

# TRINITY NEWS

December, 2007

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

MT. POCONO PA

*Mission Statement: Share God's unconditional love with everyone.*

It sometimes seems as if there is nothing new to say as we enter the seasons of Advent and Christmas. And yet the old story is always new, always a gift, and always welcome. Traditions give us a sense of rootedness and belonging. Both of these are deep needs of all people; each is part of the human longing for meaning. As December arrives here we are again, welcoming and preparing to welcome days which have the potential of drawing forth the best in each of us.

We have an interesting overlap this month. For some of us it might cause a momentary sense of dis-connect or confusion. Don't worry. That won't last! But while it is with us, the secular year comes to an end and our church year begins again. It all happens in a blending, an overlapping of cycles which offers us an opportunity to think about the realities of our lives - how they are distinct from each other and how they blend.

In these days we focus on coming, on mystery, on love. We will stand in wonder before the Incarnation of God as we gather to live into the story from Luke on a winter night. In the intervening days we will prepare for that wonder in reading Holy Scripture, in meditating on Mary, in music, in prayer, and in silence. We will make ourselves ready to experience awe before God.

Some years ago my Father wrote a poem which I want to share with you. His book of poetry is titled *Contemporaries: A Poetic Focus on Today*. As I read his work again, I am reminded of how often, even in the midst of change, we discover the past in the present.

## AWE

It is not the enormity of my sin  
which throws me to my knees  
but the awful righteousness of God.

It is not the superiority of a man  
at which I stand in wonder  
but the mystery of a creature of God.

It is not the pain of the cross  
which completely shuts my mouth  
but the outpouring of the love of God.

Reclaiming the word "awe" for that which leads us to shut our mouths moves us from what is often not awesome (in spite of what we may hear to the contrary) to what truly is. We approach a season of joy in which we might be tempted to set aside the truth of the cross. And yet we cannot, for the love of God which is brought to birth in Jesus is one and the same with that love which we know in the cross. The cycle of The Story encompasses all of it - the love and the agony, the joy and the pain. It is the story of our lives. Joy is sweeter beside the bitterness of pain. Agony leads us to a more profound treasuring of love.

We expect so much at this time of year and too often are disappointed. But that is about our world, about the dailiness of our lives. The Story goes way beyond any expectation we might ever have and it never disappoints us. The promise is real. The outpouring of the love of God is real. We stand silently in awe.

In these days and in all our days may we know all of the joy and wonder and love of the gift of our Lord.

Best blessings,

Ginny+

## DECEMBER, 2007 - JANUARY, 2008

December 1 - 10am - 4pm Christmas Bazaar  
December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 - 9-9:45am Confirmation Class, Youth Room  
December 2, 9, 16, & 23 - 11:30am Pageant Rehearsal, Church  
December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 - 11:30-12:30 Choir Rehearsal, Library  
December 5 - 8:30am - 12:30pm Trinity at Food Pantry  
December 5, 12, 19 - 6:30pm Evensong, Soup Supper, Meditation  
December 11 - 7pm Vestry, Library  
December 24 - 7pm Pageant & Holy Eucharist  
8 pm Christmas Eve Hospitality Gathering, Parish Hall  
10pm Carols & Holy Eucharist  
December 25 - 10am Christmas Day Holy Eucharist  
December 25, 26, 28, January 1 Office Closed Christmas Holiday  
December 28 - Newsletter Deadline  
December 30 - 10am Lessons & Carols  
January 4 - Newsletter Mailing  
January 6 - 11:30am Epiphany Dinner, Library  
January 8 - 7pm Vestry, Library  
January 13, 20, 27 - 9-9:45am Confirmation Class, Youth Room  
January 13, 20, 27 - 11:30am - 12:30pm Choir Rehearsal, Library  
January 15 - 6pm Stewardship Leadership Team, Library  
January 18 - Newsletter Deadline  
January 25 - Newsletter Mailing

## DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

1 Phyllis Smith  
2 Connie O'Grady  
4 Julie Beech  
13 Mary Karlson  
16 Jane Storm  
19 Jennifer Tolley  
19 Marianne Ayers  
20 Virginia Parry  
21 Dylan Campana  
27 Torrey Lyn Salmon

### **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY**

11 Vince & Mary Cole  
19 Lyle & Jean Hixenbaugh  
28 John & Kathryn Ritter-Vicich

### The Trinity Summer Music Festival....An Update

The conversations regarding the 2007 Music Festival at "The Roof" were very positive: a wonderful facility; it was nice to have a covered eating area; the music groups were great; let's go there next year.

We the 2008 Festival Committee, wrote a letter to the Paradise Township Board of Supervisors on October 2nd asking to reserve August 2, 2008 as soon as possible; the Trinity Band can perform on this date.

Later in October - on the 26th, the Festival Committee received a return letter reporting that they had reviewed our request, but they have a reservation policy for "The Roof" which states that reservations are only accepted starting January 2, 2008 when the office reopens at 8:00am - after the holidays. "There can be no exception to this!" However, our letter will be placed on their reorganization meeting agenda to be held THAT EVENING! We'll stay on top of this.

The Music Festival Committee

### **Food Pantry Report**

The food pantry Trinity supports, Pocono Mountain Ecumenical Hunger Ministry gave 182 families a turkey and canned or boxed goods for all the trimmings on Saturday November 17th. They were assisted in the carrying of all those boxes by area Boy Scouts. The food pantry will again give out Christmas turkeys and more food in December. The funds we raised at the annual People Walking for People walk around Tobyhanna State Park pay for the expense (about \$5,000 per holiday) of these events. Families can also come once a month for regular food. Trinity serves on the first Wednesday of each month from 8:30 AM to about 11:30 AM. Call Linda Salmon at 629-0644 if you would like to help on Wed. December 5th or Wed. January 2nd.

**Trinity Episcopal Church Mission Statement:**  
**Share Gods Unconditional Love**  
**With Everyone.**

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**Our Prayers have been requested for:**

Ed Benintende  
Steve Clark  
Joyce DeGasperi  
Bob Dexter  
Al Eisenecker  
Bill Killpatrick  
Jon Ross  
Ester Stein  
Rhonda Treible

Marion Braithwaite  
Lauren Boyadis  
Benjamin Gower  
Jacob Gower  
Deborah Gower  
Mary Baker  
Jeff Landi  
Stacey  
Anita Rivera  
Alex Boehm  
Victoria Forstein

Rose Smith  
Karen Kern  
Lynn Tinsley  
Ann Curry  
George Emery  
Lois Rothrock  
Dick Orner  
Alistair Stewart  
Penny Clark

**PASTORAL CARE NEWS – DECEMBER 2007**

The meeting of the Pastoral Care Team originally scheduled for Dec. 15 is being postponed until JANUARY 19, 2008 starting at 9 a.m. with Morning Prayer in the church. Hopefully this will give everyone a break during the holiday season and everyone will arrive at the January meeting full of energy and ideas. This team includes home visitors, the prayer chain, the healing ministry and Eucharistic visitors. New members to the team are always welcome – do come and find out about our work for members of the parish. And – have a wonderful, peaceful, Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

*Kathie Herling*

**The book of the Month = *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini**

There were times when I didn't want to pick it up and others when I couldn't put it down. This is a tale well told. It draws the reader of the western world into a view of Afghanistan that many of us would rather not see. It also brings us right to the edge of sin and redemption, betrayal and forgiveness. Amir bares his soul to the reader in ways that pull the heart strings, knowing that all too often we too have made choices not unlike his.

**Building Projects Update**

Roof leak & cross – Jim Witt of Continental Roofing in Mountainhome repaired the small leak over the sanctuary in October. He fastened a waterproof material to the roof at a nominal cost (\$ 50). The work was timely; it rained hard on several occasions shortly afterwards. Also, Joan Faulkner finished sanding the cross for the roof in November. However, the aura around the cross is broken and must be reattached. With winter weather coming, the plan is to repair and refinish the cross early in the New Year so that it can be reinstalled in the spring.

