

Lessons From the Earthquake, the Eclipse and the Blossoms



An early Easter means we have the full blooming of spring throughout Eastertide. Resurrection keeps happening all around us: Every day there are more blossoms, more leaves, more growth coloring and shaping the landscape. It's pure grace. Whatever we have done or left undone, this beauty springs forth.

Throw in a solar eclipse and an earthquake, and one just might get the message that even in New York, larger forces than us are at play. I've always found that time in the wilderness is good for

my perspective, reminding me how small and flimsy my problems and plans are. This spring, that perspective came right into the city to pull us off our phones and look around. Did you notice?

In a time of anger and extremes, reminders of perspective are essential. We're quite certain and rigid about our opinions these days. We know better than other people and we're right — no need to listen. But if something as dependable as the sun can vanish, if the solid Earth can shake, if bare brown twigs can burst into blossom, then maybe we still have something to learn — from God, and from one another. It's our annual springtime lesson. — *Mother Kate*

Where New Yorkers Make a Difference

The Saturday Kitchen provides food and a sense of community to many people in our neighborhood. It also gives so much to those who volunteer.

Since the pandemic, when we moved to bagging meals and giving out food, coffee and juice on the sidewalk, we have had a big increase in the number of volunteers.

Some volunteers have come from the church's congregation, but the majority are from outside. They hear about the Saturday Kitchen by word of mouth, from Episcopal Charities and via school community-service programs.

Volunteering is a nondenominational activity. We have people of different faiths, and of no faith. Before delivery begins, when we all gather to introduce ourselves and have a moment of prayer and blessing, there is a wonderful sense of New Yorkers coming together.

New Yorkers often feel powerless, surrounded as we are by blatant examples of need and economic disparity. Many New Yorkers want to help or find something practical they can do, but they don't know where to turn. The Saturday Kitchen gives volunteers a place where they can join a lively team and do something useful — a gift perhaps greater than the help we give to those waiting at our gates.

— *Oliver Bowcock*



On Holy Saturday, Linda Turnbull and Oliver Bowcock distribute surplus produce.

Our Community Lifeline Kitchen Needs to Grow

Our cramped, antiquated kitchen urgently needs new, larger quarters within the Parish House. Parishioners have generously dug deep in their pockets to support the Doors Wide Open campaign. Now a team has formed to raise money from outside funders to help

build and equip a new kitchen facility. The team is approaching foundations, government and other sources. Connections matter! If you know outside funders who might help us better serve this community, please alert Lucy Culver or John Stickney.

Family Newsmakers: Lobbying, Leading and Enlightening

Last month, **Gillian Okimoto**, a cancer survivor and a senior at Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, joined with other members of the junior advisory board of the non-profit MIB Agents (Making It Better for Kids With Osteosarcoma) to lobby in Washington. Among the stops: the Biden Cancer Moonshot conference at the White House. Gillian's op-ed, "Kids Deserve Better Cancer Treatments" was published in the March 12 issue of Newsweek. ... In January, **Janet Currie**, professor of economics and public affairs at Princeton and this year's president of the 23,000-member American Economic Association, chaired the annual convention, in San Antonio, and 6,000 members showed up. The theme: climate change. ... The Feb. 18 edition of The Living Church magazine featured an interview (available online) with textile historian **Marianna Garthwaite Klaiman**, retired from a real estate career and now pursuing her longtime passion for sacred treasures of the cloth. A database and a book project are underway. Marianna helps conserve and preserve our own treasures ... On April 20, St. Michael's Cemetery celebrated Earth Day with the planting of a Snow Fountain Weeping Cherry in honor of boxing legend **Emile Griffith**, who is buried there. **Mother Kate** led the double tribute ...



Clockwise from top left: Gillian at the White House; Janet with AEA prizewinner Oyebola Okunogbe; Marianna at the Community of St. John the Baptist; the Emile Griffith plaque beneath the weeping cherry.



Lessons From the Key Bridge Collision



Last July, David Rider was aboard a tugboat in Baltimore Harbor. This photo shows the contrast in scale between the container ship and the semi truck on the bridge.

It's said that seafarers lead quiet lives punctuated by moments of terror. This adage must apply to the all-Indian Dali crew of 23 when it crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore on March 26.

Today's massive ships combine high-tech, industrial 24/7 space with highly regulated multicultural crews who know their roles and comply with myriad safety rules.

