

THE AP STLE

Getting Into Lent: Prayer, Fasting, and Self-Denial

Lent brings a time of reflection and self-denial to the Christian Journey. It is a special six weeks set aside to focus on prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17th and ends on Easter Sunday, April 4th.

Sometimes Ash Wednesday is a harsh reminder of the need to reflect and come to terms with God in our life. The liturgy that day specifically calls us to remember our own frail nature and limited time. We are specifically invited to a “holy season of prayer, fasting, and self-denial!” This simple poem reminds us of the need for quiet that is openness before a thing of beauty is truly heard:

**Best of any song
is bird song in the quiet,
but first
you must have the quiet.**
— *Anonymous*

What is going on in your life that you need to let go of? What are your growing edges? Who is important to you? What is your vocation? Who do you need to forgive? Who do you need forgiveness from? How is your prayer life? Where is God in your priorities? When do you have time to think about all these things?

A faithful Christian should make time for God in his/her life. A busy Christian (like me) needs the season of Lent to slow down a little and focus. Can you find the quiet in your life so you can hear the song of God? Sometimes creating the space of quiet requires reflection, repentance, and fasting. Lent is for this time.

There will be a number of offerings this season at St. Thomas. May your season of Lent be holy and blessed! May you hear the song of God through the quietness of your prayer, fasting, and self-denial.

*Blessings,
GAIL*

**Lenten
Sundays
at
St. Thomas**

Classes and
Activities
for all ages!

Dinner at 5:30 pm

**Classes and
Activities
at 6:30 pm**

**Reflections and
Stations of
the Cross
at 7:30 pm
Home at 8:00 pm**

This program
begins on
Sunday,
February 28th
and continues to
March 28th.

More info in the
Tower Talk!

Footnotes

Beth L. Elswick, Director of Music Ministries



Footnotes for a New Year

Should I say “Happy New Year!” or “Happy Epiphany?” Our church year began a few months ago in Advent. What can we expect in the next year at St. Thomas?

I look forward to increased participation and excitement as our church continues to thrive, develop, and grow. Parents can relate to my musical metaphor. Think of the joy you experience seeing a youngster mature, discovering his or her talents, developing skills of communication and experiencing the enjoyment of creativity, even artistry.

Like any effective parent, I am not going to sit back and wait to see if the choirs “happen to sing well.” I will push and prod, ask for second opinions, and often have to “stretch the budget.” Sometimes we even sing “hand me downs” with such a creative flair that it makes old tunes seem fresh.

You know those tunes—old tunes written in the ‘80s, or 1880s, 1780s, 1680s, 1580s, 1480s, 1380s, 1280s or even the **880s!** Some Gregorian chant dates back to the origins of notation, maybe earlier.

The growth and development of the music program at St. Thomas is much like the maturation of the kids in a family. For me, each musical service reflects individual tastes, musical language preferences, and strengths. The service has responsibilities and “chores,” if you will. Each musical service has a common ground with the other family members (other services)—the commonality is the service of the Word and the Sacrament.

Indeed, each service has a “vested” interest in the success of all of the services. Personally, do I like one service better than

another? Do you like one child more than another? Each service has its strengths and struggles.

Do you have a favorite service? If you do have a favorite service style, can you help to strengthen its effectiveness this year? We need singers of all ages. During the seasons of Lent and Easter, there are particularly large amounts of music to be presented at the services. Even if you cannot make a commitment for the entire church year, would you be willing to sing in a choir during this season?

Father Gar has suggested that the Good Friday service could include artistic offerings from creative musicians and could include works which deal thoughtfully with the passion of Christ. Do you have a favorite poem, song, or piece of art expressing the moods, events, and ideas of depicting Lent and Christ’s time on the cross?

I guess I must admit that my favorite services occur when the whole family gets together for a meal. Since I do not have a favorite child, I like it the most when the whole crew gathers for special occasions—like a blended family, we have blended services. We will not do that very often, only on days such as Pentecost, Thanksgiving, Veteran’s Day, Consecration Sunday, and sometimes on a Kick-Off, such as a Rally Day, or an event like the pancake supper for Shrove Tuesday. When we do get together, it is particularly wonderful to put our heads together, put our hearts together, and see how much the kids have grown.

And the musicians—they even play together now.

