

November 2016

St. John's Eagle

The Newsletter of St. John's Episcopal Church


Advent/Christmas in Perspective

By The Rev. Barb Schmitz, Interim Rector

The Advent/Christmas/Epiphany cycle is upon us. The worship, music, and Scripture readings are designed to focus our attention on heaven and hell, death and judgment, John the Baptist, Mary and Joseph, and the birth of Jesus.

It is easy to forget that Jesus was born into a world in chaos, a world of darkness. The first reading for Christmas Eve speaks not of jingle bells and chestnuts roasting on an open fire, but of "all the boots of the trampling warriors and all the garments rolled in blood" (Is. 9:5). Until the recent revision of the lectionary, that particular verse was omitted. I am glad it was put back in. I have even preached on it Christmas Eve. Because we don't "get" Advent and Christmas and the stupendous news of the birth of a Savior unless we understand that the world at the time of Jesus' physical incarnation was a mess; no visions of sugar plums danced in anyone's heads. People were out of options. They needed



nothing less than God's only begotten Son to break into their lives. And the good news is that he did, and he still does..."no ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in" (Hymnal #78, O Little Town of Bethlehem). 

Save These Dates!

December 11	Advent Festival of Lessons & Music
December 24	Christmas Eve services at 4:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.
December 25	Christmas Day service at 10:30 a.m.
January 1, 2017	Holy Name Day; one service at 10:30 a.m.
January 6, 2017	Epiphany
January 8, 2017	First Sunday in Epiphany
January 22, 2017	St. John's Annual Meeting; one service at 10:00 a.m.
March 1, 2017	Ash Wednesday


Interim Rector Update

By The Rev. Barb Schmitz, Interim Rector

There is usually an uptick in energy when the pilot's voice comes over the loudspeaker and says, "Buckle your seatbelts, we have begun our descent." It is time to finish your peanuts and Pepsi, put your seat upright, fasten your seatbelt, and prepare for landing.

We are roughly in the last third of the interim period. We are completing many projects, especially having to do with the physical appearance of the church and parish hall, inside and outside. We are also finishing up normal interim tasks in order to prepare for a new rector. The Search Committee

is now in the candidate discernment phase of their work. On November 28, our new weekday sexton, Chuck Merrill, came on board. Chuck has a maintenance and building background and I know he will lovingly take care of the church's physical facilities.

Still ahead of us are the annual meeting, the election of lay leaders for 2017, and continuing to strengthen the relationship with the key ministry we support, Loaves and Fishes. St. John's is on course. So fasten your seatbelts, and keep praying for God's guidance and direction. 

Update from the Senior Warden, Advent/Christmas 2016

By Susie Backstrom

As we head into Advent, I'd like to share some updates on what's been happening at St. John's.

Building Work

We've continued with lots of progress on property improvements! Here's a summary of what recently has been finished:

- Repairs to the walls in the parish office, the children's chapel, and the entry way to the parish hall and parish office – deteriorated plaster work was replaced and the walls were repainted.
- Sacristy cabinets have been replaced and the walls repainted.
- Leaking gutters replaced.
- Parking lot re-sealed and re-stripped.
- Significant water damage caused by a leaking toilet in the basement Sunday school rooms is in the process of being repaired (this is covered by insurance).
- Landscaping has been designed and installed in front of the church building.

Building work still to come: replacement of the flooring in the children's chapel and the entry way to the parish hall and parish office; landscaping at the rear door to the parish hall; and, last but not least, repairs to the stained glass windows.

If it seems as if many, if not all, of the senior warden's reports lead off with updates on the building repairs and renovations, that is because... they do! Your Vestry and wardens are also concerned with supporting St. John's ministries and

people-oriented activities, but we realize the parish made a big investment in the future of our building by its generous pledges to the capital campaign. We hope we are keeping you abreast of what's been completed and what remains on the drawing board. Once we receive estimates for the stained glass repairs, we will have a clearer picture of what will be available to spend on growing existing ministries and launching new ones.

