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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF
ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE



December 5, 2020

The Second 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 Christopher Blake Thomas



December 2, 2021

Dear Doubters of Great Faith,

Advent is the season of new beginnings, yet again, for us as Christians, as we strain toward the light of Incarnation that we know streams from a manger, and yet we wonder in our wanderings, will it come again? For isn't that the question that haunts our journeys through most every wilderness time? I know light has split darkness, every single time, and yet, as I look to the future, I still wonder, will it again? Can I move in assured confidence that as I step out in darkness, God will meet me with

light? Will everything be ok?

The ever reoccurring themes of Advent tell us, again and again, through hope, peace, love, and joy, that the light WILL meet us in our wanderings. A baby can, will, and does save our world. We don't take that for granted; rather we take that in courageous gratitude.

I want to take a moment to update you on the most courageous and grateful way that you have responded to the "Every Perfect Gift" stewardship campaign for 2022. It is with great joy that I can report that we set a stretch goal of \$296,490, \$30,000 above your commitment level of \$266,490 for 2021, with the intent of cutting in half the need to borrow from the reserved resources of St. Thomas the Apostle. Through your courageous gratitude for all that God has done for you, and your commitment to this place, thus far, 71 families have committed \$305,570 to the ministry of Jesus Christ over the course of 2022!

I believe that this courageous and grateful response speaks directly to the Advent hope, peace, love, and joy that so radically spring forth from each of you, and from this Doubter community as a whole. We will continue to be an impact in and upon the lives of those within our walls, and those so far beyond.

Courageous gratitude is our only genuine, fitting response to being met on each and every journey of faith into darkness with light. It takes courage to respond to darkness with hope, peace, love, and joy. But every single time that we do, we experience another Advent horizon!

I have written to each of you, and I want you to know collectively, as this community of faith, how grateful I am that you are a people of courageous gratitude! If you have yet to join us on the "Every Perfect Gift" journey into 2022, it is never too late!

Yours in courageous gratitude,
Fr. Christopher+

The Reverend Christopher Blake Thomas



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 actually 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 7 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. We do our very best not to have the same folks in two consecutive foyers. One of the fun parts is naming 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 in the Service Order Bulletin during the first two Sundays in June. New groups will be forming soon for July – December 2021.

As we take our first steps in regathering, we can form groups in two ways. The January – July 2020 groups had barely gotten started when protocols forced us to suspend activities. If you wanted to maintain your previous group we can do that, but there is no obligation to do so. New folks to St. Thomas and others we have gathered into our circle can also be added provided the groups don't get too big - an upper limit around 8. I can always form additional groups but do let me know if you want to bring new friends into your existing group. Some may now have significant others since we last organized. They are welcomed as well. If you are brand spanking new to St. Thomas, I encourage you to get to know us.

Michael Legacy



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.



Angel Tree Gifts needed this Sunday!



Our partnership with Community Partners of Dallas is back in full swing and in person! The “wish cards” have been lovingly attached to a tree in the vestibule between the Narthex and the fountain garden. **The cards have all been selected! Now make sure no child is disappointed.**

The gifts should be **UNWRAPPED** with the wish card attached and **PLACED AT THE ALTAR THIS Sunday, December 5th** so that the gifts can be blessed and delivered to the collection point by their deadline. **THANK YOU!**



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!

Put on your walking shoes!



★ ***ST. THOMAS' YOUNG
ADULTS INVITE YOU
CAROLING ON DEC. 3RD***

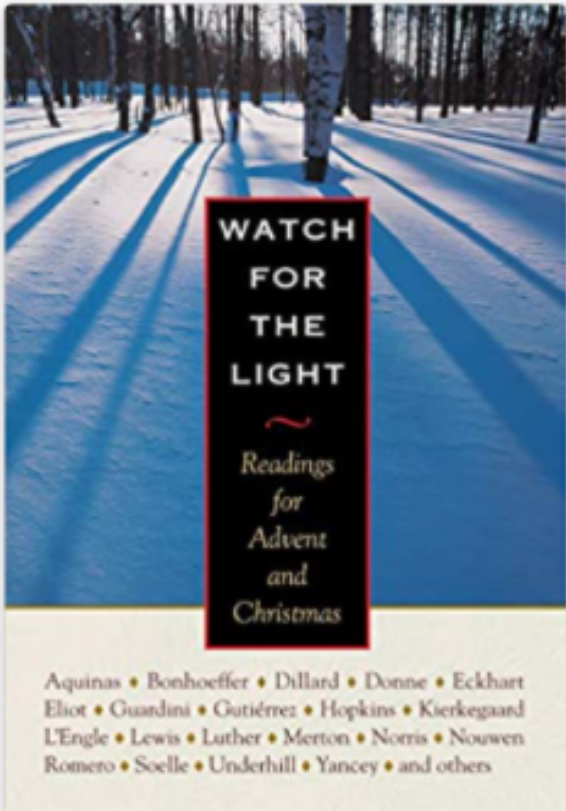
★ We will gather at Chris Reed's home at 4140 Newton Ave. #14, Dallas, TX 75219 at 6:00pm for refreshments before we take to the streets at approximately 7:00pm.

