



The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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From our Interim Rector

Almost every culture in the world has held celebrations of thanksgiving at harvest time. Our American culture is no different. Since 1820, when Daniel Webster spoke at a bicentennial celebration of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, Plymouth, the Pilgrims, and Native Americans have become the focal point of our thanksgiving history even though the Jamestown settlement in Virginia was 13 years earlier. The Pilgrims, largely because of Webster's portrayal, are seen as heroes and have gained the status of "founding fathers & mothers". Their story has become almost mythical as it has become the story of Thanksgiving Day. Of course, we know that there were peoples on this Continent long before the Virginia settlement, the pilgrims' arrival or even Christopher Columbus. Our memory of historical events is often somewhat narrow.

President Lincoln, in 1863, proclaimed Thanksgiving as a National holiday and set it to be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. Lincoln began his Thanksgiving Proclamation, which he wrote just three months after the bloody battle of Gettysburg, with these words:

"The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come....., the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God."

Lincoln knew the importance of giving thanks, at all times and under all circumstances. In the midst of fearful times, in the midst of anxious times Lincoln understood that

remembering our blessings and focusing on what we have rather than on what we don't have will help to ease our fears and reduce our anxieties and enable us to live in the present. So, in this time of national crisis he invited the Nation to be still and offer thanks to the God of all blessings.

Today we live in fearful times. We live in anxious times. Our nation is still in a war with no end in sight. Gun violence and fear of terrorist attacks have caused us to be suspicious of those different from ourselves. Immigrants are again being demonized, even though the "Thanksgiving" story is grounded in the hospitality and welcoming toward immigrants by those who occupied this land when the Europeans arrived on her shore. Economic prosperity has not brought economic stability, as our Nation's debt continues to grow, and many of us have not shared in the economic "good times." We grieve over the desecration of our earth and the devastating changes in our climate. We are anxious about what tomorrow will bring.

In the midst of anxious times, Jesus says, do not worry about your life, because your worry changes nothing. Take care of what you can affect and let go of those things you can not affect. Jesus tells us, "Instead, strive for God's kingdom." Don't spend your energy on worrying, but strive. Strive to make this a world where God's "will is done on earth as it is in heaven."

God's kingdom is not in the future; it is intended to be right now, in the present. The world doesn't look much like God's kingdom

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In Memory of Claire Cox Lowenthal

Submitted by Virginia Smith

Claire Cox Lowenthal, 99, of Kimball Farms, Lenox, died peacefully in her sleep on February 8, 2019. We at St. Stephen's only knew her for the last 15 years of her life, and she was a force! Gwen Sears introduced Claire to St. Stephen's after meeting her at Kimball Farms, and the fit was perfect. Claire was looking for a spiritual home, and she found it. As she had no children having married later in life, Claire gave generously upon her death to several local charities, including St. Stephen's.

Born December 11, 1919 in St. Louis, Missouri, Claire was raised by her grandmother in Beverly Hills, California. Her early life was not easy – and that inspired her gift to St. Stephen's Table for some special meals for our guests ("fellow wanderers") from time to time. She knew from the age of 10 that she wanted to be a newspaper reporter and, undeterred by the fact that there were very few women reporters in the 1940's, she fulfilled her wish. Claire graduated from UCLA in 1941 and

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and that is why we need to strive for it. There should be no one without shelter in our community, no one without food, no one without medical care, or fuel to keep their homes warm. As we strive to make our community and our world a better place, we discover the kingdom of God in our midst. **It is that basic.**

So, in this time of fear and uncertainty we are called to step back and give thanks for our many blessings. We show our **thanks** more completely by **giving**. Remember "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." This is true for a nation and it is true for us as individuals as well. Give thanks this season for the blessings you have received and the blessings you can give to others.

the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in 1942. After a brief stint with the Daily News in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, Claire became a reporter for the Baltimore Sun for several years then worked for the United Press (later United Press International) first in Chicago, and later in New York. It was an unusual place for a woman at that time –the noisy press room– the typewriters, western union teletype, phones ringing and people yelling. Claire forged ahead, keeping her sense of humor, and by her hard work and skill as a reporter, slowly earning the respect and admiration of her male peers.

