

# St. Margaret's & St. Mary Magdalene

ISSUE 17 • January 2010

## The Incompleteness of Inclusion, "Go and sin no more..."

While at College, the Inclusion movement was laid on thick and heavy. If you weren't Inclusive you were anathema. The Inclusive movement is very liberal in its theology, changing the shape of the church to be more accepting of variances in culture, lifestyle, sexuality, theology and any other possible variable associated with the human condition. I personally find the doctrine of inclusion to be flawed. Inclusion calls for more tolerance, a change in the way things are done, it calls for more liberalism. What does the bible say about all of this though? In John's Gospel the eighth chapter, a story is told of a woman, caught in adultery, and dragged before Jesus by the elders of the scribes and the Pharisees. They put Jesus on the spot. "The law says to stone her, what do you say?" is their cry. When Jesus demands that whoever has no sin should be the first to cast the stones, the crowd disperses beginning with the elders. The woman is asked where are the ones who convicted her; they have gone, and Jesus too does not convict her. Before leaving though, he entreats her...to sin no more.

The church has been called on to redefine sin, to eliminate sin, to water down sin. The elders representing the church took stock of their own, at least they acknowledged that they had sinned and were not without sin. Jesus' command to them about throwing the stones is a hallmark of inclusion, we are all sinful so we really shouldn't discriminate who comes to church, what their sexuality is or what their lifestyle may be like. The church has been called upon to change and it is changing. But it is there that the change ends. The church cannot redefine what sin is. How is it that 'drinking a cup of water' was a sin last year and this year it isn't? Sin is not relative.

How does the church promote change in people's lives? Jesus commands the woman to go your way and do not sin again (NRSV). This is a defining point in her life. Jesus is asking her to change, to stop from committing adultery. How is she going to effect that change? What tool does the church possess, what medicine does it use? How can we be agents through which Jesus effects the change? Arguably the church has been preaching sin, grace, repentance, forgiveness for centuries but even Jesus had trouble convincing people to reorganize the way they live their lives when he walked on this earth. Our quest is to point people to Jesus and allow HIM to effect the change their lives and then provide a community and opportunities for them to build on that change.

## Mission Impossible

The Anglican Church in the Bahamas is wide spread and far flung. We have big churches in the big cities of Nassau and Freeport, and little ones in little hamlets like Nicholl's Town and Long Cay. This Christmas, Fr. Donald Kerr was dispatched to keep services in the Parish of All Saints Crooked Island. He called the other day and told me about the service in Long Cay. According to the census, only 30 people live in Long Cay and for Mass (either Midnight or New Year's I don't remember which one) he had all 30 in church! What an accomplishment! 100% attendance!

The Bahamas Handbook of a few years ago tells the story of Long Cay, once a bustling container port just as Freeport is today, now almost a ghost town. The magnificent basilica of St. David stands as a testimony to when the Anglican church was strong in these parts. The architecture is very similar to St. Mary the Virgin in the Bight Long Island with its semicircular sanctuary and stone altar. The Archdeacon of the South, in his wisdom, has sectioned off a small chapel for the faithful to gather for worship and it is here that the mission of our church in these parts continues. Richard Wood and Whitfield Hutchinson, on their summer assignment this year spent a few weeks in Crooked Island, Long Cay and Inagua. Attached to this article is a picture of the chapel in Long Cay, during their stay

In Acklins, the little church of St. Clement stands alone as the Anglican station with the ruins of St. Aidan, slowly deteriorating on the beach not far from the high school. A few years ago while visiting Acklins for the Ministry of Works, my Aunt Linda, was the principal of the High School then and she took me for a tour to see the ruins. What surprised me the most was that the walls appeared to be steel reinforced, a tribute to rather modern construction. But alas, due to population shifts the church has had to be closed. Church closing is a painful exercise but sometimes a necessary one. Just the other day, while searching for a friend from College who is a priest in Wales, I came across a story of a church in a seaside town in Wales about to close simply because its weekly intake wasn't even enough to pay British Gas for heating fuel to heat the church. If you've ever been to a service in a freezing church you'll be able to associate. Many days at Teversham in Cambridge, I wondered about this as the little bar heaters in the pews weren't making much of an impact as the snow lay thick and heavy on the ground. But for that church in Wales, it didn't have money to do anything else with, no homeless shelter, no social outreach, no programs, nothing! The challenge all churches, not only are own, is facing is its continued quest to maintain its relevance.



## Parish starts Boys' Brigade



To kick off the New Year, our parish began its boys' brigade company. We were happy to welcome the President of Boys' Brigade, Mr. Everette Mackey to the parish at the end of 2009 and out of that visit we have been able to attract more than 25 boys to join the group. With 4 keen volunteers, made up of police officers and former police officers, we have begun the work of teaching the boys discipline through various drilling exercises as well as introducing them to the other aspects of the program. We meet in Nicholl's Town (busing boys from St. Mary Magdalene Mastic Point to meetings) and the program has the support of both communities. Continue to pray for us and this initiative as we continue to make positive strides in uplifting our young men in North Andros.

## More Words of Wisdom

Bob Briner in his little book offers another excerpt of his words of wisdom

### Establish Authority

*Jesus did not run a democratic organization. Not once did he call for a vote on the course that should be followed. He was in charge. He based his authority on the Scriptures and on the commission he had from his Father. Even he submitted to a 'higher' authority – "Not my will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42) In this day, when non-authoritarian leadership is lauded at every turn, it is important to note that no successful organization is ever built or maintained without strong ultimate authority. Ask any of the great corporate leaders. Was there ever any doubt who was boss when Laccoca was at Chrysler, Watson at IBM, Perot at EDS, or Buffet at Berkshire Hathaway? Who ran Wal-Mart? You can bet Sam Walton did. Participatory decision making may be okay to an extent, but only when there is real, ultimate, final authority at the top. Be sure there is no doubt about where the buck stops in your organization. Know the extent of your authority and exercise it. Establish and maintain authority.*

*On behalf of my church family (the vestry and people of St. Margaret's and St Mary Magdalene) and my Wife Candice and Son Aaron, I wish all of you a  
Happy New Year*

