



The *Shepherd's Staff*

Volume 13 Issue 12

December 2009

Special points of

Interest:

- **Alpha— Ministry of the Month**
- **Father Christmas Ball— Friday, December 4, 2009**
- **Celebration Sunday December 13, 2009 SOTH 15th Anniversary Celebration**

Mission Statement

Our mission is to be a beacon of faith known for engaging all persons in the love and truth of Jesus Christ

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THE ADVENT ROAD TO CHRISTMAS . . .

I remember crossing the country from Pennsylvania to California in the summer of 1947 with my parents. We traveled in a reconditioned 1941 four-door Dodge. Back then there were no super highways. Only the two-lanners that took you through the small towns and large cities. You got to see not just our country's beautiful scenery but to experience life where people lived. Yes, the trip took longer but you received the rich blessings of people and places. The last time Judy and I and our two boys crossed the county from New York to California was the summer of 1981. Now there were super highways. Not as many as today, but enough to make the trip much faster. However, you bypassed towns and cities and missed much of the local color. To warrant a stop in either a town or city you had to exit the highway.



Our road systems today run the gambit from the country dirt roads to the interstates. Most of the time we are in a hurry to get from one place to another. Our lives are built around busy schedules, getting to places as fast as we can. This September when Judy and I traveled north, Judy was insistent that we visit Andersonville, GA, the southern prison encampment during the Civil War; and Plains, GA, the home of Jimmy Carter. Well, these visits took time because we had to drive the two-lanners away from I-75. But I must say these detours were rich moments as we experienced history. Not every day do you purchase fried peanuts from an old historic country store in Plains!

The Advent road to Christmas is not an interstate, not even a paved two-lanner. Rather, more like a country dirt road with horse and buggy transportation. Our secular culture would have us fast forward to Christmas even before Thanksgiving with Christmas merchandise for sale. Buy now, pay later. Even lay-away plans have come back. The Advent road to Christmas is a four-week trip with an intentional pace to slow us down so to welcome Christmas. Advent gives us times to pause to let the scriptures and liturgies sink in to warm our hearts and minds with the beauty and spirit of the season.

The Old Testament and New Testament prophecies alert us to God engaging creation with his word and love to bring us back to wholeness. Jeremiah says

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Advent Road...

the time is coming when the Lord will cause a righteous branch to spring up from David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. Malachi speaks of God sending a messenger to prepare the way of the Lord to purify the people. Zephaniah exclaims - sing aloud, O daughter Zion, shout O Israel for the Lord is in your midst and you shall fear disaster no more. Micah foretells the birth of the Christ in Bethlehem. The gospels tell of John the Baptist who is a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord with repentance and Mary speaks the Magnificat in response to being chosen to give birth to the Child of Bethlehem. Our liturgies combine these scriptural prophecies with the great Advent hymns of expectation and hope, along with the added liturgies of the Advent Wreath and Creche. Slowly but surely, with an intentional pace, we journey to Bethlehem.

Back north I was always amazed, disturbed, and saddened when I saw Christmas trees out on the street Christmas Day. Another Christmas come and gone. Some folks just plain exhausted getting to Christmas.

I will admit I enjoy preparing for Christmas with outdoor and indoor decorations. Having an artificial tree affords us having it up longer. And I love the Christmas TV specials and singing the carols before Christmas. But I cannot conceive not having the beautiful season of Advent that is my check and balance. The richness of the indigo blue liturgical garb, the liturgies of the Wreath and Creche, the powerful and engaging scriptures and rich music slow me down to take notice of why we have Christmas. Each year I need reminding that "Jesus is the reason for the season." And so let us greet the Advent road to Christmas like a country dirt road with horse and buggy for transportation. This road will truly bless us!

