

# A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness  
Copake Falls, New York  
September 2011

## The Gratitude Issue

### Thoughts from the Wilderness

“Cultivate an attitude of gratitude” is one of the slogans that people in 12 step recovery programs use. For someone recovering from alcohol or drug addiction, being grateful can be a life or death choice. That is, for an addict to wallow in ingratitude or resentment can lead to a relapse, which can lead to death. Of course gratitude is a good attitude for *everyone* to have when possible, as it opens us to far more than sobriety. An attitude of gratitude brings us joy, peace, and better relationships. Most basically, gratitude puts us more in touch with reality. The reality that one’s very life is a gift from God. This basic gratitude to God for life fosters within us gratitude for all of God’s blessings and is contagious, inspiring gratitude in others.



Meister Eckhart said, "If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'thank you,' it will be enough." So God is the source of our lives and every blessing. If we simply say thank you to God and maintain that attitude (with God’s help, which we are also grateful for), then we’ve done most of our work! We’ll then be energized, see things as they really are, and respond to God, people, and events with gratitude and love.

As we grow in gratitude, our awareness of how others bless us also increases. If you haven’t done so, please read (or reread) my Rector’s Report from our Annual Meeting in January for my thorough and heartfelt expressions of gratitude to individuals and all who are members and friends of St. John In the Wilderness. Since then I have and we have more to be grateful for. I want to highlight a few things here.

It’s not necessarily easy to maintain an attitude of gratitude in the face of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that we all face sooner or later. But the sooner we are able to get back to gratitude after suffering, the happier we will be. And gratitude can help us put suffering in perspective and get through it quicker. The more consistently we are in that place of gratitude because of God’s many blessings and in spite of suffering, the more successful we are at life.

I’ve often spoken about the importance of gratitude in this column. For example, I’ve highlighted this scripture: *Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights*, James 1:17.

Thank you to our Stewardship Committee for their hard work and creativity in planning multiple new events like the enjoyable and successful Bell Tower Benefit Dinner at the rectory. And most recently, the great salad bar along with sausage & peppers on Copake Falls Day. Thank you to Dale and Louise Peterson, Bob Callahan, Wendy Langlois, Lucy Eldridge, Mary Ellen Baker, Mibs Zelle and Susan Mollo.

Thank you to our Building and Grounds Committee for good progress with our bell tower repair project, and continued maintenance of our beautiful buildings and grounds. Most recently, with Senior Warden Wendy Langlois’ help, they are addressing a serious flooding/mold problem in and

around Burke Hall. Thank you to Henry Croteau, Bob Callahan, Charles Fox, Jane Peck, Harry Garrett, and Bob Flynn. Their skill and hard work are greatly appreciated.

Thank you to Lucy Eldridge for her expertise and dedicated, excellent work completing multiple successful grant proposals which have reaped thousands of dollars in grants for our beautiful bell tower. Thank you to Bob Callahan for assisting Lucy with the grant applications. Thank you to the whole parish for your generosity to St. John's.

Thank you to Elen Freeston for chairing our revamped Country Fair and Auction so successfully. And thank you to Bob and Karen Flynn for another absolutely delicious BBQ that Sunday.

Thank you to Dale and Louise Peterson for taking on the ministry of editing this parish newsletter. It's looking great.

Thanks also to Dale for assuming the Communications/Media position, and thank you to Wendy Langlois and Lucy Eldridge for assisting with this.

Thank you to everyone who has helped the people, assisted the committees and supported the projects mentioned above. And thanks to those of our own parish involved in bringing us another great Copake Falls Day in August.

Thank you to all who assist with our wonderful worship on Sundays!

I must stop or this will become another annual Rector's Report. Please review it if you feel left out. And thank you to everyone who expresses appreciation and gratitude to me – it means a lot.

Finally, to our hard-working Vestry, treasurer and clerk, thank you.

To everyone at St. John's, thank you for your presence, your prayers, and your participation.

My cup is more than half full, so I'm going to have an attitude of gratitude to God and to you all! Thank you.

*In peace, John*

---

## **From the Senior Warden**

Summer flew by, as it always seems to. Some people say, once you reach July 4th weekend the rest of the summer flies by. Well, for me, its more like, once you reach The Country Fair & Auction, the rest of the summer somehow picks up speed. We had a newly "tweaked" Country Fair & Auction this year and it worked out great! Thanks to co-chairpeople Elen Freeston & Lucy Eldridge and the many, many people helping out, we had a successful day. More importantly, we were all smiling at each other when the end of the

day came – clean up was much easier this year due to the changes implemented. Change can be good! Also, the Pork BBQ was very well received, our thanks to Bob & Karen Flynn and their helpers.

