



The Flame

January 2025

Our Mission is to be a welcoming place where people meet Christ and grow in their relationship with God through our worship, service, and fellowship.

Christmas Eve & Day

What a blessing the mild weather was for celebrating our Lord's birth. The church was beautifully adorned with both the holiday decorations and the gifts of our praise and thanksgivings. We want to offer our special thanks to all those who made the services both memorable and grace filled, the Altar Guild, our Vocal Choir, our Bell Choir, our Lay Ministers, our Acolytes, our Greeters, and our Ushers. Their commitment helped all to feel the excitement of our celebration. Most of all, we want to thank all of you who joined us during one of our four services, either in-person or online. May the upcoming year be filled with an abundance of God's blessings.



More Photos on page 8

Fr. Tom's Tidbits



This past year has truly flown by. Despite some of the challenges we faced, it has been a year of many blessings. As we prepare for the upcoming transition, we have been doing our best to get our house in order both physically and spiritually. I think we have done a pretty good job so far, but there is still more to do. While we have gotten the big things done, the parking lot repaired and sealed, the outside of the church painted and stained, lighting on the circle drive replaced, there are several projects still taking shape.

Ministries are still working to complete their descriptions of what they do and how they go about doing it. Having this project completed, will be a real blessing for the new rector as they will be able to see how we work together to further our shared mission and ministry. Also, we still have some work to do in the boiler room area, the restroom and office closets, and the attic to thin out items that have taken root and that are no longer needed. With the help of our scouts, through various Eagle Projects, we hope to complete work in the fenced-in area on the northwest side of our parking lot, our memorial garden and labyrinth, our upstairs classrooms, our chapel, and office hallway and entryway.

One area that we really need to try and sort out this spring is our computer support team. Alan has been looking for a helper to manage our parish computers. He has done this faithfully for us for many years. However, he has let us know with the traveling he is hoping to do in the coming year, he needs help from someone to care for our computers and Wi-Fi system. Add to this, with my upcoming retirement, we are going to need someone with computer skills to take over managing our website and our online presence. While none of what is needed is overly time-consuming, when problems arise, they need to be addressed as quickly as possible. If you might be interested in helping, please contact Alan Wyant or let me know.

As this new year begins, I pray you are as excited as I am about the possibilities that lay ahead, possibilities for deepening relationships, growing our parish family, and expanding the difference we make in the surrounding community as we work together opening doors and eliminating obstacles so that we may live more fully into our task of being faithful witnesses of God's love in our lives.

Father Tom

The church office will be closed, Monday, January 20st for the holiday.



Rector Search Update

In late January, early February, we are expecting the diocese to send us the first batch of applications for Fr. Tom's replacement. To prepare for this next step in the search process, our search committee met with Canon Liz last month to learn how best to understand the application packages we will receive and what an interview should encompass. Please don't ask us who the applicants are as we are not supposed to share that information. The reason for this is because not all clergy seeking this position may want it out there that they are looking for a new parish family. We will do our best to keep you posted as the process continues and we greatly appreciate your prayers and patience.

**News from the
Search Committee**



Deacons Corner



2025 marks the 1700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea. Put together by Constantine, a main aim was to address the controversy of whether Christ was Divine or simply a created being. From this Council came many canons and, most notably, the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed, used by Christian traditions as a statement of faith, links followers of Christ together by proclaiming our belief in the composition of the Trinity, the role of baptism and a belief in eternity. While some still challenge concepts within the Creed (the Eastern Orthodox Church does not believe the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father AND the Son) it largely categorizes believers as “Christians.”

There is so much more to what each of us believes than what is in the Nicene Creed. Some of those beliefs separate the various Christian traditions. Beyond that there is room for differences within the Episcopal Church---even within our own congregation. I think that the beauty of these different beliefs is that it ties intimately to our individual relationships with God. God has revealed common things to us, but God also reveals things to each of us individually...things meant for just us. This became very apparent to me the first time I went to a Journeys year-end service where I listened to those graduating from the program share the creeds they developed. Each person had taken the time and made prayerful consideration to put together a creed that was unique to them, and still incorporated the commonalities of the Christian faith.

I was amazed.

