

# Trinity Times

A newsletter for the members and friends of Trinity Episcopal Church

Trinity Episcopal Church  
The Episcopal Church in Athens since 1842  
703 South Main Street (office at 701) Athens, PA 18810  
The Rev. Benjamin Lee Lentz, Long-Term Supply Priest

Office: Voice and Fax: 570-888-5715  
Parish Administrator, Barbara Cameron Caum: 570-888-8981  
Web Site: [www.trinityathens.org](http://www.trinityathens.org) - [information@trinityathens.org](mailto:information@trinityathens.org)  
[Facebook.com/Trinity.Episcopal.Church.Athens](https://www.facebook.com/Trinity.Episcopal.Church.Athens)

## Advent - Christmas - December, 2023

*"as for me and my people,  
we will worship the Lord."*

Sermon for Proper 27, November 12, 2023  
The Rev. Benjamin Lee Lentz

The Sunday before last, we heard of the death of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. Last week, if we hadn't been reading the lessons for All Saints' Day, we would have heard how God has promised to be with Joshua, the same as he had been with Moses.

It is Joshua's task to bring the people into the Promised Land. As he does so, he reminds the people of what has happened in the last forty years, how they had been shepherded by God from Egypt to where they are now, readying to enter the Promised Land. He also reminds them of even a greater history, of how Terah, (Abraham's father), Nahor (Abraham's brother), and Abraham all worshipped Babylonian gods – at least, at first. He tells them that they are entering a land where other gods, the gods of the Amorites, are worshiped. He gives them a choice: worship God or the other gods.

He tells them of his decision: *"as for me and my people, we will worship the Lord."*

When the people all join into the chorus with Joshua, he holds them back, asking them if they are sure. He tells them that God doesn't want half-hearted commitment. It is a serious choice they are making.

In our baptism – at least when we re-affirm our baptismal vows, such as last week – we are making the same choice as Joshua. It cannot be a half-hearted commitment.

Speaking of commitment, let's jump in with both feet: stewardship. Having said that, I hope

you are not expecting a traditional money sermon. You will be disappointed if you are. I'm sure you already know the good work of the parish as well as its financial needs. I don't really need to remind you. You know that the parish tries to be faithful stewards of its resources.

That's not to say that stewardship doesn't encompass the question of money. Money is terribly important; money, because of its importance, is an indicator of our priorities in life. Our priorities comment on our commitment. And our commitment speaks volumes of our relationship to God.

Baptism is our affirmation of the choice to commit oneself to God, through Christ Jesus. It is a commitment that cannot be taken lightly. It reminds us of what God has done for us in our journey with him – reminiscent of Israel's exodus.

There are all sorts of continuing opportunities for you to share your gifts with others through Trinity's ministry. Vestry, worship leaders, lectors, outreach, property maintenance – all these opportunities exist – needing not just money but bodies as well.

Stewardship reminds us that we are not just recipients, acceptors, receivers but also distributors, dispensers, and granters. We are not just a cul-de-sac into which God pours his gifts; we are to channel them.

Here's where I had planned to share with you a familiar story about two bodies of water in Israel. At one time the analogy was quite appropriate: the fresh waters of the Sea of Galilee flowing via the Jordan River to the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is fresh, potable water because it gives

all that it receives. The water of the Dead Sea, because it is a cul-de-sac – no distributaries – the water is noxious and foul.

The story told us that we are called to be like the Sea of Galilee: stewards of God's gifts. Not just every once and awhile, but daily: stewards of his gifts of love, forgiveness and mercy. Letting them flow from us freely and continually.

Regrettably, that story is no longer accurate. As I prepared for today, I found that the squabbling over irrigation and water rights between Israel and Jordan has drastically depleted the Sea of Galilee and greatly polluted the Jordan River. Poor stewardship and greed as well as climate issues are destroying these bodies of water – and destroyed a good illustrative story. However, the point of the story is still true, albeit modified to speak to a different aspect of stewardship.

As creatures of God – brought into being by God – his children – we are called to be God-like (that is, responsible, moral decision makers) and to be gracious like God. Granting gifts to others as he grants them to us – being responsible for the creation he has made.

