

## Opening Letter by Mark Rudolph

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For our honeymoon, my wife and I drove from New Jersey to Virginia and then Virginia to the Phoenix area of Arizona. We drove in an old Volvo in which the air conditioning was broken, hauling a small U-Haul trailer. That event is a story in itself, but not the point of this little essay.

The reason that we drove to Arizona was so that we could start our new life together, depending on each other, and attending an excellent church about which Mark knew before moving.

### Inside This Issue:

Opening Letter	1
A Season for Love	3
Nicaragua Mission Trip 2018	5
St. John's Christmas Pageant	6
Addendum to 2017 Annual Report	6
Order Form for Easter Flowers	7
Keeping Up to Date at St. John's	8
Amazon Smile Program	8

One of the many blessings of our time in Arizona was that I was mentored by the Senior Pastor of that church. Pastor Vincent Strigas was the pastor of a large church—about 600 members. He was probably

older than I am presently, when Lynn and I moved to Arizona.

Newly out of seminary and newly married, I was interested in stretching my wings and he gave me an opportunity to do exactly that. He assigned me to be the leader of the senior high youth group, which had around 50 young people. He gave me a stipend of \$5,000 per year and what amounted to *carte blanche* per-

mission for a budget and activities. He also promised to spend one year meeting with me every Saturday morning for breakfast, talking about life and ministry.



As you can imagine, that was an incredibly generous commitment of time and energy to an unknown quantity like myself!

However, there were some stipulations on his part; in fact, there were two essential stipulations that he put to me in very strong and non-negotiable terms. He considered these two stipulations to be fundamentals of Christian discipleship and fundamental to our relationship. One of those stipulations was that I had to be teachable.

He described being teachable as being willing to hear critique and input from another and even if the input or the person giving the input was of questionable value, my first response had to be: "thank you; I'll think about that".

As I have thought about teachability over the years, and as I have both succeeded and failed at being

St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church  
1150 Bristol Road, Southampton, PA 18966  
Church Office: (215) 396.1970  
Family Resource Center: (215) 355-1493  
email: [info@toknowchrist.org](mailto:info@toknowchrist.org)  
website: [www.toknowchrist.org](http://www.toknowchrist.org)

teachable, I've found this characteristic to be invaluable.

For one thing: it's *biblical*. "Everyone must be quick to hear", says James. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear", said our Master (James 1:19, Matthew 11:15). One of the more powerful bits of instruction

about teachability comes, not surprisingly, from Proverbs.

*To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naïve, to the youth knowledge and discretion, a wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.*

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

*Hear ... instruction and do not forsake ... teaching; indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck (Proverbs 1:1–9).*

For another thing—something that Solomon points out in the above text—it's *practical*. Receiving instruction and teaching are a "graceful wreath to your head ...", which wreath of wisdom procures for its bearer practical benefits. Solomon writes, "Do not forget ... teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments"; and he enumerates some of the reasons why.

For length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:1–6).

I wish that I had been more teachable and much earlier in my life. Why wasn't I? I think it's because being teachable is comprised of a number of necessary elements, which themselves need to be in place in order to be teachable.

To put it differently, in order to grow in maturity, one must already have some existing elements of maturity! What are some of those elements?

- I think of self-awareness, the ability to discern one's own condition. "I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment ..." (Romans 12:3)

- Humility comes to mind, the willingness to reduce one's pretensions about one's self to a proper level or estate, such that one willingly takes one's appropriate place under authority, under the wisdom of others, and (of course, ultimately) under God. "When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom." (Proverbs 11:2)

- Desiring to learn the right sort of things is important. It is said that a smart man learns from his mistakes. However, a wise man learns from the mistakes of others. Desiring to be smart (educated, erudite, sophisticated, etc.) actually under-shoots—even could prevent—the godly goal of desiring wisdom. "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." (1 Corinthians 8:1)

- And I think of patience, since none of these things occur without the slow and steady drip of time, experience, Scripture, and the wisdom of others. Isn't patience one aspect of the fruit which God's Spirit grants us? (Galatians 5:22)

One of the worst and most oft-repeated “curses” of the Scriptures that God invokes on his people is when He says that they have ears, but do not hear (for example, see Isaiah 6:10, Matthew 13:15, James 1:22–25). Are you teachable? Are you willing to learn? Are you willing to listen to the critique of others and be able to take that critique to heart as is appropriate?



