



The Bells of Saint Mary

December, 2009

With My Hand on the Plow: Anticipation

"I can hardly wait!"

Do you know that phrase? Remember it from your own childhood? It conjures up images of children waiting impatiently for Christmas presents this time of year. It also can do the same for big kids like me for the same reason! But it also captures the anticipatory nature of Advent. Maybe that is why Trudy is calling the Advent offerings this year "In the eyes of those who wait". I can hardly wait.

Since long before Jesus walked on the earth, we people of God have been using that phrase. As long back as Isaiah and before we waited, in anticipation, for the arrival of the Messiah...the Anointed

One of Israel, who would be Emmanuel, God with Us, to lead us and show us the way. We have waited for the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...we have sung about it, (are you hearing the Handel's Messiah right now?) preached about it, thought about it, longed for it, and ignored it when it has been among us all this time. What this time of anticipation is all about is renewal...a "let me see it again so I can remember it" time of the year...that is what Advent is.

It is a time to focus anew on the gift that God has given us in Jesus. It is a time to remember that the birth of a peasant baby boy more than two thousand years ago still stops the world today. And ever since that birth more than two thousand years ago, the world has

never been the same, and never will be.

Isaiah 9:2-7 (From *The Message*):

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. For those who lived in a land of deep shadows—light! sunbursts of light! You repopulated the nation, you expanded its joy. Oh, they're so glad in your presence! Festival joy! The joy of a great celebration, sharing rich gifts and warm greetings. The abuse of

oppressors and cruelty of tyrants—all their whips and cudgels and curses—Is gone, done away with, a deliverance as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old victory over Midian.

The boots of all those invading troops, along with their shirts soaked with innocent blood, will be piled in a heap and burned, a fire that will burn for days!

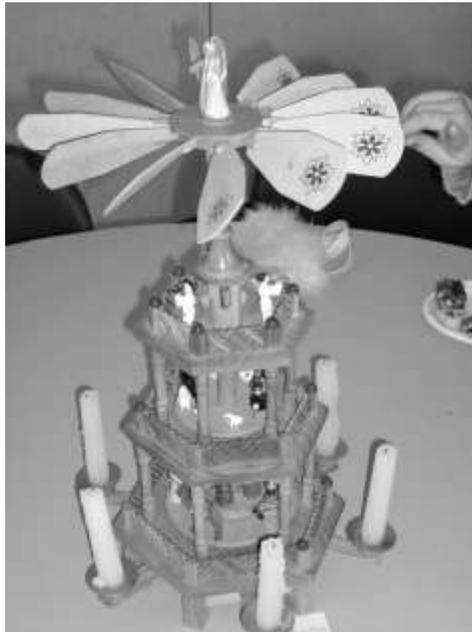
For a child has been born—for us! the gift of a son—for us! He'll take over the running of the world. His names will be: Amazing Counselor, Strong God, Eternal Father, Prince of Wholeness. His ruling authority will grow, and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings. He'll rule from the historic David throne over that promised kingdom. He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing and keep it going with fair dealing and right living, beginning now and lasting always. The zeal of God-of-the-Angel-Armies will do all this.

This year at St. Mary's we will begin our Advent preparation on the 29th of November, the



First Sunday of Advent. **Our service times will be at 8:00 and 10:00 on Sunday mornings.** I tried to move the service times to 10:30 on Sunday mornings, but I realize now that this was not a good choice for many of you and don't want to keep doing something that just does not work well for so many of us. Thank you for trying it with me and sticking to it, but you know, sometimes it is best to say, "well, we tried that", and then move on.

Throughout this season of anticipatory waiting, we will do our best to stay focused on what is to come...the birth of the Savior of the World. We will light the Advent Candles each Sunday as we get closer and closer to the night when we can light the Christ Candle and celebrate Christmas Eve. We will have two services. One will be at 5:00 in the afternoon,



Decoration provided by Glen and Mary Newcomb for last year's crèche display. (John Beeler photo)

with Holy Baptism and our Inter-Generational Christmas Pageant. The other will start with a Choral Prelude 10:00 PM, and continue with the late service beginning at 10:30 pm for Christmas Eve. We will also have a Christmas Day service at 10 in the morning for those of you who, (like me!) just can't get enough of Christmas services.

