

Connections

Quarterly Newsletter

February 2025



St. David's
Episcopal Church
Southfield

From the Editor...



Hi, St. David's Family! For those who don't know me, my name is Cindy Hampel-Litwinowicz and I am delighted to serve as the new editor of the *Connections* quarterly newsletter. I'm married to Ray Litwinowicz and we have three adult sons. Our family officially joined St. David's in 2010. I also serve on the Altar Guild and plant flowers in the Memorial Garden in the spring.

I love writing and editing. For those who don't know my background, I have a degree in journalism from Wayne State University and I worked two years as a full-time reporter at smalltown daily newspapers in Ohio.

After moving back to Michigan, I served on the media relations staff at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, then I started writing freelance articles from home after our sons were born. I'm a member and Past President of Detroit Working Writers and I've written two books under my secret identity of *Cindy Hampel*.

If you'd like to contribute to the newsletter or have story ideas, please let me know! My email is cmhampel@wowway.com or at commametaphor@gmail.com.

In this parish I see spiritual people who care...and know how to have fun! My goal for *Connections* is to reflect our multifaceted lives as St. David's parishioners.

Governor Signs Bill Mandating Destruction of Unwanted Firearms

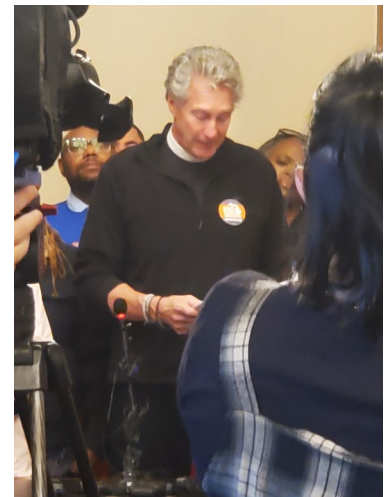
Fr. Chris Advocated for Bill Based on Experience with St. David's Buyback Program

By CINDY HAMPEL-LITWINOWICZ
Connections Contributor

LANSING — Governor Gretchen Whitmer recently signed into law a bill Fr. Chris advocated for at the Capitol in December.

The bill now requires Michigan State Police to destroy unwanted firearms instead of transferring them to companies that recycle parts for new guns.

(continued on Page Two)



Father Chris addresses a press conference in the Michigan State Capitol Building in Lansing on December 4th, 2024. He was one of several speakers at the press conference who urged State Legislators to pass a number of gun safety measures before the end of the legislative session in late December 2024. (Photo: Cindy Hampel-Litwinowicz)

Thank You's to...



Edna Buday

Edna Buday, for her longstanding service as newsletter editor. I appreciate her help as I learn the ropes in this new role. We'll keep seeing Edna in the choir, sharing her vocal and violin talents during services.

I also want to thank **Joanne Sackett** for continuing as our main newsletter photographer, as well as our regular columnists: **Fr. Chris, John Hawkes, Cindy Rush**, and **Jerry Maloney**. Last but not least, I'd like to thank our parish administrator, **Amy Prather**, for sending out the newsletters.



Governor Signs Bill Codifying New Michigan State Police Practice of Destroying Unwanted Firearms

(continued from Page One)

After the St. David’s gun buyback program started garnering national attention, an investigative article in *The New York Times* in December 2023 revealed that the unwanted guns turned in by citizens were not being destroyed as citizens thought. Instead, the Michigan State Police were sending them to a company that recycled some of the pieces as part of gun kits that require no background check for purchase.

Publicity about this practice helped change the MSP policy. However, without a law mandating the new practice, gun safety advocates were concerned that that the old policy might be re-established in the future.

“Michigan’s legislature did the right thing when they demanded that the 11,000 plus firearms which are taken in annually by the state police for destruction, are, in fact, completely destroyed,” said Fr. Chris. “Gun buyback donors and others who surrender their firearms to our local police departments, and are told they will be destroyed, can now be assured that that will happen.

“I applaud this new law,” said Fr. Chris, “and I am proud of St. David’s for the substantial role the church played in making this change.”

More than 100 people jam into a room and nearby hallway in the Michigan Capitol Building to hear advocates for gun safety measures speak at a press conference on December 4, 2024. Among the speakers: Fr. Chris, who urged legislators to codify the practice of destroying unwanted firearms instead of sending them to gun part recyclers. (Photo: Cindy Hampel-Litwinowicz)

From the Rector...



Fr. Chris Yaw

Where are you pointing?

Will the things you do today point people to God?

Will the words you use, the deeds you perform, the goals you make—bring glory to the One who made it all possible?

