



St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Small Church, Big Heart ~ 60 Years and Growing

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2019

from the Rector

Dear Friends,

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas, and the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

Traditional Christmas Blessing

The story of Christmas is beautiful. I am sure I do not need to tell you that. It has inspired countless paintings, poems, story books, plays, oratorios, pageants and even the Rockette's Christmas Spectacular. Oh, lest I forget, I must mention the Robbins-Cole Family favorite – the Hallmark Christmas Movie. Or to be honest, Adrian and I love to watch Hallmark Movies. Our kids just make fun of us. A lot.

Recently on National Public Radio on *On Point*, there was a 45 minute discussion on the merits of the Hallmark Christmas movie. While some criticize the network for its predictable plots and lack of diversity, there are a huge number of fans, millions of them in fact, who tune in to watch.

During the program one woman called in to say that she was not a fan, but her husband, a neuroscientist and professor, loves the movies. She said what is extraordinary is that he *really* watches them and even laughs in all the right places. The movies provide light relief in an otherwise very complicated world.

Another man named Steve, who is 54 years old, called in and said that both he and his father, who is 80 years old, watch Hallmark movies. He shared that about a year and a half ago both his father and his son were diagnosed with cancer. Hallmark movies were one of the only ways they could escape the “chaos” of their lives and feel okay in the world. Steve said Hallmark Movies were just what they all needed.

On Point examined how important it is for the brain to feel good. It is important for us to have positive experiences and to take a break from all that is hard and edgy and upsetting. And that is of course what the real Christmas is about too. It is about the light of Christ coming into a dark world. It is about hope gaining the upper hand over despair. It's about the power of love over the power of apathy or even hatred. Hallmark movies get to show that beginning to end in roughly two hours. We are rarely that lucky – things in real life take much longer. However, I hope your Advent, the time for patience and waiting, will be rewarded with the light, joy, peace and love of Christmas. After all, that is what we really need. So maybe go watch a Hallmark movie and we can compare notes later.

Yours in Christ,

Sarah Robbins-Cole

Sunday, December 8

Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM

Sunday, December 15

Eucharist at 8 AM

Lessons & Carols at 10 AM

Sunday, December 22

Eucharist at 8 AM

Christmas Pageant at 10 AM

Christmas Eve, December 24

5 PM Festival Eucharist with
Blessing of the Crèche and
children's story

9 PM Festival Eucharist with
special music

Sunday, December 29

Eucharist & Carol Hymn Sing
at 10 AM (no Eucharist at 8)

Sunday, January 5

Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM



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CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY ACTIVITY

Please join us on Saturday, December 7 from 10 to 11:30 AM in Eva's room for gingerbread decorating and writing letters to Santa. All materials will be provided. Cookies and hot chocolate will be served. Feel free to bring a friend. Children 8 and under must be accompanied by an adult. For more information please contact Kristen Walters at Keawalters@comcast.net.

FATIMA SHRINE FESTIVITIES FOR YOUTH GROUP AND FAMILIES

On Monday, December 23 at 6:30 pm the youth group will gather at the Fatima Shrine in Holliston for some seasonal festivities. Free parking is available and small snacks and hot cocoa will be available in the gift shop.

POT LUCK COFFEE HOUR DECEMBER 29

Please consider providing leftover holiday treats for our "pot luck" coffee hour on December 29.



CHURCH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

On Sunday December 22, all children are invited to take part in the annual Advent Pageant. There will be no atrium lessons on that day. Also, there will be no atrium lessons on Sunday, December 29. At that time, children are invited to sit with their families in church. Church School atrium lessons will resume on Sunday, January 5. Please note: It's not too late to join church school classes. Children can join at anytime during the year. Age 3- preschool level 1, grades 1-3 level 2, and grades 4-5 level 3. All classrooms are upstairs and start time is 9:45 AM. Volunteers are always needed to help teach. Please contact Kristen Walters at keawalters@comcast.net with any questions.



LOAVES AND FISHES

What is Loaves and Fishes? Loaves and Fishes is the name of one of our outreach ministries. Once a month we prepare and serve a meal at Shadows, a woman's shelter in Ashland and also at Serenity House in Framingham, a residence for women in recovery from substance abuse.



