

Frankly Speaking

December 2006

Advent Season, Year C

St Paul's Episcopal Church, Woodville, TX

Break Down the Walls; Come, Know Jesus (Holy Ghost Power)

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

What? I'm too early? It's only just turned December?

Nope. 'Fraid not. Yes, it's early December, but I'm **not** too early, because Advent began December 3rd.

What *is* Advent? Why is it important?

Advent is the first season of the liturgical year. It begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas – which can be as early as the Sunday after Thanksgiving, depending on how the calendar falls. This year, however, Advent is later because Christmas is early in the week and we always count backwards from Christmas to find the first Sunday.

Advent is a penitential season, the time of preparation for the birth of Jesus. Although chronologically Jesus was born about 2,010 years ago, in the church year we enact the drama each year as though it were happening in our "time."

This practice has its roots in ancient traditions. Just as the miracle of the candles (Hanukkah) was and is celebrated by the Jews every year as though it were happening anew, we enact our liturgical drama of expectation and birth.

ADVENT (Continued on page 5)

FR STEVE'S ANNIVERSARY

On Sunday, December 10, we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of Fr. Steve's ordination to the priesthood. **Church will start at 10:30 for this day only** and the Assembly of God congregation will join us.

A gala Open House and Reception will follow church, taking the place of coffee hour, with a light lunch of appetizers and finger foods. Please contact Reggie or Nancy to let them know if and/or what you would like to contribute.

NOTE:

NO GIFTS, PLEASE, or make a donation to your favorite charity or worthy cause on his behalf.

NOTE the change in time for church for this event!



"Frank" wearing the liturgical color of the season

FROM THE WEBSITE

stpaulswoodville.com

I'm distributing little booklets titled "Why I Am An Episcopalian" for all our families/members as an Advent gift. I hope you take the time to read this. It is an excellent view of our church from a former Mennonite pastor who chose to be an Episcopalian.

Advent is a quasi-penitential Season of the Church Year, and it is also the beginning of a New Church Year. We will be in Lectionary Year C, starting with December 3 and all the way until next Advent.

The first thing you will notice on the first Sunday of Advent is the blue hangings on the altar and my blue vestments. Advent is the only season which uses blue. Then, you will notice the Advent wreath placed in front of the altar rail. The wreath has four candles, one for each Sunday of Advent. The pink one is for Advent III, also known as Rose Sunday. The reason for the Rose color is that, like in Lent, the church relaxed the penitential discipline of Advent a bit for one week.

What do I mean by penitential? A season for self-examination and doing good works to prepare us for the Great Feast of Christ Mass which is coming soon. One of the best ways to explain it is that we all need a rhythm to our lives. Advent and Lent are more spare seasons, reflective and preparatory for the glorious celebrations of Christmas and Easter which follow. We appreciate glorious celebration more when it is not all the time—thus the ebb and flow of the seasons of the Church Year make a lot of sense.

Back to the Advent Wreath—we light a different candle each week of Advent, and then by Christmas, all four are lit plus the Christ Candle in the center.

The most difficult thing for church people to accomplish during Advent is to focus on preparing for Christmas and not getting caught up with our culture which begins celebrating Christmas as soon as Thanksgiving is over (if not before). I'll try to spare you my annual "Bah Humbug" sermon on how we have lost the meaning of Christmas this year.

Fr Steve+

WHAZZUP? Upcoming Events

Dec 3: First Sunday of Advent

Dec 6: Taize service, 6 p.m.

