

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Faith, Community and Hope ~ 50 Years and Growing

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2015

from the Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*Lead me from untruth to truth, from darkness to light
and from death to immortality. I pray for eternal peace.*

A prayer from the Upanishads, One of the Sacred Texts of Hindus

Just a few weeks ago, Hindus around the world were celebrating Diwali. Diwali is also called the festival of lights. It marks the end of one year, and the start to a new one. Diwali falls on the darkest day in the month of Kartika in the Lunar Hindu calendar. On that day, Hindus set out little clay oil lamps called diyas on window sills and patios, and lanterns hang in public areas, and string lights, like Christmas lights, encircle large commercial buildings. Even the air is alive with light with the sights and sounds of fire crackers

The purpose of all these lights is, first of all, to let the Gods in heaven know that all is well on earth. But the other purpose of the lights is to welcome the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of spiritual and material wealth, into the home. To prepare for the arrival of Lakshmi, families thoroughly clean and decorate their homes, and even leave sweet treats on the home altar just in case Lakshmi is hungry. That is the outward work of Diwali, but there is also the inward work. Along with cleaning one's home, Hindus are also invited to clean their hearts. They search their hearts to see what needs to be cleansed and decluttered asking themselves "what do I need to let go of to make room for the light?" Hindus embrace the belief that the true light removes the darkness of ignorance – the ignorance that comes from bigotry, intolerance, selfishness, greed and fear, to name but a few.

This Advent, as we await the coming of the Light of Christ, we too are invited to prepare our hearts. We are invited as we approach the New Year to think about what could we have done without this past year that annoyingly took up needless space in our hearts and our minds. Worry? Fear? Being judgmental? Anger? Over the weeks that lead up to Christmas Day, as you prepare your home for the Holidays, it is a perfect time to think about preparing your heart by pausing each day to consider what else you need to get rid of and what you need to tidy.

(cont'd on next page)

Sunday, December 6

Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM
Special Coffee Hour to
Celebrate St. Nick at 11:15 AM

Sunday, December 13

Eucharist at 8 AM
Lessons & Carols at 10 AM

Wednesday, December 16

Blue Christmas at 7 PM

Sunday, December 20

Eucharist at 8
Advent Pageant at 10

Christmas Eve, December 24

5 PM Festival Eucharist with Blessing
of the Crèche and children's story
10 PM Festival Eucharist with
special music

Sunday, December 27

Eucharist and Hymn Sing at 10
(no Eucharist at 8)

Sunday January 3

Eucharist at 8
All Ages Eucharist at 10
Children's offering of
Heifer boxes at 10

Sunday, January 10

Eucharist at 8 & 10

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FROM THE RECTOR (CONT'D FROM COVER PAGE)

One of the prayer exercises that I try to use at the end of each day is called the Examen which is based in Ignatian spirituality. It is a way to pause and to invite the light of Christ into your life. The Basic format it to:

- Ask God for light – to ask to see your life as God sees it.
- Give thanks – to realize each day is a gift of God and to be thankful.
- Review the day – to look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit to see it for what it was.
- Face your shortcomings – to see where you went wrong and to learn from it.
- Look toward the day to come – and to ask God for guidance in the day to come.

I wish you a very Holy and Fulfilling Advent and for the gift of the Light of Christ on Christmas Day.

Yours in Christ,

Sarah Robbins-Cole

CELEBRATE ST. NICK AT COFFEE HOUR DECEMBER 6

On December 6 we will be having a special coffee hour in honor of St. Nicholas! You are invited to join the holiday cheer by bringing in a plate of food that is special to you and your family during the holiday season to share. There will be a story, music, and cheer. Remember your smartphones or cameras if you would like to have a photograph with dear old St. Nick!

ALTAR GUILD MEETING DECEMBER 13

There will be an Altar Guild Meeting on Sunday, December 13 at 11:15 AM in the Meeting Room. If you are interested in joining this integral part of our parish life, please join us, or contact Camilla King (508-429-0784 or camillaking@verizon.net).

