

St. Andrew's Lenten Meditation Guide 2024

Sponsored by the Adult Formation Committee



Thanks to Katharine Clark, Caren Parker, and Sandra Rigney for their editorial assistance.

Photo front cover by Peter Lull

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ST. ANDREW'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

Editor's Note

Dear member of St. Andrew's,

For the next forty-seven days, the spiritual practice we take on together will be our daily reflection and prayer. Most of us will be reading our fellow parishioners' words alone, but we will be sharing that experience with other parishioners reading the same meditation each day. To be linked together in this common spiritual work is a blessing and a reminder that none of us walk alone. We are supported by Christian community while we ponder the complexities within our own souls and the challenges within the larger world we inhabit.

Our writers wrote alone, but some common themes emerged—perhaps they are the whispers of the Holy Spirit. We are invited to take sin seriously, to forgive, to be bold when we act on our faith, and to trust that the work of faith will bear fruit.

Being a Christian is hard work, but as we practice, we live the life that is life. We “glorify God and enjoy God's works forever.” (Westminster Catechism)

Godspeed in the journey.

Yours,
Margaret

The Rev. Margaret K. Schwarzer
Associate Rector for Adult Formation and Membership

Ash Wednesday

February 14, 2024

*Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is
coming, it is near, a day of darkness and gloom . . . (Joel 2:12)*

Joel is a book full of doom, confusion, frightful darkness, and devastation. The Lord has run out of patience with humankind. The book is a dire warning to wake up, but also a reminder that through all the horrors the locusts bring to the land and people, the Lord offers the path to return with all our hearts to a God who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.” As the people did when the locusts devastated their crops, there are times to wonder: Where is our God? Thankfully, we, as part of St. Andrew’s, can share our doubts, fears, and confusion. Indeed, with all the awful events happening, we are here to lift one another up, lend helping hands, comfort one another, and share friendship. Together we rejoice and hear the trumpet in Zion calling us to serve, celebrate our spiritual lives, and believe in the power of God’s steadfast love. As we enter Lent, I am grateful that the sign outside the church says, “All are welcome” and that all are invited to take communion. Together we conquer darkness.

Tim Phillips and his wife, Nora, have attended St. Andrew’s since 2001. They raised their two children in Wellesley. Tim enjoys serving as a lay reader and works in biotech.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday February 15, 2024

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (Collect of the Day)

It's the beginning of Lent. Thirty-nine days to go (Lent plus Holy Week). Do you ever skip to the end of a book to make sure you want to read it? Maybe it's a happy ending you're seeking so you check just to be sure. Maybe it's a synopsis of the last 20 chapters so you don't have to read every single one. I'm asking because I do this sometimes.

As we look at all the Bible readings for today, you may notice as I did, that exactly none of them advise us to skip ahead to the happy ending or the easy answers. Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Luke 9:18-25. Psalm 1. All advise on the hard work ahead of us to seek and to serve God. Alas, there is no fast-forward to an Easter option, so I take comfort in the support found in today's Collect, printed above.

I am relieved to read a prayer that includes "further us with your continued help . . . in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name." The days (and work) of Lent won't go as fast as I'd like them to, but I'm reminded that we're in this together and I know I am in great company.

I hope this Lent goes well for you.

Laura Brown MacKinnon is a daughter, sister, friend, stage manager, wife, daughter-in-law, teacher, and volunteer.

Friday after Ash Wednesday February 16, 2024

AS IF they were a nation that practiced righteousness, and did not forsake the ordinance of their God. (Isaiah 58:4)

AS IF we were so great and got there by our own merits. Lent is a time to think about ourselves and our place in the firmament. For those of us who live in the greater Swellesley bubble, it's tempting to self-congratulate ourselves for our great good fortune. Of all human frailties, hubris and vanity are among the most invidious.

Recently I experienced a prolonged power outage and had to retire to a hotel for a couple of days. That's it! The hotel was warm, comfortable with a handicapped bathroom and a hot breakfast. I think of all the people in Ukraine, Gaza, and elsewhere who were driven from their homes with no place for a refuge, no resources. I am reminded of a Kris Kristofferson song, "Why me Lord, what have I ever done to deserve even one of the pleasures I've known?" It's humbling.

Thornton (Toby) Kell, Jr. a long retired neuroradiologist, lives in Needham with his wife, Donna. He has a married daughter, Rachel, who lives in Medford. He has been a member of St. Andrew's since the early 1980s, where he has been active in several capacities. Presently, he enjoys the men's book club and Bible studies. He enjoys reading.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday February 17, 2024

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil . . . then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. (Isaiah 58:9b–14)

This chapter of Isaiah emphasizes that our relationship with God extends beyond religious observances to loving our neighbor as ourselves. As the topic of blame has been on my mind, this verse strikes a chord.

My recent experience as the target of blame has made me more aware of its prevalence—from issues related to the Israel-Hamas war, to adults pinning their poor choices on their parents, to the friction of everyday life—and of its destructiveness. While sometimes people truly are blameworthy, we often blame when we take things out of proportion, fueled by the sense of power faulting another can bring. But blame takes the focus off addressing the situation at hand, thwarting progress; it puts distance between us and our neighbor.

God alone is perfect. Differences and mistakes are part of being human; not all bad situations are someone's fault. By keeping a perspective of understanding and forgiveness, we can avoid burdening others with the yoke of blame and allow the light in.

This Lent, I'm trying to do better at loving my neighbor, and especially refraining from blame.

Caren Parker and her husband, Randy, are longtime parishioners, Wellesley residents, and the parents of two adult children. She currently participates in outreach, the altar guild, office volunteer work, and Coventry suppers.

First Sunday in Lent February 18, 2024

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news. (Mark 1:15)

Sin and repentance are two uncomfortable concepts for me. I imagine monks, kneeling in a dark, stony, damp cell, thrashing themselves with whips to achieve repentance.

When sin and repentance were a vacation Bible school activity, I was unsure how to develop the lesson. The Greek word for sin is *hamartia*, an archery term for “missing the mark.” There are two Greek words that describe repentance: *metanoēō*, “to understand and use the mind,” and *epistrephō*, which has a spatial connotation: “to turn around.” For the children, I placed a line on the floor and six feet from that line I placed an X. I asked them to stand at the line with their backs to the X and try to jump to the X. Much giggling, remarks of, “You have to turn around,” which led to a discussion of repentance. After turning around, they were asked to jump and hit the mark. (They missed.) We talked about sin. The co-instructor, as Jesus, lifted them up and placed them on the mark. They were thrilled. This lesson clarified sin and repentance for me.

