



The Keystone

Saint Peter's Episcopal Church

200 Pleasant Street, Bennington, Vermont 05201

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Interim Rector: Reverend E. Angela Emerson

Spring 2021

**“God is calling the community of Saint Peter’s Parish to live, worship
and serve according to Christ’s word and example.”**

Church as the Embodiment of the New Commandment

After washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus says: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13: 34-35.

In this new commandment, Jesus is speaking of agape love—not romantic love or even familial love. Agape love is about a quality of relationship that seeks to affirm and nurture each other as we grow together in our understanding of and service to God. Agape love is the quality that binds the Trinity—the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sustainer—in the eternal divine dance. Jesus is instructing the disciples to embody this agape love so that it can be seen and understood by others as a sign of the power of God working in humans. Jesus calls us to put divine love into action that serves God’s creation and develop relationships based on affirmation and respect so that others are drawn to God.

All around the world people of faith are organizing, advocating, and developing communities in which every person matters, everyone can thrive, and everyone can have a voice in the decisions which impact their lives. Nationally, many faith communities participate in affiliates of [Faith in Action](#). The Vermont affiliate is called [Vermont Interfaith Action](#).

The approach is action based, moving faith communities beyond social service ministries into action for systemic change on behalf of people whose voices are often not heard or disregarded. This approach to ministry moves us beyond ‘helping’ or ‘serving’ people in need. It values meeting our neighbors, learning their names, hearing their stories, and joining our voices and resources with theirs to build a community where everyone thrives. It is a long-range, people-with-people ministry. The blessing in this dark period of pandemic has been the opportunity to be outside, to meet our neighbors, to recognize how different their lives are from ours, and to stir in us a desire to build a better community. Community organizing is not a new idea. Jesus planted the seed when he washed

the feet of his disciples then sacrificed his life in opposition to oppression. It is well past time that faith communities committed to embody the commandment to put love into action.

Angie Emerson

Evangelism: Colorful or Plain

Last November Reverend Angela Emerson and John Terauds, each led a small group of vestry and committee members, on a tour around our Church Building. The purpose of this ‘pilgrimage’ of sorts was to observe and recognize the characteristics of our building and grounds that stand out as potential expressions of evangelism. What kind of creative projects and inviting amenities could we imagine? John combined the ideas and inspirations from both groups into a mapped outline. Given enough interest in participation, we could see a team formed, in the near future, or whenever we are able to resume our outdoor services, to possibly carry out some of these visions of evangelism in our building and on our grounds.

Here are just a few examples from a lengthy list of contenders:

The East side of the Parish Hall catches the morning sun, perfect for a community garden or edible landscape. The blank stucco walls are an invitation to create a mural. The back yard could comfortably accommodate some tables and benches, or meditation areas. Colorful banners could be hung, with messages of welcome to all. The front lawn could offer a food ministry for children. The list goes on and is impressive. There is no lack of vivid imagination and hope in the ministries of our parish.

Over the last year, in spite of COVID-19 restrictions, the St. Peter’s Community has reached out to our friends and neighbors with grace and devotion. The Pause Place, the Cookie Ministry, the Coffee Pot, the Coat Rack, hosting Sunday dinners at Second Congregational for our neighbors in need; our own Shepherd “walking the walk,” to personally answer to the the needs of our neighborhood; our front lawn Black Lives Matter vigils; and recently, together with the Interfaith Council, the Walloomsac River walks. Our Parish has lovingly revealed the presence of the body of Christ.

Whether you favor colorful artistry on our church building and grounds, or prefer the natural beauty and sanctity God has blessed St. Peter’s with, consider making your own pilgrimage around the building, to see what discoveries the Holy Spirit may have in store for you. The message of the Gospel is apparent on our lawn, and is spreading through our community.

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” Romans 10:17.

With warmth, Gail Broussard & Shirley Miller

Outdoor Services

The Worship & Liturgy Committee meets regularly to plan services for all of the liturgical seasons. At present, the weekend services, as well as all study groups and other activities, are via Zoom. As warmer weather approaches, we are all looking forward to resuming outdoor services. But we must wait and remain vigilant until the Diocesan Restart Team, in accordance with the State of Vermont Mandates, grants permission to gather for outdoor services. At that time, we will announce the starting date, along with whatever rules and regulations may apply. So, hopefully, soon we can all dust off our lawn chairs and head for St. Peter's front lawn, for worship and fellowship!

Gail Broussard

Community Dinner

St. Peter's hosted the community dinner at the Second Congregational Church for the second time on February 21st. We served spaghetti and meat sauce, salads, rolls, and cookies, to a good number of our friends in the community. All enjoyed a home-cooked meal. Many thanks to all the people who cooked and helped distribute the food. This makes a real difference to these folks to have a hearty meal.

I enjoyed the chance to visit with so many people when I called to ask for help on this. Everyone is always so willing to help and I really appreciated the opportunity to catch up with all the people I miss seeing at church.

Cathy Perkins

Seeds of Hope Project

The Seeds of Hope Project began in the 'walk-around' of the church building and the invitation of the outdoor space, to minister to the community. This walk, led by John Terrauds, took place in late October. The east-facing building wall, opposite the Heritage Family Credit Union, was calling to be bathed in color. From that vision came the idea to put children's artwork on that wall to celebrate them. John and Lorraine Donnatelli were spearheading this wonderful project. John contacted Beth Newman, our resident art therapist, who in turn contacted two art therapist friends. And, as in life, unforeseen changes occurred. For a myriad of reasons, the original architects, John and Lorraine, were not able to continue with the idea. The 'seed' was planted by John and Lorraine, and now the 'gardeners' are Kaye Shaddock, Eileen Druckenmiller, and Liz Luca.

The following is the invitation presented to the Southern Vermont Supervisory Union, and it was well received:

“As we are slowly seeing relief from the Covid Virus, and catch a glimpse of an ‘after Covid future’, our concern was with, and for, our children. As adults, we can verbalize our fears, concerns etc., but the children find this more difficult to do. And so, this “Seeds of Hope” Project was born. How can we best help our “Seeds of Hope”, our children, to make sense of this past year and to move forward with life? As “seeds” bring forth new life, so too, do our children, our future.”

To date, the SVSU has been contacted and they are excited and on board with this project. As soon as we receive their okay to proceed in the area public schools, then we will contact the other area private schools and the home-schooled children. So, hopefully, by the end of May, we will see the wonderful art expressions of hope from our community children displayed in the Main Street’s store front windows.

Liz Luca

Stephen Ministry Overview

Stephen Ministry will bring to St Peter’s the opportunity to care for others in our congregation and surrounding community, who are experiencing life-challenging events.

We are not medical doctors, psychologists, personal care givers or counselors of any kind. Our purpose is to provide emotional support and spiritual guidance to those experiencing types of challenges that are specified, according to Ministry Guidelines. The support we can give to individuals who are suffering will have long-lasting effects. As a Stephen Minister, all that is required is an hour per week of time. As Stephen Ministry organizers, Colleen Gates and I have been through a rigorous training program. We had a wonderful experience in going to virtual class weekly, and developing new skills and tools that enhance our own existing experience and knowledge. Both of us graduated from class after five weeks, and came out well equipped to train and lead a group of parishioners who are interested in servitude of God through the community of St Peter’s.

Stephen Ministry at St Peter’s will require a team of trained leaders and also a team of trained ministers. The emphasis will always be on confidentiality and group/team support via regular check-ins. To keep us all on track and to keep the momentum going, a biweekly supervision is required.

Once we have organized our team leadership, then recruitment of ministers can begin. The first step is the application process. Next is a careful review by designated leaders and, perhaps, leaders of other existing ministries. Once training class candidates are selected, a training class for Stephen Ministers

can be scheduled. At that point, the team leaders will have additional training to complete, for Minister Supervision, so that we can continue to provide a solid foundation for this ministry.

The planning stages of bringing this Stephen Ministry to St Peter's is where we are now. It will take some careful thought and planning to ensure we have all of our needed resources in place. This includes, clergy, vestry, and administrative support, assigned roles for our leaders, an approach for equipping ministers, and development of a list of care receivers in need, and a willing and supportive congregation.

