



Epistle Update for the Week of Sunday, December 14, 2008

A NOTE FROM DEX

This Moment Is The Moment

We are not very good at waiting for anything. We live in a country and in a time in history when everything seems to be instant. Instant messaging, blackberry devices, cell phones, news in real time from around the world, microwave dinners and the list is inexhaustible. But we are asked to set aside time in Advent to practice active and hopeful waiting, anticipating that God will make good on his promise to come again, to redeem us from sin and death. In an Advent Devotion based on the writings of Henri Nouwen, I found help in understanding “hopeful” waiting in the midst of an “instant world”. It goes like this, “Right here is a secret for us about waiting. If we wait in the conviction that a seed has been planted and that something has already begun, it changes the way we wait (see James 5:7-8). Active waiting implies being fully present to the moment with the conviction that something is happening where we are and that we want to present to it. A waiting person is someone who is present to the moment, believing that this moment is *the* moment.”

Blessings

Dex

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

DVD of 50th Anniversary Service is available for \$2 - call the church office at 880-0247 to order your copy. Lipton Moy has produced this fantastic DVD of this very special service.

Blessing of Pledges is this Sunday, December 14. Extra Pledge cards are in the bookcase in the Narthex.

Vestry Nominations start this Sunday, December 14. The nomination box will be located in the Narthex. Please talk with your hopeful candidate to verify that they are willing to serve as a Vestry member if nominated. The nominees must be a confirmed Episcopalian and a member in good standing of this parish. To be eligible to vote (voting will take place during the Annual Meeting, January 11, 2009) you must also be a confirmed Episcopalian and a member in good standing of this parish.

Christmas Flower Envelopes are in the pews if you would like to make a donation in honor or memory of someone this holiday season. The Church flowers and greenery are financed by these donations. It's a wonderful way to beautify the Church and, at the same time, honor loved ones during this festive season.

**ALL MEMBERS OF THE PARISH are invited
to help with
Greening of the Church
for Christmas.**

We will start at 5 PM before St. Thomas Night, Sunday, December 21 and during St. Thomas Night. We will continue Tuesday morning, December 23 starting at 9 AM till we are done.

Come join us in fellowship and merry.

A BIG thank you - Way to go, Santa's elves! Thanks to St. Thomas' Parish Family, 42 Christmas wishes of persons with mental illness were filled! That's a lot of gladdened hearts. Thanks to all who helped at the Operation Santa Claus table and to those who purchased gifts. Our two-year-old tradition is growing strong! Susan Smith

THE SEARCH COMMITTEE is working hard, meeting several times a week now, and conducting preliminary interviews over the phone. We know that this time may seem to you much like the Advent season itself, a time of waiting and wonder, and although we cannot share specifics in respect for the privacy of the candidates, we are happy to report that the process is going very smoothly. We are ever mindful of the presence of God in this discernment process and grateful for your prayers.

Wednesday Night Advent Programs Plan to join us tonight and next Wednesday evening for the Advent Prayer Service in the Parish Hall with supper at 5:30, Evening Prayer at 6:30, followed by a program. We will have a potato bar for these two Advent Suppers. Please bring a favorite topping (enough to serve 5 persons). We will also serve a salad and drinks. Please plan to join us.

Tonight Following the service we will all help decorate and set up the Parish Hall for the Special Children's Christmas Party to be held on Thursday, December 11 from 10 am to 1 pm.

December 17 Following the service, we will work together to finish the preparations for the Christmas pageant to be held on St. Thomas Night, December 21. We are doing a new program this year entitled, "A Gift for Christmas" and will need lots of hands to finish costumes, props and set. The children may be needed to do last minute rehearsing.

St. Thomas Night-Sunday December 21st in the Parish Hall- At 5:30 pm we will start our evening with a potluck supper. Please bring your favorite main dish and a side dish or dessert. At 6:30 pm we will turn our attention to the Christmas Pageant. This year the children will be presenting the play "A Gift for Christmas" featuring the cherub choir and several other children/and young adults of St. Thomas. We will all be blessed as we follow the children on a journey of finding out the "best" present we can get for Christmas. Our evening of fun and fellowship will end with a reading of the Christmas Story from Luke's gospel and a setting of the Crèche. Come one come all and celebrate as we all enjoy each other, good food and the children as they present their Christmas play!

