

# Christ Church Chronicle

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## A Lenten Letter from Fr. McNab

Fr. Bruce McNab

Scottsdale, Arizona

March 1, 2014

Dear friends,

Lent begins next week, but since I will not be visiting Sheridan again until Holy Week, I thought I'd seize the opportunity to pass along a few of my thoughts about the season.

Many of us old fashioned Episcopalians were brought up with the idea that Lent is the season of the Church Year that calls for us to "give up" something—usually a favorite food item, or booze, or poker, or watching soap operas. There's a modern trend to pooh-pooh fasting and abstinence in Lent and insist that it's better for Christians to "take on" something worthwhile rather than to "give up" something we'd be better off without anyway. I'm not trying to pick a fight with progressive contemporary clergy. More power to them. (Who could object more good deeds being done by believers?) But I want to make a case for abstinence, no matter how many additional worthy works you might also want to take on during the forty days before Easter.

In the sixth chapter of Matthew, which is the gospel for Ash Wednesday, Jesus speaks about almsgiving, prayer, and fasting—three regular practices of pious Jews. He assumes that his hearers are going to be engaged in all three; he doesn't say "if you give alms," or "if you pray," or "if you fast." He speaks of "*when* you give alms...and pray...and fast." None of the three is optional. We also hear Jesus telling his followers that "*unless they deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow him,*" they cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Fasting and self-denial go hand-in-hand as traditional Lenten disciplines.

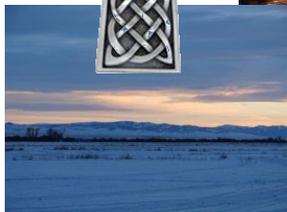
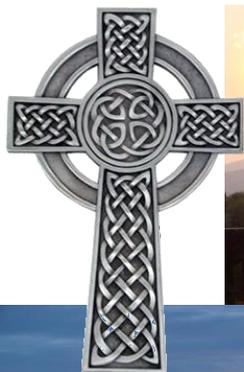
Self-denial is not a form of masochism. Self-denial is essential if we're going to follow Christ on the steep, upward way that leads to life. All of us have appetites, don't we? Not just for food and drink, but for more money, a nicer car, a vacation place in Arizona (!), thicker hair, or a thinner waistline. We *want* stuff. For most of us, the stuff we want is innocent enough in a moral sense. But unbridled self-indulgence is unhealthy, even if the things we want are not evil in themselves. Giving in to our every whim turns us, in time, into utterly self-centered creatures, enslaved to our appetites. Jesus says that unless we *deny ourselves* we cannot be his disciples. We cannot enter his Kingdom.

So, how do we start learning how to practice self-denial? One simple way is to choose to do without something we want during Lent, something we feel entitled to, something that gives us innocent pleasure. It's a matter of saying "no" to ourselves, simply because always saying "yes" to ourselves ultimately leads us away from Christ and into the darkness of self-absorption.

Joan and I are in Scottsdale watching Spring Training baseball games. These weeks of pre-season practices and games are intended to get players in shape for the *real* competition that will soon begin. I see Lent as "spring training" for Christians. Giving up alcohol, or giving up watching sports on TV, or giving up desserts for these forty days will not make us more fit for the Kingdom of heaven. And it won't earn us some kind of moral credit with God. But what it *will* do is give experience in saying "no" to ourselves. And learning how to do that is essential if we want to be in shape for the serious enterprise called life.

May God in his mercy give us all a blessed Lent. See you on Palm Sunday!

FR. BRUCE



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## Vestry Report

Frank Ford

Each year every Episcopal Church in the United States is required to submit an annual Parochial Report to the national Episcopal Church, citing financial, statistical and other information relevant to the parish. A couple of those figures may be of interest to you all. Firstly, as you know and with your enthusiastic cooperation, we completed a total audit/verification of our membership register with the result that we now know that we currently have 42 communicants in good standing in our church...a high for recent years. Of that number, 6 are less than 16 years of age which, along with an additional three frequently attending young people who have yet to be baptized, has led your Vestry to begin work on development of a Sunday school/youth outreach program. Ashley Pairitz will be leading this effort and I am sure she would welcome any assistance you would care to offer.

On the financial front, the Parochial Report cited a total operating income for 2013 of \$38,395 plus additional designated gifts for capital improvements of just over \$8000. This allowed us to dedicate over \$3400 to our outreach projects with the promise of even more during 2014, as you saw in the budget we discussed at the annual meeting.

On another topic, Lent and then Easter are almost upon us. Elsewhere in this monthly bulletin is a schedule of our liturgical activities during that time and I encourage you to look it over. Please plan to join your friends at Christ Church and make the celebration of this Holy Season a part of your family life in the coming months.



Lenten Breakfast and Christ Church 2013

## Wood Bank Ministry Receives Award

Debra McNeil



On February 7th, Governor Steven Bullock presented eight ServeMontana awards to individuals who, through their dedication and commitment to community service, have greatly enhanced the civic life of Montana. One of the awardees was Father Harry Neeley and the St. James Episcopal Church Wood Bank. Father Harry's Wood Bank Ministry has a satellite operation in the Ruby Valley through Christ Episcopal Church in Sheridan and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Virginia City. The congregations of all three churches are very pleased that Father Harry and the Wood Bank Ministry have been recognized by the Governor's Office of Community Service.

