

E-Portion – December 2008



NB: A slightly different version of these notes will appear in The Landmark; that version was co-written with the Rev. Jerry Heslinga of First Baptist Church in Holden.

Welcome Aldrich was a farmer in the Jeffersonville section of Holden in the second half of the nineteenth century. While not a particularly wealthy man, he was a generous man. To honor him, his daughter left a bequest in his name to the Town of Holden in 1934; that bequest came to be known as the Welcome Aldrich Relief Fund. The income from that bequest has been used ever since to help residents of Holden in need. Since the late 1960s, these funds have been administered by the Council on Aging and used to offer funds for heating assistance and other necessities to our neighbors in need. When I was a member of the Holden Council on Aging a few years back I served on that subcommittee.

This past summer, our Town Manager, Brian Bullock, invited a group of citizens (including yours truly) to come together to reflect on the even greater challenges this coming winter might pose for some of our residents, especially related to the challenges our economy is facing and the anticipated increases for home heating costs. That committee consists of representatives of the Holden Chamber of Commerce, town officials, the fire chief and other community leaders directly involved with our most vulnerable populations. Eventually the group came to be known as Help at H.O.M.E. (Holden Outreach Managing Emergencies.) More details about this committee and its mission statement and membership can be found on the town's website at: http://www.townofholden.net/Pages/holdenMA_HelpAtHome/index.

Our hope has been to avoid having people face the untenable choice between either having something to eat or heating their homes this winter. The primary focus of the committee's work is on food and fuel assistance. Education is also another aspect of this mission; in particular regarding fire safety and energy conservation. Early on a couple of things became clear to members of Help at H.O.M.E. First, the resources available for grants from the Welcome Aldrich Relief Fund would not be nearly enough to meet the needs we expect to see this coming winter. Second, it didn't make any sense to try to "reinvent the wheel." For these reasons, Help at H.O.M.E. committed to raising additional funds for the Welcome Aldrich Relief Fund in order to meet the anticipated needs our community will be facing this coming winter.

I am very grateful to the Mission Committee at St. Francis, which has designated our Christmas offering to this work. For those who may not be aware of it, St. Francis designates the entire plate offering from Christmas to be sent beyond our walls each year for a particular need in the world. So I hope that as you and your family come to worship this Christmas you will be generous in meeting this local need.

I write these words at the beginning of the holy season of Advent. We are beginning to prepare for the birth of our Lord, not among the rich and powerful but among the poor and downtrodden. God is a Giver—and that is central to the meaning of the Incarnation and God's self-emptying love to be in solidarity with us and especially with the poor. It is in response to that love that we ourselves give gifts. It is a wonderful tradition to give to those near and dear to us: to find that perfect gift for the person who means so much to us. But it seems to me that we most closely mimic God's love when we give to those near and far whose names we do not even know. Opportunities like the Living Gift Market or the Welcome Aldrich Relief Fund give us concrete ways to show compassion to the stranger in need, and for us to be mindful that whenever we give to the least of these among us, truly we give to Christ himself.

Joy and peace,

Rich

Associate Rector

The vestry approved a motion at the November 12, 2008 meeting to change Jill Williams' job title from "Curate" to "Associate Rector". This new title reflects the changes for Jill from deacon to priest a year ago, and an end of her time of "curacy". Jill's new responsibilities, which will focus on ministry to youth and families, will take effect immediately.



Your pledges for 2009 are the joyful part of this ministry. As faithful members of St. Francis, we continue to use our treasure to thank God for our wonderful life together both inside and outside of our walls. To all who have pledged so far, thank you.

On the business side, as this issue of *The Little Portion* goes to press, the congregation has returned 118 pledges totaling \$247,513, representing an average increase of 3%. If you have not returned your pledge card, please do so as soon as possible. The finance committee is preparing the 2009 budget and their job is made easier with pledge numbers in hand. If you need another card, please contact me or call the church office and we

will get you a card. Please feel free to email or call me with your pledge or other questions.
lacinma@earthlink.net (508) 829-7223

Thanks,
Laura Caswell



Parish Nursing

Are you a nurse (any background or experience) who may be interested in sharing your nursing talents with fellow parishioners?

