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~ THE PARISH QUARTERLY ~

Spring 2022



St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church  
Blowing Rock, North Carolina

# PREPARE WITH JOY

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## 'PREPARE WITH JOY'

Over the past several weeks, there is a phrase from one of the Eucharistic prefaces we pray during Lent that has been constantly on my mind. In it, we pray this –

*You bid you faithful people cleanse their hearts, and prepare with joy for the Paaschal feast; that , fervent in prayer and in works of mercy, and renewed by your Word and Sacraments, they may come to the fullness of grace which you have prepared for those who love you.*

'...prepare with joy...'

There is much in our common life right now that calls us to prepare with joy. As we begin and enter into the season of Lent, there is the annual call of the Church to a season of self-examination, reflection, penitence, fasting, and renewal. In addition to regular offerings for prayer, worship, and study, several additional offerings, including some new to St. Mary's will be offered.

In the Rector's Forum, we will spend time delving deeper into the Lord's Prayer, the words taught by Jesus as his disciples asked him how they ought to pray. It is also tradition here to study a book together; this year, I invite us to read "Hanging by a Thread: The Questions of the Cross" written by Samuel Wells, Vicar of the Parish of St. Martin in the Fields, London, and former Dean of the Duke University Chapel.

Morning Prayer continues to be offered each weekday at 8:30AM as we daily lift up the needs of our parish and those who commend themselves to our prayers.

On Fridays at 12:00PM, Stations of the Cross will be prayed in the Church.

Let us prepare with joy, that we may experience anew the joy of Christ's resurrection.

There is also a broader sense to this joyful preparation. As we near two years of life amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, we are preparing with joy for the time when our new sense of normal emerges and we live into the next chapter of our story as God's people at the corner of Main and Chestnut.

Much of these preparations are about ministry with our youngest parishioners and work we've been talking about since the discernment period that called me to be your Rector. In early February, a Christian formation Coordinator position was posted and applications are being received; I look forward to a new individual joining our team soon.

Additionally, an ad hoc team, appointed by the Vestry, has been working on plans for a new play space on the St. Mary's grounds. In the weeks ahead, they will be sharing more about plans, including artistic renderings, for this new play space.

Two other new teams have formed in recent months, and both are joyfully preparing for our future together in ministry.

A new congregational care team, led by Lynn Searfoss, held an organizational meeting in January. This team will be offering regular invitations for all parishioners to join in the ministries of caring for one another, including but not limited to visiting those homebound, card writing, transportation, and meals at times of need.

A new planned giving team, shepherded by Roy McCraw, has been meeting to lay the foundations for a new circle recognizing those who have remembered St. Mary of the Hills in their estate planning documents and raising awareness about avenues of legacy gifts for the future of our mission and ministry as a parish. Look for more information from this group in June of this year.

Within the pages of this “new” quarterly newsletter, “The Magnificat”, you will find much more information about the ways in which we are about joyfully preparing for God’s good future. Enjoy!

It is, as ever, a great joy to serve as your priest.

The Reverend Andrew J. Hege  
Rector

## Choir News

Throughout this strange time of Covid, the choir has worked to sing the liturgies of the church, whether singing Compline via Zoom from individual kitchen tables, rehearsing masked and 20 feet apart in a freezing parking garage, or, blessedly, now singing in person in our beloved nave. We are still masked, which creates significant challenges to singing well, but at least we're all together. And we along with the bulk of church musicians are delighted now to turn our efforts towards the magnificent music of Lent. This season of looking inward has inspired poets and composers to craft some of the most beautiful and moving music in the entire repertoire. 40 days seems far too short a time to sing enough of it.

In other news, we are delighted to have Sarah Schiener working as our Intern in Sacred Music. Sarah's semester-long internship is a degree requirement in the Sacred Music program at ASU, administered by a familiar and much-loved person at St Mary's, Joby Bell. Sarah assists the director of music, her duties to include playing liturgies, working with the choir, administration, planning, and handling the many and often unexpected aspects of being a church musician. She is proving to be a beautiful asset to the music program at St Mary's, and we are grateful for her and for our close and enduring relationship with ASU's Sacred Music program.

Finally, if any of you is interested in exploring the possibility of singing in the choir, please speak with me or with a choir member. We need singers

of all voice parts, basic requirements being a good ear, a workable voice, a positive and collegial attitude, an eagerness to learn, and a desire to make beautiful music to the best of our abilities. Don't be shy.

Keep singing.

Jim

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## **From the Senior Warden**

Your Vestry has been busy during the first months of 2022. One of our priorities is to improve communication within and outside the parish. Indeed, this newsletter and the new format is part of that initiative, as are efforts to keep everyone informed via our website, online news articles, and other digital tools. I never cease to be amazed at the many ways in which the Holy Spirit moves among us. It's at work in the various committees that carry out our mission and ministry within the community. It's at work in music and worship. And it's at work among those parishioners who prepare meals and exit boxes for Hospitality House, usher and greet, provide refreshments to facilitate fellowship, and contribute in dozens of other ways that we sometimes fail to recognize. Better communication not only keeps us informed, but also helps us remember that God is present and active in our parish.

