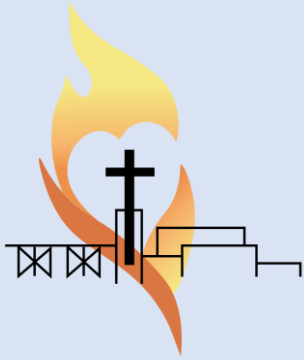


ST. AUGUSTINE'S
ANGLICAN CHURCH
LETHBRIDGE, AB



"A Church Family in
the Heart of the City"



Photo courtesy of Songer Architecture Inc.

THE HIPPO HERALD

Nov 2020

Parish Update:

Now we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this surpassingly great power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on all sides, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. II Corinthians 4:7-9

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:39-39

These two passages from the Epistles of St. Paul are truly inspirational. They remind us that we are not the first to go through difficulties (Paul and his companions went through some awful times) and that God is watching out for us and His love will prevail - always.

Despite the challenges all churches are currently facing due to restrictions on in-person attendance and activities, there are some really good and exciting things going on at St. Augustine's. Hopefully, these will offer some encouragement to you as a member of our parish family.

Return to In Person Worship

For the past 6 Sundays, it has been our joyful privilege to have people in our 10 AM Sunday Service each and every week. To be sure, the service is quite different than we remember. We cannot yet sing as a congregation, but we praise God by humming from under our masks as up to 4 singers lead us. The excellent music provided by

Joanne, Mary Lee and a large group of other musicians is truly inspiring. In addition, thanks to the efforts of Karen Larsen who is filling in at the office, we have a duty roster of several dozen greeters, registrars and sides people who minister on a rotating basis. Our COVID response team led by Karen Hammond has gone to great lengths to ensure (to the absolute best of our ability) the safety of all who choose to attend. There is still plenty of room in this service should you wish to come and feel it is safe for you to do so. If we find that we are filling this service, we have plans ready should we need a second one.

Improvements to our Livestream

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Br. Jason Carroll and Chief Sound Technician David Hignell, we have been able to continue to offer our services via livestream, even when there are people worshipping with us in person. Technically, this is no small feat! It has taken countless hours of work and research to make it happen. It has required the recruitment and training of about a dozen volunteers as we now require 2 sound technicians and 2 video technicians for each service. It has also required a good deal of new equipment. A deep and heartfelt "thank you" to those who contributed to our livestream project! To date we have raised \$17,200 of the \$25,000 budget.

Call of The Image Bearer

This class, focused on identity and calling as the Image of God, taught via zoom, has been very helpful and had excellent attendance throughout. Our thanks to Br. Jason Carroll for bringing this to us.

Advent and Christmas Plans:

Our creative and talented staff and lay ministers are all working hard to make this Advent and Christmas season as special as possible. Here is what is currently in the works:

Virtual Christmas Program: December 13, 10 AM

Christmas Eve Services: 7:00-8:15 PM Family Eucharist, Candlelight Service

11:00 PM – 12:15 AM Eucharist, Candlelight Service

*There will be no Christmas Morning Service this year.

Special Sunday Afternoon Services During Advent: Each Sunday in Advent, in addition to our regular Sunday AM services, we will be offering a special afternoon service via livestream. 2 of these will be Services of Lessons and Carols and 2 others will be Jazz Vespers. For more information please watch the weekly updates, call the church office, or see the advertisement elsewhere in this newsletter.

Indigenous Youth Giving Opportunity

Sponsored by the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, this opportunity provides a chance for strategic intervention and partnership on behalf of indigenous Youth. Call the church office for details, or watch the weekly email updates.

Baptism and Confirmation

There will be opportunities for both young people and adults to take part in Confirmation Classes beginning in the new year. Watch our weekly Email Updates for more information. In addition, we have been cleared to once again offer the sacrament of Holy Baptism, though only through a smaller 'family and friends' service at this time. If you or your child require baptism please contact the church office for more information.

Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom

This will take place each week Sunday beginning at 11:30 AM if you have questions about how to access this, please call the church office.

Thank you so much for being a part of the St. Augustine's family! While we miss seeing everyone, we are grateful for your ongoing participation in the life of our parish.

