

## Expanding the Capacity to Serve Our Neighbors



I love the old stories of how our Parish House has been used over the years. There is a consistent theme of service to the community beyond our congregation, right from the very start. That service is in the DNA of this place, and it shows up not only in the long-ago parishioners of history but in those coming to join in this new era.

With each new person that joins the community, be they congregants or staffers, the work of God broadens and grows just a little bit more here. Even through such a taxing time as the recent pandemic, the St. Michael's

community has continued to ask: How can we serve? Whom should we help? What healing can we offer to the world?

As the work on our building progresses, the physical outline of that service develops as well. It is so exciting to see the new possibilities literally taking shape before us. This is a place where God is present and felt in what John Punnett Peters called our "faith and zeal" — made manifest in our life together, and in the love we share with the neighborhood around us. What a great time to be church!

— Mother Kate

## Why We Need Doors Wide Open

Today the Doors Wide Open campaign begins. Gayle Robinson, a longtime parishioner and former two-term warden who served for 13 years as chief operating officer at Marble Collegiate Church, shares her perspective on the project.

When people think of New York City, they think of more than 8 million people. For me, as a New Yorker, the city is about my community, the Upper West Side. In fact, it's not even the whole Upper West Side, it's probably 10 blocks north and south, east and west. And an integral part of that community is St. Michael's.

Some people in our neighborhood mark their time by our clock and the bells, or come in as part of our Saturday Kitchen and count this as their church and their community. And there are parents of Homework Help kids who say to themselves, "This is where I can go to get that extra help that my child needs and that I may not be in position to give."

We're also a church, a spiritual community where people can come and reconnect with the religion



Gayle Robinson

of their childhood or a religion that's new to them.

Most importantly, it's not just about religion. We're training people, teaching people and opening people up to the Way — what the early Christians called the Way — that is, how to live your life in a Christlike way, to give not only to those around you but also to give yourself a moment of silent reflection.

So many people come in when our doors are open just to sit in our beautiful space and reflect. It makes this community smaller for them, in contrast to the vast New York metropolitan area.

But we could do much more for the community and for more of its people if our buildings were truly accessible.

Our Parish House is 120 years old and it desperately needs renovation to bring it to 21st-century standards.

As a former church administrator, I know that a building needs to be maintained. Otherwise people stop coming. Our Diocese already has too many crumbling churches. We're blessed to be a thriving parish.

Think of our 216-year history. This church survived wars, depressions, plagues and the destruction of 32 blocks east of us during the 1950s, including St. Jude's. Now it's our turn to sustain the legacy and the Way. May the doors indeed open wide.

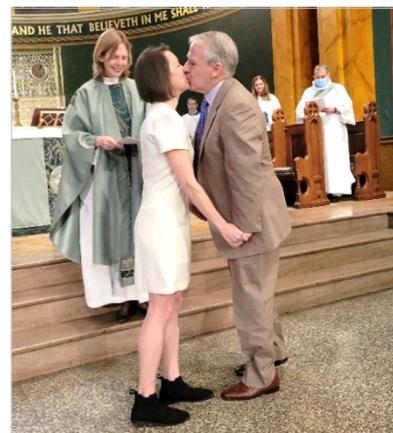
— Gayle Robinson



Work-in-progress: the Parish House elevator shaft, looking up, and the third-floor terminus. The east side of the garden is a construction site, with a pile of salvaged bricks to be recycled.

## Family News: A Native Son's Return, and a Marriage Blessing

On Jan. 8, Epiphany Sunday, **Tim Hamlin**, a third-year student at Union Theological and a seminarian at St. Ann's in the Bronx, preached affectingly on the topic of baptism and pointed to the font where he himself had been christened. Afterward the family gathered: **Rick Hamlin**, Tim's wife **Henley Cox**, 18-month-old **Silas**, Tim and **Carol Hamlin** ... Another joyous occasion, on Jan. 15, was the blessing of the civil marriage of **Lucia Moses** and **Bruce Palmer**, who had wed at City Hall on Dec. 23. The New Year is off to a celebratory start.



## Mary Ellen Lehmann: Nurturing the Young in the Faith

To Mary Ellen Lehmann, a veteran educator with lengthy experience in ministry to the young, it takes a village to bring up a child in the faith.

At St. Michael's, Mary Ellen notices, "Everybody embraces the responsibility and privilege of walking with young people. I see it when Judy [Simons] the welcomer helps a child find a favorite color of marker to decorate a name tag, or Omar [Santos] greets a teenager by name because he remembers them as a kid."

"We adults are eager to pass along our faith to young people, who take on the faith they perceive in the adults around them," she says. "If we have a half-baked faith, that's what they'll adopt. It's a reminder to us adults to be even more grounded in our faith."

