



Epiphany Episcopal

*Planting Seeds
... Growing Disciples*

The (Christmas) Star

The Episcopal Church of the Epiphany Danville, VA

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A Christmas Message from the Rector

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us..." (John 1:14)



So also the mission of God became flesh and lived among us in Jesus of Nazareth, the Child of Bethlehem. The mission that God spoke of in the act of creation, the mission that the longing of God pursued through the callings and alienations and reconciliations of Israel's saga in the Old Testament—all this vision and struggle took flesh in the life, ministry, crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. God's act of becoming incarnate, [of humbling Himself to share in our humanity and even allowing us to share in His divinity] must be central in any understanding of

Christian Mission, writes Titus Pressler, missionary, priest, seminary dean and theology professor. This is especially true for Anglicans because we take the incarnation as our starting point. Without God's willingness to take on every aspect of humanity save sin, all we do as Christians, in fact our very identity as Christians would be meaningless.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit in his baptism, Jesus exploded into ministry proclaiming that "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near" (Mark 1:15). Over and over again Jesus proclaimed that God *was up to something...something radical and new...a new way of being in relationship to God and to others*. Jesus preached that those who claimed the mantle that Christ offered were being called to discern what God was doing and join in God's mission.

What is that mission? Simply put, like Jesus, we too were empowered by the Holy Spirit at our baptism to "...proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God..." (Luke 4:43). No time in the history of humanity is there a greater need to fulfill the work of the One who sends us out. No time in the history of humanity is there a greater need to live into the commandment to love God, love neighbor and love others as Jesus loved us. How best can you and I fulfill this work...this mission?

First, *believe Jesus*, not in Jesus and not as some lofty intellectual pursuit but as someone who longs to break into the gritty parts of our daily living and into the tender regions of our heart and soul. Then share the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in **word** and **deed**. Perform some random act of kindness for a total stranger. Love the unlovable, forgive the unforgivable, and receive those who are outcast. These are but basic ways to live into our baptismal covenant...to fulfill God's mission.

Invite a friend, family member or colleague to worship with you at Epiphany. There are those who suggest that going to church is not necessary in today's world. **Not so!** In today's technologically centered culture, where routine contact with the outside world is with a smart phone and through social media, the need for direct human contact and relationship has never been more important. Gathering together, in worship, is a tangible reminder that **we** are the Body of Christ...we are God's eyes...God's hands and feet in this broken world...**we are church!**

Lastly, if you are up for a greater challenge, join with me, and others, at Epiphany who are working mightily to bring about the radically welcoming and joyous Spirit that flourishes robustly at this time of year into the midst of this faith filled community everyday of the year.

It is my prayer that this Christmas each of us will whole-heartedly embrace God's call to join God's mission in the world. Let us proclaim God's good news, let us spread the Gospel, let us plant seeds and grow disciples!

Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year! Fr. Sam+



A Message of Thanks --Joe Milam, Senior Warden

Time flies, and it is difficult to believe that my term as Senior Warden is almost over.

Many chuckle when I say that, over the last two years, I have taken far more from Epiphany than I have given. But, it is true. I learned a great deal about the multi-faceted operations of Epiphany. I developed a deeper respect for all who make Epiphany such a unique and critically important part of our community. I now have a more refined appreciation for those whom I call “Epiphians”, past and present. And I am certain that, despite many challenges, our future is as bright as Bethlehem’s star.

Much has been said about past conflicts within our parish. There is no question that internal rifts have consumed far too much of Epiphany’s time, energy and resources. In fact, when I initially accepted the position of Senior Warden, I braced myself as I tried to imagine what major blow ups might occur under my watch. Nobody enjoys conflict and the inevitable unpleasantness which it engenders. Despite my fears, rather than divisions, I have witnessed a renewed sense of community. We are moving forward and away from a church characterized by discord and disharmony. Epiphany is a special, dynamic and vibrant place which offers so much for so many.

