

Vestry Bios

John Kirby

Attending since: 1985

Occupation: Real Estate Agent (Keller Williams McLean)

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and give a brief description of your prayer life. Wow. Jesus Christ is my savior. He knows me and yet loves me just the same. I think he puts up with a lot and encourages me at the same time. I used to look at myself like Balaam's donkey, where God could use me like He used a mute beast of burden. More recently I have come to see how much he values me, not because of anything I have done, but rather out of pure love for me. Concerning my prayer life, sometimes it is good and sometimes it is not. The good news is that over time, the good is more frequent than the bad. Recent prayer time has been around my efforts to "reinvent myself" as I have changed careers, and I have also grown my personal skills and how I see other people. As God has shown me that the greatest commandment is to love Him first and seeing how I am loved, I then can better love my "neighbor". My prayer life covers from how do I change to be the person He wants me to be, to Jesus, please help me find my keys. It is because of my relationship with Jesus that I want to do what He wants me to do. I want to do what pleases Him. I want to show others the love that Jesus has shown me.

Please describe your history with Church of the Apostles Anglican, including how you came to attend. When Janet and I got married in 1985, she was living in Stafford, and I was living in Hagerstown, MD and worked in Rockville, MD. We looked for a place to live somewhere in between. It so happened that three people I knew very well from Hagerstown were going to Church of the Apostles. Janet and I thought that we would visit a couple of churches and choose a home church. We started our visits with Apostles, because we already knew some people there. We visited once and have been here ever since. Our children were born and baptized into this church and grew up here. Some of the relationships they had growing up in the church, they still have. My daughters, grew up in this church to become beautiful young ladies. My wife at one point was the youth group leader, and as with most ministries, you get a 'two fer' when you hire a married spouse. I got to help out with logistics and errands. Later, my son John would be the co-youth group leader and later entered the priesthood, sponsored by Apostles. Throughout our time here, we have served in a number of ways. The people in this church, in many ways, are my family. We have gone through a lot, both personally and with the church. This church is our foundation in a number of ways.

In what ministries have you served at Church of the Apostles Anglican? Elsewhere? I have been a home group leader; a previous member of Vestry; a Lay Eucharist Minister; a prayer ministry catcher; Boy Scout Leader with Troop 918 including a couple of summer camps; on the set-up team for Sunday Services and other events when we were at Pickett Road; worked with the youth group; volunteered to deliver and serve food for Grate Patrol; the church setup and

take down volunteer coordinator for three years when we were at Willow Springs; and currently co-leader of the Men's Ministry. I have also done a lot of little jobs like drive a van to take church kids to camp, spread ice melt on the parking lot when the snow plows could not clear the ice, help deliver furniture on Christmas Eve to a family who had none. I tend to want to help where I can.

What are your spiritual gifts for ministry? I have been told I am a good listener. I have experience seeing different perspectives of people and explaining it to each other. I also believe I have gifts of service.

What do you see as the greatest challenges currently facing Church of the Apostles Anglican? I see people needing to know that they have value and that they belong. I see people in our church who need to see the love of Jesus for them even when they don't feel they deserve it. I see where COVID has exacerbated a feeling of isolation that seems to be found in Northern Virginia.

What are your hopes and dreams for Church of the Apostles Anglican? My hope for Apostles is to grow in the knowledge and experience of Jesus Christ. We need growth in numbers to survive yet our focus should be on growth in the Lord, and I believe that everything else we would want for our church will come as a result.

Why do you believe God may be calling you to serve on Vestry? Part of why I think I am being called to Vestry is to serve the people I know and care about, to share what God has been sharing with me, and to be a part of what God is doing in our church. Another part is that I would like to work with Nick and better understand his calling and what God wants to do through him and to help him to do those things.

Kevin McKernan

Attending since: 2018

Occupation: Operations Director, Jenkins Restorations

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and give a brief description of your prayer life. It is a relationship. He is my leader, king, lamb, and the faithful one. He is the Godman; the sacrifice for the church and the example in all things for me. The relationship is sustained by Him and the Holy Spirit, but my active involvement is through prayer and the reading of the Scriptures and the pondering of many other things.

Please describe your history with Church of the Apostles Anglican, including how you came to attend. I have been on the vestry for approximately the last year and have been going to COA for the last 3 years.

In what ministries have you served at Church of the Apostles Anglican? Elsewhere? I mentioned the ministries above. At Reston Bible Church I led middle school worship for several

years. Bonnie and I attended a Shepherd Group with several other families. I served in the Junior High and Senior High ministries as Summer and Winter camps. I have been to Benevides Brazil 4 times to serve at Camps for Street children, build ministry buildings, and build houses for underprivileged families that live by a trash dump. At King of Kings I was in process for selection as a lay pastor, which entailed care and meeting with a small segment of the church. Unfortunately, we moved before I was able to take over this role.

