



The Bellringer

Rector:
 The Reverend Bradley C. Dyche
 Priest Associate
 The Reverend Dr. Beth C. Glover
 Deacons:
 The Rev. Deacon Keith McKenna
 The Rev. Deacon Sharon Manning-Lew

E-mail: august@bestweb.net Website: www.stacroton.org

December 2011 & January 2012

St. Augustine's Episcopal Church ♦ 6 Old Post Road North, Croton on Hudson, NY 10520 ♦ 914-271-3501 (Office)



December 2011

2		10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	Wreath decorating
3		10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	St. A's Wreath Sale
4	<u>The Second Sunday of Advent: The Reverend Bradley C. Dyche preaching and celebrating</u>		
		9:00 a.m.	Rite II with music
		9:45 a.m.	Coffee Hour
		10:30 a.m.	Rite II with music/Sunday School/Christmas pageant rehearsal
		11:30 a.m.	Christmas Pageant rehearsal ends
		11:30 a.m.	Adult Education: Discussion on the Gospel of Mark
		11:30 a.m.	MLK Service planning meeting
		5:30-7:30 p.m.	Youth Group
6	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	EFM Class
7	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	A Service of Light and Prayer
11	<u>The Third Sunday of Advent: The Reverend Beth C. Glover preaching and celebrating</u>		
		9:00 a.m.	Rite II with music
		9:45 a.m.	Coffee Hour
		10:30 a.m.	Rite II with music/ Sunday School/ Christmas pageant rehearsal
		11:30 a.m.	Christmas Pageant rehearsal ends
		11:30 a.m.	Adult Education: Discussion on the Gospel of Mark
13	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	EFM Class
14	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	A Service of Light and Prayer
		8:00 p.m.	Vestry Meeting
17	Saturday	10:00 a.m.	Christmas pageant rehearsal
18	<u>The Fourth Sunday of Advent</u>		
		9:00 a.m.	Rite II with music, The Rev. Deacon Sharon Manning-Lew
		9:45 a.m.	Coffee Hour
		10:30 a.m.	Christmas Pageant
20	Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	EFM Class
21	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	A Service of Light and Prayer with Eucharist
22	Thursday	9:00 a.m.	Soup Kitchen offering
24	Saturday	4:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Children's Service
		7:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Family Service
		10:00 p.m.	First Service of Christmas
25	<u>Christmas Day Service: The Rev. Deacon Sharon Manning-Lew preaching</u>		
		10:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist
26-31			Parish office closed
28	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	A Service of Light and Prayer

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

January 2012

1	<u>The First Sunday after Christmas: The Rev. Dr. Beth C. Glover preaching</u>	
	10:00 a.m.	Holy Eucharist with lessons and carols
2		Parish Office Closed
3	Tuesday	7:00 p.m. EFM Class
4	Wednesday	7:00 p.m. A Service of Light and Prayer
8	<u>The First Sunday after the Epiphany:</u>	
	9:00 a.m.	Rite II with music
	9:45 a.m.	Coffee Hour
	10:30 a.m.	Children's Service/ Youth Group Christmas Pageant
9	Monday	Vestry nominations due
10	Tuesday	7:00 p.m. EFM Class
11	Wednesday	7:00 p.m. A Service of Light and Prayer
15	<u>Second Sunday After The Epiphany: Mr. Richard Olver on Dr. Martin Luther King</u>	
	9:00 a.m.	Rite II with music
	10:30 a.m.	Rite II with music/Sunday School
	11:10 a.m.	Sunday School ends, children join service
16	Monday	Parish Office closed in observance of Martin Luther King Day
17	Tuesday	7:00 p.m. EFM Class
18	Wednesday	7:00 p.m. A Service of Light and Prayer with Eucharist
	Wednesday	8:00 p.m. Vestry Meeting
22	<u>Third Sunday After the Epiphany</u>	
	9:00 a.m.	Rite II with music
	10:30 a.m.	Rite II with music/Sunday School
	11:10 a.m.	Sunday School ends, children join service
22	11:30 a.m.	Book group: "A New Kind of Christianity: Ten Questions That Are Transforming the Faith" by Brian D. McLaren:
24	Tuesday	7:00 p.m. EFM Class
25	Wednesday	7:00 p.m. A Service of Light and Prayer
26	Thursday	9:00 a.m. Soup Kitchen offering
29	<u>Fourth Sunday After the Epiphany: Annual Meeting</u>	
	9:00 a.m.	Rite II with music
	10:30 a.m.	Rite II with music/Sunday School
	11:10 a.m.	Sunday School ends, children join service

