



# THE GEORGIAN REPORT



St. George's Church Schenectady, NY

September 2013

## STEEPLE PROJECT



It has been a long, hot summer with a myriad of activities going on around the church campus. Most visible: the steeple project with professionals onsite, on the ground, and up in the air - as documented in a 27-page Steeple Project Summary compiled by David Kennison that is available online with a limited number of hard copies in the Narthex and on the bulletin board in the Great Hall. A major part of the work was contracted to Dave Knox, expert steeplejack, from Advanced Construction & Steeplejacks in Red Hook, NY. The weathercock has been refurbished by Lou Venditti of Specialized Sheet Metal in Gansevoort, NY. Ron Petito, a member of American Institute of Architects, is our project architect.

In addition to the paid professionals, many Georgians volunteered their time and "muscle" to prepare the building and grounds for the intrusion of a manlift and other essentials needed for the completion of this necessary project. Financially, the project has been a collaboration of resources, largely from generous Georgians who raised almost \$39,000, from \$22,000 of capital funds reserved for the steeple project, and also from a \$25,000 grant from the New York Landmarks Conservancy (the Robert W. Wilson

Sacred Sites Challenge Grant.) We're working to get this project wrapped up before winter.



David Kennison



Rick Forshaw

Bob Paska

Gerald Cooper

Gene DeLong

# SUMMER OUTREACH

St. George's continued its outreach mission this summer by participating in familiar, established activities and projects.

As Schenectady Inner Cities Ministries (SICM) once again provided healthy, nutritious lunches to all Schenectady City children, Olivia and Colton Jaquith, along with Alice Polumbo, manned the Wallingford Park location at 5th and Congress Streets the week of August 12th. Between 60 to 80 hungry children ranging in age from 4 months to 18 years arrived each day to gobble up the assembled lunches St. George's volunteers prepared.



While onsite, Devon Dare, the 2013 SICM intern St. George's was happy to sponsor, came by and shared some exploits of her busy summer.

Another long-standing outreach project was fulfilled when 25 handsomely outfitted St. George's backpacks were delivered to Things Of My Very Own (TOMVO) on August 21st. As the church was delivering its offering, a school van was simultaneously waiting in the TOMVO parking lot to whisk away St. George's backpacks to those whose start to school will be improved with supplies necessary for success.



Things Of My Very Own is a 501-3c nonprofit that began five years ago by Rayn Boncie, a former foster child. Rayn's admirable dedication, focus and hard work has seen Things Of My Very Own grow in scope and size. The organization has recently moved from Rayn's in-home operational base to a Stockade location at 202 East Front Street so that the needs of Schenectady County foster children can be more compassionately served. St. George's was privileged to be present at the June 26th new location's ribbon cutting ceremony where Rayn and Things Of My Very Own received personal commendations and congratulations from city and county dignitaries and a letter of recognition

# ACTIVITIES

from Governor Cuomo's office.

If you want to bump into a Georgian while grocery shopping visit a Hannaford. In an effort to increase summer SICM food pantry donations, Georgians were encouraged to place store branded items in the



food pantry basket from their favorite grocery store. 10 items bore the Shop Rite label, 32 came from Price Chopper, and 80 various products sported a Hannaford label for a total of 122 additional contributions.

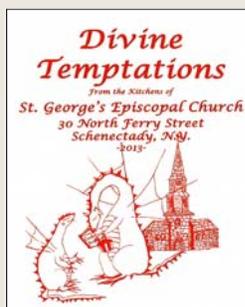
Fall outreach will see St. George's once again collecting outer garments for donation to the YWCA and Salvation Army, and renewing participation in the Salvation Army's holiday bell ringing campaign. Something new will be an Advent project to provide Christmas gift bags for Things Of My Very Own to distribute to Schenectady County foster children. This project will tap into Georgians' well substantiated generous natures and astute shopping skills!

*alice pumbo*

---

**Jim Wingate's "Visitations" column is on hiatus, but will resume in December.**

---



For Christmas, anniversaries, birthdays or "just because"....St. George's cookbook, DIVINE TEMPTATIONS, is the perfect gift: gluten-free recipes, recipes from local restaurants, and so much more. One hundred and thirty-three pages of new and updated recipes you'll want in your collection.

All proceeds go to the organ fund. Cost is \$20. Call the church office (518) 374-3163 to reserve your copy.

