

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE

December 2011

Advent: A Time for Hope in the Darkness

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. (Isaiah 11:1, 6-8)

Dear Friends,

Each December, as we begin the new liturgical year, we encounter the voice of the prophet Isaiah, that beacon of hope for the people of Israel amidst the chaos, fear, and disintegration that so often marked their lives in the times of the Old Testament.

Isaiah's prophecy above offers a beautiful vision of justice and peace. The shoot coming out of the stump of Jesse offers the hope of new life springing out from something that appeared lifeless. Isaiah dreams that this new heir of David will create human communities that mirror the divine vision of radical equality among all people. In fact, his vision of reconciliation goes even further, describing a transformation of the world that extends beyond human beings. Even the competitive and violent instincts of animals will be subdued: wolves shall cohabitate with the lambs they routinely devour; lions and cows will befriend each other. Children will play with poisonous snakes, who will be free of the fear that causes them to strike and bite.

What is particularly striking about Isaiah's vision of radical equality and peace is that it is so far from the reality of the moment in which he wrote. The 8th century BCE was time of incredible uncertainty for the people of Israel and Judah. They were under occupation from the Assyrian Empire, which resulted in the need to pay high taxes to their occupiers and live amidst recurring outbreaks of brutal war. Their freedom was under threat. Their internal political leadership was weak and focused on preservation of their own power passing the bulk of the occupation's military and economic burdens onto their own kingdom's laborers and subsistence farmers. King Hezekiah had misjudged the international situation, chosen poor allies in his bid to challenge Assyrian domination, and now the Assyrians had control and their power seemed unchallengeable.

And yet even here, amidst this danger and despair, Isaiah offers a vision of hope for the future. I think it is easy to dismiss the power of these images of reconciliation as rhetorical or poetic. But to do that is to minimize the depth of Isaiah's yearning for this reality. Isaiah himself is unable to fulfill these hopes of a transformed life and yet that does not diminish the depth of his commitment to this vision of a reconciled creation, a vision for which he worked tirelessly.

This is the kind of hope to which we are called in our own lives, and as citizens of our place and time in history. Whatever the darkness is of which we are most afraid, be it emotional or economic, personal or political, God calls us to look for the coming light, to expect a new dawn where justice will shine forth. As Christians, we do not hope based on a naïve fantasy that our problems will simply disappear because bad things shouldn't happen to good people. Rather, we hope that God will come to us, walk with us through our darkness, whatever it may be, leading us towards liberation and freedom from fear.

The true source of this hope is a tiny, vulnerable, helpless child, who calls forth from us new depths of compassion, care, trust, and love. We have hope because we know that Christ's love inspires us to become children of light, that we may bring light into a weary world. In this season of long nights and preparations to encounter Christ anew, we are confident in our hope that God can pierce through any darkness that we, our lives, or the world could possibly create. May we be signs of that hope for others.

Chris +



From the Rector

This December, Invite a Friend to St. Paul's!

December is one of the two most popular months for newcomers and visitors to check out a church for the first time (September is the other one!). The #1 reason, by far, that people visit a new church is because a friend invited them. So, this December, I want to encourage each of you to invite one person who is not part of St. Paul's to come to our parish with you for a service or an event. It could be someone you know who doesn't have a church, but might be looking for a place to come on Christmas Eve. Or it could be another parent whose kid is friends with your kids, and who might want to see your child in the Christmas Pageant on December 18th, even if they already have their own church. Or it could be someone who would feel more comfortable coming to St. Paul's for the first time at a parish event rather than for a service—for which the Advent Fair makes a perfect occasion. Or it could just be someone who might be curious to check out who the new priest is in town!

As the angel said to Mary, "Do not be afraid!" There is no way to fail. If the person you invite to come with you says no thanks, fear not—you have done your job! And if your friend says yes and decides to visit, then we'll be blessed with the chance to welcome a new visitor for a day. So I hope you'll consider taking up this invitation to offer the experience of our wonderful parish to others who might also benefit from coming to know about a warm, caring, welcoming, Christian community that proclaims God's love for all people—especially at this time of year.

Thanks for considering it!

