THE BRANCH TELLING THE STORIES OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ADVENT AND CHRISTMASTIDE 2017



We, a people affectionately known as St. B's, are a family on a journey to grow more in love with God and one another, and to grow in our willingness to serve one another. Compelled by the love of Jesus, we long to see our alienated world reconciled to God in Christ.

We open ourselves to this growth through The Way of St. B's - a rule of life that shapes formation, external formation,





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The season of Advent, which comes from the Latin word adventus meaning "coming" or "visit," begins on December 3 and ends on Christmas Eve. Advent is the time during the church year when we pray and wait with intention for the Kingdom that has already come and is yet to come. Join us on Sundays for the lighting of the Advent Wreath, the singing of O Come, O Come Emmanuel, and the praying for the Kingdom Come. Join the staff every evening, Monday - Saturday at 9 p.m. for Compline, or Night Prayer, live on Facebook beginning Dec. 4.

First Things First And then let's wait

ello! If we haven't met yet, I'm your new rector. It still seems a little surreal that my family is finally here - on the ground, in Nashville, at St. Bartholomew's. Our first Sunday was such a blessing to us personally, confirmation that God has been leading us to this place for a long time now without us even knowing. For everyone who had a hand in that day's worship and celebration, a hearty "thank you!" from me. And it was a real joy to get to meet so many of you face-to-face and begin to hear the myriad stories of pilgrimage that brought all of us, by our own unique routes, home to this parish. Renee, Elizabeth, Patrick, Flannery and I are so happy to be part of your family now, and thank you for making us feel welcome!

As I type this, it's my first Monday in my new office. I've emptied the boxes we brought with us from Boston, but I still spend part of every day rearranging books, reordering files, hanging pictures, moving things around — figuring out where everything fits. It occurs to me that's what a lot of our work together will be



The Wood family on their first Sunday at St. B's, Nov. 19

in the coming months — figuring out where everything fits. How do *I* fit into parish life at St. B's as your new rector? How do each of *you* fit in here, with your diverse sets of gifts and abilities and needs? And, most important of all, how does *God* fit into all this?

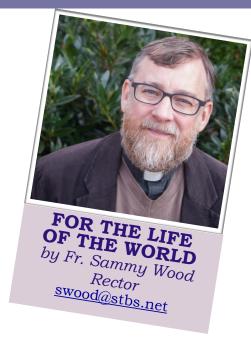
That's the work I invite you into with me, to pray and to dream about a shared vision for our common parish life and ministry. But before we get carried away, perhaps it's providential that we're embarking on a new liturgical season as we start the work. If you're at all like me, you're chomping at the bit to get moving. Let's go! I'm ready to start a new program or two, kick off a mission project, implement a big "vision," make each and every last one of you meet me for face-time over coffee, and on and on and on

Into all that anxious energy, the season of Advent arrives with one word to speak:

"Wait."

The work we have to do is important, to be sure. There are big things for us to do together. But for right now, the sort of persons we are becoming is actually more important than the projects we'll eventually undertake together. I am convinced God stands ready to speak to us and give us direction. But that makes it all the more important that we become persons with a peculiar set of sensibilities — hands open to receive from God, hearts shaped by prayer, hearing specially attuned to God's voice and and able to distinguish it from all the other voices that clamor for our attention. While we're becoming those sorts of persons, God graciously assures us that we are to wait.

Let me leave you with something to reflect on, if you have a moment. Every year around this time, when I sense



something new is about to begin, I find I'm terribly tempted to allow it to be encumbered by all the activity the season can bring. That's when I'm drawn to an anonymous 15th century poem.

Lo, in the silent night A child to God is born And all is brought again That ere was lost or lorn

Could but thy soul, O man, Become a silent night! God would be born in thee And set all things aright.

I cannot tell you how humbled I am to be your rector. I have so much I want to share with you that it's almost impossible to decide what to share first! For now, my prayer is for us to be quiet enough for God to be born in us, individually and as a family. God is telling us that it is, indeed, time for us to get to work — the paramount work of waiting on God.

I Think I Can. I Think I Can

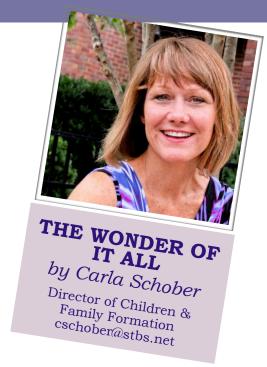
Praying the Twists and Turns

he just wouldn't stop crying. It didn't appear she was in pain. There was just a non-stop loop of whimpering. You'd think with a belly full of spaghetti following a busy afternoon of trying to keep track of her older brothers, that she'd be easily down for the night. But, no. It would be no surprise that our eighteen month old daughter might simply be overstimulated or on carb overload. Even her extreme thirst I chalked up to our little one not knowing what she truly needed, so I gave her plenty of water. It was later on, close to sunrise, when she finally let out the high-pitched scream. We checked on her, she was happy, and we finally all drifted off to sleep.

So what's the catch? It's what my husband found in her diaper that next morning. A choo choo train! Rather, half of a train. He found what was left of a broken Christmas ornament that our daughter had obviously swallowed to our shock, fear, amazement, and astonishment. The remaining two inches of the ornament had journeyed through her little body that night. Her whimpers caused by its twists and turns. Her scream, well, that was it moving into its final destination. (Oh the puns or quips I'd really like to write right now.)

The next day we got her checked out. There was no sign of harm. In talking with her pediatrician

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PICS WITH ST. NICK! SUNDAY, DEC. 3 9:45 - 10:30 A.M.

FAMILY & FRIENDS, ST. NICHOLAS WILL MAKE HIS ANNUAL VISIT TO ST. B'S BETWEEN SERVICES ON SUNDAY, DEC. 3.

COME HAVE YOUR PIC TAKEN!

A Family Celebration St. B's Pageant

Is your family in town this Christmas? If so, we invite you to join in celebrating Jesus' birth with our St. B's family.

