



The Herald

St. Raphael the Archangel Episcopal Church

Vol 53 Issue 12

December, 2018



It's that crazy, busy, beautiful time of year again: Advent. I have been known to buy Christmas presents whilst on summer holiday, but some of my best memories of childhood, of my twenties, of motherhood, have been made in the midst of the joys of Advent. I love all the planning, the stirring of Christmas cakes and puddings, the pageants and Santas, the discovery of the right gift for the right person, the news from family and friends around the world and next door, the decorating of the house – all those things that make up the busy yet waiting time of Advent. When our children were small, I used to have them wait at the top of the stairs when they woke at crack of dawn on Christmas morning whilst I went down and turned on all the lights and checked that Santa had left them some gifts! The joy of Christmas!



Rev. Canon Dr. Helen
Van Koevering

There is one tradition that our family has kept as we've moved between different continents and the children have grown up. The Christmas tree. One year, we had a huge one that touched the ceiling: another year, we found the smallest we could. Stabilizing the tree in a pot, decorating with tinsel, lights, bought and home-made decorations, chocolates and sweets, and ending with the glittering star on top symbolizes Advent to me. Part of the charm is that simply by being a tree, yet indoors, it speaks of the fact that ordinary rules don't apply at this time of year, and decking the tree is a celebration of seeing magic in the ordinary. The evergreen tree is a reminder of the never-changing love of God that broke boundaries to come 'inside' our ordinary human lives, a piece of wild nature to have a place of honor in our homes.

Listen to the Advent readings this year, and listen for God's promise of boundary breaking change for the world. Thomas Merton writes something along these lines for us to ponder during Advent: "Advent is the 'sacrament' of the presence of God in God's world, in the Mystery of Christ at work in history.... Not as a future prospect but as a present fact... 'in the midst of us'.... in the mystery of Christ realized and fulfilled amongst themselves." (*Seasons of Celebration*, 1965)

Happy Advent and a merry Christmas! Invite a neighbor to share some of Advent and Christmas here at St Raphael's – all are welcome!
Peace and joy to you all,

Helen

Senior Warden's Corner



O Lord, I am too close to tears
these days,
My small sorrows loom too
large,
I need to snuggle in your gentle love,
I need to take the time to safely rest
And ponder, as your mother in her heart,
This waiting time in Advent is a blessing,
This time to sweep away the crumbs of ego
The litter of distractions in my life,
I know I will be ready then to greet you
When angels sing and shepherds watch.

A most blessed and peaceful Advent to you all. I
love you.

This time of year we are besieged on all sides by
commercialism and Christmas “madness” is
rampant. As Episcopalians, though, it is time for
preparation for the coming of our Lord. It is Advent
and a time for reflection and remembering that Mary
was waiting for the birth of her first child.

What must that have meant for her? She knew she
was to be the mother of a very special child because
an angel told her so. She knew she was chosen
among all women for this. She knew she was not
married, though she was betrothed to a much older
man who could reject her. Her mind must have been
in turmoil, and yet her faith must have been so strong
as she pondered her fate.

We have this time to ponder as we wait to
celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is not easy for us as we
are so surrounded and distracted by worldly
events, but it is so important to deliberately make a
space for quiet introspection and meditation. The
glory of the joyous birth will come and we will be
able to celebrate it with full hearts. The holiday will
be sad for some and we must validate their feelings
and hold them in our thoughts and prayers and
hearts.

C.C.

Stewardship Report

Thanks for joining us again at the Stewardship Corner!

Just a few weeks ago we experienced our Annual Parish
Meeting. There is so much positivity and excitement in
the coming year, it is difficult to describe on paper.
At that meeting, I updated you on the Parish's
Stewardship Pledge goal of \$160,000 , with an
observation that around 20 or so pledge units were yet to
deliver their pledge. I am pleased to say that over half a
dozen of that 20 turned in pledges on the day of our
Annual Meeting on 11/18/18.

We are at that point in the stewardship campaign where,
if you have ever been to Keeneland, we have rounded
the far corner and are heading for home. I heard from
one of our members this quote, and I thought it was very
appropriate: “We can do this.”