On August 20th we participated in Copake Falls Community Day by hosting several activities in our historic church: author Margaret Roach gave a garden lecture, director Carl Ritchie presented the play "The Belle of Amherst," and the day's performances were brought to a close with Jazz Vespers. A perfect ending to a perfect day! We also hosted the community BBQ and were entertained by the Bash Bish Bluegrass Band.

## **A Voice in the Wilderness**

Editors: Louise and Dale Peterson

Please send submissions including news of church members to [peteronlouise@gmail.com](mailto:peteronlouise@gmail.com)

Next issue: November 20, submissions November 6 (Thanksgiving and Advent)

Throughout the day's celebrations, Bob Callahan and his crew provided a Salad Bar (located at the newly-cleared space at the bottom of our driveway) for the community; it was both unique and very popular. Thanks to all who helped out that day, making St. John in the Wilderness the cultural & entertainment hot-spot.

Please mark your calendar, the last two bake sales of the year at the Reinard's KOA Family Campground are September 3rd & October 8th. The campground is located on Route 7 & Route 7A, West Copake. The bake sales run from 10 am to 12 noon. We always need bakers. They have been a big hit this year with the campers – the front porch of the camp store is a perfect location and we are so grateful to the Reinards.

Since "gratitude" is the topic of this issue of the Voice, I'm reflecting back on the summer months' activities and thinking about how "small" our parish is in number but how big we are with our hearts & our actions. Everyone works so hard and is so dedicated. I think, too, of all the individuals of our parish who have come & gone and have given so much to the life of this church: Marge, Nancy, Gettie, Carolyn and so many more. I'm so grateful for their example. Then there are the folks now who quietly, without many knowing, work tirelessly to keep the buildings going, the parish activities going, the gardens growing & keep this a living, active church. Amen. It was not too long ago, we hosted another "Winds in the Wilderness" concert but this time it was on a Wednesday. I was worried about how many people would attend a concert in the middle of the week. We were all at our stations; Mibs ready at the ticket table, Elen & Bob making sure concert space looked perfect & musicians happy, Susan & I readying the refreshment table outside under the

## Why gratitude?

As we reflect on the tenth anniversary of 9/11/01, we remember not only the horror of that day. We also remember with gratitude the bravery of first responders and the many acts of kindness and helpfulness of ordinary people.

Here at St John in the Wilderness we are grateful for Father John Thompson and the many other people he has highlighted in his "Thoughts from the Wilderness."

How do we express our gratitude to the many individual people who make this wonderful church work?

Here's a suggestion: Say "thank you." General gratitude is great, but even better is a hearty "thank you" one-on-one for a job well done. Best of all, it doesn't cost a dime.

So be grateful And say "thank you."!

*Louise and Dale*

canopy. Well, the cars started coming up the hill and the people filled the church. We had a houseful! I sat outside as the music was playing. The sun was getting low, there was a soft breeze blowing and it was just a lovely early evening. I looked around and thought, "there's no place like home" and, there's no place like the Church of St. John in the Wilderness.

*Wendy Langlois*

---

## Building and Grounds Report September 2011

Since our last report regarding the Bell Tower repair/replacement, we have some exciting news. Our funding has reached approximately \$37,000.00 + - through the combined efforts of the Stewardship Committee in acquiring grants along with very generous donations from parishioners and

friends. It is indeed very heart warming to see how everyone pitches in when it comes to preserving that portion of an edifice that distinguishes it as a house of worship and not just a building. We have not quite reached what we "guesstimated" as our funding goal but we are getting close. To you our

donors and grant solicitors, we remain eternally grateful. The building committee and the stewardship committee will meet within the next couple of weeks to discuss funding and some of the stipulations required by grantors.

By now we are sure you are all aware of the closure of Burke Hall and the problems surrounding it. We experienced flooding when the storm drain was unable to handle the onslaught of water coming off the roof and running down the pathway during a couple of those torrential downpours. Actually it happened about three times during the course of a couple of weeks.

During this time period, humidity was at its peak and as a result mold and mildew formed on the perimeter walls. All of this led to unpleasant odors given off by the carpet during this time period. We contacted our insurance company and after explaining what we were up against they suggested we contact a commercial cleanup company.

