

# the Key

News & Notes

from St. Peter's-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church • Gulfport, MS

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## Examining our Expectations

I love Advent! It's one of my favorite seasons of the church year. It is a time when we are made more fully aware of the mystical, in-between realm that Christians always dwell in—the realm between the already and the not yet. Jesus has come already; and he has not yet come. The Kingdom of God is already at hand, and yet it is not yet fully fulfilled. In Advent, we are invited to spend some time with our longing and to examine our expectations.

I recently read a meditation by Richard Rohr in his small advent devotional *Preparing for Christmas with Richard Rohr: Daily Meditations for Advent*. In this particular meditation, Rohr writes, "Advent is, above all else, a call to full consciousness and a forewarning about the high price of consciousness. When we demand satisfaction of one another, when we demand any completion of history on our terms, when we demand that our anxiety or any dissatisfaction be taken away, saying as it were, 'Why weren't you this for me? Why didn't life do that for me?' we are refusing to say, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' We are refusing to hold out for the full picture that is always given by God." During the season of Advent, we are invited to examine our expectations of God,

of the world around us, of those we love, of the church, and as we examine them, we might ask ourselves, In the light of eternity, will this really matter?

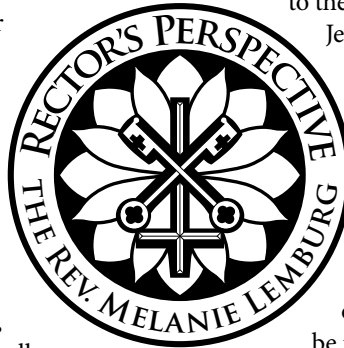
This Advent, I invite you to ask yourselves, "What expectations and demands of life can you let go of so that you can be more prepared for the coming of Jesus?" What must I do to fully give my life and my heart to the invitation, "Come Lord Jesus"?

### *An Invitation to Cultivate Silence*

As we head into the busy holiday season, our culture around us will not offer us many opportunities to care for and nurture our souls. But I invite you to be mindful of that deep hunger, that deep need, and to spend some time and attention giving your soul what it needs to flourish and grow.

The way you can do that is to cultivate silence in your life. Now some of us have too much silence that echoes with our loneliness, and others have too little which is crowded out by the competing demands for our time and our attention. So we are going to do this work of cultivating silence together. Beginning with Advent (November 27), I ask that you help me by keeping an intentional period of silence ten

*Expectations continues on page 11.*



# SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

The past few months at St. Peter's has certainly been active and the momentum is just building. We have unveiled "The Plan" for the next 3-5 years in small groups and in our town hall meeting. We will strive to communicate in a more proactive way with the church body thru quarterly town hall meetings and we will have our advisory group grading us to let us know how we are doing. I would like to say a special thank you to the Grahams, the Cassadys, the Stanfields and the McCrary's for hosting our small group meetings. Also, I sincerely appreciate those who were able to attend the meetings and for our entire church family for all that you do and all that you are. I am honored to say that I am a member of this wonderful family.

We have had our stewardship program and a very successful consecration Sunday. I want to thank Marvin Koury and all of the people who worked on his committee to make that such a great success. Marvin has worked on this program for the past 2 years and has given his all to make it happen.

Now we need your help. Of those that turned in their pledge cards we want to thank you. The pledges are approximately the same as last year. We ask that if you have not turned in your pledge card, please do so as soon as possible. We will not assume that if you have pledged in the past you will pledge again this year. Letters have been sent out to those people whose pledge card has been received so if you have not received a letter then we have not received your pledge card. If you attend church on a regular basis and make an offering each week, please complete a pledge card and let us know that you can give \$1, \$5 or whatever each week. We will be able to include that in the budget for 2012.

