



# THE GEORGIAN REPORT



St. George's Church Schenectady, NY

December 2009

## THE RECTOR WRITES . . . .

At last all the business of Immigration and Visa applications are well behind us, and now the process of the Green Card begins. I already feel settled and at home in the Stockade, and Maggie has been busy making our house into a home in every sense of the word.



It is paramount that we both take this opportunity to once again extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to all members of St. George's for your profound generosity and kindness. The many gifts we have received, the Gift Cards and cash you have given have, at times, left us feeling quite overwhelmed.

I would like to personally thank all parishioners who have worked so tirelessly on the Rectory and yard, plus the gardeners and cleaners and that mighty army of helpers who have given of their time, their talents and their money. If I mention some folk by name, I may be accused of not mentioning others, so at the risk of sounding a little impersonal, I extend a "thank you" to you all for the significant contribution you have made to the whole process of welcoming your new Rector and priest.



*Fr. Paul Frederick Blanch*

**Differences.** Life here at St. George's will be very different for me by contrast to the life of a Parish Priest in the Church of England, and one of the reasons I felt called to serve here was to explore and enjoy that difference. Change can be threatening, change can be scary, but change is also about growing and developing in life and in faith. I am in no doubt that the living God of surprises led me to explore this call, and it would seem that the final outcome has been of that same loving God, despite the slow process of Visa and Immigration issues. I am deeply impressed by the congregation of St. George's in their resolve to grow and build God's Kingdom here in this place, utilizing that motto "*We are the Church.*" We have here a very fine historical and spiritual heritage, we also have before us an exciting sacrament of the present moment, but I believe also we have a truly awesome

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and grace filled future under God. Difference is what opens our eyes to new things, difference is what wakes us up to new possibilities, and difference is what helps us make new connections with our spiritual environment.

**Opportunities.** The tasks we undertake from this point onward are our response to God, and I am acutely aware that as any new Rector moves into a congregation, he comes with new ideas, new vision, and new impetus. Many folk will say that we have seen it all before, we have been here before under the last Rector, or even the last four or five Rectors, and this may be true, but each new Chapter is a new beginning under God. This new beginning allows us to refocus on what should be our current priorities, and what the present day opportunities are for us together.

A new Rector may come with wide ranging experience, and in my case with almost twenty-five years of priesthood and parish experience, but I do not have all the answers neatly packaged in a file. Nor do I have a magic wand to wave over all the problems of the parish. I will please some, and upset others, but I must, with the Wardens and Vestry's help and support, work hard to identify the opportunities that God is placing before us now!

**Responding.** All I ask is that we put God first in our lives, that we make a strong commitment to worshipping Him with the best of our human resources, for when we commit to giving God His worth (literally his worth-ship) we fulfill the basic commandment. Flowing from our worship will come our outreach, and from our outreach will come God's blessings to all those around us. My first training Rector used to say to me and to the parish frequently that "a Church that lives unto itself, will die unto itself." We cannot be too inward looking, for the Gospel demands us to look outward to others. We cannot be too wrapped up in ourselves, for the Jesus we follow was the man for others. So our response is to live the Gospel, share the Gospel, give God His worth in our earthly worship, and serve the living God in all the ways we can.

**Finally.....** I know that from hard experience no one priest can please all the people, all the time. What I can say is this, that I will endeavour to serve you the People of God in this parish to the very best of my ability. I can only take as my example the model and image of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and in doing that I have a great deal to live up to. When I was ordained back in 1986, the Bishop said to us in his Ordination charge these words.....

*"You must set the Good Shepherd always before you as the pattern of your calling, caring for the people committed to your charge, and joining with them in a common witness to the world....and because you cannot bear the weight of this ministry in your own strength but only by the grace and power of God, pray earnestly for his Holy Spirit. Pray that we will each day enlarge and enlighten your understanding of the Scriptures, so that you may grow stronger and more mature in your ministry, as you fashion your life and the lives of your people on the world of God."*

Over the last twenty-four years or so, I have endeavoured to live up to this high calling, and I offer my self to Jesus the God Shepherd, and now to you the 'People of God' at St. George's, Schenectady. Let us together explore the way of God in holiness and worship, study and fellowship, fun and companionship each and every day of our time together.



