

Putting Ourselves in God's Hands



We are midway through a fall season that's as chaotic as it can be: a busy round of feast days and commemorations, staff comings and goings, weather that has swung from summer warmth to rain the one day we planned our outside party, and crazy election news swirling over all. In other words, it's life as usual here on West 99th Street.

It may be apocryphal, but Martin Luther is credited with saying one day, "I have so much to do today that I shall have to spend the first three hours in prayer." I remind myself of this at times

like these. There is so much to do and so little time to do it in that it feels like we should spend every available moment trying to get on top of it all. Yet therein lies the way of anxiety and frustration.

God asks us instead to put ourselves in her hands. We'll never get it all done and we're never fully in control. We make mistakes, some of them grievous. And so goes the course of our history. Instead, begin with prayer; start with asking for help and grace. And God's sustaining love will carry us always. — *Mother Kate*



Block party: Wait til next year!

Faith in Action: Answering the Call

A great blessing of St. Michael's is the generosity of its people in stewardship.

The annual campaign pays for more than one-fourth of the church's annual budget. In effect, our pledges sustain the worship and service at the core of our mission.

This year's stewardship theme is Faith in Action.

I'm honored to serve on the St. Michael's vestry. When warden Kyle Okimoto asked me to co-chair the stewardship campaign, I didn't hesitate to say YES!

So I'm putting my own Faith in Action. Why?

Our Sunday service is inspiring. But St. Michael's also challenges and inspires us to take that extra step of showing God's love by getting us up, getting us out, and calling on us to

help where and how we can.

That's Faith in Action.

Taking action often requires more than volunteers. That's why my husband Gene Diver and I are pledging to St. Michael's. We want our church to continue to be a strong presence in the community, showing the power of God's love for everyone.

"St. Michael's is also blessed to have income streams and an endowment," Kyle says. "We should think of these blessings as our given talents. Our responsibility is not to rest on these blessings but to multiply them into impact."

Please pledge to put Faith in Action. The Ingathering is Sunday, Nov. 24.

— Linda Turnbull



The stewardship theme Faith in Action takes many forms, sustained by our pledges, from left to right. Linda Turnbull and Oliver Bowcock at the Saturday Kitchen giveaway-pantry-items table; Choir blessing; Gillian Okimoto and Sunday schoolers.

A Video Primer to Reparations at St. Michael's

Just in time for St. Jude's Day, the Renewal Stories series from the Episcopal Diocese of New York (dioceseny.org) has posted a 7-minute video about Reparations at St. Michael's. The video features Mother Julie and Reparations Committee co-chairs Carole O'Connor-Edwards and Gregory Bryant, who speak frankly about the origin, challenges, achievements and hopes of an effort that extends back to the pre-Covid era. The video is alive with scenes of the church and neighborhood. In one sequence, Gregory leads us to the marker on the site of the St. Jude's Chapel. "We just can't live in the world as it is," he says. "We have to think of the world in relationship to God. And Reparations helps us do that." Bishop Matthew Heyd launched Renewal Stories last month. The filmmaker is Andrew Filippone of Telling Story Inc.



CAROLE O'CONNOR-EDWARDS
CO-CHAIR, REPARATIONS COMMITTEE
ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH

"By offering Reparations, we are at least looking to right some wrongs," says Carole O'Connor-Edwards, the committee co-chair.



Meet Mother Michelle Meech

The Rev. Michelle Meech, St. Michael's interim associate rector, has seamlessly joined the fold while Mother Julie is on medical leave.

Michelle stepped in to lead fall Bible study, where she encourages participants to engage deeply with the prophets Amos and Hosea.

Michelle believes that it's crucial to grasp the historical context of scripture to apply it meaningfully in our lives.

"Otherwise we risk manipulating scripture to suit our views," she says. "For example, Amos is prophesying after Israel's split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. He's chastising the people of Bethel for their worship practices.

"But by placing Amos's words and actions in the larger context, we're able to hear the word of God pointing to the problem of absolute power and how it twists the image of God to suit its own needs.



"There is such beauty here — not only in the aesthetics of our worship, but in the hearts of the people of St. Michael's," Mother Michelle Meech says.

"This helps us see how a similar distortion is happening in 21st-century America and therefore gives us an indication of how we're called to respond. The prophets are speaking to us, not just to the people of ancient Israel."

Michelle, a native of Meadville, Pa., honed her interpretive practice at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (which happens to be Mother Kate's alma mater).

Most recently, Michelle served for eight years as rector of St. John's, Kingston, N.Y.

Michelle's spiritual path began when she encountered the Enneagram (literally, figure of nine), a map of the false beliefs that motivate human behavior. She found its insights into human nature so powerful that she's been teaching and learning from its wisdom for 25 years.

Michelle and her wife, Ana Hernández, a singer and composer who specializes in sacred music, live in Pearl River, N.Y., in Rockland County. The commute time is perfect for reading or working the puzzles in the New York Times app. — *Ned Boyajian*

The Lord God Made Them All

The St. Francis Day Blessing of the Animals is perhaps the church's most animated and cacophonous service. Among attendees on Oct. 6 by the Amsterdam Avenue steps: Douglas, Gabriel and Cosmo; Atticus; and Archie.



A Wedding at St. Jude's: Joy and Community

Weddings are sacraments and parties, consecrations and festivities. As vicar of the St. Jude's Chapel from the 1920s to the chapel's demolition in 1956, the Rev. Floarda Howard performed as many as three weddings a week.

By all accounts, Howard was a thoughtful, joyous officiant: Couples looked forward to being married at St. Jude's. And several extended families returned for children's baptisms, confirmations and, later, more weddings.

The St. Jude's community extended all around the neighborhood, the city and the East Coast.

THEN & NOW

For the historian, the canonically required entries in the chapel register provide invaluable information. For every

wedding, the age, birthplace, and current residence of the bride and groom are recorded, together with the witnesses.

A clear demographic portrait emerges from the marriage records. St. Jude's early congregants were predominantly Caribbean and Anglican in origin. Over time, the wedding couples tended to be born almost equally in the Caribbean and here in the Northeast.

During almost 50 years, no matter what the particular individual details for each wedding, there is one constant: the officiant's signature — "Floarda Howard" — is distinct. It is clear, legible and elegant.

The vicar was pastor and spiritual father to hundreds of couples and families ... more than any of us, then or now, can count. — *Jean Ballard Terepka*



The Rev. Floarda Howard presides at a wedding at St. Jude's Chapel, date unknown.