



Church of Our Redeemer
 6 Meriam Street
 Lexington, MA 02420
 781-862-6408
 www.our-redeemer.net

Redeeming Features

Volume 27

Issue 12

Staff

Priest in Charge: The Rev. Kate Ekrem
Asst. Priest: The Rev. Sabeth Fitzgibbons
Music Director: Dr. Bernadette Colley
Administrator/RF Editor: Lisa Thistle
Sexton: Roy McHoul

2011 Vestry

Sr. Warden: Connie Parrish
Jr. Warden: George Murnaghan
Treasurer: Frank Kern
Clerk: Paula Antonevich

Vestry Members

Bob Bettacchi Anna Kern
 Emily Charlton Sandy Keshishian
 Susan Emanuel Peter Lund
 Ian Fox James Surprenant

Inside this issue:

Greetings from Kate 1-2
 Worship News 2-4
 Music News 5
 Parish Life 5-6
 Christian Formation 7-10
 Mission News 11-13
 Diocese News 14-15
 December Calendar 16



Greetings from Rev. Kate Ekrem

Dear friends,

I must sheepishly admit that for years I tried to banish Santa Claus from my house. When our boys were toddlers, I felt that Santa was just a tool of toy manufacturers trying to get my money, and along the way teach my children that the true meaning of Christmas was getting lots of candy and presents. (This was also the parenting stage when I thought I could keep my children from eating sugar.) We followed the old European tradition of telling the children the Christ Child brings the gifts, and when Peter's nursery school had a visit from Santa, I kept him home. This all worked fine until Peter turned about two. Then he informed me I was wrong, Santa brings the gifts.

Maybe Peter and I were both right. It's obvious that merchants use the symbol of Santa to sell things -- you have to go to the mall or department store to get your photo taken with Santa. As Christians we need to be a little wary of the watering down of Christmas into mere gift exchanging and instead share the joy of the gift of the Incarnation, God with us as a human person.



Greetings from Kate (cont'd)

But Santa has a lot to offer us, too. He was, after all, a real person, Nicholas of Myra, who lived around the year 300 and was a priest and bishop in what is now Turkey. He became famous for his care of the poor and of children, giving generously (and often secretly) to those in need. The Salvation Army's Santa with the bell and bucket near the mall entrance perhaps most truly represents what St. Nicholas is all about – helping others.

Like all saints, St. Nicholas points to God, and even our modern ideas about Santa give us a clue about God's nature. To a child's imagination, Santa is the one who brings us gifts and fills our stockings with wonderful things that we did not buy, that we did not earn or produce in any way, and that we probably don't really deserve. But Santa brings them anyway. That's a pretty good way of thinking about the gift of Christmas, God being willing to come into our world and be with us.

Wishing you an encounter with the true spirit of Santa this December.

Peace,

Kate



Share Epiphany with Friends at Brookhaven

Our annual Epiphany service at Brookhaven will take place on Thursday, January 5 at 3:00 pm. Brookhaven is a retirement community where many Redeemer members reside. We are often joined at this service by other members of the Brookhaven community who aren't able to get to their own churches. We will celebrate the Eucharist and enjoy fellowship and food afterwards to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. This service is organized and sponsored by the members of our Pastoral Care Team. If you would like to join us, please do!



Crèche Service aka Christmas Pageant – Saturday, December 24

The 4:00pm service on Christmas Eve will feature a Crèche Service, building a live Nativity that includes all children and teens who wish to participate.

Parts are available for all ages and abilities. Participants should **save the date** for the **only rehearsal** on Sunday 12/18 from 12noon to 1:00pm (pizza provided and costumes distributed). Questions about the Crèche Service? Contact Cathy Burns (hcburns@verizon.net /978-663-5022) or Helene Sullas Huggins (hshugs@gmail.com / 781-648-2424).



Service of Healing and Remembrance

The constant refrain this time of year about the happiness of the Christmas Season and about getting together with family and friends, reminds many people of what they have lost or have never had. The weariness of ill health, the loss of a job or a loved one, the loneliness of no longer having a beloved spouse to share each day - all these can contribute to a feeling of being alone, of 'feeling blue' in the midst of the society around us which seems bent on 'being happy' and 'celebrating'. There are years when we hurt at Christmas time and we just can't get into the festivities as others seem to be able to do.

It's at such times that we need to make the space and take the time to acknowledge our sadness and concern. We need to know that we are not alone.

On **Thursday, December 15 at 7:30pm** all are invited to come and join prayers, Scripture and music that acknowledge that God's presence is for those who mourn and for those who struggle - and that God's Word comes to shine light into our darkness.

