



**The Rev. Connie Clark**  
Vicar

**P. J. Knowlton** (Class of 2022)  
Senior Warden

**Art Symmes** (Class of 2023)  
Junior Warden

**Rob Michel** (Class of 2022)  
Register

**Dave Canoles** (Class of 2023)  
Treasurer

**Jimmy Downing** (class of 2024)

**April Martin** (Class of 2023)

**Doug Smith** (Class of 2024)

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## *From the Vicar*

### **What -- or Who -- It's All About**



I had an exciting day today (Thursday, September 23). It was the first day since the beginning of the pandemic that I was privileged to attend more than one church meeting (not counting worship here) in one day. In the morning, I met with our fantastic Bible Study group as we made our way through several chapters of 1 Corinthians. I never cease to be amazed at the depth, intelligence, and eagerness the members of this group bring to their task.

Tonight I attended the first meeting of our new Stephen Ministry training class, led by Ann Michel, our newly trained Stephen Leader. I was just along for the ride, so to speak, so I got to eavesdrop as the trainees talked about why they were doing this and what they hoped to get out of it, among other things.

Here's what I noticed: In both groups, I kept hearing a certain name: The name of Jesus.

In Bible study, we turned to Jesus' teachings as a way to understand or balance out some of Paul's words addressing marriage, sexuality, and eating rules. In Stephen Ministry, the trainees talked about Jesus as their model for loving, compassionate ministry (and more). In both meetings, we prayed in Jesus' name, as we usually do.

Jesus was just all over the place at Buck Mountain today. That is, of course, as it should be, and his pre-eminence among us is definitely asserted in every one of our worship services. But what was wonderfully refreshing to me was that on a normal weekday, even as the pandemic continues, I was able to take part in parish activities where I could hear -- in person! -- his name and his presence being consulted, called on, modeled, and praised.

*Continued on page 2*

**Buck Mountain is a Spirit-led, inclusive community of faith, living out God's unconditional love with each other, our community, and the world through worship, outreach, spiritual development, youth formation, and fellowship.**

*Continued from page 1*

What an incredible tonic to the soul after months of relative isolation!

Yes, we wore masks. Yes, we opened windows and made sure we were not right on top of each other. It's still a time when we have to be very careful, especially with the number of cases caused by the Delta variant peaking in our area. When possible, I still favor meeting outside on beautiful days like today, but that's not practical for groups using books and taking notes. So we made do while taking care. And it was just a wonderful thing to be together, focused on various aspects of following Jesus.

As an old hymn says, "There's something about that name." And as Bible teacher and author Beth Moore recently tweeted, "I just cannot recommend Jesus enough." May that name above all names be in your heart and on your lips today and every day. It's such a privilege to walk the way of Jesus with you.

*Grace, peace, and love,  
Connie*

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**Book Group Re-Launch!**  
Wednesday, October 6, 7:00 p.m.

Thanks to Ann Michel and previous book group conveners for their ministry! As Ann moves into the demanding role of Stephen Leader, she's handed over the book group reins to yours truly. I am really looking forward to "looks at books" with BMEC-ers again!

The first book we'll read is *The Ninth Hour* by Alice McDermott. There are many copies in the public library. Or you can support your local bookshop by purchasing it via this link:

<https://bookshop.org/books/the-ninth-hour-9781427289193/9781250192745>

Alice McDermott is a celebrated contemporary novelist who often treats Catholic themes and sets her novels in Catholic communities. (This one is Irish-Catholic Brooklyn in the early 20th century.) I could not put it down. I hope you'll find it similarly engaging. Don't be discouraged by the tragic opening scene; there are hard situations in the book but much that inspires.

We'll meet in person at church unless covid case numbers get much worse by October 6. Zoom is our fall-back option.

Hoping to share this wonderful book with you!

- Rev. Connie

## Senior Warden Update

While the gloomy shadow of the Pandemic persists, BMEC continues to adjust, flex, and innovate. To ensure worship is available to all parishioners and their unique comfort levels, our outstanding clergy have not only offered outdoor services, indoor services, and Zoom services, but they are now re-establishing a 5:00 p.m. bi-weekly Sunday Celtic Evening Prayer service. In addition, Deacon Courtenay is leading a weekly outdoor Morning Prayer service, and Reverend Jane is leading the Sacred Ground Event. I am extremely grateful that we have such a dedicated, thoughtful, and compassionate clergy team willing to meet all parishioners' needs. (For updates on all parish activities, please visit our calendar page on our website, [www.buckmountainchurch.org](http://www.buckmountainchurch.org))



In the spirit of renewal, you may have noticed that our outstanding Intern, Leah Wise, redesigned our website as part of her summer internship responsibilities. If you have not visited the website, I encourage you to check it out, it is fantastic!

Similarly, as our commitment to ensuring all parishioners and new members experience Buck Mountain as a wholly welcoming community, the Vestry has been engaging in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion conversations, which remain ongoing. One outcome of those conversations is the decision to remove gender specific restroom signs (e.g, Men's Restroom, Women's Restroom) in favor of gender-neutral signs. In the next few weeks, you will see our restroom signage replaced with all restrooms designated as Gender Neutral. We are fortunate that our restrooms have completely enclosed stalls foregoing the need for structural changes.

