

JANUARY 2006

THE ROCK



THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

In 2005 the Evangelism Commission, with the rector and vestry, began to reconsider the role of the *ROCK* in the life of St. Peter's. This was driven partly by editor fatigue, a phenomenon known to occur at least every seven years when gracious, expert volunteer labor has just about had it with the vagaries of chasing down submissions for monthly production. It was also driven by a recognition that all of St. Peter's publications, from the Sunday leaflet to the website to the *ROCK*, need to work in concert to meet the needs of the congregation and friends.

We are deeply grateful to Chris McLarty (aka St. Peter's design angel) for her long years of service as editor of the *ROCK*, and we hope to be able to count on her in future as the *ROCK* continues to evolve; her work will in any case continue to grace all manner of St. Peter's publications, from posters to bookmarks.

In the overall communications scheme we envision, the Sunday leaflet will contain perishable, time-sensitive information, such as deadlines and upcoming events. Volunteers are needed every Thursday afternoon to help Deb Watson proofread, copy, and fold the leaflets and mail copies to shut-ins and others (call Marty or Deborah if you can help!).

A church calendar will make its appearance as a separate instrument rather than be tucked into the *ROCK*. We are still searching for a format that will present pertinent information in a readable, usable form, so if you know of appropriate software or mechanical format, contact a member of the Evangelism Commission.

The present issue of the *ROCK* represents our first step toward retooling the church newsletter as we consider the changing needs of the congregation. We envision the *ROCK* as a seasonal rather than a monthly publication. With less frequent publication, it can contain more substantive, reflective pieces rather than the workaday pieces of upcoming events and immediate news items. In this issue, the faith journey by Dorothy Nyman and the book review by Sandra Peterson chart the course the *ROCK* will take over the next months.

As we all work to reenvision the *ROCK* for our third-millennium church, please think about your own faith story and how you might contribute to St. Peter's growing story of faith, justice, and works.

The Evangelism Commission: Thom Buescher (354.0608), Deborah Oliver (236.8503), Marty Rogers (236.8922), and Jim Bowditch (pro tempore, 236.2272)

Geologic evolution: resculpting the ROCK

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Call to Annual Meeting

**SUNDAY, 29 JANUARY
2006, 10:00 AM**

**ONE SERVICE OF HOLY
EUCCHARIST, 9:00 AM**

WARRANT: By this warrant, notice is given that St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Rockland, Maine, will meet for its Annual Parish Meeting following a 9:00 AM celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

1. To review reports of the parish ministry and mission in 2005;
2. To elect such vestry members and officers as are needed;
3. To review and commit ourselves to the parish budget for 2006, as adopted and presented by the vestry;
4. To treat such other business as may be appropriate and needed;
5. To pray that the Holy Spirit inspire, revive, and direct all our doings as Christ's Body in this place at this time.

Child Care is available.

—Sarah E. Reynolds, Clerk of the Parish

FROM THE RECTOR: This pattern has seemed to make it possible for most of us to participate, so this year it will be continued: a single service at 9 AM followed by the meeting in the parish hall at 10 AM.

The business before the gathering is vital to the ongoing life of our congregation: election of vestry members and delegates to the diocesan convention in October, review of the 2006 budget for our ministries and sharing information and reports about various parts of our life together. At least two unique items will appear on our agenda this year: a proposal to finish off our outstanding capital campaign and building loan obligations, and a description of the outreach ministry being developed to serve youth in our center city location.

Please make the commitment this year to join brothers and sisters in Christ in devoted to the calling we share as Christ's people in St. Peter's, Rockland.

Nominating Committee report

The nominating committee for the 2006 vestry, Tom Putnam, Pat Snow, and Lucia Elder, report that at the 29 January annual meeting they will offer two nominations for three-year terms to the vestry. Elizabeth Biddle and Ferolyn Curtis have agreed to stand for election.

Delegates and alternate delegates to the 2006 diocesan convention have not yet been lined up.