In the coming months, there will be short presentations that will highlight the things we can accomplish through this ministry. Consider taking them in. Perhaps you do not feel the calling to become a minister/caregiver, but there are plenty of opportunities for all parishioners to contribute to this important work that is supportive in creating a healthy and vibrant community.

Lorraine Donatelli

Was It the Coffee or the Company?

This Winter's Interfaith Hot Beverage Ministry

Was it the coffee or the company that brought many Bennington residents to the Free Hot Beverage ministry this winter in front of St. Peter's Church on Pleasant Street?

As one of the volunteers, I felt privileged to meet and greet folks walking by to see if they wanted something hot to drink. Children from nearby schools stopped for hot chocolate. People rushing to or from the bus station were grateful for a hot beverage. Others who were simply on their way here or there were happy to find friends who were genuinely interested in them, as well as providing something hot on a cold afternoon. Some folks came week after week and lingered to talk, seeming to enjoy the company as much as the beverage. I certainly did.

When the Greater Bennington Interfaith Council learned that there would not be a warming shelter available for the homeless this winter, Mary McGuinness and John Terauds of St. Peter's Church came up with another idea. Why not provide hot beverages on the cold afternoons from November to March? The Interfaith Council immediately agreed, so Mary and other members of the Council recruited more than twenty volunteers from six Bennington congregations: St Peter's, Sacred Heart/St. Francis, Temple Beth El, Second Congregational Church, Bennington Friends Meeting, and the Unitarian Universalists. The thought of offering a free hot beverage seemed a small gesture to show our concern and caring. People readily volunteered.

St. Peter's Church offered its kitchen and social room for supply storage and weekday preparations. Two outdoor tables were donated, one for the beverages to be dispensed by the volunteers, the other to be used for the sugar, creamers, stirrers, and napkins. Everyone was welcome to have a free cup of coffee, hot chocolate, or tea, as long as mask wearing and social distancing were observed. On some days, there was a basket with bottles of water, cartons of juice, and snacks for visitors to sift through. "You can take more than one," we'd politely say. Often guests did, clearly happy to have something they could nibble now and later.

One of the wonderful benefits of this service was getting to know the other volunteers. My wife and I worked with two different volunteers over the past three months and looked forward each Friday to spending time with them, as well as talking with visitors who came for coffee or chat. The Interfaith Council is grateful to St. Peter's for providing their premises, and to their church members who faithfully opened and closed the church each day.

Spending time with folks in our community, getting to know one another, and receiving appreciation for the warmth of the beverages and the ease of conversations certainly felt like a welcome gift. The experience reminds me of the song, Magic Penny.

Love is something if you give it away...
You'll end up having more.
It's just like a magic penny. Hold it tight and you won't have any.
Lend it, spend it, and you'll have so many,
They'll roll all over the floor.

Magic pennies were certainly rolling this winter. The hot beverages helped, but I think the company was the magic in the ministry.

Michael Wajda

Member of Bennington Quaker Meeting and the Greater Bennington Interfaith Council

Who Are We Now, After a Year of This?

Sunday Prayers—March 14th, 2021

Nadia Bolz-Weber

Dear God, who made us all,
A year ago, we did not know that we were about to learn:
what we could lose and somehow live anyway

where we would find comfort and where it would elude us
whose lives matter to whom
why we have kitchens in our homes.

In mid-March 2020 all I knew for sure is that
hoarding toilet paper doesn't make you safe—it just makes you selfish.
But God it feels like the world is about to open back up.
And I'm both thrilled and kind of scared about that.

Because I'm not who I was a year ago.

I want so badly
to hug my friends again
and laugh a lot again
and have amazing conversations again
and yet I am not sure how long I could do any of this before crying or just getting really quiet. My
emotional protective gear has worn so thin, and grief just leaks out everywhere now.
And yet, when I quiet my anxious thoughts, I start to suspect that I am now closer to the me you have
always known and always loved. So help me trust that, Lord.
As things change, help us be gentle with ourselves and with each other. We are all wearing newborn
skin right now.

AMEN.

