



May 2016

St. John's Eagle

The Newsletter of St. John's Episcopal Church

June 26 Dish-to-Pass Brunch: Capital Campaign Halfway Point Celebration and Chili Cook-Off!

By Margaret Johnson and Susie Backstrom

Mark your calendar! There will be a combined Sunday service on June 26, at 10:00 a.m., followed by a brunch in the parish hall to celebrate the halfway point of the five-year capital campaign pledge period, which began in March 2014. This parish-wide gathering will be fun for everyone. Our capital campaign chairs, Mindy and Brett Oakes and Susie Backstrom, will explain what has been accomplished so far and share a sneak peek at upcoming work.

The food will be a dish-to-pass with the main course as... chili! All are invited to participate in the preparations for a friendly "chili cook-off" competition. All kinds of chili are welcome: vegetarian, chicken/turkey, vegan, classic, with and without beans, etc. Parishioners not cooking chili are asked to please bring a side dish or a dessert as resources allow. A dish is not required to attend. More information will be forthcoming as we get closer to the event. Hospitality Committee chairs Stephanie Nevels and Mindy Oakes are coordinating.

Early in 2014, St. John's completed a successful capital campaign, which raised approximately \$1 million in donations and pledges to support vital physical infrastructure maintenance needs. Improvements planned included repairing the roof, truss and ceiling repair, exterior painting, garth drainage and foundation repair, stained glass window restoration, repairing the front steps and nearby wrought iron railing, as well as leveling the sidewalk, repairing the interior wall foundation, and replacing windows in the Sunday School room. The capital campaign also established a contingency fund for future capital improvements.

If you joined St. John's since the capital campaign, please consider making a pledge, according to your means, to support the ongoing work. No pledge is too small! To make a capital pledge, please use one of the cards at the back of the church or contact the parish office for assistance. 

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Contributors

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

Susie Backstrom (Senior Warden), Russell Bourne, Margaret Johnson, Jamie Parris, Michael Roman (Chair), Matthew Stedinger, Matthew Sanaker, The Rev. Barb Schmitz (Interim Rector), Lisa Tatusko, Eric Weinhold (Junior Warden).



From The Rev. Barb Schmitz:

Easter Stewardship Initiative Draws to Conclusion

It had been a long time since St. John's parishioners spoke one-on-one with other parishioners about the spiritual aspects of making a formal estimate of annual giving to the church.

During Easter season (which just concluded with the celebration of Pentecost), about a dozen parishioners called on fellow parishioners to invite an increase in pledging amount and/or commitment (moving from giving, to becoming a giver of record, to making a pledge).

Parishioners were encouraged to move toward what is called "the modern tithing": 5% of one's income to one's local church, and 5% to charitable organizations which further the kingdom of God in the community and the world.

Thank you to everyone who responded. If you did not receive a call, don't panic. We plan to do a more comprehensive stewardship initiative in the fall. You may prepare now by considering what percentage of your income you currently give away, and praying about the changes in your life that would come with increased financial commitment.

"Stewardship is not about the budget. It's about your relationship with God."

Thanks to Bettie Lee Yerka (chair), Pat Clark, Susie Backstrom, and Rev. Barb for overseeing the Easter stewardship initiative. 

Vestry Appoints Members of the Rector Search Committee

By Susie Backstrom and Eric Weinhold, Wardens

We are pleased to inform you that the Vestry has appointed the following people as the Search Committee to recommend to the Vestry appropriate candidate(s) to be the next Rector of St. John's:

- Marcia Baum, Chair
- Stephanie Nevels, Vestry Representative
- Peg Coleman
- Dean Hawthorne
- Hugh Hurlbut
- John Jackson
- Mike Roman
- Cora Yao

Please keep these folks in your prayers as they begin and continue the path of discerning the needs and gifts of this congregation over the next months and, finally, discerning who

is best suited to serve as our next Rector.

We give thanks to God for their willingness to serve, and we especially thank everyone who submitted an application to serve on the Committee. Thanks are also given to Rev. Barb for her guidance to the Vestry in connection with this process.

We look forward to the continued cooperation and support of the entire congregation. You will be kept generally informed on a regular basis of the progress of the Search Committee and, at the appropriate time, you will be invited by the Committee to offer your thoughts and input about St. John's and its ministries. See where we are in the process with this [Roadmap \(PDF, 125 KB\)](#).

We are excited about moving ahead with this aspect of the search process! God's peace to you. 

St. John's Vestry Advancing on Many Fronts

By Russell Bourne

With so much going on at St. John's this season, the vestry finds itself keeping numerous balls in the air at the same time. Among the objectives of that multi-faceted effort are: to search for a new rector, to finish the refurbishing of our beautiful building, and to keep all church missions active and on track.