Upon a inspection of Burke Hall by Service Master of The Berkshires and a submitted quotation for cleanup, we acquired the approval of our



insurance company's claims adjuster. As a result we will be involved with a major cleaning and floor replacement within the next few weeks. However, we also decided now was the time to improve the design of our storm drain system prior to the cleanup to insure this problem does not happen again.

Once again anonymous donors came out of the "woodwork" and their expertise services to provide equipment and funding for this project. It will entail the installation of additional storm drains leading to a larger capacity pipe to discharge it safely away from the building. In doing this the entrance to Burke Hall will be altered somewhat providing a wider entry way. There will also be a wider walkway/roadway (nine feet wide) leading down to the entry way that can accommodate the weight of a snow plow truck during the winter months for snow removal.

Many thanks to the members of our Building and Grounds committee for their dedication in seeing these projects to fruition and the parishioners that support us.

*Hank Croteau, Chairman*

---

## **Mibs Zelle – a woman extraordinaire!**

Well, how did Mibs get to be such an extraordinary individual? Probably many factors were involved. Mibs was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1938. Her father worked for the government during World War II, and the family moved to La Plata, Maryland. When Mibs was in first grade, they lived in Haddonfield, New Jersey until 4<sup>th</sup> grade when the family moved to North Long Branch, New Jersey on the beach.

From the ages of 9, 10, 11 and 12, Mibs and her brother climbed on the rocks on the jetty, running free on the beach and through the tall grass, all the while hunting for all kinds of fascinating treasure. Then, when Mibs was 12, the family

moved to Haddonfield and life was less free as a result.

It wasn't all that bad, though, as this was where she met her husband of over 50 years, Walt. They first met in Mrs. Draper's dancing class, and dated all through high school. Mibs graduated from Goucher College in Baltimore in 1960 where she majored in history. She said that "Goucher was a very important part of my life." After she and Walt were married in 1960, they lived in Hartford, Connecticut, where Mibs taught history at Cromwell High and Walt finished his senior year at Trinity College. They moved to Philadelphia where Walt attended Philadelphia Divinity School and Mibs taught English and History at Haddonfield High from which they had both graduated. Walt was ordained in 1964 and became the curate at St.

Luke's Metuchen for 3 years. Their son Ed was born in Plainfield, New Jersey in 1965.

In 1967, Walt was called to be vicar at Olathe, Kansas at Emanuel Church, later called St. Aidan's. Their daughter Laura was born there. The family returned from Kansas in 1970 when Walt became rector at St. Luke's Metuchen.

In the spring of 1972, Mibs started teaching history at Metuchen High School, and, after 30 years, retired from there. She recalls her teaching career as fulfilling and very satisfying. Indeed, she remembers how she was of the first generation of women to combine a full time career along with running a household.

Along the way, she got a masters in history from Rutgers University in the 60's, and eventually took 30 credits beyond the masters in education at Rutgers. She was involved in the New Jersey Council for Social Studies, eventually becoming President, running conferences and summer workshops. One summer she attended a workshop sponsored by the National Geographic Society and returned the following summer as a staff member, conducting teacher training workshops.

What else was happening in all these years? She always loved to sew, making her first dress when she was 8 years old. Mibs recalled making new outfits for her dolls every Easter. In the 80's Mibs started doing quilting and embroidery. Just this summer, she completed a quilt for Peggy Anderson's new grandson Anderson. Another passion is gardening; her garden with winding gravel paths, includes annuals, phlox, maidenhair and ostrich ferns, and a little pond with water lilies. The garden is always on the Hidden Gardens segment of Copake Falls Day.

However, her greatest joy was finding Copake Falls. In the summer of 1977, the family had been camping in New England and on their way home, stopped at Taconic State Park. The kids were tired and cranky and so they decided to stop at the Park to camp for the night. Walt saw the little church on the hill, and, as they say, the rest is history! They bought their present home in 1978

and, after always living in "company housing" it was an exciting adventure to own a home.

Since retirement, they have traveled the world, but always returning to Copake Falls with the thought that it is one of the loveliest places on earth. Mibs enjoys volunteering in all sorts of ways, taking a leadership role as President of the Friends of Taconic State Park and chair of Copake Falls Day (Mibs was one of the founding members of this annual event in the hamlet). In addition, she is a founding member of the Winds in the Wilderness concerts at St. John's and serves as its treasurer. Our community is grateful that Mibs as an "idea person" who with her good sense of humor and gentle ways, manages to help others make those ideas become reality.