So, remember this season as you get that "I can hardly wait" feeling...that this is what the whole season is about...it is all about waiting...longing...yearning...for what you know is to come! And it ain't Santa friends...it

is the Savior of the World. So let's all wait together shall we? I, for one, can hardly wait.

With my hand on the plow,
Fr. Michael

Directory Corrections

Sheila Holley's e-mail address is:
agapesheilacc@hotmail.com

Heidi Holdsambeck's new address is:
hholdsambeck@gmail.com

Photographer Needed

I plan to be out of town for Christmas, so I need a volunteer or two to take pictures of all of the festivities. If you need to borrow a camera, I can show you how to use the one Elizabeth keeps in the office; just see me at any 10:00 service.

Thanks,
John Beeler

Writers Wanted

All members of Saint Mary's are invited to submit photos, or letters or articles on relevant topics, including their spiritual life. We would especially appreciate articles about our upcoming Bells themes:

<i>January 2010:</i>	Shining Light
<i>February 2010:</i>	Looking at Lent
<i>March 2010:</i>	Looking for Light
<i>April 2010:</i>	Glory

Please send photos and articles to the Bells editor at: john.beeler@verizon.net. If you do not have e-mail, you can put them on paper, and drop it in the mail slot just outside the Parish office instead. (Photos will be returned as soon as possible.) Thanks!

Advent Waiting

Celebrating the cycle of the church year takes us on a spiritual journey. It allows us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and his followers. It helps us to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit along with the early Christians as they struggled to birth a church.

There are seasons of hope and grief, mercy and penitence, waiting and anticipation, learning and teaching, working and growing, and joy and triumph. All aspects of the human condition are addressed. The church year is an ancient way of telling time. We are called not just to mark days on a calendar, but to live into a deep eternal rhythm. I believe that living in harmony with these rhythms can bring us peace and renewal.

The observance of the church year has a long history in the life of the Christian faith. When most of the people in the church were poor and had no access to education, the church festivals and the cycle of the church year provided a vehicle for teaching the story of God and his actions in human history.

Like Lent, Advent was once a solemn season of preparation, but not for Christmas. It was to get ready for Epiphany. Advent was first celebrated by the apostle Peter, but the exact starting date of the season has been lost to history. Although one of the earliest references to Christmas being celebrated on December 25 appeared in Antioch in the middle of the second century, it was neither an official nor legal holiday. Christians were still being persecuted.

In the mid 300's, the fervent convert Constantine the Great built the Church of the

Nativity in Bethlehem, and declared Jesus' birthday a national holiday, thus insuring the legality of Christmas celebrations. Julius, the Bishop of Rome, set the date at December 25. The church had a genius for superimposing Christian festivals over existing pagan ones. Romans celebrated Saturnalia, which was a solstice festival marking the return of light into the world. The Council of Tours in 567 established the period of Advent [which means coming] as a time of fasting before Christmas. They also proclaimed the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany a sacred, festive season. Eventually, the Western Church no longer required fasting during Advent, but it does offer us a season of quiet reflection. The church colors for Advent are purple and blue, colors of royalty and penitence, not the secular red and green.



Clive Foy portrayed "the Original Santa Claus" last year.

Advent is the time when the church calls us to be the most countercultural.

The secular season of Christmas merchandizing often begins on the heels of Halloween. The weeks leading up to Christmas can be a marathon of shopping, decorating, cooking and social festivities. Many of us suffer from holiday exhaustion by Christmas day. Our eyes are

tired of red and green. Our ears are bored with synthetic carols.

Jesus calls us to be in the world, but not of it. Through Advent the church gives us a special way to mark time, but not by counting down the shopping days until Christmas.

We are called to wait, to wait in joyful hope and anticipation, but to wait none the less.

Advent mirrors the season of nature, the dormant waiting time of winter. A season of growing darkness. Whatever growth is taking place we cannot see, but we know what

we are waiting for, the return of the light and the birth of the Word made flesh.

We are pregnant and waiting. And as any pregnant woman will tell you, the pregnancy is a season of preparation.

