

From the Priest-in-Charge

I hope your Thanksgiving was an experience of reviewing the good things and people in your life, the things that feed your spirit and the way you feed others.

Myself, I am fighting the feeling that I am at the top of a sky slope being sucked by gravity towards Christmas. Michael's article in this newsletter is a help against that feeling. He reminds us that although our society wants to focus on the coming of an innocent powerless cute baby, the purpose of Advent is to celebrate that Christ our Risen savior is coming. This is the coming that we are to look toward. We can and should celebrate God's loving us to the point of becoming one with our nature and experience but it is the desire for His second coming that inspired the early Christians. I think it is difficult for us to really experience that hope and that desire they had. We like life as we know it. I believe we are much more ambivalent about what His coming again will mean. Are we ready to welcome His judgement? Have we yet built His kingdom?

As many of you know, we have welcomed a homeless family of four into the Parish Hall and into our community. We hope to help this family get back on their feet and regain the independence they had until 2 ½ months ago. Their 18 month old is the cause of many smiles among us but they have a hard road in front of them. Jan remarked to me this week that there seem to be many more people coming to us for help than in the past so I thought I would do a semi report to you on my discretionary fund.

We helped stop the marshal from evicting a family of six from their home.

Because one of our members shared the plight of the family staying with us: that they could not get to work currently without a car, a used car was identified and paid for to replace their dead car. This replacement car was inspected by volunteers. Their inspection fee and registration was paid. The father is back at work.

A person with no winter coat was clothed.

We helped 5 people with gas.

A family hiding from an abusive husband was fed.

Different homeless families were housed in a motel 5 nights.

3 additional families were fed.

We have invested in 4 \$25 gift cards at Walmart's thinking that would probably be used as food vouchers. Two of them have been distributed.

Because of these requests for help, we have formed a social action ministry to help identify and network among resources so we might be better informed and better able to direct people to needed help. We also will look for lacks in services and try to, with other like-minded and motivated individuals and groups try to get resources to match need. We follow last weeks Gospel:"³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'" Or said more simply: Love your neighbor.

for Unto Us
a Child
is Born



From the Senior Warden

Most will probably read this month's Newsletter after our annual Christmas Bazaar. I anticipate that the Bazaar will be a huge success with great results. It is our largest fund raiser of the year and it takes a lot of hands to bring it all together. I congratulate all who helped plan, set up, spent the day, spent money and cleaned up!

As I reflect on the past year I have seen a resurgence of participation and engagement in a variety of ministries. Leadership is strong and most importantly it seems that participation is broad based. It is great to see the energy, the interest and the commitment so many have in making all things Trinity run smoothly. And to see folks "stretch" a bit and participate in ministries that may be new or unfamiliar to them.

From my own perspective, I was less than enthusiastic when asked to become part of the Sunday School "faculty"! What did I know about teaching Sunday School, I thought. But when invited, I accepted and have taught a couple of lessons already. (I am scheduled once more before the end of the year.) I was surprised to find that I have been enjoying the experience of interacting with the kids, getting to know them. Also, I am finding the lessons interesting, instructive and very relevant in this day and age. I am also inspired that there are so many who stepped up and volunteered, it makes it very doable having as many participants to share the work so that it doesn't become a burden.

At the last Vestry meeting we began discussing several topics, including organizing a kids' movie program, editorial content in the Newsletter, Church safety (in response to concerns over the recent tragic Texas Church shooting) and Congregational Development. Add to this the ongoing interest in developing a Social Services ministry and it becomes clear that our Parish is active, engaged and seeking ways to be relevant.

Looking ahead, In the next few weeks, I will be working with our Treasurer, Marie Milone, and Susan on a 2018 budget which will then be reviewed with the Vestry at the next meeting on December 17th. My hope had been to achieve at least \$92,000 in pledges for 2018. This would have allowed us to make needed repairs and to put more money into our ministries. Once again, we will have to forgo even a nominal wage increase for our paid staff: Susan, Jan and Margaret.

