

SOUNDS

of

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December 13, 2009

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Merciful God, who sent thy messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

FROM THE RECTOR

Archbishop Cranmer's splendid collect for the first Sunday of Advent sets the theme of the entire season: "Cast away the works of darkness, and put [on] the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life." Inspired by Scripture, Cranmer calls us to a season of casting off and putting on. That is the true work of Advent: Not the buying of presents, not the decorating of houses, not the ceaseless rounds of hospitality, not the things which weary us and make us ambivalent about the "holidays". Casting off and putting on are the reasons for this precious season.

A myopic and sentimental view of the past holds that life was easier and less hurried in Cranmer's day. I doubt those who lived those days would have found it so, given the extraordinary amount of routine work one had to do just to survive. Yet even if the pace of life had less pressure (contrived and real) than contemporary life presents, what does one make of Cranmer's little adverb, "now". All of that casting off and putting on was to be now, not when it is convenient, not when we get around to it, not after the other work of Advent is done. Now means now.

Still, too many substitute "busy work" in place of the real work to which we are called. As we move through Advent, the pace seems to get more frantic. Is there another party to attend? Have I completed mailing my cards and greetings? Have I forgotten anything on the shopping list? Are our travel plans set? Add your own question to the list, and soon there is not enough time to get it all done, whatever "it" includes, and perhaps we just abandon hope, all we who enter here.

One way to approach the season is to slow down rather than speed up. I want to suggest one way to do that. When you read the Prayer

Book, pay attention to the punctuation. An almost forgotten principle is that the Prayer Book was meant to be read aloud, and with meaning. We have become inclined to rush through things as though the church building were ablaze and we cannot escape until we get to the last word. To the contrary, if we allow that punctuation (especially commas) to sharpen our sense of pace and meaning, we can begin to receive a richer blessing of the familiar treasures which often pass by our eyes and ears as though we were encountering a foreign tongue. Read the four Advent collects as part of your spiritual discipline. Read them aloud, with God as your audience. Pay attention to the punctuation, and let newer levels of meaning penetrate your heart.

The punctuation in the Prayer Book is a broader subject than this column allows, and we shall have to consider it in greater detail another time. For now, however, let it serve as a routine discipline, but not an unimportant one. Advent's summons to cast off and put on is something to be considered carefully. It involves repentance and it involves preparation. Advent thus can become a precious season indeed, if you let the commas – spiritual as well as a grammatical – slow you down, and put things in clearer perspective. To receive the richest blessings Advent can offer – and there are many – approach this season with Cranmer's "now" in mind, cognizant of the important work he has set before us, and of the season in which he calls us to do it.



ANNUAL MEETING

The 55th Annual Meeting of Potomac Parish will be held Sunday, January 31, 2010. The Rector and Wardens invite members of the parish to submit suggestions to the Nominating Committee for their consideration in offering a slate of candidates for election to the Vestry (four seats to be filled). In compliance with the parish by-laws, the Vestry has adopted the following criteria for nomination: Nominees (1) Must be an active, confirmed member, or a member desirous of being confirmed within one year of election to the Vestry, in good standing; (2) Must be frequent and regular in worship attendance; (3) Must be committed to the spread of the Gospel to the unchurched and to the deepening of the commitment of the congregation of St. Francis to the Gospel and God in Christ; (4) Must support the work of St. Francis by a yearly pledge to the operating budget (5) Must be willing and able to attend Vestry meetings and perform the work expected of a Vestry member. Please submit suggestions in writing to the Rector or to the Wardens.

SENIORS' CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

On Thursday, December 17th, the St. Francis Seniors will meet at Normandie Farms on Falls Road at 12 noon for our Christmas luncheon. **Reservations MUST be made by Monday noon, December 14th** as the restaurant needs a final count by 2 pm.

There will be a choice of 3 entrees: 1) Marinated Chicken Tarragon Salad; 2) Breast of Chicken stuffed with Spinach and Feta Cheese; 3) Roasted Pork Chop with Stewed Apples, garlic au jus. Please indicate your choice when making your reservation. The meal will include a salad, your entrée, dessert and coffee/hot tea.

The format will be different this year. When you make your reservation, we ask that you send a check to the church for \$31.50 which includes tax and gratuity. Make the check out to St. Francis Church and on the 'memo' line, write Senior Christmas Lunch.

If you need transportation or you have questions, please call Sue Tull at 301-299-8799.

To make reservations and select your entree, call Christine in the Church Office (301-365-2055) by Monday, December 14. Please remember to send your check on or before Monday if at all possible!

STRING AND WOODWIND PLAYERS:

Would you like to play in a small ensemble for the Christmas Pageant on December 20? If so, please contact Victoria Ellsworth via email at: vellsworth@norwoodschool.org

Rehearsals: Sunday December 13 and 20 after Sunday School in the youth room.

- Victoria Ellsworth

DON'T MISS THE BOOK CLUB ON THURSDAY

The next book club meeting will be **Thursday, December 17th at 7:30pm** in the Youth Room. We will be discussing a collection of short stories, *The Stories of Eva Luna* by Isabel Allende. These stories are filled with vibrant characters in compelling situations, all written in prose which brings them off the page and into our lives. Even if you've only read one, you'll enjoy the discussion.

Allende is a real talent, an amazingly prolific one. In her stories there are palpable life and death risks, the risks of passionate love, the risks of passionate belief, of convictions and honor.

Leigh Allison Wilson
The Washington Post



SHOPPING ALERT ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FOOD BOX COLLECTION

An Advent outreach tradition at St. Francis, the Christmas Food Box collection supplies all the fixings for a holiday meal to local families or individuals in need. The Parish Outreach Committee partners with Interfaith Works' *Holiday Giving Project*, which coordinates distribution to referred Montgomery County recipients.

