

**The Chimes**  
**The Newsletter of Christ Church, Swansea, MA**  
**December 2005**

**From the Priest-in-Charge**

My dear friends:

During the season of Advent, we wait and prepare for the greatest gift that God can give us – the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into the world. We prepare for his coming to us at Christmas – the incarnation of God almighty in the person of the baby in the manger. And we wait for his coming again into the world as the Christ of glory, who will hold all things together, and, as St. Paul writes, “be everything to everyone.”

We are also thinking about our own gifts – how we will honor and give our love to those we care about, through Christmas presents, get-togethers, and shared celebrations. And so, at this time of year, perhaps more than any other, we are aware of the word and the concept of “*gift*.”

I am so thankful to Christ Church in so many ways for the gift you are to me. Most recently, I want to publicly express my gratitude to the Vestry for its recent decision to make a loan to me from unrestricted funds, in order for me to make a down payment on a house here in Swansea. Many parishes that do not own rectories do this to enable their clergy to have a permanent residence locally; and I believe this is a significant sign of the commitment we have made to one another, as I prepare to become your permanent rector in March. The Vestry’s trust in me and in God’s presence among us in making this loan are a true sign of God’s grace and giftedness to me – and to you as well. I am so thankful.

And I want you all to know that your attention to what it means to receive and to share a gift has manifested itself in another most extraordinary way here at Christ Church. Through your prayer and deep conviction of the importance of giving a portion of God’s gifts back to God for the ministry of his Church, you have truly allowed God to bring us to a new place. *As of the end of November, the members of Christ Church have pledged just under \$106,000 to the support of our parish for 2006!* This is an increase of almost \$10,000 over what was pledged in 2005! This brings us much closer to where a parish of our size, demographics, and level of activity needs to be in order to function at its best; and it also allows us to begin operating with a budget that offers potential for growth in programming, operation, and staffing. Most of all, this level of giving stands as a magnificent testimony to your trust in the gift of God’s faithfulness to us. I am so very, very grateful to each of you, and so very proud of you.

The gift of Jesus Christ is being given to us once again. And his presence is shown in so many ways. In the gifts you have been

given by God. In the gifts you have offered back to God. And in the gift each of you is to me. May I wish each of you a most holy, blessed, and joyful Advent and Christmas season.

With my love and prayers,

### **Advent and Christmas Events!**

**(This is a full listing of all special events taking place at Christ Church through the month of December; please read them carefully and make notes of dates and times)**

#### **Advent Suppers and Services**

On three consecutive **Wednesday evenings, December 7th, 14th, and 21<sup>st</sup>**, we will have a soup and sandwich supper together in the Parish House beginning at 6:15 pm, followed by a candlelight service of Holy Eucharist in the church at 7:00. We will light the Advent wreath, have some time for prayer and reflection, and break bread together. This is a perfect “time out” from a busy season; it is also appropriate for children of all ages. Please plan to join us. If you are able to donate some soup or sandwich makings for any of the three Wednesdays, please sign up on the bulletin board at the back of the church.

#### **Parish Christmas Party**

Please join us on **Friday, December 9, from 6:30 – 9:00 pm** for our annual Christmas Party. We will have a “Yankee Swap,” (gift

limit \$10, please) some games, and delicious hors d’oeuvres, wine, hot cider, and other goodies. If you are able to bring an hors d’oeuvre, munchie, or dessert, it would be appreciated – but most of all, bring yourself!

#### **Christmas Pageant**

The Sunday School Christmas Pageant will be held in the church on **Friday, December 16, at 6:30 pm**. It is always a special treat, and we hope that you will join us. Following the pageant, we will have a Christmas Party in the Parish House. It is possible that Santa may even drop in!

#### **Christmas Bazaar on December 18<sup>th</sup>!**

On **Sunday, December 18, we will hold a Christmas Bazaar in the Parish House from 11:00 am – 2:30 pm**. We hope this will become a Christmas tradition of joy and fun for our parish. However, we decided to have it because we are still short in our funds for our operating budget for this year. So we ask you to please support our bazaar in whatever ways you can. Please sign up on the bulletin board in the back of the church if you are able to help out for an hour or so. There will also be Christmas crafts, a children’s table, and coffee, cider and meat pies, as well as some good holiday cheer! Please plan to make this part of your Christmas festivities!

#### **“Christmas in the Village”**

On **Tuesday, December 20**, we will hold a town wide carol sing at Christ Church. Beginning at **7:00 pm**, we will gather on the front lawn of the church with candles, and spend a half hour or so singing some old time Christmas favorites. Depending on how many folks attend, we may walk through “the village,” caroling

“in the good old-fashioned way,” as the song says. Dress warmly, invite your friends, and bring your most joyful singing voice. Following the carols, all are invited into the Parish House for hot cider. This is a great way to introduce your friends and neighbors to Christ Church, and we also hope that it will serve as an all-town Christmas celebration.

