Reflections from our Rector: Help, Thanks, Wow!

Greetings from the inaugural edition of the St. Mary’s Hamilton Village Newsletter! Within these pages you will find stories of our past, present, and future, and get a bird’s eye view of our life as a congregation - who we are, how we live out the ministry of the baptized both inside and outside of our walls, and what we hear God calling us to as we swiftly approach our 200th year of life as a parish.

By the time you read this, we will be well into the Lenten season, and just a few weeks shy of Easter morning. Some of us will be faithfully keeping our Lenten fasts and commitments to study, prayer, and charity, (many) others of us will be trying to get back up on the horse of good intentions. My experience of Lenten fasting and voluntary obligations has been that some of the most memorable and meaningful have been the things I took on passionately, only to have them fall by the wayside in the busy-ness of daily life. There is a forced humility in failure- prayer journals half-finished, devotionals partially read, long meditative walks not taken. What better metaphor is there for the familiar struggle to live as a faithful Christian? In our Baptismal Covenant, one of the promises we make is to “persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever [we] fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.” Right there, in the foundational liturgy of our initiation into Christian life, is the recognition that we will strive faithfully, and we will falter, and when that fall into sin comes, we will get back up, dust ourselves off, and try again. And try again. And try again.

Anne Lamott, one of my favorite authors, said in her book of the same name that all of our complicated and convoluted attempts to speak to God in prayer, from the psalms to the Song of Simeon to our own petitions mumbled secretly at our desks or during sleepless nights, can be boiled down to three essentials words: help, thanks, and wow. “Prayer,” she said in another book, “is taking a chance that against all odds and past history, we are loved and chosen.” As Episcopalians we root our worship in the Book of Common Prayer, and I think the blessing of the majestic language on those pages can sometimes be mixed, because we can feel that nothing we come up with on our own can compete. I hope that your Lent has been a holy one, that the obligations you have set for yourself have brought you closer to God, and that your spiritual life has been deepened. And if none of those things are your reality quite yet, then I hope you will join me in recommitting ourselves to the struggle to seek God’s face in the world, whether through the renewal of what we’ve let lapse, or the embrace of our human frailty, or trying on something new and simple- the perfection to be found in the daily repetition of those three essential prayers: help, thanks, wow.
Welcome to the inaugural St. Mary’s Newsletter and Happy Spring! This idea was born just this past winter, and we are already up and running and rolling into spring. As we all prepare for the soggiest of seasons, we invite you to take a look at what is happening at St. Mary’s and in our community. From upcoming musical selections to a piece of St. Mary’s history, to a delicious Easter Ham recipe, to what it means to be a Christian on campus.

We are so excited to be able to reach out in this new way, and we are excited to hear from you with your thoughts, suggestions and comments. You will notice the name and e-mail address of the author of each piece at the bottom. Your input is invaluable - it wouldn’t be a St. Mary’s Newsletter without the voices of St. Marians! If you would like to contribute in any way, or have any ideas about what you would like to see in future newsletters, please contact Sally Hillman Redman at sally.h.redman@gmail.com. Thank you and happy reading!

Anna Albrecht, Parish Administrator | administrator@stmarysatpenn.org

A Prayer for Spring

O ever-creating God,

We give you thanks for the lengthening days after the cool dark of winter; for the shoots of green peeking out of the snowy ground; for the pale, warm sunshine of spring that greets us these mornings, bolstering us as we walk the Lenten road with our Lord toward Jerusalem. In the midst of it all help us to be fortified by the promise you made to us in the empty tomb- that just as blossoms unfurl and leaves fan out into shadowing green, so we will be resurrected with your Son, into the blinding glory of your loving embrace. Amen.
Hallelujah!

This 2016 Lenten and Easter season is rich with great sacred music at the 11:00 services. Of special interest the St. Mary’s Choir will perform the beautifully spiritual Requiem by Gabriel Fauré as part of the Mass on Sunday, March 13. Featured soloists include mezzosoprano Matré Grant singing the deeply moving Pie Jesu and baritone Robert Mann. Wesley Parrot will recreate the somber and richly hewn orchestration at the organ. Soprano Anjali Gallup-Diaz will present Charles Gounod’s O Divine Redeemer as a Communion Anthem on March 6 in another special musical meditation.