At the April meeting, there was a discussion of old and new business, including these items of great and immediate

importance to the parish:

- **Property Upgrades:** See the story on page one of this issue about the upcoming brunch to announce progress so far and reveal upcoming improvements, made possible by the capital campaign kicked off in 2014.
- **Formation and Composition of Search Committee:** Parishioners will receive descriptions of this ongoing process, to be headed by Marcia Fort Baum.
- **Stewardship Initiative:** Senior Warden Susie Backstrom described the purpose and extent of this campaign to extend through the Easter season.

The plans discussed and work accomplished by specific committees at the April meeting indicate what the vestry and wardens have been dealing with, under The Rev. Barb's direction. The following committees submitted updating reports through their liaisons:

- Capital Campaign (Susie Backstrom)
- Christian Education (Muriel Everhart)
- Communications & IT (Russell Bourne)
- Hospitality (Stephanie Nevels)
- Mission (Aaron Wagner)
- Pastoral Care (Lisa Tatusko)

- Personnel (Lloyd Hall)
- Property (Brett Oakes)
- Stewardship (Eric Weinhold) ✚

Musical Notes

On Sunday, June 26, the Chancel Choir will be offering anthems by C.V. Stanford and Thomas Ford, and our three choral scholars (Ann-Marie Iacoviello, Hector Gonzalez Smith and Zeek Smith) will offer a piece by Antonio Vivaldi. Please join us for this special sacred music in worship, and in thanking our choir members for all their work this spring. ✚

The Search for Our 11th Bishop

By Lisa Tatusko

The candidate slate for the next Bishop of Central New York is here! This is an exciting time for our diocese. While there is no doubt that we will miss Bishop Skip, this is a time of reflection and moving forward as guided by the Holy Spirit. Please take the time to review the slate that has been presented and consider attending one of the walkabouts, where you will get to meet the candidates prior to the election that takes place in August. The dates and locations are listed below. I encourage you to go to the diocesan website at <http://www.bishopcny.org/> for more detailed information. Expect to hear more from St. John's convention delegates, who will cast their votes for our next Bishop along with other delegates to convention.

From the Diocese of Central New York Website

The Standing Committee of the [Diocese of Central New York](http://www.bishopcny.org/) has announced a slate of four candidates for the position of 11th bishop of the Diocese, succeeding the Right Rev. Gladstone B. "Skip" Adams, who is retiring.

The Very Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe (Rector, St. Peter's in the Woods Episcopal Church; Fairfax Station, Virginia)

The Rev. Canon Debra Kissinger (Canon for Transition Ministries and Leadership Development, Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis; Indianapolis, Indiana)

The Rev. Noah H. Evans (Rector, Grace Episcopal Church; Medford, Massachusetts)

The Rev. Nora Smith (Rector, The Church of St. Barnabas (Episcopal); Irvington, New York)

Candidate Walkabouts: Please save the date for our Bishop Search candidate "walkabouts"! Candidates will engage in a series of meet-and-greet sessions, called "walkabouts," at four locations in the Diocese. Walkabouts



allow members of the Diocese to learn more about the candidates.

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend at least one walkabout:

- Wednesday, July 20, 5:00-10:00 p.m., at Trinity Church in Watertown
- Thursday, July 21, 5:00-10:00 p.m., at Saints Peter & John Church in Auburn
- Friday, July 22, 5:00-10:00 p.m., at St. John's Church in Oneida
- Saturday, July 23, at St. Paul's Church in Owego (Note: the time for this meeting will be announced at a later date. Tentative time is 5:00 - 10:00 p.m.)

Thank you for your continued prayers for the nominees, the search and transition committees, and all members of our Diocese as we pray and discern. ✚

Parishoner Profile: Matthew Sanaker

I was raised in a number of “non-denominational” Christian churches as a child; we moved every few years and found a new church every time we did. In my late teens I started studying non-religious meditation techniques, but didn’t really seek out any other religion. In my twenties and thirties I studied and practiced Zen and Tibetan Buddhism as well as Western Hermeticism, Jewish and Christian Mysticism, along with Yoga and Tai-Chi. The common theme in the parts of my Syncretic faith is to experience the power of the Holy Spirit and to develop a deep and personal relationship with God and with Jesus Christ. It may seem odd to some, but I believe that the experience of embracing other religions and philosophies has deepened that relationship and ultimately led me back to Christianity.



What drew me to St. John’s and why do I keep coming back?

The short answer would be that I was looking for a place where I could pray and commune with God. A place that feels sacred when you walk in, where people have been praying for generations. I also knew that I wanted to attend a church with a liturgical tradition focused on the Eucharist.

The long answer starts in 2012 when I visited China to set up the IT infrastructure for a new office for the company that I work for. I expressed my interest in visiting some Buddhist temples to a few of my colleagues there and asked for some recommendations. Two of my newfound friends were kind enough invite me to the temple that they worship at in Suzhou and another took me to a famous temple in Shanghai. The experiences that I had there were profound. Being in a sacred place where people have been praying for hundreds of years was so deeply peaceful. The yearning to find a place like that, where I could call home, stayed with me when I returned to Ithaca.