St. Thomas sends nearly \$7,000 for earthquake relief

St. Thomas the Apostle continues to show its heart for outreach as evidenced in response to the earthquake in Haiti. The parish contributed nearly **\$4383.53** raised from individual donations toward relief efforts on Sunday, January 17th. Add to that another **\$2519.32** from the St. Thomas Outreach Fund and our donations total **\$6902.85!**

Episcopal Relief & Development is working closely with the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti to meet immediate needs for food, water and shelter. In addition, ERD has partnered with IMA World Health, a non-profit organization providing medical assistance and supplies in and around Port-au-Prince.

Thank you, St. Thomas the Apostle, once again for your compassion and generosity.

If you would like to make additional donations toward earthquake recovery in Haiti, write checks to *St. Thomas* and note “Haiti Relief” on the memo line. Or contribute directly by going online at www.er-d.org.

Earthquake reporters may be shocked, but Haiti's poverty and hunger are nothing new

A couple of days after the earthquake, a news crew hurried down the street in Port-au-Prince. The photographer hustled to keep up as the reporter gestured wildly during the live “on-scener” for CNN. As the reporter emotionally described the trash piling up in the streets, women trying to bathe modestly in public, and other deplorable conditions, I thought, “This is his first time in Haiti!”

Sadly, and unbeknownst to those who are seeing the Haitian slums for the very first time, these conditions are absolutely not exclusive to post-earthquake Haiti. In many neighborhoods, the streets are always filled with trash. It is quite common to see folks bathing in culverts on the side of the road and in rivers on the edge of town, to see children in t-shirts and no pants begging for food or money.

In much of Port-au-Prince, tiny houses are built into the hills, one on top of another with cinder blocks and corrugated tin roofs. They have window openings, but no windows, dirt floors where people sleep, no plumbing or electricity. Where there is electricity, it is unreliable, often going off and on at inconvenient times.

Even before the earthquake, many of these homes were crumbling. In the morning you will see a parade of people gathered at a neighborhood well to draw water used for cooking and washing up. The dusty, gray landscape is brightened by colorful laundry hanging on lines connecting one neighbor to another. You can look down from the house above and see a woman sweeping her dirt patio; across the street children are playing on the roof.

One of the blessings to come from this epic tragedy is that the world—the U.S. in particular—now sees the desperation of the poorest country in our hemisphere, a mere 600 miles off the coast of Florida. The extraordinary need in Haiti pre-dates this earthquake. For those of us who’ve been there, there is some understanding of the logistical difficulties of relief efforts. Toussaint Louverture International Airport does not compare in any way with airports in the United States. Roads in Haiti are notoriously bad and bridges are often flooded out from the last hurricane. Police are ineffective and the government is always in a shambles. In Port-au-Prince, disorder is always the order of the day. Extreme poverty and neglect by the rest of the world are part of this Caribbean nation’s legacy, along with rampant disease, filthy drinking water and corruption.

Another part of Haiti’s legacy, however, is the indomitable spirit of her people. The centuries of economic, social and political oppression miraculously have not pummeled the hope and faith right out of these beautiful people. Haiti’s children still beam at you with their beautiful Pepsodent smiles, and even among the desperate ruins, there is joy.

Another TV report days after the quake showed men, women and children, hands clasped together, dancing in the midst of the rubble that remains of Port-au-Prince. Reminiscent of the Whos down in Whoville after the Grinch “stole” Christmas, these resilient, faithful souls were singing songs of praise, thanking God that they are alive, and revealing to the world one of the prevailing truths of living in Haiti: even the heartbroken can be hopeful.—*Mary Novaria, Outreach Committee, St. Thomas the Apostle*



St. Thomas the Apostle has a partner parish and school in La Pretre, Haiti. Their priest, Pere Jean Phillippe Alphonse, e-mailed Mary a few days after the quake and assured her that he and his family were safe.

This photo shows what typical dwellings in Port-au-Prince look like.
Photo courtesy of Mary Novaria

Outreach is the “Heart” in the Heartland

Together, we make a difference.

Grace and peace to you from God our father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

There can be no more powerful greeting than the opening St. Paul uses as he writes letters to encourage the followers of Jesus. I use it with reverence as I write to all of you. This is my last message as chairman of the Outreach Committee. It has been a wonderful experience, and it is with a joyful heart that I step down. If I could, I would seek out each of you to talk about outreach, but instead, I'll send you this group message.

