



St. Mary's Messenger



From the Rector's Study

As I write this we are four days into the Twelve Days of Christmas - you know - the Christmas Season that leads up to January 6th which is the Feast of the Epiphany. An "epiphany" is a revelation. Between this newsletter and the next we will spend time together on Sunday hearing and pondering scripture that is revelatory in nature. It will be revelatory about Jesus and it will be revelatory about us.

The time that we call the Season of Epiphany is a time of continued revelation of the person of Jesus leading us up to the Season of Lent. During that time we will gather as a faith community to discern God's will for new members of our vestry. We will also gather as the Diocese of Texas in Bryan to begin the work of electing a new Suffragan Bishop for our diocese. You will be represented at that Council by Tom and Mary Raring-Hart, Cheryl Ann Hall-Wendele, Tulisha Carson and myself.

On April 26th, a Thursday night, you will be invited to participate in an event with every other parish, mission, and worship community in our diocese. It will be a night of food fellowship and sharing called, "Sharing our Faith Stories". It will be a time to talk with each other about the action of God in our lives so that we might be better able to share that with others. Janna

Hammett has agreed to be our parish coordinator for this exciting event. As we learn more about this night we will share it with you.

On the Wednesday nights of Lent we will gather for worship, a simple meal, and to explore the spiritual disciplines of the church. This will be a time of revelation, of epiphany, if we allow God to show us what we need to see. It will be a time of exploration leading up to the discussion of a Rule of Life. A Rule of Life is simply that which we use to more closely follow Jesus. We make promises to ourselves and God and then we work to uphold those promises.

We are, as always, in the process of singing a "new song" to the Incarnate God who brought light into the world and who is present in us through that very same Incarnation. That "new song" is what allows the Light of Christ that is in each of us to shine into the world as we illumine that which was darkness.

May God's rich blessing be with you all.

Peace,


Fr. Reid



ECW - Episcopalian Church Women

Hey Ladies - did you know you are a "card-carrying member" of the ECW? It's true - whether you like it or not! So what is the ECW anyway? Well, the official Diocesan definition says:

*The Episcopal Church Women of the Diocese of Texas is the fellowship of ALL women of the Church and is organized to enable the women to serve our Lord through Service, Worship, Education, Evangelism and Pastoral Care. **All women in the parishes and missions of the Episcopal Church, Diocese of Texas, are members.***

St. Mary's ECW meets on the first Sunday of each month at 9am in the Parish Hall. At our December meeting (when we weren't laughing) we discussed our fall and spring luncheons, our \$4,500 donation to church and charities, 2012 officer positions, UTO collections, how we would support the Dec 22 Interdenominational Christmas Dinner, cleaning and decorating our church, and the upcoming Shrove Tuesday pancake supper. We all had a nice time. We really encourage you to come to one of our ECW meetings. They are very low-key, easy, and the members are NICE. (Men are welcome!) **NEXT MEETING: SUNDAY JAN 8 AT 9AM IN PARISH HALL. BE THERE OR BE  <-- (SQUARE)**

SANTA'S ELVES VISIT 5 LAMPASAN FAMILIES

Linda Joseph



St. Mary's first annual giving project was a success! We provided five families with fixings for a Christmas meal plus wonderful homemade

desserts. Fun time was had Wednesday wrapping the presents. Friday was a cold delivery day. Delivery was a humbling experience - there was a large family with several small children - one small tabletop tree without a present in sight. One single mother of 3 small

boys who seemed to have the weight of the world on her shoulders met us out front of her house, her small boys looking out the window as we unloaded the car. A family of five were so appreciative, they met us on Highway 190 so we wouldn't get lost; you could see their faces light up when they saw all the goodies. We didn't take pictures but there were a lot of smiles on young faces that Friday.

Thanks to the generous giving of our church we were able to provide these families with a little joy and hope this Christmas. It wasn't easy seeing the conditions that some of these children lived in - but I am looking forward to our next giving project.



ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AND POTLUCK LUNCH

Sunday, January 8, 2012 after the 10am service. Meat will be provided (because we live in Texas. If we were in Japan it might be sushi) - but you are encouraged to bring a side dish or dessert. **GOAL:** elect 3 new members to the Vestry!! (Shbb...Don't tell, but I'm bringing Tom's birthday cake...!)

This week Tom and I found an invitation in our mailbox that asked us to join a new church that is opening in early January (you probably got one too). I was intrigued by the church invitation - it never mentioned Jesus' name, and it discusses people's idea of being "spiritual - not religious". This isn't the first time we've come across it, but it made us curious. Our quest brought us to this Episcopal response.

SPIRITUAL - BUT NOT RELIGIOUS

By the In the wake of the New Age, and the ever-growing love affair our culture has with all things spiritual, a new mantra has emerged: I'm spiritual, not religious! It is the mantra of ex-Catholics and once-in-awhile Protestants and others on the spiritual path. This emerging mantra has grown up in response to religion that looks more like a museum, religion that says you practice THIS way or you aren't one of us, religion that isn't relevant to the life I lead, religion that tells us to believe 12 impossible things before breakfast and leaves no place open for questions or doubt.

And there's this longing and maybe even a presence of energy in life. Perhaps if you are on the spiritual journey, you have felt this. Energy that gives life and joy — whether it's looking at Rainer at sunrise, or playing music with others, or sitting with someone in a time of sorrow. That energy is what the Christian people call the presence of the Holy Spirit. The followers of this Jesus know this longing and energy only too well.

What is this longing? It is the longing to live in community with others from all walks of life — a community that is present in

sadness and joy, a group of people searching and questioning and doubting and finding more questions about that presence together.

It's not about having answers as much as it is about engaging a story. It is about your story and how your story connects to an ancient story of desert wanderers that, in time, came to see that humanity and this energy they called God mingled and existed through Christ and thus, exists in all of humanity.

Is it possible to practice and grow your spirituality within an organized church? Yes! The Episcopal Church holds many possibilities open for those on the spiritual path looking for a diverse community of believers.

The beauty of the Episcopal tradition is that it is open to questions and new possibilities, as well as ancient teachings. Imagine a spiritual practice that is both grounded in tradition and open to new possibilities.

The Rev. George Anne Boyle is Associate for Christian Formation at Saint Thomas Episcopal Church in Medina, Washington.

Bishop Doyle's words..

Jesus is God with us, Emmanuel, Lord, and Messiah. It is the angel's words proclaimed to the shepherds that we ourselves echo on this holy of holy days.

We celebrate a living Word birthed into a particularly difficult and hard world. We celebrate light birthed into darkness. We proclaim wisdom birthed into longing. We proclaim glory in the mundane.

It is true that we will all come together as a Christian family celebrating in our own ways the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. We will find him in the midst of our holy worship. However, the Christmas message is clear, the incarnation of

God is more than likely best experienced in the world around us.

"Let us go and see" is the shepherd's cry. So let us, like them, leave our hallowed service and go and see the Christ Child present in the lives of families and friends. May we be buoyed by our mutual joy and hope. Let us with confidence proclaim that God has chosen us, his lowly people, in which to be seen and discovered.

May this season move us to realize the opportunity we have to witness to the Christ Child in the world. Let us offer hope where there is despair, faith where there is doubt, pardon where there is injury, and joy where there is sadness. Let us give food to those who hunger and warmth to those who are cold. Let us love the world into a just

society. And let us redefine our neighbor as our family.

My hope for you and your family is a blessed and Holy Christmas. I wish you the greatest measure of peace and joy in the company of friends. May we with one united voice proclaim God in Christ Jesus to a world that even still groans with a longing heart for a savior.

