

The Messenger

A newsletter of
St. John's Episcopal Church

December 2012

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The Rev Mark Preece, Interim Rector

"We are committed to building for the future with thanksgiving and praise"

Message from our Interim Rector

Advent 2012

Dear Friends:

The readings we hear in Advent are among the most beautiful and evocative of the whole year.

"Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God."

"But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he like a refiner's fire....."

"Now it is time to awake out of sleep: now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

"A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him...."

"The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy."

The season begins at the end, as Jesus, just before his death, sets the tone of expectancy, "what I say to you, I say to all: keep awake!" Then there are two Sundays introducing John the Baptist—his identity (the voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord.....") and his urgent message. Then we spend a Sunday with Mary ("Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb"). Taken as a whole, the readings of Advent knock us a bit off balance, suggesting our incompleteness and our longing for something more. Finally, we come in out of the darkness and cold on Christmas Eve and claim success ("the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light")

But wait a minute. Do we really believe that God will do something on December 25th, 2012 that

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is different from what God will be doing on December 23rd? Or are we supposed to pretend that Jesus wasn't born 2,000 years ago so that we can pretend that something new will happen now? Just what *are* we waiting for in this season of Advent?

Rowan Williams, the outgoing Archbishop of Canterbury, touches on this in an Advent video on his web site:

“We remember in Advent the time of waiting before the birth of Jesus, and we remember that time of waiting as the Bible shows it to us as a time when people were indeed longing for something that would change everything, and yet at the same time not quite knowing what that something would be...

“So during this four weeks before Christmas, that's what Christians are reflecting on. When Jesus comes into the life of the world with something unplanned, overwhelming, something that makes a colossal difference, we long for it and yet we don't quite know what it's going to involve. But this is a bit odd isn't it, you might say. Surely Jesus has come into the world and by now we ought to know what sort of difference he's made? But the truth is that we don't yet know the difference Jesus might make. We know some of the difference he's made to our lives as individuals, to the life of the Christian community, the Church, to the whole world. And yet there's more. We're still waiting to see what might happen if Jesus was allowed into our lives that bit more fully; that bit more radically.”

So, yes, God is doing something unique and new right now because you are unique (and I am unique) and God is acting uniquely in each of us. The trappings of the season (the readings, the music, special prayers, and all the rest) are there to help us “keep awake” to God at work in us so that we can re-launch the adventure of discovering “what might happen if Jesus were allowed into our lives that bit more fully”.

In a way, it's like coming to church on Sunday morning: we don't really believe God is “more present” inside the doors of St. John's than anywhere else, but the trappings of church (stained glass windows, special music, the *Book of Common Prayer*) can help us recognize God here more easily than, say, in the produce department at Shaw's (even though there are Episcopalians there too). Then we can take that awareness of God a little more fully with us next time, even though we walk in the valley of the shadow of retail.

Or maybe it's more complicated than that; in any case, it all begins with paying attention. If you're looking for other on-line resources to help, have a look here:

<http://www.sacredspace.ie/>

<http://anglicansonline.org/special/advent/html>

<http://www.missionstclare.com/english/index.html>

And I recommend the whole of the Archbishop's video, which is 10 minutes long. You can find it at:
<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/pages/advent-video.html>

Peace in this holy time, *FR MARK*

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News from the MDC

Update – The position for a part-time clergy for St. John's has been posted by the Diocese and will remain posted until January 7, 2013. The Diocese has received several inquiries, some of whom have indicated interest in the position.

Respectfully submitted.
Carol Doss, Chairperson

Sunday School News

The Family Worship will be on December 16th and focus on the Advent Theme. Friday afternoon, December 21st any interested Sunday School families are welcome to come caroling—we visit some homes then go back to the Plavin's house for pizza and a movie. On Sunday, December 23rd, after church the Sunday School will be “greening the sanctuary”. Please come help us decorate! The Christmas Pageant will be another fun event. We'll be practicing over the next few weeks during Sunday School. Please contact rebthomforde@hotmail.com if you are interested in caroling or if you have any questions.

