



THE GEORGIAN REPORT



St. George's Church Schenectady, NY

March 2020

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING



Information. Interaction. Incredible food. This was St. George's Annual Parish Meeting on Sunday, January 26th. After Meg Hughes was appointed Recording Secretary, there was a Vestry election: Jon Ewbank, Junior Warden; Carol Gaige and Deborah Lambeth, Vestry members; and Suzanne Hartz reelected for a 2nd term as Senior Warden. In his State of the Parish address, Fr. Matt said, "We're keeping the torch burning here in Schenectady." Jeff Wengrovius gave his Treasurer's Report. Ralph and Alice Polumbo presided over a lucrative raffle (see page 2) with 6 lucky winners, and Bob and Lynn Paska were acknowledged for publishing an updated Parish Directory. The perfect ending: a delicious luncheon buffet provided by Vestry and parish members.



lynn paska

ANNUAL MEETING RAFFLE



The fabulous reputation of the Annual Meeting Raffle was once again renewed when six lucky winners came forward to choose prizes at the annual meeting's conclusion.

Audrey Fernandez picked a beautiful nativity set while Carol Gaige selected a useful Hartz Family Cleaners gift card and set of hangars. Anne Kennison grabbed the varied assortment of snack items. Brian Taylor then removed the mystery tower package, and Nancy Angus further depleted the table by walking away with the 2-pound box of delicious Gardner's peanut butter meltaways. The final winner, Anne Dillenbeck, received three sweet, white candleholders with fragrant votives.

The annual meeting proceeds were \$255. Thanks to everyone who supported this modest fundraiser. Special thanks to **Thomas' Hallmark Shop** for donating the handsome nativity scene and to **Hartz Family Cleaners** for their \$25 gift card donation.

alice polumbo

SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS

Five years ago when Carol Gaige was searching for an Episcopal church, she asked a friend for a recommendation and attended St. George's on Ash Wednesday. "I've been a Georgian ever since," she offered. Carol found a friendly church, a beautiful church, and she liked its historic structure. "I felt comfortable here," she said, adding, "I've also made good friends at St. George's." She cited Anne and David Kennison as being very welcoming on her first time in the pew.

Carol is a serious volunteer. She's been on Altar Guild for several years, started her first term as a member of the Vestry this year, plans to join ALM (Assisted Living Ministry), and has pre-signed up to work on the 2020 Stockade Art Show in September.

Retired years ago from nursing, she keeps her hand in her profession by doing private duty for a woman in Esperance (3 days a weeks, two 12-hour shifts, and five or six hours another day) instead of a regular hospital schedule. "I'm a hands-on nurse from the old school," she said.

Carol also bowls twice a week and is a voracious reader...no sci-fi or Stephen King, but she likes John Grisham, Nora Roberts, and anything with a good story. A widow since 2009, Carol has 6 children (5 boys, 1 girl), 14 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren. One son is a married police officer in Texas, the others live locally.

Carol loves to talk, loves to laugh, and is a "with it" people person. "I'm willing to help. I don't shy away, but I don't push myself on others either. That's the way I am." Growing up in Troy, she went to the same high school as Sandee

Hughes, although they were two years apart. Carol moved to Schenectady when she got married. "It seems like a million years ago," she laughed.

Admitting that church growth is difficult nowadays as attendance is on the decline, she advocates for more advertising and public relations. "We have the same people doing the same jobs. We need new ideas."

Brian Taylor is a wonderful successor as our music director, with innovative ideas, but Carol still thinks of Andrew and Kevin fondly. "Every Sunday was special to Andrew, and it rubbed off on the congregation."

Not wanting to be prissy or known as the new kid on the block, Carol nonetheless hopes to bring new life to her role as a Vestry member. "I mind my own business but I'm really into making suggestions....and I go for it!" She ended philosophically with, "No matter where you go or what you do, you'll never be completely happy. That's what makes the world go 'round.'"

Having Carol Gaige as a volunteer would be a "plus" for any church. But. She's ours!!!!!!



lynn paska

FROM THE RECTOR'S STUDY.....



The season of Lent is a time of examination and spiritual growth. It is a time for us to take our spiritual pulse and to examine our relationship with God. It is also a good time to learn about and adopt new spiritual disciplines. No discipline is more central or more vital to a healthy spiritual life than prayer. When it comes to prayer, however, many Christians are sometimes at a loss. How do I pray? What should I pray about? These questions can seem so basic that we are often afraid to ask them. Here in this space, I want to give you some brief guidance about the nature of prayer and how to go about growing in a life of prayer.

