“All Things Work for Good for Those Who Love God”

By Chris Zavrel, Stewardship Committee Chair

With all the changes brought to our lives from the global pandemic, this fall offers some comfort in allowing us to observe the rhythms of life that persist in the face of uncertainty. Family and friends have gracefully negotiated the beginning of an in-person school year. Football has returned to dominate nearly every media outlet. Here at Christ Church, we reunited in the churchyard for our annual Welcome Sunday celebration, and what a joyful event it was! Now, as reliably as the appearance of pumpkin spice lattes, pumpkin ales, pumpkin candles, and even pumpkins, the annual Christ Church Pledge Campaign has begun.

Why make a pledge? A pledge is a financial promise and commitment to support our parish in the coming year. Your pledge tells Christ Church what you commit to giving in 2022 in support of our mission and ministries. A pledge is so much more than simply fishing through purses, pockets, and wallets for what is left over. Pledges convey a level of commitment that strengthens each person’s bonds with the parish, and help the Vestry and Finance Committee plan ahead responsibly. Most importantly, pledges are an expression of our gratitude for all that God has given us.

Yes, the act of pledging is one of gratitude. As Christians, we receive God’s gifts gratefully, value and care for God’s gifts responsibly, and share God’s gifts in love and justice. This is the foundation of stewardship. Stewards acknowledge that God is the source of all of our blessings and seek to share these blessings out of love for God and one another.

The commitment to being a steward of God is a discipline of intentional decisions on a daily basis: how can I share my time, my talent, and my treasure in service to God? As stewards of God’s gifts, we are not passive beneficiaries, but collaborators with God. We are gratefully obliged to be colleagues, associates, and facilitators in continuing the redemptive work of Jesus—the true purpose of the church, and the responsibility of each of us.

Thus stewardship is not a goal that one works toward and ultimately achieves; it is a personal commitment that is validated and renewed continually. The life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. People who seek to live as stewards learn that “all things work for good for those who love God” (Romans 8:28). As stewards, we strive to return God’s gifts with increase.

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Rejoice is the official monthly publication of Christ Church Alexandria, an Episcopal church in the Diocese of Virginia.

The Rt. Rev. Susan Ellyn Goff, Bishop Suffragan and Ecclesiastical Authority
The Rt. Rev. Jennifer Brooke-Davidson, Bishop Associate
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The Rev. Lauren Banks Killelea, Pastoral Care & Program Assistant

Director of Music
M. Jason Abel

The Rejoice deadline is the third of the month preceding publication. Please email proposed articles to mbracco@historicchristchurch.org.
Those accepted are subject to editing for length and content.

Christ Church embodies God’s unbounded love by embracing, liberating, and empowering people, whoever you are and wherever you find yourself on your journey of faith.

With Thanks From the Gift Shop

A sincere thank you from all of the Christ Church Gift Shop volunteers for your support over the past two months as we tip-toed back into business, a little bit at a time. Because of you, we are now able to open our doors again every Thursday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Not only is it fun to see everyone again (the Gift Shop is actually a great impromptu social spot), but even more importantly, we have finally been able to resume donations to our neighbors in need. With your continued support, we will be able to restock the shop with exciting, often unique, and sometimes one-of-a-kind merchandise – just in time to begin your holiday shopping and also in time to give even more to our community as the holidays approach. Many thanks!

So, as we continue to adapt, to innovate, and to develop new late-pandemic habits, I urge you to take a moment to appreciate and take comfort in those rhythms, those customs, and those routines that remain unchanged, including making a pledge to support Christ Church in the coming year. Will you pledge in gratitude for our beautiful and historic campus? In recognition of the amazing work that Christ Church’s programs accomplish in our community and in the world? In thankfulness for your deepening relationship with Christ and with this community? Regardless of the motivation, your pledge acknowledges God’s embracing, liberating, and empowering love in our lives, and I pray that you will make a generous commitment to the 2022 Pledge Campaign by returning your pledge card or filling out our online pledge card at https://bit.ly/CCPledgeForm.
An Attitude of Gratitude
By The Rev. Noelle York-Simmons, Rector

I know that I am not the only one among us that struggles with SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder, wherein the shorter days, decreased sunlight, and cold, all combine with our brain’s chemistry to create bouts of wintertime depression. I’ve worked hard to stay ahead of my own SAD and in recent years have used a combination of light therapy, talk therapy, exercise, and vitamin D supplements, along with check-ins with friends, to help me weather the weather. I love the respite that fall gives us from the intensity of summer heat and humidity, but I also find myself experiencing tickling fingers of dread that the cold dark days of winter are ahead. Oddly enough, one of the things I look forward to in the fall, along with the leaves, cute boots, and the Blessing of the Animals, is our annual pledge campaign. In addition to providing the opportunity for all members to reflect on the place of our Christ Church community in their lives, the pledge campaign reminds me-- every year-- to take a deep breath and be deeply and powerfully and humbly grateful for this holy place. There are not enough dollars in my bank account or in the US Treasury to keep up with the amount of gratitude I feel when I think about how God’s presence is made so palpable in this place. I feel God all around when I am having lunch with the Wednesday Eucharist attendees, or watching the littles play tag through our churchyard, when my turquoise-haired acolyte lights the candles, or the Vestry hunkers down for an intense and faithful discussion about our parish. This gratitude helps to keep the dread at bay by reminding me that we were all made by love for love, made by good for good, made by God for God, and that I live and work in the city on the hill, whose light will not be dimmed. I started by saying I know I’m not alone in living with SAD, and that some of you may have a similar experience. While an “attitude of gratitude” can help lighten the darkness a bit, gratitude alone will not keep us from feeling the heaviness that winter can bring. If you or someone you love suffers from Seasonal Affective Disorder, there are all kinds of helpful therapies that can help. Winter may be difficult but it doesn’t have to be unbearable. Reach out to me or to a professional therapist for help. I am grateful for each of you, for who you are, for what you offer, and for the work we do together.