One of our parish traditions is the St. B's Children's Christmas Eve Pageant. Our pageant is the children's opportunity to share the story of Jesus' birth through their eyes and impressions, not an adults. There are no lengthy memorizations, solo auditions, or extensive set building. Your children make their own costumes with the supplies we provide on site. And the script hasn't changed for over 2,000 years.

It's been said that this night is organized chaos. We like to say our children are simply imitating that same innocent chaos that played out on the hills above Bethlehem that Christmas long ago. Some might even call it the best live action play a family can participate in together. How about yours too?

We hope your family will join us this year. Please read the details on the following page and mark your calendars.



it was thought that the spaghetti and the multiple cups of water probably saved her from intestinal rips; possibly saved her life. Our daughter had swallowed something much bigger than her body should have accepted. And our God knew that the evening she swallowed a train, would be followed with spaghetti to encapsulate it and water to flush it. I believed strongly God was present. I believed the experience could be used to not only show my husband and me how to pray for our daughter, but to also remind our daughter to never give up when twists and turns seemed without destination.

Our daughter is grown now and with a family of her own. I still keep the ornament hanging in my home office. It remains a testament of God's covering and restoration: His presence in my daily life when I choose to look for Him. Through her growing up years, when our daughter struggled with life's twists, I knew from a train experience to pray for her perseverance and direction. It's interesting to me that soon after we found the ornament, I was reading The Little Engine That Could to her brothers. Funny how a children's book about trains could make it clear to me that, "I think I can. I think I can," would be something that our daughter would need to have prayed for her. And I think she would agree.

May this tangible reflection of Jesus' genealogy be a blessing to your Advent season and an encouragement that God loves us no matter what.



Mr. Jim's class enjoying a Sunday morning together.



Pageant Rehearsal: Saturday, December 16 9:30 a.m. - Noon

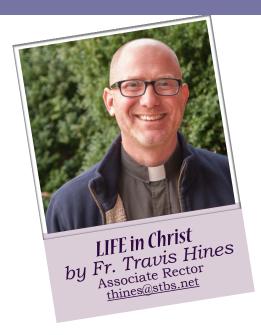
Drop your children off in Wallace Hall between 9:15 & 9:25 a.m. Join your child and help with their costume(s) at 11:30 a.m. downstairs in the designated rooms. This rehearsal is for 4 years through 6th grade. Children, 2 & 3 years, are invited to participate but do not need to come to the rehearsal.

Christmas Eve Pageant Dec., 24, 4:30 p.m.

Please arrive no later than 3:45 p.m. on Christmas Eve, or by 3:15 p.m. if you haven't made your costume. Children will gather in the room where they made their costume.

Carla is also looking for 30 teen and/or adult volunteers to help with the pageant. For more information or to help please email Carla at csschober@stbs.net.

Your Kingdom Come The Season of Already and Not Yet



Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

e know these opening words of "The Lord's Prayer" so well. Isn't it a little strange, however, for Jesus to include this request for the coming of God's kingdom? Isn't he sitting before his disciples as the answer to that prayer—the King who has come and is proclaiming the message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4.17)?

Welcome to Advent, the season in which we live with particular awareness of the tension of the "already/not yet" of God's Kingdom.

Already: From the life-giving darkness of Mary's womb to the death-defeating darkness of Jesus' tomb, the incarnated and resurrected Christ already has brought God's Kingdom into our world. We experience the reality of the Kingdom in our individual lives as we come to Jesus for the forgiveness and transforming grace that he alone provides. We experience the reality of the Kingdom in our community when come together to love each other as Jesus has loved us. We experience the reality of the Kingdom in our city, nation, and world when we participate together with Jesus in proclaiming in word and deed "the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4.16-21 and Isaiah 61. Read the whole chapter!) God's Kingdom has come.

Not Yet: The writer to the Hebrews says it well: "Now in putting everything in subjection to Jesus, God left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him" (2.8). Things are not yet as they will be—injustice, suffering, racism, sickness, broken relationships are ever-present reminders of where God's Kingdom

has yet to permeate. Even so, our hope is in the promise that God's Kingdom is coming with the return of Jesus.

This Advent at St. B's, we'll explore how in Christ the Kingdom of God has come and is coming to comfort, to restore, and to be planted in our lives. We invite you to ask two sets of questions as you look at your relationships, your neighborhoods, and our nation:

Where do we see God's
Kingdom coming alive?
How do we participate?
Where is God's Kingdom
needed? How do we plant
seeds in those places?

As the Spirit enables us to answer these questions, we will see with greater clarity the ways in which our Father in Heaven is answering the prayer Jesus taught us to pray: "Your Kingdom come...."



Your Kingdom Come ADVENT AT ST. B'S

Sunday, Dec. 3, Come Isaiah 64.1-9 God of the prophets, Father of Jesus, Giver of the Spirit: Your prophet Isaiah implored, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence...." Bring to fulfillment what you have begun in Christ: Let your Kingdom come into our lives, our neighborhoods, our nation, and our world. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!



MARK THE ADVENT SEASON WITH THE CHOIRS & MUSICIANS

A FESTIVAL OF LESSONS & CAROLS SUN., DEC. 10

DURING 8:30 & 10:30 SERVICES



SUNDAY, DEC. 17 6:30 - 8:00 P.M.

Register for childcare for 4 yrs and under by Dec. 13 to churchoffice@stbs.net



Genesis and Renewal Lay Eucharistic Ministry



WALK THIS WAY

by Bev Mahan

Verger & Assistant to the

Rector for Liturgy

verger@stbs.net

dvent is the first season of the church year. The name is derived from a Latin word for "coming." The season is a time of preparation and expectation for the coming celebration of our Lord's nativity, and for the final coming of Christ "in power and glory." Advent is a time to recommit to our faith and to our God.



