

SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Cowley

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Update your address with us! To remove your name from our physical mailing list and sign up for our electronic mailing list, please call 617.876.3037x55, or email friends@ssje.org.

To follow the latest news from the Brothers, visit www.SSJE.org where you can listen to weekly sermons, watch videos, and view photo galleries.

We would welcome hearing what you think of this issue of Cowley Magazine. Visit www.SSJE.org/cowleymagazine to share comments, ask questions, or see Cowley in color!



Cover image:

Light streams into the chapel at Emery House. A friend of the community, Eileen Scully, shared with us this beautiful image, as well as those that accompany Br. Curtis' article, on pages 9 and 10 of this Cowley.



A Letter from the Superior

James Koester, SSJE

Dear Members of the Fellowship of Saint John and other Friends,

I want to begin this first letter of mine to Cowley readers as Superior by acknowledging my brother Geoffrey and his work as Superior over the last six years. Geoffrey is currently on a well-earned and much-deserved sabbatical, and we look forward to his return shortly after Christmas.

During his time as Superior, Geoffrey completed the renovation of the Monastery – including the year of upheaval when our community was literally uprooted from our home – and brought us back into the Monastery, helping us to reclaim a renewed vision for what the Monastery can be as a center of mission and ministry. Part of this renewal stems from the five new men who arrived during Geoffrey's term and have made initial profession in the community. As Superior, I want to continue to build upon this work of renewing and strengthening our community life and its ministry.

I also want to share with you my vision for the place from which the Brothers' ministry comes. All of us have certain texts that become for us personal markers, guides, plumb lines by which we test our life in the Spirit. For me, one of those texts is the collect for Christmas II. It doesn't matter if it's Eastertide, Lent, or Ordinary Time; I always find myself returning to these words in my prayer:

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself

to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

This collect picks up on themes that I believe to be important not just for me personally, nor just for us Brothers as monastics, but for all who seek to “share the divine life” of God. The Incarnation reveals the dignity of human nature in that we, being human, can participate in the divine nature. As the second-century theologian Irenaeus succinctly sums it up: God became like us so that we might become like God. No matter who you are, or where you are, or what you've done, this is the promise: God became like us so that we might become like God.

For us Brothers, this promise is at the very heart of our shared life and ministry. We hope, above all, to help people be in touch with the incredible mystery of the Incarnation, how God became like us, so that we might become like God. This devotion shapes our lives in very practical ways. I am often struck by this during my visits to other religious communities: while elsewhere the Angelus frequently is rung before an Office, SSJE seems to be the only Anglican community I know of which has the tradition of praying the Angelus aloud. “Be it unto me according to your word”: we repeat Mary's powerful acceptance of God's presence in her life. “That we



The Fellowship of St. John Holy Land Pilgrimage begins at St. George's Cathedral, Jerusalem. For more on the pilgrimage, see page 35 of this Cowley.

may be made worthy of the promises of Christ." This constant, daily, verbal commemoration of the Incarnation shapes our community and is often evident in our preaching and spiritual direction, as we repeatedly point to the person of Jesus. Just as the Angelus shapes our day, so the Incarnation and our relationship with the person of Jesus shape our lives, our ministry, and our mission. We hope to live as a witness to the Church and the world that all are inherently good and worthy of God's love.

Every year, we are more inspired by the ways that technology allows us to help spread God's message of love. This year our Lenten offering, *Growing a Rule of Life*, was developed in partnership with the Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary, and was adopted by parishes and dioceses around the world. The topic proved so popular we sold out of workbooks on Amazon.com in the first two weeks they were available! It was wonderful to see the responses many subscribers shared online – written comments and colorful drawings – as well as the diverse ways that communities around the world participated. One diocese even created and shared with us their own version of the course for children. We hope that those of you who developed a Rule of Life are finding it a helpful tool for deepening your life with God. If you didn't give the

practice a try over Lent, check out page thirteen of this *Cowley*, where we offer the simplest blueprint for a possible Rule.

As a community, we continue to seek out our own ways to deepen our responsiveness to the rhythms of creation. Last summer we entered into relationship with an organization in Newburyport called "Nourishing the North Shore," which provides food and food education to low-income residents of the Newburyport area. This year we are pleased at the expansion of that program, as they look to double the size of the gardens and build a greenhouse. We're very excited to be involved in this ministry of providing locally grown, healthy food to the surrounding area.

The theme of this issue of *Cowley* is "contentment," and it's a theme that resonates deeply for us. As Br. Curtis explains, contentment does not mean having it all, but rather accepting, as is, the "hugely challenging, utterly amazing gift of the life that God has shared with you." We Brothers are so grateful to be companioned in this life by all of you.

