

The Christ Episcopal Church Gazette



Christ Episcopal Church
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The Pastor's Nook

By Rev. Dr. Darlene Tittle

Those of us who live in the North East America experience all the seasons of the years in different ways. Each is distinctive from another. Sometimes at the change of seasons, we share stories of our favorite season and its delights and advantages. We are now almost finished with fall and will quickly fall into winter. Winter is the "season of our discontent." Winter in this region of our country challenges us by being more powerful than our plans. I personally love the snow, the crisp winter nights and the clear blue skies when the sun shines on the snow. For me there is something mystical about winter when we crawl up with a warm blanket and rest and wait for the spring. Winter in North East America is a time of challenge, contemplation, rest, and quiet.

There is something about winter that reminds me of the desert. The desert mothers and fathers fled there when the early church was being persecuted. It was in the desert that they sought and found God. Their writings tells us of the struggle and triumph of facing the harsh and forbidding land and the prayer that was waged over the survival of their souls and the church. Winter, not unlike the desert, challenges us. We can accept the challenge of the harsh cold and ice and snow and let it teach us something about ourselves. Or we can protest and

resist something we cannot control. Aren't there times in life that are a lot like that?

The Church, not knowing the actual date of the savior's birth, chose to put the celebration of the birth of our Lord at the beginning of winter. Whatever the reason, it was winter in the desert when the child arrived. The time of fulfillment might have had something to do with a God-picture. A God-picture is something he wants us to see and know that he puts in picture form, such as Holy Communion. The Christmas God-picture was of a beautiful savior coming in the form of a dependent baby in the desert in winter. The lesson teaches that in the time of winter, when life seems to be challenged and looks like it could be over, God comes.



Falling Leaves

By Elizabeth Bonker

Whirling, Twirling
Floating down.
It seems like forever
Before it touches the ground.
What a vicious cycle
As everyone knows.
Pretty soon
We will see some snow.

Thanksgiving

By Elizabeth Bonker

A very important time of year
All your family gathers near
Thankful for all that you hold dear.

Let God know
His blessings flow
Into your life like a beautiful
rainbow.

Christian New Year's Eve Party

By Elena Mastroianni

One young boy was heard to say, "This is the best party I have ever been to!" Thanks to the efforts of Rebecca, Ed, and Debbie Burkhart a fun time was had by children and adults alike with crafts, coloring pictures and assembling them into an Advent Wreath. We played a game in which we had to hum the phrase, if it was a song, act it out, or draw it on the easel. We sang a variety of songs and enjoyed eating a delicious dinner prepared by those who attended the New Year's Eve Party.

Mark this one on your calendars for next year; it is a must do event **not** to be missed as you can see from the photos!



Book Nook

Christmas Reads

By Rebecca Burkhart

Where to start, where to start? As a librarian I am surrounded by books and I always love putting together my Christmas – excuse me *Holiday* display. There are many wonderful books for the season. What are you looking for?

If you want to curl up by yourself with a cup of hot chocolate and a plate of cookies, I recommend The Candy Cane Murders by Joanne Fluke which is actually three books in one. Also included in this paperback volume are The Dangers of Candy Canes by Laura Levine, and Candy Canes of Christmas Past by Leslie Meier. Each story has a different flavor (I was partial to the third one which took place in Maine!) and that has a double meaning—there are several cookie recipes included in the book! Can't wait to try them out.

Want to read aloud to the family or share a story with the kids? What happens when "the worst kids in the history of the world" insert

themselves into the church play? You get The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, of course! This short book by Barbara Robinson will have you laughing and crying by turns, and we read it together every year, even now that our kids are grown.

Jesus' Christmas Party tells the traditional story from the innkeeper's point of view. He doesn't appreciate being waked up time and again by couples, babies, shepherds, Wise Men, stars and angels. He is ready for a breakdown until he meets the baby and his heart melts. Everyone will join in his cries of "Round the back!" as Jesus' first birthday party arranges itself in the barn.

Miracle on 34th Street by Valentine Davies is another classic. Will the New York Supreme Court declare Kris Kringle insane? Read the book and see the movie (the original, please!).

And what would Christmas be without Dickens' A Christmas Carol? If you want to read this one aloud to the family, there is a version that Dickens himself abridged for public performance that is easy to read in one sitting. There are many illustrated versions of this title, including one that has notes on cultural customs of the times.

I have a feeling I've taken up more than my share of space, so speak to me or visit your library for more suggestions. Take time out from the hustle and bustle to enjoy a good story of the season!

