The Value of Food: Education

One of the Cathedral’s most valuable roles, in addition to providing a spiritual home for congregants and visitors alike, is that of educator. Education takes many forms: services, performances, forums and talks, congregational activities and volunteering are all learning experiences. The Value of Food: Sustaining a Green Planet has been prominent in these areas of Cathedral life over the last several months, and written about in recent issues of this newsletter. The Value of Food has also had a powerful effect on the Cathedral’s dedicated educational arms, Public Education and Visitor Services (PEVS), The Cathedral School, and Adults and Children in Trust (ACT).

The interactive nature of the exhibit was especially compelling. Among those challenges are climate change, food security and sustainability, poverty and hunger. The Value of Food is a focus for this kind of learning, bringing attention to what we all know—some more consciously than others—is important and will become more important in coming decades.

Cathedral educators were incorporating lessons about soil, seed, water, market and waste long before this exhibition opened. Every fall, ACT has a unit on apples. Kids go apple-picking, learn about the different varieties of apple, how the trees grow and reproduce, and how the fruit is harvested. This year they were excited to see the Cathedral’s own apple saplings newly planted in the soil of the Cloister: the work of Fallen Fruit artists David Burns and Austin Young. They also observed Claire Pentecost’s Growing Pillar—a tall column of vegetables perfectly suited to light urban spaces (as well as being quite lovely)—and compared it to the small gardens they plant every year.

The Cathedral School, as well, has long included lessons on plants and food in the curriculum. The early grades learn about photosynthesis, pollination, bulbs, and the cycle of the seasons, while older students study biology and earth science. Kindergarteners who came to look at the exhibition were especially fascinated by Suzanne Anker’s Astroculture—trays of peas, beans, strawberries, tomatoes, and lettuce bathed in the purple light of LED strips as well as the sunlight that filters through the stained glass of the Chapel of St. Boniface.

If this is how we grow food in the future, these students will be prepared for it. During a map skills unit, second graders helped to map edible fruits found on the Cathedral Close. The students have also been helping to water the new apple trees on the Pulpit Green. Hannah Stabins, Sustainability Coordinator at the school, took the Food Justice class (fifth graders) to the exhibit twice and reports that the exhibit sparked fascinating dialogue and questions about genetically modified food, pesticides, and factory farming. The interactive nature of the exhibit was especially compelling.

Seventh graders do a section on nutrition, including meal planning and shopping lists. Mia Michelson-Barlett, who coordinates education and public programs for The Value of Food, is impressed by the school’s family-style meals and the tradition of students serving their classmates lunch (fourth graders serve the lower grades, eighth graders the upper grades). She said, “I was struck by the very real human value of being both in a position of authority and serving their fellow students; it illustrates the balance that we all have to strike in our lives.” The Value of Food has built on this foundation, using the artists’ work, various events and performances, and the information booth as critical resources. The social, political and spiritual questions that the fall and winter’s guests have explored are also of great interest to children, who have a natural inclination to ask questions about values.

Ms. Michelson-Barlett has organized a number of events with the School at Columbia Bank Street School, De La Salle Academy and The Calhoun School. A significant amount of her time has been spent strengthening these alliances and planning future collaborations. One goal of The Value of Food, as with previous exhibitions, is to widen the Cathedral network in order to share strategies, resources and audiences: to build community. Referring to the Calhoun students, she said, “They were especially interested in hunger. In the couple of weeks I was with them, we talked about poverty, discussed the Matt Black photos, and art as activism. When it came time to do a project, the kids were given a choice: write a letter or make a (CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)
The Cathedral holds a Martin Luther King Choral Eucharist every year on the Sunday of Martin Luther King weekend, and specific programming celebrating Black history and culture is often scheduled for the late January-February season (marking Black History Month). This year, Dr. Bob Carey, Professor of Historical Studies at Empire State College/SUNY, who worked with Dr. King in the 1960s, preached the sermon at the Martin Luther King Sunday service. He gave a lucid explanation of why Black history is not an adjunct or sideboard to what is called “American history.”

Eight Presidents owned slaves while living in the executive mansion—for 50 of the first 60 years of the republic, the president was a slaveholder...

The nation that was being born was nurtured and growing rapidly because of slavery and cotton. By focusing on the founding fathers and the Constitution, we are asked to overlook the fact that the nation was taking wing politically and economically because of the work of slaves and the commodities they produced—tobacco, rice, and then the demon: Cotton."

The slave trade and ongoing exploitation of Black labor, as well as the moral, philosophical and scientific gyrations necessary to justify violence, segregation and denial of opportunity based on race, are thoroughly entwined in the economic, political and cultural history of the United States. There has been no decade since 1819 (when slaves were first brought to Virginia) that has not included crucial events, legal decisions, and artistic expressions. To list but a few of these indelible years: 1772, the passage of the first freedom bill by a Black American (Phillis Wheatley, 1753–1784, indited into the Poets Corner in 2008); 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation; the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s; and the work of Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King and so many others in the Civil Rights era of the late 1950s and ’60s.