Thanks, Rebecca

St. Margaret's Guild

Caroling Party

We are reviving an old St. John's tradition. We will meet Friday, December 14th at 4:30 pm at the church. We go first to Menig, then a few other places. No experience necessary, books provided.

We will return to the parish hall for a potluck dinner afterwards.

Poinsettias for the Christmas season

With the approach of the Holiday season, we will be ordering Christmas poinsettias starting November 25th. Along with the order sheet, there will be a manila envelope in which you can place a cash or check payment. The price is \$10 each. When you make a payment, please indicate cash or check and the amount on the order sheet. The order sheet and manila envelope will be at the back of the church during Sunday service, in the parish hall or with me during coffee hour, and in my mail box on Monday through Saturday. Thank you for helping to make our church glorious during the Christmas season.

Carol Doss, St. Margaret's Guild treasurer.

SWEETS FOR YOUR SWEETIE

An all church fundraising event is proposed for the Saturday before Valentine's Day, February 9th. A bake or pie sale is being thought of. If you have ideas for this, see Pat Lawrence or Linda Runnion. We will need lots of help to have a successful sale.

Altar Guild

Plea for help

The Altar needs Care Givers for the month of December. Anyone can sign up to assist on the weeks that remain unattended.

It is time to choose which months during 2013 we can take care of the Altar. That sign-up sheet is under the monthly calendar in the Parish Hall. Newcomers are welcome! Each of us veteran Care Givers had a mentor some time ago and we're willing to teach YOU!

Thank you, Anna

Reports of 2012 Vermont Diocesan Convention

From Susan O'Malley, delegate

As in previous years, the business of the convention took place on Saturday, November 3rd, beginning with the Bishop's address. This was followed by various reports from committee and board chairs:

Jim Kennedy reported on the good work and finances of Brookhaven School. This year Jim will be stepping down as chair of the Brookhaven Corporation.

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ERD (Episcopal Relief & Development) mission – 8.5 million mosquito nets were distributed to greatly reduce the incidents of malaria in third world countries.

\$220,000 in grants has been sent or is still targeted for Irene flood recovery efforts.

This year several resolutions were brought up for vote. A brief overview of these follows. A complete description of each may be found on the Diocesan website.

1.) Establishing minimum Clergy Compensation. Diocesan Council proposed a minimum compensation increase of 2.6%. This figure includes cash compensation, fair-rental value of housing, utilities and payments of one-half of SECA tax. The full compensation schedule may be found on the diocesan website. *PASSED* (take a look)

2.) Diocesan Budget and Alleluia Fund. A budget of \$1,031,072 was reviewed and, on stewardship the “Alleluia Fund” was introduced. This is a term we will be hearing more about as we approach the Easter season. Appeals for this single fund will be made during the Easter season only. It will replace all other funds and appeals made throughout the year. The target amount this first year is \$60,000, hopefully unrestricted, with lesser amounts in subsequent years. The diocesan fund should not be mistaken for ERD, which is a global mission fund and in no way does it replace ERD in our outreach ministry. *RESOLUTION PASSED*

3.) Diocesan health plan for clergy and employees. This is a very complicated plan that took the best of an hour to review after which I confess this delegate was still confused in spite of having reviewed it earlier with Vestry. *RESOLUTION PASSED*

4.) Resolution on Immigrant Justice: Resolved that the Diocese of Vermont recognizes the General Convention 2012 passed resolution calling for a halt to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) “Secure Communities” program. Convention resolved to appoint a diocesan task force to study this issue as it affects members of this diocese and residents of Vermont in need of our ministry. This task force will report the results of its work and recommendation to Convention 2013. *RESOLUTION PASSED*

This was a lot to digest in one day but many of your questions can be answered by going to the diocesan website or perhaps by asking our own interim, Fr. Mark Preece, who was elected to the OVERSIGHT & AUDIT COMMITTEE for a three year term. With this in mind we keep you in our prayers, Mark.

The 2013 Vermont Diocesan Convention will be held on November 8th and 9th at St. Paul’s Cathedral, Burlington

Respectfully submitted, Susan O’Malley, delegate.