Christ Church Sunday School

By Elizabeth Huxtable

In Sunday School we will be studying the Bible more by bringing it to life through 1. Bible reading, 2. Bible stories, 3. Bible activities, and 4. Bible response.

We thank the Lord for all that He has been doing in our Sunday School class each week and the many blessings of each of the children and the continuing growth of our Sunday School class.

Ms. Elizabeth and Ms. Debbie

"I bring to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people... a savior has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord."

Luke 2: 10-11.

How Many Words Can You Find?

Angels, Bethlehem, Christ Child, Donkey, East, Frankincense, Gold, Inn, Joseph, Kings, Mary, Manger, Shepherds, Star, Wise Men. There are also several other hidden words for you to discover!

S	T	A	R	A	E	A	S	T	B	C	D
H	E	N	F	G	H	I	J	K	E	L	M
E	N	G	X	O	Z	P	Q	R	T	S	T
H	U	E	V	L	W	X	Y	Z	H	G	H
P	A	L	B	D	C	D	E	F	L	I	J
E	L	S	T	A	B	L	E	A	E	F	C
R	K	I	N	G	S	C	H	A	H	B	H
D	E	F	E	W	I	S	E	M	E	N	U
S	T	R	A	W	Q	Z	I	L	M	P	R
J	O	S	E	P	H	A	O	A	R	A	C
F	R	A	N	K	I	C	E	N	S	E	H
M	O	B	T	H	N	C	H	R	I	S	T
E	O	A	D	O	N	K	E	Y	Q	V	W
T	M	A	R	Y	J	O	Y	M	F	F	M
S	A	V	I	O	R	X	B	E	L	L	S

Extra words:

S _____ S _____

J _____ S _____

B _____ C _____

C _____ R _____

M _____ J _____

A Reading from the Book of

Gratitude and Thanks

By George Ackley

Inspired Thought

Chapter 3 "Only an Internal Glow"

In early 2008, during a joint sermon given by the Tittles, I was trying to 'Visualize the meaning' or to say I was trying to get the "Big" picture of the message, at least that is what I call it, but Paula would say that I was sleeping or 'Zoning Out'.

It was early before the service had started and I was floating above the church property looking down. The building appeared to be completely transparent with only the outlines of the building edges existing to define the space.

Slowly people started to arrive for service. When the car doors opened it was not people that were getting out but only the glow of their inner Spirit was visible as it made its way into the church.

As the dimly glowing points of light entered the building and started to congregate and make their way to the chairs, it appeared that they were going into a large black bag that cut the brightness in half and only movement could be detected.

The prelude music started and suddenly there was a doubling of the light intensity that was being radiated by most of the points of lights for a brief moment. The black bag surrounding the points of light inflated instantaneously and popped tight as if it was a fabric balloon that had reached its limit of inflation.

The opening hymn and following praise music caused the points of

light to glow brighter and the indivisible points seemed to blur together and become one large glow. The black bag puffed up a little more to take the added effects of the additional 'Spirit' that was feeding the points of light, but the strain is starting to show at the seams. The edges are very tight and the stitching is starting to show.

The black veil is stretched so tight that rays of light are penetrating through the weave of the fabric, while the 'Sermon' is given and as the 'Holy Communion' is received. The total light has doubled or even tripled in brightness as the 'Holy Spirit' fills all of the people of the congregation, but the seams and fabric refuse to rupture and allow Gods light to be seen from the hill top church.

The service is over and the massive single glow of light returns to individual glowing points as they depart. Most of the points of light return to their cars with the same intensity as when they arrived, but one or two are a bit brighter to return another day.

This week the 'Black Veil' has won by keeping Gods love and word within the walls of the church and only known to the small but Faithfull few that had gather and also by keeping the beacon turned off from the surrounding neighborhood.

Lord please help us to spread YOUR love and word to the world starting in our town.

Amen

Mine First

An original poem
by Tara M. Mazzawy

I see a child, brilliant eyes
Inquisitive, searching soul
His internal buttons on fast forward,
Agitate,
Frustrated and triumphant all at
once.
It's only 7:10 am, yet he
Opens a new world for by
Turning his view into a quiet
reflection
Of breakfast choice,
Peppered with profanity.
Where to sit, what to wear, and how
about lunch?
The movie is almost over
Before his mouth opens.
"Lucky Charms," he finally
chooses,
After several mini episodes
Of temper and independence-
flexing.
He is mine, firs, and I offer him to
the world
Once his self-control washes down
With his orange juice.
Maybe today will be the day
Someone else will recognize his
Genius,
Enjoy his perspective,
Accept his awesome positive
energy.
Though, we'll probably get
A phone call.
"Bad day" or "Aggressive at
lunch,"
To which I'd love to respond
"But he's only 7 years old!"
What great expectations!