On Easter morning The Trumpet Shall Sound with guest Alexander Freeman playing piccolo trumpet to the victorious strains from Handel’s Messiah. After our rousing success last year, the Easter service will again conclude with a flash mob rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus. Scores will be provided for anyone who would like to sing along.

Our First Wednesday Luncheon Recital Series on March 2nd will feature Kathleen Scheide playing our chamber organ and the curious Lautenwerk, a cross between the lute and the harpsichord. Joining her will be Timothy Urban on the recorder playing salon music from the 18th century.

Join us again at noon on Wednesday, April 5th and on Wednesday, May 4th for this monthly mid-day concert series, and feel free to bring along your own lunch to enjoy! On May 4th, we will be welcoming back the Meany Simmons Flute and Classical Guitar Duo, who delighted us last April with their musical selections for this unique combination of instruments.

Looking ahead into the spring, the St. Mary’s Choir will be experimenting with Russian Liturgical and folk music. We were inspired by the visit from the Alumni of the Yale Russian Chorus last spring, and have asked two local members of the YRCA, Barry Rubin and John Francis, to teach us a few of their favorites. This is new and uncharted territory for many choir members; we will be learning anthems in Russian and are very excited for this challenge and to share this beautiful and complex music with you all!

David Shunskis, Choirmaster and Musical Director | music@stmarysatpenn.org
Decisions Big and Small

Vestry Meeting Highlights, November 20, 2015.

Scott Wilds and Carol LaBelle reported on the Diocesan Convention, which was held on November 7. Mariclar, Scott and Carol attended. Many resolutions were passed: One grandfathered in existing health care provisions for clergy, but otherwise provided for equivalent lay and clergy health care for full time employees. Another called for the diocese’s divestment from companies that invest in occupied territories. Yet another approved studying the legal incorporation of the diocese. The budget adopted for 2016 assumes a 15% increase in parochial assessments (the amount each parish must provide to the diocese for its operations). The search for a new bishop is underway, and it is anticipated that candidates will be identified by February 2016, with an election as early as March 2016.

Stewardship season: to date, 19 people or families have made pledges, including several people that have not pledged before.

The effort to help local refugees through the Nationalities Services Center is under way with the leadership of Sally Hillman Redman. University of the Sciences students are assisting with collections; USciences students learned of the opportunity through our Sunday Suppers. The St. Mary’s Sunday School raised $123 for refugee relief through the candy guess held at the November 3rd Sunday brunch.

Christmas support of local children through Episcopal Community Services. Last year St. Mary’s sponsored 20 or 25 children. The Vestry agreed to sponsor 25 children in 2015.

As of November, the large space in the parish hall basement is being rented to the Bearded Ladies Cabaret, a local theatre group. The St. Mary’s Nursery School has indicated that it will lease the basement office space directly beneath the library.

After his episcopal visitation in October, Bishop Daniel provided $3000 to assist in roofing repairs.

The vestry approved making a voluntary pledge to the diocese in 2016 (over and above mandatory assessments) of $1800.

Vestry Meeting Highlights, December 22, 2015.

Over 100 coats were collected for Nationalities Service Center. Many of these were provided through University of the Science students.

Episcopal Community Services Christmas gift collection. Many parishioners gave money, which was used to purchase specific gifts or gift cards. Many bicycle helmets were purchased to meet a specific request from ECS.
The new St. Mary’s Nursery School director has arrived, John Fisher-Klein. He is using the basement office space under the library as his office. The Nursery School and the Bearded Ladies Cabaret are sharing the large basement space on mutually-agreed upon terms.

To date, pledges for 2016 have been received totaling $83,350, with eight 2015 pledgers not yet pledging. Three new parishioners have pledged so far.

