

A black-capped chickadee is perched on a pine branch covered in snow. The bird has a black cap, a white breast, and grey wings. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Cross Currents

A Publication of St. Mary's Church, Barnstable Village
2007

Dear Gentle and Patient Readers;

It is no miracle that we were able to put together our holiday Cross Currents. It is absolutely credited to the willingness of many people to find the time to write for this issue. Holidays and busy schedules always challenge a writer but I find that inspiration and dedication to writing often times wins out in the end.

Our issue began with Jud Phelps offering to be interviewed for our Telling Our Stories piece. Once again Patrick Ramage offered to get together with Jud and I could tell they had a great time together. (A great bonus in writing these pieces!). I asked Jud to be sure to get us some pictures we could place in the story and without hesitation he produced a number of photos chronicling his life. Thank you Jud!

I had asked Barbara Hersey early on to take on the task of learning about and telling the history of three of our favorite Advent and Christmas traditions. Her piece on The Creche, the pageant and the Holly Fair gives us a bit more insight into the evolution of some of our most loved traditions.

Finally, at what seemed like a last minute request, I asked Matt Palmer if he would reflect on his years as Warden. At first he was hesitant but with a little urging he agreed to fit the task into his busy schedule. Matt did not disappoint. He came through (even with the incredibly tight deadline I gave him) with a piece that is insightful, reflective and moving.

While the timing is tight due to the Church calendar we will be putting together a Cross Currents for the Lent and Easter season. If anyone has a reflection or a story that they would like to share in this upcoming issue please contact me at stmarysnewsletter@comcast.net.

Merry Christmas to all!
Liz Rabideau

Cross Currents

2007/8

Issue 2

Steve Smith, Rector

Kris Lewis, Ass't Rector

Joan Kirchner, Minister of Music

Linda Keedwell, Parish Administrator

Jim Kranich, Treasurer

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Letter From The Rector



Rev. Steve Smith

Dear Friends,

One of our great artistic treasures here at St. Mary's is our crèche, created over fifty years ago by local sculptor and parishioner, Harriet Worthington. Once a year, it is lovingly arranged in our Mary Chapel, to the delight of all ages. The drama of the Christmas tableau, etched in the faces and postures of the figurines, is a marvel to behold.

Like you, I have come to cherish our crèche, and periodically, I will go up into the church to peek in the closet, where it spends most of the year hidden away. And when I do, it touches a memory of my love of crèches as a child. I remember being taken to Boston each Christmas Season to see the lights, to go to the Enchanted Village in Filenes, and then end up hand in hand with my parents in front of the life size crèche on Boston Common. I remember the anticipation surrounding our annual ritual of unwrapping the Christmas ornaments with my mother, especially the timeworn plaster crèche pieces we would place on our fireplace mantle. And most of all, I remember buying my own little crèche when I was seven or eight. It wasn't much to look at, measuring no more than the span of my mother's hand. And only a tiny Mary and Joseph and Baby Jesus with a couple of sheep were permanently glued to the bottom. But to me it was my prized possession, better than any toy or trinket in my bedroom.

One day, at school, it must have been third grade as I recall, my Jewish friends had set up a menorah, dreidels, and an elaborate pictorial display to celebrate Hanukkah. Out of an odd combination of competitiveness and evangelical zeal, I decided to set up my own display. I brought in a bible, opened to the appropriate Gospel, some greens I had cut from our hedges at home, and my little crèche, and set them up in the opposite corner of our classroom. So much for keeping religion out of the schools, my teacher must have thought! But for a week or two, we had a true interfaith dialogue, my friends and I. My Jewish friends regaled us with stories of the Feast of Lights, and I, using my crèche as show and tell, told the story of the Nativity.

I spoke to my mother a few days ago, and she told me she still has my crèche, packed away with the other memorabilia of the past. They say Christmas is for children, but somewhere in each of our hearts, I know we each keep our childhood treasures and memories stowed away to recall and to cherish. And the crèche, the little one of my early years and the magnificent one we have at St. Mary's, has great power to unlock and quicken the incarnate love born first in Bethlehem and in every child's heart since.

