

THE LION

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Issue 3

Message from the Rector

“...and after the fire a still small voice.”

I Kings 19:12

(Revisited)

I'm sure you remember the story. Ahab was king, and Israel was in a state of political turmoil and spiritual decline. Wars had plagued the nation off and on for generations, and idolatry was the religious rule of the day. And the king was leading the way. He married Jezebel of the Sidonians, built an altar for her god, Baal, in a temple specially constructed for him, and was offering sacrifices to Asherah, a Canaanite fertility goddess. Ahab “did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him” (I Kg 16:33). In short, Israel was a mess.

And into this mix God raised up the prophet Elijah, who did many things to remind the people of Israel who their true God was. He predicted the drought that God brought on Israel as punishment for Ahab's sins, he raised the widow of Zarepath's son from the dead, he continually confronted and denounced both Ahab and Jezebel for their idolatrous ways, and he even defeated and destroyed 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. To say that Elijah's life was “busy” would be an understatement.

But eventually, it became just too much for Elijah, so he fled to a cave on Mount Horeb where he could be both alone and safe from the vengeful reach of Ahab and Jezebel. And it was in that cave that God came to Elijah. At first, there was a wind that tore at the rocks, but God was not in the wind. After the wind, an earthquake shook the mountain, but God was not in the earthquake either. After the earthquake, a fire; but again, God was not in the fire. After the fire, there was the sound of a low whisper, a thin silence, a “still small voice”; and it was in that thin silence that Elijah heard the voice of God.

In a lot of ways, this account describes how many of us spend the Advent season. Advent is a time of watching and waiting as we anticipate and prepare for the coming of our Lord. But for many of us it is a time of harried frenzy. We are surrounded by a culture that uses the time between Thanksgiving (Halloween, maybe?) and Christmas as a time not to prepare for the coming of our Lord, but as a time to prepare for the coming of Santa Claus. We are bombarded with “Black Friday” specials, the “Cyber Monday” sales, office parties, Christmas parties, holiday family gatherings, and the like.

Not that there is necessarily anything wrong with any of these things; but just as it was for Elijah, the busyness of our lives at this time of the year can overwhelm us and distract us from what we should be focusing on right now: watching and waiting for the coming of our Lord, so that when the Christmas season finally does come, we can not only celebrate the day itself but also celebrate and enjoy the full twelve days of the Christian Christmas season.

With that in mind, perhaps all of us should plan to take a few breaks over the next few weeks to remind ourselves what Advent really is all about. Like Elijah, we should find a place far from the hustle and bustle of the crowds, where we can be alone and listen for that “still small voice” of God speaking to us, reminding us that he is nowhere to be found in the annual “wind, earthquake, and fire” of the days leading up to December 25, but is instead in a place of silence and solitude where he can be heard. I hope that we will all slow down over the next few weeks to listen for his voice. And as we do, may he bless our time of seeking him so that our hearts are prepared to celebrate him when he comes. *Amen.*

Music Notes

Kathleen Knott, Music Director/Organist

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

A hymn that has become “part of the fabric of our preparations for the Incarnation” is # 66 “Come, thou long expected Jesus” in the 1982 Hymnal. The text was written by Charles Wesley and is sung to various tunes. The most popular are “Jefferson,” “Hyfrydol,” and “Stuttgart”. Our hymnal marries the text to the “Stuttgart” tune.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) was the son of an Anglican clergyman and he was the brother of John Wesley, the Father of Methodism. Charles is remembered for writing more than seventy-five hundred hymns. He was educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford. He also traveled to America and spent time at St. Simon’s Island, Georgia as a Chaplain to the garrison and colony at Fort Frederica. Upon returning to England Charles experienced a “conversion” and was inspired to spread the Gospel to ordinary people through poetic hymns. The text of # 66 was first published in 1744 as part of Wesley’s Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord. Just prior to his death in 1788, Charles told the rector, “Sir, whatever the world may say of me, I have lived, and I die a member of the Church of England, I pray you to bury me in your churchyard.”

“Come, thou long expected Jesus” has the quality of a prayer that implores Christ to be among us. Wesley also employs the cumulative technique of the repetition of a single word. “Born” is repeated four times: “Born to set thy people free”, “Born thy people to deliver”, “Born a child and yet a King”, “Born to reign in us forever”. The poetry of this hymn is profound in that it combines several themes into one simple discourse. These themes include the Old Testament promise of the Messiah, the birth of a King and the idea that the child is not only the “strength and consolation of Israel”, but the hope of all the earth. Christ is born to redeem the Gentiles and Jews. Longing and hope are central to the experience of this wonderful hymn.

Meet the Curate

Well, sort of... In August, Fr. Mike and the Vestry met with a young man who was interested in serving as a Curate at St. Mark’s. While at this point we cannot reveal his name, due to the sensitive nature of his current position, he and his family will be arriving at St. Mark’s in January.

He is currently serving in a parish in another denomination in New York. He is married and has two young children, a boy and a girl ages 6 and 3. Although he will not be coming to us in Holy Orders, he is presently an ordained Lutheran minister and has already begun taking the steps necessary to be ordained to diaconate and priesthood in the Anglican tradition. Until then, we should simply use the title “Reverend” to address him.

