

# St. George's *Banner* July 2008

## Our next steps forward

I usually find it very hard to sit quietly and listen for God's whisperings. But with no conscious effort I have been hearing a message more and more insistently for some months now.

We devote much time and energy strategizing about how to energize our church, how to grow it. We tread and the same ground over and over again. The message I keep hearing, sometimes in something I read, sometimes in something said: **Focus on learning how to care for one another better. The love you cultivate within your walls will touch those outside your walls. Caring for each other and for the other will make God known in this place.** My vision for this year's June 18 mini-retreat for vestry members and ministry chairs grew out of this insistent voice.



Can we consider what we have done that has strengthened our caring for each other and plan for the coming months activities with this measure as our guide?

How does one define “the vision thing” ... how we see St. George's, each other, and the work we do? I took heart from one of the May readings in the Forward Movement's *Day by Day*:

“Many teachers have tried to explain everything. They have changed little or nothing. Jesus explained little and changed everything.” **(E. Stanley Jones)**

I have bristled at the question: What is your end product? I have bristled, even as I recognize that this is a legitimate question. We're “Inside the Beltway” people; we're task oriented. Those of us who have experienced “feel good” exercises know how quickly the feeling passes. Sappy love is NOT on my agenda. But neither is another mission statement or “to do” list.

What do I want to come out of this retreat? I want us to plant a seed. Perhaps by looking afresh at the mission we share and what we as leaders need to support, we will expand our vision of supporting each other.

I was really taken with Thomas Merton's observation that we all live in our private capsule of indignation. It's such a tempting place, especially if someone asks me to do one more thing when I am already spent. Maybe this very human response gave rise to the message in Exodus (18: 13-27): **You will surely wear yourself out.** The *Day by Day* scribe reminds me: **“God commands us to stop thinking we are called—or allowed—to bear our burdens alone.”**

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I hope that, with your help, we can create an experience at our mini-retreat that will move us to say, “Let us as leaders learn to care better for each other and let it begin with me. This is how I and the ministry to which I am connected can begin.”

I believe strongly that the greatest tool in evangelism is how we live our lives. The caring energy we emanate can not only draw in our current flock as members of a bonded and loving family, but touch those outside our walls.

As I write this the mini-retreat has not yet occurred, so I don’t know exactly how my impressions of God’s whisperings will play out at St. George’s. I am looking forward to hearing what others have to say and to figuring out what our next steps might be. If you have input to share on this subject, Junior Warden **David Grahn** and I would welcome it.

-- *Norma Kacen, Senior Warden*



Ron’s Reflections

## The middle of our Centennial year

We began our celebration of our centennial year on January 6, 2008, with a festive Evening Prayer service. We looked back to see what our fellow parishioners in 1908 would be using for prayer books and hymns. We also looked at the possible styles of worship and designed the service with all that in mind. We followed Evening Prayer with a fellowship hour, much like our founders must have done.

When we celebrated St. George’s Day in April, we again looked back, but not all the way to 1908. **Suzannah Rohman**’s slide presentation explored the more recent past, where we could recognize some of the people who led St. George’s in the 1940s through the 1990s.

The month of June, the mid-point in our celebration, turns our focus from the past to the future. The question, “Who were we then?” turns to “Who will we be in the future?” There is some obvious short-term planning that happens every year at this time with program evaluation and planning for the coming program year in September. But our centennial invites us to look beyond 2009 into the near and distant future.

What will St. George’s be in 2014, 2020, and beyond? What will Arlington County be like? How will our neighborhood change? What challenges will these changes bring to who we are and what we do? How do we position ourselves to receive these challenges creatively and confidently? The question of what God was about in our past is just as relevant for our future, “What is God about in this place and what will God place before us as opportunities for service and worship?” And in the larger picture, “What will the Episcopal Church in the early 21st Century look like?”

Obviously, we cannot clearly know the answers to these questions. And as obviously, we cannot ignore these questions because they guide and direct our present. These questions never go away because they are a gift from God for our ministry as a Christian community. They urge us to move outside ourselves into the questions about God’s world that surrounds us, is changing and is changing us. That dynamic, lively relationship will

keep us fresh and young, physically and spiritually toned for engaging God's presence in worship, service, fellowship and education.

"Where is God leading us now?" is the question that directs us in the second half of our centennial celebration. Make it part of your prayers, part of your worship, part of your thinking, part of your relationship with God and one another in this community.

