ST. DUNSTAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ELLSWORTH
TID BITS FROM THE TABLE ~ AUGUST 7, 2026

This Sunday August 9th is the fifth anniversary of Deacon Tracy Shaffer's Ordination to the Diaconate.

Congratulations to her, and many thanks for all she does for us at St. Dunstan's and in the wider community.

Sermon
The Rev. Andrew J. Stoessel
St. Dunstan's Church, Ellsworth, ME
10 Pentecost, Year A, August 2, 2026
Proper 13
Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 17:1-7, 16; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21

Chances are that you have experienced a restless, fretful night's sleep. My guess is this has happened more than once, perhaps at different points in life, maybe frequently. Work related issues, health or family issues, communal or political issues, a deadline to meet, a decision to make, or an action to be taken, jolts us awake at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. Thinking of such moments, often in retrospect, Psalm 130 comes to mind:

> My soul waits for the Lord,
> more than watchmen for the morning,
> more than the watchmen for the morning. (Psalm 130:5)

The dawn light of the morning is welcome relief, even if we feel exhausted or even wounded by our struggle.

Jacob has had such a night. We meet him this morning as he is traveling back to the land promised to him, promised to his father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham. Jacob's life has been one of faithfulness, trust and hard work on the one hand, and deceit, slyness and conceit on the other. This has been since the day he was born, and this is who he is, for better or worse. If you remember he tricked his brother, Esau out of Esau's birthright, and later tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him, Jacob, a blessing meant for Esau.

Meeting him in today's reading, Jacob has been away for twenty years in his ancestral homeland. He has built a family and wealth. There he met Rachel and Leah, and their father, Laban. (Tracy Shaffer spoke about this last week in her sermon.) We will leave discussion of his two wives, and their maids, for another time. He is now returning home, back to Canaan. He is soon to meet his brother Esau whom he hasn't seen for over twenty years. He has sent word ahead to Esau that he is returning, and hopes for a peaceful reunion. Still, he is nervous, anxious and afraid, wondering if he has made the right decision. Word comes back that Esau is coming to meet him, along with 400 of his men. Jacob fears meeting him; he feels threatened. He divides his empire into four columns and sends them ahead to meet Esau hoping that this display of wealth and success will impress his brother. At one point he is distraught enough that he prays to God that Esau not retaliate against him. He sends his wife, children and livestock ahead, and he himself is alone. Then he stops for the night needing to cross a major river, Jabbok, which is a play on his name, Jacob. This crossing is symbolic. It is as if he needs to reconcile the truths within himself of his past.

As we heard, during the night, he encounters a mysterious man with whom he wrestles until the daylight. At this point it is unclear if this an angel of God, or a demon from the river. We are told only that it was a man. It is also unclear who is the actual victor in this struggle. As dawn approaches, the man declares he must depart. Jacob holds on, demanding a blessing. It is as if he is reckoning himself right with God. It seems he has to face, rather than evade, the truths about himself and his soul. It is a long struggle, one in which he is wounded. At the same time he is reconciled. The result is a true blessing, not one received out of deceit. Even with wounded hip, he limps forward in a new state of wholeness. For the record, Esau embraces him when they finally meet.

Like our own fretful nights, in the darkness of the night Jacob may have found such reconciliation impossible to imagine at first. However, his reconciliation comes through the wrestle and struggle, and he is able to continue his journey. He ventures forth with a blessing that seems truly his. His name is changed from Jacob, to Israel, which means, "one who strives with God."

Our journey in faith and in life meet such encounters, too. There are moments of very real fear and anxiety, and ones that we can build up in our own minds and hearts that may be bigger than they actually are. No matter. It is hard to the light through the darkness. Our limitations are put before us, as are our strengths and abilities. Both sides form the whole of who we are, and whose we are: we are God's children. God knows this, and wants us to know this, that we may continue to better know ourselves that we might better serve God and our neighbor. It takes courage and bravery. Sometimes it is hard to be courageous and brave. We wrestle and struggle.

