Rector’s Reflection: Outward and Visible Signs

Our Lenten fast has ended…and yet continues.

We continue to gather daily (virtually) for Morning Prayer or Compline on Zoom. We continue to gather virtually every Sunday with a livestreamed service, but we are fasting from Communion at least through the end of May.

_The Book of Common Prayer_ recognizes two great sacraments given by Christ to the Church, Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist (BCP 858). _The Prayer Book_ also defines sacraments as “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace” (BCP 857). Which means that while there are two great sacraments, there are also countless others. And the two great ones are meant to point to all the others. The Table we gather around for Communion is an icon of all the other tables we gather around. Grace is ready to break through at any time.

Even without the great sacrament of Holy Communion, we receive strength and grace through the sacramental acts of:

- the Word read and preached;
- hymns and anthems sung;
- the sharing of our selves through Zoom social hour, and phone calls and texts just checking in on one another;
- our pledges and donations mailed in or made online.

We are continuing our fast from one of the great sacraments, in order to keep our siblings at greatest risk safe from harm and the spread of this virus. We will continue to fast together as a community. We are extending our Lenten fast from Holy Communion throughout Easter, but – and I can’t emphasize this strongly enough – we will not be without sacraments.

As we join together in small groups online, as we share our joys and sorrows with one another, as we sing and laugh and weep together, as we give as generously as we are able to support God’s mission through the continued work of this parish and the many outreach ministries we are involved with – as we do all that, God will be present with us, and we will be participating in the sacraments.

So in this time of crisis and turmoil, as we fast from one of the great sacraments, may our eyes and ears and hearts be opened to all the other sacraments, all those other outward and visible signs of God’s grace at work in us and in those around us. In these Great Fifty days of Easter – in celebration of the reality of the Risen Christ in the midst of this extended Lenten desert, this Good Friday world – let us pray and act so that all of our gatherings, all of our work, all of our lives may be sacramental: outward and visible signs of the inward and indwelling presence of Christ, who has risen and is alive now and always. _Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia!_

Richard+
Adult Education – Winter 2020

Three programs were offered early in the year before all in-person group activities were suspended at All Saints Parish because of COVID-19.

• The Good Book Club: As part of an annual program offered by the Episcopal Church in the US and the Anglican Church in Canada, All Saints parishioners were invited to read a passage from John’s Gospel every day during the Epiphany season. Numerous resources were provided to enrich the readings and provide context. Pre-Sunday service sessions were available for people to be introduced to this gospel and learn how to contribute audio recordings of each daily reading to All Saints’ Facebook.

• Bible Study: This group was scheduled to meet monthly to take a close look at Genesis using videos and guides provided by the Yale Bible Study website (https://yalebiblestudy.org/courses/genesis/). The first and only meeting thus far considered the book’s structure, history, and authorship. Meetings will continue in the fall.

• Spirituality Book Club: The first two meetings held in February and March were discussions of books by Episcopal priest, acclaimed preacher, and college professor Barbara Brown Taylor, Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith and An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith. A third volume, also by Taylor, Learning to Walk in the Dark, was to be the April selection. Its theme is particularly appropriate during a hugely stressful period like that of the pandemic because Taylor’s purpose in the book is to help us navigate our way in times of dark and threatening uncertainty. Similarly, An Altar in the World offers chapters on showing how practices like walking and keeping the sabbath can be spiritually nourishing. The group will resume meeting in the fall.

Courageous Conversations

During December and January, the Courageous Conversations Committee invited parishioners who participated in past anti-racism workshops and discussions to participate in small group meetings. Using story sharing as a way of going deeper into personal experience, an approach also being used by the parish’s Living Stones project, participants were able to create safe spaces for talking about their own encounters with racism. In the two groups I facilitated, we used the following prompt for our story sharing: When was the first time I was aware of race?

The Committee also offered a lunch and discussion in February. After listening to an excerpt of an episode of the series Seeing White from the podcast Scene on Radio (https://www.sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/), people divided up into small groups to discuss what they had heard. In his introduction to the podcast, its host John Biewen, Audio Program Director at Duke University’s Center for Documentary Studies, poses questions central to the series’ content: “Just what is going on with white people? Police shootings of unarmed African Americans - acts of domestic terrorism by white supremacists - the renewed embrace of raw, undisguised white-identity politics - unending racial inequity in schools, housing, criminal justice, and hiring - where did the notion of ‘whiteness’ come from? What does it mean? What is whiteness for?” The Committee will continue to offer opportunities for these types of discussion during the coming year.