We are stewards of God's resources – like it or not! At best we can be co-creators with God, helping his creation to blossom in all its fullness, helping others to see God's hand at work around us by dispensing his love, forgiveness, and mercy. At worst we are abusers and destroyers of his creation, squandering its resources selfishly. The role is ours to choose.

It's tough being a Christian; being Christ-like; being God-like (created in God's image). But it's not without benefit. When we acknowledge our accountability and become responsible stewards (living up to the full potential of what we were created to be), then we enjoy fully the relationship God would have with us.

It's not a joy bought with our actions – it's not something merited: it's a joy that comes when we allow God's life to flow through us: being conduits of his love, forgiveness and mercy.

May we always be able to see our resources as divine gifts, recognizing our responsibility to be faithful stewards, and thereby enjoying fully the life God would have us live with him.

AMEN

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**Stewardship Sunday is December 10;** please prayerfully consider your commitment of time, treasure, and talent, and place your pledge card in the Alms Basin at the Offertory. Pay special attention to the back of the form, which lists various ministries.

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This year the **Carol Reed Memorial Mitten Tree** is a **Christmas Grocery tree** - here are some really useful suggestions.

"In all the years I have donated food at the Holidays, I bought what I thought they wanted, but have never asked. I am glad I did. If you are helping a family this Christmas, maybe this can help you tailor it more. It does for me. I spoke to people getting food at a food bank and here are some things I learned from those in need:"








- \*Everyone donates Kraft Mac and Cheese in the box. They can rarely use it because it needs milk and butter which is hard to get from regular food banks.
- \*Boxed milk is a treasure, as kids need it for cereal which they also get a lot of.
- \*Shelf stable dairy products
- \*Pasta, but don't forget the sauce
- \*They cannot eat all the awesome canned veggies and soup unless you put a can opener in too or buy pop tops.
- \*Oil is a luxury but needed for Rice-a-Roni which they also get a lot of.
- \*Spices or salt and pepper would be a real Christmas gift.
- \*Tea bags and coffee make them feel like you care.
- \*Sugar and flour are treats.
- \*Tuna and crackers make a good lunch.
- \*Canned fruit, applesauce
- \*Low sodium canned beans, vegetables, gravies, sauces
- \*Hamburger/Tuna Helper goes nowhere without canned meat.
- \*They get lots of peanut butter and jelly but usually not sandwich bread.
- \*Cake mix and frosting makes it possible to make a child's birthday cake.
- \*Dishwashing detergent is very expensive and is always appreciated.
- \*Feminine hygiene products are a luxury and women will cry over that.
- \*Everyone loves Stove Top Stuffing.
- \*Buns

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# Trinity Episcopal Church - December 2023

## Advent and Christmas

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Trinity Cycle of Prayer</b> 12/3 Dan and Marny Gerhart. 12/10 Karen Nichols, Trula Hollywood. 12/17 Chris, Heather, Adam, Brandon, Caleb Hunsinger 12/24 Hazel and Ron Hunt, Paul Kelley. 12/31 Jill and Steve Kormanik.		Fill the Carol Reed Memorial Mitten Tree with Holiday dinner food through December 17.			1	2
<b>3 Advent I</b> 10 - Holy Eucharist II 11 - Coffee Hour  <i>Marny Gerhart</i>	<b>4</b> AA 7 pm	5	<b>6</b> Intergroup, 5:30 pm AA 7 pm	7	8	<b>9 2 pm - Memorial, for Becky Fiorello Redeemer</b> <i>Heather Hunsinger</i> <i>Mthr. Hazel Hunt</i> <i>Fr. Ben Lentz</i>
<b>10 Advent II</b> 10 - Holy Eucharist II 11 - Coffee Hour Stewardship Sunday 	<b>11</b> AA 7 pm	12	<b>13</b> AA 7 pm	<b>14</b>  <i>Nate Schwartzberg</i>	15	16
<b>17 Advent III</b> 10 - Holy Eucharist II 11 - Coffee Hour **Vestry meets**  <i>David Bubniak</i> 	<b>18</b> AA 7 pm	19	<b>20</b> AA 7 pm	<b>21 St. Thomas the Apostle</b>	22	<b>23</b> <b>1 pm - The Greening of the Church</b>
<b>24 Advent IV</b> Christmas Eve 7 pm - Carol Sing and Musical Offerings 7:30 - Festal Holy Eucharist  <i>Kay Horton Bennett</i> 	<b>25 Christmas Day</b> AA 7 pm 	<b>26 St. Stephen, Deacon and Martyr</b>	<b>27 St. John, Apostle and Evangelist</b> AA 7 pm  The 3rd Day of Christmas	<b>28 The Holy Innocents</b>  The 4th Day of Christmas	29 The 5th Day of Christmas	30 The 6th Day of Christmas
<b>31 Christmas I</b> 10 - Holy Eucharist II 11 - Coffee Hour  The 7th Day of Christmas	<i>The Diocese of Bethlehem - 12/3 Calvary, Tamaqua. 12/10 Christ Church, Towanda, Betsy Welliver Sentigar. 12/17 St. Anne's, Trexlertown, The Don Schaible. Deacon Bernice Reichard. Education For Ministry. 12/24 St. Paul's, Troy, The Rev. Hazel Hunt. 12/31 St. Barnabas, Kutztown.</i>		<i>Anglicans around the world: 12/3 The Church in North India, Bishop Bijay Nayak. 12/10 The Church of Pakistan, Bishop Azad Marshall. 12/17 The Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea, Archbishop Nathan Ingen. 12/24 The Episcopal Church in the Philippines, Bishop Brent Alawas. 12/31 The Anglican Church of Rwanda, Archbishop Laurent Mbanda.</i>		<i>The Diocese of Kajo Keji: 12/3 Emmanuel Kansuk Parish. 12/10 St. Philip Dibe Parish. 12/17 Emmanuel Parish Sokare. 12/24 Mangalotor Parish and Sodogo-Trinity Easton Primary School.</i>	<b>Epiphany</b> January 6 