Second, we have ramped up our efforts to attract new members, including families with children, to our parish. As most of you know, this emerged as a major concern during our Holy Conversations prior to calling Fr. Andrew. It has been a part of our visioning process for well over a decade. It will not be achieved by implementing a single policy or creating one new program. It needs to be a long-term multi-faceted approach in which we all participate. And I would like to see us engage it with the same energy and enthusiasm we bring to outreach and the Tour of Homes. You will be hearing more about this in the weeks to come and we need your help and prayerful support as we move forward.

Finally, the Vestry wants to hear from you. We recently adopted a new Vestry Covenant in which we pledge to be as open and Christ-like as possible in conducting church business. You can find a copy of this promise on the St. Mary of the Hills website. Please read it and give us your comments and feedback. It notes, among other things, that Vestry meetings are open, and all parishioners are welcome to attend. Come join us on the third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm. Every Sunday, Vestry members wear yellow lanyards with nametags. Feel free to speak to any of them if you have questions or concerns. You can also contact me at 828-773-9633 or [silverth@appstate.edu](mailto:silverth@appstate.edu).

As always, I remain honored to be your Senior Warden and humble servant,

Tim Silver



## Junior Warden Report

Since taking over as Junior Warden 1 January 2022 we have been busy trying to identify and correct problems or recommend improvements to the building and grounds of St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church.

First there will be a Parish Workday (Outside) on Saturday, 2 April from 9 am to about 1 pm. We have a couple of large piles of leaves that need to be removed so we will need wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes, and spades. The plan is to use the leaves in the existing flower beds. Leaves that cannot be used will be taken to the inert debris dump at the Watauga County landfill. To accomplish that we will need pickup trucks and/or trailers for hauling the leaves.

In 1993 the Vestry established a Building committee to assist with identifying needed work at the church and providing recommendations. At some point in time this committee fell into disuse and ceased to exist. We would like to reestablish the building committee. The Vestry approved the following charter.

- The building committee is to be composed of 5 Members, chaired by Junior Warden with one additional vestry member and 3 members from the parish (parishioners with plumbing, electrical, contracting, building material, carpentry, and safety {OSHA and/or ADA} desirable but not required).
- Committee to meet quarterly or as needed for special projects.
- Purpose of the committee is to
  - Inspect building on regular basis to identify safety issues for staff and parishioners.

- Identify needed repairs to maintain the building integrity and appearance.
- To identify renovations and/or improvements necessary to meet growing needs of the parish.
- Review any proposed improvements to the building.
- Provide “corporate memory” of the building.

If you are interested in supporting the church by participating in this committee, please contact the Junior Warden at [finneyb1@mac.com](mailto:finneyb1@mac.com) or at 904-540-0652 either by voice or text.

There have been concerns expressed about the “crack” or gap between the wall and the right side of the organ. That has been investigated by a structural engineer from IOCON Engineering and Lincoln Pipe Organs. They have concluded that there are no problems that the gap is caused by normal expansion and contraction of the walls due to seasonal changes. As an extra layer of precaution, we are taking quarterly measurements of the walls to determine if there is any unexplained significant movement. All foundations have been inspected with no problems identified.

The Grounds Committee has been working to identify problems and make recommendations for improving the landscape around the church. Much has been accomplished and more will be accomplished when the weather warms up. The large oak tree on the NW corner of the building has been found to be damaged and the trunk is rotten placing it at risk of falling. It will be removed within the next few months. Also, the maple trees on the east side of the building are structurally not strong enough to support the long limbs. Dynamic tree cables will be installed to preserve these trees. Finally, the large hemlock tree on the NW corner has been found to be

infested with hemlock wooly adelgid and elongate hemlock scale. This tree will be treated in May in an attempt to save it. Other work is planned to increase the beauty of the landscape around the church.

St. Marians at the 10 o'clock service have been aware of the pew space taken by our temporary live-streaming equipment for the last 2 years. Thanks to the Vestry and the St. Mary's Technology Committee, that will be changing soon. It's clear that live streaming is here to stay beyond Covid tide, especially for those of us who are homebound or traveling, and we will be putting in a small permanent camera within the next 2 weeks. Once this is connected to our existing sound recording system, we expect to have better video and audio with a simple, unobtrusive system going forward.

If you have any concerns about the building and/or grounds, please tell the Junior Warden or contact him at [finneyb1@mac.com](mailto:finneyb1@mac.com)

Have a blessed day.  
Bob Finney

## **Congregational Care Team**

The Congregational Care Team met for the first time on January 30, 2022, to discuss our vision for providing a variety of kinds of care for members of our parish. Meeting participants discerned several kinds of need, such as praying for one another as part of a parish prayer chain, making phone calls or sending cards, and providing transportation to and from medical appointments for those unable to drive due to injury or other conditions. Members of the team will volunteer for the types of service most compatible to their abilities and preferences and will be contacted on a rotating basis when needs arise so that everyone will have the opportunity to serve.