From Mickie Richardson, delegate

After four long years of trying, our Bishop Tom Ely, was finally successful in bringing Michael Bruce Curry, Bishop of North Carolina, to our convention. Bishop Curry’s impressive bio can be found on line at the Diocese of Vermont website.

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Bishop Curry's energy and passion for the gospel certainly would be hard to match. His love for old Jeremiah came through loud and clear. How he marveled that Jeremiah, in the face of all that God tested him with, continued to keep his faith and do as he was commanded, was a marvel to the Bishop. "There is a balm in Gilead", he sang to us and the words rolled off his tongue smooth as satin and filled us all with a sense of hope. Bishop Curry moves with as much passion as which he speaks and one got the feeling that he really dances with the Lord. Indeed he urged us to dance with the Lord, to revel in His love and to feel that fire of love burning in our hearts. At this point he stopped his talk and urged us to break into groups of 3 or 4 to share with each other what was burning in our hearts.

We took about 15 minutes for this exercise and were then asked to share our thoughts. I was the first to respond for our group and then another spoke up but with a question for Bishop Curry. His response took about 15 minutes. The next person also asked a question and so with the next response we kind of ran out of time! It was great to hear him talk but I thought that wasn't quite the way Bishop Tom had planned on it going.

Frequently in his talk Bishop Curry referred to Dr Howard Thurman and Dietrich Bonhoeffer as authors we would be wise to read. I'll check our library to see if we are the owners of either of those good men.

Saturday was one busy day! The day began with the Eucharist and hearing the whole assembly together in song and prayer is a feeling that you just have to experience. In that setting everyone sings with all their heart, and the sound fills you with such a powerful feeling of God's love. It was really awesome.

Submitted with thanks for allowing me to serve, Mickie

From Neil Richardson, delegate

A very significant resolution, in my opinion, was passed at the Convention. Called "Stirrings of the Spirit – Responding to the Changing Opportunities for Ministry" It reads as follows:
RESOLVED, That the 180th Convention of the Diocese of Vermont direct the Diocesan Council to fully implement Stirrings of the Spirit in 2013 using any of the funding options identified in the proposal.

The resolution was proposed by the Diocesan Council.

I quote from a section of the Explanation submitted with the resolution. "The world is changing at an unprecedented rate. The assurances and assumptions that have guided our lives are increasingly called into question.

As Episcopalians, we are awake and aware of the shifts in thinking that are taking place. Our faith emboldens us to respond with determination and hope. The powerful love of Christ and our deep commitment to ministering to our neighbors enable us to address both the threats and promises of change.

To be faithful to our calling in a rapidly changing world, we must strengthen our spiritual lives, and at the same time, open ourselves to new understandings and expressions of what it means to be spiritual beings."

There was discussion from the floor to the resolution. While one testimony was in reference to where the funding would come from, other testimony was favorable.

The resolution anticipates a three year cost of \$142,000, to be used for grants to congregations for appropriate activities, speakers, and support services.

A Diocesan “Stirrings” Team is to be appointed by the Bishop to do, among other things; research a full spectrum of successful Vermont and national faith communities activities to learn of programs that assure nurtured and empowered spiritual lives, support the creation of a spiritually healthy church and community, provide recommendations for assessing and understanding the spiritual development needs of church members and the community.

To me, the resolution is very important as it addresses our need to look to the future and anticipate a changing world not only in the Episcopal church but in our larger community in terms of our faith.

I voted in favor of the resolution. Actually, I voted in favor of all of the resolutions at Convention this year. I felt they were all worthy of passage.

An additional point of information. Mickie and I, as missionaries for the American Friend of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, also maintained a display table for AFEDJ, in the area at Convention where various Diocesan related organizations displayed materials and made a “pitch” for their specific organization.

I wish to thank St. John’s for the opportunity to have represented you at Convention.

Respectfully submitted, Neil

Pastoral Care Committee

The Pastoral Care Committee met on Wednesday, November 14th. Present were Pat Mayer, Mark Preece and Mickie Richardson. Jane Eubanks joined in through a teleconference phone call.