Our time is also significant: most obviously for the administration of President Obama, but also for the Black Lives Matter movement and the heart-breaking police killings that triggered it. The 2015 National Book Awards celebrated two books, Between the World and Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates and Voyage of the Sable Venus by Robin Cost Lewis, which are not only brilliant examples of literary craft but explore the contradictions of race with fierce intelligence and passion. It seems not unlikely that the early 21st century will be considered a second Harlem Renaissance—though no longer one centered on one neighborhood in one city.

In January and February (four Thursdays), the Congregation of Saint Saviour offered an interactive workshop, “Confronting the Demon: Racism, Power & Privilege in America.” With the workshop, with roughly forty participants per session, focused on how we can actively confront and become allies against racism in our lives and communities, asking such questions as: How did we get here? What is the history of racism in America? What does racism look like in our personal lives? Do we experience it? What is involved in creating antiracist institutional change? What are our personal and collective next steps? The workshops were led by Dr. Carey; Joan Adams, MPh, LCSW, who trains and consults on racial equity and cultural competency for individuals, groups and organizations; Randy Clancy, an educational consultant who partners with schools, community advocacy, and faith-based organizations to address manifestations of white supremacy within individuals and institutions; and Sonia Omulepu, a professor at the Borough of Manhattan Community College and a Warden of the Congregation of Saint Saviiour at the Cathedral.

Though it was clearly early on in Barack Obama’s presidency that the idea of a “post-racial” America was wildly premature, recent activity by intellectuals and poets, protesters and students, faith leaders and our own congregation holds out hope that the “commitment” about race and between races that many have called for may actually be happening now—in our living rooms, in our schools and churches, on film and TV, on social media.

Dr. Carey ended his sermon for the Martin Luther King Choral Eucharist with these words:

This day is not an occasion for despair… For Dr. King, the full measure of community was that it invited—in—did not exclude; it celebrated….. I would suggest, in closing, that we scrap the old metaphor of a city on a hill. On close inspection, the city turns out to be a gated community, with gatekeepers who are packing too many guns, who are too ready to shoot anyone who approaches who looks different. I suggest rather that we use the metaphor of a feast—all are welcome, all come to the table.

The Value of Food: Education

The Value of Food: Education

American History: Black & White

“This to accept one’s past—one’s history—is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressures of life like clay in a season of drought.”

James Baldwin (1924–1987) Inducted into the American Poets Corner in 2011
Dean’s Meditation: Divides

“You could not help but be heartbroken by their worries and their anxieties. Some of them are parents, and they talked about how their children were asking, ‘Are we going to be forced out of the country? Are we going to be rounded up? Why do people treat us like this?’ Conversations you shouldn’t have to have with children. Not in this country.”

President Barack Obama, after a conversation with young Muslim community leaders

When National Public Radio’s Ari Roth sat down with author Denise Spellberg to discuss her book Thomas Jefferson’s Quran: Islam and the Founders, they began the conversation recalling that Jefferson’s vast personal library reflected his genuine curiosity about the world. As a bibliophile, Jefferson ordered his Quran in 1765, when he was a law student, eleven years before he wrote the Declaration of Independence. Spellberg argues that Jefferson’s Quran informed his ideas about pluralism and religious freedom in the founding of America.

European, and Americans after them, in this period tended to be quite hostile toward Islam. And yet Jefferson was curious about the religion and law of Muslims, and that’s probably why he bought the Quran. Jefferson was unique in many ways. He criticized Islam as he did Christianity and Judaism. He talked about Islam as a religion that suppressed scientific inquiry—a strange idea he got from Voltaire that wasn’t right—but … was able to separate his principles about Muslim religious liberty and civil rights from these inherited European prejudices about Islam.

In the interview, Spellberg drew parallels between the beliefs of this founding father and the religious tolerance that is foundational to the United States. Somehow Jefferson saw Muslims, even after the great migration of Muslims, allowing highly-skilled professionals to enter the U.S, especially from the Middle East and South Asia, including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

When President Barack Obama visited a mosque in Baltimore the first week of February, his objective was to react what he said was a “warped image of Islam.” The President made his first visit to a United States mosque as, what he described as “inexcusable political rhetoric against Muslim-Americans” continued. Make no mistake about it. A 2016 Pew study found that some 3.3 million Muslim live in the United States and comprise about one percent of the total U.S. population. The President argued that they are essential to the fabric of America, warning again that focusing extra scrutiny on them serves only to amplify the messages used by terrorist groups to promote the idea that the U.S. is at war with the Muslim faith. Sound a different note, he said.

Let me say as clearly as I can as President of the United States: you fit right here. You’re right where you belong. You’re part of America too. You’re not Muslim or American. You’re Muslim and American.

Obama is also a constitutional lawyer. So his demand that people of all faiths be accepted without bias into the United States is rooted in our founding document and based on careful study of this nation’s laws. The President happens also to be a Christian. How odd that he continues to be described by some as an American as a Muslim—as recently as last September a CNN/ORC poll found that 29 percent of Americans still believed that Obama is a Muslim, including 43 percent of Republicans.

As CNN reported on the day of that visit to the mosque, the President alluded to the conspiracy theories and rumors that plagued Thomas Jefferson, rebuffing, "I am not the first. I am in good company.” Obama argued that Americans should not be “outbidders to bigotry.” His argument went on to make the case that only by showing that America truly protects all faiths would we actually protect our country from terrorism. The trip coincided with an increase in vandalism at mosques and violence against Muslims entering and leaving their places of worship.