Faithfully,

James Koester, SSJE
Superior



Letter from the Bishop Visitor

The Right Reverend Frank T. Griswold, III

Dear Friends of SSJE,

In speaking of life in community, Father Benson observes, "It is not because we have common tastes, a common aim, common dangers, a common purpose, a common sense of the glory into which we are called that we can be sure of abiding in brotherly love. It is only by having the spirit of love poured out into the soul. This love must overcome every difference of taste, training, work, nationality; we must simply be absorbed into a supernatural unity, where Christ is the common life of all, and the individual is gladly lost in him."

Such a costly and demanding vocation is not restricted to a monastic community, but belongs to the Body of Christ in all its manifestations. The "spirit of love poured out into the

soul" is the ground of all authentic discipleship and the fruit of the Resurrection: love is how the Risen One enters in us. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

While the following sections of this report focus largely on the external and public aspects of the Society's life and ministry, "the spirit of love" is its life force which gives coherence and direction as it looks to the future.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt. Rev. Frank T. Griswold, III
25th Presiding Bishop





Growing and Living within the Means of a Balanced Budget

In the current fiscal year (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016), SSJE anticipates a balanced budget. Projected operating expenses are supported by:

- Gifts to the Annual Fund – 41%
- Guesthouse income – 12%
- Ministry and other sources – 15%
- Spending from Endowment (with a 4.7% draw) – 32%

The community continues to grow and thrive. In addition to the four men who have taken initial vows in the past six years, one novice is now planning to take initial vows. The Brothers anticipate the arrival of three new postulants in January 2017. In September 2015 the community welcomed eight interns and will have eight more next September. The plan to absorb the operating cost of Grafton House (acquired in 2013 to provide housing for interns) within three years is on schedule with the assumption that the Annual Fund keeps on growing.

The fiscal 2016 Annual Fund is budgeted at the same level as 2015 actual results, which in turn produced an extraordinary 13% increase over the prior year. If friends repeat or exceed their prior generosity, the fiscal 2016 target will be met. The 2015 audited financial statement reports SSJE in good standing. A copy of the audit is available upon request. The Society is committed to an Endowment draw that, in real terms, will provide a stream of income to support SSJE's activities in perpetuity. As a consequence, the draw, now at 4.7%, is being stepped down by 0.1% annually until a new target of 4% is reached.

The Brothers continue to work to support the institutional Church and to bring Monastic Wisdom to the Church as a gift. In 2015 the Brothers partnered with Virginia Theological Seminary to develop a Lenten video series, workbook, and curriculum, *Growing a Rule of Life*. Four dioceses adopted the curriculum, 5,000 copies of the workbook were sold at cost to individuals and churches, and more than 20,000 were distributed. SSJE was asked in 2015 by the Episcopal Church to launch a campaign to teach people to write the seven principal forms of prayer for inclusion in the Prayers of the People at General Convention. The Anglican Church of Canada has asked for SSJE to do the same across Canada. The Brothers continue to help people start their day in prayer with "Brother, Give Us a Word" and AdventWord. SSJE hopes that these offerings will continue to feed people spiritually, and that the resulting gratitude will support the Brothers' ministry. There is great hunger for the Brothers' offerings as they help the Church connect to the next generation of the faithful, and this interest creates pressure for the Brothers to increase expenses in this area.

Sacred Space, Growing at Emery House

At Emery House, the Grafton House property, purchased in September 2013 with the very generous assistance of a loan from the Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity, is now fully operational. The property houses participants in the SSJE Monastic Internship Program, which gives young people in their 20s and 30s an opportunity to experience life in a Christian community, as well as a time of formation and discernment. Repayment of this loan is scheduled to commence in 2018. In addition the Brothers have partnered with a local organization called "Nourishing the North Shore" to provide fresh, locally-grown food to low-income residents of the Newburyport area. "Nourishing the North Shore" is growing food in two garden plots at Emery House and next to Grafton House.

Long-term Capitalization

This year pledge payments from The *STONE & Light* Capital Campaign paid off the outstanding construction loan to complete the campaign. The Brothers are so grateful.

The Brothers continue to be diligent and prudent in ensuring the long-term health of their buildings:

- Six years ago the Brothers created a Building Fund into which they place about \$150,000 a year dedicated to the renewal of the Monastery and Emery House buildings.
- Over the last year the Brothers commissioned an audit of all their buildings to establish a long-term replacement-spending plan for the Building fund. The plan awaits additional potential construction information about refurbished and replacement buildings at Emery House.

The amount being set aside in the Building Fund is not sufficient to cover all future replacement costs and is currently funded out of operations. To support the Building Fund the Brothers are looking to increase the Endowment in two ways:

- The Brothers remain in consultation with Massachusetts Audubon Society, Essex County Greenbelt and the Town of West Newbury to both conserve the land and to raise an Endowment for SSJE's ministry at Emery House through a series of environmental initiatives and the sale of conservation rights. There is interest from conservation organizations to coordinate conserving two neighbors' properties at the same time to create a nationally-significant conservation event.
- The Brothers are now directing some bequests and are receiving new gifts into the Endowment or Building Fund, as well as continuing to encourage more people to remember SSJE in their wills.





