

The Signs of St. John's



Dear Beloved St. John's,

Slow down. Keep quiet. It's Advent.

These are the words that have echoed in my mind each and every year since I first heard them in 2010. They are an invitation and a directive, counter-cultural and completely welcome. I find these words harder and harder to live by, and yet more important than ever.

Slow down. Intellectually, I know what this means. My body, however, does not. With my life the way that it is (and the way that I have made it), I know two speeds: *Warp Speed* from 7 AM to 9 PM - with daycare, work, dogs, meal prep, etc. - then *Dead Stop* from 9 PM until I make it up to bed. Slowing down means almost nothing to me. How do I keep doing all the things that I need to do, get at least some of the rest that I need, and honor this season of waiting? The answer is that I can't. Slowing down necessarily means that some things are not going to get done. Slowing down means being more intentional about the things that do happen, and being more present while they are.

Keep quiet. Another phrase that is foreign to me. For better or worse, I always have something to say. And I'm not afraid to say it—LOUDLY. During my hours of *Warp Speed*, quiet actually makes me uncomfortable. I've never been to the grocery store and not had a lovely conversation with someone unexpected. The office is always buzzing with conversation, the printer, a distant piano playing, or the noise from my own keyboard. In the car, I always have the radio or a podcast playing, or I'm talking to Mac about the day. I find it incredibly challenging to keep myself quiet, and to keep my environment quiet as well. Keeping quiet means being uncomfortable, actively creating spaces void of noise—including my own head. Keeping

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quiet means listening on a level that would challenge the most introverted therapist. It's Advent. Ah, now that I understand. It's the time that we, as a faith community and followers of Christ, set aside to wait. To prepare. To slow down and keep quiet, whether we like it or not. The only other time in my life that has had the vibe of Advent is the month before I gave birth to Mac. I had a million things to do at work to prepare for maternity leave and two million things to do at home to prepare for a baby. I didn't get to a fraction of them due to a combination of distraction, brain fog, and sheer exhaustion. I had to slow down because I physically and mentally couldn't go any faster. I had to keep quiet if I was going to get any rest. Circumstances forced my hand, making it the most exciting and exhausting period of my life.

Friends, this is Advent—exciting and exhausting, forcing ourselves to go in the opposite direction of the world. When everything and everyone is telling us to move faster, buy more gifts, bake more cookies, spend more money, sleep less, listen to more Christmas music before it goes off the radio, and lose patience with each other. Advent tells us the opposite. Advent tells us that this time of waiting is precious. It tells us to do less, to go slower, to find something between *Warp Speed* and *Dead Stop*. This season, give yourself over to the waiting—to the excited anticipation and the beautifully exhausting task of just being.

Slow down. Keep quiet. It's Advent.

Rev. Mary Margaret

Special Church Services for December

Advent Service of Lessons and Carols

December 10th at 5 PM

Please join us for a beautiful service of scripture, hymns, and anthems offered by the choir of St. John's.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24th at 9 AM (no music)

Christmas at St. John's

Sunday, December 24th

5 PM Festival Eucharist with Choir

11 PM Midnight Eucharist with Choir

Monday, December 25th

Christmas Day: 10 AM Holy Eucharist with music

Check out all the great things going on at St. John's, your Episcopal church in Chester

SUNDAY SERVICES

| | |
|----------|-----------------------------|
| 8:00 am | Holy Eucharist (no Choir) |
| 9:00 am | Adult Forum |
| 10:00 am | Holy Eucharist (with Choir) |

CONTACT US

12201 RICHMOND ST
CHESTER, VA

804-748-2182

Regular manned office hours are Tuesday through Friday 9:00 am to 2 pm



Church Happenings

Vestry Notes from November 16, 2023 Meeting

The Memorial Garden maintenance contract was approved for 2023/2024.

Due to the winter closure of the asphalt plants, the parking lot sealing and stripping project will be completed in the spring.

Rev. Mary Margaret updated the Vestry concerning an IT review and upgrades required by the Diocese. The upgrades are necessary if St. John's wants to accept pledge payments and other rental payments by debit or credit cards in the future.

December Vestry meeting has been changed to December 14, 2023 at 6:30 pm.

Andy McCauley, Junior Warden



One of the resolutions voted on by the Vestry as part of the 2023 Budget was one related to St. John's Designated Offerings. The Vestry chose to split this year's Christmas Designated Offering between the Chesterfield Food Bank and CARITAS. Thank you in advance for your generosity during this Christmas season. To ensure that your gift is applied correctly, please note Christmas Offering on the memo line of your check.

Liz Pectal

Newly-Elected Vestry

At our annual meeting November 12th three new vestry members were elected, to begin their post in January, 2024. Thank you for serving and we look forward to your many contributions!