For questions about food call Leslie Avant 520-0535 or April Taylor. For questions about helping out with the play or being in the play contact Cameron Starnes 489-1318.

ST. ANNE'S CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON -

You are cordially invited
to join us for our
Christmas Luncheon on
Saturday, December 13th at 11:30 AM
in the Parish Hall

This is open to all ladies of the parish so please mark your calendar. The cost of the lunch is \$10.50/person with an entrée choice of stuffed chicken breast or pork loin with port wine sauce. Bring a small gift to share (under \$10).

"Rudolph" will be present acting in Santa's place (after all this is a very busy time of the year for Santa).

For more information or to make your reservation, please call Barbara Meyer (880-9758) or Nancy Teasdale (881-2082)

"Alleluia II" books are Missing - St. Thomas has quite a collection of the "Alleluia II" books and we are not able to find any of them. Please if you have any church copies of this book return them immediately to the church. We would like to use them during Advent and upcoming Cursillo events. Thank you so much.

ATTENTION ALL COMMITTEE CHAIRS - Annual Reports are due today. We need to include everyone so get your report to Elouisa Stokes, 2415 Glenn St., Huntsville 35802 or email elouisa@hiwaay.net. Please call Eouisa at 539-2058 if you need more information.

Special Children's Christmas Party- Christmas is around the corner and for many of us at St. Thomas the season begins with a very special party. This year the party will be Thursday, December 11th from 10 am. to 1:00 pm. in the Parish Hall. We will entertain over 100 special children from area schools. The children have various types of physical and mental disabilities. Over the years, we have also learned that they have many abilities as well - singing,

dancing and making others feel wonderful. Please plan to be part of the festivities. There are opportunities to sign up for food, shop for assorted supplies, blow up balloons, and decorate tables in the parish hall. Look for sign up sheets to help. This is a truly wonderful event and one our church has provided for over 30 years. Questions? Call Michelle Box 489-7669.

Christmas Eve 5:30 PM service - While the traditional Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve will be held at 11:00 P.M., the early service this Christmas Eve will be held at 5:30 P.M. The early service will offer special things for children but will be designed to provide a moving and meaningful worship experience for adults as well. I hope that you will find the earlier hour of this service to be more convenient for you, especially families with young children. I am very excited about this time that we will spend together celebrating the birth of Christ. Come and join us!(Father Carl)

First Stop Gift Cards are now available for your consideration as you make your Christmas gift list. The front of the card is a drawing of a homeless camp. The artist, Craig Rupert, was homeless and First Stop helped him get into housing. For a minimum of \$15.00 donation per card to First Stop, one of these attractive cards will be sent to those you would like to honor. A sample of the drawing and order forms are available on the bulletin board in the Information Hall. All proceeds will benefit First Stop. Please contact Becky or Jack Stokes at 881-4748 if you have questions.

THE FOOD PANTRY will be collecting the following Christmas dinner items: canned 2 lb. hams, stuffing mix, instant potatoes, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie filling and holiday cookies. Dry milk packets are always needed. Thank you for your continued generosity.

NEEDED BLANKETS, COATS, thermal underwear, heavy socks, gloves, toboggans and sleeping bags are now being requested for Huntsville's homeless population. Please place donated items in the box beside the drink machine in the Information Hall. Items should be clean and in good repair. The items will be taken to First Stop for distribution. Thanks for your support.

Christmas Season Worship Schedules

Wednesday, December 24

no Bible Studies

11:00 AM Healing Service

5:30 PM Christmas Eve Service, nursery available

11:00 PM Christmas Eve Service

Christmas Day, No Service, Office Closed

December 26, Office Closed

Sunday, December 28, No Sunday School, Both Services

December 31
no Bible Studies
11:00 AM Healing Service
January 1, 2009, New Years Day, No Service, Office Closed
January 2, 2009, Office Closed

Annual Parish Meeting is January 11, 2009. It will start around 12:30 PM with a chili, soup and salad luncheon. We will vote also for the open Vestry positions during the meeting. Please be sure to mark your calendar with this date and watch for details in the next Epistle. Nursery will be provided.

January 11, 2009 will be the next Baptism Sunday - please contact the church office if you would like more information.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

There will be no Sunday School on December 28.

YOUTH NEWS AND EVENTS

YP and EYC WILL HELP YOU WITH YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING!!

The YP and EYC are planning to babysit this Sunday afternoon from **4:00 to 7:00 pm** on **December 14** to allow you to shop for Christmas. We will provide dinner and fun for our St. Thomas children! Questions? Call anyone from the Vestry Youth Ministry Group (Julia Erwin 883-4221, Kelly Evans 882-9518, Bob Harwell 880-2073, or Tod Taylor 883-8845)

EYC AND YP Note time change! We are all meeting from 4:00 to 7:00 pm

Let's meet in the Parish hall and we will have crafts and play games for our own St. Thomas kids! The Robb's are providing dinner!

CALENDAR

Sunday	8:00 AM – 12 NOON 8:00 AM 8:45 AM 9:30 AM 10:30 AM 4:00 PM 5:00 PM	Nominations for Vestry, Narthex Holy Eucharist Service, Church- Blessing of Pledges Hot Breakfast, Parish Hall Sunday School Holy Eucharist Service, Church – Blessing of Pledges EYC and YP , Babysitting for Christmas shoppers Search Committee Meeting, Conference Room
Monday	6 PM	Search Committee Meeting, Conference Room
Wednesday	9:30 AM 11:00 AM 12:15 PM 5:30 PM	Bible Study, Conference Room Holy Eucharist and Healing Service, Chapel Bible Study, Conference Room Advent Dinner and Program, Parish Hall
Thursday	5:30 PM	EFM meeting, Conference Room

PRAYER LIST

We pray for the Ill or Distressed: **Barbara** (friend of S. Fletcher), , **Jane & Roy** (sister & nephew of G. Mauldin), **George & Matt** (friends of the Gillies'), **Mary** (M.B.'s mother), **Julie** (friend of D. Boyer), **Jenny** (friend of P. & T. Lloyd), **Ken** (J. Stokes' brother), **Shirley & Jane** (B. Meyer's sisters), **Barbara, Cindy, Gaby & Brad** (family of Tracy Roberts), **Sara, Georgia** (friends of M.B. Hunter), **Lillian** (M. B. Hunter's sister), **Bill, Renee, Ben** (M. B. Hunter's son & family), **Margie** (M. Harris's mother), **Buck** (friend of S. Smith), **Lorene** (R. Funderburk's mother), **Beth** (friend of L. Allison), **Gregg** (brother of P. Meister), **Brian & Christine** (Zeigler's son & daughter-in-law), **Hernan family** (friends of D. Bender), **Wes** (friend of P. Allison), **Bob** (son-in-law of H. Urban), **Kelli** (granddaughter of H. Urban), **April** (daughter of Father Dex), **Rhett & Alba** (A. & P. Johnson), **Helena** (mother of J. Hanson), **Teresa and family** (friends of B. Hill), and **Vicky** (friend of A. Schlenderling), **Jacob** (grandson of Father Dex), **Jamie** (friend of K. Boyer), **Mary Lou** (J. Poplin's Stepmother), **Roy** (brother of R. Roberts), **Chris & Brittany** (son-in-law and daughter of S. & D. Drachlis), **Laura** (friend of T. Conover), **Gary** (brother of B. Green), **Nancy** (friend of S. Steel).

