

# The Guardian

DECEMBER 2020

## FROM THE RECTORY

### THE MOST UNLIKELY PLACE

Sometimes it feels like we are running through an obstacle course. We manage to climb over the wall, expecting a clear path to the finish line, but then new obstacles appear: a pond we must swim through, but wait, we must swim while carrying a tire with us and sing Happy Birthday at the same time.

Given the dramatic increase in COVID infections throughout the nation and even in Vermont, the Governor has just issued a new set of restrictions — more obstacles on this already challenging course. We at St. Michael's had come up with the idea of holding Christmas Eve services outside on the Brattleboro Common. We were excited about this idea and I even ordered some tiny hand-held lights that I'd imagined everyone would hold instead of our usual individual candles.

But we had to nix this idea because of the new restrictions, which is very disappointing. It is one thing to hold Sunday services on Zoom; it is another not to be able to gather for Christmas Eve, singing Silent Night together in the dark, candle-lit sanctuary.

And yet, the Holy Spirit manages to be able to overcome every barrier, even when we feel we cannot go on. We do not need to “make Christmas happen” as one of my stressed clergy friends said to me on a phone call last week. Jesus will be born regardless of the number of obstacles we face this year. Jesus, we may remember, was no stranger to obstacles....Because there was no room in the Inn, a scared and pregnant teenager and her betrothed will give birth in a cold and smelly barn after traveling 90 miles by foot.

Love is born, as Michael Leunig reminds us, in the most unlikely place.



*Love is born  
With a dark and troubled face  
When hope is dead  
And in the most unlikely place  
Love is born:  
Love is always born.*

—Michael Leunig

*Mary*  
Mary Lindquist  
Rector

## NEWS OF THE PARISH

**OPERATION ST. NICHOLAS**

St. Nicholas is coming early this year, just in time for Advent! We have recruited a gaggle of elves to deliver Advent gifts to you on Saturday, November 28, weather permitting! The elves will be delivering a copy of our Advent Devotional to each family unit within a reasonable distance from the church (i.e. we cannot deliver to Florida...). The packages will be left on your doorsteps, so please look for them.

In addition to the Advent Devotional, the Bishop of Vermont is allowing us to take Holy Communion together on the first Sunday of Advent, November 29! How is this possible, you may ask? We have ordered tiny communion sets which will be consecrated and delivered to you with the Advent Devotionals. You are then invited to worship with us at the 8 am and 10:15 am services over Zoom and receive your Communion in your home, virtually connected to others in our church community.

**If you do not wish to receive Holy Communion and/or the Advent devotional, please let us know before Saturday, November 28.** Just call the office (802) 254-6048 Extension 104 or email Jeanie, [jeanie@stmichaelsvermont.org](mailto:jeanie@stmichaelsvermont.org)

In addition, if you have been attending our services, but we do not know your address, please do contact us and let us know. Also, if you have a PO Box address and want to receive an Advent package, please send us a street address for our delivery elves. Again, we can only deliver to Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts!

If the weather looks to be bad on Saturday, November 28, we will try to deliver the packages earlier in the week.

**ADULT FORUMS FOR ADVENT****November 29 — ADVENT AMONG US TODAY:**

This year we have published a second annual Advent Devotional of voices from the congregation. As we read through these reflections together, we will have a chance to share our own journeys with faith, hope, and love in conversation with the writers. Please join us on the 1st Sunday of Advent to explore the theme of “Faith, Hope, and Love in difficult Scripture and difficult times” with adwoa. Join us on the 3rd Sunday of Advent to hear more directly from the voices in the Devotional.

**December 6 — ADVENT MUSIC!** What makes it so special? Where did our Advent hymns and carols originate? Why are they all so good? Everyone is welcome to join Susan Dedell and guests in diving into this wonderful music and poetry. NO musical skills or knowledge needed — just bring your curiosity, your questions, and your imagination!

**December 13 — ADVENT AMONG US TODAY:** On this 3rd Sunday of Advent, we will hear directly from the voices in the Devotional.

**December 20 — MOVING INTO CHRISTMAS: CAROLS, HYMNS, AND CHANTS.** Susan Dedell continues to explore the music of the season with us, as well as digging into just why this music is so magical. Learn more about YOUR favorite seasonal music: requests definitely taken!

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**VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS SERVICES****Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24**

- \*4 pm Christmas Eve Service with Virtual Pageant
- \*8 pm Christmas Eve Service with Music and Holy Communion

**Christmas Day, Friday, December 25**

- \*10 am Feast of the Incarnation Christmas Day Service

Links to all these services will be provided soon in the eNews and on St. Michael's Website!

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**A VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT**

Even though we cannot gather to practice and perform the Christmas Pageant this year, we will not let that stop us! We are planning to act out the pageant by handing out different parts to different kids, asking parents to video tape from phones the different parts and then to text or email the videos to us. We will then put all the videos together into a film version of the Christmas Pageant. We can even have parents come and pick up costumes for the different parts.