For Lent, then, my challenge questions are, “How have I been missing the mark? How do I change direction? What action must I take?”

Debbie (D.D.) Alexander has served on the flower guild, taught in the church school, and has served on the church school committee since 2009. A retired horticulturalist and biology teacher, she will be glad to talk “gardens” during coffee hour.

Monday in the First Week of Lent

February 19, 2024

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

For much of my life, I have been in positions of speaking publicly—whether giving speeches, presenting to clients, or performing in theatrical productions. Despite the regularity, my seasoned age, and my preparation, I have never found it easy. Nerves take over, wanting to “do my part right.” As a result, I have developed a routine; before I address an audience, I quietly close my eyes and say Psalm 19:14 to myself. With those words, I am reminded that my expression and my motives are guided by God. I feel and sense greater calm and strength. I open my eyes and press on.

The verse also helps me with daily human interaction. What I say to, and do with, those people in my life—may it be loving, gracious, thoughtful—as God would want and accept.

This verse is a great reminder that we are already “right” and acceptable in God’s eyes.

Madison Riley and his wife, Laura, have been members of St. Andrew’s for seven years. Since 2017, Madison has been received at St. Andrew’s, sings in the senior choir, serves as vestryperson for stewardship, and supports the outreach committee. He is continually grateful for the embrace of the St. Andrew’s community.

Tuesday in the First Week of Lent February 20, 2024

*... And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors
(Matthew 6: 12)*

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6: 14)

Growing up, my father often reminded me, “take your friends and family on average.” We all have our good days and ones we’d like to do over, so be open to forgiving and appreciating the best parts of each of us. How easy it is to forget that when we feel wronged or hurt, and yet it is what Christ calls upon us to do. It ranks right up there with “love your enemies . . . pray for them who persecute you” on challenges to be better Christians! As Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross, he called, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” When looking to forgive, I’ve found it helpful to turn to God and ask how God sees an individual—what good qualities can I align with their identity? intelligence, humor, honesty—all merits of value. Finding a morsel of goodness can help break the bonds of anger and pain—sometimes quickly, sometimes over a long time. Forgiveness is the greatest gift we can give ourselves as well as those who have wronged us.

Laura Riley and her husband, Madison, came to St. Andrew’s in 2017. Laura has recently joined the altar guild and enjoyed the pilgrimage to England in July 2023.

Wednesday in the First Week of Lent February 21, 2024

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." (Jonah 3:1)

Whatever you do today, use some of your time confetti and read the entire book of Jonah. It will take you five minutes. It is only 1,082 words. It is one of the funniest books in the Holy Scriptures. It is also one of the most biting because, as much as we may not want to admit it, Jonah is a relatable character. The whole story is of Jonah being in a snit because God wants Jonah to go tell the despicable (in Jonah's opinion) Ninevites that Nineveh will be overthrown within forty days. What makes Jonah even more angry is that the Ninevites—all of them, including the animals—immediately repent, and God relents and saves them.

I think we can all relate to how difficult it is to do something kind for someone we don't particularly like. It might be a family member, a frenemy, or a colleague. You know that person who rubs you up the wrong way? Yes, that one. God wants you, yes, you, to do whatever it takes to love that person in thought, word, and deed. Today, look for opportunities for kindness. God chose Jonah to go to Nineveh because he knew it would be hard for him. But all those things we do that are hard are actually the very things that make us grow spiritually.

Sarah Robbins-Cole is the associate rector for youth and family. She is also a doctoral student at Virginia Theological Seminary where she is studying the relationship between ancient Christian spiritual practices and happiness.

Thursday in the First Week of Lent February 22, 2024

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:7-12)

This verse encapsulates my faith and hope for the role of Jesus in my life: to help me live more selflessly and with purpose. For as long as I can remember, my parents instilled in me the importance of following the Golden Rule. From my earliest memories of my grandparents, I recall them doing the same. It has not been a flawless endeavor, but it's most certainly my goal.

An element of the Golden Rule reminds me of the importance of service to others. As a boy and teenager, I was a Boy Scout and sought to follow the Scout Oath, ". . . to help other people at all times . . ." culminating in my Eagle Scout project, which was building an observation tower for bird watching in my hometown of Lynnfield.

Now as an adult, I have an even greater appreciation for the role Jesus plays in inspiring me to serve others and "do to others as you would have them do to you." This Lenten season as I reflect on Matthew's Gospel, I contemplate ways to be impactful in serving others, especially those who are less fortunate and in need.

Stephen Clarke and his wife Elizabeth have been St. Andrew's members since 1994. Their grown children, Will, Emily, and Ben, were baptized and confirmed at St. Andrew's. Stephen has served our church in a variety of capacities over the years. He works for Eaton Vance where he leads their charitable business.

Friday in the First Week of Lent February 23, 2024

Jesus said, "I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven . . . I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment." (Matthew 5:20-26)

I have always been struck by the positivity and upbeat nature of my interactions with my fellow parishioners at St. Andrew's. As I have puzzled over this experience, which feels atypical in our world at large, it dawned on me that by joining this church I have joined a group of people who believe in caring about others and who take seriously their promises as Christians. Jesus' summary of the law, that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, offers a path to improving all our relationships. But while it is all-encompassing, it is not particularly specific.

Today's gospel reading, however, gives us more analytical, and more precise, guidance as to how to reach this goal. Just as Jesus has consistently said, complying with the letter of the law is not enough: we must look deeper, and perhaps question the motivations of how we respond to others. We should make sure that as we share our lives with one another, we strive to achieve the spirit of his teachings by not limiting our conduct to merely not murdering others. We need to avoid reacting to them in ways that injure their spirits; we need to avoid responding through anger, or through knowingly or accidentally hurting their feelings or weakening their hope. Responding to one another thoughtfully and lovingly can thus bring us closer to feeling God's love for us ourselves.

Paul Merry, a longtime member of St. Andrew's, is a passionate member of our adult choir and a faithful reader at our Sunday services. He sails as often as possible in the summer months.

Saturday in the First Week of Lent February 24, 2024

Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower . . . As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete." (John 15:1, 6-16)

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word *abide* means to "bear patiently" and "to endure." It also is defined as "to await," "remain," and "dwell." Each meaning elicits a different sense of what life as a Christian can be. "Dwelling" and "awaiting" seem more hopeful than "enduring" to me but there are indeed times in life when we simply endure and others when we feel fortified enough to bear fruit.