The St. Francis Parish Nursing Program is being re-focused. Envisioned as a "team" of nurses from varying backgrounds, this Parish Nursing Ministry "team" will be a component of the Pastoral Care ministry of St. Francis. This team of nurses would draw upon a potential wealth of nursing knowledge and experience to assist the congregation (as individuals, families, and as a group) to care for one another in the many aspects of health needs, considering physical, psychosocial and social needs, but remembering that a spiritual dimension to life is a vital force in the promotion and maintenance of health.

Please consider how you can help. Contact Mary Lindfors at melindfors@charter.net or Marge Tremblay at mbtremb@netzero.com (508-829-2414) for more information or to offer your assistance.

Year End Contributions

In order for your contribution to be tax-deductible in 2008 and on your 2008 giving statement, your checks must be received in the church office by Wednesday, December 31st, or if mailed, postmarked on December 31st. If you use e-banking, the bank must pay it by December 31st.

Thank you for your support.
Virginia Brink, Bookkeeper



Advent Worship Schedule

Saturdays 5:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist
 Sundays 8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist
 10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist
 Wednesdays 7:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist with Prayers for Healing



The Newcomer Reception will be Friday December 5th, 7:00 p.m. at St. Clare House. This is a casual, social occasion for anyone who is relatively new to St. Francis to meet other parishioners of the church and learn more about the ministries of St Francis.

We hope you will join us for light refreshments. Please sign up in the narthex or call Kathy Diehl 508-829-4835 or Linda Letourneau 508-829-9430.

Bible 101-C: Navigating Paul: A Critical Introduction to Paul's Theology
 (Led by the Rector)

This two-week class will meet at St. Clare House on Sunday, December 7 and 14 from 1:30 to 3 p.m. This is for beginners and those who wish to make a new beginning. While there is no way to cover the rich depth of St. Paul in two weeks we'll explore the contours of his theology in ways that it is hoped will re-introduce us to this important pastoral thinker. Our focus will be on the letters to the house-churches in Galatia and Corinth.

December 7: One in Christ: Paul Among Jews and Gentiles (Galatians)
 December 14: Faith, Hope, and Love in the Midst of Conflict (Corinthians)



It is our custom at St. Francis to build in a half-day "spiritual retreat" in the midst of Advent and Lent. This year we'll gather at St. Clare House on Saturday, December 6th for this time of quiet and nourishment. Meditations will be led by the rector, with times for a walk or silent meditation in between.

The schedule will be as follows:

8:30 a.m. Gathering Time
 8:45 a.m. Contemplative Morning Prayer
 reflection
 10:00 a.m. First Meditation, followed by a time for silent prayer and reflection
 11:00 a.m. Second Meditation, followed by a time for silent prayer and reflection
 12:00 p.m. Noonday Prayers and a simple lunch of soup, bread, and cheese

Please sign up on the Advent Resource Table



**Monday,
December 8th
6:00 p.m.**

Come join the fun at this family oriented party offered to the St. Francis family by Clown Alley. It is an especially fun time for children under 10 years old, with goodies, Santa, balloons, face painting, music and fun! A sign-up sheet is on the table in the narthex.

Don't forget your cameras for photos with Santa.

****Please note:** This will be the final Clown Alley Christmas Party. After the first of the year Clown Alley will no longer be meeting at St. Francis.

The Salisbury Singers present



**Sunday, December 14th at 4:00 p.m.
St. Francis Episcopal Church**

Admission is \$10.00
Please bring your Messiah score if you have one.
Booklets will be available to rent for \$5.00

Church School Advent Celebration



December 20/21 ~ The children will use the entire worship time for our Advent celebrations. Parents! If you're able to bring snack items for our parties, please sign up in the narthex. Cookies (homemade or store bought), brownies, "Munchkins," popcorn, juice. Thank you!

Please note: There will be no Church School on the weekend of December 27/28.



**Sunday, December 21st
"Caroling and Cookies"**

At 3:00 p.m. we will meet at the church to go Caroling. We will then return to St. Francis for cider, cocoa and cookies. Each family is asked to bring a plate of cookies to share.

Please sign up in the narthex so we will have enough food for all!