One last thing. A Pledge is ONLY that. Life events
happen. As I said at the meeting, I am in that Repair and
Replacement mode currently, so I am fully aware
medical events can happen. So can employment or other
family events. Pledge the amount (see the chart on the
pledge card in this flyer) that you think will likely
happen. Worry not (if Jesus did not say that, he
probably had just not gotten around to it yet).
I am weak and older and a sinner. Yet, every day Jesus
keeps coming back to my aid, not for any earned reason,
but because of who we are and who he is. However, we
each know Jesus and his teachings (and he has many on
stewardship).

Your Vestry, both the current one and the one that WAS
chosen for 2019, THANK YOU. We are indeed a very
GENEROUS church, and I am proud of each and
everyone of us, including our Rector.

Roger L Kirk

A View from the Pew

The True Gift of the Magi

They weren't wise men for nothing. Those three kings from orient were, markers of goodness perfect and pure.

The wise men (not to be confused with the wise guys from Joisey) were part of a long line of religious kings dating from the Babylonian/Persian empire (evidence that they were kings comes from Psalms 72:11, "May all kings fall down before him"). Tradition holds that there were three wise men, but this is probably because of their gifts of frankincense, gold and myrrh (oh, by the way, Costco has a great special on myrrh, but bring a friend because it's a 5-year supply!). But those closest to the scene, the Syriac churches of Eastern Christianity, believed twelve, not three, made the holy sojourn.

These learned men were followers of the Zoroastrian religion founded 500 years earlier by the ancient Persian prophet Zoroaster, aka Zarathustra. Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic faith that was to later influence Second Temple Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism with its belief in an all-wise, supreme being, messianism, post-death judgment, the existence of heaven and hell, and free will.

Following tradition, the wise men studied the stars and were widely known as expert astrologers (today they'd be considered astronomers). Such abilities to accurately "read" the stars was a highly respected science at that time.

They were called magi because of their Zoroastrian roots. Magi is the plural of the Latin magus, borrowed from Greek magos, itself derived from the Old Persian maguš, Zoroaster's religious caste. Because of their religious practices and prolific use of astrology the term Magi came to be applied to the occult in general. Thus, the English term, magic.

But there was nothing magic about the magi. Zoroastrianism strongly opposed sorcery. In fact, the magi were foretold by the prophet Daniel, who Nebuchadnezzar exiled to "rule over the wise men of Babylon" (later, Persia) in 606 BC. Daniel 2:48.



As Shari Abbott wrote in the Reasons for Hope* Jesus website, "When the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon, they established a hereditary priesthood of wise men, also known as magicians or magi. It was from this hereditary priesthood in the Persian Empire that came wise men, following a star, searching for the baby who was born King of the Jews."

Because the magi held the power to both rule and appoint authority, they were held in international esteem. Thus, their journey to honor the newly born "King of the Jews" greatly troubled Herod. He met with the magi and instructed them to inform him once they knew of Jesus's exact whereabouts. (For more in-depth analysis as their meeting with Herod, and decision to avoid him later see <https://shepherdthoughts.com/baptistchurchny/why-did-the-magi-go-to-herod/>).

All this background about the magi is leading up to this one main point: it is the ARRIVAL of Jesus into this world that is significant, and except insofar as the grace and courage with which he did so, not his leaving it.

The wise men knew, God ordained them to know, trained them to know, and through centuries of development led them to this fateful moment. The magi serve as objective, definitive authority that a swaddling babe born, fittingly, in a stable for sheep, was to become the Good Shepard of all, for all times.

This truth transcends religion and exists beyond any tradition of man. It is felt, honored and celebrated by people in every nook and cranny around the world. It is the reason Joy to the World is sung in every language and culture.

Joy, love, peace, and goodwill. That is Jesus. That's what we celebrate. Genius!

Merry Christmas!

Richard

The opinions expressed above are those of the author.

Sages Holiday Luncheon

Sages Holiday Luncheon was postponed from Nov. Due to weather, and will now be held on Thursday, Dec. 6th beginning at 11:30 am at the church. The catered lunch will feature Roast Pork Loin, Green Beans, Smashed Potatoes, English Carrots, Rolls, a Garden Salad and Pumpkin or Pecan Pie for dessert.

The cost will be \$15.00 per person, plus gratuity. We can only accept cash for this luncheon.

Please RSVP by November 30th, to Paula Brockman. Your reservation must be paid prior to the luncheon, and no refunds will be made.

