

# A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness  
Copake Falls, New York  
November 2011



## Thoughts from the Wilderness

There is a story that the apostle John in his *old age* (tradition says all the other apostles, except Judas, were martyred) used to speak repetitively and of little else but love. Traditionally John is the author of the fourth Gospel and the three Letters of John. It's in the First Letter of John that we find the words, "God is love." Love is the heart of the Christian message — as it's the essence or heart of God himself. It's true that love is an overused word. But from a Christian perspective we're primarily talking about *agape* love. *Agape* is the New Testament Greek term for unselfish Christian love. It reflects the love of God.

There is something new about it with Jesus who said, "I give you a *new* commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). This kind of love then, is the most important virtue.

As Paul said, "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13).

Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Thus Christian love has multiple dimensions and various positive effects. It is a response to God's love for us. It does what is best both for the other and for the self ("Love your neighbor as yourself"). And if we are loving well (with the distinctive unselfishness and warmth that Jesus calls for), then others will notice! "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples."

Tertullian (c.160 - c.225) confirms how early Christians succeeded, with God's help, in loving each other well. He wrote that the non-Christians who witnessed their acts of love exclaimed, "See how they love one another!" What were some of these acts of love?

Among Christians I Clement (fl. 96) notes they ought, "Let everyone be subject to his neighbor... Let the rich man provide for the wants of the poor; and let the poor man bless God, because He has given him one by whom his needs may be supplied" (*Freedom of Simplicity*, Richard Foster).

But the early Christians did even more than set a good example for non-Christians by their love for each other. They also met the needs of their sometimes hostile non-Christian neighbors. Saint John Chrysostom (c. 347- 407) said: "Every day the Church here feeds 3,000 people. Besides this, the church daily helps provide food and clothes for prisoners, the hospitalized, pilgrims, cripples, churchmen and others. When epidemics broke out in Carthage and Alexandria, Christians rushed to aid all in need." These early Christians put into practice Jesus words, "Love your enemies and pray



for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). For some of the needy they helped were not their friends.

I see members of St. John in the Wilderness loving like this. I refer for example to the generous leadership of women in our parish serving those in need regardless of religious affiliation through: the 'Shoebox' ministry, the Christmas Baskets, and the Christmas Friends ministry. Let's continue to grow in Christian love, both toward fellow Christians and toward those different from us—even those we don't like. As we pray for God's help, we will persist in treating people with warmth and kindness, and we will continue to be generous with time, talent and treasure. I see this happening. Thank you.

*In peace, John*

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## From the Senior Warden

Am I the only one who thinks of the fall and winter months as a "slow" and "hibernative" time of year? In the busy summertime, when we are trying to squeeze in our vacations, the gardening, the array of cultural and community activities, or running kids to camp, I'll daydream about the fall and how everything will quiet down then. What was I thinking?! Looking at the Weekly Bulletin under the Happenings section, it is obvious that life is not slowing down here at St. John; there are many exciting activities.

We just had our first Community Potluck Dinner on November 12<sup>th</sup> and it was a lot of fun. I met some new folks and was reacquainted with some friends I hadn't see in awhile. Elen, Susan and I had lots of help both with the set up and the cleanup – many thanks! On December 4<sup>th</sup>, the ECW will have its annual Christmas dinner at the

Pond Restaurant. There is a Hand Bell Concert scheduled for December 11<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m., the proceeds going to the Bell Tower Fund. Lucy Eldridge has been coordinating with Salisbury Congregational Church Bell Ringers to make this happen. Thanks Lucy!

A couple of years ago a group of us from St. John went to a forum at St. Michael's Parish in Litchfield, CT; the discussions centered around the challenges facing small churches – for example, how to build up attendance and interest with different activities and reaching out to the community. One suggestion was to offer a Blue Christmas service. It is specifically for people who find the holiday season a difficult time due to the loss of a loved one or facing some challenges in life. This type of church service addresses the need for something more "low key" and inspiring. After having heard about this type of service we knew it was something we wanted to do one day

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Editors: Louise and Dale Peterson

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here at St. John. A Blue Christmas service has been scheduled for Tuesday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm. Please spread the word about all these activities to friends and family.

