



# *Ring in the* **Good News**

**ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

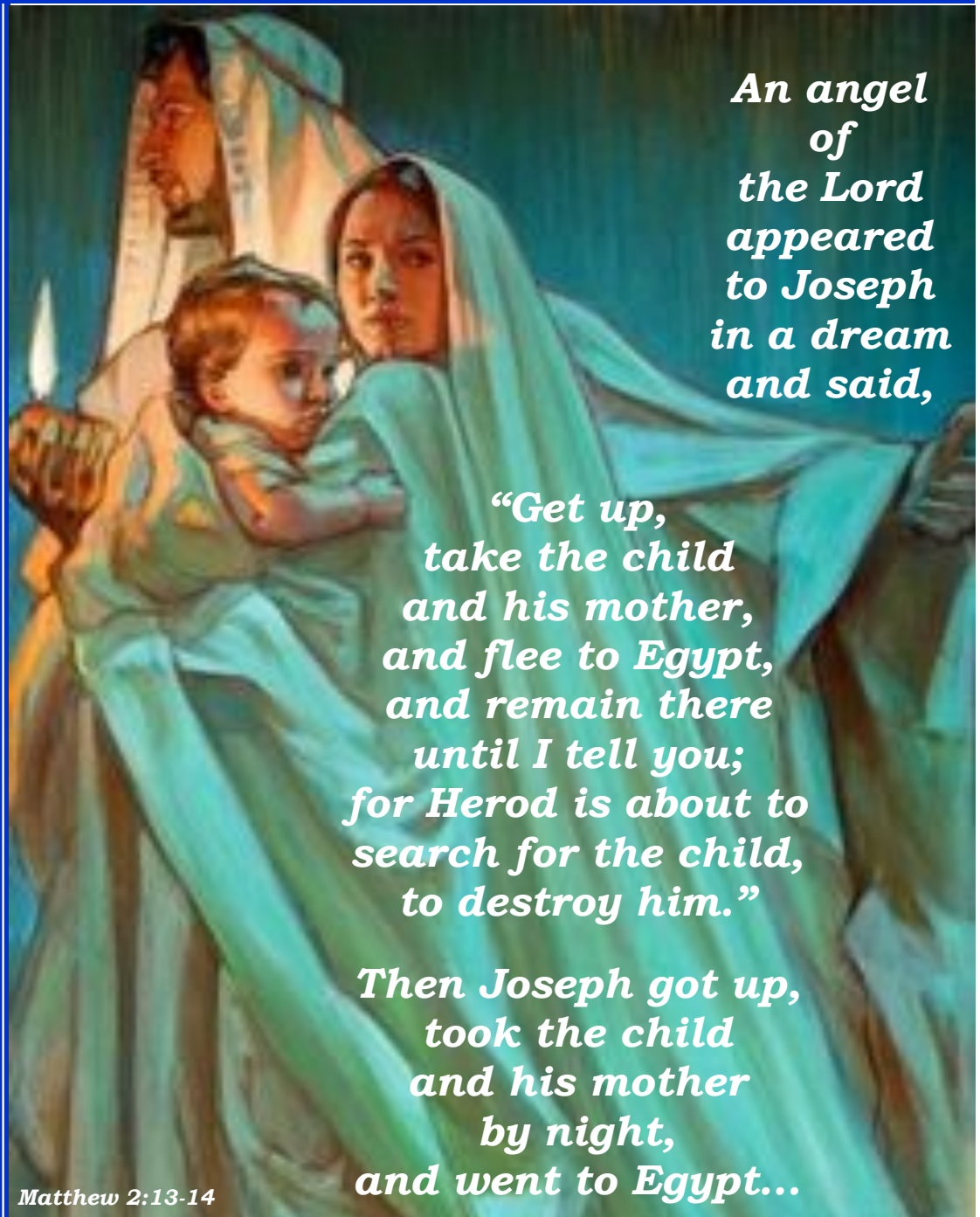
**DECEMBER 2015**

**Purcellville, Virginia**

**Advent Season**

## **Inside this issue:**

<b>From the Rector: 2 To Feed the Affluent</b>	
<b>A Colorful Church</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introducing St. Luke the Physician</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Blood of Martyrs</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Pope Francis Embodies Vulnerability</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Advent &amp; Christmas Lessons &amp; Carols</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Christmas in America, 1924</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Guatemala Mission Trip 2016</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Youth &amp; Kids News</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Kidz Page</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Service Roster</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Special Dates &amp; Lectionary</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Calendar</b>	<b>15</b>



*An angel  
of  
the Lord  
appeared  
to Joseph  
in a dream  
and said,*

*“Get up,  
take the child  
and his mother,  
and flee to Egypt,  
and remain there  
until I tell you;  
for Herod is about to  
search for the child,  
to destroy him.”*

*Then Joseph got up,  
took the child  
and his mother  
by night,  
and went to Egypt...*

*Matthew 2:13-14*



## To Feed the Affluent

By Fr. Tom Simmons

We have all vowed to "proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ," but we have struggled with the question: HOW TO DO THAT???

We often emphasize our *individual* efforts to share the news about Jesus in our families and neighborhoods, at school or work. But let's think some new thoughts! Let's think corporately, instead.

What can we do AS A CONGREGATION to make a good case for faith in Jesus?

Over the last year groups of leaders at St. Peter's have been chewing on that question, trying to discern our "Hedgehog Concept." Through extensive research, prayer, and thoughtful deliberation we have figured it out. Though the people of Western Loudoun are extraordinarily rich in "things" they are often quite "poor in spirit." They are often isolated and overworked. They are crying out for real relationships with their neighbors and even within their own families.

*To feed the affluent,  
"We will **build** a compelling community  
and **invite** our neighbors  
to deepen their relationships  
as they experience Jesus  
through our friendship."*

That "**invite**" includes hosting "famous events" (like the 4th of July party) that gather hundreds of our neighbors together for food, fun, fellowship. These events give us a chance to begin serving the people of Western Loudoun. They begin relationships, which become the basis for an experience of Jesus.

A Wild Game Feast has the potential to become such an event. Webb Turner (see letter) will use his mailing list, which includes every hunting permit-holder in Virginia, by county, to issue the invite.

Our big task at this point is to "**build** a compelling community" to host the event and to connect with those who come. This will be an "all hands" event, meaning we will need to have dozens of people helping out with planning, set-up and take-down, logistics, vendor contacts, hospitality, and the all-important follow-up.

The big day will be **Saturday, January 30**, at Shadow Creek. It's the barn-looking event venue half-a-mile down 690 from the church. We will have over a dozen local vendors offering door prizes, raffle items, and fun

activities for the whole family. Colonel North will talk about his avid love for bird hunting and also his even-more-vigorous love for Jesus. Between Webb's mailing list and the Colonel's drawing power, we expect to easily reach our 300 person capacity.

