



**We are beloved.
All are beloved.
In the assurance of
God's love we are
transformed to live
and work for the
reign of God.**

**ST. COLUMBA'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH**
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Washington, DC 20016
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Columba.org

The Rev. Janet Vincent, Rector
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St. Columba's Newsletter

OPEN IN SPIRIT ■ DEEP IN FAITH
RICH IN WORSHIP ■ ACTIVE IN SERVICE

Vol. 55, No. 2
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Open in what counts

The following is adapted from Janet's Feb. 5 Annual Meeting address.

I don't know if you've seen the new ad for the Episcopal Church that's been making the rounds on Facebook and other social media. It includes three photos and this caption:

Lifting up Heart and Mind to God since 1784.

The photos depict an attractive young female priest, a happy family represented by two men with their two children, and a young man drinking a martini. If you're not sure about that date, 1784, it's simply the year that the Episcopal Church in the United States formally separated from the Church of England.

The sentiment of the ad seems to be that the Episcopal Church is not the kind of Christian denomination that marginalizes women and gay Christians. That's wonderful! But what does the photo of a young man holding up a martini say about us? We like to drink? I've certainly been known to enjoy a Cosmopolitan on occasion, but I suspect it's about something other than having a cocktail now and then.

I glean several messages from the ad: Episcopalians are progressive (including a genuine welcome to the LGBT community), we ordain women and we have a sense of humor. I also think there is another message behind all three images: We are not fundamentalists! I often have a sense that we are eager to say who we are not rather than who we are.

You won't hear a sermon at St. C's that suggests you are going to hell if you have a drink once in a while, if you are gay or if you have sex before marriage. No, we are committed to a holistic understanding of scripture as part of our Christian tradition. But do we identify our core purpose when we tell people who we are not? Are we communicating our core identity?

A couple of years ago I watched a video interview with members of our national church's Executive Council. They were asked, "What is the Good News of the Episcopal Church?" Answers ran the gamut. The main theme, however, was that the Episcopal Church is open and welcoming to all. This is a good thing—a hard-won thing and something we continue to strive for—but it is not the heart of the thing. Being open isn't enough. Sometimes I think that our core mission (as the Episcopal Church) is simply oppositional: We are not the Christians who scare you!

We often invite people to St. C's by letting them know that we are not like some other denominations or parishes. Of course, we also include some positive details like good programs and worship.

But shouldn't we be telling people what is at the heart of the Gospel for us? What's so powerful that it draws us here over and over again? What is so powerful that in today's Gospel Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and others? But the next day, instead of healing those who have lined up to have hands laid on them, he pushes on to another town saying that his

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Worship Services

Sundays

8 am Eucharist

With homily and without music.

9 am Eucharist

In the church nave, with sermon, choirs, hymns and the healing rite. Child care is available for children 4 and under, 8:45 am to 12:30 pm.

9:15 and 11:15 am Eucharist for families with preschool children

In the Great Hall, with story-style telling of the gospel and songs children can sing.

10:15 am Education Hour

Sunday School, youth programs, forum, Bible study and refreshments. (Coffee follows all morning services.)

11:15 am Eucharist

In the church nave, with sermon, choirs, hymns and the healing rite.

5 pm Eucharist

A smaller service in the church nave with sermon, hymns and the healing rite.

Weekdays (in the chapel)

Morning Prayer

8:45 am Monday–Friday

Eucharist

7 am Wednesday, followed by breakfast.
10 am Thursday, with the healing rite.

Holy Baptism

For information on baptismal preparation and registration, contact the Rev. Rose Duncan (202-363-4119, ext. 212; rduncan@columba.org;). Forms are due six weeks prior to baptism. Upcoming date: April 8, 5 pm (church nave). Classes: March 20 and 27.

Parish leadership

CLERGY The Rev. Janet Vincent, Rector; the Rev. Martin Smith, Senior Associate Rector; the Rev. Rob Boulter, the Rev. Jason Cox, the Rev. Rose Duncan, the Rev. Margaret Guenther, Associate Rectors; the Rev. Nan Hildebrand, the Rev. Brooks Hundley, Assisting Clergy; Caleb Lee, Nick Roosevelt, Seminarians.

