



# St. Peter's Press

August 2023

St. Peter's Presbyterian Church - Spencertown, NY

PO Box 14 | 5219 County Route 7 | Spencertown, NY 12165

Telephone: 518.392.3386 | Email: [saintpeters.spencertown@gmail.com](mailto:saintpeters.spencertown@gmail.com)

Website: <http://saintpeterspc.org> | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/saintpeterspc](http://www.facebook.com/saintpeterspc)

## Everyday Civil Rights Heroes, Or "I'm Glad You Didn't Sneeze!"

By Rev. Donna Elia



At the National Monument honoring Civil Rights martyr Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Atlanta, GA, we learned that the first attempt on his life occurred when someone stabbed him. The doctor told Dr. King that the knife was so close that had he sneezed, he would have died. Upon learning this, a young white girl wrote him a letter and said, "I'm glad you didn't sneeze!"

We deeply grieve his assassination. Perhaps that child's words gave him strength to go on while he could. He was able to see the Montgomery bus strike prevail, to walk arm in arm with others to accomplish the March on Washington, and to make the *I Have a Dream* speech. He was and continues to be a role model and an inspiration to millions of people worldwide.

What I am learning on my Civil Rights Pilgrimage (sabbatical is not quite the right word!) is to gain a new appreciation for the everyday Civil Rights leaders. The child who wrote that letter made an impact and gave strength to MLK that he was not alone in the fight for justice. The marchers, freedom riders, the people who visit the home of slain Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers, the congregations like St. Peter's who are unwilling to turn away from the discomfort of reckoning with slavery and systemic racism — all of us together participate in the *Kingdom* of God. We do so with the firm conviction that all of us are equally made in God's own image. We work for a world free of racism and white privilege. It's a long journey, but taking a breath to encounter fellow pilgrims helps us carry on.

We also ate in Black-owned restaurants, determined to put our resources into action too. In Jackson, MS, there's a soul food restaurant named Bully's. It looks unimpressive from the outside, but if you go to Jackson, go to Bully's. Eat their fried chicken, corn bread, and collards. The owner-chef won a James Beard award, deservedly so! Bully, with his restaurant decorated with Civil Rights Leaders, is a Civil Rights Leader himself. He has a cadre of signs reminding people to vote.

In response to Marian's question, "Can I take a picture of your kitchen?," Bully told us stories of struggle and hope, like this one: At one time, the governor of Mississippi, William Winter, who was white and who brought Head Start to that state, was tasked with working on a federal child education committee with a Black woman minister from New York (he couldn't remember her name). He said the governor said, "Oh Lord, I have to work with a Yankee minister from New York." And the minister said, "O Lord, I have to work with the governor of Mississippi!" They found common ground in their desire to help people, and they worked together well. Transformation happened.

The great and renowned Civil Rights heroes, like MLK, Medgar and Myrlie Evers, John Lewis, and Rosa Parks, are inspiring but so are the everyday leaders like Bully. As former NAACP President Julian Bond said at the dedication of the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, AL:

*Most of those who made the Civil Rights movement weren't famous; they were the faceless. They weren't noted; they were the nameless, the unknown women and men who risked job and home and life. Let us gather here not in recrimination, but in reconciliation, remembrance, and renewed resolve.*

Although **Rev. Donna Elia** is on sabbatical, you can call her for pastoral care at any time on her cell phone (518-495-6795) or email her at [delia001@nycap.rr.com](mailto:delia001@nycap.rr.com)

## ***Peacemaker from Liberia to Speak at St. Peter's September 16***



On Saturday, September 16 at noon, St. Peter's, in collaboration with the Valatie and Hudson Presbyterian Churches, will host International Liberian Peacemaker *Matilda Parker*. She is a ruling elder at First

Presbyterian Church, Monrovia. Lunch will be provided — just come and share in an inspiring time!

PC(USA)'s work in Liberia began in 1833. It currently has 15 congregations with more than 3,000 members. Liberia has a population of 5.2 million and sits on the West African coast. Interestingly, Americo-Liberians — descendants of free African Americans who arrived from the U.S. and the Caribbean from 1822 onward — make up only an estimated 5% of the population.

