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Preparing the way in this holy season

"God takes us by the hand, and leads us out to an open place," the Rev. Cathy H. George writes in her meditation for the third week in Advent, one in a series being offered at www.diomass.org during a frenzied season when the church can be an oasis of peace. [Read more.](#)

Skip the mall and spend an "Advent Morning" in prayer with author Phyllis Tickle on Saturday, Dec. 19, beginning at 8:30 a.m. at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston. Sign up [here](#).

"Jesus is already abroad, even in the darkness," Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori writes in her 2009 Christmas message, [here](#).

And, listen [here](#) to Brother Curtis Almquist, SSJE read chapters from his book *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, in which he invites us to "unwrap gifts that will last," praying the 12 days as we go.



Clergy may solemnize marriage for all eligible couples

Clergy of this diocese may now solemnize marriages for all eligible couples, Bishop M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE announced on Nov. 29, the first Sunday in Advent and the beginning of the church year.

The decision came, his statement said, after a long discernment process leading up to and continuing after the action of General Convention this past July allowing that "bishops, particularly in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-gender marriage is legal, may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this church."

The full text of the statement is [here](#).

Bishop Suffragan Bud Cederholm characterized the outpouring of response to the decision from members of the diocese as "largely one of appreciation, as well as understanding that this is where we are pastorally at this time."

[Read more.](#)

Read diocesan clergy reactions shared in the [Boston Globe](#), [Newburyport Daily News](#), [MetroWest Daily News](#) and [Provincetown Banner](#).

Presiding bishop joins MIT discussion on science and social responsibility

Scientists have an obligation to "tell the truth they know," the Episcopal Church's presiding bishop recently told a forum at MIT in Cambridge.

The evening was part of a 45th anniversary celebration for the Technology and Culture Forum, a program coordinated by the Episcopal chaplain at MIT.

[Read more.](#)

See photos from the forum [here](#). Watch the video [here](#).



PHOTO: Tracy J. Sukraw

Former oceanographer and current presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori meets young adults in the audience before joining a panel on "The Social Responsibility of the Scientist" on Dec. 3 at MIT.

Cathedral's radio show seeks new on-air home

The Cathedral Church of St. Paul's long-running Sunday morning radio broadcast on WCRB is officially off the air--for now.

[Read more.](#)

Anyone who would like to be notified should the radio broadcast find a new home can e-mail radio@diomass.org with "Please Contact Me" in the subject line.



Five years and 100 congregations later: Consultants honor one of their own

It may sound kind of dry-- budgets, audits, financial statements, property matters, long-range planning--but it is essential to a congregation's foundation for doing God's mission in the world, Bishop Suffragan Bud Cederholm says of the work of the diocese's Congregational Business Consultants, a group of 15 legal, business and financial professionals who volunteer their counsel and practical assistance to congregations in need of it.



PHOTO: Tracy J. Sukraw

Bishop Bud Cederholm (right) and coordinator Chris Meyer (left) joined the diocese's Congregational Business Consultants in naming Helen Daley their "Consultant of the Year."

On Dec. 15 the consultants marked their group's fifth year by pausing to honor one of their own, Helen Daley of the Parish of St. John the Evangelist in Hingham, whom they named "Consultant of the Year."

In its five years the group has assisted more than 100 churches around the diocese.

[Read the full story.](#)

In addition to one-to-one consulting, the group prepares resource materials and offers annual workshops on sound business practices and audits. The upcoming workshop schedule and online registration is [here](#).

"We are very busy, so if there are people out there with business experience who want to volunteer, I'd love to hear from them," coordinator Chris Meyer says. E-mail him at cmeyer@diomass.org.

Newslinks

On switching vocations and locations: The Rev. Dr. Ian T. Douglas talks about his election as Connecticut's bishop coadjutor in this Dec. 12 *Belmont Citizen-Herald* [Q&A](#).

Bishop Beckwith on marriage in Massachusetts: Families are stronger when all families are given the full support of the law, Newark's bishop, Mark Beckwith, writes in this Dec. 7 *New Jersey Daily Record* [op-ed](#) in support of his state's pending marriage bill. He cites his experience as a priest in Massachusetts, where the "feared threat to marriage has not materialized," he writes.

More jobs, please: The Rev. Jane Gould of St. Stephen's Church in Lynn was among those rallying at the State House for government-created jobs on Dec. 3. Watch the [Fox news segment](#).

Food on the move: It took 800 hands and 900 grocery bags to move the food pantry from St. Paul's Church in Natick to a new, larger home with the Natick Service Council, according to this Nov. 30 *Boston Globe* [report](#).

