

## Dear People of God at St. Mark's,

I wonder what your Christmas traditions are. One of my favorite traditions is unpacking a crèche, which is in my attic at home in Maryland, that has been in my family since my early childhood. It is a very humble crèche compared to the one that I saw at the National Cathedral bookstore last year, which was the same size but cost some \$469! I remember helping mother, with my brothers and sisters, choose the figurines from Woolworth's when I was about four or five years old. The prices are still stamped on the bottom of the bases. Mother Mary and the baby Jesus along with the shepherd boy only cost 29 cents each. The sheep cost either 10 or 15 cents. Joseph and the three wise men cost 39 cents each. Imagine the onlookers, the men, were even then considered of more value than Mother Mary and Baby Jesus. Perhaps this is fitting, for the story of Christmas is that God so loved the world, that he came to save us in the darkest of times and thereby says to us you are of great value and loved by God.

Thinking of the crèche and all of the Christmases that it has been with us makes me aware how Christ is in our lives, bringing joy and love. I think of the Christmases of my youth in which we would unpack it and put it on the piano where we would gather around and read the Christmas story from Luke and sing "Away in the Manger" before we opened presents. I think also of the time when we unpacked it when it was the first Christmas that grandmother was not with us. Yet the peace of the faces of the crèche reminded us that God was with us always in the birth of his Son Jesus despite the circumstances. I recalled the last Christmas that we were all together as a family, when my older brother chose to celebrate Christmas with his girlfriend from college instead of coming home. Soon, the crèche would be unpacked in the years of the Vietnam war when my brothers would be gone. It held for us prayers for peace and memories that God so loved the world that the angels' message was for peace and goodwill. The prayerful silence of this simple crèche reminds as all crèches us do, that God is with us wherever we are.

This crèche saw me through my university days, and the year that we lost my younger sister. It promised new life and the love of God who is with us, for Jesus' Name – Emmanuel – means God is with us. It also was with us in times of joy of the family when there were weddings, births of nieces and nephews and even births of grand nieces. It was also with me the years that I lost my parents.

*See "Rona's Letter," page 2*

## Rona's Letter *continued from page 1*

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This year I have a new crèche purchased from our 3rd Ave. Corner Shop. This little humble crèche reminds me of the love of Christmases past and the hope of Christ present. I think too as we look forward to this Christmas that we may once again experience that holy peace that all creches depict and the love of God for not only us but for all people.

May the Holy Peace and Love of God be with you this Christmas.

Yours faithfully,

**Rona+**

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

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- December 1 . . . World AIDS Day service
- December 2 . . . Our day at Manna Soup Kitchen
- December 7 . . . St. Mark's hosts Advent ecumenical service and soup supper
- December 18 . . One service at 9:00 a.m. followed by Christmas brunch
- December 18 . . Majesty of Christmas
- December 20 . . Blue Christmas service
- December 21 . . All-church Caroling
- December 24 . . Christmas Eve *see services, page 5*
- December 25 . . Merry Christmas!  
One service, 9:00 a.m.
- January 1 . . . . Happy New Year!  
One service, 9:00 a.m.

## World AIDS Day Service

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On Thursday, December 1, St. Mark's will host a World AIDS Day Service at noon. It is a time to remember all whose lives have been affected by AIDS, those who suffer with the disease and friends and family who support them.

## Advent Ecumenical Service and Soup Supper Schedule

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Every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. during the Advent season, churches trade off hosting a service followed by a soup supper.

The schedule is:

**November 30** – St. Columba, 1830 E. 2nd Ave.

**December 7** – St. Mark's Episcopal Church

**December 14** – First Presbyterian, 1159 E 3rd Ave.

**December 21** – Christ the King, 495 Florida Rd.

St. Mark's day to host the service is December 7, and we're asking our amazing cooks to contribute soups and breads for that service. Watch for the sign-up sheet at the coffee service station on Sunday. We need to have at least ten soups, each serving from eight to ten.

## It's Our Turn to Cook at the Soup Kitchen!

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'Tis the season to give! How about giving a couple of hours of your time to serve at the soup kitchen this month? Join us at 9:00 a.m. Friday, December 2 to prepare and serve a hearty lunch to the hungry. We usually finish by 1:30 with all the tasks at hand. You can stay the whole time or give two hours of your time. Please sign up in the Parish Hall. The bonus is that you'll also get to have an amazing lunch and meet some of the folks who work at the soup kitchen dedicating their time to feed the hungry, as well as meet some of the soup kitchen guests.

