

August/September 2025

The Guardian

“Shield the Joyous”

(BCP, Compline Prayer p. 134)

Welcome to a new iteration of *The Guardian*. This is our first issue trying out something new, showcasing more voices and deeper stories about how God is showing up in our lives. Often we keep these quiet moments or awarenesses close, but if this is where our faith feels most alive, why not share them with each other? We are so happy to present stories, prayers, and poems for this inaugural issue. We hope you will consider sharing in the future. Deep thanks to Mary for the vision and invitation, Annie and Kim for collaborating, Susie for administrative support, and Susan K. for layout and design. And with that, we offer this re-imagined version of our familiar parish publication.

With love,

Erin Pesut and Megan Buchanan, Guest Editors

SIGNPOSTS

When Mary asked me to be the Sabbatical Priest, one of the things we spoke about was “What do we want the congregation to learn/think about during the 12 weeks?” We landed on two ideas:

1. Reminding people of the **mystery** that is God, worship, Eucharist, etc.
2. Inviting people to remember and share stories of when they encountered God/Holy Spirit/Jesus in their lives. We nicknamed this “sharing **SignPost moments**.”

After my first few weeks at St. Michael’s, I spoke about some of my own SignPosts. I also invited people to speak to me about SignPost moments in their lives and to consider sharing them with the congregation.

WHY? I believe that Christian community is rooted in the story of Jesus — the big “God Story.” But God’s interaction with humans did not stop with Jesus. God’s promise is to be with us. If we pay attention, usually in retrospect, we often find that the Spirit was at work, touching our lives in different ways. I also knew that, too often, people are hesitant (afraid?) to share such stories... and I believed that everyone has SignPost moments in their lives.

SUNDAYS. I invited people to share their SignPost story at Sunday worship for three Sundays in a row. Each speaker spoke briefly at the start of the “sermon time” about an experience of the Holy Spirit/God in their lives. The preacher then worked to incorporate the SignPost story in some way — guided by the Spirit? — into the sermon. Thanks to John Daly, Paul Gallagher, Karren Meyer and Ricky Davidson we have been able to hear a variety of SignPosts. They have each been a blessing.

LOOKING AHEAD

I also have had people speak with me privately about such moments in their own lives and I suspect there are more stories to tell. Thus, the church website now has a SignPost link where, in addition to each Sunday’s clip of the person’s SignPost, we can put written, audio and/or video SignPost stories. Indeed, there are three waiting to be uploaded. With Mary’s return and with input from the vestry, St. Michael’s will decide whether or not to keep asking for and sharing SignPosts.

Some say God’s Story is our story. Now, it is our chance to tell our SignPost story as part of the “God Story.”

—Rev. Thad Bennett, Sabbatical Priest

FOYER GROUPS

At St. Michael's, we will again soon have the opportunity to form friendships with members of our church family while gathering for purely social reasons, strengthening the bonds of community, and getting to know others with whom we might not otherwise interact. Once again, you are invited to think about being part of a St. Michael's Foyer group for the coming year!

The English word foyer is derived from *foier*, the French term for hearthside and projects an image of warmth and comfort.

As I reflect on my two years of meeting for these shared meals, I think of the warm relationships which have formed through this ministry. Some Foyer group members have been on each other's prayer lists. We have grown to know and cherish our friendships.

Two years ago my beautiful group included mostly younger couples, two toddlers, and sometimes an elementary school child. It was a lively gathering! My husband and I had the fun of being the "old folks." This year we were among fellow retirees, along with a working-age couple, and usually a young adult with special needs. This was a more reflective gathering, often considering answers to thoughtful questions posed in advance and shared during dinner.

We met in each other's homes, or in the church basement if homes were too small. One year families hosted a meal in its entirety, so it was a true night out for everybody but the host. The other year we had potlucks with the host providing the main course. After groups were assigned, we made up our own schedules and plans for gathering. Weather, snow and ice, limited our plans more than once, since this is

Vermont! A shared desire to figure out the logistics of getting together usually succeeded.

How did this fascinating social ministry evolve?

