

*The Hallowed Word*  
*All Hallows Episcopal Church*  
**December 2020**

... a strong faith ... a caring community ... an active ministry ...

**Hello Christmas, Goodbye 2020!** What a year this has been. January & February were wonderful months. Attendance was up, the Sunday School was lively, all in all, things were looking up! Then, as news was brewing, Covid-19 hit the world hard. Businesses were hit hard and, in some ways, the last nine months reminded me of the 1971 song by Don McLean: American Pie – which referenced the 2/3/1959 plane crash with musicians on board – in the line “*The Day the Music Died.*”



As I stated in a sermon a few weeks ago, the Snow Hill Zip Code has been a mini-bubble of sorts with Covid cases. As of Thursday, 12/17 there were 175 in an area of about 5,000 people, or a 3.5% positive rate. Yet, that number 5 days earlier was 158 (or 3.16% positive). The bubble is a bit smaller.

Snow Hill has seen many of its residents & worshippers step up to make their way through this pandemic. We can stay strong as the vaccines are coming down the pike. As we all hoped after a different Easter that moved through the summer all the way to Christmas, the Light of Christ is always at the end of the tunnel. We still had worship every Sunday. The inside the sanctuary core attendance of 4-6 people was supplemented by a steady stream of 28 to 35 regular Zoomers with their cell phones, tablets/iPads, & computers. Together, we mastered the process of the Organ MIDI (*Thanks Be to God we purchased THAT!*) so all could sing from home. Bulletins are still available by email & sealed Communion Kits available about once a month – with Christmas Eve also being a Eucharistic Service of Holy Communion that we can share together – from a distance!

I've mentioned Zoom Sunday School to some of you. It's a Sunday post service highlight that I love participating in on Sundays. Zoom in one Sunday! On some Sundays 10-12 kids participate. Covid was around so how could we help the Kids? Annette Parker Zoom'ed up last May through the summer into the Fall when Keith & Jenny Donoway continue the path that one of All Hallows' & Snow Hill's special person: Bill Gordy, who had been leading Sunday School. Glad to have you back in 21863 Bill & Pam!

No parish is an island – it takes us all to not only realize the fragility of life, but the real meaning in life comes through love. Living is not always a straight-line path. We create our own messes as well as clean up the mess created by others. But Jesus taught us to love one another – even our enemies. And it's Christmas – we'll have a service this year and after Christmas Andrew Cropper returns to All Hallows until (I hope) he is ordained a priest. Time will tell.

So, join us (Thursday 12/24) this Christmas Eve at the 4:30 PM service on **ZOOM**. The same links as we have been using – that has not changed. It will also be on Facebook Live & YouTube live as listed in the Sunday bulletin. The Bishop & Governor have both put restrictions on in-person that rolls into early 2021. Like the baby Jesus, there is no room at the inn. But born to us he was. If you had PLANNED to attend, PLEASE check in with Rev. Chuck to verify. Both the Governor & Bishop have new guidelines to follow. I will be calling each of the 10-11 people, I've already spoken to 2, who had contacted me about the service.

I'll end with a chorus from a song sent to me by a fellow priest just this week from a song titled *Cottonwood Lullaby*. ***Goodnight all you cowboys. Well, you're plain-spun and rough. But the angels appeared one time ... To folks such as us!***

Wishing all the folks here who have felt and continue to feel God's Presence here in this distinctive corner of the world on Maryland's Eastern Shore a **Merry Christmas** and a **Happy New 2021!**

Christmas Peace,  
Chuck+

**Bill and Pam Gordy are back in 21863 and in their HOME for Christmas!** Last Sunday on Zoom those 2 lovebirds looked good and were ready to beat the snowstorm up in Baltimore coming home a day early! Bill and Pam are very grateful to all of All Hallows for their prayers, cards and generosity.

**Harry Deitch** is doing well at home.

**Chuck Bowie ... who turns 88 on Monday, is doing well.** Having more tests in the weeks to come but is grateful to all who have checked in with him and for our prayers!

**Thank you for supporting the Episcopal Church!**



Like you, we did our part to slow the spread of the coronavirus, which here at the New York Church Center meant transitioning to home offices. Our duty to ensure the safe and secure handling of all donations means that you may not quickly receive proper thanks from us. We apologize for the delay.

We are deeply grateful for your support of our ministries and mission.

Your gifts are at work helping to build, heal, and renew the communities of faith throughout the Church. We are blessed by your partnership.

