

The Guardian

MAY 2017

FROM THE RECTORY

Dear Church,

I have just celebrated Easter Sunday after a full and rich Holy Week. This year Easter Day corresponds with our newsletter deadline, so instead of writing something new, I want to share the first part of the proposal for a sabbatical grant that I completed with parishioners Christy Fritz, Jeff Lewis and Leigh Marthe. I am planning to take a 4-month sabbatical in the spring/summer of 2018 and this sabbatical planning team has been extremely helpful in thinking about what new ventures St. Michael's might enter into while I am away.

Mary

“There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.”

- from *God's Grandeur* by Gerard Manley Hopkins

“Behold, I am making all things new.”

- Revelation 21:5

For the last few months, I have been meeting with a small group of lay people from our congregation who have made up St. Michael's sabbatical planning team. We have had wonderful, spirit-filled conversations, which have led us in surprising new directions. Early in our conversations, we talked about church vitality. As we reflected on our involvement in various ministries at St. Michael's and other churches, we wondered, “Why it is that some ministries feel vital, exciting and urgent while other ministries feel lifeless, dull and burdensome?” The quality that the vital ministries share, we decided, is a sense of newness or freshness. We are, after all, called to be people who proclaim the Good News.

And Good News must necessarily *be* new. But what is newness? Where is “the freshness deep down (in) things?” Our own inward experiences of newness have been accompanied by feelings of excitement, hope, freshness, connection and enthusiasm. As we look at scripture, we notice that newness is at the very center of our experience of God. In the Book of Isaiah, God says, “Behold, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?” For people of faith, newness is not something we create or make happen, but rather, it is something we perceive God is doing through the Spirit. It is the creative action of God in the world and

in ourselves. Yet we often do not perceive it. Which is why, in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, we must look for freshness that is “deep down” in things and in ourselves. God's newness is not always readily apparent, but with God's grace, newness may be perceived when we are willing and patient enough to look and listen deeply.

While inward encounters of newness are experienced as feelings, outward expressions of newness are manifested as *innovations*. Something new is actually created between the inward feeling and the outward expression. Through our renewal program, we hope both to perceive newness inwardly and to participate in this newness through acts of innovation. We in the church in Vermont have ample opportunity to experience God doing new things. Brattleboro is a vibrant but small town of 12,000 with many opportunities to experience art, music, nature and intentional living that draw people from many of the surrounding rural communities. While many people seek spiritual connection in this place, fewer and fewer people claim membership in any traditional faith community. Living in the least religious state in the union, we are on the cutting edge of exploring what it means to follow Jesus in this particular time and this place. We ask, “What is the new thing God is doing both within and outside the church walls?”

MARY'S HEART IN HER HANDS

(On the Monday of Holy Week, Megan Buchanan gave this sermon, based on John 12: 1-11.)

So the name of the story we just heard in the gospel tonight is “Jesus Anointed at Bethany.” There is a lot going on at this dinner, given in honor of Jesus by a deeply grateful family. It’s an emotionally intense scene, with ominous, violent political churning in the background and an inner-circle betrayal looming. Bethany is the home village of Lazarus, who we know Jesus had raised from the dead. RAISED FROM THE DEAD! Wow.

Jesus knows his time is short, he has been talking about it. And the disciples and his followers must have been afraid. And there was also fear that Lazarus might also be killed because of the miracle that Jesus performed for him, because of his affiliation. Lazarus walking around was an incredible example of Jesus’ power! So they are all there having dinner and Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, has something planned.

She has bought a big jar of perfume, not like the perfume of today but something thicker, more like an oil or a salve. Nard or nardin comes from a flower in the valerian family and was very precious. Mary is so grateful to Jesus - her heart is in her hands. She is touching his dusty feet and blessing them with perfume and then she wipes his feet with her hair. Just imagine that. It’s amazing. How tender and beautiful that is. We don’t really have an equivalent in our culture right now, that I can think of.