Many of our ministries are back in full swing, having adapted, flexed, and innovated while also ensuring COVID precautions are strictly observed. With the realization that the COVID virus and its mutations might be with us for some time, our ministries conduct meetings outside, or socially distanced, or virtually. Ministry volunteers exchange supplies or materials by dropping them off at the church while the recipient retrieves them later. I am grateful for the continued commitment and service of our ministry leadership and volunteers; without you Buck Mountain Church would not be the thriving community that it is, Thank You! If you are interested in volunteering on a ministry team, please let any one of the clergy or Vestry know of your interest. It takes a village, and several volunteers, to remain a thriving community.

As we head into the Fall, we will continue to adapt, flex, and innovate. Your ideas and suggestions remain a vital resource informing us how we can best meet your needs. Please reach out.

Peace to you,

PJ Knowlton  
Senior Warden  
BMEC Vestry

## **The Holy Spirit is at Work in Our Hearts...Always!**

How do our hearts not burst with gratitude every day for God's generous gift of the Holy Spirit? The eternal wisdom of the Holy Spirit guides our discernment when decisions have to be made and inspires the most loving and wisest responses in all situations. When we open our hearts to divine wisdom, and when we create time and space to hear the Spirit's call, we avail ourselves to clarity regarding God's hopes for us. The Spirit may be heard as we experience the beauty of nature or as we sit in our prayer space at home. It may be spoken through a trusted friend or through the providential occurrences that amaze us when something challenging works out for the best. The ways the Holy Spirit speaks to us are limitless. I am so grateful for that, because six people have felt the encouragement of the Holy Spirit to take a leap of faith and enter into the Stephen Ministry Training Course this fall.

Many in our congregation and in our community have struggled to stay positive and optimistic during this time of pandemic. Many have difficult life challenges on top of the pandemic's impacts, and the news around the nation and world has only added to their anxieties. It can be so easy to become disheartened, to withdraw, or to put all our energy into society's blame game.

At Buck Mountain, however, I have witnessed congregation members' resistance to that response. Many have, by their actions, their prayers, and their presence, said, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." They have come together to be Christ to one another. They have served as reminders of the God of love through their caring and concern for one another. They have encouraged one another to place their hope in God alone.

Where there is hope, hearts are open: fertile ground for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been hard at work in the hearts and minds of our congregation members. On September 23, Art Symmes, Silvia LaRue, Ann Eddins, Susan Shafarzek, Miles Fowler, and Kristine Montamat will begin the Stephen Ministry Training course. Current Stephen Ministers, Nina Siegrist and Ellen Welch, will also participate to support the new cohorts, and to share insights they have gained serving as Stephen Ministers.

If we have eyes to see, we can appreciate that this is a sweet miracle for our small community. God has seen the need for divine grace and healing during this challenging time, and a robust cohort of Stephen Ministry trainees has formed. Those who are hurting in our community will have caring Stephen Ministers available to meet them on a regular basis, while they process painful challenges they are experiencing.

Thank you, Lord, for your ever-present love and generosity toward this beloved community.

**- Ann Michel**

**Planned Giving Corner  
Expanding Our Ministries**

What's the difference between a restricted and unrestricted gift to the endowment fund?

These are the two ways bequests to our endowment fund can be made in a will.

For a restricted gift, the donor includes a specific purpose(s) to which the donated funds are be used. Once accepted into the endowment fund (after meeting our donor-designated fund policy), a portion of the gift – generally 3% to 5% per year -- will be distributed annually. For example, a \$25,000 gift for “altar flowers” will result in \$750 to \$1,250 distributed for altar flowers annually, in perpetuity!

All unrestricted gifts (which are simply gifts to the endowment fund without specific purposes indicated in the bequests) are pooled together. Annual distributions are then made to the mission-related areas described in our planned giving guideline documents. These areas are: capital improvements, outreach ministries and grants, seed money for new ministries, and special one-time projects. As an example, if the unrestricted portion of our endowment fund has a balance of \$100,000, then \$3,000 to \$5,000 will be distributed annually (again, in perpetuity). Each year, the vestry decides on the purpose(s) of the unrestricted gift distributions, within the mission-related areas described above.

**- The Planned Giving Committee**  
Gail Peters  
Janet Wiley  
Jim Foley  
Leslie Richard  
Mike Gibson



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**Food Pantry News**

The Food Pantry will be looking for more volunteers in the next two months, because I have been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Until I complete radiation treatments in mid November, Susan and I won't be participating. We are taking this action to reduce the chances of contracting COVID during my treatments.

This year, we will celebrate Thanksgiving on Thursday, November 25. The Food Pantry's Thanksgiving distribution will be on Tuesday, November 23. We plan to provide food to up to 80 families. We are looking for volunteers who would purchase (and be reimbursed by BMEC) the following items: frozen pumpkin pies, frozen cool whip or generic substitute, dinner rolls packaged in cylinder-like cans and sold in a store's dairy case, butter, gravy in a jar or can, cranberry sauce in a can, coffee, and stuffing in a box.

