One of the most important books I have read in the past few years, Learning to Dream Again, Rediscovering the Heart of God, by Samuel Wells, introduced to us by Eric Davis, was the source for a number of great discussions in our Adult Education Class in 2016.

I have been endeavoring to be a Christian all my life and Samuel Wells gave me a new lens through which to see the task. This lens has us equate “good” with being like Jesus, emulating Jesus, and trying to see things through Christ-like eyes.

For him, this all came about when he, a strong young athlete, was lying injured on his back in a hospital. He received a card from his aunt that quoted Paul, “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God.” Romans 8:28. He was furious at her lack of understanding of his unfortunate plight. To him this was...
one of those pious blatherings that make Christianity so untenable.

W e all have them, the thing that bothers us most about what we have learned about Christianity. My life long example is the way we (and the Bible) suggest that God rewards the good and punishes the evil. Each of us has these. Wells was bothered but he did not discount this message because of the character of his aunt, a woman who had given her life to the service of others.

T he end of the story isn’t one of those tales that let you know that were it not for the accident, he never would have met the person who changed his life and made him a millionaire. Instead, it is a story of him changing his perspective. Good was no longer athletic prowess, fame, or recognition, rather good was defined as I put it above. He began a life of trying to live, teach, love and everything else from this changed perspective.

I take from this tale a couple of things. One is that, though each one of us can approach God and good on our own, directly with no intermediary, it certainly helps to have people we really respect help introduce us to God in a way we can hear and understand, and in a way that helps us connect more directly to God.

T he second is the hopeful challenge that we can see with Christ-like eyes and really be part of bringing that perspective of good into being in companionship with God. We can do this in small yet-very impressive ways.

S amuel Wells himself, knowing now that fame and acclaim are dross rather than gold, has twenty-three books advertised on Amazon.com, written alone or with others. Some of them are about the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Tradition. Obviously, it can work in impressive ways. I have certainly seen this in others. While I was in Ann Arbor last week, preaching for the wedding of my children’s godmother, I looked out into the audience, and saw a very tall man with dreadlocks in the congregation. Of course, he would be there having worked so intimately with Jim, the new godfather-in-law. Both of them are lifelong staunch advocates for justice. Leron, in an anti-racism book group, patiently opened the eager but uninformed eyes of our social and economic justice taskforce, with title after title of important works of racism and injustice in America. A gentle pacifist, he has worked courageously to educate and inform people, trying to create a more fertile ground for all children in our community. What a giant of commitment and love. Our new in-law, along with Rachel his wife, spent the first day of their honeymoon here in Vermont at the poor people’s rally in Montpelier. Jim is one of the Michigan organizers of their monthly poor people’s rallies and Leron was the first person arrested for non-violent, passive dissent. Would that I could be part of bringing Jesus’ perspective of good in such impressive ways.

Y et, I think it is also important to do so in small ways. What impressed Wells when he really read the story of Jesus was how he behaved both in good times and in difficult times. He really loved his disciples, and he also bore ridicule, abuse, and shame with such grace and compassion. Perhaps every time we answer an insensitive remark from friend or family (or strangers or adversaries) with a thought toward the personhood of that individual, we are witnessing to the world with Christ-like eyes. Perhaps when we sit down and write a check to help someone across the globe who will never know us have clean water or in some other way a better life, we are also witnessing. Whatever we do that may further the kingdom of God, from sorting linens for Peasant Market, to overseeing the next great housing project for people who now live on the street, we are witnessing. What you do for good and God, is witnessing.

T his is my last Pastor’s corner to you. I say a broad thank you for the time I have spent with you. As we go forward, the thing I hope most for us, together or apart, is that we be eager to open our eyes in new Christ-like ways so that what we do, what we teach, and what we support contribute to the continuing realization of the kingdom of God right here, right now, in the midst of us, in the midst of our community, our country, our world, and this fragile globe with all its people, creature, and species. “Let thy kingdom come, as in heaven, so also on earth.” (Matthew 6:10)

S usan
News from the News
by Linda Horn

News from the News is cancelled this month, due to overwork and accidents!
Send your news to Linda Horn for July!

