



St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Faith, Community and Hope ~ 50 Years and Growing

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2018

From the Rector

Dear Friends,

As many of you know, I applied for, and received, a fellowship for preaching called "Deep Calls to Deep" which takes place at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia. It is a year-long program that commences with a week of intensive study, starting on June 10th. Preparation for this fellowship includes sending three sermons: one that was a "hit" meaning it went well, one that was a "miss" meaning it fell flat, and one that was a "risk" where I preached a sermon that was outside my comfort zone. This is in preparation for meeting with a homiletics professor who will spend time going through the sermons with me.

The other preparation exercise is a testimony (*see below*). We have been working on this exercise in Sunday Forum as well as this month in Vestry. Because it is such a challenging exercise, we decided to dedicate time over the summer to try to work on this. We all know that when we are asked about our faith it is easy to talk about the family of St. Michael's or its great outreach programs or its pastoral care. What is hard to answer are the questions that pertain directly to our faith - "why do you go to church?" or "why are you a Christian?" The reason that this is hard to answer is that religious language is largely ineffable and beyond words.

If you are interested in trying to put together your testimony just start to pay attention when you feel the presence of God, through the scriptures, through people, through poetry, through the beauty of the world, etc., and start keeping a list that you might include in your testimony. Over the summer months, the weekly update will also include selections of "inspirational scripture" to help you with your exercise.

Testimony: An Account of the Hope that is in You

For the purposes of this exercise a "testimony" is a firsthand reflection on your spiritual life. The scriptural basis is 1 Peter 3:15, "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you." A testimony requires a good deal of conviction for at least two reasons. First, a testimony emerges from your heartfelt beliefs. Second, a testimony grows out of your life experience. You "testify" or "witness" to your own experience of God's action in the world.

(cont'd on page 5)

Sunday, June 3

Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM

Sunday, June 10

Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM

Guest Celebrant: John Finley

Sunday, June 17

Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM

Sunday, June 24

Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM

Sunday, July 1

Summer Schedule Begins

Eucharist at 9 AM

Sunday, July 8

Eucharist at 9 AM

Sunday, July 15

Eucharist at 9 AM

Sunday, July 22

Eucharist at 9 AM

Wednesday, July 25 through

Friday, July 27

B-SAFE Summer Program at Epiphany School



Sunday, July 29

Eucharist at 9 AM

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PARISH OFFICE SUMMER HOURS

Beginning the week of June 17, and for the months of July and August, the office hours of our Parish Secretary, Amy Plante, are Wednesdays 9:00-11:00 AM and Thursdays 9:00 AM – 12 Noon.

SUMMER SCHEDULE

The usual Sunday schedule, with Holy Eucharist celebrated at 8 and 10 AM, will continue through June 24. On July 1, the summer schedule will begin and Holy Eucharist will be celebrated only once at 9 AM. This schedule will continue through Labor Day weekend. During the summer, the liturgy will alternate weekly between Rite I and Rite II.



CHURCH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

The last day of Church School classes will be Sunday, June 3.

PASTORAL COVERAGE

Sarah will be away on vacation and out of town from Saturday, June 9 to Friday June 15; and Monday, July 30 to Monday, August 13. If you have a pastoral concern during this period, please speak to Senior Warden Bill Shaw at 508-435-0074, or Junior Warden Cathy Harper at 508-429-7504. They will make arrangements, as needed, with clergy from St. Andrew's, Wellesley.



GUEST CELEBRANTS AND PREACHERS

On Sunday, June 10, we will welcome The Reverend John Finley as Guest Celebrant and Preacher while Sarah travels to Virginia Theological Seminary for a week-long preaching fellowship. John is the head of the school at Epiphany School, Dorchester, and was a much-loved priest associate at St. Michael's from 2006 to 2008.

Also, while Sarah is away on August 5 and August 12 we will have The Reverend Canon Edie Donolkowski visiting. Edie is the Canon for Ordained Vocations at the Diocese.

We look forward to making them feel welcome during their visit to St. Michael's.

CHILD CARE RESUMES IN SEPTEMBER

There will be no child care during the summer months of July and August. Parents and infants are always welcome in church as well as The Sacred Playroom located on the right as you enter the church. It is available for all of those who would like to use it.

B-SAFE SUMMER CAMP—

JULY 25, 26, 27



On July 25, 26, 27, St. Michael's will be sponsoring three days of B-SAFE. The theme for this year's camp is "Choose Kind". All the campers will be reading the book titled "Wonder" by R.J Palacio. B-SAFE suggested that partner volunteers read it as well. It will work well as a conversation starter. This event will require some planning so we hope that each of you will mark your calendar and put at least one of these days aside. We would love to involve as many people as possible. Again this year, we will use the on-line sign-up, "Sign-up Genius", to coordinate volunteers and responsibilities. If you would like to help, please contact Vestry Member, Frankie Gartner at 508-321-1144 or fgartner5583@comcast.net.

