



*Jesus came! - and came for me.
Simple words! and yet expressing
Depths of holy mystery,
Depths of wondrous love and blessing.
Holy Spirit, make me see
All His coming means for me;
Take the things of Christ, I pray,
Show them to my heart today.*

... Frances Ridley Havergal

Anne Cahill, X-Press Editor

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THE PRESS

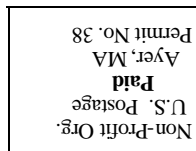
DECEMBER, 2004

Pondering all these things

“The Word was made flesh...” This is how St. John chose to describe the incarnation. John’s poetic, philosophical, and mystical language attempts to describe that which we all have attempted to appropriate into our lives of faith. On Christmas day we will hear John’s prologue. On the night before, Christmas Eve, we will have heard St. Luke’s earthy and down-to-earth account of a ragtag family coming into existence in a cattle shed. It is in Luke’s account we hear Mary’s response to the shepherd’s angelic tale, “Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.” That is what Christmas day is all about—entering into a deeper knowledge and love of God in Christ. Later, when St. John was “pondering all these things in his heart” he penned, “and the Word was made flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.” Pondering, thinking, cognition, ruminating—in short mulling things over that have cosmic implication is much of our task in Christmas. The mystery of the incarnation is how the Church has chosen to describe “and the Word was made flesh.” By its very nature and definition, a mystery is that which can be grasped only in part. To affirm the incarnation means to enter into a lifelong endeavor of “pondering all these things.”

I like using the word “ruminating” when it comes to personalizing the incarnation.

St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church
7 Faulkner Street
Ayer, Massachusetts 01432



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

To ruminate on something, literally means “to chew over again.” What an apt description of he who was called “the bread of life”. An even deeper meaning is extrapolated when we begin to see that the “Word [that] was made flesh” was laid in a manger—a feeding trough. Ruminating means chewing the cud, to ponder something over and over, to extract all the flavor and essence out of it.

As we come to the manger this year, we come hungry. We come yearning for the bread of life which satisfy the deepest hunger. Pondering all these things, means living a life of active faith seeking to know more closely, more dearly, more intimately the implications of the incarnation. The Word made flesh was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger—now that’s something to ruminate on.

Your servant in Christ,

Scott+

Christmas Worship Schedule

Please make plans to attend any or all of the services scheduled for Christmastide.

Sunday December 19th, Following the 10:30 AM Service
The Greening of the Church

Friday December 24th, Christmas Eve—
4:00 PM—Holy Eucharist Rite II and Christmas Pageant
11:00 PM—Festal Holy Eucharist Rite II (Incense will be at this service)

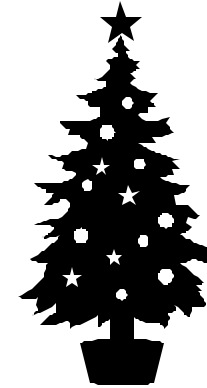
Saturday December 25th, The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, Christmas Day
10:00 AM—Holy Eucharist Rite I

Sunday December 26th, The First Sunday after Christmas Day

ONE SERVICE ONLY

9:00 AM—A Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols and Holy Eucharist

Christmas Giving Tree



Don't forget to pick an “ornament” from the Christmas Giving Tree in the Peabody Room. If the tag has several suggestions on it, a tag can be shared with someone else if you desire.

Please be sure to return the gift, or gifts, wrapped and with the tag attached by December 19th.

THANK YOU and MERRY CHRISTMAS GIVING

Stewardship Reminder

Please return pledge cards to the church office or place in the church offering plate as soon as you possibly can. The stewardship commission will be calling those people that have not returned a pledge card shortly and we hope to make the list as small as possible. Help us out by returning your pledge card today!

If you are in need of a pledge card, please contact the church office or anyone on the stewardship committee. Sheryl Baker, Carolyn Smith, Mary Medeiros, Lorraine Leonard, Sue Hildreth or Claudette Hunt will be happy to assist you in locating a pledge card!

