

FAITH 2020

The Rev. Patricia E. Henking, Vicar + **Faith Episcopal Church** + PO Box 422, Merrimack NH 03054
All ordinary calls: (603) 424-6806 + Emergencies or Text: (603) 785-6806 + awesme@aol.com
MINI-NEWSLETTER + DECEMBER 20, 2020 + THE 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

NOTE: *A meditation is found later in the newsletter since I need to share other thoughts here.*

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your support and prayers in the two weeks I have spent recuperating from COVID-19. I am finished the quarantine period and am feeling pretty well. I expect to go back to work at UPS this Sunday afternoon.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to have Prayers in the Park, and now all the snow on the ground means other ideas for Christmas prayers outdoors have been set aside, too. So! We will release a Christmas Eve recorded service via a link posted on Facebook and also emailed to you. We will take next Sunday off so we do not need to record another mini right after Christmas. Meanwhile, please watch your "snail mail" for the annual Christmas letter, and have a look through this newsletter as well.

Then, I know everyone is looking forward to turning the page on the year 2020: New Year's Day is also called The Feast of the Holy Name, which is part of the Christmas holy days, and we will release a New Year's/Holy Name recorded mini service – then take that Sunday off from recording as well. BUT, here's a thing: I would like to also offer an online opportunity to toast the New Year and usher it in together. I am thinking of a Zoom opportunity – probably sometime New Year's Day, or maybe that Sunday the 3rd. I would love your feedback on the timing of this sometime in the next few days so we can set it up and tell everybody and send the link.

Thank you again so much – I wish you all the Peace of Christmas!

Pat 

The Annual Meeting of Faith Episcopal Church will be at 10:00 Sunday morning, January 24, 2021 via Zoom. Nominations for two members of the Bishop's Committee are in order: Bob Hughes is completing two terms as clerk, and Rita MacAuslan has completed an unexpired term serving At Large. We also must elect two delegates and an alternate to Southern Convocation/ Diocesan Convention. Please contact Rita, Bob or me with nominations. Annual Reports need to be sent to me and are welcome on any aspect of our church's life and ministry in 2020.

Special Notes!

→ **Thankfulness and Stewardship** packets have been sent via email. For a print copy, please stop by the Chapel and look in the vestibule. For a new emailed copy please write Vicar Pat at awesme@aol.com. → **AND we need your help! We need your PLEDGE SHEETS so we can plan the 2021 budget at the Bishop's Committee meeting on Friday evening, January 8th at 7:00 pm.**

→ We will receive a gift of \$2000 from the irrevocable trust of **Melanie Munroe** – How very thoughtful of Melanie to have provided for us! The Bishop's Committee plans to put the gift in our general account but to keep it aside until we have a better sense of planning for next year.

→ Sue Gaillardetz rocks as our Treasurer! Not only is she chasing down that money we discovered through missingmoney.com, she has also completed all the steps to request that our PPP loan be made a grant and thus not need to be paid back. Success! Our request has been approved! Thank you, Sue!

Collect & Readings for Advent 4 – NRSV <https://www.lectionarypage.net/>

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The First Lesson – 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

When the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

- 1 Your love, O LORD, for ever will I sing; *
from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.
- 2 For I am persuaded that your love is established for ever; *
you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.
- 3 "I have made a covenant with my chosen; *I have sworn an oath to David my servant:
4 'I will establish your line for ever, *and preserve your throne for all generations.'"
- 19 You spoke once in a vision and said to your faithful people: *
"I have set the crown upon a warrior and have exalted one chosen out of the people.
- 20 I have found David my servant; *with my holy oil have I anointed him.
- 21 My hand will hold him fast *and my arm will make him strong.
- 22 No enemy shall deceive him, *nor any wicked man bring him down.
- 23 I will crush his foes before him *and strike down those who hate him.
- 24 My faithfulness and love shall be with him, * he shall be victorious through my Name.
- 25 I shall make his dominion extend *from the Great Sea to the River.
- 26 He will say to me, 'You are my Father, *my God, and the rock of my salvation.'

Second Lesson – Romans 16:25-27

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith-- to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ According to – Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.



