

The Guardian

FEBRUARY 2020

FROM THE RECTORY

GET TO THE BALCONY: LOOKING BACK AT 2019

There is a leadership adage that helps me think about my role as rector of St. Michael's: Get to the balcony. The idea is that as a leader you can't just be on the dance floor. Sometimes you have to pull away from the action, get to the balcony, and see things from a larger perspective. Or as Walt Whitman described it, a leader needs to be "both in and out of the game." While much of my vocation means being involved in the day to day tasks of the church, I am also called to step back, see the wider perspective and "get to the balcony." And writing a reflection about the year that has passed is definitely a balcony moment!

So instead of listing off things we have done or events that have happened this year, I want to share some of the subtle and not so subtle things I have noticed.

- **The impact of the Discipleship and Discernment Initiative.** In November, we conducted a number of Small Group Conversations in an attempt to understand what the impact of the Discipleship and Discernment Initiative has been. There is a separate and more detailed report about the findings contained in the Annual Report, but I want to share some of my insights gained from these conversations and from my own observations.
 - I've noticed a **shift in culture** and community self-understanding. The words "discernment," "experiment," and "discipleship" are not just part of our vocabulary as a congregation, but also part of who we are. Our understanding of listening for God's call in our individual lives and as a congregation has deepened over these last 2.5 years and it affects the way we make decisions and think about who we are as a faith community.

Continued

Christmas Pageant



FROM THE RECTORY (CONTINUED)

- I believe that this way of experiencing ourselves as disciples who have gifts that we are called to share has supported the formation of many leaders within our community. The **increase in lay leadership** was noted in the Small Group Conversations and it has been vital to have such a skilled Minister for Discipleship & Discernment (Duncan Hilton) to offer support for emerging leaders of all ages.
- There is a **deep path** that has emerged in our parish for those who are called to it. There are opportunities for prayer and formation every day of the week and sometimes multiple times a day. Providing so many opportunities for devotion and community is a fruit of this ministry; while Sunday mornings are important to us, there are many other ways to connect than Sunday morning.
- I've noticed an **energetic shift** in the congregation. Not only does it feel like people at St. Michael's have more energy to share (noted in the Small Group Conversations), but the capacity for the congregation to sit in silence, to focus with attention, to allow for the deeper rhythms of the Holy Spirit to emerge has definitely increased in the last few years. There is also more willingness for people to share from their own experiences of God within a worship setting.
- **Tikkun olam.** This is a Hebrew expression that means "repair the world." The Vestry has been very engaged in finding ways for us to manifest our faith with actions in our community and in the world. Last summer, we had a very important conversation centered around the Black Lives Matter sign which made us aware of both the deep sorrow we experience in struggling with the brokenness of our world and our deep desire to act as a community to bring healing and hope. The conversation about mission continues to engage us, as there seems to be a movement within St. Michael's for collective action aligning with faith.
- **Playfulness.** There seems to be an uptick in fun or fun events offered. There have been the "Langlican" bowling outings, "Summer Fun" offered for kids last summer, and the Elder Luncheons, which were offered three times in 2019. It is good to be together in community with no agenda but to enjoy each other!
- **Saying goodbye, saying hello.** We have had to say goodbye to some very precious people this year who have moved away: Doug & Mimi Lilly, Deb Jones & Lucia Osiecki, Wayne & Anne Cook. It has been difficult for us to say goodbye to these beloved people who have done so much for our church. In addition, we said goodbye to Priest Associate extraordinaire, Thad Bennet and to Tom Ely as the Bishop of Vermont. We are fortunate, however, that we have also been able to say "hello" to many new people who have joined our congregation. And, the Episcopal Church in Vermont elected its first African American Bishop, Shannon MacVean-Brown, who will continue to lead our diocese in new ways.
- **The Daily Office.** There has been a bit of an Anglican revival at St. Michael's in the last couple of years or so. It started with offering Evening Prayer and Compline on occasion, then grew into a commitment to do Morning Prayer every weekday during the season of Lent. As Lent was coming to an end, those of us who were practicing Morning Prayer didn't want it to end, so we kept on through the spring, then the summer and now the winter. We are re-discovering the gift of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the gift of developing a daily praying community.

Mary D. Lindquist
 Mary Lindquist
 Rector

NEWS OF THE PARISH

STM

**SEASON OF LISTENING AND FORMATION
KICK-OFF EVENT PLANNING VERMONT
INTERFAITH ACTION,
SATURDAY, 3–6 PM, FEB 1 AT THE GUILFORD
COMMUNITY CHURCH**

Want to connect with people from other faith communities about issues that matter to all of us? Eat good food together? Create a concrete plan of how to proceed? Attend Vermont Interfaith Action's Kick-off event at the Guilford Community Church on February 1!

Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA) organizers, Daniel Quipp and Debbie Ingram, joined by Northeast Regional Organizer, Tim Lilienthal of Faith in Action will lead a gathering that will leave participants inspired, and with practical tools for bringing about social change.

VIA works throughout the state on issues that matter to its member congregations. Daniel is based in Brattleboro and is organizing a number of congregations in Southern Vermont. For more information or to set up a one-on-one conversation with Daniel, email daniel@viavt.org or call (347) 977-1192.

STM

ADULT FORUM, FEBRUARY 2

“The Scopes Monkey Trial (My great, great, great, great grandpappy warn’t no Monkey!)”

Religion, science, and government collided in the Dayton, Tennessee courtroom in 1926. High school teacher John Scopes was accused of teaching evolution in the public schools instead of the state approved account in Genesis. It would become the most famous trial of the twentieth century, a Broadway play, and a Hollywood movie. Robert Anderson will read a selection of H. L. Mencken's courtroom dispatches — always acerbic, sometimes appalling, and occasionally hilarious. This is Mencken at his best and certainly one of the high points of American journalism.

**REGISTER BY FEBRUARY 8
ST. MICHAEL'S WOMEN'S RETREAT 2020**

“The Sacred Gift of Voice: Speaking One's Truth”

Saturday, February 22, 10 am–

Sunday, February 23, 11:30 am

All women of St. Michael's are invited to the St. Michael's Women's Retreat, held at the beautiful Hallelujah Farm. During this retreat, we will reflect on the sacred gift of voice and speaking. Our voices, located between our heads and our hearts, give us the means of expressing our deepest selves and our deepest truths.

Registration forms can be found in the Common Room or at this link: <https://www.stmichaels-vt.org/test/>

This retreat is led by Margery McCrum, Jenny Karstad and Mary Lindquist. The registration deadline is February 8 and space is limited, so if you are interested, register soon!

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**ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES
WILL BE HELD ON
FEBRUARY 26**

Ash Wednesday services will be offered at 7:30 am, 12 noon and 5:30 pm on Wednesday, February 26 at St. Michael's. Ash Wednesday is the first day of the Season of Lent. It occurs 46 days (40 fasting days, if the six Sundays which are not days of fast, are excluded) before Easter. Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the desert. Lent originated as a mirroring of this, a special season of devotion as preparation for Easter. This service includes the imposition of ashes and Holy Eucharist. All are welcome.

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NEWS OF THE PARISH

**“FROM WRONGFULLY IMPRISONED TEENAGER
TO LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE:**

**JEFFREY DESKOVIC SPEAKS ABOUT HIS STORY
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM”**

Thursday, February 13, 2020 • 6:30 pm–8:30 pm

The Social Justice Committee of St. Michael’s and the Windham County Branch NAACP will present a special program on criminal justice reform on Thursday February 13. The program’s featured speaker will be Jeffrey Deskovic JD, an internationally recognized wrongful conviction expert, who, after being exonerated following 16 years imprisonment for a wrongful conviction, founded The Jeffrey Deskovic Foundation for Justice, which has freed seven people and passed three laws aimed at preventing wrongful conviction.

Jeffrey will speak on his story (arrest and conviction, time in prison, appeals and exoneration, reintegration (difficulties and successes), and the non-profit Jeffrey Deskovic Foundation for Justice. He will also address topics such as the causes of wrongful conviction and reforms needed to address those systemic deficiencies, prison reform, solitary confinement, parole reform, college education in prison, mass incarceration, voting rights for the formerly incarcerated, and prisoner reentry. The final 30 minutes will be devoted to Q & A with the audience. The program will be in the sanctuary of St. Michael’s. All are welcome.



ROCK POINT SUMMER CAMP

Rock Point is an Episcopal Camp located on beautiful Lake Champlain. Last summer, St. Michael’s sent several kids to Rock Point Camp and they had a great time. St. Michael’s offers partial scholarships to all the kids from our church who would like to attend. Please let Mary Lindquist know if you are interested in a scholarship.

The website with the registration material is at www.rockpointvt.org/camp.



Below are the dates for this summer:

Elementary Camp (ages 7–10) • June 28–July 3

Volunteens (ages 13–17) • July 6–10

Junior High Camp (ages 11–13) • July 7–12

Senior High Camp (ages 14–16) • July 19–24



NEWS OF THE PARISH

UPDATE ON THE MINISTRY FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND DISCERNMENT

A social worker told me recently that he learned in graduate school that the life stages of a group are: Form, Norm, Storm, and Perform. After decades in professional practice, he and some colleagues expanded the list of stages to include: Inform, Form, Norm, Warm, Storm, Re-norm, Perform, Transform.

That list has helped me see that various parts of the discernment and discipleship ministry are in different stages. This month I'm visiting each of the six discipleship small groups. Some of them are "performing" and "transforming" as they meet regularly with a stable cadre of members and deepen their relationships with one another and God; other groups are "re-norming" as they add new members or adapt the liturgy.

