

Hello <<Your First Name>>,

After our snowy winter, spring is on the way.



Palm Sunday on March 25 is the start of Holy Week, during which we have services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. We host an Easter Egg Hunt for our neighbor children on Saturday March 31. On Easter, April 1, there are services at 8:00 am and 10:00 am. Join us for Easter worship in Copake Falls.

Louise and Dale, Editors

A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St John in the Wilderness, Copake Falls NY
March 2018

Sermon for March 11, 2018

Many members missed this sermon because of the snowy weather

Last week I contextualized a couple of things sometimes misunderstood in the Bible. That the 10 Commandments were actually called words not Commandments – words of life and freedom. But also words that need to be updated for today in regard to both the full equality of women and to unequivocal rejection of slavery.

The other thing I contextualized was the word body – in that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, thus sacred blessings. So we are to respect one another's bodies, not in a puritanical or dualistic way, but rather we are to respect one another holistically. And caring for one another's bodies means we also care for all of God's creation.

I bring these things up as they are important enough to repeat and because I want to do more contextualizing today.

One thing true of Scripture is that sometimes the same words can be used positively in one context and negatively in another. Which means we often need to slow down and meditate or pray about a passage and study a passage in order to plumb its depths.

Sometimes a passage becomes so associated with certain contexts or sorts of Christians that we can become inoculated or turned off by it. For example, a verse from today's gospel was often seen, and sometimes still is, at football games.

That is John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that

everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” It’s a good verse. But it can be easy to take that verse and use the rest of the passage about judgment to say or imply, I believe so I have the light and, you don’t believe like I do so you are in darkness!

Expanding the context further to today’s entire gospel passage helps us to understand better, but it still is a challenge.

That to believe in God or Jesus is not simply about mental or verbal assent is apparent in this same passage where we see that the criteria is what we do more than what we believe! And it’s important to point this out here in that this very passage is wrongly used to make the in group those who believe in Jesus (no matter what they do) and the outgroup those who don’t believe in Jesus (even if they are doing good).

Speaking of words, I want to interject (and you’ll see why in a moment) that the word serpent in Scripture is used negatively and positively. Negatively, the serpents bit the Israelites in the desert and Satan is portrayed as a serpent. Positively Moses lifted up a bronze serpent and those who were bitten were healed. And positively Jesus said to be wise as a serpent and simple as a dove.

I interject this as an example of the equivocal use of words in the Bible and by way of introduction to an understanding of the use of the word believe in today’s gospel that is different than a narrow understanding of belief as only saying the right words or as mental assent -- to create an in group and an out group.

Jesus said rather, “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world!”

In the story from Israel’s wilderness journey those bitten by serpents simply had to look at Moses’ bronze serpent to be healed. So belief is really more like looking in the right direction to find true happiness or as Jesus calls it eternal life. So belief is not saying magic words, it’s looking at Jesus, it’s looking at God the source of love and accepting that love, that joy, that happiness, that eternal life!

And eternal life is another equivocal term that has been narrowed in this passage and elsewhere to mean believe and you will have eternal, forever life with God in heaven, or don’t believe and you will have forever life away from God.

Faith tells us that life with God and those we love is without end, is eternal – and that’s great! But a more immediate meaning especially for us here and now is that we can experience the sublime joy, happiness, peace, and love from God now – that eternal life means this quality of life here and now!

Let’s look to God, let’s believe in God’s love and receive it in joy! We are not called to judge others based on saying or not saying the right magic words.

As Jesus says in today’s gospel, “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world!”

So what about the judgment that is in this passage? Well, it’s about deeds more than words. God is merciful and forgiving and none of us are perfect. God does and will repeatedly forgive us in our beauty and wonder and imperfection.

But hardhearted, truly destructive behavior will be judged by God. Because God loves everyone. And when people harm not only individuals but whole categories of people through racism and classism for examples, God will judge that.

God will forgive even these things but people have to change their behavior. As it says in today's gospel, if we love darkness and hide our bad or unhealthy behavior, we will do harm. If we want to improve we come into the light so that we can see even more clearly!

I'll end with the 1st verse of today's Psalm,
 "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endures forever!"
 Amen!

John+
The Rev. John P. Thompson, Rector

From the Desk of the Senior Warden

Hello fellow parishioners,

It appears that March has "come in like a lion" so I am hopeful that as we come into the end of lent and celebrate Easter on April 1st that March will have left us "like a lamb!"

I wish to thank all involved in our annual February "whole lot of love dinner". The event was a success financially as well as being a great mid winter break to celebrate community fellowship. The Italian theme was a big hit and our Irish Italian chefs(Bobs Callahan and Flynn) should be commended for their culinary talents. As usual the salad bar was expansive and the desserts donated by parishioners or made by Melissa Dipper at the Depot Deli were the stars of the evening!

St. Johns also served as host for the Wednesday Lenten soup and bread dinner which was well attended by our parishioners and several members of our neighborhood churches. The Lenten service was well appreciated. More thanks for all who helped to make this a special event.

The Episcopal Church Women's group has met and has decided to appoint a "point person" to assist in communication for the organization of special church events. It was agreed that the most vital aspect of the ECW is to meet the service needs of the Church. Wendy Langlois has agreed to function in this role.

David Webb spoke with the Vestry as our financial and investment advisor in follow up of his presentation at the Annual Meeting. David recommends that we continue the conservative, balanced approach to investments which has served us well for us over the years.

Louise Peterson is coming to the end of her 5 year commitment as our treasurer and the Vestry will be looking for someone to replace her in this very important ministry.

The Vestry discussed the widening of the driveway at the corner of the church in order to allow better access for the snow plow clear area. There has also been consideration to hiring a handyman or sextant to deal with some of the repair needs of the grounds. These decisions will be made by the building committee.

In an effort to make Church/ Vestry affairs more visible to the parish, the minutes of the Vestry will be posted in the Narthex. Please remember that any member of the parish may attend Vestry meetings which occur the second Friday of every month at 7:30 pm in Burke Hall. Please always feel free to contact John or any member of the Vestry if you have business or concerns. Thank you for your continued support.

Karen Flynn

Capital Campaign Committee Update

Hello fellow parishioners,

The Capital Campaign Committee is moving forward with several initiatives reported at the January 21, 2018, Annual Meeting of St. John in the Wilderness. First, the *Survey of Parishioners' Priorities for Capital Improvements*, distributed to those attending the Annual Meeting, was subsequently distributed to all parishioners by email. If anyone did not receive a Survey form, and would like to suggest priorities for capital improvements to our buildings and grounds, please contact me (brian.m.boom@gmail.com), and I will make sure you get a form. The results from the survey will be used to help set priorities for capital fundraising efforts.

Second, a specific fundraising effort has just gotten underway to take advantage of a wonderful invitation by a private foundation for St. John to submit a funding request. Lucy Eldridge took the lead on submitting the request last week. Specifically, we asked for funding in support of the repair or rebuild of the Rectory porch, one of the priorities recognized in a recent campus wide study of the church facilities. The results of this funding request will be reported in a future issue of *The Voice*. Fingers crossed!

Third, in January this year the Vestry voted to accept the proposal invited by the Capital Campaign Committee from landscape architect Jamie Purinton to produce a comprehensive concept plan for the St. John landscape. I am pleased to report that Ms. Purinton has begun working on the concept plan. The results of this landscape concept plan will be integrated with the engineering report from Crawford & Associates and documents written by Dale Peterson (*A Vision for the Future of St. John in the Wilderness*) and by Marjorie Hoog (*Building Description and Assessment*) to help inform the production of a master plan for the Capital Campaign, a draft of which will be prepared for review by the Vestry in the coming months.

In the meantime, if you haven't weighed in with your priorities for the Capital Campaign, please submit the survey form. The Capital Campaign Master Plan will not be this committee's plan; it will be our *parish's* plan for the future, so please voice your opinion!

Brian Boom, Chairman
Capital Campaign Committee

Easter Egg Hunt 2018

The annual Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled for Saturday, March 31, 2018. We will meet at Burke Hall at 11 am. We like to call this a "kinder and gentler" Easter Egg Hunt because we split up the younger kids from the older kids. The "four

year olds and under” are on the upper lawn area while the “five years and up” are Easter Egg hunting in the church cemetery. We are flexible, so if a five year old is more comfortable on the upper lawn, that’s ok.