What does keeping the Father's commandments and abiding with God look like for me this Lent? I intend to keep working on making the relationship with God more robust and fruitful by studying scripture, attending services, and building my community within St. Andrew's. I started attending the Beginners Bible Study with Adrian on Thursdays at noon and am learning so much. The practice is allowing my faith to grow through contemplation and discussion, and by being in community with those who are sharing the journey with me. What God promises here is that if we do abide in his love, we will find joy. How great is that?

Heather Schaefer is a lifelong Episcopalian and loves serving St. Andrew's on the church school committee, altar guild, and nominating committee. She is married to Sam and is the proud mother to Norah (20) and Coley (18).

Second Sunday of Lent

February 25, 2024

My praise is of him in the great assembly; I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship him. (Psalm 22:24)

Church has always been a place for me where I can pray for God's blessings. Early on in my life, and for many years that followed, my prayers were focused on my own desires. I would pray for world peace, for those who were sick, and to get through the challenges of work and life. These were all good intentions, but was this the right way to pray for me personally?

I feel I have changed in this regard now and have a much stronger relationship with Christ as I have gotten older and wiser. I am filled with gratitude and thankfulness towards the Lord, and it is with this loving kindness that I pray each day. I now pray with gratitude for all the great things I see and hear around me and pray that I and others can be great disciples of this world, so that we all might go forward changing the world for the better.

Mark Benjamin has attended St. Andrew's for thirty years. He ushers and participates in the Men's Book Club. When he isn't at St. Andrew's, he enjoys daily swimming and hiking in all seasons.

Monday in the Second Week of Lent February 26, 2023

Let your Spirit, O Lord, come into the midst of us to wash us with the pure water of repentance, and prepare us to be always a living sacrifice to you; . . . (Collect of the Day)

My mother has been sick for the last couple of months. She's going on 30 days in the hospital as I write this. She lives in Pennsylvania. She's the kind of person that has been private about her health problems, and she's always presenting herself as positively as she can. Of course, I think we all do this in some way or another.

As a Quaker, I believe every day to be/should be sacred. That we can, at any moment, glimpse beyond the veil, but it's hard to be ready to see that at any moment. As humans, we are always waiting for something: waiting to grow up, waiting for vacation, children, grandchildren, to get better at something, or in my mother's case, just waiting to get better.

This Collect brings me back to the present moment. It reminds me that being grateful for what time we have, right now, is the most important time I have. Every day.

Katharine Clark is a daughter, sister, niece, cousin, mother, wife, aunt, in-law, godparent, grandmother, friend, wild woman, and St. Andrew's parish administrator for almost 14 years.

Tuesday in the Second Week of Lent

February 27, 2024

All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. (Matthew 23:12)

I've been reflecting a lot lately on what it means to be a great leader and trying to identify what makes me feel fulfilled both personally and professionally. Great leadership is marked by humility, servitude, and leading by example. Often what is most fulfilling for me is an act of giving: serving others, volunteering, donating. The people who inspire me most are humble, selfless, modest, and generous.

Matthew's message is about the importance of leading by example and serving others. It's not enough for us to hear the lessons from those people who we look up to; we need to act upon them. This requires work, sacrifice, and humility. We are encouraged to follow Jesus' message: to exalt and lift the humblest servants as they are the ones living in Christ's image.

This Lent, we must be willing to do the hard work in service of others and offer our abiding love to others in need. At St. Andrew's, we are fortunate to be surrounded by so many examples of humility, selflessness, and generosity. We must live out Christ's message each and every day. In doing so, we will find inspiration and inspire others through quiet leadership, humility, and leading by example.

Sam Schaefer is a lifelong Episcopalian. He is currently vestryperson for church property and serves as a lay Eucharist minister. Sam is married to Heather Schaefer and is the proud father of Norah and Coley.

Wednesday in the Second Week of Lent February 28, 2024

Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words. (Jeremiah 18:2)

Where do we hear the voice of God? In church? In each other?

In my life, I have found the most powerful experience of seeing God is to see him at work in other people, even in people who would never set foot in a church. God comes, not into the places we might expect—not the mighty wind or fire or earthquake—but into the deeply ordinary, into a potter's shed. Through observing the potter, Jeremiah is able to hear the word of the Lord.

We can, like the potter, reveal God to others through our lives. Christians are called by their baptism to “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.” (BCP p. 305) We don't have to be preachers to be a conduit for the Word of the Lord to come through us. We can be in the middle of a gilded cathedral or in an open field. We don't have to wait to be the perfect messenger. God can use all of us, all the time, anywhere.

Tiffany Horter is a senior at Wellesley College studying robotics. She was baptized in 2022 and currently serves as an acolyte at St. Andrew's.

Thursday in the Second Week of Lent February 29, 2024

The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse—who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:5-10)

As I engage with the daily routines and rituals that constitute life with young children, Proverb 4:23 turns around in my mind and serves as a powerful guiding principal: “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” My husband and I speak frequently with our children about the importance of love and attempt to demonstrate how to infuse love into our daily actions and prayers. I share with them that my love for my husband and children consumes my heart and expands out to the vast reaches of our growing universe. I am less forthcoming (at present) about how I fail to protect my heart from internal and external forces that can lead to negative consequences.

In these early years, we try to teach our children that their hearts are full of love, too, and that keeping hate out of their hearts is a choice that requires not only time and effort but also God’s grace. In today’s world, it is not always easy to choose love over hate, peace over wrath, and joy over bitterness. We are confronted by these choices every day and must accept how effortlessly we indulge in pettiness, resentment, and anger. God understands our hearts, but do we really understand how devious our hearts can be without him? I, for one, am still learning.

Stephanie Mitchell serves on the church school committee and is a “door keeper” for Godly Play at St. Andrew’s. She lives in Dover with her husband, Brad, and their three children, Fiona, Maisie, and Brutus.

Friday in the Second Week of Lent

March 1, 2024

Grant, O Lord, that as your Son Jesus Christ prayed for his enemies on the cross, so we may have grace to forgive those who wrongfully or scornfully use us, that we ourselves may be able to receive your forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.
(Collect of the Day)

The Collect for this day is straightforward. Christ prays for his enemies, who were not just cancelling him, but crucifying him. He demonstrated the grace by which we can forgive our own “enemies.”

