

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.

I have to admit that I do love this snow. It covers up a 'multitude of sins'! It smooths over many irregularities and fills in unevenness. For a while then, until it melts, we can see the world anew, clean white, pure, spotless, fresh. The spirit of that freshness overflows into our own spirits and we can relax, smile and absorb the beauty.

However, underneath the snow, indeed, underneath the mud, dead grass and leftover piles of leaves, things are happening. The bulbs I planted last fall are stirring, the roots of perennials are preparing to travel, buds on the magnolia are thinking about waking up.

This invisible process mirrors our own souls as we observe the first hints of spring by observing the season of Lent. We are presented with a chance to look beneath the surface of our busy accomplishing of stuff and peer curiously at our souls.

Our Sunday liturgies will shift to a more introspective mood, our after-coffee-hour adult education opportunities will expand to include some hands-on artistic expression and there will be ecumenical fellowship events during the week.

Invisible things are always happening inside us. We react to events and people, we react to anxieties and regrets. Ideally, our own maturity and self-awareness allow us to step back from those instant reactions, allow the hand of God to smooth us out, purify us, allow us time to seek ways of enlightening ourselves with holy wisdom, patience and grace.

During Lent we take an honest look at the truth underneath the surface of ourselves and, acknowledging that truth, continue to grow toward the light...and the beauty of it is that we can do this together. Make the observance of Lent a priority, engage in this spiritual practice that will reveal your own beauty and the glory of God within you!

Peace, Daphne+

GODLY PLAY

Godly Play for little ones as well as Sunday School for elementary aged children will happen on the 2nd and 4th Sundays, so...**March 13 and March 27**...Mark those calendars!

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE DINNER

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
6:00 PM - Tuesday evening March 8th in the Undercroft...please sign up or call the office (567-6514) and leave a message so we have an approximate count.

ANNUAL VESTRY RETREAT

The annual vestry retreat will be held on Saturday, March 19th at Orchard Hill Retreat Center on Rt. 17 in Millerstown from 9 AM until 3 PM. Lunch will be provided. Parish members are also invited to attend.

LENTEN ALTAR FRONTAL

Once again our Lenten Altar Frontal will be built out of canned goods and non-perishable food items.. All through Lent, your gifts will continue to grow before the altar, until Holy Week when they will be taken to the Perry County Food Bank to help our hungry neighbors! Thank you in advance for your gifts of love.

SUNCATCHERS FOR SALE

These sun catchers of the Episcopal Shield make wonderful gifts and are currently available! See Lynne for pricing information.

LENTEN ACTIVITIES

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Ash Wednesday Service of Holy Eucharist and the Imposition of Ashes
7:00 PM Wednesday evening March 9th at Nativity...The ecumenical community is invited. Gloria McPherson, new pastor at St. Paul's and St. Samuel's Lutheran Churches, is the preacher.

MINDFULNESS AND YOGA

Saturday mornings **April 2 and 16 at 10 AM**
A time of quiet meditation and movement for all abilities and genders in the Undercroft.
*Deadline to sign up: **March 8th***

SOUP & BIBLE STUDY

Each Wednesday in Lent at 5:30 PM

Delicious Soup Supper (with dessert!) and Bible Study based on the Prayer of St. Patrick and led by assorted Newport clergy. Held at Incarnation UCC on 4th St., we are finished by 7:00 so you can still get home in time for Jeopardy!

ART & FAITH

March 13, March 20 and March 27

A Lenten experience with Dick P in the Undercroft.

Sundays in April we will resume our studies on Islam. Join in this lively learning experience – we finish by noon!

EAGLE HOUSE APARTMENTS

These apartments are permanent housing provided for homeless veterans. Right now they need things like dinner plates, mugs, silverware, serving dishes/spoons, pots and pans, potholders, dishtowels and any other items you might see fit to send to a good home. Your help is appreciated by those who have done much for us.

ANNUAL YARD SALE

Spring cleaning? Yard sale items are needed for this upcoming event. Bring your clean and priced things to the office on Tuesday or Thursday mornings or church on Sunday. As soon as a date is chosen we'll let you know.

SENIOR WARDEN'S CORNER

It's time to begin thinking about the soil again. How am I going to enrich my garden bed for the spring planting? I know I should rotate my crops among the beds to ensure I don't unevenly deplete the soil. And just what is this stuff called top soil anyway? It is somehow different than dirt or sand? Because when it washes away from the surface of our land exposing dirt and sand, things stop growing and the land becomes barren. So I must also enrich the soil. Should I use organic fertilizer such as various manures and compost, or artificial

fertilizers developed by scientists? Which path will bear the best produce? We as a congregation are a lot like the soil. Like the soil, we can produce wonderful results when properly nurtured, yet also like the soil; it is seemingly miraculous. Exactly what the dynamic of either how we accomplish this or what specifically within us makes it possible is difficult to discern. We enrich our congregation through common worship and study. As we rotate the crops in the soil, so we rotate responsibilities in the congregation and at worship to prevent unevenly depleting our ability to produce for the glory of God. And I do have an explanation for the seemingly miraculous both in the soil and in the congregation. It is the will of the Creator of all things, breathing life into the soil and, through the Holy Spirit, life into our congregation such that we can go forth as Jesus has asked us; to be both good stewards of the land and to love and serve our fellow man.

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT EDUCATION/FORMATION (also known as the Parlor People)
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March 6 - Continuation of the study of Islam using DVD from the "Teaching Company" and group discussion.