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ON THE COVER:

Celebrating a bounty purchased at the Farmers' Market! It runs Sunday mornings in the parking lot throughout the summer.

We welcome your contributions!

You are always encouraged to submit reflections and articles. Email communications@stjohnsstpaul.org *before* next issue's deadline of :

August 10

Thank you!

St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church

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FROM THE REVEREND JERED WEBER-JOHNSON

Dear Friends in Christ,

This past month while on retreat, I had the opportunity to finally finish reading the Reverend Pauli Murray's autobiography, *Song In*

A Weary Throat, detailing their life's work in law, civil rights, and eventually, their call to the priesthood.

Pauli Murray's life was intertwined with some of the greatest names and events in our modern national story: friends with Eleanor Roosevelt, and influential in the legal work of Thurgood Marshall and the late Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Pauli's life influenced significant and landmark civil rights law and made impressive early contributions to the work of feminist and antiracist movements in our country.

Yet what impressed me most about this quite impressive life were the number of points where Pauli's work remained largely behind the scenes. At several turns, they contributed ideas, actions, writing, and thought that would be either too early in the movement to catch on, or be built on and perfected by others whose names would go on to be attached to those revolutionary ideas, actions, and writings. In many ways, Pauli's obscurity is the unfortunate result of their own identity, their gender, sexuality, and race, and how these often intersected at the point of interlocking oppressions, which led to being lesser known or recognized. But, it is also true that Pauli's career and life were given intentionally to the often humble, often obscure, and often behindthe-scenes work needed in the civil rights and justice movements they so firmly believed in and were devoted to.

This humble service brought to mind the image of Jesus washing Peter's feet, an image we are reminded of each year on Maundy Thursday, and, at St. John's, on Service Sunday, when we recognize and honor all those who have served here in one capacity or another, through the many ministries of

our faith community. We also recognize one person each year whose humble, behind the scenes, service, exemplifies to us the work of a servant leader. This year we recognized both Bob Linehan and Jenny Koops for the 2020 and 2021 program years. Their work, in leading readers, Godly Play, vestry, streaming media, and so much more, happened away from the eyes of most of our members, and largely went without our knowledge or full appreciation.

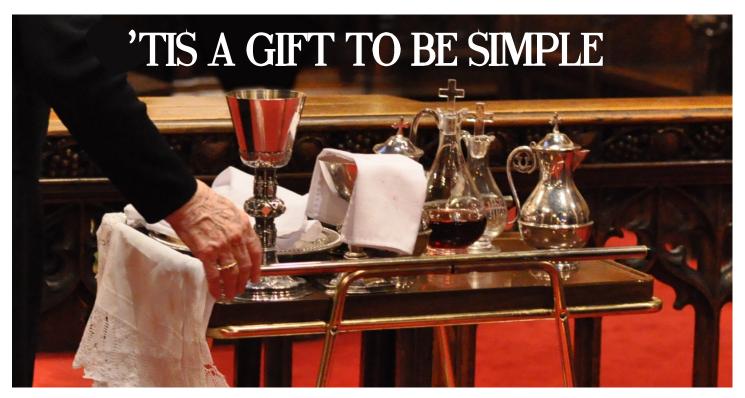
This is, in many ways, the call of our faith, to serve humbly and give even when others don't see or recognize the gift given. In this, there are many rewards, not least the joy that comes from seeing our own efforts well-received by those who needed them. And, when we serve behind the scenes, we are also practicing humility, a virtue that can help us see our own lives in right proportion to the generosity and abundance of God, that we too are dependent upon and graced by the gifts of God's love, often unrecognized and invisible to our own eyes. Humble service is an essential part of how we are discipled into the transformative and life-changing way of love taught and exemplified by Jesus.

It is summer, and we are given these precious few weeks to soak in the sun, and enjoy the activities that this season brings. In this time, I would invite you to prayerfully consider the season ahead, in the fall, when we will reengage our many ministries, launch new program, and seek to be faithful stewards of all God has given as we seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves. How can you be a part of these ministries and practice the humble and often invisible work of serving others, following Jesus, and being a part of the Body of Christ at St. John's.

Have a great summer, everyone, and I look forward to seeing you in worship!

Peace,





By the Rev. Jered Weber-Johnson

When I started seminary, I had spent very little time in the Episcopal Church—less than three years, to be exact. There was so much I had still to learn about the tradition, the theology, and especially the liturgy of our church.

