

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

This month we will begin to make some changes in the configuration of the parish hall that I hope will help the church grow in her ministry and mission. The goal is basically just to use our space more effectively. There are three phases to this redesign. The first phase is to address the area at the office entrance. The large brown “vestment chest” given to us by St. Mary’s Church has been moved *into* the vestry proper. Where it once stood will be an “office area” that will consist of a small desk and chair and file cabinet for volunteer parish administrators to use. Yes, you read that right: volunteer administrators. I have been asking and praying for administrative help for many months now, but always wondered, if anyone answered the call, where they would go, as we have no extra offices or rooms at church. Thankfully God answered the prayer and some people have stepped up to the challenge. (If you’d like to help them, by the way, please see me. There is plenty of work to go around!) God then had to show me where would be a good place for those helpers to work if they come here to do their work as opposed to working from home. So he planted this idea into my head, and I think it will work well for us. The second phase is to transform my office into a general use space for the church. I will be disassembling my desk and removing my personal effects so we can install a conference table and chairs so that the church has a small, intimate space that can be used by Sunday school, prayer and study groups, vestry, and even community groups. As for me, I will still be able to get all of my work done, as I can use the room during the week with my laptop computer. The church desperately needs a more intimate setting for these sorts of events, and so I am very happy to give up “my space” for the greater good of the parish. The third and final phase will be to reconfigure the area of the parish hall where the bank of tables and chairs are located. The goal will be to transform it into a “coffee house” type of setting with tables and chairs and comfortable seating areas. The problem that we face is that we have no comfortable area in the parish to relax and hang out, and enjoy each others’ company and conversation. The impersonal bank of folding tables and metal chairs are counter-productive to growing a deeper sense of community, and since we only use those tables about five or six times a year it does not make sense to keep them set up all the time. How this change will impact the quilt guild whom we love and that meets at the church each week remains to be seen. The hope is that we will be able to find a happy design medium that will enable us to meet our goal and still let the quilters meet at the church. I think that it will be very possible to find a great solution. There will be lots of ways to help with these projects, so if you’d like to know how you can help please see me. In the meantime let us pray that these will be positive changes for our church home.

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

September 2018

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Important News and Other Items

UPCOMING SERVICES:

Sep 8th - Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 19th & 22nd - Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 21st - St. Matthew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 29th - St. Michael

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Oct 18th - St. Luke

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Oct 29th - Ss. Simon & Jude

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 1st - All Saints' Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 2nd - All Souls' Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 22nd - Thanksgiving Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 30th - St. Andrew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 8th - Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

THEOLOGY: *What Are Angels? (A "Centurion" Reprint, originally published in 2013)*

On the 29th of every September we celebrate the feast of St. Michael and All Angels (BCP pp. 251-253). This day reminds us of the ministry of angels in the lives of Christians. Have we ever stopped to think about these beings? What are they, and what do they do? Are they real or are they mythical figments of the imagination? Since there is so much misinformation out there about angels on TV, in "college courses" (see p. 2), and on the internet, we would do best to go to a trustworthy source for information about them. For Christians, the most important resource for information about angels is the bible. The holy, inspired word of God gives us the most accurate picture of angels and their ministry. We read about them throughout its pages - from Genesis all the way to Revelation. We also learn about angels from some of the great doctors of the Church. Here are just a *few* important points about angels that we glean from the scriptures and Church tradition.

Angels are not human. This is an important point because some people think, based on popular culture and old Tom and Jerry cartoons, that when humans die they become angels. Angels are in fact their own particular beings with their own particular nature and purpose.

Angels were created by God. In Colossians 1:16 we learn that angels are supernatural spiritual beings that were created by God. Though very powerful, angels are God's creatures as much as we or a little chihuahua is. They are not "demigods," and unlike human beings are not made in God's image and likeness. Each angel serves God in his own way appropriate to his own order and rank.

Angels are spiritual beings. As spiritual beings angels are immaterial and sexless (Matthew 22:30). They do not have a physical nature as do you or I. Any time in the bible when they assume a human form we must understand that it only *appears* to be a body, or that it is *temporary*. As spiritual beings angels are eternal and cannot die or be killed. And since angels do not have a physical aspect they do not have *senses* (sight, smell, hearing, etc.) as human beings do, and therefore cannot come to know things in the way that human beings do! Instead, their knowledge is imparted directly

by God - each one knowing exactly what it needs to know to fulfill its task.

