



Advent-Christmas-Epiphany 2009-2010

It is mid-December, and we are in the midst of those Advent themes: Watch. Wait. Prepare. Be Ready. Hope. Peace. Joy. Love. Central to all this is Mary, Jesus' teenaged mother, the one full of grace, who surrendered to God with incredible humility and wisdom, "So be it unto me."

During our Stewardship Season, when I invited Pennie Curry and Fox, Susan Frantz, Dutch Pinkston and Geoff Perkins to share their stewardship stories with the congregation, I was impressed with their, "so be it unto me," gracious responses. Certainly we can see this kind of surrender to God as well when we read the beautiful piece by Gretchen Courage about her mother who died in July, and in her mother's reflection, "An Ordinary Day in an Extraordinary Place." There's also a letting-go and surrender in Charles Olegar's story about the St. James organ pipes. The Rev. Jennifer Gregg speaks to the stress and anxiety we all feel when we are surrendering and living in the unknown. Eventually a Child *will* be born here at St. James, and we do not yet know what that will be like. So this time of watching, waiting, preparing and hoping can be uncomfortable. We are truly in a season of Advent at St. James, and my prayer is we can continue to embrace the discernment process by attentively listening to God and each other so that we can live into God's preferred and promised future. With humility and wisdom, let us say, "So be it unto us."

The following came as an e-mail meditation from Richard Rohr. It is adapted from his book, *Radical Grace: Daily Meditations*. St. Catherine of Siena in her *Dialogues* pictures the spiritual life as a large tree:

The trunk of the tree is love.
The core of the tree, that middle part that must be alive for the rest
of the tree to be alive, is patience.
The roots of the tree are self-knowledge.
The many branches, reaching out into the air, are discernment.

In other words, says Catherine, *love* does not happen without *patience*, *self-knowledge* and *discernment*. Blessings to each of you for this holy season. In Christ's love, **Francie**

A Farewell to Pipes

Minister of Music Charles Olegar

As St. James continues an odyssey that began over a year ago with the Fall of the Wall, among the number of our parish's capital assets that continue in "hibernation" is our splendid three-manual Ahlborn-Galanti organ, which made its debut as recently as Easter Sunday, 2006. During its inaugural period the marvels of that all-digital instrument tended to quickly eclipse the memory of the former Austin-Andover pipe organ. Indeed, the most visual aspect of the latter, its 1919 "original equipment" Austin console, was removed at the time of the A- G's installation, although the fifty-seven sets of pipes constituting the bulk of the old organ continued to inhabit three pipe chambers in the church, unplayable.

At the time -- now four years ago -- St. James' ad hoc organ committee decided to go with Ahlborn-Galanti, there was some consideration of the possibility of eventually "hybridizing" the best of the Austin-Andover pipe ranks with the digitally-based A-G, but the latter rapidly proved itself to exceed all expectations, being so convincing in-and-of itself as to obviate the need for costly pipe enhancement.

Over the subsequent couple of years the issue of what to do with the pipes was revisited several times, each time inconclusively, but, as with so many other aspects of parish operation, the July 2008 "Wall Fall" came to cast a different light on the matter. To be sure, when we learned of the construction operations required by the situation with the west wall and Ascension Window, we realized the need to remove both the pipe-work and A-G installation as quickly as possible, our concert piano already having been transferred to the East Room some months before.

Unlike moving a grand piano, which can be done in less than an hour's time by a crew of two or three, the removal of several thousand pipes varying from pencil-size to eighteen feet in length and a foot in diameter, often from considerable height and difficulty of access, is no easy task. The bill for such would easily be at least five or six thousand dollars. Thus, even were we to donate the Austin-Andover pipes to some other parish, there would still be substantial cost to be borne by someone. As to the possibility of storage, the question is "where?" considering that the pipes alone would fill a twenty-foot van. There are also the bulky wind chests atop which pipes sit, extensive framework, and the like.