Fortunately, seminary gives you many opportunities to learn in this area, and perhaps my greatest education came as part of my service in the Guild of Sacristans. Every seminarian was required to participate in one of the two guilds on campus, and I could not have asked for a better classroom to learn about the finer details of worship. The Guild of Sacristans was the equivalent of a parish Altar Guild: the body in a worshiping community that sets up the vessels and elements necessary to each liturgy, whether baptism, Eucharist, or one of the "offices" like Morning Prayer.

Not only did I learn much in this time, I also began to find deep and meaningful connections between my everyday life and the powerful witness of worship to God's love and care for me and indeed all of us. Through the work in the sacristy—folding linens; caring for vestments (the ceremonial clothing worn while leading worship); getting ready for Eucharist by setting up the "stack" of chalice (cup), paten (plate), purificator (small towel), bread, wine, burse and veil—I began to find that these objects

reminded me of their everyday counterparts in the rest of my life, infusing the mundane with shimmers of the Divine.

In our shared life in church, external and visible acts require great amounts of behind the scenes preparation and care. We do not show up at the food shelf to feed the hungry without copious amounts of planning, preparing, and organizing first. So it is in worship: the table must be set and then cleared; the next liturgy must be planned and prepared. All of this requires great amounts of time and energy from the Altar Guild.

These individuals perform the seemingly mundane and menial tasks of washing, folding, stocking, setting, clearing, and resetting for the worship services. Yet, these same individuals are those who come up close and personal with the most sacred and holy parts of our life in community.

I spoke with some of these men and women to hear their stories, what keeps them coming back to serve on the guild, and what is it that they value about this opportunity to serve at St. John's.

DECADES OF SERVICE: DIANE POWER

It is hard to talk about the Altar Guild at St. John's without thinking of Diane Power. Diane started serving on the Guild not long after she joined St. John's in about 1999, and she hasn't taken a break since. For more than a decade, Diane has been the

head of the altar guild: organizing teams, sending out communications, coordinating with the clergy, and ensuring that members of the guild were present at every liturgy.

For Diane, being part of the Altar Guild is in her DNA. The small parish she grew up in didn't have a lot of members, and in those days, every woman in the church was a part of the guild. Diane remembers at 12 years old, "right after I was confirmed, my mother turned me over to one of the women and said 'train her'." The work with the guild continued until she left for college and at almost every Episcopal Church she has belonged to since.

Diane concludes her time as head of the Altar Guild this year, and she leaves big shoes to fill, though she promises she intends to keep serving on the guild as a part of the team.

For Diane as for many members of the Altar Guild, the point is service. As I listened I heard this refrain echoed over and again, that to belong to a faith community means you should give to it.

"A SIMPLE WAY TO GIVE BACK": CAROLINE CHURCH

Caroline Church, one of our young adult members, joined St. John's a few years ago, and signed up to volunteer with the Altar Guild when Diane recruited her one Service Sunday. "It was pretty simple," she says. And the simplicity is a big part of the reason she has continued.

"I realize that I'm not going to be an expert on every aspect of the church, and that's okay. This is a simple and easy way to get to know people and the church community, and give back."

Caroline grew up in this tradition, and remembers acolyting as a youth in her church. Like many young acolytes, coming up close and personal with worship led to anxieties that somehow she would mess up the liturgy, disappoint her priests, or make an embarrassing mistake. Being close to the liturgy again, in the Altar Guild, involved a shift of perspective. "Now as an adult, I trust that the clergy will be okay with the setup and be able to adapt if something is missing or not as it was supposed to be. It doesn't feel so urgent that it be 'perfect' anymore. You can't actually screw this up."

Caroline realized that connection, not perfection, was the reason to serve in church, whether with the

Altar Guild, Project Home, or any other capacity. Both she and Diane emphasized the way that serving on the guild connects them with others in the church, finding common points of interest and life experience, getting to know one another while preparing the altar for worship.

The members I talked to noted spiritual connections as well. Caroline points out that the inherent simplicity of the work, with dishes and linens, setting up and clearing down, helps one enter in without the buzz and distraction of extraneous thoughts. "It is like a meditation," she says, "There is the set up that feels meditative and then the further meditation of participating in the service, and then even cleaning up feels like a meditation."

"Hands-on Engagement with Sacramental Worship": Jayan Koshy

Jayan Koshy, another of our young adult members (and currently in formation for the priesthood) recently joined the Altar Guild and finds it brings deeper spiritual connections. For him, the simplicity of doing something like washing cups and plates points to the connection he feels to the sacraments through this work.

