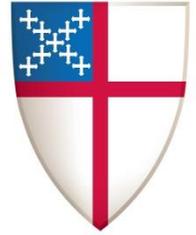


St. John's Episcopal Church and Day School

Alamogordo, New Mexico

Our Mission is to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel
and to seek and serve Christ in all people



2021 – December Newsletter

Greetings to each of you in this season of expectation,

I think that in many ways Advent is a season to reconnect with the Hope at the center of our calling. I started writing about Hope last month with this theme in mind. With everything that we have been through in the last year and a half, it feels like the season of Advent is more important for us to mark than ever. Because Advent is really a returning to what is important about the miracle of the Incarnation, the Word become Flesh.

To start, the assumption at the heart of Advent is that the revelation of God's love in God's only begotten child is a truth so powerful that it changes lives. What heart doesn't melt at the thought of God rewriting the rules of the universe in order to be born a human baby? What soul doesn't feel relief at the thought of God embracing every micrometer of the human experience in order to show us what the way of Love looks like?

Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for the tremendous gift of the Incarnation. How will our hearts approach the sacred manger? With fear and trembling? With tears of relief? However we make that journey, there is usually a fair amount of looking behind and ahead. I bring this up because we have a lot to grieve. Some of us live in a world now that we might not have recognized a couple years ago... a world full of violence, anger, and hurt. We have had to live in that world and that world has left its scars and bruises on us as a result.

To mark this, I would like us to experiment with a new tradition this Christmas. On the evening of December 21, 2021, we will have our first "Longest Night" service in recent memory. Anyone who is grieving a loved one, a friend, or even just feeling grief at the state of the world is invited to come to that service so that we can grieve together. It is my hope that even as we grieve we will feel our Hope for the future renewed in the promise of the Christchild.

May this Advent be a Holy time of reflection and renewal. Blessings from...

The Rev. Michael Peter Drinkwater

Senior Warden's Corner

One of the things I've started to notice is the grand variety of people and ministries that we pray for through the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer. It changes weekly. It is quite inspiring to me and shows just how important ministry is in this Diocese. Listen for it each Sunday and at the Daily Services of Morning and Evening Prayer during Prayers of the People.

Recently we prayed for *Lay Congregational Ministries*. This would include things like acolyte, eucharistic minister, eucharistic visitor, musician, altar guild, lay reader, greeter, community kitchen manager or server, landscaper, online streaming operator, and vestry.

We have added a few more through the creative energy and faith of some of our members. You've heard of the Card Ministry and Blessing Bags? And now Knitted Prayer Shawls, each stitch made with a prayer.

And behind the scenes we have a very devoted person who makes sure we recycle what is permitted. This can be a messy one.

See something there you'd like to try? I'd love to hear from you if you are interested!

For myself, I've added Eucharistic Visiting to my list and I'm glad I did! This is the ministry that enables us to bring the Blessed Sacrament to someone who can't make it to church for some reason. There is a training and certification requirement for the EV. Then we go out in pairs when invited to an individual's home or sometimes to a hospital or nursing home and offer the Sacrament with an abbreviated service. We bring them news from the congregation, and they usually give us news to carry back. Now we can also bring them a Prayer Shawl that has been blessed by Fr. Michael! This EV ministry is a truly joyful way to help us stay connected as a faith community.

I hope you will look over and consider our wide and varied choice of ministries and try one out! It can make a big difference in your life and your faith journey!

With joy and hope,

Nancy Gregory, Senior Warden

From the Deacon's Desk

Notes on Advent, Prayer and the Daily Office

Happy New Year!

The Church year begins every year with the first Sunday in Advent (November 28th this year), and ends with the Saturday after the Feast of Christ the King (11/27 this year). Advent always begins on the 4th Sunday before Christmas in the Western Church. (Within Eastern Christianity it is a 40-day season with slightly different dates known as the "Nativity Fast".)

The season of Advent (from the Latin *Adventus* for “coming” or “arrival”) has been observed by most Christians for at least the last 1500 years. It has long been seen as a penitential season marked by acts of special devotion. Because of this, Advent is sometimes known as “little Lent”, though it is a very different season. The historical liturgical color for Advent is purple, though many contemporary Anglican and Lutheran churches use blue to distinguish it from Lent. The Third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday (from the opening word of the Latin Mass for this Sunday: *Gaudete*, which means “Rejoice”), and it is a Sunday particularly devoted to the Joy of Christian living, commemorated in both Protestant and Catholic traditions. In some churches across traditions, including our own, rose may be used for this one Sunday of the year. (And Advent wreaths usually have a rose candle for this Sunday.)

Like Lent, Advent is a season of preparation and repentance marked by special devotion. But unlike Lent, in which we journey with Jesus to the cross and passion before celebrating His resurrection at Easter, Advent is a penitential season of hope, anticipation and joy as we prepare to celebrate God’s incarnation into human history through His birth. Though a penitential season, Advent does not call for the same rigor of fasting and self-denial as Lent.