Please contact me and let me know how you would like to be involved.

### Dear People of Saint Peter's,

*You may remember me and my wife Kim from the early 2000s, when we were part of St. Peter's. I write to you now to share an exciting ministry I've been collaborating with the Vestry on for January: The Wild Game Feast. We hope to make it "The First Annual!"*

*My first experience with wild game suppers was eight years ago while living in Round Hill and attending St. Pete's. I happened to see a flyer at a sports store advertising the event at a church in Woodbridge. What I experienced that day moved me to want to be involved with this type of community outreach. It blew me away to be in a wonderful Christian atmosphere with 700 others, all enjoying the sponsors' trade-show-type exhibits, activities such as the NRA's mobile air-rifle shooting range for the kids, archery instruction and shooting, and displays by a wide variety of apparel and equipment companies.*

*Best of all, my only expense to attend was to bring a pot luck style wild game dish, side item or dessert to share. The food was unbelievable! After enjoying the activities and meal, we settled in for the speaker, a visiting Baptist preacher. He delivered a very appropriate speech describing his own experiences in the outdoors and the importance of his personal relationship with Christ. At the end he encouraged us to give our lives to Christ.*

*I was so impressed with the event I wanted to do one at St. Peter's. Tom and I started planning one back in 2006, but my family soon moved to Warrenton and our plans were shelved. However, I now own Legacy Outdoor Sports Club, a membership club that allows families to have a place to enjoy the Outdoor Sports. We now have the means of making our dream of a Game Feast at St. Peter's finally coming true!*

*I hope you all will be part of the event!*

*Sincerely,*

**Webb Turner**

*Legacy Outdoor Sports Club  
"Hunt, Fish and Camp  
on Private Land"*





# A Colorful Church

By Fr. Tom Simmons

Jesus is Lord! He is Lord, not just of my soul or the contents of my cranium. He is Lord of ALL. That's why Christians have traditionally hallowed the passage of time with the Church Calendar.

It marks the passage of six seasons and vividly imbues each with a color: blue in Advent, white in Christmas, green in Epiphany, purple in Lent, red in Holy Week and on Pentecost, white in Easter, and green in Pentecost. These represent the great events in our Lord's life and the principal doctrines of the church. The meaning of history is to be found in the life story of history's Lord.

There are several colors which are traditionally associated with Christmas. Do you ever wonder what they represent? Most have meaning from northern European traditions of our ancestors.

**Green** - Evergreen plants, like Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe have been used for thousands of years to decorate and brighten up buildings during the long dark winter. They also remind people that spring is coming! In many parts of Europe during the middle ages, people performed Paradise plays, often on Christmas Eve. They told Bible stories to people who couldn't read. The 'Paradise Tree' in the Garden of Eden was portrayed with a pine tree with red apples tied to it. Now it is the Christmas tree.

**Red** - The apples on the paradise tree represented the fall of Adam. Red also represents the blood of Jesus when he died on the cross, to wash away the guilt of Adam's sin, and ours. Red is also the color of Bishops robes, like those of St. Nicholas.

**Gold** - Gold is the color of the Sun and light, coveted in the long dark winters of northern Europe. Gold was also one of the presents brought to the baby Jesus by one of the wise men and traditionally it's the color used to show the star that the wise men followed.

**White** - White is often associated with purity and peace in western cultures. White paper wafers were also sometimes used to decorate paradise trees. The wafers represented the bread eaten during Communion. White and/or gold is the color of Christmas, when the altar and clergy are draped in white and gold vestments.

**Blue** - The color blue is often associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus. In medieval times blue dye and paint was more expensive than gold! So it would only be worn by Royal families and very rich people. Mary was often painted wearing blue to show she was very important. Blue can also represent the color of the sky and heaven, which is appropriate for the season anticipating Christ's return.

## And speaking of Blue...

Four years ago, St. Peter's began offering a *different* type of Christmas service called a "*Blue Christmas Service*." The color blue has, since the late 1300's, also been associated with the feeling of sadness or depression. Some think this is because blue is related to rain or storms, which in turn are reminiscent of crying.

Holidays can be an *especially* difficult time for people who are "feeling blue". Unable to join in the merriment and celebrations can make the sorrow feel twice as severe. Our Blue Christmas Service is a time when we can acknowledge the "blue" feelings we have at Christmas time, and offer them to God who knows the human heart in all its joy and sorrow and says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

People who are not experiencing a very merry Christmas, and friends who support them, are invited to come and join with one another in this beautiful liturgy that proclaims the love of God for those suffering and the comfort, hope, and peace He offers during dark times.



Sometimes "Merry Christmas" is just "Not So Merry"

**Blue Christmas Service:**  
A Service of Healing and Hope

**St. Peter's Episcopal Church**

**Saturday—December 19—5:00pm**

# Introducing “St. Luke, the Physician”

By Fr. Tom Simmons

In the Christian calendar the new year begins in December with the first Sunday of Advent. With the new year we turn to another gospel in the lectionary. In the year to come we'll be reading, studying and preaching in Luke's Gospel. To help us orient to what's to come, I've included some material, adapted from the ESV Study Bible to introduce you to Luke.

## Author

Though the third Gospel does not name its author, Luke's authorship of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts is affirmed by both church tradition and by evidence within both works. Church tradition supporting Luke as the author is both early (from the mid-2nd century A.D.) and unanimous. It was never doubted until the rise of methodological skepticism the 19th century. Within those compositions, the “we” sections of Acts (16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16) assume that the author was a companion of Paul and participated in the events described in those sections. Furthermore, Paul mentioned Luke as one of his companions in his letters written during those periods (Luke is listed in Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24).

The ancient historian Eusebius tells us about Luke in his Ecclesiastical History 3.4.6. He said Luke was a Gentile, “by race an Antiochian and a physician by profession” (see Col. 4:14). Luke was among the second generation of the early church, and thus not an “eyewitness” of Jesus' ministry. As that first generation was passing away Luke sought to assemble their recollections into a coherent and comprehensive narrative. He extensively interviewed the eyewitnesses and carefully assembled their testimony in historical sequence. Jesus' words and actions were public. There were hundreds of people who had direct, repeated and even sustained contact with Jesus. These eyewitnesses had names and addresses and lived for decades after Jesus in communities all around Palestine. As “servants of the word” they owned the tradition about Jesus, told the stories repeatedly, and guarded their authenticity. Luke describes in his prologue how he carefully sought out this information (see below). In Luke we are reading eyewitness testimony, shared with the Gospel writer by first-hand participants who were present when Jesus spoke and taught.

