

St. Christopher's

e-Traveler



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From the Rector



**The Rev.
Randy W. Johnson**
Rector

The No Complaining Rule by Fr. Randy

I recently was re-reading a book authored by Jon Gordon, titled *The No Complaining Rule*. It is a quick and interesting read that was written mainly for the business environment to assist in rooting out negative influences that eat an organization from the inside out—like a cancer. Complaining is the insidious root problem that subtly cripples an organization from being all it could be, to flourish and grow in a healthy and supportive environment.

The truth be told, complaining is most often an endemic issue—being prevalent and alive in our own lives—whether we want to acknowledge it or not. Jon Gordon says he did not invent the rule—but he discovered it at a small company that had much going for it at the time.

It is one thing to deal with persons we may regard as difficult—*let's just call it what it is*—sometimes people, including ourselves, can be jerks. But we can easily recognize them and their abhorrent behavior—and deal with it accordingly. The more subtle forms are that of negativity and complaining. It likewise must be brought into the light and dealt with.

Sometimes people will accuse me of being a bit of a “*Pollyanna*”, who is nearly ever negative, but that is not universally true. I can become a complainer as much as anyone else. It is at times very easy to blame others for my misfortune or my unreasonable ideas about what is fair or not. Complaining

turns to whining, which turns to misery and negativity.

Gordon gives an example of his own Jewish-Italian grandmother, who headed up a family who loved life, and a lot of food, and a lot of wine, and lots of whining. She was so scared of flying, she would say, *“I know when they say your time is up, your time is up, but I don’t want to be on a plane when someone else’s time is up!”* She would start off nearly every conversation with what was wrong with her life.

The Holy Scriptures tell of the Israelites being freed from the Egyptians by Moses. Gordon says, *“They had spent 400 years as captive slaves and now they were free. At first they were happy and thrilled. But within a month and one half they started complaining about being hungry. They complained about not having enough water. They complained about living in the wilderness. They even said it would be better to be back in Egypt as slaves, rather than be free in the desert. Four hundred years of slavery, and all it took was a month and a half to start complaining again. Finally, God got so frustrated with all the complaining that He threatened their very existence. Turns out God is a big proponent of the No Complaining Rule. I would venture to say that God originated it.”*

But complaints can serve as a catalyst for innovation and new ways to do things. Rather than complain about what has been laid upon us by this pandemic, positive opportunities are being offered to us. Let’s focus on what the Holy Spirit is challenging us to do, rather than what we perceive we have lost.

Here are **Five Things to Do Instead of Complaining**

1. **Practice Gratitude:** Research shows that when we count three blessings a day, we get a measurable boost in happiness that uplifts and energizes us.
2. **Praise Others:** Instead of complaining about what others are doing wrong, start focusing on what they are doing right, Praise them and watch as they create more success as a result.
3. **Focus on Success:** Start a success journal. Each night before you go to bed, write down the one great thing about your day. The one conversation, accomplishment, or win that you are most proud of.
4. **Let Go:** Focus on the things you have the power to change, and let go of the things that are beyond your control. You’ll be amazed that when you stop trying to control everything, it all somehow works out.
5. **Pray and meditate:** Scientific research shows that these daily practices reduce stress, boost positive energy, and promote health, vitality, and longevity. When you are faced with the urge to complain or you are feeling stressed to the max, stop, be still, and plug into the power of Christ and recharge.

Many of us are frustrated and frightened by the cascading effects of the COVID-19 public health response. It is very easy to beat our breasts about what we perceive had been lost, but we must look forward to the wonderful opportunities we have been gifted.

For the moment, we have the opportunity to share video Holy Eucharist services weekly, and have in-person outdoor services on Wednesdays at 12:15

pm and on Sunday mornings at 8:00 am. I believe every moment and opportunity we have to share in the energetic life of Christian Community should be savored and enjoyed to the fullest. God is with us and for us, and will guide us as we learn how to best love and serve in these times of uncertainty.

The church is more than just another institution or enterprise. The important thing is that we are a church because we believe in God—not our history or our buildings—that is the reason for our existence.

