

The Newsletter

of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Northwest Texas

Number 180

December 15, 2006

Bishop Ohl's Advent/Christmas Message

As December winds down toward the Winter solstice and the days grow shorter, daylight seems almost to disappear. Advent calls us, however, to remember that the coming of the Christ is the growth of light and life. We light candles on our Advent wreaths to bring progressively more light into our dark world, culminating with the Christ candle on Christmas Eve. Advent is a parable for us as we recognize more and more the power of darkness in the world about us. We are to be the Christ-bearers, candle-like, bringing the light of Christ to the world about us, spreading the Good news to this broken and hurting place in which we find ourselves. Archbishop Fulton Sheen had a TV show in the 1950's which had as its theme song *If Everyone Lit Just One Little Candle*. What was true then is more necessary today. Be that one candle and make ours a brighter world in which we may recognize the birth of Jesus in the lives of all.

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori's Christmas Message 2006

God Among Us

God loved us so much that he came to dwell among us, to tent among us in human flesh... There is a wonderful echo there of God's presence in the tent while Israel wandered in the wilderness. The gift of the Incarnation says that God is willing to take on the human tent of flesh and be one with and among us.

That frail tent of flesh proves capable of holding divinity, but also capable of yielding up its spirit. Irenaeus and Athanasius insisted that the gift of Incarnation was that "God became human, that we might become divine." You and I are bearers of the image of God, and you and I share in Incarnation, for Jesus has walked this way before us. God is born in us as well.

The vulnerability of being born in obscurity, to a peasant refugee couple, in an out of the way place, says to us that God is with us in the smallest parts of life -- perhaps a reminder that we, too, may discover God in those humble and unexpected places if we are willing to go in search.

Matthew's story of the wise ones from the east who come searching for this new thing, this remarkable child, is equally a reminder that God's love extends to all, that God comes among us in human form for all humanity, not just for our co-religionists, not just for those who expect God's appearing in the same way we do, and not just in predictable ways at the altar.

Recently I watched and listened to a woman on a bus as she engaged in conversation with a three-year-old boy. The woman asked the child what happens at Christmas, but the boy, though highly verbal, wasn't able to say much. With his parents' apparent agreement, she asked him about Santa Claus, and began to tell him all about waking up on Christmas Day and finding presents. She didn't talk about St. Nicholas on his feast day, or about Jesus and his birth, but she did convey a sense of the wonder and love connected to Christmas.

That is an opening for those of us who claim to be followers of Jesus. It is the kind of invitation heard by the wise ones from the east. Even Santa Claus -- far removed though today's version of the story may be from the holy faithfulness of St. Nicholas -- can be another kind of star leading others to the humble stable where God comes among us. God continues to come among us in humility, God continues to be birthed in fragile opportunities that will need to be nourished and tended by others. The little boy on the bus has had his mind and heart opened to hear the bigger story about Christmas. Now, who will tell the old, old story of God's love to those so ready and eager to hear?

-- The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori

Midwinter 2007 - Caring for Creation

This fragile earth, our island home.

January 26-28, 2007

What does God want from us? What can we do now?

Sponsored by the Diocese of Northwest Texas Youth Committee for those in grades 9-12. Cost \$30. Bishop Quarterman Conference Center. Registration information: The Rev. Ryan Kuratko, associatestpaul@nts-online.net.

Cursillo - A Great New Year's Resolution

As a new year begins, thoughts often turn to making resolutions and self-improvement. Imagine a spirit-filled weekend at a peace-filled retreat center. By attending a Cursillo weekend you will have your spiritual batteries recharged, make new friends, learn more about Christ, your church and yourself. Cursillo Weekend #67, *Empowered by Faith*, will begin at 6 PM on Feb 15 at the Mercy Retreat Center in Slaton near Lubbock and ending February 18. Please register by January 15. Contact Mel or Jane Barnes, 806.799.6721, jambarnes@cox.net. Applications are available in your church office or by contacting Mel or Jane.

Happening #30 - February 2-4, 2007

Running the Race - Eyes on Jesus

For youth in grades 9-12. \$35. Church of the Holy Trinity, Midland. Contact Paula Howbert, 432.683.4207, pfhowbert@prodigy.net.

Episcopal Small Church Blog Available

smallepiscopalchurch.blogspot.com

Farewell to Canon Ehmer and Diana Pierce

As many of you know, Canon Mike Ehmer will be the new Assistant Director of CREDO in Memphis in the new year (see *The Newsletter 179*). Administrator Diana Pierce will also be leaving the diocesan office the end of 2006. Godspeed and blessings to both on their new journeys.

Important Dates for Your 2007 Calendar

May 4-5 Lubbock - **Planning for Tomorrow** for active and retired clergy and spouses.
July 10-15 Dallas - 3rd International Women's Peace Conference. womenspeaceconference.org
Sept 28-30 ECW Conference, led by the Rev. Susan Sims-Smith on "Dreams as a way to know Christ." seedwork.org/dreams.html.

CALENDAR

December

22-31 HEC Closed - Christmas Vacation

January, 2007

1 New Year's Day - HEC Closed
5-6 Deacon Formation, St. Christopher's, Lubbock
7 *Plainview, St. Mark's, Visitation
8-10 *Family Systems Conference, St. Louis
11 Fresh Start, HEC, 10 AM
15 Martin Luther King Holiday, HEC Closed
15-19 *Title IV Committee, NYC
21 *Andrews, St. Matthias', Visitation
*Canterbury at TTU, Confirmation
23-24 *Clergy Small Group I, HEC
26-28 Midwinter, BQCC (grades 9-12)
28 *Dumas, St. Paul's, Visitation
31 *San Angelo, Emmanuel, Confirmations

Send comments, suggestions, notices, and information to Carolyn Hearn, Editor, newsletter@nwt.org or *The Newsletter*, 1802 Broadway, Lubbock TX 79401, 807.7634.1370x204, fac 806.472.0641 - deadline is January 10

The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Northwest Texas

The Newsletter

1802 Broadway

Lubbock, TX 79401-3016

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED