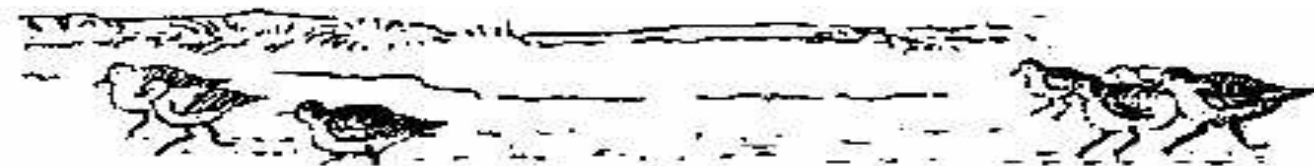


The Sandpiper

St. Nicholas Episcopal Church

December 2005



Dear Friends,

It may be cliché, but I think we never tire of it: how a child's eyes can shine around Christmastime. But what makes them shine? What makes your eyes shine?

It is a peculiar human trait, isn't it? – how our eyes can shine. How our eyes can overflow with life – with joy and with sorrow. Some time ago, when a famous person passed away, newspapers would go into their file photos and airbrush out the little gleam in that person's eyes. That little spot of reflected light was enough to make the difference between life and death.

Sometimes in church, we ask God to bless us in this way: The Lord make his face to shine upon you. I think that is a lovely image. It comes from what is known as "The Priestly Benediction" in Numbers 6:22-27. Out of the extensive commentary on scripture known as the Jewish midrash comes this insight: "This means, may the Lord give you brightness of eyes."

Brightness of eyes. Our eyes may reflect light. But don't they also shine from the life within?

I think we all know what makes a child's eyes shine. May you know the Lord's face shines upon you. May it show in the brightness of your eyes.

With Love,
David

From Inside Prison Walls

By Paul J. Aliff

What if God chose today for Christ to be born instead of in Biblical times? What would be the circumstances that would surround this event, and what would be our reaction? Have you ever pondered such questions? I admit that I had not, until my good friend, Terry, "racked my brain" and started me thinking about Advent.

It is true that there are a lot of similarities between Biblical times and today. There are still the rich and poor, people throughout the world who are oppressed, and wars and conflicts on every continent. Religions and denominations are split on issues and the need for the Christ child to be born as the symbol of God's loving grace for us all is so apparent. So why then and not now, I ask? We know that God had a reason.

The Bible states events that led to the birth of Christ which makes me wonder if the world has simply just back-treaded, and if circumstances are not now basically the same as at the time of Christ's birth. As the prophets of the Old Testament had foreseen the birth of Christ, and most of the Jewish nation was awaiting His birth as the Messiah, perhaps the timing was right for God to show His love through His only Son. Through that love our sins would be forgiven and we would have the opportunity for eternal life. Even that, however, does not answer the question of why then and not now.

So what if God had chosen the present? Would we dwell on things like a scientific explanation of a "virgin birth"? In our modern day setting of computers and technology, mass transit and communication, with non-stop days and busy nights, would we take time to notice and possess the faith needed to believe that the Christ child was actually being born in our lifetime? Who would be the wise ones to bear gifts, and who would represent the shepherds and what would they leave to adore the Christ child? Would the world's religions allow us to believe that a miracle birth could happen and that this newborn baby would grow up to be the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, save the world, and bring us salvation? Who would be the believers, and who the non-believers? Would we even stop in our rat race world to take notice? Would the news report His birth, or would world leaders snuff it out as insignificant?

These thoughts also lead me to ponder where the Christ child would be born in our modern day world. Would His birth take place at Johns-Hopkins so that all could take notice, or maybe the birth would be in the slums of Mexico or in a poverty-stricken village in Africa? I dare think that few of us would be believers if the Christ child was born in a third world country and not born white! No doubt my friend has made me do a lot of hard thinking, and asking myself questions for which I have no answers. Only God knows the answers of why, when and where the Christ child was to be born.