May God continue to richly bless us and lead us in all in truth and love.

Peace and all things good.

Randy+

The Deacon Discusses



**The Rev.
Janet MacNally**
Deacon

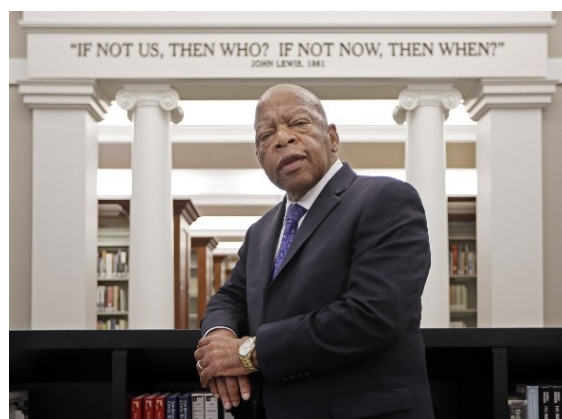
One of the most meaningful, probably *the* most meaningful of times I have spent with this community as your deacon, came on a hot July afternoon when I accompanied Chad and Elizabeth and the Moms as we led the youth group across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. Much as one would when walking the Way of the Cross, we stopped along the way across that bridge, and I read sections from a small book of reflection and meditation by John Lewis entitled **Across That Bridge: A Vision for Change and the Future of America**. With the passing of Lewis, “the conscience of the Congress,” we have lost a true hero for our times. There have been so many pictures of that bridge, at the original crossing with Lewis being beaten, his skull fractured; pictures of Lewis crossing that bridge as a U.S. Congressman; and finally the horse drawn caisson that, this past Sunday, carried him across that bridge for one final time, have brought me back to that spirit filled afternoon with our youth. And so, in this musing, I have chosen to share with you some of what I read that afternoon.

“You are a light. You are the light. Never let anyone—any person or any force—dampen, dim or diminish your light. Study the path of others to make your way easier and more abundant. Lean toward the whispers of your own heart,

discover the universal truth, and follow its dictates. [...] Release the need to hate, to harbor division, and the enticement of revenge. Release all bitterness. Hold only love, only peace in your heart, knowing that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won. Choose confrontation wisely, but when it is your time don't be afraid to stand up, speak up, and speak out against injustice. And if you follow your truth down the road to peace and the affirmation of love, if you shine like a beacon for all to see, then the poetry of all the great dreamers and philosophers is yours to manifest in a nation, a world community, and a Beloved Community that is finally at peace with itself."

"To reconcile ourselves with one another, we must release our judgments and make peace with the fact that we are one. This country was founded on the ideal that we are all created equal. If we truly believe in the equality of all humankind, how can we put down and belittle one another? How can we disrespect and prejudge one another? How can we come to the point where we malign and hate one another?"

"Take a long, hard look down the road you will have to travel once you have made a commitment to work for change. Know that this transformation will not happen right away. Change often takes time. It rarely happens all at once. In the movement, we didn't know how history would play itself out. When we were getting arrested and waiting in jail or standing in unmovable lines on the courthouse steps, we didn't know what would happen, but we knew it had to happen.



Use the words of the movement to pace yourself. We used to say that ours is not the struggle of one day, one week, or one year. Ours is not the struggle of one judicial appointment or presidential term. Ours is the struggle of a lifetime, or maybe even many lifetimes, and each one of us in every generation must do our part. And if we believe in the change we seek, then it is easy to commit to doing all we can, because the responsibility is ours alone to

build a better society and a more peaceful world.”

“The power of faith is transformative. It can be utilized in your own personal life to change your individual condition, and it can be used as a lifeline of spiritual strength to change a nation.”

“Nothing can stop the power of a committed and determined people to make a difference in our society. Why? Because human beings are the most dynamic link to the divine on this planet.”

“We are one people, one family, the human family, and what affects one of us affects us all.”

“Whenever the people finally reject the efforts to fragment their collective energies into warring factions and remember their divine union with one another, when they throw off material distractions and irrelevant negativity and hear their souls speak with one voice, they will rise up. And whatever is in their path will either transform or transpire.”

