

St. George's Spearhead: to parish, neighbor, and world

St. George's Anglican Church - a CANA Parish
56 Main Street, Helmetta, New Jersey 08828

Christmas 2011
Volume 497

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with so much joy and elation that we have begun a beautiful ministry with all of you. It has been and continues to be a blessing in getting to know all of you. My family truly is honored to be with you and serve beside you in this great part of the Lord's vineyard. We are thankful unto the Lord and all of you for having brought us together.

The Advent of Christ the Lord

I cannot think of any better time for the Lord to have done all of this than within this very season at hand. Truly and wonderfully, we celebrate the Advent, "The Coming of Christ" into the world. This time however, we are not expecting Christ the baby as we are Christ the King. Expectantly ushering this significant event along our Lord's timeline, the outcome will establish the kingdom we, beside all of creation (Romans 8:18-25) longs for – it is what the Scriptures call The Future Glory.

Isaiah 2:1-4 depicts this kingdom through these words, "In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house will be the highest of all – the most important place on earth. It will be raised above the other hills, and people from all over the world will stream there to worship. People from many nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of Jacob's God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.' For the Lord's teaching will go out of Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem. The Lord will mediate between nations and will settle international disputes. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore."

What a great and exciting kingdom has been prepared for us my friends. Thanks be to God that he carefully orchestrated mankind's redemption the way he did. As part of his divine orchestration, the Lord also incorporates. He incorporated himself into his very own creation – what we call

the Incarnation – and likewise, incorporates us into his redemptive plan. Friends, ours is a great calling, an incredible gift has been given to us! Now, what do we do with this gift – the gift of Jesus; the gift of each other? In many ways, how we handle both of these momentous gifts will be our way of giving back to God, offering intentional honor to him who is above all.

The season of Advent asks of us critical preparation for being participants of such a kingdom – it requires us to engage in introspective analysis, taking inventory of our lives as we clear and make room for him to come and be enthroned within our hearts. The coming of Christ into the world can be a futuristic event or it can be an immediate event as you and I receive him and take him into the world. When Christ truly becomes the center of our lives, he is with us everywhere we go. It is then that we can begin to value the significance of what it means to be a child of God. It is then that we begin to see more hope than hopelessness – more joy than the sorrows this life has to offer us. As we become instruments of God's grace we impart the values and characteristics of the kingdom we are bound for – where values of justice, righteousness, fairness, and understanding prevail.

My prayer for all of us this year is that Christ would genuinely and marvelously advent himself into our lives that we may go forth into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit he has given us as we share the governing principles of his kingdom into the world around us.

Have a most blessed and wonderful Merry Christmas.

Gus +



The mission of St. George's Church is to know Christ as our Lord and Savior, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, to love Him, serve Him, and witness His love to the world.

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St. George's Vestry:

Wardens:

2011: Steve Bauman– Senior Warden
2012: Barbara Raczynski – Junior Warden

Vestry:

2011: Jim Charlton, Peter Cirrotti, Douglas Wilson
2012: Bruce Eckman, Doug Miles, Chris Palmer
2013: Jose Gomez

Treasurer: Jan Kwiatkowski
Vestry Clerk: Bev Bauman

Parish Prayer Cycle

Pray each day for revival in the parish, the community, the nation, the world.

Monday: Parish Staff, (Rector, Parish Administrator, Choir Director, Sexton), Vestry, Treasurer

Parish Directory: Albergo-Briggs

Tuesday: The Sunday School, Youth Ministry, Youth Directors, Teachers, Helpers, Nursery and Parents.

Parish Directory: Capobianco-Gomez

Wednesday: Outreach, Evangelism, Alpha, Hospitality Activities, Newcomers Committee, Communications.

Parish Directory: Gray-Lackey

Thursday: Pastoral Care, Prayer Chain, Order of St. Luke, Alcoholism Counseling, AA Group, Al-Anon Group, South County Day Care and Prison Ministry.

Parish Directory: Lashomb-Ogden

Friday: Stewardship, Finance, Property, Scholarship Committee, Publicity, use and care of earth's resources.