Parish hall – Several painters came to Trinity last month in order to prepare estimates for painting the parish hall, vestibule, and the hallway in between. The estimates have been received and will be reviewed by the vestry in all likelihood at its December meeting. It will select one of them, with the work tentatively scheduled to be done in early 2008. The project will maintain the color scheme for the parish hall, etc. and will also eliminate the cracks and water stains by the fireplace. The balance currently in the Fireplace Fund (just under \$ 2200) should cover almost the entire cost of this work

*Don Scheck*

## **The Evangelism of Giving Thanks**

"Got no checkbooks, got no banks, still I'd like to express my thanks. I've got the sun in the morning and the moon at night." ~ Irving Berlin

The words from that wonderful song popped into my head as I rode home the night before Thanksgiving Day. I smiled as I thought of the beautiful gift of simplicity, in which one could honestly say those words and live a life of being thankful for the gifts of God. Of course my mind was not content stopping there, and so I could not help to laugh out loud as I thought of the reaction of the people around me if I just burst out into that song! That's just the way my mind works.

Then I thought; "what if I were to begin to hum the tune? Would that somehow place the tune in the minds of those around me and would they find themselves thankful for the sun in the morning and the moon at night – putting away their anxieties of the holiday and woes of their worlds?" Hmmm ... subliminal evangelism. So that's one way that we can follow God's call without feeling awkward about it.

We now enter Advent; the beginning of the Church Year and a time of reflection and preparation for the day when Mary will deliver the child who will soon deliver us all. Advent is a wonderful time to begin anew and to help others to prepare for the birth of Christ and perhaps the rebirth of Christ into their own lives. With Advent beginning on the Sunday after the feast of Saint Andrew who, along with his brother Peter, was called to "follow Christ and become "fishers of men", we are invited to ponder their response. Perhaps the call to share the Good News becomes easier.

Advent is similar to Lent, in the respect that we spend our time in reflection and prayers as we wait for Christ. This season of waiting lends us the opportunity to ask "who waits for whom?" Am I waiting for Christ to come or is He waiting for me? Do we hesitate to answer the call as we await the right moment to do so?

In everyday life, there are invitations to respond to situations with the love and generosity of Christ and for us to be witnesses of God through the love that we extend to others. We have the opportunity to seize, being lamps here upon earth to reflect the light of Christ in our forgiveness, kindness and compassion as we serve God through others.

With love & light,  
Rob McMahan  
Chair, Evangelism Leadership team

## **Advent - St. Martin's Lent - Gleaned from the Internet**

The season of Advent originated as a fast of forty days in preparation for Christmas, commencing on the day after the feast of St. Martin (12 November), whence it was often called "St. Martin's Lent"-- a name by which it was known as early as the fifth century.

Thomas J. Talley in *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (Pueblo Publishing Company) sees the beginning of an advent season in the Fourth Canon of the Council of Saragossa in 380. In 567, the Synod of Tours established a December fast. And in 581 the Council of Macon ordered an advent fast for the laity from the Feast of St. Martin (November 11) to Christmas. This took the name of St. Martin's Lent.

The Advent (from Latin *adventus*, "coming") season is peculiar to the Western churches, though its original impulse probably came from the East, where it was common, after the ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431, to devote sermons on Sundays before Christmas to the theme of the Annunciation. In Ravenna--a channel of Eastern influences upon the Western Church--Peter Chrysologus (reigned c. 433-450) delivered such homilies (sermons). The earliest reference to a season of Advent is the institution by Bishop Perpetuus of Tours (reigned 461-490) of a fast before Christmas, beginning from St. Martin's Day on November 11. Known as St. Martin's Lent, the custom was extended to other Frankish churches by the Council of Mâcon in 581. The six-week season was adopted by the church of Milan and the churches of Spain.

