

## Interim's Corner

### Gratitude

By Rev. Won-Jae Hur

August 11 was the Feast of St. Clare of Assisi, the friend and confidante of St. Francis. That day, I remembered a friend's daughter whose name is Clare. The last time I saw her, she was eight years old. We once discussed her name, and I told her that it meant "clear, bright, and noble." We also talked about how the Italian version sounds very beautiful: Chiara. She preferred her own version: Clare. Remembering our conversation, I was very grateful to know her.

A good friend said to me recently, "Gratitude is power. That's what the Eucharist is about. It's all about giving thanks. It transforms us." His words opened another page of memory for me.

I am sitting in a quiet room, having a conversation with a mentor in the last year of seminary. I ask him, "What can I do to draw closer to God?" He takes a postcard, writes something on the back, and hands it to me. The back of the postcard says, *Thank You*. I look up at him, half-understanding and half-puzzled. He says, "Thank God for everything in your life. For your breath, for the sun, for the ground you walk on, for the person walking by you on the street ... thank God for everything you have and experience."

It is hard to remember to be grateful at times. This may be especially true now, as we continue to live in a major recession. Yet it takes only a moment of mindfulness to notice the abundance in our lives. We are gifted with breath. We are gifted with the capacity for hope. We are gifted with faith in a loving God. We are gifted with the company of others with whom we make the great journey of life, our family, friends, and neighbors.

Gratitude changes our vision. When we take the time to notice the blessings that surround us, we begin to move from a narrow focus on scarcity to gratitude. Our hearts begin to open and our spirit becomes generous. Gratitude fills us so fully that we are compelled to give it away by sharing with others. It invites us from within to loving action.

I think this is the joy of the feast at Christ's table. We offer ourselves and our gifts in gratitude for the priceless blessings of life. We join each other in remembering what really matters: love, grace, mercy, hope, justice. We give the gift of ourselves as God gives the gift of God's self in Christ. Then we take that joy of gratitude into the streets, offices, and homes to share it with others.

As my friend says, "Gratitude is power. It transforms us." Perhaps gratitude is even more important in difficult times. It reminds us that God is with us, blessing us in every breath.

*Thank You, thank You, thank You, generous God!  
You have injected life with joy,  
thus we know laughter.  
You have dabbed creation with color,  
thus we enjoy beauty.  
You have whistled a divine tune into the rhythm of life,  
thus we hear music.  
You have filled our minds with questions,  
thus we appreciate mystery.  
You have entered our hearts with compassion,  
thus we experience faith.  
Thank You, God, thank You. Thank You!*

- C. Welton Gaddy



## From Our Senior Warden

By Doreen Canton

I hope that everyone had a fun and relaxing summer. I know that school has started for some and for others it is just around the corner, so this is a busy time for many. St. James is gearing up with enthusiasm to start our fall programs. Rev. Won-Jae has offerings for adults, and the youth and children's programs are in serious preparation for a great year to come.

As you are aware, we have lost some important members of our parish family—and our Vestry!—over the past couple of months. Jane and Hal Weston have moved to Atlanta, where Hal has taken up a teaching post. Will Gregory and his family have bought their first house and will be moving to Lafayette. Kathy Henry has accepted a position in Detroit. We thank you all for the love and service you gave to St. James, and we will keep you in our hearts and prayers.

At our August meeting, the Vestry decided as a group to finish out the year as we are, and wait until January to fill these vacancies. If you have never been part of a Vestry, it is an amazing Board to be a part of, so please think about it. If you have been there before, then you know

what I am talking about; please consider sitting again. We will be putting out the Vestry "suggestion box" in the near future. Please consider volunteering or nominating someone whom you think would contribute to this great group. Talk to Liza Colton, to Margaretta Himes, or to me if you want to know more about what being a Vestry member entails.

