

Hopeful and Quiet Advent Prepares Us for God's Arrival

The Rev. Dr. Bob Friend

If the truth be known, I have some ambivalent feelings about Advent and Christmas that I very seldom let come to the surface of my psyche. Christmas time is the feast day of the birth of our Lord. Surely, it is a time for celebration, to pull out all the stops and let the good times roll. And yet there is something inside of me that is conscious of the pain and suffering in our world that is very hesitant about the frenetic, merry pace of Christmas we have adopted in our contemporary culture. A few weeks ago, I spied in the newspaper an article about getting ready for Christmas. It offered very detailed lists about who to give gifts to, how to shop, how to get presents in the mail on time, how to clean the house for holiday visitors, how to prepare holiday foods, how to have parties. In other words, it was an attempt to help people from getting overwhelmed by the extra work and expectations of the holiday. "This is just what I need!" I thought to myself and meant to cut the article out but lost it in the busyness of the season. The other thought I had was, "How should I prepare in a spiritual way for Christmas?" I must say I am learning to cherish Advent more and more every year even if it puts me out of step with the popular culture.

I knew a priest who put on his door during Advent a sign that read, SLOW DOWN, QUIET PLEASE, IT'S AD-

Servant Sunday

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VENT. It was his way of not getting caught up in the rush to Christmas which in secular terms is a day of selfishness, of receiving presents to make our lives more comfortable and pleasant when the real meaning of Christmas is one of hope for a world lost in sin and sadness. Christmas is really for the brokenness of the world.

Advent is a time of hopeful waiting. The prophet Isaiah predicted the coming of a Messiah 700 years before a holy child was born in Bethlehem. Advent is a time of pregnant expectation. Long ago when I was in seminary I remember visiting the Chapel of the Advent at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington D.C. In their chapel there is a wonderful statue of a pregnant Mary which is actually the lectern that holds the Word of God. The symbolism is pointed and striking. To see this pregnant teenage girl holding the sacred book is almost startling. This is not the mindset of the secular world. Here we see the depth of the season of Advent in tangible form.

Advent is about hope for the future wrapped up as a child. We live in an age which has much darkness. It is difficult to be optimistic about the future. When

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Find us online all the time:





From the Rector's Desk

A Holy Mess

*The Rev. Randolph Marshall
Hollerith, Rector*

I had a wonderful moment this past summer in the most unlikely of locations. Near the end of our vacation, my family and I found ourselves crammed together for two nights in one small hotel room. This kind of togetherness used to be fun when the kids were small, but with Eliza at 17 and Marshall at 20, what had once been cozy family bonding looked like it was going to be an overcrowded and miserable experience. With two beds, a roll away cot and multiple suitcases in the room, there was barely any place to step and absolutely no sense of personal space. But on the second night, as we all fell exhausted into our beds, a wonderful thing happened. Maybe we were just tired and punchy or maybe we were excited about getting out of that room the next day and going home, but, as we lay there and talked, we began to laugh. I have no idea what we were talking about and even less idea what we were laughing about, but for over an hour we talked and laughed – it was perfect. I have to say that out of everything we did on vacation, that moment with my family was by far the best and most priceless of memories.

As we enter this holiday season of endless planning and almost endless stress, what I wish for all of us is more unplanned moments of joy and laughter. After all, there was nothing fancy about the manger in Bethlehem that first Christmas. There was only basic shelter and a young couple celebrating the birth of a child. They didn't have much and as a result they didn't need much to know the blessing of that holy

moment.

Perhaps we try too hard during the holidays. We want everything to be perfect for our family and friends, but it rarely is. People and situations are always beyond our control. The ideal Thanksgiving and Christmas are nothing more than the mythological creations of our childhood innocence. They don't exist. All we really have are imperfect moments filled with imperfect people.

But isn't that the story of our faith? The Christ child was born in a barn surrounded by farm animals and simple shepherds. His mother was an unwed teenager and his father was a poor carpenter. They were far from home and essentially alone in the world. Yet, those imperfect people in an imperfect situation ushered God's most perfect gift into the world. A King was born that night far from the courts of royalty and the palaces of wealth and ease.

For some reason, God likes the messiness of human life. The Gospels are stories of God coming to be with us right in the midst of our human mess. Maybe we should expect God to show up in our own lives in exactly the same way. Maybe encountering God during the holidays happens best when we loosen our grip a little and just accept the fact that events will never go as planned. After all, don't those precious unplanned moments of joy and laughter happen best when our guards are down and we aren't expecting them?

So let's raise our glasses and make a toast to the messy holidays. They probably won't work out as planned and that

is as it should be. But in their midst, may we all experience profound moments of joy and laughter. May we be blessed to see God in the imperfections of ourselves and our loved ones. May we encounter God in the unplanned and the unexpected.

