

The Grapevine ~ December 2002

A Publication of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Methuen, MA

In the Interim

Happy New Year!

December 1st is the first Sunday of the season of Advent, the first season of the Church Year. Like the Roman Calender's New Year on January 1st, this is a time to reflect and resolve to start fresh in the new year. This is particularly true in the Church calender, because Advent means *coming*. It is a season of anticipation, expectation, and getting ready for what is to come. It is more than the four Sundays before Christmas, it is a season in which we await the coming of Christ not only in the form of the baby Jesus, but in the Glory of God.

As the long season of Pentecost reached the end of the liturgical year, a similar theme emerged. Expectation of things to come, specifically the end of the ages or the reign of God, culminated, on the last Sunday of Pentecost, with the Feast of Christ the King. So the transition from the end of one year to the next, from Pentecost to Advent, is a natural movement with similar themes: expectation, preparedness, anticipation, and something wholly new.

As it happens, this is also the time when we ask members of the parish to make a pledge. A pledge is a best-guess-estimate as well as a faith statement about what we hope to give in the year 2003. For very practical reasons, Saint Andrew's budget committee needs to get some idea of what to expect in the coming year. People move away, but they also move in, so the total pledge is a pretty good way to deter-

mine how to make plans for next year.

Pledging also has a spirit behind it. Making a pledge is like saying, "I support the presence, work and mission of *my* church, and wish to be part of not only its maintenance, but also its growth in mission.

I believe you will be hearing from the Vestry and others about some ideas we have about the future. So not only are you going to be asked to support the mission of this parish financially, you will be asked for your ideas, your input, your dreams. You have already provided significant information through the meetings held over the past year. Now we need to start making some plans based on your ideas. Now is the time to begin anew.

Advent, in the Church liturgical year, is similar to the life-cycle of Saint Andrew's. We are in expectation. We may not know exactly what it is we are expecting, but we can be prepared. In both Advent, and in the life of our parish, we are in this season of preparation for the Coming of God, Incarnate in the baby Jesus, present as a full human being at a place in time, bringing us to safety through the Spirit, and coming to us in the future. Now is the time to make ready.

How do we get ready for God's coming? Eyes open, ears alert, aware of the presence of God within us and through one another, but most of all, ready for a transformation. God is ever present in our lives, but there are times when God comes to us

(Continued on page 2)

In Memory of...

Memorial Fund

James and Elizabeth St.Clair
Robert Thornley

Organ Memorial Fund

Minnie Nutile

**First Sunday in Advent
Dec 1 means
“Greening the Church”
and Potluck!
Stay after church for
some fun and food!**

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in bright light, with hope and joy. Often it is in the midst of darkness or chaos, and sometimes it is as if God comes to us in the midst of danger and the unthinkable. Perhaps that is because the very chaos and confusion leaves us open to the new voice, the new vision of God in our lives. We see everything differently, and we are different. So being ready is to be alert to the presence of God.

We also must be ready for success. Oh, it may not seem so. The disciples expected and lived the desolation they felt after his crucifixion, and looked for Jesus “among the dead.” What they encountered was the transforming presence of Christ alive and with them. Despite his instructions to them before, they never expected to see someone dead come to life. We must prepare a way for the Lord, in the desert and in our souls. We are not in survival mode any more. We are anticipating victory and joy. We will be transformed by the presence of God with us. We must prepare our hearts and minds for that Coming.

*John Bonell
Interim Pastor*

Coffee Hour Volunteers Needed!

Please sign the sheet posted at the end of the coffee table.

To promote our church as a “welcoming” congregation, each family - whether single, couples, or “married with children” - of St. Andrews are encouraged to sign up for one (or more) Coffee Hour. It is VERY welcoming to offer coffee and a little snack after church!

ALPHA PROGRAM IS COMING TO ST. ANDREW'S

- What** is the meaning of life?
What happens when we die?
What relevance does Jesus have for our lives?
How do we deal with guilt?

If you would like to explore questions like these, then Alpha is for you!

Alpha is for anyone interested in finding out more about the Christian faith while having fun at the same time. Alpha is an opportunity to view a talk by a the dynamic British cleric, Nicky Gumbel, Alpha is small-group conversation to discuss issues raised during the talks. Alpha is a place where no question is seen as too simple or too hostile.

Alpha is for everyone! It is especially geared to people interested in investigating Christianity for the first time as well as Christians who want to brush up on the basics.

If you want answers to these questions:

- Who Is Jesus?
- Why Did Jesus Die?
- Why and How Should I Read the Bible?
- Why and How Do I Pray?
- What About the Holy Spirit?

Think about joining the Alpha Program at St. Andrew's. The first session will begin the week of February 9th and end ten weeks later during Holy Week. A second session will begin after Easter and continue through ten weeks until mid-June.

Listen for announcements and watch the bulletins for more details in the upcoming months. See John Bonell or Linda Pacheco if you have any immediate questions.



Our New Organist:

Christopher Maynard, or as he prefers, "Chris", grew up in the Merrimack Valley area and graduated from local schools. He has traveled a bit, performing at various European venues. Chris graduated from UMass Lowell with honors - A.A. in Music Performance in 2000, and belongs to the American Guild of Organists (since 1998), Worcester Chapter & Boston Chapter. He has been playing for the past few years at St. Mary's church in Lawrence, Holy Family Hospital chapel and even for the Salvation Army.