## Newsletter Deadline

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The deadline for the December newsletter is November 20. Send information to [CherylB@StMarksDurango.com](mailto:CherylB@StMarksDurango.com).



# Children & Youth

## **All – Chrismon Tree Spectacular – Instructions December 4**

Did your church have a Chrismon Tree where you grew up? This wonderful tradition comes from the words “Christ” and “Monogram” and is based on the creation of beautiful symbols of Christianity – all in white, silver or gold. This is an invitation for each individual or family to create their best. We will place the ornaments on the tree during the December 18 worship services as part of the Greening of the Church. Ivey Patton will provide guidelines, templates and more on December 4 during coffee hour. We strongly encourage families to participate together. At the Chrismon tables on December 4, there will be a table for children, but parental supervision is needed.

## **All Children & Youth – December 11, 19, 23, 24 – Christmas Eve Pageant**

All children and youth are invited to participate in the annual Christmas Eve Pageant, which is presented at the 5:00 p.m. family worship service. Roles will be assigned on December 11 and practice sessions will be held on Sunday, December 18, Friday, December 23 and Saturday, December 24 (right before the service). To sign-up and be assigned a role, look for the Children & Youth table at coffee hour in the Parish Hall on December 11 or contact Ellen Babers ([ellen@wildhairproductions.com](mailto:ellen@wildhairproductions.com) or 946-6108).

## **Christmas Eve Music**

Parents! If your child plays a musical instrument and would like to play during the 5:00 service on Christmas Eve, please contact Scott Hagler ([ScottH@StMarksDurango.com](mailto:ScottH@StMarksDurango.com) or 247-1129, ext. 14).

## **EYC – December 11 – The Miracle of Duct Tape**

Youth in grades 7–12 will meet in the Parish Hall on Sunday, December 11 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. This session will focus on the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and will include a miraculous transformation involving duct tape. Light dinner provided.

## **Youth Event – Grades 3–6 – December 17 – Gathering of the Greens**

The greening of the church starts in the forest with the gathering of pine boughs. Youth in grades 3–6 are invited to meet at St. Mark's at 10:00 a.m. to carpool to the forest to hunt for the freshest, most wonderful-smelling evergreens we can find. Wear old clothes as pine sap is a given on this adventure. Hot chocolate and snack provided. We will return to the church at noon. Please sign up on the Children & Youth Bulletin Board in the Parish Hall or contact Ellen Babers ([ellen@wildhairproductions.com](mailto:ellen@wildhairproductions.com) or 946-6108).



# Children & Youth

## All – Wednesday, December 21 – Caroling at Four Corners Nursing Home

Join us for the annual caroling service project at Four Corners Nursing Home on Wednesday, December 21. We will meet at the church at 5:00 for a light supper and then carpool to Four Corners to sing. We will sing all the favorites – and will provide a handy booklet with the words and tunes.

## Save the Date! EYC – January 28–29 – Ski Trip and Lock-in

## A Child Returns to a Home Restored

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On November 6, the EYC travelled to the Navajo Reservation in Shiprock, New Mexico. Their mission: to weatherize a house for a mother and her daughter, who has a disability. The project required multiple skills – how to work the tools used, how to remove rotten and unusable house materials, how to install insulation, how to finish off a project so that old and new materials blend in together. It required teamwork, sharing of tools, ideas and methods. And at its heart, the mission required an understanding and respect for a different culture, and also a sensitivity for those who are less fortunate.

The EYC and their able mentors, along with the construction specialists – Anne Dizenzo, Bob Prentice, Larry Tweedy, and Matt Patton – left with blessings, breakfast and a sack lunch courtesy of the

Wednesday night prayer group. They returned with newly honed skills, a pride in their work and a knowledge that they had made a difference.

When asked what was the biggest impact on them, the team had diverse answers.

“During the day, Juanita, the mother, confided that her daughter Kersheena had not been able to sleep at the house because it was too cold,” said Trisha. “While we were there, we discovered that in addition to the house not being properly insulated, the heater had not been working. Anne and Bob were able to get it going.”

“What I noticed most was the dogs,” said Benjamin. “Lots and lots of dogs at all the houses, and they didn’t look like they were in very good condition. Max and I worked with Larry on removing an old window and installing a new one. Larry showed us what to do, but let us do a lot of the work. I had never done that before.”