You Don't Need More The Grace of Contentment

Curtis Almquist, SSJE

An ancient monastic principle about inner freedom: freedom to be fully alive is found in the context of limitation. This is quite counter-cultural. In western society we are identified as “consumers” in a market economy that is constantly alluring us with dissatisfaction, where what is next or what is new is promised to be better than what is now. We hear the pitch, “You can have it all ... and you should,” as if more is more and never enough. Monastic wisdom counters this delusion with the elixir of “contentment,” a word which comes to us from the Latin *contentus*: to be satisfied or contained. Less is more. The grace of contentment presumes that what is, is enough.

Contentment is not passivity. Contentment is an active engagement with life *now*. It encourages you not to be seduced into believing you must stretch your soul ever broader, ever thinner, to take in ever-new experiences, taste new pleasures, hear new muses, master new skills, visit new worlds to be complete. Rather, contentment comes in growing your soul downward, deeper, into the ground of your being. Contentment is an active living into the depths of life *now*, today, given all the givens. We are invited to live into the provision and revelation of what is already at hand. Jesus tells us to

learn the secrets of this from the created world: “Consider the lilies...” he says, and “Look at the birds of the air.”¹

In contentment we are invited to savor our lives in every way we can, right now. Many of us have awakened to discover that the role we’ve been given in the play of life is not the part we thought we were trying out for. I oftentimes am saying to myself, “Who would have guessed that my life would include such-and-such?” Perhaps you know your own version of this. As we pray in *Compline* every night, life is full of “changes and chances,” over which we have little, if any, control.

The grace of contentment is particularly helpful when you have no choice, when life is defined or confined in ways which you may never have imagined or desired. Speaking of contentment, I am not extolling being a victim. Contentment is certainly not about staying put in a situation or relationship that is diminishing, or abusive, or numbing, and where your energies clearly *must* be directed toward a change or an intervention. Contentment is about being thankful everywhere and in every way you possibly can for the hugely challenging,

¹ Matthew 6:25-33.

utterly amazing gift of the life that God has shared with you. What surrounds you and fills you *now* is the portal through which God will be really present, what the eighteenth-century Jesuit spiritual director Jean Pierre de Caussade called “the sacrament of the present moment.”² The psalmist says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.”³ Presume the invitation to transcendence is immanent: God is with you. *Now* is the gift of today, which is a splendid gift indeed. Taste, see, say “yes” to your life in this moment.

Living in contentment is more about being than about doing, or acquiring, or mastering, or craving, or searching. Contentment means being satisfied given the limitations of your present life, including your life with God. You don’t need a special cushion on which to sit, nor a special lamp to light, nor a special incense to burn, nor a special prayer or mantra to recite, nor even a special monastery to visit. None of that is bad; it may well help. It is simply not enough. What is, is enough – for *now*. Start with what is now: with your breath; with what you can see and hear and feel and remember now. Pay attention to now, where God’s presence will be really present. Emily Dickinson said, “Instead of getting to heaven at last, I’m going all along.”

Wherever you find yourself along the path, presume you know enough. Presume that when you pray to Jesus, asking for Jesus’ guidance, Jesus will give you enough. Jesus is not going to tell you more, because you could not bear it. You have enough for now. If *you* knew what *Jesus* knows about your path ahead, you would be overwhelmed, or you could take a misstep, or you might shy away or flee.

² Jean Pierre de Caussade, SJ (1675-1751), quoted from his *Abandonment to the Divine Providence*.

³ Psalm 34:8.

You know enough. You are being “hidden under the shadow of God’s wings,” being kept in the dark by God.⁴ You have as much spiritual direction as you can bear right now. More will be revealed, but only when you are ready for the eyes of your heart to be enlightened. Meanwhile, you’re invited to watch and wait.

Waiting, like contentment, radically challenges our culture’s promise of instant gratification. Waiting is a wonder, which piques your soul’s attentiveness to God’s ongoing revelation. The grace of waiting will cure or clarify your desire. In the meantime, wait for God’s provision. (Provision will come, sometimes fulfilling

⁴ Psalms 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4.





your heart's desire, sometimes not. I've found that one of life's greatest gifts is *not* getting what I thought I wanted, only to realize, in retrospect, that it would not have been right.) Waiting "frontloads" the expectation that, in the fullness of time, you will have and know what you need. Rather than expending endless energy in worrying about the unknown or wondering, "What if...?" or "If only..." you wait. You wait expectantly. You wait, if you can, contentedly. The psalmist says, "My soul waits for the LORD, more than watchmen for the morning."⁵ The dawn comes, but not before the sun is ready. Remember that, if you are waiting in the dark; be content to know that God is not in the dark about what comes next. The light, the enlightenment, will come to you when you are ready or readied. God knows, and God knows *what* you don't know, and God knows *that* you don't know. T. S. Eliot said that "the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting. Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought: so the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing."⁶

