
The Handclasp

a newsletter for
the Multicultural Community at Grace
One Union Park, Norwalk, Ct 06850
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CHANGE

This is it, folks. One of the first changes for this year 2012. A new format, a new old name, and the beginning of adjusting to even more changes. Hopefully, many of us have already faced subtle changes in this new year. Just writing out a new numeral for the year's date can be a challenge for some. For a lot of folk it will be February or March before the 2012 thing gets to be even semi-automatic.

Yep, change is definitely a challenge. But without change there can be no progress. We can let change happen to us OR we can actively work change for our benefit. There is a saying 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' But what do we do if it *is* broke -- not working, not moving ahead, accomplishing nothing?

Reality is sometimes not pleasant to face. Not facing it can bring on disaster. It is time to face our reality and make changes for a better future.

Barbara Bancroft



JANUARY 2012

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THOUGHTS ON BEING A TRUSTEE OF GOD'S BLESSINGS

I find it interesting that on the day after Christmas many people are no longer saying *Merry Christmas*.

Don't they remember that the Christmas season has twelve days and doesn't end till January 6th, when Epiphany begins? Anyhow, when you read this, it will still be Christmastide, so I think it entirely proper that I share with you a Christmas hymn I wrote in 1997. It is to be sung to the tune *Benessan*, whose familiar words are *Morning has broken like the first morning...*

*Child in a manger,
Infant of wonder,
Sent to redeem us,
God's gift to all,
Prophets foretold him,
Jesus the Savior;
Shepherds beheld him
In a cow's stall.*

*Anthems of angels
Pealed down from heaven;
Wise men brought treasures
To the new king.
If we could travel
To that rude stable,
In adoration,
What would we bring?*

*Our best possessions
He has no need of;
Riches are worthless,
Our grandest arts.
What does he want then,
Child of salvation?
Simply devotion,
Merely our hearts.*

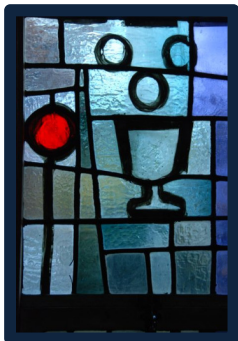
The punch line of the poem echoes a theme of
(See God's Blessings on Page 2)

God's Blessing Cont'd from Page 1)

Lois's sermon at the Christmas Eve Eucharist. Jesus wants our hearts, our deepest love. Our love for him is far more important than our possessions, our money, our creations, impressive as they may be. What we do with them, however, is important. We are not meant to worship our possessions, our money, and our creations, but to use them in service to others. So we have a paradox. Our wealth is worthless, in comparison to God's love for us and our love for God, but invaluable as we use it to feed the hungry, heal the sick, shelter the homeless, nourish the spirit. That is what the Church does, what Grace Church does. That is why we need your continued support in 2012. As you read this, 2012 will soon arrive. So I say, *Happy New Year*, as I also say, *Merry Christmas*.

John Sutton

NOTE: As of January 2nd, we have received 30 pledges and gifts for 2012 totaling \$62,049. There are still a number of parishioners we expect to hear from.

**NEW MINISTRY**

Next Sunday, January 8, marks a new partition in ministry coming out of the Betania and Grace multicultural community.

At 3:30 p.m. **Norwalk Hospital will begin broadcasting to those in the hospital a weekly service of Christian Evening Prayer with message.** The first priest up to bat is Grace Church's Lois Keen.

The service takes place in the auditorium, behind the Pastoral Services department offices on the first floor of the hospital and is open to the public. We will celebrate The Epiphany, appropriately. The challenge will be to keep it to half an hour - very short sermon!



Please Join Us for an
EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY
Open House
On
Tuesday,
February 26 and May 8
6:45 p.m.

Saint Paul's Episcopal Church
Fireside Room
661 Old Post Road, Fairfield, CT
RSVP to:

Jeffri Harre, Group Mentor, 203.856.3650

Every baptized person is called to ministry. The Education for Ministry (EfM) program provides people from all walks of life with the education "to be" Christians and to carry out their individual ministry, whatever that may be. Today, many adults seek a Christian education which supports their faith and which prepares them to express that faith in day-to-day events.

