

THE  
**LION'S TALE**

The Seasonal Magazine of St. Mark's Episcopal Church

SUMMER  
2020

A PRAYER

*By Pat Ziegler*

Gracious God, lover of all,  
Preserve my faith in You  
with Your love for us all.

I fear the desolation of the world,  
but want to trust in Your care and concern  
for all that exists.

Have mercy on me  
despite my failings  
and weaknesses.

I know You are with me always,  
but often I forget.  
Please forgive me.

Fill me with Your joy  
and show me  
Your way.

Guide me and all my sheep  
as I continue my journey  
to Bethlehem.

A  
NEW  
SEASON  
BEGINS



SAINT MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

15 Pearl Street • Mystic, CT 06355 • (860) 572-9549 • [stmarksmystic.org](http://stmarksmystic.org)



## SAINT MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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[stmarksmystic.org](http://stmarksmystic.org)

### Ministers

*All members of the congregation*  
*The Rev. Adam Thomas, Rector*  
*David Tubbs, Music Director*  
*Madeline Wilson, Parish Admin*  
*Bev Olsen, Senior Warden*  
*Kurt Cramer, Junior Warden*  
*Eric Bookmiller, Clerk*  
*Bob Ness, Treasurer*

### Vestry

*Kim Carlson*  
*Doug Barrett*  
*Joanne Murray*  
*Louisa Broadbent*  
*Gene Roure*  
*Ted Kietzman*  
*Ann Ragsdale*  
*Celina Ortiz*  
*Brae Rafferty*  
*Teresa Norris*  
*Christian Cloutier*  
*Erin Ford*

## INTRODUCTION

*by Adam Thomas*

When Lion's Tale editor Bev Olsen and I sat down to reassess the Pentecost issue of St. Mark's seasonal magazine, the COVID-19 pandemic had already gripped us for a few weeks, and we were just beginning to understand that we were in this for the long haul. Instead of trying to explain anything about the pandemic, we decided that we would invite parishioners to submit pictures and poetry that they had taken and written since the beginning of the stay at home order. What we received was astounding, and we are so happy to share it with you. (Because of the lag time between receiving articles and publication, this issue was already well underway before the recent racial justice protests, and thus does not feature any pictures or poetry about them. For a recent article about anti-racism, please visit Pastor Adam's website and read "The Vowels of Anti-Racism" <https://wherethewind.com/2020/06/08/vowels-of-anti-racism/>

A special thanks to all the photographers and poets who submitted pieces to this issue. May they lift all our hearts at this time that we may know we all dwell together in the vast heart of God.



*"Julia's Flowers"*  
*by Julia Porter*



*Photos by Robert Welt*

# CARRY ME

by Adam Thomas

You wonder where your faith has gone,  
I'll tell you where mine is:  
I keep it in a jar on the shelf.  
A mem'ry box, a keepsake chest,  
A couple hundreds squirreled away,  
'Cause I know I can rely on myself.

I go about my day as planned,  
And prayer is scheduled too  
(Once a week's enough for my soul).  
The same routine, the same results,  
And no surprises here.  
Somehow I think that I am in control.

But I can't see my house is built on the sand.  
I'm the dry and rocky, barren land.  
When did I become the sheep who'd gone astray?  
Now I walk a dark and lonely way.

Christ, here I am in the thorns  
A wayward soul with fleece all torn,  
With a spirit, frayed and worn,  
Too afraid to be reborn.  
Christ, you know I'll try to flee.  
But will you pick me up and carry me?

The jar of faith is nice and safe,  
It never makes demands  
I pull it down in times I cannot bear  
Today I go to look inside  
I need a dose of faith  
I crack the jar and find there's nothing there.  
I head outside to find my faith.  
The scales fall from my eyes;  
I see a world that's broken, beautiful.  
The grass is green, the water's still,  
The gate is open wide:  
The Shepherd calls my name and  
fills my soul.

Now I can see my house is built on the sand.  
Now I can feel this rocky, barren land.  
When did I become the sheep who'd gone astray?  
Can I walk a bright and loving way?

Christ, here I am in the thorns  
A wayward soul with fleece all torn,  
With a spirit, frayed and worn,  
Too afraid to be reborn.  
Christ, I know you hear my plea.  
When will you pick me up and carry me?

Walk me through the deathly valley  
Lead me to the ninety-nine  
Set a banquet place before me  
Touch my face and make it shine  
Fill my cup to overflowing  
Let your goodness follow me  
Plant your kingdom in me growing  
Let me live abundantly

Christ, here I am in the thorns  
A wayward soul with fleece all torn,  
With a spirit, frayed and worn,  
Too afraid to be reborn.  
Christ, I know you'll set me free.  
When you pick me up and carry me? (please...)



