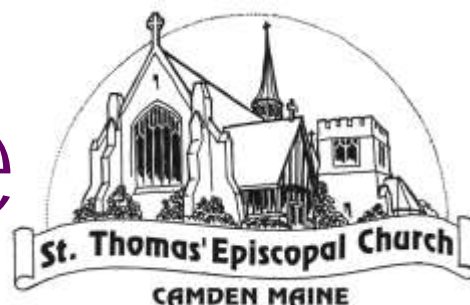


Chapter & Verse

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. THOMAS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH
MARCH 2017



The Heart of the Matter

The After-Coffee-Hour Adult Forum for sharing and discussion resumes on March 5th with a series called "The Heart of the Matter." For the five Sundays during Lent, the focus of our discussions will be God's love and grace that transforms our hearts and brings us into ever closer awareness of God's presence and into closer communion with one another.

During our hour together from 11:00 am until noon, as a basis for our sharing, we will read together a short passage from Holy Scripture or from other inspired writings about the state of our hearts. We begin from the notion that we are created in God's image and

that our hearts are therefore intended to be in the image of God's heart.

We will move on to address what we call "sin" that can distract and corrupt our hearts; how we discover that in some respect or other we have been drawn away from God's loving presence; what we can do for a change of heart; and how having healed and newly inspired hearts changes our lives. At our final gathering, which will be April 2, the Sunday preceding Palm Sunday, we will return to the topic of God's heart of love as we discuss the heart of Jesus during the last days of his earthly life and after his Resurrection.

We plan to gather in the Guild

Room, and if more space is needed, we can move to the Conference Room. Facilitators will be Br. Donovan Bowley and Rosalee and Chris Glass. To participate, the only requirement is to show up. Written material will be provided at each meeting for that meeting. Books and other resources for additional Lenten study will be available to borrow for those who care to do more study during the weeks of Lent. We hope to see you there!

—Rosalee Glass

Chris Glass

Br. Donovan Bowley

From the Transitional Priest in Charge

Dear St. Thomas' Family and Friends,

Writing this issue of *Chapter & Verse* reminds me that I have been with you a year, and what a wonderfully productive year it has been. As we begin to look forward to the end of Epiphany and hopefully, to piles of snow, we can feel a good sense of accomplishment in terms of the transitional journey we've been on. St. Thomas is well poised to begin the excitement of thinking about welcoming a new rector.

March is one of my favorite

months. The weather usually gives us a little of everything- some winter storms, bright, warmer sunny days, buds on trees, and of course, Ash Wednesday and Lent.

This year Ash Wednesday is on March 1, and we will have two services, one at 9.30 am and one at 5.30 pm. Both services will offer the imposition of ashes and Holy Eucharist. I hope that you will all come so that we can begin our Lenten journey together. This year, the ashes that we will be using on Ash Wednesday will come from a new source. They will be made

from last year's Palm Sunday palms by the newly formed Youth Group. The Youth Group is open to any young adults, age 11 and older. Parents, if you are interested in having a youngster participate please let myself or JoAnne Ryan know. The Youth Group will be meeting in Lent, once in Holy Week and once in Eastertide. See the article inside this issue for particulars.

As we enter into the penitential season of Lent, you will remember the

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Clergy Retreat at the Samoset

Amid one of the recent February snow storms Maine Episcopal clergy gathered for our annual three day retreat.

This year it was held close to home, at the Samoset Resort. We focused on Sabbath keeping, a practice that has been around for a long time, but one that is sadly often overlooked in our busy lives.

In the Book of Genesis we learn that time is Holy, a sacred creation of God. And that intentional pausing from work of all kinds; fallow time, is God ordained.

Instead of looking at regular Sabbath time as a "should" or a "must do", we were invited to think about it as "breathing spells for the soul."*. A way of tuning into our deeper selves, where the heart of God can be found.

Sabbath practices are intended to be life giving and practical. One path that was put forth during the retreat was pausing at regular intervals throughout each day--for breathing deeply, for meditating on God's love through a short passage of scripture or a spiritual reflection, and/or for reciting brief prayers. These are sacred pauses, reminiscent of the monastic Liturgy of the Hours.

But one does not need to be a monk or nun to embrace and be blessed by Sabbath! It is for all of us, and I believe it is an antidote to our often overly busy lives, where multi-tasking is the norm.

