



TIDINGS

Together

Christ Church & St. Paul's & Trinity Parishes

February 2026

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CARITAS FROM CANON JEANNE: TAKE UP YOUR MAT

Once upon a time, people often read sermons. This was before the era of live-streamed church, YouTube videos, podcasts, and other digital age ways we experience a preacher's Word beyond attending church services. I am old enough to remember a time when collections of sermons were published in books and recent sermons by parish priests were printed and made available in the tract racks. To this day, I occasionally return to the books on my shelves of sermons by well-known preachers, such Peter Gomes, William Sloan Coffin, Barbara Crafton, and Barbara Brown Taylor, and copies of my favorite sermons by my own parish priests now stored in folders and plastic bins in my basement.

In January, most of us could not worship together because of major snowstorms. Meanwhile, our parishes do not (yet) provide any kind of Digital Church. This reminded me of the enjoyable art of reading sermons, of lingering over a turn of phrase, or being surprised by a new insight, or pondering how the Word from the preacher connects with something in our own lives.

For my *Caritas* column, therefore, to offer you this joy anew, I offer a fully written sermon. I preached this for Bishop Heyd's online Morning Prayer service on the Tuesday after the blizzard, so it addresses a Scripture text about which you likely have not a preacher's word this week. (Thank you to all who did attend the "Sunday Blizzard Morning Prayer" or worshipped elsewhere online during the Blizzard.)

So, snuggle up, and may you, in the words of the great Anglican evangelist and preacher John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, feel your own hearts strangely warmed.

Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk."

At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk (John 5:8-9).

Some of you may remember the performance art piece entitled *Mattress Performance* that ran during the 2014-15 academic year at Columbia University. The piece was performed by an undergraduate student named Emma Sulkowicz as her senior thesis for a visual arts degree. *Mattress Performance* involved the student, Emma, carrying a 50-pound mattress, of the kind that Columbia used in its dorms, all around the campus.

I found myself paying attention to this work in part because I was in my first year on the Cathedral Close as a member of the staff of Bishop Andy Dietsche. The Cathedral close is just next to Columbia, and I happen to be an alumna of the Columbia Journalism School. So, I was excited to be nearby. I often would walk over to Broadway for a tuna fish sandwich and a carton of chocolate milk and eat my lunch on the steps of Columbia's magnificent Low Library, a central gathering place for the community. I was aware, therefore, of what was happening on the campus.

The performance piece was also in my ken because its purpose resonated for me as a woman. *Mattress Performance* received a lot of attention within the performance art world, the political arena, and the Academy because the student, Emma, was performing the work in protest of what she believed was a dismissive and discouraging attitude on the part of Columbia towards reports of campus rape and other sexual assault. She had alleged that a male student had turned violent during what had initially been a consensual sexual encounter and that he had ended up slapping, choking, and raping her. She filed a formal complaint when she learned that two

other women claimed to be victims had also filed complaints. Again, this was all happening in 2014 and 2015, during a time when the “Me, Too” movement was starting to take hold.

The male student denied the allegations. As the investigations played out, the performance artist vowed to keep carrying her mattress around until he was either expelled or otherwise left the campus. At the last, the University cleared the male student of responsibility in all three complaints. Yet Emma persisted in her artistic expression and carried her mattress even to her graduation ceremony, during which women friends (like the friends of the paralytic in the synoptic gospels) helped her to carry it up onto the stage as she received her diploma. the President of Columbia did not shake her hand.

Mattress Performance proved very controversial and evoked strong opinions all across the nation. And I remember Mattress Performance for these reasons – but also when I hear our gospel story today.

Jesus’ healing of a paralyzed man and commanding him to take up his mat is attested to in all four gospels, like the baptism of Jesus, the feeding of the five thousand, and Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. This story clearly had significant meaning across the early Christian communities. Each account highlights Jesus’ power to heal the body and Jesus’ authority to forgive sins. Yet also, taken together, the accounts say something about the man who is healed, this through the odd detail of Jesus not only performing the healing, but also commanding the man who is healed to take up his mat as he begins to walk anew.

Why would Jesus command this?

One scholar has commented that the act of taking up a mat was a sign of Jesus’ impressive healing power: I love this – “Christ commanded the paralytic to take up his bed that it might be evident a perfect cure was wrought, and that miraculously, for the man did not recover strength by degrees, but from the extremity of weakness he stepped in to the highest degree of bodily strength.” Honestly, I find this interpretation humorous because it makes the healed man something akin to the superhero The Incredible Hulk – albeit the paralytic surges in strength not of anger and rage, but rather healing and joy.

