

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Faith, Community and Hope ~ 50 Years and Growing

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014

From the Rector

In my house we are Christmas Enthusiasts. Our tree goes up the weekend after Thanksgiving, we launch the holiday with watching White Christmas and listening to Christmas Carols on Black Friday.

Sometimes we are the butt of jokes among our fellow clergy who follow strict adherence to the way "things should be done" including the tree only going up on Christmas Eve (a near impossible feat in a two clergy family home), no Christmas Carols until Advent is truly over on Christmas Eve, and presents not opened until Epiphany when the church celebrates the Magi bearing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. We, in our house our Christmas celebrations start early and end late. Some may accuse us of falling into massive consumerism, yet I hold out it is about what works best for our family.

We noticed when the children were young that if we did not start early, the stress of keeping up was nearly unbearable with the frenetic church Christmas schedule, the end of term school schedule, and our at home celebrations. It became a tedious chore to get a tree the week before Christmas never mind finding time to decorate it. Also, now with my son away at school, if we waited until he got home to get a tree, we would be left with only the Charlie Brown variety from which to choose.

I feel like I do have the Bible on my side on this one – just as it says the "The Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2.27) - the same is true about what we do around our holidays. The aim should be to do whatever helps you and your family make the connection with the underlying meaning of the holiday. There is no one right way to do Christmas, or Easter, or Thanksgiving. But there is probably a wrong way and to me that occurs when we feel like we need to adhere rigorously to principles that neither suit you nor your family.

My wish for you this Thanksgiving and this Christmas is that you find ways to enjoy the festivals where you give thanks for the bounty that is ours, and the gift of the Christ Child, in ways that make you feel grateful and make you joyous and full of love. Wherever you can scale back to limit your stress - do so. The added benefit of scaling back, and perhaps even saying no to some things, and setting a time table that works for you, is that you may find room in your December for things that spiritually feed you – for example taking part in some of the offerings here at St. Michael's

helping out with Stockings of Hope for the 60 women who reside at Serenity House and Shadows,

attend Companions in Christ on Monday evenings,

attend Lessons and Carols on December 14th,

attend Blue Christmas – a service that holds a space for those who grieve during the Holidays on December 17th,

attend the Pageant on December 21st

Yours in Christ,

Sarah Robbins-Cole



Sunday, November 23

Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM

Sunday, November 30

Eucharist at 8 AM

All Ages Eucharist at 10 AM

Sunday, December 7

Eucharist at 8 & 10 AM

Special Coffee Hour to

Celebrate St. Nick

at 11:15 AM

Sunday, December 14

Eucharist & Blessing of the

Altar Guild at 8 & 10 AM

Book Sale at 9 and 11 AM

Candlelight Lessons & Carols

at 5 PM

Wednesday, December 17

Blue Christmas at 7 PM

Sunday, December 21

Eucharist at 8 AM

Eucharist & Advent

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SUNDAY MORNING OPPORTUNITIES

AN INVITATION TO NEW ACOLYTES

We invite young parishioners who would like to be part of our Sunday services to consider serving as acolytes. Children are eligible to serve as acolytes beginning in the third grade. If your child is interested, or if you would like more information, please speak to Sarah Robbins-Cole (508-429-4248 or stmichholl@aol.com).

AN USHERS INVITATION

St. Michael's is a very welcoming community and the ushers at our services have the very important task of greeting both parishioners and newcomers as they enter the church. They do their best to make everyone feel welcome, but could use more parishioners joining this vital ministry. If you would like to become an usher, please contact Sarah Robbins-Cole (stmichholl@aol.com or 508-429-4248) or Tom Koshy (tkoshy@gmail.com or 508-435-5885).

ALTAR GUILD INVITATION

The Altar Guild is an important part of parish life because the people involved handle all preparations for worship, including setting the altar before services and cleaning items afterwards. Anyone who thinks he or she is a "behind the scenes" type of person would probably enjoy being a part of the Altar Guild. If you are interested in joining this integral part of our parish life, please contact Camilla King (508-429-0784 or camillaking@verizon.net).

DO YOU LIKE TO SING?

There are openings in the St Michael's Choir and we would love to have you join us as we make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord! Currently we meet Sunday mornings at 9 AM to rehearse service music and also on Sunday after the 10 AM service to rehearse music for the future Sundays. If you are interested please contact Choir Member Helen Daly (b-hdaly@verizon.net or 508-376-8215). Advent season is fast upon us - would you like to help bring the music of the season to St Michael's?

NEWS FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Dana Frye, Stewardship Committee Chairperson
As of Sunday, November 16, we have received 47 pledges totaling \$98,050. We are well on our way towards the goal of \$135,000, but we still need your help. We ask you to please consider making a pledge of financial support for 2015 so that we can fully support the mission and ministry of St. Michael's.