Editor's Note:

Next Issue: January 2005

Deadline: December 20th

Send submissions to: 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: (978) 448-4053 (home) or (978) 772-5422 x 323 (work).

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

Readings for December

Sunday, December 5 – The Second Sunday of Advent

First Lesson: Isaiah 11: 1-10

The first reading is one of the visions of Isaiah. From the almost moribund family of Jesse a new shoot will appear, a new David. This Messiah will establish God's universal reign as a time of peace extending even to the natural world.

Second Lesson: Romans 15: 4-13

Paul's message in the second reading also reflects on the character of the Messiah's ministry as one for all peoples: Jews and Gentiles.

The Gospel: Matthew 3: 1-12

This is the first of the two Advent Sundays in which John the Baptist is the dominant figure. John's ministry as the Forerunner of the Messiah is introduced in today's Gospel reading by his preaching: a stern call to repentance.

Sunday, December 12 – The Third Sunday of Advent

First Lesson: Isaiah 35: 1-10

The Old Testament reading is the passage Jesus quotes in the Gospel reading. The sign of the Messiah is a new order of existence – God's kingdom – in which health and salvation spring forth.

Second Lesson: James 5: 7-10

The second reading is a call to patient waiting for the Lord to appear to inaugurate the kingdom of God.

The Gospel: Matthew 11: 2-11

In today's Gospel, John, who has been imprisoned by Herod Antipas, is facing death and wishes to know before he dies that he was correct in identifying Jesus as the Messiah.

Sunday, December 19 – The Fourth Sunday of Advent

First Lesson: Isaiah 7: 10-17

In today's reading from Isaiah, the prophet foretells the birth of a child in a passage which the New Testament writers, especially Matthew, considered to be fulfilled in Jesus' birth from Mary.

Second Lesson: Romans 1: 1-7

Jesus' descent from David, his birth, his death, and his resurrection are Paul's theme in the passage from Romans.

The Gospel: Matthew 1: 18-25

The Gospel reading is Matthew's account of Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin. It is this Incarnation – becoming flesh – of God the Son which unites things earthly with things heavenly.