February 2012

5		9:00 a.m. Rite II with music
		9:45 a.m. Coffee Hour
		10:30 a.m. Children's Service/ No Sunday School
10	Tuesday	7:00 p.m. EFM Class
11	Wednesday	7:00 p.m. A Service of Light and Prayer

From the Rector:

I have been re-watching a favorite 1990's show, "The Vicar of Dibley." If you have never seen it, then you have really missed something. The show was about a woman priest at a time in England when that was novel and strange. In the episode, "Christmas Lunch", the Vicar, Geraldine Granger speaks with a friend Alice, whose head has a bit too much air, about the Vicar's upcoming Christmas sermon. Here is an excerpt:

Alice: I'm totally excited about your first Christmas sermon, Vicar. It's just gonna be an experience I will never forget.

Vicar: Alice, my first Christmas Sermon was last Christmas.

Alice: Oh yeah, I forgot. But it's you're fault. You probably just chose a boring subject.

Vicar: The birth of Jesus Christ, otherwise known as the greatest story ever told?

Alice: Well yeah, [it's good the] first time you hear it, but after that, it's a bit predictable, isn't it? Man and woman get to inn. Inn full. Woman has baby in manger. Angels sing on high. Blah, blah, blah....

Vicar: You have forgotten to mention that that baby is in fact the Son of God.

Alice: Yeah, that's a nice twist.

Frankly, sometimes I agree with Alice. The story of Christmas is predictable; sometimes, it feels blah, blah, blah, and it has a nice twist! The Nativity is predictable, because even as adults, we hear the same story from Christmas pageants past rolling around in our heads. The story feels blah, because it is difficult to make this story relevant to our time. Virgin births? Nasty kings? Sleeping in hay? What does that have to say to us? BUT, and here's the thing, the story has a nice twist. Because if we let it, the Christmas story can captivate hope and possibility within us.

God sending God into the world in the form of a helpless child is a noble experiment in God trusting us to bring God's love into the world. And the experiment was successful. People, like Mary and Joseph, who were afraid suddenly found themselves nurturing God. An innkeeper let them stay in their stable. Shepherds, the people who were disgusting, came to worship. And astrologers from the East came bearing gifts. Many people have and continue to nurture God's love in the world.

God comes into the world as a pebble tossed into a lake. There is just a small initial impact, but the waves ripple outward, which is the message of Advent. The season of Advent invites us to recall and imagine how God comes into the world. True, there are many days when I wish God would come in clouds and take away all the mean people. But instead, at Christmas we remember that God gives us the love to challenge the mean people, including ourselves. And that is who Jesus is: the love to help us. The love that is with us and the love which challenges us. God is a pebble thrown into a lake, water rippling toward the shore

I know that the season leading up to Christmas is not calm or easy. The world seems frantic with demands and gifts. But our message is that love has arrived, tossed into our world. And we're inviting ourselves into the ripple effect. Merry Christmas!

In God's Peace,



Financial Operations through October 31, 2011:

	Expenses Paid		Revenues Received
Administrative	\$(30,096.89)	Fundraising	\$29,476.76
Priest	\$(75,125.99)	Plate	\$14,671.35
Service/Program	\$(21,660.35)	Pledge	\$96,885.50
Diocese	\$(11,767.43)	Space	\$5,360.00
Outreach	\$(2,910.70)	Investments	\$7,753.08
Property	\$(29,302.50)		\$-
TOTAL	\$(170,863.86)	TOTAL	\$154,146.69
(deficit)/surplus	\$(16,717.17)		
budgeted deficit	\$(1,384.29)		