We should not forget Matt Apuzzo’s co-authored series for the Associated Press, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 2012 for documenting how the New York City Police Department had dispatched a senior officer to New York to basically be the NYPD’s private liaison with the CIA. That opened the door to a relationship in which the CIA officer who was working there helped set up a lot of these programs, helped set up to be the eyes and—to have eyes and ears inside every Muslim community in the city.

What makes us safer: a diverse community that stands up for and respects each other, or a fragmented society of distrust and easily rationalized violence and oppression? In the Poets Corner, Langston Hughes, a great American artist, is memorialized in this Cathedral, with this vision:

I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I’ll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody’s dare
Say to me,
“Eat in the kitchen.”

Then,
Besides, They’re see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—
I, too, am America.

Holy Week

Every year, Holy Week reminds us of the most profound mystery of the Christian tradition. The Cathedral offers a journey in the steps of Christ, with eight very different services. Before Palm Sunday, the doves of crosses in the Cathedral are veiled in deep burgundy. After the service, floral designers Chris Jobes and Naomi Martin set up shop in one of the Chapels of the Tongues, spending days bringing in and arranging the glorious spring flowers that will sit on the Cathedral on Easter Sunday.

Maundy Thursday marks the beginning of the Holy Triduum, the three-day liturgical sequence that recalls the passion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the evening service clergy ceremonially wash congregants’ feet and the altars are stripped, all the burgundy removed. When the lights come up, some worshippers remain for the annual reading of The Inferno, by Dante Alighieri, introduced by Poet in Residence Marilyn Nelson. This is a Poets Corner tradition that reminds us of what true darkness is, as well as, implicitly, its glorious language, the light of creation. The reading goes late and is followed by a party in Cathedral House.

On Friday, the noon Liturgy at the High Altar is a traditional Good Friday observance, using Victoria’s Passion, sung by the Cathedral Choir, to tell the crucifixion story. At two pm, clergymen lead congregants through the weaving dance of the Stations of the Cross, with readings in Spanish and English, chanting and hymns. The participants begin in the narthex, move through twelve stations, and end in the Biblical Garden. In the evening, Choral Lamentations features the Cathedral Choir.

On Saturday, the Cathedral is busy with volunteers placing the flowers that will sit on the Cathedrals for the candles until the lights come up, halfway through the Saturday night Great Vigil service. The service begins, “In the darkness, fire is kindled.” In the Cathedral, this moment is especially beautiful, with the stone and wood churches, while the service itself dates back to the 4th century. The Very Reverend James A. Kowalski, Dean of the Cathedral, preaches.

On Sunday between 11am and 1pm, for the Feastual Eucharist of Easter Day, the Cathedral is full of celebrants singing hymns and joining in prayer. The Right Reverend Andrew M. Dietsche, Bishop of New York, preaches.

SERVICE TIMES

Sunday
8 am Morning Prayer & Holy Eucharist
9 am Holy Eucharist
11 am Choral Evensong
4 pm Choral Evensong
Daily Services
Monday-Saturday
8:30 am Holy Eucharist
(Tuesday & Thursday only)
12:15 pm Holy Eucharist
5 pm Evening Prayer

TICKETS AND RESERVATIONS
Tickets for all performances other than free or “suggested contribution” events may be purchased directly from the Cathedral's website, stjohndivine.org, or by calling (866) 811-4111.
Your contributions make it possible for the Cathedral to offer the many programs listed below. Please fill out the enclosed envelope.
Please visit the Cathedral's website, stjohndivine.org or call the Visitor Center (212) 316-7540 for updates and additional event and tour information.
Don't forget to follow the Cathedral on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram!

ONGOING PROGRAMS, TOURS, WORKSHOPS

The Great Organ: Midday Monday
Cathedral organists provide a 30-minute break for mind, body and spirit at 1:00 pm with an entertaining and informative demonstration of the Cathedral's unparalleled Great Organ.

The Great Organ: It's Sunday
The Great Organ: It's Sunday invites established and emerging artists to perform works that span 15 centuries.

ADULTS AND CHILDREN IN TRUST (A.C.T.)
To learn about the many nurturing year-round programs for young people offered by A.C.T., please call (212) 316-7530 or visit www.actprograms.org.

Children's Quest Fund
Help us invite children from many countries, religions and economic levels under the shadow of the beloved Cathedral. Please send donations to the Cathedral, designated "A.C.T.'s Children's Quest Fund:"

Divine Saturday Celebrations
Celebrate good times with A.C.T.'s new and improved Divine Saturday Celebrations, with a variety of birthday activities for kids to enjoy! It's a great time for parents and children alike.

Spotlight Tours are specially created by Cathedral Guides to give visitors a closer look at unique aspects of the Cathedral's extraordinary architecture, artwork, and history. $15 per person, $12 per student/ senior. Vertical Tours: $15 per person, $12 per student/senior.

Highlights Tours
Mondays, 11 am–Noon & 2–3 pm
Tuesdays–Saturdays, 11 am–Noon & 1 pm–2 pm
Select Sundays, 1 pm–2 pm
Explore the many highlights of the Cathedral's history, architecture, and artwork, from the Great Bronze Doors to the seven Chapels of the Tongues. Learn about the Cathedral's services, events, and programs that welcome and inspire visitors from around the world. $12 per person, $10 per student/senior. No prior reservation necessary. Meet at Visitor Center.