And in the midst of it all, may we know deep in our hearts that Emmanuel has come, that God is with us.

Blessings,

Advent and Christmas

Special Services

Sunday, December 6

Advent Lessons and Carols 5:00 p.m.

Monday, December 21

Our Christmas Hope 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 24

Family Eucharist 4:00 p.m.

Festival Eucharist 6:00 p.m.

Selections from *Messiah* 10:30 p.m.

Festival Eucharist 11:00 p.m.

Friday, December 25

Christmas Day 10:00 a.m.

Sundays, December 27 and January 3

Christmas I, Christmas II 10:00 a.m.

Events

Saturday, December 5

Advent Retreat 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 20

Christmas Pageant 5:00 p.m.

Office Closed

Thursday-Monday, December 24-28

Friday-Monday, January 1 - January 4



Mark Whitmire, Director of Music
 Virginia Whitmire, Organist and Choir Director

Sabbatical Report

We enjoyed a fabulous sabbatical this summer. It was absolutely everything we could have hoped for, beginning with a fantastic Texas Hoedown. Our sincerest thanks go to all the friends who helped put together a great party, especially: Elizabeth Cabell Jennings, Ellen Buoyer, Fran McDermott, Anne Rawls and Diane Wright. We were so very touched by the great turnout. We were especially moved by the many children who came.



Our Sabbatical began in London on June 15 and was first focused on professional development. We spent two weeks at the Aldeburgh Music Festival, founded by the composer Benjamin Britten, which takes place in the concert hall that he built near his home and at nearby churches each year in Suffolk, on the North Sea.

We attended a concert almost every day, plus seminars and lectures on a variety of musical topics. The experience was especially emotional since Britten was the subject of my doctoral dissertation and much of my research took place in the Britten Library. This was my first return in thirty years and Virginia's first visit.



Britten window in Aldeburgh parish Church, depicting scenes from three of his Church Parables.

In daytrips, we attended Evensong at Norwich Cathedral, King's College Cambridge and at Worcester Cathedral, where St. James's Choir will sing next summer.

We went to London where we attended Evensong at Westminster Abbey (our first time back since St. James's Choir was in residence in 2006), St. Paul's Cathedral and the Temple Church.

Our next stop was Salzburg, Austria, birthplace of Mozart. There I met some of my college singers from NoVa who performed at the famed Mozarteum and sang a Mozart mass at the Salzburg Cathedral. Virginia really enjoyed that our hotel played the *Sound of Music* 24/7.

We took the train to Vienna to enjoy great food (though it's not a great place to be a vegetarian). We enjoyed the art, particularly the Albertini Museum. I enjoyed running in the

gardens of the Belvedere and we made visits to the magnificent St. Stephen's Cathedral. We toured the Vienna State Opera House where I stood in for the role of Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

The second part of our sabbatical was time to rest, recharge and visit old friends and family. It was a special treat that our younger daughter Elizabeth was able to join us. We flew to Denver on July 15, rented a car and drove south to my uncle's cabin in the mountains near Trinidad enjoying the mountain air and beautiful scenery, along with some fishing and hiking for three days. Our next stop was Santa Fe, New Mexico – a favorite place, where Virginia and I spent time when we were



first married. We especially enjoyed The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.

From New Mexico we drove to Palm Desert, California, to visit friends. There we took refuge from the intense heat by spending time in the pool and taking the aerial tram from sea level to more than 8000 feet up San Jacinto Peak where it was very cool. We also visited friends in Huntington Beach and Santa Barbara.



Virginia and Mark outside Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, NM.

We then flew to Texas for our annual sojourn to see our family, who are spread throughout Texas and Oklahoma. Our older daughter, Brie, was able to join us at last for the final week of our sabbatical which we spent in the Outer Banks. We offer our deepest thanks to Randy, the vestry and the Endowment Board for making our sabbatical possible. It was a wonderful, spiritual and truly restful Sabbath. We are ready to begin our next 20 years!

Ministry



*The Rev. Hilary Streever,
Associate Rector*

Light, Laughter...and Darkness

*Have a holly-jolly Christmas! Snow! Trees
decked with sparkly things! Carol! Gifts! Lights!
Family! Friends!*

The joy of Christmas invites us with excitement and energy to a season of light and laughter, of hope, love and expectation. It is truly a holy and beautiful time of year. Yet with that joy and sacredness come busy-ness and stress, which can occlude the sense of love, wonder, awe and worship that make the birth of Our Lord sacred and holy.