“When you pray, move your feet.”

Amen. Deacon Janet

Music Notes



Karla Cole

Director of Music Ministries

If you've read my *eTraveler* articles in the past, you know that I have long touted the physiological benefits of singing – breath control, posture, brain stimulation, the production of “feel-good hormones” like oxytocin and endorphins, not to mention the benefits of being in a supportive, like-minded community. Singing has always been important in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The tribe of the Levites were tasked with singing and playing instruments in the temple, David played and sang for Saul and wrote psalms to be sung in worship and private prayer, Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before they ventured out to the Mount of Olives on that fateful night. Now, singing is just a part of what we do as Christian people. We are continuing the centuries-old

tradition of worshipping people who sing in lament, or work, or praise. Anyone can sing, anywhere – and you can just take your instrument with you wherever you go.

So, there has been real sadness and mourning amongst the choral community as all of this information has come out. In addition to fear – there for a while, it seemed like every week, there were new and scarier symptoms of Covid-19 being announced in the news – there are now all sorts of strictures placed on singing. For some of us, it's hard. Even with my mask on, I still find myself humming or singing along with the Musak in a store. And much like the reaction you get when you cough or sneeze these days in public, singing attracts a certain amount of unwanted attention. Minnesota has been hit very hard by this not-singing thing. We have a number of professional choirs, lots of collegiate and civic choirs, and tons of church choirs, (they don't call us the Land of 10,000 Choirs for nothing) who all have been prohibited from doing what they love. I've always thought of St. Christopher's as a singing congregation – maybe not as compared to the Lutherans – but compared to the other Episcopal churches I've served in, we sing! And many of us are sorely missing the opportunity to sing our favorite hymns together with our church friends.

As with many aspects of our post-COVID life, when we return to worship at St. Christopher's, it will be different. Guaranteed. There won't be any congregational hymns for some time. There will be a heavier reliance on instrumental music simply because any singers will need to be spaced 10-15 feet apart for their health and yours. As a result, the handbell choir could sign up for a more prominent role in our future worship.

Additionally, a recorder choir might be a fun, new challenge. Recorders are cheap to buy, and easy to pick up and play, and they don't put out near the wind flow that a flute or trumpet would. I started recorder groups at St. Mary's in St. Paul and St. Luke's in Minneapolis that are still going strong. And I'd love to see one at St. Christopher's, too. There is a huge body of music from the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Modern composers have discovered recorders and have included them in other groupings of instruments as well. There are several publishing companies that specialize in recorder music and there is a wealth and variety there to be discovered and enjoyed. Recorders come in increasing sizes: soprano, alto, tenor and bass, as well as the teensy sopranino and the very large contrabass. All of those little fourth graders start with a plastic soprano recorder and read in treble clef. Being able to read music when you learn to play the recorder is helpful, but not required because you learn music reading right along with learning the fingerings. It's really quite easy and before you know it, you're making music and generating some of those "feel-good hormones". Do let me know if you'd be interested that kind of ground floor music-making opportunity!

We've lost a lot in the global pandemic. Much that we've always known or have taken for granted has been taken away from us. People optimistically predicted that we'd be back in church by September and now that seems unlikely. I'm hearing from some in the choral community who think that choirs won't be able to come back together for 18 to 24 months. Probably not until there is a vaccine and everyone has access to it. That's a rather bleak assessment. But rather than focusing on what we *can't* do anymore, let's figure out what we *can* do. We can use the resources we have, maybe in new or more prolific ways.

And we can be open-minded and try new things – kind of like throwing spaghetti at the wall to see if it sticks. If the new thing doesn't stick very well, we can always try another new thing. We can stay connected through our new best friend Zoom, and through calls and emails. We can support one another through the uncertainty, buoy up our collective spirits, flex our faith muscles, and help everyone to remember that The One who made us won't forsake us.

