

Mobility Issues? I Get It



Sam Owen and
Mother Kate

God never wastes anything: When something negative happens, something in it turns to blessing eventually.

I realized I was learning something a few days after my knee surgery, when, on crutches, I needed to get to my first physical-therapy appointment. The outing took all afternoon and I was exhausted by the end of it. This is what it's like to get around New York with mobility issues.

Two days later, it was time for Sunday church. I slowly climbed the steep steps to the Parish House, hoisted open the heavy front doors, and stumbled up the second set of steps and through the inner doors as they tried to close on me. I crept into church and up the side aisle, stopping at the chancel steps. Clearly, I saw, I wouldn't be processing that day. And so I sat, supernumerary. This is what it's like to get into and around our church buildings. The second floor? Forget it.

If I hadn't fully realized before how important our accessibility project is, I know it now. Thank God our doors will be open, an elevator installed and our entrances ramped, only a few short months from now.

— Mother Kate

Doors Wide Open: The Future in Bloom

On a recent Saturday the cacophony in the church cloister was deafening as a derrick-mounted power drill attacked the bedrock to create the accessible ramp to the elevator-to-be. In the Chapel of the Angels the hybrid Morning Prayer service proceeded, with the souls of the faithful departed hovering. The line of early-arriving Saturday Kitchen guests on 99th Street lengthened as volunteers in the Parish House crowded the tight corridors to set out the grab-and-go meals. And the cloister lilacs, behind protective fences, were blooming.

Your generous donations to the Doors Wide Open campaign are helping St. Michael's future to bloom.

"We're making St. Michael's more accessible and welcoming by making it possible for people with any kind of mobility challenge to enter and navigate our buildings," John Avery, co-warden and DWO committee member, says.

"The new bathrooms and elevator are coming into focus,

along with the atrium that will better integrate our sanctuary and Parish House. And not to forget the other ramp rising within the Amsterdam Avenue loggia."

As momentum builds, DWO committee members are meeting with every parishioner about pledging. These conversations are helping us all to know each other better.

"Thank you, all who have pledged!" Beth Ann Day, DWO co-chair, says. "The whole spirit of this project is about inclusion, making our beloved church welcoming to everyone. That inclusion is mirrored in our campaign. Everyone can support it at whatever level is meaningful to them."

"We urgently need to upgrade our Parish House so we can serve the community — our parishioners, tenants and neighbors — as they deserve," Lucy Culver, DWO co-chair, says. "These renovations are essential. Previous generations stepped up. Now it's our turn to live out our mission."



Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight: The construction crew works overtime to create an accessible ramp to the Parish House. Meanwhile the cherry tree and lilacs are blooming. And in the sanctuary the Doors Wide Open thermometer rises with the generosity of parish pledgers to the campaign: now at \$1,546,282.

When Grace Moves the Body and Spirit

Mother Julie, a veteran ballet dancer and teacher, will rehearse steps for all at the Women's Retreat, May 5-7.

During the pandemic, Julie founded Faith on Pointe, an online ministry that "explores the intersection of ballet and theology," she says. "Dance can help you discern how God is speaking to you."

Now Julie has won a SEEDS Project fellowship, sponsored by Luther Seminary, in St. Paul, Minn., and designed to help the fellows, from many different walks of life, extend their ministry.

"At the Women's Retreat I hope to show how what I call 'physio divina,' moving our bodies in a repeated way, can lead to deeper contemplation," Julie says. "It's not about skill, or about being a good dancer. It's about paying closer attention to what happens in your heart and mind as well as your body when you dance."

"The practice is rooted in the Great Commandment, that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. After using all those categories in movement, we come into a period of meditation and reflection that can be profound."



Mother Julie, here demonstrating a developpé, has won a SEEDS Project fellowship to help extend Faith on Pointe, her ministry devoted to "ballet for every body, steps for every soul."



A Christian Martyr on Amsterdam Avenue

This is the third of a series of articles by Keith Christiansen about the windows of St. Michael's.

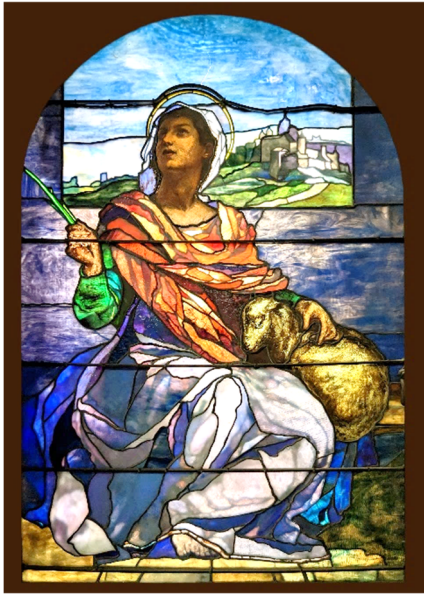
Each of the four stained-glass windows behind the baptismal font has its own character and qualities. To my mind, one stands out from the others — the third window from the left.

We see St. Agnes, the early Christian martyr. Born about 291 C.E. to Roman nobility, she was raised a Christian. Sought after as a wife, she refused all suitors, some of whom evidently denounced her Christian religion to the Roman authorities. Agnes was only 12 or 13 when, on Jan. 21, 304 C.E., she was beheaded for her faith. A year earlier, the emperor Diocletian's persecution of Christians had begun.

