

THE BELLRINGER

St. Luke's Church

Forest Hills

Advent 2008

SEASONS AND CHANGE

Dear Friends,

How is it that the iced-over puddle arrived so quickly this year? Was the season changing, unnoticed by us, while we were otherwise occupied with electing a new President and concerned about the economy? Changes do seem to come in such a way; that is, with us often unaware. Consider the child who “all of a sudden” is exhibiting adult behavior. Was it really such an overnight phenomenon, or were you for months so busy with work that when you did get home, you were too exhausted to see the signs of change in your son or daughter? Change is all around, all the time. The seasonal changes simply remind us of this reality.

The shift to Advent and another new Christian year at first seems to bring back the familiarity of holidays and Christmas preparations – the certainty of particular family traditions and church rituals which comfort and enrich us, even in anxious times. Yet, things are changing for the church too – not just Saint Luke’s but for the Church in the World. Yes, the more changes we see in the world, the more we might want the certainty that the church will go on as we have known it, for the church to continue as is. Yet, however strong a desire we might have for the “as is,” one need consider that the “as is” is *not* – not in the church, not in the world. Everything is always in a process of change.

Once again, the season is upon us when we offer invitations to our families, friends and

community neighbors: Come to Saint Luke’s; celebrate Christmas with us. But have you noticed how things have changed? There are fewer people in church at Christmas, even though the crowds may seem larger because there are fewer people in church year round. In our own area, there are many fewer Christians resident than ever before. Furthermore, in general, people are doing their initial readings of a new situation or community not by an in-person visit but by an on-line exploration.

Yes, we have to continue offering invitations to Saint Luke's, as well as to be prepared with a warm welcome and a process for including new members in the congregation. But there is a whole world we haven't really entered into yet. Saint Luke’s, and the Church at large, need to become more engaged in a creative and strategic use of the internet as a way to proclaim the Gospel. I don't say this because I am an internet devotee. Rather, we need to recognize the internet not just as the communications technology it has become but as a means to see the changes that have taken place in the ways people virtually connect.

In early American times, churches were built on the town square where people had commerce with each other. Today, however, things have changed. To a significant degree, the public square is now a virtual reality. Many people take their walks, do their exploring and musing and thinking through internet connections. Therefore, even issuing the invitation on-line is not enough. The internet is not just a place to advertise but for the church to express and circulate the Gospel of Christ.

Look at the way so-called mega churches have set their message in flow to people long before those people ever set foot in the church building. In fact, many of those audiences never do set foot in the actual, physical church structure, and this is one of the changes we need to be thinking about. What we currently understand as "church growth" is going to need some rethinking – rethinking that involves our starting to actually put our church program and message on-line in ways that boggle the imagination, and to recognize the change that has taken place. Our "membership" – or a significant portion thereof – might never actually come into our church building. This change is happening "out there" and we need to pay attention.

We cannot wait for people to come into the nave to hear the joyous, loving, inclusive Gospel of Christ preached or our uplifting liturgies celebrated. Our worship space can no longer be thought of just in terms of the beautiful edifice at 85 Greenway South. We need to circulate and herald the good news – not just by invitation but by full-bodied spiritual formation, prayer, evangelism and outreach – through cyberspace. Because anywhere people connect is actually sacred space.

This is a virtual mission field for the Episcopal Church, an opportunity to reach people who might never think of attending church as well as those who want to explore the good reasons before they show up on the doorstep. Imagine it. We can be like angels announcing Good News to hard working 21st Century shepherds out in their various fields. And, when you *do* imagine it, isn't that the way it is supposed to be?

Yes, things certainly are changing, but the changes also seem to be bringing us face to face with continuities – apostolic continuities about the church going out into the world where people are, rather than expecting them to wander into our midst. After all, the church

going out into the world is the virtual and sacred reality of Christ having come into the world, and that's what this change of season is all about.

Happy Advent,

Tom

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CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

Be looking for the Rector's Christmas Letter in the mail. Meanwhile, mark your calendar, noting that Christmas Eve worship begins at 10:00pm on Wednesday, December 24th. Christmas Morning worship will take place at 10:00am.

