

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last week, I lost two former colleagues in the Reformed Episcopal Church, who were also two very dear friends. The Presiding Bishop, Royal Grote, died on Thanksgiving morning in his sleep. Bishop George Fincke was a seminary classmate who died on Sunday morning, the 4th of December.

These are blows to their families, of course. They are certainly a loss to the Reformed Episcopal Church. But in my selfishness, I think of them as a loss to me.

Roy was never “my” bishop, in the sense that I was never in his jurisdiction. However, he would often

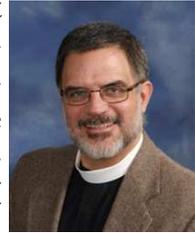
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call me just to see how I was doing, to see if I needed any help with denominational projects I worked on, including my planning for the Germany project that eventually took my family to live in Europe for several years. Why did he call? Out of Christian affection—nothing more or less.

George, before he was consecrated bishop, served a church in the Glenside area. As a student of history, it was he who made me an Anglican. We met weekly for a year for lunch, talking about the Protestant reformation, about Cranmer, Hooker, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Presbyterianism, church polity, the doctrine of the church and of the sacraments and many other topics,

until I had no choice but to agree that Presbyterian polity was an anomaly and my view of the reformation was incomplete. When I say that I became an Anglican kicking and screaming, it is George of whom I think.



But as powerful as these experiences with these two brothers were, they aren't the most compelling aspects of my relationship with them. It was that they were true friends, not just acquaintances. They were the “iron sharpens iron” (Proverbs 27:17) kind of friends, the “sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24) kind of friends. Our relationships were give and take, sometimes even rough and tumble. *Therefore, they were rich and deep!*

Of course, most readers didn't know these gentlemen and their graduation days were mere abstractions to you, if you had heard of them.

Still, there's a lesson here for us all. In my experience as a follower of Jesus and as a pastor, it seems that we often underestimate the val-

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ue of godly friendships. I cannot count how many times I've seen people walk away from a church for shallow and base reasons, without regard for the fact that the people who have loved them the most are being left behind. Instead of ham-

mering through an offense (real or supposed), off one goes to another church (or no church at all!)—missing out on an opportunity to grow up and mature for both parties.

Rather than do the hard work of “walk[ing] in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1–3), it’s common to take the comfortable way, the easy way—the shallow way, the childish way.

Does that sound harsh? Complain to Paul. His *modus operandi* for conflict is “speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:15–16).

“Speaking the truth in love, we are to *grow up*.” In godly love, the body of Christ, the church, “when each part is working properly”, makes itself grow up! However, when things aren’t working properly, the opposite of growing up is ... well, you fill in the blank.

When I think of George and Roy, did we enjoy many meals together, talking into late nights, enjoying the same movies, jokes, good beer, and fine music? Sure we did. But it didn’t stop there. It was much deeper. Roy and George were two brothers who committed themselves to godly love for me (and many others) by speaking the truth in love to me, challenging me, encouraging me, and not giving up on me. And that made the conversations,

jokes, beer, and music all the more sweet and memorable—and profitable.

My dear brothers and sisters, we are being especially stretched during this time in the life of St. John’s. As we begin to take on the marvelous gift of 1150 Bristol Road, it’s actually a double-sided gift. The property is the one side, the obvious side. The other side is that we are being required to ask ourselves where the good Father is leading us, being driven to our knees in prayer like never before. We are being required to come up with answers, perhaps like never before in the life of St. John’s. Additionally, we have the challenges and opportunities that every godly church is facing today: where are our youth? my children? music? bridging the generations? money? evangelism? “visit[ing] orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep [ing] oneself unstained from the world” (James 1:27)?

Now is a great time to learn the high value of the relationships you have with each other in Christ. Don’t give up on each other. Speak the truth in love. Be candid *and* tender-hearted toward each other. Be constant in prayer for each other. Cherish the times you have with each other. Don’t seek to make others like yourself, but seek to be like others as they follow Christ. The next offense, conflict, or misunderstanding is actually the next rich opportunity for you both to grow up.



