

The Guardian

FEBRUARY 2022

FROM THE RECTORY

Writing the annual report, I have had to work harder this year than most years, trying to remember what all we have gone through. Fortunately, we have the record of newsletters, Vestry minutes and photos. Here is what I found.

WINTER: A year ago we were still in “lock-down mode,” though most of our committees made the transition to functioning on Zoom. We began to hope that the coming vaccine would help us to return to in-person worship and our active, in-person ministries. As the vaccinations rolled out, we continued our church life on Zoom, offering a Lenten Series called “Voices from the Wilderness: Reflections on a Year of Disruption.” I recall that my expectation was that it would be a year of disruption, not more! We know now that the disruption will span a much longer time.

Our St. Michael’s “elves” delivered Lenten & Easter Bags to all our parishioners with consecrated Holy Communion and Lenten and Easter Resources. We celebrated our second Holy Week on Zoom and discovered some creative liturgies with the Good Friday Stations of the Cross and the strange and surprisingly beautiful Zoom Easter Vigil service. I will never forget standing outside in the cold darkness with Adwoa and experiencing the sunrises of many people in many different locations on Zoom.

SPRING & EARLY SUMMER: Across the globe we had the expectation that the vaccine would free us from this pandemic. I actually led an Adult Forum called “Salvation, Rescue and the Vaccine.” In May, we returned to outside worship at Christ Church. It was wonderful to be together in person and we slowly begin some congregational singing again! One issue that developed with Christ Church was the intense heat of the sun. Thanks to our Buildings and Grounds folks, we erected a tent that helped with the heat. When we were given permission by the Diocese to return to our buildings, we had a “soft opening” on July 11. We also began using the Livestream equipment that we had installed in the church many months prior. We said good-bye to the Zoom iPad and all those “annotated bulletins.” It was remarkable to hear and feel the organ again and eventually return to congregational singing!

As we opened the doors to the church again, I wrote in our July newsletter, “The opening up feels as fast as the closing down!”

The Tag Sale Team held a very successful “Un-Tag-Sale” on July 17 to benefit the Loaves and Fishes Ministry. We began planning to hold another Parish Picnic at the McGinn’s home on Lake Spofford and to have a Grand Opening for our return to the church on September 12.

LATE SUMMER: By late July, COVID surprised us all with the Delta variant that we slowly came to realize could infect even vaccinated people. As we moved through August and the Delta variant spread, we made the hard decision to cancel the Parish Picnic and to downsize our Grand Opening to a Baby Grand Opening.

Continued

FROM THE RECTORY

I pause here to mention that this new reality marked a hard moment for me, the church and our world. While the vaccines were able to offer protection against severe sickness, the reality of COVID's continued hold over our world became clear. Our hopes for dancing into the end of a pandemic were never realized.

But we carried on.

FALL: The Godly Play leaders worked hard to offer Godly Play to our young children outside and the Holy Mayhem teachers developed a plan to do service projects outside.

Susan Dedell and St. Michael's choir offered an amazing Missa Gaia service in the beginning of October, showing that singing with masks, while uncomfortable for the singers, could sound as good as mask-less singing.

Also, seeds of new ministry started to blossom at St. Michael's. Not one, not two, but three substantive, Spirit-led initiatives presented themselves to our church with urgency and resolve: St. Michael's Interfaith Refugee Ministry, The Renewable Energy & Roof Project and the Becoming Beloved Community Initiative.

At the beginning of the fall, I wrote, "I have struggled to discern in prayer if any one of these initiatives could wait until a later time, but each one seems to be irreducible and un-put-off-able." I have been astounded at the fact that each initiative is moving from planning to action in this new year. Thanks be to God for giving us meaningful ways to serve our neighbors, our community and our world.

WINTER: In early December, we were faced with another blow pandemic-wise, the advent of the Omicron variant in South Africa. This was not our first variant rodeo, so we knew we were in for another chapter of surging pandemic cases. With lightning speed, this variant spread through our country and through Vermont. Still, we managed to green the church, have a hybrid Advent Lessons and Carols Service (thank you amazing choir!) and a pre-recorded, rehearsal-free Christmas Pageant.

