

THE
DOUBBLE
ADVENT

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF
ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE



December 12, 2020

The Third Sunday of Advent

Our Mission Statement

Helping Hands - Healing Hearts

Welcome All

Our Vision Statement

*To be an engaging, passionate, spiritually healthy
community, open to all God's people*

The Reverend Stephen J. Waller



"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits that befit repentance."

-John Baptist

I have always wanted to send Christmas cards with John Baptist's warning on them. Alas, some fear of the possible responses has prevented me from doing that.

We hear these words...we heard them Sunday...every year. They should cause us some pause as we all rush toward the Feast of the Incarnation, celebrating it before it actually does happen and then letting it drop like a hot potato on the 26th of December...at the very beginning of Christmastide.

Older members of Saint Thomas the Apostle will recall my severe attitude about the proper observance of Advent. I turned down more invitations to "Christmas parties" in Advent than I can recall. If I went, I insisted that they were "Advent" parties and all the red and green decorations were premature at best. Eventually, folk stopped inviting me...Scrooge really is not welcome. I even refused to attend a Diocesan Clergy Christmas Party in Advent one year due to my strict observance of Advent...Mrs. Stanton was not impressed, as I recall.

Part of my strict observance of Advent comes from my "listening" to what John Baptist says. This Church season is a season of preparation for something that is coming, but is not yet here. We do not prepare well by jumping the gun.

Advent asks us to slow down, to rest in silence awaiting the Great Mystery of the Incarnation, to hold off on "celebrations," to spend some serious time contemplating what God's Advent among us actually means. Sadly, most folk are so worn out by Christmas that all they want to do is remove all the premature decorations and throw out the Christmas Tree, to get their house back in order.

But, "getting our houses back in order," actually defines Advent. This Church Season invites us to get our houses back in order. We are being asked by John Baptist to "bear fruit that befits repentance." We are being asked to "turn" as the Rector reminded us in Sunday's sermon...but turning means that we have to know from what we are turning and to what we are turning. We are actually being asked to repent...to turn again to God...and to steady our vision on the God who comes among us.

There is still time left in Advent for you to give "turning" a try. What is it that you do look at in life? To what do you give your life? Are you spending your life in service to others or not? This Christian life we are all involved in demands that we are serious about God and God's purposes. Even if you are surrounded by red and green decorations at this point you can still pause and point your gaze toward the Coming God. Turn away from your distractions, dear friends in Christ and Thomas. Turn to God and sit and gaze upon the One who comes to give us Life and Joy and Light. Observe Advent so that you may rejoice in Christmastide when it does come.

With Love to all of you,

Scrooge

Did you know...



that the Plate Income from the 2nd Sunday of every month goes to the Rector's Ministry Fund? This fund allows Fr. Christopher to spread the message of St. Thomas beyond the church campus, reaching into the community to help persons and organizations who are in need.

What is Foyer?



What today we refer to as foyer dinner groups were born in the Diocese of Coventry, England, in the aftermath of the massive destruction at the height of the German bombings of London and Coventry during World War II. The fourteenth-century Cathedral of St. Michael (Coventry Cathedral) was destroyed in the nine-hour blitz of 14 November 1940, but a ministry of reconciliation evolved from that destruction. Rather than dwell on the violent loss of his beloved place of worship, Provost Howard was inspired to found a ministry of reconciliation that he called the *Community of the Cross and Nails*. While sifting through the rubble of the cathedral, he gathered many of the old nails that had fallen among the ruins and was inspired to have them twisted together to form a cross. This cross of nails and the words "Father, Forgive" became the unifying symbol of the International Ministry of Reconciliation, a group of devout followers

who believe that understanding between peoples, nations, and ideologies can come only when human beings meet and know each other as individuals. [<http://www.allsoulsdc.org>]

In the mid-1960s, the staff of Coventry Cathedral began meeting in small groups to bridge differences, eventually giving these gatherings their present name. What they discovered were the strong bonds that formed from this communal experience. The concept spread to the cathedral congregation and then to Anglican churches across the country. Eventually it spread to the shores of the USA, including St. Thomas the Apostle.