Matthew 5 says that’s why we’ve been given our smarts, our opportunities, our good relationships, our financial

status: To do the works that point to God. Don’t believe the lie that it’s all about you. It’s not me first, it’s God first! It’s not my family or country first, it’s God first!

This means we put other people ahead of ourselves—pointing the way to our servant-savior, who put us ahead of him.

Don’t seek glory, seek ways to give God glory.

See you Sunday.

Christmas Memories



Parishioners sing “Silent Light” during the Candlelight Service on Christmas Eve. (Above)

Each year, the Altar Guild transforms the sanctuary into a joyful and majestic setting to honor the Birth of Christ. (Left)

Photos: Joanne Sackett

From the Senior Warden...



Ellen Boyes

The 2025/2026 Vestry year has just gotten started after our January 2025 Vestry Retreat. We spent Friday evening and all-day Saturday together getting to know each other and taking a look at what is our vision for St David's for this year.

This 2025/2026 vestry consists of:

- Ellen Boyes, Senior Warden, who will oversee the day-to-day operations of St David's;
- Maureen Mahar, Co Senior Warden who will oversee the Sabbatical events while

Father Chris is on leave.

- Hampton Hanable, Junior Warden
- Cindy Rush, clerk
- Carol Wells
- Pat Tilley
- Rita Spiller
- Rocco Romano
- Darryl Butler
- Howard Rush

Our 2025 Goals are:

- 1) Investigate hiring a curate
- 2) Develop an ongoing discipleship course/service

- 3) Transition St. David's Fire-arm Disposal Ministry outside the parish
- 4) Host a Community Conversation
- 5) Make a Kitchen Update

As many of you know that this is not my first time as Senior Warden and cannot wait to be able to work with all of you again, The vestry meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month and those minutes will be posted on the board in the hall across from the office.

If you need to get ahold of me – Cell # 248-840-0134 or email at ellenboyes@yahoo.com

From the Junior Warden...

Property Commission Members for 2025 are Alex Rienstra, Rocco Romano, and Hampton Hanable.

Woodsman Services submitted a tree removal estimate for three apple trees on our property. Two trees are along the west side of the entrance walkway along the parking lot grass area, and the third is adjacent to the rear entrance door in Memorial Park. After consultation with Woodsman arborist, these trees are past their useful life and need to be removed. Cost for removal along with stumps is \$1,435.00. This work will be conducted in the forthcoming Spring.

The Property Commission has procured one bid for sidewalk repair for the church perimeter sidewalks. This cost is approximately \$15K for all work to com-

pletely repair all damaged walkways. The Vestry will be informed after all receipt of estimates.

The Capital Campaign results have Air Conditioning and Kitchen upgrade as a virtual tie. Fr. Chris has requested the Property Commission to explore three levels of kitchen upgrades. We have been meeting to determine these three levels and the cost for each.

Kudos to Ray Litwinowicz for the purchase and installation of new LED emergency lights that replaced old emergency spotlights in the sanctuary.

Rocco reported that some missing shingles have been replaced on the rear entrance side of the sanctuary. This work was completed in the September – October timeframe.

A special thank you to Len Sackett for his initiative to winterize the Memorial Garden sprinkler system.

Lights in the Choir Room and Al Eppens office were updated and replaced with long-lasting energy efficient LED hardware. Both rooms are also equipped with a dimmer switch.

Both heating boilers have completed maintenance service by Cregger Heating and Cooling. This service call (completed February 6, 2025) required installing service ports to descale the heat exchangers and boiler maintenance to clean ignition and flame sensor electrodes. Cost for this service is approximately \$4800.



Hampton Hanable



New Vestry Commissioned Jan. 26th

Fr. Chris commissioned the new Vestry members in the Sanctuary during the Sunday Service on Jan. 26. Afterward, the parish held its 72nd Annual Meeting in the Parish Hall, which included a potluck dinner and video presentation by Fr. Chris.

The new Vestry members pictured are, from left: Pat Tilley, Rita Spiller, Rocco Romano, Cindy Rush (clerk), Howard Rush, Darryl Butler, Carol Wells, Senior Warden Ellen Boyes, and Junior Warden Hampton Hanable. Not pictured is co-Senior Warden Maureen Mahar, whose duties will begin when Fr. Chris takes his sabbatical in the second half of 2025. (Photo: Cindy Hampel-Litwinowicz)

The Altar Guild Year-in-Review: 2024 Impact Report

The Altar Guild prepares the sanctuary for the honoring of God by the members and guests of St. David's. Guild members work diligently behind the scenes preparing the elements, vessels and altars for the many and varied services that take place in our church during the year. This is a year-round ministry.