Paul encounters such in his relationship with the Christians in Rome – Jews and Gentiles who have accepted Jesus as the Messiah. He deals with the tension within his Jewish faith of origin, and fellow Jews who struggle to accept Jesus. He struggles, and seeks wholeness, reconciliation within himself and in the wider community.

In our gospel this morning we find Jesus and his followers meeting what seems at first an impossible challenge. Here is one of the most familiar stories of our Christian heritage, Jesus' miraculous power in feeding 5,000 people.

It is a wondrous event. A miracle. Our rational minds might ask how did it happen? What really took place? We can speculate and suggest things, but the "how" of it happened cannot be fully answered. But if we look a bit more closely at the story, we find some insight in what is being offered to our hungry souls and minds. One commentator, the Rev. Herbert O'Driscoll, notes the contrast between Jesus and Jacob.

It is worth noting that in Matthew Jesus *alone* leaves for a deserted place. In the gospel, Jesus has just heard from the disciples of John the Baptist that John has been killed by King Herod during a birthday banquet Herod threw for himself. We don't know why Jesus sought solitude at this particular moment, but he does. Like Jacob, perhaps he has things to consider and reconcile. Jacob sends his retinue ahead, and they leave him alone. However, people seek Jesus out.

What Matthew tells us that Jesus' popularity had grown. There were many people who had been touched by him, or hungered to have their lives changed by him. They anticipated where the boat was sailing, rushed to meet him when he arrived.

While Jacob hopes to avoid meeting his brother, Jesus embraces those who have found him. He receives them and in fact, goes to them. Matthew writes: "When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick." He had great compassion for them. I see this as one of the key and great lines of the gospel. He had compassion for them. He cures the sick that are there. Jacob may be

wrestling with his inner demons, Jesus wrestles with the demons of illness and brokenness that are part of the outer world. *(H. O'Driscoll, "The Word Today", Year A, Vol. 3, Anglican Book Centre, Toronto, pp 76-77)*

Another commentary notes that "The juxtaposition of Herod's banquet and Jesus' banquet is powerful. At Herod's banquet there is pride and arrogance, scheming and even murder [John the Baptist]. It takes place at a royal court. At Jesus' banquet there is healing, trust and sharing. It takes place in a 'deserted' place – …like the wilderness in which ancient Israel was fed with manna." *(D. Harrington, "Sacra Pagina, The Gospel of Matthew," A Michael Glazier Book, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN, p. 221)*

This place becomes a blessing for others. It symbolizes the Eucharist. In the traditional manner of a Jewish blessing, Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, blessed, broke and gave them. We gather here to nourish our own hunger of God's mercy, but also to be strengthened in it that we may help others. Such is the hallmark of our Christian faith.

Matthew tells us that thrust of this miracle is here not convince us that by the miracle itself we should believe in Jesus Christ. Rather, he suggests, that we should come to Christ because through him, God provides us with spiritual – and by extension, physical – sustenance. With such sustenance, as individuals and as a church we can do wondrous things that help feed others in the same vein.

Sometimes we need to be alone to meet our limitations and strengths, as has happened to Jacob, open and willing to meet the truth of his soul and receive blessing and reconciliation. Sometimes the church needs to do this too. God is there. God is with us.

In closing, I offer this poem from Mary Oliver, entitled Logos.

Logos, by Mary Oliver.

Why wonder about the loaves and the fishes?
If you say the right words, the wine expands.
If you say them with love
and the felt ferocity of that love
and the felt necessity of that love,
the fish explode into many.
Imagine him, speaking,
And don't worry about what is reality,
or what it is plain, or what is mysterious.
If you were there, it was all those things.
If you can imagine it, it is all those things.
Eat, drink, be happy.
Accept the miracle.
Accept, too, each spoken word
spoken with love.
(M. Oliver "Why I Wake Early", Beacon Press, Boston, p. 40)

Again, we are God's children. In our openness, with our wounds and weaknesses, in our struggles, we can ask and receive, – miraculously and wondrously – to discover that we have the strength, the ability, and the courage to continue our journey and help feed others. The dawn light comes. We are sent forth anew.

