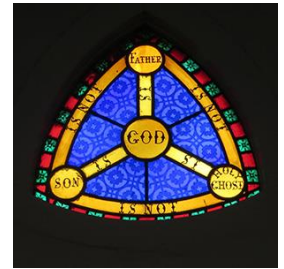




St. John's Episcopal Church

Ashfield, Massachusetts
Corner of Main and South Streets



September 2014

Take heart. God lives. Do not be afraid.

By Bishop Fisher on August 15, 2014 in *The Bishop's Blog*

Sermon given at Good Shepherd, West Springfield on August 8, 2014

Text: Matthew 14:22-33

In this compelling story, Matthew uses the word "immediately" three times in just twelve verses. "Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat..." When the disciples cried out in fear "immediately Jesus spoke to them..." When Peter starts to sink, "Jesus immediately reached out his hand..." We are tempted to say "Matthew, with all due respect, get yourself a thesaurus." But Matthew is a brilliant writer and he has a reason for all those "immediates." With them and with Peter's question: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water," Matthew is telling us who Jesus is and who we are called to be as followers of Jesus.

The significance of the first "immediately." Remember what has happened to Jesus before this story. His beloved cousin John is executed by Herod. Jesus goes away to a deserted place to mourn. But 5000 people follow him there and because of his great compassion, he spends the day healing and feeding them. The grieving of Jesus is interrupted. But he needs to mourn and mourning is hard work. When Jesus dismisses the crowds he immediately goes up the mountain to do this necessary and difficult remembering and soul-searching. He can't wait any longer.

He goes not only to mourn, but to pray. Here is one reason why prayer was vitally important to Jesus and to us as his followers. I'll get there by way of a basketball story. (Don't you think God showed God's sense of humor by calling me to a diocese where the Basketball Hall of Fame is mere blocks away from my office?) One evening many years ago back at our home/church in Millbrook New York, our daughter Caragh was taking her daily 200 foul shots at our basketball hoop in the parking lot. It was getting dark and it was starting to rain but Caragh kept on shooting. Betsy said "why is she still out there in the dark and the rain, taking the same shot over and over again?" I knew the answer to that question. "She is developing her muscle memory. She keeps repeating the same shot because if there is two minutes left in a close game, and she is exhausted, and the crowd is going wild, she needs her muscle memory to take over and sink those shots."

Jesus goes to the mountain to pray to develop his "soul memory." John has suffered an unjust death. Jesus knows his fate will be similar. He prays in the quiet of the mountain so his soul memory will take over in the midst of the chaos of his last days. And that is one reason why we gather in this church, week after week, and experience the God who loves us no matter what, the God who has embraced our lives and will not let go. We do this over and over and over again, because when the road gets tough, as it always will, we will have a soul memory to draw upon. When life is hard, we will have a memory of prayers, psalms, and images to give us courage and hope.

The second "immediately." Jesus walks toward the disciples on the water. They are terrified because they think it is a ghost. "Immediately Jesus spoke to them and said 'Take heart, it is I; do not

be afraid'." Some biblical scholars say this is not the most accurate translation. Instead of "it is I", Matthew wrote "I am." "Take heart. I am. Do not be afraid."

This is important because "I am" is God's definition of God's self in the Hebrew Scriptures. "I Am Who Am" God said to Moses. Now as a definition this seems pretty disappointing. Moses and you and I might be hoping for more. "I Am Who Am." Actually, it says everything about God. It means God is being itself. All that is, is in God. God is not separate from us. God is and we live in God. As today's collect says "we cannot exist without you." Therefore, because God lives we live. And always will. That is why there is Eternal Life – because God lives.



Jesus is clearly identifying his life as God's life. Because of that we are called to "take heart" and stop letting fear rule our lives. After all, God is here – how can we be afraid? That is going to be demonstrated in Peter's question to Jesus.

"Lord, if it is you..." What comes next tells us who Jesus is and what it means to be a follower of Jesus. "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Notice, Peter did not say "Lord, if it is you, tell me to stay here in the boat, where everything is safe." If he said that, it would not be Jesus because Jesus is the one who invites us to New Life, not clinging to the old life. And Peter did not say, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to admire what you are doing, out there walking on the water." Peter did not ask that because that would not be Jesus. Jesus is not looking for admirers. Jesus invites us to do what he does.

