

*According to Jesus, by far the most important thing about praying is to keep at it... Be importunate, Jesus says -- not, one assumes, because you have to beat a path to God's door before he'll open it, but because until you beat the path maybe there's no way of getting to your door.*

*... Frederick Buechner*

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# THE PRESS

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JANUARY, 2003

A New Year & A Tabula Rasa!

The resolutions we make put us in mind of starting the New Year off on the right foot. In the church's calendar January 1<sup>st</sup> is The Feast of the Holy Name of our Lord. Somehow it is meet and right to begin the year celebrating this feast. On this first day of the secular world's calendar we claim our beginning in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament reading assigned for The Feast of the Holy Name of our Lord is Exodus 34: 1-9. It is the story of God telling Moses to fetch two more clean stone tablets like the other ones he had broken just a few days before. God once again writes the commandments on them and tells Moses that His name is YHWH (YaHWeH). In the Gospel appointed for this feast day we read that on the eighth day the Christ child is circumcised and is named Jesus: in Hebrew Yeshua—God is our Salvation.

Both the Old Testament and the Gospel point us in the direction of beginning anew. We stand on the threshold of a new year. We stand with baited breath waiting with hopeful anticipation of what the New Year brings. There may be tough times awaiting us as we march through the next twelve months. Our country, our families, and our lives very well may be changed. In hope we look to God who will be with us through it all—through the good

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*The X-Press is the monthly newsletter of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church*

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and the bad. When we claim this hope we remember Jesus' other name, the one uttered by the prophet: Emmanuel—God is with us. God is with us and has been with us whether we were aware of it or not. The beginning of the New Year calls us to cast away those things that have hindered us, to put away those things we have harbored in our hearts and souls. We are called to begin with clean tablets, a clean slate and go forth into the future in the name of our God made known to us in the babe lying in a manger: Jesus—the one who is our salvation.

Scott+

## The Household of God Increases



The household of God in our little corner of the world known as St. Andrew's Episcopal Church is increasing almost weekly. On Sunday January 12<sup>th</sup>, The Feast of the Baptism of our Lord we will welcome more into the household of God through our celebration of Holy Baptism. But that's not all. On January 26<sup>th</sup> we will have even more baptisms. Ordinarily the church designates four occasions when baptisms are especially appropriate (BCP pg. 312). People's lives are less structured than the Book of Common Prayer, and due to their schedules and getting parents, godparents, friends and relatives, the Church simply has to respond where and how it can. These two occasions of baptisms are signs and symbols of the growth and vitality infusing our church. The next occasion for Baptisms will be on Easter Day. Considering all the families expecting children, it looks like our baptismal font will get a lot of use, and the household of God is going get even larger. Praise God for all these wonderful moments when the body of the faithful has opportunity to gather together to welcome the newly baptized as we exclaim, "We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood."

## Readings for January

### Sunday, January 5 – The Second Sunday after Christmas Day

First Lesson: Jeremiah 31: 7-14

The Old Testament reading foretells the coming of God's kingdom, when all peoples will be gathered into God's holy place.

Second Lesson: Ephesians 1: 3-6, 15-19a

In today's reading from Ephesians, Paul sees the return to God in the cosmic sense of all people's - indeed the whole creation's - existing apart from God until the revelation of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The Gospel: Matthew 2: 1-12

The Gospel reading anticipates the feast of the Epiphany later this week.

ministry of the Messiah. We administer Holy Baptism today in the context of this theme.

### Sunday, January 19 – The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

First Lesson: I Samuel 3: 1-20

The first reading is the account of the call of Samuel, the first great prophet of the Hebrew scriptures, after Moses.

Second Lesson: I Corinthians 6: 11b-20

In the second reading, Paul deals with a problem of sexual misbehavior in the church of Corinth by reminding his readers that they are a newborn people by Baptism.

The Gospel: John 1: 43-51

Today we focus on the beginning of Jesus' ministry, when he called his disciples.

### Sunday, January 12 – The First Sunday after the Epiphany

First Lesson: Isaiah 42: 1-9

On this, the First Sunday after the Epiphany, we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. The first reading looks forward to the ministry of the Messiah.

Second Lesson: Acts 10: 34-38

The second reading is one of the early Christian proclamations of the meaning of Jesus' ministry from the time of his Baptism through to his dying and rising.

The Gospel: Mark 1: 7-11

Jesus' Baptism was for all the Gospel writers, and in the apostolic preaching of the Gospel, the event which initiated the redemptive

### Sunday, January 26 – The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

First Lesson: Jeremiah 3: 21 – 4: 2

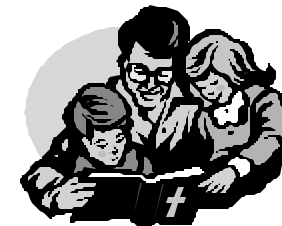
The Old Testament reading is a call to the people to repent and return to God.

Second Lesson: I Corinthians 7: 17-23

We continue to read a portion of I Corinthians, as we do each Epiphany season.

