

No Christmas Decorations?

Eight More Days of Becoming

With the Savior's arrival just over a week away, we've still got time to get ourselves ready -- to quiet ourselves -- to reflect while we wait. But as **Fr. Robin** explains it, waiting during Advent is different than, for example, waiting for a bus -- that's both boring and anxiety producing. But that distinction is sometimes hard to make.

What follows is abstracted -- and quoted -- from the writing of an Episcopal priest in Pasadena, CA, **Rev. Susan Russell**. It's about two different kinds of waiting. First, waiting for the bus....

Will that bus be on time? Will I make my connection? Am I waiting at the right bus stop? What if I looked at the schedule wrong? Oh where IS that bus, anyway? That's waiting in anxiety.

But waiting in expectancy is more like being seated in a concert hall looking for the curtain to rise. We know something wonderful is about to happen and everyone else is waiting with the same expectation. We may know what to expect -- we bought the tickets, looked over the program, checked out the performers -- but the experience is yet to happen. And so we wait, expectantly. We wait in the tension of both knowing and not knowing -- open to the experience about to unfold. Expectant rather than anxious.

I believe that is the kind of "Advent Attitude" that God calls us to aim for: to live in both trust and tension as we prepare for the coming of the One whose birth turned the world upside down.

Now don't get me wrong (I love Christmas as much as anyone). But a few years ago I found one voice in the wilderness that has helped me put my preparations in perspective -- a voice that I turn to every December to remind me of what I already know:

* If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator. *(continued on page 2.)*

Come Christmas Eve Everything Changes

At this church we are not counting the days till Santa's gifts arrive. We are still in the season of Advent. So our sanctuary remains subdued today and through next Sunday morning. But then -- wait for it -- that afternoon the church's mood will change rapidly from anticipation to celebration, glorious celebration. Our savior has come! Emmanuel!

Thus our Christmas schedule will have some real surprises, with young children playing an active role in relating the wondrous birth story.

Plan for an early Evening Service on Christmas Eve (7:00PM) with Guest Musicians. Please note: there will be no services here Christmas Day.

Without a vision, the people perish.

-Proverbs 29:18



Christmas Services

**December 24th
Fourth Sunday in Advent
St. Augustine's:
9:00AM, Holy Eucharist**

**December 24th
Christmas Eve
St. Augustine's:
7:00PM, Holy Eucharist
with carols; children tell
Christmas Story
St. Peter's:
10:30PM, Carols and bells.
11:00PM, Festal Eucharist**

**December 25th
Christmas Day
St. Augustine's:
No church services
St. Peter's:
10:30AM, Holy Eucharist**

Vestry Says Yes to Make 2007 Our Year for Growth

"'06 was a year for fixing things," **Fr. Robin** told the vestry last Tuesday night. He and **Joyce Corn** reviewed a year of painting and refurbishing our Parish Hall, totally rehabbing the interior of Ford Hall, finishing painting of the sanctuary, replacing Ford Hall's roof, clearing and hauling away truck-loads of brush and trees from our huge backyard

But the year's story has more: generous parishioners who paid for clearing our back acres and for painting the sanctuary's ceiling. Plus there were thousands (yes, 1000's) of hours our members donated to hang cabinets, wire light fixtures and build countertops. Church members tore down and replaced an entire ceiling in the back office. Fans were installed and every wall, door, window frame and piece of woodwork was painted, repainted and touched up. "Almost every square inch of Ford Hall has been improved," **Rudy Gabbidon** said.

"When we think of stewardship, it's so easy to think only of money," **Fr. Robin** reminded vestry members. "But just add up all the hours and all the craftsmanship our members have given this year -- that's stewardship too. Their generosity is truly amazing."

There's more. Our Junior Warden reported that Ford Hall is being totally rewired. Licensed electrician, **Huston Lewis**, is removing all the old knob and tube wiring with its frayed fabric insulation (and some bare wires) and replacing it with new, grounded wiring. When the crew finishes later this month, city inspectors will certify their work.

"Next year we're going to really use Ford Hall," **Joyce** explained. "It's finally safe, efficient and pleasant to be in."

Back over in the church building, a badly needed new stove top is installed and already in use. And there's a new double *(continued on page 2)*

Inquirers' Class for Everyone Today at 11:00 Ford Hall

“Chrismons” to Adorn Our Tree

Tradition Begun Last Year Will Shine Here Again

That big tree is just about to be raised again in the rear of the parish hall. And it will be decorated once more with hundreds of lights. But it also will get its Chrismons, that new-to-us kind of hand-made ornaments that were created last year after church.

