



St. Paul's Epistle

"To know Christ and to make Him known"

CHRISTMAS PARADOX

Priest-In-Charge
Rev. Jim Melnyk

Christmas is a paradox of emotions for me. On one hand, it represents the joyful celebration of God breaking into history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Through the willingness of a young woman God becomes flesh; that is, God becomes human. Yet, on the other hand, after nearly two thousand years you would think humanity would finally grasp what it meant – what it means – for God to become human flesh and to dwell among us. It can be so frustrating!

During Advent we looked with expectation and hope for two things. First, we looked for the coming Christ Child. We waited for Christmas; waited with a great degree of certainty of its coming. But we also waited, and still wait, for the coming of Christ in majesty and glory – the Second Coming – the fulfillment of God's promise in time and history. We await the consummation of all that God has longed for in all of creation. Yet, I believe that God's greatest gift of grace is that God has not yet come again.

Grace that the Christ has not yet returned? Some of you may be wondering if this writer has gone daft. But I ask you to think about it. Those who awaited Messiah the first time stumbled over the birth of Jesus in the manger. They stumbled over a human being who came among them proclaiming God's love and mercy for all people. They stumbled over a Messiah who welcomed tax collectors and sinners into the kingdom of heaven. They wanted the majesty and glory of God to sweep through creation and wipe it clean. Instead, God came with the love of a mother for her children – like a mother who gently washes away the dirt, bandages the bruises, and enfolds and comforts them. What a surprise! What a wonderfully glorious surprise!

Grace that the Christ has not yet returned? Yes. You see, I think our world and even the church have a long way to go yet; a long way toward understanding the meagerness of the stable, the gentleness of God's healing-human touch, the meanness and emptiness of the cross. I'm not sure we're ready for the fullness of God's majesty and glory. I look at the news and see people of color still beaten and discriminated against as if they are not of the same flesh and blood taken on by God in Bethlehem. I see women still wrestling with a patriarchal society and even with segments of the church that cannot seem to understand women are the same flesh and blood taken on by God in Bethlehem. I know men and women like you and me—created in the image of God—who fear going out of their homes at night because they are elderly and unable to defend themselves, or who watched their life savings disappear while others played the system at their expense. As a society we still embrace so many forms of exclusion toward fellow human beings who are the very same flesh and blood taken on by God in Bethlehem. Are we really ready for the return of God's Christ in majesty and glory, and would we even recognize if it happened?

And yet the joyful news is that God **has** come among us in human flesh. God **has** given us Jesus and has adopted us as God's children. We have been given the power to understand – even if only in a slight way – the glory of God which abounds in God's love and mercy toward the humanity which God chose to create. We have been given the power to continue that which the Christ of God began in Bethlehem.

The coming of the Christ in majesty and glory will happen. I trust my faith for that. It will happen in God's own good time, my being ready or not; so I will not worry over it much. In the meanwhile, I realize that I still have a lot to understand and experience about the first coming; about the meanness and the humility of the stable, and about the inclusivity of God taking on human flesh – a glorious message we can take with us into the season of Epiphany. There is great joy in having the chance to learn so wonderful a lesson. Thanks be to God – and Merry Christmas to us all. Jim Melnyk +



OUTREACH COMMITTEE *“Volunteers are a work of heart”*

The Giving Tree Project

Thank you for your support for the Giving Tree Project!



Our adopted family had a **SUPER** Christmas because of your love and generosity. The Youth wrapped and delivered the gifts to the family the week before Christmas.



Stop Hunger Now

Mark the date!!!! Our Stop Hunger Now event is scheduled for 2/5/2011 from 9 AM until noon in Lawrence Hall. Remember to wear a baseball cap if you do NOT want to wear a hairnet! Our goal is **\$ 5000 and 20,000** meals. WE CAN DO THIS WITH YOUR HELP!!!! As of 12/15/10, we only have \$700 towards our goal. Make checks payable to **St. Paul's** with **Stop Hunger Now** in the memo line and place them in the offering plate or give them to Jane Hawk. Check out our progress on the Fund Indicator in Lawrence Hall and in the narthex. Let's make that fundraising thermometer go up FAST.

\$ 25 buys 100 meals \$ 100 buys 400 meals

\$ 50 buys 200 meals \$ 250 buys 1,000

HOW MANY MEALS CAN YOU HELP BUY?

Help us reach our goal with your financial support as well as your support on

Saturday, 2/5/11 at 9 a.m.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

The ministry of stewardship is rooted in the understanding that entirety of our life is a gift from God. The most precious God's self-gift, the person of Jesus Christ who came so that we may know life abundant.



standing gift is we may

Stewardship is a response of discipleship, an ordering of life that puts all we have under Christ's rule—our time, our money, our relationships. Jesus is not interested in just ten percent. Jesus wants one hundred percent of our lives.

