



The Sandpiper

The Newsletter of Saint Nicholas Episcopal Church

Scarborough, Maine

February 2017

FROM OUR VICAR



Dear Friends:

Lent is the shortened word of the Old English *lencten*, meaning *spring* or more precisely the lengthening of days characteristic of the season of spring. Lent is still a few weeks away, yet we are already enjoying the waxing light in the early morning and the lingering light at the end of the day, the promise of spring, indeed.

This year, Ash Wednesday is on March 1, and our service will be at 6:30 pm.

Our Lenten study will begin the following Thursday, March 9, from 6:30-8:00 PM. Two years ago we read together Rowan Williams' *Being Christian*. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Williams has since written a companion book, *Being Disciples*. Both are beautifully written, deceptively simple, and yet reveal the depths of the Christian life. The book is inexpensive and easily ordered at your local bookstore or may be purchased online. Please plan to join us.

The Reverend Michael Ambler, Canon to the Ordinary, will be with you this Sunday, February 12, as celebrant and preacher. After the service, he will gather with you to discuss the results of the Mutual Study of Ministry that we engaged in last fall. He's hoping that as many of you as are able will be in attendance. Michael is a gifted and gracious priest. As the Bishop's assistant for congregational life, he is well known throughout the diocese.

Faithfully yours.

David

VICAR'S ANNUAL REPORT, JANUARY 29, 2017

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

Last autumn, Hazel Davis spoke to me at coffee hour. In reference to my heart surgery last April, she asked me how I was doing. She said (and I paraphrase):

You know, I've always felt that it takes at least nine months to get over a significant medical bump in the road. The doctors don't know what they're talking about. It always takes longer than they think! If it takes nine months to conceive and make a baby, well then, why shouldn't it take that long to recover?

Hazel, you are one very wise woman. God bless you.

Last week, I passed the nine-month mark and am feeling well. Back to normal? Frankly, I'm not sure what *normal* is, or if I ever felt *normal* to begin with. I am left with only gratitude for that time—for my family and friends, for my gifted physicians and all who cared for me at Mass General Hospital, for all of you.

As I made mention of in my first sermon after my return in June, Sukie gave me a card a day or two before my surgery with a quote from the 14th century Persian poet Hafiz. It says: *I felt in need of a great pilgrimage, so I sat still for three days.* Inside, she wrote: *I am sure this open heart surgery is not exactly the kind of pilgrimage that you (or Hafiz!) had in mind, but it will be its own kind of "great pilgrimage."* And further on in the sermon I said: *You have shown great love to me and to my family and for that I am deeply grateful. You have held me in your heart and prayers; you have sent cards and texts; you have offered meals and flowers and beer; if not physically present, you have as yet walked alongside me...I wonder if the great pilgrimage is just a metaphor for this journey that we call life, that we need not go anywhere at all, that we need simply pay attention to where we are. The journey to the sacred happens in the midst of the here and now, especially when we turn aside and dive deeply into those occasions when life breaks us open and wakes us up—whenever we know unmistakably that love surrounds us on every side.*

Paying attention to where we are. Gratitude for gifts received. Being clear about what's most important...a good place as any, I think, to begin this annual report.

In the Mutual Study of Ministry last fall, you were asked what connects you to Saint Nick's and then what connects you to God. Overwhelmingly, what you value most is each other. A substantial majority of respondents referred to "the people"—or the congregation feeling "like family"—as the source of your felt sense of connection. Many of you also expressed a desire to see Saint Nick's grow in numbers. Some voiced the hope that we would become a larger, livelier congregation with more young people; others wished for growth as an aspect of achieving financial stability. Some took the other tack, either seeing no need for growth or wishing for only slight growth. A few of you expressed a concern about losing the closeness and familiarity of a small community.

In my annual report last year, I noted that, however desirable it may be, growth is difficult in today's cultural and social climate. Poll after poll on the changing social and religious landscape of America shows decreasing church affiliation and attendance, especially among mainline denominations. Only a handful of our congregations in Maine are experiencing real growth. A few have closed their doors. Most are doing well just to stay even or to experience modest growth. Saint Nick's is in that latter category and for that we have much to be grateful. More and more, the Episcopal Diocese of Maine, guided by Bishop Lane, is streamlining its operations in order to be sustainable well into the future. The diocesan staff has been reduced to just a handful of full-time employees. Diocesan convention is now a one-day affair, whereas it had been two days previously.

Except for a brief seven-year stint in Massachusetts, I've been around Maine since my ordination in 1983. And I can say that the mood and overall health of the diocese has never been better. More and more we, as the people of the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement in Maine (as our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry refers to us), are becoming clear about that which is most important; our mission is more focused. It might be a lovely and desirable thing to grow in numbers but, if we lose that which is at the heart of the Christian life, we lose everything.