May the light and joy, the hope and peace of the Nativity, in which perfect love was made perfect man, be yours this Holy Season, and in the New Year ahead.

Faithfully,
Steve+



Telling Our Stories: Jud Phelps

By Patrick R. Ramage

"I know a lot of men who are healthier at age 50 than they have ever been before because a lot of their fear is gone."

—Robert Bly

I see a flagpole in the front yard and figure it must be his. He's standing on the front porch and gives a wave as I pull up behind the Caddy SUV and the Ford truck with the Red Sox sticker. "Patrick," he says in a booming voice. "Jud," I say back. We clasp hands in greeting. Then we're through the front door and Jud Phelps is making me tea with honey in his kitchen.

He wears a Patriots cap, a plaid shirt and the bright yellow wristband of the LiveStrong Foundation. A second wristband in camouflage reads "Soldiers of God."

Jud introduces his wife Bonnie who suggests the two of us sit in the living room. It is open and comfortable, hardwood and soft leather. Jud insists I take his favorite chair in front of the fireplace and sits on the sofa opposite, in front of the bay window. The early dusk of late autumn is settling over the marsh as we begin.

"So why the 8 a.m. service?" I ask him. "That's the service my father started taking me to when I was nine. I like the smaller, more intimate setting. I serve as an usher, lector, or Eucharistic Minister when the occasion demands." "So you're a Rite I person?" I ask. "Well, there was no Rite II when I was growing up. You like what you're used to. Whenever I go to Rite II services or when we use it at the church retreat, well, it just doesn't feel the same at all."

Jud was born in October of '42 in Evanston, Illinois where his father was serving in the Navy at the Great Lakes Training Center. During the war he and his mother moved to Gloversville, New York to live with her parents. "When I was little they called me 'Juddy,'" the imposing 65-year-old across from me remembers, "and every once in a while someone calls me "the Judster,"" but I'm not really a nickname sort of person."

His best friend was his maternal grandfather, the first in a series of male friends, ministers and mentors that would shape and guide him throughout his life.

Little Juddy was an only child and hated it. "My father was determined to keep his family small so we would have enough resources. That was the plan." The plan worked to a point, but Jud's was not a particularly happy childhood. There are memories of drinking, conflict and verbal abuse. Church with dad on Sunday mornings offered a respite and an opportunity. "I became an acolyte at 10 or 11. It felt special to be up at the altar." The early church leadership role kindled thoughts of the ministry and a lifelong commitment to human service.

In eighth grade, Jud began boarding school at St. Paul's in Concord, New Hampshire, continuing his father's plan. "I would've probably preferred Kent or St. George, but he wanted 'the best.'" At St. Paul's Jud discovered he loved church. He also met and befriended an Episcopal priest named John Thomas Walker, the future Bishop of Washington. "The gentlest soul I ever met," Jud says of the charismatic African-American prelate, "He had a great sense of humor. He would refer to himself as 'Johnny Walker Black Label.'"

Jud went on to Williams, where he would major in psychology, become a Navy officer candidate and meet his future wife. "Her high school boyfriend was a classmate of mine. She came to visit one weekend. He didn't have a car, so I



"His best friend was his maternal grandfather, the first in a series of male friends, ministers and mentors that would shape and guide him throughout his life."

gave them a ride from the Pittsfield bus station." Jud looked out a dorm window later that weekend to see Bonnie, the daughter of an All-American, throwing a football with some guys. The image was striking and the attraction mutual. They dated, pinned, got engaged and

were married in December 1963 in Chappaqua, New York. "I worked six or seven jobs that next spring," Jud remembers, "anything to bring in money." He graduated in June of '64 and received his Navy commission that summer.

Ensign Phelps was assigned to Norfolk, Virginia where he and Bonnie began their family with the birth of a son, Wyeth. He finished active duty at Newport where a second son, Christopher, was born, followed later by a daughter, Whitney. Jud spent the next two decades in new product marketing with Procter and Gamble,

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Memorex and several other companies. Life as a corporate executive was lucrative, but unfulfilling. "I was doing some family counseling in my spare time and running Christian retreats for teenagers. I went to a career advisor. She encouraged me to pursue counseling. I said "I can't, I'd have to go back to school. It would mean a big pay cut." And she said: "Who cares?"