I knew that as these wonderful young people continued on their now adult journeys, their beliefs would likely change. I found that concept beautiful because it meant that their relationship with God would continue to grow. What I found humbling was that I had never put together a creed of my own. The idea never even crossed my mind. Years later, as part of two theology classes in seminary, I wrote my personal creed. The first one was very high level and the second engaged more specific topics. Each time the exercise challenged me, formed me, and kept me thinking “why do I believe this?” Separating (or reaffirming) what I was taught growing up from my personal experiences and my personal experiences from my understanding of what the Bible teaches was hard. Regarding one particular subject, I spoke to four people with different opinions than me just to solidify what I believed. At a minimum, my perspective broadened. In the end, I held (and still hold) that issue in prayer. That is where I have found the true benefit of having a personal creed. It points back to not only my relationship with God, but it encourages the growth of that relationship by continual engagement with God.

To celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, consider spending time in prayerful consideration of what you believe. The time spent with God while doing this will change each of us in the best possible ways.

Deacon Terri

Parish Life

Blue Christmas

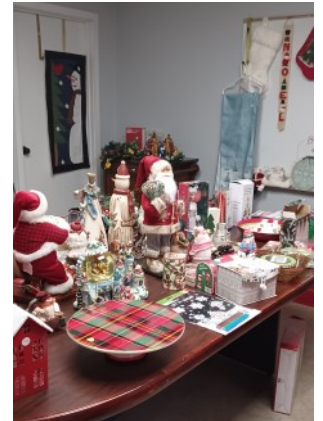
Once again, Fr Tom offered his meditative and contemplative Blue Christmas service. While the hymns were not sung by Elvis, along with the prayers and meditation, they did help those who struggle to embrace the joy of the season, whether due to grief, loss, or frustration, reconnect with the love of God, the Christmas season reminds us, surrounds us even in those times we don't feel it. Thank you to all who attended and to those who helped make the service a meaningful and blessed experience.



Craft & Bake Sale



Holiday Bake and Craft Sale signs directed a record number to the Church of the Holy Spirit undercroft filled with vendors on a beautiful December Saturday. Tables full of jewelry, knitted scarves and hats welcomed them as they entered the red doors. Mounds of carefully stitched and embroidered items, perfect Christmas gifts and decorations, delightful scents and the Bake Shop with a variety of Christmas cookies, breads, candies, and other yummy goodies made this annual event a success, both social and financial. This year totaling \$950+ was the biggest ever. A special thank you to the many wonderful volunteers who donated their time and talents!



Inquirer's Class



It is that time of year again. Fr Tom will offer his Inquirer's Class beginning at 11am on Sunday (26 Jan). This class is open to all parish members 12 years old and older. It is a great way for those new to the Episcopal faith to learn more about what we believe and how we live out our faith as part of the wider church and as members of CHS. If you might be interested in attending, please stop by the Spirit Hub and let us know. A calendar of class dates may be found at the Spirit Hub or posted on the office hallway bulletin board.

Annual Ministry Reports

Attention all Ministry Team Leaders. It is time to begin putting together your end of year ministry reports for our Annual Parish Report. Please submit all reports to the office by Sunday (12 Jan 25). If you are a new Team Leader and have questions about what to submit, or want to review last year's entry, a copy of last year's report can be found on the What's Happening page of our website (www.chsepiscopal.org).



Annual Meeting



Our 2024 Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday (2 Feb 2025). Following the 9:30am service, brunch will be provided by the Vestry. Afterwards, a short meeting will take place to review our parish accomplishments and challenges. During this meeting we will also take a look at the financial health of our parish, elect new members to the Vestry, and parish delegates to the DioNeb Annual Council in Oct 2025.

Valentine's Extravaganza

Tickets will go on sale Sunday (12 Jan) for this year's Valentine's Extravaganza. This adults only event will be held on Friday (7 Feb) beginning at 7pm. During this event we will enjoy five rounds of tasty treats, five rounds tasting your choice of alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages, and five rounds of bingo with prizes. The cost for this event is \$12.50 per person. This event typically sells out quickly. To purchase your tickets, please see Sharon Jones or call the church office.



Parish Directory

There is a working copy of the church directory at the Spirit Hub. Please check to make sure the information is correct, update it if needed. Many of the photos are old or missing. We would love to update these so people can put a face to the name. (New priest coming!) If everything is correct, please initial next to your entry so we know it was checked.



Two things to note: any member over 16 should have their own listing and while the birthdates and anniversaries are shown they will not be in the final print copy. That is for office use only. If you are not in the directory, please let the office know. You can email the office if needed, holyspirit@chsepcopal.org.