Vertical Tours
Wednesdays & Fridays, Noon–1 pm;
Saturdays, Noon–1 pm & 2–3 pm
On this adventurous, “behind-the-scenes” tour, climb more than 124 feet through spiral staircases to the top of the world's largest cathedral. The tour culminates on the roof with a wonderful view of Manhattan. $17 per person, $15 per student/senior. All participants must be 12 years of age and older and reservations are recommended. Meet at the Cathedral website or call (866) 811-4111. Bring a flash light and bottle of water. Meet at Visitor Center.

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Textile Treasures
Select Fridays, 2 pm–4 pm
Explore the Cathedral's magnificent art collection with a special focus on textiles! $20 per person, $15 per student/senior. Space is limited to 20 people 12 years of age and older. Meet at Visitor Center.

Medieval Birthday Parties
Saturdays & Sundays, by availability
Celebrate your child's birthday with a two-hour party in the Medieval Arts Workshop, where children sculpt gargoyles, weave, make brass rubbings, carve a block of linoleum, and much more! For children ages 5 & up. Call the Public Education & Visitor Services Department at (212) 932-7347 for more information and reservations.

THURSDAY, MARCH 17

March

SELECTED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Nightwatch Crossroads: Christian
Friday, March 4, 6:30 pm
Nightwatch Crossroads: Christian is a Friday evening and overnight spiritual retreat for middle and high school age students, youth groups and their adult chaperones. Your group will have the opportunity to unplug from the distractions and stresses of daily life and connect with the wisdom teachings of Jesus in this Christian-themed and Interspiritual overnight for youths exploring their spirituality. For more information visit stjohndivine.org or contact: (212) 316-7518 / nightwatch@stjohndivine.org.

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PUBLIC EDUCATION & VISITOR SERVICES
TOURS AND CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP
Public Education & Visitor Services offers Cathedral Highlights, Vertical, and Spotlight Tours. All tours meet for registration at the Visitor Center inside the Cathedral entrance, at 112th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. Highlights Tours: $12 per person, $10 per student/senior. Vertical Tours: $20 per person, $18 per student/ senior. Vertical Tours: $15 per person, $12 per student/senior.

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The Cathedral in Context: Spotlight on Morningside Heights

Saturday, March 19, 1 pm
Go back in time on an illustrated walking tour of Morningside Heights and its historic architecture and institutions. The tour begins at the Cathedral and ends at Riverside Church. Led by Cathedral Guide Bill Schnieberger. $25 per person, $20 per student/teen. All participants must be 12 years of age or older and reservations are recommended. This tour requires extensive outdoor walking and use of stairs.

Easter Eggstravaganza Children’s Workshop

Saturday, March 19, 10 am and 2 pm
Join us for our popular, annual egg workshop! Children can create colorful patterns on their eggs with tissue paper, glitter, glue, and paint, and build a nest for decorated eggs with twigs, feathers, and clay. Please bring two hard-boiled eggs per child. Recommended for children ages 4–8 years old. $10 per child, with accompanying adult.

Saturday, April 2, 1 pm
Join us for a family-friendly afternoon of crafts and special events to celebrate the conclusion of The Value of Food.

The Cathedral in Context: Spotlight on Morningside Heights

Sunday, April 3, 1 pm
Please see details for March 19.

Great Organ: Mahler’s 8th Symphony

Thursday, April 7, 7:30 pm
In the place of an orchestra, this reprise of Mahler’s astounding 8th Symphony from earlier in the 2015-16 season of Great Music in a Great Space will feature the world premiere of a new organ transcription by David Briggs. Conducted by Kent Tritle, the Cathedral Choristers will be joined by the Manhattan School of Music Symphony and Symphonic Chorus and the Oratorio Society of New York in a breathtaking collaboration.

Wednesday Weavers Children’s Workshop

Saturday, April 9, 10 am
Learn how to craft a handmade loom, then make your own tapestry using medieval weaving techniques! Recommended for children ages 4–8 years old. $10 per child, with accompanying adult. Check in at Visitor Center upon arrival.

I Love NY: Spotlight on the City

Saturday, April 9, 10:30 am
Celebrate New York City and its indomitable spirit with a special tour of the Cathedral. Learn how the Cathedral and City serve as places of diversity, tolerance, and human achievement. Led by Senior Cathedral Guide John Simko. $15 per person, $12 per senior/student.

Enter the Conversation: Krista Tippett

Wednesday, April 13, 7 pm
Krista Tippett, Peabody Award-winning broadcaster and host of NPR’s On Being, will join the Very Reverend Dr. James A. Kowalski for a talk and conversation based on her new book, Being Wise. Knightrwatch Medieval

Friday, April 15, 6:30 pm
Knightrwatch returns! Get your drumsticks and prepare to battle in time to the age of medieval storybook kings, jesters, princesses and knights in this imaginative overnight experience, designed for children ages 6–12 and their adult chaperones. For pricing, FAQs and more information, visit stjohnndivine.org.

The Cathedral in Context: Spotlight on Morningside Heights

Sunday, April 17, 1 pm
Please see details for March 19.

