



PIER REVIEW

THE MINISTRY JOURNAL OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. LUKE, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Personal Epiphanies

By The Rev. Canon J. Gary L'Hommedieu

THE WORD "EPIPHANY" IS BECOMING A household word. People talk about "having an epiphany" when they mean "seeing the forest through the trees" or "finally getting it".

Episcopalians know Epiphany as part of "church speak". It refers to the short season tacked onto Christmas, like a caboose on the back of the Christmas train. It tells the story of the Wise Men. The theme is the manifestation of Christ to the "gentiles", or those previously considered "outsiders" to God's Covenant.

The narrative of Epiphany illustrates the theological meaning of God's Incarnation. By taking on human flesh God revealed Himself to all "outsiders"—all creatures who are not God, that is to say, to the rest of the creation. Epiphany celebrates the great mystery that God took it upon Himself to pierce the infinite distance that separates created beings from the Creator of all Being, a distance borne as tragedy by man, God's fallen image-bearer.

Christians speak of this "distance" in many ways. We know ourselves as sinners separated from a holy God,

as godlike creatures sentenced to death, as shattered beings seeking a wholeness we are powerless to effect. In all these expressions we sense the deep awareness of an insoluble puzzle: how do we broken sinners and mere mortals appeal to the Holy and Immortal Creator of the universe to answer our needs, or at least to share fellowship with us—to meet us halfway? What is half of infinity?

The Gospel tells us that the Holy God has taken the initiative Himself to meet us, not halfway from without, but all the way from within—literally in the flesh! He has brought us full circle with Himself—all the way from the death we were destined to die to the life we are now destined to live.

A light goes on in the life of each individual believer when this Gospel is personalized. After decades of reciting creeds and catechisms, perhaps after some personal crisis or simply with the common turn of events, each one of us comes to realize not just that Jesus lived and died, but that Jesus died and lives *for me*, bridging the terrible distance between knowing *about* God and *knowing God personally!*

In this issue of *Pier Review* you will read about personal epiphanies that have occurred in the lives of people you know. Similar accounts could be multiplied in our church community. Some are perhaps more marvelous than others. All testify to the same miracle: to the God who took it upon Himself to come after us, who not only *is*, but is *for us*.

PR

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Major Tony Clark camouflaged in his office en route to a class meeting with the Florida Army National Guard.

The Biggest Sale

By The Very Rev. Anthony P. Clark

BAH, HUMBUG! EBENEZER SCROOGE'S infamous phrase pretty well captured my view on Christmas in mid-December of 1988. I was the assistant manager for a sporting goods store in Jacksonville in the midst of a busy Christmas selling season and had become jaded and cynical about the "commercialism" surrounding Christmas. Customers seemed just plain grumpy as they bought for the sake of buying and shopped out of a sense of duty.

I truly wondered about the value of what I was doing and, for one of the few times in my life, I did not enjoy my work. What value was there in a job that only supported the commercialism of Christmas? How could I enjoy work in the midst of grumpy customers, frazzled co-workers, and long hours?

One brief encounter change my entire attitude and outlook on my work and the season.

THE WAY THE BALL BOUNCES

An elderly gentleman and a young boy (grandfather and grandson?) approached me in the team sports section. The boy was carrying a worn, deflated basketball, and I assumed they wanted to buy a replacement. Most of our customers were "regulars", but neither of them looked familiar. By their dress they didn't look like our usual customers and seemed out of place in the store.

When I asked if they needed a new basketball (we had quite the Christmas selection!), the gentleman replied that they just needed this one reinflated. I obliged his request, hoping to

myself that this worn out bit of rubber would hold air and, somewhat relieved, returned the fully inflated ball to the boy.

As he began bouncing the ball, his face lit up like I just given him a brand new high-priced Michael Jordan ball! I was caught off guard when the gentleman offered me several crumpled dollars for my ten seconds of pumping air. "Thank you, sir, but that's not necessary. We're always happy to reinflate a basketball for free."

