



# LOGOS

The Newsletter for St. John's Episcopal Church, Arlington

*"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." John 1:5*

## **From the Rector: Preparing for Christmas**

Advent calendars are one of my favorite things. I love to open a calendar window each day until December 24. Although I'll take one with Scripture verses and pictures of the biblical story, I would much prefer one with pictures of candles and trees and elves and all the secular things that remind me of Christmas. But when it comes to the 24<sup>th</sup>, I want the double window to open with the manger scene. Scripture and elves. Wise men and trees. Shepherds and candles. Advent and Christmas all mixed up in one place.

And that is where we are every December. We are part of our culture, so we are engaged in buying gifts, sending Christmas cards, attending parties, decorating trees and stringing lights. We are also part of the Christian community, so we are celebrating Advent as the time when we wait for Jesus. We have Advent candles and lessons about John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord. We sing Advent hymns and use purple hangings to remind us that Advent is a time for self-examination and repentance as we prepare to welcome the Christ Child into our lives and our hearts. We watch in our mind's eye as Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the angels all prepare to come together in one glorious tableau on December 24, when we finally get to sing Christmas carols and greet the newborn king. There are three things we can do to anticipate and observe the secular Christmas and the sacred Christmas at the same time:

- we can celebrate,
- we can give, and
- we can love.

At Christmas, the angels celebrated the birth of Christ with songs of praise. We celebrate by going to office parties and cocktail parties, by hosting parties and by spending time with friends. We celebrate by putting up a Christmas tree and decorating it. We string lights around our house and put candles in the windows. Sometimes we even put those big inflatable Christmas scenes in our yard. Our sacred celebrations can be guided by the words of some of our favorite hymns, like "God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay; remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day" (#105) and "Good Christian friends rejoice with heart and soul and voice" (#107).

We can give, as the wise men brought gifts for the newborn king. We give to our loved ones, we give to the poor and the needy, we give to ourselves and we give to God. There are many ways to give to the poor. We can drop money in the Salvation Army kettles at the malls and other local stores. We can give money to a charity such as Toys for Tots. We can buy presents and gift cards for the Angel Tree project we do at Saint John's or for

Arlington's Secret Santa project. And we can give by serving meals in one of the feeding programs on Christmas Day. We should especially remember the poor and needy at Christmas because the Holy Family was poor and needy at Christmas, too.

We can give to our families and friends. It is enjoyable to stay in touch with family and friends during this season. We send Christmas cards to friends in faraway places. We buy or make presents for those near and dear. Sometimes that can be quite a project. Nothing is more frustrating than somebody you want to give to who says, "Oh, no need to get me anything." I have a brother and sister-in-law who do that, but nobody pays any attention and they like the gifts. I didn't give them something one year and felt awful. So now I give them a gift basket of food, which their family eats on the road back to their house from my sister's.

There is nothing more helpful than a list; I get good ones from my nephews—mostly books and CDs. I try to think up a list too, but I like surprises. Last year it was the album from Kristy and Evan's wedding and one of those blankets with sleeves in them. Sometimes there are surprises that don't work out, but the good surprises are worth having to return the ones that don't suit as well.

One way we can give to ourselves is to take some time to ponder the meaning of Christmas, as Mary pondered the shepherds' words in her heart. We can take that time for the self-examination and reflection that Advent calls us to and prepare for Christmas by giving ourselves the gift of time in silence (that's probably the hardest thing of all to do).

We can give to God by giving of our time, talent and treasure to the church to spread God's kingdom. We can talk about what Christmas means to us to our children and our friends. We can participate in God's invitation to wait with anticipation by going to church during Advent and being in community, saying that we give back to God all that we have been given. In our hymnal, we can follow the advice of "Go Tell It on the Mountain" as we share the good news.

Finally, and most importantly, we can love. Jesus is God's greatest gift of love to us, and we love in response to God's love. We love those to whom we give when we see Jesus in each one of them. We love

ourselves when we take the time during this hectic season for self-care. And we love God by adoring God for sending us Jesus and by adoring Jesus for being willing to come and live as one of us. Our hymnal tells us to come and adore ("O Come All Ye Faithful", #83 and "Angels We Have Heard on High", #96).