Grace and Peace,
Karla

Footprints AUGUST 2020 - News from Children's Ministries



Marion Hunner

**Children's Ministries
Director**



As many of you know, the children and I have been meeting weekly on Zoom. In order to mark this time as different from our time in person, I decided to delve into the rich resource of our Children's Library. There are so many wonderful books! But because they are not Bible stories, we have not made space for them in our regular curriculum. Some stories are songs, some are about how we treat each other, and many are about God – names for God, what God dreams for us, ways we see God in our lives, how God sees us, and my newest favorite, "When God Made You," by Matthew Paul Turner.

In this beautifully illustrated story, we are shown that God made each of us unique, in God's image, and that God thought about every little aspect of who we are. From composing the sound of our voices to knowing what we would look like when we are surprised, God "thought about you before your debut." But even more, the story encourages us to be fully us – to "live in full color" and to use the talents and passions that God gave us to "think up ideas and put them to action." The story goes on to explore some of the things that God wants for each of us, and shares that, "you being you is God's dream coming true."

The illustrations are bold and colorful, the language is rhythmic and rich, and the message is wonderful. I simply can't get this book out of my head. No matter your age, I believe that this book is worth a read. And I know that it is available on Amazon or at Ramsey County Libraries.

-Marion



Chad O'Leary

Director of Youth Ministries

"I can shake off anything I like as I write. My sorrow disappears, my courage is reborn."

- Anne Frank

It is always this time of the year, when the first tender nights of August arrive, when I swing back to the resolution that I did (or didn't) happen to continue championing beyond January 2nd. Without a doubt, year after after, it is about journaling. I have long given up on resolving anything regarding body weight but developing -- and continuing -- a journaling regimen has been my yearly resolution since 2014. All I have to show are sporadic entries that end with a commitment to be more regular (if only there were some journalistic metamucil or something).

Perhaps it was the pandemic, but I am happy to report that this year it really stuck. And it has really helped me, I believe, face and overcome some of the most impressive challenges of my 40 years.

The benefits have been remarkable. As an extreme internal processor, it has helped me make connections in my head so that I am able to be more present to people when I am with them as I feel more ready to engage. It has also been a form of release during this year's relentless pile-up of stressors. I have found that I am able to leave it in the journal and later derive some hokey 80s sitcom life lesson from those experiences at a later time when the feelings aren't so raw.

Most importantly, my journaling centers around the idea of gratitude. I have found great joy in reminding myself daily for those things that deserve an offer of Thanksgiving. Seeing the list grow day after day and month after month is a remarkable thing. It literally does create new neural circuits in your brain and you approach the world in a different way.

Now, I know that journaling isn't for everyone. I live with someone who needs to talk out every simple emotion that rushes through his head at the very moment that it arrives knocking. But, even he started just writing down, daily, a list of one thing he found himself thankful for over the course of the day. We share them and it has been a great conversation/relationship builder for us. We always tie our discussions on gratitude to tangible action pieces so that we can continue to bring those things we value into our life and then also bring those joys to others who might need or appreciate them.

I actually did my research at the end of 2019 for a journaling regimen that was likely to stick and I'll share mine. It is from Connecticut College, a small liberal

arts school and was actually designed for late teens and early 20s (but, it has worked for a 40-something too). This guideline has been reworded more toward coping with the current pandemic but you could also use the same process, and many of these same questions, if you chose to focus on the myriad of other situations you face as an individual, as a family member, as a friend, and as a member of a global society. If you're feeling uncentered these days, I invite you to give it a shot. We can certainly agree that it has -- and will -- take many tools in the toolbox in order to get through this year. It is possible for us to walk from this time feeling whole and still in love with the world.

An Approach to Journaling

Connecticut College

Journaling is an exercise often used as a means of pursuing mental health and well being. Here is some information on how journaling works and why it works. Creating a written or typed narration of your thoughts, experiences, and feelings provides you with an opportunity to make internal experiences tangible. Establishing a tangible narrative through journaling allows you to:

1. Sift through your cognitions (or thoughts)
2. Shift your perspective(s) when necessary
3. Unpack/explore and/or process thoughts, feelings, and experiences

The above enables you to determine how to move forward in a manner that facilitates your mental health and wellbeing and is consistent with your life goals. While having an ongoing practice of journaling may be a component of your regular mental health care regimen (you've got one of those right? If not establish one ASAP! [Here's an example](#) of one that might help you do this). At this time, when our day-to-day lives have been disrupted due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is particularly important for us to make sure that we're attending to our mental health intentionally, strategically, and proactively. Below are some journal prompts that may help you to incorporate journaling into your coping strategy/mental health regimen.

