

The Road to Damascus

March 2016



Conversion of Paul Highlighted by Confirmations

It was with great joy that we welcomed Bishop Doug Fisher for the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. January 24 was especially significant as three of our younger members, Nicholas Dillon (below, between Father Sam and Bishop Fisher), and Alex and Sam Johnson (to the Bishop's left) were confirmed. Continued on p. 3.

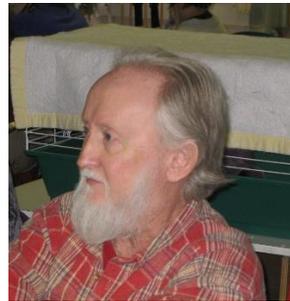


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Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of St. Paul's on January 17 voted to elect two new members of the Vestry: Sebastian Bonner and Christopher Johnson.



Sebastian Bonner



Chris Johnson

New officers are:

- Senior Warden: Matt Fillio
- Junior Warden: Vaunie Graulty
- Treasurer: John Davies
- Clerk: Linda Day

Linda Day and Jackie Nicholas were nominated as delegates to the Diocesan Convention. Returning Vestry members include Natalie Boyce, Kendra MacLeod, Donna Touponce and Michael Cosby.

In her remarks, outgoing Senior Warden Vaunie Graulty thanked the members for the opportunity to serve during a time of transition and community growth.

Father Sam noted that "We are not a charity nor a business. What are we? We are a branch of the Jesus movement and our mission is to follow the way of Christ and bring his message to every corner of our community. God needs to hear us as we bring our community needs to light." To this end, he added, "The Vestry will work with the entire congregation to identify – and act on – our hopes and dreams."

From Fr. Sam:

Turn, Turn, Turn...

This year's liturgical calendar has my head spinning. Being new to St. Paul's, I am still learning about our congregation's traditions around worship and liturgy. Combine that with Easter falling much earlier than normal, and I feel like the year is rushing by. (By the way, the date for Easter is determined by the lunisolar calendar – it falls on the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or soonest after March 21, and can be anywhere between March 22 and April 25.)



So while it seems to me we just got through celebrating Christmas, we suddenly find ourselves in the season of Lent, a time of introspection and preparation. In the early church new Christians were specially prepared in Lent for baptism at the Easter celebrations. So it is a good time for all of us to take stock of our own spiritual lives and consider what we might change to bring us closer to God.

We also have new parish leadership, elected at our January Annual meeting. (See p. 1) The vestry will be using this time to begin thinking about who we are as a congregation, and what we want to become. Of course, that is a conversation that must include all of us. Watch for opportunities to weigh in on this important dialogue.

All of this reminds me that we are called to be active in directing our own lives, both individually and corporately. It is tempting to be content with the status quo, not wanting to chance making waves in our seemingly peaceful worlds. But we know that things always change, that nothing is static. So why not chart our own course, rather than allowing it to be set for us?

As always, I am eager to discuss with you the paths you might explore for your own life, as well as the opportunities ahead for St. Paul's Church. Together, let's bring ourselves closer to Jesus Christ, using his light as our guiding beacon.

Sam+

Volunteers Make Good Things Happen

Whether you have a little time or a lot, whether you have special skills or are more of a "Jack of all trades," St. Paul's needs you. Opportunities include service ministry (greeters, readers, hospitality, etc.), support of outreach programs like the food pantry, helping with special events, and working on communications. Please see Father Sam or any member of the Vestry to volunteer your support.

Holy Week Calendar

Maundy Thursday (March 24)

8:00 am service of Holy Eucharist at St. Paul's

7:00 pm service at 1st Congregational Church (both services in partnership with 1st Congregational Church)

Good Friday (March 25)

Noon service at St. Paul's (with the 1st Congregational Church)

6:00 pm Stations of the Cross (meet at the 1st Congregational Church parking lot)

Holy Saturday (March 26)

10:30 Messy Church (Christ/Trinity Church in Sheffield, see below)

7:00 pm Easter Vigil service at St. Paul's (with Grace Church, Great Barrington and Christ/Trinity Church, Sheffield)

Easter Day (March 27)

8:00 am (Rite I)

10:00 am (Rite II)

Messy Church is Coming!

