

# A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness  
Copake Falls, New York  
November 2014



## Thanksgiving and Advent 2014

### Thanksgiving thoughts from the Wilderness

Thanksgiving is a good holiday, many people's favorite. It's a time to relax and to get together with loved ones. It's a time for good food. And it's a time to be thankful – especially if we have these things – time to relax, the presence of loved ones and delicious food. Yet as good as life can be, it's short compared to eternity. And *that's* okay, because we're promised that too (eternity) by Jesus himself. It's a good thing, as some people don't get much happiness on earth. So God will make all things right in the end. As the English mystic Julian of Norwich says, "all will be well."

Some say thanking God even when we don't feel like it can make us more aware of what we have to be grateful for. Most of us in a first world country like this one have much to be grateful for and much to celebrate – much of the time (though all of us suffer). May God inspire us to keep an attitude of gratitude and keep celebrating – not only on Thanksgiving Day but throughout the year.

When suffering does come this is what Julian of Norwich recommends: "For it is God's will that we do all in our power to preserve our consolation, for bliss lasts forevermore, and pain is passing, and will be reduced to nothing... Therefore it is not God's will that when we feel pain we should pursue it in sorrow... but that suddenly we should pass it over, and preserve ourselves in the endless delight which is God." Encouraging words. Let's allow God to help us see what we have to be grateful for and help us keep a genuinely positive attitude as much as possible, as Julian recommends.

All that said, may our positivity and joy inspire us not to deny or avoid others (or our own) suffering, but rather to alleviate it. Scripture says we can overcome evil with good. Scripture says, "The joy of the Lord is our strength", that is our strength to meet others who are hurting with our hope and our joy. Remember though, if we are to maintain our hope and joy over the long haul we're called to take it one day at a time realizing that God does most of the work. Alleviating others suffering may be as simple as a warm smile or a friendly hello. Alleviating others suffering may be as simple as treating others with respect who we are tempted to look down on or put in a category. Alleviating our own suffering may be as simple as holding our heads high and setting a boundary with someone who repeatedly disrespects us. Alleviating suffering may be as complex as discovering a cure for an illness.

We are able to alleviate others and our own suffering because God loves us first, because God blesses us first. Yes God loves everyone, but sometimes God decides that we are the channel through whom God will reveal his love to others. Even atheists are inspired by God when they are a blessing to others (they just don't know it).

In a word, be as grateful and happy as possible and let this overflow to all around you.

One of the things I'm grateful for is the benefit in October which honored me with the love of my fellow parishioners including the great music of Jim Wann. I'm especially grateful that this event benefited the parish and another worthy cause – the Backpack Program at Taconic Hills School.

Speaking of events, the Harvest Fest in October, organized by Regina Shea was a golden

day and a blessing for the whole community. And the September 5K Fundraiser for Taconic Hills and Webutuck Schools' Backpack Programs organized by Rebecca Garrard was a great success, raising a large amount of money. Thank you to St. John in the Wilderness parish and the wider community for supporting these events. The Stewardship Dinner this month was a fun time and a full house, and the food was fantastic! Not to mention a great cause – St. John in the Wilderness. And on November 9<sup>th</sup> there were 3 great events. We delighted in honoring Father Walt Zelley who is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his priestly ordination, there was a special Veterans Day Ecumenical Service at Copake

United Methodist Church, and there was another beautiful Winds in the Wilderness concert. All this on one day – with support and involvement from members and friends of St. John in the Wilderness. And we're only halfway done with November as of this writing.

I am grateful to each of you for the ways you demonstrate your gratitude to God and each other, not only in the examples I've mentioned, but for all the ways you bless this community and this world.

