



Christmas News

On Sunday, November 22nd, many parishioners gathered in Williams Hall for St. Peter's annual tradition of making Advent wreaths. Many thanks to Sue Legnani and Loren Mani for getting all of the supplies and setting up for the event, and all of the many helpers who helped to cut the branches, pass out supplies, and clean up at the end. It was a lot of fun to watch everyone gathered to work on this project.



In case you missed the Advent Wreath workshop and want to get into the Christmas spirit, here are some other ways to do so:

Christmas Toy Drive

As in past years, Community Ministries will be sponsoring a Christmas toy drive. Please take one or more ornaments, each of which represents a gift for a child, from the Giving tree in the church and return it with a present. Gifts will be distributed by the Christian Caring Center. The deadline for gifts to be returned to church will be December 13. Thank you!

Christmas Flower Offerings

Remember a loved one or give thanks to God by making a donation towards Christmas greens and flowers. Envelopes are included in this issue of St. Peter's Good News. Please place your donation and filled-out envelope in the offering plate or mail or hand deliver it to the church office by **Monday, Dec. 14th**

Morning and Evening Prayer

Each Advent, we invite you to join with others in our congregation as we read Morning and Evening Prayer. Remembering that "when two or three are gathered together in his Name [God] will be in the midst of them," let us gather together in praise as we await the birth of our Lord and the coming of the fullness of God's reign.

Morning Prayer is offered Monday-Friday at 9 am, in Moore Memorial Chapel. Evening Prayer is offered Monday-Friday at 7 pm, also in Moore Memorial Chapel.

December Calendar Highlights

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATES

WWW.STPETERSMEDFORD.ORG

- December 9 Vestry Meeting 7:00 pm
- December 13 St. Paul's Breakfast program 7:45 am
- December 19 Pageant Dress Rehearsal 9:00 am
- December 19 Greening of the Church 12 pm
- December 20 Christmas Pageant 10:15 am service
- December 24 Christmas Eve Services 5, 7:30 and 11 pm
- December 25 Christmas Day Choral Holy Eucharist 9 am
- January 1 The Holy Name, Holy Eucharist 10:00 am

FROM PULPIT TO PEW

by The Reverend Canon Donald J. Muller

Many have commented or posted on the “Christmas Wars.” That is the idea that the secular culture has waged a war to remove Christmas from our culture and replace it with “Holidays”.

I think it is a false “war.” The problems with our Christmas celebrations are not caused by our culture but by ourselves – Christians. If there is a war, I think it is a war on Advent. (But that is a topic for another day.)

We live in a pluralistic culture, many religions, ethnic cultures, languages, traditions, and more. It probably is not too different from the culture in which the early church found itself. Yet, the church grew. Why did it grow in a hostile culture? I think it grew because of the quality and character of the life of Jesus followers. They embodied his ethic of grace and love. They cared for each other, regardless of economic status. While the experiment of holding all things in common didn’t work, they tried. They conformed their lives to the teachings and witness of Jesus and their neighbors saw the difference.

Many of us grew up in what we would have described as Judeo-Christian culture. Most people in my neighborhood growing up went to synagogue or church on Sunday mornings. I don’t think we could say that today.

Our culture doesn’t have any responsibility to promote our faith, we do. What if we all took Christmas seriously, as the birth of our Savior; as the Incarnation of God, God becoming flesh? Would that change how we live? Maybe we would put off decorating for Christmas, maybe not. Perhaps we might spend less on gifts for our families, and give more to the poor. Maybe we would spend more time in church and less time in the Mall. Maybe we would donate time in a food bank, soup kitchen, homeless shelter, and less time in Christmas parties. Maybe we would spend more time preparing our hearts and spirits for Christmas with prayer, Bible reading, meditation and less time emptying our bank accounts.

I am not suggesting that we should stop everything we are doing. I am suggesting that we need to bring some balance to our celebrations. I love Christmas lights (although I procrastinate about putting them up); Christmas movies are a big part of my television time; and the sounds of Christmas, religious and secular, I really enjoy.

May you and yours have a blessed Advent season in preparation to receive Christ once again this Christmas.