(This is an excerpt from Bishop Doyle's Christmas Day sermon. It fits so nicely with Father Reid's sermon on Christmas Day that I had to include it.)



| Jan 2012 (Central Time) | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|------------------|-----|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| New Year's Day 8am - Holy Eucharist 8:45am - Christian 9:45am - Godly Play 10am - Holy | Office closed | 10:30am - Eucharist, 5pm - Brownies 7pm - AA/AI Anon | 5:30pm - EYG 6:30pm - Pot Luck | 6:30pm - His Kids 7pm - AA | Rector's Day Off | |
| Annual Parish 8am - Holy Eucharist 8:45am - Christian 9:45am - Godly Play 10am - Holy 1:30pm - Knitting 3:30pm - Adult Bible | | 10:30am - Eucharist, 5pm - Brownies 7pm - AA/AI Anon | 5:30pm - EYG 6:30pm - Vestry | 6:30pm - His Kids 7pm - AA | Rector's Day Off | |
| 8am - Holy Eucharist 8:45am - Christian 9:45am - Godly Play 10am - Holy | Martin Luther King, | 10:30am - Eucharist, 5pm - Brownies 7pm - AA/AI Anon | 5:30pm - EYG | 6:30pm - His Kids 7pm - AA | Rector's Day Off | |
| 8am - Holy Eucharist 8:45am - Christian 9:45am - Godly Play 10am - Holy 1:30pm - Knitting 3:30pm - Adult Bible | 5:30pm - His Kids | 10:30am - Eucharist, 5pm - Brownies 7pm - AA/AI Anon | 5:30pm - EYG | 6:30pm - His Kids 7pm - AA | Rector's Day Off | |
| 8am - Holy Eucharist 8:45am - Christian 9:45am - Godly Play 10am - Holy | | 10:30am - Eucharist, 5pm - Brownies 7pm - AA/AI Anon | 5:30pm - EYG 6:30pm - Pot Luck | Groundhog Day 6:30pm - His Kids 7pm - AA | Rector's Day Off | |

THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS - DECODED!

The EYG youth group made Christmas cards for the residents of the Lampasas Nursing and Rehab and delivered them during a December 28 visit. They personalized the cards with each residents first name and a note inside. Tulisha says the girls explained that Christmas Day is on December 25th and the Christmas season is 12 days long, lasting until January 5th, the day of Epiphany. They sang the 12 days of Christmas song to them and then gave the Christian symbolism for the song (see below). They sang several other Christmas Carols and served them cupcakes and gave them each small treat. It was a wonderful visit.

(Thanks, Tulisha! I finally get it :)



A Partridge in a Pear Tree

The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, whose birthday we celebrate on December 25, the first day of Christmas. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge that feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings, recalling the expression of Christ's sadness over the fate of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered you under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but you would not have it so" (Luke 13:34)

Two Turtle Doves

The Old and New Testaments, which together bear witness to God's self-revelation in history and the creation of a people to tell the Story of God to the world.

Three French Hens

The Three Theological Virtues: 1) Faith, 2) Hope, and 3) Love (*1 Corinthians 13:13*)

Four Calling Birds

The Four Gospels: 1) Matthew, 2) Mark, 3) Luke, and 4) John, which proclaim the Good News of God's reconciliation of the world to Himself in Jesus Christ.

Five Gold Rings

The first Five Books of the Old Testament, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch: 1) Genesis, 2) Exodus, 3) Leviticus, 4) Numbers, and 5) Deuteronomy, which gives the history of humanity's sinful failure and God's response of grace in the creation of a people to be a light to the world.

Six Geese A-laying

The six days of creation that confesses God as Creator and Sustainer of the world (*Genesis 1*).

Seven Swans A-swimming

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: 1) prophecy, 2) ministry, 3) teaching, 4) exhortation, 5) giving, 6) leading, and 7) compassion

(Romans 12:6-8; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

Eight Maids A-milking

The eight Beatitudes: 1) Blessed are the poor in spirit, 2) those who mourn, 3) the meek, 4) those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, 5) the merciful, 6) the pure in heart, 7) the peacemakers, 8) those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. (*Matthew 5:3-10*)