Jerry Minshall, longest serving chalice bearer

Fittingly, our diocese identifies Advent as the season to license and renew the licenses of Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Visitors. So this is an opportunity to highlight some new and long serving LEMs and acolytes.

Jerry Minshall may be our longest serving chalice bearer. He was recruited to serve as an LEM at St. B's by Bill Ward over 20 years ago! Like many of us, he fell in love with the liturgy when he first came to the Episcopal Church. The opportunity to share communion with fellow parishoners at St. B's drew him into the chalice bearer ministry. He marvels that on Sundays, we are communing with not only each other, but believers around the world, those on earth and in heaven. Even after so many years of service, he still regularly tears up as he offers the "blood of Christ, the cup of salvation" to those at the altar rail.

At the other end of the "time served" spectrum is Leora Allen. She is one of those people I felt led by God to ask about becoming an LEM. Though the invitation was completely unexpected, Leora knew that it came from God. Though serving for only a couple of months, her brief experience has exceeded all her expectations, and is marked by the special welcome she feels from her LEM team. And in a bit of serendipity, the opening she fills is on the same team as her good friend, and now teammate, Monty Kimble!

Margaret Weedman has wanted to serve as an acolyte since she was five years old. As her mother, Jo Ellen, tells it, Margaret hoped kindergarten admission would be enough, but alas, she's short. (A primary responsibility of acolytes is to light and extinguish the candles on shelves behind the altar.) When she was seven and thought she might be tall enough, there wasn't a need for 8:30 AM acolytes. So, she waited and asked her mom for about eight weeks in a row over the summer to ask Ms. Bev if "she needed any help." Ms. Bev did need help, and Margaret

woke up at 5:30 AM on the day she was to be trained. The days leading up to her first day, she had her sisters walk her through everything again. Multiple times. She wanted to be prepared! When asked why she wants to serve in this ministry, Margaret says, "I just thought it would be really cool to be able to do something for the church. I know a lot about what goes on up there from catechesis so I thought I could help. I also thought it would be really fun to carry a candle."

The children of St. B's go through the catechesis program, in which they get to use "the beautiful things of the church," and learn about our worship and why we do the things we do. So, for our kids to spend those years in catechesis and then transition to meaningful service reminds them that it's their church too, and that they can use their knowledge and gifts to serve.



Margaret Weedman, new acolyte

Jack Sullivan began serving as an acolyte in 2010. He got started "because I wanted to do something during service other than just sit in the

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From Glory to Glory

Celebrating the glory that grows within us and among our community

Births

Hudson Pace Snyder 9/16
parents Katherine & Eric Snyder

Sonia Jane Madeira 10/7
parents Elizabeth & David Madeira

Baptisms

Dean Coltrane Abernathy parents Gretchen & Judson Abernathy	10/29
Eleanor Caitlin Dyer parent Rachel Dyer	11/12
Daly Morgan Stone parent Whitney Stone	11/26



Genesis continued from pg. 8

pew. Plus, my big brother Aidan was already acolyting, and I wanted to be up there with him and some of the other older kids from the congregation." Jack now serves as a crucifer, and wears a silver cross given to him by St. Bartholomew's Church after five years of service. Despite a full schedule typical of teens today, Jack continues to serve on the altar team because, "I still enjoy the opportunity to serve and help facilitate worship for others, and not just be a passive observer." When asked for a funny story about acolyting, Jack shared: "One time, when I was holding the flagon of wine up front during communion, we would frequently have to swipe its spout to keep it from dripping. But this one Sunday, that didn't happen,

and I ended up with wine all down my robe...it was quite a mess." From the beginning, Jack has demonstrated a mature understanding of and sensitivity to the liturgy, and our parts in it as members of the altar team.

Jack is a senior in high school. We will certainly miss him once he heads off to college next fall. But God continues to call others to serve in His church. Even now, children are coming out of their catechesis experience and expressing interest in being trained as acolytes. As we look with hopeful anticipation to Christ's coming, and to a new year in the life of St. Bartholomew's Church, may we be thankful for these volunteers who facilitate our worship every time we gather together.



Jack Sullivan, Senior Acolyte

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Advent Reading

Suggestions to Slow Down the Season



f you know much about me or my family, you know that we are lovers of books. So perhaps it is no surprise that books are some of my favorite Advent tools to prepare my heart for Christmas. As my daughters have grown, the books we read at Christmas have changed. We've moved from picture books to short stories we read aloud together. If there's one consistent theme to the books that mean the most to me at Christmas, it's that they are excellently written. Many of my favorite Christmas books are by authors who've written other books I've enjoyed. Here's a sampling:

Angela and the Baby Jesus by Frank McCourt: I haven't actually read McCourt's memoirs, but this sweet and funny story gets me every time. It's a story about Christmas, but it's also a story about family and misunderstandings and grace. It makes a great read aloud and even when I read it to my older children, we laugh together.



The Glorious Impossible by Madeleine L'Engle: This beautiful book tells the story of Jesus from the Annunciation all the way through to Pentecost. It offers not only L'Engle's lovely prose, but is illustrated with frescoes by Giotto. We tend to read this one slowly, doing a few frescoes per day. If you're a good planner, this book has 25 sections, so it would be a perfect companion for December leading up to Christmas.

Star Over Bethlehem: Poems and Holiday Stories by Agatha Christie Mallowen: This little book contains some of the most surprising and touching Christmas stories I've encountered. I think we've owned it for three Advents and after the first year, we all had our favorites and were delighted to get to hear them again when the time rolled around. There's something about the combination of the excellent writing with the fresh way of seeing that makes these stories worthwhile. They can be a little long to read aloud, so I would save them for evenings around the fire with middle school aged children (and up).

God With Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Christmas, edited by Greg Pennoyer and Gregory Wolfe: While picture books and short stories are wonderful daytime or evening companions during Advent, God With Us is my favorite morning reading during this season. I love the way this book takes me through the meaning of each feast day and changes authors each week. The change in voices keeps things fresh all the way through Epiphany and the artwork throughout is a mix of familiar and new artists. There's something that inspires reflection and meditation in having images to go along with the words of writers like Richard John Neuhaus, Eugene Peterson and Luci Shaw. This book fills me up and calms me down in a way that helps me focus on what matters during Advent: waiting for Jesus.

