



THE GEORGIAN REPORT



St. George's Church Schenectady, NY

December 2017

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Saint George's Stewardship campaign for 2018 will end soon. As of early December, the total number of pledges have decreased, 36 for 2017 versus 33 for this year. However, the total amount pledged is still below 2017, \$81,318 versus \$85,118. The good news is that we are still waiting to receive several pledges from parishioners who have donated in the past. Therefore, if you have not committed your treasure to our wonderful Church, please fill out your 2018 pledge card soon. You can mail your card to the office attention of our financial administrator, Kris Kessler, or you can place in the collection plate in a sealed envelope marked as "pledge card, attention Kris Kessler". Rest assured that your names and giving amounts will be strictly kept private.

As we all know, Stewardship is more than just giving money. We kicked off our annual campaign by making our time and talent commitments on "Back to Church Sunday" in September. We were honored to host my brother, Father John Wengrovius, who preached for 25 minutes on Stewardship. After our Sunday morning services, we had a delicious brunch followed by our Ministry Fair. The level of volunteering at our church is truly amazing. Although St. George's may be few in number, we lead and energetically support many ministries; choir, assisted living, seniors, greeters, lectors, acolytes, book club, altar guild, church school, buildings & gardens, outreach, hospitality, communication, video, and the list goes on and on. These ministries bind us together as a vibrant church community who worship our Lord in many ways.

Our Stewardship campaign continued with sermons from Fr. Matt and testimonies from Joan Pearson and Tarek Wareh who spoke about what St. George's Church means to them personally. The final portion of the campaign concluded on November 19th, Stewardship Sunday. On this day, we handed in our pledge cards and enjoyed an awesome brunch. We were entertained by a choir-led sing-along.

On a concluding note, the Vestry has approved a deficit budget for 2018. This means that the anticipated giving plus the interest from our endowment is not enough to pay for all of our church's expenses. Therefore, please continue to give generously. However, the key to improving our overall Stewardship is to grow our numbers. We made a great start in 2017 under Fr. Matt's leadership. However, he needs our help. Please consider introducing a friend, a family member, a neighbor, or a co-worker to our Church. They will be rewarded and enriched, as we are.

jeffrey wengrovius

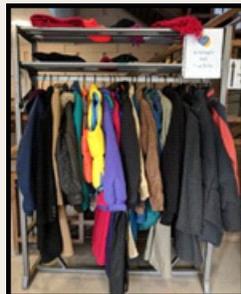
OUTREACH

Fall Outreach Involves Many Georgians

Even though numerous parish activities filled St George's autumn calendar, Georgians, in tandem with our civic partners, did not neglect our parish's commitment to serve those in need.

City Mission

It seems **Steve and Suzanne Hartz** no sooner clear off the food pantry donations area in the back of the church than it fills back up again. Steve and Sue have made several trips to The City Mission this year and on one recent drop-off Steve snapped a selfie with Kory Baskin, head of dining services for the City Mission dining center.



During October and November, St George's once again collected gently used outer garments. **Ralph and Alice Pumbo** delivered 29 coats (23 women's, 5 men's, 1 child's), 2 scarves, 6 hats, 3 vests and 1 pair of mittens to a grateful City Mission on November 27th.

YWCA

Barb Wengrovius is coordinating a holiday gift bag offering from St George's to the YWCA. Gift bags with giving suggestions attached are available in the Great Hall Foyer. They need to be returned to the Great Hall foyer by Sunday, December 17th, in time for Christmas distribution.



Salvation Army

Organized by **Jon Pearson**, several Georgians were bell ringers for The Salvation Army at the Eastern Parkway Price Chopper on Saturday, December 9th. Also in support of The Salvation Army, **Tarik Wareh** is exploring the possibility of St George's providing a lunch time meal at The Salvation Army sometime in 2018. This will be a larger and more challenging outreach project but the spirit of generosity and commitment historically exhibited by our parish will no doubt make it a successful undertaking.



alice pumbo

SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS

Sometimes Bob Moran thinks it's his duty, his legacy, his history, his destiny to watch over his parents in our Columbarium. But that's not the real or only reason why he is so vested in St. George's. The truth is, it's the people and their diversity that is what he considers *the best of St. George's*. "We're not just a parish, we're a family," he said.

Bob's parents transferred from Christ Church on State Street and became Georgians in 1968 (along with several other families.) His father, John Edward, served as junior warden and according to long-time parishioners, did an outstanding job with buildings & grounds. His mother, Polly, was the beloved "choir mom" (think today's Judith Smith) who also ran the consignment shop for years. Involved in cub scouts, little league and school sports, Bob joined the children's choir in 1976 as head chorister for the sopranos.

