



The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

January 2013



What Christmas Means

On December 15, I was standing with Virginia Synod Bishop Emeritus Richard Bansemer, a poet and theologian, a fine preacher and spiritual teacher of depth. I have always been very comfortable with Richard because we are both at ease with quiet. Neither one of us feels the need to make small talk (and, to be truthful, neither one of us is very good at it). December 15 was one day after a deranged killer had massacred 20 six- and seven-year-olds and six adults in an elementary school. It was four days after the sudden death of our friend and colleague, Chip Gunsten. Richard and I were among nearly 200 vested pastors, preparing to enter the Roman Catholic cathedral in Roanoke for Chip's funeral.

I said, "What a week this has been." Richard said, "I've been thinking about the Holy Innocents, Martyrs and the school killings yesterday. It seems like the story just keeps repeating itself." I said, "Yes. The Incarnation is awfully important for my faith, Christ born right into our experiences." He said, "No other religion can speak to this so clearly."

Let me unpack this theologian-speak.

First, the Holy Innocents, Martyrs is the commemoration on December 28 that the Church largely ignores each year – because it's so counter to the warm and fuzzy celebration of Christmas. It's the necessary remembrance of King Herod's attempt to kill the infant Jesus. This is the story, in Matthew 2:16-18 –

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

"A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because

they are no more."

Second, the Incarnation. This is what Christmas means: the Incarnation, the coming of God into our human flesh, in the person of Jesus the Christ. This means that God is present with you and me – in our human flesh, in all of our human experiences.

I put it this way, at the funeral for Sam Trapani in our worship space on December 13 –

"As we grieve, as we gather in this place at this time, God is present to us – in each other's human flesh. We are gathered as the body of Christ. In this place we give and receive God's presence and love.

"God born into our human flesh, in the person of Jesus the Christ, means that God is present with you and me – in our human flesh, in all of our human experiences. Think of this: God experiences what you and I experience! God shares our joys in our celebrations, because God has been born into our human flesh. And also there is this: when we suffer, God suffers with us. During these last four or five years, when Sam so well fought the good fight against the cancer, God was suffering with him; knowing intimately what Sam was experiencing; present; loving Sam.

"Here are some words spoken by Henri Nouwen, a great spiritual teacher of our generation: 'God loves us so much that he does not simply take our suffering away: He suffers with us. If we understand God's solidarity, the One who did not cling to power but gave it up, who did not cling to the ability to solve everyone's problems – that is to have the mind of Jesus Christ.'¹...

"...Because of Christmas, the Incarnation, we know that God is present with love in all of our experiences in our human flesh. Because Jesus, God in our human flesh, endured suffering and crucifixion, we know that God is present with love in all of our sufferings. 'God loves us so much that he does not simply take our suffering away: He suffers with us.'

“This draws us into great depths of the grace of our Christian faith. ...

“... But now, here is what is most important. Jesus the Christ, who endured suffering and even death, did not remain in the grave! The good news of Easter gives you and me the confidence and hope of our Christian faith: the end of Sam’s human life has not ended his life in God.”

This is our witness of faith in Jesus the Christ for all who grieve.

You will be reading these words during one of the 12 Days of Christmas, the actual season of Christmas, according to the Church’s calendar. I prize these days in my daily prayer – because all the holly jolly Christmas hoopla is past, and I am able to immerse myself once again in what Christmas actually means: the Incarnation; God, born into our human flesh, experiencing all that we experience, our joys as well as our sorrows.

Merry Christmas.

Pastor Andy Ballentine

¹“A Conversation with Henri J. M. Nouwen” in Tilden Edwards, ed., *Living With Apocalypse: Spiritual Resources for Social Compassion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), page 21.



Durable Decisions

After recent visits by most of our immediate family, the draw of a newborn child being hard to overcome, the need to plan for when older parents are in need of care became very clear. While it will be a while before it is needed in my situation, the limitations of our house for those who are challenged in their mobility were very evident. Everything from the placement of doorways to the way the kitchen is laid out showed me how difficult it was for people to get around if they are not agile.

