

November 27, 2011 First Sunday in Advent

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| St. Stephen's Church | Rev. Tom Kuffel | 207 N. Union Ave. | Exeter, NE 68351 |
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| Date | Time | Place | Intention | By | Feast Day |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Mon. Nov 28 | 7:30 AM | Exeter | Frank & Virginia Sudrla | The Family | |
| Tues. Nov 29 | 7:30 AM | Exeter | Shelly Billerbeck | Margie Bonta | |
| Wed. Nov 30 | 7:30AM | McCool | Jeanette Paulson | | |
| Wed. Nov 30 | 6:30 PM | Exeter Hall | Bob & Kate Harre | | |
| Thu. Dec 1 | 10:30 AM | Care Center | Phil Klemm Jr. | J.J. & Judy Dinneen | |
| Fri. Dec 2 | 7:30 AM | McCool | Connie White | | |
| Sat. Dec 3 | 8:00 AM | McCool | Theo White | Carol Smith Family | |
| Sat. Dec 3 | 5:00 PM | Exeter | Gail & Barb Heffelfinger | | |
| Sun. Dec 4 | 8:30 AM | Exeter | Susan Perkins | Richard Perkins | |
| Sun. Dec 4 | 10:00 AM | McCool | For the Parish | | |

December Ministers

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|--------------------|---------|------------|---------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Sat 3 | A-Ron | L-Pat | S-Evan & Theron | U – Ken & Lisa | G – Ken & Lisa Soukup |
| Sun 4 | A-Rusty | L-Denice | S-Stephen & James | U– Lin & Melanie | G – Lin Schlueter Family |
| Sat 10 | A-Mark | L-Rick | S-Kirby & Jack | U – Bob & Pat | G – Bob & Pat Becker |
| Sun 11 | A-Brad | L-Children | S-Spencer & Caleb | U & G – Children's Mass – Children will fill in. | |
| Sat 17 | A-Gerry | L-John B | S-Elliot & Mitchell | U – Peg B. | G-Matt Harre Family |
| Sun 18 | A-Roger | L-Kathy | S-Spencer & Caleb | U – Doug & Dacel | G-Doug Thomsen Family |
| Sat 24 6PM | A-Mark | L-Pat R. | S-Evan & Jack | U – Don & Elaine | G-Don & Elaine Krejci |
| Sat 24 11PM | A-Brad | L-Rick | S-Theron & Cameron | U – Marion | G-Angels |
| Sun 25 | A-Rusty | L-Doug | S-Sam & Max | U – Darleene | G-Roger Johnson Jr. Family |

Pray For: Justin Robert Fulton from North American Martyrs, Lincoln NE. He is in Theology 2 and is studying at St. Gregory the Great. He graduated HS in 1999 from Auburn.

Prayer Intentions: Richard Perkins, Bill Hays, Joanna & Daniel Webster Family, Ann Pospisil, Jean Hoffman, Irene Petrucek, Dawn Welch, Kelley Champion, Bernard & Lorene Zeleny, J.J. Dinneen, Taylor Thomas, Steve Lawson, Tim Becker, Joe Huber Jr., Patrick Hoarty, Carol Smith, Cindy Hogman, Zach Johnson, Lauren Dick, Stephanie Salyer, Mark Thomsen, Noah Lambrecht, & Military Personnel Jason & Lacey Hood, Rob Coffey, Jacque Erks, Zac Hartmann, Anthony & Alex Due.

St. Stephen's Church Support 11-20-2011

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|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------|-----------|
| Adult Envelopes | \$1573.00 | Loose Plate | \$43.00 | Children | \$4.00 | Total | \$1620.00 |
| Number of Envelops | \$1 - \$5 [2] | \$6 – 10 [6] | \$11 - \$20 [12] | \$21 - \$40 [12] | \$41 & Up [10] | | |
| All Saints Total: | \$82.00 | All Souls | \$115.00 | | | | |

** The actual budget for collections is \$85,305 for this fiscal year. It includes envelopes, loose plate, children, and special collections (i.e. Christmas, Easter, etc). On average, we need to collect \$1640 weekly in order to balance our budget. Check here weekly to see the actual collections compared to the budget. **Fiscal Year-to-Date we are at \$31,009 and we should be at \$34,440.**

Announcements

Birthdays: Julie Behrens – Nov 30th, Dacel Thomsen – Dec 1st, Tim Krienert – Dec 2nd, Diane Zeleny – Dec 3rd

Anniversaries: Bob & Jane Dumpert – Dec 4th

CCD: Nov 27th – No Class. **Dec 4th** – Practice at Hall for Program. Youth Choir & Angel Practice after Class at Church. **Dec 11th** – Class at Church to Practice Program. Children's Mass. Christmas Program at 4PM at the church. Potluck to follow. K, 1st, & 2nd – Veggie & Fruit dishes. 3rd, 4th, & 8th – Desserts. 5th 6th, & 7th – Meat dishes. Remember your \$1.