As we begin to think about 2011 and all the unknowns it holds for each of us, how do we respond to the ministry of stewardship? The stewardship journey is one of struggle, hope and transformation. It is a journey that doesn't necessarily have to be totally traveled alone. Consider being a member of the Stewardship Committee for 2011 and help to design the destinations for stewardship at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

COFFEE HOUR



PLEASE HELP! Please sign up for Coffee Hour. It is a great time to socialize. Please sign up every couple of months to host the Coffee Hour. Keep it easy and simple. Thanks for your help



YOUTH CHOIR

Wednesdays at 6:15 PM in Lawrence Hall. Any youth 5 thru 17 are welcome to join us. We are planning to sing at the 11 AM service once a month throughout the school year. Please call Rhonda Smith (934-6203) if you are interested. Come and sing !

FRIDAYS AT ST PAUL'S

If you are interested in helping to plan and organize a series of social and entertainments to be held at St. Paul's in 2011, please see Billie Stevens, Harriet Lassiter, Judy Eatman or Joe Austin



FOOD PANTRY

We collect for the Food Pantry the 1st Sunday of EACH month. There are two ways to participate: (1) bring nonperishable food items and place them in the back of the church or (2) write a check payable to **St. Paul's** with **Food Pantry** in memo line and place it in the offering plate. Thank you so much for your support of the needy in Johnston County.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN



Happy New Year to each and every one of you. Hope that your Christmas was joyfully blessed. With the New Year comes new opportunities to gather together and support your Church family. The women of this Church meet every third Saturday of the month to enjoy fellowship and to do service to and for St. Paul's. The meeting is held in Lawrence Halls at 9:30 on Saturday morning. We will begin to plan for 2011. On February 20, 2011, we will have our annual Souper Sunday. Come and enjoy homemade soups, featuring Brunswick Stew. Please come and be a part of YOUR ECW. Help in the planning. Join Us! The January meeting will be held on January 15, 2011.



The Feast of the Epiphany

St. Paul's will mark the Feast of the Epiphany with a **NOON** celebration of the Holy Eucharist on **Thursday, January 6, 2011.**

DIOCESAN CONVENTION

Please remember our Diocese as we meet in convention January 21-22, 2011. Your prayers for our delegation: David Baum, Mike Weathers, Sherrill Weathers and the Rev. Jim Melnyk are appreciated.

Patsy Gale—Chair 553-



Prayer Shawl Ministry

If anyone is interested in starting a Prayer Shawl Ministry group please contact Donna Ryder at 763-0786.



Pastoral Care

Volunteers are needed to visit the sick and shut in.

For more information please call the church at (919) 934-2675.

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The Brotherhood of St. Andrew

The Brotherhood of St. Andrew will meet Thursday, January 6 for dessert, fellowship, planning and study at 7 pm in Lawrence Hall. Agenda item: planning for the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. The lesson this month continues our study of the dynamics of the First Council of Nicaea with a focus on the person of Saint Athanasius. Visitors are welcome. Mike Weathers chairs the meeting and provides dessert. Come socialize with us. Any questions contact Dick Hawk.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION...

All of the educational programs of St. Paul's are part of our Christian Formation. The church education programs are designed to provide learning and growth as adults and students focus on:

- lessons of the Bible in the Old & New Testaments
- Church from a historical perspective and
- Church philosophy.

Sunday school is offered to adults and children on Sunday mornings at 10:00 AM. A nursery is offered

for children too young for classes and available during the 11:00 AM Sunday service. Everyone is encouraged to participate in these activities. For those interested in attending and **for those who would like to volunteer to lead these educational activities please contact: Sarah Thompson (919) 938-2227, momon7394@aol.com**



MITCHELL MOMENTS

January 2011

January is one of my favorite months of the year for many reasons. One reason is the fact that each of us has an opportunity to begin with a clean slate for a calendar year! Another reason, since I am not one to make resolutions per se, I ask the question what is God's plan for me and will I be ready?

Reflecting on 2010, I continued to learn that I couldn't have made it without God's power in the form of people, readings, visuals, conversations and active listening which I am truly thankful!

I have been thinking about the two questions Rev. Melnyk placed before us in two Sunday services. They are: How do I want to live and when will I start living that way? How appropriate that these questions are before me as I think about 2011 in relation to God's plan for me and being ready. These questions are very thought provoking which may require a theological reflection to get at some type of answer(s). I realize that some answers may not be found until sometime in the future.

A part of the thought process will include St. Paul's and its progress within its walls, within the Smithfield Community, within the Johnston County Community and within North Carolina. The reconciliation process, the support of the Diocese and the guidance of Rev. Melnyk, Priest-in-Charge will continue to be helpful in whatever God has planned.

I know there will be times where I will be struggling along the way, as we all do, but there is a higher power that will lift both you and me up to move us forward to whatever is next.

Thought for the day: Heavenly Father, may we learn more and more to live each day under your direction and guidance, according to your will, knowing that you will not fail to provide vision, understanding, strength, wisdom, and courage to those who are open to receive them.

As we all work together, I pray that we continue to plan and work the plan for a bright future here at St. Paul's Episcopal Church! Should you have questions/concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at lagmitchell@bellsouth.net or 919-840-8650.

Faithfully,

Lagratta Mitchell, Senior Warden

218⁷ South Second
Street
Smithfield, NC 27577



A Prayer for St. Paul's Church:

Collect of the Day for Christmas 2

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature.

Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your

Son Jesus Christ; who lives And reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for

ever and ever. Amen.

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