



THE BEACON

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

October, 2011

Father Jesse's Message

Learning From Our Pets

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Since becoming a priest, I've blessed many pets of all sorts: snakes, gerbils, birds, dogs, cats, lizards, mice, sugar gliders, and the list goes on. I've even prayed for healing for pets who are sick.

Pets are such an important part of so many people's lives, include my own. Allison and I currently live with our female Min-Pin mix Peanut and our male Spitz/Lab mix Bradley.

As I think about these two dogs, I think about all the things I have learned from them. They have taught me something about love and faithfulness. Whether I'm having a good day or bad day, whether I'm feeling happy or sad, whether I'm stressed or relaxed, they love me—unconditionally and without exception.

I have a tile in my office that says "Dog is love," and it's true, not just of dogs but of almost all pets. They love us—unconditionally.

Although that sort of unconditional love (the New Testament calls it *agape*) can be hard for humans, it seems to come naturally to pets. I think that must be part of the Creator's mark on them, his creatures, for He too loves us unconditionally and without exception.

My pets' love for me often reminds me of the profound love of God for us, his children. That sort of love constantly challenges me to love better, to love more like pets do, to love others as God loves us. It's hard, and yet Jesus' Great Commandment challenges us to do just that.

Fr. Jesse+



from the editor's desk

One of the things that I do as editor of the *Beacon* is to look for possible column topics. I can be most anywhere: camping, fishing, traveling, driving around, or watching TV, most anything. If it happens too early in the month, I probably have forgotten the idea when the time comes to write. Let me give you some examples of what has happened in the past couple of weeks. I was reading an essay in *Time* magazine. The subject was the angry tone that recent political rhetoric has taken. The essay ended with a quote from *Ezekiel*. I can't find the exact quote but the effect was that "he who carries anger in his bosom is a fool." Hmm... that would make a good topic for a column. But how would I work some form of spiritual message around that.

Then on our recent return flight from Tallahassee I observed a phenomenon that I have seen before. As soon as the plane had taxied up to the exit ramp, people were standing in the aisle, dragging luggage out of the overhead bin, endangering life and limb of themselves and others. Some stood half-doubled over in the interior seats, as if awaiting some miracle that will get them out of the plane more quickly. I mean! People! No one is going anywhere until the flight crew opens the door. And then, usually, people leave the plane based on where they were sitting. But again, I couldn't figure out any way to work a lesson –except maybe to be patient – around this observation.

Of course, the recent, total, complete collapse of the Boston Red Sox brought forth some possibilities, one of which was the fact that the Tampa Bay Rays used to be the Tampa Bay *Devil* Rays... But I decided I didn't want to go down that road...

Finally, just this week, *Forward Day by Day* came to my rescue. September's entries were written by an retired Episcopal priest on the Gulf Coast. His entry for September 27 resonated with me. It was based on the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." *Matthew* 7:1-12. This rule is familiar to most of us; we learned it at a young age. The writer goes on to point out that most major religions have this same philosophy expressed in one way or another. The brother goes on to say "This rule is simple and straightforward. It's easy to remember and easy to understand. It's not always easy to live, although it's easy to hold up as a standard to aim for when it's difficult...The rule is for a lifetime, but lived one day at a time. How will you live it today?" I thought how much better off the world would be if we lived by this rule.

So here's something to think about. When you feel angry, impatient, or out of sorts with your neighbor, think how you would like to be treated if your situation were reversed. Autumn is upon us; daylight hours are getting shorter; holiday pressures loom – no thanks to the stores with Christmas items already on display – so be cool; chill; and remember the Golden Rule.

Peace,

frp



Announcing

The next Vestry Meeting will be held on Monday, October 17. All vestry meetings are open to the entire parish. Parishioners wishing to include items on the agenda are asked to contact one of the wardens or the rector no later than two (2) weeks before the meeting. Vestry meeting agendas and minutes will be regularly posted on the bulletin board between Fay Hall and the narthex.

Fr. Jesse's office hours are as follows:

Monday – Thursday: 9am – Noon

Friday and Saturday: Days Off

He will try to be in the office whenever he isn't obliged elsewhere, but meetings, appointments, and pastoral calls do come up frequently. If possible, please call the parish office to set up an appointment with him in advance. His contact information is as follows:

Mobile: 508-614-9042

Email: rector@ststeph.com

PLEASE NOTE: Allison and Fr. Jesse would like to reserve the home number (508-870-3270) for general family calls. If you need to reach him outside of the office, please call the mobile number instead. This will allow you to contact him more directly and will protect the confidentiality of those calling about pastoral matters.