Parish Profile

Get to Know Ed McGuire by Mike Davis

Unlike most of our recent interviews, few among us would think that there was much new to learn about Ed McGuire...after all, he and Mary and their family have been around for years, and he’s not shy about his life experience. Still, a life this rich - with such a variety of plot lines - also has a lot of detail to go with the ‘big picture’. As an Engineer, Ed is absolutely a detail guy. As a ‘big picture guy’ (as in commanding a blue-water Coast Guard cutter) he’s also comfortable with the leadership role, strategic thinking, and planning ahead. So, what else is there??

If you just make lists of all the things Ed is interested in, the one about water and boats will probably be the longest. His memory of his first yearnings to sail is remarkable; Ed remembers (and he calls this one of the big moments in his life) as a youngster, reading a National Geographic article about the USCG sailing ship Eagle. He told his mom he wanted to do that...and he did. He did it in style, too, gaining appointment to the Coast Guard Academy, doing time on the Eagle (multiple Atlantic crossings, among other highlights), and ultimately spending 20 years in the Coast Guard. Sailed on four CG ships, working his way up from Ensign to CO. Got a degree in Civil Engineering while active (at the University of Illinois, a fine midwestern institution that graduated, among others, Knute Rockne, Dick Butkus, and Mike and Beth Davis...and invented the transistor...really a fine place...but I digress). And of course he ran aground a couple of times but EVERYBODY DOES THAT SOONER OR LATER. Seriously, if you add up all the time Ed has spent on the water, or thinking about being on the water, or building a boat to go on the water, or working on boats so they can go on the water...it’s a lot of time. Water and boats make up a recurring theme in Ed’s life.

Ed was born in New Jersey, to a single mom. She was a nurse, with two boys, and as Ed puts it, ‘they moved a lot’. They were not rich – Ed remembers that there was a time early on when their ‘ice box’ was a block of ice in the sink – ice delivered by an ice man. Ed’s younger brother was named Jack, and they were both adopted by their stepdad when Ed was in eighth grade. As a further nudge to a life at sea, Ed’s stepdad was in the Merchant Marine.

Bicycles also figure prominently in Ed’s life. He recalled to me getting his first bike from his uncle George, and how ‘his world got ten times bigger’ as a result. That bike was key to his getting a paper route, too, which probably expanded his world even more.

Later in life, in 1983, he would meet his wife Mary on – you guessed it – a bike trip in VT. Even now Ed is an avid biker, and coincidentally had a part-time job with VBT not long ago. It makes sense that a Mechanical Engineer would be attracted to things like boats and bicycles – lots of moving parts, things that break and need fixing.

Two other strong threads in Ed’s life...and that of his family...are church, and teaching. Ed and Mary are both teachers. After 20 years in the Coast Guard, Ed put in another 20 years teaching at Mt. Abe. Mary still teaches there. I assume that a constant responsibility for active duty officers is teaching the younger sailors how to safely and successfully carry out a mission, and it’s easy to imagine Ed being very good at that. Several St. Stephen’s parishioners have entered the world of boat building through Ed’s tutelage and become ‘boatwrights’ in the process. Good leaders are usually good teachers, and Ed is a prime example.

Ed was raised Catholic, and when he met Mary she was attending an Episcopal Bible study, so like so many mixed-denomination couples, they met in the middle...at the Episcopal church. Ed told a story about a priest in Colorado Springs who counseled them prior to their marriage, who it continued on page 5
**Report from the Vestry**

by Susan Anderson-Ray

**Vestry Update for May 2018**

Our last vestry meeting was on Wednesday, May 16, 2018. The main topics of discussion included the following items:

**Appointment of Auditors.** The Vestry approved Beth Davis, Carol Haraden, Dorothy Hayes, Elizabeth Oettinger and Barb Stratton as the audit committee for the 2017 audit. Elizabeth Oettinger will serve as the committee chair.

**Leadership Covenant and Norms.** Our covenant and norms for parish leadership were presented and adopted by the Vestry. They will be published in the Parishscope, as well as printed in large type and posted in the upper meeting room for reference by the parish. We hope all parishioners will join with the Vestry in embracing them as guidelines for our parish life.

**Disbursement of Peasant Market Funds.** We had a follow-up discussion on a proposal by Sandy Archibald and Ryan Nevius presented at the April meeting regarding Peasant Market fund disbursement. It’s a two-part proposal suggesting that the Outreach Committee determine grantees prior to Peasant Market, and that 2 or 3 charities/programs be selected as grantees per year to build a stronger relationship with each organization. The Vestry decided not to make any changes for 2018 but will establish a task force to consider this proposal further with members from the Vestry, Outreach Committee, Visioning task force and Peasant Market. The task force will be convened after this summer’s Peasant Market.