Nov 30th CYO: Starts with mass at 6:30PM in Exeter at the Hall.

Nov 29th 7:00 PM Parish Council Meeting with Jim. All parishioners are asked to review the plans for the Church Hall and make any suggestions or comments to board members. As we are looking forward to building the hall, I ask each parishioner to examine your conscience as to your commitment to our parish and our Catholic Faith. This project is an opportunity for us to build not only a church hall, but a place to educate our children, build community in our parish, and develop our town. The commitment of faith to build our church a century ago indeed was a sacrifice. Yet, with the sacrifice and faith for over 100 years, St. Stephen's continues to thrive despite the many hardships and crosses we bear.

The major cost of project has been paid by generous gifts of a few faithful who wanted St. Stephen's to continue spreading the Catholic Faith to the generations to come. We have an opportunity to make this aspiration come true. If we want a thriving community and stronger families we need to spread the gospel message. Our building project is a means to enable our children to learn in a healthy atmosphere with updated technology. It is a place to gather after Mass and become the family of God which the Pope has asked all parishes to develop. It is a wonderful opportunity to continue the heritage of the families who built and developed our parish.

Raising \$150,000 is manageable if everyone is willing to donate. If every farmer would be willing to donate two to five acres of corn for five consecutive years, we would easily meet our goal of \$150,000. This is a great tax advantage to you if you donate crops or livestock. If you are not a farmer, donating a \$50 – \$100 month for three to five years (basically a car payment) would also be a way to help pay for the building.

Dec 4 at 3PM at the church: "Acoustic Christmas" - A Musical Journey from Advent to Epiphany". The 75-minute concert captures the Christian spirit of season beginning with the joyful anticipation during Advent, continuing on to the celebration of the birth of the Christ child at Christmas, and finally to the visit of the Magi and the first revelation of Christ to the Gentiles at Epiphany. Traditional and contemporary Christmastide songs, along with scripture and stories, by Terry Little.

Dec 11th Penance Service: Sunday, 3-4PM at the church. The CCD Christmas Program will follow.

Dec 11th CCD Christmas Program: Sunday at 4PM at the church. Covered dish to follow at the Hall

Dec 18th – Class Parties at Hall. Angel Practice at church after class.

Altar Society: The November Basket is a Savings Bond donated by Frances Pracheil.

Donations for Birthright: Nov 27th the Altar Society will start collecting baby items for Birthright. Please leave your baby items in the back of the church. Thank you for donating to this very worthy cause.

Immaculate Conception Mass Schedule: Wed. December 7th at 6:30PM in McCool. Thurs. Dec. 8th at 10:30 AM in Exeter at the Care Center and 6:30PM in Exeter.

3rd Annual Lessons & Carols: Sunday, Dec 4th at 7PM. St. Gregory the Great Seminary in the chapel. Come join us for this service of light and joy! Highway 15 & Fletcher Road. (2 miles south of Seward)

Virtue Media: Donations to Virtue Media support the airing of pro-life commercials on our local TV stations and are tax-deductible. Please consider donating to this important and worthy cause. You may mail your donations to: Virtue Media 560 W. Crossville Rd., Suite #101 Roswell, GA 30075-7509.

Prayer: Gracious God, send us your grace this Advent Season so that we can prepare for your coming. Touch our hearts with longing so that we can better love and serve you and each other. Fill us with the hope that we can be transformed by your Spirit and so help transform the world. Give us the peace of knowing that you came to share our human life and redeem us for the sake of love. We ask these things in the name of Jesus whose Kingdom we seek. Amen.

Quote: The only blind person at Christmastime is he who has not Christmas in his heart. -Helen Keller

Think on These Things

The gospel says that we, who are God's beloved, created a cosmic crisis. It says we, too, were stolen from our True Love and that he launched the greatest campaign in the history of the world to get us back. God created us for intimacy with him. When we turned our back on him he promised to come for us. He sent personal messengers; he used beauty and affliction to recapture our hearts.

After all else failed, he conceived the most daring of plans. Under the cover of night he stole into the enemy's camp incognito, the Ancient of Days disguised as a newborn. The Incarnation, as Phil Yancey reminds us, was a daring raid into enemy territory. The whole world lay under the power of the evil one and we were held in the dungeons of darkness. God risked it all to rescue us. Why? What is it that he sees in us that causes him to act the jealous lover, to lay siege both on the kingdom of darkness and on our own idolatries as if on Troy-not to annihilate, but to win us once again for himself? This fierce intention, this reckless ambition that shoves all conventions aside, willing literally to move heaven and earth-We've been offered many explanations.