Nadia Bolz-Weber

<https://thecorners.substack.com/p/who-are-we-now-after-a-year-of-this>

Spotlight on a Parishioner

Cheryl Jacobs, a lifelong Vermonter, is a new member of the vestry. She was married at St. Peter's and so has strong connections and memories. She has generously shared with us a bit about her life past and present, as well as her vision for the future of St Peter's:

“I have lived in Bennington all of my life. I attended college at UVM and after graduating with a degree in Medical Technology, I came back to Bennington and started working in the laboratory at what was then Putnam Memorial Hospital. I met my husband, Greg Jacobs there. Greg has been a lifelong member of St Peter's and we were married there. I joined the Episcopal church when we were expecting our first child because I wanted to raise our family there and attend church together. I have fond memories of our children in the Christmas pageants, the Christmas teas, and other family activities at St Peter's.

“I look forward to when we are able to reunite and worship together again. I think it would be wonderful to welcome some new, younger families into the St Peter’s community.

“As a child, I lived within walking distance of the library. I spent a fair amount of time there which led to a lifelong love of reading. I also enjoyed playing kickball, hide and seek, and other outside games with the rest of the neighborhood kids. I remember long summer days at Lake Paran or the “Y” pool, and Saturday matinees for \$0.35 at the Harte Theatre.

“My husband Greg has a brother and sister (Cheryl Harrington), who live in Bennington, but I have no immediate family members left here. Our daughter Kaitlin, her husband Nick, and grandchildren Owen and Reagan live in Colchester, VT. Our son Ryan and his wife Erika and grandson Kai live in Rolla, Missouri.

“I am retired but still work part-time at the SVMC laboratory. My specialty is blood bank work. In my free time I love spending time outside enjoying the natural beauty of this area.

“Here is a picture from about two and a half years ago. The last time we were together with all three grandchildren.”

Marcia Levin



Reel Talk—Keeping It Real

How do we learn more about ourselves? How has history shaped our current attitudes, habits, and behavior? Are we really living as Jesus directed? Our Reel Talk gatherings have helped examine and answer these questions by watching and discussing the formation of our American culture through film.

Reel Talk launched in January as part of our anti-racism work in the Diocese. The Bishop asked congregations to watch the documentary *I Am Not Your Negro* by James Baldwin, on Netflix. With February following as Black History Month, our Reel Talk gatherings launched into a series of watching PBS and Netflix programming followed by discussion. The month was rich with the documentaries, *Driving While Black – Race, Space and Mobility*; *Backs against the Wall: The Howard Thurman Story*; *I am from Here – Advancing Racial Equality*; and most recently, *Amend*, exploring the history of the Fourteenth Amendment.

All of these documentaries offered informative and historical footage that contributed to our current belief system. They did not offer solutions but made it easy to identify where our prejudices came from and how they still exist. From there, our discussions led to how we can be a part of change.

There is wonderful programming offered to explore many other areas. As we move forward into the year, the focus and types of programming we watch can change. For example, we are entering the growing season. What do we know about our food? Where does it really come from? How are we responsible for what we require the earth to produce? How does our consumption affect the earth? What is our role as stewards of the earth? What changes can we make now, to make a difference?

If you enjoy a lively, informed discussion, join in on Reel Talk. Time and topics are announced in *The Clarion*. Also, if you have a special interest or topic you'd like to explore, send your suggestion to office@stpetersvt.org. Hope to see you!

Collins Sennett

Cookie Ministry – “Sweets from the Heart”

The Cookie Ministry grew from an idea, and then an action, by Mary McGuinness, to acknowledge and thank the volunteers of the Coffee Pot Ministry. She thought it would be a nice idea to show appreciation to these volunteers and to thank them with some homemade Valentine cookies. The appreciation by the recipients of these cookies led to the creation of the Cookie Ministry.

This ministry will honor those members of selected Bennington community organizations for their caring actions, shown to the citizens of the Bennington community, with a package of homemade cookies. The tag which will accompany these cookies will read as follows:

“Dear Friends,

We see you and thank you for your caring actions given to the Bennington Community.

