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Alpha & Omega Newsletter
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Vol. 1, No. 9

ALPHA 8 OMEGA

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*Published Monthly and
distributed on the last
Sunday of the preceeding month*



The Visions of a Vicar

Though I may be risking overkill, I would like to review the rationale for the request to either remove the altar from the wall, or to commission the building of a free-standing, portable altar.

One of the problems in this kind of discussion is the tendency to feel that any suggestion for change implies that the old way has been the wrong way, and that to change anything in the church is to question tradition. I am sympathetic to that feeling, having undergone many changes in my own life, and having experienced rampant change in the church in the last few years. However, in this case, to change the position of altar is to affirm a tradition older than 16th century church architecture and to re-new a form of worship and a theological understanding of the Eucharist that existed in the church from its inception. Unfortunately for many centuries, the church did not have access to legitimate documentation of how the early church conducted its corporate life. But now we do, and the mood of the church today is to make present, as best as it can, the earliest traditions of the Christian community.

For centuries, the celebration of the Eucharist was the sole property of the clergy. The laity simply sat in the pew and watched the clergy perform. There was no lay participation at all. And it got to the point that there was no need for the laity at all, except as warm bodies in the church. The act of consecration of the bread and wine was done in private and in Latin (not understood by the vast majority of folk), and so it made sense to have the altars as far back from the congregation as possible. What difference did it make anyway? This practice shifted as the Reformation brought about the radical restructuring of Christendom, but even as late as 40 years ago, there was still the sense of "Father knows best" and the laity continued in a passive role in the church, with notable exceptions to be sure. Shortly before and certainly after Vatican II, with its wide-sweeping liturgical and theological renewal, the shift towards full congregation participation in the corporate life of the church became apparent, and that is reflected in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer as well as in the revised books of worship in the Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches. Documents written by and about the early church discovered in the last 40 years clearly indicate that the worship life of the church was a communal activity, and that the lay people were not simply to observe what the priest was doing, but were to actively participate. The Eucharist, the principle service every time the community gathered for worship, was a communal act. The Eucharist was to recount the last supper, a banquet, a meal, that Jesus had with his disciples, and the Eucharist, for many centuries, was seen as table fellowship with Jesus as the host.

The position of the altar is then a sign and symbol of how the congregation views the role of the clergy, the role of the laity and an understanding of what the Eucharist is. To suggest removing the altar from the wall, or to build a free-standing altar is to say that we believe that all of us are important in worship, that as we gather each Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist, we come as a community around the table where we are fed with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ so

as to be that community of faith--all of us, you and I together. The change can be done in decency and order and be consistent with the architecture of the church. The change is also urged and supported by the Bishop. But more importantly, the change can truly be a strong statement about our corporate life as a Christian community and can serve as a sign and symbol of what we believe about the Episcopal Church. Let us go forth in the power of the Spirit to live the renewed life of Jesus Christ.

Laren



Any discussion of Christian Stewardship must begin with the fundamental truth that God is the creator of all things, in heaven and earth; that as part of that creation, we are to be stewards of all of the created order, which includes not only the natural order, but also ourselves and each other. In Genesis we read "Then God said, 'Let us make man (ed. note: that means all of us) in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion...over every living thing that moves upon the earth...Behold, I have given you every green plant for food.'" (Gen 1:26-30) Therefore, God has created all things and has given all things, and we are to care for the creation as caretakers, accountable to the creator God for our use of the creation and God's gifts to us. In fact, if you think about it, all that we have, from the very air we breathe to our talents and abilities to be successful and prosperous, is a gift from God. We are asked simply to do the best we can with what we have been given, understanding that all that we have is not our own possession, but a gift from a gracious and loving God.

The central proclamation for the Christian Church is that God's premier gift to us is his Son; that because God states emphatically that all of creation is good, he sanctifies that creation by taking the form of human flesh and dwelling among us. In other words, as one of the early church fathers put it, God became man in order for man to be like God. Jesus points the way to the creator God and fills us with his Spirit, his grace which is also a gift, to that we can be the kind of people that we were created to be in the first place. Laced throughout this theology is the truth that all is a gift from God and not given because of what we do or even who we are. It is unmerited and free. The question for us is how are we going to respond? What could we possibly offer in thanksgiving for such a gift?

