

St. Christopher's

# e-Traveler



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## From the Rector



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

### **Cultivating a Grateful Heart...**

I believe we all can agree that the first half of 2020 has been a difficult place to live and flourish. In our daily life, so much has been postponed or eliminated, and at times we may feel that parts of our inner being--*our soul*--has been forcibly stripped away from us. These feelings have been exacerbated by the direct health and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The voices of our brothers and sisters crying out following the murder of George Floyd and many others has refocused our hearts and minds to seek justice for the oppressed in this country and the world. The civil unrest that followed has exposed the tremendous need to address issues of race, social justice, and economic disparities in our own communities.

We respond to all of this with strong emotions—and even sometimes the emotions gravitate towards confusion, anxiety, fretting, complaining, frustration, fear, or even anger. These human reactions can significantly impact our mind, and even cause changes in our brain functioning that leads to negative health impacts.

With this in mind, I suggest we change our thought processes and approaches to these conditions of life as we are experiencing it today.

Have you heard it said *gratitude changes everything*? How can we possibly be grateful in all things? Life can be and is hard at times, and it is not easy to find

gratitude. But we know this, choosing gratitude leads to contentment, joy, generosity, peace, compassion, forgiveness, plus so much more. Gratitude is good for the soul. So, *once we choose to be grateful, how do we cultivate the habit of grace?*

Grateful living is a way of life which asks us to notice all that is already present and abundant—from the tiniest things of beauty to the grandest of our blessings—and in so doing, to take nothing for granted. We can learn to focus our attention on, and acknowledge, that life is a gift. Even in the most challenging times, living gratefully makes us aware of, and available to, the opportunities that are always available; opportunities to learn and grow, and to extend ourselves with care and compassion to others.

Let's look at 5 ways for *Cultivating a Grateful Heart*:

1. Gratitude is a choice—Practicing gratitude in the crappiest of times—even *times in which you didn't even want to talk to God*- by focusing on hope and blessings. Grateful people choose the attitude of gratitude in all circumstances.
2. See everything we have as a gift—We do not have a right to everything we want. Hopefully this does not come as a shocking revelation to any of us! When we view things as rights, it is really hard to be grateful. However, if we see everything as a gift, it's much easier to be grateful. Grateful people view everything they have as a gift and not a right. This leads to contentment and dispels comparison and jealousy.
3. Perspective is powerful—Many of us live in an affluent dream bubble-but we know that much of this world, and neighbors in our own community, do not share in the abundance we enjoy. Perspective is powerful. We take so much for granted. Grateful people keep a good perspective and remember all they have to be grateful for.
4. We see what we look for—We can always find something to be grateful for if you just look hard enough. In a world full of bad news, is there any good news left? It depends what you are looking for. There is only so much room in our heart. When we start to choose to reflect and look for reasons to be grateful, we have less time to worry, grumble, live in fear, be bitter, and frustrated. Grateful people actively look for opportunities to be grateful.
5. We practice what is important to us—We need to practice cultivating gratitude, on good days and difficult ones. If we practice on good days, it will be easier to find gratitude on the hard days. A grateful heart won't just happen. We won't just "*become*" grateful people. Sure, we might be grateful here and there, but true daily gratitude happens with practice. Grateful people practice cultivating gratitude every day.

Grateful living is supported by daily practices, tools, habits of mind, and behaviors that can be learned, translated, and applied to many aspects of our lives. It is nourished in community and in relationship—relationship with God and neighbor.

*"You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with the many thanksgivings to God."* 2 Corinthians 9:11-12

Small, grateful acts every day can uplift us, make a difference for others, and help change the world.