Like many college students, Bob took a church break but Mass on Sunday was what you were supposed to do religiously (pun intended!) and it wasn't long before Bob married Jane, their children were baptized at St. George's, and they became regular attendees.

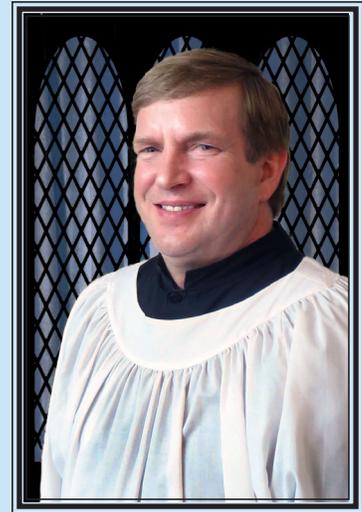
Today, Bob is a faithful member of the St. Cecilia Choir, singing in the bass section and as a cantor. "We are fortunate to have Andrew Krystopolski as our music director," he offered. "He brings so much strength to our church. There's nobody like him."

Optimistic about St. George's future, Bob said, "Fr. Matt brings balance to our church. He respects the Albany Diocese but doesn't rock the boat like in recent years; he brings us closer together. April and their children add spark to our church life."

Each Moran volunteers in his/her own way. Before rejoining the choir in 2009, Bob was an acolyte. He still involves himself in as many events as possible....art show, church dinners/functions, and visitations (either with Jim Wingate or on his own.) Wife Jane works various ministries throughout the year and is a Vestry member; son JJ, SCCC student majoring in Criminal Justice, is an acolyte and received praises galore his his busing tables at the recent dinner/show; daughter Kali Rose, Biology major at Russell Sage, sings in the choir.

An employee of the Golub Distribution Center for 20 years (first in shipping, now in the receiving area), Bob's job is demanding but it's in his genes (read above) to actively support St. George's as a volunteer.

lynn paska



ALL SOULS' REQUIEM MASS

Candles and luminaries lighting the stones and lining the walkways turned St. George's graveyard glowing and ethereal for All Souls' Day November 2nd, thanks to Suzy Unger, Cora Wareh and Fr. Matt. All Souls' Requiem Mass began with Jean Langlais' meditative prelude "Remembrance & Meditation" before the choir's chanted opening anthem: "*I am the resurrection and the life....*"

Fr. Matt's sermon started with the Fox sisters, whose 1888 hoax of communicating with the dead in darkened rooms begat a fad of seances; the citizenry's anxiousness about death helped feed an overwhelming interest in Spiritualism that grew from this false but irresistible foundation. Christianity forbids mediums but believes in eternal life and victory over death. We know that the souls of those we loved are in the hand of God. Even though we are separated from them by death, we are spiritually connected through Christ.

As David Kennison read the Necrology, members of the congregation lit candles in memory of loved ones who have died. At communion the choir sang Camille Saint-Saens' gorgeous "*Justorum Animae:*" "*The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them ...*" After the final hymn, Faiz Wareh sent us off with the postlude, Louis Vierne's rousing "Cortege."

joan pearson

FROM THE RECTOR'S STUDY....



Throughout Advent and Christmas I am preaching about some of the great hymns and songs associated with this time of year. Here I want to discuss the history and theology behind one of my favorite Christmas Carols, “*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.*”

The author of this hymn text is Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876) a Unitarian parish minister and author. He was educated right here in Schenectady NY at Union college where he was awarded a prize for his poetry. After graduating from Union he attend Harvard Divinity School.

He composed his famous text during a period of intense personal struggle and looming political conflict both here and abroad. It is a somewhat unusual Christmas Carol because it does not mention the actual birth of Christ! Instead, it is a meditation on the revelation of the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem.

He beautifully evokes the silence of the evening countryside of Judea as the song begins,

It came upon the midnight clear,/That glorious song of old,/From angels bending near the earth,/To touch their harps of gold;/“Peace on the earth, good will to men,/From Heaven’s all gracious King.”/The world in solemn stillness lay,/ To hear the angels sing.

But although he is describing events from long ago, the scene quickly shifts to a more contemporary setting. Sears wants us to hear the Angel’s song as well,

Still through the cloven skies they come/With peaceful wings unfurled,/And still their heavenly music floats/ O’er all the weary world;/Above its sad and lowly plains,/They bend on hovering wing,/And ever over its Babel sounds/The blessed angels sing.