Any properly Episcopalian discussion of prayer will of course begin with the Book of Common Prayer. This is the great jewel of Anglican spirituality. It is a tool that was intentionally organized and designed as a guide for the prayer life of Christians. We shouldn't take it for granted! When I was an Evangelical Protestant, I felt like I had to develop a prayer life from scratch, but when I discovered the Book of Common Prayer I found that I could instead adopt the life of prayer of generations of Christians before me as well as brothers and sisters living and worshiping today. The backbone of prayer as outlined in the Book of Common Prayer is the Daily Office. This consists of a series of prayer and scripture reading for morning, noon, and evening. I encourage you to take advantage of this invaluable resource. We offer morning and evening prayer here at Saint George's but you can also pray it on your own. These days you can even find an app for your smart phone! Our service of Holy Eucharist, our rites of Baptism, burial, marriage, confirmation, and ordination all come from the Book of Common Prayer as well. There you will also find a variety of prayers appointed for the seasons of the year, a calendar of Saints days, and prayers you can use for various occasions as the need arises. It also contains the whole of the Psalter. The Book of Psalms consists of prayers and songs prayed by God's people from ancient times and as you make them a part of your life you will discover that they continue to be as relevant and fresh as ever.

Along with the liturgical prayers offered in our prayer book, other approaches to prayer arise from the circumstances of your own life, your own heart and mind. The simplest form of prayer is to simply make your needs and request known to God. This is sometimes called Petitionary Prayer or Supplication. When our asking is for ourselves it is called *Petition*; when we ask on behalf of others it is called *Intercession*. Asking is central to both. Jesus himself taught us, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). We must never believe that there is any detail of our life too small or too trivial to share with God. He is our Father and he delights for us to ask of him the things we need.

Intercession is a priestly ministry but it is not limited to the ordained. There is a "priesthood of all believers" (1 Peter 2:5-9) in which all Christians are called to intercede for others and represent Christ to the world. Scripture teaches us to Intercede for others in Prayer, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people" (2 Tim 2:1). Some examples of who we are instructed to intercede for include: all in authority (1 Timothy 2:2) Ministers (Philippians 1:19), The

nation/Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6), friends (Job 42:8), the sick (James 5:14), our enemies (Jeremiah 29:7), those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44), and those who forsake us (2 Timothy 4:16). Intercession can be made privately and at a distance, but it also can and should be offered personally and in the presence of those we pray for. It is a powerful and comforting experience to pray with and receive prayer from our brother and sisters. We often say, "I will pray for you" but I invite you to say, "May I pray for you right now?"

Prayers of Thanksgiving are prayers in which we express our gratitude for what God has done for us. We call to mind the good things we have received from him. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." Prayers of Praise are prayers in which we give adoration to God not only for what he has done for us but for who he is. Thanksgiving should lead us naturally to offer praise to God. "Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him; Worship the LORD in holy array" (1 Chronicles 16:29) When we worship God by giving him praise, we are joining Angels, archangels, and all the company of Heaven. We were created to praise him. Some steps to praise and adoration include: reading scripture, especially the psalms, and meaningfully entering into the liturgy, taking time to appreciate the beauty of God's creation, meditating on God's attributes and his mighty deeds, saying grace before meals, and celebration and feasting (especially in community).

Meditation and Contemplation are both forms of mental prayer or interior communion with God. In this approach to prayer we are seeking to quiet our mind and open ourselves to God's voice and the experience of his presence. Meditation focuses primarily on rumination upon scripture, God, his works, creation, devotional text, icons etc. Meditation seeks to move truths from the head into the heart (Joshua 1:8, Philippians 4:8). In Contemplation, we seek to move beyond to discursive thoughts of our heart, beyond words, and concepts to mystical union with God. This is a highly advanced form of prayer but it isn't just for hermits or monks, It can be practiced by ordinary Christians as well. One accessible approach to Meditation with a goal of arriving at a place of Contemplation, is "Lectio Divina", a Latin term, means "divine reading." There are various ways of practicing Lectio Divina either individually or in groups. Here is a basic summary. The first stage is lectio (reading) where we read the word of God, slowly and reflectively so that it sinks into us. Any passage of Scripture can be used for this way of prayer but the passage should not be too long. The second stage is meditatio (reflection) where we think about the text we have chosen and ruminate upon it so that we take from it what God wants to give us. The third stage is oratio (response) where we leave our thinking aside and simply let our hearts speak to God. This response is inspired by our reflection on the Word of God. The final stage of Lectio Divina is contemplatio (rest) where we let go not only of our own ideas, plans and meditations but also of our holy words and thoughts. We simply rest in the Word of God. We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice. As we listen, we are gradually transformed from within. Obviously this transformation will have a profound effect on the way we actually live and the way we live is the test of the authenticity of our prayer. We must take what we read in the Word of God into our daily lives.

