The moment of Christmas

As a young child, the moment we got a Christmas tree in the house I would begin to wake myself up early so I could be first one up in the morning to see if presents had arrived. And morning after morning I would wake up, come downstairs and look at the tree. And there would be no presents. When I look at the picture to the right of our Creche and Mary and Joseph standing there looking at the empty space where Jesus will be, it reminds me of those mornings waiting for Christmas. Because there they stand, Mary and Joseph, waiting and looking and hoping for as long as it takes, throughout the season of Advent, ready in heart and mind for the coming of Jesus.

And then suddenly, as a child, one morning I would come downstairs and there were presents. I didn’t know how it happened. The mechanics of that were beyond me. And I didn’t really connect those presents to my faith. That didn’t come until later. But I knew, just as one does, that there was something special and different and amazing about the moment of Christmas when it happened, and it happened for me there on the morning of December 25th when I was a young child.

For adults that moment is sometimes harder to realize. Sometimes we get caught up in the anxiety of Christmas or the sentimentality of Christmas or the challenges of this time of year. And sometimes people go the whole Advent season and Christmastide without it ever happening that you realize the moment of Christmas. But that’s okay. Because other times, even for one moment, you might catch a glimpse of it, you might get a taste of it as you are reflecting on your life and thinking about your blessings, or as you see family or friends sharing things this season, or as some particular Biblical verse, or TV show or a hymn we sing does it for you and suddenly you have a moment when you say: There He is. There’s the baby Jesus. There’s the moment. The church goes dark and we sing “Silent Night.” We see the face of Jesus in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. We feel him again in our heart. We know he’s there in our life and in the world. And we say: Yes, He is born. And the crib is filled. And our lives are filled.

That’s my prayer for you this year, that you find the moment of Christmas in something in the next few weeks. That you know in your heart that He is born. That you know His love and grace and precious peace. And help make it known to others.

Merry Christmas, may God bless you,

Tom+
Frugal …the Best Sense of the Word

Paul Barten writes this month about the value of being frugal when it comes to preserving our resources and cutting back on what we use.

I ask the honors students in my “Voices of Conservation and Sustainability” seminar to define “frugal.” There is always a pause when you ask an unexpected, open-ended question, but in this case …crickets. I wait, glance around the room, do my best to project an open, expectant, and encouraging expression …more crickets, some squirming, no eye contact. After another uncomfortable pause, I try to encourage them by noting … “That’s OK, frugal is not a common word. Just say the first thing that comes to mind … anyone?” Invariably, some brave soul will quietly say “cheap” in the form of tentative question. They really don’t want to be disrespectful or sound cynical. Their classmates are relieved and some involuntarily nod in agreement (…a few millimeters, in slow motion). I thank them and most smile nervously. Frugal equals Cheap is, to be sure, the most common 21st century definition. However, I ask them, and you, to consider some more positive and constructive traditional synonyms…

Continue on the Cathedral website

On Carols, by Cathedral Music Director Todd Beckham

As we near the time of Christmas, we hear carols everywhere. What is a carol and what is the history of carols? The first known carol is believed to be the ‘Angels Hymn’ from 129 AD. Some think that carols may have been originally accompanied by dancing. In the Medieval period c. 1400 in England, they had a very specific form with verses and a refrain called a “burden”. “Burden” is short for Faburden or in French “Fauxbourdon”. These refrains were composed in the “Fauxbourdon style” that incorporated the sounds of the third and sixth intervals which were foreign to Medieval ears so used to open fourths and fifths. Carols like ‘There is no rose of such virtue’ combine both middle English and Latin in their texts.

One of the oldest printed carols is the ‘Boar’s Head Carol’, which dates from 1521. Apparently, it was traditionally heard annually at Queen’s College, Oxford as Christmas lunch was carried in. Today we have the elaborate Boar’s Head feasts at Epiphany which usually includes this carol sung in procession.