Parish Directory: Oros-Simonelli

Saturday: Worship leaders, Choir, Praise Band, Musicians, Lectors, Chalice Bearers, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, Servers, Altar Guild, Ushers, and Greeters.

Parish Directory: Smith-Zeintek

Sunday: Come and Worship!



This Aint No Party

By Deacon Greg Ventura

Recently Fr. Gus has been talking about Advent in a different way that we are used to. He challenged us to look at this time of the year in expectation of Jesus' second coming. During Advent we normally start to think about Christmas and shopping for our loved ones. Most of us are trying to keep Christ in Christmas. Still we are focused on his birthday. In one respect that is a good thing. It is better to focus on the birth of Jesus than on Santa Claus, elves, reindeer and Christmas trees and decorating. Still the focus is on Jesus as a cute little innocent baby.

His being a baby was all in the past. Jesus was born in a manger, but he was also crucified and rose again. That was a long time ago, but not in a galaxy far away. We now wait for him to come again and when he comes, well I am reminded of the following song:

*"This aint no party
This aint no disco
This aint no fooling around"*

That is from "Life During Wartime" by the Talking Heads. When Jesus comes again, it will be a wonderful for the believers, but not so for the unbelievers. That will be when you want to be counted with the sheep and not the goats. See Matthew chapter 25 for the parable of the sheep and the goats. Whether he comes quickly as it is described in the gospels or if it will be prolonged like Revelation seems to indicate, I don't know.

What I do know that I need to be ready now. Not tomorrow. Not once I have finished reading my latest bible study. Not once you finish school or

when you feel like you are mature enough. I need, we need to be ready this very instant. If you put it off, you might not make it to New Year's. See the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12. Do not put off where you are going to spend eternity.

A friend of mine, Gordon, just died. He was just a little younger than me. His health was not good, he was overweight and he smoked. He was a little rough around the edges, but he was a good friend. The age of 49 is still considered young to die. This just reminds me of my own mortality. I can do all of the exercise that I want. I can eat as healthy as possible. I can be the safest driver in the world and it will not stop me from getting killed in some other way.

Still your motivation should not be just that you don't want to spend eternity in the smoking section, if catch my drift. Our goal should be that we want to have a relationship with Jesus, because it will help us in the here and now. It also has the best retirement package you can imagine and then some. Our motivation should also be that God wants it from us and we want to be obedient. He loves us, otherwise he would not have sent his Son into the world. He would not have let him be born in a such a humble way. He would have had a king's entrance, but don't worry about that, when he comes again, he will. He will.

MATTHEW 23:30: THEN WILL APPEAR THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN IN HEAVEN. AND THEN ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH WILL MOURN WHEN THEY SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN, WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY.



Reasons to be Thankful...

By Douglas Wilson

A tune kept ringing in my head while attempting to pen this little note of thanksgiving about Thanksgiving...

The recent "Italian festival" dinner to benefit the pantry spurred a mid-eighties ditty by Ian Dury and the Blockheads into my ear. "Reasons to be Cheerful, Part 3" could be described as mellow rap for the unhip (hey, it WAS the eighties). I searched the web, found the words, but realized that other than re-titling it to "Reasons to be Thankful" I couldn't match the rhyme or rhythm. So here we go with the thoughts (sans accompaniment).

Reasons to be thankful...part 1!

Willing volunteers to set tables, and decorate. Other hands to participate in the preparation of meatballs, salad, garlic bread and eggplant. And for the people who worked the door, people who brought bread, people who broke down tables, people who cleared tables, and for those that told a friend, put up the sign to promote the evening.

Reasons to be thankful part 2

62 dinners for the freezer, 74 satisfied guests, great fellowship, homemade cannolis (on Sunday morning after too), and a restocked pantry courtesy of Boy Scout troop 223 for all they did.

If your hips aren't moving yet or your fingers not snapping you ain't catching the rhythm that I am [not] dishing out!!! But read on.

Reasons to be thankful part 3.

People who baked desserts, people who took takeout to friends, people who took dinner to their spouses, people who praised the cook (Chef Brad), and Chris and Sue for their smiles, knowing Jamie's eagle project is almost complete.

