“...Keep Ithaka always in your mind. Arriving there is what you are destined for. But don’t hurry the journey at all. Better if it lasts for years, so you’re old by the time you reach the island, wealthy with all you’ve gained on the way, not expecting Ithaka to make your rich. Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey. Without her you wouldn’t have set out. She has nothing to give you now. And if you find her poor, Ithaka won’t have fooled you. Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, you’ll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.” C. P. Cavafy

Someone recently asked why I feel called to interim ministry – after thinking a moment, I responded that in all of my professional life, whether in academia or in the priesthood, I have “specialized” with people and institutions on thresholds. Whether it is hospice or seminary or entering or leaving college, whether it is parishes which are closing or parishes in transition, all of them begin with people on their way somewhere else. As many scripture passages and fairy tales begin, a hero or heroine, either alone or with a community, sets out on a journey. Their minds are focused on the end. Like them, we rarely are interested on what happens in between. We just want to get there. Yet, the middle part of the story is really the most entrancing. It is the place where God meets us. It is the place where we face challenges and enemies, where we are confronted by strangers and allies, the place where we overcome challenges and discover new gifts.

In spite of the joke that the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land took as long as it did because Moses wouldn’t stop to ask for directions, it took as long as it did for the Israelites to discover what it meant to be God’s chosen people. They rebelled, they whined, they doubted, they begged for God’s assistance and it always came, though not necessarily in ways they expected.

As with any pilgrimage or fairy story the challenges and the triumphs are what make the characters the heroes and heroines that God calls them to be. Often, it is more about recognizing existing identities which have been there from the beginning. For instance, the healer who finally through medical school and residency and internships is prepared to dawn the mantle of physician. The scarecrow has discovered that he has a brain, the Lion has found courage which was there to begin with, and Dorothy learns that home is right in her own backyard. We are changed in our movements through transitions but only to the extent that we become more truly ourselves.

We wouldn’t volunteer for the anxious parts of the journey. But, in looking back, whether we are Bilbo or Moses or Dorothy, we needed a place to aim for in order to become. The journey and the companions we find along the way become greater than the destination. The movement from here to there is filled with adventure and serendipity. May we never be so concerned about our goals that we miss the glory which meets us every step along the way.

Alon+
We often think of times of transition as challenging, difficult, tedious, scary and onerous. Yet it seems to me that sometimes a time of transition is a time when we can feel most alive. My last five years since starting seminary have been chock full of transition, sometimes expected and sometimes far from expected—sometimes welcome and sometimes not so welcome. It has been such a blessing for me to be a part of this community in its transition, as I am going through my own life changes.

At St. Luke’s we are in a time of transition that is unpredictable, yet full of life. We have new parishioners, new kids in the congregation, a wonderful priest who cares deeply for us, new worship services, and a very vibrant sense of community. I have repeatedly seen so many different examples of how everyone in this community cares for each other, and this time of transition demonstrates how important that caring is.

What would life be like if there were no transitions? It seems to me that it would be like a world without people of different personalities, or like a year without a change of season. Without transition we are prone to lethargy, boredom, and wasting. With transition we are alive, vibrant, alert and watchful, ever waiting for the perfection of God’s kingdom in our midst.

God’s creation was made for change, and the stories in the Bible of transition are a very important part of our understanding that. The story of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt to return to their homeland is one of the best-known transitions in history, but along that journey they were often angry and demoralized. Christ’s message in the Gospels necessitated that his followers transition from a view of God as a God of strict law to a God of passionate love.

One of the most difficult things in life is actually to recognize a time as a time of transition, rather than only a time of the END of something good. The well-known saying, “All good things must come to an end,” is, in many instances, a story of the Bible. Yet it is difficult for us to understand that the end of one good thing may become the beginning of a better thing. In the midst of a difficult transition, we become afraid of what is ahead, failing to recognize that renewal and hope can burst out into our lives with such radiance. Are there times when you can look back at events of your life—and without diminishing the pain of a difficult time—recognize the ultimate good that resulted?
Transitions by Mike Boscher

When I was asked to talk about my transition after being baptized and confirmed, I realized that my life has always been in some sort of transition.

