

Reflections for the Journey

SAINT JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH • ELLICOTT CITY, MD

A Message from The Rev. Ann Ritonia

Dear Friends,

Let me begin by thanking all of you for making Rev. Jenni's last few weeks so meaningful. While I cannot speak for Rev. Jenni, the love and care I witnessed as you said your goodbyes filled my heart. What a remarkable community we have at St. John's! Rev. Jenni did a wonderful job supporting Children's and Youth Ministry, and her departure elicited many questions concerning how we will move forward. Let me assure you that our Children and Youth Ministries are of primary importance to St. John's and a pillar of who we are as a community of faith.

The mission of the Church as outlined in our Prayer Book is simply this: "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." We live out this mission at St. John's by being

a community of committed followers of Jesus Christ and all that this entails. Through prayer, formation, reconciliation, and service we deepen our relationship with Christ and with each other. Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has put it this way: "First, the church exists to worship God in Jesus Christ. Second, the Church exists to make new disciples of Jesus Christ. Everything else is decoration. Some of it may be very necessary, useful or wonderful decoration, but it is decoration."

As Christians we are a pilgrim people. We experience God through Jesus by the power of the Spirit, wherever we find ourselves in the world. To nourish and strengthen us for this earthly pilgrimage, our primary focus at St. John's will be on worship and formation, or what the church

has traditionally called, "discipleship."

For now, faith formation will be supported as follows:

- Rev. Stephen and I will continue to support all discipleship activities across all age groups (i.e., children, youth, and adults).
- I will support Denise Vesuvio and her work in Children's Faith Formation.
- Colleen Citrano, the administrator for Youth and Children's ministries, has been promoted to the position of Director of Youth Ministry.

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Rev. Ann's Message

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I have full confidence that with Colleen, Denise and Rev. Stephen supporting and leading our Children and Youth Ministry teams, our programs will continue to be healthy and foster the growth of our youth and families as followers of Jesus. Of course, none of this could happen without our current disciples, the committed group of lay leaders that spend time with our children and young people, modeling Christ's love for them.

There are many opportunities to practice discipleship at St. John's and for that I am grateful. To that end, Rev. Stephen will work with the Outreach Commission and I will work with the Stewardship Commission, as well as the Transformation & Social Justice Commission. Rev. Katrina will continue her work with the Pastoral Care Commission and all the activities surrounding their work of healing and reconciliation, in the limited hours she serves as Pastoral Care Administrator.

Regarding worship, the entire clergy team will lead us forward and continue to honor our Episcopal heritage. This includes (though is not

limited to) our weekly celebration of the Eucharist, individual and corporate prayer, transformative preaching, and supporting music, traditional and contemporary, that offers beautiful praise to God. Knowing that we are formed by our liturgy, we strive to create worship that honors God and strengthen and sustains us for service. This is how we as Episcopalians equip ourselves to make new disciples to witness to the world God so loves. This year it is my hope we will bring on a permanent music minister to be part of our worship team. I am excited about the possibilities that God has laid before us!

However, our focus on worship and formation is not without significant challenges. This year our pledging is not as strong as it needs to be, and we have not met our budget goal. Given this, I want to be completely transparent: with the current state of our giving for 2019, we will not be able to fill Rev. Jenni's position, have a dedicated chaplain for our day school, or hire a fulltime music minister this year. I wish this were not the case. That being said, I firmly believe God has equipped us to live into what it means to be the church in the 21st century.

The staff and your vestry, are considering the budget im-

plications decreased pledging presents. I invite you to reflect and consider more deeply how vou can continue or increase what you give back to God through the corporate ministry of St. John's. Your gifts of financial resources, personal talents, and willingness to serve are quite literally changing the lives of children, members of our community, and those beyond our church doors! Attend one Discovery Weekend, listen to the laughter and joy in the halls of our Parish Day School, experience worship on any given Sunday, or participate in a mission opportunity, and you will know what I am talking about. Imagine what we could do if every family that belonged to St. John's made a deeper commitment, including a financial offering, to our common life! Please know I am grateful for all of you that have made that commitment; for those that have not yet pledged for 2019, it is never too late. Please contact Kathy Hahn at khahn@stjohnsec.org if you would like to make a pledge for this upcoming year.

