
BITTERROOT EPISCOPAL MINISTRIES

St. Paul's, Hamilton
St. Stephen's, Stevensville

October 2010

Events at St. Paul's

October 3, Blessing of the Animals

Oct. 4 & 18, ECW at 3:30

October 13, Vestry 7 pm

October 24, UTO Ingathering

October 31, Saints & Sinners dress up

Sunday during 9:30 Worship

Every Sunday at 9:30 am, Holy Eucharist
with Rev. Oreskovich

Every Monday at 5:30 Family Dinner,
Worship & Education

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MONTANA BISHOP BROOKHART'S ADDRESS TO THE 107TH DIOCESAN CONVENTION BOZEMAN, 25 SEPTEMBER 2010

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thank you for your attention and interest. It is a signal honor to be able to address the delegates and the clergy of this grand diocese.

I want to begin with a story from the book of Acts, properly called the Acts of the Apostles. This is a record of the life of the church in the first generation of the church as it was led by the apostles, that first house of bishops. Acts certainly wants us to understand its story as paradigmatic, as offering a pattern for reflection and action. So here goes: [Acts 12.6-17].

I hope you recognize this as a resurrectional story. Some of the images and the pattern of the events are similar to the resurrection of our Lord. Peter is caught and chained in prison. Our Easter hymnody, you remember, is full of allusions to the grave as a prison in which Jesus was bound. Then, beyond all hope and expectation, Peter was freed by the action of God. He focused on what had happened: now I know God has set me free. And he hurries to the local church so that he can witness to this mighty act of God. You see the pattern? Death to resurrection.

We are the people of the resurrection. This is part of the meaning of our baptism, that we are joined to the death and resurrection of our Lord. This is who we are, this is our identity, this is our ontology. And in the Eucharist, we meet the Risen Lord, and we receive him into ourselves, so that we become what we eat, namely, people of new creation and new life.

Please at this point recall our diocesan vision statement: we are transformed and transforming people, powered by the resurrection. At the center of our life as the church in Montana, stands the resurrection, the fact of the dependable and constant presence of our Risen Lord in and among us. We live the Paschal mystery, the dying and the rising of our Lord Jesus; it was the pattern of his life, and it is the pattern of our life.

This reality transforms us, changes us, converts us. We joke about Murphy's Law, about the only sure things being taxes and death, about life as the same old, same old. But we, the people of the resurrection, the people of baptism, live with the trust and hope that God is present, acting, saving, healing, freeing us and the whole world. And in that confidence, we set out to be agents of resurrection and ambassadors of the Risen Christ, so that "out there" they can have the possibility of living in resurrection with us. We, the Diocese of Montana, are the community of Christ, transformed and transforming by the resurrection.

OK. So, here we are. I suggest that the temptation is for us to go back to prison and shackle ourselves. After all, the prison is a place we know; we are too familiar, even comfortable, with it. I want to name two chains, two bonds, that we easily revert to.

The first is this: "not us, not here." I see and hear signs more often than I want that we do not really understand ourselves as the people among whom new life occurs. We live ordinary lives in ordinary places and we go to ordinary churches. We are painfully well aware of our individual and communal problems, weaknesses and faults. We plod along with little sense of wonder or hope. What would it be like to go on a search for your baptismal record, and to be told: sorry, I did not record it, because on that day nothing special happened. Or consider how you might answer the question: what happened in church today? Oh, the usual, or, I met the Risen Lord in the Eucharist, and he spoke to me in scripture, and people knew me and accepted me---all at church today. See the problem?

Another bond: "we are poor and small." This is one that I hear all the time. I can't be expected to give much, because this is a poor place. In truth, most of us have plenty of money, which we spend on all kinds of things. And why do we think being small makes us deficient? Look around for a short person near you, and then go over to tell them: you are small, and, therefore, you cannot accomplish much with your life. I am well aware of the advantages of serving a small diocese and living in a smallish city. We are greatly blessed; we are rich; we are gifted; we can do much for our Lord.

Enough of that. I don't want to spend too much time talking about life in the prison. Besides, we should not feel overly guilty about going back to the chains from time to time. In the Acts story, Peter could not believe he was being freed. He assumed it was a dream. We are also told that the church meeting in the home of Mary, mother of John Mark, told little Rhoda that she was crazy when she announced the presence of St. Peter. They, too, had gone back to prison for awhile.

