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# The Parish Paper

OF  
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH  
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The Fourth Sunday in Lent

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## LEARNING TO SEE ANEW

This past week, at a called meeting of the Vestry, the Church School Committee, Fr. Dunbar, and I presented a change in the structure of Christian education for Sunday morning at St. John's. The Vestry voted unanimously to give us their support.

What we have in mind is an exciting new vision for our parish. It is simply to bring our families together to learn more about our Lord, and then in the solemnity and beauty and dignity of the 1928 Prayer Book to worship God together.

Consider what it means for families in our day to set aside a time as a family for the sole purpose of learning about the Lord and his Church. The predominant attitude in our culture is, at best, to put Christianity on the periphery, and at worst, to oppose the singular truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We can no longer rely on our institutions to support our religion. And so it is left to the Church alone to build strong Christian families. That is why we are taking this initiative at St. John's.

To begin with, think of Sunday morning as a kind of time in the garden. What we have planted by Baptism in the souls of our children must be made to grow. We want their happiness ultimately, and we know their happiness cannot be achieved without them growing in the faith of their fathers. Sunday morning is a primary time for us to nourish the roots of this growth. Normally, under the present structure, if a child comes every Sunday throughout the academic year, he receives twenty-four hours of instruction. Holding church school at 9:30am will improve this. What is gained? Our children grow more to know and love the Lord. They learn about the beauty and dignity of their tradition as Prayer Book Episcopalians. And they are taught what is expected of them in developing the good habits of moral behavior, their responsibility to God and their society, fruits which last for the rest of their lives.

And yet the garden is not only the place for children to grow: we adults need to continue to grow as well. Along with the change for our children, we have seen the need to offer a variety of classes for young adults and young married people. In segments of six weeks, classes on marriage, the early years and the empty nest years, classes on how to be better parents, and classes on living as single adults are to be

offered. In addition, classes on Christian Ethics, the History of the Church, the history of Christian Music and Hymnody Christian Literature, and Christian Doctrine will be scheduled. Courses on the books of the Bible will be taught regularly, as the Holy Scriptures are the guiding principle of the Christian religion. In order for us to do all of this, we are enlisting the help of those laity in our parish who have the knowledge, expertise, and interest to teach or facilitate such a class for a six week period. I am very excited about this, because we have such a wealth of talent in our congregation.

If one considers carefully this garden of our souls, of children and adults alike, one can see in it an education in the vast glory of God's Spirit acting in history. The wonder of our tradition, of Anglican Prayer Book religion, is that we embrace the whole of God's revelation in all the areas of life, the Scripture being first as the Word of God written, and then the wealth of God's general revelation of what is good and true and beautiful, displayed in the ages of providence.

Now I want you to look further. Consider this hour of learning and then take this with you as you enter the church and fall on your knees for the worship of Almighty God. You have been prepared and encouraged, and you are ready now to sing the glorious hymns of the Christian Church and to participate in the worship of God through the beauty and dignity of the Prayer Book and the Christian Year. It is through the Christian year that the times and seasons of your life are brought in relation to the Lord. There is no time and no season in our lives which the Church Year does not take up into itself, and cleanse us with the merciful blood of the Lamb, and fill us with the loving fire of the Spirit. The worship of Almighty God does not begin or end with the raising of children, although that is central to our life. The worship of God, through the truth and beauty of the Prayer Book, sculpts us into his own people, made ready to spend eternity with him. To make this worship the focus of our lives as families will cultivate our souls in the fathomless grace that will sustain us from the sweet joys of Baptism to the hard charity of our Burial.

Now this garden of Sunday morning at St. John's will not be cultivated without some amount of soil preparation and maintenance. We shall need to weed the garden from time to time. We shall all require patience, good will, good manners, and most of all charity, as we welcome the children of those families who wish to have their children with them in church. They shall learn the solemnity, quietude, dignity, and reverence of our worship. But we will also offer the opportunity for parents to choose the class of music and hymnody for those who wish their children to learn this aspect of the church's life, and so give them additional preparation for the worship of the church

I am excited about our new schedule which we will adopt this fall. The modest breakfast which will be available from 8:45 to 9:20 will provide for a happy time of fellowship for families, as well as a convenience for those with children. Please be on the lookout for more information about our new schedule. As whenever the light shines more brightly, our sight is increased, so let us pray to God that by his grace, we will learn to see anew, and that with joy as Anglican Christians, we will proclaim, teach, and follow the Gospel of his Son in our day.

**The Rev'd. Dr. Michael L. Carreker**

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