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# THE EPISTLE OF ST. THOMAS'

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church  
The Rev. Jeff Douglas

January 2012

Diocese of East Carolina  
The Rt. Rev. Clifton Daniel, 3<sup>rd</sup>

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## Be Not Afraid!

*"And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, 'Be not afraid...'—Luke 2:8-10*



Shepherds gathered round a fire, warming themselves on a cold clear winter's night. Winged angels in flowing white gowns float in the starriest of skies. A bright shining star, breaking the power of night hangs over the little village of Bethlehem in the distance. We can see the child with sparkling eyes cooing in the manger, the smell of hay, and the quiet munching of several peaceful farm animals. This is scene we see in our minds.

But this scene leaves out a key word that haunts this night: fear. Luke writes about fear in the night; the shepherds fear and a birth, Matthew relates, that will stir the fear of Herod so profoundly that he will murder the sons of Bethlehem.

The Shepherds certainly knew fear. They were nearly outcasts in their society. So untrustworthy were they judged to be that they were not allowed to testify in court. They lived under Roman occupation. Troublemakers quickly found their way to the torturers, and many suffered a naked death on the cross. It was not a Christmas card world for the shepherds.

Then an angel appeared in the night sky. Then suddenly more of these shining, magnificent beings appeared in night sky over the hills near Bethlehem. Such an appearance was dazzling and terrifying (Shock and awe in our current vernacular). The shepherds, says Luke, were "filled with fear."

And what are the angel's first words to the shepherds? They are among the most important, if most ignored, found anywhere in the Bible: "Be not afraid." These words the angel said to Mary when her pregnancy began, and again to Joseph when he hesitated to marry a woman who had become pregnant before the wedding. Several times, Jesus said the same thing to his disciples, "Be not afraid."

Fear cripples our response to those around us, numbing us to their needs, blinding us to our brothers and sisters, as children of God no less than ourselves. It is fear that drives some to dominate others, and fear that forces others into submission. "The root of war," said Thomas Merton, "is fear."

We have made the Christmas angel into an ornament and the choir of angels into a chorus line. We eat, drink and sing with bucolic images, enjoying a brief vacation, tranquilized from our fears. But Christmas is not

meant to be a time to evade our fears but to wrest them from the powerful grip they have on our lives.

Christmas is our time to stand with the shepherds, and open ourselves to that angelic invitation to disarmament: to let down our fears, take off the helmet, breastplate and shield; drop the (sword) or gun that too often ends up in our hand. Once freed, we are no longer obliged to hate our enemies. Instead, we might begin to obey our Lord's command to love our enemies. We might visit them, learn their names, read their books and see their films, pray in their churches, synagogues, and mosques. We might at last see them as human beings, not labels; as children of God; not things to fear.

A spiritual master asked his disciples one day, "How can you know when night has ended and the day has begun? One disciple said, "When you can tell the difference between a sheep and a dog?" "No," said the master. Another disciple asked, "Is it when you can see the difference between an olive tree and a fig tree?" "It is the moment, when any person walks over the hill, and you know that stranger is your brother or sister. Until then, no matter how bright the sun shines, it is still the night."

"Come Thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us let us find our peace in thee."

Peace –



## St. Thomas' Episcopal Church News

**Final Lobster Proceeds Report:** After payment of all expenses and receipt of all remaining lobster sales proceeds, the final net proceeds for distribution total were \$9,263.70. In accord with the directions given at the November Vestry Meeting, a check in the amount of \$4,631.85 has been distributed to the Ahoskie Food Pantry; \$1,131.85 has been distributed to the Rector's Discretionary Fund; \$500.00 has been distributed to the African Medical Mission in Transkei; and \$3000.00 has been reserved to fund travel expense for medical interpreters for the Medical Mission to Dominican Republic in Spring 2012.

**ECW Annual/Business Meeting:** Please mark your calendars for Wednesday, January 11, for the annual gathering which will follow Evening Prayer. Make reservations by calling the church office by Sunday, January 8.

**Mark your Calendars:** The Annual meeting of St. Thomas Parish will take place on Sunday, January 22, 2012 following the 10:30 worship. A covered dish luncheon follows. The nominating committee of the

Vestry has submitted the names of Bubba Peele, Barbara Outland, and Jim Shotwell as nominees of the Vestry. Other nominations can be made before or at the meeting.



