

## *Worship Schedule for Advent & Christmas*

### **Dec 2 10am-12 pm Greening of the Church Part I**

Anyone can help decorate the church for the season of Advent. Come help "hang the greens"!

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent Dec 3** regularly scheduled services with Bishop Larry Maze, Celebrant

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent Dec. 10** regularly scheduled services with Bishop Larry Maze, Celebrant

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent Dec 17** regularly scheduled services with Bishop Larry Maze, Celebrant

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent Dec 24** One Service of Holy Eucharist at 10:30 am

Complete the "Greening" of the church following the service. Everyone is invited to help make the church ready for Christmas Eve Services.

### **Christmas Eve Services Dec 24**

**5:30 pm - Holy Eucharist - Children's Christmas Play "The Night the Animals Talked"** will be performed during the service.

**10:00 pm Choral Prelude & Caroling** followed by  
**10:30 pm Holy Eucharist - Christmas Eve Service**

There will not be a service on Christmas Day.

**Dec 31 Holy Eucharist - 10:30 am only - Lessons & Carols**

## *Stewardship*

This year, in addition to presents for Thomas and Beth, we will shop for Gabriela, an 11 year old girl who would like a Barbie House. We started taking an Angel Tree tag every year, starting more than a decade ago. The kids were small, but we felt it was important to share the real spirit of Christmas with them early. As you can imagine, it didn't always work out to be the Normal Rockwell type experience we'd hoped: shopping with kids around Christmas is challenging. But I think, by and large, we have taught them the importance of giving. The joy of giving. The feeling of making a difference in the world that is not always fair and not always wonderful.

Giving is an important part of community. Our pledge campaign is nearly over, but we are still short of our goal of \$150,000. This is a relatively modest goal; it will support a new Rector. and expand a few programs by very little. This is a gift too, not different than the gifts we so generously give children at Christmas.

The Vestry, Treasurer, and Stewardship committee have a challenging year ahead of them. We will call a new rector, but we really don't know who that will be or what type of salary it will take. Having a solid budget that we can discuss with our new rector, even as we call them, helps to make that process more straightforward. It provides the new Rector with a solid starting point from which to build. Our goal was modest in many ways. We hope in the future to expand.

The gift of a solid budget is one that you give to everyone in the Parish. A gift that through the year means programs for our children and youth. That means worship services that enrich our lives and lift us

## Senior Warden's Corner

*Blessed Advent,*

*As Jesus lay in Mary's womb*

*So do we lie in God's love,*

*Waiting, watching,  
reflecting*

*On the wonder soon to come,*

*Safe from harm, warm and peaceful,*

*Time to search our hearts and souls,*

*Time to let the clatter pass,*

*Time to listen to the voice*

*That says "Soon, soon, soon*

*The Blessed Babe will come again."*



I am more than pleased that we are truly nearing the end of our search for a new Rector. The Nominating Committee will very soon interview candidates via Skype. We have questions for them and they will have questions for us. It is all coming together and the process we have worked through for so long will come to an end. As your Senior Warden, I am so proud of you all. You have been patient and you have participated in the work of defining who we are and where we are as a parish.

The Vestry will make the call to the candidate deemed best for our needs after considering the names given by the Nominating Committee. We thank Mother Karen and Bonnie for getting things in order to continue our mission and our Welcome Regardless way of parish life. We thank Bishop Maze who is with us on Sundays and Rev. Jan Cottrell who is with us on Wednesdays to keep our services going while we wait for our new Rector.

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## Stewardship, Continued

to do the work we are called to do. It means fellowship and community.

The vestry has worked hard this year to keep to our budget and I'm pleased to report that as of October 31, we were operating about \$600 in the black. That's pretty awesome, but it's been an austere year. We hope, with a stronger budget to be able to do more.

If you have never pledged before, please consider it this year. Budgeting gives us a way to know how much we have to work with. If you are a regular pledger, and haven't renewed your pledge, please do so soon.

## Children's Christmas Play

In the frosty mountains and on the snowy fields of Norway, there is a legend that draws children to all kinds of stables and stalls throughout the country on each Christmas Eve Night. They are hoping to hear a miracle. They are waiting to hear the animals talk.

Over 2,000 years ago, Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem. This was no abandoned place, but was a working stable, filled with animals of all kinds. Into these humble surroundings, encircled by the innocent creatures of God, the Savior of man came into the world.

Now according to legend, Christ's birth occurred at exactly midnight. Inside the stable, the animals watched in wonder as the new-born babe was lovingly wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. Suddenly, God gave voice to the animals and immediately they began to praise God for the miracle they had just seen.