What are your spiritual gifts for ministry? I'm never quite sure. Other people have expressed that I have leadership capabilities. During a sermon at COA by Rev. Josh Kammerer, I considered that I am drawn to the role of Apostle as defined: Someone who comes into a situation for a 2-3 year period, builds other leaders, encourages people to use their spiritual gifts, develops a structure for success into the future, and then hands these things over to another capable leader. I have a passion to do this at work.

What do you see as the greatest challenges currently facing Church of the Apostles Anglican? Covid, lack of in-person worship, loan repayment, finding great people to lead segments of the church and support Nick. Christian nationalism and progressive intersectional social-science related dogma.

What are your hopes and dreams for Church of the Apostles Anglican? This is the hardest question. How will I map out a road for which Jesus has a plan? I would like the Church to be a tool which facilitates:

- New life in Jesus Christ
- Christian community and discipleship
- Discovery of more of the glories of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Understanding of and use of our gifts to serve others
- Deep dependence on the Holy Spirit for ministry

Why do you believe God may be calling you to serve on Vestry? Because others asked me to consider it.

Charlie Baldwin

Attending since: 1998

Occupation: Logistician (National Guard Bureau)

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and give a brief description of your prayer life. Jesus Christ is my only hope for salvation and eternal life. I cannot resolve the sin in my life and must lean on his enduring grace to sustain my acceptance into the heavenly realm. Although good works are a result of faith in and love for Jesus Christ, they count as nothing towards salvation. I may be strong and powerful in terms of earthly things that matters not in the path to righteousness. He has endowed me with many blessings, and my hope is to give thanks for them and leverage them to serve him. At the end of the day, I am only a servant of

Jesus Christ. My prayer time while significantly engaged in a challenging job was focused on the several hours a day in which I biked (bicycle) to and from work. It was always dark in the morning and the trails deserted, and I could pray while pedaling to work. At an average speed of 14 miles per hour, I could keep on the trail even with tears running down my face as I prayed for Saint Nicholas kids or Esther's adoption process. With retirement, I can commit time previously not available to study and prayer.

Please describe your history with Church of the Apostles Anglican, including how you came to attend. Carolyn and I began attending COAA after returning from four years of military assignments out of the area and failing to find an inspiring Assemblies of God church. We attended Truro 1985 to 1990 so we were familiar with Anglican churches in Fairfax. We liked the people here and I liked Pastor David's intellect and interpretations of the Bible.

In what ministries have you served at Church of the Apostles Anglican? Elsewhere? I served on the greeter and usher ministries at Pickett Road, at the various locations prior to construction, and at the new church. While at Truro, I was the assistant scoutmaster from 1987-1988 and the scoutmaster from 1999 to 2000. Carolyn and I became involved in the Saint Nicholas mission in 2005/2006. She has visited Saint Nicholas well over 20 times since then, and I have visited around 18 times. Since the Moscatis departed in 2016, Carolyn and I have led this mission and orchestrated all aspects of support for the orphanage. Our desire was to bring one of the children back, and Esther Wangari came here for high school in 2016 and is currently at Liberty University.

What are your spiritual gifts for ministry? I think I have been given a good understanding of Christ's teaching and the Bible and have discernment as to how they apply to decisions and life. I also believe I have good communication and cognitive skills developed through education, job experience, and study. Others comment that I commit without limit to helping others in need. Carolyn comments that her view is I have wisdom and vision.

What do you see as the greatest challenges currently facing Church of the Apostles Anglican? I felt that regrowth of the congregation was the underlying hope and promise of the capital campaigns and ensuing construction project. I don't think we can really be who we think we are without growth of the congregation. The Saint Nicholas mission is not well supported by the small congregation, and that may be true of other missions as well. We have shrunk in size to be only going through the motions of having a vibrant missions program.

What are your hopes and dreams for Church of the Apostles Anglican? My hope is for Church of the Apostles Anglican to be a vibrant church with a restored congregation based on Christ's teaching, serving the community in His name, and with an effective missions program.

Why do you believe God may be calling you to serve on Vestry? I am transitioning from many years of service in military organizations to retirement. I have great experience in moving organizations to achieve their goals. It is possible that God, acting particularly through others, is pushing me towards service on the Vestry to share these experiences. The commitment to

Vestry would have been difficult during my career as assignments were increasingly demanding as my career progressed. Retirement is an opening to serve without the conflicts with demanding employment.