**Outreach Ministry Task Force.** The Outreach Ministry task force is continuing to explore ways to accomplish our outreach goals through a ministry with children and youth. A lot of positive and productive energy has been generated by the work to date. Although we don’t have a clearly defined program proposal yet, some parishioners are looking into ways to engage with the public schools as a next step. Safe Church training was offered at St. Stephen’s in June for parishioners who are interested in working with children and youth in the parish or in the community.

**Susan McGarry’s Retirement Party.** Susan’s retirement party will be after our worship service on Sunday, June 24th. Because of our summer hours, there will only one service at 9am. Please look for more detailed information about this celebration from Irv Cummings.

**Columbarium Update:** The Vestry formally accepted a $13,000 grant from the diocese for expanding our columbarium ministry. This will allow us to have Eickhof Columbaria begin construction on our new indoor columbarium. We are hoping for an October installation. Please see the Junior Warden’s report for more details about the new columbarium.

Our next Vestry meeting will be on Wednesday, June 20 at 5:45 at Lonnie Fisher’s house.

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**Next Parishscope: July 2018**

Deadline for submissions for July: July 12

Be in touch with editor Jennifer Nelson (jnelson@middlebury.edu) or 802 388 7008

And give News from the Pews to Linda Horn (lindahorn14@gmail.com) or 802 388 2300
The Bishop Discernment and Nominating Committee (BDNC) is in the midst of its Holy Listening sessions at parishes around the state. By the time the listening sessions end in mid-July, the committee will have conducted sessions at most of the 45 parishes in Vermont, plus the two congregations in upstate New York that receive episcopal oversight from the Bishop of Vermont. We are also meeting with diocesan committees and institutions such as the Diocesan Council, the Diocesan Trustees, the Ministry Support Team, the Rock Point Board, and a group of Rock Point campers. We have had a session with Bishop Ely, and plan to have a meeting with clergy from around Vermont.

The committee will use the information gathered at these listening sessions to prepare a diocesan profile, that will describe the state of Vermont and the Episcopal Church in Vermont, and will set forth those talents, skills, experiences, gifts, and other personal qualities that members of the church are looking for in their next bishop.

A special Diocesan Convention on the episcopal transition will be held on Saturday, September 29 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, at a location to be announced. At this convention, the BDNC and the Standing Committee will present their reports and recommendations regarding the next Bishop of Vermont. Topics covered will include a discussion of conventional and possible alternative models of episcopal leadership for the Episcopal Church in Vermont, as well as the future bishop’s compensation. These issues must be addressed prior to the regularly scheduled diocesan convention in October in order to keep the discernment and search process on a schedule leading up to the consecration of the next bishop in late September 2019.

Voting members of the convention - parish delegates and canonically resident clergy -- will receive more information about the special convention over the summer. All members of the Episcopal Church in Vermont, regardless of voting eligibility, are welcome to attend the special convention.

Getting to Know Ed McGuire continued from p. 3

seems was skeptical about their likely compatibility. His fears were unfounded – on a 100 question compatibility test, they differed on only TWO questions! Ed and Mary have been constantly engaged and active at Saint Stephen’s since arriving in Middlebury in 1989...Senior Warden, Junior Warden, committee of all shapes and sizes...he’s done it all. I can honestly say that Saint Stephen’s as I’ve experienced it would be a very different place without the McGuires. They are doers.

A personal story about Ed illustrates his ongoing desire to be active. After he had retired from teaching, and had ‘cut back’ to ‘a couple of boards and other volunteer gigs’, he and I had coffee a couple of times to talk about ‘what’s next?’ Ed still wanted to work, in addition to being a professional volunteer, and we did quite a bit of brainstorming in that direction. Turns out the job found him...Ed got connected with School Hack, a Bristol startup that delivers educational software to schools, and is now full time there. Oh and by the way, he also agreed recently to become Deputy Director of Operations at the Maritime Museum for 5 months! So from thinking, however briefly, that he might be running out of things to do, Ed would probably agree that he is once again fully employed.