WORSHIP John Hurd, Director of Music and Organist; Diane Heath, Assistant Director of Music and Organist; A. Wayne Fowler, Verger; Mark Allen-Gifford, Mary Claire Bond, John Guenther, Assistant Vergers.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH Pattie Ames, Director of Children's Ministries; the Rev. Jason Cox, Associate Rector for Youth Ministries.

PARISH STAFF Paul Barkett, Chief Operating Officer; Katherine Ballard, Accountant; Kim Carlson, Accountant; Dustin Davis, Operations Manager; Marina Davis, Library Assistant; Anona

Fowler, Pastoral Associate; Rachid Gana, Printer; Brindley Goodger, Coordinator of Membership and Financial Services; Joshua Hutcheson, Assistant Director of Communications and Rector's Assistant; Susan Laing, STEP Program Coordinator; Anne Stone, Director of Communications; Tim Welsh, Director of St. Columba's Day Camp.

NURSERY SCHOOL Julia Berry, Head of School; Kristen Maxson, Assistant Director and Inclusion Coordinator; Karen Smyers, Administrative Assistant.

ADDITIONAL STAFF LISTINGS

can be found at Columba.org.

VESTRY John Nolan, Senior Warden; Jennifer Turner, Junior Warden; Alan Beal, Inga Blust, Margaret Drake, Rick Dulaney, Gardell Gefke, Lane Heard, Courtney Hundley, Laurelle McCready, Schroeder Stribling, Elizabeth Taylor, John Wickham, Ron Wisor, Members; Elizabeth Terry, Secretary.

Transitions

Welcome those who have completed newcomer cards: Matthew Chandler, Bethesda; Kathy Lehmann and Luigi LaPietra, Silver Spring; Marc MacCarthy and Ana Espinoza, Bethesda; and Andrew Ognibene, Rockville.

Welcome new members: Jillian Brathwaite and Linee and Jade Maximay, D.C.; Cillian, Anne and Aileen Lynch, D.C.; and Bette Orr, D.C.

Welcome those who have transferred in: Elizabeth Anne Hamman from Washington National Cathedral; and Mark Smith from St. John the Evangelist, San Francisco.

Bid Godspeed to those who have transferred out: Thomas Bethell to All Souls Memorial Church, D.C.

Pray for those who have died: Leslie Huebner, uncle of Bob Huebner; Frank Huffman, father of Katharine Huffman; Bob Smyth, uncle of Kathleen Stanley, Jan. 10; Robert Allen Perry, cousin of Patrice Allen-Gifford, Jan. 16; Alan Brooks, Jan. 18; Martha Hunt, mother of Phoebe Mejia, Jan. 23; Patsy Stann, Jan. 23; Collette Kent; Stewart Tinsman, Feb. 6; Alexander Hildebrand, uncle of Peter Hildebrand; Morris Hollowell Collins, brother of Susan Collins Geolot; and Ruth Marsh.



The Holy Spirit is present when hope is awakened

"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" He will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Seven years ago I was one of a handful of parishioners who began serving at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF) where 700 men and 100 women are incarcerated. Over the years I have made weekly trips to MCCF to meet with male and female inmates, offering Bibles, spiritual reading material and prayer. I led a weekly healing service and mentored women in an after-care program. Other parishioners have served inmates in the re-entry unit, helping them write résumés and providing employment readiness classes—mentoring, life skills and assistance with family and societal reintegration. Over the past summer I began spending one day a week at the D.C. Jail, and I'd like to share my recent experiences.

The jail was first opened in 1976. Located on the old D.C. General Hospital campus, the facility currently houses approximately 2,150 men awaiting trials or transfer as sentenced misdemeanants or convicted felons. The jail is a depressing environment—rundown and overcrowded with no ventilation. The lack of funding for programming is evident, and inmates have little or no access to educational resources, including library books. Some religious material is available, but the supply of Bibles for those interested in the Christian faith is limited.