"I think there's an intimacy to being involved in the liturgical ministry in general. There is an intimacy to being involved in the sacrament. Following some time away from St. John's, I was longing for a more hands-on engagement with the sacramental worship of the church. Altar Guild provided an opportunity to be tangibly involved in helping the work of the liturgy behind the scenes. In this service you are reminded that this is real water, real bread, and real wine, and these are real linens."

He explains that the tangible and physical work of serving on the guild helped deepen his own appreciation of the worship that followed.

"Sitting in the pews can be an abstract experience, with receiving the sacrament as the one and only tangible or physical act," he notes, but, "being on Altar Guild brings a deeper significance to the physical reality of worship."



By the Rev. Barbara Mraz

She has a deep sense that her life is changed, noting, "Seeing one's life unfolding in new directions and taking different paths is wonderful. Sometimes you work for it to happen and other times, well, it sneaks up you."

A "SAFE" CHILDHOOD

Born in Montana but moving to Winona, Minnesota, at a young age, Colleen and her five siblings grew up with a single mother since her dad died when Colleen was only six. Her mom supported the family with secretarial work. They had a garden and all the kids got after-school jobs as soon as they could. Their mom had strict boundaries, Colleen explains: "We had Penney's jeans, but it you wanted the Levi's it was up to you to come up with the extra \$13. My mom had a detailed budget she recorded in the pages of one of our school notebooks and she

stuck to it, and we had enough."

She has strong memories of feeling safe in her family, school and neighborhood. Neighbors watched out for each other, crime wasn't such a big issue, and home was always there. These memories form a good part of her motivation for doing much of the work she is doing now around hunger and housing.

COMPLINE AND EARLY CHURCH

Raised a Roman Catholic, she had been married for ten years and was living just down the street from St. John's when Colleen and her husband Charlie connected with the parish in 2012. They attended Compline first (which she saw advertised in *The Villager*), then venturing into the 8am Sunday service and sat in the back ("I wanted to hide from God"). At that first service they encountered the Rev. Keely Morgan, who was the associate rector at the time. "I nearly had a heart attack -- a woman priest -- and one with a big smile who welcomed us warmly and offered to answer our questions! I hadn't been to church since I was 22 and this was quite a change."

RETIREMENT AND SERVICE

When Charlie retired, Colleen did too, and they began volunteering. Charlie went on to lead and grow what is now an international organization assisting boys and young men and girls in South America and Mexico. Colleen began helping at an organization called "Nokomis Healthy Seniors," which provided a variety of services for the elderly. Then she learned about Project Kathleen at St. John's and was trained to mentor single-parent families, especially in the area of housing. Later she became the chair of Faith in Action at St. John's, which currently oversees nine different ministries, a post she had to leave recently to devote sufficient time to her next venture.

DIACONATE

Colleen discerned a call to the Diaconate and has been taking classes for some time to prepare for ordination. Bishop Loya has begun overhauling the diaconal requirements and they are much more extensive than under Bishop Prior. Colleen is also supplementing this work with additional seminary classes. Here is how she describes the sense of service she hopes to implement as a deacon:

"To proclaim the Gospels – that would an amazing moment! Yet, to read the Word alone isn't enough. To bring the Word to life and inspire those around me to work in current missions or find new missions for a faith congregation to pursue. To live the moment of connection in prayer and ministry to care for an issue in the world, would be part of joining His plea for our work and what the priest will ask for in the sermon. I feel the call to make connections between the Word and the world within a faith community. In addition to the proclamation, to assist

in the service as a whole, and the Eucharist specifically, is again bringing His life to life. Assisting the priests is acting as a bridge between them and the congregation.To be a deacon would be to model servant leadership to the congregation."

Starting this summer, she will be "shadowing" deacon Rex McKee at St. John the Baptist in Minneapolis to learn more about what lies ahead. Earlier life memories still provide the foundation on which her new life of service and ministry will be built.

WHY WE'RE STILL READING THE BIBLE

By Dr. Judy Stack

Once in my early 20s, my younger sister and I ended up sharing a bedroom when I was home for Christmas. As I unpacked, I tossed my Bible on the bed. "Are you STILL reading that book?" my sister asked incredulously.

At the time I assumed she suspected I was the slowest reader in the history of slow readers. In retrospect, she may have wondered a couple other things which are worth thinking about as disciples of Jesus.