## The Deacon Discusses



**The Rev.  
Janet MacNally**

**Deacon**

I think it would be fair to say that all of us are undergoing some degree of COVID fatigue. Bill and I were introduced to the pandemic while on a world voyage that was several bucket lists in the making. Our initial experience of COVID was hearing about it on the morning news (both British and American) that we were watching daily, and then the cancellation of various ports of call, all in Asia and beginning with Hong Kong. We were, in a very real way, on a course to out sail the virus, and for two thirds of our trip the Queen Mary 2 was successful. We were set to sail on the morning of March 14<sup>th</sup> toward South Africa, the ship virus free. The next morning the captain announced that the CDC had effectively ended all cruises and we were to disembark in Freemantle/Perth and with Cunard's assistance return home. Our children were relieved. "Things are getting scary and bad here, Mom," was in the text from our daughter, along with a request for a grocery list to stock our refrigerator. And so, we returned to Minnesota, virus free, on the afternoon of March 19<sup>th</sup>, to a cold, rainy and gloomy day that was a forecast of days to come.

Those first two weeks, where we were quarantined because we came from afar, we emptied suitcases, washed clothes, binge watched a great deal of television programs, and learned about the wonders of Instacart. In other words, things were all right. We were home in one piece, healthy and not yet bored. We couldn't see anyone or go anywhere, but we were healthy and whole. Then the shelter in place order, "Stay Home Minnesota" was put into place and although we could now leave our apartment, there was literally no where to go once we did. Our children advised and cautioned and scolded because they love us, but we could not see them or our grandchildren. That part was hard. That part still is hard. I have not seen our Winnetka folks since last Thanksgiving and I miss them. We see the Minneapolis folks from the car in drive by hellos. We slammed into this "new normal;" we did not enter into it one briefing from the Governor at a time, and I am weary of it.

Like all of you, I miss community, I miss not being able to see those I love and when I do see people, not being able to hug them, shake hands, be closer than the required six-foot distance. We have binged watched all the programs we

missed and/or enjoyed and now are remembering why “we didn’t watch this show before.” And I personally have spent way too much time on Ancestry.com and with coloring books designed to reduce stresses. I don’t mind wearing a mask but find myself complaining about those who don’t from underneath my mask’s cover. I have uncovered recipes that should have remained covered, and baked more things we shouldn’t have around than I did when the kids were little. I have Zoom fatigue. I am weary of all of this.

And yet, at the end of last month, after I wrote for the June edition of the e-*Traveler*, the world, to borrow a phrase from the musical Hamilton, “the world turned upside down.” George Floyd’s death seemed to awaken all of us, all over the world, in the midst of the disease and death of the pandemic, that things needed to change. The time had come, the hour is now and the work of the cross, if you will, is ours to pick up.

There has been significant and impactful change that has occurred as the world has turned upside down. Products such as “Aunt Jemima’s Syrup” and “Uncle Ben’s rice” are finally changing their logos and images. We are questioning whether it is appropriate to name military bases after Confederate generals or name buildings and bridges after folks who were founders of the Ku Klux Klan (re: The Edmund Pettus Bridge) as a way to honor a glorious, albeit questionable past. And just the day before I wrote this, the state of Mississippi took down their state flag that included the “stars and bars” of the Confederate flag, to be replaced with a design to be chosen by a vote of the people.

These things are just the beginning. The reason we are called, several times throughout the Gospels, by Jesus to pick up our cross and follow is not because it is the easy, path of least resistance thing to do, but rather because the task ahead is hard, the road rough and journey long. The bad news is we are still under restrictions due to the pandemic, the good news is we are still under restrictions due to the pandemic and we have been given the gift of time. Time to read and to discuss, time to listen and reflect, time to work toward a real and lasting difference in dismantling the systemic racial issues that our community, our state, our country and our world need to face. That is the cross before us, the one we are being called by the Holy Spirit to pick up.

How do we begin? I heard talk of book clubs on Google circles last Sunday morning. Bishop Loya has some of us reading (or re-reading) James Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time*, which will include discussion. I am reading a book titled *Damaged Heritage*, that details one man’s journey toward accepting his family’s participation in racial injustice and how forgiveness can be asked for and freely given from those whose families his family hurt. And this morning I heard Eddie Glaude, Jr. from Princeton, speak of his new book *Begin Again*, which looks back at and forward with the writings of James Baldwin. All of these are available on kindle. Anyone interested? It is a real and meaningful way to begin to pick up our cross, it is a way to help us forward outside the doors of St. Christopher’s when it safe (health wise) to do so. It is a way to begin and more importantly it is a way to keep community.

