

Christ Church Chimes



**The Episcopal Church
of Swansea**

**57 Main Street,
Swansea, MA 02777**

508-678-0923

November 2003

From the Priest-in-Charge

Dear friends:

Recently, a friend asked me what I like best about being at Christ Church. Without hesitating for a second, I replied, “the people.” Then for a moment, I wondered if that was a rather clichéd thing to say. But only for a moment. Because the truth is that it is the people, the gathered community, what St. Paul loved to call “the Body of Christ” that is the Church. I remember that on the day I was ordained a deacon in the Episcopal Church, our Bishop, Tom Shaw asked the five of us who were being ordained to stand up from our seats in the front row in St. Paul’s Cathedral, and to turn around to face the congregation. As we looked out over that sea of faces, some we knew and some we didn’t, he said, “the only reason I’m ordaining you is because of them.” I knew that he was absolutely right. And the longer I am at Christ Church, the more deeply I feel the sacredness of what we are called to do and to be in community with each other and with Jesus Christ. It truly is this community of faithful people that has touched my heart deeply.

It is in this spirit of community that I spoke to the vestry about the possibility of pulling out the altar from the reredos (the wooden screen behind the altar) so that the presider can face the congregation. Although I did not expect this to happen in the immediate future, your vestry embraced the idea enthusiastically, and we are exploring the possibility of making this adjustment fairly soon. What we are proposing to do is simply to move the altar out a few feet from where it is now, so that I can stand on the other side of it and face the congregation during the Great Thanksgiving. However, before anything takes place, I want to take the opportunity to do some teaching on the subject.

The placing of the altar against the wall in churches originally was not necessarily to separate the priest from the people, although as some churches grew larger and the “Mass” or Holy Eucharist became more and more the purview of the priest, that is what happened. Nor was the intent to deepen the mystery of the Sacrament; for it has always been explicitly understood in Anglican theology that it is in the breaking of the bread that Jesus Christ is made known to us all. Rather, it was thought that by everyone facing the same way, the priest could be more visibly seen as “leading” the people in their supplications and sacrifice of thanksgiving – a theology which is quite sound. However, in recent years, the emphasis on the worshipping community being in fellowship in a very intentional way has increased. The Church has desired to recapture the spirit of community that was so vital to the early Christians; a spirit of worship and community that was incarnated by everyone gathering around a table, including the presider or celebrant. It was indeed a far more inclusive style of worship. In the last 30 years, new Episcopal parishes have built freestanding altars, and the vast majority of older parishes have pulled their altars out from the wall, to create a stronger sense of community.

In some ways, I appreciate the act of celebrating with us all facing in the same direction. I understand the theology in which we all face our God together. However, I do also feel very much the sense of being apart from you all at the time in the service when we should be most deeply connected. The more I know you, and the more I have come to appreciate and deeply care for you, the more I find myself wanting us to be able to gather around the table like a family at a special dinner! As your spiritual leader, I want to be able to connect with you in this most sacred moment in time and space. And indeed, that is what the Holy Eucharist is about; the household of God coming together as the Body of Christ. You know, the church building is our family home, in a way. The altar is our dining table. It is a piece of furniture that we use. One of the things I love most about our altar is that it is not perfect. It looks used. It is scratched in places. It is worn smooth in places. The bottom of it is worn and scuffed, from the shoes of countless priests, acolytes, and altar guild members tending it and serving at it. I feel almost like I do sometimes when I need to make adjustments to my dining room table to fit a certain number of people – leaves need to be added, the table needs to be moved, in order to accommodate the gathering, and in order to include everyone.

Well, it is time to adjust the dining room table to fit our community today! I very much hope that you will find this way of celebrating together to be empowering and uplifting. I think that you will! I do understand that this may be a difficult adjustment for some of you, because change can be hard. I do honestly believe that this action is in the best interest of the whole community, and I know your vestry feels that way as well. However, please do not hesitate to come and talk to me or give me a call if you would like to know more about the theology or history of the placement of altars, or if you are feeling uncomfortable with this decision. It is very important that you feel you can be heard. There is no set date for this to happen, but we have explored how the work might be done, and we will keep you posted.

In the meantime, please continue to know of my deep appreciation for you, and of my prayers for you. Please keep me in your prayers as well.

