



Beth Dunkin was thirty-eight years old when she had just finished reading her bucket list of one hundred great classic novels. But she still had a book she had not read stem to stern: the Bible. After many failed starts, she was frustrated with herself. So one day around that time, while praying in Saint John's Church, she raised up a petition for help to move beyond her good intentions and really commit to reading the Holy Book.

"Then I gave it to God," said Beth. "And the next Sunday, Reverend Hal Greenwood came up to me, tapped me on the shoulder and asked if I would chat with him about a new Bible study program being planned. I laughed out loud. What a sign!"

Father Hal had the Bethel Bible course in mind. Beth and her husband, John, had four young daughters at home at the time and participating in the class would require a two-year commitment. John pledged to support Beth in the effort by being "on duty" with the kids and Beth joined twenty-seven other parishioners for two and a half hours every Monday in the fall of 1979. "We met every week, no matter the weather or holidays, during the academic year, only breaking in the summer. Father Greenwood taught the first year and then Father Bob Spangler led the next fall's dive in to the New Testament. I recall the Hardwicks were in the class and the Wallers...every one of us was a Saint John's member."

This was the beginning of a forty-year passion for the Bible and biblical scholarship. Though early on she told the priests she was too shy to lead a small-group class, Beth stuck to her studies and they saw in her a future teacher. And in 1981 the Vestry sent Beth to Madison, Wisconsin for deeper tutelage and mentorship in the Bethel program. On the flight home, Beth says she clearly heard the "one still voice" instruct her to begin teaching. So, upon returning, she signed on to become a small group leader for parishioners who wished to begin their study at mid-year.

She says teaching grew on her. Meanwhile, her love for the Bible and its history swelled. She also traveled to Israel in the mid-1900s to see the land of the stories she had come to appreciate so much. It was also around then that Father David Fox became the gentle force

behind getting her to enroll in Phillips Seminary (then located at the University of Tulsa). Beth began to study many translations of the Bible and to explore the context of the time when the authors wrote it. She went on to obtain the equivalent of a master's degree in theology while auditing all of the required coursework.

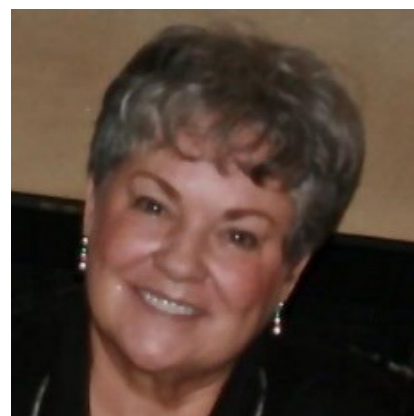
"I began to 'think Hebrew,' when I studied and taught. I truly felt the Holy Spirit used me as an instrument to help connect students to the meaning of the writings in their own lives."

Over the years, John teased her and asked when she might stop teaching. Beth took the role very seriously and the Dunkin vacations now had to revolve around when Beth's classes were on a break. In the 1990s she transitioned away from the Bethel curriculum and wrote her own. She stayed up late at night writing each new week's plan and this evolved into forty-two, one-hour lectures. At one point she led classes at Saint John's Church five days a week, with participants from all over the city. By the time COVID-19 reached Tulsa, she was still instructing four classes on three days every week.

"When I look back, I can see that the answer to my prayer in 1979 was the greatest gift I ever got," reflected Beth. "Teaching bible classes carried me through thirty-nine years. It gave me a vocation."

Beth shared an insight that the Hebrew word for the number forty has a translation of "time enough." The flood lasted forty days and the people wandered the desert for forty years. In February she turns 78 years old and will have been studying the Bible for forty years. Listening to her body (she had a heart attack and is healing from heart surgery last summer) and discerning "what's next," Beth plans to conclude her classes at Saint John's Church. But, she will not give up her calling as a teacher. She will next accept the call to lead an intimate group of students at her living community, Methodist Manor, commencing in January 2021.

For the New Year, Beth shared some wisdom for those who want to read and get to know the Bible better. "The best time to start is now," she said. "Don't buy anything special or fret too much about the version...except the King James version, that's a tough one to study with. Just grab whatever Bible is on your shelf and start anywhere that tickles your fancy."



"Because, the real teacher is the Holy Spirit," she added. "Just open the book and open your heart to hearing it." ✕

Traditions and Treasures



This month we had an opportunity to catch up with parishioner Michael O'Shea over the phone for a conversation full of wit (and a dash of mirth). We know you will enjoy getting to know a bit more about Mike's life away from the church and we encourage you to swap a few stories (true or otherwise) with him when we are back in the building.

Q: Michael, your professional career today is part of a family legacy. Could you tell us about that? A: You bet! My parents, Dan and Margaret O'Shea, founded their business in 1946 and focused on antiques, fine art, interior design, picture framing and appraisals. The first shop was at located at 18th and Boston and in 1963 they moved the store to Utica Square. While in high school and college in the 1960s, I started going on jobs with my father during the summer months. In 1968 I started full time and in the 1970s my sister, Ann Lake Wilson, joined the business.

Q: Did you ever think about NOT being in the family business? A: I attended various colleges, but found I kept coming back to what was to be my vocation for life. I grew up in a household of period seventeenth- through nineteenth-century items, so my parents were really my mentors. I didn't know it then, but this prepared me for a future once-in-a-lifetime position I would hold at Christie's Auction House in New York City. There, in the early 1980s, I focused on European furniture. This was an exciting time; living on the Upper West Side and working on the Upper East Side with amazing colleagues. After three years the timing seemed right and I returned to the family business.

Q: What are the trends you are seeing in your business now? A: Younger generations today are buying and collecting more mid-twentieth-century items (I call modern), and buying early twenty-first-century abstract works more and more online. However, some vintage

pieces are popular right now: Chinese porcelains and objects, collectables, Native American items, and Western paintings.

Q: Has COVID-19 impacted the appraisal business or market at all? A: Yes, of course, the in-person buying at auction has changed and online auctions are big. Collectors are looking for a deal and bidding is quite competitive. For my specialty, appraisals are still needed for insurance, tax and donation purposes and I continue to do a small bit of brokering. The pandemic has changed how I work as a professional appraiser, but not seriously diminished the volume.

Q: For any newsletter reader who does not know much about art or collecting, are there any books you would suggest to spark an interest in the avocation? A: A good introductory book for furniture, fine art and decorative art is the *Antiques Roadshow Primer: the Introductory Guide to Antiques and Collectables*.

Q: You've been attending Saint John's Church since 1963 and are a familiar face on the usher team. What other ways have you served in the parish? A: I led Wednesday Morning Prayer from 2001-2009 and participated in the Stations of the Cross with Jean Bowen for many years. I enjoyed serving as a lay eucharistic minister from 2002-2008 and have helped the church office with artwork value, replacement appraisals and inventory insurance reports. ✕



Collect for Epiphany, Jan. 6

*O God, by the leading of a star
you manifested your only Son
to the peoples of the earth:
Lead us, who know you now by
faith, to your presence, where
we may see your glory face to
face: through Jesus Christ our
Lord, who lives and reigns with
you and the Holy Spirit, one
God, now and for ever. Amen.*