

# GraceNotes

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH STERLING, IL

December 2009

NEWSLETTER OF GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH • 707 1ST AVENUE • STERLING, IL 61081 • (815)625-0442

## IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Sometimes we ask ourselves, "Why do I try? What difference does it make? What's the point of it all?" Many are the questions about the meaning of our lives. Such questions seem to display a lack of hope and we drag ourselves from one day to the next in quiet desperation. Some days are worse than others.

In 1995 I met a lady who in an earlier time had experienced such hopelessness. She had made mistakes, wrong choices and all seemed black. On the bleakest day she found herself waiting her turn in a doctors office mindlessly thumbing her way through a magazine as she spilled out her thoughts to God. Imagine praying in a doctors office? She might not even have realized it was a prayer but she was at the end of the road, "There is no point to my life. God has forsaken me and doesn't even know I exist." Through her tears her eyes focused on a photo in the magazine and they opened wide in astonishment. It was a picture of her old Sunday School class when she was 6 and there she was right in the middle of the first row!

In that instant she knew that God was aware of her and was not neglecting her. In that moment the light of hope blazed forth with the brightness of the Bethlehem star. In that moment her life changed.

She went back to school, got a nursing degree and specialized in Oncology, not only dispensing Chemotherapy but dispensing hope to those who thought they were perishing. That flood of joy that permeated her soul on that day in the doctor's office spread out from her over the years. It has now even touched you 2,000 miles from where she lives. Hope is essential to life, it is infectious and it is a gift from God alone. One life makes a difference. Your life makes a difference.

One life that has made the greatest difference in this world began in a manger in and out-of-the-way place. An obscure person, in an obscure place. Yet the birth of Jesus brought hope, joy and inspiration to the handful of people who were aware of the event. That hope and joy has rippled out through time and space making an amazing difference in the lives of untold millions. Like the oncology

nurse, people who were perishing have been saved. Lives have been redeemed. The whole world has been blessed as a result. Hope, the best of God's gifts! It is that hope and joy found in the lives of the saints that gives substance and meaning to the message of the angels, "Peace on Earth, good will towards men." Oh, yes the light of the star of Bethlehem published wonderful news to the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven! You do make a difference.

—FR. DAVID+

## SPECIAL PLEDGE NOTICE

For those of you who paid your pledge by check on November 29th, please call Sheila in the office. It seems the tellers recorded all the checks by number but neglected to put down the names or account number of the pledgers. Call Sheila to make sure a proper accounting is made and that your statements can be accurate.

## Study The Book of Daniel Wednesdays at 5:30 PM With Soup, Salad & Dessert

The popular notion that the Book of Daniel foretells the future is without foundation. In fact, it speaks of events that occurred 300 years before it was written. The literary devices of stories and dreams and interpretations was meant to give courage, hope and strength to the Israelites who lived about 200 years before Jesus under reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. The star of the various tales is not Daniel, but God Almighty! Come, learn, more and be encouraged as were the Israelites of old.

**BROADCASTING ON DEMAND AT [gracechurchstg.org](http://gracechurchstg.org)**



**INTO THIS SILENT  
NIGHT**

Into this silent night  
as we make our weary way  
we know not where.

Just when the night  
becomes its darkest  
and we cannot see our path,

just then is when the angels rush  
in, their hands full of stars.  
BY ANN WEEMS

**ADVENT RETREAT**

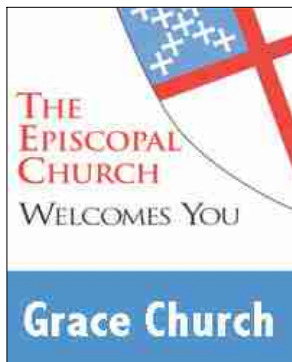
Saturday, December 12  
8:00 a.m. to Noon  
**Breakfast Provided**



**2nd Annual  
THANKFUL DINNER**

**DECEMBER 5, 2009 – 6 PM  
ROAST TURKEY WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS  
BRING YOUR FRIENDS**

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
707 1ST AVENUE  
STERLING, IL 61081**



# ADVENT RETREAT

Saturday, December 12

8:00 a.m. to Noon



Come join us for a morning as we fill our hearts with the promise of the coming Christmas season! The morning will begin with breakfast and morning prayer. Then we will share stories, poems and perhaps songs as we watch and wait for the birth of the child.

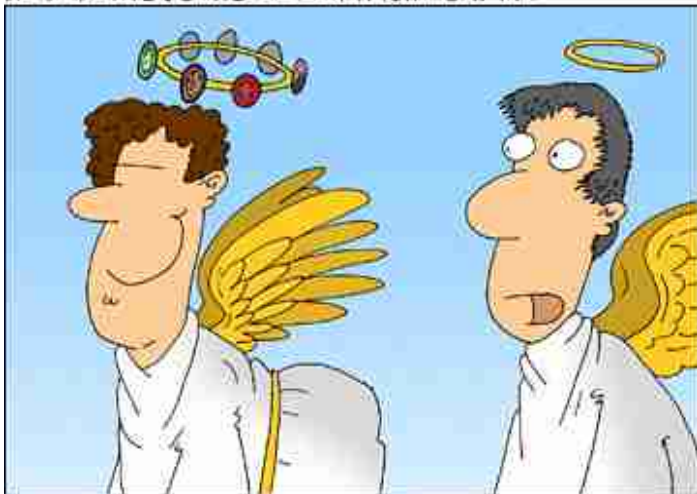
If you possess a special nativity scene that you would like to share with us, you are invited to bring it and be prepared to tell about its history and its meaning for you and your family. If possible, we'd like for you to leave it set up in the parish hall until after the service on Sunday so that others might enjoy your treasure.