Rector Search

Information about the status of the rector search comes from the Search Committee and its chair, Marcia Baum. There usually is a short report in the Sunday service bulletins. I want to take the opportunity here to acknowledge what a gift the parish has been given in your fellow parishioners who form the Search Committee. We could not hope for a better group of people to be serving in this role. Please keep them in your prayers.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting will be held Sunday, January 22, 2017; there will be one service that Sunday, starting at 10:00 a.m. Everyone is invited to attend the meeting, which will be held following the service. This is an exciting time for the parish, and we encourage your attendance at and participation in the annual meeting. Remember, however, that if you intend to vote at the annual meeting, our diocesan canons require you to be baptized, a member of St. John's, an adult, a regular attendant at worship here, and a financial contributor to the parish for at

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Update from the Senior Warden, continued from page 2.

least the prior 12 months. Being a member means that, if you have not been a lifelong member of this parish, you will need to have formally transferred your membership to St. John's from the last church you attended. Since transferring membership takes some lead time, please contact the parish office now if you want to have things in place in order to vote.


Sunday Selfies

As you may know, we are initiating a process in which the tasks formerly handled by a sexton on Sunday will be carried out by parishioners. These tasks include unlocking the church, turning on lights, making coffee, setting out coffee hour things, cleaning up after coffee hour, and locking the church. We will continue to have a sexton during the week, but, on Sundays, we are going to "do for ourselves." This, in fact, is what many Episcopal churches do already! I will be developing a schedule of parishioners to do this. If you would like to take on one of these duties for a short while, on a rotating basis, please contact me or leave your name with Sarah Richtmyer in the parish office. You can volunteer to do something once a

month, once a quarter or any variation of this.


Doing for Ourselves

Look for an announcement of an initiative in which each and every one of us is invited to volunteer to undertake one small task around the church. Your Vestry realizes it benefits all of us to participate in church life. We want to widen the circle of involvement and encourage engagement by everyone. No task is too small. Some examples of tasks include dividing the altar flowers after the service so that small bouquets may be taken to shut-ins; taking one of the small bouquets to a shut-in; turning off all the lights in the sanctuary each week after the last service; picking up stray bulletins, etc. from the pews after your service; washing and ironing some of the chalice purificators; dusting around the sanctuary. This list is only limited by your imagination! I wish I could think of a snappy name for the initiative...maybe coming up with one can be something one of you can do!

Blessings to you and yours! Peace be with you. 

Vestry Bulletins


At its meeting on November 28, the Vestry considered and/or took action on a number of points of interest:

- Discussed the preliminary budget, which will be voted on at the next vestry session and presented at the annual meeting.
- Noted with special interest the report of the Search Committee, whose work is on-track.
- The Wednesday night contemplative prayer group is planning a prayer series focused on social justice saints.
- Approved an updated version of St. John's personnel policy; associated with that, they also approved a renewal of our Tompkins County Living Wage Certification.
- Commenced plans for a vestry retreat in February and decided to move the January vestry meeting to January 30, in consideration of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday and the annual meeting, which is set for January 22.
- The next vestry meeting will be on December 19 at 6:00 p.m. 