**GREENING OF THE CHURCH**

During Advent, members of the Altar Guild are busy decorating St. Michael's for Christmas. On Sunday, December 20, they welcome any parishioners who would like to help after the 10 AM service. Please contact Camilla King (508-429-0784 or camillaking@verizon.net) with any questions.

NEW ACOLYTES

We are so excited to welcome new acolytes Mollaigh and Ailin Flannery. They are already on the schedule and will be teaming up with Trevor PinterParsons on Sundays. Trevor expertly trained both Mollaigh and Ailin in their duties of "plates&gates" as well as bells and candles.



Just to tell you a little about our newest recruits in the sanctuary, Mollaigh is seven. She loves art in school, and loves playing piano and music when she is home. Ailin is just a few weeks shy of 9. He loves math and social studies in school, and loves football and doing projects with his dad when home.

Welcome!

**STOCKINGS OF HOPE – DEADLINE SUNDAY DECEMBER 20**

This year St. Michael's will again be filling Christmas stockings for 60 women who reside in Serenity House. Please adopt a stocking in the narthex, buy one of each listed items and return your unwrapped stocking stuffers to St. Michael's or Soul Spirit Studio, 76 Railroad Street by Sunday December 20. If you prefer to make a cash donations those are happily accepted. Please make sure Stockings of Hope is in the memo section. For more information please Pamela PinterParsons at newpamela@comcast.net. Thank you for making the Holidays special for so many!

CHRISTMAS CAROLING

On Sunday December 20, at 5 PM YAC, Confirmation class, and Rite 13 will carol our community. Please join us and send your youth appropriately dressed in warm, festive apparel. We will meet in the church parking lot at 4 PM. Do you have jingle bells or hand shakers and sticks? Please bring them along to make our singing even more festive! All parishioners are welcome to join us!

WISHING YOU A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR.

The Rector, The Wardens and Vestry of St. Michael's



Christmas at St. Michael's Church

Third Sunday of Advent, December 13

8 AM Eucharist

10 AM Candlelight Lessons and Carols

Wednesday, December 16

7 PM Blue Christmas Service

A special service for those experiencing loss
or sadness in this season of Christmas

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 20

8 AM Eucharist

10 AM Christmas Pageant with Eucharist

Christmas Eve, December 24

5 PM Festival Christmas Eucharist

with Blessing of the Crèche and children's story

10 PM Festival Christmas Eucharist with choir

The First Sunday after Christmas, December 27

10 AM Eucharist and Hymn Sing (one service only)

The Epiphany, January 3

8 AM Eucharist

10 AM All Ages Eucharist

Children's offering of Heifer blessing bags

CHURCH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

On Sunday December 20, all children are invited to take part in the annual Advent Pageant. There will be no atrium lessons on that day, nor on Sunday, December 27, when children are invited to sit with their families in church. Church School atrium lessons will resume on Sunday, January 3.

NURSERY SCHEDULE

The nursery will be staffed on Sunday, December 20 but will not be staffed on Christmas Eve, December 24 because past experience has shown that there is no demand for nursery care on those days.



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND MUSIC DONATIONS

If you would like to make a contribution towards the cost of Christmas poinsettias or special music, please fill out the form on the back page and mail it to the church or place it with your donation in the offering plate on Sunday. Poinsettias may be collected after the Ten O'Clock Service on Sunday December 27.

TWO CHRISTMAS COFFEE HOURS

Providing treats for Coffee Hour for December 20 and 27 in a sort of "pot luck" sharing makes sense for all of us during this busy time. As you are baking and buying, think of providing one treat for one of the coffee hours. For more information, please contact Nan Malone at 508-429-2135.