Though most of us may rightly associate Advent particularly with anticipation of the birth of Christ, it is actually a season characterized by the coming of Christ from three different perspectives: His historic birth in the physical Nativity of Jesus in Bethlehem; His coming into our hearts as believers; and His Second Coming in glory at the Final Judgement. As we journey through Advent, both our Sunday Eucharistic Lectionary and our Daily Office Lectionary at Morning and Evening Prayer focus richly on all three of these themes: In this way, Advent as a season, with its focus upon past, present *and future*, spans and transcends history more powerfully than Lent with its singular focus on Jesus’ journey to the cross. Obviously Advent is a particularly rich time for Bible Study with both the Sunday and Daily lectionaries.

But what does Advent have to do with Prayer?

Advent is not normally observed today by fasting and self-denial in the same way as Lent: I’ve never heard of anyone giving up chocolate for Advent, and that would make for a sad edible Advent Calendar. Advent is however the perfect liturgical season to focus on renewal of one’s prayer life! Just like Lent or just like the secular New Year, the Advent Season is a wonderful time for new resolutions, and especially those related to prayer.

Advent is a good time of the year to begin a daily practice of meditation in conjunction with the Daily Office Lectionary. Among the many great links our webmaster Nancy Gregory has given us from the St. James homepage (www.stjamesalamo.com) is the Daily Meditation from *Forward Day by Day*. We also still subscribe to paper copies of this wonderful daily devotional tract. If you would like a paper copy, just let me or Fr. Michael know and we will get one to you. The Episcopal monks of the Society of St. John the Evangelist offer a popular free daily meditation called “Brother, Give us a Word” at <https://www.ssje.org/word/>. New Mexico’s own world-renowned teacher and spiritual director Fr Richard Rohr offers an excellent (and even *more* wildly popular!) meditation through his Center for Action and Contemplation at <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>. As I do every year, I will be reading the daily Advent Meditations offered free of charge through my alma mater, the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin (www.ssw.edu/advent2021 or let me know and I will get you the print version).

Advent is also a good time of the year to focus on prayer of all kinds: It is a good season to begin or renew intercessory prayer practices. Our weekly prayers at St. John’s are a good starting point, as are all of the intentions you already hold in your heart for our world, our church, our neighbors, your friends and families in need. And don’t neglect prayers for yourself: There is nothing remotely selfish about praying to God for guidance, wisdom,

charity, gratitude, compassion, patience, Sabbath rest and renewal, and empowerment and focus for active work and ministry in the church and in the world! Advent is an excellent time for new or renewed focus upon prayers of thanksgiving, praise, supplication and petition. And this season of prayer can help counter the frenetic pace and consumerism of the secular world all around us shopping for its secular ‘Christmas’ beginning with the end of Halloween.

And what does this have to do with the Daily Office?

Shortly before the onset of COVID, Fr. Michael and John Shipe began praying Morning Prayer every weekday morning at St. John’s. With the onset of COVID and the wonderful technologies of zoom, facebook and various apps (including Venite which we use at most Offices and my own community’s Gregorian app, both of which are on St. John’s links), St. John’s own Daily Office prayer group, the Playful Prayer Warriors (PPW) has prayed Morning and Evening Prayer Monday-Friday, including extensive intercessory prayers for all on our prayer list and then some. The current incarnation of the PPW is Aileen, John, Joyce, Fr. Michael, Nancy, Phil, and myself, though we always welcome and are joined in person from time to time by others on zoom in realtime, and are blessed by many other folks who join us on Facebook every day. Links are on the St. John’s homepage. Advent would be a wonderful time to join us if you are able.

The Daily Offices in the Episcopal Church (BCP pp. 35-146) are of course drawn from the ancient sevenfold monastic “hours”, the community prayer services which frame and order the life, work and days of monastic life. Though most of us probably attribute the origin of the hours to early Christian monastics, they almost certainly originate with ancient Jewish prayer practices predating Christianity by several centuries, and drawn in part from Psalm 119: “Seven times a day will I praise you”.

Though the Daily Offices are ideally a corporate or communal activity, well-suited for couples and families, they can also be beautifully prayed alone. Like most of my Brothers in the Brotherhood of St. Gregory, over the past 16 years in Vowed Religious Life I have probably prayed the four BCP Offices alone many more times than I have with my spouse, Brothers or prayer groups combined. Advent is a wonderful time to take up the Daily Office, either alone, with a spouse or family, or with the PPW. Our daily gatherings are full of joy, laughter and deep love as we pray together, and we also have reflections on the Scripture readings from Fr. Michael or another member of the group.