We were introduced to a wonderful resource which I highly recommend. A book called *Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully Through the Hours of the Day*, by Macrina Wiederkehr.

The author writes: "O Keeper of the Hours, Sacred is the pause that draws us into stillness. Nourishing

Noon Music in Lent

St. Thomas' Noon Music in Lent series returns for its eleventh year beginning on Friday March 3. This is an offering of one-half hour of music followed by a free lunch of homemade soup, bread and fruit and fellowship in the Parish Hall. The series' musicians donate their time and talent. A free-will offering is taken which will be donated to a local charity. Each program opens with a short noonday prayer.

This year's performers and dates are as follows:

March 3, 2017	Matthew Mainster, organ
March 10, 2017	Kathryn DerMarderosian, voice
March 17, 2017	Millie Crocker & Sarah Akin, harps
March 24, 2017	Suzanne Scott and Jane Schroeder, organ and piano
March 31, 2017	Howard Walen, organ
April 7, 2017	Douglas Beck, organ

Jane Schroeder, our Minister of Music at St. Thomas', started the series in 2007 as a way of providing Sabbath time, a pause, a time for reflection at noon during the six Fridays in Lent. Our parishioners make and donate soup, bread, fruit; serve and clean up.

are the moments when we step away from busyness. Teach us the wisdom of pausing. Reveal to us the goodness of stopping to breathe. Bring to our memory the truth that we are the temple out of which you pour your gifts into the world."*

Let's talk together about Sabbath keeping. May we be open to the renewal and refreshment that our God longs to bring about in each one of us.

—The Rev. Abby Pettee

Christ Walk Kids

Christ Walk Kids by Anna Fitch Courie is a spiritual fitness program designed to improve physical health and healthy choices as it brings us towards wholeness and wellness with

the good news of Jesus within us.

We invite young people 11 years and older to join us as we begin this program of spiritual and physical health.

We will be meeting: Sunday February 26, March 19 and April 9, from 10:45-11:45 am.

A copy of *Christ Walk Kids* and a pedometer will be provided. Get ready to chart your journey through the Lenten season.

I can be reached via email or phone 207-785-2726. Please call with any questions, or suggestions.

Blessings, JoAnne Ryan

* Macrina Wiederkehr, *Seven Sacred Pauses*, Sorin Books, 2008



The project to replace our aged dishwasher was not glamorous but sorely needed, as the photos above illustrate. Years of leaks had left the floor underneath badly rotted. The new dishwasher features a “booster heater” to ensure that our dishes are properly sanitized and the new vinyl flooring will protect the underfloor against accidental spills. The parish’s generous contributions to the Parker Laite Memorial Building Fund made this project possible.

From the Transitional Priest in Charge

Continued from page one

changes this season brings: we will open the Sunday service with the Penitential Order, the altar will be spare, and the music appropriate to Lent. Thanks to the newly formed Adult Education Team, there will be a weekly Lenten Adult Forum after the 9:30 service and all are most welcome to attend.

Speaking of music, we are so blessed to have the Friday in Noon Music in Lent program offered by Jane Schroeder and other musicians. This is a wonderful opportunity to come together weekly as we journey

toward Jerusalem with Jesus.

Holy Week, that mysterious and sacred week that is often both troubling and bittersweet, runs from Palm Sunday on Sunday April 9th, through Easter Sunday on April 16th. Having been with you last year, I know that this is a week of prayer, reflection and worship that St. Thomas’ takes seriously. The youth will join us for the Maundy Thursday meal, and we will be having both an Ecumenical Good Friday service at noon, and the evening Good Friday services as well. Plans are in the works for a shared Episcopal Great Vigil of Easter service on Saturday evening, April 15th. Stay tuned for details about Holy Week as we begin

the Season of Lent.

The Children will once again enjoy an Easter Egg Hunt on Easter morning, and there will be glorious flowers and music as we celebrate our Lord’s Resurrection. Like the spring crocuses beneath the snow, these moving worship and fellowship opportunities are just below the surface as we, your staff, begin our planning for the months ahead.

May you all be blessed as we enjoy this sacred time together. I am so very grateful to be here with you.

*Faithfully and warmly,
Suzanne +*

Vestry Retreat Considers Transition Issues

The incoming Vestry held a retreat for themselves on Saturday, February 4 at the Chestnut Street Baptist Church. This site was chosen as a change of scene from the usual surroundings of St. Thomas' Church. The Vestry is very grateful to its Chestnut Street neighbor for their hospitality and hopes that it can reciprocate in the near future.

