

The



Rock

St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Established in 1954

Summer 2023

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear People of God,

Over the course of the past several Sundays we've been hearing passages from a section of Matthew's Gospel called Jesus's "Mission Discourse." It's the second of the five major "discourses" or speeches of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel—five discourses being Matthew's way of organizing Jesus's teaching to correspond loosely to the five books of Jewish teaching, known as the Torah, which comprises the first five books of the Old Testament. (The first of his discourses is the famous Sermon on the Mount.)

This Mission Discourse (you'll find it in Chapter 10 of Matthew) is sometimes called the "Little Commission," in contrast to the "Great Commission" (which is found in Chapter 28). The distinction is a matter of mission "scope." In Chapter 10, Jesus is sending the apostles specifically to the "lost sheep of Israel," whereas in Chapter 28, they are told to go "to all nations." But that difference should not distract us from what the two commissions have in common: *disciples of Jesus (us!) are sent by Jesus to spread the Gospel.* Another word for that is "evangelize"—something we Episcopalians have traditionally been, let's say, less than comfortable doing.

There has been a series of recent columns in the *New York Times* by Jessica Grose focused on the changes in religious affiliation and practices in American society. The major change, of course, is that more and more Americans are moving away from religion—not just away from Christianity, but away from religion altogether. The reasons for this are many and complicated, of course, and I can't

get into them here. What I found most intriguing in these columns, though, was something Ms. Grose (who, from what I gather, is not coming at the subject as a religious person) concluded from all the research she'd done on the topic: "the one aspect of religion in America that I unquestionably see as an overall positive for society is the ready-made supportive community that churchgoers can access" (*New York Times* June 28, 2023).

In the surveys she did of people who used to go to church and no longer do, when she asked what they missed most about it, the most common answer was "community," and not just community, but the unique kind of community a community of faith can offer. Ms. Grose writes, "I asked every sociologist I interviewed whether communities created around secular activities outside of houses of worship could give the same level of wraparound support that churches, temples and mosques are able to offer. Nearly across the board, the answer was no. Phil Zuckerman, a professor of sociology and secular studies at Pitzer College, put it this way: 'I can go play soccer on a Sunday morning and hang out with people from different races and different class backgrounds, and we can bond. But I'm not doing that with my grandparents and my grandchildren.' A soccer team can't provide spiritual solace in the face of death, it probably doesn't have a weekly charitable call and there's no sense of connection to a heritage that goes back generations. You can get bits and pieces of these disparate qualities elsewhere, he said, but there's no 'one-stop shop.'"

And then there's this disturbing and maybe surprising finding: "Every demographic group in

the United States is becoming less religious, but groups that are overrepresented among people with no religion in particular are those without high school diplomas, who are single, who don't have children and who earn less than \$50,000 a year." If that's the case, while I'm certainly no sociologist, I think it's a reasonable inference that the people who are more likely to be marginalized, economically-disadvantaged, and lonely in our country are the people who are most rapidly losing connection to religious community.

And here we are, a "ready-made supportive community" at St. Peter's. How can we *not* share that!?

The "lost sheep" of the United States are all around us. Jesus is still calling us to go out, meet them where they are, share with them the Good News in both deed and in word, let them know what the Holy Spirit moving through the Body of Christ which is the Church offers them acceptance and community and love. *And* (there's no arrogance in our saying this as well, if we remember that it's all to God's glory): that very kind of community they can find nowhere in secular society can be found with us.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Dan+

Diakonian Musings

No one can say that St. Peter's takes a break in the summer months! It looks like we have some wonderful things planned. Along with our events, I hope many of you will engage in opportunities extended to us from other congregations, especially St. Phillip's.

One more item to put on your calendar is a boat ride on Miss Buffalo, sponsored by the men's group but open to everyone. They have set aside the entire boat that can hold up to 200 people, to enjoy music, food, and fellowship for 2&1/2 hours. There is a price for the tickets and the flyer will be coming with all the details. Sunday, August 27 St Phillips boat ride on Miss Buffalo. 1:-3:30am.

