By Beth Bickley, Recruitment Committee Chair

On Thursday, Dec. 1, the Recruitment Committee met with Lee Ann Tolzmann, canon for mission leadership from our Diocese, and with Virginia Army, our consultant for the search and transition process. Lee Ann presented to us the names and applications of those who had applied to be rector of St. Mary’s. The candidates had all been vetted by Lee Ann and were recommended to us for our serious consideration. What an exciting evening that was, having our first introduction to those who had applied to be our next rector!

Over the next several days, each committee member carefully read and evaluated the applications. Then, on Dec. 8, we met again, this time to share our evaluations and decide which applicants we wanted to get to know better through a Skype interview in early January. Our deliberations that evening were heartening because we found that all of our evaluations of the candidates were so similar. In a relatively short time, we agreed unanimously on which candidates we were eager to have continue in the process with us. Certainly it seemed that the Holy Spirit was with us!

Then it was time to contact each of our preferred candidates to invite them to continue in the process through a Skype interview. Our invitation for further conversation was enthusiastically received by each candidate, and the interview dates and times have been established. We will ask each candidate the interview questions we have been developing over the past few months. There will also be time allotted during each interview for the candidate to ask the Recruitment Committee questions, as well.

After the Skype interviews are completed, the committee will meet again to further narrow our field of preferred candidates. Each of the candidates we wish to continue with after the Skype interview will be invited for an on-site visit to St. Mary’s later this month. After on-site visits occur, the Recruitment Committee will

Continued on p. 4

Prayer for the Recruitment Team and Candidates

All-knowing God, lead the Recruitment Team’s search, to do your will. Send your Spirit as their guide. Unite them with a common mind to select your chosen spiritual leader for St. Mary’s Parish. Guide the Recruitment Team to develop interview questions reflecting the work of the parish and the Discernment Team. Support them in the interview process as they listen, observe and communicate effectively with the candidates. Direct the Recruitment Team and candidates in their decision process, to fulfill their needs and those of our faith community. We ask this in your name, dear God. Amen.

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2017: A New Year of Gratitude

By Mechelle Tovar Olortegui, Stewardship Committee Chair

Gratitude is the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

This past stewardship season we heard from fellow parishioners who are truly thankful for so many things in their lives. As we start a new year, let us all try to live with an attitude of gratitude. Each day, try to think of five things you are thankful for and write them down. Maybe start a journal. Life is hard, but we have so many blessings. This exercise will help us focus, not on the negatives in life, so many of which are out of our control, but cause us to reflect on all of the goodness in life that God has provided for us—the experiences, hopes and joys that make each day special. Being grateful is also good for our health and well-being.

According to the website, Happify.com, “The benefits of practicing gratitude are nearly endless. People who regularly practice gratitude by taking time to notice and reflect upon the things they’re thankful for experience more positive emotions, feel more alive, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness, and even have stronger immune systems. And gratitude doesn’t need to be reserved only for momentous occasions. Sure, you might express gratitude after receiving a promotion at work, but you can also be thankful for something as simple as a delicious piece of pie. Research by University of California, Davis, psychologist Robert Emmons, author of Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier, shows that simply keeping a gratitude journal—regularly writing brief reflections on moments for which we’re thankful—can significantly increase well-being and life satisfaction.”

To read more, visit the web page below:

http://www.happify.com/hd/the-science-behind-gratitude/

Christmas in New England Fair a Success (See also: p. 5)

By Donna Indomenico

Our annual Christmas in New England Fair is now just a memory, a day filled with warm fellowship; happy shoppers; and busy, cheerful workers.

Anderson Hall, the Guild Room and church school rooms were decked out in holiday splendor. Many people enjoyed a delicious luncheon prepared by Dottie Cannon, Ellise Sullivan and their helpers. Some people happily went home with a beautiful theme basket.

A grateful thanks to all of you who baked, cooked, set up, took care of signage, decorated, worked at tables, created theme baskets, knit and stitched items for the craft table, donated Christmas items, and to those who priced those items.

A total of $5,600 was earned from the CINE Fair. This money will be part of our church budget. Again, our thanks to all of you who helped make the fair successful.

Still looking for new chairperson/s for next year’s CINE! Perhaps you might take on the task! Please see me or Lyn Jones.
By the Rev. Lynne A. Grifo

Last year a friend directed me to a recent book entitled, People of the Way: Renewing Episcopal Identity, which has had a widespread influence on a number of key leaders in our denomination. This is a book that the candidates for rector of St. Mary’s very likely will have read.

The author, Dwight J. Zscheile, is an Episcopal priest and a respected seminary educator. A central question of the book is this: In a culture where so many people are unchurched and disenchanted with religious institutions, how must The Episcopal Church (TEC) evolve so that its members can reclaim a vibrant role in sharing the gospel and serving the world? It’s a short book, but not a quick read, because Zscheile’s perspective, from several angles, challenges those of us who know and love TEC.

Those with a long history in TEC know that it has been a denomination, as described by Bishop Ian Douglas in the foreword to the book, whose members once “occupied a place of social, political, and religious privilege in the United States” that outweighed our size. That place in society gave us a platform from which to do great good: We had a voice in the corridors of power, opened private schools, community hospitals, etc., and in urban areas, settlement houses that served the poor, immigrant populations. All that has changed over recent decades, not only for TEC, but for the other mainline denominations as well. Bishop Ian says that while such a characterization about “privilege” is accurate, it also ignores the considerable history of rural residents, African-Americans, First Nations peoples and other racial groups within the denomination. In the past few decades TEC has diversified as persons from other faith backgrounds, Roman Catholic in particular, have been received in large numbers. Zscheile summarized this as a metamorphosis out of an era of “establishment.”

