



# ST. AIDAN'S STAG & STAFF

*St. Aidan's mission: To grow as a faith family so that everyone will experience God's love.*

APRIL 2021 VOLUME XXVI NUMBER 4



**Intrepid priest!**



**Intrepid parishioners!**

**We are hearty folk!**

## A prayer at home

*The doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked. (John 20.19)*

Ever present God,  
be with us in our isolation,  
be close to us in our distancing,  
be healing in our sickness,  
be joy in our sadness,  
be light in our darkness,  
be wisdom in our confusion,  
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,  
that when the doors reopen  
we may with the zeal of Pentecost  
inhabit our communities  
and speak of your goodness  
to an emerging world.  
For Jesus' sake.

**Amen.**



### PALM SUNDAY EUCHARIST March 28

9:30 a.m. with Palms and the Passion Reading

**In church with 25% capacity. Please sign up online, through ENews or the Worship Reminder.**

### MAUNDY THURSDAY April 1

6:30 p.m.

SEDER DINNER via Zoom 6:30 p.m.

Make your preparations for this Seder Dinner in your home. Find the link to the Seder Meal Bulletin with preparation suggestions in the E-News.

### GOOD FRIDAY TENEBRAE Candlelight Service April 2

6:30 p.m.

**In church with 25% capacity. Please sign up online, through ENews or the Worship Reminder.**

### ONLINE EASTER VIGIL April 3

7:00 p.m.

Find link to this service on St. Aidan's E-News  
All Saints Cathedral  
Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee

### EASTER DAY SUNDAY EUCHARISTS April 4

**8 am AND 10 AM**

**In church with 25% capacity. Please sign up online, through ENews or the Worship Reminder.**

*"Do not abandon yourselves to despair.  
We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song."*

~ Pope John Paul II



## People in the Parish

**Aimee Hennings** is a woman going places.

If it's a normal day she is going to work since she has three part-time jobs, including her newest one as an administrative assistant at St. Aidan's.

"I love it," Aimee said of working Wednesdays and Fridays at church with Pastor Esther Kramer. "I really enjoy working with Esther. She is absolutely amazing. It's a good feeling and I like the work."

Aimee also works at Snap Fitness in Hartford and at Cynosure, an insurance company based in Menomonee Falls.

She heard about the St. Aidan's opening from Micki Hoffmann and came in for an interview with Pastor Esther and senior warden Donna Dinco. "Very informal," Aimee said. "It was very personable, and they just believed everything I said. And I wasn't lying. They actually took me at face value and I was like, 'Holy smokes. That's a lot of trust to give somebody.' It was a little bit refreshing." Aimee started the church job in December of last year and immediately showed her organizational and computer skills. She has met only a few church members due to the pandemic but is looking forward to getting to know more people in the next few months.



Aimee and her husband Brian have lived in Hartford since 2009, when they moved from New Berlin and bought a four-bedroom house to accommodate a growing family. Cody, 17, is a junior at Hartford High School while Kara, 14, and Elsa, 12, attend Erin School. Kara is in eighth grade and Elsa in sixth. "They honestly go above and beyond, and my kids are flourishing there," Aimee said of the girls transferring to Erin School. Kara will move on to the high school in the fall. Also part of the family is a 7-year-old springer spaniel named Rollo.

Aimee grew up in Fall Creek in the western part of the state and attended UW-Eau Claire, where she studied geology and met her future husband. "To me he was just kind of this smelly hippie," Aimee said. "But he was a nice guy." Their romance didn't start until later at Idaho State University. "When he came to Idaho he kept trying to contact me, because he kind of knew me," Aimee said. "He came over and he had this little springer spaniel with him, and I was like, 'Aww.' And he was clean. He had showered."

The couple got married in 2002 after returning to Wisconsin. Brian is a hydrogeologist and works for Ramboll, a Denmark-based firm with an office in Milwaukee. But in the past year Brian has done much of his work from home, converting a bedroom into an office.