**Your friend and priest,**

*Fr Paul F Blanch*

# OUTREACH

Keep Sunday, January 31st open to volunteer on a “pot luck” dinner at Bethesda House. St. George’s and St. Stephen’s are partners in this project. Each will be responsible for providing approximately 40 servings (dessert, beverages) and 6-8 servers. A sign-up sheet will be placed in the narthex. Exclusive of servers, 20 volunteers are needed. It is hoped that our younger Georgians will consider volunteering for this worthwhile project.

The first week in November, we delivered 126 pounds of food to the SICM food pantry. Thank you to Wendy Madelone, recipient of a \$20 gift card towards a turkey, who donated that gift card to SICM.

Providing weekend meals in November to The Lighthouse, a group home operated by Bethesda House, were Jim Wingate and Amy Machold. Judy DeLong and Alice Pumbo will provide the meals in December. Volunteers are needed for this ongoing monthly ministry.



As part of our Outreach, the Vestry at St. George’s voted to sponsor a table at this year’s Salvation Army (Schenectady County) 19th Annual Christmas

Breakfast and Kettle Kick-off. Georgians supporting Table #28 were: Johnnie Angus, Nancy Angus, Joan Bessarab, Fr. Paul Blanch, Chris Henry, Anne Kennison, David Kennison, Lynn Paska, Aileen-Smith Caruso, and Wendy Madelone. Also in attendance at this event, at Table #29, were: Jon Pearson and Bob Paska.



*Judy DeLong taking inventory of donated coats.*

Our 3rd Annual Coat Drive concluded on Sunday, November 22nd with Fr. Paul’s blessing of the 50+ “gently used” coats that were then donated to Conifer Park.

A great big “thanks” to Jane and Bob Moran for working on our Toys for Tots

Outreach - being responsible for the TFT collection box in the narthex as well as taking donations to a designated TFT drop site.

Construction continues at 834 State Street, site of the new Bethesda House. This will benefit Schenectady’s chronically homeless. The Vestry of St. George’s voted to furnish one room in the house for \$1,500, with an anonymous donor giving \$500 to support this Outreach.

Last year over 1,000 Christmas cards (plus stamps) were collected through the combined efforts of St. Stephen’s and St. George’s. Deacon Pat Jones (St. Stephen’s) then distributed the cards and stamps to women inmates at the Schenectady County Jail. Through Advent, we are again asking Georgian generosity for this important ministry.

With many, many Outreach opportunities in the planning stages, we hope you will continue to support these endeavors with your time, talent and treasure. Or, if you have any ideas for an Outreach project, contact Outreach Chairman Alice Pumbo with your suggestions.

## ST. GEORGE'S CARILLON

Thanks to Johnnie Angus, St. George's carillon is operable again. What is a carillon? And, how did we get one?



A traditional carillon is a stationary set of chromatically tuned bells, usually hung in a tower, and played either by keys or pedals, or mechanically by ropes. Our carillon is an electronic version of its mechanical cousin. The bell-ringing is actually generated by a series of cassette tapes. Four-hundred watt speakers in the tower carry the sound to the neighborhood. Our carillon can produce both familiar hymns and melodies and

also the traditional chimes of call to prayer, this changing with the liturgical season of the Christian year.

Many years ago, parishioner Gloria Deutl bought the carillon for the church in memory of her son John, who died at the age of 19. The sound of a carillon had always been comforting to Gloria, and she wanted her church family to share in her love of this unique type of music instrument.

Not so many years ago, St. George's carillon was a constant presence in the Stockade but without proper maintenance the cassette deck became less reliable and finally stopped altogether. Fortunately, the rest of the system was in good shape. The manufacturer no longer wanted to support or repair the system, so there it sat.

Fortunately, we had Johnnie on our team! He disassembled the tape deck, cleaned and oiled it and put in new drive belts. Like magic, our carillon is once again in operation, calling to the community each day with familiar hymns and liturgical propers.

### START-UP SUNDAY 2009

As David Kennison frequently reminds us, "We Are the Church." A church is therefore a living, breathing, thinking, and active being. The ministry fair on Start-up Sunday gave us an opportunity to assess what activities we each do now and a chance to volunteer for even more. Together, we parishioners are doing more in church and in the community than we have for many years, but there is still much that needs to be done.

First, the food. Brunch was delicious due to the efforts of Amy Machold, Chris Henry, Mike Thiessen and Rosemary Fusco. Not only do Georgians know how to entertain, but we know how to eat. David brought us up-to-date on the rectory and what to expect on the rectory tour, and encouraged everyone to sign the lists at the information boards. Options in the community ranged from the food pantry to visiting shut-ins and providing frozen meals. In-church choices included Sunday school, acolyte, lector, greeter, counter, altar guild, and choir. Fr. Paul and Maggie will find an active, involved church community.