There is much more that could be said about the discipline of prayer, but I hope these few notes will be an encouragement to you to explore it more for yourself.

grace and peace, fr. matthew stromberg

CHRISTMAS 2019



Snow, Christmas films, beautiful music, fellowship, children's laughter – the Christmas season at St. George's was glorious. Brian Taylor and the choir spent months rehearsing for the demands of Midnight Mass. We enjoyed Advent movie nights when Fr. Matt brought us classic Christmas films on Sunday evenings: *The Thin Man*, *The Holly & the Ivy*, and *Miracle on 34th Street*. And an early snowstorm ensured winter beauty through Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany.



The day before greening of the church took place, Anne Kennison, Nancy Angus and the Altar Guild worked cleaning and polishing glass and silver that would be needed for Christmas Eve Mass. For the first time St. George's purchased artificial wreaths, trees, and garland — less messy, reusable. Greening the church is always chaotic and this time was no different. Fr. Matt, Steve Hartz, Jamie Taft, Anne Kennison, and Debbie Lambeth carefully unpacked the manger scene, which Suzy Unger cleaned before Grant Jacquith, Fr. Matt, Bob Paska, and Steve Hartz set it up. Johnnie Angus, Jeff Wengrovius, Meg Hughes, Fr. Matt, Joyce Cockerham, and Jamie Taft placed wreaths on doors and the choir loft. David Kennison positioned the candles alongside the pews. Jeff Wengrovius played Christmas carols on the organ to keep everyone in the spirit of the day. Of course the floor was a mess of hay by the end, so Sue Hartz vacuumed and Grant Jacquith showed off his janitorial skills by sweeping up. Lynn and Bob Paska took pictures of it all.



St. George's was beautiful, sparkling and welcoming, on Christmas Eve. At the 3:00 Family Mass and Pageant, the congregation watched children recreate the Nativity, Meg Hughes leading them with the star.



Starting at 9:30 PM, Brian Taylor and the St. Cecilia Choir presented Carols for Christmas as the congregation arrived. That most beautiful of celebrations was rich with joyful music and candlelight. In his sermon, Fr. Matt referenced our fascination with the Christmas tree, which originated, according to legend, with St. Boniface. Martin Luther first added candles to the tree. It's



often topped with a star (representing the magi) or an angel (messenger to the shepherds), both signs of good news. The boughs are evergreen, unchanging like God’s love. At this time of giving and generosity, God asks that our own lives reflect generosity and welcome.

After the Last Gospel, when the lights dimmed and our personal candles lighted, together we sang “Silent Night.” Following the dismissal the congregation enjoyed a Festive Reception in the Great Hall.



On Christmas Day, thanks to St. George’s online presence, 26 came for Mass, mostly visitors whose churches did not offer a Christmas Day service.

The Sunday after Christmas was a Service of Lessons and Carols, with Jeff Wengrovius on the organ and the traditional format of much-loved carols and the great readings.



Epiphany, celebrated on Jan. 5, became especially meaningful as we also witnessed the baptism of Ian Michael Thiessen. Fr. Matt reminded us that the baby Jesus transformed the world with hope and light. The gifts of the Magi were symbolic: the gold of royalty; the frankincense of divinity; and the myrrh that he was born to rescue us from sin and death. Then Fr. Matt asked, What did Mary and Joseph do with these gifts? What will we do with the gifts God has given us? He asks only that we be truly thankful for them.

At the end of Mass Fr. Matt blessed chalk which we may use as part of blessing our homes in the New Year. And may we all have a blessed, healthy 2020.

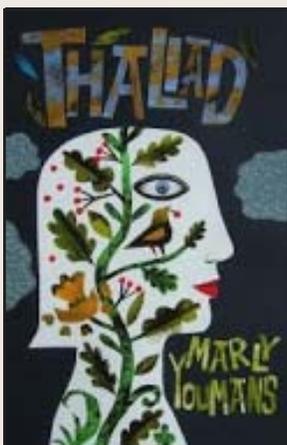


joan pearson/lynn paska

MARLY YOUMANS, POET AND AUTHOR, TO SPEAK AT ST. GEORGE'S

All On the Same Page Book Club has arranged to host writer Marly Youmans at coffee hour on Sunday, May 17 after Mass in the Great Hall. All parishioners are urged to attend what promises to be a fun and educational event.