‘Sweets from the Heart’

St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 200 Pleasant Street, Bennington, VT"

The Cookie Ministry Team will select a community organization approximately every six weeks and bake some cookies for them as a thank-you. We are looking for some of the wonderful St. Peter's bakers to join this ministry with their delicious homemade cookies. Please join us once every six weeks with your 'Sweets from the Heart.'

Collins Sennett, Liz Luca, and Carole Stair

MDC Committee

The Ministerial Discernment Committee (MDC), otherwise known as the "search committee," is working in concert with the vestry to complete a profile of St. Peter's Church to present to the Bishop for review.

The profile will include your answers to five questions that were sent out to the parishioners over the past month. The histories of the church community, the Bennington area, and the recent history of our rectors and the current developments in Bennington, will also be addressed in the profile. Our goal is to provide the Bishop and potential candidates with a clear, complete summary of who we are and what our community offers.

We also want to demonstrate to our audience what we are doing now and also, future plans we are working on. We are looking to a future quite different from where we have been in some ways, but still, including traditional worship and the use of our land and building resources in responsible ways.

If you have suggestions or thoughts to share, please contact any committee member:
Ned Perkins, Nancy Sanford, Dick Bower, Wes Baker, Gail Broussard, or Vicki Odell

Vicki Odell

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37

The very title itself is pejorative because it implies that there are bad Samaritans. In Biblical times there was tension between the Jews of Galilee and Samaria but Jesus never treated the Samaritans as inherently bad or unworthy. In fact, his conversation with the Woman at the Well in John 4 is a highly theological and deeply moving encounter.

Still, a better title might be the Compassionate Neighbor. For Jesus, “neighbor” was not defined by physical proximity, familiarity, or similarity. A neighbor is someone in need. St. Peter’s is making a huge effort to use our resources to respond to the needs of our neighbors.

When Emily Hamann was murdered on the Walloomsac walkway on a January morning, several folks from St. Peter’s attended the vigil held at the site of the murder. From that night on, St. Peter’s has been part of an effort to support Emily’s family and to support the residents of the Walloomsac Apartments and all users of the walkway in recovering their sense of safety, making their voices heard by social service agencies and public officials, and identifying practical changes that will improve the quality of life for everyone along the pathway and in the neighborhood.

Surveys of residents, conducted through the Greater Bennington Interfaith Council in conjunction with the Housing Authority, revealed a pronounced sense of fear, insecurity, vulnerability, and powerlessness unknown to most of us. The comments about drug dealings and drinking and fear were a wakeup call. One person, after reading the surveys, commented: “It is like there are two Benningtons: The one I live in and the one they live in.”

Vermont Interfaith Action will be conducting training in community organizing on April 7 from 1 pm – 3 pm through the Greater Bennington Interfaith Council and will help us develop specific, achievable goals as well as strategies for reaching those goals. The training will be via Zoom. We are collaborating with the Select Board, SASH (Support and Services at Home), Recreation Department, Opioid Task Force, and the Housing Authority and other organizations to strengthen our connections and improve our community.

We can be compassionate neighbors and respond to the needs of our community. If you are interested in getting involved in this ministry please email the office or Angela.

Angie Emerson

Celebrating Creation as People of Faith

The first monthly Community Walk on the Walloomsac walkway was held on March 21, the vernal equinox. It was a fitting day for the inaugural walk—a day perfectly balanced between light and darkness. Not only was nature in perfect balance but so was the mood of the 70-some people who celebrated the beauty of the day, the coming of spring and new life, but who also paused to remember not only the tragic deaths that have occurred in downtown Bennington, but all those we have lost to COVID, and lives lost to violence and other tragedy. It was an appropriate way to celebrate in sync with the natural rhythm of nature.

From the beginning of time, people have celebrated the vernal and autumnal equinox, when the light and darkness are of equal length; the summer solstice, the longest period of light; and the winter solstice, the shortest period of light. These are appropriate days for us to plan celebrations, rituals, and gatherings to mark these natural rhythms of the world. The Divine is present in all of creation and the more we live in rhythm with nature the more we live in accordance with the divine presence. If you are interested in helping to plan celebrations on these days, please contact the Worship and Formation Team: Vicki Odell, Gail Broussard, Colleen Gates, Liz Luca, or Mary Gerisch.