One three-year term on the vestry also remains to be filled.

Please contact Tom (594.2994), Pat (594.8643), or Lucia (785.2502) if you are interested in serving on the vestry; nominations can also be made from the floor at the annual meeting on 29 January.

BOOK REVIEW

Heresy, or more “good news”?

Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas, Elaine Pagels (paper, Vintage Books, 2004; jacketed cloth, Random House, 2003; 272 pp).

Reviewed by Sandra Peterson

History, scholarship, and faith combine in Elaine Pagels’s examination of early Christian thought in *Beyond Belief*. The book was read and discussed by the inquirers’ groups that met at St. Peter’s in spring 2005.

Pagels is a historian of religion and author of several award-winning and critically acclaimed books, including *The Gnostic Gospels*, which won both the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Pagels opens *Beyond Belief* with her personal story of finding community in an Episcopal church while she is facing the fatal illness of her young son. Her journey through that painful period in her life also adds a new dimension to her faith and gives her a new church family that helps sustain her in her grief.

Along with other scholars, Pagels has studied, edited, and annotated some of the early Christian writings discovered near Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945. In *Beyond Belief*, she revisits her research, tracing the known history of the diverse and often competitive early Christian groups and looking at that history through the lens of the newly discovered writings.

The Gospel of Thomas, one of these noncanonical texts, is examined and compared to the New Testament Gospel of John, highlighting the similarities as well as the differences. “Many Christians today who read the Gospel of Thomas assume at first that it is simply wrong and deservedly called heretical,” she points out. In her view, however, careful consideration of such writings as forms of Christian teaching could lead to reassessment of belief, perhaps with the discovery that early texts hold keys to ideas we do not yet fully understand—ideas that could enhance and enrich our Christian traditions.

Pagels sketches Christian beginnings through the fourth century and makes a strong case for continuing discussion of the differing beliefs that characterized the early Christian groups. She holds the view that faith can accommodate diverse viewpoints and that spiritual inquiry is a primary source of inspiration. Many of us would most likely agree that the ability to respect beliefs other than our own is paramount in relating to others, whether they be friends or neighbors or members of other cultures who share our home on earth.



I am sure that I am guilty of all kinds of sloppy inaccuracies in the assertion I’m about to make, but I dare do it anyway: the only thing that keeps me from thinking that I am actually in the presence of Teresa of Ávila when I am with Megan Don is that Megan is speaking English: Teresa would be speaking Spanish. And, of course, yes, Teresa would be just under five hundred years old and Megan clearly is younger—and alive, walking this earth, brightening it with each step.

We have been blessed by Megan Don’s coming into our part of Maine this past fall and speedily finding her way into many places where she could be with lots of different people. Thankfully, St. Peter’s has been one of these places. We were blessed to be the place where Megan guided gatherings on five Sunday mornings and a midweek evening during the Advent season.



WINDOW OF THE SPIRIT *views into the souls of St. Peter’s*

Megan Don and Teresa of Ávila

By the Rev. Ralph Moore



Ministry in everyday life

By Dorothy Nyman

(Condensed from Dorothy's
August 2005 presentation at the
Unitarian Universalist Church, Rockland)

These were times of guided meditation, teaching, sharing, and on many occasions receiving rich gifts of contemplation.

Megan Don is originally from New Zealand, but she is clearly a citizen of the world, especially the world of the mystics. She has been a member of a contemplative religious community. She spent time in comparative religion and psychoanalytic studies at La Trobe University, Melbourne. In 2001 she lived in Ávila, Spain, doing research for her book on St. Teresa.

Many of her sharings are available in her wonderful book, *Falling into the Arms of God: Meditations with Teresa of Avila* (New World Library, 2005, 239 pp). The pattern of this remarkable work comes from Teresa's own masterpiece, *The Interior Castle*, a process of moving through seven dwellings, a journey in which one lives moments in Teresa's life and meditation and finds a corresponding place in one's own journey that Teresa can touch with precision and grace. I have found this book to be awesome in its relevance to my own spiritual comings and goings. It is a prayer companion, tender, challenging, and grace filled.