They say that staying young is a combination of an active mind and an active body. I don’t know how old Ed is, but I’d put his functional age at about 50...the result of a very active mind and body. If you’re one of the few who don’t know Ed well, or as well as you’d like, ask him either of these: name all the organizations that you are currently involved with in some capacity, volunteer or otherwise; (and/or) what do you enter in the ship’s log when a ship under your command ‘touches bottom’ (runs aground). I suspect both will surprise you.
Be a Volunteer!
Peasant Market is fast approaching! This is the major fundraiser for St. Stephens’ Outreach program, so join the fun by lending a hand to help raise funds for the less fortunate in our community. There are many ways your help can make a difference, even if it is just for an hour during intake. Look for signup sheets in the back of the church to help set up the booths, bake pies, sell raffle tickets, help during intake, price and pack donations, prepare food for the lunch grill and sort books. **We especially need people to help carry up the boxed donations on Peasant Market morning starting at 6:30am (Bagels, donuts and coffee provided!) and help cleaning up after 2pm.**

And Now a Word from our Booth Chairs………

**Linens (Lonnie Fisher 388-0834)**
Linens is your gig if you like pretty table cloths and napkins or neat table mats, OR if you are into **Fabrics** (sewing) or **Yarns** (knitting). We also cover windows (shades and curtains), and floors (rugs), even bed and bath. The prep work includes measuring, folding, tying and tagging. 20 yrs. of the booth has lost many workers, I would **REALLY** appreciate a couple more helpers! You don’t have to launder or mend (unless so inclined) I will cover that. I can also be reached at fishmidd@gmail.com and thank you.

**Children’s Items- (Carol Haraden 617-283-8079)**
The Children’s booth is your one stop shop for everything for kids. We accept everything for all ages, from newborn to grade school books, clothing, and toys. We also typically have a number of pieces of baby/children’s equipment such as baby carrier backpacks, pull sleds, wagons and play structures. Everything is clean and ready to be played with and loved by the next lucky child.

**White Elephant (Tom Turley 759-2241)**
This booth seeks and accepts clean useful household goods: dishes, glassware, cookware, silver/stainless utensils and flatware, candles, office, picture frames, artwork, photographs, CDs, lighting, unopened gifts and personal care items. Please no kitchen plastic or storage boxes, non-flat screen TVs, computers and their accessories or cassette tapes. All small appliances must be in good working order. We would appreciate help sorting during intake.

**Lemonade (Sue Snider 388-0903)**
The squeezers will be up and running again for fresh lemonade. Looking for help especially around the lunch hours 11a-1p. Contact Suzanne scsnider1@comcast.net.

**Pie Day (Linda Horn 989-3431)**
Pie makers are needed July 6th, from 8:30 to noon and 11:30-3. We especially need fresh legs in the afternoon! All are welcome regardless of experience!

**Clothing (Sandy Ketcham 989-6139)**
Clothing chair looking for some helpers during intake and/or on Peasant Market Day. We have lots of fun and while helping you might just find a bargain that will be the perfect addition to your wardrobe. Call or email Sandy Ketcham: 989-6139 or sandyoverbrook@gmail.com

**Jewelry (Beth Stanway 989-9928)**
The jewelry booth had a successful transition inside the church last year, allowing us to set up early. So if you’d like to help us out, we’d love some help either Friday or Saturday! Thanks! Beth Stanway and Ann Cooper

**Coffee (Devon Jerslid 545-2537)/Baked Goods (Mary McGuire 388-6740)**
Baked Goods: From bread baskets to cookie tins, the Baked Goods table will make room for your delicious delectables. Please include a note indicating exactly what the item is (multigrain bread from local farms, white dinner rolls, or Aunt Betsy’s Best Brownies, for example) and if your goods include trigger ingredients such as gluten or nuts. Attractive labels help. “Goods” from box mixes or the store deli are NOT GOOD - those are great when the neighborhood gang shows up from the playground but are not fitting for our Peasants. We will be selling finger nibbles as well as items to take home and share with the family, so please package your items suitably - depend-
ing on what it is, place separately in little snack bags or in whole loaves or packages. You can bring your items in on the morning of PM, or earlier for storing in Sandy’s freezer - just let us know. Mary will also be assembling Peasant Market Soup Mix a la the old days when Ceil and Sylvia led the charge, so if you’d like to help with that, please let me know. Other nice snacks or spreads may be welcome too. If you have questions, please be in touch with Mary McGuire: mary.c.mcguire10@gmail.com or 388-6740.