The Treasurer’s report indicated that as of the end of November, the operating budget had a surplus of $1,050, with 90% of parishioners’ pledges in hand. Our efforts to save in expenses, such as purchasing rather than renting carpet mats, has been helpful. The new effort for sponsorship of Sunday flower arrangements has also been helpful. The vestry discussed options for setting up a way to take credit card or online payments for pledges and other contributions.

Patricia Vizuete, wife of St. Mary’s longtime sexton Gonzalo Vizuete, is recovering from heart surgery.

**Vestry Meeting Highlights, January 26, 2015.**

Sally Hillman Redman gave an update on the effort to provide coats and other items to the Nationalities Services Center for local refugees. About 100 coats were taken. The focus for February will be general household items, for March, cleaning products.

The vestry discussed the decision not to have church on January 24 because of the big snow.

The Shape Note Singing group that Thomas Ward is active in was not able to use its pre-arranged space that weekend, and used the Parish Hall instead, both on Saturday and Sunday.

The Shrove Tuesday pancake supper was discussed and assignments reviewed.

Sally Hillman Redman proposed the creation of a new, quarterly St. Mary’s Newsletter. It would be electronic at first, with a print edition later. There was broad support, and various assignments to provide content were made.

The Vestry adopted an amount for the Rector’s housing allowance, which is a portion of her salary. Federal tax guidelines provide favorable treatment to clergy housing allowances.

Frank Innes was elected alternate lay delegate to the Diocesan Convention which will elect a new Bishop of Pennsylvania on March 12. Scott Wilds, Carol LaBelle and Shirley Carter are regular lay delegates. The diocesan meetings with candidates for bishop includes one at the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, 63rd and Lancaster, on February 20. This forum is open to anyone who wants to attend.

Scott Wilds, Rector’s Warden | scottwilds@aol.com
Stewardship Moment

Giving your time and talent to the Lord

I love singing in the choir! I get to learn fabulous music. I also get to get up earlier in order to get to choir practice on Sundays—but that’s OK, it’s totally worth it! What might you for our Sunday time in worship and fellow/sister-ship to enrich your experience? Besides choir, there’s altar guild, ushering, reading, acolyting, name-tag hospitality, to name the usual things. Have creative talent? How about arranging flowers, preparing food for coffee hour, or playing music (do you play an instrument?) Think about it, and if you think you are ready to enhance your participation, speak to Mother Mariclair. Or me. Or David, our choir director, for all music matters.

Claudia Crane, Secretary | claudia@claudiacrane.com

Treasurer’s Report

Pledging Matters

For the inaugural issue of the Saint Mary’s Newsletter, I would like to discuss the importance of your pledge contributions to the overall financial well being of St. Mary’s.

As a congregation we are blessed to worship in such a beautiful building as St. Mary’s. In addition, our rector, sexton, administrator, and choirmaster all contribute to make our church such a unique and special community. Your pledge contribution to St. Mary’s helps to pay for the expenses associated with our building and staff.

At present, the annual pledges constitute about one-third of our church’s budgeted operating revenue. As shown in the chart below, over the past several years, we have been very fortunate to see our total pledge contribution increase or remain steady.

![Yearly Pledge Summary](chart.png)

To maintain St. Mary’s healthy financial state, we need to continue our strong tradition of stewardship.

Stan Stachelek, Treasurer | sjstachelek@gmail.com
The parishioners of St. Mary’s of Hamilton Village are drawn to St. Mary’s for many reasons. For many of us, the inter-personal connections we build at St Mary’s are an important aspect of church membership. In coming to St Mary’s, we have the opportunity to meet people we might otherwise not know. Through activities, such as coffee hour, we deepen these social connections and become a community. According to research described by Stanford University, social connections like these not only make us happy, they also help to improve our health. Consistently, research demonstrates that people with strong community ties have fewer health problems and live longer. Communities that are high in qualities such as trust and reciprocity help older adults to age more successfully. Social connectedness may work to improve our health in a number of ways: friends help you face adverse events by providing material aid, emotional support, and information that helps you deal with stressors.