The Gospel: Mark 1: 14-20

Today we continue the seasonal theme of Jesus' manifestation ("epiphany") as the Son of God.



# Ministry Possibilities

After such a successful stewardship campaign charging us all to give of our treasure we have been ushered into a greater sense of what it means to give to our church. Our giving isn't limited to just our treasure but includes time and talent. Listed below are some of the many ways we can become involved within the life, ministry, and mission of our church. This list is in no way exhaustive, but rather, is just a springboard for the many ways we can give of our time, talent, and treasure.

## Ministry possibilities:

- Acolytes—This ministry is open to anyone third grade and up. Training is available to all who are interested. This ministry has grown over the last several months, however, we can always use many more to help in our worship. Training is provided.
- Choir—The scriptures say “make a joyful sound unto the Lord” nowhere does it say you have to be on key. We especially need male voices! All are welcome. Practices are held once a week, and of course commitment for Sundays.
- Sunday School teachers for kids and adults alike—The more the merrier! The only requirement—enthusiasm for kids.
- Lectors—As with the acolyte ministry this too has grown. And like the acolyte ministry, many more are needed. Training is provided.
- Chalice bearers—Currently we have ten but many more are needed, this is also open to the youth who have been confirmed. Training will be provided.
- Oblation Bearers—These are the folks who bring the gifts of bread and wine forward during our Sunday Services. By having a pool of people assigned to each Sunday it will lessen the load on the ushers who have been scrambling around to find folks to perform this ministry. The only requirement is attend church.
- Altar Guild—Currently our Altar Guild is made up of approximately eight faithful women who attend to all the vessels and other accoutrements related to our liturgical life. We need more folks willing to help out.
- Pastoral Care—Currently there is just one person doing this ministry, many, many more are needed. The only requirement—love for people.
- Youth leaders (as opposed to Sunday School Teachers)—To support and be with the kids during evening activities and outings.
- Parish life—These are the ones who organize and throw the parties that celebrate our life and ministry together.
- Office volunteers—helps out once a month in the church office to prepare Xpress for distribution and help Judy in the office.

These are just a few of the many areas in and around the church where you can be involved in the life and ministry of St. Andrew's. Please consider giving your time and talent to these worthwhile ministries. If you are interested, please call the church offices or speak to Fr. Baker to sign up.

# Children and the Habit of Tithing

*Jonathan Wistar*

If baptism is full membership into the household of God and Confirmation is a re-affirmation of that, then it is no stretch for children and younger adults to be wrestling with the Christian message, its meaning, and the corresponding Christian life. Indeed those of us who are parents and godparents have in fact (in the Baptismal service) promised to see that our (sponsored) child is brought up in the Christian faith and life. And, of course, that is a process...

It should come, then, as no surprise that stewardship is a part of that process of bringing a child up in the Christian faith and life:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former [i.e. tithing]. [Matthew 23:23 (NIV)]

So, in short, it is *not* inappropriate to teach children about stewardship and tithing.

“What is tithing?” you ask. Tithing is a tenth and was a practice in accord with the Law in Judaism. Recall the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector who went into the Temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee prays:

God, I thank you that I am not like other men... I fast twice a week and *give a tenth of all that I have* [emphasis mine].

“What do I teach my child?” you ask. One place to start is with the word “stewardship” itself – not a word common in today's parlance. A steward – neglecting cruise ships and the like – is a person who manages his master's property, finances, or affairs (which is broader, incidentally, than mere money). That is, he or she is one in whom the master has placed his trust. A faithful steward will produce with what he or she has been entrusted (see the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30). A bad steward knowingly violates the trust that the master has placed in him or her.

Some confusion is possible. We are not good stewards in order to go to heaven, to earn God's favor, or to be noticed by our brothers and sisters in

## Children and the Habit of Tithing

*continued*

Christ. If we are Christians, we have God's salvation already ("I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." [John 5:24 (NIV)]). We have God's favorable disposition toward us already ("He who did not spare His own son, but gave him up for us all – how will He not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" [Romans 8:32 (NIV)]). Our giving should be in secret ("Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' [giving, praying, and fasting] before men to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." [Matthew 6:1 (NIV)]). (The vestry, of course, while it does not know any particular pledge or "estimate of giving" needs to know the larger financial picture in order to plan next year's budget. Only the treasurer knows the amount of your pledge, so the part of your giving going to St. Andrew's is secretive.)

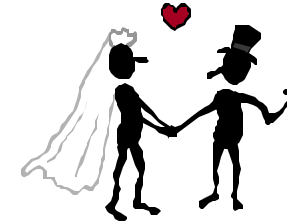
So, if we are not faithful stewards in order to go to heaven, to merit God's favor, or to win the admiration of others, why do we do it? One reason is to avoid the illusion that what we have belongs to us. As Christians, we believe that God has created us. He has blessed us with time, money, learning, and various skills. Because we are created, all of this belongs to God. The good news, however, is that He wants us to have some of it. A simple illustration for children is 10 apples. God provides me with 10 apples (through the talents and skills that He gave me). As a steward, none of the 10 truly belongs to me. Tithing is returning one of the ten back to God for His purpose and use and in thanksgiving for all that He has supplied to me, beginning with His love in Christ; the other 9 are God's gift to me. (Note well the generosity of God.)

