

The Chart

December 2007

Letter from the Rector

December 1, 2007

Dear Friends,

By the time you receive this edition of the *Chart* we will be entering into the season of Advent. For many of us (including those of us in the church office) it is the busiest time of the year. We are having special services (including the Advent Lessons and Carols and the Christmas Pageant—a truly great occasion), a parish family party, the Holly Fair Express, a 'Foodraiser', a coat drive, providing Christmas gifts for ten families and, even services for Christmas.

Nevertheless, we need to remember that Advent is not just preparation time for Christmas; it is traditionally for the Church a time to prepare for that time when we will meet our Lord again in the fullness of his glory and when we will need to answer for the lives we have lived and what we have done to enhance God's creation and to spread the good news of the Gospel. Therefore Advent should be a time of study, contemplation and prayer as well as a time for shopping, cooking and Christmas cards. *The Book of Common Prayer* has a recommended series of readings for Advent. The readings can be found on Pages 937 and 939 of the Prayer Book and prayers (collects) for the four weeks of Advent can be found on pages 211 and 212 of the Prayer Book. For your convenience we will reproduce these pages for you and will have them in the church this Sunday.

I would like to remind you of the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services this year. There will be a family/children's Christmas Eucharist on Christmas Eve at 5:00 pm and a full Choral Eucharist with choir and orchestra at 8:00 pm. The pre-service music will begin at 7:40 pm. The mass-setting will be the Mozart Missa Brevis in D (K. 194) and the traditional hymns for congregation and choir will be sung. On Christmas Day we will have a Rite I Eucharist with carols (but no choir).

On the Sunday before Christmas (Advent IV) we will have a VERY SPECIAL Christmas pageant, with more live and interesting animals than ever before. It is a Christmas presentation and gift worthy of all children and parents (and grandparents) and a good time to invite friends to join you at Christ Church. The pageant will be the 10:00 am service. There are celebrations of the Holy Eucharist at 8:00 am and 6:00 pm.

Finally, do help us with donations for Christmas flowers and music. Your special donations help us make this season most festive.

This comes with my best wishes.

Sincerely,

The Rev. David B. Lowry, Rector

On American Society and the Church: A Sociological Perspective

I came to Manhasset in September, 1968 as a seminarian. I had just turned 22 years old. Christ Church had three services on Sunday mornings and two of those services filled the church substantially. If I remember correctly, the Sunday School had separate services in the Parish House, so the young children did not count in church attendance. In the afternoon we had two youth groups, both of which had more than 20 young people in attendance. Christ Church had a high school basketball team which competed against such ecclesiastical basketball powerhouses as All Saint's, Bayside and Holy Trinity, Hicksville. Christ Church was a small church in comparison with the Congregational Church up Northern Boulevard and, of course, St. Mary's, across the way.

Today, Christ Church has about half the attendance we had 35 years ago. Pastor Jimmy Only reports much the same for the Congregational Church. St. Mary's has suffered less in terms of attendance, but its members report a clear down-turn in active participation apart from attendance at mass. The only church in Manhasset that has increased in membership and attendance is the Shelter Rock Church (formerly the American Baptist Church on Plandome), which now has two campuses and draws from a large area in Nassau and now from Suffolk County.

What has happened to our churches and what are the prospects for a reversal in the trend away from church membership, attendance and participation? There are several broad trends that should be noted and considered. The first issue is historical. After the Second World War, there was a period of time when church membership and participation spiked in the United States. From 1950 through 1960, the percentage of people who belonged to, attended regularly and fully participated in religious institutions. According to data in Robert Putnam's fascinating and important book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, membership in religious organizations in the United States increased from less than 50% in 1940 to more the 63% in the late 1960s. At present, the number has slipped to about 55%, with mainstream churches, especially non-evangelical Protestant churches, facing a much more substantial decline. (Church membership in the United States has been bolstered, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, by Hispanic immigration. Without that immigration, church membership would have declined more substantially.) However, it should be noted that a recent study of data about religious adherence in the American colonies in 1776, suggested that only 17% of those in the colonies identified themselves with a formal church. This is startling data in view of our widespread belief that our founding fathers (and most colonists) were Bible-toting, God-fearing, church-going Christians. Even our most notable forefathers (Adams, Jefferson, Franklin and Washington) would not pass our test for being good church members, much less being real Anglicans!

