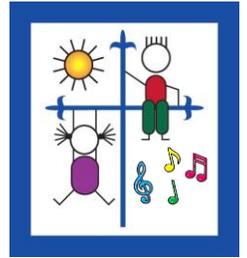




CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BLOOMFIELD & GLEN RIDGE



Growing in faith ~ Serving our neighbors ~ Creating community

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS 2014

From The Rector

One of the joys of Christmas is being a part of a loving parish family – and we have that here at Christ Church to be sure. At this celebration of the most Holy Night, we are given new life in the light of Christ that is born in us again, and we are blessed to share that with one another.

This has been a year filled with great joys and deep sorrows. The violence in our streets and around the world are a reminder that our work as bearers of Christ's light is far from over. In a word in distress, we are not a people without hope. We know, through our Savior Jesus Christ, that life is stronger than death, that no darkness can ever overcome the light of God in Christ! And so, we are given a gift at Christmas, one that we are asked to share with the world. We need to take that light of Christ out into the world, filled with "people who walk in great darkness." When we do, no one is ever the same – not us, nor those we meet.

In this Christmastide, may we be reminded that Christ came into the world as a humble and poor child. In this, he calls us all to recognize that our salvation lies not in tangible riches, but in spiritual ones. It is the humble, the meek, the lowly, the oppressed, the forgotten, and the lonely that are closest to God's heart.

May we also remember Mary, the God bearer, the one who was chosen, the one who said "Yes" to God's call. God calls each of us to say "Yes" too. To "proclaim good news to the poor," in our love and service. Christ does not ask us to judge one another, but to welcome all, love all, as he loved us. That is how we proclaim the Gospel – the good news that is born to us at Christmas.

And finally, may we remember that Christmas is not a single day, nor even twelve, but something that is alive in us all year. It is truly the most wonderful day – the day when the hope and love of God entered the world and our hearts.

May you have a blessed Christmas. See you in church!

Rev. Diana+



"Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

Luke 2:10

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN BLOOMFIELD & GLEN RIDGE

The Reverend Diana Wilcox, Rector
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Warden's Words by David Drislane

My fellow brothers and sister in Christ, it's hard to believe that last year at this time, we were coming to the end of a very extensive new rector search. As I reflect back on the past year, I do so with a full heart, as so many wonderful things have happened here at Christ Church. Our spiritual journey of growth and development, together as a congregation, has profoundly touched, me and makes me proud to be one of your Wardens. All that we have accomplished together could not have happened without each one of you taking an active role in our parish community.

At the beginning of 2014, we were a flock in need of a shepherd to guide us forward. Under the guidance and leadership of our new rector, and a hard working vestry, a new sense of purpose and direction has been instilled in the congregation, thereby enabling so much to be accomplished. So many things have happened this past year that I cannot list everything, but I would like to take a moment to share with you my thoughts on some of them.

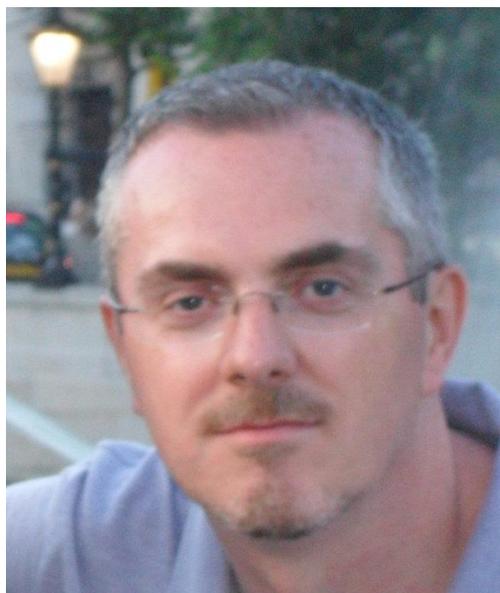
During our discernment process, bible study classes were something people expressed as an important need. We listened, and new adult formation classes covering topics such as Epiphanies and Homosexuality and the Bible to name but a few, were well attended and embraced by a congregation who was eager to broaden their understanding of the bible and God's message. I particularly was very much enlightened by the classes on Homosexuality and the Bible. Too often, people misquote or use the bible to discriminate against those who are different. These classes showed me how people only quote sections of the bible that support their message, but do not share the whole story which often contradicts the message they put forward. God loves all of us no matter the color of our skin or our sexual orientation. My take away from this class was to not let anyone use the bible to make you feel unworthy or unloved by God, as we are all equal in his eyes.

