



The Circuit Rider

Life in the Big Bend Episcopal Mission – December 2008 and January 2009

Anglican Monastery Victim of California Wild Fire

The “Tea” fire which destroyed over 100 homes in the Santa Barbara, California area in November, also destroyed the Mt. Calvary Monastery on the morning of November



14th. None of the residents of the monastery were injured, having been evacuated the night before. Most of the books, art treasures, and other contents of the buildings were completely destroyed. A group of people from the Big Bend Mission visited the monastery in 2005. Several Big Bend Mission members are or have been associates of the monastery including Aurie West, Libby Rhodes, Don Viator, Tom Graf, Charlotte Harris, and Brenda Worsham. The brothers at the monastery are resident for the time being at St. Mary’s Retreat House next to the Old Mission in Santa Barbara. Donations for their continued support as a monastic community are urgently needed and can be made to Mount Calvary, P.O. Box 1296, Santa Barbara, CA 93102. The brothers, staff and associates request your prayers as they discern the wisest and most prudent path toward the future.



Mimi Smith and her Afghanistan Adventure

St. James’ parishioner and Alpine lawyer Mimi Smith may well be leaving for Afghanistan in the next few days. She has been through training to participate in a U.S. State Department privately contracted project called the Afghanistan Justice Sector Support Program.

The program is one of many international projects that seeks to increase the capacity of the Afghan government and the legal practitioners of Afghanistan to deliver fair and open criminal justice and rule of law services to the people of Afghanistan. American lawyers in the project work with the Afghanistan Attorney General’s office, the Ministry of Justice and all sectors of the criminal justice sector to improve access to justice for those accused of crimes, to build up trial skills for both Afghan prosecutors and defense lawyers, and to create a tracking system that releases inmates from prison on their appropriate sentence completion dates. Another area of great interest and emphasis is gender justice.



American and Afghan lawyers and Afghan Government agencies put on conferences all over the country to discuss and advance these areas of justice improvement. The Justice Support Sector Program also works with other international organizations to work on Victim advocacy workshops, which address the legal basis for addressing human rights issues, in the criminal justice context.

Grief Workshop Gives Comfort and Sage Advice



On Tuesday evening, November 11th, The Rev. Rhoda Montgomery and a group of about 20 Big Bend Mission parishioners gathered at Casa de la Rosa for a grief workshop. Rhoda reminded us to give ourselves some slack in times of grief, because grief can make us tired, make us feel overwhelmed,

and will always be part of the fabric of our lives to one degree or another. She told us that everyone grieves differently and that there is no correct way to grieve. Time was provided for us to share our memories of Elaine, and the evening concluded with a moving Eucharist in the chapel.



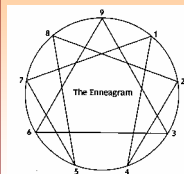
This issue of *The Circuit Rider* is a double issue. The next issue will be for February 2009.

Caroling at the Care Center

Everyone is invited to join in a group to go caroling from about 10:45 to noon on Saturday, December 20th. Carolers will sing at the Alpine Valley Care Center following the Order of Saint Luke meeting at St James'.

In addition, on Sunday, December 14th right after church service, all are invited to help stuff bags of candy so that each person at the nursing home will have a small remembrance of the caroling time. Filling the bags of candy will be accomplished in an assembly line format and will not take long. Thanks for your interest and help in this project!

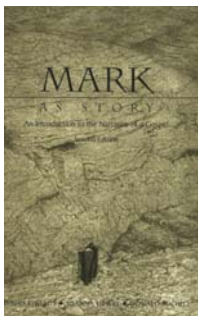
About the Enneagram



There has been discussion recently about the Enneagram and its value in spiritual discernment. The Enneagram is not a new age spiritual device, a parlor game, or a magical numbers theory. It is an ancient discernment tool passed down to us from the desert fathers and mothers of the faith. It describes nine personality types with different strengths and weaknesses. Each of us are one of the types. Knowing your number (type) and its spiritual dynamics can open new doors to understanding and growth. Look for more about the Enneagram in 2009.

New Book for St. James' Group

In Mid-January St. James' Prayer Fellowship will begin studying the Gospel of Mark with the book *Mark as Story* by David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie. The book looks at the use of narrator, the settings, the plot, the characters, and the reader. It recommends studying as a "roundtable" in a group with varied perspectives to reduce "reading your own point of view" in to the text and to come closer to the meaning intended by the author of Mark. The Prayer Fellowship meets at 6 pm on Tuesday evenings at the home of Al and Thelma Hoyle. Please contact Bonnie McNamara to order a copy of the book. The Hoyle's can give you directions to their home. Everyone is invited to participate.



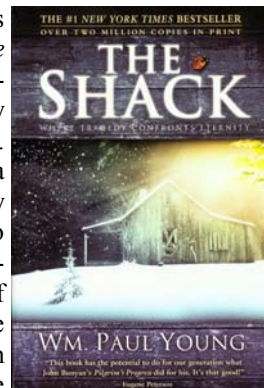
Christmas Flowers

If you would like to contribute toward the purchase of poinsettias to decorate St. James' for the Christmas Eve service, the suggested amount is \$8 per plant, or any amount that you would like to give. Make a check payable to St. James' Memorial Fund and indicate that it is for flowers. Put it on the collection plate or give/mail it to Thelma Hoyle, P.O. Drawer 1628, Alpine, TX 79831 before December 14th. If your donation is in memory or in honor of someone, please write their name or names on a separate sheet of paper and include it with your contribution.



The Shack

A number of us are reading *The Shack*, a controversial book by Wm Paul Young. The book uses a fictional story about a family to portray an unusual vision of God. If you are interested in more than the same old fare in spiritual reading, get yourself a copy of *The Shack*. It will shake things up.



Last Month's Question: What is a "Spiritual Director"?

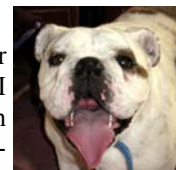
Answer: A spiritual director listens and asks questions to assist a person with reflection and spiritual growth.

This Month's Question: Who was Saint Valentine?

Dear Hankie - Advice to the lovelorn and spiritually downtrodden

Dear Hankie,

I've been going to church regularly now for most of my life. The other day it occurred to me that I haven't changed much over the years. I have studied scripture, listened to hundreds of great sermons, and been on retreat several times, but I am still basically the same skeptical sinful person I have always been. I don't know what to do.



Do your pets have spiritual questions? Send a picture of your pet and their question to Hankie c/o seth@equimax.com.



Dear Stuck,

You are not alone. Lots of people have the same problem, so don't beat yourself up. You'll never be perfect in this life, but you CAN grow and change. The trick is to uncover the "roadblock" in your spiritual life. Have a talk with yourself and figure out what you are most ashamed of, the thing that you would never tell anyone. Whatever it is, your roadblock is probably close by. God already knows about it and He doesn't think it is such a big deal. He wants to move you beyond it, but He can't do anything until you make the first move. Ask Him about it. - Hankie



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**It is not true that violence and hatred shall have the last word, and that
war and destruction have come to stay forever;**

**This is True: “For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given in whom
authority will rest and whose name will be Prince of Peace.”**

From “An Affirmation of Faith from South Africa”



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