HYMN SING DECEMBER 27 AT 10 AM – ONE SERVICE ONLY

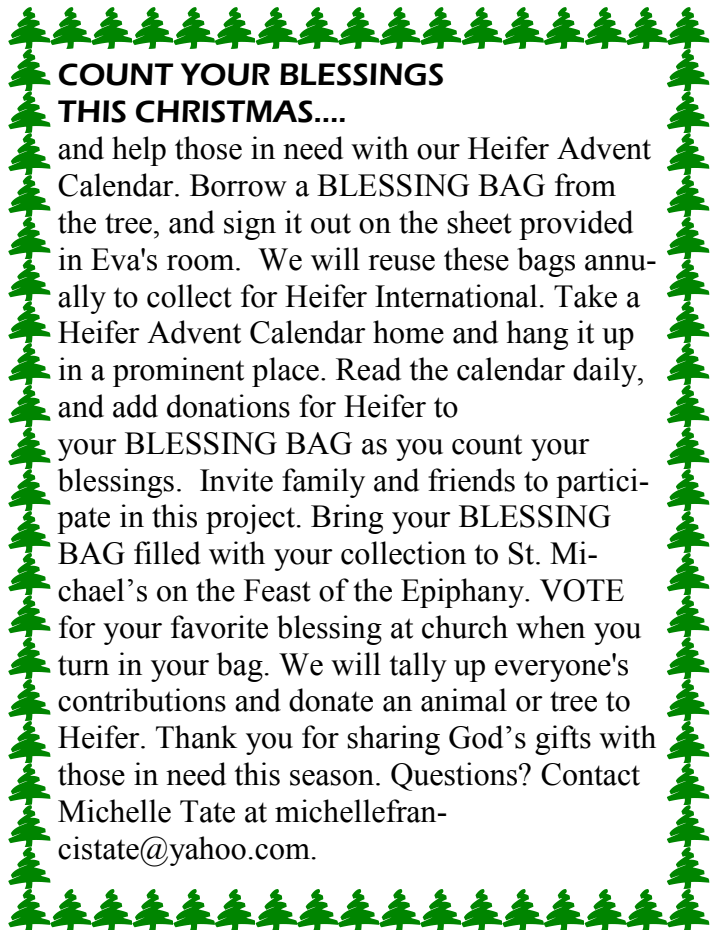
Do you have a favorite hymn that is seldom sung at St. Michael's? Or is there a hymn with special meaning for you that you'd like to tell us about? On Sunday, December 27, at our *one service only* at 10 AM that morning, we will have a hymn sing in place of the sermon. Everyone is invited to come and say a word or two about a favorite hymn – we'll sing a verse or two of each hymn.

BOOK CLUB'S NEXT SELECTION

Our November meeting of the Book Club was a smash hit and a new selection has already been chosen. Our next meeting will be Sunday, January 10 from 4 to 6 PM in the Meeting Room, where we will discuss *Caleb's Crossing* by Geraldine Brooks. Please come join our enthusiasm for reading and literary discussion. And feel free to invite a friend! Everyone ages 18 and up is welcome. Light refreshments will be served. For more information please contact Amy Plante at 508-429-4248 or stmich-holl@aol.com.

WOMEN'S GROUP

A meeting to kickstart a St. Michael's Women's Group will be held on Sunday, January 31 at 11:15 AM in the Meeting Room. Let's come together in the spirit of sisterhood for some fellowship and fun. Bring your ideas and enthusiasm with you! For more information, please contact Cathy Harper at cathy@hahpah.com or 508-429-7504.



COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS THIS CHRISTMAS....

and help those in need with our Heifer Advent Calendar. Borrow a BLESSING BAG from the tree, and sign it out on the sheet provided in Eva's room. We will reuse these bags annually to collect for Heifer International. Take a Heifer Advent Calendar home and hang it up in a prominent place. Read the calendar daily, and add donations for Heifer to your BLESSING BAG as you count your blessings. Invite family and friends to participate in this project. Bring your BLESSING BAG filled with your collection to St. Michael's on the Feast of the Epiphany. VOTE for your favorite blessing at church when you turn in your bag. We will tally up everyone's contributions and donate an animal or tree to Heifer. Thank you for sharing God's gifts with those in need this season. Questions? Contact Michelle Tate at michellefrancistate@yahoo.com.

