

## The Thanksgiving We Celebrate Every Week



There's a wonderful photo exhibit\* along the fence of Morningside Park, "Faces of Harlem." Beautiful photos taken by a range of photographers (the youngest is 14) capture residents at work, in love,

in their faith, in life. My favorites show people together, embracing, praying, holding one another. There is such life and joy in their simply being together.

The photos remind me of St Michael's. Thanks be to God we have a whole community of human beings to do life with here. Through good times and bad, in ordinary and extraordinary moments, our larger family comes around the table. Every week we celebrate Thanksgiving, you could

say, coming for the feast of communion and shared love. Every week we go out, fed by that feast and called to feed others.

There is much to be thankful for in this community of trust and mutual care. I am grateful for every one of you and for what you bring to the table. May we each be nourished here as we go into a new year together. — Mother Kate

\* It's only there till Nov. 30, so go quickly!

## The Case for Reparations

**Another reason to be thankful for ministries at St. Michael's is the work of this parish on Reparations. Debbie Humphrey, a former vestryperson and a member of this church for more than 50 years, is an attorney, now retired after three decades of service in state courts and state and city agencies.**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines reparations as the act of making amends, offering expiation or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury.

This country has struggled with the question of reparations for enslaved people and their descendants for centuries.

In 1865, General William Tecumseh Sherman issued Special Order 15, which provided for 40 acres of land to be distributed to formerly enslaved families. The order was later rescinded by President Andrew Johnson, along with most of the protections afforded Blacks during Reconstruction.

This turn of events led to laws and policies that not only resulted in intimidation, harassment and bodily harm to Blacks, but also in discrimination in education, housing and employment — all of which contributed to the gap in wealth between whites and Blacks that exists to this day.

In 1989, Rep. John Conyers Jr. of Michigan introduced a bill proposing the creation of a commission to study the consequences of slavery in the U.S. and the possibility of reparations.

With the recent rise of social justice awareness in this country, the bill has gained interest in Congress as institutions and local governments address the issue.

However, the issue has also met with backlash by some who question why they should pay for the bad acts of earlier generations.

And what about the price? Some have measured the economic cost to Blacks of slavery, forced labor and Jim Crowism at as much as \$14 trillion.

Moreover, how do you measure psychic trauma and humiliation? I was born in the segregated south. My mother told me that her grandmother would pass a Woolworth store in our hometown in Florida and say, "Someday I'm going to sit and eat at that counter." She never did.

While I was studying and practicing law in Buffalo in the late 1970's, many landlords refused to rent to me. Once, after I found housing in a predominantly white area, I was taunted by a group of white teenagers calling me the n-word and yelling at me to get out



An archive photo of the St. Jude's Chapel Sunday School signifies what's lost when a church is razed and dispersed.

of their neighborhood. The pain associated with that memory can't be measured in dollars.

Although my experiences as a child at St. Michael's were happy, those of many of my Black friends were less so. Several of their parents said that they felt unwelcomed by the church and, as such, their numbers began to dwindle.

I don't know how to measure the loss to the Black community created by the elimination of the St. Jude's Chapel. But I know that we must try to measure it, as people who believe in Christ who endured the cross to make amends for our sins.

We have a dedicated committee of individuals working on the issue. They need our prayers and our support.

— Debbie Humphrey



Debbie Humphrey



On Oct. 30, for the Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude, a procession gathered at the historical marker to St. Jude's amid Park West Village, where the chapel stood. In a Litany of Penitence, Father Frank prayed, "Let us stand before God and humbly confess our sins: our participation in racism, our privilege based on racism, and our perpetuation of racism."



# I, Robot

For the October edition of *Wired*, Gillian Okimoto pitched and wrote an article with the intriguing first line, “Back in sixth grade, I was a robot.”

Gillian, now a junior at Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, vividly describes attending middle school in the form of a motorized “telepresence” robot, the VGo, which she renamed the G202.

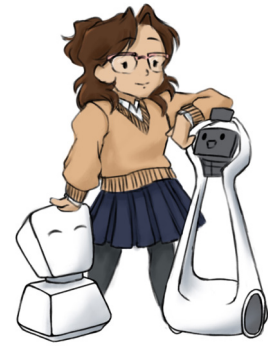
Gillian was suffering from osteosarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer that required nine months of chemotherapy, multiple surgeries and lengthy hospital stays. (Gillian has recovered, thank God.)

Children’s Hospital, where Gillian was being treated, lent her the VGo (provided to the hospital by the Valerie Fund), which she directed from her iPad. The

VGo and its two-way video monitor allowed her to participate in class — and indeed travel from class to class, with the occasional nudge and Wi-Fi reconnection by classmates and teachers.

Later came the pandemic. Gillian, G202 and everybody else were shut-ins. Now she’s happily back at school in person.