Our outreach journey has been very much like the life of a young person. How often have we asked that young person what they were going to do or what they wanted to be? They have dreams, they make plans, they begin careers, they test the waters of life. When I joined St. Thomas in 1982, there were many members who were involved in outreach on an individual basis. But as a congregation, we didn't have much parish outreach. We rang bells for the Salvation Army and had a “chicken tree” to provide chickens to be given out at St. Paul's Food Pantry at Christmas. As I reflect, I see those years as our time of preparation and dreaming. If we look back at the last 4–5 years, we see some of the highlights and milestones of our outreach journey:

♥ St. Thomas' commitment to feeding ministry grew. Members were key in the revitalizing of the **Neighborhood Food Pantry** at St. Paul's. Our volunteers are now involved at the Pantry every week and several parishioners have key roles supporting the Food Pantry.

♥ **Breakfast at St. Paul's** feeds 200-300 people every Saturday. St. Thomas volunteers cook, serve and cleanup whenever there is a 5th Saturday in the month.

♥ **IHN Host** is a ministry to homeless families here in Johnson County. St. Thomas was one of the founding congregations and has been a support congregation since IHN received its first families in 2004.

♥ St. Thomas increased the amount of nonperishable food sent to St. Paul's Food pantry by starting “**red wagons**” to hold weekly food donations as well as an annual “**Fill a Van**” to stock the shelves at St. Paul's.

♥ St. Thomas initiated **Stone Soup**, a gathering of congregations in the Northeast convocation, to help us encourage each other in the feeding ministry at St. Paul's.

♥ St. Thomas sent its first **mission team** to provide relief following Hurricane Katrina in 2006.

♥ St. Thomas supported and continues to support EPISCOPAL COMMUNITY SERVICES and programs like *Operation Backpack*, *Meals on Wheels* and the *Kansas City Community Kitchen*.

♥ An **emergency pantry** at St. Thomas was expanded to have food on hand for anyone seeking assistance.

♥ St. Thomas hosted a **Holiday party** each year for **IHN** guests and graduate families. It has grown over the last five years and is a cooperative event with St. Thomas providing the organization, volunteers, lunch, gifts, and food baskets.

♥ *Maison de Naissance*, a maternal and child health center in Haiti, captured hearts in 2007. A special “ladies shopping event” raised funds to send to the birthing center.

♥ CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN AND AGING gave St. Thomas members an opportunity to continue to reach out internationally. Parishioners and groups provide support through monthly donations channeled through CFCA, writing letters, and developing relationships with individuals in third world countries around the world.

♥ St. Thomas joined the Harvester's “**Backsnacks**” program, providing weekend food for 60 “at risk” students at Comanche School in Overland Park.

♥ *Haitian Episcopal Learning Partnership (HELP)* connects churches with schools in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. In 2008, St. Thomas became the sponsor of Incarnation School in La Prete, Haiti. Our financial support provides salaries for the headmaster and teachers, some funds for inoculations, and worm medicine for the children.

And the journey continues. I didn't make this journey alone. There are many of us and all of our footprints are on the path together. Sharing the journey makes it fun and makes it possible for us to grow and take new paths. As we continue the journey, I'll continue to coordinate our HOST ministry, and **Peggy Salts** will be the new chair of the Outreach committee. Peggy grew up here at St. Thomas. She has a passion for outreach and will share this journey with us. And, I'll be right there with Peggy and all of you.

In closing, I go to Paul's letter to the Thessalonians:

We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.

*We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith,
your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Joyfully, Dola McNown

Many thanks to St. Thomas for making IHN Christmas party successful!

St. Thomas hosted the fifth annual IHN Christmas Party on Saturday, December 12, 2009. As usual, our congregation showed such generosity to our IHN families. We hosted 68 guests at the party. These included current IHN guests as well as graduates of the program.

Our gratitude goes to those persons who donated gifts, gift cards, food for the lunch, items for the kid's store, money for the party and their time as volunteers. We would especially like to thank: **Donna Fye, Suzanne Hicks, Steve Leftwich, Bill Kidder, Dan & Donna Kopp, Ellen Peters, Ann Clements, Kay Childress, Linda Manuel, and Sharon Moorhead.** Very special thanks to Santa and Mrs. Claus (**Jerry & Connie Snider**) for making an appearance and posing for pictures with the kids. We can't forget to thank our ever faithful elf, **John McNown.**

Until next year's party! *Jean Adam* and *Dola McNown*—party co-chairs



Below, **Kay Childress** enjoyed doing crafts with IHN children.