Luke 1: 1-4 “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

Because Luke traveled with Paul, the Gospel he wrote was received as having Paul's apostolic endorsement and authority as a trustworthy record of the gospel that Paul preached. In fact Eusebius went so far as to argue that Paul was quoting from Luke on many occasions when he affirmed an idea as being “according to my Gospel” [Ecclesiastical History 3.4.7]).

## Date

Luke probably wrote between c. 62 and 65 A.D. . The earliest possible date of Luke-Acts is 62 A.D. , immediately after the events that Luke recorded in Acts 28. In addition, Luke makes no mention of the terrible persecution under Nero in 65 A.D. but gives a very positive picture of Paul preaching the gospel in Rome for two years “with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:31), so he must have written sometime before 65.

Since the 19th century scholars of a certain stripe dispute dating Luke before 70 A.D. because the predictions of the fall of Jerusalem (Luke 21:20–24) are so vivid that they could have been written only after-the-fact. This assumption reflects a modern bias against belief in predictive prophecy in particular and supernatural events in general. Christian faith, of course, allows Jesus the power of predictive prophecy.

## Theme

Luke wrote his Gospel to persuade his readers that Jesus is the one God promised in the ancient prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures. He takes pains to demonstrate that this good news is for all: Jews and Gentiles, men and women, high and low together. Jesus' miracles demonstrate God's saving activity in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Luke emphasized the truthfulness of the eyewitness testimony his readers had been taught about Jesus, to assure them that, by believing in Jesus Christ, they would receive the promised Holy Spirit whom he gives to all who follow him.

## Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Both Luke and Acts were written to “Theophilus,” whom he addresses with the honorific title, “most excellent”. Attempts to identify him have been unsuccessful, but Luke used the same title of honor to describe the Roman governors Felix (Acts 23:26; 24:2) and Festus (Acts 26:25). Theophilus was probably a man of similarly great wealth, power, and status. It's exciting to think of Christians gaining such a hearing in the first century. Luke's broader audience would have included Gentile Christians in Theophilus' circle, who had already “been taught” (1:4) about Jesus, as

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Continued from page 4)

well as many others who had not yet heard the news about Jesus. Luke probably had several goals in writing:

1. To show the reliability of Christian teaching. Luke demonstrated his credentials as a historian (cf. 1:1–4) who “followed all things closely for some time past” in order “to write an orderly account”. He also mentioned that the material he is sharing was widely known, and thus verifiable (24:18; Acts 26:26). The fact that Luke draws so heavily on eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:2; 24:48; cf. Acts 1:8) further assures readers of the credibility of the message.
2. To show God’s plan in Israel’s rejection of Jesus. Christianity is not a new religion but rather the fulfillment and present-day expression of the religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To build this case, Luke demonstrated that the events recorded in Luke–Acts fulfilled ancient prophecy (e.g., Luke 1:1; 3:4–6; 4:17–21; 7:22–23) as well as Jesus’ prophecies (e.g., 9:22, 44; 11:29–30; 13:32–34; 17:25; 18:31–33).
3. To clarify Jesus’ teaching on his return to judge Jerusalem. Luke showed that Jesus did not teach that the parousia would come immediately, but after a period between his resurrection and his return (9:27; 19:11; 21:20–24; 22:69; Acts 1:6–9). Nevertheless, Jesus would return (Luke 3:9, 17; 12:38–48; 18:8; 21:32) in bodily form (Acts 1:11), and believers should live in watchful expectation (Luke 21:34–36).
4. To emphasize that his readers need not fear Rome. Luke hints at this theme by highlighting Herod’s and Pilate’s desire to release Jesus and the Roman centurion’s recognition of his innocence. Luke also records in Acts several occasions where Roman authorities came to Paul’s rescue. When Roman officials did persecute, Luke explains that it was due to error and that the persecution ceased immediately when the error was discovered (cf. Acts 16:22–39).

### Literary Features

Luke’s narrative follows the chronology of Christ’s life and death, with vivid descriptive details furnished by eye-witnesses that make scenes come alive in the imagination. The Gospel of Luke finds its fundamental unity in the person of Jesus Christ and in his mission to seek and to save the lost. From the first announcement of his coming to his ascension into heaven, Jesus is at the center of everything: the songs are for his praise, the miracles are by his power, the teaching is from his wisdom, the conflict is over his claims, and the cross is that which only he could bear.

Luke gives his account further literary unity by intertwining the stories of Jesus and John the Baptist; by beginning and ending his story at the temple; by presenting the life of Jesus as a journey toward his final week in Jerusalem; and by following the progress of the disciples as they learn to count the cost of discipleship. The thematic unity of the Gospel is also expressed in

Jesus’ pronouncement to Zacchaeus: “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (19:10).

### Key Themes

1. God’s sovereign rule over history. The promises God made through the prophets are already being fulfilled. [13:33; 22:22, 42; Acts 1:16–17; 2:23; 4:28]
2. The arrival and actual presence of the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the consummation of the kingdom is still a future event, a blessed hope for which the church prays. [11:2, 20; 16:16; 17:20–21; 18:1–8; 21:27–28, 34–36; cf. Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20]
3. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and his followers. The Spirit is present in the Gospel of Luke, from the births of John the Baptist and Jesus to the end. The Spirit is present at Jesus’ dedication in the temple, his baptism, temptation, early ministry, and first sermon. Jesus at his ascension promises the Spirit’s future coming in power. [1:15–17, 35; 2:25–27; 3:16, 22; 4:1, 14, 18; 5:17; 24:49]
4. The great reversal taking place in the world, in which the first are becoming last and the last are becoming first, the proud are being brought low and the humble are being exalted. Luke places great emphasis on God’s love for the poor, tax collectors, outcasts, sinners, women, Samaritans, and Gentiles. Many of the episodes that appear only in Luke’s Gospel feature the welcome of an outcast, like the Christmas shepherds, the Prodigal Son, the persistent widow, Zacchaeus, etc. [1:48, 52–53; 6:20–26; 13:30; 14:11; 18:14]
5. Believers are to practice a life of prayer and good stewardship. Luke highlights Jesus’ prayer life at every major turning point: at his baptism; at his selection of the Twelve; at Peter’s confession; at Jesus’ transfiguration; in his teaching the Lord’s Prayer; before Peter’s denial; etc. [3:21; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1–4; 12:33–34; 16:9; 18:1; 22:32, 40, 46]
6. The danger of riches is constantly emphasized in Luke. It chokes out the seed of the gospel and keeps it from becoming fruitful. This danger is so great that Jesus often warns his readers not to set their hearts upon riches and to give generously to the poor. The woes pronounced upon haughty rich people stand in sharp contrast to the blessings pronounced upon the humble poor. [6:20–26; 8:14; 12:13–21; 16:10–13, 19–31; 18:22 (cf. 5:11; 14:33; Acts 2:44–45; 4:32); Luke 21:3–4]



## "The Blood of Martyrs..."

By Fr. Tom Simmons

In recent months we have followed the story of Christian persecution in Muslim lands, particularly under the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Though often ignored by the mass media, this persecution amounts to genocide, the systematic extermination of Christian communities present in those lands since the first century. The destruction of these communities, however, is only part of the story. It is an ancient insight that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The greatest-story-(almost)-never-told is that the gospel is actually spreading in the midst of the suffering.

