ST. JAMES' JOURNAL

The Rev. Dr. Cathy L. Deats, Rector December 2011 – January 2012



"Be prepared." Jesus said it, Paul underscored it, Matthew echoed it, and eventually even the Boy Scouts picked it up as their own motto. The season of Advent begins with a warning for Christians to "be prepared."

But prepared for what?

Paul Simon says this:

From early in November to the last week of December.

I got money matters weighing me down.

Oh, the music may be merry, but it's

only temporary,

I know Santa Claus is coming to town.

Gettin' ready, I'm getting' ready,

for the power and the glory and the story of *Christmas Day.*

(Getting Ready for Christmas Day, Paul Simon, © 2010)

Advent asks us: what are we preparing for? A holiday or a holy day?

The beginning of the holiday of Christmas is sometime in the week before Halloween, and builds until the actual day, then revs up again for the returning of the gifts and post-Christmas sales. The "consumer Christmas" seems to go on forever without getting anywhere.

For the church, Christmas is a holy day. It is such an important holy day, this Feast of the Incarnation, that it has a season of preparation so we can get ready to celebrate it properly. And it is up to the church to save Advent from being labeled as nothing more than the "last 29 shopping days left before Christmas."

The first step is to change Christmas from a holiday to a holy day. Preparing for a holiday – for example, a week-long vacation from work - does involve a frantic series of errands and tasks so that when the time comes you can leave. A holiday is a break from your ordinary routine and a time to focus on activities there is no time for in ordinary life: golfing, reading, traveling, or just vegging out. But holidays, while they can be refreshing, contribute to the compartmentalization of our lives - our work lives versus our home lives, our responsible and serious selves versus our fun-loving, more carefree selves.

Holy days should have exactly the opposite effect. Sacred seasons are holy because they nurture us into being whole, complete, healthy persons. Time spent preparing for holy days, like Advent, should be a time to slow down our normal speed and to see just where it is we're heading. Are we pointing towards Bethlehem or Wal-Mart? Holy days, if they are truly holy, do not fit neatly into a "religious" compartment in our lives. The power and grace of a holy day spills out over everything and everyone we encounter.

It is now up to the church (that's us) to bring back the holy day of Christmas. In their book, <u>Resident Aliens</u>, Willimon and Hauerwas tell the story of a rabbi who used to challenge the values of the society around him by telling his children, "That's fine for everyone else, but it's not fine for you. You are special. You are different. You are a Jew. You have a different story. A different set of values."

We have a different story, and a story that people hunger for. Advent celebrates the incarnational, Wordbecomes-flesh God. Advent announces that God is interested in an intimate relationship with us. Advent is all about telling us that God is accessible and reachable. Advent is a holy time of preparation. Matthew tells us that we are to stand prepared for the Lord's arrival, but we are not to stand still. When the Lord arrives, we should be caught in the act of doing justice and loving mercy. There are concrete things we can do, not to fight against the cultural holiday of Christmas, but to restore its holiness.

First, we can slow down and pay attention. We can pay attention to our relationship with the Creator God by spending more time in silence and in prayer. Silence comes when we turn off the noise. Prayer comes from deliberately planning to *be* in prayer. Immersing ourselves in the Advent music of the church tradition brings us to a sacred space far from the Christmas carols we hear around us in November.

Second, we pay special attention to those who are vulnerable. Here at St. James', The Giving Tree and food collection for hungry people are primary ways to serve. We can also find new ways to give gifts to help people in need, such as shopping in places which feature free trade items or benefit organizations like Episcopal Relief and Development or the Heifer Project.

So let's get ready...for the power, and the glory and the story of Christmas Day.