Welcome Our New Seminarian, Theodore Somes!

Theodore (he/him) is a middler attending Virginia Theological Seminary. Theodore hails from the Diocese of Pittsburgh and will likely not take phone calls during Steelers games. He graduated from Washington and Jefferson College in 2020 with a degree in Political Science and minor in Religious Studies. Theodore was an infantryman in the Marine Reserves from 2017-2021 and now serves in the Army Reserves as a Chaplain Candidate. Theodore has a passion for social justice, interfaith & ecumenical ministry, working with the poor, and especially in this season of his walk with Christ, learning about the Episcopal Church’s beautiful liturgy and worship. Theodore is excited to get to know the people of Christ Church. He is passionate about learning how to have difficult conversations in a parish context, is very excited to see Christ Church doing work around food access, and is ready to experience the breadth of life and activity within the parish. In his free time, Theodore enjoys playing folky music on the mandolin, spending time outside, and making time to be with his mother (Elizabeth), sister (Vivian), and father (Tad). Theodore is a Brother in the Order of Saint Luke, an ecumenical religious order focused on liturgical and sacramental life and practice.
September Happenings

Welcome Sunday
Happenings

Animal Blessing

Churchyard Cookout
Welcome Our New Chair of the Outreach Committee

Hi Christ Church! My name is Julie Zahn, and I am humbled and excited to be chairperson of our incredible Outreach Committee. I live in Alexandria with my husband Matt and our three children Nicholas (8), Henry (6), and Catherine (3). I am a lifelong resident of Alexandria and was baptized, confirmed, married, and have had the pleasure of seeing all three of my children baptized here at Christ Church. I just finished three years serving on the church vestry, and I’m eager to continue supporting our congregation in this new role. I’m a licensed clinical social worker both in DC and Virginia, and I’m working part-time this year for DC Public Schools, starting my ninth year as a school social worker. As a social worker in DC, I provide crisis supports, therapy, and other mental health services for children and families. While working at an elementary school in Anacostia, I coordinated our school’s food pantry and collaborated with agencies throughout the city to support families at my school, and I hope to use my experience to support our parish’s outreach work here in Alexandria. Before I attended graduate school, I had the pleasure of volunteering for the Lazarus Ministry in the food pantry and as a financial counselor, and I know first-hand the tremendous impact our church has in the community and the leadership role they have among faith groups involved in this and other important outreach ministries. I hope to support our committee and volunteers, share with our congregation the opportunities for faith formation and fellowship through service, and connect with each of you about possible ways to get involved! Please check in with me about the many ways our Outreach Committee is serving our community. For more information about how to get involved or any other questions email Juliarzahn@gmail.com.

This Year's Gleaning Haul

It was a gorgeous day on Saturday, September 25! Our Food Rescue Ministry wrapped up a season of gleaning at the Old Town Farmer’s Market. On 15 Saturdays from June 12 to September 25, volunteers from Christ Church and St. Paul’s gathered a total of over 3000 pounds of food and produce. The food gleaned by Christ Church volunteers goes directly to the Lazarus grocery delivery ministry, where our city residents receive fresh produce from eight area vendors and farmers. Each week Lazarus clients receive a range of produce and food such as radishes, corn, potatoes, basil, apples, peaches, collards, asparagus, eggplant, cucumbers, carrots, squash, broccoli, celery and bread. Thank you to our local farmers for donating each week this summer, and thank you to our core group of Food Rescue Ministry volunteers, led by Andrea McNicholas, who gather food each week.
The Fall Gathering Luncheon Features Kris Amundson
By The Rev. Lauren Banks Killelea

Kris Amundson knew that parents and grandparents who were struggling to help kids during the pandemic needed help. They had questions – lots of questions. So, based on her more than 30 years as a teacher, a school board member, and a legislator, she wrote a book to share some of those answers. “There are,” she says, “school secrets parents and grandparents need to know.” In October, she will share some of those (mostly unwritten) questions and read from her new book, *81 Questions for Parents: Helping Your Kids Succeed in School*. You’ll find answers to questions like these: Should parents “redshirt” their kindergartener and hold them out for a year? (Probably not).