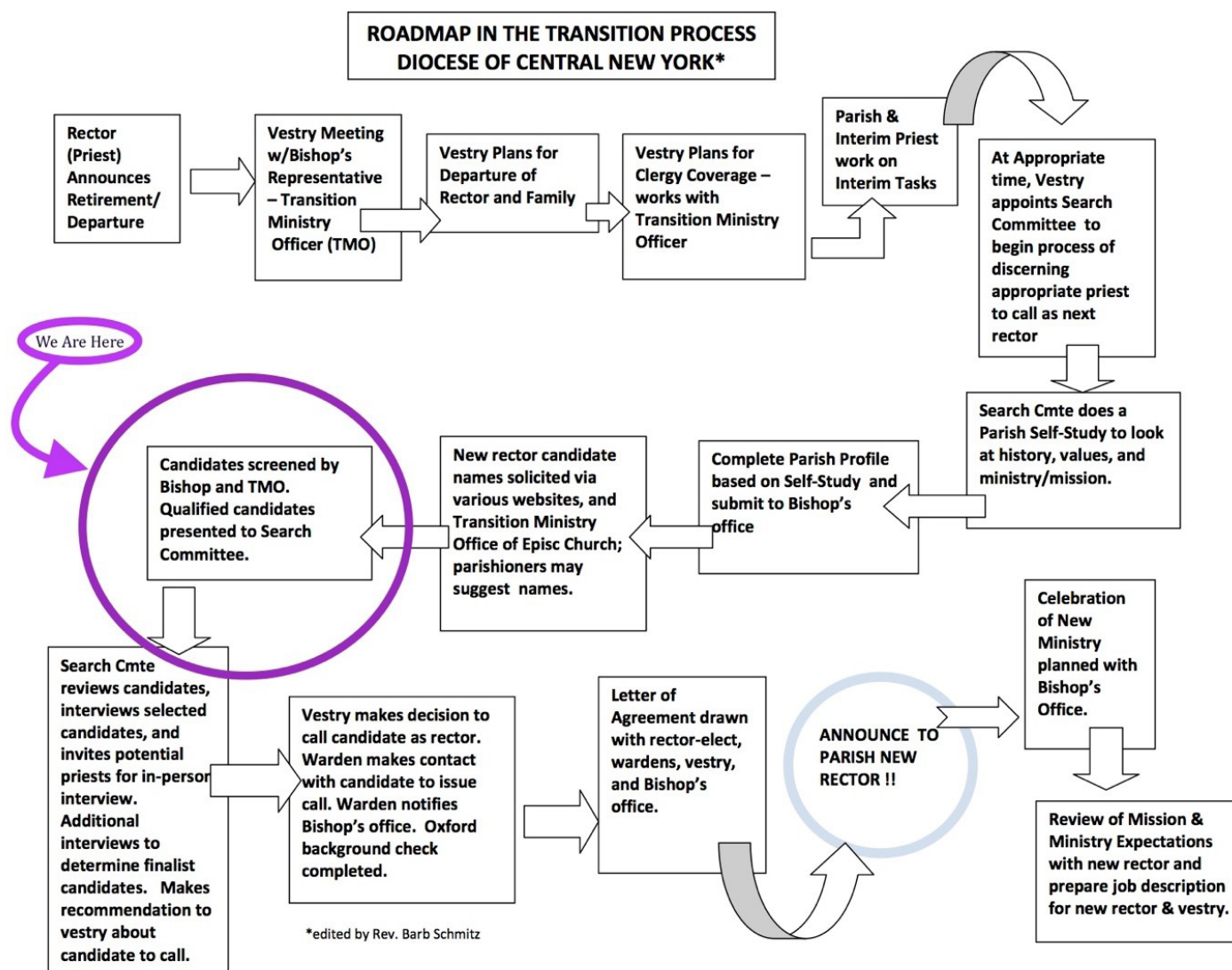
Rector Search Update

By Stephanie Nevels

The Search Committee has received the first batch of applications! We are now channeling our energies into reviewing candidate materials, and making preparations for the selection and interview phase of the search. Look for an article with more detail about our activities in the upcoming *Eagle*.

This next phase of the search is very exciting, but it also requires a high level of confidentiality regarding the candidates. While committee members are happy to answer questions about the overall search process, we ask the congregation to understand and respect that we cannot answer specific questions about the candidate pool. We ask for your continual prayers for God's guidance throughout this discernment. See the Roadmap in the Transition Process chart on page 4 for information on the diocesan rector transition process. 

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Diocesan Convention Report

By Peg Coleman, Michael Roman, and Jamie Parris

The 148th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York took place on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 11-12, 2016. The convention, which is required by the canons of our diocese, the canons of the General Convention, and the NYS Religious Incorporation Laws, is held to enact or change canons and rules of order for the diocese; fill elected positions in diocesan leadership; take action on matters brought before the convention; and meet and exchange ideas with people from other parishes.