Dec 10: Gala celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Fr Steve's ordination, after church

Dec 24: Christmas Eve Festive Holy Eucharist 5 p.m. Christmas Dinner to follow, by reservation

Jan 6: Feast of the Epiphany, 12 noon Holy Eucharist. Lunch to follow

Jan 28: Bishop High, Visitation & Confirmation

Feb 1-4: Cursillo #215, The Cursillo of the Power of the Holy Ghost, Camp Allen. Lou Campbell, Rector; Fr Steve, Asst Spiritual Director

Feb 16: Relay for Life Valentine's Day Dinner/Dance Fundraiser

Feb 20: Shrove Tuesday with Pancake Supper

Feb 21: Ash Wednesday

Feb 24: Moon Magic, St Paul's School fundraiser, at Our Lady of the Pines Family Center

Have an event to add to the calendar? Put the information in the Newsletter mailbox (top shelf) or email to frsteve@stpaulswoodville.com or to Nancy at nksecaur@yahoo.com

ASK FR. STEVE

Q: What's in the Book of Common Prayer and why should I care?

A: The BCP contains several sections, including liturgies for the Daily Offices (Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline), the Holy Eucharist Rites I and II, and special rites. Special Rites include liturgies for Marriage, Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination (of Deacons, Priests and Bishops), Reconciliation of a Penitent (confession) and Burial.

*The Prayer Book
is the heart of
Anglicanism.
...an invaluable
companion*

In addition, it contains the entire Book of Psalms ("the Psalter"), special sections containing Collects (formalized prayers for various occasions, Saints' Days and Feast Days), Prayers for the Sick, Prayers at the Time of Death, prayers for other occasions, lectionary readings for all services of the church, and historical documents of Anglicanism.

Many people find that the use of the Daily Office keeps them mindful of their relationship with the Lord and enhances their prayer. You can find Morning Prayer on page 79 and Evening Prayer on page 120. Starting on page 137 are very user-

friendly, one-page daily devotions for morning, noon, and evening. These can be read in just a few minutes as a quick devotional or used with Forward Day by Day or another meditation or study program for a more extensive spiritual aid.

If you do not have a Prayer Book of your own, you are welcome to take one from the pew home for study. Just bring it back for Sunday worship. If you would like to order one of your own, the cost is about \$15. We can

order one for you.

The BCP is not a substitute for the Holy Bible but, rather, a companion to it.

The Prayer Book is the heart of Anglicanism. Its use has sustained millions of Christians throughout the centuries. It is an invaluable companion for all Anglicans and, indeed, for many other Christians who have discovered the treasure therein.

Blessings,
Fr. Steve+

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THOSE CRAZY EPISCOPALIANS!

Why do they do that?

Why do Episcopalians read everything out of a book instead of doing things spontaneously?

Back in the 16th century, as part of the English Reformation, the Anglican church (the Church of England, our “mother” church) had tremendous social impact by making the rites of the church available, in the common language, to anyone who could read. That meant anyone could read the prayers for and among themselves, without requiring a trained clergyman to do it for them. That was the first step in enabling the laity!

The book was even called The Book of Common Prayer, “common” meaning “belonging to all.” It is a collective act of worship. Even if we are alone when we say the prayers in it, the fact that others all over the world are saying the same prayers pulls us into communion – togetherness with them. And Jesus said “where 2 or 3 are gathered, there am I.” So we can be gathered even though miles separate us, by the act of saying the same prayers.

To the surprise of many critics and fans alike, more than half of the words in the Book of Common Prayer (or, the B.C.P.)

come directly from Scripture. Many of the prayers come from ancient liturgies dating to the very early Church.

Other denominations that do not use a prayer book still follow a specific format for their service and usually for their prayers as well. The spontaneity is much less than it may appear to be. The major difference is that in the liturgically-based denominations - which are the Episcopal church, the Lutheran church and the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches – anyone who can read can follow along.

We Episcopalians treasure our Book of Common Prayer. Some of us have even been accused of worshipping the Book instead of the Word. We must remember that the BCP points us to God in Christ and the particular edition of the BCP is merely a function of the age in which it was published. That is, the 1979 BCP was an update of the 1928 BCP which was an update of the 1895 BCP, etc, etc, etc. The bottom line is that we still worship the One God in Three Persons who created us, loves us, redeems us and guides us.