I’ve also heard this interpretation: that by asking the man to take up his bed, Jesus is encouraging him to remember and incorporate into present reality his past pain. The idea is that we can never be truly healed if we are in denial about the sufferings and hardship of our past. It is only by remembering these that we can give thanks for the healing mercies of God and walk forward. This is what we do in Eucharistic worship, for example. We remember the horrors of Jesus’ crucifixion, they are part of who we are today, while also proclaiming Jesus’ resurrection and the future possibilities it yields: “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.”

So, Jesus commanding the paralytic to take up his mat may be about both physical health and authentic wholeness. This resonates perhaps for some of us. It does for me. It likely did for the Columbia student Emma who carried her mattress on campus day after day.

Yet there is also this: In all four gospels, the healing of the paralytic happens in the presence of religious authorities, and the moment reveals either emerging or escalating tensions between them and Jesus.

In the synoptic gospels, Jesus doesn't only say to the paralytic, "Take up your mat," but also adds, "and go to your home." Okay. That could mean simply: *Go home and think about all this and prepare yourself for the new reality.*

Yet then in John's version, the one we're reading today, there is also this: Jesus heals the paralytic man on the Sabbath. In John's version, the healing takes place in Jerusalem, in the presence of the religious authorities there – the ones at the center of religious and political power and authority. And stunningly, the religious authorities not only start persecuting Jesus because of the paralytic's healing, the text says, but also turn against the man who has just been healed, saying, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat."

In Jesus' day, no faithful Jew could do work on the Sabbath. This was due to God's commandment to honor the sabbath and keep it holy by resting and not doing work, just as God rested on the seventh day in the first creation story of the Bible. What constituted work fell to interpretation and proscription by the religious authorities. Something that was considered work was to carry things from public to private domains, or vice versa. The prohibition is called in Hebrew *hotzaah*. Thus, for the healed paralytic to carry his bed from the crowded public place where Jesus had healed him to his own home was in violation of the Jewish law as interpreted by the religious authorities.

Our story today, therefore, is not one only of Jesus' spiritual power and authority to forgive sins, and not only one of an authentic healing. It is also call story, a story of vocation. When Jesus commands the paralytic to take up his mat and walk, Jesus is asking him to participate in Jesus' own mission:

For Jesus himself broke Jewish law, rabbinic law, to fulfill the law. On the Sabbath he fed his disciples, he healed the sick, he confronted religious authority for the sake of justice and righteousness. The Sabbath was made for us, he said, and not us for the Sabbath.

To take up one's mat, then, is similar to taking up one's Cross. *Come, be like me*, Jesus is urging the paralytic, *even though the powers and authorities will turn on you and persecute you. Witness and teach and heal as I do.*

This is why I think of *Mattress Performance* when I hear the story of Jesus healing the paralytic. The "he said, she said" of whether the Columbia student Emma was truly raped will never be resolved. What did happen is that she took up her mat, the symbol of her pain, to confront a system she believed unjust. Her risk-taking in her performance did lead to greater awareness, up to the national level, of the prevalence of sexual assault on campuses and to the development across many colleges and universities of policies and protocols to address violence against women.

Jesus asks each of us to remember pain and suffering, including our own, for authentic healing. Jesus also asks us to notice when pain and suffering is caused by unjust and oppressive systems, and to confront those systems – as the paralytic did in taking up his mat.

In our own day, as the people of Minneapolis are doing. The pain and fear caused by the current massive deployment of federal immigration forces and the horrific deaths of Renee and Alex, and we pray not others, will not be forgotten and will part of the city's future identity and our nation's. Yet also, the stand the people of Minneapolis are taking and the witness they are courageously making against current immigration tactics, what our Episcopal Church views as immoral and evil, is like the paralytic standing up. The standing up is already changing Minneapolis' future and bringing healing and hope for a new and better reality.