I am part of the healing ministry at St Michael’s. People come forward with their concerns and whisper them to me. They ask for prayers, for blessings. It is vulnerable and beautiful. They bow their heads and we pray and they are anointed with the oil that the Bishop has blessed. It’s hard for many of us to ask for help, really hard for me sometimes. I prefer to help rather than be helped

When someone helps me, my heart kind of explodes in a good way. When I try to imagine how Mary must have felt being able to be in the presence of Jesus, this sacred man who raised her brother from the dead, I think how grateful she must feel and how afraid for him she and others are, because people wanted to kill him. And Jesus knows and talks about his life ending soon but here he is having dinner and Mary seizes the moment and offers this extravagant gesture because her heart is probably exploding with love and gratitude and compassion.

Once when I was praying many years ago, I got into a deep open place and wondered *What would it be like if I could actually be face to face with God?* And instantly my room filled up with love. A palpable, floor-to-ceiling, humming vibration. Really hard to describe. Tears just poured down my face. Other than that experience, and a feeling of love that surrounds me most of the time, I find God in others, in you and in nature.

When I am full of love for someone – a friend, a child, a sweetheart, someone in my family -- I want to do something with that too! Sometimes I write poems for people. And also I make quilts, mostly for new babies. They are very primitive. I actually don’t know how to use a sewing machine, so I piece it by hand, and my stitches are nothing to show off – the ladies at fabric stores laugh at me.

NEWS OF THE PARISH

I usually don't follow a pattern; I just wing it. When I'm done, I send the finished top, along with the soft batting and the backing fabric to a friend who binds them for me. She actually knows how to sew! Her help makes these quilts happen; her stitches hold them together and make them strong. The quilts are my love offering. And so are the lunches I make for my little son and the muffins I bake for my mechanic and his men in Guilford.

My mechanic is as close to a saint as any human I have known personally. He fixes my old cars and lets me make payments. As a single mom, being treated with respect by a mechanic is a big deal and I'm so grateful and so I bring him and his guys plates of warm muffins whenever I bake. I am not the only person who does this. He has a table that is seldom empty. It's all I can do to let him know how grateful I am, fixing my car so I can get to work and my son can get to school. He knows I love him and so many others do too, because he is so kind and generous and he and his wife have suffered, losing their only son. He serves our community as a mechanic, but he gives so much to us - keeping us safe, being the kind, honest man that he is.

I celebrate Mary's extravagant action here, I relate to her. Sometimes it's all we can do, baking, sewing, washing, anointing. Sometimes what's in our hearts feels too big to hold, and life around us is super scary and intense and we feel powerless and afraid, but still we love God and each other and the earth. The extravagant act of buying the perfume wasn't logical. These weren't rich people. Judas jumps in with his false piety and creates this torque in the scene with his words, his shame and judgement of Mary's spending money (which we are told he was stealing) on expensive ointment.

Judas' words of criticism bring forth this wonderful sentence from Jesus that we can treasure now. Jesus says "*LEAVE HER ALONE. I'm not always going to be here.*" Perhaps Jesus is saying that it's okay in the midst of our service to the poor to stop and observe the sacred when we can and celebrate God's presence in a big way. That nothing is too extravagant for God. It's our intention, our infused love and devotion.

Mary's heart is in her hands. She is worshipping Jesus with a pure and genuine heart, seizing the moment while Jesus is sitting right there with her. Our lives are not guaranteed.

I'd like to close with a poem by a young African American poet, Nayyirah Waheed:

flower work
is
not easy.
remaining
soft in fire
takes
time.

In our daily prayers, in our simple actions of service and in our grand and extravagant gestures. That's what we can do, we can open our hearts and love God. Every day, while we can.

NEWS OF THE PARISH

PALM SUNDAY PHOTOS



WHY IS MOTHER’S DAY ALSO DIAPER SUNDAY?

We of Outreach ask everyone to bring a package of disposable diapers to church to help fill the gap for mothers who do not have access to them. We donate them to Parks Place Diaper Bank, the only one in Vermont. Diapers are not covered by food stamps because they are not food. So help these young mothers by bringing in a package of disposable diapers on Sunday, May 14.

Thank you from the Outreach Team

SUMMARY OF MARCH VESTRY MEETING

At the March meeting, the Vestry discussed:

- preliminary ideas for Mary’s sabbatical in 2018,
- the letter that is going out to parishioners about the status of the Building for the Future Campaign,
- the sound system upgrade in the church and
- Vestry involvement in preparing the meal for Maundy Thursday.

