

The Road to Damascus

April 2015



Holy Week Schedule

Maundy Thursday: April 2

7:00 p.m. at St. Paul's. Maundy Thursday is the remembrance of the Last Supper. On this night Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, established the Eucharist, and was betrayed by Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane. At the end of this service, the Altar Guild and clergy will strip the worship space of all vestments and decorations and veil the altar cross. A large wooden cross will be brought into the church and people will be invited to spend as much time as they like in silent prayer before leaving after the service. The offering will go to Stockbridge Open Table.

Good Friday: April 3

Noon at 1st Congregational Church. Good Friday is among the most difficult days for Christians as we face the unthinkable, the cruel execution of God's love wrapped in flesh. Through our worship at 1st Congregational Church, we will face the cross and all it means for our faith and life.

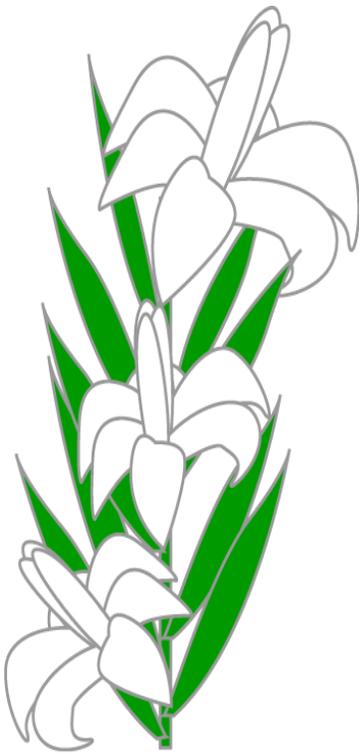
6:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross. We are invited to join people from the Congregational Church in walking the powerful life-sized Stations of the Cross on top of the hill at the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy, tracing the steps of Jesus on Good Friday so many years ago.

Easter Vigil: Saturday, April 4

7 p.m. at St. Paul's. The Easter Vigil is one of the most dramatic and powerful worship services of the whole year, and it is great that St. Paul's is hosting it right here at home this year in collaboration with Grace Church, Great Barrington. Musicians, readers, storytellers, and clergy from both congregations will lead the service. The Rev. Annie Ryder from Christ/Trinity in Sheffield will preach. Our Congregational brothers and sisters have also been invited to join us as we look to our heritage as God's people, celebrate our new life in Christ, and share the first communion of Easter. Bring a bell and come prepared for an unforgettable worship experience! The offering will be divided between Lee Food Pantry and Cathedral in the Night.

Easter Day: Sunday, April 5

8 and 10 a.m. at St. Paul's. "Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia!" The Choir will sing. The "Alleluias" buried on the last Sunday of Epiphany will delightfully reappear. Bright flowers will adorn the church. Joy will abound on this most holy of days. This is our monthly Food Pantry Sunday, so please bring diapers or food. The baskets of food and boxes of diapers will be presented for blessing at the offertory and taken to Lee Food Pantry on April 11, St. Paul's volunteer day. The special offering at both services will be divided between the Lee Food Pantry and Construct, two fine South County outreach ministries.



Momentum Sunday: April 12 (details on page 7)

Building Vital Congregations—Stayin’ Alive with Christ

By The Rev. Libby Wade

“Building Vital Congregations” was the theme of the Diocesan Parish Leadership Day that my husband Jim and I recently attended. From start to finish, it was an excellent event with much useful information and opportunities to network with lay and clergy leaders from all over our diocese. This Leadership Day is held every year and I encourage St. Paul’s leadership to take advantage of it next year.



Jim attended workshops on caring for creation and seeing our neighbors, while I attended the Christian Formation and diocesan grant workshops. Bishop Fisher was the lead speaker in the morning focusing on the day’s theme of building vital congregations. Canon Rich Simpson closed out the day with an interesting talk on hospitality called “Strangers Now Are Friends.” In this newsletter, I offer a brief summary of Bishop Fisher’s plenary address. His talk was replete with amusing and poignant video clips and graphics to illustrate the points. All I can say is, “Wish you could have been there!” Bishop Fisher’s main premise was that vital congregations at their heart are Easter congregations who live into the resurrection promise of new and abundant life in Christ. Here are his “Ten Characteristics of Easter Congregations.”