Faithfully in Christ,
Ladd

Deacon's Corner

CHRISTMAS

- C** is for the Child born that night to be our light. (John 8:12)
- H** is for holy is His name. (Rev.4:8)
- R** is for rejoice with gladness & joy. (Luke 1:14)
- I** is for Immanuel, God with us. (Is.7:14, John 1:14)
- S** is for the star that led the Wise men to Him. (Matt.2:2)
- T** is for the truth & grace that was sent our way. (John 1:14)
- M** is for Mother Mary laying Him in swaddling clothes in the manger. (Luke 2:7)
- A** is for angels singing songs of joy. (Luke 2:14)
- S** is for salvation.

- Johnnie DesRochers (www.theholidayspot.com/christmas/poems)

Have a Blessed Christmas,
Deacons Mike & Linda



Ministry Notices

Ministry of the Month

Is There More to Life Than This?



Alpha is an opportunity to explore the meaning of life in a relaxed, friendly setting. The Alpha course usually meets once per week for 10 weeks, and includes an amazing one-day or weekend getaway. Each session, people enjoy great food, laughter and learning in a fun and friendly atmosphere where no question about life or God is seen as too simple or too hostile... questions like—Is there a God? Why am I here? Where did I come from? Where am I going?

The Alpha course was developed in response to people who wanted to have the opportunity to investigate the claims of the Christian faith. Over ten weekly sessions, including a day or weekend away, guests hear the claims of the Christian faith. After the presentation, course attendees have a chance to question what they heard and discuss the validity of the claims.

The support of all the major Christian denominations has enabled the Alpha course to spread rapidly around the world. Today, Alpha is run in over 160 countries and has been translated into more than 100 languages. Courses can also be found in many contexts including churches, homes, workplaces, military bases, colleges, schools, and prisons

There are many reasons why people enjoy attending the Alpha course. For some it's the no pressure, non-judgmental atmosphere, others enjoy building relationships with new friends, while others appreciate the chance to discuss deep questions of life that they don't otherwise get the chance to ask.

The Alpha Course has been running for more than 26 years. It began at Holy Trinity Brompton in central London, in the late 1970s, as a means of presenting the basic principles of the Christian faith to new Christians in a relaxed and informal setting. By 1990, when former lawyer Nicky Gumbel took over the course, Alpha was a central feature of the church's life. While leading his second Alpha course, Nicky realized this course could also appeal to non-churchgoers and he adapted it, making it welcoming and suitable for such individuals.

During the 1990s, the Alpha course spread – first throughout the UK and then internationally - as more churches and groups found it a helpful way to answer people's questions about the Christian faith. Now, there are more than 33,500 courses run in 163 countries and the Alpha course is supported by all major denominations.

The next Alpha Course will start on February 21 at Beverly Hills Baptist Church. The SOTHEC Alpha team has been partnering with the Baptist and Methodist to share this important course. For information speak to the Alpha Team, Bob Palmer, Paul and Patty James, Bette Patz, Deacons Linda and Mike. Special thanks to the team for their vision, hard work and successes in our Lord's work.



Come Explore The Meaning of Life at The Alpha Course. A Free 10 Week Course on Basic Christianity.

Starts Sunday, February 21, 6pm at Beverly Hills First Baptist Church. Contact Paul & Patty James, Bette Patz, Bob Palmer or Deacons Linda & Mike for information or to register

Father Christmas Ball

12th Annual

Father Christmas Ball

Friday, December 4th



Cocktails/Appetizers: 6-7 pm

Dinner/Dance: 7-10 pm

Angel Tree



We have begun planning for the annual ANGEL TREE!!

At Saturday's service, Betty Harnig/Suzanne Carvajal will be the SOS representatives.

At Sunday's 8:00 service Marlene Harrison will represent SOS.

At Sunday's 10:00 service Carla Bickford will be present.

If you wish to take a card from the tree, you will also get a corresponding paper with the child's wants, needs, and sizes.

When you purchase gifts, please return to the tree as soon as possible, unwrapped and with the paper work included in the bag. This is necessary to keep things in order at the Resource Center.

PLEASE HAVE THE GIFTS RETURNED TO THE TREE BY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5-6, 2009.

