

## *The Parish News*

St. Ann's Episcopal Church in Afton, NY  
<http://www.stannsafortny.org>

Member of the Chenango District

January 2015

Clergy The Reverend

*From Fr. Dave*

Fr. David A. Hanselman  
761-4601 cell

656-9502 office

Wardens:

-Betty Vail

639-1201

-Tracey Tallmadge

343-1301

In an emergency and Fr. David can't be reached, please contact one of the wardens.



### **Make a Note**

Happy New Year everyone! Blessing upon blessing for the coming year!

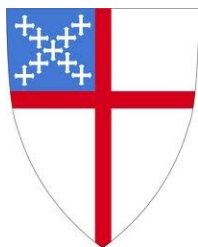
In a way, I'm so glad that Christmas is over. I got so tired of hearing about the supposed "War on Christmas", I almost wanted to scream. I simply don't buy into the idea that there is any "War on Christmas". There most certainly is a great deal of headwind in this nation, as well as the world, that Christianity must face. There's no doubt that it's difficult to be a conscientious Christian nowadays. But the supposed "War on Christmas" pales in comparison to the real battle.

Simply put, the real battle is for our minds. Sadly, part of that battle is sometimes fought most bitterly against other Christians. You see, in the battle for our minds, we have to come to a basic understanding of knowledge in general - the fancy word for it is "epistemology" - the science of knowing. Simply put, all of our knowledge forms something of a woven cloth in which facts relate and interrelate with one another. For instance, you can't "know" that the moon is "made of green cheese" without it having effects on astronomy, geology, tidal forces and any number of other broad areas of study. More to the point, though, you can't "know" the earth is 6,000 years old (young earth creationism) without there being some astonishingly negative effects on many other areas of knowledge - young earth creationism shreds to pieces and sweeps most all of astronomy and subatomic physics into the dustbin; not to mention the necessarily negative image of God that results.

So, what can we base our faith on? What firm foundation(s) is/are there for faith in Jesus Christ's birth, death and resurrection? Certainly, there are mythical overtones to much of the accounts of Christ, but one thing that's not often enough pointed out is the vast abundance of physical evidence of very early and widespread dissemination and agreement on what constitutes faith in Christ; that is, the ancient manuscripts, the actual physical evidence of the documents that were important enough to human beings that they would assiduously copy and recopy, in painstaking accuracy, the words of Christ, the earliest traditions of the Church, Paul's letters to the early Church and all the documents which constitute the New Testament.

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If you desire Father David to visit you or give you a call, please contact him at: (607) 761-4601 or (607) 656-9502.



An astonishing fact that I spoke about on 1st Sunday after Christmas was that if someone wants to doubt the existence of Christ, there is an incredibly vast number of manuscripts that need to be explained away. The numbers that follow come from [carm.org/manuscript-evidence](http://carm.org/manuscript-evidence) but there are many other scholarly sites that you can look to verify the information - "There are presently 5,686 Greek manuscripts in existence today for the New Testament... there are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing. In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000." A nice, handy chart is available which shows that the manuscript evidence (the actual physical documents available) of Plato and Aristotle (two of my favorite philosophers) number 7 and 49, respectively. Moreover, the physical documents talking about Jesus come from a time much, much closer to when Jesus lived, than what we have for Plato and Aristotle - about 200 years separates Jesus from the earliest physical documents we have; whereas about 1200-1400 years separates Plato and Aristotle from the physical documents we have about them.

And so, maintaining a nice healthy skepticism, what sort of conclusion do I think we can draw? At the very least, it should be plainly obvious that something so incredibly awe-inspiring happened in the early years of the 1st Century in Judea - a man named Jesus Christ did some things and affected so many people in such an incredible way - that hundreds, if not thousands, of people dedicated some truly remarkable resources to making sure his life, death, and the amazing things that happened afterward, were preserved and treasured and spread as widely as possible. Keeping in mind that from the very beginning large numbers of people were included in the witnessing of these things and the original documents were written well within their lifetime of having experienced the ministry of Jesus and the events that followed.