Our operating performance for the first nine months of 2011 reflects the slowdown in revenues we typically experience after the slow summer months; our actual shortfall of revenues over expenditures is in excess of -\$18,000 v. the -\$5,000 contained in the budget. This means that the revenues we have received to date were not sufficient to pay all of our bills, and we have had to dip into our reserves. Expenses have been slightly lower than expected in most categories as we continue to operate our church and other buildings and programs as prudently as possible. Revenues, however, have fallen short of the budget due mostly to (1) Pledges, and (2) Fundraising. Current Year Pledges are behind budget by over \$17,000, but that is mostly attributable to a lag in pledge receipts during the summer months as well as timing issues in receipt of some pledge payments. Hopefully we will experience a resurgence in Pledge receipts now that school is back in session and attendance on Sundays is more stable. Fundraising's shortfall of over \$4,800 is due to a slight underperformance of JuneFest versus the budget, a delay in finalizing the FoodFest results, as well as a lack of other fundraising events as compared to this time last year, when we had already hosted a Pub Quiz and a Chili Cook-off. In August we had a successful BBQ on the lawn, and in October we had our annual dinner dance and auction. The Pub Quiz occurs in November, so hopefully these affordable fundraising events will help us reach the budget for Fundraising.

Sunday School Calendar 2011-2012

St. Augustine's Church

BLOCK 3: CHRISTMAS PAGEANT (Outreach Project: Toy Drive)

December 4 th	Regular Sunday School (Christmas Pageant Rehearsal)
December 11 th	Regular Sunday School (Christmas Pageant Rehearsal)
December 17 th	Saturday Rehearsal for Christmas Pageant
December 18 th	Christmas Pageant Performance – Children's Service
December 25 th	No Sunday School

BLOCK 4: JESUS' EARTHLY LIFE*Teacher Training for Block 4 on Sunday, January 8th after 10:30 service, Parish House*

January 1 st	break
January 8 th	Children's Service for Epiphany
January 15 th	Regular Sunday School (MLK Weekend)
January 22 nd	Regular Sunday School
January 29 th	Regular Sunday School (Annual Meeting)
February 5 th	Children's Service (No Sunday School)
February 12 th	Regular Sunday School

A Capital Campaign to Renovate our Sanctuary

I worship at St. Augustine's because I feel the Holy Spirit in our community, the mass and the simple, dignified beauty of our Sanctuary. But everything in this world, however old and beloved, requires renewal and renovation from time to time; not to change the essence of what we are as a Church, but to keep it vital. This next year, renewal needs to concentrate on our sanctuary.

In the past year we've seen many welcome improvements, from new heating plant (and air conditioning at last!), to new paint in the parish hall, and a new bathroom. But the big jobs are still to be done. In September, your Vestry examined our needs and options, and agreed on tentative priorities:

The Sanctuary needs a face lift. Removal of the old radiators finished off the old carpet, and the dingy, peeling, cracked walls and ceiling are, well, mildly depressing. Also, many pews need to be rebuilt, and new seating added. We want to keep pews, but many are kept from collapse by lumber braces and prayer.

Our biggest problem is water; where it goes and what it does. Our land is a natural bowl with no outlet, and our buildings sit in the middle of the bowl. The pressure of water has destroyed the mortar in our foundations. And fixing the brickwork will be for naught if we don't begin to drain water away from our buildings. We need new gutters. We need to put in drains around our buildings and a connection to the municipal storm drain down the street. And we need to work with the Village to redo the sidewalks so that they no longer trap water and become an ice rink in winter.

