

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

Next month marks ten years since I have been your rector. In this issue of *The Centurion* I will “look back” —take a trip down memory lane, as it were— and highlight some of the things that we’ve been able, by God’s grace, to accomplish these past ten years. But before that we have a few housekeeping notes. First, if you haven’t already don’t forget to vote! If you are so jaded that you don’t want to vote for either candidate remember that you can always do a “write-in” vote. If that’s what you want to do remember that my full name is James Gordon Fraser Anderson (spelled with an “o”, not an “e”). I would be most happy to serve not only as your rector, but also as your president! Second (and all kidding aside), our annual meeting is coming up. It will be Sunday, November 15th at 12:00 p.m. As it will be impossible to have our normal meeting given the pandemic the regular attendees of the 8am and 10am service are asked by the vestry to elect a representative to attend the meeting to represent them. All of the materials —reports, budget, etc.— will be e-mailed out to the church for everyone to see. (N.B. that our latest vestry materials, budgets, reports, etc. are always on display in the parish hall for anyone to see.) Third, I am delighted to report that our DOK chapter has donated a third-class relic of their patroness, St. Walburga, to the church which will, on All Saints’ Day when new DOK members are inducted into our chapter, be placed in a reliquary on the altar along with our other relic of St. Edmund Campion. Also worth noting is that we have a relic *underneath* the fair white linen which is sewn into a cloth called an “antimension” and is certified by a bishop of the Orthodox Church. This was a gift to the church from Fr. Edelman, who briefly attended an Eastern Orthodox seminary many years ago. Efforts are currently underway to acquire two more relics for veneration to be displayed upon the altar with the two that we have. I have contacted the Vatican and the Birmingham Oratory in London to that end, and will be sending more letters of inquiry to other places. I have been told that generally all a church has to do is ask these places for a relic for public veneration and it will be sent with all of the appropriate paperwork gratis. Let us hope that is the case. It is so appropriate to install these relics in November, the month of the “Holy Souls.” Our church is part of a diocese that is branch of Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. We are organically part of all of those believers —holy men and women— who have “gone before us with the sign of faith, and are at rest in the sleep of peace” (as it says so beautifully in the Canon of the Mass). So we venerate them, and ask God for his grace and their prayers to help us follow their example and glorify God with our lives as they did with theirs. God bless you all during this “hallowtide” and beyond.

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

Nov 2nd - All Souls Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 21st - The Presentation of Our Lady

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 26th - Thanksgiving Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 8th - Conception of Our Lady

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 8th - Conception of Our Lady

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec. 16th, 18th, 19th - Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 21st - St. Thomas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 24th - Christmas Eve

Holy Communion at 5:00 p.m.

Dec 25th - Christmas Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 26th - St. Stephen

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 28th - Holy Innocents

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

PARISH LIFE: *Ten Years as Rector of Saint Alban's Church*

Next month will mark ten years since I became rector of our church! I am looking forward to commemorating the event and to be here for another ten years or more. Some might be interested to know that since I arrived here no less than five other churches have knocked on my door asking me to interview for them. But I have always replied as follows: *"No, thank you! I am so flattered that you would ask, but I believe the Lord has called me to stay at Saint Alban's."* And that is the truth. I believe that me and my family are right where God wants us to be, with all of you dear, wonderful people here in Joppa, Maryland.

The story of how I arrived is a memorable one. I had, of course, been ordained out of this parish and served as non-stipendiary curate from October 2005 to about July 2006 under my mentor Fr. Ray Unterburger. In July Valerie and I moved to Vero Beach, Florida, where I served as curate of Saint Mark's for a couple of years. From there we moved to Blacksburg, Virginia where I served as rector of a small, struggling mission parish called Saint Francis for a couple of years. One sad day all the clergy of the diocese received word that a fellow priest, Fr. Douglas King, rector of Saint Paul's in Melbourne, Florida, died. That church was now in need of a rector. Knowing as I did that Fr. Unterburger here at Saint Alban's always wanted to move back to Melbourne I phoned him and asked if he were going to apply for the position. He said that he would like to, but wondered who would take over Saint Alban's. "I'll come to Saint Alban's." I replied. (At the time I had an elderly assisting priest at Saint Francis who could easily assume the reins of the place for a while until they got their phenomenal current rector, Fr. Wade Miller.) The fact is that I was really burned out at Saint Francis. The place needed so much work in every possible area — and major improvements were indeed made and good successes achieved — that I eventually became exhausted. Add to that some personal family health scares, and I was just ready to go to a place that was different and that was stable. So we discussed all of this with Bishop Grundorf and the respective parishes and it all came to fruition around mid-December 2010. My first service as rector was the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

As I look back over the last ten years a number of highlights stand out. Early on we organized a Passion Play and a Christmas Pageant that were performed by the youth of the parish and a number of their friends. Everyone pitched in for these fun events, and a couple of the kids even joined the church. We also had a bunch of regularly scheduled youth events such as

bowling, and miniature golf. Over the years family events were organized including tours of the Walter's and Baltimore art museums, Ladew Gardens, and other fun places.