Larry Bamford

Attending since: 1983

Occupation: Retired (Information Technology); Self-employed

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and give a brief description of your prayer life. I surrendered my futile war with Jesus on Jan 17, 1976, when He assured me He had it all under control. Initially I was on fire, but I've cooled to a slow burn since then, probably from trying to take that control back. Jesus hasn't changed. I struggle now like everyone else to learn what He has in mind for me, and trust in Him is the key ingredient. I know He loves me, forgives me, and intends the best for me. I try to keep from embarrassing Him as I fumble around in my own ignorance. I love His Word. It structures my life and answers all the great questions of life. It is the easiest way to know His will. I had no model of prayer as a child so I do most of my out-loud prayers before meals. I'm thankful for having food, and while I'm at it, I pray for everything else I can think of. Otherwise, I have an ongoing simple, silent prayer life. It's always a work in progress.

Please describe your history with Church of the Apostles Anglican, including how you came to attend. My discipleship was primarily at college through the ministry of Inter Varsity. A few Inter Varsity friends graduated before me and told me about Apostles. I came and never left.

In what ministries have you served at Church of the Apostles Anglican? Elsewhere? My first ministry was with the "ADP Committee". I've also done home group leadership and hosting with my lovely wife. I served on Vestry in the early 1990s when we hired Phil Ashby and Gary Fitzgerald. I spent several years with FACETS when it first got started as Samaritan Ministries. I've been involved with the Praise Band off and on over the years. More recently I offered to give George Keitt a break from leading Grate Patrol and acquired the leadership since then. I've been serving as "IT Manager" since 2017. I've been working with the worship streaming systems for the last year, putting in most of my time there it seems. In my few previous churches I mostly helped out with music.

What are your spiritual gifts for ministry? Administration evidently since I'm compelled to organize things. IT lends itself to that. But teaching as well, since I love to understand things and help others understand after me.

What do you see as the greatest challenges currently facing Church of the Apostles Anglican? Bringing God's hope and love to the community in which we've been planted, and getting people, especially lots of young people, in the doors.

What are your hopes and dreams for Church of the Apostles Anglican? I'd love to see us become *the* neighborhood church for the community around us, not necessarily to be the big church in town, but the most welcoming and nurturing one around, and a place where people go with trust to help them face their most painful challenges.

Why do you believe God may be calling you to serve on Vestry? God has softened my attitude toward serving on vestry. Even though I've served before, I've always thought of it as an intimidating duty, not a pleasure to be enjoyed.

Ann Blackwood

Attending since: 1991

Occupation: Retired (State Department)

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and give a brief description of your prayer life. I grew up in a traditional Presbyterian church but came to faith at age 19, when I asked Jesus to come into my life. My life changed radically and I recognized, then as now, how transforming it is to follow Jesus. I have had lots of ups and downs but I have experienced God's faithfulness through life's journey. I pray to and thank the Lord daily and seek to be consistent in reading the Bible and meditating. I definitely know the difference when I do not spend daily time in prayer and in the Bible.

Please describe your history with Church of the Apostles Anglican, including how you came to attend. Church of the Apostles has been my home church since 1991 when I moved to the area and a friend said I should visit.

In what ministries have you served at Church of the Apostles Anglican? Elsewhere? I served on the Vestry once before, in early 2000's. I have served as a lay Eucharistic minister for many years, and along the way helped with Sunday school and other helps. I hosted a prayer group until COVID that was the vision of COA members, Prayer for the Nations, which has focused on international prayer needs. Prayer for the Nations continues even stronger today on Zoom. Outside of COAA, I have been on mission trips, and periodically hosted a Christian discussion group at my home.

What are your spiritual gifts for ministry? My spiritual gifts include hospitality, encouragement, helps, and discernment.

What do you see as the greatest challenges currently facing Church of the Apostles Anglican? The immediate challenge for the Church at this time, is to both restore its in-person presence and care for members who have gone through a long season without meeting together, and to build its presence in the community through outreach.

What are your hopes and dreams for Church of the Apostles Anglican? I believe God does have a new season of vibrant fruitfulness for the Church.

Why do you believe God may be calling you to serve on Vestry? As for why I believe God may be calling me to serve on Vestry at this time, it is a new season personally and for ministry, and I have asked God what his next steps are for me. I retired from a mentally demanding job at the end of May 2020 that also required a lot of travel for many years. I also have a change of situation with my family. I was very focused on my elderly Mom and after retiring I had extended time with her. She passed in October 2020. These changes have given me availability that I did not feel I had before. If elected, I would seek to be prayerful for and help support the work of the Church and its leadership going forward.

Andrew Blount

Attending since: 2012

Occupation: Principal (Fairfax County Public Schools)

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and give a brief description of your prayer life. My relationship with Jesus and my prayer life are powerfully impacted by my spiritual journey so I would like to share a little about my spiritual walk. I grew up at Epiphany United Methodist Church (EUMC) in Vienna VA and grew to know and love the Lord there as a young child. When I got to high school I struggled to stay connected with God and the church and had a falling out from the ages of 15-25. During this time, I engaged in many activities that pulled me away from God and my faith. Thankfully, a friend invited me to start attending McLean Bible Church during a time when Lon Solomon was still preaching there, and I started attending regularly. I also got connected with a bible-based Bible study that met weekly.