Youth Activities

Journeys Christmas Party

Last month, our Journeys youth celebrated the holiday season with games and treats in place of their usual programmed activities. Special thanks to our Journey's staff, and parent volunteers, who give so freely of their time and talents offering our youth such a blessed opportunity deepen relationships and have fun while doing so. Please pass on your thanks to Marcia Adams, Lori Stevens, Pam Chisam, Barb Smith, Amber Horejs, and Sharon Jones.



Journeys and Sunday School resume meeting



Journeys will resume meeting on Wed (8 Jan). Dinner will be at 6:30 pm, group activities start at 7pm, and Compline will be broadcast live on Facebook at 8pm. Journey is open to all youth 12 years old and older or who are in the 6th-12th grade. For more information about Journeys, please visit with Fr Tom.

Sunday school for youth in pre-school through 5th grade will resume meeting on Sunday (12 Jan) following the 9:30 service. Cindy and her team are excited to hear about our youth's holiday and to begin the spring program focusing on the New Testament.



Suicide Prevention Class

Please mark your calendars. Jennifer Moffett will once again offer Suicide Prevention training for youth 10-18 on Wednesday (5 Feb) beginning at 7pm (following dinner and in place of usual Journeys programmed activities). Parents are invited to attend. Please sign up at the Spirit Hub to let us know you are coming, and if you are joining us for dinner, so we can plan accordingly. If you have any questions about this training, please visit with Fr Tom or anyone of our Journeys staff volunteers.



Christmas Pageant

I want to thank our Sunday School kids for a great telling of the Birth of Jesus! The kids heard the story over and over during Advent, so they were ready for their performance! From our great narrator to our smallest sheep the story was retold with love. A special thank you to our youth who stepped in to herd children, fill parts, and be on standby for missing kids! Thank you all for blessing us with this great reminder of the day our God came to Earth to be with us. Peace to All, Cindy Pekarek, Christian Ed Director



Eagle Project Pancake Breakfast



On Sunday (12 Jan) Troop 483 will host a pancake breakfast in order to help raise funds for an Eagle Project that will be focusing on our Thomas Dr Memorial Garden. This project will remove the over-grown bushes up against the side of the church, as well as the tree that is too close to the building. Funds raised will go to purchase new bushes (that will not grow more than a few feet blocking the church windows) and some fresh landscaping. This is phase 1 of a two phase plan to give new life to our garden area.



Outreach

Hands of Hope

Bellevue Together offers their thanks to all who purchased items for their Hands of Hope ministry. As a parish, we provide 40 youth with a Christmas gift to help brighten their holiday. Special thanks to Deacon Terri who coordinated our efforts, helping us make a difference in the lives of Bellevue youth.



Mobile Pantry



December's Mobile Pantry event was a chilly one. In December, besides the food we were able to provide, we shared with our guests the many calendars you donated as well as magnetic calendars with the church's name and website imprinted. Thanks to all our scouts and parish volunteers who make this event possible.

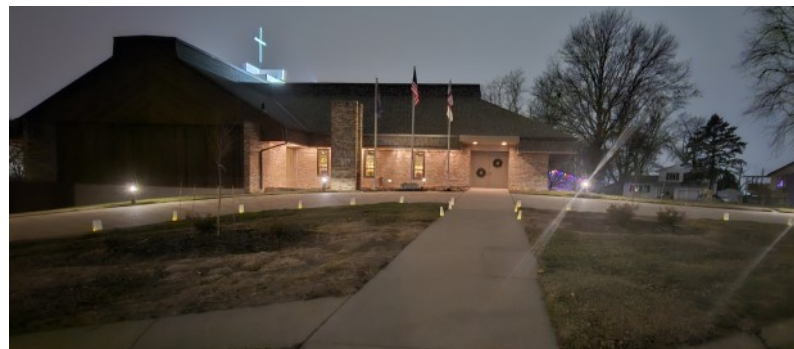


Red Cross Blood Mobile



Please mark your calendars. The Blood Mobile will be at CHS on Saturday (1 Feb 2025) between 8am and 3pm. To make an appointment for your donation, please visit the Red Cross website (<https://www.redcross.org>), click on the Give Blood Link, enter our zip code (68005), then scroll down the list until the date of our drive (1 Feb). There you will find Church of the Holy Spirit listed. Click on the link provided to make your appointment. To find out more about this event, or if you need help making an appointment, please visit with Carol McLaughlin.





FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial Report as of November 30, 2024

	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
Pledged	\$ 12,666.00	\$ 17,512.17	\$ 177,114.00	\$ 192,633.83
Other Inc.	\$ <u>1,105.00</u>	\$ <u>2,415.83</u>	\$ <u>27,146.38</u>	\$ <u>26,574.17</u>
Total Inc	\$ 13,765.00	\$ 19,928.00	\$ 205,260.38	\$ 219,208.00
Expenses	\$ 22,766.73	\$ 20,032.67	\$ <u>208,159.02</u>	\$ 220,359.33
			\$ -2,898.64	

Vestry Meeting Minutes

December 12, 2024

Vestry Members present: Fr. Tom Jones, Patrick Howell, Barb Smith, Rick Horejs, Cindy Pekarek, Judy Darrell, Vince Cummings, Jr. Also present: Marcia Adams, Treasurer and Carol McLaughlin, recorder.

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 PM. Father Tom opened the meeting with prayer.

SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE: Marcia reported that next Wednesday there will be a training session on how to interview candidates. There are a couple candidates so far.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Marcia presented the Financials for the month.

On the Budget vs. Actuals report, contributions are at 94%, and total income is at 93%. For expenditures, she pointed out the Liability Insurance which represents a quarterly payment. Nothing else was out of the ordinary.

On the Changes in Equity report Marcia noted expenses in outreach misc. for Thanksgiving Boxes and in the DOK fund for Care Packages. Under Building and Grounds there was expense for HVAC repair and phone installation. We also gained over \$13,000 in the endowment fund.

Balance Sheet: Net Cash Assets \$289,798. Total Available Assets \$778,127.

M012-12-01: Patrick moved and Judy seconded that we accept the reports as presented. Motion passed with unanimous approval. **M12-12-02:** Cindy moved, and Patrick seconded that we pay the bills. Passed with unanimous approval. Fr. Tom went over the expenditure requests for the month

FUND	EXPENSE	AMOUNT
Building Fund	Boiler Repair	1247.50
Outreach Misc	Thanksgiving Boxes	1835.49
Outreach Misc	Thanksgiving Boxes	495.00
Youth Activities Fund	Games / Supplies	20.60
DR Santa Ana Fund	Supplies / Prizes	12.01
DOK Fund	Care Package Gifts	59.93
Oktoberfest	Supplies / Prizes	14.99

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Fr. Tom went over some upcoming calendar items. Of note is the January 12th date is when Ministry Reports are due; Vestry members need to remind their ministry team leaders of this. The Youth Lock-in is on December 31.

DISCUSSION ITEMS / UPDATES:

Sanctuary Lighting: No update from Tritsch Electric on when the fixtures will be in. Fr. Tom asked if they can replace light bulbs as planned before Christmas but no response on this yet.

Sound System/Third Microphone: Still no word on when this will be in.

Roof Repair: Insurance company is sending another adjuster out to mark where they feel replacement is needed, if any.

Fr. Tom handed out the current Status of Pledge Drive. Our goal this year was \$211,000, and we have received pledges of \$219,000 already. We are sitting at \$7,700 in the hole, which is not unusual and we can expect to come out of this. We are still waiting on a couple families who traditionally pledge at the end of the year. He went over some of the discretionary funds that can be reprogrammed by the Vestry that can be used to overcome any deficit. We have received 7 new pledges, 38 increased pledges, 14 with no change and 6 decreased pledges. We now have 109 families in the parish, of which 59 are considered Core families (who have pledged at least 3 years in a row).

Fr. Tom went over a list of 2025 potential Eagle Scout Projects, both indoors and outside. He invited discussion of these and any other projects that the Vestry would like to add. One idea added was to paint all of the restrooms as well as the parish hall.

New Vestry member nominations are asked for next year as Kristi and Lori will be coming off the Vestry. Names are needed by mid-January. Also, names are needed for nominations for Annual Council delegates (October 23-25, 2025). There were no further discussion items.

DECISION ITEMS:

Fr. Tom handed out the Final Draft of the 2025 Budget. We will probably fall short this year of our total pledge offering projection, although some parish members may still step up with pledges. He believes that we will be around \$248,307 total income next year. In Expenses he noted an increase in the estimated Utilities for 2025, Gas to \$6,000. He then explained how the yearly rector expenses will be distributed between himself and the new rector. Much will depend on Health Insurance needs of the new rector. Total expense budgeted for next year is \$253,572. Taking into account the planned income we will be \$5,265 in the hole. **M12-12-03:** Rick moved and Cindy seconded that we accept the 2025 Budget as presented. Passed with unanimous approval.

