

# A Voice in the Wilderness

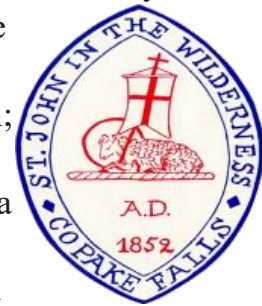
Newsletter of the Church of St John in the Wilderness  
Copake Falls NY  
February 2021

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## From the Rector

February, 2021

“Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge” (1 Corinthians 8:2). I quoted this recently at church. It seems paradoxical in its seeming inner contradiction and (also paradoxically) to be about knowledge and self-knowledge. Plato’s Cave Allegory comes to mind (in Book VII of The Republic). People are chained seeing only shadows on the wall in a cave. One of them escapes and is able to get outside and see the source of the shadows, the world in all its beauty – plants, animals, sky and the sun – the source of light. When he comes back to tell the others in the cave, they don’t believe him. They’re more comfortable with their limited world of shadows on the wall; they’re afraid to take a journey toward the light and an infinitely wider and better world. They resist knowledge of a new world because it’s new and different and frightening to them. They did not have the self-knowledge to realize that a journey out of the cave and into the light was a wise choice. A wise choice for their spirits, their happiness, their wider experience, and an opportunity to vastly increase their knowledge and awareness of everything. They claimed to know but did not know (as Paul put it).



Those left in fear back in the cave were also angry enough to consider killing the bearer of good news and freedom. They did not have the self-knowledge and self-awareness needed to be open to the knowledge and experience of a whole new world. They also did not have the basic knowledge needed to value self-knowledge. Perhaps a Catch-22. What this all suggests is the high value and need we all have of humility and openness to reality and the truth. Plato, in the voice of Socrates, says these qualities are essential for the wisdom needed to be a “philosopher king.” We need not agree about having a philosopher king to rule us to see the wisdom in Plato’s advocacy for humility and openness to the truth being essential qualities of leaders. Of course they are essential qualities for anyone who wants to be more helpful rather than hurtful in this world. Indeed it’s obvious, to those who are open to reality and

truth, as we look at history, including recent history, the destruction that happens when leaders are rather, filled with arrogance, greed and dishonesty.

As Plato continues to elaborate on his cave analogy (in the voice of Socrates) about humility and openness to the truth being required of a good leader, he says, “Thus our State ... will be a reality, and not a dream only, and will be administered in a spirit unlike that of other States, in which men fight with one another about shadows only and are distracted in the struggle for power, which in their eyes is a great good. Whereas the truth is that the State in which the rulers are most reluctant to govern is always the best and most quietly governed, and the State in which they are most eager, the worst.” This paradox is not unlike Paul: “Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge.”

Let us, my friends, seek humility, wisdom and knowledge that come from God (in prayer, meditation and worship) and that come from openness to reality and openness to the truth. We need wisdom to discern the best sources of knowledge and we need some knowledge to discern the best sources of wisdom. If one’s primary sources of knowledge are bogus, one is not only wasting one’s time but may be living in a destructive bubble of misinformation, bigotry and hatred. Made worse when one acts on it – like a violent mob invading the Capitol.

Denial of unpleasant reality doesn’t help. Wallowing in unpleasant reality doesn’t help. We can most effectively access the peace, healing and love we need to discern the true, the good and the beautiful -- and we can grow in the humility, wisdom and knowledge that we need to live lives of integrity and courage – through e.g., quiet, God focused centering prayer such as SJITW practices Wednesdays at 3 PM (currently on Zoom). Eventually we realize that even knowledge has its limits. As Paul said in the same reading referenced above, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” Let us discern and be open to the truth and to real knowledge, and let us use it to, for and in love.

