



A Light in the Sacristy

A newsletter for and about the Altar Guilds in the Diocese of Iowa



FROM THE BISHOP

This year I almost unscheduled myself for one of my most favorite liturgical events - the Thanksgiving service. Thanks to the flexibility of Jean McCarthy I managed to squeeze in as celebrant for Thanksgiving Eve at St Mark's at the last minute. I was not ready to be seized by the opening hymn "Come ye thankful people, come", but I was. And I experienced what I now call the second piece of evidence that I am identifying increasingly with Iowa. As we sang of the corn making its way upwards to the light, I saw flooded fields and flooded homes, I thought of savings and retirement accounts washed away in the economic flood. I was caught up emotionally by the different kinds of breaking through which this Thanksgiving will require of us. No doubt I was affected by the breaking through of my own grieving for my brother, which the sheer hectic pace of recent days and the complicated nature of his life and our relationship trampled down. That break through was eased I am sure by the sharing of your love and concern. But for how many is this a different kind of Thanksgiving?

At St. Barnabas' where I was rector, Thanksgiving was the time that the whole parish managed to come together with the broader community of the poor and homeless that gathered weekly to share a meal together. Even those who found little joy in serving the homeless, were able to cook or serve on that day. And in between the double sessions of meals, on Thanksgiving Eve, we would hold our Thanksgiving Eucharist (our Thanksgiving Thanksgiving!)

(continued on page 2)

Contents:

	<i>Page</i>
Bishop's Letter.....	1
Director's Letter.....	1
Star-Flowers.....	2
In Memorium.....	2
Uncasing Thanks.....	2
Advent Meditation.....	3
Advent, The Coming.....	3
Candles.....	4, 5, 6
Advent Flower Notes.....	7
Advent Wreath.....	7
Rumor.....	7
Diocesan Altar Guild Loan Closet.....	8

Fall - Winter 2008 Issue # 10

Published Quarterly

Director:

Martha Hippee
407 28th St.
Des Moines, IA 50312-4405
(515)244-5824
hipowl@mchsi.com

Newsletter preparation:
Jeanne Roland,
St. Mark's, Des Moines
JeanneHR@q.com

This Newsletter is also
available at:
www.iowaepiscopal.org

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Change is indeed coming. Change is in the air. Soon snowflakes will fall and icicles form. Fall leaves, once crunchy underfoot will be frozen to the ground. The season is changing. After a long journey through Pentecost, we begin a new church year with Advent and the preparation for the coming of the Christ child. The Lectionary and the Daily Office will change.

During this period of waiting and preparing, change in our exterior and interior lives will be sought by many and a variety of classes, bible studies and Advent experiences will be available. "Movement in Heart, Voice and Body: Advent Prayers" will be offered at St. Timothy's Des Moines. "There will be some sacred movement, liturgies that use one voice and our silence, and reflection time around themes of darkness and light, birth and miracle, arrivals and leavings." A class on "Voluntary Simplicity" will be offered at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul. "The meaning of simplicity, living more with less and living simply and sustainably" will be explored. Always during this season of hectic rushing and busy activities in homes, schools and stores we seek out more contemplative and quietly thoughtful moments; moments for preparation. We are looking for a change from the maddening world outside.

But then, the anticipation of Advent changes into the joyous celebration of the birth of the Christ Child. The coming of Jesus Christ changes our world. We sound the glad song and ring the bells. Our voices sing out merrily: Joy, Joy, Joy.

A blessed Advent and may you have a joyful merry Christmas with your family and friends.

Love to all,

Martha

STAR-FLOWERS

There is a lovely Mexican legend about God's love for children.

There were some very poor children who faced a bleak Christmas. God sent the Christ Child to be with them, and He was accompanied by the most beautiful stars in the heavens. After Christmas, when the Christ Child had departed, these stars remained in the form of a beautiful red, star-like flower, as a continual reminder of God's good will toward all children.

Today we call this star "poinsettia" - a living star of beauty that has come to be as traditional at Christmas time as the holly wreath.

