

# A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St John in the Wilderness  
Copake Falls NY  
May 2020

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## Thoughts from the Wilderness

In March here I talked about how very difficult things had become in this world. It still is. The illnesses and deaths from Covid-19 got much worse in New York City, the United States and other parts of the world since March. In addition, the US economy and other economies have been devastated with millions of job losses. The isolation and loneliness for many resulting from being unable to gather with others and having to stay home most of the time – for our health, has also been devastating for many, especially those already struggling with loneliness or depression. And it's also been very hard in a different way for those with multiple children at home most of the time, and it can be hard on couples as well. We hear about “corona divorces.” And there's been a significant worldwide spike in domestic violence with people at home so much – some trapped.

There is a small minority who claim to be thriving during this time, but from most reports, this illness and its ramifications have been hard on the vast majority of us emotionally if not also physically, financially and spiritually.

You might say, tell me something I don't know. But, the uncertainty of this invisible illness, much more deadly than the flu, yet for many like the flu or even milder, is highly disconcerting and often confusing. It adds greatly to the stress and to the variety of responses and protocols from one country to another – and to the conflicting official and unofficial responses and behavior in this country. Nicholas Kristof said, “The odd thing about reporting on the coronavirus is that the nonexperts are supremely confident in their predictions, while epidemiologists keep telling me that they don't really know much at all.” (*NYT*, 5/20/20) Kristof quotes Anne Rimoin, a professor of epidemiology at U.C.L.A., “This is a novel virus, new to humanity, and nobody knows what will happen.”

This calls for, as Kristof notes, humility. It calls for wide-ranging discernment. Though the experts (in science and medicine) may not know what will happen, they know more than the rest of us and they continue to learn. We are wise to follow their guidance. We also need spiritual guidance and discernment for our emotional, mental and spiritual health. For humans are complex – physically, mentally and spiritually integrated beings.

You may still be very busy or you may have more time on your hands. Either way, quiet prayer and meditation can calm our spirits and increase our hope and peace. The Divine Reading/Centering Prayer group, which now meets by Zoom at 3 PM on Wednesdays, is a good opportunity for just that. But one can pray and meditate quietly whenever and wherever one has some quiet time. The biblical Psalms remain great prayers for difficult times for they cover the whole range of human emotion and experience from great faith to great doubt, from adoration to anger at God.

I haven't touched or been touched by a human being since the first part of March. That's hard. On the other hand, Cleo my cat is doing well as she has more of my company than usual. She's the only creature I can hug – and being a cat, she can take it or leave it, though she does enjoy some petting and affection when she's in the mood.

I am blessed though by some of the next best things to direct human contact. Things like reaching out to parishioners by phone, reaching out to friends and relatives by phone and occasionally by Zoom, Zoom worship on Sunday mornings – for examples. And now, as the weather warms up, I can do more than walk around outside; I can sit outside with friends in the sun (socially distanced).

The virus is unevenly distributed. The curve has flattened in some places and (for the time being) the virus has appeared to diminish in some places. This is good news. And I understand every state in this country has begun (at varying rates) a phased reopening of social and economic activities. I hope we are doing so wisely, continuing to listen to the people who know something, limited though their (growing) knowledge may be.

*In peace,  
John+*

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## **From the Senior Warden**

I hope this finds all the parish family and friends staying well and safe. For

some of us, our world has become so small as we continue to “shelter at home.” On the other hand, our friends and family who continue to commute to their jobs as essential workers, the world had turned into something very different. I remember the day my office in Massachusetts locked its doors to the public - Monday, March 16 and then on April 3rd management sent half of us home to work. I haven't left Copake Falls since then. I still have the same tank of gas in my car from the drive home from work. How crazy is that! Everyone will have their individual story to tell when the pandemic is behind us and life resumes to a “new normal.” Pretty soon we will be stepping into a new phase of this journey. Our region has moved into Phase 1 of the process allowing certain businesses and recreation areas to reopen with modification. Shortly, I'm sure, we'll be moving in this same direction.

Today, we've received an email from Fr. John with an attachment from Bishop Love outlining initial protocol for the reopening of churches in our Diocese. Over the weeks ahead we'll be taking the Bishop's information and creating our plans. I have to admit, I'm facing the overall reopen into society with mixed feelings. I'm glad we're finally moving towards a time when we can all be together again, but nervous because we all know the virus is still a threat, it hasn't gone away. I guess I'm more happy than nervous, though, because it'll be so good to see you all. Thanks to Fr. John, Charley Musselman and probably others, we've been having 10AM Sunday Service with music via ZOOM. Thank you both so much for figuring the Zoom system out and keeping us connected, it means a lot to us all. The technology allows us to be with folks from out of state. We've also Zoomed our April and May vestry meetings. We have become a tech-savvy congregation.