Those of us left behind face some major challenges as we lose the many gifts and talents that our departing members brought to the Vestry and to our community. However, to look at the glass as half full, we also have the opportunity to raise up others who may have gifts they would like to share with our great family. St. James is a smaller community today in numbers than we were a few years ago, but it is still packed with great people who give seriously of their time and talent in so many ways. This includes the housekeeping chores that require much time and effort, and are routinely done in a quiet and loving way. It also takes many hands to prepare and serve at our Sunday liturgies each week, to make them a positive experience for everyone from youngest to oldest. Thank you.

There are many more opportunities to serve. We need help with our Stewardship and Membership ministries, and are also still recruiting for the Finance Committee. Typically we gear up for the fundraising aspects of Stewardship in September, and this year is no exception. Watch for more details as we get going. Also—though we know that difficult financial times continue and job security can't be taken for granted—please start thinking now about what you hope to give for the next year, as the Treasurer and Finance Committee look at putting together our budget for 2010.

Elia Pochron is stepping up to take over the ASPIRE program. If you would like to help, Elia has assured me that there will be plenty of opportunity to do so!

We merged the Membership and Parish Life ministries last year, and what a great job they have done in the area of hospitality! Thanks to great leadership, people have already stepped forward to organize the Thanksgiving dinner and lead the Christmas Carol singing. We would like to keep moving forward, so if you are interested, please speak to me, to any member of the Vestry, or to Won-Jae. We are trying very hard to organize in such a way that the burden of leadership does not fall on just a few shoulders but is spread across many hands.

The Preschool has done a major cosmetic refurbishing of their premises this summer. Stop by and have a look!

Getting a lot of  
**cards and calendars** as "free gifts"?  
Wondering what to do with them all?



**Bring them to St. James!**

**Carole Jan Lee** will make sure they get to people who can use them –

- ~ clients of a Tenderloin community center
- ~ patients at the VA hospital
- ~ visitors to the Seafarer's Center in Oakland

Your junk mail can be a REAL gift  
to someone in need!

Look for a "Cards and Calendars" box in the Parish Hall



## Sunday Clubs Update

### Fall Parent Meeting

By Carla Cooper

With the start of the new school year, Sunday Clubs welcomes children from age 3½ to fifth grade to our program. Our aim is to provide nurturing and inspiring exposure to the Bible and Episcopal traditions. We are all parent teachers, and gear our lessons to the interests and attention span of the children in class. Each Sunday we meet for a lesson-of-the-day, usually drawn from the Lectionary, with parent teachers. Our beloved and inspired Elia Pochron oversees crafts, and then we join the congregation for Communion.

Our nursery caregiver, Hansel, engages the littlest children (under age 3½) in wonderful play. We will add an additional caregiver to assist Hansel in short order, since at the end of August we said goodbye to calm, smiling Phoebe Winn, who is starting her first year Connecticut College. Older children (sixth grade and up) join Sidrah Gibbs for Youth Group.

Join us for a meeting for all interested Sunday Clubs parents and teachers on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. Please RSVP to me at [carlancooper@gmail.com](mailto:carlancooper@gmail.com), and note whether you will need childcare. Rev. Won-Jae Hur will join us, and the agenda will focus on planning for teacher training and how we can incorporate Won-Jae's professional guidance into our preparation and teaching. We'll also create a teaching rota and discuss special activities (e.g., a pet-centered St. Francis Day, and a St. Nicholas Day celebration) for the fall and early winter. We have a group of dedicated volunteer parents with wonderful perspectives to draw upon as we share traditions with our children.

Please email or call me (415-596-9405) with any questions.



## The Rector Search Committee Needs Your Voice

### Please Attend a Town Hall Meeting

By Ann Rieger Matthews and Jan Vennari

One of the first and most important tasks facing the Rector Search Committee is to prepare our Parish Profile. This is a multi-page document with photos and text that describes who we are as a parish, and what we are looking for in our next rector.

Sound important? It is.

To write a Parish Profile that's truly reflective of who we are at St. James, we need to hear from you. We will be hosting a series of town hall meetings in which we'll ask a short list of questions, such as what kinds of things are working well at St. James, what's not working so well, and what kinds of skills and experiences you would like to see in our new rector. The Search Committee will listen and take notes, and do our best to incorporate the thoughts, hopes and concerns in the Parish Profile.

