

Services

Sunday

8:00 am Eucharist with hymns
9:00 am Fellowship
9:15 am 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 pm

St Thomas Choristers

Sundays, 11:30 am

Calendar

January 8-9

Youth Confirmation Weekend
Friday evening, *Off site*
Saturday, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm
Conference Room

January 16

Baptismal Preparation Class
10:00 – 11:30 am, *Conference Room*

January 18

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

January 24

Bishop's Visitation
10:15 am

January 30

Youth Lector Training
1:00 – 3:00 pm, *Church*

January 31

Lunch with Lex & Josh
For Youth grades 11-12
12:00 – 1:30 pm, *Offsite location TBD*

THE COLLECT

January 2010

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

Christmas and Epiphany are seasons of light. When we're in a dark place, we're drawn towards the light. That's why the Feast of the Epiphany, observed on January 6, is a feast of light. The light of Jesus, God coming into the world, has exposed what is hidden in the dark.

If we take this time seriously, we might experience some discomfort. That's because the new light might expose what is hidden in our hearts. Exposure of our woundedness and our self-absorption

causes a kind of inner resistance as we let them go. But if we're attentive to Jesus in the inner reaches of our hearts, we'll hear him invite us to move from resistance to openness. He'll invite us to allow our darkness to come to the surface and be embraced as the light quickens and heals us. Being attentive to the voice of Jesus frees us

to experience the mystery of the Holy Spirit. We can then listen to the needs of others and watch how God is working in them and through them.

The prophet Anna was one who was attentive to the coming of the light. Luke reports that "she was of a great age [and] never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day" (Luke 2:36b-37). When Mary and Joseph arrived with their eight-day-old baby to present him in the temple according to the ritual law, Anna, in her

attentiveness, was immediately aware that the world was about to change in the most profound way. Without being told anything about the identity of this child, she intuited his significance, praising God and commending the child Jesus "to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38b). Although we might imagine that at such an advanced age, Anna's physical world was more dark than light, her prayerfulness (another way of saying that she was alert) allowed her

to be attentive to the presence of light.

LIGHT

looked down and beheld darkness.

"Thither will I go," said Light.

Peace looked down and beheld war.

"Thither will I go," said Peace.

Love looked down and beheld hate.

"Thither will I go," said Love.

So light came, and shone.

So peace came, and gave rest.

So love came, and gave light.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

So all of us in this season might ask ourselves how we might be more attentive to the presence and action of God in the world. Active listening, that is to say, listening with true attentiveness, always begins in stillness, in silencing the incessant voices that always seem to be clamoring

to be heard. And then listen with your heart – with the ears of your heart, as St. Benedict suggested – embracing, not burying, your thoughts and feelings. All in the light of God's presence. The voice you will hear is nothing less than the Voice of the One who is the Word made flesh dwelling within you.

Faithfully,



Vestry Views

Conversations with Father Lex

by Joanne Del Bene, Transition Committee Co-chair

It seems like many eons ago that Father Lex, newly chosen to be our rector, was sitting with the Transition Team on the lovely porch of his hosts, trying to stay cool in the middle of our heat wave. I can guarantee that having just come from Austin he was much more comfortable than the rest of us. Our agenda was to find out what we could do to help him and Zonnie integrate into the St. Thomas community. As we got acquainted with him, it soon became very clear that his desire to get to know each of us personally was on the top of his agenda. We all embraced the idea of meeting in small groups in the homes of parishioners, and we left that meeting full of enthusiasm about our new adventure with our new rector.

Since that meeting, the St. Thomas community has welcomed Father Lex with open arms, and he has delighted us with his excitement about being among us. Beginning with Evensong, the Welcome Sunday, and, finally, the Celebration of New Ministry, we at St. Thomas have found ourselves practicing the Hospitality of God in many ways.

The Transition Team gave Father Lex a little time to catch his breath and began the series of small groups in September. Since then we have had 16 small groups hosted by parishioners in their homes in Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Medina, Sammamish, and Hunts Point. At first this seemed like a formidable task. However, the feedback from the hosts, the parishioners who have attended a gathering, and from Father Lex has been so positive that we go forward with renewed energy. Some participants have expressed an interest in meeting again

and phone calls by hosts have gained knowledge about the needs of parishioners. When asked to reflect on his experience of the small groups, Father Lex said:

The small groups have given me the opportunity to know more people in a shorter period of time than I thought possible. They have also given some of us who didn't know each other an opportunity to become friends and for all of us a chance to share with each other what is important to us at St. Thomas and what our hopes and dreams are for the future.

