

The Road to Damascus

February, 2015



Calendar

- Feb. 17** – Thomas Bray Shrove Tuesday dinner, 6:00 p.m.
Feb. 18 – Ash Wednesday. Services at noon and 6:00 p.m.
Feb. 20 – Stations of the Cross, 6:00 p.m.
Feb. 21 – Vestry meeting.
Feb. 26 - Living Well through Lent 2015.
Feb. 27 – Stations of the Cross, 6:00 p.m.
Mar. 5 – Living Well through Lent 2015.
Mar. 6 – Stations of the Cross, 6:00 p.m.
Mar. 12 – Living Well through Lent 2015.
Mar. 13 – Stations of the Cross, 6:00 p.m.
Mar. 19 - Living Well through Lent 2015.
Mar. 20 – Stations of the Cross, 6:00 p.m.
Mar. 21 – Vestry meeting.
Mar. 27 – Stations of the Cross, 6:00 p.m.

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Annual Meeting Report



More than 30 parishioners turned out for the recent annual meeting. Said Senior Warden Vaunie Grauly, "Attendance was excellent. We finished the year with finances in good shape." The budget of \$148,442 shows a slight surplus but, as several speakers noted, the timing of calling a new Rector and other factors could create a small deficit. Stewardship support the church was described as "in decent shape" for this year, but a higher level of support will be required next year when we will no longer receive rent from the Rectory. The Capital Campaign has raised more than \$80,000 toward the goal of \$250,000. Mission and outreach programs continue to benefit the wider community.



Michael Cosby (left) was elected to the Vestry. John Davies was elected Treasurer, with Jennifer Carmichael serving as Assistant Treasurer. Rounding out the officers are Vaunie Grauly, Senior Warden; Kendra MacLeod, Junior Warden; and Linda Day, Clerk.

From the Interim Priest-in-Charge

The following article is based on remarks made by our Interim Priest-in-Charge at the Annual Parish Meeting on February 8, 2015.

In my first six weeks as your Interim Priest-in-Charge, I have come to have great respect for the lay leadership of St. Paul's. I am especially grateful to the Wardens — Carl Sprague, Vaunie Grauly, and Kendra MacLeod — for their dedication, faith, and vision. This parish also has a wonderful new Office Manager, Jenny Lilienthal, who is capable, reliable, and resilient. She is a joy to work with, and if you haven't met her yet, I hope you will soon. Since Jenny and I are both new at St. Paul's, we continue to need your patience and help as we sort things out and settle into processes and routines that work for us and will best serve the needs of St. Paul's within the limits of Jenny's 10 hours a week and my half-time status. As you know, Jenny's office hours are regularly Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9-12 a.m. My hours are less regular, but Wednesday is normally an office day for me. You can almost always reach me via e-mail (libby_wade@yahoo.com) or phone. I want to be as accessible as a half-time position allows!

Thank you for welcoming my husband and me on Sundays. You have intentionally worked on being more welcoming over the last several years, and my own experience as an occasional visitor over the last three years testifies to your ongoing improvement in that area. I appreciate those who wear name tags and those who make a point to talk to me after the service. The Altar Guild and worship leaders have been flexible and accommodating in adjusting to the idiosyncrasies of a new priest's style. Carla McCormick and Bill Grauly are helpful on Sundays in multiple ways. As we move into Lent, you will notice some seasonal changes in worship, but the Sunday liturgies will not be very different from 2014.

My role as Interim Priest-in-Charge is to provide support for the day to day operations of this parish, maintain Sunday worship (with one Sunday off a month), strengthen ties with the wider church (ecumenically in Stockbridge, through the Berkshire South Episcopal/Lutheran Network, and with our Diocese), prepare St. Paul's to receive a new Rector when the time comes, encourage clarity around St. Paul's identity and core values, and work on some short term mission-related goals. In my first six weeks, much of my time has gone into meeting with the various working groups of this congregation and the Episcopal/Lutheran Network, "learning the ropes" of this particular parish and diocese, tying up a great many administrative loose ends, talking with as many people as possible on Sunday, preaching and celebrating the Sunday Eucharist with you, and planning for Lent. In late February and March, I will continue these activities (though hopefully with less time wrapped up in purely administrative tasks) and begin work on a major short-term goal established by the vestry for my Interim work — strengthening and developing Christian Formation for all ages.

