

Services

Sunday

8:00 am Eucharist with hymns
9:00 am Fellowship
9:15 am Adult Forum
10:00 am Sunday School
10:15 am Sung Eucharist
11:15 am Fellowship

Wednesday

10:00 am Eucharist (Chapel)

Daily

7:30 am Morning Prayer
(Chapel)
9:00 am Friday Morning
Prayer (Chapel)
(no Saturday service)

Music Rehearsals

St. Thomas Singers

Thursdays – 7:30 pm

Sundays – 9:15 am

Early Music Ensemble

Tuesdays, 4:00 – 5:00 pm

St. Thomas Choristers

Sundays, after 10:15 service

Calendar

December 1

World AIDS Day Luncheon
Seattle Convention Center

December 5

St. Nicholas Breakfast
9:30-11:00 am, Great Hall

December 2, 9, 16, 23

Advent Taizé Service
6:30-7:15 pm, Church
Godly Playdates 6:30-7:15 pm,
Childcare Room

Christmas Eve Holy Eucharist w/
Storytelling 4:00 pm

Holy Eucharist w/Sinfonia 7:00 pm

Holy Eucharist w/Sinfonia & Full

Choir 10:00 pm

Christmas Day

Holy Eucharist 10:00 am (only one
service)

December 27 Holy Eucharist

9:30 am (only one service)

December 31

New Year's Eve Gala 7:30 pm,
Church

THE

COLLECT

December 2009

St. Thomas Episcopal Church P.O. Box 124 Medina, WA 98039
425.454.9541 www.stthomasmedina.org

From the Rector

by the Reverend Alexander "Lex" Breckinridge

Advent comes in two parts. Early in the season, we look to the future, to the second coming of Jesus. We're invited to watch and pray for the consummation of the whole of the cosmos in Christ, the fulfillment of God's ultimate purpose for creation. As the season progresses, we turn back to the past, to the first coming of Jesus in Palestine 2000 years ago. We sing, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," and we exalt "God among us" who comes with both complete humility and great power.

This Advent our focus on both the first and second comings, past and future, brings with it the invitation to focus on our individual lives, past and future. We're usually all too happy to ignore the call to conversation and transformation in this season that points towards the reality of the Incarnation. So we jump into the usual round of shopping and partying and shopping and closing out the business year, and did I mention shopping? We're like the commuter that Harry Emerson Fosdick encountered on a train once long ago.

If you're of a certain age, you'll remember Harry Emerson Fosdick as the pastor of Riverside Church in New York and a best-selling author. After moving to the suburbs late in his ministry, he began to take the train into his Manhattan office every morning. He soon noticed a particular fellow who seemed to catch the same train

and who had a curious ritual. As the train would pass 128th Street, the man would always pull down the window shade. After observing this behavior for some months, Fosdick one day found himself seated next to the man. Sure enough, at 128th Street, the shade came down and Fosdick could restrain his curiosity no longer. "Why do you always pull the window shade down at 128th Street?" he asked. "You see that slum?" the man replied. "I was born there and I find it very painful to be reminded of my childhood there. Besides, there's nothing I can do about it." After reflecting for a moment, Fosdick said, "Forgive my intrusion. But if you want to deal with your pain, you might want to begin by leaving the shade up."

Sound familiar? How often do we pull the shade down on our lives? How often do we want to block out painful memories of the past? How often do we want to hide our heads from a future that seems grim and foreboding? We spend an extraordinary amount of energy shutting out the past and avoiding the future. And so we shop and work or distract ourselves with lots of unhealthy and compulsive behavior. We pull the shade down.

But Advent is the time, the beginning of the New Year, when we're called to raise the shade. It's precisely in the midst of

(continued on page 4)

Parish Life



Thank You

by Fred Pneuman, Property Committee

Despite the weather on October 17 that had us thinking about building an ark instead of working on the church facilities, 25 brave souls turned out to help at the annual fall clean-up day. The group included 20 parishioners plus five members of the Keith Highlanders Pipe Band. Even with the wet weather, we worked through a large list of “to do’s” and accomplished both outside and inside projects. Those parishioners participating were: Mike Allert, Doug Anderson, Brigitte Ashley, Fred Hayes, Mike Hayes, Darrell Lee, Larry Loranger, Lynn Luther, Margaret Maxwell, Tom Morgan, Joseph Murashie, Greg Murray, Mark Nelson, Fred Pneuman, Dick Rogers, John Starbard, Art Sullivan, Chris Vall-Spinosa, Pete Vall-Spinosa, and Jim Ward. Keith Highlanders were represented by: Doris Conare, Darlene Lewis-Chinn, Michael Martin, Joe Stewart, and Ann Stewart. Thank you all for a job well done.

Sarah Says Goodbye

To everyone at St. Thomas:

Over the last several months, I’ve been fortunate enough to spend some time as a temporary staff member here in the church office. That time is drawing to a close, but before leaving, I must express my appreciation for the kindness and friendliness I’ve experienced at St. Thomas. Although not a parish member, I’ve been warmly and genuinely welcomed by all, especially the ministry teams that contribute their time and effort to helping St. Thomas run so well.

The volunteer receptionists made my life so much easier as they handled the phone calls so I could learn my way around. Thank you so much, ladies – you were wonderful!

And the staff . . . I don’t have the words to say how much I’ve enjoyed working with everyone here. Father Lex, Josh, Gerry, Father Steve, Charles, Aileen, Virginia and Doug — each and every one was helpful and patient with all my questions and appreciative of my efforts.

Truthfully, I’ve enjoyed working here more than anywhere else throughout my career. It’s been a wonderful experience, and I thank you all.

Sarah Schoenfeld

[Editor’s Note: You may contact Sarah through her photography gallery website, <http://docpixel.com>, or via email at sarah@docpixel.com.]

Annual Wreath Making

The Altar Guild invites everyone to help make the beautiful wreaths that decorate the church for Christmas on December 19 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. We also need donations of evergreens, such as pine, fir, and juniper (NO hemlock). Please leave the greens in the close on the weekend of December 12-13, or during the following week. For more information, contact Gerda Middleton (425-454-8051).



Christmas Services



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24 (Christmas Eve)

4:00 pm: Holy Eucharist, Storytelling & Pageantry

7:00 pm: Holy Eucharist with Sinfonia

10:00 pm: Holy Eucharist with Sinfonia & Choir

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25 (Christmas Day)

10:00 am: Holy Eucharist (only one service)

SUNDAY, December 27

9:30 am: Holy Eucharist (only one service)

Meditative Chant Services in Advent

by Charles Rus, Associate for Liturgical Arts (Interim)

Please join us in the Great Hall from 6:30 to 7:15 pm each Wednesday evening in Advent (December 2, 9, 16, 23). We will be singing Taizé and other meditative chants to prepare us for the coming of Emmanuel, God within us, on Christmas. This short service will offer a moment of peace amidst an otherwise often hectic month. Josh Hosler will be providing Godly Playdates for children ages 4 to 9 in the child-care room during these services.

New Year’s Eve Gala

You are invited to our annual New Year’s Eve Gala on December 31 at 7:30 pm in St. Thomas Church. Our celebration features music from jazz to opera with some of the Northwest’s leading musicians, including our own Alyce Rogers and Charles Rus. Enjoy dessert and champagne after the concert in the Great Hall. Suggested donation is \$15. Invite your friends to a before or after dinner entertainment to welcome the new year. For more information, contact Alyce Rogers (425-646-9550).



Meet Laura Gregg Executive Assistant to the Rector



Laura Gregg is a Seattle native whose 40-year work life includes contributions to scientific research, forestry, chemical sales, the travel industry, health care, telecommunications, and a number of contract jobs for several other enterprises. Along the way, she has indulged in several hobbies such as theater technician and director, dancer and choreographer, musician, and miniature dollhouse crafter.

She completed her undergraduate work in 1970 at the University of Washington with a BA in theater arts and a secondary school teaching certificate. In 1979 she earned an MBA from Pepperdine University and has been an ASQ-Certified Manager of Quality/Organizational Excellence since 2000.