## *A Season for Love*

*By Bishop Steve Breedlove*

What a “happy accident” that this year’s Ash Wednesday falls on February 14, St Valentine’s Day. Beginning Lent with a focus on love is a compellingly right way to walk into Lent.

Obviously I’m not talking about romantic love, at least the way Valentine’s Day is celebrated in our world. Romantic love is a great gift, when accompanied by commitment to guard and nurture the beauty and holiness of God-given covenantal marriage. Affection and love in families and between friends is also a good and godly gift. I still remember the little paper Valentines my mother gave us kids, or that we exchanged in elementary school. No harm, no foul, good fun.

But that’s not the call to love that Lent offers. There is a “first love” that Lent is about.

The church in Ephesus did much that was right. Nevertheless, Jesus was deeply concerned for its welfare. “I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.”

Behind that correction stands the overflowing heart of God. The origin of human creation is delight and love from the eternal Trinity toward his image-bearer: Genesis 1:26-31. The impulse of redemption is the awesome reality of God’s holy determination to heal our adulterous loves and to make the broken whole again. The message throughout the sad history of Israel is that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. Above all, there is “the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free.”

No wonder, then the call to the beloved from the Lover is to love him in response. “The first and greatest commandment is this, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” Love for the Lord necessarily includes the right orderings of heart, mind, and will. Love is indeed the sum of all commands, the end of all law: Matthew 22:36-40, Galatians 5:14.

Lent, then, is decidedly a time to revisit the source and origin of all true and right love. It is a time to deeply consider “our first love.” To that end, we practice spiritual disciplines of renewed devotion, fastings (decluttering, refocusing, or going hungry to nurture a greater hunger), and almsgiving, ***all for love’s sake.***

As we consider ways to nurture and renew our first love during Lent, St. Valentine may in fact be a great model and example. Reliable knowledge about this saint is hard to find. Multiple people from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries have been dubbed “St Valentine.” Two are prominently mentioned. One was a priest near Rome, martyred for his faith in 269 AD. The other was a bishop from modern-day Umbria, also martyred for his faith

(273 AD). Some speculate that this was actually one and the same person, though there are two graves, and two reliquaries, associated with two different people. Then there is a third person named St Valentine martyred in North Africa in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and another St Valentine from Genoa, and another from Slovakia – the list goes on.

Add to that misty history, the practices of honoring this saint, and why we honor a St Valentine at all, and which saint is being honored, and on what day, and in what way, differ wildly between the West and the East and in various folk legends and practices throughout Europe. The first notice of associating St Valentine with romantic love comes from a 14<sup>th</sup> century poem by Geoffrey Chaucer celebrating the engagement of English King Richard II to Anne of Bohemia. Literary critics believe that Chaucer was referring to customs associated with a Genovese St Valentine's day celebrated on May 3.

Clearly, confusion around who, what, why, and when we would remember St Valentine is significant. So why suggest at all that we remember this composite saint as a guide to Lent?

Underneath all the stories about a St Valentine, and his various supposed acts connected to romantic love (one martyred St Valentine is said to have officiated at clandestine weddings for Christian Roman soldiers), there is one constant current. Every one of these Christians lost their lives for their faith. Over the course of their lives, they nurtured a first love, and they paid the ultimate price rather than betray that love.

According to ultimately trustworthy Wikipedia (smile), *“Popular modern sources claim links to unspecified Greco-Roman February holidays alleged to be devoted to fertility and love to St. Valentine's Day, but prior to Chaucer in the 14th century, there were no links between the Saints named Valentinus and romantic love. Earlier links as described above were focused on **sacrifice** rather than romantic love.”*

Love for the Lord begins as a spontaneous response to his unfathomable love, and our love for him always grows as a responsive love: “We love because he first loved us.” But while spontaneity is great, it does not fully sustain and grow love. Love for anyone can be nurtured, including love for the Lord. But nurturing love for the Lord requires letting go of other loves, and creating space in our souls that he can fill.