Every Blessing,

The Rev. Steve Bateman
Interim Priest-In-Charge



Stephen ministry has been active in St. Augustine's church for over 20 years and we continue to offer our parishioners this ministry to anyone going through a crisis, no matter how big or small, of mind, body or spirit. A Stephen minister is not a counsellor, but we are there to 'walk along side' in a caring, confidential way and will listen and pray with you and for you. Please contact Rev. Steve Bateman at the church office (403-327-3970), Nadia Lehbauer (403-381-1259) or Pam Mundell (403-328-4884) if you would like to know more about this ministry.

STEWARDSHIP 2021

"God can do it. We can help."

"Actually.... What is Stewardship?"

What is the first thing we think about when we hear the word Stewardship? Often the word that comes to mind is "money,"

But did you know...

- Stewardship is MORE than money – it's not just about how we spend our income, but how we spend our life. Do we give back to God a portion of our income, our time, our talent? Do we realize he has given us the talents and time to earn our income?
- Stewardship is NOT LESS than money – Money is important to the life and mission of a congregation to do the ministry we are commissioned to do. In sixteen of Jesus' parables, he spoke about money in some way.

How much is enough? – Are we afraid to give too much? The Bible says to give as we have been blessed. Do we spend more time and money on recreation and entertainment than we give back to God in offerings out of thankfulness to him? Perhaps the question should be, "How much of what God has given me should I keep for myself?"

Fund-raising vs. Stewardship – Fund-raising is a financial matter like meeting the budget, while stewardship is a spiritual matter... giving of ourselves in all areas of our lives. It relates to how we live out our commitment to Jesus Christ.

To pledge or not to pledge – Pledging is a personal commitment reflecting the need to put God first – that God is vital to our lives.

The need of the giver to give – Giving adds meaning to life. Giving can be one of life's greatest blessings and pleasures.

STEWARDSHIP 2021

"God can do it. We can help."



PRIESTLY PONDERINGS

The Importance of Lament

"How long, O Lord will you forget me forever, how long will you hide your face from me?" Psalm 13:1

These questions (or similar ones) ring throughout the Hebrew Old Testament. We see them in the Psalms, the prophets (both major and minor), and very prominently in the book of Lamentations. They can be found whenever people are feeling God's absence and awaiting God's intervention. They are not limited to the Old Testament. They are found on the lips of many people today, especially those struggling through pandemic-induced loneliness. They are good questions because they are honest ones. Thankfully, God has infinite patience with honest questions.

Surprisingly, in the Old Testament, these questions are most often voiced in the context of worship! The specific form is called "lament." It involves expressing anguish or sadness. It involves complaint. But can a complaint against God really form the basis for an experience of worship? The answer is a resounding 'yes!'

Prayerful complaint is an act of faith. By addressing our complaints directly to God we are at the same time expressing our belief that God has the power to do something about them. Even the hurt we feel or a sense of disappointment with God is evidence of our belief that God is powerful enough to change things. We may be confused as to why He has not done so already, but the very act of raising them to His divine attention is an expression of trust.

Modern western Christians often struggle with lament. We usually prefer our worship to focus on the more triumphal aspects of our faith. As a result, lament is not necessarily something we have had opportunity to practice. I believe that during this time of pandemic it is necessary for us to re-discover this ancient form of worship. N.T. Wright makes this point with characteristic eloquence:

In a time of acute crisis, when death sneaks into houses and shops, when you may feel healthy yourself but you may be carrying the virus without knowing it, when every stranger on the street is a threat, when we go around in masks, when churches are shut and people are

dying with nobody to pray by their bedside – this is a time for lament. For admitting we don't have easy answers. For refusing to use the crisis as a loudspeaker for what we'd been wanting to say in any case. For weeping at the tomb of our friends. For the inarticulate groaning of the spirit.