In light of the state of the economy and the fact that we had to withdraw funds from the building fund to pay expenses this quarter, your vestry at the recommendation of our treasurer, Neely Whites, is considering preparing a budget based upon 87% of the amount pledged. The idea of this is because historically we collect about 87-88% of the amount pledged. This will give us a little margin in the event the we do not collect all that is promised during the course of the year. While stewardship training encourages us to budget the full amount and then some, we feel that we must be realistic and plan for the worse and HOPE for the best. If we receive more than is pledged we will be able to put some in reserve for those times when the income falls short instead of having to borrow from other accounts. It will also allow us to build a cushion to plan for our future growth.

My next request is to ask that if you use online banking please go into your account and set your pledge to pay on a regular basis. Usually online banking is at no cost to you and there would be no cost to the church. It is



## STATUS OF 2011 PLEDGES:

Total pledges for 2011:	\$ 265,405.00
Expected receipts thru 10/31/11:	\$ 221,162.00
Actual receipts thru 10/31/11:	\$ 190,657.00
Shortage:	(\$ 30,505.00)

the most cost effective way to have a regular pledge payment come to the church. Then, if you are away for any reason your pledge will continue to be paid. Another concern that has been presented to me is that some people will deduct any expenses they have incurred on behalf of the church from their annual pledge. While I believe that you should be able to get reimbursed if the expense is an approved budget item that has been authorized by the person in charge of that line item. However, when you deduct that amount from your pledge you are reimbursing yourself and you will throw the budget off. All income and expenses need to pass thru the general fund so that we can track them properly.

Thank you all for giving of your time, talents and money.

In God's Love

Marie Porter  
Senior Warden

# DEACON'S LETTER



## ADVENT

**ADVENT WEDNESDAY NIGHT STUDY – *The Journey: Walking the Road to Bethlehem.***

The aim of our Advent study, is to help us better understand the events that led up to the birth of Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem; to see more clearly the theological significance of the Nativity; and to reflect upon the meaning of these events in our lives.

Our three sessions (beginning Wednesday Dec. 7 at 6 pm) will examine the geographical, cultural, and historical setting of the events that result in the birth of the Christ

Child and, ultimately, to help to put ourselves in the story. Session one will focus on Mary and the Annunciation plus Joseph. Session two considers Mary's visit to Elizabeth and then the actual journey to Bethlehem. Our last session takes us to the manger and to the shepherd's fields.

I invite you all to walk the dusty road to Bethlehem, experience the culture and end our Advent journey in a small stable where the world was changed forever. See you there!

Deacon Scott

The Book Club will meet on Thursday, December 1, at 5:30 pm at the home of Leslie Stanfield. Sarah Scott will lead the discussion of the book, *Crooked Letter*, *Crooked Letter* by Tom Franklin. The author knows Mississippi and his writings prove that connection.

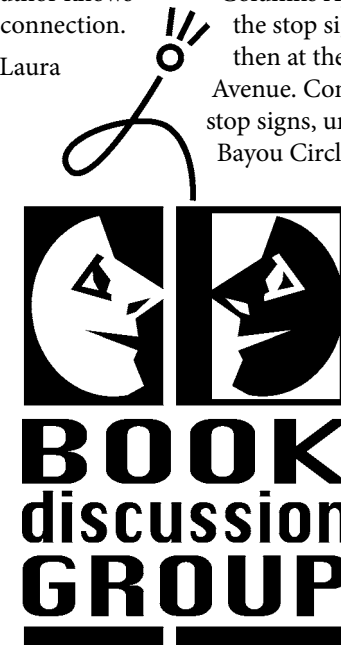
**January Book selection:** *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand

**Synopsis:** In May 1943, an Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific and quickly sank, leaving behind only two survivors bobbing helplessly in the restless seas. One of them was Louis Zamperini, a 26-year-old airman who had overcome a troubled past to become an Olympic athlete. After 47 perilous days adrift on a raft, Zamperini and his companion survivor were rescued by the Japanese navy. He remained a prisoner of war until the end of hostilities. This riveting narrative by the author of *Seabiscuit* is the story of one plucky man. Now ninety-three, Louis Zamperini lives on.