Angels were created by God to serve him, in part by ministering to man. The Greek word translated as angel means "messenger." (This is why in famous works of art they are depicted as having wings.) In the bible they bring messages from God to man. We see examples of angels being messengers of God in the bible in Genesis 19, Judges 6 and 13, Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:26, and Hebrews 1:14. Angels also are protectors and servants of God's children (Daniel 3 and 6; Matthew 18:10; Acts 12:7). But angels also serve God directly, as we see in Matthew 4:11; Matthew 26:53; Luke 16:22; and throughout the book of Revelation.

There are untold numbers of angels. Daniel 7:10 teaches that there are many multitudes of angels. But note that it says nothing about how many supposedly fit on the head of a pin!

The bible mentions different types of angels, and in some cases their names. There is the "Angel of the LORD" in Genesis 18, Exodus 3:2, Judges 2:1-4, and in several other places in the Old Testament. This angel is considered to be a pre-incarnation manifestation of Christ by some scholars. There are the four archangels: Gabriel (Luke 1:26 ff.), Michael (Jude 9, Revelation 12:7), and (from the books called Apocrypha) Raphael (Tobit 12), and Uriel (2 Esdras 4). Finally there are "Guardian Angels" and "Fallen Angels" such as Satan and the demons.

All of this and more is in direct contrast to the picture of angels that we get from popular culture... whether it be "Monica" from *Touched by an Angel*, "Jonathan Smith" from *Highway to Heaven*, or "Earl," played by Leon Rippy, on the old USA Network TV show *Saving Grace*. Interestingly, all of these TV angels and their human costars are no longer on the air, having long since gone to that big "rerun in the sky." On these TV shows we see angels falling in love, boozing it up, and more. Of course "Dudley", played by Cary Grant in *The Bishop's Wife* would never do such unseemly things, even though he was associated with Episcopalians! But I digress... *continued on the next page*

“Angels” cont’d from the previous page

The lesson for us is that we should strive to be *biblically informed* Christians so that we do not fall prey to the wiles and temptations of the devil. Our worldview - literally, the “way that we view the world” - should, as Christians, be formed by the scriptures and sacred tradition, which means we have to take the time, and make the effort to do things to grow in our faith. Most important of all with regard to this is reading the bible and

spending time in prayer and worship each day, using the Book of Common Prayer and other liturgical and classical devotional texts as guides. When we are we are better able to discern true teaching from false teaching, such as with angels.

Want to learn more about angels? Check out Dr. Peter Kreeft’s book *“Angels and Demons: What Do We Really Know about Them?”* This is a great book on this interesting topic. ✠

PARISH LIFE: *Active Shooter Response Strategy*

The recent mass shootings at schools, night clubs, churches, and other places has lead many organizations to make plans and outline procedures to follow for “active shooter” scenarios. A few months ago the Senior Warden and I, along with hundreds of other faith and community leaders from the area, attended a seminar held at Mountain Christian Church lead by the Harford County Sheriff’s Office on how to plan and prepare for such emergency situations.

After giving a report on the meeting to the vestry the vestry decided to adopt an active shooter response plan. Mr. Chuck Meyer, who attends the 8:00 a.m. service and is a lifelong law enforcement officer and decorated Vietnam War veteran, graciously offered to meet with Kristi and me over lunch to discuss what we at St. Alban’s could do to make the church safe for people during services and other events. The detailed outline he prepared after inspecting our entire facility, consisting of a series of observations and recommendations, was most helpful in moving us toward this goal.

His first observation concerned the security of the building itself. He noted that only two doors have “panic bars” installed on them: the door off of the parking lot, and the door next to coffee machines in the reception area. A panic bar, sometimes referred to as a crash bar or panic device, is used for quickly unlocking a door during an emergency situation. It makes escape very easy and quick. His recommendation was to have these affordable devices installed on the doors currently lacking them. The only door upon which one could not be installed is the door off of the ramp into the church. because it is an old historic door like the school house church building itself. So that door would need an entirely different solution, and at the meeting we tossed around various ideas were tossed around for it.

In addition to installing panic bars, Chuck recommended that the doors to the church be locked by

the usher on duty approximately ten minutes after the beginning of a service. The usher would “float” during the service and be available to open the church up to late comers, keep an eye out on things during the service, and then unlock the doors after the service ends. Note that this recommendation obviously means that the church have some men and women volunteer to serve as “ushers.” (Or perhaps a better name would be “greeters”, as we do not want to confuse the role of church usher — the people that collect the offering, assist at the Mass, etc. — with the person keeping an eye on the doors. This nomenclature is obviously something about which we will have to make a decision.)