N.T. Wright - God and the Pandemic

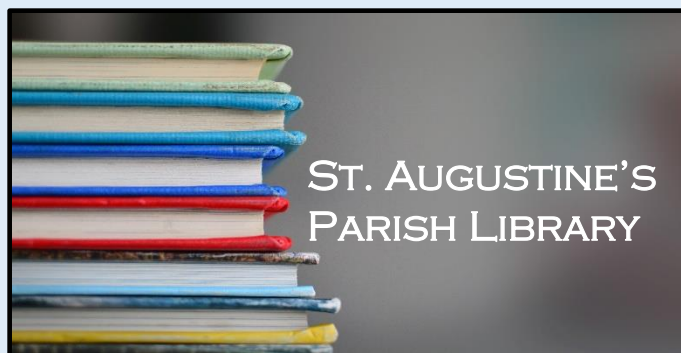
When Christians lament, they follow in the steps of Jesus who said from the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When we do this, we join our suffering to the suffering of others and then, ultimately, to the suffering of Christ. This can result in powerful ministry. When we are faithful to acknowledge our fears, hurts, doubts, anxieties and raise them to God's attention we can expect to have our perspective changed, even when the problems themselves persist, and even when the feelings of disappointment remain.

It has been deeply encouraging to me during these strange times to be a part of a church family that is so committed to both honesty and ministry, and this even in the face of our own challenges and obstacles. I pray that we will be a family that praises together, intercedes together, and yes, laments together.

Grace and Peace,

The Rev. Steve Bateman

Interim Priest-in-Charge



"No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally - and often far more - worth reading at the age of fifty and beyond." - C.S. Lewis

Submitted by Patricia Latimer & Allan Herbig

Sadly, the parish library has not been open during the Covid lockdown, though we have still continued to acquire new titles and add to the library collection! **AND** we are now happy to announce that the **Library is now open** again for visitation **by appointment!** Just call the church office to make an appointment to come browse and take out books. You will just have to wear your mask and sanitise your hands before and after you head into the library.

In addition, plans are in the works to allow online access to the library's database in the future. In the next couple months, we will be looking at having access via mobile app, as well as through the church's website. Stay tuned!



faith and finances

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Below is a summary of the church operating fund up to the end of September. Since the church closed for in-person services in mid-March, there has been an increasing gap between this year's and last year's total parishioner givings, which is currently \$31,701 less than last year at this time. Other income is also much less than last year's. We have, however, received a federal wage subsidy payment which substantially reduced the total income budget deficit.

Many operating expense categories are trending under budget because of different spending patterns while the church was closed and lower than normal staffing levels in a couple of cases. Due to the income situation improving with the wage subsidy, and the savings that have been realized on the expense side, the operating fund net deficit so far this year is less than we might have anticipated.

	<u>Year to-date</u> <u>(Sept 30 2020)</u>	<u>Last year to-date</u> <u>(Sept 30 2019)</u>	<u>2020 Budget</u>
Parishioner Givings	\$ 292,677	\$ 324,378	\$ 483,750
Other income	6,185	15,103	38,400
Federal wage subsidy	<u>26,427</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total income	<u>325,289</u>	<u>339,481</u>	<u>522,150</u>
Staffing expenses	\$ 225,783	\$ 244,724	\$ 333,300
Administration & apportionment	79,045	82,850	115,700
Facility expenses	41,128	38,847	62,300
Christian education & outreach	<u>8,349</u>	<u>10,242</u>	<u>20,850</u>
Total expenses	<u>354,305</u>	<u>376,663</u>	<u>532,150</u>
Net deficit	\$ <u>(29,016)</u>	\$ <u>(37,182)</u>	\$ <u>(10,000)</u>

In addition to the ongoing operations that are accounted for above, the office refurbishment project, which was funded from the Capital Fund, was completed this summer. Major maintenance of the organ is underway, which is also funded from the Capital Fund. As the organ recently passed its 30-year birthday, this maintenance is necessary to keep this valuable asset in tip top shape. Last but not least, the project to equip the church with suitable audio and video equipment for livestreaming is substantially complete. This project has a budget of \$25,000, funded by donations and the Memorial Fund.

If anyone has any questions about our financial situation, options for giving, or other financial matters, please feel free to contact me by leaving a message at the church office or email. Thank you to everyone for supporting St. Augustine's during these unprecedented times!