As we rely on God's guidance, St. John's will continue to transform and heal this world God has entrusted so graciously to our care.

Blessings, Rev. Ann+



40 Acts Do Lent Generously



Find a generosity buddy and agree to do 40 generous acts for Lent.	Cut down screen time and pay attention to the people around you.	Today is about positivity Try not to argue, disagree or interrupt. Only speak encouraging words	Start a giving jar and collect up loose change or donate some of your pocket change.	Be brave and pay a compliment to a grown up, or family member or teacher.
Give out some chocolate today.	Make a mega list of things that you are greatful for.	Pay for someone else's parking	Write a thank you card to people that help you.	Go on a prayer walk. Find places to stop and pray and enjoy the wonderous works of the Lord.
Look for additional ways to be GREEN. Recycle, fix something, turn off the lights, use less water.	Make a "Things I Like About You" list, card or book, for someone.	Take some flowers to a retirement home and visit some residents if possible.	Put together a few "Blessings Bags" a God Loves you note, toiletries non perishable food. Hand out to someone in need.	Choose an encouraging Bible verse and share it on social media.
Smile at strangers	Donate blood to help others.	Leave a thank you note to the garbage collector on trash can or to mail carrier in mailbox.	Volunteer at a local animal shelter.	Buy some Bibles and deliver to families in need
Read a book instead of watch tv today.	Learn about those who are less fortunate.	23 Smile at 10 people today.	Make a phone call to someone you not spoken to in a while.	25 Tidy up your bedroom and then do it for someone else.
Donate some food to the local food pantry.	Send an annonymous gift to someone.	Draw a heart and write in it all the ways to show love	29 Let someone go	Plan a fundraiser. Send the money to church or a charity.
Find out how you can help those who are homeless.	Give away clothes you no longer need away	If you buy a treat buy 2 and give the other away.	Get to know an older person	Make palm crosses and write thank yous to God on them.
136	7. /	7.0	3 Say sorry	Bake RISEN



For Children & Families at Lent

By: Denise Vesuvio, Director of Children's Faith Formation

God knows us well and gives us special moments to face faith within our secular life. Lent is one key time. The entire Season of Lent is for us to become reconciled to Christ, God and one another. It is a time to embrace the three R's in a constant and thoughtful manner as we prepare for the arrival of Easter and its message of redemption. What are the three R's?

Reflection: daily devotion to examine God's love in our day.

Redemption: atonement and forgiveness, and an affirmation that we have been given the benefits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection through baptism and participation in the life of the church.

Reconciliation: the mending of our relationship with God and the care we give to each other.

Is your family seeking to find a way to build a Lenten practice together? Incorporate a child-friendly version of the Examen Prayer— a form of an Ignatian Prayer and Wisdom.

Begin by identifying a regular time when you will be able to complete the following five steps together. Perhaps it is dinner conversation or part of the bedtime ritual. As you ask and complete the five steps each time, it will become an easy flow for everyone.

Step One – Gratitude: From God's love find and state the present that was given to you today. Say a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift.

Step Two – Petition: Ask God to give you strength and determination to carry out this examination throughout Lent as an exercise of grace and insight beyond what you are able to humanly do alone.

Step Three – Review: With God's help, review the day and become aware of where God's presence, guidance and love were with you. Likewise, become aware of what drew you away from God and God's intention for you. Finally, examine what your reaction was to each.

Step Four – Forgiveness: Ask God's forgiveness and healing light, a reminder of God's great love and respect for you. And thus, your heart may become less burdened.

