

October 1, 2023

It was a pleasure to have you lead us today, Rev. Donatelli. Thank you so much. And thank you for that wonderful sermon!

Next week Rev. Tim McRee is coming back! And we will have the “Blessing of the Animals.”

Rev. Harrison will help us out with that.

The first image I get when I hear, “All hands on deck” is a crew of burly men struggling to manage a ship in strong wind and heavy seas: tending sails, fighting with the rudder, looking out for big waves or shallow reefs: shouldering the load. That’s about what your vestry has been doing lately, (but we’re not all burly men). They are generous with their time, they respond promptly to group emails, get to meetings even if they have to rearrange schedules--sometimes without much notice—so that we can all be together to interview the candidates for interim priest. And so we can make the decision together. They are awesome. I am so grateful. And there is a lot more to come. BUT we interviewed one of our three candidates Wednesday and the other two are scheduled this week. So by next Sunday, we’ll have made our decision. This boat’s movin’ right along, and all hands are on deck!

Weather report: The leaves are turning, it’s getting dark earlier. I like to go out around twilight to watch the bats as they swoop around catching bugs. If you like spiders and their webs, you’re in wonderland these days. I’m especially fond of the webs that capture stink bugs—they are back in full force!

One more thing. Bob Johnson has been a bishop in our diocese for 30 years, and he is celebrating his 89 th birthday today. We have a little gift for you, Bob, so please come up as we sing Happy Birthday!

September 24, 2023

Thank you for leading us today, Rev. Grant. It was great to have you with us, and I'm glad you are able stay for our celebration!

Rev. Todd Donatelli will join us next Sunday.

Last week I told you that we're about to hit a patch of faster water, and well, we're there!

(We're not shooting rapids, but things are moving along.) The Vestry has accepted 3 applicants for our Interim priest from Augusta. She sent me their resumes, I sent them on the vestry, and

Peggy, Sam and I had a zoom meeting with her on Thursday to learn how to navigate the

upcoming leg of our voyage. The first step is for the Vestry to interview the candidates. We

have our questions prepared, and I'm in the process of scheduling interviews in the next two

weeks. It's exciting!

Meanwhile, you have all been doing a great job of treating each other with kindness, caring for

each other and caring for the Spirit of our joyous congregation. Thanks for doing what you do

so well.

So, Covid seems to be lurking around out there again. In the spirit of caring for each other, and

protecting our ability to worship together, please use sensible caution. If you have been exposed

to someone with Covid, or if you have Covid symptoms (fever, dry cough, tiredness, achiness,

sore throat), please test, or stay home and watch the service on zoom until you are well. Tests

are available at CVS, Walmart, and Ingles. They are not cheap, but: Late-breaking news, just in

this morning, "Free Covid tests will be available tomorrow morning at a government website

that I posted on the wall by the Roadmap." And, you can call Madison County Health Dept. for

an appointment. Exposure or not, consider wearing masks, especially if you've been to close

community gatherings. And of course, get the most recent vaccine.

Weather Report: Happy first day of Fall! We're battening down a bit since it's getting chilly and the wind has picked up (because our boat is sailing fast!) The angle of the sunlight is getting sharper, so the mornings and evenings are crisp, but the afternoons are nice and warm. It's perfect weather for a party!

September 17, 2023

So, after sailing through the summer doldrums, we're about to enter a channel where the water is moving pretty fast! I have three important things to share with you today.

1.) Seventy-four people completed the Communication Survey, which is terrific! Thank you so much for your desire to stay informed, for caring about clear communication--and for caring about our sweet church. This survey will help us make sure that important information and announcements reach you. It will also provide the easiest way for you to ask questions and get answers. AND, it will lay the groundwork for longer parish surveys and data collection, which are part of the upcoming discernment process. (If anyone was not able to find and complete the survey and wants to, please see me after the service.) And finally, thanks to our Communications Captain, Deidre Soileau, who will crunch the numbers to find their deeper meaning. Stay tuned!

2.) We have a 38th birthday party next week! The Founder's picnic and hymn sing will follow the service next Sunday.

AND 3.) Last but not least, Augusta Anderson, the Canon to the Ordinary (which translates as "assistant to the bishop"), asked if the vestry is ready to receive resumes for candidates to be our interim priest--to which I replied, "Absolutely!" She will continue to guide us through the transition process. I'm hoping that the resumes will arrive tomorrow.

Your weather report: The days are shortening faster as we approach the fall equinox this Saturday. Fields are full of that crazy purple of ironweed dancing with the brilliant goldenrod. I don't know about you, but whenever I go outside these days, I find myself shrouded in spider silk. Mornings and evenings are starting to feel crisp, and the leaves are just beginning to change color (you can tell even out here on the ocean).

September 10, 2023

Rev. Coffey, it was such a pleasure to have you and Astrid with us! Thank you so much. Rev.