A bountiful Thanksgiving of thanksgiving.



WOMEN'S RETREAT

April 20-22, 2012

By, Jan Kwiatkowski

Although we haven't seen the worst of winter yet, many of us have already turned our thoughts, prayers, and plans to spring and the women's retreat. Our retreat is scheduled for April 20-22, 2012 at beautiful Grove Hall in Ocean Grove, NJ, a short (and easy) 45-minute drive from Helmetta to the Jersey shore.

We've covered many topics in our previous retreats ranging from prayer, mentors, and spiritual gifts, to conflict resolution and mission and vision. . This year we're going to focus on the different aspects of "Practical Faith." We'll begin with a Friday evening teaching from Elda Alslev on Spiritual Warfare. Saturday morning we will have small group/Bible study time looking at how we combat spiritual warfare with the Armor of God. Saturday afternoon, Blanche Charlton will share her insights into the faithful life of Sarah. Kathryn Hackett-Fields will close out Saturday afternoon with practical points from the Epistle of James. Saturday evening will be a time for healing prayer and fellowship.

As we look around, it seems that "everything" has increased in cost. Unfortunately, this is also true of the components that go into creating our special time away. Not only has the cost of lodging at Grove Hall increased (minimally), but so too has the cost of our Sunday lunch at a local restaurant.

The retreat planning committee met in September and discussed various ways to reduce the financial impact to those attending the retreat. The consensus of the planning committee is to offer more meals at Grove Hall. Therefore, for the first time, all meals (Saturday breakfast, lunch, and dinner and Sunday breakfast and lunch) will be available in the retreat house. Saturday lunch will be a simple meal of soup, bread, and dessert, while Sunday's lunch will be soup, prepared sandwiches, and dessert. The option for Saturday lunch in Ocean Grove is still available to everyone, but the cost of that lunch is not included in the retreat registration. Time is allotted in the schedule for a leisurely stroll downtown and lunch on Saturday.

The cost per person is dependent upon how many are in the room and if the room has a bath. Note there is one room on the 3rd floor (315) that is a triple. This is a very attractive option for 3 who are looking to reduce their retreat costs.

<u>Occupancy</u>	<u>Bath</u>	<u>No Bath</u>
Single	\$210	\$170
Double	\$130	\$110
Triple		\$85

There are only 5 rooms with bathrooms (2 on the 2nd floor and 3 on the 3rd floor). Sign up will begin at the Annual Parish Meeting scheduled to take place on Sunday, January 22nd, so be sure to register early if you want a room with a bath.

While many helping hands are already at work, help is still needed with the coordination of the Saturday evening meal and with the Sunday luncheon. Please contact Jan Kwiatkowski if you are able to help in either of these areas.

We are looking forward to a blessed and spiritually rewarding retreat!



ANGLICAN 1000

By, Fr. Gus

Anglican 1000 is an initiative of the Anglican Church in North America to raise up Anglican congregations and communities across North America.

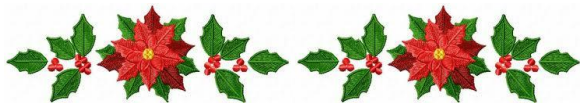
During his call to serve as Archbishop, Bob Duncan had a vision that many have seen as a prophetic call which has come to be known as Anglican 1000. Subsequent to the Archbishop's vision, a group of faithful individuals met in Plano, Texas to discern the mind of God (Funny, how that works sometimes). As a result, a movement was launched to plant churches throughout North America.

Anglican 1000 is a movement, the reason for the purpose: church planting. This falls exactly along the lines which CANA professes: we are a wave, a movement of the Spirit – not a movement or wave in time. We respond to how the Spirit moves and this is how and where the Spirit is moving.

This movement involves the mutual cooperation and networking amongst leaders, churches, dioceses, bishops, priests, and believers all over as a way of sharing the Good News of Christ our Lord.

In March 6-8, 2012 there will be an Anglican 1000 conference to be held in Plano, Texas. St. George's will be sending delegates to this conference as a means of supporting this movement. Along with this, this will also be the location of our CANA council for 2012.