This year's convention, themed "Working Together," was a combination of worship, exhibits, and meetings of the members of the convention. Worship service was held both days; Friday's session ended with Compline, and Saturday's

began with Holy Eucharist. Among the exhibitors, the Education for Ministry (EfM) table was staffed by St. John's parishioners Peg Coleman, Jim Johnson, and Jamie Parris, along with two EfM participants from other parishes, Doug Mouncey and Dick Pilgrim. There were particular emphases on our relationship with our companion diocese of El Salvador; on veterans and the military, especially those stationed at Fort Drum, in honor of Veteran's Day; and on other diocesan ministries such as Episcopal Relief and Development. For information on diocesan ministries, see cnyepiscopal.org/ministries. The meetings of the convention members were reminiscent of a St. John's Annual Meeting; and exceptional

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this year was the considerable attention devoted to the transition to our next bishop, The Very Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe.

Convention Highlights

All of the following information and other resources are available on the diocesan website at cnyepiscopal.org/our-diocese/diocesan-convention/.

1. 2016 Annual Reports to Convention.
2. 2016 Elections to Diocesan Leadership Positions.
3. Reading of Resolutions From General Convention.
4. The Rev. Carrie Schofield-Broadbent's Convention Eucharist sermon.
5. 2016 Adopted Resolutions:
 - Continue Companion Relationship between this diocese and the Diocese of El Salvador.
 - Suggested Clergy Compensation for 2017.
 - Several Resolutions thanking people by name for their service and ministry.
6. Diocesan Budget 2017.
 - The Budget of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Central New York is structured around the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion, as is the budget of The Episcopal Church. They are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Toward the end of convention, one issue was raised from the floor regarding the 2012 Diocesan Convention resolution that required that at every meeting within the Diocese of Central New York the following question be asked: "How will what we are doing here affect or involve people living in poverty?" Delegates and clergy spent a significant amount of time presenting answers to this question, which almost wasn't raised.

We take our role of convention delegate very seriously. We did our best to represent St. John's at the convention, and will do our best to report on what happened there, and how it affects members of St. John's. We got more of a sense of ourselves not only as members of a Parish, but also as members of a diocese, a national church, and a worldwide Anglican Communion. We will do our best to convey that sense to our fellow parishioners. ☦

National Church News: The Consecration of our 11th Bishop

The Consecration of The Very Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe as 11th Bishop of Central New York took place on Saturday, December 3, in Liverpool, New York. The event was recorded for later viewing online; see the Diocesan website at cnyepiscopal.org for more details.

To subscribe to *The Messenger*, the newsletter of the Diocese of Central New York, visit cnyepiscopal.org/news-events/messenger/.

During Advent, it seems particularly appropriate to observe two leaders of the Christian world attempting to achieve reconciliation. At their October meeting, pictured here, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope Francis issued a statement saying, in part, that they were "undeterred" by the "serious obstacles" to full unity between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. ☦



Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and His Holiness Pope Francis.

Parishioner Profile: John Jackson

From childhood, I grew up as part of a couple of parishes of the Philippine Episcopal Church community for four decades. When I came to Ithaca, participating in the Episcopal Church at Cornell and St. John's faith communities came pretty naturally to me. My spouse belongs to another Christian tradition, and for some years our family worshiped at Christ Chapel, a church that welcomed, loved, and embraced us as family and neighbors. But I missed my deep Episcopal roots, and I eventually settled at St. John's.

What do I think is special about St. John's? As a Jubilee ministry of The Episcopal Church, St John's makes it possible for me to fellowship with persons in Ithaca who are somewhat strangers to the American dream. Such person-to-person fellowship would not be easy to do in a practical and

even moral sense if I acted alone. But St. John's – the New Creation, the vine – enables me to enter the margins where God often hides through the Jubilee ministry's concrete expression of the Sermon on the Mount. For that opportunity I am immensely grateful to St. John's. ☩



Pastoral Care

By Lisa Tatusko

Per requests from the congregation, going forward, it is our intent to include a brief article about pastoral care in the *Eagle*. The Pastoral Care team is currently comprised of seven people who are providing care to our shut-ins and those who notify the church that they may be dealing with issues such as illness where parish contact is desired. Pastoral care activities currently include bringing communion to our shut-ins and to those who may be temporarily unable to attend church; visiting and making phone calls to parishioners; providing meals, when requested; and sending holiday cards. We are looking to expand our card ministry and begin distributing flowers to shut-ins from the altar. If you have any questions or suggestions, or would like to join the team, please contact Lisa Tatusko. ☩

Adopt-a-Family

The Christmas "giving" tree contains gift tags for five families that St. John's has the opportunity to support for the Christmas season. The tags identify the family by number, gender/age and recommended gift. You are encouraged to take one or more tags, purchase the gift(s), wrap them, and return them to the church office, **with the identifying tag attached**.