As we proceed into our pledge season, getting all our ducks in a row for the coming year, I ask again that you give as generously as you can. The future is always an uncertainty and where this economy will go is anyone's guess. To quote St. Francis of Assisi from the Prayer for Peace, "it is in giving that we receive." Our Church of St. John in the Wilderness is a great investment in both our immediate future and for future generations.

It may be a little premature, but I want to send out a big and heartfelt "thank you" to the Vestry members, the Buildings & Grounds Committee and the Stewardship Committee for all their patience and hard work in moving the Bell Tower renovation project to the next step in the process. The Vestry voted recently to hire the historic preservation and architectural service firm

of Landmark Consulting, Inc. to assist in the restoration/rebuilding of the bell tower. I appreciate everyone's diligence and cooperation thus far and I look forward to keeping the parish family updated on the bell tower's progress.

Every morning when I log into my computer at work, a "quote of the day" pops up (thanks to our office manager). For the first few months I found it really annoying and just quickly deleted it. Though I can't remember the exact day or quote that did it, one morning I started to read them. Some are better than others. In light of the season we are entering into, this quotation was especially appropriate: "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." (JFK).

Happy Thanksgiving to all my parish family!

Respectfully submitted,

*Wendy Langlois*

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## **Building and Grounds Report November 2011**

Burke Hall and the Bell Tower are two of the hottest topics we are dealing with at the present time. The Vestry recently approved to contract Landmark Consulting (an architectural company) to erect scaffolding for the purpose of doing a thorough inspection of the tower to determine the extent of damage/dry rot, etc. Based on the completion of this assessment, a decision will be made as to either take the tower down or attempt to repair it in place. There have been numerous discussions regarding this process but by a vote of the Vestry it was approved. There were some of us that were in favor of removing it entirely and having it shipped to a shop where it could be restored during the winter months and reinstalled by Easter. However, by the time this newsletter reaches you, the decision to repair in place and take it down may have been made.

Burke Hall has been a very slow and

complicated process but we are making progress. Thanks to the Garretts, two new storm drains have been installed for a total of three, the area has been blacktopped, the contaminated insulation, sheetrock, carpeting, old floor tile and kitchen cabinets have been removed. The job is now to start replacing them. The sidewalls will be first, followed by new floor tile and finally a new kitchen layout that will serve our needs much better than the old layout. Unfortunately all of this is going to take time as we ran into a couple of stumbling blocks along the way. With persistence and the help of good volunteers we were able to address them so we can move this project along. Please be patient with us and I'm sure you will be pleasantly surprised when it is complete. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

*Hank Croteau, Chairman*

## A portrait of Jane Peck

What do I think of when I think of Jane Peck? Is it fortitude, steadfastness, love of the out-of-doors, a hearty laugh and eyes that sparkle? Well, all of the above! Perhaps all of these characteristics come from a life which exhibits a true sense of place.

Jane was born in Copake Falls (her parents were Catharine and Fred Clark). She has lived here all her life. Jane grew up in the house whose property included one of the ore beds and her father's contractors' shop (now Bash Bish Bicycle shop). Her father Fred was a contractor and a long time parishioner of St. John's who did a lot of work on the church including the repair of the Bell Tower in the late 50's. Jane inherited some of her father's carpentry skills; a couple of years ago she put down new wood floors in the upstairs of her home.

Jane attended Roeliff Jansen Central School (K-12), becoming a member of St. John's as a child, and on to college at SUNY Cortland, finishing her Bachelor of Science at Empire State. Jane did further graduate work at SUNY Albany in social work. After college, Jane worked as a part-time nursery school teacher at Sidney Nursery School and was a substitute and social worker at Taconic Hills School. Then, she began working at Clark Engineering (her brother Doug's firm) and worked there for 20 years. She retired in 2007.

She married Ed Peck (a Columbia County engineer in 1967); their children are Richard (who lives in Salem, Massachusetts) and George (who lives in San Antonio, Texas). Jane now has 4 grandchildren, Brandon Peck, aged 14, Therese Peck Brigham, (26), Philip DiLorenzo, (20), Danielle DiLorenzo (16) and a great granddaughter (hard to believe that Jane is a great grandmother), Sarah Brigham (one years old).