Nine Ladies Dancing

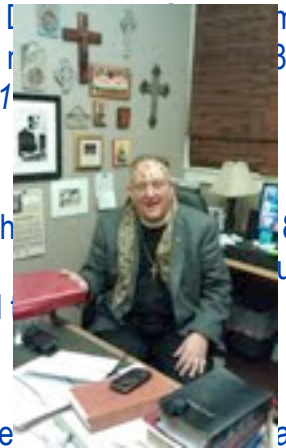
The nine Fruit of the Holy Spirit: 1) love, 2) joy, 3) peace, 4) patience, 5) kindness, 6) generosity, 7) faithfulness, 8) gentleness, and 9) self-control. (*Galatians 5:22-23*)

Ten Lords A-leaping

The ten commandments: 1) You shall have no other gods before me; 2) Do not make an idol; 3) Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; 4) Remember the Sabbath Day; 5) Honor your father and mother; 6) Do not murder; 7) Do not commit adultery; 8) Do not steal; 9) Do not bear false witness; 10) Do not covet. (*Exodus 20:1-17*)

Eleven Pipers Piping

The eleven Faithful Apostles: 1) Simon Peter, 2) Andrew, 3) James, 4) John, 5) Philip, 6) Bartholomew, 7) Thomas, 8) James bar Alphaeus, 9) Simon the Zealot, 10) Judas bar James. (*Luke 6:14-16*). The twelfth disciple, Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus to the religious leaders and the Romans.



Twelve Drummers Drumming

The twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed: 1) I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. 2) I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. 3) He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. 4) He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell [the grave]. 5) On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. 6) He will come again to judge the living and the dead. 7) I believe in the Holy Spirit, 8) the holy catholic Church, 9) the communion of saints, 10) the forgiveness of sins, 11) the resurrection of the body, 12) and life everlasting.

Mary's Thoughts.....

Believe it or not, I like to mull over ideas. I just want to share some Advent/Christmas/Epiphany thoughts that have come to me (and which you already know, I'm sure).

We have heard how Jesus was born in an "ordinary" setting to "normal" parents in a "backwater" town - and how he grew up to do "extraordinary things". Well, on Christmas day Jesus was born again - in "ordinary" ME (and you - and the HEB bagger...)! We are the "normals" that He has chosen to inhabit (or bless with His presence). Christ's light is in our hearts, minds, and actions. If that is the case, then each of us has the potential of also doing "extraordinary things" - and the duty to shine Christ's light in the world around us. The question (to me) then becomes, "What extraordinary thing am I going to do to show Christ's light to the world? How can I be a star of Bethlehem? Are my actions and words reflecting Christ's light - or casting a shadow?"

Senior Warden's Report



Dear Fellow Parishioners –

I am simply awed by your abilities to financial support our church renovations and the campaign fund to replace the monies we have expended. It is truly inspiring. As you can see, the church is

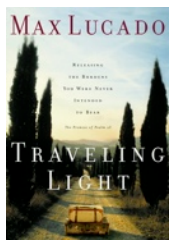
still standing and the cracks and foundation are fixed. It has been a long ordeal and many hard hours committed to its completion. I wish to personally thank Robert Oliver, as Junior Warden, for overseeing the project and Tulisha Carson for working the details of the Campaign Fund project. With Libby Bluntzer's mentorship, we also completed the columbarium. We also completed the installation of the glass planes in the Parish Hall as well.

I am further amazed by your generosity towards our outreach programs such as His Kids and the five families we adopted for Christmas. It truly has made a difference in our community. I'd ask you to look at other opportunities where we can spread the Lord's work in the upcoming year. I believe our work here has also encouraged a few more members to join our parish; however, this is a definite area we can all help in improving this

upcoming year. Please invite someone to church to experience St. Mary's in all its glory. We have adopted a deficit budget again this year of (\$20,700) in expenses over anticipated revenue. Last year's deficit was budgeted at (\$37,375). We began the year with \$8,675.20 in the operating account and ended the year with \$10,878.74, which includes \$10,000 out of our cash reserves that the vestry approved transferring during the year to defray the operating deficit. Based upon year end close-up we will not be able to re-coup the commitment of these added funds without depleting the operating account so we have really finished the year at a deficit. I anticipate that we will be close again in 2012 but we do not anticipate adding funds from our cash reserves. Your efforts through tithing and contributions to the campaign fund, memorials, and flower fund go a long way in helping us achieve a zero based budget. Finally I appreciate your confidence in me as Senior Warden; however, it cannot be done without all of our support and the Lord's blessings. Feel to contact either me or any of the Vestry members if you have a question or advice. It truly makes a difference.

