



THE BEACON

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
December, 2009

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Every Sunday

8:00a Holy Eucharist
9:15a Church School
9:30a Service w/ Eucharist
and music

Father Bill's Message

Hello, everyone:

During this Advent/Christmas season, I hope that you can take to heart the following narrative compiled by the Rev. Richard Stetler.

Enjoy,

Fr. Bill

We were the only family with children in the restaurant. I sat my infant son Erik in a high chair and noticed everyone was quietly eating and talking. Suddenly, Erik squealed with glee and said, "Hi there." He pounded his fat baby hands on the highchair tray. His eyes were wide with excitement and his mouth was bared in a toothless grin. He wriggled and giggled with merriment.

I looked around and saw the source of his merriment. It was a man with a tattered rag of a coat: dirty, greasy and worn. His pants were baggy and his toes poked out of would-be shoes. His shirt was dirty and his hair was uncombed and unwashed. His whiskers were too short to be called a beard and his nose was so varicose that it looked like a road map.

We were too far from him to smell, but I was sure he smelled. His hands waved and

flapped on loose wrists. "Hi there, baby; hi there, big boy. I see ya, buster," the man

said to Erik. My husband and I exchanged looks that read, "What do we do?" Erik

continued to laugh and answer, “Hi, hi there.”

Everyone in the restaurant noticed and looked at us and then at the man. The old geezer was creating a nuisance with my beautiful baby. Our meal came and the man began shouting from across the room, “Do ya know patty cake? Do you know peek-a-boo? Hey, look, he knows peek-a-boo.” Nobody thought the old man was cute. He was obviously drunk. My husband and I were embarrassed.

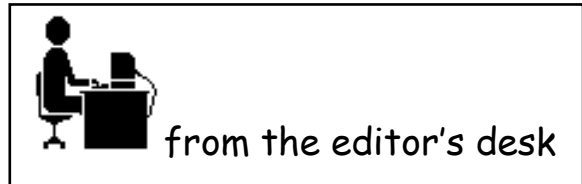
We ate in silence; all except for Erik, who was running through his repertoire for the admiring skid-row bum, who in turn, reciprocated with his cute comments. We finally got through the meal and headed for the door. My husband went to pay the check and told me to meet him in the parking lot. The old man sat poised between me and the door. “Lord, just let me out of here before he speaks to me or Erik,” I prayed. As I drew closer to the man, I turned my back trying to shield Erik, but Erik leaned over my arm, reaching with both arms in a baby’s “pick-me-up” position.

Before I could stop him, Erik propelled himself from my arms to the man’s. Suddenly, a very old smelly man and a very young baby consummated their relationship. Erik, in an act of total trust, love and submission laid his tiny head upon the man’s ragged shoulder. The man’s eyes closed, and I saw tears hover beneath his lashes. His aged hands full of grime, pain, and hard labor--gently, so gently, cradled my baby’s bottom and stroked his back. No two beings have ever loved so deeply for so short a time. I stood awestruck. The old man rocked and cradled Erik in his arms for a moment, and then his eyes opened and set squarely on mine. He said in a firm commanding voice, “You take care of this baby.”

Somehow I managed, “I will,” from a throat that contained a stone. He pried Erik from his chest--unwillingly, longingly, as though he were in pain. I received my baby,

and the man said, “God bless you, ma’am, you’ve given me my Christmas gift.” I said nothing more than a muttered thanks. With Erik in my arms, I ran for the car.

My husband was wondering why I was crying and holding Erik so tightly, and why I was saying, “My God, my God, forgive me.” I had just witnessed complete and unconditional love shown through the innocence of a tiny child who saw no sin, who made no judgment; a child who saw a soul, and a mother who saw a suit of clothes. I was a Christian who was blind, holding a child who was not. I felt it was God asking, “Are you willing to share your son for a moment?”, when He shared His for all eternity. The ragged old man, unwittingly, had reminded me, “To enter the Kingdom of Heaven, we must become as little children.”



One of the things that I love about the Episcopal Church is its celebration of Advent. As a child, I attended a church that didn’t make much of the season, so I didn’t really appreciate its significance. That has changed. Each year I look forward to Advent as a season of preparation for the birth of Jesus Christ.

But Advent is a special season for another reason. In the fall of 1993, Fr. Dennis Jarry asked me to take over as editor of the *Beacon*. I had thought for some time that I would like that responsibility; it would make a nice retirement project. I was three years from retirement, but Fr. Dennis managed to persuade me to start earlier than that.

My first issue as editor was the December, 1993 issue of the *Beacon*, the start of

Advent. So each year when Advent season arrives, I mark the start of another year as editor. I never dreamed that in December, 2009 I would be starting my 17th year as editor. Where does the time go?