Six months later, he went on an all-male retreat in Texas. "A therapist had started this program of "Wildman Weekends" — 60 guys, staying in tents on a thousand acre ranch. We did blindfolded trust walks, drums, fires, sweat lodges. I came back, quit my job and registered for graduate school."

Jud earned a Masters in Counseling and spent the next five years working in adolescent rehabilitation. When he and Bonnie moved from Ridgefield, Connecticut to the Cape ten years ago, he had no guarantee of a job. I ask him how things came

together. He smiles and points heavenward.

His passion for helping the abject, the alcoholic, the recovering addict, oozes out of him. "There's a lot of satisfaction in this work," he says. But the fires that fuel his commitment burn deep and have little to do with the grateful calls and letters saying "You saved my life."

We talk at length about his work as program director for the Gosnold Drug Court Treatment Program, the sober house he oversees in Orleans, and the growing problem of substance abuse on the Cape. I ask him what's best about his work. "Seeing people change in a very positive way." And worst? He answers fast and even: "The harm some of them end up doing to themselves and their families."

We discuss the work Jud and others at Saint Mary's are doing with the homeless "There are about 1,000 homeless people on the Cape. These are not bad people. Many of them have just had bad luck — health problems, bankruptcy, a mortgage they can't afford, or they came here on a shoe string and it broke. What we really need to do is create homeless houses in all the towns, but nobody

wants to do that. They think "Well, they're doing it in Hyannis so we don't have to."

He's a guy's guy in 2007. He roots for the Sox, the Pats and the Giants. He's biked from Sandwich to Ptown and all five boroughs of New York. He likes black labs, a good steak and Smuggler's ice cream. One Christmas he gave his granddaughters a wooden dollhouse he built in his basement.

"It can be very hard for guys. The rules all got changed in the 1980s. Some guys adapted and some guys didn't. Everything's up for discussion now and much more egalitarian. What's helped me most is being around other guys – a select few."

And how is it being 65? "It's good. I've come to terms with what my legacy is all about, with my contribution, my spiritual journey. I care about people and help them. I care about my family and my community. I'm involved. I participate. God is very much alive and an active part of my life."

Jud is an active part of Saint Mary's, where he leads the homeless men's overnight program, serves on the outreach committee, and sits on the Vestry. "I love the building itself" he says. "It's intimate and pretty small when you think about it. Steve is so supportive and without an edge to him. It's an easy place to grow to love."



Christmas Eve will find Jud at the 11p.m. candlelight service. "It's wonderful. I love to stand at the back and look. I am overcome with gratitude." Holiday visits with grandchildren Nathan, Jack, Sidney, Sophia and Jake are a special joy. "We can't seem to discipline ourselves when it comes to giving them Christmas presents," he confesses with a smile. I ask if there is a favorite he has received. "Several years ago, before I built the dollhouse, Bonnie gave me a kit for a 16 foot sea kayak, one you assemble yourself. For six months I didn't open it. I was scared to. "

We stand side by side in the garage admiring the sleek red wooden vessel, and keep talking as Jud walks me down the dark driveway to my car. "Take good care," he says when we finally conclude. He is taking down the flag as I pull away.

If you know someone who should be interviewed for our "Telling Our Stories" feature please contact Liz at stmarysnewsletter@comcast.net

Vestry

A Warden's Reflections: *A journey of leadership, enrichment and reward*

by Matt Palmer

Almost four years ago, St. Mary's called as its new rector a certain Reverend Steve. This call followed a three year long interim period, and was greeted with great relief by the parish. At that point, I had been Junior Warden for about three months. Much to our surprise and consternation, this Reverend Steve from Virginia refused our call. We continued to be sheep without a shepherd.