Whatever you read this Advent, may your heart be steadfast in waiting. As we wait to celebrate and remember Christ's birth, may our hearts' longing for Christ to return grow ever more urgent.



Your Kingdom Come ADVENT AT ST. B'S

Sunday, Dec. 10 Comfort Isaiah 40:1-11

God of the prophets,
Father of Jesus, Giver of
the Spirit: You yourself
declared, "Comfort, O
comfort my people, says
your God. Speak tenderly
to Jerusalem...." Bring
to fulfillment what you
have begun in Christ: Let
the tender power of your
Kingdom bring comfort
to our lives, our
neighborhoods, our
nation, and our world.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night

A Place at the Table



SETTING THE TABLE

by Thorunn McCoy

Altar & Flower Guild tmccoy@email.usn.org

y grandfather, Hallgrimur, and my mother, Selma, were shepherds. Being out in the stark fields of Iceland with the flock is not like a bucolic holiday card. It's windy, cold, and shepherds are terribly and utterly alone. A smelly dog snarls at things in the darkness. Sheep get caught in rocks or wander into inexplicable places and then panic. It's hours of back-breaking work to gather in flocks at autumn or to shear them in spring. Lambing season brings its own heartbreak.

And yet, God chose to announce His greatest gift to the world to this stinking bunch of uneducated shepherds in the middle of nowhere. This gives me a great sense of joy and hope. Jesus' birth turns everything the world says about power and privilege right on its head. That night, God sought out the lowly and gave them a front-row seat at the most important event in the universe.

This is why the story of the angels and shepherds IS the Christmas story for me. I am not the offspring of royals or prophets; I am the child of a shepherd. But, one, who in God's

wonderful reordering of importance, has a place at His table.

The happiest days of my mother's life were chasing sheep over the rocky crags of the family farm. At 11, she stayed out all night, learning to rely on her instincts, protecting spindlylegged lambs from errant snow storms, and keeping frustratingly resolute rams from straying. She lived beneath the northern lights, saw the dusky twilight of Icelandic summers, and slept on piles of moss. One of her saddest days was leaving to work in the fish factory on the harbor, earning much-needed cash for her family. Someone younger would tend the flocks.

This is the reality of shepherds. Those who first saw Jesus weren't the heads of their families or the oldest sons; they were the younger children and those without. Yet, these dispossessed witnessed one of the most amazing sights in all of history. They got to see the "glory of the Lord" shine on them and hear angels announce "good tidings of great joy;" the entire valley must have shaken with light and sound. That must have been an awe-inspiring event, because if those shepherds were anything like my taciturn grandfather, nothing short of miraculous could have inspired him to leave his flock.

Shepherds, like Hallgrimur, stay with their sheep-no matter what. The details of his accident are sketchy, but what I do know is that a search party located him at the bottom of a ravine. He wasn't coherent for months. Afterwards, he wore a fourinch lift and brace on his left shoe. He did not talk about it. Ever. But even with his physical and mental difficulties, he tried to continue farming. This did not last, and after losing his family to opportunities for better lives as well as the farm, he moved out to a remote sheep station, a one-room shack with a bed and a peat stove, where he opened and

closed the gate for farm trucks. He remained there much of the year, seeing his family seldom. It was hours to get out to him on crushed-lava roads. But, he was always there to open the gate for us, like he knew we were coming. When age and infirmities grew too much and he moved to Reykjavik, I remember how much happier he was in the little house. Simply put, he missed his sheep. In his heart, he was a shepherd, and nothing else would do.

Shepherds like their sheep. They don't like cities. And, they certainly don't like taking orders. Yet, these men up and went to Bethlehem. Only something truly miraculous could persuade a bunch of shepherds to enter into a town during a busy census time of the year. But, go they did. They didn't have a clean shirt, didn't stop to wash their smudgy faces. Was the roar commanding them to go see loud like thunder or like waves crashing against rocks and they were afraid not to go? Or, were they just so curious that they left their sheep to see this new child? When they returned to their fields did the angels keep the sheep safe in their absence? I like to think that the sheep were probably as



One of St. B's very own shepherds from last year's Christmas pageant.

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Your Kingdom Come ADVENT AT ST. B'S

Sunday, Dec. 17

Restore
Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-11

God of the prophets, Father of Jesus, Giver of the Spirit: You promised that your people, freed and made whole, would "restore the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations...." Bring to fulfillment what you have begun in Christ: Let your Kingdom restore the ruins in our lives, our neighborhoods, our nation, and our world. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Shepherds continued from pg. 11

dumbfounded as the men who tended them and didn't move a muscle in their absence.

With my mother, I've herded sheep. Holding my arms out wide and yelling "Hup! Hup!", we've walked uneven hills of nibbled-over lichens. Our sweaters buttoned up even in August. I've heard lambs bleating for their mothers after shearing. When the old wool goes, the young have no clue as to what their own mother smells or looks like. Sometimes their cries go on for hours before the last tired lamb suckles a patient mama. All these experience tie me to this past that I share with those shepherds in that field outside Bethlehem. I would love to have been with those "sore afraid" shepherds to hear the night crackle with the sounds of glory, to see angels swooping across the inky sky, and to feel the understanding of grace and mercy like fireworks—a message of hope and miracle and joy.

I'd like to think that each time I hear the Christmas story, my Christmas story, that I share again in the shepherds' mystery of wonder.



Thorunn's uncle's farm in Iceland upon which he watched his flocks



christmastide service times

The Fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 24 9:30 a.m. Family Eucharist

Formation Classes canceled for all ages. Nursery for 3 yrs. and under

Christmas Eve, Sunday, Dec. 24

4:30 p.m. Family Eucharist with Pageant 8:30 p.m. Family Eucharist 10:15 p.m. Carol Sing Prelude 10:30 p.m. Family Eucharist *with incense*

Christmas Day, Monday, Dec. 25, 10:30 a.m. Family Eucharist

Nursery will not be offered on Christmas Day. All ages are welcome to participate in the liturgy.

