



The Beacon

*In thy light shall we see light.
Psalm 36:9*

Mini-Beacon ~ January 2023

Be Thou My Vision

by the Rev. Abigail Crozier Nestlehutt

Experience tells me that no one much likes the query, “Do you have any resolutions for the year ahead?” Still, sometimes I ask, despite the inevitable glares and eye rolls. This January before I could pose the question, a friend offered that she had a word of the year. Actually, this happened twice: having endured a particularly difficult 2022, the first person had chosen “joy” for 2023, and the second was still deciding on the word.

And I was reminded of the star words we often have shared around the Feast of the Epiphany, a custom I borrowed from a colleague. Cutout stars in a basket, each with a word. All are invited to choose a star and allow the word to guide them throughout the year. One church explains it this way: “The Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year—to move closer to Jesus. Star words are one such lens that might provide a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight. They invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.” New Year’s resolutions tend to be overly aspirational and rarely kept. A word presents opportunities. A word nudges us to be mindful. Invites us to wonder. Encourages us to notice.

This January, this new year, I am in the final stages of sabbatical preparation. I am solidifying my plans, attending to the details of parish responsibilities, and preparing to let go for a while. The word I have chosen for the year ahead is “story.” In the first sermon I preached at St. Peter’s, I spoke about the importance of stories and invited you to tell me yours as together we were guided by the “Greatest Story Ever Told”—the story of Jesus Christ whose mission on earth was to show us that God’s power and love are limitless. Over the course of seven years, I have had the privilege of listening to your stories and of building relationships anchored by the stories we have created together.

The theme of my sabbatical is “Be Thou My Vision” inspired by hymn #488 in our hymnal, that calls us to ground ourselves in God. The focus of my sabbatical will be to attend to my relationships with God, family, and friends with the emphasis on renewing my commitment to the life of faith. Throughout my sabbatical I will use the resources available through the Society of St. John the Evangelist to develop a personal Rule of Life. The brothers describe the rule of life as being like a trellis that offers support for a plant. The purpose of the rule is not to set unrealistic expectations but to offer rhythm, order, and balance to the life of faith. This will involve reflecting on my own story and praying about how God is calling me to live into the next chapters. When I return, I will have stories to tell and new ideas for developing our ministries at St. Peter’s that are a reflection of the story of our savior Jesus Christ.

However you choose to approach the new year, I pray that the months ahead bring moments of awe and wonder that draw you closer to the heart of God. I look forward to hearing your stories.

January 29, morning

Pastor Karl will join us at each service. We will offer prayers for him, for St. Peter’s, and for me as my sabbatical nears.

January 29, evening

Compline

Outline of Abigail's Sabbatical, February 3 to May 1

Sabbatical Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Karl Krueger

Throughout, I will use the resources available through the Society of St. John the Evangelist and other resources to develop a personal Rule of Life. Link to an example of a Rule of Life workbook: <https://www.ssje.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Living-Intentionally.pdf>

February—study and prayer

Palestine of Jesus course at St. George's College, Jerusalem. Link to course description: <https://www.saintgeorgescollegejerusalem.com/palestine-of-jesus/>

March—family and prayer

Family travel and visits

April—retreat, parish visits, and prayer

Holy Week retreat. Easter with family. Visits to parishes with active, community-based food ministry programs.



After its holiday hiatus, adult formation returns in the new year, at its usual time and place, Sundays from 10:20 to 11:05 a.m., in the barn.

- On **January 8**, Abigail will offer another information session about her sabbatical that begins in February. She will address what her plans are and how her time away will affect St. Peter's, both during her absence and when she returns. If you have questions about what will happen from February through April, this is your opportunity to have them answered.
- On **January 15**, in addition to preaching, our friend Dave Kasievich from St. James School will talk with us about the activities taking place at the school, in its North Philadelphia neighborhood, and at the Church of St. James the Less, which was recently featured in an *Inquirer* article.
- On **January 22 and 29**, parishioner Jeff Conway will talk about his recent pilgrimage with Accessible Camino, led by a team from "I'll Push You," whose mission is to help people with disabilities earn their *compostela* (certificate of completion) by traveling the last 111 kilometers of the route. On the 29th, Jeff will be joined by parishioner Donna Fabius, who will add her experience of walking the Camino.

Book Club Forming at St. Peter's

Everyone is invited to participate in our new book club and in choosing the monthly selections. This will be a time to build community while exploring our beliefs and some current issues, increasing our knowledge, and expanding our hearts as we walk in another's shoes by reading fiction and non-fiction. After the first meeting, set for 7 p.m., Monday, February 20 via Zoom, participants will also suggest future books, discussion questions, and meeting times.

The February selection is *The Same Kind of Different as Me* by Ron Hall & Denver Moore, a remarkable true story of hope and an unlikely friendship developed through a food ministry. For the Zoom link and additional information, or to make suggestions, contact Brenda Grove, whose contact information is in the parish directory.

Holiday Food Donations

Throughout the November and December cold snaps, an SUV stuffed with our porch donations made weekly deliveries to Coatesville. The friendly CYWA volunteers who unloaded the car, spoke appreciatively of St. Peter's generosity and its consistent support of their weekly food distribution. We in turn thank our parishioners who experience the joy of donating this food, an action ministry of love indeed.

"Pasta November" also netted an over-the-top 275 boxes! Well done, parishioners! Thank you for your generous holiday spirit.

The Gift of Life

The Red Cross gratefully thanks St. Peter's blood donors, volunteers, and parishioners for their support. Over five hundred patients benefited from the 186 units collected during our 2022 drives. The Red Cross also applauds the inspiring example St. Peter's has set for other parishes recruited to sponsor blood drives.