Sometimes we need encouragement to become involved. No matter what we choose to do, it will be a valuable contribution. No matter what we choose to do, more will need to be done. These lists are always ready for more, all year long. Donna will be happy to hear from us.

*joan pearson*

# SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS

Everyone knows that Episcopalians love to eat. At the drop of a hat, they bring a dish to pass - whether it's a family-secret recipe, a new version of an old favorite, an old version of a new favorite, or something that can be prepared in "bulk" to satisfy the appetites of all. Some dishes are cholesterol heaven; others are heart-smart. And while the entire congregation "pitches in," it is an established fact that **The Feast Masters** - Mike, Chris and Amy - will be toiling in St. George's kitchen, preparing the foundation of our tasty Georgian buffets.

**Mike Thiessen**, aka *Feast Master General* of St. George's, said that he became a cook "out of necessity." Saying it within earshot of his mother was probably not the best statement to make at that time.



Afterwards, he admitted that his father (a chef at a restaurant in Herkimer) and paternal grandmother (a great cook) influenced his cooking skills. Today, he is teaching his youngest daughter Erin "the joys of cooking" while wife Laure is happy to leave their home kitchen and everything in it (stove, oven, microwave) to him. Mike prefers French cooking (Beef Bouguignonne is his specialty dish) but his 2nd favorite choice is anything Italian, which is "easier." Nothing is more satisfying to Mike than rolling up his sleeves and preparing fresh Biscotti. "It takes approximately 4 and 1/2 hours from start to finish, but it's worth it," said the man who never shirks from k.p. duty.

**Chris Henry** liked to eat, knew what he liked, and decided the only way he could get what he wanted was to make it himself. There isn't a spice on the market that's not in his kitchen cabinet. He also believes in fresh ingredients - no item should be in the refrigerator more than three days. A favorite dish to prepare is pasta, because "...it's easy, and there are endless variations." With a pantry stocked with macaroni - all shapes, all sizes, all colors - and, he shamefully admits, prepared sauces (when he's too tired to make it from scratch.) Chris seized the opportunity to integrate his job (22 years in retail) and his passion (food) with an Associates Degree in Hotel Restaurant Management from SCCC, then realized that food service hours were worse than straight retailing. Combining both today, he's SCCC store manager and *Feast Master Emeritus* at St. George's.



**Amy Machold**, a Certified Culinarian by the American Culinary Federation, wasn't big on cooking in the beginning. St. George's *Feastette* had no desire to become a chef, but started night classes one night a week at SCCC's Culinary School "just for fun, to see what it was like" in 2003 - followed by two night classes a week the next year - and, graduated in 2008 with an A.A.S. in Food Service. Planning to work in a restaurant, she didn't like the long hours. Instead, she put her degree to work by catering for family and friends. Amy enjoys creating her own dishes, her favorite word being "experiment." Mixing cultures and incorporating ingredients, she is constantly discovering new flavors. Two items in her refrigerator at all times are butter and Sriracha, a hot sauce found in Asian markets. Amy calls it "the new ketchup" and uses it frequently in her recipes.

# EPISCOPAL EDUCATION

**INRI.** We explored IHS in the last newsletter. We now take a brief look at another symbol that is commonly seen in the church, INRI.

You will find the letters INRI at the top of virtually every crucifix, anywhere. They may be carried on a stylized plaque, either a board or in the shape of a parchment or occasionally carved into the cross itself. In Latin such inscriptions were known as *titilums* or titles and described the particular crime of the crucified victims.

Jesus had such an inscription on His cross. INRI was not the actual inscription on the cross, but is an acronym for the Latin "*Iesvs Nazarens Rex Iudaeorum.*" Latin had no letter "J" as in English, and it used "V" instead of the English "U," so our English transliteration becomes "Jesus of Nazareth, King of The Jews." The early Church adopted the first letters of each word of this inscription "INRI" as a symbol.

The Gospel of John (19:19-22) is the most descriptive, "*Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate, 'Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'*" Pilate answered, "*What I have written I have written.*"

All four Gospels are remarkably consistent:

Matthew 27:37: "*And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, King of the Jews.'*"

Mark 15:26: "*And the inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.'*"

Luke 23:38: "*There was also an inscription over him (in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew), 'This is the King of the Jews.'*"

John 19:19-20: "*Pilate also wrote a title and put in the cross; it read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'*"

According to all Gospel accounts, Pilate challenged Jesus to deny that he was the "King of the Jews" and Jesus did not deny the accusation. For that, He was crucified and the inscription INRI is a powerful reminder to us all whenever we look at a cruifix.



