

#### From the Rector

This is an updated version of the sermon I preached on September 10. I know it's cheating to repost sermons each month in the newsletter, but a few people asked me about this one and for a copy of the "10 Rules for Respect."

Charles Christian was 23 when he became the pastor of a Nazarene Church. He realized that many of his parishioners had grandchildren older than he was. So, he wanted to create a covenant with his people to ensure that they would talk to him—that they would take questions and concerns directly to him rather than talking only amongst themselves. He created what he called "Ten Rules for Respect"—rules that became a cornerstone of his community's common life. If you've served on the St. John's vestry over the past ten years, these rules should be familiar to you. You may even remember them from *the Eagle*. I've

published them a few times. Funny thing: each time I did, someone would ask me what prompted me to put them in the newsletter — as if something was going on behind the scenes that needed to be addressed. I hope I'm never that passive aggressive. In truth, these "rules" or any similar set of healthy norms for a community shouldn't be dusted off and rushed out whenever there is conflict. They should already be in place; they should be the basic ground rules for our life together in community.

After I preached about this early in September, I was asked to publish the rules again. Here they are:

- 1. If you have a concern about me, come to me (privately).
- 2. If I have a concern about you, I will come to you (privately).
- 3. If someone else has a concern about me and comes to you, please encourage them to come to talk with me. (I'll do the same for you.)

- 4. If someone consistently expresses a concern about me and will not come to talk to me, say, "Let's go talk to Bradley together. I am sure he will hear us out." (I will do the same for you.)
- 5. Be careful how you interpret me and my actions. It's easy to misinterpret one another. I may not be thinking or doing what you think I am. Please ask. (I will be careful how I interpret you, too.)
- 6. If someone has told you something confidential, please don't tell me about it. If you or anyone comes to me in confidence, I won't tell unless (a) the person is planning to harm themselves, (b) the person is planning to physically harm someone else, or (c) a child has been physically sexually abused. I ask the same from you.
- 7. I do not read unsigned letters or notes. Neither should you.
- 8. I do not manipulate; I will not be manipulated; do not let others manipulate you. Do not let others manipulate me through you.
- 9. I will not preach "at you" on Sunday mornings.
- 10. When in doubt, just say it. The only dumb questions are those that don't get asked. Our relationships with one another, at the end of the day, are the most important things; so, if you have a concern, pray, and then (if led to do so) speak up. If I can answer your question without misrepresenting something, someone, or breaking a confidence, I will.

The point of the "rules" is the insistence that our relationships, at the end of the day, are the most important things. To be fair, I've had people follow all these rules, talk openly and candidly with me about their concerns, and get really angry with me. That happens. But at the end of the day, we left on good terms, loving and respecting one another even as we disagreed vehemently. And of course, it sometimes happens that the relationship cannot bear the weight

of the disagreement, the significance of the conflict. But the intention must always be to try, recognizing that we are human and that we sometimes fail. Because that happens, too.

These "10 Rules for Respect" are basic ways to help us live in community with others. They aren't specific to clergy or even to the church. You'd do well to follow these rules in your work life or even in your family life. And while the rules aren't obviously religious as they stand, they are biblical. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says that if a member of the church sins against you, first talk to them, only then get the community involved (Matthew 18.15-17).

This isn't rocket science and it isn't unique to Jesus. It's actually based on rabbinic teachings — avoid shaming others, listen to the testimony of others, and, when there is a conflict, let the community adjudicate. This would have been particularly true at the time Matthew's Gospel was written. For the early Christian community — an oppressed minority within an oppressed minority — the ability to deal with conflict in-house would have been critical to the community's survival. We may not have the same issues, but this way of resolving conflict still feels like what we now call a "best practice."

Still like a lot of what happens with Jesus, there's more than meets the eye. For instance, Jesus says, "if the offender refuses to listen even to the community, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." Loads of modern church communities have used this passage as the basis for shunning members who did not behave in some way or another.

I've heard way too many stories of people who have been treated this way in churches. Sometimes this shunning comes officially sanctioned; sometimes it's simply done through social pressure. Sometimes, churches simply go straight to the officially sanctioned shunning or the social pressure without the steps Jesus mentions. I wouldn't be surprised to find out that many of you have had an experience like this.