Carols and their words continued to be disseminated, even in the 16th century when Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans tried to ban the singing of carols. Carols were being collected and printed widely by the 19th century. And in 1880, it’s believed the Christmas Carol service was invented by an Edward White Benson at Truro Cathedral in Cornwall. Later this service was carried on by King’s College Cambridge and is broadcast all over the world. With the publication of The Oxford Book of Carols, a collection of vocal scores of Christmas carols and carols of other seasons carols became widely disseminated. It was first published in 1928 by Oxford University Press and was edited by Percy Dearmer, Martin Shaw and Ralph Vaughan Williams. A new Oxford Book of Carols was published in 1992 with editors Hugh Keyte and Andrew Parrott.

The King’s College Festival of Lessons and Carols continues to be a great show place for all types of carols and can be heard and attended every Christmas if one is lucky enough to get a ticket to enter. The queue is forming now! Todd will be leading the Forum after the 10:00 am service on December 22nd, with a chance to hear, talk about and sing some Christmas Carols.
An interview with Katherine Gibbs, Artist in Residence Christ Church Cathedral

How does it feel to be an Artist in Residence at Christ Church Cathedral?

The first word that comes to mind is honored. I grew up in Springfield not far from Christ Church Cathedral. The Cathedral has always seemed like an icon in the area. To have my art shown in this historical and beautiful building is quite exciting and to think my painting might help people worship is very humbling.

What does it mean to be Artist in Residence?

Well an artist residency is set up to give an artist a respite from their regular work and demands of life. It gives them a place to stay and a time to focus on their art. Since I can’t physically stay at the Cathedral I feel like the Cathedral has given me an opportunity to take spiritual hiatus from my regular work. I can focus on God and this changes my direction when creating paintings. These paintings are a reflection of my spiritual life. It gives me a rest from issues I’m usually concerned with when painting, like if the painting will sell or if it fits stylistically with my body of work. Most importantly creating these paintings gives me time to focus on God and to invite the Holy Spirit to work with me.

How long have you been making art?

As long as I can remember. When I was twelve years old my father sectioned of a small space in our basement that I could use as a studio. When I went to college I chose fine art as my major. For the last ten years I’ve had a studio in Easthampton, MA. and since having the studio my goal has been to pursue being a professional artist. At this point I would be considered a mid-career artist and my work is represented in three galleries. Even though I’ve been painting my whole life I feel like I’ve just scratched the surface of what I want to do as an artist. I hope God gives me many more years to explore and create art.

Do you do other types of art or mainly painting?

No not really. I’m a painter at heart and have always been focused on specifically oil paintings. When in college tried other types of art like sculpture and printmaking but I always returned to painting.

What inspires you?

I’m inspired by my surroundings and my emotional response to things I see every day. In much of my work my goal is to transform what might be considered mundane subject matter and bring it to the sublime through the element of light.

What will you teach on the 14th?

The time we spend during the workshop will be focused on the Holy Spirit to connect us with God’s creative nature. The holiday season is a fun but hectic time and we will quiet down and become aware of the season of Advent which is a time of waiting and reflection. The whole time we spend in the workshop is a creative experience starting with prayer and music. The large painting I created for the Cathedral, called The Universe in Waiting, will be used as inspiration to create a unique piece of art. I will be teaching step by step painting techniques which are meant to be meditative. The class is designed for any level of artist skill. I’m hoping participants will leave feeling refreshed and renewed.

JOIN CATHERINE ON DECEMBER 14TH, 2-5PM FOR A PAINTING WORKSHOP AT THE CATHEDRAL, OPEN TO ALL, PLEASE RSVP CCCSPFLD@GMAIL.COM.
The Bilingual Christmas Eve Family service at 4pm is something new. Q and A with Dean Tom Callard

This year for the first time the 4pm Christmas Eve family service will be bilingual in English and Spanish.

Why have you decided to do it this way?

We have been looking at ways to bring our English and Spanish speaking parts of the Cathedral closer together and one of the things we share across is the children. Our children are very multicultural, Latino, Anglo, African, African American. We realized that this family service was really a chance for children to be involved from across the Cathedral. It is a great way for the whole family to be together at Christmas.