For myself, I do not wish to think that I would be a non-believer if Christ was born today instead of long ago, but I think that like many, I would be skeptical. The only conclusion that I have come to is that God knew the exact time and place for His Son to be born, and that place was in a stable in Bethlehem. The world situation was right, the time and place significant, and all was according to God's miraculous plan for the birth of our Lord and Savior.

So, I'll not ponder these questions anymore, but note that I am glad that I questioned myself as a Christian on these things during the Advent season because it helps me to realize the significance of why and where Christ was born. This questioning will enhance the importance of the Christmas season.

Advent and Christmas in prison can only be a spiritual event without the presence of family and friends, but it can also be more meaningful apart from the hustle and bustle, as we in prison explore the true meaning of Christmas. God bless all of you during this holiest of seasons and Merry Christmas to all of you from me.

"For unto us a child is born*."

With Christian love,
Paul

Paul can receive Christmas cards, money orders, or letters at:

Paul J. Aliff 320901
P.C.U. #1, P.O. Box 1188
Dublin, Virginia 24084-1188

St. Nicholas' Chrismon Tree

A special Christmas tree is planned for St. Nicholas this year. Terry Foster brought the idea to the worship committee and he and Marcia Kapinos are coordinating the effort. What is a "Chrismon Tree"? The concept started over 60 years ago. A Chrismon Tree is an evergreen decorated with ornaments in the form of Christian symbols, i.e., the cross, the early church's fish symbol, angels, etc. All ornaments are white or clear, but may be decorated with silver or gold. All lights on the tree are white. The religious symbolism is intended to refocus the concept of a Christmas tree on things that are sacred. To best understand the concept use a computer. Go to google.com and type in "Chrismon Tree". You will be directed to numerous sites which will give you background and show examples of symbols that can be used. We encourage individuals of all ages and families to make "Chrismons" for the tree or cull white or clear religious ornaments from your Christmas collection for use on the tree. These should be brought to the church no later than Wednesday, December 21. We envision collecting Chrismons over the years.

THE ELUSIVE LIBRARY

I have been asked by several people, "Where is the library?". You have two choices. (1): Go thru our vicar's office, straight on thru the next door and you are in the library. (2): Walk past the vicar's office, turn right, continue down the hall past the two rest rooms. Immediately past the rest rooms is another office on your right. Walk straight thru into the next room and you are again in the library. Guides available!!

One in Christ Mission Priorities

Reduce Congregational Assessments (\$935,000)

Our commitment to common ministry must be increased. Endowment income contributes only a small percentage of the total annual diocesan budget. Through *One in Christ*, we will enlarge the diocesan endowment, thereby reducing the annual diocesan assessment from congregations and freeing funds for local programs and ministries.

Create College Chaplaincies (\$750,000)

Our commitment to nurturing young people must extend to our college-age members. Currently, we have no resources for chaplaincies, and thus, no organized programs to benefit the spiritual lives of Maine's students. Through *One in Christ*, we will create half-time chaplaincy positions and provide spiritual support to young adults in a time of transition.

Assist in Clergy Compensation (\$750,000)

Our commitment to our statewide Episcopal presence must be ensured. Part of our commitment must include offering assistance to help our smaller congregations attract and support talented clergy. By providing funds to supplement clergy compensation, the Diocese of Maine will continue to welcome people in Christ's name throughout our state.

Strengthen Clergy Internship Program (\$500,000)

Our commitment to leadership development must be promoted. Current funding for the clergy internship program is minimal. As a result, we lose many promising, highly qualified seminary graduates to other dioceses. Through *One in Christ*, we will create a permanent endowment to support internships for newly ordained people to serve in a teaching congregation in Maine.

Protecting our Diocesan Archives (\$65,000; completed)

Our commitment to our heritage must be sustained. The archives contain rare and irreplaceable documents that tell our story as a diocese and are one of the most complete collections in the Episcopal Church. Through *One in Christ*, we have funded necessary improvements to the archival facilities, ensuring the preservation of our archives in the future.

Please contact the following leadership volunteers to discuss congregational ©) or individual (I) participation in Cumberland County.