Claire was a reporter, feature writer, and columnist. She received the New York Newspaper Women's Club award for her work on the sinking of the Andrea Doria in 1956, and she covered the second Alger Hiss trial, and many other courtroom dramas. It gave Claire –with her irreverent sense of humor– great pleasure to tell of the award she won for her writing about a nudist colony. Claire also wrote a regular religion column for UPI and later for 10 years for Copley News Service. Claire was inquisitive and precise as a writer and reporter. Her intelligence was apparent, and feistiness was her hallmark.

Through 54 years of marriage Max Lowenthal encouraged Claire to continue to use her maiden (professional) name. Max died in 2005, but Claire continued her newspaper work, writing for the Berkshire Eagle and the Advocate, and assisting in the production of nonprofit newsletters for many organizations, including St. Stephen's, Lenox Library, Ventfort Hall, and Kimball Farms.

She was a pioneer, paving the path for other women journalists after her, and she was fun. Claire had strong opinions on most things which came from her extensive reading, TV news watching, and her innate intellect. She loved to debate and discuss, and she loved a good story.

In total, Claire left \$559,000.00 to St. Stephen's, and an additional \$5,000.00 to St. Stephen's Table. We are grateful for her generosity to St. Stephen's.

Library News

What do our church library and a three-legged stool and a tower have in common? A three-legged stool and tower are metaphors used at times in the Episcopal church to define the authority of the church: one leg of-or the base of a tower being the Bible, another Tradition, and the third leg or top of the tower, Reason. The library's role is to provide support in these three areas of our faith for the parish.

The **Guild Room Library** is in the process of a multi-phase overhaul. A much needed weeding was performed in September with over 250 books, vhs, and audiocassettes removed from the adult and reference collections. Over 800 adult books and 400+ children's books were dusted and the shelves adjusted and cleaned. The Berkshire Athenaeum was the recipient of the withdrawn materials. New shelf labels by subject were added. The **large wooden chest** by the kitchen was reorganized and now contains NRSV Bibles as well as current hymnals.

The **Alex G. Carney Children's Library** was relocated to the shelving units closest to the Sacristy. Shelves are labeled by subjects such as a Parent/Teacher, Bible Stories, Easter/Advent/Christmas and are organized by fiction and non-fiction.

The **Reference books** are now located on the top two shelves nearest the windows. The reference section includes study guides, pronunciation guides and historical books. Several reference series have been relocated to the Rector's office.

The next phase is to address the **out-of-date card catalog** as it does not reflect new titles and contains titles of books we no longer own. Volunteers are welcome to reorganize the catalog.

To promote the library, a different author or theme will be **spotlighted** and displayed in the Guild Room. Please take a moment during coffee hour and check out a book!

Sara Garinther, Librarian

(Editor's note: As you can well imagine, this was a HUGE undertaking and we thank Sara for her efforts on our behalf.)

New Titles Added to the Library!

(All new titles can be found on the outward facing new bookshelf area. Instructions on how to check out books are located on top of the card catalog)

The Power of Love: Sermons, reflections and wisdom to uplift and inspire by Bishop Michael Curry. "Two billion people watched Bishop Michael Curry deliver his sermon on the redemptive power of love at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle (now the Duke and Duchess of Sussex) at Windsor Castle. Here, he shares the full text of the sermon, plus an introduction and four of his favorite sermons on the themes of love and social justice. The world has met Bishop Curry and has been moved by his riveting, hopeful and deceptively simple message: love and acceptance are what we need in these strange times."

How Can Anyone Read the Bible?: A Little book of Guidance by L. William Countryman. "Offers basic information to make the Bible less formidable to beginning readers. Author is a preeminent Biblical scholar and prominent retired Episcopalian seminary professor who provides a basic introduction for those with little knowledge about the Bible that aims to provide an easy point of entry into engagement with Scripture."