We, rather, need to spend our time like Peter, describing how the Risen Lord has set us free. Let me describe three ways we can do this.

First, we can cultivate gratitude. Now, those of us who have raised children know that you have to teach gratitude, you have to hold it up as a virtue. It is easy for us to simply not see the blessings of God, the blessings of resurrection in and around us. I confess that I get caught up in complaining, griping, feeling angry that people just don't get the wisdom and wonder of my ideas and plans. The antidote is gratitude. As congregations and as persons find ways to be grateful. Make intentional efforts. I have told some of you that I use prayer beads, and that one of the devotions I practice daily is to make a circuit around the beads, telling the Lord forty-eight things for which I am grateful. It changes the whole day---indeed, my whole life.

Second, we can value generosity. Our natural tendency is to grasp, hold, and hoard, afraid that God will not provide what we need. This is life in the jail. Surely, the resurrection is the promise that God will give us all that we need to be fully human, fully alive. What we have is all gift, and we need to learn to be generous in spirit and with our money. We once lived in a community in which the newspaper had a religion editor, a retired Protestant minister. His columns were always

interesting and provocative. He once observed that in his experience the honorarium given to the cleric for officiating at a wedding was controlled by this standard: the size of the groom's check was in direct proportion to how pretty he thought his bride was. I never noticed that pattern, but there is a nugget of truth there. We are generous when we think that we have been gifted and blessed. Do you think that God has gifted and blessed us? Let me leave you with this personal observation: I have never met a serious Christian who was not generous.

Gratitude. Generosity. Finally, growth. Now, I hesitate to use that word, because it can lead us far off the path we need to take. For example, the doctor takes my temperature, not just to gain knowledge of the number, but as a sign of my health. So, too, just to focus on attendance and giving figures is not helpful *per se*; what they do indicate is something about our health. I am sad to report that both our diocesan attendance and giving fell last year. I was startled to note that average attendance was down by 247 persons; that's a whole congregation. The numbers do not call for guilt or blame, but they do call for a look at the life of our churches. And we can again use the category of resurrection as a measuring rod. Let me offer some instances. Is your congregation a place where people can meet Jesus? Or is it a place with bad vibes or lack of energy and life. Or this. Do you in public speak a good word of new life about your church, or do you complain and blame? Or this. Would people miss your resurrectional ministry in your community if your church went away? Or this. Are you energized by the good news of the resurrection of our Lord, or do you act as if the church is a polite religious club? Are you growing in teaching and learning? In worship and prayer? In being able to communicate your God story? In your service to the community? If we take care of the matters of resurrection mission and ministry, if we get on the resurrection train, issues of numerical growth will take care of themselves.

Our Acts story has this significant line: "Peter came to himself and said, 'Now I am sure the Lord has...rescued me.'" We need to come to ourselves, to know who we are as the baptized and beloved of Christ. We need to be quite clear that we, here, now, are the Church of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. We need to celebrate that fact that God in Christ has rescued us from sin, death and the devil. We need to lose ourselves in wonder, love and praise of the glorious resurrection of our Lord and of the fact that God deigns to make us part of that new creation.

Let me close with a personal word. Thank you for the privilege of serving as your bishop. I am always proud to tell people that I am the Bishop of Montana. I want you to know that I love you and value you and pray daily for you. Thank you. And thank our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Monday Night Family Service The evening will begin at 5:30 with dinner provided. We will celebrate the Eucharist together at the table. Christian Education will begin at 6:45 and conclude at 7:45. For more information or to see how you can help with this wonderful evening please call Alana 381-3534

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United Thank Offering – UTO Ingathering Sunday, October 24

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one." John 17:20

*Dear Lord, Open my eyes that I may see the beauty of the earth you have given us.
Open my ears that I may hear the lessons that you send my way.
Open my mouth that I may sing praise to you.
Open my heart that it may feel the needs of others.
Open my hands that they may share my good fortune with others. Amen*

~Gurtie Burkner, UTO Committee 2006-2009

Stewardship Testimonials St. Paul's Stewardship for 2011 is starting soon. Dutch Brewer, Jr. Warden, will be heading this campaign. We are asking everyone to consider volunteering to write their testimonial about stewardship. Stewardship is more than the giving of money, but also the giving of time and talents. It is the blessings of one's blessings and we live together in the community of Christ. Contact Dutch at 363-1472.