Currently there are no educational Christian formation opportunities at St. Paul's. While it is true that we are formed in our faith by participating in Sunday worship or the Friday Intercessory Prayer Group (and even sometimes by our work on committees or teams!), if we never take time outside of worship to intentionally reflect on our faith in dialogue with each other and a teacher/mentor or to go deeper into scripture or theology or issues of living as a Christian in a complex and rapidly changing world, then we are short-changing ourselves. We may also be denying the richness of God's possibilities for speaking in our lives and through our community of faith. I am struck by the fact that you can learn about the history of Stockbridge or hear interesting authors talk about their writing through the Stockbridge Library Lecture Series held at St. Paul's or watch a puppet play in our worship space, but there has been nothing in the way of Christian formation for children since Godly Play went on hiatus last fall and virtually no adult Christian formation groups or classes offered in a very long time.



This Lent we will offer a four week series for adults on **February 26 and March 5, 12, and 19**. On Thursday evenings we will gather at 6:30 p.m. in the Parish House or a parishioner's home for a soup supper and guided conversation on the topic of practicing resilience with our heart, soul, strength, and mind. The program—**“Living Well through Lent 2015”**—includes Bible study and guided discussion, which I will lead, and will end no later than 8:00 p.m. On February 26, we will meet in the Parish House with Natalie Boyce and Carla McCormick as hosts. If you would like to host one of the other weeks, please contact Natalie. If you plan to attend, please e-mail the Church Office so that the soup pot will be amply full! The Stations of the Cross will be offered on Friday evenings during Lent, as well. In the Easter season, we will offer two adult classes — a weeknight Bible study group at my house and a weekday or Sunday morning video-based class on a topic still to be decided, which will meet in the Parish House.

Beginning on February 15, you will begin to see a renewed appeal to families with children. At present, I am simply trying to find this group which has been conspicuously absent from Sunday worship. Emma Skakel continues to offer child care during the 10 a.m. worship service for very young children. We will also have new “Quiet Bags” available near the front door of the church for the use of preschool and elementary age children during worship along with copies of a new book “Let Us Pray: A Little Kid’s Guide to the Eucharist.” Once a month, there will be a special emphasis on child-friendly worship at our 10 a.m. Eucharist. I appeal to adults to show tolerance for a bit higher noise level and to families with children to make an effort to come worship as a family. A special event outside of Sunday worship will be held during Lent or Holy Week for children. Watch your weekly e-mail blasts from St. Paul’s for more specific info about children’s Christian formation at St. Paul’s and for announcement of a teen gathering, as well.

Thank you for the privilege of serving Interim among people so full of possibilities for more fully living into God’s dream.

Faithfully,

Libby+

From the Senior Warden



Everything is going well this winter at St. Paul's. Our Interim Priest-In-Charge, Libby Wade, began in mid January and already seems right at home. We are trying to wear name tags so Libby and Jim can learn our names. Attendance at the annual meeting was excellent. We finished the year with finances in good shape. Our budget for 2015-16 passed. We donated clothing, gifts, food, diapers and funds to our community.

Parishioners continue to enjoy each other's company at Sunday services, hospitality time and other get-togethers. We will have another chance for fun and fellowship at the Thomas Bray beef and beer dinner. This is always a wonderful time.

Lastly, please keep the Search committee members in your prayers. They are working hard but, as you can understand, much of their work must remain confidential. Just ask them and they will tell you all they are able to about how the search is progressing.

Vaunie

Thoughts on Stewardship

Recently a good friend gave me the following words that were identified as *The Spirituality of Stewardship*.

“Receive God’s gifts gratefully,
Nurture God’s gifts tenderly,
Share God’s gifts generously,
Giving praise and thanks to God.” *

I believe these four lines sum up the essence of one’s understanding of stewardship. All that we have are gifts from God, gifts we have received from our loving and generous God. May we acknowledge and receive these gifts with gratitude for God’s love and generosity. God calls us to be good stewards of these gifts. God invites us, out of our abundance, to share these gifts with others. And the natural response of a steward is to give God great thanks and praise for all the gifts God so lovingly and generously entrusts to us.