Building Faith Brick by Brick: an Imaginative Way to Explore the Bible with Children by Emily Slichter Given. "Offers a culturally relevant, hands-on way to explore faith stories with a broad range of ages. Knowing how much Lego bricks continue to be popular with children, the author dug deep into the well of creativity and an enormous bin of little plastic building bricks to meld together a new way of teaching the stories of God."

Wearing God: Clothing, Laughter, Fire and Other Overlooked Ways of Meeting God by Lauren F. Winner. "There are hundreds of metaphors for God, but the church only uses a few familiar images: creator, judge, savior, father. In *Wearing God*, Lauren Winner gathers a number of lesser-known tropes, reflecting on how they work biblically and culturally, and reveals how they can deepen our spiritual lives. Exploring the notion of God as clothing, Winner reflects on how we are 'clothed with Christ' or how 'God fits us like a garment.' She then analyzes how clothing functions culturally to shape our ideals and identify our community, and ruminates on how this new metaphor can function to create new possibilities for our lives. For each Biblical metaphor – God as the vine/vintner who animates life; the lactation consultant; and the comedian, showing us our follies, for example – Winner surveys the historical, literary and cultural landscapes in order to revive and heal our souls."

United Thank Offering

Our fall Ingathering for the United Thank Offering will take place at all services on the weekend of November 2nd and 3rd, All Saints Day. The U.T.O. is a personal and family devotional program of the Episcopal Church, founded by women in 1889. It serves to expand the mission and ministry of the church to meet compelling human needs for men, women, and children throughout the world. U.T.O. envelopes are available for those of you who need them.

There are so many things to be thankful for: a birth, a kind word, a friend, family, food on the table, clothing on your back, a shelter from the storm, warmth when it is cold – I could go on and on. And, think how your gift would grow if you simply put a coin or a bill in the Thankful box each time you realized you had something for which to be thankful! Try it, if you haven't already done so – it is so rewarding, for you and for those you are helping.

Advent Wreath Workshop

The Workshop will take place this year on November 24th after the 10:00 a.m. service. All are welcome to join in on the fun in the Dining Room.

Harvest Dinner

Once again, we offer our thanks to Dan Moon and his crew of helpers for treating the gathered parishioners to a delicious fall-inspired dinner. How do you do it?! Everything was so good and so appreciated by those of us eating it! Congratulations! Huzzahs! Three cheers! But most of all, THANK YOU! This was a perfect send-off to our Stewardship Campaign.



November

Happy Birthday:

- 2 Taryn Lee Bannon (13), Amanda Delisle
- 4 Jason Hassan, Jr. (13), Sarah Novak
- 5 Natalie Ann Devitt (15),
Don Phipps (a milestone!)
- 6 Barbara Nightingale, Christopher Plankey III (5)
- 9 Matt Billetter
- 11 Linda Somerville
- 13 Glenn Novak, Roy Sutton
- 14 Justin Devitt (11), Keil Hassan (11), Al Symonds
- 16 Lois Neumann (91 years young!)
- 17 Charlotte Mae Luczynski (5)
- 18 Addison Rose DiGrigoli (13), Abigail Moon (25!),
Charles Sawyer, Peter Zuber (a milestone!)
- 19 Martha Fickling
- 21 Michelle McNeil (a milestone!)
- 22 A'mya Rose Alger (10), Elizabeth Contenta,
Lily Stasiowski (14)
- 23 Gail Miller
- 24 Kristi LaMalfa, Sophia LaMalfa (12)
- 26 Bette-Anne Eddy
- 27 Jim Cawse
- 29 Evelyn Pieloch

Happy Anniversary:

- 9 Judith and Donald Lussier (1968)
- 14 Marcie and David Nevin (1993)
- 17 Elizabeth and Mark Trapani (2001)
- 21 Virginia and David Donovan (1992)
- 27 Susan LeBourdais and David Baker (2004)
- 28 Nancy and Peter Zuber (1987)
- 26 Sharon and Matthew Billetter (2005)
- 30 Pam and David Aldrich (1973)