Inmates can, however, submit a request to the chaplain for prayer and

spiritual counseling with a religious volunteer or request the assistance of the Visitors' Service Center (VCS), a non-profit organization that provides assistance to inmates while they are incarcerated, as well as in the early time after their release. The hope is to create, maintain and strengthen family and community ties so former inmates are better prepared for a successful transition back into the community. Services include providing information on job training, shelters and housing options. I meet individually with inmates who have requested a session with a religious volunteer or who would like assistance from the VCS.

God is always with us.

As we sit down to talk, the contrast in our appearance and life experience is obvious to both of us. I am 53 years old, Caucasian and female, while they are typically black men, often under-educated, between their 20s and 50s. And yet, the differences seem not to matter. The connection is deeper than the labels that describe and define us in the broader society and there is an openness and trust that unfolds.

While I seek to meet each individual right where he is—just as Jesus meets me right where I am—it is the Holy Spirit that guides our encounter. Inmates discuss with me the status of their cases. But even more profound is what they share about themselves, their families and their spiritual journeys. I always conclude with prayer and the offer of a paperback Bible and/or *The Book of Common Prayer*.

A 30-year-old in jail for a probation violation told me that both of his parents are addicts and his mother currently lives on the street. He was shuffled from one foster home

to another and the memories of what took place in those "homes" continue to haunt him. During the course of our conversation, I was able to convey God's love for him. He, like other inmates, needed to be reminded that God is always with him. Even though his path forward is uncertain, he realized that he is not alone. His countenance changed and in that moment of grace, hope was awakened.

In a similar experience, a 54-year-old inmate said to me, "No one has ever told me I mattered." The Holy Spirit is present and at work when hope is awakened.

I am blessed to witness what God does for those in need as I attempt to live out the promises made at baptism to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself" and to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

There are a variety of opportunities to serve individuals who are incarcerated. MCCF holds regular orientation sessions for interested individuals, and the VCS also has volunteer opportunities. I urge you to clean off your bookshelf by donating used spiritual books to inmates at MCCF and the D.C. Jail. Books can be placed in the marked collection box near the Welcome table.

As always, please hold in your prayers men, women and youth who are incarcerated and their families.

■ Julie Petersmeyer
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Breaking new ground for spiritual growth at St. C's

The Adult Formation Support Team

In the April 2011 newsletter, we first introduced the idea of an Adult Formation Support Team, whose primary role would be to plan and facilitate events such as Wednesdays at St. C's classes, Sunday Forum presentations, retreats, quiet days, workshops, pilgrimages and other means of Christian formation and practice. That team has been working together for six months now, collaborating with staff and parish leaders to imagine ways that we can help people continue to grow in taking the gospel to heart, developing their relationship with God and deepening their understanding of the Christian way.

Those who are pioneering this ministry include Rosemary Dickerson, Joel Dillard, Terry Dowd, Nancy Jokovich, Suzi Kindervatter, Kathi Kolbe and Jim Vaughter. They will soon have distinctive name badges to help you to recognize them.

But in a church that proclaims, as we do on the masthead in our Sunday wrapper, that the ministers are "all the people of St. Columba's," we depend on all in our community to help us live into our Christian faith—which is why we need each of you to assist us in the work of planning formation opportunities.

The Adult Formation Support Team is meant to be a sounding board, and we are asking you to share with us your dreams, wishes and suggestions about new ways that we might practice lifelong formation in community. What topics, speakers, themes or issues

might we address in forums, classes, workshops and groups? How might we deploy the many useful resources available through the Internet, or provide new and compelling resources for others through our own website? How can we intentionally address the needs of all those in our community, including or especially those who may not have a solid grounding in Christian traditions, spiritual practices or ways of prayer? We invite your thoughts and questions, which will be the stimulus for breaking new ground for spiritual growth at St. Columba's.

Please also consider offering your services to support formation events. This could be something as simple as being a greeter at an Advent or Lent quiet day, or helping to organize the lunch and refreshments at a workshop. Our hope is to build a network of willing hands, since the more we can share these kinds of tasks, the lighter they become.