He thanked me profusely and then the two of them left the store, with the young boy happily bouncing his "new" basketball into the parking lot.

AN EPIPHANY OF ANGELS

I had never seen the elderly gentleman and young boy before in our store, and I never saw them again over the next two years. As I reflected on that two minute "sale," I was reminded of Hebrews 13.2: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Were they really angels? Perhaps. Did they give me a message from the Lord? *Definitely!*

That brief Christmas encounter showed me the value of my work. In the midst of all the hustle, bustle and commercialism of Christmas I was called to serve my customers so that their Christmas shopping season was less stressful and perhaps, like that young boy, even joyful.

From my perspective, I was touched by angels in that brief moment. Several years removed from retail, I will always remember the biggest sale of my retail career!

PR

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Hebrews 13:2

Epiphany Hitting Close to Home

By Cannon Cameron, Ph.D.



Cannon Cameron is in his ninth year working for Orange Co. Public Schools. He recently left the classroom to become an Instructional Support Teacher for the District in ESE Services. Cannon was married in the Cathedral in 1994 and became a member after returning to Orlando in 1999. He was elected to the Chapter in 2006 and asked to be Senior Warden in 2007. Katy and Cannon have two girls, Caroline (9) and Claire (7).

RAISED A METHODIST, MY ONLY association with Epiphany was that of my mother insisting on leaving the tree up through the first week in January. I thought it was just a way for her to justify not taking the decorations down. Then once on a family trip to Florida my Mom convinced my Dad to spend the night in Tarpon Springs to see the young men dive for the Epiphany cross. It was then that I realized the season was very special, but it wasn't until I truly opened my heart to God that I experienced my own epiphany.

As believers we recognize the feast of the Epiphany as a celebration of the glory of God revealed. Epiphany literally means "to show, make known, or reveal". As we develop a personal relationship with God, Epiphany becomes so much more: an opportunity for God to reveal himself in our lives.

TAKING THAT FIRST STEP

Although church and family had laid a foundation for my spiritual life, I did not open my heart to Christ until I was well into college. I now realize that taking that first step is as easy as just asking, but it took a crisis in my life to open my eyes to my purpose and direction.

One early February morning with snow falling I awoke to loud barking and a smoke filled room. After searing my fingers on the doorknob, I threw a chair through a window, escaped and ran for help. Three of my roommates perished in the fire, and I was left with the guilt of being a survivor.

I disengaged from life and reached a place of humbleness I hope I will never need to experience again. One night I prayed for answers, and God began to pull me from the wreckage. As I strengthened my relationship with God, he continued to open doors and provide guidance.

MOVING ON

With the support of my beautiful wife I went on to earn a Ph.D. in Special Education but still didn't really know if I wanted to teach. It was during this period in my life that God made His plans known to me. As I continued to pray, my path finally became clear. God wanted me to be a teacher.

Being a teacher is the perfect parallel for developing a relationship with God. Building trusting relationships with my students was the fabric of my days in the classroom; just as trusting in the Lord is the foundation of a relationship with him. I begin every day asking God to help me make wise decisions.

About three years ago I had taken on a new student with autism, and things were not going well. Finally I asked the Lord to take control and committed myself to stepping aside. The next day was almost surreal. This young man reacted positively to almost everything that happened in class, especially the things that normally had "set him off". As a veteran teacher I was unnerved to have things happen that I knew I hadn't expected or planned. I knew God had intervened and brought his own resolution to my student and me. To this day the student continues to make tremendous gains.

As believers we recognize the feast of the Epiphany as a celebration of the glory of God revealed.

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

Jeremiah 29:11



Judith Warren-Brown has worked her entire adult life as a social worker. She and husband Ron Brown have been members of the Cathedral since 2001. Judith is in the process of completing seminary training and will take her General Ordination Examinations in early January.