Living Stones Listening Project Update

After Easter we intend to recommence with our plan of small group gatherings among All Saints parishioners to share fellowship as well as stories about our faith. Our original goal had been to hold small dinners and other get-togethers this spring. For as long as in-person meetings aren’t possible, however, we’ll be moving these meet-ups online to Zoom. We are imagining late afternoon coffee/tea gatherings or possibly evening dessert parties where everyone invited brings their own refreshments with them to their computers.

Along with a chance to socialize and get to know each other better, we’ll use the LSLP model of providing a prompt question to the group that in some way involves spirituality. Everyone has a few minutes to consider the question and how they would answer for themselves, honestly, in their lives. Each person then has three to five minutes to share their story with the group. The others listen actively and are asked to respond not with comments or advice but simply with a phrase or sentence about what resonated for them in the story. It is a very simple process, but one we have found enables people to learn about and connect with each other in an important way beyond social conversation.

Janelle Mills is organizing the guest list for these gatherings, and if you’re particularly interested in being an early participant, please let her know at janelle.mills@gmail.com.
From the Editor

This issue of Saints Alive is being put together in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. So it is smaller than usual, eight pages instead of twelve. I’ll try to make up for it in a Summer issue that is scheduled to appear in June. By then, I hope that the uncertainties which now surround us will be beginning to lift.

Meantime, we are all being pushed in new directions, with virtual services of Morning Prayer, Compline, and those for the holiest time of our liturgical year, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter. It might once have seemed unimaginable not to be in church for that sacred time. And yet… I have realized these streamed services offer a different and extraordinarily moving spiritual experience, at once intimate and yet connected to the many people of the parish. Much of that is due to the beauty of the services that Richard and Stephan have prepared, using not only the great words of the BCP, but pictures and gorgeous, finely spun music. Thanks be to Stephan, Betsy Swanson and Daniel Mahoney who provide it. And especially thanks be to Richard, for his creativity and caring in this difficult time. The services haven’t been a substitute for in-church worship, but a real extension, at once contemplative and healing.

And the parish itself has used social media to stay in touch. The All Saints Parish Support and Encouragement Group on Facebook has new posts daily, as we respond to some prompts from Richard on what we find joyous, or are grateful for, or need to share. And the digital coffee hours after church are sort of wacky and wonderful.

So love to you, dear friends. We’ll get through it. Thanks be to God.

Marianne

Gifts for God’s House: Celebrating 125 Years

Brad MacDonald & Maggie Hogan

Last October, we celebrated the First 125 Years since our founding in 1894, gathering our All Saints community for a glorious Evensong and festive reception. We participated in a memorable 125th All Saints Day service in November and published a special commemorative edition of Saints Alive. At that time, the Vestry convened a task force to explore ongoing ways to honor the past and look to the future as we mark the transition into our next 125 years.

During the winter months, the 125th Anniversary Task Force developed a plan to celebrate our anniversary with a relatively modest fundraising project to allow us to make some refurbishments to our sanctuary. We now recognize that during the continuing health crisis, bringing these plans to fruition will be a slower and more deliberate process. We want to be sensitive to the pressing challenges of economic and emotional support for our community. Nevertheless, we are excited to share these plans, formed in hope and love for our spiritual home, intended to bind us closer in community. We are grateful to be thinking about coming through these darker times into the light, and at that time seeking funding from the community to undertake sanctuary updates.

The updates to come fit into three categories:

First, to honor our past, we plan to develop a small historical exhibit near the Beacon Street entry; to preserve, digitize, and display historic parish photos; to conserve one of our most important pieces of art (the Julia Addison reredos in the Resting Chapel); and to improve signage and make information about our stained glass windows, stone and wood carvings, and other art pieces more accessible, including updating Rick Montross’s A Tour of All Saints on our website.

Second, looking to the present of our community – our children and families – we hope to spruce up the children’s area (“the rug”) with improved storage, new seating cushions, new books and toys, and decorative wall panels or hangings.