I am amazed at how technology has changed in 17 years. I remember my first visit with Mary Emily Libby, my predecessor. I went to her house to pick up whatever materials she had for me. She was very apologetic that she hadn't prepared copies of some things. "I didn't have any carbon paper," she explained. How many of you remember carbon paper?

Now I do most everything on a computer. I have a printer that is also a copier, a scanner, and a fax machine. In less than 20 years! Can you imagine? And now I can send each issue of the *Beacon* to the church secretary and our Webmaster by e-mail. Nancy prints out copies for those parishioners who prefer a hard copy and posts an announcement that the latest issue is available on St. Stephen's Website.

And with the creation of each December issue comes another reminder that we are entering the period of the church year where we await the coming of our Lord. Advent reminds us that amidst all the craziness associated with shopping, wrapping, planning meals and family visits, that we need to take time to pause and reflect that Jesus is coming. We need to take time and let this fact occupy some (a lot?) of our time. He is coming! The Savior of the world is coming. Again we are asked to wonder at the mystery and the glory of God's promise to us. "I have sent my Son because I love the world and its people."

"And the glory, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed." From Handel's *Messiah*.

Have a peaceful Advent, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

frp



The next Vestry Meeting will be held on Monday, December 28, at 7:00pm. All vestry meetings are open to the entire parish. Parishioners wishing to include items on the agenda are asked to contact one of the wardens or the rector no later than two (2) weeks before the meeting. Vestry meeting agendas and minutes will be regularly posted on the bulletin board between Fay Hall and the narthex.

Many, many thanks for all of your help with the **Interfaith Thanksgiving Day dinner** at the *Knights of Columbus* hall. Obviously, a special word of appreciation goes out to *George Barrette* for the incredible amount of work that he did as this year's coordinator.

We are now in the **Season of Advent**. For those of you who follow the liturgical calendar, the color is royal or Sarum blue to represent the coming of the King of Kings, and the time is Year C, which means that the Gospel readings are primarily from St. Luke.

Our **Annual Caroling** for shut-ins will take place on Saturday, December 19. We will leave from the church at 1:00pm

The **children of the church** are in the process of rehearsing for the Christmas Pageant on December 24th at 5 PM. Parents: please have your children here on Sunday morning as often as possible between now and then

The Giving Tree is up in **Fay Hall** with tags on it. Look them over and choose a gift you would like to purchase for a youngster in town. Remember, if a gift is too expensive, you may purchase a \$25 gift card to be used toward the purchase of the gift. Also remember to put your name on the portion of the tag that remains on the tree at church so I can call you if your wrapped gift is not **returned by December 13th** (the deadline). Use the other portion of the tag as the label on your gift so it may be directed to the appropriate place and person. Last year, we did a terrific job with this and I am confident we can do just as well this year. Thank you, in advance. *Bev Boyer* for the Mission & Outreach Committee.

Fr. Bill will lead a **First Communion class** on **Tuesday, December 15th, from 6:30 to 7:30 PM**. Although most of the children of the church school have already been receiving the Eucharist, the Episcopal Church requires that all such children attend an instructional class to further their understanding of its meaning.

Christmas Gift Bazaar—Sunday, December 13 Check out gift items from the Fall Fair and find that easy, last minute Christmas gift for friends, teachers, hairdressers, etc. Gift items, as well as Christmas wrapping paper, boxes and gift bags and holiday greens will be available between the 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. services in Fay Hall. Please see *Sharyn Philcox* for more details or with questions.

The Episcopal Church calendar for 2010 has arrived and is on the table in the narthex. Please, help yourself.

We have instituted **diocesan guidelines** regarding the H1N1 pandemic. Alcohol gel will be used by the rector and LEMs as the bread and wine are consecrated and distributed. Gel can also be found in the

narthex next to the bulletins so that parishioners can wipe their own hands

Bement/Waterfield educational grant forms are now available in the narthex. These are diocesan grants for college students and high school seniors who will be entering college next year. For more information, please see *Fr. Bill*.

Thanks to all of you who continue to support the **Westborough Food Pantry**. Their needs have continued to increase. Each week the number of families asking for help sets a new record. They are now serving over twice the numbers that they did a year ago. In addition to the usual basic food items they need crackers, cookies, and cake mixes. They also need personal care items such as soap, deodorant, toothpaste, etc. If you have questions about what is needed, please see *Don Shapleigh*.

I know recently people have been talking in church about why they love St. Stephen's and what the church, and God, mean to them. I wanted to speak during the Stewardship Drive, but there wasn't room in the agenda for me to do so. I wrote something anyway, and thought maybe it would be appropriate to share with the congregation.

Allyson Rottman

I was baptized in the Lutheran church, what I like to call the "happy medium" of my Catholic father and my Protestant mother. I went to Sunday School every week, and enjoyed the people. When I went off to college, I didn't really have a church to attend, so sometimes I would attend mass at the Catholic student center on campus.