Advertise we did, beginning this past winter, anticipating that the purchaser would be some church welcoming what we thought was an excellent bargain, and also hopeful of rapid if not widespread response, even with the national economy as it has been. But such did not happen. What DID happen was that a key "player" in our ongoing relationship with Ahlborn-Galanti, their engineering guru Ray Albright, who since the 2006 installation of our A-G 3300 has been nothing short of an angelic presence for St. James, notified the recently-revitalized Austin Organ Company of Hartford about the availability of our pipes (they had already recycled the console). Austin contacted us this past spring, presenting an exceptionally attractive offer: they would remove the pipes and other salvageable components at the company's own expense, which they would subsequently "part-out" in renovated condition, with St. James receiving any profits that might accrue from eventual sale.

It took a while to find a date when Austin's crew would be permitted in our quarantined church building, but such did indeed come to pass over the course of two sweltering days in August, 2009. A crew of a half-dozen passed pipes from the organ chambers to the chancel, where they were laid in shallow boxes, secured, and loaded in a large van for the trip to Hartford, where most were "born" nearly a century ago. The Austin console of 1919 presently has a new home at a Methodist church in Willoughby, Ohio, east of Cleveland. Where the fifty-seven ranks of pipes end up we do not know at this stage, but we can be confident that rather than remaining unused, they will come to see new life -- something so in keeping with Resurrection!

Our Ahlborn-Galanti organ is now safely hibernating in the Great Hall, awaiting eventual redeployment. Meanwhile, an excellent new Yamaha digital piano is serving us effectively at our provisional worship space at Crissey Farm, with the capacity to work in tandem with our A-G organ when that time arrives.

Living with Anxiety **The Rev. Jennifer E. Gregg, Berkshire Missioner**

Over the course of the fall, anxiety has been at the forefront of many conversations I have had. Whether it is around work-related issues such as job security or health, the rise of H1N1, shifts in important relationships, aging parents, loss of a loved one, etc., anxiety has infiltrated our lives, leaving many feeling unstable and uncertain about what the future holds. During this time of year, we are susceptible to these feelings even more. We are easily overwhelmed by our list of things to do and how to make ends meet. Neither we nor our churches are immune to the effects of anxiety. However, we do not deal with these feelings or circumstances alone.

God's people have always had to contend with periods of anxiety and choose how to respond. In Exodus we are given a wonderful example of what anxiety does to the Israelite community and its leaders, in the story of the golden calf. In this story, Moses goes up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments and is delayed in returning. This delay sends the Israelites into a tailspin. Questioning whether Moses will return, they turn to Aaron and demand a solution. Aaron, who takes on the community's anxiety, gives in. A golden calf is created to worship, and the Israelites' anxiety is alleviated. In response to this false god, even God gets anxious and lashes out, ready to let his "wrath fall down upon them". At the sight of God's anger, Moses jumps in and acts as a mediator, advocating for the Israelites. In this story, no one is immune from the effects of anxiety and each responds differently. Anxiety consumes the whole community.

This incident within the Israelite community started with a trigger: Moses' delay. Like the Israelites, within our own church communities we, too, can face a number of triggers that create the same domino effect witnessed in this story. In his book, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*, Peter Steinke outlines thirteen triggers that touch all congregations. These triggers include: Money, Leadership Styles; Growth and Survival, Boundaries, Trauma and Transition, Staff Conflict, Old and New, The Gap Between the Ideal and the Real, and, finally, Building Construction, Space, and Territory.

Knowing that our community is not immune from these triggers, the question becomes “How do we respond when they arise?” The Israelites, caught up in the fear that Moses would not return and that they could be left to die in the wilderness, lost their ability to think clearly. Their functioning was restricted and narrowed, repressing the fullness of who God called them to be. When we find ourselves living with persistent and chronic anxiety it is important to be aware of not only how we respond, but also where we become repressed. When we are anxious we may find ourselves in one of the following places:

- We have a decreased capacity to learn or take in new information;
- Our curiosity is replaced with a demand for certainty;
- Our position or opinion is stiffened over and against another’s;
- We cannot think clearly. Concentration is interrupted;
- Our nervous system is flooded. We cannot hear what is being said without distortion. We cannot respond with clarity;
- Our way of thinking of simplified. It is either yes/no; either/or;
- We want a quick fix and easy answers;
- We feel helpless or find ourselves wrestling with feelings of self-doubt;
- We find ourselves extremely defensive, perhaps attacking people who only want the best for us or our community;
- Our flexibility is diminished in responding to life’s challenges;
- We are in imaginative gridlock. We are no longer able to think of alternatives, opinions or new perspectives.