Finally, envisioning our future, we would like to purchase new altar hangings, new votive candlestands, and, most significantly, new chairs. The last of these – replacing both the existing chairs for altar ministers and a portion of the pews in the Langdon Chapel, as well as adding chairs in the Resting Chapel – would create more flexible and comfortable spaces for alternative worship and other gatherings in our two chapels.

Parishioners will have the opportunity to support these projects by making gifts designated for specific items. Undesignated gifts of any amount, of course, will also be welcomed and encouraged. Gifts will be supplemented by the Memorial Fund and grant money where appropriate. Watch for our brochure with exciting details to come!

Please contact Task Force members Maggie Hogan, Margaret Bridge, Matt Burfeind, Elinor Horner, Rev. Dr. Richard Burden, or Bradley MacDonald for more information.
We celebrate ...

Julia Addison’s Reredos

From the moment you enter many church buildings, your eye is drawn to a strategically placed work of art above the altar. Variously known as an altarpiece, reredos, or retable, its purpose is to ornament and inspire. As one source states, “The reredos acts [as] a dramatic backdrop to help us visually focus on the altar, and to lend it architectural and artistic importance. The reredos draws the worshipper’s eyes to what should be the centerpiece of any […] church.”

In the dawning moments of All Saints Parish’s birth in 1894, Julia DeWolf Addison, whose husband Daniel Dulany Addison was our church’s founding rector, crafted a small reredos (whose location is now unknown) to place on the temporary altar of the first church building, a humble one-story building constructed in 1895. She also created a small stained-glass window for the tiny church.

Later, Julia created a full-scale faux-mosaic reredos on plaster that sat over the first altar in our present building, opened in 1897. It now adorns the wall above the Resting Chapel tabernacle. In 1910, she completed a set of painted panels that became the reredos of the side chapel, dedicated in 1927 as the Langdon Chapel. These two works are a valued legacy of her artistry and of the period in which our parish was founded, a time of profound artistic ferment in Boston in which Julia Addison was thoroughly immersed.

Julia DeWolf Addison was an accomplished working artist and writer on art history. Her mother had been an accomplished painter who studied with William Morris Hunt, the leading painter of mid-19th-century Boston. Julia was a founding member in 1897 of the Society of Arts and Crafts. She, too, studied with Hunt and associated with designers Sarah Wyman Whitman and Amy Sacker and architects Ralph Adams Cram and Henry Hobson Richardson; the renowned illustrator Charles Dana Gibson was her first cousin. She was always exploring new techniques and media, including watercolor, painting, manuscript illumination, embroidery, and church communion ware. Her work appeared in many exhibitions. She had a remarkable career while also performing the typical duties of a rector’s wife and rearing two children, one of whom died as a toddler. She also used her work to raise funds for the church. Daniel Addison supported his wife’s pursuits and joined her in many artistic endeavors and travels.

Julia spent six years in England as a child, and later she and Daniel traveled there extensively. Her 10 books and her artistic eye bear the aesthetic mark of those experiences. Julia was strongly influenced by the British Arts and Crafts Movement, an international trend in the decorative and fine arts from about 1880 to 1920. Inspired in part by designer William Morris, it stood for traditional craftsmanship using simple forms, and often used medieval, romantic, or folk styles of decoration. Its influence can be seen in the medieval-inspired style of Julia’s altarpieces. It’s revealing to read her book, Arts and Crafts in the Middle Ages: a description of mediaeval workmanship in several departments.

The nave and altar of All Saints in 1899, showing Julia Addison’s reredos of five angels

Faux mosaic reredos of five angels:
Service, Resurrection, Power, Purity & Virtue. Now in the resting chapel

Detail of angel representing Power, showing faux mosaic work.
of applied art, together with some account of special artisans in early Renaissance (Boston: Page Co., 1908, 378 pp.) which was reissued several times through the 1920s. She highlighted the connection of these eras:

“... it is interesting to look into the past, particularly to those centuries known as the Middle Ages, in which the handicrafts flourished in special perfection, and to see for ourselves how these crafts were pursued, and exactly what these arts really were. ... William Morris himself, although a great modern spirit, and reformer, felt the necessity of a basis of historic knowledge in all workers.”

Her book is a work of serious scholarship, offering a profusion of examples for every point made and referring to writings by crafts workers of the past and examples of the art they produced, along with evidence from letters, financial records, and patronage documents. She argues for the importance of the crafts as works of art as well as enhancements of everyday life, of power and privilege, and of political force. She writes in a readable, direct, unaffected style.