Our doors are open to all who come so please feel free to invite family, friends & neighbors to come with you, as your support, or if you know that they too are finding that Christmas hurts.



Advent & Christmas Service Schedule



Advent Service of Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 4, 4:00pm

Cookies and Caroling: An Advent Evening

Sunday, December 11, 4:00-7:00pm

Cookies & Carols Party at the Rectory: cookie decorating at 4:00pm, dinner at 5:00pm.

Advent Service of Healing and Remembrance

Thursday, December 15, 7:30pm

A service for all those for whom Christmas may be a sad or difficult time.

Advent Special Service Sunday

Sunday, December 18, 9:30am

Advent Special Service Sunday with visit from St. Nicholas.

Christmas Pageant Rehearsal

Sunday, December 18, 12noon-1:00pm.

Parts assigned and costumes distributed. Pizza for all.

Christmas Eve

Saturday, December 24

4:00pm - Crèche Service with Christmas Pageant & Holy Eucharist .
Ingathering of books, hats, mittens & scarves for The Grow
Clinic.

8:00pm - Festive Holy Eucharist with special music from the Adult Choir.

Christmas Day

Sunday, December 25

10:00am Holy Eucharist (no music)

Note: No 8:00am service and no Christian Formation/nursery care

Sunday, January 1

Feast of the Epiphany (transferred)

8:00am Holy Eucharist, Rite I (no music)

9:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite II

No Christian Formation.

Celebrate the arrival of the Wise Men from the East.



Music News....

Christmas Eve Carol Sings Prior to Both Services:

All are welcome to come 15 minutes early to either the 4:00pm or 8:00pm services for a carol sing. The earlier service Carol-Sing will be family-oriented, accompanied by a number of guitarists. The later service Carol Sing will be accompanied by organ and flute.

We are still seeking volunteer singers for our 8:00pm Christmas Eve Service if you, or any family member who will be home for the holidays, is inclined to join us. Music will be easy, and available to take home for study. Please let Bernadette know, bernadette@our-redeemer.net, if you are interested.

Lexington Choral Festival coming up...

Once again the Redeemer choir will participate in the Lexington Choral Festival, to take place this year on January 29 at 3:00pm at Hancock Church.



Save the Date for Annual Meeting!

Our Annual Meeting will take place on **Sunday, January 29, 2012**, following the 9:30am service. The Annual Meeting is an important event in the life of the parish. All baptized members age 16 and over are eligible to vote and participate as we elect new vestry members and other officers, review the past year, and talk about our plans and hopes for 2012. Delicious food will be served! Please mark the date and make plans to be there.



Cookies and Caroling – Sunday, December 11

Cookies and Caroling is an **all-ages, family event**. Come to the Rectory (12 White Pine Lane, Lexington) for festivities! Cookie-decorating begins at 4:00pm. Dinner (provided, as a holiday gift to you) begins at 5:00pm, with caroling to follow. We will sing around the fireplace, and may venture outside as well. Come for whatever part of the event works for you and your family. No RSVP needed for cookie decorating. Sign up at church (or contact the church office) for dinner head count.



Rummage Sale

Treasures and bargains were found at the Rummage Sale, which raised \$1400 for repairing the windows of the church. Thanks to all our rummage sale volunteers!



Donate Flowers for Christmas

We invite you to donate a poinsettia to decorate our church altar at Christmas this year. Poinsettias can be donated in memory of a loved one, in thanksgiving for something, in celebration of something, or just because. You



may take your poinsettia home with you after Christmas Day, or leave it at church for us to bring to a parishioner who needs some Christmas cheer. Please fill out one of the RED forms to donate Christmas flowers, or call the church office at 781-862-6408. The deadline for donations is **Wednesday, December 14.**



Adult Christian Formation aka Adult Forum

Our Adult Christian Formation programs inform us about issues and concerns in our lives, our community and the world, AND help us consider how we respond to those issues and concerns as faith-filled Christians.

Adult Christian Formation meets Sundays from 10:50-11:50am, in the Great Hall or the Meeting Room on the lower level. We invite ages 13-113 to join us. Bring your coffee and a friend!

a thrill of HOPE

a thrill of HOPE provides a study of the Christmas story as told in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, and accompanied by stunning artwork by John August Swanson. The series continues through December and January. Please bring your coffee and join us as you can, for one, some, or all of the sessions.