"What today we refer to as foyer dinner groups were born in the Diocese of Coventry, England, in the aftermath of the massive destruction at the height of the German bombings of London and Coventry during World War II. The fourteenth-century Cathedral of St. Michael (Coventry Cathedral) was destroyed in the nine-hour blitz of 14 November 1940, but a ministry of reconciliation evolved from that destruction. This cross of nails made from the twisted ruins of nails from the cathedral and the words

'Father, Forgive' became the unifying symbol of the International Ministry of Reconciliation, a group of devout followers who believe that understanding between peoples, nations, and ideologies can come

only when human beings meet and know each other as individuals. In the mid-1960s, the staff of Coventry Cathedral began meeting in small groups to bridge differences, eventually giving these gatherings their present name. What they discovered were the strong bonds that formed from this communal experience. The concept spread to the cathedral congregation and other churches. Eventually, it spread to the shores of the USA."

Would you like to share a reflection about your experience with a Foyer Group? A few reflections may be published in the weekly e-news c/o the Parish Administrator.

To sign up: contact the church office or speak to Susan Heimer (heimer.susan@gmail.com).

—Susan Heimer

The English word foyer
is derived from *foier*, the French
term for hearthside and projects an
image of warmth and comfort.

BECOMING

A few years ago I was asked to write a brief history of St. Michael's, in response to the conversation about the portrait in the common room of Bishop John Hopkins, the first bishop of Vermont. The history was meant to be both a recognition of (all of our) human failings, as the Bishop was pro-slavery, and also a recognition of (all of our) good work as humans, as the Bishop did much to support seminaries and to unite the church during the Civil War.

While researching and writing, I tried to keep in mind both "Less is more," and "What are we leaving out? What are other ways to represent history?" I was thinking of who might read this: people new to St. Michael's? people new to the Episcopal Church? Long-time members that might like to know more?

When I finally sent the brief-ish history to the committee, I said "Gird your loins, my friends!" The 8600 word document had nine parts, each with three sections, and included quotations, poems, hymns, ideas for photographs and other artwork, all in an exquisite trinitarian framework.

I also sent along visions of a community art project: could the Sunday School or youth groups make illustrations/drawings/paintings for the various sections, or paint paper patchwork pieces for the text background? Could this be a quilt, and embroiderers and fabric artists could contribute? Could we have a great big cosmic spiral of a St. Michael's history all done in beautiful artwork?

Oh my! responded the committee, This is wonderful! Oh my! They responded, This is way too long!

Thus the lovely history panel in the common room includes some snippets, and now you, dear *Guardian* reader, will have the pleasure of reading the entire history, in serial fashion, as you imagine the great spiraling quilt of beauty.

Also, you may have memories of the glaciers, or a story about the spiritual power of black flies or bears, which you might like to contribute to future issues of *The Guardian*. (And you might even be able to write it briefly!)



BECOMING: A BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

PART ONE

UNIVERSE: COSMOS

"All things have being through the love of God."

—Julian of Norwich, *English mystic, 1342–1416* ⁽¹⁾

"our lives are bathed in the Great Mystery — every element of our bodies was birthed in the supernova explosion 5½ billion years ago; all the organs of our bodies have their 18-billion-year Story to tell. The stars, the one trillion galaxies, the sun and the moon, the mountains and waters and forests and fish — all have their sacred and revelatory Story to tell."

—Matthew Fox, *contemporary Episcopal theologian* ⁽²⁾

*"Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God."*

—Psalm 90:2, *King James Version*

FIRE. ICE. ROCK.

Out of the depths of love comes the cosmos: space, skies, stars, suns: this earth. The watery deep, the land masses rising, the breath of air; the great slow movements of fire, ice, rock.

What we know now as Vermont was once a coastline. Land masses collided with the coast, folding the Vermont bedrock into the Green Mountains, forming New Hampshire and Maine. Glaciers come and go. Giant lakes come and go. Metamorphic, sedimentary, and volcanic rocks predominate.

RIVER. MOUNTAIN. FOREST.

Pattern, order, beauty: life arises from the Holy within: cells grow, divide, join, become, on water, on land, in the air. The green ones emerge: algae, mosses, ferns, conifers, herbs and shrubs and flowers, deciduous trees. The animals come forth: water-lovers, land-lovers, sky-lovers.