Faithfully, Beth+

A Word From The Warden

COMMITMENT... life is built on it.

Whether we realize it, or not, we find commitment an unavoidable and unconscious response to virtually everything we do during the process of our daily lives. Actions as simple as washing, waking up and going to work, getting the kids safely off to school, insuring in the general wellbeing of our family and loved ones are basic daily actions, although instinctive in nature, that require commitment in order to accomplish and maintain them. Commitment can also be intentional in nature, from the commitment to pay monthly bills; preserve a valued friendship; commitment in a relationship; commitment in marriage; commitment to our jobs and commitment to the organizations we belong. No matter what form commitment takes, without it very little would be accomplished, or succeed, or survive.

We at Christ Church should be proud of the true commitment this parish family has displayed over the years. During times of joy, sorrow, turmoil or change our faith in God and trust in his guidance has kept this congregation unified and committed. Every year, about this time, we are asked to recognize and renew those commitments of Time, Talent and Treasure that we are making, or maybe could start making, as true participating members of the Christ Church family. My personal request is extended to every member of our parish family, that you prayerfully search your hearts and identify some element of Time, Talent or Treasure that you would be willing to commit to this coming year as your contribution to this "family", which you are a valued member.

Our continuing commitment to God's work, His church and our blessed parish family, is the insurance we have that Christ Church will prosper and grow for many years to come.

My heartfelt gratitude is extended to all parish members for your continued support and prayers.

Sincerely,

Stephen Carvalho, Senior Warden

Sunday School News

By Lori-Ann Bernstein

Our year has gotten off to a tremendous start! We have many returning children this year and many new faces! Welcome!

Our teen class has been meeting every Sunday at 9:00 a. am. Thanks to a generous donation, the teens are now enjoying the use of several couches during their worship class. While enjoying breakfast, our teens participate in Bible study, fellowship, and discussions of issues they face throughout their lives. We welcome anyone in grades 7-12 to worship with us at 9:00! Our teen class will be going on a haunted hayride on Saturday, October 25. Please let us know if you are interested in attending.

Our Pre-k through grade 6 children begins their worship service at 9:45 am. The children have begun going to Holy Communion every Sunday. Seeing them join in the Lord's Supper with their church family is heartwarming. We have already begun rehearsing for our Christmas pageant and the children are very excited. Our Sunday school will have a Halloween party on Friday, October 24 from 6-8 pm. Come and join us for a "Spooktacular" time!

Finally, we are looking for people to work in our nursery and teachers for our 4-6-grade class. If you would like to volunteer one or more Sundays a month, please see me. All this required is a love of children!

Thanksgiving Thanks

By Susan Carvalho

My favorite holiday is Thanksgiving because I can cook and cook and cook and my family gathers to eat and eat and eat and enjoy and enjoy and enjoy. Some people are not as fortunate and rely upon the thanksgiving of others. Between now and Nov 20 I will be collecting dry goods and canned goods for Thanksgiving baskets that the Swansea Council on Aging puts together for families in need at Thanksgiving time. The dry goods and canned goods do not have to be Thanksgiving related. We did this last year as well. It was greatly appreciated. I will have a box in the parish hall where you can leave your donations. A monetary donation is appreciated as well; checks can be made out to SCFBP-MEMO-HOLIDAY. The checks can be left at the church office and I will forward.

Outreach Program

By Marsha Gauthier

The outreach committee would like to thank everyone for their generous donations of canned goods. Please continue to do so as it is greatly needed and appreciated. Several pounds of coffee and numerous cans of tomatoes and sauce were delivered to the Church of the Ascension. (These particular items are especially

needed.) Many other non-perishable items were delivered to the Food Bank at the Church of Our Saviour.

It may interest some to know that the Church of the Ascension soup kitchen feeds over 100 people each Monday and Friday.

Also, the Annelle DeLorme Hagerman Food Bank at the Church of our Saviour provides one bag of groceries to approximately 130 people/families on the last Saturday of each month. Several of these families are lining up by 7:30 AM waiting for the opening time of 9:00AM. This month some had to be turned away as the food bank ran out of food. Some of these people were elderly.