Our religious celebration of Christmas and our secular celebration of the season are with us throughout the month of December. To enjoy the season to the fullest, we must always remember to put the religious meaning of Christmas at the forefront of our minds, even while enjoying the secular celebrations to the fullest. Enjoy Advent and anticipate its joyful consummation in the birth in Bethlehem. Enjoy all the fun of Christmas gifts, celebrations and love. And remember that we are gifted beyond measure by the Lord of All in the Incarnation of Jesus, who is Emmanuel, God with us.

Ann†

## Upcoming Events

- Tuesday, December 6 the book club will discuss *Little Princes* by Conner Grennan—you still have time to get it read before the meeting. And in January the book club will meet on January 3 to discuss *Corduroy Mansions* by Alexander McCall Smith. Join the group on January 3 at 7:30 p.m.
- Men's Fellowship meets the third Saturday of the month—those dates are December 17 and January 21. Join the fun and discussion over coffee and snacks at 8:00 a.m. downstairs.
- On Sunday, December 18, St. John's will host the Glencarlyn Community Christmas party at 3:00 p.m. in the church basement. The community event will be followed by St. John's traditional neighborhood Christmas caroling, which will begin at the church about 4:00 p.m. The only requirement for joining the singing is enthusiasm. The carolers will walk and sing through Glencarlyn and be done in about an hour. Mark it down on your calendar.
- Christmas eve services will be at 5:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. On Sunday, Christmas Day, there will be one Eucharist service with hymns at 10:00 a.m.
- Our annual service of Lessons and Carols will be on January 1 at 10:00 a.m.

## Seminarian's Diary

by Mary Ruetten Mackin

In the first part of this semester, I took a course entitled "Readings in the History of Missions." In the course, we studied six different missionaries in different parts of the world and in different eras. We read about Bartolome de las Casas in the Americas in the 1500s, Roberto De Nobili in India in the 1600s, and Hong Xiuquan in China in the 1800s. The most compelling story, however, was that of Marc Nikkel, an American missionary to the Sudan in modern times—in the 1980s and 1990s. In a book of his letters entitled *Why Haven't You Left?*, we read of Nikkel's continuing witness to the Church in Sudan during some of its darkest days.

Nikkel, who became an Episcopal priest during the course of his missionary activity in Sudan, went to Sudan in 1981 to teach at a small Christian college, Bishop Gwynne College, in the isolated town of Mundri. During his time there, he spent vacations in the cattle camps of the Jiang (Dinka) people learning their language and culture and learning to love the Jiang people. However, by the mid-1980s, the events of a new civil war overtook the region where Nikkel was teaching, and he had to face, with the Christians of the region, the reality of faith in God in the presence of the horrors of war. Nikkel refers to the story of Daniel in the fiery furnace as an image that helped to sustain them. It was "the emissary of God in the furnace that helps sustain us here. This God enters into the flames and fear and explosion of this hour in Sudan."

In 1987, Nikkel and three of his colleagues at the College were taken as prisoners by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), one of the warring factions, and spent six weeks in the bush as captives. The title of the book, *Why Haven't You Left?*, is a question put to Nikkel by his captors during this time. After his release, reflecting on this question, Nikkel says that one of his purposes in going to Sudan was to "encounter facets of the spiritual" and, he says he encountered the divine almost daily in Sudan. He says "there was no encounter, no event, which did not possess its spiritual dimension, revealing something of the presence and nature of God." It was in the wilderness experience of capture in the bush with the SPLA that Nikkel experienced the divine most fully—it was in the

suffering of the people that the Christ was "exquisitely near." He says it was "this mystery that held me, this enigma that transfixed me. God is intimately present even amid what appears to be his utter abandonment. Transfixed, I could not leave. This is why I stayed."

As the war progressed, the Episcopal Church in southern Sudan grew in an unprecedented way. Before the war, one diocese among the Jiang people had nine congregations. By 1996, it had 400. While the seeds of the Church had been planted by European missionaries during the earlier colonial period, the growth of the Church in the 1980s and 90s was the result of the Jiang people themselves. As their way of life was totally disrupted, as their cattle and homes were destroyed, and as they found themselves in refugee camps, the Church became the place where they could come together and begin to make sense of their lives. Nikkel visited the refugee camps several times and recorded the astounding growth. He says, "Dispossessed of the rhythms of their homeland, a people mark out time in patterns, which, I believe, are essential to their survival. Their song, ever straining toward homeland and heaven, affirms the divine presence, assuages pain, and gives meaning to their communal journey."