Chris +



An Advent Quiet Day

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown.
For a child is born to us, a child is given us; upon whose shoulder
dominion rests.*

(Isaiah 9:1)

Come away from the busyness of the season to marvel and wonder at this great light that offers hope and comfort during Advent and throughout the new year. The St. Paul's community will gather at church on Saturday, December 10th from 3:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. for an Advent retreat. The retreat will be facilitated by Chris Wendell and Mary Curlew and will offer time for fellowship, quiet and shared reflections, prayer, walking the labyrinth, and reading, and will conclude with a shared meal that will be provided for you. All are welcome. Please sign up on the parish bulletin board to help the facilitators plan for the day. Hope you can attend.

A Gift for You from Rev. Chris this Advent

I have a small gift for each parish family this Advent. It is a special Advent calendar to hang on your wall or your door or your refrigerator. Each day's box contains a picture or a line from the Bible or a suggestion for something to pray for or do to help us all slow down during this busy time. I have used this calendar for many years, and am glad to share it with all of you. If you didn't pick one up on the first Sunday of Advent, please come by and get one soon. One per family, please, and if you really need a second one, just ask!

-- Chris +



Weekday Morning Prayer at St. Paul's Church

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday

8:40 a.m.



Pastoral Emergencies

In a pastoral emergency (urgent hospitalization, death, or immediate crisis) if there is no answer at the office, please try and reach Chris at his home number.

Vestry Corner

Dear friends,

Advent is supposed to be a season of patience and contemplation, when we wait for the coming of the child who will be our Savior, Jesus Christ. Ironically, the season of Advent is one of the busiest times of the year for most of us, when we run around trying to finish Christmas shopping, find babysitters for holiday parties, send Christmas cards, clean the house for visitors, and stay on top of our year-end charitable giving.

December at St. Paul's is busy, too—we have our Advent Fair on December 3, caroling on December 11, Christmas pageant on December 18, and three services between Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We strive, however, to keep our focus on the reason we celebrate, and to find peace and rejuvenation in the community that we share with one another at St. Paul's.

When you're feeling frazzled this December—when the line at the post office is insane, or you've been cut off in the parking lot one too many times, or you've burned yet another batch of holiday cookies—we encourage you to take a moment, take a breath, and take your time. Join us on December 10 for a Quiet Day at St. Paul's—a respite from the bustle of the holiday season. Come to church on Sunday mornings and take an hour to hear the words of Isaiah and the Gospels. Listen to the Christmas story as only St. Paul's young people can tell it. Revel in the joy of the season.

Merry Christmas to you all.

With blessings,
Emily and Paul

*Our Christmas schedule this year will be the same as in the past. We look forward to celebrating Christ's birth with you.
Bring your friends!*



~ O Come, O Come, Emmanuel ~ Advent and Christmas at St. Paul's

The Advent Fair

Saturday, December 3 ~ 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

An Advent Quiet Day at St. Paul's

Saturday, December 10 ~ 3:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Caroling and Progressive Supper

Sunday, December 11, meet at 5:00 p.m. @ St. Paul's

The Annual Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 18 at 10:00 a.m.

Christmas Eve at St. Paul's

Saturday, December 24

3:00 p.m. ~ Family Communion Service with Children's Homily

9:30 p.m. ~ Carol Sing

10:00 p.m. ~ Festal Service of Holy Eucharist

Christmas Day

Sunday, December 25 at 10:00 a.m. ~ Holy Eucharist

New Year's Day

Sunday, January 1 at 10:00 a.m. ~ Holy Eucharist

Guest Celebrant and Preacher – Rev. Sabeth Fitzgibbons



High School Youth

Thanks to all high school and middle school youth who helped out during this year's Cookie Baking and Care Package Making Extravaganza! We shipped out seventeen care packages to our friends and loved ones at college and overseas, and made twelve cookie plates to deliver to the people we'll be caroling to on December 11. Many thanks to all who helped with this ministry!

Confirmation classes will begin in January. Please speak to Chris or Emily if you are interested in Confirmation this year. Confirmation is open to any baptized Christian in grade nine or above. Classes will run after church on Sundays, usually every other week, and will include an overnight at the Barbara Harris Camp in March. This year's Confirmation service will be held on Saturday, April 28, at the Cathedral of St. Paul in Boston.

