

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

December 2019

From Fr. John: Why we do what we do during Christmas

I don't think anyone uses the term "Christmastide" anymore, other than a few clergy folk and monastics. That's alright. It is a bit archaic and the church already has her hands full reminding people why we are not irrelevant. Here in the Pacific Northwest, we are surrounded by people who have deliberately chosen not to be a part of a church (often in reaction to a church-related wounding) as well as people who used to go to church and just no longer come and just don't really miss it.

There are also a growing number of people who have never experienced church, some who are the children of people who have chosen not to come. And then there are people who are curious and have nothing but popular culture to inform them (usually not the best face of Christian hospitality and thought!)

Curious people and others who don't typically visit us often show up during Christmas. And for them, Advent has really been not much more than a countdown to the shopping season. For them, the "Christmas season" begins at some vague point near Halloween and ends on December 25th.

That's not what we understand "Christmastide" to be. And so, even as we let the antiquated reference fade into obscurity, we can still invite people to a different kind of Christmas season. And for those folks who come only on Easter and Christmas, we can dress St. Elizabeth in her finest and welcome them with warmth and joy.

Because what we used to call "Christmastide" is filled with richness, ritual and mystical experience. We celebrate God incarnate in our lives through the birth of the Christ-child, the revitalization of Christ in our own hearts and minds, and await with renewed hope, the coming of Christ in fullness. For 12 days, beginning on sun-down of December 24th, we rejoice in the gift of the Holy Child of Bethlehem. Because the sun is down, we consider it morning and so we continue the celebration of the Nativity with a Mass at 10:00 on the morning of the 25th.

We dress the altar and clergy with our finest gold vestments and banners. We fill the air with incense from Somalia and Ethiopia at our liturgies. We return the *Gloria in excelsis* to the Mass to join our voices with the angles and the multitude of the heavenly host, praising God saying: ""Glory to God in the highest heaven." The sanctuary will be filled with flowers and we will light the center "Christ-candle" in

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Dear People of St. Elizabeth,

Peace and greetings to you all.

We, the Vestry, come to you with the good and challenging news of our financial status at St. Elizabeth.

First, we are ever grateful for this church on the corner of 10th and SW 152nd St. We are blessed by the people here, those in our past, and those yet to come. Our community has shown its vitality by its commitment to the building, grounds, and each other as evidenced by honoring and celebrating Pat's 100th birthday, opportunities for social interaction, building-improvement projects, attention to the gardens surrounding us, children and adult Sunday school, and those who serve to make worship happen. We are also landlord to South Preschool and Neighborhood House, whose programs we endorse as they also meet the needs of our surrounding community.

In our strength as a healthy faith community, we experience growth, responsibility, and challenges. Neighborhood House is expanding their footprint here, and as their landlord we are financially responsible for bringing their space up to code. Along with this is the fact that we are in an aging building. With little wiggle room in our budget, we have borrowed \$15,000 from our Diocesan Investment Fund to cover one-time needed improvements.

As we look to the new church year and a new budget, the Vestry needs your help meeting our financial challenges and budget projection for 2020. Prayerfully consider your pledge to our St. Elizabeth community, for those here now, those in our past, and those yet to come.

Your faithful servants,

The Vestry

(A note from Fr. John: Since this letter went out, several people have stepped up in beautiful expressions of generosity. Some have increased their pledges, some have made remarkable one-time donations and others are contributing despite tight finances. That said, we are not yet quite at the threshold we need to meet to cover our expenses. And so, if you intended to pledge and have not yet done so, please turn in a pledge as soon as possible so that your vestry can begin working out a responsible budget.

This is a community effort and every contribution matters. Those who can do more are doing more, and those who have had to respond to inevitable changes and pressures in their own lives are contributing in other ways. Every single person at St. Elizabeth is a blessing and no one is unnecessary! I am grateful to and for each and every one of you receiving this newsletter, and I am consistently humbled by your love and trust in God and each other. Keep the faith people of St. Elizabeth, and "all shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well!")

Thank you!

A man out walking one day came upon a beach covered with thousands of starfish that had been washed up by an unusually high tide. As he walked on, he came upon a boy picking up one starfish after another and gently tossing them back into the ocean.

He asked the boy what he was doing. Without looking up, the boy simply said, "I'm saving these starfish."

With years of pragmatic realism behind him, the man smiled and said, "You know, there thousands of these starfish and only one of you. You can't make much of a difference."

"Maybe," said the boy picking up another starfish and sending it back into the water, "but I made a difference to that one."

As winter comes closer and the weather gets colder, many of our neighbors are facing a rough couple of months. We can't serve them all, but thanks to your donations, at least a few people in need can find emergency food in our pantry. Some will be fed, sheltered and given new opportunities at Hospitality House. Some of the people living on the streets will at least have some new, warm socks.

Even small donations make a difference!

You can drop off canned food (especially cans that don't require a can-opener); Top Ramen; packages of tuna or peanut butter and crackers; granola, fruit or energy bars; and small toiletries for our pantry in the office and Celeste will get them set out.

The basket for Hospitality House is also in the office with a list of needs. Watch for our next opportunity to cook for the women as well. And the sock bin will be out every Sunday in the narthex where you can also leave toothbrushes, small toothpastes and toiletries for Operation Nightwatch. It's all appreciated!

The Elizabethan

The Elizabethan is published monthly by St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church. The deadline for articles is the fourth Friday of each month.

Articles, calendar items and ideas may be mailed or emailed to the addresses below or left in *The Elizabethan* box in the Parish Office.