Public Relations (Barb Wood 388-2262)
We would love some help distributing posters around the area for Peasant Market and Intake. Contact me or Ryan Nevius for more details.

Kayak Raffle-(Ryan Nevius 381-8747)
Our gorgeous handcrafted wooden kayak is ready to be shown off during intake. Raffle tickets for this Wee Lassie style lightweight kayak are now available in the church office, during coffee hour and online at ststephensmidd.org. Pick up an envelope with 9 tickets and an informational flyer and ask friends and family to take a chance to win this beautiful kayak while supporting our outreach programs. We are counting on every one to sell or buy raffle tickets, Can’t make it into town? We deliver! Contact Ryan at 803-381-8747.

Books- (Elizabeth Oettinger 989-7100)
Hello, all! We need medium size boxes for sorting books during intake. Please drop them off to the upper conference room once intake begins. Feel free to sort a few books while you are there!

If you have books to donate, we ask that they be in good condition. We take novels, cookbooks, mysteries, histories, childrens books, jigsaw puzzles and DVDs. Remember- no textbooks, reference books/encyclopedias, magazines, readers’ digest condensed books, or outdated materials. If you think you have an older book that might be valuable, contact Joe McVeigh for appraisal. Thank you all so very much.

Silent Auction (Paul Horn 238-9238)
Our bid sheet system is back with the added bonus of our newly acquired clipboards for each item to keep everything organized. We have lots of interesting items, so register and bid on some treasures while supporting our outreach program.

Boatwrights (Ed McGuire 989-1636)
The kayak is in the home stretch! All the wood that is going into her is included in the laminate thwart built by Tom Klemmer. This year there is an engraved “St. Stephens Boatwright’s” emblem on the foredeck. Our final sanding and varnishing are underway!

Join us on the 4th of July as we march alongside our Wee Lassie kayak in the Bristol Parade. This is a great opportunity to show off our beautiful kayak to admiring parade watchers. Stay afterwards to field questions about the construction of our kayak from curious potential ticket buyers at our booth on the Bristol green. Can’t make the parade? Help sell tickets at our booth at Peasant Market.

Lunch Grill (An Duclos (388-6487)
The Lunch Booth is preparing to tempt all Peasant Market visitors with grilled meats and delectable salads. Then, after a hearty lunch, all of our Peasant Market shoppers will resume their very important task of pulling out their wallets at our many booths. Therefore, we are looking for a few salad makers to bring their favorite knives to An Duclos’s bright and cheery kitchen on either Thursday afternoon or Friday morning before Peasant Market day. Meanwhile, Alex Horn and Clayton Duclos are polishing up their spatulas and tongs for a tasty array of grilled meats to accompany our salads.

If your heart goes pitter-patter at the thought of assisting the Lunch booth on Peasant Market Day, don’t hold back! We are serving lunch from 11-1pm and would welcome your help as well as your appetites.

Midway- (Claire Groby 458-8120)
Looks like I will be doing the midway again this year. I think the main aim of the midway is to provide entertainment for kids so that there’s something for them while parents shop. I hope to have a variety of games and activities and maybe some sort of scavenger hunt again. I don’t think I will need intake help but on the day of peasant market it would be great to have some volunteer assistance with set up and getting kids excited and engaged in playing games. If anyone is interested in doing face painting that would also be a great help!
Booth Help needed in a Nutshell

Linens- Folding, tagging and tying. Cashiers
Childrens- Cashiers
Books- Sorters, cashiers
Midway- Set up, face painter, help with games and activities
White elephant- Sorting, cashiers
Pie Day- Fruit donations fresh or frozen, Pie Day 11:30-3 shift, cashier
Raffle- Raffle ticket sellers
Publicity- Addy Indy free ad donors, Poster distribution, yard sign help
Lemonade- Lunch shift 11-1pm
Baked goods- Homemade donations, bean soup mix makers
Silent Auction- Floating help during auction
Jewelry- Set up Friday and help during sale
Grill- Food prep Thursday and Friday. Help during lunch rush.

This Gorgeous Kayak Could be YOURS!

