

# The Spire

A Newsletter of Christ Church Ithan

Spring 2018

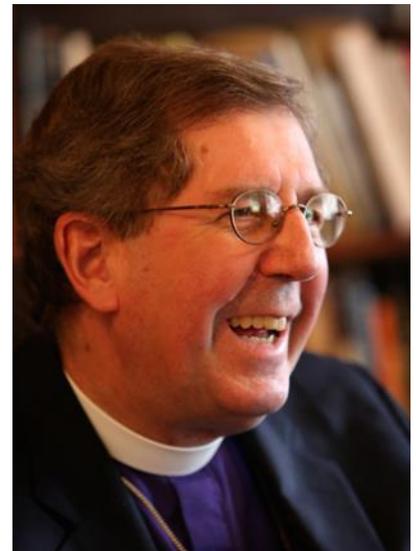
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## Seeing Jesus

*A message from Fr John*

On Tuesday, May 29th, I had the privilege to attend the funeral of The Rt. Rev. George Councill, the retired XI Bishop of New Jersey. He was the Bishop I served as Canon to the Ordinary. Bishop Councill died after a prolonged battle with Parkinson's Disease. Trinity Cathedral in Trenton was filled to overflowing with clergy and people who came to celebrate the life of this amazing man. Thirty bishops from across the country attended; our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, preached; Bishop Gates from Western Massachusetts gave a heart-felt tribute.



Everyone there, I'm sure, had a story about how they were touched by Bishop Councill's genuine love for them. His warm smile, his gentle way, his immense patience, and his affirming love were his hallmark qualities that made him a remarkable bishop, a great shepherd for his flock. As Bishop Curry noted, we may not know what a shepherd is, but we know we met one in George Councill!

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*"Just love them. It will be alright."*

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Every once in a while, and probably not too often, someone steps into your life and when you are with that person, you know without a doubt that you have seen Jesus. Being with George Councill was like that.

There was something about him... that warm acceptance that always made you feel safe; just the right words being said just when you needed to hear them; a genuineness that always made you feel that this guy is just like you, that he understands you; that family member you told him about long ago that he remembered with astonishing clarity; that sense of humor that lightened your heart.

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# Seeing Jesus

*(Continued from page 1)*

There was something about him...you knew you were seeing Jesus. George made room for Jesus to break in through his life. He was a deeply spiritual man, a man deeply grateful for God's saving grace in his life. And he was able to be grace in the lives of all those he touched.

Priest after priest could recall meetings with Bishop Cancell seeking his advice about some pressing parish matter. And his response was usually quite simple: "Just love them. It will be alright." George Cancell loved the Diocese of New Jersey into life. He came to a Diocese that was broken in so many ways and his love healed it.

His love transformed it. It took awhile because we were a stubborn people! But George never quit. He just kept on loving and knew that God would do the rest. His faithful love healed the divisions. His faithful love created welcome to the LGBTQ community. His faithful love brought about racial reconciliation. George knew that there was room for everyone at the Lord's Table and he did his best to usher us all together to that table. His love made our world so much bigger and better.

I can't express adequately how humbled I was the day Bishop Cancell called me to ask if I would be his Canon to the Ordinary, to help with the transition to the next Bishop. I thought he had the wrong number! That call was one of the great blessings of my life, a challenging call, but a rewarding one too. It was a privilege to work by his side, to learn from him, to accompany him in his struggles, and to witness first-hand the price of discipleship. He will forever be an inspiration to me. I miss his presence here greatly.

I write this to you who did not know him, because I wanted to share him with you. It's my feeble attempt at a tribute, I guess. There are no adequate words to describe a BIG love, a heroic love, a generous love, a passionate love. But every once in a while, and probably not too often, someone steps into your life and when you are with that person, you know without a doubt that you have seen Jesus.

I know, without a doubt, George did it all for Christ's sake. Oh, that we could do the same!

May he rest in peace.+

Sincerely,

John , Your Pastor

*Fr John Sosnowski*

The Rt. Rev. George Edward Cancell, 11th Bishop of New Jersey, died May 21 in hospice care at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in Hamilton, New Jersey.

Born in Detroit, Cancell was a graduate of the University of California and Episcopal Divinity School. He was ordained deacon and priest in 1975. He became Bishop of New Jersey in 2003, after serving parishes and dioceses in California, Illinois, and Massachusetts.