*Happy Thanksgiving,*  
*John+*

## **From the Desk of the Senior Warden**

Greetings, my fellow parishioners! During this anticipatory season of Advent, I would like to take a moment for reflection. So many wonderful events have taken place at St. John's this fall. The 5K fundraiser for the Backpack programs of Webutuck and Taconic Hills raised a substantial amount of money for our Regional Food Bank. This provides direct assistance to families in need within the St. John's community. A few weeks later, the Harvest Fest was a wonderful day of outreach. Many families came to enjoy the entertainment and activities which were abundant at St. John's. Just as importantly, it was a wonderful opportunity to welcome new faces to our church grounds, and allow them to experience the warmth and beauty that St. John's has to offer. Then, at the end of October, we gathered at The Greens to enjoy the music of the supremely talented Jim Wann and show our appreciation to John+ for his five years of tremendous service to our church community. This was not only an enjoyable afternoon, but this event raised money for both the Backpack program and St. John's itself. As I reviewed these church events, I found the following bible verses to be particularly relevant in regards to the recent

happenings at our parish:

Hebrews 12:14:

*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

Hebrews 10:24-25

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Whether it be charitable giving, church fundraising, or outreach, the St. John's community continues to bustle with worthwhile events. Our methods vary and our events address different needs in unique ways. Yet, as a unit, we strive to accomplish God's work, share His message, and spread His love. The scriptures above remind us of why and how we are the wonderful church community that is St. John's. May God's love bless us all!

*Rebecca Garrard*  
*Senior Warden*

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

Editors: Louise and Dale Peterson

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

Issue dates for 2015 will be announced after the start of the new year.

*Please submit reports, articles and news items at least one week prior to the issue date. Thanks!*

## **Celebration of Walt Zelley's fifty years as an Episcopal priest**

On Sunday, October 9, Walt Zelley's fifty year anniversary of ordination was celebrated during the church's 10:00 am service. Father John Thompson read the following;

*Father Walt Zelley, we praise and thank God for your commitment to serve Christ in the order of priests these past 50 years.*

May you continue to serve patiently and cheerfully, remembering that the work you are called to do is God's work; it is in God's hand, and it is done in God's name to God's glory.

We thank you for following Christ whose servant you are and for sharing the burden of those whose cross is heavy.

You are marked as a person who proclaims that among the truly blessed are the poor, the troubled, the powerless, the persecuted.

May you continue to serve Christ simply and willingly, and let your joy in Christ overcome all discouragement.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever.

*Everyone responds with a loud Amen.*

*And a big round of applause!*

## **Episcopal Church Women (ECW)**

The annual Christmas lunch is scheduled for Sunday afternoon, December 14 beginning at 12:30 with a social hour. The lunch will be at The Pond restaurant. All adult congregants are invited. Please make your reservation with either me or Peggy Anderson by December 9<sup>th</sup>. In other news, the ECW has recently purchased a used, professional meat slicer, in good working condition, to use at our events. The group also decided not to actively participate in the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes this year. However, if you have boxes already filled, please let me know and I will get it sent out.

Happy Holidays to all. Hope to see you at our annual luncheon.  
*Jeanne VanHoesen*

## **Food Pantry**

The food pantry at the United Methodist Church in Hillsdale needs our continuing support. Please bring contributions when you come to church. The basket sits on the floor across from the ushers. Marya delivers these to Hillsdale church each week.

Thank you.

*Marya Dodd*

## **Baking Opportunity**

During Winter Walk in Copake Falls on December 7, the church holds a Christmas Bazaar in Burke Hall. Among the items for sale at the Bazaar are home-baked cookies sold to benefit the church and its programs. All cookie bakers are welcome! You can help by baking Christmas cookies and delivering them to Burke Hall on Saturday December 6<sup>th</sup>. We will assemble them into festive cookie tins beginning at 10am. You are welcome to stay and help with assembling the boxes

## **United Thank Offering (UTO)**

Following a recent Sunday service, Dorothy Baker approached me about UTO. As many know, Dorothy has been the face of our biannual UTO effort for many years. Some may be wondering what UTO is. That was my question when Dale and I first become active at St. John's.

United Thank Offering is a ministry of The Episcopal Church that nurtures the habit of giving daily thanks to God. Money contributed to UTO supports mission and ministry throughout The Episcopal Church and in invited Provinces of the Anglican Communion in the developing world.. In 2014 a grant was made to an Episcopal church in a low income urban neighborhood in Syracuse to renovate its undercroft and provide a safe and secure environment for the church and its neighbors to interact, educate, and socialize. Further from home, a UTO grant was made to the Diocese of Honduras to provide an assistant bishop with a vehicle to visit congregations and clergy.

