

THE BELLRINGER

St. Luke's Church

Forest Hills

January 2009

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Dear Friends,

Though January 1st is New Year's Day, on the church calendar it is the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. Coming, as it does, still within the Christmas season, the Gospel for the feast day replays the end of Luke's account of the Nativity. After the shepherds leave, eight days pass and the child is brought to the Temple where "he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21). *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which in Hebrew and Aramaic pronunciation sounds much like the word for the phrase "he will save." So perhaps there is an interesting double-play on the naming: 1) Jesus gets the same name as a lot of other boy children, yet 2) the sound of his name sets him apart from others in that it portends the commitment of his life (and death). Actually, though, it is a triple-play, isn't it? For 3) the name is decided for Joseph and Mary ahead of time, by the angel's announcement (Luke 1:31). Of further interest is that, in Luke, the angel tells Mary but in Matthew (1:21) the angel tells Joseph.

There's an awe-filled lot in a name, in the ancient Hebrew tradition. Some sort of "origins story" always came along with the naming of a person or place – the equivalent of your being told why you were named after your grandfather or have your great aunt's middle name, or that your last name implies that your forebearers were purveyors of this or that. You get the picture: naming does something to contextualize who you are and where you might be heading, and it doesn't have to be your own name only.

In the Old Testament reading for the Holy Name of Jesus, when the name of God is upon you, you are blessed and kept safe by God who smiles upon you and is gracious to you (Numbers 6:22-27).

Paul explains, again in the readings for the day (Galatians 4:4-7), that the Son of God becomes human in order to make the naming and saving even more intimate. To a people who, under the conditions of this world, might at times feel painfully close to being nothing, having no name, God in Jesus overcomes that alienation by adopting us. Thus, we have the same family name: God's people. We are *somebodies* – of the stuff of the Body of Christ.

So what's in a name? In the case of Jesus, everything and everyone! Jesus doesn't take his name as an exclusive point of privilege. Rather, humbly listening for God and to people with every fiber of his being, in every action of his living and dying, "Jesus" is the proclamation of the name and the sharing of the life that incorporates all people into the awesome life of God (Philippians 2:5-11, also assigned for the day).

Jesus doesn't leave anybody out. So when someone prays, calling on God in the Name of Jesus, that person is one whose knee bends in humble homage to the love of God smiling graciously upon all, a person who is confessing that he or she will try, together with the intertwined fiber of their being mystically embodied in Christ, to share that love with all.

In the Name of Christ,

Tom

**ALL MEMBERS OF THE PARISH
ARE STRONGLY URGED
TO ATTEND**

**THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
SAINT LUKE'S CHURCH
SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 2009
IN THE PARISH HALL**

10:30am Holy Eucharist
The Rector's Annual Report
to the Parish

The Election of Officers
and All Other Business

Pot Luck Luncheon

Please make your reservation today!

***Call 718-268-6021,
email***

stlukesoffice@verizon.net,

***or sign up on the sheets provided in the
narthex and at coffee hour,***

***providing your name, the number of
persons attending and the
dish you will bring to share at the
luncheon.***

Thank you.

2009-10 PARKING PERMITS

All parishioners who drive to church must renew their Saint Luke's parking registration in order to receive a new 2009-2010 permit for display on the dashboard of your car; otherwise you run the certain risk of having your car "booted" by the Forest Hills Gardens security patrol. Your automobile make, color, model and license number must be submitted to the parish office before a new laminated shield can

be distributed to you. If you have not yet turned in the registration form, please communicate the above information to the parish office as soon as possible. The Gardens Corporation "grace period" ends on January 31.

VESTRY NOMINATIONS

The Nominating Committee considers candidates for open vestry positions. This year's Committee consists of Warden Anne Harte Su, Vestryperson David Smith, and Parishioner-at-large Karen Van Westering. The Committee's Slate of Candidates will be presented at Saint Luke's 2009 Annual Meeting on January 25th.

All Vestry members whose terms expire at the 2009 Annual Meeting are eligible for re-election. They are as follows: Warden Jonathan Wallin, and Vestry members Velma Adams, Gary Carldon, Barbara Gratz and Joseph Occhiuto. In addition, the two-year unexpired term of Frances Sergi, who has relocated to Connecticut, will need to be filled.

When the Bellringer went to press, the Nominating Committee was finalizing the slate of candidates. Candidates must be baptized persons, eighteen years of age or older, who have been members of the parish for at least one year and who are regular in attendance and giving in support of our parish life and the mission of the Church.

**BEST WISHES TO THE
BRIDE AND GROOM**

We congratulate Elizabeth Loughran and Kyle Simcox, who were married at Saint Luke's on December 5th.

**"THE SNOW LAY
ON THE GROUND..."**

In spite of the winter storm on December 20th and freezing temperatures, a group of intrepid carolers ranging in age from three to seventy-two trudged through the snowy Gardens on the following evening, bringing Christmas joy to our neighbors and friends. More parishioners arrived for the delicious potluck supper

afterward. Heartfelt thanks to all those who decorated the lower parish hall, contributed food, and helped in so many ways to make our annual caroling party a success.

**LOOKING AHEAD:
FESTIVE CHORAL EVENSONG**

Sunday, February 22 at 4:00pm
Saint Luke's Choir and Soloists
Reception following the service

**STARTING THE NEW YEAR RIGHT:
AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH**

**IN THE WORDS OF THE RECENTLY CONFIRMED
AND RECEIVED**

On November 2nd, Saint Luke's welcomed Rowena Chodkowski, Joseph Dinas, Anthony Lenti, Olivia Smith and Chris Dippel, who had been confirmed the previous day at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, and Sal Amato and Gabrielle Tafuro who had been received into the Episcopal Church. Following are some of our newest members' descriptions of their faith journeys.

Being a Christian means having a unique relationship with God. It is not better than any other religion. There are a lot of different ways to express belief, but one thing is always constant: they all believe in God or some form of great power or One Being that we live by. For me, being a Christian means holding true to your belief no matter what life throws at you....

To be a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, a Christian is a person who seeks to understand God in all his different expressions. By the teachings of Jesus, a Christian understands the greatest human virtue not to be adherence to piety and dogma, but to kindness and love. A Christian employs what he or she learns through faith and reason to live the best life possible. This is not done by doctrine alone; it is done through tolerance, exploration, understanding, moderation and love – answering Christ's call to love....

Christ teaches us that in order to find salvation, we must love God and one another. And love is expressed through service – we help those we love; we sacrifice for them. Christ's challenge is not an easy one. To care for everyone in this way, to see Christ in everyone, requires faith and sacrifice...

When I was a kid, my mother taught me to be a Christian. As I got older, my faith in God continued, but my contempt for organized religion grew. Then I met my wife. She was brought up in the Episcopal Church, and we got married in her home church. Her priest knew love like my mother....

I feel that the Episcopal Church is different from all other churches. It understands the Bible as a document inspired by God but written by man, and does not take its word literally, instead encouraging exploration and discussion....

I went through a difficult time in my life when I wasn't sure if I believed in God anymore. It took the birth of my son to restore my faith and help rebuild my relationship with Jesus Christ. I was drawn to the Episcopal Church through my mother....

What really started to open me up to the possibility of reconsidering what it means to be Christian is church music. If the lyrics could be that beautiful, then maybe the harsh words I had been hearing elsewhere weren't really expressing what faith is about....

A Christian understands both sin and repentance but does not dwell on personal purity to erase the sin. The Episcopal Church is a family, and "a family is bound together not by its ability to agree, but by its ability to love." And all are welcome.