In 1998, Nikkel was diagnosed with stomach cancer. He made one last visit to the refugee camp, where the people honored him and laid healing hands on him. He was again uplifted by their faith and courage. He died in England in 2000. But the Church in Sudan lives on as a holy and vibrant witness to God in the midst of suffering. As we know, southern Sudan realized a dream this past summer in becoming its own country. We hope, with all the Sudanese, that the remaining conflict there will cease and that the Sudanese people will be able to live out their witness to God in the reign of God's peace.

For me, Nikkel's decision to stay and stand in solidarity with the Jiang people in the midst of danger and incredible suffering is an inspiring example of Christian witness. Through his letters home, he was able to serve as a witness to the wider Church and the world of the death and destruction occurring in an isolated region of the globe. Also through his witness, he demonstrated that, even in the midst of suffering, the Spirit of God is alive, continuing to work among us in our day and time bringing people from all over the world into God's Church. Thanks be to God.

## Sunday Adult Education Forum

In December, the adult class will study Advent, the current liturgical season, our time of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

In January the Adult Forum will consider scripture. Did you know that more than four gospels were written? Did you know there were more letters written to the scattered Christian communities than the epistles included in the New Testament? There are a lot of writings that did not make it into the Bible—both the Old and New Testaments. January adult class will meet on Sunday mornings to discuss some of those books that did not make it into the Bible and why they were not included. Make your New Year's resolution to join the Sunday morning discussions and learn more about the Bible and what it teaches us.

## Budget Report

Pledge income in October was \$9,310, plus \$743 in loose plate offerings.

This is nearly identical with September's pledge and plate income, and remain very close to what was anticipated in the budget adopted by the vestry at the beginning of the year. As reported last month, however, this does not contribute to closing the deficit of \$21,000 that was part and parcel of St. John's 2011 budget.

The vestry thanks all who contribute, who fulfill the pledges they made during last year's stewardship campaign and those who provide the loose plate offerings as well, and encourages everyone to consider how we can help St. John's grow, meet its obligations, and serve its members and its community.

### LOGOS

The LOGOS is published nine times a year in February, March, April, May, July, September, October, November, and December near the beginning of the month.

Dave Dunlap, LOGOS Editor

Jane Edwards, LOGOS Editor and Page Layout

Email Dave at [dave\\_dunlap@yahoo.com](mailto:dave_dunlap@yahoo.com) (preferred) or leave info in newsletter box in the office.

*The next deadline is Thursday, January 19 at 10 am.*

## Parish News

### Thank you...

- Thank you Junior Warden Del Hunt and those who joined in for the parish cleanup on November 19: Jeff Wallace, Faye Pritchard, Monica Lozano, Tina, Beth, Brian, and Michael Cavey, Marshall Adair, Anne and Paul Stenger, John Restall, Debbie and Henry Carter, Marion Reed.
- Thanks to Liz White and Bill Thomson who coordinated the parish Thanksgiving potluck and celebration of Ann's ten years at St. John's on November 20. Thanks also to all who brought food and goodies to make it a special enjoyable event.
- Special thanks to Linda Trochim, who led this year's Stewardship Campaign. Returns from this year's campaign are not available as this month's LOGOS goes to press, but we do know that Linda deserves our hearty thanks for all her hard work on this year's campaign. Take a moment when you see her to thank her for her efforts on behalf of St. John's and the stewardship campaign.
- Thanks to all who wrote checks or filled mite boxes in support of the United Thank Offering ingathering on November 13. As usual, St. John's parishioners supported this worthy cause generously.

### Best Wishes to our members celebrating birthdays in December and January

Patricia Broida, The Rev. Catherine Campbell, Imogen Rose Davies, Keelyn Del Gallo, Eileen Flynn, Madeline "Maddie" Harbin, Lori Held, Galen Henderson, Don Hess, Barbara Hill, Del Hunt, Tony Kollath, Emily Lodsun, Mary Mackin, Vernon Martin, Barbara Olivere, Angie Rollet, Janet Spence, Paul Stenger, Angela Swarr, Camron Tallent, Cynthia Todd, Laura Wallace

### Best Wishes also to those with December and January Anniversaries

David & Carol Dunlap, Don & Penny Hess, Klaus & Lori Held, Cooper & Mary Mackin, Robert L. Rawls, III & Harriet Sheehan Rawls, Anna & David Scherer

