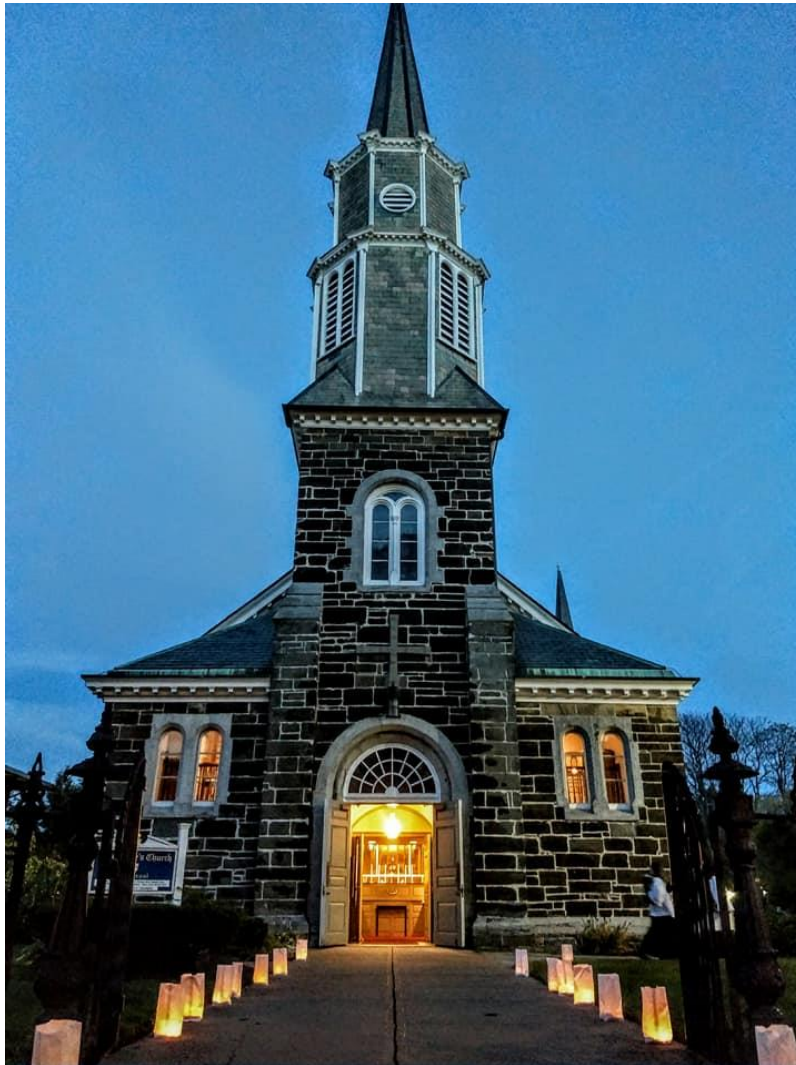


# ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH

SCHENECTADY, NY EST. 1735



## Annual Meeting

January 31, 2021



**ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH**  
SCHENECTADY, NY EST. 1735

30 North Ferry Street, Schenectady, New York 12305

Parish Telephone: 518-374-3163

Email: [office@stgeorgesschenectady.org](mailto:office@stgeorgesschenectady.org)

**AGENDA**

- Opening Prayer**
- Appointment of Clerk**
- Introductory Remarks**
- State of the Parish Report**
- Election Results**
- Blessing & Adjournment**

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Dr. Jeff Wengrovius—Treasurer and vestry member

As we look back on 2020, our church has many blessings to be thankful for, despite the COVID 19 pandemic. These blessings include the following financial highlights:

- For the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row, we finished the year with positive cash balances in both our TrustCo and RBC cash accounts WITHOUT taking any distributions from our endowment principle reserves.
- Our “Slay the Dragon” initiative to reduce spending at every opportunity is still active and produced significant results in 2020. THANKS to Bob McClosky for leading this effort. However, these opportunities are getting fewer and fewer due to our past success.
- Cash surpluses from previous years’ savings were used to fund 12 maintenance and improvement projects in 2020. We spent about \$55,000 on these efforts. Please see Jon Ewbank’s Jr. Warden’s report for more details.
- Our church received a PPP loan from the US government in the amount of \$23,300. This money was used to maintain staffing levels during the pandemic. Our loan forgiveness application is very likely to be accepted.
- Our endowments at RBC grew by approximately 11% due to the strong stock and bond markets. THANKS to Jon Pearson for his continued service in overseeing our endowments.
- Last, and most important, our giving remained strong during the year. Even though many of us could not attend church due to COVID, we still gave in an impressive way.