A Seminarian's Epiphany

By Judith Warren-Brown

EPIPHANY IS CELEBRATED AS A CHURCH festival commemorating the coming of the Magi to the Christ Child. Its significance is that it is the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

Isaiah 49 tells us that the child they visited that day would “raise up the tribes of Jacob” and “restore the preserved of Israel;” that he should be “a light to the Gentiles,” and his salvation would “reach to the end of the earth.” I like to think of this event as the tipping point for the Gentiles.

EPIPHANY DEFINED

Miriam-Webster tells us that one of the definitions of epiphany is “a sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something,” or “an intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking.”

I had my own epiphany in late 2002. God had become real to my husband and me over the previous decade as we tended to our family. I supervised a unit of social workers at the Department of Children and Families and carried the responsibility for the children and families under the unit’s care and supervision. My husband, Ron, is a mental health counselor with an interest in philosophy and theology. We had been worshipping at the Cathedral for about a year and a half and had been auditing ICS classes for personal growth.

OUT OF THE BLUE

One evening we were at home, and the kids were already in bed. I was reviewing my social

workers’ court documents for the next day, since it was important to me that our unit looked competent before the court. My husband and I have a habit of reading to each other when one of us comes upon something interesting.

Ron broke my concentration to read a few lines from Jurgen Moltmann’s *The Trinity and The Kingdom*. I have often heard the words “Kingdom of God” and had an intellectual understanding of what they meant, but at that moment the words struck me like a bolt out of the blue.

AN EPIPHANY OF THE KINGDOM

The words “Kingdom of God” reverberated through my being and, strangely, I “intuitively grasped” something in these familiar words I had never understood before, something that overwhelmed me. I understood that the Kingdom of God begins as God’s reign in the individual human heart and continues to spread until all things are brought under his rule at the end of time. I understood also that there were those outside the Kingdom who need to be brought in.

I offered the Lord the rest of my life, beginning with my ordinary day to day life. As Christians we grow in God’s love and avail ourselves of his grace whenever we pray, study Scripture, and worship together. It is our joy to commune with him. Within the next year I responded to God’s call to go to seminary, for I feel strongly that my offer to him includes working for the Kingdom within the context of ordination. PR

**“It is too light a thing
that you should be
my servant to raise
up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the
survivors of Israel; I
will give you as a light
to the nations, that my
salvation may reach to
the end of the earth.”**

Isaiah 49:6

The Spirit's Epiphany

By The Rev. Richard E. Grant



Fr. Dick Grant, retired from the Diocese of Texas, has served as an associate priest at the Cathedral since 2002. Fr. Grant is also a chaplain for the Order of Saint Luke and is active in Theophostic Prayer Ministry. He and his wife Amy live in Orlando.

MY PARENTS BOTH SANG IN THE choir while I went to church as an infant for the choir practice and the Sunday service. While the choir practiced, I explored the church and became very much at home there—so much at home that I often played there after school. By the age of six I had been in its every accessible space.

I joined the junior choir. By age nine I could hum many hymn tunes and recite most of Morning Prayer and Holy Communion.

At twelve I was confirmed and became an acolyte. By fourteen I was volunteering to serve at every service. I served as an acolyte until I graduated from college and went off to Naval Officer Candidate School. I loved the church and its liturgy, and I was thoroughly addicted!

NOT SAVED, ADDICTED!

The irony is that I was not really a Christian. Just being in church (even a lot) does not make you a Christian. I loved the services. I liked Christmas, but preferred Easter. The story of Jesus' birth was magical and exciting, but the story of His tragic death really impacted me. Jesus was a martyr but not my Savior.

The only scriptures I ever heard were the same snippets read year after year by the priest at Communion. I knew them too practically by heart but never absorbed them. My scriptural ignorance continued for years.

I never questioned that there was a God. I had felt His presence many times since childhood, but I didn't really know Jesus—not

personally. Later I got involved with others who read scripture daily and spoke of Jesus as though they knew Him and related to Him like a real person. Their attitude was neither prideful nor chummy. I began to wish I knew what they knew and had what they had. They encouraged me to read what the Bible said about Jesus. So I did.

