

# The Christ Episcopal Church Gazette



Christ Episcopal Church  
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Winter, 2009

## **The Pastor's Nook**

By Rev. Dr. Darlene Tittle

On January 24, 2009 I announced to the Vestry on our retreat that I would be leaving Christ Church of June 30. This was a difficult decision and one that took much thought and prayer. I have come to love the people of Christ Church and enjoy serving with you all. Although there were many indications that our time together was coming to a close, especially when the position became part-time, it was still somewhat of a surprise to our Vestry. On May 24 I will have completed five years as your Rector. When I came to Christ Church my goals for ministry were: to assist this congregation's healing from wounds of the past and the past five years spent without a Rector; and focus on developing a mission statement and goals for outreach and mission.

I am satisfied to leave Christ Church at this time because the congregation is growing the thriving. I feel confident that people of Christ Church are well prepared to move forward in ministry. I believe that the momentum we have experienced over the past year and a half will continue. There is true unity among us and a desire to grow our church. The Vestry has taken on more leadership of the congregation and each person in the church is finding his or her way to serve.

I hope you will take time to ask questions and support your Vestry as they take the next steps in the process of praying and working toward calling your next priest. We

also plan to celebrate our life together during the Spring months in various forms. Saying good-bye will not be easy, but it is the sign of the loving and caring ministry we all have done together.

## **A Church Within You**

By Ray Bonker

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts always be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen. We have heard the news, and it sounds bad. Turn on the TV, and hear about the economic crisis, hear about the layoffs, the foreclosures, the Ponzi schemes, along with the usual crimes, earthquakes, wars, and rumors of war. Turn off the TV, come to church, and for those who have ears to hear, we hear the news, and it sounds bad here too. Death lurks in the shadows, as we fear for the lives of those within our community, within our own families. You know the names: Bill, Carol, and Uncle Bob. Even as we pray for their healing, we remember those who have already gone before us. You know the names, Sharon, Richard, Christine, Suzanne, Shirley, Ralph's nephew. Just this week, I had to add another name to my own list. My golf partner and former Scoutmaster, Don, died on Monday. Don and my father were half of my regular Sunday afternoon foursome, and now Koz and I are left to grieve, bemoaning the sight of an empty golf cart that Dad and Don used to ride along with us. And death is not the only news. We have church members and family who struggle with ailments and maladies and

heartaches and addictions. Lost jobs, broken limbs, adult children with big problems and little children with big challenges. Some of the names are on the prayer list, and some are just burned deep into our hearts, some we share with others, and some we just chose to carry within. But you all know who they are in your own lives, including yourself.

And then we got the news 2 weeks back that Darlene has chosen to fully retire at the end of June. I got the news when I was on vacation in Florida, and my immediate reaction was “Oh, shhhhhhhoot” but perhaps with a more vernacular substitution used. I interpreted the message as more bad news. Another straw to break the camel’s back. And then the cascade of concerns came pouring down: another search committee process, what about the rectory, what about the costs, can we find an interim, full-time, part-time, what about AGC, how will the congregation react, oh no, oh no, oh no. Bad news. Or so I thought. (Buzzer.) Wrong answer. Brothers and sisters, we are not the church of bad news, we are the church of good news, of THE good news. We are not children of the darkness, we are the children of Light. We do not believe in circumstances, we believe in substance. We grieve for the departed, but we believe they have been elevated to the holy places, unbound by time and space and malady and strife. We have buried and burned their earthly bodies, but we believe their spirit lives on and above and beyond us now and forever. We do not believe this just because we would like it to be true. We believe this because a man came to us from God himself and told us it was true. And in the way he lived while on this Earth, and even more so in the way he chose to die, he showed us it was true, and by his death and resurrection he made it true, for us and for those who we

yet grieve. Oh no, the news is not bad, the news is good, very good indeed, even in the face of our difficulties. For we are not alone, and we will not be abandoned, for we know that our Redeemer liveth, we know that the Word has walked as we walk, and suffered as we suffer, and yet the Word has triumphed over the circumstances with substance. The Word has defeated Death with life, life everlasting and abundant, and all we have to do is say yes. We know the names of those who have died, and we know the names of those who are suffering, and we know the names we carry within our hearts, but most of all, we know the name of Jesus Christ, the first born of Joseph and Mary, and the firstborn of all creation. We know that at the name of Jesus all bow down in heaven and on earth, for in the name of Jesus we have our hope, our faith, and our salvation. We have good news. God our Father created us, Jesus his Son redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit dwells within us as the first gift for those who believe. We are the church of the good news.