Tim McRee will be with us next week.

The Founder's 38th Birthday picnic is coming up on the 24th , so mark your calendar.

I hope you all have received the email with your Communications Survey, which was created by our Communications Captain, Deidre Soileau. Please fill it out—it's short, and it's important. Here's why: The process of losing a priest, receiving an interim priest and discerning our new permanent priest, can get pretty emotional at times, and uncertainty about what's going on can be anxiety provoking. So, one of the ways to assure smooth sailing is to make sure everyone is up to date with information and knows where we are in the process. The survey helps us know how best to communicate with you. According to our communications team: as of yesterday afternoon, there have been 131 people who opened the email, and as of this morning, 53 people responded!

After a certain time, if there is no response, the survey will send reminders twice. We can't see your results, just whether or not you have responded. If you have a problem filling it out or if you can't find the survey, please contact Martie, and she'll let Deidre know to reach out to help you. If you are unable to complete the survey on line, we'll set up other ways

for you to do it. If you don't want to fill it out, that's ok, but please just let us know.

On a completely different note. In Judaism there is a term, Yahrzeit, which is the day one year after the death of a loved one. I just want to hold in remembrance our friend, Roger Hartner, who died September 9th last year.

The weather report: First, a reminder. The process of finding an interim is between the diocese and your vestry, and will begin in the next couple weeks. The process of finding a permanent priest is much more involved and will not begin until the interim has been with us for a while. So, we have a week or two of easy sailing, it may be a little boring. But then the vestry will have some work to do to get our boat through the channel to Interim priest. All you have to do is remember your sunscreen, and we'll keep you posted on our progress.

September 3, 2023

Some recent news: Sam Shiver is officially installed as our Treasurer since Bill Sewell vacated the helm at the end of August—after 15 years of service.

Your Vestry had a productive and perfectly timed retreat last week, and we're getting all tuned up, so we'll be ready to begin accepting applicants for our interim priest after our next meeting—which is on the 19th. Augusta is also ready to send applicants at that point. A reminder: the diocese finds applicants for our interim. The applicants are then interviewed by the Vestry. We'll look for a good fit with us with personality and pastoral qualities, and then it can get a little complicated. There are a number of variables like full time or $\frac{3}{4}$ time, retired or not, with a

family or not, how far away they live—and what we can afford. This part of the process is all on the Vestry. That's why we're getting tuned up. But you have a very important job this week.

Everyone in the congregation will receive a Communication Survey by email. This is to find the best way to get information to everyone, so we can all be on the same page. Please watch for it and fill it out—it's short. I'll check next week to make sure you all got it, and if you didn't, we'll help find a way for you to take it.

Once the interim settles in—which will take a while--we can start looking for potential members for the discernment committee. Then, there will be a lot of parish interaction: parish surveys and meetings, we'll all take the CAT which is a Congregational Assessment Tool and takes 3 weeks. (I have no idea what this is—we'll find out together).

We'll create a spectacular Parish Profile, and Deidre has been creating an attractive and user-friendly website. This is all on the roadmap. I'm just giving you an idea of the months--and year ahead. It is all still beyond our horizon.

We've been on this voyage together for about a month and a half now, and I know what you're probably thinking. We're out here on the ocean in a boat, and it's hurricane season! I asked Mr. Google if hurricanes ever hit western NC. Needless to say, the eastern part of the state and outer banks are quite popular with hurricanes, but even if they reach the piedmont, they almost all peter out in the mountains. The remnants of Hazel, Bill, Dennis, Humberto and Fred all sent heavy rain to our area. The rain from Juan caused a mudslide over Rt 40. In 2004, Mt Mitchell

saw 23" of rain from former hurricane Frances. (Frances, if you're watching, we'll have none of

that!) Hugo, in '89, was the only one that was strong enough to cause major damage from wind.

So as your current Captain, after careful consideration, I can safely state with a reasonable degree of nautical certainty, that our boat can handle heavy rain. The bilge pump works well, and mudslides don't really matter if we stay away from Rt. 40. We will be on the lookout for anything like Hugo, but as long as we keep sailing in the mountains, we should be just fine.

August 28, 2023

This is our last Sunday with Rev. Harrison. Thank you so much! Rev. Gary Coffey will preside for the next 2 weeks, and then Rev. Tim McRee, followed by Rev. Joan Grant and Rev. Todd Donnatelli.

So, we're sailing along in our little boat during the Dog Days of summer. Fortunately, we have plenty of fluids—even some ice—and lots of sunscreen and floppy hats. There have been some gorgeous sunsets as the sun melts into the horizon. It's a little strange to have an ocean sunset in the mountains, but this is a strange time. And the end of August is an in-between time, a lot of folks are on vacation, kids are returning to school, and we're waiting for cooler weather.