In 2007, she finished a one-year term as a VISTA volunteer in Salem, Oregon, where she was assigned to a microenterprise development program. She is married to Robert Gidley, an accomplished humorist and technical writer, who also did a year of service in Salem, supporting an organization that provides emergency housing for homeless families. In 2008, they returned joyfully to worship at their home parish of more than 20 years, Holy Cross Church in Redmond.

To all her work, Laura brings a servant's heart, a learner's mind, and a commitment to serve Jesus according to the baptismal covenant she has reaffirmed as an adult. She is looking forward to supporting all the ministries at St Thomas. Welcome, Laura.

Seattle Choral Company Presents "A Cathedral Christmas"

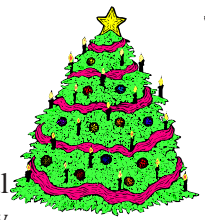
The Seattle Choral Company presents a seasonal concert of Christmas classics and holiday favorites in contemporary settings.

The concerts are scheduled for: Saturday, **December 5 at 3:00 pm**, Bastyr University Chapel, Kenmore; Friday, **December 11, 8:00 pm**, St. Mark's Cathedral; Saturday, **December 12, 8:00 pm**, St. Mark's Cathedral. Tickets: **In advance:** \$25.00 (general), \$20.00 (senior), and \$10.00 (under 25). **At the door:** \$27.00 (general), \$22.00 (senior), and \$12.00 (under 25).

Tickets available from Brown Paper Tickets at 800- 838-3006 or the Seattle Choral Company at seattlechoralcompany.org.

The Giving Tree

by Leslie Brewer



During the season of Advent, a wonderful way to prepare for the birth of Jesus is by participating in the St. Thomas 'Giving Tree' or 'Fiesta Navideña'. St. Thomas has joyfully agreed to help La Iglesia Episcopal de la Resurrección in Mount Vernon by sponsoring farm workers' children in the Skagit Valley. You may recall that in previous Christmas seasons we were able to help many children through the Fiesta Navideña project. For various reasons, Resurrección is changing their way of implementing the program.

This year, in addition to the 25 children's names we will receive for gift-giving, we will be able to assist with the Fiesta Navideña project in other ways:

- **Gift-giving:** Select a gift tag found on the Christmas tree in the Great Hall and purchase the item (more specific instructions for boxing and preparing the gift will be available near the 'Giving Tree')
- **Purchase a grocery gift card** for stores in Bellingham and Skagit counties (Safeway, Brown and Cole, or Haggen's/Top Foods)
- **Donate money** either to Resurrección Scholarship Fund or to Resurrección general budget (send a check or donate at Resurrección website www.resurreccionepiscopal.org)

All gifts and donations must be turned in to St. Thomas Church by December 13, so that they can be delivered to Resurrección in time for the Fiesta Navideña. We hope that by having many ways to participate in Fiesta Navideña you will be able to contribute to the project. If you have questions or need more information, please contact Leslie Brewer at 425-452-1860 or lesliebrewer@msn.com.

Thank you for your generosity. Feliz Navidad!

Financial Report

October 2009

	Budget	Actual
Income	\$ 94,266	\$ 78,640
Expense	\$ 83,438	\$ 82,929
Year to Date		
Income	\$793,166	\$792,409
Expense	\$811,124	\$817,874

The Sophia Way: From the Path of Misery to a Heavenly Home

by Claudia Ballheim, Parishioner and Member, Managing Committee of The Sophia Way

When I talk about The Sophia Way, people often ask me “What does that name mean? What does it have to do with homelessness?” I usually explain that “Sophia” is Greek for “wisdom,” and it’s often seen as the feminine aspect of God (as in “Wisdom of Solomon” in the Bible). The Sophia Way attempts to support homeless women as they walk the path from homelessness to a home of their own, and this journey often requires attaining wisdom – both by learning from others (about credit histories and budgeting, for instance) and by listening to the wisdom deep inside themselves.

