



THE GEORGIAN REPORT



Volume 17 Number 4

St. George's Episcopal Church Schenectady NY

December 2024

EVENSONG FOR THANKSGIVING

NOVEMBER 17, 2024



We must give thanks to God! We must sing! We must have Evensong! On November 17 we offered a perfect thanks of faith, peace, and beauty as Dr. Brian Taylor led the St. Cecilia Choir in Evensong for Thanksgiving. The choir's crisp, British *Preces and Responses* of John Reading set a traditional tone while Herbert Murrill's lively *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis*, in contrast, had a more contemporary sound.

The Reverend Dr. Amaury Tañón-Santos, Executive Director of the Sycamore Collaborative, gave the address, asking us to "consider how to provoke one another to good deeds." Giving to the food pantry and ringing the bell for the Salvation Army are part of giving hope to those who most need it. The Sycamore Collaborative has served over 800,000 meals, diverted 25,000 lbs. of food waste to compost, served 6,500 meals to Schenectady's youth this summer, and improved the ability of people to access food more easily. Giving hope is an act of love.

The anthem, "Thou Visitest the Earth" by Maurice Greene, featured Jon Ewbank as soloist. Our favorite Thanksgiving hymns filled the service from "Come, ye thankful people, come" at the procession to "Now thank we all our God" at the conclusion. We have many reasons to be thankful, especially for all who helped make this well-attended service a success, and for Brian Taylor (with assistance from Jon and Meredith Ewbank) for hosting the reception afterward.

joan pearson

FOYERS KICK-OFF DINNER

Nothing warms the heart like chili with good friends -- a perfect recipe for the Foyers kick-off dinner on October 19. Hosts Jon and Meredith Ewbank, Jerry and Sharon Trant, and Jon and Joan Pearson cooked chilis with fixin's and everyone else brought appetizers or desserts. And didn't we have a feast!

Fall décor dominated in the black tablecloths, orange gourds and flowers. We noshed on cheeses, fruits, dips, biriyis, crackers, breads, savory olives and pickles during the cocktail hour before dipping into the selection of chilis: hot, mild, vegetarian, and chicken, with every possible topping, and cornbread. Parents L Alyssa and Kyle Carlson fed baby Tallulah her first taste of chili and cornbread and she loved it! Just proof that no one is too young to enjoy a fine St. George's meal.

Sharon Trant wheeled around the dessert cart with cranberry tart, apple tarts, cupcakes, eclairs, plus coffee. So many interesting conversations! Even though we missed a few familiar faces due to conflicts or illness, we welcomed some new Georgians into the warmth of the evening.

Many thanks to the host couples, as well as Daniel Miesse who arrived early to set up and stayed to clean up, and Bill and Bonnie Daggett who helped clean up. Extra cheers to Jon Ewbank who ran the dishwasher and filled in for Meredith, who was ill.

joan pearson



GROUND COVER SCHEME MAY SAVE MONEY AND IMPROVE OUR GROUNDS

You may have noticed a sign on the front lawn of St. George's House heralding Garden Ministry's Lawn Alternative Demonstration Project. Watch that space! In the spring the garden ladies will be planting micro-clover, a ground cover designed to help St. George's reduce maintenance, save money, and improve the environment.

Micro-clover shouldn't require mowing and needs little water. It also produces small white flowers that will be beneficial for our pollinators. If the demonstration proves successful, the long-range plan is to replant other portions of the churchyard (notably, the graveyard). The larger grassy areas (e.g., front lawn and Memorial Garden) will continue to feature conventional lawn grass.

meg hughes



SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS

Lea Crow is a St. George's "returnee" parishioner who left for a few years (for a variety of reasons), and came back full force 3 years ago. Her son, our Thurifer Chris Henry, is one of the main reasons for her return.