I spoke with Augusta again this week, and I continue to be impressed with her availability, She's a busy woman, especially since Bishop Jose is on a three month sabbatical, returning Sept. 12th.

Your weather report: Sunny, hot and humid. The sea is calm with minor swells, the breeze light and variable. There are localized thunderstorms in the forecast, but we don't have to worry since our hull is coated with rubber

August 20, 2023

Here we are on the second Sunday of our seaward journey that will take us to the distant shore of welcoming our new priest, and beginning a new chapter in the life of the Church of the Holy Spirit. We have one more week with Rev. Harrison, and then Rev. Gary Coffey will be with us for 2 weeks. Our next port of call is: “Vestry calls the Interim Priest.” It’s actually not that close, the process takes a couple months. Last week I said there’s really nothing for us to actually do for a while, and that’s true. I want you to know, however, that there is a good bit of activity in the diocese looking for an interim priest who is a good fit for us. There are many variables to consider, some budgetary, some more intangible. But you don’t need to worry about juggling any of that. That’s Augusta’s job. I had a phone conversation with her Thursday (she had recently returned from a vacation), and I learned that the process is well underway. I will continue to touch base with her regularly.

The Vestry has heard from a number of people offering suggestions about a discernment committee. Our Roadmap first mentions a discernment committee right after we reach the port of “Interim Rector Begins,” which makes it look pretty close. There’s actually a good chunk of time—and ocean—between the two ports. . .

Meanwhile, our boat sails steadily along.

Some “below the deck” news: We had a successful—and quite full—vestry meeting last week. Sam Shiver is approved to be our new Treasurer as of Sept. 1st as Bill Sewell retires after 15 years of service! We’re working on developing a Communications Committee to keep everyone informed about the goings on of the church: to share news of events, and to provide updates of our transition progress. I’ll give you updates on Sundays, but we’re working on having a more available and unified means of sharing information. It’s actually fairly complicated since some of us are great with electronic media, some not so much. Be on the lookout for a survey coming in a couple weeks about how we can best communicate with each other. And while we’re down here, (we’re still below the deck), I’m happy to report our hull is sound and there are no leaks.

The weather report: The sky is clear and the temperature is high—it’s hot. The wind is steady but mild, the swells are moderate, and there are no storms in the forecast. We’ve had seagulls tailing us and dolphins riding the bow wave. Every so often a school of flying fish will glide by, but no sharks have been spotted.

August 13, 2023

If you're following our Roadmap (in case you haven't seen it, it's posted in the hallway and on the website), you noticed that last Sunday we shoved off from the first stop on our voyage that we reached together: the one called: "Celebrating the ministry of the departing priest." This is a voyage that will take us to the distant shore of welcoming our new priest and beginning a new chapter in the life of the Church of the Holy Spirit. But now, we're heading out into the wild blue yonder as we start to recover from David's leaving and start to understand who we are as a community of faith--without David. Our little boat is now sailing toward the next stopping point, which is: "Vestry calls the interim priest." It will be a couple months until we arrive at that port. We're waiting for the diocese to find an interim priest for us, and they're on it! but for now, there's nothing to actually do from our end. We just need to trust the process and continue to care for each other. I'll continue to be here on Sundays to keep you posted with any news.

This next part of the voyage is where we begin to consider and to conceptualize: "Who we are as the Church of the Holy Spirit." It's a time to honor who we have been, and to envision who we will be. It's a time of contemplation, which works well with being on an ocean voyage: plenty of time, and solitude, surrounded by the horizon under a wide-open sky. So, we're getting everything safely stowed, we have ample provisions on board. We have a spectacular crew--including special guest clergy--for the next leg of our journey.

If you have any questions or concerns feel free to ask one of the vestry—that's our job. If we can't answer your question, Peggy Wilson or myself—your wardens--will contact Augusta.

The weather report! Looks like clear sailing for now. We're looking out for any tropical storms—so far none are in the forecast; and Augusta, the Canon to the Ordinary, is keeping watch for any dangerous obstacles like icebergs. (But we really don't have icebergs in western North Carolina.)

August 6, 2023

First of all, I'm not going to say anything about this being our last day with David, so you can all relax. Today we have officially traveled together to the first step on our Roadmap: "Celebrating the ministry of the departing priest," and tomorrow we set out to sea! We have Supply Clergy lined up for the next part of our journey—until about mid-October. It's important to keep the timing flexible in our minds, since even though the process is very well defined, things can happen. For example, we could have an interim priest approved and ready, and then something personal comes up to prevent them from coming. In that case, we take a little step back, and the next candidates in line go through the final approval procedure. However, I fully expect that all will be smooth-sailing. Rev. Edward Harrison will preside for the 3 remaining Sundays in August. His photo and bio will be in the Weekly Spirit. (His wife, Teresa Harrison, led the recent icon writing workshop.) After him, we'll have a bunch of different priests, with distinct personalities—kind of like a smorgasbord. We'll get to sample!