December 4	A Visit (the Annunciation to Mary, Luke 1:26-38)
December 11	The Nativity (Christ's Birth, Luke 2:1-7)
December 18	The Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)
January 1	No Christian Formation programs
January 8	Epiphany (Matthew 2:1-12)
January 15	Presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:21-40)
January 22	Flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15)

Committee Members needed

If you are interested in joining the Adult Christian Formation Committee to plan, sometimes create, and implement Adult Christian Formation programs here at Redeemer, please contact Sabeth. The current committee includes: James Surprenant, Melissa Morgan, Ian Fox, Susan Burkhardt, Sabeth Fitzgibbons.

Adult Christian Formation Contact Person: The Rev. Sabeth Fitzgibbons (sabeth@our-redeemer.net).



Christian Formation – Children and Youth

Christian Formation News

Christian Formation for ages 3 through 12th grade is held on Sundays from 10:50-11:50am. Nursery care is available for infants and toddlers (through age 4) from 8:30am-12noon so that parents can attend worship, Adult Christian Formation and fellowship time.

Sunday Evening Youth Group meets in the Great Hall from 5:30-7:15pm. Youth in grades 8-12 are invited to join us for fellowship as we prepare and eat dinner together.

Registration Forms

All children and youth participating in Redeemer's Christian formation programs, even just once, need a Registration Form on file. Please visit the appropriate page (Children, Youth) on Redeemer's website (www.our-redeemer.net) to download a PDF file of the Registration Form you need. Completed forms can be returned to the church office. Thank you!!

Upcoming Dates to Remember

**** We have Sunday School/Atrium every Sunday unless otherwise noted! ****

December 11 Sunday Morning Christian Formation classes meet
No Sunday Evening Youth Group

December 18 Sunday Morning Christian Formation classes meet

December 25 **No Christian Formation programs**

January 1 **No Christian Formation programs**

January 8 Christian Formation programs resume on regular schedule

Questions?

Age 3-5th grade – Evelyn Hausslein (ehausslein@rcn.com / 781-861-0378)

6th – 12th grade – the Rev. Sabeth Fitzgibbons (sabeth@our-redeemer.net)

Youth Group – Cathy Burns (hcburns@verizon.net / 978-663-5022)



Finding Deeper Meaning in Christmas

I recently saw a book about re-focusing Christmas entitled *Christmas Is Not Your Birthday*. I was a bit taken aback at first, and then realized that that's the message I need to hear, and that I want to teach my children, about Christmas. It's easy to get caught up in the media and cultural messages of "buy, buy, buy" this time of year. As followers of Jesus, whose birthday we ARE celebrating, we seek a life that has different priorities from those of our dominant culture. We do believe it's possible to change the world, to heal hurts, and to be truly happy – because of the way God is known to us and knows us through Jesus, who was born a baby boy.

As we try to counter-message the media bombardment this season and create a meaningful celebration, here are a few questions to ponder:

1. Which holiday traditions do you and your children seem to enjoy most? (If you are uncertain, take some time in the next few days to talk to them.)
2. Which holiday traditions or family activities do you and your children have to look forward to after December 25?
3. Check the statement that most accurately completes this thought: Gift-giving plays the following role in our family celebration:
 - a. It is by far the most important tradition.
 - b. It is one of several important traditions.
 - c. It is of moderate importance.
 - d. It is of relatively minor importance.
4. On a sheet of paper, write each of your children's names and jot down a few sentences that describe his or her attitude toward Christmas presents last year.
5. What are you celebrating? What are your core values in regard to Christmas?

On the below list, cross off those statements that have no importance to you and add any that have not been listed. Then rank them, 1 being highest and 10 being least important. Once you decide what your deepest beliefs are, you can plan a celebration that is in harmony with your values.



Finding Deeper Meaning in Christmas (cont'd)

Christmas is a time:

- ___ to be a peacemaker, within my family and the world at large.
- ___ to enjoy being with my immediate family.
- ___ to create a beautiful home environment.
- ___ to celebrate the birth of Christ.
- ___ to exchange gifts with my family and friends.
- ___ for parties, entertaining, and visits with friends.
- ___ to help those who are less fortunate.
- ___ to strengthen bonds with my relatives.
- ___ to strengthen my church community.
- ___ to take a few days off from work and have a good time.

The Christmas Pledge

Believing in the beauty and simplicity of Christmas, I commit myself to the following:

1. To remember those people who truly need my gifts.
2. To express my love for family and friends in more direct ways than presents.
3. To rededicate myself to the spiritual growth of my family.
4. To examine my holiday activities in light of the true spirit of Christmas.
5. To initiate one act of peacemaking within my circle of family and friends.