The tree will remain in the front of the sanctuary through Sunday, December 18. The collected gifts will be delivered by the Mission Committee to the appropriate family location.

If you have questions please speak to a committee member: Florianna Blanton, Cora Yao, Susan Dunlop, John Jackson, Margaret Johnson, or Scott Russell. ☩

Musical Notes

By Karen Hindenlang, Music Director

Our choral scholars this fall are all undergraduate voice majors at Ithaca College. These talented, enthusiastic students regularly rehearse and sing in worship with our Chancel Choir. They enhance and expand our offerings while gaining professional experience in sacred music. Join us in welcoming: Olivia Bartfield, who sang for 5 years in the adult choir of her home church on Long Island; McKinny Danger-James, who sang for 10 years with the Young People's Chorus of New York City; Rachel Silverstein of Pittsburgh, who has made music in church most of her life as the daughter of an organist; and Holden Turner of Rochester (not pictured), a soloist in his home church and winner of several Eastman and Philharmonic League awards.

Thanks and congratulations to Ann-Marie Iacoviello, named our first scholar in February 2015. Recently she won a prestigious regional competition sponsored by the National Association of the Teachers of Singing. She now sings with us occasionally as a sub while preparing for graduate school.



Advent lessons and carols will be featured in our December 11 Choral Eucharist. In lieu of a sermon, anthems and hymns will be integrated with scripture readings to create a special offering to prepare our hearts for the birth of the Savior. Music by Henry Purcell, Boris Ord, Bach, Ravenscroft, and Gibbons will be included, along with spirituals and folk songs, and a newly published anthem written for our choir by Crawford R. Thoburn. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us for this distinctive, richly musical service of worship.

On Christmas Eve, many of our devoted singers will be away from Ithaca, visiting friends and family. Guests are welcome to join our Chancel Choir that evening, after attending a rehearsal or two. This year, the festive and reflective music for our beautiful candlelight service at 11:00 p.m. has been selected with this "open choir" possibility in mind. Please consider joining us!

Instrumentalists contributing to upcoming services include oboist Nancy Siemon on December 18, and violinist Carrie D'Aprix on December 24 (late service). Students and adults are welcome to play in worship, and something appropriate for almost any instrument can be found. Please contact Karen Hindenlang if you would like to participate in this way. ✚

The Altar Guild

By Muriel Everhart

The Altar Guild is the liturgical partner of the priest and servant of the liturgy. As one altar guild manual puts it, "We are the ones chosen to prepare for the meeting of the people with God." ("Working Manual for Altar Guilds," Dorothy Diggs.)

Please consider coming to join us!

The Eucharistic elements, as well as candles, flowers, special hangings, brass, silver, seasonal decorations, clean linens, vestments, all the furnishings, even down to the pew cards and pencils, are a part of our



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The Altar Guild, continued from page 7.

responsibility. The memorial book and other visible memorials also come under the maintenance and responsibility of the Altar Guild.

For a minimum of two (more often three) services each week, the altar guild must reliably prepare the Eucharistic vessels and linens in the sacristy beforehand, and cleanse, launder and polish each item afterward, as necessary. This is merely a part of the physical work. As we perform our tasks, we need to be mindful of the meaning and impact of what we do. Reliability is essential, and a careful and prayerful routine is kept to properly prepare for worship.