Submitted by
Lynn Billington
4/14/17

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AIDS WALK FOR LIFE MAY 20

On Saturday, May 20, from 10:00 A.M. to noon, St. Michael's will team with others in our community to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS with the 30th Walk for Life. Beginning at the River Garden and after a brief walk through downtown, we will gather again at the River Garden with others in the Brattleboro community as we remember friends and family we've lost to HIV-related illnesses, call attention to the epidemic in our own community, honor those who make a difference in this challenging work, and thank the community for 30 years of support. Popular Jazz and Blues singer Samirah Evens will embrace us with her powerful music.

Please consider becoming a part of the St. Michael's team to walk, gather donations, or both. You may support my fund raising effort by making a donation to the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont online or donate by check. You may make your check payable to The AIDS Project of Southern Vermont and mail it to me at 212 West River Road, Brattleboro, VT 05301. You may also give me your check during coffee hour following the 10:15 A.M. worship service on Sunday, April 23, April 30, May 7, or May 14. If you have any questions, please contact me at dpcarrs@gmail.com or by cell phone at 214-534-8725. I appreciate your participation.

David Carr

Social Justice Committee of St. Michael's



STANDING WITH, VIA BRATTLEBORO'S LOCAL LOVE BRIGADE

*Love can be seen as a soft and gentle emotion,
but it can also be fierce and strong and powerful*

Over the past 9 months, the United States has seen a growing wave of verbal and physical attacks on people of color, non-Christian people of faith, and LGBTQ people. Nor is Vermont immune: someone scrawled swastikas on the door of Havurah House which belongs to a Jewish congregation in Addison County, an anti-Semitic flier has surfaced in Burlington, and parents have reported bigotry directed at their children, both immigrants and children of color. So what can we do about it?

Ann Bedichek Braden, who spoke at Saint Michael's Joyful Resistance Series on April 4, asked that question in February when she heard news of an anonymous letter telling the Islamic Society of Vermont it wasn't welcome in the state: she formed the Local Love Brigade. The open-to-all citizens' army began by sending 500 hand-made postcards to the Colchester mosque and then hundreds more to victims of harassment statewide. The effect on those attacked has been healing. The movement has already spread all over Vermont and to another 12 states, and with Mary's enthusiastic support, to Saint Michael's beginning after Easter.

So – beginning on April 23 – we will have “Postcard Making Parties” every week during coffee hour. Supplies and stamps will be available for all who would like to join in. Every week Ann posts a list of victims, with date of attack, source of information, names and address by which they can be reached. The messages are simple, and signed with our town and state (and name, if we wish – but that isn't required). The art is what we can make, and stickers are available. We will collect the finished postcards and mail them.

“Love can be seen as a soft and gentle emotion, but it can also be fierce and strong and powerful,” Ann said. “That's really what we're channeling here.” Come channel with us!

By Joyce Vining Morgan



NEWS OF THE PARISH

PASTORAL CARE OVERVIEW MEETING, SATURDAY, MAY 20

In March, a small group of parishioners and I completed a three-day pastoral care visitation training. It was a great training! Now we are motivated to get all the constituents of pastoral care (transportation, food, etc) together to think about who will move forward with communication, covering care needs, etc.

On Saturday, May 20 at 9:30 am, I invite anyone involved or interested in being involved in pastoral care at St. Michael's to come together as we think about how best to organize the many pastoral care ministries at St. Michael's. Please join us as we move forward with this important ministry!

Mary

EXPLORING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

ADULT EDUCATION FORUMS FOR APRIL/MAY 2017

APRIL 30: “If It Takes A Village To Raise A Child, It Takes A Village To Grow Old Successfully”: Janet Cramer and Annamarie Pluhar attended The American Society on Aging conference in March and have come back with knowledge and observations for our church community. This forum is for both sharing what we learned and having a discussion. Come and have your voice heard in our village.

MAY 7: “Update from the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont”: Sue Conley, Prevention Program Manager, will review Direct Services for people living with HIV, including the Food Program, and the Prevention Program, which includes testing for HIV and Hepatitis C. Other programs include the Syringe Services Program, the CLEAR Program (counseling for people at high risk for HIV), and the Education Program for outreach in the community. There will be an opportunity for Q&A.

