



THE GEORGIAN REPORT



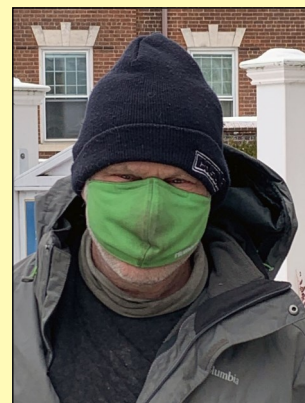
Volume 12 Number 1

St. George's Episcopal Church Schenectady NY

March 2021

WHO IS THAT MASKED MAN/WOMAN/PET?

Georgians are complying with COVID-19 safety recommendations which includes every member of their family wearing masks inside the church and outside in the Stockade Area.



(Cont'd on page 12)

OUTREACH

ST. GEORGE'S RENEWS COMMITMENT TO SICM FOOD PANTRY

St. George's is centering its 2021 outreach efforts in emphasizing support for SICM's food pantry. Each month on the second Sunday, a red wagon full of food will be presented for blessing and eventual delivery to the SICM food pantry. Donations can be left at the rear of the church or dropped off in the Cranmer House foyer Tuesday or Thursday afternoons.

St George's first red wagon blessing was Valentine's Day at which time an overflowing red wagon was presented for blessing. In total a robust 218 pounds of food and personal care products were delivered to a grateful SICM food pantry.



Helen and Isaac Stromberg bringing donated food to the sanctuary for blessing.

The next red wagon presentation is scheduled for Sunday, March 14th.

The SICM food pantry is located at 839 Albany Street and provides nutritious food and personal care items to those whose need qualifies each Monday/Wednesday/Friday morning.



Large quantity of donated items awaiting blessing.



Father Matt blessing food donated by Georgians with Holy Water as David Kennison looks on.

Calling All Local History Buffs

Local history will be on the agenda April 18 as the church's book club discusses *Island at the Center of the World* by Russell Shorto. It comes highly recommended by Debbie Lambeth. As Georgians, we are aware of England's role in colonizing our region, but Dutch explorers were here even earlier. This book tells the astonishing true story of how they founded one of the world's premier cities (New York, formerly known as New Amsterdam) and forged north to open new territory for European settlement and trade.

The meeting will be part of the Zoom coffee hour agenda at noon. To join, use the link Father Matt sends out each week. Once the weather is back to tolerable, the club will resume in-person, outdoor meetings. Meg Hughes is available at (518) 694-1550 if you have questions.

meg hughes

SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS

Sandee Hughes, a Georgian for 26 years, grew up Episcopalian at St. Paul's in Troy where she and husband Peter were married and daughter Shannon baptized. When Shannon turned 5 they transferred to St. George's because of its active Sunday school and adult forums. "It was a better family plan," said Sandee.

Immediately becoming immersed in various ministries, for years she volunteered with Sunday school, first with Nancy Wingate then later she and Connie Todt worked with Barb Wengrovius. Responsible for about six children a week, each course was planned for ten weeks.

COVID-19 changed Sandee's church habits. After consulting several doctors who recommended limiting indoor time to 35 minutes or less (and to keep moving about) she finds sitting in a pew for an hour or more concerning. "I love St. George's Mass, but it's too long with COVID-19 so I sometimes go to 8:00 at St. Paul's, which is only ½ hour and includes communion." She also loves our Rite 1 Mass and, of course, the people, but admits to not being fond of the passing of the peace because it interrupts the flow of the service.

COVID 19 changed her volunteering. "I don't do Altar Guild right now which includes cleaning up after Mass, but I've continued my Sacristan duties of setting up Church on Saturday for Sunday's Mass, when there's basically no one around but me," she explained.

When Sandee became a member of the Vestry (2019) she assumed chairmanship of the Hospitality Committee...general planning, scheduling volunteers and food for Sunday coffee hours/social events, and keeping an inventory of paper products. Many of those duties are currently in limbo.

