



# *The Epistle*

## *January, 2016*

### **Father Bob's message**

I was reading Ecclesiastes just recently. The Old Testament Book that talks of there being "a time" for everything. The author wrote from his experience and trauma of the Babylonian Exile. This experience had taught the Hebrew people that life was never going to be an uninterrupted walk in the park and that time must not be a tyrant dictating one's life.

Now some commentators see the author of Ecclesiastes as being the ultimate cynic and I would have to say that as you read this book, there is some truth to that. Most of these commentaries note that the author of Ecclesiastes said "All is vanity" some 38 times. But I am more inclined to see the author more as a realist than a cynic. I am not sure why except that I see the author as a practical theologian who was unwilling to look at life through rose colored glasses and wanted those to whom he wrote not to wear rose-colored glasses either. It seems to me that the author was more than aware of the challenges of life. He was very much aware of the uncertainty and fear that surrounds our very being as finite beings. He was very much aware that this world is challenging at

best, more often than not difficult and frequently a dangerous, a very dangerous, place. He was aware that there is a time to build up and a time to break down, a time to be born and a time to die.

The author of Ecclesiastes was simply stating facts. Let us remember that Christ came into a world filled with hatred and war, with injustice, greed and prejudice. He came to show us the way to higher ground. He came to proclaim the kingdom of God now. He came to expose the lie that we are on our own, the lie that God did not care, and the lie that God had distanced himself from his creation. He came to expose the lie that each of us is an island unto him or herself. A lie that has and will continue to be believed, for it is a lie that seems to ring true as one listens to those who fear God even now and who wish to separate us from God and one another. Their voices seem so very strong and loud in our world. And we buy into this lie every time that you and I sanction hatred by remaining silent. Every time you and I close our eyes to injustice by not calling it out, not confronting it. Every time you and I turn our backs on those who have been marginalized in our world, we are acting in a way that is entirely antithetical to the Gospel witness and our faith tradition.

You have heard me say it before, but I find myself entering this New Year deeply troubled about the divisive and hateful rhetoric that permeates the public conversation today. I am especially troubled when it seems to be sanctioned and approved by those who yet claim that we live in a Christian nation. I am troubled because I do not hear the Gospel in this rhetoric even though it is supposedly embraced by those who say that they embrace the Christian faith. I am not saying that we should all agree or that we cannot have differences. What I am saying is that I would hope that we would be civil in our disagreement with each other, listening to each other.

I have found that being troubled is really not enough. I have struggled with myself over what my response should be to this. Should I simply stand aside, sigh and say, "Well that's just the way things are." I cannot for I remember that God the Father did not stand aside, sigh, and say about the world that He created and loves, "Well that's just the way things are..." If there ever was a time to sow seeds of reason and reconciliation, the time is now.

When our Lord began his ministry, he said, "The time is fulfilled." Now is the moment of our salvation. This very moment is rich with divine possibility. This New Year which we are beginning is filled, overflowing with great divine possibilities. To be sure, the past is not completely finished and gone but the truly new has come.

For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven. Yesterday is but a memory, and tomorrow but a vision. It is said that today well-lived makes every yesterday a memory of happiness and every tomorrow, a vision of hope.

May this New Year be a blessed time for you and your family.

Fr. Bob

### **Senior Warden Update**

I want to give an update on the state of the church following the millennium flood. David Ford found our duct system under the church to have water in the insulation. We will have to replace the duct work under the church. When we put the new heat and air system into the church we did not update the duct system. Minor modification was made and, while it works fairly well, we do not get the full efficiency out of the system. We are getting a quote on the duct replacement. We have also

talked to two contractors about the moisture problems and are working on getting proposals for corrections.

Additionally we have received two quotes for replacing the two main church entry doors, the ones everyone normally uses. They are in poor shape and the excessive amount of water we have had in 2015 didn't help any. After we have a chance to analyze the proposals and quotes, we will begin the process of replacement. It appears that the doors served by the handicap ramp are still in pretty good shape. We just need to keep them painted for now.

The door replacement was included in the 2016 budget but neither duct replacement nor the correction of moisture problems were.

Due to the problems we have discovered because of the huge amounts of rain we need to create a fund for disaster relief for the church with a goal of \$10,000 to relieve the problems that have been identified and those we have yet to discover. The Treasurer will have a separate income line item created in the budget to track all donations made to the fund and an expense line item showing checks written against the fund. All funds will be deposited into the Building Checking account. Our accounting firm and Treasurer will use the approved procedures for accounting for the fund. If anyone would like to make a donation please make your check out to St. Stephen's Building Fund and annotate as Disaster Fund. This is very similar to how we paid for the organ with the only difference being that the funds for the organ went to the Memorial Fund.

Several photos of the December happenings are included in the Epistle. Thank you to Carter Siegling for taking the photos.

**DID YOU SIGN UP FOR HOSPITALITY SOON?**



**JANUARY**

1/3	Brenda & Jim McGrew
1/10	Kathleen & Tom Harwood
1/17	Dee Dee Branham
1/24	OPEN
1/31	Kathy Beale & George Langdale

**FEBRUARY**

2/7	David & Amanda Ford
2/14	OPEN
2/21	OPEN
2/28	OPEN



*Please wish the following people, a Happy Birthday:*

**JANUARY**

1/12	Robert Ellison, JR
1/19	Rowan Langdale
1/22	DeeDee Branham
1/30	Mary Jane Lever

**FEBRUARY**

2/2	Gen Palmer VII
2/2	(Michael) Buck Rowe
2/6	George L Langdale

2/10	Allison (Allie) Robinson
2/15	Heather Langdale Reves
2/18	Bob Arndt
2/20	George S Langdale
2/28	Patti Palmer

**Our Mission Committee**



(In order of appearance)

Greg Koenig, Sara Berk, Brenda McGrew, Patti Earle, David Ford (Junior Warden) and Tom Harwood (Senior Warden). Also pictured are Fr. Bob Eldridge (Priest in Charge), Kathleen Harwood (Treasurer) and Carter Siegling (Secretary)

Eleanor Milling's Birthday Celebration was enjoyed by all





Home Alone bags are packed



Greening of the church







The Christmas tree is decorated



## Christmas Eve Hospitality



Christmas Eve Service with Baptism of  
Miriam Catoe

