

The Messenger

FEBRUARY 2021

A NOTE FROM THE RECTOR

by The Rev. Carolyn H. Eklund



175 Years of Worship
and Service

*“Rend your heart
and not your garments.
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
and he relents from sending calamity.”* Joel 2:13

Every year at Grace Church, Plainfield, NJ my former parish, we spent months planning for our celebration of Black History Month. During February, we read plays written by Black playwrights and novels like “The Invisible Man” by Ralph Ellison. As a racially mixed, but predominately Black parish, we had energetic conversations about these works that focused on social, intellectual, and spiritual issues faced by Black people.

One year we invited a friend of a parishioner who had helped lead the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa. Our conversation explored truth and how to reconcile racial inequality in the United States. We invited Black artists to exhibit their works. Black History Month culminated in a banquet featuring foods of the African diaspora. Members from the Caribbean, Africa, the United States South, and the New York and New Jersey area created a sumptuous banquet during which we heard from notable African-American speakers.

During worship in those Black History Month Sundays, members of the parish offered dramatic readings from the book, “Voices From Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives” edited by Norman R. Yetman. These are original slave narratives collected by the Federal Writers’ Project published in 1941. That project included over 2,000 slave interviews that captured in their own words what it felt like to be a slave.

As I’ve read through some of the slave narratives, I am brought to tears by the matter-of-fact way in which some of the slaves express the terrors they suffered at the hands of their owners. I remember distinctly one story a slave woman told of being the house servant of a Hillsborough, North Carolina minister and his wife. She served his wife and also worked in the kitchen. But she was beaten and tortured regularly by the master at the insistence of the wife who was jealous of her.

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A fugitive slave named John Little “...who had escaped to Canada...conveyed the realities of the existence that he fled: ‘Tisn’t he who has stood and looked on, that can tell you what slavery is – ‘tis he who has endured.’” Most of us have been “onlookers” through our history books, having taken a “culturally acceptable” way of observing slavery and racism from a distance. However, for me this Lent, I’m called to listen to and stand with those “who have endured”...indeed, those who are enduring.

Giving up something for Lent is a practice that helps us reflect on our relationship with God and our neighbor. Our nation has seen the gaping disparity of coronavirus infections and deaths, economic, medical, and housing gaps between people of color and the rest of the country. I wonder if this Lent we revisit our country’s history and the shameful sin of slavery of our past, and then commit ourselves to “giving up racism and injustices” that reinforce one race’s dominance over the others.

Here’s how we can begin. We can begin to turn to our siblings of color and listen with compassion to what they tell us. Perhaps you wish to do some reading for a start. I recommend for your Lenten reading: “Jesus of the Disinherited” by Howard Thurman, “Waking Up White” by Debby Irving or “White Like Me” the 2004 book by Tim Wise. You may remember that our parish is embarking on a parish-wide and Brunswick-wide program developed by the Episcopal Church called Sacred Ground. St. Paul’s began this program in the summer with three groups that met by Zoom over the 10-session program. Sacred Ground is a film and reading-based program that explores race and faith. Please feel free to contact any of the facilitators who led these groups, Jane Covey, Andree Appel, Rev. Mary Lee Wile, Pat Ryan, and Meghan Roberts.

Because this program is so compelling and transformative, St. Paul’s through a remarkably generous gift given by Caroline Russell will be able to expand this learning into the community of Brunswick and beyond. I invite you to connect with Caroline to learn her story and the power of transformation she experienced through her exploration of race and faith through Sacred Ground. Please help me thank Caroline for her vision and extraordinary generosity.



Please read further in this newsletter and answer God’s invitation to repent and return to God. With purity of heart and amendment of ways then, may we join the call to observe a holy Lent and life that gives up racial injustice for good.

With love and friendship in Christ,
Carolyn+

ASH WEDNESDAY AT ST. PAUL’S

Ash Wednesday is just around the corner. Please join your parish and invite friends and family to our observance February 17, 2021. At 10:00 a.m., we will meet in the St. Paul's parking lot to bless the ashes for individuals to place on your forehead. You will receive a small container of consecrated ashes and a bag that contains a Lenten prayer and the exceptional St. Paul’s Lenten Devotional book. You may call the Parish Office now to drop by and pick up your book.



St. Paul's Episcopal Church
 Brunswick, Maine

"Hold fast to that which is good."
 1 Thessalonians 5:21



Lenten Meditations
 2021

Join us at Noon for the digital Ash Wednesday Liturgy with music on Facebook Live.

Thank you, Pam Nugent, who initiated the Lenten Devotional writing process before Christmas to account for pandemic delays and for her editing together with Rev. Mary Lee Wile and Carolyn Farr, who assisted in the editing and layout. Thank you, Nancy Whitehouse, for your connection with the professional printer and for delivering them to St. Paul’s. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. Join us for this special day!



Holy God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth; grant that these ashes maybe to us a sign of our mortality and a reminder that we do things we regret. Bless us with your mercy and turn our hearts to receive your healing love.

Amen.

