



Cornerstone

December 2016

Newsletter of St. Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church
107 State Street, Albany, New York

The Christ in Christmas

We beseech thee, Almighty God, to purify our consciences by thy daily visitation, that when thy Son our Lord cometh he may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

It will be soon that signs and appeals to “put the Christ back in Christmas” will appear on the Advent landscape. Likewise, we will be reminded of “the reason for the season” by pious folks on the front lines of the Christmas culture wars.

I suggest that we self-appointed Christmas warriors surrender upfront. It is a distraction from the inner work into which Advent calls us. We are to “prepare a mansion” “in us” and “purify *our consciences.*” *Such work is inner work and monitoring the status of those who afflict us with “holiday trees” and generic “season's greetings” will throw us off course.*

My newsletter piece opens with the Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. I sometimes wish that the Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent would be transferred to the First Sunday of Advent. But perhaps we need the three prior Sundays of Advent to hear John the Baptist's message of repentance and lay the foundation for the Advent mansion being prepared inside us. If we are to do this inner work and put the Christ back in *our Christmas, how do we go about it?*

For many past Advents, your clergy have promoted the use of the Advent Wreath as mansion and conscience preparing. This year we have made the use of the Advent wreath devotional even easier. Thanks to our parish secretary, Kristin, all of the appointed Bible verses for the days of Advent have been placed in a booklet. No need to look anything up. The Bible passages are brief and potent. The prayers appointed for each day are also provided in an easy to use booklet. Truly, the process is as smooth as could be.

The usual format is to gather at an appointed time, such as dinner, light one additional candle for each new week of Advent, read the Bible passage, and say the brief prayers. Family members can take turns with the various tasks. At our home, we include a little quiet time as we watch the candles with the lights dimmed. We end by saying one thing we are grateful for that day.

We say that we want to put the Christ back in Christmas. We are most credible when we begin in our own homes. Believe me when I say, it will become a tradition that your children will remember and for those living alone will heal the soul. If we find ourselves “too busy” on a given day, it is a wake-up call that our Christmas and life have gotten out of control. The Advent wreath serves as an Advent canary in our coalmine.

If Advent is about one thing, it is preparing inside us a mansion for the Lord. And where the Lord is, there is Light and Peace.

Holy Advent,

Fr. Hartt+



From the Associate Rector:

The Fruit of Practicing Gratitude

Last month, I wrote on Practicing Gratitude. To recap, I was reflecting on if one could grow gratitude within them by practicing gratitude. In other words, even if one wasn't feeling particularly thankful, could one practice giving thanks to God in such a way that it might grow gratitude within them?

Recently, our nation has practiced gratitude collectively through our annual celebration of Thanksgiving. A short history lesson tells us that this Holiday commemorates the pilgrim's survival of their first year in the new world and the bounty discovered through one's neighbor. Current Thanksgiving celebrations vary greatly from this first in several ways. First, we tend to celebrate with those we know best: close family and friends rather than newcomers into our lives or near strangers. Secondly, most of us in this country do not know the level of "neediness" that the pilgrims encountered and so our vantage point is skewed somewhat. Thirdly, many secular or extra celebrations have taken hold along with our sharing of a fine and bounteous meal.

One of these extras – shopping deals and sales – has dominated in recent years. Black Friday sales have crept earlier and earlier from wee hours in the morning to Thanksgiving Day itself. Cyber Monday follows shortly thereafter promising stellar cyber deals. I know that many of us, and particularly young families, need to watch their budgets closely and so these deals are not only attractive but necessary at times. However, we must ask ourselves if we have allowed this trend to overtake the true meaning of our Thanksgiving celebration?

On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving when I returned to my office from my lunch break, I rode the elevator with a woman who had an armload of Times Union's early Thanksgiving edition newspapers – just released at noon that day. They were chock full of sale ads highlighting many of those Black Friday deals and steals. The woman told me she was happy to have the copies early so that she could spend Thanksgiving preparing her shopping route to take advantage of all the bargains to be had.

Thanksgiving, the Holiday, is all about giving thanks – practicing gratitude – giving thanks for all the Blessings that we have. I can't help but ask, Are we pausing long enough to do this before jumping towards those additional things we think we want or even need? Leaving the great sales aside, and even the real need for many among us to take advantage of them, what is in those ads that we are so desperate for?

Along with Thanksgiving every year, we also begin a new church year with the start of the Advent season. This season is particularly focused on preparing ourselves for the coming of Christ. Truly, Jesus Christ has been the greatest gift each of us has received and known. Preparing our hearts, our minds and our lives for Him should be our greatest joy and privilege. I'd love to find a sales circular filled with that great news! Even though we may not have found it in Times Union's early Thanksgiving edition, we do find it here at St. Peter's week after week, month after month. I find that great news in you and in celebrating your joys and even your sorrows. I find that great news in our gatherings, our Bible studies and our meals together. I find that great news in the Holy Eucharist – our holiest of thanksgiving celebrations.

I can only encourage you to stop and take it all in...bask in the practice of gratitude for a while before jumping towards the next thing that you think you want or need. You might be surprised to see just how joyful it can make you.

With Thanksgiving for all God's Blessings, Mtr. Sue+

Service of Remembrance

Wednesday, December 7th at 7pm. An ecumenical prayer service will be held to gather and remember our departed loved ones. Each remembrance will be signified by the lighting of a candle and an ornament placed on our Remembrance Tree. A reception follows the service in the Pumpelly Room. We thank Judy Burns for coordinating this annual prayer event.