What type of help is needed? We need people to help cook entrees and side dishes, people to make salads, to bake or purchase desserts and people to serve.

How many people do we need to cook for? For Shadows we need to cook for 25 people and for Serenity House 50 people.

Can I partner with someone? Absolutely, the more the merrier. You can prepare the meal at home or at St. Michael's.

Are the facilities appropriate to bring my children? Yes, you can bring your children. The women enjoy seeing them. Sometimes there are babies at the facilities too.

I work full time so I can't go to the facilities but I can cook, how would that work? When you sign up to help you can indicate that you cannot serve. You can coordinate the drop off of your portion of the meal with the others that are signed up for that date.

Cooking for 50 people is costly, can I be reimbursed? Yes, just submit your receipts to Ted Comstock, our treasurer and he will reimburse you. Ted has a folder in the parish office, where you can drop off your receipts.

What day of the week do we do Loaves and Fishes? We go to Shadows in Ashland the first Wednesday of the month and we go to Serenity House in Framingham the second Monday of the month.

How do I sign up? Each week in the online version of Life at St. Michael's there are links to Sign up Genius for each location. Choose a date that works for you. If you don't use a computer, you can sign up on the bulletin board in Eva's room (where we have coffee hour).

Who can I contact for more information? You can contact Linda Ouellette at louellette@lawson-weitzen.com or 617-686-5606.

WISHING YOU A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR.

The Rector, The Wardens and Vestry of St. Michael's



Christmas at St. Michael's Church

Third Sunday of Advent, December 15

8 AM Eucharist

10 AM Lessons and Carols

Readings and music for Advent and Christmas

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 22

8 AM Eucharist

10 AM Christmas Pageant with Eucharist

Christmas Eve, December 24

5 PM Festival Christmas Eucharist

with Blessing of the Crèche and children's story

9 PM Festival Christmas Eucharist with choir

The First Sunday after Christmas, December 29

10 AM Eucharist and Carol Hymn Sing (one service only)

The Epiphany, January 5

8 & 10 AM Eucharist

Q & A WITH THE WARDENS —
NOVEMBER 17, 2019 at
8 & 10 AM SERVICES
Bill Shaw and Cathy Harper



Good Morning!

The purpose of our talk today is to give you an update on the church business of the Vestry. If any of you are new to St. Michaels, the Vestry is a group of about a dozen parish members (including the rector) who are basically in charge of managing the operational side of St. Michael's. We do tend to focus on financial matters, building and grounds, and things like that; but we also try to focus on other aspects of Parish life and activities.

Thank you, Sarah. First, Cathy and I would like to thank Sarah Robbins-Cole for her guidance and leadership in almost everything that we do on the Vestry. Our meetings are chaired by Sarah, and she really manages to keep us on task and, of course, she's a real delight to work with, and this makes our job easy.

Thank you, Ted and Amy. Then, it's hard to talk about church business without acknowledging 2 others: Ted Comstock, our Treasurer, and Amy Plante, our Parish Secretary. Ted and Amy do a tremendous amount of work on our budgets, bank accounts, payroll, newsletters, bulletins, contracts, and other financial and administrative records. You'd be surprised how much it takes to run a small church on a day-to-day basis, so we are thankful to Ted and Amy for keeping up with all of these administrative demands!

The Vestry: So, the Vestry meets monthly throughout the year, and all parishioners are welcome to attend. We have historically met on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 pm, but we've been experimenting with meetings after the 10 am church service. In fact, we have a meeting today. Vestry members serve for revolving 3-year terms, and so each year we elect 3 or 4 new members. The minutes of each meeting (as well as the By-Laws of the Parish that guide us) are posted on the bulletin board in Eva's room. We also post some highlights from Vestry meetings in our e-newsletters to keep you up to date. Our current members of the Vestry are:

Ted Comstock (our Treasurer)
 Linda Ouellette (our Clerk)
 Bob Colburn
 Deb Ervin
 Lisa Hazard
 Sharon James
 Nan Malone
 Sean Stearley
 Kristen Walters

Church School/Youth

Kristen Walters continues to teach Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a hands on Montessori based program for our preschool and elementary aged children.