-- Ron Crocker, Rector



## Warden's Word

# The joys of being a "Door Lady"

It's been an exuberant month at St. George's! As "Door Lady," I learned and laughed and swelled with pride (even knowing that the kudos belonged to others!).

How it began: I have no institutional memory of the great Strawberry Festivals of past years. This year, thanks to **Tracy Yeager** and her youth team, St. George's tradition of hosting a May Strawberry Festival was reborn (fellowship, fun, and the perfect excuse to indulge—after all, those calories are for a good cause!). "At the door" I received an education. Now I know that the Strawberry Festivals were happenings, that they were loved and have been missed, and their return brought joyful memories and inspired lots of stories. All this I learned from faces new to me, some longtime neighbors and some veteran St. Georgians who had moved from the area and were now closer and hoping to return to this their longtime parish. I felt like I was visiting with old friends!

Can it be that our energy is beginning to pulsate outside our walls, even to New York City? Over Memorial Day weekend, thanks to **Rebecca Hill** and the warm hospitality of St. George's host families, we provided a venue for the youth choirs of St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Manhattan. "At the door," our guests talked about St. Michael's and how our churches are both urban parishes that share much of the same richness and many of the same challenges. I began to understand that we provided much more than a musical venue. The warm hospitality of our host families and the congregation's enthusiastic response to the youths' performances provided the rich gift of a church community to our visitors and to ourselves.

And then—thanks to **Yvonne Pover** and **Cynthia Clark**—St. George's history was featured in the Arlington *Sun-Gazette*, together with quotes from **Ron Crocker** about St. George's today. Yeah!

Just when I thought it couldn't get any better, it did. Thanks to **Jane Tavernier's** verve and zest, and to her dedicated and gifted performers, we dared to stage two evenings of "Sacred Opera." You could feel excitement of the performers as they were warming up. (By the way, if you missed these performances, you missed a very, very special musical feast that brought standing ovations.) People streamed in, familiar faces and new faces, and lots of smiles and greetings were exchanged. (Thanks to **Marge Miller**, the *Sun-Gazette* also featured the Sacred Opera performances in its Events Column.) But it was

the end of each evening that told me, “Yes, there is exuberance here tonight!” What I heard “at the door:” “Splendid! Magnificent! Thank You! Do you do this often? Who are these wonderful performers? Are they members of your congregation? I know you do so many wonderful things here, because I often see your events listed. But this is the first time I’ve crossed the threshold of this church. The design is so beautiful. etc., etc.”

“Thank heavens for the arousing qualities of zest, intelligence, wit, curiosity, sweetness, passion, talent and grace.” To all the St. Georgians—richly talented and dedicated—whose gifts of talent and time honored the Creator through these wonderful events, THANK YOU! Your light shone forth, right through our doors.

-- *Norma Kacen, Senior Warden*



## The Food Pantry at 20

What began 20 years ago as an informal outreach activity when an office secretary gave packets of crackers to occasional hungry, homeless men who came to St. George’s office has now grown to the congregation-supported Food Pantry feeding take-away lunches every weekday throughout the year to more than 40 needy men and women.

This year the vestry allocated \$17,000 to the Food Pantry budget for the purchase of canned and packaged food from the Capital Area Food Bank or from COSTCO.

There are currently more than 40 volunteers, most of them men and women parishioners of St. George’s, and a few people from nearby communities or offices, who work in pairs each weekday in the food pantry or make shopping trips to COSTCO or unload deliveries when they arrive at the church from the Capitol Area Food Bank.

The Food Pantry’s purpose has remained the same since it began in 1968: to provide food with dignity for those in need. The Food Pantry was started when church staff member **Barbara Lewis** began to keep crackers in her desk for the increasing string of people asking St. George’s for food. Their number, in wealthy Arlington, was a revelation to rector **Bob Hall**. With his encouragement, distribution of food from an office closet began.

**Lauren Stanley**, a parishioner who has since become a priest, put together the present operation. She organized the buying methods and initiated fund-raising programs, such as sales of book marks, magnets, and tote bags. Nutritionist **Angela Churchill** developed a list of nutritious food items. **Ted Mann** built a storage closet on wheels called the Red Dragon. Later, in 1996 when the building was being renovated, cabinets were built at the back wall of the chapel, where the Food Pantry continues to operate today.