**Directions to Leslie Stanfield's home:**

**From Hwy 90:** Turn north on Courthouse Road, drive through the traffic lights at Pass Road and The Columns Apartments. Continue over the bridge to the stop sign at 48th Street. Turn left on 48th Street; then at the next block, turn right onto Kendall Avenue. Continue north on Kendall, through two stop signs, until the very end where the road intersects Bayou Circle. Turn right at the yield sign onto Bayou Circle. The first house (white) on the right is Leslie's home.

**From Interstate 10:** Drive south on Hwy 49, turn left on Airport Boulevard. Continue until the stop sign at Washington Avenue. Turn right. At the second traffic light, turn left onto 54th Street. Drive to the first stop sign. Turn left onto Kendall. Drive until the road intersects Bayou Circle. Turn right at the yield sign onto Bayou Circle. The first house (white) on the right is Leslie's home.



# WHAT IS ADVENT and how do we keep it holy?

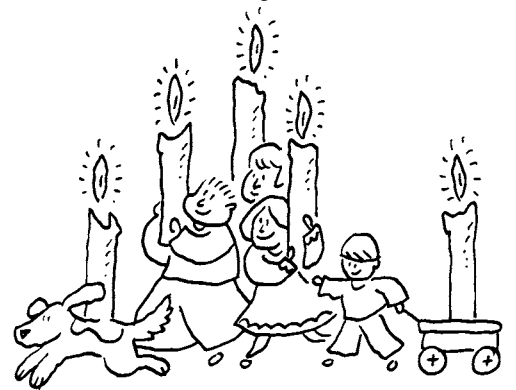
Advent is a season of the church that comes from the Latin word meaning "coming." During the season of Advent, we incorporate special practices into our worship and our home lives to help us prepare for Jesus's coming at Christmas as well as Christ's second coming when he returns to the world at the end of time. One of the special practices that we can do at church and at home is

the lighting of the advent wreath. The circle of the Advent wreath symbolizes eternity, and each of the five candles represents a part of the Christian story. The first candle represents the prophets and the hope that they proclaimed. The second candle represents Bethlehem and the love of Christ come into the world. The third candle

represents the shepherds and their joy at the news of Christ's birth. The fourth candle represents the angels and the peace that they proclaimed. The white, center candle is the Christ candle that represents the light of Christ come into the world. We have booklets for celebrating Advent in the home available at the church office to help with your devotions as you light your own Advent candles in your home.

When we keep Advent holy in our worship and in our lives, we are possibly the most at odds with our culture as we ever are. The culture around us is urging us to participate in the frenzy of shopping and activity that leads up to Christmas. But the season of Advent that we keep is a season of waiting, a season of expectation. Waiting is not something that we do well, these

days, but it is an important spiritual practice for us Christians, and there is something delicious about joy that is fulfilled expectation. So this Advent, we are invited to be still, to prepare, to wait in silence and to remember that what God has promised has been fulfilled in the birth of Christ, and that God's promise for the future will also be fulfilled.



## THE GREAT ADVENTure



The Angels for December are Helen Gillespie, Earline Sawyer, Sarah Scott, Linda Diorio