Amen.

Prayer requests will remain for 3 weeks unless notified that a name needs to be extended for at least the next 3 weeks.

Diocesan Cycle of Prayer: We pray for Trinity Chapel, Kennebunk Beach. We pray especially for postulants and candidates for Holy Orders in the Diocese of Maine.

We Pray Especially For: Jillian and Ocean Alfone, Mark Arnold, Gregg Jacobs, John Johnston, Margaret Jones, Robbie Johnston, Kate Lynch, Robert McDonald, Linc Moldawer, Ralph Preble, Carolyn Rosen, Sigrid Saradunn, Judy Stockbridge, Martha Thomas, Jonathan Vogel, Brent Was, and Mike Zboray for comfort and healing.

For the repose of the souls of Lorna McCormick and Serge Poulin, and comfort and healing for their family and friends.

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).

Everyone, please stay well and safe. Blessings to you all.

~ UPCOMING WORSHIP / EVENTS SCHEDULE ~

Sunday services are both in church and via Zoom.
The sanctuary is open for quiet reflection and prayer on Mondays from 1 to 3.

August 9 ~ Morning Prayer 9:30 a.m. Mimi as Officiant and Homilist
August 16 ~ Holy Eucharist 9:30 a.m. Rev. Andrew Stoessel as Officiant & Homilist. Liturgy Meeting after service
August 22 ~ Service of Remembrance for Lorna McCormick Jordan-Fernald, 113 Franklin Street, with visiting hours from 12:30 to 2 pm followed by a funeral service at 2pm.
August 23 ~ Holy Eucharist 9:30 a.m. Rev. Andrew Stoessel as Officiant & Homilist. Vestry Meeting after service.
August 30 ~ Holy Eucharist 9:30 a.m. Rev. Andrew Stoessel as Officiant & Rev. Tracy Shaffer as Homilist.
September 6 ~ Holy Eucharist 9:30 a.m. Rev. Andrew Stoessel as Officiant & Homilist.
September 13 ~ Morning Prayer 9:30 a.m. Dianne as Officiant and Valerie as Homilist
Sept. 20 ~ Holy Eucharist 9:30 a.m. Rev. Andrew Stoessel as Officiant & Homilist. Outreach Meeting after service
Oct. 24 ~ 3rd Annual Community of Hope service and reception, St Dunstan's, 1:30 - 2:30 pm.

On the 2nd Sunday of the month the Offering is for the Rector's Discretionary Fund

Online Donation Option

Use the link below if you would like to set up convenient online payments St. Dunstan's for one-time/annual donations or recurring weekly/monthly amounts.

Set-up instructions can be found here: https://www.saintdunstansellsworth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/How-to-create-a-Vanco-profile-and-set-up-a-recurring-weekly-or-monthly-donation.pdf
St. Dunstan's Vanco page: https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z5DE/campaign/C-12GB4

National Blood Shortage

Please schedule your next blood donation at redcrossblood.org

Happy Birthday to Martha Thomas, Diedre Swan, and Leslie Beyer!

ALTAR FLOWERS:

A gentle reminder that the weekly cost for altar flowers from The Bud Connection, effective July 1, 2026, has increased to $40, their first increase since 2015.

St. Dunstan's Church is grateful for the beautiful flowers and excellent service the Bud Connection has provided us for so many years. And I am grateful for the many beautiful flowers that have adorned our altar as gifts to God from our parishioners. Thank you all so very much.

Marian Wells
Chief Sacristan

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

With God's grace, we wanted to share that St. Dunstan's now has a **Lay Eucharistic Visitor** team that stands ready to visit and offer Eucharist to those who are homebound or hospitalized. If you would like a visit or know someone who would, please contact Deacon Tracy or Lay Eucharistic Visitors Dianne Kelley and Briana Chattin.

Benefit Concert for Everybody Eats!

FLASH!