ZOOM LENTEN PROGRAM OFFERED BY THE SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST

by Pam Nugent, Adult Formation



Believed to be the last Gospel written (by whom is a bit of a question, although many believe that John is John the son of Zebedee), the Gospel of John is beloved by many. Because it is not one of the Synoptic Gospels, which tell what Jesus did, John's Gospel dwells more on who Jesus is, most obviously in his "I am" statements. The author's self-proclaimed purpose in writing this Gospel is explained in John 20:30-31: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Many people love John's Gospel for its beautiful poetic language, its "spirituality of love and intimacy," and its frequent use of symbolic language and metaphors, but those very things that are unique about the Gospel also can make it difficult to understand.

The Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE), an Episcopal monastery in Massachusetts, is offering a Zoom "eight-week retreat and course of study" that "will provide an overview of the Gospel of John and introduce participants to its major themes." Br. David Vryhof is the presenter. Here are all the details you need to know to sign up.

Registration: <https://www.ssje.org/prayingjohn/>

Dates: Tuesdays—February 9, 16, 23, March 2 (not March 9), 16, 23, 30, April 6

Time: 7:30 p.m.-8:15 p.m.

This is such a special opportunity, and it's free. I hope many of you will participate.



Zoom Soup and Scripture Chat

Third Sundays from 4:00 -5:00 p.m.

Join us to eat your warm soup and to chat over a Scripture passage

February 21, Mark 8:31-38

March 21, Mark 11:1-11

A link will be in the St. Paul's weekly email.

Meeting ID 966 1711 1762 Passcode church



Zoom Hymn Sings

First Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m.

March 3

A link will be in the St. Paul's weekly email.

Meeting ID: 895 0389 3668 , Passcode: 520194



The Sundays of Lent

February 21 The First Sunday of Lent

9:30 am Family Worship

10:30 am Spiritual Eucharist, with The Great Litany, Facebook Live

February 28 The Second Sunday of Lent

9:30 am Family Worship

10:30 am Spiritual Eucharist, Facebook Live

March 7 The Third Sunday of Lent

9:30 am Family Worship

10:30 am Spiritual Eucharist, Facebook Live

March 14 The Fourth Sunday of Lent

9:30 am Family Worship

10:30 am Pre-recorded Diocesan Spiritual Eucharist

March 21 The Fifth Sunday of Lent

9:30 am Family Worship

10:30 am Spiritual Eucharist, Facebook Live



MY STORY OF GOD'S HEALING PRESENCE

by Sarah Arnold, with introduction by Pam Nugent, Healing Prayer Team

This is the third of several healing stories that the Healing Prayer Team is eager to share with you. The stories and writers are all different, but they all speak of God's healing presence in the life of the author. Because the accounts have inspired us and encouraged us, we want to share them with you.

In the Christmas letter I send to friends once a year to keep in touch, I said that 2020 was the most difficult year of my adult life. I said this because, although I had just turned ninety, it was the first time I had experienced significant health problems. It is true I had a major depression when I was nineteen, and that was no fun at all. In fact, it left such an impression that I wrote a book (*Faith and Madness*) about it late in life to try to understand why it had happened. I used to say that I never get sick, that I just have accidents, and I have had some good ones. Yet in thirty-five years of private practice in New York City, I had only two sick days, and one was for food poisoning. I think I felt a little smug about my good health, which was not my own doing, just my good fortune. The truth is, I never learned how to be sick.

Then on April 26, 2020, I discovered that this good health could change in an instant. Settling down one Sunday to enjoy St. Paul's worship service virtually, with my coffee mug and iPad, I decided to get a glass of water. On the way out of my parlor, I tripped on something, the leg of a love seat most likely. I did not see it coming at all, so instead of falling gently, which I can do if I feel myself falling, I hit the floor like a brick. When I went to get up, I knew I had broken my hip.

On my good knee and two hands, I crawled to the phone in the parlor and dialed 911. Waiting for the EMS, I looked out the window and said to myself, "This is the worst predicament you have ever gotten yourself into." Something told me it was going to be a long time before I could go on the walk I had planned for that afternoon.

At that moment I was not praying or asking God for help. I was angry with myself for falling and felt that I had done this to myself. Nevertheless, I believe God was watching over me. I was assigned an excellent surgeon at Mid Coast Hospital, Dr. Lisa Khoury. I would have surgery the next day, Monday. I then called my two sons to tell them. As I went into surgery, my son Chris was on the phone with Dr. Khoury. I heard her say to Chris, "She's going to do fine because she's so healthy." Even she recognized my good health. Monday is the

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day I see all my psychotherapy patients, remotely now, so I had texted all who had smartphones. Coming out of anesthesia, I realized I had not called the one who did not have a smartphone. It was just the time of her appointment. I told Dr. Khoury I needed my cell phone to call a patient. She said, “Find the number and I will call her. All you have to do is get better.”