The foyer groups at St. Thomas are strictly social events—sometimes dinners, sometimes brunches; sometimes picnics (I hosted one in my back yard when the house was under renovation), sometimes in a home, apartment, or condo; sometimes a meal at a local restaurant. They are a fun and easy way for parishioners to gather together on a regular, but informal basis for purely social reasons – to enjoy one another’s company, to strengthen bonds of community, to meet new members and just to get to know other people in the parish, because we believe that participation in small groups, welcoming people into your homes, is the single best way to form personal bonds with fellow parishioners. The only constant is the presence of good food and wine (or beer)! We are Episcopalians, after all!

Foyer groups are what the members of each group decide to make them. It is a chance to visit and socialize outside of church with people from across the parish. There are no "rules," and there surely is nothing that says you have to host a sit-down dinner in your home. Each dinner group rotates having a meal at each group member’s home. The host usually provides the main course. The other group members each bring an appetizer, a salad, a dessert, or beverages. In some cases, the host of each month does the entire meal, with the guests bringing appetizers and beverages. It is up to the group to decide how they want to manage the food part.

Here's what Foyer groups are not: they are not a Southern Homes tour, they are not an Iron Chef competition, nor are they a page out of Martha Stewart Living. They are casual gatherings where the focus is on fellowship and friendship, conviviality and conversation. We meet each other where we live and accept our surroundings as they are just as God accepts us as we are.

Dinner groups are formed with 5 to 8 people—singles, couples, young people, retirees, people with school-aged children, empty nesters, etc. In other words, it is a cross-section of St Thomas. Newcomers are especially invited to join one of the groups. You can even invite your Rector! The groups are put together randomly, such that each of us might have the opportunity to get to know others in the parish who may be outside our normal circle of acquaintances or Sunday morning coffee conversations. I do my very best not to have the same folks in two consecutive foyers. One of the fun parts I get to do is name the foyer groups—books of the Bible, English cathedrals, the seven deadly sins, the seven virtues and former Bishops of Dallas. The foyer stays together for six months (January to June and/or July through December) and then re-ups for a new group for the next six months.

If you have never participated in Foyer before, why not give it a try? If you have sat out a few rounds, consider rejoining. Look for the sign-up sheet inserts that will appear in the Doubter and on the Narthex table during the first three Sundays in December. New groups will be forming soon for January – June 2022. The due date is December 27th . If you are brand spanking new to St. Thomas, I encourage you to get to know us.

Peace,

Michael Legacy

An opportunity to serve!

Join us on Thursday, Dec. 16th at 6:30 pm in the Parish Hall. We will be packing meal boxes for the family of Dallas Champions Academy. If you have questions, please contact Kathy Carson.



St. Thomas is now the proud owner of an AED. If you have experience with using an AED, please let us know. You can email the office at pam@thedoubter.org or contact Michael Legacy.



S.O.S.
We need you!

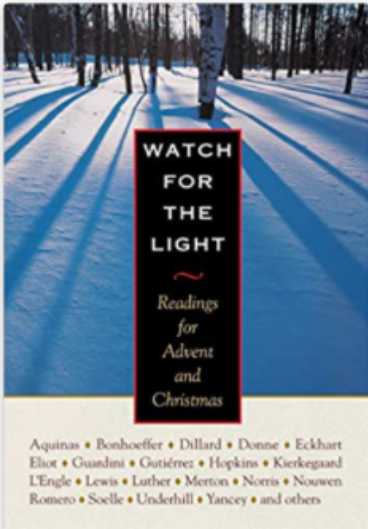


We are looking for people who would be willing to help, on an as needed basis, with some of the administrative tasks.

- Proofers for the Sunday Leaflet. We always need fresh eyes to double check copy. You could do this from home - we would email you a draft of the leaflet prior to printing on Friday.
- People to cover some admin tasks during vacation times - answering phones, distributing mail, receiving deliveries and visitors.

If you would like to be part of our Pal Friday Call List, please email pam@thedoubter.org. Giving of your time and talent for ministering to St. Thomas the Apostle is so appreciated!