Advent and Christmas at St. Peter's

Advent Wreaths, Calendars, and Candles

Available November 27th

Service of Remembrance

December 7th

7:00pm Service

Messiah Concert

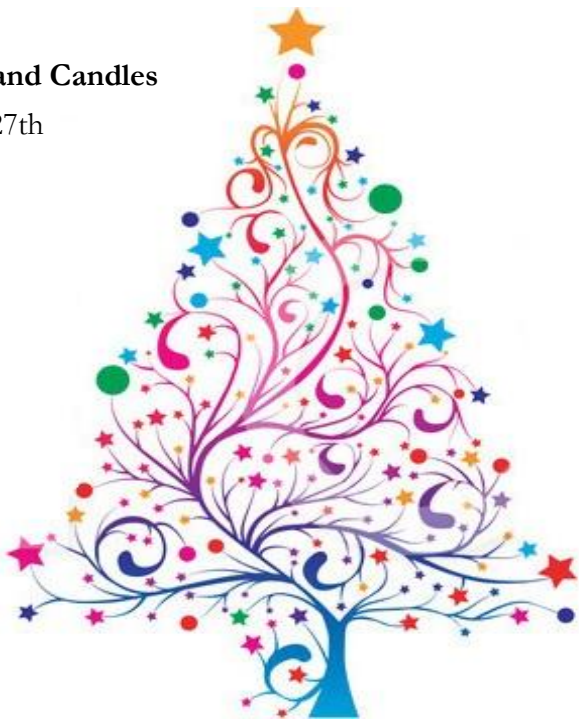
December 11th

3:00pm

Sunday School Pageant

December 11th

10:30am Service



Lessons and Carols

December 18th

10:30am Service

Hanging of the Greens

December 18th

12:00pm

Christmas Eve Services

December 24th; 4:30pm

Family Service w/crèche

December 24th; 10:00pm

Choral Service

Christmas Day Service

December 25th

8:30am & 10:30am

Helping Families in Need this Christmas

St. Peter's Parish is partnering with St. David's Parish, East Greenbush, to provide Christmas gifts to relocated Burmese families. A Christmas tree will be located in the Pumpelly Room at the beginning of Advent. The tree will be decorated with paper ornaments indicating the recipient's age, gender, size and gift idea. Please take one or more of the ornaments. The ornament should be attached to the wrapped gift and returned under the tree no later than Sunday, December 18th. Instructions are printed on the ornament as well. Thank you for blessing these families.

Daughters of the King

All women of St. Peter's are invited to join the Daughters of the King on Sunday, December 11th after the 10:30am service with lunch at the Albany Hilton Charter Restaurant which is directly next door to St. Peter's Church. They have a lunch menu that will fit any meal choice small or large. Please RSVP by Monday, December 5th whether you can attend or not to Julie (Murphy) Drao at hotmermurphy@gmail.com

Outreach Meeting

The December Outreach meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 13th at 4:30pm. Please join us to learn about Outreach ministries and hospitality events being planned!

Hanging of the Greens

The annual Hanging of the Greens in which we decorate the church for Christmas with pine and balsam will take place immediately following the 10:30AM service on Sunday, December 18th. The traditional ham luncheon will be served at 1PM. We ask you to please dress comfortably and bring a dish to share. We need cooks, servers, set-up and clean-up help. Please contact Jack Ratzel at 466-2871 if you are available to help. We hope that you will join us for this long-time festive tradition.

Christmas Poinsettia & Hanging of the Greens Donation



Your special gifts for poinsettias and greens to honor, show thanks, and to remember loved ones are crucial to this beautiful display and annual parish event. If you would like to be part of this floral tribute, please complete the enclosed Christmas Flower form and send it to the church office with your donation. The deadline is Sunday, December 18th. We urge you to be as generous as you can. Thank you for your support.

Vestry Meeting

The December Vestry meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 13th at 5:15pm.