Now I would like to say Amen and sit down. But my sermon today isn’t focused on our dead, our dying, our ailments, or even on Darlene’s imminent departure from us. My sermon isn’t even principally concerned with our fundamental belief in the power of Jesus to save us, even though that thought is never far from our hearts. Today, I want to pick up on something we all heard from a guest preacher we heard here a few weeks back, a friend of Darlene’s. To tell you the truth, I was disappointed in his sermon, but he did say one thing, almost off-handed, that shot right through me immediately, and it intrigued and inspired me to the point where I don’t think I really heard much else of what he said. He was debunking the write up Darlene placed in the outreach about him, he said it wasn’t

quite true that he started an entire church with one of his high school students in his basement, but the error was also besides the point, because after all “We all have a church within ourselves.”

Let’s chew on that thought together for a few minutes. There is an echo of one of the central themes in all Christianity, and certainly one of the main themes of Darlene’s ministry with us these 5 years, in the parallel idea that the Holy Spirit of God dwells within us, and always has, from our baptism, and even from our creation. As we heard this morning from Isaiah “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.” Created by God the Father, redeemed by Jesus our Savior, and invested with the Holy Spirit. That is our Christian belief, and we profess it, informally to friends, formally when we recite the Nicene Creed together. Hear it “We believe in one God, We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, we believe in the Holy Spirit.” But the Creed does not end there. The next section says “We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.” Whoa, slow down, hang on a second here. Father, Son, Holy Ghost, no problem. But do I BELIEVE in one holy, catholic and apostolic church? Those were the words that always seemed to get caught in my throat. One church? That’s a pretty big stretch. The history of Christianity is the story of many churches, Roman, Greek, Lutheran, Anglican, Evangelical, Methodist, Presbyterian, Mormon, Unitarian, Adventist, Baptist, on and on. Doesn’t sound like one church to me. One holy catholic church – I have to remind myself over and over that it does NOT say one holy Roman Catholic church. That word catholic actually means whole, or complete, in Greek, and Anglican Christians say that their churches are catholic in the sense that they are in

continuity with the original universal church founded by the apostles. So, in that sense, OK on the catholic. How about apostolic? Apostle in Greek means “one who is sent out” with a message. The apostolic church began as Jesus sent out his 12 apostles to the 4 corners of the world, to deliver the message of salvation. Jesus laid his hands upon them, they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (wind), and off they went, laying hands upon the next apostles, and preaching the good news, and then the next generation laid on hands, and so on, and so on, right through 2000 years of Christendom to Rev. Richard Constantinos and Rev. Darlene and Bishop Mark Beckwith and you and me.

OK then, one holy, catholic and apostolic church. Do we believe in it? We believe that the church is the bride of Christ on Earth, the body of all believers with Jesus at the head. Specifically, we are living members of the Episcopal Church USA, within the worldwide Anglican Communion. And even more specifically, we are proud members of Christ Church Budd Lake, this shining light upon a Mount Olive hilltop, a vision of those who came before us which has, by the grace of God and the sweat of man and woman, become this magnificent worship space. And Amen to that. But this is not a sermon about our building, beautiful as it is. This physical church is our dwelling place for worship, but there is a church that dwells within us that must animate this holy house. We know the Spirit lives within us, making a holy temple of our bodies. But push further with me now: how do we understand the church WITHIN us? How do we understand the guest preacher’s line “We all have a church within ourselves?” There are some classic examples. Although it was not his intent, there was a church within Martin Luther.