Christmas Worship Schedule

Wednesday, December 24th ~

3:00 p.m. Pageant with Holy Eucharist

4:30 p.m. Pageant with Holy Eucharist

8:30 p.m. Festival Eucharist

Thursday, December 25th ~

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Weekend after Christmas, December 27/28

5:00 p.m. & 8:00 a.m. Service of Holy Eucharist

10:00 a.m. Service of Lessons and Carols (no
Eucharist or Church School)



...Notes from your Mission Team

It is time again for the Heifer International Living Gift Market, scheduled for December 6 and 7. The market is a great opportunity to get Christmas gifts for those friends and family members who might be hard to buy for and it is a great way to make a statement about consumerism and the meaning of the Day. Not to be competitive, of course, but it is a chance to add a 7th consecutive Ark Award to St. Francis' list of collective good deeds.

Remember, too that fair trade coffee, thanks to Diane and Tom Wilson, is available after the 5 PM and 10 Eucharist each weekend. Other items have been added to the inventory, so stop and take a look. Proceeds will help underwrite the El Salvador Mission trip planned for mid-February. Speaking of El Salvador, be ready to welcome the Very Reverend Richard A. Bower, Executive Director of Fundacion Cristosal, to the parish on January 10 and 11. Dick and his wife, Stephanie, will join us for the weekend, and Dick will preach at all three services. Cristosal, of course, is the American non-profit with which we partner in El Salvador.

No doubt it is noted elsewhere, but you should know that the Christmas Offering this year will be donated to the Welcome Aldrich Fund. Operated by a local committee, the Fund provides emergency relief to Holden residents. Given the relative high cost of heating expenses this winter, the Mission Committee thought a donation to the Fund would help local folks who might have a tough time over the next few months.

Thanks to your generosity, the Mission Committee has made the following grants:

Wachusett Food Pantry	\$800
Rutland Food Pantry	200
Centro Las Americas	664
Good Samaritan Mission Council	500

The last grant is to assist in the medical education of a young Haitian woman met during the parish mission trip to La Ramana in the Dominican Republic some years ago.

Jim Bourque, Mission Chair

Living Nativity at Overlook Farm

The Christmas story will be reenacted at Heifer International's Overlook Farm, 216 Wachusett Street in Rutland on December 13th and 14th from 1:00 to 5:30 p.m. A live nativity, complete with animals will be presented at the beginning of each hour in the barn (dress warmly). Sleigh or hay rides will be available. Visit our gift shop featuring alternative gifts from Heifer International and free trade crafts from around the world. There is no charge for this event, but we ask everyone to bring a plate of cookies to share. An offering will be taken at the end of each presentation.



Our next services of Holy Baptism will be on the weekend of January 10th and 11th. If you would like to schedule a baptism please speak to Rich or Jill.

The deadline for the next Little Portion is Thursday, December 18th

Please have all information to the office by this date. You can leave it in the office mailbox or email it to stfran@verizon.net. The Little Portion will be mailed on Tuesday, December 23rd.

Please note: The office will be closed for the Christmas Holiday from Wednesday, December 24th through Friday, January 2nd. Regular office hours will resume on Monday, January 5th.

Epiphany Book Study

Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith

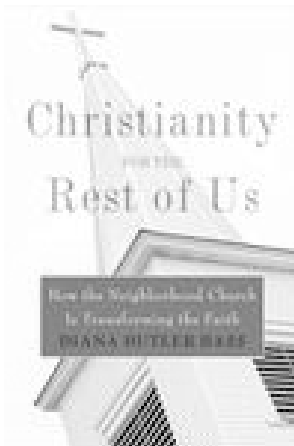
(Save the Dates and Buy the Book)

Discussion led by Rich and Jill

Wednesday, January 21st ~ 7:00 p.m. (after the service)
Part I: What Happened to the Neighborhood Church?

Wednesday, January 28th ~ 7:00 p.m. (after the service)
Part II: Ten Signposts of Renewal

Wednesday, February 4th ~ 7:00 p.m. (after the service)
Part III: From Tourists to Pilgrims



The Annual Meeting of St. Francis Episcopal Church will take place on Saturday, January 24th

The tentative schedule is as follows:

5:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist

6:00 p.m. Pot-luck supper with table conversations related to the
Discerning Our Future process

7:00 p.m. Annual Meeting (in the church) with elections and reports