Before the availability of good commercial altar linens, some St. John's members formed a Tuesday sewing group, then called St. Hilda's Guild. They were used to sewing, and expert at working their embroidery and fine stitching for altar linens as handiwork for God. St. Hilda's Guild was a communion of stitchers, sharing each other's lives, in a less public way than, say, the choir members, ushers, or Eucharistic ministers. Some of the fine linens they fashioned are still in use here.

In taking care of the furnishings, vessels, elements, linens, etc. used in the liturgy, it is important that altar guild members



understand their meaning and use in worship, and ongoing learning is another benefit of serving on the Altar Guild. Once you learn these mysteries, they all make very good sense!

If you might be interested in this ministry, please speak to Susie Backstrom, Kathleen O'Neill, or Muriel Everhart. We are looking forward to making new friends as we celebrate our altar guild service. 

Loaves & Fishes: St. John's Ministry

By Rev. Christina Culver, Loaves & Fishes Executive Director

Editorial note: This homily was given at a Sunday service earlier this year.

For six years, I have had the honor and privilege of being the Executive Director for Loaves & Fishes.

You, the St. John's Church, on the other hand, have been hosting Loaves & Fishes for the last 33 years. WOW!!

For those of you who may not be familiar with Loaves & Fishes, it is a Christian ministry that provides a place for free meals, hospitality, companionship, and advocacy to those in need, regardless of their faith, beliefs, or circumstances.

If you have never joined us for a meal or volunteered before, you may be surprised to learn that the story of the "Good Samaritan" is reenacted every day at Loaves & Fishes. Walking into your kitchen while our volunteers are preparing the free meal for our guests or walking into your parish hall during a meal, you will see God's love in action.

Serving nearly 3,000 free meals each month, relying on 25 volunteers each day, and welcoming all who walk through our doors, Loaves & Fishes of Tompkins County cares for those in greatest need. Our shared ministry makes a tremendous difference to our guests' lives — one meal at a time and one conversation at a time.

In keeping with Jesus' life and teachings, there are absolutely no eligibility requirements or questions asked. Did the Good Samaritan ask the man who fell into the hands of the robbers, "How could you let this happen to you?"

Anyone who walks through our doors is welcome at the Loaves & Fishes table. We aspire to be good neighbors, to treat everyone as we would want them to treat us. Our supportive community offers spiritual as well as physical sustenance — paraphrasing the words of Matthew 25 — we strive to welcome the stranger and to feed the hungry.

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You may be wondering who our guests are. They are the unemployed and underemployed, persons on inadequate public assistance and their children, people dealing with chronic mental or physical-health challenges, the working poor, veterans, the homeless, people in crisis, and anyone desiring companionship.

Loaves & Fishes is much more than just a place to receive a meal. We are a community that serves and cares for each other.

The other day, we asked all of the guests in the dining hall during announcements, "Who has a birthday this month?" About five people raised their hands. One of these people proudly shared that he just passed his high school equivalency exam AND just before he turned 70 years old! We all gave him a hand and congratulated him. While he was waiting in line to be served, I asked him if he had any close friend or family to share his upcoming graduation ceremony with him. He said, "No, you are my only family." At which point, I promised him I would attend his graduation.

Another guest told me, "I came here just after my divorce. My parents are dead. I was alone and broke. The staff helped me find a job. And, when I was looking for work, I got a lot of encouragement to not give up. The meals made a big difference to me each day since I basically had no cashflow. I liked meeting people at the table. Sometimes I would volunteer to help clean up. On those days, I felt like I was doing something that mattered and I felt better. I don't know what I would have done without Loaves."

Unfortunately, the need for our free meal program continues to increase. We are serving 2,000 more meals today compared to last year. Last year we served 38,421 meals.

Each weekday, we serve an average of 145 nutritious "home-cooked" meals. As I mentioned before, we couldn't do this without the help of 25 incredibly dedicated community volunteers each day.

Did you know? Loaves & Fishes provides a particularly effective environment to learn when people are in crisis or have unmet basic needs, such as lack of adequate housing or medical care?

Most people when hungry will seek help in obtaining food as it becomes a matter of survival. However, many people are less likely to ask for help if they have other unmet, but often critical needs, because they have no idea how to get these

needs met or they have given up the expectation that their life can be any different. Additionally, many of our guests have no family, no friends, and no co-workers that can offer assistance to them during times of need.