Journal Prompts Reflecting on the New Normal (COVID-19 specific):

- What has changed in your day-to-day life since COVID-19 became "a thing"?
- Which changes have caused the greatest imposition(s)?
- Which changes have led to the most distress?
- Which changes, if any, have been pleasantly surprising?
- Which changes have led to some relief of distress? Note: If your response to the last question is "None!" then create some changes that lead to stress relief; this might be new self-care and coping strategies you've employed.

Movement Toward Joy Part I:

- What are things that bring me joy (e.g. activities, hobbies, experiences)?
- Why do these things increase my joyfulness?
- What is it about these things and what is it about me that leads to interaction (between myself and these things)-based joy?
- Which people/relationships increase my joy?
- What is it about these people and what is it about me that leads to interaction-based (between myself and these people) joy?
- What may I do to maintain my connections to people and things adding to my joyfulness during the pandemic?

Movement Toward Joy Part II:

- Who in my immediate present circle seems most in need of joy?
- What may I do to increase their joy?
- What may I do to add to the joyfulness of all others around me?
- How may I add joy to the lives of the people from whom I am physically distanced at present?

Moving Outside of the Self and Into the Community:

- Reflect on the changes you've experienced due to the pandemic in the context of the larger picture. You are being impositioned in some ways due to the shift to remote operations.
- How are other folk in the larger community being impositioned?
- What is your role in the Nation's response to the crisis?
- How does being an individual who may or may not be in a "high risk" category tie into your role in decreasing the spread of the coronavirus?
- Are there ways you may be of service to your local friends, family, and community members at this time? What might that look like?

Gaining Perspective:

- What are you learning about yourself as a result of the coronavirus-related shifts in your life?
- How have you come to learn these things?
- What are you learning about other people (both close others and not-so-close others) as a result of our present situation? How have you come to learn these things?
- What are you learning about institutions (colleges & universities, the government, etc.) related to these shifts? How have you come to learn these things?
- What are you learning about your home, local, and global communities? How have you come to learn these things?
- How may you integrate this new learning and related perspectives gained into your life moving forward?

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Much Peace on the Journey,
Chad O'Leary

In Memoriam...

We are sad to inform you that **Betty Davies** passed away on July 24th. At this writing, a service is being planned for a small number of people at Roselawn Cemetery on August 5th. The family notes that Memorials are preferred to St. Christopher's Music Department. Betty will be - and has been - very much missed at St. Christopher's.

Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant Betty. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive her into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light. Amen. (BCP page 499)

Pulse of the Parish

The Vestry met on July 20, 2020 via Zoom, and discussed the following items:

1. The parish finances are remaining on track, with **50** percent of the year done. Expenses were at **45.82%** and income was **45.87%**. The Vestry continues to be grateful to those parishioners who are continuing their pledge support in this difficult time.
2. The parish will not be able to obtain a PPP loan through the federal government during the COVID pandemic. It appears that because our corporate status is derived from ECMN, we are ineligible for a loan.
3. Fr. Randy reported that the new outdoor services at Wednesday noon and Sunday mornings at 8 a.m. are going well. Attendance is below 30 for each service, which is the recommended number from Bishop Loya. Parishioners are advised to keep their eyes on the weather [Note: Services were cancelled on Sunday, July 26 due to rain].
4. The parking lot repair was approved by the vestry. We have a tentative agreement with Frerichs for them to pay \$5,500 for the patch repair and St. Christopher's will cover the rest.
5. Josh has ordered postcards that have our YouTube link and the website information. (Those postcards were sent out earlier this week.)
6. The Chinese Day Care has informed us that they will be reopening on September 1. We do not need permission from ECMN under the new guidance from Bishop Loya, but ECMN has created a building use task force and we may hear from them shortly.
7. Our memorials balance is starting to creep up to nearly \$10,000 and we need to have a system in place to help the families decide what that money should be used for. Lisa Spiro and Fr. Randy will be discussing that system in the coming days.
8. The upcoming stewardship drive was discussed, and Alexander Kun has agreed to head that effort.