So, how can we continue to build these connections and support each other as a community? I am interested in developing a “meal train” for friends and parishioners of St Mary’s.

Here’s how it would work: Meal trains are commonly organized after significant life events, including birth, adoption, surgery, illness, death, divorce, or new job. Members of our community can show our excitement or compassion though the organized delivery meals. The organization of a meal train helps ensure that during these challenging times, a nourishing meal is provided to those in need. This sharing strengthens friendships and builds the ties in our community. The meal train organizer will gather information about the recipient’s meal preferences/allergies, schedule, and calendar and will create a meal sign up calendar of the available days and known meal preferences. St Marians will be invited to participate in bringing a meal to the friend in need. The organizer will keep track of the days that are booked and what meals will be given and communicates the information to the meal recipient and other participants.

How to get involved: Contact me if you would like to participate in the St Mary’s meal train! I would like to hear from people who need meals and from people who are willing to provide meals. You can email me or call me with interest or questions.

Yvonne Michael, People’s Warden | yvonne.l.michael@gmail.com
News and Announcements

Easter Flower Donations
Envelopes for memorial flower donations can be found at the back of the church. Please write the names of those you are giving in memory of clearly, as their names will be included in the bulletin on Easter Sunday. Please submit by: Friday, March, 25th.

Are you interested in helping out with our spectacular Sunday coffee hour?
Contact Pattie Duncan at (215) 472-2014 or at pattiedd@gmail.com. You will also notice a coffee hour freewill offering box on the beverages table – your donations are welcome!

Worship volunteers needed!
You can help make mass happen! Are you interested in helping with services, as a reader, intercessor, acolyte, or usher? Please contact Anna at (215) 386-3916 or at administrator@stmarysatpenn.org.
Acolytes and ushers especially!

St. Mary’s tee shirts are almost gone!
30% SALE while supplies last!
Only XS, S, M, and L left - $10 each. Please size up from your regular size!

Shoes Shined Here!
St. Marian John Ash has once again generously offered to shine shoes and boots to benefit the organ restoration fund - $3 for shoes, $4 for boots.
Simply drop off your shoes or boots in need of polishing on Sunday morning, and pick them up the following Sunday looking shiny and spiffy. Talk to John after mass to arrange for drop off or ask any questions!
Mark Your Calendars

Wednesday, March 2nd – March 16th
Mid-week Lenten Dinner & Study, 6:30pm

Wednesday, March 2nd
First Wednesday Noontime Concert
Kathleen Scheide and Timothy Urban

Sunday, March 6th
Sunday Supper Student Gathering
6-7:30pm in the Parish Hall

Saturday, March 12th
Special Convention for Election of
our Next Bishop
Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral

Sunday, March 13th
Daylight Saving Begins
Faure Requiem Mass

Tuesday, March 15th
Vestry 7pm

Sunday, March 20th
Palm Sunday
Third Sunday Potluck Brunch
In the Parish Hall following Mass -
please bring a dish to share!
Sunday Supper Student Gathering
6-7:30pm in the Parish Hall

Monday, March 28th—Tuesday, March 29th
Parish Office CLOSED

Holy Week Schedule

Sunday, March 20th: Palm Sunday
Holy Week begins with a festive procession at St.
Mary’s - gather in the Parish Hall at 11am for the
Blessing of the Palms.

Wednesday, March 23rd: Holy Wednesday
6:30-8pm Holy Week Dinner Church
at Tabernacle UCC

Thursday, March 24th: Maundy Thursday
7pm Mass at St. Mary’s

Friday, March 25th: Good Friday
Good Friday Service, 12:15pm
At St. Mary’s, including communion from
reserved sacrament.