It was during this time that God welcomed me back with open arms and my faith grew strong. I started attending services again with my father at my hometown church Epiphany in Vienna, and I felt called to help lead the Youth Group there. This sent my spiritual walk on its path and I continued to grow in my faith through the following activities: In 2004, I had a chance to take a mission trip to Ghana; attended a charismatic church for 6 years learning all about the gifts of the Holy Spirit (2006-2012); led Bible studies for years where some of my friends gave their lives to the Lord; and led a young adult group for Apostles a few years ago.

My relationship with Jesus still has ups and downs where I go through periods of spending more or less time in scripture and in prayer, but I have never left our Lord since I came back to the church. Admittedly, Sharon and I have had varying degrees of success periodically making time for us to read scripture and pray together. This has been increasingly challenging with our 6 kids and our busy schedules. Lately, I have found the most time I have to spend with the Lord is driving alone on my way to work as I listen to scriptures. Despite the challenges of finding common prayer time with Sharon, she and I have always made a strong practice of always including Jesus in all our big decisions about finances, raising children, addressing health concerns for family members, career aspirations, and certainly in any matters related to our marriage. In summary, I would say that I love our Lord and have a very strong faith in Jesus, and I also recognize there is definitely room for more of Jesus and more of His Word in my life.

Please describe your history with Church of the Apostles, including how you came to attend. Sharon and I started attending Church of the Apostles around 2012. I distinctly

remember being invited to attend one of the welcoming dinners where we spent time learning all about Apostles. We came from a charismatic church that had been slowly dwindling over the years. We were prayerfully feeling called to leave in search of a church that was better protected under a hierarchical structure such as the Anglican church while also maintaining our belief in the power of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the spirit. We also longed for the long-standing traditions of the Christian church such as weekly communion. When we found Apostles, we knew it was a perfect match of the three streams in one and we were quickly tied into a Bible Study with the Maher family. Since then, we have fallen completely in love with Church of the Apostles and the way that our church boldly preaches the truth regardless of worldly oppositional views.

In what ministries have you served at Apostles? Elsewhere?

- Youth Group Leader (2003-2006) at Epiphany United Methodist Church - I helped grow the group from 5 youth to over 20 at the height of our program. The assistant youth leader and I helped lead several youths to Christ and saw transformational changes in many youths especially during our 3-week long mission trips over 3 years where we served poorer coal mining towns in Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia.
- Missionary (August 2004) - I had a special opportunity to serve on a month-long mission trip by myself while supporting a missionary in Ghana. During this trip, I learned all about his ministry where we would help take young youth off the streets and get them connected with a faith-based schooling program sponsored by the missionary and his supporters. We also taught the youth job skills to help them learn to be independent so that once they graduated from the schooling program, they could continue to support themselves.
- Bible Study Leader / Participant - Over the years, Sharon and I have led and or attended countless Bible studies. I have at least two friends who have specifically attributed their faith to these studies, where they gave their lives to the Lord during our Bible study.
- Young Adult Ministry - We also had a chance to lead a young adult group here at Apostles for a few years supporting young adults from the ages of 18-35. During this time, we were able to counsel young adults, married couples, and even help a few friends struggling with drug additions and alcoholism.
- Homeless Ministry (2009-present) - In 2009, a buddy and I helped start up a non-profit organization called Homeless Hope. Since then, Homeless Hope and our volunteers have faithfully served thousands of homeless by delivering coats, hats, and gloves each winter. Our ministry is slightly unique from others in that we bring new coats, new hats, and new gloves. Our belief is that we are emulating Matthew 25:40 by literally serving God himself when we serve the homeless, and so we try to bring our best gifts.
- Vestry and Senior Warden - In 2013, I was asked to serve on the vestry and had the opportunity to serve for 3 years and as the Senior Warden for a year. During this time, I was again challenged and grew in my faith as I was surrounded by a group of God-fearing men and women who helped Apostles to boldly launch our Destined for Joy campaign to raise funds for our current building. I distinctly remember the initial

meetings where our financial goals seemed so far out of reach that they were beyond even a faint prayer of asking God for such a miraculous change in our finances. But we did not let this stop our faith. We pressed into our faith, and we encouraged Christian dialogue where we faithfully felt called to move forward with God's plans for our church.

What are your spiritual gifts for ministry?