Leah Marieann Klett, writing for the Gospel Herald, offers a snapshot of how Jesus is raising up a people for himself in the most unlikely of places. <http://www.gospelherald.com/articles/59309/20151030/thousands-muslims-northern-iraq-converting-christianity-witnessing-isis-horror-ministry.htm>

*More and more Kurdish Muslims living in Iraq are turning to Christ after witnessing the brutality of extremist groups like ISIS, who carry out horrific acts in the name of Allah, Christian aid workers have revealed.*

*A ministry leader in the Kurdish Region of Iraq told the Christian Aid Mission that his organization can barely keep up with the desire of refugees to learn about Christ and the Bible, which has grown increasingly strong since ISIS overtook many parts of the region.*

*"They're just sick of Islam," he said. "People are very hungry to know about Christ, especially when they hear about miracles, healing, mercy and love."*

*He added, "As terrifying and horrifying as ISIS is, they did us a great favor because they came and have shown them all the killing, saying that it's all in the Koran verses. So now we don't have to say much, we just say the truth."*

*Numbers released by the UN in January estimated the Kurdish Region of Iraq is hosting 900,000 refugees, around 233,000 from Syria and the rest from elsewhere in Iraq. As well as Kurds, who have fled northern Syria, the region has also accepted thousands of Arabs feeling the cities of Anbar province, which the terrorist group captured in 2014.*

*The ministry director revealed that his organization provides aid to displaced people in tents and whatever dilapidated or unfinished buildings they can find for shelter, with needs for blankets, heaters, food and diapers still being high.*

*After showing refugees the love of Christ by meeting their needs, aid workers later bring Bibles, he said. "We just help because we love them, and maybe the next time we visit we tell them about Jesus and give them Bibles," he said. "We believe in the power of the Word of God. We don't have many preachers. We don't have many missionaries, but we have the Word of God that we're*

*able to print, purchase and deliver to the people and their children."*

*The leader said there has been a great "awakening" among Muslims in northern Iraq, citing many conversion accounts he has personally witnessed or heard secondhand from local churches. He recalled one particularly memorable account, where a Muslim receiving aid from his ministry was given a Bible.*

*"He said, 'OK, but I'm Muslim, I can't become Christian - I have a big family, and my father is a very extremist radical,'" the director said. "I said, 'I didn't ask you to be Christian. I'm not trying to change your religion here. I just want you to read the Bible and know who Jesus Christ is. I want you to have a relationship with God.'"*

*The Kurdish Muslim agreed, and he began reading the Bible with his wife and their many children. Over time, the Muslim presented the ministry leader with a list of questions he had made while reading, and one day asked for information about the prophet of Islam.*

*According to the Christian Aid Mission, the surprised director, who normally does not talk about Islam, "gave him a token bit of information about Muhammad that did not include anything offensive about the founder of the religion."*

*"I said, 'Why do you ask me that question?'" he said. "He goes, 'You know what? I don't like Muhammad anymore.' I was happy but surprised, so I said, 'What now?' He goes, 'I want to be a Christian.' I said, 'I thought you said you didn't want to be Christian before.' He goes, 'Oh, I changed my mind.' So he got saved."*

*The ministry director emphasized that the Word of God has the power to change lives with no embellishment. He recalled another instance, where administrators at a sharia (Islamic law) college requested 21 Bibles for a comparative religion class so they could equip Muslims with enough criticisms of the Bible to proselytize Christians.*

*"In a couple months, after they took that class going through the Bible, five of the students got saved," the ministry leader said. "They called me and said, 'Hey, we're done with Islam.'"*

*Upset by the conversions, the teacher alerted the authorities, who in turn summoned the ministry director. After being asked if he had tried to convert students, the ministry director explained that he didn't even know them, and had simply provided Bibles because the school had requested them. The officer confirmed this with the teacher and asked the students why they had converted.*

*"One said, 'The Bible is strong, powerful; it changed our lives,'" the leader said. "Then the policeman said, 'Okay, then go, there is no case here; I can't do anything.' So he dismissed the guy and asked me, 'Is it true that the Bible has the power to change lives?' I said, 'Yes, of course. It's been changing lives everywhere.' He asked, 'Can I have a copy?'"*

## Goff: Pope Francis Embodies Vulnerability

By Bishop Susan E. Goff

Pope Francis is a rock star. Since his trip to the United States, I hear people talking about him nearly every place I go — from my visits to Episcopal congregations, to my monthly worship service with women at the Richmond City Jail, to lines in the supermarket. People from all walks of life and across all lines of faith seem captivated by this pope. When I met him in mid-October, I saw firsthand something of the surprising source of his magnetism and strength.

Our group of 10 bishops of the Episcopal Church traveled to Rome at the invitation of the bishop of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe to learn about the ministry of the church there. One Wednesday morning, we headed across town to St. Peter's Square for a public audience and brief individual meetings with Pope Francis.

The moment the pope entered the huge, jam-packed square, the people leapt to their feet and exploded in shouts of joy, the way crowds do for rock stars. Standing on his white jeep, affectionately known as the "Pope-mobile," he rode through every aisle shaking hands, kissing babies, waving and smiling. He made himself utterly vulnerable, frighteningly vulnerable, as he rode through the crowd, so close to the people, with no bullet-proof shielding around him. He made himself vulnerable for the sake of deep connection with the people.

When he reached the platform, Pope Francis addressed the people from his simple chair. He spoke of the profound relationship between the church and the family. "In the family we learn the bonds which unite us ... even when difficulties abound. Indeed," he said, "it is in the family that the most vulnerable of society are cared for."

Then he challenged the church to examine the extent to which we are living as the family of God. He challenged us to make ourselves vulnerable in order to be family with the most vulnerable. With that invitation, the leader of what is arguably the most powerful church in the world made himself vulnerable to critics who disagree with him.