In past seasons of Advent, I have reflected in my prayer and preaching on how the growing darkness of the nights and shortness of days are offset – even reveal – the growing brightness of the Advent Wreath, leading to the brilliance of the Christ-light in the midst of the longest nights of the year. This year, however, I feel God calling me to enter the darkness: the darkness of being hidden in God; the darkness and warmth found under the wings of a loving God; that place of comfort, of quiet, of divine embrace, of retreat into God that lies below the jubilation, beyond the songs and the twinkling lights, beneath the laughter. Like a bear drawn to its dark warm den, I am drawn to a spiritual hibernation of the soul, to a place where my soul may rest in God. Deeper, quieter, down down down...where all that can be heard is the soft whisper of the Holy Spirit's voice...and the heartbeat of the holy infant. There, in the dark and gentle sway and hold of the blessed

womb, I rest with the small one, the glow of his light tenderly illuminating my soul laid bare.

*Have a holly jolly Christmas! Snow! Trees
decked with sparkly things! Carol! Gifts! Lights!
Family! Friends!*

For the brightness and clamor of Christmas will not cease. But resting in the darkness with God for even a few moments a day grounds me as I pass through the beautiful chaos of the season, allowing me to see and experience it with eyes and ears open without being swept away by it.

Grace and peace,

Hilary

WomanKind2016

February 26 and 27, 2016, we will again host WomanKind – a unique and powerful event that offers women an opportunity for introspection in a community with a mutual interest to explore the mysteries of our faith. WomanKind doesn't preach – it invites participants to search their souls for a deeper understanding and peace with themselves and our world. The theme is "Who Cares? Cultivating Compassion for the Saint, the Sinner, and the Self," with keynote speaker, Nadia Bolz-Weber, and preacher Becca Stevens, who will lead the worship service. Workshops will feature Nicole Unice (from HOPE Church), UVA's Nichole Flores, author Jill Baughan, and others.

More at <https://www.facebook.com/womankind.richmond> and www.womankindrichmond.com.



Bolz-Weber



Stevens



Flores



Unice



Baughan



*The Rev. Carmen Germino,
Associate Rector*

I will, with God's help

Last year, our dear friends Leigh and Andy asked Matt and me to be godparents for their son Cullen. We were humbled and thrilled by this request and, last winter, we went down to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Chattanooga, TN for the big day. Here at St. James's, I'd had the privilege of instructing dozens of parents and godparents about Holy Baptism in the Episcopal tradition, and it is always such a joy. But I had never actually been a godparent before...wow, what a responsibility! As Celebrant, there have been plenty of times when I have asked the baptismal candidates' sponsors: "Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is brought up in the Christian faith and life?" And as many times as I have reaffirmed my own baptismal vows, those promises took on a new sense of weight as the tables were turned and I made them on little Cullen's behalf.

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Those are some huge, lofty, and downright crazy promises to make! What a responsibility! If left to meet all of these expectations on my own, I would surely fail daily. Fortunately, we are not expected to accomplish all of these things without assistance. This assurance is built into the response found in the Book of Common Prayer:

I will, with God's help.

We have God to help us...thank God! Indeed, God is helping Matt and me to take our role as godparents very seriously, just as I urge godparents at St. James's to do. We pray for Cullen (and his parents and big brother Cabell) regularly. We have begun collecting some special items to send him for Advent and Christmas: a child's Crèche, an Advent calendar, a book telling the story of the Nativity. We plan to always send him something on the anniversary of his baptism and as he grows, we will do everything we can to nurture his faith. It's a weighty responsibility, and we'll surely fall short at times, but it is too important to disregard.

As we begin a new church year and make our way through the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and Lent, give some thought to how you are living into the promises made at your Baptism, or the Baptism of your child or godchild. How is your prayer life these days? How are you supporting and nurturing the faith of those around you? When did

you last take stock of your sins in Confession, and then allow God's forgiveness to wash over you? Are you seeking and serving Christ in ALL persons, or would your answer be closer to "most persons" or "some persons"?

If the answers to these questions are not what you think they ought to be, fear not! Take heart, for God always stands ready to help us. All we have to do is ask.

Faithfully,

Carmen

Ministry

... for Youth and Young Adults



Mary Beth Abplanalp,
Director of Youth and
Young Adult Ministry

The Power of Retreats

Some of my best and most vivid memories of middle school are from church youth retreat weekends. I still picture everything – the adult leaders' cars lined up in the back of the parking lot, the wooden bunk beds at the 4-H center lodge where we stayed, being asked to read the psalm during our candlelit service of Compline, and the smell of burnt pancakes in the air before breakfast.

I find it amazing that I still remember, with such detail, an annual weekend event, and yet I don't remember where my locker was at school...which I visited multiple times a day for an entire year!