For CHM:

**I hope you always ask questions, seek
answers, and be yourself –you are
PERFECT to me.**

**Love,
Mommy**

Mom's Minute

By Tara Mazzawy

Today I want to speak to you about
TIME. How do we define TIME?
Today, October 19, 2008, marks my
twelfth wedding anniversary. To
many people that would be a long
period of TIME. It is. But how does
God measure time? I'd like to
discuss how I view time. In a
dictionary, "time" is defined to be
THE INDEFINITE CONTINUED
PROGRESS OF EXISTENCE IN THE
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE
REGARDED AS A WHOLE. Often,
we as parents don't have time to
notice the wondrous things God
presents to us everyday within our
children.

I usually am looking forward to
when the bus comes and I have
"me" time to drink a hot cup of
coffee and sit down quietly for a
few minutes. Then, something in
the paper will alarm me, and I will
think of something the children
said in anger to each other, and
know that we cannot regain that
minute to change it. Every second
wasted is just that-wasted.

I wonder if God sees us as wasting
our precious time dawdling over
things. To God, our whole lives are
a blink. Time is endless to God. We
usually expect things to happen
instantaneously and pray to God
about it in haste. He will sometimes
force us to wait it out-and God does
things on His time schedule.

We have had so much tragic news
in our family these past few weeks.
My mother-in-law is preparing to
begin chemotherapy for stage 4
cancer. Our dog was diagnosed
with leukemia and given a week to
live. We have prayed over him

many times. He has come to church and is still with us today!

I believe in my heart that God is doing things IN HIS TIME. As parents, we are so quick to tell our children to “wait a minute” or “hold on a second” when we are busy with a task. To a child, with no concept of time, that is an insufficient answer. They know NOW and MINE and occasionally PLEASE, but patience is usually not a strong suite for kids.

It is especially when praying for healing and peace that I become a true CHILD in God. I want results NOW. I want healing NOW. I want peace and direction NOW. I know that God is working on me and my issues. It feels like He’s told me to “hang on a second.”

I look out at my family and know that what God could blink away, I have persevered a long time for. In 12 years, I have had 3 children, watched them explore life with new insight, and gloried in the fact that they know God in their precious hearts.

They don’t quite get the concept of TIME, but they know that God can do anything, even make miracles happen.

There is no schedule to follow. It is a blind-faith belief that God tests us. God sustains us. God loves us, all the time. I think that as humans, we know TIME, and as Christians, we know the TIMELESSNESS God gives us that glimpse of eternity every morning.

I’d like to think that we could look at the bad things that happen in life with the timelessness of Jesus. Nothing is too difficult for Him.

When Jesus lived, wars happened, people got sick, life happened much as we know it today. The

difference for us now is that we have to take those little moments and make sense of them in IN OUR TIME.

What God repairs is in His time. The difference is a blink, a life, a miracle. Have faith that in your time on earth, God is using you as a stopwatch. When he hits the button, you just go, speaking of His mercy, love, and power, until it is time to meet Him at the ultimate finish line. It doesn’t matter how fast you get there, but that you make the most out of your run here.

Use your words to magnify Him. Use your life to model His ways and use your time wisely. There is a reason I don’t wear a watch anymore. It is because TIME is something I choose not to measure. Sure, I know we are expected at the bus stop by 3:00 to pick the boys up from the bus. We make appointments for a designated time of day. Time is precious. We should value it more. You never know how important those few minutes you spend ministering to the cashier in the check-out line at Shop Rite can extend your time on God’s stopwatch.

In seeing my puppy defy his grim prognosis, I’ve had many chances to talk about God’s miracles. So many people wonder why I am not down by all the bad news we’ve been dealt lately. I know that GOD is LOVE, PEACE, and MERCY. I know that God is using me. In his time, I know HE will give me the desires of my heart. What I pray for each of us here today is that we measure TIME by faith. By that, I mean that we do not allow ourselves to become a slave of instant gratification. Bad things happen to good and Godly people. It is in always seeking to glorify God that we can overcome the

negativity and drama that humanity has us bound by. Someday, when we are home with Jesus, we will look back on these days and wonder why we suffered, or why we triumphed. It certainly is not of our own doing that we lived through such horror. By grace, God carried us. Throughout these past 12 years, God has carried me and my husband. I am so thankful I had a chance to share these thoughts with you. God bless you all!