Advent Book Study



Watch for the Light: Preparing to Welcome Christ into the World

Each year, we begin the Christian calendar with the celebration of Advent as we recall and prepare again for the coming of Emmanuel, God with Us. Despite how similar and familiar the Advent and Christmas season feels, each year we approach it as different and changed people from the experiences gleaned from the year before. This year, we invite you to join our Spiritual Formation class as we read together the book of daily Advent and Christmas focused devotions, Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas (the book can be purchased at: www.amazon.com/Watch-Light-Readings-Advent-Christmas).

The class will start **Wednesday, December 1 at 6pm** in the South Classroom and via Zoom and continue each Wednesday through January 5 at 6pm for roughly an hour and fifteen minutes. The readings in the book start on November 24 and continue through January 7. Please reach out to Chris Reed (creed@weaverjohnston.com) if you have any difficulty getting the book before November 24. While we encourage everyone to read the daily readings, each class will focus on one of the readings for the past week and will incorporate reflections from the visual arts and music on the mystery of the Season. Each class will also start with a brief period of fellowship over holiday goodies and conclude with a brief Advent-themed Compline. Please join us as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ into our midst and its call for us to be Christ for the world.

Thank you Angels!

Your generosity and kindness have blessed many children this Christmas, representing the amazing spirit of St. Thomas the Apostle within our community.



Parish Schedule

Week of December 12th

12 Sunday		The Third Sunday of Advent
	8:00 am	Rite One Eucharist/Nave
	9:00 am	Rite Two Eucharist/Zoom
	10:30 am	Rite Two Eucharist/Nave *Also Live-streamed on Facebook
	11:30 am	Coffee and Social time/ PH
13 Monday		
14 Tuesday		
	6:00 pm	Mission/Outreach/SR
15 Wednesday		
	Noon	Rite Two Eucharist/Nave
	6:00 pm	Advent Book Study
	7:00 pm	CoDA/ZOOM
16 Thursday		
	6:30 pm	DCA/PH **Volunteers needed to help pack food boxes.
17 Friday		
	10:00	DCA/PH
	Noon	Hand Bells/M
	1:00	Choir/M or N
18 Saturday		
	8:00 am	Step Up/SR **Serving Altar Guild Members** M. Followill
Room Codes:		SR - South Room; NR - North Room; CG - Community Garden; PH - Parish Hall; CR - Office Conference Room; K - Kitchen; N - Nave; IG - Interior Garden; M-Music Room

Liturgical Assignments & Lectionary

Sunday, December 12, 2021

- Counters:** J. DeuPree & R. Woodward
- LEMs:** Sub-Dcn: 2nd LEM: N/A Ext: T. Torres
- Lectors:** 9:00 am Zoom Service
L. VanBuskirk
10:30 In-Person Service
1st: J. DuePree 2nd: L. Pearson
POP: Congregation Volunteer
- Ushers/Greeters:** K. Carson, T. Chaney & N. Collier
- Acolytes:** Crucifer: D. Hess Torches: S. Arellano & K. Carson
- Sound:** TBD

Lectionary

First Reading

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Canticle

9

Second Reading

Philippians 4:4-7

Gospel

Luke 3:7-18

PRAYER LIST

Healing in the Lives of: Ben Gloria Ann Patricia Ginger
Annie Sandy Merjen Jack Harold Kelly
David Rusty Chase Maxine Anne Diana Sherry Peter
Alan Steven Phillip

In Thanksgiving For: Annie Jones

God's Grace for: Children of Belize Anne

Guidance: Gwen

In Prison: Allen Orlando Steven Aaron Brandon Hank
GR Stephanie Frank

Serving in the Armed Forces: Alex Aaron Connor Joyce
Collin Tyler Jesse

Seeking Employment: Bryan Maurice Brook Robin Vicki
Trey Gabby Gabriel Gail Oliver Aarib

Holy Death: Glen

Rest of the Soul: Reba Helen Jeffrey Yvonne
Sybil

In the Diocese: Seminary Trustees - University of the South: The Rev.
Paul Klitzke, Mrs. Jennifer Hargrave, Mr. Dallas Gingles

Sermon for the Second Sunday of Advent

Christopher Thomas

Sermon for the Second Sunday of Advent, Year C – 12/05/21

Malachi 3:1-4

Canticle 16

Philippians 1:3-11

Luke 3:1-6

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness...”