The thrust of this conference is to ignite with passion the fulfillment in obedience to our Lord's call of being revealed to all the nations by our witness. In light of this, St. George's can be a positive, uplifting, and encouraging presence to all who will attend and are part of the church planting movement. We have been blessed at St. George's and this is one way we can become a blessing to others within our CANA and ACNA family.



THE SON SHINES ON WEDNESDAY

EVENING SERVICE (Really)

by, Steve Bauman



The Wednesday Evening **Power, Praise and Healing** service has been going on now for two months and some amazing things are happening. Jesus is being glorified in prayer, praise, song and healings but on October 19th, we had a special sign.

While the leadership team was praying at the front of the church on the lectern side, Peter Cirrotti noticed an unusual sight on the Altar. The center circles of the brass cross that stands in the middle of the Altar was aglow with a very bright light. The

cross shone so brightly, in fact, that you could not see any of the details at the center part of the cross. No one had ever seen such a thing before and I've been around since 1976! Everyone there saw this great light as it shone on us all evening. It was truly a blessing and made the night even more special.

Being a "lighting expert," the next Wednesday I got there early to set up the lighting exactly as I did the week before to recreate that light. No matter how I tried, however, I could not do it. Isn't it nice to see a visible sign of the Lord on occasion? In Matthew 16.4, Jesus said, "*An evil and adulterous generation craves a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah*" but the Lord, in His graciousness, chose to show us – a small group of believers who gathered to praise Him - a special sign of His love! How fitting that the love of Christ was seen as a bright glow from the center of a cross on our Altar.

Praise be to God! If you are slow to believe great things are ahead for St. George's as we follow His will, hang on to your seats and get ready since the rollercoaster is leave the boarding area! We'd also invite you to come out on Wednesday evenings where business is not "as usual."

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6.14a)



By, Fr. Gus

Luke 5:3 tells us that Jesus stepped into a boat and from within the boat began to teach the crowds; in Matthew 21:1-3 the Lord sent his disciples to get a donkey to be used as a means of fulfilling prophecy; and, from the Cross, the Lord used the cross as a most powerful pulpit from which to preach.

Jesus used the things of his day to proclaim his message – today; we too are utilizing technologies available in proclaiming that very same message.

In the workings from within our CANA district of the Northeast is the usage of webinars to connect CANA churches throughout. The hope here is that we have been situated as parishes and dioceses along non-traditional lines. Whereas in the past we had been geographically connected to one another, our CANA parish families have been spread throughout various distances and no longer possess this luxury. One way of addressing the challenge these distances present, can be found in the employment of webinars as they can significantly keep us connected to one another.

The vision of CANA in the Northeast is to utilize future webinars as the boats, the donkeys, and the cross of Jesus' day.

The anticipation is that we will be able to hold live, simultaneous communications that foster live interactions with our bishops via this modem. In addition, parishes that have been separated geographically can be connected electronically. Utilization of such technology gives us the ability to see our bishop, invite people from within our immediate and regional parishes to be seen and engage with each other – providing intimate discussions.

The content and structures of the webinars can be to allow our bishops to lead us in reflections, make announcements, teach, and instruct. The benefit of this is great in that as parishes, we can invite parishioners to attend broadcasts in the continuing effort for extensive mutual ministry.

We should note that these webinars are not substitutions for bishop's visitation as much as enhancing relationships.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER

- 8 Vestry Reports due
- 9 Ladies Night Out [EH] 6:30 PM
- 10 Boro of Helmetta [EH] 5-9 PM
- 11 Discernment Day at Coffee Hour
- 18 Christmas Caroling and Luncheon
- 19 Vestry Meeting 7:30 PM
- 24 Christmas Eve Services at 6 and 10 PM**
- 25 Christmas Day Service at 10AM**
- 26 Parish Office Closed
- 28 No Women's Bible Study this week

JANUARY 2012

- 1 Holy Name – New Year's Day**
- 5 Vestry Reports due
- 6 Epiphany**
- 7 Mutual Ministry Review 8:30 AM
- 8 Anglican Communion Sunday
- 14 2011 Audit
- 16 Vestry Meeting 7:30 PM
- 18 Christian Unity**
- 22 Annual Parish Meeting