The Boatwrights have done it again and made this gorgeous kayak handcrafted from Alaskan Cedar and Peruvian Black Walnut. It weighs only 28 pounds and is 13.5 ft long and truly is a work of art and design. It is made to be a true car topper, easily taken to your favorite stream or pond.

Our Kayak raffle is one of our biggest and most popular fundraisers. Ed McGuire and his Boatwrights have worked hundreds of hours handcrafting this beautiful kayak. This is the final time the Boatwrights will be making this particular kayak, so this is your last opportunity to buy a ticket to win this beautiful boat.

Please support our Boatwrights by picking up a packet of 9 tickets at the church office or at coffee hour. Tickets are $10 each or 6 for $50 and are available during intake, during church office hours and online at ststephensmidd.org.

In Other Peasant Market News

Peasant Market is on Saturday July 7 and Joe and I are hoping for perfect weather this year. We are excited that we are able to bring back 2 favorite booths, the Baked Goods booth (Thank you Mary McGuire!) and the Midway games (Thank you Claire Groby!) Mary is also making our popular Bean Soup mix to sell alongside baked goods, a great staple for anyone’s pantry.

We also have Peasant Market T-shirts for sale this year. They are red with the Peasant Market logo in white, in sizes S-XL. They are available through the church office at a presale price of $8. During Peasant Market we will be selling them for $12 each.
I would like to start out by recognizing all the hard work our gardening team has done and continue to do to make our grounds look so beautiful. Your work is greatly appreciated as is your time that you all so generously volunteer.

As you are all probably aware by now, the railroad blasting has begun. I am happy to report that so far St. Stephen’s has suffered no damaging effects from the explosives. We will continue to monitor this situation closely as we work together with Jim Gish and the demolition team.

Earlier this month I attended a planning meeting at the town hall regarding what the new “triangle park” will be and how it should be used. This was a very friendly and productive meeting with many good ideas being exchanged from several people. St. Stephen’s will play a significant role in determining the future of the park and how our retaining wall blocks should be used.

Finally, I am thrilled to report that we were awarded a significant grant in the amount of $13,000 from the diocese to use toward our new columbarium. We have also received our certificate of approval from the Vermont department of health to proceed with the installation. Later this month I will sign the order agreement and send the required down payment to begin construction on our columbarium. Once received, it will take between 16-20 weeks to complete construction. Peter has been working hard making some necessary alterations to the north wall of the chapel to receive the columbarium. The next phase will involve building the base on which the columbarium will sit. That will take place after peasant market is over.

That is all for now. If anyone has any questions or concerns about these latest happenings, please feel free to reach out to me personally. You may email me at klemway@gmail.com. Thank you.

Tom Klemmer

Particularly important in times of transition

Pastoral Care Seeks to Extend its Reach

During this transition time, after our rector leaves and before the interim arrives, the Pastoral Lay Ministry will play an important role in the life of the parish. If you are ill or recovering from surgery, if you need meals, if you would like the Eucharist brought to you, if you need an empathetic ear, if you need a ride to appointments, we are available. We also realize that spousal support is a need; if you have a spouse who is gravely ill or has recently died, we hope to be there for you.

Tom Turley and I (Jessica Hoagland) take the Eucharist to Helen Porter once a month.

We have welcomed several new members, and Susan McGarry recently led us through three training sessions and when this issue of Parishscope goes to print, some of us will have participated in a session of Safe Church Training.

Our new members are: Fred De-Haven, Dee Hodges, Sandy Ketcham, Barbara Kieran, Carol Milkuhn, May Morris, Elizabeth Oettinger, Emily Sunderman, Winky Thomas, Jean Bergesen, and Cynthia Watters. Those continuing members: Marge Drexler, Coordinator of Loaves and Fishes; Steve Sontum, driver; Tom Turley, Barb Wood and me.

We would also welcome anyone else who would like to join us. If you have a need of any of the above or would like to become a member, please get in touch with me, Jessica Hoagland, 388-9012, hoagland.j@comcast.net.

From Our Junior Warden -- Tom Klemmer

I would like to start out by recognizing all the hard work our gardening team has done and continue to do to make our grounds look so beautiful. Your work is greatly appreciated as is your time that you all so generously volunteer.

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Tom Klemmer
Peasant Market is the epitome of stewardship in action!