Thank you!  
Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

To the Congregation of All Hallows Church,

A few weeks ago, Andrew Cropper, our deacon candidate and intern, gave a sermon about God's invitation to us as Christians. For the first time in my life, I took notes during a sermon. His message made so much sense to me that I am inspired to write this letter about stewardship today.

Andrew's words asked us to respond to God's call for recognizing and being thankful for the gifts we have in our lives. God's invitation to us is to live a life of love that will reflect our thankfulness and appreciation for our many blessings. This practice is not a burden or a duty but a promise to bring immense joy into our lives.

During the pandemic of the last seven and a half months, I have often reflected on the blessings of my life and have expressed my thanks to God in prayer. I know that you, too, have reflected on your many blessings.

We are fortunate to live in a time where technology is abundant for most and it has enabled us to retain our connection as congregants of All Hallows. We miss being together on Sundays in our beautiful church but Zoom and YouTube recordings have helped us to pray together and to stay together.

Our church has been blessed this year with the generosity of many people, and it has been able to meet its expenses with relative ease. We have missed our visitors and their various contributions; but thanks to many factors, we are in good financial shape to end our year close to budget. However, 2021 remains a mystery for us financially.

As we look to 2021, we are asked to respond to God's call for thankfulness and to our invitation to live a life filled with love for each other. Our pledges will assist the Vestry and Finance Committee as we craft a budget for the coming year. I ask that you consider a pledge prayerfully and thoughtfully, as you fill out your pledge.

Ann Gibb, Senior Warden

[Note from Bonnie:]

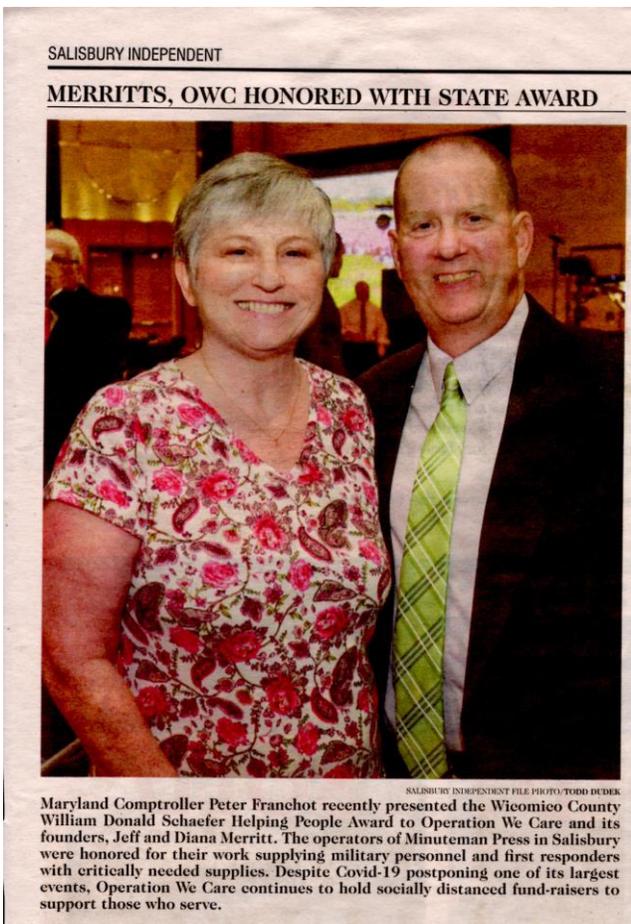
You have previously read this letter from Ann. But she describes so beautifully the grace and commitment of each of you that I could not do better! Thank you so very much to each of you for the many ways you support and encourage your parish, its staff and its members. Together we will make it through!

**Pledges have come in for next year, 2021, and the Finance Team and Vestry are grateful to all whose pledges have been received.** Over \$51,000 in 2021 pledges so far. According to Ron Geesey, Treasurer, there are about 8-10 that we haven't heard from who pledged this year, or in the past, for the new year. To complete the budget form 2021, and present to the parish at the annual meeting now scheduled for 1/17/21, please send your pledge before the end of the month. Many thanks to all those who have already sent their pledge to the church.

**The Snow Hill Food Pantry** served 899 households and 3,164 people from October 2019 to September 2020.

We want to thank the people of All Hallows that have donated their time, money, and food. It was greatly appreciated.

You may bring food to church or bring it to Betty West's house. Thank you!