From one religious camp we're told that what God wants is obedience, or sacrifice, or adherence to the right doctrines, or morality. Those are the answers offered by conservative churches. The more therapeutic churches suggest that no, God is after our contentment, or happiness, or self-actualization, or something else along those lines. He is concerned about all these things, of course, but they are not his primary concern.

What he is after is us-our laughter, our tears, our dreams, our fears, and our heart of hearts. Remember his lament in Isaiah, that though his people were performing all their duties, "their hearts are far from me" (29:13). How few of us truly believe this. We've never been wanted for our heart, our truest self, not really, not for long. The thought that God wants our heart seems too good to be true.

Character Building

The emotions of Christmas bring joy and sadness. Those who feel loved and accepted relish in the wonders of Christmas. Those who feel rejected feel desolate and dejected. Yet, Christmas is not a time of receiving and emoting in your own joy or sadness; Christmas is to give joy, either to the joyful or the sorrowful.

Selfishness creeps in during Christmas for we all want the best Christmas ever. Yet, the best Christmas ever will never be like the first one. It is not the mere birth of a boy, or the Magi offering their gifts, or the angels singing heavenly chants. It is the gift that God gives to each person. His gift is not gold, frankincense, or myrrh. It is the gift of Himself: a needy baby. God is needy of our love, for he knows that if we can break from our own selfishness and leave to give to the neediest of anyone – a new born babe – then we will experience the Spirit of Christmas despite our own neediness.

Christmas is a time to give. Giving does not mean money or presents, but means helping the poor, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick or homebound, comforting the sorrowful, and visiting the imprisoned. Today, we have so many opportunities to touch the hearts and lives of others by donating our clothing, our compassion, and our cooperation. It just takes effort to break away from our own neediness and see the needs of others. Confront your own inadequacies and push your personal boundaries and reach out to those in need with kindness, goodness, and mercy; it's the surest way to celebrate the best Christmas Ever!

Pope Benedict

Advent is the spiritual season of hope par excellence, and in it the whole Church is called to become hope, for herself and for the world. The whole organism of the Mystical Body acquires, so to speak, the "color" of hope. The whole People of God continue on their journey, attracted by this mystery: that our God is "the God who comes" and calls us to go to meet him.

How? In the first place in that universal form of hope and expectation which is prayer, which is eminently expressed in the Psalms, human words in which God himself has placed and continually places the invocation of his coming on the lips and in the hearts of believers. Let us therefore reflect for a few moments on two of his Psalms which we have just prayed and which are consecutive in the biblical Book: Psalms 141 and 142, according to the Jewish numbering.

"Lord, hasten to help me!" It is the cry of someone who feels he or she is in grave danger but it is also the cry of the Church amid the many threats that surround her, that threaten her holiness, the irreproachable integrity of which the Apostle Paul speaks which instead must be preserved for the Lord's coming. And in this invocation the cry of all the faithful also resounds, of all those who want to resist evil, the seduction of an iniquitous well-being, of pleasures offensive to human dignity and to the condition of the poor.

At the beginning of Advent the Church's new liturgy once again makes this cry her own, and raises it to God "like incense" (v. 2). The offering of incense is in fact a symbol of prayer, of the outpouring of hearts turned to God, to the Most High, as well as "the raising of... hands like an evening oblation". Material sacrifices, as it also took place in the Jewish temple, are no longer offered in the Church, but the spiritual offering of prayer is raised, joined to that of Jesus Christ who is at the same time Sacrifice and Priest of the new and eternal covenant. In the cry of the Mystical Body we recognize the very voice of the Head: the Son of God who has taken upon himself our trials and our temptations, to give us the grace of his victory.

Homily

Advent and Christmas are a time to heal broken relationships with the most intimate family members. Divorced couples, estranged children, sibling rivalries, and other damaging and destructive relationships need God's healing power. It is only when we admit our need for healing, when we admit our personal responsibility to deal with the broken relationship, that God can heal us. So much hurt is misdirected. It is not the relationship that needs healing or the other person, we have admit it is my own personal pain that needs God's healing and forgiveness recognizing that I am not just part of the problem, but I am the solution to the problem.

When I experience God's forgiveness and love, I am invited to savor it and let it touch me deeply. Experiencing compassion, patience, understanding, and forgiveness is itself transforming. If I fail to appreciate that God and I are re-united, how will I seek to restore unity with the person or persons from whom I am divorced or distanced.