I learned on December 23 that my daughter, Bibi, tested positive for COVID. This meant making some hard decisions FAST. We changed two of the four Christmas services to Zoom and Tom Ely stepped up to preside and preach at the services in the sanctuary where I could not be. We also decided that, with the upsurge in virus numbers, it was time to "pivot" back to Zoom for Sunday worship. And that is where we are today — numbers sky-high and hospitals overwhelmed. We are hoping for the inevitable down surge in cases so that we can return to hybrid worship.

But despite all that, St. Michael's is moving forward with its ministry. COVID continues to impact our lives, but it is not stopping us from continuing our call to follow Jesus. While the ways we are doing our ministries continue to be different this year (lots of Zoom meetings, no eating together, worship outside, inside, on Vimeo, on Zoom), our focus is more on our ministry together and our call to serve than it is on the pandemic. As opposed to a year ago, we are not waiting for the end of the pandemic, but rather, we are finding new ways to be disciples in this time.

Mary
Mary Lindquist
Rector

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Christmas Pageant filming

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WHEN WILL ST. MICHAEL'S RE-OPEN TO IN-PERSON SUNDAY WORSHIP?

As you know, St. Michael's changed its Sunday morning worship back to Zoom for January because of the Omicron surge of cases in our state. As of this writing, the numbers of cases and hospitalizations are still very high. If Vermont follows the trajectory of other states, we are hoping to be back to In-person/Hybrid worship by Sunday, February 13. However, it is a "wait and see" situation and we will let you know! Please check your eNews or St. Michael's website for the most up-to-date news regarding Sunday worship.

**ADULT FORUMS**

In February, we will be focusing on some of the Hebrew prophets for our Adult Forum time. Abraham Heschel said, "A prophet's true greatness is his ability to hold God and man in a single thought." Stay tuned to find out which prophets we will be studying on February 20 and 27.

February 6

"The Prophets: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah" — Who are these 'strange folk' in the Bible who stood up to kings and powerbroker telling them hard truths when the world around was falling apart... and...at the same time held up the hope of a new way of living with each other? Where are the prophets today, when we need them more than ever? Phillip Wilson leads this introduction to and discussion of The Prophets.

February 13

"The Book of Micah: Lessons and Hope for Modern Times" — The Book of Micah is found mid-way through the Old Testament's minor prophets. Micah, a man from a small town in the southwest of Judah, is of modest means. His point of view is in contrast to the writing of the upper-class Isaiah, his contemporary from Jerusalem. Both prophesied against corruption by political and religious leaders and warned of the future destruction of Israel and Judah. It is from him that we learn that the Messiah will come from Bethlehem. David Treadwell leads.

**STORYTELLING AND THE BELOVED COMMUNITY**

Responding to a new awareness of racism as part of our personal and parish story, St. Michael's has launched efforts to create what it is calling the Beloved Community in our midst. This is one of the major commitments of the parish up through Pentecost in June.

There are different levels of involvement open to people. One is a weekly Covenant Group. Another is Storytelling around our experiences of race and division. Another is a one-day retreat. Here we focus on the Storytelling offering.

Bring to mind the Moth Story Hour on Public Radio. We listen to stories that evoke our own stories and ask the questions we need to hear. Here is what we are proposing for St. Michael's.

For one hour on three Sunday late afternoons, from 5 pm to 6 pm, we are invited to gather on Zoom and listen to different members of the parish tell personal stories of racial awareness. Stories might include messages of race they learned growing up, experiences of privilege and non-privilege, experiences of racial healing and what it took, ways they have confronted the "demon" and more.....

We will gather at 5 pm on Zoom and begin with a prayer. We will invite selected storytellers to share their experiences, leaving us with questions to ponder. After each story, we will keep some silence and then hear the next person. We will end again with a prayer that

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invites the spirit of healing and reconciliation. It is our belief that one way God speaks to us is through the stories we share from deep within us.

Dates: Sunday Feb. 13, Sunday March 13 and Sunday April 3

Time: 5 pm to 6 pm

Gather: Via Zoom. LINK will be available in eNews and on St. Michael's website.

Organizers: Carolyn Taylor-Olson, Rosie Wojcik and Phillip Wilson



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE TAG SALE?

You might be wondering what this year's plans are for the Fabulous Tag Sale, a St. Michael's institution since 1973! The members of the Tag Sale Ministry are excited to be making definite plans for a big sale to be held this spring on Saturday, May 7 from 9 am–2 pm. Mark your calendars! We won't know until closer to the date if we will be allowed to hold some of the sale indoors or if it will be totally outside under tents, but with your support, and assuming a lessening of the pandemic, the sale *will* happen!