But this is a breakdown in community and a profound misunderstanding of what Jesus is all about. Just think about that line "let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." If you took this to mean that these are the kind of people we should kick out, you're reading it wrong. After all, throughout the Gospels, Jesus was constantly criticized by the religious leaders for hanging out with Gentiles, tax collectors, and worse. Matthew isn't as effusive about this, as say, Luke is, but it's there. Jesus is slow to expand his ministry to Gentiles in Matthew's Gospel, but he does. And traditionally, the Gospel is named for Matthew, himself a tax collector.

The idea here is that Gentiles and tax collectors are exactly the kind of people that need to be "regained," brought back into the community. They

are the very people who need to hear the good news of the Gospel, they are the very people who need to hear about God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. They shouldn't be shunned. They should be brought into the community through invitation

and formation. If anyone needs to hear about God's love, it's Gentiles and tax collectors. I'll leave it to you to imagine who are today's Gentiles and tax collectors. But I suppose we should be careful not to let our biases cloud our judgment.

Actually, that's where the real rub is here. This may all sound like "10 Rules for healthy relationships" or some other basic self-help kind of thing. But it actually is at the center of the spiritual life, the center of our life in community, the center of our life with God. Rowan Williams is one of my go-to theologians. Writing about the insights gained from the Desert Mothers and Fathers, the Church's earliest monastics, he says that our relationships "with eternal truth and love simply [do not] happen without mending our [relationships] with Tom, Dick, and Harriet. The actual substance of our relationship with eternal truth and love is bound up with how we manage [our

relationships with our] neighbors." At the end of the day, the most important thing is those relationships because they point us to, bind us to, God. Williams adds that "the church is a community that exists because ... God's truth and mercy have appeared in concrete form in Jesus and, in his death and resurrection, have worked the transformation that only God can perform."

"A healthy church," he continues, demonstrates this transformation in its own life and "[seeks] to stay connected with God by seeking to connect others with God, one in which we 'win God' by converting one another..." (Williams 12, 26-7).

The word "convert" here is intentional even though it's triggering to our contemporary ears. We might imagine that we're being called to "convert"

> someone to our religion or something like that. But that's not it at all, at least not in the normal sense. Instead, we are being called to convert one another back into relationship, back into a relationship of mutual love and respect, back

into community. Besides that, we can only bring someone back into relationship by recognizing the ways we fall short, the ways we sin against one another. Without context, Jesus' "rules for respect" could turn into an opportunity for self-righteousness, an opportunity to "win" our neighbor by getting them to do what we want them to do, to be who we want them to be. It's crucial to realize that this Gospel story is placed in the midst of Jesus' arguments with other religious leaders, in the context of the Disciples wondering which of them is the greatest, in the context of Jesus insisting that a little child is actually greater than any in the Kingdom of God, that Heaven is overjoyed by the return of one single lost sheep. The very next passage is all about forgiveness (Matthew 18, passim). How ironic that churches have used these words of Jesus to shun others.

A healthy church [seeks] to stay

connected with God by seeking to

connect others with God, one in

which we 'win God' by converting

one another. – Rowan Wiliams

The context ought to remind us that we should be examining the plank in our own eye before we rush off to deal with a member of the community who we think has "sinned against us," before we get the community involved, before we treat anyone as a Gentile or a tax collector. Jesus has a lot to say to anyone who wants to "convert" others because they think they know the score. A few chapters later, he tells the religious leaders that they refuse to the enter the Kingdom of God because of their own self-righteousness and even prevent others from entering. "You cross sea and land," he chides them, "to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves" (Matthew 23.14-15).