Churches offer retreat weekends – for youth, adults, or mixed-ages – because of how powerful they can be. When we step away from the rhythm and routine of our daily lives and enter a new environment, our minds have the chance to rest and our senses come alive. This allows the time and space to notice how the Holy Spirit is at work in each of our lives.

In youth ministry, retreats are essential for developing friendships and offering community in what can be a lonely teenage world. We unplug from social media, and phone entirely, and plug into group games, worship, cook teams, skit night, and even some unstructured free time! Throughout the weekend we gather for conversations and activities intended to help us explore the life God



Youth and leaders at the PYM Senior High Retreat the weekend of November 6 - 8 at Shrine Mont.

intended us to live. It's amazing how powerful it can be for a teenager to spend 48 hours focused on their faith and church community.

Love ya! Mean it!

Help Celebrate Christmas at PPDC

Ho, Ho, Ho! Merry Christmas! St. James's Young Adult Ministry invites parish families to join us at the Peter Paul Development Center (PPDC) Christmas Party on Saturday, December 19 from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. We will deliver Angel Tree gifts, host craft stations, serve refreshments, and offer a photo booth with a very special visitor in a red suit! Additional sign up information is available on the church website. Please contact Louise Bald to learn more and get involved (louise.bald@gmail.com).

2016 Youth Retreats

SNOWFEST:

February 19 - 21, 2016

Formerly Ski Trip, this is for 6th-12th graders and adult youth leaders. We stay in winterized cabins at Shrine Mont and can ski, snowboard, or snow tube at nearby Bryce Resort. *Early bird registration (\$25 discount) due by Jan. 10, Final registration deadline Feb. 7 (but space is limited).*

PYM Shrine Mont Retreats

Parish Youth Ministries (PYM) is a committee of high school students from around our diocese who plan and lead retreat weekends for their peers at Shrine Mont. Over 150 youth attend these fun-filled weekends!

**6th & 7th Grade PYM Weekend:
April 15 - 17, 2016**

**8th Grade PYM Weekend
May 13 - 15, 2016**



Becky Page
Director of Children's Ministries

When “family” is an action word

Last spring I had the opportunity to attend a conference entitled “Do What Matters” where I learned the term “familying”. I thought to myself, “Isn’t family a noun?” Dr. Nancy Going, the Interim Executive Director of Vibrant Faith and the presenter that day shared her thoughts about family as a verb and the newly created word “familying”. The idea is that families extend beyond our nuclear families to include extended families, our church families, and beyond.

Dr. Going defines ‘familying’ as the acts of expressing care, providing support, sharing power, challenging growth, and expanding possibilities. In a recent article entitled “Are You Familying?” from the Vibrant Faith blog, she shared her thoughts about this new way to learn and grow together within our church.

We love the word “familying” because it expresses really important ideas about how faith is formed. It points us to a process of faith formation instead of an outcome. It tells us that this work is larger than a nuclear family: single sets of parents and their children, think extended families. It reminds us that family happens with people who are related by blood, and, or related by faith.

It can help us focus our ministries on helping people develop spiritual relationships over time rather than on

curriculum. We have developed a working definition:

“Familying” is the relational process that the Spirit uses to form faith. And we believe that God intended us – as Church – to family, and also intended families to family. In fact, when you look at the biblical story from beginning to end, you see story after story of people who are related by blood and faith, “familying”. Familying changes every-

a spiritual process. See what the Spirit begins doing as you begin to notice.”

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky".

*Familying changes
everything about what
we do in ministry, and
how we do it.*

thing about what we do in ministry, and how we do it.

Can you think of a time in your life when you were “familied” and the impact that had on you? Can you think of someone you have had the opportunity to family? How can we in our own families, in our extended families, in our church family, and in our greater community, offer care, power, growth, and possibilities to others? Just as each of our families is different, the ways we can and will family others will be different. Dr. Going reminds us “that familying is

Our Fast, Festival



(left and above) There was fellowship, fun and food for all ages at the annual Parish Picnic held on September 13 at the Gottwald family property near the James River.



(left) helped U.C. me Euc



(above and below) The Children's and Cherub Choirs led the Festival of St. Francis service where our animal friends were blessed.



(left) On tre tifi at wa wi S'



(left) The West Gallery Choir and guests delivered the October 18 Celtic Mass with music from the Irish band U2.

ve and Fun Fall



(left and above) Our first Servant Sunday, held at St. Catherine's School due to the CI World Cycling Championships, packed tables for Stop Hunger Now amidst our Charist and Missions Fair.



(above clockwise from left) The Feast of St. James's that is our festive annual gathering of thanks and gratitude provided opportunities for fellowship, food, fun and celebration among friends at the Science Museum of Virginia.



