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Reflections of St. David's

Be Reminded

Karen Robertson Henry, Editor

There's this gem of a book entitled *Note to Self: Creating Your Guide to a More Spiritual life*, by the Rev. Charles LaFond in which he sets out to provide the individual with step-by-step instructions on how to create a Rule of Life “so that you have stepping stones for the journey”. A Rule of Life he describes as “an ancient technology for building soul memory, for training minds and souls to be kind and good. It is a technology of grace that we can offer to ourselves.” LaFond makes it clear that a Rule of Life does not belong solely to those living in religious orders, but is as important for each and every one of us in our daily lives. He guides us on the process of taking time out to reflect on aspects of our lives—on behaviors and attitudes, beliefs and desires and mixing this with scripture, quotes, prayers, stories and our reflections to craft a document. At the end of the process we will have created our own rule of life— “daily reminders to live the life we wish for ourselves and the life God desires of us”.

We can extend from the personal rule to imagine a communal “rule of life” that guides us as a community here at St. David's. What are the areas that are important to us as a parish family? Our purpose statement to love God and serve others through worship, outreach, and love for all, is a good place to start. What could our reminder be about worship—the act of affirming our relationship with our Creator through acts of praise, song, thanksgiving and storytelling? Perhaps we could remind ourselves



Be Reminded *(continued)*

that worship begins with a time for centering ourselves, quieting down and opening our hearts to God's presence. What could our reminder be about outreach? We could remind ourselves that "There is no simple or immediate way to discern the right response (to the needs of others) without a relationship". And on love for all, what could our reminder be? A reminder that we pass every time we come into church, left over from this year's Vacation Bible School, sums it all up. "Love your neighbor who doesn't look like you, think like you, speak like you, pray like you, vote like you. Love your neighbor. No exceptions". If we absorb this as a group, our doors and hearts are open to all who enter our church; we fan out into our different areas of influence bearing Christ's love. We turn away from divisiveness and division and encourage respect for each other, learning "to work together toward solutions and foster dialogue. We try to

understand the other side's point of view, even if we don't agree with it. We engage those we disagree with, looking for common ground and ways to work together. We support principles that bring us together rather than divide us". It really is all about intentional living—whether in our personal lives, or our life together as a parish community.

It is intended through Reflections of St. David's to bring our community closer together as we share and learn from each other's stories, experiences, reflections, and news. In this edition we hear from and thank our contributors—Sydney Campbell, Manju Freeman and Helen Thompson. As always please trust in the power of your own story to uplift and teach us. We are always happy to receive, and are always in need of your articles, news, special prayers, poems, book reviews, etc. to make Reflections of St. David's happen.

Homeless Families Coming to St. David's November 17-24

We serve Jesus when we serve the poor. Due to a sudden cancellation at a local church, the moveable homeless shelter, the South Oakland Shelter (SOS), has nowhere to house 30 homeless men, women, and children Nov 17-24. Our parish has stepped up to help.

Parish organizations have been kind enough to move their events to make room for our guests. SOS says they will provide all the volunteers needed for this week. Liaisons on our end are Audrey Humphrey and Alex Vogelbaum. If you'd like to volunteer to help, please see them.

St. David's Prays

Dear Lord

Where there is prejudice and hate,

Let there be recognition of shared humanity.

Where there is segregation, let there be new paths of life-giving connection.

Where there is greed and violence,

Let people find abundance and creativity.

Where there is dehumanization,

Let there be loving dialogue.

Where there is no hope that things can change,

Let people see miracles on the loose.

~Shelly Pruitt Johnson

The Vergers at St. David's

by Karen Robertson Henry

The reference book—*An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*—describes the verger as—“A lay minister who assists the clergy in the conduct of public worship, especially in the marshaling of processions. Vergers may be full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer.

The history of the verger dates back to the middle ages when the verger was the “Protector of the Procession.” He would lead the way, making room for the procession to enter the church from the town square, and with his virge (mace) in hand would literally clear the way if necessary. The basic vestment of the verger is a black cassock. The ministry of vergers is supported and encouraged by the Vergers’ Guild of the Episcopal Church.”

We now have our own verger—Brian Tilley. We can't help but feel full-ready to worship, hear and meet God, love and connect with each other as we watch Brian process in and recess out at our 10:00 o'clock service. He may no longer have to physically clear the way for the procession into church, but with his majestic bearing, he sets the tone, helps us clear away our distractions to focus on why we are present—to worship the Lord our God. Brian had previously been in the role of verger in different congregations, and when he joined St. David's about two years ago continued to feel the tug to minister in this unique way. He is honored and humbled to carry the virge on Sunday mornings, and also set out to encourage others to join in this ministry. He now has a trainee—Amy Mullins who has brought her own style and dignity to the role.

