Dear Ones,

This past Sunday, our readings were truly rich. Micah, 1st Corinthians, Matthew’s Beatitudes. Hard to pick, even harder to get down to ten minutes. I was talking with another priest in the diocese the other day, and he suggested that preaching would be much easier if we didn’t have to keep to that 8-12-minute timeframe. I started thinking about it. You know, it would be much easier to do if I could go for the 45-minute version. After all, I grew up listening to hour-long sermons. Well, okay. I think I probably napped through most of it. If I went on for 45 minutes, everyone still there would probably be nodding off.

So, ten minutes, give or take two. I guess I’ll just have to live with that.

Micah 6:1-5 is the culmination of the prophet’s laying out the case that God has against Israel. The contention is full of references to events in their history: the Exodus and its leaders, to the attempt by Balak to have Balaam curse the Israelites.

I’m pretty sure you all know the Exodus story; we rehearse it several times each year. I suspect the story of Balaam and Balak (Numbers 22-24) is not quite so familiar.

Balak was king of Moab. He’d seen what the Israelites had done to the Amorites and dreaded facing them. He sent messengers to Balaam, asking him to come and curse the Israelites. It took three entreaties before God told Balaam to go with them, but to speak only God’s words. It took four times for Balak to realize the futility of his quest to have Balaam curse the Israelites. Here’s one of Balaam’s oracles, after speaking with God:

Balaam uttered his oracle, saying: “Rise, Balak, and hear; listen to me, O son of Zippor: And Balaam took up his discourse, and said,

“Rise, Balak, and hear; hearken to me, O son of Zippor:
God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should repent.
Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?
Behold, I received a command to bless: he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.
He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob; nor has he seen trouble in Israel.
The LORD their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them.
God brings them out of Egypt; they have as it were the horns of the wild ox.
For there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel;
now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, `What has God wrought!'
Behold, a people! As a lioness it rises up and as a lion it lifts itself;
it does not lie down till it devours the prey, and drinks the blood of the slain.”

And Balak said to Balaam, “Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.”

It is powerful stuff; I encourage you to read it all for yourselves.

What is also powerful is Micah’s final verse (6:8)

He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Justice. Kindness. Humility. Ways that we are to behave if we are in relationship with God and each other.

-- Thomas
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FEBRUARY LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Brigid of Kildare

Of the Irish saints, Brigid is a close second to Patrick. A fifth century girl, she may have met Patrick while still young. Around 470, Brigid founded a monastic community of women at Kildare. She later persuaded Conlaed to be ordained bishop and to move his community to Kildare. Brigid may be best known for her concern for the marginalized, and stories of her miraculous healings abound. She is also popular in Scotland and England. We will commemorate her life and witness at our Wednesday mass on 1 February.

The Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple

We will celebrate the feast of the Presentation on Thursday, 2 February 2011 at a Said Mass at 12:10PM. “Presentation” is a new name for what’s previously been known as “The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary” and “Candlemas.” In the Easter tradition, this feast is called “the meeting of Christ with Simeon.” In Jewish tradition, first born sons were to be dedicated to God in remembrance of the sparing of the first born of Israel and the exodus from Egypt. In Christian tradition, this marks the recognition by Simeon and Anna that the Messiah, long promised by God, has appeared.

Thomas Bray

Thomas Bray was a country parson until he was invited by the Bishop of London to oversee the Church’s work in Maryland. He endeavored to secure a bishop for America, but was unsuccessful. Bray is best known for founding two societies, the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, both of which still exist today. It was Bray who suggested the idea of a humanitarian colony for honest debtors to General Oglethorpe. We will commemorate him on 15 February at our Wednesday mass at 10:00AM.

Saint Matthias

After Judas’ death, the disciples met and decided that they must replace him. They met, prayed and finally chose Matthias as the new twelfth disciple. We know nothing more of Matthias, where his mission field was, what he was like, or where he came from. We commemorate his life on Friday, 24 February at a Said Mass at 12:10PM.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Parish of Saint John’s Church has been called for Sunday, 28 February 2017. The meeting will be held during the 4th Sunday Potluck. Anyone wishing to contribute a report for the meeting should submit their report to Fr. Heard by Wednesday, 22 February.


Presented by Dr. Margaret Davis, Emeritus Professor of Literature and Composition

Thursday, 2 February—7:00PM
Gautrelet Room, Spring Hill College
The regular meeting of the Vestry and Wardens of Saint John’s Church was called to order at 12:00PM on Sunday, 8 January 2017.

The minutes of the 11 December meeting were approved as submitted.

Cindy Gass reviewed the financials. Income for December was $19,030 against expenses of $28,242. We have received 27 pledges and expect 13 more.

The Outreach Committee delivered the Angel Tree gifts to Azalea Gardens Nursing Home and sent $500 to Trinity Episcopal Church in Gatlinburg, TN to assist in recovery efforts.

James Christiansen reported that the electrical repairs to 1702 Church St. have been completed and the painter has been contacted to do touch-up work. He reported that the roofer has completed his work on the parish house and parlor roofs.

Fr. Heard called for the election of officers of the Vestry. The results of the election are as follows: Senior Warden: Cindy Gass, Junior Warden: James Christiansen, Treasurer: Connie McLean, Clerk: Nikki Shaw.

Fr. Heard presented the Audit Committee Report to the Vestry. The Vestry voted to receive the report.

The Vestry Teller schedule was distributed.