Those who worship here enjoy an outstanding and meaningful experience. The number of those attending worship services at Epiphany continues to increase. We are more diverse, yet I believe more cohesive as a community of faith. We are served by a dedicated, committed and caring clergy. We are reaching out to our community in new and meaningful ways. EES continues to grow and prosper. Epiphany cannot be characterized as myopic or reactionary. Our parishioners no longer focus on internal divisions, but seek broader solutions. Epiphany is making a major impact at a critical time in our community’s history. We are changing lives and bringing people closer to God.

While it is pleasant for me to discuss some of the good things happening at Epiphany, I certainly cannot take credit for any of them. We are blessed to have many outstanding contributors to our accomplishments. As we go forward, let us not become complacent. We should not underestimate the simplicity, but importance of expressing thanks.

There is much work to be done, but I believe we can and will continue to move forward. We can become better stewards. Those who so generously created our endowed funds did not intend to supplant the ongoing responsibility of each member of Epiphany to be faithful givers. Money and financial resources are important to the life of our parish, but we need to understand that our accomplishments and our growth as a community of faith cannot be measured in dollars and cents.

In closing, let me offer heartfelt thanks to all of you who contribute so much to the life of Epiphany. Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to serve as your Senior Warden and see Epiphany in a new way. I cannot thank enough those who served on our vestry over the last two years. As noted above, I am confident that we are in a position to assure that Epiphany will continue to thrive. Indeed, it is a season of hope. **–Best Holiday Wishes, Joe**

Thanks to My Epiphany Family

A Note from Doris Pritchett --Christmas 2011

“I want to thank my Epiphany family for all the comfort in mind, body and soul you have provided during my illness. Like the lovely flowers from the altar which I enjoyed so much – with the added pleasure of all the staff coming to my room for services. Thanks for sharing those moments of pleasure.

“I started at Epiphany at age 6 and am now 85. It has been a close part of our family’s life from baptism, confirmations, weddings and funeral; women’s and youth activities—comfort from Fr. Wilson, Mother Carolyn, Mother Helen McKee, Fr. Sam and all my other special visitors.

“I have been blessed and my prayers have been heard. Amen.”

*(*Doris Pritchett is one of Epiphany’s longest standing parishioners. Her contributions - especially her sense of humor - are legendary here, and in our community at large. Doris entertained troops the world over while touring with the USO during WWII, and served our nation in many capacities. Later, as an Extension Agent she helped us all develop our “green thumbs”. Doris is currently at Riverside Health and Rehabilitation Center.)*



Christmas Celebrates God's Incarnation

—The Rev. Carolyn Craft, Ph.D., Spiritual Director

I remember a long Advent in 1958. when I was living in the home of an Episcopal family: there were no decorations, except perhaps a wreath on the front door; the meals were simpler, without desserts, and, in some ways a deep calm settled upon the household, anticipating the great liturgical celebration of Christmas. After all the Advent preparations, I missed the Christmas Eucharistic celebration because I visited an aunt and uncle.

Christmas Eve at their home was secularly busy, decorating, wrapping gifts, and cooking; after my young cousins were asleep, my uncle and I started to his office to get the ping pong table Santa Clause was bringing my cousins. My uncle, a physician, was called to the bedside of a dying woman, so it was almost 4 a.m. before we got the ping pong table properly set up as Santa's big gift. Well before 8a.m., sleep became impossible: my cousins had bounded out of bed, discovered the ping pong table, and were in the midst of a competition which awakened their parents and me as well.

My aunt and uncle had a "no opening of packages until after breakfast" custom, so shortly my cousins were asking for breakfast. We celebrated "Christmas" that morning with lots of giving and receiving of presents and a big festival family meal: great fun! I secretly felt cheated and wished Advent waiting, a new spiritual experience for me, had culminated in a celebration of Jesus' birth as well.

I was not yet an Episcopalian, but I longed for the Christmas Eucharist which my "family" for about seven months, the Episcopal family, had prepared for and was enjoying. My aunt and uncle and their family were Christian too, but their church had no Christmas service: the Christmas celebration was a marvelous family event, but was it truly a celebration of God's becoming one of us, a human person?

