

This is the  
2016 December—2017 January EDITION!  
Of the  
**PRINTS OF PEACE NEWSLETTER**  
Of the  
Episcopal Church of the Messiah, Gonzales, Texas

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Church of the Messiah is  
to live for God, to serve Christ, and,  
by being moved by the Holy Spirit, to spread the Good  
News by our actions in serving the larger community.

Church office hours: 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday  
If we are away for some reason, please leave a message on the phone.

**Fr. Randy Melton is the Priest and Rector of the parish.**  
**Contact him at one of the following numbers at any time**  
**for an appointment or emergency:**  
**Church (830-672-3407); Cell (830-481-8290); Home (830-437-2722)**  
**Email: [soulman4jc@gmail.com](mailto:soulman4jc@gmail.com)**  
**Church Website: [www.messiahgonzales.org](http://www.messiahgonzales.org)**

If the Rector cannot be reached, contact one of the wardens  
Dan Blakemore (Sr. Warden) or Robert Collins (Jr. Warden)  
Dan @ 972-839-2332 / Robert @713-205-6246

**Sunday Worship: 10 a.m. Morning Prayer**  
**10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Sermon**  
**Wednesday Eucharist with healing at 12:30 p.m.**  
**Bible Study: Wednesdays from 1:15-2:15 p.m.**  
**AA Meetings every Monday and Friday at 8 p.m.**  
**Vestry Meetings are 6 p.m. on 3rd Thursday**

## From the Rector:

### The Difficulty of Preaching Christmas!

Preachers talk when we get together, and most that I know admit that Christmas and Easter sermons are among the most difficult preaching challenges of the year. Odd, isn't it? The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is such a simple but profoundly complex reality. It's anything but the trivial sentimentality we too often assign to it. I wonder a lot about why.....

Has the beautiful Christmas story become so familiar that we've lost any real sense of what its mystery really means to us? Has the amazement at what makes Christmas truly amazing escaped us, and been replaced with superficial amazement of culturally self-manufactured excitement? Has it become nothing more than an annual food fest of gathered family units, with joyful gift giving, overindulgent parties, and acts of kindness done in the "spirit" of Christmas, without any comprehension of what that spirit is really all about?

Is it no more than a magical time that takes place once a year but wears off within a few days, when we return back to our "normal" lives, having enjoyed what we either considered a "good" Christmas or a "bad" Christmas, depending on our level of happiness or depression? How many ways has the script of Christmas been rewritten to conform to our preferences? The alternative stories are certainly not evil, but neither are they real. Yet they serve to promote good feelings, and that's what Christmas is supposed to be all about, right? How is Christmas more than that? Or is it? We're usually too distracted to really have much care or awareness about the incomprehensible. It's just easier to focus on the simple pleasures of a different narrative.

History is re-written all the time, and always has been. I naively expected to study an objective discipline when I became a history major as an undergrad...amazed and shocked when I found that there are all kinds of varieties and perspectives of history. If we can just focus on the WHAT questions, we get a pretty uniform answer, but when we delve into the WHY, we have a lot more diversity. It can become very subjective then, with lots of levels of interpretive "truth". And yet, the WHY is essential.

The WHY is the most important question in most cases, as it gets to the depth of the superficial WHAT, and leads us to the whole point of the enterprise we're studying, practicing, believing, worshiping or living. But the WHY cannot be pure speculation or else it's just another perspective among many. It has to have merit based on truth by a clear understanding the author,

poet, philosopher, religion or morality, which usually requires spending much more time analyzing the WHAT.

Anyone can rewrite the WHAT with a whole slew of WHY's and be doing no more than guessing what the real "truth" is, of the WHAT. But when one truly observes the WHAT while pursuing the true WHY, without any preconceived notions (if that's even possible), it at least has the potential to teach and enlighten us as well as reveal truth at the deepest level.

For instance, the WHAT of Christmas is a joyful thing to celebrate (however it's done), but the WHY of Christmas is perhaps the most profound consideration ever beheld, experienced or contemplated by the world...and in many cases, ignored and rejected. Does any of that make sense to anyone?

In a couple of weeks, I'll preach about something so incredible that one can only fall to one's knees in adoration if you believe what the Church proclaims. The angel says to the shepherds in the field, "Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." That's the WHAT of Christmas. I pray that by the time the gospel is read at the Christ Mass, I will have some compelling words regarding the WHY of Christmas, that will "give flesh," so to speak, to the biblical narrative....

For unto us a Savior is born, Jesus Christ the Lord.  
Have a Blessed Advent and a joyous Christmas!