## Adult Sunday School

We continue the study of the book, "The Shack" at 9 am each Sunday. Elizabeth is our guide as we explore the implications of this amazing book.

When we finish with this book we will go on to a practical study involving boundaries, physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. More on that next month.

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HEY, NOBODY EVER TOLD ME ANYTHING ABOUT ANY MERIT BADGES!

**No Parish Movie Night  
In December**

## From Convention...

The 172nd Annual Convention of the Diocese of Chicago was held at the Westin Yorktown Lombard Center in Lombard. The convention consists of business sessions, learning opportunities, vendors displays and opportunities for fun and fellowship.

Here in the American Church power is a shared commodity rather than an autocratic system. The Bishop meets with the Clergy of the Diocese and elected representatives of the various congregations to approve the budget, make changes in local Canon Law, to produce resolutions and to worship.

Nothing earthshaking or scandal-producing was on the menu this year. But there were items of interest. The Diocesan Offices are located at 65 East Huron Street in Chicago immediately behind St. James Cathedral. The building doesn't look very ecclesiastical; more like a high-tech company. As part of a move to 'brand' ourselves more effectively they have designated the entire property "Saint James Commons". The Diocese is working with a top-flight marketing firm to further this "branding" process into an effective tool for all of us.

The most exciting news of all was the addition of three new congregations to the Church. Two are Spanish speaking and the other Asian, all in the greater Chicago area. It is sad that whenever groups of members decide to leave the church it is splashed over the front pages of newspapers but when groups join the world hears nothing of it.

But it does happen. Just before I left California a Chinese Presbyterian Church in Montebello joined the Episcopal Church. One that interested me was a huge Pentecostal Church in Virginia joined the church a few years ago. The motives in these situation can be complex but when all is said and done they simply need to un-denominate as a matter of conscience.

## Outreach News

Don't forget Food For The Poor. There are offering envelopes on the table by the kitchen that are coded so that we get the credit! One of our members is working toward going on a missionary trip with this group. Wow! More on that another time.

School is back in session. Washington School kids are in need of supplies. A box in the Parish Hall is there for you to deposit goodies in. Pens, pencils, pads, binders, etc. The kids are deeply appreciative of our help.

The food pantry in Rock Falls could use some volunteer help. If you have some morning time available stop by and see Pastor Ruth Ann.

The Firehouse of God rescue mission still feeds the hungry. Grace Church provides food and cleaning supplies to Pastor Brian and his crew. They too, can always use some noon-time helpers.

Some of us are toying with the idea of providing free Pancakes via a local restaurant on Friday and Saturday nights. Interested? Talk to Fr. David.

**OPEN HOUSE**  
**AT**  
**PALMYRA GREENHOUSE**  
**DECEMBER 4-5 TO 9 PM**  
**FR. DAVID & ELIZABETH**  
**WILL BE ENTERTAINING.**  
**THEY WILL ALSO BE AT**  
**THE LATIN AMERICAN**  
**CLUB**  
**DECEMBER 7TH**  
**FROM 5:30 TO 7 PM**

**STERLING COMMERCIAL ROOFING**  
**2704 North Locust**  
**815-626-7744**

Call Kevin Froeter today for all your roofing needs

**Come one, come all!**  
**The 2nd Annual Thankful Dinner**  
**December 5th 2009 at 6 pm.**

Bring your friends and bring your family. A great time to be had by all. The Church will provide Turkey & Stuffing and Prime Rib, sign up now to donate other dishes.

For the rest of the details listen for announcements or see Sue Lee. Last year was a great success and we are expecting this year to be even better. Entertainment provided.

Oh, we will have a dessert contest again this year. Only this year there will be 4 categories, pies, cakes, cookies and candies. Enter one or enter all, see Liz Rude for details. We have so much to be thankful for, please come and help us celebrate together.

### Music Report

The Chanting of the Psalm each Sunday is going well. Christmas will once again feature offerings by Brian and Ellen Prall. Nancy Fifeski's grandson Andrew will bless us with piano renditions

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES**  
**LESSONS & CAROLS 6:30 PM**  
**SOLEMN HIGH MASS 7 PM**  
**RECEPTION FOLLOWING**

### The Prayer Closet

For Healing: Jon, Merideth, Bea, Melinda, Chris, Sandi, Christina, Jeanie, Pat, Evan, David, Sally, Ada, Athena, Glenn, Laurell, Brooke, Arlene, Donna, Beth, Roger, Jeremiah, Steve and Nancy.

For the homebound: Helen, Char, Miriam, Kathy, and June.

For Employment: Andrew, Emily, Steve, Ray, Romee, Troy, Melissa, Tiffany, Danny, Steve, Don and Jeremy.

For Special Needs: Harold, Mary, Keith, Marge, Carol & Tom, Justin, Jen, John, Olivia & Rachel, James and Pat.

For the Departed: Crete Dillon, Harold Wade, Helene Reynolds, Bob Lee

For members of the Armed Forces: Greg, Matt, Tommy, Jamie, Alex, Ryan, Tommy, David, Rich, Robert, Larry, Chris, John, Julie, Don, Roger, Eric, Marcus, Andy, Mike, Jennifer and the 102nd MC Company.

Safe Travel for Bob

### Happy Birthday!

John Haglund, Lois Fulfs, Andrew Linville, Sandy Smith, Gregg Ripley, Sheila Duerst.

### Happy Anniversary

Alex & Monica Delgado, Brooke & Earl Cochran.