M. Scott Peck, the renowned author of one of the most popular books of all time, *The Road Less Traveled*, spoke about being at a conference with 400 Christian psychiatrists – counselors who spoke about faith with their clients. Peck read the story of the time Jesus was teaching and the house was so filled with people that no one else could get in. Four friends of a paralyzed man desperately wanted Jesus to heal him. They climbed up on the roof and lowered the paralyzed man on a cot in front of Jesus. Jesus healed him.

Peck asked the crowd of counselors to think about who they were in the story. Did they identify with the paralyzed man? Or his four friends willing to do anything to get him help? Or Jesus? By a show of hands, many identified with the paralyzed man. Many identified with his friends. No one identified with Jesus.

Now that might be out of humility, but these counselors were in the business of healing. Don't you think someone would say "I am called to heal as Jesus healed." Peter knew that. Lord do what you always do. Call me out of my safety zone and call me to do what you do.

The last "immediately." Peter gets out of the boat and starts to walk on water. When he notices the strong wind, he becomes scared and starts to sink. (Think back to the "muscle memory/soul

memory” story from a few minutes ago.) As Peter starts to go under, “Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him.”

Of course Jesus reached out immediately to save a person going under. And if it is the Lord, he is asking us to do the same. Who in your life is starting to sink? Who are you called to reach out and catch? Let’s all think about that. Let’s expand the image. Due to climate change, our earth is going under. The time to do something about it is “immediately.” 30,000 people in the United States are dying due to gun violence, and another 100,000 are injured. Those who follow Jesus need to reach out “immediately.” One in five children in our country is sinking into a life of poverty and food insecurity. Children are drowning in a sea of poverty and violence in Central America. Jesus reaches out “immediately.” When should we act?

Barbara Brown Taylor, the powerful Episcopal preacher who was on the cover of TIME magazine a few months ago, says this “It is time to reject a ‘put-off’ life and lead a ‘caught-up life.’ Get ready for the Jesus who is continually coming into the world by living today. Write that letter, reconcile that relationship, get the help you need and do it now. Refuse to keep living yesterday over and over and over again. Today is the day to be generous. Today is the day to be a new creation.”

I will end this sermon with an invitation. I invite any who wish to, to come forward and I will anoint your head with oil and say these words: “Take heart. God lives. Do not be afraid.” That is the truth. And I will do it immediately. Amen.

+Doug

Hospice of Franklin County Volunteer Training

Hospice of Franklin County is scheduling its Fall Volunteer Training. This is a nine -week training course preparing interested individuals to serve our hospice patients and their families through their life-limiting diagnosis. Volunteers help in areas such as patient/family support, Veteran-to-Veteran services, bereavement visits/follow-up, and behind-the-scenes office assistance. Hospice is particularly interested in volunteers with additional, certified skills to offer our patients, potential volunteers who are fluent in a second language and volunteers who may live in the outer reaches of Franklin County. The training will be held at 329 Conway Street, Greenfield, the office area of Hospice of Franklin County. Classes will run nine weeks, 5:30pm to 7:30pm. Start date to be determined. To schedule an interview or for more information please contact Jayne Allen, Volunteer Services Coordinator, 774-2400 or jgallen@hospicefc.org.



Five Wishes Video And Discussion.

There will be a Five Wishes video and discussion on September 7th at 1:00 p.m. held at St. John’s Corner. We invite the whole community to attend, this is free to all. A light luncheon will be included.

Five Wishes lets your family and doctors know:

- Who you want to make health care decisions for you when you can't make them.
- The kind of medical treatment you want or don't want.
- How comfortable you want to be.
- How you want people to treat you.
- What you want your loved ones to know.



Five Wishes is changing the way America talks about and plans for care at the end of life. More than 18 million copies of *Five Wishes* are in circulation across the nation, distributed by more than 35,000 organizations. *Five Wishes* meets the legal requirements in 42 states and is useful in all 50.

Five Wishes has become America’s most popular living will because it is written in everyday language and helps start and structure important conversations about care in times of serious illness.

Five Wishes was introduced in 1997 and originally distributed with support from a grant by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care

Fall Festival

The Ashfield Fall Festival is just around the corner. The Festival will be October 11 & 12. Start thinking now about how you can volunteer. The cobbler is made Thursday and Friday (October 9 & 10) before the Festival. Volunteers are always welcome to help serve during the Festival. How can you help? Look for the sign-up sheet in the Narthex. No volunteer will be turned away! **DON'T FORGET SERVICE ON THE 12TH WILL BE AT 9:00 AM & (HOPEFULLY) OUTDOORS**

A Few October Dates to Plan for:

October 5th - Blessing of the Animals
October 9th - 10th - Set up for the Fall Festival

& Making Cobbler

October 11th & 12th - Ashfield Fall Festival
October 12th - 9:00 am outdoor service
October 18th - Fall Clean-up



Creation Care is the Environmental Stewardship program in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts; the Diocesan Minister for Creation Care is The Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas. More information can be found on the Diocese of Western Mass. Website on the Stewardship page.