By contrast, the church is supposed to be a community of people centered on God's love, centered on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. A *healthy* church is going to be one that seeks to stay connected with God by seeking to connect others with God, one in which we 'win God' by converting one another. But we convert one another in large part by our awareness of our own frailty, by our own

#### From the Curate

#### (The Catechism analysis continues)

- **Q.** What is meant by a covenant with God?
- **A.** A covenant is a relationship initiated by God, to which a body of people responds in faith.
- **Q.** What is the Old Covenant?
- **A.** The Old Covenant is the one given by God to the Hebrew people
- **Q.** What did God promise them?
- **A.** God promised that they would be his people to bring all the nations of the world to him.
- **Q.** What response did God require from the chosen people?
- **A.** God required the chosen people to be faithful to love justice, to do mercy and to walk humbly with their God.
- **Q.** Where is this Old Covenant to be found?

response to God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. Sometimes our relationships break down, so we need some rules and norms — some best practices for how we relate to one another under those circumstances. Jesus' advice to the Disciples — just like the rabbinic teaching on which it's based, just like the "10 Rules for Respect," and so on — are helpful. But they are also fundamentally grounded in our need to stay connected to one another. They are fundamentally grounded in our need to stay connected to one another, because that is fundamental to our staying connected to God. A church that lives this way, models something distinctive for the world, something the world desperately needs. – *Bradley Pace, bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org* 

Charles Christian, "10 Rules for Respect", *Christianity Today. Summer 1999. Accessed 9 September 2023.*<a href="https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors">https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors</a>
/1999/summer/9l3055.html

Rowan Williams. *Where God Happens*. New Seeds: Boulder, 2007.

- **A.** The covenant with the Hebrew people is found in the books which we call the Old Testament.
- **Q.** Where in the Old Testament is God's will for us shown most clearly?
- **A.** God's will for us is shown most clearly in the Ten Commandments.

The word "covenant" is a theological term that gets a lot of use in Christianity. In sermons and in discussions over coffee or pints we hear phrases like Old Covenant and new covenant. The latter is commonly used in our Eucharistic prayers. "This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins." The Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer contains a section addressing each term, first the Old Covenant, then the New Covenant.

Understanding what a covenant is in the context of Christianity is important, and the Catechism offers a succinct definition: "A covenant is a relationship initiated by God to which a body of people responds in faith." There is a lot to unpack in this statement. First, a covenant is a relationship. There are obligations for all parties involved, and they are accepted and agreed to willingly without coercion. Second, this relationship is initiated by God and not by humans. I believe this is a crucial aspect of the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). God takes the first step by reaching out to us, God's created beings. Next, a covenant is between God and a body of people. This is not an individual proposition. The communal aspect of a covenant is important because all those involved are empowered to assist one another is keeping the covenant. This can help curb harmful and self-serving interpretations of the terms of the covenant. Finally, the body of people respond in faith to the covenant relationship begun by God. We do our best to keep the covenant, and we trust that God will honor God's promises.

The Old Covenant was initiated by God with the calling of Abraham. God promised to increase Abraham's descendants so that they would be God's people and bless all of creation by bringing everyone to God. There is a striking scene described in Genesis chapter 15 that shows just how seriously God takes this covenant business. After God outlines how Abraham will be blessed, Abraham asks for some guarantee. It's not unreasonable. After all, what God is offering seems too good to be true. (Isn't that so often the case?) In response, God instructs Abraham to set up what is, at that time and in that place, a traditional rite for entering into a covenant. God tells him to obtain a variety of animals for the ceremony, and Abraham knows what to do. He cuts them in half and lays each side over against the other, creating a path down the middle. The idea is that the parties agreeing to a covenant with each other walk the

path together. In effect, they are saying, "May I end up like these animals if I don't uphold my part of this covenant." Genesis 15:12 says, "As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him." From the midst of that darkness, God reiterates how God will bless Abraham. Genesis 15:17 describes what happens next: "When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces." God alone walks down the path and accepts all the responsibility for keeping the covenant. God appears to be unconcerned about Abraham's lack of participation. We humans who enter into this covenant with God are not completely without responsibilities, but God is making a point by taking all the initiative and walking between the animals alone.

Later, when Moses receives the Ten Commandments written on stone tablets by God, more of our human responsibilities in the covenant are clarified. An outline of those terms is found in the answer to the fourth question in this section in the form of a quotation from Micah chapter 6. "God required the chosen people to be faithful; to love justice; to do mercy; and to walk humbly with their God." The details about how to do these things can be found in the Hebrew Bible, what is commonly called the Old Testament. As the Catechism states, a distillation of those details outlining God's will for us is found in the Ten Commandments, which is discussed in the next section.