In the past few weeks, I have had the chance to go to St. Paul's Cathedral, a beautiful

building in the middle of the poorest one mile radius in Buffalo. I took some clothes that were donated by the St. James' thrift store and helped sort and get them ready for a summer clothing give away for the men and women who are homeless and wander the streets around the church. Every Tuesday from 11:30-1:00, the cathedral hosts a free lunch for about 35 people. They have named this ministry Garden of Love. When I asked Canon Twila Smith, the interim Dean, what dreams the cathedral has, she said they would like to expand this ministry to two days; Tuesday and Thursday, but they need more volunteers to make it happen, especially on Thursdays from noon to 2:00. There will be a service on Cathedral Park, a little piece of green space behind the church from 11:30-noon. They are looking for people that will just mingle and engage with the homeless and street wanderers around the Cathedral after the service.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few". Matthew said.

Why is there such a shortage of workers, of disciples willing to answer Jesus' call to love their neighbor? It takes courage to step outside of our comfort zones and into the areas of life that make us feel uncomfortable. We don't want to be reminded of the generosity we have been shown by God because it makes us feel guilty.

Face, it. We are not fond of being around people who smell, have mental illness, suffer from addiction or physical challenges. We let our "fear of the other" stop us from getting to know them as human beings. Our biases, and we all have them, tell us that street people are lazy and brought their plight on themselves, people with tattoos and piercings are looking for drug money, and males of color are going to hurt and steal from us.



Whatever it is that holds us back from opening our hearts to saying yes to God, takes hard, inner work on our part to identify and then own.

If you are feeling the Holy Spirit tugging at your heart strings and would like to go to the

Cathedral to spend a short time, just once during the summer, listening and connecting with people who desperately need human contact, showing them what God's love looks like, please let me know. Jesus asked the disciples to pray for workers. They did and their prayers were immediately answered. I think sometimes we don't pray for laborers to go into the harvest because we fear God might be calling us.

If donating is more your style, there are two ways to help out. The first would be to donate men's clothing, especially larger sizes. It must be in good shape, and larger sizes up to 3X, would be appropriate for their summer clothing give away. Used underwear and socks are not accepted. The second need is for items you can't purchase with SNAP. They are collecting sunscreen, baby wipes, sunglasses, sun visors, chap stick, and new underwear and socks. These items are being collected to be included in a summer kit for the people in need. If you can't make it in person to volunteer or to drop things off, let me know and I will help make it happen.
Deacon Diana



Back in the Saddle.....Again!



At the very end of April (28-30), Collins Christian Ministries (CCM) entered the correctional facility at Collins after a 3 year absence. We were there as Covid 19 struck New York State and closed everything down on March 17,2000, and now we were back.

Twenty five men entered to bring Christ back into the lives of men in need of his loving presence, and 20 more men and women supported them from the outside. What a fulfilling weekend it was!

About 40 inmate candidates, and 8 more stewards joined us in song, prayer, laughter, and learning. And of course, lots of sweets and homemade dinner entrees filled their bellies. One could see

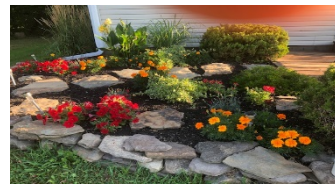
how desperate they were for our being there, and how attentive and joyous they were in response to our being there. Even a few lapses in communication between CCM organizers and the prison administration could not dampen the overall spirit.

Many thanks to all of you St. Peterites who contributed to this ministry revival, including the making of cookies and muffins, to writing encouraging notes for the inmates, to creating personal banners and placemats. And never to be forgotten- praying for all involved. Deacon Diana even came for the Holy Hour and subsequent serenade at the barbed wire fences.

I am so grateful to God that we were able to reestablish this ministry. It is such a fulfilling and worthwhile endeavor, and certainly one where one can meet the presence of Christ at work.