Like Abraham's descendents, numerous as the stars, the entire Protestant church emerged, in part, from the faith convictions of one lowly German monk who could not accept some of the teachings and practices of the Holy Roman Church of his day. Think of St. Patrick, converting the Irish Isle for Christ, a legacy that endures to this day, looming large in the many Americans of Irish heritage. Even Joseph Smith, while I don't exactly sing his praises, clearly began an American church which grew to become Mormonism today. For these men, we could almost literally say that a church dwelled, and emerged, from within them. Of course, each man was but a small copy of the ultimate example of Jesus himself beginning THE church on earth.

There are other examples that might speak more strongly to us. In some ways, our former Rector Rick and all the generations of Stanhope faithful had this church dwelling within them, as they made the hard decisions and sacrifices to turn a vision into a reality. Each of us, with every envelope we drop into the plate, and with every meeting we attend, every song we sing and every task we volunteer to complete, is also a living example of having a church within us.

Now I want to challenge your memory. Try to remember your own very first impression of the idea of "church." What do you remember? Or perhaps more accurately, WHO do you remember? Maybe it was Sunday school as a kid, or maybe it was the Sunday school teacher. Try to recall your first conception of the idea of church. Who introduced you to the church? Was it Mom? Dad? Grandma maybe. A kid on the bus talking about his CCD class? A wedding, funeral, baptism, or other sacramental event? I would venture

that most of you were introduced to "church" by someone who loved you, who wanted you to share in the knowledge of the love of God and in the security of salvation through Christ Jesus. When that introduction occurred, that person was revealing the church within themselves as well. Somebody once introduced Rick Warren to the church, and now he has raised up a literal church of his own in California, plus a metaphysical church in all the people who read his book about the Purpose-Driven Life. There was a church within Warren before he founded Saddleback Church, before he wrote that book. And it was there because someone else, within the holy, catholic and apostolic church, introduced him to "church" and then Warren let the church within him burst out.

Do you hear what I am telling you? You already knew the Holy Spirit was dwelling within you. You already knew you were a member, in whatever way you defined it, of Christ Church, Budd Lake and the holy, catholic and apostolic church worldwide. But you also have a church within you. This church lives within you. All of your historical experiences with other churches, good or not so good, live within you. You are a member of the body of Christ. What you say and what you do can give birth to many others to share in the experience of church. Future generations could look back and identify YOU as the inspiration for their concept of church.

Let me make this very concrete. When those kids come stumbling in here for All God's Children, they are being introduced to the very idea of what church is. They are hearing about God, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, some for the first time. How is that possible? Because we all have a church within ourselves that we are willing to share with them! Both physically and spiritually, we are

opening our doors and our hearts to let the little children come unto Him who calls us to be his apostles. Now we do not know how some of these kids are processing this introduction to church. Some may think this is a great place to ride in a canoe. But the mustard seeds are being planted, and we know not how they might grow in the future. Could one of these kids grow up to become the next Martin Luther, or the next Martin Luther King? Or the next Rick Warren, or the next Rick Constantinos? And if we are really lucky, maybe the next Carole Zicherman or Carol Pollio? Who knows what these kids will grow up to accomplish for the church? Who knows what all of God's children staring at me right now might do, when you decide to grow up in this church?

As much as we loved him, when Rick left we came to understand that the priest is not the church. And as much as we love her, we already know that Darlene is not the church. WE are the church. Christ is the head. The good news of salvation is the message. We believe in one God, one Christ, one Holy Spirit, and we BELIEVE in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, because we ARE one holy, catholic, and apostolic church, Christ Church, Budd Lake. We are the church of the good news. So let the Word go forth! And thanks be to God. Amen.

### **This I Believe**

(Written for my son on the eve of his retreat to ponder life.)

By Lana Liu

There is a God. One God.  
An entity like no other.  
A Being of total power  
and complete goodness.

A Being Who is Life and, therefore, the source of life. A Being Who is Love and, therefore, the source of love.