The mortar in our brickwork has leached and crumbled, especially around our foundations and is in urgent need of replacement. Our chimneys are in the same poor shape, and are leaking water into our new furnaces. Fixing our brickwork is our most pressing priority, and we have already drawn up specifications and put out a request for bids. This work should happen next summer.....if we have the money

To do these jobs next year we will need a capital campaign. Over the next few months we will be reaching out to each of you to study the feasibility of our plans. Meantime, take a look for yourselves, and let us know what you think. For further information, contact Brad or Richard Olver (914) 271-5232 <richard.olver@verizon.net>

From the Vestry:

Upon learning that Bishop Sisk would be visiting St Augustine's, the members of the vestry unanimously agreed that the bishop's position regarding the marriage of same-sex couples within the churches of his diocese would have to be discussed. It was felt that Bishop Sisk's decision would affect a great many in the St A's community deeply and negatively, and that it was incumbent upon us as the elected leaders of the parish to voice our concerns.

Several points were adhered to with regard to our discussion with Bishop Sisk:

- We agreed that one member of the vestry would write (with input from the group) and read a statement of our collective feelings.
- We hoped that the statement would initiate a larger discussion on the issue, during which individual vestry men and women could share their thoughts and concerns and at which time we hoped Bishop Sisk would respond.
- The statement would be presented as a reflection of the opinion of the vestry only; because we did not have the time to survey the entire parish, we felt it would be wrong to suggest that we represented the congregation as a whole.

With all these points established, the following was prepared and read aloud to Bishop Sisk at our Nov. 6 meeting:

Bishop Sisk:

First and foremost, we want you to know that you have our love and our prayers. You also have our thanks for your years of service to the Church.

This said, our consciences compel us to voice our unhappiness with and objection to your decision regarding priests marrying gay couples at Episcopal churches in your diocese.

- First, as we understand it, your position may be expressed in this way:the Episcopal Church defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman;
- the Episcopal Church has granted bishops "generous pastoral response" with regard to the participation of their parishes and priests in the marriage of gay and lesbian couples;
- you support the legalization and recognition of gay marriages;
- you and the priests of your diocese vowed to uphold the doctrines of the Church;
- therefore you feel allowing anything more than a blessing of a marriage of a same-sex couple would violate of your vows and the vows of the participating priests.

We also understand that six bishops in New York have responded to the Church's position: four will allow priests in their diocese to marry same-sex couples. One will not allow gay marriages in churches in his diocese. You are the sixth. We feel it is important that you know our reactions to your decision:

- You have made us confused. You support the legalization of same-sex marriages and have argued in favor of these rights. Clearly you understand that a marriage need not be the union of a man and a woman. Yet, though granted a "generous pastoral response," you uphold an antiquated definition of the sacrament which seems to contrast with your own definition. We do not understand this.
- You have made us frustrated and, in some cases, angry. You offer to bless the legal unions of gay and lesbian couples, but deny them participation in the sacred union of marriage. Setting a different standard for participation in the sacraments of the Church for gay and straight people diminishes the meaning of the sacraments. All sacraments should surely be equally available to all the faithful. Our congregation embraces many gay and lesbian couples; as vestry, we cannot abide that our brothers and sisters are not permitted to fully participate in the life of their chosen faith. Indeed, our own pastor--a man whose expressions of love, compassion and devotion have strengthened the relationships of all those in his parish--upon finding someone with whom to share his life and soul and purpose, would not be welcome to seek a spiritual bond to that someone in his own church.
- You have made us sad. The pain we have felt on behalf of our fellow congregants as a result of your decision is of course one source of our sadness. And the sense of finality you have given to your decision is another source; to date we have not seen willingness on your part to reconsider. Undoubtedly you came to your conclusion on this matter after much soul-searching and careful consideration; we find it distressing that you see your influence limited to a legalistic interpretation of the situation rather than a more generous, loving and full pastoral understanding.

Four of New York's bishops and we as vestry wish to stand with and support the LGBTQ community, as Christ would have us do. Our sense is that you share this wish, but that you feel somehow limited in your ability to do so on this issue. The Church is the body of Christ, and as His body it is a living, breathing, organic and changeable thing. It is time to heal a part of that body, to make it whole. We hope you will work with us to find a way forward, one that will allow you to honor the dignity and integrity of your office, and one that will allow all to share in the beauty and sanctity of the marriage sacrament.