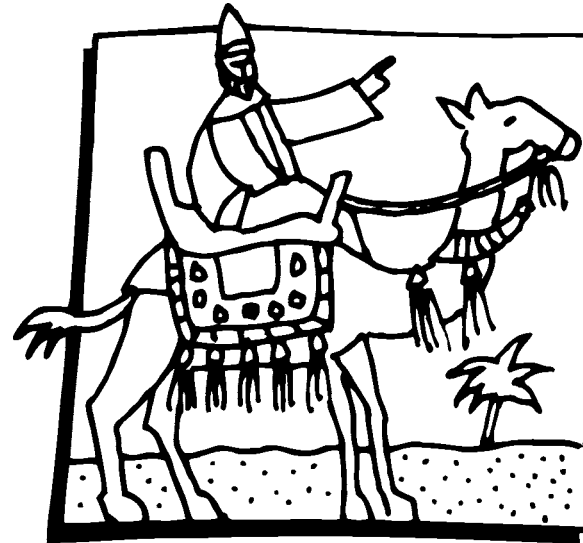
## Blue Christmas Service

This year, we are holding our first ever *Blue Christmas Service*. This service will be on Sunday, December 18th at 4:00 pm in the church, and it is a service designed for people who are feeling left out of the Christmas spirit that is rampant all around them. If you are mourning the loss of a loved one or the loss of the way things were, if you are lonely or anxious, if you just are not in the Christmas spirit, then this service is for you. Come to this quietly reflective service of Holy Eucharist and join us for a light snack afterwards. Call Melanie if you have any questions.

# PEOPLE LOOK EAST

Join us for our Advent Lessons and Carols and Holy Eucharist service on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18th at the 10:30 service.

(We will have the readings and the Eucharist only at the 8:00 service.) This service will tell the story of our salvation drama and will be presented with dramatic presentations, reading, and song.



## ECW NEWS

*The ECW will hold its annual Christmas luncheon on Tuesday, December 13th.*

**Place** Lookout Restaurant

**Time** 11:30

**Cost** \$20.00

includes everything except drinks from the bar

We will be seated on the 3rd floor. Take the elevator to the private dining room. They have requested that we have \$20 cash (no checks or credit cards) for each guest and it will be collected at the door to the dining room. Husbands and guests are welcome. To give us a count for the restaurant, please call either Jackie Krass @ 832-2979 or Mary Alice Bailey @ 863-4223 by Monday, December 12th if you plan to attend.



Dr. Richard Creel will lead our next Third Sunday Forum on Sunday, December 18 at 9:00 a.m. in the Parish Hall.

Dr. Creel will discuss "*Faith, Hope, and Knowledge: Is Hope Enough? Or Must a Christian Believe?*" We are all aware of the emphasis today on different perspectives on what it means to be a Christian. He will lead us in an examination of the various points of view.

Dr. Creel is a graduate of Millsaps College. He received an M.Div. degree from Yale University Divinity School and a Ph.D. degree from Southern Illinois University. He spent 30 years teaching at Ithaca College in New York. He is the author of four books

Please reserve this date and invite your family and friends to participate in this lively and important discussion.

If you have a topic you would like to suggest for a forum, please share it with Edwin Graham, 863-2343.



## Eco•Tips

### Did You Know—

that 40 percent of all the food produced in the US is thrown out? In the US, food waste has increased by 50 percent since 1974.

Here are some things you can do to reduce your food waste:

- ▶ rotate your food in the fridge weekly to use any items that will soon expire;
- ▶ purchase in bulk, but only those items that will be used before the expiration date;
- ▶ plan a menu;
- ▶ always shop from a shopping list and resist impulse buys;
- ▶ store foods properly;
- ▶ control portions you prepare unless you will eat the leftovers the next day;
- ▶ inventory your pantry and look up creative recipes to use what you already have.

### Life Lessons:

When in  
doubt,  
just take  
the next  
small  
step.



## Christmas by-the-Sea:

### Saturday, December 24th

**4:00 pm:** a family-friendly service that is composed of a *walk through Bethlehem*, kids dressed up as sheep and other characters in the Christmas story, Christmas carols, and a said Holy Eucharist

**Happy Birthday, Baby Jesus party** will be at the home of Amy and Chuck Rollins (20 53rd St, Gulfport) immediately following the 4:00 pm Christmas Eve service. All are invited. Please, bring a dish to share.