Being who I am, I did some reading on the topic (the internet is a wonderful thing sometimes) and it opened my eyes to how homes have evolved over the last century or so and how they are changing again. Concepts like Universal Design, where homes are designed to be usable by almost anyone, are full of small things that can make a big difference. I was particularly struck by the simplicity of using U shaped handles on cabinets rather than knobs. There are lots of other exam-

ples of how small changes in the way we design and build our homes can make a big difference if we, or somebody in our family, is not as mobile or strong as they once were.

The main point that I drew for all of this thinking and research is how short-sighted many of our decisions are, or have been, when thinking about long term use of buildings or equipment. How many people, when looking at buying or building a house, sit down and think what life will be like for the people in this house in 50 years? While certainly we can’t account for every technology or lifestyle change that will happen in that time period, the act of thinking in that time-frame is important. We tend, and I am just as guilty as anybody on this front, to think about what is immediately in front of us, not about the very long term impacts of our decisions.

This idea of taking the long approach goes beyond housing and into our everyday lives. I saw recently in Consumer Reports that people change or “upgrade” their cell phones every 15 months. I will try not to rail against the consumer-driven economy that we have (the pot calling the kettle black!) but as I sit listening to Christmas music, and am bombarded by e-mails telling me about the perfect gift to give, it seems that our need for the latest and greatest is not healthy, either for ourselves or those that will follow us.

As we start the New Year, try and think about the decisions that you make, and the long term impact that they will have. You don’t have to be building a house or struggling with a cell phone to make decisions that have an impact. It can be the simple act of repairing instead of replacing something that is worn. I am trying to take this approach, which is difficult, particularly with my Christmas shopping deadline looming. What are your practices of durability?

Doug Cummings, Ministry Associate



Pipe Peeps

Happy New Year!

It is with joy that I thank all who gave of their time and talents to make our Advent and Christmas celebrations so beautiful. I especially want to mention the choirs, the instrumentalists, and the cantors. The Holden Evening Prayer on Wednesdays during Advent was particularly moving, and I for one welcomed those few precious moments of respite during such a busy time. I am very grateful to have the opportunity to serve here

at St. Stephen, and perhaps 2013 might be the time when you answer the Spirit's call and partake in our music ministry. I welcome your input.

I want to remind everyone that on **Sunday, January 27 at 4:00 PM**, there will be a concert in our Sanctuary. I will be performing some organ repertoire along with improvisations, and I will be joined by cellist Sarah Glosson, and clarinetist, **Amanda Dell**. In addition to some fine music, we will have fellowship after the concert with some refreshments. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. I count it a privilege to play the organ at St. Stephen; however, it is not quite as much fun if you are not there to hear it! The concert is free, and no tickets are required. Bring a friend!

Your Brother in Christ, Michael Monaco

Community of Faith Mission



As you probably know, our congregation is now a part of an inter-faith mission to serve the homeless in the Greater Williamsburg area. More than 20 different congregations are involved in this project to provide a place to sleep and two meals a day plus a bag lunch during the cold months for those without housing. We plan to house and serve as many as 25 people each night this winter.

St. Stephen is partnering with Williamsburg United Methodist Church (UMC) and will work in their building for a week beginning **January 19 through January 26**. The two congregations will join together to staff the temporary shelter each night that week. St. Stephen will provide meals for three of the days and UMC will provide four days of meals. The shelter hours are **5:30 PM until 9:00 AM**.

Our church will need to fill **seventy** slots over the seven day period. There will be **five** shifts each day, beginning with intake, evening meal, an early night shift, a late night shift and a breakfast shift. **Sandy Peterkin** has volunteered to coordinate meal preparation so help in our St Stephen kitchen is needed on the afternoons of **January 20, 21 and 23** and early mornings on **January 21, 22 and 24**.

Many of you have already volunteered to help. If you have not already signed up and can donate some time that week please contact **Jo Hanny** (rbrt.hann@gmail.com - 229-5080), **David Allen** (jda136@cox.net - 565-0797), or **Sandy Peterkin** (Office@saintstephenlutheran.net – 229-6688) We are collecting some needed supplies in the donation box in the gathering area and donations of funds

to purchase additional supplies are welcome.

Peace be with you as we share our blessings!



