



Episcopal Church of the Advent
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Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

Dear Friends,

Many organizations have mission statements to help people know what they strive to do in the world. Some churches choose to write mission statements, but Jesus certainly gives us a clear mission in the passage from the Gospel of Matthew, above. The mission of the church is evangelism. So then, the question is, how do we live into this mission of evangelism?

I know, I know. Evangelism is one of those topics where many people cringe. Relax, and stop imagining that I am going to ask you to go door-to-door in your neighborhood, because that is not how we think about evangelism these days. Instead, here are some steps. I ask that you read and ponder these as part of your Lenten practice.

1. First, we live the example of a Christian life! Actions truly do speak louder than words. If there is no difference between how we live our lives as Christians and how people who are not Christians live, then should people be part of the church? We also need to be aware that our behavior reflects on ourselves, on our church, and on Christianity as a whole. Unchurched people often tell me they do not want to go to church because they believe they will be judged. Judging others is not our job. Loving them is. Are you living the life of love?
2. Talk about what it is to be a Christian and why you are Christian! Perhaps your faith brings you great peace. Others might consider that a reason to explore a more spiritual path. Share your excitement about our growing Sunday school with parents of young children. Talk about how you find yourself fed by attending Advent. As a church, we need to offer people a reason to attend. Why are you a Christian, and why Advent?

3. Invite people to come to church with you. Studies tell us that most people come the first time because someone invited them. I invite all sorts of people to come to church. Some of them have taken me up on it and that makes me very happy! However, the clergy are not the only people who can invite people, and really, it is better if the invitation comes from someone who sits in the pews. You know it is easier to go somewhere for the first time with a friend. It helps to have someone explain what is going on and how to participate, someone who can introduce you to others. Be that friend. Invite people to join you on Sunday morning. Invite them to attend other events at Advent. Whom might you invite from the people in your life today?
4. Finally, welcome people who visit our church. Introduce yourself and bring them along to coffee hour with you. Maybe they are new, or they are just new to you. Introduce yourself anyway, you might make a new friend. You can talk to your old friends anytime, but you may only have one chance to welcome this person. Who have you met recently who is new to Advent?

Evangelism is for everyone. Clergy and laity, adults and children. (Honestly, the kids are the best at it!) We enjoyed some growth in 2023. Let's keep that going this year and work to follow our mission from Christ. How are you "making disciples of all nations?"

Faithfully,
Alan+

ADVENT SECURITY TRAINING FOR ALL

Please join us on April 17, 2024 from 7:00-8:30 p.m. to learn about strengthening our resilience during emergencies and disasters. FEMA's Faith-based Preparedness Coordinator will present common types of vulnerabilities at houses of worship and ways we can reduce those risks. We will also participate in small group discussions related to emergency and disaster scenarios and share best practices related to de-escalating contentious situations. Please join us for an important and informative meeting!

WALK-INS WELCOME! For the convenience of planning, kindly RSVP (through April 17, 2024) simply by:

- calling Church of the Advent office - 609-884-3065
- email church office – adventsecretary@comcast.net
- signing up at the rear of the church
- responding on our website – capemayadvent.org

Please note: Government agencies such as FEMA provide focused training free of charge to meet the needs of houses of worship in response to a changing world. The Advent Security Committee did not receive grant monies for security upgrades. However, the committee is dedicated to proceeding with security elements of low to no cost in a timely manner.

ECW NOTES

The food drive for the Cape May Community Food Closet and St. Barnabas Cares Food Bank continues until March 11. There are lists of needed products on a table in the church and on the ECW bulletin board in the Parish Hall, but all non-perishable food is welcome. For money donations there is a gold box where the food is being collected. Please check the expiration dates on food packages.

Craft meetings resume on Monday, March 11 at 4:00 PM in the Parish Hall. We will make things to sell at our Spring Outdoor Market that will take place on Saturday, May 18. No experience is required, just bring a pair of scissors and join in.