In a passage that is among the most memorable in all of scripture—and that captures the heart of the biblical witness—see the words of the prophet Micah above: *do justice...love kindness...walk humbly with your God.*

Just that. Keep it simple. Stay close to the heart of God.

As I enter the later years of active ministry, I often ask myself: what's most important about the work I do? What is at the heart of my ministry? And, again and again, the response comes, *loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself, especially those most in need of knowing that love surrounds them on every side.* In the end, that's all that truly matters; and I believe that at Saint Nick's we already know that. The challenge is to embrace it, to embody it in every aspect of our life together.

The question that I leave with you, and ask that you ponder and pray about in the days and months ahead, is this: what is God calling us to do at Saint Nick's to foster that which truly matters?

The Reverend Michael Ambler, our Canon to the Ordinary who facilitated our Mutual Study of Ministry, will be here on February 12 to discuss it with us. Copies of his narrative report will be available next Sunday after the service.

John Sutton has been in the habit of making a Worship Committee report at annual meeting; unfortunately he is still recovering from a bout with the flu. (Editor's note: John is now almost fully recovered.) I would refer you, as I did the Bishop's Committee last month, to my *Sandpiper* cover letter for January. In it I discuss the work of the national church's Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, especially as it pertains to various options for the revision of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Our worship practice at Saint Nick's closely reflects the likely direction of the Commission's recommendations to General Convention, which is to continue to the use the 1979 Book of Common Prayer more or less as is, at the heart of our worship, while drawing from the liturgical riches of the global Anglican Communion, a practice ongoing from the first American prayer book in 1789.

I am reminded again this year, as I am every year, of those who, largely unnoticed and unacknowledged, make worship possible at Saint Nick's. For Cheryll Green, who keeps the freezer stocked with communion bread; for Carl Bredenberg, who keeps the sacristy cupboard stocked with wine and the lectern microphone loaded with batteries; for Jane Ducott, whose lovely flower arrangements bring joy to the heart. For all the lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and members of the Worship Committee, who for brevity's sake I will not mention by name but thank. For Dick Hamilton, who scheduled the lectors for many years, and now for Dorothy Sutton, who has taken on that task; and for Jane Ducott, who lines up the Eucharistic ministers. For Cathy Bennett, who creates the bulletin every week and to those who ably assist her in covering the office—Anna Hamilton, Cheryll Green, and Pam Hillman. For Linda Cohen, our building use manager. For the newly coined “offering tellers” (as opposed to “almoners”)—Dorothy Sutton (and for her able assistant John), Kelly Martino, Nancy Agan, Sean Walsh, John Nye, and Anna Hamilton; and, speaking of Kelly, thanks to her for continuing to head up our newcomer efforts. And by no means least, Terry Foster, for the wonderful music he brings us every week and for countless other ways he contributes behind the scenes, our heartfelt thanks.

I am grateful as well to all the members of the Bishop's Committee, especially for the work of our esteemed treasurer Vicki LaQuerre. Thanks as well to co-warden Erik Jensen, chair of our newly convened Building Management Team, who completed a thorough building assessment last year.



Thanks to John Sutton as editor of *The Sandpiper*, our monthly newsletter.

Special thanks as well to Nancy Nickerson (as well as to Becky Buyers, who fills in when Nancy is absent), who offers a warm and nurturing presence to the children who may be here on Sunday mornings and for her work with the Pastoral Care Committee, quietly coordinating compassionate outreach to our members.

Thanks to Chris Taylor, the chair of the Garden Committee, and for all who made 2016 such a successful year in our garden.

Thanks always for Lorna Kerbel and her ongoing presence and energetic spirit in caring for the Sandpiper Daycare Center and, of course, for Marlene Spearman in directing Sandpiper and working, together with Lorna, toward national accreditation.

And, finally, there's Jane, who is stepping down this year as co-warden. Please know how grateful we all are for your tireless commitment to this place. And always be assured of our abiding affection and love. We know you're not going anywhere and will be there alongside us—convening the Harvest Festival as it goes from strength to strength—and continuing to make Saint Nick's such a vibrant and welcoming community in so many ways.

I'm now in the midst of my sixth year as your Vicar. The canons of the Diocese of Maine state that each priest shall, following each five-year period of continuous service, be eligible for a leave of absence of four months for spiritual and intellectual refreshment, otherwise known as a sabbatical. While four months may sound enticing, my intention is to take two, most likely in the fall of this year, returning by the First Sunday in Advent. Details will be worked out in collaboration with the Wardens and Bishop's Committee. While I'm not yet sure of the sabbatical's shape, I trust it will include travel to Great Britain and will involve pilgrimages to several English cathedrals and other holy sites, including pubs.