This year we hired Elizabeth Plume as our new youth director for our middle and high school age youth. Liz is also heading up our Appalachia Service Project (ASP) a mission trip that helps repair homes in the Appalachia area. This year St. Michaels is partnering with St. Andrews in Wellesley for this trip that will take our teams of 28 participants to Tennessee June 28- July 4th. We applied for a diocesan grant to help with the costs of the trip and I am happy to say we received a \$4000 grant.

This summer we hosted a group from Great Neck NY that needed a place to stay while working on a Habitat for Humanity project. The Colburns graciously hosted them in their home and Liz & Susan Plume and Linda Ouellette hosted evening activities. Thank you to all who helped welcome this group. They were thrilled and are interested in partnering with us in other ways in the future.

Communication. Another topic that we regularly discuss in Vestry meetings is communication, and this includes our own internal communications within the Parish, external communications with our local community, and specific communication products like our website, our newsletter, and other church publications.

Signage. One point that was raised in the Vestry last year was the need for better street signage for the church, so this year we were successful to obtain a Congregational Development Grant from the diocese to fund new street signage. You can see a
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WARDENS TALK (*cont'd from page 4*)

mock-up of the new sign in the narthex, and we just obtained permission from the Town to post our sign, and this work should be completed before the serious winter weather arrives. Thank you to Deb Ervin who coordinated much of this effort.

Website. Another point that has been raised in Vestry meetings is the challenge of keeping the website up to date with a constantly changing calendar and changing parish. As a result, we budgeted additional funds in the past year to give Amy, our Parish Secretary, additional hours to dedicate to our website, and that seems to be really helping. If you have any ideas or suggestions for beautification or functionality of the website, please let us know.

Outreach happenings

With the help of many volunteers we continue to cook and serve monthly at two women's shelters - Shadows in Ashland and Serenity House in Framingham. New this year Serenity House added an additional program for the women, so now when they are at capacity they have 50 women. That is a lot of people to feed, so thank you to all who sign up to help with this ministry.

BSAFE is a program that gives inner city youth a safe place to go during the summer. For several years we have sponsored a week - where we prepare lunches and serve them during the week and on Friday host a fun barbeque. Last year we scaled back and hosted just the Friday barbeque at Hopkinton State Park, but even that was a huge undertaking. So this year we have decided to scale back and not host the barbeque but we will continue to support them with a monetary donation from our Auction funds.

And speaking of Auction...next year's auction will be held on Saturday, March 28th at Holliston Town Hall (same place as last year). Stay tuned for more info on ways you can help out with this fun event.

Tidying up

This past year our focus was on building and grounds and tidying up. We have done a lot! We received a generous donation that has helped with this. Pam Pracher has transformed our meeting room into a lovely place to gather. Thank you Pam! Our doors have been painted Episcopal Red, we have new red

runners by the back door, we have new black cushioned folding chairs, our landscaper has spruced up our grounds and memorial garden. We have a beautiful new stained glass window thank you to Helen and Bob Daly for spear heading this along with Don May who did the installation. Our church looked lovely for our 60th anniversary celebration.

Building and Grounds

And now, I'm going to continue on the theme of building and grounds...

Professional Building Maintenance. One of the changes the Vestry made last year was to add budget for a part-time licensed professional to help us with keeping our building compliant with local codes and inspections, to respond more expeditiously to urgent building malfunctions, and to help solicit and select construction bids for future work. The name of the person who has been doing this work for us over the past year is Bob Hart, and he has been working approximately 2 hours per week. I counted more than 100 email exchanges with him over the past year, so it seems we've had plenty of requests for his help in the past year. We will continue to revisit the need for an outside professional to help us keep with the demands of the building from year to year.

Repairs and renovations. It's been a fairly active year in terms of changes around the building. To add to the list of beautification projects that Cathy mentioned, we have also:

- Replaced an outdated fire alarm panel
- Installed key boxes next to the front and side doors
- Pumped out the septic system
- Made some sound system upgrades in the sanctuary (thank you, Jeff Pinter-Parsons!)
- Reflooring of Ekwell Hall and the kitchen
- Addition of a recycling bin in the parking lot

Future large-scale projects. We have 2 large-scale projects on the horizon: replacing our HVAC units and reroofing the building. Bob Hart has begun to gather construction estimates for these 2 projects, which we believe will be needed in the next 3-5 years. Getting some initial cost estimates

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WARDENS TALK (*cont'd from page 5*)

will help us to know whether a special capital campaign will be necessary or whether these improvements can be paid from our own resources or a low-cost loan from the diocese. The Vestry will be providing information to the Parish as this information begins to unfold.

