



## Rector's Letter

Dear Friends in Christ:

If you're like me, February left you a little winded. Between an extraordinary amount of snow that impacted every aspect of our lives for weeks on end and a superb visitation by our diocesan bishop – with a polar vortex thrown in for good measure – the month felt jam-packed and fast-moving.

For me, there were a variety of extra-parochial goings-on that I would like to share with you: at the beginning of the month was the annual diocesan clergy conference in Harrisburg. Brother Scott Borden from the Order of the Holy Cross in West Park, NY, was the guest facilitator. His talks were primarily about transition – as individuals, as Christians, and as a diocese. In my capacity as coordinator of the diocesan Clergy Wellness Initiative, I met with a member of the board of the Widows and Orphans Corporation who came to the conference to discuss our program. The clergy conference ended a day early due to snow.

Although our meeting had to be rescheduled because of a snow storm, I also chaired a meeting of the diocesan profile subcommittee of the Bishop Search Committee. My subcommittee is tasked with creating a profile of our diocese – the way a parish would when searching for a new priest – to be published in the spring. The profile will seek to present a full and accurate picture of the Episcopal Church in Central Pennsylvania.

Lastly, I chaired a meeting of the Congregational Development Commission (which met on its originally scheduled date!). The CDC has recently doubled in size, with the idea being that members can lift some of the weight off the shoulders of the diocesan staff. The work we could do might involve Appreciative Inquiry, or perhaps visiting parishes in

teams of two to offer financial counsel, or strategic planning advice, or to support in a variety of other areas. The chairman of the diocesan Budget Committee will attend our March meeting to explain to us what financial resources might be available to assist us with the work of developing congregations.

But certainly the most important event of the month was the visit from Bishop and Mrs. Baxter. Although their visit concluded too quickly for our liking, the Baxters very much enjoyed their time with us. The positive experience they had didn't "just happen." Many people worked hard to make sure things would go smoothly: Sara & Harry Witmer and Nancy Andrews – together with Shannon Hilderbrand – decorated the parish hall and/or supplied food for the reception; E. Kay Putnam and the choir earned the bishop's special praise and did a wonderful job leading the liturgy in song; the vestry made themselves available for a meal with the Baxters on Saturday evening; the altar servers rehearsed to make sure they knew where to be and when during the service; and last, and most importantly, everyone who came to church on February 16 who welcomed the Baxters so warmly is deserving of our thanks. I hope everyone involved knows of my deep personal gratitude.

And now, Lent us upon us! In the pages that follow, please read about the Lenten study and other special events that will be ours to experience during this sacred season.

I look forward to seeing you in church.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Christopher Pyles

**LENT: A PRIMER**

*What's the purpose of Lent? Where did the idea for it come from? What are we supposed to do differently during it?*

All good questions! The purpose of Lent is to have a season of preparation prior to Easter, the biggest, most important feast of the church year. Originally, all new Christians were baptized at the Easter Vigil, so the preparation aspect of Lent was especially applicable to them as they prepared to join the church sacramentally. But as the possibility for baptism expanded beyond one day of the year, church leaders recognized there was still value in Christians intentionally preparing for Easter.

How, you ask? There are many ways. Everyone knows about “giving something up for Lent.” That something might be chocolate, or coffee, or alcohol, or something that we normally might enjoy and that we would miss. The idea is that when our mind misses that thing, our thoughts turn to the reason for giving it up: namely, Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. In the Roman Catholic Church, and in many Episcopal churches, a popular Lenten custom is to abstain from eating meat on Fridays. Red meat has always been one of the more expensive items a shopper can purchase. The idea in this case is to abstain from flesh meat on the day of the Lord’s crucifixion, and to donate the money saved to charity.

But Lent need not be only about self-denial, although that is an important component. Lent can also be a time to take something on – like a service project or volunteering, or deepening devotion through attending an extra church service during the week, and/or Stations of the Cross, and/or the Lenten study, and/or spending more time each day in personal prayer. Stations of the Cross has been a very popular devotion for centuries because it enables the worshiper to imagine a bit more clearly what Jesus’ last hours were like. Opportunities to volunteer and to deepen our devotion abound at church and elsewhere – we need only be intentional about availing ourselves of them.

As we know from the hymn, Lent lasts “forty days and forty nights.” Where did that number come from? You might be aware that 40 is a special number in the Bible. Noah was on the ark for 40 days; the Israelites were in the wilderness for 40 years; and Jesus was in the wilderness 40 days. We understand these particular periods of time in the Bible to be penitential seasons. So, our season of penitence and preparation lasts 40 days. Interestingly, Eastertide – the season from Easter to Pentecost – lasts 50 days, because the church felt it was important for the festive season to be longer than the penitential one!

Signs of Lent include the color of the vestments worn during the services. Violet (the church’s name for purple) is the color of penitence and expectation, so we will once again wear the violet dupioni silk set with the gold and red orphreys which was purchased last year. The color for Easter – and of all feasts of our Lord – is white, so from the Easter Vigil to the Day of Pentecost, we will wear white vestments in celebration of our Lord’s victory over death.

### **LENT COURSE: *CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED***

“What’s it all about?” It’s a question we might hear from an unchurched friend when we mention we’re attending a service or an event at St. John’s. But the truth is, do WE know what it’s all about? This year’s Lenten course will take a back-to-basics approach to who we are and what we believe as Christians, using Mark’s gospel as the text. The format of the evening will be similar to years past: Stations of the Cross will be offered in the church at 6 p.m. Then, we will go to the parish hall for a light supper. After that, we will watch a short video presentation, and then dig into the study. All are welcome, and everyone is encouraged to bring a friend! As in recent years, we will meet on Thursday evenings: March 13, 20 & 27, and April 3 & 10. All evenings begin at 6 p.m. in the church for Stations of the Cross.

### **SHROVE TUESDAY & ASH WEDNESDAY**

Shrove Tuesday is March 4, and once again the traditional pancake and sausage supper will be offered in the parish hall between 4 and 6:30 p.m. Cost is \$7 for adults and \$4 for kids under 12.

We will have two services on Ash Wednesday, March 5: one at the regular time of 9:30 a.m., and the other at 7:30 p.m. Ashes will be imposed at both services. Everyone is encouraged to attend to mark the start of the most sacred season of the church year.

### **WORK IN THE PARISH HALL**

At its February meeting, the Vestry heard about a variety of proposed changes in the parish hall. These changes primarily would involve the floor and the ceiling – but each of those is a major undertaking! The idea at present is to remove the drop ceiling, restore the ceiling above, and – as was the case originally – have chandeliers hang from the (two) medallions that still exist in the true ceiling. Also, everyone has noticed that the parish hall floor isn’t exactly level. We are seeking to level the floor and cover it with new tile. Additionally, rewiring and insulation work will also be done, perhaps along with other projects. On Monday, March 3, a contractor will be coming to take a final look at the space before giving us a bid. If the bid is reasonable, we hope that the work can be done during Eastertide.

### NEW VESTRY OFFICERS

At its February meeting, the Vestry elected two of their own to serve with Senior Warden Larry Roberson and Treasurer Barbara Roberson as Vestry officers: Charlie Hilderbrand, Jr., was elected Junior Warden, and Bette Shugert was elected Clerk. Congratulations to Charlie and Bette! We thank Mike Fitzgerald for his faithful service as Junior Warden the last five years, and Carol Fyfe for her faithful service as Clerk for the last two years.

### CORNED BEEF AND CABBAGE DINNER ON MARCH 15

Come one, come all to St. John's annual Corned Beef and Cabbage Extravaganza on March 15. Deacon Alex again will bring to Bellefonte countless pounds of Brooklyn's best corned beef for a meal that no one should miss. In addition to being our biggest food fundraiser of the year, everyone loves the fun and fellowship that the occasion provides. Please be sure to be present to support the church and to have a great meal (eat in or carry out) on Saturday, March 15, from 4 to 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall, and bring a carful of friends!

### WELCOME BACK, REV. NATT!

After spending more than two decades away from St. John's, the original watercolor portrait of our founding rector, the Rev. George Washington Natt, has returned to the church.

The undated portrait is likely from about 1850, the year Rev. Natt retired. Although it sustained some water damage due to improper storage in our undercroft in the 1980s, our thanks go to the late Betty Miller and her daughter Pam for their efforts to restore and preserve the portrait.

For now, Rev. Natt will hang in the back of the church on the wall between the two narthex doors. This placement could be temporary: we will be discerning over the next several months what the most appropriate placement would be. The ideal place will boast a good combination of prominence and visibility.

Please take a moment to view the portrait the next time you are in church!