In 1994 **Wendi Mitchell** became coordinator and organized raffles of **Betty Iseli**’s stuffed bunnies. **Joanne Droppers** accepted the leadership of the pantry and established the traditional luncheon for clients and volunteers. When Joanne moved to North Dakota, **Penny DeFilippi** took over and later **Wesley Ann Godard** and **Al Brevard** became coordinators of the pantry.

With soaring food prices and greater demand, the food pantry has initiated pleas for food

donations from St. Georgians. Bookmarks, listing the five basic foods needed, have been distributed in the nave. Parishioners have responded favorably in the past, and there is no reason to believe they will not do so again.

-- *Al Brevard and Nancy McCracken*

NOTE: Summer has arrived with a vengeance and the Food Pantry needs donations of bottled water in individual sizes for our clients. The water helps keep them hydrated as they spend the day in the open, exposed to the hot sun. We would appreciate your support of this vital ministry.



## Can you help care?

I am the new chair person for the Parish Care Ministry. What is that all about? I am about to find out. It sounds like it can be a huge task or it can be cut down to a size WE can handle—based on needs. Presently the Parish Care Ministry oversees:

1. The Meat Loaf Ministry, led by **Joan Pepin**, is a short-term help for persons in need of food or transportation.
2. Care Givers Ministry, which needs a leader, is a support group (prayers, phone calls) for those who are caring for elderly parents, both local and long distance.
3. The Intercessory Prayer Group, led by **Seville Allen**, prays for those who request it, usually by e-mail or phone call.
4. Altar Flowers Delivery, which needs a leader, prepares and arranges for delivery of the Sunday altar flowers after the final service to persons designated by the clergy.
5. Taxi Voucher Program, led by **Don Lundquist** and **Wayne Lewis**, makes taxi vouchers available to enable persons to come to and from church activities via local cab.

Parish Care is all about you and me helping you and me in various ways. In coming weeks more information will be forthcoming regarding our plans. We need your thoughts and prayers and comments for guidance and direction and needs. Please consider getting involved in some way; in most cases your time commitment would be about two hours

per month. It comes down to your getting a lot more from it than what you put into it. We can become a more caring community by becoming aware of the well being of our extended family: it is You and You and Me.

I have a favorite poem written by R. L. Sharpe:

“Each one of us is given a bag of tools,  
A shapeless mass, a book of rules;  
And each must make ere life has flown  
A stumbling block or a stepping stone.”

-- [Don Lundquist](#), *Parish Care Committee Chair*



## Rite-13 celebration for our youth

St. George's celebrated a special day in the life of some of our youth on May 18. This was the Sunday that we recognized the beginning of the “journey to adulthood” of these young people, all about 13 years old, in a ceremony known as Rite-13. **Edward Crockett, Thomas Fontaine, Julia Jones, Anne Lacey, Allison Meade, Emilie Matarese, and Lelia Troiano** have been meeting and studying together for the past two years in a program that is designed to provide a more mature Christian foundation while allowing students to explore issues relevant to this time in their lives in a safe, comfortable environment.

The capstone ceremony of this program began with the presentation of the youths by the Rite-13 teachers, and with their reading of Psalm 139, which includes a plea to “**Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.**” Parents of the young people, as well as their peers were asked to come forward to stand with them. The rite included a prayer for the parents, as they send their children off on a journey from children to adulthood, a charge for the peers, acknowledging that their support may mean more than any other in the months and years to come, and a reminder to the whole congregation of their commitments and responsibilities to these youth. Finally, the young people knelt as the celebrant and parents laid their hands on each one for a prayer and a blessing to conclude the liturgy.

Please remember to keep these youth in your prayers and remember that as a their Christian community we have a very special role in seeing them through this exciting and challenging journey to their adulthood.

-- *Marge Miller, Vestry Communications liaison*



## Two Nights of Sacred Opera

There it was on the Centennial Celebrations calendar: Sacred Opera, May 30 and June 1. What I know about opera would fit on an index card: Staging it is complex. (Have you checked ticket prices?!) Opera performers have extraordinary talent. Opera lovers tend to favor French, German, or Italian composers (but not all three) and can argue passionately

their respective merits.