The Old Testament makes reference to the offering of the tithe of the fruit of the land, and much of the theology of the biblical tithe is built on this fact. The offering of the tithe was, however, occasional, and generally during the Jubilee year. But the tithe was a reminder to the people of Israel of their stewardship and their allegiance to God who had given them the land. In Psalm 51, the psalmist says that the only appropriate offering that we can give to God is a broken and contrite spirit, a clean heart, a renewed mind. The psalmist continues by saying that God doesn't desire our burnt offerings, our sin offerings, our guilt offerings (an integral part of the Jewish temple worship). God wants our hearts, hearts of flesh, not of stone, as Ezekiel says. In fact, as the familiar Christmas hymn asserts, we can offer God our very lives.

And how do we do that? How do we give our lives back to the God who created them in the first place? At the Eucharist, we offer bread and wine as symbols of our labor and work. In the church, we offer our gifts and talents to be used for service and ministry. Some offer music, some offer business expertise, some offer hospitality, and on and on. We offer to God what has been given to us. In the world, we offer our abilities so as to make the world a better place in which to live. That includes our money, also the fruit of our work and labor in the world. The key is that whatever we offer to God, it is offered in gratitude and thanksgiving, and from a heart that has been reconciled, healed, transformed and converted. The old cliché says that God loves a cheerful giver, and the cheerful giver is one who loves God with all their heart, soul, mind and their neighbor as themselves. The giving is a response, not a duty.

Throughout the years the Church has offered suggestions as to how we as Christians can respond to the creator God with gratitude. The recent SWEEPS program, a method of parish evaluation and mission strategy, suggested that our Baptismal covenant is a place to look for what is expected of us as Christians. (See BCP p. 304-305)

Service. Personally and as a congregation, meeting the needs of those outside the membership--the hungry, the sick, the powerless.

Worship. Conducting and sharing in meaningful and significant services of worship that offer thanksgiving to God and meet the deepest needs of the members.

Evangelism. Growing personally in Christian witness, as part of a congregation striving to increase both numerically and spiritually.

Education. Studying to learn more about the bible and the teachings of Jesus, and the history and traditions of the Church.

Pastoral Care. As a person and as a congregation, radiating the love and understanding of Christ.

Stewardship. As the main work of the Church, stewardship is the giving of time, talent and money to further the work of the church in the world. The church cannot function or hope to share the good news of God in Christ without the participation of its members, both in the abilities offered and money given. Stewardship involves all of our life together and not just dedicated to a particular time in the church year where we raise money for the next year's budget. Stewardship involves not only our consideration about tithing, but relates to our use of the other 90 percent as well.

How can this be done and what should I give? This can be done by dedicating yourself anew to the work of the church and by supporting this congregation and this Church with devotion and loyalty. It is done by a renewal in commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ and his work for us as his body on earth. After that, we can prayerfully decide what we should give. In essence, good stewardship can be accomplished by regaining one's perspective as to who God is and who we are as stewards. One biblical theologian put it this way: 'the question is not what we should give, but how much we can keep for ourselves, understanding the truth that God has given us everything, and we simply offer back what is his to begin with. It is easy to think of our vocations and the money we make as our own--"It's mine; I earned it." But when all is said and done, all that we have, all that we earn, all that we do is a gift, pure and simple, given to us by a loving God for his good purpose.'

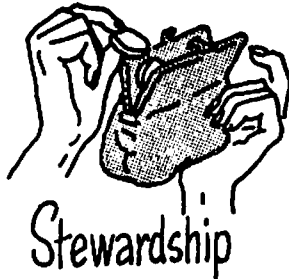
Tithing is a norm, a goal, for what we can give to the church. The tithe (10% of your family income) is, at base, proportional giving. Proportional giving does not settle for the leftovers after all your other spending. Proportional giving asks you first to set aside a percentage of your anticipated annual income for God and his church. Our tithes make possible the life of our parish, they provide for the missionary outreach of the Church both far and near, they give aid and succor to the poor, the hungry, the dispossessed, the victims of war, injustice and oppression. The tithe makes possible a realization of the church as a spiritual light in this world.

Not everyone can achieve a tithe all at once. Some have to work toward that goal. The point is that we are asked to evaluate what we are giving now and commit ourselves to increasing that giving proportionally each year, all the while understanding that whether our pledge to the church is 10% or 5% or 1%, it is an offering from a grateful heart.

Now is the time to reflect upon the blessings you have received from God, to ponder once more the fact that you are redeemed by the very blood of Christ, and to recognize that as we offer ourselves, our souls, and bodies to Him, this assuredly includes the offering of our tithes.

CHRISTIAN
STEWARDSHIP

TO
LOVE
IS TO
GIVE



Stewardship is carrying
your share of the load.



Stewardship

Alpha & Omega is one year old this month!