A retired art teacher, Sandee worked forty years for Niskayuna middle schools, mostly at Van Antwerp. Painting, photography, swimming and travel are her leisure-time activities. She and Peter traveled to Alaska (on her bucket list), Grand Cayman, and their summer destination is always Maine. She loves to bake but enjoys dancing better. She and Peter took ballroom lessons so they could "trip the light fantastic" at Shannon's wedding to Scott Hartz last year.

Homebound, Sandee has tapped into her artistic self by redoing a six-room doll house that her grandfather built for her mother. Her grandmother sewed all the curtains and bedspreads. Sandee has the structure elevated and has been taping, sanding, ripping out carpeting, taking off the lead paint and 1950's wiring, painting the walls, etc. It's a work in progress, and keeps Sandee's sanity during isolation, as well as remodeling it for future generations. (On that note, we'll end by saying that Shannon and Scott are expecting a bundle of joy in May,) And, a big "thank you" to Sandee

lynn paska



FROM THE RECTOR'S STUDY



I try to walk around the Stockade at least once a day. Not only is it good exercise, but It's good outreach too, and it scratches my itch to socialize. Saint George's is situated in a beautiful and unique neighborhood with a lot of history. People take a great deal of pride in their homes and I never get tired looking at all the beautiful old properties. The Stockade has forged a very intentional identity for itself and worked hard over the years to foster a sense of community. Just ask the president of our neighborhood association, and member of Saint George's, Suzy Unger. It is special what we have. We

are a bit like a small town nestled in downtown Schenectady.

People here love Saint George's too! Regardless of whether they worship here on a regular basis or not, they feel a certain sense of connection and ownership living in the shadow of our steeple. I was talking to a man on his stoop the other day when his landlord walked up. I was surprised when he introduced me and said, "This is Father Matt. He is my priest." Since I have been here, I have never once seen him in Mass! Still, it made me smile.

It has made me think a bit about what it means to be a parish church. Today, we typically use the term parish to distinguish one congregation from another. So we have the parish of St. George's, or St. Paul's, or St. Alice's etc. Here in the United States, we are used to thinking of parishes in terms of a voluntary association of individuals from all over, gathered together as one community. To be sure, our own members here at St. George's come from as far as Albany or even Johnstown! But the term "parish" is actually a hold over from a different time and place. In the early days of Christianity, the Church consisted of all Christians in a city under a Bishop who stood in relation to the Christians of that city much like a rector in a parish today. Think for instance of Paul who wrote to the Church in Corinth or the Church in Thessalonica. When Christianity started to spread beyond the cities into the countryside, Christians were organized into their own units with their own priest under the jurisdiction of a Bishop. In later times, when Church and State were more tightly bound, regions were divided up into parishes consisting of these units. The vicar or Rector was the priest responsible for the religious instruction, the spiritual care and wellbeing, of that particular region or parish. If you lived in a certain region, you were on the rolls as belonging to a particular parish.

Obviously, in our secular, pluralistic, society it doesn't quite work that way, but we still use the language of parish in the Episcopal Church. As a parish priest, I think it is worth thinking about it that way sometimes. What is my parish? Well first and foremost it is all of you, those who worship and contribute here at Saint George's. But this geographical region, this neighborhood, this Stockade community, these people, they are also my parish though. They are our parish. It's a more mission oriented way of thinking about the parish. Saint George's Episcopal Church, "In the Heart of the Stockade," has a mission to our neighbors, to those who live in the Stockade, those who live in Schenectady, and the capital district. We are set up here as an outpost, a mission, to the people of our community. As the parish priest, the Lord says to me, these are your flock, feed them, tend them.