If you are willing to volunteer at the family Resource Center to wrap gifts and deliver, they will welcome you with open arms!

Their phone # is 344-1001

Many heartfelt thanks!
The SOS team

SOS Ministry

During the month of October we served 311 families with 807 members, 209 were children, 490 adults and 108 seniors.

We averaged 16.43 pounds per person. The total pounds were 13,260. This is up from previous months about 40 %.

As the unemployment rate has edged over 12% there is a greater need.

The churches we are working with have tentatively pledged \$5,600 for next year. This will be confirmed once their budgets have been finalized.

They are helping with food pick up with their trucks and labor and are helping man the Key Center on Thursdays. The cooperation is wonderful to be a part of.

Also we gave 54 flu shots with the kind help of Mike Hall, EMS and Vaxcare.

We are preparing to give out 200 turkeys for Thanksgiving on November 19. Thank you for the generous support. We still have to raise a few more dollars.

The Lord will provide.

God Bless you,
Your SOS Ministry

Celebration Sunday
December 13th

15th Anniversary Celebration
Shepherd of the Hills



ECW News



A good time was had by all on our trip to the Withlacoochee Gulf Preserve. After a nice hike in perfect weather, we had a picnic lunch and an informative talk by one of the Friend's of the WGP. The view from the tower was beautiful. We look forward to our next trip out into Florida nature. A big thank-you to Sue Pratt for arranging everything.

Our next meeting will be December 12. We are inviting the women of the parish to a Christmas potluck luncheon at Sue Pratt's home. A sign-up is in the Narthex. We will be sharing some Christmas traditions, a favorite ornament, a favorite carol, etc. Please plan to join us.

The total from our Spring and Fall UTO Ingatherings was \$714. Thank-you to all who contributed.

Christmas cookies will be needed for the Christmas Eve Service. Sign-up in the Narthex, of course!

Leah Foshay, President

LEM and Acolyte Training

**December 5
10:00am**



There will be a training session for all interested in being a Liturgical Eucharistic Minister or Acolyte on Saturday, December 5, 2009, 10:00am.at the church.



Faith Walk



Hinds Feet in High Places by Hannah Hannard

What a very strange title for a Christian book! But it's one which **must** be read. It is a parable about a young girl as she begins a trusting relationship with the Good Shepherd. I thought this might be good reading as it is related to our church name. High places/ Shepherd of the Hills. Indeed – it is a wonderful journey which many of us have experienced. If you're not much into fables, this might be harder to appreciate, but as in many tales, truth bears out and brings a deeper dimension to our understanding of our faith.

Our Parish library has been moved to the new church office and Hinds Feet will be there for your enjoyment. Happy Reading!

Roberta Graybiel

Memorial Fund

There are 7 Memorial Fund Trustees . The term of service of 2 Trustees will expire in January 2010. Therefore 2 replacement Trustees are needed to maintain the required number.

One member of the Congregation has graciously offered his services. Thus, at least one more applicant is required. In case there are more than 2 volunteers, the Congregation will vote during the January 2010 annual meeting. The term of service of a Trustee is 3 years and can be extended by the relevant person. The Trustees select a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer who each serve a term of 2 years.

Please consider prayerfully whether you are called to fill one of these positions. There are forms in an envelope in the Narthex, which you are requested to complete, so that we have the necessary information. After completion, kindly return the form to the envelope.

Peace,
Bert Hombergen, Chairman Board of Trustees

Cursillo

**Group Reunion for both men
and women Cursillistas**



Monday, December 14, 2009 at 7pm

We are having a Group Reunion for both men and women who have made or who would like to learn more about Cursillo. (Cursillo is a structured three day weekend that strengthens a Christian's faith to spread Christ's good news to all.) The group reunion will be a time for sharing, singing and laughter.