We will continue to discuss the two covenants in a forthcoming article, but it is very important to clearly state that even though Christians believe Jesus initiated a new covenant, we do not believe that God's covenant with Israel has been negated. That belief, known as supersessionism, can easily lead to lousy theology and anti-Semitism, two things that should be avoided at all times. – *Jason Fortner*, *jason@stjohns-laf.org* 

### Sunday Morning Children's Education this Fall

Welcome back Sunday school students and families!

I am honored and grateful for the opportunity to help St. John's children make deeper connections with God and our community.

This school year we will continue using Godly Play as part of our formation program. We will also be embarking on new experiences together. I believe in meeting children where they are. In order to accomplish this, we will need strong communication and your help. Our goal is not to create the perfect classroom, but opportunities for worship and fellowship tailored to our parish's children. While there will be lots of changes, we will also look for growth and allow for grace.

Parents, please take a moment to reflect on how St. John's can come alongside your family to support your children. What are you looking for? What is your child looking for? Please email me your discoveries and any other information you're called to share. I deeply want to know you.

Below you'll find a link to register for our Sunday morning programs and more information about what we'll be doing this fall. It is important that you register, so we are sure to have enough volunteers and materials. If you have any questions, please email me.

Thank you again, for this most high opportunity. May God watch over you and protect you and comfort you as we undergo this busy season. – *Amanda Yauney, amanda@stjohns-laf.org* 







## Sunday School/Godly Play for Pre-kindergarten-5th grade Sundays at 9:15 a.m., beginning October 1st

Godly Play is a Montessori-based curriculum for children 4 years-old through 5th grade that follows the pattern of Christian worship and our church seasonal calendar. It teaches children religious language through sacred stories, parables, and liturgical action, as well as enhances their spiritual experience through wonder and responsive play. Classroom size is limited so we encourage you to register your child or grandchild as soon as possible. Location: Art Room. Dates: 10/01/23-05/12/24. Sunday school will not meet on 12/24/23, 12/31/23, 01/07/24, or 03/31/24.

# Coming Soon: Children's Chapel for Pre-kindergarten-5th grade Sundays 10:00 a.m.

Children's Chapel will meet on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. We will worship together in a way designed to introduce children to the traditions of Episcopal worship. During our time together, we hear the Gospel, sing, say the Creed, and share Prayers of the People. We will return to the church at the Peace and in time for Eucharist. Look for more information to come.

### Register for Sunday School at www.stjohns-laf.org/cfregistration.

### The 2023 Hunger Hike

Many thanks to all who participated in or supported the 2023 Hunger Hike to combat food insecurity in our community.

As of September 17, **St. John's raised over \$3200**. Overall, the Hunger Hike raised nearly \$98,000 to fight hunger in our community. For more information and final totals, visit <a href="https://www.hungerhike.org">www.hungerhike.org</a>.

Pictured below are some of the hikers from Good Shepherd and St. John's.



### Jubilee Christmas is set for Dec. 9

Jubilee Christmas is a Lafayette Urban Ministry program designed to serve families who need to provide their children with Christmas gifts. We are in the early planning stages for this year's Jubilee Christmas, which will be held on Saturday, December 9. We are having an in-person event again this year, split across two shifts in the morning like last year.

Right now, the greatest need is for **cash donations**. These donations pay the LUM bill, gift cards for families, and other items. Donations can be made at <a href="https://www.stjohns-laf.org">www.stjohns-laf.org</a> (select "Jubilee Christmas"), using the OnRealm app, using a Jubilee Christmas envelope. We will continue to use the Amazon wish list for basket items. Look for more information as we get closer to December 9.

If you have any questions, please contact Mary Kay McCauley. –*Mary Kay McCauley, mccauley.mk3@gmail.com* 



# **Service, Sharing, Community The 2023 Stewardship Campaign**

St. John's is a church centered on God's love and expressed in service, sharing, and community. Look for more information about how you can be a part of all three coming soon from the St. John's Stewardship Committee. – *Bill McInerney (chair)*, *Jamie Davis, Cindy Gerlach, Kristine Holtvedt, and Kathy Johnson*.

