

The Messenger

A COMMUNICATION MINISTRY
OF CHRIST CHURCH,
DUANESBURG, NEW YORK

◆
Spring 2025



Rector's Reflections

Restoration

Well, we are finally on the big adventure! The contractor has mobilized and set-up on onsite, and the work of restoration has begun. Having worked for many years on the restoration of historic buildings, I still get excited at the start of a project. Seeing the transformation of a building back to its former glory is very satisfying and rewarding. I know there will be some difficult days ahead as the contractor and architect work through unforeseen issues, and we learn we need to spend more money on this or on that. But when it is all completed, it will be worth it.

The Christian journey is also one of restoration. Step by step, as we trust and get to know Jesus better, we are transformed to reflect God's glory in our lives. However, the difference between restoring buildings and people is that, unlike historic buildings, we are not returned to our former glory, but God is making us into the best version of ourselves

for His Glory. As Paul writes to the Corinthians, "...and we all, who with unveiled faces reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

During Lent this year we heard the testimonies of six members of our congregation. Each person spoke of how God is transforming their lives to reflect His Glory. It was wonderful each week to hear their stories of faith and growth in the Lord. Michael was one who shared his story, and he has agreed to have it published in this edition of The Messenger. God is in the business of restoration, not only of building but of all of us, so that we might bring Glory to Him!

To God be the Glory

Alistair

In this issue:

Birthdays &
Anniversaries

View from the Pew

"Attitude" &
Deacon Debbie's
Travels to Italy

Christ Church
Archives

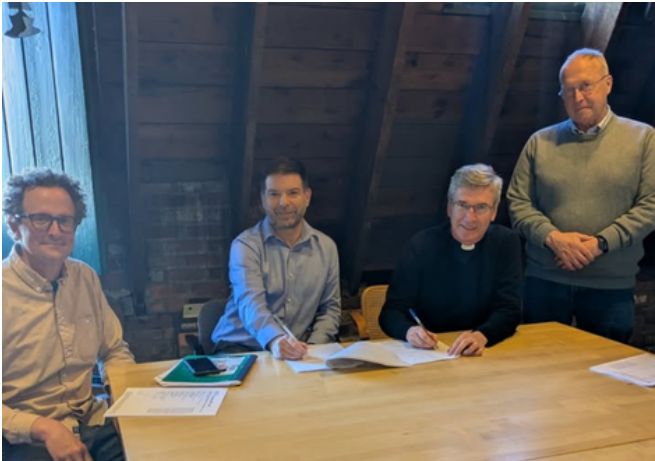
The Poetry Corner

Morning of Prayer

My Faith Journey

Women's Bible
Study

Below are photos of the Signing the Contract and Contractor's setup on site.



Bill Brandow (architect), Tim Hughes (contractor), Fr. Alistair Morrison and Steve Schrade (Christ Church)



Spring Anniversaries

- 5/7 Kevin & Kathleen Sweeney, Jake & MaryKate Metch
- 6/2 Tonya & Kyle Rudolphsen
- 6/17 Rachel & Devin O'Brien
- 6/21 Adam & Dianne Acevedo
- 6/22 Ryan & Tricia Moses
- 6/26 John & Elizabeth Iseman
- 6/29 Tom & Chris White
- 6/30 Wyatt & Jodi Moller
- 7/17 Jim & Barbara Featherstonhaugh
- 7/23 Bobby & Allison Chandler