In the Summer of 2003, I married my college sweetheart in a wonderful Congregational church in Rutland, MA. We wanted to marry in the Catholic church next door, but the mass schedule didn't go along with our reception plans...go figure.

My life was going really well, and I was happy. I started graduate school at UMass-Amherst in the Summer of 2003. That is where I met Marla Farrow, who I believe to be one of my many gifts from God. Everything was going great, until late Spring of 2005. My marriage fell apart, and at the same time my family was going through some very serious issues. This is when I began to question God's presence in my life.

The next year and a half was very difficult...I went through a separation and divorce, and saw my family fall apart. I began to wonder why God would let this happen to me. I had never done harm to anyone, and I thought myself to be a good person. I was bitter, unhappy, and jaded, and really saw no meaning in my life.

Then, in January, 2007, everything began to change. I met John, the love of my life, one of the greatest gifts God gave me, and eight months later we were engaged. In the Fall of 2007 I began singing here with the St. Stephen's choir, an idea brought to me by my very good friend, Marla. Not only did I love singing in this choir, but I began to feel like part of a church family, and I REALLY liked this feeling. In the Summer of 2008, John and I married on a beautiful Summer day...it was perfect weather, and I don't doubt God had a hand in that. On November, 20, 2008, my mother's birthday, John and I learned we were expecting our first child. There had not been a happier moment in my life at that point, than that day, when we both realized our dreams were coming true,

I continued to sing all that year, each week looking forward to spending every Sunday morning with my extended family. John and I were anxiously awaiting the arrival of our daughter, and I knew everyone at church was praying for us and for her. It's a really good feeling when you know you are loved and supported by your fellow church members.

On July 18th, my labor began, and on July 19th, Emma Joy, my biggest gift from God, was welcomed into this world. My labor and delivery started out exciting, and quickly turned to fearful. After 24 hours of labor and three hours of pushing, we learned that my labor was not progressing, and Emma's heart rate was unstable. We were told that an emergency C-Section was needed, and John and I were in complete fear. The only thing I could do was trust in God, and trust that my doctors knew what was best.

When I looked at my healthy, perfect, little girl for the first time, I saw God. I know this sounds silly, but it's true. In Emma's eyes, I see everything over the past four years, and the reasons why it all happened. God has a plan. Four years ago, I couldn't see that. Now, it's clear as day. God's plan also included me finding this wonderful parish, and its wonderful people. Marla is most responsible for bringing me here, but I am so glad she did. I love this church and its people. I love singing here on Sundays. This is my church...this is where I belong. This is where I want my children to grow up. I knew from day one that Emma would be baptized here; there was never any question. John and I feel so blessed to be part of this church, and we look forward to watching our family grow up here. Now I don't question God's presence in my life, I just wonder what else his plan has in store for me.

Prayerful Notes

It was just about this time last year that I received a surprising call from my sister-in-law Anne. She said she had some exciting news to share with me; her and her husband John were going to be grandparents again. Given that their only grandchildren were both in college, this news was surprising indeed!

Their son Jeff, now in his mid 40's, had gone through a painful divorce a number of

years ago. Three years later, however, he met and subsequently married a wonderful woman named Trish. They were a strong Christian couple and very active in their church. Previous to their marriage, they had spent much time in prayer, asking the Lord what ministry they could best serve him in. On their wedding day, their Pastor asked them : "What will your ministry be as a married couple?" They explained that they both loved children and truly felt God was calling them to a ministry to children.

They became very active in their church school program. For a time, they felt they might be being called to be foster parents; however, as time passed they discerned that God was calling them to adopt. They also both felt he was calling them to adopt siblings.

After a long process of case studies, interviews, etc., a social worker contacted them. She said she saw something very special in them, particularly their commitment to their faith. She asked if they would consider adopting 9 month old twins, a boy and a girl. Abandoned after their premature birth, they had been in foster care for the last 9 months.

From the first time Jeff and Trish saw them, they knew this was God's answer to their prayer. Initially the babies did have some medical problems; however, most of those have been resolved. Jeff's older children have also embraced these little ones in love. While they have been together as a family for nearly a year now, on Nov. 20th, National Adoption Day, they were officially adopted.

In the months previous to this Jeff and Trish had devised a rather unique and fun way to teach the twins their new last name. With the little ones "waiting in the wings" of the kitchen, Trish, using an empty paper towel holder, as a makeshift megaphone, would announce: "Now presenting Jayme Rose Endicott!" At this point, Jayme would come toddling into the living room, all smiles, followed by a round of applause by

all present. Then the same scenario would be played out by her brother, Joseph William Endicott.