The ministry that we are exploring on this team is bound to expand in the years ahead. Indeed, the team will be recruiting new members in the near future. Might you feel called to this ministry? We especially hope to attract members in their 20s and 30s, so that we can integrate the viewpoints and experiences of the different generations present here at St. Columba's.

Last but not least, we ask each of you to pray for the work of the Adult Formation Support Team. Its success depends on our openness to the Holy Spirit at work among us, as we seek to "grow up in every way" into Christ, as the Letter to the Ephesians says.

■ The Rev. Martin Smith
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Meet our new bishop



LETA DUNHAM / THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

On Wed., March 7, the Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde, Bishop of Washington, will join us for our Wednesday meal (5:30–6:45 pm) and lead us in conversation (7–8 pm) exploring the topic of service. All parishioners are encouraged to join us for dinner and/or the discussion, but advance registration is required for the meal. Sign up at Columba.org, visit the table in the Common on Sundays beginning Feb. 19, or contact Joshua Hutcheson (jhutcheson@columba.org; 202-363-4119, ext. 207).

Reconciliation of a penitent

The priests of the parish are available to hear confessions at any time of the year. Lent is a season when many are moved to seek this confidential celebration of God's healing love. Information on the rite is found on p. 446 of *The Book of Common Prayer* and two forms follow. Call a member of the clergy for an appointment or to learn more (202-363-4119).

Safeguarding God's children (and ours)

Last fall, many of us were horrified by news stories from Penn State University about Jerry Sandusky, a former football coach accused of sexually abusing adolescent boys. As awful as those allegations were, the realization that university officials, including the legendary head coach Joe Paterno, had apparently failed to take adequate action to protect children was also deeply unsettling. These headlines revived memories of other infamous abuse scandals, in churches, schools and homes, and raised many questions: Why do so many turn a blind eye to situations like these? What could be done differently? And, in a church like ours, where hundreds of children and teens are part of the community, how can we best prevent such things from happening?

In the case of St. Columba's, we follow the Diocese of Washington's standards for children's and youth ministries, as well as additional guidelines specific to our parish (all of which may be read at Columba.org). For example, new Sunday School teachers and youth leaders must be members of the parish—active and "in good standing"—for at least six months before they start working with children and youth. Also, all the office and classroom doors in our building have windows in them—not for reasons of architectural design but to minimize the chance that something inappropriate could happen behind closed doors.

All staff, vestry members and volunteers who work with children and youth on an ongoing basis (Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, vergers, SCAP leaders, etc.) are also required to take a sexual abuse awareness and training session called Safeguarding God's Children. This three-hour class is offered several times a year at different locations in

the diocese (including once annually at St. Columba's). The Safeguarding curriculum is designed to equip people to recognize warning signs of abuse, to know what to do in the case of witnessing or hearing about abuse and to take steps to avoid situations in which abuse or even the appearance of impropriety could take place.

The Safeguarding class is not an easy experience. The presentation includes video interviews with survivors of sexual abuse in church settings and with convicted sex offenders. But as hard as it is to admit, abusers are often trusted members of communities—coaches, teachers, even priests and church volunteers. Director of Children's Ministries Pattie Ames says that although hearing these stories is difficult, most Sunday School teachers later tell her they are glad they did. "It's shocking, but it's very helpful for them, both in their ministry here and as parents," she says. "You can't just put your head in the sand. You need to be aware."

Former youth ministries director Emily Gowdy Canady, who served as a Safeguarding trainer when she lived in Washington, agrees with Pattie. "[Sexual abuse] is far more common than any of us would like to think," she says. She encourages parents to seek resources to help guide them in talking with their children about sexual abuse using age-appropriate language. (Darkness to Light, or D2L.org, is one website she recommends.)

