

St. Christopher's

# e-Traveler



Meet Christ.  
Be Christ.

Visit our Website

## From the Rector



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

### **What's Happening????** by Fr. Randy

I had just taken a bite of my ham and cheese sandwich when a coworker took a seat at a nearby lunchroom table. As he took off his face covering to sip some soup, he looked directly at me and said, "*Hey Fr. Randy...what's happening at St. Christopher's nowadays?*"

I quickly chewed and swallowed before speaking...*(Yes, I did retain something about table manners from my parents!)*

For those few seconds, I really began thinking about how I was going to respond to his question. Of course, the first thing that crossed my mind was that we are not yet gathering inside our worship spaces for services. The COVID-19 pandemic is still striking us with great vigor, with case counts rising, hospitalizations and ICU bed counts on the upswing, and a great concern that we are far from conquering this virus as it continues to spread in community. It was difficult to think that we have not gathered in our building for worship since mid-March. And for a moment, I was once more heading down the mental pathway of focusing on what we have lost, what we have missed, and what we mourn.

*But, wait a minute!* Rather than lament what has not been possible during this pandemic time, I re-focused on what **IS** happening at St. Christopher's despite the health and safety restrictions in place and in an abundance of caution and

care for our faith family. We remain alive and well in Christ Jesus!

I began to list things in staccato fashion:

- Outdoor worship continues despite the colder weather—and it has been wonderful! We have transitioned to most persons remaining in their vehicles for the services, and all have been fed the Eucharistic meal! (Services at 12:15 pm Wednesdays and 10:30 Sundays)
- We have added technology to our portable outdoor speaker system to transmit services to attendees over the FM frequency of 96.1 on your dial!
- We continue producing a weekly video worship service which is hosted on our St. C's website. Many persons contribute to make this service possible as musicians, readers, intercessors, and videographers.
- Music minister Karla has been adding both voice and instrumental music to worship services and on-line offerings of choral singing to our website. She is also preparing for Advent season and Lessons & Carols music with our choir.
- Children's minister Marion is busy sharing new Sunday school curriculum with our younger kiddos and families. She is also working on a new and exciting Nativity Pageant to share with all of us.
- Youth minister Chad has been actively making updates to our St. C's website to better serve our faith family needs and provide a more informative outward facing information platform for members and visitors.
- Parish administrator Ruth is continually heading up the daily operations of our parish and coordinating all of the behind-the-scenes details we all count on.
- Priest intern Colleen Carpenter has begun her year of learning the ropes of being clergy in a local faith community. Welcome aboard!
- Vestry and wardens, and finance committee members are finalizing a carefully crafted 2021 budget—aligning with the charge and trust of being good stewards of our fiscal resources.
- The 2021 Stewardship Campaign is now in full swing! Please prayerfully consider how you will respond with your time, talent, and treasure to this important work at St. C's.
- We are supporting other community work through hosting the Keystone Food Shelf distribution, food shelf drives, and hosting a polling site for our civic elections.
- Weekly Zoom gatherings have been occurring for Adult Forum, Sunday Morning Coffee & Check-in, and Children's Faith Gatherings.
- We are developing special services and worship opportunities as we move into the holiday seasons of Thanksgiving and Advent/Christmas.

- These are just some of the things going on at St. C's...

We continue to try new and innovative opportunities to engage and support connections within our parish community, realizing that not all options will appeal to every person. Know that we are trying our best to encourage innovative gathering connections in a most unconventional time.

My friend said, "*You are doing a lot in your parish.*" Indeed we are...

Go in peace to love and serve The Lord. Thanks be to God.

Randy+

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## Music Notes



**Karla Cole**

**Director of Music Ministries**

As I continued to dig into the history of hymns and hymnwriters this past fall, I found many hymns that were written under not a little duress. Even as we are buffeted by the current events around us, hymnwriters were victims of pandemic illnesses and political upheaval, and were often moved to write their most profound thoughts down in verse form. In some cases, the obvious reaction is a song of lamentation. But as in the case of our friend, Martin Luther and his *A Mighty Fortress*, the writer can celebrate God's strength and faithfulness and write a hymn of praise, not of wailing and lamentation.

