



OCTOBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

The Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life



A newsletter is intended to mark the important events that have occurred in the life of an institution or organization during a particular time span – a month, a season, a year. As in our own lives, the tendency is to talk about what we did, about the “kind of time it has been.”

Any one period of time in the life of a Church, as in our own lives, is not simply a repeat of the same month or season or year before with just different events to distinguish it. Each passage of time is unique: in what it calls from us; in how it affects our lives going forward – a distinct time of growth, the shedding of another shell in the life of an organic, living being.

In the Church, probably also much like in our own lives, within the passage of a year’s time we live out many “years” in one. There is the Fiscal year (the Church’s fiscal year corresponds to the calendar year); the Church School and the Choir year (usually, September through June); the Pledge year; and the Liturgical year (which begins with the first Sunday in Advent – this year December 2). Within the Liturgical year there are seasons: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. Each year or season is defined by an event – usually when something new begins, when something changes from the way it has been done before, when someone new joins the congregation, when something ends, when someone dies – each occurrence having a distinct and unique spiritual reality, quite apart from its mark on the calendar.

So, as much as it is the purpose of this newsletter to chronicle the “events” that have occurred in the life of St. John’s since June when I last wrote to you, as well as those to come in the season before us, my hope is that this newsletter also will offer us an opportunity to reflect a bit on what these events have meant and, hopefully, will mean spiritually in our life together as a community of faith.

What sensibilities have been awakened in us?

What demands have been made of our strengths?

What gifts have been given to us?

What has been revealed about what we think our life as a Church is meant to be?

Has St. John's grown as a more responsible and engaged member of the wider community?

Have we gained a better understanding of the theological roots, the tenets and mission of our beliefs as Episcopalians, and the rich historical and cultural tradition which the Episcopal Church represents?

Have we gained a deeper appreciation of the reason we have chosen to continue our spiritual journey in the embrace of the Episcopal Church as it is lived out at St. John's?

Has the time been one of spiritual "ripening" for us – a new attentiveness of mind, an alertness of heart, a fullness of spirit – as a community of faith and as individuals?

Reflecting on What Has Been...

In a little less than a month we will begin a new liturgical year. We anticipate the opportunity, once again, to immerse ourselves in the soul, sense and substance of the uniquely Episcopal version of the Christian life; to experience our Episcopal tradition, its liturgical patterns, its spiritual practices, its faith in God divinely manifest in Jesus Christ and the mystery of the Holy Spirit.

It is my hope that we will enter into this new year in the life of St. John's with a renewed commitment to engage in the work that God is calling us to do, first and foremost to be aware of the spiritual reality in all we undertake, a sense of spirituality that pulls us forward, beyond the dates marked on our calendars, spiraling higher and higher into the Divine Presence, "set free from time" to become one with the eternal and universal Holy One.

October 13, 2012.

On Saturday morning, October 13, Bishop Ian Douglas, in the peculiar language of the Episcopal Church, officially “instituted” me as the thirteenth – and first woman – Rector in this Church’s over two hundred year history as a worshipping community of faith. It is a date literally “etched in stone” on the granite tablet



that hangs just inside the side vestibule entrance to the Church. It is a moment etched in my mind, my heart and my soul as a profoundly moving, and powerful witness to the unexpected places that God leads us to serve him and you, his beloved people.

Whatever epitaph may one day be said over my bones, I’m beginning to think that “Never Say ‘Never’...” would be the most appropriate. When I began my career as a lawyer, I never thought I would be anything else, except maybe a judge. When I went to divinity school, I proclaimed loudly that I would never be ordained as a priest, that I would answer my “call” as a teacher of religion or as a consultant on ethics to business and government. When I became a priest, I said I would never serve as a parish priest, but rather live out my priesthood in a “blended ministry” (in the current “church speak”) where I could bring together my various experiences and skills as a lawyer, entrepreneur, manager and fundraiser in a position that would serve and benefit the wider institutional church – and, yet, here I am, *your* parish priest, duly instituted as *your* Rector. I emphasize the relationship of me to *you* and to *this* parish, as the defining and determining factors in my acceptance of the call to serve you in this particular place, and I am absolutely sure that this very special place is where God has called, and is calling me to serve Him and you, the people of St. John’s.

