

ST. THOMAS TIDINGS

St. Thomas Episcopal Church
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June/July 2003

“A close, warm, caring and ever-widening circle of God’s people, reaching out to each other and to the community at large.”

Frederika Sargent (1903-2003): Faithfulness, Favorite Prayers and Hymns

Frederika was the oldest member of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, and one of the oldest residents of Yancey County. She almost made it to her 100th birthday: July 10th. She died on May 26. She prided herself on being a contributing member of several churches: a couple in Vermont and a couple here. She requested that there be no funeral service, but she didn’t realize that such services are not for the deceased but for the living, who need to mourn and celebrate the life of their friend by telling their stories about her. So that’s what I will do here.

Frederika grew up in Vermont and worked as a librarian at the University of Vermont in Burlington. She maintained a home there until her death, and every summer she went back for a few weeks. She will be buried there. In the 1953 she moved here with her late husband Winston, who was a Burnsville physician for many decades. He died in 1996. In 1954 an attempt was made to begin and Episcopal parish in Burnsville. They used the name St. Thomas and met in homes. Frederika was the youngest member. When that congregation didn’t survive, and then was revived in 1993, the name St. Thomas was continued.

Frederika was a remarkable woman. Her house was full of books, and in her final years when she was unable to read easily, I suggested to her that she get books on tape from the State Library. When I visited her, she always had a stack of the tapes next to her chair.

One of her projects was researching the location of the homes of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. She collected photos of the homes and produced a video of them. Her sister had been the first woman lieutenant governor of Vermont. She came from hardy New England stock.

She grew up as an Episcopalian, and in those days Morning Prayer was the regular Sunday service. Her favorite prayer was the General Thanksgiving in Morning

Prayer: “Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants / do give thee most humble and hearty thanks.....” She had it memorized, and we prayed it together almost every time I visited her in the six years I have been here. In her last days in the hospital we prayed it everyday, until the last two days, and then I whispered it in her ear as she slept. The nurse said, “Oh, she probably hears you.”

Her favorite hymn was “Love divine, all loves excelling.” (Hymnal 657) I sang it to her in the hospital last week. “Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down, fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown. Jesus, thou are all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art; visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.”

On days in the hospital when she did not seem to wake up while I was there, I still talked to her, “Frederika, God danced on the day you were born; and God will dance on the day you die, and will be waiting for you with open arms.” “Frederika, well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the reward prepared for you.” “Frederika, you have lived a good life that has been very pleasing to God. Like the rest of us, you have not been perfect, but you have been faithful. God only asks us to be faithful.”

Frederika and I had lots of fun. When I visited her at her house once, I noticed she had a new ramp for her wheelchair: “Frederika, next April during ramp season I’ll buy you some ramps, so we can dedicate your new ramp.” A year later when I brought in the ramps, I wrapped them in plastic to contain the smell. I soon put them outside on the rail of the wooden ramp. When I came back two days later they were gone. “Somebody stole the ramps.” “Oh, no,” said her sitter, “we cooked them and put them in her eggs!”

She faithfully watched “The Price is Right,” so in her last days in the hospital, I took a can of beans and said, “Frederika, what is the price of these beans? If you get it

right, we'll let you out of here." Just as she was used to litanies and ritual prayers, we had ritual jokes that I repeated most of the times I visited her: "Frederika, you are 99; we'll turn you upside down, and you'll be 66!"

Even though most of the members of St. Thomas did not know Frederika personally, she was always at home saying her prayers. One Christmas a group of us went to her house and sang carols to her. Every year we brought the altar flowers to her after the Christmas and Easter services. Last week in the hospital when I brought her the altar flowers that had come from Peg Emerson's garden, Frederika opened her weak eyes and gasped at the beauty of the deep-purple flowers. "Oh...oh..." she said.

Faithfulness. Favorite prayers. The hymns she loved. Part of us has always been with Frederika, and part of Frederika will always be with us. She lived in the Lord, and died in the Lord. May we be blessed to do the same.