Step Five – Renewal: With God's help and strength, look joyfully to the next day as a gift filled with possibility for living a life that is God's wish and promise for us.

We love because God loved us first. As early as our baptism this phrase becomes the foundation of our faith. Just look at a couple of questions from Holy Baptism. Do you put your whole trust in God's grace and love? Do you promise to follow and obey God as your Lord? Busy lives often draw us away from our promise and commitment to obey as well as to guide the children within the community of Christ.

It is in this Season of Lent and the inclusion of a family practice together that we strengthen our faith foundation. Reconciliation is given to us by God, "who reconciled us to himself through Christ." (2 Cor 5:18). Christ brought reconciliation to the church and us with this gift.

(From The Examen Prayer, by Timothy M. Gallagher, O.M.V.)

St. John's Youth Seek & Serve in Abundance

By: Colleen Citrano, Director of Youth Faith Formation



During our Baptismal Covenant, we are asked, "Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?" Our response is, "I will, with God's help." Our YAC (Young Adults in Church; 10th and 11th graders) and SWAAG (Seniors With An Awesome God: 12th graders) are living out this statement at St. John's. You may witness a pride of teens gathering on the terrace level on a YAC Ministry day, waiting to go out into the world and live out their Baptismal Covenant. Our YAC group rotates through various Ministries over five Ministry days during their program year. Our SWAAG youth have a Senior Helping Seniors program helping others throughout their program year.

YAC youth are out in the community serving a variety of people by:

• playing bingo with clients at the Catonsville Project PLACE homeless shelter

- doing light housework or yard work while visiting with our older parishioners
- volunteering at St. Francis' Neighborhood Center in Baltimore
- shopping for groceries for UMBC Retriever Essential bags for college students with food insecurities
- hosting ladies from the Arc of Howard County for a meal, games, and fun on a Friday evening
- serving in worship in All Saints Hall

And YAC efforts are not just close to home. This July, 39 of our YAC youth will travel to Almost Heaven Habitat for Humanity in Lewisburg, WV to work a week constructing homes.

SWAAG youth serve seniors by:

- helping with yard work, light housekeeping, and safety measures in homes
- making casseroles for the Casserole Ministry

• hosting Intergenerational Tech Tutoring sessions where parishioners can bring their smart phones, iPads, and laptops to receive help on how to work apps and programs.

Since offering more ministries and outreach for our older teens, we have experienced a rise in weekly attendance. Let's face it, our youth are busy. Between jobs, school activities, hobbies, and preparing for college, there is a lot to pull them away from church. We have our highest attendance on these Ministry days. Our youth want to come to St. John's and go out in the world with their friends to serve others.

"I love volunteering through the YAC and SWAAG ministries because they have allowed me to help others face to face. Getting to know these people has been the most rewarding part, and it has helped me grow as a person."

- SWAGG youth

By going out of their comfort zone and taking steps to serve Christ in all persons, our youth are living out their Baptismal Covenant. In God, all of us are loved and I see God's love being spread by our wonderful youth throughout these ministries!



One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side of the lake.' So they put out, and while they were sailing Jesus fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake. and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"

Luke 8:22-23

Anxiety & Lent

By The Rev. Dr. Katrina L. Grusell

The Biblical narrative is full of anxious people. Some live in fear under oppression and are afraid for their lives. Some are anxious as they struggle economically or socially on the edges of society. There are those afraid that change will threaten their power. Others worry about the chronic uncertainty of the future. Many fear that God has abandoned them.

Anxiety is a normal phenomenon in humans, as it is in all animals. People are hard-wired with anxiety as part of our protective fight, flight, or freeze mechanism. Without anxiety, we would not survive. While some people struggle

with anxiety as a psychological disorder, every one of us lives daily with a basic, chronic level of anxiety. Stress, crises, emotional responses, and uncertainty increase our anxiety to varying degrees based on our own reactivity and skills for addressing specific circumstances.