Baker Library Book Brief *By Ken Cook*

“Surely the Lord is coming soon! Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!” Advent is upon us, and we are called to fix our eyes upon Jesus, the Savior of the world (our Savior)! Christmas draws near and we remember the birth of Jesus, God with us! Because of the good news in Christ, it is truly possible for you and for me - and a multitude of others - to be “more than conquerors through him who loves us” (Romans 8:31-37). Let us continue to turn to him in repentance and reliant trust by the Holy Spirit.

Among the gifts God has showered upon us is the new home for St. John’s at 1150 Bristol Road, Southampton, PA 18966. Our offices and library have already been moved there, and more and more of our activities and group ministries are beginning to occur there on a regular basis.

The new publication being added to our congregational library this month is *Listen Up!: A Practical Guide to Listening to Sermons* by Christopher Ash. Christopher Ash is a Church of England priest, pastor and Director of the Cornhill Training Course in London. He is the author of numerous books and a trainer of veteran and newly-minted preachers at Cornhill.

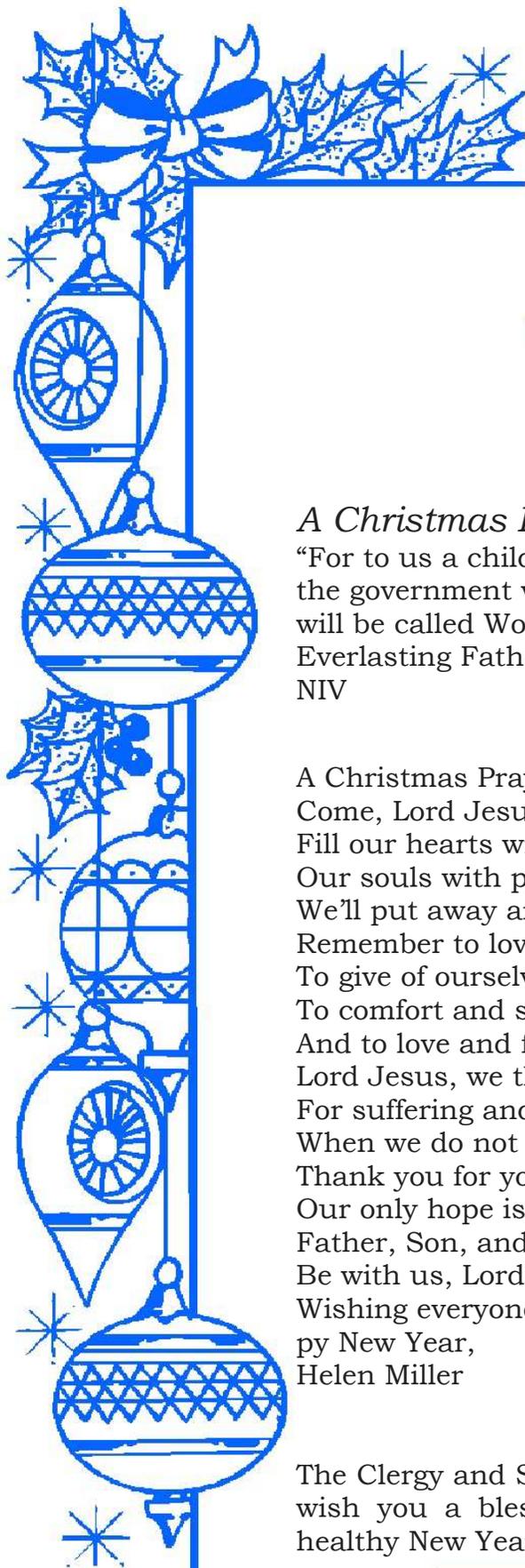
If you have struggled about what you can do to help yourself gain from the sermons you hear at St. John’s (and elsewhere), *Listen Up!* will surely prove to be a practical aid. For those of you who fear sermons that are too long, please note that Dr. Ash’s guide is composed of a mere 30 pages. This colorful pamphlet is structured around “seven ingredients for healthy sermon listen-

ing”, each of which comes with “practical steps to take.” As a preacher, I cannot resist focusing on our author’s first key ingredient to gain-