On a trip to Barcelona in 2011, a group of us from Boston gazed up at a cathedral ceiling and saw the word “Abnegation.” It was unknown to most of the group. Self-abnegation is humility—a concept and quality sadly too absent in our modern life. We are so fortunate to be safe in America; we are not called to pray for those who are shooting at us or bombing us. All we must do is to be humble in the presence of those with whom we disagree on the divisive issues of our time: immigration, abortion, DEI, ESG, whether we like Morning Prayer. We may do it by just having patience to listen.

Tom Palmer, a member of St. Andrew's since 2019, lives in Natick. He is a retired journalist.

Saturday in the Second Week of Lent

March 2, 2024

The father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." (Luke 15:32)

In both Luke's Gospel and the Collect for today, the theme of being faithful and forgiving is front and center. As we enter Lent, I am aware of the dichotomy of the two brothers and how it helps me on my journey to be a better person.

Years ago, when I read this passage, I agreed with the older son. It seemed unfair that the younger brother squandered what had been given to him and upon his return was celebrated, while the older brother who had lived by the rules was not recognized for his responsible lifestyle.

Today, I find myself still struggling to accept the behavior of those who take advantage of the system. Am I jealous? Am I resentful?

During this Lent, I will read a book entitled *The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World* by Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu. I am hopeful that I will derive inspiration that allows me to be more compassionate and forgiving.

Michael Vanin is a former warden and remains an active member of the congregation. He and his wife Kris will celebrate their 40th anniversary in July. Kris retired from nursing after four decades of a stellar career.

Third Sunday of Lent

March 3, 2024

*Who can tell how often he offends? Cleanse me from my secret faults.
(Psalm 19:12)*

I'm convinced most serious Christians live their lives with an almost constant low-level sense of guilt. We feel guilty because we don't give enough, we don't pray enough, we don't recycle enough, we offend without even knowing what we did.

Psalm 19 would have us believe we offend more often than we will ever know, and these offenses are beyond our understanding. We all have "secret faults."

Does Christianity require us to feel guilty every day? Not in my book. In my view, Jesus calls us to understand that we are sinners—that we are imperfect, that we can be misguided and often blocked in our attempts to be with God.

What do we do with all of this behind-the-scenes guilt, this sense of falling short? I suggest we refocus. Instead of being motivated by guilt, we should be motivated by grace. Instead of doing more for Christ, we should be who we are in Christ. We already possess grace. We just need to grow into it.

Dan Dent has served as a member of the vestry, as a church school teacher, and, currently, as editor of The Call. Outside of church, Dan is a communications professional at Draper.

Monday in the Third Week of Lent

March 4, 2024

... his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean. (2 Kings 5:1-15b)

“Do you believe in miracles?” was the question posed at Beginners Bible Study. Not sure I do, was my initial reaction.

Then I thought of Bob Beamon, a young, willowy African American from Queens, NY. On a warm October afternoon at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, Beamon took off down the long jump runway, placed his foot on the take-off board, and leapt into the air landing 29 feet 2 1/2 inches away, shattering the existing world record by nearly two feet! The jump was so long that it had to be measured with a tape, as it was beyond the capability of the electronic measuring system. The competition was delayed for twenty minutes while the measuring took place. After hearing the result Beamon’s legs gave out and he experienced a cataplectic seizure that rendered him dizzy, nauseated, and unable to stand. “After that jump, the rest of us are children,” noted the Soviet Union’s Igor Ter-Ovanesyan, a fellow competitor and previous world record holder. ESPN would later rank Beamon’s jump as the greatest sports feat in modern history. So, yes, on second thought, I do believe in miracles.

Mark Housel and his wife, Anne Marie, live in Wellesley. They have three adult children, Nina, Joe, and Molly, and two granddaughters, Grace and Jane. Mark previously served as St. Andrew’s treasurer.

Tuesday in the Third Week of Lent

March 5, 2024

“How often should I forgive?” . . . “Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times.” (Matthew 18:21-22)

I find the literal reading of this passage especially challenging: forgiving someone seventy-seven times? Yet this verse and others appointed for this day speak to me of the deeper message of God’s mercy and compassion, not transgression, but love. This message seems so timely—yet elusive—in today’s world of hyper-partisan politics, rush to judgement, cultural and religious intolerance, and global conflicts.

In my own life, I wonder how often I have, by an impulsive act, been asking (or wishing for) forgiveness from my family, a friend, or stranger. I remember a time, years ago, when I played a silly and immature prank on my sister; I felt bad afterwards but did not muster the courage to apologize until years later. My ultimate asking for, and (more importantly) receiving her forgiveness was a burden relieved. Today, each time I recite the Lord’s Prayer, “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,” I am reminded of this obligation of our faith to be kind and show compassion. My wish for this Lenten season is to share these gifts in our parish community and beyond.

Bob Ware is a life-long Episcopalian. He and his wife Nancy Kohl have been members of St. Andrew’s since 2004. He is a frequent usher, host of coffee hour after the 8am service, and Bargain Haul volunteer.

Wednesday in the Third Week of Lent

March 6, 2024

"... whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:19)

The other day, for a treat, I heated up some Trader Joe's hors d'oeuvre and remembered my aunt, Arlene Baker Wahn, longtime parishioner of St. Andrew's and the reason I have enjoyed the past 17 years here.

At Christmas, my daughters and I helped her heat innumerable sheets of these little treats for her community's party. The day I told her I was joining the choir, she exclaimed, "The choir!" She paid little attention to the music in church, instead focusing on friendship, cooking, and ferociously cleaning the huge kitchen refrigerator. She taught me that it is unnecessary to be the best or the greatest but, instead, to use each day as best I am able.

To her, I was the child, and she was the follower of Jesus Christ, looking for the best for me. And I did the best I could for her, even as, at the end, it was sadly impossible to avoid the inevitable. The last time I saw her in her right mind, she grasped my hand in her two hands and softly exclaimed, "My Elizabeth." Her strength was her ability to do small, profound kindnesses for others. In my heart, she is great in the kingdom of heaven.

Liz Dean is a grateful member of the St. Andrew's community.

Thursday in the Third Week of Lent

March 7, 2024

“Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house. . . . But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” (Luke 11:14)

I was in South Carolina in 2015 when a horrible act of hatred occurred in Charleston. Dylann Roof, a neo-Nazi, wanted to create a war between Blacks and Whites. He walked into a church in Charleston with a gun when a Bible meeting was going on and killed nine parishioners. However, because the “finger of God” was present in the church parishioners, this war between races never occurred. The families of those killed in their church chose to forgive rather than to seek revenge.

The city of Charleston responded by having a walk for peace with people of all ages and races.