ELCA World Hunger Appeal to be held in January

Please think about how you can support the World Hunger Campaign this year. **January 6, 13, and 20** are the dates for the campaign. Look for the envelopes and literature of this most important effort.

Remember your many blessings and realize the difference your gift will make to the hungry, thirsty, and homeless around the world. If you have questions, contact **Ursula Murden (220-3699)**.

Each year, St. Stephen has an annual appeal focusing on the more than 800 million people on our earth who are experiencing poverty, daily hunger and disease -- often from unclean water, or lack of water which produces drought and loss of food supplies.

The World Hunger Appeal is a calling of hope because we are partnering with others on site in these countries, working together on new strategies and programs to erase the causes of much of the suffering.

With your gift, you welcome to the feast those who struggle in hunger, poverty, and disaster. Our gifts, when combined with the determination of these neighbors and the strength of our partners, are multiplied ensuring a more abundant harvest for the sake of the world. Still, more than 850 million people daily experience the silent disaster of chronic hunger and poverty. Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger are urgently needed to help break the cycle of poverty for neighbors, both around the world and close to home.



Like the ripening harvest, God's love is given in abundance. Thank you for sharing God's love through your generous gifts to ELCA World Hunger.

Ursula Murden for Social Ministry

Health Ministry: The Wholeness Wheel, Part 1



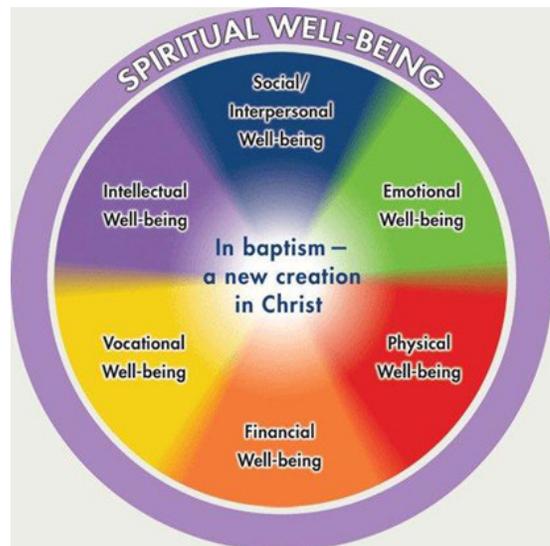
Martin Luther said: “This life, therefore, is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way.

The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal, but it is the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed.”

The Wholeness Wheel was adopted as part of a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the eighth biennial Church-wide Assembly on August 15, 2003, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

It serves as a guide to balancing all aspects of health and depicts the interconnectedness of the individual aspects of wellness. It is the picture of a process — dynamic, centered, in balance, contained, inter-related, vital, and colorful.

The wheel reminds us that being truly healthy and whole is about being in balance and intentionally nurturing all aspects of health surrounded and supported by spiritual health.



Many of us may feel that we realize our full wholeness potential at different times of our lives— peak athletic performance as a young adult, peak intellectual performance in college or graduate school, peak emotional health in a happy marriage, peak vocational health in mid-life in the attainment of a vocational goal. The wheel reminds us that, although peak experiences are wonderful and healthy, being truly healthy and whole is about being in balance and intentionally nurturing all aspects of health surrounded and supported by spiritual health.

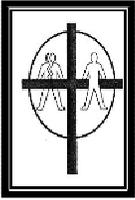
Physical well-being

We are marvelously created by God. While we are not all born perfectly healthy and no one makes it through life without injury or illness, with tending and nurturing we can live well even with disabilities, injuries, or illness. Those with good health can lose it as a result of unhealthy lifestyles and behaviors. Keeping the wholeness wheel in perspective means optimizing our physical health through good nutrition, physical activity, and avoiding risks to our health. It does not mean worshiping physical health at the expense of other aspects of health.

Emotional well-being

Being emotionally well means feeling the full range of emotions and expressing those emotions appropriately. Not feeling emotion is a sign of stress or depression, just as having emotions that you cannot control may be the sign of emotional distress. Physical health problems can affect our emotions and emotional problems affect our physical health. One example is anger and hostility, an emotion that puts one at significantly greater risk for heart disease. Keeping our emotional health means taking time in the day to be peaceful and centered, just as it means sharing emotions with others.