But when I reread this month’s hymn (one of my very favorites), I realized that it describes the mission of The Sophia Way much more clearly, particularly the second stanza:

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who orderest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.

And other parts of the hymn echo the experience of many homeless women. When I spend time with Sophia Way clients or the women at Angeline’s drop-in day center, I am amazed at their resilience, energy, curiosity, and good humor. But I can also sense, at times, the “lonely exile” they suffer, with no home and no family to depend on. Those who aren’t yet part of The Sophia Way – by choice or because of the long waiting list – must face the “gloomy clouds of night,” every night. (I think in particular of a new friend I’ve made who lives with her husband in a small, incredibly tidy hatchback car.)

Last December, when the doors of The Sophia Way shelter opened for the first time in the midst of a terrible snowstorm, I like to think that we were putting “death’s dark shadows” to flight. Since then, more than 50 women have been helped and 12 are in permanent housing – returned from exile and in, what they would all say, is a true “heavenly home.”

St. Thomas, along with Bellevue First Congregational Church, Redmond United Methodist, and Lake Washington United Methodist, will be recognized as a founder of The Sophia Way at a celebration on **December 9 at the Harbor Club Bellevue**. At the “**Give a Home for the Holidays**” celebration, we also hope to raise money to help

meet a shortfall in operating expenses for next year. (You are ALL invited.) If you would like to contribute in another way, you can send a Sophia Way holiday card to tell friends and family that you’ve made a donation in their honor. (Cards will be available during coffee hour during December.)



As part of The Sophia Way Managing Committee, when I worry about money or clients or computer catastrophes, I try to remember the promise of this hymn:

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

[Editor’s Note: The Sophia Way provides overnight shelter, supportive services, education, and permanent housing to single homeless women in East King County. For more information, go to www.sophiaway.org or contact Claudia at 425-398-9829 or cmazzba@comcast.net.]

(Lex, continued from page 1)

deepest darkness that the new light of God’s love for creation will shine the brightest.

What has come into being in him was life
And the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness and
the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:3b-5

Will you raise the shade this Advent? Will you allow the light of Christ to shine in the darkest places of your heart, the places that may be encapsulated with shame or encrusted with pain? How will we allow the Christ light to illumine our way toward the future? The future may feel indefinite and provisional —and it is — yet Advent reminds all of us who struggle in faith to face that future with confidence and hope. St. Paul sums up our Advent dreams like this:

...no eye has seen, nor ear heard
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared
for those who love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

Faithfully,

Christian Formation

Inconsolable Longing

by Josh Hosler, Associate for Christian Formation

I remember talking with my brother Seth one year about the fact that Christmas was coming. We were boys, and we were longing deeply for that joyous day. Suddenly, Seth shouted, “Christmas attack!” and started to run around the house, letting off steam, hollering “AAAAAHHH!” because his longing was so great he couldn’t contain it anymore. I knew exactly how he felt ... so I did the same.

I fear I’ll never be able to recapture the delicious childhood agony of waiting all those weeks to find out what Santa would leave under the tree. In this era of Amazon wish lists and economic struggle, it’s even harder to get excited about the unknown. Never again will I experience the thrill I felt when discovering that, despite all fears to the contrary, the Millennium Falcon was there, just waiting for me to place my Han Solo and Chewbacca action figures inside its cockpit.

But we adults are not finished with longing. C.S. Lewis wrote about *Sehnsucht*, a German word that he expressed as “inconsolable longing” in the human heart for “we know not what.” He wrote:

That unnameable something, desire for which pierces us like a rapier at the smell of bonfire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead, the title of *The Well at the World’s End*, the opening lines of “Kubla Khan,” the morning cobwebs in late summer, or the noise of falling waves.

Have you ever felt that longing? That’s what Advent is for. These four weeks of preparation are meant to lay our souls bare, to empty us completely so that we can receive the one thing our souls most long for: union with God. And the beauty of it is that we don’t have to perform death-defying feats or cross a great Eastern ocean to get to God, because God is coming to *us*.