To be content, to live in the grace of contentment, you must give consent. God is intent on forming you (or reforming you) into the beauty God created you to be, but first you must give God your consent, your co-operation. You might say, "Oh, that would be so difficult, to be so trusting of God." Maybe so, but it's not as difficult as *not* trusting God. You otherwise feign to carry the burden of authoring your life – the beginning and the end and the way in between – solely on your own shoulders. To be content you must surrender being your own god. Saint Ramuald, the tenth-century monastic founder of the Camaldolese order, writes:

...Realize above all that you

⁵ Psalm 130:5.

⁶ T. S. Eliot in *Four Quartets: East Coker*, III, 11. 23-8.

*are in God's presence,
and stand there with the attitude of one
who stands before the emperor.
Empty yourself completely and wait,
content with the grace of God,
like the chick who tastes nothing
and eats nothing
but what his mother gives him.*⁷

At the end of The Gospel according to John, Jesus is beside the Sea of Galilee talking with Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Jesus unveils what is ahead in life for Peter, beyond what he could ever have asked or imagined. Peter then points to the Beloved Disciple and asks Jesus, "What about him?" Jesus gives Peter a gentle

⁷ Quoted from the "Brief Rule of Saint Romuald (c. 951–c.1027).

retort: "What is that to you? Follow me." It's a good reminder to us all that we each have our own life script. Not to compare. Not to envy. Not to resent, but to consent to what God has in mind for us to be and become, to have and hold. Discontentment resists joy. Contentment claims the delight and wonder that informs God's each passing moment, as it unfolds for us, around us, and within us.

One final word: Contentment is not one more thing to do. The way to contentment is found in surrender to God, in embracing the life God has entrusted to you. You need not go far off to discover the grace of contentment. Come home. Contentment is within your reach, waiting to be claimed. 🙏



Eggs from Emery House, in the hands of our intern, David Reynard.

Practices for Contentment

Give thanks for what is throughout the day

Morning – Contentment begins when you open your eyes. You've opened your eyes to another day! If you waken to a new day, presume God thinks you're up to it. We are "to praise, reverence, and serve God" (Ignatius of Loyola's premise), to be an ambassador of Christ. Your first prayer of the day: gratitude for the wonder of your life.

Noon – By noon of each day, claim a dozen things or people or circumstances for which you are grateful. Express your gratitude whenever possible. It's contagious, for you and for others.

Night – Pray your life at the end of the day: reclaim your gratitude; express your regret for where you blew it; hand back to God what you are lugging so that you can rest in peace.

Embrace waiting

Review your life – Wherever you are worrying or wondering about the future, all of it is an invitation for your waiting. Waiting is fascinating. Don't let waiting be empty space or fretful time. Let your waiting be full with wonder and the grace of resting in God's unfolding provision.

Write a "Rule of Life for Contentment" on an index card

Start with three – Identify three aspects of your life right now that make it worthwhile for you to get out of bed. What are you living for? Not something in the future, or something in the past, but something now. Keep the card with you and review it throughout the day.

What are you living for?

1

2

3



What Are You Living For?

*A conversation about vocation with
Br. Jim Woodrum*

How did you first become interested in the monastic life?

One day back in October 2003, I started exploring the “links” section of the website for the church I was then attending, and I found there a list of monastic communities’ sites. I already knew that there were monastic communities, but for some reason, on this day, the fact that they had websites intrigued me. I wondered, “What the heck do they put on them?” So I started clicking through – the Franciscans, the Benedictines – and, you know, there weren’t really any surprises; it was just monks and nuns. But the last website I visited was SSJE’s. And it had this line on the front page: “We’re men living traditional vows in a non-traditional setting of Harvard Square. We’re learning to pray our lives.” And for some reason *that* is what struck me: Tradition in a non-traditional place and praying our lives.

So I clicked around and started reading the sermons online. There too, I was intrigued – in this case because the sermons didn’t tell me what to believe. Instead of preaching a clear doctrine or a straightforward interpretation of scripture, the sermons would throw the ball in an unexpected direction, inviting me to run

after it and figure out what I believed. I read around for a long time that night, getting more and more interested, and then I came to my senses. “What the heck am I thinking?” I asked myself. I quickly turned the computer off, insisting, “This is just another of your hair-brained ideas. You becoming a monk is not even a possibility.” But the very next day I was back, reading more sermons and going through the same thing again – turning the computer off, only to turn it back on the next day – until I’d read through all the sermons and was waiting for new ones to be posted.