Good Friday Service, 7pm
At University Lutheran, 3637 Chestnut St.
(No communion)

Saturday, March 26th: Easter Vigil
8pm at St. Mary’s

Sunday, March 27th: Feast of the Resurrection
11am Mass
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<td>11am Mass</td>
<td>12:15 Low Mass w Healing</td>
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<td>Lenten Dinner &amp; Study 6:30pm at St. Mary's 8pm Stations of the Cross</td>
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<td>11am Mass</td>
<td>12:15 Low Mass w Healing</td>
<td>Lenten Dinner &amp; Study 6:30pm at UniLu 8pm Stations of the Cross</td>
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<td>9am Diocese of PA Convention</td>
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<td>11am Sunday School</td>
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<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>12:15 Low Mass w Healing</td>
<td>Lenten Dinner &amp; Study 6:30pm at St. Mary's 8pm Stations of the Cross w/organ</td>
<td>10-12 Fold &amp; Staple</td>
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<td>Great Cleaning of Easter 9am-12 Parish Workday</td>
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<td>Easter Sunday</td>
<td>12:15 Low Mass w Healing</td>
<td>Holy Wednesday See reverse for details</td>
<td>Maundy Thursday See reverse for details</td>
<td>*Easter Flower deadline Good Friday Parish Office CLOSED 12:15pm at St. Mary's 7pm at UniLu</td>
<td>Holy Saturday 8pm vigil</td>
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*Note: *Easter Flower deadline is 12:15pm at St. Mary's 7pm at UniLu.
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<td>Bishop's Banquet Ministry</td>
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| 1. 11am Mass  
11am Sunday School | 2   | 3 Tuesday Mass 12:15         | 4 Lunch concert 12:15        | 5 Ascension Day  
12:15 Mass | 6   | 7   |
| 8 Mother’s Day  
11am Mass  
11am Sunday School | 9   | 10 Final Tuesday Mass  
12:15 | 11                           | 12                           | 13  | 14  |
| 15 Pentecost  
11am Mass  
11am Sunday School  
Third Sun. Potluck Brunch | 16  | 17 Penn Commencement         | 18                           | 19                           | 20  | 21  |
| 22 11am Mass  
11am Sunday School | 23  | 24                            | 25                           | 26                           | 27  | 28  |
| 29 11am Mass  
11am Sunday School | 30  | 30 Memorial Day  
Parish Office CLOSED | 31 Feast of the Visitation of  
The Blessed Virgin Mary  
12:15 Mass |
Community Events at St. Mary’s

March
Sunday, March 13th
FaSoLa Philadelphia Shape Note Singing
7-9pm in the Parish Hall

Thursday, March 17th - Friday, March 18th
Fold and Staple with Anna!
Volunteers are needed to assist Anna, your Parish Administrator, in her Holy Week bulletin factory. E-mail administrator@stmarysatpenn.org for more information!

April
Friday, April 1st
West Philadelphia Square Dancers
7-10pm in the Parish Hall

Saturday, April 9th
The Gatherings Concert Series
Featuring Slow Meadow
8pm in the sanctuary

Sunday, April 10th
FaSoLa Philadelphia Shape Note Singing
7-9pm in the Parish Hall

Saturday, April 16th
Crossroads Music presents Sruti
4pm in the Sanctuary

Friday, April 29th
West Philadelphia Square Dancers
7-10pm in the Parish Hall

May
Sunday, May 8th
FaSoLa Philadelphia Shape Note Singing
7-9pm in the Parish Hall

Friday, May 14th
Fold and Staple with Anna!
Pentecost Edition

Saturday, May 21st
The Gatherings Concert Series
Featuring Tangent Project
8pm in the sanctuary

St. Mary’s Directory

A new directory for St. Mary’s is now an active community project. We have begun the great slog through a database of many hundreds of names and addresses, flagging folks who have moved on and updating contact information for those who will be included in the new directory.

We hope to have photos of everyone, taken by Aaron Todd or Mother Mariclaire, which will help us all to learn the names and faces of every St. Marian.

Watch this space for developments! Talk to Jerene Good with any ideas and inspiration.

Contact Anna at administrator@stmarysatpenn.org with updated contact information, birthdays, and how long you have been at St. Mary’s!