Submitted by: Cathy Gillespie, Treasurer



MUSIC MINISTRY MUSINGS

I asked some of the “regulars” who have been serving in Music Ministry during the past months to share their thoughts about being a part of our livestream services. I posed the same four questions to each of them:

- 1) How have you viewed your role in music ministry during the pandemic?
- 2) What have been some of the greatest challenges for you as a church musician and parishioner during the pandemic?
- 3) What has been a reward of working with the livestream music ministry team?
- 4) Anything else you'd like to share?

This is what they had to say:

Mary Lee Voort, organist and pianist (our “Keyboard Commander”)



I felt my role in music ministry during the pandemic was to try and keep things as “normal” as possible — to keep the service music as familiar and as varied as usual.

For me, the biggest challenge has been to keep the feeling of “worship” during our livestreams, and not to feel as if we were onstage for a production. Fortunately, thanks to our great leadership and the sensitive and professional skills of our technical crews, I feel as if we are in the midst of a worship service, not a TV set. The other hardest thing? Folks not being able to sing along with the hymns — a necessary thing for now, but it’s very weird ... 😊

Working with the livestream music ministry team has given me an even greater appreciation of each person’s gifts and skills. These folks cheerfully and willingly put in many extra hours of practice and rehearsal to make sure each week’s service runs smoothly, and their talents have brought much joy to those inside and outside the church building. I think we have grown closer in many ways, and I’m thankful for that gift.

I would like to thank the many parishioners who took the time to comment during the livestreams, or would call or write or leave messages of love, support, and encouragement during these past months. It has frequently moved me to tears to hear how much our music has meant to others, and I pray that our ministry will continue to bless you and enhance your worship.

Wayne Edwards, *steel pan, singer (our "Man of the Pan")*



I have viewed my role in Music Ministry during the pandemic as very important and inspiring based on comments that I have received from those who can participate only online. I think that it is a role that God would want me to do as part of the ministry to all our parishioners and indeed to others in a much wider congregation as I have told family members in different parts of North America and Trinidad about our church's live-streaming ministry and they have enjoyed it immensely.

The greatest challenges as a church musician during the pandemic are that our world has been turned upside down and we have had to adapt quickly. During the time when there was no congregation in church it took a lot out of me to share with a virtual congregation. Additionally, the Saturday Service was a big loss. Finally playing together as a small tight group is so hard with the distancing restrictions AND NO SINGING!! Sometimes it is hard to see what we are doing is worship even though I know it is and that God accepts what we do at this time as He understands the limitations and would not want us to put ourselves at risk.

A reward of working with the livestream music ministry team is that we are perhaps forced to strive for a greater level of excellence and we can review what we did as it is recorded then do better the next time.

I would really like to thank those who have been working so hard to make all of this happen, especially those behind the scenes and those who really have not had a break since this started. I do not want to start naming names. I don't think that exhaustion or burnout is setting in yet but I hope that, if and when people get tired that they take a break.

Brandon DeGorter, *alto sax, singer (our man of the "Smooth Sound")*



I see my role as a musician to be to bring a different state of mind to anyone in the church or at home. This is probably the part that has changed the least since we started livestreaming. Music has always been a part of church and is a great way to make people feel what the service or scriptures are trying to convey to the congregation.

The greatest challenges have been outside of church since the start of the pandemic. I wouldn't say there have been any noticeable challenges for me and that's good because no one goes to church for a challenge.

I am the only one in my circle of musicians who has been able to perform for people since March. I am extremely lucky to be a part of these services. Once I started performing again I realized how much I missed it and how happy I am to be a part of this ministry.

Karen Hudson, *singer (our resident "Nightingale")*



For me, I have viewed my role in the music ministry of St. Augustine's during the pandemic as one of being able to keep things as "normal" as possible. This has been for both me and those participating in our worship services. How we are able to keep things varied with the kinds of music we have been able to share.

As a church musician, I feel like the greatest challenge has been the ability to keep a sense of "worship" in all that we do and to not create the feeling of performance. As I have not been on the parishioner side very often but I feel like it would be so very difficult to be in person and not be able to participate in all aspects of worship - mostly the ability to sing but also to connect personally with people.