More information on the Wellness Wheel will appear in the February Quill



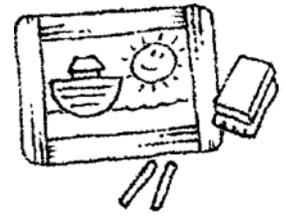
My Journey With (and without) Stephen Ministry

January can be a time of let-down post-holiday blues. The cold and darkness can bring on more stress and depression. Winter is often viewed as a symbol of death. I have looked back at my “winters” when I was so overwhelmed with work, responsibility, deadlines, and grief. They have one thing in common—I was relying on myself alone to handle everything. I know I have to trust in God that things will work out, and to ask Him for help. But I forget, and sometimes I just can’t. I was reminded of this total trust when viewing a video of the ultrasound at 13 weeks of my nephew’s quintuplets. There was great rejoicing as they saw each of the five healthy and growing babies. They knew from the beginning that life will be difficult, financially and otherwise. They view these babies as a blessing from God, and His will for them. Their faith that God will guide them reminded me that when things are overwhelming, I need to take a deep breath, trust in the direction in which God is taking me, and ask for help—spiritually AND from others. As Stephen Ministers, we are there to help our care receivers remember to trust that God—and we as his servants— will see us through our “winters.” *“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1*

Cindy Gibbs

Stephen Ministry Training begins in January

A new class for Stephen Ministers will begin **January 8**, meeting **Tuesday nights** at the Williamsburg United Methodist Church. The sessions will be taught by Stephen Leaders from area Stephen Ministry congregations. Would you like to join the others from St. Stephen who will be new Stephen Ministers? We need to order books for you, and let the organizers know how many to expect. If you have not yet spoken to one of our Stephen Leaders, please indicate your interest on the blue sheet. If you have questions, ask one of our Stephen Leaders: **Cindy Gibbs, Rudy Stegmann, or Pastor Ballentine.**



Preschool News

Happy New Year!

At the December Christmas parties, the students, the staff, and the parents collected bags and bags of food for the St. Olaf Food Pantry. St. Olaf was very appreciative of this gift, and the children had a learning experience in the joy of giving.

The children are busy creating snowmen, snowflakes and winter scenes.

Note: The Preschool will be closed in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King on **Monday, January 21.**

The Preschool staff is hosting an Open House on **Sunday January 27 from 1:30PM to 3:30PM.** If you are aware of parents interested in our program, please invite them to the Open House. Registration for the 2013 and 2014 program is currently in progress.

Our deep appreciation to all who donated to the St. Stephen Preschool Scholarship Fund! Your generosity permitted us to assist three families during this past year.

For the Preschool, Rudy Stegmann



Annual Reports are due to the church office by **Wednesday, January 2.** Committee chairs, Council officers and staff, please send your annual reports electronically to Parish Administrator **Sandy Peterkin** at office@saintstephenlutheran.net. This is a firm deadline, as the Annual Report will be available to the congregation on January 6.



***A new Bible study
begins January 6***

A Sunday morning study of the book of Daniel will begin **Sunday, January 6**. **Sandy Croushore** will lead

the study, at **10:00 AM each Sunday, in Fellowship Hall Room D.**



Join us for a meal out!

Join friends for lunch! The Dining Group will gather on **Sunday, January 13 at 1:00 PM** at the Candlelight Restaurant in Norge. Mark the blue sheet, or contact **Ray and Shirley Basley** (566-8023).

Address Changes



Ben and Christy Keele
2258 N Meridian St Apt 3,
Indianapolis, IN 46208

James Ogborn III
Ilianna & Alex
12 Nichols Place
Newport News VA 23606



January Birthdays

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|
| 4 | Lauren Franck | Ralph Johnson |
| | Ken Spencer | |
| 5 | Cliff Henderson | Gayle Spencer |
| 6 | Amanda Buckley | Melissa Buckley |
| | Jim Mayfield | Chris Punchard |
| | Anders Timberg | |
| 7 | Judy Joppa | |
| 8 | Andy Fisher | Carole Meyer |
| 9 | Andy Franck | Karen Shoberg |
| | Clay White | |
| 10 | Shirley Basley | Jeffrey Berry |