CHRISTMAS EVE

St Paul’s has had a tradition of holding a dinner in the parish hall following the Christmas Eve service. Since many of us do not have kinfolk nearby to celebrate with, this provides an opportunity to celebrate with our church family.

This is **not** potluck. It is a real dinner with meat and potatoes and salad and all It is, as Jim Knecht would say, ‘slap ya grandma’ good!

We ask a donation of \$5 per person to help with the expense of providing the food. If this is a hardship for you, especially for those of you with a large family, come anyway and contribute what you can!

In the past, people have “hosted” a table, bringing their own choice of tableware and decorations. Each table is different and the effect is so festive!

If you have not participated in the past, consider doing so this year. Call the church office to make reservations so we know how many to expect and do not have tables sitting empty.

If you are interested in hosting a table, call Pat Knecht.

WHAZZUP? Upcoming Events 2

Taize Service

We will hold a Taize service on Wed, Dec 6, at 6 p.m. Taize services are very peaceful, offering scripture readings, meditation, and simple, quiet music. Come and try it.

Christmas Eve Dinner

Would you like to host a table for the festive Christmas Eve dinner following the 5 p.m. Festive Holy Eucharist? Contact Pat Knecht.

If you plan to attend, please be sure to call the church office to make a reservation.

Bishop High Visit and Confirmation

Bishop High will make a visitation to St Paul’s on January 28 for Confirmation and Reception.

If you have not been confirmed and would like to be, or if you were confirmed in the Catholic or Lutheran Church and wish to be received into the Episcopal Church, please contact Fr Steve.

Relay for Life

Look for information in upcoming issues of *Frankly Speaking*.

CONSECRATION SUNDAY

This year, we used a stewardship program that I am very familiar with and comfortable with - The New Consecration Sunday. We had fantastic results - a 27% increase in Estimated Giving pledged for 2007 to enable St. Paul's to do the mission and ministry that the Lord is calling us to.

I am grateful to all of you and to our Lord. I am especially proud of our Stewardship Committee: David Askins, Chuck Hollis, and Woodie Cone. Our guest speaker, Ben Hancock of Jasper, was just excellent and very inspirational.

For next year, David Rust is joining the Stewardship Committee. We will conduct our Time and Talent survey in the spring and hold a Planned Giving Workshop sometime after Easter.

Planned Giving

This is a topic I have been interested in for several years and attended a conference on in 2002. One of the facts that was stressed at the conference is that, in the next 20 years or so, something like \$60 billion will change hands, from one generation to the next. Rather than have funds evaporate in the murky depths of probate court, people of means are urged to plan in advance to maximize tax benefits for their heirs. Likewise, advance planning can enable their favorite charities (like our parish and our Diocesan entities) to flourish deep into the 21st century and beyond. After all, our ancestors and forebears have funded the buildings and properties that our churches enjoy now. We should do the same for those who come after us.

My favorite illustration of the urgency of this need is a true story about a small Episcopal church in northern Wisconsin. They had a designated fund for eventually replacing their aging electronic organ with a nice pipe organ. When a beloved member died - one who had been on the vestry several times - the parish was delighted to

receive a bequest in his will for \$50,000 for their organ fund. They were delighted, that is, until they learned that he had left **\$3 million** to the local chapter of Ducks Unlimited! Now, I have nothing against ducks, but don't we all agree that God's Church deserves more than God's ducks?

Surely, had there been an endowment fund for new mission or new ministries, with appropriate safeguards to assure the money would be spent as designated, he would have been overjoyed to give at least a million dollars to his church. But since no one had set up such a fund or was bold enough to ask for such a gift, he responded to the people who **did** ask.

