

The Messenger

Saint Stephen's, Schenectady

January 2006

The Epiphany Of Our Lord

The name "Epiphany" is derived from a Greek word meaning "manifestation" or "appearing." It is also called "The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles." This phrase is a reference to the story of the Wise Men from the East.

A Christian observance on January 6 is found as early as the end of the second century in Egypt. The feast combined commemorations of the visit of the Magi, led by the star of Bethlehem; the Baptism of Jesus in the waters of the River Jordan; and Jesus' first recorded miracle, the changing of water into wine at the marriage of Cana of Galilee -- all thought of as manifestations of the incarnate Lord.

The Epiphany is still the primary Feast of the Incarnation in Eastern Churches, and the threefold emphasis is still prominent. In the West, however, including the Episcopal Church, the story of the Wise Men has tended to overshadow the other two events. Modern lectionary reform, reflected in the Book of Common Prayer, has recovered the primitive trilogy, by setting the event of the Baptism as the theme of the First Sunday after January 6th.

Our celebration of Epiphany at St. Stephen's will take place on Sunday, January 8th at 8:00 am, 10:15 a.m. and 7 pm with Eucharist and renewal of our Baptismal vows.

Household Blessing For Epiphany

A custom from Eastern Europe that is presently being recovered in North America is the practice of blessing homes on Epiphany. Members of the household go from room to room expressing thanks to God for each room and asking God to bless the room and its intended use. Some small symbol of the blessing may be carried to leave in each room: a candle, a cross, "gifts" of the Magi.

The procession ends outside the front door where the door's lintel is marked in chalk with the year and the initials C,M,B - each separated by a cross - recalling the traditional names of the Magi: Casper, Melchior and Balthasar. The members of the household are then invited to add their own initials. Also at this time it is appropriate to pledge volunteer time or other gifts for Bethesda House or some local homeless shelter as signs of our thankfulness to God. The ritual ends with a celebration of the Eucharist.

Talk to the rector if you would like to have your home blessed.



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

1935 The Plaza
Schenectady, New York 12309

Church Staff

The Rev. Dr. James R. Brooks-McDonald, Rector
The Rev. Patricia L. Jones, Deacon
The Rev. John H. Peatling, Rector Emeritus
Dr. Timothy Olsen, Director of Music
Ms Katherine Miller, Office Manager

Vestry

Warden: Shari MacIvor
Warden: Dave Carroll
Clerk:
Treasurer: Denise Crates
Chancellor: Rosemarie Jaquith

Class of 2005 Steve Ras
Sondra Grady
Vicki Hoshko

Class of 2006 Marilyn Dare
Budd Mazurek
Keith Nelson

Class of 2007 Dave Caruso
Paul de Kanel
Stacy DeBritz

THE CHURCH OFFICE, located at 1229 Baker Avenue, is open every weekday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

TELEPHONE/FAX: The office telephone number is 518/346-6241 and the office fax number is 518/346-6242. Please leave a message if no one answers and someone will get back to you as soon as possible. Our email address is ststeph@albany.net. The rector's email is jbrooksm@nycap.rr.com. Our website address is <http://www.albany.net/~ststeph/>

The Messenger is published 10 times a year, September through June.

Dear Friends,

One of the great leaders of the Episcopal Church in a past generation, Bishop Stephen Bayne, had some sage words on the month we are now entering: "January, I have long felt, is a month without which life would be greatly improved. Annual reports, final days of reckoning with postponed business, new budgets, clearing out of files...to say nothing of Christmas bills and the like...it is a miserable, harassed, snivelling, crass, overbearing, worldly wretch of a month."

That may be a little harsh, but I think Bishop Bayne has the right idea. Still, at least around the parish, I see some redeeming signs of life in the depths of this winter.

For one thing, the bitter cold and many feet of snow seem to bring out the best in people. Maybe because it's harder to get out, and harder to get together, it seems better when we do. For all the busy ness of this month, and all of the winter chill, I find the being with people on Sunday, and other times, especially rich.

I am heartened, too, in preparing the Annual Report for the Annual Parish Meeting. I am amazed by the amount of energy and activity going on in this place, and by the remarkable generosity of spirit and time with which people give of themselves.

But maybe I value January most of all because it seems like a new beginning, and that's something I can always use. I start into this new year resolved to be doing all that I can to build us into a genuinely supportive family of Christians finding ways for us to be together, challenging us to connect ourselves more deeply to Christ and to each other, exploring together how best to minister to the world in Christ's name.