The pope made himself vulnerable too, by inviting our presence with him. We Episcopal bishops, seven women and three men, were seated on the platform in front of the first row of chairs, just to the right of the pope. We were dressed in purple cassocks, identifying us as bishops even from a distance. The Roman Catholic Church does not recognize the validity of Episcopal Church ordinations. Yet this pope chose to be seen in the company of Episcopal bishops, chose to speak with us publicly, chose to allow our photos to be taken with him. The Roman Catholic Church does not ordain women. Yet this pope chose to be seen in the company of women bishops, chose to speak and shake hands



*Pope Francis greeted 10 Episcopal bishops from America - including the Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff of Virginia - in October at the Vatican.*

with us, chose to have his photo taken with us.

This pope made himself vulnerable in welcoming, acknowledging and honoring those whom the Roman Catholic Church has long refused to acknowledge.

Finally, this man of strength and faith made himself vulnerable in the heartfelt request he made to each of us who met him. "Please pray for me," he asked. That invitation forged a deep connection. To ask another to pray for you equalizes the relationship. It acknowledges that we are all in need of God's grace. It is an act of profound humility that levels the playing field.

It is no wonder to me, based on our brief meeting, that Pope Francis exudes such tremendous peace. It is no wonder to me that he radiates calm presence to each individual, even in a massive crowd. He knows himself to be a human being like all of us. He knows who he is, and he knows who God is. Francis is first in the Roman Catholic Church — you can't get any more "first" than that — but he chooses the way of humility and vulnerability. Pope Francis is a rock star because he doesn't act like one, doesn't think like one, doesn't want to be one.

Out of the vulnerability he embraces, Pope Francis leads with courage, clarity and strength. Vulnerability does not make him weak; it does not diminish him in any way. Instead, his embodiment of vulnerability connects him deeply with the Lord in whose way he strives to walk and with the people the Lord loves. Those deep, authentic connections make him powerful. Some would say they make him dangerous.

So I, for one, will do as he requested and pray for him, even though I am not Roman Catholic, because in the deep connectedness of our shared humanity, he is my pope, too.

# Advent & Christmas Lessons & Carols

By Barbara Bulger Verdile

With the beginning of the Advent and Christmas seasons, along with trading Christmas cards and the annual catch up with far away friends, baking the chocolate chestnut cookies, decorating the house and the tree, comes the expectation of the Service of Lessons and Carols. We could call it the world's greatest carol event. And it has such a rich history.

The carols sung at a service of Lessons and Carols, and throughout the subsequent liturgical seasons of Christmas and Epiphany, have deep roots in the Christian worship tradition. However, this connection would not have happened without the reluctant consent of the medieval Catholic Church. Reluctant because it found the carol's strong pagan ties troubling. Fortunately for us, by the beginning of the 15th century carol singing had become an integral element of seasonal worship.

Today, while the terms "carol" and "hymn" may occasionally overlap, the two genres are, in fact, different. Hymn texts tend to instruct and educate; while the purpose of the carol - one that stems from the medieval mystery play - is narrative. For uneducated folk of the Middle Ages, the carol depicted the momentous event of Christ's Incarnation. It should come as no surprise that centuries ago, carol singing celebrated several seasons of the Church year while the custom is now almost entirely relegated to the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

Even in our technological age, the simple pleasure of communal carol singing at Advent and Christmas has endured, and it's carol music evokes very specific and special feelings. For my family, as for many of the world's Christians, Lessons and Carols is a most beloved Advent and Christmas tradition.

At the Verdile's, on the morning of Christmas Eve, we tune all the radios in the house to the BBC broadcast of "A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols" so the whole house fills with the sounds from King's College. Many times in spite of attempts to continue last minute wrapping, cooking or decorating chores, I find myself simply sitting or standing, totally immersed in the program's music and readings, most of which I have heard countless times before, and will experience again even before day's end at our own St. Peter's services. I enjoy these moments as a participant in a familiar service without the pressure of having to think ahead to the music coming next and its immediate challenges of execution. I can reflect instead on the reading of God's word with further reflections during the singing of the related carol. I find myself feeling as one with the thousands of Christians around the world listening to the same readings and singing the same carols. I realize I am enjoying a respite from the merciless commercialism bombarding us everywhere we turn. And even though it lasts for just a moment, I can release the tension created trying to find time to run at least three more errands before mid-day, and relax and delight in the story.

Before year's end, at St. Peter's we will celebrate both Advent and Christmas Lessons and Carols on the 6th and the 27th of December, respectively. May the readings and carols enrich your spirit throughout the season and the year ahead.



## How far to Christmas?

*How far is it to Christmas Day?  
The journey's just as long  
as taking time to listen  
to a joyful angel song.  
It's just as far as one can go  
in doing a loving deed  
that helps someone feel better  
or that meets their special need.  
For Christmas is a journey  
that the heart makes every year.  
It starts right with your family  
and those you hold so dear.  
It travels on to strangers  
'round the world to everyone  
with the message that God loves us  
and that's why he's sent his Son!*

—Peggy Ferrell



## Christmas in America, 1924

*This story is based on my conversations with "Telma," Thelma Sande Sheys (1918-2005) who was my mother. Enjoy, Carl Sheys.*

I live with my parents and two sisters on a farm in a small town in Massachusetts. My older sister, Alice is seven, I am six and our youngest sister Charlotte is five. I almost forgot to mention –my name is Thelma although I am called "Telma" because my Ma and Pa can't make the "th" sound because they are from Norway and Sweden. None of us will learn those languages because our parents say, "We are in America now and we speak English!" I think they are right.

Ma was born in Sweden and Pa was born "next door," in Norway. Pa would never admit it, but Norway had once been part of Sweden. They both came to America as children but did not meet until they were young adults.

These days my sisters and I are more excited than usual because it will be Christmas in less than two weeks. School for Alice and me will be over this Friday. Ma has promised that next week we will go to town to shop for Christmas. It is only three miles to town and Pa will hitch Dolly, our horse, to the wagon. I have been saving all year and now I have almost two dollars. I hope this will be enough to buy something for everyone.

Because we live on a farm there will be lots to eat with vegetables from summer in the root cellar. Pa will prepare a pig and we will enjoy the meat for a long time. It is cold enough outside in the barn to keep food fresh until we can use it all. Pa even knows how to keep animals from getting into our supply during the winter months. Our Ma and Pa are so smart!

I am so happy that I was able to buy Christmas presents for everyone even though it took all of my savings. Pa has promised to let us have a table by the road where we can sell vegetables next summer. People from town like to buy things fresh from the garden. Last year we sold wild blueberries which we

picked in the field behind the barn. Alice and I made more than a dollar each in just one week.