We pray for Members of the parish who are ill or distressed: **Catherine Albanese, Anerton and Harris families, Barbara Austin, Dorothy Barnett, Paul Bayruns, Josh and Noah Bowen, Corky Carlisle, Harold and Barbara Clayton, Beth and Lloyd Cook, Ann Cochran, Karly Dodson, Garry Griffith, Josh Herman, Ryan, Ryan Paul Hoplamazian, Jones' family, Michael, Michael Jones, Pru Lawson, Barbara Little, Diane Lucas, Linda & Bob Mixon, Lisa Mizelle, Penny Neilsen, Margaret Ratchford, Roth Family, Sara, Marge Schafer, Scott, Teresa Stephens, Christina Suto, Henrietta Urban, Joe & Pierrette Watson, Mike and Pat Young.**

We pray for those who have died, **Lynda Kadrmas, Ray Anerton, Axel Roth, Ron Barnett, Marianne Meyer** (cousin of L. Meyer), **Ricky and Lucy** (friends of the Poplins), and **Charlie Poplin** (father of J. Poplin),

We pray for Good Shepherd, Montgomery, Calvary, Oneonta; Our companion diocese of Haiti and its bishop Jean-Zaché Duracin; our missionaries to Namibia, Jeremy and Penny Lucas; Judges of the Ecclesiastical Court, Kairos Prison Ministry and Kairos Outside.

We pray for those who serve in and with the Armed Forces, especially: **Christopher Harris, Paul Mandrell, Chet Marr, Matt Neustadter, Sean Pyle, Danny Seaman, Denise Shelton, Bobby Sutton, James Cutting** (friend of A. Steel), **Christopher Erwin** (friend of S. Drachlis), **Lee Wilson** (S. Kittle's nephew), **Charlie McNew** (S. Kittle's cousin), **Ben Meyer** (Meyer's grandson), **Brian Reasoner** (J. Reasoner's nephew), **Jason Kucza** (nephew of D. Boyer).

Happy Birthday to: **Wynton Scott, James Johnson, Brenda Smith, Becky Stokes, Wesley Roy, Heather Mandrell, Ann Ellis, Carol Covell, Alton Hudson, Rena Anderson**

NEWS FROM AROUND

Kick your holiday season "down a notch" and come to a Quiet Day on December 20 with retired Sewanee priest, Tom Ward. The Rev. Ward will lead us in prayer (contemplative style) and conversation from 9:00-2:30 at The Church of the Nativity. If you want to purchase lunch for \$10.00, call 533-2455. Other questions, call Linda Lou Hardison, 650--4682.

WORSHIP

Sunday's scripture: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

LAY MINISTERS SERVING DECEMBER 14

	8:00 AM	10:30 AM
Eucharistic Ministers	Todd Taylor, Elaine Poplin	Bob Harwell, Tom Atkins
Lector	Paul Bayruns	Carol Covell, TBD
Acolytes	Rosie Chilton, Hutson Chilton	Noah Bowen, Joshua Bowen, Graem Cook, Foster Harwell, Emma Davis
Ushers	Al Johnson, Garry Griffith	Bob Thurber, Karen League
Greeter	Marjorie Ashcraft	Jim and Nancy Teasdale
Vestry on Duty	Latham Thurber	Bryan Dodson

Breakfast Cooks: Richard Williams, Brenda Smith, Todd Taylor and Tony Mason

Altar Guild: Gretchen Mauldin, Tut Clements, Ann Bayruns

Flower Guild: Barbie Harwell, Kelli Conover

Meals on Wheels: Don Gillies, Bob and Linda Mixon, Larry and Barbara Meyer, Marsha Samples, Jim and Nancy Teasdale

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

INFORMATION

OFFICE 880.0247
12200 BAILEY COVE ROAD
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA 35803
WEBSITE www.stthomashuntsville.org
OFFICE HOURS M-F 9 AM - 4 PM

SERVICES

HOLY EUCHARIST
SUNDAY 8 AM & 10:30 AM, CHURCH
WEDNESDAY 6 PM, CHAPEL

HOLY EUCHARIST & HEALING SERVICE
WEDNESDAY 11 AM, CHAPEL

BREAKFAST

SUNDAY 8:45 AM

SUNDAY SCHOOL

SUNDAY 9:30 AM

CLERGY

THE REV. W. DEXTER BENDER

INTERIM RECTOR

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WARDENS

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SENIOR WARDEN

CINDY ATKINS

JUNIOR WARDEN