



Historic St. George's United Methodist Church



MESSENGER

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Photo by Dick McKreight

Christmas Musical

...a wintry mix, indeed!

Local Choirs and Musicians Helped Us Begin the Advent Season on a Bright Note

For the 27th year, some of Philadelphia's finest talent gathered at Historic St. George's on the first night of Advent, welcoming the season with brass, voice, organ, flute, handbells and lots of holiday spirit. Neighbors from across Philadelphia and folk from throughout the Delaware Valley filled the pews.

Some of St. George's own musical talent was on display with organist Dominic Silla, and regular soloists Heidi Starr and Kay Mitchell, supported by Stanford Thompson and the Rittenhouse Brass from nearby Curtis Institute. This year's program was memorable for its richness of diverse musical expression — the Bryn Mawr Boychoir and Girlchoir from the Church of the Redeemer, Episcopal (pictured above) processing to the Anglican chant *Come, Thou Redeemer of the Earth*, the plaid-scarf clad Select Patriot Singers from Germantown Academy, the Covenant Ringers from Covenant UMC, Springfield, Delaware County chiming bells large enough for a steeple, and finally, the Seven Quilts for Seven Sisters, the unique family whose closeknit harmonies and handmade quilts adorning our balcony

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238 years ...

Blessing Interrupts Anniversary Sunday

Our Anniversary Sunday services in November were surprised by a blast from the past. Colonial Methodist Lay Preacher Simon Blessing, a character created by actor Peyton Dixon, burst into the sanctuary at the beginning of Pastor Day's sermon as if he were the preacher slated for the day. Mr. Blessing transformed the morning message into an inspirational interpretation of the gospel by the personal testimony of one here at the beginning.



The artist bringing Simon Blessing to life is Peyton Dixon, writer, actor, singer, and interpreter of history. Dixon works with the Independence Hall National Park's "Once Upon a Nation" program as a costumed storyteller roving the streets of Old City bringing colonial times to life. The son of a Methodist minister, Dixon came to the library, archive and museum at St. George's more than a year ago to do research in the development of the Simon Blessing character he brings to life throughout the historic district.

Blessing's story, though fictional, is wonderfully authentic. The son of a bookbinder on Mulberry St. (now Arch St.)

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brought African American spirituals and Christmas on the plantation to life.

Thanks to Michael Kemp and the Germantown Academy singers for rescuing the traditional singing of the *Hallelujah Chorus* when the director who had been the backbone of this favorite part of the day was forced to make a last minute cancellation. Once again the chancel was filled with choirs and dozens of people for this annual highlight.

Kay Mitchell's rendition of *Mary, Did You Know?* was the perfect segue to the traditional candle-lighting and *Silent Night*, ending the program and beginning the inspiration for 2008.

"It just keeps getting better and better," one person said.

Like the verse about Christmas says, "Come and see." Next year's date is December 7 ... mark it down.



destined by his father to return to England for seminary and ordination in the Church of England is forced to remain in Philadelphia to run the family business. Yearning for the ministry and struggling with faith and disappointment, he meets the Loxley Court Methodists and Captain Webb and is drawn by their passion, zeal and the inspiration of their singing. He tells the amazing story of how the Methodists, through a series of mishaps, come to the "George Church" in the first place, and about Joseph Pilmoor, John Wesley's emissary, holding the first services here on November 24, 1769.

How often sitting in this historic sanctuary is there some wonderment about what it must have been like in the storied past. What a marvelous view we were given by Mr. Blessing's blessing.



Confirmation Classes, and Visitors take heed!

We are planning a Spring event with a performance by actor Peyton Dixon as Colonial Methodist preacher Simon Blessing.

Watch the web site for dates and times:
www.historicstgeorges.org

A great opportunity to learn history *and* meet other Methodist youth.

The confirmation class from Stratford UMC, NJ ... part of over 150 visitors from 12 states since last newsletter!



Photo by John Elliott



Top photo, (l to r): Kevin Newburg, Ph.D. candidate, Drew University; Chris Anderson, Methodist Librarian, Drew; Jocelyne Rubinetti, Reading room supervisor, Drew; Mark Shenise, Archivist, GCAH.

Bottom photo (l to r): Mark Shenise, Archivist, GCAH; Michelle Merkel-Brunskill, Administrative Assistant, GCAH; Fred Day (pastor, St. George's), Dale Patterson, Archivist, GCAH. not shown: Robert Williams, General Secretary, GCAH.