All kinds of volunteer activities have



sparked Jane's interest and commitment. She is treasurer of the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society (serving as secretary prior to her current position), member of the Copake Falls Day Committee, founding President of the Friends of Taconic State Park, and of course, as we all well know, treasurer of St. John's. Jane has been our stalwart treasurer for 20 years, helping to prudently watch over and keep track of the church's finances. We are especially grateful for that! Jane also volunteers beyond Copake Falls by donating her time at Columbia County Opportunities where she participates in the Ride Program and helps individuals with IRS tax matters.

Jane leads a physically active life. She loves to swim (Jane taught swimming for 20 years), hike and to snowshoe. Jane hiked as a kid, then with Ed and the boys, and has recently conducted hikes and snowshoe excursions for Friends of Taconic State Park. Biking has recently captured her attention in recent years. In 2010 she joined a bike trip along the Erie Canal biking 300 miles in 6 days.

Jane is a loyal member of a walking group which meets every weekday morning at the church at 7:15, to walk a three mile loop along Valley View Road. On clear days, the hikers can glimpse the beautiful Catskills in the distance. Perhaps Fr. John's following quotes from Thoreau and John Muir which he read at our recent Community Bike & Hike Day in October can serve to tell us what motivates Jane's love of the active outdoor life:

*Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves. – John Muir*

*An early-morning walk is a blessing for the whole day. – Henry David Thoreau*

*Lucy Eldridge*

## Beyond Copake Falls: An Encounter and Two Gatherings

Having encouraged others at St. John's to attend Bishop Spong's recent lectures in Queensbury, Marya and I were chagrined to miss them ourselves. As most of you know, Saturday, October 29, was not a good day to be on the road!

The 16<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> were much better. Each day gave us reason to be uncommonly proud to be Episcopalian!

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**An Encounter.** On October 16, Marya and I attended a Eucharist and adult baptism at Messiah Church in North Woodstock, New Hampshire. There are Episcopal parishes closer to our vacation venue near Lake Winnepesaukee, but this one drew us because Bishop V. Gene Robinson was to be there for his biennial visitation.



Figuring that the church, a bit larger than St. John's, would be crowded for the Bishop's visit, we got there 15 minutes early to find the place almost empty. It would fill quickly -- +Gene is beloved -- but we had a few minutes with him before he left to vest for the service. He responded warmly when we called ourselves as "leaf peepers from the Diocese of Albany," more warmly when Marya mentioned our connection to Albany Via Media.

It's trite but accurate to say that this small, balding, soon-to-be retired bishop glows. He invited *all* to share the Eucharist. His lively sermon on "rendering unto Caesar," delivered without notes or lectern, moved from the historical setting of Matthew's Gospel ("a source of anti-semitism") to some wise and timely comments about church and state ("The government accepted the Church, and we've been in trouble ever since.") and a water-clear discussion of what prayer can and can't do for us.

After the service, Marya and I told the

Bishop how much we would like to hear him speak in Albany, perhaps after he retires in 2012. He, and we, know that Bishop Love would not permit that, but he brightened when I suggested that he speak "without a Eucharist and in a non-Episcopal setting, perhaps a Lutheran church," with which we are in full communion.

Leaving North Woodstock, I recalled meeting a recent expatriate from New Hampshire, a ranger, at tiny Frijole State Park in West Texas. It was 2003. Gene Robinson had been elected Bishop but not yet approved by General Convention. I asked the woman whether she, a Congregationalist, knew of him. "Do I know him?" she asked. "*Everybody* knows him. He's *wonderful!*"

Amen to that. We *will* find a way for +Gene Robinson to shed his light on

Albany!

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**Gatherings.** On Saturday afternoon of this summer's diocesan convention, two dozen Episcopalians met for coffee and conversation at a camp near Speculator. Some knew each other from Albany Via Media's blog, website, and Facebook page and enjoyed matching faces to names. Others, including a priest from up north, were unfamiliar with AVM but curious about it. All shared concerns about a diocese and its convention in which they felt out of place.

With neither agenda nor leader, we chatted for 2 ½ hours and emerged with a warm sense of fellowship and a common thought: "Let's do this again!"