Tom Niehaus +

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES **JUNE AND JULY:**

Lili Bartleson	June 1
Bob McMillan	June 1
Julie Niehaus	June 2
Bob & Betty McMillan (A)	June 3
Ron & Mary Helms (A)	June 13
Judi Ewing	June 17
Jack & Eloise Kaeck (A)	June 24
Caroline Clark	June 26
Abe McKay	June 27
Noah Davis	June 29

Anthony Tyburski	July 3
Woody McKay	July 7
Kerstin Davis	July 17
Rob Storrs	July 24
Nancy Carey	July 26
Peter Bobbe	July 27
Sam McKay	July 27
Maggie & Dave Zurbrick (A)	July 28
Bruce & Maryallen Estes (A)	July 29
Joe Martin	July 31
Joe & Susan Martin (A)	July 31

We wish each of you God's blessings on your special day!

PRESIDING BISHOP TO VISIT WNC

Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold is scheduled to visit our diocese June 20-21. He will be at our **Diocesan Picnic at**

Lake Logan on June 21. More details will follow regarding the picnic, but please plan to attend! This is a good opportunity to visit our new conference center.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT

The building committee has been formed and has had its first meeting. Building committee members are Dee Bobbe, Peter Stephens, Jack Kaeck and Margie Haaga. Many in our parish have talents and skills that will be helpful during this project and have volunteered to help where needed. The building committee will establish ad hoc committees for various segments of this project and your assistance and expertise will be invaluable. Thanks to those who have already offered their help.

The committee has decided on the following strategy:

1. The building committee will develop a questionnaire for the parish to elicit views, opinions and desires of everyone, expecting a range of opinions. They will follow the skew of the "bell curve" (with an eye to what we can afford).
2. The committee will research and visit various parishes and other buildings to help develop a building concept.
3. The committee will present the congregation with "minimal" and "maximal" options for their review and discussion.

This is an exciting time for our parish as we embark on this project. Keep St. Thomas Episcopal Church in your daily prayers.

RUMMAGE SALE NETS \$1400!!

The parish Rummage Sale, held April 25-26 brought in over \$1400 which will go toward the St. Thomas building fund. Congratulations and many thanks to Nikki Dees who chaired the sale this year, and hearty thanks to all who helped and all who donated items for this year's sale. (Special thanks to Maryallen Estes for those wonderful brownies!!)

BISHOP'S VISIT

Mark your calendars, please, for August 24 the date of the Bishop's last visit to our parish before he retires next year. He will perform the sacrament of confirmation.

Tom is convening a **seeker's class** soon in preparation for confirmation. Anyone who wishes to learn more about the basics of the Episcopal Church is welcome to attend. There will be sessions on the Eucharist, the history of the church and on the sacraments.

Also, the Diocesan Search Committee and the Transition Committee have been formed and commissioned. The Bishop will retire in October 2004.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Plans are being made for Vacation Bible School this July. For more information, contact Kerstin Davis or Dee Bobbe.

CAMP HENRY

Tom will be at Camp Henry/Lake Logan from Monday June 23 to Saturday June 28 as chaplain/storyteller for Grades 3-4.

'SMOOTHIE' BOOTH TO RETURN TO 4TH OF JULY FESTIVAL ON TOWN SQUARE

Kerstin Davis has volunteered once again to chair the committee for the smoothie booth at this year's 4th of July festival on the town square. If you are interested in helping or have a blender you can loan for the day, please contact Kerstin. Thanks, Kerstin, for taking on this project again!

PASTORAL LETTER TO BE READ TO EACH CONGREGATION ON PENTECOST 2003.

The Primates of the Anglican Communion send this pastoral letter to all bishops, clergy and people of our churches, with the desire that it be read or distributed at public worship on the Feast of Pentecost, 2003.

"I have called you friends." (John 15.15)

United in Common Prayer and Witness

To our sisters and brothers of the Anglican Communion: Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the joy of the Holy Spirit. We met as Primates of the Anglican Communion in Gramado, Southern Brazil from 19th to 26th May 2003, at the invitation of the Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil, to bring before God our common life as the Anglican Communion and to take counsel together on the life of our churches. Five Primates were unable to be with us, and we prayed especially for the Archbishop and people of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui, facing the difficulties of the SARS situation.