"Are you still reading that book.... even though it is filled with stories that are historically and scientifically inaccurate, that sometimes portray God in troubling even horrifying — ways, and that sometimes promote ideas and behaviors we as modern, ethical people reject?" Or put more succinctly, why do we keep reading an ancient text?

One of the worst ideas to permeate modern thinking about the Bible is that it is "life's instruction book." Read one or two stories and you find the Bible is nothing nearly so straightforward. If we come to it thinking it will be filled with simple, timeless moral maxims and stories of "heroes of the faith" on whom we can model our lives, we are bound to be (and most of us have been!) very disappointed.

The Bible is compendium of texts about the relationship between a certain line of people and



The book to read is not the one that thinks for you, but the one that makes you think. No other book in the world equals the Bible for that.

~ Dr. James McCosh

their God—and the development of that relationship is long and messy. Its texts capture significant moments and ideas in the history of that relationship, and lots of them are stories of failure. Most of the key figures are deeply flawed or at least have moments of significant weakness and poor choices. But these are the stories of our people, of our forbearers in the faith. And they are the stories of us. The stories of faith and miracles and deliverance stand alongside the tales of doubt and struggle, of getting it wrong, of attributing our own ideas and motives and objectives to God.

We read these difficult and problematic texts not because they offer an easy template but because, standing with others in the millennia-long line of God's people, they offer a sobering mirror. Because their struggles to understand God's ways and live faithfully resonate with our own lives of blessing and brokenness. They are stories of a God committed to loving and blessing a people and a

(continued next page)

world. A God who has chosen to be present and make himself known, though the people's perception was often partial and faulty and shaped by the world that surrounded them. And that same God is willing to be present and become known to us in our own time and place (as best we can) through reading the stories of those ancient people.

"Are you still reading that book.... even though you've already read or heard the stories at least once, some of them many times?" Or put more succinctly, why do we keep RE-reading the Bible?

One of the great literary and philosophical minds of the 20th century, Paul Ricoeur, once described the Bible as having a "surplus of meaning." In other words, these are texts whose meaning you can never exhaust, never get to the end of, never finally find the one message of. Because the Bible is not a book of information to be mastered, but a voice with whom we are having a conversation. The Spirit continues to speak, so each rereading brings potential new insights for a new life moment or with new reading companions.

This is the fundamental idea of the Bible as "the Word of God." Not that God dictated the words of Scripture into the ears of the writers, but that, of all the many texts that spoke about God and God's work in the world, these were the texts through which God's people most consistently heard God speaking to them. Texts that, generation after generation, the Spirit has used to inspire and challenge and guide God's people. Texts that didn't think for them, but made them think deeply about what it meant to be called into that relationship.

"Are you still reading that book.... even though it's long and weird and confusing and often boring?" Or put more succinctly, why do we keep reading the Bible by ourselves? You may wonder how the short version of that question follows from the long version, but it does. Reading the Bible silently and alone is not a good way to engage it, yet because of convenience, it is the one we are often most likely to use. It can be hard to find people to read with and a time to meet. But reading the Bible with others is the way the church (and the synagogue) has historically experienced scripture. Reading the Bible alone can be frustrating. But when we read together, our collective wisdom, knowledge, and insight can help clear the fog of confusion, and the promise of Jesus to be with us when we gather means that the Spirit is present through our siblings to help us in our weakness.

But why scripture rather than something... easier? Certainly God can speak to us through many texts, but the texts of the Bible have a unique power to ignite and shape our imaginations, and imagination is at the core of discipleship.

Discipleship is a shared, communal work—a work of behaviors shaped by principles forged in the imaginative field of what God is up to in us and among us. Read in community, the texts of scripture come alive, and the Spirit addressing us in the voices of our siblings restrains us from reading in ways that are self-justifying and calls us to deeper faithfulness in community. And no book on earth gets us thinking more deeply about that than the Bible.

SPIRITUALLY, CREATIVELY, QUEER

By Kat Lewis

On July 1, I will be preaching at the Racial Reconciliation Eucharist celebrating the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray. Pauli did not claim a transgender identity themselves, but in their letters to doctors, I can recognize a familiar feeling of gender dysphoria. Pauli and trans people have something in common when it comes to feeling stifled by a cis world.

Pauli's poetry poignantly captures the despair of

living in a world that tries to suffocate you as the Other. An escape from this is faith and hope that the world to come will be kinder to us than our current one is. We deserve to be ourselves limitlessly.