(left and above) Our annual retreat in the beautiful fall foliage at Shrine Mont was infused with prayer and more..



(above) Baptism banners led the procession on All Saints Day.



(above) Baptism Guides is a new effort to involve godparents and parents.



(above) Over 150 attended the Youth Ministry Kickoff in October.



(above) National Cathedral's Marion Zimmerman taught floral design in November.



Nancy Warman,
Director of Servant Ministry

Ministry Matters

Ministry matters, inside the church and out in the world. It matters during the holiday season and throughout the year. Your ministry matters and it makes a difference in the lives of those whom you embrace. Thank you for serving and for allowing God's love to break through in the opening of gifts, in the warmth of shelter, in the stability of housing, in the embrace of a child, and in responding to one another's needs.

Christmas Giving Tree

Return gifts to Valentine Hall no later than Sunday, December 13.

Those participating in our Giving Tree ministry have the opportunity to provide gifts for children and for seniors who are served by the Peter Paul Development Center, and/or to provide monetary gifts to my in-house emergency fund to assist families in need. Wish list ornaments remain available through Sunday, December 6.

CARITAS Intake continues through December 19. Make it a family affair and come to serve as the hospitality team to welcome CARITAS guests each evening, 4:45-6:00 p.m. as they wait for a bus to take them to an overnight congregation. CARITAS staff are present at all times and manage the intake process. Contact lay leader Margaret Corwin at corwincompany@verizon.net/673-3956.

CARITAS SHELTER WEEK
APRIL 9-16, 2016
MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!

We give thanks, O God, for the light that shines in the darkness, for the Christ who came into our world, and who uses us to be instruments of His glory and love and hope.
AMEN.

NEW IN-REACH MINISTRIES

Just call DAN!

Television advertising tells us that those who have electrical house issues may call Michael & Sons for assistance. Well, did you know that those at St. James's who have need for minor house repairs, yard work, snow shoveling, changing light bulbs, hanging pictures, help with checkbooks, organizing health documents, and other minor household needs may call DAN!

Doers Action Network is a new ministry of church members helping church members! This team provides in-reach ministry to those who are members of our St. James's family, and especially to those who are financially or physically unable to care themselves for these particular needs. If you have such needs, just call DAN! Lay leader Harry Warner will be happy to receive your call at 357-8157/hhwarner@msn.com. For those who would like to add your name to the DAN team of "doers" to be "on call" for requests, please contact Harry Warner or me.

Professionals in Action (POA)

Endorsed by the vestry Service Commission, this team of professionals stands ready to offer guidance in the arena of one's expertise to assist Director of Servant Ministry/Social Worker Nancy Warman who supports church members or community people who are challenged with important life issues. This is not a referral service, but a network of professionals who staff can rely on for questions pertaining to a given area of need and expertise. Periodically a need arises within our congregation, or in the larger community, for help with a particular issue: someone needs a second opinion on a house repair job, advice on how to transition a relative into long term care to know what type attorney to call or help with an accounting issue or tax law. The Service Commission hopes you will add your name and expertise to our team of "doer" professionals. If you have questions or would like to join this ministry team, please contact me at 355-1779 ext. 333/nwarman@doers.org.

Nancy Warman

Deepen Your Advent with a Daily Photo

This year for the season of Advent, you are invited to take part in #Advent-Word, a daily Advent Reflection and Global Advent Calendar made up of digital images from participating Christians around the world. Our friends at Society of Saint John the Evangelist organize this project to help individuals and churches deepen their experience of Advent as we await the arrival of the Christ Child. It is a wonderful way to enter into the true meaning of Advent, a very special season which is almost entirely ignored by secular culture. Here's how to participate:

Sign up to receive the daily email reflection and prompt from the brothers at SSJE (<http://adventword.org/signup/>). Advent began November 29, but you can still sign up.

Each day during Advent, read the daily email reflection. Notice the word of the day. As you go about your day, use your phone camera to snap a photo that somehow captures, expresses, or resonates with the word of the day for you. Share your photo on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook to help create a Global Advent Calendar. Caption each photo with three hashtags: #beyedoers #Adventword AND the word of the day. Make sure that there is a space between the tags. At the right is a graphic of all the words. For example, on Sunday, November 29, you would have posted your photo on Instagram, Twitter, or the SSJE Facebook page with these hashtags: #beyedoers #Adventword #WakeUp. Using these hashtags allows your photos to be included in the Global Advent Calendar and on doers.org.