It is true that an endowment fund can be a millstone that holds back the vitality of a parish, if the proceeds are used in lieu of annual giving by the members. In other words, if a small parish has access to, say, \$50,000 in endowment earnings that are being used to pay utilities and diocesan assessment, then the members are denied the joy of giving back to God out of the abundance that he has poured out on them.. 3209258

An endowment fund which is specifically for mission and ministry can and should strengthen the parish and generate excitement about the fund's purpose. For example, St Paul's could set up an endowment fund with proceeds designated for mission trips in Appalachia or Central America or the Big Bend or anywhere that someone had a burning passion for ministry. We could partially fund a medical clinic in Honduras or send high school students to a work camp like Habitat for Humanity in Appalachia or Alabama. This could be so energizing and exciting for our parish! It could contribute to our growth in numbers, and it would certainly please our Lord! In short, we need to **THINK BIG! DREAM BIG!** Because Our Lord is the author of creation and wants us be part of his holy intent to redeem the world.

DID YOU KNOW?

St Paul's Church has a website: stpaulswoodville.com See an excerpt from it on the front page.

The entry area of the church building is called a "narthex." It provides a transition from the world outside and is where we should stop talking about outside things and begin to think about worshipping God.

The pew area is called the "nave" - sharing the root word with "navy." When you look up, it looks like the inside of a ship, doesn't it? How appropriate, since we are all on this journey together.

The altar area is called the "sanctuary." Yes, other denominations call the pew area the sanctuary, but it really is the altar area, which at St Paul's is enclosed by the communion rail. This term goes back hundreds of years. The king's soldiers could not violate the holiness of the altar to seize one who sought safety there, so anyone reaching the altar found sanctuary. The name "sanctuary" shares the root word with "sanctus," meaning "holy."

Note that it isn't time for celebration yet, because Jesus hasn't been "born" yet, in terms of our liturgical drama. So it's too early to sing happy songs about his birth.

Instead, we sing about preparation, about recognition of our **need** for him, for his coming, for his birth. We sing about our sadness over our falling so far short of what God wants for us to be.

We face our shortcomings, we confess our sins, we long for One who will redeem us. We wait for Jesus to be born – in our liturgical year and in our hearts and lives.

When Jesus is "born," or, rather, at Christmas Eve services, we change to Christmas songs. We sing about the miracle of God sending the One who will redeem us. We sing about the wonder of such amazing love, the wonder that the Creator of the entire universe would choose to become helpless flesh in

a small town on a small planet that cosmically is like . . .

Dam B? Indian Springs? Cut 'n' Shoot?

Advent is not a time to be ignored or glossed over. Facing our smallness, our mortality, our sinfulness is neither fun nor easy. Yet, how can we fully celebrate the miracle unless we first fully recognize how great is our need of it?

So when (if?) Fr. Steve grumps "bah, humbug" over the incessant background chatter of Christmas carols in October, November and December (before December 24th), he's just expressing his desire that we all experience Advent fully, that we prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus into our lives.

DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

Not many times will you catch me not wearing my Daughters cross. I will be ready should God put someone in my path to evangelize that day. The cross is noticed by the cashier at the grocery store, the person next to me on the airplane and even at the doctor's office. The usual thing people say is "What a pretty cross. Where did you get it?" This is my window of opportunity to evangelize.

I proudly explain that I am a member of The Order of the Daughters of the King and that this is my "habit." It reminds me that I cannot live a day without God. I explain that I've taken a vow of **prayer, service and evangelism**.

This may be the first seed planted to get the person thinking about their spiritual life, or it could be the final nudge that gets them back into church, only God knows. But be assured that God uses us in many different settings for His Glory and all we need to be concerned about is to be ready and obedient.

Our handbook states that we are to wear our cross **faithfully**. This is not just a suggestion; this is a mandate found in our by-laws. In our service of admission, the priest will bless our

cross with the words, "Bless, Lord this cross and grant to your servant such abundance of your grace, that she may wear this sacred symbol in the spirit of humility and with devotion...." Then the priest will hand the cross to the new Daughter with the words, "Wear *faithfully* this mark of your membership.