As many of you remember, and I'm sure all of you can imagine, this was a significant disappointment. We responded as all good Episcopalians do in times of crisis: we had a pot-luck supper. Bishop Bud came and spoke words of comfort and encouragement. We were not the first parish in this predicament.

The evening ended with a lovely Compline service.

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to Steve's leadership.."

What had impressed me most about that event, however, was the spirit of resilience and determination that I felt from everyone present. Our numbers had dwindled in the preceding three years. Those of us who were left became the foundation on which to build.

The entire Search Committee, to their lasting credit, agreed to stay on and begin the search anew. With God's help, and a nudge

from Bishop Bud, a different Reverend Steve emerged as a new candidate within a few months. Shortly thereafter, Stephen V. Smith was installed as Rector of Saint Mary's Church, Barnstable.

A few months later, Harold and Eve Roberts announced their intention to move off-Cape to be closer to family, and I became Senior Warden. This, of course, required me to work quite closely with the new Rector. Steve Smith's leadership style is broad and inclusive. He sought and welcomed lay leadership from the very beginning. My responsibility, and God's call to me, was to provide strength and support to Steve's leadership.

From past experience, I was confident I possessed management skills. Leadership was, at that time, an untested area for me. In fact, just a few months earlier, I had taken a brave and potentially dangerous step away from my previous career as an engineer and manager and became head of a start-up non-profit. Both at church and at work I was being called on to provide leadership. For someone with an engineer's mentality and training, this was no small challenge. By responding to this challenge, I was given an opportunity to learn and grow.



I have a friend and mentor in Italy who told many years ago that all decisions are emotional. He meant that the core of any decision comes from an emotional root, not a logical one. As a young engineer, I resisted that notion vehemently. In my world, all decisions were based on facts and figures, spreadsheets and calculations. Recently I called my friend, thanked him, and told him he was right. The point I had missed all these years is that the significance of any fact or figure is the value we place on it. That determination of value, what is important to us, is inherently an emotion-based determination. We value highly what we feel in our hearts is important and right.

My experience as a Warden at Saint Mary's helped me come to that particular epiphany. Our accomplishments and growth as a parish since that pot-luck supper four years ago are not the result of a brilliant strategy or carefully calculated action plan. Instead, success comes from people with positive attitudes and shared values. Those values, ultimately, derive from an individual's belief in and understanding of God.

The work of a Warden can be time-consuming, stressful, and challenging. It is nonetheless a calling that I highly recommend to everyone. Working with extraordinary people of shared faith is tremendously rewarding. There are many extraordinary people at Saint Mary's, but I particularly want to thank Steve and Marian. Their creativity, determination and faith are inspiring.

Our challenge as followers of Christ, both individually and as a community, is to understand what God is calling us to do. That understanding sets our values, determines our priorities, and ultimately makes our decisions. I believe Saint Mary's is at a turning point. We have gone through many changes in the past four years, and God is calling us to new and important endeavors. We should heed that call, and truly be the body of Christ in our world and community.

I want to thank the parishioners of Saint Mary's for giving the opportunity to serve as a Warden. It has helped me grow, enriched my life, and enabled me to become a better husband, father, and person. Hopefully, I have given something in return. God bless you all.

Music at St. Mary's

Advent: *A season of lessons, carols and antiphons*

by Joan Kirchner

Advent Lessons and Carols

The annual St. Mary's Advent Lessons and Carols service will be presented on December 16 at 4:00pm. The theme for this year is European carols, which will feature some familiar and some unique settings from several time periods. We invite you to take a short break from the rush of the holiday season and join the choir for this beautiful service.

A reception will follow if a coordinator can be found—the choir is too occupied to be able to host the reception as well as sing the service, but will gladly donate some finger foods and sweets. If you would be willing to help us with hospitality, please contact Joan Kirchner or one of the choir members, and many thanks!