SHOUTOUTS go to the Green Team for their continued work on the Giving Garden. Sally Brown gets a shoutout for maintaining the north courtyard garden and Karen Hanna for her work in maintaining the plants on the inside of the building, and pots around the outside.

As always, feel free to contact me, Mike, Randy or any Vestry member with questions or concerns.

Kathy Ackerman



AUGUST Calendar Highlights!

2 Sunday - Pentecost 9

8 AM Outdoor Worship - Kitchen Garden (Weather permitting)

3 Monday - Parking Lot repair

5 Wednesday

12:15 PM Outdoor Worship - Kitchen Garden (Weather permitting)

9 Sunday - Pentecost 10

8 AM Outdoor Worship - Kitchen Garden (Weather permitting)

10 Monday

5:30 PM Finance Committee - via Zoom

11 Tuesday - Primary Election Day

7 AM - 8 PM Voting in Parish Hall

12 Wednesday

12:15 PM Outdoor Worship -Kitchen Garden (Weather permitting)

14 Friday

Food Collection at North Entry

1:30 PM Keystone Mobile Food Shelf - West Lot

16 Sunday - Pentecost 11

8 AM Outdoor Worship - Kitchen Garden (Weather permitting)

17 Monday

6:45 PM Vestry Meeting – via ZOOM

19 Wednesday

12:15 PM Outdoor Worship - Kitchen Garden (Weather permitting)

23 Sunday - Pentecost 12

8 AM Outdoor Worship - Kitchen Garden (Weather permitting)

24 Monday

e-Traveler Deadline for September

26 Wednesday

12:15 PM Outdoor Worship- Kitchen Garden (Weather permitting)

30 Sunday - Pentecost 13

8 AM Outdoor Worship - Kitchen Garden (Weather permitting)

Please note: Outdoor worship services are still limited to 25 persons. Due to the COVID-19 protocols in place as we prepare this edition of the e-Traveler,

most other activities of our community and outside groups have been cancelled or postponed. If we are able to resume activities, we'll send out plenty of notices.

Last Words



I hope you have enjoyed the August *e-Traveler!*

A first for us all this summer, we will have to figure out what to do with our time at the end of the month NOT spent at the State Fair. And the parking lot will be empty... except for the intrepid contractor who will fix the "patch" area on August 3rd, and seal cracks in the blacktop. (We'll let you know those dates when we know!)

Ruth Thillen
Parish Administrator

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church

VESTRY:

Kathy Ackerman, Sr. Warden; Mike Sirany, Jr. Warden
Allison Jensen, Clerk; Suzanne Hitchcock, Treasurer

Erin Bowman; Barbara Hovey; Ann DePaolis-Jones; Josh Kattelman;
Alexander Kun; Tom Linder; Jeanna McLoughlin; Al Reedstrom; Lisa Spiro

STAFF:

Ruth Thillen, Parish Administrator
Chad O'Leary, Youth Ministries Director
Marion Hunner, Children's Ministries Director
Karla S. Cole, Director of Music Ministries
Rev. Mary Rowe, Assisting Priest
Rev. Janet MacNally, Deacon
Rev. Randy W. Johnson, Rector

Our Regular Schedule

Sunday: 8:00 AM Holy Eucharist

9:00 AM Fellowship

9:30-10:20 AM Children's Education-Room 107
(NO First Sunday)

9:30-10:15 AM Youth Education-Youth Room

9:30-10:15 AM Adult Education-Parish Hall

10:30 AM Holy Eucharist

10:30 AM Children's Chapel (First Sunday ONLY)

11:30 AM Fellowship

Wednesday: 12:15 PM Holy Eucharist in the Chapel

Current Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday 9 AM - 4 PM

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STAY CONNECTED