Notes from the Nursery School



As the month of December opens, the children's excitement grows. Our first event is a field trip to Season's Four in Lexington to choose a tree which we dub our "Hat and Mitten Tree." Our families decorate the tree with hats, mittens, and scarves. At the end of the month we will give the donated items to the Central Food Ministry in Lowell. Because of the generosity of families in previous years, we have been able to donate many large bags full of hats, mittens, snowpants and boots. These items have been well received.

Our bulletin boards will soon take on the look of the holiday season. Children will be busy making holiday ornaments and will work on a special gift for their families.

The month ends with holiday parties for both groups. Parents, grandparents, siblings and friends will join us. Children in both groups perform a sample of their music activities and then we adjourn to the classrooms where we enjoy some holiday treats. We close for Christmas break and will reopen for more fun and adventures on January 2.

Have a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

Lee Frank

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP UPDATE

November was quite a busy month!

Thanks to the hard work of the group and the generosity of several families Operation Christmas Child was a resounding success. We were able to collect and send out 29 boxes to children in need around the world. So many people brought in supplies that we ran out of boxes! In December we are going to put the remaining supplies to use by creating boxes for local families in need.

We also held our first overnight at St. Paul's! Eight members of the Middle School Youth participated in an evening of fellowship and fun. After Chinese food and make-your-own pizzas we gathered for a night service led by Chris, then lightened it up with a game of prayer book dominoes and Sardines. We topped the night of fun off with ice cream sundaes and a movie. Special thanks to Ron Presti and Christine Thompson for preparing breakfast.

Finally we helped make Care Packages for college students with the High School youth group and stored extra cookies for caroling.

Our next meeting will be Sunday Dec. 4th during the service. We will be working on assembling the local Operation Christmas Child boxes. Hope to see you there!

Karin Baker and Matt Skavenski

Save the Date! Our annual trip to support the Massachusetts Special Olympics basketball tournament in Worcester is **Sunday, March 11**. Signups will begin in late January. See Suzanne Johnson if you have any questions. Hope you can join us.

CATECHESIS CORNER



Catechesis families,

Our main announcement this month is that there will be

NO CATECHESIS CLASSES IN DECEMBER.

This is due to the pageant and rehearsals, which start after the children's sermon on Dec 4th, and the timing of the holidays – we didn't think anyone would want class on Christmas or New Year's!

Given this, we have gotten a head start on some pre-Nativity lessons in November. Both Atria are going well, with good attendance and happy and engaged children. Often they are each engaged on their mats with a different activity. They are so good about putting things back and taking turns. We started the month learning about the Holy Land, showing them on relief maps the places Jesus went. We then heard the Annunciation, where Mary is visited by an angel with news of the baby. Catechesis II, our older group, is also learning the less familiar story of Mary visiting Elizabeth. (Notice how many of the Bible stories we present in the Catechesis curriculum feature women.) Finally on the first Sunday of Advent we discussed Advent and made small wreaths.

In December the children will all be welcome to join in the pageant, and learn the full Nativity story in the best way, by helping to act and tell it. See the pageant entry for details of rehearsals. Just in case any of the younger ones find the big Sunday rehearsals a bit much, we will keep an Atrium open to provide a quiet retreat.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas.

Amanda Hubbard, Ellen Ryan and Carol Hokana

Women's Group Meeting Tuesday, December 6

Advent and the Story of Mary and Elizabeth – discussion led by Chris

The Women's Group will meet on Tuesday, December 6 in the Library at the church. Chris will lead a discussion about Advent and will explore the story of Mary and Elizabeth's visit. We will have refreshments beginning at 7 PM and the discussion will begin at 7:30.

Luke's Gospel tells that once Mary became pregnant, she went for an extended visit to her older cousin Elizabeth, who was also pregnant. What did these two women talk about for three months as they laid low and waited for two extraordinary miracles to occur? What gifts of companionship in the midst of uncertainty and anticipation did these two women offer to each other? We'll explore how their story offers us inspiration to be companions to others in times of expectation and uncertainty.