Dear Christian people, when we peacefully advocate and bravely walk around with our mattresses, or our posters saying “God’s love melts ICE,” when we are witnesses to dignity however we can do this, when we peacefully make no peace with oppression, when we take up our crosses to follow Jesus knowing that the powers of this world will respond by persecuting us – when we do these things, we help bring Jesus’ healing to others, even as Jesus heals us. We participate in Christ’s resurrection after his crucifixion, we become his risen and whole body in the world today, and we say yes to Jesus’ call to us today to participate in his mission. We are called to bring to fruition the healing of the paralyzed, healing for those who yearn to walk into God’s peaceable and glorious future. Jesus’ mission, and therefore our own, is the health and salvation of all.

Church Services during February

Sunday Worship 10:00 AM



Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany February 1

at Christ Church

*Commissioning of the 2026 Vestry
Annual Meeting Part II
Blessing of Candles*

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany February 8

at St. Paul’s

*Annual Meeting with
Commissioning of the 2026 Vestry*

Last Sunday after the Epiphany February 15

at Christ Church

Birthday Blessings

First Sunday in Lent

February 22

at St. Paul’s

Healing Ministry

Laying on of Hands and Anointings

Sunday, February 1 Eve of Candlemas: Bring Candles for Blessing!



On Sunday, February 1, we will conclude worship at Christ Church with an observance of the Feast of the Presentation, also known as Candlemas, a day in the Church calendar when we remember Jesus’ presentation by Mary and Joseph in the Jerusalem Temple forty days after his birth. Led by the Spirit, Simeon and Anna came to the Temple that same day and recognized the baby Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah (Luke 2:21-38). Simeon burst into song, proclaiming Jesus as “a light to enlighten the nations.” In celebration of this witness, a Church custom is to bless candles on Candlemas, both for worship and for use at home. Everyone in church will receive a candle as a gift, yet you are also invited to bring any candles from home you wish to have blessed – beeswax, paraffin, soy, oil, electric! – as a sign of the light of Christ in your daily lives.

***Christ Church is located at 7423 South Broadway in the Village of Red Hook.
St. Paul’s and Tivoli Parish is located at 39 Woods Road in the Village of Tivoli.***

The Beginning of a Holy Lent

ASH WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5

Holy Eucharist with Burning of Palms & Imposition of Ashes 12:00 Noon at St. Paul's

 The Ash Wednesday liturgy is solemn and beautiful, as we remember our vulnerability to sin and death, and the grace of forgiveness and risen life which God offers to us. A custom of the Church is to burn palms blessed and saved from Palm Sunday to create the ashes for Ash Wednesday liturgies and individual impositions. We'll burn palms as a prelude to the Ash Wednesday liturgy. Feel welcome to bring your palms from home!

For those who cannot get away mid-day
**Holy Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes
7:00 PM at Christ Church**

A brief, quiet Liturgy of the Word, with no homily



RED HOOK COUNCIL OF CHURCH'S LENTEN SERVICE
Wednesday, February 25, 7:00 PM
St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
The Rev. James Miller, Preacher



This symbol is an expression of ecumenism, a word derived from two Greek words, "oikoumene" ("the inhabited earth) and" oikos" ("house"). Together, they can be understood as "the household of Christians throughout the world." The Church is portrayed as a boat with the mast in the form of a Cross. These early Christian symbols embody the faith and mission shared by all Christian denominations.

Our two parishes have long valued ecumenical friendships with our Christian kin of other denominations in Red Hook. During Lent, we express this friendship by participating in an ecumenical series of worship services on Wednesday evenings, by which we can visit other churches and worship together within the wider Christian community. This year, the Lenten Ecumenical Wednesdays will begin on February 25th at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Both Christ Church and St. Paul's will be hosting during March. For your planning, see the schedule of Lenten Wednesdays on the next page.

St. Paul's Lutheran is located at 7412 S. Broadway in the Village of Red Hook.



Home & Hospital Eucharist Visits

If you are unable to attend worship due to illness or other hardship, Christ Church and St. Paul's can bring communion to you. Simply contact Deacon Linda, who will arrange for a Eucharistic Visit by a pastoral minister.



**Ecumenical Friendship:
Red Hook Area Council of Churches
Lenten Wednesdays, 7:00 PM**

February 25

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
The Rev. James Miller, *Preaching*
7412 S. Broadway

March 4

St. John's Reformed Church
The Rev. Alisha Riepma-Hosier, *Preaching*

March 11

Christ Church of Red Hook
Chaplain Jody Spiak of
Northern Dutchess Hospital, *Preaching*

March 18

Red Hook United Methodist Church
The Rev. Caroline Beringer, *Preaching*

March 25, The Annunciation

St. Paul's & Trinity Parish
The Rev. Canon K. Jeanne Person, *Preaching*

ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION



**BIBLE STUDY: THEMES IN
MATTHEW'S GOSPEL**

Come to the final two sessions!

We have started well in this special series meant to help us read, contemplate, and respond to Matthew's Gospel, the Gospel being read in the current liturgical year. The series is exploring Matthew's theological emphases and understandings of Jesus. Canon Jeanne is offering this online Introduction via Zoom on three Wednesdays at noon. There are two more sessions! Here is the remaining schedule:

February 4 The Kingdom of Heaven

February 11 Mountaintops

Each session of the series is independent of the others and last no more than an hour. You are welcome to attend either or both of the remaining sessions. For security reasons, we are not giving the Zoom link in printed materials: If you wish to participate, please email Canon Jeanne with your interest, canonkjeanne@gmail.com. She will be glad, indeed!

**IN THE BLEAK
MIDWINTER**



**Watching the snow from my
kitchen window; Audrey Smith**

TWELVE STEP MEETINGS

Open to all pursuing the Twelve Steps and seeking companionship in sobriety.

At St. Paul's, in Memorial Hall

Al-Anon (for friends and families): Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m.

AA (Alcoholics Anonymous): Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m.

On Sunday Jan 18

Neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet, nor hail will keep our parish from Sunday service.

The roads were not clear. The snow was falling. And we had people at Christ Church at 10:00. Vestry elections were held, and outgoing members were recognized. This included Dave Nandor whose years of Warden and Treasurer received a standing ovation. Penny Conroe was also acknowledged with her positive outlook and thrift shoppe dedication.

Thank you to incoming and outgoing church helpers.



Christ Church Thrift Shop

Volunteers needed to join the Thrift Shop team! Our hours are Fridays 1-5 and Saturdays 10-5.

Opportunities exist, on request, outside these hours for trained volunteers.

If interested, please contact:

Penny Conroe 619-855-9881, Barb Zelie 845-464-7225, or Carola Warren 917-708-3007



POETRY CORNER

In 2025, our two parishes celebrated the 175th anniversary of the first Episcopal worship in the Village of Red Hook and the seeds of the common life and mission by publishing a book of poems by parishioners. Each poem was based on the poem *Where I'm From* by George Ella Lyon. By completing a fill-in-the-blank template following the structure of Lyon's poem, parishioners created lovely poems that tell others, with poetic beauty, more about themselves.

Now, we welcome further submissions for publication in *Tidings Together* and perhaps only on a new website for both parishes to debut in 2026. If you would like the template to make a submission, please speak with Canon Jeanne. On the next page is a lovely poem by Rosalie Cartier!

Where I'm From
by Rosalie Cartier

I am from a small town in Pennsylvania north of Philadelphia,
born during the Depression,
a difficult time for my parents.

The area was inhabited by Polish and Slavic folks
who worked in the steel mills and factories.

I am from parents who did their best to make life comfortable,
with few amenities.

I am from staunch Catholic heritage, attended Catholic school
with strict nuns,
encouraged by my parents and teachers to get an education
and work hard.

I am from many wonderful memories of growing up,
Vacations at the Jersey Shore,
often too much sun and no sunscreen; Ouch!
Going to Grandma's on Saturdays
and finding large pots of
perogies, Gołąbki , and other Polish fare
on the back of the coal stove.
Help yourself!
A large family of aunts, uncles, and cousins
streaming in
to enjoy Bopcha's delicious food.
Grandma sitting there smiling, enjoying the company –
speaking only in Polish.

I am from a nursing education at Temple University, then
Much of my life centered on my career; I was
well-respected in supervising and managing positions.

I am from my beloved husband and two children
who also shaped the person I am.

I met Fred at a coffee house
in his hometown,
while I was working at Morristown Memorial Hospital,
and he was finishing his third year of seminary
at Philadelphia Divinity School.
He was doing what I refer to as an internship
at his home church in Bernardsville.

He lured this Catholic girl
to his Episcopal parish on Sundays.
We married one year later
in the Episcopal seminary's chapel.

I am from 54 years as a clergy wife.

I am from Christ Church of Red Hook,
our home for 29 years,
and the memories of there I will always cherish
and still am making.