

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

January 6, 2021
Issue 236



Craig's Corner

Aim for Progress, Not Perfection

Mr. O.J. Fauchaux barbered for decades in downtown Houma. He died a few years ago but I remember him and his funny stories so fondly. He once told me about a young man in his late teens, who was training to become a barber. It so happened he suffered a terrible stutter, and often had difficulty communicating with his customers. One day he cut a customer's hair way too short in the back...nearly skinning him. After seeing the back of his head in the mirror the customer complained bitterly. The boy just shrugged, and replied, "It'll g-g-g-g-g-gr-gr-gr-gro-gro-grow back."

At a recent visit to my barber I noticed a sign on the wall: "Aim for Progress, Not Perfection." If barbers know anything it's that hair is always growing, always changing, and often thinning! Perfection proves elusive, and if it's ever attained, it doesn't last for long. And if it looks bad, well that'll change too.

This proves true of just about any human endeavor when you think about it. It's true whether working on your golf swing, or tackling the never-ending pile of dirty dishes in the sink, or raising kids. It's true as well of our attempts to get right with God. About the best we can hope for is to make progress on whatever front we're attending to, so it's best to let go of perfection. It's actually quite liberating to let go of perfection; demanding it in such an imperfect world is like chasing after wind. The Bible calls tolerance of imperfection—our own, as well as that of others--the grace of God. The irony is that when we let go of the need for perfection, and instead rest in grace, we are much more likely to make progress toward our goal. It's counterintuitive but true.

The spiritual writer, Robert Wicks, advises that if we are aware of our tendency to find and then focus on what's wrong with the world and with others, we should try giving it up. We should pray about and focus our intent on choosing not to criticize, judge, or accuse. The place to start is within: stop criticizing, judging and accusing yourself. Then let that discipline extend outward to include other people. Finally, extend the refusal to judge even further outward to include circumstances, and events in our lives.

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Craig's Corner Continued...

Fr. Kilian McDonnell penned the following poem about the wisdom of letting go of perfection. I think he was in his 70's when he wrote this:

Perfection, Perfection

I have had it with perfection
I have packed my bags,
I am out of here.
Gone.

As certain as rain
will make you wet,
perfection will do you in.

It droppeth not as dew
upon the summer grass
to give liberty and green joy.

Perfection straineth out
the quality of mercy,
whithers rapture at its birth.

I've handed in my notice,
given back my keys,
signed my severance check,
I quit.

Hints I could have taken:
even the perfect chiseled form of
Michelangelo's David squints.

The Venus de Milo
has no arms,
the Liberty bell is cracked.

St. Matthew's Endowment Grows!

About a year ago our Vestry planted a seed which has already begun to grow, and which hopefully will eventually be an enormous blessing to future generations of St. Matthew's parishioners. The Vestry invested \$10,000 to start an endowment, and that amount has already begun to appreciate in value. Also, we just received a donation of \$2000 from Ms. Peggy Daigle Sternitzke in memory of her mother, Marguerite Moody Daigle.

Ms. Marguerite was born in Gibson in 1894 and moved to Houma when she married Jules Daigle in 1921. She became a devoted member of St. Matthew's, walking to church every Sunday morning for nearly six decades from her home on High Street. She was in the Altar Guild, and sang joyfully in the Choir.

In the early 1980's her failing health required that she be moved to New Orleans to be near her children, Peggy and Barry. She passed away in 1982 at the age of 88.

Marguerite's granddaughter, Martha Sternitzke, reached out to me in hopes of making a gift in honor of Ms. Marguerite, and on behalf of Martha's mother, Peggy. This is a lovely gesture, and by donating to St. Matthew's Endowment, her gift will continue to grow and bless many souls.

Our hope is that the St. Matthew's Endowment will substantially lift the burden of expenses associated with the maintenance of the physical plant as time marches on. Maintaining our buildings and equipment is already expensive, and will continue to be a financial pressure on the operating budget. (We've spent over \$50,000 just to maintain the HVAC these past 5 years!) So, this is why this Endowment is so important. We want the Endowment to take care of the buildings, so that future congregations can focus on taking care of the people.

We have many parishioners who like Ms. Marguerite have been so faithful in their service, devotion and support of this ministry. Many have gone on to their reward, and many are still with us, and are like great pillars which support the ministry of St. Matthew's Church & School. Please know that a generous gift to the Endowment is a wonderful way to honor such a person. Also, if you yourself want to continue to bless St. Matthew's for years to come, please include St. Matthew's Endowment in your estate planning. Your gift will help St. Matthew's continue to thrive and be a blessing in this community for generations to come. (Please contact Leon Stiel at 985-856-0694 to learn more, or to make a gift or pledge).

Announcements:

Many people enjoy sponsoring altar flowers on or around the occasion of a birthday, or anniversary, or in memory of a loved one. The remaining available dates are listed below. The cost is \$100, and can be shared by more than one family if you'd like. The ladies of the altar guild always arrange them so beautifully. Call the office (985) 872-5057 or email Ms. Erica (erica.stmatthews@gmail.com) to reserve a date.

January 24

April 11 & April 18

May 23

June 13 & June 20

July 11 & July 18

August 1, Aug. 8, Aug. 22, Aug. 29

September 26

October 10, Oct. 17, Oct. 24, Oct. 31

November 21

December 26

Parish Prayer List

Margaret, Andr e, Jay, Norma, Sybil, Betty, Lydicia, Donna, Clifford, James, Carol, Karen, Ursula, Jane, David, Carol & Bennett, Brenda, Jack, Beth, Seth, Angela, Pat, Gilbert, Jessica, Mary, Annette, Helen, John, Charles, and Legion Park School. We give thanks and pray for St. Matthew's Episcopal School, Head of School, Larke Leonard, members of the Board, faculty, staff and students, our Parish Vestry.

January

Happy Birthday

- 1-Linda Greenburg
- 1-Bonnie Moore
- 1-Karlene Dunagin,
- 3-Sandy Ostheimer
- 6-Michele Boudreaux
- 7-Rob Alexander
- 9- Emmalee Hampton
- 11-Keith Hampton
- 12-Randolph Bazet
- 13-Emilie Daye
- 14-Verna Hebert
- 14-Rene Schnexnaildre
- 20-Randy Bazet
- 21-Beulah Rodrigue
- 22-Sybil Webb
- 26-Beth Drury
- 27- Avery Leonard
- 28- Rina Medina
- 28-Harvey Chauvin

Happy Anniversary

- 1-Dickie and Charlene Barker
- 3-Chuck and Julia Bourque
- 5-Randy and Donna Knight
- 30-Lynn and Keri Kelley