Your Brother in Christ,

Bill Adams



MUST READ!

A friend gave me this book for Christmas, and I LOVE-LOVE-LOVE it! The writer takes Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want") apart and applies it to the guilt, resentments we carry with us. I have to admit when I first got it I thought, "Yuck..." - and started reading it just to be polite. Boy was I wrong! Here is a taste:

Releasing the Burdens We Were Never Intended to Bear: The Promise of Psalm 23

The suitcase of guilt. A sack of discontent. You drape a duffel bag of weariness on one shoulder and a hanging bag of grief on the other. Add on a backpack of doubt, an overnight bag of loneliness, and a trunk of fear. Pretty soon you're pulling more stuff than a skycap. No wonder you're so tired at the end of the day....

CAMP ALLEN

2012 EVENTS

ABUNDANT LIVING

Explore aging as a spiritual journey-grow mentally, socially and creatively.

February 27-29

FISHERS OF MEN

Overnight retreat full of fly fishing workshops and pastoral fellowship for men.

September 14-15

BIRDS & BLOOMS

Attend presentations led by experts and enjoy nature first-hand through hikes.

March 24-25

GRAMPS CAMP

Explore the camp's many activities through your grandchild's eyes.

September 21-22

STARRY NIGHTS AUSTIN

Kick up your heels hill country style as we raise funds for Camp Allen youth programs.

May 10

STARRY NIGHTS HOUSTON

A boot-scootin' fundraiser at the Junior League benefiting Camp Allen.

October 11

BISHOP'S FAMILY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Enjoy music performances and a variety of outdoor activities for the whole family.

May 18-20

C.S. LEWIS RETREAT

Study the works of C.S. Lewis while sharpening your writing skills at the joint Writer's Workshop.

November 8-11

SUMMER CAMP FOR MOMS

A weekend of renewal, adventure, and relaxation for moms of all ages.

July 20-22

HOLIDAY IN THE PINES

An activity filled retreat to help families reflect on the reason for the season.

December 7-9

LABOR DAY FAMILY CAMP

An adventure and entertainment packed weekend for the whole family.

August 31-September 2

To learn more, call: **866-334-CAMP**
or visit us at: **CAMPALLEN.ORG**

ABUNDANT LIVING

9TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 27-29, 2012

2012

This conference is for Seniors, their family members, health care providers, residential care providers, social workers, and leaders of all faith communities. Take the opportunity to gain fresh insights into the spiritual aspects of aging. This three day, two night seminar is programmed by the University of Texas Medical Branch, Sealy Center on Aging. Conference pricing including meals, lodging, socials, and speakers.



RATES

\$200 - Double Occupancy

Early Bird Rate: \$185 (valid thru 2/13/12)

\$245 - Single Occupancy

Early Bird Rate: \$225 (valid thru 2/13/12)

CAMP ALLEN

CONFERENCE AND RETREAT CENTER

18800 FM 362, NAVASOTA, TX 77868

TEL: 936.825.7175

FAX: 936.825.8495

CAMPALLEN.ORG



WORSHIP OPPORTUNITY

With the New Year sometimes come new things. I am in the process of planning a rather eclectic worship experience for Sunday evenings. We are the inheritors of a rich and varied liturgical tradition. It is one that allows us to worship God in many forms and with different types of music. There are also times in our lives when we are unable to get to church in the morning. So, soon, we will be having Sunday evening services at St. Mary's that will take advantage of the breadth of our, and other, liturgical heritages.

While we are still in the planning stage we are looking at Evening Prayer, Taizé Services, Eucharist, and Contemplative Eucharist, just to name a few. Included with some of these services will be music that will be a cappella and some that will be accompanied by guitar. So, as you might anticipate,

we will have a varied and deepened worship experience.