As I write this we have 42 pledges with commitments for roughly \$77,000. Our Stewardship Co Chairs, Joanne Smith and Carolyn Tolley are still receiving pledges and hope for another 5 more before we finalize our revenue projection from Pledges. My best-case scenario for Pledge revenue is \$82,000, a drop from our 2017 Budgeted pledge revenue of 13%. This is disappointing, and is short of the informal goal I had set as a minimum threshold for us to be able to begin adding funds to support our ministries.

I am firmly committed to a Balanced Budget. That means living within our means and not spending more than we collect in contributions. Unfortunately, with the drop in revenue the only option is to further reduce expenses. This is tough, as we already have a very lean, bare minimum budget. It will mean that we will continue to postpone needed repairs, upkeep on the Rectory and the Church and postpone financial support for new ministries. If we have a cold, icy or snowy winter, our budgeted funds we will be at risk for over spending.

The paradox I see is that while our level of active engagement by parishioners, re-energized ministries, new ministries, and many new members, our pledge contributions continue to be in decline. The Vestry will need to address the budget concerns with pragmatism and empathy.

Reflections for Advent

My understanding of the word Advent is that it is derived from the Medieval Latin "adventus" meaning arrival, but I was not a great Latin scholar when I spent my early years at Hinchingsbrooke School !!. In several weeks, while most of us will be discovering every kind of turkey treatment with leftovers from Thanksgiving, the church will begin a New Year with the season of Advent. The Episcopal Church and our congregation marks this season with the weekly lighting of the candles on the Advent wreath and perhaps, a few other changes in the liturgy. We like many other Christians, will sing Advent hymns, though some more worldly, will immediately sing songs about Christmas.

Advent, however, is primarily about looking through the baby in the manger to see Christ the King coming on the clouds in glory. Many church denominations sing very few Advent hymns during this season of Advent. This is likely because of the fact that they join together Advent with the Nativity. Generally people are quite comfortable with the meek and mild baby in the manger; but to speak of a returning all powerful King "robed in dreadful majesty", who comes to judge the living and the dead and to set all things right, is much less popular.

We live in a culture that continues to extend the "Christmas" season for commercial reasons; for the most part forgetting the Advent season. The Church finds it nearly impossible to speak of the second advent of Christ in the weeks leading to Christmas. In our silence, have we capitulated to the dominant culture?

Charles Wesley wrote a real gem in his Advent hymn "Lo He Comes With Clouds Descending", which has remained a favorite with congregations for generations. At Trinity we will be singing this hymn in early December, it is #57 in our hymn book. In the first stanza Wesley is clear that Christ will physically return in glory. The imagery of thousands upon thousands of saints following in procession is particularly evocative. In the next verse he shows that all will see the glorified Christ. Having spent the first three verses depicting the scene of Christ's return, the final verse centers on the basic cry of the Church which is amplified during Advent, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

The standard hymn tune setting for "Lo! He Comes With Clouds, Descending", "Helmsley," works nicely with the text. The composer of this tune Thomas Augustine Arne, was a British composer born in London that lived during the 18th century. Arne was a Roman Catholic and he never composed music for the Church of England, unlike most other leading English composers of his time. Some congregations find the tune difficult to sing. I have found that the hymn tune "St. Thomas", next door in our 1982 hymn book also works well. The point is that tune and style need not limit congregations from reclaiming this incredible hymn for the Advent season.

M.J.G

Birthdays & Anniversaries



December Birthdays

1 Jolene Backora
2 Connie O'Grady
3 Grace Ferrantino
5 Susan Treanor
17 Bob Scully
25 Chris Eidschun

December Anniversaries

6 Peter & Linda Salmon
11 Vince & Mary Cole
28 John & Kathryn Ritter-Vicich

O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

December Calendar of Events

Dec. 2 - Christmas Bazaar, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Dec. 6 - Trinity at Food Pantry, 8:30 a.m. - Noon

Dec. 10 - Vestry Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Library

Dec. 10 - 17 - Family Promise Host Week

Dec. 24 - Advent 4, 9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with music

Greening of the Church, 10:15 a.m.

Christmas Eve Festive Holy Eucharist, 4:00 p.m.

Dec. 25 - Christmas Day Holy Eucharist with music, 10:00 a.m.

Dec. 25 - Jan. 1 - Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

Dec. 29 - Newsletter Deadline for Information