

# Time Together

## While We are Apart



Sunday, May 17, 2020

Good morning, dear church communities,

Our featured pet this week is from Theresa Kanuck (SMWC). Theresa adopted her cat, Henry, almost two years ago from The Animal Welfare League. He was named Henry when she adopted him, and Theresa said she did not think of changing his name, because Henry is a cat who knows his name! When she calls him, Henry comes running! He loves to play, and he loves to take things of Theresa's, like her Fitbit, and hide them. This helps Theresa get exercise, searching high and low for Henry's latest hiding place! Many thanks, Theresa for sharing Henry with us!

Following my opening letter here, you will find a letter from our Bishops, Bishop Goff and Bishop Brooke-Davidson. Their letter to the Diocese explains why, though Governor Northam is now allowing individuals to attend religious services, the churches of the Diocese of Virginia, along with many dioceses across the country, are not opening for worship yet. I encourage each of you to take the time to read the Bishops' letter.

This letter clarifies what many know, but is always good to remember. Our churches are part of the Diocese of Virginia, which is part of the Episcopal Church USA, which is a member province of the worldwide Anglican Communion. In other words, SMWC and Trinity, are part of a larger community and a larger hierarchy. Thus, the decision as to when our churches reopen is not for me as your Rector to make, nor is it a decision of the Vestries. We will begin the process of reopening when our Bishops of the Diocese of Virginia, make that decision.

I appreciate the Bishops' emphasis on loving our neighbors as ourselves, and thus to care for all our neighbors, including and especially those who are vulnerable to COVID-19. And how, when we gather for worship, we do not want to "produce risk," we do not want to be a place of spreading the virus to others, and again especially those who are, by age and/or health, more susceptible to the virus.

As we continue this time away from in-person worship, I will, after my week off, develop Zoom worship to allow us to gather not only with folks at The Cathedral, but also with our own familiar and beloved folk from SMWC and Trinity. More details to follow soon!

And though we will re-gather in-person at a future date, I encourage everyone not to over-focus on "finally getting back to normal." Even when we can gather again in our churches, much of our services... preaching, the peace, communion, music... for a good while, will look different, often very different than the normal we left in early March.

Thus, I'll end by repeating the quote I offered Wednesday from the Bishop of Maine, Thomas Brown, in an Episcopal News Service article on how the pandemic is reshaping how we all will approach worship:

"The world around us has changed. We are changed. If we think of the next couple months as simply resuming what we did earlier this year, we will be disappointed. God calls us to give thanks for what was and to move forward in trust and gentleness."

And now onward to the letter from our Bishops, and a little more "Time Together," -Megan



May 13, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last Friday, Governor Northam issued Executive Order #61 which outlines "phase 1 easing of temporary restrictions due to the novel coronavirus." It goes into effect on Friday, May 15 for much of Virginia and on May 29 for the northern counties, cities and towns of Virginia. While this order allows individuals to attend religious services, we in the Diocese of Virginia will not begin our phased regathering in church buildings this month. Like dioceses across The Episcopal Church, as well as many denominations and faith traditions across the country, we will continue the fast from in-person worship that we began in March for a time longer.

This continued fast from in-person worship is rooted in scripture. In 1 Corinthians 10:23-24, we read, "All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful, but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other." Regathering under very specific guidelines is now lawful, but it is not beneficial for our whole population when nearly 2,000 people died of COVID-19 in the United States just yesterday. We are bound by Jesus' law to love our neighbors as ourselves. We sacrifice worship in our church buildings for the sake of people we love in our congregations and for the sake of people in our communities whom we will never meet.

Experience shows in this time of pandemic that worship is a "superspreader" of the virus. When we go to the grocery store or to a restaurant pick-up window, we accept the inherent risk. When we gather for worship at church, however, we produce the risk. As people morally bound to live the way of love, we choose not to produce such risk. Instead, we choose to protect others and ourselves until the time when we can worship together safely.