**MARCH LAY MINISTRIES SCHEDULE**

**EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS**

	8 a.m.	10 a.m.
March 2	Deacon Dyakiw	Deacon Dyakiw
Last Epiphany		Sara Witmer (cassock alb)
March 5	7:30 PM	Deacon Dyakiw
Ash Wednesday		Charles Hilderbrand (cassock alb)
March 9	Deacon Dyakiw	Deacon Dyakiw
Lent I		Jason Dench (cassock alb)
March 16	Deacon Dyakiw	Deacon Dyakiw
Lent II		Thomas Quigley (cassock alb)
March 23	Deacon Dyakiw	Deacon Dyakiw
Lent III		Kathryn Grossman (cassock alb)
March 30	Scott Mauger	Deacon Dyakiw
Lent IV		Cyrus Lanager (cassock and cotta)

**ALTAR SERVERS' ROTA (10 A.M. MASSES)**

March 2	Book/Server	Bryan Hough
Last Epiphany	Crucifer	Charles Hilderbrand, Jr.
	Torches	Tina Scott
		Jason Dench
March 5	Book/Server	Bryan Hough
Ash Wednesday	Crucifer	Steve Dillon
	Thurifer	Charles Maurukas
March 9	Book/Server	Steve Dillon
Lent I	Crucifer	Bryan Hough
	Torches	Christine Holt
		Jason Dench
March 16	Book/Server	Jason Dench
Lent II	Crucifer	Charles Maurukas
	Torches	Bryan Hough
		Tina Scott





**BIRTHDAYS**

March	1	-	Arielle Fetzer
March	2	-	Anne Lucas
March	4	-	Marcia Snyder Caleb Lykens
March	10	-	Mary Jones
March	22	-	Mike Fitzgerald
March	29	-	Alex Dyakiw

March 2014						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<b>1</b> 10 a.m. – Prayer Bead workshop, parish hall  10 a.m. – Bishop Search Listening Event, St. Mark's, Lewistown
<b>2 Last Epiphany.</b>  MP – 7:30 a.m. Low Mass – 8 a.m. High Mass – 10 a.m.  Coffee Hour	<b>3</b>  Men's Group, 7 p.m.	<b>4</b> Shrove Tuesday.  Sausage & Pancake Supper, 4 – 6:30 p.m., parish hall	<b>5</b> Ash Wednesday.  Low Mass with Imposition of Ashes, 9:30 in the Chapel; Solemn Mass with Imposition, 7:30 in the church	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Community Lunch. 10 a.m. at the Presbyterian Church.	<b>8</b>
<b>9 Lent I.</b>  MP – 7:30 a.m. Low Mass – 8 a.m. High Mass – 10 a.m.  Coffee Hour	<b>10</b>  Men's Group, 7 p.m.	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Lenten Ember Day.  Low Mass – 9:30 in the Chapel.	<b>13</b>  Lenten Program – 6 p.m., starting with Stations of the Cross in the church.	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>  Corned Beef Fundraising dinner – 4 – 7 p.m. in the parish hall.
<b>16 Lent II.</b>  MP – 7:30 a.m. Low Mass – 8 a.m. High Mass – 10 a.m.  Coffee Hour	<b>17</b>  Men's Group, 7 p.m.	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> St. Joseph.  Low Mass – 9:30 in the Chapel.  Vestry Meeting – 7:30 p.m. in the parish hall.	<b>20</b>  Lenten Program – 6 p.m., starting with Stations of the Cross in the church.	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23 Lent III.</b>  MP – 7:30 a.m. Low Mass – 8 a.m. High Mass – 10 a.m.  Coffee Hour	<b>24</b>  Men's Group, 7 p.m.	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Lenten feria.  Low Mass – 9:30 in the Chapel.	<b>27</b>  Lenten Program – 6 p.m., starting with Stations of the Cross in the church.	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30 Lent IV.</b>  MP – 7:30 a.m. Low Mass – 8 a.m. High Mass – 10 a.m.  Coffee Hour	<b>31</b>  Men's Group, 7 p.m.	<b>Notes:</b>				

**ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**120 WEST LAMB STREET  
BELLEFONTE, PA 16823**

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Parish Website:

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*St. John's is a parish in the  
Diocese of Central Pennsylvania,  
The Right Reverend Nathan  
Baxter, Bishop*

**PARISH CLERGY**

The Rev. Christopher V. Pyles, Rector  
[cvpyles@aol.com](mailto:cvpyles@aol.com)  
215.870.4809 (cell) (Off Tuesdays)

The Rev. Alex Dyakiw, Deacon  
[deaconalex@gmail.com](mailto:deaconalex@gmail.com)  
814.883.0430 (cell)

**PARISH STAFF**

Sara Witmer, Secretary  
Barbara Roberson, Treasurer  
E. Kay Putnam, Organist/Choir Director  
Terence Riley, Sexton

**LAY LEADERS**

Larry Roberson, Senior Warden  
Charles Hilderbrand, Jr., Junior Warden  
Ellen Dyakiw, Director of Sunday School  
Charles E. Maurukas, Acolyte Director

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120 WEST LAMB STREET  
BELLEFONTE, PA 16823**



**NAME  
STREET ADDRESS  
CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE**