

The Hallowed Word

All Hallows Episcopal Church

January 2011

From The Priest in Charge...

Dear Members of All Hallows,

Again this year you have been extremely generous to Arlene and me with your Christmas gift. For the moment, we have deposited the money in the bank. We are still very much in the planning stages for our vacation times during the coming year but we expect to use the money you've given us for our vacation. Your gift gives us a great deal more flexibility for planning than we would otherwise have. Thank you again for your generosity and thank you even more for continuing to make us feel so much a part of the All Hallows Church family. Love to all, Ken+

Epiphany

The Feast of the Epiphany is always held on January 6. It celebrates the manifestation of Christ to the peoples of the earth. During the early years of the Christian era, the Winter solstice was held on January 6. This was a time for a major pagan festival. In opposition to those festivals, Christians chose this date as the time to celebrate the various manifestations or "epiphanies" of the divinity of Jesus. The day was also called "The Feast of Lights," and the celebration of the Son of God replaced the celebration of the returning of the sun. In some Eastern churches, the day is called Theophany which means the manifestation of God, and the birth of Jesus is celebrated on that day rather than on December 25. The season of Epiphany starts with the feast on January 6 and extends through Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. As a result, the season can last anywhere from 4 to 9 weeks. Last year, the season was only four weeks long because of an early Easter, and this year it will be a full nine weeks long because Easter is much later in the year. Major manifestations of Christ's divinity are told in the Gospel stories read during the season, starting with the coming of the Magi, read on the Epiphany. The Baptism of our Lord is observed on the Sunday after the Epiphany, and the gospels for the other Sundays include the wedding at Cana, the calling of the disciples, and various other miracles of Jesus. The last Sunday after the Epiphany is always devoted to the Transfiguration. Jesus' identity as the Son of God is dramatically revealed in the Transfiguration gospel. We are called to respond to Christ in faith through the showings of his divinity that are recorded in the gospels of the Epiphany season.

Correction

The telephone number for Nicholas Haglich shown in the new directory is incorrect. The correct phone number is 443-523-2467. Please make this correction in your directory.

Musings from All Over: Atheists and the Apostles' Teaching

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers? (Book of Common Prayer, page 304)

For more than thirty years, Episcopalians have been regularly answering this question from The Baptismal Covenant with the response, "I will with God's help." In the matter of at least the apostles' teaching, it would appear that even God's help has not been sufficient to motivate many Episcopalians to become conversant with their own faith tradition.

The Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life recently issued the results of its first U.S. Religious Knowledge survey. This survey measured a number of aspects of religious life, including Americans' knowledge of their own belief systems and denominations. The amazing finding of this study is that "atheists and agnostics know more about religion than the average American." Next are Jews, Mormons, evangelical Protestants, Catholics and then main-line Protestant denominations.

The researchers' conclusions about these results focus on the fact that atheists and agnostics have come to their decisions after serious study of the various forms of religious belief and practice. Those scoring lower are not so intentional about study and ongoing faith development.

Any parish priest can outline the difficulties of attracting adult learners to ongoing Christian formation. The fact seems to be that for many people graduation from Sunday School as a child or the reception of Confirmation meant graduation from the study of scripture, theology, history, or any of the other disciplines that shape our faith. It is not only study and learning which form us, but also our worship, our service to the world and our personal prayer and reflection about our Christian lives.

It is no accident that Jesus was known as "Rabbi" or "Teacher" to his first followers. The foundation of teaching which he offered them made it possible for

God to be at work within them and through them. They understood there is no faith which existed apart from this ongoing learning, worship and fellowship.

Growth in faith and wisdom is always the gift of God. Growth in knowledge is always the gift of God. Growth in knowledge is something we can seek, trusting that God will use our study to open us to new dimensions of faith and service. (The Rt. Rev. Dena A. Harrison, Bishop Suffragan of Texas in *Texas Episcopalian*)

The Ancient and Future Church

A few weeks ago I went to a conference for writers. I enjoy writing, a friend of mine helped coordinate the weekend and wrangled me an invitation, and one of the speakers was Stephen Lawhead, one of my favorite writers—so I took a few days off to go. About 80 people were there: novelists, poets, bloggers, nonfiction writers, and several members of the clergy from several denominations. As we got to know each other, I heard several of the younger people at the conference introduce themselves as “spiritual but not religious” or “faithful but not church-oriented.”

My friend knows I’m a bishop, but I asked her not to make a big deal of it—I was there, after all, pretending to be a writer. Still, a few people asked me what my day job is, and I told them—and the word got out. I’m quite proud to be a bishop in the Episcopal Church, but it does require some explanation, and it certainly changes the way people act toward you.

On the last morning one of the young women in my small group, a poet from Maryland, came up to talk to me. She was sheepish and hesitant, but she really wanted to tell me that she was concerned that she’d said something that might have seemed harsh about the Church being antiquated and irrelevant. She had written in one of our writing assignments that *the Church she grew up in was her father’s Oldsmobile—and that he could have it!* Then she explained to our little group that she’d grown up in the Episcopal Church, as if that explained it all. She said that later she was horrified to learn that one of the people in her group is a bishop in that same Episcopal Church, and now she wanted to apologize.

I told her that I hadn’t taken offense and that I grew up an Episcopalian too. I told her I know full well that we can be stodgy and stiff and that our emphasis on maintaining traditions can be an impediment to embracing new ideas. I also told her that all of those traditions link us to the saints and teachings of the Church throughout the centuries—and that it’s important to have such good strong healthy roots.

When she turned to walk away, not entirely satisfied with how the conversation had gone, I stopped her. I told her that it is the job of the Church to make the love of God real and accessible to God's children, to share the Good News of the love of God in Jesus Christ so that it's inviting and compelling, and to invite people to live their lives in the faith, hope and joy that God wants to give us—and I told her that it sounded to me that in her life we have failed. She was stunned. I was a little surprised myself—but I think it's true.

We have failed her and many others like her, and we have failed our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been far too interested in defining and maintaining the status quo; we have allowed positions and issues and resolutions and debates to hijack the mission of the Church, arguing esoteric theological points and obscure liturgical practices as if they were much more important than they really are and forgetting that our principle mission is inviting people into love, calling them and us to turn away from self-absorption into forgiveness and reconciliation. We have spent far too much time and energy trying to keep things the way they were at some point in the nostalgic past and far too little time listening to how the world around us is able and eager to receive the Gift we have to give. It is a new day, and the world is changing rapidly. If our response to the world around us is to circle the wagons and preach only to ourselves, we really are her father's Oldsmobile. And my young friend from Maryland will have nothing to do with us because we will have convinced her and many, many others like her that we have nothing to do with them.

I'm certainly not suggesting that we should abandon our traditions—I'm grateful that we are so well rooted and grounded in the proven teachings and practices of our Church. But I wonder if it is sufficient, or truly faithful, for us to cast the work of the Church in the past tense only without considering how we can embrace and invite the world around us today and prepare to preach the Gospel in the days and years to come. This, I think, is our great challenge: to "hold fast that which is good," as St. Paul wrote, while at the same time committing ourselves to "sing to the Lord a new song," as the writer of the Psalms encouraged God's faithful people.

It seems to me that the world around us can be a dark and lonely place—and that you and I are called now more than ever to shine the Light of Christ and invite God's people to find their home in God's grace-filled, loving community, the ancient and future Church. (The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan in *The Alabama Episcopalian*)

God prefers fruits of the spirit over religious nuts.

If God is your copilot, you should consider changing seats.

EXCERPTS FROM OUR PAST...

In 1950, St. Margaret's Guild had 25 dues-paying members and met September through June in various homes. At the December 6th meeting at the home of Lottie Stagg (with co-hostess Leah Truitt) there were 14 members present. Winners of the Blanket Club were announced. Ten dollars were approved to purchase toys for the young lady at the Children's Home sponsored by the guild; \$5.00 went to the Empty Stocking Club, and \$2.00 to Christmas Seals. A problem with the ceiling painting contract in the church paid for by St. Margaret's was discussed. It was decided (by a vote of 11 to 2, with one abstention) to insulate the attic at the Rectory and to get storm windows for the entire house for just under \$900.00. The purchase of ten dozen 10" candles for Christmas decoration was approved. Church decoration was set for Thursday, December 21st. Punch and homemade cookies were served. (Discovered by Kathy Fisher while she was cataloging historical papers from AH.)

Saying "Cheese" Could Buy You Years

A new study says people who grin big may actually live longer. Happiness (measured by those toothy smiles) is linked to both physical and emotional well-being.

It Really Does Take a Village

Stephanie Klinzing, the mayor of Elk River, Minnesota, challenged the people in her town to perform 1,000 acts of kindness in a month. Elk River's 24,000 residents answered the call, with good deeds like giving out cookies, paying for other people's groceries and babysitting for free. After a month the people of Elk River had surpassed their goal with 1,400 good deeds—and they don't plan to stop anytime soon.

Changes in communication...

For several years, we have been receiving the Eastern Shore Episcopalian as a wrap-around to the *Episcopal News Monthly* from the national church. January was the last issue since TEC is stopping publication of that paper. Jerry Hames, a retired former editor of *Episcopal News*, has committed to publish a new paper *Episcopal Journal*, and we will send to him our Eastern Shore news to continue as a wrap-around for the new paper. The diocesan Department of Communications have decided this will be a good alternative. This will be sent to every member of each parish on the Shore, as is now done. From you we would like comments as to what has worked, what you would like to see changed, and what else you would like to see in your paper. Please talk to Bonnie. Also, if you are not now getting the paper, let her know.

All Hallows Parish
109 West Market Street
Snow Hill, MD 21863

Calendar of Events

Worship Schedule

January 23, Holy Eucharist, Rite II

January 30, Holy Eucharist, Rite II

February 6, Holy Eucharist, Rite I

February 13, Holy Eucharist, Rite II

Special Events

February 2, 7 p.m., Southern Convocation review of Diocesan Budget, St. Peter's, Salisbury

February 25 & 26, Diocesan Convention, Hyatt Hotel, Cambridge

March 8, Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Dangerous Talk: Atheists are not solely to blame for religious people losing their faith in religion and God this year. It seems that religious leaders are able to drive people away from religion all by themselves. (Reader Comment in *The Post*)

“A Man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on. Ideas have endurance without death.” (John F. Kennedy)