Since then, she has plunged head-and-feet-first into various aspects of parish life: as a member of both The Daughters of the King and The Society of Mary, but most importantly, her input with Hospitality is invaluable! She tries to help out in the kitchen, which (she says) is everyone's least favorite thing to do. "I roll up my sleeves and pitch in....after church on Sundays and after parties." Doing dishes is not beneath her pay-grade.

Born and raised in Colonie, she isn't an artist, doesn't knit or sew, but she does enjoy hiking (does that whenever possible) and the outdoors, and is a big advocate of Yoga.

Retiring 12 years ago from her job as Medical Assistant for a large primary care practice, Lea does not let retirement make her dormant. She loves to cook, is eager to try new cuisines, saying, "It calms me down," and admits her favorite recipe is an apple cake.

Although she's not big on traveling, she does go to Florida where her younger son David lives ("It's far enough south for me," she quipped); and Lea and her husband Warren also enjoys the Jersey shore, especially Cape May.

What does she like best about St. George's? "The people! They're warm, embracing, always helpful, and they're there for you. Not all churches are like that." What can St. George's do to improve? "I think it's perfect the way it is." Although, upon reflection, she added, "There's no future unless we have a Sunday school for children," and she's glad that Sharon Trant has taken over this ministry to encourage family attendance.

Lea is unabashed in her admiration of "Fr. Vang," reminiscing about his rectorship fondly. When asked about Fr. Tom, she was even more praiseworthy. "He's a breath of fresh air," she said, "He's so different, so sincere, there's not a subject you can't talk to him about. He's bringing us into the future by gradually bringing more and more people to church. They attend coffee hour, they interact with parishioners, they come back."

Lea Crow is a very important volunteer in our growing ministries. Her St. George's family is grateful for all that she does for all of us.

lynn paska



FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK.....



One of my favorite hymns is one with which we start the mid-night mass on Christmas Eve, "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." It was the hymn that when I was growing up at Bethesda Church always started the Christmas Eve liturgy. I introduced that here last year for two reasons. One is that it's sentimental to me and as Rector I get to do that kind of thing every once in a while. But secondly, and more importantly, I chose that hymn to begin our Christmas Eve service because of the central theme. Of all that the Good News is, it seems that to me, one of the most important things is the joy and the comfort it brings; in other words, the peace which the Gospel message gives us. With a world full of fear, anger, violence, and hatred, the message and gift of peace is, for me, central to my faith.

We end every mass with a blessing which starts with the words drawn from Saint Paul, "now the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your heart and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his son Jesus Christ." It seems right that on that night, when we celebrate the Incarnation and the birth of

our savior we should begin with peace, comfort, and joy.

The hymn begins with that famous stanza "God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay." It goes on to tell us why we need not be worried or frightened or anxious despite everything going on in the world: "remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day to save us all from Satan's power when we had gone astray." That is truly to me, and I hope to all, true tidings of comfort and joy.

But the hymn does something else. In two short stanzas it tells the story of that night. When I was in seminary in the Midwest. I discovered Garrison Keeler's "News from Lake Wobegon." Garrison Keeler had the uncanny ability to tell a story. And in telling a story, he could create a space which drew the listener into the very fabric of the world of the story he was telling. It really was like you were in that place that "existed so long as you didn't go looking for it."

I think this hymn, and many others which tell the story of God's love and redemption, draws us into the narrative and makes us feel like we are really there. They create a space that we know we're really in so long as we don't try to grab hold of it. (Think of Saint Peter on the amount of transfiguration: As soon as he suggested building booths and staying there forever with Jesus, Moses and Elijah- it was all over). Of course, the wonderful thing is that it's more than just a story. It really is. And we really are part of the fabric of that reality because God has drawn us into it by his love.

This Christmas, we re-enter the story once again. Not as a form of escapism or denialism of the troubles of the world. But rather as a gift, knowing that this story, which started in the manger so long ago is our story. And with the Shepherds, we go and see this thing which has come to pass, which is nothing short of our life, our hope, and our salvation! Tidings of comfort and joy, indeed!