Other dates to note are our next meeting on Thursday, March 21 at 10:30 and the reception after the concert on Sunday, March 10. Sunday, May 5 we will sponsor a Lady's Tea for the five Episcopal churches in Cape May County with our special guest, Bishop Sallie French.

We so appreciate your support in donating food for our events and remind you to pick up your dishes that are stacked on the counter in the kitchen.

ADVENT BOOK CLUB

The Advent Book Club will meet on Tuesday, March 12, at 7:00 PM at the home of Jack and Lorraine Shaw. We will discuss Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell. Books for the rest of the season are:

April 12 – Heaven and Earth Grocery Store by James McBride

May 14 – Secret Life of Sunflowers by Marta Molnar and Dana Morton

June 11 – The Last Kings of Shanghai by Jonathan Kaufman

September 10 – The Girls in the Stilt House by Kelly Mustian

If you have questions or need more information please call Lynda Cogswell at 609-884-6675.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE NEWS

The Outreach Committee has two projects during Lent. The Mustard Seed Jars are available for our congregation to collect loose change which will be collected the Sunday after Easter. The money will be counted and sent to Collateral Repair Project in Ammon, Jordan. This agency helps refugees from Syria with basic necessities to get their lives started in a new country. If we collect \$750 or more we can apply to our Diocese for a sustainable grant which will match that amount. We have been able to achieve that for several years.

Our second Lenten project is giving \$75 Acme food cards to each family in the Cape May Housing Authority. This helps folks to buy food and is accompanied with a letter from Fr. Alan inviting all to our church listing Holy Week services and Easter celebration.

Our next Outreach Meeting will be March 20, 2024 at 3:00 PM in the Parish Hall.

-Marrie Cassidy

THE MIRACLE OF SPRING

The miracle of spring permeates the air;
We hear it in the trees and smell it everywhere.

A bursting forth of buds in colors soft and light;
Pink, lavender, yellow, what a lovely sight!

The honeysuckle's fragrance rises as sweet perfume;
Roses, lilacs, and lilies too, appear now in their fullest bloom.

The crickets' constant chirping as an orchestra in tune
Tells the miracle of spring, one which never comes too soon.

We welcome this miracle as a gift from God above—
A token of His mercy, an expression of His love.

- *Freda Dehoff*

EASTER FLOWERS

If you would like to donate toward Easter flowers please complete this form and send it with your monetary donation to Church of the Advent, PO Box 261, Cape May, NJ 08204. Donations must be received by March 25, 2024. Thank you.

Easter Flowers

In Memory of:

In Thanksgiving for:

Enclosed is a check made payable to Church of the Advent Altar Guild for

\$_____.

Your Name(s):

2024 STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Gifts to Advent through your Time, Talent and Treasures are gifts to God that support our worship, spiritual educational programs, pastoral care, and fellowship

events. All that we each do for the Church supports our mission to serve God. As members of the Episcopal Church we are expected to contribute financial “treasures” by pledging the amount we are able. The annual pledge provides the platform for our Finance Committee to prepare a budget. Without knowing the pledged income, we do not know if we can pay the costs of our Rector and part-time staff; utilities, repairs and maintenance; insurance premiums; basic equipment, systems, and supplies; and programs and services for our parishioners and visitors. The bulk of our expenses are fixed costs.

All the Church’s income comes from our parishioners and visitors. We do not receive income from “above.” In fact, our Church makes an annual, suggested pledge up to the NJ Diocese to help support the Diocesan Programs and the National Church.

Pledge income constitutes over 85 percent of our total annual income. The additional income comes from plate offering and loose checks, fundraisers, and meager interest/dividends from our limited investments. Our Stewardship Committee strives to educate the parishioners on the need for pledges and the progress we have made. For 2024 to date, we have received 49 pledges (vs. 52 in 2023) totaling \$168,946 (slightly less than 2023). Our average pledge increased to \$3,448 (+6%). Given prior year experiences and projected increases in expenses, our budget projects a \$22,000+ deficit for 2024. At present, we have drawn down over \$43,000 in debt on our line of credit (LOC). The LOC draw could grow to well over \$60,000 by the end of 2024 if we do not grow our pledges.