As we continue our fast from in-person worship, we ease one restriction that has been in place in this diocese since April 19. Beginning on May 22,

congregations may live-stream or record worship from inside their worship spaces, following specific guidelines that are outlined in **Attachment 1** of this letter. We ask congregations desiring to exercise this option to write a letter to me outlining their plan for the reasons included in the attachment.

We continue to work in the Diocese of Virginia to develop strategies, guidelines, checklists, support and review processes for phased regathering for worship in our church buildings, as promised in **our letter of May 4**. The **second attachment** to this letter describes the process.

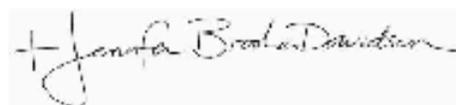
Worship in this Diocese over the past month has been marked by tremendous creativity and energy. Many congregations have learned new technologies and skills that have enhanced worship. Many of you have moved outside of your church walls to engage with people who never come to church. We have worshipped with a good number of congregations over the past weeks. The most vibrant worship we experienced was not filmed in a nearly empty church, but in homes and backyards, neighborhoods and pastures. We hope congregations will continue the new best practices you have learned, even if you do record or livestream from the church building, so that worship may continue to reach far beyond our walls with the saving, healing, loving grace of Christ Jesus. Let's not be in a hurry to "go back," but filled with urgency to keep going forward into the future, into all that God is revealing to us.

God bless you with hope and grace as these days of fasting from in-person worship continue.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Susan E. Goff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff  
Bishop Suffragan and  
Ecclesiastical Authority

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Jennifer Brooke-Davidson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. Jennifer Brooke-Davidson  
Assistant Bishop

## **Prayer Notes:**

We will include our prayer lists in each Sunday Newsletter. Please continue to let us know of folks you would like to have on our prayer lists.

Notes for this week:

- Randy Romaine (SMWC) had rotator cuff surgery this past Wednesday, and is coming along in the healing process. Please keep Randy, and his wife Gloria, in your prayers.
- Chuck McGrath continues improvement, and is 95 years old today!!!! Birthday Blessings to Chuck! Please continue your prayers for Chuck and his family.
- Our healthcare workers are on all our hearts. Please keep them, and their families, in your prayers.

## **Prayer Lists:**

**St. Mary's Whitechapel:** Chuck McGrath, Don DeFilippo, George Clowser, Sherry Mann, Susan Goff, Jori Keckman, Nancy Brandon, Ron Okrasinski, Sally Flanigan, Alexa Frisbee, R. W. Courtney, Tammy, Dorsey Ficklin, Glenn Courtney, Terry Thompson, Wendy Burnett, Nora Pennell, Lin Greene, Jake Cobb, Dave Petersen, Dan Ficklin, Marie Beringer, Donna Alexander, Rose, Cecil Courtney, Mimi Chace, Donna Brayton, Hilda Courtney, Robert, Howard Hanchey, Jennifer Cassell Cole, Karen Woodruff, Roger Fortin, Wier Harman, Gina Adams, Brad Quillen, Jessica, Joanne and Michael.

**Nursing Home Resident:** Lancashire - Mary Sue Courtney

**Armed Forces:** Joshua Green, Aimee Budzinski, Mark Medina, Kathryn McCormack Akacem, Mehdi Akacem, Anderson Sale, Thomas Mackie, Pia Mackie, Tate Young, Spencer Fortin.

**Trinity:** Omid, Nancy Clark, Vicki Simmons Watson, Jerry Gregor, Susan Goff, Janice Shanks, Sherri Carter, Terri, Nick Slaughter, Fran and Dick Davis, Sally Flanigan, R. W. Courtney, Frances Bush, Delford Walthall, Glenn Courtney, Barbara Nunnery, Keith Elswick, Steve, Rick Bateman, Jenny Dunaway, Earline Tomlin Kelley, Ed Borer, Dean Haine, Donna Alexander, Mary and Karen Jackson, Cecil Courtney, Berkeley Kellum, Wendy Boswell, Preston Bryant, Michael, Mel and Frances Ercelino, Hilda Courtney, Robert, Karen Woodruff, Joey Coker, Michael Dunaway, J.W. Boone, Brad Quillen, Ian Larmore, Brandon Dunaway.