When the Hennings family does have a chance to get away, it spends good times at a family cottage near St. Germain. Aimee said it was great to have a special place to land during the pandemic and to enjoy Fawn Lake. "Last year we were there a lot, maybe about half the summer," she said. "We didn't go anywhere other than the grocery store a couple times. I felt relief to be able to get out on the water and watch the birds or whatever. 'There's no wi-fi and the kids love it. We do have a TV up there, but the wind has got to be blowing a certain way. It's like, 'This is what I grew up with!'"

**Charles Gardner**, Senior Staff Writer

**ST. AIDAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**



Dear Friends,

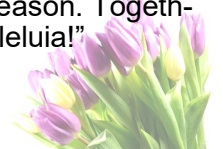
For Christians, Easter is the most important feast of the church year. It is the day of the resurrection of our Lord! From Easter day to the Sunday before Pentecost (May 16), we celebrate new life in Christ. The season of Easter provides 50 days of rejoicing and most of us, especially this year, are more than glad to fully participate in the paschal celebration.

We welcome back into our liturgy our shouts of "Alleluia, alleluia" at the dismissal after eucharist. We can omit the Confession of Sin, and in some churches, everyone stands for the part of the liturgy during which we are accustomed to kneeling. During the 50 days, we will pray for those who will be baptized, confirmed, and received into the church, and I'll talk even more about the meaning of living the new life of the resurrection! Each Sunday in the Easter season, we'll read a lesson from the Acts of the Apostles, and you'll hear the return of the Gloria in Excelsis at the eucharist. You might notice symbols of the resurrection during our church services, including our beautiful handmade white vestments and white altar linens.

We have experienced a very long season of a global pandemic, creating in us feelings of grief, anxiety, and uncertainty. Perhaps the signs of new life around us in this Wisconsin spring will, most profoundly this year, refresh our spirits and fill our hearts with Easter joy.

I know that the St. Aidan's community is ready to embrace each day of a resurrected life by remaining connected with members of the church, extending hospitality to community members, engaging in the emerging types of worship that aim to spiritually feed our souls, supporting the work of the vestry, and praising God with our whole heart. We have so much to celebrate this Easter season. Together, let us say, "Alleluia, alleluia!"

In the risen Christ,  
**Esther +**



**STAG & STAFF**





## Vestry Retreat: Moving Forward!

They're back ....

We have it on good authority that spring is just around the corner as *our resident* Sand Hill cranes paid us a visit this week -- stately and proudly promenading through the front yard, like it belonged to them. Such is the migratory patterns of many of our harbingers of spring. Their instinct assures them this is where they belong for the next 7 months.

In his essay "March," Aldo Leopold famously wrote: "One swallow does not make a summer, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of a March thaw, is the spring." Forty some years ago, Sand Hill cranes may not have been the harbinger of spring in Wisconsin that they are today; however, in northern Minnesota where I grew up, people will still be waiting for the geese to return in April. With spring we know the tide is turning, and well it should as the last 12 months have been, well, a *challenging* journey. Without the natural instinct of our friends the Sand Hill cranes, we continue our journey; sometimes with trepidation and sometimes with confidence. I am sure this might be the case on Easter Sunday.

Easter will feel different. It will be our first Sunday back in over a year, and although it will not be inside, it will be 'in person' on the patio, masked and distanced. Many will be anxious or cautious, others excited. Even with being vaccinated, I remain cautious; yet, excited, to provide and support worship service(s) that safely lead to inside, in-person services. Easter will be the first step of that new journey.

Two weeks ago the vestry met to discern a course for the next 6-12 months and to prioritize goals that could mark our progress. The goals are:

***Increase contacts and connections with the community by creating a place to belong.***

*How do we provide a welcome space for others; for groups to meet safely, for observing diverse traditions, for celebrations?*

***Focus on youth formation leading to a lifetime of faith.***

*How do we finish confirmation class for those ready to be confirmed; how do we involve youth in worship; or gather a new confirmation class or coordinate activities for youth?*

***Coordinate "Faith in 3D," to re-gather and welcome each other and new people to church.***

*How do we integrate worship in person, inside the church or outside and online; how do we re-gather for activities; how do we re-energize adult formation?*

Vestry members: Amanda Mercado, Eileen Schmidt, Brian Schrunk, Micki Hoffman, Sandy Koeller, Donna Dinco and Pastor Esther