We have accepted our full Faith Asking (\$24,881) in the budget, and need to discuss how this will be paid. We have in the past opted to pay on a 10 month plan, skipping two summer months. **M12-12-04:** Barb moved, and Rick seconded that we pay on the 10 month plan as in the past. Passed with unanimous approval. June and August were agreed on as the two summer months to skip. Given to Senior Warden to sign. Clerk of the Vestry (Patrick) will sign when he returns to town.

After budget approval, Fr. Tom submitted his Church Pension Group's required resolution. It reads: "Whereas Fr. Tom Jones is employed as minister of the Gospel by Church of the Holy Spirit, in Bellevue, NE, which does not provide a residence for him, the Vestry resolves that of the total compensation of \$40,183 to be paid to Rev. Jones, between Jan-Jun 2025, that \$20,100 be designated as housing allowance with the meaning and that term as used in Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Cond of 1986; and be it further resolved, that \$20,100 of compensation is designated as housing allowance. **M12-12-05:** Fr. Tom moved that we accept the resolution as presented. Judy seconded. Passed with unanimous approval.

The final 2025 Parish Calendar and Fundraiser/Outreach schedule was handed out. There was discussion of the calendar entries. No changes were made to the Fundraiser/Outreach Calendar. The following changes are made to the Parish Calendar:

Red Cross Blood Drive changed from Feb 15 to Feb 1 // Spring parish clean-up changed from May 31 to May 17 // Sunday school open house and first day of Sunday school moved to Aug 24 and Sept 7, respectively // Christmas Pageant moved from Dec 14 to Dec 21

Motion M12-12-06: Judy moved, and Cindy seconded to accept the parish calendar and fundraiser outreach calendar as updated. Passed with unanimous approval.

Motion 12-12-07: Fr. Tom made a motion to move \$2,000 from the Rector Discretionary Fund to the Parking Lot Fund. Barb seconded. Passed with unanimous approval.

There was no further business. **M12-12-08:** Judy moved and Rick seconded that the meeting adjourn. Passed with unanimous approval. Meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM.

UPCOMING PARISH EVENTS!



- Jan 1** - Office Closed
- Jan 12** - Pancake breakfast
- Jan 12** - Finance Committee meeting - 11am
- Jan 16** - Vestry Meeting - 6:30pm
- Jan 25** - Mobile Food Pantry - 10 - 11am
- Jan 26** - Inquirers Class - 11am
- Jan 29** - Youth Group Bingo Night - 6:30
- Feb 2** - ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 11am



LAY MINISTRIES SCHEDULE

Ministries	Jan 5	Jan 12	Jan 19	Jan 26	
VPOD	Patrick H	Rick H	Cindy P	Judy D	
Hospitality Team 9:30 am <i>Greeters, Ushers & Coffee Hour Host</i>	Team 3	Team 4	Team 1	Team 2	
Altar Guild	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	
Spirit Hub	Hospitality Ushers	Meals on Wheels	Vestry	Food for Parish	
Altar Bread	Carol M	Carol M	Carol M	Carol M	
Recycle Team	Jan S	Marcia A	Susan H	Karen G	
LEM Saturday 5:00 pm	Kristi S				
LEM Sunday 8:00 am	Doug A	Dcn Terri	Doug A	Dcn Terri	
LEM Sunday 9:30 am	Jan S Carol S				
Acolytes	Crucifer Torch Torch	Isaiah CH Vincent C Olivia H	Kyper M Ailynn M Mya H	Isaiah JH Olivia H MacKenzie C	Evelynn C Vincent C Ailynn M

Please submit articles for the
February 2025 FLAME to the
church office by January 17th.
Thank you



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Regular Services:

Sunday: 8:00am Holy Eucharist Rite I
9:30 am Holy Eucharist Rite II *
Wednesday: 9:30 am Holy Eucharist *
Saturday: 5:00 pm Holy Eucharist
* Broadcast live on Facebook

Education: September - May

Sunday: Sunday School @ 10:45 am
Wednesday: Bible Study @ 10:15 am
Journey to Adulthood @ 6:30 pm

Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday: 9:00 am–3:00 pm
Friday: 9:00 am–Noon

Rector's Day Off:

Friday

The Flame is a monthly production of the Church of the Holy Spirit, Episcopal, in Bellevue, Nebraska. We welcome all stories, pictures, and suggestions, but must reserve the right to choose what we can print. Please send articles and pictures to CHS Admin at holyspirit@chsepiscopal.org. The next deadline for submitting news is December 17th.

Webpage: www.chsepiscopal.org

Email: holyspirit@chsepiscopal.org

The Flame
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