I have spent two very solid weeks with my grandson, which is both exhilarating and exhausting. I wonder how he will learn about the church, Jesus, and God. I very much want him to be a person of faith with a religious sensibility, but how?

I got a clue a few nights ago when we gathered for dinner to say grace. I folded my hands, the others did, too, and we bowed our heads. Grace was said, and everyone said Amen afterwards. The last Amen to be said was his. It was loud and it was strong. Of course, he wanted to pray again and say Amen again. The words of his prayer were garbled in a mixture of both English and French, none of which I could understand except for the Amen. Amen literally means “so be it”.

And so it was. His first prayer, with a big Amen, echoed by me with the hope that he will discover the vast and wonderful journey of faith. For me it’s always been a gift, and it is my prayer, with a big Amen, that it will be his as well.

Perhaps prayer is a way to begin 2020. I often write, and others do, too, “You are in my thoughts and prayers.” Hearing that, I often think, really? Is that simply a wish or are you actually praying for me?

Perhaps a big prayer is needed for me as I live my life into the new year. Living life is a messy business, and I like to look at certain times of the year as a way of measuring, refocusing, and rebooting my life. As I live my life, I feel that I am always moving very quickly from one thing to another, from one challenge or opportunity to the next. Things can get pretty murky, especially as everything crowds together, not giving you the kind of space you need to reflect and sort things out.

New Year’s is an important date on my life calendar. It marks for me the end of an old year, where you tried your best, where you had failures, losses, and victories, where you fell and got up again, where you lost perspective to gain focus again. Sometimes, at the end of the year we just have to let go and reconnect to a clean slate.

Of late, there has been a lot of discussion about Fred Rogers, who is showcased in the movie “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood”, starring Tom Hanks. There was also a documentary on PBS about his life by the same film makers who made the movie. If you have not heard about Fred Rogers, he was a Presbyterian minister who got into children's TV in its early days as Mr. Rogers. His program became a touchstone for millions of children growing up in the seventies and eighties.

It was built around teaching values on many levels. He showed children how to dress, how to play, how to talk and express themselves. He gave them a vocabulary of kind words, he talked about their emotions and how important it was for them to express how they felt.
To look at him and how he carried himself, you could come to the conclusion that he was a “nerd”. When you look closer, though, you see a person who carried his faith and core values with him wherever he went. He was the same person in front of the camera as he was at home.

Recently I read that before every episode of Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood he prayed this: Let some word that is heard be Thine. This struck me in many ways. First, I thought it was an excellent way to begin the new year, hoping and even praying that the next year would have words coming out of my mouth that would be “Thine”. You would think that would be easy for an experienced minister. I preach, I talk, I pray, and sometimes, I do it out of both sides of my mouth. In other words, sometimes you can lose perspective. That’s when you need to reboot and pray the prayer that some word that is heard be Thine.

Perhaps little Marius, with his head bowed and hands folded, speaking words I couldn’t understand but ending with a resounding AMEN, allowed me to hear the Thine I needed to encourage me into the new year. May you hear the Thine as well.

MEH
COMING EVENTS

Saturday, February 8
9 am to 2 pm

Please participate and help save lives - blood is needed urgently.

You can make an appointment online now: go to RedCrossBlood.org and enter sponsor code: St. Johns. For any questions, please email Marc Schlueter: orthodontics@optonline.net.

February 9
after the 10.30 am service

Please join us to review the past year and look forward to 2020. We welcome your ideas, concerns, and suggestions to further our ministry in the coming year.

The 2019 Annual Report will be in church on February 2.

ASH WEDNESDAY SOUP AND SALAD SUPPER
6 - 7.30 pm

Please join us at the supper before the 7.30 pm Ash Wednesday service. There will be several gourmet soups and chili made by members of the congregation.

This is a potluck dinner, and we need volunteers for the following:

- Make salads and soups or bring soda, bottled water, white and red wine, bread
- Help organize:
  1. set up tables and chairs
  2. serve soup and salad
  3. clean up kitchen
  4. put tables and chairs away

Email Marc Schlueter at orthodontics@optonline.net to volunteer.

Thursday, February 6 @ 7.15 pm

Our book is The Song of Achilles by Madeleine Miller. "Thrilling, profoundly moving, and utterly unique retelling of the legend of Achilles and the Trojan War. A tale of gods, kings, immortal fame, and the human heart, The Song of Achilles is a dazzling literary feat that brilliantly reimagines Homer's enduring masterwork, The Iliad."

Read it and join us!

SAVE THE DATE

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<td>CONCERT Florilegium at St. John's</td>
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<td>MIDNIGHT RUN</td>
<td>March 13</td>
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<td>OKTOBERFEST</td>
<td>October 24</td>
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The 2019 offering envelopes are in the narthex. Pick yours up on Sunday or tell the office if you need to have them sent.
Thank you to Véronique Banzet, Kim Schiro and Pastor Henk for the photos.
CAROLING & CAROLING PARTY

We had another great turnout to carol the elderly and homebound this year. It’s a very rewarding event both for those who are being caroled and those who are doing the singing. In addition, we were again rewarded by another wonderful after-party at the Hillman’s house. A big thank you to Lynn and John for their splendid and generous hospitality!
Hi everyone!

What a busy but wonderful December we had celebrating Advent, preparing for the Christmas Pageant, having a movie day with pizza after the rehearsal, gathering toys for the St. Rita’s project, decorating the Sunday school Christmas Tree in fellowship hall plus carrying on with our regular classroom lessons as we learned more and more about the birth of Jesus.