There is a contrast between the peace and serenity of the Angels and “weary world” with its “sad and lowly plains.” And yet these heavenly messengers bend down to bring us good tidings and serenade us with the music of Heaven. Their beautiful harmony is contrasted with the “Babel” of the world, a reference to the confusion of tongues in Genesis (11:1-9). Here on earth, we are confused and divided amongst ourselves but the Angels are inviting us to share in the blessing of their harmony.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife/ The world has suffered long;/Beneath the angel strain have rolled/ Two thousand years of wrong;/ And man, at war with man, hears not/The love-song which they bring;/ O hush the noise, ye men of strife/And hear the angels sing.

Although Sears does not mention the Christ Child in this text, his silence should not be taken as unbelief. Sears’stated views on our Lord were considered unusually conservative and traditional within the Unitarian Church. He wrote in *Sermons and Songs of the Christian Life* (1875), “Although I was educated in the Unitarian denomination, I believe and preach the Divinity of Christ.”

Sears believed in the incarnation, that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. He wrote that only Christ could bridge, “the awful gulf between God and man.” Although Christ has extended his message of salvation to all the world, Sears believed that the peace of the gospel depended on our human response and acceptance. His hymn can be read as a plea to the world to receive the good tidings of heaven.

The final verse of the hymn has sometimes been criticized as unscriptural and even pagan.

For lo! the days are hastening on,/By prophet-bards foretold,/ When with the ever circling years/Comes round the age of gold;/ When peace shall over all the earth/Its ancient splendors fling,/ And the whole world send back the song/ Which now the angels sing.

Critics believe that they detect in Sear’s verse hints of the *doctrine of eternal return*, or the belief—from antiquity—that history is an ever recurring cycle and that in the last age we return again to a lost golden age of simplicity and peace. At the very least, it is felt that Sears shares with his generation, too much confidence in the inevitability of progress. His final verse is almost always altered in some way. Our hymnal 1982 alters it slightly, removing the “prophet-bards,” “ever circling years,” and “age of gold.”

I happen to really like Sear’s final verse, but can understand the criticism. It seems to me that he was simply

using pagan imagery (perhaps evoking Virgil) to express a deeply Christian hope. We do in fact wait for a promised time of peace, a “millennium,” when the Lion shall lie with the lamb, and the nations hammer their swords into plow shares (Isaiah 11:6). We do in fact pray and expect that God’s Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. This is, however, the work of God and not the inevitable product of history.

I rather like Edward Bickersteth’s alternative verse for his *Hymnal Companion To The Book of Common Prayer* (1870).

For lo! The days are hastening on,/ By prophets seen of old/ When with the ever circling years,/ Shall come the time foretold/When the new heaven and earth shall own/The prince of peace their King/ And the whole world send back the song/ Which now the angels sing.

grace and peace, fr. matthew stromburg+



- VISITATIONS -

I was humming the Christmas song that has the phrase “these are a few of my favorite things” when I thought of Aileen Caruso Smith. She came to mind because not a week goes by when some member of St. George’s does not ask me about her. Clearly she is one of our “favorite things.” Due to a series of health issues, Aileen has not been able to attend Mass and currently lives at the Atria Retirement Community on Washington Avenue Extension.

Aileen was first involved with St. George’s as a place to get married. Her husband-to-be George had an aunt who was a member here and it is - of course - a beautiful place to have a wedding. I asked Aileen what kept her at St. George’s and she said her favorite things were the dynamic Father Kirby, then the liturgy and music, and as time went by the people and relationships that developed. Over time she became involved in many aspects of life at St. George’s. Being a lector, Director of Christian Education, a Chi Rho advisor, member of the Vestry, being on the Altar Guild, working with the Shop at St. George’s and the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) are but a few of the favorite things Aileen has been part of during her years at St. George’s. No wonder she is missed.

Unlike so many that we visit, Aileen does have family in the area. She has two brothers - Robert (East Greenbush) and Kevin (Wynantskill) and a sister Mary Ann (Scotia.) Her son Patrick and his wife Katie live in Mayfield with her three beloved grandchildren: Nicholas (9), Ryder (3) and Collin (1.) You cannot spend more than a few minutes with Aileen before the proud grandmother pulls out her phone and shows pictures of the three young boys in action. Certainly those are three of her most favorite things.