For me, the greatest reward is to have been able to work so closely with Joanne and Mary Lee throughout all of this. We are so fortunate to have such amazingly talented people willing to share their gifts and it has required more hours of organization and rehearsal. I feel blessed to have been able to share music with so many different musicians in the parish. We are so fortunate to have incredible sound support in David Hignell who coordinates all aspects of the technical part of this ministry so that it is shared with the highest quality to those people participating from home.

I would just like to say that I am blessed to have been part of this ministry throughout the pandemic and being able to share the gift of song with so many people. It is always lovely to see comments that talk about how the music has moved/touched them during worship.

Closing thoughts...

Being a part of the livestream worship services has been an honour, a privilege, and an opportunity. We are grateful for

- the excellent leadership at St. Augustine's which has allowed us move forward during a time we could never have imagined experiencing;
- the guidance and support we've received from the Diocese;
- our parish staff and volunteers
- the encouragement and support of our church family;
- the gift of music and its power to connect and touch our lives;
- God's unfailing love, protection, and care for us all.

We miss you so much and can hardly wait for the day we will all be able to sing together again! God bless you all.

-submitted by Joanne Collier, Music Director





News from Down Under

By Joelle Wills

This year has been quite unusual, as I'm sure everyone could say. I started staffing the January Discipleship Training School (DTS) here at Marine Reach YWAM in New Zealand. The school would usually run 5 months - 3 months of lectures at our base, teaching the students more about who God is and then 2 months being sent to the nations for outreach to share the gospel and all they've learned. We had 47 students with at least 17 countries represented. I had the privilege of walking alongside four beautiful women throughout their journey: Ana (Fijian Canadian), Kathrin (Brazilian), Shali (American) and Kathryn (Canadian). One of which I was actually able to baptize at the beach a few days before lockdown! I was beyond blessed to be a part of such a special time.



- The beautiful privilege of baptizing Ana the day before students got sent home for lockdown.

That school, however, got cut short because instead of taking our teams on outreach in April (I was supposed to lead a team of seven to Samoa), we actually sent the students back to their home nations. We lived day-by-day not knowing what would happen next. Soon enough, New Zealand was in full level 4 lockdown, where it was basically forbidden to leave your home. Even though lockdown put our DTS on hold, it didn't stop training altogether; we ran a Discipleship Bible School and a School of Primary Healthcare in the middle of a global health pandemic. It's crazy really!



- These are my four one-on-ones, the girls that I got to walk alongside during the January school. right to left: Kat (Brazil), Shali (USA), Ana (Fiji/Canada), Kathryn (Canada)

So in the short term, we THRIVED during quarantine. As a community, we invested in relationships and growing in a deeper understanding of the Word. The last few months I have taken up yet another role that I didn't expect. Since we aren't able to leave, I like to say that New Zealand is stuck with me! We turned our focus inwards to the country

that has poured out so much to us. I've taken up the role as main **videographer** for the base and part of our new **community outreach team** - bridging the gap between the church and YWAM. As a team, we get to bring in the wider community by leading youth groups, having events at our base and running church services! It's been very full-on recently, not only do we have our daily schedule with the ministry, but also our weekends are filled with community outreach opportunities.

We were able to run a mini weekend young adults camp for a local church. The team appointed me to get a word from the Lord for the weekend prophesying over them and create an art piece displaying the word for their welcome cards. (If you want to know what it was feel free to ask me! Or anything else for that matter - wills.joelle@gmail.com)

Currently, we are in the middle of a three part series that we call the TIDE - based on Romans 12:2, *do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind* - encouraging youth to go **against the tide** of the world, and focusing on a heavenly mindset. The first night was an outreach testimony, the second was a hearing God's voice workshop, and the last will be a prophetic and worship night next month. It's been so good inviting people from the community to join in with the things we do here. In these couple months being a part of this new initiative, five people have directly come to the Lord and a few more have rededicated their lives !