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sundays:

Holy Eucharist 8:00 & 10:00 am
 Sunday School
 Fellowship following each service

Tuesdays:

Discipleship Group 1 pm
 Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) 8:00 pm

Wednesdays:

Men's Discipleship Group 8:30 am {Panera's}
 Morning Prayer and Women's Bible Study 10 am
 Healing Service 7:30 pm
 Discipleship Group [Smith's] 7:30 pm

Thursdays:

Serenity Seekers (Al-Anon) 1:00 pm
 AA Step Meeting 7:00 pm
 Choir Practice 7:00 pm
 Praise Band Practice 8:00 pm



CHRISTMAS AT ST* GEORGE'S

Our service times for Christmas are as follows:

CHRISTMAS EVE

Children's Service– 6 pm
 Carols and Service – 9:30 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY 10 AM



God the Father at Christmas

By, Kit Rockwell

Dear Lord,

In the joyous Christmas Season we think of the stable in Bethlehem, of Mary's joy, of the awe of the shepherds, and of St. Joseph's steadfast protection. We even think of the Magi, with their gifts and homage. We, at least I, seldom think of God the Father.

How it must have pained Him to see so many souls lost and hopeless. With what great love and tender mercy He must have looked down on His only begotten Son, now in the form of a human baby. For His Son is the only one that can appease His anger and hurt at our disobedience and coldness.

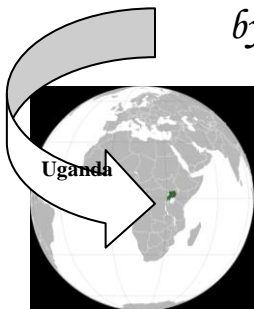
He has provided the only way to save us, whom He loves. He knows full well how we will treat His dear Son. Yet He rejoices that, through His Son, we can be forgiven and reconciled.

Yes Father, Christmas was Your idea. You, Father, are the crystal core of Christmas, from whose shining facets flows forth unfathomable mercy, forgiveness and love. For such gracious gifts we thank You with all our hearts.



ST. GEORGE'S HAS NEW FRIENDS IN UGANDA

by, Steve Bauman



I've mentioned that our Search Process covered a lot of ground and in addition to finding the exact Rector God has in mind for us, we also started a new relationship with the Rev. Frederick M. Masengere in the parish of Bweyogerere located in the Anglican Diocese of Namirembe in Uganda. (They are located along Jinja road about 12 miles from Kampala, near Namanve. If you care to Google Earth his parish. When I "Googled" his place and commented on the lack of trees, he said that electricity was too expensive and most of his people have cut down the trees to use the wood for cooking purposes! How's that for putting things into perspective?)

We have so much to learn from our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world and I welcome this personal contact. I wanted to bring you all up to date since our Outreach Committee has helped meet some of his people's basic needs. I'll get to that in a bit.

On the personal side, Frederick is married to Immaculate and God has blessed them with five children – Samuel (4th Grade), Stephen (3rd Grade), Emmanuel (Nursery), Jemimah (at home) and last born, Caren. He pastors seven sub parish churches and is completing a master's degree in public administration and management of non-profit organizations at the Uganda Christian University in Mukono. He describes his ministry as evangelical-based with a desire to witness the love for Christ. With all this, he has time to contact me multiple times a week and pray regularly for St. George's and my family. I praise God for putting us together in this strange world of cyberspace!

For a glimpse of his parish life, I asked him to tell me about his people and here, in his words is his response:

I would say that the parish is cosmopolitan and made of people of different cultures and so different languages. We hold services in Luganda and then, English for those who do not understand Luganda language. Once in the while we invite the people to come fellowship in another language found within the Country. People love worshipping in their own language. We have the young, youth and the aged. Diabetes is a big challenge to day alongside HIV among the youths and surprisingly in the married people as well! Poverty, unemployment, diseases and poor standard of living is experienced by majority of our people. Many graduate but getting a job is a problem today in Uganda.