On Holy Saturday, March 26, there will be a *Messy Church* event for kids ages 3-12 and their parents that will focus on the journey through Holy Week into Easter. Led by The Rev. Libby Wade, the program will be presented in partnership with Grace Church, Great Barrington, and Christ/Trinity Church in Sheffield, and will be held at the church in Sheffield (180 Main Street) from 10:30 to 11:45 am and will include lunch.

Messy Church is a program that began in England and bills itself as "a form of church for children and adults that involves creativity, celebration, and hospitality." The program is open to any families in our area, regardless of church membership. We hope to have another *Messy Church* event with a focus on Pentecost in May, and to have monthly gatherings beginning in Fall 2016.



Confirmation (continued)



Following the service Bishop Fisher gathered with the congregation to help welcome the newly confirmed.

Nick Dillon, a son of Peter and Diane Dillon, is in 9th grade at Monument Mountain Regional High School. He swims for his high school team and the Westfield Wave. He volunteers through Pathways and Berkshire South's Tone Program. Nick appreciates the St. Paul's community.

Alex Johnson, son of Chris and Tracy Johnson, is a college freshman at Green Mountain College in Poultney, VT. He is a graduate of Monument Mountain Regional High School and an Eagle Scout. Alex enjoys alpine skiing and backpacking.

Sam Johnson, also son of Chris and Tracy, is a sophomore at Lenox Memorial High School. He rows Crew in Fall and Spring and is a member of the Alpine ski team. Sam is a Life scout with the Lee Boy Scout troop, and enjoys reading and camping.

Stewardship Program is a Rousing Success



Consecration Sunday on December 13 exceeded its goals of encouraging people toward proportionate and systematic giving in response to the question, "What percentage of my income is God calling me to give?" Guest preacher Rev.

Jim Burns (above, on the right) conducted a brief period of instruction and inspiration, climaxed by members making their commitments as a confidential act of worship. This approach has proved to be highly successful. Finance Committee Chair Kendra MacLeod reports that "As of February we have exceeded our budgeted goal for pledges of \$83,000. We are grateful."

Windows to get needed protection

With the help of Danielle Fillio, Jorja Marsden and Carl Sprague, we have received a grant from the Stockbridge Community Preservation Commission to protect our stained glass windows. The Committee appreciated the well-presented application and granted us \$21,000 to use towards the project. The process will include the removal of the aged and discolored Lexan coverings from the windows (right). These will be replaced with a new protective glass of 1/4" thick, clear tempered glass. These new coverings will allow more light into the church and also let people on the outside see our beautiful windows



Reaching out – one load at a time

On Maundy Thursday, March 24, a group of volunteers from St. Paul's will begin a new outreach program. Called "Laundry Love," it's designed to help people who face daily economic challenges, such as whether to have clean clothes or buy food and medicine. Modeled after a successful program that has taken root in Pittsfield, volunteers will supply quarters for washers and dryers, as well as detergent, dryer sheets and other supplies.

It will take place at the Lee Coin-Op Laundromat on Park Street (by Rite-Aid) from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Your help is needed! We need volunteers on the 24th, and we also need liquid laundry detergent and disposable dryer sheets. Cash donations are also welcome. Please leave laundry supplies at the back of the church (by the food pantry items) and place financial donations in the offering plate, marked

"Laundry Love." This is an opportunity to help with everyday needs – and also to reach out to our community. As Fr. Sam noted, beginning this outreach has special significance in light of the Maundy Thursday tradition of washing feet.



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Story Telling: At the family Christmas Eve service Father Sam draws a crowd of young people as they place figures around the crèche and hear the story of the birth of Jesus.



Christmas Outreach: This year's programs included a "giving tree" to benefit families and individuals in the South Berkshires. Above left, baskets of gifts were delivered to Construct, Inc. in Great Barrington. Above right, a "tree" of donated food rose during the Advent season. These goods and more were for the Lee food pantry. A similar "tower" is rising during Lent.



Thomas Bray Supper: Chef Dennis Ryan checks with Robin and others to be sure everything is to their satisfaction. It was – again! Another highly successful and well-attended dinner to mark the start of Lent.