**10:30 pm:** A choral concert presented by JT Anglin and the St. Gregory's Choir of St. Peters by-the-Sea

**11:00 pm:** A Sung Holy Eucharist with candles, carols, chanting, and incense

### Sunday, December 25th

**8:00 am:** Holy Eucharist Rite One

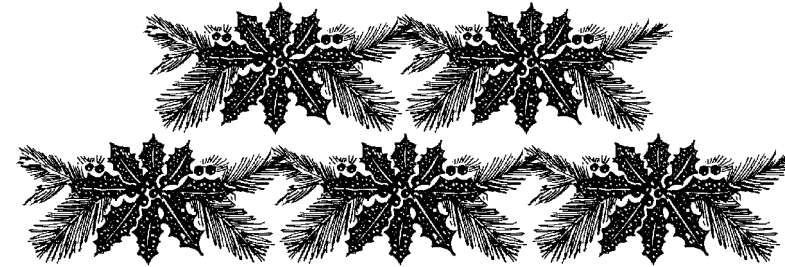
**10:30 am:** Morning Prayer Rite Two

## CALENDAR

**SERVING SCHEDULE**

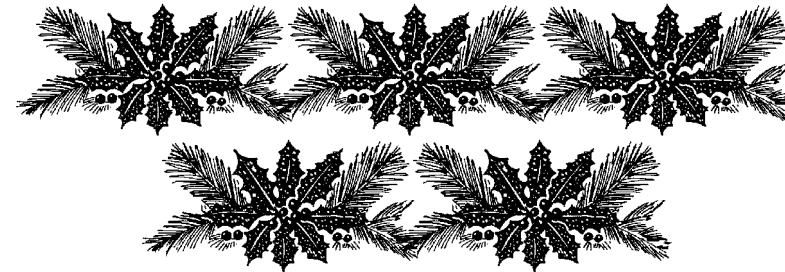
**SERVING SCHEDULE**

## CALENDAR



## Burning of the Greens

The EYC will have their annual burning of the greens bonfire at St. Peter's on Sunday, January 8th at 5pm. If you would like to contribute your Christmas tree or other greens to their bonfire, then just drop it off in the church yard near the dumpster prior to the bonfire.



Expectations *continued from page 1.*

minutes before each of our Sunday services begins. It is something that we can help each other with and which we can support one another through our community that is gathered for prayer and worship. In silence, we are given the opportunity to "be still and know that God is God" and that we are not. In silence, we are given the opportunity to lay down the words and the burdens and the incessant chatter that we carry around with us every single day, and we are invited to be before God as our most true selves whom God has created. When we allow ourselves to be silent, then we can hear things that God is speaking to our deepest souls that we've not been able to hear before for all of the noise.

Two other opportunities for you to cultivate silence in your life this Advent are by joining us at the **Advent Quiet Day on Saturday, December 3rd from 9:30-3:00**. We will alternate between periods of silence and reflection. If you have trouble sitting quietly, we encourage you to bring a journal or some type of hand-craft (such as knitting or needle-point) that might help you in your reflection.

A group will also meet at 5:30 PM in the church on the Mondays during Advent to practice Centering Prayer.

I encourage you to take time this Advent Season to cultivate silence in your life to prepare your hearts for Jesus's birth and his coming.

## CALLED TO LEADERSHIP

On January 29th, the people of St. Peter's by-the-Sea will elect a new Junior Warden and three new vestry members. You may nominate qualified individuals by first obtaining their permission and then contacting a member of the nominating committee (Judy Joest, Alan Jones, Doug Singletary, or Bob Wolford) with that name and the specific office for which he or she will run. Please, consider taking part in the life of our church in this way. We will hold Vestry elections at the Annual Parish meeting. Below are the expectations and qualifications for a member of the Vestry or Warden at St. Peter's by-the-Sea.

### Expectations of Vestry Persons:

- attend 80% of more of Vestry meetings (meeting dates to be determined by 2012 vestry)
- attend annual Vestry retreat
- be visible (through regular church attendance and participation in parish activities)
- function on or within committee of your designated area or areas
- serve as a liaison between congregation and leadership
- be a confirmed communicant in good standing who is over 18 years of age.
- be an upstanding member of community
- give regularly
- be diplomatic/team player
- be prayerful

## Dear St. Peter's:

Jay and I hope this letter finds everyone well and getting ready for Advent. Romania seems to be preparing for a most festive Christmas season!

