

THE GEORGIAN REPORT

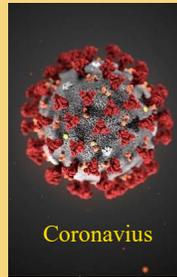


Volume 11/ Number 2

St. George's Episcopal Church Schenectady NY

June 2020

WHAT GEORGIANS ARE DOING IN SELF-QUARANTINE



"With papers saved since the '70's, we're shredding! We shredded so much that our first shredder exploded, and we had to buy a second."

Rick & Karen Forshaw



"I have a lot of help in the kitchen these days."

April Stromberg with Isaac and Helen



"My friends and I have a ZOOM Cocktail Happy Hour."

Chris Henry

"We are in quarantine at Caroga Lake. Our store has been closed, Sheila is still teaching online, and our yard looks better than ever."

Sheila & Gregg Thomas



"I've planted a home vegetable "victory" garden. I'm doting on my tomato seedlings but I also have peppers and basil."

Meg Hughes

"I've been working from home, keeping the boys focused on things other than video games, and volunteering with Regeneron's effort to fill 1/2 million vials with viral transport medium for NYS Covid-19 test kits. Paul still goes in to the lab every day."

Louisa Carr & Paul Smigelski

LENTEN OUTREACH



At the start of Lent, Georgians were asked to donate 7 cans of soup (one per week) as an outreach in support of Schenectady Inner Cities Ministries. While abruptly cut short, there were still 50 cans of soup along with some other food items placed in the basket at the back of the church. These were taken to the SICM food pantry the week of March 30th. Thanks to all who included this outreach as a part of their Lenten devotions.

alice polumbo

- VISITATIONS -

The current COVID-19 pandemic is horrible. There is no way to sugarcoat its impact on every aspect of the lives of all the people on this planet. Some of the hardest hit groups are the elderly and those with underlying health conditions and as we know there is great overlapping of those two groups. Attempts to protect these groups have led to many changes for your Pastoral Care Committee.

As we are all aware, it is no longer possible to make visits to nursing homes or retirement facilities. Fortunately in early March prior to restrictions being put in place we were able to visit everyone on our visitation list. We were able to bring Communion to everyone who desired it during those visits. Like all of you we have been saddened by the images of residents in care facilities who can no longer have visits from family or friends. This put great stress on those in the facilities and on those who can not visit their loved ones. And it is not just those in these facilities who are in need of support. We have several people who live at home alone. As inconvenient and frustration as the stay at home orders are for all of us, for the elderly living alone at home often with physical or other issues the impact is much greater.

So what are we doing now. Easter cards were sent to everyone on our visitation list and where appropriate to spouses who are at home unable to visit the facilities as they also feel the sense of loss of contact. We are calling these same people on a regular basis to check on them; to try to ascertain if they need anything and make suggestions about how to get these things. We remind them that if they have a computer that Father Matt is conducting services and that those services can be accessed on Facebook and/or YouTube. And to let them know that even if they feel alone, that we are there for them -and yes they have called us just to talk.

As most of you know we recently lost a member of our Parish family with the death of Ann Stamm. We had many wonderful visits with Ann and her devoted husband Charlie. It was so inspiring to witness the gentle, patient care provided by Charlie. Such an example of true Christian love.

Your Pastoral Care Committee looks forward to the time when we will be able once again to make personal visitations and bring Holy Communion to our fellow parishioners. Until such time we will adapt and do what we can to provide comfort and support. Please remember to keep this vulnerable group in your thoughts and prayers.

jim wingate & ann duff

SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS



With Georgians in self-quarantine, Sunday Mass has been live-streamed on Facebook using Alex Travis' iPhone....with Fr. Matt Stromberg assisted by David Kennison, organist Brian Taylor, alternate cantors Jeff Wengrovius and Jon Ewbank.

Fr. Matt will celebrate 4 years as our Rector on August 6th. What does St. George's mean to him? "It's my everything. Not only my church and place of worship, it's my employer, my main community, my family away from home. It keeps me going to continue Sunday Mass." Streaming is nothing new to Fr. Matt as he started streaming Evening Prayer when he first came to St. George's, before encountering technical difficulties. Until Georgians can be together again in church, Fr. Matt suggests we keep this time to read the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer....to grow in our faith by focusing on God in that way.