Please come and let us know your opinions. The town hall meetings are scheduled as follows:

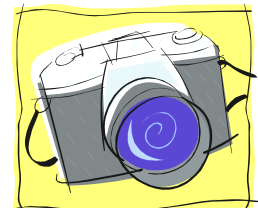
- **Sunday September 13 in the Parish Hall, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.** (Follows the 10:00 service. Lunch provided.)
- **Sunday September 20 in Parish Hall, 8:45 - 9:45 a.m.** (Follows the 8:00 service. Breakfast provided.)
- **Sunday September 20 for the Youth Group, 10:00 -11:00 a.m.** (Breakfast provided.)
- **Sunday September 27 in the Parish Hall, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.** (Follows the 10:00 service. Lunch provided.)

We will also have an online survey available for people who cannot attend one of these meetings.

Please let any member of the Search Committee know if you have questions: Giselle Bosc, Louise Newlin, Carol Overman, Ann Rieger Matthews, Elia Pochron, Judy Spain, Elizabeth Sturcken, Jan Vennari, Roger Wickstrom, Ed Wilcox, Warren Wong. Thank you!

## PHOTO CONTEST EXTENDED!

Submissions accepted through September – Final judging in October!



Bring your best black and white photos (or color prints to be printed in black and white)

*Box for submissions is in the narthex*  
Put your name and phone number on the back of each photo

Finalists will have their photographs enlarged and framed to decorate the parish office!

Questions? Contact Rose Scarff at 415-460-1615 or [Rose.Scarff@gmail.com](mailto:Rose.Scarff@gmail.com)

## Aspirations

### Sexuality and General Convention

By Jon Owens

I remember throughout my college years, how I would be at YMCA camp during the summer reading about all the resolutions passed at the Church's General Convention. The director of the camp was Episcopalian as well, and we would have lengthy discussions about the Church. He always said that if we would quit passing resolutions, there would no controversy. Maybe he was right. The Church would not have to grapple with tough issues. On the other hand, isn't our goal to decide what God's intention is for the path he/she wants us to take, using the Church as a way of guidance?

The idea that was always upsetting to me about General Convention was a group of people whom I did not know trying to make decisions about my life. The thought of someone else deciding whether I could be included in the life of the Church was so frustrating.

When Rowan Williams became Archbishop of Canterbury, I was deeply excited, thinking, "Here's a progressive guy who loves 'The Gospel According to the Simpsons.'" He claimed that no one would be left behind when he became leader, but somehow the more conservative Church got hold of him as he spent more time in Africa after he was elected to his new post. Now it seems he is trying to strike a balance between the more liberal U.S. Church and his conservative brothers, including the assertion that being homosexual is a "choice."

"Choice?" I have always hated that word, along with "sexual preference." Such language implies I can do something to change who I am. Coming out as a teen while growing up in the Oklahoma Bible belt was a nightmare, as anyone could imagine. I tried reparative therapy. I tried praying to God to take away my "evil thoughts." I suffered death threats in college, as well as constant hazing.

The American Psychological Association recently declared reparative therapy dangerous and said it should be avoided. To me there is no "choice." I can remain celibate or be allowed to have what most people desire, a strong healthy relationship built on love, honesty, commitment, and fidelity.

Having these issues to deal with in college only made me stronger. I founded the first GLBT campus organization in rural Oklahoma. It was a challenge to get recognized by the student body, but we did it! My experiences also led me to try to bridge that gap when I was in Omaha working for the Church, by organizing a GLBT ministry for the diocese. The people in that organization struggled;

many just wanted the Church to give a simple blessing to their commitments as couples. We strove to raise awareness of the risk potentially posed to one's spiritual development by exclusion, if the Church maintained its traditional stance.