*In peace,  
John+*

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## **Greetings from Senior Warden Elen Freeston**

I am pleased to introduce myself as the 2021 Senior Warden of Church of St. John in the Wilderness from, like all of you, the confines of my home. Most of you know me as I have been around the church for many years now (since 1995) but for those who do not, this is my third term, or maybe fourth, as Senior Warden. For those who don’t know what that means, I assure you that it is not an onerous position, just one that requires some paperwork, attendance of Vestry meetings, oversight of the mechanics of running a church and the ability to head off discord whenever possible. Thankfully the

Vestry is the actual governing body of the church and decisions are made as a team. I tell you all of this as encouragement to all of us to jump into the management pool. The more of us that take turns on Vestry the greater the appreciation and understanding of the practical side of our Parish. I never cease to be impressed by the strength and viability of the community of St. John in the Wilderness. When I speak of it to friends and family out of the area they are envious of the nature of the community and the success we have achieved in integrating in the community. We have developed friendship and support from many quarters and that is a wonderful reflection of our commitment to the church, each other, and the neighborhood at large. I say all of this as a reminder that there is effort on the part of many people, the Rector, the members and all of our friends and supporters, that must be encouraged and most of all, appreciated.

The Vestry meets on Zoom, which I personally find convenient. I don't need to bundle up and go out on a cold winters Friday night. I am sure that one day we will be back to in person meetings but I think maybe Zoom meetings might remain. That will not be true of church services, I assure you. As a member of the choir, I can't begin to tell you how much I miss singing every Sunday morning. How much we all miss seeing each others smiling faces and knowing we are alright. On that subject, I encourage everyone to join our zoom 10 am service on Sunday mornings. It is rife with technical issues but we get better all the time and it is such a comfort to keep the church in our lives and be able to check in with folks. If you haven't the technical means to join us, let me know as we might be able to figure out a way.

The nature of this community means that we sometimes lose people to other parts of the country. I want to assure everyone "abroad" (as I think all of you still get The Voice in the Wilderness) that you are missed and thought of often. Remember that family is family and we are here.

Finally, I would like to let you in on my big secret. My brother, who is much like me, calls every night and comes on Sundays for the purpose of reminding ourselves what day of the week it is and to find humor in the absurdity of life. No one could have foreseen the situation in which we all now reside (although the epidemiologists knew it was coming sooner or later) but there have been surprising positive aspects that should be taken to heart. Local communities have come together to help one another. Our lives have gained perspective. We all know now what is really important. Most of all I encourage us to laugh as much as possible. The only thing for us to do about all of this, is to be responsible. Wear our masks, socially distance and know that this too shall pass. Love and good health to all. Hope to see you in church soon and come zoom with us.

*As ever,  
Senior Warden, Elen J. Freeston*

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# Connections

This past year and the present year with all its difficulties and challenges, have brought on an increased awareness and importance of people to people connections. This is true at St. John in the Wilderness where several projects have taken on a special focus.

The project, “Dinners for Dorothy,” providing meals by parishioners and friends for a longtime home bound member of St. John’s, has now expanded in numbers and scope. Dinners are prepared and delivered every three days by 20 parishioners and members of the Copake Falls walking group. In addition, a call list has been drawn up where volunteers call and chat with Dorothy on a three day rotation schedule, once a month. Reports are that she is delighted with all the meals and conversations. The entire project has been organized by Peg Anderson and Mibs Zelley.

Although all our church services are currently held on Zoom, church programs continue, such as donating to the Roe Jan Food Pantry. Donations are collected in the basket placed in the church entry way, and are then taken up to the food pantry in Hillsdale; the volunteers are always so thankful with smiles and cheers for our generous gifts of food.

Throughout the nation, including at St. John’s, a special ringing of church bells was held on January 19 at 5:30PM to remember and connect with those who have died of Covid-19. Four of us, joined the somber bell ringing at St. John’s, taking turns to ring the bell in memory of those Americans we have lost.

The following day, Inauguration Day, was a bright sunny day in Washington D.C. As part of the proceedings, Amanda Gorman, 22 year old National Youth Poet Laureate, gave an inspiring reading of a poem she was asked to write for the occasion on the theme of national unity. Her words connected to the gathered assembly, and at the same time reached out to people throughout the nation. The following excerpts from her poem *The Hill We Climb* speak to her poetic skills and her abiding faith:

...we will never again sow division  
...this is the era of just redemption  
...but one thing is certain:  
If we merge mercy with might,  
and might with right,  
then love becomes our legacy

...The new dawn blooms as we free it  
For there is always light,  
If only we’re brave enough to see it  
If only we’re brave enough to be it

*Lucy Eldridge*

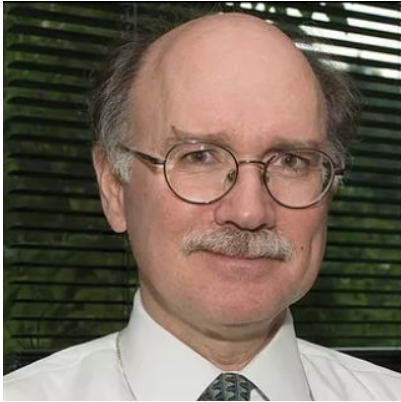
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## New Officers elected at Annual Meeting

New church officers were elected at the Annual Meeting held on Zoom on Sunday, January 17.