If you have ever felt imprisoned, lost in darkness, or exiled, you’ll know what I mean. You just want to be ransomed, to see the light, to go home. *Home* ... the longing is there, embedded in the very sound of that word. *Home*. Some people, as their lives draw to an end, develop a new vision of *Home* that means they’ll never have to move again.

But it’s not all melancholy. There’s another aspect of *Sehnsucht* that is pure, quivering excitement: the thought that you might not actually want to receive the gift, because if you do, you’ll have to let go of that wonderful longing feeling.

Jesus came many years ago to be with us. But luckily, in a mystery, Jesus is coming again. It’s never over. Jesus is always approaching, and every year, we mark his approach by observing Advent, four weeks of inconsolable longing and excitement. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

Pilgrimage to Israel, Palestine, and Jordan

by Mary Pneuman, Member, Bishop’s Committee for Israel/Palestine

Fourteen women from five parishes in the Diocese of Olympia spent two weeks in the Holy Land in October. Members from St. Thomas were Kathryn Ballinger, Margie Mayhall, Anne Rogers, and Mary Pneuman. The women went with hopes of forming person-to-person connections that would lay the groundwork for future partnerships between our own parishes and the parishes and educational and health care institutions of the Diocese of Jerusalem. The pilgrimage was led by St. George’s College, Jerusalem, and sponsored by the Episcopal Bishop’s Committee for Israel/Palestine.

The Christ One Family—Women’s Connection itinerary included visits to major holy sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth; tours of schools and health facilities; and meetings with women’s and mixed groups from Episcopal parishes in Nablus, Ramallah, and Zababdeh (West Bank), Reine (Israel) and Irbid and Amman (Jordan). As the members of the group attempted to understand

the challenges that face Palestinian Christians living with conflicts among Christians, Jews, and Muslims, they formed pen pal relationships with Palestinian Christian women and explored practical ways to support their parish programs, especially in the field of education.

For the 14 women, first-hand observation and personal experience of the “facts on the ground” quickly made it clear why the continued presence of Palestinian Christians in Israel and Palestine is threatened, especially for those living in the West Bank. Ever increasing restrictions imposed by the government of Israel on travel, jobs, economic development, and educational opportunities have led to increasing frustration and emigration. Yet, many Christians are determined to stay in the land of their ancestors. In their struggle to provide a future for their children, they need the help of fellow Christians. For these faithful Christians, their steadfast love of Christ is their hope.

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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The Collect

Shirley E. Deffenbaugh, *Editor*
 Elizabeth Ward, *Assistant Editor*
 Deadline: The due date for the January
 issue is December 14.
 Please submit copy to Shirley
 Deffenbaugh, editor, via email at
 sedeffenbaugh@comcast.net or leave
 in the drawer marked "Collect" at the
 Church. All articles will be edited. If you
 have questions, please call Shirley at
 425-455-4817.

Project Outreach Committee Grants to Two Groups

by Leslie Brewer, member, Project Outreach

For the second year in a row, the Project Outreach committee added a third grant period in October. At the October Project Outreach meeting, the committee convened and prayerfully evaluated four grant requests totaling \$18,500. With only \$11,000 available to disburse, the committee had to make some difficult decisions. The committee uses the following criteria to evaluate each grant:

1. Is the project inspired by principles of faith?
2. Does the project offer opportunities for parishioners to get personally involved (time/talent)?
3. Will the PO contribution make a significant difference?
4. Are we enthusiastic about the cause and/or organization?
5. Does the organization "teach people to fish" or just give them "fish"?
6. Is the organization well managed and does it spend most of its funds on its mission, not on operating or fundraising expenses?

After much consideration, Project Outreach decided to fulfill two grant requests. We gave \$6,500 to the Buguruni Anglican Health Center (BAHC), which is located in Tanzania's port city of Dar es Salaam and delivers both clinical health care services and public health programs. Project Outreach has supported BAHC for a number of years. BAHC will use this most recent grant request to sustain their AIDS treatment program through the funding of medical, nursing, and laboratory personnel, and to support those living with AIDS. In Dar es Salaam, AIDS is the leading cause of death and approximately 10% of the population is HIV+ including about 30,000 children.