Thoughts While Hiking in North Carolina

Nan Malone

Bob and I traveled to beautiful North Carolina in September so that I could hike a few miles on the Appalachian Trail. I knew that he would love Hot Springs, NC. It's a trail town which means the trail goes right through the downtown. There are AT symbols in the cement sidewalks to guide hikers through the town and, hopefully, into the shops and restaurants. Bob was a frequent visitor to the Smokey Mountain Diner while I was on the trail. There are actual hot springs close to the town center, and trains run through 3 or 4 times each day. He was a happy trail chauffeur.

Many of the mountains in the south are what are called balds. Because of the more southerly latitudes and the fact that the glacier did not get that far south and scrape away soil, all the mountains would be wooded. Native Americans kept some open by fire to enhance small game hunting. Settlers kept them open by fire, grazing and cutting. Although "bald" mountains are as high or higher than the Whites, they are gently rounded, covered with wildflowers, fruit trees, and lovely masses of rhododendron and azalea. In the spring hikers go through tunnels of rhododendrons in bloom. One especially lovely bald is Max Patch, which is kept open because of haying; and at 4629 feet, offers spectacular vistas in all directions.

Bears? Plenty of black bears in the area. We saw a very large and handsome bear crossing the street in a neighborhood as we were heading up the access road to Max Patch, but I did not see any on the trail (phew!). I do carry bear spray when I am hiking solo, but try to head off any sightings by frequently clacking my hiking sticks together and shouting, "Hey, Bear!" As September is not prime time for AT hikers in the South, I was worried as I headed into the foggy, mysterious woods alone, that I would also be spending the night alone. I can testify that alone in the woods at night is VERY alone. I got to the shelter area midafternoon and, as it was in a small valley called Deep Gap, the light was already dim. The dark, dank stone shelter was quite old probably made by the CCC. (Civilian Conservation Corps. In the 30's, the CCC built many projects including gorgeous stone arched bridges in Smoky Mountain National Park.) I opted for my tiny, cozy REI tent. The sun began to lower and the light got dimmer and the woods got noisier with scurrings and chattering. I knew at any minute, "the very large and handsome bear" would be along. I know that God does not necessarily respond to such prayers that we oft times send aloft such as for parking spaces, but I did pray for a hiker to come along. Just before quite dark, I heard the welcome noises of a hiker getting water and cooking his supper. Hallelujah! Sometimes in the south, there are metal wires strung about 15-20 feet up between two trees with wire and pulleys to attach food bags and haul them up at night. This discourages bears but, sadly, I found out, not mice. An enterprising rodent got into my food bag and ate all my M&M peanuts - a very discerning rodent. I was grateful it was not interested in my breakfast oat square or sandwich.

At times the trail can be lonely, but with all the saints that I call upon for energy, courage, and company, I am never really alone! Also, I am confident that Bob will be waiting at the next road crossing; and while cell coverage is spotty in them thar hills, eventually I could get help if needed.



**Important
DATE!**

ANNUAL MEETING— ONE SERVICE ONLY AT 10 AM

Save the date for Sunday, January 24, when the Annual Meeting offers a chance for the entire parish to get together. We will hold the majority of the meeting during the 10 AM service and following the Eucharist, there will be a potluck brunch. *There will be no 8 AM service that morning.* It's an informal affair and we hope that you will be there. There will be activities for children during the brunch.



APPALACHIA MISSION TRIP FUNDRAISERS

The Youth Group are going to West Virginia the last week in July, 2016. Below are two fundraisers that they are doing in December to raise money for the trip.

Christmas Cookies! We will take orders for our variety of Christmas Cookies, \$10 per dozen that will be wrapped and ready for you to pick up on Sunday, December 20, just in time for Christmas! Please fill out your order form and place in our Christmas Cookie Box in the Narthex. All orders must be received by December 14.

