I saw God recently.

An old man bent low to put some flowers on the ashes of his son-in-law that had just been scattered on top of his recently deceased wife’s grave. He grieved both losses. And as he carefully straightened up again from mingling the flowers and the ashes, God was there.

I saw God recently.

Walking down Wisconsin Ave. there was a skinny teenager dressed in ragged jeans and dirty tennis shoes. He looked tired and pretty beaten down by life. He stopped and asked if I had “a little money for some food.” I don’t often support panhandling because it’s dangerous. But I looked at this scrawny kid and made the instant calculation that even I could have taken him if I had to—and besides, I saw God in his eyes. God; hungry. So I gave him some money. He looked at me with incredulity, and then bothered to say, “Thanks, Sister!” (on the Marquette campus they always call me “Sister” if I have my collar on) before he walked off in the direction of the nearby Jimmy Johns. The thought of God eating Jimmy Johns makes me smile.

I saw God recently.

A brother, still a boy himself, patted the shoulder of his grieving younger sister before he went to fill in his mother’s grave. He was so brave. So sad. Trying so hard to be a man like his older brother, while he had just watched his father do the hardest thing a husband can ever be asked to do. And in the tears that flowed between brothers and a sister and a father, God came and stood among them.

I saw God recently.

A very little girl came through the doors of the church recently with a radiantly joyful smile because she just flat out loves church! She loves everything about it. She’s a bit confused about who God is (she thinks that I am God.) But God is not confused at all about her. Every time she comes through the door, God comes to welcome her back to God’s house with joy in God’s heart to see this little soul come to worship again. She makes God smile. And me, too.

I saw God recently.

We pray this summer as we use Eucharistic Prayer C, “Open our eyes to see your hand at work in the world about us.” Yes, open our eyes.

God is equally everywhere. And I saw God many times recently. I pray you will, too.

Debra+ 
The Unexpected Pot Luck

My family was invited up to a small town where my friend John and his family own a sport shop/gas station. The agenda was to cook up some of the fish that we caught during our recent vacation in the area. I anticipated a quiet afternoon with some pan fried and deep fried Northern and bass and two delicious Key Lime pies that Jen put together. I was so excited because we got the whole family to go on this trip.

We pulled up in back of the station and unloaded the family and the pies. John asked one of his employees and Zach to set up 15 chairs in small groupings throughout the air conditioned store. In no time, food took up two counters. Forty to 50 people showed up suddenly!

In the back by the alley, Zach and Ava helped batter the fish and John and his friend fried it up. John thought that about 70 fish were prepared!

We feasted on mashed potatoes with six sticks of butter in them (how could they taste anything but amazing?), salads, baked beans, desserts and bread—my mouth waters just thinking about it! And the fish was some of the best I have EVER had. It was even better than some five-star restaurants I have had the privilege of visiting.

He does this about every three weeks ... in his store!

There were poor, rich, retired, employed, unemployed, tradesmen, a doctor, a guy whose brothers and sisters had to pay for his dental work, a reverend, some mentally challenged, Caucasians, Asians, Hispanics, fathers, sons, mothers, daughters, brothers, sisters, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and strangers.

What became apparent is that we all brought something to the party not knowing who was going to be there. We didn’t know if we would be accepted, liked, scrutinized or if we had anything in common.

It is amazing how there was no judgment of others. We just shared food, names, smiles and conversations of how we all came together because of one being who worked in the background while we enjoyed the community and the food.

Reread the last sentence please.

John is certainly not God, but he is a conduit of kindness and good. I am not sure he understands the magnitude of his simple gift to all of us. Then again, with that twinkle in his eye, perhaps he does.

Darrell Fischer,
Senior Warden

Golf Outing Expanded

*The golf outing scheduled for October 5 after church has been opened up to the women of St. Christopher’s, as there are some great enthusiasts of the game out there! My apologies to anyone who felt excluded. The initial intention was for this to be the “Guys” version of Ladies Night Out.* Darrell Fischer.
Heads Up! for September

Get out your calendars and note these events that are coming to St. Christopher’s in September:

Monday, September 1st — Labor Day & the office is closed.

Sunday, September 7th — We resume Holy Eucharist services at 8 AM and 10 AM; the 2014-2015 Church School year begins; and we celebrate with a Potluck Picnic.