* From the Institute for Peace and Justice <http://www.ipj-ppj.org/>

Winter Storm Reminder

A reminder to let everyone know of our bad weather procedures. You can call the church office at 781-862-6408 or check for an email update to see if services are cancelled. Usually those are updated by 7am. You can also check the closings on WCVB/Channel 5.



It's our general policy not to cancel worship if the clergy can get here. However, that does not mean you have to be here! On stormy days, all those with official duties are excused. Often we hold worship but cancel choir, Christian Formation, coffee hour, and other non-worship events, and operate without acolytes or Liturgy Team. Please use your own judgment and only come to church if it's safe for you to travel.



A wonderful holiday opportunity to share your time, talent, and treasure...

For Mission in December, we focus on The Grow Clinic and there are lots of opportunities to help!

Located at Boston Medical Center, the clinic serves the medical and social service needs of families with a baby or toddler diagnosed with Failure To Thrive. These are hard times for families served by the clinic and the number of these families has risen substantially during the recession. Redeemer has responded with a significant increase in our support over the last several years.

(To read more about The Grow Clinic's important work this year, http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/health/articles/2011/07/28/ranks_of_hungry_children_swell_worrying_doctors/)

For the third year, we have the honor of sending a team to help with the holiday party for the families served by the clinic. The party is scheduled for Thursday, December 15 from 2:30pm to 5:00pm. Our teens in Rite 13 and Youth Group shop for presents and read-to-me books before the party and, for the first time this year, teens age 16 and older can volunteer at the party itself. Our collection at the Crèche Service and special collections at other Christmas services provide for the presents and a contribution to the clinic's family assistance fund, which provides fuel assistance, diapers, baby equipment, supplies and other things the families need. We also help by assisting with the packing of presents for the families on Monday and Tuesday morning that week. At the party itself, we help with set up, music, serving food, crafts and entertainment, and clean up. We take the mitten tree from church, set the tree up and give out the mittens, scarves and hats. There are lots of ways for you to help: (see next page)



A wonderful holiday opportunity to share your time, talent, and treasure...(cont'd)

1. Knit or buy mittens, hats and scarves and hang them on the mitten tree by Sunday, December 11.
2. Volunteer to sort presents at the clinic on the mornings of Monday, December 12 or Tuesday, December 13.
3. Bake cookies for the party (NO NUTS PLEASE DUE TO ALLERGY CONCERNS) by December 14. (Deliver to Marilyn Williamson, 60 Ledge-lawn Avenue, beginning at 12 noon on December 12.
4. Volunteer at the party (Thursday, December 15) between 2:00pm (for set up) through 6:00pm (for clean up).
5. Bring your favorite board books and read-to-me children's books to the Crèche Service (for the clinic to give to families when they visit). Especially needed: books featuring non-Anglo characters.
6. Donate funds at the Crèche Service or give in a mission envelope at any service between December 18 and December 26.

Visit the Grow Clinic's website, <http://www.bmc.org/pediatrics-growclinic.htm>, to learn more about their important work and the population they serve.

Please contact Chris Needham at 781-862-0591 if you would like to volunteer.



Sustainable Harvest International

In January, Susan Emanuel will be visiting Honduras with **Sustainable Harvest International** (www.sustainableharvest.org). SHI provides farming families in Central America with the training and tools to restore our planet's tropical forests while overcoming poverty. On trips over the last three years, our friends at Hancock UCC have been helping a village, under the supervision of field staff, to install irrigation, compost for bio-fertilizer, wood-conserving stoves, as well as planting trees. The focus is on practical and low technology: interplanting, increasing the variety, and, if water is available, creating fish ponds to increase protein in their diet and eventual marketing. Susan says, "When I saw my friend Nancy standing alongside the family she stayed with, who had no indoor toilet, I knew this was where I wanted to go!" Nancy Schlecht explains: "What impressed me most was going back to the same village and witnessing the increased health of the families and the pride in their farms and gardens. We saw the continual use of the techniques they learned and evidence of the result." This World Service trip involves five nights with host families in the Yoro area in the north of Honduras, and then, while the SHI board meets, Susan will take a local bus to Copan to see Mayan ruins, before flying back on January 17. Fortunately she speaks some Spanish so can fend for herself. Although there is no official contact between SHI and the El Hogar farm school, she hopes to bring back ideas how they might collaborate. Please give Susan your blessings for her travel and work.



Volunteers from Hancock in Honduras with Sustainable Harvest International.