Our chrismons are cloth and paper ornaments each featuring a centuries-old symbol of Christian faith. First developed by **Francis Kipps Spencer**, it was she who coined the term by combining the words Christ and monogram.

Traditionally they are made in white and gold with beads, ribbon and glitter. White is the liturgical color for Christmas, suggesting purity and joy. Gold is a color for kings and represents the glory and majesty of God.

The symbols used in the decorations represent Christ, Christianity, and a variety of biblical and theological concepts. Crowns, crosses, doves, butterflies and stars are examples of the Chrismon designs we have here.

Such symbols date back to the early Christian church. Those first Christians were reluctant to allow any artwork that might possibly encourage people to worship "graven images" of any kind.

But as the new church grew, its leaders found that art was vitally necessary to give the church a sense of identity. Artwork was also helpful to understand the many Christian ideas and principles, especially for those who could not read or write.

Vestry: Growth in 2007 *continued*

oven as well, replacing the very old, barely working model. This equipment is thought to be important for St. Augustine's ministry of hospitality --Sunday breakfasts and meals after funerals, for example. Vestry members stressed that a working kitchen is essential.

The church's marginal phone system has been replaced with service from Vonage. "It's a lot less expensive," Fr. Whitlock assured members. Plus most calls get answered by a person rather than a recorded voice because calls can be forwarded to Fr. Robin's cell phone.

"When you're trying to grow the church, the impact of a real person answering your calls is huge," reasoned **Shirley Davis**.

In other business, a new policy passed: Beginning immediately, all outside work costing over \$250 will require a written contract.

Treasurer **Greg Duckett** announced with great satisfaction that our 2006 diocesan apportionment was fully paid by December. "This may be the earliest we've ever done that," Greg chortled.

A budget review revealed the need for strong giving in December. "So far," Greg said, "our income from pledges and plate collections is behind about \$8,300 for the first 11 months." Bills are paid, but members noted that very little has been given to outreach.

In his personal report, Fr. Whitlock gave examples of his participation in our larger community, most recently with Bayfront Hospital's Continuing Education department. "I see my work beyond our parish as a way to represent St. Augustine's. I'm excited about St. Augustine's profile."

2006 was about taking care of our property. But 2007 will be about growing our outreach effort, Fr. Whitlock told the group. We'll work at deepening our individual spiritual lives and expanding our practice of stewardship." All this will begin in January with the training of acolytes, lay readers, people doing pastoral visits and new Eucharistic ministers.

So Where's the Color?

With our church's appropriate emphasis on Advent's preparation – and with Christmas Eve falling on a Sunday – the time for holiday decorating is crunched even more than in past years. Here's the trimming schedule St. Augustine's will run on this week.

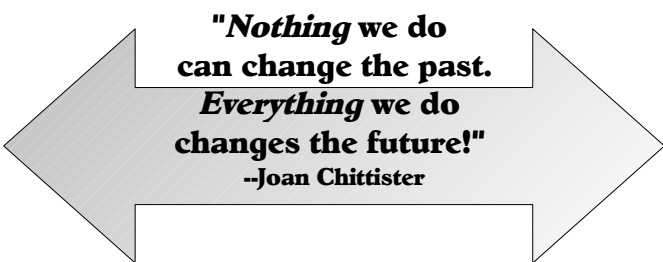
The Creche. Our lovely Nativity Scene is already in place, waiting for the Big Event. Of course the stable is empty now, just an old out-building, barely what we'd call a barn. There are a few animals and the manger, holding animal feed. But there's no holy family, and still no visitors.

The Tree. Our Hall's big tree should arrive on Tuesday and it should have its lights and crismons for next Sunday.

Poinsettias. Ten of them, will appear only after next Sunday's final Advent service.

Changed Altar Linens. The purple is replaced with the white of joy after Eucharist next Sunday – in time for Christmas Eve Eucharist at 7:00PM

Wreaths & decorations. Next Sunday afternoon.



**"Nothing we do
can change the past.
Everything we do
changes the future!"**
--Joan Chittister

Decorating for Advent? *continued*

* If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.

* If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and cro-cheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

* Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the partner. Love is kind, though harried and tired.

* Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens. Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way.

* Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return. it rejoices in giving to those who can't. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

What we are called to prepare for in Advent is that love that will set us free if we'll **just** embrace it. And when the anxiousness threatens to make me nuts, I listen again for those voices in the wilderness that call my heart back to where it longs to be: waiting expectantly.

Note: No newsletter for the next two Sundays. Editors Judy and Tom Krug will be on vacation.