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December 28, 2006

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### Rector's Column

*"We are called to remember our mortality day by day with unflinching realism, shaking off the sleep of denial. Paradoxically, only those who remember that they are dust, and to dust they shall return, are capable of accepting the presence of eternal life in each passing moment, and receiving ever fresh the good news of hope. The anticipation of death is essential if we are to live each day to the full as a precious gift, and rise to the urgency of our vocation as stewards who will be called to give account at Christ's coming. Remembering that death can come to us at any time will spur us to be prepared, by continual renewal of our repentance and acceptance of the forgiveness of God, to meet Christ without warning. We shall remember to express to one another those things that would make us ready to part without regrets, especially thankfulness and reconciliation."*

*From The Rule of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, Chapter 48, "Holy Death"*

This fall I became a member of the Fellowship of St. John the Evangelist, making official my desire to associate with this Episcopal monastic community in the ordering of my spiritual life. In fact this Rule has been my primary guide in prayer for nearly a decade now. The words quoted above may well seem more appropriate for Advent or Lent than this season of light (Epiphany) upon which we are about to embark. But for me they are also words to ponder as we begin a new year.

In a couple of months I will celebrate my forty-fourth birthday. Age, I know, is a relative thing—and context matters greatly. In most clergy gatherings (where I tend to be a decade or so younger than nearly everyone else in the room) I still remain "the young kid." As an adjunct professor at Assumption College, in a classroom filled with eighteen and nineteen year olds, however, I feel like "an old man" (and am certain that is how I am perceived there as well!)

My father died just about six months shy of his thirty-eighth birthday. At the time, I was a freshman in college. I knew by the frightened looks in the eyes of my dad's friends and parents that he was very young, but I don't think I completely appreciated just *how* young he was until I approached my own thirty-seventh, and then thirty-eighth birthdays. As the oldest of four children I've been the "pioneer" in achieving these milestones. But I'm now watching my younger siblings pass these same markers and as they do we've talked about what it feels like to have "passed" my father and moved into mid-life without having the benefit of having seen how he navigated these years. This spring will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of my dad's death. Had he survived that massive heart attack he would turn sixty-three this October.

I am usually not one for New Year's resolutions. Every year it is the same: the pounds I need to shed have accumulated and I should make it to the "Y" more often than I do. But I am more likely as the calendar turns to a new year to reflect on the past and to wonder what the future holds—and this year that sense seems to be heightened. Beyond the grief of losing my father twenty-five years ago, one of the gifts that I have discovered through that loss is an awareness of my own mortality. I am struck by the words from the Rule of the Society and aware that I am very much an "unflinching realist" when it comes to fact that I, too, will one day die. I hope to live to a ripe old age! But I don't fear death; and there is something strangely reassuring in knowing that young men can and do die suddenly and unprepared. It means each moment needs to count.

I am brought up short by our culture's deep denial of death—especially when, for example, I come into contact with someone who has a family but who hasn't made a will, or apparently even considered that one day they will die. It is hard enough to grieve the loss of a loved one; harder still when worldly matters are not in order. (On this matter please see page 445 in *The Book of Common Prayer*—and consider yourselves reminded that it is a Christian duty and spiritual matter to make a will—or update your will—when you are in good health! If you haven't done that, then this is as good a New Year's resolution as I can suggest to you!)

The “anticipation of death,” the Rule states, “is essential if we are to live each day to the full as a precious gift,” and if we are to rise to the urgency of our vocation as stewards of God’s good gifts. This anticipation allows us to live one day at a time, with glad and generous hearts, and to truly commit our lives to the ministry of reconciliation. We are even now in the midst of the season where we celebrate the birth of the One who comes to bring “peace on earth and good will to all.” As this season unfolds and a new year begins we need to finish that prayer: “...and let it begin with me.” Even as we pray for reconciliation in the Middle East, and in the Episcopal Church—we need also to be sure that we are doing all we can much closer to home to be agents of God’s reconciling love.

Happy New Year!  
-Rich-

### **A heartfelt “Thank You”**

to all who helped make our first Advent Event of Chrismons and Carols such a wonderful success!