1. Easter Congregations have spiritually mature leadership and intentionally provide ways to increase spiritual maturity throughout the congregation.
2. Easter Congregations help their members articulate the faith that is within them.
3. Easter Congregations believe in a dynamic God. “God is constantly making changes. Lord, help me to see the changes you are making.”
4. Easter Congregations know that God answers prayers, though sometimes late and without much detail. (For example, the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth’s prayer for a child)
5. Easter Congregations know that change brings conflict, but they are not afraid! “We are the Body of Christ not because we agree with each other, but because we care about each other.”
6. Easter Congregations experiment with liturgy. (One example came from St. Andrew’s in Northampton, where a Celtic Communion Liturgy was begun as a monthly Saturday service after a year of careful planning.)
7. Easter Congregations know that the natural moral arc of the universe is charity, service, advocacy, and justice. (Gideon’s Garden in Great Barrington along with the Community Network Dinners held by Grace Church at the Guthrie Center last year are an example of moving from charity and service to advocacy and justice.)
8. Easter Congregations ask “Who is my neighbor?” They look around the neighborhood of their church, engage neighbors in conversation, and then ask “What do we see?” and “What might we do with what we’ve seen?”
9. Easter Congregations know where the young people are. Bishop Fisher says the young people are volunteering and encourages congregations to invite teens to help with outreach, giving them a chance to do things that matter and to talk about it. We also need to remember not to make assumptions, but to directly ask young people, “What do you need from the church?” A good website, bold leadership, bold stances on social justice, a safe place to express oneself, intellectual engagement, welcoming everyone to communion, good music, a variety of worship service times, and more diversity are all ways in which young people have answered this question.
10. Easter Congregations know we are in the midst of the dynamic changes God is making in our world and in our church.

Continued on page 3.

Stayin' Alive with Christ (continued)

Bishop Fisher closed with a play on a phrase from one of his favorite musicians, Bruce Springsteen: "Is your church just stayin' or is it stayin' alive? I hope that you will take some time to consider our bishop's top 10 list in relation to your experience of St. Paul's as we move into the Easter Season. Our God truly is the God who refuses to stay dead, is intent on setting people free, and is always on the move. Following Jesus means expressing the aliveness of God. What better time to consider the implications of this than during this season when we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and watch new life spring from the ground all around us. May St. Paul's strive to be an Easter Congregation!

Easter Blessings!
Libby+

Search Committee Update

The search process is moving along at a very good pace. The Search Committee has been interviewing candidates on a "revolving" basis. That is, we have evaluated each candidate's materials as they were received .

The Search Committee started reviewing candidate's OTM portfolio's in late February and scheduled online interviews for those of interest. We are utilizing online Skype interviews as the first step in the interview process. This is an extension of a phone screening process often used in interviewing with the added benefit of being able to see one another during the conversation. The online conversation is the first step with respective candidates to determine if we and they wish to have continued conversations.

The Search Committee continues to rely on the Holy Spirit to guide our discernment. We appreciate your ongoing support and patience, and we ask for your continued prayers for the committee and the entire search process.

Matt Fillio



A highlight of Every Member Sunday was the commissioning of officers and members of the Vestry. From left, Jennifer Carmichael, Michael Cosby, John Davies, Natalie Boyce, Kendra MacLeod, Matt Fillio, Vaunie Graulty and Libby Wade.

Organ Update

St. Paul's is closing in on a major decision regarding our organ. Here are some facts, provided by people who have studied the matter, including Mike Foley of Foley Baker, organ consultants and repair experts, and Nancy King, organist, who both presented at a parish organ meeting on March 1 attended by 17 people.



- The current organ, a tracker by Hillbourne L. Roosevelt, was built in 1883 and greatly enlarged by Richard Geddes in 1964. Our aging organ is deteriorating. The organ has a recurring problem with ciphers, mysterious sounds that happen unexpectedly and must be fixed for the instrument to play properly. Dust regularly falls into the pipes.

- Records indicate that there have been four recent proposals (one in 2008 and three in 2010) for rebuilding the organ. None was acted upon, primarily for reasons of cost. According to notes from Tom Damrosch, Mike Foley recommended that St. Paul's, "since we will not be doing a major rebuild, husband the organ fund for repairs as they arise."

- St. Paul's has been offered the opportunity to buy a Gress Miles concert quality organ from Hartt School of Music for \$50,000. It was used as a teaching instrument and has been very well maintained.

- At this point, the church has an organ fund that has enough money in it to cover purchase of this instrument, but not the installation, which is estimated to cost in the neighborhood of \$200,000. Raising funds for such a large project would require very serious time and commitment from parishioners, as well as a fundraising effort beyond our church community.

- The Vestry has discussed the option to store the organ until funds can be raised to pay for installation. Cosby Sporting Goods warehouse in Sheffield is available and is an adequate storage space with no cost involved thanks to parishioner, Michael Cosby.

- The Vestry voted on March 28 to form a study and feasibility committee to explore the organ situation, including the status of the current organ and financial options for funding purchase and installation of the Gress Miles.

- We regularly receive requests from organists to play our organ. Some are interested in presenting concerts. At some point, our organ will no longer be up to our own musical standards and will no longer attract the interest of visiting or even regular Sunday organists.

The Vestry invites your participation on the newly formed Organ Committee. This important work will continue into the future whether St. Paul's buys the Gress Miles organ or not because the question of what to do about our organ will not go away. Please contact Vaunie Graulty, Kendra MacLeod, John Davies or Libby Wade.