We are also taking orders for flamingo flockings. For a donation of \$25 you can send a flock of 10 flamingos to a friend. You choose the date and time and let us know the address and occasion, if any, and we will have the flamingos mysteriously migrate to their front lawn and then magically disappear within 24 hours. Our pink flamingos will bring a smile to your friends or relatives face!

Order forms for each of these will be in the Narthex or contact Cathy Harper cathy@hahpah.com for more details or to place an order.

YOUTH GROUP MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT

Jarvis Wyche

This past weekend I had the pleasure to accompany three St. Michael's middle school aged youth to the Diocese of Massachusetts Middle School Retreat held at the Barbara C. Harris Camp and Convention Center. The weekend included a mix of fun, fellowship, camp exploration, relaxation and worship. The theme chosen for this weekend "Quest!" was an opportunity for the youth to explore their journey of life and faith. For each worship opportunity, youth were able to explore a particular aspect of what type of Quest they were journeying as well as moments in which God has been present in their journeying. Along with this exploring their "Quest!" youth were able to participate in different prayer practices as well as establish new relationships with other youth of our Diocese. Organized by the Diocesan Youth Council (of which Tess May of St. Michael's is a member) the weekend was heightened by the live band "Fever Fever" for all worship services and Concert. I am elated by both the willingness of St. Michael's youth to take this journey and hope more of the youth or our Parish take advantage of exploring faith through offerings of our Diocese.

MUTUAL MINISTRY REVIEW

Dana Frye, Senior Warden



Greetings all! You may recall the Wardens briefly discussing Mutual Ministry Review in September when we held an all-parish town hall meeting. I'd like to take the time to provide some more information regarding what a Mutual Ministry Review is, and what it isn't, as the Vestry will set aside time during the annual meeting for discussion and feedback. Other opportunities for participation will be made available as I recognize that not all can attend the annual meeting.

Mutual Ministry Review is an opportunity for us to look at our achievements and challenges and to set and agree upon joint goals for ministry. We can use the work of the Search Committee as a starting point, as the Parish Profile put together by this committee (the Parish Profile is accessible from St. Michael's website) talks about who we are, talks about our ministries, and identifies challenges we expect to face. Mutual Ministry Review can also be a time to look at new ideas for ministry. It is a time to ask:

"What is working well and what needs our attention?"

"Do we need to make changes in our stated goals?"

"Are our goals relevant to where we find ourselves today?"

"Are our expectations fair, realistic, a stretch--but not impossible?"

Mutual Ministry Review is not a performance evaluation of the Rector. The Vestry and the Diocese take on this responsibility. Mutual Ministry Review is a time for both parish and priest to reflect upon how the church, in its broadest sense, has accomplished its goals in a formal review process. It is a way to ask questions about what God is calling the church to do at a particular time. In addition, it is a way to determine jointly the needs of the congregation and community and the gifts of the "ministers"--lay and ordained--of the congregation in meeting those needs. Although this review occurs on an informal basis all the time, a formal review is a process for stimulating open discussion so that appropriate change can be planned, instead of happening casually in the parking lot after church, on the phone, or during coffee hour.

The Vestry and I look forward to your thoughts and comments, as we will use this material in planning our work for the upcoming year. St. Michael's is blessed to have vibrant and far-reaching ministries. The Mutual Ministry Review will aid us in staying true to our ministry callings.



THE MILLERS—WITH ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM TO SPARE

Barbara Gardner

Would anyone in our parish be surprised to learn that Debi Miller was once a cheerleader? This energetic young mom of two who seems to take on daunting volunteer tasks in our church effortlessly must have been hard to keep up with back in High School too. She has co-chaired our annual auction for two years, the auction raffle for three years and this year the raffle for Applefest. She will also be a new reader this year and has taught Level 1 church school. She is proud that she was confirmed by Bishop Barbara Harris. Husband Craig is no slouch either – he is finishing up his fourth year of a three + one year term on the Vestry, helps with coffee hour, children's ministries, and Buildings and Grounds, organizing our fantastic fall clean up in October. He's also planned fellowship events (such as the annual parish dinner) and served on the Search Committee. Wow – they are a dynamic duo.