We will be in touch soon to see if you would like to participate in St. Michael's first ever virtual pageant!



**WHAT WE NEED NOW:  
ADVENT LESSONS AND CAROLS**

Warm your hearts with the beautiful advent readings and our favorite carols and hymns at 4 pm on Sunday, December 13. Join Susan, Mary, readers, and singers to celebrate and maintain this much loved annual event!

**STEWARDSHIP UPDATE**

Many thanks to everyone who has made a pledge in support of St. Michael's ministry and mission for 2021. As of November 18, we have received 96 pledge cards for a total of \$ 200,132. We are well on our way towards our goals for pledges received (135) and total pledged (\$270,000). Forty-six percent of people pledging have increased their pledges this year. If you have not had a chance to pledge, we encourage you to do so soon. Pledge cards may be returned in the mail or by pledging online through St. Michael's website ([www.stmichaelsvermont.org](http://www.stmichaelsvermont.org)). Just look under "Give" at the top of the homepage. If you have not received a pledge card, we can send one to you. Just contact the office at (802) 254-6048, extension 104. Many thanks for your great generosity and support!



**BODY PRAYER & MEDITATION  
WITH MARY LINDQUIST  
SPECIAL OFFERING FOR THE SEASON  
OF ADVENT**

**TUESDAYS, 5:30–6 PM**

In Advent, we are preparing for the Feast of the Incarnation. Incarnation literally means "in the flesh." Although Christians affirm the goodness of our bodies in remembering that God has become a body in Jesus Christ, we often do not act; we often regard our faith as something mental and not embodied. I hope you will join me in the Season of Advent with a bit of an experiment; we will practice joining gentle movement, breath and body awareness exercises to prayer and scripture, in the hope of experiencing the goodness of the incarnation in our own bodies.

Please join me via Zoom on Tuesday afternoons in Advent, beginning December 1, from 5:30-6 pm! All ages and bodies welcome. Zoom links will be provided in your eNews and on St. Michael's website.



**WEDNESDAY SCRIPTURE,  
WORSHIP & FELLOWSHIP  
ALL WELCOME!**

Looking for a way to deepen your faith during this Season of Advent?

On **Wednesdays from 5:45–7 pm**, we will be reflecting on the Advent appointed scripture on Zoom. Our time will be bracketed with Advent songs and prayer from the Sunday services. No prior biblical knowledge or sign up is required. All are welcome for occasional or ongoing participation. Links can be found in the eNews or St. Michael's website.

If you are interested in more information, please contact adwoa at [adwoa@stmichaelsvermont.org](mailto:adwoa@stmichaelsvermont.org) or call her at 254-6048, ext 103.

## MUSIC IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC, CHAPTER TWO: “ON THE BENCH”

Susan Dedell

My first job as a church organist was at a small Lutheran church six blocks up the road. It was 1966 and I was 13 years old. There were two services, and I played for both. The organ was a Hammond electric draw-bar model, with these teeny-tiny pedals, of which there were only 15. Between the two services, I read a lot. Sometimes I also read during the second sermon, but I had to be careful because there was a hymn right afterwards. I played there for about a year, and then I got hired at a similarly small Episcopal church, with a much nicer organ, but, alas, no reading allowed between services since I had to play for the choir rehearsal. When I started 10th grade, I landed a good job at a medium size Congregational Church, located on a small harbor leading out to Lake Michigan. The sanctuary had a big bank of windows looking out on to the water, and this made it hugely popular for weddings. I must have played at least 50 weddings every year! I was there all through high school and still fondly remember the folks there who helped me cut my church musician teeth. Various satisfying positions followed during the next decade, but I really came home — both spiritually and musically — when I was hired to be the director of music at St. Michael’s in the fall of 1991.

I’ve been on the bench for most of my memory. I’ve played for thousands of services of every kind — and I really do love it. And I really do miss it. Sliding on and off the bench on a Sunday morning in our lovely church feels as natural and invigorating as waking up and as routine and comforting as going to bed. Sometimes when I’m really missing it, I feel like a sports player who has been benched by circumstances beyond anyone’s control.

One definition of being benched in sports reads: “player(s) not currently in the game, but situated on the perimeter of the playing area.” More thoughts about being benched led me to an article titled ‘How to be a Great Player while Sitting on the Bench,’ from

the website called Basketball for Coaches. The writer made five points that any player on the bench should remember and apply.

1. **Bring lots of energy;** shout words of encouragement, and cheer when your team scores.
2. **Take note of your body language** — sit forward, don’t slouch — stay in the game.
3. **Don’t ruin your team’s focus with unnecessary observations or comments.**
4. **Watch the opponent’s game and strategize from your observations**
5. **Stay ready**

I loved this list, and I found it oddly apt for the benched organist! I reworked it a little bit in my head, and here’s what I came up with.

