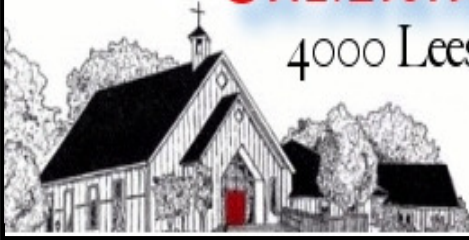


St. Michael's Episcopal Church

4000 Lees Summit Rd, Independence, MO

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October 2008

A monthly newsletter of St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Independence, MO

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Vicar's Reflection

Growing Fiery Wings

I recently saw a picture by Erica Grimm Vance entitled "Growing Fiery Wings II." It is a painting of a person seated on the ground with their feet flat on the ground, their knees tucked under their chin, and their arms outstretched in front of them. It looked like most of us would look if we tried to stand from that sitting position - the expression on the face was one of determination and effort because it is almost impossible for someone to rise up from that position. Yet, there is more to the painting. Transparent and abstractly painted from the arched shoulders and the leaning back all the way to the outstretched elbows is a streak of red almost like webbing. The red looks like the beginning of transparent fiery wings which will lift the person upward. It is an image of what God's Spirit does to us in this life. God's Spirit enables us to stand when it seems impossible. God's Spirit gives us fiery wings which help us live and act faithfully.

This long liturgical season following Pentecost, from June until the end of November, is focused on living the gospel of justice and compassion. This image of growing fiery wings challenges us to do the hard work of growing our own "wings" so we can live and act faithfully. All the Sunday readings encourage us to let the fire of God's Holy Spirit make our wings stronger and more powerful with each new day. This is the season of discipleship. This season does not focus on God's coming into the world as a child nor does it focus on Jesus' earthly life and ministry. The season following Pentecost begins with the arrival of the Holy Spirit often described as flames or tongues of fire; and Pentecost challenges

us to live as Christ in the world. This season invites us to show the world the power of God's Spirit within us.

Each of us has holy fiery wings which can grow in our lives and lift us up—fiery wings which free us from the forces of gravity and worldly concerns. Many things can weigh us down and keep us stuck in a seated position from which it is difficult to do any work. So how do we grow these fiery wings? God does the work of growing our wings, if we do the work of seeking out God's presence in our lives and committing ourselves to God's work. Our fiery wings are good only for the work God gives us. Our fiery wings don't give us super powers to fight crime or leap tall buildings. Our God-given fiery wings are to help us live out our ministries and build up God's kingdom here on earth.

In this season of discipleship and growth, we invite you to pray about what God wants you to do with your life. God wants us to do more than sit on the ground and struggle to stand. God wants us to get up and work for justice. God wants us to engage in ministry and service which lets people get a glimpse of God's Spirit and power. Take the time to pray about your ministry. Take the time to reflect on what you need to do to let your fiery wings grow. If you can't discern what God is calling you to do with your life now and into the future, then perhaps you need to ask your family and trusted Christian friends to help you see what steps to take.

We have been marked as Christ's own at our baptism and sealed by the power of the Holy Spirit. The genetic makeup is there and the fiery wings are ready to grow. They may appear gossamer thin and barely visible to you when you struggle to do God's work; but with each act of faithful service and each moment

of prayer and study those fiery wings grow stronger and God's Spirit becomes more visible in you and in me. Take on a spiritual exercise program which strengthens and grows your fiery wings. Together we can do great things through the power of God's Holy Spirit. So let's get to work.

From the Deacon

Stewardship

Stewardship is an integral part of our Christian walk. As we look forward to the new church year we again assess where we are in our giving of time, talent and resources. The Reverend Jeff Black tells a story that may help us understand what following Jesus and stewardship is about.

A rich young man comes to Jesus and asks what he must do to get eternal life. Jesus says that keeping the commandments is a good way to begin, and the rich young man smiles, says that he's obeyed all the commandments since he was a little boy, and asks what else he must do. Jesus tells him to give up his money, and the rich young man stops smiling, turns and walks away, because his possessions possess him. But then there's this second rich young man, who has seen what just happened and walks up to Jesus, pulls out his checkbook and says, "I've kept all the commandments, too, and I am willing to give up my money if it'll get me eternal life." And Jesus turns to him and says, "Let's talk."

The young man smiles and asks, "How do I make out my check?" Jesus smiles back and says, "No need for that. Just give me the checkbook. Is that all your money?" Surprised, the young man hands over his checkbook and says, "No, I have some cash here in my wallet." And Jesus says, "Let's see." This young man pulls out his wad of dollars and hands them over too. Jesus asks, "Is that all?" The young man is no

longer smiling, but he says, "Well, I have some loose change." Jesus sticks out his hand. The young man hands over his coins and says, "I guess I'll be living on my credit cards for awhile." Jesus looks at him and says, "Credit cards?" Getting the idea, the young man pulls his credit cards out of his wallet and hands them over, and Jesus asks, "What else do you have there in your wallet?"