Through our daily morning prayer and anticipation throughout the year, another Discipleship Training School has **FINALLY STARTED AGAIN!** For the first time ever, we have seven wonderful Kiwi students moved onto our base. During this quarter, I won't be as active with the DTS as I would like, only because I'll be helping out and staffing the January school once again. Instead, I'll actually be filming a testimony documentary on each of the students' individual walks with Jesus while they're here. Hopefully using the gifts God has given me to bless this school.



- Our small community outreach team with it on our hearts to love our city well by meeting and bringing in the wider community.

Overall, it's been a beautiful year so far even through the circumstances - God has been so, so faithful!!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SCHEDULE FOR LIVESTREAM PRAYER AND WORSHIP:

MORNING PRAYER

- MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS @ 9:00AM

EVENING PRAYER

- TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS @ 6:00PM

COMPLINE

- MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS @ 8:45 PM

RESERVE SACRAMENT — OFFERED EVERY OTHER WEDNESDAY IN THE CHAPEL

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS EVENTS AND SERVICES

ADVENT CAROL SERVICE SUNDAY NOV. 29 @ 4:00PM (LIVESTREAM ONLY)

JAZZ VESPERS SUNDAY DEC. 6 @ 4:00PM (LIVESTREAM ONLY)

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM SUNDAY DEC. 13 @ 10:00AM

JAZZ VESPERS SUNDAY DEC. 13 @ 4:00PM (LIVESTREAM ONLY)

NINE LESSONS & CAROLS SUNDAY DEC. 20 @ 4:00PM (LIVESTREAM ONLY)

CHRISTMAS EVE THURSDAY DEC. 24

- ❖ FAMILY HOLY COMMUNION (CANDLELIGHT) @ 7:00PM
- ❖ LATE NIGHT HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE (CANDLELIGHT) @ 11:00PM

CHRISTMAS DAY NO SERVICE!!

FIRST SUNDAY IN CHRISTMAS SUNDAY DEC. 27 @ 10:00AM

EPIPHANY SUNDAY SUNDAY JAN. 3 @ 10:00AM



Children's Ministry is still Chugging Along

First Communion Class

Join us via Zoom to learn what receiving Holy Communion is all about. The class is geared to children in grades one through five but there are no hard and fast rules as to when a child should start receiving, so join in if you have questions.

Sunday School is Happening Virtually

Every week we have a lesson plan and activities under the "Church Life, Sunday School" tabs on our website www.staug.org. The lessons focus on the readings from that Sunday. Pop on and check it out! Pew activity boxes with the same lessons are available for children who join us for in-person worship.

Family Advent (ure)

Join us in making a homemade Advent calendar over our Zoom coffee hour on Sunday, November 29. Pre-register by calling the office and we will deliver the supplies to you in advance.

Children's Christmas Production

Planning for this year's Christmas production are underway. We are getting creative in our delivery method, but the show will go on! If your child would like to get involved, please let us know.

If you would like to get involved in Children's Ministry or have questions please contact Wendy at wendy@staug.org or through the office.



1. There are some who say I began my journey hundreds of years ago in the 12th century. I was a stone form on the south of the Sanctuary where both Celebrant and Deacon would tarry, it being their custom to use me during the singing of Psalm and Kyrie as well as Scripture reading.
2. Nowadays, they are accommodated elsewhere, on the north side, adjacent to the Rector's chair. My design is quite plain, but you'll recognize me by designs which abound in the Sanctuary: stylized fish, and lilies, the symbol of innocence, rose for martyrdom and heavenly fragrance.
2. Though centuries have passed I'm still very useful for each Sunday I'm used by the Acolytes youthful. My name is from Latin and may seem exotic but, I hasten to add, my role is quite basic. As a piece of furniture I've no real claim to fame. You must know what I am, but do you know my name?
3. To help you with this mystery historical which is true, but may seem allegorical, the last clue is this – my name's like 'fidelia'.

Change one consonant, switch two vowels and you'll have



A Great Cloud of Witnesses



**ST. HILDEGARD
VON BINGEN
1098-1176**

In the history of the Church, very occasionally there arises an individual of spectacular and almost immeasurable gifting. Hildegard of Bingen was one of those people. Known as the "Sybil of the Rhine" (the 'sybils' were oracles and prophets of ancient Greece), Hildegard was a Benedictine Abbess, writer, composer, philosopher, Christian mystic, visionary, and polymath.