When asked what is the best thing about retirement?, she replied, "Well, I don't have to grade 50 history papers and instead, can go on a hike if I feel like it, in other words, I do not have the constraints of the working life." She recently typed in a message on Facebook, saying that many she was connecting with, she had probably taught. She was pleased to receive seven responses from former students in four minutes and someone responded, "ah, the dreaded RNQ" (Reading Notes Quizzes). Two of her students are now college history professors, a very gratifying development indeed.

She and Walt are proud grandparents of 6 grandchildren who along with their parents, came to Copake Falls to celebrate the Zelle's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 2010 at St. John's. In addition to her community volunteer work (including being active in the Copake Democratic Club), Mibs is a staunch member of St. John's. She loves singing in the choir, serves on the Altar Guild, is assistant treasurer, prepares the Sunday bulletins, former member of vestry, former newsletter co-editor with Karen Flynn, is a current member of the Stewardship Committee and attends St. John's weekly prayer/meditation group. All in all, we are very grateful to have Mibs in our parish and in our community!

*Lucy Eldridge*

## The Sunday School Corner

Sunday School at the Church of St. John in the Wilderness will be starting a new term September 11, 2011. There is no pre-registering. Posters have been put up around the neighborhood inviting community children to join our church school group and hopefully increase our numbers. I'll keep them up for the month of September. I'll also try to put a sample of the curriculum on our website [www.stjohnw.org](http://www.stjohnw.org). The curriculum will again be Weaving God's Promises. This curriculum presents biblical stories and "weaves" in Episcopal tradition. Please invite your friends & neighbors to church with their children if they are

not already attending a church. Thanks to the congregation for all their support and encouragement.

During July & August we had "Summer Sunday School" – we put together a program focusing on the environment & ecology partnering it with the Genesis Creation story in the Old Testament. It was fun. It was great having Jackie throughout the summer months. We planted some perennials and look forward to seeing them reappear, hopefully, next year! Many thanks to Jackie & her mom, Hope.

*Respectfully submitted, Wendy Langlois*

---

## Beyond Copake Falls

In the last issue of *Voice*, I observed that this summer has been uncommonly quiet in the Episcopal Diocese of Albany. Our drowsy summer ended dramatically on June 24, when the state Senate passed the Marriage Equality Act, making New York the sixth (and biggest!) state to legalize same-sex marriage. The LGBT community and its supporters were ecstatic. Indeed, so many couples were eager to take advantage of the new law that they literally had to "take a number," by means of a lottery, for the privilege of marrying as soon as the law went into effect.

An important battle for justice has been won, but the struggle for equal rights for LGBT's goes on. Forty four states do not yet recognize same sex marriages, and the federal government cannot do so because of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Hence couples who marry in New York may lose important legal rights if they fall ill, are injured, or die elsewhere. For this reason, The New York State attorney general, Eric T. Schneiderman, has filed a brief to support a lawsuit against the United States by the widowed survivor of a lesbian couple. "Without such equal treatment by the federal government," Mr. Schneiderman wrote in his June 26 brief, "New York's statutory commitment to marriage equality for all married

couples will be substantially unrealized." This is encouraging, as is President Obama's support for a law that would sweep away the noxious Defense of Marriage Act.

Because the Episcopal Church has not yet reached a firm conclusion on the validity of same-sex marriages, LGBT's and their supporters were keenly interested in the reactions of New York's diocesan bishops to the new Marriage Equality Act. The Bishops of Western New York, Central New York, Long Island, and Rochester quickly authorized their clergy to conduct or bless same-sex weddings. They hastened to add that doing so was at each parish's discretion.

Bishop Mark Sisk of the Diocese of New York moved more cautiously. Because the national Church does not yet sanction same-sex marriages, he instructed his clergy that they may only use the Book of Common Prayer to bless civil marriages.

The sixth diocesan bishop, Albany's +William Love, also moved fast, with a two-page "pastoral" letter to be read aloud to every parish. It reminds us of two diocesan canons that were adopted in 2008 in anticipation of the Senate's decision. One prohibits clergy from conducting, participating in, or blessing same-sex marriages.

The other forbids the use of any facilities within the diocese for such activities, whether public or private.

