

# CHRIST CHURCH CHRONICLE

Produced by the congregation of Christ Church Episcopal in Sheridan, MT

September 10, 2019

## What a Priest Does - Post Ordination Reflections

Rev. Harry Neeley

In these past newsletters, we've looked at the three orders in the Episcopal Church: Bishops, Deacons and Priests. Last month the focus was on the calling and discernment process of becoming a priest. But what then?

I asked our venerable Fr. Harry to write his thoughts on a very long priesthood experience. He has such depth of experience, and the long view of what it means to be a priest in these 20th-21st centuries. I commend his article to you!

Rev. Janis Hansen

I have been tasked by the Rector of Christ Church to produce an essay on "What happens after ordination". I can speak to that topic only thru the window of my own experience. All of that experience has taken place west of the Mississippi and primarily in Montana and Wyoming. Having set that stage, I submit the following.

My first post ordination experience came as I walked down the steps of St. Matthew's Cathedral returning my vestments to the car. It came in the form of a greeting from "a man of the road" who was in need of a meal. I gave him what I had, prayed with him and we parted, it appeared, both pleased with the encounter. For myself it provided a start reminder of what my ministry, in part, was all about. Coming down from the heady rigors of Seminary, Morning and Evening Prayer, Sunday assignment as a translator for the deaf at a local parish, work at the bookstore, strict and long study hours, study groups, mission study in Nicaragua, Clinical Pastoral Training etc., the encounter served to ground me in the reality of a portion of my ministry.

To say that the last three-fourths of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first 19 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been a period of fast paced societal change and flux is, probably, not a strong enough generalization. The church and the priesthood have not been isolated from that social process. Witness the following: Post ordination my generation of priest interned for not less than one year nor more than 2 years in a large urban parish. This was a period of intense supervision of ministry, including but not limited to, the examiner in liturgy appearing weekly for two months to lunch and drill one in the finer points of bells, bows, sign of the cross, voice and manner and, of course, "smoke" i.e. incense, censer practice. Daily evaluations were a part of that discipline. If the Rector felt you were ready you preached once a month. Now, it seems, young priests, especially in the west are thrust into the parochial scene fresh out of seminary or whatever other academic process they have experienced. I cannot fail to mention the obligatory lunch and afternoon with the Archdeacon who presented the ordained with a pass on the Union Pacific RR and a Firestone Corporation Discount Card and detailed explanation of precisely what sort of survival gear to pack in the trunk of one's car, the importance of choosing a spiritual director and a heavy emphasis on what might be fairly characterized as an admonition to "curb your enthusiasm"

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## What a Priest Does - Post Ordination Reflections, cont.

Rev. Harry Neeley

as you take on your first parish as clergy sole. Then early on a trip to Roanridge to deepen one's understanding of rural ministry. Here we studied topics such "nurturing the Rectory garden" and "how to pull a calf". For the privileged few a trip to the College of Preachers was de rigor.

I have seen and applauded the recovery of one of the nuances of Baptism as rather than the "christening" of the newborn in the home or garden of the parents followed by champagne cocktails and hors d'oeuvre party of my early years in the priesthood to a communal reaffirmation of Christian support and nurture. I cannot recall a church baptism in those early years. Perhaps more exciting yet has been the recovery of the Diaconal ministry. The diaconate in my early years was an honorific given to elderly men who had been, for decades past, of significant service to the church. Although one such gentleman was present at my first assignment, I witnessed this gentleman at services vested and assisting, and that alone was precisely what he did. Contrast that with the recovery of the Diaconate of today; discerning community needs and bringing those needs to laity (see Baptism above). In the early years in the Priesthood "Father knows best" would fairly, in most cases, characterize clergy/laity relationships. The Priest lining out what "needed" to be done with a mostly obedient response of the laity no matter what their individual gifts might be. I applaud how far we have come in discernment of lay ministry and raising up and honoring those ministries.

Change and flux, to me at least, some good some not so good are part and parcel of the human experience. This is, I believe true of all institutions and individuals, the church and its people being not exempt. Think of the past 25 years in the Episcopal church: the new Prayer Book, Ordination or women, recovery of Baptismal meaning, recovery of the Diaconate, Lay Ministry, gender equality, inclusive posture regarding sexual identity and the list continues to grow!