Rector Janet Vincent learned first-hand about the importance of preventing and confronting child abuse. Her previous parish struggled with revelations about abuses committed by a former rector. Recalling how some in the community felt the abuse should not be exposed, she

says, "We live in denial. We will protect an abuser in order not to make public an uncomfortable truth." But for Janet, the most important lesson she learned from the ordeal was that protecting children and youth must be the priority. "One of our core missions is the nurture of children and teens," she says. "My responsibility as rector of St. Columba's is that they are allowed to flourish in as safe an environment as is possible."

Janet and Pattie both make it clear that any parishioner with concerns about child sexual abuse—whether something they may have witnessed, something they were told or any other questions—are encouraged to come to either of them, youth ministries director Jason Cox or any other member of the staff or clergy. "Like that homeland security phrase, 'if you see something, say something,'" says Janet. "We will take it seriously, and we will follow through."

The Safeguarding classes are not limited to official volunteers, but are open to parents or others who want to know more about the issue; visit edow.org/prevention for the dates and locations of upcoming sessions. The bottom line is that in order for St. Columba's to be the kind of community we all want it to be, we all have to do our part to look out for each other, especially for our youngest members. As Emily puts it, "This is all rooted in our baptismal covenant. We make promises to children and young people that we will protect them."

■ Elizabeth Terry
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To read the diocesan standards for youth and children's ministries, as well as St. Columba's own guidelines, visit "Safeguarding Our Children" under "About St. C's" at Columba.org.

Parish Life

Have you heard?

We recently began sending out a short weekly e-mail compilation that we hope will be a useful tool for keeping you informed about the activities and opportunities at St. C's. If you are not yet receiving this e-mail and would like to, please click Member Login at the top right corner of any page on our website and update your contact information, including a preferred e-mail address. Please also add news@columba.org to your address book to ensure that our e-mails make it safely to your inbox instead of getting flagged as junk mail.

You are also invited to participate in a contest to name the weekly e-newsletter. Go to Current News at Columba.org for a sample of the e-newsletter and a link to the contest. And while you're filling in your entry, we're also interested in hearing about what's working well in the new weekly e-mail, what's not and what else you might like to see. Please take the time to answer our quick survey and help us better serve you.

Going green, one newsletter at a time

With the launch of our new weekly e-mail, we now have an easy way to let you know when the monthly newsletter has been posted on our website. If you'd like to help us save on paper, printing and mailing costs, why not skip the print newsletter and download the PDF or read it online instead? To opt out of paper copies, please contact Geoff Greene (202-363-4119, ext. 200; ggrene@columba.org).

Annual Meeting results

Congratulations to all elected at the annual meeting: John Nolan, Senior Warden; Jennifer Turner, Junior Warden; Alan Beal, Courtney Hundley, Elizabeth Taylor and John Wickham, Vestry; Krishna Singho, Diocesan Delegate; and Mark Lindblom and Sylvana Sandoz, Diocesan Alternates.

We offer our thanks to Suzanne Burrows and Adrienne Clamp for their willingness to stand for election. And thanks also to outgoing members of the vestry Lance Elliott and David Hawkings for their service.

Finally, congratulations to those honored with this year's Outstanding Lay Person awards: Peter Clamp, Prentiss Lay and Lisa Whelan.

The by-laws revisions passed by a vote of 256 to 17.

Lent booklets for children and adults

Our annual booklet of Lent reflections is now available at Columba.org. Being mindful of the Earth's precious resources, we encourage you to access the booklet online, either as a PDF or as weekly pages posted to our site. We have also printed a limited number of copies for those who have difficulty accessing the Internet or who for other reasons need a hard copy.

Booklets to help children ages 3 to 10 and their families focus on themes of Lent, Holy Week and Easter are now available in the Common and Great Hall. Mite boxes are also offered in these locations and will be distributed in Sunday School. The money collected this year will go to the Bishop Walker School.

Photo policy

It is our custom to publish on our website photographs of members engaged in church activities, as a way of showing the life and spirit of this parish. We are sensitive to privacy concerns and do not name people in photographs except in rare instances and only with prior permission from the individuals pictured. If you have a concern about a picture of yourself or a family member on our website, contact us at webmaster@columba.org with the particulars, and we will be happy to remove it from our site.