The Rev. John Van Sicen served as the facilitator for the retreat. Rev. Van Sicen has served as advisor and interim priest to a number of congregations in Maine who are in transition as St. Thomas' is.

Following time for coffee, conversation and introductions, Rev. Van Sicen began the retreat with a theological reflection as a warmup using a passage from the gospel of Mark: "They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way." (Mark 10:46-52). Breaking into groups of two, participants were asked to share an experience from their lives when they felt God



and or Jesus offering himself to you in this way. Returning to the entire group, they shared what they had learned.

Rev. Van Sicen discussed the role of the vestry using the *Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church* as his reference text. He explained the authority of the vestry and the rector as they are defined. The rector's role is pastoral and he or she chairs vestry meetings. The vestry has financial responsibility for the church, including "encumbrance and alienation of property" (i.e., real estate), in consultation with the Bishop. In respect to calling a new rector for St. Thomas', the bishop has the final say and that no announcement can be made until all documents of agreement have been signed and verified.

After a break for lunch, Rev. Van Sicen briefed vestry members on the details of the transition timeline to calling the new rector. The Discernment Committee will recommend one candidate to the vestry to either accept or reject. Following the signing of the letter of agreement, the announcement will be made public. The work of the Discernment Committee will have concluded and the responsibility for wel-

coming the new rector will shift to the congregation. He stressed the importance of making the new rector, a stranger to both the parish and Camden, feel comfortable and welcome.

Next, Rev. Van Sicen asked vestry members for ideas on what they would like to see at St. Thomas'. These were posted on a large writing pad: *Vestry and the congregation work together; Strong Sunday School and youth group; Hire the right Sunday School coordinator; New membership and pledging families; Fundraising events; Bring in more people as parishioners; More volunteers; Stay close to Jesus; Greater visibility in the community; Public relations plan; Annotated bulletin.* From these ideas a theme emerged which was to increase opportunities for fellowship. Asking for practical solutions, two main ideas were brought forward which related to the task of making the new rector feel welcome: a rejuvenated coffee hour and the production of a photo directory and/or name tags. The group split into two subgroups to explore the issues.

In closing, Rev. Van Sicen urged the vestry to consider the creation of a team to welcome the new rector before the call is issued. He said the call to a new ministry needed to be met with care and sensitivity, as well as provide practical solutions to such issues as housing, names of medical and other professionals, introductions to the parish and outside community, and very importantly, a publicity document that will make readers say, "I want to meet this person."

The retreat ended at about 3:00 pm.

—George Jones

What's New for Sunday School and Youth Ministries at St. Thomas'?

Nursery and Sunday School

During Sundays of Lent the children will continue with their Sunday School lessons. Bianca is here at 9am and available for infant and nursery care and she assists in the classroom. During Lent the children will be hearing stories from the same lectionary as the grown-ups get on Sundays. In addition to their arts and crafts or outreach projects, they will each receive a booklet called, *"What We Do in Lent: A Child's Activity Book."* The booklet will come home and will offer all sorts of fun activities for families to do together during Lent. The children will also continue to join their parents in worship during The Peace and Communion and will then go with Bianca for their own snack time. Thank you all so much for bringing your children to St. Thomas!

Thanks to Catherine Kitt, and helpers, there will be an Easter Egg Hunt again this year after the 9.30 am Easter Service. If you'd like to help, please let Catherine know, and thank you.

Acolytes and Youth Group

First, thank you to all Acolytes who continue to serve so faithfully on Sunday mornings.

Secondly, St. Thomas' has a newly formed Youth Group for youngsters age 11 and older. The Youth Group will meet on the following dates: Sundays, February 26, March 19, and April 2. The Youth will have their meetings from 10:45-11:45 am while the adults have coffee hour and the Adult Lent Forum. Please meet JoAnne Ryan in the Parish Hall right after the 9.30 am service.

Patience

You may be heading into Lent not having had an epiphany - that is, you're not sure how God is working in your life.