In port for less than 24 hours, container ships swap cargo, refuel and

receive provisions while managing Coast Guard inspections or border-protection audits. A local pilot always boards the ship and works with local tugs to dock or sail the ship.

Loss of electricity and engine failure certainly sounded a general alarm, awakening those asleep (someone is always sleeping in a 24-hour work cycle) and sending everyone into emergency mode. Constant training and emergency drills — fire, man overboard, engine failure — equip everyone to battle a crisis.

The Dali crew's Mayday call to authorities to halt traffic saved lives. Alas, six of the eight construction workers on the bridge perished.

After the bridge collapsed, inspectors and regulators interviewed everyone. The seafarers are still aboard as investigations continue.

Most major ports have maritime chaplains who visit ships and respond to emergencies like fatal injuries or human-rights violations. In Baltimore, the Apostleship of the Sea, a Catholic organization, is ministering to the crew.

In emergencies like the Dali, chaplains deliver personal items to the ship. Prayer. Worship. Conversation. Provisions. And godspeed on the voyage home, some rest and eventual return to sea. — *David Rider*

David Rider, formerly head of the Seamen's Institute and an associate priest at St. Michael's, is a professional photographer.

Ben Bath: Tenor, Ethnomusicologist, Pathbreaker

Ben Bath, the choir's new tenor section leader, has led two services in "lined-out hymnody," based on his ethnomusicology field work in rural Appalachian communities, from Alabama to the Catskills.

The leader sings a line of the hymn, and the congregation repeats it. No hymnal, no printed music. The idea, dating back to the Reformation, is to return to Apostolic purity and simplicity.

"The practice of congregational lining-out of hymns persists in certain African-American, Native American, Appalachian and Scottish worship practices," Ben writes.

Via music director John Cantrell, we at St. Michael's are familiar with the



At the March 17 service, choir tenor section leader Ben Bath leads the congregation in "lining out" a hymn. "I'm thrilled to be a part of the St. Michael's family with a choir that dares to experiment," he says.

"shape-note" repertoire — a polyphonic choral tradition, dating from the early 19th century.

Now Ben, who also loves the shape-note repertoire, has widened our horizons still farther, to an even more elemental, and older, tradition of monophonic church music.

Ben has long been a pathbreaker. Raised in what he calls "an interfaith family of political radicals and music lovers," Ben has taken part in world- and community-music ensembles. He has thorough classical training too: cello and piano, theory and composition.

Ben graduated from Bard College, where his Appalachian field work contributed to his thesis. — *Michael Smith*

Slavery and St. Michael's

At an April 15 forum, Justin Fox presented a PowerPoint adaptation of his report to the Reparations Committee last year, and subsequent research. Justin's summary:

When St. Michael's Church was founded in 1807, slavery was still legal in New York but on its way out. By 1810, according to that year's U.S. Census, 83 percent of New York City's 9,823 residents of color were free. In 1820 it was 95 percent, and in 1827 slavery was finally abolished in the state.

THEN & NOW Given that context, the founding members of St. Michael's were clearly laggards when it came to owning and freeing enslaved people. Among the wardens and vestry, seven of 10 men reported owning slaves in the 1810 Census, and two had owned slaves earlier in the decade. Of the 19 other original pewholders, 11 owned slaves in 1810 and four had been enslavers earlier.

That's what I've been able to discover in a far from exhaustive search of St. Michael's founders' ties to slavery.

My starting place was the Northeast Slavery Records Index hosted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, which draws on Census records, manumission documents, ship manifests and other sources. But it misses a lot, so I also examined images of old, handwritten Census pages, newspaper clippings and a couple of biographies, as well as relying on the 1907 centennial history "Annals of St. Michael's" and previous work by St. Michael's archivist Jeannie Terepka.

The original members of St. Michael's were mostly city merchants with summer homes in Upper Manhattan. Their

work as merchants meant that most profited from slave-grown crops such as sugar, tobacco and cotton. One vestry member, Michael Hogan, was an out-and-out slave trader — although he reported owning no slaves in the 1810 Census.

By 1820, only two of the original St. Michael's members reported owning slaves in that year's Census, although several founders had died by then and one of the remaining enslavers was long-time warden William A. Davis, who owned six slaves.

— *Justin Fox*



At the April 15 forum a rapt audience heeded Justin Fox's presentation on "Slavery and St. Michael's," adapted from his report to the Reparations Committee. A lively question-and-answer session followed.