Education

Bookgroup



The St. Augustine's bookgroup will read at least four books over the coming year. Please mark the dates and join us. If you have trouble locating a copy of one of the books, let us know. All are welcome to join, even if only for one particular book. We generally meet after the 10:30 service for about an hour. If you have other book suggestions, the list is negotiable!

For January 22nd: "A New Kind of Christianity: Ten Questions That Are Transforming the Faith" by Brian D. McLaren

For March 4th: Lenten Gothic Tales: "The Swimmer" by John Cheever and "A Good Man is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor

For May 6th: "The Same Kind of Different As Me: A Modern-Day Slave, an International Art Dealer, and the Unlikely Woman Who Bound Them Together" by Ron Hall.

A Look Ahead in Adult Ed

On December 4th after the 10:30 services, come to a discussion on the Gospel of Mark. With the beginning of Advent, we will begin a year of Sunday readings mostly from the Gospel of Mark. Come hear about the history and tradition of the Markan Community. Hear about the earliest Gospel, the one without the Christmas story, and the one without Resurrection appearances.

On December 11th after the 10:30 service, the Vestry invites Parishioners to come to a discussion regarding their November meeting with Bishop Sisk concerning same sex marriage.

Christmas Pageant

St. Augustine's children's Christmas pageant will be performed during the 10:30 am service on Sunday, December 18th. All Sunday School age children (pre-school through grade 6) are invited to participate. Rehearsals will be during regular Sunday School hours (10:30 - 11:10) on Sunday, December 4th and Sunday, December 11th, and on Saturday morning December 17th at 10:00 a.m. Please contact director Genie Fabian at 302-2531 if your child would like to participate but cannot be at the first rehearsal. Following the service on the 18th, we will celebrate with a festive potluck Christmas coffee hour.

The St. A's Youth Group

The Youth Group is back with another epic community service project! We are helping Michaela O'Connell with her Girl Scout Gold Award project to work with a homeless shelter in the Bronx. The shelter is Susan's Place. If you are not familiar with this shelter, it helps women that have mental health issues. Once they move out of the shelter they have a home with nothing in it, and only a little bit of money.

The project is that we are collecting small household items so that the women can be given these items instead of having to purchase them. That way they can use the little bit of money they have for food. These are the items we are collecting:

- Cups and mugs
- Silverware
- Sheets and blankets
- Small appliances (lamps, toasters, etc.)
- Plates and bowls
- Toiletries
- Towels

The youth group will have a box that you can put your donations in, and we will bring the items to Michaela's house to be delivered to the shelter.

Also remember: the Youth Group is multi-tasking! We are still collecting soup!!!

Catherine Riedel and Rachel Norfleet lead the youth group again, with Brad's counsel and participation. Here's how it works:

SUNDAY SCHOOL is for 6th-8th graders weekly from 10:30-11:10 in the parish house. At 11:10 the class joins the congregation in church. The kids have the option of sitting together (we reserve a pew for this purpose) or with their families. Rachel is teaching the first block. If you are interested in teaching a block, please let Rachel or Marie Fabian know.

YOUTH GROUP is for 6th through 9th graders. It will meet twice a month: once during regular Sunday school (the children's service weeks), and once on a Sunday evening from 5:30-7:30 p.m. which will include dinner. Sometimes we'll be at church, and sometimes we'll go do something. Here are the remaining youth group dates:

December 4	5:30 - 7:30
January 8	5:30 - 7:30 & pageant
February 5	During 10:30 Service
February 12	5:30 - 7:30
March 4	During 10:30 Service
March 11	5:30 - 7:30
April 22	During 10:30 Service
May 6	During 10:30 Service
May 20	5:30 - 7:30

Outreach/Parish Events

MLK Service

Planning meeting for our annual town-wide MLK Day service on December 4th, after the 10:30 service. This service is not only an opportunity for members of our community to gather but also a fund-raiser for a scholarship in memory of a most beloved parishioner Alta Kirton, who was focused on issues of Justice. Your help will be much appreciated. For more information, speak to Father Brad or Ty West.