I believe my hip would have healed quite nicely except for the one health problem I do have, osteoporosis. I was in good spirits and pleased with my progress when, four weeks into my recovery, I had a compression fracture of a T11 vertebra. The physical therapist was at my house when my back suddenly went into spasm. It felt like my whole back was on fire, a steady pain that would persist unabated for three months. The only time I was not in pain was lying flat in bed, so fortunately I could sleep. However, getting up from a lying-down position took all the willpower I could muster. Getting dressed now took two hours because I had to rest between each part of the process—take a shower, rest; put on clothes, rest; dry hair; rest—all the while in pain such as I had never experienced before.

In addition, something had happened to my digestive system. Pain medication gave me stomach pains almost as bad as my back pain. I had no appetite. Even the sight of food was repellent. Before long I had lost 14 pounds, and I had only weighed 105 to begin with. I felt I was fading away and was not going to get better. I still read the Lectionary every morning, and, if I prayed, I said to God, “Either heal me, Lord, or take me home to be with you and with Charles. I cannot live this way. It’s no life at all.” I could not even read a book because of pain. That all this happened so suddenly is what made it so intolerable. In four weeks I had gone from a healthy person enjoying life to one with hip pain, severe back pain, abdominal pain, and no appetite whatsoever. Like the movie *Groundhog Day*, every day was a struggle to get through, have a night’s sleep, and get up to begin the same routine all over again. Despite my dark feelings, I did get up every day, dressed, forced myself to eat, did my exercises, and continued to see my clients. COVID-19 made getting help extra difficult. I had to plead to see the neurosurgeon for my back and then plead for an MRI he required before he saw me.

Friends at St. Paul’s were unbelievably there for me. Joan Reynolds, Karen Rienert, Tom Nugent, Macauley Lord, and Terry Howell gave me rides to

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doctors. Ellen Hall and Roberta Hipkins brought meals, and more people than I can name, especially Pam Nugent, called me numerous times. Because of COVID-19, I could not get in-home health care. My wonderful friend, Carol Thomas, volunteered to come three hours, three days a week. She was a godsend. She got my mail and groceries, made food, and brought bread pudding she had made at home, one food I could eat. Despite all this loving care, I was a grumpy, miserable patient. Carol was undeterred. She never tried to talk me out of my mournful feelings. She seemed to understand that I was mourning the life I had just lost, a life in which a few months before I had taken a trip to the Greek Islands and walked two to three miles a day and, even more recently, hopped on a train to Boston to take my granddaughters to the Boston Symphony's Casual Fridays where they had a buffet and the girls could try out instruments. I feared I would never do these things again. In addition, I felt incredibly guilty for being a burden to my sons for the first time ever. Carol just listened and offered to pray with me. I accepted because it was hard to pray for myself.

Another source of help were the meditations of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who went up against Hitler and paid with his life. I read one or more of these with the Lectionary. I came to a series of meditations in which he stressed that suffering is part of the Christian life. These helped. Eventually, I did begin to get stronger. I have now regained much of my former independence. I can drive, cook, and do laundry. Walking any distance is difficult, but Dr. Khoury says that I will walk that two to three miles again. I was afraid that I could not continue to live in my house, but now I know I can. I think I could hop on that train to Boston, too, if it were not for COVID-19. Almost nine months out, I am enjoying my life again. I attribute these gains mainly to the prayers of others. Jesus often healed people who could not ask for healing for themselves. I believe that is what happened to me. I still have a way to go, but I am so grateful!



Holy Week 2021

- **Palm Sunday**, March 28
- **Monday-Friday**
 - Celtic Morning Prayer 7:30 am
- **Monday - Wednesday**
 - Celtic Evening Prayer 7:30 pm
- **Maundy Thursday**,
 - Spiritual Eucharist 7:30 pm
- **Good Friday**,
 - Good Friday Liturgy, Noon
- **Easter**, April 4



BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Happy Birthday

Shirley Arnold 2/1

Tom Nugent 2/2

Phil Gilliam Cuffee 2/3

Dan Warren 2/4

Stephen Chandler 2/5

Charles Priest 2/7

Kevin Wilson 2/11

Carol Bondy 2/12

Ellis Taylor 2/12

Joanna Brown 2/13

Ada Moore 2/15

Anne Springer 2/15

William Nicita 2/18

Eleanor Steele 2/19

Helen Nicita 2/21

Sue Nickerson 2/21

Karin Jackson 2/27

Carolyn Farr 2/28

Thomas Kelley 2/28

Happy Anniversary

Alan & Ellen Shaver 2/1

Bronda & Al Niese 2/5

Pat & Tom McCabe 2/18



The Messenger is published monthly, excluding January, and with a combined July/August issue. It is emailed to the parish. Paper copies are available at the church for those who prefer them. It is also mailed to those who do not have email. **Please send submissions for the March issue by February 19.**

Articles may be emailed to stpauls@stpaulsmaine.org

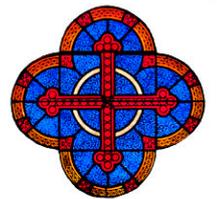


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- Jan DeBlieu, Junior Warden
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- Susan Tyler, Parish Administrator
- Carolyn Farr, Administrative Assistant
- Jane Redlon, Nursery Caregiver
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