Angie Emerson

Our COVID Signage

The Bennington community has noticed St Peter's Church again during the COVID pandemic. First we drew attention with the Pause Place, next with the coffee ministry in the afternoon, a third time with the organization of the River Walk in memory of Emily Hamann, and finally on Ash Wednesday when the COVID signage was installed on the front lawn of the church to show how many people have lost their lives to the Coronavirus to date. The numbers shown have changed weekly as they increase in the US.

Through our sign, we've let the community know that St Peter's is alive, even though we cannot hold services inside our church.

St. Peter's parishioner, Shirley Miller told her cousin in Richmond, Massachusetts about our sign; her cousin visited the St. Peter's website and saw it. She thought it was great idea, and so she shared it with others.

While sobering, the sign serves as a daily reminder of how devastating this disease really is. Let us leave the sign there while we continue to navigate the pandemic, and celebrate the day we can finally remove it.

Bill Harrington, Junior Warden

Vestry and MDC Retreat

The Vestry and Ministry Discernment Committee (MDC) will be holding this year's retreat on June 19. We are praying for nice weather so we may meet outside at Mission Farms in Killington, VT. The retreat will be led by Susan Ohlidal, who will share her knowledge of the concept of bivocational ministry. This retreat will enable us to experience a day of education, prayer, and reflection, focusing on our vision for the future of St. Peter's.

This past year has been difficult and challenging. The closing of our church building has changed the way we worship. We have a beautiful church, but we must remember that our faith, worship, and church community are much more than a building. We hope to strengthen the cohesiveness that holds our church family together.

St. Peter's has a strong core group who have created a foundation of active lay worship leaders, Bennington outreach workers, and active financial and building support leaders. We have reached out to the entire church community through the weekly *Clarion* newsletter and quarterly publication of *The Keystone*. The pastoral care group stays in touch with members who are otherwise isolated from the church community. We continue to offer two weekly Zoom services and look forward to resuming outdoor services when the weather permits.

The future of St. Peter's Church looks promising and positive. We pray that through this retreat we will find clarity in our vision for that future.

Cheryl Jacobs

Spotlight on a Parishioner

Mary Gerisch, a member of our vestry this year and an active community leader, shares her personal and professional background and her lifelong dedication to Church.

What brought you to Bennington?

Prior to living here, I had been living on Woodford Lake. I moved there because of the beautiful woods and lake. I frequently had my grandchildren staying at my house and it was wonderful! Then, when a snowmobiler died in front of my house, I found out that ambulances cannot get in there during the winter. It did not feel safe to have the grandchildren there, and I felt that I needed to move to Bennington.



What is your background with the Episcopalian Church, and with St. Peter's in particular?

I grew up in the Episcopal Church in Detroit, Michigan. I went to a number of different churches in that area. My grandmother was spiritually tied to the Episcopal Church because a missionary had saved her from boarding school by sending her to Detroit. There was a great convergence between the Episcopal religion and the Lakota traditions/religions. My mom and I were both raised in that tradition. This is why my grandmother embraced the Christian mystics—because of that concordance. I remember when I was quite young she gave me *Seeds of Contemplation* and later the first book by Thomas Merton, which I still have and value.

Some of my fondest memories of my grandmother have to do with helping her with Altar Guild when I was young and learning about the symbolism and value of every aspect of that service. My grandmother and my mom were both directresses of Altar Guilds, at Detroit Cathedral and Christ Church Cranbrook.

When I moved into Bennington and came to St. Peter's, it was clear that the Spirit had guided me here. The Sanctuary itself was very much like a smaller version of the sanctuaries I grew up in. When I walked in and met the interim rector I was even more surprised. I had at one time moved from Connecticut to Vermont and attended St. Barnabas Church. The interim priest, who had been at St. Barnabas when I moved, was now the interim at St. Peter's! I said, "Oh my, what are you doing here?" and laughed. He said, "What are YOU doing here?" and also laughed.

What do you do professionally and what have you done in the past?

