

E-Portion – January 2009

*Glorify the Lord, O chill and cold,
drops of dew and flakes of snow.
Frost and cold, ice and sleet, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.*

Canticle 12, A Song of Creation, BCP 88

As this issue of *The Little Portion* goes to print, we remain in the midst of dealing with "Ice Storm 2008." My article inside of this issue reflecting on the closing of St. John's in Worcester was written before that ice storm hit, but I wanted to very briefly share a few additional thoughts here.

1. Our experiences of this storm are different based on many factors including our geographical diversity. Some have been hit very hard and others never lost power. But many in our parish as of this date are still without power a week after the storm hit and that remains very unsettling.
2. In a real sense we feel (and I feel as rector) "disconnected"--we rely so heavily on modern technology like the internet to keep us connected and without that resource it has been a challenge to communicate. But we can continue to use the old fashioned form of staying connected: prayer. We can continue to pray for one another and especially the most vulnerable among us, for whom this storm has been a very real challenge.
3. We can find Christ in all circumstances. Everywhere I go--the police station, the shelter at the Senior Center, the Big Y, and at church--people want to tell their stories. We need to lament together (i.e. complain!) and yet also remind one another that "it could be worse." In the midst of it all, with a lot of winter still ahead of us, we can be servants of Christ and instruments of God's peace. In the midst of it all there are many random acts of kindness worth sharing.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Rich



At their November 3, 2008 meeting, the vestry of St. John's Episcopal Church in Worcester reached the difficult decision to close their doors after 125 years of ministry. St. John's began on Lincoln Street, a mission of All Saints, where they remained until I-290 came through Worcester and dislocated them. It was at that point that they moved to their current location on Holden Street. Among the many wonderful accomplishments of the clergy and people of that congregation over twelve and a half decades was the decision made almost sixty years ago to start a mission in Holden under the leadership of the then rector, The Rev. John Parke. St. John's, in other words, helped give birth to St. Francis.

Dying is never easy. Even when we live in denial of our own deaths, there are those reminders that come our way from time to time that life is short: a childhood friend dies suddenly or we attend an Ash Wednesday liturgy and the priest reminds us we are dust or we stand at the gravesite of our life-partner of more than fifty years. But when it comes to institutions, including congregations, it may be even an even harder challenge to face the fact that they, too, have a lifespan. We tend to think they will last forever; but they do not. *All* created things are born and die: civilizations, banks, schools, and even congregations eventually come to an end. *Only* God is alpha and omega. In many ways, though, it can seem even harder to mourn the loss of an institution than the death of a person; partly, I think, because we assume they will outlast us—and usually they do.

Over the past few decades for myriad reasons, some previous members of St. John's have found their way to St. Francis. One of those former members, Doug Rayworth, now serves on our vestry; his family is an integral part of the life of St. Francis. A former rector of St. John's and his wife, Dick and Lorraine Hennigar, are also very much a part of our life at St. Francis. Countless other former members of the St. John's community are actively involved at St. Francis in a variety of ministries and our parish administrator, Karen Heath, continues to be a part of that congregation. The reverse is also true: our longtime Minister of Music, Chris Bergquist, has spent the past decade working at St. John's. The ties between our two congregations are strong, and I pray that you will keep all of these persons and the priest at St. John's, Lise Hildebrandt, in your prayers in the days and weeks ahead.

In addition, on Saturday, January 31 at 4 p.m., St. John's will celebrate their 125-year life with a liturgy that will be open to the public. I encourage all who can attend to do so as a sign of our support and love and affection for the people of St. John's. The following morning, St. John's will offer their last services before their members head out to seek new spiritual homes. Some of those members may end up making their way to St. Francis. While we always try to welcome newcomers into our midst, I hope that we can make a special effort to welcome any and all who may come our way from St. John's. This will not be an easy time for them, and I know that all of them (whether they end up at St. Francis or not) will remain in our thoughts and prayers as they grieve this loss, but also as they put their trust in Jesus and seek the Easter life he brings.

Peace,
Rich



...Notes from your Mission Team

I've heard some dispute as to whether it is the 6th or 7th Heifer Ark Award in a row, but there is no dispute that you raised \$5,195 at the Living Gift Market on December 6-7. In addition your generous Thanksgiving Offering gave \$608 to the Worcester County Food Bank. .

The Christmas Offering is designated for the Welcome Aldrich Fund administered this year by a special committee Holden Outreach – Managing Emergencies (HOME). While the Mission Committee decided to commit the Offering in this way because of the high price of oil, and though it has dropped it could still be unstable. The devastation caused by the ice storm will most certainly mean more

people in need this winter.

We have now sent a total of \$12,000 to Fundacion Cristosal for the indigenous agriculture project in the Baja Lempe region of El Salvador. Once sensitized to that kind of program, one listens more carefully as radio and TV reports highlight that approach in developing countries all around the world. Heifer International operates a similar project in El Salvador. As we move into 2009 please keep the next group of El Salvador visitors in your prayers. On January 10-11 St. Francis will host Fr. Dick Bower and his wife Stephanie for the weekend. Dick is the Executive Director of Cristosal. He'll preach at our three services and meet with the group as they prepare for their trip.

