



THE GEORGIAN REPORT



St. George's Church Schenectady, NY

March 2010

ST. GEORGE'S WELCOMES 18TH RECTOR



Front row (L-R) The Reverend Paul Frederick Blanch; The Right Reverend William H. Love, Bishop of Albany; Mrs. Margaret Blanch; back row (L-R) David Kennison, Subdeacon; The Reverend Canon D. Delos Wampler, Deacon of the Mass; Daniel Machold, A Master of Ceremony.

One of the most magical times to go down in Georgian history will be the long-awaited Institution and Induction of The Reverend Paul Frederick Blanch as the 18th Rector of St. George's Episcopal Church on Saturday, December 12th, 2009. The formal ceremony itself was exquisite and meaningful. The reception following in the Great Hall was an evening of love, fellowship and (important to Episcopalians) outstanding food - as clergy, parishioners, family, friends, neighbors and politicians gathered to welcome Fr. Paul and Maggie to Schenectady, New York.



(L-R) Congressman Paul Tonko, Fr. Paul Blanch, Bishop William H. Love.

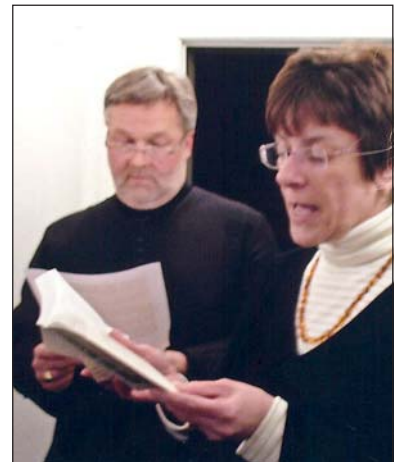


(L-R) Maggie and Fr. Paul at the reception in his honor.

BLESSING OF THE RECTORY



This year, the Feast of the Epiphany was an extra special time at St. George's. Fr. Paul celebrated Morning Mass at 9AM in the Lady Chapel and Evening Mass at 7PM at the High Altar. The evening ceremony was followed by the solemn "blessing of the rectory" and a joyful catered party that lasted well into the night. The congregation was invited as well as all friends of St. George's. It was a beautiful night (albeit a cold one.)



Everyone took a grand tour of the renovated rectory, marveling at the homey touches Fr. Paul and

Maggie have brought to their new residence in the historic Stockade Area of Schenectady.

CHRISTMAS 2009

I love Christmas at St. George's. It starts not in September as retailers want, but on the first Sunday of Advent when Fr. Paul lights the first Advent candle. The focus for four weeks is on joyful spiritual anticipation, not on frantic gift-buying; and on reflection, not on appearances. Advent 2009 included Bible study every Tuesday, when about 25 participants looked closely at Old Testament prophecies, John the Baptist, Mary, and the Nativity itself.

I enjoy the fellowship of people working together. On the Sunday before Christmas, approximately 30 parishioners decorated the church in our annual hanging of the greens. They set out candles and pine boughs, hung wreaths, arranged poinsettias, and constructed the creche. Against the background of choir rehearsal, these members of the St. George's community worked through the usual challenges of what greenery goes where, crooked candle poles, and the need for bows. David's acolytes practiced their famous double procession.

My favorite part of Christmas preparation is the music. Don Ingram chose Darke's beautiful Mass in

F and then worked patiently with the volunteer choir for weeks on the mass, carols, hymns, and anthems. When the organ began "O Come, All Ye Faithful" and a grand procession entered with full choir, we saw, heard and felt the glory of Christmas. Aniko and Jeff shared organ duties with Don on Christmas Eve. Kali Rose Moran, Courtney Thiessen and Gene Tobey, with their solos, lifted everyone's hearts.