- Grace - I think this is one of my greatest spiritual giftings. During my rocky start as a young Christian, I sinned many times, and I still stumble from time to time. Seeing how greatly I have fallen and how God and the church have lifted me up each time to love and embrace me regardless of my past mistakes has taught me how to give and receive grace. I thank God frequently for His grace, and He reminds me to give it as freely and frequently as I can since I have received grace in such abundance. As a result of this gifting, I have seen many benefit from grace, as they struggle to comprehend the immense magnitude of grace that our Lord can offer.
- Faith - During my time attending a charismatic church from 2006-2012 and certainly still in my time here at Apostles, I have seen God move in such miraculous and tangible ways that I cannot deny that God is in the business still today of answering prayers with miracles. I have seen/witnessed healings, seen financial miracles, and most impressive of all I have seen how God can heal the heart and our broken relationships.
- Service – My grandparents modelled service for me from a very young age. I remember my grandfather, even in his last year before he died at the age of 87, delivering meals to families in need. While I was a youth pastor at Epiphany United Methodist Church, my pastor continued to instill this call to serve as we would go out to feed the homeless each year with the youth. And in recent years, I take great joy in continuing our homeless ministry through Homeless Hope. My hope is to continue modeling this service for my children and the next generation of believers.

What do you see as the greatest challenges currently facing Church of the Apostles?

I think pastor Nick has a great deal of insight on the challenges facing our church and the larger church. Our worldly views are our greatest threat right now. Our conservative Bible-based Christian values are under attack and are seen as offensive in many public domains. I also always have been greatly concerned with the youth ministries and young adult ministries at all churches, because I saw firsthand how the enemy lured me away from Jesus and my faith at a time in my life when I was at very vulnerable (ages 14-25). I believe this to be one the front lines of the enemy's schemes to destroy our relationship with Jesus. This was one of the reasons I started serving as a youth pastor at one of my former churches, and it is also the reason Sharon and I helped lead a young adult ministry at Church of the Apostles. It especially continues to be on my heart now that Apostles has a strong and robust group of young teens (including my own children) and young adults coming through Apostles who are under our care. This is a vulnerable age where the larger church is frequently losing youth and young adults, and I am eager to be a part of the vestry to prayerfully consider plans to implement ministries to build up the faith of our teenagers and young adults.

What are your hopes and dreams for Church of the Apostles? My hope is that we can continue to support Pastor Nick as he boldly preaches the truth of the Gospel each week despite opposition. I pray that we can continue to take care of the flock God has given our church and build up our ministries, such as our Bible study programs. I am eager to team up with the different group of vestry leaders to help prayerfully discern the direction that God is calling us to serve. And I'm eager to be a part of the action team to put Jesus' plans into place once we have clarity of where God is calling our church. Additionally, my marriage and my family have been supported by Apostles in amazing ways over the years, and I am hopeful that I can return this favor to our church community by also giving back.

Why do you believe God may be calling you to serve on Vestry? I was approached to see if I would consider serving on the vestry again. In full transparency, I love serving in leadership roles both in my work and my personal life (church and children's sports), and so when someone asks me to serve in a leadership role, my heart leaps for joy and I am eager to prematurely say yes. However, over the years these additional leadership roles have at times placed an added strain on my marriage and our family. For this reason, I have learned through my faith and Sharon's guidance to be cautious about overcommitting myself and my family, and to always seek God's wisdom and blessing in obtaining any leadership roles. As I talked with Sharon and prayed more and more about serving on the vestry over several weeks, the more and more excited I got about serving. I read carefully through the "Considering the Call" packet which clearly outlines our Anglican views and considerations for considering the call. After doing all of this, I now have full peace about putting my name forward to serve on the vestry feeling God's blessing, and it also was very reaffirming to have Sharon be so supportive. I am very excited to have a chance to prayerfully collaborate with the vestry team to seek God's plans for our church, and specifically to put these plans into action. In my personal workplace, I serve as a principal of an elementary school, where I love helping to create a common vision with a group of stakeholders and put tangible action plans into place. It is my hope that God will use these administrative skills to help me serve the vestry and our church so that we can collaboratively seek God's will and put His plans into action.

Bill Bremmer

Attending since: 1984

Occupation: Missionary

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ, and give a brief description of your prayer life. Although I had attended church since I was a small child, my real Christian conversion came in my junior year of college while attending a campus fellowship group. It was then that I realized Jesus was not just some abstract idea, but God himself with the power to transform my life – more than just a savior, but my Lord. And if that were so, then He was also faithful in all His promises and accessible to me through prayer and the study of His Word. To try to encapsulate my faith walk since then in a short paragraph would be impossible, but in the past four decades I have been learning daily what it means to live in Christ and to have Him live in

me (my “life verse” is Galatians 2:20). I still have a lot to learn (and re-learn!), but I am thankful that God delights in hearing and answering my prayers about anything I bring to Him.

Please describe your history with Church of the Apostles, including how you came to attend. I started attending COA right after moving to D.C. for grad school in September 1984. I was part of the GWU Christian Fellowship, where a number of students made the trek out to faraway Fairfax High School each Sunday. Having grown up a no-nonsense Presbyterian, the charismatic and liturgical streams initially left me shocked but intrigued. An attractive and fun-loving young woman in the Fellowship had a car, so I usually tried to ride with her – ten years later she would become my wife! I have been an active member of COA ever since and been involved in many ministries and missions trips.