Cynthia Hunt has been a member of St. Andrew’s for over 40 years. Cynthia sings in the choir. She and her husband Sam were part of St. Andrew’s pilgrimage to England in July 2023. She is very thankful to be a member of St. Andrew’s and to sing with the choir under the direction of Wardie Mannix.

Friday in the Third Week of Lent

March 8, 2024

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. (Ephesians 1:7-10)

In this passage of Ephesians, Paul writes so beautifully about God's bold plan for us through Jesus Christ, if we only have the courage to believe and accept his radical love for us all. I could read this passage over and over again. And it reminds me that there are parts of our Sunday morning worship that I cherish so much. Short phrases that speak to me and fortify me for the week to come.

Are there passages that you hear or repeat each week in church that speak to your heart? That are inspirational? That demonstrate God's love for us all? Write them down and share them with your family. Or keep them close at hand and repeat the words when you need strength. One passage that strikes me each week is during Communion, right before the Lord's Prayer, when the celebrant states "By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever, Amen." To me, it speaks to God's all-encompassing presence in our lives. And I find it so comforting. My wish for all of us this Lenten season is that we can take heart in the words of God.

Will Nystrom is a longtime parishioner, along with his wife Suzanne and children, Maddie, Lily, and Hazel.

Saturday in the Third Week of Lent

March 9, 2024

The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector." (Luke 18:11)

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector who go to the temple to pray. The Pharisee only glorifies himself and degrades the tax collector; he does not ask God for anything and receives nothing. The tax collector humbly asks for God's mercy and is redeemed.

The season of Lent is a time for prayer. This parable is essential because Jesus is teaching us how to pray. It is also a reminder of the dangers of comparing ourselves to others. Today, we often acknowledge the harm in comparing ourselves to those more fortunate; we bemoan the social media comparison trap. But there is also harm in comparing ourselves to those less fortunate, or to "sinners" like the tax collector, to try to make ourselves seem better—whether it is in God's eyes or our own.

Pamela Grossetti is a mother to Francesca (15) and Sara (11), and an investment management attorney. She lives in Wellesley with her children and her husband Josh. She is the vestryperson for youth formation and learning.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 10, 2023

... God, who loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ . . . (Ephesians 2:4-5)

When God created a spectacularly beautiful universe and populated it with humankind, I believe he thought that we would be just that: kind, caring helpmates who exhibited love and compassion for each other and for those in need. Our scripture lessons for today tell us otherwise. People of Jesus' day, like many of us, became self-indulgent and overly interested in their own needs. They became unappreciative of the beauty of Creation and indifferent to others.

So, God came up with another plan and sent Jesus, God with us, to save us and to serve as an example of a way to get back into a right relationship with God and with each other. When we walk in the way of Jesus, we serve as examples, as helpmates, healers, teachers, caregivers, as people who bring hope and love. I often think of and pray for those people who have served as examples for me and know that now it is my/our turn to do the same.

Lent affords us the opportunity to look inwardly and ask—“How are we serving as examples, for one another, for future generations of young people, and for those in our society who most need our love, care, and concern?” More importantly is the question, “Are we the people God intended us to be?”

Karen Vickers Budney, as pastoral associate, enjoys community building and visiting the sick and shut in. She and her husband Al savor time spent with their children, grandchildren, and friends.

Monday in the Fourth Week of Lent

March 11, 2024

Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." (John 4:48)

The readings for today emphasize the importance of believing in God without being able to always see concrete examples of God's presence in our lives.

In my life as a Christian, this is one of the most difficult things for me to do, so I find it fitting that this is the message I happened to be writing about. I find it hard to balance my life and learning as a student, specifically regarding the sciences, with what I have learned about through my religious education, and through reading the Bible. These two fields have many contradictions.

I have spent a lot of time considering their contradictions, and I believe that challenge is something that has come from God as a way of encouraging us to learn how to trust and see God in our lives without needing the concrete evidence.

Those who can believe without seeing and praise God even in difficult times are truly the people of God, and these people will be, "blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well," (Isaiah 65:23). There is a way to both learn and trust in science while believing in God, and I am working on finding that balance as I continue to study while in college.

Julia Pekowitz has been a member of St. Andrew's since she was a child. She has sung in the junior choir and currently sings in the senior choir. She is a first-year student at Wellesley College who enjoys playing the sport of curling.

Tuesday in the Fourth Week of Lent

March 12, 2024

O God, with you is the well of life, and in your light, we see light: Quench our thirst with living water. (Collect of the Day)

All of today's readings concern water: its healing qualities and immense power. Of course, water serves many purposes—drinking, bathing, cooking. The Bible is full of water references and imagery. Jesus walks on water, turns water to wine, and tells his disciples that he will make them “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). In one stunning moment, Jesus tells the woman at the well he will give her “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

Until this fall, I didn't truly believe in the power of water to heal, thinking that it was simply a metaphor. One Saturday, a friend and I visited Lake Mattawa, recently named Massachusetts' most beautiful lake. As we exclaimed of its clarity and freshness, a woman approached, telling us that local Native Americans believed the lake had healing powers, naming it Mattawa, “Meeting of the Waters.” Floating in this incredible body, I instantly understood why water has such power: across many tumultuous centuries, people have come to water for sustenance, beauty, calm, and peace. They leave refreshed and restored; healed.

Karen Pekowitz is a devoted Christian, mother, and teacher. She feels most healed by the music she shares with her beloved St. Andrew's choir family.

Wednesday in the Fourth Week of Lent

March 13, 2024

O Lord our God, you have sustained your ancient people in the wilderness with bread from heaven: Feed now your pilgrim flock with the food that endures to everlasting life. . . (Collect of the Day)

Thus says the Lord: . . . Come forth, to those who are in darkness, “Show yourselves.” . . . And I will turn all my mountains into a road, and my highways shall be raised up. (Isaiah 49:9-11)

There were times in my life when I wandered in the wilderness like the “ancient people” cited in today’s collect. During those periods, I found little solace in the trappings of my life. Any satisfaction gained from material possessions proved fleeting. Through business failures and successes, I learned that creating fulfillment in my life derives from conscious choices I can make. As Robert Frost concluded in his poem *The Road Not Taken*, “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

The Lenten season is a reminder to “show ourselves,” affirming our faith and growing in the knowledge that God will sustain us with bread from heaven if only we come forth from the darkness. God’s promise is that obstacles on the path into light will be eased as mountains will be turned into roads and highways raised up.

