
Christmas 2008

The Messenger

of St James' Church, Texarkana, Texas

From the Rector

The great philosopher Kierkegaard told a parable about a great king who fell in love with a lovely servant girl. He wanted to tell her of his love, but he wanted to approach her in a way in which she might freely, willingly love him.

As a high and mighty king, he would overwhelm her. She would perhaps fear him, or even respect him, but could she love one so high and so remote from her world?

So the king devised a plan. He took off his royal robes and dressed himself as a poor peasant. He slipped away from the palace, descended into the village below, and took up the life of a poor peasant. There he wooed the young woman. Making her acquaintance, he gradually got to know her, and she gradually got to know him. Eventually, she grew to love him. They moved toward marriage. At last he revealed himself to her as king. They live happily ever after in the palace, recipients of true love.

Take this as a parable. Throughout the Old Testament, in various ways, God attempted to reveal himself to us. Now, because of his incarnation at Christmas, God has been revealed to us as a Son, Word made flesh, God-With-Us.

A very blessed Christmas to you and yours.

CHRISTMAS AT ST JAMES'

Sunday, December 21

**The Fourth Sunday of Advent:
The Sunday of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
Quiet Eucharist at 7:45am
Sung Mass at 10:00am

*Boy/Girl Choirs sing.
Christian Education Classes are in recess.*

Wednesday, December 24

Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord
Early Christ Mass at 4:30pm
Nursery provided at 4:30pm only.
Sung Christ Mass at 10:30pm
Christmas music will precede the Service at 10pm.

Thursday, December 25th

The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Day
Said Christ Mass at 10am

Sunday, December 28th

The Feast of the Holy Innocents
Quiet Eucharist at 7:45am
Sung Mass at 10:00am
Christian Education Classes are in recess.

Wednesday, December 31st

Eve of the Holy Name of Jesus
Mass at 5:30pm

Sunday, January 4th

Sunday of the Epiphany
Quiet Eucharist at 7:45am
Epiphany Pageant & Sung Mass at 10:00am

The Smell of Quietness

by John Bishop

I'm writing from New York City. It's five days before Thanksgiving, and Fifth Avenue is festooned with every gaudy bauble imaginable. European tourists are spending their gargantuan Euros, spreading Christmas cheer from Gucci's to Saks, from the Disney Store to the NBA Store. Elaborate light displays draw attention to five-thousand-dollar handbags, displays of shoes worthy of Imelda, and unimaginably expensive jewelry. Chestnuts are roasting on open fires. They smell terrific, blending with the bustle of the city. My mind's eye flashes an image of the fireplace in our house, associating the smell of the chestnuts with sitting in the peace of that favorite of rooms. One of the carts selling chestnuts had middle-Eastern music playing over loudspeakers – no doubt a nod to the indigenous music of Bethlehem, Palestine, or the West Bank. Fitting. I'm pretty sure that the shepherds gathering in the alley behind *The Inn* were not singing four-part-harmony in the key of G. I'm pretty sure that snowy flakes weren't falling softly, *clothing all the world in white*. In fact, I'm pretty sure that the shepherds weren't white!

People are wearing Santa hats. And it's snowing. It's okay for it to snow in Manhattan, but it's pretty early for snow here. I wonder if the Fifth Avenue Merchants Association made a special arrangement. Maybe Donald Trump has a connection – the ultimate networker. It would be better if he'd make it rain in Atlanta – they really need the water.

One of the stores is broadcasting Christmas music out to the sidewalk, I'm especially attracted to the meaningful Christmas favorite, the former nun singing, "these are a few of my favorite things."

WWJD? I'll tell you what he'd do, he'd go to Evensong at St. Thomas' Church, Fifth Avenue at 53rd Street.