The Southeastern Vermont Piedmont region, between the Green Mountains and the Connecticut River Valley, is known for its rolling hills, low mountains, and rivers. Forests are mainly mixed northern hardwoods and conifers: beech, birch, maple, oak, pine, hemlock, ash, basswood. Animals of many kinds, from bugs to birds, fish to frogs, snakes to skunks, black fly to bear, inhabit the area.

LOVE. JOY. JUSTICE.

The church has long wrestled with an anti-nature, anti-body bias in some eras and expressions of Christianity, while others times and sensibilities have brought forth visions such as those of Julian of Norwich: "For the fullness of joy is to behold God in everything"⁽³⁾.

Concerns about the climate crisis, ecological devastation, and human and more-than-human suffering help undergird a spiritual reverence and love for the universe as well as movements for environmental, political, and social justice in the church. In 2022, St. Michael's adopted the Season of Creation as part of the liturgical church year, from early September and the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, to early October and St. Francis of Assisi's feast day.

—Kim Peavey

UNIVERSE SOURCES:

1. Friends of Julian Norwich, julianofnorwich.org
2. Matthew Fox. "Deep Ecumenism, Ecojustice, and Art as Meditation," *Wrestling with the Prophets*. NY, HarperCollins, 1995 (218).
3. The Order of Julian of Norwich, orderofjulian.org
Swimme, Brian Thomas and Mary Evelyn Tucker. *Journey of the Universe*. DVD, 2011.
exploringnature.org
vtfishandwildlife.com
bplant.org
vermontpublic.org

God's Grandeur

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
 It will flame out, like the shining from shook foil;
 It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
 Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
 Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
 And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
 And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
 And for all this, nature is never spent;
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
 And though the lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*

—Gerard Manley Hopkins,
 English poet and Jesuit priest



IN CELEBRATION OF THE TAG SALE

Joy was evident as shoppers exited the church on May 3rd, the date of the 2025 Annual Tag Sale, clutching their treasures, feeling glad to have contributed to charitable causes. The joy flowed onward to Loaves and Fishes, which received \$8,500 from us, and to the Winston Prouty Family Program which got a check for \$2,000. Our fundraising goal had been more than met, yet again. The generosity is something to be proud of.

One factoid that people might find interesting is that the sale began in 1975 with a group of parents recycling their children's clothes, and has happened every year since, except during Covid, so it's been going strong for 51 years!

The Tag Sale is a whole church effort. "The greatest joy of working on the Tag Sale is getting to be part of the community," observed one Tag Sale Ministry member. The wonder, chaos, and success of the day is the result of a great deal of work by a huge number of people. "I love being invited to DO something," she added."

"The fact that it is a ministry that can involve short-term commitment is appealing," remarked another. "It is intense while it lasts, but we continue to tweak it, to streamline what we can, and everybody jumps in to help." We are proud that it has been a real ministry to encourage people to recycle, downsize, and even help families deal with possessions after the death of a loved one.

People may not be aware of all that goes on behind the scenes. Planning begins in the summer. Of course, donating into those closets is a generous first step! Sorting goes on once or twice a week in the months leading up to the sale. ("It is fun to unwrap and sort all the bags and boxes.") Sorting times can be adjusted to meet people's schedules as needed. Publicity is a big job which can be done on your own timeline. There is a big push near the end to put up tents and pick up furniture (if you can allot time then it is a real gift). Some people cook, bake and clean, and eventually haul away unsold items. Liz Vick would like to see volunteers help organize these efforts and not just join in.

The team is already evaluating and beginning planning for the 2026 sale. Liz Vick, after many years of

leadership, wants to step back a bit, and turn the organizing over to teams. She has carefully documented all the various organizational steps and the committee

is looking for ways to share the responsibility more. Consider yourself invited! Please join this ministry!

Some last comments to share from the participants: "Measuring sheets is the WORST! Please tell folks to note what size sheets they are donating." Also let's keep in mind "Love your neighbor as yourself" and "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" when it comes to what is donated!

Contact Susan Heimer (heimer.susan@gmail.com) to learn more.