When I arrived at the church there were only men and no boys serving at the altar despite the fact that we had a few in the church, so I immediately had all of the boys go into the rotation. At our highest we had eighteen men and boys serving in the server's guild! The altar guild similarly expanded from a group of perhaps four women all the way up to twelve or so at the highest. Our young people also began serving as ushers at church services.

Many existing traditions continued or were strengthened, such as our yard sale, parish work days, various seasonal fellowship dinners, studies, and of course services of worship. A few new activities were tried including a Christmas craft fair, single-malt scotch whiskey tasting, Advent Lessons and Carols, Christmas party, and these were all great fun. We continued and expanded our support and outreach to the community taking up collections for needy families, supporting Welcome-One, Char-Hope, and various diocesan missions (in India, Philippines, and Haiti, and also stateside). We were blessed to have two fine young men offer themselves for the sacred ministry and see them through seminary and ordination to the priesthood. We continued to host community groups at various times over the years including NA, the Flying Geese and Wild Threads Quilt Guilds, and more recently a CPR training organization.

A number of good improvements to our facility were made as well. We painted the parish hall, which was formerly stark white, and over the years have beautifully decorated it with art and donated and purchased items of furniture. The parish purchased a gorgeous Spanish altar crucifix one year during Lent. A couple of significant items from our distant past as Prince of Peace Episcopal Church were given to the parish including a large marble baptismal font (which we hope to use in our expanded building) and a chalice and paten that we use each week for services. Almost all of our candles have been switched over to oil candles which always look good and do not make a mess. A new brass Advent Wreath/Paschal Candle Stand was purchased, replacing the cheap tawdry ones we used for so many years.

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New vestments were donated to the parish by a number of parishioners so that we have a lot of what we need for the reverent celebration of the sacred liturgy. Permanent pew cushions were donated for the nave. (Previously only *one* pew—the back pew— had a cushion, and parishioners would sometimes fight over it, moving it from one pew to the another... then it would mysteriously return to the back pew, only to grow legs and move somewhere else again! But I digress.) The flooring and sub-flooring in the sanctuary has been replaced and in the bathrooms, hall, and kitchen. A new heat pump was donated to the church for the parish hall, and a new refrigerator was donated for the kitchen. The church has a collection of photo albums from back when people made those things that are full of pictures of how the church used to look. It is amazing to see how different things are now, and exciting to consider how they will change for the better in the next few years with all that we have planned.

Believe it or not, one of the biggest and yet at the same time most subtle changes to the church was the donation of a changing table for the ladies room! Astonishingly, our church, which always had at least some babies, and where two previous rectors had their first children *never had a changing table!* When I arrived with my then one-year-old son and saw no changing table we immediately (and finally) took steps to fix it.

There was also this annoying feature about the exterior doors... they didn't have "closers" on them. On a hot summer day I would go down and see the door to the church hanging wide open. Not only was not good for safety and climate control reasons, but it was also not good because we are next to a farm which, as with all farms, are full of flies... which pesky creatures would eventually find their way to the parish hall!

Lots of changes happened on the outside over the years. We started a campaign to have the entire church professionally power washed, scrapped, and painted for the first time since we were established. We also raised funds to have a new, ADA compliant low-maintenance "trek" handicapped ramp installed on the front of the church as the old wooden one rotted away to nothing. New exterior parking lot lighting with motion sensors was donated to the church. This year the church engaged our lawn care and snow removal company to provide us with regular landscaping for the property. Now, twice a year, Superior Touch Lawn care will come out to the church and mulch, trim, weed, and all the

rest of it so our yard always looks great. Last year we had a new sign made for the church to replace the old, rotted wood sign.

This very newsletter was started shortly after my arrival. Looking through the old papers of the church after I arrived I saw that our second rector, Fr. Mark F.M. Clavier, had a parish newsletter called "The Centurion." It fell into desuetude either sometime during his tenure or shortly after it ended and was not revived under his successors, Fr. Jones and Fr. Unterburger. (The latter once told me that he had no use for parish newsletters.) I restarted it to use as a teaching and information tool. Today the Centurion is read not only by parishioners but also by many different people online, and all of the old issues are archived on our website.