Christ Episcopal Church Shabbat Dinner

By Elena Mastroianni

Friday, October 17, 2008, Darlene and Richard Tittle shared their impressions and slides of their journey to Israel with an evening which included food typically eaten in Israel, singing, and fellowship. We had matzo ball soup, kugel, dates, olives, and many other dishes. Everything was delicious!

The photographs of the Tittles' trip to the Holy Land helped us see famous places related to the Bible. We were in awe of the sites and stories Darlene and Richard shared with us.



God and Mammon

Sermon November 9th 2008
By Mr. Raymond Bonker

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen. Sex. Politics. Religion. Money. The 4 horsemen of topics that people say are not suitable for polite company. Today I am going to talk about 2 of them. With the national election just concluded, it will be a relief to all of you that I am NOT talking politics this morning. I once heard an entire sermon on sex, but I'll save that one for some week when the teens don't look like they are paying attention. I'm going to talk about religion and money, or as the Bible says, God and Mammon. For me, it is easy to talk about money, but it is much harder to talk about God. Vestry members can attest that I have no problem discussing our finances: we have \$270,000 in mortgage debt, we get \$105,000 a year in pledge income, and our expenses outrun our revenues most months, blah blah blah. Easy. Over the last few years, however, Darlene has encouraged me to fill in for her, on Sundays like today when she is away, and I have to talk about Jesus Christ. Not as easy. And today I have to talk about God AND money. Not easy at all, especially when we read in Malachi earlier that God was not pleased with Jacob's descendents because they "robbed Him" of the tithes and offerings. They were not putting God's share of their harvest and livestock to the support of the priests, the Levites. Tough words and they conjure up a nasty parallel for us today. Are we robbing God if we do not tithe? Can you even wrap your mind around the idea of robbing from God? He gave us life itself, our world, our families,

everything, and yet we rob him. Feel free to start squirming. The readings today do not follow the lectionary. I chose the OT, NT, Psalm and Gospel today to highlight the God and Mammon theme. I hope you were listening carefully, because there will be a test, and I am assigning homework.

But first just a quick word about pledging. Every year we ask ourselves to sign pledge cards indicating our plans for financial contributions for the following year. These pledges make it possible for the Vestry to build a budget. The Good news is that our congregation has the highest average pledge in the entire Diocese, even though most of us are not wealthy, materially. The other good news is that we have several non-pledgers this year, which is the surest sign that the church is growing, and Amen to that. I hope that our non-pledgers would consider making a pledge for 2009, because it would make it a little easier to plan, but it is not a requirement, and it is strictly between you and God whether you fill out a pledge card or not. I am not going to hand these cards out, I am leaving them here on the altar. You will have to decide to come to God's table and give from what you have been given. As we say each week, "All things come of thee O Lord, and of thine own we have given thee."

It's a paradox that we have the highest average pledge in the Diocese, and yet we are forced to reduce our priest to half-time status for lack of funds. How can that be? We have people here who give hundreds of dollars per year. God bless them. We have people who give thousands of dollars per year, and year after year. God bless them. And we have some who choose to give even more than that,

year after year. Watch out for them. If they get hit by a truck, as we saw a few years ago, the story changes, and quickly. But the good news is, this church has also changed since then, and I for one believe it has changed for the better. We give generously of our financial wealth, but we also give generously of our time, of our spiritual wealth, and it is contagious.

When I see Gerianne donate our new door downstairs, it stirs me up. When I see George and Ed donating hours and hours of their time to make Gerianne's donation a reality, it stirs me up. When I see Mark installing computers and updating our website, it stirs me up. When I see Vicki's slides and hear the musicians during the Celebration service, it stirs me up. When the men play golf together, it stirs me up. When I hear Lana's sermon, it stirs me up. When I hear Andrew talking about youthful magical moments, it stirs me up. When I read Elena's Gazette, it stirs me up. When I see the kids on the rug for Bible Study Time during the All God's Children service, it stirs me up. And I bet it stirs you up too. Faith and giving are contagious. Catch the Spirit.

