



The Salem County Episcopalian

May 2023

*From St. Luke's
Vicar*



As we begin another month, we are happily saying "Alleluia"! From Easter to Pentecost, we celebrate the Easter season. As St. John Chrysostom

reminds us in his famous Easter homily, Christ has destroyed death, and now is the "feast of faith."

Pentecost (also called Whitsunday) is a Christian holiday which takes place on the 50th day (the seventh Sunday) after Easter Sunday, May 28th this year. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks, as described in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1–31).

In Western Christianity, Pentecost is celebrated on the 50th day (the seventh Sunday) after Easter Sunday. Since its date depends on the date of Easter, Pentecost is a "moveable feast".

The liturgical celebrations of Pentecost in Western churches are as rich and varied as those in the East. The typical image of Pentecost in the West is that of the Virgin Mary seated centrally and prominently among the disciples with flames resting on the crowns of their heads. Occasionally, parting clouds suggesting the action of the "mighty wind", rays of light and the Dove are also depicted.

St. Paul already in the 1st century notes the importance of this festival to the early Christian communities. Since the lifetime of some who may have been eyewitnesses, annual celebrations of the descent of the Holy Spirit have been observed.

Marking the festival's importance, as the principal feast of the church and the fulfilment of Christ's purpose in coming into the world, namely bringing the Holy Spirit which had departed with Adam and Eve's fall, back into the world, all 33 following Sundays are "Sundays after Pentecost" in the Episcopal Church.

Across denominational lines Pentecost has been an opportunity for Christians to honor the role of the

Holy Spirit in their lives and celebrate the birth of the Christian Church in an ecumenical context.

The main sign of Pentecost in the West is the color red. It symbolizes joy and the fire of the Holy Spirit. Priests or ministers, and choirs wear red vestments, and in modern times, the custom has extended to the lay people of the congregation wearing red clothing in celebration as well.

In some cases, congregations have incorporated the use of red balloons, signifying the "Birthday of the Church". These may be borne by the congregants, decorate the sanctuary, or released all at once. (From Wikipedia)

After having total knee replacement on April 18, I hope to return to serving at St. Luke's by May 21st for a couple of Sundays until the next knee surgery on May 30. Please keep the people of St. Luke's and me in your prayers. Thank you!

Mother Antoinette



Saying goodbye is challenging at the best of times. Last Wednesday, I had to say goodbye to my mother and daughter. It had been so long since I had seen them that parting from them was harder than expected. I know that I will see them again, but it doesn't make it easier. Saying goodbye for the last time is more than difficult, especially being parted by death. I got the chance to be with my father as he died. I got to say goodbye. It was sad and surreal but also beautiful, full of grace and loving. I will never forget it.

Do you remember the goodbyes in your life—whether someone who was near death or someone for whom

(cont. on p 2)

(Rector's Desk continued)

your lives were splitting apart, you knew that you probably wouldn't see that person again anytime soon? Do you remember those important goodbye moments? Of course, you remember.

We sometimes forget, I think, that the disciples hadn't had an opportunity to say goodbye to Jesus before his death. Everything went so wrong so very quickly during that fateful Holy Week in Jerusalem. When his death seemed imminent... they all scattered.

So, the joy Easter now makes sense. When Jesus first appeared to them in, they were terrified thinking he was a ghost. However, he urged them to touch his wounds and see that he was a living body. We were told that they still could not believe it, but now it was because they were so amazed and happy. Jesus asks for some food and eats a piece of fish, proving that he truly has been raised, fully and bodily raised. Jesus opens their mind to understand the Scripture, that all of this was intended.

He tells them that they are going to go out, to serve as witnesses of his death and resurrection, to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations, starting in Jerusalem. He tells them to wait there, in Jerusalem, that he would send them power from on high, power to enable them to do this work of ministry. And then they all walk back to Bethany, a small village close to Jerusalem, and Jesus raises his hands and blesses them and while he is blessing them, our Lord is carried up into heaven.

This was a profoundly good goodbye, one that healed and restored the wounds from all the pain from his earlier departure and death. And it is tempting to stand staring into heaven, full of joy at the knowledge that we have been forgiven, that evil will not triumph, that our weaknesses will be filled with strength. It is very tempting to stand staring into heaven.