This One—God—created us to love us as family, to have sweet eternal intimate relationship with us.

We say “No thanks” and run after lesser, empty loves. By leaving Life, we die. By leaving Love, we cry.

To win us back He put Himself in our midst. Life, Love, Goodness, Peace and Joy walked around making real footprints. Then He crawled under every declaration of independence and died with the weight of Love rejected.

The dying drained the rebellion and Life arose. The offer to love us as family, to have sweet eternal intimate relationship with us again surfaces. The offer. An offer we can refuse. Again. Or not.

Accepting the offer lifts the dying and crying into a heavenly Lap of Love, and Life begins.

### **You Have to Know**

By Elizabeth Bonker

It doesn't matter who you are  
It doesn't matter if you stray far.  
God is always there for you  
In spite of what you may do.  
His love is stronger than anyone can  
know.  
You just have to know to go to God.

## **My Ultimate Joy**

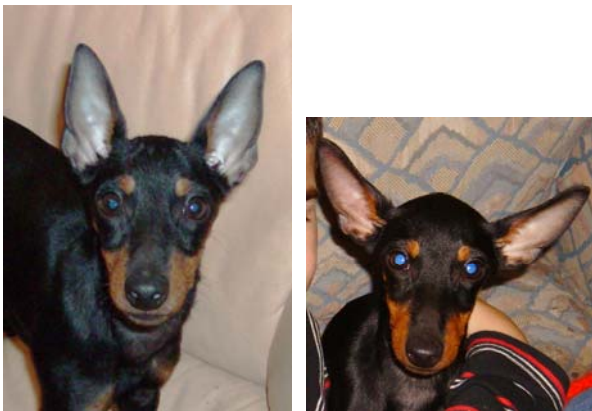
By Tara Mazzawy

November 13, 2008 started out as a very sad day. My puppy, Speck, had finally succumbed to his chronic leukemia. What we believed to be a 6 week miracle was exactly that – a time for us to grow to accept his absence. How could such a tiny little creature create such a huge hole in our family? He was just a dog, yes, but he was 10 days away from his first birthday. In the seven plus months we had him, he was pure love, and expensive vet bills. His last night with us was especially bittersweet for me. After 2 days of refusing food, he was laying down, lethargic and weak all day.

Wednesday night, I didn't want to sleep. I crawled onto the floor with him, and Speck stood up, stretched, and yawned. All he'd done was sleep, so he wasn't tired ... but then, he climbed into my lap and kissed me. His eyes were glassy and his ears were getting cold. I knew, settling him down, that he had given me his final goodbye. While I laid Speck down with a hug and kiss goodnight, and a silent prayer to die peacefully, I knew I'd wake up to miss him. Thursday morning came too soon. Speck was gone, as I'd expected, and I prepared to take him to Abbey Glen to be cremated. I cleaned up all Speck's puppy things before the kids got up. I was numb preparing him, though. Miraculously, Our loving Father gave me strength to get through the task and get the kids off to school. We cried. It was such a sad morning. I went to Abbey Glen directly from the bus stop. Knowing what I had to do, I drove with almost no recollection of how I got to where I was going. I walked in with puffy eyes and a heavy heart to say goodbye to my little angel. The ladies there were so kind and compassionate. In speaking to them, I felt as if they really cared about what we had gone through. Our family has used their services in