All women of the parish are welcome! Please join us as we welcome Chris to his first meeting with the Women's Group.



SUPPORT ST. PAUL'S THROUGH AMAZON!

If you're doing your Christmas shopping at Amazon.com, don't forget to visit St. Paul's website first: www.stpaulsbedford.org. Click on the Amazon link on the homepage, and every dollar you spend earns money for St. Paul's. Every purchase counts!

Christmas Pageant 2011



Please mark your calendars for the following rehearsal dates

Sunday, December 18th – 10AM – Christmas Pageant
 Saturday, December 17th 9AM - Lead characters
 Saturday, December 17th - 10AM – Full cast
 Sunday, December 11th – 10AM – during Sunday School
 Sunday, December 4th – 10AM – rehearsal after Children's Sermon (Family Sunday)

If you know now your child/children might have a conflict with the pageant and/or these particular rehearsals, please let me know and I can cast them accordingly.

Everyone child is welcome to participate and urged to do so!!!

Any questions please contact Carol Wait or Andrea Hayes.



Have you made a switch on the church calendar?

Attention all altar servers, greeters, and ushers! A schedule is posted inside the closet door of the far left altar server closet in the library. If you switch responsibilities with someone else, please mark the calendar or call the office so we know who is assigned each Sunday. We are now printing the names in the bulletin, so keep the list up to date!

Karaoke Night Save the Date!



Karaoke Night is a fundraising event to be held in January 21st, 2012. If you are interested in helping in some way, please contact Emily Mitchell, who will be spearheading this event. St. Paul's will host another fundraising event in the Spring. The Fundraising Committee is currently looking for fundraising ideas and volunteers to run and help with the event. Support will be provided to everyone interested in leading and helping out with the event. For more information, please contact Sue Marasa or Louisa Saladino-Kuhl.

ST. PAUL'S WEBSITE



Our website, www.stpaulsbedford.org, is getting a facelift! During the last week of December, we'll be shifting our website to a new host and ISP. The content of our existing site—Chris's sermons, our Epistle archive, information about our various ministries, and our Amazon Associate link—will be preserved, but we'll have a chance to add even more functionality and content to our new site, including a Google calendar to keep track of all our goings-on. The web address and all email aliases, including Tracy's and Chris's emails, will remain the same.

Emily Mitchell will be in touch with all the ministry leads in the coming weeks (if she hasn't contacted you already) to discuss any updates that may be needed to the content. If you have any questions or changes you'd like to request, please feel free to contact Emily. It's our hope that the transition to the new site will be completed seamlessly by the first week of January.

Community Table Dates

February 9th
 April 12th

OUTREACH AT ST. PAUL'S



DECEMBER MISSION OF THE MONTH:

The Gift of Giving

ADVENT FAIR HOLIDAY GIFTS BENEFIT HEIFER PROJECT AND FRIENDS FOR MATTY

Puzzled about what to get for the boss or that aunt who already has everything? Don't forget Heifer cards! With a \$10 gift to Heifer International, give a gift which helps a needy family. Heifer International works with communities around the world to end hunger and poverty by providing animals to needy families, giving them economic security and better nutrition. This year we will also have gifts benefiting "Friends for Matty," a Bedford-based organization providing financial assistance to families with children who are battling cancer.



THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, HELP FAMILIES IN NEED

Help us "UNDECORATE" our Giving Tree and help make the holidays brighter for residents of Alternative House, a shelter for battered women and their children. We will also be gathering gifts for families in temporary housing here in Bedford.

On the First Sunday of Advent, our Giving Tree will be decorated with ornaments listing specific requests. Please sign up to purchase a gift and take the ornament to attach to your gift.

If you are unable to shop, checks are always welcome. Mark the memo, Giving Tree. **DEADLINE for gifts is Sunday, December 18.**

UPDATE ON OUR NOVEMBER MISSION: OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Thank you to the Middle School Youth who took on this project and sent 29 boxes to Operation Christmas Child. Some of the boxes will be tracked so we can find out what part of the world they went to. Leftover gift contributions will be packaged up for families in temporary housing here in Bedford. Thank you to everyone who contributed to brighten the day of a child in need.