David Kennison, a Georgian "forever," was baptized Roman Catholic at a Polish church in Watervliet before his mother converted to his father's religion. Growing up at St. George's, it's the spiritual center of his life and wife Anne's, "Not just a physical place to worship God, it's social interactions with friends, our church family." When Fr. Matt wanted to continue Sunday Mass, David raised his eyebrows but agreed to try it to see if it worked. "We did, it did." Confident that volunteers are not infected, he added, "It's a labor of love." David misses everyone tremendously, looks forward to getting back together, and advocates for wearing masks.



With quite an act to follow (Andrew and Entourage), Brian Taylor slipped into his role as Music Director in January 2019 in his own style that everyone admires. He likes that St. George's is "... rooted in tradition but not bound by it." Also, "It's important to have a 'live' Mass, not taped or produced, and we're doing it with minimal risk for participants. I'm happy to be part of this spiritual communion." Brian wears a mask when grocery shopping early in the day, and on nightly walks by the riverfront or church grounds. "It's a time for personal and spiritual growth," he said. "I'm making the most of it."



You don't get more Episcopalian than Jeff Wengrovius whose father was the "ultimate church man"/Senior Warden, two brothers were priests, and he met wife Barb at an Episcopal Youth Group. They found St. George's 35-years ago while searching for an Episcopal church with a good music program and, today, it's the source of most of his closest friends, spiritual growth, and spiritual home of their family. With no underlying health issues, Jeff cantors at Sunday Mass, which is handled well in maintaining social distancing in every possible way. He ended with, "What a glorious celebration when we're back in person!"



When Jon Ewbank and wife Meredith moved to Schenectady in 2018 to be closer to her adult children, they looked for a Rite I church and found St. George's. "We liked the people, we liked the service, it became our home." Choir is part of Jon's church ties and why he volunteered to cantor. Admitting there are instances when participants have to get a little closer, he's not concerned as precautions are satisfactory enough. Advocating staying connected via ZOOM and other media venues, he said, "Fellowship plays into our sense of well-being. We have to do what we can for our mental and physical health."

Kudos to all, including Alex Travis, who was ready to join St. George's before the pandemic took over life as we knew it. And, to Anne Kennison who worked behind-the-scenes *inconspicuously* throughout Holy Week and continues to help with set up and clean up before and after Sunday Mass.

lynn paska

FROM THE RECTOR'S STUDY



A lot has happened since the last time I addressed you in this space! On March 15 we had to cancel public worship due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19. We have been unable to gather for public worship since that time. As I write this it is already mid May and the immediate resumption of public gathering for Mass is still unlikely. When we do begin to gather again, social distancing will continue to place many restrictions upon what we are able to do. This is unlike anything that even the oldest among us have experienced in their lifetime, but it is not without precedent in the history of the church. From time to time Churches have needed to suspend worship during times of pandemic or during public safety emergencies. Churches were forced to suspend

worship most recently during the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918.

Back in his own day the English Non-conformist, poet, theologian, and pastor Richard Baxter (1615-1691) in his book “A Christian Directory” addressed the question, “May we omit church assemblies on the Lord’s day if the magistrate forbid them?” He wrote, “If the Magistrate for a greater good, (as the common safety) forbid Church Assemblies in a time of pestilence, assault of enemies, or fire, or the like necessity, it is a duty to obey him. Because positive duties give place to those great natural duties which are their end: so Christ justified himself and his disciples’ violation of the external rest of the Sabbath. ‘For the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.’”

That being said, although this pandemic has placed certain limitations upon us, it has by no means halted our offering of worship or the proclamation on God’s word. Both of these things have continued, but we have had to get creative about the manner in which we offer them. In previous ages, during times of pandemic, priests would sometimes celebrate mass in the street or from the stairs of the church, so that the faithful could watch from a distance. During the 1918 pandemic, newspapers and other periodicals published sermon texts, excerpts, and outlines from a variety preachers from area churches. What have we done during our own time of pandemic?

Morning and Evening Prayer has been celebrated Tuesday-Friday via live streaming on my Facebook page and they have also been shared on our Saint George’s page. We have also continued to offer mass on Friday afternoons, various feast days, and of course each Sunday morning. Audio recordings of my sermons are published on our website as well as on our podcast. Although the faithful cannot gather to physically partake of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, we have made use of the rite of Spiritual Communion. This is provided for on page 457 in *The Book of Common Prayer (1979)*. The prayer we have been using is excerpted from a devotional text called *The Saint Augustine Prayer Book*. The faithful are able to participate in the Mass, in real time, through our live streaming and I have been leading them in this act of Spiritual Communion.