Almost a year later, I walked into St. John’s just before 8:00 a.m. on the morning of Pentecost. Participating in the Celebration of the Eucharist and receiving communion for the first time in many years that morning, I felt that same sense of deep peace. The combination of speaking in unison with the rest of the congregation, listening to the scripture being read and prayers being said and the culmination of the service being the moment of receiving communion, was what I was looking for. Sharing in that tradition which connects us to Christ himself is to experience the miracle of the Mass. That moment of being in communion is timeless and a paradox, it is a finite moment in which to experience the infinite omnipresence of God.

There are many things that I appreciate about being a member of the community of St. John’s and the Episcopal Church, but I would like to highlight a few. I appreciate the long liturgical tradition of the Episcopal Church coupled with a strong commitment to social justice. I really enjoy celebrating the Eucharist in a way that people have been doing for many generations. Yes, the language has been updated over time, but the spirit of the tradition extends back over millennia. It feels really good to be a part of something bigger than myself in that way. Another thing that I appreciate is that the Episcopal Church ordains women as members of the clergy, I like how that may feel more inclusive for my wife and daughters. I also respect how the Episcopal Church has prayerfully considered its position to celebrate same-sex marriages equally with those of opposite-sex couples. I know that for many it is a blessing to feel that the love they feel can be celebrated instead of judged. There seems to me to be a commitment to treat all people with equal respect and dignity, without regard to sex, sexual orientation, race or class. I also feel a very strong affinity for the mission of Loaves and Fishes. I have some friends that have benefitted from both the meals

and the fellowship of the Loaves and Fishes community. I think that it's a wonderful blessing for the greater Ithaca community and an important mission to continue to support. And finally but not least of all, I've found a group of friends here at St. John's to study scripture with, pray with, and to celebrate special life events with, birth, baptism, marriage, and even to celebrate the life of loved ones who have died. I'm very grateful and thank God for all of these things. ✠

Loaves & Fishes and St. John's Parish

By John Jackson and Scott Russell

[Loaves & Fishes](http://www.loaves.org) (L & F, <http://www.loaves.org>) was founded in 1983 with the intention of serving the Ithaca community's individuals in need by providing at least one hot meal per day and a safe place to eat and share with others. The intent was to be an ecumenical program that many Ithaca downtown churches would support.

St. John's clergy and supportive parishioners volunteered to be the initial providers, and with the expertise of the original social worker, management and staff, the program became so successful that it only made sense to maintain the facilities at St. John's as the core of the program. Other local churches have continued to provide support and financial assistance.

The program gained strength over the early years to become its own entity as a not-for-profit with financial stability. L & F is now Tompkins County's only community kitchen that is open every week day, except on Thanksgiving Day. It serves three hot lunches and two hot dinners weekly - over 3,000 meals a month. All are welcome.

L & F is financially supported through individual and local business donations, grants and fundraising events. Most of the workers are volunteers from the community, including students from our high schools and colleges. Over the years, L & F has funded several kitchen and parish hall renovations and provided refrigeration units. It also provides a quarterly reimbursement to St. John's to offset some of its utility costs.

St. John's parishioners have been involved in daily feeding chores and have served on the L & F Board of Directors. Today, our Rector and a St. John's parishioner nominated by the Vestry are included as regular board members.



Community members enjoying a meal provided by Loaves & Fishes at St. John's.

An Advocacy Program was developed several years ago by the L & F Director. The Program offers guests compassionate support and practical help meeting their most basic needs such as housing, employment, transportation, food, safety and health care. Additionally, over 20 social service agencies provide direct outreach to the guests during meal times. One L & F staff member coordinates the program, which includes training and supervising about 12 Volunteer Advocates.

This year, our Mission Committee has been active in exploring new modes of parishioner involvement. A Saturday morning cookie bake has had some success. The objective is for parish volunteers and L & F volunteers to come together to bake cookies for use at St. John's coffee hour and the L & F meal dessert table.

Opportunities continue for St. John's parishioners to become involved by volunteering for kitchen duties, as advocacy representatives or through board service. The need for volunteers is especially critical in late May and summer when college students are away. L & F is always eager to enter into partnerships with St. John's in serving the hungry in Ithaca. Questions about L & F may be directed to the Mission Committee. ✠

Congratulations Graduates!

Coffee hour after the 10:30 service on June 12th will honor our graduates: Rob Harbert, Lillian Baptist and Ryan Welch. Rob, his wife Lucy and their son Luke move to New York City where Rob will be a post-doc at the Museum of Natural History. Lillian will attend Simmons College in Boston and Ryan will attend Tompkins Cortland Community College. ✠