Yours in Christ,

Cathy

From the Wardens

The leaves are off the trees; Halloween has come and gone (along with our first major snowstorm of the season) and Thanksgiving is still fresh in my memory. Of course, all of this can only mean one thing: the St. James' Finance Committee is working on the budget for next year! Every year at about this time, the committee reviews the finances of the current year and begins the process of planning for the New Year. To plan for the next year, we consider the pledges that have been made for the upcoming year. The number of pledges received to date this year is higher than we received in past years by this date. Receiving pledges early make the job of the Finance Committee much easier. So, to those that already submitted their 2012 pledge: Thank You!

Junior Warden

Electronic Giving, a simple/effortless way to pay your pledge each week. Simply complete a form selecting the type of account to withdraw from (checking or savings), the frequency (weekly, semi-monthly or monthly), and the amount and forget about it.

Why?

It's easy. To those that pay their bills on line, transfer funds from one account to another, etc., this is the obvious choice for paying their pledge each week.

Electronic Giving eliminates the writing of yet another, check. No more envelopes; at least for the general fund. Electronic Giving keeps your pledge up to date and current whether you are home or away for a Sunday.

It's free, it costs you nothing to participate.

It's convenient for you.

To sign up call the office and ask for more information or pick up a form in the Narthex. We will also have a table set up in the parish hall during coffee hour soon to answer questions and complete the forms.

Barbara

Advent is HERE!

Advent means *coming* – the coming of Jesus the Christ.



We are to be awake – watching – prepared – ready for the incarnation.

All these attitudes are a challenge in a world whose focus is on preparing for the Christmas holiday season.

Immerse yourself in the calming blue color, the quieter liturgy, the minor key

which characterizes advent music and emphasizes the time of mystery.

Try the discipline of prayer with your community as we stop each day for Evening Prayer.

Come to the chapel every day or some days, Monday through Friday, at 6:30 pm, November 28 through December 23rd.

Thanksgiving Update

Vestry High-Lites

From the November Meeting

- Nominating Committee is seeking three Vestry members, Deputy to Diocesan Convention and Alternate Deputy for the upcoming term. Elections to be held at the Annual Meeting February 12, 2012
- Veterans Day Service format was excellent; thanks to the organizers Barbara White, Dave Handville and Linda Ayres. The service began at 5 AM and continued until 1:30 PM, with worship services celebrated at 8 and 10 AM.
- The tower reconstruction has been paid for by a combination of Capital Improvement Fund (\$12,000), Donations to date (\$13,798), and a grant from the Diocese (\$18,435). A loan from Richard and Marge Ames (\$13,000) enabled us to pay for the \$54,200 in full, and that loan will be paid back by December, 2012. Total yet to be raised: \$9,967.

!!!!!Calling all hands on deck!!!!!

We are having a pancake breakfast Saturday, December the 10th from 7AM to 11AM. This is open to the public and we need tons of help. I have a sign up sheet in the parish hall and need 15 people to help with this. There will be many many areas to help. I have all the cooks lined up but need help with a host/hostess, folks to take orders, clean tables, run coffee and juice, wash dishes. With the help of Patrick Stasolla, Gerri Huryk and DJ Hoffman along with the publicity committee we hope to make more than a few dollars on this. So, wish us well and come on down; we need your help!!!! With the exception of the cooks volunteers will need to arrive at 6:30AM. Please sign up, if you have additional questions email or call Barbara White at: 908.798.0928.

Invite a friend to church or breakfast !

Thanks to our congregation's generosity, through food bag collections and donation of Shop-Rite "Turkey" gift cards, our Sunday School students were able to assemble twenty bags of food to provide food for families



for this holiday. Special thanks to our Sunday School teachers for their guidance and organizational skills.

We also were able to supplement this food project with \$50 in food cards for each family. Outreach such as this

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helps to remind us of our call to share our many blessings.