Cancell was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease — and later climbed Mount Kilimanjaro — in 2008. He retired in 2013. The next year he began serving as resident chaplain of the Doane Academy, a coeducational, independent day school founded in 1837. In an era of court battles, Cancell arranged for a parish to stay in its existing building after it left the Diocese of New Jersey.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth, and their daughters Martha and Sarah.

# CLASS OF 2018



**Larissa Wietlisbach** graduated *cum laude* from Georgetown University, where she studied Human Science with a Psychology minor.

She also completed an honors thesis, studying the effects of prenatal stress on pediatric cancer Neuroblastoma development.

Larissa was also captain of the club field hockey team. She will be attending medical school in the fall of 2019.

# CONGRADULATIONS

Julia and Porter Gould's son, **Rob Thompson**, graduated in May from Union Theological Seminary in New York City with a Master's Degree in Theology. The focus of his studies was the intersection of psychology and religion. In September Rob will begin a Ph.D. program in Theology at Georgetown University.

**Will McPherson** graduated from Bates College where he majored in Political Science and minored in History with a concentration in Music.

## Wedding Bells

Miss **Julianna A. Boily**, daughter of Jeffrey Boily and the late Lynne Boily will wed Mr. Edward A.W. Bellamy on August 18, 2018 in Winchester, England.

Julianna is a graduate of the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and The Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr.



## The Choir of CCI



June 3 was the last Sunday the choir would sing for the season. Three of our four Choral Scholars are graduating from Haverford High School and going on to college in the fall.

**Katie Sharbaugh**, who has been our Soprano Choral Scholar for two years, will study music at Berklee College of Music in Boston majoring in professional music.

Alto **Becca Armandi** and tenor **Keilan Barber** have been Choral Scholars with the choir for one year. Becca will attend Loyola University Maryland majoring in Communications, and Keilan will attend the University of Vermont.

**Matthew Monteleone**, our Bass Choral Scholar, will be a Senior at Haverford High School and plans to continue singing with the choir next fall. Kudos to our quintet of professional singers, all of whom (Jeff hopes) will return in the fall!

A special thanks to those who contributed to the Choral Scholar Program for 2017-2018!

Nancy Breitling

Judy Englerth

Jeff Fowler

Lunetta Headley

Dr Richard & Dr Christina Herring

Brenda Noone

Jacqui North & Martin McNeil

Sue Philipp

Carlos & Cynthia Rios

Betsy Rogers

Barry & Dode Tague

Philip & Joan Wallick

## Father's Day Ice Cream Social

Join us after the 10 o'clock service on Sunday, June 17th for a Father's Day Ice Cream Social. We will have home made blueberry sauce, and whipped cream and crumbles to go with the ice cream.

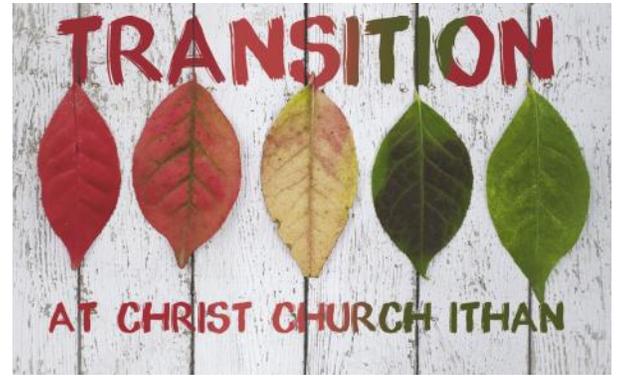
If you attend the 8:30 service, please feel free to return and join us just after 11:00am. We will enjoy our ice cream outside on the lawn if weather permits.



# Good Transitions

Hope Eakins is a Priest Associate at St. John's, West Hartford, CT. After she retired as Rector of St. John's, Essex, CT, she served as Interim Rector of several parishes and views interim ministry — and all parish transitions — as a time for real growth “in wisdom age and grace” for parish and priest alike.

The following article appeared in the May “Vestry Papers” section of the Episcopal Church Foundation’s “Vital Practices” website:



Israeli anthropologist Yuval Noah Harari proposes that our success as a species arose from our ability to create and respond to change. Neanderthals didn’t adapt very well, and they were left behind as the world changed.