Our majestic St. Agnes fills the window in a commanding way that reflects its exalted ancestry. Note how the Michelangesque body is angled in one direction and the saint's noble features turned in the other, endowing the figure with a quality of active movement. Her left hand rests on a lamb, and her right hand raises the palm of martyrdom.

These contrasting elements are typical of Renaissance painting. The saint's head is beautifully set off by a

view of a distant landscape with a turreted city crowning a hill. This composition is filled with the artistry of the Old Masters — not surprising, since designer Walter James adapted it in astonishingly literal fashion from the 16th-century painting by the Florentine master Andrea del Sarto. During the great age of American stained glass, the art of the Renaissance inspired James and other designers of the St. Michael's windows.



St. Agnes's remains now lie beneath the high altar of the Roman church of Sant'Agnese fuori le mura (St. Agnes Outside the Walls), built over the catacombs where she was buried. St. Agnes is the patron saint of those committed to chastity and purity and of young girls. The legacy of the early church and of the Renaissance enlightens our faith life at St. Michael's.

— Keith Christiansen

Designer Walter James was inspired by the painting of St. Agnes by Andrea del Sarto, the 16th-century Florentine master. James's major change in adapting the painting to the rich palette of opalescent glass was to alter the color scheme — richer, darker, more somber. James retained the brilliant orange mantle around the saint's shoulder. The window was installed in 1896.



40 Years in Paradise

Forty years ago today, Carol Wallace and I got married in the Chapel of the Angels. Carol's mother, who considered herself "a woman of the East Sixties," was chagrined about the location of St. Michael's. But that was the whole point. It was our church, not our parents' church. Carol had joined the choir back in 1979 and I got confirmed at St. Michael's in 1982 (having been raised a Presbyterian).

April 30 was a brilliant spring day. We lived on West 95th Street and I walked to church in my wedding attire. Upon my arrival, one of the ministers asked, "Do you have the ring?" Nope. I'd forgot. I walked back home and got it.

Our rector Fred Hill and his associate Jeff Gill officiated. As Fred would say, "I do all the thinking and Jeff does all the work." Jeff, like so many of our beloved parishioners, died only a couple of years later, tragically of AIDS. A plaque in the chapel



On April 30, 1983, Carol Wallace and Rick Hamlin were married in the Chapel of the Angels, with Fred Hill and Jeff Gill officiating.

commemorates him.

But all that was to come. On this happy day friends and family gathered as Carol and I processed down the aisle to a hymn (Carol hoping that people would be staring at the hymnal and not her). We said our vows and shared Communion. Then a friend and former roommate Angelina Réaux (who later recorded "La Boheme" with Leonard Bernstein) sang us out. We got on a bus and drove to Carol's mom's house in Connecticut for the reception.

Our two sons, Will and Tim, were baptized here. I taught Sunday school for years. Both Carol and I served on the vestry and, of course, we still sing in the

choir. What a blessing St. Michael's has been! I doubt that our marriage would have survived and thrived without a faith community like this one. Forty years in the wilderness? Not at all. Forty years of worshipping in the realm of angels.

— Rick Hamlin

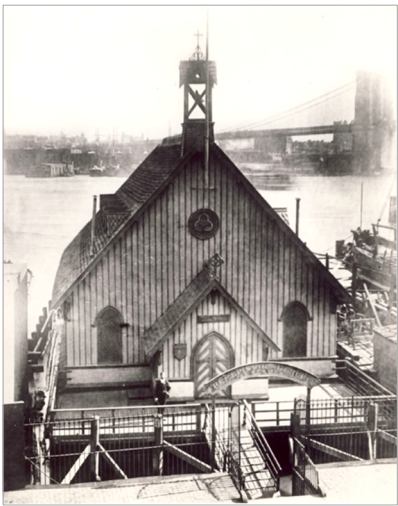
For Those in Peril on the Sea

One of the farthest-reaching ministries at St. Michael's is the Knit-Wits, who gather every Sunday to knit scarves, mittens, hats and vests for mariners around the world. Their handiwork also binds St. Michael's to both the Episcopal Diocese of New York and the city's history as a major port.

In 1834, the diocese established The Young Men's Church Missionary Society, now the Seamen's Church Institute, which in 1846 launched the Floating Church of Our Savior on the East River. Later another floating church was built on Dey Street on the Hudson.

In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, the Christmas at Sea program was established: New York Diocese churchwomen knit garments to keep mariners warm. These gifts were sent to harbor-churches and American shipmasters with Christmas cards and messages of hope from Sunday school children.

Now the Seamen's Church Institute, with facilities in the ports of Peducah, Ky.; Houston; and Newark, supports mariners with social work counseling, legal services and health and safety advocacy. But at its heart remain prayer, personal connections and pastoral care. Every knitted or purled stitch by our Knit-Wits links St. Michael's to our diocesan and national church and to an ancient spiritual tradition of caring for those at sea. — Jean Ballard Terepka



In 1846 the Seamen's Institute launched the Floating Church of Our Savior, moored at Pike Street on the East River.