Diocese Convention Update

Kate, Sabeth and I joined hundreds of other Episcopalians at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul on November 4-5 to take up the annual business of the Diocese of Massachusetts. This year's convention also included two special events: a big farewell to Bishop Bud Cederholm as he retired after 30 years of ministry (nearly 11 of them as bishop), and the official kick-off of a diocesan fundraising campaign.

Convention approved the proposed diocesan budget for 2012, which was characterized as reflecting more of an increase in transparency than in spending. (You can view the 2012 Budget Summary at www.diomass.org.)

Resolutions approved included

- a change to the canons regarding which organization has oversight matters pertaining to the compensation and benefits of lay and ordained employees. That responsibility was transferred from the Commission on Ministry to the Diocesan Council.
- a resolution concerning guidelines for minimum clergy compensation that also reiterated the definition of Total Clergy Compensation components.
- an amended resolution that encourages all congregations to become aware of issues that face the elderly and makes suggestions for specific elder ministry actions.

The convention program also included the official public launch of "Together Now", which is the diocese's \$20-million fundraising campaign for an array of diocesan initiatives for building up congregational life through mission, stewardship and collaboration. The campaign will fund initiatives in five areas: \$2 million as a tithe for global mission work; \$2 million for environmental stewardship through "green" grants and loans; \$4.5 million to create regional "mission hubs" and a mission institute (the latter is a collaboration between Episcopal City Mission and Episcopal Divinity School); \$7.5 million



Diocese Convention Update (continued)

for ongoing and expanded ministry programs with children, youth and young adults; and \$4 million for renovations to the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston. We will all be hearing more about this campaign in the months ahead.



The closing Eucharist on Saturday was a very moving service that also marked the official end of Bishop Bud's full-time ministry. The offering collected at that service is going toward renovating the lake house at the Barbara Harris camp into an energy-efficient retreat and sabbatical residence for clergy, to be named in his honor.

Bishop Bud closed the service with the blessing we used on Mission Sunday (11/19). It summed up the theme of his ministry, as well as the theme of the diocese's convention and fundraising campaign.

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world, so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.

Amen.

Connie Parrish, Senior Warden and Diocesan Convention Delegate



Calendar

December	Date	Event Details
Monday	5	7:30pm - Property Committee meeting
Tuesday	6, 13, 20 & 27	7:00pm - EfM Class
Tuesday	6	7:00pm - Stewardship Committee meeting
Wednesday	7	7:30pm - Adult Choir Rehearsal
Saturday	10	9:00am - Vestry/PIC Discernment Committee meeting
Sunday	11	8:00am - Holy Eucharist Rite I, The Rev. Dr. Ted Gaiser, preaching 8:30 - 9:15am - Choir Rehearsal 9:30am - Holy Eucharist Rite II, The Rev. Dr. Ted Gaiser, preaching 10:45am - Christian Formation for children and youth 10:50am - Adult Christian Formation: <i>A thrill of Hope: The Nativity</i> 4:00pm - Cookies and Carols
Monday	12	7:30pm - Executive Committee meeting
Wednesday	14	7:30pm - Adult Choir Rehearsal
Thursday	15	2:30 - 5:30pm - Grow Clinic Party 7:30pm - Service of Healing and Remembrance, Holy Eucharist Rite II
Sunday	18	8:00am - Holy Eucharist Rite I 8:30 - 9:15am - Choir Rehearsal 9:30am - Holy Eucharist Rite II (w/ visit from St. Nicholas) 10:45am - Christian Formation for children and youth 10:50am - Adult Christian Formation: <i>A thrill of Hope: The Shepherds</i> 12:00noon - Crèche Service Rehearsal
Monday	19	7:30pm - Finance Committee meeting
Wednesday	21	7:30pm - Vestry meeting 7:30pm Adult Choir Rehearsal
Saturday	24	4:00pm - Crèche Service with Holy Eucharist/Ingathering of Mittens, Hats & Scarves 8:00pm - Festive Christmas Eucharist, Rite II
Sunday	25	10:00am - Holy Eucharist Rite II No Adult, Children & Youth Christian Formation No Nursery Care.
Monday	26	Office Closed 1:30pm - Cook for Bristol Lodge 7:30pm - Mission Committee meeting
Tuesday	27	Office Closed
Wednesday	28	7:30pm - Wardens meeting 7:30pm - Adult Choir Rehearsal

Please send all announcements by email to office@our-redeemer.net or for those without email, call or send to the church office, with "RF" clearly marked.

The **monthly deadline** for all Redeeming Features submissions is the **15th of the Month.**