The current EfM group at St. Paul's invites you to learn more about this worldwide educational program by sitting in on an actual class and, if you wish, participating in our discussion. There is no obligation and no cost to attend this Open House session; in the spirit of Episcopal Hospitality, light refreshments and non-alcoholic beverages will be served. Anyone age 18 and over is invited to participate; it is not required that you be Episcopalian or Christian.

The seminar group is the nucleus of the EfM program. At Saint Paul's our EfM group consists of six to twelve participants and a trained mentor who meet weekly over the course of a nine-month academic year (September through May). We meet once a week, on Tuesdays, from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Adult students enroll for the EfM program one year at a time, can transfer almost anywhere in the USA and in many foreign countries, and are eligible for 18 Continuing Education Units per year by participating.

We are hopeful that this Open House format allows adults curious about the program to experience the
(See EfM on Page 3)

EfM Cont'd from Page 2

richness of our spiritual explorations and discussions. **We are actively seeking new members to join us for the September 2012 to May 2013 academic year at St. Paul's in Fairfield. Additional Open Houses will take place on Tuesday, February 28 and again on Tuesday, May 8, 2012.**

If you would like more information about Saint Paul's EfM group, please contact: Jeffri Harre, Group Mentor, 203.856.3650. For more information on the EfM program: <http://www.sewanee.edu/EFM/EFMAboutUs.htm>



ANNUAL MEETING

The Parish Annual Meeting will be held Sunday January 22, following the 10:00 o'clock service. This is the opportunity for members to vote for their representatives to Vestry and to receive the Annual Reports for 2011.

At 9:00 a.m. this same morning, January 22, there will be a presentation of the Annual budget for 2012 at which time questions may be addressed. The Vestry will be meeting at noon on Sunday, January 15 to finalize the 2012 Annual Budget.

Please contact any of the Officers or Vestry Members listed on the last page of this newsletter with questions and/or concerns *before* the January 15 Vestry Meeting.

RAMBLINGS

From the time of my calling to ordination to the priesthood, I envisioned a leadership of midwife, rather than obstetrician. A wise priest, in counseling me, encouraged me, pointing out that the leadership of John the Baptist was one of decreasing as Jesus increased.

The Church all over the world is changing. Until now, the priest or minister was the face of the congregation. Front page of the newsletter, photo, words of wisdom. It still lingeringly is expected that the clergy be the ones who attracted people to a church.

In truth, it is the people, how they worship together, how they love one another, how they greet and put all their attention toward the guest, the visitor, the newcomer, over one another, that attracts people to a church.

The newsletter of a church is about the people and what they are doing in the name of Jesus Christ. You are the Church:

- on Sunday morning at prayer,
- on Monday at work,
- on Tuesday at a community meeting,
- on Wednesday at the grocery store,
- on Thursday at the auto repair shop,
- on Friday at dinner with friends
and acquaintances,
- on Saturday at rest in the back yard.

You are the Church.

This is your newsletter.

Use it to share with one another what you do during the week, and share it with other people, to say, "This is who we are, in the Name of Jesus." Teacher, nurse, volunteer, office worker, city worker, hardware retailer, farmer, retired, all the wonder of human endeavor, undertaken by the followers of the One who took our flesh and elevated it to Godhead.

Faithfully,
Lois Keen, Priest

JANUARY HIGHLIGHTS

Sundays at 10:00 a.m. (Except the last Sunday of the Month) -- Holy Eucharist in English

Sundays at 1:00 p.m. (Except the last Sunday of the Month) – Misa en español

Saturday, January 7 at 10:30 -- Holy Needles in the Memorial Room

Sunday, January 8 at 11:30 a.m. – Practicing Prayer in the Parlor

Sunday, January 15 at 12:00 Noon – Vestry Meeting

Saturday, January 21 at 10:30 -- Holy Needles in the Memorial Room

Sunday, January 22 at 9:00 a.m. – Presentation of the 2012 Budget in the Memorial Room

Following the 10:00 a.m. service – Grace Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 27 at 10:00 a.m. – Bilingual Service .(Betania and Grace together)

Pot Luck lunch and joint parish meeting will follow the service,
replacing the former Wednesday evening gatherings

IGLESIA BETANIA

1st Thursdays – House Eucharist at various homes

3rd Thursdays – Spanish Bible study

REV. LOIS' OPEN TABLE at DUNKIN' DONUTS

Most afternoons, Monday through Thursday at 2:00 p.m., Lois is at a table in the neighborhood DD. Drop in for a visit, be it a chat, a visit, or a problem.

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