God and money. How should we think about this? You have a relationship with God. As a Christian, you have a personal relationship with Jesus. You also have a relationship with your spouse, your children, your neighbor, and your church family. But you also have a relationship with money. How you think about it, how it makes you feel, the time you spend earning it, and how you spend it, and even the emotional responses you have to it. Does your relationship with God align with your relationship with money? And with those other personal relationships? A harder question.

Can your relationship with God determine your relationship with money? Can we say "Jesus you are Lord" but I can only slip you a five spot this week? Now think about the lessons this morning. They were all about our relationship with God as viewed through our relationship with money. The Jews "robbing God" of the required tithe. The Psalmists lament for the rich who failed to develop their relationship with God, who trusted in their riches but were destined for the grave. Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to remember that God loves a cheerful giver – could there be a plainer statement about our relationship to God as viewed through our relationship to money? And finally, with the last word, the Word Himself told us: No one can serve 2 masters. You cannot serve both God and Mammon. I said there would be a test. Here it is. Answer this essay question: Describe your relationship with God in terms of your relationship with money. I'll make it a take-home test.

This is not some academic question, and it does not occur in a vacuum. In the last year the stock market has fallen about 40%. Like many of you, I lost a lot of wealth this past year. I just got my statements yesterday. It hurts, and it will probably take a long time before the market returns. Ouch. No joke.

What has that meant to you? Are you anxious? Are you upset? Mad as hell? Do you find yourself thinking about it and changing your life plans as a result? Tightening your budget, cutting out luxuries big or small. Lose sleep? You have a relationship with money after all, don't you?

In many Christian communities, and even in our own, it has been a

standard practice to strive for the tithe, for 10% of annual income, before taxes, to be pledged. Let me shake your assumptions about that. In researching this sermon, I discovered an argument that I feel called to share this morning, and I want to credit a guy named Brian Anderson of the Milpitas California Bible Fellowship for his wisdom on this topic. To oversimplify the argument, we are no longer bound to tithe. In the OT, tithing was a requirement, almost as if the Jewish IRS had a 10% flat tax. No exceptions, no deductions, no loopholes, and not voluntary. It was the Law.

But we are Christians, and as a result of Jesus fulfilling the Law on the cross, we are no longer under the Law. We no longer offer animal sacrifices. We do not follow the dietary restrictions. We don't have an obligation to tithe either. There is no commandment in the NT to tithe.

Tithing is no longer required. That may sound radical, but hear me out. Jesus freed us from the Law, but Jesus also said, and did, something else, something greater than tithing. And what he said and did was foreshadowed in our readings today. Back again to Malachi, and listen to what God tells the Israelites he will do if they will honor him with their tithe: "Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." To the OT ear, that probably sounded like lots of good rain in future years to produce bumper crops, and it was.

To our Christian ear, I would suggest it foreshadows Bethlehem and Jerusalem and Budd Lake. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Listen again to Psalm 49: "God will ransom my life; he will snatch me from the grasp of death." To our Christian ear, who do we believe ransomed his life for ours? The stage was being set in these readings. And then the Word Himself appeared upon the world stage, and these prophecies came true, for you and for me.

2 Corinthians sounds like the same lesson from Malachi: "Remember this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. **Each of you must give what you have decided in your heart, not with regret or under compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver.** Besides, God is able to make every blessing of yours overflow for you, so that in every situation you will always have all you need for any good work." Talk about throwing open the floodgates!

We don't have to tithe anymore, we don't have to offer animal sacrifices anymore, and we are no longer under the Law, because the Word ransomed our lives upon a cross. God opened the floodgates of heaven and poured out so much blessing that we do not have room enough for it. Alleluia!

OK, so no tithe is *required*. But what did Jesus the Word also tell us this morning? In Matthew he teaches us to give to the needy, but do not make a show of it. He tells us the same lesson we heard from the Psalmist: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there

your heart will be also.” For where your pledge goes (Christ Church), there will your heart also go. In this house of God, where Faith is contagious, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Invest in the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, in this place, at this time, and here will your heart be also.

How do I know that the Kingdom of Heaven has drawn near? What have I seen here? I’ve seen All God’s Children. I’ve seen Richard’s prophecy of 29 new people walking into this church. I have seen Lana give a sermon I could never give. I have seen women we never knew before stand right here at this lectern and speak the word of God to us directly from their hearts. Some of their children are struggling with disabilities most of us do not understand, and yet they hear the promise of a loving God for their children and for themselves. They are not the children of a lesser God, they are the children of our very own loving God. And so are we. We ARE All God’s Children. Every one of us.