# Poetry of HOPE

## THE DARKLING THRUSH

*By Thomas Hardy*

I leant upon a coppice gate  
When Frost was spectre-grey,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted nigh  
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
And I was unaware.



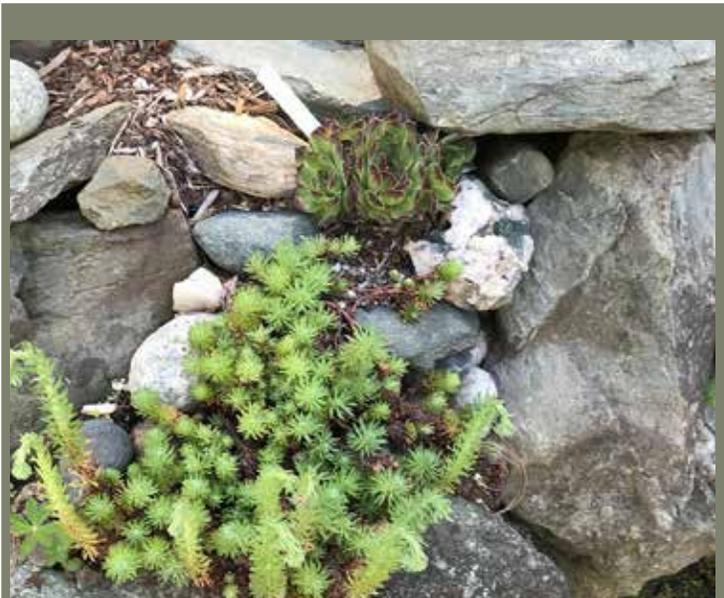
## "HOPE" IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

*By Emily Dickinson*

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me



ALPINE SUCCULENTS  
THRIVE AFTER SLEEPING BENEATH SNOW.  
HOPE IN A ROCK WALL.

*By Bev Olsen and Susan Romans  
Photo by Susan Romans*

## MY CHINESE BOX OF ROOMS

*By Philip Kuepper*

Within the room of the world,  
my room,  
where I dwell in the room of my mind,  
listening to the adagio  
of Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor,  
my thoughts racing  
like white fire across the keys.

I become the piece of music.  
I become abstract,  
in hopes to maneuver my way  
out of the way of the harms  
to which the body is vulnerable.

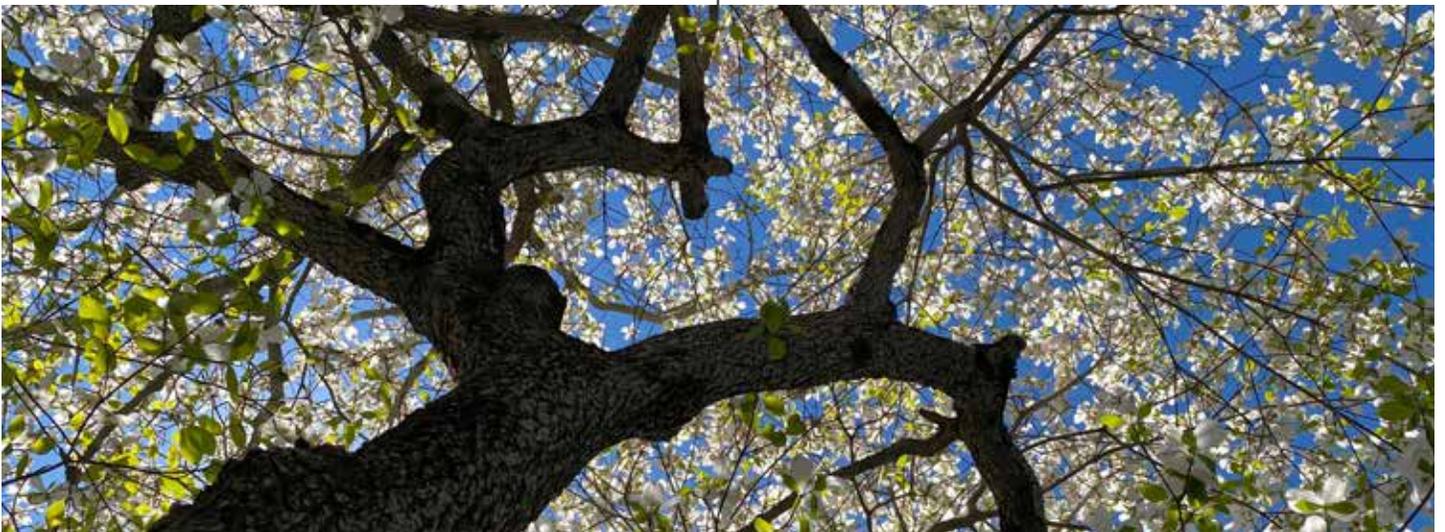
Within the room of my mind,  
my inner sanctum, where stands lit  
the lamp, the lighthouse  
on my inner shore,  
moving, from side to side, its pendulum of light,  
on the ever-darkening waters of chance;  
lamp by which I compose,  
I play a music of praise,  
for each of those on the front-line,  
fighting the virus by hand-to-hand  
combat, one patient at a time,