Hildegard's parents were from Sponheim, near the city of Frankfurt, one the families of free lower nobility that made up the Holy Roman Empire. Like so many of the younger nobility of medieval Europe (she was the youngest of ten siblings), Hildegard's opportunities were limited and she was sent to the monastery of Disibodenberg in her later childhood. However, although physically unwell for most of her life, in the monastery she flourished and grew into a leader, spiritual visionary and scholar.

Actually, even from a very young age, Hildegard experienced a unique spiritual awareness of God's presence, which manifest

in the apprehension of God in what she called *umbra viventis lucis*, or a "reflection of Living Light." As she described it,

"In this vision my soul, as God would have it, rises up high into the vault of heaven and into the changing sky and spreads itself out among different peoples, although they are far away from me in distant lands and places. And because I see them this way in my soul, I observe them in accord with the shifting of clouds and other created things... The light which I see thus is not spatial, but it is far, far brighter than a cloud which carries the sun. I can measure neither height, nor length, nor breadth in it; and I call it 'the reflection of the living Light.' And as the sun, the moon, and the stars appear in water, so writings, sermons, virtues, and certain human actions take form for me and gleam."

This mystical vision of God and reality would follow her regularly through out her life.

Though likely given a basic education, which included reading and writing, Hildegard probably did not receive the formal education of the classic medieval liberal arts. However, and quite remarkably, she took advantage of her access to the monastery's library and educated herself, reading voraciously in nearly every topic. We aren't sure exactly at what point she learned to play the *psaltery* (a ten stringed instrument, kind of like a lute), but her skill as a musician and composer of chant became apparent in due time. In addition, she took great interest in and developed a deep understanding of medicine

as well (she wrote two books on it later in life). She even became a skillful and creative calligrapher and illuminator of manuscripts in the medieval style, and invented her own alphabet (*Lingua Ignota*) in an attempt to communicate her visions more accurately in words.

Her spiritual knowledge and wisdom became so well known that in 1136, at the age of 38, she was unanimously elected *magistra* of her community. Her influence was such that by 1150 she founded a new monastery in Ruperstburg (near the city of Bingen on the Rhine River), and then another in Elbingen in 1165, as her communities grew. In fact, her reputation was so well respected that Hildegard also kept up a correspondence with kings, queens, ecclesiastical authorities, and great leaders of Europe. She exchanged letters with such medieval luminaries as Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Becket, Pope Eugene III, Pope Anastasius IV, Henry II of England, Eleanor of Aquitaine (Henry II's wife), and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and many others. Transcending bans on women's interpretation of scripture, she frequently preached sermons outside of her monasteries, even going on four separate preaching "tours" in the Rhine region in the 1160's, where she denounced clerical corruption and called for reform.

Most importantly, she left a wide variety of works, both theological and artistic, that rival the works of any saint of the Church, frequently illuminating them herself. First, she created scholarly works of theology, including a series of lectures on the Gospels and two hagiographies of St. Rupert and St. Disibod, the patrons of her two monasteries. Her best works, though, consist of the three works of "visionary theology", or works based upon the regular visions she had through her life.

For example, in her first work, *Scivias*, she wrote what can only be described as a poetic and mystical theology of the whole Christian faith.

In this work she chronicles the order of God's creation (famously described as the shape of an "egg"), the order of redemption in the coming of Christ the Redeemer, the Trinity, and the Church (including erudite sections on the Bride of Christ, baptism and confirmation, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, the Eucharist, and the fight against the devil), and finally, recapitulates the history of salvation, symbolized as a building adorned with various allegorical figures and virtues. It concludes with the "Symphony of Heaven", an early version of Hildegard's musical compositions, and was illuminated by her own hand!