If the decline of membership was only a decline in church participation, we might want to look at the failure of religious institutions. However, the decline of social organizations—or possibly we should say the transformation of American social organizations—which includes, but is not limited to religious organizations, is so broad that a deeper consideration of the phenomenon is required. Since the 1880s, regular membership in civic and religious organizations in the United States has tended toward decline. During that time, there have been resurgences in certain areas of civic life—note the growth of church membership and attendance in the 1960s and 1970s, but the overall trend has been unmistakable.

Along with the general decline of organizational membership and civic participation, there has been a shift in the nature of organizations and the demands of membership. In the recent past, people belonged to community organizations for years—if not for a lifetime. At the end of the First and Second World Wars many veterans joined the American Legion and the Veterans of

Foreign Wars; after Korea, some joined; after Vietnam, few joined; after Iraq virtually none joined. There are numerous examples of regularly-meeting women's groups, bowling leagues and the like. That does not mean, however, that we no longer belong to groups within our communities. We belong to different types of groups; groups that are less formal, demand less of our regular time and energy and focus on short term tasks and pleasures.

Social theorists look at groups in a number of ways. They categorize some groups as *binding* groups and others as *bridging* groups. Binding groups 'bind-together' people around common interests and concerns; bridging groups pull-together bring together people around disparate interest and concerns. Equally, social theorists categorize groups around the level of commitment and participation that are necessary to belong to a group. Over the past decade there has been a decline in binding groups and groups where there is a high level of commitment necessary for participation and an expansion of lower-level commitment groups the bridge societal gaps.

There is one other aspect of American culture that needs to be considered in assessing groups and organizations in American culture—that is American consumerism. Lizabeth Cohen in her 2003 book, *A Consumers Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, notes that Americans have come to view almost every aspect of life from the perspective of a consumer. The question we pose in what we want to have and what value will that good have for us. It appears that this sense of consumerism has also permeated our sense of groups and helps us decide which groups to belong to and what activities to partake in. Our postwar consumer has also brought about the era of the two-income family, which leads inexorably to the last general consideration, which is time.

In the 1980s we fretted about how we would use our leisure time. We believed that the computer and other technological advances would shorten our work week and give us additional leisure time. Reality is that globalization and technological advances have added to our work and have shrunk our leisure time. With more work and less leisure there is less time for group participation.

What does this say for the church in the present day? It suggests that the old model for church participation may be working against the future health of the institutional church. For people like me who grew-up in the 'old' church and much enjoyed that model of group organization, facing a 'new' model can be difficult and disheartening. I have spent much of much ministry (possibly that I why I took a 14 year hiatus from church work!) trying to convince people to conform to the model of groups with which I feel comfortable. However, if Professor Putnam is correct about the dynamics of groups today, possibly I have been 'kicking against the goad.' With less time, more two-income families, more consumerism, more two house families, the church may need to work on new, less demanding models of church organization. The task we in the church have is how to be true to our Biblical, theological, spiritual and ethical foundations without being held hostage to our societal and cultural roots. The success of the church will depend substantially on our abilities to work our way through whether our new wine will be held by old wineskins.

♪ Music notes from Kyle Babin, Organist & Director of Music

December is a very busy month, musically speaking. After the Advent service of Lessons and Carols on December 2, the choir will be hard at work preparing for Christmas Eve. This year, like last year, the choir will be joined by a string quartet comprised of faculty members from the Children's Orchestra Society. Music will include Mozart's *Missa Brevis in D, K. 194*, as well as anthems by John Rutter and McNeil Robinson. The extended prelude will begin at precisely 7:40 p.m., so please come early to hear a great variety of special Christmas music for organ, choir, strings, and recorder. At the 5 p.m. service, music will be provided by the Christ Church Junior

Choir. Christmas Eve will be a wonderful occasion, with traditional Christmas carols. I hope to see you all there.