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Vestry 2011 If any member of the congregation feels called to consider serving on our vestry in 2011, it is recommended that they attend one or more meetings this fall to learn how the vestry operates and help them discern their willingness to be involved.

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The Haven House collection is now a basket found behind the last pew. Our donations of non perishable food will be received weekly. When the offering is brought forward following announcements, the basket will be brought forward at the same time.

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PFLAG Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays meets October 28th at 7:00 p.m. at St. Paul's Church. Call Terry at 363-7656 with questions.

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White Ribbon Week --Oct. 1st through Oct. 8th

Friday, Oct 1st Report to the Community at noon

The Ravalli County Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence will host the thirteenth annual Report to the Community luncheon on Friday, October 1, from 12 pm to 1:30 pm at St. Francis Community Center at 411 South Fifth Street.

This year's luncheon will feature presentations by Officer Dan Murphy from Butte-Silver Bow Law Enforcement, Adam Arlint from Montana State University's Stopping Rape program, and Corvallis High School youth leaders. The eleventh annual Courage Award will be presented to honor individual commitment to non-violence and making our community safer. The event will also include the presentation of the third Ravalli County Coalition Award.

Report to the Community will commence the 2010 White Ribbon Campaign, a public awareness campaign designed to prevent domestic violence. This year's campaign runs October 1st through October 8th. **Community members are encouraged to wear a white ribbon throughout the week.**

The Ravalli County Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is comprised of community members from health care, religious, educational, business, and social service organizations, as well as those interested in improving the community's response to domestic and sexual violence. The coalition seeks to share the message that domestic and sexual violence are unacceptable in our community and there are resources available to help people cope with these issues.

The Report to the Community luncheon is free and open to the public.
Tuesday, Oct. 5 Community Prayer Service, 7pm, St. Francis Catholic Church
Wednesday, Oct. 6 Brown Bag Luncheon with Matt Dale, 12pm, Commissioners' Conference Room
Thursday, Oct. 7 Raise a Glass for Respect – Bitter Root Brewery 4pm - 8pm

Ravalli County Habitat for Humanity is planning the construction of their 5th house, presently planned to begin in late October. The new house will be at 7th and Cherry in Hamilton, adjacent to the Habitat house completed last March. We have received donations of some labor and materials, but are still greatly in need of funds to purchase materials not donated, and to continue the building once it is begun. Thank you for your support; we appreciate everything that is being done to further this wonderful opportunity to provide housing for a family that could not otherwise afford to have a home of their own. *October 17 at St. Paul's, the plate is collected for Outreach, and this month specifically for Habitat for Humanity.*

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- **October 1st – Hamilton Merchant 1st Friday Oktoberfest Gone Pink & Mammo Man contest** – the First Friday event will begin at 6pm in downtown Hamilton, shop and dine local, enjoy music to Cabin Fever and at 7:45pm be there for the Mammo Man contest. Your pink purchases are supporting local Ravalli County women in-need.
- **October 1st & 24th – Bitterroot Brewery** is a participant in the Oktoberfest and will be promoting Breast Cancer Awareness and supporting the Aid for Mammography fund. Enjoy local brews while making a difference in your community! Purchase a shirt during the month of October and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Aid for Mammography fund.
- **Month of October- The Hamilton Merchant Pink/Aid For Mammography Contest** – Shop local and shop pink tag items throughout the month of October. On November 1st donations will be counted and the highest fundraiser will be awarded.

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Father holy is your name
when your will is done
your kingdom comes
give us today
the bread of tomorrow
because you have forgiven us
we forgive all others
be with us in time of trial
for you are our help and salvation

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Bitterroot Episcopal Ministries is a monthly publication. The editor is Jocelyn Snider. November's Newsletter deadline is **October 20**. For newsletter copy and address changes, email stpaulnews@hotmail.com (with a cc to terrymoran1955@yahoo.com) or phone Jocelyn at 375-0416.

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