We often mistake the need for preparation as only a call to make ready our external environment. And just as there are cribs to be bought and nurseries to be painted, so too we feel the pressure to find the tree, buy the presents, and hang the lights and stockings. This is also who we are today.

Advent invites us into mystery. For this, we must prepare our hearts. We are waiting, not just for the baby in the manger, but also for the Christ who comes to us in the Eucharist. And ultimately, we are waiting for the return of the victorious Christ the King and redeemer who will set the world aright again. If we pay attention to the liturgical readings we will hear these messages.

Time closes in on itself at Advent. Advent teaches us patience and humility. We are not the masters of time, only silent observers.

If we allow it Advent can give us perspective. When we reflect on the bible stories assigned to Advent we might find ourselves asking, "How did we get here from there?" If a manger in a cold, smelly stable was deemed suitable for our Lord, why are we knocking ourselves out to create homes of decorator perfection? Why not homes where love and charity are perfected? These stories show God's solidarity with the poor and oppressed. How

about directing some of our resources [time as well as money] to those in need this season? Remembering all that we wait for teaches us perspective.

We don't have to feel guilty about our own Christmas activities and preparations during Advent. We can keep our balance. Our church traditions offer us many lovely and meaningful ways of marking time.

The Advent wreath has its origins in pre-Christian northern Europe. As the days grew shorter and darker it was time for farmers to put away their tools and move indoors and inward. To symbolize this time apart and defend against the darkness, a wagon wheel would be removed and brought indoors, to be festooned with evergreens and candles.

We can take a few moments at dinner each night to light a candle, say a prayer and read a reflection. Advent is also a good time for starting family traditions. Children enjoy opening the windows of an Advent calendar. Crèches can be set up a little at a time, with the Holy family moving slowly towards Bethlehem. Straw can be placed one piece at a time in recognition for good deeds. I have lots of ideas and resources I would be happy to share with you.

I offer you these resources for you to take home and use. I am sure if we take the time to light the ancient candles, both on our tables and in our hearts, the true light of Christmas will be reflected back to us so much holier and brighter.

Trudy Ardizzone

Please note that St. Mary's will be having a crèche display again this year. You may bring in yours for display any time during Advent; please be sure to take it home on December 27th. Please see Glen Newcomb for details.

The Greening of the Church for Christmas: HELP!

Glen Newcomb here. God is so good to me. I volunteered at the Worship Committee meeting to oversee the CHURCH DECORATING PARTY on Sunday December 20th this year. Mary and I were on a retreat the beginning of this week and I was afraid that I had missed the deadline for articles for the December "Bells". BUT, I arrived home on the deadline date and here I am, asking for your help in preparing our beautiful church for the Christmas Season. I'm writing this on the fly and may be asking for help when there are people who are already planning on this event....please let me know if you can help us.

Church Decorating Party, Sunday December 20th. We need your help!

Times: Decorate the church: 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Pot Luck Supper: 4:00pm - 5:00pm (yes, you may come to the supper even if you did not come to the decorating party.)

Christmas Caroling to our Shut-ins: 5:00pm - 8:00pm (Everyone Welcome!)

The Help We Need:

Flowers: Jeanne Kendall and Kay Rowland are in charge of the flowers. Donations for the poinsettias and fresh cut evergreens and holly for the wreaths are appreciated. BUT they can probably use our help in making wreaths, putting up the aisle candles and making greens for those candles too. A Big Swag for the front door?

Christmas Tree: We like to put up a Christmas tree in the Narthex with the traditional Christmas décor on it. Jane Longley and My brother Dick from Seattle have worked on that, but they can use HELP!

The Narthex: Flowers and or a creche on the big cabinet in the narthex...We need ideas and HELP!

Pot Luck Supper: I think that everybody loves a pot luck. We need people to be in charge of that. Making a sign-up sheet for the food, setting up the food, cleaning up after supper. (Fellowship People?)

Cookies to take to our shut-ins: We need someone to organize getting people to bake cookies, decorate them and bring them to the church to be placed on plates to be taken to our shut-ins when we go caroling.

We need your HELP!