There are many ways to serve at St. David's; many different ways to become part of this vibrant community of God; many different ways to use your special gift that God has given you for God's glory.



Verger Brian Tilley leading the procession
Photo by Joanne Sackett

...And Now Here I Am

By Helen Thompson

How does a woman of Indian descent from Jamaica with the last name Thompson end up in an Episcopal church in Michigan? The story unfolds.

Indians were brought by the British to Jamaica from India as indentured servants between the years 1845 to 1916. They were brought in after the end of slavery in 1834, to make up for the lack of free labor on the plantations. Of the 36,000 indentured Indians that arrived, 12,000 were able to pay their way to return to India. Today there are about 500,000 direct descendants of these early Indians, though with intermarriage and migration to Canada, Britain and the U.S., this number remains very fluid.

The Indians, were referred to as “coolies”, a term originally from South Asia meaning laborer, but now a derogatory term. They were looked down upon by the Africans and the British because of their cultural and linguistic differences, and tendency not to mix with the local population. They were placed at the bottom of the social ladder, being paid less than the former enslaved Africans.

Despite their hardships many Indians managed to retain their culture and religion, mainly Hinduism and to a much lesser extent Islam, but for ease of assimilation, many adopted English names.



As for my personal history as a Jamaican Indian—my paternal grandparents arrived on one of the last ships that went to the island from North India. For the most part this later group of arrivals never gave up Hinduism nor many of their customs. My grandfather was unable to withstand the hardships he faced and smoked ganja (marijuana), which was one of the many plants that Indians brought with them from India. This led to his early death leaving a young wife, with six children. She was eleven at the time of their marriage.



My maternal great grandparents arrived on one of the earlier ships from India, they managed to overcome the difficulties faced and fared very well in their new homeland. My grandfather became a successful businessman, owning one of the few lumber yards in Jamaica at the time. He gave up Hinduism and changed his religion to Christianity, Catholicism—so my mom grew up as Roman Catholic as did I, although I also grew up with a Hindu father. My father's family retained their Indian name, so I was Helen Maragh until I married my husband, also a Jamaican-Indian, but whose family had earlier changed their name to Thompson on converting to Christianity. As for now being an Episcopalian, that's my son's doing. He moved to Texas many years ago and joined the Episcopal Church. I worshipped there with him and his family whenever I visited and soon went in search of my own Episcopal church at home here in Michigan and I found St. David's.

So here I am today. As a Jamaican-Indian I might be considered multi-cultural or some might say non-cultural. I am not recognized as an Indian because I do not have any of the religious, linguistic or cultural bonds that would normally bond a group. I am not considered white nor would I be considered black, just simply Jamaican. My grandchildren who are half-white and half-Indian will proudly tell you they are American, though when they see people like Usain Bolt they will proudly say they are Jamaican; rarely do they say we are Indians.





Just Like Mom!

by Sydney Campbell

“I see where she gets her coloring! She looks just like you!” Two different people exclaimed this to me in the last two weeks after seeing my daughter and I together. While sometimes I can see in her the reflection of a younger version of myself, I also have to secretly laugh to hear this, because while her hair is naturally red, mine is in part “red-ish” thanks to highlights and my hairstylist.

I remember soon after Olivia was born almost twelve years ago looking at my beautiful sleeping daughter and thinking, “Could she possibly have red hair? No one I know of in my family has red hair! Did they just forget to scrub her head clean when she was born?” Ever since I realized I really did have my own ginger, I’ve just loved my daughter’s beautiful, strawberry blonde hair. I’ve come to realize you can’t be a wallflower with red hair, because everyone notices it and makes a comment. She receives compliments from friends and strangers alike regularly. I couldn’t even count how many times she has heard, “A lot of people pay a lot of money to have beautiful color like yours!” Olivia always accepts the compliments graciously, but I have a feeling that I’d be forever blushing to receive that much attention.

While the similarities between my daughter and myself are pretty easy to see, there are also plenty of differences. Olivia is strong and determined, and I can’t help but wonder if what a relative warned—that she would be “fiery” because of her red hair—is at all true. I knew when I first heard her cry after she was born that she had attitude; comparing her wailing complaints to the softer complaints I had heard from son, my first thought was, “Uh oh!” She was delivered by C-section three days before her due date, and she let me know from the start that she was not happy about not being able to make her entrance on her own time. For years though, teachers have raved about this sweet girl who is “the model of how to get along with classmates,” and I have had to sometimes think, “Are we talking about the same girl?” Is this the little girl who can single-handedly strong arm the other three members of the family from eating out at our restaurant of choice?