Take, for example, the story of a Lutheran pastor in Eilenberg, Germany during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). That particular pan-European conflict caused an estimated eight million deaths, most of them due to disease and starvation. Because the walled city of Eilenberg was slightly off the beaten path of the fighting, it was a haven for political and military fugitives, and overcrowding, and disease and famine. So, our little pastor, Martin Rinkart, like Martin Luther before him, opened up his house and took in folks who needed shelter and food. By the time the bubonic plague had ravaged the town, Martin found himself to be the last pastor standing, overseeing as many as fifty funerals some days. In the year 1637, he logged more than 4000 funerals, and, heartbreakingly, one of those was the funeral of his own wife.

And yet, despite the chaos around him and the tragedy in his own life, he managed to write beautiful hymn texts. There isn't a particular date associated with his best-known hymn, *Now Thank We All Our God*, but it was widely known in German and Nordic circles by the end of the war and was sung at the Peace of Westphalia – the treaty-signing event where everyone agrees that

war is hell and we ought not to do it. Until the next time.

The German composer Johann Crüger set *Now Thank We All Our God* to the tune we well know and published it in his hymnal, *Praxis pietatis melica* in 1647. This venerable hymn, with its three substantial verses was originally intended as a “short prayer before meals.” That hymn clocks in at about three minutes. Those 17<sup>th</sup> century Lutherans had a lot more patience than my crew. The shortest possible grace was about all I could get them to sit still for when they were young and hungry! But it is notable that Rinkart wrote this hymn during a time in which hungry people came to his door and he didn’t turn them away, even though it was an extreme hardship for his own household. It is said that during that particular famine, people fought in the street over a dead cat or a crow. I don’t think we can even begin to imagine deprivation so severe, regardless of our real or perceived troubles. We have been encouraged to isolate in our own “pods” for this upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. The busiest travel holiday of the year will be pretty quiet. There won’t be a Thanksgiving morning service, where we would sing all of the traditional Thanksgiving hymns, especially including *Now Thank We All Our God*. And there won’t, or shouldn’t be the enormous holiday dinner with relatives all around the table, and a turkey and every side dish known to man. But likely, we will all have a holiday dinner of some sort, and will all give thanks for the blessings that we have received, in spite of the pandemic and the social and political upheaval roiling around us.

Of course, sometimes you just want to wallow. And as I write six days before the national election with deaths from COVID and the infection rate rising daily all over the country, I can appreciate that inclination. Toward the end of the Thirty Years’ War, Charles I of England was busy disappointing his Parliament. In their estimation, he had insufficiently supported the troops that had been dispatched to fight in solidarity with the Dutch Protestants. And additionally, Charles was a believer in the divine right of kings, which was touted by the Catholics and dismissed by the Protestant reformers. In fact, he was seen as being altogether too Catholic. Elizabeth I had kept these religious conflicts under relative control during her lifetime, but after her death, the seething began, culminating in Charles’ difficulties with Oliver Cromwell and the Parliament. The disagreements over English participation in the Thirty Years’ War devolved into a Civil War at home and Charles found himself on the wrong side of Cromwell and the Parliamentary forces. He spent a little time imprisoned on the Isle of Wight and by the time the Peace of Westphalia was being signed, he found himself charged with high treason and separated from his head.

But I have digressed. Where was I? Oh yes, wallowing. There was an organist and composer who lived in Worcester during the English Civil War, Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656), who had served faithfully at Worcester and in London as the “Composer of the King’s Musick” for many years. When Cromwell’s Parliamentarians marched through Worcester, they desecrated the cathedral, destroyed the organ and managed a direct cannon shot which demolished Tomkins’ own house. Tomkins had been a composer of some of the finest choral music from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but now his home and workplace were no more, and his choir disbanded. Rather than wallowing, he turned his hand to writing for the smaller keyboard, the harpsichord. These were some of his finest works in the end. And maybe he even managed a little wallowing, too. He did write some harpsichord pieces in memory of two bishops who had been

beheaded, and a *Sad Pavane: For These Distracted Tymes* upon the death of Charles I.

So what do we do to handle all the turmoil within and without? If you're like me, you waffle back and forth between cock-eyed optimism and deep despair, usually settling into a morose sort of *Que Sera Sera*. Lately, I've been beset by a verse from Proverbs 3 – "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." I find the whole trust thing to be really difficult. But my own understanding is what permits me to be so morose. Not that blindly dumping everything in God's lap and saying, "fix it, please" will really fix anything. God does require some effort on our part. And that's the rub, isn't it? We have to search out what we can control, or what we can help to effect. And take the rest to the Lord in prayer, as the old hymn goes. "Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer." And if I've learned anything over these last months of reading about hymnwriters and plagues and famine and war, I've learned to be really grateful that I live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with indoor plumbing and radiant heat. There's no bubonic plague. No one is sizing up the family cat for dinner. And I don't have to write my own music every week!