If our hearts are filled with lesser loves, how can we receive more of God's love, and return it back to him? Consider the tragedy of Isaac. He ended life badly, making a mess of his family and failing, perhaps deliberately, his responsibility to pass the covenant blessing to Jacob rather than Esau. Why his bias for the older son whom God had already proclaimed would serve the younger? Genesis 27: 1-4 offers a clue. Isaac speaks to Esau and asks him to hunt game and “prepare for me delicious food, such as I love.” That phrase repeats in vv. 9 and 14. By v 25, he trades the covenantal blessing for a bowl of stew, given to the right son in spite of Isaac's (willful?) departure from Yahweh's prophetic will.

Love always grows on a path that requires some sort of sacrifice. Love led God to sacrifice for us. Our love relationship with him is rooted in his sacrifice, and it is returned and nurtured in our small sacrifices. Like the Ephesians, nurturing that love inevitably calls for repentance, remembering, and returning. What better time than Lent to sacrifice more time and money, or to choose less food or media distraction, in order to attend to and nurture our first, most important love?

*Last Lent, I strongly commended the book, **The Good of Giving Up**, by Aaron Damiani, an ACNA rector in Chicago. If you did not read it last year, I underline my appeal: get this book, and read it!*

*This article appeared in the AnchorLines Newsletter published on February 13, 2018 by the Diocese of Christ Our Hope.*

## Nicaragua Trip 2018

By Phil Hanner

I can say with honest conviction that every year our trip to Nicaragua is better, where our Student Program is flourishing in new ways and our relationships are richer than the year before. As Chris and I began our journey south, I remember wondering whether or not the changes we had made last year to the program had worked out for good or ill, and at first I was a bit nervous. But as we arrived and spoke with Juan Gonzalez, the director of the Student Program in Santa Maria, we were very relieved to hear that the program



was not only working well, but that *both* the students and leaders in Verbo church recognized the blessings of the changes implemented last year.

In directing the efforts of the program away from cleaning the church and attempting to encourage their studies through study hall and English learning classes, we have found that the students are doing better in their academics and we are setting them up for success as they consider University studies. Not only that, but our current university students are advocating for our redoubled efforts to help the students in the program as we focus their attention more on their academics. We now have many of the top students in the region in our program, for which the Principal of the School has expressed his deepest gratitude. The students seem happy with the program overall and are very aware of our love and prayers for them, and they recognize that our people in St. John's care deeply for them.

Chris and I are both happy with the way the program is being supervised under Juan's watchful care, and he has proven himself an able teacher and leader in the community of Santa Maria. We have truly "hit a stride" so to speak, and expect the Lord to continue to do great things through this program.

Shameless plug: We are still taking new students so if you are interested in sponsoring one of these wonderful kids who need resources to aid in their studies (shoes, pens, pencils, etc.), please don't hesitate to contact Chris or myself about supporting one of future young professionals.

## St. John's Christmas Pageant

By Ken Cook

St. John's annual Christmas Pageant took place on Saturday, December 23rd at 5:00 p.m. As Luke 2:1-19 and Matthew 2:1-2, chronicling the birth of Christ, were read, a large cast moved carefully about to reenact the incarnation of the world's Savior. The congregation, composed of young and old, St. John's veterans and visitors, sang Christmas carols and traditional hymns of praise. (The Rev.) Phillip Shade and flutist Margaret Claudin provided the music, and our singing was undergirded by Helen Miller, vocalist. Ray Baker, our producer and director, was supported by Vikki Baker (costumes) and Butch Bodenheimer (set-up and take-down); Ray also served as Reader.