We have divided our directory by zip code and are now scheduling January gatherings. If you have not been called, you will be. If, for some reason, you are not able to attend a gathering, we will have a meeting in the Great Hall when the small groups are over. We on the Transition Team – Jean Johnson, Joanne Del Bene, Shirley Deffenbaugh, Michelle Jewell, Nancy Pitarys, Alice Reid, Anne Rogers, and Phyllis Ross – would like your feedback. If you have been to a gathering, please let one of us know what the experience was like for you, and if you have not been called yet, please say “yes” to the invitation when the call comes.

In these small groups, we have the opportunity to share a renewed appreciation of the gifts each of us brings to our St. Thomas community.

For more information, please contact:

Jean Johnson, Vestry Warden for Transition, at 425-454-9740 or jeanjohnson@yahoo.com and Joanne Del Bene, Transition Team Co-chair, at 425-453-0332 or jddelbene@msn.com.

Keeping Current @ St. Thomas

We increasingly use electronic mail to keep parishioners and friends up-to-date, so we need to update our list of email addresses. If you're not sure that the church has an accurate email for you, please provide it via email to laura@stthomasmedina.org or fill out a pew card or call the office at 425-454-9541. Thanks for your help in improving our communications. Please know that we do not share your contact information with anyone outside the church for any purpose.

Project Outreach

A Spotlight on La Iglesia Episcopal de la Resurrección

by Susan Sheelin, Project Outreach member

In 2009, St. Thomas generously supported La Iglesia Episcopal de la Resurrección. Several youth and adults journeyed to Skagit Valley in July to work, worship, and play with its children and families. For the fourth consecutive year, Project Outreach granted funds to La Iglesia; in October, it provided \$4,000 to begin a new Sunday School program. During Advent, the St. Thomas 'Giving Tree' yielded toys, clothing, and grocery gift cards for La Iglesia members. Clearly, St. Thomas has reached out to this congregation.

At the Adult Forum on December 20, The Reverend Jo Beecher shared the congregation's story. (By the way, she not only leads La Iglesia but was baptized and confirmed at St. Thomas.)

La Iglesia was founded in 1998 as an outreach ministry of the Diocese of Olympia. It is now organized as a Jubilee Center separate from the Diocese. The mission serves the families of migrant farm workers in the Skagit Valley. Most do not speak fluent Spanish. Rather, they speak the indigenous Mexican languages of Mixteco, Triqui, and Zapoteco. La Iglesia's members are typical of Skagit County residents, where Hispanics comprise approximately 15 percent of the population and average 22 years old (almost 20 years younger than the average Caucasian in the county). Currently, 20 families, including 45 children, attend Sunday evening services.

La Iglesia's ministry is two-pronged: a social service ministry and the development of an Episcopal congregation. Under the leadership of The Rev. Beecher and fellow staff member Francisco Lopez, La Iglesia helps members interact with the Skagit Immigration Rights Council and with the county jail and court systems, distributes free diapers and used clothing, teaches computer-based drivers' education classes, assists with medical visits, and advocates for labor rights. The Rev. Beecher officiates at Sunday evening Eucharist and baptisms (of which there are many), provides pastoral care, and oversees celebrations particularly important to La Iglesia's members: Pentecost (the day the church first met in 2003), Day of the Dead, Quinceanera, and Christmas pageants.

La Iglesia currently uses office space provided by and located at St. Paul's Episcopal in Mount Vernon. Several hundred people visit this office weekly and worship services are also held at St. Paul's. La Iglesia actively serves the community in Mount Vernon and the Skagit Valley.

You may learn more about La Iglesia de la Resurrección and you may donate directly to its mission at www.resurreccionepiscopal.org. If you would like to support this and other Project Outreach ministries, you may at any time direct a special donation to St. Thomas as a "Project Outreach" contribution.