Thursday, September 11th — 7 AM Holy Eucharist and Discussion resumes after the summer hiatus.

Saturday, September 13th — St. Christopher’s serves at The Gathering: 9:45 AM - 1:15 PM, at Our Next Generation.

Wednesday, September 17th — The Reading Group gathers at 6 PM to discuss May Sarton’s *A Reckoning: A Novel*.

Saturday, September 20th — St. Christopher’s hosts Safeguarding God’s Children, 9 AM - 12 PM. Vestry members who have not attended a session are required to do so, as are all paid staff, such as the Sunday School teachers, who haven’t done so. Those who work with children are strongly encouraged to attend.

*Scenes from last year’s first day of Sunday School and Potluck Picnic*
Qs from the Pews

Dear Priest,

I describe myself as a conservative Christian. Am I welcome in your church?

Dear CC,

Let me emphatically say, “yes!” Some of our members tend to be progressive on social and religious questions and some tend to be conservative. But both groups of members love the liturgy and the thoughtfulness of our tradition.

We have, as a church, sought to repent of our unwillingness to move more quickly in support of people of color in their struggle for equality. Other churches were far more helpful than we were and far more quickly. Perhaps because of that we are proud of our commitment now to full equality for women in all areas of our church life, and to affirming our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in their life in the church. And, as a church, we continue to work on issues of racism.

But we are very traditional in other ways. Our Book of Common Prayer, the basis for our worship together, has material in it that goes back many centuries. We love the Bible and give it a prominent place in worship. And our clergy are committed to the key themes of Christianity: the Trinity and the Incarnation. We share a love for Scripture, tradition, and the creeds with our conservative brothers and sisters.

But we welcome all perspectives. It is hard to figure out, “what is of God.” We understand that we need many perspectives to understand things of God. But this, of course, is messy. Some folks want simple and firm answers. And we are messy because we think that it is in prayer and dialogue between and among people that the wisdom of God is most readily apparent. And since not everyone agrees, it gets messy at times.

But messy is how it has always been. If you read Paul’s letters to the churches of the early church, you will see that God’s will has always been found in the midst of the messiness of God’s people trying to figure it out. In the Episcopal Church, we would rather keep staying together and coming together in worship—welcoming everyone—than seeking some sort of purity of doctrine that excludes someone.

So, my question back to you is: I describe myself as a progressive Christian. Will you come and pray with me?

Signed, the Priest
Summer at St. Christopher’s

I think of summer at St. Christopher’s being bookended by the last day of Sunday School in June, and the first day of Sunday School in September. Things quiet down here, but they certainly don’t grind to a halt.

This year there has been only one 9 AM service, so there are fewer bulletins to print up. The choir is gone, so John has the opportunity to use hymns selected from “My Favorite Hymn” choices, and I see titles from other seasons of the year.

This summer there have been two Sundays with worship led by Rays of Light, so I’ve had music sheets to compile, that leave me whistling favorite tunes throughout the week.

Thursday morning Holy Eucharist and discussion has been on hiatus during the summer, so my Thursday morning arrival doesn’t include saying good-bye to the participants.

The garden is in full swing now, so I greet the garden volunteers during the week as they come in the afternoon or morning to weed or otherwise dispose of japanese beetles and other nasty bugs.

Traffic through the building has slowed down considerably (although we still get visits from the various technicians for the boilers, elevator, fire alarm system, etc.). But traffic along River Road increases, if anything.

There are the determined cyclists in their sleek yellow, blue, and red suits, testing their stamina on the hills and dales of River Road. There are also the more relaxed riders on their bicycles, getting their morning or afternoon exercise. As I’m arriving in the morning, or departing in the afternoon, I’ll pass single walkers or couples as they enjoy the cooler weather, dog walkers, and runners as they pant along the road.

Occasionally a car or truck will pull into the driveway; usually they’re just there to turn around. But sometimes the driver will park in the lot in order to talk on his or her cell phone or text without being a danger while driving. More rarely, someone will be delivering items to the Habitat bin at the back of the church.

The flowering trees have now lost their blossoms, mostly, but the berries are beginning to appear. When I go out to the mailbox to collect the day’s mail, I may have to dodge some hungry dragon flies, or watch the swallows as they swoop and soar over the building and the lawns. They are often joined by gold finches and house finches, dipping and diving through the air as finches will.