AUCTION THANK YOU!

Thank you – thank you – thank you! We had a very successful auction and we should have roughly \$15,000 to hand out in grants! We couldn't have done it without lots of helpers. Thank you to those that donated baskets and items, those that solicited donations, those that helped with publicity, helped with data entry, helped with the raffle, those that made our auction look fabulous with all of the decorations, those that provided the sweet and savory food, those that took care of the beverages, took care of the sound system and set up our computers, those that helped set up the night before the auction, created our auction booklet, helped with clean up, those that gave up some of their time during the auction to sell tickets, pass food, give out gift certificates, greeted people and handed out bidder numbers, those that helped gather all the bid sheets and race them to the back of the church, those that helped with check out and made sure everyone had the correct items, those that counted all the money, those that invited friends and family and those that came! We had a wonderful night and couldn't have done it without



UPDATE FROM THE WARDENS

On April 8, our Wardens Bill Shaw and Cathy Harper updated us on several areas in the life of the parish.

For those that were not able to attend that day, a summary of their updates are presented on this page and the next. As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Bill or Cathy.

From Bill Shaw, Senior Warden:

St. Michael's Vestry held their annual retreat on March 24 at the Edwards House in Framingham. If you're new to St. Michaels, the Vestry is a group of about a dozen parish members (including the rector) who are ultimately responsible for managing the operational side of St. Michael's. While these responsibilities often focus on financial matters, building and grounds, etc., the Vestry also tries to make time (especially during the annual retreat meeting) to focus on more spiritual and liturgical aspects of Parish life as well. The Vestry is chaired by the Rector, Sarah Robbins-Cole, and the other current members of the Vestry are: Ted Comstock (our Treasurer), Linda Ouellette (our Clerk), Nan Malone, Bob Colburn, Maggee Davis, Annette Hamlet, Sharon James, Ken Rice, and Kristen Walters.

A topic at this year's Vestry Retreat was how to support the mission of St. Michael's by encouraging attendance at our Sunday worship services. The reason for this was that we had noticed when we completed our parochial report to the Diocese this year that our average Sunday worship service attendance has been slipping over the past 10-15 years from an average of 85-90 worshipers each Sunday to an average of from 75 to 80. We thought we would try as a group to understand this better and whether there might be some way to bolster Sunday attendance in the future.

First, we learned from scouting around online was that this trend in declining church attendance is a nearly universal phenomenon across Christian denominations over the past 20 years. Second, St. Michael's is currently mirroring another universal trend, a slight decrease in attendance without a matching drop in total church membership or stewardship. So, what this seems to be telling us is that people are glad to be contributing church members, but they're finding it harder to get to church on Sunday morning. As a group, we recognized that church attendance is a complex and deeply personal issue and one that deserves some prayerful thought and discussion before the Vestry should consider any changes to boost attendance.

In trying to dissect this further, we did recognize that there are some increasing practical barriers for people to attend church on Sunday morning. That includes kids' sports schedules, more people working jobs on Sunday morning, things like snowstorms and bad weather, and more out-of-state weekend travel trips. We also talked about the digital age, and whether the ubiquitous use of YouTube videos, livestreaming, and computer time might be changing not only the way we spend our time and work and home, but also how we choose to seek out spiritual support and guidance.

Nevertheless, despite these sorts of practical barriers, our Vestry members were, of course, unanimously enthusiastic about coming to worship services and felt that Sunday morning services are a great blessing and a very important part of the week. But the question remains: "How can we communicate this feeling of church being an essential part of our lives to other members of the Parish and to our community?"

To help with our discussion at the Vestry Retreat, Rev. Sarah introduced us to a book titled "Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Doing Less" by Greg McKeown. In this self-help book, the author provides suggestions for how to declutter your life and prioritize daily activities so that you're spending more time on the things that matter most, and less time on all of the little things that are stacked up on your "to do" list. We looked at some short excerpts from the book, and we discussed how coming to church on Sunday and maintaining other important family activities might require each of us to take careful stock of the things that really matter in our lives and to separate those from the things that are really just cluttering things up.

Another discussion point was that maybe to increase attendance, we first need to look beyond attendance and think about the levels of engagement that people feel with the Parish and how we can help people feel more engaged with each other. We defined "engagement" as the sense that people have of being emotionally attached and invested in the church and the work of the church. As a brainstorming exercise, we tried to come up with a list of the ways we could "observe" levels of engagement at St. Michael's. That included not only things like stewardship and giving, but also participation at events, volunteerism, friendship, support, and attending to those in need in various ways. The disconnect between a relatively high level of engagement at St. Michael's but with a slowly declining level of Sunday attendance is what we were trying to decipher.