SHOPPING LIST BASICS:

5 lbs.	Potatoes	2	15 oz.	Cans green beans or peas
1 lb.	Carrots	2	15 oz.	Cans cranberry sauce
2 lbs.	Onions	1	64 oz.	Non-refrigerated juice
1 ea.	1 lb. bag or box of stuffing	3	lbs.	Apples or oranges
2 ea.	Cans or envelopes gravy mix	2	15 oz.	Cans corn
6 ea.	Sweet potatoes or 1 large can yams	1	ea.	Pie: pumpkin, apple, etc. (check the Sell By dates)
1 dz.	Dinner rolls or biscuit/cornbread mix			

1 \$20 gift card to Giant or Safeway for a main course (taped visibly inside the box or its lid)

WELCOME ADDITIONS INCLUDE:

- Staples like pasta, rice, peanut butter, tuna, cereal, soup, nuts, snacks
- Disposable roasting or baking pans, pot holders
- Holiday tablecloth or napkins, candles, candies or cookies, brownie or other dessert mix, stocking stuffers

NOTES:

- Be sure the box has a sturdy **lid**. Do not tape it shut, since the Outreach Committee may have extras to add.
- A new laundry basket or storage bin may usefully replace a box.
- **Involve your children: decorate** your box with wrapping paper or last year's Christmas cards, and add an item or two nightly after lighting the Advent wreath. Include a Christmas card or ornament.

THE DROP-OFF WILL BE IN THE UNDERCROFT ON:

Friday, December 18, 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 19, 9:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

If shopping is difficult for you, send \$50 in Giant or Safeway gift cards to the church office in **\$10** or **\$20** increments, noting "Christmas Food Boxes" on the envelope. Please do not send a check payable to St. Francis. **GIFT CARDS ONLY.**

Questions? Contact Susan Dolan (301-279-9129, sldolan@comcast.net) or Andy Jordan (301-299-3162, marionaj@aol.com) or the office at 301-365-2055.

Thanks and warm wishes for a blessed Advent, the Parish Outreach Committee.

A MESSAGE FROM STEVE HARPER

The 2010 Stewardship campaign is underway. You have seen a series of messages in Sounds and heard sermons during church services. Faithful Stewardship is at the core of our Christian responsibility and it allows us to show gratitude for all the blessings of this life. Your financial participation provides for excellent worship services, Christian Education programs, Youth Programs and Outreach. We ask that you prayerfully consider making your offering in support of St. Francis to be one of a significant amount.

Please return your pledge card as soon as possible so the St. Francis Vestry can plan for the upcoming year.

Thank you.

Steve Harper
2010 Stewardship Chairman

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS OPEN HOUSE

Women of St. Francis are inviting all parishioners to an **Open House at Gary and Trina Bachman's**, 7713 Masters Drive, River Falls Community, **Sunday, December 13, from 3 to 6 PM. Come enjoy an appetizer and glass of wine!**

Please **bring a favorite family recipe** that you cook during your holiday gatherings. These recipes will be organized into a "new" cookbook supplement which will fit in our St. Francis cookbook published two years ago. We are calling this new edition of recipes "**Home for the Holidays**".

Since December is also prime time for cookie baking, **an optional cookie exchange** has been organized. Bake 2 dozen or more cookies, bring them to the Sunday Open House and exchange your cookies for other home baked goodies.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT END-OF-YEAR CONTRIBUTIONS

Please note that all contributions to St. Francis Episcopal Church that are to be included in your 2009 Charitable Contributions Statement and therefore tax deductible for 2009, must be received at the church office no later than 12:00 noon on December 31, 2009. The church office will close early that day for the New Year's holiday.

In compliance with Internal Revenue Service regulations and consistent with the parish's auditing firm's standards, **contributions and gifts received after noon on December 31 will be included on the 2010 Charitable Contributions reports**, even if they are credited to 2009 pledges.

CHRISTMAS FLORAL MEMORIALS

You are invited again to remember your loved ones this Christmas by making a donation for the Christmas flowers and greens. All of the beautiful decorations in and around the church during the holidays depend on this one source of income, and what better way to honor those you love at this joyous season?.

If you would like to make a contribution, please fill out one of the forms available on the table outside the office and return it with your check to Christine in the office. You may also call the church office directly at 301-365-2055 and then mail in your check.

Donations must be received no later than December 15th so we can ensure that your acknowledgements are made correctly. Please note on your check that it is for **Christmas Flowers**.

Thank you in advance for your generosity in this ministry.

COMING UP AT ST FRANCIS

For more information, please visit our website at www.stfrancispotomac.org

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

HUNGER SUNDAY

8:00am Holy Eucharist
9:00am Holy Eucharist
Adult Education Hour
11:15 am Morning Prayer
3:00—6:00 pm Holiday Open House—Bachman Residence

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

5:30 pm St. Nicholas & St. Clare Choirs
7:00 pm Centering Prayer—Undercroft
7:30 pm Vestry Meeting

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

10:00 am Holy Eucharist
11:00 am Rector's Bible Study
5:30 pm Jr. High Bible Study

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17

12:00 Noon Senior Luncheon at Normandie Farms
No *Sounds* the week of 12/27
5:30 pm Sr. High Bible Study
7:30 pm Book Club—Youth Room
7:30 pm St Francis Choir

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18

7:00 am Men's Bible Study

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

8:00 am Holy Eucharist
9:00 am Morning Prayer
Adult Education Hour
11:15 am Holy Eucharist
4:30 pm Sunday School Christmas Pageant

The Scripture appointed for the Second Sunday of Advent
Zephaniah 3:14-20, Philippians 4:4-7(8-9), Luke 3:7-18, Psalm 85 or 85:7-13 or Canticle 9

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