We gathered first and foremost in a spirit of common prayer and worship, listening for the voice of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and manifested in the lives of our communities. We give thanks to God for what was shared among us - for the welcome of the Brazilian Church; for the music and worship led by local Christians; for the Bible studies led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams; for the theological reflections by Dr Esther

Mombo and Professor David Ford; and for the stories of witness and Christian discipleship from across the Anglican Communion.

In particular, we listened to stories of the growth of our churches in mission, of the creation of new dioceses and provinces and of the fruits of discipleship. They reflect the richness of our diversity across the globe, and the abundant resources of the Gospel to address all people in all situations.

We heard accounts of how many people, including faithful Anglicans have faced extreme situations of natural disaster, disease, the threat of terrorism, social unrest, war and its aftermath. We were moved by stories of Christian witness:

- in Sudan, where the Episcopal Church faces the huge challenge of helping to transform a culture of war to a culture of peace;
- in other African nations, such as Burundi and the Congo, where despite war, death and disease, the Anglican Church is courageously expanding its mission in circumstances of deprivation and hardship;
- in the Holy Land, where we are saddened by the unbroken chain of violence but encouraged by some recent signs of progress towards a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict;
- in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the humanitarian crisis is in many ways worse than before the recent conflicts, and where we see a need for greater United Nations involvement in repairing the damage;
- in some island states in the Pacific, where the Anglican Church is playing a peacemaking role in conditions of great political instability and corruption.

We thank God for the courage and wisdom that he has given in these situations, and affirm our solidarity with all who face alienation, persecution or injustice. We are mindful of those who live out their Christian faith as small minorities within their societies.

We give thanks for our life together in the Anglican Communion, for the way in which churches of the Communion support one another and, in particular, for the contribution which the Episcopal Church (USA) continues to give to many provinces across our Communion. We send our brotherly greetings to George and Eileen Carey, with thanksgiving for all they achieved in their ministry among us.

We rejoice in the fellowship we share with other churches and denominations, at the same time recognising that any true ecumenical endeavour has to be built on the mutual recognition and respect which we must accord each other as fellow members of the Body of Christ.

Our Work Together

We take to heart the words of Dr Esther Mombo, who urged us to "talk to each other rather than about each other". We welcomed our brother in Christ, Rowan Williams, to his first meeting with us as Archbishop of Canterbury. We listened to him as he shared some of the

priorities for his ministry. As reflected in the agenda of our meeting, these are:

- Theological education, which is facing different kinds of crisis in all provinces;
- The continuing engagement of our churches with HIV/AIDS;
- The nature of communion itself and, in particular, how we might be drawn together and renewed in an Anglican Gathering.

Theological Education

It is our conviction that all Anglican Christians should be theologically alert and sensitive to the call of God. We should all be thoughtful and prayerful in reading and hearing the Holy Scriptures, both in the light of the past and with an awareness of present and future needs.

We discussed what basic standards of theological education should be provided for and expected from all members of the Church. All regions face major challenges in this area, particularly in the provision of resources in non-English speaking provinces, and we considered how these should be met.

We recognise that there is a distinctive Anglican approach to theological study. This is reflected not only in the way our worship and liturgical life express our belief, and in our attention to Scripture read in the light of tradition, but also in our respect for exploration and experiment.

Theological education in the Anglican Communion honours each local context and, at the same time, calls us together into communion and mutual accountability. Therefore, though we wish to develop common standards of theological education worldwide, we value the uniqueness of the work of the Holy Spirit in each place.

Supportive of the Archbishop of Canterbury and, with him, convinced of this need, we affirm and encourage the work of the Anglican Communion Task Group on Theological Education.

HIV/AIDS

We pondered the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on our lives and in our communities and provinces as we shared our experiences and sorrows. HIV tears at the very fabric of our nations and homes. We admitted that the "Body of Christ has AIDS".

Adhering to the teachings of the Church, we determined to engage more deeply in challenging cultures and traditions which stifle the humanity of women and deprive them of equal rights. We agreed that our greatest challenge is to nurture and equip our children to protect themselves from HIV, so that we can fulfill the vision of building a generation without AIDS.