Spring Birthdays

- 5/2 Sharon Mericle, Levi Mitch
- 5/3 Kelly Corcoran
- 5/4 Emma Connor
- 5/5 Jeff Guntert
- 5/8 Ashley Hunt
- 5/9 Corinne Skala
- 5/12 Andrea Salisbury
- 5/16 Tracy Rabideau, Amanda Weyers, David White
- 5/17 Marguerite MacDougall, Kelly Schrade Powers
- 5/18 Isabelle Acevedo
- 5/19 Chui Elliott, Peter Rea
- 5/21 Kevin Sweeney
- 5/23 Kevin Barker, Charlie Powers
- 5/24 John Bard
- 5/26 Elizabeth Iseman, Ryan Powers
- 5/27 John Langston, Laura Lucia
- 5/28 Tracy Hardendorf
- 5/30 Brandon Lucia
- 5/31 June Vance
- 6/1 Jasmine Therrion
- 6/2 John Chandler
- 6/8 Billy Lucia
- 6/12 Devin O'Brien, Audrey Rudolphsen
- 6/17 Joan Langston, Deborah Van Zink
- 6/20 Samantha Moses
- 6/29 Eva Weyers
- 7/1 John Michael Iseman
- 7/2 Tricia Moses, Bruce Bonacquist
- 7/3 Paul Munson IV, Michael Kosier
- 7/4 Carl Breitenstein
- 7/6 Bonnie Kerr, Evie Kosher
- 7/7 Molly Powers, Margaret Bernstein
- 7/8 Jake Metch
- 7/16 Alexander Rabideau, Terry Williams
- 7/19 John Weiler, Michael Walsh
- 7/21 Samantha Iseman
- 7/28 Charlotte O'Brien
- 7/29 Camille Crandall

Direction

I've used Waze, a GPS app, for a long time. It has its plusses – very accurate, a collaborative user interface where you can note and confirm road hazards, police presence and disabled vehicles while other drivers do the same giving an accurate reflection of road conditions in real time. It also has its faults – Waze tends to define the shortest route as an unusually road-conscious crow might fly – a zigzag line seeking the shortest distance between two points. This tends to take you down narrow side streets and through every hole in the hedge when the fastest route might actually be by highway, even if that takes you ever so slightly out of the way.

My recent string of discernment meetings for the Diaconate were held at St. Stephen's, Delmar. Having no idea where it was, I used Waze to navigate the first time. I used it for every meeting thereafter. Until the last.

That afternoon, I thought, I've been to – what – four, five of these meetings? Do I really need Waze? I should know the way by now.

I thought, what has GPS done to us? Once I had a vast and complex map of the Capital District in my head; of Columbia County before that, and before that, of the southeastern Catskill Mountains. Humans evolved this way to catalog the best hunting grounds, migration routes and hazards – where, if you will, the wild things are.

Doesn't GPS rob us of this faculty?

I should be able to find my way on my own. I'm traveling from Albany to Delmar, for crying out loud. These territories were once well documented

in that mental map. I'm sure I can follow my nose, recognize the landmarks and get there.

Sure.

I did fine, to a point. The point where I made a single wrong turn. So, I followed my nose. Its right down here. I think I can almost see it.

No, that's not right.

Nope, don't recognize this street at all.

What's at the end here? – looks kind of familiar.

Nope.

Finally, I pulled over, got my phone out and brought up Waze.

Two lefts and a right and I was at St. Stevens having traveled in exactly the opposite direction.

I was late.

The meeting, as every time we met, opened in prayer and silence. In my silence I prayed on direction. We all need it – the Spirit provides it, yet we follow our own noses with varying success.

Waze didn't fail me. I turned to it when I loused up and it came through.

Where I failed in heeding its guidance was my failure to learn from it, to pay attention to the direction it showed me and to internalize it.

Isn't that why I was here? in this meeting, in prayer? In the presence of others chosen to listen and to guide, to walk this walk with me?

I pray that I and all of us learn to call upon God not just when our own efforts fail, but to heed His guidance, to learn from it, to pay attention to the direction He shows us and to internalize it.

Amen.



As many of you know I traveled to Italy, which was never a place I had expected to visit. But I went to the Republic of Ireland with this group and had a great time. So, I thought why not and there are no regrets except I missed being with all of you. Here are some of the highlights.

We left on Saturday arriving on Palm Sunday. Our wonderful tour manager, Luca, took us to the fishing community of Carole. In the square as a double decker carousal. Well at Luca's encouragement a bunch of sleep deprived adults from our group got on! And no, I was not one of them! Love to fly but do not spin me!