If you prefer to make a donation as opposed to bringing in items of food, you may make checks payable to the Annelle DeLorme Hagerman Food Bank or the Church of the Ascension Soup Kitchen. You may give them to Marsha Gauthier or mail them directly to the churches. Please indicate that you are a member of Christ Church Swansea.

Fall At Its Best

By Susan Carvalho

My life has been so busy and hectic and I feel like I cannot catch my breath so it is no surprise that a month has gone by since the fiftieth Harvest Festival on September 13. No matter how busy I may be my husband and I always find time to work the Harvest Festival. This was a glorious festival. It was a sunny day warm with sun and fellowship. Clint and Leslie Jones even made a trip down this year. There were lots of hugs and well wishes exchanged.

This year there were people who were new to working the festival- we enjoy when we can corner a few new recruits. The amazing thing is if you can get people to work one festival they will be back year after year to work. In spite of tired feet and aching backs, we manage to want to come back and work again and again and again. I love working the Harvest Festival. I have met some of the nicest people working the festival and people who come year after year to the festival.

My day was spent working hard at the White Elephant table and laughing hard as well. It is always a joy to work with Elaine Gray. This year there was also help from Pat Redfearn, Joanne Stevens, and Marianne Owens. Franklin Gray also helped us as well. We had a GREAT time. When I wasn't working, I was buying, buying, buying. I always head for the clothing boutique first. Couture labels at thrift shop prices- I look forward to shopping this exclusive boutique every year. I buy fudge for my mother-in-law and my husband and then I stop at the craft table to see what unique items were made. This year I was able to buy two housewarming gifts this year, beautiful hand crafted wreaths all decorated in fall colors. I even learned how to square dance and found I actually enjoyed it. Lunch at the snack bar was as usual a delicious treat. I know my husband is looking forward to pulled pork next year.

I hope that those who attended the festival found it was a great day for families, a great day to meet and mingle, and another wonderful way to enjoy our church family. I know for those who worked the festival they were tired but satisfied, glad the work was done and sad the festival was over and also looking forward to next year. I hope for those who didn't work the festival or attend the festival they will look forward to next year when they can. You will fall in love with the festival like the rest of us.

I Am Going To Die

By Susan Carvalho

I am going to die. I am not sure when I am going to die but I know that I will die someday. I am not sure how I would handle a situation if I were told that I was going to die sooner than I had ever expected. I know that there are people in this parish who have battled and are battling life-threatening illnesses. We probably have all been touched in our lives by such a situation.

I admire the grace and determination with which people handle such a situation. Never faltering in their faith, praying to God for a miracle, praying for the strength to get them through, looking to God for comfort. I also notice the same people really know what is important. Family, friends, faith, and most of all laughter. Why sweat the little things? When I hear of situations like this that is the first thing that comes to my mind.

As we see others going through these situations, we often do not know what to do or what to say. So, we often do nothing rather than do the wrong thing. Prayer is always a good thing- just say a prayer or better still ask a friend to say a prayer also. How about a hug? Can you give that person a hug? A hug always lets someone know you care. Often times when I can I might cook something and bring it to the family. Most important just let them know you care about them, you cannot go wrong when you let a person know you care about them.

We are all going to die but it is more important to live before we die. So even if you don't know when you are going to die stop what you are doing right now and tell those you love you love them, call a friend you haven't talked to in awhile and remember don't sweat the little things.

Teen Group

*Don't forget that there is a **Teen Group** for everyone in grades 7 – 12, held every **Sunday morning from 9:00 – 9:45 A.M.** We meet downstairs in the Sunday School area, where we now have our own Teen Room, complete with very comfortable furniture (thanks to Roger Owens!) and delicious Sunday breakfasts (Thanks, Lori-Ann!) We have some great discussions, and we will continue to plan further exciting educational events, as well as outreach projects and fun things we can do together. Please join us!*

Bible Study

On two **Monday evenings, November 17 and November 23, at 7:00**, there will be a two-part study led by the Priest-in-Charge, entitled "What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality? What does Anglican Theology Say About Homosexuality?" In light of recent developments in the Anglican communion, with the election of The Rev. Canon Gene Robinson as the first openly gay man to serve as a bishop, it seems important to have an opportunity for folks to come and discuss this issue and perhaps learn some new things by delving more deeply into scriptural texts and our particular way of doing theology. All are welcome. If you would like to come but are concerned about child care, please contact the office, and we will look into having some care, activities, and homework space for children.