I know that many of you were physically present on the Saturday morning (in what seems now like a very long three weeks ago) when I knelt before the Bishop and my fellow clergy and all of you who assembled in the Church and made this vow. But, for those of

you who couldn't be with us, I want to reaffirm the prayer I made kneeling before the Altar:



“O Lord my God, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; yet you have called your servant to stand in your house, and to serve at your altar. To you and to your service I devote myself, body, soul, and spirit. Fill my memory with the record of your mighty works; enlighten my understanding with the light of your Holy Spirit; and may all the desires of my heart and will center in what you would have me do. Make me an instrument of your salvation for the people entrusted to my care, and grant that I may faithfully administer your holy Sacraments, and by my life and teaching set forth your true and living Word. Be always with me in carrying out the duties of my ministry. In prayer, quicken my devotion; in praises, heighten my love and gratitude; in preaching, give me readiness of thought and expression; and grant that, by the clearness and brightness of your holy Word, all the world may be drawn into your blessed kingdom. All this I ask for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.”

I am deeply grateful for the trust you have shown in choosing me to serve you as your Rector. St. John's is a blessed place and a

special gathering of God’s people. In the three years I have been with you, I have come to hold you and this place close to my heart. You have taught me much about love and patience and generosity of spirit – and the enormous possibility for healing and growth when a community earnestly desires, and is willing to work for what is good for one another and for the welfare of the whole.

No doubt you have come to know me better, as well. Many of you, probably, have discerned those “things” that make me “tick”: my devotion to meaningful liturgy enriched with good music – liturgy firmly rooted in the Anglican tradition but alive to the present; my abiding desire to sustain and deepen both my own and this congregation’s spiritual journey, lurching forward, sometimes sputtering and stalling, but, hopefully, prayerfully, always tending forward, spiraling higher; my devotion to beauty and order in all things, from the mundane (closets) to the monumental (the Church’s restoration); my unshakeable belief in the presence of God among us – often unrecognized and unseen; my passion for education so that we can better understand why we are who we are, do what we do, and believe what we believe – as people, as Episcopalians; and my love for the Church, for this Church, for you who are the Church; my impatience to be all that we can be “now” (unrealistic); and my deep gratitude (unending) for your patience, support, constancy and resilience as a community of faith, and your generosity (unbounded) with your many and varied gifts to the Church and the community.

I pledge my whole self to do all that I am able so that, together, we will make progress toward fulfilling the goals embodied in St. John’s Mission Statement, especially

- Continuing to seek meaningful ways to deepen and enhance our collective and individual spiritual lives and to provide a spiritual home expressing the best of the Anglican tradition;
- Strengthening and expanding our response to the needs of others in the broader community;

- Enlivening and enriching our understanding and appreciation of other faith traditions – where they are similar to our own, how they are different, and what they can teach us;
- Fulfilling our obligation to be good stewards of the gifts we have been given, especially in the restoration of our historic and beautiful buildings, and in the further development of a solid financial plan that will sustain the Church in the future;
- And becoming ever more mindful of our Christian duty –
 - to serve Christ in all people, loving our neighbor as ourselves;
 - to provide a spiritual home in the context of the Episcopal tradition in accord with the Book of Common Prayer;
 - to respond to the needs of others around us with our hearts and hands and financial resources; and
 - to strive for justice and peace among all people and to respect the dignity of every human being.

Consistent with this sense of our mission (see the Parish Website for the full text of our Mission Statement) and ever mindful of the spiritual nature of all we do, on **October 6** we inaugurated the Stewardship Season (which will culminate in our Pledge Drive for



2013 early in November) with a half-day seminar on the *Spirituality of Philanthropy* led by the Rev. Canon Charles Lafond. Canon Lafond is renowned in the wider church for his teaching and writing on the spiritual and theological principles that are meant to undergird, inform, support and sustain all of our efforts of philanthropy, the spiritual underpinning which affects our

stewardship of the gifts in their many forms that we are given, and are called to give to our church.

