



The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

January 2015



Christmas Gift!

I am assuming that you're reading this during Christmas. (The 12 days of Christmas, of course, begin on December 25 and end with the Epiphany, January 6.) So – what is your Christmas gift to the newborn Christ child?

That's the origin of our custom of giving Christmas gifts! As our "winter holiday" of materialistic excess has evolved, most no longer realize that our custom of gift-giving comes from the story of the magi bringing gifts to the Christ child on the Epiphany. (This story is only in Matthew's gospel.) Let me test this. When you were at the outlet mall or ordering gifts on line, were you shopping because of your joy of welcoming God into our human flesh? One of our St. Stephen folks posted a Facebook status that named the irony: that the birth celebration of the One who taught us to turn away from material things has become our "winter holiday" celebration of materialistic excess!

I was immersed in Advent during the first 24 days of December. (When someone would say to me, "Merry Christmas," I was actually startled! For better or worse, that's how much of a liturgical nerd I have become!) My focus during Advent was the coming of Christ that has not yet happened: the day to come when there will be no more crying, no more dying. "Your kingdom come," as we pray each time we gather for worship.

Now Advent is over. Now that it is Christmas, I am thinking about the coming of Christ that *has* happened – the coming of God into our human flesh in the birth of

Jesus the Christ. And so, how do we respond? What gift do we offer, in celebration of this birth?

We offer ourselves. We offer our time and our talents to do the work God gives us to do – which is to touch others with the compassion of Christ.

We can never offer ourselves purely. "We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves," we pray in the Sunday morning liturgy. Our sin is this: that we are almost always motivated in our actions by pride and self-centeredness and self-interest more than the pure desire to extend Christ's compassion.

Ah! But there are those moments when do give ourselves, simply, in obedience to the will of God! You know how that feels. What a Christmas gift that is to the Christ child!

Such a response is only possible in God's grace. First there is God's gift of the Christ child to us. We respond with our gifts to God. As we pray in our liturgy, after offering our gifts of money and bread and wine:

"Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: ourselves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen."

Pastor Andy Ballentine





The Twelve Days of Christmas

For those of you who may not know, Christmas does not end after December 25, after presents have been opened, and loved ones have returned home after visiting families. It ends on the Day of Epiphany, which occurs every year on January 6.

The Twelve Days of Christmas was first published in England in 1780. During this time, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly, so this carol was written as a way to teach the various parts of the bible to children, but in a secretive way.

The “True Love” represents Jesus Christ, when true love was born.

The partridge in the pear tree also represents Him because that bird is willing to sacrifice its life if necessary to protect its young by feigning injury to draw away predators.

The two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments

The three French hens stood for faith, hope, and love.

The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The five golden rings are the first five books of the Old Testament, which describe man's fall into sin and the great love of God in sending a Savior.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (prophesy, serving, teaching, exhortation, contribution, leadership, and mercy)

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (charity, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, mildness, fidelity, modesty, and chastity)

The ten lords a-leaping represent the Ten Commandments.

The eleven pipers piping are the eleven faithful Apostles.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolize the twelve points of belief in The Apostles' Creed.

Source:

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resources/advent/customs-and-traditions/the-history-of-the-twelve-days-of-christmas/>

Director of Music – **Marty Barstow**



Health Ministry

**SPACE
AVAILABLE**

(Can you help by writing a health article for the *Quill* just once a year?)

Contact Parish Nurse Marcie Clark 603-6346 or
parishnurse@saintstephenluheran.net)



St. Stephen December Council Minutes

The Council met on December 9, 2014.

Jane deSolms presented the proposed 2015 church budget developed by the Finance Committee.

She noted we are right on track with the 2014 budget, and the proposed budget is an approximately 3% increase. The Committee is confident we can meet the new budget.

Council approved the proposed 2015 budget for presentation to the Congregation at the January meeting. Council thanked Jane and the Committee for their efforts in preparing the new budget.

Council discussed the need for a thorough review of the Preschool over the upcoming months, since that has not been done for several years. Some obvious needs are reconstituting a diverse fully staffed Preschool Committee, developing up to date job descriptions and evaluation tools, and reviewing and updating guidelines to ensure purposes, relationships, roles, and procedures are clear to everyone concerned.

The Annual Congregational meeting will be held **Sunday January 25, 2015**, after the 11:00 AM service.

Agenda items are: Presentation of the proposed 2015 church budget, vote on the sale of property at 608 Jamestown Road, selection of our Synod Assembly voting members.

David F. Clark, Secretary

FISH, INC. 

Fish Volunteers Needed

Besides supplying food, clothing and housewares to needy families in the Historic Triangle, FISH, Inc.

provides transportation to medical appointments. A similar service is offered for seniors by Peninsula Agency on Aging (PAA) RIDES and Faith in Action but FISH has no age restrictions. Recently, the demand for transportation among sub-sixty-year-old clients has ramped up, creating a need for more volunteer drivers and schedulers.

Drivers use their own vehicles with trips normally limited to the greater Williamsburg area. Clients come from the city, James City County and the Bruton District of York County. An average round trip ride will last not more than 2 1/2 hours. Drivers may limit the days of the week they are available and usually are asked to drive less frequently than once a week.

A few additional transportation schedulers are also needed. A scheduler serves for a week, working from home by checking daily for messages left on the FISH Transportation phone line and calling drivers to find one available for the date and time of each request. On average, seven requests come in each week. Each scheduler is on call approximately one week per month.

If you think that you could fit one of these assignments into your portfolio of volunteer activities, please call or send an email to **Sue Voigt, FISH Transportation Coordinator, for more information. (804-966-8487; svoigt1@cox.net)**



The Church Mouse Hears

The mouse is simply amazed and delighted at the January 2015 issue of *Next Door Neighbors!* First of all, **Jim Ivey** was lauded with a special article about his work with Olde Towne Medical Center as a patient, volunteer, and member of the Board of Directors. How fortunate we are that he is in Williamsburg! Then we came to a wonderful story and pictures of **Reed Nester**, who has enriched the entire community with the blend of his work as the planning director of the City of Williamsburg and his love of bicycling. **And**, a third member of St. Stephen, **Stephanie Leek**, was headlined with the title "A Bright Light in student homelessness." A school social worker, Stephanie is the Williamsburg James City school system Homeless Liaison. As we work with our St. Stephen homeless programs, we are even more grateful for the work that Stephanie does. Thank you one and all!



Christmas Caroling to the ill and homebound of our congregation on Sunday, December 21.



Caroling followed by chili and cornbread and fun and conversations



January Birthdays

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| 4 | Lauren Franck
Ken Spencer | Ralph Johnson |
| 5 | Cliff Henderson | Gayle Spencer |
| 6 | Amanda Buckley
Jim Mayfield
Anders Timberg | Melissa Buckley
Chris Punchard |
| 7 | Judy Joppa | |

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|--|
| 8 | Carole Meyer | |
| 9 | Andy Franck | Karen Shoberg |
| 10 | Jeffery Berry | |
| 13 | Peter Stauffer | |
| 14 | Steve Bailey | Elise Emanuel |
| 15 | Brad Jefferson
Brock Jefferson | Brandon Jefferson
Justice Jefferson |
| 16 | Julie Jefferson | |
| 17 | Susan Bosworth | Ned Neidlinger |
| 18 | Victoria Lewton | |
| 19 | Chuck Frey | Howard Glenn |
| 20 | Mark Gulesian
Susan Neidlinger | Fred Haecker |
| 21 | Patty Ballentine
Emily Rossiter | Tommy Peterkin |
| 22 | Leah Hardenbergh | Julia Mahony |
| 24 | Helen Lenox | |
| 25 | Mary Bieber | |
| 28 | Nancy Carter
Ethan Owens | Daniel Hanley |
| 29 | Lisa Maroney | |
| 31 | Alyssa Alpino | |



Prayers

Pray God's blessings on the ordained ministry of former LSA President **Laura Tancredi, who was ordained in Philadelphia. Laura has been called as Associate Pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Ardmore, Pennsylvania.**

Pray God's blessings on the marriage of **Nelia (Heide) and Bob Lamoureux, who were married before our altar.**

Join your prayers for healing with God's desires for **Ward Bourn, Carrie Correll, Stacey Cummings, Dan Hanley, Bobbie Harms, Janet Higgs, Chuck Hilbinger, Jim Ivey, Mary Jamerson, Jane Mazur, Ursula Recktenwald, Linda Reuben, Nancy Rivolta, Regina Root, Marian Thies, and Shana Wilkins.**

Pray God's blessings upon **Chris and Kristin Stahl, Chad and Cathy Bingman, Steve and Larysa Stein, and all parents who are awaiting the births of their babies.**

Pray comfort and resurrection hope for **Harlan Schone** and his family, mourning the death of his sister; for **Kathryn Ogborn** and her family, mourning the death of her mother, **Donna Alt**; for **Rita Kristiansen** and her family, mourning the death of her sister; and **Shana Wilkins** and her family, mourning the death of her grandmother.

Pray for these who are physically unable to get to worship: **Dick Batman, Bob and Angie Groom, Elsie Hall, Willetta Heising, Mary Jamerson, Elma Johnson, Helen Lenox, "Pete" and Kathy Peterson, Jo Schumacher, Jean Shivel, Dot Wright and Lois Wysong.**

Pray for those in our community who are homeless and for those who are serving them through the Community of Faith Mission.