In preparation, book club members are reading Ms. Youmans's blank verse epic poem *Thaliad*, a dystopian tale of young adults remaking society following an apocalypse. Some are also enjoying



Catherwood, a deeply affecting novel about a

young 17th-century English settler who gets lost in the New World forest with her daughter. These and many other works by Ms. Youmans are available online, and Meg Hughes and other book club members have copies of *Thaliad* to loan if you are interested. You can also learn more at www.thepalaceat2.blogspot.com



Marly is originally from North Carolina and now lives in Cooperstown with her husband, where they attend Christ Church, Episcopal, and became friends with Father Matt during his time there. They have three children. Previously a professor at the State University of New York, she now works full-time as an author and has earned numerous awards for her writing, including a fellowship at Yaddo, a writers' retreat in Saratoga Springs.

Tip for Youmans fans who can't wait until May to meet the poet: In addition to appearing May 17 at our church, she will be the keynote speaker at "The Hidden Cathedral Poetry Festival" at 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 25 at the Cathedral of All Saints. Among other accomplished poets to be featured at this event will be Luke Stromberg, Father Matt's twin brother, who will read from his own work. Workshops, live music, and afternoon tea will round out the day. Tickets are \$20 if purchased online in advance at www.cathedralofallsaints.org or \$25 at the door on the day of the event.

meg hughes

BABY BAPTISM

Ian Michael Thiessen was baptized on Sunday, January 6th by Fr. Matt Stromberg. Baby Ian is surrounded (L-R) by his godparents Missy Pankow and Dustin Clookey, and his parents Michael and Michele Thiessen. (Maternal grandmother Rosemary Pannone was cheering from the pew.) A reception for family, friends and parishioners followed in the Great Hall after Mass.



FUN WITH FOYERS



Foyers is a fun way to socialize with fellow Georgians. Participants are assigned to groups of 6, 8, or more, and take their turn at hosting a dinner party. Hosts are responsible for the main course with everyone else bringing appetizers, salads, sides or desserts. Non-participating parishioners may be invited, too, to “sample” an evening of Georgian camaraderie, hospitality and amazing food.

Jon and Meredith Ewbank, captains of one of the groups, hosted a successful dinner at their lovely Niskayuna home in January. Their group includes: Rosemary Pannone, Diane Reid, Bob and Lynn Paska, Brian Taylor, and Tarek and Patti Wareh (missing that evening.) Also missing were Fr. Matt and his family, who are invited to all Foyers dinners. Paul Smigelski, Louisa Carr and their young son James were Foyers “guests.”

If you’d like to enjoy a “fun with Foyers” dinner, contact chairperson Jeff Wengrovius at (518) 382-8079 and he’ll assign you to one of the existing groups.

lynn paska



CHURCH CHUCKLES

An aging father concerned that money may be needed in heaven, asked his 3 adult children if they would each place \$1,000 in his casket when the time came for his journey to the hereafter. They promised they would. When his time finally came, his eldest son placed \$1,000 in the open casket. His grieving daughter stepped forward and placed ten crisp \$100 bills inside. Finally Slick, as he was called, wiped his face with a handkerchief, whispered goodbye, deposited a check for \$3,000 and picked up the \$2,000 in cash.

- JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -

The heating issues in the sanctuary have been addressed with installation of a new remote thermostat. We will continue to monitor its operation to determine if additional sensing units may be required. We will also be reviewing the current thermostat programming to better address heating the church when needed. We will also be resetting the thermostats in the Great Hall to determine if that will resolve erratic heating issues in that building. Church members are requested to NOT adjust thermostats without checking first with either Father Matt or me.



A plumber has been contracted to address isolating the source of and then repairing a leak in the Rectory guest room bathroom before that problem (and its solution) becomes greater.

I have met with one flooring contractor, and am awaiting a reply from a second for estimates to replace the tile in the lobby and hallway leading to the great hall.