### **Christmas Services at Christ Church**

#### **Saturday, December 24 - Christmas Eve**

4:30 pm Christmas Carols  
5:00 pm Holy Eucharist with carols and Children’s message  
  
7:30 pm Christmas Carols and Special Music  
8:00 pm Festival Holy Eucharist with Choir

#### **Sunday, December 25 - Christmas Day**

9:00 am Holy Eucharist with carols

#### **Sunday, January 1 - First Sunday after Christmas Day and New Year’s Day**

9:00 am Lessons and Carols with Holy Eucharist

(Please note that both Christmas Day and New Year’s Day are on Sundays, and there will be **one** service on each of these days.)

### **Christian Education**

On **Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup>**, there will be **no Sunday School**, due to the Christmas Bazaar immediately following. However, there will be a Children’s Message on that day, and the children will be invited to take part in the 10:00 service. Please plan to bring your children to church, and then join us for our Christmas Bazaar!

### **Stewardship**

You have already read about how enormously successful this year’s pledge drive was. This serves as an enormous “thank you” to Diane Stains and the Stewardship Committee for their hard work and devotion. They not only did a great deal of day to day work on letters and mailings, they approached giving as a spiritual and prayerful issue, and inspired all of us – including me – to remember that God is in all things – including our money, our time, and our gifts. Your Vestry also began to talk in a focused way about money as a spiritual aspect of our lives, and I am so grateful to all these folks for their witness.

And again – each of you made this pledge drive the success it was. Many, many thanks! *Beth+*

### **Outreach**

Crop Walk – The final tally is in. Seven churches raised \$4,700 for the Church World Service with the Annelle Delorme Hagerman Food Pantry in Somerset receiving 25% or \$1,150. This will go a long way in serving those who are hungry. Christ Church raised \$275.00 Although they could not walk with me, Diane Stinton and Steve and Sue Carvalho collected money for this walk and I thank them for their help. I also thank those who donated money to this worthy cause. *Jane Robinson*

Thank you, thank you to all who contributed in any way to the success of the Lasagna Supper held on November 18th. We raised four hundred dollars for the Newman Family. Fantastic work!

We will be bringing a **"Holiday Breakfast" to the Fall River Family Shelter on December 17th.** Food is being donated by the Outreach Group. We will also be providing gifts for the children.

Thanksgiving Cards have been sent to our "Homebound" parishioners, Sunday school children & teens from members of the congregation. This is such an important mission as it keeps us all connected to the church family. Many thanks to everyone who participated.

Forty Tiny Blessings Shoe Boxes were mailed to the Kids Shoe Box USA Headquarters last week. This is spectacular! Thank you to our most generous parishioners for your participation.

We will be sending our final gift to our Punta Gorda family. Among the items will be a prayer shawl & recipe cards for Grandmother Carolyn and a doll made by Jane Robinson for Samantha. The Outreach group is also donating small gifts with a New England theme.

We are in the process of sponsoring "30" children in the Salvation Army Clothe a Child Program. Thank you again parishioners for your caring and generosity. **Completed gifts can be brought to the parish office during regular office hours, or given to Peggy Deston.**

Sojourn Teddy Bears have been placed in the pews to be prayed over by the congregation. Please feel free to take one to someone you know who is living with cancer. Please notify the church office or Marsha Gauthier so it can be replaced.

The Prayer Shawl ministry is flourishing now that the cold weather is upon us. Please submit the name of anyone who you feel may benefit from this mission, to the church office or any member of the Outreach group.

Our next meeting will be held **Tuesday, January 24th at 7 PM** in the parish house. Please come join us & give us your ideas of how we can help our brothers and sisters in Christ.

#### **Flowers**

Please note the addition of the Christmas Flower Form in this issue of the Chimes. If you would like to have Christmas poinsettias given to the church for our Christmas services, either in memory of or in thanksgiving of a loved one, please return the form to the parish office by **December 16.**

We are in the process of putting together our Flower Memorial schedule for 2006. This is so members and friends of the congregation can make donations toward having Sunday flowers given in memory of loved ones. If you have reserved a specific Sunday in the past, it will be automatically carried over into the next year, and a postcard will be sent to you near the reserved date. If at any time you wish to make changes, please let Karen know by calling the office. We are happy to make adjustments.

### **Vestry Notes**

At their November meeting, the Vestry had discussion/action on the following items:

- There is significant mold in the basement of the Parish House. It was agreed that we will do a complete clean-up of this area. Ted Yates is getting some quotes from several companies to determine the most cost-effective way of going about this process. As it will require a much more significant amount of money to rebuild the area for usage other than storage, the Vestry needs to continue its discussion on what kind of long-range planning will best accommodate our Sunday School and our many ministries and activities.
- The Vestry voted to make a loan of \$50,000 from unrestricted money to the Priest-in-Charge for a down payment on a house in Swansea, with the understanding that the interest will be paid by the Priest-in-Charge on a monthly basis and the full amount paid back to the parish at the time of the sale of the house or the end of the pastoral relationship.

Our dear friend Avis Blackway sends this Christmas memory by our former organist Martha Griffiths:

**The deadline for submissions for the January 2006 issue of the Chimes is Wednesday, December 21, 2005!**