**Back to School Prayer Service**

September 1, 2020

*Officiant: Caroline Cox*

*Musicians: Bobby Bartolotta, Errol Fern*

*Reflections: Kate Glass, Kaley Richmond, Andy Eldridge*

*Readers: Olivia Richmond, Ben Glass, Grace Probe*

*Final Blessing: The Reverend Canon Carrie Schofield-Broadbent*

(Erin will welcome people and introduce Caroline)

Officiant: Welcome everyone to the Back to School service for the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York. Tonight we are led by the young people of 4West, a youth group encompassing the churches of St. John’s Marcellus, St. James Skaneateles, St. Luke’s Camillus and St. Mark’s Syracuse. Tonight, we wish to wrap students, teachers, administrators and parents in prayer as everyone begins the challenge of a new school year in uncertain times.

Officiant: We begin in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Officiant: Our first reading is offered by Olivia Richmond from St. Mark’s Church in Syracuse:

A Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah.

**10** For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon’s seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. **12** Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. **13** When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, **14** I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

Officiant: Our first reflection will be offered by Ms. Kate Glass. Kate is a rising junior at West Genesee High School. She plays cello in her school orchestra and is a member of the Symphoria Youth Orchestra. She and her family attend church at St. James’ Church in Skaneateles and she is a veteran of Happening. Welcome, Kate!

*(Kate’s reflection)*

Officiant: We welcome Ms. Grace Probe of St. Peter’s in Cazenovia for our Gospel reading.

### A reading from the Gospel according to John.

**14** “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26659a)] in God, believe also in me. **2** In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26660b)] **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. **4** And you know the way to the place where I am going.”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26662c)] **5** Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” **6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **7** If you know me, you will know[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26665d)] my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

**8** Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” **9** Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? **10** Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. **11** Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. **12** Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. **13** I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **14** If in my name you ask me[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26672e)] for anything, I will do it.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**All: Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

Officiant: We welcome Mr. Ben Glass of St. James’ Skaneateles to read the poem “When This Is Over” by Laura Kelly Fanucci. The poem will be followed by a moment of silence as we pray for all those who are suffering in this pandemic.

"When this is over, may we never again take for granted

A handshake with a stranger

Full shelves at the store

Conversations with neighbors

A crowded theater

Friday night out

The taste of communion

A routine checkup

The school rush each morning

Coffee with a friend

The stadium roaring

Each deep breath

A boring Tuesday

Life itself.

When this ends

may we find

that we have become

more like the people

we wanted to be

we were called to be

we hoped to be

and may we stay

that way — better

for each other

because of the worst."

(Silence for about a minute)

Officiant: May God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Officiant: Our next reflection will be offered by Mr. Andy Eldridge. Mr. Eldridge is an educator with over twenty years of experience, and is the principal at Jamesville DeWitt middle school. He is a member of the vestry at St. John’s Church in Marcellus, and his children Liam and Lucy attend Marcellus schools. Welcome, Mr. Eldridge!

*(Mr. Eldridge’s reflection)*

Officiant: We will now have a musical interlude, led by Marcellus sophomores Bobby Bartolotta and Errol Fern. Bobby and Errol attend St. John’s Church in Marcellus and can be heard around town in their band, AMP. Please make sure your microphone is muted, and feel free to sing along to My Lighthouse.

Officiant: Our final reflection of the evening will be offered by Kaley Richmond. Kaley is a freshman at Onondaga Community College. She was a member of the class of 2020 at Westhill High School, where she recently starred in their production of Bye Bye Birdie. Kaley attends St. Mark’s Church in Syracuse with her family. Welcome Kaley!

*(Kaley’s reflection)*

*The Intercessions*

Officiant: Our response is “God, protect them.” *(put your hand up to welcome people to say it with you)*

**All: God, protect them.**

Officiant: For all in direct patient care; give them strength for their service and strength to ask for help when they are in need.

**All: God, protect them.**

Officiant: For all the sick; bring them to full health and restore them to those who love them.

**All: God, protect them.**

Officiant: For all those isolated in their homes; sustain them in joy and peace.

**All: God, protect them.**

Officiant: For decision-makers at all levels; send them your wisdom and good counsel to serve their communities.

**All: God, protect them.**

Officiant: For all students returning to school this fall in person or online; may they be blessed with faith, perseverance, connection and creativity.

**All: God, protect them.**

Officiant: For all teachers preparing a place for their students; may they be safe from all harm and show love to their pupils.

**All: God, protect them.**

Officiant: For all parents and guardians; may they be given peace in their hearts and wisdom in their decisions.

**All: God, protect them.**

Officiant: For all those who have died and those who grieve their loss in isolation; comfort them in their sorrow.

**All: God, protect them.**

Officiant: At this time we will have a period of silence for your own personal intentions. If you would like to type any of your intentions into the chat I will pray them out loud with the group.

*(time of silence)*

*(after a few minutes read out loud the prayers that were typed)*

Officiant: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.

Officiant: As the author C.S. Lewis wrote, “There are far better things ahead than any we leave behind.” For all of our teachers, we pray for creativity and perseverance as they weather this storm. For our administrators, we pray for wise leadership and listening hearts. For all our fellow students, we pray that you do not lose hope. It gets better, and this will not last forever. Remember you are kind, you are smart, you are important. For parents, we pray for patience and love. As Julian of Norwich once wrote, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”

Officiant: For our final blessing this evening we welcome the Reverend Canon Carrie Schofield-Broadbent.

*(Mother Carrie’s blessing)*

Officiant: May the Lord bless us and keep us; may the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.

**All: Amen.**

Officiant: Let us go in peace.

**All: Thanks be to God.**