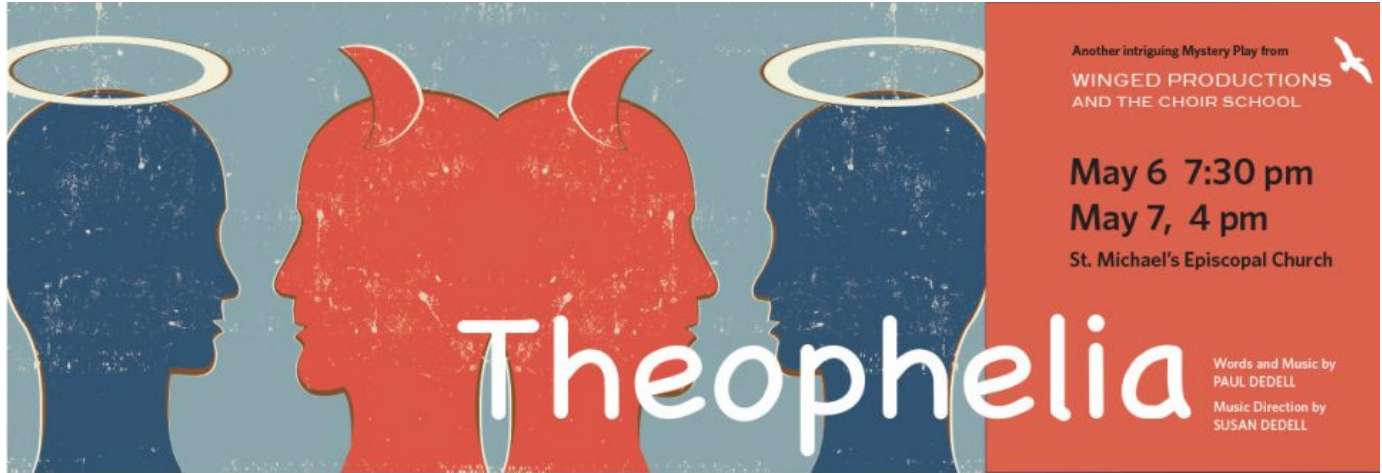
MAY 14: To be determined.

MAY 21: (Recovery Sunday) – “Recovering from Substance Abuse”: Al Anon was always a help in the recovery process for Nancy – and for Bill – while Bill struggled through abstinence. Their story is one of commitment and perseverance as Bill strove for sobriety.

MAY 28: “Communication that Reconnects -- Tools for Bridging the Political Divide” with Robin White and Beatrice Blake. Do you feel at a loss when trying to communicate with people who have different political views than your own? Are you concerned about how we Americans can overcome our divisions? Do you want to get better at listening to others and braver at expressing how you really feel?

We will explore these vital questions. Robin and Beatrice have years of experience teaching Nonviolent Communication and Focusing. Nonviolent Communication turns conflict into connection by recognizing and addressing the implicit, unmet feelings and needs that underlie conflict. This helps us listen to others and to ourselves.

“THEOPHILIA”: A YOUNG CHRISTIAN’S EXPERIENCE OF BULLYING AND FORGIVENESS



Interview by Joanne Patalano

On May 6 and May 7, Winged Productions and the Choir School present *Theophelia*, a play inspired by the 13th century play *Le Miracle de Theophile or The Miracle of Theophilus*. Paul Dedell wrote the play based on a young girl’s perspective. Jayne Fritz, a member of the Choir School, is 16 and plays *Theophelia*. I interviewed Jayne about the play in which we see that bullying was probably as real in the 13th century as it is today. We will meet *Theophelia*, *Salatina*, the townspeople, the Devil, the Saints and Mother Mary in this play as the townspeople turn against *Theophelia*, realize their mistake and pray to the saints for help.

Theophelia from Jayne’s Perspective

Theophelia is about a popular, kind and generous girl. Someone spreads a rumor about her. Then she becomes an outcast and feels abandoned by her friends and God. A fake friend in the village, *Salatina*, convinces *Theophelia* to sign a contract with the Devil with the promise to get back what she lost. Afterwards the villagers realize their mistake and that the rumors were just that, rumors. They ask *Theophelia* to come back – to forgive and forget. But she’s too hurt and refuses. The villagers pray for help. They pray to the Saints to intercede and help bring *Theophelia* back to the light, to herself, to them. A miracle happens.

St. Francis of Assisi, St. Claire and Saint Teresa of Avila help the townspeople soften *Theophelia*’s heart. It works. *Theophelia* – still troubled - turns to someone who used to comfort her - Mother Mary. Mary confronts the Devil and demands that the Devil hand over *Theophelia*’s contract.

Theophelia Today

I asked Jayne how she felt about playing the part. I can see that she’s not just playing the part, but that she’s also feeling it. She says, “When listening to the songs that describe the terrible rumors about *Theophelia*, I get depressed and hurt, just like *Theophelia*. What if I was in her position? And then when listening to the song where the villagers say that they forgive *Theophelia* and how they were so saddened by the rumors, I get angrier by the minute. Why should I forgive them? They took everything from me! I think the reason that I experience these emotions so intensely is because *Theophelia* is an easy character to relate to. The audience will relate to what *Theophelia* is feeling. She’s human, just like all of us. She isn’t perfect, no matter how good she is. “

The Miracle

The play is known as a miracle play. I asked Jayne what she thought the miracle was. I love her reply. She says: “Even though Theophilia grew angry and became an awful person, she was still able to come back into the light. She was able to forgive and be forgiven. I believe that forgiveness is one of the most miraculous virtues in our world and it is one that we should practice often. Without forgiveness, most of us would be lost and hurt.”

That’s so true. For me it means feeling my feelings and recognizing our equality. It’s about letting go of resentment so I can live in peace. Jayne’s words brought it deeper for me. I’m sure the play will too. I plan on seeing it. I invite you too.

Event Details

What: Theophilia: A play by Winged Productions directed by Paul Dedell

When: May 6, 2017 at 7:30 pm and May 7, 2017 at 4 pm

Where: St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, 16 Bradley Ave., Brattleboro, VT

Duration: 1 hour

Cost: \$10 adults/ \$5 students under 21. No one will be turned away.

Learn more about Winged Productions online at www.stmichaels-vt.org/winged-productions.

“The play is a great musical experience, and a fun social one. These young people think about the role of faith, the meaning of ‘organized’ religion, and the everyday impact that a walk with God could have.”

Susan Dedell, founder, Winged Productions

STM

LETTER OF THANKS FROM BETSY SWIFT

Dear Friends at St. Michael’s, I want to express my deep appreciation for the many prayers, cards, visits and calls I received while I was in the hospital and recuperating at Pine Heights. They raised the spirits and I’m sure contributed to the healing process. I’m truly blessed to be part of such a caring, supportive Church family.

With warmest thanks,

Betsy

STM

CHOIR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE MAY 6 & 7

The Choir School will be performing on May 6 and May 7 in an upcoming BMC Concert Choir concert! This program, which also includes a premier of a choral/orchestral work by Paul Dedell, also includes music of John Tavener, Ola Gjeilo, and Will Todd and is sure to touch your senses and is. Save one of those dates and come to be in the cheering section!

EXPLORING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

MAY LECTIONARY

Sunday, May 7

Acts 2:42-47
 Psalm 23
 1 Peter 2:19-25
 John 10:1-10

Sunday, May 14

Acts 7:55-60
 Psalm 31: 1-5, 15-16,
 1 Peter 2:2-10
 John 14:1-14

**Sunday, May 21**

Acts 17:22-31
 Psalm 66:7-18
 1 Peter 3:13-22
 John 14:15-21

Sunday, May 28

Acts 1:6-14
 Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36
 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11
 John 17:1-11

