



RECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Friends in Christ:

As I write this on New Year's Eve (less well known as the Feast of St. Sylvester), it does not seem possible that Christmastide is already half over. And yet on January 6, the Twelfth Day of Christmas, the church turns its liturgical page to begin a very long Epiphany season, which will conclude on Shrove Tuesday, February 28. But more on that in next month's rector's letter. First, we must enjoy the moment, and reflect gratefully on the many blessings of the present season.

I would be completely remiss if I did not acknowledge in this space the extraordinary efforts by a number of people that make Christmas "happen" here: while St. John's is not the size of a cathedral, it is certainly large enough to be considered formidable when it comes to decoration. Yet Bette Shugert, members of the altar guild, and others step up to the plate each year to trim high and low to beautifully bedeck our church.

Between handling a huge number of boxes of decorations, screwing into place the pew torches, arranging the pillar candles and globes in every window, and placing no small number of poinsettias from the east end to the west, our beautiful Victorian church is replete with bows, swags, and flickering candles of all shapes, sizes and colors on Christmas Eve.



The stage, having been set, is ready for the players: this year, our Sunday school children – under the superb direction of Ellen Dyakiw – retold the Christmas story splendidly at the Family Service on Christmas Eve.



Each child took his or her role very seriously, and brought a certain confidence and sincerity to the production. A significant team of Sunday school parents also deserves our thanks for their invaluable assistance with costumes, set construction, staging and blocking, and covering any and all extra bases during the performance. Everyone did a great, great job. Special thanks go to Deb Cree, who prepared the

children during Advent for the musical part of the pageant, and then accompanied them during the production itself.

Lastly, I must thank Erik Clayton, who – having nothing else going on in December – managed to pull off a spectacular musical milestone at St. John's on Christmas Eve: our first orchestral Mass setting. The choir and orchestra offered Haydn's *St. Nicholas Mass* with joy, energy, and excellence, and it was a delight to observe so many young people demonstrate a real commitment to classical church music.



And so as our celebration of Jesus' birth transitions to celebrating the ways in which his glory shows forth for all the world to see, we mark our own transition from the old year to the new one. In December, newspapers and social media offer their own takes on the year nearly past while making predictions for one year to come. But for Christians, perhaps our best way forward at this moment is to remember that this year, and every year, God abides with us. No matter what happens, we are never without God's presence, which – as Christmas reminds us – is very near indeed. That is an extremely comforting reality for me, and I hope for you as well.

Meanwhile, please read the pages that follow, and please plan to join us for worship, study, and fellowship here at St. John's.

Yours faithfully,
(The Rev.) Christopher V. Pyles

BUILDING FUND IN 2017

As a result of a very generous donation, the new fire suppression system over the stove in the parish hall is now functional, and has passed all inspections. However, there are a variety of new projects that – with the continued support of members of the parish via Building Fund envelopes – we hope to complete in 2017. These include additional work in the parish hall; the question of carpet replacement upstairs and downstairs in the church; and improved insulation to help keep our drafty buildings warm in the winter and cool in the summer. We are currently receiving bids for this work, and thanks are due to Scott Mauger, Jim Jackson, Charlie Hilderbrand, and Matt Perkins for their assistance in a variety of ways in helping us to keep our beloved buildings in good shape and "in compliance."

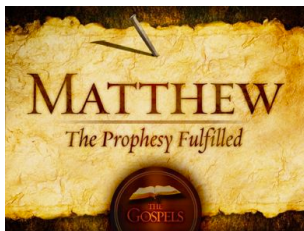
COOKIES, COOKIES EVERYWHERE

Our thanks to Charlie and Shannon Hilderbrand for organizing our third Christmas Eve Cookie Collection and Distribution event. Blessed with a generous response from parishioners, Charlie and Shannon had dozens and dozens of cookies to repackage and distribute to first responders and others in our area before Midnight Mass. A card indicating the cookies were from St. John's Episcopal Church in Bellefonte was included with each tray. This is a wonderful way to acknowledge those who work long hours at times they'd rather be home with their families, and a very gentle way to evangelize. Thanks to Charlie and Shannon and to ALL our busy, talented bakers!



SHORT WINTER COURSE ON MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

We now find ourselves a month into Lectionary Year A, the year of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, from which we will hear on most Sundays through the end of November. Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets is unique, and there are many equally unique stories found in Matthew, including – but not limited to – Joseph being visited by an angel; the account of the Holy Family's flight to Egypt; the visitation of the Christ child by the Three Kings; and the Sermon on the Mount (although there is a similar story in Luke).



A short Epiphanytide course on Matthew and his gospel will be offered on three Sunday mornings in January and February: January 22, February 5, and February 19. The classes will meet at 9 a.m. in the rectory conference room, and will last about 40 minutes. All adults are welcome.

ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR JANUARY 15



Q. What is the “annual meeting”?

A. A business gathering, required by the parish by-laws, at which Vestry members are elected; Vestry reports are received; the budget is presented; and any other business required to come before the parish is conducted. Our by-laws state that the meeting must be held in the month of January, and that the parish must be given notice of the meeting at least 10 days prior. Every Episcopal Church is required to have an annual meeting; only the month in which it is held varies from

parish to parish. A quorum is necessary in order for the annual meeting to be called to order; a quorum consists of twenty percent of the members qualified to vote. Members qualified to vote at parish meetings include those who are: identified in the Parish Register as Communicants in “good standing”; contributors to the life and work of the parish for the six months preceding the meeting, as shown in the records of the Treasurer; at least 16 years of age; physically present at the meeting; and not under ecclesiastical discipline. All are welcome to attend the meeting; the pot luck lunch alone will make the meeting worth your while!

THANKS FROM THE SHIPPENSBURG HOME

Once again this year, St. John's parishioners generously donated gift items for residents at The Episcopal Home of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, also known as the Shippensburg Home. Mary Grace Shearer, Executive Director of the Home, wrote in the acknowledgement, “Thank you for all the lovely items you sent. Every year you seem to know exactly what we need.” St. John's should take pride in helping to enable the Home's residents to live more comfortably and with dignity. We look forward to offering further support to the Home's residents in the future.

OBSERVANCE OF THE EPIPHANY ON JANUARY 8



This year, we will transfer our celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany – more formally known as the Manifestation of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Gentiles – to January 8. We anticipate a children-in-worship service at the 10:00 Mass that day, along with the customary blessing of chalk. January 8 will also be the first time we have had a “regular” coffee

hour since December 4, so there will be an occasion to catch up with friends perhaps for the first time since Christmas. Everyone is encouraged to be present to celebrate this important feast of the church year.



COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

January 1	No Coffee Hour New Year's Day
January 8	Paula Hough
January 15	Annual Parish Meeting, Pot-luck
January 22	Tina Scott
January 29	Holland Family

ALTAR SERVERS' ROTA - 10 A.M. MASSES

January 1	Book/Server	C.Hilderbrand
Christmas I	Crucifer	S. Dillon
	Torchbearers	G.Hilderbrand P.Hilderbrand

January 8	Children in Worship	
Epiphany		

January 15	Book/Server	S. Dillon
II Epiphany	Crucifer	T. Scott
	Torchbearers	C. Holt P.Hilderbrand

January 22	Book/Server	C.Hilderbrand
III Epiphany	Crucifer	S.Dillon
	Torchbearers	T.Scott C. Holt

January 29	Book/Server	T. Scott
IV Epiphany	Crucifer	C.Hilderbrand
	Torchbearers	P.Hilderbrand G.Hilderbrand

JANUARY COLLECTION COUNTERS

Betsy Quigley and Scott Mauger

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS

8 a.m. 10 a.m.

January 1	Dcn Dyakiw	Dcn Dyakiw
Christmas I		S. Witmer

January 8	Dcn Dyakiw	Dcn Dyakiw
Epiphany		T. Quigley

January 15	Dcn Dyakiw	Dcn Dyakiw
II Epiphany		C.Hilderbrand

January 22	Dcn Dyakiw	Dcn Dyakiw
III Epiphany		C. Fyfe

January 29	Scott Mauger	Dcn Dyakiw
IV Epiphany		K. Grossman

BIRTHDAYS

January 2	Joyce Banker	
	Rachel Pifer	
January 4	Kayleigh Fitzgerald	
	Paula Hough	
January 8	Christine Holt	
January 21	Marlee Preston	
January 27	George Holt	
January 29	Wesley Mauger	
	Scott Mauger	

January 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Christmas I MP 7:45 Mass 8 Mass 10	2 Office closed 7 pm Men's Group	3	4 Low Mass with healing in the Chapel 9:30	5 Breakfast Feeding Ministry, 7-9 a.m., parish hall	6 Community Lunch at the Presbyterian Church, 10:30 a.m.	7
8 Epiphany MP 7:45 Mass 8 Solemn Mass 10 Coffee Hour	9 7 pm Men's Group	10	11 Low Mass with healing in the Chapel, 9:30 7:30 Vestry Meeting	12 Breakfast Feeding Ministry, 7-9 a.m., parish hall	13	14
15 Epiphany 2 MP 7:45 Mass 8 Sung Mass 10 Pot Luck & Annual Mtg.	16 Office closed 7 pm Men's Group	17	18 Low Mass with healing in the Chapel, 9:30;	19 Breakfast Feeding Ministry, 7-9 a.m., parish hall	20	21
22 Epiphany 3 MP 7:45 Mass 8 Sung Mass 10 Coffee Hour	23 7 pm Men's Group	24	25 Low Mass with healing in the Chapel, 9:30	26 Breakfast Ministry, 7-9 a.m., Parish Hall	27	28
29 Epiphany 4 MP 7:45 Mass 8 Sung Mass 10 Coffee Hour Class on Matthew 9 am	30 7 pm Men's Group	31				