In light of this, lets ponder together, how can we minister to the people in our community with the love of Jesus Christ and the Gospel? Who are they? What good news do they need to hear from us? How can we serve them as Christ has served us?

grace and peace, fr. matthew stromberg



St. George's Vestry 2021



**Fr. Matthew
Stromberg
Rector**



**David
Kennison
Senior Warden**



**Jonathan
Ewbank
Junior Warden**



**Jeffrey
Wengrovius
Treasurer**



**Margaret
Hughes
Clerk of the Vestry**



**Richard
Unger**



**Lynn
Paska**



**Sandra
Hughes**



**Deborah
Lambeth**



**Carol
Gaige**



**Paul
Smigelski**



**Sean
Albert**

Outside work goes on as usual around the buildings and grounds of St. George's, as captured pictorially by Sandee Hughes.



**Stephanie Youmans
1914 – 2021**

IN MEMORIAM



**Dorothy Kennison
1925 - 2021**

"Rest in Peace"



**William R. Schultz, Jr.
1926 - 2021**

CHRISTMAS 2020



God gave a second gift to us this Christmas – a quieter holiday, with time for personal reflection. In this pandemic year when an intimate Nativity season was forced upon us, it was in retrospect a return to the essentials of immediate family, reaching out to our loved ones by phone or computer, stripped of the usual frantic partying and endless shopping.

During Advent Fr. Matt spoke on the themes of Forgiveness, Love, Waiting. A year of impatience, disruption, and loss has pretty much drained our reserves of calm forbearance; hearing about Mary's acceptance of Jesus' impending birth and later his death helped us remember the solidity of God's help when we adapt to upheavals in our own lives.



For the first time in years Greening the Church was not bedlam, thanks to the organizing and decorating skills of Kevin Decker. Using evergreens from a tree that Chris Henry (conveniently) had cut down, Kevin draped the communion rail with greens, red poinsettias, and lights. He hand-made wreaths for the lecterns and balcony, and set candles in the windows. He and David Kennison stood trees by the altar and arranged the nativity scene outside. Anne Kennison ironed altar linens, and with Sandee Hughes polished silver candlesticks, altar vessels, and other items that needed polishing. Barb Wengrovius tied greens and silver bows to the candelabras and then Jamie Taft secured the candelabras in the pews. Bob Paska vacuumed pine needles and Lynn Paska took pictures, so that St. George's emerged serene and beautiful for the birth of Jesus.



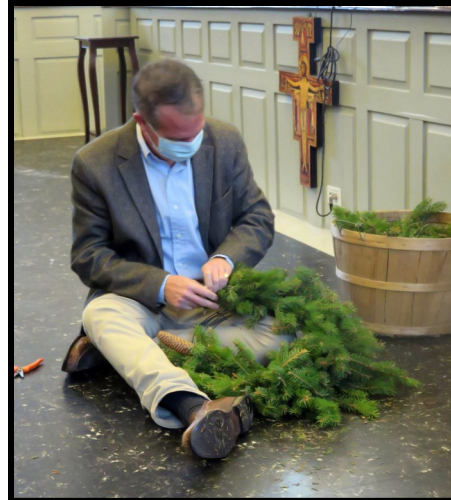
There was no children's Mass on Christmas Eve. Due to rain, the "choir" sang carols inside

under Brian Taylor's direction, starting at 9:30. Mass began at 10:00 but without the long procession and special music of previous years. Fr. Matt spoke of the Christmas spirit and its elusiveness. For many of us that spirit is based on nostalgia, so we revisit traditions to recapture it. If we are in quarantine and can't practice our usual traditions, where will we find the Christmas spirit? The Christmas spirit is joy. "The joy that visits us at Christmas is the magnetic pull of God's love." After communion Georgians joined together in perhaps our best-loved tradition, singing "Silent Night" by candlelight.

At Epiphany on January 6, Fr. Matt explored the human need to seek meaning by asking questions. Was the alignment of planets at Christmas time the same as the Star of Bethlehem? The timing works. This would be a compelling explanation of the Magi and the Star. Some people would prefer the Star to be a miracle, not a natural phenomenon. Humans still ask what it means in our quest for truth. The heavens declare the glory of God as God reveals Himself in Nature. God has given us Christ. We find God everywhere in the world throughout its design: the divine revelation is fulfilled in Christ.