I wish you all a blessed and happy Christmas!

Faithfully, Thomas+

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

Sunday, October 6th was a lovely Fall day, sun shining, warm, and very welcoming for St. George's Annual Pet Blessing at 3PM at the West Doors of the church. Approximately 17 humans gathered there with their pets, including: parishioners Suzy and Rich Unger with (Golden Doodle) Cody, who once again showed off his boisterous side; Carol with (Chihuahua) Pookie; Andrea with (black cats) Salem and Solstice; Chloe with (Yorkie) Versace; John with (Cairn Terrier) Paisley; Cindy with (Corgi) Devlin, Julie with (American Staffordshire Terrier) Salem; and Ross, without his cat Crash, who was there "in spirit."

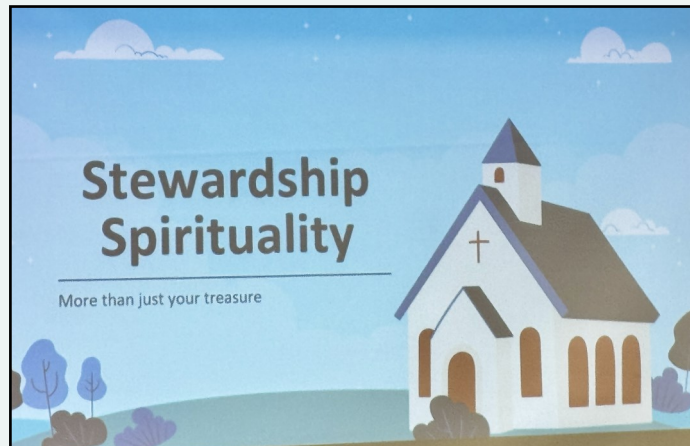
Fr. Tom Pettigrew, assisted by David Kennison, presided over The Blessing of the Animals, in honor of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, who had a great love of animals and a profound appreciation of the beauty of "all God's creatures." Everyone participated in the short, meaningful service before taking their cherished family members home.

lynn paska



STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY BRUNCH





Did someone say bacon? Brunch on Stewardship Sunday, November 10, offered bacon plus two kinds of quiche, French toast, strawberries and whipped cream, charcuterie, cookies, juices, and coffee, served by Bob Falco and John Falco. Maple syrup went around and around. No one left hungry.

While we ate, Fr. Tom spent several minutes speaking about Time, Talent, and Treasure and their importance in the life of the church. St. George's being a very old, historic structure, \$\$ are needed for physical maintenance as well as the needs experienced by every parish. And the Vestry will need several fresh faces at election time, a valuable use of time and talent.

Many thanks to the members of Fr. Tom's family who worked on the delicious brunch: Robert and Meg Falco, John Falco, Michelle Holmes, and Mark Hannon, and Carol Gaike who kept her eyes on all the details.

Mark your calendars: The next brunch will take place with the Annual Meeting in January.