Who said,

“Who, me?”

“Turn.”

I am fascinated, captivated, motivated by this notion of “turn.”

Oh, you can call it “repent,” or “metanoia.” But for me, it’s as simple, and yet as complex, as “turn.”

“Turn” is pivotal to the God-story!

I’m more specifically interested in what motivates “turn.”

Journey stories, all of our stories, are fraught with “turn,” twists and turns, ups and downs, forward and back, from one side to the next. Somehow, I fear that the holiness of the journey stories that we all share, the stories that are the holy grounds of our lives, are marked by sheer holy moments of “turn.”

It goes back to our earliest bonds, between parent and child, when we push out on our own, straying from mother and father, eagerly stretching toward the unknown, crawling toward separation, kneeling, standing, then walking into that which we cannot see. Every so often, though, we turn, either when we fall, or something is affright, turning into the face of blessed assurance, the voice, the look that says, “Everything was ok. Everything is ok. Everything will be ok.”

My own fascination with “turn” roots in the prodigals, both son and father. What gives voice, ah voice, toward this urging into “turn,” the path that I am currently on is not working, is not sufficient, maybe another would be preferable? I am tired of this literal or proverbial pig-sty.

What catalyzes “turn?” If only I knew, then this whole endeavor of Christian witness might seem so much easier, so much less resistant, at the very least, more predictable. Heck, if I could bottle “turn,” I could be a rich man! At the very least, I could control, “turn.”

But alas, I cannot, control “turn.” Of all the things that I am, I am not God.

I do know that voice plays such an integral role in the “turn” process, either having voice, or lack thereof. For how many different ways does one proclaim the gospel, recognizing the word (small w)

Sermon for the Second Sunday of Advent

and the Word (capital W, Logos)? THE WORD, after all, bypasses emperors and rulers, kings and queens, priests and deacons, magisterium of every sort and shape and kind, landing squarely in the desert at the foot of an ascetic donning hirsute dining on bugs. This is where God chooses to plant God's word of proclamation?

(Stay tuned. It gets better. I hear tell in a few weeks God's Word shows up in a barn!)

God plants gospel in the queerest of places, with the strangest of people.

John. "Yahweh is gracious." Merciful God, give us grace (give us some John) to heed warnings and forsake our separation, that we might greet with joy the Advent of our Redeemer!

This puts me in mind of another John, who also baptized but denounced hirsutes and bugs, but was lovingly referred to as curmudgeon. This John was my 93-year old mentor, and priest, and friend, who transitioned into glory earlier this year. This John seemed grumpy and grouchy to the point of unhappy most all of the time, but the Cathedral, and the Diocese, and I, loved this John dearly. Somehow, this baptizer, the Rev. John A. Logan, Jr., sometime Canon for the Diocese of Texas, heard God's call in his own wilderness, and the many wildernesses in which he found himself, and "turned" toward that same good news proclamation of John the Baptist.

In John's voice, and it was his voice, every time John read the Gospel, or delivered a sermon, or celebrated the Eucharist, those who were in earshot heard the comfort and succor of God God's self. In that voice, they heard mercy, and grace, and forgiveness, and the promise of new and unending life. In that voice, there resided stability. In that face, there was blessed assurance. In that voice that rang out at so many graves the proclamation was made that tombs everywhere were and would always be empty, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, and you knew that it was (and is) so.

The greatest gift that Canon Logan, John, gave to all of us in the Diocese of Texas was the confident assuredness, in the "turn," that God is God, and resting in that knowledge, everything was, is, and will be ok.

Confident assuredness of God's gospel good news. Yahweh is gracious.

Is that part and parcel of the turn?

I wonder, during this season of Advent, if, in the "turn," as we look for the confident assuredness of God's return, Immanuel, God dwelling among us, if there is some fear as to what we might see, what we might find, underneath the tree? For we are so fascinated, during Advent, with all the lectionary talk of Christ's second coming, in fire and great glory. Will the skies open up, will the heavens split, will the temple cloth tear in two, will the earth shake? Is judgment day at hand, when some rise and others are condemned, where justice is finally meted out? Is that what we "turn" toward when we "turn" to see God?