Adult Education

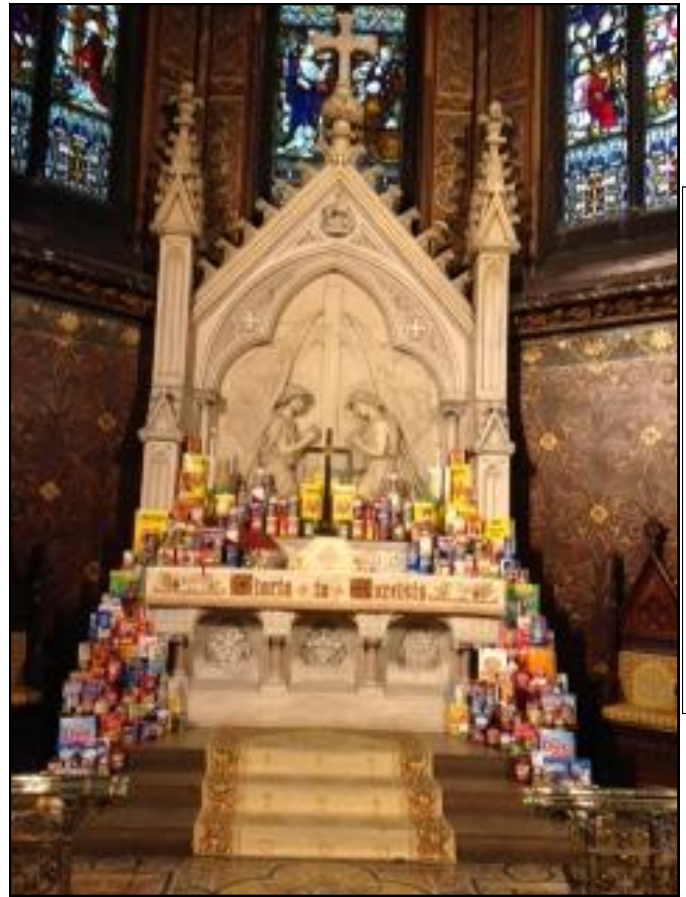
Advent Retreat

On Friday and Saturday, December 2nd and 3rd, The Healing Center at Christ the King invites you to experience the refreshing and renewing power of God in a weekend away. Come away for rest and renewal, and learn some tools to help you enter into God's peace through the power of the Holy Spirit. The retreat will be led by Dcn. Lynne Crimi, MSW and Dee-Dee Whitten, M.Ed. Prices are \$96 per person for double occupancy, \$120 per person for single occupancy, and \$20 for commuters (no lodging provided). Prices include lodging in the King's Inn (except commuters), Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast and lunch, and retreat materials. All are welcome.

Outreach

The First Lutheran Church Shelter Dinners began Thursday, November 24th. The Capital Area Council of Churches runs a 20-bed shelter at First Lutheran Church (on Western Avenue in downtown Albany). During the cold months (November through April) when other shelters fill up quickly with women and children, the men can come to this shelter and receive a hot meal and a good night's sleep. St. Peter's Church is committed to providing a complete dinner for 20 people, cooked and delivered, every Thursday evening. We are asking that you sign-up to cook a complete dinner, putting your name next to the date on the board in the Pumpelly Room and taking an instruction form. (Please include a phone number at which we can contact you.) Containers will be in the Pumpelly room for the meal items. If you cannot deliver the meal, please return the meal **frozen** to the church on the **Sunday before** your date for the meal. Pat will put the dinners in the freezer for delivery during the week. If you are delivering the meal you can call Deb Spath at 478-9389 for directions.

Thanksgiving Altar



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Overflow Homeless Shelter:

Could you consider giving up one evening this winter to offer the gift of hospitality and show another the love and mercy of God?

The St. Peter's Overflow Homeless Shelter will open for its 8th season on December 1st to augment the ministry of the Capital City Rescue Mission to Albany's Homeless. This year, we will be housing up to 20 women each evening.

We are currently receiving donations of food items and financial support and are also scheduling volunteers (women volunteers only) to offer hospitality during the evening hours; the hours for this are from 8pm until 11pm on the 2nd floor of the Guild House (next to the church). To sign up to volunteer, please call Judy Burns at 441-7538 or email stpeterschurch.albany@gmail.com

Food items needed include: coffee, tea, sugar, popcorn and snacks, cereal (hot and cold), peanut butter, bread, fresh fruit, milk and juice along with fresh baked items. These can be dropped off to the church office any weekday, or brought to church on Sundays and given to Pat. Thank you in advance for your continued support.

Youth Formation & Sunday School

Mark your Calendars!

December 4th rehearsal for the Christmas Pageant

We will be giving out parts and readers. Please bring the children up to see us and get their costumes during Sunday School and for about a hour after

December 11th The Christmas Pageant

please have the children upstairs by 10:00am sharp.

December 24th The Christmas Eve family service

I invite all the children of St. Peter's to join us in the procession of the Crèche. Each child will carry a piece of the Manger to be put together before the service. Meet us in the Pumpelly Room for your piece.



Making
Pumpkin Bread!

St. Francis Mission Soup Kitchen **(a.k.a. Angels in Training)**

On the 3rd Saturday of each month (December 17th) we invite you to join Laura Saffares and others from St. Peter's to prepare and serve lunch at this Episcopal church on Clinton Avenue, Albany. Generally, over 100 adults and children come for lunch. Many hands mean light work! Please call Laura for information or to let her know you are coming at 368-4284.



Thank you all for donating coats for the children at Grace and Holy Innocence. We were able to bring warmth and comfort to almost 15 children. God Bless you all. I need to ask for a little more help.

I am continuing the coat drive for the children sizes (2-14) and woman's coats all sizes.

I will bring the buckets back to the Pumpelly room, and thank you in advance.

Thank you to all that brought canned cranberry sauce for Equinox.

Once again St. Peter's Parish went beyond expectations !!!!

Another thanks for all that volunteered at Equinox.

Sending blessings to All,

Laura Saffares



Youth Mission Trip to N. Ireland

Looking for a Teen Mission Opportunity to grow your faith and serve in Northern Ireland? Want to attend Summer Madness, Ireland's premiere Christian festival? Consider joining the 7th Diocese of Albany Northern Ireland Teen Mission Trip tentatively scheduled for June 26th through July 9th 2017. Teens must be at least 15 years and no older than 20 years at the time of the trip. Two to four adult Chaperones will also be selected for this mission trip. The trip planners are currently hoping to work with On the Move with the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe. Following Summer Madness, teens will have the opportunity to serve others by working with Irish teens in local communities. For more information about the trip, go to

<https://www.albanyepiscopaldiocese.org/ministries/missions/2017IrelandYouthTrip.html>

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship

The MLK Committee of the Capital Area Council of Churches awards the Scholarship each year to graduating seniors who, in part, show a commitment to the ideals and teachings of Dr. King. Applicants are also rated on financial need, academic record, and evidence of service to school, faith Community and society. The students chosen as finalists will be invited for an interview before the committee. If you would like to know more information please contact the Capital Area Council of Churches office at 462-5450 or email Joan Lipscomb at lipscomb@scolonicj.org

Join us for *Faithful, Abundant, True*—
a rich study from Kay Arthur, Beth Moore & Priscilla Shirer!

SAVE THE DATE!
**Women Going Deeper
Retreat**
February 24-25, 2017
Christ the King Spiritual Life Center
Registration details coming soon!

lifeway.com/women Lifeway Women

Faithful, Abundant, True women's retreat.

This is a fantastic 2 day retreat with videos from Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer and Kay Arthur. It is a time of prayer, fun, fellowship and laughter as we seek to grow deeper in our faith. This is a wonderful opportunity for women to come and enjoy great teaching from Hebrews, Ephesians throughout the Bible, as well as an opportunity to relax and rest. Please save the date February 24-25, 2017. For more information or registration please speak with Mother Sue.

Pledge Cards

Pledge cards for 2017 have been mailed out to all parishioners. If you did not receive a pledge card please call the church office. Those wishing to pledge that did not do so during the Stewardship Campaign, are welcome to complete a pledge card and return it to the church office or place in the offering plate during the service. Pledges may also be made by phone. Thank you to those that have promptly completed and returned their pledge card.





On **January 13-15, 2017** Excel will host there Breakout Conference@ Saratoga City Center & Saratoga Hilton

Since 1988, Capital District Youth for Christ has hosted youth conferences in Saratoga Springs, NY. With the help of hundreds of volunteers and staff, the EXCEL High School Conference is held each January and the BREAK OUT Middle School Conference each March. Attendance from 3 states and many denominations brings over 1,000 students and leaders each year.

EXCEL and BREAK OUT are fast paced, exhilarating weekends featuring inspiring Christian speakers, worship, musical guests, drama, and comedy from all over the country. Leaders and students enjoy spiritually charged general session, worship and seminars that address tough issues facing today’s teens. Year after year, these conferences have become “mountaintop” life-changing experiences for many students, youth groups and their leaders. Additional information can be found at: <http://cdyfc.org/excel/>



fresh foods from small farms™



Local produce delivered to St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Thursdays

How Does It Work?
Field Goods is a local produce subscription delivery service. Brilliant, right? Each week, you'll receive 5-8 different types of fruits and vegetables. Invaluable to a healthy lifestyle!

Field Goods chooses the items delivered and purchases them directly from over 60 different Hudson Valley farms. A subscription costs \$20, \$25, or \$30 a week depending on which bag you choose. All of the produce is non-GMO, much is organic, and all is grown by small farms.

In the Bag, our newsletter, gives you information about what you're eating and how to eat it: facts, recipes, and photos! We deliver 150+ varieties of fruits and vegetables, and more than a dozen types of local cheese and artisan bread, all grown by local small farms or local producers.

Field Goods offers great value and variety, convenient delivery, fresh and delicious produce, and supports local farmers.

What's not to love?

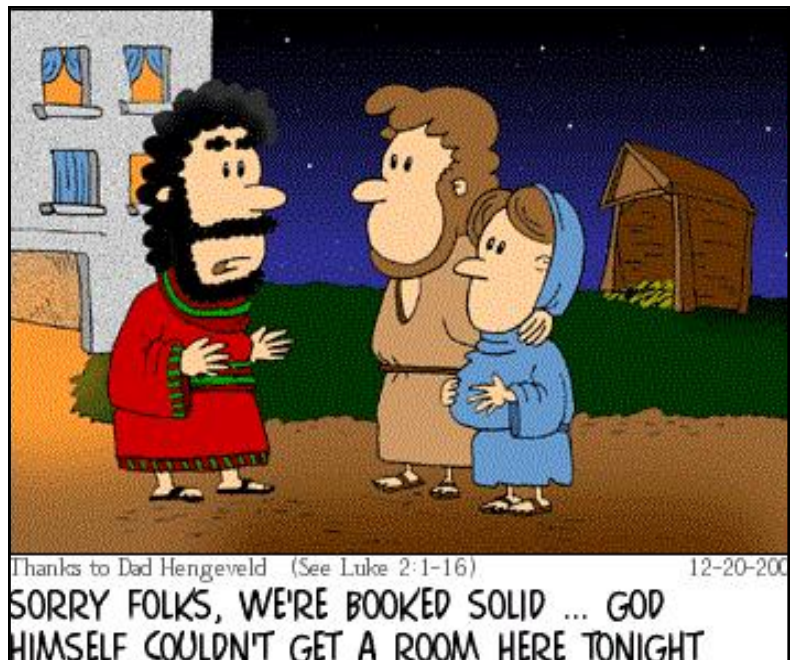
To sign up & learn more, go to **Field-goods.com**
 Email info@field-goods.com
 Field Goods is located in Athens, NY




Lay Eucharistic Ministers:
 Are you looking to increase your religious experience?

We are looking for members of St. Peter's who might be interested in becoming a Lay Eucharistic Minister. Experience the joy of serving God by assisting at both the Morning Prayer and Holy Eucharistic Sunday Services. If interested please call the parish office at 434-3502.

Church Chuckles!



December 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
			
<p>4 Second Sunday of Advent</p> <p>8:30am - Holy Communion 10:30am - Holy Communion 12:00pm - Confirmation Class</p>	<p>5</p> <p>5:00pm - Treble Rehearsal</p>	<p>6</p> <p>5:30pm - Women's Bible Study @ Mother Sue's Home 6:00pm - Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>7</p> <p>8:45am - Top 12:05pm - Ho 7:00pm - Servi</p>
<p>11 Third Sunday of Advent</p> <p>8:30am - Holy Communion 10:30am - Morning Prayer with Sunday School Pageant 12:00pm - DOK Luncheon 12:00pm - Confirmation Class 3:00pm - Handel's Messiah</p>	<p>12</p> <p>5:00pm - Treble Rehearsal 6:00pm - Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>13</p> <p>4:30pm - Outreach Meeting 5:15pm - Vestry Meeting</p> <p>No Women's Bible Study</p>	<p>14</p> <p>8:45am - Top 12:05pm - Ho</p>
<p>18 Fourth Sunday of Advent Youth Sunday</p> <p>8:30am - Holy Communion 10:30am - Lessons and Carols 12:00pm - Hanging of the Greens with Luncheon at 1:00pm 12:00pm - Confirmation Class</p>	<p>19</p> <p>5:00pm - Treble Rehearsal</p>	<p>20</p> <p>No Women's Bible Study No Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>21 St. Tho</p> <p>8:45am - Top 12:05pm - Ho</p>
<p>25 Christmas Day</p> <p>8:30am - Holy Communion 10:30am - Holy Communion No Confirmation Class</p>	<p>26 St. Stephen</p> <p>No Treble Rehearsal</p> <p>Office Closed</p>	<p>27 Saint John and Evangelist</p> <p>No Women's Bible Study No Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>28 The Ho</p> <p>8:45am - Top 12:05pm - Ho</p>

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 5:00pm - Treble Rehearsal 5:30pm - Full Choir	2 12:30pm - Organ Concert	3
of the Hill ly Communion ice of Remembrance	8 5:00pm - Treble Rehearsal 5:30pm - Full Choir	9 12:30pm - Organ Concert	10 9:30am - Messiah Rehearsal with the Orchestra
of the Hill ly Communion	15 5:00pm - Treble Rehearsal 5:30pm - Full Choir	16 12:30pm - Organ Concert	17 11:00am - Angel's in Training
Thomas the Apostle of the Hill ly Communion	22 5:30pm - 7:00pm Full Choir	23 12:30pm Organ Recital	24 Christmas Eve 4:30pm - Holy Communion 10:00pm - Holy Communion
Solemnity of the Holy Innocents of the Hill ly Communion	29 No Choir Rehearsals	30	31 New Year's Eve 

St. Peters Music

CHOIR

Choir rehearsals are on the following schedule:

Mondays: 5:00pm - 6:15pm Trebles

Thursdays: 5:00pm - 6:30pm Trebles

5:30pm - 7:00pm Adult choristers

Sundays: 9:30am rehearsal for the 10:30am service

Please contact Neil Keen for more information at stpmus@gmail.com or 339-0137.

~ HANDEL'S MESSIAH ~

DECEMBER 11TH, 3PM

On Sunday, December 11th at 3pm the St. Peter's Choir will present a performance of Handel's Messiah, accompanied by a chamber orchestra. All are welcome to this performance. There is no charge for admission, but a \$10 donation is suggested. Mark your calendar now for this seasonal favorite.

FRIDAY NOONTIME ORGAN CONCERTS

Free half-hour recitals each Friday at 12:30pm



Composer of the month: German composer Max Reger (1873-1916) wrote some 1400 compositions of nearly every sort except opera. He worked as a composer, teacher concert pianist, and conductor. Although a Roman Catholic, a great many of his 200 compositions for organ are based on Lutheran Chorales. His organ works range from 30 second miniatures to 45 minute concert fantasies. While Reger favored classical forms, such as the fugue, his harmonic language was densely chromatic, often stretching limits of traditional tonality. Dense textures, dramatic contrasts, and powerful shifting harmonies characterize his organ writing. A number of his organ works have found a secure place in the concert repertoire, while the popularity of works for other instrument and ensembles has waned.

Saint of the Month Club

Nicholas

Bishop of Myra, c. 342

Prayer: Almighty God, who in thy love didst give to thy servant Nicholas of Myra a perpetual name for deeds of kindness both on land and sea: Grant, we pray thee, that thy Church may never cease to work for the happiness of children, the safety of sailors, the relief of the poor, and the help of those tossed by tempests of doubt or grief; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



Very little is known about the life of Nicholas, except that he suffered torture and imprisonment during the persecution under the Emperor Diocletian. It is possible that he was one of the bishops attending the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325. He was honored as a saint in Constantinople in the sixth century by the Emperor Justinian. His veneration became immensely popular in the West after the supposed removal of his body to Bari, Italy, in the late eleventh century. In England almost 400 churches were dedicated to him. Nicholas is famed as the traditional patron of seafarers and sailors, and, more especially, of children. As a bearer of gifts to children, his name was brought to America by the Dutch colonists in New York, from whom he is popularly known as Santa Claus.

From the Archives

The Entrance to St. Peter's Church – Part I



When we first enter the church doors we are in the Vestibule a space set apart before preceding into the Narthex of the church. The Vestibule contains important stained glass windows and plaques. The two stained glass windows above the Church's front door are especially interesting. The first depicts the Seal of St. Peter's Church which includes the keys which are symbols of the Keys of the Kingdom given to St. Peter. In the center of this seal there is an ornate Bishop's Mitre with accompanying ribbons. The other window possibly indicates variations on the upside down cross of St. Peter. Both windows may be from Tiffany of New York according to Ned Pratt of the Society of Architectural Historians. Note that there have been numerous variations over the years to the original design of St. Peter's Seal.

In addition to the stained glass windows, the Vestibule contains several plaques. The most impressive is the wall plaque in memory of Viscount Lord Howe, a British officer killed on the march to Ticonderoga on July 6, 1758. It is in black stone with a black floral frame. A second smaller brass plaque to Lord Howe is in the floor of the Vestibule. Another plaque of the same period is for Colonel George Munro of the 35th Regiment of Foot with his dates as 1700 to Nov 3, 1757. A plaque for the gift of the Bronze doors notes that they were constructed by Marchus Reynolds and Worthington Palmer, Architects in 1933. They were the gift of Alice Glassford Boyd in memory of her father, vestryman Henry A. Glassford. Another plaque in the Vestibule commemorates the 1980 designation of St. Peter's Church as a National Historic Landmark.

But that's not all. If we turn around and look up we see the Queen Ann Royal Arms done in color in bas-relief. It was donated in memory of Albert Edward Oliver, Esq., a vestryman from 1944-1956. Inscribed in the plaque are the words *Semper Eadem*, a motto of Queen Elizabeth the First which means "always the same," denoting British stability, integrity and tranquil equanimity.

Before we leave the Vestibule there is a plaque of dedication of the Narthex which we will enter next. It reads "This Narthex is dedicated to the Glory of God and in Memory of Evelyn and Clarence Newman, Benefactors of St. Peter's Church."

There are four stained glass windows above the center entrance doors to the Narthex which are each inscribed: Raymond E. Sheldrick (1920-1984) Beloved by His Family. Window 1 depicts the Scroll of St. John; Window 2 depicts the upside down cross by which St. Peter was crucified and crossed keys of St. Peter; Window 3 depicts the crossed spear of St. James the Greater; and Window 4 depicts the diagonal cross on a blue shield of St. Andrew.

In addition to the stained glass windows there are several plaques. Plaques in the center of the Narthex include one commemorating the Heroes of World War I. There are 54 names on this plaque. The second plaque on the other side of the front doors is for the Contributors to the Church Lighting Project. There are 13 families named on this plaque. Gracing each side of the center entrance to the Narthex are two boxes labeled For the Poor. Visitors and parishioners put contributions in these boxes.

The Narthex is important in St. Peter's Church liturgy at Christmastime. It is in the Narthex that the Choir assembles to begin the singing of *Once in Royal David's City*, our hymn beginning of the Service of Lessons and Carols that heralds the coming of Christmas.

Merry Christmas everyone!

Connie

12 Fun Facts of Christmas

1. The “true love” mentioned in the song “Twelve Days of Christmas” does not refer to a romantic couple, but the Catholic Church’s code for God. The person who receives the gifts represents someone who has accepted that code. For example, the “partridge in a pear tree” represents Christ. The “two turtledoves” represent the Old and New Testaments.
2. In A.D. 350, Pope Julius I, bishop of Rome, proclaimed December 25 the official celebration date for the birthday of Christ.
3. The traditional three colors of Christmas are green, red, and gold. Green has long been a symbol of life and rebirth; red symbolizes the blood of Christ, and gold represents light as well as wealth and royalty.
4. Many European countries believed that spirits, both good and evil, were active during the Twelve Days of Christmas. These spirits eventually evolved into Santa’s elves, especially under the influence of Clement C. Moore’s *The Night Before Christmas* (1779-1863) illustrated by Thomas Nast (1840-1902).
5. Each year there are approximately 20,000 “rent-a-Santa’s” across the United States. “Rent-a-Santa’s” usually undergo seasonal training on how to maintain a jolly attitude under pressure from the public. They also receive practical advice, such as not accepting money from parents while children are looking and avoiding garlic, onions, or beans for lunch.
6. In Poland, spiders or spider webs are common Christmas trees decorations because according to legend, a spider wove a blanket for Baby Jesus. In fact, Polish people consider spiders to be symbols of goodness and prosperity at Christmas.
7. Because they viewed Christmas as a decadent Catholic holiday, the Puritans in America banned all Christmas celebrations from 1659-1681 with a penalty of five shillings for each offense. Some Puritan leaders condemned those who favored Christmas as enemies of the Christian religion.
8. Christmas stockings allegedly evolved from three sisters who were too poor to afford a marriage dowry and were, therefore, doomed to a life of prostitution. They were saved, however, when the wealthy Bishop Saint Nicholas of Smyrna (the precursor to Santa Claus) crept down their chimney and generously filled their stockings with gold coins.
9. The first person to decorate a Christmas tree was reportedly the Protestant reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546). According to legend, he was so moved by the beauty of the stars shining between the branches of a fir tree, he brought home an evergreen tree and decorated it with candles to share the image with his children.
10. The earliest known Christmas tree decorations were apples. At Christmastime, medieval actors would use apples to decorate paradise trees (usually fir trees) during “Paradise Plays,” which were plays depicting Adam and Eve’s creation and fall.
11. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), there are 2,106 million children under age 18 in the world. If there are on average 2.5 children per household, Santa would have to make 842 million stops on Christmas Eve, traveling 221 million miles. To reach all 842 million stops, Santa would need to travel between houses in 2/10,000 second, which means he would need to accelerate 12.19 million miles (20.5 billion meters) per second on each stop. The force of this acceleration would reduce Santa to “chunky salsa.”
12. Evergreens (from the Old English word *aefje* meaning “always” and *gowan* meaning “to grow”) have been symbols of eternal life and rebirth since ancient times. The pagan use and worship of evergreen boughs and trees has evolved into the Christianized Christmas tree.



MINUTES FOR THE VESTRY MEETING
ST. PETER'S PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

OCTOBER 11, 2016

Present: Fr. Hartt, Mtr. Sue Waldron, J. Chenot, G. Scala, D. Spath, T. Murphy, M. Lundberg, N. Creagan, K.Cehowski, M. Holden, S. Lencewicz, E. Stafford, M. Kanya

Opening Prayer: Fr. Hartt

1. Approval of Minutes of Vestry Meeting , September 13, 2016

The September 13, 2016 minutes were approved on a motion made by G. Scala and seconded by E. Stafford. The motion was unanimously approved by the Vestry.

2. Senior Warden Report – J. Chenot

Starting September with the annual picnic was just a great way to start off our new church calendar season. The picnic was well attended with plenty of hospitality and food. I would like to thank Deb and Frank Spath for all their help preparing the set up the morning of the picnic as well as many others including Pat Shortall for his help with the food planning, cooking supplies and cleanup. I would also like to thank to Kevin Cehowski, CJ Gordon and Jeff Russom for all their assistance cooking on the grill. Also many thanks to those who brought a dish to pass and making the picnic run smoothly and successfully. It was wonderful and encouraging to see many new faces and families, as well as those who have attended for so many years in the past. The picnic is a great event and a time for all to enjoy each others company.

As in the past, First communion, confirmation and Bible study classes are in full swing. I would like to thank both Mother Sue and Father Hartt for all their work they put into these programs in place as well as some new activities that have been added to the calendar.

This week the office will sent out the third quarter statements to our parishioner's. The vestry and finance committee will be finalizing the stewardship campaign this month and information will be coming out to our parishioners in the coming weeks.

The finance committee will also start working on next year's budget so the vestry can begin reviewing at the next vestry meeting. It will be important that we continue to get the message out to the congregation of the importance of stewardship and increasing the endowment with gifting in wills and estate planning.

Just this past Sunday, the choir hosted a concert as a fund-raising event for their upcoming trip to England next year. We would like to thank the Funf wind Quinetet and the choir for putting this performance together.

November is right around the corner and the outreach committee will be reporting on some of the few important upcoming events. One to mention will be the pre-Thanksgiving dinner held in November. Each year we have an incredible turnout for this event and I hope many that have not come in the past please mark it on your calendar. Again it is a great time to get the congregation together for great food and fellowship. Jim also wanted to mention the continuing effort of St. Peter's hosting the overflow homeless shelter again this year beginning in December. This year will be our eighth year and the mission has reached out to us to accommodate women looking for shelter this year for the first time. The Albany City Mission is in the process rehabbing an additional building in Albany dedicated to women which is sorely needed in downtown Albany and they have had a large calling for this important ministry helping these women in the local community during the winter months. We will begin this ministry the first week in December and will have women from the mission qualified to oversee this outreach. We will be reaching out to the congregation in November with details regarding volunteers who may want to help with City Mission coordinators welcoming these women and helping them get settled each night with light snacks and beverages. The congregation has been very generous in the past supporting this ministry with food and momentary donations and we hope that this generosity will continue this year for those who are in need for a safe and warm place at night during the upcoming winter nights.

Lastly, Jim wanted to thank the Clergy, the choir and Neil for all their work and support during the very busy upcoming schedule of events that lead us through the musical performances, special services and dinners that will be coming up in the near future as well as getting ready for the Advent season. Also, please remember all those on the committees that dedicated their time and talents behind the scenes each week as well including those in the office. We need to

remember all the hard work and planning that is put in all the upcoming events as well each week during the year. I want to thank each and every one of them for all their help and support.

3. Finance – G. Scala

George S. reviewed the Treasurer's Report for the month of September. Total offerings for September were \$14,849. Year to date offerings through September are \$164,458 which compares to a budgeted number of \$237,399.

The investment/endowment accounts showed very minimal gains for the month. For September Merrill Lynch was up .07% and Key was up .26%. YTD Merrill Lynch is at 4.69% and Key is at 4.62%. This leaves us with a positive budget variance in this area of \$111,864. Both accounts performed favorably versus market indexes. Expenses year to date are \$27,654 under budget through September.

George also discussed the recommendations for the Stewardship Campaign from the Finance Committee. After discussion certain key dates were solidified and process put in place. The 2017 Campaign will begin immediately and conclude on November 20th with the celebratory luncheon.

Motion to approve the budget was unanimously approved by the vestry.

4. Property – None

5. Outreach - Mother Sue

Pre-Thanksgiving Dinner is scheduled for Saturday November 12th at 5:00pm. Thank you Kevin and Caitlin Cehowski for coordinating this event. Turkeys will be provided by the church and will be cooked by: Maria Holden, Sally Jennings, Earl Stafford, Annette Hollis, Janice Chenot and Debbie Spath (Thank you!)

Outreach is requesting the Daughters (and others) pray for the victims of Hurricane Matthew (especially the loss of life in Haiti and beyond). Edith is making inquiries through the Capital District Deanery on how we can make a donation of funds to our the Haiti parishes our Diocese supports. Outreach is also requesting food pantry donations be brought in for the decorating of our altars for Thanksgiving. These donations are then brought to the Capital District food pantry. We are also asking for donations of coats, hats and gloves for the children (and hats/gloves for adults) at St. Francis Mission Center where we serve lunch on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

The Thursday night meals will continue for the shelter at First Lutheran church beginning Thanksgiving. Please see the signup sheet and details in the Pumpelly Room. Thank you, Deb Spath, for coordinating this ministry.

This year, our Overflow Homeless Shelter (opening December – March) will continue but will be for women seeking shelter through the Capital City Rescue Mission. We will not house men this year. We will be making modifications to the 2nd floor bathroom to include a shower for the women's use. Female CCRM staff will be present. We are looking for volunteers (women only) for hospitality.

6. Old Business - None

7. New Business - None

8. Associate Rector's Report – Mtr. Sue

The Fall started off very strong here at St. Peter's and it is wonderful to have everyone back from travels and holidays. Our parish picnic had the strongest attendance I remember in many years. This is a good sign of our strong year to come.

Women's Bible study will begin October 18th and will meet on Tuesday evenings at my home. We will follow the Discovery Bible Study format and include time for prayer and fellowship.

Youth: First Holy Communion Classes began this month with children receiving their first Holy Communion on All Saints Sunday (November 6th). Children's sermons continue to be a strong offering to the parish and we are very excited about Children's Chapel continuing this year. Confirmation classes will begin shortly.

Daughters of the King: The Daughters continue to hold intercession for St. Peter's Church. We are planning a Fall Neighborhood Prayer Walk for any St. Peter's member on October 16th during which we will offer prayers in various stops in downtown Albany. That Sunday the Daughters are also hosting coffee hour. Our October meeting will be joined with the DOK chapter of St. Stephen's Delmar NY. We welcome interested women of the church to join us.

I attended the Bible Symposium on September 24th. It was led by Fr. Behr and he offered a teaching founded in the patristic writings in how we can search the scriptures to encounter Christ. He did an excellent job tying together OT prophecies that have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Oct 22nd is the Discovery Bible Study training at the Spiritual Life Center in Greenwich NY. I look forward to taking part in the training along with members of the Vestry.

The week of 10/23 I will be on vacation...thank you!

9. Sunday Attendance - Fr. Hartt

The average Sunday attendance is currently 114.4

10. Rector's Report – Fr. Hartt

The church has been quite active since the start of September. Father Hartt said the Parish Picnic was a success both in attendance and spirit. The parish thanks Jimmy and Janice Chenot, Frank and Debbie Spath, Clark and Carol Daggett, Pat Shortall and Wayne Hill for their help in setting up the picnic as well as working through the many details that went into making it a joyful event.

Sunday School enrollment is 21, which is a good number. We also held our first Children's Chapel on September 25th. This service continues to be spiritually significant for our kids and their parents. Reminder postcards are working well with our families. We hold Children's Chapel on the last Sunday of the month.

Father Hartt thanked Jimmy Chenot and the vestry for the recent repairs at the rectory.

First Holy Communion Classes have begun. There are two students at this time. First Holy Communion will take place on All Saints' Sunday.

Three Baptisms are also scheduled for All Saints.

Father Hartt is working now with two adult Confirmands. Postcards have gone out to eligible teens. There is consensus that postcards are particularly effective means of communication across the parish.

Father Hartt had the funeral of Mr. Spencer Standish on September 30th. Mr. Standish was a former Vestry man and philanthropist who did many good works for the community. Our prayers are with the family.

Attendance was discussed. Father Hartt spoke of the 7% drop in ASA in the Diocese as a whole for the year 2014-15. We do not have more current numbers yet. This trend is alarming, but also means that St. Peter's is not alone in our attendance concerns. We will need to continue to promote the "stewardship of presence." Our common life depends on one another. Last Sunday, for example, a children's homily was not possible due to absences.

Discovery Bible Study will begin in the parish with a men's group and women's group. The first meeting for the women will be held at Mother Sue's new home. Fr. Hartt will be meeting with the men in the Vestry room.

Father Hartt discussed Stewardship plans.

Father Hartt discussed the Vestry retreat for October 21-22, The retreat will include a Saturday training workshop on Discover Bible Study.

Our Pre-Thanksgiving Thanksgiving dinner will be on November 12th. Preparations have begun.

The Overflow Shelter at St., Peter's will be housing women this year. Rev. Perry Jones sees meeting the increase in homeless women as the area of greatest concern for our location.

11. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by D. Spath and seconded by E. Stafford. It was passed unanimously by the vestry.

12. Compline

Fr. Hartt led Compline.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deborah Spath

Clergy & Staff

The Rev. Paul Hartt.....Rector
 The Rev. Susan Waldron.....Associate Rector
 Neil K. Keen, F.A.G.O.....Organist & Choirmaster
 Laura Saffares.....Director of Christian Education
 Kristin Robinson.....Administrative Assistant
 James P. Shortall.....Sexton
 Shawn Van Ness.....Assisting Sexton
 Janice Chenot.....Office Volunteer
 E. Constance Powell.....Historian & Archivist

Vestry

James Chenot.....Senior Warden
 Deborah Spath.....Junior Warden
 George Scala.....Treasurer
 Kevin Cehowski, Nancy Creagan, Maria Holden, Moses Kamy,
 Stephanie Lencewicz, Mark Lundberg, Tim Murphy, Earl Stafford

How to Contact Us

Office Hours:

Monday -Friday

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Telephone: 518-434-3502

Fax: 518-462-4419

E-Mail:

Receptionist@stpeterschurhalbany.org

Website:

www.stpeterschurhalbany.org

Services

Sunday

Holy Communion 8:30 a.m.

Holy Communion 10:30 a.m.

(1st & 3rd Sundays)

Morning Prayer 10:30 a.m.

(2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays)

Sunday School 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Holy Communion 12:05 p.m.

ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

107 State St.

Albany, New York 12207