Computers & Glassblowing

An artist finds the right balance between technology and creativity

Jon Goldberg, member of Historic St. George's and a full-time computer consultant by trade, has developed his avocation of glassblowing into a fine art. Husband of St. George member Latitia Stauffer, Jon has followed his muse to learn the ancient art of Venetian glassblowing, beginning with his studies at the Studio at Corning Museum of Glass.

Jon designed one-of-a-kind ornaments with the cross of St. George that are part of our holiday decorations. One was presented to now-retired administrator Brian McCloskey in recognition of his years of service coordinating the first twenty-six Christmas Musicals. Jon has paired with glass artist Owen Pach to open East Falls Glassworks, a studio, gallery and workshop space that is helping to make that Philadelphia neighborhood a thriving arts center.

In the past two years, Jon's creations have been featured on ABC TV's *Extreme Makeover*. Now, the St. George's family wants to congratulate Jon on being selected to display his works in the 26th Annual Smithsonian Craft Show at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC, April 10 to 13, 2008.

You can see the pieces Jon will have in the show at

www.smithsoniancraftshow.org

Just click on "Glass" in the right hand menu, then select the picture above Jon's name.



What the Wind Blew In ...

Visitors to Our Museum & Archives

In November, we were excited to host a visit from the General Commission on Archives and History. Folks made the trip down from Drew University to explore their roots firsthand. Seeing Pilmoor's journal, venturing down into the vault to explore the collection, and sitting on the original meeting benches is an experience that transcends book knowledge.

Following the visit to St. George's, the group went to Mother Bethel and Mother African Zoar, discovering new dimensions to the story of these early churches. Their trip included a stop at the Philadelphia Museum of Art to view a portrait of John Wesley by Philadelphian Benjamin Tanner. We look forward to more visits from these folks as they discover the resources in our library and archives. Our thanks to Bob Williams for arranging this event.

If you have a group that would benefit from a similar tour, call our office at 215-925-7788 to arrange a visit. Out-of-towners should consider a trip to enjoy the whole panoply of historical sites in our area, and include a visit to see what is "new" at our museum. If you are in town on a Sunday, please join us for worship at 11 am.





An Old Favorite Updated

Replicas of Historic St. George's Available

We are pleased to again offer wooden models of this historic shrine. Marlene Whiting, an artist who runs Brandywine Creations with her husband Truman, produced this beautiful watercolor of St. George's. The painting is reproduced on a wooden plaque which stands 5 1/4 inches high, 7 inches long and is 3/4 of an inch thick. The plaques are in full color and would look very attractive on your bookshelf or mantle. We have been searching for sometime for a quality model and think you will be very pleased with these. If you would like to order one via mail, you may fill out the form on the next page.

There are also lovely Christmas tree ornaments of the same image in winter (complete with snow). These smaller items are 3 by 3 1/4 inches on 1/4 inch stock. We realize they won't make it to your home for this year's tree, but if you would like to order ahead, you can also purchase them via the mail.

If you are in the area, stop by and pick one up in our gift shop!



I. N. Seldomridge

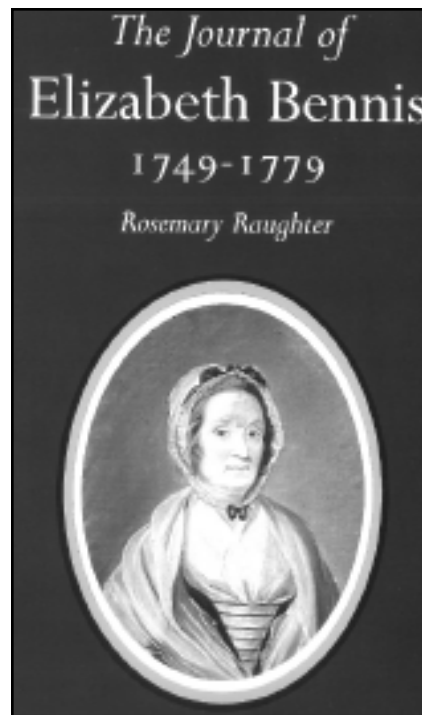
New to Our Collection

Finding the EUB in St. George's Archives

Rev. Joseph DiPaolo, President of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Historical Society, brought us a treasure trove of items from the collection of Phares Brubaker Gibble. Gibble wrote a history of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Brethren in 1951. The collection includes Gibble's notes on his book, as well as hundreds of photos such as the fine portrait shown above. A scholar could now follow Gibble's notes through to the final book, which is on the shelves of our library.