★ Doubters and friends of all ages are welcome!



★ If you'd like to volunteer to bring a festive treat, or if you have any questions, contact Chris at creed@weaverjohnston.com or Allen at allen@thedoubter.org.

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.

Parish Schedule

Week of December 5th

5 Sunday		The Second Sunday of Advent
	8:00 am	Rite One Eucharist/Nave
	9:00 am	Rite Two Eucharist/Zoom
	10:30 am	Rite Two Eucharist/Nave
	11:30 am	**Also Live-streamed on Facebook** Coffee and Social time/ PH
6 Monday		
7 Tuesday		
8 Wednesday		
	Noon	Rite Two Eucharist/Nave
	6:00 pm	Advent Book Study
	7:00 pm	CoDA/ZOOM
9 Thursday		
10 Friday		
11 Saturday		
	8:00 am	Step Up/SR **Serving Altar Guild Members** J. DeuPree, J. Lambert, S. Toon, D. Aston
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 5, 2021

- Counters:** D. Hess & Murray Followill
- LEMs:** Sub-Dcn: 2nd LEM: N/A Ext: B. Day
- Lectors:** 9:00 am Zoom Service
R. Woodward
10:30 In-Person Service
1st: F. Owen 2nd: F. Ellis
POP: Congregation Volunteer
- Ushers/Greeters:** M. Woods, F. Balderas, A. Besterman
- Acolytes:** Crucifer: K. Carson Torches: M. Legacy, S. Arellano
- Sound:** TBD

Lectionary

First Reading

Malachi 3:1-4

Canticle

16

Second Reading

Philippians 1:3-11

Gospel

Luke 3:1-6

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

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: Sara Reba Helen Jeffrey Yvonne
Sybil

In the Diocese: Ethnic Congregations in the Diocese of Dallas
Church Planting Commission

Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent

Allen M. Junek

Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent, Year C:- 11/28/2021

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 25:1-9

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-36

In the Name of our loving, liberating, life-giving God + Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

From today's Gospel: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

From the Epistle: "And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints."

From the Hebrew Bible reading: "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the houses of Israel and Judah."

And lastly our Collect: "God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light...that on the last day, when Jesus Christ shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal."

You mean there's no champagne? No confetti? No anti-climactic ball drop at midnight? I imagine that none of us would write any of these messages inside our New Years' cards--and if we did, I bet our mailing lists would dwindle pretty quickly.

Nevertheless, today marks a new year in the life of the Church, and we will take our cues from scripture on this day of new beginnings by talking about the ending.

And so, I wonder, when was the last time you thought about the end of the world? About the culmination of this great cosmic dance? The fulfillment of all things?

And no, before you can say something smart, Mother Sandi's sermon two weeks ago doesn't count. I'm serious. When was the last time you considered that all of *this* will one day pass away.

The question I pose to us this morning is the same posed by one-time poet, priest, and Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, John Donne:

*What if this present were the world's last night?
Mark in my heart, O soul, where thou dost dwell,
The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
Whether His countenance [would] thee affright[?]* (Holy Sonnet XIII)

Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent

What if this present were the world's last night? This morning its last dawn?

Now, I can think of a good many reasons why a modern Christian might be hesitant to give the belief in Christ's Second Coming the same emphasis given to it by our ancestors. I'm sure you too can think of many reasons, perhaps even good reasons.

One of these reasons is that we have let one kind of Christian be the loudest when it comes to Christ's second Advent—when he shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. This, I think, is one of the greatest disappointments of American Christianity. You know who I mean--the people who walk up and down the streets with their cowbells shouting "The End is Near," for any number of reasons (few of which worth repeating).

Aside from the fact that this view often makes Hell a much more potent reality than God, it also makes being around these doomsdayers Hell for the rest of us, doesn't it? It also suggests that the End is something to be dreaded, not anticipated. It's a message of fear-mongering, and not one of hope. If it's about fear, then it has nothing to do with love; and if it's not about love, my friends, then it's not about God.

On the other side of the equation is an equally bleak message. Certainly, the world had a beginning and the world will have an end, there can be no question--that's simply the second law of thermodynamics: we are headed towards complete entropy. One day, eons from now, every atom of every thing that ever there was will be spread across the universe in a single layer. All of cosmic history is just hurtling towards a cold, silent oblivion. The rest is of little consequence.

Because these two are all so often the loudest, competing voices in the room, my experience has been that many mainline Christians (of all persuasions) have simply chosen not to engage the topic of our Lord's Second Coming--so as to not be lumped in with those other quacks.