January permits such resolutions. I guess I'll be glad when the month is over, but I hope that the good things the people, the community, the dreams of the year will carry us on as we make the snowy trek toward spring. Peace,

James

Kerygma Bible Study

Starting on Tuesday, January 17th, we will begin the study of the Gospel of John. This gospel offers insights into the nature of Jesus and the meaning of faith, using images of darkness and light, blindness and sight, death and new life. The class will meet for 14 weeks, Tuesday evenings, 7:30-9:00, in the Community Room downstairs.

All are welcome; no previous Bible study is necessary. Resource Books are available from Deacon Pat. Please sign up at the shop.



Christmas in the County Jail

This year for the first time our St. Stephen's Giving Tree was designated for a very special group of children: all of their mothers are inmates at the Schenectady County Correctional Facility. The children range in age from 8 months to 18 years; all live in Schenectady County or nearby. We asked each mother what she would like to give her child, and we did our best to fulfill those requests. Suggestions ranged from gift certificates for teenagers (always a popular option!) to educational toys, games and clothing for the younger ones. The mothers were very grateful to St. Stephen's, as were the guardians who received the deliveries. And hopefully the children's Christmas was happier for our efforts.

This was an ambitious project: we had over 60 names, in 23 families, and we provided two gifts for each child. We will refine our procedures another year: an earlier start, firm deadlines, more

help needed to sort and deliver gifts, etc. But I think this is a very worthwhile project: I can not imagine what it means for a child not to have his or her mother home for Christmas; I have seen for myself what effect such absence has on the mothers. Thanks go to all who participated in this effort. Special thanks are due to Carole Merrill Mazurek, Cyndi Schwartz and Dawn Tonneau for their extra efforts.

I wish you all could have joined Diane Reid and me as we made our way from one end of the jail to the other to deliver Christmas cards to the inmates. The recipients were most grateful, especially since we include postage on each envelope. In addition to the cards provided by members of St. Stephen's, we received a generous donation from the Women's Guild of Lynnwood Reformed Church, and several boxes of cards from the mother of an inmate. As a result, we were able to distribute over 1300 cards; postage came to approximately \$475. This is truly a worth while project: it reminds the men and women that they are not forgotten, and allows them to reach out to their loved ones. Special thanks go to Marilyn Causey and Hoagy Walker, who spent hours sorting and organizing the cards ahead of time, and all the helpers on December 18th who assembled packets of cards and applied stamps to envelopes. Now---remember to bring in your leftovers, bargains and freebies for Christmas 2006. It is not too early to start!

Deacon Pat

Sunday School

Thank you to all of the children who worked on creating the Christmas *Putz* this year season. The youth of St. Stephen's made the figures, assembled the *Putz* and presented the story to the congregation the last Sunday in Advent. It was a very special way to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

We will resume regular Sunday school classes 9:00 – 10:00 for 1st grade through high school and following the children's sermon for Pre-K and K. We look forward to learning about Jesus as He grew up, healed us, and performed miracles only the Son of God could accomplish.

THANK YOU....
THANK YOU...
THANK YOU...

...To Stacy Debritz, Allison de Kanel and all our actors who allowed the Christmas *Putz* to happen...and to the parents who helped it all come together

...To the Alter Guild and to brass polishers par excellence who polished all the brass in the church, and made Christmas beautiful

...To June Russel, the Pratico and Morin families who 'greened' the church

...To Tim Olsen, the Choir members and all the instrumentalists who helped to make Advent and Christmas beautiful

...To the lectors, chalice bearers and acolytes who made our worship possible

...To the ushers and to the offering counters

...To our Office Manager, Kathy Miller, who worked so hard to prepare bulletins and make other arrangements

...To all of you who do quiet things in quiet ways and help this parish to work

8:00am Coffee Hour

Additional hosts are needed for the coffee hour following the 8:00am service. If you're interested, please see Suzanne Taylor (or give her a call at 393-9035).

Episcopal Relief and Development: South Asia Relief Fund

Episcopal Relief and Development is providing ongoing emergency relief to people affected by the earthquake in Pakistan and India. The October 8th earthquake killed more than 87,000 people and left four million homeless.

"As winter descends, there are immediate needs for additional assistance," said Kirsten Laursen, ERD's Senior Program Director of Asia and New Initiatives.

