

The Desert Wind

SPIRIT OF THE DESERT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

873 D Coyote Gulch Circle Ivins, Utah

February 2012 - Volume One Number Two

We are Spirit of the Desert, an inclusive, Christ-centered faith community in the Episcopal tradition, dedicated to knowing Christ and to make Christ known. We practice Christ's unconditional welcome at Spirit of the Desert.

Advent, Epiphany Were Filled With Anticipation & Activity

Prayer Group Offered Petitions

The Intercessory Prayer group met at the home of Sue Miller on December 15 for a few hours of dining, sharing and praying. It was a time to rejoice as people's names were removed from the prayer list - having fully recovered. Our hearts and minds were lifted up to Christ as we offered our petitions for those in need of healing both spiritually and physically. On January 19 the group met again to share their Christmas experiences and join in prayer for those suffering. The commitment of these dedicated ladies praying each day is evidence of miracles large and small happening.



Bishop Scott Hayashi, 11th Bishop of Utah

Spirit Blessed by Bishop's Visit

We were blessed by Bishop Scott's presence on January 15. We were encouraged by his teaching and now have a deeper understanding of the

true meaning of Epiphany, and the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. We are pleased that he promised he'd be back before his "scheduled" visit in September. Thank you, Bishop Scott.

Spirit's Lessons and Carols Service

Our Christmas Eve service of carols and lessons was a beautiful reminder of Christ's birth. There were no presents under a tree but a feeling of love for each other permeated our small church. Joyous spirits returned home to share with family and friends the reminder that He is the reason for the Season.

Epiphany Journey Still Unfinished

Lee's Epiphany sermon recounted the wise men's journey following the star and offering their gifts to the Christ Child. The magic of Christmas is over now, the tree has been taken down, the creche packed away until next year but new life and possibility await us as we continue on our journey with Christ.

Bishop's Committee Meeting Held To Discuss Spirit's Lenten Plans

Our Bishop's Committee meeting was held on January 26 at Katie May's home. Discussion centered around Ash Wednesday service, our Lenten programs and preparation of the annual meeting schedule which will include the proposed budget.

Spirit's Outreach Activities Addressed Community Needs

Spirit Rings Salvation Army's Bell

Kathy Wood reported that seven members of Spirit donated their time prior to Christmas to "ring the bell" for donations to the Salvation Army. Our group collected over \$800 one day and with the other collections at Lin's Market the total was more than \$5,000! The Army helps fund dental, pharmacy and medical needs of the uninsured in the greater St. George area. In 2009 Kathy Wood was elected to the Family Healthcare Board of Trustees and serves as the Chair; thus her connection with the Salvation Army. Family Healthcare is a clinic serving all ages, incomes and persons, with or without medical insurance. Kathy wants to thank those seven volunteers. We want to thank her for her continued dedication in the community.



Spirit Bell ringers helped the Salvation Army raise money for the needy.

"5th Sunday" Benefits Charities

As Lois Moritz reported and explained in our last Newsletter, we take up a special offering for a local charity in each month that has five Sundays. We begin immediately this year, as January has a fifth Sunday. Our charity of the month is Ivins Animal Shelter. This is the only municipal shelter in Utah designated a "no-kill" animal shelter. After the blessing of our pets on St. Francis feast day we were reminded just how special they are and how much God loves them too. We know the Shelter always needs food, litter, medicines and bedding. Our gift helps this wonderful shelter purchase these badly needed items. Some of our pets have been rescued animals from the Shelter. Any gift they receive is accepted gratefully and put to good use.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Katie Mays, a faithful member of Spirit, tells us she became aware of shawls while looking at patterns in a yarn shop. She mentioned it seemed a lovely way to spend time knitting shawls and thinking healing, comforting thoughts and praying for the persons who would wear one around their shoulders. It was a pleasure to get started. Before long there were more ladies knitting. Thus became our Ministry of Prayer Shawls. After Lee blesses them they are kept until needed. Three women in