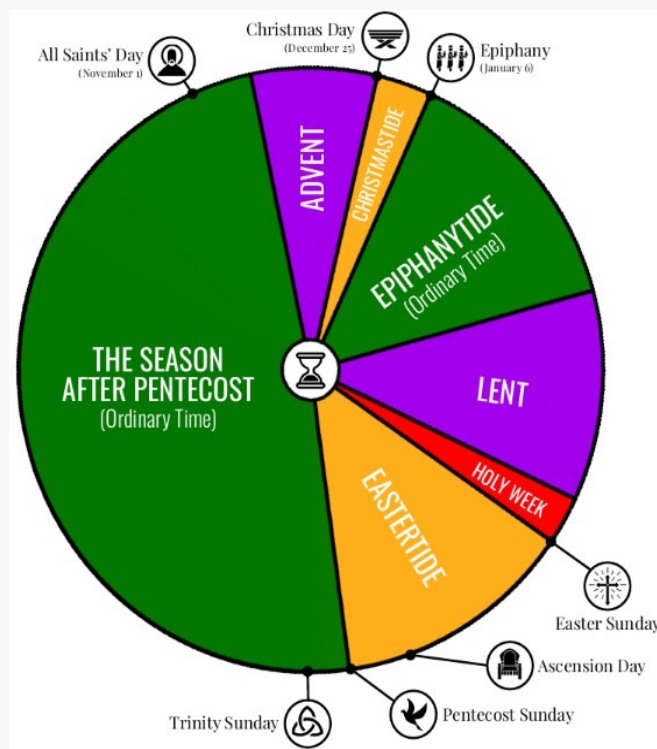
joan pearson / carol gaike

The Church Year

Happy New Year! You've probably never heard that in church. As you might expect, the Church does not define its year in the same way that our secular calendar does, i.e., January 1-December 31. There's a good reason for that.

Our secular lives run according to the Gregorian calendar, first introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, an improvement on the older Julian calendar. In contrast, the Church calendar is not based on solar and astronomical cycles, but is structured according to liturgical seasons and events, beginning notably with the anticipation of the birth of Jesus. Thus, the first day of the Church Year is the First Sunday of Advent, the very word Advent meaning beginning, starting, opening. Quickly thereafter comes the Nativity of Christ, Christmas.

From this beginning, the church year continues as a cycle of seasons and days that determines when feast days, including celebrations of saints, are to be observed, and which portions of Scripture are to be read. The seasons vary in length and calendar dates because they are based on movable feasts.



Advent: The four weeks before Christmas, when people prepare themselves spiritually for Jesus' birth. The season is a time of preparation and expectation for the coming celebration of our Lord's nativity, and for the final coming of Christ "in power and glory."

Christmas: Observes the birth of Jesus, God made Man.

Epiphany: The manifestation of Christ to the peoples of the earth. Christians chose this day to celebrate the various manifestations, or "epiphanies," of Jesus' divinity.

Lent: A 6-week period of penance and preparation before Easter. Originally, the Paschal feast followed a fast of up to 2 days, later lengthened to 6 days, and eventually 40 days, imitating of Christ's fast in the wilderness.

Sacred Paschal Triduum (Holy Week): Three days when Christians remember Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. The Mass of the Lord's Supper on the evening of Holy Thursday marks the beginning of the Easter Triduum, which includes Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. The days of the Easter Triduum recall Christ's last supper with his disciples, his capture and passion, his death on the cross, burial, and resurrection.

Easter: The feast of Christ's resurrection. Christians in England applied the word to the principal festival of the Church year, both day and season. Faith in Jesus' resurrection on the Sunday or third day following his crucifixion is at the very heart of Christianity.

Easter: A 50-day celebration of Jesus' resurrection, during which he again walked the earth.

Pentecost: The time after Pentecost, recalls the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples after his Ascension. The season after Pentecost continues through most of the summer and autumn.

The Lord's Day (every Sunday) is of primary importance among the observances of the year. The Church year contains two central cycles – the Easter cycle and the Christmas cycle. Each cycle includes a festival season (Easter and Christmas), preceded by a season of preparation and anticipation (Lent and Advent). While the date of Christmas is fixed, Easter Day varies as the 1st Sunday after the full moon that falls on or after 21 March. The sequence of all Sundays in the church year is based on the date of Easter.

With great affection, david



PHOTO ALBUM



Fr. Tom with Ms. Lisa Longe who led our five-week course, The Spiritual Work of Racial Justice.



Georgians fixing the sink-hole on North Ferry Street.



Proud grandfather and father: Jerry Trant.



Serious conversation on Stewardship Sunday in the Great Hall between Jon Ewbank and Bill Daggett.



On Thursday, November 14th, we paused to give our solemn thanks and to honor our Veterans for their service.



The Rev. Dr. Amaury Tanon-Santos, executive director of Sycamore Collaborative, spoke eloquently about his organization at St. George's Evensong on November 17th.