Following a magnificent mass, we had a magnificent feast, organized by Amy Machold, Mike Thiessen and Chris Henry, where we shared laughter, happy embraces, reunions of old friends, and joy in the company. Fr. Paul and Maggie deserved an especially beautiful first Christmas with us and it was, as it is especially beautiful each year.

joan pearson

**CHURCH
CHUCKLES**



"People are funny: they want the front of the bus, the middle of the road, and the back of the church."

OUTREACH

On a cold Sunday afternoon on January 31st, St. George's - in partnership with sister parish St. Stephen's -



served a pot luck dinner at Bethesda House. This was the inaugural Sunday dinner at the new Bethesda House facility at 834 State Street. Those in attendance received a new pair of socks hence the "knock your socks off" name for the occasion.

The afternoon began at 1PM when volunteers were greeted by Des Rossi, program director at Bethesda House, who gave an overview of their mission and the way it serves the community. He conducted a tour of the newly opened building that includes a residential wing, food pantry, clothing room, hospitality center, washing machines and bathing facilities to meet the most basic needs of its guests. Des spoke about the nature of homelessness in our community.

Meal service began promptly at 3 and ended at 4. After Fr. James MacDonald (St. Stephen's) offered a grace, volunteers served up 85 meals to hungry individuals. According to Des in a follow-up, guests

were still raving the next day in appreciation for the opportunity to partake in a rare home-cooked meal - with everything from hot dog casserole to pineapple upside down ham loaf served and consumed.

This was the largest outreach project St. George's has undertaken to date and required the participation of many for success. Kudos to the wonderfully generous Georgians who prepared delicious, nutritious food: Amy Machold, Rosemary Pannone, Anne Kennison, Lynn Paska, Maggie

Blanch, Ib Bartlett, Suzanne Hartz, Trish VanDerhoof, Susanna Sherwood, Sandee Hughes, Joy Adams, Wendy Madelone, Barb Wengrovius, Ann Duff, Christina

Danley, Margaret Gruener, the Moran family, and Alice Pumbo. Wendy Madelone, Aileen Smith-Caruso and Fr. Paul worked the serving line.



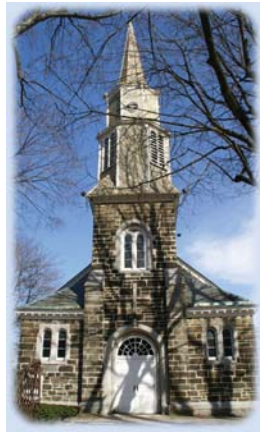
David Kennison and Tom Madelone coordinated the various foods from the ovens to the service line. Joan Bessarab, Bob and JJ Moran, and Alice and Ralph Pumbo interacted with those in attendance.

A sub-benefit to the day was the opportunity to share fellowship with members of St. Stephen's.

alice pumbo

THE RECTOR WRITES

Everyone tells me what a wonderful resource we have in St. George's Church, and indeed we have. It is pretty, it is historic, it stands proudly in the Stockade district and is often the focus and goal for many visitors to our neighborhood. I have always believed that our Church buildings speak loudly to the passer by, even though many may never darken the Church door. What do people think when they pass by on sidewalk and road? The Church spire points heavenward to God, yes, I know that heaven is all around us not just up in the sky; but here we talk symbolically, witnessing to the greater power of the living God. Then there is the daily ringing of the Church bell some three times a day for the ancient prayer called "The Angelus" - all these things are doing the work of evangelism 24-hours a day, even before we open our doors for worship.



I would very much like to see St. George's open daily in the Spring, Summer and Fall to receive visitors and pilgrims alike. I know that just spending time around the Church when the weather is pleasant reminds me of how many visitors we do actually see trying to gain access to our beautiful Church. Can we see this as a ministry to the visitor? What can we offer to the tourist and pilgrim alike?

Recently I read an article in *The Living Church* entitled "Let the Elders Unlock the Doors" and it stimulated my thoughts to see how we could make more of St. George's as both a tourist attraction and a place for prayer and pilgrimage.

