



## A LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

“The only Son of God, came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.”

God is doing it all out of faith in us.

God wants to experience it all out of fondest hope for us. God wants to risk it all out of the deepest love in us.

On Christmas morning, a new journey began! Never again will humanity journey alone towards God. From now on our journey will always be with God. And it began in the manger, with Jesus, with the journey of God through life as one of us—which begins our journey at one with God.

We cannot imagine where our own journey will take us, once we take to heart that we sojourn always and forever at one with God. It's a journey out into an unknown, with pleasures and pitfalls we cannot foresee and never with a dress rehearsal or change to undo what's done.

Yet this is what God waits for, year after year...for each of us to share with Mary and Joseph giving birth to the holy...to create with our own hands the offering of generous compassion, the welcome of radical hospitality, to work for justice, give freely of ourselves for healing, to inhale with awe and delight all of creation, to make a difference in at least one child's life and to become as German mystic

Meister Eckhart wrote, “mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born.”

Christmas is the love story of all our lives made real, again, out of love on our behalf... that Mary, the mother of Jesus, gave birth to and held in her arms the God of love so that we might hold in our hearts the love of God...and it's this very love that surrounds you, prays for you and will love you through every heart-rending challenge and celebration of your life. This same love will never abandon you and in the mystery of love made flesh can be seen in the eyes and touch of family and friends, colleagues and religious community, all those with whom you share this love story, this holy journey towards wholeness with.

O Come, let us adore him...for Jesus loves us, this I know!

A very blessed Christmas to each and everyone... Love, Nancy Lee+

## A LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

HAPPY NEW YEAR'S Day, 2009!!!

We have had a remarkable year in 2008, one in which we can all be very proud to have been a part. St. Thomas Parish has not only continued to thrive this past year, it is flourishing! The Parish has taken ownership of its past and is looking at a bright, imaginative and creative future. The Discernment Process the Parish has

been immersed in has brought an energy and excitement to this Parish that is remarkable to behold. The persistence and dexterity that Parish members have shown in prayerfully considering and dreaming about St. Thomas bright future makes our future together hopeful and inspiring.

I am confident that this new year will be one that will continue to make St. Thomas' a beacon of hope, a light of love and a place to find strength to face this bright future we all have, together.

God's Blessings and Peace, John+



## **SAMARITAN MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Celebrate Mardi Gras with Samaritan Ministry**

Toe-tapping Dixieland Jazz, savory New Orleans style cuisine, distinguished honorees and an exciting live auction of fabulous vacations are on tap for the Second Annual Samaritan Ministry Mardi Gras.

Join us Friday, February 6, 2009 for all the fun as we honor The Rt. Rev. John Bryson Chane, Bishop of Washington, and Ms. Christiana Carter, Partner Parish Representative St. Paul's,

Rock Creek since 1989. With get-away vacations in the live auction such as a cabin in Colorado near fly fishing, mountain biking, hiking and climbing and a condo in historic Williamsburg.

The Mardi Gras will be held at the NRECA Conference Center 4301 Wilson Blvd Arlington, VA (free parking and Metro accessible) 6:30-9:00 pm.

For more information or to purchase tickets (\$50/person) contact Mary Belknap, 202-722-2280 x327 or [mbelknap@samaritanministry.org](mailto:mbelknap@samaritanministry.org)

### **Hear from Program Participants at Samaritan Ministry's Next Step Experience**

Next Step Experience Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Refreshments 1:15 pm. Next Step Experience 1:30 - 2:30 pm

1516 Hamilton St, NW Washington, D.C Make your reservations by contacting Mary Belknap at 202-722-2280 ext. 327 or by email at [mbelknap@samaritanministry.org](mailto:mbelknap@samaritanministry.org)

### **Meaningful Volunteer Opportunities at Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington**

Take a step toward volunteering in a meaningful volunteer position with Samaritan Ministry. We need front office coordinators, computer mentors, resume writers, and casework associates to help our participants, many who are homeless, take steps toward a better life.

The Next Step Program works because of the many volunteers who give their time to this ministry. Call or email Dianne Lewis at 202-722-2280 x 319 or [dlewis@samaritanministry.org](mailto:dlewis@samaritanministry.org) to find out more.