The sequel to the Gospel of Luke is the book The Acts of the Apostles, which continues the story of the ministry of Jesus and beginning of the early Church. In Acts, the disciples stand staring into heaven as Jesus ascends out of sight, suddenly two men, clothed in white stood beside them. They asked the disciples why they are staring into the sky. "This Jesus," they say,

"who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Can you imagine being witness to such an event? I would be just like those early followers of Jesus staring at the sky in awe. In a way, Christians still do this. Often, Christians stand staring and waiting for Jesus to come back fix things; things like racism, poverty, inequality, oppression, and the hard heartedness we have for people we've never met. We stand staring into heaven will heal all that is broken, that God will undo every injustice. However, instead of keeping our heads in the clouds, the work stands in front of us. St John's and St. Luke's and St George's are now commissioned to fill Salem, Pennsville, and Woodstown, and even to outermost parts of the world, with the unearned grace and uncontainable love of God.

May 18th is Ascension Day, a high feast day to celebrate the triumph of God in Christ and that this triumph means our sins and weaknesses forgiven. But it is not a feast day intended merely to fill us with joy, to leave us staring into heaven. Ascension Day indicates that there is now work to be done. Ascension Day transforms us from observers to participants in sharing the Good News of the Gospel. Ascension Day transforms us from people who only receive, who only consume, into folks who go out and give, disciples of Jesus who go out and act. On Ascension Day, we say goodbye to our Lord's bodily presence on earth and celebrate that we are now called to be that presence wherever and whenever.

Fr. Chuck

Recognizing Our Risen Lord and Savior



On the third day, as Jesus predicted, something very extraordinary happened. The stone was rolled away and the tomb was found empty.

The Apostle John (20:1-2) tells us: [1] Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. [2] So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus love

(cont on p. 3)

(Warden's Words cont)

and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"



We later read in the Gospel of John that Mary is back at the tomb and encounters Jesus. [15] He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." [16] Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). (John 20:15-16)

We may wonder why Mary did not recognize Jesus at first. Was it still dark when she returned? Was her vision blurry from all the tears pouring out of her swollen eyes from all her grief? Was she scared of the Roman guards she expected to face? Was she feeling sad, sorrowful, defeated, and brokenhearted? Was she numb from witnessing the death of her beloved Lord and seeing his mutilated body; the darkest hour that ever dawned on sinful earth?

In the Gospel of Mark we read that Jesus was "Suspended on the cross for six excruciating hours, the last three of which were spent in eerie darkness that "fell over the whole land" (Mark 15:33).

Mary had a very profound thought "Thinking He was the gardener" without (I think) realizing what she was thinking really meant. The only other time I found the word gardener mentioned in the NIV Bible is when Jesus says "I am the true vine and my Father is the Gardener." (John 15:1) Jesus also said "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30) Mary was absolutely correct in thinking he was the Gardener.

In the Gospel of Luke (24:13-16) we read about the encounter Jesus had with two men on the road to Emmaus. [13] Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. [14] They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. [15] As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; [16] but they were kept from recognizing him.

We do not know what kept them from recognizing

Jesus. Were they so wrapped up in their discussion that they paid very little attention to Jesus? Did God keep them from recognizing Jesus until the proper moment? Were they spiritually blind?

As we continue reading Luke (24:30-31) we learn that the light bulb finally lit up and a revelation occurred. [30] When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. [31] Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

For Mary it was a word spoken and for the two men on the road to Emmaus it was an action taken before they realized who was speaking to them.

What keeps us from recognizing Jesus and hearing His voice? What keeps us from seeing Jesus in others? Is it because we are weighed down by our circumstances? Are there too many distractions that compete for our attention? Is it our racing thoughts that makes it hard to hear His gentle whisper? Are we walking in spiritual darkness? Is it the desires of the flesh?

When we hear the voice of one of our loved ones, we know who that person is by what we hear. We also can identify a number of artists and songs after we hear just a couple of notes. Wouldn't it be great to be able to recognize when God speaks to us just as well?

How do we train ourselves to recognize Jesus? Ask the Holy Spirit to calm your mind so you can hear His voice. Also, the Prophet Jeremiah (29:13) tells us: [13] You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

May we continue in our spiritual growth, listen for the voice of our Lord and Savior and respond to His calling in full obedience and gladness..

Henry Herrera



From The Deacon's Bench

I can't believe that April went by so swiftly but it certainly was a very busy month! I love Holy Week with all the different services and the journey! I hope those of you who participated in so many of the services felt the same way.