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Hildegard's illumination of "Divine Love" (Caritas)

In her other two visionary works, Hildegard tackled the moral life in the form of dramatic confrontations between the virtues and the vices (*Liber Vitae Meritorum*), and explored the depth of divine providence in creation through a study of the Gospel of John (*Liber Divinorum Operum*). In particular, she uses grand allegorical figures - "Divine Love" or

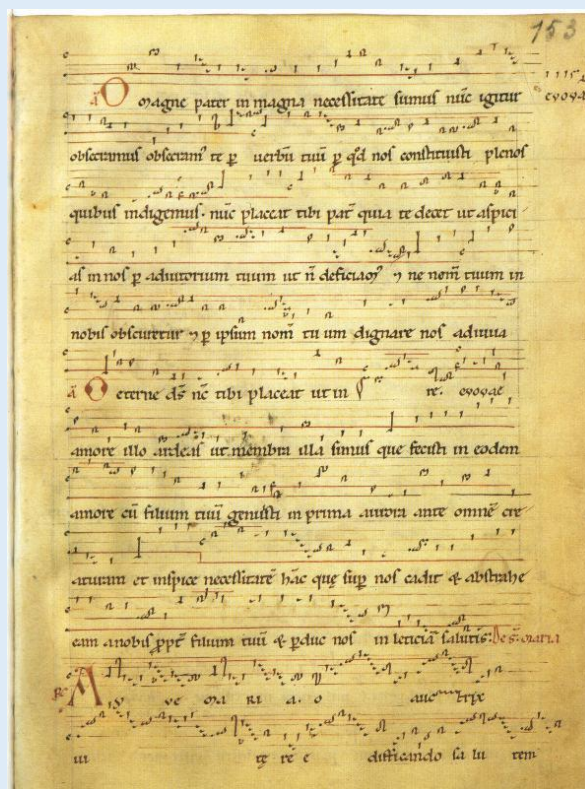
"Divine Wisdom", for example, to symbolize the dynamic activity of God in creation and salvation. Her concept of *viriditas* - or "green vigor" - elevated the natural world to an expression and extension of the Divine (though she was careful to avoid pantheism). God was revealed in nature, and the grass, flowers, trees, and animals bore witness to the Divine simply by their existence. She wrote to Bernard of Clairvaux that all creation reverberated with "sacred sound, by the Word from which all the world was created, by the height of the Father who through the power of green vigour (*viriditas*) sent the Word to the Virgin's womb where it took on flesh like honey in the honeycomb." Notably, in a world where nearly every work of theology was closely scrutinized for heresy, Hildegard's works were read with interest by the Synod of Trier in 1146-47, and ultimately approved for publication.

beautiful melodies. (Check her out on Youtube!)

Her music is also unique in that Hildegard pushed the boundaries of "melismatic" singing much farther than medieval chant had gone before. The term "melismatic" refers to the singing of a single syllable of text while moving between several different notes in succession (Think the "Gloria" from *Angels We Have Heard on High*). Medieval chant had begun to sing in this fashion, but Hildegard took it to a new level. Her compositions are highly melismatic with that single voice climbing and spiraling through beautiful and hypnotic phrases all contained in a single syllable or word. That "sacred sound, by the Word from which all the world was created" seems to pour gloriously through her music.

In the modern world, though, Hildegard von Bingen is most well known for her music. Her greatest musical work is the *Ordo Virtutum*, a morality play consisting of 82 songs. It is a grand allegory of the Christian story of sin, confession, repentance, and forgiveness, where the Virtues restore and elevate the fallen. She also left us 69 other musical compositions, each with its own original poetic text, and many with musical notation and some with illumination by her own hand. This is one of the largest collections of music from any medieval composer.

Her music is easily recognizable in its beauty and simplicity. It was largely unique from other medieval chant in that it was "monophonic" and highly "melismatic". Most medieval chant was "polyphonic", in that it had many voices singing together, with the melody being the main voice and then paralleled and harmonized by other voices (plainchant). Hildegard's compositions, though, are all monophonic in that they have one single voice singing, and characterized by soaring and



- from Hildegard's *Ordo Virtutum*, ca. 1175

Although Hildegard was informally honored as a saint as early as the 16th century, it was only in 2012 that Pope Benedict XVI finally canonized her officially, and quite rightly, named her a Doctor of the Church. Her feast day is Sept. 17.

- Br. Jason