ERD responded immediately after the earthquake and continues working with Anglican and ecumenical partners to reach the most vulnerable populations.

ERD is also still actively involved in responding to the tsunami that struck the region over one year ago. To date, ERD has received more than \$12 million in donations for tsunami relief and development. Some of those funds have been invested in training professional counselors -- an essential piece of ERD's response.

To support families devastated by the tsunamis or earthquake, donate to the South Asia Relief Fund. Please go to www.er-d.org or call 1-800-334-7626, ext. 5129. Gifts can be mailed to: Episcopal Relief and Development, South Asia Relief Fund, PO Box 12043, Newark, NJ 07101.

What Is The 'Vestry'?

The vestry is a group of eleven lay representatives from the parish who are charged with the temporal affairs of the congregation. They meet monthly with the rector presiding. The vestry spends considerable time on income and expenses and on writing the annual budget. They set the salary scales and are responsible for raising the money to meet expenses. The vestry also has the important job of finding a new rector whenever a vacancy occurs. Three representatives are elected at the annual parish meeting for a term of three years. In addition, a Warden (vestry officer) is elected for a term of two years.

Vestry News

The vestry discussed the purpose and working of the parish's endowment. They are currently reviewing an endowment 'charter' prepared by the Finance/Endowment Committees.

The vestry is reviewing the energy audit that was done earlier in the year. It was decided that those

items that will pay for themselves in the short term would be the first to be done.

It was reported that a gift from the Vanda estate of \$15,000 was given to the church: \$5000 to the Altar Guild Fund and \$10,000 to the Property Fund in the endowment.

It was reported that the Every Member Canvas is almost complete with 113 pledges in for \$179,454. Several pledges remain to be given.

There was a discussion of our congregation's financial contribution to the City of Schenectady as 'payment in lieu of taxes' in the amount of \$500.

Nominating Committee Appointed

The vestry has appointed the outgoing members of the vestry (Shari MacIvor, Vicki Hoshko, Steve Ras and Sondra Grady) as the nominating committee. They are securing the nominations for the positions vacant for next year. In addition, nominations will continue to be made from the floor of the Annual Meeting of the parish. The elected offices are:

3 - three year terms for 2006 Vestry

1 - Warden – two-year term

REQUIREMENTS FOR VESTRY MEMBERSHIP

Basically there are only three requirements for vestry membership:

- (1) being a confirmed member of the parish church.
This can be accomplished through confirmation or reception by a bishop or through a transfer from another Episcopal Church.
- (2) having been regular in attendance of Sunday Eucharists.
- (3) having been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God. This includes giving of Time, Talent, and Treasure.

January Wedding Anniversaries

Michael Bishop & Pauline Holmes	1/6
Irwin & Beverly Blanchard	1/19
John & Susan Goldthwaite	1/25
Dave & Liz Stevens	1/29
Bruce & Jane Tatge	1/31
Harvey & Mary Alexander	1/31



January Birthdays

Jacob Price	1/2
Barbara Dobbins Stratton	1/7
Robert Bailey	1/7
Audrey DeBritz	1/7
Emma Koch	1/7
Laura Manor	1/8
Luke DeBritz	1/8
Chelsea Trant	1/8
David Taylor	1/9
Laura Practico	1/12
Lauren Steele	1/12
Susan Goldthwaite	1/13
Lillian Peterson	1/14
Zosia Borst-Censullo	1/16
Pearl Burton	1/17
Andrei Crates	1/18
Megan Dominguez	1/22
Deborah Trawick	1/23
K. Scott Kilbourn	1/26
Carolyn Morin	1/27

Adult Education: Shalom: A Study of the Biblical Concepts of Peace

Shalom shines Biblical Light on the issues and unsettled mood of our times. Today, more than ever, we cry out for Shalom. See what the Bible says. This course unravels the multiple Biblical threads of this eternal quest in this masterful exploration of the Hebrew concept "Shalom" and the Greek "eirene". Peacemaking is a central concern of the church and the world today.

Beginning with the Old Testament Hebrew *shalom* and the New Testament Greek *eirene*, the meanings of 'peace' are traced and their relevance for today explored.

Classes will be held on Wednesdays, Jan. 11 - Feb. 22 from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm. A sign-up sheet can be found in the Parish Hall or call the Parish Office 346-6241.

HOME COMMUNION

If you or someone you know is unable to attend church on either a long or short-term basis, please call the parish office if you would like to have communion brought to you.