In our mailbag

We received a package from Rev. Louis Rowley giving us publications about churches from Pottsville to Swarthmore. One old program includes a note that among things you never see in church: are "people asking to sit in the front pews"!



Methodist Ties: Dublin to Philadelphia

Our library received a new publication, which has a close connection with the early history of St. George's. The Journal of Elizabeth Bennis, 1749-1779, edited by Rosemary Raughter, is published by Columba Press, Dublin. The author tells us:

"Bennis was a Limerick woman who played a vital part in the establishment of Methodism in her own area and elsewhere in southern Ireland. She went on to become a confidante of John Wesley and of many of his preachers and, as a correspondent of John Stretton, had an impact on the development of Methodism in Newfoundland. Sometime in the early 1790s she emigrated with her family to North America, settling ultimately in Philadelphia. While her correspondence was published shortly after her death, her diaries had been presumed lost. As an Irish historian with a particular interest in eighteenth-century women's religious activity, I came

across Bennis in my researches into Methodist women, and in an effort to locate the diaries, I contacted St George's – though without any great hope of success. To my delight, I had an almost immediate reply from Brian McCloskey, the then administrator, who was able to tell me that they had indeed found a home in your library.

In July 1999 I spent a week in Philadelphia, working in St George's archives, where I was finally able to read Elizabeth Bennis's 1765-79 journal. Having arranged to edit this volume for publication, I subsequently, and with the help of one of Bennis's American descendants, located an earlier journal in the library of Willamette University in Oregon. We therefore have an almost unbroken record, extending over thirty years, of the daily routine and inner life of a middle-class Irish woman of the eighteenth-century – and one which also throws a valuable light on the earliest days of Irish Methodism and on the female contribution to its development.

While Elizabeth Bennis is not included in the membership lists of St George's, her son and daughter-in-law certainly are, and it seems likely that she did have some association with the church during her final years in Philadelphia. I do hope, therefore, that Elizabeth's journal will be regarded as a useful addition to the documentation of the early years of St George's – and indeed as an intimate and very readable account of a truly remarkable woman. “

If you would like a copy of Raughter's book, go online to www.columba.ie.



St. George's Embarks on Historic Study with Gloria Dei Old Swedes Church – *Your Participation Invited!*

At the invitation of UMC Bishop Marcus Matthews and Episcopal Bishop Charles Bennis, two historic Philadelphia Churches will join in a study of their respective and shared traditions around Holy Communion. The study is part of a shared Eucharistic agreement pending between the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church to be launched by 2012.

The Very Rev. Joy Segal of Gloria Dei and Pastor Day at St. George's will lead the study group beginning in January to meet monthly (slated for Tuesday evenings) through the spring, culminating in a joint communion service between the two churches sometime in May.

The study gatherings and shared communion service will be a reunion of sorts for both churches. Methodism's founder John Wesley was an Anglican priest; the early Methodists were all members of the Church of England and the fledgling Protestant Episcopal Church in

America prior to the 1785 formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. All are welcome to join this study group and be part of a history making experience.



Mission Out-Reach at St. George's

Supporting the Action AIDs Network of Greater Philadelphia again this year at Christmas time, we'll be adopting a family of four and providing food and Christmas gifts for the holidays.

Winter brings concern for the city's homeless and street people. We'll respond with supporting the Winter Shelter for Men at Old First Reformed Church by volunteering time and money collected in January Special Offerings and by cooking breakfast the 2nd Sunday of the month at the Grace Café, sponsored by the Philadelphia Committee to End Homelessness and the Arch Street United Methodist Church. We need volunteer cooks, servers and pot scrubbers at 6am on the 2nd Sundays January-April.

Your generosity in giving gifts, cash and volunteer time will be most appreciated.



Original cups used in the first Love Feast in America ... these and other items are on display in our museum, open all week thanks to your support.

