

# The



# Rock

St. Peter Episcopal Church

Est. 1953

January 2024

## From the Pastor's Desk

Dear People of God,

We used to have a dog named Penelope. Before she became our dog, she belonged to a friend who one year asked us to watch her over the holidays. Penelope was our houseguest that year between Christmas and New Year's Day. At that time, we didn't have a dog of our own, but she made it easy on us. She was always there, but never made noise and didn't make a mess. She was always happy to see us, no matter our mood. We fed her and made a little spot for her, sure, but we didn't really have to change our lives or schedules for her at all. Penelope was easy to find—we didn't look for her, she came to us—and easy to accommodate—she happily played by our rules.

In other words, she was just the sort we Christians often have in mind, sadly, when we say we want to “grow the church.”

I suppose you could say we behaved like “good Christians” because we welcomed Penelope into our home. But maybe Penelope was more “Christian,” because she was the one willing to leave her “comfort zone” to enter ours. She was the one willing, as the saying goes, to meet us where we are. Yet how often do we say that to others, literally or metaphorically: meet us where we are?

Whenever we do, we should remember that's precisely how God does NOT work. God finds us. We see it during both Christmas and Epiphany. God finds ways to meet us where we are. As John's Gospel tells us, “The Word became flesh and *dwelt among us*.” That's what the Nativity of the Savior is all about—God coming to us.

But maybe no event illustrates this more powerfully than the Epiphany story of Jesus's Baptism. John the Baptist went out preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John's warning was that the Messiah's “winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear the threshing floor and to gather the wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire.” People from all over heard that message and came to the Jordan River to be baptized. They lined up, people like you and me. And what does Jesus do? Well (and I've always wondered how John the Baptist reacted to this) he doesn't stand over them with a winnowing fork. The Messiah gets in line with the sinners. He makes himself present to them. Jesus gets in line and gets in the water with everyone tired of the selfishness of this world and of their own role in it, and—even though he himself has no sin—he is baptized. John talks of wheat and chaff, but Jesus's own message is even greater. We can never buy into reductive dualities like wheat and chaff, good guys and bad guys, us and them, once Jesus says by his actions “I am with all of you, and you all are one with me.”

As we at St. Peter's head into 2024, may we do so renewing our own Baptismal Covenant “to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves.” That means a willingness to get out of our comfort zones, to meet people where they are, so that as we seek out Christ manifest in all persons, they may see him manifest in us.

Yours in Christ  
Fr. Dan+



# HOPE

I don't know about you, but for my money, 2023 was one of the saddest, upsetting, and challenging years of my life. Between untimely deaths of friends or their children, nagging illnesses, the increasing impotence of our nation's government, and horrific global conflicts- it has caused much weeping and gnashing of teeth- my own.

And yet, there is always HOPE swirling around, along with the snow, at this time of year. The birth of Jesus celebrated, and the manifestation of God come among us, generates this much-needed hope.

Though rising incivility and foreboding anger continues to foment, the celebration of Christ's birth once again offers hope for a better world of communication and dialogue.

Though factions of Christianity desire to insert themselves into politics and create laws that would stifle the command to love God and our neighbors as well; Jesus offers us the hope contained in the Gospel, and the teachings of the Beatitudes. Jesus brings us the offering and availability of hope.

Though I age slowly and sometimes painfully into the winter years of this reality, Jesus brings me hope. Initiated in my baptism; bolstered by a developed faith and actions taken in servitude, I have hope for the betterment of this reality we live in, and what lies beyond.

Epiphany itself is hope. It's the season of the incarnate God being presented to a hurting world, in a year not too dissimilar to 2023.

**"This is my well beloved Son- listen to him."**

I have. I know when and where he has been in my life. He gives me hope for a truly happier New Year. I pray the same for all of you. I will pray unceasingly, and then again.  
Deacon Tom

## Challenges for St. Peter's 2024 Budget

As the former Treasurer and now a member of the Vestry, I was surprised to learn at our December Vestry meeting that we expect to propose a deficit budget for 2024. If we are to propose a balanced budget in the coming year, we will need additional money. The Diocese expects churches to have a balanced budget whenever possible, and the Vestry wants to present to the congregation such a budget at January's Annual Meeting.

Our current deficit is approximately \$12,000. Certain items such as salaries, utilities, insurances and pensions are almost impossible to reduce. Other items can be cut, but we would prefer not to if possible. The vestry has found a few areas to cut back, but basically right now we are looking at either (a) increasing pledges wherever possible, (b) having some kind of fundraiser(s), or (c) beginning to draw down reserves.

I got a small raise in my Social Security. The more I thought about it, I decided I can afford to increase my pledge. I called Ed Hill and asked him to increase my pledge. (Sorry it wasn't the \$12,000). Look at your budget and prayerfully see if you too can donate a few extra dollars per week or month. If so, just let our Treasurer Ed Hill know.

The vestry will be meeting again on January 9<sup>th</sup> to try to balance the budget and will present the best budget we can at our January 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.

*Merrie Hill*



### Rockettes Dinner

All women of the parish are Rockettes. Our next dinner is **Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm at the Family Tree** on Bailey Ave. Last time it seems everyone had a good time. Let's get together again.

## Votive Candles

St. Peter's has a votive candle rack outside of the Columbarium. Burning votive candles are a common sight in Anglican, Catholic and Lutheran churches. The light from these burning candles indicates our prayers to the Lord for ourselves, loved ones, or situations are ascending.