I love seeing the poised young lady she is becoming. However, as she becomes more independent, I have to admit that it is hard to accept that she doesn’t need me around as much as she used to. It’s like a punch to the gut to walk her into her dance studio and have her say to me, “Why are you still here?” Or to have her turn down my offer to go to the mall with me to go instead with one of her friends (and her friend’s mom!) Whenever she gets angry and annoyed at me or doesn’t want me around, I think it hurts all the more because I think of my own mother.

People always used to say that I was just like my mother, too. It was uncanny that after several weeks of not seeing each other when I was away at college, she would show up to visit and we would be wearing the same thing! We both shared a deep love of chocolate, and I used to cherish going on “chocolate runs” with her to the Wawa! One of my all-time favorite pieces of advice from my mother was, “Chocolate was not meant to be shared!” Both of us shared a passion for teaching children what we enjoyed most-- reading for her and music for me—so I followed in her footsteps and became a teacher like my mother.



Loving my daughter shows me just how much my mother also loved me.

I lost my mom to ovarian cancer when she was 50 and when I was 22. It robbed me of my naivety and most of my optimism. How could my mother, the strongest person I had ever known, succumb to this disease? When she was unable to beat it, I was robbed of my sense of hope. This wasn't supposed to happen to someone who was so strong. When I feel despondent because Olivia often doesn't seem to need me as much anymore, am I really feeling so awful because I would give anything to have more time with my own mother?

But I know that God gave me back the hope that my mother's death robbed from me when I was blessed with that fiery, little red head. The strength of my mother's spirit lives on in the fire, passion and determination of my daughter. Loving my daughter shows me just how much my mother also loved me. As I sneak into my sleeping daughter's room and tuck a lock of her red hair behind her ear, I could swear I see my mother in her serene face.



Tomorrow...

By Manju Freeman

A few years ago I wrote about a series of events that occurred on November 12, 1985 in Monrovia, Liberia. This day of tremendous horror still lingers indelibly in my mind. This poem was written a few weeks thereafter.

I was a chemistry teacher at Tubman High School. We had all been ordered back to school by a military government that was oblivious to the pain and sufferings inflicted on the people. There, in the aftermath of the pogrom I entered several classrooms, and in the seats before me were young people (students) who had lost so much—siblings, parents, friends, relatives, homes. The students were tired, hungry, grieving, weeping, terrified, lost. There were also empty seats in the classrooms—those students who were not so lucky, who had died on that day of horror. I stood there in front of them, also in pain—suffering, tired and doleful, hungry, grieving and weeping, and wishing for tomorrow.

Tomorrow Refuses To Come

We have been thru
Earth's darkest valley,
And sorrowful songs
Fill our minds.
Our hearts are laden
With weeping memories;
Mouths cannot utter
Any words adequate enough;
Eyes don't wish to behold
An iota of the past sights,
For in those times
We saw bullets rushing
To meet their aimed-at bodies,
Bodies that we know so well
We cannot bear to say
That we knew them.
The pain derived from
Such a thought
Is much too unbearable.
Yesterday is all sad memory
Today is just a continuation,
And tomorrow refuses to come.

Manju Kogpeh Freeman
November 29, 1985

New in the Pews

By Karen Robertson Henry

St. David's welcomes new member Adriana Negron. Adriana, originally from Hampton, Virginia came to Michigan in July 2018 after completing her mechanical engineering degree at Virginia Tech. She now works at General Motors as a mechanical engineer in an innovative program that allows new employees a six-month rotation on different jobs. Adriana's current rotation is working as a facilitator between engineering and creative design; so it is her responsibility to ensure that the car both works and that people will want to buy the car. This job is particularly interesting to Adriana as she minored in industrial engineering and has always been interested in how humans interact with products.

This nod to creativity started when Adriana went to college. There, away from home, she was determined to throw away the quiet, shy and bookish persona from high school and reinvent herself, or better yet follow up on that desire to express herself creatively, grow, and become more comfortable with who she wanted to be. Adriana started dancing, and danced with joy and abandon throughout college. Now post-college, here in Michigan the dancing continues. Adriana joined an all-women's hip-hop dance team, practicing from one to four nights per week, and thoroughly enjoys the dancing, the performing and the sisterhood.