—Susan Heimer

"The greatest joy of working
on the Tag Sale is getting
to be part of the community,"

LATE SUMMER MAGIC

In the Buzzing Country

for Kingman B. IV

Today and often lately I long for the dark green cool
 of a big New England pond: trillium, turtles,
 tired children resting belly-down on faded towels,
 all strawberry-stained and muddy. Highways home
 lush with trees whose names I haven't learned.
 Rolling along unpaved backroads, bare feet
 on the dusty dash of someone else's car.
 Horses munch spicy buttercups and swat deerflies
 out in fields behind the house.
 Dragonflies hover and zip
 over iris and sunflowers standing tall
 amid billowing beds of romaine and basil at sunset.

Candlelit nights in the buzzing country,
 drinking tea with honey late around the long table,
 breathing in the faces and voices of friends I'm never full of,
 the friends that just know what I mean
 as frogs, crickets, the whole world hums
 just outside the old screen door.

I wrote this poem about the fullness and sparkle of Vermont summers when I lived thousands of miles away in the high altitude and ponderosa-forested mountains of northern Arizona. It recalls the feeling of kindred communion with dear friends — *chosen family* is a term often used now — and an embodied awareness of oneness with all life forms. Our happily muddy feet, the songs of the creatures living outside humming inside our ears, the warmth of the mug in our hands — all a gift from the Creator. Of course there is always more a poet can describe; there are no stars or fireflies in this poem, but we know they are there! I still can't believe I live here now in Vermont, and every day I am grateful for the beautiful land here and the community I am blessed to share with all of you.

Now as we begin to round the bend from late summer into the early fall, I offer this poem as an invitation to write your own poem or prose to answer the following question: What is your summer magic? Which sounds, smells, textures, flavors, routines, traditions held now or in the past do you love and long for in the deep midwinter? During this summer of deepening national and international uncertainty (and for many of us, anguish), what sensory moments buoy you? Let your thoughts unfurl. Let the words flow without judgement or editing. The only real direction I will share is this: *BE SPECIFIC*.

Sending love to all who read this. And stay tuned for an announcement about the revival of the St Michael's poetry writing group that has met off and on since 2010.

—Megan Buchanan

A PRAYER FOR PEACE

Back in March of this year at the Women's Retreat at Hallelujah Farm, Laura Frey, one of the co-facilitators, handed out these prayer cards. The day focused on the idea of courage and on the life and courageous acts of Saint Edith Stein, Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

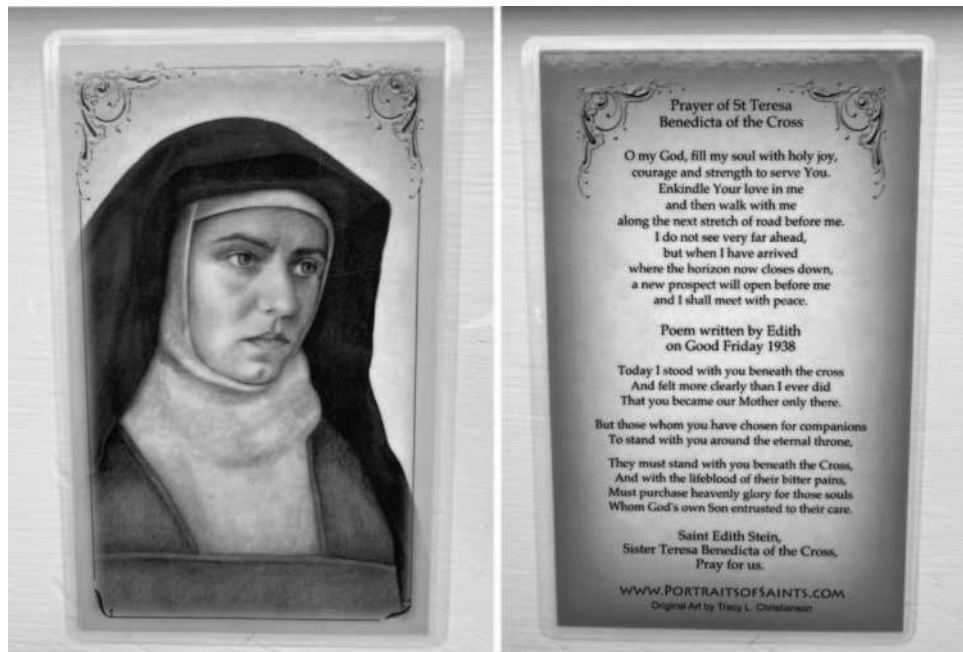
Little did I know how much I would come to rely on this thickly laminated card I brought home.