Logan Hope School, led by Jim Sovocool, played a significant role in our evening. Vimul and Lindsay Ros, from the school, acted out the role of *Joseph and Mary*. Dan Issler, Jim Cushing and Phil Tolbert were *kings* - for the day - and were joined by their *pages*, Kate Issler, Benjamin Cushing and Matthew Tolbert. Carole Ziegler was the inventive *inn-keeper*. *Archangel* Michael Simone was joined by an *angelic host* including Denise Simone, Jackie Baxter, Tiffani Cushing, Becca Geberth, Al-lura Harris, Ella and Madeline Issler, Camryn Jewel, Bijuu Kim, Maleah Nelson, Cora Oberly, Donna Tong, Sophia Tong, Kiley Xayabandith and Myah Xayabandith. There was a large contingent of *shepherds* as well: Anthony Burgess, Craig Clau-



din, Henry Cushing, Alex Munos Diaz, Dennis McKnight, Zyaire Phelps and Danny Saks. Ken Cook was the master of ceremonies and homilist.

Afterwards, a great meal was served and enjoyed by everyone. We all had opportunities for conversation and Christ-centered fellowship. Among the comments overheard was the suggestion that the portrayal of the Gospel from the perspective of Christmas makes the "Pageant one of the most important services held at St. John's in any given year." Praise God!

Ken

### *Addendum to 2017 Annual Report by Chris Freisheim*

#### NICARAGUA STUDENT PROGRAM 2017

2017 marked the second year of several transitions in our student program. Most importantly, we took several steps to further strengthen the education component of the program. Importantly, we opted to continue funding a tutor, Juan Gonzalez, to oversee extra help and additional educational opportunities for the students. We continued to offer computer and English classes. Through several generous donations, we were able to fund the purchase of 6 computers for the students to regularly use during Juan's classes. These classes have only just begun to help our kids.

In 2017 friends and members of St. John's funded 14 high school and 4 university students. University students are enrolled in nursing and business programs currently. Each and every year, we continue to build a stronger relationship with the local school director.

Unfortunately, 2017 also marked the passing of our longtime friend and partner in the ministry in Nicaragua, Pastor Jose Tellez. He is a great loss for the church and the community. We are blessed to have been able to serve alongside of him for over 12 years.

The current year program has also brought more changes, including the promotion of Juan to run the program for us in Nicaragua. We have also opened up opportunities for some of the best and brightest students in the community, even if they are not part of Verbo Church. In working with the local school director, we now have 4 of the top students in the school, in our program. We are excited to give these young men and women the opportunity to grow and have new doors opened for

their future. For 2018, we will be sponsoring 6 university students and 16 high school students.

Thank you all for committing to these young people. Please continue to keep Juan and all of our students in your prayers as we seek to help them grow both spiritually and through new educational opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,  
Chris Freisheim

*Editor's Note: Chris submitted this report in a timely manner. In error, it was not included in the Report presented at our Annual Meeting.*

**EASTER LILLIES TO BE PLACED ON THE ALTAR AT  
ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH  
IN MEMORY OF LOVED ONES  
(Deadline for submitting requests is Sunday, March 25th)**

In Memory of:



Given by:

Donation \$:

Phone Number:

Please make check out to St. John's Anglican Church in any amount, and place it in the box marked "Easter Memorial Flowers" along with this form.

## *Keeping Up to Date at St. John's*

Would you like to be on our email distribution list? If so, please call the Church office (215) 396-1970 or email [cindy@toknowchrist.org](mailto:cindy@toknowchrist.org). Make you give us your first and last name along with the email address we should use.



## *St. John's Can Receive Donations through the Amazon Smile Foundation!*

If you already buy from Amazon as many of us do, this is an easy and terrific way to donate to our Church.

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. The purchase price is the amount paid for the item minus any rebates and excluding shipping & handling, gift-wrapping fees, taxes, or service charges. From time to time, we may offer special, limited time promotions that increase the donation amount on one or more products or services or provide for additional donations to charitable organizations. Special terms and restrictions may apply. Please see the relevant promotion for complete details.

Go to this link <http://Smile.Amazon.com> to sign up. Just type in St. John's Anglican Church. There are several churches with the same name. Scroll to our location and select it. It's that easy! You can continue purchasing/donating as long as you use the [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) website.

Donations are made by the AmazonSmile Foundation and are not tax deductible by you.