Hopefully, we've all been processing feelings—of all kinds. I know I have. And I'm sure there are more to come. But know this: Our ship is in good shape, completely sea-worthy. You have been incredibly supportive to me, and I trust you've been supportive to each other. Your vestry is ready to help this continue, so please feel free to reach out to us with questions and concerns. Also, Canon Augusta Anderson is watching us all along the way, which is why her little face is in the lighthouse.

So, there's not much of a weather report today, since we're safely docked in the harbor, preparing for the celebration. It's a beautiful day for a party!

Peace, Gail Kase

July 30, 2023

I hope that you all have had a chance to explore our Roadmap that is posted in the hallway and on our website. It will be there until we have a new priest installed, and you can follow our progress with the little boat.

This is an emotional time for many of us. It's a bit disorienting to be feeling the loss of our dearly loved priest while we prepare to celebrate the last 13 ½ years of his time with us. But, that's where we are!

When I first learned that David was leaving, it seemed surprisingly sudden that it would be in only 4 weeks—at least it did to me. But actually, the process takes a good bit of time. This is the Episcopal Church: everything is a planned and methodical process. The first part of the process is private: a very personal and prayerful discernment not only about what feels right for David, but also what is best for our church. Then, there is a discussion with the Bishop, further discernment, and finally it's formed into a call. This takes time, and by necessity is known only to David and then the Bishop. So it seems everything happened suddenly, but it did not. And it seems like much was kept secret from our congregation, and it was. That's the nature of discernment. Much happens silently, in the heart, in prayer, with love. It takes time to come to fruition, and only when clarity arrives can it be known, shared with the bishop, and then with the diocese and then with us. I don't like that we're at the end of that line, but it makes sense.

Once the decision is made and affirmed, things happen fast: 4 – 6 weeks after the decision, and it's time to say good-bye. This is also necessary, since two congregations are being held in limbo, with David stretched in between. So here we are, a week away from our last day together. . . .

And finally, your weather report: The sky is overcast with a chance of localized thunderstorms. For now, the wind is steady and fills our sails as we head toward the shore. Augusta is in the lighthouse guiding us into harbor to gather provisions for the celebration next week as we prepare to off-load a couple passengers.

Thanks, I'll see you next Sunday!
Peace,
Gail Kase

July 22, 2023

[Augusta Anderson, the Canon to the Ordinary](#), met with the Vestry on Wednesday evening. I was impressed with her warm and competent presentation, and I think we all were impressed by her experience: in her 7 years as Canon, she has “shepherded 35 congregations” through the transition

to a new Priest. The Episcopal church provides a solid roadmap for a well-designed and structured process. It's important to remember that the roadmap is just a template and may vary a bit.

The diocese will find an interim priest for us (Augusta is already on it). The interim priest--with the approval of the Vestry—should come sometime in October—again, this is an estimate. We have supply priests already scheduled for the time from David's last Sunday until our interim priest arrives. The interim priest will be with us for a good while, because it's important for us to settle in to a new relationship AND there is a careful, stepwise, and fairly complex process to select a permanent priest who is a great fit for us. If you have any questions or concerns, here's how it works: feel free to reach out to any of us vestry types. If the vestry can't answer them, Peggy or I will funnel the questions to Augusta. The names of vestry members are in the directory and our contact information is next to the Roadmap that is posted in the hallway with. You can just take a picture of it, and take us with you!

The first step--and what we need to focus on now--is to say good-bye to David and Lynn and to honor their presence in the life of Holy Spirit.

So, the weather report! We have a clear sky with a strong wind filling our sails, the sea is smooth with a slight wind chop. Augusta has charted our course, and Your vestry has "all hands on deck."

Respectfully,

Gail Kase

July 8, 2023

Here are some of the things I learned in the past few days:

The Episcopal Church has protocols for just about everything, and supporting a congregation during the transition of our rector is well choreographed. I spoke with [Augusta Anderson who is the Canon to the Ordinary](#) (translated: the assistant to the Bishop), and she will come to meet with the Vestry the week of the 17th. She is available to assist us, and she emphasized that she and the Bishop have our backs. Managing these transitions is a major part of her job.

David's last day is Sunday, August 6th . We'll have supply priests lined up for a month or so until an interim priest is identified, and we're going to get a good one! The interim will be with us for about a year as the call for our new priest goes out. And as things develop, I will give you updates. As always the Vestry is here to support you.

So our job now--as a congregation, is to honor our feelings, to support each other, to grieve, to say good-bye, and to show our gratitude for and to celebrate the 13 ½ years of David's loving leadership. We can do that!

Peace to you!
Gail Kase