In what ministries have you served at Church of the Apostles? Elsewhere? I am passionate about seeing God’s Word reach the world in every language, so Kerry and I have served as missionaries with Wycliffe Bible Translators since 2004, including a two-year field assignment in West Asia (2011-2013). At COA I have been active in many ministries since 1984: currently as a member of the worship team; in 2019 as head of the rector search committee; previously as head of the European Outreach Group and later the Missions Commission; in leadership positions in several home groups and men’s ministry study groups; through service with the greeters/newcomers and lay Eucharistic/readers ministries; and as an occasional Sunday school teacher. In the 1990s I took part in six COA-sponsored overseas short- and medium-term mission trips. I also served for several years as a worship leader and counselor with Regeneration Ministries of Northern Virginia. I am presently an active participant in two men’s Bible studies.

What are your spiritual gifts for ministry? Interestingly, one of my favorite things to do – leading others in worship – is not listed among any of the “Spiritual gifts” passages found in the New Testament, so perhaps this can be thought of as an aspect of the gift of serving (Romans 12:7). That same verse mentions the gift of teaching, and I have taught in many contexts over the years. What is exciting to me is that, as I have sought to study the Bible more purposefully in the last couple of years, I’ve noticed that God has begun equipping me as a teacher in that domain, too. I still have a long way to go, but I find that I really enjoy getting deeper into the exegesis of the Bible. As a result, I now have a greater interest in discerning spiritual messages (1 Corinthians 12:10), especially since we live in a time of many attractive but false teachings. Finally, I believe I have the gift of encouragement and its counterbalance of exhortation, though my kids would probably say I err on the side of the latter.

What do you see as the greatest challenges currently facing Church of the Apostles? The Church in the West is living through one of the most challenging times in modern history. Like many others, I believe that, short of God’s intervention, our circumstances will only continue to devolve toward greater persecution. We face opposition on many levels – social, political, cultural – but in the end all spiritual (Ephesians 6:12). It would be easy to be caught up in the spirit of the age, as so many churches are today. False teachings abound, and we face the real danger of being lured away incrementally from our first love if we are distracted by things like

social and political movements, the false security of prosperity, or the temptation to water down or depart from the Gospel in exchange for being perceived as “safe,” “tolerant,” and “relevant.” The challenge will be to not let our hearts grow cold or fall away, but to remain focused on proclaiming the compelling message of the Gospel to reach the lost both here in Fairfax and online “to the ends of the earth.”

What are your hopes and dreams for Church of the Apostles? My hope is that COA will be a magnet for people who are seeking to know God, even if they don’t realize it yet. Because of my interest in outreach to internationals, a very specific hope that I have is that we would become a foretaste of Heaven, with people from many nations and tongues gathering to worship. There are people from all over the world and all walks of life within a few minutes’ walk or drive from our building, and even more who can be reached with our streaming services. I would like to see us growing daily in our desire to reach as many people as we can with the Gospel.

Why do you believe God may be calling you to serve on Vestry? Before God calls, He prepares and equips. I have seen God preparing and equipping me over the past few years for greater service than what I have, up to now, been comfortable with. I believe He has brought me to a place where I can finally say yes to this particular service and has encouraged me through people who are close to me and who know me, with all my faults. Whether or not I’m selected to serve, I am eager to see God continue to draw me out of my complacency and use me in whatever ways He chooses.

Lib Gillam

Attending since: 1981

Occupation: Mental Health Therapist (Self-Employed)

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and give a brief description of your prayer life. My relationship with Jesus Christ has evolved over the years. When I first accepted Jesus as Savior, I was so grateful to know salvation as a free gift that I could not and did not have to earn. However, I generally thought of myself then as a relatively “good” person. In his mercy, the Lord has led me, like “Much Afraid” (*Hinds’ Feet on High Places*) to see myself limping up the climb and falling into his care in the valleys; in desperate need of saving and repentance. The benefit of long life and hindsight is that I see his faithfulness and rich blessings more clearly now both in and through the difficulties. He is becoming my all-in-all as I “fix my eyes” and run to him constantly with both a grateful heart and desperate need. This season of life is entering one of many losses – friends, family, abilities – so my prayer is that he enlarges in me as life moves forward. He continues to “break up my unplowed ground” (Hosea 10:12; see my explanation below). I desire to grow in abiding intimacy with Christ through dwelling in his word, fellowship, and in worship.

