

NATIVITY NEWS

The newsletter of the Episcopal Church of the Nativity and St. Stephen
Newport and Thompsontown, PA

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From the Rector

Sometimes making the lemonade is easy! At the beginning of March something goofy happened to the organ. One Sunday, we began to hear a squeaking sound, as if some mice were playing tag up in the pipes. It didn't seem to happen with one particular note or a certain stop...the noise was random and over the last few weeks has been getting louder and more constant.

The fellow who fixes our organ is having some medical problems so we are having to wait until he's well enough to come check it out. Thankfully, we have the clavinova and have been using that for Sunday worship. It lends a different feel to the liturgy. It sounds a bit more spare, the harmonies are simpler and it exposes our singing efforts with grace!

When someone asked me if we were doing without the organ intentionally for Lent, I considered what a serendipity that was. Yes, I said, we are fasting from that full-bodied, hearty, rich, satisfied sound. It does seem appropriate to do so and I smile to think that it was not planned...it just happened!

It reinforces the Lenten idea that doing-without, enduring hunger and thirst, suffering want or absence or loss allows us to experience God's love in a whole different way. God is not only in the beauty, the fulfilling of desires, the answering of prayer, life's rich pagaent. God is also with us and in us as we long for the deeper meaning, for the relief, for the answer, for the security that we lack.

Our altar frontal reminds us of this truth. The thorns and the empty baskets, the wilderness and the wanting, the pain and the need all overflows over the top of the altar where we encounter the living Christ though the eucharist...it overflows now with that love and mercy into the piles and piles of canned goods, pasta and jars of applesauce that we will share with our neighbors.

Lemonade out of lemons...light out of darkness, beauty out of nothingness, courage out of cowardice, water in the desert and, in a few weeks, life out of death.

May Holy Week and Easter be, for you, a journey of open eyes and hearts, a blessed time for seeing serendipity and for recognizing grace.

Peace,

VESTRY MEETING

April 20 at 6:30 PM in the Conference Room of the Parish House.

Lenten Mindfulness/Yoga Class

Saturday, April 2 at 10 AM and **Saturday, April 16th at 1:00 PM** in the Undercroft. Wear comfortable clothes. Mats will be provided.

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Tuesday evening, April 19 - 7:00 PM
Candlelight service at St. Stephen's, Thompsonstown

Thursday evening – April 21 – 6:00 PM –
Agape dinner in the Undercroft followed
by Holy Eucharist, footwashing and
stripping of the Altar – Nativity – 7:00 PM

Friday evening – April 22 – Good Friday
Liturgy – Nativity – 7:00 PM

Sunday morning – April 24 – Easter Day –
Festival Eucharist & Baptism - Nativity –
9:30 AM

SENIOR WARDEN CORNER

Bill R

While my garden rests under a cover of snow and the soil begins to rejuvenate, I find myself with added time for reflection. My reflections are filling the time that in the other three seasons of the year would be spent caring for the flowers and vegetables. Before Daphne left, she gave me a book to read, The Art of the Commonplace, the agrarian essays of Wendell Berry. On her return, she gave me a second book of essays, Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition (various). Both these books address aspects of Christian spirituality and farming, yet came to very different conclusions. They are the kind of books that I have to read a section, then stop and reflect for awhile; hence I have only recently finished them. They left me somewhat perplexed.

It seems to me the predominant theme of Berry's book is that Christian stewardship of the land is best practiced in a local community setting for a book full of reasons that is beyond the scope of this Corner. The second book's main theme is that Christian Stewardship of the land is best practiced by mass agro industries again for a lot of reasons beyond the scope of this Corner. Both sides made very compelling arguments based on Biblical texts and references. As with most things spiritual, I long for the easy "pat" answer. My personal experience in the garden tells me Berry is right. My academic experience over the years from my association with the College of Agriculture at Penn State tells me the second book is right if we value human life and want to avoid mass starvation. So what am I as a Christian to do? Where am I to use whatever resources of time, talent, and treasure that I can bring to this issue? I find my answer to be the same one that God gave me regarding issues in the "big" church today. I should concentrate on loving my neighbor and the environment that I can reach as part of a parish community one individual at a time. I have little influence over "big" church or "big" agriculture, but I can sure grow a bunch of healthy vegetables for the local food bank. And if a whole parish sets an example by loving their neighbors as their talents allow, maybe that can set an example for a whole Diocese or a whole National Church or a whole World Communion.

