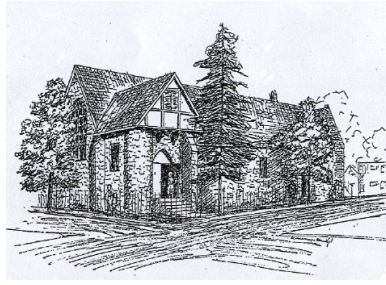


THE GRAPEVINE
NEWSLETTER OF ST. MARTIN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS



St. Martin's Episcopal Church

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Rev. Richard T. Clark, Minister

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2011

From the Rev. Richard T. Clark:

A Word, If I May...

Our congregation is hunkering down for the winter season, taking refuge from the cold and the high cost of heating by moving into the parish house on Sunday mornings. Our attendance now averages about 45 committed and dynamic individuals. The vitality of our congregation is not in doubt, but we do tend to be shrinking in numbers rather than growing. We are not alone in this, but that is not much consolation.

Dr. John B. Chilton, an active Episcopal layman in the Diocese of Virginia, recently wrote: "Most people... want to be told that it really matters to their salvation what they believe, how they came to believe it, and what they need to do to grow in grace. They want a charismatic leadership that professes no ambiguity or uncertainty. They want to see a clear boundary between those who are in grace, and those who are not." Obviously, that doesn't quite describe the Episcopal Church, but it does suggest why we do not have mass appeal.

Dr. Chilton adds: "We are not a mass market church. We are a niche church with a rich liturgical tradition that brings some closer to God's immanence, transcendence and longing for a relationship with God's people. But our style doesn't work for everyone – even if they agree with us on social issues – and that's okay."

The Rt. Rev. Marian Budde, recently installed Bishop of Washington, D.C., sees our church as a "jewel of Christianity." We have a wonderful, expansive understanding of God. We are thoughtful Christians, open to the experience of Christ in the many ways he comes to us. We're open-minded and inclusive of other faith traditions. And we believe that God placed us on this earth for a reason, to help heal the world and promote the well-being of all of God's children."

As I respond to your call to be a part-time Cleric, it is from my own love and respect for the Episcopal Church, but I am not willing to live in or cling to the past. Rather, I prefer to take the treasures of this Church and open them up to new insight and inspiration, reshaping them to inspire, challenge, encourage, enlighten those of every age, to make real the experience of grace and love.

Jesus wasn't so much a charismatic leader as he was a person who expressed the truth with authority. His approach was not so much mass appeal but in one-on-one conversations or in small gatherings. He was commonly addressed as "Teacher." Our relationship to the Jesus seen in the scriptures is as students, learning how to evolve into the fullest expression of God's will for us. Sometimes our learning is by the trial-and-error method.

If it's been a while, come and join us on Sunday morning, and share in the process of growing in grace and love...as *Episcopalians*.

- *Richard T. Clark*

It's Coming!

Advent, the Season of Expectation – We'll hardly be through with the turkey leftovers when it's time to light the Advent Candles, marking the countdown to Christmas. November 27th is the first Sunday in Advent. The Advent Wreath is a beautiful tradition, creating a heady mix of expectation, illumination and anticipation. The scent of evergreens ties in with ancient Celtic traditions such as...

The Winter Solstice

We'll be celebrating this ancient tradition with a special service on **Wednesday, December 21st at 7:00 p.m.** There will be the scent of evergreens, the light of candles, words of inspiration, silence, gentle music and quite insights. Take a break from the last minute rush, and gift yourself with inspiration and peace.

BIT 'N PIECES

By Dee Davenport

I am so sorry for being so tardy in doing this newsletter. I just can't seem to get with the program. So much has transpired; I will try to get much of it in writing.

The summer quickly passed and so did Fall and now we are in winter, yes, we have turned the heat back on and have moved our Sunday service to the parish to conserve on the expense of oil. We are hoping to switch to gas in the near future.

We have missed Evan Crocker, he cannot drive any longer. We put Mildred Gates to rest at Rural cemetery this summer.

June Costa had a quadruple bypass and is doing well. Arnie Furtado is finally home and doing much better. Mildred Soloman has been at rehab for quite awhile. Rev Phil Douglass passed away. Fred Catterall was up for the summer; now back to Florida with the other snow-birds, Carol and Fred Morgan. Big John fell and fractured his hip, had surgery, rehab and is now home.

Our Laurinda, had surgery as well and is through with her radiation, just in time to help with John. All are in our prayers. The DeCosta's have moved to assisted living, only problem being the distance from church. Tad Morris celebrated his 3 years of sobriety on Sept 5th. Great job Tad.

Rev Billie Mae left and is now an interim out of town. We are fortunate to have as "Our Minister", the Rev Richard T. Clark, who has been around St Martin's for 40 years or so-off and on! He comes to us when we are always in need and has been a rich source of inspiration. Welcome Richard.

We welcome new lay readers, Thelma Swaye and Joan Gomes, cousins and long members of St Martin's. They have taken up the call and do a marvelous job- Thanks. Ray Morin has been a great help and painted the Thrift Shop. Again, thanks.

"Irene", the hurricane floated through on August 28th and left many without power, but we were lucky. The sad thing is all the

trees and shrubs were killed by the salt and our local squirrels are without acorns.