The Stewardship Committee is not waiting until 2025 to address this issue. It is actively involved in finding ways to continue to grow pledges in 2024. Here are some highlights.

We Took Steps to Thank All Who Have Pledged in 2024. Following the lead of many other Episcopal Churches in NJ and other States, we openly thanked by name (not by amount) those who have pledged to Advent for 2024 in the February Anchor. We received mixed reactions from parishioners. We want to assure you that **only two people know the amount that you pledge**--our Parish Secretary who maintains the parishioner database, and our Treasurer who maintains our financial information. We greatly appreciate everyone who pledges, no matter how big or small. Our annual pledges range from under \$100 to \$16,000.

The Stewardship Committee is going to solicit advice from the Diocese regarding the practice of thanking pledgers by name. One thought was to add a checkbox to the pledge card if you wish to remain anonymous, an approach commonly used by charitable organizations.

We are Going to Provide Ongoing Stewardship Education. We plan to provide a Stewardship Q & A orientation to newcomers, and periodic newsletters from the National Church.

We are Providing Ways to Make it Easier to Pledge and Give to Advent. With the technical expertise of our Junior Warden, Noel Smith-Wong, we have added a link to pledge on-line on our website. We have many seasonal members. We want to make it convenient for them to pledge if even for part of the year. We are also adding a QR code to our bulletin insert and making it available as you exit the Sanctuary for visitors, many of whom do not carry cash, to conveniently donate to the Church on-line.

Growing our pledge income is certainly not something a few of us can accomplish alone. The Stewardship Committee needs the help of all parishioners. Please pass on

your thoughts and ideas. Better yet, join the Committee. Continue to welcome newcomers--we have had many in recent months--and encourage them to get involved. Advent is very special to all of us and has a very bright future if we all pitch in to keep the lights shining brightly.

Stewardship Committee--Scott Griffith, Chair; Joel Rutenberg, Vestry Member; Lew Price, Senior Warden; Noel Smith-Wong, Junior Warden; Father Alan Leonard, Rector

THREE HABITS

This year, during the reflective time of Lent, a group of parishioners is gathering between Sunday morning services to ponder God's call to be peacemakers. They are undertaking a learning experience known as the *Difference Course* by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Specifically, he has offered a curriculum guide for five weekly sessions to identify and practice a three-step, formative process he describes as "habits" of interpersonal engagement. He discerns these practices from scripture and from his prior years of reconciliation work in the southern Sudan, equatorial Congo, and South Africa. I suspect he also sees them as tools gleaned from challenging negotiations in his pre-ordination life as a high finance executive, too. These habits are especially key in our interpersonal communications with other persons in contexts of disagreement, conflict, even hostility. They are: *Be curious. Be present. Reimagine.* Or as I internalize them for myself: *Have interest. Show interest. And identify shared interests*—even with those we find disagreeable, challenging, or just "different." The archbishop reminds us that developing these peacemaking reflexes requires God's help for which we should earnestly and constantly pray.

For me this is hard work. For too long I was indoctrinated with a day-to-day operational rubric, "Lead. Follow. Or get the heck out of the way." The intensity of military service, especially combat, deeply ingrained a will to "get it done" into my cerebral cortex. It became a habitual way for me to "solve" thorny issues. This oversimplistic and, frankly arrogant approach to conflicted situations guided my professional career before, during, and after Vietnam. Clearly, though, it lacks sensitivity, nuance, and above all patience for the conflict situations of day-to-day- life. I have spent a good deal of time and effort to tone down, reorient, or reconstruct my approach to conflicted situations. I recognized that at times it alone exacerbated the very situations I wanted to ameliorate or at least accept with greater tolerance and patience.

Ironically, while I was in Vietnam my father was serving as the Defense Attaché in the American Embassy in Moscow. There he regularly and earnestly leaned into conversations, closely listening, and empathically replying to senior Soviet officials and officers at frequent diplomatic gatherings during the *rapprochement* era of Soviet-American relations of the early 1970s. Empirical evidence of the cumulative effect of his communication "habits" revealed itself at the time of his reassignment in 1973. A phalanx of Soviet general officers accompanied him to his departing airplane with a successive series of bear hugs and earnest farewells, "*Tovarishch! Comrade! Please come back! You are one of us!*" Rapprochement-cum-reconciliation? Probably, both personal and institutional (i.e., military to military). Globally? A more stable and trusted foreign policy exchange still requires a lot of hard, tortuous work.

But back to the subject of hard work. My father received his Moscow assignment directly from the White House because of his years of study and fluency in the Russian

language and prior experience working with Soviet military counterparts. For example, he had been a young army captain in 1948-50, working with Soviet military counterparts and other wartime allied representatives to sort out and repatriate war refugees in Central Europe. Following periodic formative assignments over the next 20 years refined and honed his command of the language and personal communication skills. The point being that effective diplomacy (a secular term, in my view, related to the work of reconciliation) effectively occurs with experience, and finely attuned communication skills to deflate tension and to nurture—in the words of Archbishop Welby—“**the ability to disagree well!**”

Beyond the archbishop’s “habits” of peacemaking, I believe it also requires a critical trait that takes us to the heart of the matter and into the Gospel itself. The trait of honest humility that critically nourishes empathy, the very attribute that enables one to walk in someone else’s shoes. True humility requires parking one’s ego at the door. It means remembering the common dignity bestowed on each of us by our Creator through the Holy Spirit, regardless of station or circumstance or belief or gender or race or ethnicity or other factors of human identity. I also perceive true peacemaking is forgiving, sacrificial work most exemplified and sanctified by Our Lord’s radically forgiving sacrifice—in utter humility—of his own life, so that a broken world may find its way back to its Father.

Those who gather in the upper room of our parish hall between services during this Lent are reading, sharing reflections and stories, doing practical exercises, and praying on the ministry of peacemaking. They seek change and renewal in themselves guided by habits presented through the experiential wisdom of the archbishop. These habits are also pointedly prescribed in scripture, in the *Beatitudes* of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount.” Here, we find that God blesses those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they have a divine **curiosity** and seek an informed faith to engage the challenges to good relationships in this world. God blesses those who are pure in heart for they **present** themselves authentically to God and to each other in selfless risk and vulnerability to reconcile. And God calls those who would make peace among us, God’s children, for they **reimagine**—in practical, yet, almost childlike trust and optimism—God’s fulfillment of the best hopes for us all even as we disagree with one another.

May we all through God’s grace find blessing as we work to forgive and reconcile with each other in this coming year.

—Sam Wilson

SPECIAL LENTEN ACTIVITIES

Wednesdays: Stations of the Cross – 5:30 p.m.

Lenten Supper – 6:00 p.m. – Parish Hall

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday: Sunday, March 24 – 8:00 and 10:30 AM

The Anglican Rosary: Wednesday, March 27 – 9:00 AM

Morning Prayer: Wednesday, March 27 – 9:30 AM

Stations of the Cross: Wednesday, March 27 – 5:30 PM

Maundy Thursday: Thursday, March 28 – 6:00 PM

Garden Watch: Thursday to Friday, March 28-29 – 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM

**Good Friday, March 29 – Liturgy and Veneration of the Cross -
12:00 Noon at Church of the Advent**

Easter Day: Sunday, March 31 – 8:00 and 10:30 AM

WEEKLY WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday: The Holy Eucharist at 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.

The 10:30 service is also livestreamed on YouTube

Wednesday: The Anglican Rosary at 9:00 a.m.

Morning Prayer at 9:30 a.m.

Thursday: The Holy Eucharist at 12:00 Noon