**Brian Boom** was elected as Warden and will serve at the Senior Warden from January 2022 through January 2023.

I am a resident of Copake Falls, New York, and have been a member of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness since 2013. At St. John's, I have served



in various roles at Sunday morning services, such as Greeter, Usher, Acolyte, and Lay Eucharistic Minister. I have served in leadership roles at St. John's through a three-year term as a member of the Vestry, and then a year as Junior Warden, followed by a year as Senior Warden. I currently serve as Co-Chair of St. John's Capital Campaign Committee. In the local community, I am also a member of the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society, Copake Grange, Harlem

Valley Rail Trail Association, Roeliff Jansen Community Library, Conservation Advisory Committee of the Town of Copake, and Friends of Taconic State Park. Professionally, I am a botanist, having conducted field research and conservation projects for the past forty years throughout Latin America and the Caribbean regions. I have spent most of my career as a scientist and administrator at The New York Botanical Garden, based in The Bronx, New York City.

**Charley Musselman** was elected as a member of the Vestry through January 2024.

I grew up in Omaha, Nebraska, where my father taught at Nebraska Medical School. I studied particle physics at Chicago during the turbulent



60s, a radical survivor. Lucky chance led me to Cambridge and Abt Associates, where creative young people helped the government develop programs to improve peoples' lives. After studying at MIT and teaching at WPI, I had a career as a management consultant, with a focus on industrial automation.

I met my life partner, Marian Henneman, in 1970 at Abt. She has been my wings (and my

anchor) over the last 50 years. It is Marian's purchase, with her sister Betsy, of the Hillsdale cabin in 1995 that led us to Columbia County and the Church of St John. We find our lives full of many blessings, this community a special one of them.

**Jay Corcoran** will serve as a member of the Vestry for three years, through January 2024

He is a documentary filmmaker. His films, *Life and Death on the A-List*, *Undetectable*, *New York Diary* and *Rock Bottom* have been broadcast on PBS Independent Lens, NHK, CBC, Here! networks and Thirteen/WNET.



He is Senior Digital Content Producer at Columbia Business School's Career Management Center's Leadership Learning and Development. He has taught documentary filmmaking at the Gateway School in New York City and was a Reel Works filmmaking teaching artist at the Brownsville Community Justice Center in Brownsville, Brooklyn. He has taught filmmaking and storytelling at "The Campus" an after-school tech program in the Howard Houses

in Brownsville, Brooklyn and at the Clubhouse in Catskill, NY. He produced and shot a series on literacy and education for the Afghanistan Center at Kabul University in Kabul, Afghanistan.

During the winter, he is a part-time adaptive ski instructor at Ski Butternut in Great Barrington, MA. Since 2007, he has lived in Ancram, NY with his husband, Michael Roberts.

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## Capital Campaign Update

In the November 2020 issue of *A Voice in the Wilderness*, we reported that the Capital Campaign of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness had raised \$218,764, or 66 percent of its goal of \$332,000. Since then, thanks to additional generous gifts and pledges from church members, as of the publication of this issue of the newsletter the total funds raised has climbed to \$242,454, or 73 percent of the goal!

While the Committee continues working on funding proposals for private foundations, and on seeking additional pledges and gifts from individuals, we are also looking forward to the beginning of the implementation phase of the Campaign in the coming months. One important project for which we anticipate celebrating the groundbreaking this spring is the construction of a new exterior walkway to the front of the church to provide an accessible entrance. The walkway is being designed by John D. Alvarez II, Principal

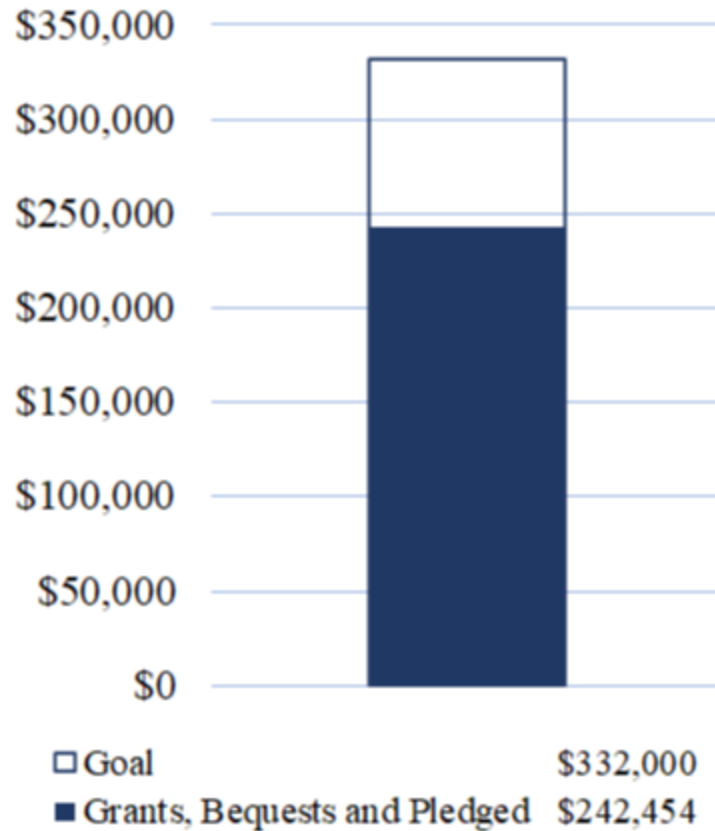
Architect of Landmark Consulting, with input from Jamie Crelly Purinton, the Registered Landscape Architect who envisioned and produced the [Preliminary Landscape Plan](#) for St. John's in 2018.

Another project highlighted in the Capital Campaign's [Summary Brochure](#) that is scheduled to begin this spring is the extensive overhaul of the Sacristy. This project includes much needed new energy-saving insulation, new walls and ceiling, new flooring, cabinetry, sinks and lighting. Please stay tuned

for updates on the launch of the new walkway and Sacristy overhaul projects. If you have not yet made a pledge to the Capital Campaign, or if you have previously made a pledge and would like to make an additional pledge, which some parishioners have done recently, please contact one of us to discuss, or to obtain a pledge form, or you may download a form [here](#). We thank the generosity of the many individuals, local businesses, and not-for-profit organizations for their much valued and farsighted contributions to the *Capital Campaign for St. John in the Wilderness: Sustaining People, Place, and Peace, 2019 – 2022*.

*Brian Boom and Lucy Eldridge, Co-Chairs*

## Capital Campaign as of February 5, 2021



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## A Note from the Editors

For ten years we have had the privilege of editing and publishing [A Voice in the Wilderness](#), the church's newsletter. We're grateful to all who have contributed reports, stories, calendars and photos to tell the story of this parish on the edge of a true wilderness. Please join us in welcoming and supporting Jim and Patricia Wann as they bring new energy and insight to communications at Church of St. John in the Wilderness.

*Louise and Dale Peterson*

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# Calendar through Easter 2021

*Times for all events may change due to the current pandemic.*

February 17, Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, 10AM and 7:30PM, Zoom services

March 7, Sunday, Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday (to be confirmed)

March 14, Sunday, Deanery Meeting, 3PM, via Zoom

March 28, Sunday, Palm Sunday, via Zoom?

April 1, Thursday, Maundy Thursday, via Zoom?

April 2, Friday, Good Friday, via Zoom?

April 4, Sunday, Easter, via Zoom?

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## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness (Episcopal)

Copake Falls, New York

The Rev. John Thompson, Rector

Elen Freeston (1/22) Warden

Brian Boom, (1/23) Warden

### *Vestry*

Lucy Eldridge (1/22)

Jane Peck (1/22)

Virginia Johnson (1/23)

Milbrey Zelle (1/23)

Jay Corcoran (1/24)

Charley Musselman (1/24)

Jane Peck, Interim Clerk of the Vestry

Karen Flynn, Treasurer

### *Eucharists*

Email [stjohnw@fairpoint.net](mailto:stjohnw@fairpoint.net) for details of services at this time.

[stjohnw.org](http://stjohnw.org)

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