Someone enjoyed a hug from Santa!



An IHN guest found plenty of gifts from which she could choose the perfect gifts for her loved ones.



Bill Kidder is masterful at packaging food items for IHN guests Christmas celebrations.

All photos courtesy of Dola McNown



Parish Notes

Deaths

St. Thomas extends its deepest sympathy to the following persons:

Emily Barnes,

on the death of her uncle,

Tony McGrath;

Pat Seiler

on the loss of her father,

Robert F. Widmann;

Deb McArthur

on the death of her aunt,

Carol Archbold;

Kevin Shields

on the death of his mother,

Genevieve Shields;

Rosemary Williams

on the death of her husband,

Jay Williams;

Dave Beaver

on the death of his wife,

Sally Beaver;

Barbara Allison

on the passing of her father,

Curtis Robert Catenhauser.

Baptisms

We welcomed into the household of God the following:

On December 13, 2009:

Everett Crabb,

grandson of Ed and Barbara Sisk;

On December 27, 2009:

Marah Greene,

granddaughter of John and Therese Greene;

On January 10, 2010:

Lucas Wilson,

grandson of Sally Welch.

Marriages

Margaret Knowlton

was married to

Cody Richardson

on December 19, 2009.

Congratulations to the newlyweds!



Youth Group News

Katie Knoll Lenon, Director of Youth Ministries and Small Groups

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Feed

The youth will be putting together the **Pancake Feed** again this year for Shrove Tuesday, February 16th. This will be a fundraiser. Money raised will support our *Summer Mission* programs, the *Mission Trip* for our Senior High, and *Reaching Out to the Community* for the Junior High. We will start serving piping hot pancakes and sausage at 6 pm and will continue flipping our delicious pancakes until 8 pm.

We are blessed again this year to have a Dixieland band providing entertainment for you throughout the evening. Come and bring your families and enjoy yourself on this very festive occasion.



Parent's Night Out

We will have our **final Parent's Night Out** of this winter season on **March 6th** from **6-11pm**.

We have really enjoyed providing these nights for our parents. The youth have bonded with our younger children and enjoy getting to see them once a month.

We will have snacks, play games, do crafts and color together, watch movies, and have fun. All we ask is a free will donation.

The nursery will also be open for our younger crowd. If you need a night off and want to provide your child with some great fun, please drop them off at St. Thomas.

Lenten Program

This year for Lent our youth group will be talking about Jesus' walk through Holy Week.

As we take this journey, we will learn what it would have been like for Jesus and his disciples as they encountered hardships along the way.

During this program, we will discuss miracles, parables, healings, and other things Jesus did before the Last Supper.

We will also spend some time planning for Maundy Thursday and putting on an **Agape dinner** for the church on **Thursday, April 1st**.

Parent's Day Out Update

St. Thomas Parent's Day Out just began its 2nd semester. We currently have seven children enrolled and have several interested families. We are working on adding a second room for Tuesdays and a second day for Fall of 2010. The kids are all happy and enjoy the activities that we do each Tuesday. The parents have reported that their kids look forward to coming.

If you are interested in our **PDO**, or if you know of someone who is interested in our program, please contact **Anne Thompson** at 231-9701 or email her at athompson@stthomasop.org.

The forecast for Sunday School: Warm, Sunny and Fun days!

Ann Clements, Director of Children's Ministries



St. Thomas survived the blizzard of 2009! Arriving smack dab in the middle of Christmas Eve seemed likely to be a holiday buzz-kill, but I'm so proud to say our kids were troupers and made our 4:00 family service very special. The Christmas Pageant went off without a hitch, and we all made it through before the worst part of the storm began. . . thanks to director **Laura Wiltanger** and her crew of volunteers. Most especially, I thank our group of talented actors and singers for making once again making our Christmas worship so wonderful.

Though we've had a few more weather concerns between December and now, I'm happy to report that church school is back on track. While all our holiday plans might have gone awry, and school snow days may have messed up some things, we all seem to have "weathered" the chaos fairly well. At least St. Thomas is a place where we can find normalcy.