AIDS is not a punishment from God, for God does not visit disease and death upon his people: it is rather an effect of fallen creation and our broken humanity. We were reminded at our meeting that Christ calls us into community

as friends so that we might befriend others in his name. In that spirit, we resolved to build on what has already been achieved and to re-commit our efforts, prayers and support for all who are living with, and dying from, the effects of HIV/AIDS.

Our Shared Communion in Christ

As Primates, we believe that the 38 provinces and united churches in the Anglican Communion are irrevocably called into a special relationship of fellowship with one another. We thank God for our common inheritance of faith, worship and discipleship - an inheritance which has sustained our journey as one Christian family, and in which we have been united in our proclamation of the Gospel.

We recognise that all churches, and not just Anglicans, face challenges in applying the Gospel to their specific situations and societies. These challenges raise questions for our traditional teaching and understanding - questions which require of the Church a careful process of thought and discussion in order to discover a way forward that is true to our inheritance of faith in Christ and to our duty as Christians to care for all people.

Recalling the Virginia Report's exhortation that we should strive for "the highest degree of communion possible with tolerance for deeply held differences of conviction and practice" (Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, 1997, chapter 1), we are committed as Primates:

- to the recognition that in each province there is a sincere desire to be faithful disciples of Christ and of God's Word, in seeking to understand how the Gospel is to be applied in our generation;
- to respect the integrity of each other's provinces and dioceses, acknowledging the responsibility of Christian leaders to attend to the pastoral needs of minorities in their care;
- to work and pray that the communion between our churches is sustained and deepened; and to seek from God "a right judgement in all things" (Collect of Pentecost).

Human Sexuality

We take seriously the duty laid upon us by the Lambeth Conference 1998 to monitor ongoing discussion of this matter and encourage continued study and reflection in the context of common prayer and worship. We are grateful to the Archbishop of the West Indies, Drexel Gomez, for taking forward our discussion on matters of sexuality by introducing the booklet "True Union in the Body?", which fruitfully illuminated our study. We are also grateful to Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold for drawing our attention to the Report of the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church (USA) on this issue. We commend the study of both documents.

The question of public rites for the blessing of same sex unions is still a cause of potentially divisive controversy. The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke for us all when he said that it is through liturgy that we express what we believe, and that there is no theological consensus about same sex unions. Therefore, we as a body cannot support

the authorisation of such rites.

This is distinct from the duty of pastoral care that is laid upon all Christians to respond with love and understanding to people of all sexual orientations. As recognised in the booklet "True Union", it is necessary to maintain a breadth of private response to situations of individual pastoral care.

Anglican Gathering

We discussed the proposal for an Anglican Gathering of lay and ordained people, drawn from all parts of our Communion, which could be held in association with the next Lambeth Conference.

There would be significant financial costs, but we firmly believe that such an event would offer the Communion an important opportunity to renew its life, witness and mission together. The Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane, has offered to welcome a Gathering and the Lambeth Conference in Cape Town, which has the facilities for such events. We encouraged the Archbishop of Canterbury to move ahead with planning for the Gathering in 2008. This would be an occasion for celebration, learning and the deepening of our communion.

Invitation to Prayer

Having been renewed in the fellowship of our meeting, we invite Anglicans everywhere to pray with us. In his Bible studies, the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke of the joy we have as friends of God in Christ. "Jesus' joy is given to us", he said, "so that we might become nourishing to one another, nurturing and feeding one another in the Body of Christ." It is this vision of the rich blessings to be found in the fellowship of Christ's Body that inspires us.

Give thanks to God for the vibrant life of the Brazilian Church; for the diversity of the Anglican Communion, with its 75 million Christians, witnessing in 164 countries in a thousand languages; and for the faithful and courageous witness of Anglicans as they seek to bring God's love into situations of hardship, danger and despair. Pray that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Anglican Communion may everywhere be a faithful witness to what God has done in Christ, and to the abundant fullness of life to which he calls us.

The fire of love which binds together the Father and the Son be shed abroad in our hearts by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and renew us in our lives and in our discipleship; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

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The August/September issue of *St. Thomas Tidings* will be sent during the first week of August. If you have ideas for an article, please email Pattie Curtis at pcurtis@yancey.main.nc.us.