I'm staying in a little hotel on 54th Street, two blocks east of Fifth Avenue. It's a pretty quiet street, but turning left onto Fifth is like entering a festive war zone. It's mobbed, it's noisy, a little scary for someone who woke up this morning in rural Maine. Walking into St. Thomas' Church is like walking into another world. In fact, it is another world. It's a world of serenity and grandeur, of peace and spirituality. It's a world created by the best of human effort through design and craftsmanship. And just like the gaudy, extravagant, commercial scene outside, it's the product of great wealth. In contrast to the neighboring stores that are

bursting with Santas, inside the church, above the High Altar is a Reredos bursting with Saints. While some Reredoses (or is it Reredosi?) feature Saints that are neatly tucked into their niches, some of those at St. Thomas' Church are renegades – bursting out of their little spaces as though they were in conversation with each other, gesticulating, looking this way and that, making their points for the ages to witness. I don't know the dimensions, but I guess that the thing is more than fifty feet tall. There's a beautiful photo on the church's website at

<http://www.saintthomaschurch.org/interiorview.html>.

Perhaps it's a crude question, but what would something like that cost? If we figure the price of a new organ as "so much per stop," is the price of a Reredos "so much per saint?" There must be twenty tons of stone involved, and heaven knows how many hours of skilled work taking away all the stone that doesn't look like saints. We who regularly install organs might be able to imagine what it's like to install stone carvings on this scale. But radically different from the commercialism on the street outside, this vast expenditure of money, skill, and human effort is dedicated and devoted to the glory of God as an eloquent expression of faith.

The choir stalls, pulpit, lectern, and organ case are all elaborately carved so that their massive construction appears delicate, even wispy in a few places. And the fabric of the building is stone, that most unyielding of media. Drop one stone on to another and you get chips, a little dust, even splitting in two. The fact that the graceful curves of the arches and ribs on the ceiling are made of stone defies the character of the natural material. And by the way, those active saints in the Reredos are also "chips off the old block."

There is a magnificent quietness to a building like this. You can hear distant noises from the street – an impatient taxi, an indignant pedestrian – and you can hear subway trains rattling up the River Styx, but these noises seem only to enhance the quietness. There's a tinge of incense mixed with beeswax that is the peculiar smell of an Anglican Church. It is the smell of quietness. Organbuilders know that the higher up you get in the building, the stronger the smell gets.

Sitting in the Gothic half-light before the service started, listening to and smelling the silence, I reflected on the complicated processes that go into the creation of monumental art works like the Reredos, the organ, or the building itself. Having been involved in many projects building, restoring, and moving organs, I have

first-hand experience with the complexities of the conversations that lead to the creation of these things. Moving from concept to vision to fundraising to design to construction to completion, these great efforts are both challenging and rewarding.

In Craig Whitney's entertaining and informative book about the twentieth-century American pipe organ, *All the Stops*, we read that during June of 1956 G. Donald Harrison, the famed creator of so many wonderful Aeolian-Skinner organs, was hard at work supervising the completion of the large organ in the Chancel at St. Thomas' Church, racing against the calendar to have the organ ready for the convention of the American Guild of Organists. In the late afternoon of June 14, Mr. Harrison left St. Thomas' feeling unwell, walked eight blocks home because of a taxi strike, had dinner with his wife Helen, turned on the television to watch a performance by musician and humorist Victor Borge, and died of a heart attack at 11pm.

I find in this story a link between a creative genius involved in great and enduring work and the passage of life. I wonder what stops Harrison was working on that last day? What was the last pipe he handled? Did I hear that pipe tonight? Did he know as he left the church that he would not be back? Did he stop for a drink on his way home? (We know that when working on the organs at Boston's Symphony Hall and First Church of Christ, Scientist, he was very fond of stopping for refreshment at the Café Amalfi next door to Symphony Hall.)

Immaculately clad in scarlet and white with elaborate frilled collars, standing out from the muted tones of stone and wood, the Choir add to the stunning visual effect of the surroundings.

The precision of their movements – processing, standing, sitting – adds dignity to the worship, but I noticed that it also removes the possibility of distraction. I was able to listen almost wholly to the music, without the back of my mind clattering about someone falling out of step, someone standing later than the rest. Because they were paying such close attention I was able to.

