

The Lower Lights

December 2020

St. Peter's-at-the-Light Episcopal Church, Barnegat Light, New Jersey 08006

Welcome to the December issue of *The Lower Lights*. We certainly are living through an interesting time, one that has been very difficult for many. It has been a year of challenges, and we pray that all are well and safe. We know Thanksgiving family gatherings were restricted this year due to the current health pandemic but sincerely hope your holiday was joyous. Several months ago Donna Evleth penned a poem regarding the pandemic and we thought it would be appropriate to share with all of you.

A New Kind of War

*A snow white dove soars through the deep blue sky,
While we are filled with questions that all start with Y.
Why has our globe been besieged with this scourge,
To measure our faith and to help us emerge?
Why are we here in this beautiful place,
When so many others have lost the race?
Why have we been granted these blessings from God,
While so many others are still pushing the rod?
We wear a mask and put on surgical gloves,
And pray for the grace of the LBI doves.
To be at risk because of one's age,
A scary feeling even for a sage.
We pray for the families who have lost a loved one,
Whether it's a mother, father, a sister or son.
We pray for all wherever they are,
And pray for escape with nary a scar.
Please God give us the courage to fight,
A different kind of war that threatens our flight!*

Thank you, Donna! Now, as we prepare for the Christmas holiday, we would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. May the spirit of love fill our hearts and our homes!!

We are pleased to provide you with the following updates from:

Rev. Lee Powers, Interim Vicar:

Advent-Christmas-Epiphany – When Darkness Turns to Light

Advent is my favorite season of the Christian year. That it ends in the joy of Christmas is obviously one reason. What I love most is how it reminds us that we are continuing to live in times under God's control and watchful eye. This year, that may seem hard to believe. So, let's remember what Advent tells us, as it is the start of the Christian year.

The end is imminent, even if not immediate. At the time of our Lord's ascension to return to the Father, two men in white robes appeared to Jesus' disciples and said, "*Men of Galilee, why*

do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11) In the very last chapter of the final book of the Bible, Jesus spoke directly: “See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end...it is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with the testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” (Revelation 22:12-13, 16)

Looking forward to and being ready for our Lord’s return is the fullest way to celebrate and give thanks for his first coming. He came in humility; he will return in power. He came to save; he will return to judge. He gave his life for our sins, so that we could give our lives to him. He came to defeat the work of the devil; he will return to throw the devil into the Lake of Fire.

His example in his first appearing is what shapes us for our lives of faith. He was born in complete humility, and no circumstances of our own birth can raise us higher than that. He had no abiding home on earth, and neither do we. His gaze was always heavenward, as should be ours. All this means that at the heart of our joy and celebration in the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany season is the realization that we have been reborn as children of God, heirs of eternal life, and ministers of Christ’s redeeming message and invitation to the whole world. It is a season of extravagant spending for many in the world. Let our extravagance be of love. If you are showing your love for your own family, be sure to also show your love for those whom Christ loves the most; the poor, the dispossessed, the sick, the hungry, the prisoners, the naked, and the rejected. In Matthew 25:31-46 our Lord makes clear that it is by what we do for them that we give to him. Christmas is Jesus’ earthly birthday. Don’t forget to give to him by helping those he loves. Epiphany celebrates Jesus’ manifestation as the Son of God. His works revealed his Father’s glory. He also reminds us that *“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)*

I write this with the knowledge that our time together is coming to an end. We will continue to be linked together as brothers and sisters in Christ and members of the Diocese of New Jersey. This opportunity and journey has been a great blessing for me. I hope it has been a time for you to recommit yourself to serving our Lord Jesus, together, as his body at St, Peter’s-at-the-Light in Barnegat Light. Soon, you will know who is coming to be your next Pastor, and as John the Baptist said to his disciples, *“He (or she) must increase, and I must decrease.” (John 3:30)* God bless you, my sisters and brothers in Christ, as you embark on the next phase of your life in Christ. But remember, *“Keep Awake!”* Jesus is coming again!

Completing the Journey and Welcoming Your New Pastor

At the time I am writing this, the Diocesan office has given the names of possible candidates for your next Vicar to the Chair of the Discernment Committee. Following Diocesan guidelines the Discernment Committee will engage its task of getting to know these candidates, and eventually giving the Mission Committee the names of those who could be a suitable match for your parish. It is an exciting time. Many people have worked hard to get us to this moment, and with our Lord’s blessing, your search will result in a call of your next Vicar.