We will have a one-day reunion "retreat" in July to follow up our efforts in encouraging and supporting the new "graduates". Peace and Blessings,

Deacon Tom



IN INVITATION to
a ST. PETER'S
DAY RETREAT

Along with your own personal quiet space, there is an opportunity for us to spend a day in a beautiful, Zoar Valley setting. You are invited to attend a **Day Retreat** at the property my family owns in East Otto.

What: Day retreat hosted by Diana and Diane
When: Saturday, August 12, 2023. 10:00am-3:30pm

Where: Fowler Road off Hammond Hill Rd, East Otto (near Springville, an hour away) I will provide directions so your GPS does not take you up steep hills. (My little 4 cylinder does not do well on the slopes)

Why? To have time to reflect and relax in nature while having some fun together.

Please let me know if you are interested on the sign-up sheet in the undercroft.

A light breakfast and coffee will be ready for early birds at 9:30 as we wait for people to

arrive. (Just in case someone in a fancy car gets lost!!!) Lunch will be served also. If you have any dietary needs, please note that when you sign up so I can do my best to keep your tummies satisfied. More to come as the day gets closer.



Deacon Diana

Buildings and Treasurer



Thank you to all who worked hard weeding and cleaning the gardens in preparation for the summer. The buildings are all in good shape with the exception of a small leak in the nave roof

which is being addressed. We also lost a piece of fascia over the parking lot entrance. This repair has to be coordinated with National Grid due to the service wires rubbing against the building.

Financially we are in good shape and continue to support our many outreach programs. During the summer church attendance seems to decrease but please continue to keep your pledge current, bills do not go on vacation. The \$5,000 blessing Box grant we received last year has been supporting that effort. We have approximately \$1,000 left to spend of the grant. Your donations to the blessing box have been kept in a separate Church Blessing Box account. Once the grant has been depleted we will begin supporting that outreach with your continued support. The Refugee support ministry is continuing and may see some increase activity based on the current immigration programs. Deacon Tom and Deacon Diana are leading this effort.

Thank you for your continued support, and thanks to Mike Taube for his support in Buildings and Grounds.

Ed Hill

Treasurer

Building and Grounds

The Blessing Box

Thank you for all the donations this past month! The food items for July are pasta spaghetti and jelly (we've gotten lots of peanut butter donated). If you prefer, checks can be made out to St. Peter's with Blessing Box in the memo section.

For the Pet Pantry: the July items are canned or dry dog food. There are now envelopes in the pews for individuals to put cash or check donations for the Pet Pantry. Make checks payable to St. Peter's with Pet Pantry in the memo section.

God Bless your generosity ❤️

Thanks,
Lois Tripp

Linen Pantry Update



During the month of June, the Linen Pantry provided household goods for 19 families from 7 Agencies. We were also fortunate to find 2 large donations on our front porch this month. As fast as donations come in, they are given out.

We are in the process of counting our Dash's Market receipts to see if we have enough to submit for funds. For a minimum of \$5,000 in receipts, they give us \$250. The larger the number of receipts turned in, the more money we receive. If you have any Dash's receipts, please bring or sent them to the church.

We can also use cash donations for the Linen Pantry. If by check, make it out to St. Peters with Linen Pantry in the memo section.

Merrie Hill



are parts of the Bible that have no permanent worth – that is nothing to be sorry about, it is just to say that it is the Word of God in the words of men and women.”
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Love Rising, July 2023
Help Create Caring Communities

Love Thy Neighbor
 St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Buffalo, New York




love-rising.com

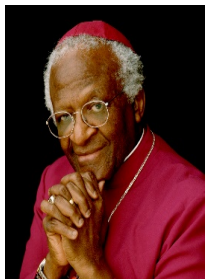
Praise and Prayer Community Event
 Sunday, July 16th
 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM
Please join us for a celebration with music, poetry readings, face painting, food, fellowship, and fun!!!

