

From Anger and Violence to a Vision of Love



Here we are at the turning point of the church year, moving from Thanksgiving and harvest to expectation and hope. It's a time to turn from gratitude for all that is to awaiting all that could be. Our world is torn apart by anger and violence, suffering from poverty and homelessness. Yet we believe that this reality isn't all there is. God is still at work. The light still shines.

Our faith teaches us not only to hope but also to act. When we befriend someone from another faith or culture, when we take extra time to prepare and serve food for someone who is hungry, when we open our doors for ministries to our neighbors, we're helping to make this world as it should be. And in so doing, we learn — that our perspective isn't the final word, that our resources aren't to be taken for granted, that all that we have is a gift to share. In Advent we expect the One who comes to save us all; indeed, the Prince of Peace. It's time for each of us to prepare. Make room in your heart and life for Love. — *Mother Kate*

An Interfaith Hope for Peace

Last summer, 18 metropolitan-area teenagers — Christians, Jews and Muslims — traveled to the U.K.'s Lake District to join British counterparts in a week-long Emerging Peacekeepers program sponsored by the Carlisle, U.K.-based Rose Castle Foundation.

Mary Ellen Lehmann, director of Children's and Youth Ministries, whose daughter Abby had attended the program in 2019 and last year, spearheaded the effort. Our Frannie Hinch, Sophie Pritchard and brothers Josh and Thomas Barker-Stewart joined the group.

On Nov. 19 at St. Michael's, the teenagers reunited, amid high-fives and embraces, for a forum on the experience. They spoke of practicing peacemaking exercises — and bonding over a six-hour hike. They acknowledged the shock of Oct. 7 and its aftermath.

At Rose Castle, a young woman peacemaker said, "We learned that we need to talk about what's actually happening, as opposed to what you think is happening."



Ramona Okumura: This Side of the Rafah Crossing

On Nov. 1, Ramona Okumura, a volunteer pediatric prosthetist for the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF) in Gaza, was among the first foreign nationals to pass through the Rafah Crossing after an agonizing three-week wait.



For several years, Ramona Okumura, a pediatric prosthetist, has volunteered in Gaza for the Palestine Children's Relief Fund. Ramona, who speaks little Arabic, teaches her patients the shaka sign, "hello" in Hawaii, where she was raised.

Next to her in the exit line at Rafah was her colleague Barbara Zind, a PCRF volunteer physician from Grand Junction, Colo.

"It's a sad story but with glimmers of hope," Nick Pang, Okumura's step-nephew and a St. Michael's parishioner, says of Ramona's release. "It's hard to find that balance of praise that she's out and sadness at why she had to flee and why so many are left behind."

In mid-October, PCRF president Steve Sosebee organized a trip to Washington, D.C., to lobby on behalf of his volunteers. Nick and his spouse and fellow parishioner Jennifer Chew joined a whirlwind two days of visits with congresspeople and other officials.

Ramona, raised in Hawaii, lives in Seattle. Home again now, she just wants to recover on her own terms and get back to her normal life, Nick says.

But Ramona hopes to return to Gaza. "She has a strong emotional connection to the work she has done through PCRF," Nick says. "There will be thousands of children who have lost limbs. She wants to be able to help them recover some semblance of their past lives, to play, to go to school and just be kids."



Join the Ingathering!

On Nov. 19 we celebrated the Gathering to Grow pledge drive at Ingathering. But it's not too late to make a 2024 pledge to St. Michael's. Pick up a pledge card at the back of the sanctuary or in the pews. You can also pledge online. Big, small, we accept them all.

— Kyle Okimoto and Sam Sue
Stewardship co-chairs



What Is the St. Michael's 'Secret Sauce'?



Two Kates are better than one: Kate Schneider, at far right, shadows the clergy to learn what Union Seminary can't teach: for example, how to asperge a newly accessible loggia.