The annual observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day will be held at St. A's on Sunday, January 15th at 4:00 p.m. This Interfaith service reminds us of our need to fight prejudice in our society, to celebrate freedom and to rejoice in our unity



Wreath sale

'Tis the Season: Our annual wreath sale is scheduled for this Saturday, December 3rd. Wreaths may be picked up on Saturday. There will be a few extra wreaths for sale! This effort generates several thousand dollars and is an important component of our budget. Besides, it is a great way to get into the spirit of the holiday season.

Vestry Nominations

The Vestry is the group that makes policy, legal, and financial decisions for St. A's. It is the group that holds vision, planning, and the day to day needs of the church together. Vestry meets monthly on the third Wednesday, beginning at 8 p.m. and will go on retreat in February of 2011. The term is three years. Please contact Tom Eshoo, the clerk of the Vestry, at [914-862-0003](tel:914-862-0003). before January 9, 2012 to nominate yourself or someone else. Election of new officers will be during the 10:30 service on Sunday, January 29, 2012.

St. A's Christmas cd

The cd is recorded, edited and at the printers now! Order your copies of our St. A's Christmas cd beginning this Saturday, December 3rd at the Wreath Sale. Buy copies for everyone on your Christmas list!

St. A's Christmas Caroling

Denise Bessette has arranged for us to sing Christmas carols at Skyview on Saturday, December 10th at 3:00 pm. Please gather at 2:45 in the lobby

Pledge update

As of November 29th, 44 parishioners have returned their pledge cards. They have pledged \$90,250. Last year, 82 parishioners pledged \$ 149,283.

Annual Meeting

St. A's Annual Meeting will be held on January 29th during the 10:30 a.m. service. Please mark it in your calendars and come and hear reports from parish members & share in planning for the future. Polls for election of Vestry members will be opened on Sunday, January 29th from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Anyone interested in running for Vestry should speak with the Clerk of the Vestry, Tom Eshoo.

Coffee Hour 2012

The Parish Office is helping to gather information for the 2012 Coffee Hour list. If you would like to volunteer to host one or more coffee hours, please email us at august@bestweb.net. If you have a particular Sunday or Sundays that you prefer, please include that in your email. Volunteers will call everyone in a few weeks so that we may have a comprehensive list as soon as possible.



Clothing donations

As usual at the turn of the seasons we are asking for donations of men's and women's clothing suitable for job interviews and office dress. All donations go to Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison, a ministry we have supported for many years. Drop items off in the parish house on Sundays or during regular office hours.

Soup Kitchen

We are grateful for the new soup kitchen volunteers and we ask all of our volunteers to continue to help out through the winter months. Our meatloaf meal is a favorite in Peekskill. The cold weather is causing concern as even more people will need this meal. We can supply you with recipes for meatloaf, mashed potatoes, carrots or apple cake. Please call or email the parish office (271-3501 or august@bestweb.net) to help.

Reminder

St. A's Parish Office will be closed from December 26th 2011 through January 2nd 2012

<u>Rector</u>	<u>The Rev. Bradley C. Dyche</u>				
<u>Rector Emeritus</u>	<u>The Rev. David B. Wayne</u>				
<u>Priest Associate</u>	<u>The Rev. Dr. Beth C. Glover</u>				
<u>Deacon</u>	<u>The Rev. Deacon Keith McKenna</u>				
<u>Deacon</u>	<u>The Rev. Deacon Sharon Manning-Lew</u>				
<u>2011 VESTRY MEMBERS</u>					
Senior Warden:	Elizabeth Hoffman	Junior Warden:	David Wixted		
Treasurer:	Holly Anzani	Clerk:	Tom Eshoo		
Class of 2011	Lisa Cohen	Class of	Holly Anzani	Class of	Richard Olver
	Laura Seitz	2012	Kelly Jackson	2013	Chris McColl
	Leigh Anna		Meaghan Shawcross		Thomas Eshoo
	Harken				
<u>Meeting Schedule: Vestry, 3rd Wednesday, 8:00 p.m.</u>					

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6 Old Post Road, North
Croton-On-Hudson, NY 10520
www.stacroton.org

Address correction requested



December 2011 & January 2012

Dated material - please deliver

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!