#AdventWord			
Nov 29 #WakeUp	Dec 12 #Wait		
Nov 30 #Proclaim	Dec 13 #Wonder		
Dec 1 #Give	Dec 14 #Accept		
Dec 2 #Forgive	Dec 15 #Listen		
Dec 3 #Repent	Dec 16 #Invite		
Dec 4 #Worship	Dec 17 #Desire		
Dec 5 #Believe	Dec 18 #Prepare		
Dec 6 #Care	Dec 19 #Hope		
Dec 7 #Be	Dec 20 #Look		
Dec 8 #Surprise	Dec 21 #Experience		
Dec 9 #Ask	Dec 22 #Pray		
Dec 10 #Dare	Dec 23 #Reflect		
Dec 11 #Shine	Dec 24 #Receive		

For those who only use Facebook, you'll need to post your photos directly on the AdventWord Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AdventWordOrg/>. Instagram and Twitter users can just post their Adventword photos and hashtags like they would for any other post. Watch the Global Advent Calendar (<http://adventword.org/>) grow each day as new images, including your own, are added from around the world!

Grief and Sadness Need Not Overwhelm Your Holidays - Here's Help

Advent Grief and Loss Group

December 2, 9 and 16, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.,
Michaux House, Room 205, facilitated by
Catherine Ferguson, LCSW, of our parish.

The holiday season can remind us of losses both old and new, and grief can feel profound and overwhelming. Talking in a warm, supportive, and confidential environment with others who have experienced losses can help. Join us and experience:

Healing – Talking leads to better health, emotionally and physically

Hope – Seeing others who have survived and learned ways to cope brings hope

Practical solutions – Life after a loss can pose new tasks or challenges for which others often have practical advice
Register online or by calling Gina at

355-1779, ext. 315 no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday before each Wednesday session. We must have 4 to convene.

Our Christmas Hope

Come rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing..

On Monday, December 21, at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary, we will offer a service for those who struggle during the holidays. The days leading up to Christmas are generally associated with happy times, parties and festivities. Yet many people find the holidays to be long, dark nights of the soul, as they struggle with life challenges. You are invited to this special service on this darkest night of the year to remember that God dwells where we dwell, in our joys and in our sorrows...and that tomorrow, there will be just a little more light in the day.

ADVENT *continued from cover*

people talk about what lies ahead, it is always about terrorist violence, global warming, conflicts around the world, doom and gloom. There does not seem to be much to look forward to. We must remind ourselves again and again that the same God who was active in the past is active in our lives even now and will be there for us in the future. Isn't that what Advent and Christmas are really about? I look forward to lighting the Advent wreath candles and singing the Advent hymns with you as we prepare for Christmas.



Gratitude

by Debbie Lickey

Executive Director, St. James's Children's Center

In the last month I have begun a personal, conscious practice of writing about one thing I am grateful for on a daily basis. I began this practice because, like many of us, I realized that I was walking around with a 'to do' list in my head too much of the time. A 'to do' list will often nudge me into thinking about all the things that have not come to be which can, in its very essence, create a sense of unease or wanting. Creating a gratitude list nudges me in the other direction. To take a few minutes to see what is going well in the world right now, or what has happened in the past of which benefits I can appreciate now, makes a significant difference in my perspective.

I decided to be very genuine about this process and not make any preconceived ideas about my state of gratitude, but rather to contemplate each day and find one thing to be grateful about. It was a delight to me, after 38 years into my career in early childhood, that the first 3 of my 4 genuine feelings of gratitude were about St. James's Children's Center. One could interpret this as a form of being too involved in a work life, but I know this is not what this was about. Instead it was a delightful experience in understanding how fortunate I am to be in the position of the Director of such a unique educational community and opportunity in Richmond.

On one of my first days of this practice I reflected on my gratitude in being able to work in an environment in which a part of my day involves dancing with three year olds. In many ways...need I



say more? But to explain further, the real blessing is that the St. James's teachers have infused the day with joy for each of these young children and for the rest of us that is expressed outwardly, in the delight of dance. This is not a dance that is orchestrated or planned, yet it incorporates listening skills, connection with others, concept development, gross motor development, all done in a joyful manner.

I won't go into every aspect of my own personal gratitude for St. James's Children Center, but I find it timely in this season in which we look back at the year, to consider our blessings and to celebrate our connections, to express my deep gratitude to you, the members of the congregation of St. James's Church for the gift of a truly unique education experience for the youngest members of our Richmond community. It is hard to express what an enormous difference it makes in the life of one child. In Janu-

ary the Center will begin its 30th year as an institution in Richmond. As a result, you will have made a difference approximately 2,000 lives. Past students and their parents are returning now to share with us how their start at St. James's made a difference in their lives as individuals and families. These prior students are returning as college graduates, professionals, even teachers themselves, and they are bringing in their own little ones to continue the journey.

That's a lot to be grateful for. Thank you St. James's Church members and supporters, this couldn't happen without you.

