



THE BEACON

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

January, 2012

Father Jesse's Message

GREETING THE NEW YEAR

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As we start a new year, I'm mindful of that old tradition of making New Year's Resolutions, and I've been thinking about New Year's Resolutions in light of the Feast of the Epiphany, which the Church celebrates on January 6th.

The Epiphany recalls that event in the early life of Christ where the Magi are led by the star to Jesus, crossing countries and borders on their way to present him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Epiphany marks the 12th day of Christmas and both remembers the Magi's arrival and celebrates the manifestation of Jesus to all the nations and cultures of the world.

Of course, the need to make Jesus known did not end with the Magi's discovery. The Church is called to the ongoing task of revealing Christ to the world: in the way we pray, the way we interact with other people, the way we help those in need, and the way we welcome others into our community of faith.

Great things are happening at St. Stephen's! We've seen Sunday attendance begin to increase, new families join the parish, faces from the past rejoin us, and church school programs expand. There is energy and excitement about being a parish family at this time in this place. I believe that the source of that optimism and enthusiasm is our shared faith in the Savior, who is God revealed in the flesh.

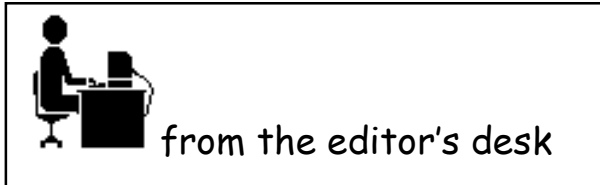
As we begin this new year, I pray that Christ may be manifest for us. May Jesus reveal himself in all the aspects of our daily lives, at home, at work, at school, and of course at church, and as an extension may we then go forth to manifest Jesus to all those we encounter in the world.

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:

Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

– Collect for the Feast of the Epiphany

Fr. Jesse+



Christmas was rather hectic this year (when isn't Christmas like this?). What with Cam and I doing our monthly program at Marlboro Hills Nursing Home, then going to the Secure Treatment facility at DYS for our annual party with the boys there, then caroling at the Willows and Beaumont Nursing home a few days later. Then Sharyn and I were off to Tallahassee for a week with the family, home for Christmas Eve, and driving to Millbrook, NY, to see Dawn and Nick – I'm out of breath just recounting all this.

But nonetheless, we had a good time. Lots of fun with the different groups along with some spiritual times of reflection.

Family time was special. We got to see our Derek, our soldier grandson who was home on leave, preparatory to returning to his unit for shipping out to Afghanistan. Obviously a time of excitement and anxiety. Sharyn and I spent some time with Sharyn's college roommate and her husband. They live in Tallahassee and graciously allowed us to stay with them during our visit.

We returned home on the 24th, had dinner with some friends, and celebrated Christmas Eve at Saint Stephen's. Next

morning, it was off to Millbrook NY, and spent Christmas Day and the next Monday with daughter Dawn and her husband Nick, Sharyn's two sisters and niece Karina, and Dawn's delightful beagle Nino. Our reaction to Nino pretty much cemented our desire to get a dog – a small dog, but not a yippy, barking dog. Any way we are actively looking for a pet. After 40 years of cats, we think we'll try a dog.

All through the holiday time, we were able to see God's blessings in our lives: the times of joy; the times of reflection, and even the times of stress.

I'm looking forward to 2012. Got some things I need to work on, but with God's help, I'll be OK. Happy New Year to all.

frp



Bulletin Board

The next Vestry Meeting will be held on Monday, January 16, 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.

Thank you to all who made the Christmas Pageant on Christmas Eve so successful. Please check out the video of the Cherub's choir made by Tom Plasterer. It's on Saint Stephen's Facebook page and it's wonderful.

20s/30s GROUP: Adults in their 20s/30s here at St. Stephen's would like to get

together as a group for fun and fellowship, maybe going together to the movies or out to dinner. If you are interested in joining us, please see Amelia Brigandi or Fr. Jesse.

EPISCOPAL 101: Are you new to St. Stephen's or even to the Episcopal Church? Are you a longtime member who'd simply like to learn more about the Anglican/Episcopal tradition, our history, and why we do things the way we do? Then this group is for you! Fr. Jesse would like to offer an Episcopal 101 discussion group in the new year. (This will be much like what has been called an "Inquirers' Class" in the past). If you are interested, please speak with Fr. Jesse about what days and times would work best for you.

HYMNAL MEMORIALS NEEDED: There seems to be a shortage of hymnals in the pews so we need to order a few more. Each hymnal is \$22 and is a wonderful way in which to remember loved ones or give thanks for a special event in your life. We will add a nameplate on the front page with the name of the individual being remembered or the donor. If you would like to order a new hymnal simply write a check made out to St. Stephen's for \$22 and note "hymnal" in the memo portion of the check. Someone will then be in touch with you at the appropriate time to get the pertinent information for the nameplate.

FUNDRAISING: Some fundraising updates include: First profits from the sale of Stop & Shop gift cards/shopping cards have netted the parish \$85. (Should grow a lot as we streamline the program.)

-Continuing profits and gift cards from some restaurants for our patronage of them.