Great Organ: Raymond Nagem

Tuesday, April 19, 7:30 pm
Raymond Nagem, Associate Organist of St. John the Divine, showcases organ music from Germany in a program ranging from J.S. Bach’s fiery Toccata in F Major to Paul Hindemith’s elegant Third Sonata. The second half of the program is devoted to Sigfrid Karg-Eler’s magnificent—and rarely played—Organ Symphony.

Nightwatch Crossroads: Interspiritual

Friday, April 22, 6:30 pm
Please see details for March 18.

Medieval Games Children’s Workshop

Saturday, April 23, 10 am
What did people do for fun in the Middle Ages? Children will discover where sports are featured in the Cathedral, learn to play games, and create toys that were popular in Medieval Europe, as well as create their own heraldic coat of arms. Recommended for children ages 4–8 years old. $10 per child, with accompanying adult. Check in at Visitor Center upon arrival.

Unfinished Symphony: Spotlight on Architecture

Saturday, April 29, 10:30 am
Explore the architectural styles within the Cathedral and the saga of its still-unfinished construction. Led by Senior Cathedral Guide Tom Fedorek.

Food and Culture: Spotlight on Morningside Heights

Saturday, April 29, 11 am
Please see details for March 12.
Looking Back

On January 6, Adults and Children in Trust (A.C.T.) held their 45th annual Winter Family Festival: The afternoon featured games, crafts, giveaways, and tours of the A.C.T. facilities for parents interested in enrolling their children.

On January 13, a Visual Thinking Strategies Salon offered a chance to look at selected artworks from The Value of Food exhibition with new eyes, hosted by VTS National Program Director Amy Chase Gulden.

On Martin Luther King Sunday, January 17, the Martin Luther King Choral Eucharist included readings from Dr. King’s speeches and other writings as well as musical selections curated by Director of Music Kent Tritle. Dr. Robert Carey preached. Dr. Carey, graduate of Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, Professor of Historical Studies, SUNY/Empire State College, worked in Dr. King’s Ebenezer Baptist Church as an assistant pastor from 1963–1965 (see AMERICAN HISTORIC: BLACK & WHITE). A Spiritual Sing with Alice Parker, choral conductor, educator and Artist Director, Melodious Accord, took place that afternoon in the Chapel of St. James.

On January 24, The Diocesan Treble Choir Festival, under the combined direction of Kent Tritle, Malcolm J. Memmber, Melissa Altebury and Raymond Nagel, filled the cathedral with joyous music. The Choir performed C.S. Lang’s Evening Canticles “Canons Service”; Maurice Greene’s “O Praise the Lord”; C.V. Stanford’s “Psalm 150”; and Bob Chilcott’s “Mid-Winter.”

In January and February, The Congregation of Saint Saviour offered a four session interactive workshop: Confronting the Demon: Racism, Power & Privilege in America in January and February (SEE AMERICAN HISTORIC: BLACK & WHITE).

On January 28, urban farmer Karen Washington and a diverse panel of gardeners, agriculturalists, and heirloom horticulturists (Owen Taylor, Ken Greene, Onika Abraham, Chris Bolden, Newsome, Kirbynna Baxter) presented Cultivating Tradition: A Seed Saving Workshop. Seed saving is a traditional method of harvesting seeds for the next growing season, retaining biodiversity and protecting plant variety.

Evening of Witness

The closing event of the exhibition The Value of Food: Sustaining a Green Planet, on March 31, will be a tour de force of performance, music and dialogue, raising us to action in behalf of one of the most important issues of our time, nutritious food, sustainably and equitably produced, distributed, cooked and shared. The evening is being curated by Anna Lappe, founding principal of the Small Planet Institute, and co-founder and head of the Global Food Move Project, and author of many books, including Diet for a Hot Planet: The Climate Crisis at the End of Your Fork and What You Can Do About It (Bloomsbury 2010). Joining Anna Lappe will be author and activist Rick Patel, co-founders of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers Lucas Benitez and Greg Asbed, musical guests including David Amram and Kentucky Ramana, and many more thinkers, organizers and food advocates. Please check our website for details.

The Value of Food: Sustaining a Green Planet is on view through March 31. The exhibition and ancillary programming are organized by The Value of Food Project, in collaboration with The Congregation of Saint Saviour, the Laymen’s Club, Close staff, Morningside Heights neighbors, organizations offering crucial information and inspiring continued opportunity for children to observe new work, and the Cathedral’s Education and Visitor Services (PEVS). The exhibition and ancillary programming are sponsored by Ameriprise Financial and The C.S. Lang Fund.

The Cathedral’s Christmas cirlce circle of joyful minstrels. Photo: Cathedral Archives

After an unseasonably warm December (no jacket needed for the Christmas Eve Festal Eucharist), winter settled in with a snowy vengeance, bidding us take shelter indoors, hold off the dark with art and music, and share meals newly inspired by The Value of Food exhibition and ancillary programming.

The weekend of December 4–6, the annual Cathedral Craft Fair was exceptionally stunning this year; we are sure there were many happy people opening Christmas and Hanukkah gifts, courtesy of the Fair’s fire crafters. On December 5, Public Education and Visitor Services (PEVS) offered Made with Love: A Children’s Holiday Workshop and Table Talk, an opportunity for children to observe Tom Otterness’ sculpture, The Tables (SEE EDUCATION).