I leave you with this. James Baldwin is quoted with the following, “Nothing can be changed if it is not faced.”

***Amen. Deacon Janet***

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## Music Notes



**Karla Cole**

**Director of Music Ministries**

The people that sing in the choir and play in the bell choir know that I have a bit of a thing about sight-reading. I've always had a thing about it, since it is such an integral part of every musician's basic skill set. As a music student, I paid the rent for my roach-infested hovel by accompanying anyone that needed a pianist for their juries and recitals, and every Suzuki teacher in town that needed an accompanist for their little violin twinklers with pint-sized fiddles. And you can't do that very easily without mad sight-reading skills. As an adjunct faculty member before being an adjunct was widely known as a fast track to nowhere, I taught applied piano to undergraduates. Most of them were preparing for a piano proficiency exam (required for graduation) and the skill most universally feared was sight-reading. Our music building was down the street from a Presbyterian church that had just purchased their brand-new hymnals and were giving away their old ones. I snagged thirty of them and checked them out to my students at the beginning of each semester. Two hymns a day, even on weekends, and by the time you take the proficiency exam, sight-reading can be your mad skill. The kids that took my advice always smoked that part of the exam. Scales and arpeggios were another story.

Anyway, now I torture grown-ups with sight-reading practice. Or, at least I did until the coronavirus sent us all into suspended animation. Sight-reading is a laudable skill and gives one a quick look into the delights and difficulties of a piece, even though the singing or playing of it may be riddled with mistakes. And it requires a fair amount of courage. One presses onward in intrepid fashion, not knowing what lies beyond the next page turn: a key change, a tempo change, scores of tiny, little black notes that are technically difficult to manage on a first pass. And each subsequent page turn brings more trepidation.

It strikes me that we are like that sight-reading musician just now. We can't know the difficulties that lie beyond the page turn, we can only guess at what will come next. Right now, it all seems rather uncertain and unsettling: the pandemic, race relations, distrust in our institutions and leaders, fear of the unknown. And it feels as if we are coming to the next page turn in the sight-reading exercise of our lives. It's all quite disconcerting. But our composer is God, who knows every nuance, every phrase, every sequence and ornament in this metaphorical composition. And unlike perhaps, Beethoven, God generously forgives our earlier mistakes and gives us grace to tackle what lies on the next page. And the pages after that.

I have always been a collaborative musician, much happier and much better suited to making music with others than as a soloist. And as we play this next metaphorical piece together, when will we resume worshipping in church? Will we ever have a choir again? Will we be able to sing the old hymns we grew up with? The new ones we've learned to love? I haven't any clue what's been written on the next page. But I know who wrote it and my faith rests in the comfort that brings. And I can't imagine happily collaborating and turning pages with anyone other than all of you.

Grace and peace,  
Karla

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## Footprints JULY 2020 - News from Children's Ministries



**Marion Hunner**

**Children's Ministries  
Director**



Happy July! Now that I see that I can't just sit at home and wait this thing out, I am learning to find new routines. I'm being very mindful to look for the joy in the things that I CAN do, and the silver linings that come with the careful lifestyle that my family is choosing – hoping to do our part in keeping ourselves and others as safe as possible. All the while, I am allowing myself a little bit of space to mourn the many cancelled events that I see going by on my calendar.

The St Christopher's families and I have worked our way into a new routine as well:

- Each week I share a fun activity or resource on the closed "St. C. Families" Facebook page.
- On Fridays I send my weekly email (Marion's Message), as I have done for years, with updates for families. Now that email includes an attachment of a family faith formation piece that they can do at home.
- On Sundays, we Zoom! Our attendance is anywhere from 2-7 kids, much like our Sunday School attendance. Often, we have our Sunday School teachers, Carol Duff and Jean Darnell, as well. In our Zoom meetings we check in, do our Sunday School body prayer together, sing a song, share a story, and tell what we are thankful for this week.