This was audacious. We were going to create an evening of operatic music! And what was sacred opera? I invoked Tennyson: “Ours is not to question why...” Like a good foot soldier, I read the plots that **Jane Tavernier** and **Jo Belser** had thoughtfully provided us, and I recognized the story of the Prodigal Son and was moved by Suor Angelica’s tragedy. Now I understood that these selections were a form of musical prayer, hence “Sacred Opera.” So far so good. But could we carry it out? And would there be an audience?

To think, I actually doubted! When I walked the neighborhood looking for venues to post our flyer, I was equipped with my “elevator speech,” a 60 second sales pitch. I never used it. Our neighbors knew opera—they even knew sacred opera—and requested additional flyers.

Then the night came. Would there be an audience? At first a trickle, the audience grew and grew, to some 75 on Friday night and some 60 on Sunday evening. Could we carry it off? Oh, the voices! The cast included St. George’s choir women, as the chorus for *Suor Angelica*, with **Jane Tavernier**, **Karen Vaughn**, **Valerie Wayman**, and **Aurora Martin** in the stronger supporting roles, and **Ellyn Crawford**, **Karen Vaughn**, and **Adrian Cook** as the St. Georgians in *L’Enfant Prodigue*. Let me simply say, the performers earned standing ovations.

We are often challenged to contribute our time and our talent in God’s honor. “Brava” to Jane and all the dedicated and talented St. Georgians whose energy reverberated in our nave. Surely God looked down on this place and smiled.

-- Norma Kacen



## Special Events

Visit St. George’s [Calendar](#) or [Announcements](#) pages to find out what’s happening. Our [worship schedule](#) is online, too!



## Thanks for a great Youth Sunday

St. George’s held Youth Sunday on June 15, the day in our year that we set aside to celebrate the children and youth of our parish and recognize the adults who volunteer to teach and lead them. Young people, from pre-schoolers to teenagers, participated in the service by acolyting, ushering, reading the lessons and the prayers, singing, and playing instrumental selections.

Youth Sunday concludes the church school year at St. George’s, so a big part of the service was a recognition of church school students and teachers. More than 50 students attend classes each Sunday morning. They attend classes starting at about age 4, and continue through all of high school. We recognized, too, the dozens of teachers who

volunteer their time and energy to keep this program going. You may have noticed that some of the students were also the teachers. Some of our older high school students give back to St. George's by teaching the younger children. What great fun for the younger students to enjoy their spirit and energy!

Youth Sunday is also about recognizing the many other programs at St. George's that serve and support our children and youth and their parents. These include EYC (our youth groups for middle school and high school students), Kids' Gospel Time, children's choirs, and the Children and Youth Committee. It takes a congregation as well as a village to raise and nurture these young Christians, and it's pretty clear that they have a great home at St. George's. We are blessed to have them with us each Sunday and will be blessed for years as we watch them grow into wonderful young adults.

St. George's gave special recognition to one of those young adults who is graduating from high school this spring. **Aurora Martin** is heading to Virginia Tech this fall. We will miss Aurora and her beautiful voice in the choir. Aurora was presented with a college edition study Bible.

We also celebrated Youth Sunday and the end of the church school year with a special brunch organized by **Donna Crocker**, which was awesome: Thanks, Donna!

-- Marge Miller, Vestry Communications liaison



## United Thank Offering gathers \$515

Thank you, St. Georgians, for the \$515 contributed to the United Thank Offering. This semi-annual outreach offering helps women and children throughout the world. In 2007 the UTO Committee approved 104 grants totaling \$2,439,342.46—a lot of change from little blue boxes. The grants ranged from supporting health clinics, expanding a school-based violence prevention program for youth, making a retreat house handicapped accessible, and purchasing kitchen equipment for a church-based community meals program. Missed the spring UTO ingathering? There will be another ingathering this fall, on October 26.



## John Bassler wins Sea Scout accolades

Some heroes get carved into the entire side of a mountain, and some have great buildings and memorial statues dedicated to them. But most don't. Instead, they are the heroes of everyday life without whom our nation would suffer greatly. Heroes can be defined as having valor—great bravery. They can also be defined as having character, morals, ethics, and honor, the core values that our Sea Scouting program instills in our young people. St. George's [Sea Scout Ship 1942](#) salutes one of its heroes.

Recently, at the annual BSA National Capital Area Council Business Meeting, Sea Scout Ship 1942 Committee Chairman **John Bassler** was recognized with the Council's highest award for service to our youth: the "Silver Beaver" Award.