while the virus spirals up the tree  
anchoring Reality's garden.  
May it feast on the vaccine.  
May it die the death  
it has brought.

## A WORLD ON LOCKDOWN

*Philip Kuepper*

A virus does not discriminate.  
It is  
an equal opportunity killer.  
It is hungry.  
So it devours,  
the essence of logic.  
It does not pause to consider  
the consequences of its acts.  
It leaves a swath,  
to leave a swath.  
A virus naturally senses  
we are vulnerable,  
we who are not used to  
questioning. Instead, we are  
raised, like sheep, to follow  
the herd-worn way.  
We are immune to thinking  
about germs, the alien hosts  
that throw parties  
in the houses of our bodies:  
'Please, help yourselves to the chips.  
Dip? A beer?  
A Grolsh? You've got it,'  
a virus so inviting,  
hmm, one would think  
it was up to something.  
Yet, we don't, until it is,  
often, too late.



*Photo by Allison Ives*

# I AM

*by Adam Thomas*

Come to me all you who feel burdened, tired, or stressed;  
Take my yoke and learn from me and I will give you rest.  
Remember I am with you until the end of time.  
Remember what I told you: I am yours and you are mine (I am the...)

I am the / Way, the Truth, the Life  
I'll speak peace amidst your strife:  
In the storm, when you mourn,  
When your faith is tattered and torn,  
I will share my love.

Do not let your hearts be troubled; trust in God and me.  
I'll prepare a resting place for you to come and see.  
Until you do, I'll send the Spirit, a comfort on the road.  
And know you have each other to walk a mile and share the load.

I am the Way, the Truth, the Life  
I'll speak peace amidst your strife:  
In the storm, when you mourn,  
When your faith is tattered and torn,  
I will share my love.

I am the Light the world can shine.  
You're my branches, I'm your vine.  
Your roots, your fruits,  
Your green and growing shoots  
All remain in my love.

When you feed all those who hunger, you are feeding me:  
Give a drink to thirsty ones, and prisoners you see;  
When you tend the sick and when you give the naked clothes,  
When you greet a stranger, it is me your service knows.

I am the Way, the Truth, the Life  
I'll speak peace amidst your strife:  
In the storm, when you mourn,  
When your faith is tattered and torn,  
I will share my love.

I am the Light the world can shine.  
You're my branches, I'm your vine.  
Your roots, your fruits,  
Your green and growing shoots  
All remain in my love.

I am the Bread of Life to share.  
I'm the Shepherd of your care.  
You're my sheep,  
I'm your deep,  
Please take a faithful leap  
Into my love.  
Please leap into my love.  
Please leap into my love.

## FINDING THE WORDS

*By Teresa Norris*

Isn't it interesting to see the slogans around:  
"We're in this together" and others abound.

In cryptic terms they remind us what's real  
And some of the good ones do touch how we feel.

I know words can reach us in places down deep  
Leading us to outrage, to love, or to weep.

Other words can even sum up a life's view  
Like "It is what it is" or "I'm okay; so are you."

Yet now we need words to help us feel calm  
Are any more fitting than those found in a psalm?

Isn't God wonderful to give each what we need?  
My favorite's Psalm 91; maybe yours, twenty-three.

When life's challenges come, the psalms can provide  
A means to express all our sorrow inside.

Yet so many words speak of offering God praise  
It's even called sacrifice,\* as it seems in these days.

We're told to have faith when fear is so strong  
(I'm no expert, believe me) but I know God's not wrong.

So, I'll ponder the slogans, I'll rant, and I'll cry  
I'll thank God for my blessings, but I'll still ask him,

"Why. . . ?"