Anxiety affects our relationships. Fundamental to all our relationships is a tension between our own individuality and who we are in relationship with others, or togetherness. This is sometimes described as, "How do I stay me, in we?" The lower our individual anxiety, the easier it is to be clearly self-defined

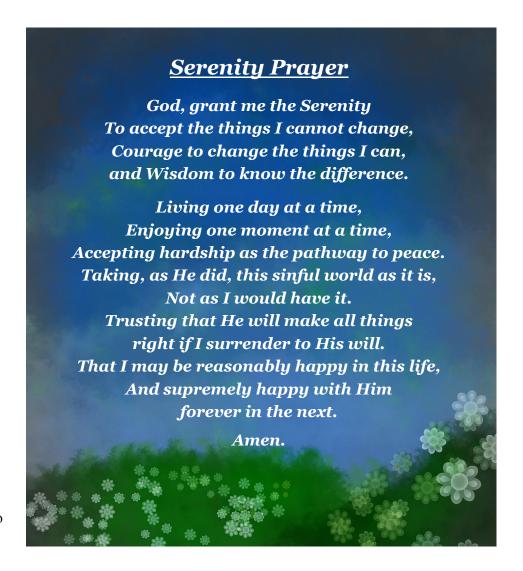
within a group or community. One can maintain individual identity, goals, and personal clarity while engaging with others who may or may not think or respond to circumstances as one does. This self-differentiation becomes more difficult in a group under stress or during times of uncertainty.

Lent is a time to examine ourselves and our relationships. Given that anxiety impacts all of our relationships including our relationship with God-it makes sense to examine our anxiety in Lent, both as individuals and as a congregation. How high is your basic, chronic level of anxiety? How does anxiety affect your relationship with others, with God? Do you have specific, positive ways to deal with stress in your life that deepens your relationships? How are you responding to the changes or transitions taking place in your life now, and in the life of our parish?

Over and over again, the Biblical narrative addresses the fear and anxiety of God's people. In the story of the storm on the sea in Luke, Jesus calms the storm and asks them, "Where is your faith?" But even that is not enough to allay their fears. Jesus' actions

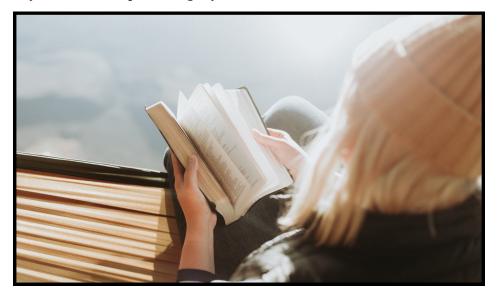
are so powerful and beyond their understanding, the story reports: "They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"

As we progress through the season of Lent, and its directive of self-examination, considering our own anxiety and anxious responses, and how they affect us and our relationships, is important. Regular worship, personal prayer and reflection, and a variety of pastoral supports can assist you as you address life's stresses and uncertainties. As our individual concerns come together in our changing life as a congregation during this time, it is essential that we remind one another of God's promise that the One who created us will never abandon us. That is why Jesus reminds his disciples over and over again, "Do not be afraid."



Hurry Up & Slow Down

By: The Rev. Stephen Hagerty



If you would ask me the virtue I covet the most (if "covet" is the right word when speaking of virtues), I would easily and quickly tell you that it would be "patience." And as only a person practiced in the habit of impatience would tell you, I am in a rush to develop this virtue! It is because of this that a phrase from our Ash Wednesday service impacts me so strongly. It comes from the "Litany of Penitence" (BCP, p. 267), which is the time where the church, in beginning its Lenten pilgrimage, invites all of us to deeper reflection—to take stock both personally and corporately.