Steve Canada Kathy Ellington Tanya Scott

Much appreciation to the Vestry members who have served their term and will be stepping down: Nancy Fast, Kent Horner, Jr., Brook Heggie and Mary Smith

ONGOING MEETINGS

Altar Guild
Meetings 3rd Sat of Month

Choir
Every Wed @ 7:30 pm

Men's Bible Study
1st & 3rd Sat at 10 am

Daughters of the King
2nd Sun 11:30 am

Outreach
4th Tues at 4 pm

Prayerful Crafters
1st & 3rd Tues @ 1 pm

Vestry
3rd Thurs @ 6:30 pm
(December mtg 12/14)

Wed Refresh
1 and 6 pm each Wed

For full calendar
click here





Outreach News

Many thanks to those who contributed Thanksgiving meal packages and/or gift cards for CCHASM. St. John's delivered 27 bags and 27 gift cards to the Chesterfield County fairgrounds!



CHRISTMAS MOTHER WRAP UP

Project Leads: JoAnn Maher and Susan Kalanges



This year we sponsored three seniors and a family with four children. All gift tags were taken from our tree and we had a wrap party Tuesday November 28th. There was a lot of wrapping to do!

The monetary donations we received went to a few unfulfilled gifts as well as grocery gift cards for the seniors and family. We were also able to purchase underwear and socks for all. Outreach purchased a pair of shoes and pajamas for each child. The adults both got snuggly throw blankets.

Through the many generous donations of our giving parish we were able to send Christmas Mother a check for \$2000. This is greatly needed, since their main fundraiser was canceled this year.

The next **Beulah Teacher's Breakfast** will be on Friday, December 15th. If you would like to make (or buy) a breakfast goody for the very appreciative teachers please have your donation in the Parish Hall kitchen (marked "Beulah Breakfast) in a disposable container by 8:00 am on 15th. Please note that due to the holiday the Breakfast is a week early.

Look at the appreciation on these faces. November breakfast - what abundance!



Advent Word is a wonderful online resource to carry us through the season of waiting and listening. For each day of Advent, there is a word, image, and reflection shared through email and social media. Visit adventword.org for more information and to subscribe to daily emails.

AdventWord

DECEMBER 3-25 **2023**

| | | | |
|----|----------|----|----------|
| 3 | WIND | 15 | HASTEN |
| 4 | HIDDEN | 16 | BEGIN |
| 5 | PRESENCE | 17 | SPIRIT |
| 6 | PEACE | 18 | REPAIR |
| 7 | GRACE | 19 | GIVE |
| 8 | WATCH | 20 | DREAM |
| 9 | AWAKE | 21 | LAUGHTER |
| 10 | GLORY | 22 | QUENCH |
| 11 | HERALD | 23 | PONDER |
| 12 | VALLEY | 24 | COVENANT |
| 13 | TRUTH | 25 | LIGHT |
| 14 | PATIENCE | | |

adventword.org



The church office will be closed Monday, December 25— Monday, January 1 to give our staff a much need vacation.

We will reopen on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 9 AM for regular business hours.





A first for St. John's!

What a beautiful day for an impromptu automobile blessing in the parking lot of St. John's! Last weekend Rev. Mary Margaret+ blessed Shanna's car, which belongs to one of the six international exchange teachers at Beulah Elementary.

SAFETY CORNER

The holidays are a magical time. Unfortunately, it's also the time of year when scams become a nightmare. Here are some tips for a safer holiday!

Verify online stores

To avoid shopping scams, when typing in a URL, double- and triple-check the spelling to ensure you are on the correct page. Scammers often create a URL with one letter off from the authentic one in hopes you won't catch it.

Change the way you think

Learn how to not engage. You are under no obligation in these modern times to respond to calls, emails or texts from strangers – especially given that so many of them are fraudulent.

Learn to say no. Sometimes a caller will get through. Get tough: Say, "I do not do business over the phone. Goodbye." Then hang up without remorse.

Stop at the mailbox

Informed Delivery is a free service from the U.S. Postal Service. The agency emails photos of letter-size mail expected to be delivered to you that day or shortly after. This is a great way to be sure that nothing is stolen from your mailbox by ID thieves.

Sign up at InformedDelivery.usps.com

from AARP.org



Greens Workshop December 19th 10am - 1 pm Parish Hall

The **Altar Guild** invites you to participate in a Greens Workshop. We will be making swags for the sconces in church and creating swags or wreaths to decorate our own homes. Enjoy a soup lunch and fellowship with the Guild. All materials provided. Please let Kathy Canada or Valerie Paredes know if you plan to attend. All are welcome!!



The December Altar Guild meeting (12/16) will be a brunch at the home of Donna Horner, Directress. Anyone wishing to join this fun, loving and dedicated group of people are welcome to attend. Please contact Donna with any questions or to express your interest. *Serving on the Altar Guild is a caring and important ministry of our church.*



We will celebrate December Birthdays at Coffee Hour on December 3rd! Daughters of the King (DOK) is hosting and will be displaying various nativity sets. JOIN IN!

8 - Alex Heggie, Jackie Colonna; **10** - Ivan Mueller;
11 - Trinity Horner; **12** - Carlton Smith, Thea Shoop;
15 - Rebecca Phoenix, Clay Heath, Peter Smith; **16** - Jim Robinson; **19** - Martin P. Fideli; **22** - Henry Gibbons; **28** - Doug Blake; **29** - Teresa Duncan, Ella McBrearty; **31**- Dick Pitman

Priest Swap! Last Sunday Rev. Mary Margaret and Rev. Sam swapped churches! We thank Father Sam for his on point, heartfelt, and often funny sermon! We welcome Father Sam+ anytime!