## **WHAT IS GOD UP TO?**

Why is there pain and suffering in the world? Why is there disease and tragic death? Why are people rendered homeless, maimed, and killed by drought and floods, hurricanes and tornadoes, forest fires and tsunamis? And what about man's inhumanity to man, where people perpetrate atrocities on each other? If God is good and God is in control, then what is God up to?

There have been many attempts by Christians, over the centuries, to explain this. Each explanation has been found to be flawed, only to be replaced by another explanation, also flawed. John Calvin believed that "all things, big and small, flow from the will of God and therefore serve God's good purposes, even if we cannot understand those purposes." But how can we believe that the horrors described above are in accordance with God's will? I can't, and I think that I have a lot of company.

The next explanation had its origin in the 17th and 18th centuries, when modern science first made its appearance. "Christians needed a way to make belief in God reasonable in an age of rationality, and by pointing to the ordering of nature and human progress, they believed that they could prove the existence of an all-powerful designer of the plan." The weakness of this argument became apparent during the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, which killed up to 100,000 people. How could God have let this happen?

Up to this point, Christians believed in divine providence, which "has to do with the conviction that our lives and our world constitute a coherent story, a drama, in which God and mankind, together, drive the story toward its proper conclusion." That conclusion, as described in Revelation, is the victory of God and God's people on earth. But as we look around us today, it appears that the trend is downward, not upward. Indeed, some believe that we are descending into chaos, with little or no hope for the future. How can we resolve the inconsistency between God and humans driving the story toward its proper conclusion, and the chaos we see in the world around us?

I suggest that we do it by daring to be different. Suppose we dump the doctrine of divine providence. Suppose the story doesn't have a proper conclusion? How can we justify this?

Let's begin with free will. We know that God has given us the ability to choose between right and wrong, good and evil. It started in the Garden of Eden. Suppose God has given all living creatures a certain amount of free will, including planet Earth, which many considered to be a living, breathing organism. In doing so, God has surrendered voluntarily part of his omniscience and omnipotence. God no longer knows the outcome of the story here on Earth. The outcome depends on the choices that God's creation makes.

Does that mean that God has abandoned us to our fate? By no means! God's will shall indeed be done, but in the spiritual realm, not in the physical realm. This world is Spring training; the season has yet to begin. So train hard (grow spiritually), and be ready to play when the season begins.

In God's realm, there is no need for free will, because God's will becomes our will, not through force, but because our greatest joy is to love and serve God. Our ultimate goal is to grow into the full stature of Jesus Christ. That process may take an eternity, but God's realm is beyond time. There are no clocks in Heaven.

So be faithful, be steadfast, and be ready. And don't blame God for creation's foul-ups.

Tom Sayer

Note: Quotations are from *Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear*, by Scott Bader-Saye.

## **Social Concerns: Give Me Your Rich, Well Born and Able**

"Essay" means attempt and that's what these monthly essays are - my attempts to apply Christian ethics to present day problems. They are not the word from on high and I don't expect everyone to agree with my conclusions or that I will always be right. They are also attempts to transcend the usual liberal/conservative divide in our country, finding things to value and things to question in both traditions.

The reason for all this disclaimer is that I want to examine an especially contentious issue this month, one that has made our region of the country a center of national attention, primarily in Hazleton but even extending to Mt. Pocono. This is, of course, the question of illegal immigration.

The issue itself cuts across traditional conservative/liberal divisions. Some conservatives want severe restrictions on immigration, others value the cheap labor provided by illegals. Some liberals favor almost unrestricted immigration, others resent the competition for jobs, driving down wages. Studies by Harvard University indicate that African Americans have been especially hurt by this competition.