**December at Trinity**

**Sunday, December 3 - The 1st Sunday of Advent - 10 a.m. Holy Eucharist II**



**Saturday, December 9 - 2 p.m. Celebration of Life for Becky Fiorello, Church of the Redeemer**

**Sunday, December 10 - The 2nd Sunday of Advent - 10 a.m. - Holy Eucharist II Stewardship Sunday**



**Sunday, December 17 - The 3rd Sunday of Advent - 10 a.m. - Holy Eucharist II \*\*Vestry meets\*\* (one week early)**



**Saturday, December 23 - 1 p.m. - The Greening of the Church - come help polish brass and decorate**

**Sunday, December 24 - 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Carol Sing and Musical Offerings and Festal Holy Eucharist II**



**Sunday, December 31 - The First Sunday of Christmas - 10 a.m. Holy Eucharist II**

**Grocery Tree - Cont'd from p. 4**

- \*Baked goods
- \*Potatoes
- \*Nuts
- \*Seeds for eating or cooking
- \*Raisins
- \*Dishwashing pods
- \*Rags and cleaning supplies
- \*Diapers
- \*Wipes
- \*Pet foods and supplies

What suggestions do you have? While we can't put fresh meats, butter, and margarine under the tree, we can donate money so the Food Pantry can purchase fresh foods. *... as you did to the least of these ...*

**Music for Christmas Eve** - We welcome all to take part. We'll all sing carols and musicians are invited to offer a special Christmas selection. We're just beginning the planning, so talk to Barbara if you have a musical idea.



**The Advent Wreath.** Given in loving memory of The Rev. Canon Edward L. Caum, aka Fr. Ned, in 2009, it is a beautiful reminder of this season of Advent, which often gets lost in the rush to Christmas. As Fr. Ben has said, *Advent reminds us to look always - throughout the entire year - for the end things, the kingdom of God in its fullness, the reign of Christ. ... we need to remain focused on the fact that Christmas*

*isn't our goal, it is merely a step in God's goal, which is today, the reign of Christ.* So, as each candle is lit, ponder the big picture, God's goal.

**Stewardship Sunday** is nearly here. While we definitely need to make financial plans, we also need to share the gifts we have been given - our time and talents. We each have much to offer; pay special attention to the back of the pledge form to learn how you can help. Specifically this year we are in search of a **new Outreach Coordinator**, a **new Senior Warden**, and a **new Clerk of the Vestry** as we look ahead to the Annual Meeting at the end of January. Your pledge form will be mailed to you this week.

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**Advent - Christmas**  
 December, 2023

*To seek and serve Christ in all people*