Just a reminder: the candle rack has a slot in order that individuals lighting the votive candles can help defray the cost of these candles. Lately, candles are being burned with no donations. Fifty cents or more is a small enough donation for your prayers to continually ascend into the heavens while the candle is burning down.

## Annual Meeting Reports

Our annual meeting is on Sunday, January 28th. **Annual reports should be emailed by Sunday, Jan 14**

Parish Leadership reports submitted by:

Priest: The Rev. Dr. Dan

Deacons- Diana Leiker and Tom Tripp

Wardens- Elizabeth Ann Schascheck and Mike Taube

Treasurer-Ed Hill

Administrator – Carolyn Bonggi

Building and Grounds-Ed Hill

Music Ministry - Elizabeth 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)

*Carolyn Bonggi,*

## Nursery Available at 10 am Service

Beginning January 7th Sienna and Vivienne Tripp will be able to watch young children in the nursery the first and fourth Sunday of each month. The children will be brought up to the service at the time of communion.



## Memberships

St. Peter's has a corporate membership to BJ's. Individual memberships cost \$30 for a year beginning on 2/1/2024. 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 21, 2024. If you have any questions feel free to ask.

*Merrie Hill.*

**SAVE THE DATE**

01/14 Annual Reports are due to Carolyn Bonggi

01/16 5:30pm Rockettes Dinner at Family Tree

01/28 Pot Luck Lunch, Annual Meeting and Elections after 10am service

01/282 BJ's membership due

## Blessing Box

We begin the New Year thanking everyone for your support this past year. St. Peter's always steps up to the needs of the community.

As you know we are now self-supporting. Our efforts, along with our neighbors help us to fill the box. We continue to obtain gift cards from businesses, and to take advantage of low-cost food and snack items from local agencies.

We have stopped the paper products and personal need portion of our Blessing box. Those items are precious to the people that use the Blessing Box as they would have to pay cash to purchase at the store. On a trial basis, St Peters will offer a Donation Day, during coffee hour, with-Personal products, Soap and Paper products. The users of the Blessing Box may come down to the undercroft

to choose a few items they might need Gary Donhauser and Lois Tripp will do coffee hour that week and be available to help with the donations. We will also offer them a cup of coffee, tea, and snacks. It will give us an opportunity to meet and greet. Our first **Donation Day will be Sun., February 11<sup>th</sup>.**

We still feel that we must feed the hungry first, so in **January we ask for donations of a hearty can of soup** and if you are able to also contribute **1 personal care item: soap, detergent, or toilet paper item** that will be put toward the special donation day. Our **pet food donation item of the month is canned cat or dog food or treats.**

God Bless you everyone!

*Gary Donhauser, Lois Tripp, Alison Mohr and Tori Paradise*

## Linen Pantry Update

In December we served 22 families from 11 agencies. We waiting for our \$225 from the Dash Receipts you submitted. Unfortunately, we have assisted so many families these last three months our supplies are now low. If you received a new household item and your old one has been gently used, think of the Linen Pantry. A family may be happy to have it. Families are moving into apartments with no stoves. Do you have any new or gently used hotplates, a small microwave, electric frying pan or toaster oven? We are low or almost out of on bath towels, queen sheets and comforters. Times are hard for everyone.

The Linen Pantry distributed hats, mittens, scarves and socks to the three food pantries. along with 20 Christmas mugs each filled with candy. Mike and Sharen Taube put together 18 Christmas mugs each filled with candy. Each pantry received a total of 38 mugs. Thank you to Sharon & Mike for all you do to support this ministry.

We are still collecting hats, mittens, scarves and socks for another donation the end of

January. Carolyn Bongi's Needlecraft Group supplied us with hats, scarves and throws.

I hope 2024 brings lots of donations so we can pass them on to those who need it.

*Merrie Hill*

## Action Photos from a Seminarian's Life

St. Peter's is proud to be supporting Rachel Pinti as she pursues her Master of Divinity degree at Yale Divinity School. Rachel just completed her first semester, and here are a few of her favorite moments:



*Shaking the Dean's hand at the matriculation ceremony*



*Preparing to serve on the altar at the Bishop of Connecticut's visit*



*Playing drums with the liturgical jam band*



*Studying in her room*

The challenges have sometimes been tough, but the blessings abound. Keep up the good work, Rachel

## Prayers of the People

**Long Term:** 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, Rickie P, Becky P, Giada F, Jordyn S. and Bray S, Olive P, John D, Rachel, Jean, Dick and Maria W, Florence

**just a reminder names have to be renewed for the new year 2024 if still needed** (some of you have already contacted me thank you)

**Short Term,** Bill B, Kristy, Mike K, Dan D, Gary D, Kelly T, Carma, Anita, Rick B, Nicole, Elaine M, Francis E, Bob P, Dan T, Donna, Art and Sheila W, Wallace and Angel

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

God Bless

*Sue Gunn*



01/01 Sue Gunn  
01/03 Melissa Lopat  
01/06 Thomas Tripp  
01/07 Kelly McElhinny  
01/10 Gregg Palmer  
01/15 Agostino Lewis  
01/20 Carolyn Bongi  
01/21 Candi Bull  
01/23 Nicholas Palmer  
01/23 Avery Campus



01/23 Thomas and Lois Tripp