Megan Don is still with us in the Midcoast area and is available as a leader of all sorts of gatherings, workshops, and retreats. She can be reached through St. Peter's.



When I tell people I've completed the Education for Ministry (EFM) course, many respond with "What? Are you going to be a minister?" Clearly for them the word *minister* carries a heavy and solemn tone appropriate to Garrison Keillor's fictional Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility Church in Lake Wobegon—but it doesn't match my view.

I have always yearned for humor and fun and a "lightness of being" in most situations. So people speaking of "ministering to the poor" or "serving mankind" used to make me feel as if a heavy object were pressing me down. Thinking about all the troubles in the world and suffering animals and people made me feel powerless and sad, and a little guilty for not being able to fix everything. Compassion burnout makes many of us tune out.

My work for many years as a mental-health professional was a kind of ministry, yet its satisfaction was mainly on an intellectual and emotional level. Toward the end of my career I began to realize that my clients and I were also connecting on a spiritual level. Undefined and random moments in the course of helping others cope with difficulty or even tragedy would surprise me with their power and joy.

Those moments of clarity and connectedness—also in my personal life—made me more aware of spiritual nudges, flashes of understanding, and a deepening sense of inner peace. In the last few years I sought and found in St. Peter's a compatible religious community, which led me to EFM and a long-avoided study of the Bible and Christian theology. Amazingly, EFM was not boring or distressingly "religious" but life enhancing. EFM does not present a set of answers—instead, it offers me a way to organize and use what I already know. It allows me to continue to question everything while I build a foundation of deeper faith. I am growing and changing in ways I recognize as good.

One of the most remarkable changes is the breadth of my view of "ministry." The French philosopher, Pierre de Chardin, said, "We are not physical beings having a spiritual experience, but rather we are spiritual beings having a physical experience."

For me that statement sums up my core belief about the meaning of existence. I believe I am here for a reason. And the clue to that reason is to be found in my unique configuration of abilities and experiences. I walk or

stumble on the path of my life, and my reason is revealed as I encounter pain and loss, joy and achievement. Now, after gathering what I have learned so far in nearly 75 years, I have a long view that reveals patterns. Contemplation of the natural world, the mysteries of science, and the miracle of life and love itself all evoke my gratitude. This gratitude is so integrated in my being that I am compelled to give something back to the world. I must give back compassion, humor, and mindfulness. My words and actions must be in harmony with nature and nourishing to the minds and spirits of my brothers and sisters. They must communicate my conviction that we can overcome our personal dragons and live joyfully.

This is my personal ministry in everyday life. It is not an external, isolated action; not charity or patronage; not simply a reaction to crises, but rather a constant way of thinking and being and doing—not just toward others, but also toward myself, for I must also be mindful of my own physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Respond to the smallest task with an attitude of willingness. Share my book with someone hungry for reading. Call a desolate elder. Write persuasively to that journalist who fosters fear. Generate beauty through my music, poetry, and gardening. All of these ministries are my part in the creation of heaven on Earth.

However exhausting my idea of ministry sounds, it isn't: paradoxically, giving is energizing. If we do things that exhaust us and drain us of joy and creativity, we have probably wandered off our path. We can vigorously, passionately engage in our sacred work only when we honor and nourish ourselves—just like putting on our own oxygen mask before trying to assist another passenger in an airplane emergency.

Today I strive to do everything mindfully, with a prayerful heart. Mindful of the origin of my very being in the mind of divine love. To be carried, humbled, and informed by that divine love. And when I minister to myself, my garden, my brothers and sisters, and my pets in this frame of mind, I feel complete. All elements of my life—physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual—are integrated. My acknowledgment of paradox and opposites—joy/suffering, achievement/failure, life/death—allows me to embrace this human experience fully.