It’s that time of year again when the Stewardship Ministry Team (SMT) begins to think about its role in the year-round performance of its ministry. Key in all our thinking is the forthcoming Peasant Market. Every year I seem to write this article proclaiming how important the Peasant Market is to St. Stephen’s overall stewardship ministry. It bears annual repeating.

Peasant Market is a full-on exercise of our Christian giving. It represents the gifts of very valuable personal time and talents of so many St. Stepheners. If we were to count up all the hours and personal efforts expended, I think we would be astonished. These gifts of time, talent, and in many cases, personal financial expenditures, are then turned around and shared with members of our community. The funds are extremely important to a wide range of charitable organizations.

The SMT has begun to meet again after a few months’ rest with a number of things on its plate. Among our meetings was a wonderful ‘afternoon tea’ served up by Irv Cummings at which, energized by tea, scones and English clotted cream, we discussed the future of stewardship in coming months.

First and foremost is Susan’s retirement at the end of June. Susan has been an invaluable asset to the parish and the cause of stewardship. In my many years of concentrating on stewardship, she has exemplified its precepts better than any of my many other rectors. A few examples of her dedication to stewardship include her adoption and upbringing of two children, the way in which she has apportioned her funds to exceed what is normally thought of as a tithe, the way she has agonized over and finally decided on how she will power her Middlebury house in an environmentally responsible way, and how she has sought wide guidance on how to responsibly use her inherited farm for the good of society and the needy. To this end, the SMT recently held a potluck meeting at her farm to brainstorm innovative uses the farm could serve. It was a lively and friendly meeting with many ideas being floated.

Throughout her tenure, Susan has been a strong participant in both the SMT meetings and Fall Campaigns. She has not let us forget that the principle of stewardship is part and parcel of our spiritual and church lives. Through her sermons and actions, she has exemplified a person who practices stewardship in all its aspects of her daily life. For that, we are extremely thankful.

A second consideration on the minds of the team has been how to fit next fall’s Giving Goals Campaign in with the rector discernment process. That, coupled with my stepping down as SMT leader and the occasional Fall Campaign chair, will require a ‘rethink.’ It will be a good chance to look at changing the process and allow for changing the timing. So far, the team is looking at an early start, so that the campaign will not interfere with the discernment process that will likely begin in the fall.

The SMT is looking for more members to join what we see as a vibrant and fun group. The meetings generally occur in the late afternoon of weekdays and have been limited strictly to one hour. The unofficial mission of the Team is to come up with ideas on how to celebrate and support the important ministries of St. Stephen’s. Please consider joining the Team; if you’d like to learn more, please contact me.

John Hammer
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I learned a new term this week from a talented artist: liminality. I know hardly anything about it except that anthropologists have used this term to describe tribal coming-of-age rituals. My interpretation is that it addresses the times of transition when a situation is in flux and there may be confusion and chaos before the stage of clarity arises. The image that my artist friend created to capture this shows strands of yarn raveling and tangling with each other between moments of the yarn wrapping around a fixed rod in a tidy pattern. She writes in her project introduction, “A modern-day illustration of this idea: in general, a college student has a stable purpose and place in the world (thread is tight, structured, wrapped) but a recent grad might go through a period of endless questions and options and confusion (tangled thread) as she passes through the liminal period that precedes her next step.” (Molly Haig, mollyhaig.com, where you can see her animation).

The connection to St. Stephen’s is clear. We say farewell to Susan, our smart, loving, sensitive rector of six years, and enter this liminal stage of being between. It’s not comfortable; some may feel sad and afraid, some have regrets, and some wonder what all the fuss is about -- as many different feelings, perhaps, as there are St. Stephen’s parishioners. We are not moving through this alone, though. God is here among us, and as we open our hearts and hands, so will we see God in each other and feel encouraged, even excited.

To that end, the Vestry will be meeting with Lynn Bates, the diocesan Canon to the Ordinary, in mid-July to discuss the interim clergy and discernment processes. We hope, and reasonably expect, to have an interim clergy person in place by the end of summer or early fall. We may be able to form a discernment committee before then, but until we meet with Lynn, I can’t say for sure exactly what our timeline will be.