Vestry openings – We currently have 4 slots on the Vestry that will be opening up at the end of January. We do our best to have the Vestry be representative of the Parish, and we also try to rotate Parish members through the Vestry so that we can keep fresh ideas and perspectives coming! With that in mind, please give some thought to joining the Vestry. It is a wonderful way to give back to the church and get to know your fellow parishioners a little better. If you are interested or want to find out more, please let Bill or I know. If you were on the Vestry before and think you can't be on again, don't worry, you just need to wait 1 year and then you can jump on again.

Stewardship: Because it's Stewardship season, we wouldn't be doing our job if we left the podium without reminding you how important it is to return your estimated giving cards so that we have some estimate of financial support for the church in the coming year. This is still our largest single source of income for the church, and without your financial support, we really would have no way of paying for our clergy, our parish secretary, our choirmaster, our Youth Minister, or have this place to meet. If you can't find your estimated giving card, it's ok to send me the information in an email or a phone call. Please give generously to the church as you are able!

Open up for questions

Before we open up for any questions from the Parish, we just want to say that Cathy, me, and the rest of the Vestry members welcome your comments and questions at any time; please feel free to speak with any of the Vestry members or send an email through the church website if you have any questions or comments for us. Last year, we started a new custom of printing a few highlights from our Vestry meetings in your bulletin insert, so hopefully this will help you to stay abreast of what's going on at Vestry meetings.

Questions or comments from the Congregation?

STOCKINGS OF HOPE

Pamela PinterParsons

Once again, we are inviting you to be part of a program that touches the lives of so many. We will be filling Stockings of Hope for the residents of Shadows and Serenity House. We have an increased number of women this year so all help is appreciated! Each woman receives a special stocking filled with items they need but more importantly, items they want ~ after all isn't that what Christmas is all about? Special thanks to Pat Weston who made all 82 backpacks that we will be filling this year! How special these will be!

How you can get involved:

Purchase items for a whole stocking or sponsor a stocking (\$75).

Buy select items. For example, five pairs of socks or 10 lip gloss. Lists are available.

Donated cash, gift cards, or Kohl's cash to help us buy what is needed. Please make sure any checks have Stockings of Hope in the memo section. We have shopping elves ready to go!

Collect items at your place of employment. Do a sock drive. Or an underwear drive. Or a nail polish drive. People are often looking for ways to help.

If you are not sure how to assist please contact Pamela at 508-277-9230.

Lists will be available in Eva's room or by contacting Pamela at pamela@soulspiritstudio.net.

Whole Stockings

- *Socks
- *Hat & Scarf set
- *Gloves
- *Earrings
- Lip gloss
- Pocket size Tissues
- *4 oz Hand Lotion
- Nail polish
- *Chap Stick
- Lindt Chocolates



Drop off boxes in Eva's Room and at Soul Spirit Studio, 76 Railroad Street, Holliston. Soul Spirit Studio (*) will happily give you 20% any items purchased for Stockings for Hope.

Deadline for unwrapped items is December 15th so that we can get them to the shelters by Christmas! Thank you for helping make the Holidays a bit brighter for those in need.

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans

PASSIONATEPENNYPINCHER.COM

A decorative border of red poinsettias with green leaves frames the top and sides of the page.

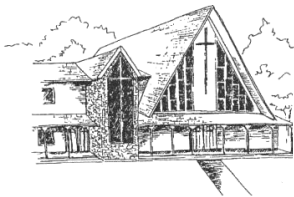
Christmas Flowers and Music

If you would like to make a donation to the cost of Christmas flowers and special Christmas Eve music in “memory of” or “in thanksgiving for” a loved one or loved ones, please fill out the form below and return it to Amy Plante in the parish office or place it in the offering plate. All memorials and thanksgivings received by December 20 will be listed in the Christmas bulletins.

Name _____

In Memory of _____

In Thanksgiving for _____



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