



The Keystone

Saint Peter's Episcopal Church

200 Pleasant Street, Bennington, Vermont 05201

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Interim Rector: Reverend E. Angela Emerson

Fall 2021

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

Our Theme: New Beginnings

Our theme of new beginnings is so appropriate for this time of year. New beginnings for the school year, which means new beginnings for our children and those who teach them. New beginnings for the football season: pro, college, and high school. New beginnings, for tulip and daffodil bulbs which are being planted now, for bloom in the Spring in the dark soil. New beginnings, for the trees whose green leaves will turn to a myriad of Autumn colors. New beginnings, for the Fall Season with a change in the hours of daylight, a change in the temperature, and a change to crisper air.

And “New Beginnings” for St. Peter’s Church, as well.

~Liz Luca

Worship & Liturgy/Formation Team Updates

Gail and Vicki

As a member of the Worship & Liturgy/Formation Team, I am surrounded by the imaginative ideas and creativity of my learned teammates. Most of them have been traveling this spiritual journey for a very long time, so being a “rookie”, I am so blessed by all of the knowledge being shared with me. With Priest Angie at the helm for this past year-plus, we have been guided in this Ministry, with diligence, encouragement, faith, and love.

Angie has not only inspired us to grow and become confident as Worship Leaders and Preachers but has introduced Celtic Liturgy into our weekly schedule of services. This team is blessed, not only by Angie’s caring leadership but by the joy and trust which results in learning from each other. Angie has provided us with the tools we need to sustain a Bi-vocational Ministry, and serve our Congregation through varied worship opportunities. But now, as the Fall approaches, Priest Angie will be leaving us, hence, our new beginnings. A vacant seat at the head of the table may seem scary, but after all, that’s where faith holds us in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. In a recent email, Angie very diplomatically stated that “self-organization seems to be our most pressing issue.” OK, we’ve got this, new beginnings, bring it on! Our team meets twice a month, and anyone is welcome to join us with ideas and prayers.

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to do good works.”

Hebrews 10:24 KJV

With warmth,

~Gail Broussard

Spiritual growth, meeting challenges, and developing the skills to serve St. Peter's as lay worship leaders have been the goals of our worship team over the past year. The reopening of the church building is certainly a *new beginning* as we reacquaint ourselves by offering services in our beautiful sanctuary as well as on Zoom. We present Morning Prayer on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 10:00 AM and Celtic Evening Prayer each Saturday at 5:00 PM. Currently, the Saturday service is held in the backyard so that we can enjoy the birds and the river.

We are looking forward to Saturday, September 18th, when we will offer the Blessing of the Animals as part of the Walloomsac Walk at 10:00 AM. Persons participating in the walk can bring pets to be blessed by Reverend Angie in recognition of the feast of St. Francis.

On the first and third Sundays in October and November, we will be welcoming Rev. Lee Crawford, who is well known to St. Peters, to serve a Eucharist Service. Our worship team will continue to offer Morning Prayer on the second and fourth Sundays.

Plans for Advent and Christmas are in process and will be announced when finalized.

Thank you to the congregation of St. Peter's for your support as the worship team continues to learn and develop our skills to serve God and to provide a meaningful worship time for all of us. We are grateful for the opportunity that we have been given and we encourage anyone interested in participating in any area of worship to please contact us.

~Vicki O'Dell

Centering Prayer Workshop

Do you long to deepen your relationship with God?

Do you seek the still, quiet voice of God?

An Introduction to Centering Prayer Workshop

Saturday, October 9 from 10 am to 2 pm at St Peter's.



This workshop will help us to understand the Indwelling Presence of God within each of us and our intimate relationship with that Presence. We'll watch videos explaining the background and method of Centering Prayer, and there will be members of Contemplative Outreach Bennington to talk with you and to share their experiences with Centering Prayer. We will explore the benefits of Centering Prayer in ordinary life and experience two periods of Centering Prayer practice.

All are welcome to attend! This introduction is the beginning of the journey into Centering Prayer and a contemplative life. Participants are urged to attend weekly sessions following this workshop. These sessions provide support and encourage a daily prayer practice.

