

September 2018 Messenger

FR. MIKE'S CORNER

After a three-month hiatus, *The Messenger* is coming out of "mothballs". The reason for this publishing interruption was due to very messy repairs and refurbishing efforts we began on our church facility late last spring. Over a decade of deferred maintenance on a one hundred fourteen year old building due to The Episcopal Church's (TEC's) lawsuit against our diocese and specifically St. John's Anglican Church, we were left needing to address serious maintenance and repair issues with our building and grounds.

In a separate section of this edition of *The Messenger* you will see a list of projects we tackled and a list of much needed undertakings waiting in the wings. Please look at these lists, or better yet, come and visit St. John's and see what has been accomplished to date. All of this has been completed due to the gracious hard work of some stalwart volunteers, generous offerings from members and friends of Saint John's, and a \$3,000.00 mission's grant from the Diocese of San Joaquin.

To refresh those of you who receive and read this newsletter, St. John's is the only congregation in our diocese that did not lose their building as a result of TEC's lawsuit. The settlement allowed us to keep our property, but required us to forfeit all of our cash assets accumulated prior to disaffiliation with TEC. The amount they won in their punitive legal action against St. John's well was over \$400,000. That



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Sept 9-Vestry Meeting
- Sept 13-Men's Club
- Sept 15-ACW Meeting
- Sept 28-Men's Bible Study



FR. MIKE'S CORNER (cont.)

left us without any funds for much-needed repairs and renovation, or even more important, funds for future use for evangelism and ministry.

In order to complete necessary repairs to damage, address security issues and handle ongoing maintenance, we are going to need to replenish the cash reserves we have used for the listed improvements you will read about in this edition of *The*

Messenger.

I must include one final thought in my update. The mission statement of Saint John's Anglican Church reads: *The mission of St. John's Anglican Church in Porterville is to bring God's redeeming love to His people by prayer, preaching, teaching, and example.* We at Saint John's believe God has commissioned His people to go beyond ourselves to those who are

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yet to know and experience God's redeeming love. Our mandate from Jesus is to go beyond ourselves to those who have neither heard the Gospel as well as those who may have heard the good news of Jesus's payment for their sin and have chosen to disregard it. This is the most serious business we face as God's people at Saint John's Anglican Church.

This appeal for continued prayer and financial support is meant to facilitate a much higher calling than merely fixing and maintaining an old historic church building. The members at Saint John's Anglican Church will continue to reach out to organizations and people who are meeting vital needs of people who are suffering the effects of a lack of provisions for their basic needs. Our supreme desire, however, is to increasingly address the source of all suffering and human pain. The cure for all man's temporal and eternal needs ultimately is met in the person, message and mission of Jesus Christ.

Prayerfully consider supporting us in these efforts through your interest, prayers and financial support.

We would love to see you soon at nine o'clock Sunday mornings.

Blessings!

Mike+



Tim Challies

A Sober Warning from the Earliest Christians

When I was a kid, my family once watched a movie that included vivid scenes of persecution against the earliest Christians. I remember lying awake at night, terrified by these images of Christians burning in the streets and being fed to the lions. I couldn't help but imagine myself in the place of those beleaguered believers. At the time, I assumed they were being persecuted simply for being Christians, but as I've studied early church history, I've come to realize it's not quite so simple. And as simplicity gives way to reality, I see there are some important lessons we can learn today through that early church persecution.

The earliest Christians lived within the Roman Empire, and, despite what you may have heard, Rome was surprisingly tolerant of other faiths. As they conquered the surrounding nations, they would rarely demand full loyalty to the traditional Roman religion or gods. They would allow people to continue to worship their own gods in pretty much their own way. But still the Christians were persecuted. Why?

The great challenge of the Roman Empire was binding together many cultures, faiths and nations under a common banner. As

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**HAPPY
SEPTEMBER
BIRTHDAY**

8-Marilyn Kavadas
15-Ralph McLaughlin
18-Ray Cerniga
21-Morris Tharp
22-Manuel Azevedo
29-Richard Sailors

**HAPPY
SEPTEMBER
ANNIVERSARY**

13-Steve & Vicki
Brown
19-Tom & Sandra
Luce

A Sober Warning From The Earliest Christians. (cont.)

their armies conquered lands stretching from Germany to Northern Africa, from Spain to Syria, this challenge became increasingly difficult. What could serve as a kind of bond to hold it all together? The obvious answer was the Emperor. He could stand in as the living embodiment of the empire so that loyalty to the Emperor would be synonymous with loyalty to make a sacrifice to him as if he was divine. So Rome did not insist that everyone convert to their religion; they merely insisted that every religion add a small homage to the Emperor, a small act of worship that would serve as a display of their loyalty to the Empire.