Sunday, Dec. 31 9:30 a.m. Family Eucharist

Formation Classes canceled for all ages.

Nursery for 3 yrs. and under

Christian formation classes for all ages

resume on January 7.



Did You Know?

St. B's Preschool Happenings



DOWNSTAIRS UPSTAIRS

by Kelly Hull

Director of Preschool khull@stbs.net

Each month the entire student body of the Preschool meets for chapel. Our littlest 15 month old friends, all the way up to our 5 year olds, meet for a time of Bible teaching and worship. Father Travis meets with us in the sanctuary for this special time. This year we have added a new element to our chapel time. Under the direction of one of our teachers, Ruth Carleton, we added an offering time. The children collect their coins in preschool sized envelopes and bring them to chapel each month. Every child gets to put his or her envelope into the special offering basket.

We are partnering with St. B's in supporting Pastor Paul Mbithi and New Life Restoration Ministries. Our monies go to support the children in his program helping to provide food and school materials. Last month, the children had the opportunity to meet Pastor Paul in real life while he was here for a visit! It was a great way for our kids to put a face with a name! Pastor Paul shared about his ministry and the children in his school. It was a sweet time together. So far this year we have collected a little over

\$300.00 (along with a safety pin, some sequins, a few tokens, a flower petal, and some coins from overseas! Ha!) This hands-on way of giving has been a great way to walk out the truths we are teaching our students each week.



Fr. Travis teaching at the monthly preschool chapel.



Left Behind

A Story of the Magi

I bought my first crèche the year my mum died. I couldn't stomach putting up a tree or hanging decorations. I wanted to avoid the hustle, the bustle, and the malls. But sometime in that first Advent, I figured out that I could still do Mary. I could do Joseph. I could do the fuzzy sheep and the tired donkey. And I could do Jesus. So, I bought a crèche for the hearth.

In the years that followed, my crèche began to take on a life of its own. The crowd that gathered at the manger expanded exponentially: Leia, Han, Yoda, R2, Wonder Woman, Captain America, the Tardis and the Doctor, the Falcon, Groot, Hulk, the Tetley Tea Man, Gromit, Dr. Alan Grant, and even a velociraptor. Everyone hung out on the hearth waiting for the light to come. One year even the "bad guys" started to show up: Darth Vader and the Red Skull. I didn't have many, but it became important that they were there too. Because Jesus came for everyone, not just Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, and that includes the "bad guys."



Some of the gang readying to celebrate the Epiphany

My crèche: Always teaching. Always growing. Always a story.

One year, Bugs, my four-legged furry friend, ate Jesus before I could hide him. I hide him because, of course, Jesus doesn't arrive at the scene until Christmas Eve. But hiding Jesus often leads to other problems, though, like forgetting to put him out in the excitement of Christmas Eve. Or better yet, forgetting where I had stashed him only to find him when I'm packing everything away after Epiphany. I can't help but wonder how often Jesus gets missed or forgotten on Christmas Day with all the gifting and feasting.

But perhaps none have a better story in my home like the Magi. Unlike the rest of the gang, the magi start far away from the crèche. Often they begin their journey in another room. The goal is always to move them a little closer each week, but alas we all know how December often goes. My poor Magi end up taking detours, back tracking, and often having to sprint the last mile to arrive on time for the Epiphany and Twelfth Night. I confess that one year, I completely forgot about them. I discovered them in the corner of a room behind a lamp the week before Lent.

I find great comfort in the Magi. They were late to the party and yet still made the story. The Magi say there is hope for me who is perpetually late to everything! Those Magi, they paid attention to the stars. The world was their classroom. They listened. They were wise and discerning. They were brave. They loved to travel. And they were foreigners – most likely of a different religion. Yet still they came to worship this new born King. Yet still they were welcome. Still they had a place in this story.

As a child, I remember my Dad dressing up as one of the magi, carrying one of the gifts down the



center aisle, and singing one of the verses of *We Three Kings*. It must have been around Epiphany, but I wouldn't have known that at the time.

Today, though, I know Epiphany. I know when it is. I know what it is, the climax of the Christmas season. I know why the Magi matter. But yet most years, because Epiphany falls on a week day (January 6) and not a Sunday, the Magi get left behind not only in my living room, but in the liturgy, too. Our church calendar moves very quickly between the adoration of the Magi on Epiphany and the Baptism of our Lord on the first Sunday after. And so the beloved Magi get overshadowed by other Epiphanies or manifestations of Jesus to the world.

Well, I say: no one gets left behind in *this* story.

So let's bring back the Magi. Let's celebrate Twelfth Night. Let's sing We Three Kings. Let's look at the stars. Let's remember the foreigner. Let's keep the decorations up through January 6. Let's bless our doorways and our homes. And let's have King Cake.

Let's keep the feast for all twelve days of Christmas, allowing the crescendo to build, the magi to actually arrive, and the light to be made known in our own worlds.

Pipe Dreams: Have I Got a Deal for You

The Organ Completion Project



By Julia McGirt

Have I Got a Deal for You!

he young man walked into the used car dealership looking for a real deal. He had seen a Cadillac on the lot and was smitten. When he questioned the salesman he was told, "Yep! It's a real steal, just no power steering, no power brakes and no air conditioning." That's the organ at St. Bartholomew's. When it was originally built for our church, it was not in the budget to build to completion, and as a result our organ is missing many of the essential components of a quality instrument.

The King of Instruments

The organ is said to be the King of Instruments. Its various pipes are crafted to sound like every instrument in the orchestra. There are flutes, strings, reeds, brass, and one more sound (not like any particular instrument), the Diapason or Principal. The Principal is essential for a full, complete organ registration. At St. Bartholomew's we have no strong Principal, one weak string, and no brass at all. What we do have sounds lovely, but there is so much more sound that an organ is capable of producing, if it is simply equipped to do so.