The guild began 2024 with 13 members. We were graced with much assistance from our seminarian Felicity Thompson. We are blessed to have many parishioners assist us with setting up and removing of the Easter and Christmas décor.

Monthly teams clean the sanctuary and prepare the vessels and elements on Saturday for about 90 minutes. On Sundays they clear the 8 AM service and set up the 10AM service. We also prepare and set up the Wednesday mid-week service. Altar linens are also cleaned and ironed by the members. In addition to the weekly services, Altar Guild prepares the kit for the monthly visit to the Detroit Rescue Mission and maintains the kits for the Lay Eucharistic Visitation team. Weddings, funerals, burials, baptisms and Festival Days all require preparation and cleaning by the Altar Guild members.

We continue to burn the prior year's blessed palms for use on Ash Wednesday during the services and



**Anne Jeanette LaSovage
and Diane Schoch**

also for the popular drive-thru applying of the ashes. We also assisted at several funerals this year for parishioners and non-parishioners. Outdoor services during the summer were conducted on the back lawn, requiring Altar Guild to lend a hand in set up.

We continue to offer intinction at the communion rail, and the common cup is offered outside of the railing on the east side. 8 a.m. Sunday and mid-week services are being held in the Sanctuary. Sanitizer continues to be used at the Altar and the Credence table.

Bob Masek continues to supply flower arrangements to beautify our worship space. We continue to use the arrangements for two weeks to be fiscally responsible, and to ease the duties of Guild members.

The Guild continues to successfully recycle our used Swiffer pads (dirt and all). We also continue to recycle paper, batteries, cardboard, and wine bottles. Also using the flowers for two weeks reduces the amount of oasis going into the waste stream. We cleared out many candle stubs that had accumulated for many years, and donated them to the Arts & Scraps resale shop in Detroit.

St. David's was graced with 2 donations of items this year. A memorial donation of additional Lenten linens was made by the Boyes family, and blessed in March. Julie Wagner donated a chalice she purchased on a trip to Portugal and it was blessed in November. We have labeled this the Fatima Chalice.

It is an honor to serve God in this ministry. The members of this Guild are so hard working and supportive of one another, and this ministry. This labor of love for God and our parish family continues to bless our souls and allow us to help others reflect on the mystery of the Eucharist, where heaven and earth meet.

Respectfully submitted,

*Diane Schoch and
Anne Jeanette LaSovage,
Altar Guild Co-Chairs*

Message in the Mud

Psalm 46 says: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea."

Labor Day Weekend 2024 found us in Hendersonville, North Carolina. The Rush Family gathered at the home of our nephew for an adventurous weekend. Our hosts showed us the loveliest time in the loveliest place. As a friend once told me when seeing the sun rise in the mountains, "Who says there is no God?" The colors, the air, the majesty are beyond compare. If God has an earthly home, surely this is it. Together we (ages 6 to 71) zip lined, hiked a mountain that revealed a gorgeous view of Lake Lure, and had the time of our lives kicking up a lot of dust on the ATV trails.

Unfortunately, just four weeks after our trip, the area would be ravaged by Hurricane Helene. We watched the news incredulously that the storm would hit the beautiful location we had enjoyed just a month before. We made urgent calls to our family to check on their safety. They were safe after huddling in a closet while the house shook. It took a few days, but with the help from all the neighbors they were finally able to drive off the mountain.

Now Christmas was approaching and instead of exchanging gifts we adopted a family affected by the storm. Our family was Rich, his wife, Sheila, and their adult son, Chris. They lived about six miles down the mountain in a house they had just bought two months prior to the storm. When the rains started, Sheila didn't go to work. Chris wanted to go to a hotel but they decided to stay put. The power went out at three in the morning and by six o'clock they could see water outside the door. Soon, the water was up to the foundation, eventually coming through the vents and floor boards. It was a flash flood.

Suddenly, there was a loud crack! A mudslide busted out the windows, and

Cindy
Weeder
Rush

Connections
Columnist



logs came rushing into the house. It happened so fast! Soon, the water was up to the counters and everything was floating by them. They even saw the refrigerator bump the ceiling. They put their dog on the counter for some safety.

Fearing the end, the little family called their loved ones to say good-bye. They held hands and said a prayer. But soon after saying the prayer, the water stopped rising and started to recede. The house had six inches of mud and was knocked off the foundation, but the family was safe. The only way out of their destroyed home was to crawl out of a window.

A call to 911 was of no use. The small creek that once passed in front of the house was now a torrent. Rescue workers could not get to them. Walking in the cold, they managed to make it to a friend's house and spent the night in the garage. The next morning it was clear that help was not coming, so they decided to hike the mountain, knee-deep in mud.