Could we repeat this experience on a larger scale? To find out, Ann Gaillard+, the Rector of St. Luke's in Saranac Lake (picture), its Treasurer, Marya, and I met in August to plan a gathering to

discuss what mainstream Episcopalians want in and from the Diocese of Albany and how to get it. We chose October 22 for the gathering and St. Luke's as the place. At Marya's suggestion, we advertised the focus of the event as *Wishes and Ways*.

*"If you build it, they will come,"* the ghost said in *Field of Dreams*. We wondered how many people would give up a pretty Saturday morning for coffee and conversation. Happily, 50 people appeared: enough to populate six round tables for indaba-like discussions. Most of them were from a half dozen parishes in the St. Lawrence and Northern Adirondack Deaneries, but several AVM-ers from farther south came to serve as informal mentors for the discussion groups. Rev. Ann and I were co-chairs.

Prominent among the many "wishes" expressed at the gathering were: 1) eliminating the three homophobic canons that Albany enacted in 2008; 2) limiting the diocesan business meeting to one day and returning it to the Cathedral; 3) offering theologically varied Episcopal programs and speakers at the Spiritual Life Center; and 4) allowing parishes to recruit their own clergy from *all* Episcopal seminaries, not just the few favored by the Bishop. Behind these and other "wishes"

lay a shared desire that the Diocese of Albany fully accept Episcopalians of all sexual and theological orientations.

How might we reach these goals? The "ways" suggested ranged from conciliatory (continued efforts to communicate with the Bishop and his staff) to confrontational (Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight for disaffected parishes; withdrawal of financial support by parishes or individuals). One person suggested "Occupy Christ the King!" then added "Tongue in cheek!" Another agreed but omitted "Tongue in cheek!"

When the morning began, I had told the group, "This meeting is already a success: *You're here!*" Just drawing together 50 mainstream Episcopalians who are scattered over our vast diocese is a big step forward. Many people whom we met in Saranac Lake echoed the sentiment that had warmed Ann+ and me after our small gathering during convention: "Let's do this again!"

Speaking for the rest of the AVM Board, I say, "That we will!"

*Bob Dodd*



## ECW

Thank you ladies for your generosity in filling 10 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child, a project of Samaritan's Purse.

We are now collecting for Christmas Friends. These gifts go to children in the Roe Jan area.

I need volunteers to purchase, wrap and deliver gifts to our shut ins. There are six women and two men.

Note from Bea: Please send your Christmas Luncheon menu and check to me after November 15th as our Treasurer will be involved in other business. My home address is: Beatrice Croteau, 441 Route 23, Claverack, NY 12513-5145.

Thank you.

*Babs Croteau, President*  
babsc@fairpoint.net

## Events in the Wilderness

Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas, 2011

Tuesday, November 22, 7:00 p.m.

Thanksgiving Service: The annual ecumenical Roe Jan Churches Thanksgiving service is scheduled for Tuesday, November 22 at 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church in Copake Falls. Hope you can join us for this interdenominational celebration of Thanksgiving!

Sunday, December 11, 3:30 p.m.

Hand Bell Concert at St. John in the Wilderness by the bell ringers of Salisbury Congregational Church. This concert will benefit the Bell Tower Fund and will be followed by a reception.

Tuesday, December 20, 5:30 p.m.

Blue Christmas: We have scheduled a liturgy called a "Blue Christmas" for Tuesday, December 20 at 5:30 p.m. at Church of St. John in the Wilderness. Parishioners and members of the community are invited for this low-key service designed for those who may be grieving a loss of some kind or who find Christmas a difficult season.

Saturday, December 24, 7:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Choral Eucharist.

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Day. Regular schedule of Eucharists at 8:00 a.m. and 10 a.m.

Watch the Sunday bulletin for details of these and other special Advent and Christmas services and events.

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Church of St. John in the Wilderness  
(Episcopal)  
Copake Falls, New York

The Rev. John Thompson, Rector  
Wendy Langlois, Sr. Warden  
Elen Freeston, Jr. Warden

### *Vestry*

Marilyn Kay, Clerk of the Vestry  
Jane Peck, Treasurer  
Robert Callahan      Charles Fox  
Henry Croteau      Rebecca Garrard  
Karen Flynn      Steve Savarese

### *Eucharists*

Sunday, 8:00 AM (spoken)  
Sunday, 10:00 AM (choral)

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