WE MUST ALL COMMIT TO DISMANTLE SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

Our current moment, in the midst of rampant violence and discrimination against trans people, begs us to accept that broad cisheterosexist

Critical terms, from the UC Davis LGBTQIA+ Resource Center:

Cis or Cisgender: a gender identity that society deems to match one's assigned sex at birth.

Gender dysphoria: a sense of unease, depression, or anxiety because of a mismatch between one's biological sex and gender identity

Cisheterosexism: the societal and institutional privileging of heterosexuality, cisgender identity, and binary sex assignment as the norm.

Gender Expansive: anyone who is some way broadening their society's notion of gender.

Gender Identity: A sense of one's self as trans, genderqueer, woman, man, or some other identity, which may or may not correspond with the sex and gender one is assigned at birth.

Gender non-conforming: not subscribing to societal expectations of typical gender expressions or roles, usually through how one behaves and presents themselves to others.

Gender Variance: Varying from the expected characteristics of the assigned gender.

Queer: Historically, queer has been used as a slur against people whose gender and/or sexuality do not conform to dominant expectations. Some LGBTQIA+ people (but not all) have reclaimed it to celebrate not fitting into society's norms. The term is still often considered hateful when used by those who do not identify as LGBTQIA+.

stigmatization of gender variance is a result of brutal Western colonization, and being trans is not an unnatural way of being. We lose so much when we do not celebrate and acknowledge queer identities and bodies. Representation and trans visibility matter, and trans liberation will not solely come from analytical projects of queer theory. There must also be a political commitment to dismantle the larger vectors of oppression that intersect with cisheterosexism, such as white supremacy, ableism, racism, and imperialism.

BEYOND CIS-CENTERED SPIRITUALITY

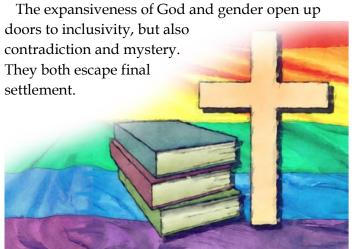
Queer readings of the Bible can be a healing practice for queer people because it provides affirming theologies and safe worship spaces.

For transgender Christians, in order to wholly claim our gender and faith at once, we have to look beyond what our current churches provide for us and be spiritually, creatively, queer. One way that I practice this is by reclaiming gender non-conforming saints and Biblical figures. I cannot survive in a world that is built for cis people and continue to experience cis-centered worship. The Book of Judith is not canonized in our church, but it lends itself so much gender expansive spiritual interpretation. For my personal spiritual grounding it is important to seek stories like this out.

GOD AND GENDER: BOTH LARGER THAN HUMAN DEFINITION

Judith advocates for the idea that God is beyond what humans can fully comprehend. This mystery

of God is similar to the elusiveness of gender; neither can be essentialized or certain, despite how often humans attempt to define either. In a queer reading of Judith that seeks to deconstruct the ideas of a God-given, "natural" cisheterosexual order, the phrase "God is not like a human being," (Jdt 8:16) is worthy of note. While there is a history of humans inventing and enforcing rigid gendered and sexed binaries, God has taken on feminine and masculine traits in various instances in the Bible and is beyond human constructions of gender and sex. "God is not like a human being" speaks to the idea that God is a mystery to humans and is not bound by the same gendered binaries that are culturally constructed by humanity. Judith's insistence that God cannot be fully understood by humanity inadvertently implies that constructions of gender and gender identity are a trait of humanity, while understanding gender as fluid is a characteristic of the divine.





By Ellie Watkins and Cameron Williams

From Ellie: When we first decided that the theme of this issue of the Evangelist would be discipleship and service, I became very passionate about exploring, specifically, the place where those two intersect.

St. John's has a rich tradition of worship and an energetic ministry of outreach (as well as many passionate volunteers within the church). But, speaking both as a parishioner and as a staff person, it can sometimes feel like those programs are running on two parallel tracks. In reality, there is so much richness and rejuvenation in the place where discipleship and service meet and feed into each other.

I sought out an interview with Cameron Williams, Coordinator of Member Ministries, to talk about his current seminary studies and how they shine a light on that intersection.

From Cameron:: At heart, I've always been a mystic. When I began seminary, my initial interest was purely academic. Though, in my education I discovered a penchant for, and love of, pastoral care which lead me to my current study of spiritual direction.