RSVP to Paula Brockman. 859-554-6055, or

Decorating the Church for Christmas begins with Advent

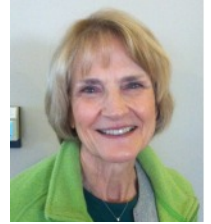
Nov. 30 Following the 11AM service we will begin decorating for Christmas. The Chrismon Tree and Advent Wreath go up first, and we need some help getting everything upstairs. Please take a few minutes to help! Many hands make this a whole lot easier!

Angel Tree Tags are available!

The Angel Tree Tags for this year's Christmas Season of Giving are available to our parishioners starting Sunday, November 18. Gifts need to be returned to the church by Dec. 9 and should NOT be wrapped. We will load them up after the 11:00 service and deliver them to the Salvation Army Christmas Distribution Center on Nicholasville Rd. A few people with vehicles to help would be appreciated. See Michael Summers for answers to any questions.

See Michael Summers for more details!

Music Notes



"The Dearest Day in All of the Year . .

"I don't hear any argument, so let me say forthwith:

I wish that every day could be: December the twenty fifth!"

Those memorable lines are from the Albert Finney version of *A Christmas Carol*, sung by "Old Fezziwig" as he celebrated the holiday with his wife and employees. Surely, at least for the children among us and the child in us, Christmas still remains the dearest day of the year, the day when the "Lord is come and earth receives her King."

The month of Advent prepares us for this wondrous occasion, and at St. Raphael our music will reflect the time of anticipation, of hope and expectation. The choir will be singing beautiful anthems to complement the Advent readings: "A Shoot Shall Come Forth" by Richard Horn; "Rejoice, O Jerusalem" by Healey Willan; "Ave Maria" by Franz Schubert. Then, on Christmas Eve, listen for traditional favorites such as "O Holy Night" by Adolphe Adam and "Gesu Bambino" by Pietro Yon. During communion at the late service, we will sing "O Magnum Mysterium" (O Great Mystery) by the Spanish Renaissance composer Tomas Luis de Victoria. Again at both services, "Silent Night" will be sung by candlelight, accompanied by Kris Olson on classical guitar.

It would be lovely to have a children's ensemble singing during the early service on Christmas Eve! Parents, if your child or children are interested in participating, please speak to me after the 11:00 service on December 2. We need at least five children in order to form a choir. Rehearsals will be held after church on Dec. 9, 16, and 23 for fifteen minutes each time. Take-home sheets will be available as well so that the children can practice at home.

Take full advantage of the wonderful program offered at St. Raphael during this most beautiful season of Advent, and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior on Christmas Eve. Christmas continues on December 30 with a Service of Lessons and Carols presented by the choir.

Best wishes for a Blessed Advent Season,
Melinda Storey, Organist/Choirmaster



A Church Mouse in God's House

Did I miss writing last month? Yes. Was it because of illness? Yes. Am I a better person for it, having triumphed over the harsh realities of existence and returned as a transformed individual with a grander perspective on the meaning of life? No, that's stupid, I'm a mouse.

Still, I have had a bit of time to reflect on health and how it relates to what we do with our lives. You see, I am not exactly a warrior mouse. Not even very good at being a scavenger. In the mouse world these physical types are the ones that get most of the accolades. My own family shunned me at a young age for thinking too much. I

probably wouldn't have even gotten interested in writing if I had been a healthier mouse. But while other mice were out playing, running, scurrying and scavenging I was sitting alone in a hole pondering the mysteries of life: why some cheeses have holes and others don't; why cats exist; if there are parallel universes in which mice are at the top of the food chain. You know, the kinds of things that don't make you popular.

You humans seem to place a high value on such thinkers. You have great philosophers, teachers, writers... and look how much you talk about politics, religion, art, etc... I guess you've gotten so good at making other people do the real work of society like growing food and building houses that you can just sit around and think big thoughts. What a luxury!

But still... some people in your lot do a lot of work. Who changes the light bulbs? Shovels the snow? Works with your kids? Visits the sick? Packs the backpacks? Does those things that are needed, but not even thought of yet? I see them... but do you know who they are?