## **Gospel Lessons for December 2011 and January 2012**

### **December 4, Second Sunday of Advent Mark 1:1–8**

Mark begins his telling of the “good news” with quotations from the Old Testament. God had promised the Israelites a “messenger” (v. 2) to lead them. The prophet Malachi understood this promise as pointing to the end-times, to one who would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. To him, the “messenger” would be Elijah. While v. 3 originally spoke of return from exile, by Jesus’ time it was seen as an expression of God’s comfort and salvation. To us, John the Baptist comes to prepare for, and announce, Jesus’ coming. Tradition says that John baptised near Jericho, in an arid region. People came to him in large numbers, repenting (changing their mind sets), “confessing their sins” (v. 5), resolving to sin no more, and dipping themselves in the River. John dressed like a hermit or prophet (v. 6). (In Palestine, some species of locusts were eaten.) John is so unworthy, compared to “the one who...is coming” (v. 7), that he cannot untie his “sandals”, a task normally performed by a slave. His baptism is a sign of purification, of turning to God, of accepting God’s forgiveness and judgment; Jesus’ baptism re-establishes a spiritual link between God and humans.

### **December 11, Third Sunday of Advent John 1:6–8,19–28**

In the opening verses of the book, the evangelist has told us, that the Word, the logos, (i.e. what God says, God in action, creating, revealing and redeeming) existed before all time. He is the force behind all that exists; he causes physical and spiritual life to be; life, goodness, light, overcomes all evil. Jesus, the “light” (v. 7), took on being human through God, and is a force for goodness, light, godliness, for all people. Now he tells of John the baptizer, who is sent, commissioned by God, to point to Jesus, to “testify to the light” (v. 7). He is the lamp that illuminates the way, but Christ is the light (v. 8). When the religious authorities (“Jews”, v. 19) send emissaries (“priests and Levites”) to assess the authenticity of this religious figure, John tells them that he is neither of those whom they are expecting to come to earth: neither “the Messiah” (v. 20) nor the returned “Elijah” (v. 21). (Jews

believed that one or both would establish a kingdom on earth free from Roman domination.) Neither is he “the prophet” who was expected (by some) to be instrumental in establishing the Messiah’s kingdom. John says simply that he is the one who prepares “the way of the Lord” (v. 23), who announces the Messiah’s coming, fulfilling Isaiah 40:3. Representatives of the Pharisees (who enforced traditional Jewish law and practice) ask in v. 25: why are you performing an official rite without official status? (Jews baptized proselytes at the time.) John tells them that the one to whom he points is already on earth (v. 27); he is so great that I am not even worthy to be his slave. Surprisingly, per v. 28, this occurred outside Israel.

### **December 18, Fourth Sunday of Advent Luke 1:26–38**

In vv. 8–17, Luke has told us about Zechariah seeing an angel in the sanctuary of the Temple. The angel told him that his wife, Elizabeth, will bear a son, who will be named John. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit and “turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Elizabeth is now in the “sixth month” (v. 26) of her pregnancy. God sends the angel Gabriel to Nazareth. (Angels have appeared at great moments in the story of salvation. Gabriel also appeared to Daniel in Babylon. In John 1:46, we read “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” It was a town known for its jealous, materially minded people.) It is through Joseph (not Mary) that Jesus is of the lineage of David. Mary’s name in Hebrew is Miryam, meaning exalted one (“favoured one”). The angel, speaking Aramaic, probably said Shalom! Peace be with you! Mary is

#### **St. John’s Mission Statement**

We welcome everyone including believers, seekers and doubters to share God’s love and acceptance in a community of worship and service.

#### **St. John’s Vision Statement**

St. John’s is dedicated to nurturing disciples for Jesus by:

- Offering faith-deepening worship, education, outreach and pastoral care;
- Attracting and welcoming newcomers; and
- Sharing God’s love with our community and the world around us.