The Tag Sale has now shifted to being a once-a-year event, so we will be offering clothing and other items for all seasons at the sale. We will not be putting prices on many of the items, but will ask for donations for the local non-profit organizations we will be supporting. More on that later!

We will be accepting donations of housewares, clothing, shoes, linens and books beginning on Tuesday, March 1. We ask that all donations be in good condition: gently used, clean, not stained, broken or missing pieces. Sorry, we will not be able to accept any electronics except for small household or kitchen appliances. Furniture donations will be accepted closer to the sale, due to lack of storage space. Specific guidelines and details for donations will be in the Thursday eNews and Sunday Bulletins beginning in mid-February.

Please start sorting through your belongings and keep the Tag Sale in mind as you do! If you have questions or would like more information, please feel free to email Liz Vick at ebethvick@gmail.com or call at 802-254-7060. Thank you!



ASH WEDNESDAY IS ON MARCH 2

Lent is late this year! But, it is coming....Mardi Gras is March 1 and Ash Wednesday is on March 2. We will let you know about worship opportunities soon. Mark your calendars!

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ABRAHAM, HOSPITALITY, AND OUR REFUGEE FAMILIES

Craig Hammond

We are very excited that as I write this on January 10 when our very first refugee family is on its way to us via the Manchester NH airport. They will arrive in Brattleboro tonight and will be housed at SIT for a week for their orientation and welcome to our community. They should be quite comfortable at SIT. Some of us from our St. Michael's team will be at this new housing this evening to make sure everything is in place for them: bedding, halal food in the kitchen, dishes, toiletries, extra blankets, toys and more. In this first family there will be the mom, her three kids ranging in age from 3 to 16, and her brother and cousin. We've been told that the mother worked as a physician for the Afghan military.

We have a "Core Team" that's been working almost daily on all that needs to be done, including Jeff Lewis, Daniel Dobson and Jean Smith as our team coordinators, plus Alix Barstow, Joyce Vining Morgan, Brian Morgan, Jane Sbardella, Christopher Wesolowski and me. We also share this work with all the other teams outside of St. Michael's, and we're beginning to collaborate more and more to support one another. These preparations have been underway for the past six months.

In the next few weeks, our new families will be helped with their acclimation to life here. You may see them in stores or on the sidewalk. For a while our co-sponsor team or other volunteers will be with them as they learn all kinds of things: about US currency, how and where and when to use it, how to shop, how to use the Moover to get around, how to enroll and find support for their three children in our schools, be introduced to our health care system (including screenings, first visits, and attention to immediate needs), and employment opportunities, to name a few.

You may see other refugee families and individuals as well. They are arriving all the time, and it's expected that in all we'll have between 100–200 refugees settling

in Southern Vermont. Our St. Michael's team is the first to be approved to host families, but there will be 8–10 more of these co-sponsoring teams, from Bennington to Brattleboro. In our one team there already must be over 50 volunteers actively at work. So let us be ever so grateful for one another and for all we can do for these our new friends. And in that spirit I want to offer a few thoughts about what it might mean in our faith to offer up this hospitality.

It is certainly true that throughout Judaism, Islam and Christianity there are many stories of welcoming the stranger. In those stories there is always a triangular relationship between each of us, the stranger or the other, and God. But today let's just look at hospitality in a story about Abraham. For throughout history, Jews, Christians and Muslims have all held up that story as a touchstone for what's central and paramount to who we are and how in this spirit we may greet strangers into our lives, including our refugee families.

The story of Abraham's hospitality is the same story, whether we read it in the Qur'an or the book of Genesis. Travelers, perhaps angels, came to Abraham with "greetings of peace." He had been speaking with God, but when these travelers came, he turned away from God, turned to his guests, and responded with his own greeting of peace. Abraham then rushed off and returned with a roasted calf to share. In some accounts it is said they had a message that Sarah and Abraham, who were both very old, would have two children, first Isaac and then Jacob. Sarah immediately laughed with joy, assured that these strangers had not come to do them any harm but to greet them and to bring this good news. They said farewell to one another, the story ended, and Abraham returned to his conversation with God.