Her first major art work for All Saints was the faux-mosaic reredos for the High Altar. She described it thus in her journal:

“The building was promised us for worship by Christmas, 1899. I was asked to do a temporary reredos in synthetic mosaic – my own invention – and Mr. Cram approved my design. Five angels with symbols – about five feet high. I had the big plaster panels made by John Evans, and worked on them all summer in Marion. The cutting of the plaster made a fine dust, very undesirable in a house, so I had the panels laid on horses on the piazza and worked there.” After the plaster was cut into mosaic-like irregular pieces, she painted the angels onto the sectioned plaster surface.

In 1910, she wrote of her ongoing artistic work:

“At this time I began to paint altar-pieces and church panels, of which I did several. After painting the tiny miniatures in initials, illuminating in gold and colors, it occurred to me to enlarge my scope, and do the same thing on a larger scale. This seemed to be successful, and I was quite in demand for several seasons, to paint reredos and other chancel decorations. I painted an altar-piece for the chapel at All Saints, which may still be seen there, and many similar pieces. A more detailed description of these achievements may be seen listed in Who’s Who in America.”

All of Julia’s efforts were guided by a desire to enhance the quality of everyday life and an emphasis on the craft of making art. In the final passage of the preface of her book on the Middle Ages, Julia lays out her artistic philosophy:

“Some people think that ‘Arts and Crafts’ means a combination which allows of poor work being concealed under a mask of aesthetic effect. Labour should not go forth blindly without art, and art should not proceed simply for the attainment of beauty without utility – in other words, there should be an alliance between labour and art.”

All Saints Parish is fortunate to house and preserve the work of this gifted artist.

Sources: all quotes and images are from the Papers of Julia DeWolf Addison (Ms. Am 1735-1737 ) and the Additional Papers of Julia DeWolf Addison (Ms. *2006MT-95r), Houghton Library, Harvard University, and from Julia Addison’s book on the Middle Ages; the quotation on the significance of a reredos is from the web site of Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church, Jasper, Wyoming: https://olmjasper.com/archives/what-is-a-reredos/
Where the Bible Shows Up

In the summer 2019 Saints Alive, Jessica Stokes explains how, looking with her family at the stained glass of the Sainte Chapelle in Paris, she discovered that her children didn’t recognize many of the Biblical stories represented, although they were proficient in Greek and Norse mythology, the gods of ancient Egypt, and the characters “from 22 Marvel movies.” It prompted her to start a Church School class in the Bible’s iconic parables and their influence on art and ideas. Early lessons included one by request, angels and demons: “how Lucifer’s fall has been reborn in Darth Vader, and how angels are never actually described as winged (Ezekiel describes angels as a pair of interlocking circles covered in eyes and on fire).” The young people also discussed how people use Bible stories to argue for beliefs and political policies.

Two participants in Jessica’s class talk about their favorite Bible stories and what they have learned or hadn’t thought about before.

Avery Rae

My favorite story from our studies so far has been the story of Jacob and Esau. I thought it was unique among the stories of the Bible. It is said that Jacob and Esau created the whole idea of sibling rivalry. Their mother Rebecca said she even felt them fighting in her womb. During their birth Esau was starting to come out, but Jacob grabbed him by the heel, then tried to pull him back in so he could be born first. I never knew that sibling rivalry had been around for so long.

Would Avery recommend this as a way to learn about the Bible?

Definitely! These classes really bring out the most important lessons in the Bible and have changed my perspective on our religion. I now know so much more about the Bible. As a person who never read any of the stories, or even the kid-simplified versions, I was a little in the dark when I started going to these sessions, but I have learned so much since I started.

Charlotte Stokes

The Where the Bible Shows Up class was mainly started because I felt that I didn’t know the “greatest hits” of the Bible, as my mother calls them. I knew some of the stories, like Noah’s Ark and the Christmas stories, but not all of them, so I wanted to get some general knowledge. I didn’t realize how much I didn’t know!

In the class, we often covered places in the media and the arts where these stories appear, and I’ve learned so much about the origin of common phrases and sayings, books, songs, political views, and more. For example, in our last class we covered Jacob’s Ladder to Heaven, a famous idea that I did not know about. Interestingly, this ladder is also sometimes known as a stairway, or a Stairway to Heaven. There are so many more things that draw influence from Bible stories than I thought.