# THE RECTOR WRITES .....

If you cast your mind back to our Annual Parish Meeting in January, or you re-visit the Annual Meeting Report you would see that I asked that this Year 2013 would be for us a “Year of Grace” for our Parish. I spoke of a year in our parish community free from massive fund raising, and from all those projects that seduce us and take us away from our true spiritual focus. I offered a well-known prayer to use daily – printed in the Annual meeting Report. The prayer was that of St Ignatius of Loyola. Are you using it?



*Eternal Word, only begotten Son of God, Teach me true generosity.  
Teach me to serve you as you deserve.  
To give without counting the cost, To fight heedless of wounds, To  
labor without seeking rest,  
To sacrifice myself without thought of any reward Save the knowledge that I have done your will.  
Amen.*

How have you given extra time to enriching the life of God’s Grace within you? What have you done differently this year? Do you want to deepen your spiritual awareness, for if so, the first thing you need to do is become more mindful of both your inner and outer worlds. In essence, spiritual awareness is the recognition and attention to the fact that you are but a part of a much greater reality than you can perceive with your five senses. Sounds simple, but the problem is that our hyper-developed, logical brains get in the way of the beyond-logic knowing of this greater reality.

For we are essentially people still living within a traditional framework of “reality” yet we need to have the humble wisdom to know we are only a part of a greater divinity, and the practice of “religion” can sometimes fill the gap where deep spiritual awareness is missing. But here’s the problem: heavily entrenched religious traditions have usually replaced paradoxical and vibrant spiritual truth (the kind of truth that logic cannot always grasp) with rules, regulations and the dogma of doctrine to control people.

True spiritual awareness doesn’t require a ‘middle man’ between the individual and the Divine. Nor does a deeply spiritual life demand outdated dogmas or rigid behavioral rules to assure a truly blessed and holy life. These are the creations of men – and usually men and sometimes women too, with an ‘agenda’ that has little, if anything to do with enhancing the spiritual awareness of their ‘followers’. Jesus was well aware of this problem, and it brought him into deep conflict with the religious elite of his own day.

I’m not knocking formal religion per se. I actually believe that each and every spiritual tradition holds, at the very least, a seed of divine truth – and usually a lot more, once you look and search deep enough. What I am saying is that when this truth gets lost in dogma and institutional mechanisms created by men, there’s a real problem. If this isn’t painfully evident by the fact that the majority of our human history’s wars have been fought in the name of ‘God’, then I’m not sure what is.

Out of curiosity I typed the word “prayer” into my favorite Internet search engine and I discovered a wide variety of websites and resources devoted to that topic. One interesting site referred to a 2001 Barna Research Study that indicated that 82 percent of adults still pray on a weekly basis. That’s a lot higher than I would have guessed. Another site offered a twelve question quiz that gives you the opportunity to identify your “prayer personality.” I even discovered that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has a prayer center on its website, which includes a variety of prayer tools and resources. In following these links and others, I learned some things about prayer life and Grace that I hadn’t known or even thought of before.

So here are a few tips to help you cultivate deeper spiritual awareness and strengthen your connection with God in what is left of 2013 “**The Year of Grace**”.

## 1. Meditation and/or Prayer

Stilling the mind daily for quiet contemplation of the spiritual nature of things is paramount for deepening spiritual awareness. Whether you're saying the rosary with heart-felt intent, quieting the mind completely in silent prayer, or visualizing divine light or something in between these, or doing Bible study, you want to make a consistent habit of 'communing' with that which is most sacred to you.

## 2. Read Spiritual Books

The Bible is a good place to start, but you also need to read widely in spiritual things, but you don't have to agree with all of them. In reading spiritual books from different traditions, you give yourself at least two things: 1). something for the rational mind to do, and 2). an opportunity to see the connections (those 'seeds of truth') inherent in all spiritual traditions.

## 3. To Forgive is Divine

Letting the past go is number one for the heart. The heart (the energetic, metaphoric 'heart' – not the muscle that pumps the blood) is the seat of deep spiritual awareness. For as every single awakened spiritual master and teacher throughout time has said, love and compassion are the true keys to the kingdom of heaven. Without love, we are nothing. And without forgiveness – of ourselves and others – we cannot fully love.