Here is a suggestion that could help you deepen your gratitude during this Lent: Each morning, take just a couple of moments to ask God to help you think about the day ahead...first, be aware of God’s loving presence with you always. As you think about the responsibilities and opportunities in the day ahead, identify and give thanks for the gifts God has given you to use in these situations. Ask God to help you be a good and generous steward of the gifts God has given you in the relationships, responsibilities and tasks for the day. Then at the end of the day, (before you are too tired) take a few moments to invite God to help you reflect back over the day: First, call to mind all the things for which you are most grateful about the past day, the ways God was present and at work in, around and through your life. How did God help you to use your gifts during the past day? In what ways did you share God’s generosity with others during the past day? Offer your thanksgiving to God for the gift of the day and surrender your self to the renewing love of God as you fall asleep.

If we do this during our Lenten journey, I believe we will grow in our relationship with God and will become better stewards of the countless gifts God entrusts to us.

*Bruce Rockwell
Assistant to the Bishop for Stewardship
Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts*

* *From The Jesuit Collaborative, January E-News, 1.29.15*

What's With The Windows?

By Carl Sprague

For those of you curious about what is happening with the Musgrave Memorial windows here are some notes from John Misci of Misci Art Glass in Boston who is doing the restoration:

The work is moving along - I already have the vent sections rebuilt and one of the panels put together. The others are in the process of being cleaned and readied for rebuilding. I'm not sure if I discussed the issues we discovered when we removed them but these windows were crammed into the openings.



The major issue with these windows seems to be that they were a very tight fit for the openings. Contraction and expansion over the years led to the severe buckling that prompted the renovation effort. We're confident that John will be able to resolve these issues, clean up the glass (below) and put the windows back in properly for what we hope will be a long time to come.

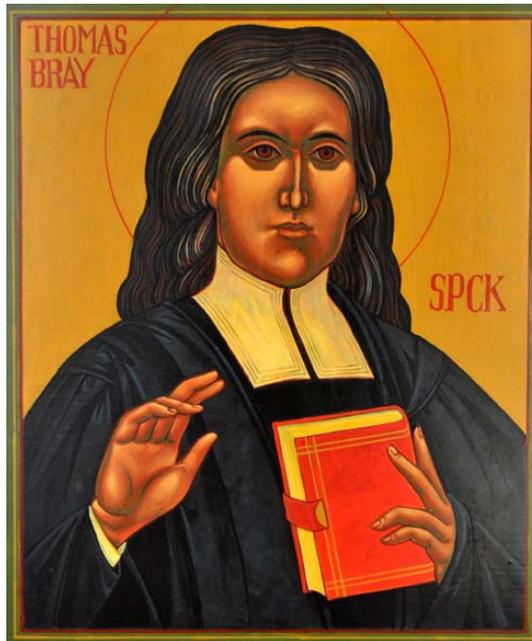


The cost for restoring the windows is estimated at \$15,000. The Capital Campaign Committee is reaching out to the Musgrave family to help cover this cost. In any case, we seem to be on track to have everything back together by Easter. We will be talking with them about replacing the exterior storm glazing that protects our other precious stained glass. Happily the prognosis for the rest of the windows in the Church is that they're in very good shape.

A long term goal is to revisit our central St. Paul window. This is a very special work by the American master John LaFarge, but it has already gone through two renovations - one in the 1920s and another in the late 1970s. Important elements of LaFarge's original work have been lost in the process. Considerable study will be required before we tackle this project.

Who Was Thomas Bray?

And Why Are We Eating Beef and Drinking Beer?



For many years St. Paul's has marked the eve of Lent with the Thomas Bray Beef and Beer supper. It was started as an alternative to the more traditional Shrove Tuesday supper. But other than a change from pancakes, why do we have beef and beer? And who was Thomas Bray, anyway?

It turns out that Bray, who lived from 1658 to 1730, had quite a career. He was an Oxford professor, a priest, and the Bishop of London's Commissary to the colony of Maryland. He founded church libraries and schools, raised money for missionary endeavors, and influenced young English priests to try their vocations in America. He even fought long and hard to get an American bishop consecrated, though that effort failed.

It was his concern for the deplorable condition of England's prisons that led him to organize Sunday "Beef and Beer" dinners to provide nourishment for the underfed inmates. (It should be noted that in those days, beer was commonly served at most meals and was considered to be more healthy than water.) Few clergymen have taken more seriously our Lord's command, "Feed my sheep."

This year's dinner will be Tuesday, February 17, 6:00 p.m., in the Parish House.

Writers Wanted!

Want to help with the newsletter? We need people to contribute short articles on parish life. If you are interested, please contact Bill Graulty at bgraulty@yahoo.com.