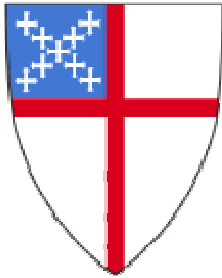


The Fabric of St. John's



Parish News of
St. John's Episcopal Church
Alma, Michigan



December 2008

Pastor's Corner

Anticipation, expectation, hope, are many of the words applied to the Season of Advent, but the one I like the best is eagerness. Why? Because each Advent helps us start again on our journey to God through eagerly awaiting the birth of Jesus Christ; preparing ourselves for His rebirth in our hearts.

Each Advent we sing "O Come, O Come Emanuel" expressing our desire for God to be with us. This very old and wonderful hymn, which is a series of "O" antiphons, was an expression of the longing of the early church for the Messiah to come, not only in remembrance of His birth in Bethlehem but also His second coming, when Redemption will be completed; when the whole of creation will rejoice.

There are numerous passages in Isaiah referring to the coming reign of God and what God will do to those who abuse His creation. Yet, there is always forgiveness for those who repent, for those who are truly sorry for their betrayal of God, because God continually reminds that we are His creation and wishes the

best for us even in the midst of our betrayal. We are the tender garden that God nourishes and for whom The Word became flesh and dwelt with us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

And when we see Jesus will we recognize him?

Mary+

What's going on at St. John's?

The best news is that Rev. Mary is back with us after an absence of almost seven weeks! Rev. Mary returned the second Sunday in November and is slowly working her way up to a complete Eucharist on Sunday and coming back to the office on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. We welcome her and give thanks to Jesus for her healing and strengthening, and continue to pray for her full recovery!

Vestry Highlights

The Vestry met in November, but there was not a quorum present so no business was transacted. They will meet again on the second Sunday in December following the 10:00 a.m. service.

Episcopal Church Women

ECW met on Saturday morning, November 15 to prepare for the Thankful Dinner.

The Christmas tree was put up in the Parish Hall with tags for the Adopt-a-Family gifts. We have two senior citizens and a family from Ithaca with three children. The father is laid off and we hope to make a good Christmas for the family. The deadline for bringing gifts to the church is Sunday, December 14, and the gifts will be delivered on that day.

The greening of the church will be Sunday, December 21st, followed by a potluck. The food is to be finger food so plan to bring something that can be picked up and eaten. The children will be given gifts by the Sunday School.

Sally T. from Uganda has been helped by the Kabells and ECW over several years. She is in need of tuition for Makerere University and we voted to send \$400 for a semester's tuition. We are also writing to

her that we may not be able to continue this support.

We will have an Epiphany cake with charms in it the first Sunday in January. The Annual Meeting will be the third Sunday in January, the 18th, for again the ECW meeting will be moved to Saturday, the 17th, the prepare for the potluck dinner.

The Chili Cook-off is set for Sunday, Marcy 15th with Angie and Racquie Ballard chairing this event.

The December ECW meeting has been canceled because of conflicting events. We will return to Sunday meetings on the third Sunday in February.

Plaid Door Event

Friday, December 12 is "Come Home to Alma for the Holidays." All downtown stores will be open late that night and offering specials for their customers. The Plaid Door will again be giving bags of cookies to our customers.

Will everyone please help by donating three to four dozen cookies and deliver them to the store or church by Wednesday, December 10th, when we will assemble the bags.

Also, come downtown that night and join the fun!

Thanks, Margaret Trimmer

Daughters of the King Prayer

THANK YOU, LORD, that nothing in my life is beyond your reach; nothing is too large or difficult for your powerful hand. Help me to remember that you display your power best in my impossible situations. Give me greater understanding of who you are so that my trust in you will be complete. Amen.

Daughters of the King News

We will be collecting coats and cold weather gear for local children and seniors until December. Any gently used or new

items will be appreciated. It's a good time to clean out closets.

We have set our blanket making workshop for January 10th at 11am here at the church. We plan on working until 2pm. All are welcome. Please bring a sack lunch and any rotary cutters and mats that you may have. We are still happy to accept donations of fleece.

Due to the Christmas season we will hold our next business meeting on January 25th.

We wish everyone a very happy Advent and Christmas season.

Youth Group

Due to popular vote we will be meeting at Burger King instead of McDonald's the first Sunday of every month. This month's topic: Where is God in our everyday world? Can we still know him?