High Altar



Pulpit Cross



Calvary Set  
in  
The Lady  
Chapel



Priest's  
Sacristy



david kennison

It never rains at St. George's. This is the lesson we learned at this year's Art Show, which always seemed on the verge of a shower but remained dry. Our preparations began well before Saturday. Thanks to money donated to us beforehand, Gerald and Antoinette were able to purchase supplies. Jane Moran returned to make her famous corn chowder, this time with an apprentice, Will Ottery. In addition to helping organize lunch, Chris Henry baked several pans of cornbread, and Gerald set up serving and eating areas. Anyone who has been at church early on Art Show days knows that artists check in as early as 8:00AM for coffee and pastries, and this year we were truly ready for them with free coffee, muffins and coffeecakes, courtesy of Barbara Wengrovius. They thanked us by sending hungry customers our way for lunch.

Our menu is perfect. Mike Todt, Jim Wingate and Chris Pearson broiled hundreds of hamburgers and hot dogs; Kathleen Todt and Martha Smith served chili, uncountable bowls of chowder, and all the slices of

dragon bread. Connie Todt, Jennafer Thiessen and Erin Thiessen kept track of money and supplies. The kitchen smelled caloric as Rick Forshaw and Laure Thiessen made fried dough all day. Joan Pearson and her sister, Marilyn Warner, filled in whatever necessary, from cleaning tables to chopping onions.



This year David Kennison had help in the church, Joyce Kapusta, who welcomed visitors and answered questions. Jeff Wengrovius practiced on the organ during the afternoon, drawing visitors in. Our active presence in the Stockade makes us as important a fixture of the Art Show as the artists with their booths. There is a job for everyone on Art Show day, but

donations keep us going. Thanks to Jim Wingate, the Morans, the Thiessens, and the Pearsons for donating food and drinks, and to all who gave of their time. Despite the uncertain weather we made about \$1,200.00 and can truly say that in all respects, we had a good day.

*joan pearson*

*Our Glastonbury Thorn, in the rain garden on the north side of the church, was started from a cutting taken from an original tree at Glastonbury Abbey in southwest England. Documentation, early photographs, historical data or recollections of its provenance, would strengthen St. George's case and support our effort to have it listed on the National Historic Tree Registry. All material should be directed to Garden Chairman Rosemary Pannone.*

## - SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -

It was with an outpouring of great joy from the entire St. George's family that Fr. Paul Blanch and Maggie finally arrived in October. That now seems so long ago as time has passed quickly, however it has been only slightly more than a month. The twists and turns of an arcane and circuitous approval and immigration process are now long-forgotten. How easily we have become accustomed to a new rector and how much hope we have for our shared ministry! Fr. Paul and Maggie have fit in so well and so swiftly, that it seems they have been with us for a long time. What better endorsement of God's call than this?

Of course, with a new rector comes change and new beginnings. We all constantly reinvent ourselves in so many small ways that it is indiscernible until we take a moment and look backwards - at an old photograph perhaps or maybe a previous way of thinking, and we notice the change. It is the same in our beloved parish. In one month's time at St. George's we have added daily Mass, daily Morning and Evening Prayer, monthly benediction and the re-emergence of scriptural education and teachings. No small feat for the first 30 days, yet more must inevitably be done to keep us fresh and living out the Gospels each day.

A change which the Vestry is now wrestling with is the future direction of our music program. St. George's has always been a beacon of light in its traditional liturgy and in a high level of sacred organ and choral music. There are fewer places each day where people can find this. Our liturgical traditions are among the finest in the area. Our music program has been ably upheld by the dedication of Aniko Szokody and Jeff Wengrovius and by the recent addition of Don Ingram, who brings 60 years of experience in church music to the organ loft. Without Aniko, without Jeff and without Don, we might not have a music program. However, this dedication comes at a cost to personal schedules, to business pressures and to lives. It has been much to ask for the past 3 years of dedication. It is too much to ask for that to continue forever.