Always in Partnership,

Debbie



Successful Servant Sunday Feeds Children, Ministries and Participants

Thanks to all who participated in Servant Sunday on September 20th at St. Catherine's! The event was a great success, with over 450 Doers in attendance and a joyful spirit throughout the whole morning.

We can report that the 20,088 meals we packed with Stop Hunger Now are headed to Zambia in southern Africa. They will be distributed to 5,500 children in 17 schools which are providing education and nourishment to orphans and vulnerable children every day. Also, our Every Member's Ministry Fair had lots of energy and fellowship, with over 400 sign-ups for new or ongoing servant ministry roles.

Planning for Servant Sunday began in April 2015. Members of the planning committee were: Margaret Bloor, Carmen Germino, John Hart, Russell Lawson, Lucy Meade, Becky Page, Evelyn



Packing meals was a central activity for Servant Sunday

Sutton, Bobbie Ukrop, Nancy Warman, Fontaine Williamson, and Kendal Sibley, committee Chair. Over 150 additional volunteers were engaged in staging the event, including set up, clean up, ushers, LEMs, registration, and the lay leaders who staffed the tables during the Ministry Fair. Thank you all for your enthusiastic support of Servant Sunday. Together, we made a difference! Gratefully,
Carmen Germino & Nancy Warman

Sacred Spaces

by Harry Moore

Michaux House Kitchen

Whenever two or more are gathered, you know great food is at the center of any event at St. James's. Countless souls are eager participants in the preparation and serving of delicious meals and snacks.

At the heart of any great dish is the kitchen. This wonderful addition to our Michaux renovation is where so many volunteers contribute hours to perfect the bread we break together.

Our kitchen serves both inreach and outreach. Wednesday night dinners, Sunday morning coffee, The Feast, and Mardi Gras make us feel welcome and at home.

The real heavy lifting, though, is



what we do for others outside our church. We supply meals every month through the efforts of four Food Force Teams. These volunteers eagerly contribute their time to help so many less fortunate have a hot meal.

Earthly Matters

by Jerry Green
Stewards of the Earth Committee

Our Integral Ecology

Since becoming involved in the Stewards of the Earth committee, I've realized that while a concern for nature has always been in the back of my mind, the recent issue of climate change is a game changer. There is an urgency to our environmental stewardship because our degradation of the planet is reaching perilous proportions. It is for this reason Pope Francis issued his encyclical this past summer, *Laudato Si', On Care For Our Common Home*. I've spent time studying this eighty-page document, which is addressed to "every person living on this planet," and I'd like to share a concept it introduces: "Integral Ecology." Integral Ecology emphasizes that everything is connected: human systems and ecosystems. We can't separate ourselves or our jobs from nature. Francis writes, *"A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."*

He is hopeful we can change our ways, and ourselves, for the better: *"Spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. The ecological crisis is thus also a summons to a profound interior conversion, whereby the effects of encountering Jesus Christ become evident in one's relationship with one's surrounding world."*

In other words, as mercy, forgiveness, and care were shown to us, we are bound to extend the same to every person, animal, plant, and mineral. Francis is urging us to deepen our notion of "Stewardship" to include an awareness of our interdependence and our communion with all that surrounds us. Where do we start? With what is right in front of us. We look beyond ourselves, to others, just as Christ did, and we respond to the cries we hear.

Stewardship



*Suzanne Hall
Director of Stewardship and
Development*

Clear signs that we are led by the Spirit

I have three stories to tell.

The first is virtual. Out of the blue, Randy received an out-of-state email from a mysterious new friend.

“For some time, when I am not at my brick and mortar church, I have joined St. James’s services via the internet. There is such an abundance of God in this church. I believe this is due in great measure to your leadership as rector. Your sermons always apply so aptly to the scripture “Be doers of the word and not hearers only.” There is so much God-rich activity at St. James’s, and I have long felt a need to give back. However, I was not sure what relationship I had to the church as only a virtual attendee. I decided this is at least worth as much to me as my Netflix subscription. This may be a bit goofy but long considered, please do not be offended.”

I responded and began a dialogue with this lovely man who was so moved by our video ministry. I explained Randy’s vision for this new technology and some operational aspects that I had experienced in the early years when I served on the video squad.

But more importantly, he echoed to me the essence of stewardship.

“You cannot know how much I appreciate the warm response from all of you at St. James’s. It’s a privilege, as well as a spiritual responsibility, to give back. And, I’m very glad, even relieved to be able to do this.”