It is important to take note not only of where we find ourselves on this list but how our congregation responds to anxiety as well. This knowledge can allow us to step back and name where we find ourselves in the moment, asking others for help to choose a healthier response.

Whenever we are faced with incredible amounts of anxiety, whether at home or in our church communities, we can choose how we respond. This response can come in a reactive form (seen in the list above), or we can learn how to cultivate a non-anxious presence. What would have happened if Aaron, rather than taking on the Israelites’ anxiety, calmly listened to what they had to say, or refocused their bewilderment? I imagine we would have an entirely different story.

Like Aaron, each of us has an emotional field of influence. What we say and do naturally affects others. When we respond calmly to someone who is anxious or angry, that calm can influence him or her. When someone is bewildered and feeling as if he or she is living in chaos, we can offer focus. First, however, we have to be aware of what is going on inside of us and grow in our self-awareness. We do this together. When we own our own reactions and try a different kind of response as we feel our anxiety meter rise, we are helping to write a different kind of script: a story in which anxiety does not reign, and God’s peace and well-being can be fostered through our inner work together.

Update on Partnership for Missional Church

Kathy Clausen, steering team leader

This fall was a very busy time for the PMC team. After the cluster-training meeting in September we were asked to have a parish-wide spiritual discernment

conversation and be prepared to share the results by the next cluster event on December 4th and 5th. The Vestry, both current and nominated, joined us for this and for more training in Agawam last weekend.

At the September training we learned that before we could have the parish-wide conversation we had to complete another round of interviews with members both of the parish and of the larger community. We were asked to sort through pages of information we had collected over the summer and summarize them so that we could provide those results at the parish meeting. We had to plan the meeting, create the presentations, and invite everyone. We met just about every other weekend to work on this.

All the while in our parish, unlike in any other parish involved in PMC, the Vestry was wrestling with the uncertainty of the Main Street building situation. A parish meeting needed to be held to discuss that and the unfolding Berkshire Summit initiative. The only possibility, given the time frame, was to put all the elements impacting our parish together in one huge meeting.

The November 8th meeting was lengthy, stuffed full of information, and a clear demonstration of the commitment the people of St. James feel to the future of our presence in Great Barrington. When the members of the PMC team reviewed the November eighth meeting in preparation for our presentation, we were humbled by the passion and devotion of the attendees.

PMC is a process by which we will, as a whole congregation, discern what God has in mind for us. Through the steps we are taking and will continue to take, the path God has laid out for us will become clearer. It will take us another year, at least, to complete the PMC process. What we will discover will shape us as a people of God and continue to shape us into the future. Through this work we are learning more precisely who we are and what we are called to do, and are looking around us to see who might be a partner in this yet-to-be-discovered endeavor.

The premise is actually quite simple: we are God's visible presence in this community. We exist to do what God is calling us to do, and that is to love one another as Christ loved us. One thing that I read recently that keeps coming back to me is that we are called to be "followers of Jesus." To follow you have to be moving. We are not called to stand around behind Jesus, or just sit around and wait for Jesus. We are asked to be in motion, moving into places we haven't gone, perhaps uncomfortable or unpopular places, just as He did.

Where will we be called to go? Our journey is unfolding through the tireless efforts of these PMC folks: John Cheek, Lee Cheek, Francie Hills, Elizabeth Holland, Doreen Hutchison, Dutch Pinkston, Peter Raifstanger, and Lynn Walker, with guidance by the Holy Spirit. In January we will continue the planning when we meet with the Vestry in a retreat.

Thank you to Nancy Cobden who helped us at the November eighth meeting by leading a table discussion!

The Artist of the Month program **Charlene Peet**

The "Artist of the Month program" has expanded to incorporate the non-visual arts. This presents a new organizational challenge -- finding ways to create a visual

display and discovering ways (with Francie's help) for tastefully weaving a performance aspect of the artistry into the worship service. So far, so good. This began in November with **Michael Houlihan**, often referred to as the Bard of Great Barrington, reading poetry twice during the service, as well as making copies of his poems available to peruse.