Organ Donor Found!

Out of loss good things can happen. Organ builder Dennis Milnar has found organ pipes from an organ removed from its setting, and they are very much like ours. That organ has the Diapason, the brass and strings that we need, is in good condition, and available for us. Furthermore, because these are reclaimed pipes and not built anew, the cost to us to complete is roughly a third (\$36,000) of the previous

estimates we have had to build our organ to completion (over \$100K). There couldn't be a more affordable way to complete our Cadillac!

Organ Completion Project

Henri Temianka, virtuoso violinist, conductor, author and music educator said, "The most meticulous technique and thoughtful musicianship go for naught unless projected by a beautiful sound." Our organ completion project will bring a new dimension to the sounds emanating from our choir loft in worship. We would like to thank all the generous donors who have already given to the Organ Voices Fund! We are so excited to finally see this project through to completion.



When the organ is complete, the knobs on both sides, now covered with tape, will make joyous sounds.

Welcoming Nashville's New Neighbors

St. B's Partner in Mission

by Morgan Wills, for the Mission & Outreach Committee

o most of us Advent means lessons & carols and anticipation of Christmas. But the first Advent was all about sudden and unexpected displacement.

Joseph and Mary's abrupt trek to Bethlehem, interrupted by a delivery in a stable, was only the half of it.

Pretty soon the young family was fleeing for their lives as refugees to Egypt, where the story of their stay—and the hospitality they experienced there—is etched deeply into the art and hearts of the Coptic people to this day.

Fast forward to today, and refugees are still on the move. And God's people at St. B's—in partnership with Siloam Health—are demonstrating the same kind of hospitality.

Although President Trump's executive orders have decreased the flow of new refugees to the U.S., more than 550 are still expected to be resettled in Nashville in 2018, arriving primarily from countries including Afghanistan, Burma, Bhutan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These forcibly



Fr. Dave, volunteer chaplain at Siloam Health

displaced peoples are, like Joseph's family, a type of sacrament for those of us already established here. You might call it our "Matthew 25" moment, an opportunity to welcome "others" as if welcoming Jesus himself.

These refugees arrive with little more than the clothes on their backs, looking to build a new life in a new land. They have an uphill battle learning a new language and securing jobs and housing, but what often goes overlooked are their medical needs and their lack of understanding of the American health care system. As a charitably funded health care nonprofit with 25 years of experience in refugee ministry, Siloam Health is uniquely positioned as a bridge between them and the local body of Christ.

The ties between Siloam and St. B's are deep. Dr. Morgan Wills, longtime staff internist at the ministry, has served as President & CEO for the past four years. His predecessor in that role was longtime St. B's parishioner Nancy West. Every week, Beth Heimburger and Father Dave Wilson share their gifts with Siloam's patients in their roles as volunteer nurse and pastoral caregiver, respectively. And Nancy Hyer currently serves on the Siloam board of directors. That doesn't even include the literally dozens of other volunteers, advocates, and financial supporters among the ranks at St. B's.

In 2018, Siloam is excited to be launching a new program that offers a practical, hands-on opportunity for a small group of St. B's volunteers to partner with Siloam in a new and even deeper way. Nashville Neighbors is a new program which pairs a team of



6-10 adult volunteers (children are welcome, too) with a newly arrived refugee family. Siloam will equip volunteers to foster cross-cultural relationships, teach basic health education, and help the refugees create a broader social network and support system. Teams will meet a total of 12 times over six months in the homes and apartments of their refugee family.

What will they do? Eight carefully designed, experientially-driven lessons will cover such basic topics as: pedestrian safety, when and why to call 911, and "over-the-counter medicines 101." You need no medical training to do this, people! But with only 8 lessons over 12 sessions, there's also built-in time to get to know each other. Volunteers and refugee families are encouraged to use the extra time to share a meal, an outing, or meet a practical need. And when it's time for the adults to teach, kids can be quite useful to play with the refugee children who inevitably linger around!

We anticipate that volunteering with Nashville Neighbors will not only be transformative for the newly arrived refugees, but also for the Americanborn volunteers. As with any missional endeavor, it will no doubt be messy. But those who commit can expect a deepened understanding of the nations, empathy for the foreign-

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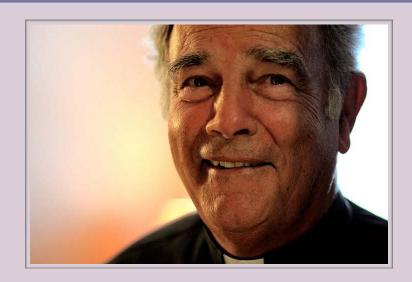
Welcoming continued from pg. 17

born, and a fresh glimpse of the Kingdom of God at work among and through us. We are particularly excited to see a ripple effect in the volunteers' spheres of influence, especially in our church!

Time and time again, the Bible is clear about the church's response to the foreigner, the sojourner and the immigrant. God tells us to treat the foreigner as native-born and to love them as we love ourselves. Why? Because we too were once foreigners - to our land and even to our God. On average 1,000 new refugees enter Nashville each year. There has never been a better time to live out this call to action. It's like the Great Commission in reverse: Instead of us going to the nations, the nations are coming to us!

Siloam Health is excited to partner with St. B's, as well as other Nashville churches, to respond to this great opportunity to empower refugees, demonstrate the gospel, and build lifelong friendships with our new neighbors. Whether in prayer, finances, or direct service, we hope many in our community will join us!

For more information or to get involved, please contact Nancy West at nancy.west5@att.net.



I would like to give a shout out for Siloam Health. I have been volunteering as a Chaplain at Siloam Health for ten years now, and I just want to say what a blessing it is for me to be there every Wednesday morning interacting with the staff and praying for patients. Siloam Health is truly a holy place and everyone who serves on the staff and all the volunteers see our time spent there as ministry. Whenever I leave I feel truly blessed to have had the opportunity to serve in the Name of Jesus.