FALL CLEAN-UP COMPLETE

Carl Twomey, Senior Warden
St. Michael's annual fall clean up was held on Saturday, October 18. Thanks to Bob Daly and Craig Miller for joining me! We got the gardens in the front cleaned up and made some progress in the memorial garden as well.



ADULT FORMATION

SUNDAY FORUM

Please join us Sunday mornings in the Meeting Room from 9 to 9:45 AM as we continue our study of Luke's Gospel. We will be looking at questions regarding who wrote the Gospel of Luke, what were the gospel writer's particular interests, and what are the major themes. After this we will begin to study the gospel going from chapter to chapter - starting with the Nativity according to St. Luke.

COMPANIONS IN CHRIST



Companions in Christ will meet during Advent for our spiritual and spirited evenings on Mondays, December 1, 8, 15, and 22. Gathering will time from 7:30 to 8 PM with the opening prayer at 8, finishing around 9PM. Deb Ervin and Nan Malone will

be co-leading the sessions. We will provide materials, so there is nothing to purchase and no homework. Two nights we will use the book, *Watch for the Light*, and two will be from *Advent and Christmas* by Henry Nouwen. We hope you will join us for these special times together as we study and share and pray. For more information, please contact Nan Malone (maxximilla@verizon.net) or Deb Ervin (djemac@verizon.net).

ORGANIST/CHOIR DIRECTOR SEARCH UPDATE

A search committee made up of choir members and other parishioners has been formed and the committee held their first meeting last week to identify initial screening criteria and to set up a procedure for reviewing applicants and scheduling interviews/auditions. Bill Shaw has volunteered as chair of the committee and Kathy Longee as secretary. Several applications have already been received, and the position has been listed with three websites listing opportunities for church organists and choir directors.

The Committee members are: Bill Shaw, Chair, Kathy Longee, Secretary, Helen Daly, Frankie Gartner, Rev. Sarah Robbins-Cole, Joan Clark, Phil Munroe, Anke Guertsen, and Carl Twomey.

If you have questions or input you would like to share, please feel free to contact any of the committee members. More updates will be coming soon!

THANKSGIVING DAY PRAYER

By Kris Ediger

*We take so much for granted
of life and liberty,
and think that we deserve it;
that all was done "for me."*

*Think how they must have struggled,
new pilgrims in this land.
So many died from hardships
yet still they made a stand.*

*When all the work was finished,
new crops sowed in the ground,
they gathered with their neighbors,
asked blessings all around.*

*Oh, God, help us be grateful
for gifts you've sent our way.
For these we want to thank you
on this Thanksgiving day.*



HEIFER ADVENT PROJECT BEGINS NOVEMBER 23

The Famous Heifer Advent Calendar Project is returning to St. Michael's.

Advent calendars and collection boxes will be available on Sunday November 23. We will collect money to purchase a Heifer animal or plants for someone in need. Each day of the calendar will pose a question: how many people love you? Did you go to school today? The answer can be a simple yes, or a number. You collect that number of coins or bills and put them in your special box. We will collect all the boxes on the Feast of the Epiphany, Sunday, January 4. All participants will then vote on which Heifer animal or plant we will donate. This project is a wonderful way to introduce the spirit of giving in your home. Children and adults are welcome to participate. If you have any questions, please get in touch with Michelle Tate at michellefrancistate@yahoo.com or 508-893-0945.

CELEBRATE ST. NICK AT COFFEE HOUR DECEMBER 7

On December 7 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!

GREENING OF THE CHURCH

Don't forget Advent is right around the corner. The altar guild will be looking for help with the greening of the church after the 10 AM Sunday services in December. Watch for further details. Please contact Camilla King (508-429-0784 or camillaking@verizon.net) with any questions.

CANDLELIGHT LESSONS AND CAROLS

Everyone is invited to our Candlelight Lessons and Carols service on Sunday, December 14 at 5 PM, which will feature readings and music from the Advent and Christmas seasons.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Although Christmas is a time of celebration for most of us, for some it can be a sad reminder of what has been lost -- whether it is a loved one, a job, or good health. On Wednesday, December 17, at 7 PM, St. Michael's will be hosting a Blue Christmas Service for those who may not be feeling the joy of the season. This is a special reflective opportunity to acknowledge the blue in our Christmas. It will be a service of readings, music, candle lighting, and silence.



A VISIT TO ANOTHER ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH

Barbara Gardner

In keeping with the tradition that the Malones have established when they travel to visit other Episcopal churches, I had the good fortune to vacation in northern Wales, United Kingdom in September and made a point to visit the Church of St. Michael's, Betws-y-Coed, Wales while there. Built in the 14th century and the oldest building in the town of Betws-y-Coed, it is a charming site located as it is on the banks of the River Conwy. The building itself is stone with a simple and humble feeling to it. The grounds contain marvelous old trees and cemetery markers. Their website says that students of architecture and church history learn much from the inside arrangements of the church and inside is a stone effigy of Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch, a famous Welsh hero. The town is in the middle of the Snowdonia mountain range and not far from the sea and the site attracts thousands of visitors each year.