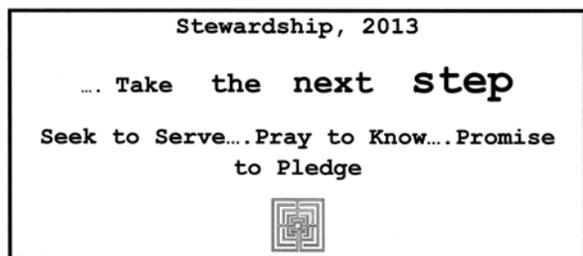
## 4. Surrender

"Let go, let God" – or however you imagine the higher power we call God. Surrendering things like: the need to be right, the need to control minutia, the need for your life to look or feel a certain way, the need for your spouse to put down the toilet seat, your children to take out the trash, the government to give a damn about its people, or all the other things that cause you aggravation. When you surrender, when you stop trying to make things happen or go your way, you can then turn within to a place of deeper wisdom and awareness. An awareness that beyond this particular life drama – with all its little annoyances and joys – that you are an eternal, spiritual being having a physical experience – this is the stuff of God's grace.

Can you imagine just how different St George's Church would be and feel if each and every member lived these daily spiritual and grace filled exercises. The community of faith would literally be what we are meant to be, rather than what we often become, which is just another social club. Please don't forget the daily opportunities for grace and faith in the daily Mass and the public daily offices of morning and evening prayer in your very own parish church.

"Learn to get in touch with the silence within yourself and know that everything in this life has a purpose. There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from". Elizabeth Kübler-Ross

*Your friend and priest, Fr Paul*



## CHOIR NOTES

Choir Rehearsal is in full swing Tuesday nights at 7PM. Rehearsal for the Super Singers is Friday in the choir room from 11AM-Noon.

A fun-filled Choir Retreat on September 13th-14th at Camp Johansen in Lake Luzerne highlighted Chef Kevin's "culinary magic" and a workshop headed by Barbara Wisnom.

# STOCKADE ART SHOW 2013



Schenectady parties the Saturday after Labor Day. Thousands of visitors wander between the Greek Festival, the Italian Fest and the Stockade Art Show; hundreds stop at St. George's. This year Joyce Braun informally tallied about 700 who stepped into the church, greeted by Joyce, Dot Dever and David Kennison, to look around, talk to David about our history, or sit and enjoy the music of organists Jeffrey Wengrovius, Edee Silva, Robert Dicks, Agnes Armstrong, Charles Jones, and Maury Castro, all arranged by Andrew Krystopolski.

Signs and balloons directed people to "Buy George" and Jim Williams. Anyone who seeks out art is naturally interested in the beautiful jewelry and gifts available for purchase in "Buy George." Jim had never before experienced the art show and was stunned by the crowds.

Artists would eat at 7:00AM if the coffee was ready but we couldn't produce the first pot until 8:30AM. Wendy Madelone was busy selling coffee, tea and pastries when the first lunch customers arrived at 10:30AM, then Jim Wingate and Peter Braun fired up the grills, Judith Smith, Marilyn Warner, and Keith and Christine Nelson rushed out food, Joan Bessarab and Aileen Smith-Carusio settled in with the money box, and the Cafe opened. Rick Forshaw and Mike and Laure Thiessen produced pretzels and fried dough while Kevin, Joan and Erin Thiessen ran supplies. By 3:00PM, when Virginia Manning, Jeff Wengrovius and Sunday and Sam Whiteman arrived to help clean up, we had served over 300 bowls of chili and chowder (prepared by Michelle Whitehead and Kevin), hundreds of "hots and hams," dragon bread, and countless drinks and snacks. Thanks to generous donations of food and money for supplies, our net for the day was over \$1600.

Fr. Paul, Maggie, Gerald and Antoinette shared the thankless task of monitoring restrooms all day, and Johnnie and Nancy Angus manned the cook-book table. St. George's is a vital part of the Stockade Art Show. Visitors love our grounds, our sanctuary, our music, our lunch, our restrooms. In turn, we show them a living church.

*joan pearson, kevin grace*

# BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY

The Annual **BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY** on September 15th was the opportunity to invite family, friends and neighbors to a combined Sung Mass at 10AM followed by a Georgian/Episcopalian feast. This year, our potluck turned into a parish BBQ and picnic....with good eating and fellowship enjoyed by all!



Recently, we presented an article on church steeples and why a few of them have a cock (rooster) atop their spires. We traced the origin of this practice to Pope Gregory, who in the 6<sup>th</sup> century declared the cock to be the most suitable emblem of Christianity, reminding us that St Peter repeatedly denied Jesus to save his own life. St George's steeple is graced with an historic weathercock and today we offer a little more of its history.

