



The Sandpiper

The Newsletter of Saint Nicholas Episcopal Church

Scarborough, Maine

March 2017

FROM OUR VICAR



Dear Friends:

For this year's Lenten Study we will be reading *A Practical Christianity: Meditations for the Season of Lent* by the Reverend Jane Shaw. The book's Foreword was written by Brother Curtis Almquist, a monk of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist in Cambridge, MA. I've had a long association with the SSJE brothers, and Curtis has been my spiritual director for several years.

At our Ash Wednesday liturgy we began our Lent with a prayer derived from Psalm 51: *Create and make in us new and contrite hearts...* Curtis points out that the English word *contrite* comes from the Latin *contritus*, meaning *thoroughly crushed*. The sense of the word is not about a broken heart, he says, but rather a heart broken open.

He writes: *This is a bidding to God, asking for God's aid in our own heart's being broken open to the needs of the world that surrounds us, a world that God so loves. It is also a prayer to retrieve, recover, and redeem what is most important—in this case to be given a like-new heart. This is not a heart bypass procedure. Rather, this is a thoroughfare right through our heart—spiritual angioplasty—with every vessel and valve completely unclogged, pumping afresh with the light and love of God.*

Lent is about finding practices that open our hearts to God. *Whether we work, or walk, or weep, or wait*, writes Curtis, *God is with us. Many of us need periodic reminders of this truth. Lent can be a great help to retrieve, recover, redeem what is most important to us, yet may have gotten lost along the way.*

I pray that God may open wide our hearts this Lent. May they be broken open to a world so in need of God's healing love.

Our Lenten Study begins Thursday evening, March 16, at 6:30 PM. Please join us.

Blessings,

David

UPCOMING GUEST MUSICIANS by Terry Foster, Church Musician

This coming **Sunday, March 5**, we will welcome back to Saint Nicholas the internationally known violinist Aban Zirikly. Mr. Zirikly is a native of Syria who lives now in Cape Elizabeth. His playing is magical and touches the heart. On April 2, outstanding tenor soloist Eric Winter will sing for us. These guest musicians are made possible by the Barbara MacDougall Fund. All gifts are taxable deductible.



STEWARDSHIP NOTES by John Sutton

Have you ever thought about the fact that the liturgical season of Lent and Tax Season overlap? This year Easter, the end of Lent, falls on April 16. Our federal taxes are due on April 18. Both seasons involve taking stock. In the case of Lent, the Prayer Book urges self-examination and repentance, prayer, fasting, and self-denial. If we are in the habit of praying, fasting, and self-examining, the forty days will pass quickly. If these are not our habits, Lent can be demanding. In preparing our tax return we need to assemble all our relevant documents: W2s, 1099s, K-1s, receipts, canceled checks. If we have filed all these carefully, the task can go smoothly, but if we have been sloppy in our record keeping, doing our taxes can be a nightmare.

I admit that keeping a holy Lent and paying our taxes are not the easiest or most joyful of activities. We prepare our 1040 form in order to pay the United States Treasury as little as the law allows. And I suspect that many of us—I include myself—do less than we should to keep a holy Lent, even make no effort to do so. Nevertheless, keeping a holy Lent and paying our taxes are vital to our spiritual and our fiscal health.

When I lived in Connecticut I attended a conference at which Ian Douglas, our soon-to-be-consecrated bishop-elect, reminded us that when we give to the Church, the money is not our gift to God but God's gift to us to use in support of God's mission in the world. What a powerful concept! I don't suppose that many of us, as we look at what we pay our government, think about the thousands of things our money pays for--education, medical care, highways, environmental protection, defense--and perhaps feel proud of the way, however tiny, we support our country. We might also take a look at our gifts to church and charity and feel good about how they are helping to support God's mission.

May I suggest a way in which our tax return can help us gauge at least one aspect of our spiritual health. If you itemize, you list the amount of your donations to charities (of which, of course, the Church is one). If you divide that number by your Adjusted Gross Income (usually the bottom line on page 1) you will calculate your level of giving, a measure of your generosity. There is no magic number--everyone gives as she/he is able--but the tithe (10%) is considered the minimum for charitable giving. If you reach ten percent, pat yourself on the back--modestly, please, because it's God's money! If you come close to ten percent, you realize that it will take just a little more effort to reach the tithe level. If you missed by a significant amount, then perhaps you will find it possible to strive to tithe, that is, work gradually year by year toward ten percent. If satisfying the IRS means paying as little as possible, then, in contrast, giving to support God's mission should mean, ideally, giving as much as we can, even sacrificing in order to do our very best for God—and making a strong effort to keep a holy Lent.

SANDPIPER CHILDREN'S CENTER NEWS by Lorna Kerbel, President of Managers Group

At their meeting on February 16 the nominations of Jane Ducott as president and Lorna Kerbel as secretary were approved. The design of the tile in the hall will be changed to eliminate the overstimulating checkerboard pattern. The Saint Nick's maintenance group has been informed of mold under the sink in the Toddlers' Room, which the SCC staff cleaned with bleach. There will be a Sandpiper parent's meeting on February 28, and Marlene will enlist help for the work day on Saturday, May 20, to help organize the basement and help clean up the back yard and spread wood chips. The yard sale date is June 3, and the preschool graduation program will be held on June 16, at 3:30pm, followed by a pot luck supper. Staff evaluations and development plans continue, as well as the completion of paperwork for NAECY. The SCC must implement the disaster plan that the State and NAECY have created. We need to have three days of clothing, food, and water stored for every child in the program, as well as a land line phone hooked back up for use if the electricity goes out.

News flash! The Children's Center has received a \$500 grant because one of the parents who sits on the Managers Board has volunteered forty hours to our daycare program.

EDITOR'S NOTE

We have a short issue this month. For next month—or any month--if you have something you'd like to share, please send it to me: johnfsut@aol.com. Normally the deadline is the Friday before the first Sunday.