Massachusetts natives both, Debi grew up in Webster and Craig in Westwood. Their parents still live in those communities. Debi graduated from High School in 1986 and went to Mt. Ida, majoring in Retail Management. She worked at Filene's and eventually Ralph Lauren where she met Craig. Craig went to Pomfret, a prep school in Connecticut and graduated from the Univ. of Vermont with an Engineering degree and worked part time at Ralph Lauren where their romance began. Debi recalls their first date was dancing at the Roxy in Boston in December of 1991. They were engaged in 94 and married in 96.

Debi's heritage is from French, Polish and Irish stock. She grew up "Catholic Light" and went to Catholic schools until the 8th Grade. She has one brother. Craig's family is larger (4 siblings with a set of twins in the mix) and are extremely close. His mom has been involved in the Episcopal Church for as long as he can remember and called Bishop Shaw by his first name. She sat on various ecumenical boards and served as a deacon. She has many causes she cares about, including Alzheimers, Rosie's Place, runaway teens, and a homeless shelter in Providence. His Dad was a Warden and taught Sunday school too. Debi spoke very highly of her in-laws, explaining they made her feel at ease by putting her right to work and treating her as one of their own. Their home parish was Trinity Church in Newton.

Debi's career path was fairly predictable. She was a regional coordinator for Liz Claiborne for 8 years which meant some traveling and also worked for Ralph Lauren. When Mackenzie arrived on the scene, she decided to stay home but recently has begun working part time as a Geriatric Care Manager for a private home care agency. Craig had a wonderful physician family friend who got him his first job, telling him "you're starting Monday". Unpredictably for an engineering major, his path has been in the health services industry. That first job catapulted him into becoming a hospital jack of all trades (scrubbing in the OR, computer networking, doing research, etc.). In 9 years he went from local, to regional, and then to national level, working for the Dept. of Veterans Administration on addressing both clinical and financial issues. After he created his own start up, working on reducing complications and mortality through the development of a risk adjustment system for surgery. He is currently a data manager at the American College of Surgeons in Chicago.

They are the proud parents of daughter, Mackenzie, age 10 and son, Logan, 6 years old. They live in a cozy wooded setting on South Street with a great pond view off their rear deck. Some of their favorite things are Cape Cod, sports, taking their dog Piper for walks in the woods and playing family games. Both kids are enrolled in Holliston's famous French Immersion Program. They moved here in 2002 because it was close to Interstate 495. They had previously rented a carriage house in Dover that had squash courts and Debi learned to play the game there.

When asked about something that might surprise us, Debi shared that she mostly ran and walked the rest of the way to finish the Boston Marathon for the Jimmy Fund in 6 hours' time. Craig was the captain of the Crew team at Pomfret. They describe our St. Michael's parish as a "family community – one that is supportive and caring as a whole". Having grown up in very large churches, Debi especially enjoys the size of St. Michael's – small, where everyone knows your name. We feel fortunate indeed to so often be the beneficiaries of their charming, youthful, consistent and, hopefully, infectious energy and enthusiasm and we thank them for sharing it with us with such friendliness and good humor.