After thirty hours a good samaritan picked them up and took them to a shelter. They stayed there for three weeks, going to their property when they could, trying to find any of their belongings. They recovered a few household things. But mostly, everything was washed away.

Gone. Except the Mother's Day gift Sheila had received a few years before. On one of the scavenger trips back to their house, Rich saw a glimpse of something in the mud: it was Sheila's small crucifix on a gold necklace. He picked up the mostly buried necklace and reflected: "That's God just telling me, I'm right here."

Rich, Sheila and Chris are currently living in a hotel and have bought another house. This is their home and they don't want to leave. Rich, a veteran, was grateful to also find his American flag. Sheila said, "The only reason we're here is because of God."

My trusty companion, Google, states, "In the Bible, mountains are significant points between heaven and earth, symbolizing places where God dwells and encounters humanity."

I guess you're right, Google. I guess you're right.



Parishioners visit the residents of neighbor St. Anne's Mead to sing Christmas Carols in January...including Katie Yaw, Jack Yaw, Fr. Chris Yaw, Kitty Kenning, Edna Buday, Cindy Rush, Jim Kenning, Rita Spiller, Gloria Knights, and Al Eppens. (Photos: Joanne Sackett)



CSB Adventures

St. David's Christian Service Brigade group (CSB) continues to support the youth

of the church and community. The Monday meetings provide fellowship, friendship and learning opportunities. CSB welcomes any youth, boys or girls, ages 9 to 18+ to join us for Monday meetings and outings. Speaking of outings, in December 2024, we coordinated a SCUBA Discovery class hosted by a local dive shop. Seven adventurous youth joined us for an introduction to the sport of diving, including a session at a local pool for a two hour underwater class. In January 2025 we held the annual

**Jim
Kenning**

**Connections
Contributor**



Cabin Outing at Island Lake State Recreation Area. We had 18 youth and adult alumni join us for the fun, including x-country skiing,

sledding, games and wonderful meals. The heated cabin provided the focal point for these activities. Finally, in February 2025, we went skiing and snowboarding at the local Alpine Valley resort, with 15 youth and adults joining us for the fun. A safe day of activity included private lessons for the beginning enthusiastic participants. We are looking forward to many more activities as the year continues, including hosting the Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner on March 4th in the Parish Hall.



CSB's Annual Winter Cabin Outing weekend included games inside a heated cabin and cross-country skiing outside on the trails at Island Lake State Recreation Area in January. (Both Photos: Jim Kenning)



In December, CSB coordinated a SCUBA Discovery class at a local pool for a two-hour underwater session (above). In early February, the group went skiing and snowboarding at the local Alpine Valley Ski Resort. (Both Photos: Jim Kenning).

CSB Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner: March 4th in the St. David's Parish Hall

New in the Pews

Keith Harris and Stacy Jackson are advocates for diversity, socialization, service and activism. When they learned about St. David's and our outreach ministries as well as our views on social issues, among other things, they began to attend our services in September.

**John
Hawkes**

**Connections
Columnist**



For many years, Keith attended an Episcopal church with his grandmother. The couple are also members of the Church of the Messiah in Detroit. Their rector, Pastor Barry Randolph (who has been a guest preacher at St. David's) has worked with Father Chris on the Gun Buy Back ministry. Their church hosted one of the six buyback events last year. When Keith saw Father Chris on television it influenced him to visit St. David's.

"I saw Father Chris on the news and that's what motivated me to get back to a faith-based church, after seeing the things he was doing," Keith said. "I absolutely feel strong about gun buybacks."

Stacy grew up in the Baptist faith. She likes the family environment and the awareness of social issues that exists at St. David's. Our welcoming atmosphere is also an attraction for her.

"Father Chris makes us feel welcome," Stacy said. "It is kind of like the lights that are cut on in a dark house." Keith added, "the socialization in church is so warm. It's really a welcoming church."

The couple have already participated in activities with St. David's and are looking for more involvement. Keith and Stacy are both licensed lobbyists and they traveled to Lansing as part of the entourage and served as spokespersons for the anti-gun movement. They have also participated in some of the Gun Buy Back events. In November, they attended the 190th Diocesan convention in Novi. Stacy encountered an unexpected acquaintance.

"I met the Venerable Timothy Spannaus, the Archdeacon of the Diocese," Stacy began. "I had him as a professor at Wayne State. I had no idea he was a part of the diocese." She compared her

classroom experience to the message she receives in sermons from Seminarian Felicity Thompson.