We will also be collecting food for

Christmas. Those bags, along with suggested food contributions, are available in the Narthex and Parish Hall. These bags need to be returned before Sunday, December 18th, so that the Sunday School can pack them. Again, orders for Christmas Shop-Rite gift cards will be taken. Please see Paul Bartkus to arrange your donation.



caroling

Old-fashioned Christmas caroling: gather at the church at 3 PM on Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup>. We will travel to the homes of St. James' parishioners who cannot get to church, then return to the Mitcham House for hot chocolate and cookies. Children especially welcome! We expect to be finished by approximately 5 PM. Please contact the church office to sign up so we can have transportation for all! <u>stjames214@comcast.net</u> 908.852.3968

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# Advent/Christmas Giving Tree

Each year I struggle with the timing of the Journal's December/January publication schedule and reporting the completion of the Giving Tree project. It seems too late to write about it in February as we are in a new church season and moving toward Lent while our tree goes up in Advent. However, it is important that our congregation knows that their efforts have been appreciated and have been valued. During Advent we are encour-

aged to develop a spiritual discipline. It should be something that will heighten our awareness of the coming of Christ. I hope this project does this for you, as you model the giving of gifts to the baby Jesus. I thought I'd try to touch on some aspects of preparation for the Giving Tree and my spiritual trepidations. As you read this the Giving Tree has already been set up and hopefully most, if not all, the candy canes have been replaced by the angels from the Sunday School.

The Giving Tree tradition at St. James has gone on for about fifteen years. Each year families are identified, gifts are selected and the candy canes go up on the tree. Then we wait, just as in our spiritual Advent. We wait to see the canes disappear, for the angels from Sunday School to appear, and for the presents to accumulate under the tree. I admit that I experience a bit of anxiety over whether all the canes will be taken or whether the gift-wishes can be fulfilled, or whether a specific toy or request can be found. This anxiety was elevated over the last few years due to uncooperative weather and poorly coordinated snow and ice storms. (Couldn't a snow storm wait until Monday?) There are only four

Sundays in Advent. This seems to me such a short time when so much preparation is needed. When there is a snow or ice storm attendance at church drops off, understandably, and the gift canes are not taken off the tree. Once, we had snow three out of four Sundays and I began to brainstorm potential plans for the possibility that people were not able to get to church at all during Advent. That was a possibility that I feared might happen.

It has been said that the opposite of Faith is Fear and I have been fearful. But, it seems that each year, despite my faltering faith, the children's wishes are filled. The candy canes are gathered up, the angels are hung in their place and by the last day the wrapped presents appear. Often you give more than was requested. I wish I could leave the presents under the tree for a week or two so that everyone could see concrete proof that a Christmas miracle really happened. Proof that you took the extra time, during arguably one of the busiest and hectic times of the year, to extend yourselves to share your gifts with others. But, as is symptomatic of this season, and despite Cathy's exhortations that we slow down, we are rushed to gather them up, sort them for each child and deliver them to the schools on that next Monday so that the families can pick them up.

My wish for you is that you have the faith to envision the appreciation of the parents and the joy of the children. Although, I do not speak to them directly, the schools communicate that the parents are very appreciative of your generosity and the care taken to wrap the gifts. This is a blessing for them, and, also a blessing for us. It is truly more blessed to give than receive.

As you shop this year for your gift(s) I hope that you can experience this undertaking prayerfully and with a spiritual focus. But, please, don't put my faith to a test this year! (Wink - Wink)

> *Paul Bartkus, Mission Strategy Committee*

# BELL CHOIR "NOTES"



The Bell Choir is facing some very busy weeks ahead.

On December 2, a group of ringers will be participating in the festivities surrounding the Lighting of the Tree in Hackettstown. The bells along with the Youth Choir will be

found in a heated tent at the Hackettstown Hardware Store from 6:30 - 6:45 PM. Come and hear the children sing and see them. Hear the bells and sing along to some familiar Christmas tunes.

On December 4, the Bell Choir will be playing at the 10:00 service. That afternoon the bells will be ringing at the Port Morris United Methodist Church in the Annual *Christmas Though the Arts* Program. The program will begin at 5 PM and the St. James' Players along with the Youth Choir will also be participating. All are invited to attend. Come and relax and focus on the " reason for the season".

