



# THE PARISH NEWSLETTER

St. John's Church, Salisbury, Connecticut 06068

The Rev. John F. Carter, Rector

December, 2008

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### Christmas Services

18<sup>th</sup> 5pm Blue Christmas  
 24<sup>th</sup> 5pm Christmas Eve  
 25<sup>th</sup> 11 am Christmas Day  
*See Calendar for details*

## The Rector's Corner

### THE RISK OF BIRTH

This is no time for a child to be born,  
 With the earth betrayed by war and hate  
 And a nova lighting the sky to warn  
 That time runs out and the sun burns late.

That was no time for a child to be born,  
 In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;  
 Honor & Truth were trampled by scorn . . .  
 Yet here did the Saviour make his home.

When is the time for Love to be born?  
 The inn is full on the planet earth,  
 And by greed and pride the sky is torn . . .  
 Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.

*Madeline L'Engle*



The Website and Newsletter committees of St. John's Church have agreed that certain articles and personal information, will not be included in the web version of the newsletter. It is, therefore, slightly different than the version available to the congregation by mail or in the narthex.

# APPEAL UPDATE

*(Below: an important letter to those who have not yet pledged)*

December 2008

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

As the Annual Appeal for St. John's Church comes to a close for the year, your Senior Warden has asked me to write to you with the good news we are within 26% of achieving our goal of \$165,000 for the 2009 operating budget. The response from your fellow parishioners has been very gratifying and we are encouraged by the many who have been able to increase their giving over prior years as well as those who have maintained their pledging equal to this year's.

Now we are writing to you, as faithful and generous givers, because St. John's needs your pledge. We are asking those of you who are in a position to do so to consider an increase of 5% over your contribution for 2008.

As your Vestry has earlier written, this is not the best of times to consider giving more. But the fact is that the current financial climate has severely impacted the trust fund income which St. John's depends on for more than 50% of its total expenses. Normally, we have attempted to budget expenditures so that the draw-down on vested funds would still allow for growth in these monies. However, you need to know that dependence on trust funds for draw-downs and the unstable financial climate has eroded the value of the trust funds by some \$378,000, year to date. The resulting balance of trust funds as of October 31st was \$857,000, erasing gains made prudently through astute management.

Your pledge will be very important to St. John's right now. Your generosity will help strengthen the financial resources and essential ministries of our Church. St. John's will appreciate your early response to this request as Good Stewards of the gift of God's loving abundance to us all. For those who would prefer to take advantage of prepaying part or all of a 2009 pledge in this year, we will escrow those funds accordingly.

God's Grace to you this Advent season. Blessings for the New Year.

Yours Faithfully,

*David W. Hannegan*

Vestry Chair 2009, Annual Appeal

**A Steady Burning Light in the Darkness:  
Blue Christmas at St. John's Church**

"What on earth is Blue Christmas?" I was recently asked by a parishioner. "I thought Christmas was a time of joy and celebration," she said. "Well, not for everyone," I replied. And sometimes being able to name and recognize this reality in people's lives is one of the greatest gifts of all during the holiday season.

The "Blue Christmas" concept acknowledges those who have lost loved ones, have gone through a divorce, or are estranged from their families. To be able to say, "You are having a hard year," to someone who is in this situation is to provide them with a tremendous sense of relief. They no longer have to pretend to be jolly and full of Christmas spirit when the truth is that they are neither. Sometimes other people's excitement only heightens the feeling of being "blue"—thus a recognition of this in our Blue Christmas service.

On Thursday, December 18 at 5pm, St. John's Church will offer a quiet time to be in community with other people who are dealing with the holidays in a less than joyous frame of mind. The Church will be bathed in candlelight. The choir will be leading some quiet singing from the Songs of Taizé. And we will offer hands-on healing to those who are interested.

So come and join us: Even if you are not "blue," the opportunity to sit quietly and reflect on the full meaning of the season—in all of its many moods—can be a welcome respite from the pressures of the holiday season.