So, what can be said about the foundation of our faith - basically, it's just what it's always been - communities of people embracing the memory of Jesus Christ and embracing one another in fellowship. Communities of caring people willing to dedicate some incredible resources to proclaiming the vision Christ had (and demonstrated) of and for God's kingdom - Creation matters, people matter - God cares and loves and treasures life.

May the blessings of Christ be with you all!

*Father Dave* ✝

## Service Schedule

	<u>Date</u>	<u>OT Reading</u>	<u>Epistle</u>	<u>CS</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Acolytes</u>
HC	Jan 4	S.Proffitt	T.Vail	BV	SP	J.Proffitt/B.Vail
MP	Jan 11	B.Wright	R.Felldin	AC	----	A.Cimini
HC	Jan 18	S.Proffitt	B.Wright	JP	DB	D.Becker/B.Vail
MP	Jan 25	A.Weiber	J.Proffitt	RF	----	J.Proffitt
HC	Feb 1	M.Harding	S.Proffitt	AC	DB	A Cimini/D Becker

### Morning Prayer:

Jan. 11 - J.Proffitt/B.Vail  
Jan. 25 - S.Proffitt/R.Felldin

### Church School:

No Church School Jan. 4  
Jan. 11 - Melrose Kelly  
Jan. 18 - Marissa Harding  
Jan. 25 - Kerri Vail

### Special Thanks to all who serve

**Note to all who serve:** It would be most helpful if, when you cannot make your assigned date, you would arrange for a substitute. If you are unable to do that, please notify a warden. Thanks for your cooperation!

## Lectionary (Year B)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Psalm</u>	<u>OT Reading</u>	<u>Epistle</u>	<u>Gospel</u>
Jan 4 2 Christmas	84	Jeremiah 31:7-14	Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a	Matthew 2:13-15,
Jan 11 1 Epiphany	29	Genesis 1: 1-5	Acts 19:1-7	Mark 1: 4-11
Jan 18 2 Epiphany	139:1-5, 12-17	1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)	1 Corinthians 6: 12-20	John 1: 43-51
Jan 25 3 Epiphany	62:6-14	Jonah 3:1-5, 10	1 Corinthians 7: 29-31	Mark 1: 14-20
Feb 1 4 Epiphany	111	Deuteronomy 18:15-20	1 Corinthians 8: 1-13	Mark 1: 21-28

### Altar Guild

Altar Guild Duty – Melrose Kelly - 639-1090 and Carol Cimini 693-2907. If you wish to purchase or provide flowers for the Altar on a particular Sunday, call Betty Vail. If you are giving flowers in memory of a loved one, please notify Pete Vail (607)639-1444 no later than the Thursday before the designated Sunday so that he can include a notice in the bulletin.

## In Need of Prayer

It has been suggested that the names of individuals on the parish prayer list be included in the newsletter. A current listing follows. The names listed are not necessarily members of the parish and may include individuals or other requests for which we have been asked to pray. The clergy persons of the Chenango District are included. Please remember these individuals in your personal prayers. Send or give any additions or changes to Tom Vail, 639-1201.

Carol Peter Michele Joyce Pat Mya Holly Cindy Lou Toni Lois Vern Sally  
Clifford Deb Lally Mary Niles Elliott Julia Richard Don Wieber Norma Ryan  
Judy Amber Danny Wade Mike Wade Fr. Chuck Taylor Fr. David Hanselman Fr. Bruce MacDuffie  
Bishop “Skip” Adams Pope Francis Zion Church St. Paul’s Church The General Theological Semi-  
nary of the Episcopal Church The vestry of St. Ann’s

The following prayer is suggested by Bishop Skip. It is from the Evening Prayer service in the Book of Common Prayer:

*Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, sooth the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous: and all for your love’s sake. Amen.*

### Vestry Highlights

1. **Outreach** - \$100.00 to the "Make a wish foundation" and \$100.00 Tri-Town Regional Hospital Relay for Life.
2. Discussed the Lenten Program. Father Dave will present Walter Wink video series.