PLANNING FOR GIRL SCOUT SUNDAY



Girl Scouts®

On Sunday, January 15 there will be a meeting in the library after church for all Girl Scouts, past and present, who would like to help plan Girl Scout Sunday on March 11. Bring ideas for a service project! If you cannot attend, but would like to participate in the service, contact Caroline Larson.

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church
100 Pine Hill Road
Bedford, MA 01730**

**Non-profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Bedford MA 01730
Permit No. 11**

Sunday Service of Holy Eucharist: 10:00 a.m.
Office hours: Tuesday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
Telephone: 781- 275-8262
Fax: 781- 687-9070
E-mail: info@stpaulsbedford.org

Staff:

The Reverend Christopher S. Wendell, Rector
Tracy Lane, Parish Administrator
Joan Reddy, Music Director
Bob Godoy, Sexton

Officers:

Emily Mitchell, Co-Warden
Paul Ciaccia, Co-Warden
David Woodward, Treasurer
Katie West, Clerk

Vestry:

Betsey Anderson
Cassie Baker
Arthur Fergusson
Lisa Hafer
Sharon Healey
Carol Hokana
Rene Seaton

There is a grace approaching
that we shun as much as death.
It is the completion of our birth.

It does not come in time, but in timelessness
when the mind sinks into the heart
and we remember who we are.

It is an insistent grace that draws us
to the edge and beckons us to surrender
safe territory and enter our enormity.

We know we must pass beyond knowing
and fear the shedding.

But we are pulled upward nonetheless
through forgotten ghosts and unexpected angels
realizing it doesn't make sense
to make sense anymore

This morning the universe danced before you
as you sang – it loves that song!