Additionally on Easter Sunday, following Mass, we had Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, at which time the consecrated host was carried in a monstrance, in procession, through the streets of the Stockade. Many of our neighbors, and some parishioners as well, stood on street corners or in the doors of their houses as we passed by, to adore the presence of Christ in the Holy Sacrament. Our efforts drew the attention of local media such as the Times Union and CBS 6 as well as the news magazine of the Episcopal Church, *The Living Church*.

The unexpected grace of this horrible time of trial has been the way in which it has encouraged churches to think outside the box and expand their ministry beyond the walls of the church. Whereas some have been prevented from participating in worship here at Saint George’s, others have been enabled to be active participants from distances all over the country and indeed the world! I don’t think it is a stretch to say that this crisis has forever altered the way we do Church. In recent days we have been planning for ways we can improve our online presence and live streaming capabilities including extending our internet connection to the church and looking at new recording equipment.

I pray, however, that this crisis will also have forever changed us in a lasting spiritual way as well. This frightening confrontation with mortality should cause us all to take sober stock of where we stand with God and what we really value in life. Sometimes abstinence can teach us to appreciate a blessing in new and profound ways. Not being able to gather publicly should teach us all to appreciate the vital importance of our times of fellowship. Being unable to receive the Holy Eucharist with our mouth should likewise give us a renewed appreciation for the blessing that this visible and outward sign of God’s grace really is. Not being able to worship in the immediate presence of the sacrifice of the mass, should teach all a deeper reverence for the Real Presence that draws near to us in this Holy Rite. Not being able to gather to grieve our dead, to celebrate a marriage, or a baptism, should give us a renewed awareness of how essential and precious the ministry of the church really is in our lives. May the day come soon when we can once again taste and see that the Lord is good and embrace our brothers and sisters with the peace of Christ.

grace and peace, fr. Matthew Stromberg

WHAT GEORGIANS ARE DOING IN SELF-QUARANTINE



“We belong to the Benedicts (formal) dinner/dance club. When our get-together was postponed, we ordered take-out dinners, donned party clothes and masks, and invited other members to join us via social media for cocktails. We set up a dance floor in the living room, I prepared an elegant table and concocted a dessert I called “Maple/Caramel Ice Cream & Cookie Dessert for a Pandemic,” and Jon was the evening’s sommelier.”

Meredith & Jon Ewbank

“I’m spending much of my time ‘teaching’ four French classes via the Internet. I love the fresh air and we really enjoy taking the dogs out for walks.”

Diane Reed

“I walk around the neighborhood or ride my recumbent bike indoors if the weather doesn’t allow for walking.”

Jim Wingate



“I’m catching up on some ‘light’ reading.”
Brian Taylor



“I’m painting....working on a tray from a pattern, with pallet, paints and brushes. It’s a work in progress!”

Debbie Lambeth

“I’m clearing up my flower garden outside, getting ready to plant. I also walk every day.”

Ann Duff



“We’re working on The Georgian Report.”
Lynn & Bob Paska

EASTER 2020

Easter this year was quiet in a way that we never expected. We shared none of our usual preparations for the Day of Resurrection: No Lenten series, no Palm Sunday procession, no full congregational Passion reading, no special music from the choir, no Easter Vigil with wonderful food afterward, no brass trio, no Easter brunch. Jon and I reflected on the Holy Week services and how we missed being in the church for them. We had looked forward to all of it.

Ash Wednesday prepared us: *Thou hast mercy on all things, O Lord, and hatest nothing that thou hast created: and winkst at men's iniquities, because they should amend, and sparest all men; for they are thine, O Lord, thou lover of souls. Wisdom 11:24-25, 29* We have all felt some dark moments these solitary weeks. But Fr. Matt's message has been the same throughout: God is with us, God loves us, and just as Lent ends, this virus will end.