John and his wife **Sally Bassler** have been most active community participants during the raising of their two Eagle Scout sons **Christopher** and **Michael Bassler**. Both sons have gone into various marine and nautical fields. Chris has completed his engineering doctoral work in Marine Architecture from Virginia Tech University and is about six months away from being Dr. Bassler of the David Taylor Ship Modeling Basin. Quartermaster Mike has his two-year technical boat building degree from Maine Maritime.

John will soon complete his eighth year as our Sea Scout Ship 1942 Committee Chairman, after a 10-year run as a successful scout leader and Committee Chairman for his two Eagle Scout son's Boy Scout troop. John actively serves on the Chain Bridge District Roundtable Staff and the District's Venture Roundtable Committee as additional duties.

What does a Ship Committee Chairman's job entail? Virtually every piece of paper that he sees deals with 100% of our youth membership. John chairs all our too numerous-to-count Boards of Review for every youth advancement from Apprentice to Quartermaster; Tenderfoot to Eagle Scout; Venture Bronze to Venture Gold Awards; and our Girl Scout Gold Awards. He completes virtually all the required youth paperwork, and files it with Council headquarters, or above. He insures our annual Charter is renewed on time and makes 100% certain all our required "Tour Permits" are in place before we ever leave the docks. And John's garage has built a myriad of everything from Atomic-4 engines to our "Land Ship" props.

Chairman Bassler is the busiest Committee Chairman afloat, or on land for that matter, with our 23 Outdoor Venture "Ranger" Awards the past two summers. The Sea Scout equivalent to an Eagle Scout award is our Quartermaster Award. Each year there are 18 or so Quartermasters awarded throughout the United States. For the past three years Sea Scout Ship 1942 has produced 11 of them. In the calendar year 2007 alone, Ship 1942 has boarded five new Quartermaster Sea Scouts, a feat that has never been done before in all of the nearly 100 years of Sea Scouting history.

This past year Ship 1942 was led by no less than 11 Quartermaster Sea Scouts, 8 Eagle Scouts, 10 Venturing Silver Awards, and 2 Girl Scout Gold Awardees. Over the years, Chairman Bassler has personally mentored 32 Eagle Scouts.

Our Ship 1942 unit was recognized last year as the very best Sea Scout Ship in the United States. This national-level award has not been in the Northeast Region of Scouting since

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1931. Fittingly, John Bassler is in the center of that the award photo, as that's where he is always: in the center in quietly making things happen for our youth in Ship 1942.

-- Tom Ballew, Skipper, Sea Scout Ship 1942

## Thanks for the Strawberry Festival

The EYC (youth) groups hosted the rebirth on May 17 of a long-standing St. George's rite of Spring, the Strawberry Festival. The Festival was very well attended by about 70 St. Georgians and friends. It was a great time for all of us to come together on a gorgeous day and eat strawberries, ice cream, and cake. What could be better than that?

The idea for bringing back the Festival emerged during one of our winter meetings, when several EYC members indicated that they missed not having the Strawberry Festival, and that bringing it back would be a great way wrap up the year. St. George's Youth Representative **Tracy Yeager** took the lead in organizing the event. She sought out Fellowship Committee Chair **Helen Malone**, who provided invaluable advice about how the festival had been conducted in the past. Tracy met with the EYC leaders and members to develop a task list and make sure there were enough people to handle the tasks. Because of Tracy's leadership, the EYC members and leaders had a great time preparing the strawberries and hosting the event. Tracy, along with all the EYC members and leaders, did a great job.

The Strawberry Festival was not only a great fellowship success; it also raised about \$300 for future EYC activities. EYC members want to thank all came and enjoyed the cake, strawberries, and ice cream that made the revived festival such a great success. We look forward to seeing them, and those who could not make it this year, at next year's Strawberry Festival.

-- David Grahn



## Do you play an instrument?

Congratulations to our fine young instrumentalists who offered music at the 9:00 and 11:00 AM services on Youth Sunday: Nathan Harpine, Thomas Fontaine, Betsy Yuhas, and Michael Yuhas. I think all of us would love to hear more from the musicians in our congregation, young and older. Do you know someone who plays the keyboard or a wind or string instrument? Do you? Please let me know. I will be contacting those of you whose talents I know about. If you would like to play and I haven't discovered your talent yet, let me know.

-- Jane Tavernier