Last week one of the moms, Leonette, reminded us that her autistic son was born for a purpose, that God knew him in her womb. You were born for a purpose too. You have a role to play in this Kingdom of Heaven. I will invest in that promise. I’m asking you to invest too.

Jesus continued: "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, (generous) your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, (stingy) your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise

the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” You cannot serve both God and Mammon. Money itself is not evil. But the love of money is the root of all evil. (Timothy 6:10)

Saving our money is not evil. We need to store up some treasure on Earth to get us through those rainy days, to pay for college, to fund our retirements, to pay for health care, etc. But don’t put your trust in those savings to save you. Only God can save you. The Dow Jones Index fell 40%, but your salvation index is still 100%. Do not fall for materialism, putting value into things that cannot satisfy what your soul longs for. We are spirits in the material world, but don’t get caught up in materialism. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his soul? (Mark 8:36)

Do not look for happiness in your relationship with money, and with what it can buy. Didn’t you hear the Psalmist? Remember the rich man, who asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life? Jesus told him to sell what he had, give to the poor, take up the cross and follow Jesus, and he would have treasure in Heaven. But the rich man did not. His relationship with God and his relationship with money were not aligned.

Several months back, I asked if you would come up here and stand with me as we proclaimed together “With God’s help, I pledge to own this church.” And you did. Now I’m asking you to put your money where your heart is, and to spiritually and literally pledge to own this church. I told you earlier I would be assigning homework, here it comes. Take a pledge card from God’s holy table here, in God’s house, and take it back to your house. Examine your

relationships with God and money; pray that Jesus will help you discern your financial role within his Bride the Church. In the next three 3 weeks, or by December 7th at the latest, bring that card back here and place it in the collection plate. But remember, we put it in the plate quietly, solemnly, without fanfare. "When you give to needy people, do not announce it by having trumpets blown. Do not be like those who only pretend to be holy. They announce what they do in the synagogues and on the streets. They want to be honored by others. What I'm about to tell you is true. They have received their complete reward."

Giving can be relative, but watch out for rationalizations. The widow gave two mites, maybe 50 cents today, and Jesus praised her. But the rich man, and those who made a show of their giving, they all gave much more than two mites, but what did Jesus say to them? It can be relative. But the trap for us lies in rationalization. Hey, others have more than me, and they don't give as much as I do, or maybe don't even go to church. They live in a bigger house than me, have more money, etc. Just look out the back window here. Yet what did we hear the Psalmist say? "Do not be envious when some become rich, or when the grandeur of their house increases; for they will carry nothing away at their death, nor will their grandeur follow them. Though they thought highly of themselves while they lived, and were praised for their success, They shall join the company of their forebears, who will never see the light again." Ouch. Tough words. No joke.

If you go home and do your homework, and you examine your relationship with God and money, and you come to the conclusion that

you should tithe, meaning 10%, then by all means tithe. But I will not call you a tither. I will call you a Christian giver. If you conclude you should give some other percentage, be it more or less than 10%, I will call you a Christian giver. If you go home and pray about this until you can see the face of Jesus looking you right in the eyes, then remember what he said "If your eyes are generous then your whole body will be full of light." He, who has eyes to see, let him see.

Don't give because you think it is required, give because your eyes are healthy, give because you want to invest in the Kingdom of Heaven, give because you see others here giving contagiously of their money and of their spirits and of their faith and you want to catch that Spirit too. Give because you see children, and parents, abled and disabled, hearing the Word and disabled, hearing the Word and experiencing the love of God. **Give what you have decided in your heart, not with regret or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** And we love you, too. Amen.



Fall in Maine

Picture and Poem by Elena Mastroianni

The day began with the snap and
sizzle of bacon frying,
Breakfast - a cup of tea, orange
juice, scrambled eggs,
And buttered, crisp rye toast.
The dishes done, we headed out the
door.

The scent of pine tickled our noses,
The trees around the cabin wore an
artist's palette of colors:
Yellows, oranges, and reds of many
hues.
The bright colors made a cheery
scene.

We meandered down the path
And paused by the pinecone strewn
sandy beach.
We watched the water as it lapped
gently against the sand
As it usually did early in the day
before the
Winds arrived and made white caps
on the lake.

We hiked up the hill on the dirt
driveway and tried not to
huff and puff.
We listened as the birds sang their
morning songs.
We saw Indian Pipes growing in a
waxy clump
Among the pine needles on the
forest floor
And marveled at their colorless
beauty.