God's Peace  
*Lillie Mikesell*  
Music Director

*"The purpose of this service is to offer healing and comfort to those for whom the holiday season is difficult because of loss, grief or the holiday blues."*

*-Rev. John Carter*

**AFRICAN TEAM  
MINISTRIES SALE**

**Arts and crafts** made in Africa will be for sale in the Upper Parish Hall from Sunday, December 14th – 21st. Carved wooden animals, napkin rings, semi-precious stone necklaces and earrings, stone sculptures, woven purses and many other beautiful things make great gifts at remarkably low prices.

Proceeds from this sale support the churches of East Africa in their efforts to provide education for orphans and the training of elders in Kenya in Aids Prevention ministries.

Come and fill out your Christmas gift list!

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**Honoring The Rev. Richard H. Taber**

Congratulations to the Rev. Richard H. Taber who will soon be retiring as Pastor of the Congregation Church of Salisbury.

During his 28 years of ministry there, Dick has reached out and connected with many individuals and groups. He is a "bridge maker", an ecumenist and always a steady presence. He has spoken out with courage and forthrightness on a variety of social justice issues, always reflecting his deep roots in Quaker spirituality and pacifism. He has a keen sense of humor accompanied by an infectious laugh. He has been a great colleague and I shall miss him in that capacity.

On Sunday, January 11th at 3:00 there will be a service of celebration at the Salisbury Congregational Church honoring Dick and his family.

John+

*We have been given a copy of this letter, written by a Roman Catholic priest to a newspaper, in response to its report on a sign put up near a Christmas crèche in a park last year.*

## **Imagine No Religion? Imagine a Conversation!**

"A Park Where Faith and Faithless Intersect" (Dec. 23) reports that the Connecticut Valley Atheists put up a sign in Central Park in Vernon that read "Imagine No Religion."

O.K., I'll try to imagine a world without religion. For starters: no pyramids, no Parthenon, no Buddhist statuary, no Cambodian temples, no Venus de Milo, no "Confessions" of St. Augustine, no Sistine Chapel, no Gothic cathedrals, no Bach cantatas, no Michelangelo's David, no "Divine Comedy," no Islamic architecture, no Byzantine icons.

Nevertheless, I sit with atheists and agree in large part with their take on organized religion. The atheist stance offers believers the challenge first to acknowledge the horrors past and present perpetuated by religious zeal, and then to consider how paths of faith might foster forgiveness and reconciliation.

In place of taking offense at the sign alongside the crèche, we might see this juxtaposition of symbols as cause for conversation based on the common ground of our humanist concerns not only for healing divisive attitudes of mind and heart, but also for addressing the crisis of our planet, whose healing works for the well-being of all inhabitants.

(Rev.) John B. Giuliani  
Redding

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### *France Awards its Highest Honor to a St. John's Parishioner*

The Lakeville Journal reported last week that a member of St. John's has become a Chevalier of the French *Légion d'Honneur* – our good friend Donald Hart.

The award was given for extraordinary service in World War II, when Mr. Hart was serving with the Office of Strategic Command in 1944 -1945, under Gen. Omar Bradley in Normandy. He and his unit assisted the French Resistance in "blowing up railroads, factories, anything that would help the war effort," which was, as Mr. Hart says, "really sabotage, not information gathering," which is what the OSS, now the CIA, was officially intended to do.

Donald Hart received this highest French award at the French Consulate in New York, when 11 United States Armed Services veterans of World War II were honored on November 11, the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Armistice Day, the end of World War I. He and his wife Elvera moved to Noble Horizons from Cornwall recently, and have become members of the 8.00 o'clock congregation, but can also be met, (and congratulated!) at the 10.00 o'clock service on the first Sunday of every month.

**Thanksgiving in the OWL's Kitchen -  
and Christmas is coming!**

OWL's Kitchen served 102 Thanksgiving meals last Saturday, and our thanks go to all of you who continue to provide food for our clients. We are most appreciative.

In order to have a wonderful Christmas package for our hungry neighbors, we would appreciate donations of cake mix, frosting, and stuffing mix. Again, our thanks to all parishioners of St. John's.