-Sales of beautiful calendars to support Sunday school. Some calendars are still available in Fay Hall for only \$6!

-Cookbook to be available soon.

-Planned fair-- including rummage sale. Please put aside items you no longer need, including clothing.

COFFEE HOUR: Thanks to those who have sponsored coffee hours recently and in the past! As many of you may know, it is a tradition of this denomination and our parish to have coffee hour after the service. It provides a great opportunity to strengthen our parish community, and to provide a hearty welcome to newer members and visitors. We are starting a new year and need to schedule sponsors for 2012 coffee hours. Sign-up sheets are on clipboards in Fay Hall. Sponsors are needed starting Sunday, January 8. Sponsors do not need to buy coffee, coffee sweeteners, cups, plates or napkins as we keep them on hand. All that is really needed are some simple baked goods for the adults, milk or half&half and something for the kids. A guide sheet is available. If you do not find it posted in the kitchen, or have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Chris Scheffel, Parish Life Representative, at 508-269-2634 or at chrisschef@aol.com.

RUBY TUESDAY FUNDRAISER: Ruby Tuesday is now offering a Community GiveBack Program in which 20% of your food purchase will be donated to St. Stephen's. Our days for the fundraiser are January 26th, 27th and 28th in 2012, which are a Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The rules require that a Ruby Tuesday flyer has to be handed in to the server and no discount coupons are used in conjunction with the GiveBack Program. *(see last page)*

Prayerful Notes

"Are we there yet?" What frustrated parent hasn't heard these words, coming from their impatient child, in the back seat of the car, on a long road trip?

All of God's children, the old as well as the young, get impatient when they have to wait for things. Perhaps it is an even bigger

problem today, as we live in a fast paced world of instant everything.

My column this month is an addendum to my November column, in which I wrote of the lessons I had learned from my experience of having my only bathroom remodeled. Some of the lessons learned were patience, humility, flexibility, creative spirituality and conflict resolution. I ended the column, which I had actually written on Oct. 20th, by saying things were nearly complete and life would soon be back to normal again. Much to my dismay, it did not quite work out that way. In fact, it was not until Dec. 12th that the work was actually completed. The details of the delays are not what I want to focus on. Rather, what I would like to share is that in addition to a couple of "do over" lessons on patience and conflict resolution, there were additional lessons, which God taught me through the scriptures. The first one came from the Old Testament, *Genesis* 32: 23-30. These verses tell the story of Jacob wrestling with God. Theologians have offered various interpretations of this scripture; by comparison, mine may sound rather simplistic. However, this is how the reading spoke to me. Throughout the struggles with my long remodeling project, I spent a lot of time pleading with God. I often refer to these as my "life raft prayers."

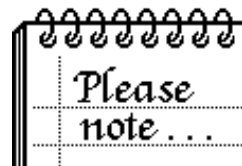
They go something like this, " Please God, get me through this, let it end!" Perhaps the lesson here is, if you just hold onto God, you will be blessed! While it was a long process, with God's help and guidance, I made it through and got the desired result.

The next lesson came to me from the New Testament. St. Paul in *Philippians* 4: 13 – "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. My Bible notation refers to this as "Paul's Secret." He had discovered the secret of contentment in all situations. When we live in Christ, we find strength to handle everything.

Through time spent in prayer and reading scripture, God led me and taught me how to

make my voice heard and to be an advocate for myself in a way that would also benefit others in similar situations. It was a big step out of my "comfort zone," but I did it. Through it all, I knew Christ was with me. The Bible really is our instruction manual for life. Thanks be to God!

Blessings Always,
Phyl Endicott



Please remember to set aside Sunday, January 15 for Saint Stephen's Annual Meeting. Come and support the election of Vestry officers and members and hear a presentation of the 2012 budget.

NOTE: There will be only one service at 9:00am with the annual meeting to follow

Also note that on Saturday, January 21, Deacon Bob Williams will be ordained to the priesthood at 10:00am at St. John's, Millville.

In Memoriam

This month, we offer our sympathy and condolences to the families of the following who have died and passed on to God's eternal reward:

Alice Smith, grandmother of Allison Abell

Wayne Farrow, husband of organist/choir director Marla Farrow

Bernice Cummings, long-time Saint Stephen's parishioner

Evelyn Ward, former parishioner



Enjoy a meal with us & we'll **GiveBack**

100% of the GiveBack amount is donated directly to your organization.

Ruby Tuesday is extremely proud to be part of your hometown and believes in giving back. As a fellow member of the community, we invite you to participate in...

Ruby Tuesday's Community **GiveBack** Program.

Grab your family and friends and join us at the Business Park Drive location on **August 30, 2011**. Please present this flyer to your server, and we will give back **20%** of the purchase to your organization.

HOW IT WORKS

(We apologize but we cannot accommodate coupon usage or other discounts in conjunction with our GiveBack Program.)



To make a reservation, call us at

or visit us online at rubytuesday.com

Organization's Name: Prattville High School Megaphone Booster Club

Date of Visit: August 30, 2011

ID Code (administrative use only): CAP50003RT44ZZ

For directions to the restaurant or a peek at the menu, visit rubytuesday.com

Ruby Tuesday

789 Business Park Drive, Prattville, AL 36067