We gave \$4,000 to La Iglesia de la Resurrección in Mount Vernon to start a Sunday School program and child care for the youngest children and babies of that congregation. Resurrección will use the money to hire and train a children's ministry leader. Resurrección's congregation is made up of about 20 families with a total of 45 children under the age of 10 and an additional 30 children between the ages of 10 and 18. By implementing the children's ministry program, Resurrección will not only be serving the young of their congregation, but also the adults who will now be able to participate more fully in the adult services. The Reverend Jo Beecher, the rector from Resurrección, will be presenting at the December 20 Adult Forum at St. Thomas. The Forum will offer us an opportunity to hear more about the ways Resurrección, as a Project Outreach recipient, is reaching out and supporting their community.

At St. Thomas Church, the Christmas Eve offering is a primary source for funding Project Outreach (the other is the Easter offering). With the money you donate, the committee is able to reach out both locally and globally to many organizations in need. Since the committee has depleted the existing income with these recent grants, let us consider the gifts that God has given us and give generously to others.

The Quiet Corner

Holy Land Pilgrimage

by Kathryn Ballinger, Deacon, Associate for Spiritual Direction & Parish Visitor

I've never had a strong desire to visit the Holy Land or felt it necessary in my spiritual life to walk where Jesus walked. I know that must seem very odd indeed; however, when Mary Pneuman invited me to join the "Women's Connection," I gave it serious thought. I had heard wonderful things about St. George's College courses from others who had gone from St. Thomas. If I ever decided to go, this was the type of trip I'd consider. Philip, my husband, kept saying, "Kathryn, you should go." He had gone years ago as a young seminarian and had loved it. The cost was very reasonable, so I said "yes."

We arrived from different flights at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv where the Dean of the College, the Rev. Dr. Stephen Need, and Bishara, the course assistant who was our shepherd for two weeks, met us. The van was loaded and we drove through the night to Jerusalem. We arrived at the College's guest house and were checked in with our roommates. Providentially, roommate selection turned out to be the best possible arrangement. Then we shared a delicious dinner. I loved all of our meals, which were so healthy with lots of vegetables, yogurt, hummus, cheeses, and salads.

We began our pilgrimage the next morning with Eucharist and an overview of Jerusalem then and now. We toured the sacred sites on foot for two days. The temperature was in the mid-90s, and we were exhausted by the time we walked back to the College every evening.

On the third day, we began visiting sites outside of Jerusalem. Bethlehem and the West Bank were eye-opening experiences. These areas are enclosed with 25-foot concrete walls topped by barbed wire. Entrances or checkpoints are manned by unfriendly, armed Israeli soldiers. Our guides had to get out the vehicle and answer a barrage of questions, and we had to show our passports. It was not an easy, perfunctory process, and we felt very uncomfortable.

Something about Stephen Need reminded me of someone. After a few days, it dawned on me. I approached him and said, "I don't want to embarrass you, but you remind me of

Anthony Hopkins." He did seem embarrassed, and asked, "Is that a good thing?" "Oh, yes, I think so," I said, "don't you?" "Yes, I think so," was his reply.

After Bethlehem and the West Bank, we visited the Galilean areas of Jesus' ministry. The weather was cooler, and it was quiet and peaceful. One of my favorite places was Jacob's Well. Once just a well in a field, it now has a beautiful church built over it by a Greek Orthodox priest who also painted all the icons in the church. The well is very deep, and we drew up water and drank it while we read the story of the Samaritan woman. Talking with Stephen, I reflected on how she ran into town to tell the good news of Jesus and forgot her bucket, leaving it behind. What must we, too, leave behind and let go of when we hear the good news?