**St George's Steeples** When St George's was first built starting from 1759, there was no steeple of any sort. The original church floor plan was a simple rectangle, portions of which are unchanged to this day. The vaulted ceiling that we see today was part of the original church ("...the ceiling over the nave was arched or wagon-head vaulted and over the aisle, flat..." at a "cost of nearly 40 pounds"). A bell was hung within the church and was rung at time of services, although there is no record of exactly where that original bell was located. "We have contrived to hang a bell in the Chapple until we are able to erect a Steeple" [letter to the Rev. John Ogilvie, October 14, 1776].

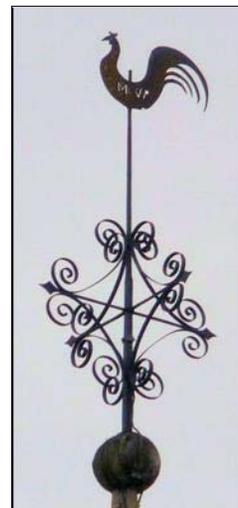
Eventually, money was raised to construct a steeple – timber frame on a stone foundation, built in 1792 for \$1,600. There is written record that this wooden steeple later became badly decayed and required replacement in 1804, but this seems unlikely to have happened within a span of 12 years and this inconsistency is unresolved. Was the reputed 1792 steeple actually an 1804 steeple? Regardless, there was an August 1804 expenditure of 8 shillings for beer for celebration "at raising Steeple" in addition to 83 pounds for a new bell and expenditure for "wenches cleaning 9 days."

The stone steeple that exists today was built in 1870, this following several prior church expansions in the mid-1800s and as part of a plan for a tower that would support a new set of bells. The new tower and vestibule were completed at a cost of \$5,600 but for some reason, the new bells were never realized and the bell from the wooden steeple had to be reinstalled. This bell, cast at the Andrew Meneely Bell Foundry in West Troy in 1842 hangs in the steeple today.

**Whither the Weathercock** There seems to be nothing at all written about the weathercock. This is why it's important to know the history of the steeples when investigating the weathercock. We do know this – the weathercock appears in photographs of the wooden steeple and the stone steeple. The photo of the wooden steeple was probably taken after the mid-1800s as it shows the previous church fence. The current iron fence was installed in 1874, being donated by two ladies of the parish, Miss Mary Curtis and Miss Kitty Jackson, so the photo predates that. The stone tower photo was likely taken in the early 1900s. Both photos are somewhat fuzzy although the weathercock can be discerned. But how long had the cock been there before 1874?

**A Clue – MWp** St George's weathercock is a whimsical design, quite unlike others. We know it is made from sheet iron, which dates it before the wide availability of steel in the mid-1800s. It is well worn, rather deteriorated by the elements and has endured a number of patches and repairs.

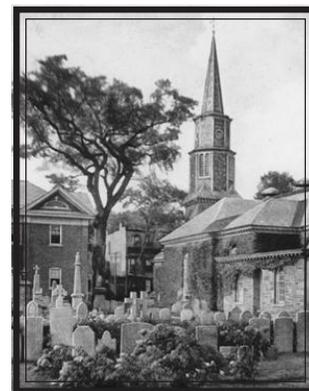
Those who have studied the cock ask about its pierced letters **MWp** and their meaning. This is a clue to its age. Without hard facts, theories abound



St. George's weathercock sits proudly atop a 12ft iron mask, decorative scroowork & wooden ball.



The wooden steeple in mid-1800s. The front fence was replaced in 1874.



The stone steeple in early 1900s. The cock can be seen atop the spire.

but the most likely is that **MWp** are the initials of the maker. In colonial times, this was the job of a blacksmith-almost certainly a local one. A smith was a skilled trade, requiring apprenticeship, and a valued member of any community.

A search of genealogical records reveals that **MW** was likely the initials of Myndert Wemple. There were a number of Myndert Wemples in Schenectady in the 1600s-1800s. Most were descendents of Jan Barentse Wemp, emigrated from Holland about 1643. Later records indicate that Wemp was probably a misspelling of Wemple that carried through the years. One of his sons was Mynert Wemple and many generations inherited the name.



**Myndert Wemple** Several Myndert Wemples were blacksmiths, one notably a grandson of Jan Wemp[le]'s (1691-1785). Myndert was a friend of Sir William Johnson and was a smith of some repute. Sir William sent Myndert to the Senecas, “to stay till their corn was a foot high and keep their arms and working utensils in repair”. Later, in 1726, the Indians requested that he “being good and charitable to the poor,” may reside among them, as they are smiths, and acquainted with them and know their language.

The next Myndert Wemple blacksmith (1796-1886), apprenticed in 1810 at 14 years and then moved to Ohio in 1818 and remained there. While in Schenectady, he would have been too young to have crafted St George’s weathercock.