+++++



IN MEMORIUM

At this time let us remember Altar Guild members who have died this past year:

BARBARA ANNE TONGE LINDOPP,
St. John's by the Campus, Ames

MAY LIGHT PERPETUAL SHINE UPON
THE DEPARTED.

FROM THE BISHOP *(continued from page 1)*

At the first such service I was suffering from laryngitis and so I opened up the sermon to anyone who wanted to express thanks. That became our tradition for umpteen years.

It was the one time a year that the parish and wider community, the poor and the homeless, gathered together not only to ask the Lord's blessing, but to bless the Lord with thanks, most often for one another.

If I was able to set policy for the exporting of one American ideal or cultural experience - it would be this gift of taking the time of one day and giving thanks. Freedom can be interpreted in so many ways, but the giving of thanks and the disposition it presumes is priceless.

For this thankful spirit is for everyday, and every time. This thankful heart is nothing less than the spark of that icon of God whose changelessness knows no other way to be in creativity and imagination, in power and initiative, than to be thankful - even for God's own generosity.

+Alan

+++++



UNCEASING THANKS

For each new morning with it's light,

For rest and shelter of the night'

For health and food,

For love and friends,

For everything Thy goodness sends.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

ADVENT MEDITATION

THE GLOW

Turn off the lights in your room
and light a candle.
Place it a few feet away from you.

Now focus on the flame:
sometimes it dances
and you observe its smallest movements,
sometimes it seems motionless and steady.
You may find it more restful to close your eyes
and see the flame in fantasy.

As you look at the flame
think of what it symbolizes for you.
It may be a symbol of many things.

Allow memories of the past
connected with the candle flame
to come to your awareness.

Then conduct a dialogue with the flame
— on life and death, the flame's and yours,
or life and death in general.

Finally put all words and thoughts and memories
aside
and contemplate the flame in silence,
thus allowing the flame to give your heart a
message,
a wisdom that escapes the grasp of conscious
thought.

At the end take leave of the flame
by joining your hands and bowing down to it.
Then respectfully put it out
with the grateful awareness
that it has kindled something in your heart
that you will carry with you through the day. †

Anthony deMello, Wellsprings, A Book of Spiritual Exercises



ADVENT, THE COMING

Epistle #137, Autumn 2005

The meaningful observance of Christmas depends on the full observance of Advent. Advent is a time of waiting, preparing and hoping. To keep Advent is to keep clear the meaning of Christmas.

The Christmas celebration was established in the fourth century, but Advent did not develop until at least several decades later. The word Advent comes from a Latin word for "coming," and this coming has been interpreted in various ways in church history.

Today it has three meanings: past, present and future.

- ✦ First, Advent refers to Christ coming as the baby at Bethlehem, reflected in Advent hymns and the focus of the gospel for Advent IV.
- ✦ Second, Advent refers to Christ repeatedly coming to us in Word and sacraments and in the fellowship of the Church.
- ✦ Third, Advent is a time of preparation for Christ coming again at the end of time — the second Coming. †

Excerpted from: Keeping Advent, Preparing the Way to Prepare the Way, The Living Liturgy NAGA Newsletter, 1987

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

On the first Sunday in Advent the Episcopal Church begins a New Year.

On Advent 1 2008, the Lectionary year will change to Year B. The Daily Office changes to Year One.

CANDLES

May Sherrod

The name candle comes from the Latin *candere* meaning "to shine." While no date can be definitely pinned down for the development of the first candle, we do know that candles were developed independently in many countries. Accounts of candle use date back to ancient times with Biblical references as early as the 10th century BC. The Egyptians and Cretans made candles from beeswax as early as 3000 BC. The Chinese created candles from whale fat during the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC). In early China and Japan tapers were made with wax from insects and seeds wrapped in rice paper. Yak butter was used for candles in Tibet and in India wax was made from boiling the fruit of the cinnamon tree.

During the Middle Ages, candles became associated with worship. Priests made beeswax candles for their services and also for the general public. Using the Roman method, they simply poured melted beeswax over a wick.