Please describe your history with Church of the Apostles, including how you came to attend. My husband, David, and I began attending COA in 1981 when our first two children

were very young. We both grew up in the Catholic Church and came to personal acceptance of Christ as Savior through a Catholic charismatic group. We were drawn to COA as we wanted more of the “Living Word” both through teaching, liturgy and fellowship. Over the years we were part of 2 different home groups, and I have continued with a women’s group that evolved from the first group we attended. I am currently in a newly formed COA home group. We raised our 4 children at COA and were so grateful for the solid foundation they received through worship and youth group fellowship and teaching.

In what ministries have you served at Apostles? Elsewhere? Over the years I have served in the nursery, altar guild, compassion committee, and am currently serving on the outreach committee and women’s ministry. As a licensed therapist, I have also provided confidential counseling support and/or consultation to COA members. I see my counseling practice as a ministry, and I offer reduced fees to those who need that. I also facilitated teachings on grief and loss based on Facing Life’s Losses from Healing Center International. I completed the 12-week training in this scripture-based grief/loss program.

Outside of COA, some years ago I regularly delivered left-over bakery bread to Food for Others in Fairfax. I currently volunteer as a relational partner to a family through HOPE of Northern Virginia crisis pregnancy center. I also volunteer with a grant program providing mental health support to at-risk students in two elementary schools in Fairfax, as well as offering parenting workshops at an elementary school in the Mt. Vernon area.

What are your spiritual gifts for ministry? Compassion, hospitality (the relational aspect, not the organizing/administration part) and a good listening ear are probably my strongest gifts. I am praying for grace to be “fully present” to whoever God puts in front of me.

What do you see as the greatest challenges currently facing Church of the Apostles? The aging congregation (of which I am a part) is a great blessing in many ways but also presents certain challenges. I get the sense that it is sometimes more difficult to step outside of our comfortable “box” where we do things the way they have always been done, rather than asking “what if we.....?” I also wonder if groups/ministries sometimes operate in “silos,” which can run counter to an experiential sense of unified community.

It would be wonderful to have more young families and more families with tweens and teens and be able to hire a youth pastor. There are so many challenges in the world around us these days and struggles/risks facing youth. The world offers no anchors of truth for kids – it’s all “up for grabs.” I think parents are looking for that support as they seek a church home.

As I consider the journey of COA over the years, it is so clear that the Lord has kept us and has a clear purpose and vision for us. He is faithful to complete the good work he has begun.

What are your hopes and dreams for Church of the Apostles? My hope/dream for COA is that it would be a haven of rest for the weary, where people find joy in true relationship with Jesus and one another, and in hearing the truth and hope of the gospel. People need this across their life span, cradle to grave. The DC area is so fast paced and competitive, so “connected” to every material thing and every aspect of technology, yet so relationally disconnected and terribly lonely. We seem to be constantly searching for the next thing to fill the void, yet nothing does.

We run faster when we don't know where we are going! COA stands quietly, gently, steadfastly as a beacon of hope in a weary world. In summary, I would say my hope is that as a body we become more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we seek to increasingly know Christ and make him known.

Why do you believe God may be calling you to serve on Vestry? I believe God may be calling me to serve on Vestry because it is not a path that I likely would choose for myself, but I trust that the Lord nudges me through faithful and mature friends who may see something in me that I would tend to resist, minimize, or ignore. During COVID the passage the Lord has had me focus on is from Hosea 10:12, "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you." I think this calling may be part of allowing the Lord to "break up my unplowed ground," seeking and trusting the Lord in deeper ways and allowing Him to use me through serving in this way.

Faith McDonnell

Attending since: 1980

Occupation: Director of Advocacy (Katartismos Global)

Please describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and give a brief description of your prayer life. I rejoice that I am a child of God, and that Jesus is my Savior and Lord. My relationship with Jesus started when I gave my heart to Him when I was 10 years old. I was blessed beyond measure to have parents who loved Jesus and were in His service -- as officers (ordained ministers) in The Salvation Army. I always loved the Lord, but I never could have imagined how much more my relationship with Him would become, and what an adventure it is to follow Jesus. Much of that I owe to the decades that I have been at Church of the Apostles, blessed to hear amazing sermons, experience Spirit-filled worship, and know men and women of God who totally rock! And today I am overwhelmed by the honor to be part of the Body of Christ in such a time as this, that He has chosen me to be here at the time when Holy Spirit is moving all over the world, and we will see Him do great things and use us as His instruments.

My prayer life is better than it used to be, but not as good as it could be! For years, because of the work to which God called me, I focused on prayers of petition for the Persecuted Church around the world. Then I realized that this was a spiritual battle, battling wickedness in the heavenly realms, so I started focusing my prayers on spiritual warfare. Then I realized that I could not enter into these battles without first making sure that MY heart was right. And I learned more about humbling myself, confessing my sins, asking forgiveness, and just spending time with my King. Our beautiful prayers in the Book of Common Prayer are so powerful in that respect. Most recently I'm also praying God's own words back to Him - the things that Jesus has promised to His Body that He told to His disciples. Songs are also very important to me as part of my prayer life.