The youngest of five siblings, Adriana moves with ease through the varied worlds that come with having an Italian mother and a Puerto Rican father. What is common to these two worlds? Amazing foods—Adriana says. Her Italian favorite is gnocchi al Pesto which her Italian godparents make the “best ever” at their restaurant in Philadelphia. Her favorite Puerto Rican dish is arroz con ganbules—a rice and beans dish made particularly during the Christmas holidays, with among other things, contains

roasted red peppers, olives, garlic green peppers, and onions. She describes her mother as feisty, passionate and strong who taught her to be strong and independent, as did her Puerto Rican abuela (grandmother) who recently died at 102 years, and who did much of the caring of Adriana.



Adriana was born and raised Catholic and initially did the Catholic church rounds when she came to Michigan, but had been wanting to try the Episcopal Church for a while. She kept putting it off, until one morning she just decided to do it. It was late in the morning by the time she decided, and the only church that was available with a noon service was St. David's. She came, and she enjoyed the service and along with the other attendees. She was comforted by the familiarity of the liturgical style of worship and visited the ten o'clock service. She says St. David's feels much like her church at home—warm, inviting, comfortable. It had the Episcopal elements that she was looking for—a non-judgmental and accepting space, and importantly was part of a larger church that has women in leadership, and is inclusive of the LGBTQIA community.

As she has always been “double-brained”, her term, Adriana joined the choir and is looking forward to cultivating another creative interest and to getting formal instruction on something she loves, music. But more importantly, joining the choir is her ministry, her way of contributing to the St. David's community.

We welcome Adriana to St. David's and look forward to being CoJourners on her walk with God.

Book Review

On Killing by Dave Grossman

The Very Rev. Chris Yaw

One of the most informative yet disturbing books I've ever read, is one I think many more people should read.

It's because: we're Americans, who have inherited a violent legacy; we're citizens who agree that having armed forces to protect us is vitally important; and we're Christians who value life in all its forms.

On Killing, which has been standard reading at war colleges, begins with some eye-opening statistics that back up a central claim, that humans have always been very reticent to harm one of their own species. Surveying statistics from ancient wars up through World War II, Grossman tells us that when enemies come face to face on the battlefield, weapons drawn, loaded, and aimed, 80-85% of these soldiers, when commanded to fire on the

enemy, will intentionally fire over their heads. An analysis of one particular Civil War battlefield and the weapons recovered show an astonishing number of them fully loaded but unfired. Grossman tells us that those for whom killing comes easiest have very high rates of psychosis.

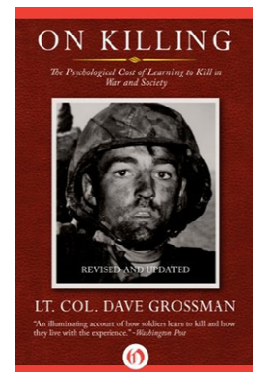
Overcoming the reticence to harm one another, which the U.S. military was able to do from Vietnam forward, has made our armed forces much more effective. Using techniques like distance from the enemy, of lessening the humanity of one's enemy - think of derogatory terms like towel-head, nip, or gook, and recruiting very young soldiers, whose psyches are not fully formed at best, are strategies that have paid off. The American military may be the most effective killing force that's ever existed.

However, at what cost? We see homeless vets on our area streets, begging for assistance. We know that 17 U.S. soldiers or ex-soldiers die by suicide every day. Therefore, as

Christians it is incumbent upon those of us who believe in our military, to do our utmost to support them—by lobbying for better

medical and mental health care benefits. The sad truth is that our military is filled with the poor and less educated who have small voices that often go unheard.

On Killing makes us aware of some very hard but important truths. Read it, pray, and act.



Rector's Wish List

As St. David's continues to grow in our worship, outreach, and love for all—these items would really be appreciated from anyone who would care to donate!

- Blue Advent Vestments (\$2,000)
- Matching ambo throw and altar linens for green and red sets (\$2,500)
- Permanent Stations of the Cross for the Sanctuary walls (\$3,000)
- Organ repair \$90,000
- Sunday assistant: \$5,000/yr, 2 Sundays/mo, \$200/Sunday Choir
Section leaders: \$8,000/yr, 4 @\$50/wk/each

Rector's Message



My friend Todd is a personal trainer.

Three times a week, he stops by the gym and is put through a rigorous workout that includes all sorts of exercises that condition and buff his body into the kind of frame he desires. Todd is a very smart, busy man who relies on his trainer to put together the right kind of program to help him grow and develop.