Pastoral care

If you wish to request any of the following, please contact the Rev. Rob Boulter (pastoral@columba.org; 202-363-4119, ext. 245). For an emergency outside of office hours, you may reach a member of the clergy through the pastoral on-call phone (202-669-4856).

Sharing your news: We encourage you to let us know when an illness, death, transition or joyful event occurs in your life. You may request that events be shared with prayer lists and in the newsletter prayers.

Ongoing pastoral care: Stephen Ministry is our one-to-one caregiving ministry, consisting of trained parishioners who meet with people who have experienced a loss, crisis or difficult life transition.

Home communion: If you are unable to attend church services and wish to receive communion, Stephen Ministers and clergy are available to provide this service.

Calendar

Parish office closed

Mon., Feb. 20

Presidents' Day

Shrove Tuesday Pancakes and Mardi Gras, Feb. 21

Join us in the Great Hall from 5:30 to 6:45 pm for pancakes, sausage, applesauce and beverages served by Rite 13 youth: \$12/adult or youth (over age 12); \$8/senior; \$6/child (ages 4 to 12); free for children 3 and under. Tickets for games and activities are two for \$1. Proceeds will benefit the Youth Ministry outreach and scholarship funds.

Ash Wednesday is Feb. 22

Join us at 7 am, noon and 7 pm for Eucharist with the imposition of ashes. Supper is available before the 7 pm service (5:30 to 6:45 pm) and child care is available for the 7 pm service.

Ash Wednesday service for children, Feb. 22, 5 pm

A brief service of prayers and the imposition of ashes to help children mark the beginning of Lent.

Simple Ash Wednesday supper

5:30 to 6:45 pm in the Great Hall. \$12/adult or youth (over age 12); \$8/senior; \$6/child (ages 4 to 12); free for children 3 and under.

Daily Lenten Eucharist

**Mon. through Thurs., 7 am
Feb. 23 through April 4**

Want a meaningful discipline for the season of Lent? Join us on weekday mornings at 7 am (no service on Fridays) for a Eucharist with homilies by parishioners and clergy.

Tending the Flame

Lent Quiet Day

Sat., Feb. 25, 9 am to 3 pm

Come for a day of prayer, quiet

pondering and simple rituals that help us explore the rich spiritual symbolism of fire. The image of flame helps to focus our prayer. It can kindle our desire to stop "quenching the spirit" and become more fully alive. And in step with our current movement at St. Columba's to renew active ministries of service, we will re-visit the imagery of Pentecost—the Holy Spirit's flame rests on each one of us, empowering us to serve. This Lent Quiet Day will be led by the Rev. Martin Smith. Lunch will be provided at a cost of \$12. No registration is needed, and we encourage you to invite your friends.

42nd Street Fellowship Brunch

Sun., Feb. 26, 12:30 pm

Meet in the Common after the 11:15 am services to carpool or walk to brunch at Café of India (4909 Wisconsin Ave., NW; 202-244-1395). Questions? E-mail 42ndstreet@columba.org or call coordinators Harriet Dwinell (202-362-5505) or Rosemary Ryan (301-805-6789).

Live@5: Lenten Taizé

Sun., March 4, 5 pm

All are invited to attend this monthly service designed with the help of St. Columba's youth.

Mothers' Group

Sun., March 4, 6:30–8 pm

Do you sometimes find yourself wondering, "Who am I?" As we navigate our many roles (mother, wife/partner, daughter, sister, friend) it's easy to feel that we are losing ourselves. The Rev. Rose Duncan will lead us in exploring this topic and will share strategies for remaining true to our authentic selves as we constantly redefine who we are. Come for fellowship at 6:30 pm, or join us at 7 pm for the program.

Screening of "Cape Spin:

An American Power Struggle"

Thurs., March 15, 7 pm, Great Hall

St. Columba's hosts this screening as part of the Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital. The movie tells the story of the "not-in-my-backyard" battle over the Cape Wind project in Nantucket Sound, America's first proposed offshore wind farm. A panel discussion will follow the screening and will feature two of the filmmakers, Libby Handros and John Kirby, among others.