## Celebration of the Feast of St. Francis Blessing of the Animals Sunday, Oct. 1, 5 p.m.

Bring your furry friends to St. John's and celebrate the Feast of St. Francis. There will be a short prayer service in the St. John's Memorial Garden during which animals may be blessed. All pets are welcome (as well as pictures or stuffed animals). – *Bradley Pace, bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org* 

### **Tuesday Morning Bible Study**

Join us for Bible Study in St. John's Commons at 10 a.m. on Tuesdays. This fall, we are studying those strange Bible stories we skipped in Sunday School and usually gloss over on Sunday mornings. – *Bradley Pace, bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org* 

## Introduction to the Christian Story, Anglicanism, & St. John's Beginning Oct. 3, 6 p.m.

Come to St. John's on Tuesday nights beginning October 3 for six sessions on the big questions of the Christian faith, the Episcopal Church and Anglican Christianity, and St. John's. For those of you who are new to the Episcopal Church, we will also discuss the way Episcopalians approach theology and Scripture and learn a little about our shared history.

Dinner will be provided. Childcare will also be available. For more information, contact Bradley or call the church office at 765,742.4079. — *Bradley Pace, bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org* 

## Episcopal Communion at Westminster Village Second Tuesday of the Month, 2 p.m.

St. John's now hosts a service of Holy Communion at Westminster Village on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 2 p.m. This service is especially for St. John's members living at Westminster, but everyone is welcome. The service will be held in the cardinal room near the main entrance. For more information, contact Father Bradley. – *Bradley Pace*, *bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org* 

## Fall Schedule for Greater Lafayette Episcopal Youth Group

The youth from Good Shepherd and St. John's will meet regularly throughout the fall. More information is coming soon about events in October including bowling, a trip to Exploration Acres, and formation. Get an updated schedule at <a href="https://www.stjohns-laf.org/youth">www.stjohns-laf.org/youth</a>. If you have questions or would like to get involved, contact Hilary Cooke at <a href="https://hilary@goodshep.org">hilary@goodshep.org</a> or Father Bradley. — Bradley Pace, bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org

# Service of Holy Eucharist & Healing Sunday, Oct. 15, 8 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

Healing prayer (also known as "unction" or "ministration to the sick") has a long tradition in the church. The person receiving healing prayer is anointed by special oil blessed by a bishop or a priest. A minister anoints the person requesting prayer and lays hands on her invoking God to bring about healing and wholeness.

On Sunday, October 15, at both the 8 and 10:15 a.m. services, we will include a time of healing prayer in our services. After the sermon, the presider will bless oil to be used for anointing during those services as well as during services throughout the year at St. John's. Special prayers of healing will be said by the congregation. All are invited to come forward for anointing and for a time of prayer. – *Bradley Pace, bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org* 

# The Feast of All Saints Sunday, Nov. 5

On Sunday, November 5, we will observe the Feast of All Saints. At our services that day, we will dedicate special time to remember those saints of St. John's who have died in the past year. There will also be time for us to remember those saints who have been the chosen vessels of God's grace in our own lives.

Please join with the whole church as we remember the saints of God who have come before and welcome new saints into the Body of Christ. - *Bradley Pace*, *bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org* 



### **Holy Baptism**

For anyone considering baptism, or for parents considering having their children baptized, the next baptismal feast is the Feast of All Saints on Sunday, November 5. For more information, please contact Fr. Bradley. – *Bradley Pace, bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org* 

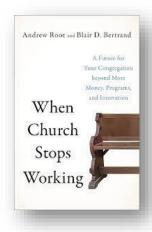
## The St. John's Vestry is reading

### When Church Stops Working by Andrew Root and Blair Bertrand

Beginning at their September meeting, the St. Vestry is reading *When Church Stops Working* by Andrew Root and Blair Bertrand. From Amazon reviews:

"What if the solution for the decline of today's church isn't more money, people, programs, innovation, or busyness? What if the answer is to stop and wait on God?