That nice segue leads us to the changes in technology that have occurred over the last ten years. Our parish website went from being a static site that never changed to a (relatively speaking) dynamic site that is regularly updated, and which contains lots of links and other information. We also strengthened our presence on Facebook and started a Twitter page and a YouTube channel. Services and some classes are now posted online for all the world to see! And do in fact get people from across the world watching us and occasionally even sending in money to help support us.

Yet another convenient segue leads us to how we have updated ways for people to give to the church. As less and less people use cash and write checks we thought it good to establish online giving through a service called tithe.ly and to allow people to give in person at church using credit cards via a kiosk made by a company called Square. (This company incidentally was started by the same man who started Twitter.) Young people especially but also a lot of middle-aged people just do not use checks and cash very much anymore, so we have had to provide these other ways for people to give for the work of the church, and so far they have worked out very well.

Over the past ten years the church has been served by a number of very good and faithful organists. There is our organist Barbara Jones, who has played on and off for us for over 25 years. Her sweet, gentle presence on the bench and humble spirit lifts up our worship. The legendary R. Warren Glock served us for about five years until his health took a turn for the worse. Mr. Glock adjusted the sound of our small Baroque organ and added a 32' "pipe" to it. His artistry greatly enhanced our worship. *(Continued on the next page.)*

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Miss. Charlotte Von Clapprede, a life long Anglo-Catholic and continuing churchman, served us for several months before her company transferred her to Washington DC for work. She knew the service inside out and I never had to tell her anything about what to do. Since the pandemic we have been served by Mr. Robert Wallace of Saint Mary's Episcopal Church and Mr. James Anthony, Ph.D of Towson University and Saint John's Episcopal Church (Western Run Parish). It is to my everlasting regret that some of the best organ music to ever ring out in our church has been during the pandemic when people could not be here in person to listen to it, as the excellent sound and quality doesn't quite translate online very well in my opinion.

In terms of ministry, the formation of our Daughters of the King chapter (St. Walburga) has been a great blessing for the church. They now have nine members and are a huge help in prayer and outreach to the parish and community. Thank God for these dedicated Christian women! We also welcomed a few assisting clergy to the parish and diocese including Fr. Don Edlemann, Fr. Bill Smith, and Fr. Nana Kwasi Ellis. These gentlemen have been a huge support to us all and I thank God for them every day. And of course the seminarians, who I mentioned earlier, have been a total blessing to the parish and so many other people. Please remember to pray for the clergy of the parish! The vestry of the church, of course, has always been a major blessing as well. Thanks be to God for all of the people who've served in this capacity over the years! All of that being said, I know there have been so many *additional* blessings and accomplishments over these past ten years! Please forgive me if I have left something out or forgotten something or someone. As I was typing this more and more things that God has done in and through us kept coming to mind, but surely I am still forgetting many important things.

The only question now is "Where do we go from here?" Well, all I can say is that where the Lord leads we will follow! We are of course trying to get the first phase of our building project underway which includes expanded parking, better and up-to-code entrances, and storm water management. From there we hope to modestly expand the interior of the church to make

room for more people and activities. We hope to continue to grow and to be a beacon in the community for our Lord Jesus Christ and his life changing Gospel.

I hope to one day have additional staff to assist in the various aspects of ordained ministry. Though numerous vocations have come out of our parish, no one has stayed here. So it would be really nice to have a man ordained to either the diaconate or priesthood who stays here to minister in this community.

Related to that is starting a mission. It would be wonderful to start a mission parish somewhere where there is no orthodox Anglican presence. Right now God is not calling us to do that because he has not opened any doors in that direction. But I remain hopeful that he will use us to start a mission or missions elsewhere here in Maryland so people have a good, faithful Anglican parish to attend.

There have been certain things I wanted to do here or explore doing but the door has been closed to us for a variety of reasons. (I won't go into them now.) That is okay, because that is how God works. One of the keys to successful ministry is the ability to discern God's will. And one of the ways we discern his will is by simply looking around us, noticing where he has put us, how he has gifted us, what needs there are around us, and how all of this ties together. As our community changes and we change over the years God will no doubt have new and different tasks for us to accomplish for the sake of his kingdom. We need "ears that hear" what God is calling us to do in these important times.

My leadership has not been perfect these past ten years, and I beg forgiveness for my failures and shortcomings. I've made my own share of mistakes over the years, but like to think I have learned from them. Thank you all for your gracious support for me and my ministry and family, and for being partners with me in the work God has called this "small but mighty" parish to do. I look forward, by his grace, to be here with you for ten or more years, and I can't wait to see what God has in store for us. May he bless and keep you all of your days, and may he bless and keep our church! ✠

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) ✠