School has ended and there is just one week left until Christmas. Pa will take all of us out across the stone wall, into the woods to cut a tree this afternoon. Ma says we should plan some extra time to gather some of the small green plants which grow around the trees. They will look beautiful around the fireplace and in the windows. We can always count on having snow for Christmas and this year will be no exception since we already have more than twelve inches. We may even have to break the crust to reach low enough to cut the tree. This is all so exciting – I can hardly sleep at night!

It is Wednesday night, just two days until Christmas Eve ("Julaften" in Swedish.) We will decorate our tree after supper. The whole house smells like pine and I wish we could capture that smell and enjoy it all year.

We will all help with the decorations but Ma and Pa will need to reach the top of the tree to place the angel which my grandmother made in Sweden when she was a little girl. Pa has promised that the three of us can sleep under the tree on Christmas Eve. I do hope I will not be



too excited to sleep – Ma says that Santa Claus ("Jultomten" in Swedish and "Nisse" in Norwegian) will not stop unless we are all asleep.

Pa has told us three girls a Norwegian story that is so exciting I can hardly think of anything else. When he was a boy in Oslo his parents told him that animals in the barn are allowed to talk for one hour starting at midnight on the 24th of December. This is because there were animals in the stable where the Baby Jesus was born. Maybe Ma and Pa will let us go out into the barn at midnight on Friday to see if Dolly and our cows can really talk. Some people say that this is not really true and is just a story told by little Christmas people called "Julenissen". I don't think Julenissen are real but I know that Jesus is real and that he was born in a stable.

## Guatemala Mission Trip, 2016

By Bob Loker

St Peter's Church will be sending a short term mission team to Guatemala next summer to support Redeemer's House International missionaries, Todd and Maureen Erickson. Todd and Maureen are involved in various ministries fighting malnutrition, enriching education of young children, creating safer and dryer homes, and planting healthy churches. Our team will be based in the colonial capital of Antigua and we will travel to minister in surrounding areas.

Every year our tasks are different but in the past we have worked in the town of Santiago Zamora which is located outside of Antigua. This is a small town where people work in crafts and businesses that support the economy of Antigua. Many people have a small plot of land on the mountainside for farming. Most children in Guatemala only go through sixth grade and Redeemer's House maintains an after school program here to keep the children in school.

### *Feeding Station, Patzatzun*



the Ericksons and their ministry, Hope for Home, takes in children to live with their family. They also have a "four wheel" ministry to isolated areas where they donate custom built wheelchairs and provide basic medical services. Hope for Home is supported by the Wednesday Night Bible Study.

**There will be an informational at the church at 5 PM on Sunday, January 10th, and applications will be accepted through January 17th.** Team size and makeup will be limited by the projects we are given and the local logistical support available for the team. The cost for the trip is \$1700. Please contact Bob Loker (540-338-2978 or bobloker@gmail.com) if you have questions or would like to get your name on the application list. It will be helpful to get an early idea of who may be interested in applying.



*After School Program, Santiago Zamora*

Last year we also helped with a feeding program for undernourished children in Patzutzun, an isolated Mayan village of 1500. Here families work as subsistence farmers growing corn in order to purchase basic needs. They live in adobe brick homes which have up to three generations living together in one room. This area has barely been reached with the gospel of Christ.

For the past two years we have also helped Daryl and Wanda Fulp with their ministry to severely handicapped young children. The Fuls are close friends of



*Hope for Home, San Antonio, Aguas Calientes*

## Now That's News

In 1809, with Napoleon sweeping through Austria, the world was in such upheaval that nobody paid much attention to baby news. Yet during that year, Abraham Lincoln, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charles Darwin, Alfred Tennyson, Edgar Allen Poe and William Gladstone were born.

Although the attention was on an Austrian battlefield, "history was actually being shaped in the cradles of England and America," writes Charles Swindoll. "Similarly, everyone thought taxation was the big news when Jesus was born. But a young Jewish woman cradled the biggest news of all: the birth of the Savior."

—Adapted from *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*



**Acolytes****Advent Review  
&  
Lazer Tag  
Night**

A 60 minute  
refresher training  
for Christmas – then  
carpool over to the  
Lazer tag center  
at Dulles  
immediately  
following.

Contact:  
Dan LaPre

Friday  
Dec. 11  
5 PM  
at the  
church

# youth

## white elephant

### gift exchange



## Save the Date!

Friday, December 18

More details coming soon!

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

### **CHRISTMAS MISSION PROJECT: OPERATION CHRISTMAS STOCKING**

We are partnering with the Salvation Army to fill Christmas stockings for boys and girls in Loudoun County. Please pick up your stocking this Sunday in McCray Hall and return filled stockings to the Christmas box in McCray Hall by DEC. 6.

Please direct any questions to Kathleen Voss.

Many thanks to Krista Winger, Tamara Tyler and Sara O'Neil for teaching Sunday School this first semester! They are all amazing women and teachers and gave so generously of their time and talents! Please take a moment to say "thank you!"

Remember the annual Saint Peter's Christmas Pageant will be held at the 5 PM service on Christmas Eve! Our Pageant cast has been working hard at rehearsals, under the directorship of Liz Tuohy and we expect another wonderful evening!

The magic of  
Christmas  
is not in the  
presents, but in  
His *presence*



The nursery will be open for the 5PM Service on Christmas Eve!



DEVOTIONS: MERRY WATTERS • POEM AND DESIGN: THOMAS MOUNSEY • ADVENT 2015 • WWW.THOMASMOUNSEY.WORDPRESS.COM

<p>SO FAR FROM HOME WE MAKE OUR WAY TOGETHER, YET ALONE. BEHIND THE WORLD WE KNOW AND LOVE AHEAD, A NEW UNKNOWN.</p> <p>WE DID NOT CHOOSE THIS TIME OR PATH BUT NOW, AS NIGHT DRAWS NEAR, WE SEEK A PLACE OF WARMTH AND REST O, DO NOT TURN IN FEAR!</p> <p>SOME BREAD, A BED, A BIRTHING STOOL. IS WHAT WE NEED TONIGHT. WE STAND BEFORE YOUR DOOR AND KNOCK. IS YOURS A WELCOME LIGHT?</p> <p>YES, I'VE THE HEART, THE HOME, THE LIFE THAT OPENS WIDE THE DOOR TO GREET THE STRANGER, FRIEND OR THAT WELCOMES CHRIST ONCE MORE.</p>													
SUN	29 LIGHT ONE CANDLE	MON	30 SEE THE GROWTH	TUE	1 BE PATIENT.	WED	2 BAKE BREAD.	THU	3 TRUST.	FRI	4 KEEP HOPING.	SAT	5 TASTE IT.
													