"Felicity is almost like a spiritual professor," Stacy said. "When she speaks, I feel like I'm in class and need pen and paper. Father Chris and Felicity make an excellent team."

The diversity that exists at St. David's is very important to the couple. Keith said, "Diversity is everything for me. This is the way we spell the word race... RASE, which stands for Real Activism Serves Everyone. When Father Chris speaks, his message is to serve everyone."

Both Keith and Stacy are native Detroiters. They have lived in Southfield for 20 years. They have five children, four of whom live in Michigan while the fifth one is in Alabama. Stacy has a bachelor's degree in Radio-TV-Film and a Master's in Instructional Technology from Wayne State. She currently works for WSU as an Associate Director of Educational Outreach. In her position, she oversees satellite campuses while working with high school students taking college level courses.

Keith is a retired contractor and helped build Detroit's VA hospital, the Renaissance Center, the Palace of Auburn Hills and Ford Field. He was also part of the team on the Hudson's demolition. Keith's pastime involves architecture. He loves taking pictures of old architecture and seeing new architectural projects in progress. He likes to

write in his spare time. His latest paper is entitled: "Prayer, Peace and Poverty."

Keith describes Stacy as a strong speaker and activist. At our 10 a.m. service on Feb. 23, Stacy read the poem "Won't You Celebrate with Me" by Lucille Clifton, as part of our Black History Month Poetic Reading Series.

Meanwhile, Stacy describes Keith as the "disruptor." "He will kick the door in for justice and is not afraid to lead," she said. "His heart is as big as his strength." She gave an example of this trait.

"Once we were driving to a department store," Stacy began. "Keith noticed an elderly woman pushing a shopping cart that was overflowing with groceries up a hill. Keith stopped the car, got out



Keith Harris and Stacy Jackson

and insisted on helping the lady. She said that she stayed two miles away. He put the woman's groceries in their vehicle and drove her home. He has always done these kinds of things for others since I have known him."

Keith concluded by saying, "We're here for our souls. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, 'you may go to heaven with a battered and bruised body, but you will not go to heaven with a battered and bruised soul.'"

We welcome Keith Harris and Stacy Jackson to St. David's.

(Photo: John Hawkes)

My New Point of View

I was a Catholic for seventy some years and a priest for eleven of them and I have been an Episcopalian for about twelve. There are many things in the Catholic Church I loved and I treasured and still do. Of course, there are many things I love and Treasure in the Episcopal Church as well.

However, there are things in the Episcopal Church that drive me right out of my mind. And one is the lack of certitude. One of the nice things about the Roman Catholicism is its uniformity. You pretty well know what-is-what and what-isn't-what. You may disagree, but at least you know what it is you disagree with.

On the other hand, one of the things I treasure and love in the Episcopal Church is the lack of forced uniformi-

Jerry Maloney

Connections Columnist



ty. I like it when the guy in the next pew disagrees with me and I disagree with the guy next to him. For that matter, if you took a poll you might find there are not many people in the congregation who

totally agree with someone else. How can we deal with groups of people who claim to belong to the same faith community who do not believe the same things? Should we not have a common faith, a common creed?

I think this is not the result of confusion but of openness. Take communion. With my Catholic background, I like to believe that Jesus is truly present in what appears to be bread. Lots of other people believe Jesus is symbolically present in the bread and wine. Let's not get all hot and bothered. Somehow, Jesus is there. That's my Episcopalian answer.



What's under the colorful cloth veil on the altar? This is what the priest sees. Then there's what we see through the eyes of faith. (Photo: Cindy Hampel-Litwinowicz)

Guests Share with St. David's Their Stories of Living through Wars in Gaza and Lebanon



Left: Hani Almadoun, an official with the United Nations Works and Relief Agency, speaks about his efforts as a relief worker, executive, and Palestinian who has lost family and loved ones in Gaza after Hamas started the conflict with Israel on October 7, 2023. (Both Photos: Joanne Sackett)

Right: The Reverend Halim Shukair shares during his sermon on Feb. 23 some of his experiences living through the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted from 1975-1990, and acts of love he saw even during the war. He taught us the Arabic phrase "Marhabah," which he said means both "Hello" and "God Is Love."



Nationally Known Author and Political Analyst Peter Beinhart to Visit St. David's on March 10 for Book Signings and Discussion on Future of Israel and Palestine

St. David's is one of four locations in Southeastern Michigan where author Peter Beinhart will speak on his vision for a way forward in



the Middle East for Israelis and Palestinians after the Gaza War.

Beinhart presents his vision in his new book, *Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza*.

Fr. Chris will talk with Beinhart about the book at the event, starting at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 10.

For tickets and more information please visit tchayah.org/Beinart.