In the class we watch movie trailers, read the actual Bible text, look up famous art on the subject, participate in group discussions, and more. I would totally recommend it, as it is a completely novel way to look at religion and Bible stories, and one learns so much about culture that they’ve never thought about before. It is totally eye-opening, and now I feel like I know a lot more about both my heritage and my religion.

Panels designed by Julia deW. Addison for St. Peter’s Beverly and dedicated to her daughter Marianne Bradford Addison, who died at the age of three while Daniel was still rector there.
Parents Continued Church School

Phil Haberkern, Meg Bridge & Margaret Harrison

Family Minister Kathleen O’Donoghue left in October when she was called to ministry as a hospice chaplain. In her absence, the church school at All Saints has continued, led by our rector Richard Burden, parents, and others. Phil Haberkern and Danielle Dong, among others, have taken over until a new family minister begins. Phil tells us what has been happening from October until the COVID-19 restrictions closed church school in March.

Margaret: How did the parents decide to take over the church school?

Phil: I think there was a collective sense that this was the only way to do it. The folks on the family ministry committee, Danielle, Jessica Stokes, Patricia Lowe, Jeff Thibault, and Jennifer Giannini, provided the crucial vision initially, seeing that we had enough people who were willing and able to run our family ministries, so we just did it. Richard has provided organizational support, and his communication each week has been key to the program’s success.

The response from parents and other adults in the congregation was amazing. There is a core group of parent leaders/teachers, but on any given week we have had four to six adults with the kids. Much of the energy has been spontaneous. Some folks we often saw are parents Jeff Thibault, Jennifer Giannini, Danielle Dong, and Patricia Rea, and some of the others are Kari Limmer, Meg Bridge, and Ted Sturr. Also Rusty Fenton and Nirupa Matthan, Matt Burfeind, Jessica and Colin Stokes, Robert Blanton, Patricia Lowe, Kate Thibault, and more.

Margaret: Were the kids still in age groups, or were they all together?

Phil: The teens broke out with Jessica Stokes about once a month to have their discussion group on the Bible in pop culture and literature (see page 6). Otherwise, we kept the kids together. Fortunately, we have an age cluster of 2nd-5th graders, and the few big kids have been super welcoming to the younger kids. There’s a great group of younger girls who keep one another engaged and happy.

Margaret: Did you lead a Sunday service?

Phil: I helped lead by gathering the kids and doing some scriptural reflection. We’re trying to build up the kids’ willingness to share with each other and see church as a place where they can talk about the things that make them anxious and also joyful. We made sure that we slow down at the beginning of every week, closing our eyes, breathing deeply, and stepping outside our regular activities to be present with one another. We started to work on praying aloud with and for each other, but that’s going to take time. It’s an unfamiliar activity for lots of our kids, but I think we are moving in the right direction.

Margaret: What curriculum were you using?

Phil: We either followed the lectionary, using the Episcopal Church’s Lesson Plans That Work as a starting point, or chose texts that reflected our projects. For instance, we focused on preparing the kids for Winter Walk in January, doing activities based around our bake sale (we raised almost $800!) and researching homelessness in and around Boston. For our scriptural reflections, we talked about Jesus’s itinerant life (e.g. Luke 9:58 - the son of man has no place to lay his head) or about the Beatitudes and the necessity of caring for marginal members of our larger community.

Margaret: What are the plans for the future?

Meg Bridge, chair of the search committee: Earlier this year, acting upon the advice and recommendations of the family ministry committee, current parents, the rector, and as always the children and youth of All Saints, the vestry approved a new family minister position that will be expanded in scope, with a commensurate increase in salary and benefits. Both lay and ordained candidates may apply.

In early March Richard convened a search committee: Meg Bridge, the Rev. Dr. Richard Burden, Danielle Dong, Rusty Fenton, and Elinor Horner. Although currently operating under COVID-19 restrictions, the committee continues its work remotely and optimistically. The goal is still for the new Family Minister to begin work in the summer of 2020, though the search was temporarily delayed due to diocesan restrictions. If you have any questions, or know of candidates to recommend, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the committee. Candidates may contact Richard directly.

... teaching children and youth
Alleluia. The Lord is risen indeed. O come, let us adore him.