1. **Enthusiastically encourage your team** of weekly musical volunteers — they are donating a precious gift of joy and meaning. Reach out in support to the readers, liturgists, and preachers. Above all, give thanks for the commitment and love that everyone in the entire parish family is bringing in so many ways. *Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.* —Proverbs 12:25
2. **Keep it positive, and keep it current.** Project hope, determination, and solidarity and be ready to strengthen others when called upon. *Do not be frightened, do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.* —Joshua 1:9.
3. **Let the little things go.** Keep the big picture in mind and remember that God’s work is about love. People are sometimes fragile: remember that every good word counts. *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth, but only that which is for building up, that it may give grace to those who hear.* — Ephesians 4:29

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4. **Be observant.** Notice what things during this time have been meaningful. Be aware that there are more opportunities to learn and grow during this time than meets the eye. *There are different ways of working, but the same God works all things in all people.* —Corinthians 12:6.
5. **Be flexible and ready to learn new things.** Move out of the comfort zone. Trust that the Holy Spirit works in and through us at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances. *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.* —Ephesians 3:20

I hope this list gives you some food for thought as you consider your own situation. For sure, I'll be more than ready to move back ON the bench just as soon as possible! And I believe that when our time for reunion comes, we will find ourselves strengthened as a community, and more than ever aware of the power of music to heal and bind.

*"Open the doors and let the music play  
Let the streets resound with singing!"*

from "Do you feel the Mountains Tremble" by Martin Smith



## WHAT GOES AROUND

Cliff L. Wood

*No, it don't cost very much  
Well to place a gentle touch  
To give a glass of water  
To a pilgrim in need of such.  
Well you may not be an angel  
and you may not go to church,  
But the good that you do  
Will come back to you.  
It don't cost very much.*

These lyrics sung by the great Mahalia Jackson soothed my soul this week as I thought about St. Michael's ministry to the Southern State Correctional Facility (SSCF). I learned to love Mahalia from my mother-in-law, Lucille McKee Branton, an elegant and generous woman in word and in deed. Lucille never came downstairs without lipstick, combed hair, and long dangling earrings. She was usually in a lovely dressing gown, ready to prepare a sumptuous breakfast for the large family who gathered in her home for special occasions. It was also what she wore when she stood at the newel post at the bottom of the stairs doing her exercises, always to the music of Mahalia.

Last Tuesday at about 1:00 pm, I stopped at St. Michael's to pick up the bin on the bench. Though tired after six hours at Loaves and Fishes, I smiled when I saw

the bin full of books and magazines for the inmates at SSCF. I put the bin in the back of my SUV, started the car and turned right onto Route 5. All of a sudden, I heard a loud noise and as I looked in my side-view mirror, I saw the bin flying from my car and crashing into the south lane of Route 5, books flying everywhere. I had not closed the back gate of my vehicle. As I pulled to the side of the road, a car with a young couple in it stopped in the middle of the south lane. The man stopped oncoming traffic as the woman began picking up books. In less than a minute, this thirty-something couple and I had all the strewn items safely back in the rear of my car, and this time I closed the door.

I thanked the couple profusely and told them where the books were bound. The woman thanked me for my good work and said, when she was homeless, "... pulling my wagon of stuff, it often overturned as I crossed the street. No one ever stayed to help me. People either yelled at me or shot me the finger." Hearing that, I realized the truth of the saying "What goes around comes around," and "...the good that you do does come back to you, and it don't cost very much."

Keep singing, Mahalia!

I now ask your help in donating items to create gift bags for the SSCF inmates who have no family or

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friends to bring a gift and visit during the holiday season. The Volunteer Coordinator said there are a significant number of men who have no support from the outside, so she hopes to make up gift bags of toiletries, men's white (only) socks, and bags of individually wrapped candies. Magazines and used

paperbacks are always welcome as well. If you can donate any of these items for the men at SSCF, please deliver the gifts to the bin by Tuesday, December 15. I promise to be sure the gate on my car is shut.

Thank you for your continued support of this ministry.