“Love Thy Neighbor” Neighborhood Clean-Up
 Saturday, July 22nd
 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Love in action! Your assistance with the following would be greatly appreciated: yard work, planting flowers, replacing light bulbs on outside lights, donations of outdoor plants, flowers, and yard equipment.

15 Fernhill Ave. Buffalo, NY 14215

Bible Study

Reading the Bible can be a source of reflection and inspiration, as you listen for God’s voice in your life. But you must watch how you read the Bible and apply it to today’s world. The Bible is not something that came dropping from heaven, written by the hand of God. It was written by human beings, so it uses human idiom, and is influenced by the context in which whatever story was



written. People need to be very careful. Many tend to be literalists, people who believe in the verbal inerrancy of the Bible, who speak as if God dictated the Bible, when, in fact, God used human beings as they were, and they spoke only as they could speak at that time. There

A Contest



What is this church building saying to you?
 To me: **“Ed Hill, what is this, the tenth time you been here this week?”** Let me know your funny comments and I will print the ones I receive in the August Rock.
 Merrie Hill

Backpack Sunday – August 20th

We will be collecting school supplies for the refugee children. Watch for sales this summer

on the basic supplies. More information coming when their school lists are available.

Prayers of the People

Long Term: Becky, Jim G, Kristie P, Ron B, Gino L, Lee & Jessica M, Judy E, Joanne U, Beth, Sue & Dave S, Ron W, Lynda C, Dominic, Lindsey V, Jason, Bill, Finnegan M, Nicole, Sue H. Joyce J, Emma B, Kelly, Marilyn S, Kathy and family.

Short Term: Billy F, Adele, Mike, Abby and family, Priscilla, Sheri, Giada F, Jordyn S. and Bray S, Sharon H, Sammy M, Joe & Teri W., Bishop Michael Curry, Naomi, Olive P, Suzanne J, Stephen R, Alison M, John D, Linda P

Military: Ben M, Brandon G, Richie, Quincy, John

Please contact me at sgunn@sixgunns.com with any updates, corrections, or Thanksgivings.

God Bless!

Sue Gunn



Birthdays

07/03 Augusta Hardy
07/08 Sharon Taube
07/12 Cheyenne Mohr
07/14 Shawn Mohr
07/17 Talia Benning
07/18 Heather Wagner
07/18 Fran McElhinny
07/18 Emmalina Baumgartner
07/20 Augusta Hardy
07/25 Maria Sanchez-Clarke
07/26 Alison Mohr
07/25 Aaron Taube
07/31 Becky Piatov
08/01 Jay Fiutak
08/91 Emily Fiutak
08/01 Michael Coury
08/01 Nicholas Campus
08/03 Wendy Palmer
08/04 Alissa Gordon
08/09 Bryan Tripp
08/10 Katia Sanchez
08/13 Tariq Benning
08/15 Robert Rezabek
08/15 Suzanne Smith
08/16 Maya Hill
08/18 Barbara Price
08/21 Lee McElhinny
08/22 Iain Gunn

08/25 Elaine Miller
08/25 Della Harris
08/27 Rev. Terry Bull
08/28 Bradley Taube

Anniversaries

07/11 Greg and Wendy Palmer
07/20 Gary and Marty Donhauser
07/25 Nicholas and Mary Jane Campas
08/19 Ronald and Carolyn Bongli
08/19 Michael Kankiewicz and Mary Jeffers
08/21 James Gunn and Susan
08/27 Fr. Dan and Maria Pinti

MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!

July 16 Praise, Prayer event at St. Philip's
12:pm – 3:pm
July 18 Rockettes Dinner at Family Tree
at 5:30pm
July 22 Clean up neighborhood at St. Philips
10am-12pm
August 12 Retreat in East Otto led by Deacon
Diana

- August 20 Backpack Sunday. School supplies for the refugee children
- August 27 Parish Picnic at Ellicott Creek Park
- Sept 8-9 Woman's Retreat at Stella
Details to follow
- Sept 17 Annual Flu shots provided by Wegman, 11:15am- 12:15pm