



Volume 7 Issue 5

Sep/Oct 2008

St. John's Episcopal Church, 4 Church Street, Essex, New York, 12936
Website: www.StJohnsEssexNY.com Email: stjohnschurch@willex.com
518-963-7775

"Thanks for Nuthin' "

Kathy Henderson

- ✓ INSIDE THIS ISSUE
- ✓ VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS
- ✓ A WORD FROM SENIOR WARDEN LYNNE GOEPPER
- ✓ MOVIE REVIEW

As we approach Thanksgiving one question always occurs to me: What about the people who have nothing to be thankful for? You know we are rich! I doubt there are many here who will lack for food on Thanksgiving Day. In fact most will eat more than they should. Most of us have a decent place to live, family and friends to celebrate the day with. And even the poor in America are rich by third world standards.

But there are many people who are not so blessed. Today there are many in our country and our world that don't have a place to stay on this day. There are some that face chronic illnesses and even imminent death. As a child I learned a prayer called Burns' Grace. It says, "Some have meat and cannot eat, and some there be that want it, but we have meat and we can eat so say the Lord we thank it." There are some that have food but because of their health they can't eat and there are others who don't have the meat to eat. And then there are those for whom Thanksgiving is just another day of loneliness.

How can they give thanks? How can people give thanks for nothing? How can the persecuted, starving, lonely and ill give thanks to God? What would they give thanks for? What about the people who have nothing to be thankful for?

Perhaps a brief history lesson on the origins of Thanksgiving Day will help us answer this question. The day that we in the United States celebrate as Thanksgiving originated with the Pilgrims. They were persecuted for their Puritan religious practices in England so they sought to come to the New World to find freedom. In the process of coming to the New World they got lost and landed at the wrong place. The New World was flowing with milk and honey, but it was also a rugged country. They were isolated and alone except for the Native Americans who taught them how to work this rugged land.



Some might say that they didn't have much to be thankful for. They had work hard and some had died. They were a world away from their loved ones and were isolated from their country. They were unwelcome in their homeland and they were facing a long cold winter.

Yet they gave thanks! Not only did they give thanks and feast themselves they even invited others, the Indians, to feast with them. And out of this ragged groups of survivors grew a tradition that has become a national passion. A day of feasting and giving thanks for all that God has given us. A National holiday for counting our blessings.

I have discovered that giving thanks often at it greatest when life is at its worst. People give thanks best when they seem to have nothing to be thankful for. A case in point: the hymn "Now Thank We All Our God." Let me just read it to you:

Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
who from our mother's arms has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love and still in ours today.

The second verse is a prayer for God's protection and the last verse a doxology.

The surprising thing is that this hymn was written in the midst of the 30 years war. The author of these words was Martin Rinkart. He was serving as the pastor of a church in Eilenberg. During his time there the city was overrun by armies at least three times and was constantly dealing with large numbers of refugees. In 1637 there was a plague in which 8,000 people died. At one point Rinkart was the only pastor left and was performing 40 or 50 funerals a day!

Suddenly the words of his hymn take on new meaning: "Thank we all our God...who wondrous things has done...countless gifts of love." In the midst of such great human suffering; pain, loss, illness, that such a hymn as this could be written is a miracle. Many of us, as blessed as we are, could never offer up a prayer of thanks like that! Yet out of this womb of human suffering the great hymn of thanksgiving was born.

Why can people like Rinkart and the Pilgrims give thanks in the midst of such troubles? How can they give thanks for nothing? They can give thanks for nothing because Christ is their Lord! Jesus himself had been where they are and worse. Before he was crucified Jesus was dragged before Pilate. He had been abandoned by his friends and is being persecuted by his own countrymen. He was about to be stripped of all human dignity to be tortured and then to experience true alienation and finally death.

Pilate looked on this pitiful creature and asked, "Are you the King of the Jews?" The world would laugh and say, "He is no king for he has no kingdom - no power." But Jesus replied, "My Kingdom is not of this world." If it were of this world he would have an army to try to defend him but the only armies he commanded were the hosts of heaven. And they didn't need to defend the homeland because it could not be touched by the Romans or any earthly army.

It is this realization that gives people the ability to give thanks for nothing. Even when so much is lost, people who claim Christ as their Lord know that the things of this world are really nothing to begin with. When Rinkart wrote of countless gifts of love, he was not thinking of his earthly home or health or food. Those things had been destroyed. He was probably thinking of his home not made with hands; eternal in the heavens. When the Pilgrims gave thanks, they were not merely giving thanks for the food that might see them through the winter. They were also giving thanks to God for the eternal blessing that he had given them.

In fact I think this explains why people give thanks best when life is at its worst. It is at those times that we realize that what we have in this world is really nothing. It is then that we begin to realize the richness of God's

blessings. It is in those moments of hardship that we can thank God for our earthly nothing and our heavenly something.

Can you give thanks for nothing? Count your blessings this year: both the material and the spiritual. We all have much to be thankful for. What do you have to be thankful for this year?

If you had none of the earthly things mentioned, could you still give thanks? If you were homeless and alone and sick, could you celebrate Thanksgiving? If you were persecuted and in prison, could you rejoice at the greatness of God's gifts to you? I know I would have trouble. But with God's help I hope I could.