After our opening prayer we did a review of cards and call that were sent. We also reviewed what had taken place for the meals of those who lost a loved one to see if any changes were needed. Unless others in the congregation tell us of something that could be improved we will continue with our present system.

Since our small Grief Booklets were unable to be reprinted (they are copyrighted) we are going to go ahead and produce one of our own. We decided that in January we would begin to review what we wanted in it, the size and whether or not we could print it ourselves.

The library for Hospice related materials is not yet in progress, hopefully after the holidays. If anyone has books that they feel are pertinent for those who are caregivers to the dying or for those who have lost a loved one, we welcome your contributions.

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Mark has said that he will pursue the issue of all of us being more attentive to those who are elderly and have difficulty getting to church, perhaps by providing rides if they wish to come, or simply calling to see how they are.

The calendar for the cards that are sent to those celebrating birthdays is as follows:

January, April, July and October	Pat Mayer
February, May, August and November	Mickie Richardson
March, June, September and December	Jane Eubanks

Should we be lucky enough to get new members to the Pastoral Care Committee, the calendar will be revised.

The next meeting of the Committee will be on Wednesday, December 19th.

Respectfully submitted,
Mickie Richardson for the Pastoral Care Committee

The members of the Pastoral Care Committee are:
Mark Preece, Jane Eubanks, Pat Mayer, Mickie Richardson

We received this lovely note from Barbara Bonney in reference to the funeral held here for her late husband, and good friend to all of us, Marshall Bonney

The Bonney Family would like to express our sincere thanks for all you did to make a sad time for us into a celebration of Marshall's life. How he loved a party and you all made his final journey a special one we will never forget. Your generous gifts of time and food and the beauty of our church are a real comfort to our family. Thank you is not adequate but all I can say. Please accept this token of our appreciation.
Barbara Bonney

Community Notes

RANDOLPH COMMUNITY SUPPERS

The Community Supper for December will be held on Tuesday, December 18th, at Bethany UCC Church, Main st, Randolph - by Bethany folks - Doors open at 5 pm

Sunday Support Ministries

	Dec 2 10:00am	Dec 9 10:00am	Dec 16 10:00am
Eucharistic Minister	Christine Gilbert	Pat Mayer	Ray Mayer
Readers	Pat Lawrence	Gay Gaston	Mickie R
Ushers	Adele Smith	Carole & Ken Merrill	Mickie & Neil R
Oblations	Ellen & Phil Plumb	*****	*****
Intercessions	Gay Gaston	Nancy DuBois	Mickie R
Coffee Hour	Pat Lawrence	*****	Jane Eubanks
Altar Guild	Anna Sease	*****	Mickie R
	Dec 23 10:00am	Dec 24 5:30pm	Dec 30 10:00am
Eucharistic Minister	Gay Gaston	Steve Eubanks	Bob Sparadeo
Readers	Pat Mayer	Ray Mayer	*****
Ushers	Susan O'Malley	*****	Susan O'Malley
Oblations	*****	*****	*****
Intercessions	Susan O'Malley	*****	*****
Coffee Hour	*****	None	Mickie R
Altar Guild	*****	Pat Mayer	*****

Note - ***** designates item still needs volunteers as of this publication date

Anniversaries –December 2012

Birthdays:

Dec 3	Lydiana Pelletier	Dec 16	David Gaston
Dec 13	Betsy Arnold	Dec 18	Cecile Smith
Dec 15	Judy Gardner	Dec 29	Mark Preece

Wedding:

Dec 2 Matthew and Linda Nagy

Vestry of St. John's

Steven Eubanks, Senior Warden	Nancy Wright
Ray Mayer, Junior Warden	Susan O'Malley
Linda Nagy	Ellen Baker
Treasurer, William Arnold	Receipts Treasurer, Jane Eubanks
Clerk, Pat Mayer	

Delegates to 2012 Diocesan Convention – Mickie Richardson, Neil Richardson
Alternate Delegates – Gay Gaston, Susan O'Malley, Nancy Wright

Please visit our website <http://stjohnsrandolphvt.org>