The members of **St. James' Choir** have been designated as the **December "Artists of the Month"**. This is both to honor and celebrate the reservoir of talent evidenced in the choir under the direction of Charles Olegar, and their faithfulness in making splendid music fifty-two weeks of the year. For the display, Jean Yves Valette (**September "Artist of the Month"**) has taken portraits of choir members that will be displayed in the Artist's Nook during the month, along with their individual responses to three questions:

- What are your overall musical involvements?
- Why are you committed to being a member of St. James' Choir?
- Does the experience draw you into a deeper awareness of God the Creator? If so, how?

You will be amazed at what you will discover about these dedicated persons who are members of St. James' Choir. And you will be delighted by brief "*moments musicaux*" weekly during coffee hour.

In **January**, **John Cheek** will be the Artist of the Month. John describes himself as a person who has dedicated a lifetime to making beautiful music. John is beloved by us all and has graced our choir for many years as both faithful member and frequent soloist. We all stand a little taller following his singing career in various concert halls and opera houses at home and abroad, knowing he is part of our church family. And none of us will ever forget his incredible rendition of "Consider the Lilies", written especially for him by Wallace Nolin, a recent guest at St. James'. John promises us a display of posters and programs representative of his singing career and some solo work during the month.

What better way to celebrate the beginning of the third year of the Artist of the Month program?

My Mother's Sense of Gratitude

My mother, Gwyneth Griffin Bohr, died on July 1, 2009. We held a funeral and burial on July 8. Family members and friends spoke at the Service of Celebratory Remembrance on July 25. These are my remarks. – Gretchen Courage

*It's not the weight you carry,
but how you carry it –
books, bricks, grief
when you cannot, would not put it down*

Mary Oliver - **Heavy**

Here we are all together, celebrating Gwyneth Griffin Bohr or, as one obituary stated, Gwyneth Gwyneth Bohr. We are celebrating the bold and loving life she led. This is one way we find balance in our grief. Passing memories around, the weight shifts.

Mom would have loved all this. And we know she would have loved the concert because she herself invited the jazz band. “Will you play at my funeral?” she asked at a previous performance. “I hope it’s not too soon!” was the sensitive response.

Mom would have loved to chime in. And she is, through us. In his poem, “Promissory Note,” Galway Kinnel writes,

*I will cross over into you
and ask you to carry not only your own memories
but mine too
until you lie down and erase us both together into oblivion.*

As the poet said, *I will cross over into you*. Memories are the bridge and we are all walking it tonight.

Scene One

Our family gathered at the hospital in Portland, the week of Dad’s 90th birthday. We were all granted a grace period, enough time to talk with Mom, to see life come back into her body, time to love her up.

She had time to receive the messages sent by family and friends, whether in writing or heart sent. I asked her, “Mom do you feel like you got a new lease on life?” “Yes I do!” And for a week she did. And it was a shiny new lease, like a motorcar that’s really “spiffy,” one of Mom’s favorite words.

So much came forth for me at this time, but above all her sense of gratitude... for the sky she could finally see when she left intensive care; tasting her favorite hospital meal (a turkey sandwich); holding hands and smiling; hearing emails and messages; visiting with loved ones; for poetry and prayers; smelling flowers and holding a blossom in her hand as she fell asleep. “I’m thankful for everything,” she told me in our last conversation. “The people here are so kind.” She spoke with her daughters about gratitude as a spiritual practice “This is my final goal,” she told us.

Scene Two, an older memory

The year is 1963, I am in another country, another hospital. When we lived in India, and my sisters and I wanted to explore life outside of the American School, Mom arranged for us to volunteer at Holy Family Hospital and Mother Teresa’s Orphanage in Delhi.

When a member of the American Wives’ Club questioned the wisdom of exposing “our children” to poverty that might upset them, Mom responded, “It exists. I want my girls to be aware and to care.” She was not one to fear vulnerability and she saw no reason for her daughters to.

At Holy Family Hospital I was given the chance to share in the intimate experiences of life and death alongside Indian families. With Mom’s support, I learned that I could walk into difficulty, rather than fear it. And furthermore, if I could do it once, then I could do it again and again. No matter how hard it felt, no matter how much the experience challenged me, I could continue to act, embracing my feelings, and by so doing, reach a deeper level and allow my heart to be touched.