Celebrating With St. Thomas:

A Relationship Renewed

It all started with a visit from folk from the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas this past summer. Members from this historic Episcopal Church that grew out of St. George's in 1792 came to our library and archive to do research for their 215th anniversary celebration. It ended with an invitation to the 215 anniversary gala at the City Line Hilton Ball Room.

What's in-between isn't so celebrative, since the events surrounding folks leaving St. George's to form St. Thomas are infamous at best. St Thomas Church was formed by Absalom Jones, who with Richard Allen left St. George's after a seating controversy forcing the growing number of black congregants to segregated seating in the balcony. The ensuing exodus of some blacks from St. George's came to a head when Absalom Jones and Richard Allen were forced from their seats by a church trustee while they prayed during a service in 1792. Jones's followers formed the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas; Allen's followers, Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church,; Harry Hosier's followers, Mother African Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church.

The occasion of the St. Thomas anniversary banquet and celebration not only offered Pastor and Linda Day, representing St. George's, an opportunity for renewing a relationship with a church with whom we share storied past, but also gave an opportunity to build a restored future based on repentance and reconciliation. Quoted in the Episcopal News Service, Pastor Day said of the occasion: "We wanted to celebrate with our brothers and sisters, who

are the spiritual children of Absalom Jones, the great accomplishments of their church. We also wanted to claim and reconnect with the common heritage. The events of the past still speak to us today in terms of the working to combat racism and any kind of exclusivism as well as to create churches that are both welcoming and hospitable."

Our ad in the evening's program said:

With full acknowledgement of our past, and in celebration of our renewed connection, Historic St. George's United Methodist Church congratulates the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas on their 215th anniversary of living, teaching and spreading the Gospel.

The choir from the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas has been invited to perform at next year's Christmas Musical. Representatives from Historic St. George's attended St. Thomas Easter Vigil in the spring of 2007.



Historic St. George's United
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Online at

www.historicstgeorges.org

Alfred T. Day III, Pastor
Donna Miller, Administrator
Lorenzo Crew, Sexton



Photos by David Fonda

Bringing Charles Wesley to Life

A tercentenary filled with song and story

In October, St. George's was treated to a visit by Charles Wesley, thanks to the magical performance of ST Kimbrough. ST weaves songs and stories into a captivating experience. The prodigious output of Charles Wesley provides ample material, and ST also gives his audience a sense of the marvelous humanity behind the creations.

We were fortunate to catch an opening in this busy performer's schedule: after Philadelphia, he was on to Budapest & Moscow!

CDs, books and other learning resources from ST's performance and other Wesley tercentenary items are available in the gift shop.



Associate Members

St. George's relies on the support of our Associate Members. We are grateful for your continuing dedication to the mission of our historic church and its ministry in today's world.

An envelope is included twice a year with your newsletter to facilitate giving. While not "membership" in the official sense, your gifts allow us to keep our doors open to the public during the week.

If I have made any errors in your name or address details, I apologize. Drop me a line and we'll keep working to polish our record-keeping.

We would love to keep in touch with our Associate members via e-mail. If you have an e-mail account, send your address to office@historicstgeorges.org. We pledge to respect your privacy; our records are not shared with any other organization.

Yes, I would like to make a gift to Historic St. George's

Level: \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$500 Other _____

I would like to order a replica of St. George's (prices include shipping costs)

Number of Replicas at \$25 ea. _____ Total enclosed for Replicas _____

Number of Ornaments at \$12 ea _____ Total enclosed for Ornaments _____

(If you would like, just attach the mailing label from your newsletter below)



See article on Page 4

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail _____

Gifts that Keep on Giving

St. George's has been blessed in the past by faithful supporters who have included this institution in their estate planning. These gifts have been instrumental in helping us accomplish our mission of historic preservation, education, and vital community development. If you would like to join these gracious and generous folks, we will work with you to help develop your bequest to reflect your wishes (there are also tax advantages for your estate). Please contact Pastor Day at (215) 925-7788 or e-mail him at pastor@historicstgeorges.org.

New IRA Tax-Free Gift Provision Remains in Effect Until December 31, 2007

If you are 70½ years or older, the government is allowing charitable gifts up to \$100,000 directly from your IRA to St. George's with no Federal income tax if the gift is arranged through your IRA Administrator as an outright gift. Your tax advisor can provide information on specific state requirements. If you want help with researching this avenue, please contact Pastor Day at (215) 925-7788 or e-mail him at pastor@historicstgeorges.org.