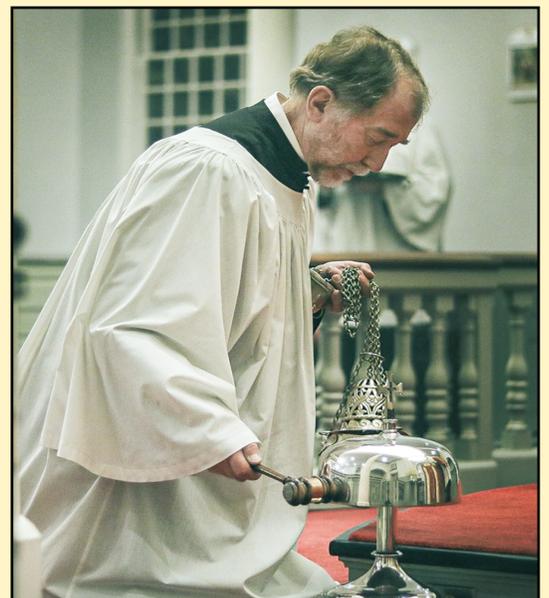
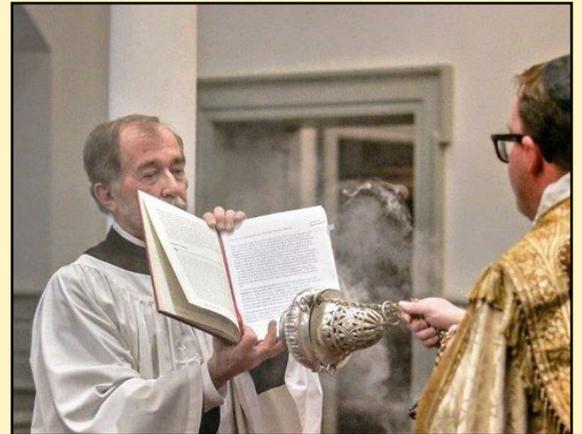
Instead of giving up candy for Lent we gave up each other, fellowship, Sunday potlucks, the Lenten series, school, jobs, games, shopping, movies, sports, parties, lunches and dinners out. But we also found that our phones and iPads can be used for more than texting and streaming and emails: they can be harnessed in new ways for that oldest of communications, conversation, and with the touch of a button, group conversation.

And we still have worship. We are all thankful for the miracle of streaming Facebook live and its ability to bring us Mass on Sundays. We are thankful for the presence of Fr. Matt and David Kennison at the altar every week. We are thankful for Brian Taylor's music that sounds so beautiful over the speakers in our homes. We are thankful for Jeff Wengrovius and John Ewbank, who have become the cantor and choir. We are thankful for Alexander Travis, who takes care of the video feed.

This unusual Holy Week we could participate virtually with the daily Masses. Fr. Matt washed Helen and Isaac's feet on Maundy Thursday representing all of ours. Good Friday Mass was stark, the Holy Fire was relit on Saturday, and Easter Sunday we celebrated together from our separate homes. When Brian played Widor's *Toccata* at the conclusion of Easter Mass I felt as if we had been given a special gift to lighten our distancing. The procession of David Kennison swinging the thurible, Fr. Matt carrying the monstrance of Holy Communion, Brian Taylor, Alexander Travis, Helen and Isaac ringing bells, parading through the Stockade after Easter Mass definitely brought Easter joy to residents who haven't been out and about.

Next year? Easter will be St. George's fabulous. Fr. Matt, Brian and David must be planning already. Hold onto your hats. *Hallelujah! Christ is risen!*

joan pearson





Ann Stamm
1929-2020

IN MEMORIAM

Rest in Peace

You are missed by your church family

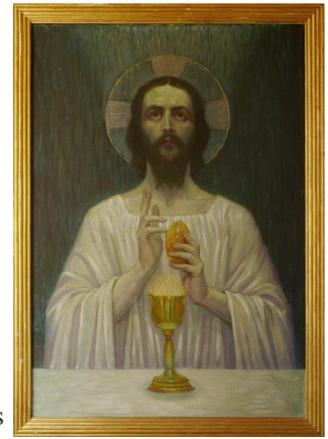
Joycelyne (Joy) Adams

1929-2020



No doubt by now, we have all had a chance to make a Spiritual Communion during our live streamed Sunday Masses. It was probably a new thing at first, but it's now something familiar as the weeks and months of lockdown continue. Today, we take a closer look at what a Spiritual Communion is all about.

We are living in tough times right now. Social distancing put a screeching halt to most public gatherings and that includes church services. But the lifeblood of the body of Christ is our gathering together for worship. In Greek, the word for church, *ekklesia*, describes a public assembly of people, proclaiming allegiance to our king and receiving his presence among us in word and sacrament. It's the same word used in the Septuagint to describe Israel's gathering 'as one' to be ruled and instructed (Deut 4:10; 1 Kings 8:14; Neh 8). It is in our corporate gathering that we are formed and constituted as the body of Christ through the sacrament.



Jesus with Bread and Wine by Wilhelm List (c. 1905)

What is Spiritual Communion? St. Thomas Aquinas is said to have described Spiritual Communion as "an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him.

