



The Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist

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The Rev. Thomas M. White, Rector

Autumn 2017

Dear Member or Friend of the St. John the Baptist Community,

A member of a church, who previously worshipped faithfully, stopped going. The priest scheduled a visit, was welcomed by the parishioner, and they sat down in front of a blazing fire. The priest made himself comfortable, but said nothing. After several awkward minutes, the priest walked to the fire, and with tongs picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it upon the hearth. He then returned to his chair and sat in silence, staring at the lone ember. Its flame slowly faded, then there was a brief glow, and finally it burned out.

Just before the priest was ready to leave, he again took the tongs and placed the cold ember back with the others. It quickly glowed once again, then burst into flame, burning with warmth and light. As the priest reached the front door, the parishioner bade him farewell and said, "Thank you, Father, for your visit, and especially for your fiery sermon. I'll be in church next Sunday!"

The longer I am in ministry, the more I realize that Christian faith is less a "me" thing and much more a "we" thing! This shouldn't be a surprise, for God in infinite wisdom and love, in that moment we were baptized, made us members, one of another, in the family of faith. God desires that we deepen and live out our faith in community. We need one another—to support, encourage, strengthen, provide for, and nurture each other's faith. Separated from Christian community, the fire of the Holy Spirit within us, like that lone ember, will soon grow dim and burn out.

Sorry to be a "wet blanket," but summer is over! Ugh! I love summer! Perhaps you have been away from church on vacation, maybe you have fallen away for various reasons, or have just gotten out of the habit. Fall is a perfect time to come home to the church and to reconnect with your faith community, the congregation of St. John the Baptist. Sincerely, we have missed you! "Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful...and abounding in steadfast love!" A warm welcome home awaits you!

With the end of summer, a host of church activities is getting underway. This **Sunday, September 10**, our precious kids return to us as **Sunday School resumes, 10 a.m.** I hope you will think of friends of your children or grandchildren, or other children in your family, or neighbors whom you might invite to be part of our Sunday School. For five Tuesdays in July and August, "God's Buddies," with 11 buddies attending, had a great time sharing dinner, playing games, singing songs, doing crafts, and learning about Jesus' story of the seeds and soils. In fact, "God's Buddies" was such a huge success that our children want to meet monthly during the school year for a reprise. Stay tuned for details!

Bible Study begins on Tuesday, September 19, 7 p.m., and the Tuesdays following. This faithful group of members will continue to study the Scripture readings appointed for the following Sunday. All are welcome!

Bring your beloved pets to our annual **Blessing of the Animals**, in connection with the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, on **Saturday, September 30, 11 a.m.**, in St. John the Baptist's beautiful garden. The **rain date** will be **October 7**.

Angela Neal, our beloved member, will speak to us on **Wednesday, October 11, at 7 p.m.**, about her experiences as a young girl in England during World War II. Be gripped by her recounting of the Blitz, air-raid shelters, blackouts, rationing, and more! Bring your friends!

Next week I will begin conducting several **workshops to prepare new Eucharistic Ministers** for their service as worship leaders at Mass. Then I will be doing the same for new **Acolytes**.

The **Organist Search Committee** has been very busy during the last several weeks. A position description has been finalized and ads placed in a variety of publications, soliciting resumes. The next step will be to interview candidates who apply and, finally, to make a recommendation to the vestry for approval.

In last Sunday's homily I spoke of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Louisiana, and now Irma, and begged us to give **monetary donations to Episcopal Relief and Development**. I also read from a letter by the Presiding Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, pleading that Episcopalians across the Church support the relief efforts, short and long-term, through our gifts to Episcopal Relief and Development. Place your check in an envelope marked "Episcopal Relief and Development," and place it in the offering plate **this Sunday or the Sundays following**. Those suffering are grateful to you!

In addition, as part of St. John the Baptist's Ministry of Outreach, we are receiving during September your offerings of **canned vegetables for the Milton Community Food Pantry**, as well as **school supplies** (200 composition books, packs of tissues, hand sanitizer and baby wipes) **for Milton's elementary school students**. Place your donations in the basket and in the box. The Savior thanks you!

Whew, I'm grateful for your perseverance in reading all this, yet I'm covering only a sampling of all the great ministries and activities happening at *your church*! I pray you, keep the Spirit's fire burning, come home to Christ!

In His Name,
Fr. Tom