Dear God,

In this month of October the beauty of the earth must be a little bit like Heaven. With all my heart I thank Thee for the trees that flaunt their brilliance against the sky. There are times at twilight when I behold these magnificent colors that my soul grows homesick for eternity and the perfection that exists where Thou art. I pray for all the world—that it will stop its madness and proclaim that Thou art God and that, in spite of men, Thou art the ruler. Forgive us our erring ways and help us to repent. Give us goodness so that truth will fill our lives and we will reach out our hands to our fellow men in trust and love and understanding. Amen.

There are four main bones in every organization:

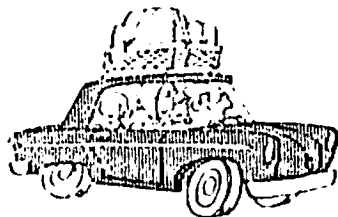
The Wish-bones: Wishing somebody would do something about the problem.

The Jaw-bones: Doing all the talking but very little else.

The Knuckle-bones: Those who knock everything.

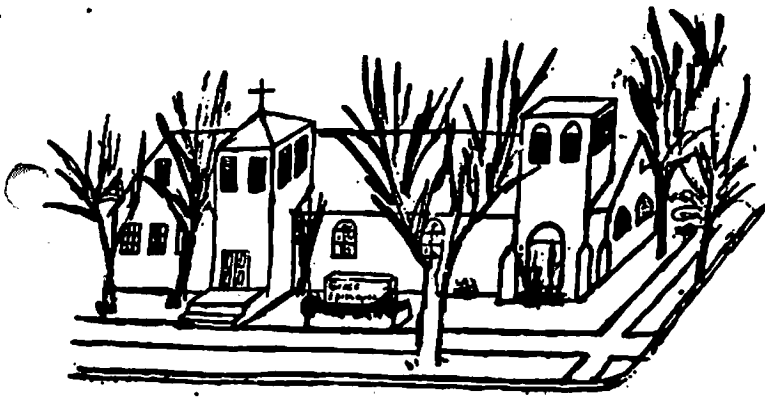
The Back-bones: Those who carry the brunt of the load and do most of the work.

—Don Kite



TUMBLING A RIDE!

A hitchhiker says, "You furnish the car and the gas, attend to the repairs, and pay for the insurance, and I'll ride with you. But if you have an accident, I'll sue you for damages." Consider then, the many hitchhikers in the church. They seem to say, "You furnish the building, the heat, and the lights, pay for the insurance, and provide the program, and we'll go along for the ride. If things don't suit us, we'll criticize, complain, and probably get out and hitchhike with another church."



Echo's from the Past

THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF GRACE CHURCH, DAKOTA TERRITORY AND MADISON, SOUTH DAKOTA

123 persons, men, women, and children entered in the first church register of April 1888, 25 years later, but actually beginning in 1885, when Rev. Father Marais began to hold services. No record is available of those first services held in various places and in the country at Boyd School, southwest of Madison and others.

By 1910 the number entered in the registry was 86 Communicants and 111 people in the families were entered. During this time churches of Episcopal denominations were also active at Winfred and Wentworth. Some of the original 1885-88 congregation established them. The Rev. Mr. Cleveland was the priest for both of those churches.

1911 - 1919 the record for marriages, baptisms and confirmations:


	<u>Marriages</u>	<u>Baptisms</u>	<u>Confirmations</u>	<u>Priest</u>
1911	0	2	0	Rev. E. Nelson
1912	0	1	0	Rev. Nelson
1913	2	13	5	E. Wilson Bishop George Biller, J.
1914	1	6	5	E. Wilson Bishop George Biller
1915	4	7	4	E. Wilson Bishop George Biller
1916	9	6	12	Louis Gwynn Bishop H. Burleson
1918	0	5	9	WH Moore Bishop H. Burleson
1919	0	3	0	WH Moore Bishop H. Burleson

There are breaks in the years from the departure of one priest to the entering of another. We expect that loyal "Lay Reader's" filled in those times in the early days of the Church just as they have over all the years up to the present time. They are invaluable to the life of the Church and to continue on with the "History of Grace Church!"

