

# The



# Rock

St. Peter Episcopal Church

January 2023

## From the Pastor's Desk

Dear People of God,

As I think about January 2023, one of the first things that occurs to me is that it will mark the completion of my third year as priest-in-charge at St. Peter's. Time sure does fly! I can't but look back for a moment and think about the challenges we've met, the changes we've made, and the blessings we've received together. There'll be a fuller "State of the Parish" statement at our Annual Meeting on January 22<sup>nd</sup> (mark those calendars!), but for now, please just know I remain daily grateful to be so blessed as to serve you as your priest. Thank you, and thanks be to God!



Of course, and more importantly, January also takes us into the season of Epiphany. Keeping with my opening tone of reminiscence, I want to reiterate a few things I wrote in last January's *Rock*. The season of Epiphany is about the revelation to the world of the divinity of Jesus Christ, "Emmanuel," "God *with* us." And the first Sunday after the Epiphany is the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, an event I have always found deeply moving. There's something about Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, getting in line with all the sinners and getting baptized just like them that's truly touching. It shows in its own way what the Birth of Christ shows, what Jesus dining with the tax collectors shows, what the Crucifixion shows. Jesus is determined to be right there alongside each of us, and among all of us, no matter the circumstances, every step of the way. He never stands apart.

That's a profound lesson for the Church. *No one* is made to stand apart, and no one can

afford to stand apart. To put it in clichéd terms, we're all in this together (*whatever* "this" happens to be!). With all that in mind, let me remind you of a major Epiphany event this year: Please mark your calendars and make every effort to participate in our next adult education offering at St. Peter's, coming up on Saturday, January 14<sup>th</sup>.

We'll be holding a one-day mini-retreat as part of our living out the "Pledge of Faith and Action Against Racial Injustice," which we made in response to the work of our diocese's Commission to Dismantle and Racism and Discrimination. It will be co-led by our deacons, Tom Tripp and Diana Leiker, our parish liaison to the Commission, Sue Gunn, and myself. Our time together will include prayer, scripture readings, other short readings, conversation, and sharing, with a focus on learning more about *implicit biases*—what they are, how we all have them, how they relate to systemic and structural racism, and what we can do to understand and overcome them for the sake of the Gospel.

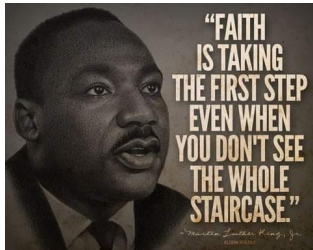
It remind us of the Outline of the Faith found in our *Book of Common Prayer* (p. 855), which spells out that "the mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ," that the Church pursues this mission as it... "promotes justice, peace, and love," and that the Church carries out this mission "through the *ministry of all its members*." The journey to become the Beloved Community begins with courage, honesty, and the truth being spoken in love. This mini-retreat will be a crucial step in this journey, and after three years with you I know you, the people of St. Peter's, have been gifted

with the kind of courage, honesty, and love needed for it.

We'll gather at St. Peter's from 10:00-2:30 on Saturday, January 14<sup>th</sup> (lunch provided). Appropriately, that's on Martin Luther King weekend. May our time and work together during this retreat open our eyes, especially if we believe ours do not need to be opened.

MLK weekend 2020, by the way, was my first Sunday at St. Peter's. I look forward to beginning my fourth year at St. Peter's on the heels of this very important gathering. May the Light of Christ illuminate your heart and light your way throughout this Epiphany season.

Yours in Christ,  
*Fr. Dan+*



## 2022 Christmas Storm

I have to admit that I felt a bit downhearted on Christmas Eve morning. But then, I made a conscious decision to stop moping and do something positive. I listened to music and reflected. "Let every heart prepare Him room and heaven and nature sing". Hmmmm. These words spoke to me. I prepared the physical space where I would worship for Christmas Eve by dusting, polishing, and displaying a few candles by my childhood nativity set. Even though I wasn't venturing out to church, and no one was visiting my house, I exchanged my jeans and comfy sweatshirt for dress pants, a nice shirt, blazer, and even new shoes that I hadn't worn yet. I put on some jewelry and even curled my hair.... which I never do. I looked at the clock and realized that on a normal Christmas Eve, I would be heading out the door. I played through every verse of every hymn that we would have sung in person and really thought about the meanings. I will close by saying that for me, Christmas Eve service, in its simplicity,

ended up being a very peaceful, moving, experience that reached deep into my heart.

*Elizabeth Schascheck*



## Here We Go Again

I'm writing this as WNY is attempting to dig out of yet another monster storm, this one right smack in the middle of Christmas weekend. What was supposed to be a time of sharing familial love and gift-giving, in celebration of the birth of our Lord, was severely disrupted by Mother Nature.

Most of us hunkered down with an ample supply of food and other necessities as best we could. Yet the severity of the storm made it crystal clear (as in ice) that we cannot even approach controlling Her (Mother N), or be sufficiently prepared to handle some of the bombs that She tosses at us. I grieve for the loss of life that resulted; the multitude of people having to go without power or heat for extended periods of time; and for those whose severe medical conditions were threatened.