Sunday, December 26 – The First Sunday after Christmas

First Lesson: Isaiah 61: 10 – 62: 3

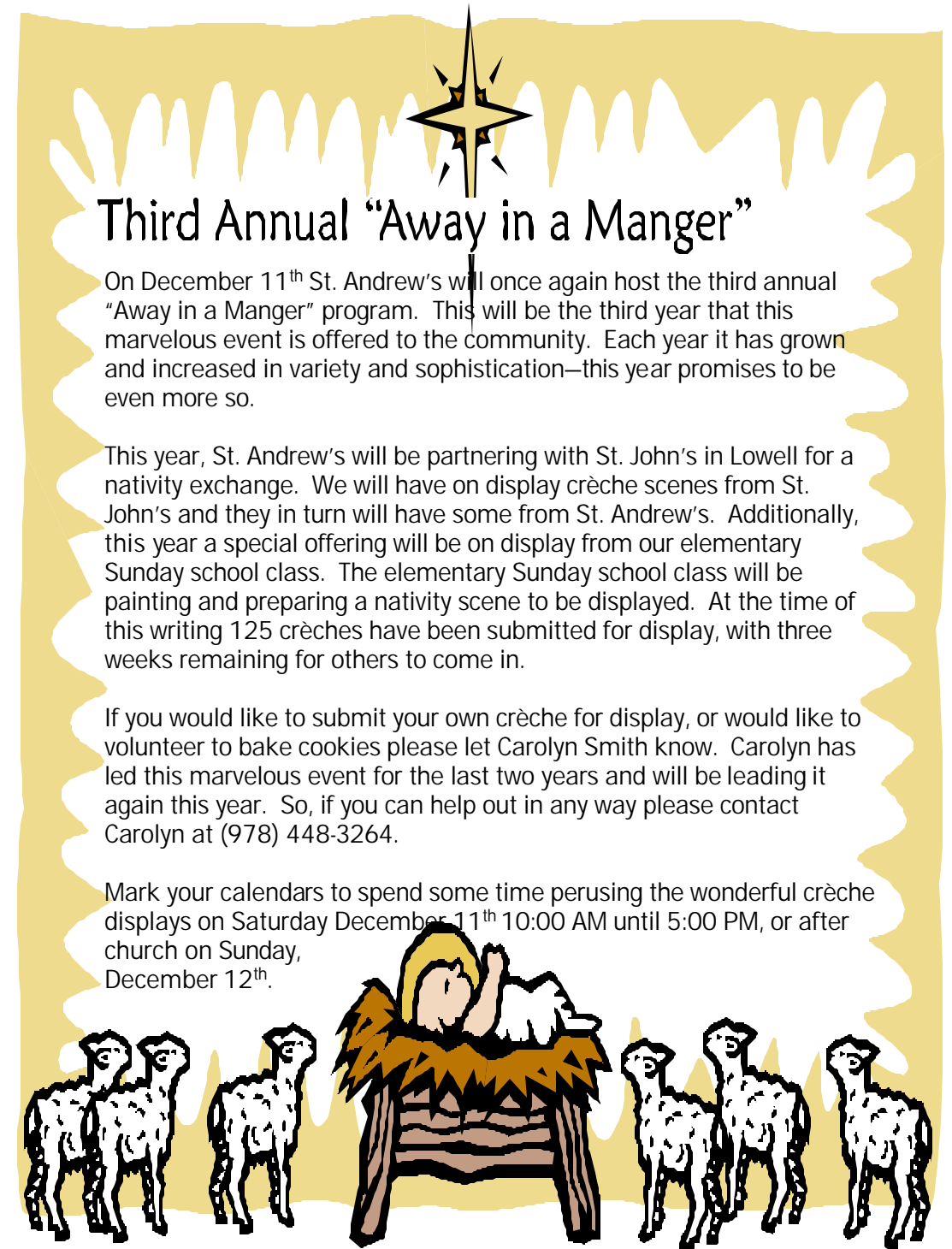
The first reading today promises the re-establishment of God's people in his kingdom.

Second Lesson: Galatians 3: 23-25; 4: 4-7

The reading from Paul's letter to the Galatians is a portion of Paul's proclamation that in the new covenant our relationship to God is based on faith rather than obedience to the Law.

The Gospel: John 1: 1-18

The Gospel reading is the theological prologue to the Gospel of John. This early Christian poem described Jesus as the Incarnation ("enfleshment") of the divine Word who is one with God, through whom God creates and redeems the world.




Third Annual "Away in a Manger"

On December 11th St. Andrew's will once again host the third annual "Away in a Manger" program. This will be the third year that this marvelous event is offered to the community. Each year it has grown and increased in variety and sophistication—this year promises to be even more so.

This year, St. Andrew's will be partnering with St. John's in Lowell for a nativity exchange. We will have on display crèche scenes from St. John's and they in turn will have some from St. Andrew's. Additionally, this year a special offering will be on display from our elementary Sunday school class. The elementary Sunday school class will be painting and preparing a nativity scene to be displayed. At the time of this writing 125 crèches have been submitted for display, with three weeks remaining for others to come in.

If you would like to submit your own crèche for display, or would like to volunteer to bake cookies please let Carolyn Smith know. Carolyn has led this marvelous event for the last two years and will be leading it again this year. So, if you can help out in any way please contact Carolyn at (978) 448-3264.

Mark your calendars to spend some time perusing the wonderful crèche displays on Saturday December 11th 10:00 AM until 5:00 PM, or after church on Sunday, December 12th.



THE REPORT OF THE LAMBETH COMMISSION ON COMMUNION (AKA “THE WINDSOR REPORT”)

Commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, in October of 2003, in response to the crisis in the Anglican Communion caused by the actions of the August 2003 General Convention of the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A., the Lambeth Commission was charged with providing practical recommendations “for maintaining the highest degree of communion” among the Provinces of the Anglican Communion. (Note of explanation: The worldwide Anglican Communion comprises 77 million people, of which the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. – ECUSA – is but a small part, comprising approximately 2 million.)