*Barbara Nicholls*

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**Warm Thy Neighbor**  
Northwest Corner Fuel Bank  
PO Box 385, Sharon CT 06069

December 1, 2008

Rev. John Carter  
St. John's Episcopal Church  
12 Main St. PO Box 391  
Salisbury, CT 06068



Dear Rev. John Carter and Members of St. John's Church

Thank you very much for your kind donation of \$2,500.00 to the Northwest Corner Fuel bank. This money will go directly to a fuel company to help pay an energy bill for one of our neighbors — perhaps a working family, or an elderly person on a fixed income who doesn't qualify for the federal or state heating programs, or someone facing a crisis. Your generosity helps them address at least one of their financial obligations.

The Fuel Bank has no administrative costs; every dollar is used to help pay a fuel bill. We particularly appreciate your help in these times of high heating costs and reduced state and federal fuel assistance funds.

On behalf of all families who benefit from your contribution, we thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrice DeMarcb McGrath". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrice DeMarcb McGrath  
Salisbury Social Services

**Why access the  
St. John's Website?**

1. You misplaced the Newsletter/ Calendar.
2. You are interested in the Drumming Circle, but not too sure what it's all about.
3. You missed the Thanksgiving service and would like to read the sermon.
4. You forget what time the Christmas service is held on December 25<sup>th</sup>.
5. Someone asks you about your church, you refer them to the website for more information.
6. You missed Father John's sermon and would like to read it. Or, you loved Father John's sermon and would like to read it again or share with someone.
7. You've decided to join the choir, but aren't sure when they practice.
8. You were out of town for the fall festival & would like to see pictures.
9. You would like to find a link to the Episcopal Church in CT.
10. You are curious now . . . what else is on our website?

Piqued your interest? Go to

[www.stjohnssalisbury.org](http://www.stjohnssalisbury.org)

Information about the St. John's Website will be presented at the Annual Church Meeting, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Please join us!

Susan A DiStasio  
Chairperson, Website Committee

# Here, In These Rooms: A Christmas Story

by  
**F. Herbert Prem, Jr.**

He struggled to open the door. He wasn't that young anymore. Strong gusts of wind were throwing sleet and snow from the darkened sky against the entrance to the small, country hospital. It was Christmas Eve, and the doctors had discharged anyone who could be sent home or to a nursing facility.

He wiped off his glasses and wished the receptionist a Merry Christmas. She was reading a tattered magazine in the large reception area and was all alone except for the Christmas tree. Its soft lights shown down on the few remaining gifts brought earlier for patients by local school children. A waiting stillness filled the empty space, and he marveled how it returned each year to bring him joy and wonderment.

He sat down at the reception desk and leafed through the patient roster to look at the few names remaining since earlier in the week. The other chaplain was attending to the Christmas busyness of his parish so he had volunteered to be on duty all week. Yes, she was still here, on the second floor, too sick and frail now to be moved. They were waiting together for her to die.

He took his Bible and Prayer Book out of his bag, walked up the stairs and opened the door to the nursing floor. The long corridors were empty. Most of the doors were open with only newly polished floors and starched white bedding to be seen, the once familiar patients' names vanished, at least for this weekend. Only two nurses were sitting at the long nursing station, talking quietly together, lost among the Santa Clauses, candy canes, reindeer and tiny, tinsel Christmas trees atop the long counter. Below it the computers kept silent watch over the inexorable progress toward life or death of the names they held inside their hard drives.

"Merry Christmas, Father," they both said.

He had long since given up correcting people in the hospital who called him "Father." He was neither a "Father," nor any other kind of ordained clergyman, having received training as a lay chaplain late in life. But it only confused people when he tried to explain who he was, even though his hospital badge read "Volunteer Chaplain," and anyway he thought they felt better calling him "Father."

"That's a terrific reindeer hat, Jane. Sarah, I really like your elf outfit, even better than last year's," he said, as he walked by them. They, too, had volunteered to be here Christmas Eve so other nurses could be with their families. He loved them.

He knocked softly on Mary's door and entered the darkened room, all in shadows now except where the night light cast a small circle of warmth at her bedside. Her eyes were closed; charcoal shadows under them, accentuating the high cheekbones of what must once have been a beautiful face, now gaunt, the skin translucent. There were no pictures, no cards, no teddy bears. Mary had no family. He had been the only visitor that week as far as he knew.