David Guydan and his wife Elizabeth are longtime Wellesley residents, members of St. Andrew’s since 2020, and regulars at the 9am Christian learning classes. David is a member of the Men’s Book Club and, together, they enjoy the fellowship of Coventry suppers.

Thursday in the Fourth Week of Lent

March 14, 2024

Almighty and most merciful God, drive from us all weakness of body, mind, and spirit; that, being restored to wholeness, we may with free hearts become what you intend us to be and accomplish what you want us to do. . .” (Collect of the Day)

Sometime last year, I read Brene Brown’s *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience*, and right now I’m reading *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life*, by Susan David. Both good reads, the books are respectively described as: “. . . a journey through eighty-seven of the emotions and experiences that define what it means to be human” and “. . . to navigate life’s twists and turns with self-acceptance, clear-sightedness, and an open mind.” This is me in my human journey.

In my journey with God, as I am carrying all that I learn about myself with me, I try to start fresh with myself and God every day. Prayer is key, and practice is important. Remembering to be grateful and kind. Asking for help; giving to others. God could be standing beside me right now. God could walk into my office at any moment. How will I behave? There is not a straight line from wholeness to doing what God wants, but practice, practice, practice, and I might find myself close to feeling like I did what God needed me to do.

Katharine Clark is a practitioner of prayer and finding Spirit in the everyday mundane stuff, and has been St. Andrew’s parish administrator for almost 14 years.

Friday in the Fourth Week of Lent

March 15, 2024

. . . God created us for incorruption and made us in the image of his own eternity. . . (Wisdom of Solomon 2:23)

There are some Christians who focus a lot on the fallenness and moral depravity of humanity. But personally, I feel much more spiritually excited by the notion expressed in this verse that we were made for incorruption and in the image of God. For me, this verse is the fundamental foundation for hope. What an extraordinary thing that each of us has an image of God imprinted in our soul—a divine spark.

But it also carried with it an enormous responsibility in the way we use our precious lives. Christians define God as love, and as someone made in the image of God, I believe I need to use my life to bring that divine love into the world. I look forward to Lent because it offers me a chance for self-examination and an opportunity to root out the sin and temptation that can mar the image of God within me. Although outwardly Lent can be a somber season with its emphasis on giving up things up, for me it is a season of hope. If I can cleanse my soul, hopefully the image of God within me will shine more brightly, bringing God's love into the world.

Adrian Robbins-Cole is the rector of St. Andrew's. He is married to Sarah and they have two adult children, William and Elizabeth, and two rescue dogs, Olivia and Quincy.

Saturday in the Fourth Week of Lent

March 16, 2024

Let the malice of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; for you test the mind and heart, O righteous God. God is my shield and defense; he is the savior of the true in heart. (Psalm 7:10-11)

Most of the lessons for today seem to refer to judgment, punishment and reward, and destroying one's enemies. I have always been a little uncomfortable with Bible passages like that. But here the ending of Psalm 7 provides a more benign and hopeful interpretation. Let malice end and righteousness prevail. Eliminate the bad thoughts and actions, not the wicked people. That, I believe, is Jesus's message of love. We strive to be true in heart.

Paul Shellito has been a member of St. Andrew's for 38 years. He is a husband, father of two fine sons, a choir member, a member of the adult formation committee, and a lover of the outdoors.

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 17, 2024

“Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24)

In the gospel of John, Jesus says this to Andrew and Philip in reference to his own death and its necessity in God’s plan. The message I draw from it is that God put us all (humans and everything else) here for a purpose, and that we should keep the “big picture” in mind as we consider our role in doing God’s will and making the world a better place.

Focusing on short-term ways to make ourselves feel good can distract us from doing what really needs to be done: putting in the effort and sacrifices for the sake of others and for our own long-term spiritual growth.

In the same passage, Jesus tells his disciples he could have asked God to save him, but knew he had to suffer as part of God’s plan for the world. In his metaphor, wheat grains that fall feed a lot more people than those stuck on the stalk. Even if our “comfort zone” is on the stalk, we can all endeavor to follow his lead and provide the actual or spiritual food that feeds others.

***Sam Burns** runs an independent investment research firm and has been at St. Andrew’s for 14 years with his wife (and current warden) Megan and son, Andrew. He currently serves on the finance committee.*

Monday in the Fifth Week of Lent

March 18, 2024

Jesus spoke to the people, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

In Genesis, God's first act is to manifest a formless and empty earth from the inchoate universe. It is light, however, that is the first of his creations that God recognizes as being good. The opening passages in John invoke those early Genesis verses and then introduce Jesus as the light, anticipating Jesus' own statement in the temple, "I am the light of the world." "Whoever lives by the truth," John writes elsewhere, "comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God."

We may all stumble and fumble in darkness at times. But the coming of dawn each morning, and the lengthening of days as we approach Easter, remind us of the warmth and love of a light that never goes out. I grew up in a very secular household and could probably count on one hand the number of times I went to church as a child. This year, however, marks my second Lenten season as a member of St. Andrew's, where I have experienced for the first time in my life that warmth and love and light of life, for which I am grateful and humbled.

David Morris lives in Wellesley with his wife Gena and their daughter Sofia. They have been members of St. Andrew's since 2023.

Tuesday in the Fifth Week of Lent

March 19, 2024

Jesus increased in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favor. (Luke 2:52)

The word that is most associated with St. Joseph in my mind is faith. Joseph's faith in God's plan is again on display in Luke's passage when waiting for Jesus to return.

This reminds me of the early days of the pandemic when there was so much fear of the unknown: not knowing how long and for what we were waiting. In that uncertainty, I relearned the importance of faith in my life and of slowing down, making time to foster my faith, and letting everything else follow.

So often I think about either the beginning or the end of Jesus's life and it is an unfamiliar image to imagine Jesus as a somewhat cheeky child.

The final line says that "Jesus increased in wisdom and in years." How perfectly human it is! Suggesting that Jesus did not always possess complete wisdom or complete favor, if such a thing exists. Perhaps perfection is never static but always requires us to grow; if we know more than we did yesterday, it doesn't mean that we lacked something yesterday but that today requires more of us.

Sabine Adamson started coming to St. Andrew's as a student at Wellesley College. She was married at St. Andrew's last June to her husband Nathaniel who now sings in the choir.

Wednesday in the Fifth Week of Lent

March 20, 2024

Almighty God our heavenly Father, renew in us the gifts of your mercy; increase our faith, strengthen our hope, enlighten our understanding, widen our charity, and make us ready to serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (Collect of the Day)

In the Collect for today, the theme of renewing gifts of mercy and widening our charity speaks to me.