The Great O Antiphons

During the Sundays of Advent we will be singing verses of Hymn 56, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel", as our procession. Unlike most hymns, *Veni Emmanuel* (the tune name in this case is the original Latin text) lends itself to being split up in this way because it is a compilation of the Great O Antiphons. The Great O's were originally used during the evening service of Vespers on the days preceding Christmas (hence the dates in the hymnal before each verse). An *antiphon* is a short chant used as an introduction and response to a *canticle* (a portion of Scripture believed to have originally been sung, therefore among the first portions of the Bible set to music). The antiphons vary according to season, but the canticles remain the same. One of the evening canticles is the Magnificat, which we often hear as part of Evensong services. The Magnificat is especially appropriate at this time of year as it is Mary's response to the angel Gabriel's proclamation that she would bear the Son of God.



The origin of the Great O's is uncertain, but they are probably from the 9th century, possibly creations of St Gregory (of Gregorian chant fame). Their number has varied, but seven was the fixed amount by the end of the Middle Ages.

The Great O's follow a certain format: each is a paraphrase of Scripture, first addressing Christ by one of the titles used in Old Testament prophecy (O Dayspring, O Root of Jesse), then petitioning that He come and fulfill a Scriptural promise (come and enlighten us, come and save us from the shadow of death).

As is often the case, these antiphons eventually became separated from their original canticle, and are now collected together as a hymn. *Veni Emmanuel* is possibly the most familiar and beloved Advent hymn (even among people who don't really know what Advent is!). It makes an excellent introduction to enter the mystical and prayerful mood of Advent.

Women's Evening Group: *A time for respite & reflection*

When I was living in Exeter, New Hampshire and had just had my first child I was invited by an acquaintance to join a new group that she was forming for women. The group was small and we spent our time together sharing experiences around a weekly theme directed by our leader. The commitment was high but the rewards of spending quality time with a group of women were great.

When we moved from New Hampshire to Virginia I was sad to leave our group and was hoping to find another that would provide the quiet respite and reflection I shared with my old group. It took me about six months but I was able to find another group. It was a larger, co-ed, bible study group at the church I was attending. We would gather together once a week, read passages in the bible then our priest would direct the conversation and reflection on what we had read. Once again I found myself enjoying a unique connection with this group of people.

It has been 10 years since I have been involved in the bible group in Virginia. There have been lots of reasons to not get involved but the need to be part of a group has continued to be strong. It was this growing need that led me to a conversation with Barbara Hersey last winter. We agreed that there was an opportunity at St. Mary's for women to be involved in a new kind of group; one that offered a spiritual respite but was low maintenance. That was the key for both Barbara and me. As two busy working moms we knew that to gather other busy women we would have to demand little and offer something worth returning to.

Out of our conversations we formed the Women's Evening Group (WEGs). WEG's is part of ECW therefore every woman of St. Mary's is a member and is invited to join us. The structure of this group is simple. We initially planned to meet periodically, feeling that having a monthly meeting might be too much of a commitment for some women. The meetings are scheduled on Monday nights, a night that most women do not have obligations. Meetings are 1 ½ hours. There is no preparation required. Women volunteer to bring a reading or reflection, some are spiritual; some aren't. Often there is more than one reading; some are connected in theme, some are not. Conversation and reflections on the readings are encouraged and often there are times of silence as we reflect personally on what we have heard. Sometimes women offer to bring food. One meeting we were all treated to homemade apple pie; another meeting food was absent but that didn't prevent the group from sharing their thoughts on that evening's reading O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi".

Barbara and I would like to invite any woman who feels this might be a place for them to join us. Our next meeting is on Monday, Jan 28. If you would like to ask more about the WEGs feel free to ask us at church or call me at 508-737-2734.

~Liz Rabideau

Reflection



Advent: *A time of anticipation*

by Kris Lewis

I saw my first Christmas display at a drugstore in New York City a week before Hallowe'en—complete with a jolly Santa, sparkling lights, fake snow and brightly wrapped packages. Christmas, at least the secular, commercialized, hyped up version of Christmas, seems to come earlier and earlier each year, a trend I find distressing. I find it distressing not because I don't like the trappings of Christmas, but rather because the rush to early decorating, mad shopping, and frenetic activity not only overshadows the real meaning of Christmas, but also because it robs us of the pleasures of anticipation.