Should kids take algebra in the eighth grade? (Yes)
Could playing in the band be a secret to getting a student into a good college? (Read the answer to Question 43).

She will also share some suggestions for grandparents who want to know how they can best help their grandchildren.

Kris Amundson is a former teacher, school board chair, state legislator, and CEO of a national education organization. She has spent decades answering parents’ questions about school. She’s a nationally recognized expert on parenting, education, and how parents can become advocates for their own child and for every child in the school system.

Join us at the Fall Gathering on October 29 at 11:30 a.m. on Zoom.

There's Joy in the Churchyard on Sunday Mornings
By Ariel Rudy, Director of Children’s Ministries

After cutting our Sunday School year short in 2020 and getting creative with children’s formation in 2021, September 26 marked our first day of Sunday School in almost two years! While our time together looked very different than it has in years past due to COVID precautions, the joy in the churchyard was palpable as children raced to greet their friends and sat cross-legged to listen to the Bible story of the day. For the time being, all Sunday School classes meet outside in our beautiful churchyard. This green space we are blessed with ensures that we are able to keep the children of Christ Church as safe as possible during the formation hour as the coronavirus crisis continues. Preschoolers through first graders meet on the first and third Sundays of the month, while second through fifth graders meet on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. Regardless of when each class meets, there are a few things that are consistent of course-- the stories that shape our faith are shared with little ones who hear them with new ears each time. Prayers are offered up to God, brilliant questions are asked, and of course, snack is devoured. Sharing the Good News with our children is the responsibility of the entire parish, not just parents or those who teach during the week and reprise the role on the weekends. Having a diverse crew of children’s ministries leaders enriches the faith lives of our children, offering them different perspectives on faith and experiences of God that they might not otherwise encounter.

There are so many ways to become involved in children’s ministries at Christ Church, and Sunday School is just one of those ways. We always need volunteers who can offer a Sunday or two a month to this program, so come see how much you can learn from our smallest parishioners as they learn from you in turn!
At the September meeting, the vestry began a two-month deliberation on the future of Fowler House, our property at 112 N Washington Street. For the last seven years, a committee of thoughtful, dedicated parishioners has been researching options for the building that will serve our parish, our neighbors and our community. These options have taken into consideration financial impacts on our parish and its ministries today and for the future. We are committed to making space for every ministry we currently offer, though our spaces will be configured and conceived differently in any “new” vision of the church’s campus. In early 2019, we entered a contract with a developer that did not come to fruition. We took what we learned and entered a new contract later in the year, which fell through just as pandemic shutdowns began. We’ve paused for a time to regroup, see how COVID would impact our parish, and to see if any new insights about our properties have surfaced. Through this summer’s Our Calling, Our Campus discussions, we’ve learned this congregation loves this parish deeply and is excited to be back together safely. We also learned many parishioners had little knowledge of many areas in the Parish Halls and Fowler House. Understanding campus space and costs is essential to discerning the future of Fowler House, so we offered in-person tours of the campus on Welcome Sunday followed by two Sunday forums to review the full financial picture of the Fowler House property. Materials from the entire months-long effort are available at www.historicchristchurch.org/about-us/fowler-house. Now we are approaching the time to make a decision. From now until October 24, we will be taking additional feedback, ideas, concerns, and opinions—kindly and politely expressed—from around the parish about the future of the Fowler House. Please read and watch the available materials before contacting us, as there is so much thorough information provided that might help your discernment. Please send all correspondence to wardens@ccalex.org. Vestry members will also be seeking out conversations in informal settings at church. At its October meeting, the Vestry will review all the materials, information, and correspondence received. There will be prayerful discussion about the future of this church and of the properties we hold. After that meeting, we will take a month to deliberate and pray before coming to our November vestry meeting to decide how to move forward. Then we will turn the process over to the appropriate committee for the execution of that decision. This will be a watershed moment for Christ Church, no matter the decision. There will be some in our community who disagree and some who are thrilled with the outcome. We have had other watershed moments in our parish’s lifetime, all carrying both disappointment and joy. And yet we are still here, worshiping God, serving the poor and teaching our children to be lights in the world. Once the decision is made, I know we will all find ways to come together and celebrate the future, the good work we will do going forward, and the care we will continue to show one another. Central to this process, for the vestry and for the parish, is prayer. Prayer is always integral to our lives as Christians, but it is particularly necessary in times of deliberation when we are at crossroads. The vestry covets your prayers always and especially as we make this difficult decision. How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!—Psalm 133.1

Rites of Passage

Baptisms:
Luca David Metzner
Beau Patrick Murphy

Births:
Louise Harriet Chadbourn, daughter of Meg Pursley & Chad Chadbourn, granddaughter of Sally & Charles Chadbourn
Olive Marie Grey, daughter of Sara & John Grey

Deaths:
Fay Weirich
Marc Hanson
Robert Trautman
Glenn Spitler Jr.
David Bobak
Dave Bieging
Charles Collier
Samuel Gilmore Rogers
Debbie File
Diane Pugh