Chris warmly welcomes newcomers to the choir, and has lots of ideas to bring many kinds of music to St. Andrews. Please contact him, or show up for a rehearsal on Thursday night at 7pm OR at 9am on Sunday in the church.

The latest venture by the choir is a combination with members of First Congregational Church's choir on Christmas Eve at 11pm. Guest Organist will be Alan Carrick, Organist and Director of Music at First Church Congregational, and Chris will direct the combined choirs. Currently, this Christmas Choir practices each Sunday afternoon at 4pm (with the exception of Dec 8). Again, anyone who wishes to join the Christmas Choir is very welcome!

Contact Christopher Maynard at (email) <ChrisMay1980@hotmail.com> or call 978-509-8224.

From the Senior Warden:

Dear friends of St. Andrew's,

It's December. Memories of Thanksgiving are still fresh, and our bellies are still full. It was great to see family! The dinner was delicious. Hopefully, we all spent some time thinking about our good fortune, and said a prayer of thanks for all that the Lord has provided us.

As a child, when we could not sleep, my mother would tell us to count our blessings. To think of all the things we had to be thankful for. There was never a night that I reached the end of that long list! And I remember wondering why people counted sheep... -how boring! We have all experienced pain, illness, disappointment, loss. But we also have been amply blessed!

Now we enter the next season of the liturgical calendar, Advent. Preparation. Beginning. Waiting for the birth of Christ and the hope of new beginnings. It feels as if St. Andrew's is involved in its own Advent. We are in a phase of preparation for our own New Beginnings. We are discerning who we will be and what our church will represent in our community.

The very idea of new beginnings holds such promise. A new chapter. A clean slate. It lets go of the past. It releases us from what we have been and invites us to be something new. No longer bound by the past, we can sort through our history, take along only that which is good and useful, leave behind those things which caused us

pain, that prevented us from fulfilling our responsibilities to God, to our community, to each other. As I write, the Vestry is preparing to meet yet again to discern God's will for us and prepare St. Andrew's for a new beginning.

The question now is Who will join us? Who will commit to the new life of St. Andrew's? Your Pledge Drive letter will arrive shortly. Will you read it? Will you think about it? Will you recall your recent prayers of thanksgiving? Will you pray about your pledge commitment and submit a pledge to St. Andrew's for the coming year? When you meet the Lord, face to face, will you be proud of your affiliation and support of St. Andrew's?

The Vestry will spend this month developing a budget for the next year. Like you, it needs to know what's coming in before it can decide how to spend it. Will we have necessary building repairs? Clergy? Worship services? Music? Christian education? Outreach? Programs to support spiritual growth?

Please, take the time to think and pray about your pledge. And turn in your pledge as soon as possible. We are praying for 100% support. I hope we can count on you!

In Christ,

Laura

Episcopal Relief and Development

**“For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.”
-Matthew 25:35**

Soon, Thanksgiving will be here and gone.

For many of us, it has been a good year, and we are deeply thankful.

For others, it has been a hard year, and giving thanks is more challenging.

This Thanksgiving season, 14 million people are living on the brink of starvation. One of the worst famines overwhelms six nations in southern Africa. The needs are immense and immediate.

Episcopal Relief and Development stands ready to address the food crisis. We have already provided critical food aid to Malawi, one of the hardest-hit countries.

With your support, ERD will be able to reach other parts of southern Africa.

Each dollar can help save a life.

“For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.”

As you celebrate this Thanksgiving holiday, please help provide food for people across southern Africa and other parts of the world.

We can make a difference—your generous gift today will save lives!

Please send donations to:

Episcopal Relief and Development
c/o Hunger Relief
PO Box 12043
Newark, NJ 07101

For more information or to donate by credit card, call 800-334-7626, ext. 5129 or visit our website at www.er-d.org.

Festival of Trees November 20 – 30, 2002 Methuen, Massachusetts

It is decorations, lights, music and warmth ...all the blessings of the season, wrapped up in a one week event. The Festival features over 150 one-of-a-kind trees decorated for the holiday season by individuals and organizations, local artists, designers, businesses and schools. Premier Gala, silent auction, entertainment, visits with Santa, a unique gift shop, and an outdoor café, with wreaths for sale and vocal choirs at the First Congregational Church on Friday and Saturday, November 29 & 30 surround the Festival with all the tradition of a New England holiday season. Please join us at Festival of Trees 2002, an event you will not want to miss, Friday, November 22 - Saturday, November 30, 2002 at The Red Tavern, Masonic Lodge, the Tenney Gate House and the First Church Congregational Church of Methuen. All venues are located off Route 28 in Methuen. Open 10:00 AM - 9:00 PM daily, except Saturday, November 30, Festival closes @ 7:00PM - Closed on Thanksgiving Day. General Admission \$6.

For more information on the Festival of Trees, call the Methuen Festival of Trees office at 978-681-7611 or visit our web site @ <http://www.methuenfestivaloftrees.com>.

November 29, 2002 – 8:00PM Silent Auction Goes Live
November 29 & 30, 2002 – Children's Day – Visit with Santa and his Elves
November 29, 2002 Silent Auction goes Live @ 8:00PM
November 30, 2002 Festival Closes @ 7:00PM Tree Drawing starts @ 7:15PM