This went on for several minutes and, just before the entrance of the shepherds -- who had hurried to the stable because angels had told them the Christ had been born there -- the animals again fell silent. The only humans who had heard them were Mary, Joseph and, of course, the Christ child.

The legend of the talking animals persists to this day around the world. And every Christmas Eve, wide-eyed children creep into stables just before midnight to hear the animals praise God for the wondrous birth of His Son. Of course, adults scoff at this. "Old wives tale," they grump. "Those children should be home in bed, not out in the cold waiting for the family cow to preach a sermon."



Continued on page 3

## Children's Christmas Play, Continued from page 2

But the children know -- or at least believe -- that animals really do praise God at midnight every Christmas Eve. And who of us -- those who believe in an all-powerful God -- can say that it really doesn't happen?

**Rehearsal is scheduled for 10 am on Saturday, Dec. 23.**

Plan to join us at the 5:30 pm service on Christmas Eve to see our young people bring this legend to life!

## St. Raphael's Art Space - Many Thanks

I wish to thank the St. Raphael church family who made 2017 a great first year for the Art Space. Artists Bill Thompson and Bernice Woods and the many people who provided photos of their outreach ministries covered the walls with love and beauty. Danville artist Lori-Lyn Hurley revealed how prayer and painting go together. Thanks also to the members who brought food and laughter to the opening receptions and gave the guests tours of the church.

For the first show of 2018, we are proud to display the work of one of our own church family, Bonnie Conaway. Bonnie works primarily in fiber but also incorporates found objects from nature. Bonnie's show "All Things Wise and Wonderful" will be on display January through March with an opening reception to be announced later.



*"Many of my greatest feelings of peace and joy come during times of creating art. It is often a time of exploration and reflection. Most pieces begin as a seed that grows and changes during the process. I find my pieces, both finished and unfinished, to be analogies of life. As I work, my body, soul, and*

*mind interact with the materials.*

*Sometimes my thoughts and feelings guide my work, but even if my thoughts are a starting point, the work itself begins to generate new ideas and connections to both physical and spiritual experiences. Movement, change, growth, and transitions almost always seem to become incorporated into the works. These, in return, remind me of the many wonders and blessings from God that abound within us and all around us even in time of trouble. Peace and joy!" – Bonnie Conaway*

Please share this information with your friends, family and others. Guests during the opening reception often ask for tours of our church; thus, another kind of outreach occurs.

## Ed's Voice: A Christmas Gift to Us All

Folks, it's that time of year again. The holiday season filled with joy, excitement, good tidings, and cheer—or is it.

Unfortunately many folks (especially in my age group) experience a lot of depression this time of year and I really can't pinpoint the cause of it all. Maybe it has to do with all of the commercialism that surrounds the holiday season. We say Christmas is just for the kids and not for us. Then again maybe it's just a matter of loneliness. Many people who live in high-rise apartment buildings are essentially "homebound." They can only go as far as the city buses, Wheels Inc., etc. can take them.

Today, as with every day that our Lord God gives me the chance to breathe, I am thankful for the fact that I can still walk, drive, and help a few folks along the way because of that fact.

So in conclusion, I find that the best way to ward off those "Christmas Blues" is to carefully examine our own spirit as it relates to the true Christmas Spirit. The best thing we can do for each other is to reach out and touch one another. Give each other the love, trust, and nurturing that we all deserve. Christ said: I am with you now and until the end of the age." And may the peace of our Lord be with you now and forevermore.

Ed Blackwell



## Church mouse in God's house

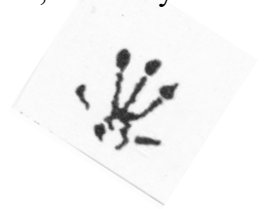
So it's the birthday month. I like that, has a nice ring to it. Of course I know, most of December is about preparing. And that's really important to you, I notice. When you find out a baby is going to be born you all get very excited. Showers, parties, gifts, touching the mother's belly. Find out it's God in the flesh and even though the solemn purple and candles come out, there's still that sense of celebration and excitement.

We get excited around births too. We may not have the presents or parties like you do, but we still celebrate in the planning, something we may have in common with you humans.

We need good safe places to be, the mother needs lots of rest, the rest of the family needs a stable food source.

It must be amazing to have your God be in the flesh as a baby! To know that he's going to save humanity.

We mice have nothing like that. We just hope for fertility and good foraging skills. Once again, I find myself inspired by your kinds hopeful expectations and gleeful celebrations of your Savior.