Thanks Corner

This is new. The idea is to give everyone here at our church the chance to openly give thanks for the big or the small things in life. You can claim your thanks or leave an anonymous note in a DOK member's mail box. In the upcoming Holiday season it is important to remember to be grateful for all our blessings. It's hoped that this little corner will be able to appear in every newsletter. It's up to you.

Thanks for the healing and safe return to house and church of Rev. Mary. We missed you.

Thanks for all the great and small joys that have occurred over the last year.

Thanks for the chance to give thanks.

This last one is just an idea. I'll bring it up at the meeting tomorrow and hopefully get some more thanks givings.

God's blessings to you and your family over this Thanksgiving festivities.

Wendy

United Thank Offering

While you are what you are thankful for and writing it down to be put in the Newsletter, remember your Blue Box and drop a coin in it. Keep your Blue Box out where you can see it. We do have a lot to be thankful for in these difficult times.

Your prayers are needed for healing:

Jeff Loehr (Radzibon friend)

Norman Mills (Member)

Tony Dill (Hamilton relative in the Military)

Kay Crispin (Member, Jerry's wife)

Karl Wakeman (Member)

December Birthdays

2 Hayley McCreery

2 Nate Fishburn

3 Gerald Hamilton

4 Basil Anderson

12 Beth Davison

13 Barbara Gladding

14 Ray Anspach

19 Fran Parcher

19 Lilly Schwei

20 Royce Clark

21 John Jerry

21 Julie Cratcha

26 Vlesta Alexander

30 Simi VanCise

Memorial Flowers for Christmas

For the Christmas services we like to have as many poinsettias as possible, both red and white to make the sanctuary look beautiful for the Nativity of Jesus, our Savior. That means we either need your gift of money or bring a poinsettia to set in the sanctuary. If you wish to give money, put it in an envelope and label it for flowers for Christmas, and write clearly the name of the

person that is to be remembered. Put the envelope in the alms basin on Sunday.

Everything is Going to be All Right

How should I not be glad to contemplate
The clouds clearing beyond the dormer
window
and a high tide reflected on the ceiling?
There will be dying, there will be dying,
but there is no need to go into that.
The poems flow from the hand unbidden
and the hidden source is the watchful heart.
The sun rises in spite of everything
and the far cities are beautiful and bright.
I lie here in a riot of sunlight
watching the day break and the clouds
flying.
Everything is going to be all right.
Derek Mahon

Derek Mahon was born in Belfast in 1941, and grew up in the midst of the Troubles..

Heather Kesselring spoke this poem to us at one of the Sunday services. Heather finds that the poem speaks for itself. Everything she tried to write about the poem sounded like noise and seemed to weaken the poem. It is a powerful statement for us. If you are in need of further understanding of this poem, read it again.

Heather Kesselring, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor at Aquinas College. She is the Business Administration/Sport Management Program Director in the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation.

Preparing for Advent Setting the Stage For Our Advent Journey, Even Before It Begins.

Getting in Touch with Myself

One of the best ways to prepare for the very special of Advent is to "get in touch with ourselves." It may sound odd, but one symptom of our contemporary lives is that we can often be quite "out of touch" with what is going on in our very own hearts. We are about to begin our Advent, right at the time our Western culture begins Christmas preparations. It is a busy time, and our heads are filled with details to remember. And, it is a time of emotional complexity that is part of this holiday season--with all of the expectations and challenges of family and relationships: who we want to be with and who we struggle to with. So, our hearts are a bit tender, if not completely defended from experiencing anything deeply.

We are about to hear some very powerful and stirring readings from Isaiah, the Prophet. We will re-enter the ancient tradition of a people longing for the coming of a Savior. We may remember the days of our childhood when we longed for Christmas to come, because it was a magical time of receiving gifts. As adults, we have to ask ourselves: "What is it I long for now?" The answer won't come easily. The more we walk around with that question, and let it penetrate through the layers of distraction and self-protection, the more powerfully we will experience Advent.

Salvation From

We are about to read and pray about the expectant hope of Israel, as expressed through Isaiah. The images we will be using are about darkness and gloom--about thick clouds covering the people--and about hunger and thirst. They are images that attempt to capture a sense of what we feel when we are distant from our God. There are many images about war and conflict. They express the powerlessness and anxiety we experience when we feel vulnerable and defense-less. Most of all, there are images

of a future day--a day that can only be called the Lord's--when all the tears will be wiped away, when there will be plenty to eat and drink, and when there will be no more conflict and no more war. God's salvation will be made known. God's victory will be complete. These are very precious days for us to come into intimate contact with our own need for salvation. It is a time to make friends with our tears, our darkness, our hunger and thirst. What is missing? What eludes my grasp? What name can I give to the "restlessness" in my heart? What is the emptiness I keep trying to "feed" with food, with fantasy, with excitement, with busyness? What is the conflict that is "eating at me"? What is the sinful, unloving, self-centered pattern for which I haven't asked for forgiveness and healing? Where do I need a peace that the world cannot give?