Many thanks to all who made 2008 a blessed year!



Thanks to one and all for your very kind contributions to this Ministry. It is such a worthwhile and joyful experience having completed a shawl and having it blessed and sent out to someone in need.

PS4FS Ministry: I have been privileged to attend two Prayer Shawl meetings recently. One held in So. Yarmouth, Cape Cod. There were 70 members from different congregations and I was asked to deliver a speech. A very moving experience. The second meeting was held in Hartford, CT. There were 300 members attending this affair. It was great to meet ladies from just about all over the country and to be able to share experiences and emotions.

Thank you all and wishing you all a very Happy Holiday season.

Beryl Turner

Dear Friends:

Thank you for all the wonderful cards and many phone calls. I feel truly blessed to have so many dear and valued friends.

With gratitude.

Beryl Turner

During my time at Bement I had the opportunity to be trained as a challenge course facilitator. Many of you are now picturing me 40 feet in the air with a harness and helmet and maybe laughing to yourself because yes I was terrified. But, that is not all there is to facilitating. The most important part is preparing the group for those extreme circumstances with challenges that require patience, communication, regard for one another's safety and skill. This preparatory stage was my favorite part of facilitating. Over and over again I would set up the same challenge with the same set of rules the same circumstances and over and over again I would get completely different results from each group. People's personalities would come out, group dynamics would take over and I would watch something new arise out of something old and familiar. Only one person had to change for the group to react completely differently.

Why am I telling you this and what does that mean for us here at St. Francis? In January we will begin youth group again. Same time, same place, same set of circumstances...yet even confronted with the same challenge we will be different. That's the power of group dynamics. I recognize that this change will have its ups and downs. It could feel awkward or uncomfortable, but I think it is also an opportunity. We have an opportunity to reflect on what is important to us about youth group. We can keep the best of us and reevaluate what could be better. We can create space for people to enter who have not yet found a place at youth group. We can extend ourselves to the wider community. We can do it together reflecting as a group and when we come through to the other side of this challenge we will be even stronger.

Here is my promise to you. Whether you have been to youth group before or the January meeting will be your first we will spend the meeting brainstorming how to begin the challenge of change. I will listen more than I talk and everyone new and old will have a chance to say what they need from youth group. Then we will see where the spirit leads us next. No plan, just you and me and God. Hope to see you there.

Sincerely,
Rev. Jill

I have felt so blessed to have been your Youth Minister for the past seven years. Many thanks to everyone who supported the ministry, most especially to all you parents who entrusted your teens with us.

I greatly appreciated the gift from the parish - thanks! To teens past and present, you have been the biggest gift of all.

May God's peace be with you always,
Lori

Budget \$ Presentation

Sunday, January 11, 2009 immediately following the 10:00 a.m. service.

Please join us.



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

GUESS WHO'S COMING FOR DINNER!

No this is not a game, but a new twist on Fellowship. On Saturday, February 7th all adult parishioners of St Francis are invited to participate in a fun evening of dinner and getting to know each other in a mystery setting. You will come to the church for light refreshments and conversation, then be given an envelope that will give you directions to your dinner destination. You might ask, where are we going and who will we be dining with?? That is the mystery! Once you arrive you will enjoy a nice dinner with 4 - 6 of your fellow St Francis members. After dinner everyone is invited back to St Francis for dessert and coffee. This is sure to be a great fun, there is a sign up sheet in the Narthex, and sign ups must be made by Jan 25th. There will be a \$5 per person charge to help off set our costs. Save the date and we hope to see you there, if you have any questions regarding this, please see Kathy Diehl or Linda Letourneau.

Call to Annual Meeting
St. Francis Episcopal Church
70 Highland Street
Holden, Massachusetts
Saturday, January 24th

5:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist
6:00 p.m. Potluck Supper with Discerning Our Future Conversations
7:00 p.m. Annual Meeting in the Church with Elections and Reports

Vestry Officers

The following slate of officers will be presented at Annual Meeting to be elected to one (1) year term.

Senior Warden: Chris Berglund

Chris and his wife Judy joined St. Francis in 1994 when they moved to West Boylston. Their daughter, Kyle Emma, was baptized that same year. Prior to serving the past two years as Junior Warden, Chris served one term on Vestry. While on the Vestry, he served as liaison to the Finance Committee and the Stewardship Committee at different times. For the last four years, Chris has served on the Audit Committee. St. Francis is a vibrant, mission-directed community comprised of a diverse congregation that is continually stimulated by the broad range of ideas, energies and gifts provided by its members. Chris is grateful for the opportunity to further serve the St. Francis community.

Junior Warden: Laura Caswell

Laura has been attending St Francis since 1991. She has taught church school, overseen the acolyte ministry, helped with the senior luncheon a number of times, been a member of the stewardship committee since 2001, has been chair the last 3 years and is currently on the vestry. She is always amazed at the youth of the parish and is grateful that her children such had a nurturing place to grow. Laura has seen St Francis change and grow over the years along with her personal spiritual growth. She looks forward to serving St Francis and meeting the challenges of the next years.