Tallow from cows and sheep became the standard material used in candles in Europe. However the candles had a very unpleasant smell due to the glycerin content. In fact, it was so bad that several towns banned their use by ordinance. This is why candles made from beeswax were used for church and royal events. Beeswax candles were a marked improvement but were expensive, so only the church or the wealthy could afford them.

The early candles in America were made by suspending wicks in a mold and pouring liquid tallow three times and then hanging on a rack to dry. After this first dipping, the candles would be dipped repeatedly until they were thick enough. Colonial women in America offered a first in candle making by boiling the berries of bayberry bushes that produced a sweet smelling wax that burned

The Egyptians and Cretans made candles from beeswax as early as 3000 BC.

The Chinese created candles from whale fat during the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC).

In early China and Japan tapers were made with wax from insects and seeds wrapped in rice paper.

Yak butter was used for candles in Tibet and in India wax was made from boiling the fruit of the cinnamon tree.

clean. It was a tedious task and the popularity soon faded, as it required 1 and ½ quarts of berries to make an 8-inch taper.

The whaling industry brought the first major change in candle making in the late 18th century with spermaceti, a wax obtained by crystallizing sperm whale oil. Like beeswax it did not smell bad and actually was found to be harder than tallow and beeswax. During this time the whaling industry boomed, but we all know that using whale oil has had dire consequences on the whale population.

Around this time cotton and linen came into the market and both were used for wicks. By braiding several strands together, which produced a tight plait, the wick would curl over and burn.

The 19th century was a defining time for candles and candle making. The first patented candle making machines were introduced. Michael Chevreul identified stearic acid for the first time as one of various fatty acids in tallow or animal fat. Stearic acid became and still is today a vital part of the candle industry.

Candles are often used as a sign of festivity and solemnity in Christian worship. The use of such lights has a long and varied tradition. Acts:20 records that there were "many lights" at the service at Troas when Paul and other Christians gathered to break bread. Lamps and candles were in normal use in Christian worship by the 4th century, but for many years it was not customary to place candles on the altar. The first known mention of the use of altar lights was a 12th century report that two candles flanked an altar cross in the papal chapel. The injunction of Edward VI in 1547 called for there to be two lights on the high altar "for the signification that Christ is the very true light of the world." Candles have been used in some English cathedrals and churches

CANDLES

continued

since the 17th century. The use of candles at the Eucharist was disputed in the Church of England and in the Episcopal Church during the 19th Century. During the years of ritualist controversy in the Episcopal Church, the General Conventions of 1868, 1871 and 1874 all considered proposals to prohibit the use of altar candles but nothing was ever passed.

THE BCP NOW PROVIDES CERTAIN TIMES THAT CANDLES PLAY A SIGNIFICANT PART IN THE SERVICE:

The Easter Vigil begins with the lighting of the Paschal Candle, the altar candles are lighted after the Renewal of Baptism Vows and before the Easter Acclamation, "Alleluia, Christ is Risen." Candles are lighted after the dedication of the altar by the bishop at the Consecration of a Church. At the order of Worship for the Evening, the lighting of the altar candles and other candles follows the Prayer for Light and precedes the hymn "O Gracious Light."

Advent wreath — An advent wreath is a circle of greenery with four candles of color, which may be purple or Sarum blue, and rose. The candles are lighted in succession each Sunday in Advent. A white candle in the center, called the Christ Candle is lighted on Christmas Eve.

Candelabra may have different numbers of branches, usually three, five, or seven and may be placed on the re table flanking the altar cross.

Single candles sticks may be placed on the re table or on the altar. If placed on the altar it is customary to light them at the beginning of the Great Thanksgiving and to extinguish them at the conclusion. This is an optional practice that is decided by the Rector or the Vicar.

A sanctuary lamp or light is a light that burns near the Aumbry when it contains Reserved Sacrament.

Torches are candles on poles that are carried in the processional and used to flank the reading of the Gospel.

A votive light is a small candle often used at the Festival of Lessons and Carols and at the Feast of the Epiphany service on January 6, celebrating the coming of the Magi.