Parker, a member of the Bassa tribe, has studied in the U.S. and holds an Executive Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Texas-Dallas. Parker has hands-on experience working in the areas of finance, international relations, and business operations. She started her foundation in 2009 to aid underprivileged families.

Parker believes that one of the many ways to improve peace in Liberia is by addressing imbalance in the provision of public services to citizens. She has said:

*Liberia has made remarkable peace gains over the past 14 years. However, many of the root causes of Liberia's conflict remain unaddressed. The concentration of power in Monrovia and the imbalance in the provision of public services persist as sources of discontent in the country. Land disputes, corruption, and concession-related tensions continue to be the main triggers of violence.*

*My foundation is very involved in the transformation of lives. In the past three years we have focused on the peaceful resolution of land disputes around the country using the Palava Hut approach, the promotion of violent-free elections and the rehabilitation of youth on drugs using the religious approach.*

### **A Little Bit About Liberia**

The founding of Liberia in the early 1800s was motivated by U.S. domestic politics of slavery and race and foreign policy interests. In 1816, a group of white Americans founded the American Colonization Society (ACS) to deal with the “problem” of the growing number of free blacks in the United States by resettling them in Africa. This was not an altruistic endeavor. Many of the people transported from the U.S. to Liberia by the ACS did not want to go.

Prominent Americans such as Henry Clay and Daniel Webster were members of ACS. Thomas Jefferson supported the organization's goals, and President James Madison arranged public funding for the Society. Members of the ACS ranged from abolitionists to slaveholders. Ultimately, however, abolitionists, both black and white, rejected the notion that it was impossible for the races to integrate and therefore did not support the idea of an African-American colony in Africa.



The new settlers were not welcomed with open arms. Local tribes continually attacked the new colony; in 1824, the settlers built fortifications for protection. In that same year, it was named Liberia and its capital Monrovia, in honor of President James Monroe, who had procured more government money for the project.

In 1847, Liberia declared independence from the ACS and established a sovereign state with a constitution based on the U.S. Constitution. It is the only Black state in Africa never subjected to colonial rule and is Africa's oldest republic.

The country suffered under two brutal civil wars in 1989-1997 and 1999-2003, during which some 250,000 people were killed. It is still working on recovery. In 2006, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected as the first female president; she served until 2018 and did much to fight corruption, establish unity among the country's many factions, and rebuild the country's devastated economic infrastructure. She won the Nobel Peace Prize, along with two other women, in 2011. The current president is George Weah, serving since 2018.

## Clara Gott Scholarship Awarded to Emily Mesick



Each year, the Clara Gott Fund awards a scholarship to a deserving senior at Chatham High School. This year's recipient is Emily Mesick, niece of Bonnie Mesick. Emily wrote a very sweet thank-

you note, saying:

*I want to thank you so much for this scholarship award! It means so much to me that you feel I am deserving of it. I plan to attend the University of North Carolina in Wilmington in order to become a physician assistant. Without your help, this would not be possible. Thank you!*

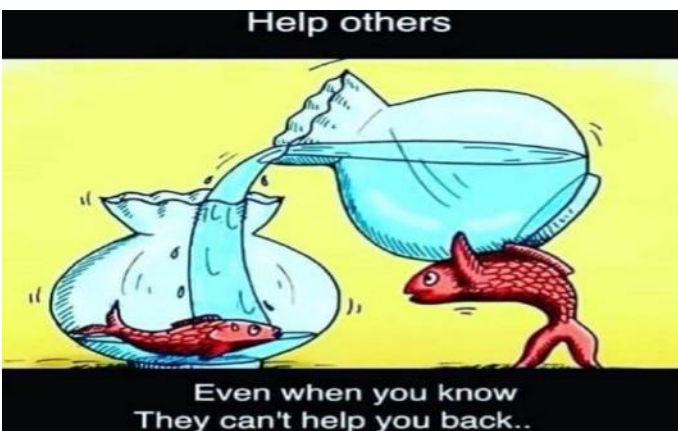
~~~~~

### Collection of Toiletries for Immigrants—Let's Fill the Box!



St. Peter's collection of toiletries to give to the Columbia County Sanctuary

Movement (CCSM) continues. Help is still urgently needed for the 100+ immigrants who arrived via bus to Albany in late May. And more have come since then. Please bring your contributions and place them in the box in the narthex.



## Roses

By Mary Oliver

Everyone now and again wonders about those questions that have no ready answers: first cause, God's existence, what happens when the curtain goes Down and nothing stops it, not kissing, not going to the mall, not the Super Bowl.

"Wild roses," I said to them one morning. "Do you have the answers? And if you do, Would you tell me?"

The roses laughed softly. "Forgive us," they said. "But as you can see, we are just now entirely busy being roses."