Looking through the prism of icons, Canon Lafond helped us to see philanthropy as an organic expression of our professed faith, a spiritual exercise that deepens our own souls as it works to sustain the missions to which we are committed. Canon Lafond offered us a new vision, gave us a new language, and nurtured a deeper understanding of the spirituality of giving.

And, of course, on **October 7** we celebrated ***Rogation Sunday*** and the bountiful harvest with the wonderful ***Blessing of the Animals*** in honor of St. Francis when numerous cats and dogs joined Church Cats, Izzy and Jerry, for a blessing accompanied by the Children's Chorus in a rollicking rendition of the traditional spiritual "Rise and Shine, and give God the glory."



On **October 3**, our service to the community expanded with the first monthly ***"Parson's Table"*** lunch where people from all over the wider Washington community are invited to join us for food, fellowship and conversation at no cost and without an agenda except the development of a stronger and broader sense of community. The first lunch was attended by twelve people who expressed their pleasure in having this time together. We expect the lunches to continue (and to grow by word of mouth) on the first Wednesday of every month. The next scheduled ***"Parson's Table"*** lunch will be held on **Wednesday, November 7** at 12:30 p.m. when Alan Murchie will once again be at the keyboard to entertain with a little light midday music.

The **Summer Food Festival** on **August 4**

accomplished many of our mission goals in one extraordinary day: it involved the larger community through the merchants, producers and artisans who participated in the market, and all the members of the community who came and enjoyed the music and food and shopping; it brought the St. John's community together in the planning and staffing of the day, and then in celebration of its success at the "Surf and Turf Clam Bake" – all to the soulful tunes of a toe-tapping blue grass band; and finally it contributed to the coffers that allow us to offer meaningful service and assistance to our neighbors.



The huge and generous response to the **Outreach Committee's September Back to School Back Pack** program was heartening and marked the first step in a major new expansion of our Outreach program.



Our striving for "wholeness" in body, mind and spirit has been enhanced by the addition of a **Pilates** class on Monday and Thursday taught by Martha Zaharevich, and a **Kripalu yoga** class, which is more contemplative in style and tone, taught by Doug Greene on Tuesday and Saturday – again, another kind of community outreach.

Looking Forward to What Is to Come...

We will continue the **“Monday Morning After”** informal discussion group that began meeting at 11 a.m. in the middle of summer to focus on the readings and sermon of the previous Sunday – and then to go wherever that and the Spirit leads us in our desire to expand our knowledge and understanding of things theological, spiritual, historical, cultural, etc....and to become aware of the great and varied gifts of knowledge and experience in so many among us.

Taking a cue from the enthusiastic response to the highly successful **“Pop-Up Concerts”** offered during the summer by Alan Murchie and his musical colleagues – **June 17** Courtenay Hardy, flute; **July 22** earlybird, an instrumental group focused on music from the medieval and renaissance periods, **August 15** Owen Young, cello; and **August 29** Andrew Garland, baritone – we will periodically be treated to similar concerts throughout the year, beginning with Courtenay Hardy on flute and Alan on piano on Sunday, **November 11 at 5 p.m. in the Parish Hall.**

A VICTORIAN MUSICAL AFTERNOON
SUNDAY NOVEMBER 11th ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
AT 5 In The Afternoon 78 Green Hill Road, Washington, CT

COURTENAY HARDY
FLUTE

Featuring

ALAN MURCHIE
PIANO

WORKS BY

KUHLAU HÜE REINECKE MENDELSSOHN BORNE



The formal St. John's Concert series will return in 2013, with a schedule featuring rising and established talent in the world of music.

November 21, at 7:30 p.m., St. John's will host the *Thanksgiving Eve Community Inter-Faith Service* with an Episcopal gloss and early American music, including the congregational, Covenant, Roman Catholic and Jewish communities.