I have my own deep prejudices about all this for two reasons. One of my grandchildren is a Mexican American. Michael entered the country legally in a hospital in Phoenix two years ago, but I wouldn't be surprised to learn that some of his ancestors may have slipped over the border years ago. 100 years ago, my grandfather, Dr. Thomas W. Salmon, was in charge of mental examination of immigrants at Ellis Island. This was during the great wave of immigration from Central and Southern Europe which caused the same kind of clamor we hear today about mixing alien cultures with our pure American product. Since it didn't involve Mexico, they didn't conceive of putting up a 1000 mile fence on our border, but tried to create such a fence in other ways, including the mental examinations. They would call people insane because, speaking only Italian, they couldn't answer questions in English. My grandfather was constantly and unsuccessfully at war with his superiors about these policies - which were eventually codified into a law essentially ending mass immigration in the 1920's. Similar "Oriental exclusion acts" had kept out Chinese and Japanese immigrants still earlier.

These voices then, echoed today ironically by Italian American Mayor Barletta of Hazleton, were themselves an echo of our most patrician founding father, Alexander Hamilton, who thought that only "the rich, well-born and able" should hold office in the United States. Critics of immigration policy go still further and seem to think only such people should be allowed in.

In contrast to them stands the lady in New York harbor, such an inspiring symbol of "the long continuity of our institutions" amidst the smoke and rubble of 9-11 with her message, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..." Surely she is a finer symbol of the American spirit than a fence or wall.

Given these feelings, what can one say to legitimate concerns about the right to control our borders, the unfairness of "line jumpers" getting in ahead of those patiently waiting for the chance to immigrate legally, the burden on social services caused by undocumented aliens, the competition for jobs and depression of wages, and the political and social confusion in our national life caused by two languages?

I have been waiting to write this essay while searching for answers to these questions. They all came in a rush in an opinion piece in the Christian Science Monitor by Lionel Sosa, director of Mexicans and Americans Talking Together (MATT). Sosa has been a media consultant for the Bush election campaigns and was named by Time Magazine in 2005 as one of the 25 most influential Hispanics in America.

Although he doesn't say so, it strikes me that there is a disconnect in the complaints of opponents of immigration who maintain that illegal aliens are coming to take our jobs and use our welfare system. It really has to be one or the other. Sosa argues that the main reason they come is for jobs and that a sensible policy should recognize that we want people to "clean our offices, take care of our elderly and children, build our homes and roads, pick our vegetables..." We can't fire them, because we need them. So we should issue them guest worker cards which are only valid for those with actual jobs offered by an employer or agent for employers.

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I would add that these jobs would have to be at the legal wage scale and working conditions and been offered to current American citizens first. Short periods of unemployment could be tolerated by such a system, but anyone requiring permanent social services would have to return to his own country. Spouses of such workers, if they had no jobs themselves, could visit on an ordinary tourist visa, but not stay longer than any other tourist. We would thus maintain control of our borders without totally disrupting families, while meeting our need for service workers.

Sosa makes mandatory classes in English part of his system. Some of us are old enough to remember how the hilarious Education of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N had fun with this sensible requirement in a multi ethnic society in that earlier wave of immigrants. It can be done. Making English an official language, while honoring and encouraging people to study the many others that make up our American melting pot, is a simple basic requirement for a civil society.

If these guest workers wanted to become naturalized citizens - a function of Congress under the Constitution, not the city of Hazleton, PA - they would indeed have to take their place in line and get no special treatment.

Sosa concludes by saying that we are finding we need 3 million new immigrant workers a year and that this system is better than either the harsh proposals being aired or the "de facto amnesty" of current policy. I would add that it has three more positive effects (besides pleasing my grandfather and grandson). It gets more people paying in to Social Security and Medicare just as baby boomers are retiring. It avoids the whole problem of discrimination against legal Hispanic immigrants and US citizens which is the inevitable by-product of the Hazleton approach.

And it is in tune with the words inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty that Emma Lazarus, remembering a wonder of the ancient world, the Colossus bestriding the harbor at Rhodes, entitled "The New Colossus". It's a good idea to repeat them and think about what they mean from time to time. Lazarus (referring to the then "twin cities" of New York and Brooklyn) wrote:

#### The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land,  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor which twin cities frame.

"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp," cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

*Peter Salmon*