

CHIFF CHAT – DECEMBER 2015



Dean's Message:

The embodiment of Love is often referred to as the Incarnation. For Christians, Christmas is a special act of love becoming present in the world.

As a child, Christmas was personal and magical at the same time. I loved the shortening of the days and the holiday lights piercing the darkness. There were carols and descants to sing. Private visits to the crèche and family meals in the presence of a tree aglow with color, tinsel, garlands of cranberries n popcorn, and just about everything else that is considered tacky today.

That spirit and joy I was able to keep alive into early adulthood. Then in the course of a few years several people who meant everything to me since childhood died at Christmas. For too many years Christmas became a reminder of loss, a time of sorrow. Though it took a decade or so I finally arrived at another understanding of Christmas, of Incarnation.

I've been fortunate enough to attend Christmas Mass in the cathedrals of Vienna, Cologne, Antwerp, and twice at St. Peter's Basilica with Paul VI. However, the Christmas morning through which I have viewed every

Christmas since was in the humblest of locations, the ground floor of a hospital.

In the late 1970's, I met a woman named Cicely Saunders. She was a nurse and physician. She invited me and a few other students to spend our Christmas recess with her in England. It was a small hospital that she started called St. Christopher's in an unglamorous location. Dame Cicely and her staff were the founding spark of the modern hospice movement.

I was there for maybe a month learning about palliative care, helping with the less than pleasant tasks, visiting some real salty gents, giving haircuts and shaves which they could no longer do for themselves, and taking barbs for being a Yank.

St. Christopher's was filled with human dignity. No one died alone. There was always someone present. If you were on watch when someone passed, you noted the time, told the nurses, and said the canticle "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; To be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel". I learned the canticle of Simeon from memory that



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Christmas. It will be forever embedded in my heart.

This was my surroundings for my very best Christmas. England can be dank and gloomy in winter, but on that Christmas morning the sun shone with brilliance. After the morning routine I helped wheel the beds with residents to the lift and down to the large room on the ground floor. There we assembled for worship, to observe the manifestation of Love entering the world. I remember being on the edge of the room, looking at everyone I had recently met and had come to know. All the time noticing how the sunlight was just pouring in.

I don't remember a word the priest said, but on that day I began to become aware of all the resurrection theology that saturates our carols. The whole purpose of Christmas being that we need not fear the grave and that we may never die.

St. Christopher's was unapologetic in its religious outlook. It grew out of Dame Cicely's faith. Exact words escape me, but Dame Cicely said something to the effect that the two most important times in life is when we enter this world and when we leave. She felt that the best gift that the entire staff could give the residents was to take care of the worries of life, particularly it's pain, so people could have the time and space to reflect on their journey and contemplate the truly important questions of life.

Most of us will be playing or attending Christmas services. The Christmas and the world of my childhood have long vanished. It will never return, but the Incarnation is constantly reborn in open hearts. The glory of Christmas does not depend on how great our music may be, but depends on how well and open we are to conveying the message the music contains. We live in a world filled with broken hearts and wounded souls with many of them well disguised. Here is our golden moment. Here is your opportunity to influence a life. When you play be mindful of what those carols say. People absorb them slowly over a lifetime and for someone this Christmas you may make their meaning perfectly clear. While you play and people sing, it is hope you bring.

Faithfully yours,

Lad



Frederick G. E. Wood (RIP)
(1927-2015)

SOUTH HADLEY - Frederick G. E. Wood, 88, of Alvord Place, passed away Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2015, at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. He was born in New York, and is the son of the late Frederick H. V. and Helen (Stone) Wood. He retired in 1990 as a clerk for the U.S. Post Office in Northampton where he had worked for 23 years and previously had worked for the former Pro Brush in Florence. He was a Korean veteran serving with the United States Army, a member of the Hampshire County Voluntary Sheriffs, a member of the First Congregational Center Church in South Hadley, a past patron of Bethlehem Chapter 24, the Joel Hayden Chapter 171 of the Order Eastern Star, and the Mountain Masonic Lodge in Shelburne Falls, and Jerusalem Lodge of Northampton. He leaves his wife Anna (Piper) Wood; his son Frederick Wood of Holyoke; his daughter Elaine Wood of Easthampton; a sister Marilyn Wakeman of Framingham; and his grandchildren Jillian, Jake and Lucas Patee. The family would like to thank the staff of Holyoke Soldiers Home and the Baystate VNA and Hospice for their care of Frederick. A private service with military honors will be held at the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam. There are no calling hours. The Boucher-O'Brien Funeral Home is handling his arrangements. In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Soldiers' Home, 110 Cherry St., Holyoke, MA 01040, or Baystate VNA and Hospice, 50 Maple St., Springfield, MA 01103.

Dr. Mitchener in Concert



Pastor Organist Dinner St. Andrew's Church



Swearing in of two new Board of Directors



Speaker-Rev. Joseph O. Robinson Rector of Christ Church Cambridge





Calendar of events...

Saturday, 12 December 2015, 7:30 p.m.

The Cathedral Choir of Boys and Adults sing Advent-Christmas Lessons and Carols accompanied by Organ, Strings, Handbells, and Percussion led by Ladislav Pfeifer. Highlights include Purcell's "Rejoice in the Lord always," Handel's "For unto us a child is born," Delibes's *Gloria*, Biebl's "Ave Maria," and the Corelli *Christmas Concerto*.

Saturday, 5 December 2015, 4:00 p.m. ***Novi Cantori's Annual Community Carol Festival-First Cong. Church, 18 Broad Street, Westfield, MA. Admission by donation at door.***

Sunday, 13 December 2015, 7:00 p.m. ***Eastern Skies: Christmas with Novi Cantori, featuring music of Bach, Tallis, Locklair, Rorem, MacMillan and more - St. Stanislas Basilica, 40 Cyman Drive, Chicopee, MA. Admission by donation at the door, with proceeds shared w/the Boys and Girls Club of Chicopee.***

Sunday, 20 December 2015, 4 p.m. ***Eastern Skies: Christmas w/Novi Cantori, same program as on December 13, but at Granville Federated Church, 16 Granby Road, Granville, MA. Donations at the door.***

Joy to the World!



Hark the Herald Angels Sing!

Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year!



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Springfield, Massachusetts Chapter of the American Guild of Organists Celebrating 65 Years of Life!

To submit information regarding positions, upcoming concerts, recitals, or area events, please e-mail Elizabeth Zellmer at Vinitajoybound@netzero.net.

Submissions are due by the 20th of each month.

Visit our website at www.springfielddago.org & “Like” us on Facebook!

We need your help!

Volunteer for the Program Committee!

Contact our Dean, Lad Pfeifer, at ljep@diospringfield.org

**Springfield Chapter American Guild of Organists
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