“I wrote the *Wired* article because I wanted other kids to have the opportunity I had,” she says. “I couldn’t have come through that time without G202 and the wonderful community I found in my peers and steady love and support from my family.”



**Gillian Okimoto and her cartoon of herself with her alter ego, a motorized robot that she named G202. The robot, provided by Children’s Hospital via the Valerie Fund, happily stood in for Gillian at school and went from class to class so she could participate from afar.**

# A Rite of Faith and Identity



Last Sunday, St. Michael’s celebrated a first in its 215-year history: a Rite of Renaming. The Aug. 19 *Looking Ahead* announced that Woody Wisz, a parishioner who has served as online chaplain, co-leader of the Middle School Group and Saturday Kitchen volunteer, is transitioning to live as a woman, Annie. The Rite of Renaming, authorized by the Episcopal Church in 2018, made the name

change official. Annie is in her senior year at Fordham as a double major in theology and English. She works part-time as a page in the rare books collection at the New York Public Library. She also is in discernment for a vocation in the Church. The Rite itself, led by Mother Julie, included a laying-on-of-hands. Annie’s mother, friends, sister and sponsors were by her side at

the altar, and just afterward, Annie and her mother Kate Wisz, up from Raleigh, N.C., embraced. “Holy One of blessing, you created us in your image and pronounced us good,” Mother Julie concluded the Rite. “We give you thanks for the gift of life itself. We thank you for our individual names, which connect us to the One who spoke all creation into being.”

# Amelie Held, Variations on America

On Sunday, Nov. 13, at Saint Cecilia Parish in Boston, our new organ scholar Amelie Held, a native of Munich, Germany, and now a student at Juilliard, played a program of German and American organ music: her transcriptions of Haydn and Wagner; a toccata by John Weaver; and Charles Ives’s “Variations on ‘America.’”

Amelie’s Juilliard professor, Paul Jacobs, had alerted his students about John Cantrell’s call for a new organ scholar. Amelie already has an international career, but at St. Michael’s she’s an apprentice.

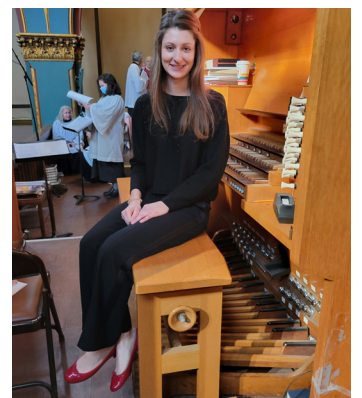
“My job includes accompanying the choir on Wednesday rehearsals, playing preludes and postludes and sometimes directing the choir,”

Amelie says. “Basically you learn all the things that a music director does, and that they don’t teach you in school. The choir has been wonderfully patient with me!”

John’s versatile programming suits her. “I’m thrilled that we’re able to play jazz and other styles of music apart from classical,” she says.

Amelie brings her own style to our von Beckerath and Hammond. She’s famous for wearing bright red patent-leather pumps.

“Five years ago I saw the red shoes in a dance shop in Paris and they have a leather sole, very important for playing,” she says. “Now they’ve become my trademark!”



**For the Postlude at the Nov. 20 service, our new organ scholar Amelie Held, in her trademark red organ shoes, played J.S. Bach’s “Fugue in E-Flat Major, BWV 552” from memory.**

# Winslow Homer: Peace Be to This House

For nearly 20 years, Winslow Homer worked as a commercial illustrator, often for *Harper’s Weekly*. For the April 18, 1874, edition, his subject was St. Barnabas’ House, established in Lower Manhattan by Sarah Adelaide Adams Richmond, widow of William Richmond, the third rector of St. Michael’s.

After her husband’s death, Mrs. Richmond devoted herself to founding charitable institutions for women and children.

the faces and attitudes of the women and children, Homer captures the need for such an institution.

In his “Annals of St. Michael’s,” the 1907 centennial history, John Punnett Peters, the sixth rector, wrote about the “wonderful work” of his grandmother. He noted that the women of St. Barnabas’ House were “innocent of any crime but homelessness.”

St. Barnabas’ House was gradually absorbed into the Episcopal Mission Society, which itself became part of the Sheltering Arms, the children-and-family services agency that thrives today.

— Jean Ballard Terepka



**In his wood engraving for Harper’s Magazine, Winslow Homer depicted the residents of St. Barnabas’ House in dramatic tableaux, with an attendant poised to help.**

## THEN & NOW

St. Barnabas’ House was first called the Home for Homeless Women.

Its mission was to provide a safe haven for women referred by the courts, brought by police or directed there by friends.

In Homer’s wood engraving, the motto on the lintel, “Peace be to this house,” Luke 10:5, embodied Mrs. Richmond’s vision for St. Barnabas’ House. Through