One striking aspect of this story is it that Abraham just walks away from God to honor his guests. Why did he

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do that and why were they so important? Were they even more important than God? Instead, let's think of it this way — that for Muslims, Jews and Christians hospitality is always to come first. And more than that, many believe now that in the stranger, in the guest who presents him or herself at our door, in that

troubled person by the side of the road, in that act of hospitality God is present in that person. And that when we truly look at one another face to face, that is indeed a sacred moment, one to honor God, truly present. Please join us as we welcome our new families and friends.



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FROM OUR SEMINARIANS

St. Michael's is so blessed to have three seminarians connected to us! Darcey and Jeff are seminarians sponsored by our parish and Adwoa is our Seminary Intern, sponsored by Christ Church, Cambridge, MA. They are all experiencing their formation in different places — Darcey is studying at the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin Texas, Jeff is studying at Virginia Seminary in Alexandria Virginia, and Adwoa is studying remotely with Luther Seminary in St. Paul Minnesota.

STM

GREETINGS ST MICHAEL'S FAMILY!



Here I am about to begin my last semester of seminary, in the hopes that I will be ordained (God willing and the people consenting) to the transitional Diaconate in June at the Cathedral of St. Paul up in Burlington!

During the past semester I spent much of my time on three big projects. The first one was planning a "Service for the Whole Human Family" with a group of friends. For the sermon I used readings that spoke about eunuchs and their being differently abled and differently gendered and often treated as not belonging, and yet God and Jesus honored them. The second project turned into a curriculum for guiding churches into being welcoming to people who are different from them, specifically people in the LGBTQIA+ community, but with the flexibility and framework to be modified for anyone. The third one was a paper for my Queering Congregations class, exploring how God is beyond gender and how keeping God's pronouns only as "he" keeps the hierarchical framework of male patriarchy and oppression in place and we miss out on the grand expansiveness of the diversity of God and the recognition of the imago dei within one another in all our diversity. I will continue to work on these last two projects in some way this

coming semester, specifically as a research assistant with the visiting professor.

This coming semester looks to be a lot of fun, mostly because the dean will be teaching our liturgical leadership class, which is where we learn all about being at the altar. We will also have a class on formation and youth ministry, which I am sure will be inspiring. After last summer interning at UVM as a chaplain, I thought it would be helpful to continue my learning by taking a class specifically on hospice and palliative care. It will be a full semester as we spend more time with our field education community, which for me is a missional church that was started in a neighborhood and meets in a school. That is all for now. I look forward to seeing you all again in the summer.

*Blessings,
Darcey Mercier*

STM

Dear St. Michael's,

I am very happy to be home on break from Virginia Theological Seminary. This past semester I studied Biblical Greek, Old Testament Interpretation, and Historical Witness of the Church. I am happy to report that I have passed my courses and am preparing to return to Virginia at the end of January. My coming semester will include continuations of Old Testament and Greek, and I will also be taking a course entitled "Theological Reflections on Contemporary American Novels," which I am excited for.

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It has been quite an adjustment for me and my cats to be living in an apartment far from home. The cats particularly object to the nine-hour drive back and forth from Brattleboro, but we are settling into the city life nonetheless. I am blessed to have wonderful professors and wonderful classmates, and I am looking forward to continuing this journey with them when I return. I have been attending a number of different parishes in the DC area in preparation for choosing a field internship site, and I can confidently report that St. Michael's has the



finest music program of any Church I have yet attended. It was wonderful to celebrate Christmas Eve with you all, and I look forward to being together again in the near future. I will keep you in my prayers, and I particularly appreciate your ongoing prayers for me in my seminary adventure.

*In Christ,
Jeffrey Hiam*

STM

Hello St. Michael's!

This last year and a half has been action-packed with study in language, Bible, history, theology, justice, innovation and spirituality, all while having the opportunity to work alongside all of you in the great calling of being church together. The program I've been attending has an accelerated design intended so that four years of formation can be accomplished in 24 continuous months integrating academic study and fieldwork at once. In this whirlwind of busyness, I found myself wondering *Did I actually learn anything? Has anything actually been integrated and 'stuck'?*

In the first week of January, Darcey and I took the General Ordination Exams (GOE). The GOEs consist

of six essays over three days exploring six different canonical areas. This year, about half of the questions invited us to explore how to make theological meaning of the last two years of instability. It was such a precious time to realize that the learning of the last two years has become a part of me, and that day by day among you, some mysterious thing called 'formation' has been happening. A theology of ministry and of faith, a sense of sustaining practices, and growing clarity about the shape of my call all seem to be emerging, even as I continue to listen for what is next.