“It’s about honoring and reverencing the creation as a way of honoring and worshipping God.”

The Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas
Missioner for Creation Care

Runaway climate change, toxic waste, and resource depletion are threatening to unravel the web of life upon which we, and all God’s creatures, depend. Through the power of the Holy

Spirit, Christians in this diocese are rising up to proclaim God’s love for the Earth, which God pronounces “very good” (Genesis 1:31) and which the crucified and risen Christ gave his life to redeem.

Now is the times to experience afresh our reverence for the Earth, which reveals God’s glory, and to express our concern for our neighbors, here and worldwide, who are already affected by extreme weather events, rising seas, and conflicts over natural resources, such as water. Now is the time to proclaim our vision of a just, sustainable, and healthy world.

The Diocese of Western Massachusetts encourages every congregation to observe a Season of Creation, which extends from St. Francis Day (October 4) through Christ the King Sunday at the end of November.

Our diocesan Missioner for Creation Care, the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, represents the diocese at environmental conferences and other gatherings so that the Church has a seat at the table for one of the most crucial issues of our time. She is helping the diocese to develop and execute a strategic plan of action to care for God’s Creation. Margaret also reports on climate action opportunities and builds ecumenical, interfaith and secular partnerships.

Thank you for everything you do to bear witness to God’s love for the whole Creation.



“Do Not Be Afraid.”

Angels are often known as messengers of God and as protectors, but at almost every encounter with humans they first appear to be fearsome, powerful, otherworldly creatures. It is for this reason these encounters often begin with the angel saying, “Do not be afraid.”

On September 29th we celebrate the feast of Michael and All Angels. Traditionally known as Michaelmas the feast originally celebrated the Archangel Michael; in 1969 the feasts of the Archangels Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel were combined with that of St. Michael. The Anglican Communion only recognizes these four while other denominations and religions recognize as many as seven archangels.

Michael is best known as the archangel who expelled Lucifer from heaven and seen as the leader of all angels. He is also said to weigh the good and bad of souls before they can enter heaven. In prayer he is often asked for protection against evil and enemies. In art he is usually pictured in full armor, carrying a lance and standing on Lucifer, who is sometimes depicted as a dragon. This image is very similar to pictures of St. George; the difference between the two images is that Michael has wings.



Gabriel is the archangel who foretold the births of both John the Baptist and Jesus. It is also believed he will blow a trumpet to announce Christ's return to Earth (even though the Bible never really specifies him as such). Gabriel is named as this messenger of God in literature and African-American spirituals. In art he is usually depicted wearing blue and white while carrying a lily and a trumpet.

Raphael is found in the apocryphal Book of Tobit. In the Book of Tobit it is that he was sent by God, he accompanies Tobit on a journey and heals him of his is often prayed to for healing, especially healing of vision problems, and protecting he is depicted holding a staff or guarding a pilgrim.



said that after he declares blindness with fish gall. He people on pilgrimage. In art

Uriel is also found in before the great flood and serves as a guide for Enoch. He is often prayed to for depicted carrying a large halo.



an apocryphal book, the Book of Enoch. In legend he testified on behalf of humans then warned Noah of the coming flood. In many parts of the Book of Enoch he In the Anglican Church he is seen as the patron of the Sacrament of Confirmation. guidance and protection and seen as the protector of the Earth. In art he is often copper disc with ancient symbols written on it or with a flame in his hand or as his

While each archangel is venerated by for a different reason, each of them protect, guide and deliver messages; they serve as a connection between God and mortals.