our church became seriously ill and were given shawls for comfort. They still use them when saying their daily prayers and devotionals. Shawls have been given to people experiencing anxiety about upcoming surgeries and treatments. Shawls have even been passed on by these recipients to friends and relatives. A woman recently told Katie she gave her shawl to a friend recovering from cancer because "it had good vibes." The gift keeps giving. We've heard reports of nervousness being set aside and feeling less fearful as they experienced the peace described in the prayer given with each shawl. "In my anguish I cried out to the Lord and He answered by setting me free. Psalm 118:5. May these beautiful words from Holy Scripture release you from your pain and discomfort. More than that, may they open your mind and heart and permit the grace and peace that only Jesus can give you heal your body and soul. Rest assured that He will do this for you. Lord, we believe that nothing is impossible. We not only believe in miracles, we expect them. Healing powers shower forth on those who simply ask."



Profiles of Spirit Congregants

We Welcome Oriole and Hans

Dorothy Barlow introduced us to her good friend Oriole Collier. Oriole tells us she immediately felt she found a home after her first visit. We cherish her attendance each Sunday as she and Dorothy arrive to brighten up our day.

Hans Lundgren has been living in Kayenta-Ivins for many years and is a neighbor of Bill Monroe. At Bill's invitation they are now coming together on Sundays joining in worship and fellowship.

Bill Monroe Important Member of Spirit of the Desert Family

Our featured member is Bill Monroe. Bill has lived in Kayenta for twenty years and resides in his second home. He was born in Lansing, Michigan and taught school in Michigan and Salt Lake City. He subsequently became an Episcopal missionary and spent fourteen school years in Honduras, teaching English and Economics.

Bill is a "Cradle Episcopalian" and has served as Senior Warden at St. James in Salt Lake City and three different vestry terms at Grace Episcopal, Saint George.

He has two daughters: Emily who resides in Eugene, Oregon, and Harriet who lives in Albuquerque, New

Mexico. When Harriet visits her dad she attends Spirit of the Desert with him. Bill is one of the original members of Spirit, and he certainly is an important member of our Spirit family. In the past he was one of three cup bearers aiding Lee in celebrating the Eucharist. We joke when we say we can set the clock by Bill - he arrives one minute before church begins. What would we do without him? He is loved by all of us.

Upcoming Activities

"Soup-er-Bowl" of Caring

"Soup-er-Bowl Sunday" will be on February 5. As in the past, the churches in the diocese are urged to collect cans of soup for the less fortunate. Lee has put Grace, St. Jude and St. David on notice that we are challenging them to see who brings in the most cans per capita. We did very well last year!

Saints' Celebrations Provide A Chance to Help Shut-ins

Commemorating Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day will give us an opportunity to remember shut-ins who are being visited by members of Spirit with cards, flowers and candy. There are also people on our prayer list who will be remembered in this manner. See the articles on the next page for a short history of these popular ancient saints.

Saint Valentine's Ancient Origins

The first representation of Saint Valentine appeared in The Nuremberg Chronicle, a great illustrated book printed in 1493. Valentinus was a Roman priest martyred during the reign of Claudius the Goth. Since he was caught marrying Christian couples and aiding any Christians who were being persecuted under Emperor Claudius in Rome, Valentinus was arrested and imprisoned. Claudius took a liking to this prisoner - until Valentinus made a strategic error: he tried to convert the Emperor - whereupon this priest was condemned to death. He was beaten with clubs and stoned; when that didn't do it, he was beheaded outside the Flaminian Gate. One legend says while awaiting his execution Valentinus restored the sight of his jailer's blind daughter. Another legend says, on the eve of his death, he penned a farewell note to the jailer's daughter, signing it, "From your Valentine." As we observe February 14 as Valentine's Day we will not lose sight of the opportunity to love more, appreciate more and reach out to others....and giving a small gift is as good as receiving one.



