

Parish Bulletin
Parish of the Epiphany
Winchester, MA

1/15: This weekend I will be representing our diocese at a national church conference in Indianapolis. Entitled "Wrestling with the Big Questions," the conference actually is being billed as a "consultation" with an agenda to transform and advance the Episcopal Church's ability to embrace its educational mission more deeply." Parker Palmer, a well-known writer, thinker, and educational consultant whom I admire greatly, will be working with us for four days. I thought you might be interested in the "big questions" we'll be addressing: What do people mean by "faith" or "living in faith"? What are some key ways in which people learn to live in faith? How is education in the church both supporting and failing to support us on the faith-learning journey? How can education in the church become more hospitable to the diverse ways in which people engage in the faith journey? What are some of the obstacles to such hospitality in the church and how might we overcome them? What is needed to create "learning communities" in the church? What is the leader's/teacher's role in creating space for mutual resourcefulness in teaching and learning? What changes in the church might enhance the development of dynamic communities of learning where people can grow together in faith? And on a more personal level, upon reflection on the story of Jesus healing the blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), where and how have I encountered "blindness" when it comes to learning about faith? What "mantle" do I need to throw off in order to approach the teaching/healing I need? Who do I think Bartimaeus represents in church life today? I'm looking forward to reporting back to you all about this experience. May God bless us as we are apart from one another?

1/22: As I told you in last week's newsletter, I traveled to Indianapolis for a national church conference last weekend. The conference, which was billed as a "consultation," was convened around the task of considering ways in which the Church might grow and deepen its educational ministry. It was an honor and a real gift to be asked to attend. One of the new pieces of learning for me was the reminder posed to us by our keynote speaker/facilitator, Parker Palmer, that we in the church are teaching today in the midst of great human brokenness. All around us people are struggling with one another and with themselves. He urged us as we began the visioning process to consider how our teaching might bring healing and wholeness to people and to communities. So I leave you with that thought to ponder as we move through this season of Epiphany, the season when we are called not just to follow God's light to the places where Jesus can be found, but also to be the Christ light in a world that is full of darkness.

1/29: The national church conference I attended a couple weeks ago in Indianapolis was entitled "Wrestling with the Big Questions." Prior to this event, the conference organizers gathered multi-age focus groups together to help plan the conference. They asked these men, women, young people, and children, "If you could ask God 3 questions, what would you ask?" Many of these questions were posted on the walls of our worship space during the conference, reminding us of the need to create educational settings where folks feel safe to pose their "big questions." I was fascinated by what people wanted to ask God: "How can I stop being so anxious?" "Could you tell BJ to stop bullying me?" "What is your will for the church?" "If we are called to love our enemies, how do we stand up to evil?" "God, why would you come to me?" What "big questions" are you carrying in your heart? What "big questions" might the children and young people in your classrooms have? What can we do here at Epiphany to create a safe space where these questions can be offered and explored together?

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