It was uncommon for a colonial blacksmith to sign their work except when it was special and expected to endure. St George’s might have warranted such a commission, being sufficiently noteworthy to receive Myndert’s pierced initials. The backwards **P** alongside the **W** could have been a middle initial, but genealogical records show only one or two Myndert P Wemples and no record that they that they were blacksmiths. The **P** might have been a way to indicate a difference between Wemp and Wemple, although it is a theory without evidence. The **P** might have been a gesture to Mynert’s grandfather Jan Wemp, who died in the 1690 massacre and who was nicknamed “Poest” as a remembrance to his home town in Holland. Poest Jan later moved outside Troy, and Poest was used to name Poestenkil [creek].

**St George’s or Dutch Reformed?** Was Myndert Wemple an early member of St George’s? Although there are several Mynderd (different spelling) Wemples in St George’s genealogical birth records, they are all children whose father is not a Myndert. Other on-line genealogical searches indicate that the blacksmith Mynderts were all sons of a Myndert. It is unlikely that Myndert was a member of or baptized at St George’s, although there are clear references to the Dutch Reformed Church.

**How Old?** All this suggests the weathervane might have been created before the wooden steeple was erected. Remember that St George’s original steeple-less structure had a bell hung within the church. It may have has a small bell tower that carried the weathercock or the weathercock may have been placed on the peaked roof. If so, the weathercock could date to the 1760s. Supposition? – Of course, but how exciting to have such history in our midst!

*Kind acknowledgement is made to those who freely provided information and advice for this article  
Kim Mabee; Donna Vrooman, Rob Petito; Schenectady County Historical Society on-line genealogical records;  
Wemple Family genealogical record; Various genealogical web sites; “A History of St George’s Church in the City of Schenectady”, 1919, Willis T. Hanson.*

david kennison

# PILGRIMAGE 2013



Where are the English roots of our faith? Who was Venerable Bede? Who was St. Cuthbert? What is on Holy Island? Will we have any fun?

With Fr. Paul as spiritual leader and travel guide a group of 20 pilgrims left Albany on July 15th for eight days in Durham, UK, “the land of the northern saints....storybook beautiful countryside.” This is where Fr. Paul and Maggie grew up, with rich Christian heritage and important sites, enormous abbey ruins, grand cathedrals, unassuming chapels.

We slept and ate in St. Chad’s College, next to Durham Cathedral and on a cobbled street so narrow no buses could approach. Our accommodations included all meals and a common room with bar, Wifi and mostly comfortable seats. Waitresses were our buddies by the end of the week. Durham Cathedral is on a high promontory ringed by a loop



of the River Wear, and streets literally fall away from this high point. Every walk around town includes a climb. Cathedral bells ring 24/7.

Our first evening we heard Evensong with all the pomp of an English cathedral and dedicated choir, then sampled local ales in a traditional pub before

dinner. Such was our week, pilgrimage and friendship. Most days we celebrated Mass in intimate chapels; at our final Mass Fr. Paul invited Rev. Craig and Pastor Dugan to join him at the altar. They served communion to a group who had become a family.

Cathedrals, medieval towns, history, Lindisfarne Island, fantastic abbeys....these are just the surface



of our trip. On the flight home we jotted some reflections: “A journey in faith....A most rewarding spiritual journey....Spiritually wonderful and full of great fellowship....Shared joy in our shared faith....Wonderful memories for all times....The St. George family, priceless....St. George’s band of 20 is truly one international family under God....New friends came together to pray as one....It was a truly amazing experience and opportunity....I’ll always carry this trip in my heart....Going to Holy Island....A new perspective of our journey in faith and how our understanding of God has evolved yet stayed constant....A wonderful time to put our busy lives behind us and open our eyes and hearts to simple faith....I love you all.”

A pilgrimage is about connections. Ask any of us about the trip and we’ll fill you with details and anecdotes: Fr. Paul and Maggie Blanch, Stan and Pattye Craig, Shawn Dugan, Chris Henry, Meg Hughes, Don Ingram, Gene Tobey, Kali Rose Moran, Jenn Thiessen, Paul Nooney, Jon and Joan Pearson, Marguerite Pileggi, Judi Smith, Jeff and Barbara Wengrovius, Sunday and Samantha Whiteman.