But that simply will not do...if for no reason other than that Jesus spoke so often of his Second Coming, and it was this very promise that nourished the seeds of his Church. Not to mention how integral it is to what we understand this table to mean: "Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again." To be faithful followers of Jesus Christ, we must be a people of both Advents.

I suspect it is easy to think of ourselves as a people of Christ's first Advent. We are an incarnational people, certainly. We are intentional about breaking out our pretty blue vestments, intentional about making sure the creche is set up nice and neat, and (hopefully) intentional about preparing for the coming of the Christ Child come Christmas Day. Ours is an embodied spirituality, and our prayers and worship are saturated with the conviction that God the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We believe not only that the divine and the human met in a cattle trough eighty some-odd generations ago, but that we continue to take him into ourselves at the sacrament of the altar.

But I wonder, are we also a people of the Second Advent? Are we a sort of people who live with the End in sight? Are we a hopeful people? I think to be faithful followers of Jesus, we must be.

Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent

Another reason for our hesitancy to speak of Christ's Second Advent, I think, is that it goes entirely against everything we have been led to believe about ourselves and the world we find ourselves in. The doctrine of Christ's coming again in glory is deeply unfriendly to the progressive character of contemporary thought. We have been taught to believe that the world grows toward perfection, that the world is as a fruit on a tree slowly ripening, and that we are somehow smarter or have progressed more than the generations who came before us. I trust that two World Wars would have told us otherwise. Some much smarter than myself have come to call this "the myth of progress."

But the apocalyptic vision of Christianity offers us no such hope. As we can see from today's Gospel reading, it introduced the idea that things actually aren't getting better. There's a sense of foreboding, of national distress, and of the very powers of the heavens themselves being shaken.

And there are signs in the sky that contribute to this turmoil and are expressed more clearly in Matthew's account of this same encounter: "Then," he [Jesus] said, "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," (Matthew 24:29-30).

You see, the Second Coming, turmoil, and disruption is a constant theme in Advent, not only because of the Child waiting to be born, but because very often and for good reason, we come face-to-face with God on our worst days. We find God when we're alone and the shadows grow long and the night closes in on our lives and we begin to fear not only for the future, but the present too.

And that's why, year after year, we bring out these candles--specifically the candle we light today: the candle of Hope.

A candle only shows its true purpose and its true value in darkness... Much like at Mt. Sinai where that cloud of deep darkness held the light of God's Law, and truly like how the darkness of Mary's womb held the Light of the World.

We don't put candles around when all the lights are on--when everything is well. It is when the lights are off that a candle begins to glow and inspire hope. And that is why through the season of Advent we fill our homes with candles--and why our Jewish loved ones will light the first candle of Hanukkah this evening--to remember God's faithfulness, and to remind ourselves and one another that God will never abandon God's people.

The point--or perhaps one of several points--of this season leading up to Christmas is that help is on the way.

The message of the angels is that God will not leave us to the desires and devices of our own hearts. God will not leave us to our guns and our bombs, nor to the illusion that war is the price of peace. Neither will God abandon us to the demons of white supremacy nor nationalism, nor to a system of courts that continue to be haunted by the specter that justice can be achieved through retribution or anything else apart from restoration and mercy.

The message of Advent, God's response to the weight of the world's grief, was the cry of an infant and the sweat of a mother's brow.

Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent

This, I think, is what it means to be a people of Christ's Second Advent.

This, I think, is what it means to be a people called to live with the End in sight.

It is to be a people of hope--hope that the world will be made right, and not only that, but that the world will be made right soon; and that through our tears and prayers, labor and sweat, we get to participate in this new thing that God is doing. For God is with us even now--even in the darkness--by candlelight.

It is foretold that the End will come suddenly, much like a curtain falling at the close of a play--the only problem is that we don't know if we're in Act V or yet still in Act I. That knowledge belongs only to the Playwright, and is not for us to know. And so, at every moment of every year John Donne's question remains relevant: "What if this present were the world's last night?"

Now is a time to lean into those feelings that all is not as it should be--there's some truth there. Now is a time to dream with the Christ Child, who, as we speak, sits in darkness alongside us dreaming of the world to come. In the coming weeks, may we become a people of both Advents, knowing well that the End marks the Beginning, and the Beginning unfurls with the End already in sight.

There is nothing left to fear.

My prayer for each of us, each one of us, is that in this season God may kindle the fires of Hope in our hearts and homes--for where there is Hope, her sisters Faith and Love are never far behind.

A blessed, and hopeful, Advent to each of you. 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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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

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Michael Legacy

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Ruth Woodward, Murray Followill, Randy Hering

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Rusty Rippamonti

Treasurer
Randy Hering

Paul McCright
Clerk