Then one day, right before Christmas, I was listening to NPR on my way home from work, and they did a report about a Christmas CD recorded by some monks ... at the Society of Saint John the Evangelist! Well, I just about drove off the road. I could not believe it. Out of all the monasteries, the chances of it being this one, the chances of this Boston radio program being broadcast in South Carolina where I was living, and the chances of me happening to hear it, were downright incredible. Yet here I was, listening to the voices of the men whose sermons I had been reading, and reading, and reading! I

looked up at God and said, “Okay. Okay. Okay.”

I went home and wrote my first email to Br. Geoffrey, who was the novice guardian at that time. I said, “I don’t know why I’m writing. I think this is crazy, it’s scary, it’s exciting and I don’t know what to make of it, but I’m writing you. So here I am.” I ended up making my first visit to SSJE in June of 2004, just six months later.

Did you struggle with pursuing this interest in a monastic vocation?

At that time, I was searching and swimming in the sea of life, so to speak, but not really landing anywhere. I wasn’t sure what I wanted in life, but I knew there were certain things that were foundational: I’d loved my fraternity in college; I loved the Episcopal Church where I’d found my home after growing

up Southern Baptist; I was not in a relationship and had never gotten married; I was a musician. Well, suddenly it seemed to me that if you took all of that and mixed it together, you’d get something like the monastic life. Discovering SSJE was like finding a place where I fit in, where all these unique little threads that were me – which didn’t quite fit into any of the other different lives I’d tried – suddenly fit together and made sense. It resonated instantly.

Yet I kept pushing the idea of this vocation away because I still felt that I needed to do what I was “supposed” to do: I needed to have a family, to have a career, and to make money, because that’s what is seen as successful in our society. We’re constantly bombarded with this ideal of the American dream, the way life is *supposed* to be. But here I am: I’ve found a vocation that doesn’t



Br. Jim Woodrum with the Rev. Dr. Hamilton Fuller, his hometown rector, and Lynn Fuller on the day of his initial profession.

fit that ideal at all.

You know, people always ask each other, “What do you do for a living?” I feel uncomfortable answering that question now. Because a vocation is different than a job. The monastic life is definitely a vocation, and vocation is not what you “do for a living,” rather a vocation is what you’re living for.

So how did you finally commit to testing this vocation?

Well, it took some time. Ultimately it took me eight-and-a-half years after that initial visit before I actually came to test my vocation. During that time, I visited SSJE nearly every year. I came for a “Monks in Blue Jeans” retreat, for a couple of Christmases, and for an Easter. Every time I visited, it was always the same as I’d remembered: from seeing the Brothers to what it smelled like inside the guesthouse, to the rhythm of the life, I just slipped into the groove. Each time I came back, I needed less and less of a primer. I knew that the bell was going to ring ten minutes before services. And as soon as I walked through the door – even though a year had passed – it would seem like it was

just the very next day. And that felt wonderful.

Yet while the life kept tugging me back, I also could not make myself take the step to commit to testing my vocation. There were too many other things – like going back to school, or pursuing music – that I felt I had to do *before* I could do this. After a while, I was starting to think it would never happen. One day my mom out of the blue said to me, “You know, you don’t talk about SSJE anymore.” Literally two days later, I got a phone call from Br. David Vryhof, asking me “Where are you at? Why don’t you come back for a visit and we’ll talk.” I knew then that God was prompting me once again. I couldn’t resist that.

Why do you think you struggled so long to make that decision?

I think we all struggle, to a certain degree, with letting go of our previous lives and giving control over to God. When you walk through that door, you have to say, “Okay, I’m here. Do with me what you’re going to do, God.”

That process reminds me a little bit of when you’re a kid and you have



“Over the past two years, I’ve lost eighty pounds . . . by living this balanced life, I could finally do what was good for me all along!”

a loose tooth. I for one *hated* pulling my teeth. My dad would say, “Why do you prolong this? Get it over with. It’s going to happen. Just pull the tooth.” But I wouldn’t. I would wiggle it and wiggle it, until at last it just fell out. Making this decision felt kind of like that: there was this prodding within me to “get on with it,” but I just kept wiggling the tooth until finally it just *happened*. At last. There was no pain, there was no surprise; it just kind of came out, and I put it under my pillow waiting for a quarter. Coming to SSJE has felt like that for me – something I hesitated a long time to do, and which has ultimately been a wonderful gift that was just waiting for me.

Now that you’re here, what are the rewards of living this life?

I feel healthy now; I feel grounded; I feel like I’m getting acquainted with the person God created me to be.

When I first came to the Monastery, for instance, I was very overweight and pre-diabetic. Over the past two years, I’ve lost eighty pounds. It’s not

that there was any pressure from the Brothers for me to change, but rather that by living this balanced life, I could finally do what was good for me all along. I could exercise and eat right and get the proper amount of sleep.