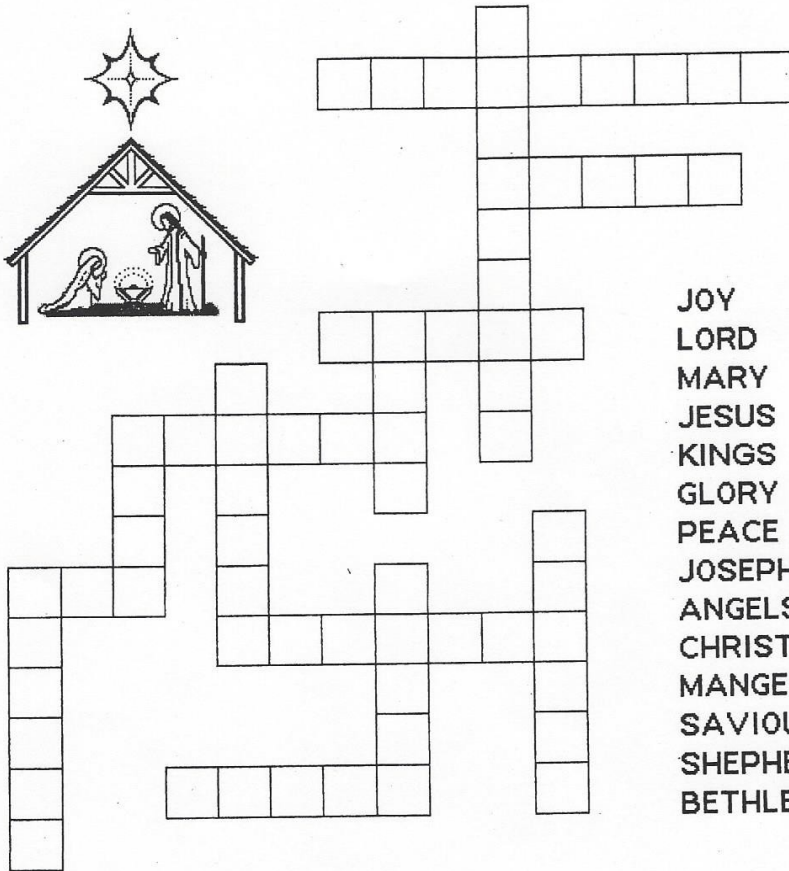
DECEMBER AT ST. MICHAEL'S

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 Choir Rehearsal at 7 PM	4	5
6 Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM Coffee Hour with St. Nick at 11:15 AM Sunday Forum at 9 AM Church School at 9:45 AM YAC at 11:15 AM	7 Companions 7:30 to 9 PM	8 Vestry at 7 PM	9 Girl Scouts 6 to 7 PM	10 Choir Rehearsal at 7 PM	11	12
13 Eucharist at 8 AM Lessons & Carols at 10 AM Sunday Forum at 9 AM Church School at 9:45 AM Rite 13 at 10 AM Altar Guild Meeting at 11:15 AM Pageant Rehearsal at 11:15 AM Confirmation Class at 11:30 AM Quilters at 5 PM	14 Girl Scouts 4 to 6 PM Companions 7:30 to 9 PM Rite 13 Outreach Project	15	16 Blue Christmas Service at 7 PM	17 Choir Rehearsal at 7 PM	18	19
20 Eucharist at 8 AM Church School Pageant at 10 AM Christmas Caroling in Evening at 4 PM	21 Brownies 4:30 to 6 PM Companions 7:30 to 9 PM	22	23	24 Christmas Eve 5 PM Blessing of Creche & children's story 10 PM Eucharist with choir	25 Christmas Day	26
27 Eucharist and Hymn Sing at 10 AM ONLY No Church School Classes No Youth Group Classes	28	29	30	31		

