



CHURCH OF THE
HOLY COMFORTER

December 2010

THE DOVE

The Season on Advent by Pastor Heath Howe

Advent is not a time to declare, but to listen, to listen to whatever God might want to tell us through the singing of the stars, the quickening of a baby, the gallantry of a dying man.

-Madeleine L'Engle

The season of Advent begins four weeks before Christmas Day, December 25. It is a time of quiet and preparation, a time when we make ourselves ready to receive Jesus into our homes, hearts and lives at Christmas. More and more Christians are finding the intentional celebration of Advent a way of minimizing the stress and commercialism of our culture during the weeks prior to Christmas. Each of the four weeks of Advent has a particular theme represented by the four candles. As we move through these days of preparation we will be invited to reflect on each of these themes.

Celebrating Advent is not only something we do together in a sanctuary on Sunday morning. We can also engage in the wonder of Advent daily in our homes. Our "Season of Advent Family Handbook" is a devotional tool to be used along with your Advent wreath that may be prayed alone or with a family. The scripture passages suggested for each week are very familiar to us. We hear them yearly on Christmas. We invite you to listen again to the story. Each week a new piece of the familiar story will be read; however, the theme of each of Advent will provide the lens for your hearing. There are no right or wrong answers for the questions provided. All of us will have our own answers as we hear the story of our Lord's birth. It will come alive for each of us just where we are. All we need do is listen!

We encourage you to set aside a time each day for you and your family together. This may be at a meal time or you may find that bedtime is best. Gather together, turn off the computer, phone, and television and do whatever you wish to set the tone as you listen to whatever God wants to tell you.

The following is an excerpt from "The Season of Advent" family handbook which is available in the parish office:

THE WEEK OF HOPE

Setting the Theme: Day One

Our season of Advent begins with the theme of Hope. Hope is different than wishing. Hope loves deep in our souls and invites us to look forward. Often the symbol of Hope is an anchor because Hope is something that holds us steady. Other times we experience Hope as a light at the end of a long dark tunnel. Sometimes it can be difficult to find or feel hope. Just as the Jewish people long ago were living in Hope of the Messiah, many today find ourselves looking for signs of Hope, God among us. As we light the first candle on the Advent wreath let us remember that God never leaves us. God is the light at the end of the tunnel. God steadies us when we need it. The light of the candle is the sign of our Hope that God is coming in the birth of Jesus.

Lighting the Candle

Light one candle on the Advent wreath, saying, "The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light." Isaiah 9

Bible Reading Read aloud Luke 1:26-38:

Listen Spend time in silence listening and being still

Reflection and Response

Share or journal your responses to the one or more of the following questions:

- What word or phrase in this story stands out for you?
- What are the Hopeful parts for the people in this story?
- What are the Hopeful parts for me in this story?

The Nativity Scene If you have a nativity set in your home, please move figures closer to the manger.

The Lord's Prayer Say the prayer aloud, holding hands if you are with family

Blessing *May the God of hope light our path to Jesus. Amen.*

Christmas 2010 The Rector's Column by Father Myers

Christmas 2010. This is my last Christmas with you. Thirty-five times we have shared the glorious celebration of the Incarnation - the Word became flesh and dwells among us. My first Christmas was in 1975. I was curate. I had been ordained a priest on December 13th, and this was my first time celebrating "Midnight Mass." The altar was east facing, so the priest stood with the back to the congregation. The altar party was three: the priest, the deacon, and the sub-deacon. Jack Stewart and Jack Saunders, the two parish Layreaders as they were then called, served as sub-deacons, one at 8:00 and the other at 11:00. We wore chasuble, dalmatic, and tunicle. The three sacred ministers mounted the steps to the altar and stood in precise position. We rehearsed everything in advance. Since the priest's back was to the people, it was necessary to project one's voice well. The reredos was covered with red poinsettia. Along with many others, I helped Father Johnson decorate the church the day before Christmas Eve. The poinsettia were removed from the pots and placed with roots and soil in well watered baggies. Those baggies were then sealed and "tacked" to the reredos. Black Styrofoam was wedged between the wood of the reredos, and then the bagged poinsettias were attached with long prongs. Things were arranged such that no one saw the baggies. The entire reredos was arrayed with flowers. It was beautiful. We ceased the process because the Styrofoam and the prongs marred the wood. Father Johnson was the preacher, and his sermon was entitled, "There is no God!" I remember it well. I can almost deliver the message he gave that night, so stirring was the memorable content.