Mom’s message was clear: “Your caring and your actions matter, even when they seem so small. Sadness is part of life and it’s safe and good to feel it.” Mom taught me that I could feel grateful, not that I was better off than the families I met in a hospital in

India, but because I had the capacity to care, to reach out and to love, and by deepening my connection with my adopted country, I could see myself in a new way - as part of the universal communion of humans. There was room for all at God's table, every single bit of ALL.

Gratitude is a relationship with life

Gratitude means allowing ourselves to be touched by our common humanness and since each of us is a work in progress, a student of life, we hold imperfections. Mom accepted, even celebrated, the perfection of imperfection, *the crack in everything*, as Leonard Cohen wrote. Mom and I REALLY deconstructed that one!

*Ring the bells that you can ring
Forget your perfect offerings
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in*

We all have human frailties and vulnerabilities and Mom was no exception. What was exceptional was the way she sought to "drink the wine of astonishment" (in the words of her favorite and most challenging psalm). In the middle of the imperfection that is human life, she learned to appreciate the everyday. She wrote:

*I seek the holy in the mundane and try to find it,
Life is a new kind of search.
I seek to see beneath the surface.
I am noticing small things -
A stream of sunlight in the yard,
The cat scratching
The flowers in every room
Weariness in a visitor's face
The pine trees outside our bedroom windows
Ken and Alexis - our golden - walking to the mailbox and returning*

Our Mother did not regret any part of her life, not even the hardest parts, only that they were hard for others. She was grateful for the chance to dig deep, to explore the general insecurity and unpredictability of life. Mom learned how to have gratitude around the edges of a hard experience, how to be appreciative of the love she shared with others, of her own growing awareness.

During a difficult period in her life, she learned to find a place to rest, like a cradle of loving kindness, in the form of Father Griffith, an Episcopal priest who brought her to church and lunch every Sunday during a difficult period in her life. Mom recalls: *Later I write and thank Father Griffith and send him some money to help someone else. He returns the money, saying they have a fund. He personifies Christian charity for me. I am stuck with my gratitude!*

This happened over 50 years ago, yet the memory of Father Griffith's kindness lived on in Mom's memory and then in the memories of her daughters and now in yours.

Did Mom know that "stuck with my gratitude" planted a seed? That later contact with an Episcopal chaplain while doing volunteer work at St. Elizabeth's hospital in Washington, DC would water that seed?

Did Father Griffith know that the young mother to whom he reached out would become an Episcopal priest at the age of 59? That Father John Smith, of St. Peter's Church in Bridgton, would step in decades later to carry on this kindness and would bring church to Mom in the hospital? That she has in fact returned his kindness thousand-fold through her own awakened heart?

In Buddhism, this is called 'bodhichitta'. Pema Chodrun, in her book, *Comfortable with Uncertainty*, writes: *Bodhichitta is our heart - our wounded, softened heart... It is gentle and warm; it is clear and sharp; it is open and spacious. The awakened heart of bodhichitta is the basic goodness of all beings. It is the love that will not die.*

It is the love that will cross over into all of us, all of us who knew and loved and still love Gwyneth Griffin Bohr, who is beyond time and can forever rest in the cradle of loving-kindness.

An Ordinary Day in an Extraordinary Place

*Gwyneth Griffin Bohr, Memoirs 2008
recalling an afternoon in Jaipur, India in 1965.*

There was nothing for me to do. I moved out to the lovely gardens and watched two brightly-turbaned men beating Indian-Persian rugs. I enjoyed the setting. Every mother knows I appreciated this brief time alone, with no chores possible. There was nothing to worry about: the girls were at school and a friend would watch over them when they returned; Ken was at work; I was relaxing.

Slowly I felt the loveliest calm, a sense of at-one-ness in this ancient world. Where did it come from? I just accepted it and wondered. In that wonder and rest I found peace. An ordinary day in an extraordinary place where I had learned anew to attend to my environment. I can still touch that peace.

Vestry notes

August 6, 2009 – 5:45-7:45 p.m. Fairview Hospital Library

Present: Doug Happ, Junior Warden; Dick Kelly, Treasurer; Lee Cheek, Clerk; Nancy Cobden, Margaret Layton, Pat Poulos; The Rev. Frances Hills, Rector.