Priest in the pew and pulpit, he says: The *Dover-Sherborn Press* on Nov. 26 interviewed the Rev. Mark McKone-Sweet as he begins as the new rector of St. Dunstan's Church, [here](#).

Parish Circuit

Candles and bells for Copenhagen: Candlelight vigils were held all around the world on Dec. 11 as world leaders negotiate a climate treaty in Copenhagen. The Church of the Good Shepherd in Acton, St. Stephen's Church in Cohasset, St. Paul's Church in Newburyport and St. John's Church in Westwood were among local Episcopal churches planning vigils in their communities.

And, youth from Grace Church in Lawrence (pictured here) braved the rain on Sunday, Dec. 13 to make a witness of their own by ringing their church's bells 350 times.



PHOTO: Sheila Bonfiglio

Building catches up with ministry at St. Christopher's in Chatham: After six years of planning and 14 months of construction, St. Christopher's

Church in Chatham will hold its first service in its renovated building on Dec. 20. "This new building has basically caught up with our ministries," the Rev. Brian McGurk, Rector, says. [Read more and see more photos.](#)

South Shore helping hands get down to essentials: The Helping Hands Essentials Pantry at Christ Church in Quincy, founded about seven years ago with a diocesan challenge grant, is now serving 100 South Shore families a month. It's different from traditional food pantries in that it distributes personal hygiene items that families in need find it hard to come by.



PHOTO: Kristen Poulin

On Nov. 15 the Episcopal churches of the South Shore Deanery had a Bowl-a-thon that raised \$4,000 for the pantry and other local agencies. "Volunteers from other area parishes who provide personal care items, as well as hands-on help when the pantry is open, make this a wonderful example of collaborative ministry on the South Shore," the Rev. Clifford Brown, Rector of Christ Church, says.

Pictured here are pantry volunteers Dallas Gould and Erika Clark. "Our volunteers try to build relationships with our guests and range in age from four to well into retirement, and provide a friendly face and kind word to all," says pantry director Kristen Poulin.

Sign up online for Ministry Discernment Conference

The annual Ministry Discernment Conference offered for potential applicants to the ordination process takes place on Saturday, Feb. 6, 2010. More information and online registration is [here.](#)

Coming up:

[Dec 16](#): Annual *Messiah* Sing-Along, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, 12:15 p.m.

[Dec 16](#): Contemplative Eucharist, Bethany House of Prayer, Arlington, 7 p.m.

[Dec 18-20](#): Personal Prayer Weekend with the Sisters of St. Margaret, Boston

[Dec 19](#): Advent Morning with author Phyllis Tickle, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, 8:30 a.m.

[Dec 19](#): Candlelight Carols, Trinity Church, Boston, 4 p.m.

[Dec 20](#): Lessons and Carols for Advent and Christmas, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, 10 a.m.

[Dec 20](#): Candlelight Carols Benefit, Trinity Church, Boston, 4 p.m.

[Dec 20](#): Night Song, St. John's Church, Jamaica Plain, 7 p.m.

[Dec 20](#): Candlelight Carols, Trinity Church, Boston, 7 p.m.

[Dec 24](#): Christmas Eve at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, with Holy Eucharist celebrated by Bishop M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE, 8 p.m. (pre-service music begins at 7:30 p.m.)

[Dec 24](#): Christ-Mass at St. Margaret's Convent, Boston, 9 p.m.

[Dec 25](#): Christmas Day at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, with Holy Eucharist celebrated by Bishop M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE on Boston Common, 10 a.m.

[Dec 27](#): Night Song, St. John's Church, Jamaica Plain, 7 p.m.

[Dec 31](#): New Year Service of Lessons and Carols, St. Margaret's Convent, Boston, 7:30 p.m.

[Dec 31](#): Interfaith Peace Service, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, tentative time is 11:15 p.m.

[Jan 1](#): Feast of the Holy Name, St. Margaret's Convent, Boston, 11:30 a.m.

[Jan 5](#): Refreshment Day, Bethany House of Prayer, Arlington, 9 a.m.

[Jan 9](#): Ordinations to Priesthood, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, 10:30 a.m.

[Jan 10](#): Workshop for Clergy and Spouses, Christ Church, Needham, 4 p.m.

[Jan 13](#): Green Gathering, Bethany House of Prayer, Arlington, 6 p.m.

[Jan 19](#): "Spirit: Garden Inspiration" Lecture with Dan Peterson, Trinity Church, Boston, 7 p.m.

[Jan 30](#): Worship Learning Party, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, 9:30 a.m.

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