Don't panic. Jesus' inner circle of friends didn't understand right away either. Like the disciples, you may need to work these things out with Jesus in your prayer. Ask Jesus to shed some **light in your life, to transfigure it....and then be patient.**

-Br. Jim Woodrum

Society of Saint John the Evangelist

Each participant will receive a copy of "Christ Walk: A 40 Day Spiritual Journey for Tweens and Teens" by Anna Fitch Courie. At the first meeting on Feb. 26, the youth will set up their space, The Upper Room, off the Parish Hall. They will also be making the ashes for the Ash Wednesday Services from dried palms from last year's Palm Sunday. On Sunday March 19 youth, will focus on their own Christ Walks during Lent and on Sunday April 2, Palm Sunday the focus will be on Christ's Walk through Jerusalem and the services of Holy Week.

All youth from St. Thomas are welcome to the new Youth Group. We are also planning for a fun time bowling, date to be announced. If you would like to be involved with the Youth at St. Thomas, please let Suzanne or JoAnne know, and thank you, as always for supporting our

Acolyte Ministry as well as our children and youth.

Christian Formation for Children and Youth at St. Thomas

We have a wonderful Sunday School and Youth Planning Team that works collaboratively to oversee children and youth Christian formation at St. Thomas'. The Planning Team is made up of parents, teachers, musicians and parishioners interested in supporting this growing ministry. Meetings are held every other month for about 1 hour and if you would like to join in, please let our Parish Administrator George know by calling the office. We are always looking for folks to help with special outreach projects, teaching, mentoring the youth and researching/planning curricula. Our hope is to create a comprehensive Christian-Episcopal Formation program for children from birth through high school and beyond.

Sunday School and Youth Formation are year-round at St. Thomas. We have exciting things to look forward to: more music in the curricula, Easter, a new Rector, the Bishop's Visitation on Sunday June 4, Confirmation, and our famous (!) Summer Program, Kids2Kids. Thank you everyone for all your prayers and support as we do our best to follow Jesus in and through the grace of the Holy Spirit at work in our parish family.

Faithfully,

Rev. Suzanne and the Sunday School and Youth Planning Team.

Growing in Love Towards Wholeness

At our recent Annual Meeting Presiding Bishop Michael Curry reminded us in a video presentation that we are the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement in the world. He made mention that a deacon stands at the intersection of the church and the world, and that when the gospel is read each Sunday a way of love is lifted up, grounded in compassion and forgiveness. The Word of God, incarnated in Jesus; liberating and life-giving. In our Gospel reading for today the closing verse seems in puzzling contrast to the heart and soul of Jesus' message, if we consider it in isolation. "Be perfect, therefore, as your Father in heaven is perfect." Perfect?--this seems the opposite of liberating and life-giving.

Matthew 5, 38-48 takes place in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, and the last verse about being perfect is preceded by Jesus' command that we love and pray for our enemies. Rather than being about striving for moral perfection, the Greek word for perfect, *teleios*, points to completeness, wholeness, and integration. It also reflects a promise. We are works in progress as human beings, growing in love towards wholeness, and in the end we will be made complete---fully able to love our enemies. Anglican theologian John Wesley had this to say: "Perfection is about complete freedom to love, not necessarily freedom from flaws."*

All of our lectionary readings for today touch on integrity; the character and heart of God forming and informing who we are, in the very depth of our being. In the Leviticus reading, verse two: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God are holy." This too could seem like a rigid demand on us,

Sermon by the
The Rev Abby Pettee,
Sunday, February 19

similar to the call to perfection— impossible to fulfill. But integrity is really about living from our center, where the generous grace, love and mercy of God abide. It's not so much about adhering to a set of black and white set of rules. And then we have Jesus as our model and our inspiration. Jesus came to us as an equal, a brother, breaking down the barriers and giving us a new heart, a new spirit and a new mind. Love shows no favoritism in the kingdom of God. We are offered an inclusive love that embraces all, including the parts of ourselves that we consider less than perfect — maybe even unlovable.

The apostle Paul asks in our Epistle reading "Do you know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you?" Imagine with me for a moment what life would be like if we really understood ourselves and each other as beloved temples of God? We would trust that God is forming each of us in holiness and in wholeness. It would be harder to bear a grudge against one another or to be critical in the face of our shared imperfection.