Patrick Helped Spread Christianity

St. Patrick was born at what is now referred to as Ravensglass in Cumbria. His father was a deacon, his grandfather Potitus, a priest. When he was sixteen he was captured and carried off as a slave to Ireland. He worked as a herdsman, remaining a captive for six years. His faith grew in captivity, according to his writings, and he prayed daily. After six years he heard a voice telling him that he would soon go home and that his ship was ready. Fleeing his master he returned home to his family, now in his early twenties. He recounts that he had a vision a few years after being home to return to Ireland. He used the three-leafed shamrock to teach the Irish about the Holy Trinity to illustrate the Christian teaching of 'three divine persons in the one God'. According to old Irish annals, he died in AD 493 on March 17. There is a beautiful Irish Blessing that goes: May God grant you always a sunbeam to warm you, a moonbeam to charm you, a sheltering angel so nothing can harm you,

laughter to cheer you, faithful friends near you and whenever you pray, Heaven to hear you. This Blessing is said at the closure of each Intercessory Prayer gathering at Spirit. Share it with others on March 17th, you will bless and be blessed.



Ash Wednesday's Origins Tied to Day of Atonement

Ash Wednesday's origins are tied to its history and the time of year during which it occurs. It follows the season of Epiphany which culminates with Shrove Tuesday which is also known as Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday). The solemn proceedings that occur on Ash Wednesday bring the focus back to the sacrifice of Christ and the mission of the Church.

Biblical Origins

The observance most likely comes from the biblical Day of Atonement. In Leviticus 16, the Lord establishes an annual day of repentance for the Israelites as a lasting ordinance for

all their generations. Since the blood of Jesus represents atonement, the heart of Ash Wednesday is a humbling of oneself through fasting and prayer. On this day, Christians come before a priest to receive the sign of the cross, marked in ashes on their foreheads. Over the next month, they are encouraged to fast, pray, and seek repentance for their sins. Reflection upon one's life during the previous year receives extra attention, and a greater commitment to God and the Church is offered.

Sackcloth and Ashes

This ceremony originated around the eighth century and extends back to the custom during biblical times of people humbling themselves with sackcloth and ashes. The prophet Daniel speaks of seeking the Lord for the release of his people from Babylonian exile with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes (Daniel 9:3). Jonah 3:6 states: "When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust."

Ashes Symbolize Man's Mortality

Ashes are often considered to be a symbol of man's mortality and represent an attitude of humility, sorrow, and repentance (Genesis 18:27). The ashes used in the Ash

Wednesday ritual come from burning the palm branches used to celebrate Palm Sunday of the previous year.

Penitential Psalms

In an old Ash Wednesday tradition, penitents who had committed grave sins would come wearing shifts made from rough cloth or animal hair. The priest would bless them and sprinkle ashes over them while they recited the Seven Penitential Psalms. The penitents would leave the church and for the next forty days strive for repentance and absolution. They would then return on Maundy Thursday and receive Communion from the priest.

Humility and Repentance

One of the major tenets of the Christian faith is living one's life with humility and repentance. For many Christians, the origins of Ash Wednesday are the annual reminder of where our hearts should be in relation to God, and of the reason Jesus became our atonement.



Spirit Plans Bible Study, Ash Wednesday Service, and Lenten Activities

"Bad Boys of the Bible"

"The Bad Boys of the Bible" will be the subject of a Lenten Bible Study at Spirit of the Desert beginning March 4, the second Sunday of Lent. The study will present the stories of 12 well-known men of the Bible, who are strong and weak, faithful and challenged. Cain, Abraham, Moses, Samson, Saul, David, Judas, and Pontius Pilate are some of the men who will be included in the four week discussion.

Imposition of the Ashes

An "Ash Wednesday" observation held on the first Sunday of Lent will mark the beginning of the Season of Lent at Spirit of the Desert. "The Imposition of the Ashes" will begin the countdown to Easter.

Lenten Sermon Series

Father Lee will focus on the theme "Encounters with Christ" during his Lenten sermon series. Each Sunday Lee's sermon will highlight the story of those whose lives were forever changed by an encounter with Christ.

May the Holy Spirit, for whom our community is named, blow with the winds of inspiration and be the Breath of God for our continuing journey.