Worship

What follows is the current schedule for all services at Christ Church from Thanksgiving Eve through Christmas Day. We will shortly be entering the joyful and holy seasons of Advent and Christmas, and hope that you will take advantage of as many of our liturgical offerings as possible.

Wednesday, November 26, 7:00 P.M.
Thanksgiving Eve Service of Holy Eucharist

Sunday, November 30, The First Sunday of Advent
8:00 A.M. *Holy Eucharist, Rite I*
10:00 A.M. *Holy Eucharist, Rite II*

Sunday, December 7, The Second Sunday of Advent
8:00 A.M., *Holy Eucharist, Rite I*
10:00 A.M., *Holy Eucharist, Rite II*

Wednesday, December 10, 7:00 P.M.
Advent Service of Evening Prayer and Reflection

Sunday, December 14, The Third Sunday of Advent
8:00 A.M., *Holy Eucharist, Rite I*
10:00 A.M., *Morning Prayer and Holy Eucharist, Rite II*

Wednesday, December 17, 7:00 P.M.
Advent Service of Evening Prayer and Reflection

Sunday, December 21, The Fourth Sunday of Advent
8:00 A.M. , *Holy Eucharist, Rite I*
10:00 P.M. , *Holy Eucharist, Rite II*

Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve
5:00 P.M. *Family Service of Holy Eucharist with Choir and Carols*
8:00 P.M. *Candlelight Service of Holy Eucharist with Carols*

Thursday, December 25, The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
10:00 A.M. *Holy Eucharist, Rite II*

Confirmation Classes

We will be starting Confirmation classes very soon, in preparation for a **Deanery-wide Confirmation which will be on Saturday, May 15, 2004, at Grace Church in New Bedford!** Please contact the Priest-in-Charge if you are interested in Confirmation for your child, or being received into the Episcopal Church. There is also a sign-up sheet at the back of the Church, which will be there until the **deadline** for signing up, which is **Sunday, November 23**. Information about classes and preparation for Confirmation will be sent out the first week of December; but in the meantime, please mark **Friday, March 5 – Saturday, March 6 on your calendars. This will be a mandatory retreat with Bishop Tom Shaw** for everyone who is being confirmed. We will join with other folks from this deanery for a wonderful time of fellowship, prayer, fun, and preparation. In the meantime, please contact Beth if you have any questions.

Confirmation Mentors

We are seeking baptized adults who would be willing to serve as mentors and sponsors for our young people who will be confirmed next spring. The role of a mentor is to pray regularly for one of our confirmands, and be a spiritual companion to that person – greeting them in church, sending an occasional note or email, and getting together now and then to share your own spiritual journey and your faith. The only requirement is to be willing to support our young people in their own faith journeys. Please contact the Priest-in-Charge if you would like to know more about being a Confirmation Mentor; a training will be held after the first of the year for all who are interested.

Inquirer's Class

Our **Inquirer's Class** continues to be a wonderful opportunity for learning and sharing. We meet on **Wednesday evenings at 7:00** in the Parish House. The schedule of topics for the remainder of the class is as follows:

November 5 – The Creeds as Historic Statements of Belief

November 12 – No Class

November 19 – Church Government and Canon Law

November 26 – No Class (Thanksgiving Eve)

December 3 – The Sacraments and Ministry

December 10 – The Holy Eucharist

Those of you who have schedules, please note several changes to dates and topics. EVERYONE is welcome!

Vestry

The Reverend Beth Grundy, Ex-officio
Stephen K. Carvalho, Sr. Warden
Diane Stains, Junior Warden
Alan R. Scott, Clerk
Carlton Yates, Treasurer
Gladys Shaw, Financial Secretary

Peggy Deston, Elaine Gray, Lorna Gregory, Robert Hawley, Susan McMullen, James Medeiros, Chris Munro, Charles Reed, Ted Yates

Al Deston, Minister of Music
Karen Remine, Parish Secretary
Anthony Melo, Sexton
Lori-Ann Bernstein, Sunday School Superintendent