- & To Barbara Beck and all who donated gold craft supplies.
- & To Julie Russell and all the youth who made holiday crafts for the shut-ins.
- & To the Dunn family for their generous donation of Advent candles.
- & To Karen Heath for helping with food shopping (twice...)
- & To all the members of the youth group who helped to set up/clean up and who added so much to the “Spirit” of the event!!
- & To Mike Bastardo, Jay and Ken Carlo for serving with such joy in the kitchen!
- & To Steve Bullock, Joe Papandrea and all the Carolers who gave the gift of music.
- & To all who made Chrismons for our St. Francis family tree.
- & And to all who brought cookies for our after Caroling snack.

We really had lots of fun with all of you! Let’s do it again next year!

Blessed Christmas  
~Lori and Susan

### **Mission Matters**

**Thanksgiving Offering** ~ Thanks to your generosity \$600 will be sent to Centro Las Americas to help provide food for the Latino community and others in need in the Worcester area.

### **Thanks for Changing the World 2 by 2 ~**

Did you know that at our recent Heifer International Living Gift Market, we managed to raise over \$5000—enough to give Heifer International a gift of an ark? The gift of an Ark means oxen, donkeys, and water buffalo...cows, sheep and goats...even bees, chicks, rabbits and more...healthy, hardy animals that will go forth and multiply improving lives for countless families and children and passing on your spirit of faith and charity over and over again to places in the world where your generosity, kindness and vision are needed most.

Just in time for Valentine’s Day...a hands on mission project—**Gifts of the Heart**—coordinated by Donna Alarie. An opportunity to help neighbors around the world meet their own immediate needs and gain self sufficiency .

- & More than 800 people in the world are hungry
- & every 5 seconds a child dies from hunger related causes
- & 13 million children in the U.S. live with the threat of hunger daily.

Church World Services provides resources to help people in some 80 countries including the United States. More information next month.

### **Upcoming Meetings.....**

#### **Prayer Shawl Ministry**

The next meeting will be Monday, January 15th at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall (weather permitting).

**Mission Team Meeting**—Monday, January 8th at 7:00 p.m. (This will be Bob Anderson’s final meeting. He has been a long time member of your Mission Team. We will miss all his help, his valuable input, his notetaking...but most of all his presence. Good Luck Bob!)

### **Mustard Seed**

The Mustard Seed schedule for next year is in the works. Three teams of 8 parishioners each carry this effort faithfully. We are grateful for their dedication. However, there are times when substitutes are needed. If you would like to help shop, prepare the meal in the church kitchen or serve our guests please let Karen in office know or call Eleanor Bird @ 978/464-5564.

Submitted by Jeanne Schutte for the Mission Team.  
Bunny Huddleston, Chairperson 508-886-4969 – [darrellandbunny@msn.com](mailto:darrellandbunny@msn.com)

### **Coffee Hour News**

With every cup of coffee now served during Sunday Morning Coffee Hour, social justice is being served as well. All of our coffee is now “Fair Trade” coffee. This means that the small, independent farmers growing these all-organic coffees are paid a fair price, which helps them pay their employees a fair wage, support their families, and to continue to invest in their own businesses. An added bonus is that a portion of the profits from some of the coffee we buy helps support Episcopal Relief and Development. Fair Trade Coffee, just one more way “Mission Matters” at St. Francis Church!

### **Adult Confirmation/(New Member Class)**

Anyone who is interested in learning more about The Episcopal Church and becoming a member of St. Francis Church, please mark your calendars with two important dates.

Sunday, January 7th at 11:00 a.m. in the Library

Sunday, May 6 at 10:00 a.m. Bishop’s visit—when adults and young people are confirmed or received.

In between, depending upon the make-up of the class and the questions raised on 1/7, we’ll build an agenda for 4-6 group meetings that will provide preparation for the Bishop’s visit.

### **Save the date.....Epiphany Bible Study**

“Praying with the Psalter” Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m., January 30 and February 6 & 13. Details in the next Little Portion

### **Youth Group News**

First, thank you guys for all you did to make the Advent Event happen. You were awesome! It was fun, and especially so since it's a new thing for St. Francis. Great job!

I can't believe that we are now moving toward 2007. I will soon be sending a letter to you all with the schedule for the second half of the year. Two things for certain, we will resume youth group on Sunday, January 7 with regular meetings for juniors, seniors, and also parents at 5:30. Seniors who have signed up should note that we are indeed going to Nightwatch January 12-13. More details will be in the letter, and let me know if you have questions.