The second is a personal experience. At Servant Sunday at St. Catherine’s, we packaged food for more than 20,000 people in about an hour. I have a rich memory of my role in that elegantly designed assembly process. I received a basket with four bags of dehydrated food about every 30 seconds from seven-year-old Tyndall Hopper. I weighed each one and passed them on to 96-year-old Bob Seiler and his partner Sam Fuller, who then passed the finished bags on to be boxed up for the shipping container.

Being out of our sanctuary reminded us that we are St. James’s no matter where we are, and that all of us, regardless of age, are doers of the word. Clad in ridiculous hair nets, we were the arms, hands and feet of Christ, feeding the hungry.

Third, throughout the Annual Giving campaign, parishioners have shared reflections of being led by the Spirit. Those messages, written from the heart by faithful and generous members give us personal insights into their responses to stewardship. Giving to our church is everyone’s privilege and a part of our faith. We pledge money to St. James’s, to other deserving organizations, and also share our time and talents.

Those reflections have been inspirational, triggering a new pledge from a young family, and personal calls to some of the writers.



I look forward to receiving pledge cards from every member of our parish. No gift is too small, and each gift is important to St. James’s and to you.

Suzanne

Note on Stock and Other Gifts

Especially in the fall, St. James’s becomes the Grand Central Station of checks, stocks, and charges for pledges, programs, memorials and gifts. Please make sure to indicate the purpose for your payment on the check memo line, in the online notes field or in an email. When making a gift of stock to the church, do not depend on your broker to notify us. When making your gift, please send the name of the brokerage firm you used, the transaction date, the name of the stock and number of shares to Poconna Thiel or Suzanne Hall.

The Interview

The Chimes asked Jennifer Sisk, chair of the Mardi Gras for Missions Committee, about the plans for our event next February 9.

Chimes: Tell us what the Mardi Gras for Missions event aims to accomplish.

JS: Mardi Gras for Missions is the number one fundraiser for our Missions program each year. There is no line item for Missions in the church budget, so this event is crucial for our ongoing work of sharing God's love through service throughout the world. With the funds raised at Mardi Gras, the Missions Committee goes to work, planning eight to ten missions in a typical year. The Committee seeks to offer an annual Missions program that will serve those in need both domestically and abroad with work that ranges from construction and yard work to working with children and youth. In 2016, St. James's plans to send teams of adults and youth to serve in New York, North Carolina, Arkansas, Honduras, Cuba, Haiti, Richmond, and beyond.

Chimes: Who is involved and how is the planning going for Mardi Gras?

JS: This event involves an amazing team of up to 100 volunteers! Helping with Mardi Gras is a great entry point



2016 Chair Jennifer Sisk (right) with her 2015 co-chair Sara Cann.

into the vibrant life of St. James's for anyone who wants to meet new folks, get involved in a small or large way, support our dedication to Missions, and have fun. We have a fantastic group of committee chairs who help all of our volunteers jump right in, whether they are helping with registration, decorations, bartending, check-out, or any other part of the event.

Chimes: Anything "new and exciting" that you can reveal ahead of the event?

JS: Our auction committee is hard at work securing some amazing items for both the silent auction and the live auction. Though the specifics on new auction items this year are 'under wraps'

for now, I can promise that the evening will be filled with some of our longtime favorite items (dinners, art, homes and trips) as well as some brand new surprises that you won't want to miss!

Chimes: What do you think people will like best about the event?

JS: Festive and fun fellowship is truly what Mardi Gras For Missions night is about. The food is always especially popular – everyone who comes will have the chance to dine on amazing Creole cuisine, like chicken and sausage gumbo, Louisiana crab cakes, crispy fried oysters, homemade pecan pralines, and more. And watching our emcee Mark Shuford crack jokes is always a treat. But the best part is always the chance to give to Missions while getting something special in return, whether it be the fun evening or walking out with a great live or silent auction item.

Chimes: When is Mardi Gras?

JS: The Mardi Gras for Missions fundraiser always takes place on the evening of Fat Tuesday, the night before Ash Wednesday. We hope that all our parishioners will put February 9, 2016 on their calendar today and make Mardi Gras part of their personal St. James's traditions!



WomanKind for Men: A Forum with Becca Stevens

Raising our Sons to be Advocates and Cultivating a Community of Men to Stand with Survivors

Guys, this Forum is just for you! On Sunday, February 28 at 10:15 a.m. in the Parkinson Room, spend a few minutes in this special workshop with renowned speaker, Becca Stevens, an Episcopal Priest and founder of Thistle Farms, a recovery program for women with histories of prostitution and addiction. In these women's stories lie seeds of compassion and support for all women. Hear Becca share how you

can be an advocate for your partners, daughters, sisters, mothers, friends, and colleagues. Deepen your understanding and be inspired in this forum for men who love and support women, brought to you through the WomanKind 2016 event.



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