Recently, I've tried to be intentional about Advent waiting: no decorations (usually at some point a wreath on the door, but that's all), simpler meals, more time spent deliberately "with God" who is always present but so often ignored. Often I feel like Scrooge as everyone else decorates, parties proliferate, and everywhere the secular songs of Christmas—those about Rudolf, or Santa, or a White Christmas—are heard.

How do we observe sacred times in the midst of a culture that is not only secular but that secularizes, commercializes, and trivializes our greatest feast day? Of course, many Christians regard Easter as the greatest feast day; God is far faster than our perceptions or thoughts: Christianity is enriched by many perceptions. I resonate with the Franciscan idea that the Incarnation is the great feast of God's redemption, when God lowered God's self to become a finite, limited human being living in the midst of the sin and death we had brought upon ourselves. We tried, without knowing what we were doing, to kill God: Easter celebrates the impossibility of deicide, even when God has clothed God's self in our humanity. Wonder of wonders: God calls us to share in the fullness of the divine life.

Preceding our *Book of Common Prayer: 1979*, the Christmas celebration was observed throughout its Octave (eight days), often bursting beyond that until Twelfth Night and the Feast of the Epiphany which celebrates God's human birth's becoming known to Gentiles, those outside the Jewish community.

Thanks be to God for the Incredible riches of God's grace, mercy, and infinite love! Somehow may we, within the Tabernacle of our hearts, let God quietly prepare us for an exuberant celebration of the deepest meaning of Christmas: *God is with us, one of us, and we are created to share God's divine life! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

-God bless all of you, Mother Carolyn

There are openings for the dedication of Altar Flowers in 2012: The following dates are available: January 1; April 22 & 29; June 17 & 24; July 1 & 22; August 5; September 30; December 30. If you would like to dedicate the altar flowers on one of these dates, please call Nan Freed at 792-6261.

Spotlight on Epiphany Episcopal School

EES Teacher's painting, "Monet Flowers" wins best in show



Epiphany Episcopal Science teacher, Lois Lea has always been a huge fan of the *French Impressionistic* period. And it shows.

The multi-talented Miss Lea studied painting and drawing while at the University of Virginia, where she graduated with a degree in Fine Arts. "The love of art history and painting are in the family DNA. My Great Aunt Clara and Aunt Jenny were accomplished artists, and encouraged me to study the arts along with my academics."

During summer breaks Lois would visit Aunt Jenny in South Carolina who would tutor her in painting.

Lois began drawing in childhood and continued throughout high school. "Although I enjoy media such as charcoal, pastels, and pencil; my real love is painting. I have worked with acrylic and oil on canvas, but oil is my favorite. Oil paint has a richness and elegance that acrylic paint lacks.

"I especially love to paint flowers. Georgia O'Keefe is one of my favorite artists!"

While at UVa., Lois did a series of floral compositions on canvas in oils and acrylics. After graduating, however, she drifted away from paintings but kept a sketch book handy for whenever an idea materialized. "I kept thinking, 'one day I will take up the brush again,' and the recent opening of DRAW Gallery has inspired me to do so. In fact, I have begun a floral in canvas which I hope to finish soon."

Recently, Lois took some college paintings out of storage and put them on display at the DRAW Gallery (Dan River Art Works Gallery-531 Main Street, Downtown Danville). It was there that one of her paintings, "Money Flowers" (see photo) won "Best in Show". The inspiration for the painting comes from the work of Claude Monet, considered by many to be the founder of French Impressionistic painting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

"The composition is of hyacinths painted with acrylic on canvas. I was stunned when I went on the website and saw my painting was the winner!

"I intend to continue painting. It is very therapeutic. The problem is finding the time! I teach at EES, and contrary to belief, teachers can easily work 10-12 hours a day when school is in session. However, I try to carve out time each day to sketch. The ideas just keep coming!"

Market Street Brass who entertained so wonderfully this summer will present a Christmas Music and Program Wednesday, December 21, at 7:00 p.m. This will be followed by a Wine and Cheese reception. A festive way to get into the season!!