Looking forward to 2021, I must express the following concerns:

- Some pandemic fatigue may be setting in. We have received only 23 signed pledge cards versus a normal number of about 38. As your treasurer, I do have a strong faith that your giving will continue. If you haven’t pledged, please consider doing so.
- We suffered the failure of our heating boiler for the Great Hall. This 42 year old unit served us well, but we have an unbudgeted expense of about \$53,000 to replace. The new boiler is being install now in January. Because we spent a lot of money in 2020 for maintenance projects, our cash reserves are low. Our “security blanket” is gone. Thus, we will have to take money out of our endowment principle to cover this cost.
- Our Vestry approved a 2021 budget that calls for \$28,000 more in spending than projected income. In the past, we have been able to overcome deficit budgets through savings. This is less likely to happen in 2021. Thus, we may need more resources from our endowment principle. Our endowment provides greater than 55% of our income. A

diminishing endowment could pose serious financial issues for our church without significant growth and Divine intervention.

- Our huge infrastructure of 5 major building, 1 building for every 10 people giving to our church, is a major drain on our finances. We have a goal in 2021 to create a strategic plan for our buildings. This may include a capital campaign to raise money to support this strategy.

One final thought: Our church has shown resilience in the past. We have overcome money issues before. We need to be a strong and united church family to secure our future.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Wengrovius

Treasurer, St. George's Church

### **SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT**

David Kennison—Senior Warden

#### ***Is It Over?***

#### ***Church, Faith & St George's in a Time of Pandemic***

*“What hath God wrought?”* [Num 23:23]. In 1844, Samuel F. B. Morse, American inventor of the telegraph, tapped out this phrase from the US Capitol as the first telegraph message ever sent. Today, this phrase would be taken to mean *“See what God has done!”*. When we think of a mighty act of God we often think of a disaster. Morse thought of a great invention. But in the bible, God's work is a lot more personal. The bible teaches us that what God *“hath wrought”* is a people – an unbreakable, forever-blessed people - the Israelites, God's chosen.

So today, in the grips of a global pandemic, in the throes of a society in upheaval, sometimes warring amongst itself, we too must look at the light before us. Even as we mourn the loss of over 400,000 souls in this country alone, we are here, we are alive, we hold tight to our faith. Yes, we now wear masks, practice new methods of social behavior and await a life-saving vaccine but we have faith for the future.

We, the Church, will survive. Without faith, there is no church. We have faith in God's grace. We practice our Christianity. We show it to the world.

At St. George's, our Sunday Mass numbers have been diminished but not our spirit. If you cannot be with us physically, we know – by faith – that you are with us spiritually. We know you join us through our new live-streaming connection. It is really a special feeling to know that all Georgians can remain together, however we are bound. The Zoom coffee hour after Mass doesn't hurt.

While I've been back in the Sr. Warden's seat only a short time, there has been a lot happening in 2020 and more will come in 2021. Even during a pandemic, the work and the mission of a church endures.

**Great Hall Boiler** - After more than 42 years of service, the GH boiler finally gave up the ghost just before Christmas. The call came late one evening – “It's freezing in the GH!” The boiler had failed, leaked water all over the floor and ultimately was assessed as not economically repairable. We quickly considered different approaches and contractors, finally selecting a new cast iron boiler with much higher efficiency. We'll save money on heating bills and with some associated work to repair some pipes and valves, the GH will no longer be hot upstairs and cold downstairs. And we selected a new heating contractor that will take a holistic approach to each of our five boilers, so we can finally get our hands around the ongoing boiler issues and not just do emergency patch jobs. Jeff Wengrovius did an outstanding job in leading this effort.

**New Web Site** – I don't know about you, but I use the St. George's web site frequently. It's full of good information and I like to keep up with the photos of parish events. The existing site debuted in 2003 and has been managed by Jon Pearson since then, with editorial expertise from Lynn Paska. Jon & Lynn have done a wonderful job and now it's time for some updating, expanding and refreshing. When people look for a church, they always first check out the parish website and we have to look sharp. This project is ongoing but nearing completion. Fr Matt has put a lot of energy into the new site. Jon has agreed to continue as Web Site Project Manager to get it done. New photos, new write-ups, parish resource information – they're all there. Yet, we've retained the rich history and liturgical traditions of St George's. I think you'll like it. When it's ready (soon), we'll announce it.

