

How the St. Jude's Chapel Guides Us Today



Today we celebrate the feast day of St Jude's Chapel, torn down in 1957. The chapel's history has become part of our St. Michael's story. It's a cause for repentance for past actions, when the mostly white St. Michael's didn't welcome the African-American and Caribbean members of St Jude's. It's a reminder of our heritage, honoring the legacy of life-changing ministry in this neighborhood. And it's a challenge to action in our reparations and community outreach. We can't change the past or reshape what was; we can't with certainty

promise right action in the future. But we can pray, and try again, and bless what good we see, and that we are doing today.

Human past, present and future are complex. We see that afresh in our horrified reaction to the attacks in Israel and Palestine, our community interconnected with both sides of that conflict. We decry the death and suffering but fall short of a solution. We can't fix it. So again, we pray, and try to listen, and point to the good we see.

Our collect today calls us to follow Jude in making known God's love and mercy. May we know it ourselves, and offer it widely. — Mother Kate

The Israel/Palestine Conflict Strikes Close to Home

At this writing, Ramona Okumura, parishioner Nick Pang's aunt, is waiting to leave Gaza at the Rafah Crossing along with thousands of others.

Ramona, from Seattle, a pediatric prosthetist who volunteers for the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund, arrived in Gaza on Sept. 22, two weeks before the Oct. 7 attack. She specializes in creating artificial limbs for children.

Our prayer list includes Ramona as well as Israeli friends and family members of our parishioners. The list is open to people of all faiths or no faith.

On Tuesday, Oct. 17, Nick and his spouse Jennifer Chew

went to Washington, D.C., to lobby. Then came the explosion at the Al Ahli Arab Hospital. The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem operates Al Ahli.

On Monday, Oct. 2, Nick attended an interfaith supper at the synagogue Ansche Chesed. Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky had invited members of St. Michael's and the Muslim interfaith group Peace Islands Institute to the event, sponsored by a New York City program, "Breaking Bread, Building Bonds."

Five days later came the attacks. The impact on New Yorkers of all faiths was reminiscent of 9/11. St. Michael's parishioners include many interfaith families as well as interfaith activists.

St. Michael's responded to the crossfire in Israel/Palestine with calls, messages, snapchats, donations, lobbying — and prayers.

On Oct. 17, parishioners attended a prayer vigil on the steps of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, just before the Al Ahli explosion.

At the vigil a reader read several paragraphs from an Oct. 7 New York Times story about the attacks and counterattacks and the limitless suffering they unleashed.

Then another reader read from Romans 12: 14-21:

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them ... If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.'*

Why We Gather to Grow

St. Michael's is where we gather to grow our connection to God through prayer, scripture, the Eucharist, profound sermons and glorious music.

St. Michael's is where we gather to grow in community with each other through worship, the Peace, smiles, hugs and service to others.

St. Michael's is where people of diverse backgrounds and of all ages gather to grow their connection to God and to each other in song, with outstretched arms.

St. Michael's is a refuge in turbulent times.

But St. Michael's is also a building that has to be lighted, heated and cleaned. It is staffed with dedicated priests and personnel. Our church offers programs that nurture our parishioners and minister to the wider community in outreach such as Saturday Kitchen and Homework Help.

Even as we seek to make St. Michael's more accessible to its congregants and the surrounding community through our Doors Wide Open Project, our building must be maintained, our staff must be paid and our programs and ministries must be funded.



I am the bread of life. They who come to me shall not hunger.

St. Michael's has been my spiritual home since I was a child. And it's reassuring to see all the children in our midst, growing in faith.

What is St. Michael's to me?

My refuge, my connection, my peace, my home, my beloved community.

This is why I give to St. Michael's. I hope that during this stewardship season you will pledge too. — Debbie Humphrey

Prayerfully consider your 2024 pledge.  
The Ingathering is Sunday, Nov. 19.





# Where Paul Debated the Athenian Philosophers

Visiting Athens last month, I stayed on the “Apostolou Pavlou,” the street of the Apostle Paul. It’s a stone’s throw from the Areopagus — the place where Paul defended Christianity to an audience of skeptical Greek philosophers. That was a turning point in ancient history, documented in Acts 17: 16-32.