Despite the current chilly temperatures, rest assured that spring is rapidly approaching, bringing with it that most highly anticipated/dreaded event called Spring Cleaning. Please feel free to advise me of things you feel need to be addressed!

respectfully, jon ewbank

- TREASURER'S REPORT -

As reported at our annual meeting in January, St. George's Church completed our 2019 fiscal year with a healthy financial condition. Highlights include the following:



- Ended the year with a balanced budget and a small surplus. No principal withdrawals were taken.
- All 2019 bills were paid before year end, including Christmas expenses.
- Concluded 2019 with ~\$38,000 of unspent income from our endowments at RBC and ~\$20,000 cash at TrustCo.
- Our "Slay the Dragon" initiative to reduce costs was a key reason for our positive financial performance in 2019.
- Endowment principal increased 14.3% with a total value of \$2,647,000.
- Our Vestry has approved a budget for 2020. Budget highlights include the following:
 - Small increase in envelope giving due to an improved year-over-year Stewardship campaign result.
 - Small increase in endowment income due to positive stock and bond market performance.
 - Significant increase to our Hospitality budget.
 - Funding provided for a new dishwasher and improvements to our website to encourage growth.
 - No increases for significant capital building improvements. These will require a capital giving campaign to fund.

Through January and February, our church is on budget for the 2020 year. We are off to a good start.

THANK YOUs go to Jon Pearson for his continued support on all financial matters, and to Bob McCloskey for his administrative skills and focus on slaying the dragon. Finally, and most importantly, *THANK YOU* to all Georgians for your generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. Please continue to keep your pledge up-to-date during Lent and beyond.

blessings, jeffrey wengrovius

♪♪♪ MUSIC AT ST. GEORGE'S ♪♪♪

Last year on Maundy Thursday we sang a new hymn called “Three Holy Days Enfold Us Now.” This hymn describes the three special services in the latter part of Holy Week: the Maundy Thursday service commemorating Christ’s institution of the Holy Communion, the Good Friday service with the veneration of the Cross, and the Easter Eve service in which we celebrate the Great Vigil of Easter with the lighting of the Paschal Candle, the reading of salvation from the Old Testament, the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, and the first Mass of Easter. Music will figure prominently in all of these services with chants, hymns and choral pieces offered by the St. Cecilia Choir.



Good Friday is unusual in that the organ is not used on this day. The choir will continue the tradition of offering the Reproaches by Tomas Luis de Victoria.

Then on Easter Morning we will offer a Choral Mass with the communion Service in F by English composer Harold Darke, along with anthems and all the great Easter hymns everyone loves to sing.

We hope that these liturgies and the accompanying music will help you walk the way of the Cross with Our Lord Jesus Christ and bring you once again to Easter Joy.

brian taylor

St. George's Vestry 2020

Fr. Matthew Stromberg	Suzanne Hartz	Jonathan Ewbank	Jeffrey Wengrovius	Margaret Hughes	Richard Unger
Lynn Paska	Sandra Hughes	Deborah Lambeth	Carol Gaige	Paul Smigelski	James Turley

IN MEMORIAM

Susan Lea Burgess
1960- 2019

“a former Georgian who lived her adult life in California”

Rest in Peace



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 Alice Polumbo
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 Brian Taylor
 Jeff Wengrovius

The Vestry

Suzanne Hartz, Sr. Warden
 Jonathan Ewbank, Jr. Warden
 Carol Gaige
 Margaret Hughes, Clerk
 Sandra Hughes
 Deborah Lambert
 Marilyn (Lynn) Paska
 Paul Smigelski
 James Turley
 Richard Unger
 Jeffrey Wengrovius, Treasurer

Office Staff

Robert McCloskey
 Administrator
 Financial Secretary
 Brian J. Taylor
 Director of Music Ministry
 Jeremy Kravetz
 Sondra Kravetz
 Sextons

Stockade Art Show

It's not too early to think about **YOUR** involvement at St. George's Cafe during the 2020 Stockade Art Show which will take place on Saturday, September 12th.

Our Cafe can only succeed with enough volunteers to make it happen. There is work to be done, and workers needed to get the job done....*before, during and after* the event. Some of the area needed include: set-up, kitchen cooks, church docents, grillers, bus persons, cashiers, break-down, and financial counters at the end of the day. Think about it and sign up early for your area of expertise or interest. Contact *Paul Smigelski* at (518) 424-3763.

**Food and Fellowship
 Make For a Hhappy Congregation**

Remember to sign up to bring "goodies" for Sunday morning's coffee hour after Mass. And, for pot luck dishes for Georgian feasts like our Holy Saturday buffet after Mass and our foodfest after our St. George's Day parade. See *Sandee Hughes* for more information.

A REMINDER:

St. George's services are broadcast on television:



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