Being a cancer survivor my life changed dramatically. My partner, Jim, and I experienced a year of turmoil and uncertainty. But through the strength and love of family and friends and our faith in God, we survived and our relationship grew stronger. I began to see things in a different light and to appreciate life as a gift. Soon after, our children came into our lives. When I first held my daughter Abby in my arms, I experienced the most joyful moment of my life. I realized that I had become a dad. Ethan joined us soon after, and we became the family we are today. Last year, Jim, my partner of 22 years, and I were married at St. Luke’s in the presence of family, friends and our church community. The Reverend Robert Lamborn’s moving sermon was the most memorable highlight of the day. He touched the hearts of all who were present.

This year, I was baptized and confirmed. My motivation was to feel closer to my husband and children. The baptism was held at St. Luke’s, with Jim’s father and stepmother as my sponsors. The confirmation was held at St. John The Divine in a traditional ceremony that led me to reflect on the history and personal meaning of Christianity.

I believe that my conversion to Christianity represents a new beginning to my spiritual life.

While I am sure my life will continue to undergo transition, I am supported by my faith in God and the love of my family and the St. Luke’s community.

Grapevine

Sally Beckett held her last Church School session Sunday, June 14 – this after 17 years of Sundays. “It’s a very important ministry,” she said, noting her heart was there, “but it was time for me to step away; time for someone else to step in and take this on, and it doesn’t have to be for 17 years!” However it works out, she wants potential teachers to know, “I learned so much along with my pupils - and it’s fun. The curriculum is divided into 3 parts: the Old Testament, the New Testament and Miscellaneous. Sometimes they learned about church architecture, the altar guild, the church calendar, and more.

Cont. on p. 6
I am a biochemist which makes me a technically based writer. Basically, as a scientist I write down what I observe and test theories to see if they hold up to be true. The best I can do is to speak to you using my accumulated knowledge and from the heart. God gave me gifts of logic and science. The writing and singing gifts were given to others. Hence, this is why I miss the choir during the summer months. ;-) Here is one of my scientific observations. As one ages, one looks and reviews one’s own life. In general, they see many transitional stages: from baby to child, to teenager, to young adult, to middle-aged adult, and finally to elderly adult. Many challenges occur in each stage which requires us to continually adapt to these changes.

Here are two accounts giving some insight in dealing with changes and issues. The first theory I’ve heard was from a fellow female work colleague when her two boys were babies. She said, ‘Just when you figured out to become a master of one pattern like changing diapers that skill set is no longer needed and you have to learn a new one.’ The second theory I learned was many years ago when I worked with an older woman whose husband used to beat her and left her with five kids to raise. She worked two jobs and not one of her kids was a delinquent. Many of them grew up to have successful lives. She said, ‘It’s not what kind of negatives issues you have in your life, but how you deal with them. You have to grow and learn from them.’ Considering she didn’t have an easy life, she could still smile and she cherished the good and bad moments. What I learned from her to take all those negative moments and turn them around into positive ones.

Now here is my current situation. My father passed away in 2001, my sister in 2007, and finally my mother in 2015. My aunts and uncle are also gone. They did not have children which leaves me with no cousins or extended family. This makes me the last living relative on my side. This is why losing my mother has hit me so hard.

I have no anchor, no roots, except in memories. My foundation is shaken to the core. Don’t get me wrong as I am very grateful that I have a loving husband and son. I know I must continue on. I am now transitioning into the rock for my family; I am the matriarch. But to keep this all in perspective, I also realize that I am but a pebble when compared to God. For He is my true rock; He is my foundation. I cannot be strong without God’s love and support. I ask for His guidance all the time. I understand that it’s not about me. It’s about my impact on others. It’s about all of us being brother and sister to one another. I’m not alone. I can’t properly express the happiness that I have coming to this church. The clergy and the congregation are wonderful. I am so thankful to partake in this brotherhood and sisterhood and learn as I go.