In September a small team of people from St. Michael's began going up to Bellows Falls to join a Circle of Support and Accountability. The circle encourages and helps individuals as they transition out of prison. We are "warming" as we get to know one another, the staff at the community justice center in Bellows Falls, and the routine of the circle.

After months of larger meetings to inform about L'Arche, a smaller Reflection Group is "forming" this month to study the history and theology of L'Arche and further discern if there is energy to partner with the international organization. The group includes people with and without intellectual disabilities and people from within and beyond St. Michael's.

The Discernment for Lay People Team is "performing" and "transforming" this month as it puts on a Desire and Discernment Retreat at Hallelujah Farm at the end of January and then "re-norms" in February to explore a regular discernment group and/or a diocesan retreat. The ministry leadership team is "performing" as it prepares for Lenten observances.

I'm mindful of a commitment to the vestry and the parish to develop a transition plan so that lay leaders can continue with the discipleship and discernment ministry beyond my tenure. Understanding that different parts of the ministry are at different stages has been the first step in developing a plan. It may mean that the best plan is actually a set of plans. More will be revealed!



Mission discernment conversation

NEWS OF THE PARISH

SMALL GROUP CONVERSATIONS SUMMARY

Overview:

In November 2019, small groups convened across St. Michael's parish membership to comment on the state of the parish in the recent past and since the Ministry of Discernment & Discipleship (MDD) began two and a half years ago. The comments will help the Vestry and Rector prepare for the near future. Duncan Hilton, specifically called to launch this ministry, has a three-year term, substantially supported by external grant funds, that ends in June 2020. These conversations and the subsequent deliberations of the Vestry and the Rector are intended to help prepare the ground for financial and program planning in the coming year.

85 people participated in groups of about 6, plus a facilitator and a scribe. The total notes run to 49 pages. We have also prepared a collation of key quotes organized by the interview questions to provide a flavor of the discussions. The Review committee has prepared this document to summarize the major points from our perspectives — to 'sugar down' the 49 pages of notes to the sweetest syrup.

- Broadly, people noted, whether they described the timing or not, that the parish mood has picked up in energy and lightened in tone in the past few years. Activities of the sabbatical period were mentioned along with the MDD launch and Duncan's arrival. Most people were not focused on the connection of the sabbatical, Duncan's arrival, and the MDD; it all feels natural and flowing.
- As an interesting historical parallel, some members of many years noted that there were tri-annual small group meetings for the purpose of evaluation and re-purposing during Paul Thompson's ministry and a lot of small group opportunities including the Cursillo movement, which gained strength in the 80's.
- There were no worries expressed about our financial capability to do whatever we determine to do.
- Many people commented approvingly on the active presence of children from infants to teenagers and how that had grown in the last few years.
- Time and again, people noted music was noted as both filling personal spiritual needs and as an attraction to others.
- Worship, the liturgy, is a key focus for many people. Sunday morning services and other worship opportunities are a touchstone for their week. Similarly, many noted positively the increased variety of worship experiences including Morning Prayer, Compline, Vespers, Holy Week, St. Brigid's day.
- Prayer was similarly mentioned as an increasing opportunity and focus from the Healing Team to Discipleship Groups.
- Lay leadership of so many programs was described as a great and rising strength.
- Particular notice was given to intergenerational interaction for teens and elders.
- There was widespread appreciation for Mary's leadership, presence and preaching.
- There was strong awareness that the additional professional leadership Duncan has brought to St. Michael's is key to gains of the last few years.

We end with the observation the while people liked BEING who we are now, they were also aware that we are BECOMING new. This gentle tension, a 'both/and' not an 'either/or', describes a congregation in personal and community discernment about our place and places in the world. We are not done yet.

Thank you.

*Review Committee of Christy Fritz, Judy Davidson, Jeff Lewis
Advising: Mary Lindquist, Jeanie Crosby*

CORRESPONDENCE

LETTER FROM WAYNE & ANNE COOK

Thank you all for the delicious breakfast, wonderful music, kind words, best wishes and the thoughtful gifts we received on December 1st, our last Sunday with you. Wayne and I survived the move with the help of a couple dear friends and the crews they rounded up both in Vermont and in Delaware. We are now settling in and getting used to the new surroundings of the neighborhood and the town. Thankfully Wayne's sense of direction is better than mine. Aside from a few small issues (as there will be with any new place), we love our new home.

It is always difficult to leave such wonderful people as there are at St. Michael's. Just like Mary, we do not like "good-byes" so "see you later" is more appropriate for us. We will not forget all the people we worked with over the years. We felt honored to participate as a lay assist, treasurer, ushers, Tag Sale leader and many more functions and ministries of the Church.