This is just the beginning of a year-long discussion on the Vestry about church attendance. If you have any ideas to share about church attendance with the Vestry, or if you'd like to tell us more about why you choose to come to Sunday worship services, please feel free to talk with anyone on the Vestry, and we will make sure those comments become part of our on-going discussion. You will probably be hearing or seeing more from the Vestry on this topic throughout the year.

(cont'd on next page)

**UPDATE FROM THE WARDENS (con'td):**

From Cathy Harper, Junior Warden:

The Vestry held their yearly one-day retreat on Saturday March 24 at the Edwards House in Framingham. The Vestry meets every second Tuesday of the month. Once a year, we go off-site and work on the direction for our upcoming year. We took care of regular church business in the morning, reviewing the upcoming calendar, approving financials, minutes, etc. We then chose our bubbles (ministries that are broken down by area). Those responsible for each bubble are:

Outreach is headed up by Linda Ouellette and Sharon James with Ted Comstock and Bob Colburn as helpers. They will oversee the staffing of meals for Serenity House and Shadows, the scheduling of the Panera Bread pickup, B-Safe summer camp, Stockings for Hope and the food pantries.

Christian Formation and Fellowship is headed up by Kristen Walters and Cathy Harper with Linda Ouellette and Ken Rice as helpers. They will oversee Church School, Journey to Adulthood programs / Rite 13, youth mission trip, coffee hour, women's group, book group, and all parish dinners.

Pastoral Care and Worship area is headed up by Nan Malone, Annette Hamlet and Sarah they will oversee Eucharistic visitors, compassionate cooks, angels on wheels and all things relating to worship, altar guild, lectors, ushers, choir, and Eucharistic Ministers.

Stewardship & Communication area is headed up by Bill Shaw and Ken Rice with Annette Hamlet & Sharon James as helpers. They will oversee the stewardship drive in the fall, communications and the website.

Administration, Finance and Property is headed up by Bob Colburn, Bill Shaw and Ted Comstock with Annette Hamlet as a helper. They oversee the finance committee, treasurer, memorial fund, spring and fall clean up fund raising, gardening, building and grounds.

These bubbles are the many ministries of St. Michaels. The bubble diagram, as well as the vestry meeting minutes of our monthly meetings are posted in Eva's room on the bulletin board.

We also revisited our priority areas for the coming year – they are:

Communication and advertising - making sure the congregation knows what is going on at St. Michaels and making sure that those who are outside of St. Michael's come to know about us. One way you can help us with this is to check out our website and let us know if there is anything you see missing. What would you expect to see on the website that wasn't there?

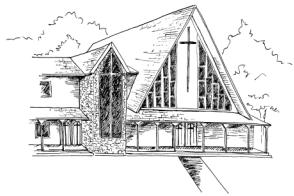
Stewardship and Volunteerism – we plan to begin working on the fall stewardship campaign early, and we want to work on helping people get involved in our many ministries.

Membership – gaining new members and retaining existing members and helping all to feel engaged. One part of membership is attendance at church, an area that we talked about at length during our retreat. Bill has expanded upon that.

Lastly, our financial position – at our annual meeting Ted Comstock, our treasurer, provided our annual budget. We had a very good stewardship drive and met our goal for estimated giving. Thank you to all who gave us an estimated giving card! At this time, with our first quarter numbers being reported, I am happy to say that we are "on track" to meet our budget needs for the coming year. Now, let's hope there are no more snow storms and snow plow bills to be paid!

Sunday Opportunities to Serve

Have you ever thought about playing a role during Sunday services? Or wondered how your children can get involved? There are many ways to participate – *as you can see from the following list* – and our quieter summer months are a perfect time to contemplate ways you can serve and speak to Sarah about how to do so. To be an intimate and integral part of Sunday worship is very rewarding, and we invite all who are interested to contact Sarah Robbins-Cole (508-429-4248 or stmichholl@aol.com) for further discussion or preparation.



Choir - Adults or Young Adults

If you enjoy music and like to sing, think about joining the St. Michael's Choir. We would love to have you join us as we make a "Joyful Noise unto the Lord"! The choir takes a break during the July and August months, but start up again in September, heading into full swing with rehearsals on Thursday evenings at 7 PM and performing at the 10 AM service on Sundays. Please talk to Roy Kelley, our Organist and Choir Director, if you are interested.

Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers - Adults or Young Adults

A lector is generally scheduled to read one lesson once or twice a month. A Eucharistic Minister helps to lead the liturgy, including reading prayers and serving communion. *Lector positions are open to young adults in middle school or older and Eucharistic Minister positions to those in high school.*



Acolytes - Children from seven years old & up

Young parishioners are eligible to serve as acolytes beginning in the third grade. The younger children begin with tasks appropriate to their abilities and, as they grow, they take on more duties.



Greeters and Ushers - Adults or Young Adults

Greeters and Ushers have the very important task of greeting both parishioners and newcomers as they enter the church before services and do their best to make everyone feel welcome. *Young adults aged twelve and up are eligible to serve as a greeter or an usher.*

Altar Guild - Adults or Young Adults

The Altar Guild is an important part of parish life because the people involved handle all preparations for worship, including setting the altar before services and cleaning items afterwards. Anyone who thinks he or she is a "behind the scenes" type of person would probably enjoy being part of the Altar Guild. *High school students are also invited to be part of the Altar Guild.* If you are interested in joining this integral part of our parish life, please contact Camilla King (508-429-0784 or camillaking@verizon.net).



From the Rector (*cont'd from front page*)

First, select a scripture passage-- any scripture passage that has been meaningful in your life. Then, reflect on how this passage relates to your own life. Prepare a first-person account to share with the group. There are a number of different approaches you might take. What claim does the text make on you? How do you know this text to be true? Or, in light of this text, what do you believe (about God, human beings, or the life of faith)? You have considerable freedom with your approach provided your testimony:

1. Relays some aspect of your faith;
2. Uses the first-person;
3. Involves conviction;
4. Springs from a scripture passage; and
5. Lasts no more than 3 minutes.

Yours in Christ,

Sarah Robbins-Cole



Outreach Opportunities

As you can see from the following list, St. Michael's offers many opportunities for parishioners of all ages to participate in Outreach. Our quieter summer months are a perfect time to contemplate ways to become involved.

Loaves and Fishes

St. Michael's serves Serenity House in Hopkinton, a residence for women in recovery from substance abuse, and Shadows House, a shelter in Ashland. We prepare and serve a monthly meal at each house and also make weekly deliveries of breads and pastries donated by Panera Bread. If you are interested in joining this program, please contact Linda Ouellette (617-686-5606 or attylao1958@gmail.com).

Food Pantries

As well as giving grants to the food pantries in Ashland, Holliston, Hopkinton, Medway and Millis (*from the proceeds of our annual Auction for outreach*), we invite parishioners to bring food donations for the Holliston pantry and place them in a box in the narthex at St. Michael's.



Stockings of Hope

We give each resident of Serenity and Shadows Houses a Christmas stocking with small items such as toiletries, socks, etc. Parishioners are invited to donate items or to sponsor the cost of a stocking or to help in assembling and delivering the stockings. For more information, please contact Pamela PinterParsons (508-277-9230 or newpamela@comcast.net).



The Appalachian Reading Project

St. Michael's supports school children in Kentucky by collecting and sending children's books. You can support this ministry by donating your gently used children's books. Donations can be placed in collection boxes in the church narthex. For more information, please contact Anke Geurtsen (508-429-1132 or fgeurtsen@aol.com).

B-SAFE Summer Day Camp

St. Michael's partners with B-SAFE, the summer day camp program started by Bishop Tom Shaw, former Bishop of Massachusetts, to provide academic enrichment and fun activities for inner-city children in the Boston area. Our parish sponsors three days of the camp by providing meals at Epiphany School in Dorchester, (one of the camp locations) and organizing a day's outing at Hopkinton State Park, that includes a cookout. You can help by preparing food or going to Epiphany School to serve or helping with activities and/or food at the state park outing. For more information, please contact Sarah Robbins-Cole at 508-429-4248 or stmichholl@aol.com.

Youth Mission Trip

Young people in our *Journey to Adulthood* programs, together with adult leaders, spend a week in Appalachia working to repair and renovate houses for low income families under the auspices of the Appalachia Service Project. This mission trip occurs every two years and is the culmination of the J2A program for high school teenagers. Our young people raise funds for their mission, and St. Michael's assists with an outreach grant from the proceeds of our annual auction. For more information, please contact Sarah Robbins-Cole at 508-429-4248 or stmichholl@aol.com.



St. Michael's Kids Page



ST. MICHAEL'S SPONSORS B-SAFE

(our Bishops' Summer Academic,
Fun and Enrichment program
for children in inner-city Boston)



July 25, 26, 27

**SIGN UP TO PREPARE FOOD,
AT EPIPHANY SCHOOL, DORCHESTER
OR HELP WITH ACTIVITIES**



St. Michael's Episcopal Church
1162 Highland St.
Holliston, MA 01746