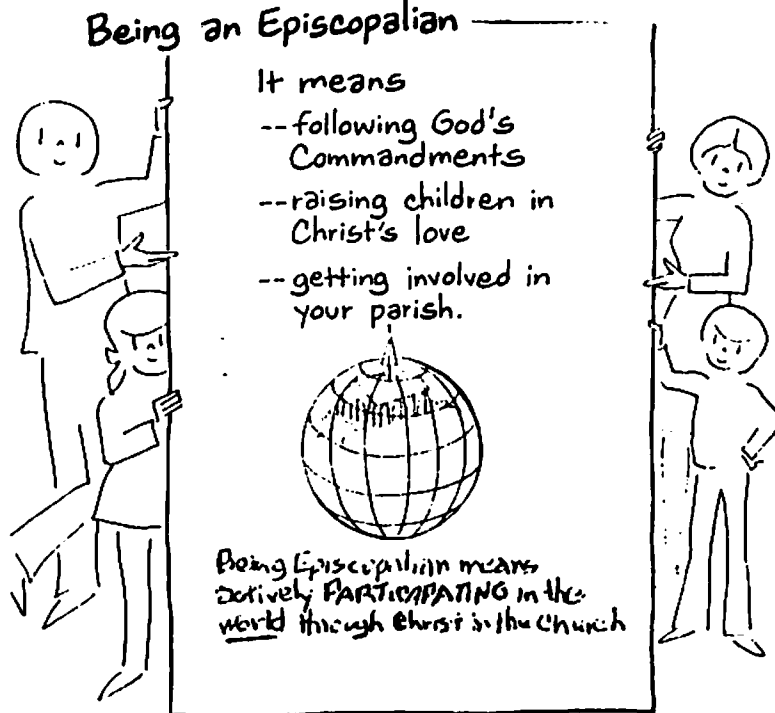
Being an Episcopalian

It means

- following God's Commandments
- raising children in Christ's love
- getting involved in your parish.



Being Episcopalian means actively PARTICIPATING in the world through Christ in the Church



"...my bounden duty is to follow Christ, to worship God every Sunday in His Church; and to work and pray and give for the spread of His kingdom."

POTPOURRI FROM THE VICAR

A NOTE TO THE LAY READERS

Included on the October schedule are the lessons for each Sunday. This will give you an opportunity to rehearse the readings before you lay read. It is my intention to have the Lay Readers gather before the Bishop's Committee meetings each month to go over the readings for the month, to review difficult words or concepts, and to look at consistent themes within the readings for the month. This will also give me an opportunity to develop some sermon ideas.

ALL SAINT'S CHILDREN'S LITURGY

When I was at Nashotah House I had the distinct pleasure to study under the Rev. Louis Weil, Professor of Liturgics. One of the areas that we considered was worship for children, and as a means to provide meaningful worship experiences for children, he designed a Liturgy for Children. This liturgy has all the components of a Eucharist service, but has been rewritten so that the children might be able to comprehend what is being said and prayed. When Stephen and I moved to Brookings, we introduced the concept of liturgy for children in that congregation. The children loved it and the adults who were present thought it to be an extraordinary tool for education and liturgical experience. We revised the liturgy even more and now have a format available.

I suggested to Kitty and Janice that we might try such a liturgy with the children at Grace and they agreed. Therefore, we will be offering a Children's Liturgy in October to commemorate All Saint's Day. The children will meet on October 8 after school to plan the service, which will include a brief program and an instructed Eucharist. The program will include a survey of saints and the children will dress in costume to depict their favorite saint. The liturgy will be celebrated on October 29 at 5pm. At this time, the congregation is invited to participate. In fact, these kinds of liturgies are far more successful when the adults come and be part of the service. In many respects, this becomes a wonderful way to teach about the Eucharist and what it means. To complete the evening, a potluck supper will follow the service. I hope that all of you will come and have a good time with the children. This is their offering to you, but we all will be blessed by the fellowship and good fun.

MEETING WITH THE STANDING COMMITTEE

Please keep me in your prayers as I meet with the Standing Committee on October 14. At this time, the Diocese will either agree or disagree on my ordination to the priesthood.

OCTOBER SCHEDULE

- October 3-4 Diocesan Convention at Christ Church, Yankton.
Karen will be attending as a representative for Grace Church and the Wider Area Ministries.
- October 5 Deacon's Distribution of Communion 11am
Sunday School at 10am
- Lay Reader: George DeLay
Acolyte: Ben Johnson
- Lessons: Habakkuk 1:1--2:4
Psalm 37:1-18 .
II Timothy 1:1-14
Luke 17:5-10
- October 6 Children plan for All Saint's Children's Liturgy at 5pm. Dinner for the children will be served.
- October 12 Deacon's Distribution of Communion 11am
Sunday School at 10am
- Lay Reader: Kitty Brewer
Acolyte: Annie Brewer
- Lessons: Ruth 1:1-19a
Psalm 113
II Timothy 2:3-15
Luke 17:11-19
- October 14: Karen at meeting of Standing Committee in Pierre
- October 19 Deacon's Distribution of Communion 11am
Sunday School at 10am
- Lay Reader: Rex Page
Acolyte: Jennifer Rethorn
- Lessons: Genesis 32:3-8, 22-30
Psalm 121
II Timothy 3:14--4:5
Luke 18:1-8a
- October 21: Lay Reader's Meeting at 7pm
Bishop's Committee at 7:30pm
- October 26 Deacon's Distribution of Communion
Sunday School at 10am
- Lessons: Jeremiah 14:1-10, 19-22
II Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18
Psalm 84
Luke 18:9-14
- October 29 All Saint's Children's Liturgy at 5pm. The congregation is cordially invited to participate. There will be a potluck after the service.