Bp. Love's letter has sparked a broad-based movement to rescind the two marriage canons and a third canon that bars homosexuals from *discernment* for ordination. Although it was surely not his intention, Bp. Love has given new energy to Albany Via Media and the mainstream Episcopalians whom it serves.

This summer was unexpectedly eventful. Next summer may be even livelier. General

Convention 2012 is likely to take a stand against the Anglican Communion Covenant, and it may well approve same-sex marriages, thereby erasing the last remaining asterisk after "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You."

We Episcopalians live in interesting times. Stay tuned!

*Bob Dodd*

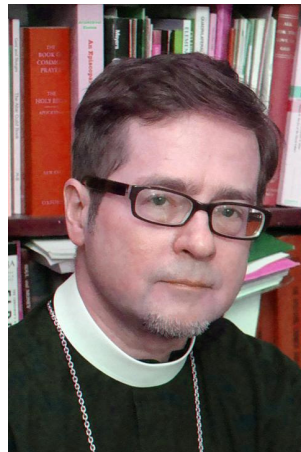
---

## Fr. Tobias Haller to speak

Albany Via Media is delighted to announce that Fr. Tobias Haller will speak at its Annual Meeting at historic St. George's Church, Schenectady, at 2 p.m.<sup>1</sup> on Saturday, November 12. His talk, **Anglican Disunion: Issues behind *the Issue***, will bring us up to date on the state of the troubled Anglican Communion, whose issues go very far beyond the place of homosexuals in the Church.

Born in Baltimore, Fr. Haller moved to New York City after graduating from Towson State College and worked as an actor for 15 years before he was called to serve the Church in the Brotherhood of St. Gregory and, between 1983 and 1991, on the Presiding Bishop's staff. He attended General Theological Seminary, graduating with honors in 1997, and pastored a small parish in Yonkers, NY, before taking his present position as the Vicar of St. James Fordham, in the Bronx.

Involved at every level of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, from th e



diocesan Interparish Council to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Indaba Reference Group, Fr. Haller has an uncommonly broad view of the Anglican world, which was enhanced by recent visits to London and South Africa. He shares his rich experience through workshops and retreats as well as numerous publications in the church press. His blog, "In a Godward Direction," is on the favorites lists of all who are concerned with Anglican matters. So too is his critically acclaimed book, *Reasonable and Holy: Engaging Same-Sexuality* (2009, Seabury Books).

Fr. Haller and James Teets, partners in life and ministry for 31 years, were among the first to take advantage of New York's new Marriage Equality

Law.

Fr. Haller's address will be preceded by a *short* business meeting at 1 p.m. and followed by a reception and Evening Prayer.

*Bob Dodd*

## ECW

The ECW will meet Tuesday September 6, 2011 at 1:00 pm in the Parish Office. We hope to plan for our Fall Ingathering United Thank Offering during September. Then in October we would like to participate in Operation Christmas Child, Samaritan's Purse. That brings us to November and our collection for Christmas Friends. We will also plan our Christmas luncheon.

Can you see how busy our small ECW group is? Please join us in showing our gratitude as we complete these worthwhile projects.

On a personal note I am grateful for the life and love of my Mother, Bea Baxter, and for all the

Hospice Volunteers, Nurses, Doctors and Chaplains that are there for Mom and with her so much of the time. I (and Hank too) appreciate and are grateful for the prayers, cards and visits from St. John's.

*Babs Croteau, President*  
babsc@fairpoint.net

---

## Events in the Wilderness

Community Bike and Hike Day, Oct 1, 9 am to 12 noon. The second annual blessing of the bikes will be at 10:30 am.

---

### **A Voice in the Wilderness**

Newsletter of the  
Church of St. John in the Wilderness  
(Episcopal)  
Copake Falls, New York

The Rev. John Thompson, Rector  
Wendy Langlois, Sr. Warden  
Elen Freeston, Jr. Warden

#### *Vestry*

Marilyn Kay, Clerk of the Vestry  
Jane Peck, Treasurer  
Robert Callahan      Charles Fox  
Henry Croteau      Rebecca Garrard  
Karen Flynn      Steve Savarese

#### *Eucharists*

Sunday, 8:00 AM (spoken)  
Sunday, 10:00 AM (choral)

www.stjohnw.org  
518 329-3674

P.O. Box 180, 261 Route 344  
Copake Falls, NY 12517-0180