Aileen says she does hear from some members of St. George’s but would like more calls at 518-466-5895. Or you can drop her a note: Atria Crossgates, 140 Washington Avenue Extension, Room 72, Albany, NY 12203. Like all the individuals we visit, Aileen appreciates contact with friends from the church that has clearly been one of the favorite parts of her life.

jim wingate

SPOILER ALERT: LILAC GIRLS IS NOT ABOUT GARDENING

All on the Same Page, St. George’s book club, generally meets every other month on the third Sunday in the Great Hall following the 10AM Mass. All are welcome to attend.

On January 21st, the group will discuss the historical novel “Lilac Girls” by Martha Hall Kelly. Based on true WWII events, it weaves together the stories of three young women: Caroline, a Broadway actress, devotes her wealth and energy to help victims of war; Kasia, a spirited Polish teenager, risks her life by resisting the the German invasion; Herta, a German physician, is swept up in the unspeakable horror of the Nazi movement.

Questions or suggestions about the reading group are always welcome. Please speak with Meg Hughes, Alice Polumbo, or Sandee Hughes.

meg hughes

AN EVENING AT ST. GEORGE'S

From 7 months old to 102 years young, the audience at *AN EVENING OF DINNER AND MUSIC* in the Great Hall on Saturday, November 4th was a night to remember. The event, chaired by music director Andrew Krystopolski with food prepared by our own master chef Kevin Grace, will go down in the annals of St. George's history. Fr. Matt Stromberg gave the opening prayer. Fourteen beautifully set tables for 8 were filled to capacity with parishioners, family, friends and neighbors enjoying a wonderful turkey buffet with all the fixings. Soprano Roseanne Hargrave, accompanied by pianist Michael Clement, performed selections from An American Songbook....including renowned composers from Cole Porter to Irving Berlin. The final three selections were sing-alongs ("Always" and "Cheek to Cheek") with not a dry eye as the lyrics of the closing "God Bless America," was never more meaningful. P.S. A big "thank you" to a very hard-working bus boy, JJ Moran. Also to Gene and Judy DeLong and Bob Paska for selling 50/50 raffle tickets that netted \$102 to winner Peter Luczak.

lynn paska



PET BLESSING



They came on leashes and in carrying cases from their forever homes with their forever families. They were small, medium and large in size. Approximately 20 dogs and cats together attended the Annual Pet Blessing in honor of St. Francis of Assisi on Sunday, October 8th at 3 o'clock at the west doors of St. George's. Fr. Matt presided over the very special ceremony with two very special guests in attendance: Officer Sean Clifford and police dog Romo representing the Schenectady Police Department.

lynn paska



THANKSGIVING CHORAL EVENSONG

"I Will Give Thanks unto the Lord!" With this introit by Thomas Matthews the choir opened Thanksgiving Choral Evensong at 4PM on November 19th. What better way to give thanks for our many blessings than with the beautiful music of evensong and prayers of thanksgiving!

Andrew Krystopolski directed the St. Cecilia Choir plus several friends for 18 voices in the loft. After the opening prayer, Richard Shephard's "Preces and Responses" led to the "Phos Hilaron" of Ronald Arnatt. Bible lessons alternated with Charles Villers Stanford's "Magnificat" and "Nunc Dimittis" from the "Evening Service in Bb."

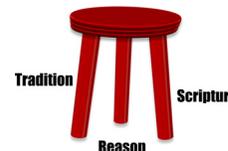
In his sermon, Fr. Matt noted that is easy for us to forget the source of our blessings and to take all our wonderful things for granted. "We are more

likely to remember God during times of hardship than during times of prosperity." Our proper response to blessing is praise, thanksgiving, and gratitude. Instead, the tone of thankfulness has slipped from our national day of thanksgiving and has been replaced by consumption and shopping. Just as we often are reminded to put Christ back in Christmas, it is time for us to put "Thanks" back in Thanksgiving.

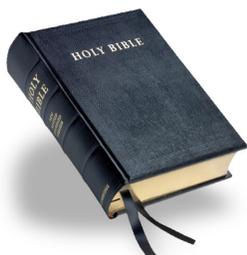
The choral anthem "Thanksgiving" by Alec Wyton, filled with crystalline harmonies, listed the beautiful, good things for which we all give thanks. Andrew's regal "Procession" by William Mathias concluded the service, after which all enjoyed a light reception in the lounge.

joan pearson

It is often said that the cornerstones of our faith, the sources of authority in Anglicanism, are like a three-legged stool, standing on Scripture, Tradition and Reason. A stool needs at least three legs to stand and those three legs must be of equal length. The three legs uphold each other in a dynamic way. This is distinguished from Roman Catholicism which often emphasizes tradition and most Protestant churches that emphasize scripture above all else. Our Anglican stool will topple if any one overbalances the other. Each of the three sources of authority must be perceived and interpreted in light of the other two. This concept was traditionally attributed to Richard Hooker, an English priest and one of the most influential English theologians in the 16th century. He has been regarded as the originator of the Anglican *via media* between Catholicism and Protestantism, largely based upon his 1666 work, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.