In Venice I chose to take a half day tour of the Venice lagoon stopping at the islands of Murano and Burano. Murano is known for its glass blowing which my dad dabbled in when I was a child and I have a number of little things he made. Burano is known for its lace making and colorful homes. I walked around the island and found it so peaceful. Then had my first gelato which was raspberry and it was not my last!

On our way to Florence, Luca had us stop at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial. The land was gifted to the United States by Italy after WWII. There are 4,392 soldiers buried there with a wall containing the names of 1,409 who are missing in action.

While touring Florence we also saw the Ponte Vecchio, which is the only bridge the Germans did not destroy during their retreat from the Allies and there are no records of why. Michelangelo's statue of David was mind boggling. The detail, the smoothness, the size. Our tour guide, Ali, took us past an art store after to show us the tools he had as his disposal which made it even more mind boggling. After the tour I spent a few hours in the Basilica of the Holy Cross which was built by the Franciscans and is where Michelangelo and Galileo are

buried.

Rome, what can you say? It is 2,777 years old! To see remains of Roman columns and toilets. Yes, toilets. Did you know the "Romans were pioneers in plumbing and sanitation systems, including early forms of toilets and latrines." Learn something new every day! The Coliseum is huge for lack of a better word. I could not really appreciate the Spanish Steps due to the crowds. The Trevi fountain is beautiful but there were others, like the Fountain of the 5 Rivers.

Then there was what I had been waiting for, Vatican City, which is the smallest country in the world. We spent about 4 hours as there are many museums and we had just a glimpse of them. The Sistine Chapel, where the cardinals will elect the next pope, is stunning thanks again to Michelangelo's talent not only as a sculptor but as a painter. Did you know, "Michelangelo refused the Pope's commission as he had not painted since the age of 14 and feared he would fail Pope Julius II, who had a fearful reputation. However, Pope Julius II insisted Michelangelo paint the Sistine Chapel and so the four-year long project began."

After the Sistine Chapel we moved towards St. Peter's Basilica built over the tomb of St. Peter. This year is a "Year of Jubilee" in the Roman Catholic Church. A general definition is it signifies a time of forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration.

During the year of Jubilee "Holy Doors" are opened in four major basilicas including St. Peter's. Passing through these doors "is believed to bring blessings and grace upon the faithful, making it a truly sacred experience for all who enter."

This is where the title of my story is coming from, my attitude regarding the "Holy Doors". I more or less scoffed at the

idea but thought “I will walk through and I can say did it.” Like a badge of accomplishment. Well, when our tour guide, Monica, told us tour groups were being ushered into the basilica via the “Holy Doors” something changed in the group and me. The chatter ceased as we shuffled towards the doors. I started repeating in my head, “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner.” I felt a peace or calmness; it is hard to describe. I touched one of the panels as I passed through. Then it was back into the chaos of the crowd and I heard Monica say “The Pieta” sculpted by Michelangelo is on your right! It was the one thing I wanted to see, the one thing important to me to see. You might say my “tour” turned “pilgrimage” was complete at that moment. You might say my attitude did a major 360-degree turn!

Afterwards as we were shopping near the Vatican I was drawn to the logo for the year of Jubilee, even though I could not read it and was too embarrassed to ask. I did a search finally as I was writing this and according to AI “The Vatican's official logo for the Jubilee Year 2025, “Pilgrims of Hope,” features four stylized figures representing humanity from the four corners of the earth embracing each other, symbolizing solidarity and

fraternity. The leading figure holds a cross, signifying faith and hope, and the cross's lower end forms an anchor, a metaphor for security and hope. The rough waves beneath the figures represent the challenges of life's journey, and the cross' dynamic shape bends towards humanity, offering reassurance and certainty.”

I bought a magnet with the logo for my refrigerator. As we were getting ready to get on the bus, my friend, Cameron, came up to me and she said “I bought this for you.” It was a pendant of the logo with a prayer card. We ended our trip with dinner and of course wine tasting at a winery near Rome. As we were getting ready to leave the most beautiful sunset happened!

A perfect ending to a perfect trip!

I have been asked if I saw Pope Francis and sadly I did not. I was saddened by his passing on Easter Monday. The world lost a great man who demonstrated what it meant to care about and for the least, the lost, and the left out.