Fr. Matt blessed chalk, which is at church, for writing 20 + C + M + B + 21 above our doorways as we say an Epiphany house blessing for the coming year. My favorite is: *"Lord our God, bless this household. May we be blessed with health, goodness of heart, gentleness, and the keeping of your law. We give thanks to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen."* After 2020, we all understand the importance of blessings for our homes and families. Joy and Good Health in 2021!

joan pearson





MUSIC AT ST. GEORGE'S



STABAT MATER

At the cross her vigil keeping,
Stood the mournful mother weeping,
Where he hung, the dying Lord:

There she waited in her anguish,
Seeing Christ in torment languish,
In her heart the piercing sword.

With what pain and desolation,
With what grief and resignation,
Mary watched her dying Lord.

Deep the woe of her affliction,
When she saw the crucifixion
Of the sole begotten one.

Him she saw for our salvation
Mocked with cruel acclamation,
Scourged, and crowned with thorns entwined.

Saw him then from judgment taken,
And in death by all forsaken,
Till his spirit he resigned.

Who, on Christ's dear mother gazing,
Pierced by anguish so amazing,
Born of woman, would not weep?

Who, on Christ's dear mother thinking,
Such a cup of sorrow drinking,
Would not share her sorrows deep?

Jesus, may her deep devotion
Stir in me the same emotion,
Fount of love, Redeemer kind;

That my heart fresh ardor gaining,
And a purer love attaining,
May with thee acceptance find.



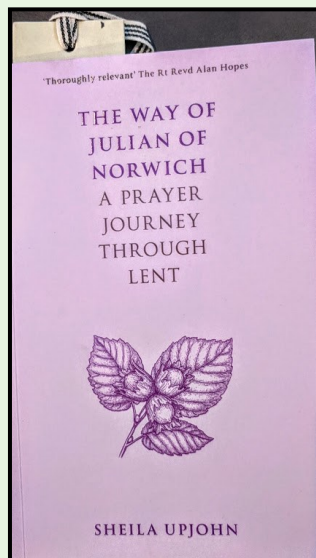
This Medieval hymn from the 13th century is one that has captured the Catholic imagination for centuries. Numerous choral settings of this text have been composed, including a notable one by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736). In the Roman Catholic tradition its primary use is at the Mass of the Seven Sorrows, a mass that is done twice a year - once on the Friday before Holy Week and once on September 15th, the day after Holy Cross Day - as well as other times during the year. In the English translation commonly used the first six stanzas describe Mary's anguish as she beholds the crucifixion of her son. (Note the fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy at the end of stanza two.) The next two stanzas invite all to join with Mary in her sorrow. The final two stanzas ask Jesus for increased love and devotion as well as the grace of acceptance.

Each Friday evening at 7:00 p.m. here at St. George's we will walk the Stations of the Cross singing one or two stanzas of the Stabat Mater between each station. In this way will unite ourselves to Mary in contemplating the death of our Savior for our salvation.

brian j. taylor

LENTEN SERIES

ALL SHALL BE WELL



A sculptural imaging of Julian at Norwich Cathedral

St George's 2021 Lenten study was an examination of "The Way Of Julian of Norwich – A Prayer Journey Through Lent" by Sheila Upjohn. A journalist, Ms. Upjohn has written extensively about Julian since first encountering her over fifty years ago.

Not much is factually known of the 14th century Julian which most likely isn't even her real name. She became an anchorite, an unusual life whereby a person is walled into a small room for a lifetime of devotion to God. In her cell at Norwich Cathedral Julian received a series of "showings" during which our Lord appeared and spoke with her.



St George's Lenten Study text. The hazelnuts depicted on the cover used by Julian in her writings.