Long-standing practice in the Episcopal Church has offered a means for people to receive Holy Communion spiritually when it cannot be received physically. This act of prayer and meditation can provide the means by which you can associate yourself with the Eucharistic Action and open yourself to God's grace and blessing.

For example, in the BCP, pg 457, *Ministration to the Sick*, the following is given:

If a person desires to receive the Sacrament, but, by reason of extreme sickness or physical disability, is unable to eat and drink the Bread and Wine, the Celebrant is to assure that person that all the benefits of Communion are received, even though the Sacrament is not received with the mouth.

Is a Spiritual Communion Sufficient? Yes, it is enough! If you believe in your heart that the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ and if you fervently desire to receive Jesus in your heart, in your body and in your life, you are making a spiritual communion, regardless of being physically present at Mass or physically receiving the sacraments, the Body and Blood.

St. Augustine's Prayer Book, offers this prayer when making your Spiritual Communion:

O most blessed Savior, in union with the faithful at every altar of thy Church where they blessed Body and Blood are being offered to the Father, I desire to offer thee praise and thanksgiving. I present to thee my soul and body with the earnest wish that I may always be united to thee. And since I cannot now receive thee sacramentally, I beseech thee to come spiritually into my heart; I unite myself to thee and embrace thee with all the affections of my soul. Amen. ✠ Come, Lord Jesus and dwell in my heart.

Afterwards, pray the "Anima Christi" (Soul of Christ) - a 14th century prayer, of rich associations with the Eucharistic, Baptism and the Passion of Jesus.



*Soul of Christ, sanctify me
Body of Christ, save me
Blood of Christ, inebriate me
Water from the side of Christ, wash me
Passion of Christ, strengthen me
O good Jesus, hear me
Within Thy wounds, hide me
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee
From the malignant enemy, defend me
In the hour of my death, call me
And bid me come unto Thee
That with Thy Saints I may praise Thee
Forever and ever. Amen.*

And remember - the apostle Paul assures us that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39). Spiritual communion offers one way to sustain ourselves as we await the time when we can once again gather in the same space with our friends and church family to celebrate Eucharist.

david kennison

WHAT GEORGIANS ARE DOING IN SELF-QUARANTINE



Anne and her assistant preparing altar linens.

“Church work continues—our streaming Sunday Masses, especially Holy Week, took as much work as normal times but there were fewer people to chip in. We also had 4 break-ins at our home in Vermont this year that has consumed weeks of work and many trips to design and install an alarm system and multiple layers of security.”
Anne & David



“We are walking, running, reading, and watching the news hoping for an end to this isolation period. We have decided to spend another month in Florida! We thought it might be better to be warm in isolation than be cold in isolation. We look forward to returning North!”
Gerri & Jim Moore

Barb, I finished another section!



“We’re doing 2000 piece puzzles.”
Barb & Jeff Wengrovius



“I’ve been spending my downtime being creative with crafts and baking.”
Sandee Hughes

- JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -

The good news is that maintenance issues have dropped off significantly. The bad news is that as with everything else, this COVID-19 issue has pretty effectively put maintenance on a back burner.



NEW ISSUES:

Sanctuary Wi-Fi - I have been extremely grateful to the team that has been producing all of the wonderful online services for us, and congratulate them on an outstanding job. It has been a real blessing to Meredith and me to stay connected with our church family during this period. As with so many other facets of life, this pandemic is going to affect our church life far beyond the end of the societal restrictions. Luckily, I am not alone in thinking that we should and must begin planning now how best to meet these challenges. Thanks to the efforts of David Kennison and Jon Pearson, we now have a hardwire network line running from the church offices in Cranmer House, via the steam tunnel, into the Sanctuary. Once installation is complete, we will have significantly better Wi-Fi coverage in the church, resulting in improvement to the audio and video quality of our online streaming efforts.

CONTINUING ISSUES:

Heating - These have been resolved—either by the work done by Crisafulli Brothers or by the weather! The question of when to address the control switches in the Great Hall heating system has been deferred until closer to cold weather.

Great Hall Tile - S & K Contracting contacted me to enquire whether we wanted estimates.

respectfully, jon ewbank

- TREASURER'S REPORT -



Despite our inability to be together in church, our financial condition is quite good. We would like to highlight the following info regarding St. George's finances:

PPP loan: The Vestry approved a motion to apply for a PPP loan to sustain our financial health during the Covid19 virus. Our loan application was approved and we received a loan for \$23,300. Bob and Jeff are carefully tracking the expenditures from this loan. We anticipate that 100% of these funds will be forgiven (already 50% there).