CHRISTMAS CHEER FOR THE HOMEBOUND

Do you know of someone whose holiday would be brightened by the gift of a holiday plant from Saint Luke's? If so, please let the office know the person's name (and address if he or she is not a parishioner) no later than Wednesday, December 17th, and members of the Inreach Committee will arrange for poinsettias to be delivered.

"DECK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY..."

You will be able to do exactly that when you purchase spectacular bunches of holly grown right here in Saint Luke's own front yard. Please plan to buy yours here rather than elsewhere, because all proceeds will be donated by the Outreach Committee to Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen.

—Joanna Guinther

THE JESSE TREE SPROUTS AGAIN

Jesse was the father of a little shepherd boy from a forgotten family in an obscure, impoverished section of Ancient Judah in Israel. *By the Power of God* the hope of a troubled people was realized in that shepherd boy favored by God to become King David.

SAINT LUKE'S JESSE TREE PROJECT

This Advent, Saint Luke's will once again provide holiday gifts for needy families through the Queens Community House. All parishioners are encouraged to take an ornament/gift tag from the Jesse Tree in the narthex. On each ornament is written the name and age of a child who needs some extra love at Christmas. Your job is to find an appropriate gift, wrap it using the Jesse Tree ornament as a gift tag, and return it to St. Luke's by **Sunday, December 14th**. Next to the name(s) you are taking, please write your name and phone number or e-mail address on the master list so that the Outreach Committee can make sure all gifts come in and no child is disappointed.

We're also looking for "elves" to be standby shoppers the week of December 15th to fill in any gifts that don't arrive in time. And between December 15th and 19th we'll need a driver or two (you don't need a reindeer license!) to transport the gifts from Saint Luke's to the Queens Community House on 62nd Drive. (Note that this is *not* the Forest Hills Community House on Greenway North and Ascan Avenue.) If you're interested or have any questions, please see Joanna Guinther or Jean Tessier, or e-mail Joanna at jbg23@verizon.net.

A few hints to shoppers: sporting equipment and electronic games are good for teenagers; if you buy clothing, err on the large side; if you're not sure about your purchase, enclose a gift receipt in the box. (Reminder: DON'T LOSE THE ORNAMENT. You will need it for your gift tag.)

THE CHRISTIAN NEW YEAR Celebrating Advent with Saint Luke's Church

**"We Are In For a Change"
Advent Scripture Study
Sundays November 30**

and December 7, 14, 21 at 12 Noon

You have heard it said that when a baby is born, the parents are in for a real change.

Well, we are preparing for the birth of Jesus. Are we ready for the changes such a birth brings?

Join in each week for a lively presentation and discussion with leaders Bill Paine, Joyce Egginton, Joe Occhiuto and Lori Sbordone.

*** Also follow on-line. Go to www.stlukesforesthills.org and click on The Rector's Blog ***

THE SUNDAYS OF ADVENT

Advent Sunday, November 30

**The Choral Advent Matins Responsory
Lighting of the Advent Wreath
Rector's Sermon: "Change"**

Advent II, December 7

Festival Youth Choir

Rector's Sermon: "Continuity"

Advent III, December 14

Father Bill Doubleday, Celebrant and Preacher

Advent IV, December 21

"Sing Magnificat"

A Special Choir Offering

Rector's Sermon: "Songs in the Key of Glory"

Caroling Party and Supper begins at 5pm

SAINT LUKE'S FESTIVAL YOUTH CHOIR

Once again we can look forward to a musical offering by young members of our parish as well as youth from the community. On Sunday, December 7th, Saint Luke's Festival Youth Choir will add to the joy of our Advent worship during the 10:30 celebration of the Holy Eucharist. We thank Louise Guinther and Velma Adams for their fine work with the junior choir

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

SAINT LUKE'S NEWEST MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

We warmly welcome confirmands Olivia Smith, Anthony Lenti, Joseph Dinas, and Rowena Chodkowski; and Sal Amato, Chris Dippel, and Gabrielle Tafuro, who were received into the Episcopal Church at the Cathedral of the Incarnation on Saturday, November 1st. The following Sunday, Father Tom's sermon consisted entirely of our new members' personal observations about their faith. May the words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts bring them nearer still to God.