A year later, on October 18, 2004, the Lambeth Commission released its report, known as “The Windsor Report.” The Lambeth Commission was made up of 17 members drawn from across the Communion, and holding opposing views, but the Report had, in the end, unanimous support from every Commission member.

To attempt to summarize the Report and its recommendations, I quote from a commentary by The Rev. Joseph F. Wilson in the October 18 issue of “The Christian Challenge”: “(In the Report) heavy criticism is directed towards both ECUSA and the Canadian Diocese of New Westminster. The Episcopal Church, in its triennial General Convention, ratified the decision of the Diocese of New Hampshire to elect V. Gene Robinson as their bishop, thus making the consecration of an openly active homosexual an act of the whole Church; the General Convention then went on to observe that church blessings of same-sex unions were occurring in places and were actions ‘within the life’ of the Church. The Diocese of New Westminster comes under fire because, at the request of its convention, the bishop prepared and published a rite for blessing of same-sex unions, and authorized its use. The Windsor Report deplores what it considers to be the failure of both entities to take the time and the steps necessary to obtain a consensus in favor of these actions among the member churches of the Anglican Communion. Evidently regarding the matter of condoning homosexuality as a matter of opinion, both bodies went ahead with the disputed actions., ignoring the evident fact that huge portions of the Communion regard this question of homosexuality as a vital matter of Christian orthodoxy. And the Report notes the ‘overwhelming response from other Christians both within and outside the Anglican family’ holding the acts to be departures from genuine, apostolic Christian faith. The effects of this crisis have been catastrophic for Episcopalian relations with other bodies, particularly the Eastern Orthodox churches and Roman Catholicism.” In other words, the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. ignored the pleadings of the vast majority of the Anglican Communion not to take action that would tear the fabric of the Communion and, by acting unilaterally, breached the acceptable limits of diversity within the faith.

Further, the Report clearly states (and here I quote from remarks made by The Rev. Dow Sanderson, Rector of the Church of the Holy Communion, Charleston, S.C.) that

- “The original Lambeth Statement which calls the practice of homosexuality ‘incompatible with Holy Scripture’ remains the clear, unambiguous teaching of the Anglican Communion

(continued)

A REPORT ON THE 219th ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS

This year’s convention was held on November 5-6 in Hyannis. It was run smoothly and efficiently, and all business was conducted with very little discussion and no dissention. On all of the big TV screens was the opening prayer, “. . . send us to serve with Christ, taking risks to give life and hope to all people.”

Mission and evangelism was the theme adopted by The Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw, Bishop, in his address to the 700 delegates assembled. He touched briefly on the so-called “Windsor Report” (see article on this Report elsewhere in this issue), calling it hopeful, the first step in building a stronger Communion that will embrace and affirm the Communion’s diversity. He wants every church to be consciously mission-minded, “every Episcopalian telling their story.” He encouraged every delegate to find ways to “speak their joy” (a phrase used often over the two days), by committing themselves to increasing their pledges to their congregations by 6%, and asking their fellow parishioners to do the same. As a help to congregations, the diocese has created a welcome packet for newcomers, which can be individualized with each parish’s information, copies of which went home with each delegate.

Following the Bishop’s address, we heard a Report of the Committee on Constitutions and Canons, “eliminating funding for (diocesan) assessment abatements on the grounds that they are ecclesiastically unsound,” which passed unanimously. Under this amended Canon 9, “a *parish* which has not paid in full all its past and current assessments for a period of 3 consecutive years” is subject, by a vote of Convention, to reclassification as a *mission*. The Compensation and Benefits Committee gave a lengthy report. This committee proposes guidelines to promote uniform, fair and equitable compensation and benefits for ordained and lay employees within the Diocese.

Other actions:

- Diocesan assessments for 2005 were approved (St. Andrews’ is \$21,561)
- The 2005 diocesan operating budget of \$6,992,250 (a 3.1% increase over 2004) was approved
- Diocesan elections (for clerical and lay delegates to General Convention 2006, for Standing Committee, for Board of Directors of the Barbara C. Harris Center) were held.