In order to reach new people and those who are not so new we need to engage in new and different things. This will be an opportunity to experience worship in a new and fresh way and an opportunity to invite someone to come and experience the Episcopal Church and our rich liturgical tradition.

Stay tuned. Keep your eyes and ears open for this new and exciting worship experience. Please pray for our planning and for God to prepare your heart to

“come and see”.

Peace,

Fr. Reid

TAKE THE BIBLE CHALLENGE! Tools to Help you Read the Entire Book in 2012

Scott Gunn has started a new project: **The Bible Challenge**. It's a way to get people to read the whole Bible in a year. Already seven dioceses in the Episcopal Church in the US have signed on, along with many parishes and people in England, Tanzania, Pakistan, and other places. This isn't the first effort to encourage people to read through the whole Bible, but this one is getting quite a bit of traction among Episcopalians. That's new.

The program “kicked off” on January 1. If you sign on, you'll read three chapters of the Old Testament, a bit of the psalter, and one chapter of the New Testament each day. Every day (except Sundays) there will be a blog entry to support people who decide to read the Bible in 2012. Scott Gunn has written the first three days' entries, but look forward to other entries by a very impressive lineup of authors and scholars like Walter Brueggemann.

There are iPhone tools on the way, and eventually there will be web tools for those who choose to read at a different date. *Forward Movement* will be publish a book of daily meditations (drawn largely from the Bible Challenge blog entries). Anyone can read the Bible. This project seeks to build community among those who take the challenge.

Go explore the Bible Challenge's website at <http://thecenterforbiblicalstudies.org/>. You'll see that lots of folks are excited about this and have signed on to take part in various ways.

Mostly, I encourage you to join the Bible Challenge. Read the whole Bible this year. It will change your life.

- The Rev. Scott Gunn, Executive Director, Forward Movement.

The LAST Page....

You know you are a Episcopalian when:

- It's 100 degrees, with 90% humidity, and you still have coffee after the service.
- YOU HEAR SOMETHING REALLY FUNNY DURING THE SERMON AND SMILE AS LOUDLY AS YOU CAN.
- Donuts are a line item in the church budget, just like coffee.
- When you watch a Star Wars movie and they say, "May the Force be with you," and you respond, "And also with you."
- It takes ten minutes to say good-bye.

A Few Famous Episcopalians:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Buzz Aldrin | George Washington |
| Gerald Ford | John Steinbeck |
| Fred Astaire | Franklin Delano Roosevelt |
| Humphrey Bogart | Norman Rockwell |
| Bono | Sidney Poitier |
| Margaret Wise Brown | Thomas Jefferson |
| George H. Bush (41) | Cary Grant |
| Charlie Chaplin | Judy Garland |
| Charles Darwin | Ben Franklin |
| Bette Davis | Colin Powell |

Words To Live By

"The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbour; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.

C.S. Lewis—Mere Christianity

Sharing Faith Dinners Coming to St. Mary's in April!

[The Sharing Faith Dinners](http://www.epicenter.org/sharingfaith/) is a project that will feature simple meals in parishioners' homes followed by moderator-led discussions. The event is scheduled for Thursday, April 26. Janna Hammett is our "Dinner Coordinator". She will pass along communications and help host this event. Two families will host dinner for about 15 people. We'll have topics to discuss and share - centering on how our faith has impacted our lives. It sounds really cool! If you want to learn more, then use this link: <http://www.epicenter.org/sharingfaith/>

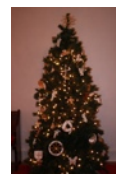
EASY DESSERT TRUFFLES

Ingredients

- 1 package Oreos
- 1 8-oz package cream cheese
- 2 packages of Baker's chocolate

Directions:

1. crush oreos in food processor
2. mix in cream cheese
3. roll into balls
4. Refrigerate for 1+ hour
5. melt Baker's chocolate
6. dunk balls into Baker's chocolate
7. Cool chocolate icing
8. Enjoy!



It's true - that's Will Mezger and family! God truly lavishes miracles on our parish family!