## Parish News and Events

### Birthdays for December

Sarah Edmundson	December 3
Madison Dedman	December 4
David Monk	December 14
Amy LoBianco	December 15
Paula Brockman	December 21
Jeannie Graham	December 25
Marie Sutton	December 26
Brynna Monk	December 28
Terri Bey	December 30
Paula Seigny	December 30



### Anniversaries for December

Heather & Mark Matics	December 13
Moses & Helen Massaquoi	December 17

## Datebook

Wednesday Services: 12:00 pm - Holy Eucharist and Healing Service. 6:30 pm Healing Service & Evening Prayer

Dec 2 10:00 am -12:00 pm Hanging of the Greens

12:30 pm ECW Christmas Luncheon at Jos Beth Bookstore - all are welcome!

Dec 10 12:30 Daughters of the King meeting

Dec 17 12:30 Vestry meeting

Dec. 23 10:00 am - Play rehearsal for all children in the Christmas play

See page 1 for Christmas services times

**Reminder:** If you are scheduling an event for the church, or an event to be held at the church, check with the Wardens and put it on the calendar so we don't over schedule things.

# *A View from the Pew*

## **A Christmas Tale**

Sunlight roused Grace from another restless night's sleep. The crisp, cloudless sky was a brilliant blue, and only in December does it get that hue. It didn't matter, for Grace it was just another dreary day.

Grace winced with contempt at the sun "Go away! What do I have to be so cheerful about?" Despite a college degree, she barely had a nowhere job. She was single and alone, with a handful of friends, and her family well, they were okay, they meant well, but she dreaded the annual Christmas gathering, now just two days away. She couldn't afford to give them much, maybe a tchotchke from Tuesday Morning, but that was about it. And the nagging questions about her job, her social life, it was all too much.

Her grinding existence sapped Grace of any vitality for life. She was stuck in quicksand, forever-fixed in a sad state of futility. No purpose, no hope, no simple moments of pleasure, much less, joy. Suicide was painless, but even that took more energy than she could muster. She did keep praying, and by that thin thread of faith hung on, day by day...existing.

Grace managed to brush her teeth, splash some water on her face and throw on some clothes that were strewn in a pile in the corner of her small bedroom. Resigned to another day of woe, she went to work, a filing clerk at a law firm that specialized in real estate foreclosures.

"Grace! Here's your stack for today, please have these filed as soon as you can, we have more right behind it," Herbie said. Getting deadbeats out of properties was Herbie's job, and he attacked it with zeal. For her efforts Grace got paper cuts, and a meager salary.

It was a busy office, for no matter how good the economy seemed, or how high the stock market, more and more people fell behind on their payments, so Grace often fielded calls: "McCormick and Johnson, may I help you?" "Yes, hello, I need help, can you help me?", the plaintive voice wailed.

Grace had heard it all before, voices frantic with worry, desperately seeking to avoid eviction. Growing a thick skin was no problem, life had coarsened hers up long ago. "Listen, ma'am, you have your letter, it has all the instructions, you have a court date," Grace robotically answered.

"Please, please, you don't understand, it's just me and my baby. I've lost my job for now, but I'm cleaning, doing odd jobs, I can make some payments, please, please help me, oh no-o-o-o, oh no, no, no-o-o-o..." her voice trailed off into wailing sobs.

There was something different about this call. The pain and anguish was somehow familiar. It was real and urgent, and if ever so slightly it struck a microscopic slit in Grace's



By Richard Dawahare

heretofore uncrackable crust. And for whatever reason—a grasp that there were others more pitiable than her, God responding to her prayers—whatever, it shook Grace to her core.

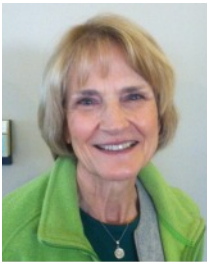
As if to say "ENOUGH! Enough wallowing, enough sadness in my life or others', enough!" Grace answered, "Hold on honey, let's talk about this." At this point there was only one thing that mattered to Grace, and that was bringing peace to this pour soul. She was determined to do this, no matter what she had to do. After listening and taking notes Grace went to Herbie's office and closed his door. "Herbie, listen to me please. This woman does not deserve to be put out, we can work with—" "Grace, come on," Herbie cut her off, "we hear these sad luck stories all the time, forget it!"

"No, Herbie, I won't forget it. You stop this and you find a way to work with her and not only her but everybody. Some may have to go, but many we can save, and it starts here, Herbie, it starts here, with this poor woman." Maybe it was the single tear down her right cheek, the quiver in her lip, or the fire of conviction in her eyes, but something in Grace grabbed Herbie too. He listened, and he responded.