(continued)

Second Annual Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols

Last year we had a fabulous celebration the First Sunday of Christmas, with a worship service of A Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols. If you will remember, last year we gathered for one service at 9:00 AM and came together to listen to God's Holy Word and sing Carols during this festive season. Many are aware of Advent Lessons and Carols, but few of us have had exposure to Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols. This year we will hold the second annual Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols. Like last year, we will have one service at 9:00 AM on Sunday December 26th, the First Sunday of Christmas.



Prayer Chain

Just a reminder to those who would be comforted by specific, concentrated prayer from St. Andrew's. Our dedicated group of parishioners want to pray with you. Give Jack and Priscilla Andrews a call and they will get in touch with the rest of us to hold you close to our hearts in prayer for 24 hours.

For those currently in the chain, this is the order for contact:

Jack and Priscilla Andrews 978.448.5273

Rena Gagne 978.448.9303

John Ferrillo 978.772.1898

Rhonda Cotton 978.456.8680

Jane Rockwell 978.263.8323

Susan Leeming 978.456.3397

Scott Baker cell 978.505.1310 (church 978.772.2615, home 978.597.3413)

Nancy Brown 978.456.8489

For those desiring to pray for others, contact any member above to be included in the chain.

Evensong Every Sunday in Advent

Many of you may remember that we have held Choral Evensong during both Advent and Lent. This year we are pleased to announce that we will be offering this beautiful service each Sunday of Advent. Evensong is a remarkable service of music, contemplation, and mystery.

Each Sunday of Advent we will begin at 6:00 PM in the church. Evensong lasts approximately 45 minutes. Following the service we will have a simple soup, bread, and cheese dinner in the Peabody room. Please make place to join in this remarkable service as we prepare for the coming of the Christ child.

The Report of the Lambeth Commission, continued

- Unilateral conservative retaliation by schism and 'border-crossing' (the AmiA of Pawleys Island is cited specifically) is equally condemned as damaging to unity
- The Episcopal Church is asked to apologize for its actions
- Until such apologies are offered, the bishops (including Presiding Bishop Griswold) who participated in Eugene Robinson's consecration are asked to 'withdraw themselves from functions within the Anglican Communion'
- A moratorium on future election and consecration of persons living in same-sex relationships is called for
- Finally, a 'covenant' is to be formulated expressing that all constituent members of the Anglican Communion must make mutual rather than unilateral decisions on issues of such magnitude. Failure to sign this covenant would result in 'walking different paths.'"

This is a long document, over 100 pages. The above offers the only briefest outline of the crisis and the Report's recommendations regarding it. In the 6 weeks since its release, speculation on what will happen next has been hurtling throughout the world. The Episcopal House of Bishops meets in January. How will they respond to the recommendations? A majority of the Primates have declared themselves "not in communion" or in "impaired communion" with ECUSA. What will happen when they meet in Ireland in February?

If you wish to read the Windsor Report in its entirety, you can download it from www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004. If you're not up to 100 pages, try "A Guide to the Windsor Report," which can be found at <http://www.AmericanAnglican.org/News/News.cfm?ID=1244&c=21>. We might even consider using this Guide for an Advent discussion group, asking ourselves the question, "What are we at St. Andrew's able or supposed to do about the issues facing the larger church following the events of General Convention 2003, and now, the Windsor Report?"

Any interest?

Susan Leeming (978) 456-3397

"By loving or hating another, I cause the other in some measure to become that which I see in him or her. My love is creative just as my hatred is destructive. Loving humility is a terrible force whenever we give up anything or suffer anything - not with a sense of bitterness, but willingly and out of love. This makes us not weaker but stronger ..."

Kallstos Ware

The Report of the Diocesan Convention, continued

Resolutions:

- On fair and equitable clergy and lay employees' salaries and benefits (passed unanimously)
- On renewing financial support for the Anglican Communion's struggle against AIDS in Africa (passed unanimously)
- On inviting all congregations to contribute 0.7% of their annual budgets in support of international development (passed unanimously)
- On the Episcopal Council of Indigenous Ministries (withdrawn)
- On the National Single Payer Health Care System (tabled)

A reception in honor of Bishop Shaw's 10 years as Bishop was held at the end of the day. A diocesan mission strategy goal is to place clergy assistants in urban congregations. The first such assistant is already at St. Stephen's, Lynn. Grace Church, Lawrence, will see another by the end of the year, and by June of 2005 a third will be in place. \$270,000 has been raised to date to fund this program, and we are asked to continue its funding in honor of Bishop Shaw.

The Rev. Bonnie A. Perry, Rector of All Saints on Chicago's North Side, was Saturday's main speaker. She delivered an inspiring and enthusiastically received talk on the rejuvenation of her church (its motto: "A rising church for the risen Christ"). Calling herself a feminist, lesbian, and "proudly on the liberal side" ("a conservative congregation wasn't going to work for me"), she gave the Convention examples of her evangelistic outreach: "create liturgies that increase the number of days that non-church people can attend," e.g., blessing of the animals, a champagne feast on High Holy Days, a Wake-the-Dead All Saints' Day celebration, complete with Dixieland band. To loud applause, it was announced that a videotape of her speech will be sent to each congregation.

Following a Celebration of the Holy Eucharist, which included the Great Thanksgiving from "Enriching Our Worship," a 1997 collection of supplemental liturgical materials, and the offertory hymn "As a Fire is Meant for Burning" (. . . "Not to preach our creeds or customs, but to build a bridge of care, we join hands across the nations, finding neighbors everywhere"), the 2004 Diocesan Convention was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Leeming, St. Andrew's delegate

Notes from "The Verge"

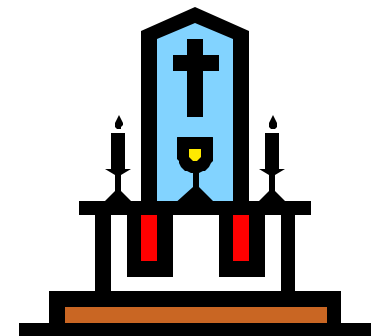
Training notes: On Thursday November 18th, we held the first of hopefully many training sessions for acolytes. This session was focused on the Holy Eucharist, Rite II liturgy and was attended by both our 10:30, Rite II and our 8:00, Rite I acolytes. The appreciation of the entire parish goes out to all who serve as acolytes and a special thank you goes out to those who either attended Thursday or who made the effort to contact me and make other arrangements. I look forward to working with your busy schedules to find a time to go through this training with each of you. Remember, this is required of all Rite II acolytes. Any Sunday, after the 10:30 service is a fine time to run through the training for 20 minutes or so. I look forward to hearing from each of you.

A note to ushers and oblation bearers: During our 10:30 service, I notice the occasional confusion as to when the oblations should be brought forward. The Epistle Torch is the cue! At the beginning of the second to last stanza of the Offertory hymn you will notice him/her move from the pew, get the collection plate and then move forward to the altar rail. The Gospel Torch will also come to the altar rail on the Gospel side and the Crucifer will be in position behind the Gospel Torch. The oblations can begin moving forward any time after the Epistle Torch is in place at the altar rail. The money offerings are the first in line and are given to the Epistle Torch. The bread and wine offerings are next and are given to the Gospel Torch. The Loaves and Fishes offering is last in the procession and is given to the Crucifer. Again, let the Epistle Torch be your cue – she/he has been trained to do so!

A call to the acolyte ministry? St. Andrews can always use more acolyte help. There is a minimum age requirement of 8 years old but NO maximum! If you feel the call to this important ministry, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincere appreciation to all,
Your fellow servant in Christ,

John Petracca, Verger (978-697-3513)



December 2004

St. Andrew's Church

Tel: (978) 772-2615

Office Hours: Monday 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Tu - Fri 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

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