Vestry notes

At its meeting on Jan. 30, the vestry:

- Was updated about the latest plans for the fall launch of the capital campaign.
- Reviewed the totals from the 2012 stewardship campaign and discussed plans to reach out to households that had not yet submitted pledges.
- Committed to contributing a total of \$100,000 to the Diocese of Washington in 2012. This represents a \$10,000 increase from last year's pledge.
- Discussed content for the 2012 Annual Meeting presentations to the parish.
- Heard about plans for launching the first round of SPARK groups, part of the "Light the Fire!" community service campaign.
- Shared many parish joys, including thanks to outgoing vestry members Lance Elliott and David Hawkings.

A WELCOMING
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
THAT SEEKS TO BE
OPEN IN SPIRIT,
DEEP IN FAITH,
RICH IN WORSHIP,
ACTIVE IN SERVICE.

Mailed February 16: Dated material. Please deliver promptly.
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most important work is not healing but the proclamation of the reign of God. The healing of the sick is a sign of the proclamation but it's not the whole proclamation.

The heart of our faith is that God gave up on sending messengers and sent God's own self in the form of Jesus. We are beloved. All are beloved. In the assurance of God's love we are transformed to live and work for the reign of God. I hope that's what you hear from the pulpit every Sunday and in every program of formation that we offer. The power behind creation is love.

As powerful as that message is—and we can never tire of proclaiming it—there is more. The very love promised to each and every one of us is also the love that promises (it can also seem to be a threat) to transform our lives. It will change us and allow us to grow into the image of Christ. It means that we live in such a way that we project God's love. We know that the fully realized reign of God is still in our future but it beckons us to work and to pray—Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done—with all the strength we have.

God's reign is about justice and equality and all those things inscribed on our monuments but oh so very hard to live.

Let me remind you that over this past Advent and Christmastide we heard the proclamation of Mary's Magnificat. She says that God "... has scattered the proud in their

conceit; has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly; has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty . . ."

It sounds like an Occupy protest, doesn't it? The good news for us is that we are the blessed and we are the rich! I know, we don't feel rich, but look around—we are.

I love the four bullets of our mission statement. And I love that the first one is: OPEN IN SPIRIT. We seek to be open to each other, the world around us, other faiths and the doubt of faith.

Are we open and ready to cooperate with the transformation of the very privilege that sets us apart? That's the scary part. It's not that we might be mistaken for fundamentalists. It's that we might actually be transformed.

Repeat after me: We are blessed. We are privileged. It's our joy and passion to open avenues of blessedness to others by sharing what we have.

That was easy!

At St. C's we are not here just for ourselves even though we value the support and care we receive. We are Jesus' disciples and the workers in God's field. We are not responsible for accomplishing the reign of God in our time. We are called to add our substance to God's work.

We love to say about ourselves that we are open. That's good! Let us be radicals in our openness! Open in love, worship, service

and giving. Yes, even in our financial giving!

Many years ago I heard Bill Tully tell this story: An IRS agent opens up a letter and out falls \$500 in cash. There's no return address and no signature but there is a note: *I cheated on my taxes and haven't slept since. Enclosed is \$500. I'll send more if I still can't sleep.*

There is a lot of anxiety in our country, indeed, in the whole world about finances and instability. There's a lot of anxiety right here in this community about money. Will there be enough to get our kids through school? Can I afford to retire? Will I keep my job? All of those worries are real.

Can we face our fears and find ways to give more? The work of the Church and the work of St. Columba's deserve our money, enough to allow us to flourish and grow.

Our pledge campaign does not close until the last day of each calendar year. It's always the right time to give more or give for the first time.

We are growing in numbers, in depth and in faith. Let us also grow in financial generosity. We know who we are and we follow the banner of Christ. My deepest hope is that St. Columba's will become who we say we are and who God has called us to be. Blessings!

Janet
jvincent@columba.org