"Nothing you can spend," says the young man, "just some identification and my driver's license."

Jesus says, "I want that too."

The young man protests. "What can you do with my driver's license?" Jesus replies, "Will you give it to me or not?" The young man sighs and hands over his driver's license and ID.

The young man reaches into his pocket and pulls out his car keys, and says, "Then I guess I won't need these." Jesus asks, "What are they?"

"They're the keys to my car."

"You've got a car?" "I do," replies the young man. "Do you want the title too?" Jesus says, "We can take care of that later. What are these other keys?"

"Well, that's the key to my office and that's the key to my house."

"You've got a house?" "Yeah," the young man says, getting irritated. "But if you take my house, where are my wife and kids going to live.?"

"You've got a wife and kids?" Shocked, the young man says, "You want me to give up my wife and kids too?" And Jesus says, "Look. Your wife and kids have never really belonged to you, but if that's how you've seen them, as belonging to you, then I do want you to give them up to me."

"And I suppose you also want the shirt off my back." Jesus smiles, "Well, I had been admiring it." Angry, the young man takes off his shirt and hands it over, saying, "Unless you want the rest of my clothes, that's it. I have nothing left."

And Jesus says, "That is not true. You have the gift

of life itself, a canvas on which you've painted all the pains and pleasures you have ever known and on which you continue to paint. You have hands to work with, if you're willing to use them, and you have a voice that you can use, if you choose to so, to praise and to pray and to say all sorts of things. You got all these from me a long time ago."

The young man was silent.

Jesus continues, "And now I ask you, are you willing to lift up your voice and your hands and your very life and give them all to me?"

The young man takes a deep breath and says, "Yes."

"Good," Jesus says. "Now we're talking. I have great plans for you, but they don't involve your being half dressed." And Jesus hands back to the young man the shirt he just took off. The young man is confused. "You're giving me back what I just gave to you?" And Jesus says, "Not exactly. The shirt still belongs to me. As a matter of fact, it always did belong to me. You just treated it as if it belonged to you. That's even more true as to your wife and kids. You may have thought of them as your possessions, but they have always belonged to me, and they always will. I'm putting them back into your life now, for a while, so that you can keep each other company and help take care of each other. But don't think for a minute that they're yours. They're mine. That's also true as to the new friends you'll meet along the way. They'll always belong to me, but I'll give you some opportunities to care for some of them on my behalf, and vice versa.

Jesus continues, "And, of course, you'll need housing and transportation while you're serving me. Here are the car keys and the keys to the house you just gave me, along with the keys to your office. That all belongs to me, too, but I'm calling you to serve me where you work and where you live and even when you're passing to and fro.

The young man asks, "What about my driver's license?" Jesus replies, "Forgive me if it sounds like I'm being nitpicky here, but this is not your driver's license. It has your picture and name and address and so forth on it, but I was the one who put it into your hands in the first place. I'm the one who took it

from you a minute ago, and I'm the one who is putting it back into your hands right now, to use wisely in serving me. The same thing goes for the money, the credit cards, and the checkbook. I'm putting them back into your hands, but be careful with them. If you use them wisely in serving me, they'll be blessings I'll use to provide for your needs and for the needs of others. But if you're not careful, the financial stuff and the rest can become little gods that compete with me and try to shut me out of your life, the very life that you've lifted up to me. Remember that it all belongs to me, and keep in touch with me as the Lord of your life, and I'll help you to be careful, to use the gifts wisely, and to live true life forever, beginning now."

And the young man says, "What can I say?" Jesus smiles. "You said all that you needed to say when you said, 'Yes'."

God's Peace, Deacon Larry

FOCUS ON MINISTRY

Our grounds keeping folks have been diligently working on the rain garden, weeding, and mowing—which is an ongoing project. Thanks to Roberta Morgan, Scott Meyer, Jim Swaney, Marie and Ron Weisbach, Terry Bickham, Jonathan Bickham, and Rick and HazelAnn Barkie-Cox for their diligence in keeping our grounds looking good.. The work of this group makes our building so attractive that people call just to tell us how wonderful it looks and that is what attracts them to come and worship with us. If you would like to be a part of this evangelism ministry just let Deacon Larry or Scott Meyer know of your interest. This is a ministry which you can do on your own schedule during the week that you are assigned. You don't have to mow the grass to be a part of this great ministry. In fact, Marie Weisbach is often here weeding the garden areas when the place is quiet. Marie will tell you how spiritually uplifting it is to do this important work surrounded by the beauty of God's creation.

EMMAUS CELEBRATION

Sunday, October 26 ... Our Emmaus Celebration will be at **11:00 a.m. at the Community of Christ Auditorium** in Independence. Joining with us will be our **Presiding Bishop, the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts-Schori**. She will be both **Celebrant and Preacher** at the Eucharist. She and her husband will also be present with those who are delegates to our Diocesan Convention, which meets on Friday and Saturday, October 24-25. **Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this great gathering of Episcopalians** Further details will be forthcoming regarding carpooling from St. Michael's and other information. There will be a banquet Friday night (cost: \$55) which is open to anyone who wants to register. The Presiding Bishop will attend. It is not known whether she will speak or simply mingle.