As Dorothy said to me, each of us should give thanks to God every day for our blessings and set aside something for others in greater need. The blue boxes serve as a daily reminder to us.

Dorothy asks that we return our UTO contributions by the end of the month.

Thanks to Dorothy for leading this important effort.

*Louise Peterson*

## **Backpack 5K Run**

On Saturday, September 27, St. John's hosted a 5K fundraiser for the backpack programs of Webutuck and Taconic Hills school districts. This program sends food home in backpacks each weekend to families in need. (\$167.00 feeds a child for an entire school year). Our 5K fundraiser was a family friendly walk/run which used the same route as the event held on Copake Falls Day. Chris Rickard, park manager, provided help setting up the course and loaning supplies including tables and water jugs. On this warm and sunny day, friends and parishioners manned the water stations and registration area. As a result of the generosity of participants and donors, I am proud to share that we raised a total of \$2,547 for this worthy cause! Many thanks to all of those who helped to make this possible.

*Rebecca Garrard*

## **News on the Roof Project**

Just in time for the start of winter, work has begun to replace the church's aging roof. After review of several proposals, Tony Briggs of Lee, Massachusetts, was selected because of his good price and reputation for excellent workmanship. The work of Tony's team will be complete by the end of November.

The church has also received the good news that the Sacred Sites Program of the New York Landmarks Conservancy has awarded us a matching grant of \$4,000 toward the Roof Project. We are doubly grateful as it is the second Sacred Sites matching grant; the first grant supported the recent Bell Tower renovation. Peg Breen, president of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, wrote in the award letter that "The Conservancy commends you and the congregation for recognizing the historic importance of this sacred site and maintaining it for future generations."

We are pleased that we have met the campaign goal of the roof project, thanks to the successful Summer Sparkling Soiree, the Pomeroy Foundation challenge grant and the generosity of many parishioners and friends of the church. Thanks to all who have given time and treasure to assure the successful completion of this project!

*Dale Peterson*

*Lucy Eldridge*

## **Jim Wann honors Father John**

Fifty friends and parishioners gathered at The Greens restaurant on Sunday, October 26, to honor Fr. John's five years of service to our church. Jim Wann generously provided a wonderful afternoon of music for the guests. Jim ended his concert with Bob Dylans' *Forever Young* which by coincidence happens to be Fr. John's favorite song! Funds raised were both to the benefit of the church and the Backpack program in both the Taconic Hills and Webutuck school districts.

Thanks to all who joined us.

## **Pledge Campaign for 2015**

Early this fall, the Stewardship Committee met to discuss the 2015 pledge campaign. At that time, the committee set two goals:

- a 10% increase in the overall level of pledging
- a 10% increase in the number of pledgers.

We are well on the way to meeting these ambitious goals for 2015. As of Sunday, November 16, two thirds of our pledges have been received.

Just as costs for our households increase each year so do the costs for our church. As an

example, for the first 10 months of 2014, our costs for heat are running almost \$2,000 or 20% more than the same period in 2013. This is a significant increase for our modest annual budget of about \$100,000.

Each pledge is important as the Vestry develop plans for the coming year. Thank you to all who have made this commitment for 2015. If you haven't yet pledged, please prayerfully complete the enclosed pledge card. We hope to hear from everyone!

*Louise Peterson, Stewardship Committee*



On October 12 our Harvest Fest delighted families with hayrides, clowns, magicians and lots of fun.

The successful event was organized by Regina Shea.



The Greens at the Copake Country Club was the setting for brunch on October 26 when Jim Wann, Tony-nominated singer, composer and friend of St. John's honored Fr. John Thompson for five years of service in our church. Christine Palmer was the hostess and organizer of the event.

## Jupiter

Sarah was going on 12 when she helped her grandfather put up his Christmas tree. Her parents were working late at the store and Beth, her older sister, was spending Christmas Eve at her boyfriend's house. Because there was no one else to help Gramp, Sarah got the job by default.

"There's a system to it, Mouse," Gramp said from the stepladder. "First the lights and the star, then the big ornaments, then the little ones. Then?"

Tinsel!" Sarah exclaimed.