As you and I already know, taking stock can lead to difficult truths coming to the surface. Since we normally only use this service once a year, this phrase always hits me with more than sufficient force: "We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives." It is that last phrase, "impatience of our lives." that almost always takes the wind out of me. I have spent most of my life consistently focused on rushing through it—always planning for what is next, often with no real appreciation for how much a gift the present is. And this even goes down to the most basic act of eating, always finishing a meal at seemingly twice the speed of my dinner companions.

The Season of Lent is the church's way of telling me (and telling you as well): SLOW DOWN. And like all good spiritual practices, this is easier said than done! I imagine you, like me, feel the pull of so many things

for your attention: social media, email, text, sports & school events that your kids need to be brought to, work responsibilities that seep into time outside of work, and the list goes on and on. But underneath all of these things both good and bad—vying for our attention, the Divine invites us ever so gently to slow down and be present. Frankly, it is an invitation we most need, vet can also morph into vet another obligation on our Lenten "To Do" List.

So, in that vein, I am not going to tell you to do anything this Lent. Not give up chocolate or swearing; not take on a specific practice or set of disciplines. No, none of that. What I am inviting you and me to do is just slow down and notice how we are already living in the world. To notice this without judgment or condemnation, but with deep awareness. In other words, to notice the "impatience of our lives." And in noticing that to see and feel how God may already be gently guiding and pushing us to be more open to this very moment.

This Lent may we discover the joy of having patience with our lives. We have all the time we need because we worship a God who quite literally has all the time in the world to be with us.



Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

These words from the opening Acclamation during Eastertide never fail to bring a smile to my face and fill my heart with joy. Given all that is happening in our world we can sometimes forget we are an Easter people. No one is immune from loss, grief or suffering, but as an Easter people we place our hope in the resurrection. God make all things new and we have the privilege of partnering with God in that work. Through the resurrection, Jesus broke the grip of sin and death over our world, and we are living witnesses of Christ's remarkable sacrifice. In this hurt and broken world, we the church are the balm that provides healing and hope. This does not happen magically, but by intentionality. It does not happen by just showing up on Sunday, but through prayer, study of scripture, receiving the sacraments, and service to one another. It begins at our Baptism when we are named

and called as Christ's own forever. It means that we worship together, share each other's burdens, take responsibility for the spiritual education of ourselves and children, model the Christian way of life, and witness to the community. It takes commitment, obedience, and discipline, and requires we be in this world, but not conformed to this world. At St. John's we live this out is so many ways. We are a community willing to step out of our comfort zone and bring the reign of God's kingdom just a little closer to this side of eternity. This is what it takes to be an Easter people. Jesus overcame death that we could move bevond fear and become true heirs and ambassadors of the kingdom of God.

We practice this kind of life not in isolation but together. We participate in this faith community to learn and grow, not only because of a hope and promise of the next life, but because Jesus, who showed us the way to a life of

blessing for ourselves and others, wants us to experience and witness our hope and joy now.

In the coming months, some special events illustrate, if nothing else, a celebration of the Body of Christ here at St. John's. Our annual meeting on May 5th and our parish retreat over Memorial Day weekend are two such events that will give us opportunities to share our stories, build our relationships, and grow stronger in our relationship with God. God has blessed our community in so many ways.

As we look forward to the future, our vestry will begin to set some goals to help us live into our call as disciples of Jesus. In the meantime, we continue to worship together, offer grace and patience during this period of transition, visit the sick, serve the poor, support and love one another, and "Be the Church." As a wise mentor once said, "The foolishness of the cross is our gift to share and celebrate, not only as an event of the past; it's also a hope for the future that impacts who we are now. It may seem foolish to others, but for us, by the grace and wisdom of God, it makes perfect sense to proclaim, 'The Lord is risen indeed!"

