

THE
DOUBBLE
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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF
ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE



A FESTIVAL OF NINE
Lessons & Carols

December 26, 2021

First Sunday after Christmas Day

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*



For Unto Us a Child is Born, Unto Us, a Son is Given!

- Isaiah 9:6

December 22, 2021

Dear Doubters of Great Faith,

Our Advent journey has led us here again, to the foot of the manger. What a spectacular sight to behold. Incarnation, Emmanuel, the holy intersection of divinity into humanity. Heaven and earth collide, again, thankfully, in the strangest, and most wondrous, of places!

I hope your nativity-journey includes spending time here, with your St. Thomas the Apostle family. Many different hands, hearts, minds, and spirits have invested time, love, and effort into insuring a blessed experience as we gather in awe and wonder yet again. On Christmas Eve, we will gather in our candlelit nave surrounded by sights, and sounds, and fragrances that bespeak the wonders of this most holy night, culminating with kneeling at the foot of the manger, as I imagine those folks might have done that night so long ago.

How better to join our hearts to theirs?

We will have two services on Christmas Eve, December 24th, at 7:30 pm and 10:30 pm, both including incense. Between the services, we will do what St. Thomas does best – hospitality! A wonderful reception has been planned for 9 pm in the Parish Hall, so plan to stay after (the earlier service), or come early (the later service).

On Christmas Day, we will have a 10 am service with festive carols, particularly appropriate for those who avoid driving at night. There will be no incense at this service.

On December 26th, Christmas I, the First Sunday after Christmas Day, we will have our usual 8 am service, and our 10:30 am service will be Christmas Lessons & Carols!

We have a particularly lovely addition to our celebration this year. Mr. Hank Cofield and Mr. Chris Schilling, newly received and confirmed members of the Doubter community, have donated the spectacular nativity scene that adorns the inner garden courtyard. With the lovely decorating and lighting highlights by Mr. Stephen Toon and Mr. Phillip Scheldt, it makes for a particularly moving scene! (You MUST see it at night!)

If you are unable to be with us for one of these opportunities, please remember that we have the Facebook Live streaming available for the Christmas Eve services (December 24 th) as well as the Christmas I (December 26th) Service of Lessons & Carols.

Following the Christmas celebrations, I will be on holiday from December 27 – January 10. During that time, you will be in the most capable hands of our Doubter leadership! If you have any pastoral issues, please do not hesitate to contact Mtr. Virginia Holleman (vfholleman@icloud.com, 214.450.9652, cell), or Fr. Stephen Waller (doubtortom@aol.com, 214.676.8253, cell). Any business-related issues can be handled through the Church office by Pam Liles (pam@thedoubter.org, 214.352.0410, x104).

I hope you know how glad and grateful I am for each and every one of you who make up this beloved community. It is with gratitude that I wish you a very Merry Christmas and forward to all of the ministry we will do together on this corner and beyond in 2022!

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Christopher+

Remember in December!

Thank you for your continued generosity to the mission and ministry of the Episcopal Church of St. Thomas the Apostle. As the end of the year draws near, we are grateful for your commitment to fulfill your 2021 pledge. Below are a few helpful reminders for end-of-year giving:

- ◆ All contributions must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2021, or delivered to the church office by noon on Dec. 31, 2021 to qualify as a 2021 donation.
- ◆ Online donations made before midnight on Dec. 31, 2021 will qualify as a 2021 donation.
- ◆ Stock transfers should be received into our account by Dec. 31, 2021. For information on making a stock transfer to St. Thomas the Apostle, please contact the Controller at laura@thedoubter.org.

Christmas Eve Reception



Please join us in the Parish Hall on Friday, December 24th at 9:00 pm to celebrate the joys of Christmas together. Light refreshments will be served. Please feel free to bring your favorite holiday treat to share.

This will be a fun time to mingle with your St. Thomas family and see the spectacular nativity scene in the inner garden courtyard.

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.

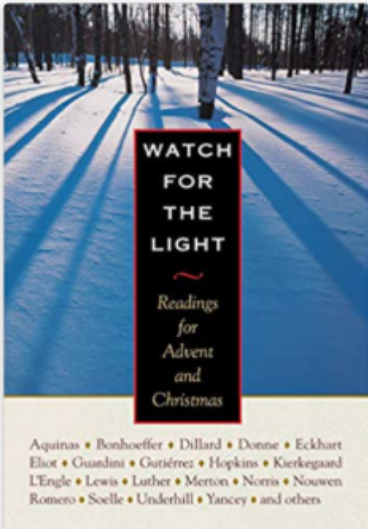
Peace,

Michael Legacy

The following is the link to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's 2021 Christmas message:

<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2021/12/15/presiding-bishop-michael-currys-christmas-message-2021/>

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.



Epiphany Taize Service

January 6, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.
in the Parish Hall

Masks required

Doubters of all ages are warmly invited to a special service in observance of the feast of the Epiphany. Join us on Thursday, January 6th in the Parish Hall beginning at 6:00p.m. to celebrate the Epiphany through a Taize-style service. If you've never participated in this style of worship before, it originates from the ecumenical Taize monastic community in France, and uses simple chants, sung prayers, and silence —all while we meditate upon the God who came to dwell among us. If singing isn't necessarily your thing, don't let that stop you! Please feel free to come and pray internally while others lift up the prayers in song around you. Masks are required and will be available at the door. Holding true to the spirit of Taize and the Epiphany, all are welcome. We hope to see you there!

Epiphany Study



Paired Saints: Exploring Desire, Embodied Spirituality, and the Renewal of Sacred Imagination

I will lead a study of **Paired Saints** for five Wednesday evenings during the season of Epiphany, January 12, 19, 26, February 2, and 9. Everyone is invited. There is no prerequisite, and no books to read. We will learn about three sets of same-gender saints who have been celebrated by the LGBTQIA+ community for many generations: Ss. Perpetua & Felicity, Sergius & Bacchus, and Polyeuct & Nearchus. Sessions will feature media presentations, icons, and lots of discussion of same-sex desire and

holy love in antiquity and its influence in the present. I will issue a prospectus on the sessions in the near future. Please attend, either in person or online, and bring your imaginations with you!

Stephen V. Sprinkle, Your Theologian-in-Residence

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 families of Dallas Champions Academy. If you have questions, please contact Kathy Carson at 214-236-4372 or kcarson75214@gmail.com



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!

Parish Schedule

Week of December 26th

26 Sunday	The Fourth Sunday of Advent
8:00 am	Rite One Eucharist/Nave
10:30 am	Rite Two Eucharist/Nave *Also Live-streamed on Facebook
11:30 am	Coffee and Social time/ PH
27 Monday	Office closed. St. Stephen, Deacon and Martyr
28 Tuesday	St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
29 Wednesday	
Noon	Rite Two Eucharist/Nave
6:00 pm	Advent Book Study
7:00 pm	CoDA/ZOOM
30 Thursday	
31 Friday	
1/1 Saturday	2022
8:00 am	Step Up/SR **Serving Altar Guild Members**
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 26, 2021

Counters: M. Legacy & L. Pearson

LEMs: Sub-Dcn: 2nd LEM: N/A Ext: D. Calhoun

Ushers/Greeters: C. Reed, M Woods, F. Balderas

Lesson Readers

Lesson I

Dr. Stephen V. Sprinkle

Lesson II

Kathy Carson

Lesson III

Dr. Rene Aguirre

Lesson IV

Allyssa Montague

Lesson V

Dr. Randolph A. Lacy

Lesson VI

Allen M. Junek

Lesson VII

Fred Owen

Lesson VIII

Janet Elsea

Lesson IX

The Rev. Christopher Blake Thomas

Acolytes: **Crucifer:** M. Legacy **Torches:** D. Hess & S. Arellano

Sound: TBD



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 Patricia Gary Don Michael Barbara

In Thanksgiving For: Annie Jones

God's Grace for: Children of Belize Anne John Sharon

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 Annette Ed

In the Diocese: Evangelism Commission
Harvest Prayer Team

Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Magnificat Mary

A sermon for the fourth Sunday of Advent
The Episcopal Church of St. Thomas the Apostle
Dallas, Texas
December 19, 2021

Stephen V. Sprinkle
Theologian-in-Residence and
Professor of Practical Theology

Luke 1:46b-55

Whose mother is she anyway? This *Mary*...who sings like a cross between Janis Joplin and Joan Baez and Lady Gaga? Weren't we taught to expect the tamed and homogenized Mary, the idealized little mother-to-be? You know, the little mousy one that the white supremacist patriarchy had already knocked the starch out of? No, instead, this un-pasteurized Mary raises up her fist and then takes a knee, like Colin Kaepernick, down on the skull of every oppression you can think of, on a bad day. Good God! She opens her mouth and belts out a song we call "The Magnificat"—like an amplifier for the God she calls "the Mighty One." And her voice shudders like she has a splinter of the True Cross twisted deep in her vocal chords.

"My soul," she cries out, "my soul amplifies the Great One who has done big things for me! Great God A'Mighty is God's name—and 'now hear this,' God says—it's high time things got shook up around here! Because my Baby's coming, and nothing can ever be the same again!"

Are you listening? 'Magnificat Mary', the least anticipated revolutionary in cosmic history, the 12-or-13-year-old unwed Palestinian Jewish girl, sings the original song of Advent.

Are you listening? Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the renegade German Lutheran who defied Hitler and paid for it with his life, preached about her song in a sermon for Advent of 1933. He spoke these words the year of the Reichstag Fire that gave the Nazis their excuse to launch the holocaust against the Jews. Bonhoeffer said in that sermon:

"[Mary's song] is at once the most passionate, the wildest, one might even say the most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung. This is not the gentle, tender, dreamy Mary whom we sometimes see in paintings.... This song has none of the sweet, nostalgic, or even playful tones of some of our Christmas carols. It is instead a hard, strong, inexorable song about the power of God and the powerlessness of humankind."

Commenting on Mary's Magnificat, Carolyn J. Sharp, an Episcopal priest and professor, said: *"Don't envision Mary as the radiant woman peacefully composing the Magnificat."* [Instead see her as] *"a girl who sings defiantly to her God through her tears, fists clenched against an unknown future."* When we do this, Rev. Sharp goes on to say, *"Mary's courageous song of praise [becomes] a radical resource for those seeking to honor the holy amid the suffering and conflicts of real life."*

A question should make my point here, and I hope will make it abundantly clear: Can you honestly see a white nationalist-supremacist singing this song with Magnificat Mary? Or anyone else, for that matter, stubbornly holding onto racism or transphobia in their heart?

Ben Wildflower grew up as an evangelical Christian who envisioned Mary singing this sweet little song as she gazed up into the night sky, just like his evangelical upbringing taught him to. Then,

Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

everything began to change for him. He started attending an Episcopal Church, and was converted into what he now calls himself, “*a high church low-life.*” There, he encountered Mary’s Magnificat as part of evening prayer in the Book of Common Prayer. Wildflower found Mary’s song and Mary’s faith radical and beautiful. So, one day he found a discarded block of wood as he walked past a construction site, and being the artist he was, created out of it an expression of his new found Marian faith: He drew Mary with her fist raised to the sky, and her foot on a snake and a skull, surrounded by the words from the Magnificat. It is now his most popular image. Here’s what he said about it:

“She’s a young woman singing about toppling rulers from their thrones. She’s a radical who exists within

***the confines of institutionalized religion.*”** He got into trouble with some Christians who saw his images as too political, until Wildflower explained that all the language behind his portrayal of Mary came right out of the Bible. Plain, hard-hitting, tough language, right out of The Book.

Are you listening now? If you follow Magnificat Mary with any integrity at all, you will probably get into trouble like that—the kind of trouble the late Representative John Lewis called “Good Trouble.” Cash poor, outcast people who are pushed to the margins of society have often found Mary’s song a powerful sign that God is the Liberator they have been looking for all along—the One who comes with real hope and real help. The Powers that Be don’t like it when Magnificat Mary gives hard living people the courage to change their world. At least three governments in the last hundred years have actually banned Mary’s song.

During the Raj in India, British colonial rulers banned the Magnificat from being sung in church. In the 1980s, the Guatemalan government found Mary’s powerful poem dangerous to the status quo among their poor people, too revolutionary and defiant to keep them compliant. So, the strong men of government banned any public recitation of Mary’s song.

Likewise, in Argentina, after the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo—whose children had been ‘disappeared’ during the Dirty War—plastered the words of the Magnificat on posters all around the capital square in Buenos Aires. So, the military junta outlawed any display of Mary’s words in public. Taking Mary’s song seriously can indeed get people into trouble!

But then how you feel about that depends pretty much upon who you are and whether you want the world to remain untroubled for you. Is this young woman not the mother of Jesus of Nazareth? Is she not the mother of the poor, the outcast, the disinherited, the disabled, the immigrant non-English speakers, too? Is she, as Allen, our Seminarian-in-Residence, often reminds us, the Mother of the Church, your church and my church, the home of our souls, as well? And, if so, then what are the words of Mary’s song to us, Beloved? What is their true meaning? Could Magnificat Mary have Good News as well as Good Trouble for the people of this parish, too?

Magnificat Mary’s words to the abused and left-out are tough, unsparing, and strange to people who like their lives to remain like they already are. I know that most of what Mary says to you and me, who are likely on the upper side of the privilege line, probably doesn’t sound much like the Good News we have been looking for. But Mary’s song ***does*** sound like Good News to our neighbors—our neighbors in hard-living Dallas, and in the Rio Grande Valley, and around the globe who suffer the crushing blows of a system that thrives on injustice and exploitation of women, and children, and the cash poor.

Whose mother is this Mary, my Dears? Is she not theirs ***and*** ours? What would it take then, Dear Ones, for us to give her tough, unsparing words a new hearing, for ourselves this time? For how can we say that we love God whom we have never seen, if we do not love our neighbors near and far whom we do see? The Number One way we will ever know God is to do so by knowing God through and with the people we live among. So says our Mother, Magnificat Mary—Good Trouble and all.

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 8:00 AM until 2:00 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

christopher@thedoubter.org

The Rev. Stephen J. Waller, Rector Emeritus

doubtertome@thedoubter.org

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

steve@thedoubter.org

Mr. Allen Junek, Seminarian-in-Residence

allen@thedoubter.org

Mr Lee Corbin, Organist-Choirmaster

music@thedoubter.org

Mr. David Aston, Assistant Organist

Ms. Pam Liles, Parish Administrator

pam@thedoubter.org

Ms. Laura Giffin, Controller

laura@thedoubter.org

Ms. Annelies Moeser

annelies@thedoubter.org

The Episcopal Church of St Thomas the Apostle

6525 Inwood Road, Dallas, TX 75209 - 214 352-0410

www.thedoubter.org

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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