It will be hosted by Bette Patz in her home in Citrus Hills:

1150 N Fresno Avenue
Hernando, FL 34442

Please R.S.V.P. by calling: 352-270-3097
Or sign-up in the Narthex

Directions from SOTH: Go east on 486 to Essex Avenue (1st traffic light after Publix). Turn right on Essex. Continue on Essex to the end and take a right onto Keller. At the stop sign take a left onto N Fresno Avenue and it is the first house on the right.

Services for the Christmas Season . . .

Christmas Eve, December 24 –
Festive Choral Holy Eucharist at 7:30 pm,
followed by a simple dessert social.

Christmas Day, December 25 –
Holy Eucharist with carols at 9:00 am.

First Sunday after Christmas, December 27 –
Usual service schedule, with Lessons and Carols
and Holy Communion at 10:00 am.

Christmas Eve Dessert Social

Sign up is in the narthex for dessert donations. Due to having the social in the church, we ask for cookies only.



Holiday Parish Open House at Ladd 's and Judy's

5527 N. Sierra Terrace, Pine Ridge Estates

***Sunday, December 20,
between 3 and 5 pm***

Directions to our home: From Route 491 – turn onto Pine Ridge Blvd, turn right onto Flagstaff, turn left onto Pinto Loop, turn left onto N. Sierra Terrace, we are second on the left. From Route 486 – turn onto Pine Ridge Blvd, turn left onto Flagstaff, turn left onto Pinto Loop, turn left onto N. Sierra Terrace, we are second on the left.

Additional Sign-ups in the Narthex –

Christmas Flowers to be given in loving memory and in thanksgiving. Plants are \$15.00 each.

Caroling on Sunday, December 13, beginning at 3:00 pm from the church and ending at Natalie Warrick's for a light supper of Sloppy Joes, munchies, and desert. We will visit members who are homebound or simply need a cheering up.

Liturgical Notes...

All Saints' Day, November 1, we welcomed our newly baptized Bailey Liane Stokes into the fellowship of the Church. Bailey was sponsored by her grandmother, Marilyn Stokes.

The season of Advent begins a new Church Year. We move to Liturgical Cycle C, using the Revised Common Lectionary. The liturgical color is Indigo Blue. The altar area is graced by the Angel Tree, Advent Wreath, and Creche. The beautiful Advent hymns and different liturgical settings help to prepare us for Christmas. The spirit of Advent is one of expectation, preparation, joy, promise, and hope.

The Third Sunday of Advent, December 13, will be the 15th anniversary celebration of Shepherd of the Hills.

Christmas ushers in the fulfilling promise of Emmanuel – that is, God-With-Us. The liturgical color is White. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day will be celebrated with great and beautiful festive liturgical pageantry.



ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of Shepherd of the Hills will be held on Sunday, January 31, 2010 following **One Service** at 9:30 am. No Saturday service.

The agenda will include ministry and other reports, the election of three vestry members for three-year terms, and trustees of the Memorial Fund. Verbal reports will be given by our delegates to diocesan convention the previous day.

Written reports of all the ministries need to be in the parish office by January 11. These, along with financial statements for the year 2009 and the budget for 2010 will be handed out.

Church Directory Updates

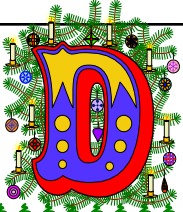
**Add: Zaib and Maria Khan
 Paul, Laila, and Michelle
 2790 W Laureen St
 Lecanto, FL 34461**

STAFF CHANGES . . .

Sylvia Giffune has resigned her position as Parish Nurse and chair of Health & Wellness after serving in this capacity since 2000. She was honored at the 10 am service, November 15. At this point Health & Wellness is exploring new directions for the ministry of the committee.

Br David stepped down as Sexton the end of November after serving in this capacity since 2004. He will be honored at 10 am services, December 6. Mary Reed at the November vestry meeting was approved to become our new Sexton as of December 1.

