

Staff

The Rev. Andrew J. Hege, Rector

The Rev. Samuel V. Tallman, Assisting Clergy

The Rt. Rev. J. Gary Gloster, Assisting Clergy

Dr. James Bumgardner, Director of Music

Greta Wilson, Parish Administrator

Joe Raulerson, Financial Secretary

Bill Stroh, Sexton

Nursery Attendants: Megan Redford, Alex Scheurer, Chloe Shaut,

Sunday Schedule

Adult Christian Formation 9:00 am

Morning Prayer (Zoom and YouTube) 10:00 am

Mid-week Services

Wednesday Noonday Prayer 12:00 pm

Vestry

2021	2022	2023
Sterling Hutcheson	Doug Galke, Jr. Warden	Marjory Holder
Gigi Poole	Lisa Kaufamnn	Faith Jones
E.B. Springs	Roy McCraw	Chip Monroe
Jim West	Tim Silver, Sr. Warden	Patty Patella
Amanda White, Treasurer	Elizabeth Sudderth, Clerk	

The Newsletter

This publication is for you, about you, and by you. If you have news to share, please submit it to Greta Wilson in the office on or before the 15th of each month. We want to hear from you.

The mission of the people of our church is to grow spiritually in Christ through worship, stewardship, study, service, and fellowship.

Website: www.stmaryofthehills.org.com

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Blowing Rock

North Carolina 28605

ST. MARY OF THE HILLS

EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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Newsletter



Lent 2021

Volume 3

Issue 1

LENT



St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church

FROM THE RECTOR

*“...but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.”
- Matthew 6.20*



In a season that has called upon us to refrain so much already, this question may be fair, “Can I bear to give up even one more _____?” One more dearly held tradition, one more deeply needed activity, one more long-awaited gathering – It all seems like too much.

This exchange plays out in my mind almost daily as we approach the one-year mark in our collective effort to slow and contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Aware that there is considerable grief already present in our midst at the loss of so much, I want to carefully invite us to consider giving up one more thing as we approach the dawn of the season of Lent – the imposition of ashes.

Like so many of you, the receiving of ashes upon my forehead and the proclamation of my finitude is the starting point of my annual forty-day pilgrimage in the Lenten season. The tender touch of another human hand and heart-wrenching announcement of my mortality shocks my soul, year after year.

Interestingly, however, the imposition of ashes is optional in the Ash Wednesday rite of our 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. “If ashes are to be imposed...,” the rubrics read. There is, within the framing of our common worship, an assumption that we might not receive ashes upon our foreheads as a part of our worship on the first day of Lent.

This year, in light of the continuing guidance from the Diocese of Western North Carolina to refrain from gathering for in-person public worship, our Ash Wednesday liturgy will not include a space for the imposition of ashes. Instead, I’d like to invite us to enter into the emptiness of that space and perhaps discover a far deeper truth.

In reality, all our sacraments and rituals are incomplete in what they seek to communicate, the unfathomable love of the infinite God. Bread and wine, water and oil, palms and ashes - none of these last. They all break down and waste away. But the love of the risen Christ endures.

On Ash Wednesday each year, we read a familiar portion of the Sermon on the Mount, wherein Jesus invites his disciples to place their hope in treasure that will last, riches not of this world, a fortune that cannot be taken away. This is the invitation of Ash Wednesday and the whole of the season of Lent – to re-discover that which will truly last, the treasure that cannot be taken away.

In this peculiar time, might we let go of those practices long thought too dear to part with, those places of ourselves too painful to confront? And, in so doing, within the absence and emptiness, might we make room for the abundant love and mercy of Christ to take root in our hearts, souls, and lives.

Praying for a holy Lent for each of you!

