



An Episcopal Church  
with a servant's heart  
living by word and example.

the messenger

A Christ-centered community inviting  
those seeking loving acceptance,  
spiritual growth and sacred beauty.

Published Monthly

January 2010

MONTHLY BIBLE VERSE

Rejoice in the  
Lord always;  
again I will say,  
**Rejoice.**  
Let your  
gentleness be  
known to  
everyone.  
The Lord is near.

Philippians 4:4-5

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**Annual Parish Celebration**



- 5:00PM— Potluck Dinner for All
- 6:00PM — Adult Celebration,  
Meeting, & Election
- 6:00PM — Children's Program

*The children will go downstairs to participate in their own program while the adults will celebrate the great things God has done for St. Mary's, ponder what God might have in store for 2010, and elect four new Vestry persons and eight persons to serve as delegates for Diocesan Council.*

**Candidates for vestry:**

Chris DiCamillo, Carl Eckersley and Margaret Sowden.

**Candidates for Diocesan Council:**

Ron Dupre, Patti Saurage, Carl Eckersley and Beccy Smith

**Alternate delegate candidates:**

Larry Angle, Mike Blocher, Sally Meisner and Linda Oechsel.

**Bring a dish to share and join us for this celebration!**



## Last month I asked you to tell me how your life would be different if you had no debt. Here are some of your responses:

from  
YOUR  
RECTOR

- I can't imagine my what my life would be like without any debt (from several of you)
- I'd be a lot less anxious.
- My husband told me that I could buy a whole new car with what I'm paying in interest on my credit cards.
- But you're supposed to have debt, aren't you? Aren't you supposed to have a mortgage and a car loan?
- I would have a whole lot of money to give away.
- I could help my [adult] children more.
- I could help support my family members that are out of work
- I'd eat out more often.
- I'd travel!
- I'd pay off my daughter's student loan.
- I could retire now.

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*I know this is a lot of information. Please start praying about all this debt stuff. Remember. Nothing is impossible with God.*

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### What about you? What would you say?

Your Vestry and I have been doing some talking about what life would be like at St. Mary's if we didn't have debt. You may not even know that we have debt. If you enjoy the narthex or the Holy Family Center or the bathrooms in the main building, did you know that they aren't completely paid for yet?

When we decided to do renovations at St. Mary's and build a new nursery, parish hall, and classroom space a few years back, we made plans and raised money for a project we could pay for in three years. The cost of the project was about one million dollars; people had pledged close to \$800,000 and we expected to get a very low interest loan (2%) for \$200,000 from the Crump Foundation. When we began to build, we thought that we were well covered.

But we didn't get the Crump Loan. Then several people were unable to keep their financial commitment to the building mission. After three years, we owed about \$450,000.

We did get a 2% loan from the Crump Foundation for \$200,000 in 2007. Others of you have made a financial pledge each year, in addition to your regular money stewardship pledge, to "debt elimination." As of today, December 16, 2009, St. Mary's is in debt \$190,000 to the Crump Foundation and \$172,206 to Wells Fargo. This is what most church folk would call "strategic debt" or manageable debt.

Did you know that it costs about 10,000/week just to keep the infrastructure of St. Mary's going? The infrastructure includes giving 10% to outreach, salaries, utilities, and minimal funding for the many ministries you give so generously of your time. That means that the money we pledge basically covers the basics. Thankfully, over and above your money pledge, many of you give enough extra to pay our yearly debt costs, although this year we may have to dip into reserves to pay part of the debt (but reserves are for those extraordinary things that happen).

But what could we do with the \$45,000 you have pledged to debt elimination for 2010 if it could go towards ministry rather than a bank? We'd have enough money to hire a full time youth minister and/or have a full time director of family ministers and/or renovate the vesting room to make it a more efficient and useful space and/or buy an AED

for each building and/or give a lot more money to outreach and/or .....you get the idea--things that could enrich our life greatly at St. Mary's. What would you like to see St. Mary's do that we are unable to do now because of the money that is being spent for debt?

During Lent, you're going to be invited to try a little experiment during our Forty Days of Time and Talent. Like last year, you will be invited to make a pledge to attend worship one time each week during the seven weeks of Lent. But we'll be upping the expectation this year. We've estimated that it would take about 10/week for three years per St. Mary's family to make us debt-free. \$10/week! Can you believe that?

During Lent, your family will be invited to make a second Forty Days of Time and Talent pledge to give up a meal each week (or whatever you choose) and give that money to help pay down St. Mary's debt. Isn't there something in your life that you could give up each week of Lent that costs you about \$10/week? A movie? Coffee? McDonald's? Soft drinks at work?

We're aware that some of you may not be unable to scrape together an extra \$10/week. For others of us, \$10 a week is no big deal. So the others of us are going to be invited to make an additional pledge to help pay what another parishioner could not pay. So that all of our resources together would equal \$10/ week per family.