I have “talked” enough and end with the prayer from the card:

“May God give us strength and enlighten our journey to look into the future with open hearts.” Amen.





Italy



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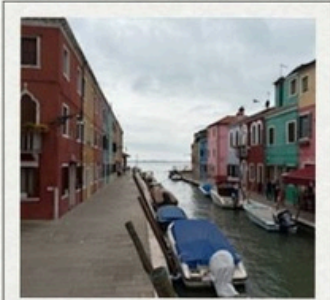
Carole



Murano



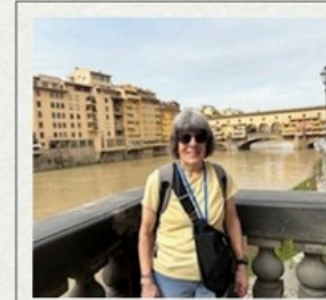
Glass Blowing



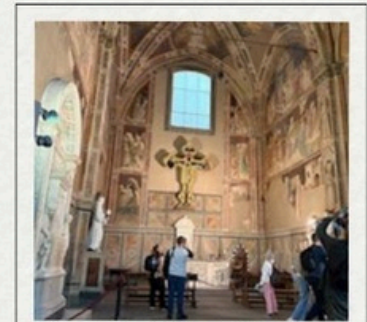
BURANO



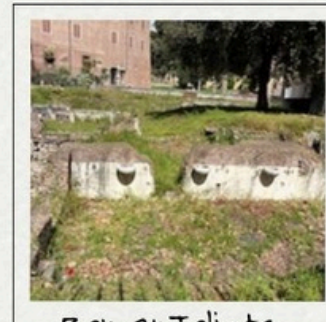
Florence American Cemetery



Ponte Vecchio



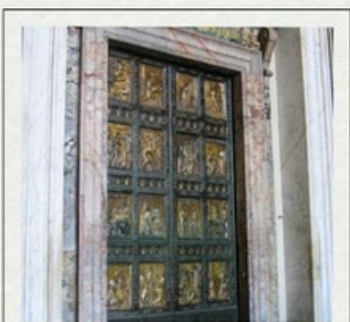
Basilica of the Holy Cross



Roman Towers



Roman Pillars



The Holy Doors



The Pieta



Holy Saturday sunset

JESUS TRAVELS TO ITALY!

Bus ride to JFK International Airport. Do you know what JFK stands for?



We stopped to pray at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial



Layover at the airport in Zurich. Can you find Zurich on a map?



A boat ride on the Venice lagoon. There are special boats in Venice. Do you know what they are called?

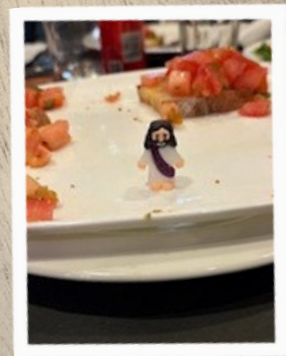


The view from Deacon Debbie's room at a villa near Florence. A very famous sculptor is buried in this city. Who is he?

Deacon Debbie loves bruschetta! Do you know how it is made?



Do you know what the smallest country in the world is? Deacon Debbie was there!



Hope this was fun!
Love, Deacon Debbie

Vestry Notes from the Past

November 1957: The new Parish Hall was dedicated and Sunday School classes have been relocated to the new building from classrooms in the rectory (then located west from the church on route 20).

The wood burning stoves used to heat the structure were removed from the church as a result of the installation of its first central heating system. The stoves were stored in the carriage shed only to be stolen several months later.

Betty MacDougall formed a Christ Church choir.



1st Row (L-R): Elizabeth MacDougall, Linda Turnbull, Marguerite MacDougall, Nancy Jean Hopper, Edna Johnson, Gail Williams

2nd Row (L-R): Anna Turnbull, Joan Escher, unknown, Betty MacDougall, Louise Slocum

3rd Row (L-R): Bart MacDougall, Rob Bagely, Hugh MacDougall, Sherwin Schrade, Harold Smith

Rev. John V. Higgins at the door with parishioners. Photo circa 1962

May 1961: It was agreed that St. Peter's chapel in Delanson would be deconsecrated and sold. The building continued to be in use as a drycleaning business and a Duaneburg Central School classroom and business office. The Parish sold the chapel for \$2,000.