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Rector: Fr. John Forman

Associate Priests: Fr. Alwyn Hall

Fr. John Fergusson
(emeritus)

Sr. Warden: Kirk Utley

Co-Warden: Ryan Davis

Treasurer: Dorothy Armstrong

Admin Assistant: Celeste Alfred

("Why we do what we do..." continued from page 1)

our Advent wreath.

In our Sunday liturgies, we continue using Eucharistic Prayer B (the form we have been using through Advent) because of the emphasis on the Incarnation, but we will change the *Sanctus* and the *Angus Die* to those from Franz Schubert's composition of the *Deutsche Messe* because they are so well-known and beloved by Episcopalians (some of whom will be visiting this Christmas and will find the familiarity of the setting welcoming). We also forego the confession of sins and absolution from Christmas Eve to the second Sunday after Epiphany. And we do that because the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany are not a time to focus on our sins, but on God's astonishing response to us in the giving of Christ!

There are several celebrations recognizing events and people that are a part of our heritage within the 12 Days of Christmas. We honor St. Stephen, the first martyr of the faith, on 26 December (also known as Boxing Day). We mark the feast of St. John the Evangelist on 27 December, the feast of the Holy Innocents on 28 December, the feast of the Holy Family on 29 December, and finally, the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus on 1 January. Some also observe the feasts of St. Gregory of Nazianzus on the 2nd, William Passavant on the 3rd and St. Elizabeth Seton on the 4th. The 12 Days of Christmas officially end on Epiphany Eve or Twelfth Night, the evening of 5 January. (We will celebrate Epiphany on the 5th because it is one of seven principle feast days.)

What was once commonly called Christmastide is a season filled with celebration, history and tradition. And it only *begins* on Christmas Eve!

Evangelization

(Excerpt from "Christian Meditation")

By Fr. Laurence Freeman, OSB

We need to be filled with wonder if we are to communicate the Good News, and that wonder doesn't come primarily from reading or listening to talks. It comes primarily from an interior experience. Just as the early Christian disciples were filled with the experience of the risen Christ and went out, each of them laying down their lives to proclaim the Good News around the world. So we ourselves, by that interior discovery of Christ within us, become filled with the same wonder and energy of generosity. We're not trying to convert. You know, if you try to convert everybody you meet, you're a bit like a man or a woman who is desperate to get married, and everyone you meet at every party or every dinner pretty well picks up quickly that is what is in your mind and of course it scares them away. We need to find the best way in the circumstances – with the people we are with, with the kind of audience we are with – to explain why we are disciples and what a holy life really means.

Fr. Laurence is a Benedictine monk of the Monastery of Sta Maria di Pilastrello in Lendinara, Italy, a house in the Benedictine Congregation of Monte Oliveto. He is Director of The World Community for Christian Meditation. Fr. Laurence was awarded the Order of Canada in 2010 in recognition of his work of interfaith dialogue and the promotion of world peace. His approach to evangelization is a perfect fit for the gift that has taken root and is beginning to blossom at St. Elizabeth!

NEW BOOKS IN OUR LIBRARY

FICTION

*A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain** by Robert Olen Butler

*A Sudden Light** by Garth Stein

*Bucking the Sun** by Ivan Doig

Lila by Marilynne Robinson

Ordinary Grace by William Kent Krueger

Still Life by Louise Penny*

The Alto Wore Tweed: A Liturgical Mystery by Mark Schweizer

*The Turner House** by Angela Flournoy

Varina by Charles Frazier

NON-FICTION

Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver by Mary Oliver

Hallelujah: Rediscovering Mercy by Anne Lamott

Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers by Anne Lamott

Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others by Barbara Brown Taylor

John of the Cross: Selected Writings by John of the Cross, edited by Kieran Kavanaugh

Julian of Norwich: Showings by Julian of Norwich, edited by Edmund Colledge

Life List: A Woman's Quest for the World's Most Amazing Birds by Olivia Gentile

Love Heals by Becca Stevens

Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle by Pamela Eisenbaum

Small Victories: Spotting Improbable Moments of Grace by Anne Lamott

*Small Wonder: Essays** by Barbara Kingsolver

Teresa of Avila by Rowan Williams

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion by Jonathan Haidt

The Artisan Soul: Crafting Your Life into a Work of Art by Erwin Raphael McManus

*Well Read, Well Fed: A Year of Great Reads and Simple Dishes for Book Group** by Marcia F. Brown

Wesley the Owl: The Remarkable Love Story of an Owl and His Girl by Stacey O'Brien

What Do We Mean By 'God?' by Keith Ward

Writings on Nature by Thomas Merton: When the Trees Say Nothing edited by Kathleen Deignan

FOR CHILDREN

A Church for All by Gayle E. Pitman: illustrated by Laure Fournier

*Bear's House of Books** by Poppy Bishop: illustrated by Alison Edgson

*Hats of Faith** by Medeia Cohan

*I Would Tuck You In** by Sarah Asper-Smith and Mitchell Watley: illustrated by Sarah Walsh

You Belong Here by M.H. Clark: illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault

FOR YOUNG READERS

The Wrinkle in Time Quintet by Madeleine L'Engle

* Gifted by the Friends of Seattle Public Library for the loan of folding chairs for an event.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

“The Advent mystery is the beginning of the end of all in us
that is not yet Christ.”

~ **Fr. Thomas Merton, OCSO**

Save the date!

December 29, 4:00. The Christmas season begins on December 25th and to celebrate this joyful season there will be a fun event on Sunday afternoon, December 29. Singing around the table, festive readings, special musical surprises and some tasty dessert. Just bring your friends and your family and your jolly spirit! And if there are folks who would like to participate by sharing a favorite song or poem or short reading, or dance, please contact Danielle Butz.