Faithfully,

The Reverend Andrew J. Hege

Rector

Fr. Andrew J. Hege, Rector
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(336) 848-4052—cell



FROM THE ORGANIST/CHOIRMASTER



Though you haven’t seen us or heard us singing in our beloved space in about a year now, the choir of St Mary of the Hills is alive and well. We are struggling with the same issues as everyone else, though, being a band fiercely loyal and addicted to our role in the life of the parish and mightily bound one to other by our music-making, we feel a particular pain in not being able to come together to sing as an ensemble. For the present time, duos of staff singers and others are holding down the fort on Sunday mornings, and, as circumstances allow, we hope to begin appearing in quartets, sextets, and octets until such time as we can safely sing in our full complement.

For much of the past year during more temperate times, and as allowed by state, local, and diocesan guidelines, we gathered safely in various places to sing together. Perhaps our favorite gathering spot, which we consecrated as Covid Cathedral, was level 3 of the newly-built parking garage at ASU. With students not being on campus, the venue was largely deserted and felt safe. And the acoustic—OH MY—is reminiscent of Ely Cathedral’s Lady Chapel, where the choir has sung in concert in years past and hopes to do again.

Meanwhile, in addition to the regular Sunday morning offering of music, we are virtually offering the ancient service of Compline, the final office of the day before going to bed. Singing Compline isn’t new to the parish; in ages past, the choir ended its Thursday evening rehearsal (and subsequent socializing across the street at Tijuana Fats) singing Compline in the darkened nave. We even had a small following of parishioners who learned to judge what time we’d likely return from across the street to don vestments and sing the short liturgy. Years later, Compline was offered regularly at St Mary’s in a simplified Rite II format.

And we are now offering Compline again via Zoom/YouTube, with the thought that it could continue on a regular basis if it catches on, virtual for now and in person when it’s safe. Our next online offering of this beautiful and very short liturgy will be on Sunday evening 21 February at 6.30. We will use Zoom’s ‘meeting’ format, with the opportunity for all to participate by saying together the Lord’s Prayer, however cacophonically. The The Rev Porter C. Taylor—not OUR Porter Taylor, rather a priest in Kansas City—offers the following commentary:

Compline was a service to close the day, an opportunity to give thanks for the joys and graces experienced, a chance to confess the (many) sins committed throughout the day, and the perfect moment to close the day the same way it started: in doxological prayer. If Morning Prayer—or whatever service you use to begin your day—is designed to start the day off right then Compline is designed to end it well.

Please join us for these ancient night prayers on 21 February. And as always, anyone wishing to make a contribution to the music program of time, talent, money, or good will is encouraged to do so. If you think you might be interested in singing in the choir, please speak with the director of music (me) for information.

Meanwhile, unmute and keep singing.

Jim

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Wednesday, February 17, the Ash Wednesday Holy Eucharist service will be livestreamed via Zoom and YouTube at 12:00pm and 6:00pm
- Sunday, February 21 at 6:30pm-Sung Compline Service on Zoom and YouTube
- Each Sunday from February 21-March 28 at 9:00 am-Lenten Rector’s Forum on Zoom
- Each Monday from February 22-March 15 at 3:30 pm-Fr. Sam Tallman is offering a Zoom group engaging four familiar Psalms interpreted through the Jewish tradition.

- Each Thursday from February 18-March 25 at 12:00 pm-Fr. Andrew is offering reflections and leading discussion on the book, *Beautiful and Terrible Things: A Christian Struggle with Suffering, Grief and Hope* on Zoom.



We the members of the Outreach Committee want to deepen our understanding and feeling for the members of our community and the needs which confront them. During 2021 we will invite several leaders of the agencies and recipients to address our meetings and share their insights and experiences in order to make our offerings more than just giving money.

Several of the agencies that we serve need volunteers to help in carrying out their ministries. The people of St. Mary’s would be welcomed most warmly. A phone call to Casting Bread, Hospitality House or Hunger and Health Coalition* would be an answer to many prayers and assist greatly in helping others. The agencies are very much aware of the need to be careful during these times of Covid 19 and are taking precautions to make sure all are safe, especially volunteers, clients and staff.