Best wishes for Advent and Christmas!

Holly Fair Express Needs Baked Goods

Home Baked goods are needed for the Holly Fair Express. Please be sure to call Diana Tadler at 627-0128 to let know what you can provide. All baked goods my be brought to the Parish Hall on Friday, December 7 for sale at the Fair the next day.



CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT CHRIST CHURCH

Sunday, December 23rd at 10 a.m.

Pageant with the Children of Christ Church

Christmas Eve, December 24th at 5 p.m.

A Family Eucharist and Building of the Crèche

Christmas Eve, December 24th at 8 p.m.

A Festival Choral Eucharist with Music for Organ & Strings

Prelude music to begin at 7:40pm

Christmas Day, December 25th at 10 a.m.

Holy Eucharist with Traditional Carols

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CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

If you would like to contribute to the joy of our Christmas worship through the gift of altar flowers, please fill out this form and place it, along with your check (*designated Christmas Flowers*), on the offering plate. Or you can mail it to Christ Church, 1355 Northern Blvd., Manhasset, NY 11030.

All offerings for Christmas Flowers need to reach the church office no later than Monday, December 17th.

My offering is
"In memory of..."

(List names)

- Or -

"In Thanksgiving for..."

(List your thanksgiving)

Flowers are given by:

(See reverse for Christmas Music contributions)

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

If you would like to contribute to the joy of our Christmas worship through donations for special music, please fill out this form and place it, along with your check (*designated Christmas Music*), on the offering plate. Or you can mail it to Christ Church, 1355 Northern Blvd., Manhasset, NY 11030.

All offerings for Christmas Music need to reach the church office no later than Monday, December 17th.

My offering is
"In memory of..."

(List names)

- Or -
"In Thanksgiving for..."

(List your thanksgiving)

Donations are given by:

(See reverse for Christmas Flowers contributions)

Happy Birthday!!

We are pleased to congratulate these friends and parishioners this month on their birthdays... Elaine Phillips, Peter Ciaccio, Clayton Tadler, Beth Morningstar, Kathleen McGill, Austin Bennett, Valerie Siener, Katherine Stackler, Christopher Sherwood, Kelly Whalen, Tom Chaly, Jerome Blocker, Elizabeth Pavlovich.

Happy Anniversary!!!

Our congratulations to all those friends and parishioners celebrating their wedding anniversaries for this month... William and Valerie Siener.

SUNDAY READINGS AND ALTAR FLOWER MEMORIALS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER:

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – DECEMBER 2, 2007

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

Altar flowers are given in memory of Kenneth Rider & Ellen Rider Meath
by Janet Rider

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – DECEMBER 9, 2007

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

Altar flowers are given in memory of Dorothy Jamal
by Ruth Mishrick & Family

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT – DECEMBER 16, 2007

Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:4-9; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

Altar flowers are given in memory of Richard G. & Lucy H. Siegel,
Dr. & Mrs. Albert E. Field by Dick & Lucy Field and Nancy and Joseph Cioffi
by Louise Fribush

Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 23, 2007

Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 7:10-16; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25
Pageant with the Children of Christ Church

Christmas Eve – December 24, 2007

Family Eucharist - 5:00pm

2 Samuel 7:1-16; Psalm 96; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:67-79

Christmas Eve – December 24, 2007

Festival Choral Eucharist - 8:00pm

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14

Christmas Day - December 25, 2006*

Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-12, John 1:1-14

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS – DECEMBER 30, 2007

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 147; Galatians 3:23-25, 4:4-7; John 1:1-18

** Enclosed for you convenience is a Christmas Offering envelope*

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CHRIST CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. David B. Lowry, Rector, Residence: 516-570-0318
Mr. Kyle Babin, Organist/Choir Master
Ms. Kathy Hoffmann, Administrator Church Office: 627-2184
Mr. Enrique Valdes, Sexton