In Christ,

Fr. Don

KIDS' CORNER

As many of us have already noticed, the Christmas decorations started to appear in the stores even before Halloween was here. They sort of creep in one aisle and before you know it they take over the whole store. We all complain about it, but one can hardly help look at them with a somewhat lustful eye and think about where they would fit into an already full decorating scheme at home.

We are also thinking about or stressing over the gift list. The big question seems to be: What to do about Christmas gifts? This is a big question especially when it comes to children.

Let me offer some thoughts about what children really want for Christmas and what to do about those gifts.

- Children really want some relaxed and loving time with their family. It's okay to say no to some of the chores and events that crowd into our lives around holiday time.
- Children need realistic expectations about gifts. As parents we need to define the celebration of Jesus' birth and share our sense of values. Make your family traditions an important part of your gift of time to your children.
- Children need an evenly paced holiday season. Hold off on some important traditions until a week or so before Christmas.
- Children need strong family traditions. Talk with your children to find out which holiday activities are most important to them and make an effort to do them.

*These ideas are from "Unplug The Christmas Machine: How to Have the Christmas You've Always Wanted" by Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli (New York: Quill, 1982) and appeared in an article by Sharon Ely Pearson, (Church Publishing Inc., 2008).

Wishing you all the blessings of this Christmas season,

Sue Legnani, Director of Christian Formation

Advent Resources to Use at Home

Many of us grew up with paper Advent Calendars, and some us still look forward to opening those little doors on the calendar starting on December 1. However, with the internet we can do this digitally now on our smart phones, tablets and computers. Here are a few resources to use this Advent season:

Society of St John the Evangelist #AdventWord2015: <http://ssje.org/adventword>

- Sign up and receive the daily #AdventWord email meditation.
- Tweet, Facebook or Instagram an image each day #AdventWord.
- Watch the Advent Calendar grow each day.
Thousands of people will be sharing their personal images in response to the daily meditations.

Episcopal Relief & Development Advent Toolkit:

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/adventreflections>

This begins on Advent I (November 29) and runs through Christmas Day. This year's Advent campaign for The Episcopal Church website and social media will be based on daily themes highlighting cultural practices and traditions of the season. Each day history and information, family-centered projects, music, recipes, prayers, and other resources that focus on the day's particular theme will be offered on episcopalchurch.org and throughout our social media outlets.

d365.org following the Star: <http://d365.org/>

While this is a teen centered site, adults will find lots of helpful resources as well, but you should definitely get your teen to sign up and share with the family.

Body and Soul

By Edith Green, RN

When I was a little girl, probably about 6 or 7, I went to St. Wilfrid's Episcopal church in East Camden. I'm not sure why, but I found church mysterious, quiet and had definite, in my young mind, secrets.

I remember at one point thinking that the altar held a dead body, probably Jesus. It fascinated me just thinking about it. And then from there, I concluded that Jesus was dead and not a living entity as we were taught.

I then concluded that I was probably the only one who knew this. I couldn't tell anyone because they believed Jesus was alive in our hearts so who would believe me? I kept this secret for quite a while until, as I grew in body and mind, I realized the errors in my thinking.

How often have we all done this; made conclusions based on false information? In our crazy world today when safety in crowds has been called into question, when folks were born as one sex, turn into another, when folks who are openly attracted to another of the same sex instead of the 'way it should be', when everything we thought was right is suddenly turned on its head? How do we assess these situations? Decide that all Muslims are terrorists? That all people who are gay have a mental illness? That the government doesn't know what it's doing? That the whole world is going to pot, that we should throw in the towel because nothing is as we want?

How about realizing that our world has lots of hope in future days? God has promised this. How about researching our conclusions and hearing both sides of a story? How about spending our time doing good? How about living up to our God given potential?

How about focusing on the good stuff in our lives? I think that would make God very happy, don't you?

Christian Formation dates

Christian Formation in December

December 6 Advent II

9:00 Sunday School and Adult Education
Christmas pageant practice.
10:15 Children's Chapel

December 13 Advent III

9:00 Sunday School and Adult Education
Christmas pageant practice.
10:15 Children's Chapel

December 19 (Saturday)

9:00-11:30 am Christmas Pageant rehearsal

December 20 Advent IV

No Sunday School classes or Chapel today.