*joan pearson*

# FUN WITH FOYERS



Although Foyers is mainly a dinner group of Georgians/Episcopalians getting together to “break bread” at each other’s homes, it can also be so much more....as these pictures of Round #3, Group #6 can attest to. Diane Reed came up with the idea of a Talent Show to follow dinner, and this is what happened pictorially.

- #1. Diane opened the show with her piano forte’ (3rd Movement of the Beethoven’s Sonata Pathetique) and closed the show jamming to “Love Potion #9.
- #2. Fr. Paul Blanch (guest) read a 6-verse English poem from his childhood: “Albert and the Lion” by Marriot Edgar.
- #3. He stopped when Diane’s dog Molly started snoring.
- #4. Maggie Blanch (guest) proved a witty comedienne with a brief joke.

#5. Judi Smith described her Kake baking business.

#6. Karen Forshaw supported her husband Rick in telling about his woodworking activities.

#7. Lynn Paska, avid reader/professional writer, read her latest article (“Saratoga’s Winning Chef”) from *Saratoga Femme* magazine and handed out copies of the publication.

#8. Bob Paska serenaded with a few selections on his saxophone.

#9. At that point, Molly woke up and left the room.

#10. Bob then switched to his newest instrument, his granddaughters’ Sesame Street guitar.

Kudos to Diane’s sister, Kitty Walker from Maryland (another guest) who was camera shy but enjoyed the talent(s) and was in charge of clean-up.



**St. George's Episcopal Church**  
 30 North Ferry Street  
 Schenectady, New York 12305  
 The Reverend Paul F. Blanch, Rector  
 Telephone (518) 374-3163  
[www.stgeorgesschenectady.org](http://www.stgeorgesschenectady.org)

## The Georgian Report

**Editor:** Lynn Paska  
**Layout:** Bob Paska

### **Contributors:**

Johnnie Angus  
 Maggie Blanch  
 Fr. Paul Blanch  
 Richard Forshaw  
 Kevin Grace  
 David Kennison  
 Joan Pearson  
 Jonathan Pearson  
 Alice Polumbo  
 Erin Thiessen  
 Michael Thiessen

### The Vestry

Joyce Braun, Clerk  
 Richard Forshaw, Warden  
 Christopher Henry, Warden  
 Grant Jaquith  
 Robert E. Paska  
 Jonathan Pearson, Treasurer  
 Karen Perka  
 Alice Polumbo  
 Michael Thiessen  
 Dawn Tonneau  
 Jeffrey Wengrovius

### Office Staff

Donna Vrooman  
 Administrative Assistant  
 Andrew Krystopolski  
 Music Director  
 Gerald Cooper  
 Sexton  
 Dawn Tonneau  
 Financial Secretary

## **SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS**



Petite, blond, and feisty....Judith Smith is an integral part of St. George's life. For the music ministry, she works with Andrew Krystopolski in the choir room; takes care of the music library; files and copies; arranges the music for each event; works on organ fund-raising events selling admission/raffle tickets, and helping in the kitchen. As a Georgian, she's a reader and a greeter, helps with Sunday bulletins, and volunteers at most functions (i.e. the Stockade Art Show.).

A Jersey girl all her life, she met Andrew in the parking lot at St. Peter's in Essex Falls where he was starting as organist/choir director. They bonded immediately, he asked her to assist him, and she worked with him for five years. When Andrew met Kevin who works at Unity House in Troy and a move to Upstate NY seemed imminent, Judith had no qualms about relocating. With sisters in Colorado and California, Judith had been "adopted" by Andrew and Kevin. "They are my family. I spend a lot of time with them." For this modern, blended family....it works.

Andrew agreed, "We think of Judith as a member of our family. My aunts, uncles, and cousins have adopted her, too. She is one of us." As to her work ethic, "I always say that Judith has more energy in her little finger than most people do in their entire body. She is a tremendous help as the Choir Librarian, keeping me and the choir organized. That is what working in regulatory affairs for forty years will get you." He ended with, "Judith is the best!"

"I want to be Judith Smith when I grow up," said Kevin Grace, one of her biggest fans. "At the age of eighty, Judith embraces every day and every adventure with more enthusiasm than most twenty year olds. Her commitment to her church is inspiring and witnessed by her willingness to volunteer whenever she is needed."

Living in the Glenville Reserve, she loves this area and the parishioners at St. George's. "The people are nice and very friendly." When not volunteering at church, Judith enjoys hiking, going to the gym and traveling, especially day trips. Migrating to the Schenectady area was a big step but she doesn't regret it for a second. Judith has become a Georgian, a Krystopolski and a Grace....all rolled into one.

*lynn paska*