



# *The Epistle*

## *November, 2015*

### **Father Bob's message**

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Many writers today will tell you that the signature human condition today is worry and that anxiety born of uncertainty is the major characteristic of our day and our culture. Three years ago, it was estimated by those folks that study these things that approximately 12% of Americans suffered from some form of debilitating anxiety. I cannot help but wonder if the percentage is far higher today. We are a people consumed by anxiety and worry. Unfortunately, everywhere we turn, everywhere we look, there are seemingly the ever-present visible and verbal reminders of just how much there is to worry about.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus says "do not worry about your life." Do not worry? There are times when I simply have to wonder what Jesus was thinking. I mean many days my life feels like, as one author I read put it, one worry strung after another like lights on a morbid Christmas tree. I do not think that it is just me that has felt this way. The morning news and the evening news suggest that if it were not for bad news there would be no news at all. In

politics, it seems that the political speak of our day is designed to feed our uncertainty, our worries and our anxiety. The air is filled with the rhetoric about those others, you know those migrants who had the nerve to come to our shores. You remember them; they came over the beach at a place called Plymouth. We watch the TV ads for all the wonder drugs that will cure us or kill us according to the ads for the lawyers which follow the medical ads. It goes on and on so how in the world then can Jesus possibly ask us...really command us...not to worry?

I mean how does this help? I mean these words heap guilt on those of us who are worried for worrying, do they not? Are not Jesus' words the rather romantic but unrealistic words of an idealist, rather insensitive to say the poor, the unemployed and especially to the worrywarts amongst us? On the surface Jesus' words do not seem very practical or doable.

The theologian Paul Tillich characterized the most predominant modern anxiety as spiritual; that is you and I suffer from emptiness or meaningless. Others have suggested that if what Tillich says is true, then the cure for us is that instead of nursing our worries, we change the focus. Look elsewhere, beyond self-absorption, moving out of self to notice something or someone beyond the self that matters. Now I realize that the ease of this is what makes it seem unrealistic probably to you. To be honest, I find that gratitude, real gratitude, is something that I have to work at. It does not come easily, especially when you and I are caught in the grip of anxiety and worry. It is also true that gratitude does not come in some sudden conversion experience. It comes through a slow turning away from worry by intentionally stopping to find something, anything for which to thank God in the midst of worry. Yes it is not easy, Jesus understood this. Jesus also understood that a small step will lead to a

huge result. In my favorite movie, "What About Bob", Bob was told by Dr. Marvin to take baby steps to overcome his anxiety. So Jesus tells us to take baby-steps.

Everything is God's. God is eagerly waiting to give you and me more and more. If only we would allow him. Jesus wants us to notice what is in front of us, to believe that God is present and to be thankful. Change the subject, Jesus admonishes. There is a lot of stuff in life that we are powerless to change, but changing the subject is always in our power. This is reality.

Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote what has come to be known as the Serenity Prayer. "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

### **Senior Warden Update**

The 93rd Diocesan Convention for The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina was held on October 17th at St. Thaddeus in Aiken. Attending were Fr. Bob, Delegates Carter Siegling and Kathleen Harwood, Alternate Delegate JoAnn Palmer and Tom Harwood as a guest. There were elections to the various open positions, the Treasurer's report, and presentation of the 2016 Budget. The budget passed without objection. Everything appeared to run smoothly and we were dismissed early. The Bishop likes to keep things moving and does a great job doing so. Two Convention pictures are included in the Epistle.

The annual meeting of St. Stephen's is scheduled for Sunday November 22, 2015 after the service. We will plan our usual covered dish dinner. A signup list for dishes will be posted on the bulletin board. Please sign up for something and plan on attending this most important meeting. Prior to the meeting committee reports, the minutes of

the last meeting and the proposed budget along with details will be sent to the members by email. Please review the documentation and bring any questions to the meeting. Election of two members to the Mission Committee, plus a Junior and Senior Wardens will be held. This is an extremely important meeting held only once a year so please make plans to attend.

The 2016 pledge sheets are located on the table next to the organ. As stated in the bulletins, please do your best to pledge what you can. At this point in time we are anticipating a deficit so anything you can do to help will be greatly appreciated. We understand that there may be situations that may prevent pledging however, since we know everyone does give something to the church each year, we ask, if you cannot pledge, that you fill out a slip with an estimate of your 2016 contributions, cross out pledge and write in Est. for estimate and place it in the envelope provided. Please seal and write Treasurer on all envelopes and give them to the Treasurer, Kathleen Harwood, put them in her mail box in the church hall or put them in the alms basin.

With Advent and the Christmas Season fast approaching Poinsettia order forms will be available beginning Sunday November 1<sup>st</sup>. The Greenhouse has requested that we give them an idea of how many we want so they can place their orders by November 11<sup>th</sup>. You can make payment with your order or wait until December 6<sup>th</sup> to pay. This year the cost per plant will be \$13.00. The forms will be in the parish hall and on the table next to the organ. Envelopes will be available in both areas to enclose payment with the form. If you are making payment later the envelope won't be necessary. In either case, put the envelope in the Treasurer's mail box or alms basin. Last but not least, on Saturday October 24<sup>th</sup> we had a very successful work day with

fourteen people attending. The mold found on the books and in other places in the church was eliminated. The storage room in the church hall was also decluttered. With the super number of people we completed the tasks quickly and left well before noon. We know that some members had other commitments and would have joined in if they could have. If you missed we hope you can join us whenever we have our next work day. A big thank you to all who participated!!! Pictures of the work day and Convention taken by our resident photographer, Carter Siegling, are in the Epistle.

Remember Daylight Saving Time changes this weekend. Be sure to set your clocks one hour back or else you will arrive at church one hour early. Normal Episcopalians don't do that!

**DID YOU SIGN UP FOR HOSPITALITY SOON?**



**NOVEMBER**

11/1	Berk/Koenig
11/8	OPEN
11/15	Beale/Langdale
11/22	Annual Meeting – Covered Dish – separate sign up
11/29	Donna Guess

**DECEMBER**

12/6	David & Amanda Ford
12/13	Beverley Anderson
12/20	Paula & Frank Spinale
12/24	Christmas Eve
12/25	Christmas Day
12/27	OPEN



*Please wish the following people, a Happy Birthday:*

**NOVEMBER**

11/3	Jim McGrew
11/5	Kathleen Harwood
11/11	Cleve Langdale
11/13	Sharon Swofford
11/15	Justin Autry
11/16	Tom Harwood
11/17	Jo Milling
11/30	Jay Branham

**DECEMBER**

12/5	Carolyn Babb
12/6	Jacob Upchurch
12/15	Eleanor Milling
12/17	Gen Palmer VI
12/19	Harmony Addison
12/21	Ethan Lee Langdale
12/23	Jill Upchurch
12/28	Jennifer Palmer

Pictures from:

The Convention:



This is going to be a fun convention!



Best convention ever!

Clean Up Saturday – we've been busy!



I guess we have to get started.



Cleaning out the closet.



Got to get more!



Here comes more!



Mold YUCK!



We learned this from the Highway Department



It pays to be tall



All done! Time to rest!



Good Job!!!