By the day's end Herbie and Grace had worked a plan to keep Mary and her babe in her home. Grace whisked out of the office to deliver the papers for Mary's signature. Yet on the way she could think of nothing but getting some things for Mary and her son.

She could hardly wait to get to their small home, little more than a shack with shingles, but it was the world to them. She sprang up the steps and rang the bell, papers and packages in hand. Mary opened the door, with sweet baby James in her arm. Their eyes met. In an instant, the two souls recognized shared pain. They cried and hugged each other tightly, big salty tears drenching their faces.

Grace reached into the first bag and brought out her gifts. For Mary, an angel figurine, its banner inscribed with "Salvation Soars on Wings of Hope." And for baby James, a little pink prayer lamb. She then lifted out a sack of goodies—fruits and nuts, chocolates and peppermint, cookies, and cupcakes flavored with the spices of the season, a holly-cinnamon scented candle, some silver garland, and a golden star tree-topper. In another bag was a smoked turkey breast, yams, mashed potatoes, and peas, with crackers and cheese, and jars of food for baby James.



## Music Notes

### Advent Marks the Beginning of a New Year

Take advantage of the Sundays in December to worship and enjoy this special season of anticipation, as we begin our new liturgical year. There will be beautiful readings and music appropriate to Advent while we wait with joyful expectation for the birth of our Lord and Savior. The fourth Sunday of Advent falls on December 24 this year, so we will celebrate Advent in the morning with one service only at 10:30 a.m. Our two Christmas Eve services will be held at 5:30 and 10:00 p.m. The early service will be family-oriented.

In keeping with our tradition at St. Raphael, the 10:00 service will feature 30 minutes of caroling and Christmas anthems before the worship service begins at 10:30 p.m. In addition to favorite Christmas carols for the entire congregation, soprano Junghyun Lee will sing "O Holy Night." Kris Olson will play "Silent Night, Holy Night" on guitar during the candle-lighting, and alto Carolina Fernandez will sing the original German text for us. On the following Sunday, December 31, our choir will present Christmas Lessons and Carols.

This last month of the calendar year should prove to be an exciting time for our parish. In November, we said goodbye to our interim priest, Mother Karen Booth. Now our Nominating Committee is nearing a recommendation concerning a new priest for our parish. We are very fortunate to have Bishop Larry Maze in place during this final time of transition. Don't miss the opportunity to hear one of the Bishop's sermons. Then, be prepared to welcome that special person, whoever he or she may be, who will be called to lead our congregation as we enter the new year! Exciting times!

Blessings for Advent and Christmas,

Melinda Storey, Organist/Choirmaster

## A View from the Pew Continued from page 5

Mary cried tears of joy, in awestruck wonder at this Christmas miracle. Likewise, Grace cried with the utter satisfaction of making a difference in two people's lives, before today complete strangers, but on a higher spiritual plane, never so.

More than that, Grace had rediscovered her soul, and who she really was. She had a new mission in life. She wished them Merry Christmas and practically skipped as left their stoop. The day had turned gray and cold and the first flakes of snow floated gently about. But for Grace it couldn't have been sunnier. She now had the only thing she ever really needed: She had purpose. She had hope. And she had joy. She couldn't wait for tomorrow! For she wanted nothing more than to help others find their purpose too.

Merry Christmas—purpose, hope and joy to the world!

Richard Dawahare

### *Photo Directory - are you pictured in it?*

Please consider submitting a family photo for the 2018 Picture Directory as soon as possible! This will be a very helpful tool for our new rector to use as he or she becomes acquainted with our congregation.

Submit your own RECENT photo, or one from any other photographer to Amy Smerick soon! We're ready to go to print and we are missing about 30 members of the congregation! Don't be left out!

# Annual Meeting Breakfast and Service



The Vestry recognized Diane Whorley for her many contributions to St Raphael with her leadership of the Altar Guild, and her many other contributions to Pastoral Care, Christian Ed and never saying "no" when asked to help. Thank you, Diane!



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Articles and news information for January must be submitted by Saturday, Dec 23, 2017 to Dana Berry at [danabruceberry@gmail.com](mailto:danabruceberry@gmail.com)

## **Sunday Services**

8:30 am Holy Eucharist (Rite I)

10:00 am Christian Education for all ages

Nursery provided from 10:00 am to end of 11 am

service for children: infant to 2nd grade

11am Holy Eucharist (Rite II)

## **Wednesday**

12 Noon Holy Eucharist with Unction

6:30 pm Evening Prayer with Unction (healing prayers)