On Thursdays or Fridays when I arrive, the landscaping crew will be finishing up their care of the green spaces that surround St. Christopher’s. The wet weather in the early summer meant that they had to deal with the big central lawn over several weeks, as the ground was so damp and soft. And every once in a while, a truck will come in to replace the flowers in the Memorial Garden or in the pots in front of the church entrance.

Regularly during the week, Allen Higgins drops by to pour out his tender loving care on the roses in the front garden. He also keeps track of any overgrowth at the periphery of the property that needs cutting back, and devotedly deals with the week’s coffee grounds and puts them in parts of the lawn that need some extra encouragement.

(continued on p. 6)
And now the Rector’s attention is turning to what’s coming up in September when Sunday School resumes, and the 8 AM and 10 AM services return, and my in-box gets fuller with things to do as we prepare. I feel summer drawing to an end, and now can even anticipate the fall with the changing colors in the trees, more sightings of deer in the bush and even cooler temperatures.

Gust Olson
Parish Administrator

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St. Christopher’s Memorial Garden

The Memorial Garden was conceived for St. Christopher’s by the Reverend William C. Norvell, Rector from 1960 to 1979. It is located just south of the church and serves both as a memorial and a place of solitude for contemplation and reflection - for joyful memories and thanksgiving.

The Memorial Garden consists of 4 quadrants, each containing 60 “plots,” making a total of 240 “plots” in the Garden.

There are presently (as of July 2014) 109 persons interred in the Garden.

Memorial Garden Guidelines include:

* Persons eligible for interment are St. Christopher’s communicants, past and present, and their immediate family whose remains have been cremated.

* The Garden is used only for interment of ashes in specific marked locations (each about 1¼ square feet) in the four turf areas inside the Garden. No urns or containers, or individual markers or flowers, etc. are permitted. The name and years of birth and death for each person are engraved on the granite memorial ledger in the center of the Garden. A record of the exact location of ashes is kept in the church office.

* The fee for the interment is established from time to time by the vestry. The current fee is $1000. The one-time fee includes all costs: interment, ledger inscription, and maintenance.

For more information about the Memorial Garden, contact the Rev. Debra Trakel or the office.
We are excited about the beginning of the new church school year on Sunday, September 7, 2014.

We continue to have four classrooms. We have made a slight change to the room assignments this year.

K-4 and K-5 (The Ark); Grades 1 and 2 (Knitters); Grades 3-5 (Weavers); Grades 6-8 (Journeyers).

We have lost two of our instructors to high school graduation: Adam and Annie. But we are very pleased with our new teachers. Rachel Powlen comes to us with a solid background in teaching. And the Ark will be staffed this year by Zach Fischer and Micky Braeger. Zach and Micky are beginning high school at Marquette University High and are super excited about teaching in our program. The Ark students will love them. Maddy Fischer and MaryBeth Ansley will continue teaching for us, and we are so grateful to have their ongoing gifts.

Katie Madlung is also continuing as our Christian Formation Coordinator and we are blessed by her steady and gifted presence within our community.

In Sunday School we will continue to use the Sparks curriculum for our younger children this year, and will move to the next phase of the Journey to Adulthood program for our older children.

As we did last year, this year will be punctuated with worship services where the children are in charge. We will continue to use the music of Rays of Light. Those dates have yet to be established.

As always, we need parents and other volunteers to help assist our teachers. Our program, like all Sunday Schools, is dependent on the ministry of parents and other volunteers to our children.

**Our first instructional Sunday will be September 7, 2014.** This will include the beginning of the year picnic!

Debra+
Each year the Outreach Committee chooses a focus area for the possible distribution of grants from the endowment fund. In past years, emphasis has been on hunger, literacy and homeless youth. For 2014 the area chosen by the committee is domestic violence. The common thread is children as they are affected by each of these issues.

At this point, grant application request letters have gone out to ten agencies dealing with victims of domestic violence. The deadline for return of the applications is August 31. At that time, the committee will carefully evaluate and make a decision which agencies to recommend to the vestry for funding. Grants are usually between $1,000 and $3,000. If the recommendations are approved, those agencies will be funded by St. Christopher’s endowment. In June 2015, the funded agencies will submit a report as to the achievement of the agencies’ stated goals.

The committee is in the process of receiving the evaluations from the 2013 grant recipients. These were Pathfinders, Walkers Point Youth and Family Center and Casa Maria.