~~~~~

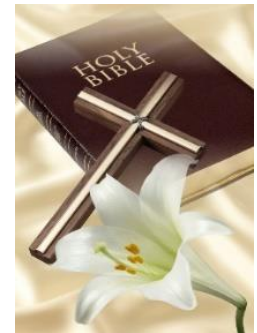
### August Lectionary Readings

**6th:** Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 17:1-7, 15; Romans 9:1-5

**13th:** Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28; Psalm 105:106, 16-22, 45b; Romans 10:5-15

**20th:** Genesis 45:1-15; Psalm 133; Romans 12:1-8

**27th:** Exodus 1:8-2:10; Psalm 124; Romans 12:1-8



~~~~~

### August Worship-Sundays at 10 AM (In-person and via Zoom)

**6th:** Rev. Elia Communion; Valatie at St. Peter's

**13th:** Lay Leader Jere Wrightsman

**20th:** St. Peter's at Valatie

**27th:** Rev. Elia



***Congratulations to Kurt and Teresa Barenfeld who celebrated their 45th Anniversary on July 15!***

*They got married on July 15, 1978, at Grace Church in the West Village of Manhattan. Teresa reported, "The reception was in our loft, which was in the building around the corner from the church. Our back windows overlooked the steeple, and the loft was all set up for the reception and looked beautiful. **Fun fact:** However, we were on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, and our building's passenger elevator had broken down a week before the wedding and hadn't been fixed yet, so we had to use the extremely funky freight elevator. Some of our guests were, um, concerned about the trip up and down. Our floor neighbor operated the elevator for us and assured everyone that it was perfectly safe as long as you stayed away from the sides that had no walls!"*

***♪ Happy Birthday to: ♪***



- |                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| Randy Ezinga     | 8/2  |
| Brianna O'Rourke | 8/2  |
| Patti Scheppman  | 8/2  |
| Doug Conkling    | 8/8  |
| Marion Ulmer     | 8/8  |
| David Hudson     | 8/10 |
| Dan Conkling     | 8/18 |
| Jane Fischer     | 8/19 |
| Richard Fischer  | 8/19 |
| Diane Whiteman   | 8/21 |
| Beth Cozzolino   | 8/23 |

*Did we forget your birthday?  
If you would like to be added to our birthday list, please contact one of our deacons.*

**COMING IN SEPTEMBER: 9<sup>TH</sup> – CLEANUP DAY, 10<sup>TH</sup> – HOMECOMING WITH POTLUCK, 16<sup>TH</sup> – PEACEMAKER FROM LIBERIA SPEAKING AT ST. PETER'S (INCLUDES CATERED LUNCH), 19<sup>TH</sup> – SOUL CAFÉ TO FEED THOSE WHO MIGHT NEED A LITTLE EXTRA HELP IN OUR COMMUNITY**

# Photo Album



On July 26, the Council and the Board of Deacons held a joint meeting/picnic at Mary Anne Davis's home. They feasted on hamburgers, hotdogs, and lots of wonderful side dishes contributed by the attendees. Pictured from left are Jere Wrightsman, David Pearce, Mary Anne Davis, Sandy Fischer, Larry Massimo, Rev. Donna Elia, Wendy Diskin, and Marion Ulmer. Those present but not pictured were Barbara Conkling, Joel Dyslin, Randy Ezinga, and Kathy Geddie.



**The Women Unabridged Book Group** met at Kathy Geddie's house on June 15 to discuss "The Girls of Atomic City" by Denise Kiernan. The book tells the story of the women who worked on the Manhattan Project without knowing they were helping to supply uranium to create the first atomic bomb. Nancy Ordman, who lived not far from Oak Ridge, TN, where the book takes place, had some good information to add. **Pictured in the half circle from left** are June

Houghton, Nancy Ordman, Denise Davis, Marion Ulmer, Teresa Barenfeld, and Lee Armstrong. **In the front** are Mary Anne Davis and Kathy Geddie. We had a great meeting in July at Teresa's house — some had a nice dip in the pool. Our next meeting is Monday September 18 at Lee's house. The book is "Demon Copperhead: A Novel" by Barbara Kingsolver. The book group always welcomes new participants. For questions, contact Denise Davis, 518-392-9690, or Teresa Barenfeld, 518-755-3273.