Our goal of engaging the community through outreach was accomplished through activities such as Ashes to Go, our weekly Labyrinth Walk & Compline, Stations of the Cross in Community, Theology on Tap, and our annual Blessing of the Animals to aid PAWS in Montclair to name but a few. I have to say that our annual Blessing of the Animals is something very near and dear to my heart. The unconditional love we give and receive from our pets can draw us more deeply into the larger circle of life with our Creator.

Your leadership team has been working hard on a major infrastructure project to move church and nursery schools spaces around to allow both the space to grow. This is moving along and in the first quarter of 2015, we anticipate that the vestry will review proposals and vote, so that work may commence on this project in the Spring of 2015. This project is a key component to helping both to further grow and better serve our surrounding communities. Our goal of growing the congregation by 25%, over the next three years is well on the way to being achieved. We anticipate closing 2014, with an average Sunday attendance growth rate of over 13% above the prior year. In one year alone, we are already half way towards achieving our three year goal!

Our stewardship campaign this year was like no other. It was encouraging to see that the congregation was fully engaged and gained a better understanding of what it really takes to run this parish and how we all need to take an active role. Stewardship is not something that we should only think of once a year, but is something we need think of and do year round.

I would now like to take a moment to wish you and your families a Happy Christmas and New Year's. May God bless you and keep you all safe.



Music Notes by Bill Davies

Christmas Music and ...“Christmas Music”

This story may be apocryphal, but I like it nonetheless.

Some years ago a controversy arose in a school about the music presented at the school’s winter concert, with parents lobbying teachers and administration to include more music specific to their particular religious traditions. At one heated moment in the discussion, a parent is reported to have insisted, “We need more Christian songs, like ‘Frosty the Snow Man!’”

Well, no. Frosty appears nowhere in the Gospel’s infancy narratives, and you can’t even dig him up amidst the weirdness of The Book of Revelation. He’s the product of a Gene

Autry hit song of 1950, inspired – commercially, no doubt – by Autry’s hit of the previous year, “Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” Both are happy ditties and amusing to children, but they’re “Christian” only in the sense that they’re associated with Christmas. And herein lies a problem. Leaving aside the question of whether music reflects or informs culture, it’s pretty clear that both Christmas itself and Christmas music have fairly foggy boundaries. The season itself seems now to begin, for commercial purposes, while we are all still wearing shorts and tee shirts. But one of the “jobs” of churches, as liminal institutions, is to stand just outside the cultural mainstream so that they can reflect the culture, warts and all, to itself. Music helps us do that.

We don’t start singing Christmas carols, much as we like them, once we’ve polished off the Halloween candy. We restrict them to the actual liturgical season of Christmas. And the carols we sing are beautiful in a way that surpasses the mere jauntiness of “Frosty” and “Rudolf.” That’s because, even in our Christmas music, Christians make demands of themselves.

We begin the 10:30 service on Christmas Eve with “Once in Royal David’s City” and end it with “Joy to the World.” Here is a verse from each.

He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall:
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

Joy to the World , the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

The first, from “Once in Royal David’s City” reminds us of the “poor, mean and lowly” circumstances of Jesus’s birth, suggesting what one theological tradition calls the “preferential option for the poor,” a particular Christian responsibility to the “mean and lowly” of the modern world. The second reminds us that His coming is only part of the Christmas story; our “preparing him room” is the other. “Frosty” and “Rudolf” pale in comparison.



Christ Church Children & Youth

Nursery School News by Dir. Jean Bannon

The month of December at the Nursery School is the most hectic of them all, but the most enjoyable as well. The excitement here is immeasurable, and contagious! Family and staff are in the spirit with decorations, music and lights, and have collected gifts for Apostle's House families who are less fortunate than us. On Wednesday, December 10th we had our Dance Recital for those children signed up for Dance, Ballet, Tap and Yoga classes. Dance classes are held here on Wednesday and Friday mornings with Just Dance With Miss Melissa.