October 1963: The Vestry approved the sale of the church rectory and adjacent property. The new owners were Maria Vacì (mother) and Maria Vacì (her daughter). The rectory had become too much of a financial burden for the parish to maintain. Construction of the current rectory was completed in the early 1970s. Several Rectors and their families lived in the rectory until 1994.

December 1978: The proposed budget for 1979: \$14,185. Christ Church and St. Boniface, Guilderland, agree to continue the shared rector arrangement. A small furnace fire occurred during the Christmas Eve midnight service. The fire was quickly extinguished with little interruption of worship.

January 1980: The Vestry granted approval for a church restoration study to begin. The engineering firm of Ryan, Biggs of Troy, NY was hired to conduct the study. The main focus of that restoration was toward the interior where the plaster was crumbling from the walls and ceiling.

The Poetry Corner

by Camille Crandall



Over the Hill

As Sally lay there in the bedroom
Of her senior apartment dwelling.
The night descended over the land
While moon and stars elicited an
ambiance quite compelling.

As the night became quieter;
Her mind drifted off just over the hill.
She thought of how she used to go to Bingo,
other games, parties and such.
Now she finds she doesn't really join in so much.

Her thoughts are interrupted by familiar
Red and white lights flashing between the slats
Of her mini window blinds
She has seen this many times before
It's etched in her mind like unwelcome finds.

Then she hears the heavy doors slam shut
Giving her a feeling like a punch in the gut.
She wonders who is going out for a ride tonight
An unwanted ride in the gleaming moonlight.

Is it Herbert, or Clarence, or Jackson, or Stan?
Is it Maxine, or Janis, or Lucy, or Fran?
Tomorrow she'll know
For word does not spread slow.

The lights begin flashing as the ambulance quietly
Pulls away and heads up over the hill.
At which point the sirens begin to blare
The sound gives Sally a chill

She prays the rider will be okay
And will return back home later today.
Sally has enjoyed a full life with many a frill
Yet someday she knows she'll ride over the hill.

Morning of Prayer

by Heidi Bonacquist

On Saturday, April 26, we had our first Morning of Prayer! There were nine of us that gathered (including two people on Zoom). We spent the morning talking about spiritual practices that help us to grow closer to God. We began with a short introduction to Benedictine Spirituality, which emphasizes a balance of work, study and prayer. Deacon Debbie led us through how to use the Book of Common Prayer for daily Morning Prayer and as a resource for praying. Nancy Palluti introduced the ancient prayer practice of Lectio Divina. She used the Gospel from the Lectionary

for the following day and read through it several times, asking us to listen and meditate on what God was saying to us. We had a wonderful discussion before enjoying some time to rest in the presence of God. The final session was on Solitude and Silent Prayer. We talked about the importance of spending quiet time with God, opening ourselves to better hearing His word. We practiced centering and contemplative prayer. It was a wonderful morning, learning and practicing spiritual disciplines and praying in community.

My earliest memories of church take me back to the pews of the First Moravian Church of York. They weren't all that different from the ones at Christ Episcopal today—sturdy, wooden, and a little too firm for a restless child. I can remember sitting there, legs swinging, listening to Reverend Gosarude thunder from the pulpit. His voice filled the sanctuary with passion and conviction, but to me, as a child, it was just an endless stream of words I didn't understand.

I spent much of those services wondering, "When is this guy going to stop talking?" My attention span was short, and my patience even shorter. I would whisper to my parents, pestering them with questions about the time or asking for yet another trip to the bathroom—anything to escape the long, ostensibly incomprehensible sermon. Of course, this only irritated them, but at that age, faith wasn't something I pondered deeply. Church was simply something we did—a routine, a tradition, something that was expected.