Listen for that still, small voice of Love, the late Henri Nouwen reminds us. We can affirm belovedness in one another, he emphasized, only by first affirming it for ourselves. For us as people of the Christian way, this path stands in welcome contrast to the urging we hear and see in the culture that surrounds us. Prove your worth, strive for perfection—do something relevant and important so that you can earn esteem. "Do not despair"

Nouwen writes, "thinking you cannot change yourself after so many years. Simply enter into the presence of Jesus as you are and ask him to give you a fearless heart. Rest and abide in his love. The more you feel safe as a child of God, the freer you will be to claim your gifts and your mission in the world." ***

Over the past few months I have had experiences within the life of my family that have challenged and changed me. This past fall I spent many hours at Maine Medical Center in Portland, with my husband Bill facing a complex cardiac situation. At first I tried very hard as his wife to do everything perfectly well. I learned all I could about his condition, so that I could ask Bill's cardio-thoracic surgeon the right questions. I took calls from Pen Bay Medical Center where I am Chaplain, trying from Portland to get pastoral support for patients there. And then one day I felt deeply exhausted, emotionally and physically. I went into the chapel at Maine Med and poured my heart out to God. The Holy Spirit met me there, offering me an invitation to be still and to rest in the love and peace that pass all understanding. "Follow me", Jesus said to me in that sacred space, and I will show you the way. I left the chapel realizing that I needed to fill up my own well, if I was to be there for my husband. I went to Mass at Mercy Hospital the next day, part of my path towards wholeness and healing. Sister Pat urged me to say the following simple prayer as I walked back and forth to Maine Med. "Help me to receive your love for me, O God." I did that, and then God's people did the

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* *The Journal of John Wesley* (1703-1791) by the Rev John Wesley Moody Press, Chicago, 1951

*** *The Life and Teaching of Henri Nouwen*, Daily Meditations www.henrinouwen.org

Christmas Fair and Pageant



The season of Christmas just past featured a robust Children's Christmas Pageant complete with live sheep from the Akin farm! The Sunday School children made many dozens of stars which decorated the church. Our annual Christmas Fair was held in the Parish Hall on December 3. Above, Br. Donovan Bowley and Ruth Tolman were just a few of the volunteers present.

Sermon by the
Rev. Abby Pettee
Continued from page six

rest. A good friend from home offered to be with me in early September for Bill's surgery, which turned out to be 12 hours long. The chaplains at Maine Med sat patiently with me in waiting rooms.

Saying yes to the grace, mercy and love of God transformed my striving for perfection into the wholeness and fullness of something much better.

God can set us all free to grow in wholeness, so that we can incarnate his loving, liberating, and life-giving presence in the lives of those around us. May it be so. The last verse of Matthew's gospel offers a very reassuring promise from our God: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

I offer the words of Bishop Michael Curry in closing.

"Now is the time to go. To go into the world, letting the world know that there is a God who loves us, a God who will not let us go, and that his love can set us all free." *Amen*

Calendar of Events

Ash Wednesday: March 1

9:30 am—Service of Holy Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes

5:30 pm—Service of Holy Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes

Sunday, March 18

11:30 am

Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen at Peter's Rockland

Sunday, March 26

1:30 pm—Service at Quarry Hill

Sunday, April 9: Palm Sunday

7:30 and 9:30 am—Holy Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Palms

Maundy Thursday: April 13

5:30 pm—Supper and Communion and Stripping of the Altar

Good Friday: April 14

Ecumenical Service at Noon (*details forthcoming*)

5:00 pm—Good Friday service in the Chapel

Saturday, April 15

The Great Vigil of Easter

St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, Belfast

Sunday, April 16

The Sunday of the Resurrection

7:30 and 9:30 am

Services of Holy Eucharist

Easter Egg Hunt follows 9:30 am service

Chapter & Verse

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. THOMAS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The Rev. Suzanne Colburn, Transition Priest in Charge ♦ The Rev. Abby Pettee, Deacon

VESTRY

Lucy Ebbert, Senior Warden ♦ JoAnne Ryan, Junior Warden ♦ Terry Mello - Treasurer ♦ George H. Jones - Clerk
Sarah Akin (2018) ♦ Frank Beane (2018) ♦ Br. Donovan Bowley (2018) ♦ Susan Fockler (2019) ♦ Edmund Hartt (2020)
Elizabeth Moran (2018) ♦ Suzanne Scott (2020)

RECEIVING TREASURERS

Bonnie Achterhof ♦ Pat Ayers ♦ Joan Bennett

STAFF

Jane M. Schroeder, S.M.M, Minister of Music ♦ George H. Jones, Parish Administrator