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: Rita Adams, Robert Anderson, Bea and Tom Black, Lois Bomba, Joyce Bosworth, Cayla Cantafio, Lee Carlson, Nancy Carlson, Cathy Carr, Maureen Chandler, Ayrtion Climo, Michael Compton, Tim Correll, Rosemarie Cristofolo, Sylvia Croushore, Kathryn Dieter, Theresa Dodge, Debbie Effeney, Buffy Elstor, Donna Embleton, Joe Eustace, Lucy Eyler, Nick Finley, Bruce and Kay Flatin, Natalie Fulton, Lori Galloway, Pamela Glasgow, Jack Gottschalk, Hal Harter, Liz Konner, Laurie Kracum, Theda Laubach, Chucky Lindblad, Mildred Lindblad, Betty March, Marshall Mauney, Joe McCool, Kristin McGraw, Dick McGrew, Julie Miller, Heidi Morris, Laura Mraz, Barbara Mullins, the Nasra family, Roy Nester, Lance Oglesby, Lavonne Prescott, Robert Pushaw, Emily Reubush, Myrna Ring, Lisa Rivolta, Wayne Shaw, Linda Smalarz, Emily Smith, Kim Snow, Nancy Spaniol, Evelyn Spear, Jo Ann Sunnes, Jean VanDuyse, Barbara VanWormer, Mary Lou Ventz, Annette Vosteen, Dwayne Westermann, George Wilbar, Curtis Wilkins, Snodie Wilson, Nicholas Wooton, and Anna Zabdyr.



Letters to our Congregation

➤ **From FISH**

Dear Friends at St. Stephen,

Once again the volunteers from St. Stephen absolutely shone! Throughout the entire month of November you came each Tuesday to help process garments in the Clothes Closet at FISH. Working hard and making ready a prodigious amount of clothing to be put on the shelves and given to those in need, you also added tremendously to the fun and fellowship that is a "perk" of working at FISH.

Your Church Family continues to support FISH on many levels – contributions, in-kind donations in response to specific needs and hands-on work by many, many individuals.

Without your open hearts and helping hands, FISH could not fulfill its mission to our community. Our heartfelt thanks to all!

Sincerely,
Mary Kafes on behalf of all in the Clothes Closet at FISH

➤ **ELCA World Hunger**

We also received a thank you from ELCA World Hunger.

➤ **From Godparents for Tanzania**

They thanked us for our recent gift of \$500 and spoke of the 10 students, including Roggy, who graduated from college and training programs. A quote from Kristin Westerman, Executive Director:

"We are so thankful to have St. Stephen Lutheran Church as our partner in this endeavor! We are grateful that your congregation understands how the power of one scholarship can change the lives of many in Tanzania. **Thank you for your support of godparents for Tanzania.**"



***Community of Faith Mission
Serving Williamsburg families
without homes***

We have just completed our fourth week of service in three years to some of those in our community who live without homes. Once again the St. Stephen Community stepped up to the opportunity to minister to those in need through the Community of Faith Mission. Thanks to all who donated clothing, food and supplies, and money to purchase food, clothing, and needed supplies.

The logistics of coordinating the many who want to help in this ministry is daunting. **Jo Hanny** is masterful. Changing schedules, illness, and last minute conflicts – nothing was an insurmountable problem for her.

Our members served by greeting guests as they checked into the shelter, housed at Williamsburg United Methodist Church that week. We handled the details of securing possessions, providing information and direction. We served by preparing healthy meals – some starting at 4:00 AM; some staying through 10:00 PM. We served by serving breakfast and dinner – accommodating special needs and desires, as best we could. We served by keeping watch overnight – in case of emergency – in case of need. We served by checking guests out – sending them back to the street or to jobs, or to school for the day. We served by listening.

Rachel was angry. Anyone who approached her was met with sarcasm and silence. Several of us had tried to speak with her – engage her in conversation – assist her in getting her meals. All attempts at kindness, conversation, and interaction were rebuked.

One evening, before dinner was served, Rachel sat at a table, seemingly daring anyone to join her. One member of our congregation, who had not yet “met” Rachel, started toward her. I stepped between them, trying to ward off the hostility. Ursula, leaning heavily

on her walker, said to me, “She is so sad.” “I know, but I don’t think you can help.” Rachel overheard this conversation, as Ursula walked around me to get to her. “You are so sad,” she said. “I feel badly for you.” Rachel replied, “Don’t you have any feelings for yourself, you need to give them to me?”

Ursula didn’t give up. She asked if she could sit with her. She told her that she was homeless at one time, too. A conversation between the two ensued. I don’t know the details, but the conversation became animated. Rachel smiled. She had a radiant smile! She got a cup of coffee for Ursula. Others came and sat at the table - Rachel and Ursula went out in the hallway to talk in private.

I was very disturbed. I had tried to connect with Rachel. I failed. I gave up. Why couldn’t I reach her? Should I have tried harder?

Tom gently reminded me that it wasn’t all about me. It was the Holy Spirit working through Ursula to reach this very troubled young woman. He reminded me that that the Spirit was working through me to reach others seeking shelter from the cold. It wasn’t about me.

The presence of God was palpable during this week of service. The Spirit worked through all of us to bring the love of God to some who doubt that they are loved.

Twenty five people stayed in the shelter this week: ten women, including, two high school students; a mom and her nine-year-old son; thirteen men. Nearly half of the adults had jobs. Two were actively filling out applications for work.

Seven guests had been in the shelter last year. What must it be like to live on the street for a year? What do they do when the shelter closes in March? Some were going to stay with cousins or children for Christmas. Then they will be back on the street.

We all pray that God will be with Rachel and all those who are living without homes in our community. We pray that they will feel God’s love through us now, through members of other churches providing shelter and food through the Community of Faith Mission, and throughout the coming year.

Sandy Peterkin



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