Let me give you an example. The Loaves & Fishes staff members and volunteer advocates provided multiple levels of support to a guest who was new to town and escaping an abusive relationship. We provided referrals on her behalf to the Rescue Mission, so that she could have a safe place to spend the night and to the Advocacy Center, which provides domestic violence services. We also offered her compassionate, non-judgmental listening support. Additionally, staff members accompanied the woman to the Advocacy Center, provided her with a care package of groceries and gave her a meal-to-go when she had to leave the building in a hurry. Staff members also accompanied the guest to the Tompkins County Public Library where she had a ride waiting for her.

The Loaves & Fishes Advocacy Program offers guests compassionate support and practical help with the goal of satisfying such basic needs as housing, transportation, food, healthcare, and safety. We link guests to existing social services and community resources. Additionally, over 20 social service agencies offer our guests direct outreach in the dining hall during the meal service times. The Advocacy Program is characterized by the compassion and respect we have for each individual person in our community.

Two St. John's parishioners have become active volunteers in our advocacy program. I asked them to share a few words about their experiences for you today. Scott Russell says, "Weekly meal sharing leads to camaraderie with guests, which leads to opportunities to help as needed." And John Jackson explains, "Participation in Loaves & Fishes is a Eucharistic practice — practicing hospitality and inclusion with real people, partaking real food and fellowship around real tables. Loaves & Fishes humbly incarnates God's kingdom where all are invited, everyone is welcome, and God loves you — no exceptions. Eating in community with the guests is a concrete and formative social justice practice and ritual."

Let's think about the Good Samaritan story again.

What happened to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers could happen to any of us or to our loved ones. He didn't expect to be robbed that day or beaten and left for dead.

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We all have needed help or will need help from another person or community at some point in our lives. When that happens who would you rather have pass you by? The Levite, the priest or the Samaritan? Loaves & Fishes offers our volunteers the opportunity to show our neighbors mercy, just like the Good Samaritan. Jesus asks the lawyer, "Which of the three do you think was a 'neighbor' to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The lawyer answered, "The one who showed mercy." Jesus then said to him go and do likewise.


Our summer intern from Hampshire College, Ana Nazir, explains it this way, "Working at Loaves, I have been struck by the kind and caring efforts of so many individuals who have chosen to serve other community members in need. At Loaves, I have learned that when one person serves food to another, a connection is made, a smile is exchanged and a seed is planted. A seed of empathy and caring for what is happening to those who may be experiencing different situations than yourself. When I hand a guest a plate overflowing with food and our eyes meet, we lift each other up and realize that we are all in this together. If we don't extend a helping hand to one another who will? To me, working at Loaves & Fishes is about love."

Loaves & Fishes is Tompkins County's only community kitchen. For 33 years, residents have relied on your ministry that hosts Loaves & Fishes each weekday in this building.

Have no doubt that the St. John's ministry significantly helps our guests get through their toughest times.

On behalf of all the Loave & Fishes guests, I invite you to join us for a meal and I thank you for making this extraordinary ministry possible.

Winter Help Needed: Loaves & Fishes volunteers are especially needed the last week of December and the first two weeks of January. Most people volunteer for two-hour shifts during the following hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; or Tuesday and Thursday, from 2:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. To sign up and for more information, please call the Loaves & Fishes office at 272-5457 or email us at info@loaves.org.

The Loaves & Fishes guests, and staff and board members wish the St. John's parishioners a very blessed Christmas season! 

Contributors

The following parishioners and people on the St. Johns' Communications Committee contributed to this newsletter:

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Russell Bourne, Libby Hedrick (photo credit), Margaret Johnson, Jamie Parris, Michael Roman (chair), Matthew Sanaker, and Lisa Tatusko.

Contributing parishioners:

Susie Backstrom (senior warden), Rev. Christina Culver, Muriel Everhart, Karen Hindenlang (music director), John Jackson, Stephanie Nevels, and The Rev. Barb Schmitz (interim rector).