The first sound I heard from the choir was the vigorous, sonorous, precise “and with thy spirit” coming from a distant corridor as they were led in prayer before entering the Nave. Even so, the worshipper-listener could not be prepared for the inhalation of breath and utterance of the first few chords of perfectly balanced and expertly tuned tone as they sang the psalm after the opening words. I was sitting about a third of the way

down the Nave (Pew 51 had a wad of chewing gum under the seat) on the epistle side (starboard), far enough back that the choir members, especially the very young boys, were dwarfed by the majestic height of the place, but their voices filled the building in a most moving way.

Great care had been given to the balance between organ and choir. We talk and talk about *The English Cathedral Style* – when you hear it done so well you can understand it better. The organ needs to have the ability to sound as if its going “all out” without overpowering the choir, and it needs to be able to melt into the ether. This evening, while I heard the organ in its great fullness in hymn and postlude, I was so impressed by the sound of “full organ” including powerful chorus reeds and mixtures enhancing the sound of the choir.

Choral Evensong in a great church like this is a syzygy of genius and creativity. The vision of the architect and the skill of the builders make possible the magnificent building. The proportions, decorations, symbolism, and acoustics are all essential to the experience.

The organbuilders who were contemporary with the composers (tonight we think of Charles Villiers Stanford, Ernest Skinner, Henry Willis) heard the music, knew the buildings, and invented and perfected machines that transcend machinery – machines that melt into magic under the hands of a master organist, machines that consume air as fuel and transform it into sound energy sufficient to excite tens of millions of cubic feet of air mingled with the scent of incense and beeswax.

The commitment, dedication, discipline, and devotion of the musicians interpret that music for our modern ears. Their voices burn the same fuel as the organ, turning static air into sound energy. Their tuning is precise, their phrasing lofty, their harmonies true.

And the present clergy and congregation in all their various roles as officers, committee members, evangelists, ushers, welcomers, and worshippers combine their talents, energy, and (just say it) financial resources to make the entire experience available to us in this world of Gucci and taxicabs.

These are a few of *my* favorite things. □

Epiphany Pageant for All Ages

January 4, 2009, During the 10:00 Mass



❖ For more information, contact Ruth Hale (Director), 903.838.3968 or Mary Nell Short or Jennifer Gould at the church.

Give a Gift of Warmth and Love

Bring your gift of mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, socks to the Christmas Eve Family service, Dec. 24, 4:30 pm

Excellent Attendance for Block I (Certificates to be given out December 21)

K/4 & K

Ryan Gould
Blake Maynard
Austin Miller
Camden Robertson
Andrew(AJ) Williams

Grades 3, 4, & 5

Celeste Anderson
Bethany Dowd
George Hale
Meredith Maynard
Laurel Wakefield

Grades 6 – 8

Sean Conkey
Patricia Hale
T.J. Higgins
Sarah Storey

Grades 1 & 2

Emma Anderson
Maddie Anderson
Gracie Higgins
Davis Miller
Erica Stanley
Dakota Williams

Grades 9 - 12

Cynthia Cowdery
Steven Firmin
Matthew Hendrickson
Jessica Jones
Anja Krappe

Did you hear about the CRAZY stuff happening on “Black Friday?” People were attacked at stores for what supposedly is the gift of the Season; a person in Wal-mart lost their life in this frenzy! Instead of going crazy trying to find the perfect gift, try a service project. There are lots of opportunities in our community. For instance, talk to Michelle Miller or Michelle Harutunian at Harvest Texarkana or Christie at the Randy Sams Shelter. Call the Salvation Army to find out about ringing bells at building entrances.

The youth have been working on a few service projects throughout the year. Some youth members helped Deacon Ethel and the Finn Family clear brush from a portion of the State Line Cemetery, a few participated in the Race for the Cure, and we helped the Faithweavers pack shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. We plan to write Christmas cards to members of the Armed Forces who are away from their families for our December project. That is only the first half of the year! We have quite a bit in store for next year!

In addition to service projects, we also have fellowship activities with our most recent being a trip to the movies before Thanksgiving break. In December we will hold our second annual

Progressive Dinner where we travel to different parish members’ homes for a course of a meal. We had such a good time last year that we are going to make it a tradition! To begin the New Year, we will have another lock-in to kick off the next half of the school year. Stay posted for details!