### **[Samaritan Ministry Needs a New Home](#)**

Samaritan Ministry is looking for a new site that includes at least 4,000 to 4,600 square feet of space at a location in either Northwest or Northeast Washington

If you know of a parish with space to rent or of another suitable location, please contact David Downes at 202-722-2280 x 318 or [ddownes@samaritanministry.org](mailto:ddownes@samaritanministry.org)

### **[Meal Program Volunteer Training Scheduled](#)**

Get to know meal program guests at Loaves and Fishes, Charlie's Place and Church of the Epiphany's Street Church and help them connect with local resources and programs like Samaritan Ministry's Next Step Program.

If you have good interpersonal skills and a desire to work with people who are homeless, hungry and poor, register to attend a training session on Saturday, January 31 from 9:30 am-2:00 pm at St. Stephen and the Incarnation Church (1525 Newton Street, NW. Volunteers will receive specialized instruction including information on issues relating to homelessness.

This is a good opportunity for those looking for a weekend volunteer position.

For more information or to register, contact Catherine Rodman at [crodman@samaritanministry.org](mailto:crodman@samaritanministry.org) or 202-722-2280 x 324.

### **MY EXPERIENCE ON THE WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

From Gregory Mackmin



Since we have a rather brief newsletter this month, I thought I'd take the time to write about my own recent experiences serving with our Worship Committee. This committee is tasked with making sure our worship services flow smoothly from start to finish. They do everything from greeting us at the door; ushering us to our seats; reading the lessons; setting up the altar and cleaning up after we've all retired for coffee. This past Autumn I expressed my interest to Jack Reiffer in being "One of those people who gets up and reads." Shortly thereafter I was placed on the Fall schedule to read one of the lessons and, to my intense anxiety and excitement; I saw my name on the schedule to be a Eucharistic minister a few weeks after!

Now I'm certain Jack asked me which roles I was comfortable with and I was probably feeling especially daring the day I signed up. At the very least I knew they'd have vestments long enough for me because I'd seen Matt Cloninger up there before (when you're 6'5" this is often one of the first things that goes through your mind). This first reading was going to be the first reading I had ever done at St. Thomas' or in any church for that matter. Probably, like most people, I'm not immediately comfortable with the idea of standing in front of a large group of people. I prayed that I would keep my calm and wouldn't do anything embarrassing or disruptive to the service.

Filled with anticipation, the week came where I received an email announcing the lesson I would be reading on my very first time standing before a church full of people. It was the "Ten Commandments"... I remember I kinda looked up from my computer screen, cracked a smirk, and said, "That's a good one God... yep, no pressure at all." Well, after much apprehension, the reading went as smoothly as it could. My second reading was a little rough, filled with the names of ancient locations -- I learned that John has a book that gives you the phonetic pronunciation of many of these places, so it's worth checking out if you're faced with a similarly challenging passage. I was proud of myself for having done it and for confronting and conquering a phobia (another one is heights, but the lectern apparently doesn't exceed my comfort level).

Now I'll save my story about my first and subsequent times as a Eucharistic minister for the coffee hour. There have been quite a few moments that have made me crack a smile or, as those of you who attended the 11pm Christmas Eve service know, there are times when I feel so moved by the words and surroundings that I can't keep my eyes dry. Whatever mishaps I've had while serving at the altar, I've never been made to feel as if it

detracted from anyone else's enjoyment of the service. Nancy Lee and John are incredibly patient teachers, and the members of St. Thomas' Parish have been extremely thoughtful and encouraging. I would likewise encourage everyone to participate for at least one season in the Worship Committee and see how these services, that are meant to stimulate our spirits, are executed. I have personally felt a closer relationship to God and to my fellow parishioners since I sought involvement in this new relationship to worship.

***And that's all for the January Edition of the Phoenix. I hope for many of you the year is off to an auspicious beginning! Remember to send me your articles and contributions to the Phoenix towards the middle of the month if possible for publishing in the following month's edition. Have a wonderful January. Remember hastily boxing those lights will only lead to aggravation next Christmas -- my Dad can attest to that (just about every year I can remember growing up!).***

**GM**

Updated Parish news can always be found online at [www.stthomasdc.org/news/index.html](http://www.stthomasdc.org/news/index.html)

Send Phoenix articles to  
[phoenix@stthomasdc.org](mailto:phoenix@stthomasdc.org)  
Send Parish announcements to  
[announcements@stthomasdc.org](mailto:announcements@stthomasdc.org)