In *When Church Stops Working*, ministry leaders Andrew Root and Blair Bertrand show how actively watching and listening for God can bring life out of death for churches in crisis today. Using clear steps and practices, they invite church leaders to stop the endless cycle of doing more and rather to simply 'be' in God's presence."



#### **Deaths**

**Roy Meeks**, September 14, 2023 Longtime member of St. John's.

### Join the St. John's Vestry

The St. John's Vestry will soon be looking for new members to join the Vestry in 2024. Vestry terms last three years and begin after the annual meeting in February. While there are specific canonical responsibilities, Vestry service is much more than these minimal, canonical requirements suggest. Our ministry focuses on the work of God as it is lived out in this church community. Vestry members commit to a reasonable understanding of the

church's structure, management, and finances; to be leaders in attending the worship and fellowship of the church; to support the church through financial stewardship; to lead in outreach, service, and evangelism; and to support the mission and ministry of the church in other ways. Vestry members commit to be leaders in prayer and in the study of Scripture and to living out the Gospel in their daily lives.

If you feel that you may be called to service on the St. John's Vestry or if you would like additional information, please contact one of the current members of the Vestry's middle class: Kristine Holtvedt (at <a href="mailto:kristineholtvedt@gmail.com">kristineholtvedt@gmail.com</a>), Bruce Johnson (at <a href="mailto:squirrel75@hotmail.com">squirrel75@hotmail.com</a>), or Elizabeth Ladd (at <a href="mailto:eliz.t.ladd@gmail.com">eliz.t.ladd@gmail.com</a>). You may also reach out to Fr. Bradley as well. -Bradley Pace, <a href="mailto:bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org">bradleypace@stjohns-laf.org</a>

## 2023 Diocesan Convention November 10-11

### St. Paul's Episcopal Church Indianapolis

The 186th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis will be held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Indianapolis on November 10-11, 2023. Everyone is invited. This year's highlights include:

- The theme of Rest & Liberation.
- The keynote speaker is Cole Arthur Riley.
- Workshops will be announced on the website and part of the registration process.

A preliminary schedule is available on the diocesan convention web page at <a href="https://indydio.org/2023-diocesan-convention/">https://indydio.org/2023-diocesan-convention/</a>.

## Stay up to date with IndyDio!

If you do not receive the Diocesan newsletter, go to <u>indydio.org/newsletter/</u> and click subscribe.



## St. John's Financial Summary, August 2023

INCOME	January-August	Operating Budget	% of Budget
Operating Income	\$298,880.06	\$495,730.62	60.3%
Non-Operation Income	\$26,525.60	\$58,557.40	45.3%
Transfer Income	\$2,498.39	\$42,100.00	5.9%
TOTAL INCOME	\$327,904.05	\$596,388.02	55.0%
EXPENSES			
Outreach	\$43,630.12	\$86,001.00	50.7%
Program	\$16,554.69	\$28,620.00	57.8%
Administration	\$1,849.24	\$4,450.00	41.6%
Personnel	\$214,689.42	\$342,185.51	62.7%
Office	\$18,942.30	\$28,912.00	65.5%
Property	\$80,411.49	\$106,219.51	75.7%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$376,077.26	\$596,388.02	63.1%
Net Income (loss)	\$-48,173.21	0.00	

### ST. JOHN'S LAFAYETTE

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### Parish Staff & Leadership

Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, Bishop
Bradley Pace, Rector
Jason Fortner, Curate
Teresa Lohrman, Associate for
Administration & Finance
Michael Bennett, Director of Music
Amanda Yauney, Director of Christian
Education
Becky Dick, Senior Warden

Bruce Johnson, Junior Warden

St. John's is a parish of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Indianapolis.



### Mark Your Calendars

Sunday School begins, Sunday, Oct. 1 at 9:15. a.m. Blessing of the Animals, Sunday, Oct. 1 at 5 p.m. Healing Service, Sunday, Oct. 15 at 8 & 10:15 a.m. The Feast of All Saints, Sunday, Nov. 5