We had a different service in the parking lot- "Mass on the Asphalt" led by Richard and well attended. Hopefully do more of this in summer.

Thanks to a generous parishioner, we now have a new freezer/refrigerator. Also our old oven has been cleaned and repainted and good as new!

Food Pantry

St. Martin's Food Pantry has grown, there are so many needy out there. We feed 160 families and couldn't do it without the help of the Boston food bank and our generous parishioners. We also had the Leo Pimental Food Drive, The Feinstein challenge, the United Way grant and a food drive by the students of the Gomes School, 5th grade under the direction of their teacher and member of our church, Elaine Santos- Great job kids. Also, thanks to a generous donor we are able to help in our own circle with Gift certificates at local stores during the holidays.

THANKSGIVING

This year we are trying something different- Thanksgiving at St. Martin's. This was Libby and Mike Costa's idea. There are many who have no family around and we are opening our doors to our members to join us on thanksgiving at noon. Richard,

Mike and Dee are cooking a turkey and Dee doing the stuffing, green bean casserole, Richard the squash, Mike and Terri and Libby, Betsy doing the potatoes, carrots and turnips. Also having numerous pies and ice cream! What a great way to share a great day.

Forms for flower donations, and also Christmas envelopes are on the welcome table. We will be greening the church on December 18th following the service. All hands on deck!

WINTER SOLTICE – 7PM

On Thursday, December 22 we will be conducting a nightlight service celebrating the winter solstice.

TWO BABIES IN A MANGER

In 1994, two Americans answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics (based on biblical principles) in the public schools. They were invited to teach at prisons, businesses, the fire and police departments and a large orphanage. About 100 boys and girls who had been abandoned, abused, and left in the care of a government-run program were in the orphanage. They relate the following story in their own words: It was nearing the holiday season, 1994, time for our orphans to hear, for the first time, the traditional story of Christmas. We told them about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem. Finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable, where the baby Jesus was born and placed in a manger. Throughout the story, the children and orphanage staff sat in amazement as they listened. Some sat on the edges of their stools, trying to grasp every word. Completing the story, we gave the children three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was given a small paper square, cut from yellow napkins I had brought with

me. No colored paper was available in the city.

Following instructions, the children tore the paper and carefully laid strips in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel, cut from a worn-out nightgown an American lady was throwing away as she left Russia, were used for the baby's blanket. A doll-like baby was cut from tan felt we had brought from the United States.

The orphans were busy assembling their manger as I walked among them to see if they needed any help. All went well until I got to one table where little Misha sat. He looked to be about 6 years old and had finished his project. As I looked at the little boy's manger, I was startled to see not one, but two babies in the manger. Quickly, I called for the translator to ask the lad why there were two babies in the manger. Crossing his arms in front of him and looking at this completed manger scene, the child began to repeat the story very seriously.

For such a young boy, who had only heard the Christmas story once, he related the happenings accurately....until he came to the part where Mary put the baby Jesus in the manger. Then Misha started to ad-lib. He made up his own ending to the story as he said, "And when Maria laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him I have no mamma and I have no papa, so I don't have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with him. But I told him I couldn't, because I didn't have a gift to give him like everybody else did. But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought maybe if I kept him warm, that would be a good gift.

So I asked Jesus, "If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?"

And Jesus told me, "If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me."

"So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and he told me I could stay with

him...for always."

As little Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed full of tears that splashed down his little cheeks. Putting his hand over his face, his head dropped to the table and his shoulders shook as he sobbed and sobbed.

The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon nor abuse him, someone who would stay with him...FOR ALWAYS.

I've learned that it's not what you have in your life, but who you have in your life that counts.

-- Author Unknown

Christmas Pot Luck

December 17th is the date for our Pot Luck get-together at 5 pm. We also invited many of our loyal supper supporters to join us. We will have the karaoke machine up and running with Christmas Music. This is always a pleasant evening sharing everyone's favorite dish and just being together at the holidays. Please join us. We also have a lovely comforter, curtain and sham to raffle.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Our choir is rehearsing for Christmas Eve and we will have lovely music, thanks to Pat Gurney, organist. The children will be angels and have a little skit for us. The service will have candlelight, communion and eggnog and cookies to follow. Please join us as there will be no service on the 25th. The time is 7 pm, plenty of time for you to do whatever after the service.

November Birthday greetings to:

John Sylvia 11/2, Ken Taylor 11/17, Marjorie DeCosta 11/8,

Thelma Swaye 11/10, Kevin Furtado 11/18, Barbara Geneste 11/21, Kathly Carlisle 11/24

November anniversary

congratulations to: Ken & Gerry Bastien 11/24.

Please excuse the blurriness of the copy quality, we are waiting for a new drum for our machine.

December Birthday Greetings to:

Karen Larkin 12/1, Carlton Smith 12/3, Gus Santos 12/6, Elaine Mahoney 12/11, Gloria Smith 12/12, Albino Gomes 12/14, Joan Gomes 12/18, Katie Li-Xia

Carlisle 12/20, Joan Arruda 12/25, Michael Costa 12/26, Paul Los 12/28.

December Anniversary

congratulations to: Jim & Anne Benevides 12/12, and Scott & Elaine Ellms 12/31.

Wishing everyone a blessed Christmas and May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Dee

**MAY GOD HOLD YOU IN
THE PALM
OF HIS HANDS.....DEE**