We know we have been derelict in our duty to maintain contact and do not want you to think that we have forgotten home. Life has been so full and interesting with Jay's work and learning about our new home that our time seems to slip away. Nevertheless, today, a quiet, frosty Monday morning, is the perfect time to write a note about a little part of our life here and try to make amends.

Yesterday Jay and I attended the Church of the Resurrection in downtown Bucharest. Referred to by the people we have met as the "English" Church, it is a small red-brick Gothic style church in the center of town, completed in 1920. Most Americans from the Embassy attend "Bible study" classes in the suburban area of town. To our knowledge, while there may be some English speaking churches, there are no commonly known ones other than the Church of the Resurrection. This was confirmed by Christian before we came to Romania. But, by yesterday, we both felt like it had been long enough since we had attended church and were determined to go somewhere, even though this church is quite a distance from our apartment.

It was a very cold morning. To be sure we did not waste time looking

for the church on unfamiliar, perhaps icy, roads, we left our house and walked to the Metro Stop, about a mile from home through a beautiful park, and then rode the warm and almost empty Metro to the general neighborhood of the church. It was the first morning of real frost and the fog had frozen on the last remaining tree leaves, so it was a shimmering, quiet morning. When we arrived at the Romana Metro stop, there was the typical confusion when we tried to decide

# Greetings from Romania

which of the many exits from the metro station to take. So we stopped and warmed up with cappuccino and a pastry before wandering the nearby streets. Luckily for us, after a few minutes, we asked for directions only to find out that the person we saw was headed for the same church. As it turned out the church was next door to the French restaurant, Chez Marie, where we had a wonderful meal just two nights earlier!

The Church, sitting on a small triangular plot of land between two roads, was built in 1920, with the help of Queen Marie, the grand-

daughter of Queen Victoria, who was living in Bucharest at the time. She had married King Ferdinand of Romania and was and remains a very beloved person here. The sanctuary is about the same size as Handsboro Presbyterian, or according to Jay, even closer to Melanie's last parish sanctuary, before God called her to St. Peters. Stark white plaster walls were capped off by high ceilings covered in simple dark wooden boards. It had two or three very small rooms off of the right side of the sanctuary, almost as if the entrance could be from that side. There are no pews, just old-fashioned wooden chairs with arms, almost like one might expect to find in a Puritan Church. There are occasional thin red kneeling pads, but kneeling would be a difficult maneuver to pull off given the space between pews makes economy class leg room look roomy. It was austere in appearance,

devoid of ornamentation, with no stained windows. The only signs of decoration are the occasional small beautiful Romanian woven rugs that lie on top of cushions in the alter area. The pictures on the wall are an eclectic mix of Romanian works, but nothing of singular importance.

It is not architectural grandeur that draws one to this Church, especially given that it is surrounded by centuries old Greek Orthodox Churches with elaborate gold leaf murals, frescoes, and intricate carvings. You have to understand that the very existence of this Church is the real story. Built before

Communism to handle a small minority religion, it is the only Anglican Church to remain in operation throughout the Communist era in all of the former eastern block countries. The only time services were not held in the church was during World War II, and the Church secretary, Maria, maintained and protected the church during that time. From the time of the war until recently, the Church's very existence constantly remained in doubt. According to the history of the Church, the mere act of attending the English Church placed your life in peril. From 1944 until 1989 Communism ruled Romania and for the most part life was harsh. It is hard to fathom this oppression in the vibrant Bucharest of today, but I know from Meri and others, the history is still very fresh to those who were here.