	JER. 33:14-16		ISA. 11:1-3		ROM. 8:25		1 COR. 5:8		PS. 62:5-8		HEB. 11:1		PS. 34:8
	6 LIGHT TWO CANDLES		7 MAKE PEACE.		8 SEE THE LIGHT		9 BE EARLY.		10 SHOW THANKS.		11 CELEBRATE.		12 FORGET THE FORMER.
													
	LK. 3:1-6		PS. 122:6-9		JN. 1:6-9		PS. 119:147		THESS. 1:2,3		DEUT. 24:11		ISA. 43:18
	13 LIGHT THREE CANDLES		14 REMEMBER REFUGEES.		15 CHOOSE BETTER.		16 WATCH FOR ANGELS.		17 BE STRONG.		18 GO!		19 SEE THE NEW.
													
	ZEPH. 3:14-20		PS. 137:4		LK. 10:38-42		PS. 91		MT. 26:41		2 JN. 12		
	20 LIGHT FOUR CANDLES		21 SAY YES.		22 RECEIVE HIM.		23 MAKE ROOM.		24 INN	ADVENT			
													
	LK. 1:46-55		LK. 1:26-38		ISA. 9:6		LK. 2:1-7		JN. 1:14				



# St. Peter's DECEMBER ROSTER 2015

		Dec. 6	Dec. 13	Dec. 20	Dec. 27
		Advent 2	Advent 3	Advent 4	Christmas 1
LECTOR	Early	Gail Donohue	Drew Lavan	Kelly Wyatt	Dell Nunaley, William Lawrence, Mark Baker
	Late	Mark McKinley	Liz Tuohy	Kyle Voss	Dan LaPre, Traci Eddinger
EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS	Early	NA	Terry Duhring, Sophiann Nunaley	Judy Hall, Jaqueline Whalen	NA
	Late	NA	Dan LaPre, Randy Stoutenburgh	Tom Coate, Dave Tocki	NA
SUB DEACON	Early	NA	NA	Tim Hall	NA
	Late	NA	NA	Dave Hunt	NA
INTERCESSOR	Early	NA	Dell Nunaley	Peter Schellhase	Terry Duhring
	Late	NA	Randy Stoutenburgh	Marty Thompson	Traci Eddinger
ACOLYTES	Early	Kimberly & Colin Donohue, John Matthews	Adam & Eric Gibson, Mark Matthews, Hayes Baker	Aubrey & Addie Winger, Isabella Tucker	Adam & Eric Gibson, Mark Matthews, Hayes Baker
	Late	Chris Hunt, George & Henry Simmons	Dan LaPre, Lauren Hunt, Jon Coate	Katya Clavelli, Jonathan LaPre	Katya Clavelli, Jonathan LaPre
COFFEE HOUR HOSTS	Early	Eckerd & Keri Holdorf, Todd & Pam Johnston	Colleen Duffy, Chris Lafferty, David & Carla Ramsey	Linda & Larry Turner, Gail & Paul Donohue	Peter & Erin Schellhase, Chris & Terry Duhring
	Late	Ollie & Betsy North, Steve & Anne Schultz	Jon & Charlotte Corbett, <b>VOLUNTEER NEEDED</b>	Mark & Katie McKinley, Travis & Rebekah Ehrich	Randy & Linda Stoutenburgh, Dave & Gail Hunt
USHERS	Early	Todd & Pam Johnston	Zan Shah, Dick Wilhelm	Bill & Beth Gibson	Rick & Kelly Cockrill
	Late	Tred Parry, Billy Dillon, Jimmy Eddinger	Eamon & Jenn Coy, Ben & Anna Curtis	The Clavelli Family	Mark & Katie McKinley, Marty & Erica Thompson
GREETERS	Early	Rebecca Smoot	Dell Nunaley	Mark Baker	Bill Gibson
	Late	Jon Corbett	Jae & Andrea Lee	Traci Eddinger	Dan LaPre
TELLERS		Pat Long & Sven Johnson	Howard & Linda Evans	Joe Clavelli, <b>TBD</b>	Pat Long & Sven Johnson
ALTAR GUILD		Bobbie Wilhelm, Jean Kuhns, Ruth Ensor, Anna Curtis, Kat Clavelli, Wynell Schatz	Bobbie Wilhelm, Jean Kuhns, Ruth Ensor, Anna Curtis, Kat Clavelli, Wynell Schatz	Sophiann Nunaley, Nancy Baker, Maggie & Jim Heim, Chris Lafferty, Patty Costantino, Rebecca Smoot	Sophiann Nunaley, Nancy Baker, Maggie & Jim Heim, Chris Lafferty, Patty Costantino, Rebecca Smoot

If you are unable to fulfill your ministry on a day you are assigned, please (1) find your replacement and (2) notify the church office of the change in schedule. Thank you for serving!

## St. Peter's Christmas Worship Services



**Blue Christmas Service – Dec. 19, 5:00 pm**

**Holy Eucharist & Christmas Pageant – Dec. 24, 5:00pm**

**Candlelight Holy Eucharist – Dec. 24, 11:00 pm**

**Christmas Day Holy Eucharist – Dec. 25, 11:00 am**

### Mark Your Calendar!

- Dec. 1 Pastoral Care Team Mtg. 5pm  
Planning Mtg. 7pm
- Dec. 2 Mission Team Mtg. 5:30pm
- Dec. 5 Men's Breakfast 7am  
Christmas Pageant Rehearsal 9am  
**Evening Prayer** 5pm
- Dec. 6 **Advent Lessons & Carols** 8am & 10:30am
- Dec. 8 Vestry Exec Mtg. 6pm  
Planning Mtg. 7pm
- Dec. 9 FBF Christmas Party 6pm
- Dec. 11 Acolyte Night
- Dec. 12 Christmas Pageant Rehearsal 9am
- Dec. 13 Youth Group 4:30pm
- Dec. 15 Vestry Mtg. 7:15pm
- Dec. 17 TOL Dinner (*hosted by Men's Breakfast group*)
- Dec. 18 Youth White Elephant Christmas Party
- Dec. 19 Men's Leadership Mtg. 7am  
Christmas Pageant Rehearsal 9am  
Literary Guild 5pm  
**Blue Christmas & Healing Liturgy** 5pm
- Dec. 20 Altar Guild Christmas Decorating 12pm
- Dec. 24 **Christmas Eve Eucharist & Pageant** 5pm  
Festive Choral Prelude 10:30pm  
**Christmas Eve Eucharist** 11pm
- Dec. 25 **Christmas Day Eucharist** 11am
- Dec. 27 Newsletter Deadline
- Dec. 28 **Christmas Lessons & Carols** 8am & 10:30am
- Dec. 30 **Morning Prayer**