Income: Pledge income is over budget by about \$14,000 YTD. It is amazing to see the continued generosity of our parish during our time at home. Most pledges are up-to-date!! Our cash balance at TrustCo bank is about \$40,000. We are under budget on rent income and loose plate giving, but this is expected due to the virus.

Expenses: Our expenses YTD are under budget by about \$24,000. Expenses are down for many reasons, including not spending much for Easter and St. George's Day.

Endowment: We also have positive news regarding our endowments. Our cash income balance at RBC is about \$41,000 available for spending. We have not taken any cash income from the endowment since January. Our endowment principal has suffered due to the decline in the stock market. However, we have seen a significant recovery. Our endowment principal is down only about 4% versus the beginning of the year. We caution, however, that the financial markets are quite volatile. We THANK all Georgians for your continued giving during this tragic time of Covid19 virus. We will be together again very soon.

blessings, jeffery wengrovius & jon pearson



MUSIC AT ST. GEORGE'S



Music ministry continues during this extraordinary time in which we are unable to worship together physically as a congregation. The Rector, having determined to continue to offer the Sunday Mass via Live-stream (with some minor modifications), wanted for as little to change from the normal Mass as possible. Hence with the help of a cantor we continue to have the minor proper chants (Introit, Gradual, Offertory & Communion), the ordinary chants (Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus/Benedictus and Agnus Dei) sung each Sunday along with one or two hymns, even though there are only five of us available to sing them. Instead of organ voluntaries at the beginning and end of the Mass, I usually offer an organ piece at the Offertory.



Although I did not ask any choir members to be cantors, two people, Jeff Wengrovius and Jonathan Ewbank, volunteered to come in and help with the music on a rotating basis. Tarik Wareh also volunteered to sing for the Easter Vigil.

In addition, since I have additional free time now, I am joining Fr. Matt Tuesday through Friday for Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer at which we usually sing at least two canticles.

Finally, I have been keeping in touch with the members of the choir during this time.

We are preparing for several scenarios of how we may come back as a worshipping community as we follow the unfolding events in our state, nation and the world. We do look forward to the day when we can all come together as a faith community and sing the praises of God in the holy Mass.

brian j. taylor



With gratitude to long-time Georgian, Kevin Decker, for making sure that our altar on Sunday has beautiful fresh flowers with weekly memorials dedicated to past parishioners who were such an integral part of St. George's history.

Georgians appreciate the time and effort of Fr. Matt Stromberg and our Music Director, Brian Taylor, for their dedication in bringing Morning Prayer (8:30AM) and Evening Prayer (5PM), Tuesday through Friday, at St. George's. They also offer Compline on Saturday evening (5:30PM.) These are "live" streams on Fr. Matt's Facebook page which are then reposted on St. George's Facebook page and on YouTube.

David Kennison and Jon Pearson have been installing Internet Wi-Fi service in the church over the past few weeks. Details will come later, but St. George's has needed Wi-Fi for a long time and we hope you enjoy the new video quality.

david kennison



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- Jeff Wengrovius
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- Jonathan Ewbank, Jr. *Warden*
- Carol Gaige
- Margaret Hughes, *Clerk*
- Sandra Hughes
- Deborah Lambert
- Marilyn (Lynn) Paska
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TEN THINGS HAPPENING IN THE POLUMBO HOUSEHOLD DURING THE COVID-19 NY PAUSE ORDER

Like everyone else, finding ways to keep busy and motivated during the NY Pause order has yielded some unexpected results. Also, like everyone else we have thought and prayed for those who are sick as well as those taking care of the afflicted and everyone whose livelihood and welfare have been upended.

We are fortunate and thankful to be well and report these 10 things that have occurred courtesy **COVID-19**.

- Vacuumed the tops of window treatments
- Inventoried old paint in the basement
- Cleaned the glass and dusted the backs of pictures
- Cleaned the roll portion of a roll top desk
- Had our house resided
- Took walks in The Albany Pine Bush and Western Turnpike Golf Course
- Made two quilts
- Checked in more frequently with friends and family
- Set up a golf net in the basement
- Read aloud Lorna Doone

ralph & alice pumbo



A REMINDER:

St. George's services are televised !!

Spectrum Schenectady Access Channel now on channel 1301—or Verizon Fios Channel 36—Sundays at 4:30PM