Scripture



Scripture is the normative source for God’s revelation and the source for all Christian teaching and reflection. Scripture is the word of God contained in the Old and New Testaments. The 39 books of the Old Testament contain the story of God’s love from Creation up to the birth of his son, Jesus Christ. They contain God’s laws as He gave them to the Hebrew people. The New Testament’s 27 books contain Christ’s teachings, the accounts of his life as told by his followers, and the beginning of his church. Within the Mass, scripture is read in the lessons, the Gospel (the teachings of Jesus), the Psalms (poems from the OT) and other prayers. Two-thirds of our guide to worship, the Book of Common Prayer, comes directly from the Old and New Testaments.

Tradition

Tradition passes down from generation to generation the church’s ongoing experience of God’s presence and activity. We are not Christians in isolation, but are part of a living faith that spans 2,000 years. Tradition is the embodiment of our experience as Christians throughout the centuries. The heart of our tradition is expressed through the Bible, the Creeds (statements of faith, written early in the church’s existence), the Sacraments (the Lord’s Supper and Baptism), and the ordained ministry passed on by Christ to his Church. Our tradition is expressed with many voices, among which are a variety of worship styles, languages, cultures, architecture and music. Our tradition encourages this diversity. We seek to value the life and story each person brings to the community of faith. Each person’s offering is woven into the life of the whole, making it stronger and more beautiful.

Reason

Reason is understood to include the human capacity to discern the truth in both rational and intuitive ways. Each one of us, with God’s help, makes a decision about how we use tradition and Scripture in our lives. A personal relationship with God allows us to realize and celebrate our lives to the fullest. The gift of reason, as a complement to Scripture and tradition, leads us to seek answers to our own questions and to grow spiritually. Being active in a community of faith strengthens us to carry our personal faith into the world. Weaving scripture, tradition and reason together, we strengthen our faith and grow as children of God.



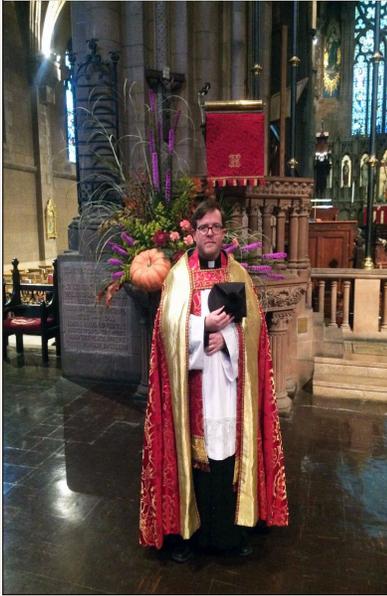
A Fourth Leg? – Experience In the modern Episcopal Church there has arisen an expanded view that our stool might have four legs - Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience - and that Richard Hooker is not really the father of the 3-legged stool at all. After all, Hooker did not consider the three legs to be of equal value, but rather placed Scripture as the driving force with tradition and reason filling in only where Scripture is ambiguous.

The newest leg of our stool is Experience. God reveals himself in and through modern life - human social, political and behavioral experiences. Thus, it is possible for modern Christians to affirm as God’s will that which might possibly have been understood to be sinful. Not that God has changed, but that human beings have changed in their ability to read, appreciate and understand what God wants them to know and do. Are modern Christians are reading God’s signs more perceptively than did the ancients, possibly to justify their desire for greater freedom? Hooker would have found the claim incomprehensible that life’s experience is a major source of revelation from God, equal to the Scripture that God has delivered to us.

david kennison

ACOLYTE FESTIVAL

Once again, St. George's participated in the Albany Diocese Acolyte Festival at All Saints Cathedral on Saturday, October 28th. Fr. Matt Stromberg was the preacher, and our acolytes were represented by senior warden Chris Henry, David Kennison, Steve Hartz, JJ Moran and Anna Thiessen.



CALENDAR: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

BAPTISM - Congratulations to the Bergami family who welcomed baby Emilio into their household, who was baptised at St. George's in November with Mom Chelsey, Dad Vince, and big brother Gio proudly in attendance.