**New Video System** –St George's has had a video system in place since 2000, used as community outreach and for special events. Dedicated as a memorial to Charlie King, a longtime WRGB executive, it was brought to life through the efforts of Johnnie Angus, Bob Paska and others. In recent times, it was the adopted child of Rick Forshaw with help from Mike Thiessen. When the pandemic hit and churches were closed, parishes ran to set up streaming services for their homebound parishioners. At St George's, we thought we were in great shape with our video system. Unfortunately, not! Live services, streamed over the Internet, require all digital equipment and ours was older analog. Our system wouldn't work. We immediately started using personal cell phones as a temporary solution. That worked for a while but it was clear we needed to replace our video system and fast. Thanks to Bob McCloskey, we contracted with specialists in audio and video and ultimately installed a new digital system that connects directly to Facebook and YouTube. All the old equipment has been removed, although the video room still needs attention. In 2021, we have some lingering tasks to complete on this system and we've budgeted for a 2<sup>nd</sup> camera, but the major work has been accomplished. This was an unforeseen budget expense but it was necessary.

**Church Sexton** – The pandemic virtually stopped all communal parish activities other than a streamed Sunday Mass. It forced us to rethink the model of an on-site sexton living on the church campus. The need was not there, likely will not be there in the future, yet the cost was high. So we moved to a new model of outsourcing sexton services as they are needed. Our sexton team, Sondra & Jeremy, will soon be relocating. We have contracted with new sextons who live in the neighborhood and are available almost whenever they are needed. Routine cleaning of the church and facilities is a standard weekly task. So is grounds work, mowing, snow clearing, etc. This model has worked well for the past few months and we have great faith that it will continue. And we have already proven significant cost saving to the parish.

**Historic Preservation Grant** – We have begun examining the possibility of getting another historic preservation grant for St George's. You'll recall that we did this for the repair and restoration of the steeple in 2013 with great success. Grants are always tough to get and competition for limited funds is fierce, but

St George's has a clear strength due to its history and stature. There are limitations of course – the building has to be of national/regional significance; the work has to be for the church building itself; we have to be able to raise matching funds from within the congregation and community; the need must be urgent; the congregation must be strong and healthy; and the parish must prove engagement with the community. A long hill to climb, but we are up to the task. We will explore this further in 2021.

And that wraps it up for a look back at 2020 - a year of Covid, a year of change, yet a year full of action. All based on faith, on hope and on love.

G. K. Chesterton, a noted British author and intellectual, wrote: *“Hope is as unreasonable as it is indispensable.”* Without hope we would be crushed by disappointment and by all the twists and turns of life. In sin and in our suffering, hope is our refuge. It lifts us up and banishes fear.

With great affection for you all,  
Respectfully submitted,  
David Kennison



## **JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT**

Jon Ewbank—Junior Warden

As in most areas, 2020 was an up and down year in terms of maintenance of our facilities. We began the year with heating issues in the sanctuary and ended the year with a boiler problem in the Great Hall; combatted plumbing issues in the Great Hall and the Rectory; and dealt with an asbestos removal challenge in the sanctuary.

In spite of all that, we took some major strides toward resolving some deferred maintenance actions. These included repair and painting of the cornice work on the sanctuary; repair and painting of the Cranmer House dormers; repair and maintenance of the sanctuary vent fans; and rebuilding of the steps of the three entrances to Cranmer House.

In order to meet the spiritual needs of our congregation and our community during a time when we could not come together in person, we have taken, and will continue to take major strides in upgrading of our Audio/Video capabilities.

We have purchased (but not yet installed) a new dishwasher for the kitchen in the Great Hall, and have investigated repairing the tile flooring in the lobby and hallway of the Great Hall. Both of these projects are funded in the coming year's budget, however, the timing of completion of these 2 improvements has been paused until we can see an end to the COVID pandemic and can start using the GH again as a parish.

As we look forward to a better 2021, I would like to express my thanks to everyone who has contributed to the facilities successes we achieved in a challenging 2020.

Jon Ewbank  
Junior Warden

## MUSIC MINISTRY REPORT

Dr. Brian J. Taylor, AAGO—Director of Music Ministry

2020 started as a year full of hope and promise. We had several planned projects and new initiatives in music ministry that we intended to undertake before the pandemic and resulting shut-down forced us to put these plans on hold.