On a personal level, we are also hoping to offer Financial Peace University during Lent—which is a very successful program to help your family get out of debt.

I know this is a lot of information. Please start praying about all this debt stuff. Remember. Nothing is impossible with God.

*FYI – Did you know that you can use online banking to make your pledge payment to St. Mary's? Just like you set up the water company, the electric company, and gas company, you can set up St. Mary's to receive your money. It's quick and easy. You can either set up a one time payment or a recurring payment and you can decide what time of the month that you want it sent. St. Mary's receives a paper check in the mail that has your name on it, so we know which account to credit it to. All you need to know is our name and address (15415 N. Eldridge Parkway, Cypress, TX 77429). If you have any questions I'm sure your bank would be happy to answer them for you.*

## **Newcomers Lunch**

**January 24, 2010 | 12 Noon – HFC 203**



Are you new to St. Mary's or feel like you would like to get to know more about St. Mary's? If so, this is the lunch for you. Come meet the Vestry and Ministry Council and find out more about the ministries at St. Mary's. Get a tour of our facilities, get all your questions answered, and enjoy a delicious lunch prepared by the Ministry Council and Vestry. Childcare will be available.



## Among Friends

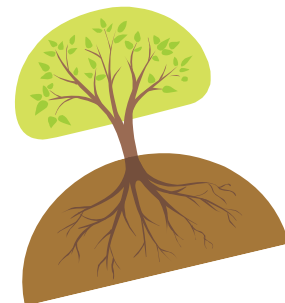
For centuries, music was a social and family event. Today, the arts are a luxury experience that usually requires effort, money, and valuable time away from your family. **Among Friends** is a family dinner and concert series that makes live music an affordable family activity again and delivers it right here in our own backyard. Internationally acclaimed artists from Houston and abroad will present a program here at St. Mary's including J.S. Bach's 5th Brandenburg Concerto and his Cantata 84 featuring one of Houston's most acclaimed sopranos, Melissa Givens.

The festivities begin on January 23 with dinner at 5:30 p.m. and a concert at 7:00 p.m. Seating at the dinner is limited, and tickets for the dinner and concert must be purchased in advance. Tickets for the concert only may be reserved or purchased at the door.

Tickets are priced by family (2 adults + children) or individually. Dinner and Concert: \$65/25 – Concert only: \$40/15. Childcare will be available, but interested children of all ages are encouraged to attend the concert. For more information and tickets, please email [amongfriends@stmaryscypress.org](mailto:amongfriends@stmaryscypress.org)

## The Tree of Life: In the Shade of the Hebrew Scriptures

You are invited to slip on your sandals and grab your walking staff... **the Adult Christian Education class is set to embark upon a yearlong journey through the Hebrew Scriptures!** We will begin our wandering gathered in the shade of the Torah (Pentateuch), which Proverbs figuratively refers to as the *Tree of Life*. The five Sundays of January will be spent under the *Tree*, there checking our maps and surveying some basics about the terrain we will cover in the months ahead. **Join us on January 3 as we talk about foundations of belief as found in the Pentateuch: the God of Israel, covenant and election of Israel, reward and punishment, and perhaps a little eschatology!** As always, there will be time for conversation and revelation. Watch for announcements about the developing itinerary. The travels ahead promise plenty of room for insights into our liturgical year, New Testament parallels, and discussions of contemporary issues informed by our wanderings. Our tour guides will be various and the adventures as yet unknown! See you under the *Tree*!



## Episcopal 101: January 31 – March 7

Finally—the class so many of you have been asking for! Beginning Sunday mornings at 9 AM on January 31, and continuing for 6 weeks through March 7, we'll be offering a class for those of you who are (1) new to St. Mary's and/or (2) new to the Episcopal Church and/or (3) want to be confirmed/received/reaffirm your baptismal covenant and/or (4) just want to know more about being an Anglican and an Episcopalian.

Led by The Rev. Beth Fain with the assistance of others, using DVDs, Bible study, and large and small group work, we will all become more theologically literate members of our parish.

A bonus for those of you who wish to be confirmed in the Episcopal Church: The Rt. Rev. Dena Harrison, Bishop Suffragan of the Diocese of Texas, will visit St. Mary's on March 7 for the 5.30 PM Holy Eucharist and will offer the Sacrament of Confirmation.

## Swept Away by Thanksgiving

Do you know what a stunning parish St. Mary's is? On ordinary days, I (your Rector, Beth+) am grateful for your generous stewardship, but from time to time I am overwhelmed with thankfulness for this parish. Last Saturday was one of those days.