Living in divine love, giving from that love—whether we name it God, Allah, the Christ Spirit, Buddha, or simply right-mindedness—thinking and acting from this powerful, positive place makes the smallest everyday exchange between me and the “other” purposeful and joyful. It offers a new dimension for living my ministry in everyday life.

Matthew's words about following Jesus' example of everyday ministry is suddenly a livable mantra: “His yoke is easy and His burden is light.”



ON THE HORIZON *Upcoming events*



Photo from Church of Ireland church in Kinsale, Ireland; courtesy of Marty Rogers.

Sail around Ireland, Scotland, and Norway with the Rogers

Yes, we've finally gotten Paul and Marty Rogers to bring home to St. Peter's their slide presentation of their sail in northwestern Europe. Join us in the parish hall on Sunday, 26 February, at 5:30 PM for light dessert and coffee, gorgeous slides, and entertaining commentary. Donations to Episcopal Relief and Development welcome but not imperative: come for the fellowship and the sheer enjoyment of hearing about the Rogers' adventures aboard Canty, their J/42.

Pancake Luncheon

The ECW's (Episcopal Church Women's) major annual fund-raising event is the Pancake Luncheon on Shrove Tuesday. This year that date is 28 February, and as usual the lunch will be from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM. All church members—men and women alike—are invited to assist. Please save the date and join the fun. Bring lots of friends. Call Marilyn Smith at 594.4039 for more information or to offer your good help.

Megan Don presents

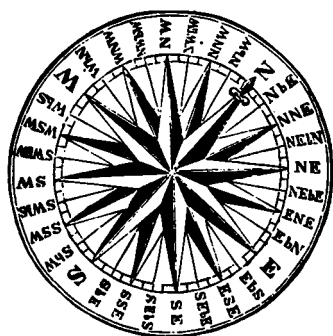
Mystical Graces March Retreat

Through Western and Eastern mystic traditions, New Zealand teacher and author Megan Don will lead a retreat at St. Peter's exploring discernment of the spirit through perceived obstacles in our lives, unfolding into grace amidst difficulty.

Participants will enter into contemplative meditation, movement, Taizé, and Sufi chants, and a special Sunday ritual and service. This nonresidential retreat will be held 10–12 March.

For an information and registration packet, please send a SASE to Mystical Graces, P.O. Box 437, Rockland ME 04841, e-mail stevedonos@yahoo.com, or telephone 207-230-0232.

Also visit www.mysticpeace.com.



WAYPOINTS *Activities and notices on our journey together*

Special thanks to Malcolm and Bob

Malcolm Brooks has met with whoever might arrive on Sundays at 10:00 AM to learn new music and be singers in our services. This has been an exciting experience for all involved. Many special thanks to Malcolm and those brave souls. We're all invited—and, we're all encouraged to let Malcolm have our input: suggestions of all kinds gladly accepted.

Bob Earle has continued to make a failing organ sound like a fine instrument. Especially grateful are we who participated in the later Christmas Eve service: Michael Reavey and Jake Thomas made their trumpets blister with praise, and John Adams Bird's bass voice carried wonder to us in song. Thanks to Bob for his careful work and leadership.

Pledging (and it's got nothing to do with fraternities and sororities)

As of 4 January 2006, our stewardship commitments to the operational support of the parish ministry provide for 91 percent of the budgeted income we need to find from pledges for 2006 expenses. In terms of dollars and numbers, here's what it looks like: 89 pledges make a total of \$118,892. The ideal goal for this year is \$130,000. It would be a huge relief as well as a fantastic blessing to discover during these next few days pledges made by the 20 to 30 members we have not yet heard from and find that gap of less than \$12,000 filled!

Youth and adult confirmation groups

The rector has been meeting with seven young people as a confirmation group. Their work will continue through the spring. There can be room for others who still might wish to join. Call Ralph at church right away.

It's time to gather back together those adults who began study of two challenging books last year in a process to complete two more units this spring. The rector is about to invite them to a new meeting, and in this group, also, there can be spaces for others who would like to share this learning process. Call Ralph at church right away.