When I see people who knew me before I came to SSJE, the first thing they say is, “You look really happy.” I am! In this vocation, I’m so incredibly happy. I feel wanted, I have a purpose, my talents are used and nothing is wasted. This life feels like a gift that God has given me, a life that is a unique adventure, because it’s entirely mine, right for me. I’m not living the life of someone else but living the life God has intentionally called me to.

Now when I look in the mirror, I see me, authentically. I think this is what our relationship with God does. God calls us to be more authentically the person God has created, and if we turn our lives over and allow that change to happen, then we can look in the mirror and see the person God sees, the person who was always waiting inside. 🙏



The Rule of Silence

The Rule of Silence does not apply necessarily to creatures that warn, suspect invite in this quiet place. No noise seems heedless, no idle chatter or gossip among the honk of patrolling geese, disappearing beyond a hill by the hermitage, dragging the dewy grass with downy white bottoms. An oak tree reaches out a strong limb, thick into the meadow near me. Its bug bitten leaves sizzle in the breeze. The goose gang returns, necks and tongues outstretched, hissing "Be still, Be still!"

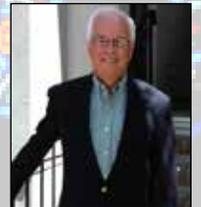
Johanna Young
Emery House, July 2015



The Society of Saint John the Evangelist The Friends of SSJE Annual Fund 2015

"I saw water flowing from the right side of the temple, alleluia; and all they to whom that water came were saved, and they shall say, alleluia, alleluia." These are the words of the Vidi Aquam, sung during the Eucharist at Eastertide, and the waters they describe are like the words and work of the Brothers. In gratitude we all sing alleluia for the countless ways that the Brothers pour saving waters upon the world's dry souls. As Friends, you have felt the grace of those waters and through your generosity have helped the Brothers pour them out for others.

**- William Kendrick & Polly Chatfield
Co-Chairs of the Annual Fund**



The final stanza of Isaac Watts' hymn, "When I survey the wondrous Cross," has always spoken deeply to me: "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." I would not have articulated it this way to myself when I first came to the community in 1989, but this stanza captures the essence of the monastic life. The deepest desire of my heart is to give my soul, my life, my all to God. We Brothers are so grateful for the support of our Friends, which enables us to offer our all to God.

**- Br. James Koester
Superior**

Jesus tells us that God's love flows to everyone. Thank you for supporting the Brothers, who repeat this message everyday and in so many ways that enable us to hear this truth.

**- Mr. Jamie Coats
Director, Friends of SSJE**



LEVELS OF GIVING

The Brothers rely on Friends who give at all levels.

# of Donors	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
• All donors	1,423	1,506	1,839	1,981	2,173	2,251
• \$5,000 +	32	26	25	34	43	40
• \$2,500 - \$4,999	26	31	31	27	24	36
• \$1,000 - \$2,499	114	123	139	147	158	162
• \$500 - \$999	149	156	165	199	229	211
Total Donations (US Funds)	754,039	733,033	814,679	893,438	1,031,425	1,091,042

The Annual Fund of SSJE is made up of gifts given by the Friends of SSJE and it includes collections in the Chapel, the spring and fall appeal gifts, gifts from members the Fellowship of Saint John, Annual Fund pledge payments, and donations given at other times. It does not include restricted gifts or bequests. This report is based on records of gifts from Friends going back to 2002.

Please let us know if our records do not match yours. Many thanks.

SSJE ANNUAL FUND REPORT 2015

Welcoming New Friends

The Brothers welcome new donors who joined the Friends of SSJE in 2015.



Pat's spontaneous evaluation of our recent six days at Emery House: It was "magical." Both of us have years of experience sitting grueling 7-day Zen sessions while faithfully attending Trinity Episcopal Church here in Bloomington, Indiana. God decided last year it was finally time to have our cake and eat it too. Long days and nights of perfect silence and stillness before the Buddha with chanting and simple meals became at SSJE periods of contemplative solitude before icons on demand, amplified by 4-5 services a day including Eucharist, extraordinary food, the wonderful hospitality of the Brothers, and a

lovely rural New England setting. More specifically we remember Br. Nicholas' warm greeting at Emery House, Br. John's quiet introduction to the Virgin Mary, and Br. Curtis' daily routine of helping Pat, who has difficulty balancing on stairs, down into the main dining room. We remember building and feeding daily fires in our hermitage, eating breakfast, reading and enjoying quiet together listening to an intern chop wood outside: an intimacy like a spiritual honeymoon. We remember reciting psalms in congregation, then chanting psalms, then breaking into harmony with hymns (the latter even more thrilling in Cambridge). We remember frosty country walks, and night reflections on the Merrimack River at flood stage. Despite a long drive, we remember coming home rested.