Coffee Hour Food Angels Wanted

With regrets, the office staff has to set down the responsibility for purchasing food for coffee hour. We will temporarily continue to supply the kitchen with hot beverage service items (coffee, tea, sugar, etc), but we can no longer buy juice, cookies, muffins, etc., or children's snacks. There is a budget for these items and the funds will continue to be available. If you have the gift of hospitality and would like to share it, let us know. Contact: Anne Rogers—anneyr@comcast.net or 425-641-1350.



Aileen Begins a New Season in Her Life

Cherished St. Thomas Friends,

It is with mixed emotions that I relinquish my staff position at St. Thomas to complete my master's degree in pastoral counseling at Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry. It has truly been a privilege to serve our church as part-time parish nurse from 2003-2006 and, in an expanded capacity, as part-time associate for pastoral care and health ministries since the fall of 2007.

For the past two years, while I ministered to our congregation through its clergy transitions, I have also been a graduate student. This fall, I initiated my clinical internship as a therapist at the Family Counseling Program in a non-profit, community mental health agency, Center for Human Services in Shoreline. Now that Father Lex has arrived, I can focus on my studies and expect to graduate in the spring of 2011. This work allows me to minister to vulnerable families in our North King County community who struggle with serious mental health issues.

The clergy will continue to provide pastoral care to the hospitalized, homebound and those in nursing homes or rehab centers. Stephen Ministers also provide pastoral care to those in our congregation who need ongoing support. There are volunteers who provide meals, transportation to church, and visitation. Pastoral care will continue to flourish with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you for allowing me the honor of walking alongside you or your family as life's inevitable challenges arose through illness or death. You have taught me so much about living with deep faith and grace through difficult times.

My husband Larry and I will continue as active parishioners at St. Thomas, our church home since 1998. We look forward to passing the peace to you on Sundays as the new year begins.

In Christ's love,

Aileen MacLaren Loranger, PhD, RN



Confirmation

Bishop's Visitation

On Sunday, January 24 at the 10:15 a.m. service, The Right Reverend Greg Rickel, 8th Bishop of the Diocese of Olympia, will visit St. Thomas. He will preach and preside at the Holy Eucharist and perform baptisms and confirmations.

Greg came to the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia from Austin, Texas, where he served as rector of St. James' Episcopal Church, "an inclusive, multicultural community," from 2001-2007. He has a passion for youth and young adults, and he believes the Episcopal Church must make itself appealing and relevant to that demographic as it has in the past. Bridging this gap is a major focus of his episcopate along with congregational development, stewardship of resources, and improving communication and interconnectivity throughout the diocese, both inside and outside the church.

You can read his past sermons and other ruminations and meditations on his website: <http://www.bishoprickel.com/>. There are several wonderful pictures there, too.

Financial Report

NOVEMBER 2009

	Budget	Actual
Income	\$69,342	\$52,094
Expense	\$74,082	\$83,654

YEAR TO DATE

Income	\$862,508	\$844,503
Expense	\$886,344	\$901,528

The Quiet Corner

The Presentation

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

Hebrew law ordered every aspect of Jewish life, child-birth included. On the eighth day, infant boys were circumcised and named. This was true for Jesus. His mother, Mary, was considered unclean for 40 days and was not allowed to touch any holy thing nor go into the sanctuary until her purification was complete. That time was twice as long if the baby was a girl. At the end of this time, babies were presented to the priest and two offerings were made – one a burnt offering and the other a sin offering. Atonement was made for the mother, and she was proclaimed clean again. Such was the law of Moses.

And so it was with Joseph and Mary carrying the infant Jesus. The new mother was getting her strength back, but Mary probably tired easily. The temple must have seemed vast and complex compared to quiet, rural Galilee. They felt themselves peasants in the sophisticated and busy Jerusalem.

Near the outer entrance of the temple, Joseph purchased two inexpensive birds for the sacrifice because they could not afford a lamb. They waited their turn along with other parents. The priest stood in front of the altar where red coals glowed. When it was their turn, the priest took the baby, faced the altar, and raised him above the fire, offering him to God. The brief moment over, Jesus was returned to his parents and the priest accepted the two birds. With a quick stroke of his knife, he cut the birds, poured their blood on the altar, and tossed their bodies on the fire.



The couple turned to leave. Out of the shadows stepped an old man with his arms outstretched toward Mary and the baby. He seemed kindly, and Mary allowed him to hold the child. His words were startling: “This child will be the glory of Israel and a light to the gentiles.” As he handed the baby back into Mary’s arms, he spoke: “A sword will pierce your heart.” His words were unexpected and terrifying. She clutched the baby tightly against her.

Then a woman who was even older stepped forward. She seemed ancient with lines and wrinkles, but her face glowed with joy and friendliness. Her name was Anna, and we know little about her except that she had been a widow for many years and was a prophetess of the tribe of Asher. Without children, she made the temple her spouse, worshipping, praying, and fasting to God. She took Mary and Joseph’s child into her arms and prayed over him, thanking God for the redemption of Jerusalem.

(I’ve always wondered about the way scripture talks about widows. They seem to hold a special spot in God’s care. When my first husband died, I, too, made the church my spouse and second home. I felt all of my needs met by a very present God.)

As the little Holy Family left the temple to return to their quiet lives in Nazareth, Simeon and Anna remained. Today, we can look back on the events of that day in the temple and ponder the presentation of Jesus. While the young parents saw Jesus with eyes of love, Anna and Simeon saw him with the knowledge of his meaning. This insight was God’s gift to them and to us.

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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The Rev. Lex Breckinridge, *Rector*
The Rev. Kathryn Ballinger, *Deacon*
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Couples & Family Life
Charles Rus, *Interim Associate for Liturgical Arts*
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Elizabeth Ward, *Assistant Editor*
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Deadline: For the February issue, January 11
Please submit copy to Shirley Deffenbaugh,
sedeffenbaugh@comcast.net or leave in the
drawer marked "Collect" at the church. All
articles will be edited. Questions? Please call
Shirley at 425-455-4817.

Christian Formation

Unknowability

by Josh Hosler, *Associate for Christian Formation*

One of the biggest realizations in my faith in the past five years is the utter "unknowability" of the future. It seems that at various stages of our lives, we reach a plateau where we believe we know what there is to know. We've finally absorbed enough of the world to assume that whatever else happens in life, it will just be variations on themes we've already heard. It's all been done before.

Punctuating those plateaus are epiphanies. Epiphanies are new realizations we couldn't have anticipated before – new information that forces us to reconsider everything else. Sometimes we can't explain the new information very easily. Epiphanies are experiences, and they often come in the form of a crisis. It can take the shaking up of everything we know to show us that the world is larger than we had thought. And that's one of the reasons I really admire Anna.

Anna gets all of three verses in the Bible (Luke 2:36-38). She takes second stage behind another minor character whom I won't mention here so as to give Anna her due props. Anna was 84 years old when she met the 40-day-old Jesus. And

the moment she laid eyes on him, she knew this was the Son of God.



I'm sure Anna had also had plateaus and crises in her life. We don't know much about them. We do know that she was widowed as a young woman and never remarried. We know that she, more or less, lived at the temple and prayed and fasted constantly. So I guess this is the profile of a woman who is ripe for the ultimate epiphany: the recognition

of God in her very presence, active and alive. And she was not too old by any means.

Have you had a similar epiphany? Have you ever noticed God right there in the room with you? If you have, the experience may have been tinged with just enough doubt to make you shy away from telling others about it, lest they think you're deluding yourself. But not Anna. The old woman saw the baby, praised God, and began telling everybody about him.

Anna had cultivated a perspective from which she could see God plainly. Can we say as much? How many epiphanies have passed us by because we were too busy, too preoccupied, too distracted by the "real world" to notice the even *realer* world breaking in? This world is unknowable, yet it's at work among us even now. It's a mystery, and if you don't slow down and look for it, you'll miss the mystery.

I'm not saying we all need to become celibate and cloister ourselves for 65 years. But what can we do to simplify our lives so that there is ample room for Christ? Between Epiphany and Lent, come to church and listen to the stories of the life and work of Jesus. Dig into the story. Get to know the unknowable. Let God open you up for an epiphany of your own.

Journey of the Magi

“A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.”
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow,
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelter,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.



At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
This was all folly.



Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wineskins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

— T. S. Eliot (*The Norton Anthology of English Literature*,
v. 2, pp. 1491-92)

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