The Priesthood, to me, has largely been about accepting, understanding and mediating changes internally and in concert with others, most especially with those who differ from our opinions

Or positions. Personally, and professionally lovingly ministering to and accepting those who differ from us. There is a way, Christ's way, of living with and loving those who differ from us. The Priesthood has been about deepening my understanding of the Christ within and Christ without. The first 30 years of my Priesthood I would characterize as ministering to the rich, by world standards, the next 24 years have been fairly characterized as ministering to the poor. God willing, I may be granted six more years of ministry to the poor which would give me the nice balance of 30/30. A goal I am pursuing with all my remaining resources. It has been my privilege to share and be with fellow followers of The Way. I have been privileged to share in their and my own deepest joys and sorrows. The Episcopal Church is, for me, a church for everybody or it is for nobody. The same may be said for the Priesthood, understood in its broadest terms.

## Bridal Shower



Women of Christ Church having fun eating and sharing gifts, good wishes, and laughter at a bridal shower for Bri Larson.

## Gospel Music Workshop

The week of the Gospel Music Workshop kicked off with a meet and greet and jam session with visiting musicians Rev. Johnny Thompson and Rev. David Fattah on Friday night at the home of Jim Kephart. Workshops took place in Sheridan and Twin Bridges on Friday and Saturday. On Sunday the Reverends participated in our morning worship and we celebrated afterwards with a "Soul Food Sunday" lunch of fried chicken, potato salad, macaroni and cheese, collard greens, and blackberry cobbler for dessert! More events are planned for next weekend, culminating with an All Faiths Concert and scholarship awards.



## Coming Events

Thursday, Sept. 12 ,2:00 pm . . . Brianna Larson and Caleb Harbor Wedding. Doncaster Round Barn, Twin Bridges  
Friday, Sept. 13, 6 to 8 pm . . . Gospel Music Workshop, Parish Hall  
Saturday, Sept. 14, 1 to 3 pm . . . Gospel Music Workshop, Parish Hall  
Sunday, Sept 15, 1 -3 pm . . . Gospel Music Concert, Bethel Methodist  
Saturday, Sept. 21, 4:00 pm . . . David and Janis Hansen Golden Anniversary, Parish Hall.  
Sunday, October 6 . . . Blessing of the Animals

## Senior Meals Week

Every year for a week in August, Christ Church pitches in to provide meals for seniors in our community while the regular Senior Center staff are on vacation.

This year we served 110 meals. Parishioners cooked, bought, packaged and delivered meals every day. A great many folks contributed. To name a few: Darlene Tussing, Sandra Baril, David Hansen, Sandra Roberts, with special accolades to Alice Forwood, Janet Marsh, Cynthia Shackleton, J.J. Snyder who either provided an entire meal or worked every day cooking and delivering these meals to grateful recipients. Many Thanks to All!!

**REMEMBER!**  
The blessing of the animals will take place after Sunday service on October 6.





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**INVITE** people into our midst  
**INCLUDE** people in the life of the church  
**INFORM** people about past events that shape our present,  
and current events that shape our future  
**PROCLAIM** the gospel in thought, word and deed  
**REJOICE** in a new life found in Christ Jesus.

### Mission Statement

To be formed as the body of Christ, seeking to love and serve one another and those in need.

### Vision Statement

To be Christ's continued presence in the Ruby Valley by welcoming those who seek Christ, offering varied forms of services, reflecting our diversity while maintaining our Episcopal identity.

## Service Leaders for September and October

### Upcoming Service Leaders for September / October

15 Sept: Rev Janis Hansen (Eucharist)  
22 Sept: Rev Janis Hansen (Eucharist)  
29 Sept: Rev Janis Hansen (Eucharist)  
6 Oct: Rev Janis Hansen (Eucharist) (Blessing of the Animals)

### Upcoming Lectors for September / October

15 Sept: JJ Snyder  
22 Sept: Adam Romkema  
29 Sept: Alice Fotwood  
6 Oct: Laura Cooper