Fr. Randy+

## **ADVENT begins November 27**

Advent, the beginning of the new liturgical Church year, actually means "*coming*," as in the "*coming of Jesus*." Advent is a season when the air is filled with expectancy and anticipation. It's a solemn period of preparation and waiting for the arrival of Christmas, the birth of Jesus, when we celebrate the "*Word becoming flesh among us*," while also anticipating Jesus' second coming for the final judgment and the establishment of God's Kingdom in its fullness. The color blue signifies the expectant nature of Advent as it prepares us for Jesus by self-examination, personal reflection, prayer and study. Blue is also the traditional color for Mary, who is the means used by God to bring about the incarnation of our Lord. It's a season of mixed emotions: fear, anxiety, hope, joy, expectation, penitence and celebration. As is traditional at Messiah, the Advent liturgy shifts from Rite 2 to Rite 1 until Christmas.

## Adult Forum, 9 AM Sundays:

### "Bible Study on John's Gospel"

December 4:	John 4
December 11:	John 4
December 18:	John 5
December 25:	No Class
January 1:	No Class
January 8:	Bishop Lillibridge Visitation
January 15:	John 6
January 22:	No Class (Annual Parish Meeting)
January 29:	John 6-7

## Messiah Welcomes Songwriter to Gonzales

**Celebrated Texas songwriter Fletcher Clark will perform in concert at Church of the Messiah on Sunday, December 11, at 3 p.m. Fletcher is coming from Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Lockhart to bring his musical ministry of faith-based songs. Fletcher has previously brought his programs and songs of Texas history to the Gonzales Crystal Theatre and the Gonzales Historical Commission. There is a suggested donation of \$15, but all are welcome.**

Long a fixture in the Texas music scene, Fletcher's career spans over four decades, dating from his time at Austin's legendary concert hall Armadillo World Headquarters in the 1970's; his continuing involvement with the Kerrville Folk Festival from its earliest days; his performances as sideman for songwriters Steven Fromholz, Bobby Bridger, Rusty Wier, and others; his studio work as engineer and producer for Fromholz, Bridger, Kenneth Threadgill, Uncle Walt's Band, and others; and most recently as a solo songwriter. For the past six years, he has produced and hosted the acclaimed monthly series *Evenings with the Songwriter* at the historic Dr. Eugene Clark Library in Lockhart.

Fletcher has brought his musical ministry to congregations and groups in Luling, Spring, Marble Falls, Port Aransas, Cuero, and at the Kerrville Folk Festival – and most recently to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Brady. Future appearances are planned for San Marcos, New Braunfels, Kerrville, and many other Texas communities.

**Invite a friend or neighbor and come, relax and enjoy some great family fun. The performance will be an hour or so, followed by some snacks.**

## **VESTRY Nominations: Deadline December 18**

Time to begin thinking about Vestry nominations, which will be accepted from Sunday, December 4 through December 18. Dan Blakemore and Janna Christian rotate off at the Annual Parish Meeting on Sunday, January 22, 2017, leaving two vacancies for 3 year terms. In order to nominate and/or vote for someone, you yourself must be a member in good standing in this parish for the past year, at least 18 years of age, and you must be known to the parish treasurer as a giver of record. It is wise to check with Fr. Randy first before making a nomination to ensure that he candidate qualities as specified by canon law.

**Brief biographical sketches are made available to parishioners at least 2 weeks prior to the parish meeting.** Since there will be ample opportunity for submitting names to the Rector, no nominations will be made from the floor. If more nominations are needed when the deadline rolls around, the remaining Vestry members will serve as a nominating committee to ensure that at least enough candidates are presented to fill the vacant positions.

**Canonical Vestry Qualifications:** Vestry members shall be confirmed communicants in good standing of Church of the Messiah for the past year, a giver of record known to the Treasurer, and be at least 18 years old. Communicant in good standing is defined as: Any member confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church by a Bishop of this Church, who has received communion at least three times during the preceding year and who, for the previous year, has been faithful in attending worship, and at working, praying and giving for the "spread of the Kingdom of God." These are the very minimal requirements set in the church canons.

**In addition, the following list of "qualities" are also suggested for consideration. Although not canonically required, they offer a standard that befits the position:**

- \*A strong commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
- \*Worships regularly and has a prayer life.
- \*Familiar and involved with overall parish life
- \*Demonstrates leadership qualities; comfortable making decisions
- \*Able to work with others who may have differing opinions
- \*Able to express convictions, challenge and be challenged
- \*Tactful and respectful of others and a team player
- \*Open minded and a good listener
- \*Able to see long-term possibilities
- \*Positive attitude about the life of the parish
- \*Able to work in a positive manner with the Rector
- \*A person of high integrity, fair-minded and honest

- \*Currently involved in a parish ministry in the church and beyond
- \*Dependable, reliable and responsible
- \*Wants to be part of a solution, not a problem
- \*Does not bring a special interest agenda to the vestry
- \*Able and willing to give time and energy required of Vestry ministry
- \*Model of Christian stewardship (time, talent and treasure)

**Permission must be received in writing before submitting the name of a potential nominee to Fr. Randy. The deadline for submissions is Sunday, December 18.**

## **BIBLE STUDY: Wednesdays at 1:15 p.m.**

Bible study meets every Wednesday afternoon from 1:15-2:15. We are currently studying the Advent propers for the following Sundays. Our last class of 2016 will be December 21. We will resume classes on January 11 when we will be doing a 4-5 week book study on prayer called **Before Amen: The Power of a Simple Prayer** by Max Lucado. The Holy Spirit is always present to us in powerful ways whenever two or three are gathered in his name. Please join us! Lively discussions abound as new and interesting questions are always being raised. Every once in a while, we come up with some answers! Join us and be a part of this roundtable of personal renewal!