Away: Doreen Hutchinson, Geoff Perkins, Dindy Anderson, Elizabeth Holland

Parish Needs: Nancy Cobden raised the question of finding at least one other person, preferably two, who would accept the ministry of coffee hour along with Valerie

Smith. The currently involve carrying items up and downstairs as well as being present to help the coffee hour hosts. *The vestry agreed to work on this between meetings.*

Rector's Report: A Finance Committee meeting is being scheduled for the end of August. Issues to discuss are stewardship and fundraising.

Members of the nominating committee for the 2010 Vestry are, so far, Pat Poulos and Margaret Layton, whose vestry terms end in 2010. Two members from the parish will be chosen as well as one member of the Executive Committee who will be retiring.

The Rector will be away August 27 to September 6. Archdeacon Bill Coyne will preach and celebrate on August 30. Ted Cobden and Don Peet will preach and celebrate September 6. We will celebrate Minister of Music Charles Olegar's 5th anniversary of employment at St. James on Sunday August 23d.

Geoff Perkins' daughter Olivia is recovering from hip surgery and four members of the vestry agreed to provide some meals in August.

Pennie Curry and the rector met and concurred the application process is on hold, and, because of the requirement from the grant foundations that were contacted, the future mission and goals of St. James must be defined before application is made.

Piano Disposal: The Vestry agreed to offer our old electronic piano as a gift to Christ Church-Trinity Lutheran should they decide they want it. If not, we will sell it as agreed on at the last meeting. They have provided space for our monthly choir rehearsals as well as providing Charles a place to continue teaching organ.

250th Anniversary: The first organizing meeting of the 250th Celebration of the founding of St. James was Saturday August 1. Susan Frantz agreed to co-chair the committee with John Cheek and the rector. A motion from the committee was amended and passed: **To create a restricted fund of monies to be raised by a special committee for the initial phase of the 250th celebration of St. James Parish.**

The vestry discussed the issues of precedents regarding remuneration of parishioners for work done on St. James projects. The rector will initiate further conversations regarding discernment in such situations.

Treasurer's Report: Dick Kelly presented the report for the end of June. No major items are awry. The report was accepted.

Building issues - where we are now: Junior Warden Doug Happ asked members of the vestry three major questions (below). After a discussion, Doug asked the vestry to continue to think about these questions before the next meeting and to write out any comments. Doug will be away Sept. 9 to Oct. 1.

- *Can you envision St. James in another location?*
- *In 2020 will St. James (or other South County Episcopal Churches) be viable?*
- *Looking at the demographics, if only one church in South County could be viable in 2020, where should that church be located?*

Carefully read the Ryan-Biggs report and see if you can justify and wholeheartedly recommend restoration of the present building(s).

Insurance: We are expecting a \$193,000 initial payment in settlement from the insurance company for the expenses we have incurred so far.

September 10, 2009 – 5:30-7:15 p.m. Fairview Hospital Library

Present: Doreen Hutchinson, Senior Warden; Dick Kelly, Treasurer; Lee Cheek, Clerk; Elizabeth Holland, Margaret Layton, Geoff Perkins, Pat Poulos; The Rev. Frances Hills, Rector. **Away:** Doug Happ; Nancy Cobden.

Rector's Report: St. James has been invited to present a five-minute story of where we are now at the Diocesan Convention in October. Elizabeth Holland and Francie will write the script to be taped on September 22.

Dindy Anderson and Francie reported that a new curriculum for children's formation has been chosen that can be used with a diverse group of children, ages 3-11. The teachers also recommended that one "Children's Sunday" a month be re-instituted at St. James when the children will assume liturgical roles during worship. The vestry concurred.

Berkshire Summit Report: Doreen Hutchinson reported on the last South Berkshire Summit Meeting attended by representatives from St. Paul's, Christ Episcopal-Trinity Lutheran, St George's, Good Shepherd and St. James. As they looked ahead to 2020 and the possibility of only one Episcopal Church in South County, two ideas were proposed to foster inter-congregational experiences: (1) celebrating the 150th cornerstone anniversary of St. Paul's on Nov. 15; (2) combining churches this winter to promote fuel efficiency.

The vestry wholeheartedly agreed to attend St. Paul's celebration in November. The vestry agreed that the idea to combine churches this winter is a laudable idea for many reasons but that many logistics will need to be worked out by the South Berkshire Summit Leaders. There was concern expressed that fusing the churches, even experimentally, would negate the reasons that parishioners chose to become members of St. James and not one of the other churches.