Mid-January, I also had the next stage of interviews with my Diocese of Massachusetts to move forward with the ordination process. This June will mark new transitions. Graduation. The end of my employment with St. Michael's. The beginning of a new stage in formation and ministry, maybe, as a newly ordained person??? In the spring term, after so many months of intensity, I look forward to taking some independent studies in order to further integrate some of this rich learning, as well as to deepen and renew some intentional spiritual practices that have been strained by the requirements of the program. There may also be a mission trip to Germany. We've been very sad to have that element of the program deferred repeatedly by COVID, but hope that it will still happen in May. Through it all, I feel so grateful to look forward to being sent and to celebrating whatever is next with this wonderful community of faith.



*Shalom,
Adwoa*

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SUMMARY OF JANUARY MEETING OF THE VESTRY

The Vestry met via zoom on January 20, 2022.

Judy Davidson opened the meeting with a prayer and check in time around our personal feelings about the ongoing pandemic.

Then Bruce did the treasurer's report and there the Vestry learned about how the parish did during the month of December and the final numbers for the end of the year. Then he shared a draft version of the budget and we were given the highlights of the budget for the coming year.

Susan Dedell joined our meeting to give an update on the condition of the organ and the needed repairs to the instrument. Our organ is ready for some needed work to keep it in the best shape possible and it can continue to serve us for decades to come. Did you know that our organ is 45 years old, has had no major work done to it and if we were to totally replace it with the same instrument, it would cost over 2 million dollars? The Vestry all agreed it is a wonderful gift that we get all year having music fill our space and add to our worship.

Jeff Lewis joined the meeting to give the Vestry an update on the work of the co-sponsorship group and how welcoming the first Afghan family to the area has gone. It is a lot of work and all of the volunteers have done so much to help these new arrivals feel welcome to the area.

Then the Vestry received an update on the roof, solar and renewable energy project. As part of that work, the Vestry is setting aside \$15,000 to be used to hire a capital campaign consultant and to have a total energy audit of our space done.

As part of the Rector's report, Mary gave us an update on having in-person worship again. The hope is (if all the covid number keep trending down) that we will be back in the church on Sunday February 13th. She also told us about the covenant groups that will be starting soon. Over 40 people have signed up. Our annual meeting will be on Sunday January 30th at 2pm on zoom. The Vestry will do its annual retreat via zoom the of February 11th. Lastly, Horizon Preschool has asked to rent some more space in the building and we will do a limited test of them using more space this spring and revisit the use before summer.

This month's Warden's report was just a reminder that the Vestry will be hosting the Adult Forum on Sunday January 30th at 9 am on zoom. All Vestry members will be in attendance and we hope the parish will come out to ask question and meet any Vestry members they do not know or know well. Then the three outgoing Vestry members, Judy Davidson, Christy Fritz and Ricky Davidson shared their thoughts and reflections of their time on the Vestry. Wonderful stories were told and memories were shared.

Ricky closed the meeting with an evening prayer written by Martin Luther King Jr.

—submitted by Ricky Davidson

EXPLORING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

LECTIONARY FOR FEBRUARY

Sunday, February 6:

Isaiah 6:1–8, Psalm 138, 1 Corinthians 15:1–11,
Luke 5:1–11

Sunday, February 13:

Jeremiah 17:5–10, Psalm 1,
1 Corinthians 15:12–20, Luke 6:17–26

Sunday, February 20:

Genesis 45:3–11, 15; Psalm 37:1–12, 41–42;
1 Corinthians 15:35–38, 42–50; Luke 6:27–38

Sunday, February 27:

Exodus 34:29–35, Psalm 99,
2 Corinthians 3:12–4:2, Luke 9:28–36

FEBRUARY 2022 CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

February 1	Steven Meyer
February 7	Chris Landin, Doug Lilly
February 8	Emma Allen
February 9	Richard Burtis, Susan Wilson
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 23	Judy Davidson
February 24	Kirsten Mattson
February 25	Anne Cook
February 26	Paul Love, Charlene Kemp, Corey Nasman
February 28	Leigh Marthe
February 29	Asa Taggert



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