Our Church is locked outside worship times for security reasons at present, and many people peer through the windows but then go on their way disappointed not to have seen inside our hidden gem. The article in *The Living Church*, written by Fr. Richard Kew, highlights the problem of security and locked churches, but also the many missed opportunities for evangelism and ministry. He asks, "What is to prevent parishes from commissioning elder mission teams who will take responsibility for being in Church for a certain

number of hours each day?"

It is a fact that there are many in our modern culture who have a deep yearning after God, and who wish to re-connect with the ways of spirituality and a disciplined life of faith, and very often that yearning is rekindled by a visit to a Church or holy place. When individuals are tempted to slip into Church it may just be the beginning of a pilgrimage of grace, as they confront beauty, silence, welcome and a place to light a candle and say a prayer. We are already a community of faith that I hope takes its ministry of welcome seriously, but this may open us up to an even larger constituency of both locals and visitors.

My suggestion is that from May through September we attempt to open St. George's on a daily basis, especially weekends, so that people see our doors open, and receive a truly Christian welcome as they visit our fine place of worship. To this end we will be updating our historical literature and guide book, perhaps having some postcards for sale and above all a great Georgian welcome to all who come to visit us.

I make an appeal that the "retired elders" of our congregation seriously think about this vital and worthwhile ministry, ideally people serving in groups of two or three at a time for safety. Maybe there will be few visitors at first, but as folk see the doors open on a regular basis other people will find their way in. If we could begin such a ministry, it would dovetail into the already scheduled Daily Office of Morning and Evening Prayer and the daily Mass. Locked doors say the wrong thing to the world, intimating that the wonderful message of Jesus and his risen life is not for sharing but for keeping to our selves. We have a Gospel to proclaim, so let's begin by opening our sanctuary to the wider People of God and exercise a ministry that welcomes all. Please speak with Donna or Fr. Paul if you could offer help in this new form of ministry to St. George's. We shall be drawing up a sign-up sheet for volunteers very soon.

Your friend and priest,

Fr Paul F Blanch

SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS



Our children are top priority for Barbara Wengrovius.



Santee Hughes strives to make Christian Ed fun.



Fr. Paul with (L-R) Ava, Liam and Trevor Weakley and Anna Thiessen after the blessing of the milk cartons project. Missing from picture: Will Ottery.

There are volunteers, and then there are the Barbara Wengrovius' and the Sandee Hughes' who take volunteerism to the next level. As leader and teacher, respectively, of our Christian Education program, they have gone beyond the call of duty - Barb for 23 years, Sandee for 15.

"MUST LOVE KIDS." When applying for a "job" with our Christian Education program, those three little words are the prerequisite to being "hired." (The pay is zilch but rewards are top shelf.) Whether there's an enrollment of 25 + or as few as 4, Barb and Sandee give our youth the necessary religious background to sustain them throughout their lives.

"For a successful program, we need dedicated parishioners and families," said Barb. "It's important that someone always be here to greet the children." Sandee Hughes believes at-home encouragement is also important. "Attending Sunday school should be a pleasure, not a punishment," she said, adding that new ideas and volunteers are essential to the program's growth.

Barb and Sandee recall past and present projects: Epiphany pageants, Damien Center quilts, SICM lunches, Festival of Trees ornaments, Valentine's bags for residents of Mohawk Opportunities housing programs, and creating and decorating banks shaped like St. George's Church out of one pint empty milk cartons to be distributed and used as coin collectors.

Four students (4-8) are currently enrolled in Christian Ed. They work from a Children's Worship Bulletin that is age-appropriate to the Bible lesson of the day - connecting dots, coloring, multiple choice questions, crossword puzzles, finding items in a picture, and/or identifying a Scripture phrase.