– Gates & Pat Agnew

NEW DONORS cont.



My collaborative practice group spent four days in retreat at the Society of Saint John the Evangelist's Monastery in Cambridge in October of 2015. The experience was much more than I could have ever imagined. The peace and tranquility shown by each of the Brothers and most particularly, the compassionate guidance of our retreat leader, helped me to become more prepared to deal with the bustle and demands of my job as I help families in pain and transition. I was overwhelmed by the generosity and humility of these men who have dedicated their lives to making a difference in the world and who challenged me and showed me, through example, how to pause in my day to breathe and move forward with gratitude and self-awareness. I am deeply appreciative of the opportunity to learn from the Brothers and experience the beauty of this place.

– Julie H. Quaid

THANK YOU ABIDING FRIENDS OF SSJE

The Brothers are grateful for Friends who abide with them, giving year after year.

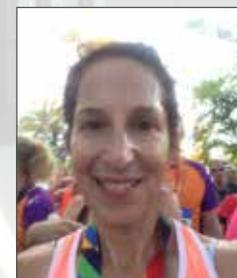


SSJE has been a beacon of prayer, hope, and joy for me for more than thirty years. In my first days in seminary, it was a place of solitude and respite amid the storms of learning. Serving the church as a young priest, I awaited the Cowley Publications catalog like gardeners look for the spring seed catalogs. A decade in New England reconnected me to the community through spiritual direction and retreat. Now, while a little farther away, the digital world keeps me connected and I count the days until my next trip to Emery House or the Monastery. Good worship, good counsel, good hope; I have received them all from the Brothers.

– Mark Delcuze

The Life of the Monastery reminds me of the path to be fully alive and fully in love.

– Laura Chessin



THANK YOU ABIDING FRIENDS OF SSJE

At the suggestion of my parish priest, prior to my marriage, I attended the “first retreat in silence” at Emery House. My five-day experience changed my life in many ways, but most importantly put it in correct perspective. Learning to “be” was a huge risk in my mind. Being with myself, at peace, became comfortable as I discovered Christ within. Through prayer with the Brothers and some private counseling while on retreat, I realized that I am loved by God through Christ and that is the most important aspect of my existence. I am not alone! My prayer life was revitalized and following the Fellowship Rule has become a routine, a passion. My singing in my parish choir, vestry involvement, eucharistic ministering and my marriage took on new meaning. I now love my church and feel fully at home both here and with the Brothers and look forward to and long for my next visit.



– Dr. Norman “Sam” Steward, Jr.



I’ve known SSJE for over forty years and, in that time, I don’t think the community has essentially changed at all. The community has always been doing its utmost for its mission to witness to Christ for everyone who comes by, or who is invited, or happens in. It’s a wonderful thing that SSJE is so steady – so steadily aware of itself and its mission to be an inspiration, a guide, a sort of spiritual home for the laity.

And yet, at the same time, I’ve also always appreciated how SSJE is forward-looking. A document like their Rule of Life is an inspiration to those who want Christianity to be imaginative, innovative, and always looking for signs that God’s will might be different from what it has been heretofore. I’ve always felt well, if SSJE is doing it, it’s okay. I had a spiritual director elsewhere for about ten years, but when that ended, I did not succeed in finding another one. Instead, now I test things against what the monks are doing, or saying, or preaching. I have a number of sermons printed out from what the Brothers make available online. There are some that I return to on a regular basis because they seem to be so clear and so applicable to what I’m experiencing. In a way, SSJE has filled in as my spiritual director. Now with Brother, Give Us a Word, I look forward to contacting my “gurus” every morning when I start my prayer session.

– Char Sullivan

CANADIAN DONORS



I have been a lay reader at my church for fourteen years. I also do pastoral visiting at seniors’ residences and nursing homes as well as with shut-ins. I am still on call to the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County, where I have volunteered for twenty-five years. Sometimes people ask me, “How do you do it?” I reply “with prayer and with God’s help.” As I have aged I have valued prayer more, and it is good to be connected with people who have a discipline of prayer. The Brothers’ words convey that. As a cradle Anglican from Canterbury Kent UK, I like that connection and I like the depth of thought in what I have read from the Brothers. The

Brothers online teachings keep that connection for me.

– Jane Buttery

LEGACY SOCIETY

The Brothers thank those Friends of SSJE who remember SSJE in their legacy planning.