AN EPHIPHANY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

One evening, after I had just read John 14, the promised Holy Spirit opened my mind to Scripture. Jesus said to Philip, "Have I been with you so long and yet you do not know me?" The first shoe dropped! I knew he had been with me all along! And then I read, "He who believes in me, the works that I do he will also do, and greater works than these shall he do because I go to the Father" (John 14:9,12).

The second shoe dropped! I finally got it! Of course Jesus did not leave a powerless church! He is alive! And I read, "He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth.... You know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18).

I was then 35 years old and in the deepest recesses of my heart had known Jesus, but never had the sense to study the Bible to confirm it. With the Holy Spirit pointing to Jesus and saying, "Behold the Lamb of God," I personally accepted Jesus as my Savior. Since then I have never looked back.

The irony is that I was not really a Christian. Just being in church (even a lot) does not make you a Christian. Jesus was a martyr but not my Savior.

"...The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father."

John 14:12

PR



Tali Anderson, Bishop Howe's secretary from 1989 to 2002 and a member of the Cathedral since 1995, has been a resident of Winter Park since 1969.

At Wits' End Malcolm's Story

By Tali Anderson

AFTER A SHORT BUT SUCCESSFUL CAREER AS A jockey in England my young brother Malcolm could not seem to find his way and encountered many failures in his life. About seven years ago his life seemed to unravel. After pouring his energies into building a cozy home with a beautiful garden, his personal life failed irreparably. Woven into this situation also was an incident that occurred on his way into work. As the elevator doors opened, he came upon two people who had been shot to death. It was a horrendous sight and a traumatic shock to this very sensitive man. He continued to work but ultimately became so ill with nightmares and flashbacks that he was unable to cope with every day life.

THE END, OR THE BEGINNING?

These two events left him destitute financially and emotionally, and he became despondent. One day he decided there was nothing to live for, no way out. He walked out onto the Motorway with the intent of being run over by the speeding vehicles. He remembered calling out to God, and indeed, God had other plans for him. A policeman came up and very gently talked to him, walked him off the highway and took him to the hospital where he spent the next two months. He remembered nothing of the first few weeks, as if he were asleep. But God had heard his cry for help and his story was not yet over.

When I was notified, I quickly called the Diocese of Rochester in England and asked my counterpart there for the closest church to Malcolm's area. She directed me to Fr. Bryan Knapp, including his e-mail address (thank you Lord for the internet!). He and his congregation immediately responded, regularly visiting Malcolm and looking out for his needs. It was an incredible act of love

from that congregation, truly being the hands and heart of Jesus reaching out to someone they knew nothing of except he was a lost sheep and they had found him.

When Malcolm was well enough to leave the hospital, he was unable to work and had very few personal effects. Piece by piece the church, along with some of his work friends, provided items to furnish a flat, until it gradually became a comfortable home in which he would be restored to good health.

Malcolm began attending church regularly and felt very much a part of the family. Eventually he began to help them wherever he was needed, and he was so excited for me to know about his new life.

AN EASTER EPIPHANY

When I traveled over to see him, we had so much to share now as he grew in his faith and learned more about who Jesus really was. He signed his Easter Card to me that year "From a New Person," and he really was. He was so aware of how the Lord had worked in his life and shown he cared and had a plan for him.

He told me that he was excited to get ready for Church on Sundays, overwhelmed as he was with the kindnesses and friendliness shown to him. He shared how he now saw people he knew as he took his walks in the town. He talked of all he had learned—the music, his daily Bible readings—and how he related the scripture to what had happened in his life. He later attended the Alpha course.

He mentioned Reverend Knapp's sermon about the unknown people who go about doing things for others. These were the ones who had helped him. He related about the "Jesus footsteps" card someone once had given him. After the fact he realized that was what had happened to him on the Motorway when he was at his wits' end.

PR

Faith Coming Alive



Karen Daniels is a graphic designer. She came to the Cathedral in July 2004, and is active with the prayer team, the OSL healing ministry, and is a founding member of the Health Ministry Team.