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

On November 2nd, All Saints Sunday, the people of Saint Luke's welcomed Harper Sophie Seton Curran and Alden Thomas Mahon Klemme into the fellowship of Christ's body, the Church, through the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Please keep these children and their parents, Christopher and Ashley Curran, and Joshua and Kristen Klemme, in your prayers. We also give thanks for Benjamin Tafuro, who joined us at the Lord's Table on the occasion of his First Communion.

"GOOD CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, REJOICE WITH HEART AND SOUL AND VOICE"

Warm up your vocal cords and come to Saint Luke's annual Caroling Party on Sunday, December 21. We'll gather at 5:00pm and go caroling around the neighborhood, then return to the church after about an hour (or earlier if we're freezing!) for a potluck supper. Everyone is requested to bring a dish to share, so please

sign up on the sheets provided in the narthex and at coffee hour, indicating whether you'll be contributing a salad, entrée, side dish, or dessert.

MAKE YOUR PRESENTS FELT!

This year it's more important than ever to help those in need this holiday season. Because of the worldwide economic downturn, charitable donations have lessened greatly and food pantries are running out of basic necessities just when increasing numbers of people need assistance. Please consider doing some of your Christmas shopping at Episcopal Relief and Development's "Gifts for Life" catalogue, available in the narthex and in the parish hall, or making a donation to ERD, either on line at www.er-d.org or by sending a check to Episcopal Relief and Development, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017. And don't forget to bring contributions of canned and packaged foods to church on Sunday, December 7th for distribution to our hungry brothers and sisters right here in Queens.

RECTOR EDUCATION TIME AWAY

Tom Reese will be away from December 12th through December 20th on education leave. Though he has finished coursework on his master's program, Tom is now finishing his research and preparing to write. He will return to Saint Luke's in time for the Caroling Party on the 21st.

While the Rector is away, Father Bill Doubleday will be the celebrant on December 14th. The church office will be open as usual Tuesday through Friday from 9:00am to 2:00pm. In case of emergencies outside of regular office hours, please contact Wardens Jonathan Wallin (718-381-7863[h] or 212-916-7849 [w]) or Anne Harte Su (516-333-4299).

AUDITIONS FOR GINGERBREAD PLAYERS' SPRING MUSICAL

Come try out for *Ragtag! or The Mayor's New Suit*, a ragtime riff on the classic story of The Emperor's New Clothes, with music by William Ryden and book and lyrics by Milburn Smith, on Saturday, December 6 from 10:00am to 12:00 noon and Sunday, December 7 from 2:00 to 4:00pm. Auditions will be held in Saint Luke's parish hall. Children age eight and up and adults of any age are welcome. There are lots of featured roles for kids and grownups too, plus wonderful ensemble roles for everyone!

Performances are on March 21, 22, 27, 28, 29 and 30, 2009. We rehearse on Saturdays and Sundays from 2:00 to 5:00pm, beginning in early January. *Please note that there are three mandatory weeknight rehearsals in the week before the opening.* If you have questions, or a conflict with the audition dates, please call the director, Louise Guinther, at 212-769-7082 (day) or 718-268-6292 (evening). We're also looking for backstage assistants, so if you'd like to work on props, build or paint scenery, or be a member of the lighting or stage crews, please contact Louise.

A NOTE OF THANKS TO THE PARISH FROM WARDENS ANNE HARTE SU AND JONATHAN WALLIN

Thank you all for your support of Saint Luke's Church during this 95th Anniversary year. Special thanks go to our spiritual leader, Father Tom and all the members of the Vestry and committee chairs who worked so hard on mission all year. However, there are many who move quietly behind the scenes. (Yes, you know who you are.) And with the help of the calendar, we would like mention a few highlights. Thank you for your work in 2008 during...