We visited six parishes and five facilities, which included schools, hospitals, and clinics. We asked many questions and enjoyed wonderful conversations over delicious meals prepared by our hosts. Now when I read the Bible, I can picture all the places and they will be fresher and more alive for me. I learned that the Palestinian Christians are beyond hate over their situations. They are truly the most steadfast, loving, and faith-filled people. I regret that we did not hear the Israelis' side, however. Every conflict has two sides, and what we hear in our media is not without bias.

The van picked us up at 1:00 am and drove us to Tel Aviv for our 5:30 am flight. It took three hours to get through security. By the time we finally were rolling down the tarmac, I was very glad to be going home.

While we were in the Holy Land, there was an incident in Jerusalem that made the news. I hadn't had any contact with Philip while I was gone, but I realized he had been concerned when I found he had left work early to be home to meet me. The towels and sheets had been washed, his shirts taken to the dry cleaners, and there were flowers and a note on the table. He had been busy those two weeks with a trip to New York and taking care of Wally (our new dog), but I felt very missed and loved and glad to be home.

World AIDS Day—December 1, 2009

by Rebecca Crimmins, Chairperson, Walk in Love: The Episcopal Church Response to AIDS, Diocese of Olympia

Started on 1 December 1988, World AIDS Day is about raising money, increasing awareness, fighting prejudice, and improving education. The World AIDS Day theme for 2009 is 'Universal Access and Human Rights.' This important day reminds people that HIV has not gone away and that we still have many things to do.

According to UNAIDS estimates, 33.2 million people are now living with HIV, including 2.5 million children. During 2007 some 2.5 million people became newly infected with the virus. Around half of all people who become infected with HIV do so before they are 25 and are killed by AIDS before they are 35 (UNAIDS '2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic' [August 2008]).

I am always struck by the statistics around AIDS. They are overwhelming. It is difficult to put the number of people with AIDS into the context of our daily lives. But now Americans have a statistic for comparison — those without insurance in the United States— 47 million. Both issues bury themselves within the statistics with the danger of not appearing real. For many of us, these numbers are rarely associated with the face of an actual person.

St. Thomas has a history of support for the faces of AIDS. Many of you have told your stories of loved ones touched by AIDS. When we have held AIDS events, you have attended in

support; you have contributed money; and you have followed the progression of AIDS through other countries and our own. Two years ago, we celebrated World AIDS Day as a community with song and dance and Eucharist with Bishop Gregory Rickle.

One local organization with which we share contributions is Multifaith Works. Multifaith Works has provided what is known as the AIDS Care Teams throughout the Seattle Area. "Multifaith Works Care Teams offer people of all faiths a common volunteer experience by providing practical support and friendship to people living with HIV/AIDS and those in recovery."

Today, I invite you to join me in putting a face on the statistic. Join me at the annual World AIDS Day luncheon at the Seattle Convention Center on Tuesday, December 1, 2009. This year's key note speaker is Kathi Goertzen, KOMO TV anchor, who has fought an on-going battle with cancer. I promise you will leave the event with a new knowledge of what AIDS looks like today in Seattle, and how you can directly affect a life. The table sponsor is Walk in Love: The Episcopal Church Response to AIDS and I am the table captain. I am looking for a contribution of \$100 for each seat for the program and luncheon. For more information or to reserve your seat, please contact me at rebecca.crimmins@yahoo.com or at 425-427-1741. My deepest and sincere thanks.

in this issue:

From the Rector, p.1

Meet Laura, p.3

Project Outreach Report, p. 6

Parish Life, p.2

The Sophia Way, p. 4

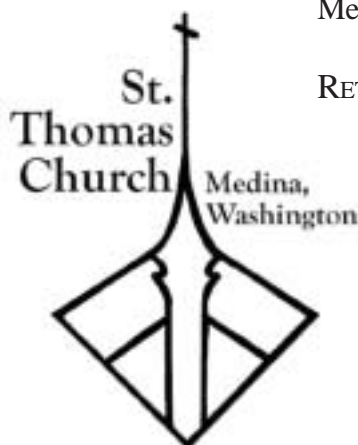
World AIDS Day, p. 8

Sarah Says Goodbye, p.2

Holy Land Pilgrimage, pp. 5 & 7

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