I recently sent out an email encouraging folks to send in their pledges, if possible. I ask again, that folks who can, please continue to do so. It's very much appreciated. I understand that Covid-19 has changed many peoples lives and finances. Along with all the positive acts of kindness demonstrated there has also been amazing sadness. We have an amazing parish family and some wonderful friends of St. John in the Wilderness. We are blessed. As we re-open into the world again, I pray everyone stays safe and healthy.

*Love and Peace to you all,  
Wendy Langlois  
Senior Warden*

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## **Capital Campaign Update**

## Capital Campaign as of May 25, 2020



In the March 2020 issue of *A Voice in the Wilderness*, we reported that St. John's Capital Campaign had raised \$209,020 or 63 percent of the goal of \$332,000. We are delighted to let you know that two months later, as of May 2020, the total funds raised has climbed to \$212,720, or 64 percent of the goal!

Also in that most recent issue of *A Voice*, we announced that Colleen Heemeyer, Deputy Director, Sacred Sites and Preservation Services of The New York Landmarks Conservancy, made a site visit to St. John's in early March. She then indicated that the Capital Campaign would be receiving a grant to help with architectural and engineering fees for the first phase of the Capital Campaign's implementation. Earlier this month, the award letter arrived, and we are pleased to announce the awarding of \$3,500 from the Sacred Sites program of The New York Landmarks Conservancy. This is a 1:1 matching grant, so St. John's will need to provide an equivalent amount from gifts raised from other sources. We wanted to share with readers a portion of the letter from Peg Breen, President of The New York Landmarks Conservancy:

*"Your congregation joins over 800 houses of worship throughout New York State that have received more than \$11.5 million in grants from the Sacred Sites Fund, supporting over \$690 million in restoration and repair projects in the state. The Sacred Sites Program has provided outreach services and technical advice to almost 1,500 individual religious institutions. The Conservancy commends you and the congregation for recognizing the historic importance of this sacred site and maintaining it for future generations."*

The Committee has had inquiries from people who are interested in making gifts of securities to St. John's Capital Campaign. To facilitate this form of donation, we have created a document that explains the specifics of the simple procedure, and it is available as a [PDF download](#).

In conclusion, the Committee wishes to thank all who have donated to the Capital Campaign and in doing so invested in the sustainable future of people, place, and peace at St. Johns, and with their just announced \$3,500 matching grant a special thanks to the Sacred Sites Program of The New York Landmarks Conservancy!

*Brian Boom and Lucy Eldridge, Co-Chairs*

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## **Building Committee Report**

We're getting started with design and construction of capital campaign work. On May 19 Marjorie Hoog and I met at the church with Jack Alvarez and Kim Konrad Alvarez, architect and preservation specialist of Landmark Consulting in Albany. Jack grew up nearby and attending Roe Jan School. He and Kim were responsible for the rebuilding of our church tower so they are familiar with our historically important church building.

Our first phase of work will include accessibility improvement to the church narthex, repairs and upgrades to the sacristy and egress improvements to the undercroft. The undercroft work will be coordinated with the installation of the a propane furnace being specified by Crawford and Associates of Hudson. As the planning proceeds we will provide schedule updates to the congregation.

*Dale Peterson*

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

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness (Episcopal)  
Copake Falls, New York 12517  
The Rev. John Thompson, Rector

Wendy Langlois (1/21) Warden  
Elen Freeston (/22) Warden

### *Vestry*

Charley Musselman (1/21)  
Peggy Anderson (1/21)  
Lucy Eldridge (1/22)  
Jane Peck (1/22)  
Virginia Johnson (1/23)  
Milbrey Zelle (1/23)

Richard Peck, Clerk of the Vestry (1/21)  
Karen Flynn, Treasurer

*Eucharists (Services now on Zoom only. Email [stjohnw@fairpoint.net](mailto:stjohnw@fairpoint.net) for details.)*

Sunday, 8:00 AM (spoken)

Sunday, 10:00 AM (choral)

[stjohnw.org](http://stjohnw.org)

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