Christmas Services: December 24—4:00, Family Oriented Service; Sacred Music-10:30 p.m., Christmas Midnight Mass and Holy Eucharist-11:00 P.M.; Christmas Day-10:00 A.M. Service Only



Christmas Church Mouse Looks to *THE STARS*

(Reprinted from last year due to the poignancy of Thomouse's message)

I have just finished decorating my Christmas tree with strands of popcorn, strings of cranberries, bits of tinsel, and my silver star on the very top. My Christmas tree star is made of plastic and glitter, but it is a good symbol to remind me of other stars and of my relationship to them.

In the Gospel Matthew tells the story of the star that led the 3 Wise Men or 3 Kings or 3 Magi to Jesus; the star that "...went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

In this Christmas season it is also the time of year to sing about The Star, the star of Bethlehem:

"O Star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light."

Today the debate goes on about the star of Bethlehem. Was it a comet or a confluence of planets or a supernova? Was it simply fiction, an attempt by Matthew to symbolize Jesus' birth by linking it in majesty to a star?

In this Christmas season the stars continue to show me all of the majesty of our creation, our human lives, and our blessings. In December 2009 I looked at the stars through the lens of the Hubble Space Telescope Advent Calendar. Each day of December leading up to Christmas a new Hubble photograph was posted showing the nitrogen red, hydrogen green and oxygen turquoise of nebulae in deep space. There were images of cream and peach Jupiter surrounded by 4 moons, the Red Spider Nebula waving red radiation like a matador's cape, and the red, white and blue twinkling 10 million-Christmas-light stars in the globular cluster of Omega Centauri. My favorite was the Caribbean sea-blue of the "chaotic Carina Nebula" streaming new stars like 4th of July fireworks.

This year the Hubble Space Telescope Advent Calendar is back online, offering up one new photograph every day starting with a Star of Bethlehem image created by the formation of pre-planetary nebula around a central star that is "...one of the most perfect geometrical forms created in space." You can see last year's calendar at http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2009/12/hubble_space_telescope_advent_1.html and you can enjoy the 2010 images at http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2010/12/2010_hubble_space_telescope_ad.html the stars in heaven and the joy of Jesus' birth are all gifts for us in this majestic world. Let us all be guided by this perfect light.

Yours in the shining light of billions of stars, **Thomouse**



The Multiple Uses of **WICKER HALL**

It may be a commonly held belief that one of Epiphany's two "Troika" buildings is used for classroom space, but this is not the case. Only Trinity Hall functions as classroom space. Wicker Hall (left) serves a plethora of functions in its three floors.

The ground floor space recently housed the book sale and currently is being used for Hollis Stauber's Yoga class. Soon, Boy Scout Troop 452 will hold its regular weekly meetings on this floor, and Cub Scout Pack 452, too, when up and running. The scouts' equipment and accoutrements will also

be permanently housed there.

The second floor, or street-level floor, has been renovated and furnished as living quarters for guests of the church and school resulting in convenience for our guests as well as saving the cost of a motel room. This floor has a furnished kitchen and laundry facilities as well. The comfortable living room is also used for gatherings and meetings of Epiphany groups.

The upper floor is being furnished as a space for our youth, already holding the meetings and activities of the EYC. The Christian Education Coordinator also has an office there. As time goes on, we are sure that Wicker Hall will serve in many other useful and efficient capacities.

“Bo” brings special gifts as Epiphany Christian Education Coordinator

I'm William T (Bo) Setliff Jr and I'm humbled to be your Christian Education Coordinator.

I come to our church from having spent eleven years as a United Methodist Pastor, last serving two churches here in Danville. I'm a graduate from Virginia Wesleyan College with a BA in Religion and of Duke University Divinity School with an MDiv. Originally from east of Martinsville Virginia, I have four grown children and one granddaughter. Prior to becoming a pastor I retired from serving in the US Navy operating and maintaining nuclear power plants on submarines. My two cats and I live in Vandola where we enjoy playing at various musical instruments, playing video games, shooting sports, and reading.