On Friday, December 19th we had our annual Holiday Show at 2:00pm. All of the children and their teachers practiced their songs and dances for this special show. After singing their Feliz Navidad number at the close of the show, all the



children had a special visit from Santa, who comes delivering toys for every girl and boy.

The Nursery School is at full capacity, there is "no room at the inn". We have 28 full time and part time employees (not including Jayne and Bob), who are truly dedicated to children.

A blessed holiday to all!

At left, the staff busy in the kitchen making that lunch a feast to behold. Above, a full plate of Thanksgiving food brings a smile to a young face.



Children's Choir & Pageant Programs

This year, at our 5pm Family Eucharist on Christmas Eve, a new children's choir, led by our Director of Music, Bill Davies, will make their debut. On the fourth Sunday of Advent, we held our Christmas Pageant. What a wonderful celebration of children – the ones Jesus called to his side – it all is!

At right, Director of Music, Bill Davies, leads the children's choir in their very first rehearsal for the Christmas Eve service.



Youth Group News

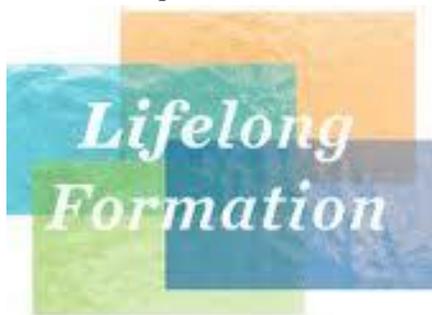


Our High School Youth Group was busy this fall going to see the “Chairs of Inclusion: A Seat at the Table for Everyone” exhibit presented by the JSDD’s Wae Center at the Gaelen Gallery East in West Orange, and the Phoenix exhibit at St. John the Divine Cathedral in New York City. They also helped make the Giving Tree tags for gifts for the less fortunate, assisted in the Nursery School fundraiser, and the Christmas pageant. In the works are plans to do a fundraiser in the Spring for a cause.

The Youth Group offers those in high school a sacred space for engaging with their faith, and with one another, as they move along on their spiritual journey.

New Adult Formation Programs Begin

Starting in January we will begin a Women’s Group that will meet monthly to share our spiritual journeys in a sacred space. Discussions on various topics and retreats will happen throughout the year. All women are invited.



Also starting in January will be a book club. This group will also meet monthly, and will read a book for discussion at each meeting.

And our Adult Forums will continue with a wonderful series in Epiphany on Images of God. Lent will bring a meditative series that will prepare us for the journey to Jerusalem.

All of these opportunities for spiritual enrichment will start in the new year, and information on them will be in our weekly Sunday Paper, so stay tuned for details!

Thank You!!

So many of you responded to the stewardship campaign this year that we have blown past 2014 numbers in terms of pledges and amounts pledged. We still see some names missing, and we hope that if you have not had a chance to get your pledge in, that you take a moment over the holidays to remember the place where you find spiritual enrichment – Christ Church – your parish home, by offering your gift to God, and to loving and serving in the name of Christ.

Also, if you have not completed your 2014, now is a great time to send that in to the office. Thanks!



Sharing the Good News

This information was shared in our last newsletter, but because it is so important, we are sharing it once more, with a few updates. We are called to share the good news of Christ, but we also have some good news to share about Christ Church – this Christ Church as a matter of fact. Since the beginning of this year, we have restored our buildings, grown our numbers, and expanded our outreach. In the last nine months we have:

- ❖ Increased our average Sunday attendance by more than 13%
- ❖ Restored our worship space, fixing and refinishing the wood and cleaning the terrazzo, while making the labyrinth a permanent and beautiful addition to our nave (which, in itself, has attracted many to our church)
- ❖ Added worship experiences, including: Last Chance Mass/Worship Without Walls, Joyful Noise!, Stations of the Cross in Community, Labyrinth Walk & Compline
- ❖ We continued in our outreach, including: The Nursery School, Ashes 2 Go, SpiritWalk, Giving Tree and so much more
- ❖ Transformed the choir room into a multi-purpose space that respects the past, but is not grounded there
- ❖ Created a KidZone to make it easier for families with young children to come to worship, staffed up our child care facilities, added an Easter Egg Hunt and Christmas Pageant this year.
- ❖ We launched a new website (over 15,000 hits), new Facebook page (over 500 likes), new quarterly newsletter, and new weekly Sunday Paper
- ❖ We have hired new staff, and hope to add a Director of Family Ministries very soon
- ❖ Adult Formation is now regularly offered
- ❖ The old dirty plexiglass is being removed from all the stained glass, allowing light to flow in, and changing the outside look from a church that is boarded up to a church that is most definitely open and beautiful, and our steps outside the Coursen Room and the Sacristy have been repaired beautifully to match the building stonework
- ❖ Additional social opportunities are being provided, including a new Second Saturday Stitchers group that makes scarves, hats, etc. for those in need, with new ones on the way in 2015
- ❖ We are now hosting diocesan events including Christophany and Diocesan Council meetings

What does all this mean? We are growing to serve and serving to grow. Christ Church in just a month shy of a year has grown by leaps and bounds, and in the next year, we will experience even more.

Don't miss out on your opportunity to be a part of it!



Christ Church Diversity Makes News!

Our church was featured in the International Business Times on December 10, 2014 in an article on the diversity of churches. We were one of only three churches in the country mentioned in the article, which spoke to our diverse congregation, and the importance of that in a world often divided by race. Check it out online by going to our website, or to the article directly at:

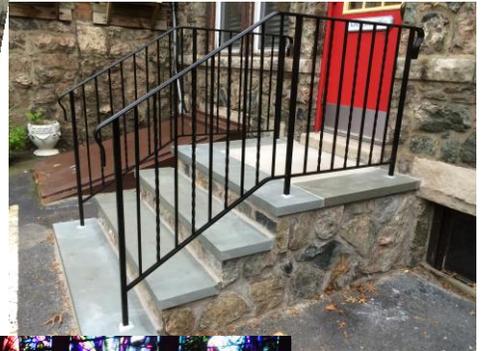
<http://www.ibtimes.com/us-churches-make-moves-become-more-diverse-less-racially-segregated-1745825>

At A Glance...



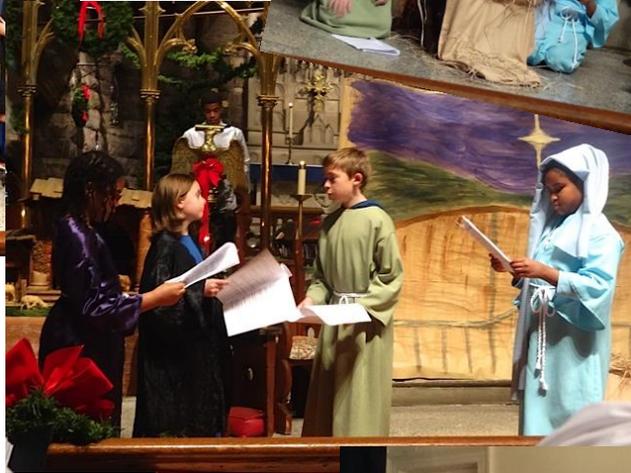
Coursen Room dedication & Christophany.

Blessing of the Animals, Baptism, Restoration of the Church Stairs and Windows, Women's Art Exhibit at St. Luke's, Nursery School Fundraiser.





Caroling at South End Gardens, Greening of the Church, Christmas Giving Tree, Church Choir on Advent 2.



Nursery School Christmas Show and Santa Visit, Christ Church Christmas Pageant, Church staff has some Christmas fun.



Here are some of the ways you can find out more about what is happening here at Christ Church:

The website:

<http://christchurchepiscopal.org>

Our Facebook page:

facebook.com/cc74park

Our Sunday Paper, an insert in our Sunday Bulletin, all of which is located on our website for download to your e-reader or iPad.

By email:

office@christchurchepiscopal.org

And the best way...come to church!

Our Newsletter

We at Christ Church are excited by the new life and transformation in this place, and this newsletter is a part of the many ways we are stepping boldly forward in faith. This newsletter will be published four times each year, and will cover the life of this congregation – worship, spiritual formation, music, children & youth, and so much more. Let us know what you think.

**Christ Church
74 Park Avenue
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