

Now Hear This ...

# WELCOME!

by the Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr.

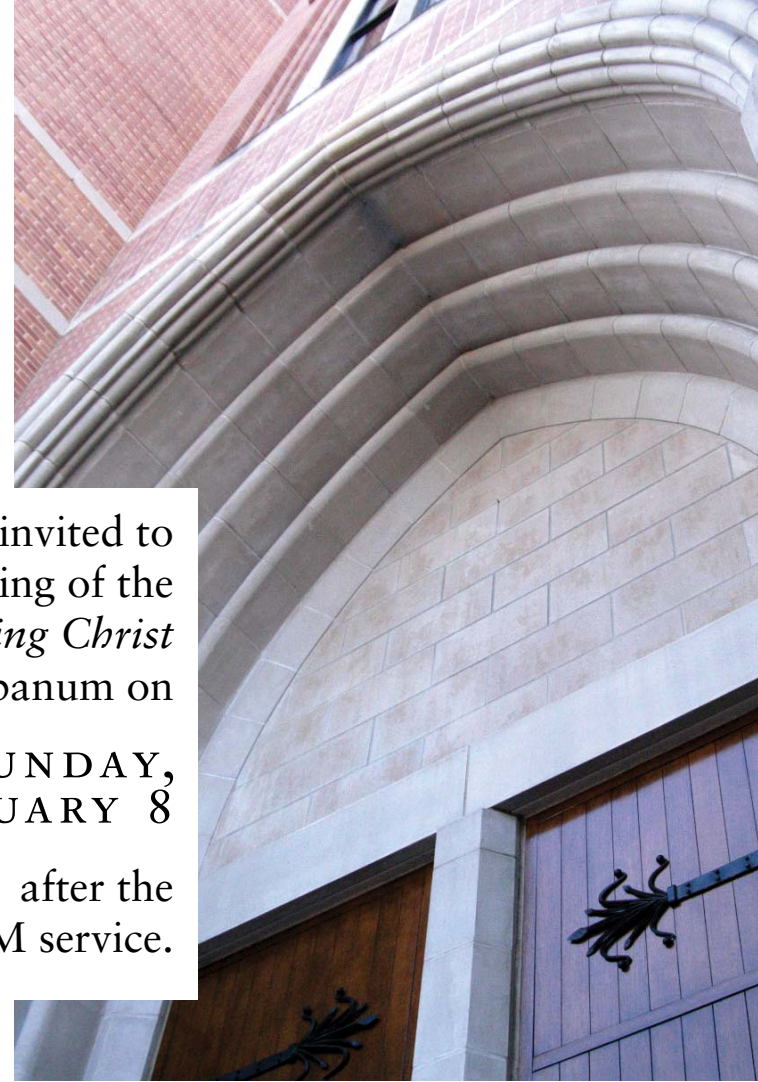
Prayer is often accompanied by vision, and such prayer-fueled vision, if realized, often produces wonderful gifts. Such was certainly the case when under the leadership of my predecessor, the Rev. Laurence A. Gipson, D.D., the architectural skill of Jackson & Ryan Architects, the construction expertise of Tellepsen Builders and the generosity of thousands of our members, our beautiful and majestic worship space was designed, built and ultimately completed in the spring of 2004. Constructed as perhaps the last great medieval-style Gothic worship space in the United States, our spires not only draw our eyes and hearts to “reach up to God,” but also enable those of us who worship here week after week to know that God, in Christ, is reaching down to us. From narthex to chancel, choir screen to *Gloria Dei* organ, from pew to each of the over 100,000 pieces of carefully tinted and brushed stained glass — every detail of The Church was painstakingly planned, reviewed and executed with one primary mission in mind: to bring glory to God. There is no question in my mind that that mission was infinitely and thoroughly accomplished.