Grace and peace,  
Karla

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## Footprints NOVEMBER 2020 News from Children's Ministries



**Marion Hunner**

**Children's Ministries  
Director**



It took a little while for us to get into our new digital groove, but the families, the teachers and I are working together to meet weekly on Zoom, and monthly in person (socially distanced, of course!). We have lessons, crafts, lots of laughter and a great community.

**Sunday School:** We meet on Zoom at 9:30 on Sunday mornings. As we head into November, we are continuing our journey into the life of Moses. Our lessons are now on the St. Christopher's website (under the "learn" tab) so that families can access them even if they can't be with us on Sunday morning.

**Family Worship:** We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month, in person, where Fr. Randy leads us in interactive storytelling and engages the children in celebrating the Eucharist with him - using individual patens and small cups (with grape juice!). Each child then gets to distribute the Eucharist to their family.

**On the horizon:** As we head into the holiday season, we are looking forward to these (somewhat modified) traditions:

- Christmas Card contest – The children will submit their artwork and we will choose one to adorn the St. Christopher's card.
- Outreach – Helping the Lessons and Carols folks by decorating plates for them to take goodies to our shut ins
- Family Advent Wreath making – via Zoom
- VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT! Following our tradition, we will work on this before Christmas and have it ready for you at Epiphany.

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## Stewardship Update

**Please** prayerfully consider your Pledge for 2021. We would like Pledge cards in **by Monday, November 9th!** This will allow us to have all of our information in time for the Finance Meeting on the evening of November 9th. Pledges not received by the Vestry meeting on November 16 will get a phone follow-up call from a Vestry member.

**As of this sending,** we have **49** pledges in of about 116 expected. If you need a Pledge card, call the office Monday-Thursday and Ruth will mail one. OR, you can just tell Ruth what your pledge will be (by phone or email), and she can enter it in the computer.

If you need to know what you pledged for 2020, to assist in your 2021 pledge decision, please call or email Ruth in the church office, and she will get you the correct information.



## NOVEMBER Calendar Highlights!

**3 Tuesday - GENERAL ELECTION DAY**  
**6 AM to 9 PM** Parish Hall in use

**4 Wednesday**  
**12:15 PM Outdoor Worship** -Parking Lot

**8 Sunday - Pentecost 23**

**10:30 AM Outdoor Worship - Parking Lot**

**9 Monday**

**6 PM Finance Committee Meeting - via Zoom**

**11 Wednesday - Veteran's Day**

**12:15 PM Outdoor Worship - Parking Lot**

**13 Friday**

**11 AM to 1 PM Keystone Mobile Food Shelf - West Lot**

**15 Sunday - Pentecost 24**

**10:30 AM Outdoor Worship - Parking Lot**

**16 Monday**

**6:45 PM Vestry Meeting - via Zoom**

**28 Wednesday**

**12:15 PM Outdoor Worship - Parking Lot**

**22 Sunday - Last Sunday after Pentecost/Christ the King**

**10:30 AM Outdoor Worship - Parking Lot**

**23 Monday**

***e-Traveler* Deadline for November**

**25 Wednesday**

**12:15 PM Outdoor Worship - Parking Lot**

**26 Thursday -- Thanksgiving Day (No Service)**

Office Closed

**29 Sunday - ADVENT 1**

**10:30 AM Outdoor Worship - Parking Lot**

**Please note:** Outdoor worship services are now being held in the North parking lot; please **tune your car radio to 96.1 FM** to hear the service. 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.

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## **Last Words**

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

Thanksgiving will arrive soon, and I am thankful for



many things; my continued good health and the good health of my loved ones; my warm fuzzy cat (who does not believe in "social distance!"); hot chocolate; and especially the St. Christopher's Community.

*I will be thankful for things that will return to us in the future when we can all gather again safely. Unmasked smiles, warm hugs, and shared meals are just a few!*

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  
Colleen Carpenter, Seminarian  
Rev. Randy W. Johnson, Rector

## Our Regular Schedule

**Sunday: 8:00 AM Holy Eucharist**

**---Currently meeting outside the Kitchen Garden---**

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 (On Hiatus)**

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

11:30 AM Fellowship

**Wednesday: 12:15 PM Holy Eucharist in the Kitchen Garden**

### **Current Office Hours:**

Monday - Thursday 9 AM - 4 PM

STAY CONNECTED