I see you have elected several new Vestry members (I got ONE write-in vote... maybe next year). Are these the thinkers that think the best? Or did you try to get more do-ers? Or... did you select people who can balance both thinking and doing? Let's face it, you're not a bunch of spring chickens. I know you can think the deep thoughts, but who can perform and inspire real action? Who is the next one of you that is going to get down, get dirty and say, "yes, I will get rid of the mousetraps?" I think you can do it... maybe you just have to value things the way us (well, most of us) mice do.



December Birthdays

James Matics	12/1
Sarah Edmundson	12/3
Beverly Bouse	12/6
Amy LoBianco	12/15
Alexandra Vance	12/18
Paula Brockman	12/21
Rev. Helen Van Koevering	12/21
Jeannie Graham	12/25
Marie Sutton	12/26
Margie Williams	12/27
Terri Bey	12/30
Paula Sevigny	12/30
Carl Fosnaugh	12/31

Anniversaries

Heather & Mark Matics	12/13
Helen & Moses Massaquoi	12/17

Datebook for December

Dec 1:	10:00am Greening of the Church for Advent
	12:00pm Help for Bill & Sharon Thompson move
	12:00pm ECW Luncheon - JoBeth Bookstore
Dec 2:	9:30am ECW Regional Meeting
Dec 4	6:30pm Vestry Meeting
Dec 6	11:30am Sages Luncheon at Church
Dec 9	9:30am Property Meeting
	12:30pm DoK Meeting
Dec 11	6:30pm Stewardship Meeting
Dec 20	11:30pm Sages Luncheon
Dec 21	10:00am Rehearsal for Christmas Pageant
Dec 23	11:00am Christmas Pageant during service
Dec 24	Christmas Eve Services:
	5:30pm Family Service
	10:00pm Christmas Choral Prelude
	10:30pm Holy Eucharist
Dec. 25	10:30am Holy Eucharist
Dec 26	Office Closed to end of year
Dec 30	10:30am - Lessons & Carols



Dec 24 Christmas Eve Services:
 5:30pm Family Service
 10:00pm Christmas Choral Prelude
 10:30pm Holy Eucharist

Dec. 25 10:30am Holy Eucharist

Help Needed

Bill and Sharon Thompson are moving on Dec. 1st and need help with packing and unpacking the U-haul truck. They are moving to The Lafayette, 690 Mason Headley Road here in Lexington. They anticipate it will take most of the afternoon to accomplish the move. If anyone can help them please contact Sharon at 223-4639.

Crafters' Guild on break

Until 2019

The Crafters' Guild is on break during the month of December, and will reconvene in 2019 on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month at 10:00 AM in the downstairs family life area. The first meeting will be on Jan. 12,

Art Space at Saint Raphael

In the last few months, you might have noticed the beautiful fabrics on display in our Art Space lobby that have now been taken down. These were generously loaned to us from Reverend Helen and I am very remiss in telling you the very special story of these garments. Yes, they are garments and their story is a beautiful one.

Had we named this show, we would have called it "Woman to Woman" because that is the essence of the capulana. In Mozambique capulana are usually given from one woman to another for a special occasion or gesture of appreciation. Similar to a sarong, as clothing Mozambique women wear them as a wrap-around skirt, dress or head wear. As a utilitarian item, they can be fashioned into a baby carrier or used to carry heavy items.

Reverend Helen's collection of capulana was massive and our space could never have held them all. Each of these beautiful fabrics represented a special bond between Helen and the community she served there. St Raphael was blessed by their presence.



Christmas Poinsettia Orders

Deadline to order is December 16, 2018

Cost: \$20 each; 2 for \$30

Order forms available at the church.

Christmas Pageant for Last Sunday of Advent

We are planning on having the Children's Christmas Pageant on the last Sunday of Advent, Dec. 23, at the 11:00 Service. Please let Dana Berry know if your children would like to participate. We will have one rehearsal Saturday, Dec. 22 at 10:00.

Bishop's Visit - Nov. 11th for Confirmation/Receiving, Baptism, Daughters of the King New Members and a wonderful reception!



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Articles and news information for September must be submitted by **Friday, Dec. 21, 2018** to Dana Berry at danabruceberry@gmail.com

Sunday Services

8:30 am Holy Eucharist (Rite I)

Nursery provided from 10:45am to 12:15pm

service for children: infant to 2nd grade

11am Holy Eucharist (Rite II)

Wednesday

10:30 am Book Club & Cookies

12 Noon Holy Eucharist with Unction

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