This prayer card has been on my bedside table, and I have turned to it so often — in times of discomfort,

uncertainty, and when I am trying to bravely step “along the next stretch of road before me” when “I do not see very far ahead.” It has brought me peace and comfort, and I wanted to share this prayer with all of you.

Thank you again, Laura and Karin, for leading that wonderful retreat back in March, and to you, Leigh, as well for your delightful hospitality at Hallelujah Farm. The ripple effects of that day are still being felt many months later...

—Erin Pesut



PRAYER OF ST TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS

O my God, fill my soul with holy joy,
 courage and strength to serve You.
 Enkindle Your love in me
 and then walk with me
 along the next stretch of road before me.
 I do not see very far ahead,
 but when I have arrived
 where the horizon now closes down,
 a new prospect will open before me
 and I shall meet with peace.

PLAYING LOAVES AND FISHES

To give is to receive.

I can't give a lot of money: if I could, I'd hope to be there for those who struggle.

I can give time, and I do when I can.

And then there's music.

A couple of years ago, Ruth Tilghman suggested that I gather musicians to play on Tuesday or Friday mornings in the basement of Centre Congregational to make the work of the many Loaves and Fishes volunteers just a little bit lighter and brighter.

Since then, my partner Breeze and I have played Loaves and Fishes many times, as have John Ogorzalek, Talley Summerlin and a few others.

Every time we play, we see hardworking carrot-peelers, onion

choppers, food collectors and distributors move to the beat, sing along, smile, engage — all over the music. And the last time we played Loaves and Fishes inked in the reasons why we do.

As one of the Afghan moms collected groceries for her family at the basement refugee market, her little boy, maybe age four, trotted about in a sequined midnight blue top and pants. Some 15 feet away, he passed us several times eyeing the guitar with curiosity before he came close to stand and listen, his deep brown eyes searching ours.

He watched calmly as we played, taking in rhythm, harmony, a lyric's poetry. I was about to ask if he

wanted to use my shaker, but he turned with the same cool with which he'd listened and he toddled away, back to his mother.

Toward the end of the set, a young volunteer stood to listen in a snappy hat and vest. He was there with an aide, I believe, doing all he could to help with one facet of the big Loaves and Fishes machine.

Our song was almost over — I can't remember which — when he reached into his inner vest pocket and pulled out a collection of coins: several pennies, a couple nickels, and a quarter. He held them out on an open hand for us to receive. I blurted, "Oh no, thank you, but we don't do this for money." He looked perplexed as he put the coins back in his vest pocket and turned to walk away, back to work.

Music is the food of love.

The next time we play Loaves and Fishes, I will learn that young man's name and thank him for

what he offered — which we should have taken gratefully. To give is to receive.

Instrumentalists and vocalists are welcome at Loaves and Fishes. The rewards are rich: a spiritual boost, smiles from volunteers — and often from those receiving food — and a great lunch, to boot.

If interested, sign up by writing to me at verbatimvt@gmail.com to play any chunk of time you choose on a Tuesday or Friday between 9:30 and 12.

Music is the food of love.

—Annie Landenberger

VESTRY REPORT FOR JULY 17, 2025

Once each summer, the Vestry gathers early for a festive meal followed by our normal Vestry meeting. This July 17th we met at the home of John Spooner (Jr. Warden of the Vestry) and Craig Irvine for a delicious potluck meal that provided a great time of connecting as a group before moving into the business of the church. We always start each meeting with prayer and reflection to help us shift gears from the day and to be fully present for the meeting at hand. Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed and approved and we dived into the substance of our agenda.

