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Mini-Newsletter+ January 3, 2021 + 2nd Sunday of Christmas

Dear Friends – The Collect for the Second Sunday of Christmas prays,

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Recently, I read a story that offers a parable for all that this prayer means: As she approaches her 80th birthday later this month, Joan Baez has become an accomplished portrait painter. In 2018, she painted Bob Dylan; at her website ([Joan Baez Art - Home](#)) the story with the painting reads:

While she was painting this portrait of a young Bob Dylan, Joan had his music on in the background, inspiring her to call the piece “Baby Blue,” after “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue,” a song from Dylan’s 1965 album “Bringing It All Back Home.” ... The song was written just before her painful split from Dylan during a British tour in the spring of 1965, and there has been much speculation that she is the “Baby Blue” he is saying goodbye to in the song. One thing for certain, their breakup had long been a bitter memory for Joan, especially since she was responsible for introducing him to the public, launching his career. But as she worked on the portrait and listened to his extraordinary repertoire of songs, both old and new, something shifted emotionally. It’s as if the whisper of blue in the painting became a theme, a color of healing and forgiveness, and all the hurt and resentment she’d felt over the callous way their relationship ended slowly washed away. “As I painted his portrait and listened to his music, whatever resentments had lingered all these years quietly evaporated,” she says. “I felt enormously grateful to have been around at that moment in history, honored to have been his friend, and damn lucky I could sing.”

Movie Critic Peter Howell has said that Dylan treated Baez as so much “excess baggage” in 1965 – and that Dylan apologized 44 years later in 2009. There are greater indignities than to be treated as excess baggage, but maybe that is the start of all indignity. The quiet evaporation of lingering resentment as Baez painted parallels what the prayer calls the restoration of dignity. There is something about the coming of the Christ child that is God’s ending of resentment – something about that humble act that restores us and puts things right. As there is new peace for Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, so there is new peace and restored dignity – for us and for all people. May the Lord lead each of us to the quiet evaporation of our resentments, the healing of old or new stresses and fractures in our lives – and to openness for the mission to restore the dignity of every human being.





In Loving memory – Fern Jones passed away on December 30th – Fern has been deeply devoted to our church for decades. No one has been more constant, more cheerful, or more colorful than Fern. She rarely called any of us by name, devising rather her own nicknames for each one of us. She knew the prayers and hymns by heart, and when she held the book for reading the Gospel, she locked eyes with the vicar as both continued singing the gradual hymn from memory. If either forgot the words, humming took their place. For decades she worked our election polls, greeting those of us in the middle of the alphabet and handing us our ballots. We

will miss you, Fern, most especially when we finally worship together again in the Chapel and find you are with us, but in spirit. Thank you, and the Lord bless and keep you, always.

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

In Our Prayers: , Please remember all who have died, particularly Stephanie Holdgate’s friend, Avis Porter, as well as Fern Jones. Pray for all who are injured, ill or infirm, including those dealing with COVID-19, and for Greg (Dawn MacKechnie’s friend), Irene Fuoco (Bob Hughes’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 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 & all of 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.*



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 vicar Pat and are welcome on any aspect of our church’s life and ministry in 2020. **We also 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. Printed copies were included with your**

Christmas letter – an envelope addressed to the church and stamped was also included. If you need a new copy, please notify Vicar Pat.

From Rita MacAuslan – and the **Sustaining Earth** winter newsletters. If you don't know about **Sustaining Earth**, Rita can forward the newsletter to you if you would like it. The coordinator, Deb Baker, is a colleague (and friend) of Rita's. They were mutually surprised in 2019 to discover at one of the Episcopal events that they had another link with each other. Subsequently, they were working together with Canon Tina Pickering on events for 2020 when Covid 19 intervened - maybe 2021 will be more fortuitous!



Here is the ***Sustaining Earth, Our Island Home Support for Congregation Leaders*** MESSAGE:

→ Many of us see the start of 2021 as a time of hope for a better future. Take a step towards securing that future for generations to come by joining Sustaining Earth, Our Island Home, the carbon footprint tracker that helps households reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and join others in caring for God's creation. Simply visit the tracker's [web page \(sustainislandhome.org\)](http://sustainislandhome.org), answer some questions about your household's energy use, and take actions. If you have any questions, contact Deb Baker at deborahba@yahoo.com



Epiphany! We will celebrate this great Feast Day in our next recorded mini-service, coming out next weekend. Epiphany is both **January 6th** itself, and the season that runs from that day until Ash Wednesday (this year falling on February 17th) – the beginning of Lent. It is a feast that celebrates the revelation/appearance/manifestation of the Christ Child to the whole world, notably to Gentiles. In western Christianity, we tell the Gospel story of the star and the visitation of the Magi; Eastern Christians concentrate more of the story of Jesus's baptism. We ask

continually throughout the season how we encounter light shining forth – as in the Bethlehem star that reveals the salvation and love of God to the entire world. John's Gospel sees the work of revelation beginning with Christ, the Word of God, in Creation – so here is that reading, our focus in this week's mini, followed by the collect for the Epiphany, which is Wednesday – we'll print the Epiphany lessons next week!

John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that

all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

And here is the Collect for the Feast of the Epiphany –

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

So visually, here is what the Epiphany means –



David Hayward's cartoon is used through purchased license for non-profits. (Note that his moniker "nakedpastor" has to do with a spiritual and theological stance and is not a threat to safe church concerns!)