prepare both parishes for the mission trip to the Gulf Coast in June. These five evenings are intended for adults, teens and young children. Childcare will be provided, if needed.

Sunday Feb. 25 and March 4, 5-7:30 pm at St. Paul's

Sunday, March 11- Museum of Science trip to see *Hurricane on the Bayou*

Sunday, March 18 and 25, 5-7:30 pm at St. John's

Jazz and Jambalaya!

Mardi Gras Fundraiser for Gulf Coast Mission Trip

Saturday, March 24, 6pm at St John's

**Jambalaya Mask Making Dancing to a live Jazz
Band
Fun for the whole family!**

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

We opened in prayer remembering especially Jeanette's mother and David's sister.

Thank you notes: We received thank you notes from the Grow Clinic, the Waltham Community Day Center, Epiphany School, The Gray Center in Mississippi, the Horace Cousins Fund and the Newton Wellesley Chaplaincy program. We decided to post them on our bulletin board.

March Plate: We decided to use the offering in March to support the "Gifts from the Heart" program chaired by Bishop Bud. Through the program gift certificates from Home Depot, Target, Wal-Mart, etc. are sent to people who are still recovering from Katrina.

We will be serving lunch at the Waltham Community Day Center on Thursday, March 15th.

Lenten Food Drive:

- a. Mary Lou & Tim will make up bags.
- b. Dates are from February 25th through March 25th.
- c. Food will go to the Newton Food Bank and the Somerville Mental Health Program.

Clothes Basket:

- a. Charlotte and Dave will spend \$100 from our budget to purchase children's clothes at the North Conway Carter Outlet store.
- b. Everyone is urged to bring in clothing, hats, scarves, socks, etc.

Next Salvation Army Dinner: Monday, March 12th.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 7th at Ginny's home at 7:30.

CANDIDATES CORNER

Dear Friends,

I write you today, in the midst of Lent, living in the midst of change. Lest you not forget that I often preach from the pulpit that I love change because I understand it to be part of our human condition, at the root of community, natural to our eco-system and is the output of the living Christ. I can best describe the each day as an emotional rollercoaster ride.

Kate, Maya and I are now expecting, through a Guatemalan adoption service, our future son. We hope he will join us here in Wellesley by Advent season. My paper work for ordination to the transitional Diaconate has been submitted to the Stand Committee for final approval (ordination is scheduled for June 2 at the Cathedral - all are welcome), I am preparing to complete my studies at EDS, AND I am actively interviewing at four parishes. These headline stories of my life are only part of my story. You have been following my story for years now, some of you for decades. As you know, I thirst for Christ, as I suspect many of you do too.

This Lent I have made a covenant with God to do three things, not as a response to resist the change around me, but to better embrace and love it. First, I am slowing down. No, this is not in a literal sense of my schedule, but at an emotional level, much like a mantra. I have learned in my life that if I can "slow down" then I can be present to God and the people around me. Second, I will love myself better. Often, I am my worst critique. This makes me unhappy, angry and usually unpleasant to be around. Third, and finally, I want to love Christ better in others, in you.

I invite you to share with others how you are walking in the light of Christ this Lent. We all know what is coming; Easter Day is inevitable. If you are changing daily, how will you prepare yourself, form yourself, when Easter Day arrives this season?

Faithfully yours in Christ - Mark

NEWS NOTES

SPRING CLEANING!!!!

Members of the altar guild will gather on Saturday, March 31 at 9:00am in the Parish Hall, to clean and polish the church vessels in preparation for the Easter celebration. If anyone would like to join us, we would welcome the extra help. Many hands make light work!

UNITED THANK OFFERING COFFEE HOUR

Coffee Hour on April 1, 2007 will be *United Thank Offering (UTO) Coffee Hour*. UTO is a mission founded in 1889 by the women of the Episcopal Church and is still on-going today. It's premise is to give in gratitude for our many blessing. UTO meets the needs of the 21st century through grants for prison ministry, youth ministries, centers for battered women, and various community services. It is a prayer ministry as well as a "giving in gratitude" for our many blessings. Ask yourself: What do you have to be thankful for? See you at coffee hour. Betty M.

DATES TO REMEMBER

March 21

Vestry meeting at David Montgomery's house

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! HAPPY BIRTHDAY! HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

April 1	Phil Whitbeck
April 2	Don Yurt
April 6	Abigail Blay
April 7	Kyle Hubner
April 8	Keith Hatfield
April 10	Woody Meyer, Crane Friedman
April 12	Bob Royster, Bernice Cramer
April 13	Anne Goldman
April 16	Jane Walsh
April 18	Ken Anderson
April 20	Peter Kelly
April 21	Bob Pandorf
April 26	Retta Whitmore
April 27	Molly Walsh
April 29	Maya McKone-Sweet

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

April 25

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!!!!!!!

Lee & Keith Hatfield



Easter Flowers

On Sunday, April 8th, our Altar will be surrounded with fragrant white lilies in memory of loved ones and in celebration of special people and events in our lives.

Please have information for the Easter flower dedication list (names and events) **in the church office no later than 1pm April 3, 2007.**

If you wish to contribute to the display, make your check payable to Parish of Saint Paul and mark it "Easter Flowers". Mail this form to:

Parish of Saint Paul, 1135 Walnut Street, Newton Highlands, MA 02461

Questions? Contact Joan Whalen, Parish Secretary, at stpaulsnewton@verizon.net or 617-527-6642 (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 10am-3pm)

Easter flowers in memory (or in celebration) of _____

Your name: _____ Telephone: _____
(in case we need to verify spellings)