the past. I mentioned the previous pet tragedies I'd been through to the kind woman helping me. I had a Toy Fox Terrier that passed away on Christmas day a few years back, and many years before, I had a Toy Manchester Terrier that got hit by a car. With the mention of a Toy Manchester Terrier, I was introduced to another young lady in the office. She shared my name, Tara, and she, too, had a Toy Manchester Terrier. Her little puppy was a bundle of nerves. She needed so much attention that Tara felt she couldn't give her. She offered for me to hold her, and this adorable warm black and tan bundle snuggled right into me. She eventually stuck her pointy little snout right into the crook of my elbow and fell asleep. While the two ladies shared a knowing glance, Tara mentioned that this new pup needed a home that could lavish attention on such a little, needy dog. Of course, with my sadness and vulnerability, I should've run out of the room ... but then one of the women said something to me that further showed me how God works in mysterious ways. "Where you entered with grief, you leave with Joy," she said. That is how I found out this pup's name – JOY. So, I did indeed leave with her. She has warmed my heart from the first moment I held her. She brings such personality and love to us all, too. We still miss Speck, but to have a wet nose cuddle up to you and look at you as if to say "thank you for letting me love you guys," I know we gave God a chance to show us something. Grief is temporary. When you trust in God to get you through, sometimes His messengers might be covered in fur with puppy breath, wearing adorable little sweaters and wagging their tails. God will always give us little reminders that love lives on in many forms. I still see Speck's pictures and cry sometimes, but I know he's waiting for me at the Rainbow

Bridge. I have another wonderful story that Speck left with me. All the times I was able to speak of God's healing power and miracles on Earth because of Speck's extended 6 weeks with us, God was preparing us to say both goodbye and hello in the same day. I entered with grief, and left with Joy. Speck's final miracle was finding us a new little furry baby. We thank God for our pets and what they bring to our lives. And we thank God for Speck, who in his short life, was such a testimony for us. Of course, we thank God for Joy, too, who has given us much joy and assistance through our grief. God always gives each of us joy ... but my ultimate Joy barks loudly and follows me around. What a perfect story, right? We think so!



### **A Letter from Amanda Thompson**

I wanted to take a moment to share something with you. Because of the All God's Children Services that my family went to last year (we didn't get to them all, but we managed to get to several of them), I want to let you know of a positive accomplishment. For years, I didn't go to my home church because it was just too hard to manage both of my kids with special needs with feeling uncomfortable with the noises that my son makes that other people would be disturb and for myself to be able to attend the church service while managing his and my daughter's behaviors. I was also reluctant to attend because

there didn't seem to be a place in Sunday School for my son any more because he was too big for the nursery and can't really attend a traditional class.

Since attending the All God's Children Service, it gave me the confidence to be able to try it again with my church. My kids are a little bit older now, which helps, but I saw how well they did at the AGC services. They did make noise and fidget, but for the most part followed along with everything and really seemed relaxed and enjoyed the service. It was such a relief for me to attend church and get something out of it. What I felt from all of you there was a complete acceptance and LOVE! You were so accepting of me and my children and it just made me feel like we had a second family. You welcomed us back each time with familiarity and joy, just that we were back again and I can't tell you what that meant to me. My daughter still talks about the Easter service where she got a great basket that we still have! So we have been attending my home church now since September and I rejoined the vocal choir there (I was part of it years ago and haven't been able to join again for some time). The Sunday School teachers are working with us, asking about ways they can engage my son and help other kids' awareness of him. My husband is bringing my son and staying for longer periods of time each week. One of the women teaching his class works with kids with autism, so she is very comfortable with my son.

Three Sundays ago, when my husband brought our son back down to the sanctuary after being in Sunday School about five minutes, the pastor was in the middle of her sermon. She stopped and said "Welcome back Matt – we love to hear your wonderful noises," to which my son made a noise! Everyone laughed and in that

moment, I felt so accepted there and that everything would be okay. Now many people have come up to me and asked about Matt's progress, talked to me about both of my kids and their challenges, and generally made me feel so welcome again to my own church. I always knew I was welcome – I had played the handbells in the church choir for 15 years and I was christened and married there, but I guess I wasn't sure that my kids would be as welcome. That was probably silly on my part, but I guess I just wasn't ready to try and I didn't give them a chance. The AGC service was the thing that made me feel as though I could do it and should do it, for myself and my family. It gave context for church, we get dressed up and we go and sit and listen and be active and most of all that people loved them. I want to thank you so much for this incredible service you have given to us, as parents of kids with special needs.

While it is a good thing that I have rejoined the choir and we are all more involved in our church, it does mean we won't be able to attend AGC services very often now, but I plan for us to at least come once this season to the place that so readily opened their arms to accept us and to thank you all in person.