This

was

"redundant" so, although open to the public as an historical site, it is no longer used for regular public worship except for a Holy Eucharist service for St. Michael's Day in September and an Annual Candle-Light Carol Service in late December. Please visit their website (www.stmichaelsbyc.org.uk) to view some pictures and to learn more.

Anglican
church
declared



STOCKINGS OF HOPE

This year St. Michael's will again be filling Christmas stockings for 60 women who reside at Serenity House (a substance abuse treatment center in Hopkinton) and Shadows (a women's shelter in Ashland). We are currently serving monthly meals to both programs through our LeChef program. Requested items for the stockings include:

socks, hat and scarf sets, toothbrush, lotions - 4oz size, hair brushes, nail polish, lip gloss & Lindt chocolates.

What can you do to help?

You can adopt a stocking in the narthex and buy one of each listed items and return your unwrapped stocking stuffers to St. Michael's or Soul Spirit Studio, 76 Railroad Street.

You can buy any of the above items in any quantity and again return them unwrapped to either location.

Or you can simply make a cash donation and we will be glad to shop for you and fill in whatever else is needed to complete the stockings.

We ask that all donations be dropped off by Sunday December 14 so we can assemble these Stockings of Hope.

As we prepare ourselves for this very festive time of year, let us please stop and think about how we can truly make a difference in the lives of others. A gift of Hope. A gift of Caring.

For more information please contact Paula Colburn (pcolburn1@verizon.net) or Pamela PinterParsons (newpamela@comcast.net). *Thanks to Ellen Rose and Debi Miller for stepping up!*

THANK YOU FROM PAT STELZ

I am sorry that it has taken me this long to write and say thank you for our ministry together, for the wonderful and generous send off that we shared, and for the outpouring of cards and thoughtful words when my brother died. It was such a comfort at a very difficult time. I continue to pray for you and for your mission and ministry as you walk together with The Rev. Sarah into your future with God.





OUTREACH – HOW THE APPALACHIA PROJECT CAME TO ST. MICHAEL'S

In 1956 Frits, our two little boys and I immigrated to this country. We were sponsored by St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in White Plains, NY. This is a long story condensed in two sentences, a story I could talk about for hours. To this day we are amazed and deeply grateful for the help this wonderful church gave to enable us to make this enormous step. From the moment we came out of the plane many of the parishioners were available to assist us in many ways. The committee in charge consisted of about ten people. Some of them became good friends and we stayed in touch for years even after we moved away.

When we lived in the Netherlands we attended church as well, but not on a regular basis. The building was open on Sunday mornings and then closed its doors during the following week. As far as we knew there were no activities although there must have been meetings and choir rehearsals. The parish life we experienced in this country was a wonderful and unexpected surprise and from the beginning we were especially attracted to being part of Outreach. We wanted so much to give back or pass on what others had done for us.

Many years went by and when we eventually moved to Holliston in 1967 we immediately looked for an Episcopal church and joined St. Michael's. We were welcomed warmly and felt right away attracted to becoming active in the life of the church. Active in many ways and with great satisfaction.

In 1997 we met a woman in a nearby town who collected children's books and stuffed animals and shipped them to very needy schools in South East Kentucky. After working with her for several years we took over from her and our Appalachia Project has been a very worthwhile way to reach out to very poor children in eleven schools (pre-school through 12th grade). Ever since we have been shipping three or four boxes with books on a weekly basis providing the children with material they normally would not have. We maintain good contact with many of the teachers and librarians and they have informed us that the reading level of many of the children has gone up since they now can have books of their own – until then, an unknown luxury. A couple of years ago we decided to give up sending stuffed animals since the cost of shipping became too high and books were our highest priority.

How have we been able to keep this project going? Where did we get the books and the money for our mailing from? From people like you! St. Michael's reached out in a generous way, the Lions' Club helped us and so did the Holliston Library (thank you, book angels!), quite a few individuals, who read about our Project in the newspapers, and some of our family members.

Our church has helped us for a number of years with a grant from the Outreach Fund (thanks to the Auction!). Without this support we could not have done this very important work.

Thank you all for reaching out and sharing of your bounty with those who have so little.

Frits and Anke Geurtsen
Appalachia Project



CALENDAR

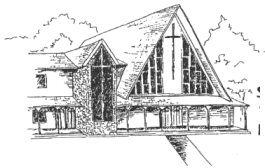
St. Michael's Kids Page

Candlelight Lessons and Carols 5 PM

Sunday, December 14

***Readings and Music
for Advent and Christmas***

Everyone is welcome!



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