<u>CASH RECEIPTS</u>	1986 <u>July</u>	1986 <u>August</u>	1986 <u>YEAR TO DATE</u>	1985 <u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
Pledges	433.00	511.00	3667.00	3824.10
Plate	17.87	4.58	230.31	337.61
Discretionary Fund	15.00	10.00	37.00	--
	<u>465.87</u>	<u>525.58</u>	<u>3934.31</u>	<u>4161.71</u>
From Memorial Acct.			-	450.00
From Diocese			1018.19	1000.00
Miscellaneous			6.50	4.50
Printing, Mail Slot			39.02	
Interest		614.92	614.92	22.68
Special Gifts		500.00	1100.00	125.00
			-	880.00
Refunds			135.00	897.86
Totals	<u>465.87</u>	<u>1640.50</u>	<u>6847.94</u>	<u>7541.75</u>
Bank Bal.	327.61	303.47	666.43 1/1/86	1178.69 1/1/85
=====	<u>793.48</u>	<u>1943.97</u>	<u>7514.37</u>	<u>8720.44</u>

<u>CASH DISBURSEMENTS</u>				
Heat	13.16	14.03	1060.55	1471.95
Electricity	32.38	11.89	274.92	255.13
Telephone	11.56	13.18	92.53	70.17
Maintenance-Mowing			55.00	192.00(&shovelling)
Cleaning & Supplies	18.00	24.19	139.49	-
Repairs(&Mail Slot)			58.05	208.47
" paid from Ins.				630.87
Printing, Candles,				
Palms, Ck. Blanks	19.91	19.81	176.96	365.11
Clergy	250.00	250.00	1800.00	1532.00
Discretionary Fund	15.00	10.00	37.00	-
Diocese Pledge	100.00	100.00	700.00	662.50
Organist	-	-	200.00	320.00
Pearson Seminary	30.00	30.00	240.00	-
Insurance			525.00	625.00
Church News			72.00	72.00
J.D. Hanson		174.37	174.37	-
Special Gifts(Seminary) -		500.00	1100.00	880.00 Pearson
				175.00 Hall
Safety Deposit Box			12.00	(Included in Misc.)
Bishop Suffrage Fund				50.00
Pension Fund				117.00
Totals	<u>490.01</u>	<u>1147.47</u>	<u>6717.87</u>	<u>7627.20</u>
Bank Bal.	303.47	796.50	796.50	1093.24
=====	<u>793.48</u>	<u>1943.47</u>	<u>7514.37</u>	<u>8720.44</u>

<u>CLERGY ACCOUNT</u>			
<u>CASH RECEIPTS</u> (Diocesan)	975.00	975.00	5850.00
from DeSmet	100.00	-	500.00
from Flandreau	100.00	100.00	600.00
Grace Church	250.00	250.00	1500.00
Totals	<u>1425.00</u>	<u>1325.00</u>	<u>8450.00</u>
<u>CASH DISBURSEMENTS</u>			
Karen Hall	1200.00	1200.00	7200.00
Pension Funds			3547.20
			<u>7747.20</u>
Bank Balance			702.80
			<u>8450.00</u>



Sunday *L.M.W.M.* Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

5 10:00 Sun School 11:00 Communion 12:00 Coffee	6 Children's Meeting at 5:00	7	8	9	10	11 John Hunter's Wedding	
Birthday - Myrtle Newcomb							
12 10:00 Sun School 11:00 Communion 12:00 Coffee	13	14 Karen with the Standing Committee	15	16	17	18 DSC Parade	
Columbus Day							
19 10:00 Sun School 11:00 Communion 12:00 Coffee	20	21 7:00 Lay Readers Meeting 7:30 Bishop Committee Birthday - Daryl Raverts	22	23	24	25 Birthday - Jennifer Kirstein	
26 10:00 Sun School 11:00 Communion 12:00 Coffee	27	28	29 All Saints Children Liturgy at 5:00	30	31 		