Please describe your history with Church of the Apostles, including how you came to attend. I

I LOVE the story of how I came to attend Church of the Apostles, and I used to remind our precious Gretchen Keitt about it every year on the anniversary of my first Sunday at Apostles, which is pretty easy to remember because it is Easter! I was in grad school at the University of Maryland and had become part of a weekly fellowship, prayer, and praise group known as "The Thursday Night Group." Mary Edwards (then Chilcoat) was also part of this group! The group was led by a fellow grad student in the English Department, Brian McLaren. (Yup, THAT Brian McLaren!) It was the first time that I had ever experienced that kind of worship -- where we sang TO God, not just about Him. Brian and his wife, Grace, invited me to come to Easter service at Church of the Apostles, an Episcopal church in Fairfax, VA. It was 1980, and Apostles was meeting in an elementary school. I had never been to an Episcopal Church before, and since my Salvation Army dad was a wee bit legalistic, I was very curious to experience a "mainline church." I was blown away by the worship, the prayers, the obvious way that people were just crazy about Jesus! And when Gretchen Keitt, the lay reader, read the passage about Peter and John and the lame man, and she exclaimed, "And he went WALKING, and LEAPING, and PRAISING GOD! I said to myself, "This is MY church!" And it has been, ever since!

In what ministries have you served at Apostles? Elsewhere? For many years, I have been the Sudan Ministry coordinator on the Church of the Apostles Outreach Committee. I have always been so proud of Apostles' commitment to generous outreach -- even when we have struggled ourselves with so much of our earthly treasure taken by the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. I also led three mission trips with Ian and Pauline Bothwell at Crossfire Trust in South Armagh, Northern Ireland. A couple of those years we brought kids from Northern Ireland here, who were hosted by Apostles' church families. I also participated as a team member in a mission trip to Moscow and Yerevan, Armenia in Soviet Union days. This was a great precursor to the ministry to which God called me for the Persecuted Church, since the Church in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was the first Persecuted Church issue that any of us ever knew about. I also was the coordinator for 10 years of Grate Patrol, the feeding program for the homeless street people in DC.

Outside of Apostles, my ministry has been advocacy to persecuted Christians around the world and it has also been my occupation. Never sure which hat I have on, or if I just wear both at once. I have also, through my previous occupation at the Institute on Religion and Democracy, been very involved in the fight to try to restore orthodoxy, Biblical authority, and the Lordship of Christ to the Episcopal Church along with my then boss, the late Diane Knippers. When it became apparent that they were not going that way, I was privileged to be part of the founding of the Anglican Church in North America, again alongside Diane, who really lit a fire under the godly bishops.

What are your spiritual gifts for ministry? I have a passion for justice and truth; intercession and spiritual warfare; as well as strong faith and persistence (some would say stubbornness). Commissioned as an apostle in the Heartland/Global Apostolic Prayer Network, I have an ability to connect dots between situations, to connect people, and to influence situations and people.

What do you see as the greatest challenges currently facing Church of the Apostles? To me, the greatest challenges facing Apostles are not of our own making but are because of the days in which we are living. We have had challenges in the past, being "homeless" for so many years, having people leave the church, etc. but the greatest challenge before us is responding to these times, and this time -- this moment in history to which God is calling His Body, the entire Ekklesia. We are so blessed to have Fr. Nick leading us, preaching the whole counsel of God. Our challenges:

- get rid of the spirit of fear and be fearless, fierce, faith-filled members of His Body
- grow deeper in love with Jesus and in holiness and joy
- to pray more as individuals and together
- treasure and make flourish all three streams in the River of God, and pray and work to see other expressions of the Body of Christ come to value all three streams, as well, helping to make us all One, so we can be a fit Bride for King Jesus
- be open to whatever the Holy Spirit is going to do to bring glory to Jesus and be a witness to a lost and hungry world
- be prepared for those MASSES and MASSES of the lost and prodigals who will be seeking a church home/community of faith when they return to Jesus or meet Him for the first time!
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What are your hopes and dreams for Church of the Apostles? See above! I believe that God created Church of the Apostles for such a time as this! My hope and dream are the realization of Church of the Apostles being used by God as never before, of being known as a place where people can find joy and the love of Jesus and where the Spirit of God is so heavy on the place that the building settles about five inches deeper into the foundation! And signs, and wonders, and healings, and worship all point people to Jesus.

Why do you believe God may be calling you to serve on Vestry? Because I have friends that have asked me, "Why haven't you been on Vestry?" or "Why don't you allow yourself to be nominated for Vestry?" After praying about it, I am open to the call from God to serve on Vestry, if that is where He wants me, or however He wishes to use me in service to the church body that I love and that has given me so much for so many years.