"Nope," Gramp said, climbing down the stepladder. "Next candy canes, then tinsel." He threw a switch under the tree, stood back, and cast an artist's eye on the lights. Satisfied that they were where he wanted them, he went to the sofa, rooted through a pile of dusty boxes, and came back with the biggest of them. "Gram would have a fit if she saw such dirty stuff on her sofa," he chuckled. "Poor eyesight has its advantages!"

Aside from his dimming eyes, stooped shoulders, and about 50 extra pounds that pushed his suspenders apart like parentheses, Sarah's grandfather was in good health for a man of 85. A machinist all his life, he grieved that he could no longer do the fine work -- building model sailing ships -- that had carried him through his seventies, but he regretted little else. He could still see well enough (well, almost well enough) to drive, watch television, and keep his own little house, which was just a few miles from Sarah's. Independent but with his family close by, Gramp was a happy man.

"Have a ball, Mouse!" Gramp held out the ornament box. Sarah unwrapped a big ball and hung it on the highest branch she could reach. "Lower," Gramp said, "and closer to the trunk, so the branch doesn't bend."

The box of ornaments was half empty when Sarah came to a huge, deep red ball girdled by blue, yellow, and green rings. The red part was pocked and mottled, some of the rings were chipped, and a folded paper clip stood in for its original hanger. "This one's busted and...and scuzzy," Sarah complained, handing the ball to her grandfather. "Let's throw it away!"

Gramp turned the ornament in his hands. He couldn't see it clearly and seemed to be looking through it rather than at it. "That's Jupiter," he said softly. "And he's not scuzzy, just worn." Cradling the ball, he walked over to the fireplace, sat down on the hearth, and beckoned to Sarah to join him.

"Mouse," Gramp said, "this ornament came to our house the same year your Dad did. He named it Jupiter when he was about your age -- said it looked like the biggest planet. It has seen a lot of Christmases." He passed the ball to the girl. "It greeted your Aunt Virginia and Uncle Ben, and it welcomed me home from the War. It was here for your sister's first Christmas, and yours, and when Gram...." Gramp's voice trailed off. Tears sparkled in the corners of his eyes.

For a moment, Sarah and her grandfather stared at the ball in silence. Then Gramp stood up. "Mouse, we shouldn't throw something away just because it's old!" he said, hanging the big red ornament on a low branch in the front of the tree. "Why this fellow is still full of Christmas!"

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Sarah was sixteen when her grandfather went to sleep for the last time. She thinks of him every year when she hangs Jupiter on her children's tree. The old ornament is indeed full of Christmas. So was Gramp.

*Bob Dodd*

## Weekly events

### Sunday

8:00 am Spoken Eucharist.  
10:00 am Choral Eucharist.  
Sunday school at 10:00 am.

### Wednesday

3:00 pm Divine Reading / Contemplative  
Prayer Group.

## Events for Thanksgiving and Advent

**November 27, 10:00 am.** Thanksgiving Day Service. Church of Christ, Mt. Washington (116 East Street, South Egremont, MA 01258). The Rev. Philip Newell and the Rev. John Thompson will be sharing the officiating. We'll be joyfully thanking God in words and music for his many blessings! Music by Rachel Cole.

**December 7, Sunday,** Copake Falls Winter Walk.  
Holiday Bazaar 1-4 pm  
Salisbury Congregational Handbell Concert, 3:30 pm

**December 14.** Rededication of flag pole in memory of Nancy Sheldon following 10:00 am service.

**December 17, Wednesday,** Blue Christmas Service, 6pm

**December 24, Wednesday,** Candlelight Christmas Eve Service, 7:00 pm Carols, 7:30 pm Service

**December 25, Thursday,** Christmas Service, 10:00 am

**December 28, Sunday,** Winds in the Wilderness Concert, 3pm

### 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

Rebecca Garrard (2015) Warden

Lucy Eldridge (16) Warden

#### *Vestry*

Robert Dodd (16) Dale Peterson (15)

Brian Boom (17) Regina Shea (17)

Martha Glantz (16) Jeanne Van Hoesen (15)

Marilyn Kay, Clerk of the Vestry

Louise Peterson, Treasurer

#### *Eucharists*

Sunday, 8:00 AM (spoken)

Sunday, 10:00 AM (choral)

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

[www.facebook.com/stjohnwilderness](https://www.facebook.com/stjohnwilderness)

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