One final note, I’ve watched the television shows Intervention and Hoarders. It breaks my heart to see their suffering. Many times the root cause of their disease is in the loss of a family member or they were abandoned in some way. I truly feel for them and understand all too well they want to fill that void. But drugs and accumulation of ‘stuff’ is looking in all the wrong places. The void to fill is a spiritual one. We all need God’s love to fill us (Thanks Mike Watson for this thought). But where is God? How do we find Him? Answer: in the Bible, in our church, and in each other. This is my scientific conclusion. My sincerest gift is my love for you all and for God’s blessings to everyone.
In the Christmas movie *It’s A Wonderful Life*, the main character, George Bailey, experiences an intervention with a guardian angel. During the intervention, George sees all the lives he has touched and how different life in his community of Bedford Falls would be had he never been born.

If the guardian angel Clarence Odbody were with us at St. Luke’s today, what might he show us about our transition? Who has touched our lives? What lives have we touched in return? What great things might we have missed out on if we weren’t in transition?

We been blessed with great leadership and care from both Rob and Alon. We are immeasurably fortunate to have enjoyed Mike Watson as a Ministry Intern and now Ministry Assistant. St. Luke’s in return provided support to Rob and his family during personal crisis and has offered a warm and inviting home to Mike on his journey to ordination.

Our transition has enabled community barbeques, outdoor movies, indoor concerts, outdoor services, Sunday evening service and vibrant adult education. It has enabled us to welcome new families to St. Luke’s and welcome back many former parishioners who are again active at St. Luke’s. We have begun to build relationships with neighboring churches.

Transitions can be challenging, and perhaps take longer than expected. Perhaps we just want it to be over; to get back to “normal” as quickly as possible. That’s OK. As you make your personal reflections on our transition – think about the lives that have been touched, and how different life in our community would have been had we never experienced this transition.

*Pat Saxton*
Grapevine, cont.

Sally stepped down as Warden this year, too. “The wonderful thing about being warden’” Sally said, "was the opportunity I had to get to know the church very well. What are the priorities of the congregation? That was so important. And I am not leaving! I’m still singing in the choir, and I will be doing Plant Patch again. “

This year was the most profitable ever!” And it helped by having assistants sharing the work with her. That may be the approach to church school as well. She reminded me that thanks are owed Caroline Saxton and Caroline Mason who took over the Outreach part of Church School, which has been an enormous help. So a great big thank you to Sally Beckett for all that you are, for all that you have done for the church.

Thanks to Mary Zipkin who orchestrated a fun feast for us on Shrove Tuesday, as only Mary can, and got us back on the track of having Women’s dinners this spring; to Mo. Alon White for preparing a tasty soup for a Maundy Thursday supper, bringing new people to that moving evening service and to Mike Watson, who hosted a barbecue on our church grounds, open to the community, and come they did. A delicious outreach.

On April 12 The Rev. Alon White baptized two: baby Mackenzie K. Culver, daughter of Craig and Daria Culver; and Mike R.

Boscher, our Church Treasurer. Mike was also recently confirmed (see his piece). On Sunday, June 21, Charlotte Parker, daughter of Kate and Nick Parker was baptized. Congratulations to all!

Sad to say but Pat and Jim Skinger will be moving away once they find their house in Cape Cod. The Skingers have been long-time, active members of the church. The last event Jim put on and performed in was the ESP fund raising concert in January, which was such a success. Pat wrote for and helped edit Cornerstone. We will miss you both.

Maura Rosenthal’s son Richard spent this semester of Jr. year in Tasmania, an island that’s part of Australia and New Zealand, studying the environment in the wilderness. He returns to Cornell for his senior year.

Those of you who remember Jane Chatfield, long time church member who moved to Maine, will be proud to know she has finished her studies and become a Deacon with ministries in hospital visiting and much much more.

Brian Kershner will be starting college in the fall at Bucknell University in PA. where he will study mechanical engineering. We will miss your excellent readings – and you!

New St Luke’s members are Brad Burdick and Lucy Williams, a lovely engaged couple who are thinking about a spring wedding with their large families and many friends. Brad was brought up Episcopalian. Lucy’s background was evangelical but she is quite familiar with the tenets and ritual of the church through working once as a naturalist at an Episcopalian after-school program. They are both happy that they found St. Luke’s and so are we!

In addition to Anna Alfano, we send our condolences to Henry Skilling who lost his father, and to Karen Lucia, whose mother died.

Betty Wald