



# St. Paul's Church

422 Market St.

Box 1551, Camden, New  
Jersey 08101

Imagine the kings, the caravans' stilted  
procession  
As they make for the cave, or, rather, three  
beams closing in  
And in on the star, the creaking of loads, the  
clink of a cowbell;  
(No thronging of Heaven as yet, no peal of  
the bell

That will ring in the end for the infant once  
he has earned it).  
Imagine the Lord, for the first time, from  
darkness, and stranded  
Immensely in distance, recognizing Himself  
in the Son  
Of Man: His homelessness plain to him now  
in a homeless one.

Joseph Brodsky

Brodsky's Epiphany poem, one of the great ones of the last century, is striking because it tells the truth about what the revealing of Christ is. We are used to hearing, through poets before Brodsky, about the three wise men: they have given them names like Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar, and have been made into kings; we have placed all the emphasis on the star and gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, in a kind of soft-focus picture of what the revealing of God is. In these versions, the emphasis is on the world being drawn to the manger. There is little description of this God made flesh,

either in scripture or the gaps we have decided to fill-in, either because the actual biblical account is so spare or that it is dominated by the political fears and machinations of Herod, who is consumed by the need to find and dispose of this child, an idea so ugly that we try to suppress it.

But the image that Brodsky leaves is of God staring down on the Son of Man, "His homelessness plain to him now in a homeless one." The image is of precariousness and fragility, one that the last twenty months have made clear is the world we all inhabit. Homelessness is easy enough for us to identify, because it is the condition of so many who come through our doors. But all the images in the poem are of isolation: the Lord in darkness, "stranded immensely in distance," looking at a scene shot through with vulnerability. Epiphany, the revealing of this God-with-us, is not about those who would pay court to this infant king, honoring him with expensive and regal gifts. It is about the vulnerability of this God and how that vulnerability is sanctified. We spend much of the season after the

Epiphany looking for this God made manifest, but we will not find him in royal splendor; we will see him in those who have little, who have nowhere to go, those who render the whole idea of precariousness holy.

For several years I worked at the Church of the Holy Trinity on Rittenhouse Square, which had a mural of the Epiphany scene across the back of the chancel. It was partly in honor of the hymn, "O little town of Bethlehem," which was written there by Phillips Brooks, but we had to contend with the nativity scene even during Holy Week and Easter, when the calendar turned to very different subjects. I actually came to appreciate the dissonance, not only because our lives are not built around convenient situations but because we have to confront the fragility, the homelessness of our condition year-round. If we have learned anything recently, it is that fragility is emblematic of who we are. We simply have to find a way to see its sacredness.

-Fr. Mark

# Parish News

## Online fundraiser

"Mark your calendars"

St. Paul's virtual fundraiser Saturday  
February 26th 5pm - 7:30pm.

- An evening of fun and fundraising
- Basket raffle, trivia, Basket of cheer and 50/50.
- \$35.00 per person. Additional \$5.00 for basket of cheer.
- Event hosted via Zoom. Link will be emailed to attendees"

The committee would appreciate donations of baskets, gift cards, and/or liquor for the basket of cheer.

Contact: [Stpauls422@gmail.com](mailto:Stpauls422@gmail.com) or [elizann57@gmail.com](mailto:elizann57@gmail.com)

Thank you,  
Betty Fletcher

**Birthdays:** Nicolas Fletcher  
January 26

**Anniversaries:** Ed and Betty Fletcher:  
January 24 (41 yrs.)

## Annual Meeting

This year's annual meeting on January 30 will use a hybrid format. For those attending in person, voting, food and (appropriately distanced) fellowship will be in the parish hall at the church. We will be electing three persons to fill vacancies on the vestry. There will also be elections for those wishing to serve as delegates to Camden convocation and diocesan convention. If you have someone to nominate or wish to nominate yourself, please let me or one of the wardens know.

I look forward to seeing everyone, in person or online after the 11:00 mass on January 30.

-Fr. Mark

## Deacon's Corner

Last week, we learned the news of Sidney Poitier's death. In response, we thought to honor him by selecting one of his films for movie night; we chose Lilies of the Field. Poitier won both a Golden Globe Award and an Oscar for this film—the first Bahamian and first African American to win these awards.

Poitier was born three months prematurely when his Bahamian parents were in Miami on a trip to sell tomatoes and other produce from their farm. Sidney was not expected to survive. When he was fifteen, he moved back to Miami and at sixteen to New York City with goals of becoming an actor. He failed his first audition as he could not read English. He was “tutored” by an elderly Jewish waiter who worked with him via reading newspaper articles. He later joined the American Negro Theatre, the group who had rejected him after that first failed audition.

