



# The Leaven

April 28, 2024

*The newsletter of  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church*



Dear Friends,

Most of us come to St. Paul's hoping to experience the presence of God. That is what makes our church "church." We are shaped by our history as it prepares us for inclusive and courageous faith and action, and it is confirmed in the way we worship together. But nothing validates our ministry except the presence, actively sought, of God.

You have heard Jesus say it – "Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them," in an Upper Room, or at St. Paul's...

Do you remember the story of the Samaritan woman and Jesus in John's gospel, beside Jacob's well? Jesus asks for a drink. She has had seven husbands. He tells her he can give her the water that wells up into eternal life and she'll never be thirsty again. And then this lucky, problematic woman becomes the very first person to hear from Jesus that he is the Messiah.

The piece of the story that not so many people remember is the discussion about where to worship. Samaritans worship on the Samaritan mountain, the woman says, while Jews worship in the Jerusalem Temple. And then the conversation has an interesting conclusion, as Jesus seems to imply that from now on the place to worship God is not mountain or temple, but wherever Jesus is.

The essence of Christianity is that we insist on the incarnate presence of God. At Easter this takes a very difficult turn, when the one we have understood to be the perfect image of God is crucified.

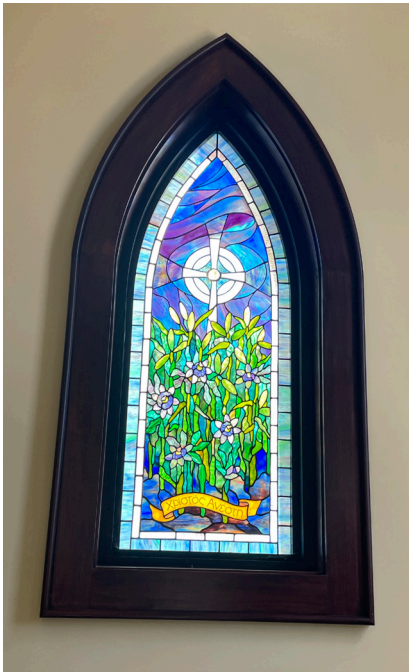
How we respond to this crucifixion, or to our own difficulties, big or small, to disappointment or mortality, even standing in line by the ovens of Belsen, is crucial; these are the Holy Moments of witness in which our faithfulness is tested.

One thing marks out the witnesses, the martyrs (martyrs, witnesses, in Greek it's the same word) – they insist that they are not alone.

I was visiting with Betty Kristo on Saturday and she told me this story again; she couldn't remember the Bible verse and a few of the details, but I could remember it with her.

Kristaq 'Krist' Kristo had been in the U.S. just long enough to learn English, and just long enough to fall in love with Betty, when he was sent off to war. At the end of 1944 the 18 year old Albanian-American refugee found himself in the Ardennes, in Belgium, stripping and cleaning his tank's machine guns. The rest of the crew were inside a house. Just then several rounds of German artillery fell, one of them directly hitting his tank. His friends ran outside expecting to find Krist dead. Instead he got out from the tank safe and sound. Just before the rounds fell, Krist said, a Bible verse

popped into his head – “Where two or three are gathered, there am I in the midst of them.” – and he jumped into the tank to look it up in his Bible, and it saved his life.



In 2015, when we were planning the new stained glass windows by the stairs, that story was in our minds. The windows given in memory of Krist, and to the glory of God, tell us of Easter, the movement from darkness to light from one window to the next. Easter was, and is, the Kristo family's favorite time, and that is how, every year, Krist greeted us at Easter when he said, in Greek. “Kristos aneste. Alethe aneste, alleluia.”

“The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!”

*Your friend in Christ,  
Michael*

# VESTRY VIGNETTES

First, I want to thank the people who turned good intentions into reality with the return of our beloved Leaven: Myrtle, Jan, Mary, and of course, Kris. This is essential and so appreciated!

Second, I want to update you about what the vestry has been up to. It's hard to imagine that our last meeting was prior to Holy Week, where hustle and bustle meets reflection, contemplation, and the magnitude of love and sacrifice. We were finishing up the Lenten Lunch series with the theme about women in the church, from biblical times to now, their impact and experiences and what we have learned through those different lenses. Plus, there was always delicious soup. There are many people to thank for making that happen, but a special shout-out goes to Julianna and Mary L. (probably a multitude of Marys).