Anticipation. Waiting for something—a phone call, the arrival of a package, a long-planned vacation, and yes, even Christmas—can be hard, but, oh, the pleasures of anticipation—imagining, hoping, dreaming, savoring what is to come. Anticipation allows us to prepare, to make ourselves wholly ready for something so that when it arrives we can appreciate it and celebrate it more fully. And that is what Advent is all about. Advent gives us the space to prepare for Christmas thoughtfully, to anticipate its coming prayerfully, to ready ourselves for the day so that we can greet it joyfully rather than in a state of exhaustion, eager to be done with the whole thing.

The season of Advent gets its name from the Latin word *adventus*, which means *coming*. As early as the fourth century, the church began to use the weeks before Christmas as a time to prepare for the coming of the Christ Child. Originally Advent was a strictly penitential season, observed in much the same way as Lent, with fasting and extra prayer. Over time, the penitential nature of Advent has softened, and now it is considered to be a time of quiet preparation, with perhaps more solemnity and less festivity than in other times. We mark the season of Advent with an Advent wreath, lighting another candle each week, and with blue or purple vestments, and with scripture readings from the prophets that seem to anticipate the coming of a messiah. We take this time and mark it as special so that we can anticipate the wonder that Christmas brings—the babe in the manger, the glory of the angelic chorus, the awe of the shepherds summoned to gaze at the newborn Jesus, the wonder of Magi who traveled from afar to see this new king, the renewed hope that accompanies the coming of a savior.

The season of Advent marks the beginning of a new church year, a year that is shaped around the life of the Christ Child born at Christmas. Observing Advent helps us to remember that Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are the beginning, not the end, of our celebration. Advent reminds us that the cultural trappings of Christmas, while often fun and exciting, are only part of what Christmas is about. Few of us can (or even want to) completely give up Christmas shopping, decorating, and gift-giving, but in the midst of all that, keeping Advent gives us permission to slow down a bit and remember what it is really about.



Keeping Advent in a world that begins the mad rush for Christmas earlier each year isn't easy. What can you do?

~Make an Advent wreath, and light it each day (one candle the first week, two the second week, and so on). Say a prayer as you light the candles and reflect on (or talk about with your family) what it means to prepare for the coming of the Christ Child into the world.

~Use an Advent calendar to mark the season and anticipate the coming of Jesus.

~Participate in Advent activities at church. Come to the Simple Suppers on Thursday nights and join in as we learn more about Saint Nicholas, labyrinths, and our patron saint Mary (who certainly plays a central role in the Christmas story). Attend Advent Lessons and Carols where you'll hear the anticipatory scriptures and sing the carols of Advent.

~As you might in Lent, read a special book in Advent. It might be a book of Advent meditations or essays, or a Christian classic. Read the gospels and compare how each tells the Christmas story (or doesn't!).

~Take on an Advent project—buy gifts for someone in need through the "Dress a Live Doll" program, or for our foster family, or through other community programs. Visit someone who is a shut-in or in a nursing home.

~Consider alternative giving—mosquito netting, a cow, some chickens! Episcopal Relief and Development, the Heifer Project and other organizations offer a variety of ways that you can give to provide for not only the immediate needs of those in poor and developing countries, but also help them become self-sufficient in the long term.

~Most importantly, slow down and savor the season. Anticipate the joy of Christmas in all its splendor.

Embracing the season of Advent can help us both anticipate and fully celebrate the joy of Christmas. May your Advent be a blessed one.

An Advent Prayer

~Henri J. M. 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 light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

AMEN



Holiday Traditions:

Preserving history through crafts, acting and sculpture.

by Barbara Hersey

The Holly Fair

It starts in early summer, that rumbling like the far off sound of a freight train and as the fall begins you can hear the whistle blow. It's preparations for the Holly Fair, as tangible as our own preparations for Christmas gatherings at home, only months earlier. This year the Holly Fair is in full swing culminating on the day of the fair. Helen Hinkley, co-chair of the fair, shared a few memories from her years at St. Mary's. The Holly Fair is many long months of preparation filled with cheerful conversations. They gather to sew, knit, create wreaths, and share their lives. The ladies of Saint Mary's have done so for now, generations. Helen Boocock's mother, Helen Hinkley remembers, was one of the 20+ knitters who gathered on Wednesday's weekly through the fall to fill the "mitten tree."