Yet, this small, simple, church somehow maintained its existence, and I am sure the low profile was a factor. I can only assume that the desire to maintain that proud heritage of serving the Christians in the community, combined with simple Anglican faith and a complete lack of funds, has preserved the church much as it was eighty years ago. The actual history of the church is far more interesting than what I have written and I recommend for those who interested that read the official church information on its website: [www.resurrection.ro](http://www.resurrection.ro)

The service was very familiar and most of the songs were as well. The organist of twenty years recently

had a stroke and a new one began that day. The Rector, a tall stately man from Ireland, gave a wonderful sermon, which is what I needed, especially given my newfound ability to wile my days away grazing in the pasture as opposed to looking for lost sheep. Rector Patrick Irvin also serves as the rector for the Anglican Church in Sophia, Bulgaria, which is about a four hour drive to the south, where, I believe, he performs mass once a month.

***“I can only assume that the desire to maintain that proud heritage of serving the Christians in the community, combined with simple Anglican faith and a complete lack of funds, has preserved the church much as it was eighty years ago.”***

Jay and I were the most impressed by the church members. There were about fifty members there this morning, most arriving just as church began. Ninety percent of them were young and with children. They were from all over the world and Romania, as well, and once the room was filled, it was like a slice of the globe. No one else was from the US, but they were still very familiar to us, just like home. This was made more so by the children who happily played about the sanctuary while the adults stood to the side talking and drinking coffee or tea

from delicate coffee cups on saucers. Certainly, there was nothing for the children to break and the sharp edges had long since been worn down on the furniture. I wanted to suggest the children help with the dismissal like we do, but I think you would agree that I should not be trying to change things the first Sunday I appear!

I had heard from some in the community that the Church has a lot of outreach and although it is hard to imagine doing a lot on the paltry budget with such a small congregation, I will be interested to watch and help. It is what made me attracted to the idea of this church. To be known for perseverance, faith and charity is pretty special, as we know from St. Peters by-the-Sea. I hope that Jay and I can help in some small way to continue its legacy.

Well, we are sure you know we miss everyone there, but I have to tell you we are having a wonderful time. Jay is doing well at work and our apartment is amazing and I am enjoying just learning everything I can about Romania. It is the perfect place for visitors and will make a lasting impression upon anyone. Think of a country filled with such wonderful people as Meri and Christian and their handsome sons, and then add huge inviting parks, a complex history, and stunning mountains, and you will understand why we are still happy. We have lots of room for guests!

All our love!  
**Jay and Patti**

# Boo! Halloween 2011



## **St. Peter's by-the-Sea Mission Statement:**

*We are a community of faith that seeks to equip and nurture all persons to live out the love of God and to share the message of Jesus Christ through servant ministry to the greater community.*

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St. Peter's by-the-Sea  
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And he said to them,

*“Follow me and I  
will make you fishers  
of men.”*

Matthew 4:19



## MARK YOUR DECEMBER CALENDAR

**1st**

Book Discussion Group

**13th**

ECW luncheon at  
the Lookout

**18th**

Third Sunday Forum  
Advent Lessons and Carols  
Blue Christmas Service

**22nd, 23rd  
26th, 27th**

Office Closed

**25th**

Alleluia! Christ is born.

**31st**

New Year's Eve

## *Upcoming and notable:*

### *The Bishop is coming Sunday, January 8th!*

The Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray, III will be making his Episcopal visit to St. Peter's by-the-Sea on Sunday, January 8th. If you would like to be baptized, confirmed, or received by the Bishop at this service, please, contact Melanie or the church office.

**Annual Parish Meeting:** (one service) on Sunday, January 29th.

### **Follow St. Peter's by-the-Sea on Facebook, blogspot**

If you use Facebook, look for the St. Peter's by-the-Sea fan page.

#### **The Rev. Melanie Lemburg has a blog:**

There's spiritual insight and the texts of her sermons, in case you didn't hear all of it the first time! <http://lemburgordinarytime.blogspot.com/>  
There's a link to it at the top of the St. Peter's website, too.