During Lent, it is traditional to give up worldly pleasures. In my world, that means chocolates, cookies, a second helping of lasagna, and ice cream. My waistline could benefit from giving up some of these “treats.”

However, I made the decision to take my Lenten practices in new directions, balancing abstinence with outreach. I gave up alcohol (which has now become part of my lifestyle—at least 90% of the time). I counterbalance my self-imposed asceticism by doing good for others. I am more participatory in food banks, clothing drives, and in supporting local Brownie, and scouting troops.

I am on a mission during Lent and throughout the year to give more and to take less.

Michael Vanin, his wife Kris, and their two daughters Caitlin and Cara have been members of St. Andrew's since 1997. Over the years, he has been privileged to serve St. Andrew's in a variety of capacities. In 2022, both girls got married; it was so nice to celebrate their happiness.

Thursday in the Fifth Week of Lent

March 21, 2024

*Search for the Lord and his strength; continually seek his face.
(Psalm 105:4)*

In my early Christian life, I often used to think about what it meant to seek God's face. I wondered why I should seek God when I have accepted him as my Savior? When I was younger, "seeking God" meant praying when I needed something.

Years ago, I faced an unexpected loss of loved ones when I was away from my home, South Africa. My dear mother and my only sister passed away a month apart from each other; that broke my spirit. Darkness, pain, and anguish overwhelmed me. I had no words. *Why God, why me?* I thought. My world fell apart. The words that kept echoing in my mind during that time of loss were Jesus saying, "If you seek me, you will find me." As weak as I was, hurt, with the unanswered questions of grief, I found myself praying with psalms because the pain was great. I could not even utter the words. I felt the psalms helping me with words to express my pain. As I spent time in the word of God, I found his promises strengthening me day-by-day and I felt as if I could begin to process my pain. I realized that I was not alone; Jesus was with me. I learned that "seeking God's presence" meant abiding in him every day and thanking him continuously, even when I don't understand why.

Ntonhle Kekana is a daughter of the Most High, a mother, member of the altar guild, member of the membership committee, church school teacher. She says that she is "very grateful to be part of St. Andrew's."

Friday in the Fifth Week of Lent

March 22, 2024

Grant that we may accept with joy the salvation you bestow and manifest it to all the world by the quality of our lives. (Collect of the Day)

This Collect reminds me of my favorite final blessing, one of the blessings a priest says at the end of each Sunday's service: "Receive a blessing for all that might be required of you: may love always drive out fear; may each of you be more perfectly abandoned to the will of God; and may peace and wholeness reign in your hearts, and through you spread out over the face of the earth." This blessing was given to me by Louise, an older ordained priest at Trinity Church, Princeton, where I served as a curate in the first few years of my ministry. It was written by Rev. James Cottel, 25 years before I learned it from Louise, but Louise taught it to me so, for me, it has always been Louise's blessing.

It links me to Louise and Trinity Church, but each time I say it, I also spin out into the timeless Communion of Saints—Christians both living and dead—which makes up the church in all its fullness. Present links to past and eternity, with all of us practicing love driving out fears, claiming peace and wholeness, staying open to what God has in store for us.

How do we practice salvation on earth? By allowing love to drive out fear and then sharing that love with others in the gritty particulars of our lives; by remembering that we are a part of the Communion of Saints.

Margaret Schwarzer has been serving as an associate rector since 2016. This year, she is baking delicious desserts from the Great British Baking Show with her son Ben and is taking lots of yoga classes.

Saturday in the Fifth Week of Lent

March 23, 2024

My dwelling place shall be with them. (Ezekiel 37:27)

One of my favorite books to teach is Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. In it, one of the main characters, Lucie, a young woman with golden hair, is described as "the golden thread." She binds the characters of the novel together, and all their stories are interwoven because of her connections to each one.

When I read Ezekiel 37:21-27 and read the line "my dwelling place shall be with them," I was reminded of this. Someone once asked me what I thought God looked like. The image that initially came to mind was the classic one: man with beard and halo on a cloud with arms open. That image didn't feel right, and it was then I realized that God isn't someone or something that I see, but rather something that I feel. I believe that God dwells within us all, binding us together with a spiritual force. He is the "golden thread," the way we are connected to each other in shared humanity.

Holly Anza has been attending St. Andrew's with her family since the early 1990s. She is currently serving as the vestryperson for communications.

Palm Sunday

March 24, 2024

So they took branches of palm trees . . . shouting, "Hosanna!"
(John 12:13)

"Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" (Mark 15:12-13)

The contradictions during the Passion have always fascinated me. The same people who shouted "Hosanna!" on Palm Sunday shouted "Crucify him" a few days later. The disciples fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter denied Christ three times. How can this be? Are we that weak? Are we that easily intimidated or swayed by the crowd? The answer seems to be "yes."

At the same time, the Passion story reveals Jesus' humanity as he prays in the Garden of Gethsemane to avoid crucifixion and, on the cross, asks God why he has been forsaken. As potentially troubling as these contradictions are, I also see them as the bedrock of our faith. To me, Jesus is most human—most understandable—at the end as he fears death and expresses frustration with the weaknesses of his followers. At the same time, he is most godlike as he forgives his executioners and accusers and promises to take the prisoner on the cross next to him with him to heaven. If he can forgive them, there must be hope for us as well.

Elmore Alexander and his wife Pam joined St. Andrew's during the Pandemic and are regular participants in the Christian Learning Series. Elmore also participates in the Men's Book Club and Bible Study.

Monday of Holy Week

March 25, 2024

I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness. (Isaiah 42:1-9)

During the time of Lent, we are called to look inward to find God's love through Christ's resurrection. However, we need not forget that God calls to us as his chosen people.

When I think of Isaiah's words, I am reminded of being called back to church after a many-year hiatus. It was post-pandemic, only a couple of months after sending my daughter to Godly Play, that I found myself actively listening with happiness to the clergypersons' sermons. Instead of feeling hopelessly lost in my faith, I felt God pull me back—as "[his] chosen, in whom [his] soul delights." What a wonderful gift St. Andrew's is to us!

When I reflect upon my faith journey during Lent, I needn't feel lost or forgotten. As a servant of God, I am held and kept in grace, safety, and comfort. And as I pray, I remember that God's patience in my faith will always meet me where I am. God keeps us in his favor to spread his good word, and we, in turn, can celebrate all that God's love brings to our lives.

Kate Farella has been a member of St. Andrew's since 2021 and is a proud mother of Scarlet, Logan, and Kieran. She hopes to become involved in the worship committee in 2024.