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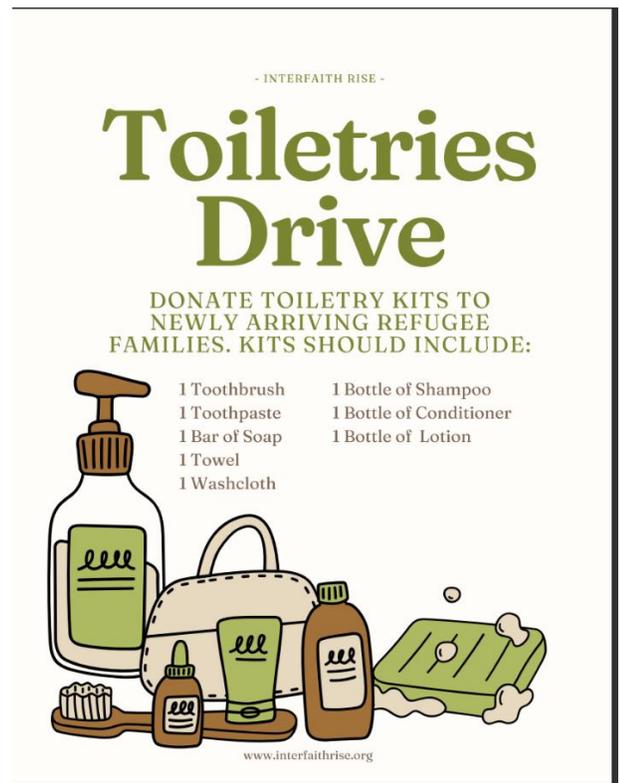
(Deacon's Bench cont)

As soon as Easter was over, my intrepid right arms – Curt and Sue got busy sorting the shoes gathered from St. George's, St Luke's and St. John's. 300 pairs of shoes! 20 bags x 15 pairs each. All carefully counted and identification paperwork inside each one. Our dear Scott Trull volunteered to take them to the bin at RCGC only to arrive and find the bin full (for who knows from how long) and unable to drop off. Resourceful Scott contacted the local Episcopal Church who's interim rector, Don Caron, graciously agreed to store them until we find what to do with them next. They are eliminating the 'bin system' which to me was far more convenient than alternative methods, big sigh, and I guess that was the last bin in NJ and they forgot about it. I will have to find the nearest DSW, probably Deptford and see if we can drop them off there – I'm working on it. Always something. You will find our 'Impact Report' (found on p. 7) in this newsletter.

Now in the last newsletter from Interfaith Rise – Vineland, they announced that they are desperate for 'Welcome to the US' kits that they can give to incoming refugees so that they have some basic needs met. That flyer should follow this article. I believe from the volume of items they have to be in a 2 gallon zip lock, or something else like a tote bag. What I really like about this project is it so easy today.

They need basic toiletries, easy to pick up when you go to the store, pick up the basics – don't buy specialty shampoos and all of that. Bags could be made up for kids (kids toothpaste, kids toothbrush, kids soap, maybe even bubble bath, no tears shampoo, etc.

I'd like to challenge all three churches to try to get 10 bags each – that would be 30 bags we could give to Interfaith Rise! Start now and I'm going to put an end date of May 28th – thank you in advance for making this happen!



Sunday, May 7 is ECS Sunday. Episcopal Community Services (ECS-NJ) is a diocesan initiative that focuses on proactively addressing human needs, such as food and shelter, and relentlessly working against both social and racial injustice.

ECS will accomplish these goals by:

1. providing grants to our ministries and projects
2. offering educational and training opportunities
3. opening up crucial connections and networks
4. advocating for meaningful systemic change

See the flyer on p. 6 for more information on ECS.

St. John's News



Dear Members of St. John's

We are thankful for your unwavering support and generosity towards our church. Your contributions have been essential to our ability to continue carrying out our mission and serving the needs of our community. We want to introduce our new e-giving platform, Vanco. This platform provides a secure and user-friendly way to give to our church online, and we are confident that it will make giving more convenient for many members of our congregation.

You can give now at this link:

<https://secure.myvanco.com/LZ9RC>

Whether you choose to give online or in person, your support is vital to the continued success of our church community. We are so grateful for your generosity and commitment to our shared mission. Thank you again for all that you do.

Blessings,

Fr. Chuck Messer & the Vestry of St. John's



MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 5/1 Barbara Sweeney
- 5/2 Christopher Gray
- 5/4 Bill Pankonien
- 5/10 Caitlin Murphy
- 5/11 Andrew Wang
- 5/12 Ryan Bailey
- 5/13 Debra Ann Gralley
- 5/14 Evangelina Madeline Bailey
- 5/16 Jan Peterson
- 5/19 Chris Sorenson
- 5/20 Alana Rodriguez
- 5/21 Rachael Cagle
- 5/21 Maria Lugo
- 5/26 Eleanor Bailey
- 5/29 Jeffrey Buck
- 5/29 Lars Runkle
- 5/30 Helen Acton
- 5/30 Jennifer Buck
- 5/31 James A. Irvine



MAY ANNIVERSARIES

- 5/17 Curt and Sue Harker
- 5/18 Joe, Jr. and Jan Peterson
- 5/26 Father Steve and Rosie Carroll



Altar Flowers

Altar Flowers-All Sundays (except May 14) are currently open if you would like to present Altar Flowers in memory of someone or in thanksgiving for something, please call or email the office to let us know. Cost is \$50 for the 2 arrangements at the altar.