At our vestry meeting in March, we reflected on ourselves, our strengths and weaknesses, and how we hope to move forward in an inclusive and loving community. We want to prioritize communication as an expression of God's love. Better communication improves how we worship and how we demonstrate hospitality and pastoral care. It starts with this, written updates and invitations for feedback and ideas. It continues with planned monthly conversations during coffee hour after church, listening and sharing. We hope it builds even more in our grill-outs/picnics (at church) one Sunday a month during the summer, in Bible studies, and in outreach.

This is part of our emphasis on hospitality, visibility, and service. There are unlimited possibilities for how these take shape, from what's already up and running (nursery, signs and video ads, Wednesday meals, a continuation of last year's family camp, the return of lunch with Lenten Lunches) to ideas just taking shape to ideas yet to be discussed. And we want to hear those ideas...big, small, unusual. It's great to hear each other's voices...and have a cookie and coffee while we're at it.

Many blessings,

Jody

# SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Letters to apply for the Oswald family scholarship at Saint Paul's are due by 10 May. It was established by the Oswalds to give young people a start on their future plans after high school. The letters should state your plans for your future and what church has meant to you. Mail them to the scholarship committee care of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. In recent years people other than high school seniors have also been considered for scholarships. If you or someone close to you has gone back to school or changed fields of work, consider applying for a scholarship.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS . . .



... FOR THESE AWESOME SUMMER EVENTS!

- ✓ **Bishop Loya visits St. Paul's**  
Date TBD, but possibly May 22
- ✓ **Parish Grilling Sundays:**  
June 9  
July 14
- ✓ **Family Bible Camp**  
August 6-9

## COFFEE HELP NEEDED

Enjoy treats after the service? Then please consider helping on a Sunday! Sign-up sheets are in Upper Tanner or talk to Judy Erck or Terri Hottmann.



**H**ELLO ST. PAULITES! I thought I should introduce myself. I am CeCe your resident church mouse. Don't be alarmed if you hear me scampering around. I will be keeping you informed of all that's going on in the parish. Great uncle Clericus loved telling stories about his time here, and I am looking forward to stepping into his shoes. Lent and Easter are always a busy time and the services this year were just lovely. Lenten lunches are back! Great tasting soups were served and enjoyed, and the speakers were inspiring. Maundy Thursday supper and service always is impressive. Mary Parsons and her crew did a great job! Thanks to all helpers! Did you see the new Pascal candle? A very tall one. Beautiful! Thanks, Drew! It was first used at the Easter Even service. The bells were ringing on Easter morning and to add joy and fun to the service, the choir and handbells joined in. The lilies also helped make it a glorious service.

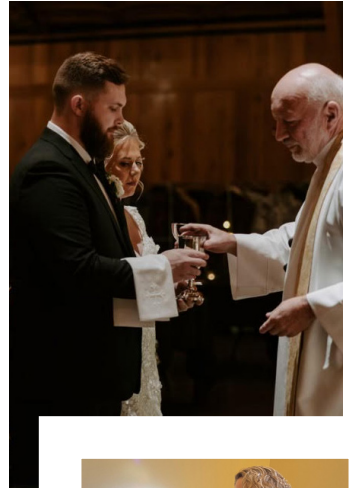


Some Saint Paulites traveled to faraway and closer places over the winter. Gary and Leanne Johnson are still in warmer states. Lynn and Dave Seykora visited Egypt and other places. Judy Erck flew to Paris. Wow! Mary Speltz flew to Alaska to see a new grandchild! Congrats to Johnny and Mary. Roger and Kristin Warehime went to Florida, also Mary Levine went to Florida to see Jennifer and family.

Prayers for Betty Kristo as she recovers in Rochester. Heard from family that she's doing well. Thoughts and prayers for Jim Otteson as well. Really, really want some warm days around here. Love the spring flowers and can't wait for the lilac trees to bloom. See you all around the parish!

## CLERICUS (MAY 1981)

Ahhhh Friends—sunshine, green grass, blue skies it's really SPRING! Did you see the crocus blooming in the front of the church? Saw George Dawes out taking care of the lawns around St. Paul's—a sure sign of spring.



THE FURTHER I WALK IN THIS LIFE, THE MORE I REALIZE  
**GOD IS EVERYWHERE,**  
and the EXTRAORDINARY IS WAITING QUIETLY  
BENEATH THE SKIN OF ALL THAT IS ORDINARY.

--Mark Nepo



*Leaven* is published monthly to keep the people of St. Paul's informed and united in thought.

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