Caroling to the shut-ins: We need someone to organize this. Get Fr. Michael and Sally Goetsch to help us make up a list of shut-ins. Plan the route. Trudy A. has caroling books and Stephanie B. and I have flutes.

How about caroling to our neighborhood, Lands End? We need your HELP! (Pastoral Care people?)

We need people to come and work and eat and sing and have FUN !

Call Glen 733-3811

The Bat in the Belfry

Hi, it's me, Bede and I have a question. How do you stand on "anticipation"? This is the season for it. Anticipation can cut two ways. The dictionary says that it can mean "expectation or hope" or you can go with the synonym "foreboding". I opt for expectation AND hope.



Advent, the season leading to Christmas, has always felt like a dark season to me. It's a season that lends itself to waiting and I have to tell you that Bats are not given much to waiting. We tend to flit and we don't have a lot of patience. I have to admit that I've had to learn patience, but waiting for something wonderful to happen can be very hard for me. That's what Advent means to me -- lots of anticipation of something big coming if I can only be patient and wait knowing that what I wait for will be even sweeter when it finally arrives.

Advent is one of those times. It's the time when God will come into our midst. How amazing is that? During this time, we'll hear about how ancient prophets knew that a Messiah would come. They waited patiently for thousands of years for Jesus to come into the world. Imagine waiting all that time? Could you do it? Or would you want it now, now, now?

I always think of Advent as waiting for the sun to rise. When we wake up before the sun rises, it's so dark and we wait impatiently for the light of the sun to make our world bright and beautiful. We go to the window and look out. Where is the sun? We are impatient for the light of the sun. Impatience will not make the sun appear sooner, but we long for the light. And what is the true light we wait for during Advent? You and I know who that light is. It is Jesus, the Light of the World. I have always felt that Advent is a time of waiting and watching in the darkness -- praying for the Savior to come and bring warmth and light to my life.

So what do we see on Christmas Eve? Light everywhere! There was a star -- beautiful and bright and leading the shepherds and the Magi to the manger where a baby lay -- the Savior they had waited for, the Good Shepherd who would gather His sheep and love and protect them. Their patience and long time of waiting was rewarded. And so each year during Advent, we patiently anticipate and watch and wait and pray for the light to once again appear. We call it Christmas.



The Light always comes again. It never fails. The beautiful lines from the hymn tell us: "In Him there is no darkness at all. The light and the dark are both the same. The Lamb is the Light of the City of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus."

Patience, Bede. The Light will come. A blessed Advent and a light-filled Christmas from Bede the Bat in the St. Mary's Belfry

WARNING: Advent Virus

Be on the alert for symptoms of inner hope, peace, joy, and love. Many hearts have already been exposed to this virus and people everywhere could come down with it in epidemic proportions, posing a serious threat to what has, up to now, been a fairly stable condition of conflict in the world. Some signs and symptoms of The Advent Virus:

- ◊ A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.
- ◊ An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- ◊ A loss of interest in judging other people.
- ◊ A loss of interest in conflict.
- ◊ A loss of the ability to worry.
- ◊ Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
- ◊ Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
- ◊ Frequent attacks of smiling.
- ◊ An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.
- ◊ An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.

Please send this warning out to all your friends. This virus can and has affected many systems. Some systems have been completely cleaned out because of it.

- Anonymous



Did you even wonder why we use “x’s” at the end of a letter to symbolize kisses? It began with the custom of using St. Andrew’s cross as a pledge of good faith when signing legal documents. The emblem was named for the Saint who died on an x-shaped cross, and a document was not considered valid unless the signer affixed the mark of St. Andrew and kissed it as a guarantee of authenticity. In time the original meaning of the ceremony was forgotten, and the “x” associated only with the kiss.