The Holly Fair has been a staple of life in Barnstable Village for more than four decades. In the early days there was an expansive Summer Fair too. Robert Nicholson, former rector of St. Mary's, simply loved the gardens, bringing together parishioners and using exotic decorations. The Summer Fair goers shared great food, some knit, and doughnuts were made in the garden's gazebo. On the front Lawn there were games for kids including a row boat outfitted for rowing practice and a Pony Ride. And there was much more. But at some point, there was a change and consensus was to move to one fair each year, the Holly Fair.

These days, just as 'way back when', the Fair takes over nearly every room of the church facility. The newest offering: Maya Works and Serve International bring fair-trade goods from around the world which are sold in the library. The Silent Auction of appealing theme-baskets shares the library too. Glorious Greens are sold in the sunroom and breezeway. A beautiful sailboat pattern Quilt, made by Estelle Tryzinski, is offered in a Raffle. There's also amazing food at the Luncheon in the parish hall and coffee and doughnuts in a tent outside. The classrooms house the Country Kitchen with baked goods and the famous bean soup; Potpourri room with ornaments and a large variety of pet treats and toys; Attic Treasures; Jewelry room; Sewing and Knitting room; Children's room, still Just For Kids shop, run by the youth group with funds going to Christmas gifts for teens of the 'Angel Tree.'

The Christmas Pageant

However many kids there are at Saint Mary's, some years an older group of children, and sometimes very young, they gather with parents, clergy and volun-

teers to prepare for Christmas Eve. Traditionally there has been one rehearsal on the day before the performance in costume. Despite the success of the rehearsal the pageant would begin with the children walking through the pageant; getting into their places, reading, singing and reliving the story of the Nativity in a very concrete way. There's no end to the patience needed to deal with such a frenzy of anticipation as fills a child's heart the week before Christmas. The children are blessed, even in their frenetic behavior, and there's no end to their energy or passion for the story each year. Witnessing their participation in the Liturgy of the Word on Christmas Eve is simply magical, like a snow covered forest the morning after a storm.

The Pageant is at times funny. There are never the same quandaries, never the same challenges because we're talking about children, families and a very stressful time of year. For example, the first year with the King Puppet heads, two of the heads were used in a mock sword battle. It's a wonder they survived! There was the year when two of the three kings were kept home with a horrible stomach 'bug', and the sudden need for two stand-in Kings were found by some miracle. Another year, the Angels ran down the aisle and in climbing the old staging we lost a little one off the edge. She was undaunted, got right back up on the stage, disheveled wings dangling. Despite the "crisis dejour" the Pageant happens bringing the congregation a unique, fun and loving interpretation of the beloved story of Christ's birth.

The Harriet Stockton Crèche

Each year, in early December, the parish office gets the call - Robbie is coming! There is a rush of excitement because that means the crèche will be brought out from its plexiglas sarcophagus to join the life of the parish. Rob Stewart and helpers carefully place each piece gingerly on the velvet cloth covered with sand from a nearby beach. A backdrop hangs behind the scene and spot lights are hung. Baby Jesus is held by the Altar Guild in a safe spot until Christmas Eve. Finally special greens are placed around the crèche scene and with this last addition it settles-in as if at home.

The Crèche was made with great skill and lovingly by Harriet Stockton over 30 years ago. She still comes to visit Saint Mary's from time to time. A professional sculptor whom St. Mary's was fortunate to commission, created extensive multiple art pieces. It was also a stroke of genius to place the crèche on special storage shelves in the Baptistry behind Plexiglas to be viewed year 'round. Many's the child who's tried to see just when the little light would turn on and off while slowly opening the door and peering around its edge, myself included.





St. Mary's Episcopal Church
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