Everlasting God, you have ordained and constituted in a wonderful order the ministries of angels and mortals: Mercifully grant that, as your holy angels always serve and worship you in heaven, so by your appointment they may help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

This commemoration found in the Book of Common Prayer

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.
Matthew 11:28*

September Calendar

1	LABOR DAY 7:30 pm Al Anon St. John's Corner	16	9:30 am Play Group St. John's Corner
2	9:30 am Play Group St. John's Corner	17	2:30 pm Food Pantry UCC 5:30 pm Centering Prayer St. John's Corner
3	5:30 pm Centering Prayer St. John's Corner	18	9:30 am Osteoporosis Class St. John's Corner
4	9:30 am Osteoporosis Class St. John's Corner	21	HOMECOMING SUNDAY 10:00 am Eucharist Service
7	10:30 am COA Outreach Counseling St. John's Corner	22	11:00 am - 12:30 pm Mother Woman St. John's Corner
8	10:00 am Eucharist 1:00 - 3:00 pm 5 Wishes Workshop St. John's Corner	23	7:30 pm Al Anon St. John's Corner
8	11:00 am - 12:30 pm Mother Woman St. John's Corner	24	First Day of Autumn Newsletter deadline
9	7:30 pm Al Anon St. John's Corner	25	9:30 am Play Group St. John's Corner
9	9:30 am Play Group St. John's Corner	28	5:30 pm Centering Prayer St. John's Corner
10	5:30 pm Centering Prayer St. John's Corner	29	9:30 am Osteoporosis Class St. John's Corner
11	9:30 am Osteoporosis Class St. John's Corner	30	10:00 am Eucharist 11:00 am - 12:30 pm Mother Woman St. John's Corner
14	10:00 am Eucharist 12:00 pm Vestry Meeting St. John's Corner		7:30 pm Al Anon St. John's Corner
15	11:00 am - 12:30 pm Mother Woman St. John's Corner		9:30 am Play Group St. John's Corner
	7:30 pm Al Anon St. John's Corner		2:30 pm Food Pantry UCC

Wage Peace

Wage peace with your breath.
Breathe in firemen and rubble,
breathe out whole buildings
and flocks of redwing blackbirds.

Breathe in terrorists and breathe out sleeping children
and freshly mown fields.
Breathe in confusion and breathe out maple trees.
Breathe in the fallen
and breathe out lifelong friendships intact.

Wage peace with your listening;
hearing sirens, pray loud.
Remember your tools:
flower seeds, clothes pins, clean rivers.

Make soup.
Play music, learn the word for thank you in three
languages.
Learn to knit, and make a hat.
Think of chaos as dancing raspberries,
imagine grief as the outbreath of beauty
or the gesture of fish.
Swim for the other side.
Wage peace.

Never has the world seemed so fresh and precious.
Have a cup of tea and rejoice.
Act as if armistice has already arrived.
Don't wait another minute.

Judyth Hill, *Wage Peace*

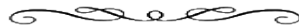
The Rt. Rev. Andrew Frederick Wissemann (1928-2014)



The sixth bishop of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts, the Rt. Rev. Andrew Frederick Wissemann, died peacefully at home in early morning of August 20th. Bishop Wissemann served the people of this diocese with clarity of purpose and compassion during his eight-year episcopate. "A soft-spoken, self-effacing, scholarly man whose genuineness and sympathy were immediately apparent to all, he was, by gift and temperament, more inclined toward the pastoral model of a bishop than the lordly," wrote diocesan historian Richard Nunley. Raised up by the Church in Western Massachusetts for leadership in 1983, Bishop Wissemann had been the beloved rector of St. Stephen's in Pittsfield for sixteen years. His pastoral care extended to both St. Martin's in Pittsfield and St. Luke's, Lanesboro. Prior to that he served as rector of St. James, Greenfield from 1960-1968 following seven years of service to churches in the Diocese of Connecticut.

The life of any bishop cannot be adequately measured by a list of achievements, though Bishop Wissemann had many. The only measure is the standard of the Gospel and Bishop Wissemann proclaimed the Good News in word, in deed and in the example of Christian family life. Our hearts go out to Andrew's wife, Nancy, who has been partner to his mission and ministry for 61 years, to his son, his three daughters, and his five grandchildren.