I would define a mystic as someone who shares a profound connection with God, one that encompasses their whole life and changes their whole being. Because of the nature of spiritual direction, I imagine many spiritual directors may feel a kinship with the title of mystic.

A spiritual director's job is to walk with you on your spiritual journey; listen to your story; help you become aware of where God is showing up in your life; and teach you how to listen, discern, and follow those cues. While it is a form of pastoral care, spiritual direction focuses on discerning where God is guiding one's spiritual growth.

A spiritual director serves God and the "neighbor" by listening to the guidance of the Spirit. It's a manifestation of discipleship and service. Of course there are many other ways to connect those things, but this is the one that makes sense for me.

This summer I am taking a course called "Sacred Activism" that discusses the intersection of spiritual direction and social movements, and how to find guidance and respite in God in challenging times.

A core necessity of spiritual direction for sacred activism is to be committed to spiritual practice. Without being grounded in daily spiritual practice, burnout, or compassion fatigue, is inevitable. People will just go, go, go, using all their spiritual resources without restoration. It's unsustainable.

If you're struggling with how to grow your discipleship in the face of burnout, a spiritual director may help you find answers or provide guidance. Howard Thurman is an exemplar of this relationship, as he was the spiritual director and mentor of Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement.

God-centered spiritual practice is necessary to maintain what Andrew Harvey might call "Divine fire." This fire is the passion that sets the world ablaze with God's love; to care for one another and to strive for justice.

JOIN THE WORSHIP TEAM!

Help make Sunday mornings happen! Contact the addresses listed below to volunteer or learn more.

Adult Choir & Handbell Choir: richard.gray@stjohnsstpaul.org

Media Team: media@stjohnsstpaul.org

Ushers: jolsen4338@gmail.com

Greeters: getconnected@stjohnsstpaul.org **Readers & Vergers:** rlinehan@gmail.com **Coffee Hour:** gphagstrom@gmail.com

Altar Guild: powerdianep@gmail.com

GIVING

St. John's mission and ministry is more vital now than ever before. In 2021, your gifts helped provide over \$10,000 in cash and \$13,000 worth of food for our Hunger Relief partners.

Please support this effort, as you are able, by continuing to make your pledge payments or by making an offering today. To give online, <u>click</u> <u>here</u> or text 651-273-0753 with the amount you'd like to give and where you'd like the funds to go; e.g. "\$100 Pledge2022." Thank you!

WORSHIP

Sundays: Rite I Eucharist at 8am in the Church;

Rite II Hybrid Eucharist at 10am in the Church and on YouTube at www.tinyurl.com/youtubeSJE.

Monday-Saturday: Morning Prayer at 8am at www.facebook.com/MorningPrayerSJE

followed by Coffee Hour on Zoom.

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- 1 Cammie Beattie
- 3 Judy Kinkead Christina Anderson
- 5 Brett Gemlo
- 6 Thea Bischof Charlie Johnson
- 7 Kat Lewis
- 8 Cameron Williams
- 9 Kipling Lightner
- 11 Samantha Rosendale
- 12 Jonathon Frost
- 15 Jay Debertin
- 17 Ernie Ashcroft Mark McInroy Jemma Berry
- 18 Christopher Parish Abby Kelley-Hands

- 19 Anneke Krall
- 20 Rick Olson
- 21 Kathleen Dahl
- 22 John Docherty Andrew Tessier Gabe Tessier
- 23 Nancy Martin Richard Resch
- 24 Tamara Zurakowski Alec Smith Sidney McInroy
- 26 Peggy Olsen
- 27 Charles Swope Hannah Stengle
- 28 Andrew Kampa Megan Kampa
- 29 Bob Linehan

AUGUST

- 1 Sam Clark William Rinkoff Nova Wilson
- 2 Phillip Baird
- 3 Marty Brown Stephanie Quinn
- 4 Gary Hagstrom Gabriella McCann Helen Docherty
- 5 Caroline Krall
- 6 Allan Klein Piper Wilson
- 8 Phillip Stoltenberg
 Jeff Corrow
 Jonathan Lundberg
 Luca Brown
- 10 Peter Rosendale Sarah Sand Andrew Fox
- 11 Elizabeth Lindeke

- 12 Brian Chatt George Hodgson
- 14 Kelly Russ
- 17 Cheri Wiegand
- 18 Mimie Pollard
- 19 Owen Hansen
- 20 Jennifer Kinkead Andrew Krall
- 21 Larry Ragland
- 22 Sister Julian Smith-Boyer
- 25 Rob Beattie
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