At peak enrollment, there were children's forums (much like adult forums), periodic and intensive confirmation classes (three hours every Saturday), and a monthly Instructional Eucharist when there was a curate. Hoping to reinstate Chi-Ro (12-18) volunteers are needed - not a parent because teenagers won't talk freely if a family member is onboard. Nursery service with regular baby sitters is also on the table, with parental commitment needed for this undertaking.

We salute Barbara Wengrovius and Sandee Hughes for their dedication to Christian Ed. We thank Connie Todt for her continued assistance with this ministry and all those Georgians, current and former, whose input have made a difference, including: Aileen Smith-Caruso, Ann Duff, Suzanne Hartz, Wendy Madelone, Diane Reed, Carol Rose, Stacey Sweeney, Ann Marie Tomeck, Trish VanDerhoof, Nancy Wingate. And, we couldn't forget Sybil Telfian who started making Christmas angels over thirty years ago - a tradition Barb maintains to this day.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING



"We Are the Church"



Our Rector



Our "Rock"



Our Leader



Our Finance Man



Our Lasagna Man

ADULT BAPTISM



Surrounding the baptismal font (L-R) Patsey Manning, Virginia Manning, Fr. Paul Blanch, David Kennison. It is interesting to note that Patsey, who sponsored her sister Virginia for baptism at St. George's, was previously baptized (also as an adult) at St. Stephen's in Schenectady.

Virginia Pauline Manning - Fr. Paul's 1st adult baptism at St. George's - embraced Episcopalianism in a circuitous way. Raised in Christian faith by Presbyterian parents who did not believe in infant baptism, she attended Episcopal churches as a young adult. Marrying a devout Russian Jew and not wanting a religiously divided household, she converted to Judaism after intensive classroom instruction. "For four years I kept as kosher a kitchen as someone like me possibly could," she explained.

After two daughters - Yelena (18), Suzanna (16) - and a divorce, Virginia became "spiritually lazy" and had not been in a synagogue for years. A number of severe illnesses started her thinking about her own mortality. Reflecting on past Christmas Eve masses she attended at St. George's when she was in her twenties, she tentatively returned; participated in a bible study; and asked to be baptized. "Fr. Paul is an excellent educator," Virginia offered in her bubbly manner. "I absolutely, truly, love St. George's."

A SUNYA graduate with degrees in Medieval Studies and Social History, Virginia - who is known for her collection of wearable hats - is Administrative Assistant at the Scotia-Glenville Children's Museum.

BABY BAPTISM



Baby Amanda Renee Dillion, Candidate for Holy Baptism, at the baptismal font with (L-R) godmother Angela Tatem, father Fitznesto Dillion, David Kennison, Fr. Paul Blanch, mother Renee Dillion and godfather Elroy Tatem.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY



(L-R) Nancy Angus, Rosemary Pannone, Maggie Blanch, Joy Adams, and Wendy Madelone.

Prayer Shawls are symbolic of an inclusive, unconditionally loving God. This ongoing, universal Ministry has been giving comfort, support, hope and/or celebration to the recipient since 1998. Blessings and intentions follow the shawl maker from the start to finish.

Georgians have taken up their (knitting/crochetting) needles and enthusiastically begun this project. Although much of the work is done individually and at their leisure, there is a monthly meeting for an exchange of ideas and camaraderie.

New crafters are always welcome. Pattern instructions and prayers are available. Contact anyone in our Prayer Shawl Ministry for information.

EPISCOPAL EDUCATION

CHI RHO and ALPHA and OMEGA

We have been examining some of the signposts of our faith by taking a look at common symbols that are found in churches. We now arrive at the last of three such explorations with *Chi Rho* and *Alpha and Omega*.

In St. George's, we most often see these symbols on altar frontals or on a priest's vestments, but they really may appear in any number of places.



The **Chi Rho** is one of the earliest forms of christogram, formed by superimposing the uppercase Greek letters Chi "X" and Rho "P". Together, the X and P form the first letter of the word *Christ* (or in Greek ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, *Christos*). So, the joining of these two letters creates a simple symbol for *Christ* in the same way that *IHS* is a symbol for *Jesus*.