Inquirers' Classes

This course is an introduction to the Episcopal Church in the United States. These four classes give an overview of how Episcopalians fit into the complex of protestant and catholic churches. The National Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Albany, the congregation of St. Stephen's and the relationship among all three will be explored. Frank discussions include both the wonderful things about our Church, and also some not-so-wonderful things. This course is required for all adults who wish to be confirmed or received into the church, but is open to all members of the Parish Family.

Classes will be held on Sunday afternoons at noon during the month of January from the 8th through the 29th in the rector's office.

Sunday Morning Adult Education: The Jesus Experience

Each culture of the world has created its own expression of Jesus. These experiences sprang from past ages and all over the world. These experiences sprang from ancient Israel, the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean, as well as Russia, Asia, Africa and the Americas. This course is a chronicle of how Christianity came to billions around the globe.

Jan. 8	Jesus in the Roman Empire
Jan. 15	Jesus in Early Europe
Jan. 22	Jesus in Modern Europe
Jan. 29	Jesus among the Slaves
Feb. 5	Jesus in Latin America
Feb. 12	Jesus in North America
Feb. 19	Jesus in Asia
Feb. 26	Jesus in Africa

Class will be held on Sunday mornings at 9:00 am in the Parish Hall.



JANUARY SCHEDULE

	January 8	January 15	January 22	January 29
CHALICE BEARERS AND LECTOR				
8:00 Service				
Chalice	V. Hoshko	C. M-M	D. Carroll	G. Woodzell
1st Lesson	A. Walraven	B. Mazurek	V. Hoshko	G. Woodcock
2nd Lesson	P. Nevius	L. Stevens	T. Miller	C. M-M
10:15 Service				
Chalice	D. Trawick	M. Dare	V. Hoshko	D. Carroll
1st Lesson	B. Strangfeld	S. Grady	L. Varno	V. Hoshko
2nd Lesson	C. Canavan	T. Ormsbee	D. Caruso	B. Voelker
USHERS	N. Hoffmann & J. Jones	R. Davis & S. Sombor	S. Kilbourn & D. Caruso	N. Hoffmann & J. Jones
COUNTERS	M. Gittinger, D. Molino, S. Grady	J. Versocki, D. Belardo, B. Voelker	M. Causey, D. Crates, A. Spang	P. Northop, L. Peake, K. Small
KEEPERS OF "THE BOOK"	Jed & Marilyn Dare	Millie Gittinger	Sue Goldthwaite	Norman & Charline Hoffmann
FLOWERS	Available	Available	Available	Available
LEM and Care Givers	C. Mertz, A. & K. Lowe	S. & C. Trant	M. Alexander & J. Russell	S. & G. Woodcock
ALTAR GUILD	1/7: Casale, Jones, Lowe	1/14: Hoffmann, Northrop, Versocki	1/21: Morin, Russell, Wisnom, Woodcock	1/28: Casale, Jones, Lowe

*saint stephen's
episcopal church*

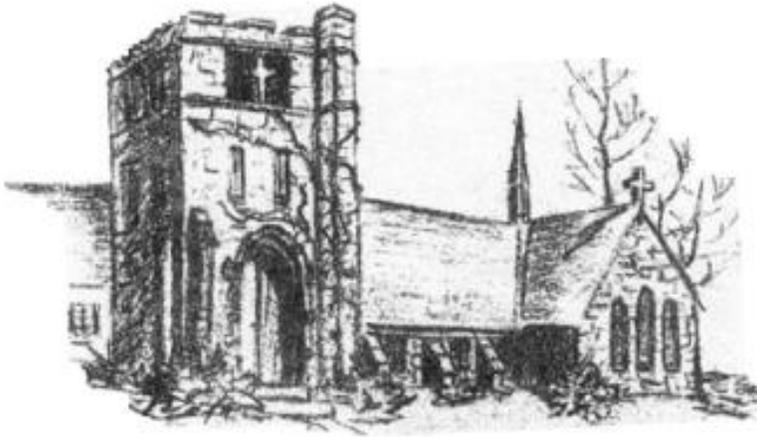
*progressive,
catholic, reformed*

Holy Communion, Sunday 8 am,
10:15 am and 7 pm
Education Hour for all Ages 9 am

1935 The Plaza
Schenectady

www.albany.net/~ststeph

346-6241



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