By Karen Daniels

I AM AN ARTIST BY PROFESSION. AS A child, I lived under a cloud of depression, and the church represented a place of safety, warmth and peace. Being a cradle Episcopalian, I loved the church's traditions and read my Bible at bedtime.

A Faith Alive Weekend came to Holy Trinity, Gainesville (my home church) when I was 12 years old. It was dynamic and different, yet relaxed, like a folk mass or EYC.

During that conference I learned that Jesus the High Priest of Heaven was available for me to pray to (which I took to mean "talk to") 24 hours a day. And not just through a human priest. I could talk to Him whenever I chose. My belief in Him allowed me to come to His throne.

DRAWING NEAR TO THE THRONE

"Having therefore boldness, brethren, to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living Way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil (that is to say, His flesh), and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.... Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 10:19-22, 4:16 NKJV).

By the Holy Spirit's prompting, I made an altar to God in my room out of old church altar candles which were too short for the Altar Guild to use anymore, a cross given to me from my Godmother, and a Prayer Book. I prayed at it when ever I was anxious or troubled. The

Holy Spirit must have filled my room with His presence.

A PERMANENT EPIPHANY

The depression lifted and my grades in school went up. Awards and recognition came. It was as if a clamp had been removed from my thinking, which became deeper and more complex. For the next 10 years I served as an acolyte. Peace and hope rested on my life.

Altars to God symbolized many things in Scripture. They served as reminders of the heritage of God's Chosen People. They called attention to major events. The altar was also the place to offer sacrifices to God. The temple altar was recognized as a place of refuge where those wrongly accused could flee for protection. In the Tabernacle, there were separate altars for incense and the offering of sacrifices. Under the New Covenant Jesus is the cornerstone of the living temple in the heart of every believer.

As an adult, I pray everywhere and anytime. I still have my personal altar, though it has changed over the years. Now it reminds me of God's character: candles for the Light of the world; flowers for creation and growth; a clock signifying God's timing; a piggy bank for tithing first fruits; a beautiful drawing of Jesus wearing a crown of thorns; and, finally, a photo of the altar from Holy Trinity, my home church, with Easter lilies and a framed prayer signifying God's Word. It reminds me of God's place in my home, His provision for my life, and His covenant with me, which makes up the eternal foundation of my life. Amen. **PR**

"Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 4:16

Karen's personal altar is also quite portable. Here it is a "street altar", set up at the courtyard entrance to the Cathedral.



pier \pîr\ *n.*

1. *Architecture* Any of various vertical supporting structures, especially:
 - a. A pillar supporting an arch or roof.
 - b. The portion of a wall between windows, doors, or other openings.
 - c. A reinforcing structure that projects from a wall; a buttress.
2. *Literature* The monthly ministry journal of The Cathedral Church of St. Luke, Orlando, Florida.
 - a. Editor/Designer
The Rev. Canon J. Gary L'Hommedieu
 - b. Contributing Writer and Editor
The Rev. Christine L. Maddux
 - c. Proof Readers
Rosemary Atwater and Theo Gordon
 - d. Photographs
Gary L'Hommedieu

HITTING CLOSE TO HOME CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

EPIPHANY HITS HOME

About a year ago, my teaching again was tested, this time in a much different capacity. About a week before Christmas my elderly dad was admitted to the hospital with pneumonia. The doctors discovered end stage lung cancer and told us he may not make it through Christmas. I went home to North Carolina to stay by his side as much as possible.

One night I just felt that I needed to sleep in the room with Dad. As it happened, he awoke in the middle of the night. We sat on the bed for nearly an hour talking about how I had developed my relationship with God. My dad was one of the kindest men I have ever known, but I knew he had not opened his heart to Christ. I shared with him that night that all he had to do was ask and God would open his arms to him.

That night it was very clear to me that I had been an instrument of God. Dad died two days after Christmas, and I had the peace of knowing that God had taken him home. PR