The mission of the Wood Bank Ministry is "In the name of Christ, helping keep warm those who live in the shadow of the American dream." To fulfill this mission, the Ministry provides wood for heating and cooking to aged, handicapped and fiscally challenged families and individuals in Beaverhead, Madison and a portion of Silver Bow Counties. The program also provides farm fresh eggs and wool hats and mittens when available. When there are extra reconditioned chainsaws, these are provided to physically capable clients, enabling them to become independent of the program.

If you would like to volunteer some time to help gather, split or deliver wood in Madison County, please contact Christ Episcopal Church at 842-7713. Contributions are also welcome and will be used to maintain the equipment and for gas. If you are in need of assistance, you can also contact Christ Church or Father Harry at 683-3690.

## Coming Events

March 5..... Bethel Methodist Lenten Breakfast 6:30 a.m.

March 5 7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service at Christ Church.

March 11 .....2:00 pm Prep for hosting Lenten Breakfast. Parish Hall.

March 12..... Lenten Breakfast 6:30 a.m. Christ Church hosts. Parish Hall. Servers, be at Parish Hall at 5:30 a.m.

March 14.....Family Game Night 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Parish Hall

March 19..... Lenten Breakfast 6:30 a.m. St. Mary's Laurin

March 26..... Lenten Breakfast 6:30 a.m. Dayspring Church, Highway 287 Sheridan

April 2 ..... Lenten Breakfast 6:30 a.m. New Beginnings Church Sheridan

April 9 ..... Lenten Breakfast 6:30 a.m. Notre Dame, Twin Bridges



February's Family Game Night fun. Don't miss the next one - March 14 6:00p.m.!

## Legacy Project

Janis Hansen

The past. All in God's hands. In the mystery of the Alpha and Omega, as we see their images in the window of our nave. The past holds our heritage, and, some great stories. We are shaped by our past here at Christ Church--a small church in a beautiful valley, loved by many, cared for, kept going -- a place where lives have been shaped, where the sanctuary has become sacred space for many.

The Christ Church Legacy Project group meets almost monthly (check dates with Deacon Janis), to share our past, our history, to laugh and tell stories, and to seriously honor our heritage. A small and lively group, we are working toward building on the historical records we do have, and adding others, along with anecdotes about folks' lives here in the parish. We have put together a list of all the priests who have served here, and we see names of long ago priests, who baptized, married, buried, provided confirmation and loved the people of Christ Church. For them we are grateful. Our Legacy group is attempting to fill in the gaps where some information is missing, and to expand on what we do have.

Members of the group include: Catherine Doornbos, Vi English, Claudia Holland, Cynthia Shackleton, Polly Todd and Gloria Lombardi. Deacon Jan Knox has provided us some excellent material, also.

Anyone you know who would like to participate is invited.... meetings are usually on the first Tuesday of the month (depending on the weather), at 10 a.m. Lunch is provided.

We need:

- more pictures of past events at Christ Church
- more newspaper articles about the Church
- copies of folks' baptismal records, confirmation records
- your ideas about the history of our parish



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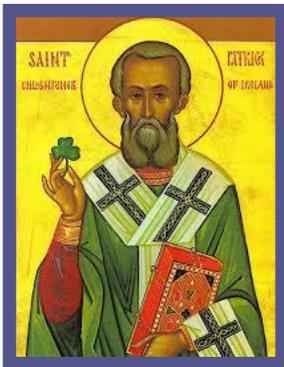
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**Patrick of Ireland**

March 17

**INVITE** people into our midst  
**INCLUDE** people in the life of the church  
**INFORM** people about past events that shape our present,  
and current events that shape our future  
**PROCLAIM** the gospel in thought, word and deed  
**REJOICE** in a new life found in Christ Jesus.

### Mission Statement

To be formed as the body of Christ, seeking to love and serve one another and those in need.

### Vision Statement

To be Christ's continued presence in the Ruby Valley by welcoming those who seek Christ, offering varied forms of services, reflecting our diversity while maintaining our Episcopal identity.

## Service Leaders for March and April

### Upcoming Service Leaders for March / April

- 2 Mar: Morning Prayer – Deacon Janis Hansen w/ sermon by David Hansen
- 5 Mar: Ash Wednesday Service – Deacon Janis Hansen
- 9 Mar: Eucharist -- Rev Canon Chris Roberts (First Sunday in Lent-Rite I)
- 16 Mar: Morning Prayer – Deacon Janis Hansen / Eucharist – Rev Harry Neeley
- 23 Mar: Eucharist -- Rev. Jean McLean
- 30 Mar: Morning Prayer – Deacon Janis Hansen / Eucharist – Rev Harry Neeley
- 6 Apr: Eucharist -- Rev. Jean McLean
- 13 Apr: Eucharist -- Rev. Jean McLean (Palm Sunday)

### Upcoming Lectors for March / April

- 2 Mar: Dave Hansen
- 9 Mar: Bill Callaway
- 16 Mar: Alice Forwood
- 23 Mar: Frank Ford
- 30 Apr: Jerry Aaker
- 6 Apr: George Rich
- 13 Apr: JJ Snyder