Recently, I am the compliance manager and advocate at Bennington Housing Authority, our public housing and section 8 administration locally. I retired from the legal profession, where I had spent my career in trial work for Legal Aid, and small firms which involved mostly civil rights litigation. My first Legal Aid job was at the Landlord Tenant Clinic in Detroit, where we organized rent strikes in the buildings that had been burnt out in the Detroit Insurrection/Riot and were still being rented in their burned-out condition.

I have also been a human rights advocate and activist for many years. I am, particularly, an advocate for universal healthcare. I grew up knowing this was important. My mom was a nurse, and my dad a doctor. My dad was one of three doctors who started the first free clinic in Detroit in the 1950s. I honor their tradition when I advocate for healthcare for all.

Can you describe hobbies and areas of interest?

I love doing leather and beadwork from my Lakota culture. I have always loved and played music since I was very young. I also love taking care of, honoring and understanding plant people—in gardens—and sometimes in the wilds. I have been doing that most of my life. This includes my fascination and study of how many plant people can be used for healing and other sacred purposes. I know that they were created with the same Sacred Breath as were all other peoples. I am constantly awed the more I learn from them about their communication with each other through their root systems. I enjoy many forms of art, but rarely seem to have time to allow myself the pleasure of painting or mosaics in recent years. I love poetry and enjoy reading all sorts of poetry and philosophy/theology.

What are some favorite memories of St Peter's?

Participating in so many education events, particularly for our younger members. I learn so much from their wonderful questions and interpretations during our youth Christian education sessions! I love our Christmas pageants, and the enthusiasm with which they are embraced by all of our children and grownup children!

All of the Altar Guild duties are sacred to me, and I find great joy in doing them. My grandmother is with me as I perform each task, and the memories of the symbolism she shared with me comforts my soul. I love sharing these traditions with the youth and they seem so excited to embrace them! This also gives me so much joy!

I also love doing Coffee Hours. This is another thing I shared with my mom and grandmother. As a child I so loved the coffee hours where folks stayed and visited, the children played, and the families bonded over simple foods. It really expresses to me the spirit of sharing our hearts.

What do you see for the future of St. Peter's?

I have theorized about several visions of St. Peter's in the future. This takes many forms, from home worship, outdoor worship and many other forms. The real vision I see is that we can be leaders in the community and provide safe spaces for those who are afraid to speak up about their problems (for fear of disdain, retribution, or ridicule). My board vision for St. Peter's is to see the love of Jesus and the Spirit of the Creator control and guide our lives, not in church services but in our community and beyond. I love the services, but for me, they are only necessary to inspire the real work of spreading

love and joy. I think we can BE the spirit of love so that all with whom we communicate can see the spirit and embrace the joy.

Marcia Levin

Yappers and St. Peter's

No, we haven't gone to the dogs. This YAP stands for Youth Agricultural Project and it is part of the array of classes offered by our neighbor, the Tutorial Center.

YAP is part of the University of Vermont Extension Service's 4-H program. The goal is to "bring together the best of all worlds: growing fresh healthy produce, essential job skills training for local youth, environmental sustainability & community involvement, plus support for local charitable health and human services organizations."

The Tutorial Center says Yappers "experience success while developing transferable job and life skills by growing, harvesting and marketing plants and vegetable crops...we also grow self-confidence, knowledge and curiosity."

The Center's director, Peter Fish, said the center would be grateful to be able to use our garden beds this year and beyond. They have gardens at the beautiful middle school facility but additional gardens so close to their building would be beneficial.

Students in the past have sold their produce at the Bennington and Manchester farmers markets. We talked about perhaps having a 'free veggie' stand on one of our tables on the sidewalk for our Pleasant Street neighbors. We talked about parishioners, children especially, and neighbors from the apartment buildings coming to help out in the gardens, working with the students.

This will be an excellent connection with our neighbors to our grounds. We can interact with the students, learn from one another; perhaps link the gardening with other summer activities in our yards. There may be opportunities for students to help us manage our compost bins and perhaps to plan and plant flower beds.

This is 'dream time' for gardens. More information will be coming as we work out this new relationship with the Tutorial Center.

Mary McGuinness