# Photo Album (*Continued*)

## Some Tea on the Green Shots



*From left: Nancy Ordman, Jeff Kiplinger, and Wendy Diskin. Wendy and her mom, Emma Jensen hosted Tea on the Green on July 30 with lots of goodies, highlighted by Emma's homemade cake!*



*From left: Emma Jensen, Pat Meess, and Shirley Newsome*

*From Left: Ian Wing, Sharon Wing, and Carol French*

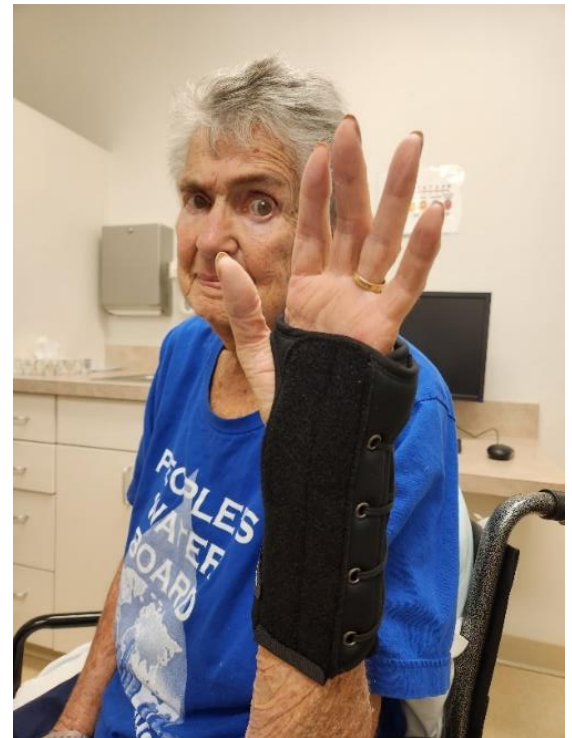


## Photo Album (Continued)



*Meet 2-year-old Emi and her mom Jacquelyn Harden who have been coming to St. Peter's services. They live in Chatham. Jacquelyn was born and raised in Oregon. She is a practicing psychologist in Great Barrington, MA.*

*Jean Brower is showing us that her broken wrist is healing — they removed the cast. She is recovering from hip surgery as well as her wrist. We are wishing you the very best, Jean, as you go through strenuous rehab on your road to full recovery.*



*Rev. Donna Elia and Marian Eaton (pictured) dined at Bully's Restaurant in Jackson, MS, during their Civil Rights journey through the South. Don't let the exterior fool you, the owner/chef won a James Beard award. Marian and Donna said the food was delicious!*

# AUGUST

| Sunday<br>(Service at<br>10 AM)                                                      | Monday | Tuesday                                                                                | Wednesday                                                                                                   | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------|----------|
|                                                                                      |        | 1<br> | 2                                                                                                           | 3        | 4      | 5        |
| 6<br>Rev. Donna Elia.<br>Communion<br>Valatie joining us                             | 7      | 8                                                                                      | 9                                                                                                           | 10       | 11     | 12       |
| 13<br>Lay Leader Jere<br>Wrightsmen<br>Tea on the Green by<br>Vicky and Scott Jensen | 14     | 15<br>Deacons'<br>meeting 7 PM via<br>Zoom                                             | 16<br>Council Meeting 7<br>PM via Zoom                                                                      | 17       | 18     | 19       |
| 20<br>We are worshipping in<br>Valatie at Valatie<br>Presbyterian Church             | 21     | 22<br>Deadline for<br>submission of<br>material for the<br>September<br>newsletter     | 23                                                                                                          | 24       | 25     | 26       |
| 27<br>Rev. Donna Elia                                                                | 28     | 29                                                                                     | 30<br>Full Blue Moon<br> | 31       |        |          |