She slowly opened her eyes as he pulled up a chair and sat down beside her bed. "Oh, good evening, Father, I'm so glad you came back tonight," she said, and her shy smile erased the lines of pain etched across her face and warmed him as he enclosed her thin, feverish hands in his.

“God bless you, Mary. I’ve come back to read the Christmas Eve Festival of Lessons if you still want to hear them.”

Mary had told him earlier that week that as a child she had attended a church where this service was read on Christmas Eve, but she had grown away from her church and had not listened to it in many years.

“Would you like me to read it to you now?”

“Yes, Father, please, I would like to hear it once again.”

Mary lay back against the pillows in the still darkness, folded her pain-filled hands together on her breast, and closed her eyes.

Then he began once again the age-old story, while the freezing rain chattered against the window outside, and he remembered again that ‘When two or three of you are gathered together in my name . . . ’

“ Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmas Eve our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels: in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which came to pass, and with the Magi adore the Child lying in his Mother’s arms.

“ Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child.’ ”

And he began the first reading: “ ‘And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day . . . ’ ” Then, the second: “ ‘The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light . . . For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace . . . ’ ”

He looked up and stopped reading; he thought Mary had fallen asleep. She often did during his visits. She was tired from her long journey. He hoped she was no longer afraid. He had been a witness to her lonely pain and grief for the past two weeks, a silent witness for the most part, just sitting beside her bed, intentionally present, sharing in and acknowledging her suffering.

After several quiet visits, he had come into her room late one day. As he sat down beside her he noticed the agitation in her frail, wasted body. He took her hand in both of his and looked into the fear in her eyes. He silently prayed that they would both feel the presence of God in the room.

“Mary, I know you’re afraid now, very afraid. You’ve told me you’re all alone, and there is no one to know what will happen to you. Of course, you know that I will know, but there is someone else whom you must think about. Do you remember last week when we read the Twenty-third Psalm together?”

“Yes, Father, I remember.”

“Do you remember the part that goes ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me?’

“Mary, we all walk through that valley and we all fear it. But I know, as certain as I am sitting beside you now and holding your hand, that God is beside each of us as we walk through the valley, and He holds our hand on each step of the journey.

“And you know how every valley has an ending, no matter how steep and terrifying the hills above, no matter how dark and desolate the floor of the valley? Well, God will lead you out of the valley, Mary. He will lead you out into the sunlight, into the blue sky and the green fields, freshly washed by rain and covered with every wild flower in creation. The clear, cool air will fill your lungs and take away all your pain and sorrow, and you will live in the house of the Lord forever.”

Mary had opened her eyes now. “Are you still reading, Father? Please continue, I’ll try to stay awake.”

He began again: “ ‘And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou who art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women . . . ’ ”

He thought he heard a noise behind him. It was Sarah with the elf outfit listening at the doorway. She put a finger to her lips and motioned for him to continue.

“ ‘And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed . . . And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city...And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn . . . ’ ”

Mary’s eyes were closed again. He lowered his head to hers and listened for her breathing. It was becoming labored, and he knew she would not be with them in the New Year. It seemed to him that all of the pain in the world was in this little room with him. He closed his eyes and thought about all the others like Mary he had been with at Christmas, how here in these rooms filled with pain, sadness and grief he had never felt closer to God.

He shook his head, stretched in his chair, and was back in the present with Mary. He couldn’t tell whether she was still asleep, but his wife would be worried about him out so late in the storm on Christmas Eve. He read the final Lesson, and stopped before the concluding Collect.

“Are you still awake, Mary, do you want me to continue?” He had to bend down close to hear her. “Please, Father, even if I fall asleep I’d like you to continue so that it will be within me and I will remember it forever.”

And so he read the Collect for Christmas Eve. He finished, and saw that the pain had gone out of her hands, now relaxed on the sheet, her breathing gentle. He gathered his things quietly, leaned over and placed his hand on her forehead. At the door he looked back at her sleeping form and gave the blessing that concludes The Festival of Lessons. He didn’t know whether a layperson was authorized to give this blessing, but he didn’t care. If he wasn’t, he thought that worse things had been done in the name of our Lord.