To register please call the office at 442-2911. If you have questions or need more information please email Mary McGuinness [@mcmcgui@comcast.net](mailto:mcmcgui@comcast.net)

~Mary McGuinness

An Old Friend

I recently ran into a bright, young woman who watched my boys one summer when they were small. I've seen her over the years at various places and this time it was at Madison's where she was waitressing.

She's married and has two girls, one in college and one working on her Masters so it's always fun to catch up but this time, she told me something that was quite a surprise. She and her husband decided to become foster parents and have a 10-year-old girl who has lived with them for almost 3 years. Knowing the type of person she is, this didn't surprise me but what I learned from her about the foster parent side of things did.

I learned how hard it can be for some families to provide opportunities for their foster children; opportunities that help develop confidence and a well-rounded individual. This would be the type of thing most of us take for granted as our kids grow up – team sports outside school, music lessons, dance, gymnastics, private tutoring for example. Then I learned how that weighs on a caring foster parent - especially as the family recognizes what even the smallest of opportunities would mean in the life of a child they are caring for.

Now, remember, my friend is waitressing. She should be moving around to tables. A window of time opened however so we could talk about this for at least 15 minutes. I couldn't help but think, okay ... "What is God up to now?" Why has this situation been presented to me? Was it because I knew there was a recent discussion of funding sitting idle in the St Peter's budget dedicated to just this type of thing? Perhaps it was some funding recently used for camperships – the very thing we were just talking about. What about the support of foster parents? Is there some way to help?

We exchanged phone numbers and plan to talk more about the need she and other foster families might have in our community. I'm sure there are agencies out there and other organizations providing some support but is there something we at St Peter's can do to help as well?

To me, this encounter was intended. It was put before me *on purpose*. I know we host a party for foster children during the holidays. Hopefully, we can do that again this year but is there more St Peter's can do? I plan to find out.

All of us experience what we think is a coincidence. Some situations may be just that but what if it's more? What if it's God's way of letting us know we need to pay attention to something, find out more, help where we can because someone is in need. I believe we are given plenty of chances to find out. What we do and how makes the difference.

The theme of this edition of the Keystone is "New Beginnings" and as a congregation, we are beginning a new journey in many ways. I'm planning to wear new glasses on this journey hoping to recognize and see how and where God is calling. I'm sure my glasses will get smudgy and may fall off from time to time but I have complete faith He will help me pick them up, wipe them off, and put them on again. I hope you'll join me and wear new glasses too.

With blessings to All,

Collins Sennett

Celtic Healing Service

Have you seen God's great cathedral in our very own church's backyard? We have been blessed with such a wonder. We all know God is Love and He surrounds us with his creation. The trees form a natural roof over the river. You can hear the rushing water flowing over the rocks. It's the living waters that Jesus tells us about in his teachings. To make it more wonderful, the birds jump from tree limb to tree limb while the cute little squirrels play tag on the floor of this great cathedral. When you sit here, you are surrounded by God's Love. A great place for meditation. There is no better place to resurrect the healing service. We use these words during the Celtic healing service.

When a cool breeze touches you, it feels like the Holy Spirit is enveloping God's Love around you.

The service is every Thursday at 10:30 AM. Come and join us.

~Colleen Gates

Hair Braiding
Mary and Cheryl

Another new beginning was the holding of an all-day hair braiding salon in Fellowship Hall on July 23rd. With the approval of the Vestry, a hair braiding stylist from Brattleboro was invited to come for the day to hair braid some of our Bennington Community friends. As there are no local stylists in Bennington for African American hair braiding, she journeyed to Bennington and made several girls quite happy.

A little history about African American women's braids was that not only was the styling important for a woman's hair to look attractive, but in addition, African women used braids for another important use: a secret messaging system for slaves to communicate with one another. People used braids as a map to freedom. For example, the number of plaits worn could indicate how many roads to walk or where to meet someone to help them escape bondage. Similarly in the early fifteenth century, hair functioned as a carrier of messages in most West African societies including the Wolof, Mende, Mandingo, and Yoruba. Hair was an important piece of a complex language system, in which it communicated the identity of the person wearing the braids. Who would have imagined that your hair braiding style could lead you to freedom!

