

THE
LION'S TALE

The Seasonal Magazine of St. Mark's, Mystic



Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2021



SAINT MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Mystic, CT 06355
(860) 572-9549
www.stmarksmystic.org

MINISTERS

All members of the congregation
The Rev. Adam Thomas, Rector
David Tubbs, Music Director
Faihe Emerich, Communications
Bev Olsen, Senior Warden
Kurt Cramer, Junior Warden
Eric Bookmiller, Clerk
Dave Cruthers, Treasurer

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Christian Cloutier
Mon Dickinson
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Louisa Broadbent
Ann Ragsdale
Gene Roure
Ted Kietzman

BENEATH IT ALL

by *The Rev. Adam Thomas*

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the Kings and princes are home,
When the Shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.
—Howard Thurman

Dear friends,

This is my favorite Christmas poem. It came to me by way of a Christmas card years ago. I don't remember who sent it. It might have been from my seminary or the bishops here in Connecticut. Whatever the case, I made sure to keep the poem by cutting it out of the card and slipping it under the glass topper on my desk in the office at St. Mark's.

I was trying to come up with what to write about for this issue of *The Lion's Tale* when Thurman's poem popped into my mind. (By the way, Howard Thurman was one of the foremost theologians of the first half of the 20th century and one of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s mentors.) I knew the poem was under the glass on my desk, but it wasn't immediately apparent because my desk is very cluttered with papers and other detritus.

So I started excavating the top of my desk. First went the laptop case, then a phone message I need to return, then a copy of Advent's service music, then my planning legal pad, then a long lost post-it note reminding me to call Comcast. Finally, I reached the glass of my desk and found Thurman's poem. And I read it and remembered why Jesus came.

That's it. That's my story. But it makes me wonder. How often do we need to excavate our hearts out from under the detritus of our lives? How much clutter do we allow to pile on top of the truth of ourselves? I invite you during this season to ponder these questions, and so will I. As you ponder, pray with Thurman's poem, and listen for the music your heart is making underneath all that clutter.

Peace and blessings,



THE HOPE OF LIGHT'S RETURN



by The Rev. Rachel Thomas,
SE & SC Region Missionary

The increasing darkness of November tends to have a direct impact on my mood. I try to plan diversions that will bring joy. And yet, I am aware that I have a deep longing inside myself for more light. I count down the days until the winter solstice, when I know we will at least be heading in the direction of more light. Maybe I'm part pagan in that, but there are many reasons that we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the true light coming into the world, around the same time as the winter solstice.

Meanwhile, I wait. I long for light and wait in increasing darkness.

The Season of Advent provides me with a companion for that longing and waiting. It says to me that I am a part of a bigger story than my own, of God coming into the world in unexpected ways. It offers a day-by-day rhythm through calendars or candle lighting, reminding me that the process of moving towards the light is as hope-filled as arriving there.

And it offers reminders to Turn and Turn and Turn again, towards God, towards neighbor, towards all that is holy within myself. I've taken to praying the confession of sin daily, using the text from *Enriching our Worship*. For years I had been more haphazard about confessing my sins. I suppose I felt that it was so much of a downer; I know I sin; why remind myself of it every day?

Instead, I've found as I've given myself over to its words, and, importantly, as I read the Absolution in response, a strengthening of that internal longing to abide in the love of Jesus, and serve only his will. The words give voice to my desire to Turn to the light.

Here are the words, if you would like to join me in this practice during Advent.

*God of all mercy,
We confess that we have sinned against you,
Opposing your will in our lives.
We have denied your goodness in each other,
In ourselves, and in the world you have created.
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
The evil we have done,
And the evil done on our behalf.
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us
Through our Savior Jesus Christ,
That we may abide in your love
And serve only your will.
Amen.*

Absolution:

*Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all
your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen
you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy
Spirit keep you in eternal life.
Amen.*

BEHIND THE SCENES

by Teresa Norris

Hitting the replay button one more time, I strained to hear the phone number rattled off so quickly. I was on duty in the church office, fielding messages and taking calls regarding Thanksgiving dinners. All I had to do is get the correct information and feed it onto the spreadsheet.

Just the facts: name, number of meals, address, and phone number.

I soon found it impossible to get just the facts. There was so much more in those messages. Gratitude, resignation, and loneliness. “Just one meal. I’m by myself.” “Can you ring the bell and wait? It takes me a while to get to the door.”

Words from the old Beatle song came to mind: “All the lonely people, where do they all come from...”

But then I was also touched by the generosity of heart by people asking for a meal to be delivered to a friend. “We’ve invited her to our house, but she won’t come.” “She has no family nearby. I just want to be sure she gets a meal.”

What I really enjoyed though was when a “live” call came through. With most of these also underscored with loneliness, I made an effort to be upbeat and welcoming – as if St. Mark’s was in the business of providing meals to everyone every day of the week. “Of course we can! Did you say you have a caretaker there? Would you like a second meal for her?” “It’s a him,” came the gruff reply (I swear he sounded like my father). “Oh, sorry – that was a bit sexist of me, wasn’t it?” (I swear he chuckled.)

My favorite conversation was with the lady who launched into how she’d seen on TV how to make pepperoni “roses.” She’d found it fascinating, then admitted she had no pepperoni and why on earth would she make such things? “People would think I’m nuts!” We had a good laugh over that.

In the Before Times, pre-pandemic, I headed up the table setting task for the big Thanksgiving Dinner served in the undercroft. Ordering the paper goods, arranging for the centerpieces, and finally, with the help of a couple of other folks, setting out the rows and rows of plastic plates and mismatched flatware. A behind the scenes job for sure, the kind I’ve always preferred.

This year I was behind the scenes again, one of several office volunteers taking down information for dinners. To be delivered. Small tasks, small moments, and yet abundant blessings. Not just for the folks who’d receive the meals. No, I’ve realized my behind-the-scenes job was a blessing for me.

Earlier, I’d written it was almost as if St. Mark’s was in the business of making meals for people every day. Well, sometimes we need to be reminded we are St. Mark’s, called to feed people every day. A little love. Maybe a laugh. Every day. Even if it’s behind the scenes.

A PEEK INTO CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD THROUGH STAMPS

by Bob Welt



The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph...and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ...And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus...And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; Let it be so to me according to your word."



The Visitation (Luke 1:39-49)

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb...and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" ...And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord..."

Angels and Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch of their flocks by night. And the angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened...And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."



A Note from the Collector

My original idea for this collection was to use it with the church school to help remind youngsters that there was more to Christmas than Santa and that it is a holiday celebrated around the world. I wrote about it in my monthly column in Global Stamp News and received a number of letters from readers. Two of them made me smile. One was from a nun, who was a collector, and told me that the sisters had added me to a Novena. The other was from a minister who was a professor at a Southern Baptist seminary in San Francisco!

I still have lots of Christmas stamps if anyone would like to create their own display.

Experienced collectors will note that some of the stamps are what we call CTOs, cancelled to order, printed simply for sale to collectors. "Serious" collectors wouldn't touch such stamps. I buy them because they're pretty and kids like them.

Advent Paper Chain: Cut out the strips and link them together with a stapler. Each day of Advent, pull off the next link and read the scripture passage.

SUNDAY 11/28/21	In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. (Genesis 1:1-4a)
MONDAY 11/29/21	In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up...the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:4b-7)
TUESDAY 11/30/21	The serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:4-6)
WEDNESDAY 12/1/21	For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:3b-4)
THURSDAY 12/2/21	Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good." (Isaiah 7:13-14)
FRIDAY 12/3/21	This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 31:33-34)
SATURDAY 12/4/21	Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low. (Isaiah 40:1-4a)
SUNDAY 12/5/21	But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. (Micah 5:2-3)
MONDAY 12/6/21	A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. (Isaiah 11:1-2)
TUESDAY 12/7/21	For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is name Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. (Isaiah 9:6-7a)
WEDNESDAY 12/8/21	The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing... Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. (Isaiah 35:1-2a, 5-6)
THURSDAY 12/9/21	Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. (Zephaniah 3:14-16)
FRIDAY 12/10/21	How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. (Isaiah 52:7-8)
SATURDAY 12/11/21	For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind... The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent-- its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:17, 25)

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15 Pearl Street
Mystic, CT 06355

Return Service Requested

First Class Mail

2021

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE



CHRISTMAS EVE

4:30pm – Family Service

8:30pm – Musical Prelude

9:00pm – Festive Service

CHRISTMAS DAY

9am – Christmas Day Service

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26TH

8am – Holy Eucharist

10am – Holy Eucharist

(no education this Sunday)

DECEMBER 24TH – JANUARY 1ST

Office Closed

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2ND

8am and 10am – Lessons and Carols

(no education this Sunday)