After the Easter Egg Hunt we gather back at Burke Hall to count eggs, receive prizes and have a simple lunch together. We love welcoming back old friends and love making some new friends! In the event of rain or snow, we will meet at the church. This Easter Egg Hunt is open to all so please invite friends, family and neighbors.

Wendy Langlois

Feed My Sheep Garden 2018

It seems appropriate to “officially” open our vegetable/flower garden on Earth Day, Sunday April 22, 2018. We are hoping to have another great growing season this year! This year the plan is to not only share our veggies with our church family but to also share with our local Food Pantry. We are in the process of making some inquiries to see how we can make this work. The more “Sheep” we can reach out to, the better.

My hope is to come up with a plan to open the garden to the community – I’m not sure exactly how, or what the details might be but I’ll keep you posted. I’d love to invite the local kids up to plant, harvest and learn how God blesses us throughout the gardening process of growing and giving. I’m hoping to advertise the garden project during the Easter Egg Hunt by handing out some postcards or flyers.

*Thank you,
Wendy Langlois*

Quilt Show on Display in Burke Hall

Quilts from Community Collections, March 4 – June 3, 2018, has opened in Burke Hall. The exhibition of 17 quilts was a team effort; Bob Callahan helped with design and installation, Mibs Zelle and Jane Peck also helped with installation and Richard Peck designed the hand-out for the show. The quilt *Variable Star* was repaired by Pauline Royal and is for sale to benefit St. John’s. We are also grateful for the lenders and quilters (from the parish and beyond including Mt. Washington, MA, Pacific Northwest, Bucks County, PA) to the show. There is a wide variety of quilts, exhibiting pieced, embroidered, applique techniques, with several from the late 19th century to mid-1940’s to one made a few years ago.



One of the quilt books available for browsing in Burke Hall, *The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt in America*, contains poems by quilters themselves. Here is one which serves to give a sense of the exhibition:

Life is like a patchwork quilt
And each little patch is a day,

Some patches are rosy, happy and bright,
And some are dark and gray.

But each little patch as it's fittin in
And sewn to keep it together
Makes a finished block in this life of ours
Filled with sun, and with rainy weather.

So let me work on Life's patchwork quilt
Through the rainy days and the sun—
Trusting that when I have finished my block
The Master may say: "Well done."

Elizabeth Ryan DeCoursey

There will a reception in Burke Hall for quilters, lenders, parish members and interested friends of the church, April 7 at 4PM. Please come!

Lucy Eldridge

Baptism of Maeve Driscoll



Maeve Munro Driscoll was baptized in the 10:00 am Eucharist on March 4. Maeve was born on August 3. Her parents are Mark and Alice Peterson Driscoll. Her proud grandparents are Louise and Dale Peterson.

Church Calendar - Easter through June

March 25, Sunday, Palm Sunday

March 29, Thursday, Maundy Thursday, Seder Meal, 6PM, Eucharist, 7:30PM

March 30, Good Friday, 10AM and 7:30PM services

March 31, Saturday, Easter Egg Hunt, 11AM

April 1, Sunday, Easter, 8AM and 10AM services

April 7, Saturday, Reception for *Quilts from Community Collections*, Burke Hall, 4PM

May 5 and May 6, Saturday and Sunday, Sacred Sites Open House

May 12, Saturday, 10AM, 5k in support of Taconic Hills and Webutuck Backpack program

May 20, Sunday, 3PM, Burke Hall, Hudson Valley Deanery Meeting

May 26, Saturday, KOA Bake Sale, 10AM-12 noon, KOA, West Copake, NY

June 8-10, Diocesan Convention

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Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness (Episcopal)
Copake Falls, New York 12517
The Rev. John Thompson, Rector

Karen Flynn (1/19) Warden
Marjorie Hoog (1/20) Warden

Vestry

Jane Shannon (1/19)
Rebecca Garrard (1/19)
Susan Massarella (1/20)
Zita Kobos (1/20)
Elen Freeston (1/21)
Wendy Langlois (1/21)

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

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