Wearing the Daughters cross daily is habit-forming and contagious!

NOTE: Members of the DOK pray daily for all clergy of the church and for any needs brought to their attention. .

The Daughters now have a prayer request box in the narthex (foyer) of the church. Any prayer requests can be placed in the box and the Daughters will add them to their daily individual and group prayers.

If you would like more information about the DOK, contact Ann Morrison,

SMILES FROM THE BIBLE

Q. What kind of man was Boaz before he married?

A. Ruth-less.

Q. Who was the greatest financier in the Bible?

A. Noah. He was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.

Q. What do they call pastors in Germany?

A. German Shepherds.

ADVENT HYMN: O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

The verses of the 9th century Latin hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," are derived from the "O ANTIPHONS". These seven great "O's" mark the last week of Advent. One is sung each day until Christmas Eve. They sum up the longing of Advent as they depict the desperate plight of humanity in need of a Savior, and address Christ with seven grand titles, pleading with him to come save his people. The verse we know as the first was actually the last, climactic verse in the series.

In Latin the letters which begin the titles form an acrostic S-A-R-C-O-R-E which when reversed spells ERO CRAS meaning "I shall be there tomorrow". In other words, this is the answer (spoken the day before Christmas!) that echoes back from the One to whom the people call.

Here are the Seven "O" antiphons:

O WISDOM, (Sapientia) who came from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end and ordering all things mightily and sweetly: come, and teach us the way of prudence.

O LORD (Adonai) AND RULER of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the flame of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: come, and redeem us with

outstretched arm.

O ROOT (Radix) OF JESSE, who stands for an ensign of the people, before whom kings shall keep silence and unto whom the Gentiles shall make supplication: come to deliver us, and do not tarry .

O KEY (Clavis) OF DAVID, and Sceptre of the House of Israel, who opens and no man shuts; who shuts and no man opens: come, and bring forth the captive from his prison, he who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O DAWN/LIGHT FROM THE EAST (Oriens), brightness of the light eternal, and Sun of Justice: come, and enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O KING (Rex) OF THE GENTILES and their desired One, the Cornerstone that makes both one: come, and deliver man, whom You formed out of the dust of the earth.

O EMMANUEL, (Emmanuel) God with us, our King and Lawgiver, the expected of the nations and their Savior: come to save us, O Lord our God.

<http://www.worshipmap.com/lyrics/storyveni.html>

SMILES FROM THE BIBLE (Continued from page 5)

Q. Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

A. Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

Q. What kind of motor vehicles are in the Bible?

A. Jehovah drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden in a Fury. David's Triumph was heard throughout the land. Also, probably a Honda, because the apostles were all in one Accord.

Q. Who was the greatest comedian in the Bible?

A. Samson. He brought the house down.

Q. What excuse did Adam give to his children as to why he no longer lived in Eden?

A. Your mother ate us out of house and home.

Q. Which servant of God was the most flagrant lawbreaker in the Bible?

A. Moses. He broke all 10 commandments at once.

Q. Which area of Palestine was especially wealthy?

A. The area around Jordan. The banks were always overflowing.

Q. Who is the greatest baby sitter mentioned in the Bible?

A. David. He rocked Goliath to a very deep sleep.

Q. Which Bible character had no parents?

A. Joshua, son of Nun.

Q. Why didn't they play cards on the Ark?

A. Because Noah was standing on the deck.

Finally... Did you know it's a sin for a woman to make coffee? Yup, it's in the Bible. It says . . . "He-brews!"

SAINTS' DAYS AND HOLY DAYS IN DECEMBER

Christmas, of course, is the biggest day we can think of in December. But did you know we also celebrate 4 other major feast days?