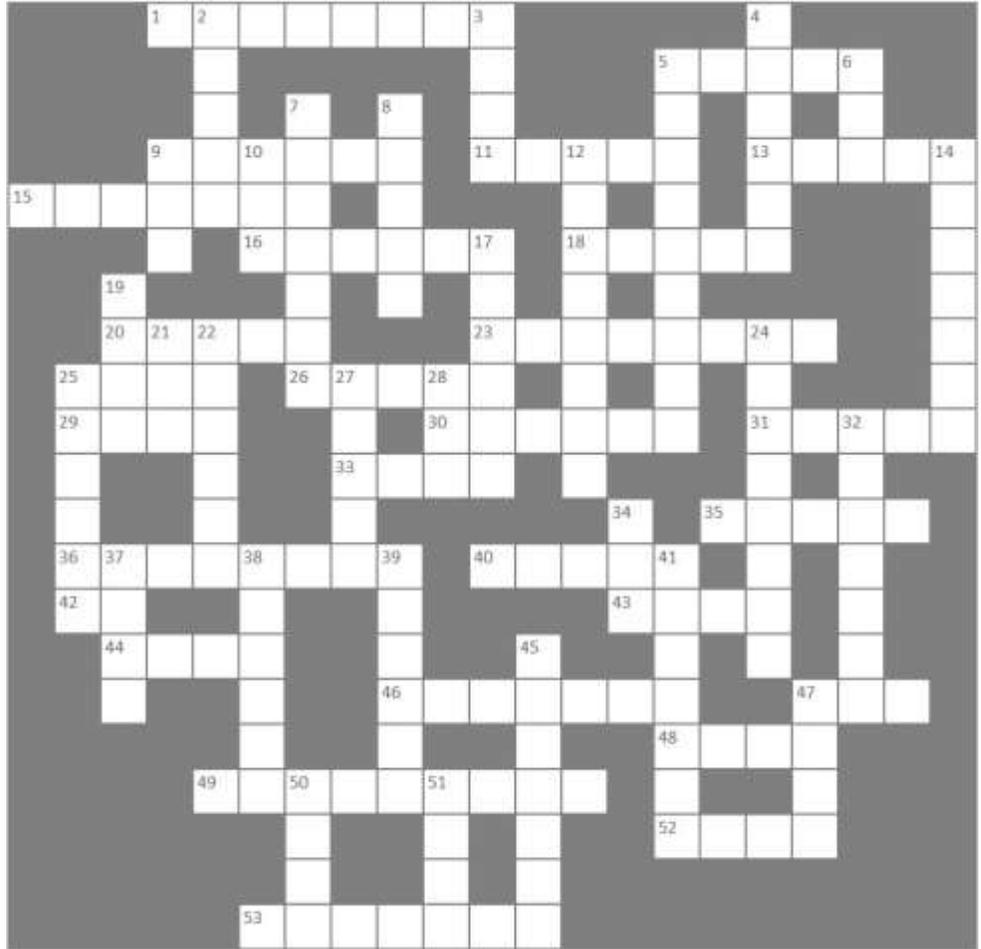
- Brotherhood of St. Andrew,
Diocese of North Dakota

The Original Santa Claus (O.S.C. in the clues), by John Beeler

(Note: O.S.C.P: means that the answer refers to something O.S.C. is considered to be a patron saint of.)

Across

1. O.S.C.P: Young people
5. Noah survived one
9. Jesus' 'Stepfather'
11. Jacob and Esau, for example
13. Worshipper of many gods
15. Falsely _____ (of a crime, for example – another O.S.C.P)
16. The Church Season just before Christmas
18. To solve crossword puzzles, it helps to do this well
20. The first name of our organizer, or the name of a red-breasted bird
23. The capital of Virginia
25. Where O.S.C.'s remains were relocated to in 1087 A.D.
26. The language spoken where O.S.C. lived
29. "All _____ on me"
30. With 10 down, the water between Greece and Turkey
31. Another word for chocolate, or the name of a city in Florida (east of Orlando)
33. Jesus' mother, and the patron saint of our Church
35. O.S.C. sometimes gave this to young women so they could have their 7 Down
36. The Church season immediately after Christmas
40. "_____ of Fortune" (popular TV game show)
42. To act
43. O.S.C. lived in this city
44. Animals used to pull wagons in O.S.C.'s time
46. O.S.C.P: Bow-and-arrow people
47. To locate