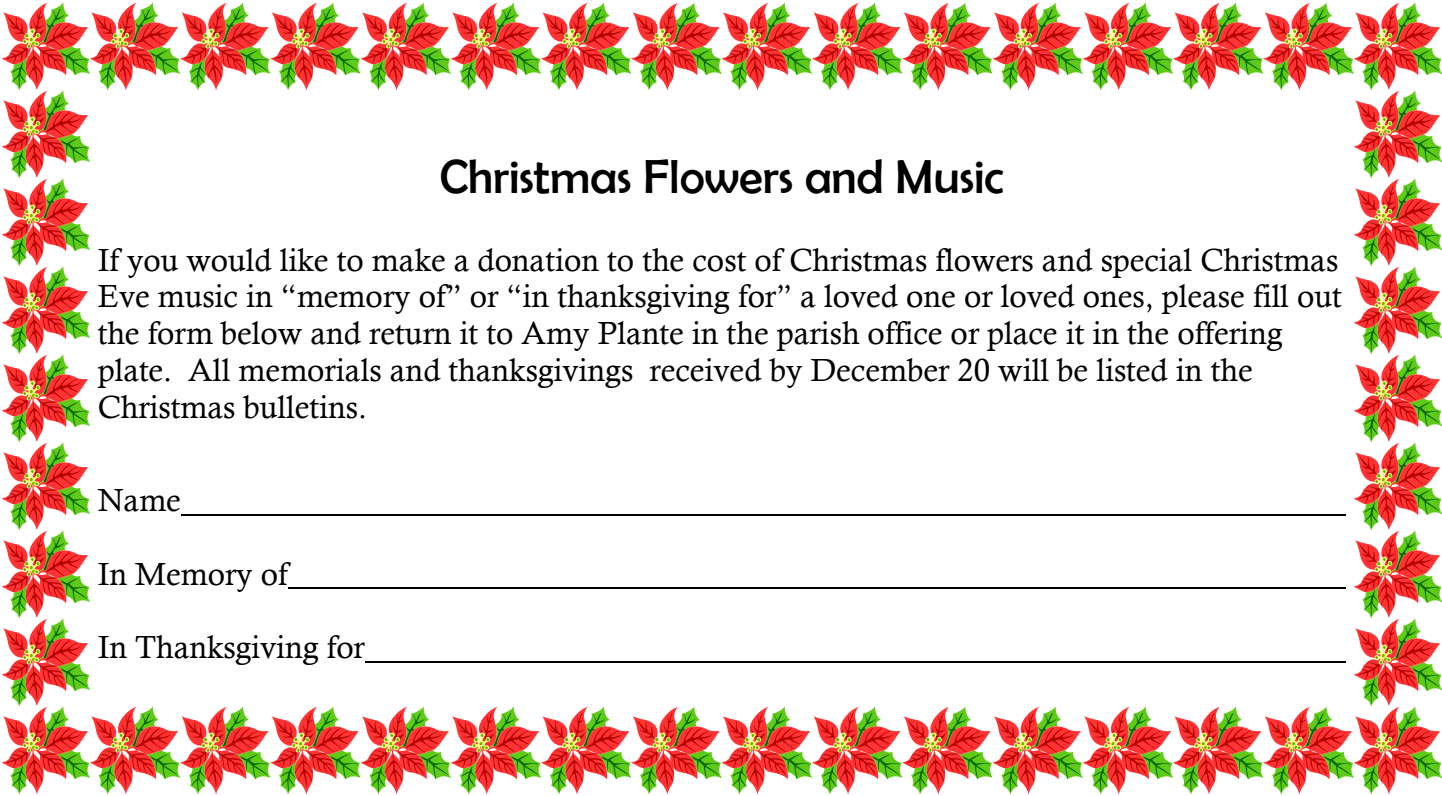
St. Michael's Kids Page

Christmas Crossword

Make all the words fit into this crossword.
Each word is only used once.



- JOY
- LORD
- MARY
- JESUS
- KINGS
- GLORY
- PEACE
- JOSEPH
- ANGELS
- CHRIST
- MANGER
- SAVIOUR
- SHEPHERDS
- BETHLEHEM



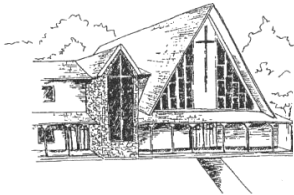
Christmas Flowers and Music

If you would like to make a donation to the cost of Christmas flowers and special Christmas Eve music in “memory of” or “in thanksgiving for” a loved one or loved ones, please fill out the form below and return it to Amy Plante in the parish office or place it in the offering plate. All memorials and thanksgivings received by December 20 will be listed in the Christmas bulletins.

Name _____

In Memory of _____

In Thanksgiving for _____



**St. Michael's Episcopal Church
1162 Highland St.
Holliston, MA 01746**