Fellowship hour
St. John's is in need of people to step up and help set up (before) and clean up (after) coffee hour each week. You would be responsible for arranging for the items to serve, setting things up, and cleaning up after. Once a month we have Birthday Sunday (1st Sunday-cupcakes are provided) and Sandwich Sunday (when Vestry has a meeting). For more information and to volunteer, please see Eileen Miller or Father Chuck.



In the month of May this year the Christian Church celebrates two of its most ancient and most important high holy days: **Ascension**

Day (May 18) and **Pentecost** (May 28). In recent years, including 2023, rather than celebrating the feast of the Ascension on the 40th day after Easter—see Acts 1:1-11 (always a Thursday)—we will observe a **“Solemnity of the Ascension”** on Sunday, May 21. On that Sunday, the music will feature two Organ Preludes from Olivier Messaien's *Ascension Suite* and a Postlude based on the Chorale: *Praised be God on the Highest Throne*. The choir will sing *Lift Up Your Heads, O Ye Gates* from George Frederick Handel's Oratorio *Messiah*.

The following Sunday, May 28, is **Pentecost**, the 50th Day of Easter. All of the music for that liturgy will focus on God's gift of the Holy Spirit. The day is sometimes referred to as “the Birthday of the Church”. There will be music by Nicolas de Grigny, Edward Bairstow, Vernon Hoyle, Jacques Berthier (of Taizé), and Johann Sebastian Bach. Don't miss it. Invite all your friends and enemies. They'll be glad you did.

TOGETHER, WE ARE STRONGER

Press **Esc** to exit full screen

For the body is not one member, but many. *1 Corinthians 12:14*



ECS Sunday Collect by The Reverend Andrew D. Kruger

Compassionate God, you called us to establish Episcopal Community Services of the Diocese of New Jersey: endow us with the vision to balance charitable giving with advocating justice, so that both the source and symptoms of oppression will be overcome; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Episcopal Community Services (ECS-NJ) is a diocesan initiative that focuses on: proactively addressing human needs and relentlessly working against both social and racial injustice

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME OR TALENTS

Get engaged and make a difference! If you or someone you know has a skill or talent and a few hours a month to give, we need you!

For more information, contact us: info@ecs-nj.org

SEEKING ECS-NJ CONGREGATIONAL CHAMPIONS

Help identify your congregation's champion. It's someone who:

- will serve as a liaison to vestry
- will share ECS-NJ messages and events
- will communicate congregation's needs/wants with ECS-NJ
- will attend biannual briefings with the Bishop and leadership

If interested, please email info@ecs-nj.org.

COMPASSION & JUSTICE IN ACTION

St. Michael's, Trenton

With support from ECS-NJ, St. Michael's opened up their church to the local community, convening community conversations on mental health & wellness and creating a bookstore space to provide recovery and mental health resources. This networking with grass-roots groups, nonprofit organizations, and government (including the City of Trenton and the Police Juvenile Division) led to new community programs & collaborations.

One young lady on her way to Catholic Charities came into the store and, after picking out some books, noticed the CODA (Codependents Anonymous) books. After mentioning her inability to find a close-by CODA meeting, she got interested in the possibility of starting one at the church. The dates were scheduled, and the new CODA meeting at the church was successfully launched.

PUT YOUR FAITH INTO ACTION

CONTACT US
info@ecs-nj.org

WE CAN DO SO MUCH MORE BECAUSE OF YOU

We would like to express our deepest gratitude. We are blessed with the congregations, individuals, and organizations, without whose kind generosity, none of this would ever have been possible.

We are committed to working to achieve a more just and equitable world. Together, we're able to do so much more.

Let's ignite an epidemic of compassion, [donate today](#).



We want to say **THANK YOU** to our friends at the Episcopal Churches of Salem County! We are so grateful for the partnership with have with you and for the impact you are creating. The shoes that you donated will benefit Soles4Souls' international micro-enterprise program, where Soles4Souls repurposes shoes and utilizes them as a tool to help people in need in the developing world generate income. The micro-enterprise model offers a powerful and sustainable way for people to create small businesses selling shoes to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

We look forward to continuing to partner with you in 2023-2024!
You have made a difference!