36. The Church season immediately after Christmas
40. "_____ of Fortune" (popular TV game show)
42. To act
43. O.S.C. lived in this city
44. Animals used to pull wagons in O.S.C.'s time
46. O.S.C.P: Bow-and-arrow people
47. To locate

48. A very big dolphin
49. Where Jesus was born
52. Architects draw them
53. O.S.C.P: Men in boats
10. See 30 across
12. How O.S.C. often gave gifts
14. The capital of Cyprus
17. The country that the former site of 43 across now lies in
19. Some people do it on their knees
21. What many mines produce
22. O.S.C. held this office in the church
24. **O.S.C.'s first name**
25. Something the 37 down often did to get money
27. O.S.C. lived in the _____ Empire
28. "Lend an _____"
32. Another word for reindeer
34. The bottom edge of a skirt
37. The kind of people O.S.C. most often helped

Down

2. Saints are usually depicted with them in Church art (variant spelling)
3. Most young birds live in one
4. O.S.C. is often depicted holding this set of four books of the Bible
5. O.S.C.P: St. Peter was one
6. "Man's best friend"
7. When a man and a woman get married
8. Things in which O.S.C. sometimes left money
9. A container for whiskey

Parish Voices: Lights Before Advent

The snow had melted into little round mounds in black muddy patches. It was still cold, but not winter. **“Look! Look! It’s Christmas!” Gramma didn’t understand, but I knew. It was time for the lights** again. There they were, shining even in the daytime on the old house on the corner.

But Gramma knew. Old Mrs. Mockamer had died during the holidays and Old Mr. Mockamer just **didn’t have the heart to take them down. Even after she explained, I don’t think I understood. But I did understand that it wasn’t Christmas again, and that it was sad.**

Even then, Christmas meant lights to me, starlight, candles, tree lights, lights in windows and on eaves, bright ones in stores, dim ones at church, pen lights we carried as Christmas angels in the pageant.

It happened again when we lived on an Air Force Base. “Hey, why are there Christmas lights on those quarters? It’s way past New Years.” This time I did understand. The Daddy was “overseas” in a place my Daddy would go soon, Korea. Their Daddy had missed Christmas so they were waiting for him.

Would he come home? Mommy didn’t know, but they would wait and think how happy they would be when they could have Christmas together. My Daddy didn’t go. Their Daddy came home.

My friend Connie had a lighted tree in her window even before Halloween. Her twin sister and their little brother would all have Christmas before she went off to the big hospital back East to have her heart fixed. **She wouldn’t be home before Valentines’.**

It never was about the presents or the candy canes. It was always about singing together at church and it was about the lights. Not all years were the same, but most were merry. And each year held all that is very real in life of sorrow and hope and joy and waiting and wondering.

As lobsters and tiny lanterns and chili peppers and surf boards joined in and became “party lights”, they lit the dark too, though not quite so well. They seemed an attempt in summer to echo the twinkling comfort of Christmas lights...

This year on our neighborhood walk on November first, we saw the first Strings of lights. So early! **Some were solar powered, others multi colored rope lights, even white twinklers in little shrubs... One** house has a boy Marine finishing training. One has a new grandchild. In another a job has been lost.

It seems the world is longing for the Light of Christmas. We are here in the dark, mourning losses, asking healing, needing sustenance, hoping for joy,. We are reaching and cannot wait. We need a little (or a lot) of Christmas. Now.

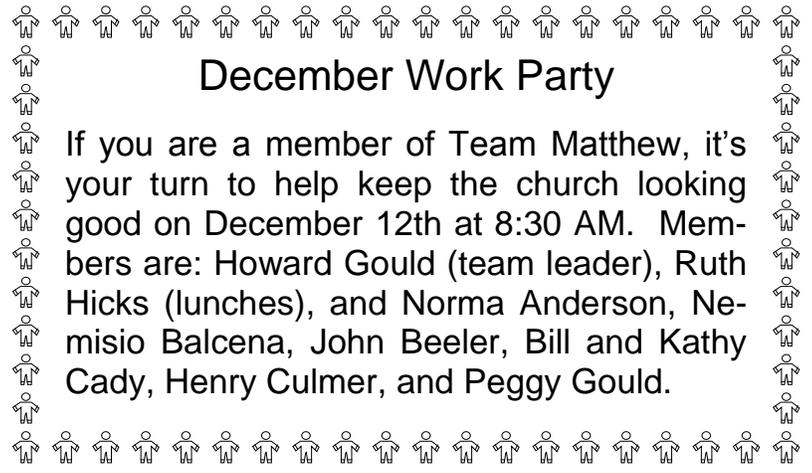
Wherever Christ is celebrated, there is a Feast of Lights, dim ones, bright ones, colorful or plain, candles or electronic. Epiphany is far off yet, but the little camp fire on the journey toward Bethlehem calls us toward comfort. There will be a little oil lamp in the stable to draw our flickering hearts.