Wendy Madelone was officially welcomed as a member of the Order of the Daughters of the King.



- SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -

I've visited a lot of churches over the years and some of them really stand out in my mind. If possible, I try to attend Sunday Mass. I always like to arrive at a new church a bit early to have some time to take in the building and absorb God's presence in that space. At one church in particular, I stepped through the door, got my bearings and was not just greeted but welcomed so enthusiastically by several people that you'd think I came bearing the Gifts of the Magi. What a warm congregation, I thought! After the service, many people came over to say hello and take me to coffee in the parish hall. I left that day, very impressed with that church and with those people.



More often though, I've encountered something quite different. I walk in, and am handed a bulletin with a "good morning", but that's it. After the service, I may get a cordial "hello" as people walk by, but most people go their way. They speak animatedly with each other but not with me unless I initiate it. They don't ask or remember my name. Maybe that's too much to expect but I feel some emptiness as I leave. After Mass, I'm full of the power of God, but I wonder is that all there is to God's people in this place? Their buildings may be beautiful, but where's the love?

Can you see and feel the change at St George's lately? We are seemingly being blessed with a number of new people. For some, it's their first time in our church and you can tell right away if they are awed by the majesty and mystery of the Mass. Some are inquirers, looking for a parish that "feels right". Some come back a few times and then move on, still searching for that "right" church.

It's time to ask ourselves, "*How do we welcome people at St. George's?*" In my eyes, we are a warm and welcoming parish family, but I'm a big fan of rose-colored glasses. Are we guilty of being warm to each other and not to visitors? Do we seek visitors out after Mass and speak with them and tell them how glad we are they worshipped with us? Do we invite them to the Great Hall for coffee – not just point the way but TAKE THEM and introduce them to others? If we don't – why not? If we don't do these things, we have not fulfilled the Church's mission to *bring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ*.

God calls us to have the welcoming heart of Christ with persons the Scripture calls "strangers". Jesus says, "*.... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me....*" Matthew 25:43

It's so easy for us to focus on ourselves and our friends. Visitors are, after all, strangers to us. It's normal to distance ourselves, but this is not what we are called to do. To have the heart of Christ means to be truly open to each person we meet, especially those who God has brought willingly - maybe even eagerly - to our door.

Greeting strangers isn't easy for most people, so I'd like to suggest a 3-minute rule. For 3 minutes after each service, look for newcomers and speak only to people who you don't know. Lest you think this is superficial, it can make a huge difference to people who are "church shopping". After all, look at my experience. A small danger is that this might make some visitors feel uncomfortable, so it's our job to sense that and know when to back off. People warm up at different rates, so be sensitive.

If you are a shy person by nature, be strong and remember that visitors may also feel a bit awkward and uncomfortable. Be yourself and put them at ease, just as if they were a guest in your home. For they are exactly that.

At its core, welcoming strangers is a little about dying to self. We live in a world where self takes precedence in our secular lives, but as we are nurtured by Christ, we learn that it is not about us but about our transformation to become different people - welcoming visitors to our family in the Body of Christ.

With great affection, David



The whole church watched with nervous anticipation as the visitors sat where the Martins have sat for 42 years.



- MUSIC NOTES -



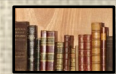
The St. Cecilia Choir has had a very busy fall season this year. First the choir chanted the Requiem Mass for former organist James Lazenby in September. It then went down to the cathedral in October to sing with other choirs at a Mass offered by The Very Rev'd Marshall J. Vang in honor of his 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. At the beginning of November the choir sang a Choral Mass for All Saints Day and chanted a Requiem Mass for All Souls.