In thinking about these goals, I reviewed some notes from a favorite book, *Those Episkopols\**, by the Rev. Dr. Dennis Maynard. Maynard describes Sacramental piety or allegiances in the church as a piety that believes we are on a journey. He describes this journey as the work of the church. This time when I read, "we are on a journey....a spiritual journey...we cannot live that journey in isolation so we join with others on this journey in a common community – the Church," I thought about the past 12 months and our journey as a faith community and began to feel more comfortable with that journey. The goals set by the vestry will continue to keep us renewed and focused on our mission 'to grow as a faith family so that everyone will experience God's love.'

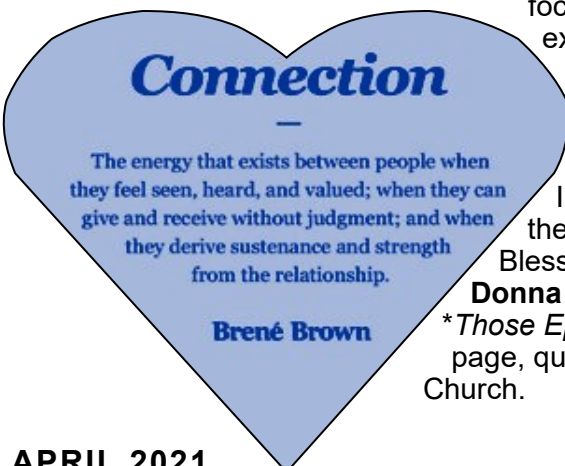
My thoughts then brought me full circle to Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer:  
*God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.*

I am looking forward to renewal of worship, re-gathering in-person, and the fellowship of our faith community.

Blessings,

**Donna Dinco**

*\*Those Episkopols*, by The Rev. Dr. Dennis Maynard. This is a short, 70 page, question and answer format from the perspective of the Episcopal Church.



## News from Newala -- Medical Clinic in danger of being closed

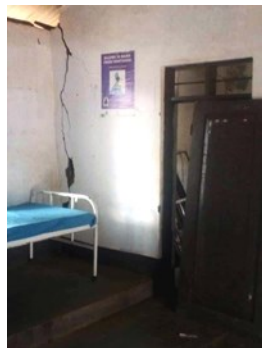


Pictured is the medical dispensary in the village of Luatala in the Diocese of Newala, which is located in Tanzania in East Africa. Newala has been the companion diocese of the Diocese of Milwaukee for over

a decade. Visits between the two diocese have taken place over the years but contact has been difficult during the pandemic. And now we have learned that the clinic in Luatala, which sees some 1,300 patients annually, is urgently threatened with closure by the government health ministry because of its dilapidated state.

St. Raphael's Dispensary opened in 1950. It is approximately 30km (19 miles) from Newala. That may not seem like much but keep in mind that few people have cars or access to them and buses are also few. Patients are seen for common cuts and infections, vaccinations, treatment for malaria, diarrhea, urinary track infections, and other complaints. There is also a Reproductive Health Clinic for problems during pregnancy.

There are presently four workers at the clinic but staff may need to be reduced due to lack of funds. Two persons have laboratory training and there is a watchman. There are regular visits from a doctor and nurse.



It is hoped that sufficient funds can be raised in the Diocese of Milwaukee to assist this clinic in our Companion Diocese to remain open and with sufficient staff to serve the needs of the many local people who depend on it.

Sr. Debora, CMM, the new Medical Secretary of the Newala Diocese, has started re-building work on the medical clinic but it will not advance without additional funding.

Please make checks payable to  
**The Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee**  
and mail to

**804 East Juneau Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53202**

I will be happy to provide more information to those who have questions; I may best be reached at

**niradtke@wi.rr.com**

**Neil Radtke  
Companion Diocese Committee**

**ST. AIDAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**



## Virtual Sunday School

**Sandi Lenz** provided the materials for "Resurrection Eggs" to the Sunday School children to help them understand Holy Week.



## Good News!

**Moran Drive-by Shower  
and Baby!**

The shower for Molly and Zach Mertens was hosted at St. Aidan's -- very creatively!