Coming to know where I need a Savior is how I can prepare for Advent. I am preparing to listen to the promises, listen to these rich texts announcing the liberation I can truly long for. When my heart is open, when my hands are open, when my mouth is open and ready to ask for freedom, healing and peace, then I am ready to begin Advent.

Come, Lord, Jesus. Come and Visit Your People. We Await Your Coming; Come, O Lord.

Isaiah 35

The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom.

They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song. The glory of Lebanon will be given to them, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; They will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.

Strengthen the hands that are feeble,
make firm the knees that are weak,

Say to those whose hearts are
frightened: Be strong, fear not?
Here is your God, he comes with
vindication; With divine recompense
he comes to save you.

Then will the eyes of the blind be
opened, the ears of the deaf be
cleared; then will the lame leap like a
stag, then the tongue of the dumb
will sing. Streams will burst forth in
the desert, and rivers in the steppe.
The burning sands will become
pools, and the thirsty ground, springs
of water; the abode where jackals
lurk will be a marsh for the reed and
papyrus. A highway will be there,
called the holy way; No one unclean
may pass over it, nor fools go astray
on it. No lion will be there, nor beast
of prey go up to be met upon it. It is
for those with a journey to make, and
on it the redeemed will walk.

Those whom the LORD has
ransomed will return and enter Zion
singing, crowned with everlasting
joy; They will meet with joy and
gladness, sorrow and mourning will
flee.

This article on Advent was taken from the Internet by Wendy Ward of St. John's, St. Johns and given to Father Anderson. We are sorry that we cannot credit the author of the article as we cannot locate it on the Internet.

Advent Prayer

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We

who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen

Prayer by Henri J. M. Nouwen

December Schedule

Monday, December 1

Tuesday, December 2

9:00 a.m. Plaid Door Check

Writing

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, December 3

9:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Group

Thursday, December 4

7:45 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group

**7:00 p.m. Saginaw Valley Clericus
at St. Alban's, Bay City**

Friday, December 5

Saturday, December 6

**8:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast at Big
Boy**

Sunday, December 7

9:00 a.m. Christian Education

**10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and
Sermon**

Monday, December 8

Tuesday, December 9

7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, December 10

9:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Group

Thursday, December 11

Friday, December 12

Saturday, December 13

Sunday, December 14

9:00 a.m. Christian Education

**10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and
Sermon**

**Adopt-a-Family Gifts are due so
they may**

be delivered.

11:30 a.m. Vestry Meeting

Monday, December 15
7:00 p.m. Saginaw Valley
Convocation
at St. Alban's in Bay City

Tuesday, December 16
12:00 p.m. Commission on
Ministry at the Diocesan Office
7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, December 17
9:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Group

Thursday, December 18
7:45 a.m. Spiritual Growth Group
12:00 p.m. Alma Clericus at His
Place

Friday, December 19

Saturday, December 20

Sunday, December 21
9:00 a.m. Christian Education
10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and
Sermon
11:30 a.m. Hanging of the Greens
and
finger food potluck

Monday, December 22

Tuesday, December 23
7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve
9:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Group
9:00 p.m. Singing of Christmas
Carols
9:30 p.m. Christmas Holy
Eucharist
with Sermon

Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day
No services

Friday, December 26
Saturday, December 27

Sunday, December 28
9:00 a.m. Christian Education
10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and
Sermon

Monday, December 29
Tuesday, December 30
7:00 p.m. Choir Practice

Wednesday, December 31
9:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Group

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Sunday Eucharist: 10:00 a.m.
Christian Education (all ages): 9:00 a.m.

St. John's is a Church of the Episcopal
Diocese of Eastern Michigan

The Rt. Rev. S. Todd Ousley, Bishop

The Rev. Dr. Mary Delaney, Rector
Nora Kowitz, Secretary
Bob Crist, Organist
Basil Anderson, Sexton

VESTRY

Margaret Trimmer (Sr. Warden), Ryan
Ballard (Jr. Warden), Angie Ballard (Clerk
of Vestry), Doug Ballard (Treasurer), Sue
Young, Wendy Brown, Vickie Bethka, and
Tim Cruttenden