We rode into Belfast on Route 3,
And under the overpass and onto
Route 1.

We passed the road to Young's
Lobster Pound where we planned
to eat a lunch of lobster, clams,
and corn on the cob while sitting
on the deck of the restaurant.

We would watch the sailboats bob in
the Penobscot River

And take pictures of the scenic 19 th
century town across the way.

Its main street leading up from the
harbor past old brick buildings
Being gentrified by a new
generation.

The scenic turnoff at the edge of
town was empty of cars and
people.

The bench seemed to be waiting just
for us to sit a spell.

A perfect place for my friend and
me.

We sat there and watched the
sailboats scudding by,
The ocean going freighters on their
way to dock in Searsport, and
The lobster boats coming in with
their catch.

Once in a while, one of us would
point out something of interest,
But mostly we enjoyed listening to
the sounds around us.

An invisible cloak of serenity settled
over us; each of us lost in our own
thoughts, but connected by the
silence.

We needed no words between us,
the two of us,
My friend and me.

After an hour or so others arrived;
we knew it was time to go, so they
could enjoy the same comfort and
peace that had descended upon
us as we sat there.

We knew we could return again and
again to that same spot; it would
always be there for us, my friend
and me.

Photo by Elena Mastroianni, Rt. 1 Belfast, ME

What a Difference a Word Makes

by Lana Liu

My thyroid saga began in the spring of 2004 during my annual physical. The doctor was new—with a name uncannily similar to my brother's (who also was known to cause me grief during periods of my young life, as big brothers are prone to do)—and extremely thorough. She felt a nodule in my neck. So began the tests, each returning with the diagnosis: “inconclusive.” By the third one I was with an endocrinologist (with a name you wouldn't believe if I told you) who recommended I have my thyroid removed. When she went along with my request for a delay of several months, I was encouraged. No rush had to be good. Time to pray, then. Time to try some highly recommended supplements. Time to do Christmas and a retirement party for Tony. Blessed time.

The January 2005 surgery went well; the recovery was pretty straightforward. Little did I know, however, what would be required next! Thyroid gland removal is never complete. Because of its strategic placement, the surgeon necessarily must leave some cells behind. Getting rid of said cells requires being made hypo-thyroid—i.e. going off all synthetic thyroid hormones—and then taking radioactive iodine which will be absorbed by any remaining cells causing them to light up on the scan, thus betraying their presence. Present cells then require elevated levels of radioactive iodine to get thoroughly zapped.

This was not fun. Take a moment to thank God for your thyroid and its glorious hormones that are doing things for you you don't realize!

By the end of the two months of this, I still harbored some thyroid cells. Whether they were cancerous or not was uncertain, but that they had survived this onslaught of radioactivity was certain.

Sometime after this I was reading along in Psalm 37. I love Psalm 37. I had been blessed by the beginning verses so often, but that particular morning I was reading through to parts that weren't as familiar and came to verse 35. “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a native green tree.” I stopped. Hm-m. The wicked. Spreading himself. What an apt description of cancer, I thought. I returned to the psalm. The end of verse 34 said, “When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.” Well, I hadn't literally seen it—thankfully!-- but I was certainly there, and I did see the pathology report. Then in verse 36 I read, “Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more; indeed I sought him, but he could not be found.” Ah, now here was something I truly wanted to believe. Was God telling me this? I felt as if I was more involved in reasoning this through than I usually am when I sense God is speaking to me. But it seemed so pertinent to my situation.

In May of 2007 we began “Let's Get Rid of These Cells—Part 2.” By then I was here at Christ Church with a healing prayer team ready, willing, and able—sitting right there!-- waiting for me to come. (My advice: Never pass up an opportunity for healing prayer!) Richard's word to me that April 15th morning was “...the miracle will be in the process somehow.” And was it ever! Compared to that first round, this was remarkable; and I have remarked on it repeatedly. I had energy, a light spirit, an appetite, decent sleep, minimal

headaches. The difference could not have been more profound.

During that season I confessed to a group of praying friends my doubts about that word from Psalm 37. I wondered aloud if I had just made that into a word from God because I wanted it to be. A wise woman suggested I ask God about this, which I did. Before long He had answered with two further scriptures that just reached out and captured my attention: Ephesians 5:26 "...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." and Psalm 130:5b "...And in His word I do hope." This was sufficient evidence for me; I climbed back up onto Psalm 37 and rested there.