Target completion date is Summer 2016!
Cook’s Corner

Easter Ham

Though I have been surrounded by good food and good cooks for as long as I can remember I am not an instinctive cook; I like recipes. Rather than just watch my grandmother make meatballs and gravy (as we call tomato sauce with meat in it) and soak in the experience, I took notes (which I still have) so I wouldn’t forget. One of my treasured keepsakes is the recipe for my grandfather’s baked stuffed shrimp in his own hand – he wanted to make sure I’d know how to do it for myself. When I read it I feel him standing next to me. But that story I’ll save for the winter issue. We always had that dish on Christmas Eve with the other six fishes.

For this issue we’ll talk about baked ham, and again I’m indebted to others. This time it’s to the testers at *Cook’s Illustrated* magazine who develop wonderful, foolproof recipes and take you along for the ride. Ever since we got a subscription as a Christmas gift many years ago, we have been renewing; give the magazine a look at a newsstand or better yet catch *America’s Test Kitchen* or *Cook’s Country* on PBS. You’ll see what I mean.

One of my favorite finds in the magazine was their recipe for moist spiral sliced ham. Those hams feed a crowd and the spiral slicing make them a breeze either to serve up to a line of hungry eaters at church or to let folks help themselves at an open house. However the spiral slicing tends to make the hams dry out while cooking, and nobody likes a leathery ham. *Cook’s Illustrated* (CI hereafter), the Nov. 1999 issue, came to the rescue.

The trick was ingenious; you heat the ham (which at that point is already cooked) in a low oven in a plastic oven roasting bag. CI suggests that you speed up the cooking time by soaking the shrink wrapped ham, plastic netting and all, in a tub of warm water for 90 minutes before doing anything else, but I usually skip that step. As far as the cooking goes the only tricky part is remembering to remove and discard the plastic disc covering the bone before putting the ham in the bag. I’ve almost forgotten that more times than I care to remember.

Once you do that simply place the ham in the bag cut side down, tie the bag, put four slits in the top of the bag, and place the bagged ham (still cut side down) in a 9" x 13" pan. Place the pan on the bottom shelf of a pre-heated 250 degree oven for 1½ to 2½ hours (or 3 to 4 minutes per pound longer if you skipped the soaking) depending upon size or until the ham registers 100 degrees in the center with an instant read thermometer. CI then wants you to cut open the bag and in later versions of the recipe roll it back and glaze the ham in a 350 degree oven for a half hour, and the magazine offers several glaze recipes. I have never gone that far. DO NOT use the glaze package that comes with the ham; the magazine insists it will taste artificial. That advice I follow.

Glazed or not you will have a moist, flavorful ham to serve your guests. I’m sure the tasters at CI had suggestions for the brand of ham to use, but I just keep my eye out for sales a week or two beforehand. Any brand will work just fine. If you have any questions, catch me at church.

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Our Historical Treasures

The Gray's Ferry Bridge Goes To St. Mary's

There is no map indicating that our church building is near the Gray's Ferry Bridge, so how can the title of this item be true? From a pew, you have probably noticed the ornamental iron grillwork in the arches on the north or Locust Walk side of the church. The grillwork is not original. The space defined by the arches and the north wall was the baptismry containing a marble font. Early in the 70's the ornate brass font cover and some of the brass in the church had been stolen, so there was concern to protect the church from theft and vandalism while allowing people to use the church for prayer and meditation at all hours. The ironwork would protect the interior of the church while allowing the old baptismry to remain open as a chapel. In 1976, the City of Philadelphia replaced the 1901 bridge with a modern highway bridge.

A view of the 1901 bridge is shown in the accompanying photo [Photo courtesy of PhillyHistory.org, a project of the Philadelphia Department of Records]. Charlie Kapps realized that the demolition of this bridge provided a way to separate the baptismry and the nave in an attractive manner and was able to rescue sections of the railing grillwork from the scrap heap for this purpose. In the lower right of the photo, the grillwork is very recognizable as what is installed in the church.