Small Group Discussion with the Rector:

Fr. Jesse would like to invite parishioners to join him for one of then informal discussions about the parishioners over coffee and dessert. Invitations letter have been mailed out, and sign-up sheets are posted in the Narthex. Please see Fr. Jesse or Bob Jarvis if you have you have any questions.

UTO ingathering will be held on Sunday, October 16th. Use the blue UTO box or envelope to show your gratitude for the large and small daily gifts from God. (checks or cash). Checks should be made payable to Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church with UTO in the memo portion. Contributions will be presented at the Diocesan annual Convention.

There will be a Mission & Outreach meeting on Saturday, October 8th, at 9:00 AM in Fay Hall. Do you have any ideas for projects we can work on? Any new areas of need we can assist with? Bring your ideas and willingness to help others! See you on the 8th. I will make coffee and bring Danish!
Bev Boyer

To the army of parishioners that were able to commit their time and talents to the Pond Clean Up, I give my heartfelt thanks. In only a few hours, we were able to get the toughest parts of the clean up done. Using coffee, donuts, jibes, jokes, and a lot of camaraderie, we worked hard and had some fun along the way. Thank you so very much for your help.
Jeff Bartee

The Adopted Soldier Project is moving forward quite quickly. The Church has sent out 12 care packages in the past year and I would like to send out more. *Courtney*, a Chaplain's Assistant in Afghanistan, is a name I received from AnySoldier.com. The units they serve are combat units made up entirely of men. They especially appreciate Batteries AA and AAA, Quality Basic Hygiene items for men, Muscle Magazines, sports Magazines, Common Interest Magazines like *Popular Science*, *Popular Mechanics*, *National Geographic*, and some news Magazines. Some times we don't get to hear what's going on back home as far as news goes. [Treats](#) and snacks are always welcomed. Also popular books are appreciated, as well as popular music on CDs and current [movies](#). Some of our soldiers don't get many care packages from home because they come from unsupportive families. Please keep these soldiers in mind when doing your grocery shopping. These soldiers are just looking for anything to brighten their day and bring a piece of America to Afghanistan. Thank you for what you guys are doing. All of us appreciate it and are thankful to have supportive citizens that "Have our Backs" while we are deployed so far from home and living in less than ideal conditions and often running on little to no sleep. Please address letters to ANY SOLDIER and NOT to him (*Courtney*).

ANY SOLDIER
HHB 5-25 FA
FOB Shank
APO AE 09364

The parish has committed to writing at least one letter of support a week and sending a minimum of one or two care packages a month. The soldiers love to receive these

gifts and letters, which help keep their spirits up. A list of suggested items to go in the "care packages" which consists of the most requested supplies such as toothpaste, Frisbees, sunscreen, etc., although almost anything is appreciated by the soldiers. The list is available at the Peace and Justice table set up in Fay Hall. Please contact *Ruth Beck* at 508-485-5338 with any questions.

Fr. Bill and Gail Martin sent their new address. They have sold their house in Jim Thorpe and moved to East Stroudsburg. Their address is:

For mail: 727 Blue Mountain Lake
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301

For packages: 526 Hilltop Circle
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301
House phone: 570-369-4931

We are really in need of a few more people to serve as readers. If we have a few more then no one will have to read more than once a month! Also, we need crucifers. If you would be willing to be a crucifer, please contact *Bev Boyer* at 508-366-7320 or see her after church.

***Michele Mongeon* is handling all aspects of the altar flowers.** Please record your information on the flower chart on the bulletin board in the narthex. Then put the envelope with the date you have chosen, the dedication, and your check for the flowers in *Michele's* in-box which is just outside the church office. Please make sure *Nancy Harris* also has the information including the correct spelling of the names to go in the Sunday bulletin. If you have questions about the flowers, please call *Michele* at 508-366-3985.

Time to Update St. Stephen's family tree. Apples and silver markers can be found in Fay Hall following the 9am Service. Choose an apple and write all the members in your household on the apple. Thanks to *Les Daniels* for making the apples and shipping

them from Florida. Questions contact *Melanie Daniels*.