The vegetable garden behind the church is flourishing. The committee decided to send the harvested produce to small agencies that prepare meals for their residents. Some of these may be Casa Maria, Guest House, Daystar, Sojourner and others. As produce becomes available, the committee will be looking for parishioners to help deliver.

With the help of the Rev. Debra Trakel and MaryBeth Ansley the committee is investigating several possibilities for a service project that could be carried out by the confirmation class.

Carolyn Davies for the Outreach Committee
News from the Garden

We harvested the first batch of vegetables over the weekend of August 2nd—broccoli, cucumbers and chives, which will be delivered to Casa Maria. Over the following several weeks, the tomatoes should start to ripen along with beans, cucumbers, and squash. The pepper plants are not doing very well due to the cold and wet weather early in the summer so there may not be much, if any, yield from them.

We are at the point where we can eliminate having volunteers check on the garden every other day. If you have already signed up to do this for August and feel like looking in anyway, please do, but it is no longer a necessity as it was in the beginning. We plan to harvest weekly and Sundays after church seems like a perfect time for those that want to come down and participate. Either I or MaryBeth Ansley will be in the garden to help with any questions about whether a vegetable is ready to be picked. Then on Mondays, the produce will be delivered to the designated food pantry selected by the Outreach Committee.

We will need volunteers to assist in the delivery and if you are available on Mondays, please let me know at khstanford@aol.com or call me on my cell at 414-345-7698.

Thank you again to everyone who has helped with this effort!

Kathy Stanford

Ed. Note: These two groups together are coordinating the search for volunteers to deliver our vegetables. Contact Kathy Stanford or Carolyn Davies.
# Events in August

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**St. Christopher’s Sundries Outreach**

As many of you know, we collect sundries for the homeless and those in need in Milwaukee which are distributed through Sundries on the Avenue at St. James’ church downtown.

We have additions to the list of items they really need, (besides sundries), which are:
—Plastic bags, like the type used to bag groceries, etc.
—Laundry pods. These are found to be the most cost effective way to distribute a product to the homeless, enabling them to keep their clothes clean, and not carry around powder, or plastic jugs of products.

The ministry at Sundries on the Avenue appreciates all we do to collect sundries for the homeless and those in need in Milwaukee.

Baskets are always available in the community room.

Diane Eisen for the Outreach Committee
ST. CHRISTOPHER’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
7845 N. River Road     River Hills WI 53217
Phone: 414 352–0380   Fax: 414 352–0381
Email: office@stchristopherswi.org
Rector’s Email: revdebra@aol.com
Website: www.stchristopherswi.org

Parish Office
Open Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Staff
The Rev. Debra Trakel, Rector
Gust Olson III, Parish Administrator
John Beardsley, Music Director
Katie Madlung, Christian Formation Coordinator
Gloria Bond, Housekeeper
Michael Schneider, Building & Grounds Supervisor

Vestry – Meets 4th Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.
Darrell Fischer & Tom Davies, Wardens
Janie Asmuth & Harry Ansley - Co-Clerks
(2015) - Dolores Mishelow, Dick Hackl, Alan Becker
(2016) - Diane Eisen, Bill Warner
(2017) - Carrie Bedore, Kathy Stanford

Committee and Ministry Contacts
Altar Flowers: Roz Krause
Altar Guild: Judy Scharfenberger
Building & Grounds: Tom Davies
Caring Ministry: M.J. Perry, MaryBeth Ansley
Flower Guild: Helen Sheen
Memorial Garden: Helen Sheen
Outreach: Steve Petrie
Prayer Chain: Kathy Hou siaux

ALTAR FLOWERS: Roz Krause
ALTAR GUILD: Judy Scharfenberger
BUILDING & GROUNDS: Tom Davies
CARING MINISTRY: M.J. Perry, MaryBeth Ansley
FLOWER GUILD: Helen Sheen
MEMORIAL GARDEN: Helen Sheen
OUTREACH: Steve Petrie
PRAYER CHAIN: Kathy Housiaux
THE COURIER

The Monthly Newsletter of St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church

The Holy Eucharist
Summer Sundays 9:00 a.m.
Thursday Eucharist on hiatus until September

Outdoor Labyrinth - open to the public, weather permitting

The Rev. Debra Trakel, Rector

Christianity is not just a religion...it’s a way of life.