Fr. Dave



Your Kingdom Come ADVENT AT ST. B'S

Sunday, Dec. 24 *Plant* 2 Samuel 7.1-11, 16 God of the prophets, Father of Jesus, Giver of the Spirit: You covenanted with your servant David, "I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them...your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me...." Bring to fulfillment what you have begun in Christ: Plant your Kingdom in our lives, our neighborhoods, our nation, and our world. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Thursday Mornings at St. B's

The Women's Study That Keeps on Growing

By Gretchen Abernathy

he Thursday morning women's Bible study began around seven vears ago at the impetus of the wonderful Katie Moessner. Katie was responding both to a prompting from the Holy Spirit and to a deeply felt need among women in the congregation for a space in which to gather together mid-week and actually be able to connect with God and each other. We started with a verse-by-verse study of John 17, and the following year Katie formalized the approach a bit more by leading a curriculum-based exploration of the book of Esther and instituting a real game-changer: snacks. Since then, the core features of the Thursday morning Bible study have been fellowship (with snacks and coffee), the Word, and prayer.

The Bible study has evolved over the years from being primarily attended by mothers of young children to now being a lovely swatch of the church's diversity in terms of age, marital and family status, and work experience, not to mention spiritual backgrounds. Some women have their hands to the plow of a long, steady, abiding relationship with the triune God and God's living Word; some are newer to the faith; some find the Bible incomprehensible at best, if not downright offensive; some are in the process of redefining everything they



believe and don't yet know where they'll end up; and all of us want to do the faith/life wrestling match together.

For many years, we had a defined leader, the position falling to whoever had the time, energy, and passion for that semester. We are now in our third year of being group-led. That is, we have no defined teaching leader but, instead, whoever is willing to sign up takes the leadership for that week. This model is working really well for us in this season. It allows us to benefit from the varied gifts and skills of this amazing group of women. Each week showcases a different leadership style and approach to prayer. This model also keeps us involved, as opposed to being spectators, and pushes us to attempt things that don't always feel comfortable. At the same time, no one is ever expected to lead or bring snacks or pray out loud or do anything but sit there and keep breathing. A lot of times keeping on breathing is the hardest part.

Childcare is a key aspect of the Bible study. From the beginning, Father Jerry was supportive of the idea and over time the Bible study initiative was folded into the adult formation area of St. B's ministry, with officially sanctioned childcare overseen by the committed and resilient Teresa Robinson. Despite the highs and lows of budget restraints, childcare has always remained intact thanks to the dedication of the church staff and contributions from the mothers themselves and other women who donate to cover the costs. If it were not for childcare, quite a number of us would not be able to participate.

Regarding what we study, we generally alternate Old Testament/ New Testament, and at the end of each semester or year we discuss as

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Studies over the Years:

- John 17
- Esther (Beth Moore)
- Isaiah (Kay Arthur at first then we went rogue)
- A biblically-based social justice workbook
- James (Beth Moore),
 Judges (Tim Keller)
- Acts (N. T. Wright)
- Psalms (started with a book then went rogue)
- Hebrews (Jen Wilken),
- Ezekiel (Navigators)

Leaders over the Years:

- Katie Moessner
- Jenny Ramsey
- Gretchen Abernathy
- Tara Acheson
- Currently Leadership is a rotation among each woman who signs up

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a group what we're interested in studying next time. With only one exception over the years, we've always studied a book of the Bible itself, as opposed to topical or thematic studies. This is intentional. We do this because it is hard, The Bible is confusing, and we want to learn; also because we love (or love/hate) the Bible and want a context in which to engage with it. We typically choose homework-based studies as opposed to a "free reading" approach because, even though none of us feels like we ever have time to do the work, most express that we need an external structure to help us enter into the Bible without completely floundering.

But what is really the point of the church offering a Bible study, the point of any of us participating in this thing week after week? Why do we show up even if we haven't done the homework? Objectively, the Thursday morning women's Bible

study checks off several boxes regarding the Way of St. B's: worship; internal formation; external formation; a bit of evangelism; and action. Beyond these pragmatics, there is real community formed through the Bible study, and not just a vague sense of feeling at ease with fellow human beings. There is community formed through being vulnerable with each other and in front of God. We learn a lot from hearing each other talk about our different experiences, perspectives, interpretations, and questions. We receive each other's stories, joys, and struggles with sincere care. We accept each other. We nudge and encourage each other to take it all to Jesus and to wait patiently for God to show up. This is the slow, steady work of tending the garden of the kingdom of God, one weed, one flower at a time.



Annual Women's Retreat April 20 - 21, 2018 St. Mary's, Sewanee

Retreat Leader: Dr. Erika Moore Professor of Old Testament and Horse Lover

Erika's reflections on the book of Ezekiel will guide us into discovering the Lord in all his majesty and glory in the most unexpected of circumstances and places.

A Musical Journey



MYSELF FROM SINGING by David Madeira Dir. of Music dmadeira@stbs.net

love my job year-round, but starting around the beginning of December it becomes especially fun. During Ordinary Time, the Sundays between Pentecost and the beginning of Advent, music selections are made primarily in regards to the lectionary passages of the day. But beginning in Advent there is also a seasonal focus to our hymns, drawing our attention not only to the morning's Scripture but to the larger themes that echo through the entire liturgical season.

The seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany are often referred to as the "Cycle of Light." Beginning with the words of Isaiah that "the people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light," our services become replete with imagery of the light of Christ breaking into the world.

In Advent, our Scripture and music is full of hope; we are expectantly waiting for the light to break into our darkness. We light candles in our Advent wreath, adding one each week as the light grows. We sing "O come, thou Dayspring, from on high," and we proclaim Christ as our Morning Star. In Advent we hold in both hands the tension of knowing Christ has already come into the world (the first Advent) but awaiting his return to complete the work of redemption (the second Advent).

