



February 2025

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT

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A Note from the Rector



Beloved of Holy Spirit,

Last year this time I was still learning people's names and getting my "sea legs" in joining you in your interim season of searching for a new priest. Now, these fifteen months of sharing in our faith community with you has been a rich season in my life! It's not over yet. But, with your profile posted on the big Episcopal matchmaking network in the sky, the call of a new priest is more and more of a reality.

As a congregation you have been phenomenal! You have kept up your momentum in worship, outreach, financial support, and too many ministries to name. Whoever is called to serve among you will be blessed indeed.

So, with the new year upon us, as we continue that forward-looking momentum, let's take one precious day at a time to be fully present to each other, to our ministry commitments, and to whomever God guides us to serve.

Some of us are concerned about issues that could arise because of new initiatives in our national government and continued climate change, to name two. All I know is that when the Church is true to God and faithful in following the way of Jesus, we will know how and where we are needed to work for justice, freedom, peace and mercy. Our worship and formation will build us up and keep our plumb line true. Our outreach and involvement in the larger community will be our compass and direct us in our service to God and neighbor.

Let's be expectant! God has plans for us and God will set us upon a level path in this new year. Thanks be to God!

In Christ's love, Dena



MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Helen Clark	02/03
Patty King	02/05
Ed Caskey	02/08
Dillon Wyatt	02/08
Katy Singhas	02/10
Bobbie Pell	02/11
Robertjohn Gillespie	02/15
Margie Haaga	02/15
Dick Jordan	02/17
Beecher Kinsey	02/17
Lucas Yeakley	02/20
Lynn Michie	02/22
Jade McWilliams	02/25
Ronnie Jordan	02/27
Vivienne McCullough	02/28

February 2025 EVENTS CALENDAR

SUN	2	8:00 am Men's Breakfast 10:30 am Holy Eucharist
TUE	4	11am-1pm Tai Chi
WED	5	9:45-11:15 am Centering Prayer
THU	6	4-6:30 pm Discernment Committee
SAT	8	9-noon Sisters in the Spirit 1-4 pm Honeycomb Music Group
SUN	9	10:30 am Holy Eucharist Outreach Committee
MON	10	6-7:30 pm NAMI
TUE	11	11am-1pm Tai Chi
WED	12	9:45-11:15 am Centering Prayer
SUN	16	10:30 am Holy Eucharist
TUE	18	11am-1pm Tai Chi 5 pm Vestry
WED	19	9:45-11:15 am Centering Prayer
THU	20	3:30 pm Communications Committee
SUN	23	10:30 am Holy Eucharist
MON	24	6-7:30 pm NAMI
TUES	25	11am-1pm Tai Chi
WED	26	9:45-11:15 am Centering Prayer



In The In-Between

Out of My Mind
Essays by Tom Panek

January is not one of my favorite months.

It has no real identity, unlike its predecessors and successors. Think about it. September heralds the end of summer and the beginning of cooler days and nights, offering the first glimpses of the color riot to come. Then October splashes the world with neon Autumn hues and blinding azure skies, screaming to our existence that we are alive! November brings with it Thanksgiving and the gathering of family and friends as we all share our love and deep appreciation of this life. That celebration goes on when we all, in our myriad ways and faiths, joyfully celebrate God for our existence. As Christians, we anticipate and honor Christ's birth and the promise of a new life in His name. February and March join hands and slowly but surely lead us into Spring. Though frigid weather and occasional snow may still inflict us, jonquils and crocus push through into sunlight, sparking thoughts of warmer days to come. In between all this sits...**January.**

January – whose icy grip one day gives way to a balmy thaw the next, only to once again return to remind us the vernal equinox is still weeks away. I find it to be less than inspiring. Much like her fickle nature, my muse is unable to find a coherent path to travel. My mind wanders here and there with many thoughts and little direction. I am in the in-between. It's January for me, too. So take a walk with me into my disparate ramblings. Between us, we might discover a little nugget that will make us pause a moment and reflect, solicit a laugh, or have us all wondering where my head is at, and why you're here in the first place.