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## A LETTER FROM JACK KARN

Dear Beloved St. Michael's Community,

Happy Advent! I hope my note finds you all well as we enter the final month of a strange and unforgettable year. Before I begin with my updates, I want to acknowledge and say thank you for your continued support for me and my call to serve as a Deacon in God's Church. As a Candidate for Holy Orders to the Permanent Diaconate, I am pleased to report that my ministerial formation and training is going very well. Based in Houston, TX, I am now in my third and final year of education at the Iona School for Ministry. It is amazing how the time has flown by, and I consider it a privilege to model servant leadership for the first- and second-year students. In the classroom, the main focus this year is on theology, and I am enjoying the opportunity to develop my theological thinking and reflection around our catechism. You will be proud to know that over the summer I was chosen for The Rev. Sam Todd Student Leadership Award of 2020, granting me a full tuition scholarship for the 2020–2021 School Year! Professionally, Jerusalem Peacebuilders (JPB) led a successful summer of four online summer institutes for 60+ Americans, Israelis, and Palestinians. We are continuing to develop a hybrid model of offering online and in-person activities during the school year — health and safety permitting. With the slowdown in in-person programming, JPB is working on strengthening our organizational capacity over the next several months through a rigorous staff training program. In addition to JPB, I am the part-time Director of Youth Ministries at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church in Houston. I started in September, and I am truly loving the opportunity to work with young Christians and support them in their faith journey and formation. My staff role at Palmer will witness an increasing role in the life, worship, and ministry of the parish.

In looking at my progress toward ordination, I am doing my parochial field work at St. Luke the Evangelist Episcopal Church in Houston. It is a unique opportunity for me to serve in a historically Black episcopal church, supporting adult formation, worship, and outreach ministries. My field work at St. Luke will reinforce previous parish field work assignments undertaken while I was a foreign missionary in Jerusalem and Nazareth in the Holy Lands between 2016–2018. It is a timely and important assignment for me personally, professionally, and spiritually as our nation continues to reckon with the evils of racism and bigotry. Toward the end of the assignment next spring, I plan to submit my formal application for ordination.

I intend to travel up north a couple of times before next summer for wedding planning and various meetings. I do hope I will get to join you at the Lord's Table once again. In the meantime, I offer these familiar words of encouragement, *therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* —Ephesians 5:1–2. Take good care, stay safe, and I look forward to sharing more updates on my life, ministry, and formation in the new year! God bless you.

In Christ, Jack Karn



## EXPLORING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

## LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

**December 6:** Isaiah 40:1–11; Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13; 2 Peter 3:8–15a; Mark 1:1–8

**December 3:** Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11; Psalm 126 or Canticle 15; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24; John 1:6–8, 19–28

**December 20:** 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16; Canticle 3 or Canticle 15 or Psalm 89:1–4, 19–26; Romans 16:25–27; Luke 1:26–38

**December 27:** Isaiah 61:10–62:3; Psalm 147 or 147:13–21; Galatians 3:23–25; 4:4–7; John 1:1–18

## DECEMBER 2020 CELEBRATIONS

## BIRTHDAYS

- December 1 Liz Vick, Cindy Bacigalupo  
 December 3 Jonah Siegel  
 December 6 Ramon Escalera Jr.  
 December 7 Chris Mattson  
 December 8 Julia Fedoruk, Paul Dyer  
 December 9 Jeanette Perry  
 December 10 Clara Fritz, Gigi Birri  
 December 11 Wylene Wood  
 December 12 Jenny Karstad, Hailey Cogliano, Rebecca Mayer, Holly MacLean  
 December 14 Robin White-Diamondstone  
 December 15 Carol Hesselbach  
 December 17 Julie Ackerman-Hovis, Jessica Bennett  
 December 20 Merribelle Coles, Annabel Horton  
 December 22 Susan Avery, Ann Bonneville, Daniel Dobson  
 December 23 Jean Smith  
 December 25 Joyce Vining Morgan  
 December 26 Jeanette Landin, Hugo Taggert, Susan Ruggles  
 December 28 MJ Woodburn, Christine Gauthier, Stephanie Diamondstone  
 December 30 Annamarie Pluhar, Laurel Harrison



## ANNIVERSARIES

- December 5 Brian & Joyce Vining Morgan  
 December 7 Michael & Susan Wilmott  
 December 21 Lucia Osiecki & Deb Jones  
 December 27 Bruce & Kerry Capponcelli

## LEADERSHIP

## VESTRY

**Carolyn Taylor-Olson, Senior Warden**  
 oltayols@gmail.com  
 254-9255

**Ricky Davidson, Junior Warden**  
 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



*The Guardian* is published monthly by St. Michael's Episcopal Church. News items, announcements, articles, etc. should be submitted to [jeanie@st.michaels-vt.org](mailto:jeanie@st.michaels-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](mailto:jeanie@stmichaels-vt.org) or 802-254-6048.

*Printed on recycled paper 100% post consumer, PCF*

# The Guardian

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



## OUR WORSHIP TOGETHER ONLINE

SUNDAYS	8:00 am	Quiet service of prayer and virtual Morning Prayer or Eucharist
	10:15 am	Prayer, music and virtual Morning Prayer or Eucharist.
WEEKDAY MORNINGS	8:00 am	Morning Prayer
WEEKDAY EVENINGS	5:00 pm	Evening Prayer
THURSDAYS	5:30–6:00 pm	Contemplative service of chanting, silence, and prayer