The Pageant was so much fun for us to do and from the comments I received from members of the congregation it was enjoyable for them as well. A very big thank you to Lisa and Austin, our Pageant Directors, Becky the Assistant Director, Becky and Matt for leading the children in song, our children for their awesome talent, and to everyone who assisted with the pageant preparations, without all of you this event could never take place. After the pageant we all enjoyed a fabulous pageant brunch hosted by the Johnsons and Sunday school families, thanks to all for the goodies, they were delicious.

January Events:

January 12th – Sunday school classes resume. New children’s giving envelopes will be handed out.

Reminder: we will continue to collect non-perishable food items on the 1st Sunday of each month to help the local food pantry take care of the many people who would otherwise go hungry so please donate what you can each month.

The Sunday school staff and teachers wish you all a very Happy New Year,

Dorothea
Dorothea Ferri, Chairperson for Christian Education

HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES TO:
Brian Caldwell 1/30

My name is Mohammad Salem Azizi, I am from Afghanistan, from Kabul Province. I was born in 1989 in an educated family: in 2000 I enrolled in school then I graduated in 2011. During my school years, due to economic problems I took a job at a US military base, Camp Phoenix.

From 2011 until 2013 I worked at Camp Phoenix as a car mechanic. When Phoenix base closed, all the Afghans who worked there become unemployed. After that I served the USA military in reconstruction - in 2015 I worked for a construction company that had activity along the Kabul- Khost highway. Coming and going between Kabul and Khost, I was detected by Taliban and other terrorist groups. Directly and indirectly I felt that I was being chased by unknown people - every day and every month life became scarier and more unsafe for me. Sometimes in order to keep my family safe, I didn’t go home but would go to the homes of my friends. Life became very hard for me and I could not live normally. So, in 2016, I talked with my family and decided to apply to the SIV program, although as I know that the SIV program takes a long time to complete cases. In 2018, when I went home from my job, unknown people attacked me as I rode a motorcycle. They hit me very badly then escaped from the site. Because of that wild attack, my right knee broke in several places. After an operation on my knee, I was hospitalized for several months.

Fortunately, at the end of May 2019, I came to the USA. I am thankful to the HIAS office, because they introduced me to a church, St. John’s Lutheran in Mamaroneck. When I came to New York, I met Ms. Christine Hardigree with her husband Matt, who came to the New York airport to welcome me and I will never forget that. The next day, Ms. Rebecca Gomez and Ms. Amy Robertson came to my apartment to welcome me. Over the summer, my knee was treated with the help of the church, as well English language support for me, economic support and accommodation being provided for me. From my side and my family, I am eager to thank from Ms. Amy Robertson, Ms. Rebecca Gómez, Ms. Yourha Kang, Ms. Jeanhee Chung, Mr. Steve Michaelson, Ms. Karen Clark and everyone who has helped me. I will never ever forget my birthday night.
AUGUSTA VICTORIA HOSPITAL

Thanks to new donations in December and early January we now have a total of almost $11,000 for Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. This money is much needed as the hospital is always struggling financially to meet the special medical needs of an impoverished population with few (if no) alternatives. We are truly grateful to everyone who has helped make this support possible.

THANK YOU!

LOOKING BACK AS I AM GOING FORWARD

I am writing this on New Year’ Eve, and in about two hours I will be driving my daughter and her family to the airport on their way back to Paris. It is, of course, a bittersweet experience. The house is a wreck, with toys, children’s books, packages, and lots of stuff everywhere, I am looking at a Christmas tree that is well past its prime, but still, when the lights are on, it looks festive. It’s been a good Christmas in almost every way as far as my family is concerned.

It’s also been a good Christmas for us as a church. Everything always seems come together as we light the candles on the Advent wreath every Sunday. There is the trimming of the church when everyone shows up to decorate and it manages to change not only the look of the church, but gives it an entirely different feeling. The wreaths, the garland, the glorious tree, the candles, the poinsettias, the wonderful creche make the place look stunning. We can’t forget the music, the Christmas pageant, and those wonderful ancient carols that we are eager to sing every Advent and Christmas. Yes, it’s always a great celebration of the season when you go through the doors of our church.

Now at my house, we are left with a massive cleanup as we move from these special days to the reality of a new year. Yes, 2020 stands before us and it can be either foreboding or promising. It’s the same for us individually as for us gathered as a church. This is the concern we all have: what will the future bring? The answer to that is up to us. There is the old story about the teacher who taught for 30 years but actually only taught for one because he taught the same thing every year.

This is always a worry: will this year be the same Lent, Easter, Christmas, or will we create something different, new, and challenging? Somehow we always manage to come up with great opportunities to serve, and it is my hope that this will be a year that is even more productive than the past. It is also my hope that everyone will lean into it with all the energy and resources we can muster to embody the good news of Jesus Christ and bring that good news to the world.

MEH

TIME TO RENEW YOUR ST. JOHN’S WINDOW SUBSCRIPTION

Can’t wait to get your monthly newsletter? You can receive it first class! Thanks to your support, we will continue to be able to publish our newsletter without cost to the church budget. Please note that we have added the option to forgo first class mailing despite your payment to give us the full benefit of your donation, which proved very popular last year.

Your gift goes a long way to pay for paper, copying and postage to publish St. John’s Window. Please enclose your $40 check in the return envelope provided. Thank you for your support!

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Thank you for your subscription in support of St. John’s Window!

Dorothea Ferri
Kathy & Pastor Henk
Lynn & John Hillman
Christine Romani
Karen & Mark Stuart
Jim Wills

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If you don't see your name here anymore but you would like to continue to receive your newsletter via first class mail and help support St. John’s print ministry, please return the renewal confirmation on page 7 and a $40 check in the enclosed envelope.

If you have sent in your contribution and don’t see your name, please let us know.

Thank you for your support!