Please ask yourself: What is love? I mean, what really is love? No "Hallmark" answers, please. Why is it that some live their lives like they need to get all they can to survive, in total disregard of others, while others respect the dignity and lives of us all and care that we all live in a good situation? Sometimes I probably do have profound thoughts. They come on me like lightning strikes, random "AHA!" moments. There will never be an absolutely green, sustainable life in this world as long as we strive to reach it through technology. Love the one you're with. Forget the premise of the rest of the song.

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I think anyone who could be “in my head” would be dizzy from trying to see it all. Is that what sanity is? Knowing what to pay attention to in your own head and only letting that out to the world? I am always willing to help others, even if it’s only to help them find the door. Every situation is a new opportunity. We humans have a hard time accepting that we are, even at our greatest, just animals like any others. That is the hubris of our intelligence. No one ever trained to come in second. Expect perfection. Accept excellence. There is a definite connection between science and spirituality. The nexus is what science endlessly strives to find as the key to existence, and what faith leads us to believe is the key to eternity. It is the Great Mystery. *The trouble with using experience as a guide is that the final exam often comes first and then the lesson.*

To let go is to endlessly freefall toward who you are meant to be. When we replace “I” “Me” and “My” with “We” “Us” and “Ours”, we begin to understand that we journey together. No one of us ever actually does something all alone.

I am the contradiction of myself. But I am happy living this life the way I do. Enough of my in-between, my January.

On to February!

St. Valentine (died 3rd century, Rome; feast day February 14) was the name of one or two legendary Christian martyrs whose lives seem to have a historical basis.

He is the patron saint of lovers, people with epilepsy, and beekeepers.



Encounters in Aloneness

By Deacon Ty Jones (jtjones100@gmail.com)



When I was eighteen, I volunteered to go with some sodality pals to a cloistered monastery on a Saturday morning to help out the nuns who lived there—yardwork, washing windows, and so forth. I had never imagined such a place, where residents committed to a life of silence and Benedictine prayers behind high brick walls that sheltered them from the city. To Catholic boys, it seemed a strange morning-after to our crazy Friday night experience in the Rathskeller (3.2 percent beer!) and a guys’ dorm!

A brief conversation with the gracious nun whose job it was to orient us (and answer our stumbling questions about life in this exotic place) had left us ready to join the silence, and we attended our various tasks. To be sure, we were left plenty curious, but how do you go about talking with a woman dressed in a formal habit using a language that has suddenly made you tongue-tied? It was only later that I imagined, to our gracious host, that communicating with us was like St. Francis’s first talk with the hungry wolf! It worked out somehow, and I still recall the nun’s easy hospitality.

Many are trying to explain that epidemic of “loneliness” and “aloneness” in today’s America. Some think the causes are online social networking and new ways of working from home. I suspect the latest trend is little more than people making choices around what to do with the time they’ve been given in this life.

Taking the soul’s perspective, consider what brother Geoffrey Tristram, SSJE (one of the Cowley brothers), wrote which helps explain the headlines: “We no longer belong as we did. And with that comes the loss of that deeper *contentment* which is the fruit of belonging.”[1]When a person goes deeper into silence, it can evoke “a deep feeling of melancholia, nostalgia, and longing for [one’s] true *homeland*”.

There is that “Something” in spending quiet time which gets us in touch with a desire to experience more of God. His words, “longing for...the true homeland” and “fruit of belonging” must scare a whole lot of people who’ve stopped believing in the power of much of anything beyond themselves. Let’s try to remember to invite such folks into our welcoming Christian community!

[1] Cowley magazine, Advent 2022 Vol 49, No 1

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

Dr. Gail Kase

A Life of Art, Medicine, and Spirituality

Born into a Pennsylvania German family in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Gail Kase grew up with deep roots in both farming and suburban life. While her extended family remained farmers, her grandparents moved to the “big city,” and her father pursued a career in medicine. The Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Penbrook played a central role in her family’s life for generations—her grandparents were active members, her mother was baptized and confirmed there, and her parents met, married, and remained involved in the church community.