The upcoming semester should be a fun one. First on our agenda is our annual **Winter Party**, to be held after the 10:45 service on **February 14th**. Our teachers put on this party for our kids in preschool through 5th grade to promote fellowship among the students, to bid a fond farewell to Christmas and Epiphany before Lent begins, and to have lots of fun. Invitations will be sent to families with drop-off/pick-up times. And here's my easy answer question of the day: **Guess what our theme will be?????**

The next big activity on our calendar is **Celebration Sunday**, which takes place on **April 11th**, the week after Easter Sunday. On this day we celebrate the holy season of Easter with a children's egg hunt and continental breakfast. We also take time this day to recognize all who are to graduate (or have recently graduated) from high school, college, and all other learning institutions.

Our last day of Sunday School will be on May 23rd. Summer Fun Sunday School, our June and July children's program, will begin on **June 6th**. **VBS 2010** is going to be new and exciting this year; our dates are tentatively scheduled for **July 11th-15th**. More information regarding our new program, final dates, and registration forms will be coming soon!

We had such a great and exciting fall that we plan to continue these activities into 2010. **Trunk or Treat**, our All-Parish Hayride, seasonal Advent and Christmas activities—these have been the icing on our Sunday School cake. Of course, we plan to share the Word and love of God and Jesus each week in class and Children's Church. Here's to another awesome year!

ChristCare growing at St. Thomas

Everyone who is involved with the Small Group ministry here at St. Thomas has been working very hard to make this ministry be all that it can be for this church. We have been very successful at getting six groups up and going within just a year. By using the ChristCare program from the Stephen Ministries organization, we have grown to really appreciate all that it provides to help our church become strong in our Small Group ministry.

During these last couple of months, we have been working hard to make their program adapt to what St. Thomas needs by focusing on membership in our small groups; those involved have really enjoyed what they have gained and want to share this with the rest of the congregation.

We are now at a point where it would be great to have additional small groups to reach more people in our church family. We are committed to the Group Leader Training and are currently recruiting more people to step up and join this ministry. It is meant to be shared with others. If you would like further information, please contact **Katie Knoll Lenon** at kklenon@stthomasop.org or at the church 451-0512.

The Journeymen

The group formerly known as "Hand, Foot, and Mouth" has recently changed its name to "The Journeymen." They have begun a Bible study where they are discussing the Apostle Paul. This group gets together on Thursday evenings at the residence of **Jack** and **Judy Dutra**, who are also the Leaders of this group. It is a group for couples, so come enjoy a night with your spouse. In addition, their mission is to refill the Emergency Bags here at St. Thomas, and to be on call for the Blue Valley Center. For more information contact Jack and Judy Dutra at 851-8217.



Holy Communion Services

Saturdays

5:30 Holy Communion

Sundays

8:45 Holy Communion

with Praise music & Band

9:45 Sunday School/Adult Forum

10:45 Holy Communion
with traditional music

10th Annual

Café St. Thomas presents

"At the Hop"

Breakfast
&
White Elephant
Exchange

Saturday, February 6
from **9-11:30** in the **Assembly Room**

Dust off your poodle skirt or roll up your jeans, comb that duck tail or beehive and bop on over to St. Thomas for a trip down memory lane (or not)!



The Apostle

St. Thomas the Apostle Church
12251 Antioch Road
Overland Park, KS 66213
• phone: 913-451-0512 •
• fax: 913-451-1966 •

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**Next Apostle deadline:
Sunday, March 7, 2010**

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

- 6: **Cafe St. Thomas** — Theme: "At the Hop"
- 7: **Taste of ChristCare** — 4 pm in Assembly Room
- 14: *Winter Blues Party* — after 10:45 am service
- 16: **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Feed** begins at 6 pm.
- 17: **ASH WEDNESDAY**—Services at 7 am, 12 pm, 7 pm
- 28: **Lenten Sundays** begins at 5:30 pm with Supper

CPR/AED Training is coming!
Watch Tower Talk for further details.

MARCH

- 7, 14, 21, 28: **Lenten Sundays** continues
- 28: **Palm Sunday**

APRIL

- 1: **Maundy Thursday**—Stripping of altar, washing feet
Youth group gives Agape Supper for entire church.
- 2: **Good Friday Service at 7 pm.**
- 3: **Easter Eve service at 7 pm.**
- 4: **EASTER**