Christmas 1986 was my first as rector. That was memorable too. The curate came down with the flu. There were only two of us then. So Christmas Eve brought me an absent curate, three liturgies, three sermons, and Christmas Day with another sermon and celebration. By mid morning Christmas Day, I was really pooped. My two and a half year old sons were eager to open their gifts as I arrived

home. I splashed water on my face to appear more awake than I really was. Bonnie, the boys, and I gathered for some prayers, reading the Scripture, a Christmas drink and goodies, and then we began opening gifts. The boys exploded with excitement. They were in wonder tearing off the paper and ribbon. As they examined their first gifts, the phone rang. It was a teen-ager who had been thrown out of his home Christmas morning by his father. He was at the Kenilworth train station, crying, angry, and troubled. It took three hours to return this young man to his family and to begin a longer process that would unfold a fuller reconciliation. They were able to sit down for Christmas dinner that day seeking each other's forgiveness. I am grateful that God has blessed me with the experience and education as a priest to know how to intervene. I am further and more grateful that I had a wife and two sons who welcomed me back home to celebrate our delayed Christmas. Bonnie was a giving and loving person who understood what a priest's presence in a crisis means. Having lost her father at age eight in a tragic automobile accident, she knew the comfort of a priest arriving on scene with the family. I don't remember my Christmas sermon that year, but I do remember the incarnational ministry that unfolded with a teen-ager and his family.

Christmas 2010. This year I will celebrate at 11:00, my final Christmas Eve with you. As I stand at the altar, my mind will flood with memories of Christmases past. At this altar, Canon Leland Hobart Danforth served. At this altar, William Osborne Hanner served. At this altar, Wayne Leonard Johnson served. At this altar, I have been privileged to serve. Shortly, a new priest becomes our rector. The celebration of the Incarnation continues - the Word was made flesh and dwells among us. A new voice now is called to proclaim and live that message. Let us pray for him, his family, and our joyous life together.

'Twas the eve before Christmas by Patti Pateros, Community Building

'Twas the eve before Christmas
and all through God's house
I was busy in my office,
with my computer and mouse.
The boughs were all hung
by the altar with care;
Not a needle on the floor
because Jose had been there.
Mary Jeffers exhausted,
with an ache in her head
Surrounded by bulletins,
already proofread.

As Jeff counted money given as donation,
Mary prepared for children's Christian formation.

Suddenly out on the driveway
there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my desk
to see what was the matter.

Away to the Great Hall I flew like a flash,
Tore open the draperies and rolled open the sash.

The snow guys were shoveling the new-fallen snow,
making pathways for parishioners on sidewalks below.

Then what to my weary eyes should appear,
But a Buick LeSabre with 12 passengers in the rear.
On this his last Christmas before he retires,
I knew in a moment it was Father Myers.

More rapid than eagles the vestry they came
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name:

Art, Sue and Charlie!
Julia, Josh, Janet, Connie!
Tom, Jon, and Mary!
Bob, Courtney and Andy!
To the top of the stairs,
to the main office hall!

Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"
Into the narthex the vestry they flew
With arms full of paperwork and Father Myers too.

A voice with a drawl, I heard near the office,
Saying "Welcome, y'all!" coming from Chris.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Through the parlor door the rector came with a bound.

He was dressed all in black,
from his head to his foot,
which well-hid the wrinkles,
ashes and soot.