Aurelia Rose Mertens was born on February 21. The proud grandparents are **Mary and Mike Moran**. Our congratulations!



**STAG & STAFF**



# St. Aidan's Reader Schedule



APRIL	READER	Eucharist Live
4	Bert Mendoza	X
11	J.P. Schrunk	
18	Lily Mercado	
25	M. Weber	X



MAY	READER	Eucharist Live
2	M. Schmidt	X
9	B. Mendoza	
16	M. Hoffmann	X
23	Brian Schrunk	X
30	Alice Pollock	X

If you cannot serve your appointed time, please arrange for a substitute. Thank you.  
Any **permanent** changes to the schedule should be reported to  
**Gail Hefti** at [gail.hefti@gmail.com](mailto:gail.hefti@gmail.com) or 920-740-3997.

## Up for a challenge?

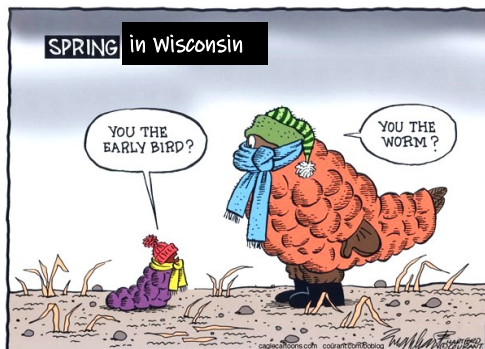
Combat that brain-fog we've all experienced in 2020 with good reading and better discussion! Education for Ministry [EfM] is starting up again face-to-face in the fall. **YOU** are invited to join the seminar. According to the EfM literature:

*EfM is a four-year course of study in theological bible study and reflection for lay persons. The EfM program is administered through the School of Theology at The University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.*

St. Aidan's folks have found that while the description is true, it doesn't reflect the struggles, the joy, and the camaraderie that is EfM. We wrestle with Scripture, listen to new ideas and eureka! moments, as well as worries from each other -- most importantly we laugh!

Each class stands alone -- you don't have to commit to anything beyond a single "school year." There is a fee for the course, and scholarships are available. It's going to be a great class!

Call or email Micki Hoffmann for more information.  
[mphoffmann70@gmail.com](mailto:mphoffmann70@gmail.com) or 262-673=2903



## LAUGHTER—GOOD FOR THE HEART AND SOUL

While laughter is hardly a cure-all, research has shown that positive emotions can have an impact on your health. A good laugh can help relieve stress and muscle tension. Many of us go through our daily lives stressed out because we forget to give ourselves time to just have fun. When you need a little comic relief, try a funny movie or read a humorous book. Try to see the humor in everyday events. You'll be laughing before you know it!

This is not medical advice. Always consult your doctor first.



"WE ARE  
THE  
Episcopal BRANCH  
OF  
THE Jesus movement"  
—Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

How to reach us —

Church Mailing Address:

670 E. Monroe Avenue  
Hartford, WI 53027

Church Office E-mail:

secretary@staidans-hartford.org

Church Website: [www.staidans-hartford.org](http://www.staidans-hartford.org)

**Church Phone: 262-673-7273**

The Rev. Esther Kramer

262-309-7661

estherkramer0806@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant

secretary@staidans-hartford.org

Scott Eakins, Organist

Mike Weber, Treasurer

**Vestry Wardens**

Donna Dinco

Sandy Koeller

**Vestry**

Pat Gardner

Micki Hoffmann

Brian Schrunck

Gary Stage

**Vestry Clerk**

Linda Weber

**Stag and Staff**

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Micki Hoffmann, Editor

Contact: [mphoffmann70@gmail.com](mailto:mphoffmann70@gmail.com)

or 262-673-2903



***Prayer Chain***

If you have a prayer need for someone or something, please call **Alice Pollock** [262-707-3456] or the church office.