Blessings, Rev. Ann+









HOLY WEEK & EASTER SUNDAY

EVE OF PALM SUNDAY, April 13

5:00 p.m. Blessing of the Palms & Holy Eucharist, Gather outside of Resurrection Chapel

PALM SUNDAY, April 14

7:30 a.m. Blessing of the Palms & Holy Eucharist, Gather in front of the Historic Church

9:00 a.m. Blessing of the Palms & Holy Eucharist, Gather at the Labyrinth

11:30 a.m. Blessing of the Palms & Holy Eucharist, Gather in front of the Historic Church

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK, April 17

6:00 p.m. Centering Evening Prayer, Resurrection Chapel

7:00 p.m. Individual Rite of Reconciliation (also known as Confession)

(walk-ins will be received by the Clergy through 8:30 p.m.), Historic Church

MAUNDY THURSDAY, April 18

7:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Healing Prayers, Resurrection Chapel, Parish Life Center

3:45 p.m. Individual Rite of Reconciliation—also known as Confession

(walk-ins will be received by the Clergy through 5:30 p.m.), Historic Church

7:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist, Foot Washing, and Stripping of the Altar, Historic Church

9:00 p.m. Prayer Vigil (concludes at 10:30 p.m.), Resurrection Chapel, Parish Life Center

GOOD FRIDAY, April 19

10:00 a.m. Stations of the Cross, Lower Commons, Center for Ministry & Education

11:00 a.m. Stations of the Cross, Lower Commons, Center for Ministry & Education

12:00 p.m. Good Friday Prayers and Meditations, Historic Church (continues through 3 p.m.)

7:30 p.m. Solemn Good Friday Service with Passion Reading and Music, Historic Church

HOLY SATURDAY, April 20

9:00 a.m. Holy Saturday Prayers, Historic Church

4:00 p.m. Easter Eve Holy Eucharist, Rite II & Holy Baptism, Historic Church

8:00 p.m. The Great Vigil of Easter & Holy Baptism, Historic Church

EASTER, April 21

6:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II Sunrise service Labyrinth

7:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Historic Church

9:00 a.m. Festival Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Historic Church

9:00 a.m. Celebratory Holy Eucharist, Rite II, All Saints Hall, Center for Ministry & Education

11:30 a.m. Festival Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Historic Church

WORSHIP TIMES

Saturdays

5:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Resurrection Chapel, Parish Life Center (Lower Level)

<u>Sundays</u>

7:30 a.m. & 9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Historic Church

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite II, All Saints Hall, Center for Ministry and Education 10:15 a.m. Fellowship Time, Commons Areas, Center for Ministry and Education 10:15 a.m. Faith Formation for Children and Youth, Center for Ministry and Education

Please visit the Information Desk in the Lower Commons for room locations.

10:30 a.m. Faith Formation for Adults, Various Locations

11:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Historic Church

11:30 a.m. Korean Language Service, All Saints Hall, Center for Ministry and Education

Wednesdays

6:00 p.m. Evening Prayer with Centering Prayer, Resurrection Chapel, Parish Life Center

(lower level)

Thursdays

7:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Healing (2nd & 4th Thursdays), Resurrection Chapel,

Parish Life Center (lower level)

Morning Prayer (remaining Thursdays), Resurrection Chapel, Parish Life Ctr.

Monday through Friday

Resurrection Chapel, (Parish Life Center, lower level) is open 6:00 a.m. to midnight for individual prayer. Early Childhood & Lower School students gather daily for Chapel.



St. John's Episcopal Church & Parish Day School

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The Rev. Stephen Hagerty

Associate Rector for Discipleship

The Rev. Barnabas Lee

Assistant Rector for Asian Ministries

The Rev. Dr. Katrina L. Grusell

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Interim Organist

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All Saints Hall Music Coordinator

Denise Vesuvio

Director of Children's Faith Formation

Colleen Citrano

Director of Youth Ministry

Stuart Scarborough

Director of Facilities Operations

Yvonne Hollis

Parish Administrator

Tracey Stone

Director of Communications

Kathy Hahn

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Dana Walters

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Annie Kao

Finance/Development Assistant

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Beth Fyock Lissa Bounds Hammond David Sloper Brian Stone Class of 2021

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