

ST. DUNSTAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ELLSWORTH

TID BITS FROM THE TABLE ~ JANUARY 19, 2024

Dear ones,

Well, even though we promised ourselves we wouldn't, Aaron and I have in a way given over to popular culture's insidious 'new year, new you!' nudges. We've done a massive clean and re-organization of the house, including another round of clothing donations from all of us and of toys from one of us. Our white board, where Arthur and his best friend Ava draw and where A and I write our daily and weekly to-do lists, has been filled and wiped clean and re-filled nearly every day.

I think some freshness is in order this time of year, even as we Christians also reside in our Epiphany joy. Why shouldn't joy also be refreshing, or an impetus for refreshment?

I know we feel it as a family this time of year right down to the food we eat in the darker days of January and February--we wait longingly for the first appearances of the blood oranges and the Meyer lemons at the Belfast co-op, and Arthur and I (we do all the shopping and cooking together) jam citrus into as many dishes as we can think of. Just the other day I impulse-bought a bouquet of gorgeous tulips at the market, from a farm out near Brooks, because the sight of them made me so happy and excited.

So I suppose it's fitting that, with the birth of our Lord at Christmas, and the recent reminder of the miracle of the Epiphany, we'd all might be inspired to do a bit of housecleaning, so to speak. That goes for the spiritual realm, too--this time of year, I'm sure God rejoices at our recognition of anything we want to let go of that's weighing us down in our prayer lives and our spiritual existence, and God undoubtedly welcomes the introduction of healthy, fresh approaches we are keen to make into new habits.

Wherever we are on our Epiphany journey, I pray you feel God with you, holding you in the hollow of God's hand. See as many of you as possible on Sunday!

With love,
Carolyn+



ANNUAL MEETING: Our Annual Meeting will take place right after our service in the sanctuary on **JANUARY 28, 2024**. We will Zoom for those who are unable to join us in person. After the meeting we are planning to have a Pot Luck brunch and/or lunch. A sign up sheet will be available after our services this month but, if you missed the sheet feel free to bring what you want or better yet just come. Booklets will be available at the meeting and can be sent to you through email or picked up at your convenience during office hours.

This week we are **Green** according to CDC for our county.



Even with the wind down of **COVID 19**, we know that it will be with us for some time to come. The CDC is now resuming coding the occurrences of COVID. We will keep you informed.

We at St. Dunstan's we will continue to follow CDC data and the practices in our Diocesan parishes. Our vestry has voted to not require masks. If you wish to wear one, masks will be available. Of course, if you are feeling unwell, we ask that you rest and join us on Zoom. Our hope is that you will stay well and will join us for our worship services each Sunday.

At this time in the year after the rush of Thanksgiving and Christmas and preparing for the New year I thought that this poem I found would speak to you as it does to me. I found it in a little book given to me called Footprints and Other Inspirational Poems and Prayers, published in 1992 by Antioch Publishing. The author is unknown and the poem is titled "Take Time". - Dianne Kelley

TAKE TIME

Take time to think; it is the source of power.

Take time to read; it is the foundation of wisdom.

Take time to play; it is the secret of staying young.

Take time to be quiet; it is the opportunity to seek God.

Take time to be aware; it is the opportunity to help others.

Take time to love and be loved; it is God's greatest gift.

Take time to laugh; it is the music of the soul.

Take time to be friendly; it is the road to happiness.

Take time to dream; it is what the future is made of.

Take time to pray; it is the greatest power on earth.



**Happy Birthday to Jean Roherer,
Hyla Tracy, Ralph Preble, and Liz
Tracy! Enjoy!**

1.14.24 Homily – Tom Hancock

Let the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

Our selected readings today give us several different views of faith and belief... the nature of God, and of our relationship and responsibilities to God.

Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17

The Psalm tells us, in several ways, that God made me and knows me in every part, but I can never know or fully understand all of God's thoughts and works.

Samuel 3:1-10(11-20)

Along this same line, Our Old Testament reading suggests that we don't always know that it is God speaking to us. He sometimes has to call to us repeatedly before we hear, or know it is him. And we are charged with acting on his words or requests, however uncomfortable or painful they may be.

This would have been especially difficult for young Samuel, delivering harsh news to his elder, a priest – telling Eli that his whole house is to be punished for the sins of his sons, which Eli had tried – unsuccessfully – to stop.