***Alice's Restaurant***

I don't know how the weather will be on the day you read this, but as I write it is beautiful! All the patio doors are open, and at our house that's the whole south wall. There is a bit of a breeze, the birds are flitting past on their way to the feeders, and a possibly very foolish chipmunk is braving the cat who is sleeping in the sunshine. We have enjoyed two Sundays sitting on our folding chairs near our cars for St. Aidan's service. We can chat with each other from a bit of a distance, and it feels like a return to normal is getting closer. I am sorry for Pastor Esther who doesn't get to come out until she brings us communion. Soon we will have church out on the patio all together (carefully distanced) in the sunshine.

I know these lovely days will not last; this is Wisconsin, but I am going to enjoy each one and look forward to warmer weather. I have started a few plants for the vegetable garden. I am trying to finish some of those projects I had begun in the dark days of winter and complete some housecleaning things, but not today. Today is for sunshine, breezes, and sleepy cats.

Here is a recipe Bruce really liked (so you already know it's not spicy!).

**Creamy Lemon Chicken**

Cook half a box of linguini or spaghetti, drain, and set aside.

2 chicken breasts cut into bite sized pieces

1/4 C. flour

Salt & pepper

Mix the S&P with the flour and toss the chicken pieces until well coated

Save any leftover flour for later

2 T. olive oil (or other)

2 T. butter

Heat in a large frying pan and begin to brown the chicken pieces.

3 cloves of garlic chopped

Brown along with the chicken and after a minute or two sprinkle on the rest of that flour and stir well

1 C. chicken stock

Stir in and let thicken a little

1 C. cream

(I didn't have any and used milk, worked fine.)

4 t. lemon juice (and zest if using the real thing)

Stir as it simmers and thickens

Stir in the drained pasta and top with

1/2 C. Parmesan cheese

**Alice Pollock**



It's not Westminster Abbey,



but it's St. Aidan's own literary space! If you have a favorite poem, please share it with all of us -- by sending it to the S&S editor:  
mphoffmann70@gmail.com

## c poet's r ner

in Just-

in Just-  
spring when the world is mud-  
luscious the little  
lame baloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come  
running from marbles and  
piracies and it's  
spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer  
old baloonman whistles  
far and wee  
and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's  
spring  
and  
the

goat-footed

baloonMan whistles  
far  
and  
wee

*e.e. cummings (1894-1962)*

Happy April!



## Birthdays & Anniversaries

2 – Kathy Fairchild	18 – Eric Meigs
8 – Amanda Mercado	19 – Michal & Dennis Daley
Brian Schrunk	20 – Alice Pollock
9 – Andre Masset	22 – Sandy & Dave Tracy
13 – Jan Lindborg	23 – Emily Hellmann
15 – Margaret Crandall	25 – Grace Kaker
16 – Liz Goldberg	

## Vacation Bible School



It's time to start thinking about Summer, although we're not certain what summer will bring. We are designing an **AT HOME TREASURE CHEST**

**VBS Program** for the children, because they really are our greatest treasure. Our sincere hope is that we will be able to meet in person for VBS this summer, but we want to be fully prepared for all the possibilities. Each child will receive a treasure chest filled with 5 days of VBS stories and activities. After they complete the program we will have a group get-together either in person or on Zoom, where they will be able to share what they learned and what crafts and activities they did.

If by the time summer approaches, we are able to meet in person, each child will have their treasure chest full of materials to work from each evening at church!

We would appreciate your filling out the registration form [page X] and returning it by May 15. That way we will know how many treasure chests to make. If you have scheduling conflicts, you can use the AT HOME treasure chest even if we meet in person. You'll notice that we don't yet have a firm date as so much is uncertain. What is certain is that there will a VBS program in some format for our children.

Questions: please contact:

**Linda Weber** [262-442-3364] or call church [262-673-7273] and leave a message.



*Everyday a treasure!  
Every ONE a treasure!*

**St. Aidan's Episcopal Church  
2021 Vacation Bible School  
Registration**

Classes: Pre-school (3years by 9/1/2019) Through 5<sup>th</sup> grade

Dates: **TBA**

Time: **TBA**

Location: St. Aidan's Episcopal Church 670 E. Monroe St, Hartford WI 53027  
262-673-7273

Parent's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please PRINT the names of children attending VBS, their birthday and the grade last completed

NAME	BIRTHDATE	GRADE COMPLETED
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Please list any special needs or allergies your child(children) may have  
\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby agree to hold St. Aidan's Episcopal Church and any or all representatives from any harm or liability that could arise out of my child's participation in the 2021 VBS program. I further authorize that emergency medical treatment may be administered to my child by licensed emergency medical technicians or by licensed health care providers in the event that my child is injured and I cannot be reached.