On December 11, a group of ringers will be participating in the Service of Lessons and Carols at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Montclair. The service begins at 5 PM. This service always includes beautiful choir anthems, wonderful hymns and fantastic organ music. Sit in a beautiful sanctuary and listen to the words of hope offered through the readings. Again, take time to relax during what is often a hectic Advent season. The service will be followed by a delicious soup supper.

On Christmas Eve, at each service the Introit will be a piece combining organ and bells. The Bell Choir will also be participating in the 7 PM and 11 PM services.

On January 8, the Bell Choir will be participating in the 2 PM worship service in St. Margaret's Chapel at the House of the Good Shepherd.

With all these varied commitments, I want to say that St. James is very fortunate to have a great group of ringers who are so willing to share their time not only for services at St. James', but also with the wider community. The "off-site" events involve moving cases of bells, many notebooks and music risers and several foam pads. It is quite an undertaking to get all these down from

the balcony, into a car, unloaded and set up at the site and then reloaded and returned to the balcony. Thank you to all the Bell Choir members who help each time with these chores.

If you missed the bells on November 20 at church or at the Hackettstown Community Hymn Sing, check out the link on the St. James homepage to YouTube where you can hear the bells as they played at the Hymn Sing. A special thank you to "retired" bell ringer Wendie Germain who stepped in to play at church on November 20.

Best wishes to all for a relaxing Advent season, a blessed Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

#### Louise Olshan,

Bell Choir Director

# St. James' of Hackettstown Dec. 10th Pancake Breakfast

If you think it's impossible to have fun at a classic pancake and sausage breakfast, you obviously have not attended one at St. James' Episcopal Church!

One and all are welcome to enjoy a hot breakfast of pancakes, sausage, eggs, juice and coffee with the community and friends at the Church from 7-11 a.m. on Saturday, December 10, 2011.

"There is no place like St. James' Episcopal Church for pancake lovers," stated Rev. Dr. Cathy Deats, rector of the Church. "It's the time of the season to sit down and experience not only the warmth of the food, but the warmth and friendship of our community."

Admission is only \$10 per person. Discounted tickets for senior citizens are available at \$7 per person, and children under age 5 eat free. Tickets are available at the door. The church is located at 214 Washington St. (corner of Moore & Washington St), Hackettstown. Please use the Moore Street entrance.

For more information on seeing how the holiday spirit is brewing at the Church, contact 908-798-0928, or visit the church's website at

http://stjameshackettstown.org



# Yarn Twisters

With the Holidays upon us and everyone so busy, we have not set any dates for the Yarn Twisters to meet during the month of December/ January but we can arrange an evening get together if anyone would like to have some "down time" to work on their project and chat ... this could be very therapeutic with all of the Holiday shopping, etc. going on. We could even have hot chocolate and cookies! Please feel free to continue to knit and crochet at home if you cannot join us.

Anyone interested in joining the group is welcome to contact me at 908-684-3566 or email me at <u>frlbailey1@comcast.net</u>. We are looking for some additional knitters/crocheters to join the Yarn Twisters and will be placing an article in a local paper shortly.

The following items can be collected during the year. There is a blue plastic barrel in the Great Hall for donations:

- Unscented, Hypoallergenic Hand Lotion (2-4 oz bottles)
- Sealed Packages of Holiday Sweets
- Books or Activities like Sudoku, word searches, or playing cards
- Facial Tissue
- Microwave Popcorn
- Chewing Gum

Thank you,

Linda Miller

Greening of the church will be held on Sunday, December 18, 2011. This event begins with the annual Wardens' Coffee which is served immediately after the 10 AM service. Come to work. Come to schmooze. Come to supervise. All are welcome. No special talent required. This is a perfect way to prepare our Church and your heart for Our Lord's coming. *Meg Critchley* 

As you are doing your holiday bargain shopping keep in mind the St. James' Tricky Tray! It isn't too early to start shopping for next year's tricky tray. With all the holiday bargains out there we are sure you can find something special for your tricky tray basket donation. The after Christmas sales are a great time to find those special bargains!! Put a basket together now or just pick-up some items and we'll put it together for you. If storage is a problem just let us know. Not sure what to do with that unwanted gift?? Re-gift it to the tricky tray!! Happy bargain hunting!!