While we miss seeing familiar faces on a daily basis, this is an exciting adventure as Wayne often says. The Vermont home is still on the market so don't be surprised if we just pop in one Sunday.

Our new address is 89 Climbing Vine Ave., Smyrna, DE 19977

The phone number is currently our cell 802-258-0591 (which actually has service).

We pray you were blessed with a wonderful Christmas and the New Year brings all the best. Again our sincere thanks and appreciation to all.

*Your friends,
Wayne and Anne Cook*

Elder Luncheon



NEWS OF THE PARISH

NEW MEMBERS OF THE VESTRY

*Nancy Ames**Rebecca Olmsted**Jared Rediske***NANCY AMES**

Having been a member of our parish for 13 years, I am humbled to have been asked to serve on the Vestry of St. Michael's Church. A woman of questionable faith, I came in search of community, and have been blessed to have found that and so much more. I was told to "just show up." I did, and that advice has changed my life, both inside the church and out. St Michael's is an inclusive, vibrant place for worship, and outreach, as well as being a safe place where parishioners celebrate and support one another. Faith has grown in me over these years and keeps me coming back to a church community which means the world to me.

REBECCA OLMSTEAD

I have been an active member of St. Michael's Episcopal Church since my family moved here in 1988. I have grown up in this church. I was confirmed and was married here at St. Michael's and my two children were baptized here. More recently, I am a member of the altar guild and coffee ministry. I am a School Nurse in Brattleboro and I hope to bring my knowledge of our community to the vestry.

JARED REDISKE

I came to St. Michael's over 13 years ago after I moved here from Minnesota. At first, I wasn't the best parishioner. I was not a consistent member but would always meet my once-a-month obligation for my church counting. When Susan asked specifically for basses to join the choir, I knew I needed to speak to her. After we spoke and I saw Susan's enthusiasm, I knew this was my calling.

Now I am a devout bass that comes to choir every Sunday that I'm in town. And now I've been honored to be asked to be on the vestry. I was thinking about getting more involved within our parish but didn't know which avenue to take. It would seem that God has called me to this next step, and I am ready to answer. I hope to serve St. Michael's and Christ well and thank you for your faith in me.

EXPLORING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

LECTIONARY FOR FEBRUARY

February 2

Malachi 3:1–4, Psalm 84 or Psalm 24:7–10,
Hebrews 2:14–18, Luke 2:22–40

February 9

Isaiah 58:1–9a, Psalm 112:1–9, 1
Corinthians 2:1–12, Matthew 5:13–20

February 16

Deuteronomy 30:15–20 or Sirach 15:15–20,
Psalm 119: 1–8, 1 Corinthians 3:1–9,
Matthew 5:21–37

February 23

Exodus 24:12–18, Psalm 2 or Psalm 99, 2
Peter 1:16–21, Matthew 17:1–9

FEBRUARY 2020 CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

February 1	Steven Meyer
February 7	Chris Landin
February 8	Emma Allen
February 9	Richard Burtis, Susan Wilson
February 10	Sissi Loftin
February 11	Alan McBean, Jayne Fritz
February 12	Robert Anderson
February 13	Cliff Wood
February 16	Greg Allen
February 19	Ross Kinney
February 20	Laura Andrews
February 24	Kirsten Mattson
February 25	Anne Cook
February 26	Paul Love, Charlene Kemp
February 28	Leigh Marthe
February 29	Asa Taggert



LEADERSHIP

VESTRY

*Senior Warden:***Carolyn Taylor-Olson**

oltayols@gmail.com, 254-9255

*Junior Warden:***Ricky Davidson**

rickybratt@gmail.com, 579-6701

Nancy Ames

alderyacht@gmail.com, 617-733-6179

Judy Davidson

judydavidson3d@gmail.com, 254-5440

Imogene Drakes

idrakes10@gmail.com

Christy Fritz

fritzfive@gmail.com, 706-599-8756

Mary Lindquist

mary@stmichaelsvermont.org, 254-6048

Rebecca Olmstead

rebeccaolmstead@me.com, 802-258-2656

Jared Rediske

dentalguy2006@gmail.com, 802-579-8998

Christopher Wesolowski

cmwvt@svcable.net, 380-1474

Bruce Lawrence, Treasurer

brattvt@yahoo.com, 257-1494

Carol Beninati, Clerk

writers@sover.net, 258-4636



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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 am	Quiet service of prayer and Holy Communion
	10:15 am	Prayer, music, and Holy Communion, with childcare
WEEKDAY MORNINGS	6:00–7:00 am	Silent hour in chapel
	8:00–8:30 am	Morning Prayer
WEDNESDAYS	12:00–12:30 pm	Brief service of prayer and Holy Communion
THURSDAYS	5:30–6:00 pm	Contemplative service of chanting, silence, and prayer
SATURDAYS	8:00–9:00 am	Centering Prayer