From Paris to New York: A People’s Vigil for Preventing Climate Change with Food & Water Watch, on December 9, was a moving, eloquent evening, with representatives from many organizations offering crucial information and inspiring continued activism. Wenneon Hauter, Director, Food and Water Watch, who spoke to assembled guests from Paris, was recently praised by Ralph Nader as one of “12 People Who Made a Difference” (Auffington Post, Jan. 8, 2016).

Early Music New York, with Frederick Renz, December 5, 6, 20, and 25, presented New World Christmas, Navidad en Latinoamérica. Religious songs for Spain and Mexico’s cathedrals were interspersed with instrumental and vocal chansonetas, villancicos, coloquios and andensaladas, with guitar tablatures of indigenous dances by Santiago de Murcia.

The annual Cathedral Christmas Concert, December 12, put us all in the festive spirit. The combined Cathedral Choirs, Orchestra and soloists Amy Justman, James Pittman, Michele Kennedy, Katie Geissinger, Kristen Solsky, Marc Day, and Hans Tahsian performed J.S. Bach’s beloved Magnificat and carols by Benjamin Britten, John Rutter and Gregg Smith. Cathedral Director of Music Kent Tritle conducted.

While the weather was closer to May than December, the 36th annual Winter Solstice Celebration was celebrated December 17–19. The concert featured the Paul Winter Consort with special guest Brazilian singer-guitarist Renato Bato and gospel singer Theresa Thomas.

The New Year’s Eve Concert for Peace, founded by Leonard Bernstein in 1984, gathered old friends and new. The Reverend Canon Victoria Sirota wrote the text and her husband Robert Sirota composed and performed the piano part for a beautiful new work, Prelude and Spiritual for Mother Emanuel, honoring those who were murdered at the Emanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, SC, June 17, 2015. The concert, hosted by Harry Smith, featured guest Judy Collins. James Pittman and Gregory Pumphrey were soloists and Kent Tritle conducted the orchestra and choir.

On February 13, the Cathedral community and the Diocese of New York celebrated a special Eucharist commemorating Abolitionist Jones, abolitionist and the first African-American ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church of the Unites States. Finally, the clients, volunteers, and staff at Cathedral Community Cares thank the Congregation of Saint Savior, the Laymen’s Club, Close staff, Morningside Heights neighbors, Federation for Protestant Welfare Agencies, Columbia Community Service, the students and parents at Trinity School, New York Cares, and Young and Rubicam Group for their donations over the winter season, which enabled CCC to give away more than 300,000 books, 200 coats, and countless clothing items to our neighbors. Special thanks are given to the students and parents from the Cathedral School, whose Thanksgiving canned food drive and winter donations made the holiday seasons special for the families visiting CCC.
Looking Ahead

In winter, bright color on the Close is confounded to peacock’s tails, children’s faces and the occasional visitor or staff member in a striking coat. In spring, the whites, grays and browns give way to a riot of tulips and daffodils, the pastels of flowering trees and the vivid green of new leaves. The warm days make us linger outdoors as the Cathedral Gardens Conservancy, under the guidance of cathedral gardener Marilyn Budzanszki, plant, water and weed; maintenance gets out its mowers; and the returning birds build nests for the year’s crop of fledglings. Humans and animals have been sharing this dance for tens of thousands of years: very little that we value (food, faith, clothing, beauty, buildings, companionships) is new. Yet spring and the miracle of Holy Week remind us that it is always new for us; that our precious lives pass all too quickly, and the first thing on our calendar, to-do list, or internal monologue should be celebration, if we have been given.

On March 4, Nightwatch Crossroads: Christian begins its spring season. Particularly suitable for this time of the year, the Friday evening and overnight spiritual retreat for middle and high school age students, youth groups and their adult chaperones, focuses primarily on the wisdom teachings of Jesus. Working Theater will present a reading of Lisa Ramirez’s To the Bone, a contemporary drama providing a close-up look into the lives of Central American food workers, on March 7. The play asks questions about equality and justice through five female characters who migrate to the U.S., brings hardships and struggle. Researching the play, Ramirez spent six months interviewing immigrant poultry workers in the Catskills.


On March 16, Amir Vahab & Ensemble will return to the Cathedral (after 2014’s very successful concert) with Celebrating Nowruz: An Evening of Spiritual Nourishment. Vahab, an acclaimed composer/singer of Sufi and folk music (who sings in eleven languages), weaves the poetry of Hafiz and ethnic backgrounds, was formed in 1981, when Amir moved to New York from Paris. His first concert in NYC was at the Cathedral that same year.

March 18, Nightwatch Crossroads: Interspiritual offers an overnight spiritual retreat and middle high school age students, youth groups and their adult chaperones. The Interspiritual retreat is an inclusive program created for youth of all faiths. It explores music, spiritual disciplines, stories and wisdom from a variety of the world’s religious traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity.