~Mary Gerisch

I happened to be volunteering with the summer lunch program on the day the hair braiding took place at St. Peter's. While I was sitting on the lawn, a little girl came out with her mom. Her hair was braided and she had beads and a big bow in the back. She was walking along with her head held high. I said to her, "Oh, you look so pretty!" Her face lit up and she broke out in the biggest smile.

~Cheryl Jacobs

Ministry Discernment Committee Update

During the Ministry Discernment Committee's work, we reviewed the demographics of our parish. Wes Baker and I had a list of parishioners and we checked off its accuracy. We'd typically come to a name and say, "hmmm 'we haven't seen him/her/them in a long time, or, 'oh, they moved away from here a while ago' or 'she or he passed away last year'. Yes, there were a few new names added, but by and large, we were struck by the reality of our shrinking congregation. We presently have about 65 members, where 10 years ago we had more than 150.

I'm supposed to be writing about "New Beginnings", and, as we begin our post-pandemic journey, I think it's important that we realize that we are leaner, and not necessarily meaner, but tighter, and in my view more supportive of one another as we pursue our common theology.

We are about to embark on a time of a vacuum in clergy leadership. There is a significant shortage of clergy that are looking to be called. We may be in this vacuum for a time. Know this: The Vestry is STRONG (!) and well trained to carry us through. We the laity may be diminished in size, but we ARE 'leaner and meaner' and prepared to take on roles we never thought we would be asked or we could do. That's good news as far as I'm concerned in this post-pandemic world.

~Dick Bower

Operations Manual

At its July meeting, the Vestry asked that I head up a group to compile an Operations Manual for St. Peter's Church. This request was made in response to a suggestion from the Audit Committee, and the thought that the completed manual would help smooth the transition when a new Rector comes on board. I have researched other churches' Operations Manuals which provided us a starting point in developing a useful document. There are many people involved in the operations of the church and I hope that we can get a good cross-section of the parish involved in this project.

As Treasurer, I am willing to act as a scribe and control the document as it is written. Lorraine Donatelli (our Assistant Treasurer) is ready to take an active role in writing the manual. The finance team of the Vestry (Collins Sennett, Colleen Gates, and Liz Luca) has offered to join in as well. As we get going, I expect to call on different teams and ministries to document their procedures. We all know what we do - it is just a matter of gathering our routines together and making this information available so that we can easily pass it along to others.

~Ned Perkins

Young Tutorial Gardener

Our side garden (near the bank) was tended by a student from the Tutorial Center this summer. It took a while for things to get started but when they did, the weeds had to watch out as they were being evicted! How wonderful to have young hands adding their creative energy to our garden. The Tutorial Gardener has cultivated four raised beds and filled them with beauty and scent: two beds are cultivating herbs, basil, and parsley; the other is displaying beautiful flowers, Cosmos.

Several years ago, it was the hands of our 4, 5, and 6-year-olds who were putting their hands of love into the garden, and now, time for older youth. Regardless of age, it is wonderful to have God's gift of soil tended by young, energetic hands. In so many different ways this young person will grow. And, so will our garden!

~Liz Luca

New Air Purifiers Installed

If you hear something humming or feel the air circulating in the parish hall or sanctuary, know you are experiencing our new air purifiers at work. Four ActivePure units were installed this month by Aerus of Rutland. These units circulate air and destroy over 99% of airborne and surface contaminants including COVID-19 in the process. This type of air purification was researched by the Building & Grounds Committee and the purchase was approved by the vestry last month.

As in-person indoor activity increases in the upcoming months, these units will keep the air we breathe as clean as possible with scientifically proven technology. If you'd like to know more, ask any of the members of the committee; Bill Harrington, Collins Sennett, Gail Broussard, and Shirley Miller. In the meantime...breathe easy!

~Collins Sennett

Welcome Back

A warm welcome back to Donna Lauzon who is our new "old" office manager. Donna is up and running already. No learning curve is needed! What a blessing to have Donna back.

Other folks that are back in the building are the Bone Builders, Beth Newman, and the Tutorial Center, who will be using our kitchen.