Discussing these various showings was the basis of Georgians Sunday evening study. While focusing on a wide range of human conditions and theological considerations, in the end, Julian assures us that "all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well".

alice polumbo

*The **EPISCOPAL EDUCATION** column is on hiatus this issue, but will be back in June.*

Church Chuckles



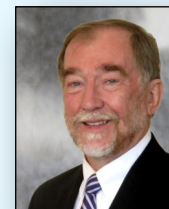
A preacher was winding up his temperance sermon with great fervor. "If I had all the beer in the world, I'd take it and throw it in the river." And the congregation cried, "Amen!" He continued, "If I had all the wine in the world, I'd take it and throw it in the river." And the congregation cried, "Amen!" He ended with, "If I had all the whiskey and rum in the world, I'd take it all and throw it in the river." And the congregation cried, "Hallelujah!" The preacher sat down. The choir master stood up and very tentatively announced, "For our closing song, let us sing Hymn #365...." Shall We Gather At the River."



Brian Taylor poses with his daughter, Amelia, prior to her December 12th wedding to Caleb Israel in Carrolton, Georgia.

- SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -

Today, rather than presenting to you a progress report of accomplishments on various projects, I'd like to share some work the Rector and Vestry have undertaken – to grow our church. This will be a long and winding journey and not an easy one. There is no guarantee of success – denominational Christian churches are in trouble across many countries. Declining attendance, reduced giving, empty pews – we see it in our own church and it's not all caused by Covid-19. Has our Christian commitment to God to attend church weekly descended into “if it's convenient” or “maybe, if there's nothing else going on”? What is the inexorable pull of modern society? What is the role of religion in an age of science? Many questions, few answers and we won't solve them all.



We start with the *Catechism* in the Book of Common Prayer, pg 855, specifically the articles on the Mission of the Church. If this sounds familiar, it is – it forms the basis of St. George's Mission Statement, it is on our web site and is posted in the narthex of the church.

The mission of St. George's is to bring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. As we worship and serve Christ, we come to know him and make him known through the Sacraments and through study of Holy Scripture. Nurtured by scripture, tradition and reason; through prayer and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the people of St. George's know the church of Jesus Christ to be local, universal, and inclusive.

Our mission statement goes further, but you get the idea. St. George's mission - our mission - to “bring people to unity with God and each other” makes it imperative for us to grow God's church. That is our goal. The rest is strategy and tactics and that is why we have begun discussions.

We know we have to improve communications. When people fall away for whatever reason, do we forget them or do we maintain contact? Do we call them on the phone or just send a text message? When people move away, do we keep some level of contact so they know St George's is alive and well and do we ask for support? When visitors grace us with their presence, do we greet them enthusiastically, introduce them to other parishioners and take them to coffee hour (post-pandemic)? Do we send them newsletters? Do we send parishioners a personal handwritten note of thanks for making their pledge? There are many ways to make us better at communication and thereby make us better as a church family and make St. George's a place that all people can worship God with a sense of majesty and mystery, grow in their faith and even have fun together as a church family.

I am also asking for ideas from each of you. Our mission for growth falls to everyone. Don't be shy!

With great affection, david kennison

- JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -

Since my last Georgian submission, things have been hot and not so hot in the facilities and maintenance area.

We have:

Replaced a leaking steam line valve under the Sanctuary (after first doing an asbestos abatement process of the surrounding piping).

Cleaned out, lubricated and made operational the Sanctuary vent fans.

Repaired the concrete steps at all three entries to Cranmer House.

Repaired the Cranmer House dormers, and repainted those dormers and the cornice work on the Sanctuary.

Just before the Christmas holiday, the boiler for the Great Hall failed, and we (i.e. Dr. Brian Taylor and Dr. Jeff Wingrovius) scrambled to keep the building warm enough to prevent damage to the plumbing.

Following the Holidays, we signed a contract to replace the Great Hall boiler. All of the necessary parts and pieces are now on hand, awaiting a break in the cold weather to allow the contractor to make the installation.