The St. Cecilia Choir, having completed a lovely service on Christmas Eve in 2019 prepared and sang a choral mass for Candlemas Day - the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple on February 2nd. The choir did an outstanding job with the Missa "Corde Natus" by Healey Willan. Unfortunately it was to be the choir's last major project of the year.

With the shift to online worship in mid-March Fr. Matt and I worked together to restructure the Mass liturgy in such a way as to maintain its liturgical and musical integrity. Although we only had five or six people in the church for the online Mass we sang the minor proper chants, the ordinary of the Mass and one hymn each Sunday as best as we could.

Three individuals from our corps of cantors volunteered to come and lead the singing on a rotating basis. I am very grateful to Joyce Cockerham, Jon Ewbank and Jeffery Wengrovius for their service during this time.

With the return of public worship we continued our "slimmed down" Mass. This was partly to reduce the length of the Mass and because singing is considered more high risk in spreading the virus than speaking.

If many things had to be put on hold one new thing did emerge during the shut-down. The Rector and I pray Compline almost every Saturday night at 8:30 p.m. which includes some sung elements. This has become part of our regular schedule of worship.

The choir has been suspended since March as directed by the Bishop. During this time I have maintained regular contact with choir members through email, generally twice a month. Also prayers are said for the choir on Thursdays at our regularly scheduled Morning and Evening Prayer services.

In the late Fall some members of the choir began to ask if there was some way we could sing together informally. We began to prepare some Christmas carols for Christmas Eve which we intended to sing outside after the blessing of the Creche before going inside for the "Midnight" Mass. On Christmas Eve the cold rain precluded the choir from singing outside so four members of the choir sang the prepared carols inside the church before Mass with appropriate distance between the singers. We did go ahead and have a full Christmas Mass on Christmas Eve with all the hymns that would normally be sung.

In early January the Rector, having followed new developments with regards to the COVID-19 virus made the difficult decision to eliminate virtually all singing from the Mass. The cantors continue to sing the minor propers and the one thing that is still sung by all is the Gospel Alleluia. Our first commitment is to maintain in-person worship as safely as possible. At this time eliminating almost all congregational singing seems like the best decision for the safety of all. We do have all of our cantors back with us singing on a rotating basis, and I thank them for their service.

The Choir Camp that we postponed from 2019 to 2020 obviously did not happen, and I am already learning that most summer camp opportunities for children and youth are being cancelled for 2021 so it looks like it will be 2022 before we can offer our first Choir Camp.

I am especially grateful to my two associates, Jeff Wengrovius and Joan Pearson for their support and assistance this past year. Their help is invaluable.

I continue to be grateful for the privilege of serving at St. George's Church, and I appreciate everyone's support and encouragement.

Brian J. Taylor

Director of Music Ministry



## **ST. GEORGE'S WEEKLY WEDNESDAY SACRED HARP SINGING**

Tarik Wareh—Volunteer

In 2020, the weekly Sacred Harp singings, always open to experienced singers and newcomers alike, were able to meet at St. George's as usual until March 4. Regular attendees include parishioners Sean Albert and Tarik Wareh and friends and visitors from throughout the region. On March 11, the very eve of all the changes brought by the pandemic, we had a very special outreach singing and singing school at the Shaker Meeting House. The entire Albany Gay Men's Chorus joined us to learn about and join us in shapenote hymn singing. This marked our 117th weekly St. George's singing. Singing then halted for three months. Between July 6 and October 17, singers met for outdoor, physically distanced singing seven times, a precious taste of hope and joy, and time of fellowship, in a difficult period. On October 31 and November 14, after careful study of feasible precautions, a small group of singers sang indoors in the St. George's nave. I announced the singing would go on pause if daily new COVID-19 cases in Schenectady County reached 25 per 100,000 population. The Nov. 28 singing was accordingly canceled, and that number has only risen since then (95.6 at the time of writing, January 8, 2021). Participants gratefully contributed money towards St. George's expenses at all singings held at the church.

Tarik Wareh

## **OUTREACH REPORT**

Alice & Ralph Polumbo—Volunteers

While Georgians in their own way remember and care for those in need, as a church, there was minimal outreach activity in 2020. A Lenten project, Souper Douper, requesting canned soups for donation to SICM's food pantry, began enthusiastically but was suspended in mid-March. Still, 80 cans of soup were collected and taken to SICM's food pantry. Food/supplies left at the back of the church were periodically delivered to SICM for the remainder of the year.