Do you know Old Mr. Mockamer? Or Connie in the hospital, or her family at home? How about the neighbor who lost her job? Take your Christmas lighted heart to them. Bring them to the center of worship where Christ may speak to them of sorrow, healing, loss or hope. He carries them all. He is the why of Christmas lights.

-MJ Newcomb

- 38. Something you hold a pot by
- 39. Two words that are often turned into one in the Old South
- 41. An old-fashioned cleanser (two words)
- 45. O.S.C.P: Repentant _____ (people who are sorry they 'borrowed' things)
- 47. O.S.C.P: ____brokers (or, a chess piece)
- 50. Rock and Roll singer Turner
- 51. Repetition

The solution will be printed in the January Bells.



December Work Party

 If you are a member of Team Matthew, it's your turn to help keep the church looking good on December 12th at 8:30 AM. Members are: Howard Gould (team leader), Ruth Hicks (lunches), and Norma Anderson, Nemisio Balcena, John Beeler, Bill and Kathy Cady, Henry Culmer, and Peggy Gould.



Pictures from last year's crèche display (photographer unknown.)



Financial Statement, October, 2009

Undesignated checking/savings	80,814
Designated checking	17,410
Designated fund obligations	17,410
Parish mortgage	369,108

	Actual Oct 09	Actual Jan - Oct 09	Budget Jan - Oct 09
Income	18,971	257,113	280,862
Expenses	28,376	291,956	299,843
Net income/(loss)	(9,405)	(34,843)	(18,981)



December Birthdays

Virginia McConnell	1	Glenn Owen	9	Ronald Pace	21
Chris Frenk	2	Jeanne Macomber	11	Almedia Hutchinson	22
Mary Jo Wright	2	Will (Buck) Sharp	13	Rebecca Larson	22
Veronica de Alba	3	Stewart Johnston	15	Kathi Froemming	23
John Beeler	5	Dennis Anderson	16	Chelsea McCarty	23
Jim Everly	5	Mary Alice Saladino	19	Luke Decker-Orland	24
Jeanne Johnston	6	Nathan Chandler	20	Trina Larson	24
Lynn Chacon	7	Amanda Holdsambeck	21	Patricia Middleton	24
				Donato Ricci	27

The Bells of Saint Mary's

St. Mary's Episcopal Church
2800 Harris Grade Road
Lompoc, CA 93436
www.stmaryslompoc.org

U.S. Postage Paid
Non-Profit Organization
Permit #25
Lompoc CA
93436

December, 2009



Next Issue:
Shining Light

Inside this issue:

Fr. Michael:	1
Directory Corrections:	2
Help Wanted (sorry, no salary):	2
Trudy Ardizzone:	3
Annual crèche display:	4
More Help Wanted:	5
Crossword Puzzle	6
Financial News & B'days	7
December Work Party	7
The Bat in the Belfry:	8
Parish Voices:	9
Calendar	10



Sunday Eucharist
8:00 AM and 10:00AM

Church Office Hours
Mon - Fri 10 AM - 4 PM

Telephone: (805) 733-4400
Fax: (805) 733-4405

E-Mail Addresses:

Fr. Michael:
rector@stmaryslompoc.org
Deacon Judy Lin:
deacon@stmaryslompoc.org
Elizabeth:
admin@stmaryslompoc.org
Trudy:
formation@stmaryslompoc.org
Wardens and Clerk:
vestry@stmaryslompoc.org
Bells Editor:
john.beeler@verizon.net