Poitier was a trail-blazer for all African American actors—men and women. Even though he was born in Miami, his Bahamian roots and accent created challenges for his acting, creating almost an immigrant-like experience, if only due to his voice. Yet, he overcame the obstacles before him. The film itself overcame other obstacles and challenges: Lilies of the Field was shot in only 14 days. The director took out a second mortgage to cover the costs and Poitier agreed to take less than his usual salary for it, agreeing to a percentage of the proceeds instead. ([tcm.com](http://tcm.com)) They were as convicted in the success of the film as Mother Superior of the film was in the building of the chapel.

Remarkable, too, for a premature baby who was not expected to live. But, if we consider the lilies of the scripture passage on what this movie is based, we might not be surprised at all. Matthew 6:28-33—and you may read it in your favorite Bible version.

Poitier's character, Homer, arrives as a traveling handyman to a small farm worked by a small group of German nuns. Mother Superior of the group has a sketch and a vision for a chapel. She is the one who remains sure in her faith, sure at God's provision, and unrelenting in her methods for inclusion. It is in this community energy, founded in faith, that the chapel is realized.

I'll let you watch for yourself and see how a truck load of bricks can change the world—at least a corner of it.

-The Rev. Jeannie Marcucci, Deacon

## The Walker Family

For those who have not heard, the Walkers have sustained a fire in two of their homes, causing a great deal of suffering and displacement throughout the family. Although I have in past days listed their immediate needs, as I understand them, I will do so here again. Even through these times of pandemic and separation, they are a part of us and I believe we should do what we can to help.

Toya Walker: size 9/10 pants; medium tops; 8 1/2 women's shoe

Cynthia Johnson: (8yrs. old) size 12 kids clothes, 4y shoe

Elaya: (4yrs. old) girls 5T or XS

Naja: (10 yrs) girls 14-16

Shoe sizes: toddler 8 and children's girl 4

Jasmine Walker: (28 yrs.) size 7 pants, medium shirts, size 6 shoe

Holly Walker: size 9/10 pants, L/XL shirts, 6.5 shoe

Orianna Walker: (22 yrs.) size 5 pants, S/M shirts, 6.5-7 shoe

Raven: size 0/1 pants, XS/S shirts, 7 shoe.

-Fr. Mark

# Diocesan Anti-Racism Training

Having taken this training in 2020, I can recommend it without reservation; it has developed a national reputation. It is also highly recommended for all those in leadership positions (i.e. wardens and vestry). I am including the advertisement in the Episcopal News Service. If you need more information, I will be happy to talk about this opportunity.

-Fr. Mark

**“In the ministry of racial healing and justice, none of us walks a straight line.** We enter a labyrinth wherever God has provided an opening – telling the truth about our church’s story around race; discerning and proclaiming God’s dream of Beloved Community where we are; learning and practicing Jesus’ way of healing and love; and bravely working to transform systemic racial injustice. We keep moving from one quadrant to another and back. No one is ever really finished. That is the way of ongoing spiritual formation.”

-from Becoming the Beloved Community <https://www.episcopalchurch.org>

**The Anti-Racism Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey** invites you to join us for our 20-hour online Anti-Racism Training on five (5) consecutive Friday evening Zoom sessions, a self-study program in between the Friday meetings, and a follow-up session four weeks later.

The session costs \$100 per person. Our winter dates are:

January 21, January 28, February 4, 11, 18, and March 18

[Click here to register for the Winter Session of the Anti-Racism Training.](https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event_page.aspx?ek=0015-0007-8fe2df6afdd047d9a7ffdbf6f905669f)

([https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event\\_page.aspx?ek=0015-0007-8fe2df6afdd047d9a7ffdbf6f905669f](https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event_page.aspx?ek=0015-0007-8fe2df6afdd047d9a7ffdbf6f905669f))

Each week leading up to the Friday Zoom session, participants will complete self-study lessons to fit their own personal schedules. The material consists of recorded lectures, videos, and articles which provide a historical overview of systemic racism in America, its impact on society and on our individual lives.

Participants must attend all sessions to earn a Certificate of Completion.

**The Anti-Racism Commission** is a group of dedicated anti-racists who are working to help dismantle systemic racism, inequality, and injustice in our church and in society.

If you're interested in learning more, please contact [Rev. Ted Moore](mailto:tmoore12@comcast.net) (tmoore12@comcast.net), co-chair of the Anti-Racism Commission.