One day after a workout I asked Todd, “Does your trainer show you a lot of different kinds of exercises that are more effective than the ones the rest of us do?” “No,” said Todd, “the main reason I have a trainer is not because of what he teaches me, but of how he pushes me. I know how to do all the exercises, I just need help doing them.”

Isn't the spiritual life a bit like this?

It's been said that the faith life of the average North American Christian has developed little since Sunday School. Polls that test biblical literacy seem to support this (my favorite: 1 in 10 Christians believe Joan of Arc was Noah's wife). This sense that our spiritual lives should take precedence over the development of our physical bodies or our careers is not widely shared both in the culture or in the Church.

It is poignant that Jesus did not spend much time showing us how to be physically fit or how to climb the corporate ladder. He commended us to pay the highest attention to our spiritual lives—knowing this would lead to the most fulfilling and satisfying life of all. Yet we know we live in a culture that actively works against this. Indeed, growing more deeply into discipleship is life's most difficult endeavor.

So do we need a personal trainer? Or some other regimen that allows us to take our spiritual lives as seriously as we take the development of other areas of our lives? What might a concrete step toward deeper discipleship look like? Is now a good time to experiment?

At the beginning of this program year—a reminder that regular visits to the spiritual gym are recommended, and personal trainers are always on hand to assist.

Fr. Christ†

Photo Gallery

Parish Life
at St. David's

Joanne and Len Sackett



We bid a fond farewell to Mark and Eileen.



Creation Sunday and time to plant the flowers.



Youngsters can help too!



Our vestibule under construction.



Ready to welcome everyone to St. David's.



It's back to school and
Blessing of the
Backpacks Sunday

Its fun to go to school, especially when
you have a new backpack!



Volunteers being rededicated.



An ice cream social to kick off the new season....
more whipped cream, please



Getting ready for the first day of church school.



Third Graders receive Bibles.



They look happy with their new books.



Daughters of the King Junior members.



Another third grader gets her Bible.



Our choir is ready for a new season.

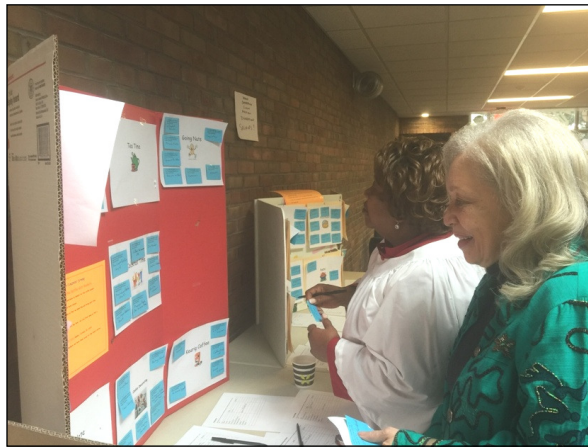


Our latest Crossroads crew (September Visit)



Crossroads crew packing lunches.

**Comedy Castle
Fundraiser
October 29**



Donation Sign-up for the Haiti Comedy Castle
Silent Auction



Pet Blessing Sunday

Several people brought their special furry friends...and they
all (pets) behaved themselves!

Reflections of St. David's

Karen Robertson Henry, Editor
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Joanne Sackett, Photographer
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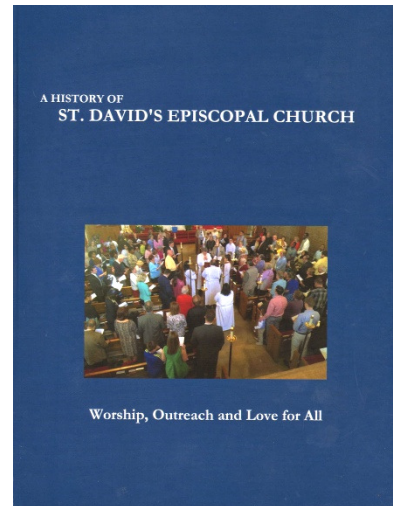
St. David's History Book

As we dedicate and celebrate the renovations to our refurbished vestibule and look forward to Phase III of our building renovations, we are thankful first to God and to all those who preceded us, taking the steps of faith along the way to provide our present facilities.

In 2017, our history was condensed and compiled into a beautiful hard-cover book to celebrate our first 65 years of ministry.

As our building renovations continue and our building takes on a new look and our ministries evolve to better serve our community, this book will be a treasured reminder of the vision and mission of those who came before us.

Copies of this book remain available and we hope you will consider a donation to St. David's Capital Campaign Fund and take this book home for your library. Copies of the book are available in the parish office with a suggested donation of \$40.



Atrium Dedication Sunday, October 27, 2019



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