

# St. Mark's Episcopal Church

412 Cedar Street, P.O. Box 307  
Paw Paw, MI 49079  
269-657-3762

JULY

Services Sunday at 9:30 am  
All are welcome to attend

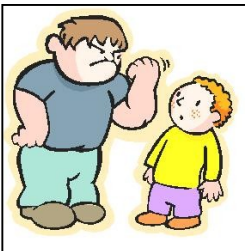


## Being Nice or Being Christian?

By Richard (Dick) Innes on [www.actsweb.org](http://www.actsweb.org)

"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

In training for Christian ministry I recall one of my professors stating that every church had a church boss; that is, someone or a small group who, often behind the scenes, control the happenings of the church. This isn't usually the pastor or priest. Today we call these people control freaks. They have a neurotic need to control others in order to feel okay about themselves, when in reality they do this because deep down they don't feel okay about themselves.



William Easum calls them bullies. After years of consulting with churches he said, "I have seen a disturbing pattern: Most established churches are held hostage by bullies. Some individual or small group of individuals usually opposes the church's making any radical change, even if it means the change

would give the church a chance to thrive again. Courageous pastors often ask, "What do I do when one or two persons intimidate the church so much that it is not willing to try something new?"

Easum's response was either to convert them, neutralize them, or kick them out. To which some cry, "That's not very Christian."

The point is that sometimes (not always, by any means) we Christians are just too nice. That's more because we are too afraid to stand up to bullies and call their bluff—not because we're Christian. We'd rather keep the peace than rock the boat.

True, we are to be loving, but that doesn't mean we always have to be nice. I recall hearing an employer share how he was accused of not being Christian by an inept employee he was firing. So he said to the employee in question, "Well I'm going to lovingly fire you." If, after being given several warnings and help to improve, an employee is not pulling his or her weight, it isn't loving to let him off the hook. In fact, it is reinforcing his irresponsibility, which is anything but loving. Neither is it loving to allow bullies to control a church.

So let's not confuse loving with being nice. Jesus was always loving and compassionate as this was his nature, but he wasn't always nice. Think how he turned over the tables of the money changers—merchants who were ripping off the poor in the house of God, no less—and drove them out of the temple with a whip, and how he scathingly scorned the religious bigots who loved their doctrines more than they loved people, and used their teachings to control people for their own ends.



Jesus knew the value of tough love. Not that it's easy. In fact, it can be very difficult, but we need to exercise it too when such is called for.

Suggested prayer: "Dear God, I confess that I am often afraid to exercise tough love for fear I won't be liked. Please help me to overcome my fear and give me the courage to exercise tough love when tough love is what is required. And give me the insight and grace to know how to do this in a firm but loving manner. Thank you for hearing and answering my prayer. Gratefully, in Jesus' name, amen."



*Picture above shows some of the regulars enjoying good food, good company and good fellowship at "The Breakfast Place" restaurant in Lawton. The group meets there every Sunday after our church service. Membership is open to all. Come join us next Sunday and every Sunday. It'll make your day! (And ours too!)*



Some new signage will soon grace the front and side of our church. As shown above, the original “antique” sign will be mounted on the front of the building. A brand new sign, compliments of Chris and Jan Terrill, will identify us from the parking lot side.

Special thanks to Judy Peterson who chaired and inspired the sign committee made up of Chris and Jan Terrill along with Jim Lytle. Judy did all of the leg work and interacting with the Paw Paw “village elders” to get the official permission needed to post the signs.

Note that the sign on the parking lot side of the building has a QR code in addition to the identification information. You’ve probably seen QR codes showing up on a broad range of places, including billboards, packages and buildings. The QR, or Quick Response code, on the sign can be read by a smart phone camera and when read, will immediately display St. Mark’s website. The new signs will be installed soon. Help will be needed to mount the signs on the building.



In 1990 the United States Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is a wide ranging law that mandates special accommodations in public buildings to allow access by handicapped persons. Interestingly, churches are *not* covered by the law and are *not* required to comply. None the less, the Vestry fully realizes the importance of complying with both the provisions and spirit of the act. One might say that while government mandates on ADA don’t apply to us, we recognize a higher authority ©. Accordingly, a special committee has been formed to plan and execute compliance with the ADA in our church. Jean Kracker, Judy Peterson, Larry Chase and Jim Lytle comprise the committee.

One semi-official estimate to fully implement all the requirements specified by the ADA came to \$40 thousand.— half of what we paid for the entire building! Clearly, this is not going to be a trivial task.

A year ago we had no church of our own, then being mere tenants in the Seventh Day Adventists church in Paw Paw. Today we hold services and meetings in a church that we own and is fully paid for. Accomplishing that was no trivial task either.

*I'll send out updates on a regular basis. Ed.*

### [NEW ON THE WEB](#)

By special arrangement with ACTS International we are now able to publish a daily inspirational message on our website. A new message will be posted every day. Click the link on the “NEWS” Page to get your daily inspiration.