Beginning the habit of tithing at a young age may also be beneficial. When I was much younger, Dad gave me an allowance of 55 cents. The extra nickel was for tithing. We had offertory envelopes for children, collected at Sunday school. Later, as a youth, I was visited, one year, as part of the church's every member canvass, even though I was tithing a mere \$1 per week (in those days). Playing my small role helped me live into the "full membership in the household of God" in a concrete way. The habit of tithing instilled and nurtured so many years ago lives on...

## Milestones & Memorials

December 1st, 2002—

Marriage of Marley Oliver (daughter of Martha Gray and step-daughter of Berkley Gray) and John O'Brien.



## Pony Express Update

The Pony Express has been a success – we have almost reached our goal! If you have yet to return your Estimate of Giving, please send it to the office, Attn: Treasurer. If you need an Estimate of Giving Form, please call the office at 978-772-2615. Thank you all for your response.

*"The Measure you give will be the measure you get back." Luke 6:38*

### ***Editor's Note:***

***Next Issue:*** February 2003

***Deadline:*** **Monday, January 20**

***Send submissions to:*** [acahill@hybricon.com](mailto:acahill@hybricon.com)

*Or, drop off your submissions at the Church Office during office hours or in the Peabody Room on Sundays.*

***Questions?*** Please call me at:

***H:*** (978) 448-4053

***W:*** (978) 772-5422 x 323

***Be sure to include your name and telephone number on all submissions!***

# Vestry Candidate Profiles

In preparation for the upcoming year, four vacant vestry positions are open. Three of these openings will be for a full three-year commitment with the remaining opening being a two-year. This is a golden opportunity to participate in the fullest sense within the life and ministry of St. Andrew's. The election for these positions will take place at the annual parish meeting the first weekend in February.

Following are some brief profiles of the candidates for this year's openings:

## **Anne Cahill**

When my parents moved the family to Harvard when I was four years old, we shopped around for churches for about a year before settling down at St. Andrew's. Throughout my school years I served as an acolyte, as a crucifer, in the nursery, as a reader, and in the choir. St. Andrew's is where I received my First Communion, was confirmed, and was married. For the past eight years I have been the editor of the X-Press, and I have served on the Vestry in the 1-year position of Clerk twice and then I took over to fulfill another member's unexpired term two years ago. I am honored to have been asked to run now for a term of my own, as I believe that with this experience under my belt I am better able to contribute and promote positive changes in this parish. I have grown and developed with St. Andrew's for close to 30 years and feel I can balance historical perspective with a strong desire to make continual improvements to our infrastructure and programs. Most of all, I treasure the warmth of community at St. Andrew's that drew my family in so many years ago and has kept us all here to this day.

## **John McNeill**

My wife Kris and I have been coming to St. Andrews since we moved to Stow in 1994. I have served on the Vestry before and am honored that I've been asked to do so again. I believe our fundamental mission in the Church is to live out Jesus' Great Commission: to make disciples! While all activities at St. Andrews deserve our support, my top priorities would be education (at all levels, from early childhood to adult) and outreach. I believe that we at St. Andrews are fortunate to have received many blessings, both spiritual and material. Now it is time for us to continue strengthening the disciples we have and to welcome as many new disciples as we can.

## **Mary Medeiros**

I was born in Ayer and have lived here all of my life with the exception of 2 years. I was baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church. When I was 6, the Greek priest suggested to my parents that we attend St. Andrew's Episcopal Church as the closest Greek church was either Lowell or Fitchburg. At the age of 8, I started singing in the choir under the direction of Daisy Perry and continued for approximately 35 years. I was a member of the Vestry during Rev. Paul Koumrian's tenure as Rector at St. Andrew's. This past year, I was a member of the Stewardship Committee and the Auction Committee. For the past twelve years, I have been actively involved with the Deaconess-Nashoba Hospital – being a member on the Board of the Auxiliary, a volunteer in the gift shop, and involved with the annual spring fundraiser on the Ways & Means Committee. As a Vestry person, I would like to see the Church continue to grow spiritually and in numbers, being mindful of monetary commitments and assure that the maintenance and upkeep of the facilities are properly maintained.

# Annual Reports are Due

All officers and commission chairs should submit their annual reports to the parish office by Jan 20<sup>th</sup>. Reports may be e-mailed to [staayer@rcn.com](mailto:staayer@rcn.com) or dropped off in the office. If you have any questions, please call Judy Converse at 978 772 2615.

## St. Andrew's Church

### ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>,  
following the one service at 9AM

**PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND!**  
Make your voice count.

# January 2003

## St. Andrew's Church

Tel: (978) 772-2615  
 Office Hours: M - Th 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
 Friday 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

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