St Nicholas' Day is observed on December 6th. St Nicholas was Bishop of Myra, in present-day Turkey. He was highly revered for his good and charitable works, his love of children and his great love of the Lord Jesus. He is the real-life, flesh-and-blood Saint Nicholas. His name was widely known in Europe and the various forms of it became the names we associate with Christmas: "Sint Nicolaas" to "Sinter Klaus" to "Santa Claus." St Nicholas is the Patron Saint of children, sailors and travelers.

St Stephen's Day is observed on December 26th. He was a deacon and the first martyr of the Church. It was he who was being stoned to death at the feet of Saul, the persecutor of the early church, Saul whose name was changed to Paul after Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. In the English Christmas carol "Good King Wenceslaus" we sing "Good King Wenceslaus looked out, *on the feast of Stephen*, as the snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even...."

St John's Day, observed on December 27th, celebrates the apostle John, who established the Johannine school of

Christian theology, the gospel of John. The two epistles, First and Second John, are ascribed to him and his followers. He referred to himself as "the beloved disciple" in the Gospel of John. Although many Christians have believed St John to be the author of the book of Revelation, it is more likely to have been written by a follower (or followers) of John the Baptist.



The Feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28th, honors the unnumbered and unnamed baby boys who were put to death by order of King Herod, who was enraged after hearing from the Wise Men that a new king had been born in Bethlehem. This story is a good example of how the Bible doesn't blink at gruesome details, and it counters the argument that "it's too good to be true" and made up as a fiction. After all, if you were inventing the story of Jesus, why would you put in murdered babies?

If you look at an Ordo Kalendar, you will see that nearly every day we have someone to recognize: apostles, bishops, martyrs, saints. Our church year contains a wealth of history and celebration.

If you have never seen an Ordo Kalendar, pick up one this year and learn more about our rich tradition.

WEBSITES ON ST NICHOLAS

Here are some websites, thanks to Google. This is just a sample. For about 270,990 more, Google "St Nicholas, bishop of Myra"

<http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/19981101/SAINTS/nicholas.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/7175/stnich-page.html>

<http://www.stnicholascenter.org/Brix?pageID=38>

<http://www.stnicholascenter.org/Brix?pageID=40>

<http://www.stnicholascenter.org/Brix?pageID=45>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Nicholas

<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintn01.htm>

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11063b.htm>

<http://www.saint-nick.com/santa/santa01.asp> (a series of 6 pages, plus links)

http://dmoz.org/Society/Religion_and_Spirituality/Christianity/People/Saints/N/Saint_Nicholas_of_Myra/

http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nicholas/nicholas_of_myra1.html (see end for comments on women in the church)

<http://elvis.rowan.edu/~kilroy/JEK/12/06.html> (includes St Nicholas Day prayers)

Kids' websites on St Nicholas, via Google:

<http://stnicholas.kids.us/Brix?pageID=40>

<http://www.cptryon.org/prayer/child/nick.html>

Books to help children understand the relationship between St Nicholas, Santa Claus, and Christmas, also via Google:

<http://books.google.com/books?q=st+nicholas,+bishop+of+myra&ots=ugX-clhT8y&sa=X&oi=print&ct=title>

"I am Nicholas, a sinner," the old saint would say. "Nicholas, servant of Christ Jesus." (<http://www.joyfulheart.com/christmas/st-nick.htm>)

St Paul's Episcopal Church
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Break Down the Walls; Come, Know Jesus (Holy Ghost Power!)

**NOTE: The Church Office
will be closed on Christmas.**

Quick Peek at Upcoming...

Dec 3: First Sunday of Advent

Dec 6: Taize service 6 p.m.

Dec 10: Church at **10:30** today for
Anniversary Gala

Dec 22: Deadline for January
newsletter submissions

Dec 24: Christmas Eve 5 p.m.,
(dinner, by reservation, 6 p.m.)

Jan 6: Epiphany Service 6 p.m.

Jan 28: Bishop High Visit

CONSECRATION SUNDAY



Brunch was served on Consecration Sunday, Nov 12.