On **Friday, November 30, and continuing on Saturday, December 1**, we will celebrate, in true St. John's fashion, the *23rd Annual Holiday Bazaar*, an event highly-anticipated by the whole community: great food, wonderful music, with hordes of friends for laughter and fun; fabulous "finds" to give as gifts, or keep for yourselves; and goods and services that will entice you to bid at the live and silent auctions.

And finally, as part of our intentional work at becoming more aware of the spiritual context of all that we do, but especially in the Anglican tradition of worship, during Advent we will offer Adult Forums that explore the spirituality expressed in our music and embedded in our liturgical form of worship.



On **Wednesday evenings beginning on December 5 at 5:30 p.m.** Alan Murchie will teach an hour-long course exploring the *"Music as Spiritual Practice"* – how to "read" a piece of music as we "read" a work of visual art; how to listen to a piece of music and understand what the composer is expressing and, most important, how our engagement with a piece of music becomes for us a spiritual practice.

On **Sundays at 11:30 a.m. on December 2, 9, and 23**, Mother McCone will offer a course exploring and revealing the underlying *“Spirituality in Anglican Worship”*. It is said about our liturgy – “Lex orandi, lex credendi” (roughly translated, how we worship, reflects what we believe). The shape of our liturgy has been intentionally structured (and, I believe, divinely inspired) to provide us an opportunity within each service to find hope, express thanks, exult in the joy of God’s presence. To experience its transforming power personally, we need to understand the spiritual and biblical roots of what, otherwise, would be merely rote recitation of familiar words.

Finally, please visit our revised website – still a work in progress to some extent – but already putting a more welcoming “face” on St. John’s...and send us your pictures and comments.

In all things and for all things I am indebted to our talented and dedicated staff: Isobel, Sarah and Jorge.

As your Rector, I will endeavor always to be worthy of your trust in this extraordinarily special and holy place.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan" followed by a small plus sign.

Susan

CALENDAR

2012

DATE	EVENT
November 7 at 12:30 p.m.	Parson's Table luncheon
November 11 at 5 p.m.	Pop-Up Concert featuring Courtenay Hardy (flute) and Alan Murchie (piano)
November 19 – 30	Bazaar preparations in the Parish House
November 21 at 7:30 p.m.	Interfaith Thanksgiving Eve Service
November 30 at 6:30 p.m.	Bazaar Preview Party in the Parish House
December 1 at 10 a.m.	Bazaar
December 2 at 11:30 a.m.	<i>Spirituality in Anglican Worship</i>
December 5 at 12:30 p.m.	Parson's Table luncheon
December 5 at 5:30 p.m.	<i>Music as Spiritual Practice</i>
December 9 at 11:30 a.m.	<i>Spirituality in Anglican Worship</i>
December 9 at 5 p.m.	Lessons and Carols for Advent – the Rt. Rev. Laura Ahrens
December 12 at 5:30 p.m.	<i>Music as Spiritual Practice</i>
December 19 at 5:30 p.m.	<i>Music as Spiritual Practice</i>
December 22 at 4 p.m.	Living Nativity; Greening of the Church; Carol Sing and sweet/savory pie supper
December 23 at 11:30 a.m.	<i>Spirituality in Anglican Worship</i>
December 24 at 4:30 p.m.	Early Christmas Eve Service
December 24 at 10:30 p.m.	Late Christmas Eve Service
December 30 at 10 a.m.	Patronal Feast Day

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2013

January 26 at 6:30 p.m.	Burns Night Dinner
January 27 at 5 p.m.	Iona Evensong
February 13 at 6 p.m.	Mardi Gras
February 14 at 7 p.m.	Ash Wednesday
February 24 at 5 p.m.	Taize Evensong
March 24 at 10 a.m.	Palm Sunday
March 28 at 7 p.m.	Maundy Thursday
March 29 at 7 p.m.	Good Friday
March 30 at 7:30 p.m.	Great Vigil
March 31 at 10 a.m.	Easter Day

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

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