Fr. Heard asked the Vestry to call for the Annual Meeting of the Parish. The Vestry voted to call the meeting for Sunday, 26 February in concert with the 4th Sunday Potluck.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 12:30PM.

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February 26th will be the 4th Sunday Potluck lunch. We will have a Mardi Gras theme: so plan on red beans and rice, king cakes and other “seasonal” goodies and, of course, good fellowship.

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**SAINT JOHN’S ECW RUMMAGE SALE MARCH 24TH AND 25TH**

It’s time to start spring cleaning and making a pile of things to donate to the Saint John’s ECW Rummage Sale which will be held on **Friday March 24th and Saturday, March 25th 8 AM to 1 PM each day.**

We will **not** be storing items at the church until the week of the sale. You can bring your “trash and treasure” items to the Great Hall from Sunday, March 19th until the sale starts. Items will not be accepted before that time.

A few reminders:
- Please make sure items are clean
- If it is electric, make sure all the parts are included and it works
- No computer stuff this year (it didn’t sell in the past)
- No clothes this year

Volunteer to spend a few hours helping to sort and price the items. You don’t have to be an ECW member: all are welcome, gentlemen too!!

Tell your friends and neighbors about the sale (and all the other good things we do at St. John’s) and invite them to come.

Volunteer to work at the sale, we need people to help keep the room organized and the tables looking neat; to answer questions from our “customers” and to clean up afterwards.

Call Irene Yeager or Paula Ross if you have questions.
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**Lectioary and Rota for February 2017**
Episcopal Relief & Development has announced that it will again offer the Lenten Meditations. Written by a diverse group of faith leaders and produced by Forward Movement, Lenten Meditations reflects the spirit of Lent by focusing on love, togetherness, and community.

“Lent can be a time of lone introspection, but there is also tremendous power in joining together in community to examine our lives and consider what we can do to become reconciled to God, to one another and to Creation,” said Sean McConnell, senior director of engagement for Episcopal Relief & Development. “Under the theme of ‘Together We Can,’ this year’s Lenten Meditations explores how strong relationships and strong communities enable people of faith to share God’s love with each other and with the world around us.”

Also, Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday, traditionally observed on the first Sunday in Lent, is a day when congregations focus on global needs during worship services, collect a special offering, and distribute Lenten Meditations booklets to invite members to make healing a hurting world a part of their Lenten spiritual practice. More information and planning guides for this occasion, held on March 5 this year or any convenient time during Lent, are available at episcopalrelief.org/Sunday.

“Focusing on Episcopal Relief & Development during Lent puts Episcopalians in spiritual solidarity with people of faith in nearly 40 countries around the world,” said the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies. “Their well-loved meditation booklets give us the opportunity each day during Lent to pray and reflect about how we can seek and serve Christ in all people.”

The booklets will be available at St. John’s and you may sign up for daily emails at: http://www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/church-campaigns/lent

**2017 PLEDGE SUMMARY**

As this newsletter goes to print, we have received financial commitments from 35 pledge units for 2017 totaling $119,956. In 2016, we received 38 pledges totaling $123,360. For 2015, we received 47 pledges totaling $141,152. Data back to 2012 are represented in the graph.

If you plan to pledge to the 2017 operating budget, please turn in a pledge card as soon as possible. Extra cards are available in the church office.
For healing grace and continued strength, we pray for our members:
Marian Boykin, Ron Brown, Mary Jones, Jayson Chestang, Budd McLean, Joyce Lee, Donna Waites.

For our Homebound:
Mae Dunn, Joan-Marie Elam, LaVerne Foster, Lorraine Murray, Catherine Warren, Chick Wohlert, Becky & Art Youngblood.

For victims of war and their families, and members of our Armed Forces and their families:
Ellis Garner, Eric Mattoon.

For our Friends and Family:

Contact Us
Staff:
The Reverend Thomas Heard, rector
rector@stjohnsmobile.org
Louis Daniel
Organist & Choir Director
music@stjohnsmobile.org
Lella Lowe
Financial Secretary
finance@stjohnsmobile.org
Jack Ruppe
Sexton
Vestry:
Darren Anderson
Ron Brown
James Christiansen, junior warden
Cindy Gass, senior warden
Kathe Gieseler
Connie McLean, treasurer
Geri Moulton
Nikki Shaw, clerk
Butch Yeager

Directory Update
Neva Bache
Cell phone: (251) 725-8214
Home phone: delete

Geri Moulton 02/01
Bob Sheffield 02/05
Mary Sheffield 02/08
LaNeisha Anderson 02/10
Alison Chestang 02/12
Lee Dorsey 02/15
Thomas Heard 02/15
Debbie Ollhoft 02/15
Lisa Chestang 02/17
David Thompson 02/23

Happy Birthday
Prayer List
Neva Bache
Cell phone: (251) 725-8214
Home phone: delete
Come Worship With Us!
Monday—Friday:
8:30AM Morning Prayer

Sunday:
9:00AM Adult and Youth Christian Formation
10:00AM Holy Eucharist

Wednesday:
10:00AM Holy Eucharist;
Healing on the 1st Wednesday of the month.

Other Feasts and Holy Days are observed throughout the year; please see our website for the latest schedule.

Parish Office
Monday—Thursday
9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Telephone: 251-479-5474
Fax: 251-473-1230
www.stjohnsmobile.org

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and by appointment

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St. John’s: The Episcopal Church in Midtown Mobile
Grounded in shared sacramental life and moving into the world to be the hands of Our Lord.