- | | | |
|----|------------------|---------------------|
| 13 | Peter Stauffer | |
| 14 | Steve Bailey | Elise Emanuel |
| 15 | Brad Jefferson | Brandon Jefferson |
| | Brock Jefferson | Justice Jefferson |
| 16 | Julie Jefferson | |
| 17 | Susan Bosworth | Ned Neidlinger |
| 18 | Victoria Lewton | |
| 19 | Chuck Frey | Howard Glenn |
| 20 | Mark Gulesian | Fred Haecker |
| | Susan Neidlinger | |
| 21 | Patty Ballentine | Tommy Peterkin |
| | Emily Rossiter | |
| 22 | Christina Gamble | Leah Hardenbergh |
| | Julia Mahony | |
| 24 | Helen Lenox | |
| 25 | Mary Bieber | Gwen Deierling |
| 28 | Nancy Carter | Daniel Hanley |
| | Ethan Owens | John Warner |
| 29 | Lisa Maroney | |
| 31 | Alyssa Alpino | Christopher Shearer |

Is your name missing? Is your date wrong? Please let us know immediately! Rev. December 17, 2012

Please Pray for:



Join your prayers for healing with God's desires for **Gerri Bass, Ray Crocker, Deloris Hanley, Linda Laity Hite, Paul Kristiansen, Michael Monaco, Bob Newman, and Linda Vonderheide**

Pray Easter peace and hope to **Ann Trapani, Samantha** and **Ryan Lewton** and their families on the death of husband and father, Sam; to **Nancy Rivolta** and her family on the death of her sister; to the family and many friends of **Pastor Chip Gunsten**.

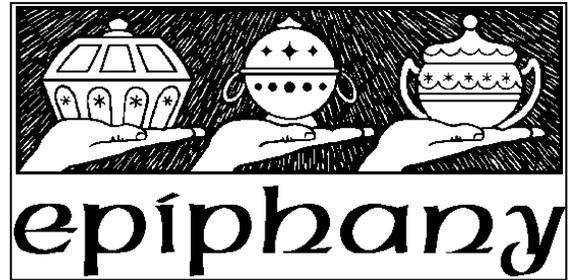
Pray God's blessings upon **Matt Bosworth**, serving in Afghanistan and upon the **Community of Faith Mission**, serving the homeless in Williamsburg

Pray for these who are physically unable to get to worship: **Bill Dickerson, Elsa Englert, Ruth Ennis, Bernice Fahncke, Elsie Hall, Willetta Heising, Anna Lou Hobday, Helen Lenox, Jo Schumacher, John Warner, Barbara Weekes, Dot Wright, and Lois Wy-song**

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: Donna Alt, Millie Andrews-Young, Laurie Berger, Cathy Bierd, Mary Breeden, Gilbert Burton, Bob Canny, Joanne Carlson, Karen Heide Carney, Bob Casey, Sue Chapman, Donna Chernel, Jeris DeKievit, Inge Feilbier, Nick and Ann Finley, Bruce and Kay Flatin, Mary Funkhouser, Nancy Gottschalk, Mary Hallman, Theodore Harms, Janis Hepburn, Mary Jo

Hill, Carol

Horton, Jane Kent, Fran Kibler, John Lester, Charlotte Litterer, Sheena McCabe, Laura McDonald, Kristin McGraw, Flip Miller, Roxanne Morris, the Nasra family, Mary Noyes, Arthur Pate, Donald Peters, George Pollin, Ann Rathkamp, Lisa Rivolta, John and Suzie Roberts, Clarice Rohling, Don Romig, Mark Salsman, Catrince Scanlan, Cathy Schappell, Abbi Schaub, Roland Scheiding, Deb Schilling, Bernadine Schlicht, Brant Smith, Ron Smith, Linda Soucek, Helen Soultoukis, Nancy Spaniol, Gail Swan, Connie Testerman, Vivian Villaseñor, Edwin White, Shirley White, William White, Bitsy Whitten, Peggy Wood, Anna Zabdyr



Special St. Stephen Activities



Advent afternoon December 2

Care Group socializing December 9



Glenn Joppa, Bob Harman and Harlan Schone finish another Housing Partnerships wheelchair ramp