When is Ash Wednesday this year?

March 1. The reason we can't easily pin this down each year is that, although Christmas is a fixed feast (25 December), Easter is a movable feast (the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, March 21). As the moon moves around its course, so does our liturgical calendar, and we either lengthen or shorten the Epiphany season in order to make sure that just the right number of Sundays are counted after Christmas so that we have a full Lenten season that precedes Easter.

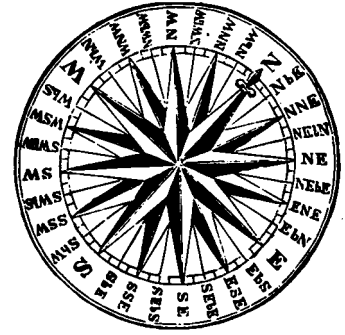
"What is a full Lenten season?" one might ask. It's a period of forty days, beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding on the Eve of Easter, that we call a period of spiritual fasting and special devotions (Sundays aren't counted in this calculation because they are always considered feast days). Confusing and confounding? Yes—but all good puzzles are challenging.

Children everywhere!

We are all cheered by the presence of children and young people in the ministry we share. Sunday mornings are times of happy gatherings. How thankful we are for those who guide and work with the younger members of our congregation.

Valerie Wells, our coordinator, is simply awesome—the talent and spirit and skill she brings! What a blessing she is! And we're also thankful for the wonderful companionship of Doree Fisher, Pat Snow, Elizabeth Biddle, Bridget Buck, and Linda Mann; they've devoted time and energy to forming the weekly gatherings. Also, many willing folks take care of children during the second service on Sundays.

And while we're at it—wasn't the Family Christmas Eve service just something else this year? Good drama, music, and extremely joyful joy (redundancy noted). The cast of thousands and Valerie really gave us a wonderfully gifted uplift as well as an uplifting gift.



WAYPOINTS

PARISH RECORD

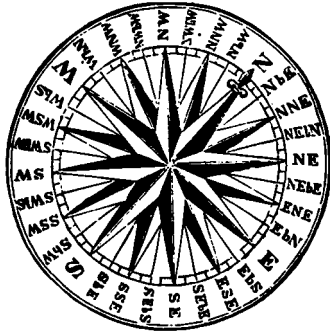
Holy Baptism

8 October 2005
Tucker VanVleck Edwards,
born 14 September 2003
to Peter Edwards and Anne Schultze

Christian Burial

Joanne Horne Estes, age 79
Departed this life 8 November 2005

Harold D. Mann, age 62
Departed this life 23 November 2005



WAYPOINTS

Foyer groups

The third season for foyer groups began October 23 with a potluck supper in the parish hall. It was a feast of delicious food and fellowship. People were mixed into new groups, with new people joining the activity and others taking a year off due to complicated schedules. Fifty-one people are participating this term.

The universal activity in foyer groups is socializing and getting acquainted with the six to eight other members of their group. And usually some food too. A few groups with lots of energy have gone bowling or undertaken a small task for St. Peter's. Everyone seems to learn something new, about the world and even about people they already know pretty well. Anyone who would like to join a group at anytime during the year, please contact Marty Rogers at 236-8922 or mlr@midcoast.com. All the groups are flexible, and we would love to have you.

Summary of December vestry meeting

The vestry met on Thursday, 8 December 2005, at 7 pm.

Members Present: the Rev. Ralph Moore, Jim Bowditch, George Jones, Joanne Murphy, Linda Peterson, the Rev. Isabel Polk, Sarah Reynolds, Joanne Smith, and Harold Van Lonkhuyzen. Members Absent: John Bird, Kay Brown, Doug Curtis, Jim Curtis, Bruce Davis, Mac Deford, and Pat Snow.

The next meeting is Thursday, January 12, 7 pm.

There being no quorum, it was agreed to receive reports but take no actions. The November minutes were discussed and assented to.