One of my favorite hymns, appropriate for Advent, is "O Day of Peace that Dimly Shines." Its text is pregnant with the hope of a coming day in which war, hate, and division are ended.

O day of peace that dimly shines through all our hopes and prayers and dreams, guide us to justice, truth, and love, delivered from our selfish schemes. May swords of hate fall from our hands, our hearts from envy find release, till by God's grace our warring world shall see Christ's promised reign of peace.

On Christmas Eve, the hopes of Israel recounted in Advent are realized in the nativity of Christ. As we sing Silent Night, each of us holding candles and the light spreading through the congregation, we are reminded that because in Christ's incarnation, light has entered our darkened world: "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:5)

I love the way this is depicted in "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence":

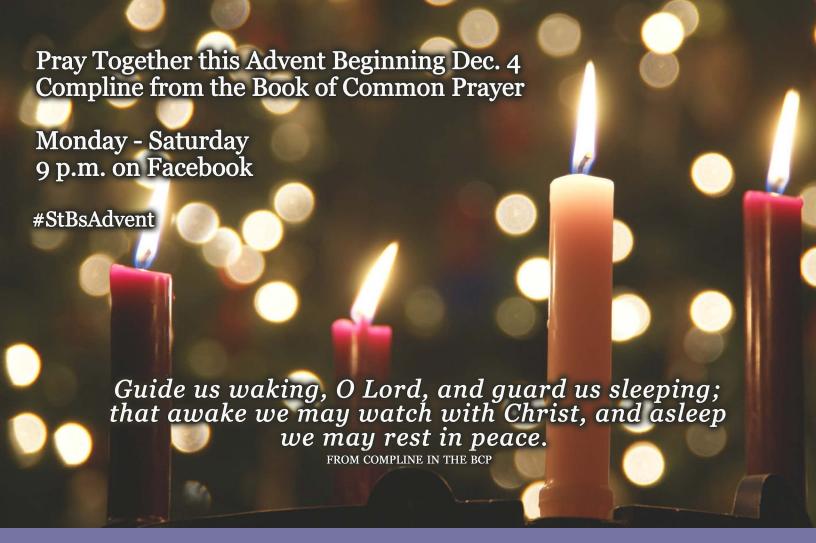
Rank on rank the host of heaven Spreads its vanguard on the way, As the Light of light descendeth From the realms of endless day, That the powers of hell may vanish As the darkness clears away.

The candle-lighting on Christmas Eve, spreading though the congregation, is no mere gimmick; it carries with it a profound symbolism that will bring from us from Christmastide into Epiphany. In Christ's incarnation, humanity has received his light, and we are now his light-bearers to the world.

Epiphany draws its name from a Greek word meaning "reveal." The primary theme of the Epiphany season is Christ made manifest to the world, beginning with the story of the magi, Gentiles from afar who are among the first to recognize and worship the Savior King.

In Epiphany, as we tell the stories of Christ being revealed to all people—at his baptism, his first miracles, the calling of the disciples, and the beginnings of his teaching ministry—our light theme takes on a nature of spreading, growing outward

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as more and more people come to see and to know that Jesus is the Messiah.

Pay attention to the theme of light spreading in our Epiphany music, beginning with "We Three Kings" and its refrain of "Star of wonder...guide us to thy perfect Light." It is captured in other hymns such as:

Praise the One who breaks the darkness with a liberating light,
Praise the One who frees the prisoners, turning blindness into sight.
Praise the One who preached the gospel, curing every dread disease,
Calming storms and feeding thousands with the very bread of peace.

And in one of my all-time favorites:

Christ is the world's true light, its Captain of salvation
The Daystar, clear and bright, to every race and nation.
New life, new hope, awakes for all who hold his sway,
Freedom her bondage breaks,
and night is turned to day.

Pay attention to all these themes as we head into a new liturgical year and the Cycle of Light begins again. Notice the trajectory and place in yourself in the journey as Advent turns to Christmastide and then to Epiphany. For as Jesus reminds us in one of our Epiphany readings, *you* are the light of the world (Mt 5:14). You are called to be part of the continuation of the spreading of the light, like the star above Bethlehem that led the magi to the boy Jesus.

So...

Come, live in the light.

Shine with the joy of the love of the Lord.

We are called to be hope for the hopeless

So hatred and blindness will be no more.

We are called to act with justice,

We are called to love tenderly,

We are called to serve one another

to walk humbly with God.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Annual Epiphany Celebration Twelfth night. Three Kings Day. Feast of Light.





Last year, Andy Beaird chili won for being the "most original."



Contestants are also judged for the creative table decor.

piphany concludes the Christmas season. It marks • the visit of the magi, the Baptism of Jesus, and the first miracle at Cana and hence celebrates the Light being made known to the world. Please join us in celebrating the Epiphany as a church family on Sunday, January 10 from 5 -7 p.m. Come and feast on chili, conversation, connection with others, and warmth from the bonfire.

Chili Cook-Off

The celebration gets started with a chili dinner. All ages are welcome to compete in our popular chili cook-off. The categories are Best Hot Chili, Best Medium Chili, Best Mild Chili and Best Decorated Table. Each contestant determines which category to compete in - Hot, Medium or Mild. All contestants will automatically qualify to compete for the Best Decorated Table.

If you wish to provide chili for the celebration, but do not want to compete, please still sign up. We need 35 chilis total And if chili isn't your thing, sign up to bring star-shaped cookies!

Email churchoffice@stbs.net to sign up. The church will provide cheese and sour cream.

Christmas Trees & Bonfire

After chili, we move outside to our larger-than-life bonfire comprised of Christmas trees. Christmas trees can be dropped off on the church grounds near the fire pit any time after December 25.

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the Peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



EPIPHANY CELEBRATION chili cook-off & bonfire SUNDAY, JANUARY 7 5-7 P.M.