A good starting place for praying the Daily Office is to choose a particular time of day that works best for you and then use that Office. (If Noonday or Compline, you may want to also pull the day’s Lectionary readings from the Bible from Morning or Evening Prayer as well.) If this all seems too ambitious a starting place, I would highly recommend the abbreviated Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families (BCP pp. 136-140). However you celebrate it, may you have a Holy and Blessed Advent! Soli Deo Gloria, with love and prayer, David-Luke

Next Month: the Church Calendar

Schedule of Sunday Readings

Date	Old Testament	Psalm	Epistle	Gospel
5-Dec	Baruch 5:1-9	Canticle 4	Philippians 1:3-11	Luke 3:1-6
12-Dec	Zephaniah 3:14-20	Canticle 9	Philippians 4:4-7	Luke 3:7-18
19-Dec	Micah 5:2-5a	Canticle 3	Hebrews 10:5-10	Luke 1:39-55
26-Dec	Isaiah 61:10-62:3	147	Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7	John 1:1-18

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Date	Sunday	Reader - 8:00	Deacon - 10:15
5-Dec	Advent 2	Joyce Summers	The Rev. David-Luke Henton, BSG
12-Dec	Advent 3	John Shipe	The Rev. Aileen Walther
19-Dec	Advent 4	Randy Burroughs	The Rev. David-Luke Henton, BSG
26-Dec	Christmas 1	John Shipe	The Rev. Aileen Walther

Christmas 2021

This year we are celebrating three services in honor of the Feast of the Nativity:

December 21 – 6 pm – Longest Night Service

December 24 – 7 pm – Christmas Eve

December 25 – 10 am – Christmas Day

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Blessing Bag Ministry: New Ministry at St. John's

Blessing Bags contain **travel** size items (i.e. hand sanitizer, small note books, toothbrush, toothpaste, pens, pencils, shampoo, deodorant, granola bars, soap, tuna/cracker packs, underwear, socks etc). We place several of the items in a gallon storage bag and distribute them to those in need. Currently, we are working closely with Pastor Mike Degner, COPE and our community kitchen.

If you are interested in helping in this ministry, please contact Sharon Kelman at 757 718 9451 or email: ke4zia@gmail.com. You may bring any items you purchase to the church and deposit them in the bag that is located in the Narthex any Sunday.

Brotherhood of St. Andrew Bible Seminar

The Brotherhood is a group of men who engage in the study of scripture and service. We currently meet each Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m. for a Bible seminar in the Parish Hall. All men and women from the community with an interest in the study of scripture are invited to attend.

Birthdays and Anniversaries in November

November Birthdays:

Chuck (11/1), Jane (11/12), Kim (11/12), Lisa (11/14), Thomas (11/14), Dixie (11/23), Adam (11/24)

Happy Birthday to all!

Caring card ministry

I would like to thank everyone who has donated cards, stamps and stickers to this ministry. We would like to help you celebrate **ALL** occasions. So, if you haven't signed up on our birthday (we just need month and day- **NO YEARS**) and anniversary lists, please do so. If you know of someone who may enjoy receiving one of our cards, please let me know. The sign- up sheets are on the table in the Narthex. If you prefer, you may contact me directly: Sharon Kelman email: ke4zia@gmail.com or 757-718 9451 call or text.

Pet Prayer Chain

Many people in our congregation have pets. We all love our pets. They are part of our family. When they are sick, elderly or lost, it is a comfort to know that our church family is praying for them as well as us. If you have or know of a pet that could benefit from our ministry, please let me know. Please consider joining our pet prayer chain volunteers. You may contact: Sharon Kelman at ke4zia@gmail.com or 757 718-9451 call or text.

Daily Office

Morning Prayer is offered Monday through Friday at 8:00 a.m. Evening Prayer is offered Monday through Friday at 4:00 p.m.

Links to these services can be found on the website. The service is also streamed to our Facebook page when technology allows.

Formation Hour

Join us on Sundays at 9 for our Bible Study on Leviticus. We began our journey with Abraham and are now reading through the story of Leviticus. In December, we will likely continue into the story of Numbers.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Do you knit or crochet? Are you interested in doing it as part of an ongoing spiritual practice that gives back to the community? If you are and would like more information, like patterns or prayers, please contact Joyce at joycesummers@mac.com

Food Box Ministry

As many of you know, our church community has been doing amazing work through a grant made possible by the USDA farms to families initiative, a form of COVID relief. After serving more than 1000 meals over the months that we were involved in that program, it became clear that we were meeting a different kind of need. Now that the grant has run out and things are returning to normal, Father Michael is calling for a time of sabbath and planning for next steps. To that end, he has composed the prayer below. If you would take some time to pray with us, we would appreciate it as we continue to discern how to serve our community in the name of Jesus Christ.

Almighty God, whose eyes and ears, hands and feet we are. Give us eyes that see the needs of our community through the lense of your loving-kindness. Give us ears that hear the sprirt speaking through the mouth of our neighbors. Give us hands that reach out and build up your kingdom in our midst; and give us feet that carry the Good News to the darkest corners of our world; in the name of the one who died and rose again, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. John's Episcopal Church

1114 Indiana Avenue, Alamogordo

Sunday Services: 8:00am Rite I; 10:15am Rite II

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