### **Vacation Bible School Update (in case you missed it last month):**

As much as it pains me to write this, for the first time since 2004, we will not be having Vacation Bible School



at St. Christopher's this summer. As many of you know, this has been a passion project for me for 15 years, and I am very saddened by this reality. There are some virtual programs available through ECMN and one or two other parishes in the area - I will be referring families to those opportunities. The Knights of North Castle curriculum is purchased, and I have already started some of the planning. I will put that on hold until we find ourselves in a place where it will be safe to proceed.

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## Pulse of the Parish

The Vestry met on June 15, via Zoom and addressed the following issues:

**Finances:** We are at 41.66 percent of the calendar year, and we are somewhat on track with our income and expenditures. Many thanks to those who continue to be faithful in their giving.

We are continuing to work on our PPP loan application and as of this writing, we have not received a final answer on the loan.

The vestry discussed briefly the status of our communications in and with the parish. Everyone is encouraged to keep calling and keep in touch with each other through this difficult time.

The Chinese Day Care remains closed as of this time. Since the June Vestry meeting, we have been advised that Larry plans to reopen the day care on September 1.

Bishop Loya has signaled that he is going to allow more flexibility on the local level, but we are still barred from having indoor services. Given that, we are working on how we will be handling outdoor services.

The Vestry approved a proposal to fill the cracks in our parking lot and seal. The money for that project will come from state fair parking lot revenues that were set aside for parking lot maintenance, and some additional funds set aside for building improvement. No general funds will be used.

In light of the financial situation facing St. Christopher's, the Vestry reluctantly voted to cut Fr. Randy's salary from three-quarter time to half-time, starting July 1. The Vestry also voted to take Fr. Randy off the church's health insurance program. Both those moves will save the church a significant

amount of money. The move was done with the understanding that Randy will maintain his employment with the State of Minnesota so he has access to health insurance.

Me breaking format again: Folks, as sad as I was to recommend that cut, I am extremely thankful that we don't think we'll have to do worse. Episcopal churches in Minnesota are letting staff go entirely – including priests – and are considering not paying their assessment to ECMN because they just don't have the money. Keep up the good work of paying pledges, and if you have a couple of extra dollars in your pocket at the end of each month, give some thought to tossing at least one of those in St. Christopher's direction.

Back to format:

The vestry agreed to restart Adult Forum – and we've had good response to that. Jeanna McLoughlin will be instituting game nights with the kids. We are going to add people to the taping of the Sunday service (that happened last week to good reviews!) and will work on other ways of reaching out to our parishioners.

Shout Outs go to

Patrick Hunner for being willing to sing to and with our littles on Sunday morning when he could – like any self-respecting teenage boy – be asleep. Karla Cole gets a shout out for her outstanding work in coordinating the music for the beautiful consecration service for Bishop Loya.

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

Kathy Ackerman



## **JULY Calendar Highlights!**

**5 Sunday - Pentecost 5**

**10 Friday**

**1:30 PM** Keystone Mobile Food Shelf - West Lot

**12 Sunday - Pentecost 6**



**13 Monday**

**5:30 PM** Finance Meeting - via ZOOM

**19 Sunday - Pentecost 7**

**20 Monday**

**6:45 PM** Vestry Meeting – via ZOOM

**26 Sunday - Pentecost 8**

**27 Monday**

***e-Traveler*** Deadline for August

**Please note:** Due to the COVID-19 protocols in place as we prepare this edition of the *e-Traveler*, most 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.

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## Last Words



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

As I write, we have entered the season of traditionally hot weather for the Fourth of July. The heat is always a mixed blessing - I KNOW it is Summer, because it is HOT, and I feel like a kid out of school. But, I'd like it to cool off at night so I can sleep with a blanket and no air conditioning, to hear the crickets (and fireworks). My mom always told me if I didn't like the weather in Minnesota, to "wait a minute" and it would change. I guess I'll take her advice, and Randy's and Karla's - to be grateful for Summer's heat, and to wait on the page turn to see what comes next.

Ruth Thillen  
Parish Administrator

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## 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

#### **Office Hours:**

Monday - Friday 9 AM - 4 PM

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