Change is often threatening. The church appoints committees and commissions to propose new liturgies. Many of us have seen a new Prayer Book, a new Hymnal and new Bible translations in our lifetimes, yet we often cling anxiously to the old familiar hymns and words. A deacon friend of mine cautions that the seven last words of the church are, “We have always done it that way.”

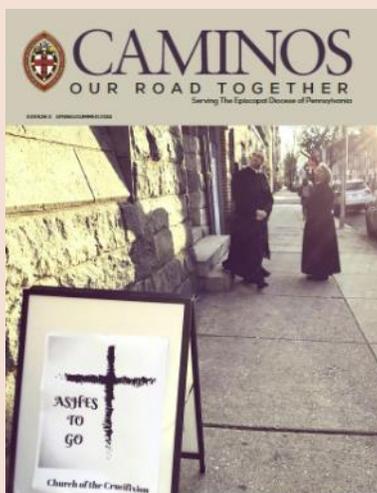
So transitions can be fraught with anxiety and the fear of losing what we love and expect, of what makes us comfortable and lifts our souls to God. But a system that cannot or will not embrace change, like the Neanderthals, is dead or dying. A system that sees possibility and opportunity in times of change is open to new life and new hope.

I think especially of the transitions that occur when parish clergy leave. Both the congregation losing its priest and the priest who is moving on are often fearful of letting go. I have seen this in the parishes where I have served as the interim rector, and I offer the following suggestions for the times when clergy leadership changes.

Read more at [www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/article/687/good-transitions](http://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/article/687/good-transitions)

*The Rev. Hope Eakins*

*St. John's Episcopal Church, West Hartford, CT*



**Caminos** is a publication of The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania which shares stories of hope and faith.

Copies of the latest issue can be picked up from the back of the church, or viewed online at:

[issuu.com/episcopaldioceseofpennsylvania/docs/caminossummer2018](http://issuu.com/episcopaldioceseofpennsylvania/docs/caminossummer2018)



# The Joys of Life

With all the negatives swirling around us, I find that I, and I presume others, rarely stop to think about all our blessings. I recently jotted down a list of things that bring joy to my life. The list below is by no means comprehensive. No doubt, everyone has his or her own variations of a Joys of Life list.

- ◆ Comfort of being loved
- ◆ Wonder of discovering
- ◆ Exuberance of youth
- ◆ Family unity
- ◆ Stability of home
- ◆ Exhilaration of outdoor activities
- ◆ Enjoyment of food and drink
- ◆ Stimulus of intellectual challenges
- ◆ Appreciation of beauty
- ◆ Peace from faith
- ◆ Camaraderie of friends
- ◆ Warmth of love and companionship
- ◆ Pleasures of intimacy
- ◆ Creature comforts
- ◆ Pride in accomplishments
- ◆ Reassurance of financial stability
- ◆ Associations with excellence
- ◆ Affection for pets
- ◆ Appreciation of living creatures
- ◆ Exploration of interests
- ◆ Joys of parenthood and grandparenthood
- ◆ Pride of country and family
- ◆ Communicating effectively
- ◆ Appreciation of differences
- ◆ Assisting those in need
- ◆ Creating harmony
- ◆ Instilling joy in others
- ◆ Moments of peace and reflection

I visualize each bullet on the above list as a drawer in a bureau that I can open and rummage through contemplating all the different items that make up the contents. By focusing on just one drawer at a time, I find myself thinking about things that I otherwise would not. I feel refreshed and am often smiling after spending time with an opened drawer.

At our May Vestry retreat, Father Rob emphasized that we all can be spiritual resources to others. By refreshing our own spirits, we will enhance our ability to be spiritual resources to others.

I wrote to Father John and Julia with the thought that parishioners might also gain a sense of refreshment if we had a moment of quiet reflection during each service when we each focused on a specific "joy"/drawer. Going one step further, if people were to focus on one drawer and share specific contents with fellow parishioners after the service, it would help us to better get to know and appreciate each other. I would like to think it would have the added benefit of being fun. (Father Rob at the Vestry retreat also emphasized that whatever initiatives we undertake as a church, we should try to make them fun.)