Gospel - John 1:43-51

And in our Gospel reading, Nathanael's telling line: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" How many of us have had this dismissive reaction to someone or someplace – or perhaps heard it said about a place that is seen as impoverished, disreputable, or a backwater...perhaps even our own hometown?

When Jesus tells Nathanael he knows him because he saw him earlier under the fig tree, Nathanael says, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these."

Here is Jesus using another of his minor miracles to prove his divinity, and then once again chastising the listener for only now being convinced of that divinity.

This raises a question I often confront: Do you believe without requiring demonstrations of God's power, in some form? Does your faith in the divine require seeing miracles, or at least believing in miracles? And further, how do we even define – or understand – the divine?

I apologize in advance for the fact that these questions were also a theme in my Homily last March – but it is something that is often on my mind and in my heart. Besides, that was so long ago nobody probably remembers!

So, my two big questions:

- First, Is it necessary to believe in God to be a good person and do good works? Is it enough to do the good works?
- And second, If you believe in God, in some form, is it necessary to believe literally in miracles and the supernatural elements of God - a specific theological interpretation of the divine - in order to be a 'good' christian?

Elsewhere in the Gospel of John (4:48), Jesus chastises the Galileans (and perhaps others) saying 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.' In contrast, the Samaritans had only needed to hear his words to believe (John 4:42) – though this was after the Samaritan woman at the well had already told them of Jesus' miraculous knowledge of her whole life.

And of course later, John (20:29) also has Jesus telling all the Doubting Thomases – like me! – "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

It comes down to one's comfort level with Uncertainty: to be willing and able to live with the unknown – unknowable – unprovable, with or without demonstrable proof in the form of miracles. To accept and believe on faith. Fundamentalists (of all faiths) require a single, simple, unarguable explanation or interpretation, and woe betide those who question them.

I won't even get started on fundamentalist, megachurch (or minichurch) leaders who call themselves and their churches "Christian," but by their words and actions do not appear to qualify as Jesus followers. And who claim to have the only correct interpretation of liturgical texts. OK, just real briefly - Let's name names – are the millionaire megachurch Pastors like Joel Osteen doing the same work of Christ as small local parishes? What of churches and denominations that seem overtaken by misogyny, homo/transphobia, racism, idolatry...tolerance of sexual abuse? Maybe the problems are in the institutions and their leaders, not in the faith of the members.

Personally, that is what led or pushed me away from the Roman Catholicism of my youth. I was a diligent CCD student and altar boy (no altar girls, of course), but when, as a freshly confirmed, callow youth of 12 or 13 I started participating in adult Bible study sessions, there was little or no acceptance of questioning the 'official' interpretation of all the biblical text, religious practices or sacraments – particularly from a smart aleck kid. Everything from the details of transubstantiation v. consubstantiation in the Eucharist to the role of women in the church – and since several nuns who taught at our local parochial school participated in the bible study group, this latter was an especially sensitive subject. And the broader role of the Church in the modern world –

this being the tumultuous late 60's - was of course a bit of a minefield, too. The impact of the recent Vatican II changes, such as they were, hadn't perhaps fully filtered down to all the small town churches. Then, undergraduate life as a philosophy student took me in all different directions regarding faith and the divine, and the nature of existence. But somehow, this and other experiences - including, most importantly, the impact of participating in Jaci's faith journey - lead me to a new faith - and a Church - that was more open to all who were willing to come gather and pray together, whatever questions they had about accepted doctrine.

Some of you may be familiar with the so-called **Jefferson Bible**. Thomas Jefferson compiled 2 manuscripts about Jesus - One, *The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth*, was completed in 1804 - however, no copies survive. The other, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, commonly referred to as the *Jefferson Bible*, was completed in 1820; copies exist, though it was never published. This document was created by cutting and pasting with a razor and glue sections from the New Testament, to extract what he understood as the doctrine of Jesus. Jefferson's condensed composition excludes all miracles by Jesus and most mentions of the supernatural, including sections of the four gospels that contain the Resurrection and most other miracles, and passages that portray Jesus as divine. Jefferson's goal was to strip away not just the divinity, but the interpretations and additions by later writers, the impact of philosophical, theological, institutional and political disputes, to get to the true lessons of the life and teachings of Jesus. As Jefferson stated in a letter:

There will be found remaining the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man. I have performed this operation for my own use, by cutting verse by verse out of the printed book, and arranging the matter which is evidently his, and which is as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill.

As one historian notes: "If a moral lesson was embedded in a miracle, the lesson survived in Jeffersonian scripture, but the miracle did not... Jefferson managed to maintain Jesus' role as a great moral teacher, not as a shaman or faith healer."

THEMES

Role of the church/duty of a Christian

So what is the significance of acting on these moral principles out of a belief that we are serving Jesus, rather than serving our fellow humanity for secular reasons? And how far are we to take our efforts act on these moral principles?

When one feeds the poor or otherwise helps those in some need (on our own or through the Church and its programs),

they are considered a good Christian, maybe even saintly - even though they are just doing the least that should be expected of one. Many of our churches - here and around the world - are heavily involved in helping those in need through meal programs, food banks, and other social services and community support efforts - indeed, it is seen as a basic, important and even expected role for churches. However, if one starts examining, critiquing and perhaps attempting to change or improve the system the economic and political systems that have created the poverty or other social ills one is trying to relieve on a micro level - if we attempt to do that work on a macro level - we are called liberal do-gooders, socialists or worse. And if one does so in express service of their faith and church, then they are improperly involving the Church (or their faith) in the political process - risking at the very least tax exempt status - or worse, credibility as a faith. I trust that our own Bishop Brown's participation with other faith leaders in the Gun Safety Day of Action in Augusta last week, does not raise any of these problems.

In a recent NYT Opinion piece, the Anglican rector of the parish of Haworth, near Doncaster, England is quoted as asking "Instead of pulling people out of the river, what if we could go upstream and find out why they are falling in?"

Jesus says to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God that which is God's. But who is responsible for alleviating the suffering of the poor, the victims of Caesar's system - private religious or secular organizations, or Caesar himself, in the form of the State? Or both? What duty to we have - religious or otherwise - to try to see that the State serves the people in the way Jesus has directed us?

Is it enough that people do 'good' acts (as defined by our faith), without reference to the motivation of those people, whether it is faith, humanism, basic decency or selflessness?

When contemplating these various threads of my thinking, I ask myself whether my motivation, or those of others who perform "good deeds", matters. For myself, it is enough to know that my faith - including the difficult questions underlying my belief in a divine Jesus - fuels my actions.

Like Nathaniel, Jesus is asking me, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." I remain open to seeing all these greater things.

AMEN

Update your Directory Information

Please update or confirm your contact details for our parish directory. Contact our church office--stdunstansellsworth@gmail.com--with your title(s), postal address, email address(es) and best phone number(s).



**American
Red Cross**

National Blood Shortage

Please schedule your next blood donation at redcrossblood.org

Diocesan Cycle of Prayer: We pray for St. Francis-by-the-Sea, Blue Hill, and St. James, Old Town. We pray especially for the work of Episcopal Relief and Development.

We Pray Especially For: Kathy O'Connell, Skip Stevens, Larmie Knuesli, Tony Rowan, Sally Rowan, Robbie Johnston, Sharon St.Clair, Jennifer McCall, Eve Mitchell, Donald DeGolyer, and Dorothy Sweeney.

If you would like to add someone to the prayer list or continue a name on the list, please let us know at stdunstansellsworth@gmail.com or leave a message at the church (667-5495). Prayer requests will remain for three weeks unless notified that the request needs to remain for more.

It is important to us that the list is up-to-date and accurate.
To everyone, please stay well and safe. Blessings to you all.

Almighty and merciful God, we ask in our prayers that the conflict in Ukraine and the others around the world can be resolved peacefully. Bless the people that have been affected by the unrest and grant them peace and justice. We also ask for the people in our own country that have been impacted by the hurricanes, violence and loss of loved ones as they grieve, pick up their lives. Grant them strength, comfort, and healing. All this we ask with the power of your love to all through Jesus Christ our Lord.

~ UPCOMING WORSHIP / EVENTS SCHEDULE ~

At this time the Sunday services will be both in church following safe practices and via Zoom. Compline is every Thursday at 7:00p.m via Zoom

The sanctuary is open for quiet reflection and prayer on Mondays from 1 to 3.

Access to the sanctuary is available through the lower level parking lot doors of the church during this time.

January 21 ~ Holy Eucharist, 9:30 am

January 28 ~ Holy Eucharist, 9:30 am, Annual Meeting after the service

February 4 ~ Holy Eucharist, 9:30 am

February 11 ~ Morning Prayer, 9:30 am. Dianne as Officiant and Homilist



Happy Anniversary to Jim & Jan Newett!

**St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church
Final Approved Vestry Minutes
Meeting of December 3, 2023**

Present on Zoom: The Rev Dr. Carolyn Rosen (Priest-in-Charge), Tracy Shaffer (Deacon), Muffet Stewart (Assistant Treasurer), Dianne Kelley (Senior Warden), Tom Hancock (Deputy Senior Warden), Kim Peterson (Junior Warden), Jaci Hancock (Clerk), Sally Rowan, Valerie Doeblner, and Martha Thomas; Fred Byer (Treasurer) and Marian Wells joined while the meeting was in progress.

Absent: Brianna Chattin, Caiden Chattin (Junior Member).

After the Land Acknowledgement (Dianne) and Opening Prayer (Tracy), the meeting was called to order at 12:05 am. Tom noted one correction to the meeting agenda: the 2024 budget will be presented and discussed at this meeting, but approval is set for the January 7, 2024 Vestry meeting.

Check-In: An opportunity for check-in provided. Kim's offer of a Christmas tree from his land was accepted and Marian Wells (chief sacristan) will be notified.

Acceptance of Minutes: Upon motion by Kim, seconded by Valerie, the draft minutes of the October 22, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved without change.

Reports -

Treasurer Report: Fred noted that there were adequate funds on hand. Budget discussion was deferred to New Business item.

Priest-in-charge: Carolyn provided an update on the Vestry nomination process, reporting that, after several years of service, Fred will be stepping down as Treasurer when the new vestry is seated at the annual meeting in January. With Fred's departure, Muffet will take on the role of Treasurer, pending vote at Annual Meeting. She conveyed each vestry member's thanks to him for his service to St. Dunstan's. In addition to Assistant Treasurer, the Deputy Senior Warden position needs to be filled. Carolyn advised that the people who have been approached to fill these roles are prayerfully considering the offer.

With respect to Mutual Study of Ministry, Carolyn reported that she reached out to the new Canon to the Ordinary who will get back to her with possible start dates.

Carolyn reminded the vestry that there will only be one service, to be held at 5:00 pm, on Sunday, December 24th. A contemplative service will be held on Zoom at 9:30 am on Christmas morning.

Carolyn advised that she is providing three months of rent assistance to a local family, through the Rector's Discretionary Fund. She is making a special effort to meet with everyone on the visitation list to share the joy of Advent and requested that we let her know if there is anyone in need of a visit.

Finally, she advised that she and Arthur will be travelling to New Jersey to visit her parents the weekend of December 9th and 10th.

Deacon: Tracy reported that in addition to her work at St. Dunstan's, she continues to serve the three MDI churches currently without an interim priest. Tracy will be on MDI Sunday the 10th and 17th and will be conducting the 11:00 am Christmas Eve service at St. Savior's. She has also been busy with Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry and Everybody Eats, and thanked Muffet for handling the L&F volunteer schedule.

Senior Warden: Dianne deferred to the business Items on the agenda.

Deputy Senior Warden: Tom deferred to the business Items on the agenda.

Junior Warden: Kim reported that the heat has been repaired. The problem in the downstairs bathrooms is due to the old iron pipes which require a power wash/roto-cleaning every three to four years. Seven of the nine emergency lights have been replaced; the other two should be replaced in the next two weeks. Kim confirmed that he will make sure that the lights at the front of the church and near the driveway entrance are on when it is dark out.

Committee Reports -

Building Use and Fees: Carolyn is finalizing a draft updated building use policy and will email it to all vestry members for review and comment, with a goal of vestry approval at the 01/07/2024 meeting.

Carol Mason asked whether arrangements have been made for snow shoveling this winter; Kim will contact Pablo to see if he is interested in taking on this task for the 2023-2024 season.

Old Business -

Nominating Committee: Dianne noted the need to select two Annual Convention delegates and one alternate for approval at the annual meeting; an announcement seeking volunteers will be made at the 12/10 service. Tom indicated his interest in being a delegate again next year. All other items were discussed in the Priest-in-Charge Report; see above.

Mutual Study of Ministry: Already addressed in the Priest-in-charge report, see above.