ANNOUNCEMENTS – see notes on page 1, and –

The next **Bishop's Committee Meeting** is via Zoom at 7:00 pm Friday, January 8th.

PRAYER LIST – Please send updates to the prayer list or prayers you find helpful!

In Our Prayers: Pray for all who are injured, ill or infirm, including those dealing with COVID-19, wild fires or severe weather, and for Greg, who is Dawn MacKechnie's friend, Adrian Pike, Beatrice Wright, Karen Brown, Karenina Armstrong, Rhonda, Santos Lara Sr., Kirsten Draba, Julia DiStefano, Denys Ruel, Marjorie Johnston, Steven Lassey, Elvira Lassey, Larry Carpenter, Alfred Panela, Jim & Margo Barbotsina, Rick Fiacco, Daniel Parada, Mark May, Stephanie Holdgate, Nancy and Mike Colombo, Valerie Neill, Bill Lambrokous, Margaret Makowski Saunders, Mark Carter & Family, Anne & Paul Makowski, Steve Blotcky and Rachel Osborne. We pray for: those who seek well-being for others, including Merrimack's Police, Fire and Rescue personnel; all medical workers; and all the "essential workers." We also remember those we join in mission, especially Bishop Hirschfeld and the Episcopal Church in NH; our Prison Ministries; the St. Petersburg Men's Ensemble; the Turkish Cultural Center; 4 Directions Outreach; our Food Pantries; Wheeler Memorial Chapel Trustees; our AA groups; Congregation Betenu, Qodesh Family Church & Merrimack's Faith Communities.

A Prayer During Pandemic by The Most Rev. Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

God of compassion, be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation. In their loneliness, be their consolation; in their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light; through him who suffered alone on the cross, but reigns with you in glory, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Meditation as Christmas Approaches – by Vicar Pat –

Suppose one year in July you woke from a nap to find your spouse had accidentally set their clothing on fire. You did everything you could to extinguish that fire, including putting a rug over your spouse, and were badly burned yourself in the process. And suppose about 10:00 the next morning, after requesting a cup of coffee, your life partner and soul mate died – and you were too injured to attend the funeral. The following year, in March, in a country torn apart by political division and violent strife, your 19-year-old eldest child determined to join the army, writing a letter noting that he felt he had to go in spite of not having your leave to do so. Then, on December 1st, you received word that your son had been wounded seriously on November 27th, that he might die or suffer lasting paralysis. You boarded a train to Washington and brought him home on December 8th. By Christmas it was evident he would recover, but slowly: The bullet that had entered his left shoulder and exited under the right collar bone had grazed but neither broken nor severed your son's spine. Meanwhile the war, as well as political and social upheaval, was dragging on and the casualties continued to mount.

How, then, would your soul, your spirit, be that Christmas morning? You happen to live in a city and your home is near at least two large churches, and those churches begin to peal their bells to celebrate the Holy Day. Though you have all six children, motherless, at home, you find time to write out a poem that harnesses both the depth of your sorrow and the core of your hope. Eventually the poem is set to music and becomes a very popular Christmas carol – one that a vicar "about this tall" has never liked because it seems too sweet and cloying. But the carol

oozes because the essential verses are always seen as either too timebound or too depressing, so those are left out of the singing.

Then along comes another acclaimed poet with a smoky, weathered voice and a sincere, direct delivery. The second poet reads the first one's entire Christmas piece aloud, leaving aside both the dulcet music and any forced cadences to the poetical sense, recording the reading for anyone who wants to listen. Chancing upon the recording, the vicar "about this tall" gains an utterly new take on the sweet carol's depth, and the bells of that Christmas morning long ago echo through the reading to find the aching, longing world of Christmastime, 2020.

So, here is the entire poem, with its essential, foundational verses. Here, too, is a link to Bob Dylan reading the words and conveying the soul of the widower and father, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as he heard the bells on Christmas Day, 1863 in his home – the same home that had been George Washington's Revolutionary War headquarters – on Brattle Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Perhaps now you, too will find rekindled hope as a new Christmas dawns and the bells ring again this year.

Link → [Bob Dylan "Christmas Bells \(I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day\)" - YouTube](#)

Christmas Bells

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
and wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,

And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

**Mission is to find where God is working
in the world and join God there!**