Paschal Candle — The origin of the oversized Paschal Candle is uncertain and its use has varied as well. Initially it was broken up after the Easter Vigil and its fragments given to the faithful. This practice was later transferred to the following Sunday. In the 10th century it was kept in a place of honor near the Gospel until the feast of the Ascension.

Around the 12th century the custom began of inscribing the current year on the candle as well as the dates of the movable feasts. The candle grew in size and in some cases weighed 300 lbs. Today's smaller size is more suitable for carrying to the altar in procession at the Easter Vigil. After the Easter season, it is typically placed near the font. It should burn at baptisms, representing the new life in Christ that we share in baptism. It may also be carried in procession at burials and placed near the coffin as a symbol of resurrection life.

Pavement Lights are candles in long holders or poles in stands that rest on the floor of the church. They may be placed near the altar and lighted during services.

Beeswax candles are expensive but at the same time are economical as they burn slowly, are odorless, dripleless, and smokeless. and emit beneficial ions, which remove toxins (this process cleans the air of dust, odors, pollen, mold, dust mites, etc).

Beeswax/Stearine candles are most used by churches. They are less expensive than pure beeswax although they burn faster.

CANDLES

Stearine candles, based on animal or vegetable oil, are least expensive. Paraffin candles are not recommended because they are made from petroleum sludge, highly refined and treated with carcinogenic chemicals. The black smoke that a paraffin candle emits is basically diesel exhaust and as it is oil instead of water based, it is harder to clean up. (EPA warns of the health hazards of burning paraffin candles.) Soy candles, made from American grown soybeans, last 50% longer than petroleum based (paraffin) candles and are biodegradable. They burn slower than petroleum based candles, are cooler, non-toxic, and produce very little soot.

The purpose of a wick is to deliver fuel (wax) to the flame. The wick draws the liquefied wax up into the flame to burn. Too much and it will flare and soot, too little and the flame will sputter out. Wicks consist of a bundle of fibers that are twisted, braided, or knitted together. The type of wax used in a candle determines the type of wick.

ACCESSORIES:

Brass candle JOINERS available at most sacristy supply houses, make it possible to create new candles by joining two half-used candles. A tricky job!

Brass or glass candle FOLLOWERS should be placed on altar candles to ensure even burning. Once placed on a candle, a follower should not be removed until the candle is ready for disposing. It is important for followers to be cleaned between uses either placing them in boiling water or in a freezer for easy removal of wax.

SNUFFERS/LIGHTERS also need to be cleaned after each service and tapers trimmed. Extend a taper one inch before lighting and trim after extinguishing. Offer to give a les-

son in lighting and snuffing to the acolytes! Moving the snuffer too fast after extinguishing the flame will cause wax to drip. Pieces of wick (if it has not been trimmed to ¼ inch) can fall and burn linens.

A fairly new adapter for the lighter has been developed and marketed by Almy. It is an oil filled case with a fiberglass wick that is attached to your lighter after all of the taper has been removed. The container holds enough oil to light candles for three or more services. The wick does not burn but feeds the oil for a flame thus needs no trimming. We have been delighted with results, as we no longer encounter dropped wax on the Fair Linen. The only drawback is that it is oil from paraffin, which is petroleum based.

TIPS:

1. Always use a follower on altar candles. To seat, place it on the shoulder of the candle and give it a ¼ inch turn. Straighten the wick and precondition the candle by burning for at least two minutes.
2. Extend the lighting taper one inch out before lighting. Handle the lighter carefully to avoid pieces of the taper or wick from breaking off. After snuffing the candles and retracting the taper in the lighter tube. Immediately extend the taper out from the tube to avoid wax build up and jamming.

Never allow the snuffer to rest on the follower when extinguishing the flame as the follower is resting on both liquid and soft wax. Watch for drafts from open doors, heat/ac vents, etc. as they cause an unsteady flame.