The Rev. Larry Weeks
772-7421
Debby Hammond
781-5621

Golf Committee Thanks

Many people were thanked many times for their efforts on the successful golf outing but I think one more BIG "Thank You" should be passed to Don Martin & Greg Frame for their many hours of hard work.

Ralph Hillman,
Golf Committee

A Note of Thanks.....

We can't thank you enough for the support we have received from the community of St. Nicholas Church this fall. As many of you know, our son Sam (age 20), was diagnosed with metastatic papillary thyroid cancer in late July. We are tremendously relieved and thankful that Sam's prognosis remains very good, but it has been quite a Fall. As part of his treatment, Sam has had two major surgeries (totaling 14 hours) to remove his thyroid and the associated disease in his throat and neck. Both surgeries were very successful, and we have been hugely grateful for the unbounded support from our community of friends, family, and even strangers. These were tricky surgeries with lots of life-changing risks involved, and we appreciated that Sam was being held in peoples' hearts, near and far. It truly made a difference to us and to Sam; and to the medical team—they commented on how focused and energized they felt throughout the lengthy procedures.

The community of St. Nicks has played a big role in this web of support. In addition to the wonderful outreach of prayer and emails and cards, it has also been, for me on Sunday mornings, a place where I have felt completely and quietly and profoundly held in care. Besides his many cards and the heartfelt knowledge of this amazing community of support, Sam has also valued his cribbage games with David. The Tanzanian Children's Fund also greatly appreciated and was awed by the St. Nicks Golf Tournament's generous donation on Sam's behalf (he was supposed to have worked in their orphanage and school this fall).

Thank you all for your share in this amazing network of support. We couldn't imagine going through this stuff alone. We are truly blessed in community.

With profound thanks----

Lucy, Billy, Sam, Kaitlin, and Matthew LaCasse

About Deacon Formation

Here's a bit of an update on where I am in this process. Late in the summer those of us in the second-year "class" were invited to apply for Candidacy. We have had the status of Postulancy since September 2004, and Candidacy for Holy Orders is the next step. The first step in applying for Candidacy is a mountain of paperwork, followed by two important interviews. The first, in October, was with the Committee on Holy Orders; the next (having been passed on by COHO) was with the Standing Committee in November. Happily, the Standing Committee recommended to the Bishop that I be passed on to Candidacy. That new status puts me in position to take the competency exam in January. And, assuming completion of all the components of the program, possible ordination in the spring.

What about my Mentored Practice at St. Nick's? I will be with you through Christmas. Then (here comes a huge non-sequitur!), on December 28, I'll be having my right knee replaced at Mercy Hospital. So I foresee the month of January being spent in knee rehab and working on the competency exam, which we have three weeks to complete. You probably won't see me during January, because with my right knee disabled I won't be driving myself. But I expect to return to St. Nick's in February for one more month of Mentored Practice. I'm really looking forward to that! Your prayers, especially during the month of January, will be most appreciated.

Faithfully,
Anne Hunter

Address Updates:

If you have moved recently or notice that your address is incorrect in the church directory please notify the church office so that all correspondence from the church makes it to the correct place. With your permission we can publish your new address in the Sandpiper so that the congregation can update it in their copy of the directory. I will be the first since I believe my address is incorrect in the directory. Please note the following change:

Joseph Harnden
56 Ross Rd. #3
Old Orchard Beach, ME 04064
Phone #: 233-5028
E-mail address: jcharnden@maine.rr.com

By doing the corrections this way we can avoid reprinting the directory and cut down on returned mail.
Thanks, Joe Harnden

St Nicholas
Episcopal
Church

Upcoming Events:

350 U.S. Route 1
P.O. Box 342
Scarborough, ME
04070-0342

Sunday Service &
Church School
9:00 am

Priest-in-Charge:
Rev. David Matson

Office Phone:
(207) 883-9437

December:

December 13th: Evening Prayer and Bible Study
December 18th: Taize Service
December 19th: Bishops Committee
December 20th: Evening Prayer and Bible Study
December 24th: Two Services

January 2006:

January 8th: DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE OF SANDPIPER
January 15th: Sandpiper release date