10:15 Service and Christmas Pageant

December 27 No Sunday School or Chapel

St. Peter's 2015 Christmas Pageant: *Jesus' Christmas Party*. Based on the book by Nicholas Allan.

What happens when Mary and Joseph show up at the Inn in Bethlehem and the innkeeper is kept up all night with visitors, bright lights and guest's coming and going? Well, it's a birthday party of course!

Our children will share this wonderful story at the 10:15 service on December 20th.

DEACON'S BENCH

A Gift of Prayer for the Season
An Advent Prayer by Fr. Henri Nouwen

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.



The Virgin Mary's Invitation – Author Unknown

If you come to the stable,
Do not come to steal a peek
And then vanish into the night
Like some thieves
At a festival of lights.

If you come to the stable,
Bring back to Him what He made before creation,
Your souls.

If you come to the stable,
Take only what He offers you, God's love
And God's grace.

If you, indeed, come to *adore* Him,
Expect to be nailed to His cross,
For you are His playmates and His disciples.



Communion
for the
Homebound
and Hospitalized

During the Christmas season, the clergy of St. Peter's make a special effort to carry Communion to those unable to attend services at St Peter's due to illness or long-term disability. If you, or someone you know, would like to receive Christmas communion at home or in a hospital or other facility, please contact Deacon Helen Orlando at denhelen@stpetersmedford.org (856-596-6415) or through the church office.

PARISH NEWS

Welcome our new Organist!

Our new Organist and Choir Director is Matt Smith. His first Sunday was November 1, All Saints Day. Matt grew up in Geneva, Illinois. He has a Bachelors in Piano and Organ from Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin. He is a graduate student at the Westminster Choir College of Rider University. Please help Matt feel at home at St. Peter's. Welcome, Matt!



Pictured above, Matt is helping our children practice their songs for the Christmas Pageant.



St. Peter's parishioner, **Mekayla Montgomery**, who is a senior at Rancocas Valley HS, is pictured above (far right) signing paperwork committing to play Collegiate Lacrosse at Gettysburg next year. (Photo courtesy of Ken Montgomery.)

PARISH REGISTER

BAPTISMS

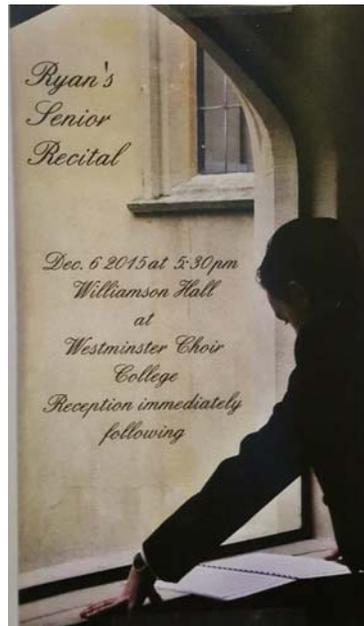
None

WEDDINGS

None

MEMORIAL SERVICES

None



All are welcome to attend **Ryan Manni's** senior recital at Westminster Choir College on December 6th at 5:30 pm. Ryan is a senior at Shawnee High School.

News from Haiti

More News from Redemption School Haiti

Following is the most recent email received from Fr. Diegue of Redemption School:

Dear Hellen,

I received your e-mail, and I sincerely thank you. Everything is fine at "la Redemption". I think it's a very good idea if we can find the possibility to connect your parish with "la Redemption". The small group of people that is coming during next year will receive a warm welcome. The month of February is fine with me. I hope that everything will go as planned for your "first Fair trade gift sale" which will benefit "La Redemption".

Upon my arrival in the parish, there is a lot to do. I already started with the most important ones. For instance, I repaired the sanitary units of the school by installing tiles and installing a brand new water system. I also replaced a roof sheet metal that was interrupting the kids from continuing their class work when it's raining. However, I also have other projects, for example, a part of the building of the school is in a very bad shape. I think it would be favorable in the future, if we build a space that will serve for the kids as a kitchen and a cafeteria to eat. It's not a way to ask you guys to come and do everything for us, that's why I have already started with the most important projects with internal funds. Our friends that will come visit us in February will serve as my witness.