To fill the space between the grillwork sections and the arches, custom grillwork was needed. The means to accomplish this was provided by the multi-talented Marcia and Charles Kapps, who eventually became a priest. Marcia, his wife and a professional artist, designed the additional sections and Charlie, a Temple professor of computer engineering and a welder, constructed them with the help of Keith Richards and others.

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Community Outreach

St. Mary’s Response to the Refugee Crisis

Last summer, the pictures of the razor wire on top of the fences to keep the refugees out that prompted my question to our Rector. How is the church going to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis? Mother Mariclar simply turned the question around and asked me what I would do to respond to the crisis. After asking our congregation for their ideas from the pulpit, we formed the St. Mary’s Refugee Committee. One of our responses was to support the Nationalities Service Center (NSC) in Philadelphia. The NSC has been locally helping refugees from all over the world for 95 years. They are addressing so many needs of refugees; it was a natural fit. But what should we do?

We worried that as the news cycle changed, we might lose our impulse to help. So, we decided to take up monthly collections. The response to our call for donations has been remarkable! St. Mary’s Hamilton Village has made many trips to the Nationalities Service Center to drop off items since October.

But I want to especially thank everyone who has donated coats! We have sent over 100 coats and they are still coming in! I would especially like to thank Alpha Phi Omega (APO) Service Fraternity at the USciences for their generosity with James making the connection with our cause, and Mother Mariclar for dropping off the donations.

Everyone is welcome to continue to donate items from our fall and winter lists such as Personal Items in October, Winter Coats in November, Kitchen Supplies in December, Linens in January, or General Items in February. Your donations are always welcome.

But here are our suggestions for the Spring months:

March: cleaning products such as all-purpose cleaning spray, soap, sponges, scouring pads, laundry soap, mops, brooms, dustpans, buckets, paper towels, and trash bags.
April: rain gear and gardening supplies such as rain coats, rain boots, umbrellas, bags of soil, seeds, and gardening tools.
May: children’s summer clothes and outdoor toys such as shorts, tops, baseballs, bats and soccer balls.

To learn more about the Nationalities Service Center, please go to: https://nscphila.org/about-us

To volunteer to help or learn more, please speak any member of the St. Mary’s Refugee Committee:

Sally Hillman Redman (chair)       Vanessa Albert Lowry
Frank Innes                       Mother Mariclar
Holman Massey                     Joan Spellman

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Although the Ash Wednesday scripture reading from Matthew 6 warns us against very overt displays of religious devotion, one of the best parts about Ash Wednesday is its visibility. The ashes on a student’s forehead invite others to ask about the wearer’s religious beliefs and practices but does not force them to ask. Throughout the day, the ashes on my forehead compelled friends and classmates to ask me about the observance of Ash Wednesday. This basic question led to some larger discussions about how my faith shapes my relationship to the rest of the world.

As a religious studies minor, I often have the opportunity to discuss the idea of religion and how it operates in philosophy and in the world at large. Nevertheless, I rarely get an opportunity to explain what my religion means to me on a personal level. But on this day, Christian students defend their decision to mark their foreheads, explaining what their beliefs are and why those beliefs are important. It is this kind of conversation that shows other students what Christianity is and how it operates in the lives of Christians. For students that have only been exposed to Christianity in politics and the media, many find that a more personal exposition is often very different and refreshing.

In a world rife with religious conflict, it is not always easy for students to initiate a conversation about their faith and what it means to them. However, on Ash Wednesday, it is up to curious students to ask us, “what does your faith mean to you?” Although this is not the true purpose of Ash Wednesday, it nevertheless can provide a valuable opportunity for Christian students to share their faith with their peers in a way that does not intimidate those of different or no religious affiliations.
Building Knowledge; Building Community

Our Sunday School is small with a span of ages. This presents challenges. How do we approach our forty minutes of prayer, sharing, reading and response in a way that engages someone in second or third grade and someone in sixth or seventh grade – especially, if they are the only two pupils one Sunday?