We hope that many members of the congregation will feel called to serve one another in love. Please watch for future announcements in "The Epistle" and our newsletter. Feel free to contact Lynn Searfoss or Father Andrew for more details. Let us love one another as Christ loves us.

Lynn Searfoss

## **The Library at Saint Mary of the Hills**

Our parish library awaits your visit! Browse the shelves and check out books that appeal to you, learn more about Jesus or the saints, or enjoy a novel. A small collection of books particularly relevant to the season of Lent have been set aside for you to look at or check out. We are fortunate to have such a fine collection of books. Take a look!

Lynn Searfoss

## **Sustaining Grace**

Late last summer Fr. Hege asked me to form a committee to implement a planned giving program at St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church. Planned Giving exists alongside endowment gifts made during the donor's lifetime. Generally, planned giving describes the thoughtful designation of a gift of cash, retirement assets, securities, real estate, life insurance proceeds, or other assets at a future date, generally at the time of settlement of one's estate. These gifts can be made immediately available to a particular ministry at St. Mary's, or the proceeds can be invested in the St. Mary of the Hills Endowment and Investment Fund, to be held in perpetuity. Annually, returns from the investments are provided to a designated ministry. Gifts can be large or small, so anyone can participate. Planned gifts differ from annual stewardship that provides operating revenues for our parish. Planned gifts allow us to expand and enhance our ministries beyond current operations.

We plan to introduce our planned giving program, Sustaining Grace, in June. When implemented, it will allow everyone in our church community to help provide the continuation of St. Mary's ministries for generations to come.

Our committee is made up of John Carlson, John Chanon, Bill Furr, Jo Ann Hallmark, Gigi Poole, Ryan Postlethwait, Fr. Andrew Hege, Fr. Sam Tallman and me. Every member is well known in our parish and has an abiding love for the many ministries of St. Mary's. We look forward to providing a full description of Sustaining Grace in June.

Roy McCraw



## **Holy Week 2022**

### **April 10 - The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday**

8:00AM and 10:10AM: Holy Eucharist with Liturgy of the Palms and Passion Gospel

### **April 11, 12, 13– Monday, Tuesday, & Wednesday in Holy Week**

12:00PM: Holy Eucharist

### **April 14 – Maundy Thursday**

6:00PM: Holy Eucharist with Foot Washing and Stripping of the Altar

### **April 15 – Good Friday**

7:30AM: Stations of the Cross

12:00PM: Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday with Veneration of the Cross and Communion of the Pre-Sanctified

### **April 16 – Holy Saturday**

8:30AM: Liturgy of Holy Saturday

7:30PM: The Great Vigil of Easter with Kindling of the New Fire, Renewal of Baptismal Vows, and First Eucharist of Easter (w/ incense)

### **April 17 – Easter Day**

8:00AM: Holy Eucharist

10:10AM: Solemn Holy Eucharist (w/incense)

# **'Prepare with Joy' Additions**

## **A Book Companion for Lent**

During the season of Lent, Fr. Andrew invites the parish to read together the book, *Hanging by a Thread: The Questions of the Cross*, written by Samuel Wells, Vicar of the Parish of St. Martin in the Fields, London, and former Dean of the Duke University Chapel.

Wells invites us to go deeper into the mystery and paradox of the cross, setting aside easy conclusions and daring to sit in the discomfort of sin, brokenness, and death that Jesus' crucifixion exposes. In the discomfort, he suggests, we uncover the deep meaning that the cross offers our lives and our faith.

Copies of the book are available in the Parish Library for a suggested donation of \$10. The book is also available online for purchase or download.

Fr. Andrew is leading "Conversation Circles" on three different dates, both in-person in the Barrett Room and online via Zoom, for discussion and deeper reflections:

- \*Thursday, March 31 at 12:00PM
- \*Friday, April 1 at 9:00AM
- \*Tuesday, April 5 at 5:30PM

## **Stations of the Cross**

Stations of the Cross will be prayed each Friday in Lent, beginning at 12:00PM in the Church. Booklets containing the service are also available in the Church, to be prayed at any time.

## **Reconciliation**

The Reconciliation of a Penitent, commonly called Confession, will be offered each Friday during the season of Lent, from 11:30 until noon, in the St. Mary's Room. Reconciliation is available at any time by appointment. Please contact Fr. Andrew if you'd like to make an appointment or to learn more about the rite of Reconciliation in the Episcopal Church.

\_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL. VISIT. FOLLOW. \_\_\_\_\_

[www.stmaryofthehills.org](http://www.stmaryofthehills.org)