**Armed Forces:** Giovanni Elhordoy, Ward Gavin, Paul Price and Michael Stout.

**Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:** Pray for St. Peter's, Arlington; St. Mary's, Goochland; St. John's, Centerville.

**Anglican Cycle of Prayer:** Pray for the Anglican Church of Kenya.

## Announcements:

Paula Stallard, our Parish Administrator, is expanding her work and ministry within the Diocese of Virginia. Recently, Paula was hired by the Virginia Diocesan Homes (VDH) as their Administrator and will help VDH manage its diocesan work to encourage parishes to maximize their uses of their property for community mission and ministry. Paula will continue in her work and ministry with SMWC and Trinity, as well as with St. Mary's, Fleeton. Congrats to Paula for her deepening ministry in the Diocese of Virginia! We are blessed to be one of the places where she brings her amazing gifts!

I will be on vacation starting tomorrow, Monday, May 18<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>. The Time Together Newsletter will still be sent by email. If you receive the Newsletter by my delivery to your door/mailbox, Paula will send your Newsletters this week by US mail. Zoom Coffee Hour will still happen on Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>; Ellen Tracey has kindly agreed to send the invitations. I will be in town and available for pastoral emergencies, but if you need other help, you may contact Paula at her email address: [stmarys.whitechapel@gmail.com](mailto:stmarys.whitechapel@gmail.com) and at her cell: 804-221-5562, as the office remains closed. You may also contact your Wardens as needed.

I need a few more animal pictures for our Time Together Newsletter! So, if you have been meaning to send me a photo of your beloved pet, please email or text. We all enjoy meeting them.

The Scholarship Committee at SMWC announces that their deadline for applications has been extended until May 29<sup>th</sup>. More information, including guidelines and forms, is available on the SMWC website: [stmaryswhitechapel.org](http://stmaryswhitechapel.org).

"Zooming Coffee Hour" is held every Sunday, at 3pm; all are welcome! Text, call or email me if you want to join us, and I'll put you on the list to receive the Zoom invitation each week. Once you sign up you are on the list and can come any Sunday that suits you. (My cell number is 804-477-5515.) And if you would like to join us, but are not signed up for Zoom, Ellen Tracey from Trinity and Sharon and Richard Gill from SMWC are willing to help anyone get on Zoom. Ellen can be contacted at: 804-436-2371 and The Gills can be reached at: 804-462-9939.

For the season of Easter, I will be posting a video each Sunday, except for May 24<sup>th</sup> when I am on vacation. The videos will be available on the Trinity website and on our Facebook pages.

Washington National Cathedral continues to offer beautiful and moving worship daily. They can be found at [cathedral.org](http://cathedral.org)

Please let me know if you are in need of help with getting groceries or other necessities. Call, text, or email and I'll connect you with a volunteer.

You can continue to mail pledges and donations to Rector's Discretionary Fund to each church:

Trinity Church  
PO Box 208  
Lancaster, VA 22503

SMWC  
5940 Whitechapel Rd  
Lancaster, VA 22503



## ***Thoughts from the Organ Bench***

### **History of Hymns: "Be Thou My Vision"**

Sometimes hymn singing invites us to connect with the saints who have gone before. Such is the case with the famous Irish hymn, "Be Thou my vision." The original poem, found in two Irish manuscripts in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, may be dated as early as the 8th century.

Quite often, older hymns come to us as a collaborative effort before we are able to sing them from our hymnals. The Irish text, beginning "Rob tu mo bhoile, a Comdi cride," was translated into literal prose by Irish scholar Mary Byrne (1880-1931), a Dublin native, and then published in *Eriú*, the journal of the School of Irish Learning, in 1905. Byrne was also known for her academic publications, including *Old and Mid-Irish Dictionary*, *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, and a treatise, *England in the Age of Chaucer*.

The original prose translation comes to us in 16 couplets.

The first is: Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart. None other is aught but the King of the seven heavens.

And the last is: O heart of my heart, whate'er befall me, O ruler of all, be thou my vision.