As I got older and learned to read, my relationship with church shifted, at least a little. No longer just a restless child waiting for the sermon to end, I became curious about the Bible itself. I remember flipping through its pages, overwhelmed by the sheer number of words, and how thin and delicate the pages were. Some sections, especially the long lists of names in the genealogies, felt impossible to understand. It was all very confusing.

One image, however, stayed with me. Somewhere in the pages of one of those old Bibles, I came across an illustration of the crucifixion—three men, roped and nailed to crosses, shrouded in a green, dreary haze. The image was somber, almost haunting, yet I was drawn to it. I didn't fully understand what I was looking at, not really. I knew it was Jesus, but I had no true comprehension of the sheer magnitude of that moment—what it meant, what it had cost. At that point in my life, it was just another picture in a book, something that stood out among the seemingly impenetrable columns of text.

At some point, someone gave me a book that was more age-appropriate—a retelling of Bible stories meant for children. That book changed things for me. It made the stories come alive in a way the sermons never had. I remember being captivated by the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt, the image of the Red Sea splitting in two, the raw

power of God on display. It was incredible, almost too big to fully grasp, but it stuck with me.

Other stories started to resonate as well, stories of faith and perseverance, like the story of Joseph's journey, or that of the suffering of Job. I may not have fully understood what many of these retellings meant in a deeper sense, but they planted something in me—a sense of wonder, a feeling that maybe there was something more to all of this than just sitting in a pew bored out of my skull.

Like many teenagers, as I grew my thoughts drifted away from God and toward more immediate concerns—girls, friendships, and figuring out where I fit in the world. Faith didn't disappear, but it took a backseat to other things. I started asking bigger questions, ones that felt less like Sunday school lessons and more like personal philosophy: Why am I here? Who am I, really? What is my purpose?

Later, an experience that left a lasting impact on my faith came during my time in the military. Right out of high school, I joined the reserves and was sent to boot camp at Fort Benning, Georgia. It was my first real time away from home, and everything about it was intense. Drill sergeants yelling at me, pushing me beyond what I thought I could handle, trying to break me down so they could rebuild me into something different, something stronger. Every order was met with a sharp "Hooah!" a word of duality that seemed to mean everything and nothing at the same time. It was acknowledgment, obedience, motivation, and sometimes just the only acceptable response. It became second nature, a verbal commitment to keep moving forward, even when my body and mind screamed otherwise.

In those early weeks, I didn't have much time to think about faith. But one weekend, I went to church on base, looking for something—maybe comfort, maybe answers. I sat there, exhausted, listening to the sermon, but mostly, I prayed. God, what am I doing? Why am I here? I haven't figured this out. I didn't hear a booming voice answer me, and I didn't walk away with sudden clarity. But in that moment, I felt something—a presence, maybe just the reassurance that I wasn't alone.

Looking back, that was one of the first times



My Faith Journey (cont.)

I reached out to God, not as a child asking about Bible stories, but as a young man, searching for real meaning. I wasn't sure what I believed yet, but I knew I wasn't alone.

By the time I went off to college, church had become less of a priority. I still went occasionally, and I wasn't opposed to it—I just didn't feel the same pull or expectation to attend. Instead, I found myself drawn to broader ideas of spirituality. I dabbled with the idea that it was more important to be a good person than to follow religious rituals. Maybe, in some ways, I had drifted from the church, but I never truly let go of God. He was always there—just in a different way than before.

As I progressed in my studies and career, I became a scientist. Science, by its nature, is built on evidence, logic, and repeatable observations. It seeks to explain the world in measurable terms, reducing complex phenomena to principles and equations. And yet, as much as I valued that clarity, I couldn't ignore the feeling that there was something beyond what could be tested in a lab or written in a research paper.

Many of my peers in academia were atheists. To them, everything could—and should—be explained in rational, empirical terms. There was no room for faith in their worldview, no place for the unprovable. And in that sense, I was different. I never openly discussed my beliefs, but I carried them with me. While I respected the pursuit of knowledge, I couldn't accept the idea that science by itself held all the answers.