Eucharist & Stripping of the Altar takes place at 7 pm, and is followed by the annual reading of selections from The Inference of Dante Alighieri. This annual event gathers old friends and new to be dazzled by the vivid imagery and unforgettable stories of one of the great poets of the Western tradition. Selected cantos are read by guests, distinguished poets, eminent translators, visiting scholars and Dante enthusiasts in the Crossing. After the reading, participants raise a glass to literature and fellowship. Good Friday offers the Good Friday Liturgy and Choral Lamentations (see website article) in preparation for the Great Vigil of Easter on Saturday and the Easter Sunday morning service.

On March 31, Evening of Witness will be the closing event of The Value of Food: Sustaining a Green Planet (see evening of witness). The exhibition has been a nursing success, bringing visitors of all ages, sparking questions, raising awareness, and future programming at the Cathedral to bring the important conversations of our time under its roof.

On April 7, Great Music in a Great Space reprises Mahler’s Symphony No. 8. From the place of an orchestra, this performance will feature the world premiere of a new organ transcription by David Briggs with the chooruses of Manhattan School of Music Symphonic Chorus; Oratorio Society of New York; The Cathedral Choristers of St. John the Divine; and the Manhattan School of Music Symphony. Soloists: Sara Murphy, mezzo-soprano; Adam Lau, bass; John Tirano, tenor; Angel Azzarra, soprano; Bryn Holdsworth, soprano; Jana McIntyre, soprano; Noragh Devol, mezzo-soprano; and Tim Murray. Kent Tritle conducts.

On April 13th, Krista Tippett, the host of PRX’s “On Being,” will join the Dean for an evening conversation. Tippett is a Peabody Award-winning broadcaster and New York Times bestselling author. In 2014, she received the National Humanities Medal at the White House for “thoughtfully delving into the mysteries of human existence.” The West Coast-based Tippet’s new book is Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living (Penguin Press, 2016) and this event is one of only two New York appearances she will make this spring.

Nightwatch Medieval Returns on April 15 (see box). This imaginative overnight experience is designed for children ages 6–12 and their adult chaperones, takes guests back in time to the age of medieval storybook kings, jesters, princesses and knights, a fitting time period for the delightfully gothic setting of the Cathedral.

Cathedral assistant organist Raymond Nagem performs on the Great Organ, showcasing organ music from Germany, on April 19. The program includes: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Overture to Die Zauberflöte; Paul Hindemith, Sonate II; Johann Sebastian Bach, Toccata in F Major; and Sigurd Karg-Elert, Symphony for Organ in F-sharp Minor, Op. 143.

Earth Day, April 22, is especially hopeful this year, with the successful 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris resulting in the future of our planet and our ability to inhabit it responsibly. Our work here is one of robust energy, innovation, more equitable economic systems, and redoubled efforts to make global agriculture both sustainable for the planet and sustaining to a growing population.

On May 10, the Dean welcomes author Susan Brind Morrow and Robert Thurman, world renowned authority on religions, for an exploration of Morrow’s new translation of one of the world’s earliest, most complete bodies of writing, The Dawnning Mind: Unlocking the Pyramidal Texts.

On May 30, the annual Memorial Day Concert brings the glorious sounds of the Philharmonic Orchestra to the Cathedral—inside and outside—with a program of Sibelius, Symphony No. 7 and Brahms, Symphony No. 2. Alan Gilbert conducts. This annual event takes place with music flowing through the Cathedral and out onto the newly-landscaped Pulitzer Green, heralds the beginning of long, warm evenings spent out doors, enjoying the best of the Cathedral and city have to offer.

Every spring, the Cathedral holds its annual Blessing of the Bicycles. The tradition started in 1999, and has since spread to many other cities, including Los Angeles, Toronto and Melbourne, Australia. According to The New York Times (May 16, 1999), the first ceremony “was organized jointly by two rival bike clubs, the Five-Borough Bike Club and the New York Cycle Club, as a kind of good will gesture.” The Very Reverend Harry S. Pritchett, Dean of the Cathedral, read Ezekiel 1:21: “When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. Wherever the spirit would go, he went and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.”

In recent years Glen Goldstein, owner of Bike Shows USA, has done more than anyone to promote and organize the event. “It’s the one day where we don’t protest, we don’t sign petitions,” said Goldstein in an interview with Leslie Albrecht of DNAinfo. “I’m in favor of that stuff, but not on this day. It’s a day to be together, then we’ll go back to fighting the fights.”

The bicycle has inspired many encomiasts, including this one by Susan Brind Morrow (who likens it to the historic Parapet inside the Cathedral), “Let me tell you what I think of bicycling. I think it does more than to emancipate women than anything else in the world. It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance. I stand and revere every time I see a woman ride on a wheel…the picture of free, untrammelled womanhood.”

We forget what a difference it made in the 19th century for a woman to have her own transportation. Working women did not earn very much, certainly not enough to keep a horse or ride a train, and having a bicycle would have been time-consuming and often dangerous. But Anthony is also talking about how it feels to ride a bike, and how that translates into a sense of expanding potential—something anyone who remembers first bicycles in the days before helmets, lycra, and multi-speeds and the triumph of Citi Bikes, the world largest bike-sharing program, whose bikes were rented more than 10 million times in 2015.

At the Cathedral, we love the environmental gentleness of bicycles, their fitness benefits, relative safety and how they integrate into city life, with more bike lanes and the triumph of New York’s bike share, the Citi Bikes. The world largest bike-sharing program, whose bikes were rented more than 10 million times in 2015.