Parish life: From Shrove Tuesday ...



The annual Thomas Bray Beef and Beer supper was a huge success with a large crowd enjoying a feast coordinated by Chef Dennis Ryan (left). At right, Natalie and Kendra enjoy a moment.



A special event that night was a birthday celebration for Betty White, who received a cake and best wishes from Bishop Doug Fisher.



... to helping children prepare for Easter with pretzels, palms, and butterflies

On Palm Sunday St. Paul's inaugurated a new event for children Age 12 & under and their families. Rev. Libby was the guide through a journey from Palm Sunday through Holy Week. The event featured stories, food, crafts, and other activities.



Easter Season brings Growth Opportunities

Acts: From Maintenance to Mission

An 8 Week Bible Study beginning April 16

During the Easter Season, we read from the book of Acts instead of the Old Testament in Sunday worship. This is particularly fitting because Acts tells the post-resurrection story of the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem to Rome itself with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. An eight week study course here at St. Paul's will offer participants a chance to read and explore the first nine chapters of Acts. The study guide author is the Rev. Canon C. K. Robertson, Canon to the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

In his introduction, Canon Robertson writes: "We are God's agents on earth, ambassadors who act on God's behalf in the world about us, taking great care of the divine gifts of creation, money, resources, and people." We are called not just to maintain the status quo, but to move forward with God's mission. In each session, we will look at the designated passage from Acts in its original context and then explore what it might mean for us in our local context. Those who read the passages ahead of time and engage with the optional "homework" will naturally get more from the sessions, but those who do neither will still be able to participate. We can take a maximum of 15 people and 2/3 of those slots are already filled, so reserve your spot quickly.

Leaders: Libby & Jim Wade

Location: The Wades' House (1110 Fairview St, South Lee)

Dates: Thursdays from 7-8 pm on April 16, 23, 30; May 7, 21, 28; June 11, 18

Embracing a Life of Meaning -- Discovering What Matters

A 5 Week Study beginning on April 15 or 19

This study course for adults includes a brief video teaching session each week by noted poet and memoirist Kathleen Norris. Her warmth, insight and humor stimulate thoughtful and heartfelt conversations among her listeners, both on screen and in local study groups such as ours. The Rev. Libby Wade will guide our local study group making use of a handbook (\$10) that offers an incredibly wide range of choices to generate our own substantive discussions after viewing the video. Weekly topics center around belief, the Bible, community, a sense of place, and the notion that we matter to God.

Leader: Libby Wade

Location: The Upper Room in the Parish House

Option 1: Sundays, April 19; May 3 & 17; June 7 & 21

(after the hospitality time following the 10 a.m. worship service)

Option 2: Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. on April 15, 22, & 29; May 13 & 20

(Option 2 participants are invited to bring a brown bag lunch)

E-mail Libby (libby_wade@yahoo.com) if you have questions. Indicate your interest in participating in any of these study groups by e-mailing Libby or signing the interest sheet on the table near the front door of the church. Feel free to invite a friend to join us for these sessions, even if they do not attend St. Paul's.

The Second Sunday of Easter -- April 12 -- 8 and 10 a.m.

Momentum Sunday across our Diocese

Bishop Fisher has challenged the congregations of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts to do all in their power to keep the Easter Day momentum going so that our Easter Celebration is sustained and grows over the seven weeks of the Easter Season. The Mission and Outreach Committee has lots of ideas about this, so stay tuned as we sift through those and work to make all our Sundays even more special than they already are! On the Second Sunday of Easter, the gospel lesson is always the story of Thomas, who brought his skepticism and doubts to a gathering of the disciples and met the resurrected Jesus. So, **this is a Sunday when "Doubts are Welcome" in the church.** Come as you are and be welcomed! If the weather cooperates, it may even be our first Sunday to share hospitality time outside on the lawn after the 10 a.m. worship service.

Help the Food Pantry with these deals!

Thanks to John and Lynda Morse, here are some ways we can stretch our Food Pantry contributions. Each Wednesday/Thursday, Big Y, Stop & Shop and Price Chopper flyers for the following week specials are distributed to P.O. boxes. Flyers are also available at store front entrances. Effective days for the advertised specials are:

Big Y	Thursday thru Wednesday
Stop & Shop	Friday thru Thursday
Price Chopper	Sunday thru Saturday

In addition to reduced price specials, often advertised are "Buy One Get One Free" and "Buy One Get Two Free." Approximately every three weeks, BIG Y advertises numerous "Buy One Get Two Free" specials. Seen frequently are price specials for tuna fish and boxes of pasta at \$1.00 or less and seemingly every week cans of Chef Boyardee ravioli for \$1.00. For those who accumulate "cents off fuel savings" at Price Chopper, many featured items come with bonus fuel points.

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.