How will the languages be divided?

Whenever we have a bilingual service, we tend to divide things pretty evenly so people can worship with English and worship with Spanish. No matter what language you speak you will receive the full message and be able to participate completely. Music, lessons, prayers will all be in both languages.

Does it mean the service will be long?

No, it will not be longer than a regular service in one language. We do not repeat everything.

How is the music?

There will be traditional hymns like “Angels We Have Heard on High,” “Come, All Ye Faithful,” “We Three Kings,” “The First Nowell,” and “Silent Night.” Some parts of them will be sung in Spanish. It’s amazing how much music everyone shares. Plus there will be some fun and upbeat music in Spanish like “Feliz Navidad, I Want to Wish you a Merry Christmas.” It should be great.

Is there a Pageant?

There is a mini-pageant with narrators telling the story of Mary, Joseph, the Angels, the Shepherds and the Three Kings and children will dress and participate. All children are welcome and if there are children who want to be in it call the Cathedral or email us right away and let us know!

Will it feel like normal Christmas Eve?

Yes, we have tried to make sure the service keeps the spirit of what we have done the last few years in the service at 4:00 pm and in the Spanish Christmas Eve service at 6:00 pm. I predict it will be a true moment of being present with Jesus in Christ Church Cathedral.

And the late service?

The Festive Christmas Eve Eucharist begins at 10:00 pm with a 9:30 pm choral prelude. You can come to that as well. Come to both, they will both be very different. That’s part of what’s great about being a Cathedral, we’ve got different things going on under the same roof.

Anything else to share?

Only that we hope you will join us for this service and participate in it fully, and invite your family and friends. Christmas Eve is one of the most memorable services of the year, and we think this one will be particularly memorable.
My experience of the holidays in Puerto Rico, by Nilsa Velez

Cathedral Member and Daughter of the King Nilsa Velez shares some of her experiences of Christmas from a different cultural perspective.

I was about 7 years old, when my family moved to Puerto Rico. It was the first time there for my brother and I. We found the Island beautiful with the hot weather and we loved that we were able to have cold drinks and lots of ice cream almost all the time.

Christmas came and everything was beautiful. There were lots of lights, Christmas trees and lots of decorations. People in Puerto Rico celebrate Christmas with carols, food and family gatherings.

My brother and I asked our mother if Santa Claus was coming to Puerto Rico, and she said "yes," but told us that it was not like in New York were we had lived. She said it was too hot for him and the reindeer and that Santa couldn't fly the sled but that instead he would fly a helicopter, park it on a side street and from there bring gifts to the houses on a horse. She told us that parents will open the door for Santa because there was no chimney.

Then she told us that for Christmas there were the three Wise Men and that each had a camel and would visit the houses with the gifts, like they visited Baby Jesus in the Bible. They visit on January 6th, Epiphany. We learned a lot about the three Kings as part of the traditions of Christmas in Puerto Rico. We had to collect green gras and put it in a shoe box and put some water next to the box for the camels. Because we were living in New York and moved to Puerto Rico with more people from New York and other states living in Puerto Rico, we were taught that we would get gifts from Santa and also from the Three Kings. Extra gifts were great. We also loved Christmas in Puerto Rico because the festivities lasted longer than they did in New York.

Editor’s Note: In Puerto Rico, Christmas is merely the midpoint of the holiday season. Three Kings Day commemorates the biblical journey of the three kings—Balthazar, Caspar and Melchior—who followed the star that appeared in the sky on Christmas Day.

Check out this website for more
Announcements

Advent Evensong
December 15, 5:00pm

Worship, singing and praise
for all, especially remembering
those we have lost and
casting a holy light in this
dark time of the year.