DECEMBER QUIZ - How well do you know the Episcopal Church?

1. What does the red cross on the white field on the Episcopal Shield represent?
2. You must be a confirmed Episcopalian to receive the sacrament of Communion in an Episcopal Church? T or F
3. How many dioceses are there in Virginia?
4. What diocese does St. John's belong?
5. What is the name of our Diocesan newsletter?

(Answer key on Page 7)

Signs articles are due on the 20th of each month to Brenda Wood

pchefbren
@verizon.net

Please start your Subject Heading with "Signs Article"



Photos welcome and appreciated!



CONVOCATION VII YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3rd / 6:30 - 8:00 PM

- ⇒ Episcopal Church of the Redeemer (2341 Winterfield Road, Midlothian 23113) is hosting a Convocation VII Christmas party.
- ⇒ Youth in 6th—12th grade are welcome!
- ⇒ There will be fun games, snacks, and a White Elephant gift exchange—so bring a gift (\$10 or less).
- ⇒ Youth Leaders are requested to attend.
- ⇒ Questions? Contact Kristen Ketron at kristen@redeemermidlothian.org OR 804-379-8899

**PLEASE SIGN
UP BY 12/1**



**BRING A
FRIEND!**

Trivia Answers

1. The red cross on the white field is an ancient Christian symbol, white representing the purity of Jesus and red representing his sacrifice on the cross and the blood of Christian martyrs. The red cross is known as the cross of St. George, patron saint of England, and indicates the Episcopal Church's decent from the Church of England.
2. False - All baptized Christians are welcome to take communion in the Episcopal Church.
3. As of 2018, the diocese has **16 regions** with 68,902 members and 180 congregations.
4. We belong to The Diocese of Southern Virginia. The diocese was formed in 1892 from the extensive Diocese of Virginia. Today, the diocese stretches more than 300 miles from the Atlantic Ocean westward to the Dan River and from the south side of the James River at Richmond to the North Carolina border.
5. Our Diocesan weekly newsletter is called *The Tidings*. It highlights news from the Diocese and is distributed on Wednesdays. If you would like to receive *The Tidings*, go to the website at <https://diosova.org>

ST. JOHN'S LEADERSHIP

REV. MARY
MARGARET WINN
Priest-in-Charge

AUBREY LINDSEY
Organist &
Choir Director

DONNA THIBAUT
Office Administrator

HAZEL SLOANE
Register

LIZ PECTAL
Treasurer

VESTRY

NANCY FAST
Sr. Warden

ANDY MCCAULEY
Jr. Warden

BROOK HEGGIE
Christian Formation

MARY SMITH
Communications

JOANN MAHER
Outreach

VALERIE PAREDES
Parish Life

KENT HORNER JR.
Property

TOM MARKWOOD
Stewardship

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--------------------------|
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 |
| 8am - Holy Eucharist 9am - Adult Forum @ 10am - Holy Eucharist 11am - Fellowship Coffee | 12pm - Kiwanis Luncheon 7pm - BSA-Troop 2819 @ | 10am - Ikebana Flower 1pm - Prayerful Crafters 7pm - 12-Step Program - | 1pm - Wednesday 6pm - Wednesday 7:30pm - Choir Practice - | 7pm - 12-Step Program - 7pm - Al-Anon-Parish | 7pm - 12-Step Program - 7pm - Al-Anon-Parish | 10am - Men's Bible Study |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 8am - Holy Eucharist 9am - Adult Forum @ 10am - Holy Eucharist 11am - Fellowship Coffee | 12pm - Kiwanis Luncheon 7pm - BSA-Troop 2819 @ | 7pm - 12-Step Program - | 1pm - Wednesday 6pm - Wednesday 7:30pm - Choir Practice - | 7pm - 12-Step Program - 7pm - Al-Anon-Parish | | 10am - Men's Bible Study |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 8am - Holy Eucharist 9am - Adult Forum @ 10am - Holy Eucharist 11am - Fellowship Coffee 5pm - LESSONS AND | 12pm - Kiwanis Luncheon 7pm - BSA-Troop 2819 @ | 1pm - Prayerful Crafters 7pm - 12-Step Program - | 9am - Chester Garden 7:30pm - Choir Practice - | 6:30pm - Vestry Meeting 7pm - 12-Step Program - 7pm - Al-Anon-Parish | 7:30am - Beulah Eiem | |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 8am - Holy Eucharist 9am - Adult Forum @ 10am - Holy Eucharist 11am - Fellowship Coffee | 10am - CHRISTMAS | 4pm - Outreach Meeting 7pm - 12-Step Program - | 7:30pm - Choir Practice - | 7pm - 12-Step Program - 7pm - Al-Anon-Parish | | |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 9am - Sunday Morning 5pm - CHRISTMAS EVE 11pm - CHRISTMAS EVE | | | | | | |
| 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8am - Holy Eucharist 9am - Adult Forum @ 10am - Holy Eucharist 11am - Fellowship Coffee | | | | | | |