Sincerely,  
Amanda Thompson  
(and Jack, Cassie, and Matt!)

## **Vestry Retreat at Crossroads**

By ElenaMastroianni

It was a freezing cold day in January and the roads in Crossroads were ice-coated. The heat in the building was negligible, but luckily there was a supply of chopped wood on the porch and a small wood burning stove in the "living room" of the building. Vestry members, who had previously attended retreats, encouraged those who had never

been there, to bring pillows and blankets. Everyone brought food to graze on throughout the day. Lunch was provided and as the paths were ice-coated we supported one another as we made the trek from one building to another!

Rev. Darlene Tittle provided a program for us to follow. The day was spent with prayers, Bible study and meditation. We discussed new beginnings for the congregation, and making new people feel welcome.

Rev. Dr. Darlene Tittle shared with us that she would be departing Christ Episcopal Church in June. Tears were shed over Darlene's departure, but also the knowledge that the Bishop and his staff will work with us to find an individual who will fit the needs of Christ Church.

## **Cooks Nook Egyptian Cooking**

By Tammy Fahmi

As a first generation Egyptian, my mom has handed down many traditional Egyptian recipes. Since I am no where near the genius she is in the kitchen, over the years I have asked her to write down as many of her recipes as possible. I also did that because whenever I asked her how to make something, her consistent answer (no matter how difficult or complicated the recipe) has always been, "it's easy, you can do it," and then she would proceed to tell me, from the top of her head, the ingredients and how to do it step by step. She would say, "add a little of this and some of that and then..." The next inevitable response/question from me was, "well, exactly how much of this and that ...and what is that you do next?" My mom has always known how much of this and that is needed (and not just in the kitchen, but for most of life's complicated questions and situations). I, on the other hand,

haven't! Thus, I have, in her own handwriting, forced her to decide actual measurements to all of her recipes, and I will share a few with you here. I hope you enjoy them as much as my family does!

### Mezza (Appetizers)

#### **Babaghanouj – Eggplant Dip**

1 large round eggplant  
¾ tsp. lemon juice  
¼ cup of vinegar  
1 ½ cups tihini sauce  
1 tsp. chopped garlic  
1 tsp. cumin  
1 tbsp. olive oil  
1 tbsp. finely chopped parsley

Bake or roast the eggplant for 19-20 minutes or until it is soft, and immerse immediately in cold water with the lemon juice to preserve the color. When cold, peel, drain the juice, and mash the pulp until paste-like. Add all other ingredients **except parsley and olive oil** and mix thoroughly. Place in serving dish and sprinkle top with olive oil and parsley. Serve with pita chips.

#### **Humus - Chickpea Dip**

1 cup of chickpeas (canned)  
1 cup of tihini sauce  
¼ cup of lemon juice  
1 tsp. chopped garlic  
1 tsp. cumin powder  
Parsley leaves  
1 tbsp. of olive oil

In a blender, blend chickpeas, tihini sauce, lemon juice, garlic and cumin. Blend to a smooth paste. Place in a serving dish and sprinkle top with parsley leaves and olive oil. Serve with pita chips. And, in anticipation of summer barbecuing, here's a simple recipe (I know, I'm starting to sound like my mom!) for barbecued chicken marinade, Egyptian style:

2 onions, peeled and chopped in a food processor

5 crushed garlic cloves  
2 tbsps. of olive oil  
Salt and pepper to taste

Mix ingredients together and then marinate the chicken for at least 3 hours.

Enjoy!

The **Christ Episcopal Church Gazette** will publish four times a year: summer, fall, winter, and spring. It can also be found on the church web site: [www.christchurchbuddlake.org](http://www.christchurchbuddlake.org)

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Editor: Elena Mastroianni

**Next deadline** to submit articles, poems, stories, pictures, recipes, original art work, etc. for the **spring edition** of the Christ Episcopal Church Gazette is **Sunday, May 31**. Publishing date will be **June 14, 2009**.

#### **Think Spring!**