Reading a bike in 21st century New York City doesn’t produce quite the same effect. Yet bicycles are becoming more integrated into city life, more bike lanes and the triumph of Citi Bikes, the world largest bike-sharing program, whose bikes were rented more than 10 million times in 2015.
Why Do We Have Cathedrals?

SALLY BENNER, VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEVELOPMENT & STRATEGY

It’s not easy to describe the Cathedral to someone who’s never been here. I suspect that, like me, you struggle to put its vastness and variety into words. My fallback is to say, “You have to experience it for yourself; come see it.”

In this issue you’ve read about the Cathedral’s heritage as a stage for performing arts. Going back many centuries, it would be common for a Cathedral—the central place of a town’s gathering—to be a place where allegories were dramatized and music performed.

Reading The Canterbury Tales in college inspired my pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral five years after graduating. Sitting on an ancient stone wall outside the Cathedral I closed my eyes to conjure the cackling loudness of the Wife of Bath and the song of Chanticleer. I opened them to survey the terrain that inspired Chaucer to spin such saucy and timeless tales.

The next time you visit the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, try it yourself: imagine the echo of tambourine trills and the electricity that thrummed in the Cathedral during performances of Chanticleer. I opened them to survey the terrain that inspired Chaucer to spin such saucy and timeless tales.

On February 24 and 25, Great Music in a Great Space calls for a gargantuan orchestra, an off-stage brass ensemble, two SATB choirs, a children’s choir, and eight soloists. In this production, over 350 voices contributed, including soloists Sara Murphy, mezzo-soprano; Rachel Rosales, soprano; Bryn Holdsworth, soprano; Janet Todd and Jana McIntyre, sopranos (taking the role of Mater Aegyptiaca on February 24 and February 25 respectively); Lisa Barone and Noragh Devlin, mezzo-sopranos (taking the role of Maria Aegyptiaca on February 24 and February 25 respectively); John Tiranno, tenor; Jesse Blumberg, baritone; and Adam Lau, bass. Kent Tritle conducted.

Fostering an environment that helps our community and visitors come close to the divine is the mission of the Cathedral. It’s why we do what we do. Through performances, service, liturgy, outreach and beauty, we hope you’ll see this cathedral as a central place for New York’s town gatherings.

In May, we’ll honor a revered New Yorker, the enormously talented performer Patti LuPone, at the annual Spirit of the City Gala. The prospect of Ms. LuPone in the Cathedral is an exciting one for us. She has established herself as an artist important in the history of performing arts and definitive in each role she plays. She is of our time while also timeless. The Spirit of the City Gala is a celebration for the Cathedral community and invites attendees to donate support to allow us to fulfill our mission. We hope you will join us and support the Cathedral in this way.

Why do we need cathedrals? It’s still hard to put into words. But when we enter them we know we’re experiencing something transcendent. Because of the generosity of so many donors to the Cathedral, we are here and will be here for as long as the storied European cathedrals have lasted.

On behalf of all of us involved with the Cathedral, thank you for your abundant support of our mission.

Symphony of a Thousand: Mahler’s 8th

On February 24 and 25, Great Music in a Great Space collaborated with the Manhattan School of Music and Oratorio Society of New York in two performances of Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No. 8, which the composer called “the grandest thing I have ever done...Try to imagine the whole universe beginning to ring and resound. There are no longer human voices, but planets and suns roaring.” The symphony was first performed in 1910 to an audience including composers Robert Strauss, Camille Saint-Saëns and Anton Webern, and the writer Thomas Mann. Often referred to as “The Symphony of a Thousand,” the symphony calls for a gargantuan orchestra, an off-stage brass ensemble, two SATB choirs, a children’s choir, and eight soloists. In this production, over 350 voices contributed, including soloists Sara Murphy, mezzo-soprano; Rachel Rosales, soprano; Bryn Holdsworth, soprano; Janet Todd and Jana McIntyre, sopranos (taking the role of Mater Aegyptiaca on February 24 and February 25 respectively); Lisa Barone and Noragh Devlin, mezzo-sopranos (taking the role of Maria Aegyptiaca on February 24 and February 25 respectively); John Tiranno, tenor; Jesse Blumberg, baritone; and Adam Lau, bass. Kent Tritle conducted.

Stay in Touch
We welcome your suggestions and thoughts on the newsletter. Please write us at editor@stjohndivine.org.

Spirit of the City Gala, May 23, Honors Patti LuPone

Renowned actress and singer and Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle award winner Patti LuPone will appear at the Cathedral’s 35th Annual Spirit of the City Awards Gala, May 23, 2016. The Spirit of the City celebrates New Yorkers whose energy, vision and creativity keep this city great. LuPone’s illustrious career includes a Tony for her portrayal of Evita Perón in Evita (1979) and one for her portrayal of Mama Rose in the 2007 revival of Gypsy. She is currently starring in the Showtime series Penny Dreadful.

To learn about sponsorship opportunities or to purchase tickets in advance, email the Cathedral’s Development Department at spiritoftthecity@stjohndivine.org or call us at (212) 316-7570.

In Memoriam

Joan Cupo
1930–2016, Cathedral Trustee
1987–1999

Robin Chandler Duke
1923–2016, Cathedral Trustee
1995–1998