Christians refused to do this. Their ultimate and exclusive loyalty to Jesus Christ precluded them from making the offering, and it was this refusal that was the source of so much of the persecution. It's crucial to understand that from the Roman perspective, the persecution was not primarily about religion, but about politics. The Christians' unwillingness to add this small element to their worship made them appear disloyal to the Emperor and to his empire. By failing to make their offering to Caesar, they were not failing a religious test as much as a test of good citizenship. They were refusing to participate in the ceremony that signified the unity of the empire. Thus, they were persecuted as disloyal citizens who hindered rather than strengthened their society.

It is right here that we may do well to learn some lessons for our own day. Our societies are attempting to maintain unity through growing diversity, yet have abandoned or overthrown most of the elements that have traditionally bonded us together. This leaves us searching for new means of fostering and expressing unity. The unifying principle that has risen to the top is tolerance—a new kind of tolerance centered around modern sexual ethics and mores. Where tolerance once called for respect despite disagreement, today it calls for far more. We are considered tolerant only when we advocate and celebrate new understandings of marriage, sexuality and gender. Those who refuse to celebrate what they believe God forbids are seen as disloyal to the unifying principle of society. They are seen to be hindering rather than helping the strength and growth of this great new “empire”.

If we fail the test of tolerance we fail the test of good citizenship.

Here is one similarity between ourselves and Rome: Just as every religion in the Roman Empire was meant to add a small homage to the Emperor, today we find that every religion (and every other group, for that) is meant to add an element of tolerance. We display our loyalty to society when we express such tolerance, and

A Sober Warning From The Earliest Christians. (cont.)

display disloyalty if we refuse. If we fail the test of tolerance we fail the test of good citizenship.

Here is a second similarity: People today are perfectly willing to tolerate the Christian faith as long as it doesn't disrupt the unifying principle of tolerance. Christians in the early church were welcome to continue to worship Jesus, to sing their songs, and to preach their Scriptures, as long as they added just that one tiny nod to the Emperor. Likewise, we are free to continue to worship Jesus, to sing our songs, and to preach our Scriptures, as long as we accept these new definitions of marriage, gender, and so on. We don't need to abandon our faith, but just modify it slightly to better fit the times.

And a third similarity: Just as the people around the early Christians insisted that there was no inconsistency between worshipping Jesus and offering a pinch of incense to the Emperor, people around us today are insisting there is no inconsistency between these new sexual mores and the Bible. Those first Christians knew better and bore the consequences. We, too, know better, and may be forced to bear consequences.

Writing of the early church, Bruce Shelley said, "To the Roman, the Christian seemed utterly intolerant and insanely stubborn; worse, he was a self-confessed disloyal citizen." But that Christian, through all his stubbornness, maintained a clear conscience before God. He was willing to suffer, knowing that he owed far greater loyalty to Christ than to any emperor, to his heavenly nation than any empire. May the same be said for us to-



Completed Projects On Brandon Hall and Property Maintenance

August 12, 2018

Extensive pruning of shrubs and fruit trees behind and in the front of the Jackson house and church property.

Trash removed from outside and inside church property.

Trash removed from the Jackson House.

Rail painted on the ramp into Brandon Hall.

Gutters all cleaned and flushed on the church facility.

Gutters cleaned on the Jackson House.

New water cooler on the east side of the church facility.

New ceilings in all the rooms of Brandon Hall.

New lights in the ceilings of all rooms in Brandon Hall.

New lights in the narthex, nave, and sanctuary.

New ropes for the bell and ropes restrung to the inside of the building,

Handrail on the steps to the choir room entrance.

New carpeting and flooring in Brandon Hall.

New toilet in men's bathroom.

Stage curtain hem repaired.

New desk in the church office.

Hardwood floor refinished in the church office.

New door on the small office at the entrance of Brandon Hall.

Bookshelf from the church office moved into the conference room in Brandon Hall.

Books sorted in the bookshelves in the conference room.

New audio/visual equipment placed in Brandon Hall including a motorized screen for multi-media presentations.

Property projects yet to be completed:

Inside lighting.

Outside lighting.

New shingles on the church roof.

Jackson House? Future plans for it.

New carpet in the worship facility.

Windows repaired at the back of the nave. The one on the north side opens. The one on the South side is jammed closed.

Repaint and repair exterior siding of the church and Brandon Hall.

New church sign.

