

St. John's Chapel Newsletter

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A Meditation for New Beginnings

What new beginning are you experiencing? A new job? A move to a new city? A new year? God is with us in our transitions. New beginnings are the best time to reflect on where we've come from and move into the future with a joyful hope.

New beginnings don't just happen at the beginning of a new year. They can occur with a romantic breakup, a move to a new city, a new job, a new child, or another life event. **What new beginning am I experiencing now? How am I feeling at this point? ... I sit for a while with that feeling.**

"Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it? There it is! I'm making a road through the desert, rivers in the badlands." (Isaiah 43:18-19)

The stories in scripture show time and time again that God offers people a *new beginning*, another chance for great things. God frees the oppressed, Jesus heals and restores, and the Holy Spirit imbues new life.

When we're in a new situation, at the beginning of a new year, or in a new state of mind it's natural to make resolutions. But in those resolutions are we staying true to ourselves or trying to be someone different? When Jesus offers someone a new beginning, he's simply calling them to be themselves, their best selves. **Can I claim my selfhood, my own identity, loved and given by God?**

Sometimes new beginnings are chances to look at the things we're holding onto. Saint Ignatius speaks of so-called "disordered attachments," things we're attached



to that are not helpful to growing closer to God and our True Self. We need to get rid of those things. **Are there any things that I can get rid of at this point in my life, things unhelpful to my journey? What do I need to let go of? At this new beginning, what are my hopes?**

Friendships can be very important to new beginnings. They may help us in our transition, or they may help encourage us to awaken dreams. **Who are my friends who can help me in my journey forward?** It's also important to consider our friendship with God who meets us wherever we are. When we look back on a past year or past relationship or past situation, we may nostalgically long to return to that place. But the graces of those times and the memories of the past can come with us. And God, most importantly, is never left behind. God moves with us from the present moment into the future, into new and hopeful beginnings. The verse from Isaiah says that God is going to do something "brand-new." **What brand new thing is God doing for me now?**

Let's start our new beginning with a prayer attributed to St Teresa of Avila and St Thérèse of Lisieux:

May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts you received and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be confident knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us.

SENIOR WARDEN'S MESSAGE



Saint John's has recently had two wonderful Feasts to get together and give thanks for our blessings. I wish to thank all of you who contributed or attended for your loyalty to the future of St. John's. We have recently completed our Pledge Drive and we are on our way for the next year. If you haven't already pledged, please consider doing so soon. Remember it is the pledges that keep St. John's open for the good of all of us. We have also fulfilled our "Angel Tree" commitment to the needy of the area. We are currently having our organ refurbished so it will deliver truly holy music for Christmas.

Thank you all for your dedication and commitment to St. John's during this last year. Keep the faith alive and well in our beautiful Monterey. Merry Christmas to all and see you on future Sunday.

St. John's Early Priests, Part 9

by Dick & Elizabeth Barratt, St. John's Historians

From the beginning, St. John's had a preponderance of British-born vicars and rectors. By 1935 with the arrival of The Rev. Theodore Bell, the chapel not only had another Englishman at the helm, but one who had been ordained twice. The son of a draper and shopkeeper, The Rev. Bell (1889-1974) was born in Harrogate, Yorkshire. As a young man he and his wife Helen Purcell (1884-1970) were members of the Theosophical Society. They also belonged to the Old Catholic Church in Great Britain, in which priests, including The Rev. Bell, were ordained to the priesthood. After their Archbishop suddenly demanded they all withdraw from the Theosophical Society, a breach formed and in 1916 the Old Catholic Church in Great Britain was reorganized. By 1918 it became today's Liberal Catholic Church, basing its episcopal succession from the Old Catholic Church of Holland.

The Rev. Bell arrived in California with his wife and children Michael and Barbara in August 1922. His first Episcopal deaconate was at St. Peter's Church in Red Bluff, where he served from 1925-27. It was here that Bishop Moreland of the Diocese of California ordained him into the Episcopal priesthood. From there he served as vicar at St. Stephen's Mission in San Luis Obispo 1927-1931, oversaw Trinity Church in Hayward while also rector of All Soul's in Berkeley 1931-35, and then in November 1935 he arrived in Monterey to become Rector of St. John's Chapel Del Monte, a position he enjoyed for the next 16 years until his retirement.