In Memoriam: Saint Stephen's offers sympathy and condolences on the recent passing of *Lyla Deysher*, mother of parishioner *Bob Deysher*. May she rest in peace in God's company.

Prayerful Notes

"A Cat Tale With A Spiritual Lesson"

I recently accompanied my friend Jean, when she had an extensive and painful surgery to remove a deep rooted cancerous growth from her nose. At the end of a long day, she was in pain, weak and shaken from the trauma of the ordeal.

Concerned for her well being, I spent the night at her house, to support her in whatever way I could. Her bedrooms are upstairs. I slept in the guest room, directly across from her room, so I could be on call if she needed anything.

Jean has a beautiful but very insecure, black and white cat named "Quadi." I guess cats tend to be nocturnal creatures, at least I know Quadi is. Jean's house has the colonial black latches on all of her doors. Quadi's usual routine is, around 1:00 A.M.. to stand on his back two legs and keep hitting at the latch until her door opens. Once inside, he's ready for play, often playfully pawing at her face, to wake her up. Obviously, this would have been very dangerous, given her surgery, so she wisely locked the door. This did not sit well with "The Quad"!

Sleeping soundly in the guest room, some time in the predawn hours, I was suddenly awakened by his loud, mournful crying and meowing. I found him standing on his haunches, frantically banging at the latch of her locked door.

Hoping Jean's pain medication would keep her from being awakened, I quietly tried to coax him into my room but to no avail. Like a sentry standing guard, he would not budge from his post! You may be wondering why I

didn't just pick him up, well that's another whole story!

Then an idea came to me. I got his can of kitty treats. I shook it in front of him and suddenly I had his attention. I took out just one treat and placed it on the first step. "Come on Quadi, come get your treat," I urged. Surprisingly, he left her door and came to get the treat. I patted him and praised him, speaking very softly. Then I put one on the second step. Patiently and quietly, I repeated this procedure, down the entire flight of stairs. Then one more treat in the foyer. Now I was convinced, I had him! I threw the next treat into the den, shut off the stairway lights and just as I tried to close the den door, he raced right past me, up the stairs to Jean's door!

The previous scenario began all over again, until Jean got up. We all went downstairs, had our coffee and after sitting with Jean, on the arm of her chair for about 10 minutes, Quadi went out into the sunroom for his morning nap.

As I reflected on this event, I could see a similarity in how my own journey of faith is often interrupted by fear, doubt and insecurity.

For Quadi, Jean represents his security. For him to be locked away from her, all of his fears took over. While I too share a special relationship with him, the reality is, I am merely a cheap substitute. He trusted me for a while but ultimately his fears got the better of him.

I like to think I have a strong faith. I walk closely with the Lord, have a very disciplined prayer life and try to do His will in the world. In retrospect, my faith has been built through adversity. One would think that would make it easier to face the crises that come along in life. My faith certainly does help.

For Quadi, his time of temporary calm came with the slow, loving feeding of his kitty treats. For me, it is feeding my soul each morning. as I read His holy word, as I sit in silence with the Lord and in spoken and written prayers to Him. Most days that works

for me.

There are times however, when I, like everyone else encounter "Job experiences," a crisis situation that overwhelms me so much that my faith is diluted and fear and despair take over. I cry out to God for help but cannot hear Him in my despair, much like Quadi in his desperate attempts to open the door. I wanted to comfort and console him but he lost focus and fell back into fear, as I do at times. Like Peter, who walked to the Lord on the water but quickly sank, when he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked at the giant waves around him.

There are times when we all lose faith. I think it is just part of being human. We need to remember, the Lord is there walking beside us, through each step of our day. We have His word on it. *Deut. 31 : 8a.* The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you: He will never leave you nor forsake you.

God used a very special cat named Quadi to remind me of His care for me.

Blessings Always,
Phyl Endicott



STEWARDSHIP NOTES

Building Our Future Together

“Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established .” – Proverbs 16:3

“Building Our Future Together” was selected as this year’s stewardship theme to highlight the exciting new possibilities ahead for our parish.

The stewardship season will begin with informal group discussions about our parish’s strengths, needs, and potential opportunities and will culminate in a fun-filled Stewardship Pot Luck on Saturday, November 12th. The following morning will be Pledge Sunday, with pledge cards being collected at offertory.

More information will be appearing in the Sunday bulletin and the next newsletter. In the meantime, the stewardship committee invites you to prayerfully consider the common future we share as a parish family.