A Note from the Treasurer's Office -- In order for you to receive a tax credit for the year 2009, all contributions must be received in the church office no later than **Thursday, December 31, 2009**. The general rule is that a contribution is effective when delivered. This means that a check deposited in the church offering in January cannot be deducted in the previous year, even if it is backdated to the previous year or even if it was actually written and dated in the previous year. **One exception – checks that are mailed and postmarked by December 31st are deductible in that year even though not received until the following year.** If you have any questions pertaining to the above, please contact Allen Harlow or Pat Howard.



December 2009

JOY TO THE WORLD



Birthdays

- Dec 3: Pat Howard
 Dec 6: Edna Luther
 Dec 7: Natalie Warrick
 Dec 8: Barbara Stover
 Brittnee Marie Brooks
 Dec 9: Anita Cranmer
 Dec 21: Sue Wager
 Dec 25: George Harnig
 Mary Jeanne Wright
 Dec 26: Rosanne Skipper

Anniversaries

- Dec 5: Edward & Hazel Herbert
 Dec 6: Gene & Eleanor Caldwell
 Dec 7: Ted & Marcille Gustina
 Dec 17: George & Barbara Krueger
 Dec 20: Betty & John Husowitz
 Dec 28: Larry & Stephanie Hopper
 Dec 31: Earle & Susan Pratt



NOTE: If you cannot come as scheduled, please call for a replacement and notify the office at 527-0052 to be sure the master list is corrected.

Greeters

Saturday 5pm

- Dec 5: B Harnig
 Dec 12: N & J DeMerchant
 Dec 19: J & E Paskey

- Dec 24: Christmas Eve 7:30pm L & H Papke
 Dec 25: Christmas Day 9:00am S & J Payne

- Dec 26: L & R Cable

Sunday 8am

- Dec 6: M & P Cass
 Dec 13: W Simperts & C Segers
 Dec 20: K & J Wasey
 Dec 27: B & G Krueger

Sunday 10am

- G & A Medvigy
 R & A Harlow
 P & D Howard
 C & A Bickford

Chancel Servers

Saturday 5pm

- Dec 5: D Maasch
 Dec 12: D Maasch
 Dec 19: D Maasch
 Dec 24: Christmas Eve 7:30pm N Warrick/R French
 Torch Bearers: M Reed/M French
 Dec 25: Christmas Day 9:00am S Keene
 Dec 26: D Maasch

Sunday 8am

- Dec 6: B Sewell
 Dec 13: P Cass
 Dec 20: B Sewell
 Dec 27: G Krueger

Sunday 10am

- N Warrick/J Hombergen
 S Giffune/A Medvigy
 M Reed/C Wilson
 M & B French

Lectors

Saturday 5pm

- Dec 5: J DeMerchant
 Dec 12: Sister Ann Rose
 Dec 19: L Graybiel

- Dec 24: Christmas Eve 7:30 pm R Sikpper/J Kalix
 Dec 25: Christmas Day 9:00 am A Clingan

- Dec 26: J & S Carvajal

Sunday 8am

- Dec 6: M Wright
 Dec 13: L Papke
 Dec 20: B Sewall
 Dec 27: P Cass

Sunday 10am

- J Hagen/M Johnson
 S Payne/P James
 B Patz/D Maasch
 L Hopper/S Pratt

SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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Lecanto, Florida, 34461

Non-Profit Organization
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Permit No. 69
Lecanto, Florida

We are a Mission Church of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida

***It is the mission of Shepherd of the Hills Church to be a beacon of faith
known for engaging all persons in the love and truth of Jesus Christ.***

The Rt. Rev. John W. Howe, Bishop
The Rev, Ladd K Harris, Priest in Charge
(Phone 746-2812)
The Revs. Joan Clark, Mike Hall and Linda Liebert-Hall, Deacons

We're on the Web!!
www.sothec.org

Vestry Committee

***Peter Cass Sr. Warden, George Krueger, Jr. Warden,
Allen Harlow, Marlene Harrison, Margie Johnson, Sonna Keene,
Bette Patz, Howard Papke, Natalie Warrick***

Mary Reed, Clerk of the Vestry