



A Word from the Bishop



July 2010

Dear Friends:

What a month of contrasts--at least in terms of climate and context! From the mountains of New Mexico and Colorado to the cornfields of Iowa to the beaches of the Outer Banks, from the chill of the morning air at 9,000 feet to the scorching mid-Atlantic heat wave. What a diocese we have!

Meg and I began our travels with an extraordinary experience at the Alcoholics Anonymous International Convention in San Antonio. Parishioners in recovery at my former parish in Virginia had nominated me to give a workshop at this gathering of 55,000. The national board took them up on it and asked me to speak on "A.A. and the Clergy." I was part of a panel of three clergy, prompting numerous jokes ("the bishop, the priest and the rabbi walked into, well, not a bar, but..."). I drew on a classic sermon by the Rev. Sam Shoemaker, one of the spiritual founders of A.A., which he entitled "What the Church Has to Learn from A.A." I know that many in A.A. have had negative experiences of the church and I was led to do what is called "identificational repentance," asking those in attendance for forgiveness for the sins of the church. As a bishop and representative person, I identified with the church's hypocrisy and abuse and failings and asked their forgiveness. The Holy Spirit came in power and it was clear that He was working in many hearts. Some rose and spoke to the whole group and many others shared privately with me about how significant those words of repentance had been to them. One man said with tears that he had been abused by his priest as a teenager and hadn't been back to church since; he said no one had ever said they were sorry until that moment and he felt that the Lord was now opening the way back for him.

I am convinced that repentance is the most powerful weapon we have.



Church of the Savior, Ruidoso, NM

From there it was up, up, up to Cloudcroft, in the mountains of southern New Mexico, where we were hosted by the Rev. Fred and Nancy Griffin of Epiphany Anglican Church. Though Epiphany is quite small, they have caught Archbishop Duncan's vision for church planting and have already begun a second congregation, an hour away in Ruidoso. The Anglican Church of the Savior worships at 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays and what an enthusiastic and joyful group! We heard a glorious testimony of a miraculous physical healing through prayer, and joined in further prayer for one another.



The Rev. Fred Griffin and the historic church, Cloudcroft, NM

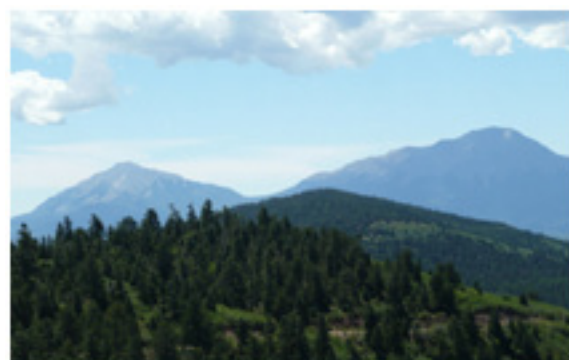


Passing the peace, Epiphany, Cloudcroft, NM



Meg's trail ride

At Epiphany, we celebrated Independence Day with Sunday worship which overflowed the historic church—there were worshipers in chairs outside, joining in through open doors and windows. It was followed by a lovely July 4th picnic.



God's splendor in Colorado

Then it was on by car to Castle Rock, Colorado. We took a day off en route to enjoy the mountains, then arrived for a mid-week visit to one of our newer congregations, Emmaus Anglican Church. The Rev. Theron and Denise Walker graciously welcomed us and arranged a fruitful and delightful first visit to this growing church. We met with the leadership and then had a cookout with the Vestry and spouses (elk-burgers!). The next morning we visited a ranch and I led a Bible study group, while others took Meg on a trail ride (she says she got the better deal). Worship that evening was Evensong and Eucharist, with prayers for healing. How wonderful that the Lord's people are so eager to pray for His healing power to touch those in need! I hope that all our churches will make healing prayer a normal part of our worship and ministry. (Special thanks to the Rev. Jim and Mary Anne Paul of St. Peter's, Fort Collins/Loveland, who traveled to worship with us that evening.)