Wow!
Amen

GTO (Giving to Others) TASK FORCE

GTO will meet on April 24th following coffee hour. Anyone who has suggestions for recipients of GTO funds may attend or give them to Lynne M.

CARING FOR NATIVITY'S NEIGHBORS

This spring brings many opportunities to join in feeding those without adequate resources. Tony and Ann will be cooking and distributing food at the following locations:

April 12	Life Center of the Assembly of God, Newport
April 16	Salvation Army, Carlisle
April 19	Shiloh Baptist Church, Carlisle
May 17	Life Center of the Assembly of God, Newport
May 19	Central Penna. Youth Ministries, Newport

LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS

Bible Study and soup supper continues at Incarnation UCC through April 13th. The program begins at 5:30 PM

GODLY PLAY

Godly Play will be held on April 10th and again on April 24th.

Do You Wonder?

Do you wonder what all this talk about Godly Play is? We have been using this method of Christian education with our very little kids for over a year. It is a spiritual take on Montessori teaching that helps the children (and the teachers) learn the language of God through the stories of the Bible and through their own discoveries of the Spirit in those stories (as well as in their own stories!)

Ideally, we would like to be able to deepen our offering of this powerful form of Christian education and could do so if there were a cadre of 3 or 4 adults who would be able to serve as teachers. Then, we could offer the class every Sunday and no one would be responsible for the **whole** kielbasa **all** the time!

The training is expensive and takes 3 days of commitment...our children are worth it! We have the funds in our budget. If you are curious, be in touch with Marion (head teacher) or Daphne and find out more. One's own spiritual life grows and deepens the more it is exercised and shared! Might this be your gift to share?

EVENTS AT NEWPORT SENIOR CITIZEN CENTER

Location: 2 N. Second St.

Time: 10 AM

Wednesday, April 13 – Craft class – memory wire bracelets with Karen Smyth. Cost \$5.00 for materials.

Wednesday, April 25 – Advanced Directives and Living Wills by SUN Home Health

Wednesday, April 27 – Seminar and Stroke screening presented by SUN Home Health

Wednesday, May 11 – Craft class – Cancer awareness bracelets for Cancer Awareness month in June. Cost \$5.00 for materials

ADOPT A HIGHWAY

We'll meet at 9:00 AM (at the church) on Saturday morning April 9 to head out to our section of Little Buffalo Rd and do a spring cleaning. Come get some fresh air and exercise and observe Earth Day a few weeks early!

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER

After much groundwork, we are ready to explore the possibility of establishing a shelter for women in crisis here in Perry County. Currently, women who are in a violent situation at home have limited options. They can go to shelters in Carlisle or Harrisburg (and take their kids out of school/be separated from support systems), stay with family/friends(which gets pretty old pretty soon) or stay with the abuser. This parish has a history of hospitality and a history of concern for housing issues. Episcopal Gardens, Commons, the Van Buskirk House and Eagle House all speak to this mission that is an important part of Nativity's identity.

A *Formation Team* of folks who have expressed interest and energy in this project is hard at work educating and informing themselves so that wise, timely and focused decisions can be made about how to move forward.

A kick-off event will be held on Sunday afternoon April 10 at 2:00 at the Newport Library with a presentation by NY Times bestselling author, Leslie Morgan Steiner. Leslie has a history here in Perry County

and will speak about her book, Crazy Love.
You are invited to attend and learn more
about the challenges of meeting the need of
women in such dire straits.

**EASTER FLOWER
MEMORIALS**

If you wish to remember loved
ones at Easter, please let Rita
know no later than Tuesday of
Holy Week, April 19 so their
names can appear in the
bulletin.