When I wrote my will, I decided that I wanted to leave a specific percentage of my estate to charity. In addition to my local Episcopal church and school, I wanted to give to a select few national Christian communities that not only have had a profound impact upon my life but which also have a vision for the future of Christianity that comes closest to my understanding of what the Kingdom of God should look like here on earth. SSJE is one of those communities. First, it is a shining example of the both-and holy paradoxes of our Anglican faith: contemplation & action, traditional & progressive, liturgically rich yet simple, high tech & personal, and monastic & radically hospitable. Second, the Brothers’ outreach to individuals and communities across the Episcopal world through their on-site retreat offerings as well as their weekend retreats which they lead in faith communities is a uniquely powerful ministry that is essential to the long term health of The Episcopal Church. I was recently reminded of the Brothers when I read Eugene Peterson’s final paragraph to his commentary on Jesus’ Final Discourse, “The pattern holds: Whatever we do in Jesus’ name, we begin on our knees before our friends and neighbors and conclude looking ‘up to heaven’ praying to our Father. Washing dirty feet and praying to the Holy Father bookend our lives” (Conversations, p. 1672).



– Scott Christian



The Rule of the Fellowship

As Director of the Fellowship of Saint John, over the years I have received – from committed members of the FSJ and from probationers trying the rule – a request to temporarily suspend their participation in the Fellowship. Most often the reason given is a perceived inability to “keep up” with their personal version of a rule of life. In the past, I’ve been inclined to accept this view without argument. But more recently I’ve tended to push back. Here’s my reason why.

In the gospels, Jesus is criticized for failing to “Keep the Sabbath day holy,” both for his acts of healing and for his disciples’ “work” on the Sabbath in plucking grain to eat. Jesus answers his critics by stating that God’s loving desire to help and heal all creatures overrides a rigid interpretation of the written law. Jesus teaches that the Sabbath observance is a gift of God: the Sabbath was created to serve humanity, not humanity to serve the Sabbath.

Similarly, I’ve come to believe that keeping a personal rule of life is to be seen as a gift of God, a way for becoming fully alive in Christ. By means of our baptism into Christ’s continuous dying and rising, we participate in God’s own life as members of a beloved and redeemed community. Thus the FSJ rule is not a task by which to achieve some self-styled perfection, but an invitation to companionship with God, the SSJE Brothers, and other members. The moment when we’re feeling least able to “keep” our personal rule on our own is the very time to breathe deeply of God and ask for help to creatively, lovingly adapt the rule to our present circumstances.

I wonder if there might be readers of *Cowley* who have delayed or denied themselves the chance to become members of the Fellowship for similar reasons, out of a sense that they were not somehow, or in some way, “enough” just at this moment: not committed enough, not prepared enough, and so on. If so, I would encourage you: Consider whether becoming a member of the Fellowship might be, not a marker of your arrival at some destination, but a way of a joining companions on the journey. We truly are joined to the Fellowship, even when – and perhaps especially when – during difficult times and fear of failure, we gratefully accept it as Christ’s gift for us.

– Br. Jonathan Maury

To learn more or apply to become a member of the FSJ, visit www.SSJE.org/fsj

In the Footsteps of Jesus

As this issue of *Cowley* goes to print, thirty FSJ members and four SSJE Brothers journey to the Holy Land on pilgrimage.

In the fourth century, as St. Jerome was translating the Scriptures in Bethlehem, he wrote of the Holy Land as the “Fifth Gospel,” given how much light it sheds on the other four. For those who have visited the Holy Land in the past, this observation rings true. As pilgrims, we walk in the footsteps of Jesus, hearing anew Jesus’ teaching, exploring where he was born, where he taught and healed, where he ate and rested, where he died and was resurrected. Our travels take us beyond the sacred sites of Jerusalem – where Jesus’ final days played out – to holy places that commemorate other moments in Jesus’ life: at the Mount of Olives, we stand where Jesus wept for Jerusalem; at the Pools of Bethesda, where he invited the invalid man, “Take up your mat and walk”; at Jericho, a city 11,000 years old; and alongside the Sea of Galilee, near where the multitudes were miraculously fed. These sites make the familiar gospel stories come alive for us in a whole new way, as our five senses encounter a landscape foreign to westerners, but known to Jesus and his early followers as home.

As we meet the local people, we also discover the moving stories of communities who have been inspired by the gospels across the centuries. Caves and excavations dating to the first century give witness to the oppressive circumstances faced by the very first followers of Jesus. Structures built and rebuilt over the centuries – such as the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem and St. Gerasimos’ Monastery in the Palestinian desert – reveal the power of abiding faith to shape lives. All through our travels, we encounter the traces of men and women who have followed Christ in their day, inspiring us to listen anew for God’s calling today.

We hope that you will join with us in praying for those of all faiths who inhabit this land of promise and grief. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” writes the psalmist, “May they prosper who love you” (Ps 122:6). The people of the Holy Land need our prayers. At every new visit, we’re reminded how much we need the lessons this land teaches, in both its sacred history and its present conflict.



On pilgrimage, Brs. Curtis Almquist, Jim Woodrum, Luke Ditewig, and John Braught, with our long-time friend, guide and instructor, Canon Iyad Qumri.



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