This is a time when every member of St. Peter’s Church has an important role to play. The first and most important role is that of prayer. Bathe your Discernment Committee, Mission

Committee and clergy who are exploring this ministry possibility with your prayers. Ask that the Holy Spirit guide all involved so that the discernment will be centered in God's will.

Secondly, it is good that this process is taking place during this season of Thanksgiving and Commitment. It may seem hard to be "thankful" with all we have endured during 2020, unless you step back and look at the wider picture. We have so much for which to be very thankful. St. Peter's church has evolved as a full year, worshiping community under the dedicated leadership of your first full year Vicar, the Rev. Donald Turner, and your lay leadership and member's ministries. Regarding the Coronavirus pandemic, we are blessed with dedicated researchers and health care workers who are working under great pressure, and at personal risk, to save lives and develop a vaccine so we can face this disease with hope for a cure and the ability to resume some normalcy in our lives. For our nation, which provides for us and protects us in so many ways that enable us to live exceedingly well. And for the ever-present love of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, giving us assurance that whatever travails we face, we are never beyond God's loving and redeeming care. The life we are living now is but a foretaste of a much more glorious and eternal life that will be lived in the nearer presence of God and our loved ones who have gone before.

As I commend you to our Lord's care, I feel a bit like Moses, as he stood on top of Mt. Nebo to the east of the Jordan River and looked out over the whole promised land. Moses had brought the people of God to this wonderful moment, but he was not the one to take them across the Jordan River into their future home. Moses was a transition minister. He followed in the steps of Abraham, who first heard the calling to leave his homeland and kinsfolk and travel to a land that God promised to give to his descendants. Abraham took his family so far, and they grew greatly in their initial sojourn in the land. After a period of living in Egypt and being enslaved, God sent Moses to begin the journey of bringing Abraham's children home. Joshua then led the people across the River to take up residence and settle in the land God was giving to Abraham's seed. Fr. Turner took you through the long first part of your faith journey; I have been with you for a short journey to the place where another pastor will help you to grow in love and faith in receiving the blessings God has for you, and sharing them with others.

St. Paul said it this way to the Christians in Corinth who tried comparing his ministry with that of Apollos: *What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth...For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.*" (1 Corinthians 3:5-7,9)

My heartfelt prayer is that you will welcome your new Pastor as warmly as you welcomed Fr. Turner and me, and will fully commit your time, talent and treasure to working together with your next Vicar in God's field. That is a blessing for which we all should give thanks. God bless you.

Tom MacArthur, Sr. Warden:

During this time of Thanksgiving and Advent, we rightly look back with gratitude for all God has done for us, and we look forward, with expectation, knowing that God is not done with us, our Church and country and ultimately, our world.

First, I want to express my thanks for the blessings of this year. I'm grateful that even as we have faced the unknowns of COVID19, which thundered into our lives in March, we also know that God promises to never leave us nor forsake us, and He assures us that we have a future

and a hope. I'm grateful for technology, as frustrating as it can be at times. We never would have dreamed just a year ago how much we would need it to connect with family and friends, as well as worship together online. I thank God that He loaned us Fr. Powers to help St. Peter's stay together through this time. Fr. Lee has been such a blessing to all of us and while I'm sad to see him go, I know that he has had a positive impact on all of us.

Most of all I thank God for the life He has given us. As one of my favorite authors, Frederick Buechner has written, "If you were aware of how precious life is, you could hardly live through it. Unless you are aware of how precious it is, you can hardly be said to be living at all. This is the day which the Lord has made," says Psalm 118. "Let us rejoice and be glad in it (v. 24). Or weep and be sad in it for that matter. The point is to see it for what it is, because it will be gone before you know it. If you waste it, it is your life that you're wasting. If you look the other way, it may be the moment you've been waiting for always that you're missing." (from *Whistling in the Dark*)

In this Advent season we also look forward. I'm hopeful that by the time this newsletter is published, we will all be looking forward expectantly to being vaccinated in the coming months. Soon COVID19 will be to our generation what polio was to an earlier generation – a terrible scourge that God helped us beat. And even as I write this, we are starting to interview candidates to be the next Vicar of St. Peter's. I'm hopeful about our future. Most of all, we look forward to that day when God will make all things right--things on earth and things in heaven. This life is not the whole story, and at the final Advent, God will return and reveal the final, best chapter.