There was little, if any, to “complete” in The Church. There have been a few touches here and there — the *Patron’s Chapel*, given in thanksgiving for Mary Frances and Larry Gipson and their years of dedicated service; the Welcome Center and improvements to our Library; and the *St. Martin’s* pulpit, finished earlier this year with the inclusion of carefully chosen carvings of some of the Church’s greatest preachers. However, just over a year ago, I was taking one of my regular walks around the outside of The Church when I took particular notice of the large, blank space just over the main doors facing Woodway. This architectural space, particularly in churches and educational institutions, is called the tympanum — basically the semicircular area enclosed by the arch above the lintel of an arched entranceway. During the Gothic and Romanesque periods, tympanums of churches were often decorated with sculptures of biblical scenes. As I meditated on this spot, it occurred to me that filling in our tympanum with such a sculpture would be a worthy addition that would continue in our tradition of inspiration and mission. I gave Dr. Gipson a call and asked whether such a sculpture had ever been considered, and he said, “Yes, but we decided that could wait!” With his encouragement, I began to consider a wide variety of possible themes and finally settled on something that would convey our Lord’s invitation to the human family to follow Him.

You are invited to  
the unveiling of the  
*Welcoming Christ*  
tympanum on

SUNDAY,  
JANUARY 8

after the  
6:00 PM service.



Some of you will remember the story of the “birthplace” of St. Martin’s Episcopal Church. Mr. and Mrs. William G. Farrington were the parents of Mary Catherine Miller and close friends of our first rector, the Rev. Dr. J. Thomas Bagby, and his wife, Mary Louise. When traveling to a diocesan event with Dr. Bagby, Mr. Farrington asked, “Tom, when are you going to open your church?” Dr. Bagby replied, “Well, we really don’t have a place to meet.” Mr. Farrington said, “You do now!” That was when Dr. Bagby learned that Mr. Farrington had purchased the land with the large, beautiful Hollyfield Home, as it was called, on 2019 Post Oak. In 1952, to help form the church, Mr. Farrington leased the property to Dr. Bagby. He and his family moved upstairs and the first members of St. Martin’s gathered downstairs, until a permanent home for St. Martin’s was established at 717 Sage Road.

Now, sixty years later, I formed a small committee to design and produce our very own tympanum; including John Clements (the architect for many of our St. Martin’s projects), Flo McGee, my very capable assistant Carol Gallion, Mary Catherine Miller and, perhaps most importantly, her daughter Michelle Miller Shedd, an acclaimed artist in her own right. In the months that followed and armed with the suggestions of our little committee, Michelle developed a

*Continued from page 16*

beautiful design that we brought to the Vestry for their review. With final design in hand, and with the help of John Clements, we set out to find a sculptor who could carve Michelle's design into stone. We reviewed dozens of possible stone samples that would best match the tympanum border and, by late spring of this year, our stone was found in the Luxor area of Egypt and shipped to our sculptor, Pedrini Mario & C., in Carrara, Italy. Since that time, Michelle Shedd and Roberto Pedrini have been working very closely together to carve our collective thoughts and Michelle's design into what will be our *Welcoming Christ* tympanum. As you read this, there will likely be scaffolding in front of The Church, as we finish installing our new tympanum. My reason for not sharing more information or photographs is because it will be unveiled after our 6:00 PM worship service on Epiphany Sunday, January 8, 2012. This will be the first of many special moments celebrating the 60th anniversary year of St. Martin's. The overriding theme of the *Welcoming Christ* tympanum is obvious and is an invitation to those who worship here, and those who may

pass by, to recall the words of our Lord, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest..." (Matthew 11:28). Those of you who are drummers will also know that a tympanum is one of many pieces of percussion that, when struck, makes a loud noise! Those of you who are students of anatomy will know that a tympanum is also that thin veil of tissue in the ear canal that, receiving rhythmic sounds, actually makes hearing possible. Our new tympanum will be yet another avenue of reaching out to others. "Now hear this ... welcome into the loving arms of Christ!" and may all who see it hear not just with their ears, but with their hearts, "Welcome!"

The *Welcoming Christ* tympanum is given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. G. Farrington and Mr. Wm. James Miller by the Miller family and the Shedd family. So we come full circle in our 60th year. St. Martin's welcomed its very first members in 1952 and now, six decades later, those who seek the grace, mercy and love of Christ Jesus will visibly encounter His welcoming and loving embrace.

*The Welcoming Christ*

# TYMPANUM

*will be unveiled on Sunday, January 8,  
after the 6:00 PM service.*