The choir is preparing its Carol Concert and musical offerings for the Christ-Mass to be offered on Christmas Eve. The Carol Concert will begin at 9:30 p.m. and the Mass itself will begin at 10:00 p.m. The choir is also offering a new service this year. On Sunday, January 5th, at 5:00 p.m. the choir will sing A Feast of Lights for Epiphany. This will include lessons, hymns, carols and anthems for this feast emphasizing the three manifestations of Christ: his manifestation through the appearance of the Wise Men, his manifestation at the River Jordan with John the Baptist, and his manifestation through his first miracle at the wedding in Cana. This will be a lovely liturgy with lots of congregational singing as well.

I remain very grateful for the choir's work in our parish.

peace, dr. brian j. taylor



BOOK CLUB



A Variety of Mystery Novels For Your Consideration

St. George's Book Club has three reading selections on the calendar for the coming year. Coincidentally, they are all mysteries, although they differ in setting and tone. Here's the line-up:

- **January 19-***The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon is historical fiction, based on a midwife who treated patients in 18th century Maine. It's also a suspenseful murder mystery. Meg Hughes suggested the book.
- **March 16-***Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone* by Benjamin Stevenson is a humorous take on the mystery genre itself. If you liked the movie *Knives Out*, this book is for you. Many thanks to Pattie Wareh for nominating this title.
- **May 18-***God of the Woods* by Liz Moor is set in the Adirondacks in 1960 and 1970s. It's fiction but relies on some tragic history for inspiration. The author summered in the Adirondacks as a child and began the novel while living at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs. Suzy Unger recommended the read.

Have you read anything noteworthy that you'd like to share with fellow parishioners? Please see Meg Hughes or Pattie Wareh if you have suggestions. There's no obligation to be at every club meeting, but if you do want to suggest a book, please plan to attend the meeting for the discussion.

meg hughes / pattie wareh



IN MEMORIAM

Donna Vrooman

Rest in Peace

1935-2024

You are missed by your church family





St. George's Episcopal Church

30 North Ferry Street

Schenectady, New York 12305

Telephone (518) 374-3163

[email: office@stgeorgesschenectady.org](mailto:office@stgeorgesschenectady.org)

www.stgeorgesschenectady.org

Editor: Lynn Paska

Layout: Bob Paska

Contributors

Meredith Ewbank
Carol Gaige
Meg Hughes
Sande Hughes
David Kennison
Gloria Kishton
Joan Pearson
Fr. Thomas Pettigrew
Brian Taylor
Pattie Wareh

The Vestry

David Kennison, Sr. Warden
Jonathan Ewbank, Jr. Warden
Kevin Decker
Carol Gaige
Gloria Kishton
Marilyn (Lynn) Paska
Paul Smigelski
Jerry Trant
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Director Music Ministry
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ALL SOULS 2024

Black vestments, a symbolic, black-draped casket surrounded by candles, and the somber tones of William Croft's *Burial Sentences* opened All Souls Requiem Mass on November 5. A service of love and remembrance, we were reminded throughout that even as we grieve, the dead are at peace with God.



The Reverend Jason Radcliff, Rector of The Church of the Holy Cross in Warrensburg, spoke about purgatory in his homily. He said that Anglicans rejected the Roman, transactional doctrine of purgatory, where the wealthy famously "bought" their way out of being cleansed there. Poor people were terrified of the punishments of purgatory, which seemed to be like hell. We Anglicans believe there is no place for repentance after death.

Our doctrine of purgatory is more like an anteroom of heaven, a place of hope. Jesus has set us on course for heaven because we experience God in Jesus. Jesus is purgatory and heaven because he rose from the dead. Through him we have been saved.

During the Necrology, Chris Henry read the list of names while family members lit candles for their passed loved ones. This moment of light brought them close again, like a touch on the cheek.



"The Souls of the Righteous" by Geraint Lewis, the gorgeous communion anthem, reminded us that souls are with God and they are in peace. After the committal prayers, Gabriel Faure's ethereal "In Paradisum" bid the angels lead the souls into paradise.

Fr. Tom invited everyone to the Rectory for a fine wine and cheese reception after Mass. This was a lovely way to relax after such an emotional service.

joan pearson