CELEBRATIONS

MAY BIRTHDAYS

May 1	Holden McDowell
May 2	Sarah Colson
May 4	Deborah Leggott, Carol Beninati, Bruce Landenberger
May 5	Bill Ames
May 6	Mark Mayer
May 7	Diane Pitcher, Beatrice Johnson
May 8	Opal Mayer
May 10	Sarah Nohl
May 11	Brian Morgan, Diana Bingham, Julian Siegel
May 12	K.C. Mattson
May 17	Brian White
May 19	Susan Dyer
May 21	Ruth Struthers
May 22	Oliver Pomazi
May 23	Chloe Hull
May 26	James Crosson, Sylvester Mayer
May 27	Karin Bleecker
May 29	Colby McGinn

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

May 2	Karren & Steven Meyer
May 19	Sarah Colson & Cliff Dempster
May 24	Janet Brocklehurst & Sissi Loftin
May 27	Teri Robinson & Ross Kinney



The Guardian is published monthly by St. Michael's Episcopal Church. News items, announcements, articles, etc., should be submitted to jeanie@stmichaels-vt.org by the 15th of the month for consideration.

The Guardian Mailing List: Contact Jeanie Crosby with address changes or requests to be added or removed from *The Guardian* mailing list. jeanie@stmichaels-vt.org or 802-254-6048.

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MAY ROTA

Liturgical Rota for 8:00 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. Sunday Services unless otherwise noted.

Position	May 7	May 14	May 21	May 28
8:00 A.M. Service				
Lay Assistant	Anita Crosson	Wayne Cook	Kate McGinn	Wayne Cook
Lector		Jeff Lewis		Jeff Lewis
Intercessor	Kiersten McKenney	Doug Switzer	Anne Brown	Joanne Patalano
Sacramental Healing	Janet Cramer	Jeff Lewis	Janet Cramer	Jeff Lewis
Usher	Judy McGee	Anne Cook	Linda Rice	Anne Cook
10:15 A.M. Service				
Crucifer	Ricky Davidson	Peter Johnson	Annamarie Pluhar	Jessica Bennett
Torch Bearers	Julian Siegel Marian Wojcik	Brian White Jonah Johnson	Miles Ackerman-Hovis Jesse Ackerman-Hovis	Avery Bennett Nathaniel Johnson
Element Bearers	Nancy Barber Dick Burtis	Andy & Elise Burrows	Fritz Family	Chris Hart Jeff Hiam
Lay assistant	Darcey Mercier	Greg Lesch	Ann Landenberger	Brian Morgan
Lector	Craig Hammond	Diana Bingham	Carolyn Taylor-Olson	Mary Carnahan
Intercessor	Sue Dyer	Jeanette Landin	Valarie Abrahamsen	Sarah Benton
Ushers	Jeff Hiam Sue Dyer	Betsy Bates Ken Jacobs	Craig Hammond & Liz Vick	Ricky Davidson Elaine Curry-Smithson
Sacramental Healing	Megan Buchanan	Robin White-Diamondstone	Carolyn Taylor-Olson	Judy Hildreth
Altar Guild	Susan Dyer Elise Burrows Pat Laubach Laurie Chiperfield	Jane Sbardella Lucia Osiecki Kiersten McKenney	Jane Sbardella Lucia Osiecki Kiersten McKenney	Irene Burtis Judith Hildreth Sherry Stimmel Craig Newbert
Coffee Hour	Deb Jones Lindquist/Johnson Family	Ken Jacobs Julie & John Laamanen	Rich Cogliano	Lemonade on Lawn Begins
Counters	Anne Cook Judy McGee	Wayne Cook Judith Hildreth	Ricky Davidson Jared Rediske	Jeanette Landin Wayne Cook

If you cannot make it, please find your own replacement; then call Jeanie in the Office at 802-254-6048, ext. 104. Thank you.



ST. MICHAEL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Brattleboro, Vermont 05301-8429

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The Guardian

a Christ-centered community of practice awakening to the abiding presence of God



Our Worship Together

SUNDAYS 8:00 a.m., Quiet service of prayer and Holy Communion
10:15 a.m., Prayer, music, and Holy Communion, with childcare

WEEKDAY MORNINGS 6:00–7:00 a.m., Silent hour in chapel

WEDNESDAYS 12:00–12:30 p.m., Brief service of prayer and Holy Communion

THURSDAYS 5:30–6:30 p.m. Contemplative service of chanting, silence, and prayer

SATURDAYS 8:00 a.m., Centering Prayer