

# A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St John in the Wilderness, Copake Falls NY  
**Thanksgiving and Advent 2017**

## Thoughts from the Wilderness

Silence. It's an important dimension in most spiritualities. It is hard to think deeply if one is agitated (inner noise) or surrounded by noise. It is also hard to relax, rest or rejuvenate. Benedictine monk and teacher of contemplative prayer Laurence Freeman writes that, "Average city noise today often reaches 70 decibels which is equivalent to being in a room with a loud vacuum cleaner" (Letter from Laurence Freeman, July, 2017). So noise is a problem as most people now live in cities.

Freeman makes a distinction between noise and sounds. "Noise is unnatural and doesn't care what it disturbs. It feels it has right of way and always claims it. Sounds reach us subtly from the great silence of nature and then draw our attention to it."

Good music is not noise, including good electrified music. But I notice often in restaurants that the music seems too loud. It seems we sometimes want noise to distract us from thinking too much. Yet everyone needs some quiet, some silence. We all know this at night when we generally prefer quiet in order to sleep (or quiet background music or white noise to drown out other noise).



We also need quiet and silence when we are awake. St. Augustine said, "God is delight and those who are faithful are in God, called home from the noise that is around us to the joy that is silence" (On the Trinity). So as Jesus, Augustine, Laurence Freeman, the Dalai Lama, and many others throughout history say, we need quiet or silence in order to commune spiritually, in order to commune with God.

Contemplative prayer or Centering prayer (something that's part of the Wednesday 3 PM prayer group here) is best practiced in silence or relative quiet. It increases our peace of mind and heart, increases our joy and increases within us the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. These are priceless gifts and virtues given to us and through us when we simply settle down and have some quiet time with God.

Taking time for silence or quiet prayer also increases one's ability to discern the truth. Something more important than ever in a world that is now being called a "post truth world." Thomas Merton (another monk and a favorite writer of mine) said, "I make monastic silence a protest against the lies of politicians, propagandists and agitators" (Letter from Laurence Freeman, December, 2016). Thomas Aquinas, brilliant 13th-century saint said, Contemplation is the "simple enjoyment of the truth."

So contemplation (simple prayer that needs quiet), can bring us not only peace of mind and heart, but wisdom, and increased ability to discern the truth. For example you might be led to something like the wisdom of Michael Caulfield who teaches at Washington State University in Vancouver, Washington. He says in his free online textbook, *Web Literacy for Student Fact Checkers*, that to be good (and efficient) fact checkers we need to practice, “Four moves.” They are: 1. Check for previous work (check other reputable fact checking sites to see if they’ve already checked what you’re assessing). 2. Go to the source (try to find the original source of the information). 3. Read laterally (that is read what others say about the source of a claim). 4. Circle back: (If you get stuck back up and start over).

But in addition to increasing our ability to discern what is true ‘out there,’ silence and quiet prayer increase our awareness of what is true within. Because as Thomas Keating says, we are consenting to “God’s presence and action within.” And God is the source of all truth. So we also grow in self-awareness. And all of these blessings resulting from silence and quiet prayer reinforce each other helping us to grow in wholeness and holiness. It is not always easy and we do not become perfect. We do not necessarily notice these blessings right away, but we do over time, if we give ourselves a regular gift of silence.

As Jesus said, “Come away to a quiet place all by yourselves and rest a while” Mark 6:31. And, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” Matthew 11:28.

*In peace,  
John+*

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## From the Desk of the Senior Warden

### Passionate Pledging

About a month ago, parishioners of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness received a letter from Martha Glantz, as Chair of the 2018 Pledge Campaign, and me announcing that we have launched the stewardship campaign to sustain our church for the next year. I hope you have reviewed the letter and given its request for a pledge your prayerful consideration. If you have pledged in the past, we asked that you consider an increase this year. If you have not previously pledged, we asked that you consider a commitment to the mission of the church.

In this column of *The Voice*, I would like to discuss my own reasons for making a stewardship pledge every year, and how I became passionate about the act of pledging at St. John. I first came to a worship service at St. John on Christmas Eve



in 2012. I had been familiar with the existence of the church from the time that I first moved to Copake Falls in 1995; I knew it as that beautiful, historic church on a hill nestled by Taconic State Park. In the intervening years, I had been to the church a few times, but for concerts, lectures or some other community functions. I cannot recall specifically why, at the last minute, I decided to go to that Christmas Eve service at St. John, but for the preceding couple of

years I had been having various spiritual thoughts and experiences. My background for interpreting these feelings was my childhood upbringing in Memphis, where I had attended with my parents, and was baptized in, the Presbyterian Church.