It is at this point that Eleanor Hull (1860-1935) enters the story. Born in Manchester, England, she was the founder of the Irish Text Society and president of the Irish Literary Society of London. Hull versified the text and it was published in her *Poem Book of the Gael* (1912).

Following the original publication in Ireland, the hymn was included in a number of British hymnals. After World War II, the hymn came to the attention of hymnal editors in the U.S. and it has become a standard hymn in most hymnals today.

When Hull's versification was paired with the lovely traditional Irish tune **SLANE** in *The Irish Church Hymnal* in 1919, its popularity was sealed. The folk melody was taken from a non-liturgical source, Patrick Weston Joyce's *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs: A Collection of 842 Airs and Songs hitherto unpublished* (1909). It was on **Slane Hill** in County Meath around 433 CE that St. Patrick lit candles on Easter Eve, defying a decree by High King Logaire of Tara that no

*(continued next page)*

one could light a fire before the king signaled the beginning of the pagan spring festival by lighting a fire on Tara Hill. King Logaire was so impressed by Patrick's devotion that, despite his defiance, he was permitted to continue his work as Ireland's first Christian missionary.

"Be Thou My Vision"

Versified by Eleanor Hull

*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
All else be naught to me save that thou art.  
Thou my best thought, by day and by night,  
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

*Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my great Father; thine own may I be;  
Thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.*

*High King of heaven, when victory is won,  
May I reach heaven's joys, bright heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.*

The links below will take you to two performances of "Be Thou My Vision" by the Tabernacle Choir:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RICmaY6p7FM>**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6q7kNr1XCIs&pbjreload=10>**

Source: **<https://www.bayviewbiblechurch.org/post/the-story-behind-be-thou-my-vision>**

## Reflection

This Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup> is Ascension Day. Though it feels like we were contemplating Easter just last week, Ascension Day takes place 40 days after Easter, and remembers the ascension of Jesus to heaven. After the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, he appears to his disciples and friends, and disappears, numerous times. Finally, Jesus appears once more, and takes his friends outside of Jerusalem, up on a hill, and tells them to wait in Jerusalem and that they will receive the power of the Holy Spirit. And then Jesus blesses them, and then ascends, rising up into the clouds, out of their sight and into heaven.

His friends remain there, on the hill, heads turned upward, necks getting a bit stiff, perhaps the sunlight hurting their eyes... but they keep on looking upward... perhaps convinced if they keep looking in the direction Jesus disappeared, he will appear again. And as we often find, we humans, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are still so similar to Peter and his friends... We too keep looking in the same direction, hoping for things to return to “normal”.....

Jesus had been with his disciples for three years; they travelled together, ate together, laughed and prayed together. They heard him preach and witnessed the healings he did. When they were frightened or had a question Jesus was there, right there. And now as he ascended into heaven, they are not yet willing to let him go, they yearn for things to continue like those past three years... traveling with him, rather than a new call to go out without him, and tell the world of Jesus and the powerful love of God. So, the disciples stay on that hill, craning their necks, hoping for a glimpse of Jesus, back in just a few minutes, if they just wait... And then two angels appear, but they do not notice them, as their heads are tilted skyward. I always imagine those angels clearing their throats and getting no response from the disciples. And trying a not so subtle cough, and no response, and finally tapping them firmly on the shoulder and saying:

*“You Galileans!—why do you just stand here looking up at an empty sky? This very Jesus who was taken up from among you to heaven will come as certainly—and mysteriously—as he left.” (Acts 1: 11, The Message)*

And so, all his friends could do was return to Jerusalem, and do as Jesus had told them, to wait. Looking skyward was not going to help. They had to wait for the future to unfold. So, they returned to Jerusalem, surprisingly, “with great joy” the gospel of Luke tells us.

And what of us, in May 2020, during a pandemic? Well, often we too keep looking in the same direction, staring backwards to the first week of March, hoping for things to return to “normal.” But all through the Bible we hear of God’s people moving forward, not backwards... So can we too wait, even wait “with great joy” like the disciples? God is with us in our waiting, as we wait not to patch together the past, but to move into the future, the future for ourselves, for our churches, and always, with our God.

Amen.