His next observation concerned people’s safety. Does the congregation even know what to do in an emergency situation? In typical emergency situations, such as fires, severe storms, and power outages, the appropriate response is to be calm, don’t run, and try to help others. But in an active shooter scenario none of that comes into play. On the contrary one must save his own life first! He needs to run, create a distraction by shouting or throwing things at the shooter, and the like, because his life and the lives of others depends on stopping the shooter. His recommendation was to train ushers/greeters on how to instruct the congregation in an emergency.

So where does this leave us? 1) We have to fix the doors that need fixing. 2) We have to identify people for the role of usher/greeter. 3) We have to come up with policies and procedures to follow and have training sessions that are mandatory for official usher/greeters and optional for everyone else.

Please keep the church and vestry in your prayers as we consider how best to implement these recommendations so graciously prepared for us by Chuck Meyer so that we can provide a safe environment for those who want to worship the Lord with us! ✠

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES: *Please note these important items!*

Seminarian Update - Mr. Mason Waldhauser

Dear Friends in Christ,

I just finished my first day of classes back here at Nashotah House, and year two is off to a good start! I had my first Greek class, which I think will be much easier than the Hebrew classes I had last year; and I had Historical Theology with Fr. Holtzen. He was a farmer from Nebraska before becoming a priest and is very reserved and matter-of-fact in his way of speaking. His sermons are always the fastest and most direct. This is my first time having a class of his, and I'm really excited, because his teaching is surprisingly engaging and exciting. The assigned reading is all in the primary sources, which this semester happens to be the early Church Fathers. I think this will be my favorite class of the semester, judging from this morning.

There are fourteen new students, which is a lot for our little seminary; so chapel feels very full, and the campus is much more lively than before. The new students have been fun to get to know. There's one guy from Philly, from St. Clement's, who's my age, and we've hung out a lot so far and immediately bonded over ascetical theology. He seems to be a laid-back Anglo-Catholic—not as showy as some of these other guys. A lot of them are trying to demonstrate just how catholic they are, talking about their patron saints and their rules of life and devotion to Our Lady, etc. John's the kind of person who has all those things, but on a more personal level, like he doesn't have anything to prove, which is why I feel like we clicked.

There's another guy here with a similar kind of genuineness as what John has. His name's Cliff, and he was Baptist just two or three years ago, so he's here experiencing a lot of the tradition for the first time. He's got a wife and some teenage kids here on campus, and they sold their sheep farm to move here and pursue the call. I got to meet them at our Labor Day cookout last night. (Hope you all enjoyed the three day weekend, too!)

I had a little time this afternoon to go to the gym. Now that the semester's starting, I'm trying to be mindful of the amount of food, drink, and exercise I get instead of just winging it all like last year. Please pray that God would help me be intentional and purposeful about eating healthy and living actively this school year.

I really enjoyed the chance to preach that last Sunday I was with you. I didn't realize until sermon prep just how unique it is that in Christianity God takes on flesh and blood in order to love us as our neighbor. I'll be preaching several times this year in chapel here, which will

be fun. Those sermons have a five minute time limit, since we get one every day.

Now I'm off to Evening Prayer, then my friend Dale and I are going to go to Walmart, because I need a notebook for class, and he needs groceries. Thanks for your prayers for me. See you at Thanksgiving!

In all Christian Love,
Mason

Brass Restoration

Thanks to a generous gift given to the church by a parishioner for use at the rector's discretion for something at the altar we have delivered our brass offering plates, memorial flower vases, and thurible to Brassworks on Eastern Boulevard (formerly of Fells Point) to be completely restored. They will be professionally cleaned and then coated with a clear lacquer to prevent them from tarnishing and protect them from dust and fingerprints. It is important that everything that we use for divine worship be kept in the best possible condition, because these objects are being used in our worship of almighty God. We also have an obligation to take care of these items because many of them were memorial donations to the church. Special thanks to Jonathan's Florists for giving us some "loaner" vases to use for the next few weeks.

Upcoming Activities

Don't forget about our upcoming fellowship activities! Saturday, September 15th 8 am - 12 pm Parish Work Day (lunch will follow); Saturday, September 22nd 4 pm - 7 pm Annual Parish Picnic; Saturday, October 6th 8 am - 12 pm Parish Yard Sale (please sign up to help); Tuesday, October 9th at 6:30 pm "Grace, Grit, and Thanksgiving: St. Alban's Prayer Wheel and Fellowship Group. Please invite a friend to these!

Standing Notices:

"The minister is ordered, from time to time, to advise the People, whilst they are still in health, to make Wills arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, and, when of ability, to leave Bequests for religious and other charitable uses." (BCP, p. 320) ☩