ful listening to a sermon in order to provide perspective on this publication at large, that is, “*Expect God to speak*”. In three crisp pages, Ash (a.) reflects on two hypothetical (but common) experiences for those who are present as a sermon is preached. Then (b.) he draws on several passages from the Bible which consider the significance of the proclamation of the Word of God. What follows is (c.) a simple pastoral and theological observation as to how we might, or might not, be able hear God speaking by means of a sermon. Lastly, (d.) he suggests five excellent preparatory steps to take before the sermon starts. These include: if possible, reading the sermon’s Bible passages, and praying for the preacher and yourself in advance, as well as aiming to come to the service in a rested rather than exhausted state, and then quietly preparing your mind to listen before the sermon begins. The other six ingredients considered after this fashion are: “*Admit God knows better than you*”, “*Check the preacher says what the passage says*”, “*Hear the sermon in church*”, “*Be there week by week*”, “*Do what the Bible says*” and “*Do what the Bible says today - and rejoice*”. All of this is found in the first 23 pages! The remainder includes sympathetic - and wise - counsel on “How to listen to bad sermons” and “7 suggestions for encouraging good preaching”.

Ken



A Christmas Prayer

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6 NIV

A Christmas Prayer

Come, Lord Jesus,
Fill our hearts with song, our spirits with joy,
Our souls with peace, our minds with wisdom!
We'll put away anger and discord, and
Remember to love one another,
To give of ourselves to those in need,
To comfort and support the grieving and the lost,
And to love and forgive those who hurt us.
Lord Jesus, we thank you for coming to save us,
For suffering and dying and rising again,
When we do not deserve it, could never earn it.
Thank you for your grace and forgiveness,
Our only hope is in you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Be with us, Lord Jesus, now and forever! Amen
Wishing everyone a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year,
Helen Miller

The Clergy and Staff of St. John's Anglican Church wish you a blessed and joyful Christmas and a healthy New Year.



2016 Christmas Holiday Events

Date and Time	Event	Location
Saturday, December 17th 3:00 pm 5:00 pm	Rehearsal of Christmas Pageant Christmas Pageant Light Refreshments Follow	St. John's Anglican Church 1150 Bristol Road Southampton, PA
Sunday, December 18th 7:45 am 9:00 am 10:30 am	Holy Communion Lessons & Carols Wassail Bowl & Snacks	Abington Baptist Church 1501 Huntingdon Road Abington, PA
Monday, December 19th 6:00 pm 6:30 pm 7:00 pm	Cooks' Caroling Light Meal Prayer Caroling Begins	Home of Ken & Margie Cook 1843 Rockwell Road Abington, PA
Saturday, December 24th 10:00 pm	Christmas Eve Holy Communion	Abington Baptist Church 1501 Huntingdon Road Abington, PA
Sunday, December 25th 9:00 am	Christmas Day Holy Communion	Abington Baptist Church 1501 Huntingdon Road Abington, PA



Cooks' Caroling on Monday, December 19

Cooks' Christmas Caroling will take place on Dec. 19 starting from the Cook home at 1843 Rockwell Rd. in Abington. If you can, join us at 6 for a sandwich supper. We plan to pray at 6:30 and carol from 7 to 8 followed by dessert and fellowship back at the Cook house.

You can join us at any time but please RSVP if you are going to be present for sandwiches. Please pray for the singing of Christ centered carols to result in ministry to the neighborhood. Please also pray for good weather. Thank you for your prayers! If you come bring a flashlight! Questions: call Margie Cook @215-360-4959.



Attention: Ladies and, of course, Gentlemen who wish to participate! On Saturday, December 17 Women's Ministry of St Johns is Having a Cookie Exchange

Please make and bring four dozen cookies to exchange with your fellow parishioners and to share with the seven families at A Woman's Place - a shelter for abused women and their children in Doylestown.

We are meeting at the home of Carole Ziegler between 10 am and 12 noon. Her address is 369 Emerson Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006 and phone number is 215-806-0311.

Come for coffee, tea, goodies and fellowship as well as "ooing and ahing" over the cookies. Please let us know what type of cookies you will be bringing by signing up at church this Sunday or emailing Carole at cvziegler@earthlink.net

We need a variety of types; so far ladies have signed up for chocolate chip, snickerdoodles, snowballs, short bread, macaroons and meringue cookies. Other suggestions are brownies, chocolate, peanut butter, sugar, oatmeal, raisin, gingerbread, scones, lemon squares,....

Any questions??? see Tiffani Cushing, Vikki Baker or Carole Ziegler.