For some reason I was drawn to St. John that Christmas evening. I will never forget the warm, welcoming, sacred feelings I experienced during the service that evening. I was met by the greeters outside, and then the ushers inside, and I made my way to a pew towards the back. I was immediately, deeply moved by the sanctuary's beautiful interior architecture, lit by hundreds of candles. I was enthralled by the choral music, led by Edith Hedrick, inspired by the sermon by Father John Thompson, and shared the Peace with LEM Jean Peck and Acolyte David Chittick, along with some of the nearby members of the congregation in the packed church. During the course of that evening I knew I had found a new church home.

I wanted to get involved in St. John, and the Episcopal Church more broadly, on a fast track, almost like I was making up for lost time! Shortly after I attended the Episcopal Church-sponsored Sustaining Hope in the Face of Climate Change conference in May 2013, in Washington, DC, Father John, knowing of my professional and spiritual interest in this topic, allowed me to give a sermon on the subject at St. John one Sunday. I really appreciated this opportunity, and it made me want even more to get involved with the church. I got confirmed in the Episcopal Church at The Cathedral of All Saints in Albany at the 2013 Easter Vigil. I right away answered Father John's call for volunteers to serve as Lay Ministers and Acolytes. I had the opportunity to serve a term on St. John's Vestry, and then was honored to serve as Warden. Most recently, I have taken on the role of serving as Chair of the Capital Campaign Committee.

The point in recounting my personal journey of engagement with St. John is that as I got deeper involved, I got more passionate about ensuring that the church is in sound financial and physical shape. I witnessed in ever greater detail all the good that St. John does globally, as through contributions to Episcopal Relief and Development and commitment to the Genesis Covenant, and locally, as thorough the Back Pack Program for Taconic/Webutuck Schools and the Roe Jan Food Pantry. I wanted to help keep all that good work going and to keep my spiritual home whole. I came to look forward to pledging at St. John with the same mindset as I plan for my annual home budget, making sure all is set in place to provide for peace of mind and body and general wellbeing for the coming year.

As mentioned in the letter about the 2018 Pledge Campaign, the annual expense budget of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness for 2017 was \$117,000. Our pledges cover about 75 percent of those expenses. The remainder of the gap is covered by fundraising activities, plate offerings, and donations. Pledges are the essential and reliable foundation for the budget. Your pledge goes to St. John's operating budget for church programs, salaries, utilities, maintenance, and outreach to the community. Your pledge is a personal investment in our shared responsibility of keeping St. John open for the Lord's business.

It's really amazing when one thinks about all the community outreach and joyful spirituality provided by our church. I became passionate about making a stewardship pledge each year because of these reasons, and I hope you will likewise find these or your own reasons for making a passionate pledge for the Church of St. John in the Wilderness.

*Brian Boom*

## Stewardship News

The biblical quote written on our pledge letters

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the one who brings good tidings of good and who publishes salvation. Isaiah 52:7*

reminds us of the lovely setting of St. John in the Wilderness. The recent Harvest Fest, sponsored by ECW, was held in this beautiful setting welcoming members of the community for an afternoon of fun events for children, delicious refreshments and unique items for sale by vendors, including yummy bake sale goodies, tomato sauce and pickles made and harvested from the “Feed My Sheep” children’s garden.

The community, will again be welcomed when we will hold a Christmas Market in Burke Hall as part of Copake Falls’ Winter Walk, Sunday, December 3 with a holiday market, 12-3PM and a concert presented by the Salisbury Congregational Church Bell Choir at 3:30PM (free for children; goodwill donations will be thankfully received). Our annual “Blue Christmas” service will take place on Wednesday, December 13, 6PM.

These events and all the other activities celebrated during our 165<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year have been lots of fun and show our vitality here in Copake Falls and beyond.

The pledge campaign for 2018, chaired by Martha Glantz, is off to a great start; we hope that as many people as possible will show their love of St. John’s by pledging.

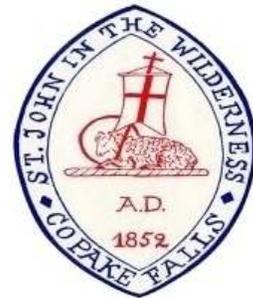
*Lucy Eldridge, Chair of the Stewardship Committee*

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## Stewardship Update

By the time you read this edition of In the Wilderness, we will have enjoyed our annual Stewardship dinner which was held on November 11. With complete confidence I can thank in advance all who helped to make the dinner a success and all who joined us for a wonderful evening of good food and fellowship. In addition to a thank you to all in our parish, the dinner gives us another chance to thank all who help make St. John’s the vibrant community that we are.