especially “favoured” (vv. 28, 30) with God’s love, and as such has long been part of God’s plan. “Perplexed” (v. 29), she reflects on this greeting (“pondered”, v. 29), drawing on her faith: in what way am I “favoured”? She might have panicked in the presence of God’s messenger: awe can easily turn into fear. Gabriel now tells her (vv. 30–33): she will bear a son, Son of God, a king. (God says “do not be afraid” to Abraham when he tells him he will have a son.) V. 31a recalls Isaiah 7:14: there Isaiah tells King Ahaz that “the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” (meaning God with us.) Psalm 89:26–27 also speaks of the link between the dynasty of David and sonship of God. (“The Most High”, vv. 32, 35, is God.) The prophet Micah often speaks of the house of Israel as the “house of Jacob”; in his book (4:7), we read “the Lord will reign over them...forevermore.” (Jacob is renamed Israel after his struggle with God at Peniel (Genesis 32:28), but we find both names used for the man and the people from that point on.) While Mary does not doubt Gabriel’s message from God, she does wonder how can this be? The last clause in v. 34 can be rendered since I have no husband. Mary is engaged to Joseph. Gabriel, in v. 35, answers Mary’s question by telling her that she will conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit (not through sexual union): a gift from God. The child will be filled with the Holy Spirit (“holy”), dedicated to the service of God, and “will be called Son of God”. V. 37 is like Genesis 18:14, where God says “Is anything too wonderful for the LORD?”. There (as with Elizabeth) in advanced years (“in her old age”, v. 36), after a normal gestation period, Sarah gives birth to a son. Jesus’ birth is even more exceptional than those of Isaac and John the Baptist. To be a “servant of the Lord” (v. 38) is special: David, in v. 8 of today’s first reading, is called a servant. Luke is doing more than telling the story of the Annunciation: he is placing Jesus in the context of Old Testament prophecies.

### **December 25, Christmas Luke 2:1–14,(15–20)**

Luke is concerned to place Jesus in the time-line of history, as a real human being. We know of Augustus’ attempt to clean up the taxation system: as well as requiring more reasonable practices of tax collectors, he introduced a truly equitable tax: a poll-tax. Every

14 years, a census was held: people were required to present themselves in their ancestral towns, to register for the tax. Records are fragmentary but we do know that a census was held by “Quirinius” (v. 2) of Syria in 6–7 AD. Perhaps Judea was included in a census of 8–7 BC, “the first registration”. From Matthew 2:16, we know that Herod the Great sought to kill Jesus by slaughtering all children aged two or less. Because Herod died in 4 BC, Jesus was born no later than 6 BC. The dates agree. Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem, the city of David, to “to be registered” (v. 5). Jesus is born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of the prophecy of Micah 5:2–5: a shepherd-king is to be born there. In v. 7, Jesus is treated like any other newborn of the time: he is wrapped in cloths, but there may be a message in his being born in “a manger”: animals normally fed from it; Jesus is sustenance for the world. In vv. 8–14, we learn the meaning of Jesus’ birth. Those who hear the pronouncement by the angel are “shepherds” (v. 8), lowly people. David too was a shepherd; in Luke, Jesus comes to the poor, the lowly. The message of Christ’s birth is indeed a joyful one—for all. V. 11 mentions our great claims as to who Jesus is: “Saviour”, “Messiah” and “Lord”. As “Saviour”, he restores us to wholeness, rescues us from sin and alienation from God. In Jesus, God is present with sinners and saves us from destructive self-isolation to union with him, in a nurturing community. As “Messiah”, he inaugurates the era of heavenly peace: the end-time has begun. As “Lord”, he is God come in human form. The kingdom is for all those whom God has chosen (v. 14b). In vv. 15–20 the shepherds visit Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They tell them and many others the good news the angels have told them.

### **January 1, Feast of the Holy Name Luke 2:15–21**

Luke has told us of Joseph and Mary’s visit to Bethlehem (his ancestral town) to register in the census, and of Jesus’ birth. He lies “in a manger” (v. 12), a trough from which animals eat; he is sustenance for all peoples. Shepherds, living in the field with their flocks have heard the angel’s announcement of the birth of “a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord” (v. 11). Many heavenly beings have appeared, praising God and pronouncing peace: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours.” (v. 14). Now the shepherds decide to see the glorious event for themselves (v. 15). It is appropriate

that the first visitors to the newborn child be shepherds: Jesus is our shepherd. Note “with haste” in v. 16; as Mary set out to visit her cousin Elizabeth “with haste” in 1:39; Jesus will later stress the urgency of his mission. The shepherds look for, and find, the infant where the angel has told them in v. 12, “in the manger” (v. 16). They make known, tell Mary and Joseph—and others—the good news the angel has delivered. Mary and Zechariah have already told us something of the meaning of the birth and the destiny of Jesus in 1:31–33, 1:46–55 and 1:68–79. What the shepherds have been told provides another perspective on this event. Mary tries to understand (“pondered”, v. 19) all that she has experienced and been told, especially the great news told by the angels, but she does not immediately grasp the full significance of God’s action of Jesus being born into the world. Later, after Jesus as a boy has asked his parents “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (v. 49), she understands a little more. Luke does not tell us directly about Jesus’ circumcision but infant boys were named on this occasion; being a Jew, he is circumcised (v. 21). As a member of God’s chosen people he will bring salvation to the world. Before Jesus was conceived, an angel has said “you will name him Jesus” (1:31). His name means God saves. The Hebrew and Aramaic forms of Jesus are similar to he will save.

### **January 8, Baptism of Our Lord Mark 1:4–11**

This gospel begins with the messenger whom God sends ahead of Christ, to prepare the way. John is the forerunner of Jesus. Tradition says that John baptised near Jericho, in an arid region. People came to him in large numbers, repenting (changing their mind sets), “confessing their sins” (v. 5), resolving to sin no more, and (probably) dipping themselves in the River. John dressed like a hermit or prophet (v. 6). In Palestine, some species of “locusts” were eaten. Mark does not tell us why Jesus was baptised by John, but what follows is important. The opening of the heavens symbolizes the start of a new mode of communication between God and humankind. Perhaps “like a dove” (v. 10) is an allusion to the spirit hovering in Genesis 1:2. To Mark, the “voice...from heaven” (v. 11) confirms the already existing relationship between God and Jesus. (The Greek word translated “Beloved”

indicates God’s choice more than his feelings.) Part of Jesus’ message in Galilee (v. 15) is “repent, and believe in the good news.”

### **January 15, Second Sunday after the Epiphany John 1:43–51**

On the previous day, Andrew and Peter, both disciples of John the Baptist, have become Jesus’ disciples. The Baptist has said to them: “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” (v. 36) They have asked Jesus: “Where are you staying?” (v. 38, where do you dwell?); he has answered “Come and see” (v. 39): a command that means, in this gospel, come and believe. It was Andrew who found Peter. Philip finds Nathanael (probably Bartholomew of the other gospels), and tells him that the three have found the one to whom the Old Testament points, i.e. Jesus, the Messiah (v. 45). Nathanael’s response (v. 46) is probably a local proverb: the people of Nazareth were despised. Philip says “Come and see”, as Jesus did to Andrew and Peter. An “Israelite” (v. 47) invoked the law and the prophets; Nathanael is a “truly an Israelite” because, unlike other Jews, he accepts Christ. Jacob, the father of the nation, practised deceit before meeting God, but in Nathanael “there is no deceit”. In v. 49, Nathanael acknowledges Christ for who he is—in Jewish terms, because of the minor miracle of Jesus observing him under a fig tree on a previous occasion, before they met. Jesus tells him that he will see a much greater miracle: like the one Jacob saw in his dream at Bethel (Genesis 28:10–17), but with the Son of Man, Jesus, being the vehicle of communication. In today’s psalm, God knows our doings; here Jesus knows Nathanael.

### **January 22, Third Sunday after the Epiphany Mark 1:14–20**

Mark has just told us, briefly, about Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. Now he returns to Galilee. His message begins with “the time is fulfilled” (v. 15): the time appointed by God, the decisive time for God’s action, has arrived. “The kingdom of God has come near”: the final era of history is imminent. Numerous sayings of Jesus support Paul’s view that the end is near, but Jesus did say that no human knows when he will come again, and he will not come when expected (13:32–36). He also said that “the kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:21), and that the kingdom has begun. Jews believed that when they individually and collectively admitted the error of their ways and

returned to God's way ("repent", v. 15), the Messiah would come. We too are called to adopt God's way, to "believe in the good news". The whole of Mark is an expansion of this verse. In vv. 16–20, the first four disciples are called: they immediately leave their previous occupations, and follow Jesus. Jesus expresses his command in their terms (v. 17). (Immediacy of response is a mark of this gospel.) These disciples owned nets (v. 19) and had employees ("hired men", v. 20), so they were people of rank. They gave up security and family ("left their father", v. 20) to devote themselves to Christ's mission.