Thanks for such a great year so far, kids and parents alike. Happy New Year!!

Peace and Love,  
Lori and Mike

**Reports for the Annual Meeting Booklet** need to be into the office by **Tuesday, January 9th.**

If you have access to a computer and email, please email your report to [stfran@verizon.net](mailto:stfran@verizon.net), otherwise, please leave them in the office mail box located in Fellowship Hall. Thanks.

**The next Little Portion deadline** is Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup>.

Call to the Annual Meeting of  
St. Francis Episcopal Church  
70 Highland Street  
Holden, Massachusetts

Sunday, January 21st  
Immediately following  
the 10:00 a.m.  
Service of Holy Eucharist

## Vestry Officers

*The following slate of officers will be presented at Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 21st, to be elected to one (1) year terms.*

### **Senior Warden: Robin Carlo**

The Carlos have been attending St. Francis for 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 an 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.

### **Junior 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 this past year 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 three 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.

### **Clerk: Dawn Rooke**

Brian, Dawn and their three children, Kiersten (18), Connor (17), and Jonathan (14) have lived in Holden for 17 years and have attended St. Francis for 15 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. This past year, serving as vestry clerk has been an honor and she looks forward to continuing in the coming year.

### **Treasurer: Sandra Kimball**

Sandra Flynn Kimball has been at St. Francis for a little more than 4 years. She and her husband Doug have two children Lauren, 9 and Ethan, 7. She is a life-long Episcopalian, raised in The Church of the Good Shepherd in Clinton. At St. Francis she has been a church school teacher. She is very much looking forward to sharing the strengths that God has given to her as she begins 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 nearly 15 years of experience in corporate finance, currently serving as AVP of Investment Accounting for The Hanover Insurance Group in Worcester.

### **Assistant Treasurer: Jane Howell**

Jane is a cradle Episcopalian and was a member of St. John's Episcopal Church in North Adams for 50 years. She has been a member of St. Francis for 18 years. Currently she serves as the Assistant Treasurer, a job which she enjoys. Working for her church was instilled in her at a very early age.

### **Vestry:**

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

### **Peter Glanville**

Married to Roz Glanville, Peter has been a member of St. Francis since 1973. Peter is a life long Episcopalian and was a member of St. Mark's, Worcester, prior to coming to St. Francis. Peter is a Retired Public School Administrator.

### **Cynthia McIntyre**

Cynthia McIntyre, husband Paul, and daughter Claire have been attending St. Francis for four years when the family moved from Leominster to Sterling and found St. Francis through the church website. Cynthia now manages the website with regular updates to the calendar, E-Portion (online version of the Little Portion), and sermons. Cynthia also served on the Stewardship Committee this year, and is delighted to have been nominated to serve on the vestry and help St. Francis in its mission and ministries. Cynthia is Director of Communications and Online Learning at the Concord Consortium, a nonprofit educational technology organization in Concord, MA.

### **Douglas W. Rayworth**

Married to Linda (Benoit) Rayworth with 4 daughters, Sara, Janna, Kayla and Erica. Doug's family have been members of St. Francis for 4 years, transferring from St. John's Episcopal Church where he and Linda were married and all the girls were baptized. He grew up attending St. Michael's Episcopal Church. He is the Manager of Facility Engineering and Maintenance at Wyman Gordon Company, where he has been employed for the past 27 years. He looks forward to serving God and the parishioners of St. Francis Church as a new member of the Vestry.

### **Diocesan Convention Delegate**

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

**Dawn Rooke** (see clerk's bio) is eligible for re-election to a second term and has agreed to do so.

### **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 Dick Delorme for his many years of service over the past decade to St. Francis Church. Dick began serving a two-year term as Junior Warden on February 1, 1998--the same day our current rector, Rich Simpson, began at St. Francis. After fulfilling that term, Dick served two years as Senior Warden. He was hoping to "retire" at that point but he agreed to serve as treasurer when a vacancy emerged that year, "until we could find someone." Five years later, we have. But the parish is exceedingly grateful to Dick for his hard contributions to the life of our congregation and the Church.