Jim Girgenti, Jr. Warden:

I would like to wish all at St. Peter's-at-the-Light a very "Merry Christmas and a safe and blessed New Year."

I am looking forward to the day when we can all be back in person to worship together in our beautiful Church. Until then, I will be seeing you on Zoom.

Maribeth McGrover, Discernment Committee Chair:

It has been a very busy two weeks for the Discernment Committee. The Diocese submitted three candidates on November 12th for our prayerful consideration. After discussing all the resumes and OTM profiles, we prepared and finished interviews on November 24th. We have three very exciting and enthusiastic priests interested in leading St. Peter's. We'll be meeting on November 30th to finish our report for the Mission Committee. Thank you for all of your prayers.

St. Peter's – Christmas Holiday Outreach Initiatives:

This year Joni Bakum and Don Mann have initiated drives to support St. Francis' holiday programs.

Joni Bakum – Joni has provided a number of St. Peter's parishioners with an "angel" tag from St. Francis. Each of us who are participating will help to make a child's Christmas a little happier. As a reminder, all unwrapped gifts are to be taken to St. Peter's (outside of the

Parish House) on Saturday, December 5th, between 1:00 and 1:30 p.m. All gifts and tags will be assembled for delivery to St. Francis' Church.

Don Mann will be coordinating a drive, on behalf of the St. Francis' Food Pantry. The Pantry reports a large uptick in people using their service. In the past few weeks they have reported over 100 people visiting the Pantry. They have a good supply of food being donated by a number of sources; however, they have a great need for a number of items – personal products, detergent, toilet paper, sanitary wipes, and toddler size diapers. On behalf of St. Peter's, Don will coordinate the drive for these items through December 15th. Don will collect and distribute your gifts to St. Francis. You may either drop off your gift at our Church (place on the portico in front) or if you choose, Don will pick up your donation at your home. Either way, please advise Don at Dfmann123@gmail.com or at 609-902-7487 and he will arrange coordination and delivery. If you choose, please bring your Pantry donations to the Church on Saturday, December 5th and we will certainly be sure to get these to Don. Again, this drive will run through December 15.

Important December Birthday/Anniversary Dates:

Birthday Celebrations:

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|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| December 14 | Susan Scangarello |
| December 14 | Gil Owren |
| December 18 | Kay Giberson |
| December 21 | Deacon Carolsue Cummings |
| December 26 | Cynthia Clarke |
| December 30 | Allacen Rathbun |
| December 31 | Nancy Rudko |

Anniversary Celebrations:

There were no December anniversary celebrations reported to the Church. Please remember to report any major events, address changes, email changes, telephone number changes, etc., to the Church office so that our records can be updated. You may reach the office at 609-494-2398 or at officestpeterslbi@gmail.com.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS – SAVE THE DATES FOR THE FOLLOWING DECEMBER EVENTS:

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| December 2 | Healing Mass – 12:00 Noon |
| December 5 | St. Francis "Angel" tree gifts due |
| December 10 | Mission Committee Meeting |
| December 15 | St. Francis' Pantry Drive Program Ends |
| December 16 | Holiday Happy Hour – 4:00 p.m. Watch for details from Debbie MacArthur. |
| December 24 | Christmas Eve Service – 5:00 p.m. Currently scheduled for in-person Church Worship and via Zoom. Watch for details. |
| December 25 | There will be no Christmas Day service. |

December 27

January 24, 2021

Sunday Worship – 10:00 a.m.

Currently scheduled for Zoom service only

St. Peter's – Annual Church Meeting

Watch for details. There will be a January issue
Of *The Lower Lights* devoted to this meeting!

Contact Information:

Rev. Lee Powers, Interim Vicar (revlpowers@gmail.com; 609-502-5811)

Tom MacArthur, Sr. Warden (tmac@nsigh.com; 732-930-4659)

Jim Girgenti, Jr. Warden (jfgirgenti02@gmail.com; 609-709-8688)

Church Office (officestpeterslbi@gmail.com; 609-494-2398)

How I Chose St. Peter's Church:

Please continue to send us your stories. We have heard from several of you and will be including your stories in a future issue of *The Lower Lights*. We have not forgotten you!

This issue has been assembled and distributed by your 2020 newsletter committee – Jean Archer, Sue Hofer and Nancy Rudko. We welcome your comments and suggestions for future articles. You may reach us at: jeanmad@comcast.net; nightbird526@comcast.net; or nrudko@verizon.net.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a very happy and healthy New Year!!