From the start of his ministry in Monterey, the Rev. Bell was a popular member of the community, meeting with other local clergy and participating in missionary and outreach projects. He served on the diocesan board to examine and approve all candidates applying for priesthood. In 1936 he hosted a meeting of the National

Council of Episcopal Churches, held at St. John's Chapel. As with prior pastors, when St. James Church was without a rector, he served in that capacity, holding communion services at the church on the first Sunday of the month. At St. John's itself, Sunday services enjoyed robust attendance with Holy Communion at 8:00 AM and Morning Prayer and Sermon at 11:00. Daily the church doors were kept open from 8:00 AM-3:00 PM for prayer and meditation. At the time, the Bell family lived in St. John's Rectory which was located on church grounds.



Rev. Theodore Bell, 1935-1951

Both Fr. Bell and St. John's Chapel enjoyed public attention in 1939 when newspapers nationwide announced that he performed the August marriage ceremony of movie stars Joan Fontaine and Brian Aherne at St. John's Chapel. In October he officiated at the wedding of another film actress, Andrea Leeds, who married Robert Stewart Howard, son of businessman Charles S. Howard, who owned the racing-horse Seabiscuit.

Another item hitting the news gambit during Fr. Bell's tenure at St. John's was his application for U.S. citizenship that was turned down not once, but twice, in 1937 and 1938. At his hearings, when Superior Court Jorgenson asked whether he would answer affirmatively the question, "If necessary are you willing to take up arms in defense of this country?" Rev. Bell's answer was that he couldn't give an unqualified "yes" to the question. His reason was, "Yes, providing the war was one of defense and not aggression." He also stated that he was not a pacifist and would be willing to bear arms if the country were attacked or engaged in a war which he considered justifiable and righteous, such as one protecting a weaker nation from an aggressor. The decision was held over pending a parallel case about to be heard in the United States Supreme Court. In the end, once Fr. Bell's hearing came up again, the judge's decision was to again deny the application. The Supreme Court's eventual decision had held that the government cannot bargain with an applicant for citizenship. In his ruling, Judge Jorgenson said he was sympathetic *continued on page 3*



Altar Flowers: The Flower Chart is in its usual place in the Parish Hall. Reserve those important dates now. Costs are \$30.00 for regular seasonal flowers, greenery and candles, OR \$40.00 for roses.

Early Priests, *Continued from page 2*

to the Rev. Bell's position, particularly since he had had been a resident of the county for many years, but that he deferred to a higher court decision.

Once again making news in 1949, Fr. Bell wrote and published an open letter attacking "iniquities in the Episcopal church pension fund" which he mailed to Episcopal clergy and laity throughout the nation. According to the June 7, 1949, San Francisco Examiner, this resulted in "commendation by a majority of bishops in this country." The Rev. Bell reported that the subject would be brought before the general church convention that year, since the average clergy retirement pension was \$75 a month, with those retiring early due to ill health only meriting \$65 a month. Widows received \$31 a month. Inequities in the system, he further noted were that some others retired with \$258 a month and that the system needed to be equitably re-



Photo: Taken in 1916, this photo shows The Rev. Bell (standing second from the right) at the consecration of James Ingall Wedgwood as the first Presiding Bishop of the England-based Liberal Catholic Church.

he initially applied, he was granted United States citizenship on March 12, 1953.

vamped.

In June 1951, parishioners of St. John's Chapel bid farewell to the Bells as they departed Monterey for retirement in La Jolla. It must have been a great source of satisfaction for Fr. Bell when, 16 years after

A Short History of the Episcopal Church, November 2022 Part 16

Out of its deep depression, the Church, with its neighbor churches, returned to life by the grace of God. The Christian religion has passed through many crises. Sometimes by reason of its foes, sometimes by reason of its friends, it has seemed at the point to die. But it possesses a victorious vitality.

The War of 1812 strengthened the Church. It put an end to much of the political prejudice which had arisen from its position at the time of the Revolution. In the new strife with England, Churchman, Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, fought side by side. They went into battle singing a national anthem written by Churchman-Francis Key of Maryland, The Star-Spangled Banner.

In the opportunity thus made, new men came forward to meet the new conditions. Weak and discouraged dioceses in the South were strengthened and full of faith and expectation. In New York, scattered Church people were ministered to, gathered into parishes, founding societies for the distribution of tracts, for the planting of Sunday Schools, for the advancement of missions and the education of clergy. In New England, there was a notable revival of religion and a formerly weak series of dioceses strengthened into five self-supporting and strong dioceses. In North Carolina and Virginia, churches were increased, and men of moral earnestness and spiritual enthusiasm stood up against unrighteousness. This work was done under four Bishops.

The Church of England at the time of the Reformation was a time of strife into which the church fell. Extreme men on one side left and became Roman Catholics. Extreme men on the other side left and became Puritans. As in England this produced Churchmen and Dissenters, in America they became Whigs and Tories. The Churchmen of the northern colonies especially in New England, were mainly Tories and high Churchmen, in the southern colonies, especially in Virginia, they were mainly Whigs and low Churchmen.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the life and vigor of the church both in England and in America was with the low Churchmen, in the second quarter of the century, the progress of religion in the Church in both countries was with the high Churchmen.

Excerpts from "A Short History of the Episcopal Church," by George Hodges, first published in 1907, reprinted by Forward Movement Publication, 1967. This series to be continued.

St. John's Chapel, Del Monte January 2024 Schedule

Date	Activity	Notes
January 3	11:00 AM - Bible Study	Parish Hall
January 7	10:00 AM - Morning Prayer or Holy Communion	TBD
	11:00 – Vestry Meeting (following service)	Centennial Hall
January 10	11:00 AM - Bible Study	Parish Hall
January 14	10:00 AM - Morning Prayer or Holy Communion	TBD
January 17	11:00 AM - Bible Study	Parish Hall
January 21	10:00 AM - Morning Prayer or Holy Communion	TBD
January 24	11:00 AM - Bible Study	Parish Hall
January 28	10:00 AM - Morning Prayer or Holy Communion	Parish Hall
January 31	11:00 AM - Bible Study	Parish Hall

Our Beautiful Rose Garden

Have you taken full advantage of St. John's classic rose garden yet? Now is the time to enjoy a fragrant and/or meditative rest in one of Monterey County's most beautiful gardens. Consider Dorothy Frances Gurney's poem:

*The kiss of sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's heart in a
garden
Than anywhere else on earth."*



News of Parish Personalities!

Parishioner, Vestry member, and long-time usher for our weekly services, Chibby Ogbuka has added yet another feather in her impressive nursing cap. On Friday, December 15th of 2023, Chibby received her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) from the University of San Francisco. This is the just the latest in an awe-inspiring nursing career that began in Southern California. Pursuit of her doctorate was no small endeavor. For three years she drove to San Francisco for two days every other week to attend the necessary courses to acquire her Doctorate.

Chibby and her husband Chris have been important members of St. John's Chapel, Del Monte, for a number of years. When not physically ushering Chibby and Chris can be heard singing at the top of their voices from the back of the church - Chibby's "Usher's Station." They were married on December 9, 2016. The late LTC Jack Jones walked the bride down the aisle.

Congratulations Chibby!



Dr. Chibby Ogbuka, DNP, PMHNP, MSN, RN with husband Chris at her December 15, 2023 graduation at the University of San Francisco

Christmas at St. John's



Christmas Eve's 4:00PM service in 2023 found a congregation of over 40 parishioners and guests treated to a beautiful and moving service conducted by Bishop Lucinda Ashby. The beautiful formal service from the 1928 prayer book service was highlighted, in no small part, by Bishop Lucinda's thought provoking sermon. She centered her re-

marks around the light of a single small candle and the fact this tiny light that would have been what was available at the time of Jesus' birth. She also pointed out the meaning of the candles on the advent wreath and the need to carry these traits forward into all our lives. The congregation was also treated to the lovely and moving rendition of the 1984 Christmas song, "Mary Did You Know?" by our own congregation member, Stephanie Hulsey.

Christmas Day's 10:00AM Morning Prayer service was held on a beautiful sun-lit morning and those attending enjoyed the traditional St. John's camaraderie of the season.



Editorial Policy

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