## **CHRISTMAS WORSHIP**

Liturgically, the color is festive white to celebrate the Holy Nativity, the birth of Jesus. The Song of Praise is "*Gloria in Excelsis*," and the Eucharistic Prayer is Rite 2, Prayer B, with its more explicit incarnational emphasis.

**HANGING OF THE GREENS normally occurs the Sunday prior to Christmas, December 18. Watch for the announcement of the exact date in the E-News.**

**Saturday, December 24, Christmas Eve:**

**10:20 p.m. Singing of Christmas Carols**

**10:30 p.m. FESTIVAL CHRIST MASS**

**Sunday, December 25, Christmas Day:**

**10:00 a.m. Morning Prayer**

**10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist**

**Sunday, January 1: FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME**

**10:00 a.m. Morning Prayer**

**10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist**

## Bishop Lillibridge's Last Visitation

Bishop Lillibridge will be with us on January 8, the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, for his annual visitation. This will be his last Visitation to Messiah before his retirement this summer. Please make a point of coming to wish the Bishop well in his retirement and to show your appreciation for his episcopal leadership since 2003. The vestry will be making a gift presentation to him at the worship service. There will be a cover dish luncheon in his honor.

## Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held after worship on January 22. Lunch will be provided immediately after the service. A summary of our 2016 ministries will be presented, as well as the 2017 budget. Two new vestry members will be elected. A brief vestry meeting will take place immediately after the conclusion of the Annual Parish Meeting in order to select a secretary and a junior warden, and verify a meeting time that's agreeable to all. Come enjoy the fellowship as we celebrate together the life of our parish! An epiphany cake that has several surprises inside for the lucky ones who receive the various blessings. They include a bean (king or queen of the party), a dime (increased wealth), a button (increased ecclesiastical wisdom), a cross (blessings of the church), and a thimble (increased industry). The thimble holder gets to make the cake for the next year.

**NOEL REESE received the thimble last year and will be responsible for this year's cake!**

## DIOCESAN COUNCIL to Meet in Corpus Christi

Diocesan Council will be held on the coast next year in Corpus Christi, on February 23-25. The theme will be "Behold, I make all things new," from Revelation 21. At our November meeting, the vestry elected our delegates and alternates: Kasey Floyd, Esther Bell, Dale and Robert Collins, Dan and Lucianne Blakemore, all of whom will join Fr. Randy in representing Messiah. Council elects representatives for a variety of positions within the diocese and beyond. The diocesan budget is reviewed and approved, and several workshops, ministry moments and Bible reflections are made available on varying topics of interest for enhancing our parish ministry and personal devotions. Both Bishops will give addresses that promise to challenge and inspire our hearts and minds. It is always a refreshing and Spirit-filled event!

**This year we will elect a new suffragan bishop on Saturday, January 29 at TMI will be an opportunity to visit with the 7 candidates.**

## **DATES TO REMEMBER for JANUARY:**

- December 4: 9 a.m. 2nd Advent Adult Forum Bible study  
10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
- December 7: 12:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with healing  
1:15 p.m. Bible study
- December 11: 9 a.m. 3rd Advent Adult Forum Bible study  
10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
3 p.m. Fletcher Clark concert in Church
- December 14: 12:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with healing  
1:15 p.m. Bible study  
6 p.m. Women's Dinner Fellowship Group
- December 15: 6 p.m. Vestry Meeting
- December 18: 9 a.m. 4th Advent Adult Forum Bible study  
10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
- December 21: 12:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with healing  
1:15 p.m. Bible study
- December 24: 10:30 p.m. Festival Christ Mass, (Caroling 10:20)
- December 25: 10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
- December 28: 12:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with healing

## **DATES TO REMEMBER for JANUARY:**

- January 1: 10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
- January 4: NO EUCHARIST TODAY
- January 8: BISHOP'S VISITATION  
10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist, followed by reception
- January 11: 12:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with healing  
1:15 p.m. Bible study  
6 p.m. Women's Dinner Fellowship Group
- January 15: 9 a.m. Adult Forum Bible study  
10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
- January 18: 12:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with healing  
1:15 p.m. Bible study
- January 19: 6 p.m. Vestry Meeting (if necessary)

January 22: 9 a.m. Adult Forum Bible study  
10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
11:45 a.m. Annual Parish Meeting and luncheon

January 25: 12:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with healing  
1:15 p.m. Bible study

January 29: 9 a.m. Adult Forum Bible study  
10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
3-6 p.m. Meet the Bishop Suffragan Nominees at TMI