Did you know that more than 50% of teenage suicides in the U.S. have sexual orientation as an issue linked to the death? I look at this number and think of the African Churches who refuse to work with the U.S. Church, while their countries' legal systems continue to jail or sometimes stone homosexual people. These are countries where the Church looked the other way when it came to polygamy. People in Africa are suffering from an AIDS epidemic, and we are worried about the U.S. Church allowing gays to have unions and be ordained?

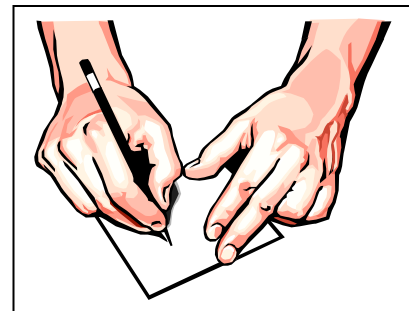
I believe this is a new era in the Church's life, when God is asking us to reflect deeply on what is important to enable us to live together in harmony in the world. It is a chance for us to develop a ministry focused on justice and reconciliation.



## Letters to the Journal

Got a thought about something  
you've read in the Journal?

Want to share it with the St. James community?



Drop the editor a note,  
and you could be in print next month!

Send your letter by September 20th to:  
[elizabethn@jfc.org](mailto:elizabethn@jfc.org)

or to: Elizabeth Nelson – LTJ  
578 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue #6  
San Francisco, CA 94121  
(or hand it to me at church on Sunday)



*The Altar at York Minster*

## The Unity of the Christian Churches

By Barbara Burgess

“We are each responsible for how we live our lives before God.” This quote (and those that follow) was part of the sermon I heard at York Minster on August 2, during my recent trip to Scotland and England. The sermon was about why there has never been complete unity in the Christian Church, and why attempts to force unification have failed.

Recently, Episcopal Churches in the United States have begun to split from the Anglican Church because they feel the Anglican Church no longer represents their spiritual beliefs. There has never, in the history of the Church, been true unification. The apostles themselves disagreed on the basic principles of the church, including whether or not circumcision should be a requirement. When you read the different accounts of Jesus’ life as told by the apostles, they can’t even agree on the basics such as who told them that the stone sealing Jesus’ grave had been moved. Is it any wonder, then, that thousands of years later Jesus’ followers still can’t agree on what makes someone a Christian?

I was fortunate while growing up to have varied exposures to Christianity as well as other religions. I went to Saint James Preschool (Episcopal), the Jewish Community Center in San Francisco, and Marin Catholic High School. In addition, my father’s side of the family are Freewill Baptists, my uncle is a semi-retired Freewill Baptist minister, and my stepmother is an agnostic Jew. What I have found over the years is that most religions, Christian or not, have in common the idea of a higher being: God, Jesus, Allah, Yahweh, Krishna, etc. It is on this principle that former Bishop Swing first developed the United Religions Initiative. What I have also found is people’s religious views are as varied as their political views and as the people themselves.

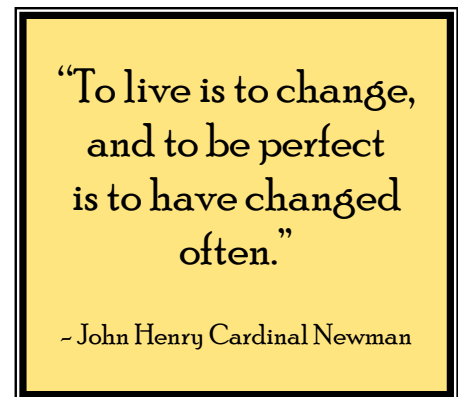
So how do we go about unifying the Christian Church, or is it a hopeless proposition? I believe that any further attempts at unification must take into account that “the God we worship is a living God, and God can never be established and unchangeable.” We as God’s followers are capable of change, although change comes more easily for some than for others depending on how “established” we are in our own beliefs and practices. I suppose that unification begins the same way as any change does: with the individual. “Emulate the way in which Jesus’ love for God allowed him to be merciful, and in God’s love we will find unity and look away from ourselves and listen to the Spirit of God in each other.”