A bundle of envelopes
he held tight in his fist
(Could they be bonus checks?
No, they don't exist.)

His eyes, how they twinkled,
his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses,
his nose like a cherry!

His droll little mouth
was drawn up like a bow,
And the hair on his head
was as white as the snow.
His glasses, all fogged up,
slid down on his nose,
and the little white collar
his neck did enclose.

He had a mischievous grin
and a little round belly,
that shook when he laughed
like a bowlful of jelly.
He was tall and imposing,
quite unlike myself,
and I laughed when I saw him,
feeling much like his elf.

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word,
but went straight to his work
And filled all our mailboxes,
then turned with a jerk.

After giving a blessing to all of us there
Through the front doors he left with his usual flair.

He jumped in his LeSabre,
to his vestry gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.

But I heard him exclaim before he hurried outside:

***"Happy Christmas to all . . .
it's been a wonderful ride!"***

Serving our Community

On November 13th, 27 parishioners gave up their Saturday to participate in the annual parish service project at Good News Partners in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood. Although Good News Partners has its own maintenance crew, there are many projects that need special attention due to the amount of labor entailed or lack of funding for supplies. Our parish assists with these projects, providing financial support, all materials and supplies, and most importantly the gift of our time and talents. Equally important are the fellowship and friendships that are built among parishioners and members of the Good News Community throughout the day. Working together to make a difference in the lives of those who need it the most is rewarding for everyone involved. As we were leaving the site after a very long, hard day, a Good News staff member asked, "Do we have to wait a whole year until Holy Comforter comes back?" If the parish is willing, and we certainly know we are able, we can plan a second project in the spring.

Thank you John Baccich, Lisa Baccich, Pru Burke, Bob Burke, Kevin Carlson, Stephen Citari, Sid Condit, John Dell, Alec Dike, Dick Dodson, Charlie Fargo, Ian Fargo, Stephanie Fargo, Beth Kemp, Jody Lapp, Bob Lapp, Mike Murphy, Charlie Quigley, John Quigley, Henry Shaw, Holly Shaw, Tim Stutzman, Char Washburn, Teresa West, Charlie Wise, Ginny Wise and Dick Wood for a job well done!

We would also like to extend our gratitude to those who prepare and serve meals at A Just Harvest Soup Kitchen and work with children at Good News Saturday Morning program every month. In these difficult economic times, offering our hearts and hands whenever we can is more important than ever.

Christmas Outreach

Jesse Tree

Gifts for Connections for the Homeless and Holy Family/St. Gregory School are generously donated by our parish families. Be sure to attach your ornament as a gift tag so that your gift goes to the right person/family. In order to have gifts delivered on time, Holy Family gifts must be received by Dec 12; Connections gifts by Dec 16.

Christmas Offering

Monetary donations given to our Christmas offering go towards our outreach giving to selected local and global organizations who provide assistance to those with the greatest needs. Thank you for your generosity.

Christmas Flower Offering

Flower donations may be given in memory or celebration of loved ones. To have your donation included in the Christmas bulletins, your flower offering envelopes must be received by Dec. 19.

In the Vineyard

We joyfully announce the birth of. . .

- 4lb 3oz Nora and 4lb 2oz Shea to Aimee and Jake Whipple on November 19. Although arriving six weeks, early the girls are doing fine.
- 9lb 10oz Augustus to Alexandra Relias and Jonathan Cifonelli on November 23. Linda and John Relias are Gus's grandparents.

We celebrate . . .

- Margaret Prince's 106th birthday! Margaret is Carol Lisle's mother.

We express our sympathy to . . .

- The family and friends of long-time parishioner Molly Sale on November 2.
- Terri and Don Dowd on the death of her brother, Tom Petersen. A memorial service will be held at CHC in mid-December.