Sometimes, the **Chi Rho** has also been used to symbolize the crucifixion of Jesus as the Christ, this drawing from the X shape of Chi as a form of cross. Historically, Chi Rho has been cast into ancient coins and was used by the first Christian emperor Constantine I (aka Constantine the Great) on the shields of his soldiers as a defense in battle.



*A fancy design on the gold altar frontal?
No, it's the Chi Rho, ... and more.*



Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, signifying that God is "the beginning and the end," or eternal. The symbols were used in early Christianity and appear in the Roman catacombs.

This is not a fanciful construct, but has scriptural roots in Isaiah and Revelation.

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god." (Isaiah 44:6, RSV)

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8, RSV)



Unless you look closely, it's not obvious that this purple altar frontal carries the Alpha and Omega woven into the design of the cross.

This phrase is interpreted by most Christians to mean that Jesus existed from eternity (as the second person of the Trinity), and will exist eternally.

In Rabbinic literature, the word *emet* ("truth"), composed of the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, is "the seal of God". In Judaic tradition it carries a similar connotation as Alpha and Omega.

The **Alpha and Omega** symbols are often combined with the cross or with the Chi Rho.

david kennison

SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

While traveling a year ago, I attended Sunday Mass at another church in another city. I always like to arrive at a new church a bit early to have some time to take in the building and absorb the feeling of a different setting. I stepped through the door, got my bearings and was immediately greeted and welcomed so enthusiastically that you'd think I came bearing the Gifts of the Magi. What a warm congregation, I thought! After the service, many people came to say hello and invite me to coffee in the parish hall. I left that day, very impressed with that church and with those people.

I also occasionally attend another church in a different state, maybe only once or twice a year. I am handed a bulletin when I arrive with a "good morning," but that's it. After the service, I get a few cordial hellos, but most people go their way, talking animatedly with each other but not with me unless I initiate it. They don't remember my name and maybe they shouldn't be expected to. A beautiful building, but a different feeling.

The first church is St. Francis of Assisi, Meir Health, nr. Stoke-on-Trent, England. It was Fr. Paul's former parish. They didn't know who I was or why I was there, but it didn't seem to matter. I was welcomed in a way that made me want to return. The second church is one I regularly attend when I visit family. They are good people and I make allowances.

What happens when you visit another church? Do people welcome you warmly at the door or do they allow you to simply pass to your pew? What happens after the service? Do they ask your name? Do you just leave?

It's time to ask ourselves, "*How do we welcome people at St. George's?*" In my eyes, we are a warm and welcoming parish family. But are we warm to each other and not to visitors? Do we seek them out after Mass and speak with them and tell them how glad we are they worshipped with us? Do we invite them to the Great Hall for coffee and introduce them to others? If we don't - why not? If we don't, we have lost something.

God calls us to have the welcoming heart of Christ with persons the Scripture calls "strangers." Jesus says, "...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me..." Matthew 25:43

Without consciously trying, it's easy for us to focus on ourselves and our friends. Visitors are, after all, strangers to us. It's normal to distance ourselves, but this is not what we are called to do. To have the heart of Christ means to be truly open to each person we meet, especially those who God has brought to our door.

Greeting strangers isn't easy for most people, so I'd like to suggest a 3-minute rule. For 3 minutes after each service, look for newcomers and speak only to people who you don't know. Lest you think this is superficial, it can make a huge difference to people who are "church shopping." After all, look at my experience. The danger is that this might make some visitors feel uncomfortable. It is our job to sense that and know when to back off. People warm up at different rates, so be sensitive.

If you are a shy person by nature, be strong and remember that visitors may feel a bit awkward and uncomfortable. Be yourself and put them at ease, just as if they were a guest in your home. For they are.