*Shoes for Souls ....*

The Murfreesboro Federated Woman's Club is collecting slightly used shoes—infant, children, teens, and adult men and women shoes (tennis shoes of all sizes can be used). The shoes collected will be sent to the Samaritan's Purse sponsored by Rev. Franklin Graham. Shoes will be collected during the months of December and January. Bring your shoes to the church and place in the BOX labeled "SHOES" in the old office room. Talk with family and friends. This is a wonderful way to clean out your shoe closet and help others.

Thanks and God Bless,  
Linda Shotwell

## **Just for Fun ...** Subject: Texting for Seniors

In case you wanted to know what all those texting abbreviations are: Teens have theirs, now seniors have their own texting codes (LOL OMG e.g.). I thought the following listing was appropriate... after all the kids have all their little codes... like BFF, LOL, etc. So here are some codes for seniors:

ATD- At the Doctor's  
BFF- Best Friends Funeral  
BTW- Bring the Wheelchair  
BYOT- Bring Your Own Teeth  
CBM- Covered by Medicare  
CUATSC- See You at the Senior Center  
DWI- Driving While Incontinent  
FWBB- Friend with Beta Blockers  
FWIW- Forgot Where I Was  
FYI- Found Your Insulin  
GGPBL- Gotta Go, Pacemaker Battery Low  
GHA- Got heartburn Again  
HGBM- Had Good Bowel Movement  
IMHO- Is My Hearing-Aid On?  
LMDO- Laughing My Dentures Out  
LOL- Living On Lipitor  
OMSG- Oh My! Sorry, Gas  
ROFL...CGU- Rolling on the Floor Laughing...Can't get Up!  
TOT- Texting on Toilet  
TTYL- Talk to You Louder

WAITT- Who Am I Talking To?  
WTFA- Wet the Furniture Again  
WTP- Where're the Prunes  
WWNO- Walker Wheels Need Oil  
GGLKI- (Gotta Go, Laxative Kicking In!)

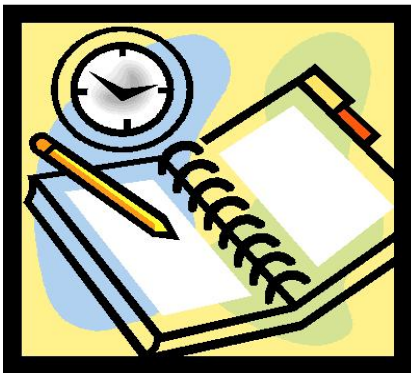


## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Mac Griffin  
8 Patsy Jones  
8 Gretchen Simons  
11 Bryan Wiggins  
12 David Shields  
14 Anne Tucker  
15 Sarah Blanchard  
20 Beth Douglas  
30 Joan Fitzwater



*"O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor; we pray, on your servants Mac, Patsy, Gretchen, Bryan, David, Anne, Sarah, Beth, and Joan as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*



## **St. Thomas Episcopal Church – Schedules for January 2012**

### Acolytes

1 Jerrie Taylor and Riley Boyd  
8 Nelle Burgess and Becca Boyd  
15 Bill Blanchard and Robby Outland  
22 Charles Sawyer and Josh Boyd  
29 Stan Jenkins and Mary Outland

### Altar Flowers

1 Dr. and Mrs. Benji Brown  
8 Dr. and Mrs. Stan Jenkins  
15 Dr. and Mrs. John Davis  
22 Mr. and Mrs. Bill Blanchard  
29 **In memory of Mike Lambert**

### Altar Guild

January: Vicki Blanchard and Cheryl Steczak

**Food Pantry (Note-Wednesdays)**

4 Dicky Hoggard  
11 Jim Shotwell  
18 Peggy Vann  
25 Bubba Peele

**Lay Readers**

**1 8:00 am Morning Prayer-Julie Shields**  
**1 10:30 am Morning Prayer-OPEN**  
**4 No Evening Prayer**  
8 8:00 am Morning Prayer- **OPEN**  
8 10:30 am Holy Eucharist- Buck Suiter  
11 6:00 pm Evening Prayer- Buck Suiter  
15 10:30 am Holy Eucharist- Martie Tayloe  
18 6:00 pm Evening Prayer- Martie Tayloe  
22 10:30 am Holy Eucharist- Claudia Griffin  
25 6:00 pm Evening Prayer- Claudia Griffin  
29 10:30 am Holy Eucharist- Colin Jones