In St George's annual fall coat collection 18 coats were hung for donation to The City Mission.

## **ASSISTED LIVING MINISTRY REPORT**

Alice Polumbo—Volunteer

St George's Assisted Living Ministry (ALM) began robustly in 2020 before suspension of visits in mid-March. Our last service for 2020 took place on Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at The Schenectady Center. For the year St George's conducted 7 services that were attended by 162 congregants.

While our locations (The Schenectady Center, The Glen Eddy and Kingsway Community) remain committed to this ministry, resumption of ALM services is uncertain for 2021.

## **PASTORAL CARE REPORT**

Jim Wingate & Ann Duff—Volunteer

This has indeed been a very difficult year. It has saddened us that we have not been able to visit nor bring Communion to those on our visitation list. If there is one positive it is that Ann and I had just finished our round of visits and Communion for March one week before all nursing and Rehab facilities were closed to visitors.

Since that time we have tried to contact those on the list that we can by phone. Each month we called those with phone availability. Some people do not have personal phones nor do they have phones in their rooms. One person simply does not respond but we keep trying. Most of our contacts have found individuals doing about as well as all of the rest of us are. The number of family or friend visits have been reduced by fears of the virus but they appear to be getting the support necessary for their safety.

In addition to calls we have relied on the US Postal Service to deliver our cards. Cards have been sent for Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and birthdays and anniversaries. Thinking of You and Get Well cards have also been sent when our calls indicated a need.

Fortunately the Committee has built up a large inventory of cards but with literally hundreds of cards sent, it will need to be restocked by spring.

We want to thank Father Matt and Bob McCloskey our Parish Administrator for their help and efforts in trying to keep us current with changes in address and health status during this difficult year.

Ann and I can not wait for the day when we can once again visit our friends and fellow parishioners and administer the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Respectfully,

Your Pastoral Care Committee

Ann Duff and Jim Wingate

## COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Lynn Paska-Vestry Chair

Despite the pandemic, we have continued to publish The Georgian Report four times a year. It's been a challenge....succeeding only with the support of dedicated Georgians who write articles, take pictures, and give us ideas. Volumes of thanks to the Vestry members and their reports, as well as our regular contributors: Meg Hughes, Sandee Hughes, David Kennison, Joan Pearson, Jon Pearson, Alice Polumbo, Barb Wengrovius, Brian Taylor, and Jim Wingate. And kudos to David Kennison for being our proof-reader extraordinaire. (He catches a typo before it's even typed!)

We've kept our Website up and running, too, and thank Jon Pearson for his skills in maintaining the site as well as his quick response to our submissions.

We published an updated (from 2009) Parish Directory, which has been very well received by our parishioners.

Finally, thank you to parishioners and friends of St. George's for all the kind words you write/articulate after each issue is in your hands.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob & Lynn Paska

## **GARDENS REPORT**

Meg Hughes-Vestry Representative

The grounds of our beloved church were well-tended in 2020 by a core group of devoted volunteer gardeners. Debbie Lambeth, Suzy Unger, and Barb Wengrovius, led by Meg Hughes, reported for work on a twice-weekly basis from May through early November.

In addition to routine maintenance, the group accomplished several significant projects, including:

- With professional support, the south border of the Memorial Garden was greatly refurbished and enhanced with a hedge of long-blooming perennial hydrangeas.
- Another long-neglected spot, the northern border of the graveyard adjacent to St. George's House, had become overgrown with invasive vines, sumac, and other weeds. The volunteers cleaned it up and rearranged some of the existing plantings at no cost to the church.
- Thistles and groundcover encroaching on a grave adjacent to the handicapped-accessible sidewalk to the Great Hall were removed and replaced with new grass and a mulched bed of Knockout Roses.
- On the opposite side of that same sidewalk, an area that had been colonized by crabgrass was torn up and replanted with sun-loving, butterfly-attracting sedum. The butterfly garden next to the Great Hall was also cleaned up and expanded.
- Vestry approved the purchase of a dog-waste station to help Stockade dog-walkers be more respectful of our grounds. Meg Hughes and Rich and Suzy Unger installed the amenity on a 91-degree July afternoon. Gardeners and visitors alike have appreciated the enhanced sanitation it has engendered.