**SEEK YE FIRST HIS
KINGDOM, AND HIS
RIGHTEOUSNESS;
AND ALL THESE
THINGS SHALL BE
ADDED UNTO YOU.**

Matt 6:33 ASV

Saturday, October 4 ... *St. Michael's Green Fling and Blessing of the Animals*. Our first ever Green Fling will be held on October 4, which is also the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. It will be from 1 to 4 and will include Bridging the Gap, an environmental group. They will provide an educational experience for everyone. We will have recycling exhibits, alternative energy exhibits, natural healing exhibits, and more! The Lakeside Nature Center will bring its birds of prey, a mammal (depends on the weather), and a reptile for you to get up close and personal with. We will also have REGAP (Retired Greyhounds as Pets) and Animals Best Friends on hand with dogs for adoption. At **6:30 p.m.** we will have **Holy Eucharist and Mother Pat will bless the animals**. It should be a glorious day, so bring your critters for a blessing!

OCTOBER FEAST DAYS

St. Francis of Assisi	Saturday, October 4	6:30 p.m.
St. Luke the Evangelist	Saturday, October 18	6:30 p.m.
St. James of Jerusalem	Thursday, October 23	6:30 p.m.
St. Simon & St. Jude Apostles	Tuesday, October 28	6:30 p.m.

**BE NOT CON-
FORMED TO THIS
WORLD: BUT BE
TRANSFORMED
BY THE RENEW-
ING OF YOUR
MIND.**

Romans 12:2 KJV

This newsletter is a publication of St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 4000 Lee's Summit Road, Independence, MO 64055. The telephone number is 816-373-5333. The newsletter is sent to all members of St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Independence, MO, and to friends of the church. If you would like to be included in our mailing list, please contact the church office.

Mail all news items to the church office at the address above or email to Shirley Nelson (shrl12nelson@sbcglobal.net) by the 15th of the month.

Conviction is worthless unless it is converted into conduct.

Thomas Carlyle



Donald Kuske	10/5
Vicky Anderson	10/13
John Robb	10/14
Larry Allen	10/24
Jewell Cox	10/25
Faith Hogan	10/30



Donald & Genie Kuske 10/29



Scott Meyer	10/9
Shirley Nelson	10/29
Lisa Stewart	10/30

DIOCESAN YOUTH EVENT BE PART OF THE EMMAUS CELEBRATION!

October 24-26
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Kansas City, MO
Grades 6-12

Cost \$25

For More Information Call
417-793-0780

GOING GREEN

Jim Hackler of Sky magazine offers some ideas (and their impact) on ways we can contribute to the good and proper stewardship of God's creation.

Metal Winner

One old cell phone recycled by each cell phone user in America would reclaim enough precious metals to create **631 solid gold replicas** of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen's funerary mask.

Use a Rake

One hour of using a gas-operated leaf blower produces the same amount of greenhouse gases as a car driving **4,400 miles** — that's a round trip from Salt Lake City to New York City.

Virtual Payment

If every American switched to receiving just **one bill** as an electronic statement the one-time savings would be **217,800,000 sheets of paper** — enough to completely blanket the island of Key West in a single layer of paper.

September 3, 2008

ELDER LAW MINUTE
From Ira M. Leff and Associates
Attorneys at Law
Atlanta, Georgia

Older Americans present some unique tax planning opportunities. For example, consider Harold and Evelyn Green. Harold has a big income from two pensions and Social Security. Evelyn receives a small pension and Social Security. Evelyn has diabetes, peripheral vascular disease and emphysema. Her medical costs are very high, but not high enough for the couple to deduct them on their joint return. (In order to take advantage of this deduction, their medical costs would have to exceed 7.5 percent of their combined adjusted gross income.) However, if Evelyn pays her expenses from her own, separate bank account, and the couple reports their taxes as married filing separately, Evelyn can use her medical expenses to offset her income and reduce their total tax cost.

A single, divorced or widowed person caring for an elderly parent in her home may be entitled to file as head of household rather than single. In order to do so, the parent must reside with the child for the entire year. The parent must be a U.S. citizen or resident, or a resident of Canada or Mexico. The parent may not be claimed as a dependent on another return. The parent may not have earned more than \$3,500 in 2008. And the child must pay for at least half of the parent's household expenses during the year.

A child who is eligible to claim a parent as a dependent may also be eligible to claim the dependent care credit if the child paid a third party to care for the disabled parent. In order to be eligible, the parent must be incapable of providing his or her own care and the child's home must be the parent's principal residence.

There is the story of a pastor who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad new is, it's still out there in your pockets."