Peace and challenge in Christ, Gary
*828-295-8333 828-264-1237 828-262-1628



In the only direct reference to the 1918 influenza epidemic we can find at St. Mary of the Hills, a letter from the Committee of the Mission (roughly equivalent to a Vestry in the newly established worshiping community), dated 15 June 1919, says this –

“Owing to the influenza epidemic the Services during the Fall and Winter were very much curtailed, consequently the offerings at the present time have not reached normal.”

The Church, the committee goes on to explain, was in a financial struggle to pay its bills, secure clergy support, and remain a viable mission of disciples in Blowing Rock.

Today, however, we write from a similar, yet altogether different place. A pandemic rages on in our midst, yet the financial stewardship of this parish is strong. In the fall of 2020, your faithful generosity pledged \$467,xxx in support of the annual operating budget of this parish community in 2021. During 2020, more than ninety-seven percent of all pledges made toward our common mission and ministry were fulfilled by the year’s end. Well done, good people of St. Mary of the Hills!

Amidst all the uncertainty of this season in our common life, you continue to respond with steadfast faithfulness, rooted in God’s rich abundance. Together, we are building upon the firm foundation of our Lord Jesus and the good stewardship of those who have come before us in this community of faith as we live into our calling as disciples here and now.

Many thanks to our hardworking Stewardship Team – Valerie and Peter Purcell (chairs), Bill Furr, Roy McCraw, Chip Myers, and Gigi Poole for their hard work in stirring us all toward a deeper life of giving to God’s mission in our community.

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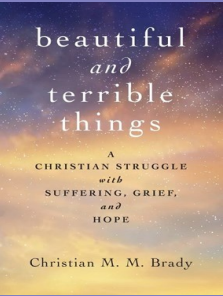
Springtime in the Desert
The Rector’s Forum in Lent



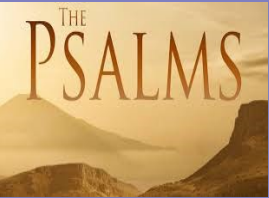
During Lent, Fr. Andrew will offer a series in the Rector’s Forum based upon the book *A Spring in the Desert* written by Frank and Victoria Logue (purchasing and/or reading the book is not required). This series will include video reflections, created by the Logues, that are inspired by the many passages of scripture that use images of water in the desert as a sign of the healing and wholeness that come through God alone as well as the distilled wisdom of the Desert Mothers and Fathers and the surprisingly rich inspiration of the plants and animals that thrive in an arid land. Along the way, we will discover the ways our faith speaks to the barren places in our lives and how those times of drought can be a source of strength.

We meet each Sunday morning at 9:00AM via Zoom. All are welcome!

Book Study in Lent



This year, during the season of Lent, Fr. Andrew will be offering reflections and leading discussion on the book, *Beautiful and Terrible Things: A Christian Struggle with Suffering, Grief and Hope*. Written by the Reverend Christian Brady, Ph.D., an Episcopal priest and biblical scholar whose research has focused on the Old Testament book of Lamentations, the book is a personal, biblical, and theological struggle with the reality of suffering, pain, and loss. The book is available online from a variety of booksellers. The classes will be each Wednesday afternoon from 5:30-6:30pm via Zoom, beginning on February 24 and ending on March 31.



Psalms: Hebrew Expressions of Faith & Hope - Fr. Sam will be offering a Zoom group engaging four familiar Psalms interpreted through the Jewish tradition. There is great power to be found in the ancient Jewish witness of faith for this COVID-time, for our Lenten journey, and for discerning a “new normal” to emerge out of this pandemic. The four sessions will be on Mondays, 3:30-4:45, beginning Monday, February 22.