### SPOTLIGHT ON...

#### Mother Rebecca



How many of you know someone who has made a major life change? Most such changes are forced upon us by circumstances — the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” so to speak. The death of a spouse, loss of a job or the breakup of a marriage are major causes for many who are forced into a major life change. But major life changes aren’t always forced by negative circumstances or result in negative consequences. And our own Mother Rebecca is a case study to make that point.

Rebecca (the “Mother” title would come much later) grew up in northern Indiana. She was the youngest of four children and now says she feels “sort of like an orphan at this point” with her parents now gone as well as her three siblings.

Rebecca remembers that she always loved animals and by the time she was in high school decided she wanted to be a veterinarian. Her ambition was encouraged and nurtured by a great uncle who owned a farm where Rebecca spent time. She describes her ambition toward becoming a vet as “single-minded”, not just a passing whim.

After graduation from high school she went on to attend two years of pre-vet at Purdue University after which she was accepted into Purdue’s four year veterinary program. Interestingly, women were a rarity in veterinary school at that time. Back in her day, Illinois didn’t even admit woman to their veterinary school. Her graduating class of 65 had only 12 women. (*see “Rebecca” on page 4*)

# PICTURES PAGE



**SAM RICE GOES TO THE PROM.** Seen at left with his sister Leah and at the right with a young lady also attending .



Phyllis and Jim took a train trip stopping at San Antonio and New Orleans. Shown at top is the stern wheeler Natchez that hosts cruises on the Mississippi river. Below Phyllis is enjoying lunch at a café along the River Walk in San Antonio. (She's talking to her daughter on the phone, doubtless telling her what a great time she's having ☺)



Here's a scene you won't see again. Lee Allen generously donated a deluxe garden tractor to St. Mark's. As soon as Charlie gets checked out on it, we'll get a picture of him at the controls. Watch out everyone. He's a dangerous driver.



## THE GROSS SCHOLARSHIP

Many of you are aware that St. Mark's has a scholarship fund. The fund was bequeathed to St. Mark's by Bill Gross who was a professor at Western Michigan University and a long time member of St. Mark's.

Each year, the Vestry appoints a committee tasked to select a candidate for the scholarship. Among the criteria for selection are: enrolled in an undergraduate program, academic standing, community involvement and be an active member of St. Mark's.

The latest recipient is Leah Rice who is studying Anthropology and Chinese. (Wow!) Leah will graduate next spring.

Past recipients include Kelly Minor (daughter of the Joza's), William Drulliard (Lise Black's son), Alexandra Prediger, Kelsey Prediger and Rachel Paren. Kelly, Willy, Alex and Kelsey have all graduated.



***Leah Rice is studying Anthropology and Chinese and is the latest recipient of the Gross Scholarship from St. Mark's.***

I hope everyone has noticed the new picture of the church on the newsletter masthead. I thought the old one with the ground covered in snow could be put aside til next winter. This one is much more inviting (and appropriate) dontcha think? Once we get the new signs installed I'll upgrade the picture again. *Ed.*

*(Rebecca— continued from page 2)*

After graduation from veterinary school she went to work in a succession of veterinary clinics. She spent 4 years in Waukegan, 3 in Chicago, then moved to TX with husband-to-be where she spent another 5 years working in her field. Her husband was attending school in Texas. Her marriage broke up and she moved back to Chicago to be with her mother. She'd always wanted her own veterinary practice so she moved to Valparaiso Indiana to start the new venture. At this point in her life she had invested six years in formal veterinary education and nearly 25 years working in the veterinary profession. During twelve of those years she had her own practice. And that's when her life changing event happened.

Family issues left Rebecca feeling "at a low ebb" during the latter part of the time period when she had her own practice, so when a client (the owner of a pet under her care) invited her to attend the service at an Episcopal church on Christmas Eve, she accepted.

What makes this remarkable is that attending church was not a part of her upbringing. Nether did she attend church as an adult, up to that time. While she was married in the church, she and her husband never attended church services. Remarkable as it was for her to accept the invitation to attend the service, one might call it extraordinary that she went to the altar rail and took communion, the first time in her life as far as she can remember. . Rebecca cannot explain what moved her to do this. She describes the experience at the altar rail like this:

*"Before I went to the rail, if you'd asked me, I [would have said] God was some distant disinterested entity, if there was one. And after that, suddenly God was right there, like in my head, very interested in me. It really scared me."*

Following this experience, Rebecca tried to stay away, but found herself drawn back to the church to sporadically attend the service. Counseled by a priest, a spiritual advisor and others, she enrolled in an Inquirer's Class and officially joined the Episcopal church. That led, ultimately, down a six year long road toward her eventual ordination and the title Mother Rebecca.

Her first assignment was in Waukegan where she served as Transitional Deacon for two years. The word that St. Mark's was looking for a new priest back then reached Rebecca and she let it be known she was interested. After being interviewed by St. Mark's search team. The rest is history. Mother Rebecca has been with us at St. Mark's since the fall of 2007.

Leaving behind more than 30 years of prep and practice in the field of veterinary medicine, Mother Rebecca started down a new road. Her life changing experience started with what some would describe as a divine intervention.