Meeting

ANNUAL MEETING REPORT by Jane Ducott

The Annual Meeting of Saint Nicholas Episcopal Church was held on Sunday, January 29. Jane Ducott, who was about to retire as co-warden, thanked the Vicar, Erik Jensen, and Carl Bredenberg for their years of support and friendship and also thanked the church family. She spoke about the meaning of the word *connect* and how it pertains to a worldwide revival of strangers protesting in support of human rights, what she considers to be a form of the "Jesus Movement."

Erik Jensen spoke on building maintenance. Early in January 2016, members of the Finance Committee, Vicki LaQuerre, Carl Bredenberg and Jane Ducott, met with Terrence Reimer of the diocesan staff to discuss ways to alleviate financial concerns at Saint Nick's. He brought the Lovett Fund to their attention. Soon a group of concerned members gathered to evaluate the maintenance needs of our physical structure. Money was raised by the congregation, and additional funds were granted through the Lovett Fund. Five large sanctuary windows have been replaced thus far.

Community Garden. Chris Taylor, Chairman. Exciting news regarding this year's garden was that 483 pounds of produce was harvested and delivered to the Scarborough Pantry. Recipe cards were created, which helped many of the recipients of food experience vegetables. At our annual Harvest Fest in October, one of the local Cub Scout groups joined us to plant herbs and lettuce pots to be given to the Food Pantry to distribute. They also harvested kale and Swiss chard to be sautéed and blended into smoothies. The samples were a big hit at the fair. We showcased our first farmer's market along with crafts and treats and brats. Carpenter Court, a new Habitat for Humanity community off Broadturn Road in Scarborough, has asked for our help in creating organic garden spaces in their circle. Exciting news moving forward is that two high school students are joining the Steering Committee, Will Ducott and Dan Taylor. The garden has already received grants and it will be self sustaining through 2017.

The Sandpiper Children's Center, an LLC, was created in 2010 and is owned and operated by Saint Nick's. The school is run by a director, Marlene Spearman, and teachers who have bachelor degrees in education. The Director has a master's degree. The daycare is seeking national accreditation in late spring 2017. There are four classrooms and each child has a portfolio which documents his/her development. The Center has four fund raisers a year and has accrued five thousand dollars this year. Monies have replaced flooring in the hallway and coffee room, and rooms have been painted. Volunteers are important and are required to have two background checks, two letters of recommendation, and a medical clearance to work with children. A part-time business manager is being hired this year, and Jane Ducott will be replacing Lorna Kerbel as the president of the Manager's Group effective March 1, 2017. Gross earnings by the daycare this year were over three hundred thousand dollars.

Outreach/Pastoral Care. Nancy Nickerson spoke about resuming the bimonthly dinners at Logan Place, making ongoing donations to the Essentials Pantry, and meeting the need for more of us to volunteer at the pantry once a month. We also donate a large amount of fresh produce and food to the Scarborough Food Pantry. We continue to support Konbit Sante in Haiti with donations for books and supplies for school children through the sale of Equal Exchange chocolate bars and coffee/cocoa. The sale of these commodities also benefits farmers' receiving a fair wage for their efforts. The annual "Souper Bowl Sunday" donations collected in soup pots are given to recipients based on need. We have started a fuel fund this year that goes towards the cost of green energy. The church community donates the cash generated by CLYNK bags (bottle redemption) and also has signed up to pay an additional thirty dollars a month towards fuel. Pastoral care is ongoing, and our caring church family as a whole is part of the process.

Administration. The church office is staffed by volunteers on Thursday and Friday mornings: Anna Hamilton, Cathy Bennett, Cheryll Green, Pam Hillman, and Nancy Agan. Their tasks include answering the phone, replying to emails, filing documents, preparing weekly bulletins, updating the website and Facebook pages, and helping with mailings and seasonal booklets for liturgy. More hands are needed to keep this busy group afloat. Please lend a hand.

Music. Terry Foster shared that because of the Barbara MacDougall Fund we were able to have twelve guest music groups enhance our services this year. The MacDougall Fund was started by a deceased member's family in honor of her love of music. This gift has added excitement and beautiful music to our Sunday services. The chime choir will be meeting every other week moving forward, and the Allen organ was tuned and adjustments made to the sound system by Advance Technology.

Annual Stewardship Campaign. The pledge drive was enhanced this year by articles in the newsletter written by John Sutton, new welcome packets compiled by Kelly Martino, and additional communications related to our church family. The committee of Vicki LaQuerre, Jane Ducott, John Sutton, Kelly Martino, Ralph Hillman, and David Heald met in October to plan the appeal drive, including "mission moments," powerful stories from members sharing what Saint Nicholas means to them. For 2017, 42 pledges have been received, \$82,522.00 pledged, a \$2.9K increase over this time last year. The Lovett Fund brought us two grants of \$4,500 each, which were supported by \$3,900 raised by members of the congregation.