At the end of service over the last several weeks, members of the church have spoken about the importance of pledging. A common theme among the speakers is that word “community.” We are a community within ourselves as we gather to worship on Sunday, rehearse for choir practice, plan and execute the many fund-raising activities. We are also a community who reaches out to the broader community to offer help when needed in many forms, including but not limited to the local food pantry, soup suppers, Thanksgiving and Christmas Baskets—Churches and the Shoe Box Ministry.



Your pledge allows St. John’s to develop its budget so that we can commit to all the activities that make us the welcoming and important community that we are.

As we approach the end of the year and the end of our pledge drive I am pleased to

report that we have received \$63,481 in pledges which is 68% of our goal of \$93,000. If you haven't given us your pledge card, please do.

Thank you,  
Martha Glantz  
Chair of 2018 Pledge Campaign

## Sunday School

Sunday School has gotten off to a slow start this year. But we are ready to go! Would love to see the familiar faces back on Sunday again along with some new ones! We meet Sundays during the 10am service with the exception of the first Sunday of each month when we do not meet for a class. Instead, we can participate in the Service. It's a good opportunity for family to worship together or for the kids to participate in different aspects of the Service itself i.e. greeting people, handing out flyers, learning to acolyte, or singing in the choir. I'd be happy to work out the details.

The Sunday School, Feed My Sheep, summer garden did very well this year. We were able to grow a lot of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, radishes, beans. We expanded into a flower garden too. We were able to share vegetables with our Parish family and even provided some flowers for the church. I look forward to planning next year's garden.

Our lessons are based on the Jesus Storybook Bible – every story whispers his name. We are starting with the Old Testament stories. About Creation, the heroes and some who are not-somuch-like heroes but are more like us, making mistakes and learning along the way. They get afraid and run away, like we do sometimes. We will learn about some brave women and men.

The Creation story starts....

GOD WROTE, "I LOVE YOU" - HE WROTE IT IN THE SKY, AND ON THE EARTH, AND UNDER THE SEA. HE WROTE HIS MESSAGE EVERYWHERE! BECAUSE GOD CREATED EVERYTHING IN HIS WORLD TO REFLECT HIM LIKE A MIRROR - TO SHOW US WHAT HE IS LIKE, TO HELP US KNOW HIM, TO MAKE OUR HEARTS SING.....

I'd love to see you kids on Sunday so we can read great stories, talk about how the stories make us feel, express ourselves with artwork and learn about our Church.

I look forward to seeing you all.

Please call if you have questions or if you know of someone who might be interested in coming to Sunday school – I'd be happy to call them and introduce myself.

Wendy Langlois

## Harvest Fest



Our Harvest Fest was held on Sunday afternoon, October 8. There were lots of fun events – puppet show, balloon tying, pony rides, games, vendors, bake sale, face painting, lunch bar and more.

*Tonya Carter*

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## Jacob Stickle Memorial 5K



On Saturday, September 23rd, we held the second annual Jacob Stickle Memorial 5K. Jacob was a student at both Webutuck and Taconic Hills Schools before he passed away at age 9 from neuroblastoma. This event, held during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, brought over 40 walkers and runners to honor Jacob's memory, raise awareness for childhood cancers, and fundraise for charities. Although this event had no admission fee, we raised over \$1,000 to be split between the Childhood Cancer Organization and The Ronald McDonald House of the Greater Hudson Valley. We are grateful to everyone who participated in this worthwhile event.

*Rebecca Garrard  
Vestry Member*



Caroline Aurelia Mae Crawford was christened during the October 22 10:00 am service. Parents are Chris Crawford and Madeleine Hoog-Crellin. Marjorie Hoog is the proud grandmother.

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### Calendar through January 2018

November 11, Potluck Stewardship Dinner, 6PM

November 5, Sunday, Winds in the Wilderness Concert, 3:30PM

December 3, Sunday, Copake Falls Winter Walk, Christmas Market, 12-3PM,  
Handbell Concert, 3:30PM

December 13, Wednesday, Blue Christmas

December 24, Sunday, Christmas Eve Service, Carols and Eucharist, 7PM

December 25, Monday, Christmas Day Service, 10AM

January 14, 2018 Sunday, Annual Meeting

**A Voice in the Wilderness**

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness (Episcopal)  
Copake Falls, New York 112517  
The Rev. John Thompson, Rector

Brian Boom (1/18) Warden  
Karen Flynn (1/19) Warden

*Vestry*

Tonya Carter (1/18)  
Rebecca Garrard (1/19)  
Catherine Kaputa (1/20)

Susan Mollo (1/20)  
Jane Shannon (1/19)  
Madeleine Tramm (1/18)

Richard Peck, Clerk of the Vestry (1/21)  
Louise Peterson, Treasurer (1/19)

*Eucharists*

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

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

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