“ ‘May he who by his Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, grant you, Mary, the fullness of inward peace and goodwill; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.’ ”

He walked quietly out and closed the door.

# CALENDAR

## DECEMBER 2008

- |    |       |  |   |
|----|-------|--|---|
| 11 | Thur. | 5:00 p.m.  | Executive Meeting   |
| 12 | Fri.  | 12:00 noon<br>4:00 p.m.<br>6:00 p.m.   | NWMA Meeting<br>Choir Rehearsal<br>Al-Anon  |
| 14 | Sun.  | <b>AFRICAN TEAM MINISTRY CRAFT FAIR AT ST. JOHN'S<br/>December 14<sup>th</sup> thru December 21<sup>st</sup></b> |   |
|    |       | 8:00 a.m.  | Eucharist Rite I  |
|    |       | 10:00 a.m.   | Eucharist Rite II   |
|    |       | 12:00 p.m.   | Misa  |
| 15 | Tue   | 5:00 p.m.<br>7:00 p.m.   | Vestry Meeting<br>Drumming Circle (and every Tuesday)   |
| 17 | Wed.  | 5-7 p.m.   | Spanish Class   |
| 18 | Thur. | 5:00 p.m.  | <b>Blue Christmas Service at St. John's</b>   |
| 19 | Fri.  | 4:00 p.m.<br>6:00 p.m.   | Choir Rehearsal<br>Al-Anon  |
| 20 | Sat   |  | ADAM GREENE ORDINATION in Atlanta, GA   |
| 21 | Sun.  | 8:00 a.m.<br>10:00 a.m.<br>11:15 a.m.<br>11:15 a.m.<br>12:00 p.m.  | Eucharist Rite I - Celebrant Lance Beizer<br>Eucharist Rite II<br>Special Choir Lunch and Practice<br>Hanging of the Greens<br>Misa |
| 24 | Wed.  | 5:00 p.m.  | <b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b><br>One service for all with<br>Bishop Curry Preaching and Celebrating<br>Misa de la Navidad                    |
| 25 | Thur. | 11:00 a.m.   | <b>CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE</b>  |
| 26 | Fri.  |  | Office Closed   |
| 28 | Sun.  | 8:00 a.m.<br>10:00 a.m.<br>12:00 p.m.  | Eucharist Rite I<br>Eucharist Rite II<br>Misa   |



## **JANUARY 2009**

1	Thur		<b>NEW YEAR'S DAY</b> – Office Closed
2	Fri.	4:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal Al-Anon
4	Sun.	8:30-9:30a.m. 10:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m.	<b>HUNGRY SUNDAY</b> Breakfast Club Eucharist Rite II Misa
8	Thur.	7:00 p.m.	Website Meeting
9	Fri.	4:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal Al-Anon
11	Sun.	8:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m.	The Very Rev. Thomas C. Chesterman, Guest Preacher from <i>Food for the Poor</i> Eucharist Rite I Eucharist Rite II Misa
16	Fri	4:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal Al-Anon
18	Sun	8:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m.	Eucharist Rite I Eucharist Rite II Misa
19	Mon.		Martin Luther King Day
22	Thur.	10:00-12:00	TLC Begins (6 Sessions)
23	Fri.	4:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal Al-Anon
24	Sat.	5:00 p.m.	New England Baroque Soloists Festive Winter Concert

## **FEBRUARY 2009**

1			Annual Meeting
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St. John's Episcopal Church  
12 Main Street  
Salisbury, Connecticut 06068

Phone: 860-435-9290



The Mission of St. John's Church

- To reveal through worship the presence of God
- To grow spiritually in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ
- To reach out to others through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Dear Readers:



Please know that this Newsletter is also available by email.. Let us know if you are interested [sjsalisbury@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sjsalisbury@sbcglobal.net). It is also available on the St. John's website [www.stjohnssalisbury.org](http://www.stjohnssalisbury.org)