3. Trim the wick of any candle to ¼ inch every time you light the candle. Always use a snuffer to extinguish a candle. No BLOWING. The snuffer helps prevent wax sprays and keeps the wick centered. †

FLOWER NOTES:

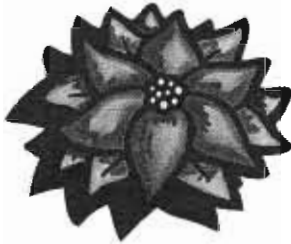
ADVENT - CHRISTMAS

Clara Fowler, NAGA

Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation of a wonderful event. For many churches we have a bare altar of one adorned only by greens. For the flower guild, green only is a welcome change and a big saving. If you use greens, be sure they are well conditioned and use a variety in texture and hue.

Christmas is filled with parish traditions. Be careful of changes you make -- do it twice and it is tradition. Poinsettias are used most often in a pot as they are unreliable when cut and will weep. If you do cut them, seal the end with wax or a match. Take a 6 inch pot, soak it well and take the plant out with a little dirt and place it in a quart freezer bag. Seal the bag with tape, tape a stick on it (to be a stem) and use it in arrangements or lay it on something.

We use a variety of red flowers on the altar, combined with pink or orange. Some years we have a white altar. My former church made swags of spruce, eucalyptus and gold pinecones to hang. Another used plain wreaths with red bows. Yet another did beautiful L-shaped arrangements of holly with a candle for the windows. Flower guilds get many helpers for big holidays! Just be sure to bring snacks.



ADVENT WREATH

Try herbs for your Advent Wreath. Some of the herbs that are used most frequently are:

Thyme for courage

Basil or rose for love

Rosemary for remembrance

Rue for grace

Southernwood for constancy

Sage for immortality

Burnet for a merry heart

Pansy for thoughts

Mint for wisdom

Lavender for devotion

Wormwood to prevent weariness

Santolina to ward off evil

Ivy as a symbol of God.

You will enjoy the pungent fragrance of the herbs and the knowledge that herbs were part of our Lord's life from the time he was born and laid in a manger of hay and wild herbs (most likely sweet woodruff, bedstraw, and thyme) to the time He died and his mother went to the tomb with spices and fragrant oils.

RUMOR

They say it's only a Christmas fable
That just at Midnight out in the stable
Amid the darkness and fragrant hay
The animals drop to their knees to pray.

I've never seen them. I don't know how
You would find every horse, every sheep, every cow
Suddenly kneeling there in the straw
God-struck with the wonder of Christmas, the awe.

But I've heard it said that on Christmas night
When the snow is shining and stars are bright,
The animals kneel because they remember
The ox and the ass in that first December.

Elizabeth Rooney, *Gift Wrapped*, Published by Brigham Farm Publishing, Used with permission

DIOCESAN ALTAR GUILD LOAN CLOSET

The Diocesan Altar Guild has a Loan Closet and it is located (actually in a closet) on the lower level of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Des Moines.

The Loan Closet received items from churches within the Diocese that have been blessed with new items due to the age of the old ones or different size appointments because of changing needs.

Many churches have generously donated priest's vestments, altar linens, frontals, candlesticks, chalices and cruets, ect., to the Loan Closet. We are very thankful and grateful for these splendid gifts and it is always a joy to be able to 'recycle' them.

Last year Deacon Muffy Harmon and I selected frontals, Pulpit hangings, burses and veils for churches in Swaziland. We were excited and delighted to fill two boxes with these altar items and send them off to Swaziland (Father Charles Kunene). Then, in October of this year, two suitcases (one with a pair of beautiful brass candlesticks and another with many chasubles) were carried to Swaziland by Deacon John Doherty and Father Kunene.



Also last year, chalices, cruets, and vestments were selected by the Rev. Karen Wacome for the Church of the Savior, Orange City.

It is wonderful when we can help a parish or mission church find needed items in the Loan Closet. Altar linens, appointments and vestments can be used again and again and bring much joy for many years. The art of "recycling" can take on a new meaning.

So you see, if your church has items that are no longer being used and are just taking up space in a closet or drawer, think about sending them to the Diocesan Altar guild Loan Closet to be shared with other parishes or missions.

Come see us. We welcome your visit.