But in the end the scan showed cells remaining; and this time, in two places.

Fast forward to the fall of 2008. I entered this third episode with a positive attitude—after all, hadn't the last time been remarkably good? So certainly this one should be, too. And maybe this would be the one where they would "seek him (it), but he (it) could/would not be found."

It is over now. He could not be found! Hallelujah! Now I know that all along Psalm 37:34-36 was referring to November 18, 2008. (Isn't it the times and dates that always elude us, that always mess with our faith? No wonder God has to say "Wait" so often!)

But what an ordeal to get to that day of good news and then to get back to the land of the living. Ugh. (Of course, there had been no word that it would be otherwise this time!) Now, though, I am realizing that had it not been for that remarkable second episode, I would have been inclined to quit

because I believed I could live without knowing. Now I see that God wanted the whole process completed and His whole word fulfilled. My joy in the good news was as much in experiencing His word to me fulfilled as in being cleared of those cells.

I've known this scripture from Isaiah for years. Now I know it by experience—the way God always intends for us to know His things.

For as the rain comes down,
and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there,
But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and
bud,
That it may give seed to the
sower
And bread to the eater,
So shall My word be that goes
forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I
please,
And it shall prosper in the
thing for which I sent it.
Isaiah 55:10-11

Indeed, what a difference a word makes.

By the way, thank you so very much for every one of your prayers--
Pastor Darlene, my Captivating
friends, all of you; what a blessing
you are!

Cook's Nook

Treasured Family Memories

By Gerianne Murphy

Many of you know that I enjoy baking and that I find it relaxing. I've recently stopped to think about why that is. What I came to realize is that when I'm baking, I feel a sense of comfort and warmth - and it's not from the oven!

I have a large collection of cookbooks and recipes, but the ones I find myself making the most often are the ones that have come from my Grandmother (we called her Nanny), or things I have made with my Dad. Nanny has been gone for more than 30 years, yet I still feel very connected to her when I bake some of the recipes that came from her, especially Banana Nut Bread, Russian Coffee Cake, and Flat Apple Pie. Those were childhood favorites, and I can still picture her sitting at her kitchen counter, with a great big smile and a sparkle in her blue eyes, mixing up all those wonderful treasures. She was a big woman who shook when she laughed - and she laughed often and heartily!

Nanny taught me about cakes, but my Dad taught me about yeast and bread. We had some pretty funny moments baking bread! The flops

can be just as much fun as the successes. There was a great deal of joy just working together. About a month after my Dad passed away in 1996, I was baking a coffee cake with a new brand of yeast. Things were not going as I expected. The dough just wasn't rising, until it suddenly started rising way too

much. I found myself laughing until tears rolled down my face and I knew, and felt that Dad was watching and laughing heartily along with me.

When I bake and see others enjoying the results, I feel that I am honoring them, what I've learned from them, and the sheer joy of having been able to bake with them.

Please enjoy two of my favorites:

Banana Nut Bread

3 Mashed Bananas

1 Cup Sugar

1 Egg

1 Tablespoon milk

1 Teaspoon baking soda

1/2 Teaspoon baking powder

2 Cups flour

1/2 Cup walnuts

Mix all of the ingredients and pour into a small greased loaf pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 45-60 minutes. This is about the simplest recipe I've ever seen, and it sure does taste good!

Russian Coffee Cake

Filling: Mix together and set aside

3/4 Cup chopped nuts

1/2 Cup sugar

2 Teaspoons cinnamon

Cake:

1/2 pound butter (2 sticks)

2 Cups of Flour

2 Teaspoons Baking Soda

2 Teaspoons Baking Powder

1 Pint Sour Cream

2 Teaspoons Vanilla

Directions:

Cream together the butter and 2 cups sugar. Add the eggs and combine.

Add the flour mixture alternately with the sour cream and vanilla beginning and ending with the flour mixture.

Spread half of the batter in a large greased baking pan (I use a 13 X 9). Top with half of the filling mixture, then add and spread the rest of the batter. Top with the rest of the filling mixture.

Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes or until done. Mine is never done in 45 minutes! If in doubt, give it another 5 minutes.

Next deadline to submit articles, poems, stories, pictures, recipes, original art work, etc. for the **winter edition** of the **Christ Episcopal Church Gazette** is **March 8, 2009**. Publishing date will be Sunday, March 15, 2009. Please check us out on the web page!

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