Illustrations of the scene often make it look like a university seminar. But the Areopagus is no classroom or lecture hall. It’s a bare outcropping of hard, uneven rock, on a steep slope below the Acropolis. A destination for Christian pilgrims, it wasn’t even mentioned in my tourist guidebook.

The Areopagus was named for Ares, the god of war, who was tried and acquitted there for the murder of Poseidon’s son, who had tried to rape Ares’s daughter. Mortals were tried there for treason — and the Greek philosophers brought Paul to the hill to cross-examine him. Some said, “What does this babbler want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.” What was this strange new teaching he was spreading in the marketplace and the synagogues?

Paul responded with a masterpiece of theological rhetoric. He praises the Athenians for their spirituality and their poetry. But in a city full of idols, he points to one inscribed “to an unknown god.” What you worship as unknown, he says, we know as the God who made the world and everything in it — the Lord of Heaven and Earth, who does not live in shrines made by human hands, but “in whom we live and move and have our being.” At the end he



On a September trip to Athens, Tom Phillips stands on the Areopagus, the rocky hillside where Paul the Apostle debated the Greek philosophers on life, faith and the Resurrection (Acts 17: 16-32).

tells of Jesus and the Resurrection — at which some scoffed, but others were drawn in, and some became believers.

To stand on the rock where Paul stood is nothing like gazing at the Parthenon. It is to stand in a hard place, with no protection from Zeus’s thunderbolts, and proclaim that there is something greater in heaven. Paul’s sermon won the day. — *Tom Phillips*

## Family News: Wedding, Welcoming and Wagging



On Oct. 6, **Kat Luetters** and **Isaac Peña** were married at the Newark Museum of Art by family friend **Bess Morrison**, a Universal Life Church minister. The parents, left to right: **Richard Peña** and **Patricia Bergstedt** and **Laura Bennett** and **Ray Luetters** ... On Oct. 14, **Megan Dechaine** and **Yang Li** were married at St. Michael’s. **Mother Julie** officiated, and **Mother Kate** read scripture and prayers ... On Oct. 15, the **Rev. Anne Marie Witchger**, our seminarian in 2013-2014, was inducted as priest-in-charge at St. Mark’s-in-the-Bowery. **Bishop Matthew Heyd** presided and preached. Bishop Heyd was formerly rector of the Church of the Heavenly Rest, where Anne Marie was his associate priest. Anne-Marie and spouse **Joshua Witchger** are expecting their third child next month ... On Oct. 1, during a lively but peaceable outdoor Blessing of the Animals on the Amsterdam Avenue steps (passers-by with dogs joined right in), **Rebecca Morrow’s** Russell terrier **Douglas** enjoyed a post-blessing treat.

## Washington Irving, Sojourner at St. Michael’s



Washington Irving in an 1820 portrait at the time of his writing “Rip van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.”

On the morning of Sunday, Sept. 8, 1811, writer Washington Irving — whose parody “History of New York” had catapulted him to national renown two years earlier — set off on foot for St. Michael’s.

As detailed two days later in a letter to his friend James Renwick, Irving had spent the night at Renwick’s mother Jane’s country house, somewhere south of what is now West 70th Street. The recently widowed Jane Jeffrey Renwick, who in her native Scotland was the subject of two poems by Robert Burns, served as a sort of den mother to Irving and his set. James, a Columbia professor, was a member of the St. Michael’s vestry, 1819-1820.

“After a long walk to church,” Irving continued, “I had the mortification to find that there was no service in consequence of Mr. Jarvis being absent for his health ....” That would be our second rector, Samuel Jarvis. As Irving headed back, he came upon the Dutch Reformed church at what is now 68th and Broadway, where a young Presbyterian minister of his acquaintance was preaching about the Devil. He entered and saw that quite a few other St. Michael’s parishioners were there.

An 1818 letter to Irving from his friend Henry Brevoort (St. Michael’s vestry: 1819-1821) refers to a group baptism at St. Michael’s — in terms that implied that Irving was quite familiar with the church and Father Jarvis.

By this point Irving had left for Europe, where he was to write “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” — *Justin Fox*