Our big event for the year will be our Mission trip in the summer. The Senior High will be traveling to New Orleans to experience all that is New Orleans, the good and the ugly. We will be working with an organization called Wonder Voyage Missions who specializes in providing safe and meaningful Mission experiences to youth members from all parts of the country.

The Junior High will be going to Dallas for “Summer in the City,” a program run by the Diocese. We have participated in this program before and have had a wonderful time! So, why fix somethin’ that doesn’t need it!

We have accomplished so much this year and we have so much to anticipate in the coming few months! Don’t let the Holiday season’s craziness drag us down! Think of the joy we will have when our Savoir returns. Best Christmas wishes to all and remember to BREATHE!

Women of St James’

The Women of St James’ will be serving supper at Randy Sams’ Homeless Shelter on Monday, December 15th. Menu:

Chicken and Dressing: *Michelle Miller*

Cranberry Jello Salad: *Volunteers needed*

Dessert: Pumpkin and Pecan Pies: *Volunteers needed*

NOTE: (Please make sure pecans are minced to a fine texture due to the dental needs of the clientele at Randy Sams’.

Greenbean casserole: *Volunteers needed*

Dinner rolls: *Volunteers needed*

The Woman of St James’ serve every third Monday of the Month. If you are interested in sponsoring a month, please let Kim Fowler know. For volunteers for December, please contact: Michelle Miller-903-701-2641

Also, all women are invited to the Women of St James Christmas Party on Tuesday, December 16th at the home of Katie Caver. Please bring a potluck item and an unwrapped toy for the children of the Battered Women's Shelter. Address: #8 Cindywood, Texarkana, TX. Let's have a record attendance! Please attend!

The Women of St James meet about four times a year. It's never to late to start coming. If you are a woman and you attend St James, you already belong! Please be an ACTIVE Woman of St James!

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ ST JAMES

Mass at 5:30pm

Supper at 6:00pm

Adult Class & Faithweavers at 6:30pm

In the adult class:

December 3rd God's guidance for handling criticism

December 10th How to get your relationships right

We will take a break for Christmas before resuming on January 7th.



The Brotherhood of St. Andrew

A Ministry of Men within the worldwide Anglican Communion

The Brotherhood of St Andrew had a very successful meeting in November to discuss new directions for the Brotherhood. Beginning in January, members will meet for a Men's Bible Study, led by Fr Anderson, on the first Sunday of each month at the Church. Business meetings, for those interested, will take place on the third Tuesday of the month at the Rec Center.

Upcoming Meetings

Decorating the Church for Christmas

Sunday, December 21st at 1pm

Bible Study

Sunday, January 4th at 9am at the Church

Business Meeting

Tuesday, January 20th at 6pm at the Rec Center

For more information, call Charlie Cook at 903.826.8303.

December Birthdays

Celeste Anderson	1
Carl Miller	2
Dee Hale	3
Vickie Melde	3
Melanie Power	3
Carroll Wheeler	5
Glenn Crowder	5
Scott Bruner	5
Lyn Storey	9
John Fountoulakis	10
Jane Pappas	11
Chuck Firmin	11
Dennis Smith	12
David Warrick	12
Caitlyn Burke	12
Claire Wade	12

Jennifer Gould	13
Alysia Fomby	14
Keith Maynard	15
Blake Maynard	16
Misty Robertson	17
Don Shipp	18
Dennis Kern	19
Joseph Asher	19
Joshua Asher	19
Elizabeth Hardy	20
Donna Andrews	22
Leisa Burke	23
Mary Hamlin	25
Leo Ronan	26
LouAnne Harrell	27
Michelle Miller	28
Susan Williams	28
Dena Hill	28

Josh Dunkeson	29
Martha Bean	31
Patricia Horn	31
Mary Helen Mitchell	31

December Anniversaries

Willie & Cecile VanZandt	6
Charles & Chris Terry	9
Don & Debbie Holder	12
Don & Donna Shipp	21
Bruce & Barbara Cannedy	28
Jim & Lou Wilson	28
Scott & Jane Bruner	29
Dennis & Joyce Kern	30
Ches & Lila Walker	30