

# The Newsletter

*The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Northwest Texas*

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## **Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori's Christmas Message 2009**

The mornings are dark, pitch black until after most of us have begun our days. The hints of dawn in the eastern sky, those streaks of rose and pink that promise more and brighter light, bring hope even in the dark mid-winter. Where do you look for that kind of hope borne on slim rays of light?

Jesus is already abroad, even in the darkness. The hungry one fed, the street people who have their feet cared for, the humble and honored guest at your dinner table – each one offers a glimpse of that dawn, if you look closely enough.

What we have waited long for, ages and eons for, has been born among us. He comes among us quietly, almost stealthily, in an obscure barn, long ago. This child holds all our hope for light. This tiny frame seems too frail to bear our yearning. Yet the nations come streaming to this light even before he is weaned. The divine has come to dwell in our midst, and God's eternal promise of peace, restoration, and home is made flesh.

Where and how will you seek out this light of the world? In what other frail frames will light expunge darkness? The light grows with our own eager searching, light reaching out to light, divine reflection yearning for its source. May the light of Christ light your way in the darkness, may his light spread through nations besieged by war and hunger, may we continue to search out his light in the dark places of our own hearts.

## **Bishop Scott Mayer's Advent Meditation for Christmas Eve**

“O come, O come, Emmanuel.” Throughout the Season of Advent we proclaim the coming of Christ, and as we approach Christmas Day, the Advent hope lies specifically in the birth of the long awaited messiah.

Such hope was alive and well two thousand years ago. Rulers and emperors routinely claimed to be divine – even saviors – and the people accepted and embraced that. For example, the inscription at the birth of Caesar Augustus reads as follows:

“Providence ... has brought into the world Augustus and filled him with a hero's soul for the benefit of humankind. A savior for us and our descendants, he will make wars to cease and order all things well. The epiphany of Caesar has brought to fulfillment past hopes and dreams.”

So the Greco-Roman world would not be shocked or even surprised by the announcement that a new savior was born, nor even the birth of a divine being. It's not the claim of a divine messiah that was shocking two thousand years ago.

Huston Smith reminds us that what turned the world upside down was the Christian claim that God assumed a human form; that God was born a baby, and lived a human life. That God was willing to take on human flesh, and live as a limited human being, and suffer, and die was the impossible, unbelievable, and even blasphemous claim of the Incarnation. The Word was made flesh.

That's the claim which shocked the world. That's the claim which was new; the claim which was “good news.” For this meant that God cared enough about creation; cared enough for you and me; was concerned enough about all of humankind and the whole world to become flesh, and suffer for us and with us.

It means a new understanding of divinity, that rather than the power and wealth of Augustus who lords over and above, the Divine is all mixed up with humanity as vulnerable and compassionate. “God with us.” “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel.”

The Collect for the Second Sunday after Christmas Day: “O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.” Amen.

## Bishop Ohl Elected Provisional Bishop of Diocese of Fort Worth

Bishop Wallis Ohl was installed as Provisional Bishop of the reconstituted Diocese of Fort Worth on November 14 during the 27<sup>th</sup> diocesan convention. Bishop Ohl retired from Northwest Texas on January 1, 2009 after serving in NWTX for 12 years. Bishop Ohl will spend about half his time in the Fort Worth diocese preaching, baptizing, confirming and seeing to diocesan business.

Bishop Ted Gulick ordained the first female priest in the Diocese of Fort Worth on November 15, and Bishop Ohl and Bishop Nedi Rivera of Olympia, the first Hispanic female bishop, ordained the second female priest in Fort Worth on December 5. See [episcopaldiocesefortworth.org](http://episcopaldiocesefortworth.org).

### Happening #32

Happening #32 (for high school students) in the Diocese of Northwest Texas will take place at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, San Angelo, February 19-21, 2010. Please contact Meredith Rogers, Happening Coordinator, at [nwthappening@yahoo.com](mailto:nwthappening@yahoo.com), 210.332.3303. Please register as soon as possible. Space is limited.

### Prayers and Thanksgivings

Please keep Bishop Mayer in your prayers as he continues in therapy and recuperation from surgery for a torn rotator cuff and frozen shoulder. He is progressing well and on track.

Please also keep in your prayers **Fr. Barry Ferguson**, affiliated with St. Paul's, Lubbock, who runs a mission in downtown Lubbock. Fr. Ferguson has been released from the hospital and continues to recover. **Deacon Don Webb** (Trinity, Albany) has received a pace maker and is doing well. **The Rev. William Ketcham** (retired, Odessa) died October 29 at Hospice House in Odessa. A memorial service was held at St. John's, Odessa.

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## Calendar

### December

- 13 +St. Barnabas', Odessa, Visitation
- 16 +Standing Committee, HEC, 10 AM
- 20 +St. Mark's, Abilene, Visitation
- 24-31 HEC Closed, Christmas Holiday

### January - 2010

- 6 +All Saints' School, 8 AM
- 8-9 Deacon Formation, Lubbock
- 10 +St. Paul's, Lubbock, Visitation
- 12 Fresh Start, HEC, 10 AM
- 14 +Trinity School, Midland, 8 AM
- 16 +Jennifer Rowley Ordination to the Priesthood, Heavenly Rest, Abilene, 11 AM
- 18 HEC Closed, Martin Luther King Day
- 24 +St. Thomas', Hereford, Visitation
- 29-31 Mid Winter (High School), BQCC
- 31 +St. Peter's, Borger, Visitation

### February

- 1-2 +Presbyters' Conference, Lubbock
- 5-6 Deacon Formation, Lubbock
- 7 +All Saints', Perryton, Visitation
- 8 +St. Paul's ECW, Lubbock, 12 Noon
- 9 +Trustees, HEC, 10 AM
- 11-14 +Dominican Republic
- 12-14 Spring Fling (Middle School), BQCC
- 17 Ash Wednesday
- 10-21 Happening #32, Emmanuel, San Angelo
- 22 Harvey Lecture, Seminary of the Southwest, Austin
- 26-28 Deacons' Retreat, BQCC
- 28 St. George's, Canyon, Visitation

### March

- 5-6 Deacon Formation
- 13 +Executive Council, Lubbock
- 14 +St. John the Baptist, Clarendon, Visitation
- 19-24 +House of Bishops, Camp Allen
- 28 +St. Stephen's, Lubbock, Visitation

+indicates Bishop Mayer in attendance

The Newsletter Deadline: December 15