**January 29, Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany  
Mark 1:21–28**

Mark has just told us about the calling of Peter ("Simon", v. 16), Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee. Our passage tells us of the recognition of Jesus' authority, both in word and deed. He and his disciples go to Capernaum, a prosperous town on the Sea of Galilee. A synagogue was where Jews met to gain a fuller understanding of their tradition through study and worship. (At the time, it was probably not

a building set apart for study and worship.) Anyone with sufficient knowledge could teach. The "scribes" (v. 22) were specialists in the interpretation and application of Mosaic law to daily life. They frequently quoted scripture and tradition, but Jesus (on this occasion) does not: he speaks directly, confident of his "authority", of his very essence. The Greek word is like the one in the Nicene Creed which is translated as being or substance. The "man with an unclean spirit" (v. 23) was, in our terms, possessed: he was under the influence of evil forces. In Jewish terms, he was under Satan's direction, separated from God. The devil, speaking through this man (v. 24), asks what Jesus is doing meddling in the domain of evil; he recognizes who Jesus is and that his coming spells the end of the devil's power. He understands the significance of the coming Kingdom. Wonder-workers of the day healed using ritual or magic, but Jesus exorcises simply through verbal command (v. 25), so clearly he is divine. V. 27, on the lips of the crowd, acknowledges Jesus' "authority" in word and deed.

*Commentaries on the Revised Common Lectionary were prepared for the Anglican Diocese of Montreal, Canada, © 2003 – 2011 by Chris Haslam. Used with permission.*

## St. John's Calendar

### December

- Thu 1 Morning Guild, 10 a.m.  
Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 4 Second Sunday of Advent  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Christian Education: 9 a.m. adults, 9:20 youth  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Tue 6 St. John's Book Club, 7:30 p.m. discussing  
*Little Princes* by Conner Grennan
- Thu 8 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 11 Third Sunday of Advent  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Christian Education: 9 a.m. adults, 9:20 youth  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Tue 13 Vestry meeting, 7 p.m.
- Thu 15 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sat 17 Men's Fellowship, 8 a.m.
- Sun 18 Fourth Sunday of Advent  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Christian Education: 9 a.m. adults, 9:20 youth  
Glencarlyn Community Christmas  
Party 3:00 p.m.  
Community Christmas Caroling, 4 p.m.  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Thu 22 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sat 24 Christmas Eve  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 5 p.m.  
Holy Eucharist, 11 p.m.
- Sun 25 Christmas Day  
Holy Eucharist with hymns, 10 a.m.

### January

- Sun 1 Feast of the Holy Name  
Festival of Lessons and Carols, 10 a.m.
- Tue 3 Book Club, 7:30 p.m., discussing *Corduroy  
Mansions* by Alexander McCall Smith
- Thu 5 Morning Guild, 10 a.m.  
Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 8 The Baptism of Our Lord  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Christian Education: 9 a.m. adults, 9:20 youth  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Tue 10 Vestry meeting, 7 p.m.
- Thu 12 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 15 Second Sunday after the Epiphany  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Christian Education: 9 a.m. adults, 9:20 youth  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Thu 19 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.  
LOGOS deadline, 10:00 a.m.
- Sat 21 Men's Fellowship, 8 a.m.
- Sun 22 Third Sunday after the Epiphany  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Christian Education: 9 a.m. adults, 9:20 youth  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Thu 26 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 29 Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Christian Education: 9 a.m. adults, 9:20 youth  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.

St. John's Episcopal Church  
415 South Lexington Street  
Arlington VA 22204  
703-671-6834  
<http://stjohnsarlington.thediocese.net>

*Next deadline is Thursday, January 19 at 10:00 a.m*

## **Time Sensitive Material—Please Deliver Promptly**

### **Staff**

Rector: The Rev. Ann B. Barker  
Seminarian: Mary Mackin  
Minister of Music: Lynn Robinson  
Organist: Carol Dunlap  
Parish Administrator: Virginia Pearson  
Sexton: Justiniano Garay

### **Parish Leaders**

Bill Thomson, Treasurer  
John Restall, Assistant Treasurer  
John Wilson, Chair, Building and Grounds Committee

### **Vestry**

Brian Cavey, Senior Warden  
Del Hunt, Junior Warden  
Patricia Broida  
Debbie Carter  
Carrie Harbin  
Diane Henderson  
Faye Pritchard

### **LOGOS Volunteers**

Editor: Dave Dunlap  
Page Layout and Webmaster:  
Jane Edwards (Monarch Training)