A member of the parish died who loved St. Mary's, but spent most of his membership in some type of homebound setting. Even though only a handful of you knew him, members of the Altar Guild, Ushers, Daughters of the King, and Flower Guild stepped up and facilitated beautiful worship and a beautiful reception.

In the Episcopal Church, there are no flowers placed on a casket or urn during the burial liturgy. Instead, they are covered in exquisite palls as a reminder that all of us are equal before God and highly valued. The ministry that St. Mary's offered was like that luxurious pall. It did not matter how active the departed was or how many people knew him—he got the same respect and dignity that we'd have given a member of our immediate family or our closest friend. That Saturday a group of you demonstrated that we do indeed value "all people." God was well pleased.

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the Advent Conspiracy by giving so generously to our Advent Angels ministry.

## Advent Angels for Bering Omega

WOW – real Kleenex!!! That was the first reaction from one of the volunteers when Mary Jo and I arrived at the Bering Omega Hospice to deliver the Advent Angel donations. A medical program started at Christ Church Cathedral in 1989 to assist dying, indigent AIDS patients and another at Bering Memorial Methodist Church to provide dental other community services to personal with AIDS, joined together in 1999 to provide a total service package. While there is a few paid staff, volunteer teams from various churches assist in taking care of patients and dentist/doctors donate their services. Go to the Bering Omega website to get a complete historical review.



St Mary's has been participating in this hospice effort for at least 5 years and they are always excited to see us arrive with your donations. We always take time to visit with the volunteers so as to appreciate what they are doing. While we were there, the 70<sup>th</sup> patient of 2009 arrived. During 2009, at least one patient died each week so it is a constant shuttle of patients arriving and departing. A few patients are there for a few months but most are there for only a few weeks. We were told that the hospice does not attempt to cure patients.

I asked why the continued sickness now that there are medications for HIV. We were told that many of the patients don't take the new medications, probably because HIV medicines are very expensive. For whatever reason, the hospice is full.

For a very heart warming experience, please join MaryJo and me next year to witness how the Advent Angel donations are received.

Thanks for all of your donations.

Ron Dupre

## Parish Report

### November Visiting Families: 9

#### November Transferred In: 4

Jeffrey and Janet Altamari  
St. Andrews, Houston, TX

Dale and Kimberly Graham  
Good Shepherd, Tomball, TX

### November Baptisms: 1

Emily Parker Presley

### November Deaths: 1

Carol Mc David

### Dear St. Mary's,

Thank you very much for the beautiful arrangement of flowers from the altar. Thank you also for the prayers offered at the altar on my behalf. It is truly a blessing to belong to a community such as St. Mary's. God Bless each of you.

*Karen Miller*

### To St. Mary's Staff and Congregation and Daughters of the King:

The Gorham family was warmed and comforted with your prayers and support at the passing of our Dad, John Gorham. He had a lovely funeral service at St. Mark's Episcopal in San Antonio with a memorable burial at Fort Sam Houston Lawn with full military honors. Dad served his country during WWII.

In great appreciation,  
*Cindy Gorham and Family*

## January Birthdays

Happy birthday to the following persons and may God bless you this coming year.

1	Page Vacek
2	Andrew Simmons, Matt Trigg
4	Jackie Eckersley
6	Trevor Moffett
7	Sandy Lada, Carla Llewellyn, Scotti Wingfield
8	Donna Bosholm
9	John Backo
11	Warner Abel, Naomi Denton
12	AJ Maclean
13	John Akard, Max Miller, Carla Preston, John Toungeate
14	Tiffany Bowles, Valerie Cavanaugh, Brendan Harrison
15	Matthew Frnka, Linda Leonard, Hannah Preston, Jonathan Preston, Patti Saurage, Daniel Simmons, Jake Whitley
17	Jeremy Abel
18	Dan Bidwell
19	Deborah Lake, Dyana Martin
20	Cameron McCulloch
21	Celeste Booker, Jason Marsh, Michael Sliva
22	Milly Kelly
23	Casey Buchanan, Greg Stafford, Kelly Wallis
24	Ian Blake, C.J. Bowles, Lauren Goodheart
25	Pamela Blake, Zachary Foreman, Gloria Kim, Hatai Lee, Grace Nagy, Jennifer Nelub, Kathleen Staten
26	Avery Martin
27	Tyler Martin, Theresa McCarl
28	Jason Warnick
30	John Hendrickson, John Long, Keith Vickery, Rose Marie Villarreal, Peggy Wills
31	Paul Ingebretsen, Jennifer Newsom, Corin Patel, Joan Postma, Ty Stricklin, Michael Wilde



## Eric's Epistle

Dearest Friends,

This letter is from Eric, a priest of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and his one holy catholic and apostolic church. I am writing to God's Church, St. Mary's Church, in the City of Cypress, in the Diocese of Texas. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

We are going on the third week of grey, chilly days here in Houston. December has "come in like a lion." Some say it is more like January in Houston, than December. Personally, I am just missing the bright Texas sunshine and the effect it has on my general well-being. We are truly blessed to live in a city that enjoys 204 sunny days a year. However, as I walked our dog Minnie today we could see our breath and feel the cool breeze blow through us. What a paradox from the norm of Houston weather.