Building Scenarios and Parish Meeting: The vestry again reviewed a list of building scenarios for the future. Various concerns were expressed about each possibility. It became apparent that the major financial challenges need to be written out in plain language. Dick Kelly, treasurer, will prepare these figures (to the best of his knowledge) before the October parish meeting.

The vestry also agreed that the October meeting would be the beginning of a process of discernment that may take a very long time. Francie reminded us that we need time to let the Holy Spirit work on us and show us what God's preferred future is for St. James. We do not need to rush this process even though it may be difficult to live with ambiguity. The discoveries from the work of the Partnership for Missional Church process will be invaluable for us as we go along.

The work of the vestry at the parish meeting is to lead the congregation in the discernment process by initially providing an overview that will connect the dots all the pieces of information that we have received over the past year about our building. The parish meeting will also be a time for outlining the work that we must do now, and finding teams of parishioners to help organize the work. One major area is the columbarium, which will need to be moved and will involve engraving the cylinders for identification before moving. The other is the inventory of memorials required by the auditor. The executive team will work on the structure of the meeting and email the vestry for comments and suggestions. The meeting date may be changed to Oct. 25 due to scheduling.

Miscellaneous: The engineers have signed off on Allegrone's work and have presented their findings to the Building Inspector. There are some qualifications that need to be clarified regarding "weekly monitoring". We are still waiting for the estimate for demolition.

October 8, 2009 – 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fairview Hospital Library

Present: Doreen Hutchinson, Senior Warden; Doug Happ, Junior Warden; Dick Kelly, Treasurer; Lee Cheek, Clerk Pat Poulos, Dindy Anderson, Margaret Layton, Geoff Perkins; The Rev. Frances Hills, Rector; Kathy Clausen, Partnership for Missional Church Chair. **Away:** Nancy Cobden, Elizabeth Holland.

A motion was made and carried unanimously to release Harry Conklin and David Hellman, attorneys at 342 Main St. from the restrictions regarding the shrubbery and plantings, originally donated as memorials to the Church, in paragraph 5 of the original restrictive covenant in the deed that was registered when the former rectory at 342 Main St. was sold. This will allow the attorneys to remove the shrubbery and plantings from their property, which now limit visibility to traffic exiting the driveway between the church and the law offices. [Papers were signed by the wardens, treasurer and clerk of the vestry, and notarized on October 9, 2009.]

A motion was made and carried to instruct the Rector and wardens to continue to communicate the vestry's affirmation of the idea of a Season of Common Worship from the last Sunday of Epiphany to the 5th Sunday of Lent and to proceed in conversations with the five South Berkshire Episcopal Churches.

November 8 Parish Meeting: Kathy Clausen outlined the agenda for the parish meeting on Nov. 8. In addition to the nuts and bolts of the building issues and financial picture, we will have four other reports to help bring us some perspective. In addition to the 2020 picture which will be outlined in the Berkshire Summit summary from the Senior Warden, we will also have three reports, with power point slides, from what we have learned in the Partnership for Missional Church process: Congregational Discovery Report, Time Line, and Church Future Finder (demographics and community views of St. James). Kathy outlined the day: worship, reports, lunch, Q&A, discernment. Postcards are being sent out twice to remind parishioners of the length and importance of our meeting on Nov. 8.

Junior Warden's Report: Doug Happ reported that the Ascension Window has been removed. We will not be able to turn off the heat in the sanctuary because the water pipes for the parish house run through the sanctuary and need to be kept above freezing. Allegrone completed the estimates for a demolition of the sanctuary (\$374,200) and parish hall (add \$11,475). These figures will be added to Doug's report at the November 8 parish meeting where several options will be laid out.

Rector's Report: Francie reported that the Christmas Eve Holy Eucharist will be celebrated at Crissey Farm this year. We will worship Christmas morning at St. Paul's, Stockbridge. There is a consensus among the vestry for a traditional carol sing before the service, both for pastoral needs in the congregation and also to serve the community. We are still looking for someone to co-chair the Mardi Gras Fundraiser for 2010.

Upcoming Vestry Meetings: December 17, 5:30 pm at Fairview Hospital and January 17, 5:30 pm at the Rector's home.

Respectfully submitted, **Lee Cheek**, Clerk to the Vestry