Gail’s love for art emerged early, leading her to attend the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia for three years. Dedicated to her craft, she worked as a freelance artist with representation in local galleries, supplementing her income through restaurant work. Eventually, she was able to support herself entirely through painting.

In 1984, Gail moved to San Diego and became a SCUBA instructor. She later ran a dive charter business, guiding divers through California’s kelp beds. Her deep love for the ocean grew, and when a client introduced her to a resort in the Bahamas in need of a divemaster, she seized the opportunity. The winds of change kicked up again however, and Gail returned to Harrisburg to finally finish her undergraduate degree.

Gail then enrolled at the University of Maryland with an interest in Marine Biology, but those winds blew her unexpectedly toward medicine. She earned her M.D. at Penn State College of Medicine and completed a psychiatry residency at The Institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, one of the few psychoanalytic institutions in the country.

Throughout her journey, Gail remained connected to her spiritual life, first engaging in Spiritual Direction during her residency. She participated in silent retreats with the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and, in 2007, completed their two-year Program for Spiritual Guidance. From the start of her career, she balanced both psychological and spiritual perspectives in her work.



Gail having a **ta-da!** moment upon completing a set of built in shelves

One of her favorite quotes is, *“I’m drawn to places where human nature is most confusing.”* (P.J. O’Rourke, Republican Party Reptile, 1987), and indeed, Gail’s psychiatric career took her to some of



the most complex areas of human nature. While maintaining a private psychotherapy practice, she also served as a medical director for organizations supporting homeless and formerly homeless populations, sex offenders, incarcerated women, and developmentally disabled adults.

In 2013, Gail and her husband, Bob Warner, along with their beloved dog, Jaxon, moved to Asheville, North Carolina, settling in Mars Hill in 2014. They soon met and became good friends with Ross and Gwin Jones, who introduced them to the Church of the Holy Spirit.

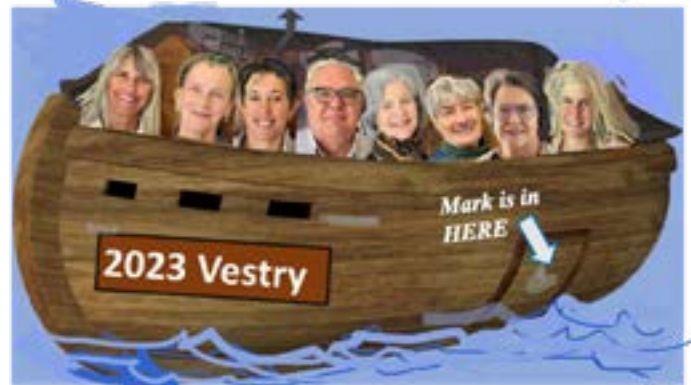
Gail continued her professional journey, spending four years in a group psychiatric practice before accepting a faculty position at East Tennessee State University's Department of Psychiatry, where she had the opportunity to teach future psychiatrists. She retired in 2021.

But Gail wasn't able to rest for long, as she was soon asked to be Holy Spirit's senior warden. She agreed, not knowing it would end up encompassing a time of pastoral and lay leadership transition. Captain Gail proved to be the right leader at the right time, guiding us admirably through sometimes stormy seas.

Now, she spends her days making sawdust (and furniture, including an 8-drawer bureau to complete a bedroom set) in her basement woodshop, tending her garden, hiking the beautiful mountains of North Carolina, and cherishing time with her husband and dog Rosie.

Captain Gail's Last Weather Report

So, here's what I've learned in the past 2 years. I had a steep learning curve at first, but there was something else at work—on me. This is where it gets personal – it's about my relationship with God, and it doesn't get more personal than that. Like many of you, I have found glimpses of God in creation—in its beauty and complexity, in places of awe: in the vast empty spaces as well as in the delicate and miniscule—in the rhythmic waves of firing neurons, in the boundless and perfect connectedness. I have felt surrounded by God in solitary places, in silence: candlelit monasteries, or in the wind's symphony sweeping over alpine peaks, or in that crazy blue in the depths of the ocean.