Blue Hill, Maine

Stop by Knowlton Park on August 10 for this by-donation concert from Downeast Maine's favorite steel drum band. Proceeds benefit the Everybody Eats free community meal program, which now operates as part of Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry.

When: August 10, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Where: Knowlton Park, 160 State Street, Ellsworth

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Public Policy and Witness Weekly Prayers – July 31

For Love Over the Spirit of Hatred

God of reconciling love, who created every person in your image and calls us to love one another, we mourn every act of violence born of hatred, especially when people are targeted because of who they are. We grieve especially the fear and suffering left in the wake of violence against the LGBTQ+ community. We pray for those who were harmed in the attack at the Pride event in Berlin. Comfort the grieving, heal the injured, and give your angels charge over those who live in fear. O Lord, turn all hearts from hatred and break the cycle of any type of radicalization. Give your holy wisdom to leaders, faith communities, and families as they seek to recognize and interrupt violence before they take root in their homes and communities. May your peace, through the power of your Holy Spirit, take root wherever fear seeks to divide your people. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Episcopal Public Policy Network Action Alerts: Join the active ministry of public policy advocacy by taking action with EPPN Action Alerts. Join your voice with Episcopalians across the church as we aim to influence the legislation and policy of the U.S. government on critical issues. **Sign up here**: episcopalchurch.org/ministries/office-government-relations/

PLANNING AHEAD

Copies of the Funeral and Burial Information form are on the table in back of our church. We are all aware that we will leave this earth and planning for that day might be uncomfortable, your family and those responsible for your service and funeral will be thankful that you took the time as to how you wish to be remembered.
Once the form is completed a copy can be filed in the church office. It might also be helpful to have another copy at home or a place to be retrieved. (https://www.saintdunstansellsworth.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Funeral-and-Burial-Information.pdf)

Another helpful resource we have available is The Five Wishes document, a comprehensive, easy-to-understand advance directive that allows you to legally outline your medical, personal, emotional, and spiritual preferences if you become seriously ill. Created by the nonprofit Aging with Dignity, it is valid as a living will and healthcare power of attorney in most states. Copies are available at the back of the Nave (extras in the office).

Please call or ask me if you have any questions.

In Faith,
Dave

Cart in Those Cartons and Bags to Help Fight Food Insecurity

Loaves and Fishes is once again in the business of accepting clean dozen-sized egg cartons from the public. Donating helps reduce pantry costs. Please put your donation in the little red wagon in the sanctuary. Everybody Eats appreciates the full-sized grocery bag donations to help with takeout meals. We are still sharing over 100 meals a week via takeout and Friends in Action deliveries. Bags can be left in the Lottie Horn Room.

Volunteers are always welcome at Everybody Eats! Interested? See Tracy, Kim, or Fred.

Diocese Convention Delegates and Alternates

Would you like to serve as one of St. Dunstan's Lay Delegates to the upcoming Annual Convention of the Diocese of Maine – or be available as an Alternate? Those who have attended in the past will tell you that it's a great opportunity to meet fellow Episcopalians from around the state, learn about the many activities in our Diocese, and participate in decision-making.

The convention is being held on Saturday, November 7, from 8.a.m. to 5 p.m., on the University of Southern Maine Campus. There are two opportunities for on-line pre-convention informational meetings, the evening of October 27 and 29. For more information on the role and responsibilities of Lay Delegates, see **here**: episcopalmaine.org/resources/responsibilities-of-delegates-to-convention/ And let Tom or Dave know if you are interested in serving.

We have one confirmed delegate; we are eligible to send two, and would like to have two alternates, in case someone can't make it.

Supply Priest Rev. Andrew Stoessel
Deacon - Rev. Tracy Shaffer
Senior Warden – Tom Hancock
Deputy Warden – Dave Wells
Junior Warden – Bill Thomas, Assistant Dan DeLong
Music Director – Paul Dickson
Office Assistant – Rain Perez

www.saintdunstansellsworth.org
You can contact us by leaving a message by telephone or email:
Phone: 667-5495 Email: stdunstansellsworth@gmail.com