The fabulous Gwen Mousin, church treasurer, gave a thorough report of all the work she and her team are accomplishing. Points of interest to the St. Michael's community include:

- The financial news of the church is positive. At the June meeting, the Vestry requested additional review of the church endowment to help us understand a projected deficit for the St. Michael's budget. This work was completed by the Endowment Committee who revisited the monthly draw on the endowment and were able to revise it, thus reducing the projected deficit and helping the church gain better financial footing.
- Also, the church will be releasing its mid-year giving statements very soon. Please look at your to track your pledge and make payments if necessary.
- Other positive news includes:
 - Higher offertory plate income than last year (thanks to everyone giving during church).
 - 2025 pledge income is higher than last year
 - 2025 rental income for using church space (e.g., the day care center) is also higher
 - So far, 2025 expenses are lower.
- Considering this positive financial information and the knowledge of coming expenses, the Budget team will do a mid-year review of where things stand and report back to the Vestry. For example, the Building and Grounds Team reported on a list of items that need to be completed.

After considering the Treasurer's Report, our Interim Priest Thad Bennett updated us on topics he is covering. We spoke about the SignPosts project, some stepped up security at the church, the successful class offered this summer on the Episcopal Church, and recommendations for updating and revising the church's *Guardian* newsletter. A group has been working on the *Guardian* and the new look will be unveiled soon. We welcome your feedback. We also spoke about updating the church's website and we are currently implementing changes as best we can. If anyone in the congregation has a love of website development and wants to volunteer some support, please reach out to a Vestry member and let us know!

Susan Heimer, the Vestry Senior Warden, and John Spooner, the Junior Warden also gave updates. We always talk about feedback we hear at the Sunday Vestry Listening Corner during the coffee hour. Look for a Vestry member and give us your ideas, suggestions, questions, compliments, or anything else you want to share. We listen and do our best to respond.

Other news shared by the Wardens included an update on church signage. We have a viable proposal for indoor signage, and it will be implemented soon.

Also, the church picnic is almost here! Mark your calendars for August 24th. More details will follow in church communications.

Judy Davidson and Craig Hammond joined the Vestry meeting by Zoom to update us on the Responding in Faith group and to brief us on a proposal for becoming a Sanctuary Church. The Vestry appreciates the work this group has been doing and voted to empower the Workgroup to create a protocol and invite the ACLU to offer a training at the church for the St. Michael's and broader community.

We closed our meeting with prayer and thanksgiving. We appreciate all of you who attend and support St. Michael's in so many ways!

EXPLORING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

LECTIONARY FOR AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

To see all the readings for each Sunday, go to
<http://www.lectionarypage.net/#august>

<http://www.lectionarypage.net/#september>

You will find there the collects, lessons and psalms
 for each Sunday and feast day.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

August 2	Caleb Fritz, Laura Frey
August 11	Christine Triebert
August 16	Erin LeBlanc
August 18	Avery Buchanan, Mary Carnahan
August 21	Judith McBean
August 22	Janet Brocklehurst
August 26	Susan Dedell, Grainne Buchanan
August 28	Fred Bump
September 1	Nan Tierra
September 3	Thad Bennett
September 4	Jacki Capponcelli
September 6	Ricky Davidson
September 9	George Moore
September 12	Margit Lilly, Chris Dubis
September 14	Jay Pomponio, Kyle Capponcelli
September 16	Eleanor Horton, Susan Daigneault
September 17	Michael Hightower
September 19	Skylla Ragle, Elise Burrows
September 20	Krista Burtis, Ainsley Meyer, Christian Olmstead
September 22	Anne Montgomery, Alix Fedoruk, Susie Webster-Toleno
September 25	Scott McElhinney
September 26	Steve Guerriero, Keane Southard

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parishadmin@stmichaelsvermont.org or 802-254-6048.

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The Guardian

St. Michael's 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. (in-person and online)
WEEKDAYS	8:00 am	Morning Prayer (online) and Tues.–Thurs. in Chapel
WEDNESDAYS	11:30 am	Centering Prayer (in-person)
	12:00	Eucharist (in-person)
THURSDAYS	5:30 pm	Contemplative service (in-person and online)
SATURDAYS	8:00 am	Centering Prayer (in-person)