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# ST. BART'S MONTHLY

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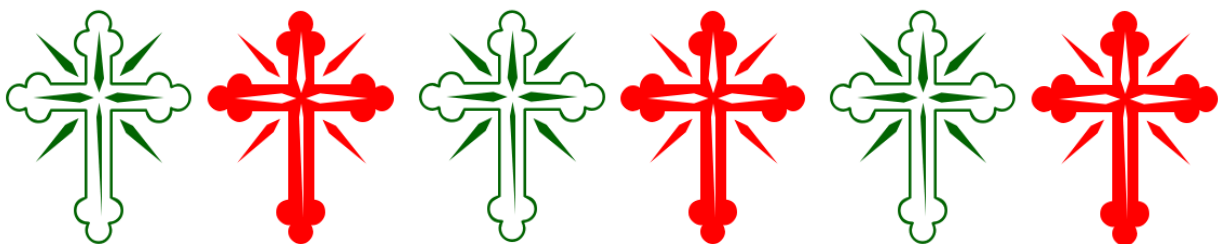


St. Bartholomews Episcopal Church, built in Hempstead, Texas 1870.

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## DECEMBER 2017

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Alert!

Any suggestions for the newsletter are greatly appreciated!

Any material you would like to see in the newsletter needs to be given to Aubrey by the 15th of each month!

We anticipate new ideas and pieces for the newsletter!

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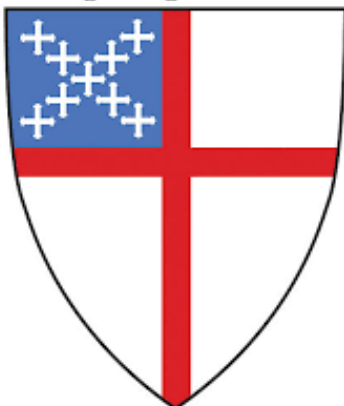
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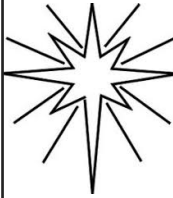

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The Episcopal Church



# December 2017 Calendar

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1 Birthday! Jen Vines	2
3 Service at 10:00 am!  Birthday! Abbey Rodriguez	4	5 Arts and Crafts!  Birthday! Richard Johnson	6	7 Meals on Wheels!	8	9
10 Service at 10:00 am & Vestry Meeting after!	11 Birthday! Johnnie Mathis	12 Arts and Crafts!	13 Anniversary! Sarah & Jeff Flukinger	14 Meals on Wheels!	15	16 
17 Service at 10:00 am!	18 Anniversary! Kathy & Lee French	19 Arts and Crafts!	20 Birthday! Jeff Flukinger	21	22 Birthday! Ann Hinton  Anniversary! Kay & Tom Scholl	23
24 Service at 10:00 am, Carols at 6:30 pm, & Christmas Eve Service at 7:00 pm!	25 Christmas Day!	26 Arts and Crafts!	27	28 Meals on Wheels!	29 	30
31 New Year's Eve!						

# Lay Ministry for this month will be announced as necessary.

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## A Christmas Carol Story of Stewardship

by Dan Conway on October 25, 2017

We all remember the scene from old movies and TV specials. Two “portly gentlemen,” as Charles Dickens calls them, enter the offices of Scrooge and Marley hoping to raise money “for the poor and destitute who suffer greatly at the present time of year.” They make their case, pointing out that “hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts,” but Scrooge is not impressed. “Are there no prisons?” the old miser asks. “Aren’t the workhouses still in operation?” he snarls.

“Yes,” one of the gentlemen replies, “I wish I could say they were not.” Undaunted, the two gentlemen continue. “What shall we put you down for?”

“Nothing!” says Scrooge.

“You wish to be anonymous?” the gentlemen ask.

“I wish to be left alone!” says Scrooge.

The gentlemen leave with hearts full of sadness. They grieve for the poor and the homeless “who would rather die” than suffer the humiliation of a 19th-century English workhouse; but they also grieve for old Ebenezer Scrooge whose self-centered misery has blinded him to the simple joys of Christmas.

How many times have we heard similar versions of this same old story? How many times have we found ourselves playing the part of Scrooge – saying to those who ask for our time or our money, “Please don’t bother me. I wish to be left alone.”?

Although he never uses the word, Charles Dickens’ wonderful story, *A Christmas Carol*, is about stewardship. It is about the joy of giving and about learning to care for (and be responsible for) all of God’s creation. And, as Mr. Dickens makes very clear, *A Christmas Carol* is about more than just the sentimental (or commercial) “Christmas spirit” that comes and goes each holiday season.

Scrooge is not a good steward. He hoards what he has been given (time, talent and treasure) and he buries his gifts deep within himself. He cannot give or share, and the result is a twisted, self-absorbed misery. Along with his gifts and talents, Scrooge accumulates and hides all the hurts, resentments and disappointments of a lonely lifetime. In the end, nothing makes him happy. Nothing gives him peace.

There is only one thing that can save this miserable old man from the hell he has made for himself. Giving. Open, generous, unrestricted giving is the only cure for the likes of



Ebenezer Scrooge. As long as he holds back – asking “What’s in it for me?” – Scrooge is condemned to live the life that he has fashioned for himself through many years of lonely self-centeredness.

Fortunately, Mr. Dickens believed in a God who is generous and forgiving. Old Scrooge is given one last chance to experience life as it was truly meant to be lived. The spirits who visit Scrooge (including Jacob Marley, a former business partner now condemned to haunt the spirit world in chains of his own making) help Scrooge to face painful truths about himself. And by caring enough to confront him with his selfishness, the spirits give Scrooge something far more valuable than all his gold; they give him a glimpse of who he was, who he is now, and who he could become – if only he would let go of his bitter resentment and embrace the joy of giving.

Recall that, following this change of heart, as he hurries to join his nephew’s family for Christmas dinner, Scrooge encounters one of the two “portly gentlemen” who had asked him for a contribution the day before. After greeting the gentleman so warmly that the man barely recognized the old miser, Scrooge whispers in his ear the amount of his pledge to help the poor and destitute.

“My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?” cries the gentleman, “as if his breath were taken away.”

“Not a farthing less,” says Scrooge. “A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favor?” he pleads.

And then the most amazing thing happens. As the astounded solicitor tries to express his gratitude, stammering from both appreciation and disbelief, old Scrooge says it for him.

“Thank you,” says Scrooge. “I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!”

In *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens wants each of us to discover what old Scrooge had to learn the hard way: the only way to hold onto something is to give it away. This is the paradox of giving: the one who gives a gift, from substance and without counting the cost, is the one who is most grateful. Besides being a donor, the generous person is also a beneficiary. That’s why Scrooge says thank you “fifty times” and also why he asks the gentleman, quite sincerely, to do him a favor by accepting the gift.

Ever afterwards, Mr. Dickens writes, it was said of Scrooge “that he knew how to keep Christmas well.” Like any good steward, Scrooge kept it well by giving it away. And so, as Mr. Dickens observes at the conclusion of his story, “May that be truly said of us . . . every one!”



<http://www.smcportsmouth.org>





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