Serving Schedule



<i>Date</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Celebrant</i>	<i>Preacher</i>	<i>Lector</i>	<i>Altar Guild</i>	<i>Coffee Hour</i>
September 7	13 th Sunday after Pentecost	Jennifer Walters	Jennifer Walters	Sue Craft	Susan Todd	Lynette Sievert
September 14	14 th Sunday after Pentecost	Eliot Moss	Eliot Moss	Lynette Sievert	Susan Todd	Marilyn Berthelette
September 21	15 th Sunday after Pentecost	Eliot Moss	Eliot Moss	Susan Todd	Susan Todd	Bambi Philips
September 28	16 th Sunday after Pentecost	Eliot Moss	Eliot Moss	Jim Wagener	Susan Todd	Addison Hall

Top 10 Reasons to be an Episcopalian

(from the comedian Robin Williams, who is an Episcopalian, on a HBO special)

10. No snake handling.
 9. You can believe in dinosaurs.
 8. Male and female God created them; male and female we ordain them.
 7. You don't have to check your brains at the door.
 6. Pew aerobics.
 5. Church year is color-coded.
 4. Free wine on Sunday.
 3. All of the pageantry - none of the guilt.
 2. You don't have to know how to swim to get baptized.
- And the Number One reason to be an Episcopalian:*
1. No matter what you believe, there's bound to be at least one other Episcopalian who agrees with you.



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS
 "CELEBRATING GOD'S ABUNDANCE"

SEPTEMBER 2014

Diocesan Ministries

1. The Rt Rev. Douglas and Betsy Fisher
2. Christ Church Cathedral, Springfield - The Very Rev. James Munroe, Canon Tom Callard, The Rev. Bill Dwyer
3. Diocesan Support Staff Cozette Haggerty
4. Diocesan Council
5. All Saints' Church of the Berkshires, North Adams - The Revs. Stephen White, and Bruce Duncan
6. The Human Resources Committee
7. St. Mark's, Worcester - The Rev. Donald Chamberlain
8. Franklin-Hampshire Deanery - The Rev. Tanya Wallace, Dean
9. St. John's, Northampton - The Revs. Catherine Munz, Jennifer Walters, Dcn. Eric Elley
10. Trinity, Shelburne Falls, The Rev. Marguerite Sheehan
11. Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development
12. Budget and Financial Planning Committee
13. St. Andrew's Church, Turners Falls - The Rev. Marnie Keator
14. Trinity Church, Ware - Canon Samir Habiby

Wider Mission

1. The Alban Institute, Inc.
2. Repose for the soul of The Rt. Rev. William Appleton Lawrence, III Bishop of Western Massachusetts Diocese
3. The Episcopal Ministry in Higher Education
4. Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission
5. The National Assoc. of Episcopal Schools, Inc.
6. Bible Reading Fellowship
7. Office of Government Relations
8. Church Periodical Club
9. St. Paul's, Otis – summer chapel
10. Episcopal Camps & Conference Centers, Inc. (ECCC)
11. Cursillo
12. CREDO
13. The Episcopal Church Foundation
14. Episcopal Church Missionary Community

15. Berkshire Deanery - The Rev. Annie Ryder, Dean
16. Spouses of deceased clergy
17. St. Andrew's Chapel, North Adams
18. Youth in our Diocese
19. Grace Church, Dalton – The Rev. Daina Salnitis
20. For repose of the soul of The Rt. Rev. Robert Denig - VII Bishop of Western Massachusetts
21. Episcopal Church Women
22. East & South Worcester Deanery - The Rev. Dr. Will Bergmann, Dean
23. Ecumenical Relations
24. St. Andrew's, North Grafton - The Revs. Laura Goodwin and Richard K. Clarke
25. Diocesan College Scholarship Committee
26. Church of the Nativity, Northborough - The Revs Len Cowan and Michael Cheney
27. The Rt. Rev. Gordon P. and Rebecca Scruton, VIII Bishop of Western Massachusetts
28. St. Stephen's, Westborough, The Rev. Jesse Abell
29. Social Justice
30. The Rev. Jenny Gregg, Dir., Berkshire Servant Leadership Ctr.
15. Repose for the soul of The Rt. Rev. Thomas Frederick Davies, II. Bishop of Western Massachusetts
16. Episcopal Peace Fellowship
17. Episcopal Media Services
18. Third Order of Franciscans
19. Episcopal Women's Caucus
20. Education for Ministry - Joan Gilchrist, Coordinator
21. Evangelical Education Society
22. Faith Alive
23. National Episcopal Health Ministries
24. Historical Society of the Episcopal Church
25. Episcopal Book Club
26. National Cathedral Association
27. Friendship Covenant with Diocese of Kumasi, Ghana
28. Chinese Ministry, Boston
29. Church Publishing, Inc.
30. Girls' Friendly Society

Holy Michael, arch angel, defend us in the day of battle; be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray: and do thou, prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God thrust down to Hell Satan and all wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of Souls. Amen.

From Celtic Daily Prayer, the Northumbria Community



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