With the arrival of Fr. Paul, we will have many

more seekers and inquirers in our church. We hope they like what they see and we hope that they decide to stay and become part of this Christian family. Whether we like it or not, some people come for the music. A high level of music has always helped to fill our pews. And this is the issue before the Vestry - do we take the bold step of reinstating a full-time position of Organist and Choir Director now, thereby keeping a very high level of musical repertoire, or do we take the safe approach of securing every dollar before we make that leap? Filling this position now adds to our budget deficit, which must be covered by our endowment funds until new members arrive to share the costs. Outstanding music brings in new members. Waiting for money to somehow be raised might take several years. It is not a simple question of "this music" vs. "that music." It is a deeper issue of parish growth. Now with a rector, how do we grow? What are we able to do and what risk do we take?



The time to consider this is now, while the newness of Fr. Paul's rectorship is still fresh and inquirers still arrive at the doors full of anticipation of what they will find on the inside. This is a major issue before the Vestry and we ask for your ideas and suggestions and for your prayers for our deliberations.

Many thanks to each of you for what you have done to bring us to this juncture. The future of this church is in your hands. By the power of the Holy Spirit and through the hard work of so many, we have come far together. There is still more road ahead. God bless you all.

*With great affection, David*



## - JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -

The Rectory renovation is essentially complete. Fr. Paul and Maggie are settling in and making our house their home. Having someone living in the house has revealed a couple of minor issues that we've had our contractor address.

I would like to thank the entire parish for going beyond a simple "wash and paint" to give the Rectory a much-needed fresh face. Major needs had been overlooked over the past several years, and the electrical, plumbing, heating, and security systems were all in need of significant upgrades. Thanks to our efforts, we have a property that coming generations of St. George's family will be able to be proud of.

*mike todt*

## - TREASURER'S REPORT -

For St. George's, 2009 has been a very significant year with some major budgetary impacts.

Most encouraging has been the fact that through October 2009, our pledge income has been 7.8% higher than the amount we collected during the same period in 2008. If we can experience an increase of that magnitude during a recession when we don't have a rector, we can hope for even larger pledge increases in 2010 with Fr. Paul leading us.

St. George's has also experienced some significant expenses in 2009. The most notable was the refurbishment of the rectory for a total of \$308,000 which we paid for by drawing down our endowment. Other expenses included the parking lot improvements, some asbestos removal from St. George's House, and repairing ice/water damage to the church sacristy, for which we received some insurance reimbursement.

The Vestry is currently working on a new budget as we prepare for 2010. It is very exciting to have the new and spirited leadership of Fr. Paul, and it is my hope that this year's stewardship campaign will be successful enough that we and Fr. Paul can fulfill the vision we all have for a stronger and more vibrant St. George's.

*jon pearson*

## - VISITATIONS -

Change is a very powerful force in life. It can be a cause of fear or optimism. If you want an example of change as a positive, look no further than Helen Peterson.



Helen and her beloved husband Charlie were long-time members of St. George's, where they served as lectors and greeters. Helen also teamed with Rosemary VanDerhoof to produce those wonderful fruitcakes many of you remember. When Charlie died, Helen tried to remain in their home but with her son Douglas living in New Jersey, it became more and more difficult - even with the help of long-time friends and fellow Georgians, Bill and Stella Schultz.

About two years ago Helen moved to the Terrace, a Glen Eddy facility in Niskayuna. As usual, there was a period of adjustment. However, soon Helen's outgoing personality and captivating smile brought her many new friends. A clear testament to that fact was her 90th birthday this summer where the room was filled with well-wishers. She has become re-energized. Currently, this vivacious young lady keeps three aides hopping as they venture out into the community.

Asked what Pastoral Care means to her, Helen said, "It means a great deal. It lifts my spirits and I am very grateful for the visits." When we visit, Helen often brings one of her aides or a friend who also desire to receive communion.

So, as St. George's installs a new Rector, if you want to know if that can bring changes that are positive, all you have to do is ask Helen. She'll reply with a big smile and a little twinkle in her eye that tells you all you need to know.

### **CHURCH CHUCKLES**

There is the story of a rector who got up one Stewardship Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our programs. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."





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**ST. GEORGE'S 18<sup>TH</sup> RECTOR ARRIVES**



*At last! On American soil! A small coterie greeted Fr. Paul and Maggie at Albany International Airport after they flew in from England to assume their new life in the Stockade area of Schenectady, New York. (L-R) Anne Kennison, Fr. Paul Blanch, Martha Smith, Lynn Paska, Maggie Blanch, and Randy Smith. Missing from picture: photographer Bob Paska.*