Christ Church Cathedral
35 Chestnut Street
Springfield, MA 01103

Homeless Memorial Service
Christ Church Cathedral

Annual service near the shortest day
of the year to pray for our brothers
and sisters we lost in the last year

Wednesday, December 18
One O’clock in the afternoon
All are invited

35 Chestnut Street, Springfield MA 01103

Cathedral service of Lessons and Carols on December 29th. Join us as we hear
the amazing story of birth and sing some of our favorite hymns and carols.
Other Announcements

ANGEL TREE GIFTS: Dear Church Family, As Christmas approaches, we are all aware that there are many needy children right here in our neighborhood. There is a tree in the church foyer to allow you the opportunity to provide gifts to needy children. This year, we will be providing gifts to children being served by the Department of Children and Families and Square One. Please take an ornament from the tree and return it, along with your wrapped gift, to the church by December 20th. In joyful appreciation, the Outreach Committee.

Sat, December 14 – OUTREACH MINISTRY MEETING, 9am – 10:30am. All are welcome.

Sun., December 15 – THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, The Reverend Linda Taupier will preach at 8 and 10.
5:00 pm – EVENSONG service with candle lighting and prayers in thanksgiving for our loved ones and our blessings. 4:30 pm reception prior to the service.

Tues, December 17, 6pm – COMING TO BELIEVE Christian worship for those in recovery, those struggling with substance use disorders, addictions, and for friends and loved ones. Home-baked refreshments following the service.
7:00pm – THE MAGIC & MYSTERY OF ISRAEL Rabbi-in-Residence, Mark Shapiro, will be leading the last of three presentations and discussions on the topic of Israel, its geography and peoples.

Wed., December 18 – HOMELESS MEMORIAL SERVICE, 1:00 p.m., followed by a reception. an opportunity to pray for our brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness who have died in the past year.

Sun., December 22 – THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, The Reverend Jerry True will preach at 8 and 10.

SPIRITUAL RESOURCES FOR YOUR WEEK, Sunday 9:00-10:00 a.m. Bible Study on the Lectionary in the 2nd floor Dougout; Wednesday 8:00-9:00 a.m. Bible Study for beginners in the Kendrick Room, all invited; Wednesday 12:00-12:45 p.m. Holy Eucharist services in the All Saints Chapel; Saturday 10:30-11:30 a.m. Centering Prayer in the 2nd floor Common Room.

SUPPORT FOR OUR HOME-BOUND PARISHIONERS: Many thanks to Jean Ryan and Karen Authier, for their time, energy, and dedication in their weekly ministry to parishioners who are home-bound due to age, illness, or life circumstances. Weekly mailings of sermons, news updates, bulletins, and prayers, help home-bound parishioners stay connected to their spiritual community while away from the Cathedral. To add a home-bound parishioner to the mailing list, please contact Jean Ryan: jeanb01119@aol.com.

FOOD DRIVE – A GREAT NEED FOR NON-PERISHABLE FOOD! Each Sunday we take up a collection of non-perishable foods to be given to Open Pantry and to those who drop by during the week needing food. Please support this ministry. Donations may be dropped off in the baskets in the Narthex (foyer) of the church on Sundays, and, brought to the Cathedral Office during the week. Thank you.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY – Calling all knitters and crocheters!, please consider joining the Prayer Shawl Ministry. Knit from home or join us. Create prayer shawls to be blessed and offered to the congregation for anyone in a time of need. Meetings for knitting and crocheting, fellowship and prayer on the second Saturday of each month at 9:30 AM in the Kendrick room and your participation is welcomed. Please contact Jean Ryan at 413-782-2878.

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS: Sign up to host Coffee Hour! Bring something to share with the gathering after church. Sign-up sheets are posted across from the Cathedral Office door. We need people to please sign up for the weeks in December, January, and February. We thank you in advance.
CHRISTMAS

Our great joy.
God’s great love.

Christmas Eve
4:00 pm Bilingual Service (English/Espanol)
9:30 pm Hymn Sing
10:00 pm Midnight Mass
Christmas Day
10:00 am Christmas service

Christ Church Cathedral
35 Chestnut Street, Springfield, Cccspfld.org  413-736-2742
On Springfield’s historic Quadrangle