**Operation We Care is still doing a great job supplying military personnel and first responders with critically needed supplies,** for which Jeff and Diana Merritt have been twice honored this Fall. Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot presented them with the Wicomico County William Donald Schaefer Helping People Award, and the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore presented them with the Non- profit Award of Excellence.

Since 2007, Jeff and Diana have coordinated this ministry. (I still remember how Barbara Merritt stood up in church every Sunday to remind us of how we can help.)

Bonnie regularly visits them, and she would be glad to deliver any items you leave in church or at her house.

**Communion Kits are available.** You may pick one up in the Parish Hall (Please sign your name if you pick up.) or if you cannot come by, ask Rev. Chuck about delivery.

**The Rev. (Deacon) Andrew Cropper returns on December 27<sup>th</sup>.** Andrew is scheduled to supply on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December and January 3<sup>rd</sup> with Morning Prayer.

### **C.S. Lewis 1942**

Satan: “I will cause anxiety,  
fear and panic.  
I will shut down  
businesses, schools,  
places of worship  
and sports events.  
I will cause economic turmoil.”

**Jesus: “I will bring together neighbors,  
restore the family unit,  
I will bring dinner back  
to the kitchen table.  
I will help people slow down their lives  
and appreciate what really matters.  
I will teach my children to rely on me  
and not the world.  
I will teach my children to trust me  
and not their money and material resources.”**

### **Proof that God Exists**

A man went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and his beard trimmed. As the barber began to work, they began to have a good conversation. They talked about so many things and various subjects. When they eventually touched on the subject of God, the barber said, “I don’t believe that God exists.”

“Why do you say that?” asked the customer.

“Well, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God doesn’t exist. Tell me, if God exists, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be neither suffering nor pain. I can’t imagine loving a God who would allow all these things.”

The customer thought for a moment, but didn't respond because he didn't want to start an argument. The barber finished his job and the customer left the shop. Just after he left the barbershop, he saw a man in the street with long, stringy, dirty hair and an untrimmed beard. He looked dirty and unkempt. The customer turned back and entered the barbershop again, and he said to the barber: "You know what? Barbers do not exist."

"How can you say that?" asked the surprised barber. "I am here, and I am a barber. And I just worked on you!"

"No!" the customer exclaimed. "Barbers don't exist because if they did, there would be no people with dirty long hair and untrimmed beards, like that man outside."

"Ah, but barbers DO exist! What happens is, people do not come to me."

"Exactly!" affirmed the customer. "That's the point! God, too, DOES exist! What happens is, people don't go to Him."

From Talbot Courier, Author Unknown

### **Do you know your Carols?**

Earliest carols descend from the mid-winter celebrations of Saturnalia during the winter solstice and were celebrated as fertility rites with the belief that now the days were growing longer again, spring would soon be back and fecundity would return to the earth. When Christianity replaced the pagan worship, carols were sung equally at Easter and Christmas. It took some time for the complete separation of the two and for carols to become entrenched at Christmas. During much of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, carols were banned and the accent was on Gregorian chants and metric psalms.

After the Restoration in England in 1660 the ban was lifted and the earliest official carol we now sing was Nahum Tate's "While Shepherds Watched" which was the only one permitted until 1782 when "Hark! The herald angels sing" was approved. As could be expected for immensely popular songs, there have been various irreverent versions of the two sung by children.

Christina Rossetti wrote "In the bleak mid-winter" in the 1800's but it was not set to music until after her death. "Silent Night" has an interesting fable about its creation but it was sung in the church of St. Nicholas, Obendorf. It also has the true story of how its singing by the German troops was taken up by the English in the trenches leading to a temporary Christmas truce until the high command stepped in.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) was only 16 when his father, a Congregational Elder, told him if he didn't like the hymns being sung, (he called them "dull"), then he should "write something better". Isaac did and is responsible for many of the hymns still in use. His best known carol is "Joy to the World, the Lord is come".

In 1865 an American, Phillips Brooks, rode on horseback into Bethlehem where he attended a service at the Church of the Nativity. Out of this experience came the words of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and he asked Lewis Redner, the organist at Holy Trinity, Philadelphia to compose the music for it.

It is interesting that modern winter songs such as "Jingle Bells", "Frosty the Snowman" and many others are actually a return to the early pagan fertility songs celebrating mid-winter and the promise of the return of growth and life in the spring since there are no references to religion in them.

(Condensed from article in *This England*, Winter 2008 via St. Alban's newsletter)