## To Live Is to Change

By Maureen K. Fisher, MFT Intern  
California Counseling Institute

Growing up, I remember eyeing on a daily basis a small decorative wooden plaque inscribed with a quote by Cardinal Newman: “To live is to change; to be perfect is to have changed often.” It traveled with us back and forth between New England and North Carolina, popping up on a night stand or coffee table in one after another of the 11-plus homes we had inhabited by the time I was 13. I like to think my mom displayed it prominently for encouragement (or perhaps as a tongue-in-cheek allusion to our often grueling nomadic lifestyle). At any rate, the message was difficult for me to ignore, as household dusting was my designated chore.



Fast forward to the present: Cardinal Newman’s words

grace an inconspicuous spot on my kitchen wall and continue to give me occasional pause for thought. I’m pretty sure that little piece of wood traveled with me to San Francisco for some purpose. Perhaps I had become unwittingly attached to its unobtrusive presence – a “binky” of sorts. Or perhaps I’m a big fan of pithy aphorisms presented charmingly on wood.

In my present role as a therapist, I find myself resistant to the notion of perfection as a desirable or achievable goal.

Clearly one must allow for various connotations of that word, and it's possible the Cardinal's intent was to incite such variety of interpretation. Or maybe he said it in passing and never surmised it would be plaque-worthy. (After all, he is also quoted as saying, "Nothing would be done at all if one waited until one could do it so well that no one could find fault with it." Incidentally, I haven't seen that one carved in wood. But I digress.) For me, the sentiment is age-old and probably a cliché; nevertheless, contemplating it sparks timely ideas about the nature and necessity of change.

Fundamentally, life is a succession of incremental changes. If we cease to grow, we cease to live. Clients (and, I would venture to guess, the whole of humanity at one point or another) often resist change out of fear and, in doing so, invite stagnation which causes them further distress. This seems on the surface a no-brainer. Yet delving into the depths of cognition and behavior have begun to teach us about the brain's remarkably complex mechanisms for necessitating and adapting to change: in a word, its inherent *plasticity*.

Change does not have to be monumental. Indeed, it is more often the deceptively subtle shifts in awareness that facilitate growth. We are indoctrinated in this society to measure fulfillment and happiness by our external and observable situation: respectable career paths, promotions with pay raise, exponentially increasing friend totals on Facebook, and so on.

But the change I'm referring to is more basic: attending to the seeming minutiae. As Diane Ackerman asserts in *An*

*Alchemy of Mind*, this might be "an absorbing errand as simple as becoming aware of each breath." She goes on to suggest that "by pay[ing] fresh attention to what's grown stale, [one might] scrape some of the rust and lichen off the brain, and find the world renewed." If we take the same route to work every day, our brain adjusts so rapidly to what it recognizes repeatedly that it eventually ceases (by design) to "recognize" at all. We begin to operate on autopilot—but at a potentially steep price. While we need the brain to conduct certain operations outside of our immediate awareness (imagine the mayhem of having to attend to all sensory input at once), it is a slippery slope to the dulling of our sensations. We may fall prey to perpetual numbness. Boredom stifles us when we cease to recognize the wealth of stimuli in our surroundings. We begrudgingly (and erroneously) accept that all is mundane.

But boredom, like other nagging and repelling sensations, can feel less frightening if viewed more innocuously. For example, in Ackerman's words: "[b]oredom develops as a kind of 'waking slumber.'" Once we become aware of it as such, however, we are given an opportunity to initiate change.

Though it requires vigilance and patience, the brain's capacity to effectively transform perspective and alter for the better our quality of life is nothing short of astounding. We are endowed with the means of adapting to our current state of mind merely by learning to attend to it.



## COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER ONGOING CLASSES AND EVENTS

### For Children and Youth

**Saturday Learning Time**  
**Kindermusik and Advanced Kindermusik**  
**ASPIRE After School Program**  
**Suzuki Music Lessons**  
**Homework Help Center**

Call 415-751-1199 for information.  
Contact Dee Dee Lawton at 415-561-9754.  
Call 415-751-1199 for information.  
Call 415-412-6723 for information.  
Contact Nayad Abrahamian at 751-1198 to volunteer.

### For Adults

**"Always Active" Senior Exercise**

Mondays 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.  
Wednesdays 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.

**Buddhist Meditation**

Wednesdays 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

**Overeaters Anonymous**

Sundays 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. in the Caldwell Room.  
Tuesdays 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

**Debtors Anonymous**

Tuesdays 6:00 – 7:00 in the Caldwell Room.



# San Francisco Village

OUR GENERATION. OUR CHOICE.

## SEPTEMBER EVENTS

for San Francisco Village Members and Prospective Members

Wednesday, September 9

**Debut of the Village Lunch Bunch - 94118 and Surrounding Zips (94121, 94115, 94117, 94122)**

Join us for the beginning of a monthly lunch club for Village members and guests

1:00 -2:30 p.m. Pasta Pomodoro, 3611 California Street near Spruce ([pastapomodoro.com](http://pastapomodoro.com))

Cost: Self pay, lunch entrees range from \$8-\$12 Host: Marilyn Campbell

Thursday, September 10

**Second Thursday Seminar Series on Smart Choices in Retirement**

**“Long Term Care Insurance – What Are the Options?”**

Presented by Tammy Haygood and Jenipher Chiang of Edward Jones

6:00 pm - 7:30 p.m. Cost: Free, bring a dish for potluck dinner Host: Jeanne Lacy

Monday, September 14

**Dim Sum Dinner at Tong Palace**

933 Clement Street, between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues ([tongpalace.com](http://tongpalace.com))

6:00-7:30 p.m. Cost: \$20, self-pay at the restaurant Host: Dawn Ming

Tuesday, September 15

**Debut of the Village Lunch Bunch – 94123 and Surrounding Zips (94129, 94109, 94133, 94111, 94102)**

1:00-2:30 p.m. Squat and Gobble, 2263 Chestnut Street between Scott & Pierce ([squatandgobble.com](http://squatandgobble.com))

Cost: Self pay, lunch entrees range from \$8-\$12 Host: Marilyn Campbell

Visit [www.sfvillage.org](http://www.sfvillage.org) or call Gayle at 415-387-1375 for more information or to RSVP for any event.

## Conflict!

### Sex, Religion, and Feminism

By James A. Turner

*“[An] unborn child is a human being from the time of conception and is, therefore, a legal person.”*

-- Illinois Judge Jeffrey Lawrence, February 2005

Abortion remains one of the most contentious religious, political, and social issues that we face in the United States today. Closely allied with abortion in contentiousness is the issue of contraception, which some feel is nothing but an abortion in pill form. There are many sub-issues associated with both. *When does life begin? Is a fertilized human egg a person? Should all abortions be made illegal? Do contraceptives really cause abortions? What reproductive rights should women have? Where did the idea of an immortal “soul” come from, and when is it supposedly imparted to an embryo? What are stem cells, and should they be harvested from frozen embryos? What makes these issues so difficult is that there are no absolute*

answers and much misunderstanding. Many consider these moral issues, and morality, for many, is defined by their religious beliefs.

In the human, fertilization occurs, not in the uterus, but in the Fallopian tube closely adjacent to the ovary. When the time is right, the female ovum (“egg”) is extruded and makes its way into the mouth of the Fallopian tube. If sex has occurred, the ovum may (not always) become fertilized as it begins its journey through the tube toward the uterus. It reaches the uterus and, at about the fifth or sixth day after fertilization, it implants in the wall of the uterus and pregnancy begins. Thus there is a time lag of five or six days, and *pregnancy does not begin until this implantation occurs.*

This is a good point at which to consider *stem cells*—what they are and where they come from—as there has been so much controversy concerning them. When the ovum is fertilized, it receives half of its genetic information from the mother, half from the father; it then begins to divide, first into two cells, then into four, then into eight and so on

in a mathematical progression. At this early stage it is called a *zygote*. Cell division progresses as the *zygote* moves down the Fallopian tube, and by the time it reaches the uterus and implants it looks like a hollow sphere of cells (called a *blastocyst*) with a mass of cells clustered at one end. These clustered cells are the *stem cells*, special embryonic cells which are multi-potential and develop into all the different tissue types and organs that make up the human body as the embryo develops.