We are excited about him and his family joining St. Mark’s. We hope to have a long and fruitful ministry together.

Daily Calls

Peggy Scott

Free Sunshine Daily Telephone Reassurance calls are available to seniors 60 and older, the disabled, and the housebound. Sunshine service is provided seven days a week between the hours of 7:30am & 5:00pm. If you or someone you know would like to receive this free service, you may visit www.211treasurecoast.org or call 211 and let them know you would like to start receiving calls.

Women's Bible Study

Linda Philpott

The Women's Bible study is on break until January 14th. The class will pick up with the last six lessons of Part 1 of the Gospel of St. Luke beginning with chapter 9. This session will conclude on February 18th. Part 2 of this study will begin tentatively on March 4th for 7 lessons ending in mid-April. The cost for the workbooks is \$17.00. You are more than welcome to join us, even if you missed Part 1. The class invites all to come and watch the movie, *The Nativity*, Wednesday, December 10th at 10am in the parish hall, a brown bag lunch follows.

Anglican Church Women

Linda Philpott

Soup Bowl Event

On Thursday, November 13th, St. Marks was a host site for the Annual Samaritan Center Soup Bowl Event. This event is a community wide event now celebrating 22 years. Over 32 churches and businesses hosted a soup luncheon to raise funds for the center. This was St. Mark's first year and we raised around \$400 for the center from lunch, donations and sales of handmade bowls and raffle tickets. Many thanks to all who helped make the day a success, Debbie and Mike Kanehl, Liz Hansen, Bobbie Winger, Donna Burton, Michelle Cook, Melvena Grice, Shelia Ward, Wanza Murray, Ann Dozetos and Era Hawkins. We look forward to participating next year.

Advent Practices

We thank Father Bob Stull and Judy Stull who were our recent guests at the November meeting. They spoke on the practices of Advent and answered the question, "What can we learn from Joseph and Mary that applies to our lives today?" The following are some excerpts from this session:

Joseph was a man of Righteousness, Discretion, Obedience and self-control, and Courage. Mary's call as the mother of Jesus has many similarities to our call as Christians today: To receive Him; To follow and worship Him; To experience everyday life with Him; To let Him use us as He wills; and To carry Him into the world.

Coming - A reMARKable Treasures Sale, February 7, 8am-1pm

The ACW is organizing its first treasures sale. It will be held Saturday, February 7th from 8 am to 1 pm in Parish Hall. Please start saving your gently loved treasures that you wish to pass along. We will take clothing and accessories, household items, linens, small appliances and furniture, books, jewelry, garden equipment. Thursday, February 5th you may drop your items off from 9-3 in the parish hall. More information to come.

Additional dates

December 4 (Thursday)

Regular monthly meeting at 10:30a in the parish hall.

Guest: Elaine Neal from The Salvation Army.

Potluck lunch to follow.

December 13 (Thursday)

ACW Christmas Luncheon.

Hostess: Bobbie Winger, 12 noon, invitation will be coming.

January 15 (Thursday)

Regular monthly meeting, 10:30a in the parish hall.

Guest: TBA

Potluck lunch to follow.

Life without wheels

A perspective of life at 91 by Joyce Smith

The world is different when you no longer drive a car. You become more patient in getting to where you want to go and you sometimes find out you really didn't have to go there anyway. Time takes on a new value and I have found that I can now be satisfied and happy in any circumstance I find myself.

I seem to have more time to really think about things that are important to my life as a Christian. Let's take the real meaning of Christmas. I love Christmas and always have. The celebration and the beauty and wonder of the season make it "the most wonderful time of the year" for me. But something is happening. "Christmas Stuff" is coming out earlier and earlier. Christmas used to be limited to December, but it is common now to hear Christmas music in late October. By the time the real Christmas begins, one almost feels numb or tired of this great season of gratitude and awe. Christ was given to us as The ultimate gift, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15). So when Christmas abuse seems to take over, I try to remember what Christmas means, who Christ is, and why he came. He died for me and my sins and I have him in my life all year long. He is the greatest wonder and we should truly say, "Come let us adore him".

May my worship and gratitude for Christ never be diminished by the distractions of the world around me.

A note from the Treasurer

Enclosed with this edition of The Lion, please also find a 2015 pledge card as well as a copy of the 2015 budget mentioned in the Treasurer's letter dated November 25, 2014.

Upcoming Holy Days

December/January/February

December 22 (noon) – Feast of St Thomas the Apostle (transferred)

December 24 (11:30 p.m.) – Carols (11:30) and First Mass of the Feast of the Nativity (midnight w/incense)

December 25 (10:00 a.m.) – Christmas Day (Day of Obligation) *Note: no 8:00 a.m. service*

December 26 (noon) – Feast of St Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

December 27 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of St John, Apostle and Evangelist

January 1 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of the Circumcision

January 6 (noon) – Feast of the Epiphany

February 2 (noon) – Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary

St. Mark's Anglican Church

Rev. Canon Michael L. Ward, SSA

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