**A message from the Stewardship Committee**

It is appropriate, during the Advent season of the Church year, to acknowledge the generous financial support of parishioners and friends of St. Ann's Church. In addition to the continued financial generosity of our regular attendees, we are blessed to receive support from several individuals that are geographically unable to attend on a regular basis as well as several organizations that use St. Ann's facilities. This year, the "intention" cards show an increase in the generosity of our financial supporters. To all of you, we extend our heartfelt Thank You !! It is only through your combined prayers, work and financial support that St. Ann's is able to continue to exist.

May God bless each and every one of you in the coming year and Best Wishes for a blessed and Merry Christmas.

### **Kudos**



**THANKS!** - Many thanks to the Tallmadge's for decorating the wagon and driving the wagon with parishioners on board singing Christmas Carols.

**THANKS!** - To the Tom, Duane and Jody for putting up the Koresh

**THANKS!** - Calvin Tallmadge for being our "dapper" car attendant Christmas Eve

**THANKS!** - Pete and Tom Vail for setting up Synthia and doing the Christmas Eve programs



***Note:** If you know of one or more people who we should thank in this column, please pass that information on to Pete Vail or Jody Proffitt. We don't want to miss anyone!*



## **A History of Christmas Carols** **The most enduring Holiday Songs**

Music enriches any holiday, and this is particularly true at Christmas. Starting each year in November or even earlier, homes, churches, stores, shopping malls, and public buildings are filled with the music of Christmas carols. But where did our carols come from? Who were the first carolers?

The word “carol” is most likely derived from the Old French word *caroler*, which meant to dance in a circle, often while singing. There are some who would argue that the angels at Bethlehem were the first carolers, but Christmas music did not actually become part of Christmas festivities until there was a Christmas Day. And December 25<sup>th</sup>. was not established as Christmas Day until early in the fourth century, when the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, who had converted from pagan beliefs to Christianity, decided that the birth of Jesus would be celebrated on this date. This generally accepted origin of the holiday is still a source of historical and religious debate, but there is agreement that the early observances of the day occurred in churches, and the music consisted of chants and psalms.

In 1223, all of that changed. An Italian monk named Francis, (later to become known as St. Francis of Assisi) who lived in the small town of Assisi, wanted to find a way for the common people to learn about Christmas. He decided that the best way to do this was to act out the Nativity story. He borrowed animals from local farms and talked some of the village people into portraying primary characters in the story.

Francis put together a live Nativity scene (complete with shepherds, wise men and a holy family) and carols were sung. Francis also wrote a hymn in Latin which inspired the joyous spirit of caroling that soon spread across Europe. From that time on, Francis became known as the father of the Christmas carol, and in 1228, he was declared a saint.

Christmas carols soon became the songs of the common people. Some of the earliest carols were written by those who wanted to use music to convey Christian teachings to ordinary folks. This Christian message can still be heard in the oldest carol written in the English language and which is still sung today, Christmas carols soon became the songs of the common people. Some of the earliest carols were written by those who wanted to use music to convey Christian teachings to ordinary folks. This Christian message can still be heard in the oldest carol written in the English language and which is still sung today, “The First Nowell.” Its composer is unknown, but it is known that the carol was written in England. Its original spelling was “Nowell,” a word based on the Old English Christmas greeting of “Now all is well.” The other spelling is French and is based on Christmas being called *Noel* in France.

Another carol, “God Rest You Merry Gentlemen,” was written in the fifteenth century in response to the somber church music of that era. This joyful Christmas song allowed people who were disenchanted with the church’s solemn music to sing and even dance, and it remains popular today.

Christmas carols came to North America in 1645, and they were first sung by French missionaries at the Huron Mission, located near the northeast shore of Lake Huron. What is ironic about this is that while the French were using carols to try to convert Native Americans, the Puritan-controlled English colonial governments in America had outlawed any celebration of Christmas as being too pagan.