WEEKLY SHAPENOTE SINGING - Spearheaded by Tarik Wareh, who teaches you firsthand the old harmonies of the Sacred Harp tunebook, every Wednesday from 6-8PM. Reading music is not a prerequisite. All you need is a love of music.

THEOLOGY ON TAP - An informal get-together each month at the Van Dyck where participants gather for nourishment of the body and the soul while discussing important religious issues of the day. Fr. Matt leads a healthy dialogue with participants. Next scheduled dates are Thursday, January 11th and Thursday, February 8th, at 7PM both evenings.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES - All children are welcome to our Rite II Mass and Pageant with hymns at 4PM on December 24th. Our Rite I Midnight Mass starts at 10PM Christmas Eve....followed by a festive reception of savories and sweets in the Great Hall. Christmas Day will be celebrated in the Lady Chapel at 11AM.

OUR ANNUAL MEETING - Sunday, January 28th after the 10AM Mass, in the Great Hall. Vestry elections will be included in the agenda.

- JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -



The four boilers for church, Cranmer and Great Hall have been serviced and are up and running. We have some steam issues, but nothing that prevents heating or risks damage; some radiator steam traps may need replacing in the future @ \$75-\$100 apiece. Jeremy is checking each one to find the culprit(s). Jeremy and I got the rectory boiler fired up.

The gas valve/regulator on the Great Hall hot water heater was replaced. The heater is 30 years old, fortunately it does not get used extensively.

The pilot lights in the Great Hall ovens were adjusted. Gas was being emitted due to faulty pilot light setting.

Thank you, Gene (DeLong) for volunteering to repaint the indoor church window sills.

Gene also helped find a contractor who fixed our sidewalks by raising them (Concrete Raising Company.) The cost was much less than new concrete. They have done sidewalks in front of the office and church on the north side of the church. Total cost for this project was \$4,800.

Richard Unger



- TREASURER'S REPORT -

A budget for 2018 was approved at our November vestry meeting. It calls for \$121,000 in envelope giving and continued deficit spending through a draw of approximately \$34,000 from the principal in our endowment.

We are starting to see an uptick in attendance at Mass with a corresponding uptick in giving. We encourage all regular attendees to consider making a pledge of monetary giving for the coming year. We will provide you with dedicated envelopes that you can use to have your giving tracked, and a receipt for tax purposes will be provided to you at the end of the year. When you have a box of envelopes, you will find a specific envelope for each Sunday as well as special days such as Christmas and Easter. There are also envelopes to assist with special things like Christmas flowers and St. George's Day in the spring.

St. George's has its momentum back since Fr. Stromberg has been with us for 16 months. Let us pull together to ensure the success of his ministry and it will mean a success for all of us.

Jonathan Pearson

STEWARDSHIP BRUNCH 2017

After Mass on November 19th, Georgians enjoyed the culinary skills of parish administrator Bob McCloskey at a wonderful brunch celebrating the conclusion of the 2017 Stewardship Campaign. Bob prepared delicious baked chicken breasts, cheese-topped potatoes (everyone wanted seconds), salad and rolls, rounded off by desserts from parishioners. Stewardship Chair Jeff Wengrovius organized the musical entertainment, song standards of the Greatest Generation. With Jeff at the piano and choir voices leading, we sang several old favorites like “Tip Toe Through the Tulips,” “Yankee Doodle Dandy,” and “Bicycle Built for Two.”

Good Food, Good Music, Good Fellowship, three ingredients for a successful brunch. Many thanks to Bob, Jeff, and kitchen assistants Greg and Sheila Thomas.

joan pearson



Susan Ruota
1953 - 2017

IN MEMORIAM

“Rest in Peace”

You and Frank are
together again.





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 Sextons
 Kris Kessler
 Financial Secretary

MEET OUR NEW STAFF

In case you haven't noticed, we have a new church staff in place.

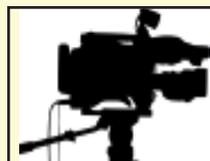
Bob McCloskey
 Parish Administrator



Kris Kessler
 Financial Secretary



Sondra and Jeremy Kravetz
 Sexton Team



A REMINDER: Our Sunday 10AM Mass is videotaped by Rick Forshaw . It is then telecast Sundays at 4:30PM, Thursdays at 10AM on SACC-16 TV as well as Sundays at 2PM on Channel 18, Albany and Guilderland.