Clerk: Dawn Rooke

Brian, Dawn and their three children, Kiersten (20), Connor (19), and Jonathan (16) have lived in Holden for 19 years and have attended St. Francis for 17 years. They feel blessed to have been able to raise their children in this wonderful church that places such a strong emphasis on supporting, nurturing and honoring its youth. During these years Dawn has been involved with the "Meal Connection", the Newcomer Committee and has served four years on the vestry. Serving as vestry clerk has been an honor and she looks forward to continuing in the coming year.

Treasurer: Sandra Flynn Kimball

Sandra Flynn Kimball has been at St. Francis for 7 years. She and her two children Lauren, 11 and Ethan, 9 live in Holden. She is a life-long Episcopalian, raised in The Church of the Good Shepherd in Clinton. She is looking forward to continuing to share what God has given to her as she continues to serve as our treasurer. Sandy is a Certified Public Accountant with a BA from Tufts University and a Masters of Science in Accountancy from Bentley College. She has 15+ years of experience in corporate finance, currently works in financial reporting for The Hanover Insurance Group in Worcester.

Diocesan Convention Delegate

This year we will elect one person to a three (3) year position as lay delegate to Diocesan Convention.

Robin Carlo

The Carlos have been attending St. Francis for over 11 years. Robin has been blessed with many opportunities to work with and enjoy the company of the St. Francis family: teaching church school, serving as and EFM (Education for Ministry) co-mentor with Rich and serving on vestry. She found all of these opportunities to be both rewarding and challenging, and is very grateful to be a part of this community.

Vestry:

The following list of names will be presented to serve a three (3) year term. [Three persons to be elected.]

Nancy Brunelle

Nancy lives with her family in Hubbardston, and has been attending St Francis since 1996. She is active in the music ministry, and is in her fourth year of the Education for Ministry program. She was among those who went to El Salvador last November, and continues to support this mission. She is honored to be nominated to the vestry, and would welcome the opportunity to deepen her commitment to the community of St Francis that has so richly blessed her these past twelve years.

Julie Mankowsky

Julie moved to Holden in 2002, after living in Hardwick, MA for many years. She has been a teacher with the Quabbin School District for 26 years; she presently teaches first grade in Hubbardston. She began attending St. Francis two years ago, and found it to be a friendly and supportive community for spiritual and personal growth. She sings in the choir, and occasionally plays the piano at services; she also enjoys helping to direct the youth choir. She is a member of the Christian Formation committee, and is in her second year of the Education for Ministry Program. She is honored to be nominated to serve on the vestry.

John Nowak

John was born and lived most of his life in Holden. He and his wife Lucy have been members of St. Francis for the past 26 years. John's sons, Josh (25) and Alex (17) were both raised and confirmed at St. Francis. John works at Heywood Hospital as the Director of Food Service. He feels honored and excited to be nominated to serve on the vestry.

Wayne Switzer

Wayne, his wife Gloriann and their children Joe, Elizabeth, and Ethan, have been attending St Francis for just over a year, primarily attending Saturday services. Wayne served on the Church Council as Moderator of their previous congregation (equivalent role to Sr. Warden) and is excited to have been nominated to serve on the vestry of St. Francis and to have the opportunity to serve the St Francis community.

Dianne Wilson

Dianne & her husband Tom moved to Rutland from Martha's Vineyard. They have been attending St. Francis for a little over a year. Dianne is part of the group that will be going to El Salvador in February. She has been selling Free Trade Coffee on Sunday morning. Dianne is honored to have been asked to serve on vestry.

Basic Responsibilities of the Vestry

The responsibility of the Vestry, like that of the governing body of any organization, is to:

- + Help define and articulate the mission of the congregation;
- + Support the mission by word and deed;
- + Select the rector;
- + Ensure effective organization and planning;
- + Ensure adequate resources in leadership and in financial stewardship;
- + Manage resources effectively;
- + Determine that appropriate programs, policies, and procedures have been developed and are followed;
- + Assess its own performance.

Though the Vestry has some similarities to a board of directors, it is important to remember that this ministry of leadership is exercised in the church. The success of a congregation is not measured in terms of numbers of members or size of the endowment, but rather in the degree to which it is working toward the fulfillment of the mission of the Church.

From "What Is A Vestry?" Publication of Cornerstone, Episcopal Church Foundation

With Our Gratitude

A special thanks to Patrice Mavricos and MaryAnn DiPinto for their past years of service on the vestry of St. Francis Church. They will be sorely missed on Wednesday nights.

Thanks also to David Simmons for serving 3 years as our Diocesan Convention delegate.

Reports for the Annual Meeting Booklet need to be into the office by Monday, January 12th.

If you have access to a computer and email, please email your report to stfran@verizon.net. Otherwise, please leave them in the office mailbox located in Fellowship Hall. Thanks.

The deadline for the next
Little Portion is
Monday, January 12th

Please leave information in the Office mailbox or email it to stfran@verizon.net.

The Little Portion will be mailed on Thursday, January 22nd.