I salute and commend all those who looked after neighbors in need, and for those that heeded the need for the common good of community. It remains comforting to know that they are in the majority. The need for attending to the common good should always take precedence in situations like we are currently experiencing.

We found that Christmas celebrations do not necessarily depend upon a date (it's a contrived date anyway). It's about spreading love and compassion with our families and in everyday life, and... it's okay if you change the date of gathering in dire situations. Thank you- whoever invented ZOOM.

Buffalo's public bane has always been snow, and the national media shall never stop letting the rest of that nation know that. I won't go so

far as to embrace that image, but we can all be thankful that we are not known for tornadoes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, or earthquakes.

Living adjacent to a fresh water lake, in the long term, is a very good thing. Thanks be to God for all the blessings bestowed- even through blizzards, pandemics and other tests of nature. It gives us a chance to shine in God's eyes.

*Deacon Tom*



## Diakonia Musings

As I look outside today, I see the remnants of the storm that tore through the area a week and a half ago. We have mounds of dirty snow left and a few trees down. Two golf domes are gone, hopefully to be rebuilt so the gift certificates I gave my grandchildren for Christmas can be used! There are funerals to hold for 40+ people who lost their fight with the cold. And we have much to learn from our mistakes. But compared to the damage from hurricanes and flooding that Southern states have experienced, we in Western New York are breathing a sigh of relief after this catastrophe. For this we give thanks. It reminds me that there is always light after the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

I also am in shock, like the rest of the country, waiting to hear about the health status of Damar Hamlin. While not being an avid follower of sports, I still find myself praying for the life and recovery of this young man who literally put his life on the line when he walked out onto the field to play the game he loves and entertain the people who love football. I have to say that I am so proud of the way the NFL postponed the game, putting the players and coaches mental and emotional status above money. I worried that they would tell the players to get tough and go out there to win. It struck me that while we complain about sports being one of the many false Gods of many Americans, keeping them from church and church activities, when push came to shove, it was a child of God that we put above everything else. Money did not talk in this

situation, and players and fans were brought to their knees in urgent prayer to the true God.

God's light came into the world as a vulnerable baby, born of an ordinary human, raised by ordinary humans, serving and teaching ordinary humans and dying and rising again for us. It is we ordinary human beings, that bearing Christ within us, are carrying this light into our world. The efforts of so many during the storm, and the response to Damar's cardiac arrest during a legendary football game, are demonstrations of that light shining brightly in the darkness. May we continue to shine in this coming New Year.

*Deacon Diana*

## The Annual Meeting Reports

Our annual meeting is on Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Annual reports should be emailed by Sunday, Jan 15<sup>th</sup>**

Parish Leadership reports should be submitted by:

Priest: The Rev. Dr. Dan Pinti

Deacons- Diana Leiker and Tom Tripp

Wardens- Lee McElhinny and Eliz Ann Schascheck

Treasurer-Ed Hill

Lois Tripp-Outgoing administrator

Building and Grounds-Ed Hill

Music Ministry Director- Eliz Ann Schascheck

Prayer and Healing- Sue Gunn

Threads of Hope- Carma Miccoli

Altar Guild- Ed Hill and Carma Miccoli

Blessing Box-Gary Donhauser, Lois Tripp, and

Alison Mohr (Pet Ministry)

Lois Tripp,







## Refugee Update

As of this writing, all of the Christmas gifts for our refugee families have been delivered in time for their celebrations.

Lois and I delivered the Moises family gifts on the Thursday before the blizzard, by necessity. The only ones present were mother Deborah and eldest son Mikaele. We gave them strict instructions to open only on Christmas Eve or Christmas itself, and take pictures to send to us.

I also checked in with them after the blizzard, and found that everything was good, and everyone was safe. They never lost power or heat, and had enough food stored up to sustain them throughout.

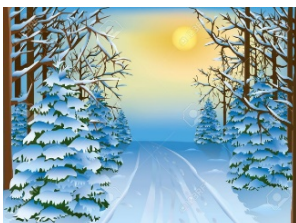
Since the Balanovych family is Ukrainian Orthodox (Christian), they celebrate Christmas on New Years Day, and/or Epiphany (Jan. 6). I delivered their presents on New Year's Eve to a bunch of smiling faces.

Their apartment had lost power prior or during the storm, and somehow the family found their way to safety at Katryna's house, the sister of Serheii, the father. Katryna, if you remember, was the saintly sponsor for the family's exodus to America. Power is restored, and they too are doing well, all things considered.

One bit of good news is that both Serhii and mother Halnyna now have their work authorization papers, which now permits them to seek gainful employment. We will begin English mentoring sessions very soon.

I pray that 2023 will bring more blessings to each family as they continue assimilation into American society.

*Deacon Tom*



## The Blessing Box

Thank you for your continued support. Our neighbors seem to be very accepting of the Blessing box ministry and can be seen regularly donating.