Jim Bowditch reported for the Stewardship Commission that pledges for 2006 are up to \$102,000, which puts us ahead of the same time last year.

For the Evangelism Commission, Jim reported that no one is on board as new editor of the Rock. Ralph offered to gather the interested parties for a meeting.

Ralph and Jim went over the treasurer's report and told the vestry that John and Mary Alice Bird will run the top-off campaign between April and June of 2006.

We reviewed the proposed budget for 2006. It was reported that the church is looking into buying out its copier contract and purchasing a copier outright.

Since there was not a quorum, we did not vote on the budget.

Sarah Reynolds said she would make some more calls to find a place for the vestry retreat Feb. 24-25. Jim will talk to Janet Blakely about leading the retreat.

A prayer-reflection from the Iona Community lies before me as a silent invitation into the Epiphany season:

For millennia the light of the stars has traveled. For a thousand years the stone St. Martin's Cross on Iona has withstood the winds. For a hundred years of war, wave has followed wave while people walking in darkness have longed for peace. But before our time, before all time: in the beginning, the Word. In this moment the snowflake, a perfect crystal, is formed and falls. In this moment the snowdrop, in the dark earth, waits for the returning sun. In this moment a child is born, a life begins, blooms. . . . And in this time, our time, God's time: in each beginning, the Word.

From the Rector



I would not be able to move forward in my life and my work if, at some moment each day, I did not expose myself to meditations, poems, prayers, and scriptures that reminded me that I live in God's time, not my time. When we pray, "all things come of Thee, O Lord," time is the first "thing" on a long list of wonderful gifts given to us. We live in God's time, which is outside of and different from the time of our clocks and calendars. We live in God's time, which cannot be manipulated, rushed, or slowed down. To experience life in God's time is to be at prayer, to feel what is meant when we pray that "Christ dwell in us and we in him," to know profoundly that in each beginning is the Word.

Well, the calendar calls us to our parish Annual Meeting on a Sunday counted out as 29 of a month called January in a year called 2006 at an hour called 10 of the clock in the morning. And we're caught in the paradox: we live in our time as we live in God's time. That saying about the only two certainties being death and taxes is quite misleading. Taxes are due April 15—quite certain in terms of human time; death (life) happens with no certainty at all in the eternity that is God's time. Can an annual meeting be an experience of this wonderful paradox?

It is my prayer and my hope and my commitment that this happen in 2006. I'm not sure how, but why don't we all plan to be together on January 29 for prayer and Eucharist at 9:00 AM and annual meeting following at 10:00 and make it happen—or, better put, let it happen?

Love in Christ,

Ralph

St. Peter's Episcopal Church seeks to serve God's mission of restoring all people to unity with him. We open wide our doors and say, in the name of Jesus Christ, "Welcome."

Worship

Sunday 8:00 and 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist
Wednesday 7:00 AM Taizé Holy Eucharist

Office hours

Tuesday–Thursday 8 AM to 4 PM

The Rt. Rev. Chilton R. Knudsen, Bishop of Maine
The Rev. Ralph Moore, Rector
(home 596-0421, rector@stpetersrockland.org)
The Rev. Isabel Polk, Deacon
(home 596-0003; deacon@stpetersrockland.org)
Deborah Watson, Administrative Secretary
Robert Earle, Organist
Malcolm Brooks, Composer and Choir Director
Valerie Wells, Director of Christian Education

Officers

Senior Wardens
John Bird 596-6276
Jim Bowditch 236-2272
JoAnne Murphy, Junior Warden, 594-4023
Mac Deford, Treasurer
Jake Thomas, Assistant Treasurer
Sarah Reynolds, Clerk

Vestry members

Katherine Brown, Douglas Curtis Sr.,
Jim Curtis, Bruce Davis, George Jones,
Linda Peterson, Joanne Smith,
Pat Snow, Harold van Lonkhuyzen

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THE ROCK

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