It is a season of paradoxes. This was my third Christmas as an ordained priest and without fail, just when the world seemed to be united around the birth of our savior, death came knocking. St. Mary's had three funerals

between November 21<sup>st</sup> and December 18<sup>th</sup>. While we are most pleased to celebrate the life, death and resurrection of parishioners it is never easy and never how we would chose to spend our time as priests, at least not given the choice.

However, the birth, life and resurrection of Jesus were also marked by paradoxes, some joyful, some bitter, but none as sweet as the gift we were given on Easter. My hope and prayer is that each of you has experienced the joyful side in your life and in the life of Jesus. That life began with a wonderful birth, celebrated by three wise people bearing extravagant gifts. But those gifts were not delivered to a fancy home, or a palace. They were shared in a simple stable where the newborn king lay in the hay of a feeding trough.

For me realizing Jesus suffered pain like all humans suffer pain, and Jesus enjoyed happy times like all humans enjoy happy times, brings a great deal of comfort and joy, even on dark gloomy days. I think of Jesus' time studying in the Temple as a child, the miracle of a wedding feast at Cana, the joy of dining with Zacchaeus, a reformed tax collector. All of these were happy, wonderful times for a man who suffered incredible rejection. I continue to be amazed at the paradoxes in the Gospel, and yet I think of how much Jesus' life parallels that of a typical human being. In that I can take great joy!

In Jesus we have a God who knows the suffering and pain it is to be human. However, the Bible also tells us we are made in God's image. If that is the case we know God cries, laughs, smiles and mourns right along with us. God's presence is reflected in the Church where we all come to laugh, mourn and smile as we encounter one another and encounter a God who shows unconditional love to all the children of the earth.

May you feel that love in the days and weeks ahead as we get through the cold and grey of January. Remember that the beauty of Texas springtime is just around the corner!

My love and thanks to all of you in Christ Jesus,  
Eric+

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*In Jesus we have  
a God who knows  
the suffering and pain  
it is to be human.*

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**St. Mary's Episcopal Church**  
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### Office Hours

Monday – Thursday  
 8:30 am – 4:30 pm  
 Friday  
 8:30 am – Noon

### Weekly Service Schedule

Monday – Saturday  
 9:00 am Morning Prayer  
 6:30 pm Evening Prayer

### Sunday Service Schedule

7:00 am Morning Prayer  
 8:00 am Holy Eucharist  
 9:00 am Christian Education  
 10:30 am Holy Eucharist and  
 Children's Liturgy  
 5:30 pm Holy Eucharist and  
 Healing

*Nursery provided from*  
 7:45 am-12:15 pm

**The Reverend Beth J. Fain**, Rector  
**The Reverend Eric J. Zubler**, Asst. Rector  
**The Venerable Russ Oechsel**, Deacon  
**Diane Mihalik**, Admin. Assistant  
**Janet Ash**, Parish Secretary  
**Rebecca Pitoniak**, Interim Parish Secretary  
**Celeste Booker**, Music Director  
**Kelly Wallis**, Organist  
**Sharon Davis**, Staff Assistant  
**Beccy Smith**,  
 Director of Family Ministers  
**Cindy Wingfield**,  
 Lay Ministry Coordinator

*If you wish to be removed from our mailing list; or wish to only receive an electronic copy of The Messenger call 281-370-8000 or email [admin@stmaryscypress.org](mailto:admin@stmaryscypress.org).*



*This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.*

## Mark Your Calendars

**Children's Chapel Meeting** | January 9 | 4:00 pm  
**Momtime Resumes** | January 10 | 8:00 am  
**Among Friends Dinner & Concert** | January 23 | 5:30 pm  
**Annual Parish Celebration** | January 30 | 5:00 pm  
**Lord of the Streets** | February 7 | 6:30 am

## Messenger Test

*In order to be better stewards of  
 our money and our environment*

**Starting with the February 2010 issue,  
 The Messenger will no longer be mailed.**

It will be available online and you will receive  
 and an email reminder and link when it is updated.

**We need a current email address.** If you are already receiving our weekly news via email than you are set. If not, call or email Cindy Wingfield ([cindy.wingfield@gmail.com](mailto:cindy.wingfield@gmail.com)) with your current email.

Paper copies will be available in the narthex/welcoming and our Lay Eucharistic Visitors will be delivering a copy to the homebound. If none of these ways work for you please call the office and they will "snail" mail a newsletter to you.



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