One of our neighbors regularly adds fruit and veg to the cooler we have placed next to the Blessing box. We also need to thank Deacon Diana and her granddaughter Molly for a special neighborhood collection of Women's personal products. They asked for donations and many of our neighbors answered the call. I keep repeating that the need continues to be great for food and other essential items.

Gary Donhauser and I have started a new Inventory system to better track what is coming in and out. Alison has been doing this with pet food right along. It will help us share the amount of items we donate and better anticipate shopping needs. All of us know the cost of toiletry items, spaghetti, peanut butter, tuna, chicken, soups, etc.; many of our neighbors cannot make their food supplies or Pet food last until their next visit to a food pantry, or supermarket.

Thank you for whatever help you can provide. We are asking for volunteers to help fill the box once or twice per month. No shopping is required. If you are interested, please call or email Gary or me.

*Gary Donhauser-Chairperson Lois Tripp Alison Mohr (Pet Food)*

**SAVE THE DATE**

01/14 Parish Mini Retreat 10am -2pm  
Lunch Provided

01/15 Annual Reports are due to Lois Tripp

01/17 5:30pm Rockettes Dinner at Family Tree

01/22 Pot Luck Lunch, Annual Meeting and Elections after 10am service

01/22 BJ's membership due



## Linen Pantry Update

In December we served 17 clients from 8 agencies. Because of the storm we were even closed for several days.

The middle of December we filled and delivered 4 dozen Christmas mugs to each of the 3 food pantries. I made deliveries to 2 of the pantries. They were each, very happy to receive our donations. They look forward to giving their clients a little something extra at this time of year. If you have Christmas mugs you don't want, we can use them for next year. We purchase some mugs at after Christmas sales and from donations.

Along with the Christmas mugs, the 3 food pantries each received two large trash bags filled with hats mittens, scarves and socks. These too were also greatly appreciated by the pantries on behalf of their clients.

A thank you goes to Sharon and Mike Taube for donating 6 dozen Christmas cups filled with candy. Another thank you goes out to Carolyn Bongi's Needle Group for providing a lot of the hats, and scarves. We could not do what we do without the help of others.

I took 21 coats and jackets donated during the year to Calvin Cleaners for their "Coats for Kids" project. They will be repaired (if needed), cleaned and distribute to those in need. I was told me they can use adult size coats to give to teenagers and adults who need something warm to wear this winter.

We still need hats, mittens, scarves and socks for distribution to the 3 food pantries sometime in February.

Merrie Hill



## Membership

St. Peter's has a corporate membership to BJ's. Individual memberships cost \$30 for a year beginning on 2/1/2023. Even if you do not want the large quantity food

items, their membership fuel prices may be an incentive.

Please let me know if you are interested in joining or renewing your membership. You can pay the \$30 membership fee by check made out to St. Peter's or cash if you prefer by January 22, 2023. If you have any questions feel free to ask me.

*Merrie Hill.*

## 2023 Offering Envelopes



Sunday it was brought to my attention that the 2023 offering donation envelopes were not distributed to the congregation. Normally the

packets are delivered to me in late November, I did not receive them and failed to realize it. I contacted the supply company Monday morning and they have said they have been short staffed and have experienced paper supply issues. We will not be receiving the envelopes until the end of January.

Until we receive the envelopes, please place your donations in a plain envelope, mark the outside with your name, what fund the donation should be charged to, (pledge, building fund, etc.). Indicate if a check or cash is enclosed. It is not necessary to indicate the amount. If you know your envelope number you can mark it on the outside. I can locate your record using your name when entering the donation data, but it is easier if I have your envelope number. You can contact me with any questions or to find your envelope number.

I apologize for this inconvenience.

*Ed Hill*



## Rockettes Dinner

All women of the parish are Rockettes. Our next dinner is Tuesday January 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm at the Family Tree on Bailey Ave. We had a good time in November so let's get together again.

## Prayers of the People

**Long Term:** Becky, Jim G, Kristie P, Ron B, Gino L, Alfred, Lee & Jessica M, Judy E, Joanne U, Beth, Sue & Dave S, Ron and Susan W, Lynda C, Dominic, Lindsey V, Jason, Bill, Finnegan M, Tami G and Nicole



**Short Term:** Kelly, Beverly T, Dan & Sue H, Joyce J, Kris, Jeffery, Adam N, Brenda B, Lori W, Marianne & family, Chris G, Michelle H, Joanne F, Marilyn S, Diane G, Damar H and Tee H

**Military:** Ben, Brandon and Richie

**Departures:** Anna H, all those lost in the Buffalo snow storm

Please contact me with any corrections or updates.

Happy New Year!

Sue Gunn



01/01 Sue Gunn  
01/03 Melissa Lopat  
01/06 Tom Tripp  
01/07 Kelly McElhinny  
01/10 Gregg Palmer  
01/20 Carolyn Bongi  
01/21 Candi Bull  
01/23 Avery Campas  
01/23 Nicholas Palmer  
01/29 Tori Paradise  
01/30 Kristin Tripp-Kelly



01/23 Tom and Lois Tripp