They gathered at the court house on adoption day. When their names were announced, they once again toddled forward, all smiles, winning the hearts of the judge and the large crowd assembled. All children should be so loved.

I share this story with you for two reasons. First, because it is a story of faith and hope and that's what Christmas is all about. Sadly, stories like these do not often make the nightly news.

The second reason because, as much as we need God and are so quick to call out to him to help us, God also needs us. We are his hands and feet and heart in this broken world.

This young couple humbly asked God how they could best serve him and they answered his call. If each of us had the courage to ask that question in prayer and to listen and follow through, what a difference we could make in our world.

Merry Christmas everyone!

Blessings Always,

Phyl Endicott

Mark 10: 14b "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Fr. Bill submits the following for our consideration [ed.]

Maintenance or Mission?

by Harold Percy in "Good News People"

1. **In measuring the effectiveness**, the maintenance congregation asks, "How many pastoral visits are being made?" The mission congregation asks, "How many disciples are being made?"

2. **When contemplating some form of change**, the maintenance congregation says, "If this proves upsetting to any of our

members, we won't do it." The mission congregation says, "If this will help us reach someone on the outside, we will take the risk and do it."

3. **When thinking about change**, the majority of members in a maintenance congregation ask, "How will this affect me?" The majority of members in the mission congregation ask, "Will this increase our ability to reach those outside?"

4. **When thinking of its vision for ministry**, the maintenance congregation says, "We have to be faithful to our past." The mission congregation says, "We have to be faithful to our future."

5. **The rector in the maintenance congregation** says to the newcomer, "I'd like to introduce you to some of our members." In the mission congregation, the members say, "We'd like to introduce you to our rector."

6. **When confronted with a legitimate pastoral concern**, the rector in the maintenance congregation asks, "How can I meet this need?" The rector in the mission congregation asks, "How can this need be met?"

7. **The maintenance congregation seeks to avoid conflict** at any cost (but rarely succeeds). The mission congregation understands that conflict is the price of progress, and is willing to pay the price. It understands that it cannot take everyone with it. This causes some grief, but it does not keep it from doing what needs to be done.

8. **The leadership style in the maintenance congregation is primarily**

managerial, where leaders try to keep everything in order and running smoothly. The leadership style in a mission congregation is primarily transformational, casting a vision of what can be, and marching off the map in order to bring the vision into reality.

9. **The maintenance congregation is concerned with their congregation**, its organizations and structure, its constitutions and committees. The mission congregation is concerned with the culture, with understanding how secular people think and what makes them tick. It tries to determine their needs and their points of accessibility to the Gospel.

10. When thinking about growth, the maintenance congregation asks, "How many Episcopalians live within a twenty-minute drive of this church?" The mission congregation asks, "How many unchurched people live within a twenty-minute drive of this church?"

11. The maintenance congregation looks at the community and asks, "How can we get these people to support our congregation?" The mission congregation asks, "How can the Church support these people?"

12. The maintenance congregation thinks about how to save their congregation. The mission congregation thinks about how to reach the world.

Time and Talent Opportunities

Several years ago, St. Stephen's had developed forms to invite members to offer up their time, talent and treasure to the parish. Recognizing that stewardship

entails more than matters of finance, the Stewardship Committee has spent time during its monthly meetings this year reviewing these and has recast them as opportunities for parishioners to share their time and talents with the St. Stephen's family. Each year's Every Member Canvas addresses the opportunity to share one's treasure.

Briefly, we have identified five areas of opportunity. These are:

- Opportunities to Love God
- Opportunities to Worship God
- Opportunities to Learn of God
- Opportunities to Proclaim God
- Opportunities to Work and Serve in God's Name

Each of these areas has several specific opportunities and a contact person associated with each one.

In the near future an area in the church narthex will be devoted to presenting more detailed information for each of these. Fellow parishioners who desire to find a way to share their time and talents with the St. Stephen's family are encouraged to look at these and contact the appropriate person to explore that opportunity further. There will be printed information available to take home with you so you won't have to write down or memorize who to contact about what. If you have a specific interest that doesn't seem to match any of the areas listed please contact Fr. Bill to discuss your interest further.

Mission and Outreach announces the adoption of two soldiers:

SPC Timothy Zetts, Jr.
A1-9FA
FOB Masez
APO AE 09443

Sgt Nayaira Mojena
Task Force 3-3 ADA C-RAM
MNC 1
APO AE 09342

Tim is from Maryland and is stationed in Mosul. He would like our support.

Nayaira is from Puerto Rico and is 21 years old. She is based at Camp Victor in Baghdad.

Would you please add them to your Christmas card list? A 44 cent stamp will reach them.

Now is a wonderful time to get in touch with people who have moved away from *St. Stephen's*, but would love to maintain contact with our parishioners. A note or Christmas card would be very much appreciated.

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