VBS in Durant, IA

Then we were off by air to Durant, Iowa, to visit again St. David's Anglican Church. We attended the parish's evening Vacation Bible School, offered jointly with two other churches in the community. St. David's is in search of its next rector, and I was glad to have meetings with the Senior Warden Doug Lincoln, with the Search Committee and with the Vestry. We had a cookout for the congregation, followed by a time of Bible teaching. We enjoyed Sunday worship, now held in the Durant Community Center, and a lovely reception. One of the strengths of this and many other smaller congregations, is the

close and loving fellowship among its members.

Then we headed home for three days of catch-up, dealing with laptop and car repair, doctor's appointments, running errands to the dry cleaners, drug store and post office, and beginning to set up my home office, now that I'm no longer rector of All Saints'. I also had the opportunity to meet with some of the lay leaders of Christ Our Lord Church here in Woodbridge. And, of course, there were lots of email and phone calls!

Then we were off by car to northeastern North Carolina. We led a teaching weekend on prayer for Church of the Redeemer in Camden. With teaching sessions on Friday evening, Saturday morning and Saturday evening and church dinners on Friday and Saturday, it was a fabulous (and full) weekend! We were blessed to spend time with the rector, the Rev. Craig Stephans (whom I ordained to the priesthood in April) and his wife, Missy, while the former rector, the Rev. Rickie Steenstra and her husband, Hank, hosted us.

After worship including Confirmation on Sunday morning, we were off to the Outer Banks and Redeemer's new church plant, Good Shepherd Anglican Church, Nags Head. The launching of these church plants by congregations which are themselves new is so very exciting and encouraging! We had Confirmation there, as well, and a reception to enable us to get to know this faithful group. Let me urge you to tell those you know who vacation on the Outer Banks to be sure to worship with Good Shepherd on Sundays at 5:00 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, milepost 13.5! (Friends from All Saints' in Woodbridge who were on vacation joined us in the worship that day.) We were also blessed to visit the Rev. Charles and Della Gill. Charles, who had been a seminary classmate and is now a priest of our diocese, had served as the rector of the parish at Nags Head and he and Della are now helping in the launch of Good Shepherd.



Good Shepherd, Nags Head, NC

Then Meg and I stayed on at the beach to enjoy a day off (with naps!) before the five hour drive home.

This weekend, we'll be supporting our partners in the Anglican Church in North America by attending the CANA Annual Council. Ten congregations of the Diocese of the Holy Spirit join with churches under CANA in the Anglican District of Virginia, which is in the planning stages of applying to become a regional diocese of the Anglican Church in North America.

Looking ahead, the next newsletter will be delayed until mid-September. Meg and I will be in East Africa from August 12 through September 8. We'll be teaching at Uganda Christian University in their D.Min. program and attending the Church of Uganda's Provincial Assembly (I have an honorary seat in their House of Bishops), a farewell event for Stephen and Peggy Noll, who are retiring after ten years as missionaries in Uganda, and the week-long All Africa

Bishops Conference. This will be the second AABC, bringing together all the Anglican Bishops of the continent, and it will be held in Uganda, near Entebbe airport. Then Meg and I will head for Northern Kenya on mission with Canon Alison Barfoot, Archbishop Orombi's Assistant for International Relations and our dear friend. We will serve at a conference for 100 local church planters, mostly young, who are evangelizing unreached people groups in the region. We'll be doing Bible teaching and helping these amazing servants to reflect on the two weeks they will have just spent on mission, living by faith and planting churches in ten villages.

Please pray for protection for all involved in these events. The devastating terrorist bombings in Uganda have brought security issues to the forefront.

Yours in Christ,

+John

Prayer Requests:

- For our upcoming visit to Holy Trinity, South Haven, MI and its church plants in Free Soil and Grand Rapids.
- For the meetings of the Executive Committee and Archbishop's Cabinet of the Anglican Church in North America, August 10-11.
- For my successor, the Rev. Dan Morgan, who begins his ministry as rector of All Saints' Church, Woodbridge, VA on August 1.
- For our travel to Uganda and Kenya, for fruitful ministry and for safety throughout.
- For the Lord's wisdom in the all that He calls me to do (James 1:5).