Elections. We said goodbye to Jane Ducott and welcomed our new co-warden, Kelly Martino, who was elected. Nancy Nickerson and John Sutton were elected delegates to Diocesan Convention, which will take place in Bangor this fall and will be for one day.

Adjournment. The Vicar ended the meeting with a prayer.

Thirty-eight members were present.

FROM OUR TREASURER

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to share, as reported at the Annual Meeting, that our annual pledge drive was very successful! We welcome three new families to our pledging circle, and overall annual commitment's increased by \$2,900 for 2017. Thank you all for your continued, consistent, and generous support.

A very qualified member of the congregation has stepped forward and offered to fill the position of co-treasurer in the future. Sharing this role is very exciting, ensuring continuity and a new set of eyes on our processes.

Finally, Saint Nicholas's most recent financial snapshot is posted on the Bolger Board. Of note, we incurred two unexpected repair bills totaling \$600: 1) repair of light fixtures and bulb replacements both interior and exterior and 2) replacement of the water heating element. Although we should budget for large repairs, we don't. As our building is more than twelve years old, such expenses will continue to be an ongoing issue. Special gifts are encouraged and welcome to help offset these unforeseen repairs.

Peace and blessings.

Vicki

STEWARDSHIP NOTES by John Sutton

In his sermon on Ash Wednesday several years ago I heard the preacher remind us that to keep a holy Lent we are obliged to pray, fast, and give alms. As you might expect, I will have something to say about the latter. But, first, a comment or two about prayer and fasting.

I will admit that I do not devote as much time to praying as I should. I say grace before dinner each day. I pray, at least the Lord's Prayer, before I fall asleep each night. During the day I often say brief prayers of thanksgiving, usually when God directs me to find something I have lost. I will strive to be a better pray-er this Lent.

Fasting. I'll bet you'll be asked sometime during Lent, "What are you giving up?" Usually we give up things we regularly consume. For me it's ice cream and pretzels--and used to be alcohol. Maybe I'll lose a few pounds. But there are habits to give up too, such as spending too much time in front of TV or computer screens, reading

trashy novels, fretting about things we have no control over. It's good to give up for Lent--but perhaps more important to take on. I have already mentioned praying. How about Bible reading? attending worship more often? participating in Saint Nick's Lenten study? volunteering in programs that help others?

Now, giving alms. Most of us do this year-round, not just in Lent. But our Lenten discipline should motivate us to make a special effort in this area. If you haven't made a pledge for 2017, why not do it now? Or during the six weeks of Lent, how about putting a few extra dollars in the offering plate? (If you give up certain foods or drinks, you can use the money you save to do this.) There are dozens of charities right here in Maine that our alms can help. Or give to Episcopal Relief and Development.

Prayer. Fasting. Alms giving. These make up a holy Lent. The special effort we devote to them--with God's help, of course--will make our arrival at Easter all the more glorious.

ADOPT-A-MONTH FOR GREEN POWER by Nancy Nickerson

Several of you have generously signed up to take a month to pay the \$36 fee added to our monthly CMP bill, in order to more vigorously support the sourcing of our electricity from Maine-based types of renewable energy. I write to thank you for participating in this way and supporting Green Power at Saint Nicholas. I also write to recruit more of you, as a fresh roster of empty months starts in March. See the Bolger Board for the new sign-up sheet and check the old sheet to see if your name is there--perhaps you have not yet written your check--and feel free to speak with me if you wish more information on this program and what it means for Saint Nicholas.



SAINT NICHOLAS CHIME CHOIR

Our next regular chime choir rehearsal is Sunday, February 19, after Coffee Hour. We are working on some new music that all will enjoy. Join us if you can count to six.

ABAN ZIRIKLY TO PLAY VIOLIN ON MARCH 5

Our guest musician for March is Syrian native Aban Zirikly. Now living in Cape Elizabeth, Aban is an internationally known violinist and conductor. He plays music from the heart as well as classical selections. He will be playing throughout the service at Saint Nicholas on Sunday, March 5. Don't miss this special musical experience in worship.

UPCOMING ESSENTIALS PANTRY DATE

The next Essentials Pantry is Tuesday, March 7. Help is needed at the Cathedral from 9-11am as we share the responsibility for that day with Saint Mary's, Falmouth. Working at the pantry is an eye-opening, fulfilling experience. For more information see Terry Foster.

WORDS OF WISDOM

The gospel is not made to dominate the world. It's the grain of sand that upsets the world's machinery.
Jean Sullivan

Perfection is precisely to suffer one's neighbor's imperfections and to do so out of love.
Rule of Taize