—*Stephen and Ondrea Levine*

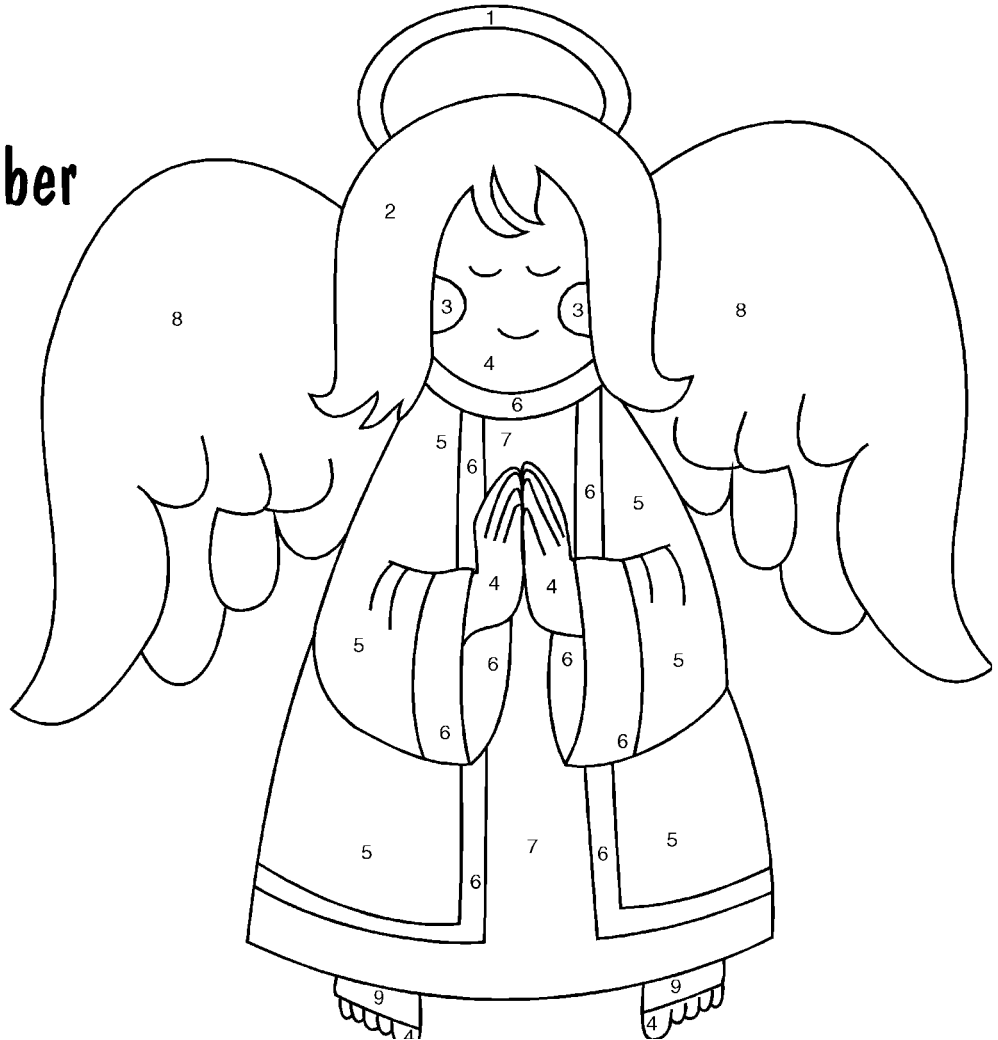


Kids Challenge

All children of the parish are invited to complete these puzzles. If you return them to the church office completed as best you can so we can display them, you may then collect a small prize from Rev. Chris!

Christmas Color-by-number

- 1=Gold
- 2=Black
- 3=Light Red
- 4=Skin color
- 5=Green
- 6=Dark Blue
- 7=Light Blue
- 8=Grey
- 9=Brown



Peace Word Jumble

Peace	I	I	have	leave	said	with	this	you	to	my	you	peace	so	I	that	give	in	to	me	you	you	I
may	do	have	not	peace	give	In	to	the	you	world	as	you	the	face	world	persecution	gives	But				
Do	take	not	courage	let	I	your	have	hearts	conquered	be	the	troubled	world									

Starting with the first word, write it and every other word in the blanks below. Read the verse.

_____ , _____
 _____ . _____
 _____ . _____
 _____ . _____
 _____ . _____

John 14:27

Now start with the second word and write every other word in the blanks below. Read this verse.

_____ , _____

 _____ . _____
 _____ . _____
 _____ ; _____
 _____ ! _____ John 16:33

ST. PAUL'S ADVENT FAIR



St. Paul's will hold its 2011 Advent Fair on Saturday, December 3rd from 9:00 to 2:00. This all-parish event provides a major portion of our annual fundraising revenue and is a wonderful opportunity for fellowship. It's not too late to help!

Donate jams, jellies, relishes, etc. to the ever-popular **COUNTRY KITCHEN**. And, if you love baking, remember we'll need breads, pies, cookies, and sweet treats to sell for the holidays. Consider making gingerbread or gingersnaps. If you bake a cake, please make it a single layer for ease of transport.

Dust off your cookbooks and make delicious homemade soup for our **SOUPS-TO-GO** section of the Country Kitchen. Containers are available in the kitchen. Make and freeze!!

Save good quality new or gently used items you don't need for our **WHITE ELEPHANT** sale. Also, donate any **BOOKS, DVDs**, etc. (in good condition) you may not need/read anymore for our book sale. All of these are a great way to recycle and help St. Paul's at the same time.

VOLUNTEER to set up, to help the day of the fair or to clean up. The more the merrier!! Sign-up sheets are available at the church.

Buy and sell tickets for the **iPad 2 RAFFLE** - \$10 each or 3 for \$25.

Drop off items for the fair after 2 PM on Friday, December 2nd. We need to borrow card tables for the library – please drop off on Friday.

Our **OUTREACH** efforts at the fair will be Heifer International and the Friends for Matty Foundation, a non-profit organization helping families of children with cancer.

Bring your friends and family. Come to shop for wonderful gifts, beautiful gift baskets, delicious homemade foods, the chance to win the iPad2 or a Silent Auction item and a bargain or two in the white elephant and used book rooms. Activities will be available for children and lunch will be served at the Snack Bar.

Payment for items purchased may be made by credit card (new this year), cash or checks.

Any questions, please contact **Betsey Anderson**.