In the meantime:

- We will focus our energy on collaborating for a successful Peasant Market - all hands on deck!
- A group of people involved in various elements of inner and “outer” communication met; more on that later. Just know that we have skilled and passionate communicators who will be sharing their time and talents to make some improvements. Exactly what yet, we’re not sure.
- Mission Outreach: the follow-up from the visioning is pausing, just a tad, while we take on some of the more urgent work; however, I know that we have a couple people who expect to start volunteering in the schools in the fall. Safe Church training is part of that preparation.

Finally, I want to thank Susan; you have been my rector and fellow seeker of God’s will. You offer intelligent, faithful, loving leadership to the Vestry. Your love for Jesus is crystal clear and offers a beacon of love for others. You are courageous and tender. You talk about being an older mother than some of your parenting peers, but your energy level seems to match that of your children, so your family is a perfect fit. We will miss Lean and Thomas as well. We have watched them grow, literally through leaps and bounds, into talented, interesting and fun young people! I wish you all the best for your study period and then retirement, Susan. Your work for Jesus is far from over as I know that you will continue to serve God in ways that we don’t anticipate yet.

God’s love and clarity is at hand in each other and in our quiet times. May we reach out for it!

--Mary
This Summer our 9:00 am service will be a pretty conventional Rite II service with musical service settings taken from Franz J. Schubert’s Deutsche Messe. For most of our summer services we will have some special music for the offertory. Since there will be a number of celebrants with past or present ties to St. Stephen’s, please come worship joyfully and support all our guest celebrants.

On June 24th and July 1st we will have special services dedicated to the memory and inspiration of special saints.

Something about special services for saints on Sunday. There are only 6 situations when a feast day (that isn’t already a Sunday service) may take precedence over the normal Sunday worship. That means you can change the lessons and the focus of the service from the yearly cycle to reflect these special services. The first four are All Saints’ Day (Nov. 1), The Holy Name (Jan. 1), The Presentation (Feb. 2), The Transfiguration (Aug. 6). Of these All Saints’ Day can always be moved to the next Sunday. The others take precedence only when they fall on Sunday. Usually a feast day that falls on Sunday gets bumped to later that week. There are two other feasts that are often important to individual congregations, the feast of the dedication of a church and the feast of its patron. These can actually be moved to any Sunday (unless they fall on a Sunday when you celebrate it on that day) except during Advent, Lent and Easter. (This is all explained on page 15 and 16 of the prayer book.)

Our Patron, Stephen, has a feast day on December 26. For the last 5 years we have celebrated St. Stephen’s Sunday on the Sunday before Peasant Market. We will do that again this year with The Rev. Catherine Nichols as our Celebrant. Stephen as the first deacon in the church is a symbol of servant ministry. It has also seemed appropriate when launching into this market that is dedicated to raising money to help people most in need in our community, that we remember Stephen who gave not only his energy but his life to witness to Jesus and his call to serve “the least of these my brothers and sisters.” On this day the Peasant Market chairs and table chairs will be blessed and dedicated to this ministry. Also the boat will be blessed.

The next special day is a bit odd. It is a major feast day, called Feast of our Lord, but it usually doesn’t get observed on a Sunday. It is the Feast of St. John the Baptist. In our church is is called the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. Placed about 3 months after the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25) when the Angel Gabriel was to have caused Mary to be pregnant. People good at math will notice that March 25 is exactly 9 months before Christmas. When Gabriel delivers the news of her own impending birth to Mary, Gabriel also tells her of the miracle that her cousin, Elizabeth, in her old age, has conceived and is 6 months pregnant with John.

Canonized as a saint in 1690, John the Baptist is the patron saint of hospitals, the sick, nurses, firefighters, alcoholics, and booksellers. I was ordained a deacon on June 24, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, at St. Paul’s Cathedral in downtown Cleveland, 40 years ago (1978). As a special concession to me, we will be celebrating his feast day on Sunday the 24th of June this year.

But, “how?” you might ask. It isn’t one of the 6 situations listed above. The answer is, “I asked permission of the bishop.”

There is a famous “permission clause” in the prayer book on page 13. “Also, subject to the direction of the bishop, special devotions taken from this Book or from Holy Scripture, may be used when the needs of the congregation so require.” This was the clause that freed so many of our bishops to authorize services of “Blessings” for same-sex couples long before the larger church wrote such services. This was particularly important in Vermont where Civil Unions were so early authorized by the state.

The bishop’s answer was, “yes” as long as you explain the reasons for this special observance to the congregation. This I have just done.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan