



# The St. John's Newsletter

St. John's Episcopal Church 254-803-3800 Marlin, Texas April 2007

*We are a church community rooted in Anglican traditions and committed to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ through faith, prayer, compassion, and encouragement.*

## **Reconciliation**

Last week, Pam Williams, Weezie Burton, Libby Price, and I attended an ECW spiritual retreat on the subject of reconciliation. This seems a perfect topic for this Easter season, following the Lenten time of repentance and examination of self.

We all need reconciliation from time to time. When groups of people come together, conflict is inevitable. And conflict, of itself, is not bad. It can lead to deeper understanding, to new appreciation and in Christianity, to spiritual growth.

The process of reconciliation can be seen in two ways. One is the way of the secular world, where reconciliation often consists of compromise, apologies, and finding a middle road. It may also include one side or person in a disagreement 'giving in' so that there are 'winners' and 'losers.' Reconciliation may or may not be sought; it is not a requirement.

In a Christian community reconciliation is a requirement in any conflict and begins first with reconciliation with God. When discord and a broken relationship occur, Christians first turn to God in prayer. We come in humility seeking to stop the angry conversations in our minds. We do our best to turn a receptive heart toward Jesus Christ, our mediator and advocate. We know that sin is involved, because conflict is not of God. We seek to turn our attention from self toward Christ, and we ask God's help to do this. We ask to be able to see Christ in the other person and to see that person as Christ wants us to see him or her. And we ask to be shown our own sin, so that we may confess and seek redemption. It is not our responsibility to name the other side's sin. Judgment is God's, not ours. We ask for help to give that up.

When we are in a right relationship with God, we may still need His help in letting go of anger. So we ask for that too, as many times as it may take. We know that we are human and will probably not forget the conflict. But we also know that God can bring new life and growth from the worst of circumstances.

A sign of progress is that we feel no malice in our hearts toward the other person. This is a key test. We need to be able to pray for blessings for the other person without wanting to change that person. Transformation is God's work, not ours. If we can stand next to that person in church and pass the sign of peace, wishing them well and meaning it, even if we still don't agree, we are in the work of reconciliation.

In conflict, it is important to separate the issue from the person, knowing that we are called to respect all people as part of God's creation. After turning to God, we can then try to speak again to the person, hoping for resolution or an agreement to amicably disagree. If the conflict is proving too difficult, it is good to seek help from a counselor, minister or spiritual advisor. My hope for all of us is that we experience an Easter season filled with reconciliation and the hope and joy of the resurrection.

May the peace of God, which surpasses our understanding, surround each of us throughout our day, every day. Judy+