## Fundraising committee

# Ten Years Together

# From Sunday School Coordinator Jenn Howlin:

I was blessed with the opportunity, this past month, to attend Teacher Resource Day - Beyond the Curriculum at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Montclair, NJ sponsored by the Christian Formation Commission.

I was impressed at how well organized the event was. I was greeted by a light breakfast and a welcome package containing a great deal of resource information. There were 5 x 7 cards laid out on a stage detailing each workshop, time of workshop and location. We each had to choose one card of each color; three altogether. I chose Implementing Curriculum, Experience Godly Play and Drama. Each workshop lasted 45 minutes.

There were approximately 15 people in each workshop. Not only were we given specific information in these workshops, but we were able to network with one another and discuss different ideas and perspectives for making Sunday school, not only educational, but fun for our children as well.

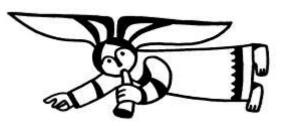
I came home feeling refreshed, renewed and enthusiastic about sharing this experience with my fellow teachers. I found these workshops to be an invaluable resource for Sunday school teachers, Youth Leaders or anyone else interested in formation activities and I would highly recommend them.

# What a wonderful celebration of our ten years together!



Many thanks for the delicious dinner, awesome decorations, inspiring program and an all around good time. I am still making my way through the guest book, emails and cards, taking in all the great things you wrote. You could not have given me a more wonderful gift than the stained glass image of St. James'. Our journey together has been full of blessing; may it continue to be so!

Cathy



# Christmas Worship Schedule:

#### Christmas Eve, Saturday December 24:

4:30 PM The Holy Eucharist – especially for families with children

- 7:00 PM The Holy Eucharist choral and meditative
- 11:00 PM The Holy Eucharist traditional Midnight Mass



All services are choral and each is enhanced by the musical talents of one or more of the following musical groups: St. James' Adult Choir, Children's Choir, Multi-Generational Bell Choir

Christmas Day, Sunday December 25:

The Feast of the Incarnation of our Lord 10:00 AM The Holy Eucharist

# Did you know?



That snow is cleared from the St. James' property by a crew of volunteers? If you would like to help (and have a strong back!) please

contact Dave Lacouture or send an email to <u>snowremoval@stjameshackettstown.org</u>

**Have you noticed** Paul Bartkus sporting a mustache in Movember? No, it's not a typo. Paul participated in a month-long event to raise awareness of men's cancers. Let's see what he does in December...



Please consider

Making a donation to help offset our energy (electric, gas and oil) expenses. This year, our electric bill was higher than in past years. This is due to increased energy costs as well as our using the air conditioned Parish Hall to hold Sunday services through much of the summer.

Poinsettias - Wreaths -Pine Roping Fundraiser



Barbara White will place our order for poinsettias, wreaths and pine roping Tuesday, December 6th so please have your orders in today. Order forms can be found in the parish hall.



## The Annual Meeting of St. James'

has been scheduled for Sunday, February 12<sup>th</sup> one service of The Holy Eucharist at 9:00 AM Annual Meeting begins 10:30 AM watch for more details in your postal mail and email!