*Rick Wheeler*

I really liked Rick's reflections on the "Joys of Life" and found it to be very positive and refreshing. Eucharist is a word that means "thanksgiving" and so when we worship together our focus should be on gratitude for all that God has done in our lives. I would like to try something over the summer during worship beginning on Sunday, July 1<sup>st</sup>.

After Communion, at both Services, before the closing prayer, we will incorporate a period of silent reflection (just 1-2 minutes) during which I will raise up for our consideration one of Rick's "Joys of Life" from his list. During that silence you can offer your own prayer of thanksgiving or simply just savor the moment as a time to reflect on something really good in your own life. Should you like to carry that thought to coffee hour after the Service and share your "joy" with your neighbor, I would certainly encourage that.

Let's give it a try! Summer is a perfect time to be a bit more reflective and thankful for our many blessings. Thanks, Rick, for inspiring us to be better spiritual resources by tending to our inner life.

*Fr John*

## Parish Meeting

*(In case you weren't there, here's an update...)*



## *Sunday, June 3rd* **Parish Meeting**

Single Service at 9:30 am

followed by Parish Meeting in Ithan Hall

On Sunday, June 3rd, we had one Service at 9:30AM followed by a parish meeting and brunch. At our Service, we celebrated our Choral Scholars who are leaving to go off to college and presented them with gifts in appreciation for their participation this past year. Our Choral Scholars program, supported by generous parishioners, is a true gift to our church that enhances our worship. In our conversations with St. Martin's, our music program is noted to be a real strength of our church.

Our meeting was preceded by a delicious brunch thanks to the contributions of several parishioners. As always, everyone left well fed and happy! Martin McNeil took individual pictures of those in attendance to update our picture board in the parish house. If you didn't get your picture taken, please see Martin in the upcoming weeks after Service on Sundays so we have a "new you" to post on our board.



Fr. John began the meeting asking what was on the mind of parishioners as they came to the parish meeting. Various questions were raised ranging from concerns about outreach to young people, a need for a church school, and what was being done to address leaks in the church roof.

Fr. John noted the hard work of the Vestry in implementing the goals of our "Holy Covenant." He noted that they pray together and reflect on God's Word together, at every meeting. The focus of their work is around the mission and purpose of CCI. They have explored a lot of ideas. A recent Vestry retreat had a very outward focus – joining God in the community to do what God is already doing.

The facilitator of the retreat, Canon Rob Droste, really instilled a sense of passion for Jesus and his mission in the world. He talked about us being "spiritual resources" for one another and that our call as church is to always go out, to find God working in our world, our community, and join God in that work. The Vestry's reflection on this continues with a book he suggested: "Joining Jesus On His Mission" by Greg Finke.

Another focus of the vestry has been increased collaboration with St. Martin's. There have been three joint Vestry meetings, most recently on last Thursday evening. Wardens have met together. The focus is on building relationships.

We reviewed the goals of the "Holy Covenant" and parishioners were asked to recall things that were being done in each of the three objectives of the covenant. It was impressive to hear what has been accomplished and to witness members' awareness of the work being done. We refer you to the bulletin board about the covenant in the parish house to further review each of these goals.

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## Parish Meeting *(continued)*

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We turned our attention to our collaboration with St. Martin's Church. Fr. John spoke about his positive relationship with Fr. Chris, how they work together and their belief that the two churches are better together than apart.

There is a great advantage to sharing resources and to build on the strengths of each parish. The three areas of strength on which we're focused are: music / outreach / Christian formation.

### **Collaboration**

Fr. John stressed that we are not two dying churches getting together, but two churches where there are still signs of life that seek to build each other up by engaging in mission and ministry together.

Hopefully, this collaboration will grow our respective congregations. He went on to explain that this time is a real opportunity for both churches, a luxury, that other churches this size and with similar issues do not have.

Fr. John stressed that not doing this, and proceeding with business as usual will lead to further diminishment and eventual death.

During this time of collaboration, we can figure out and remain open to what God is doing among us as the objective of the "Holy Covenant" on page 1 clearly states.

We shared some of the things we are learning in our collaboration with St. Martin's. Rick Wheeler talked about the Pentecost Service and the energy and volume of singing and what a positive experience it was to have the children involved and to have a "full" Service to which you could easily invite someone.