**Ushers**

Bubba Peele and Rob Outland

**Yard Work**

1 Julian Taylor and Jamie Johnson  
8 Julian Taylor and Jamie Johnson  
15 Colin Jones, David and Julie Shields  
22 Colin Jones, David and Julie Shields  
29 Dicky Hoggard and Johnny Griffin

**Soup Kitchen** –Thursday, January 26, 2012

**HAPPY NEW YEAR**



## **Subject: Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup> Mission/Worship Day**

A wonderful Deanery event is scheduled for Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup> at St. Thomas Parish in Windsor. The Mission Cooperative Task Force has planned a three part event which brings us together for Mission, Worship and Fellowship.

At 3:30, we will gather for a “Stop Hunger Now” event which will prepare meals for 10,000 people. We are asking each Parish in our Deanery to send 4-5 people or more to help in this effort. It will take us 2 hours to prepare the meals. It is a wonderful event and several Parishes in our Diocese participate in this program annually.

At 5:30, we will be lead in the service of Evensong by Schola, a wonderful Choir in our Diocese. We will gather at St. Thomas Parish in Windsor for this worship time together. One does not have to participate in the “Stop Hunger Now” in order to come and worship with us. Everyone in the Deanery is invited to come and worship together.

Finally, we will have a Covered Dish Supper. We ask folks to bring a favorite “International” Dish for this event. We will have a meal together in the Parish hall at St. Thomas.

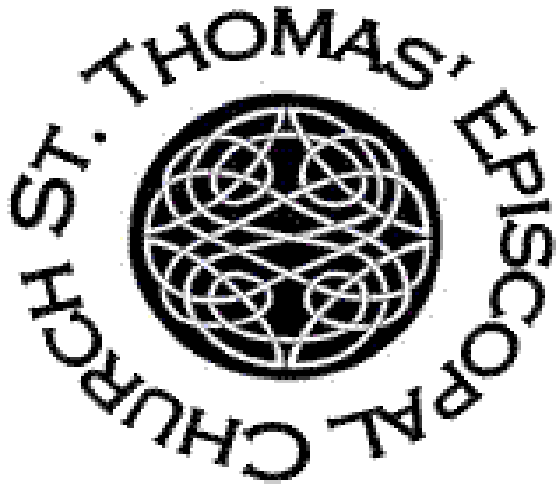
We are asking each Parish to make a gift of \$250-300.00 to pay for the supplies for “Stop Hunger Now.” Please send this donation to John Bonner at Holy Trinity. We need to expedite this as soon as possible. Please come and join us for this grand ministry event.



# January 2012

## Monthly Planner

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																		
<b>1</b> 8 & 10:30 AM MP HAPPY NEW YEAR'S DAY	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>																																																																																																		
<b>8</b> 10:30 AM Rite II HE 8 AM Rite II MP 9:15 AM Sunday School Rector's/ St. Mary's, Gates	<b>9</b> 5 PM Book Guild 7 PM Boy Scouts	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 6 PM Evening Prayer ECW Dinner follows EP	<b>12</b> Choir Practice resumes at 6 PM	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>																																																																																																		
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<b>22</b> 8 & 10:30 AM Rite II HE 9:15 AM Sunday School Annual meeting and lunch after worship	<b>23</b> 7 PM Boy Scouts	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> 6 PM Evening Prayer	<b>26</b> 5-6 PM Soup Kitchen Choir Practice at 6 PM	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>																																																																																																		
<b>29</b> 8 & 10:30 AM Rite II HE 9:15 AM Sunday School	<b>30</b> 7 PM Boy Scouts	<b>31</b>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">Dec 2011</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th> <th>M</th> <th>T</th> <th>W</th> <th>T</th> <th>F</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18</td> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25</td> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> <td>31</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Dec 2011							S	M	T	W	T	F	S					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">Feb 2012</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th> <th>M</th> <th>T</th> <th>W</th> <th>T</th> <th>F</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3 4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Feb 2012							S	M	T	W	T	F	S					1	2	3 4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29			
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