You have taught me that God can also be found in community. As you know, community can sometimes be complicated, but I watched—over and over again—how when a need is expressed, a swirl of generosity spontaneously arises and takes shape. It's gorgeous. We're a bunch of people who have found our way into a community called Church of the Holy Spirit. Community allows us to care for and help each other in ways we couldn't as individuals, because we're not alone. It's so simple and powerful—and alive. It's bigger than us, and it's been swirling around for a long time. It's actually kind of ancient, isn't it? There was that little community in Palestine a little while back. We belong to a long tradition of people who believe in the power of love. Belonging, feeling welcome and accepted, being companions in this bewildering and beautiful world. It's breath-taking. It's community, strong and sustaining. It has been my honor to serve you. Thank you.

First Sunday Offering for February: **La Esperanza**



Submitted by Rebecca Sharp

La Esperanza (Hope) is an outreach program that serves first- and second-generation immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Chile in Madison, Buncombe, and Yancey counties. Founded in April 2015 and hosted by the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit, we are guided by hope: **Our mission is to cultivate a vibrant community where Latinos can grow and thrive, empowered by access to education, resources, and support.**

This year we will continue our monthly youth program, womens mindfulness workshops, and interpreting for people with special needs. We plan to expand our assistance program with a large focus on helping Latina families in Yancey and Mitchell counties affected by Helene. We will also host events to help the Latino families become educated about new immigration laws and issues.



Try to Praise the Mutilated World

Adam Zagajewski

Try to praise the mutilated world.

Remember June's long days,
and wild strawberries, drops of rosé wine.

The nettles that methodically overgrow
the abandoned homesteads of exiles.

You must praise the mutilated world.

You watched the stylish yachts and ships;
one of them had a long trip ahead of it,
while salty oblivion awaited others.

You've seen the refugees going nowhere,
you've heard the executioners sing joyfully.

You should praise the mutilated world.

Remember the moments when we were together
in a white room and the curtain fluttered.

Return in thought to the concert where music flared.

You gathered acorns in the park in autumn
and leaves eddied over the earth's scars.

Praise the mutilated world

and the gray feather a thrush lost,
and the gentle light that strays and vanishes
and returns.

From *Without End: New and Selected Poems; 2002*,
Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Submitted by Kathleen Phillips

Science Moment: Bird Watching

Submitted by Gail Kase

I love watching birds. During our recent cold spell, I was delighted to see them all fluffed up like little round puffballs. With their intricate air-trapping microstructure, down feathers are the most naturally insulative material on earth, and birds have the ability to fluff them up manually.

Of the two to four thousand feathers that cover the average songbird, the vast majority include downy basal barbs or downy appendages or are entirely downy in structure. Feathers adapted for flight, in contrast, number only a few dozen. When safely tucked beneath a bird's weatherproof contour feathers, down traps countless pockets of warm, dry air near the skin and makes life in the cold possible. All birds need to survive unpredictable climate events and large fluctuations in temperature. The quality and quantity of their down corresponds directly to their environment and lifestyle, and they manipulate the feathers to trap or release heat depending on the weather, season, and time of day. This is also why birds line their nests with downy feathers.



Now, what about their little feet? Don't they get cold when they hold onto an icy twig? Birds do get cold feet, and that is why they don't freeze. It's all about heat exchange in their circulatory systems. As colder blood returns from the feet, warm arterial blood passes coming from the heart. Heat is exchanged between the two by blood flowing in opposite directions. Blood flowing down is cooled, and blood flowing to the heart is pre-warmed to maintain core heat. The temperature of the feet is close to the temperature of the ice, so very little heat transfers between the two. The bird's circulation is fast enough that blood doesn't remain long enough in the feet to freeze. In severe cold, a bird may stand on one foot, with the other tucked under feathers. This further reduces heat loss by keeping one foot warm, and the surface area in contact with ice or snow is cut in half.