Safety and Security Update of Items: Dianne advised that we have made great progress with respect to the safety and security to-do list. She hasn't heard from Seacoast Security regarding installation of the alarm system, and will follow-up with them. It is not likely that the system will be installed before the New Year. Kim will install the Knox Box. Kim ordered a security camera that comes with two motion sensor lights; the camera and one light will be mounted outside the office door and the other light at the Lottie Horn Room door. Tom said that he would move the extension ladder from the storage room to the utility shed, and noted that he is working on finding a safety video that can be shared with the congregation and is also looking into whether grants may be available for some of our safety expenses.

Sacred Ground: Tracy reported that the next session will begin on 01/10/2024, and that other area Episcopal churches will be invited. Information will be in upcoming Tid-Bits.

Marian Wells joined the meeting to raise her concern about the front and driveway lights not being on, especially with upcoming Christmas Eve service. She left the meeting when Kim confirmed that he is taking care of this matter.

New Business (taken out of order on the agenda) -

Annual Meeting Reports: Dianne requested that reports for the annual meeting be given to Rain by January 10, 2024. Annual Meeting will be a pot-luck with vestry members serving. Zoom will be available for those who cannot attend in person.

Liturgy Committee: The next liturgy committee meeting is set for 6:00 pm on Thursday, January 11th.

Budget Review: Muffet led a line-by-line review of the draft 2024 budget. The vestry discussed each item and revisions were made per the discussion. Among the more significant items:

- New Line Item for Fire Protection (for the new alarm system contract) \$1,000 budgeted
- Grounds/Misc. Line Item for \$250 will remain (as there have been expenses paid by members in the past); however, since snow shoveling for this amount had been posted here in the past, \$250 will be added to the line for Snowplowing.
- Diocesan assessment for 2024 is set at \$14,962; it is calculated by the Diocese based on income and membership information from two years prior.
- Insurance needs to be increased based on current year expenses; Fred will reach out to the providers to get a recommendation for the appropriate percentage
- Payroll 3% increase for all non-clergy staff

It was noted that \$2,000 of the \$2,500 Outreach Funds budgeted 2023 (and proposed for 2024) have not yet been expended. Tracy sent the list of 2022 outreach contributions to Dianne; she will share an updated proposal with members to review and provide input/consent via email. Community Closet needs to be removed as it is no longer operating. Valerie suggested that the funds that went to CC last year be allocated to Loaves and Fishes this year as their need has grown substantially. Martha noted that she may not have access to email, but will agree with the consensus.

Next meeting date(s):

- Sunday, 01/07/2024 Via Zoom (budget approval)
- Sunday, 01/28/2024 Annual Meeting

Adjournment: There being no other items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:36 pm (moved by Dianne, seconded by Valerie); Carolyn shared a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Jaci Hancock

Faith in Maine:

This is a podcast produced by our Episcopal Diocese with various members of the clergy giving their thoughts and prayers. The podcast changes each week. Feel free to call and listen. You can call **207-223-6402** at any time. They last approximately 4-5 minutes.

FAITH IN
MAINE

GOD AT WORK IN OUR
COMMUNITIES

A PODCAST OF THE
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MAINE



Family News



We would love to hear about **your news** and for **what you are thankful for during this year**. Submit your news to stdunstansellsworth@gmail.com

Let us always remember that we are living on the traditional homelands of the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot peoples and of the Wabanaki confederacy of Maine. We recognize the native peoples throughout this land.

Prayer For Peace

Oh Great Spirit who dwells in the sky,
lead us to the path of peace and understanding,
let all of us live together as brothers and sisters.
Our lives are so short here, walking upon Mother Earth's surface,
let our eyes be opened to all the blessings you have given us.
Please hear our prayers, Oh Great Spirit.
- Native American Prayer



Priest - Rev. Dr. Carolyn Rosen
Deacon - Rev. Tracy Shaffer
Senior Warden - Dianne Kelley
Deputy Warden – Tom Hancock
Junior Warden - McKim Peterson

www.saintdunstansellsworth.org

You can contact us by leaving a message by telephone or email:
Phone: [667-5495](tel:667-5495) Email: stdunstansellsworth@gmail.com
Fred Beyer and Muffet Stewart: stdunstanstreasurer@gmail.com
Rain is in the church office Tuesday, Thursday & Friday, 8 – 9 am