Mary Ellen grew up in Bucks County, Pa., attended the University of Arizona and received a master's degree there in speech pathology. She and her husband Mike, a corporate lawyer, moved to West 108th Street in 1993 and raised four children there.



The Godly Play circle shares a moment when a boy spelling "Messiah" stops at "Messi." "OK, Messi is another kind of messiah," Mary Ellen Lehmann says.

The family attended All Angels, where Mary Ellen served in a variety of roles, including warden, and then, for eight years, as director of children and youth ministry.

"Mother Kate sold me on this place," Mary Ellen says. "The community that you

are creating here is the kind I want to be involved with."

Mary Ellen is working with volunteer teachers for our three youth groups: Eva Bogino, Efe Emakpose, Serhat Krause, Gillian Okimoto, Emily Smith, Kathleen Toner Talbot and Annie Wisz.

## Going Solar at the Cemetery

After 170 years of honoring soul power, St. Michael's Cemetery, in Queens, is adding solar power. The 88-acre cemetery is under contract to install a solar panel system that will replace virtually all the electricity that it now buys from Con Edison.



The 305 kilowatt plan, slated for completion by year-end, will make St. Michael's greener and contribute to carbon-reduction goals set by New York City and the Diocese.

The journey began over two years ago when John Avery asked Mission Energy to evaluate whether we could install solar panels at the church as part of our renovation project. Mission specializes in developing solar projects with religious organizations.

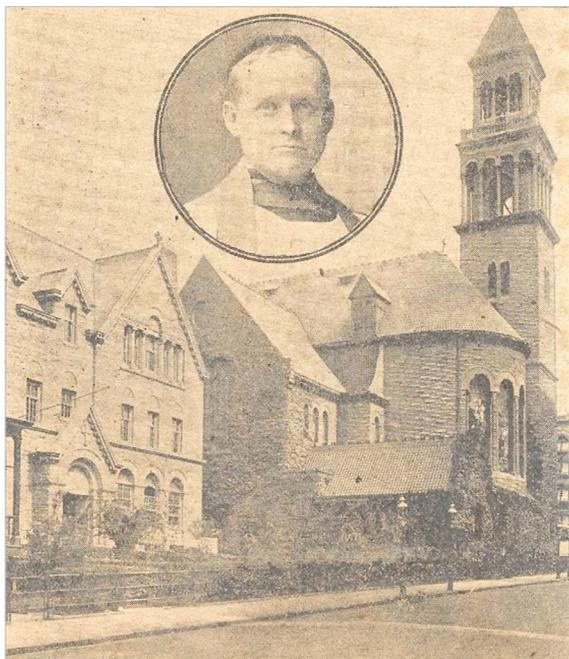
The church buildings aren't good candidates for solar. But John saw an opportunity at the cemetery. Its 10 mausoleums have flat roofs, a preferred platform for solar panels. Cemetery general manager Dennis Werner worked with Mission to devise a technical and financial plan that will not only generate clean energy but ultimately pay for itself and yield significant savings.

A key factor: the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which allows nonprofits like the church and cemetery to earn a 30 percent rebate from the federal government on the cost of buying and installing a solar-panel system. This game-changing law encourages the adoption of clean energy and marks a path to a greener future in America.

When the cemetery builds its next mausoleum, the hope is to add even more solar capacity to generate energy credits that will also benefit the church on Amsterdam Avenue. Let the sun shine!

An aerial view at St. Michael's Cemetery shows the prospective layout of solar panels on the roof of the administration building and St. Joseph Mausoleum — among the many other cemetery buildings that will soon generate clean energy.

## A Parish House Founded to Serve the Community



Dedicated on Nov. 1, 1902, the Thomas McClure Peters Parish House was meant to serve "the locality in which we are located and not merely the individuals who are enrolled as communicants or attendants of this church," John Punnett Peters, our fifth rector, wrote in the March 1903 Messenger. The Parish House was named for his father, our fourth rector.

From the start the Parish House hummed with church and neighborhood activities. Sunday School classes, Wednesday Bible study groups, the St. Michael's Men's League, the Girls Friendly Society, the Brotherhood and Junior Brotherhood of St. Andrew, the Church Periodical Club and the Young Women's Parish Aid Society all shared and occupied office and meeting space. The Bloomingdale Free Clinic, open to the whole neighborhood, occupied the ground floor.

In the 1904-1905 program year, the St. Michael's Sewing School, open to girls and women from the neighborhood, numbered 144 students and 14 teachers. Membership in The Mohawk Athletic Association, providing gymnasium facilities for exercising and games, was available to any neighborhood man over the age of 18.

The Parish House still sustains its mission to the church and neighborhood.

— Jean Ballard Terepka

The Parish House in the early 20th century, with an inset photo of John Punnett Peters, our fifth rector, who wrote in the November 1902 Messenger that the new building was founded with the same "faith and zeal" that inspired the church's neighborhood missions.

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