The author’s premise is that our world is in a “new apostolic era” and that profound adaption is required. So, while preserving what is beautiful and true in our Anglican heritage, we must either adapt or disappear. The vignettes he presents of Episcopal faith communities around the U.S. show clearly that in the face of “accelerating trends of institutional decline … many structures will not last very long in their current configuration.” Churches have been unable to keep pace with the changing demographics of their neighborhoods and with the impact of the digital age on culture. Of course, that does not describe every community; the economic and social context of some geographic areas has been more resilient and stable. But if one examines overall trends, such decline has been in evidence for decades.

The book includes many remarkable stories of drastic adaptation in the context of the author’s theological premises and his proposals for a new, dynamic vision. The concepts he discusses include: being ambassadors to the neighborhood (sound familiar?); becoming less concerned about “inclusion” and more about broadening appeal to “people of different education or economic levels, for instance”; refocusing from private spiritual needs to becoming “communities of conversation and practice for the common good”; and transforming the faith community into a networked church — diverse, highly participatory, evolving. For a case study of this concept, see the Trinity Wall Street article at: https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/blogs/news/charette-3-moving-forward.

All this talk about change is a bracing way to begin a new year, yes? Mr. Spock of Star Trek fame said "Change is the essential process of life." And St. Paul wrote:

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! —2 Cor. 5:17

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Lynne
Seasonal Sharing: You Made a Difference

Over the holiday season, the people of St. Mary’s gave abundantly to provide food, necessities and Christmas gifts to people in our community. Your gifts and your efforts helped people feel God’s love and experience a joyful holiday they would not have had otherwise.

This year, St. Mary’s partnered with the Family Resource Center at Bennett Academy. A letter from Family Resource Center Coordinator Brittany Hall expresses how much the seasonal baskets meant to the families served by the center. Hall wrote:

“I’m thrilled the baskets were all successfully delivered! In speaking with several of our families this past week, I know how many of them were depending on this and looking forward to it. Bennett Academy would not have been able to do all of this without our beloved St. Mary’s team! We are so very grateful to have you all as our partners, and as a school, we extend our gratitude for literally being the reason some of our families even get to celebrate the holidays this year. I can’t thank you enough! May you all have a wonderful, peaceful, joyous holiday! I send my love, gratitude, and prayers for ongoing blessings. Thank you all!”

Recruitment Team (Continued from p. 1)

meet one last time to recommend two or three candidates for further consideration by the vestry.

Now that the Recruitment Committee is in dialogue with the candidates for rector of St. Mary’s, it’s important to stress again that the committee must maintain confidentiality, as required by the Diocese, to protect the candidates’ privacy and the integrity of the process. So we respectfully request that you do not ask any of us about the applications or the applicants. We cannot disclose any information about them. But please continue to hold all of us in prayer—the Recruitment Team, those who have applied to be our next rector and our entire parish family—as we move forward through this special time in our life together. Thank you for your understanding and your prayers!
Remember Loved Ones with Altar Flowers

By Jean Kelsey

Flower memorials are a wonderful way to remember those who are no longer with us. A monetary donation of any amount ($25 to start is a suggestion) will allow the altar guild flower arranger to order cut flowers from the florist and arrange them in vases for the altar for Sunday services. Please consider donating to the Altar Guild Flower Fund.

Please complete the form below and return it, with your donation, to St. Mary’s.

DONATION FORM FOR MEMORIAL FLOWERS

Enclosed is a special gift to help decorate the Church on Christmas or Easter. Please remember the following person(s) in the prayers.

CHRISTMAS $ ___________  EASTER $ ___________

Person(s) to be remembered ___________________________________________________

Given by __________________________________________________________

Share Your Thoughts at CINE Wrap-up Meeting

The Christmas in New England Fair wrap-up meeting will be held Wednesday, Jan. 25, at 6:30 in the Guild Room/Anderson Hall. Please come and share your thoughts about our 2016 CINE. Your thoughts and reflections will help next year’s co-chair person(s) plan for 2017 CINE fair.
Visitors are always welcome!

Worship Schedule:

**Sundays**
- 7:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
- 8:40 a.m. Adult Forum
- 9:45 Godly Play and Church School
- 10 a.m. Holy Eucharist
- 11:30 a.m. Rite 13/J2A

**Tuesdays**
- 7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer

**Wednesdays**
- 10 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Healing Prayer

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**God cooks: we share the feast!**

**St. Mary’s Episcopal Church**

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Every bit counts! Help support St. Mary’s ministries.

When you shop at [AmazonSmile](https://smile.amazon.com), the Amazon Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to St. Mary’s.

*AmazonSmile* is the same as your regular Amazon account. **Your login and password are the same.** Instead of logging into your www.amazon.com account, log into www.smile.amazon.com.

Instructions to set up St. Mary’s as your AmazonSmile charity are in the narthex. Call or email Mechelle Tovar Olórtegui for details:

860-995-1946 / mechelle.tovar2011@gmail.com

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**A Little Church Humor**

Do you have some favorite church signs? Here are a few *Newsday* collected and published several years ago.

“*What is missing from ch__ch? U R.”*
— River Falls Baptist Church

“There are some questions that can’t be answered by Google.”
— Claude Presbyterian Church

“*Honk if you love Jesus. Text while driving if you want to meet him.”*
— Stonebridge Church of God