Our new seminarian Kate Schneider brings to St. Michael's a big smile, a big heart and a deep question: "What is that secret sauce?" she asks — the recipe that makes our parish thrive and grow. She wants to know "how to keep the gears running in a place where they run well."

In return, St. Michael's gets a grown-up intern who knows how to preach, teach, pray and nurture faith, especially in family groups.

A cradle Episcopalian who grew up in Thomasville, N.C., in high school Kate felt a pull toward church work, but thought being a priest would be "hard and boring." Her own faith was formed at camps and retreats, so after college she set out to be a camp director.

One year of running a Methodist camp on Shelter Island convinced her that this wasn't the place for a gregarious 23-year-old. She made her way to shore and worked for five years on family ministries with the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island.

"I'm not a city girl at heart," she says. But moved by the Holy Spirit, she came to New York eight years ago. Here she met a Jewish soulmate, Mariel Schneider. They were married in Brooklyn last year, by UCC minister (and St. Michael's parishioner) Eleanor Harrison Bregman and Cantor Basya Schechter. The ceremony combined "the Jewish and Episcopal wedding liturgies that meant the most to us, and reflected the multi-faith family we intend to build together," Kate says.

Kate's first love is still family ministry. But at St. Michael's she's concentrating on the "hard and boring" parts of church life — administration and finance. At Union Seminary, she's studying Hebrew. At home, she enjoys baking bread. — *Tom Phillips*

Aletheia ('Ally') Teague: That 'Aha' Moment

Our new organ scholar Aletheia (Ally) Teague, a student in the undergraduate program at Juilliard, comes from a musical family in Anaheim, Calif. (Her father named her for the Greek goddess of Truth.)

Ally began piano lessons at age 5. Then, at 12 she switched to organ but "I didn't really have an 'aha' moment until I was 16 and heard a performance that included Bach's 'St. Anne' (prelude and fugue in E-flat major, BWV 552)," she says. "I realized that the organ could be for me."

Ally feels at home in the St. Michael's loft. "I love the von Beckerath for its tone, its clarity and its bright, sparkly quality," she says. "I love how it fills the space and how well it is suited to styles such as the Baroque and early romantic German music — Bach to Mendelssohn. I was also pleasantly surprised at how versatile it can be for later styles and particularly for service playing."

Ally likes the German Baroque — Bach, of course, and Buxtehude. But she also likes Duruflé and Messiaen and "anything new and quirky" such as the work of Czech composer Petr Eben or American composer William Albright.

The St. Michael's organ scholarship program suits Ally because of "the diversity of musical styles and the fact that the congregation is so welcoming and open," she says. "It's never boring here!"

— *Michael Smith*



Organ scholar Aletheia (Ally) Teague works closely with music director John Cantrell so he can conduct the choir while she plays the organ, as here in the Nov. 19 offertory, Orlando Gibbons' "The Eyes of All Wait Upon Thee."

The Stories That Our Church Can Tell



The old neighborhood comes to life in this 1910 photo of College Van Express, a moving-and-storage company at 976 Amsterdam Ave., at 108th Street. Local resident Jonathan Etkin shared the photo after he visited St. Michael's during Open House New York. Jonathan's grandfather Harry, at far right, is wearing a derby hat and sitting on a crate.

Part of my duty as our archivist is to welcome Open House New York visitors to St. Michael's, as we've done since 2008, apart from the Covid years.

OHNY celebrates the city's architectural and cultural heritage. On Oct. 21-22, more than 80 visitors dropped in — from all five boroughs as well as France, Italy, Japan and South Korea.

Every year, neighbors who have "always wondered what St. Michael's is like" but never come in use the occasion of OHNY to visit and introduce themselves. This year, local resident Jonathan Etkin shared stories from his research into his family's roots in the neighborhood and sent an archive photograph.

Jonathan's grandfather Harry Etkin is sitting on the crate. To his left, just visible, is a poster for the old Loew's Lincoln Square Theatre, which stood on the Broadway corner where the Juilliard School is now located.

— *Jean Ballard Terepka*