Addressed the non-functional security systems to our buildings. After researching options and costs, David Kennison decided it was easiest and most effective resolution was to fix the old system. That project is now complete.

My thanks to all who have jumped in where needed, making my job easier.

respectfully, jon ewbank



- TREASURER'S REPORT -

As we look back on 2020, our church has many blessings to be thankful for, despite the COVID 19 pandemic. These blessings include the following financial highlights:



For the 3rd year in a row, we finished the year with positive cash balances in both our TRUSTCO and RBC cash accounts WITHOUT taking any distributions from our endowment principle reserves.

Our “Slay the Dragon” initiative to reduce spending at every opportunity is still active and produced significant results in 2020. THANKS to Bob McCloskey for leading this effort. However, these opportunities are getting fewer and fewer due to our past success.

Cash surpluses from previous years’ savings were used to fund 12 maintenance and improvement projects in 2020. We spent about \$55,000 on these efforts.

Our church received a PPP loan from the US government in the amount of \$23,300. This money was used to maintain staffing levels during the pandemic. Our loan forgiveness application is very likely to be accepted.

Our endowments at RBC grew by approximately 11% in 2020 due to the strong stock and bond markets. THANKS to Jon Pearson for his continued service in overseeing our endowments.

Last, and most important, our giving remained strong during the year. Even though many of us could not attend church due to COVID, we still gave in an impressive way.

Looking forward to 2021, I must express the following concerns:

Some pandemic fatigue may be setting in. We have received only 25 signed pledge cards versus a normal number of about 38. As your treasurer, I do have a strong faith that your giving will continue. If you haven’t pledged, please consider doing so. It’s never too late.

We suffered the failure of our heating boiler for the Great Hall. This 42 year old unit served us well, but we have an unbudgeted expense of about \$53,000 to replace. The new boiler is being installed now in late February. Because we spent a lot of money in 2020 for maintenance projects, our cash reserves are low. Our “security blanket” is gone. Thus, we will have to take money out of our endowment principle to cover this cost.

Our Vestry approved a 2021 budget that calls for \$28,000 more in spending than projected income. In the past, we have been able to overcome deficit budgets through savings. This is less likely to happen in 2021. Thus, we may need more resources from our endowment principle. Our endowment provides greater than 55% of our income. A diminishing endowment could pose serious financial issues for our church without significant growth and Divine intervention.

Our huge infrastructure of 5 major buildings, 1 building for every 10 people giving to our church, is a major drain on our finances. We have a goal in 2021 to create a strategic plan for our buildings. This may include a capital campaign to raise money to support this strategy.

One final thought: Our church has shown resilience in the past. We have overcome money issues before. We need to be a strong and united church family to secure our future.

*respectfully submitted,
jeff wengrovius*



St. George's Episcopal Church

30 North Ferry Street

Schenectady, New York 12305

The Reverend Matthew R. Stromberg Rector

Telephone (518) 374-3163

email: office@stgeorgesschenectady.org

www.stgeorgesschenectady.org

Editor: Lynn Paska

Layout: Bob Paska

Contributors:

Jonathan Ewbank
Meg Hughes
Santee Hughes
David Kennison
Joan Pearson
Alice Pumbo
Fr. Matt Stromberg+
Brian Taylor
Jeffrey Wengrovius

The Vestry

David Kennison, Sr. Warden
Jonathan Ewbank, Jr. Warden
Sean Albert
Carol Gaige
Margaret Hughes, Clerk
Sandra Hughes
Deborah Lambert
Marilyn (Lynn) Paska
Paul Smigelski
Richard Unger
Jeffrey Wengrovius, Treasurer

Office Staff

Administrator
Financial Secretary
Robert McCloskey

Directory of Music Ministry
Brian Taylor

(Cont'd from front cover)

We commend the efforts of these conscientious mask-ers for thinking
"safety first" for themselves and others.



And, we hope you had fun trying to identify the man/woman/pet beneath
the masks.