If so, I can understand the reluctance to "turn." I'm ok with going to the Galleria to do some Christmas shopping if the second coming of Christ looks that apocalyptic. I don't need to be John the Baptist, or John the anything. I just want to go about my little routine, and get my stuff done, and have a holly, jolly Christmas.

Sermon for the Second Sunday of Advent

It is perfectly understandable why nice, polite folk, most especially Episcopalians, don't want to talk about the second coming of Christ.

Here's why.

I can absolutely guarantee you that any direction that you turn, you are going to turn into the face of Jesus Christ. If you are looking for the second coming of Jesus Christ in power and great glory, I would bid you to very simply turn to your right, and/or turn to your left, and let me introduce you to Jesus Christ.

And what are you going to do with that?

A baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of separation begins with turning toward Christ and saying, "I am sorry. Forgive me."

That's how we go around raising up valleys and lowering mountains. When we go out from here, we go out into the world, and we see Jesus, literally everywhere we turn, left and right, the second and third and fourth, and the five hundredth coming of Jesus Christ, and we preach repentance for the forgiveness of our separation, simply by turning and saying, "I am sorry. Forgive me!" "What can I do to help make it right?"

Again, I can completely understand why this is frightening. I would much rather Jesus Christ sweep in in a cloud of fire and glory and do this work himself. But the truth of the matter is, when you see Jesus in each and every other person, Jesus is sweeping in and doing that work in you. And guess what? If Jesus does that work in you, and each one of us, then all of those mountains get made just a little bit more low, and all of the valleys get raised up just a little bit more, and the pathway for the triumphal entry of God's kingdom finally begins to become less crooked and rough and choked, being smoothed out and straight.

Do you know how we will know when that has happened? Do you know how we will know when the second coming of Jesus Christ has been fulfilled?

When ALL FLESH see the salvation of God, and not one moment before.

If you want to see Christ, just look around. What are you going to do with him?

One of downtown's homeless found her way into Eucharist, making her way toward the altar, claiming to be Jesus Christ.

The Dean "turned" to John, asking, "What should we do?"

His response, "Look busy!"

Amen.

December Birthdays



Fr. Christopher
Dec. 5th



Barbara Foster
Dec. 6th



Pamala Gilliland
Dec. 9th



Sandee Lowe
Dec. 11th



Chris Schilling
Dec. 17th



Jim O'Neal
Dec. 18th



Bob Walker
Dec. 22nd



John Lambert
Dec. 31st



Kabir Master
Dec. 31st

Parish Office hours are 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM

Tuesdays through Fridays

214-352-0410

Emergency contact: Rev Christopher Blake Thomas 214-352-0410 ext 6

(Please leave message with name, call back number, and brief explanation of urgency. Fr. Christopher will receive an urgent message to call back as soon as possible.)

The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop

The Right Rev. G. Wayne Smith, Bishop of Oversight (Missouri Diocese)

The Right Rev. George R. Sumner, Bishop of Dallas

The Right Rev. Michael Smith, Assistant Bishop of Dallas

The Rev. Christopher Blake Thomas, Rector

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The Rev. Stephen J. Waller, Rector Emeritus

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Dr. Steven V. Sprinkle, Theologian-in-Residence

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Mr. Allen Junek, Seminarian-in-Residence

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Mr Lee Corbin, Organist-Choirmaster

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Mr. David Aston, Assistant Organist

Ms. Pam Liles, Parish Administrator

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Ms. Laura Giffin, Controller

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Ms. Annelies Moeser

annelies@thedoubter.org

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The 2020 Vestry

Joe DeuPree

Senior Warden

Michael Legacy

Junior Warden

Andrew Besterman, David Hess, Kathy Carson, Lisa Pearson,
Ruth Woodward, Murray Followill, Randy Hering

Chancellor
Rusty Rippamonti

Treasurer
Randy Hering

Paul McCright
Clerk