Signature of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Return form to St. Aidan's Episcopal Church

Questions regarding registration please contact: Linda Weber 262-442-3364





2021  
FIESTA  
LATINA

**\* SAVE THE DATE \***

**FIESTA LATINA** *Fundraiser*

– and –

**LATIN AMERICAN** *Cultural Celebration*

**SATURDAY, MAY 22, 2021**

**11:30am - 7:00pm / Regner Park, West Bend**

**\* FREE ADMISSION! \***

Fun for the whole family / Latin American Music, Entertainment, Food & Drinks / Dancing / Kids' Activities / Raffles... and more!



Casa Guadalupe Education Center

## **Fiesta Latina 2021**

Casa Guadalupe Education Center, 501c(3) nonprofit, invites the community to our 9th annual Fiesta Latina Fundraiser and Latin American Cultural Celebration!

We're excited to offer this family friendly event with **FREE** admission at Regner Park in West Bend on Saturday, May 22nd from 11:30am-7:00pm! Come and enjoy Latin American food, drinks, music, entertainment, kids activities, a large raffle drawing and MORE!

Understanding COVID-19 is still in our community, we are striving to make this OUTDOOR event as safe as possible for attendees, Casa staff, and volunteers. All staff and volunteers will be required to wear masks while helping at the event. We will also be updating our website and Facebook event periodically with more information about health and safety protocols that we'll be implementing.

All funds raised will help us continue our literacy and education programs for the local Hispanic community, as well as build a scholarship fund for Hispanic high school and undergraduate college students in our Dream to Succeed program!

Any questions, please call 262-306-2900 or email [noelle@casaguadalupeonline.org](mailto:noelle@casaguadalupeonline.org) & [maria@casaguadalupeonline.org](mailto:maria@casaguadalupeonline.org).

## Suggestions for a Pilgrimage around your Home



March 2020 will be remembered as the time when we became more creative in learning how to be new people in a strange land. To go on pilgrimage is to make a journey of intention which draws us closer to God and makes us aware of our relationship with him and with others. This pilgrimage may help you, young children or any member of your household to imaginatively go on that journey of intention, to enter into prayer or to focus thoughts as you 'journey' around your home.

The idea is to set up a 'route' around your home for everyone to follow, pausing to reflect at each 'station' for 2/3 minutes. Or you can choose to sit in your chair and use the things you can see from there. Below are some suggestions as to what could be used and said/prayed at each 'station', but these will vary according to your own environment and the age and/or needs of the people taking part.

### **Kitchen/Dining Area:**

Sit down for a moment and listen to the sounds of food preparation and take time to smell what's cooking or anything you are about to eat. Remember the people who have prepared the food and, in the quiet, reflect or pray for all who help to deliver such a variety of food for you to savour – those who are involved in shipping and haulage, those who work in supermarkets and shops and those who grow and prepare our food.

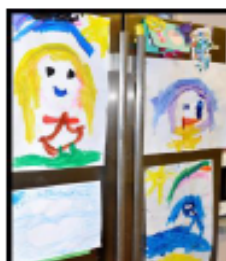
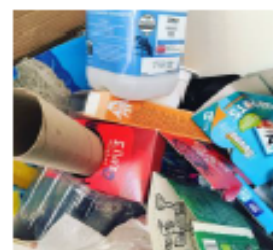


### **Information calendar/the post pile/mobile phone:**

Turn to the people who live with you and tell them some news (or think about a recent event if you live alone). You can use this simple prayer: Thank you Lord God that we can talk to each other, write digital messages and read. Help us to keep in touch with those outside our home using the many ways of communication available to us.

### **Recycling bin:**

What a load of rubbish! Think about all the things we just throw away. What will happen to the rubbish in the recycling bin? Dear Lord, help us to be more aware of how we can look after the world and show that we care about our environment by recycling and reusing.