If you can't give thanks for nothing, then ask yourself: Is Christ really your King? If you answer "no" or if you can't find an answer, then make Christ your King. Then you too can celebrate a real Thanksgiving this year!

VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

By Lynne Goepper (Warden)

During the vestry's regular monthly meeting in September, Treasurer Kalora Finucane reported that pledge receipts are down. Hopefully with summer distractions over, folks will turn their attention to their important pledges made and kept.

Peter Schultz gave an update on building and grounds work. Exterior work on the rectory porch is getting done. There remains drainage and fill work to be done in the carport area. Also underway is the replacement of the parish hall back door and porch. Replacement became very apparent as that area experienced extensive carpenter ant and rodent damage. Orkin is now under a year contract to care for both the rectory and Persell Hall.

Because our supply priests seem to live in the Saranac Lake area, the vestry discussed installing some furniture from "ReNew" during the winter months so that visiting clergy might come on Saturday and stay overnight. Thus if weather threatens, we could still have Sunday service with communion.

Mary Anne Schultz is fulfilling an amazing mission, bringing her vision of helping neighbors in need to reality. In addition to volunteer help from Willsboro-Essex churches Mary Anne has also organized a great variety of special fund raising events. Please extend a "well done" to her, Helene Gray, Norma Goff, local organizations (including the Masons) and the many others who have done so much to make this endeavor such an outstanding success.

In other matters: there are only two spaces left in the columbarium. A. Almar will be contacted to design an addition; a new yoga group is using Persell Hall on Monday afternoons; six candidate "packets" have been received from the Diocesan Deployment

Office and these will be reviewed by the vestry at a special meeting.

At the October meeting we discussed our heating cost concerns. It is hoped that all the renovation work will reflect more efficiency! With the seasonal change the rectory will be kept at 55 degrees so visiting clergy may use the house for overnight stays. The Rev. Fredrick Dennis will be our celebrant Nov. 9- Dec 21. There are three October Sundays when priests are not available, so Morning Prayer will be conducted by lay volunteers: Peter Schultz and Katharine Preston on October 19; Claudia Caveney and Mary Beal on October 26; Bill Finucane and Bruce Stephan on Nov. 2.

The new directory is being completed by Kathy Henderson who urges all corrections to the current one be submitted yesterday! Also discussed: the ReNew Shop will close on October 26 and reopen for Dec. 6th "Christmas in the Village"...volunteer crafters are invited to make items for sale; stewardship time is upon us, but given that the vestry is preoccupied with finding and selecting a new priest, you are requested to fulfill your pledge for this year. More on stewardship at a later date.

MOVIE REVIEW

David Thewlis, Vera Farmiga, Asa Butterfield, Jack Scanlon, and Rupert Friend. Drama. Written by John Boyne and Mark Herman. Directed by Mark Herman.

Based on the best-selling book by author John Boyne, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* is a fictional story that offers a unique perspective on how prejudice, hatred and violence affect innocent people, particularly children, during wartime. Through the lens of an eight-year-old boy largely shielded from the reality of World War II, we witness a forbidden friendship that forms between Bruno, the son of a Nazi commandant, and Schmel, a Jewish boy held captive in a concentration camp. Though the two are separated physically by a barbed wire fence, their lives become inescapably intertwined as friends. **A Must Watch!**



A "WORD" PLEASE

Lynne Goepper

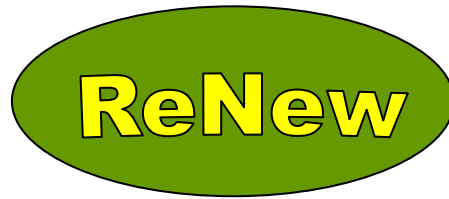
In June and July as we prepared our church profile and goals, WE frequently heard ourselves emphasize our need to improve and increase OUR outreach efforts. This is easily done by remembering to contributing: on the first Sunday of each month for the "Rector's Discretionary Fund", on the second Sunday for our community food shelf, and on the third Sunday, to missions. The extra giving can be by check with notation or by cash offering. Every Sunday food items may be left at the rear of the church. Your giving makes a difference to those less fortunate in our community!

We all know the importance of lay participation via serving as greeter, acolyte, lay reader, altar guild, prayers of the people, flowers for the altar, and hosting coffee hour. St. John's can be very proud of our amount and willingness to serve. When to serve can be a problem without an easy answer! Though we did give "signing up" a try, it only partially worked. As of November Kathy will return to delegating duties. However please feel free to call Kathy (963-7775) if you have a particular Sunday when you would like to help.

"GREENS TEA"



DECEMBER 6, 2:00-4:00, VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
CONTACT LYNNE GOEPPER @ 963-4464
CLAUDIA CAVENEY @ 963-7977



**PARTICIPATING IN "CHRISTMAS IN ESSEX"
DECEMBER 6 & 7
WITH CHRISTMAS BAZAAR @ICE CREAM SHOP**

THANKSGIVING SERVICE

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A COMMUNITY-WIDE, ECUMENICAL
THANKSGIVING SERVICE ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, AT 7 PM AT ST.
PHILIP'S CHURCH IN WILLSBORO. WE WILL BE TAKING UP AN
OFFERING OF MONEY AND /OR FOOD ITEMS FOR THE FOOD SHELF AT
THE SERVICE.