If you want to participate, contact Jim at [nagyjamesa@gmail.com](mailto:nagyjamesa@gmail.com) or Susan at [ssnagy52@gmail.com](mailto:ssnagy52@gmail.com) or 434-990-0313. I know a number of us are looking forward to Thanksgiving this year; many of us have experienced some significant challenges but are blessed and thankful for all we have received. It will be wonderful, fulfilling days, both our distribution event and Thanksgiving Day.

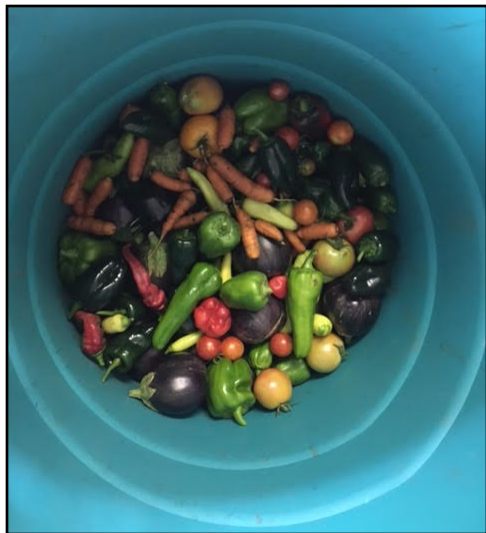
Our Food Pantry volunteers have done a great job getting us through the past 18 difficult months; we are very proud of them, and feel special and grateful to be members of their team.

**- Warmest regards,  
Jim and Susan Nagy**



## Food Pantry Garden Ministry!

The Food Pantry Garden has produced in such abundance, and it is all due to the incredible team of our waterers/weeders/harvesters! A big thank you to Janet Wiley, Robyn Fink, Kevin Sushka, Margaret Walter, Joy Matthews, Pat Carman, Dave Bagby, April Martin, and Janet and Tom Call for their extraordinary time, dedication, and faithfulness to nourishing our garden.



The garden has produced much abundance this season. In spring, we harvested sugar snap and green arrow peas, radishes, beets, kale, and spinach. In summer, we grew cucumbers, eggplant, green beans, varieties of peppers and tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, and melon! For the fall season, we recently planted lettuce, carrots, beets, and spinach seed with hopes that the seeds will flourish into beautiful plants.

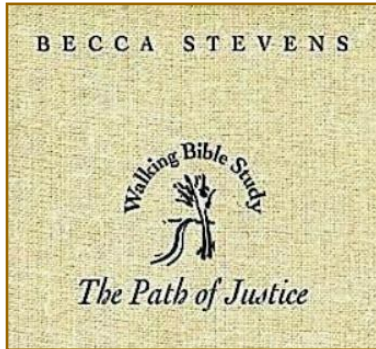
All produce grown has gone towards the Food Pantry distribution, and for the weeks in-between the Food Pantry, we have been placing a produce stand just outside the Parish Hall with a sign reading, "Free produce from our garden. Please enjoy a taste of God's goodness" with the hope that our community members passing by may also enjoy the gift of God's bounty. Fortunately, the produce stand has been a wonderful success!



The garden has been and continues to be such a gift, bringing such opportunity to marvel in, with great awe, the beauty and abundance God is providing.

- Courtenay Evans

**Walking Bible Study!**



Join Courtenay Evans for four Sundays in October (October 3, 10, 24, and 31), from 3:00 to 4:15 p.m., for a walking Bible study!

We will be using the book, *Walking Bible Study, the Path of Justice*, by Becca Stevens, Episcopal priest, as our guide. Photocopies of the text will be provided. We will meet in the Food Pantry Garden, so please remember a chair, water, sunscreen, and a hat! Please contact Courtenay with any questions, [cardoon2016@gmail.com](mailto:cardoon2016@gmail.com), or 434-249-4592.

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**Midweek Outdoor Morning Prayer Service**

Wednesdays, 7:30a.m.

Please join Courtenay on Wednesday mornings at 7:30 for an outdoor morning prayer service. The service should last no longer than 30 minutes and will be a time of prayer, pause, reflection, and thanksgiving amid the busyness of the week. Please remember to bring a chair!

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**Bi-Weekly Outdoor Celtic Evening Prayer Service**

Please join Courtenay Sunday evenings at 5:00 p.m. for an outdoor Celtic Evening Prayer service. This service will be bi-weekly (our next service is on October 3). Please bring your own chair!

## Poem of the Month

*O Sapientia*

by Malcolm Guite

I cannot think unless I have been thought,  
Nor can I speak unless I have been spoken.  
I cannot teach except as I am taught,  
Or break the bread except as I am broken.  
O Mind behind the mind through which I seek,  
O Light within the light by which I see,  
O Word beneath the words with which I speak,  
O founding, unfound Wisdom, finding me,  
O sounding Song whose depth is sounding me,  
O Memory of time, reminding me,  
My Ground of Being, always grounding me,  
My Maker's Bounding Line, defining me,  
Come, hidden Wisdom, come with all you bring,  
Come to me now, disguised as everything.



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