Tuesday of Holy Week

March 26, 2024

The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. (John 12:35)

Jesus speaks these words to his disciples in the days leading up to his crucifixion. He is responding to a cry from the crowd that the Messiah will be with them forever. Although this is true in many ways, Jesus knows that his physical presence on earth is limited and he also knows that once he is gone, there will be strife among his followers.

Just like the disciples, we often take for granted that people we love will always be with us. We aren't always present in our daily lives because we think there will be more time. I believe that Jesus' admonition to "walk in the light" calls us to try to emulate him as the Light of the World, but also to try to be present and enjoy our friends and family while we can. It seems that everyone is very busy these days, me included, but I'm going to try to remember Jesus' call to walk with him and to try to appreciate the people and activities that bring me closer to him.

Megan Burns and her family have been parishioners at St. Andrew's for 14 years. A former church school teacher, Megan currently serves as senior warden.

Wednesday of Holy Week

March 27, 2024

It is by God's will that I answered this "call" (Hebrews 10:10)

As a pediatric resident in 1965, I evaluated and treated children and adolescents, ages eight to 14, with acute leukemia. At this time, the medications were not successful, and many died. As a child's clinical condition worsened, many asked me to meet with them and their parents.

They spoke as follows:

"I am going to die soon and do not want you to be upset, angry, or frightened."

"No one is responsible for my illness. It was God's decision."

"At some time and some place after I die, we will meet again."

These children had a profound impact on me. I went through a period of soul searching about how I was going to continue working with them. Pediatrics was not enough. I considered changing my career to include Child/Adolescent Psychiatry which required six more years of training. After much reflection, I decided to do it and it became my "calling."

I ended up working in this field for 42 years. I am now a retired professor of psychiatry and the former chief of Child/Adolescent Psychiatry at Tufts University School of Medicine.

Joe Jankowski has been a member of St. Andrew's since 1972. He has served as a financial secretary, a vestryperson, and served on the committee on ministry, and a rector search.

Maundy Thursday

March 28, 2024

"Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you." (John 13:35)

Every year, attending Maundy Thursday service is something I look forward to, despite it being the night before Jesus' death, the night he was betrayed. It's a strange mix of emotions. I am so deeply touched hearing about the profound love that Jesus demonstrates for his disciples as he washes their feet, one of his last teachings, and a sign of true equality and unconditional love of all people. It's really moving to then participate in the act of washing feet at our communion rail, together, expressing this same simple act of love.

I was hesitant to participate years ago and just watched from the pews. When I finally got up the courage to join the line of parishioners waiting to first have their feet washed, then wash the feet of others, I was truly moved by how impactful it was. Jesus' last teaching to his disciples was a commandment to love one another. "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." I'm reminded again and again each year at this service that we are encouraged to follow in Jesus' footsteps and ways as Christians, loving one another, caring for one another, unconditionally, with whole hearts.

The Maundy Thursday service is a loving reminder of his sacrifice for us and what he truly wanted us to learn from him and carry on into the world forever.

Carrie Hawley is a professional lighting designer, wife, and mother who resides in a 1773 historic home in Sudbury. She enjoys spending time in her garden and traveling with her husband. She serves on the adult formation and membership committees.

Good Friday

March 29, 2024

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)

I have a new home office. When decorating the walls of my workspace, I bought a new cross. The cross has an image. At the top of the cross we see an arm and hand extended downward. To me this is obviously God. At the bottom of the cross is a person reaching upward, his hand far away from God's. The distance between the outstretched hands represents sin. God cannot abide sin in any form. And, as a sinner, I can never bridge this chasm that separates me from God. The solution is a figure in the middle of the cross. This figure has his back turned to me, but I see scars all over it. He is firmly grasping God's hand with one of his and is reaching down to grasp the person's outstretched hand with the other.

When I look at this cross, I realize viscerally that Jesus is the bridge across the gap of sin that separates me from God. His sacrifice is the key to my salvation, and the ultimate revelation of God's grace and mercy. I just need to make sure I keep reaching upward.

Hugh MacArthur is now a distant parishioner, but still loves St. Andrew's clergy and parish. He moved to Florida with his wife Lakey, and children Hunter, Tommy, Jed, and Charlotte.

Holy Saturday

March 30, 2024

"Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." (Matthew 25: 64)

Today has always felt like an in-between day for me because I know the prophecy came true as Jesus conquered death and rose again. But this Gospel reading makes me ponder what was going through the minds of the apostles, Mary, and Mary Magdalene. They had just witnessed the horrors of a crucifixion, the devastation of Jesus' death, and the finality of placing him in the tomb. Were they inconsolable, in a numbing daze, full of anger and despair? Did they feel alone, forsaken, and fearful for their own safety? Were they doubtful of God's promise? The uncertainty must have been unbearable.

But God did not abandon them. He was just not done.

We are not strangers to suffering. Hurt and desolation are shared human conditions which do not have quick antidotes for their pain. As C.S. Lewis said, "Life with God is not immunity from difficulties, but peace in the difficulties." That peace comes with hope and the understanding God is always nearby.

As I silently and somberly reflect and pray today on the harsh realities of death, I am buoyed knowing God's love will sustain me. I feel the hope and desire for a restored relationship with God beyond the grave. As Cornelia ten Boom once said: "Faith sees the invisible, believes the unbelievable, and receives the impossible."

Ansley Martin is the proud father of three daughters and the proud husband of his wife Jen. They have been members of St. Andrew's since 2001. He currently serves on the adult formation committee.

Easter Sunday

March 31, 2024

Confitemini Domino [Give thanks to the Lord] This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. On this day the Lord has acted; We will rejoice and be glad in it! (Psalm 118:23-24)

These verses are from one of the propers for Easter. They express the marvel and joy of the resurrection. But any and every day we can feel that the Lord has acted: to feed the hungry, to house the homeless, to bring peace to warring nations, or to ourselves when we lose hope. The Lord has overcome trouble and acted on our behalf.

When our choir sings the words “. . . it is marvelous in our eyes” and “We will rejoice and be glad in it,” I feel the joy expressed by the psalmist. These verses also impart a lesson: that our faith in the Lord can break through sadness, danger, and discouragement, bringing us hope and joy.

Janet Giele is a retired professor of sociology who has taught at Wellesley College and Brandeis University. At St. Andrew's, she began singing in the choir in the 1970s. Janet served on vestry as chair of the mission and social responsibility committee and later as junior and senior warden.



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