*\*\*Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and pay thy vows  
unto the Most High:*

*And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and  
thou shalt glorify me."  
(Psalm 50: 14, 15 ERV)*

# DWELLING IN THE WORD

*By Ann Ragsdale*

She has a new house, all the walls inside white and bare,  
Two stories, almost square,  
And a great affection for  
The New Oxford Annotated Bible.  
One morning, dwelling in the word  
Started becoming real.  
She opened to the first page of Genesis  
Got out a three-step ladder,  
Set it on the right inside the front door,  
Climbed to the top step so she could reach high  
And began to print each line on the wall,  
Exactly as many words as were in each line of the text,  
Come to the end of the line, begin another,  
Come to the bottom of the wall,  
Begin at the top next to it.  
This painstaking work, day after day,  
Took her many months; every room,  
Every space, filled; a thing of great beauty,  
Well worth the effort, ending on the left inside the frontdoor,  
complete.  
She smiled: her husband will  
Find it most unsettling,  
He'll be sorry he disapproved  
Her wish to make the curtains.



*Photo by Robert Welt*

## FIGHTING COVID-19 ON APRIL 20, 2020

*By Barbara Barrett*

I go around the house with my Clorox wipes  
High touch areas  
Knobs, door handles, railings, more knobs  
Keyboards, light switches  
I wonder if these wipes really work  
Is it necessary?  
Curves are flattening  
Few cases of the virus in Mystic  
People are social distancing and wearing masks  
Mostly

Doug went to the grocery store this morning  
Everyone was wearing a mask  
Except for one  
What was that person thinking?  
Perhaps he didn't care  
Perhaps he felt self-conscious  
Perhaps he couldn't breathe through a mask  
A prayer, and move on.

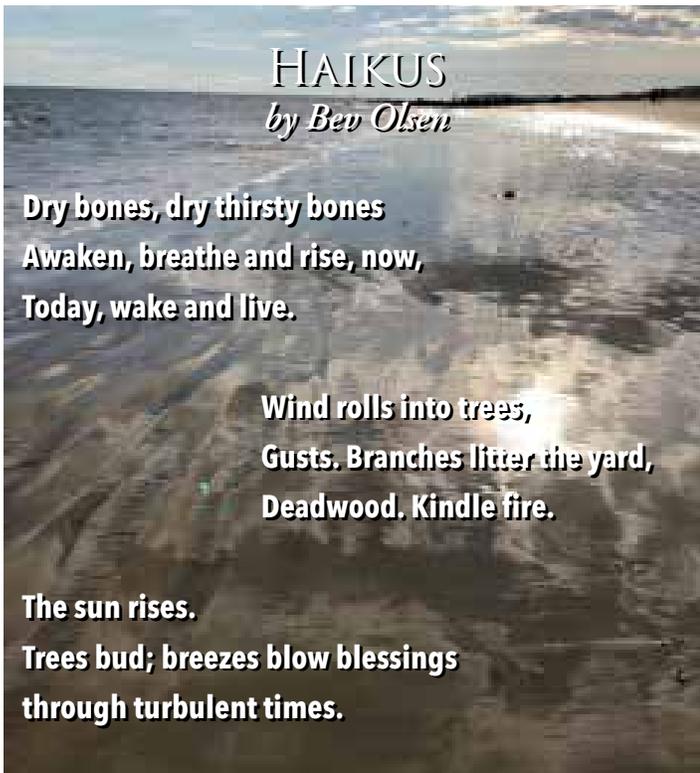
This afternoon Doug will go to the dump with a third load of leaves  
He has made an appointment and must arrive at 2:30—no earlier!  
No socializing  
It's almost funny—if it weren't deadly serious

I will drive to New London to pick up my seedlings grown by FRESH  
No browsing. No hugs with FRESH friends  
But a bag on the sidewalk with my name on a popsicle stick  
And hopefully a wave of gratitude

This is life on April 20, 2020

Thank you God for those who stock the shelves  
And those who work the cash registers  
And those who check us in at the dump  
And those who grow seedlings

Amen.



### HAIKUS *by Bew Oken*

**Dry bones, dry thirsty bones  
Awaken, breathe and rise, now,  
Today, wake and live.**

**Wind rolls into trees,  
Gusts. Branches litter the yard,  
Deadwood. Kindle fire.**

**The sun rises.  
Trees bud; breezes blow blessings  
through turbulent times.**

*Photo by Maggy Gilbert*



Photo credit: Adam Thomas

## FIRST CLASS MAIL

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