Today one kilogram of sugar costs money equivalent to One dollar. One gallon of petrol costs is \$5.53. We continue to pray that this can be controlled. One bunch of matooke (bananas) which is the staple food of the people in central region costs in the range of five dollars. The very poor cannot meet this. Soap costs ALMOST ONE DOLLAR. That is the life now. We are black, brown in nature, talk, love, care and have concern for others, we live in houses with some power although some cannot reach this level that uses candles in the house. Many of our youths have no jobs and so some are tempted to involve in sinful natures.

I asked for stories of healings, conversions and persecution. He responded:

Healing ministry is our church's mission and interest. If there was no conversion, and healing, you would not have heard about some people here. God has always been good to many of our people in some situations. They love God, and some accept him as their personal savior although the challenge is patience that God would one day want to answer to their so many demands for life. Some drunk men punish in homes. We continue to see women throwing their children in toilets, refuse places etc. A number of street children increase as a result of persecution in homes. We have a lot of worship freedom in my country. Everyone, including our leaders, come to church. Weakness of the body and the mind lead them go their own way.

Here is more of an earlier conversation:

What are the main denominations in Uganda?

The main denominations are: Anglican (formally referred to as Protestants), Catholics, Muslims and the Orthodox. We today have Seventh Day Adventist, the Pentecostals, and Hindus.

I belong to the Anglican Church and I love to serve this church only.

I have many questions since I am interested. I know very little of Uganda.

I am willing to answer to some of your questions. But, let us not discuss politics as I am limited and or have not many answers to such questions, my brother.

Not to go on too far, but let this serve as an introduction to our Ugandan Christian brother, Frederick. If there is interest, I will forward more of what I am learning. It touched my heart so that I forwarded some excerpts of his emails and needs to our Outreach Committee for their consideration. I am happy to say they were led to send \$750 to Frederick and he has sent us a partial list of where that money has gone. It is posted in Ericson Hall on the Outreach Bulletin Board. He started sending receipts, but I responded that this was not needed and his word as a brother in Christ was quite sufficient.

Please have a look and see how your generosity has touched people that you will likely never meet. I've also put some photos on the board for your interest. If you would like to reach out to Frederick, let me know.



May God bless you and all His people, where ever they are, and protect them from the evils of this world.



DAISY THE GOAT-EARED DOG

By, Douglas Wilson

Funny how a brisk, clear and sunny fall day clean-up conjures smile-inducing memories of times past.

Long before we planted the English ivy covering on the front hill, mowing it had always been a challenge. I recall once a rope and pulley system attached to a gas mower (electric was available back then?) to guide the beast of a machine up and down safely. But I more fondly remember the four-legged lawn mower who thought she was a dog.

Daisy debuted in 1967 and was legendary in creating lasting memories around the neighborhood. She was a goat; home raised like the pet dog, before being adopted by Jon and Steve Vanaman, our then rector's almost teenage boys.

Daisy created stirs during periodic midnight neighborhood romps and antics when she got loose, "She was a social goat, to say the least," previous Rector Emeritus J Wesley Vanaman's wife, Helen recently shared. "Monitoring the traffic, in between munches of the lawn, and people watching always kept her happy," she added.

But alas, her house upbringing, and thinking she was a dog, conflicted with being housed outdoors. Sometimes upon escape Daisy would spur the middle of the night call asking, "Are you missing something?" "We would call out her name and not hear her responding bleat or BBBBAAAAAAA. We would get the leash go get her again." Helen recalls.

[Things like this are reasons to be thankful...part IV]

P.S have you seen the wild turkeys picking up the recently uncovered acorns one by one? Too many to name individually just yet.

Music Notes:

"How Music Moves Me"

By, Jessica Thompson

**"The LORD is my strength and my shield;
my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.
My heart leaps for joy, and with my song
I praise him." Psalm 28:7**

I met with the Vestry in November to tell them a little about what I do as the choir director at St. George's. During that meeting I discussed how I prayerfully choose the music for Sunday Services, I program the power point, I practice, I run practices, I can play the flute, the piano or the drums and a laundry list of other things. I shared that there are things that need updating now, that I have plans for when our church grows and that at this point we should be prayerfully listening to GOD about what he wants our music ministry to be. I also shared how I thought it would be nice for me to put something in the Spearhead each month. So I came up with this "Music Notes" section, feel free to roll your eyes at the corny play on words, but I am still going to think it's kind of cute.