Taken from "Feathers: The evolution of a Natural Miracle," by Thor Hanson, pp. 89-90, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources website, "Why don't bird's feet freeze?" 3/2/2017.

“We don’t get to choose the times that we live in, of course, but how we live in the times we’re given is our call. Some generations are called to plant seeds that will be realized in another time. And maybe that’s part of our work now. Perhaps some of our work now is just to be as merciful and kind as we can in a time that has become increasingly coarse and harsh. So we don’t know.

I mean, hope is a discipline. Hope is a practice. It is a way of life, and it is tested most when there is reason to give up hope. And I would say, we’re human, so we can’t help the way we feel. I’ve certainly felt despairing at times, but to choose hope and to live in hope is certainly the responsibility of every Christian and, I would say, every human being. We have that inside us. We share that. It’s not a faith thing. That’s a human thing. And it’s part of what makes us the species that we are.”

Bishop Mariann Budde (Interview on NPR’s 1A, 01-28-2025)

Submitted by Kathleen Phillips

	02/02/25	02/09/25	02/16/25	02/23/25	03/02/25
Vestry	Claire Gillespie	Gail Kase	Deb Carlson	Jennifer Reda	Keith Pierce
Acolyte	Gail Kase	Amanda Hilty	Ann Smith	Peggy Wilson	Gail Kase
Offertory Musician	Mike Robinson	Ann Smith Nancy Larkin	Rebekah Wilson	Keith Pierce	Jan Mallindine
First Reader	Beth Mallindine	Kaye Carson	Ty Jones	Amanda Hilty	Patty King
Second Reader	Jan Mallindine	Claire Gillespie	Dick Jordan	Gail Kase	Ginny Lentz
Prayer Leader	Kathleen Phillips	Peggy Wilson	Pam McNally	Ingrid Diederer	Mark Holland
Greeter	Ruth Van Sickle	Keith Pierce	Kaye Carson	Bud Wiley	Kristen Pierce
Ushers	Bendik Clark Adam Reda	Dick Jordan Mary Jo Sparrow	Teresa Matthews Bill Sewell	Susan Sherard Bud Wiley	Amanda Hilty Kaye Carson
Eucharistic Minister	Tom Panek	Loraine Hilty	Pam McNally	Gail Kase	Patty King
Coffee Hour Host	Pam Hayhurst	Nancy Whitaker	Sewells	Ann Shiver	Carol Woodruff
Sunday Cleanup	Sewells	Loraine Hilty	Ed McNally	Rebecca Sharp	Toneys
Altar Guild	Peggy Wilson	Colleen Boll	Smiths	Jennifer Reda	Loraine Hilty
Bulletin Folder	John Doran	Colleen Boll	Mary Maupin	Nancy Larkin	Pam McNally
Healing Prayer	Nancy Larkin	Gail Kase	Barbara Schauer	Pat Mahon	Ann Smith
Camera	Teresa Matthews	Carolyn Homra	Barbara Schauer	Teresa Matthews	Carolyn Homra
Supply Stocker	Mary Jo Sparrow	Mary Jo Sparrow	Mary Jo Sparrow	Mary Jo Sparrow	Genevieve Burda
Trash	Bendik Clark	Robert John Gillespie	Robert John Gillespie	Robert John Gillespie	Bobby Wilson

STAFF

Rev. Dr. Dena Whalen,
Interim Rector
Martie Carson, Parish
Administrator
Teresa Sumpter, Parish Musician
Rebecca Sharp, Executive Director,
La Esperanza, and Parish
Custodian
Ana Gaspar Lara, Co-Director,
La Esperanza

VESTRY MEMBERS

Amanda Hilty, Senior
Warden
Ron Pell, Junior Warden
Debra Carlson
Bendik Clark
Claire Gillespie
Gail Kase
Keith Pierce
Jennifer Reda
Mike Robinson

TREASURER
Marcus King

VESTRY CLERK
Deidre Soileau