Well, we begin with sharing our victories and defeats for the prior week and our hopes and fears for the coming week. This seems simple, but it is the core of our Sunday School time and really brings us together. We approach it with God in our midst and finish with the Lord’s Prayer and a sung Doxology. We then wash our hands and share a snack, while we read the assigned Bible story from the Revised Standard Version and, often, the retelling from our age-bridging curriculum from “Seasons of the Spirit,” and discuss what we think the story means. We encourage the pupils to read, listen and share. If we have time, we may respond with art or role play or more reading and reflection. Sometimes we roam outside.

When we have a bigger group, we also have fun testing knowledge of the names of the Bible books and characters with games and challenges.

We work together to find God in the Word, in the world about us and in each other. We also learn concrete things about the Bible to become literate in our tradition and liturgy. Our Sunday School is time for growth, challenging questions, open to faith and doubt, and a place of friendship, trust and love. We arrive in the Sanctuary ready to share communion with the larger parish body. We welcome newcomers and visitors!

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Parishoner Profile: Ron Rhodes

Tell us about yourself - what’s your story?

I was born in Philadelphia at 8th and Parrish Streets, and my family moved to West Philadelphia when I was in the 7th grade. We moved into a house at 50th and Chestnut, and my mother still lives in the house. I graduated from West Catholic in 1964, and then entered the Christian Brothers, a teaching order. After a novitiate in Maryland I was sent to LaSalle for my undergraduate degree, and then for about a decade I taught at parochial schools in Philadelphia and Jersey City. I decided to leave the order and then taught as a lay person in Philadelphia for a few years, but still felt called to serve the Church, so I went to seminary at St. Mary’s outside of Baltimore and was ordained to the priesthood by the Diocese of Raleigh. I served as a parish pastor in North Carolina, and then as the director of the Newman Center at the University of North Carolina for about five years, but ultimately left ministry and came back to Philadelphia in the late 80s, and returned to teaching. I taught at charter schools and most recently at Kaplan for their associate’s degree program, before retiring. Now my full time job is trying to keep up with my 96-year-old mother.
What are the “hats” that you wear here?

I am just finishing up my second term on the vestry, I serve alongside Pattie Duncan as a lay healer on Sunday mornings, I was on the search committee that called you as our rector, and I have filled in in the office when help has been needed. Informally I am a chauffeur for a few of our non-driving older folks, and we have a ball together.

What is your favorite hymn?

Oh I have so many, it is hard to choose, but I guess if I have to it would be “There is a Balm in Gilead” because it’s a resurrection song. It tells us the story of faith, of Jesus- if you make a mistake, you don’t need to stay awake in your bed all night beating yourself up about it, because in Jesus we can be made whole again. We can be imperfect, because there is a balm “to heal the sin sick soul.”

How did you first come to St. Mary’s, and is there a particular thing about this place that is your favorite?

I like to take walks, usually down Chestnut Street to the river and back. One Sunday I decided to come back on Walnut Street instead. I hadn’t been to church in quite a while, and as I got to the intersection at 40th Street I just happened to look to my left and saw St. Mary’s. Mass was just starting as I walked through the belltower doors- I saw the Philly Gay News on a table in the narthex, and decided to stay and see what this place was about. It was soon clear from the people and the sermon- Jim Littrell was the rector then- that this was an “out” community. I remember the slogan was “diverse, inclusive, inviting”. This was about 6 or 7 years ago, and it made sense then and it makes sense now. I was received formally by Bishop Bennison some years ago now. And there isn’t any other church I would go to!

My favorite thing about St. Mary’s is that to me the community truly is diverse, and in a way that no labels are necessary- it isn’t about being gay or straight or black or white or old or young, it’s about being a group of human beings who can enjoy every aspect of who we are together. We are the sort of church that if you are coming here, it is because you have made a choice to be here and you are comfortable in your own skin, and we make room as a community for people to find that comfort in their own skins. We live that charisma. For the most part we are neighbors, including the students who are only with us for a set amount of time, and though there is room for anonymity if you really want it, we are a small church so we are comfortable with each other. We are down to earth and we truly are diverse, inclusive, inviting- and it isn’t an Emily Post sort of polite obligatory acceptance, but genuine acceptance.


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