I came to Epiphany seeking to return to the mother church of the Wesleyan tradition. Mr Wesley, the founder of the Methodist tradition was an Anglican priest his entire life and claimed there is no other church with better organization and faith than the Anglican Church, and so my theology and understanding are thoroughly in accord with the Episcopal Church. At the same time I share with Mr. Wesley an evangelical bent that lends itself to my seeking to lead people to walk with Christ and to serve our Lord by serving others (the *imago dei* that makes each human being redeemable and of tremendous worth to God, hence to us). It is my fervent and active hope that in working harmoniously with Father Sam we will all be moved more deeply into the mystery of God and reach out to our community in the name of Christ all the more.



REACHING OUT

Epiphany's ANGELS

Christmas was given to our community children by members of the Epiphany Community. The Salvation Army “ANGEL TREE” effort brings Santa Claus gifts where, otherwise, there might be none. It is an absolutely elegant Outreach, and Epiphany parish family stepped up big time adopting 34 children to whom they brought gifts and clothes. An excellent expression of the real purpose and meaning of the Christmas message.

Cards for Jail Ministry: You are urged to donate Christmas cards for the Jail Ministry making it possible for locally incarcerated men and women to maintain contact with their families. This has a tremendous impact on their rehabilitation. Other cards, such as “Missing You”, “Get Well” “Happy Birthday”, etc., are also welcomed to use year-round. The cards can be deposited in the front hall of the Parish House. **Please do not put stamps on the envelopes.

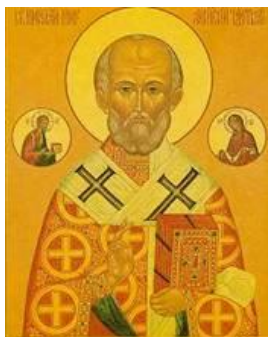
Epiphany is collecting warm coats for men who come to the Thursday lunch program who are in need of a coat. The Prayer Shawl Ministry is providing scarves. If you have a coat to donate, please bring it to the church office.



Epiphany Church and School as One Epiphany

These students at Epiphany Episcopal School are also members of active church families: Nassio Beaver, Brooks

Powell, Lauren Dickerson, Luke Lamonica, Isabella Lamonica, Robert Nejad, Ashley Nejad, Brittany Nejad, Jonathan Adkins, Aaron Salmon, Austin Salmon, Seth Haskell, Garrett Jones, William Jones and Maryjane Shipman. These students comprise around 20% of the school population.



St Nicholas of Myra: A Guide to the Real Santa Claus

Although St Nicholas is usually acknowledged as the 'original Santa Claus', we actually know vanishingly little about him for certain; indeed, his very existence has sometimes been called into question, due to the lack of secure references to him in contemporary sources. All that can be said with any degree of confidence is that St Nicholas probably lived in the fourth-century in the Lycian port of Myra, in the south-west of modern Turkey, and that he was a bishop. In addition, it is likely that he died on the 6 December, which was celebrated as his feast day in the medieval church calendar; later accounts also add that St Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea and was vocal in

opposing the Arian heresy, which does not seem implausible. One of the earliest legends that was attached to his name tells how St Nicholas heard of a man who could not afford the dowries for his three daughters, with the result that he intended - regretfully - to send them to the brothel to work. St Nicholas saves them from this fate by throwing three bags of gold through their window at night: it is this tale which is often identified as the root of St Nicholas's reputation as a gift-giver. Whether or not this event, or something like it, really happened is entirely uncertain; however, it is more credible than some of the other tales told of St Nicholas. In this context it ought to be noted that, in the course of the development of his legend, St Nicholas does appear to have taken on some of the qualities/roles that originally belonged to the pagan deities Artemis and Poseidon.

Courtesy: www.arthuriana.co.uk/

In Other Countries Santa Claus is Known by Various Names:

Afghanistan-Baba Chaghloo, Albania-Babadimri, Armenia-Gaghant Baba, Belgium-Pere Noel, Bosnia and Herzegovina-Deda Mraz, Brazil-Papai Noel,

Bulgaria-Dyado Koleda, Chile-Viejo Pascuero ("Old Man Christmas"),

China-Dun Che Lao Ren ("Christmas Old Man"),Denmark-Julemanden,

Egypt-Papa Noël, France-Pere Noel, French Canada-Père Noël,

Finland-Joulupukki, Germany-Weihnachtsmann ("Christmas Man" or "Nikolaus")

Hawaii-Kanakaloka, Hungary-Mikulas (St. Nicholas), Iran-Baba Noel,

Iraq-Vader Kersfees, Ireland-Daidí na Nollaig, Italy-Babbo Natale,

Jamaica-Santa Claus, Japan-Hoteiosho (a god or priest who bears gifts)

Latin America-Papá Noel* (Spanish-speaking), Lithuania-Kaledu Senelis,

Malta- San Niklaw, Norway-Julenissen ("Christmas gnome"),

Poland-Swiety Mikolaj (St. Nicholas), Portugal-Pai Natal,

Romania-Mos Craciun, Russia-Ded Moroz ("Grandfather Frost"),

Serbia-Deda Mraz, Scottish Highlands-Daidáin na Nollaig,

South Africa-Vader Kersfees, Spain-Papá Noel, Sweden-Jultomten ("Christmas brownie"),

Turkey-Noel Baba, United Kingdom-Father Christmas



Courtyard on Course to Fulfill Plan

It was way back in 1991 when Meg Turner (daughter-in-law of Frank and Marcia Turner) and skilled Landscaper drew up beautiful plans for the Church Courtyard. This week those plans were finally put in place as the Raywood folks under the supervision of Betty Wilson and Marcia Turner and Buildings and Grounds Commission started the extensive landscaping process

that will transform the space into a lovely venue for receptions, parties, parish gatherings and the like.

When completed, the Star will again feature our magnificent new congregational space in a spring pictorial in full bloom.

(Above-Left: Betty Wilson, Building and Grounds Commission Chairman, and Marcia Turner blueprint plans in hand, supervise Raywood Landscaping in planting and shaping the courtyard to Meg Turner's careful, beautiful design specifications).



Another Winning Entry!

Once again the float entry for Epiphany Episcopal School achieved notoriety taking **THIRD PLACE NON-COMMERCIAL FLOATS** in the **2011 Danville Riverview Rotary Christmas Parade** held Saturday, December 10. Many hours were dedicated to this marvelous float conceived, designed and built by EES Students and Parents proclaiming "An Old Fashioned Wish for Peace on Earth."

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 - Carter Richardson; 4 - Loudon Bendall;
 4 - Kathy Milam; 5 - Makeda Warner; 8 - Sally Davis
 10 - Corliss Jones-Williams; 13 -Kellie Beaver; 13 - Jerry Charles;
 15 - Charlie Riddle III; 16 - John Henry Moore;
 17 - Catherine Ruev; 17 - Nicholas Ruev; 18 - Elaine Lea; 20 - Lily Hungarland;
 23 - Sarafina Sampson; 25 - Evelyn Bengston; 26 - Eleanor Craig;
 29 - Hattie Bendall
 29 - Steven Walton; 29 - Elizabeth Williams

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

17 - Wilson and Janie Leigh Carter
 28 - Peter and Anne Howard Moore
 29 - Kurt and Winnifred Lindquist
 30 - John and Shearin Light

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

2 – Brenda Craddock; 2 – Geneva Myers;
 5 – Leslie Dobbins; 8 – Jaya Clark; 8 – Alex Mitchell;
 9 – Betty Wilson; 10 – Pat Alwood; 10 – Haiasi Sampson;
 11 – Mary Clayton Eggleston; 13 – Wallis Milam;
 14 – Milo Abercrombie; 14 – Bob Sjoberg; 16 – Jim Caywood;
 16 – Todd Isom; 17 – Kathy McDaniel;
 17 – Susanne Singer; 19 – Sherry Gott; 20 – Stephanie hedge;
 21 – Nancy Jiranek; 25 – Jane Carter; 31 – Warren Williams

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

1 – Peggy and Larry Welborn
 17 – Fran and Sonny Ramsey

The Annual Christmas Pageant with Holy Eucharist will be held at 11:00 a.m., December 18, followed by a party/reception in the Parish Hall. Make plans for this annual event.

EES will close at noon, December 20 for the Christmas Holidays, returning January 3. The church office will be closed December 23 - January 2.