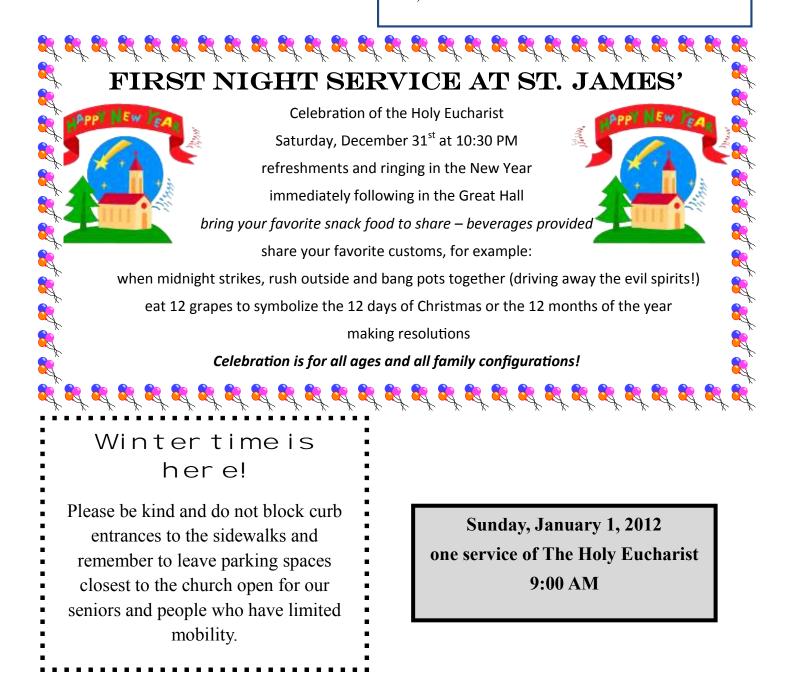
# THANK YOU!

To everyone who has supported these last few fundraisers, Innisbrook, See's and the Christmas Flower/Decoration sale. We do not usually make a lot on these fundraisers but they are important to a few folks and every penny counts!

I will place our order for poinsettia's, wreaths and pine roping Tuesday, December 6th so please have your orders in today. Order forms can be found in the parish hall.

Barbara White

**Communications...** St. James' is a leader in communications of all sorts: the <u>Journal</u>, ejournal, Constant Contact emails, website, press releases, advertising and more. We are looking at ways to expand our communications and organize them to maximize our energy and reach more people. To that end, we invite everyone interested in any aspect of communication to a meeting to brainstorm ideas. We need people who are graphically talented, or experience with advertising or journalism, as well as others whose interest is to share this jewel of a community with others. The meeting will be **Wednesday**, **January 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm** in the Great Hall. Please speak to any Vestry member, especially Publicity Chair Paula Van Clef, to learn more.



| 2<br>CHURCH OFFICE OPEN 9<br>AM TO 1 PM<br>B:30 AM Joseph Quinian<br>Bereavement Center<br>6:30 PM EVENING<br>PRAYER<br>7:00 PM HACKETTSTOWN<br>TREE LIGHTING<br>CHURCH OFFICE OPEN 9<br>AM TO 1 PM<br>B:30 AM Joseph Quinian<br>Bereavement Center<br>6:30 PM EVENING<br>PRAYER<br>PRAYER<br>PRAYER<br>CHURCH OFFICE OPEN 9<br>AM TO 1 PM |
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# ST. JAMES' JOURNAL

December 2011–January 2012

#### St. James' Staff & Vestry The Rev. Dr. Cathy L. Deats Rector: The Rev. Sheila Shuford Deacon: Seminarian: Rod Perez-Vega The Rev. Clarence Sickles Rector Emeritus: Greg Malejko Senior Warden: Junior Warden: For Weekly Announcements Barbara White Treasurer: Penn Pixley and what's happening at St. James' visit our webpage: Bookkeeper: Ellen Infante stjameshackettstown.org Parish Administrator: Linda Ayres Music Director: Pam Laura Check out the new calendar! Sign up for email news! Organist: Louise Olshan Sexton: Pauline Volkert Vestry David Bernauer DJ Hoffman Peter Quelly Ron Cipriani David Jenkins Roy Smith David Handville Dan Miller Paula Van Clef Barbara Olesen, Vestry Clerk

ST. JAMES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH 214 Washington Street Hackettstown NJ 07836