I hope you have a wonderful week with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Sincerely,

Joseph Tancrel Diegue
Priest in Charge

Mite Boxes

Both Advent Coin Folders and Mite (Offering) Boxes will be available on the narthex table throughout the season of Advent. **Mite Boxes** have been a part of every Advent season at St. Peter's. These little boxes hold **BIG** promise when we put all of our coins and dollars together. Again, this year, the money that is collected from our mite boxes will go to Redemption School in Gonaives, Haiti. As their brochure tells us:

"Redemption School is a coed institution created in the heart of the City of Independence (Gonaives, Haiti). It offers a place where creativity, productivity, and the multiple and diverse talents of all are valued. Its mission is to gift [Haiti] with men and women capable of **INSPIRING** with wisdom and **ACTING** with intelligence, in order to effect true, reasonable, efficient, and efficacious **TRANSFORMATION** of society".

Please consider using your mite box each day to give thanks for what you have, and to share that thanksgiving with the children of Redemption School. It only takes one dollar a day to educate a child and to insure that the children and youth of Haiti will have a secure future. We will welcome the return of filled boxes and folders at any of our Christmas Eve and Day services.

Loving God,

We thank you for the gift of education.

We ask you to bless the children in Haiti who you want to go to school. Help them and their communities find opportunities to receive an education so that they may have a better future. Support the work of Redemption School among them. And help us, as members of the global community, be part of their journey out of poverty. Amen.



DID YOU KNOW?

Most human rights experts agree that the worst abuses of Haitian children involve young people called *retavecs*, or poor children who work as house servants for urban families. Their parents hope that host families will feed and educate their children, but some hosts physically and sexually abuse the *retavecs*. Experts estimate that 300,000 Haitian children are living as slaves.

Blue Christmas

Blue Christmas Service-Wednesday, December 16 at 7:00 pm

Our Annual Blue Christmas Service is a time when we can, with others, acknowledge the “blue” feelings we have at Christmas time, the reasons for them, and offer them to God. Soon we will experience the shortest day and the longest night of the year. Certain memorable phrases come to mind at this time: “long dark night of the soul”, “the winder of our discontent” in which memories from past experiences and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming. For some, Christmas Day is the most difficult. For others, Christmas Eve, or New Year’s Eve, or the beginning of another lonely New Year. During this Service, we’ll share in some singing appropriate to the Christmas Season, recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone. We will invite you to reflect on the pain, loneliness, and the sadness you may feel and offer it all to our great sign of hope, the Christ Child. We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone.

BIG BAND EXPRESS CONCERT

Big Band Express will present a concert at St. Peter’s on Sunday, December 6 from 7:00-8:30 pm in the Church. There will be a couple of Christmas songs, but most of the music will be part of big band jazz repertoire. Big Band Express rehearses in St. Peter’s most Thursday mornings. It is made up of 16 musicians, many who played with some of the great big bands, Atlantic City shows, and are retired music teachers. Come hear great music and have some fun.



Fundraising for St. Peter’s

There is still time to order your Christmas cards and photo gifts and help us raise funds for this summer’s Vacation Bible School. Just go to www.fundphotos.com and select St Peters as your donation recipient. Fundphotos is a Shutterfly affiliate and going through Fundphotos gives you access to ALL of the Shutterfly and TinyPrint items at the low Shutterfly prices, you can even use your Shutterfly coupons and take advantage of Shutterfly specials! If you already have a Shutterfly account, there is no need to create a new account, you can access all of your current albums, add new ones, and see all of your Shutterfly projects. If you are not a Shutterfly user, registering is fast and easy. Remember to go through www.Fundphotos.com so St Peters can benefit from your order!



St. Peter’s is listed as a charity on Amazon. When you shop on Amazon, go through Amazonsmile.com and list St. Peter’s as the charity. It’s quick and easy to set up and St. Peter’s will get .5% of the purchase.



Acolytes Needed

All Acolytes and Alumni - Acolytes are needed for the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. The services in most need of Acolytes are the 7:30 and 11PM Christmas Eve and 9AM Christmas Day services. If you are able to serve, please contact Jack Hobson at hobson.j@verizon.net or 609.504.0432.