## **ALL ON THE SAME PAGE REPORT**

Meg Hughes-Vestry Representative

The year started strong for St. George's book club with two well-attended meetings in the Great Hall. In January we discussed *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens and in March, *The Ninth Hour* by Alice McDermott. Less than a week after that second meeting, however, church went on lockdown with the rest of the state. A tentative May speaking engagement by local author Marly Youmans had to be postponed, and has yet to be scheduled.

Over the summer, members read *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett, then gathered on a bright chilly October 20 for a masked and socially-distanced discussion of the book. The final selection of 2020 was *In the Bleak Midwinter* by Julia Spencer-Fleming, which was the topic of the noontime Zoom coffee hour on January 3.

In 2021 we plan to continue the Zoom format for meetings on the third Sunday of every other month, beginning on March 21 with *Transcendent Kingdom* by Yaa Gyasi. When conditions allow, we will resume in-person book circles.

### **HOSPITALITY REPORT**

Sandra -Vestry Representative

The hospitality committee has been sidelined by the pandemic since March of 2020. Gathering in person has just not been safe. However, there has been a group of parishioners who have gathered for “ Zoom” coffee hour on Sundays at noon. Thank you to Chris Henry for getting this started and to Meredith Ewbank and Matt Stromberg for keeping it going. If your days are not consumed by computer meetings please follow the link, log on and join us for about an hour of lively conversation.

Thank you also to Jeff Wengrovius and Bob McClosky for pursuing the purchase of a dishwasher for the Great Hall. Once installed, we will be able to fully utilize our kitchen without the need for expensive paper products.

I am looking forward to when we can all safely meet again!

Sandra Hughes

### **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION REPORT**

Fr. Matt Stromberg—Rector

The refrain of these reports seems to be, “the pandemic interfered” and that is certainly true when it comes to our usual programs of Christian Education. Despite it all, we persevered. That has been a second refrain!

When the year began we were continuing a slow walk through the book of Exodus in our 9 a.m. Sunday Bible study. That continued up until the shutdown. Our Sunday Bible study did not begin again in 2020 but we do plan to offer regular Bible study again sometime in the future.

We had big plans for our Lenten season in 2020 which were unfortunately cut short. We began offering Lectio Divina which is a contemplative way of reading and meditating on Scripture which dates back to the early centuries of the Church and the monastic practice of Saint Benedict. We were offering that Thursdays at 4 p.m. and Sundays at 9 a.m. in the Holy Family Chapel. We had also begun a Lenten series on the seven signs in the Gospel of John. We began with a joint Evensong hosting our neighbors at First Presbyterian. Pastor Mark Dunn gave a teaching on the first of the signs, John 2:1-11, the wedding at Cana. On the first Sunday in Lent we continued with a pot luck in the Great Hall, a teaching by Fr. Mark Chestnut on Jesus’ healing of a nobleman’s

Son Near Death (John 4:46-54), and Stations of the Cross. The next Sunday we continued with the same format and a teaching by Fr. Tom Malionek on Jesus' healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-17). Unfortunately our series and Lenten programming were unexpectedly cut short by the shutdown.

On January 23 of last year we hosted our regular Theology on Tap at the Van Dyck Restaurant and Lounge. The topic was, "Evangelism and the Episcopal Church." We hosted another Theology on Tap in the month of February in which participants were encouraged to bring their own questions. After the lock down, we moved Theology on Tap online. We pivoted to a Theology on Zoom model. We had a successful discussion about the Predestination and the Doctrine of Election which saw new people participating that had not before. In the fall we had a smaller gathering of Theology on Zoom in which we discussed Anglo-Catholicism and the various schools of churchmanship in the Anglican tradition.

Our Theology Breakfast met in January to discuss Wesley Hill's book, *The Lord's Prayer: A Guide to Praying to Our Father*. Dr. Hill was also the featured speaker at the Bible Symposium hosted at the Cathedral of All Saints in November which some of our members participated in. During the shut down, we met on Zoom to discuss, *Unapologetic : Why, Despite Everything Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense* by Francis Spufford and *Seculosity: How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do about It* by David Zahl.

In the fall, we met Sunday nights, 6:30 p.m. for eight sessions to watch a DVD presentation on C.S. Lewis' classic, *Mere Christianity*. Each presentation was accompanied by a discussion of readings from the book. We thought to include an online option for this course, but the Zoom sessions were canceled due to lack of interest.

We are looking forward to another year of growing in faith and understanding this year in 2021!