### **Picture or photograph:**

You may like to reflect on the scene in the picture or photo and ponder on the events they record as you say these words of prayer. We thank you Lord for creative minds and fingers. Give us opportunities to use them to make our world as colourful as possible and to make our homes bright, comforting places to be.



### **A view of the road:**

Lord God, thank you for all the people who work hard behind all the doors we can see or who come to our door to help us. We ask you to bless all those who are travelling along the road to help us, especially those who work in our health service. (Wave to the people that you see or give them a smile as a thank you or find a way of showing your appreciation.)



### **Candle:**

We remember that Jesus was called the Light of the World. Who is a light to you? Let us think or pray about how bright goodness can be: Shine in all the dark places of this world, where there is fighting or hunger, people without homes or those who are ill. Help us, in any way we can, to bring light to these places. (Name any people or situations you want to remember.)

**If you have any outside space you can use the following:**

### **Tree/garden:**

Stand in the garden and look about you, below you and to each side. Think of all the activities that happen in this space (and not just yours!). In your own words thank God for the space. Look above you. The Space above your head is immense! Can you imagine how far it goes? In the quiet you may like to thank God for the wonder of such a marvellous universe.

We want to give thanks for this place. For the beauty we see and have enjoyed, for the amazing growth of the plants. When we look close, we marvel at the detail in the smallest petal and wonder at the strength of the tallest sunflower. We remember all your creatures, from the tiniest ant that scurries around in the undergrowth to the night-time visitors that we may never see. Help us Lord to look after this place of beauty.



### **Play equipment:**

What is the most challenging move you have attempted on this equipment? Which muscle groups do you have to use to get across/round/on it? Think of the strength contained in your own body. Try to imagine what you would have to do to use up all the energy you have stored up inside you. In a moments quiet, reflect on or thank God in your own words for your amazing body.

### **Gates/ fences**

Think about your safety in this place and say these words of prayer. Lord God, as we look at the boundary around our home, we ask you to keep us safe. Help us to look after each other, to be responsible as we leave this place remembering everything that will keep us and others safe.





# Get up and go

By Tiffany C. Chaney

In a lectionary reading for the third Sunday of Easter, Saul has a life-altering encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6, [7-20]). Light from heaven shines down, then Jesus' voice knocks Saul off his feet, confronts Saul for persecuting him, and sends him on a new mission. Everything Saul had planned was interrupted. He found himself without sight and no instructions other than "Get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

Jesus also speaks to Ananias, asking him to lay hands on Saul and restore his sight. This command troubles Ananias. He didn't question whether his hands would bring healing. No, Ananias was shaking in his sandals because Saul had a reputation for "breathing threats and murder" against disciples like him. Ananias knew Saul had permission from the high priest to capture and bind Christ's followers and take them to Jerusalem.

Like Saul, Ananias had been minding his own business when Jesus interrupted his journey. Imagine what Ananias must have been thinking as he traveled to Straight Street. Oh, it must have been a long, long walk. Nevertheless, he heeded the Lord's call.

See, Jesus' instructions often make us uncomfortable, stretch our limits and interrupt our plans. The Lord desires that his disciples—then and now—lean into all we're capable of accomplishing, pushing beyond our comfort zones. Sometimes that call may leave us shaking in our sandals like Saul or Ananias. Still we get up and go.

The Lord told Saul and Ananias to get up and go—and tells us the same. Their stories highlight how our calls are intertwined with those around us. Jesus didn't tell Saul somebody would come lay hands on him. He told him Ananias would come lay hands on him. After Ananias restored his vision, Saul joined with all the disciples, proclaiming Jesus throughout Damascus as the apostle Paul. What a powerful witness.

To fulfill God's plan, both Saul and Ananias had to push past doubt and act in faith together. The call for each was personal, yet their stories were connected. Likewise, God's call for each of us is personal and connected to the people around us. As individuals and communities, we act as God's hands in the world.

Toward whom and what is Jesus calling you today?

Get up and go. **L**

Statue at Bab Kisan, Damascus, Syria, of Saul being struck down by the light (Acts 9:3).



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