Julia Gould talked about where we are headed in the collaboration. She noted two initiatives that came out of the recent joint vestry meeting: a non-traditional, informal, Saturday evening Service to begin in the Fall and the

launching of the "Good Works" initiative as a joint venture of both churches.

Fr. John encouraged our participation in our shared activities with St. Martin's stressing the need to continue to build relationships and get to know the people of that community.

He went on to stress the importance of coming together during this important time in our church's life.

### **Participation**

He said: "we need you to stay, to be present, in our pews on Sunday, to contribute and join us at the Lord's Table, where we find our solace and our strength. We need you to give something new a try - Bible study, a combined program we are doing like "Good Works," or a service we are sponsoring.



The CCI Good Works team helped to renovate a future Community Center in Radnor

When you are not here and not participating, we look like a dying, if not dead community to those who may stop in to visit! But even more, we are diminished when you are not here in so many other ways. But still, even more than that, we need you to stay for Christ's sake - because you love Jesus and only together can we live out his call in our world today."

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Parish Meeting *(continued)*

*(Continued from page 8)*

He also addressed any fears people might have about a merger. He noted: "Merger is not on the table at this time. We don't know if it will be someday in the future. But there is no hidden agenda here.

We need to stay open to what God wants, keep our eyes fixed on mission and see where it leads. If, down the line, there is a need for merger, at least we will be prepared! We will have already been being church together. That's the luxury part I was talking about earlier!"

In summary, Fr. John made the following comments. Since his arrival here, there have been three areas of concern:

**Defining and integrating mission / purpose**

The lack of clarity around this is probably what led to the failed search for a Rector in 2017 despite the best efforts of the Discernment Committee.

**Critical mass**

Do we have enough people to accomplish what we need to as a church?

**Financial stability based on various income sources**

We are blessed to currently be financially stable and have been good stewards of our resources, but must acknowledge that the loss of any one of our rental incomes, would be problematic and force us to further draw down our endowment.

He noted that while these concerns loom in the background, we continue to move forward in creative ways with a sense of optimism. We believe we are on the right track. We need to stay open to God's call and ultimately do what God wants. We can't stand by idle and be victims of our circumstances. It is best to be pro-active and take the steps necessary to cultivate life and discover new ways to "be Church."

The meeting concluded with a number of comments by various vestry members, some wonderful affirmations by parishioners and addressing questions about young people. Fr. John noted that recently someone engaged him in a discussion about possibly starting up a church school and he is following up on that.

He noted some outreach to Villanova University and Cabrini. And he stressed various things that we are doing to connect with the community, get our name out there and the hopes we have for the "Good Works" program to further increase our visibility and presence in the community.

If you have any questions about this meeting, please see one of our Vestry members. They are happy to serve you.

Thanks to all for your participation in this important meeting in the life of our Church.

## Vestry Corner

Pierce Eckhardt is among our most recent additions to the vestry and he has arrived at exactly the right time! With a professional background in Information Technology he has always understood the importance of being a liaison. In his job he translates technological information to people across different parts of a business.

As a vestry member at CCI, Pierce looks forward to making sure individual parishioner interests and concerns are understood by the vestry as a whole. And he hopes to support the vestry in its efforts to be transparent to our whole community.

Pierce arrived at CCI close to thirty years ago as a professional choir member. He had sung with our former and beloved organist, Mary Prince, in the Olney section of Philadelphia. When she moved to CCI, Pierce soon followed.

Although he had attended church as a child, he was struck at CCI by the importance of our coffee hour and the ways in which members of the church community visited and caught up with each other every week after church.



"I soon realized that an important part of the service took place in Ithan Hall," Pierce explained. Gradually, Pierce shifted from seeing himself less as a professional singer and more as a parishioner.

Pierce is excited by the changes he sees happening at CCI right now. He recognizes increased participation among many members of the congregation and is excited by an increased effort of our church to be part of the local community. He also sees the importance of making CCI more known to people outside of the church and is excited about our collaborative efforts with St. Martin's.

"Our church is located in an area where specific needs are perhaps less obvious and it is important we become part of the community in an effort to address what is needed," Pierce explained.



## Bible Study

Our weekly Bible Study continues throughout June on Wednesdays at 7:00pm.

During this month we will be meeting in St Martin's church, in the large Sunday School room at the end of the hall in the parish building.

Even if you have not previously participated in this study, you are welcome to join us.