This brings us directly to the controversy over stem cell research and *frozen embryos*. About one in ten couples in the United States is infertile, and many turn to modern fertility clinics for help when they want a child. Multiple eggs are extracted from the woman and fertilized outside her body in Petri dishes. Some of the resulting embryos are then implanted in the woman's uterus. More embryos have to be produced than may be necessary, in case the implanted ones don't work. Thus a surplus results, and these surplus embryos are frozen and kept for later use.

The word "embryo" suggests that they have a human form. They do not. They are very early clusters of cells—zygotes and blastulae as described above—and can only be successfully frozen at this very early stage of development. And, of course, they have clusters of stem cells that could potentially be used for research. However, if the clinic never uses them again, they are eventually destroyed.

It was estimated that in 2003 there were some 400,000 frozen embryos in infertility clinics across the U.S., and there are even more today. If the cultural climate were right, they could be used for productive research instead of being destroyed. In fact, the prestigious journal *Science* reported that some 60% of fertility clinic patients would like to donate their unused embryos for stem cell research.

Embryonic stem cells are special because of their potential to develop into different types of tissues that might someday prove to save human lives. Adults no longer have embryonic stem cells. They do have some adult stem cells in the bone marrow, but these do not have the same developmental potential as the embryonic form.

But here is the rub. Pro-lifers claim that human life begins at the moment of fertilization, and so they consider all these frozen embryos as human *persons* which should not be used for research, even though each is just a small cluster of cells. Yet they apparently don't object to the embryos' eventual destruction by the clinics. Therein lies the irony of their belief system.

I'll pursue some of these issues further next month.



## Thoughts While Shaving

By Ray Muñoz

*"I am loved and accepted by God just as I am. Since I cannot be more demanding than God, it surely follows that I must love and accept myself."*

-- Esther de Waal, *Living with Contradiction*

We just got a new computer. A sleek, modern looking thing; quite expensive. It has all the whistles and absolutely all the bells. I love to touch it and to look at it. I just can't write on it.

Or at least I find it very hard to write on it. I may need to ask for help, whether I like it or not.

(I asked my thirteen-year-old to help me, but she got a bit testy, since I do tend to ask her to repeat stuff. Thirteen-year-olds are fearless.... My ego took a beating.)

It got me thinking that I've had many of these ego-deflating moments in my life. (You too? Well, imagine that!)

Say, for instance, dating. It was a lot of fun, but boy was it ever scary, and so often confusing and embarrassing. (Golly, I'm busy tonight ... tomorrow too ... I'm really sorry ... buh-bye!)

School? That was tough! I had some learning difficulties and they got in the way. I didn't know they were learning difficulties; I just thought I was dumb. A real blast on the ego? You bet!

Work? Don't get me started.... I did okay once I found my groove, as they say. But, again, it was hard. (Why



can't people say what they mean and mean what they say?)

So this late in my life I happened to read that short bit by Ms. de Waal, and in a way it looked so simple. God, that Being that lives within me and outside me and all around me, loves me without any reservation. Why, then, should I be so hard on myself?

I figured it out: I'll try to give up all my self-demeaning and threatening thoughts to God, who will shred them, and in turn give me some new ones ... as well as a spotless, ironed-out ego all wrapped in shiny new blessings.

I know it won't be easy. I have trouble with faith, you see. I will have trouble letting myself hang out on a limb. Past experience will rear its ugly head. Words that others heaped on me will come up. You know! You have your share of them! You know exactly what I mean! You and I are legion, as they say. We belong to a not too exclusive club.

But ... but ... with a little bit of self-awareness and with easy access to God (who I have been told is a good listener), we can make a new world for ourselves. What have we got to lose?

*Shalom*



## Hope and the Time of Trial

By Elizabeth Nelson

Among the several small orthodoxies that have recently slid into the Sunday liturgy at St. James, one of the first I noticed was a return to the "official revised" wording of the Lord's Prayer. The extra, St. Jamesian revisions have been omitted, and we're back to the BCP version of current English and theology.

For the most part, that's okay with me. Leaving our 21<sup>st</sup>-century gender issues and family issues aside—can we, for just a minute?—I think "Our Father" is the right beginning for a prayer to Jesus' *Abba*, closer to his intention and to his heart than the more formal "O God." And "hallowed be your name" calls for action and response, perhaps from

us, in a way that the flat statement "holy is..." does not. (What does it mean to *hallow* something or someone? Whose job is it to do the hallowing?) But there's one abandoned revision that I haven't surrendered, and don't plan to.

In the traditional version of the prayer that we learned as children, the next-to-last petition goes, "Lead us not into temptation." If you stop and think about the literal meaning of those words, it's horrifying that we should believe such a petition to be necessary. *Would God lead us into temptation, if we didn't beg not to be led? For what possible reason would God do such a thing?* In the Book of Common Prayer it's rewritten as, "Save us from the time of trial." "Time of trial" is a phrase with a lot of sharp edges, evoking not only test and temptation but just plain hardship—not to mention trial-by-judge, and therefore judgment. That's a phrase I can imagine Jesus using, describing circumstances I can imagine him urging us to pray about.



But "save us from the time of trial"? Save us from testing and judgment, save us from hard times and the exhaustion and pain that come with them? It's unquestionably a human thing to pray for; how completely natural and understandable to want to be spared from trials like those. I don't question the impulse to pray that way. I just question whether there's any evidence that God answers that particular prayer.

Think about the three most loving and God-attuned people you know; have their lives been free of trial? I've been saved from, say, the trials endured by women in Sudan, starving slowly while they struggle to keep their children alive for another day; does that mean that God is listening to my prayers and not to theirs? If you and I stand next to each other in church on Sunday and pray, "Save us from the time of trial," and on Monday you get the new job you need and I get fired, does that mean that God loves you more than me?

“Save us from the time of trial” is not a petition I can pray without choking. If I try to interpret human events in light of that petition, I end up with a convoluted theology about a micromanaging God whose ways are too mysterious, and whose “lessons” are too harsh, for me to understand them as having anything to do with love.

How did that petition get reworded at St. James? “Be with us in the time of trial.” *Be with us.* Trials come at times, God, and judgments and temptations—not because You send them for us to endure, but because of the complicated, random workings of Your creation’s laws and freedoms. Times of trial do come, and come to each of us ... so be with us in those times. *Be with us to clear our*

minds, open our hearts, strengthen our spirits and show us how to do Your will and live in Your love, a moment at a time. *Be with us.*

That’s a petition I’ve actually known God to answer, and I’m guessing you have as well. Just between us, it’s what I’m going to keep saying when we pray the Lord’s Prayer together at St. James. Orthodox version or not, that petition feels true to me. That’s a prayer I can hear Jesus urging us to pray.



Our Father in Heaven,  
hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today  
our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin  
against us.

Be with us in the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.  
Amen.



## CALENDAR

- Sept. 6     Sunday Clubs begin  
Youth Program kicks off  
General Worship Ministry meeting after 10 a.m. service
- Sept. 12    Suzuki Violin Student Recital
- Sept. 13    Town Hall Meeting after 10 a.m. service \*
- Sept. 20    Town Hall Meetings after 8 a.m. service and for youth at 10 a.m. \*  
Vestry Meeting after 10 a.m. service
- Sept. 27    Town Hall Meeting after 10 a.m. service \*

\* See article on p. 3

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