Over time, my faith didn't wane, in fact it grew. Maybe it was God revealing little insights here and there, or maybe it was the result of my own search for understanding, but I started to consider that faith and science weren't necessarily at odds. Science can map the stars, it can decode DNA, and explain the laws of physics, but it can't fully explain consciousness, morality, or the deep longing for meaning that exists in all of us. Those questions belong to a different realm—one that science alone cannot answer.

With that understanding, I no longer saw my faith as something I had to defend in the face of objective scientific reasoning. Instead, I saw it as a complement to it—two ways of seeking truth, both valuable, both necessary. Faith was never about rejecting knowledge; it was about

accepting that not everything can be known.

Eventually, I got married and started a family. One evening, while talking with my young son about Christmas, I realized that his excitement was focused entirely on the presents under the tree. That moment chafed at me. Christmas wasn't just about gifts—it had meaning, and I wanted him to understand that. That moment, more than anything, was what started pulling me back toward the church.

I decided to rejoin the Catholic Church, largely because of my wife's childhood faith. I met with Father Pat, a thoughtful and patient priest, and we studied topics like the historical development of the Nicene Creed. During this period of introspection, I found myself praying more. And one phrase kept coming back to me, over and over again: **You are not worthy.** It was unsettling.

But as I completed my reentry into the Church, as I was confirmed and given my Catholic name, Joseph, something changed. The words transformed.

You are not worthy, but I love you just the same.

That realization stayed with me. It wasn't about being perfect, about having every answer, or about earning grace. It was about understanding that even with all of my flaws and shortcomings, I was already loved, already being watched over, already on a path that mattered—not just for me, but for my family, and for those around me every day.

Eventually, life's journey brought us to Christ Church. And in this place, we found something we didn't even realize we were looking for: a home. A home that accepted my family and my children, where we were truly embraced.

Maybe the true purpose of faith isn't just about personal revelation. Maybe it's about belonging—about having a family beyond bloodlines, about walking this path together.

In the end, my journey wasn't just about finding answers. It was about finding home.

Christ Church Women's Bible Study

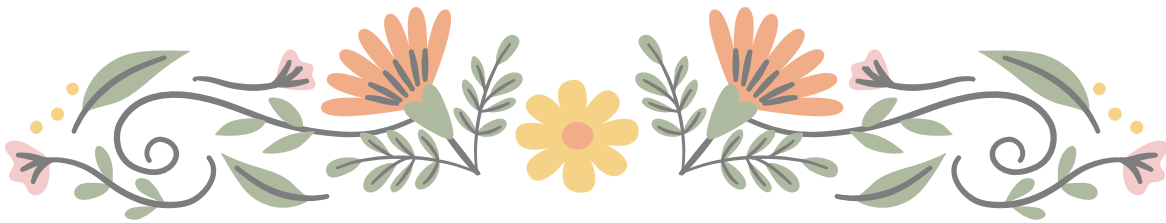
by Heidi Bonacquist

Update

We recently finished a ten week study of the book, Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life. Though we often long to sit at the feet of Jesus, we are pulled by the many demands of our hurried lives. Most of us could identify more with Martha than with Mary, even though we want to spend more time with Jesus. Early on in the study we were asked to draw a wagon and fill it with the 'rocks' that we carry in our lives. What are all the things that take us away from spending time with the Lord? For me it is the many ministries I am involved in and the difficulty I often have in saying no. The next question was - which of those rocks did God tell you to put in your wagon? This stopped me in my tracks! Of all the things I am involved in, I only discerned two of these decisions by talking with God before jumping in!

In addition to talking about all the things that get in the way of us spending time with God (like worry, overcommitment, social media, etc.) we discussed ways we could begin carving out time to build our relationship with Jesus, starting with establishing a quiet time to be with God.

As we finished the study of Martha and Mary, we concluded that we really need to find a balance of being like both of them. Our relationship with Jesus is essential, but we are also called to serve Him by serving others. We will always have many demands in our life, but Jesus is inviting us to have an intimate relationship with him. By making the time to sit at His feet every day, He will provide us with all we need to have a heart of Mary in a crazy, busy Martha world.



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