## DECEMBER

## Anniversaries and Birthdays

### ANNIVERSARIES:

- 12-1 Dick & Bobbie Wilhelm  
12-7 Richard & Sharon Purnell  
12-19 Jon & Charlotte Corbett  
12-23 Todd Johnston & Pam Pierce-Johnston  
12-26 Brad & Chris Lafferty  
12-29 Zan & Vijay Shah  
12-31 David & Carla Ramsey

### BIRTHDAYS:



- 12-5 Bill Geiger  
12-6 Keith Brzozowsky  
Traci Eddinger  
12-7 Marty Thompson  
12-9 Mary Coate  
Howard Evans  
12-10 Cohen Ballinger  
Wanda Juraschek  
Jim Schatz  
Jim Wehr  
Jim Whalen  
12-12 Ruth Ensor  
Andrew Lonon  
12-13 Kellen Babb  
12-15 Maggie Heim  
12-16 Sally Andrews  
Noelle Ayers  
12-17 Samantha Purnell  
12-18 David Tocki  
12-20 Bill Gibson  
Thea Verdile  
12-22 Bill Ensor  
12-25 Paul Benner  
12-26 Lexi Eddinger  
Dave Hunt  
12-27 Mack Ensor  
Lauren Hunt  
12-28 Sophiann Nunaley  
12-30 Pat Long  
Thayer Smith  
12-31 Madi Voss

## Revised Common Lectionary Readings for DECEMBER

Date	Sunday	First Lesson	Psalm	Second Lesson	Gospel
<b>6</b>	2 Advent	Malachi 3:1-4	Canticle 16	Philippians 1:3-11	Luke 3:1-6
<b>13</b>	3 Advent	Zephaniah 3:14-20	Canticle 9	Philippians 4:4-7	Luke 3:7-18
<b>20</b>	4 Advent	Micah 5:2-5a	Canticle 15	Hebrews 10:5-10	Luke 1:39-55
<b>27</b>	1 Christmas	Isaiah 61:10-62:3	147	Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7	John 1:1-18



# December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 PC Team Mtg  Planning Mtg.	2 <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b> Mission Team Mtg Bible Study 1 Bible Study 2 MSSG	3 Next Step Community  Choir	4	5 Men's Breakfast Christmas Pageant Rehearsal  <b>EVENING PRAYER</b>
	6 <b>ADVENT LESSONS &amp; CAROLS</b> SS & SF Classes Choristers & CS Bible Study	7	8 Vestry Exec  Planning Mtg	9 <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b> <b>FBF Christmas Party</b> Bible Study 1 Bible Study 2 MSSG	10 Next Step Community  Choir	11 Acolyte Night  Bible Study 1 Christmas Party  <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b>
13 <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b> SS & SF Classes Choristers & CS Bible Study	14	15 Vestry Mtg	16 <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b> Bible Study 2 MSSG	17 Next Step Community  TOL Dinner	18 Youth Group White Elephant Christmas Party	19 Men's Leadership Mtg Christmas Pageant Rehearsal  <b>BLUE CHRISTMAS &amp; Healing Liturgy</b>
20 <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b> Choristers & CS Altar Guild Christmas Decorating	21	22	23 <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b> Bible Study 2 MSSG	24 <b>HOLY EUCHARIST &amp; Pageant</b>  Choral Prelude  <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b>	25 <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b>	26 <b>HOLY EUCHARIST</b>
27 Newsletter Deadline  <b>CHRISTMAS LESSONS &amp; CAROLS</b>	28	29	30 <b>MORNING PRAYER</b>  Bible Study 2 MSSG	31 Next Step Community		

**KEY:** CS=Choral Scholars; FBF=Friends Being Friends; MSSG=Men's Spiritual Support Group; PC=Pastoral Care; SF=Spiritual Formation Classes; SS=Sunday School; TOL=Tree of Life



MAILING ADDRESS  
P.O. Box 546  
Purcellville, VA 20134-0546

*Address Correction Requested*



## **St. Peter's Episcopal Church**

**37018 Glendale St., Purcellville, VA, 20132**

**540-338-7307      [www.stpetes.net](http://www.stpetes.net)**

Rector: The Rev. Thomas W. Simmons IV  
— [frtom@stpetes.net](mailto:frtom@stpetes.net)

Director of Music & Organist:  
Barbara Bulger Verdile — [musicd@stpetes.net](mailto:musicd@stpetes.net)

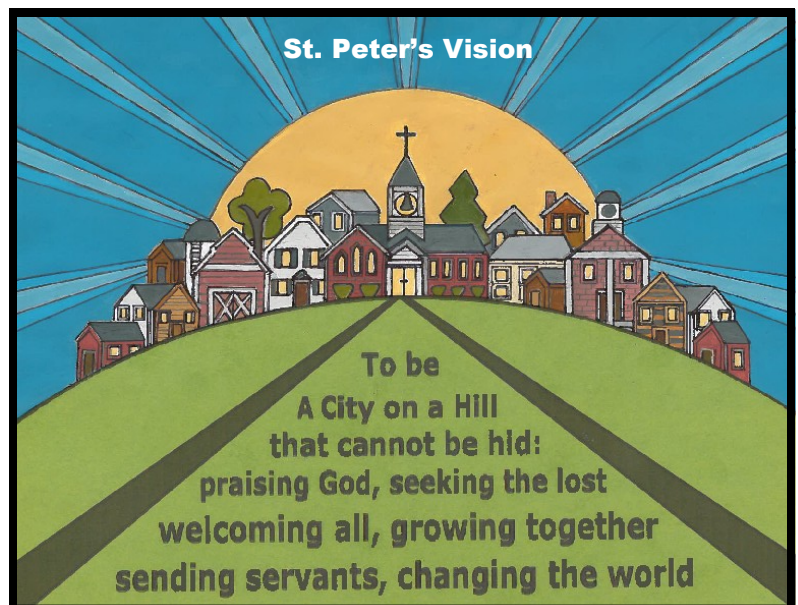
Director of Children's Ministries:  
Kathleen Voss — [dcm@stpetes.net](mailto:dcm@stpetes.net)

Youth Minister:  
Andrea Lee — [youth@stpetes.net](mailto:youth@stpetes.net)

Parish Administrator: Wanda Munsey Juraschek  
— [office@stpetes.net](mailto:office@stpetes.net)

Financial Administrator: Diane Adams  
— [bookkeeper@stpetes.net](mailto:bookkeeper@stpetes.net)

Sexton: Chris Daniels — [sexton@stpetes.net](mailto:sexton@stpetes.net)



The *Good News* is published monthly by St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
Editor: Wanda Munsey Juraschek      Newsletter email: [GoodNews@stpetes.net](mailto:GoodNews@stpetes.net)

If you would like to save paper and postage, please notify the editor; *The Good News* is available to read or download on our website.