January – serenading us into the New Year with the “Die Fledermaus” Gala and bringing joy to many

February – welcoming parishioners with a coffee break after the Sunday 8:30am service

March – teaching classes during Lent; purchasing and delivering Easter plants to the home-bound; practicing special choir selections
April – providing comfort for grieving families and friends with compassion and hospitality then and throughout the year

May – proving that where there's Imaginauction, there's a way, thanks to everyone's support and all the volunteers from extended family and friends

June – honoring us with your service as an acolyte; taking pictures of our church family members and giving the photos to them

July – making sure work on the furnace continued so we wouldn't be cold in the winter; supporting the Wardens during the break-in crisis; fixing a broken window; playing hymns on the piano for 10:30 services while Bill Stokes was on vacation

August – collecting food to feed the hungry, and reaching out to those outside of St. Luke's all year

September – working on Sunday School lesson plans; changing outside lights to keep us safe; trimming shrubbery, raking leaves and cleaning up church and rectory property

October – assembling exhibits and lending precious items, including photos and documents for the 95th Anniversary of Saint Luke's Church; breaking fundraising records (and cleaning up after) the Rummage Sale; helping Father Tom with all those names for All Soul's Day; attending Wings of Song and bringing friends; working on and responding to the Rector's blog

November – witnessing presentations at the Cathedral of Incarnation before the Bishop; entertaining the community with your thespian talents; sharing Scottish music and dance; conducting tours of our sacred space during intermissions during the fall Gingerbread Players show; rehearsing the young singers of the Festival Youth Choir

December – preparing the altar and church so all may enjoy celebrating the birth of Our Lord; contributing to the Jesse tree so others may also celebrate

And there's more. *Thank you* for greeting visitors and making them feel welcome... returning your pledge quickly in response to the Stewardship Committee's request, and then adding more dollars to it because the church is in need ...making phone calls and sending e-mails to update us on the status of those members who are ill...staying to lock up the church after everyone has left after an event...being kind to other people's children ... lending your book to someone who is trying to learn Excel... keeping in touch with all members of the parish, new and old alike...preparing the Choir and Vestry dinners on separate occasions...creating flyers about upcoming special services and events....

Our sincere thanks to all!

—Anne Harte Su
Jonathan Wallin

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- December 4, 7:00pm: Gingerbread Players
- December 9, 6:30pm: Outreach
- December 10, 7:30pm: Vestry



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 Aleyamma Varghese
- 2 Jim Chamberlain
- 5 Noelle Alfano
- 5 Jocelyne Brillson
- 7 Richard Sydenham
- 12 Anne Harte Su
- 13 Barbara Glick
- 16 Jonathan Wallin
- 17 Lindsay Baxter
- 19 Vincent Yue

- 22 Brian Percival
- 24 Paul Shanley
- 27 Gert Hounsell
- 27 Giselle Bates
- 28 Nancy Baxter
- 29 Varghese and Aleyamma Varghese (A)



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

•Friday, December 5 and Saturday, December 6 at 8:00pm: The Parkside Players present Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park* at Grace Lutheran Church, 103-15 Union Turnpike at 71st Road, Forest Hills. Tickets are \$14, \$12 for seniors. For reservations, call 718-497-4922 or visit www.parksideplayers.com.

•Saturday, December 6: Children of all ages are welcome to attend the Saint Nicholas Day celebration at Church of the Resurrection, 85-09 118th Street between Hillside and 85th Avenues. Evening Prayer will be offered at 6:30pm, followed by caroling, tree decorating, refreshments, and a visit from St. Nicholas. For further information, call 718-847-2649.

•Sunday, December 21 at 4:00PM: The Oratorio Society of Queens presents a Holiday Concert at the Queensborough Performing Arts Center, 222-05 56th Avenue, Bayside. In addition to Part I of Handel's *Messiah*, the concert will feature Christmas favorites and Chanukah songs. For further information, call 718-460-0726 or visit www.queensoratorio.org.

• On Saturday, December 13, an abbreviated version of the same program will be presented at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, corner of Ascan Avenue and Queens Boulevard in Forest Hills. For further details, call the number above or visit the Queens Oratorio Society web site.

St. Luke's Church Vestry

Rector: The Reverend Thomas F. Reese

Wardens: Anne Harte Su, Jonathan Wallin

Vestry: Sandra Baker, Dennis Khare, Allan Smith,
Velma Adams, Gary Carldon, Barbara Gratz, Joe
Occhiuto, Paul Dinas, David Smith, Jean Tessier,
Jane Thornton

Treasurer: Arthur Tasker

Clerk: Jean Tessier

Parish Staff

The Reverend William A. Doubleday,
Priest Associate
William J. Stokes, Interim Organist
and Choir Director
Sally Friedman, Parish Administrator
Omar Garcia, Sexton

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