"For many people, their first deeply personal spiritual encounter with scripture comes when they encounter their lives mirrored in the Psalms," said Fr. Sam Tallman. "In 150 Psalms, one can find personal struggles, social evil, battles, sickness, faith, redemption, hope, and joy. We will engage familiar Psalms from their Jewish interpretation as we reflect on our experience of COVID and our hope for new engagement with the world and each other. The experience of faith and hope in the Hebrew tradition can be a surprising inspiration for our life in Christ."

Reconciliation

The Reconciliation of a Penitent, commonly called Confession, will be offered by appointment during the season of Lent. Please contact Fr. Andrew at: rector@stmaryofthehills.org if you'd like to make an appointment or to learn more about the rite of Reconciliation in the Episcopal Church.



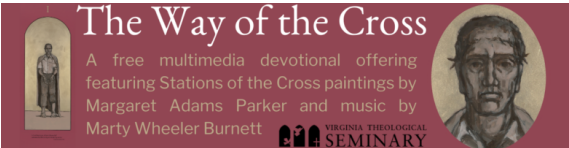
Church open for Prayer

Beginning Ash Wednesday, the front doors of the church will be open each Wednesday afternoon from 1-5pm for private prayer. Masks and social distancing are required at all times in the building, and the front door will be the only entry available to access the Church.

Way of the Cross

The devotion known as the Way of the Cross is an adaptation of a custom widely observed by pilgrims to Jerusalem: the offering of prayer at a series of places in that city traditionally associated with our Lord's passion and death. This practice is also known as Stations of the Cross. Virginia Theological Seminary is pleased to offer a video version of The Way of the Cross and a reflection guide in both English and Spanish (coming soon). Through scripture, art, and music, the video invites us to walk with Christians of every generation on a virtual pilgrimage, meditating on our Lord's passion and death.

Many people choose to make the Way of the Cross a part of their devotions during the season of Lent and the Stations are especially appropriate to be prayed on Fridays. The video is available on our parish website – www.stmaryofthehills.org/len - to be prayed at any time.



Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina

Throughout February, the diocese will be sharing some of the stories of barrier breakers in the Diocese of WNC. Today's story is Brianna's, a young adult in the diocese, member of Presbyterian Episcopal Campus Ministry, PECM at ASU and Youth Group leader at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Boone, NC.



LISTEN AS BRIANNA SHARES HOW HER PASSION JUSTICE AND DEEP FAITH GO HAND IN HAND.

#DIO WNC #BLACKHISTORYMONTH



OUTREACH 2020

During this past year the Outreach Committee considered compassionately and prayerfully the needs of many of our local agencies, the people they serve, as well as, needs of those in distant places. As we held these sisters and brothers in our hearts and minds, the words of scripture and our commitment to what Jesus Christ called us to be held great sway.

“What does the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

“In as much as you have done it unto the least of these you have done it unto me... Whenever you did not do unto the least of these you did not do it unto me...” Matthew 25: 40-45

The gifts allocated by St. Mary's Outreach Committee included the following agencies or endeavors:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Back 2 School Festival | Episcopal Relief and Development |
| Blowing Rock C.A.R.E.S. | F.A.R.M. Cafe |
| Blue Ridge Conservancy | Hospitality House |
| Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture | Hunger and Health Coalition |
| Casting Bread | New Dawn School Sri Lanka |
| Club 12 | Rise Against Hunger |
| Compassion International | The Empty Chair |
| Episcopal Church in Navajoland | Who Needs A Change |
| Episcopal Relief and Development | |

The contributions to Episcopal Relief and Development were specifically designated for: hurricane relief and fire relief.

The above agencies do not reflect the outreach of two budgeted items in St. Mary's overall budget: Back on your feet Boxes and Bread of Life. The Bread of Life program involves five teams of people who provide evening meals for 85 to 100 people five nights each month. Back on Your Feet Boxes are given to people who are transitioning out of Hospitality House to help setup new residences.

The total monetary outreach for 2020 of St. Mary totals \$41,793.00 It would be hard to calculate the number of lives that these gifts have touched, the love that they have conveyed and the comfort they may have given.

Continued