2023 IMPACT SNAPSHOT:

- **300 pairs of Used Shoes Donated**
- **Provides consistent, quality food, housing, and education for a family for 3 months**
- **Creates \$2,715 of economic opportunity for families and communities around the world**

Shoes translate to basic essentials for families in need in the developing world. **For families in Haiti and Honduras, 300 pairs of shoes could mean food, education and shelter for a family for over 3 months!**

Learn more about our micro-enterprise program [here](#) and see how repurposed shoes today can help provide meaningful opportunities for people in need tomorrow!

Visit soles4souls.org for more information





	1 12:30-3:30 pm SCOOA Parish Hall SJ	2 8 am Yoga-Parish Hall SJ 9 am Quilters SJ 7 pm NA SJ	3 10 am Holy Eucharist SL Noon Holy Eucharist SJ 12:30-3:30 pm SCOOA Parish Hall SJ 8 pm AA SJ	4 8 am Yoga-Parish Hall SJ 6:30 Bible Study with Potluck Dinner SJ	5	6
7 8 am St. John's 9 am St. George's 10 am St. Lukes 10:30 am St. John's	8 12:30-3:30 pm SCOOA Parish Hall SJ	9 8 am Yoga-Parish Hall SJ 7 pm NA SJ	10 10 am Holy Eucharist SL Noon Holy Eucharist SJ 12:30-3:30 pm SCOOA Parish Hall SJ 8 pm AA SJ	11 8 am Yoga-Parish Hall SJ 6:30 Bible Study with Potluck Dinner SJ	12	13
14 Holy Eucharist 8 am St. John's 9 am St. George's 10 am St. Lukes 10:30 am St. John's	15 12:30-3:30 pm SCOOA Parish Hall SJ	16 8 am Yoga-Parish Hall SJ 9 am Quilters SJ 7 pm NA SJ	17 10 am Holy Eucharist SL Noon Holy Eucharist SJ 12:30-3:30 pm SCOOA Parish Hall SJ 8 pm AA SJ	18 8 am Yoga-Parish Hall SJ No Bible Study at St. John's	19	20
21 Holy Eucharist 8 am St. John's 9 am St. George's 10 am St. Lukes 10:30 am St. John's 5 pm Bishop's Gala	22 10 am-2 pm SCREA Parish Hall SJ	23 8 am Yoga-Parish Hall SJ 7 pm NA SJ	24 10 am Holy Eucharist SL Noon Holy Eucharist SJ 8 pm AA SJ	25 8 am Yoga-Parish Hall SJ 6:30 Bible Study with Potluck Dinner SJ	26	27
28 Holy Eucharist 8 am St. John's 9 am St. George's 10 am St. Lukes 10:30 am St. John's	29	30 8 am Yoga-Parish Hall SJ 9 am Quilters SJ 7 pm NA SJ	31 10 am Holy Eucharist SL Noon Holy Eucharist SJ 12:30-3:30 pm SCOOA Parish Hall SJ 8 pm AA SJ		<i>Activities are held in the following churches:</i> SG -St. George's SL -St. Luke's SJ -St. John's	SCOOA-Salem County Office on Aging SCREA-Salem County Retired Educators Assn

St. John's Episcopal Church

76 Market Street, Salem, NJ 08079

Parish Office: 856-935-1798 E-Mail: stjohnssalemnj@comcast.net

Services

Sunday 8 am & 10:30 am

Wednesday Noon

Rector: The Rev'd Charles Messer 856-935-1798 (office) 610-800-8795 (cell) frchuckmesser@gmail.com

Deacon: The Rev'd Sally Maurer 856-769-1409 (h) 856-297-2385 (cell) slarrabee@comcast.net

Facebook: [St. John's Salem](#)

Website: [St. John's Salem](#)

St. Luke's Episcopal Church

37-39 E. Grant Street, Woodstown, NJ 08098

Parish Office: 856-472-1501 E-Mail: stlukeswoodstownnj@gmail.com

Services

Sunday 10 am

Wednesday 10 am

Vicar: The Rev'd Antoinette Tackett 856-472-1501 (office) stlukessupply@gmail.com

Facebook: [St. Luke's Woodstown](#)

Website: [St. Luke's Woodstown](#)

St. George's Episcopal Church

3 Church Landing Road, Pennsville, NJ 08070

Parish Office: (856) 678-7979

Services

Sunday 9 am

Deacon: The Rev'd Sally Maurer 856-769-1409 (h) 856-297-2385 (cell) slarrabee@comcast.net

Facebook: [St. George's, Pennsville](#)

Website: [St. George's, Pennsville](#)



The Salem County Episcopalian

c/o **St. John's Episcopal Church**

76 Market Street

Salem, NJ 08079

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