As time passed, however, attitudes toward carols changed, and the nineteenth century became known as the Golden Age of Carols. Over twenty of today’s best-known Christmas carols were written during this period, including “O Holy Night,” “It Came upon a Midnight Clear,” “Good King Wenceslas,” “We Three Kings of Orient Are,” “Jingle Bells,” “Jolly Old St. Nicholas,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” “Away in a Manger,” “Angels We Have Heard on High,” and “Silent Night.”

The origins of some carols are lost in history, but other carols have histories that can be as inspiring as their cheerful lyrics. For example, around Christmas in 1818, a pastor was at work on his Christmas sermon in St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria. The pastor, Joseph Mohr, was interrupted in his work by a local farmer who wanted him to come and bless his new infant. Pastor Mohr put on his coat and trudged out in the snow with the man. He visited and blessed the new infant. The peaceful scene reminded him of the scene at the first Christmas, and the words for a poem started forming in his head.

Hurrying back to his desk, he wrote them down. He then gave the poem to his friend, Franz Gruber, a local schoolmaster, asking him to write music for the words. Gruber was impressed: "Your words seem to sing themselves," he told the pastor. Gruber served as the church's organist, but the organ was out of commission, so he wrote the music for two voices and a guitar. On Christmas Day in 1818, the little congregation heard for the first time a "song from heaven."

*Silent Night, Holy Night  
All is Calm, All is Bright....*

In 1857, James Pierpont (uncle to financier, J. P. Morgan) wrote a song for Thanksgiving called "Jingle Bells." He wrote both the words and the music and later commented that he had no idea the song would become as popular as it did.

Another well-known Christmas carol is based on a poem by American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Composed in December 1863, the poem was Longfellow's response to the tragedy and despair that surrounded him. On April 12, 1861, the civil war had begun. Longfellow also had suffered personal tragedy when his young wife, Fanny, died when her dress caught fire. A little over one year later, Longfellow's 19 year-old son, Charles—a Union army soldier—had been wounded in battle. Longfellow's poem lamented the lack of "peace on earth and good will towards men." His seven-stanza poem was simply called "Christmas Bells." Almost ten years later, in 1872, the poem was set to music by John Calkin, choirmaster at St. Columba's College in Ireland, and was retitled "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." There are many more stories of how popular carols were written and the modern tradition of Christmas carols has evolved over many years and continues to evolve and endure today. Anyone who has witnessed the power of a simple song to warm hearts and spread cheer among family and strangers alike understands how carols have become such an essential part of our holiday season. Expressed through Christmas carols, the sense of wonder, exhilaration, and celebration that marks the holiday season has inspired young and old alike through the centuries.





Address label here

Worship Service: Sunday 9:15 am

Tracey Tallmadge

Wardens: Betty Vail

Clergy: The Rev. David A. Hanselman

SHARING GOD'S LOVE IN OUR  
COMMUNITY THROUGH PRAYER, STUDY  
AND ACTION

Afton, New York 13730

P. O. Box 22

St. Ann's Episcopal Church

## The Final Word



**This is a reprise of a commentary that was written for the Jan. 2006 issue.)**

**Epiphany** - 1. A feast celebrated Jan. 6th, commemorating the coming of the Magi as being the first manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles..

**manifestation**—an act of being evident to the senses, especially to the sight.

As Christians we believe that God became manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. That is, God became visible to people by taking the form of Jesus Christ, calling himself “the Light of the World.” And in the beginning of his Gospel, John says, “The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.”

Think about light. It can't be seen unless it is reflected off something, be it a particle of dust or an object like the moon.

Furthermore, in the absence of light, we are unable to see and are likely to stumble around, bumping into things and possibly injuring ourselves.

Isn't God much like that? We can see Him only when His love is reflected by others. Likewise, it is only when we live our lives based on God that others will see God in and through us. Without God, we stumble through our lives, running into things and often getting hurt.

With Jesus, the Light of the World, we are able to see, and when we see, we don't get hurt as much!

PCV