Somewhere Out There by Mary Johnson, Children's & Youth Ministries

As some of you may know, I like to have music playing in my office....or just about anywhere I happen to be. As my cousin, a concert violinist said to me: "music helps you have your feelings: happy, sad, excited, quiet, silly.....any way you are feeling, there is music like that." So on one recent afternoon, after the person responsible for renewing our license with DCFS left my office saying we had passed with flying colors, I was feeling particularly happy. So I turned on some happy music.

Then I started to go through my check list to make certain everything was in order to be gone for a week. There is always a big piece of me left behind when I am away from here. Are all the classrooms in order, all the teachers in place, all the supplies ready? When the song from *An American Tail* started I was listening to the lyrics: And even though I know how

very far apart we are, it helps to think we might be wishing on the same bright star...it also says in the song that somewhere out there someone is saying a prayer. We are all still very connected: if not physically, then by thought and prayer and love. The beautiful lyrics put it all in perspective.

People often travel during the Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations. And it's good to get away for a bit. It is also very good to get back home. So wherever your celebrations take you this year, please know that somewhere out there, we'll be thinking of you and saying a prayer. And if you are not going away, come join us here at one of the many beautiful liturgies on Christmas. There will be lots of wonderful music and I know it will help you have warm, wonderful and blessed Christmas feelings.

Music Notes by Derek Nickels

This year's Service of Advent Lessons and Carols will be part of the 11:15 a.m. liturgy on the Second Sunday of Advent, December 5th. Like previous years, this service will include the readings from the Old and New Testaments that illuminate the proclamation of Christ's birth and set the tone of the short, but busy season of Advent, and the joyous season of Christmas. Our liturgy on December 5th will comprise of two parts: The Word of God (Lessons and Carols) and Holy Communion. Two new anthems will be heard: a setting of *Come, thou long expected Jesus* by Indianapolis-based composer and acclaimed countertenor, Steven Rickards; and a lush setting of the *Ave Maria* by Franz Biebl, a work that has been championed by many years by the San Francisco choral ensemble, Chanticleer.

Our Christmas Eve services at 8 and 11 p.m. will be preceded by a Choral Prelude of Christmas hymns and anthems sung by the choir and congregation

beginning at 7:30 and 10:30 p.m. While the origins of the Lessons and Carols service (both Advent and Christmas) began as a way of preparing the faithful for the Christmas Mass, our Christmas Eve liturgies will begin in a similar, yet modified way. Beginning with Hymn 102 "Once in royal David's city," this hymn was written for Cecil Frances Alexander's *Hymns for Little Children* in 1848. This was intended to be a commentary on the third article of the Apostles' Creed, "who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." This text first appeared in the United States in 1865 when it was published in *Cantica Sacra*, a collection of hymns for the Catholic Church. This hymn remained relatively unknown until the 1950s when the recordings of the choir of King's College, Cambridge became available. It is now one of the most recognized tunes of the Christmas season. Our Christmas Eve Choral Prelude will be augmented by a string ensemble that will accompany the choir and also enhance the 8 and 11 p.m. liturgies.

Special Events and Liturgies

Sunday, December 5 ~ Advent Lessons & Carols at 11:15am

A special Liturgy with readings and hymns of the Season.

Sunday, December 12 ~ Living Crèche at 10am

A reenactment of the Nativity by our church school children includes live animals and caroling. A reception with hot cocoa and cookies follows in the Great Hall. (If you can bake cookies, please deliver to the kitchen by 9am that morning.)

Sunday, December 19 ~ Christmas Sing-Along at 10am

This annual tradition for adults takes place in the Great Hall.

Friday, December 24 ~ Christmas Eve Liturgies

Children's Christmas Pageant at 4pm

Choral Eucharist at 8pm and 11pm

Saturday, December 25 ~ Christmas Day Liturgy at 9am

Sunday, December 26 ~ 1st Sunday after Christmas Liturgy at 9am

(only one service that day)

Monday, December 27 ~ Offices closed

CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER
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To read more about our parish or to register for a parish event, go to www.holycomforter.org.