I started playing the flute when I was seven and now weeks away from being 38, music gives me an amazing thoroughfare to get close to God. On a daily basis I can share my heart with God and open it in a way that is pure and natural to me. On Sundays, it is with great expectation and sincerity that I share this openness and lift my face to God through our praise and worship time. For me, words of faith, blessing, mercy, power and grace become so much more commanding and intimate when I can sing them or play to them. Music is the most natural and serene way for me to share God with so many people and it helps me pray and meditate on God throughout my day.

Granted, when I am asked about my faith or feel that a friend needs to hear God's words, I do not break out into my own little musical. I am, however, able to use lyrics and phrases of songs to help make the Bible seem less intimidating. Music also helps me share God's love in a way that is more accessible to most seeking people than to pull out my Bible.

I will conclude for this moment by sharing with you these lyrics from a Sara Groves song called The First Song that I Sing:

"In the morning when I rise • Help me to prioritize • All the thoughts that fill my day • Before my schedule • Tells me that my day is full • Before I'm off and on my way • I want to praise you • I need to praise you • Let the first song that I sing • Be praises to my God and King •"



Christmas for Our Military Overseas

My friends, below is a list of items we are putting together to send overseas to our troops who are in harm's way this Christmas. Please prayerfully consider purchasing any of the below listed items to be sent to our troops before Christmas. If you have questions please feel free to contact Noel Calvo or Jose Gomez.

- Antibacterial hand wipes
- Deodorant
- Baby Wipes
- Granola Bars
- Foot Powder
- Shaving Equipment
- Tooth Brushes/Paste
- Toiletries



"THE SOLDIER'S NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS"

Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone,
In a one bedroom house made of plaster & stone.

I had come down the chimney, with presents to give
and to see just who in this home did live

As I looked all about, a strange sight I did see,
no tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.

No stocking by the fire, just boots filled with sand.
On the wall hung pictures of a far distant land.

With medals and badges, awards of all kind,
a sobering thought soon came to my mind.

For this house was different, unlike any I'd seen.
This was the home of a U.S. Marine.

I'd heard stories about them, I had to see more,
so I walked down the hall and pushed open the door.

And there he lay sleeping, silent, alone,
Curled up on the floor in his one-bedroom home.

He seemed so gentle, his face so serene,
Not how I pictured a U.S. Marine.

Was this the hero, of whom I'd just read?
Curled up in his poncho, a floor for his bed?

His head was clean-shaven, his weathered face tan.
I soon understood, this was more than a man.

For I realized the families that I saw that night, owed
their lives to these men, who were willing to fight.

Soon around the Nation, the children would play, And
grown-ups would celebrate on a bright Christmas day.

They all enjoyed freedom, each month and all year,
because of Marines like this one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone,
on a cold Christmas Eve, in a land far from home.

Just the very thought brought a tear to my eye.
I dropped to my knees and I started to cry.

He must have awoken, for I heard a rough voice,
"Santa, don't cry, this life is my choice

I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more.
My life is my God, my country, my Corps."

With that he rolled over, drifted off into sleep,
I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.

I watched him for hours, so silent and still.
I noticed he shivered from the cold night's chill.

So I took off my jacket, the one made of red,
and covered this Marine from his toes to his head.

Then I put on his T-shirt of scarlet and gold,
with an eagle, globe and anchor emblazoned so bold.

And although it barely fit me, I began to swell with
pride, and for one shining moment, I was Marine
Corps deep inside.

I didn't want to leave him so quiet in the night,
this guardian of honor so willing to fight.

But half asleep he rolled over, and in a voice clean
and pure, said "Carry on, Santa, it's Christmas Day, all
secure."

One look at my watch and I knew he was right,
Merry Christmas my friend, Semper Fi and goodnight.

"Merry Christmas, My Friend"
by LCpl James M Schmidt, USMC, 1986