Newcomers may feel strange after years of not attending church. They wonder if they're dressed properly and doing the "right thing" in the service. They may not know what book to pick up and when to stand, sit and kneel. It would be so easy for them to turn around and go home if they don't feel the welcoming voice and gentle touch of our congregation.

At its core, welcoming strangers is a little about dying to self. We may live in a world where self takes precedence in our secular lives, but as we are nurtured by Christ, we learn that it is not about us but about our transformation to become different people - welcoming visitors to our family in the Body of Christ.

With great affection, david

- TREASURER'S REPORT -



We have started off 2010 well. Through the end of February our pledge income is 27% above budget at \$23,205 versus a budget of \$18,173.

It is too early to gauge our total expenses, but there are some major expenses we face this year that are going to be a challenge. The Great Hall roof is going to need replacement which goes well beyond our normal maintenance budget. We also have become aware that the sexton's apartment, where Gerald lives, is overdue for some major restoration. One other important project that has been put off, and will probably not be addressed this year either, is the church steeple restoration. Unfortunately, these expenses come at a time when our endowment fund balances are down partly due to the recession, and partly due to the cost of the rectory repairs we made in 2009. Our Vestry is going to have to make some critical decisions about how to proceed through 2010 with these expensive projects.

If you have been attending services regularly, we encourage you to request a box of envelopes for making your contributions. This helps us to track the amounts given, and we in turn can provide you with a report at tax time to ensure that you can take a tax deduction for the amounts given. Please feel free to ask Fr. Blanch, David Kennison, Bob Paska, or myself if you would like a box of numbered envelopes.

I note that there are still a few boxes of contri-

bution envelopes in the narthex awaiting pickup by owners. If you don't currently have envelopes but have had them in prior years, please look in the church narthex to see if one of the boxes has your name on it.

Have you updated your wills lately? Do you have St. George's Church in your will? If you have not updated your wills in the past 3-5 years, it is very important that you have them reviewed in the very near future. Congress has allowed the estate tax to go away for 2010, but in 2011 it will come back at the one million dollar level. It is quite possible that if your will is designed to minimize estate taxes by passing the largest untaxed amount possible to your children, your spouse may come up with nothing if your will isn't worded properly. Please keep the church in mind the next time you do update your wills.

Jonathan Pearson

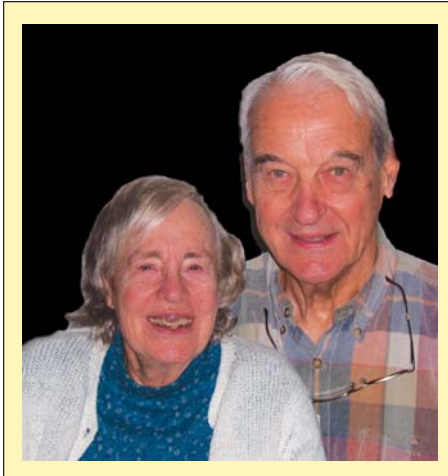
GARDENING NEWS

After a mild winter, it's with a sigh of relief that Rosemary Pannone, our gardener-ess extraordinaire, didn't suffer spring fever with premature digging - since cumulative snowstorms the last week in February would have made it a disaster. However, she has been busy working up a schedule for spring:

- #1 - restoring and updating the Memorial Gardens.
- #2 - pre-selecting plants needed for the new season from gardening catalogues.
- #3 - finalizing plans to participate in the Stockade's Annual Secret Gardens Tour (June 25th and 26th.)
- #4 - interviewing for a Garden and Grounds Committee Secretary. See Rosemary for details.

- VISITATIONS -

Devotion is a word used very often when talking about religion. However, like so many concepts, it is talked about much more than it is practiced.



Such is not the case with KT and George Schmidt. Since they moved into their Dorwaldt Avenue home in 1963, this couple has been devoted to their children, their faith, and each other.