Thank you,
Jack Hobson
Acolyte Director



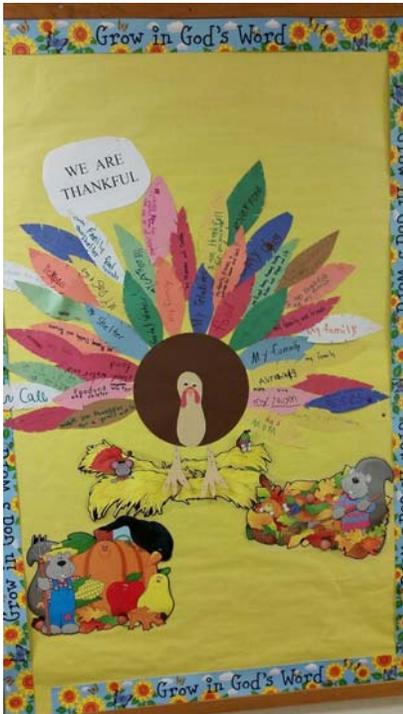
Refugee Crisis

In the midst of the misinformation that is being distributed in our country about refugees, the Episcopal Church and other faith communities are working hard to educate Americans about the reality of the crisis. The Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN) and Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) are the key agencies leading this effort to help us understand the careful and time consuming vetting process that all refugees undergo before being allowed to enter our country and how we as Episcopalians can help support refugee resettlement.

Learn more about the refugee crisis and the National church's response at:

<http://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org/> including how you can write a letter to our public officials letting them know that the Christian response to this crisis is to open our Christian hearts and arms to our suffering brothers and sisters throughout the world.

PARISH PHOTO ALBUM



The Thanksgiving bulletin board the youth have been working on in Sunday School. (Photo courtesy of Sue Legnani).

Hats off to Deacon Helen and the MDG Team for a hugely successful International Gift Market! Many shoppers came to St.Peter's to purchase beautiful hand crafted fair trade items. Our purchases will help to sustain craftspeople and their families in developing nations around the world. (Photo courtesy of Mike Orlando)



Above, the Gosewisch boys work on their Advent wreath. Right, Angela McCrum and her daughter Summer put the finishing touches on theirs, while Christopher McCrum shows another use for the Advent Wreath and a possible new fashion trend?



Serving breakfast at St. Paul's



On the second Sunday of each month, members of St. Peter's travel to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Camden to serve breakfast to the homeless. It takes many hands, but everyone pitches in and gets the work done.

Thank you to everyone who helps out! For more information on going to St. Paul's, please contact Kelly Trimble at kellytrimble@yahoo.com.



St. Peter's Episcopal Church

One Hartford Road, Medford, NJ 08055
The Rev. Donald J. Muller, D. Min., Rector
The Rev. Canon Ronald Albury, Associate Priest
The Rev. Helen M. Orlando, Deacon

Lisa Miner, Parish Administrator Matt Smith, Director of Music Sue Legnani, Director of Christian Formation
Tel: 609-654-2963 Fax: 609-654-0401 <http://www.stpetersmedford.org>
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Saint Peter's Church is a blessed community of faith, grounded in the power of God's transforming love, where Jesus Christ welcomes all to abundant life. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we follow Him in prayer and praise, study and service.

December 2015

<i>Christmas News</i>	1
<i>From Pulpit to Pew</i>	2
<i>Kids' Corner</i>	3
<i>Body & Soul</i>	4
<i>Deacon's Bench</i>	5
<i>Parish News</i>	6
<i>News from Haiti</i>	7
<i>Blue Christmas</i>	8
<i>Refuge Crisis</i>	9
<i>Photo Album</i>	10
<i>Photo Album</i>	11

Service Schedule

Saturday Eucharist..... 5 p.m.
Sunday Traditional Eucharist..... 7:45 a.m.
Family Eucharist..... 10:15 a.m.

Weekdays

Wednesday, Healing Eucharist..... 10 a.m.
Morning Prayer (Monday-Friday)..... 9 a.m.

St. Peter's Episcopal Church
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Medford, NJ 08055

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