The Children & Youth Committee is just beginning the planning for 2012 events. With the success of this trip, and our mission statement of “To build a loving fellowship of Disciples of Christ through service, education and recreation,” expect to see more service mission events in the future!

## Schedule of Services

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### **Christmas Eve** *Saturday, December 24*

**5:00 p.m.**

Children's Christmas Pageant and Eucharist  
(Child care provided)

**7:00 & 9:00 p.m.** (identical services)

Candlelight Choral Eucharist with Choir  
(Child care provided)

### **Christmas Day** *Sunday, December 25*

One service only: **9:00 a.m.**

Family Eucharist, no child care.

### **New Year's Day** *Sunday, January 1*

One service only: **9:00 a.m.**

Family Eucharist, No child care.

In order to be more sensitive to those with allergies, there will be no incense at any of the Christmas services this year.

## One Service on December 18

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On Sunday, December 18 we will have only one service at 9:00 a.m. followed by brunch in the Parish Hall and decorating the church for Christmas. Children and their families will decorate the Chrismon tree during the service, and the children will also have a pageant rehearsal immediately following the decorating. If you would like to help with the brunch, especially with clean-up (we have two holiday concert receptions on the same day) please let the office know by e-mailing CherylB@StMarksDurango.com or calling 247-1129.

## Majesty of Christmas: December 18

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Enjoy beautiful Christmas music, performed by favorite Durango musicians, including soprano

Gemma Kavanagh, flutist Rochelle Mann, oboist Danielle Menapace and organist C. Scott Hagler. The concert is Sunday, December 18 at 2:00 p.m. with a repeat performance at 5:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students and children. Get yours at the 3rd Ave. Corner Shop, at the church office or online: [www.3rdAveArts.org](http://www.3rdAveArts.org).

## Blue Christmas Service: December 20

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Many people experience sadness during the holidays. Loss of a loved one, children moving away, losing a job or a pet, divorce and the many changes that we struggle with, can all make this holiday time seem more like a burden than a joy. The Blue Christmas service is a time to gather together and honor our feelings in a setting of remembrance, prayer and music. The service is Tuesday, December 20 at 5:30 p.m.

## Caroling, Caroling Now We Go!

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Caroling with the youth will be on Wednesday, December 21. We will meet at the church at 5:30 p.m. and carpool to Four Corners Health Care Center where we'll sing carols and spread good cheer. Mark the date and watch the church bulletins for more details.

## Monday Service Change Announced

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For the rest of November and December the Monday 5:30 p.m. service will return to a vespers service without Eucharist. In simple terms, a Vespers service is an evening worship service. The service offers readings, prayers and sometimes music, often chanted by a worship leader. The evening Eucharist service will resume on January 9, 2012.

## Dear Partners in Mission,

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Ana's mother recently suffered a stroke which caused Ana to be busily running between the house and the hospital. Family members here stay with a loved one 24 hours a day in the hospital, since the staff is only there to administer medicine and direct their care. Any personal care provided such as assistance to the bathroom, repositioning in the bed, changing the sheets, feeding, bathing, etc. is all provided by the family. If there is a woman and the rest of the family is men, the woman does the majority of the work. Men take their turn sitting with the loved one and may help with water or something simple. Ana is the only daughter and she only had sons, so the majority of the work fell to her. She slept with her mother in the hospital for several nights and started back to work after about five days of this. Her mother was not released from the hospital for

another few days. Two or three days after returning to work, she was having a difficult day. My reaction was to hug her and give her the opportunity to cry and release some of the tension. Her reaction was to do exactly that, and then to ask God to forgive her. I protested that she didn't need to ask forgiveness for crying and she said it was because she was in despair. Although her reaction to the stress was perfectly normal under the circumstances from my perspective, she felt it was not trusting God to have these feelings of despair. I still have much to learn in my journey with Christ!

Please pray for Ana and her mother as they face the reality of a severe stroke, for those who are ill and don't have family to care for them in the hospital. Please pray for the training opportunities I'm involved with that they truly enhance the recipients' abilities to care for their clients.

May God bless and guide you in all you do!

—Cathy Donahoe

ST.  
MARK'S  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

[www.StMarksDurango.com](http://www.StMarksDurango.com)  
(970) 247-1129

910 E. 3rd Ave.  
Durango, CO 81301