Originally drawn to St. George's because it had "the best choir in town," KT says she grew to love the beauty of the Episcopal service. The Schmidt's four children - George (Niskayuna), Kit (Vermont), Philip and Sarah (both Connecticut) - were all raised at St. George's and kept KT and George quite busy. Still they found time to work on the Altar Guild, Aids Luncheons, and visit nursing homes doing Pastoral Care before it even had a name! The two have been constant fixtures at the Wednesday morning Mass. With nicer weather on the horizon, KT is really looking forward to celebrating St. George's Day when we parade through the Stockade.

Their devotion to each other is manifested in so many ways. Where you see one, you see the other. Whether it is out enjoying their favorite meal (breakfast), exercising at Sunnyview, enjoying their summer place on the coast or negotiating the aisles at St. George's, their devotion and love shines through.

So, when you next see KT and George, be sure to say "hello," but don't stand in their way as there is an omelette with their names on it waiting on Nott Street.

jim wingate

"CHRIST AND THE CHOCOLATERIE"

Fifty people signed up for "Christ and the Chocolaterie," a Lenten bible study by Hilary Brand that took Georgians, friends and neighbors by storm (literally and figuratively.) Like the post office oath of "...neither rain, nor sleet, nor snow..." class participants braved the elements to attend this original and innovative course.

While sipping a glass of red wine and munching on a decadent piece of 70% rich dark chocolate, we dissected the movie "Chocolat" that is based on Joanne Harris' best selling novel. Exploring issues about God, the world, and what it means to be human, there were five group sessions pertinent to these themes:

Giving up - the prelude to change

Giving out - the power of a gift

Getting wise - the possibility of change

Getting real - the power of acceptance

Growing up - the process of change



After first viewing the entire film, we watched extracts during each session and followed that with lively group discussions, exercises and meditation, suggestions for individual reading and related bible passages. Because of its popularity, Fr. Paul offered two classes - 11:15AM on Sundays after Mass and 7:00PM on Wednesday evenings.



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

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Editor: Lynn Paska

Layout: Bob Paska

Contributors:

- Gene DeLong
- Judy DeLong
- Rick Forshaw
- David Kennison
- Dottie Kennison
- Joan Pearson
- Jonathan Pearson
- Alice Polumbo
- Martha Smith
- James Wingate

The Vestry

- Richard Forshaw
- Ralph Fusco, Jr. Warden
- Christopher Henry
- Joyce Kapusta, Clerk
- David Kennison, Sr. Warden
- Daniel Machold
- Rosemary Pannone
- Marilyn (Lynn) Paska
- Alice Polumbo
- Michael Thiessen
- Barbara Wengrovius

Office Staff

- Donna Vrooman
 Administrative Assistant
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- Robert Paska
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- Gerald Cooper
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HOW TO BECOME A BETTER GEORGIAN

Volunteering is one of the most selfless acts. When you give of yourself, you're giving one of the most precious gifts of all: your time.

There isn't a Georgian among us who doesn't possess an expertise that would be useful to one of our ministries. And whether you can give an hour a week, two hours a week, or five, or more, or less - it is your gift of time that will help St. George's grow stronger, grow bigger, grow **together**.

We have a dynamic new rector who, in a few short months, has brought positive new vision to our church. We have elected parish leadership who give above and beyond. We have a dedicated congregation - old faces, new faces, returning faces - that support our mission statement. But, just being in the pews on Sundays is not enough. It is the same parishioners over and over again who get down to the follicles; get down and dirty; get the job(s) done.

"*We Are the Church.*" That is more than just our adopted slogan, it is a fact. As a church family, our goal is to worship together but it also should mean working together. No volunteer effort is too small to make a big difference in our church lifestyle.

Please, look over all the opportunities you have to serve God at St. George's. Then, get involved. **Volunteer.** Be assured, you will be welcome. And, you just might find a whole new group of friends that are fun to be around!