



Fr. H. Alan Leonard, Rector

Patricia E. Keltie, Editor Emeritus

Kathe Christensen, Editor

Episcopal Church of the Advent

Franklin & Washington Streets

PO Box 261, Cape May, NJ 08204

609-884-3065

adventsecretary@comcast.net

capemayadvent.org

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Dear Friends,

It was great that things got more back to normal in 2022. We have been enjoying increasing attendance at worship and groups are once again active in the church. Good things are happening at Advent.

Unfortunately, Church of the Advent does have continuing financial challenges. The good news is that pledging has increased each year for the last several years! The bad news is that our expenses have also increased. Our budget for 2023 is about \$20,000 out of balance and does not have areas we can reduce or cut. In addition, since our budgets have been out of balance for several years, we have accumulated about \$30,000 of debt on our Sturdy Bank line of credit.

In the last year or so, we have also depleted our building reserves. There was a leak in the roof of the parish hall and changes had to be made to two exit doors in the sanctuary in order to comply with the fire codes. In the near future, we need to make our entryways safer by repairing some stairs and adding more exterior lighting. To accomplish these projects, the Vestry made the decision to borrow \$15,000 from the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey.

The 2023 budget is in this issue of the Anchor, along with a report from the Property Committee about the details of the work to be done this year. Please read these reports carefully so you can understand our church's financial situation.

At our meeting, your vestry brainstormed some ways to raise more money for the church. The men will host a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on February 21. Also possible are a chili cook-off, Lenten Soup Suppers, and an Art Show featuring artists connected with our congregation. More ideas are always welcome! If you would like to lead a fundraising event for the church, please talk to me or to one of your vestry members. Together we can address these financial challenges.

In addition to supporting fundraisers, there are ways you can help Advent improve our finances. Please consider a one-time donation to help cover our property improvements. We would be delighted to repay our loan early! Donations are also welcome to help pay off our line of credit. And of course, if you are able, consider increasing your pledge.

I trust we will overcome these challenges, but it will take an effort from everyone. I ask you to prayerfully consider how you can help with our financial needs. We live by

faith, not fear. So I believe that with your help, we can balance our budget, pay off our debt, and do the work that God is calling us to do.

Faithfully yours,
Alan+

CHURCH OF THE ADVENT ANNUAL MEETING

Our Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2023 at 9:00 AM in the Parish Hall. This meeting will also be available on Zoom. Details for connecting via Zoom will be available prior to the meeting. A copy of the Ballot is included in this issue of The Anchor. Voting will take place on January 22, 2023.

ADVENT PROPERTY COMMITTEE – TRANSITIONS

Property Committee members met to reflect upon the demands of the past year, to celebrate the acceptance of Advent's application to the Diocesan Loan Committee, and to focus upon a smooth transition into the next year. The Diocesan Council approved a short-term loan at low interest (\$15,000 at 4% over 5 years) to facilitate completion of deferred projects to address safety issues and to maintain Advent's landscape in alignment with its location in a nationally designated historic area.

The application for financial aid from the Diocese includes the following:

- Restoration of all stairs, as needed. Estimate: \$2,238.00.
- Electrical work associated with installation of lighting to assure all stairs will be lit, with conversion to a motion-light at kitchen stairs. Estimate: \$3,375.00.
- Repainting of parking lot, to include "No Parking" and ADA designations. Estimate: \$1200.00.
- Landscape Services to include river stone behind parish hall, redesign of bottom of rear steps to church with cement base the width of the stairs, and sidewalk to replace crumbling existing walkway (safe access to ADA parking), addition of low-maintenance perennials, with mulch, throughout beds. Estimate: \$8450.00.

All contractors advise that bids submitted during the summer may likely increase as these essential upgrades could not be addressed prior to the Diocesan application process. It is worthy of note that all trees bordering the property had been pruned so as not to rest on roofing and/or wires of our own or neighboring properties. This project was finalized through a generous donation in recognition of the urgency of this need.

The property committee will work diligently to realize the finalization of these projects, so far as seasonal weather and contractor scheduling permits.

- *Barbara (Basia) Smith, Junior Warden*

OUTREACH NEWS

The congregation very generously supported our Three Christmas projects. We provided 40 children from "Caring for Kids" with their Christmas gift wishes. Thanks to Jo Ann Armstrong for coordinating and organizing this project.

Our collection of items for the Seaman's Institute was very successful. We filled 10 large boxes with items for ditty bags that were distributed to the sailors who come to

the Port of Philadelphia on the cargo ships. They are away from their families at the holidays and the ditty bags are a way to thank them and spread the Christmas cheer. Thanks to Glenda Unzelmann who collected and packed the boxes and Fred Obligado who delivered them.

We gave 87 local families an Acme food card valued at \$75 to help with their Christmas dinners. Thanks to Marty Torpey who helped me write and fill envelopes with a Christmas message from Fr. Alan and the food card.

Thank you for sharing God's love with others. Our local ministry is alive and well. You responded very generously.

Our next committee meeting will be Wednesday, January 18, 2023, at 3:00 PM in the Parish Hall. Anyone interested in joining our committee is welcome.

-Marrie Cassidy

ADVENT BOOK CLUB

The Advent Book Club will meet on Tuesday, January 10, 2023, at 7:00 PM at the home of Joy Wadleigh and Richard Hudson, 1023 Washington Street, Cape May. The book to be discussed is Forty Autumns by Nina Willner. Anyone interested in joining this group, please call Lynda Cogswell at 609-884-6675. All are welcome.

-Lynda Cogswell

TRANSFORMATIONS

In anticipation of ringing in a new year, it is customary for many of us to focus on self-improvement. Might it be the excitement, the power of hope, that springs within us to resolve to some commitment that we perceive to be key to living a healthier, better life? We enthusiastically design plans to maintain better health habits, explore new areas of our world, home improvement, and so on. Some of these dreams come to fruition, but all too often, we define ourselves as failures over all those new regimens unachieved.

Spiritually, we immerse ourselves in the season of Advent, rejoicing in the coming of Jesus, our Savior. We delight in the stories of his birth, and his journey through a most deliberate teaching ministry. We recognize Jesus as our model for living a life that walks in love. Perhaps it is here, in the essence of Jesus, that we might discover our very own "reset button." Jesus himself progressed through essential transformations in fulfillment of his destiny on earth. Perhaps we might consider moving beyond the secular, to discover new meanings within ourselves, new connections with our God, the ability to recognize his affirming grace in our daily lives.

The Episcopal faith gifts us with a rich tradition of opportunities for religious practice; but, it also encourages us to critically delve into the study of our Christian heritage, and, it demands that we live our faith, based upon an active life formed by an inspired personal ministry. The EFM (Education for Ministry) Program continues to offer me a transformational opportunity to move toward a deeper relationship with God, and to move forward in renewal of a purposeful life, not only for myself and my family, but also in commitment to our neighbors and our world.

*- In the hope of Peace - Love - Joy in 2023,
Barbara Smith*

AN ILLUMINATING JOURNEY

My favorite Christmas tableau comes from the back end of Christmastide. Nervous shepherds with their flocks, joyous angels descending and singing, a young, expecting mother riding on a donkey with her husband looking for lodging, and the nativity scene inside the stable with lowing, curious animals—each uniquely contribute to our understanding of the nature of the event: **God entering history in a radically, humble way.** Yet, for me, the “three wise men” following the Christmas star to Bethlehem portray the significance of Christmas in a specially “illuminating” way. Their representation signifies that an initial “inside experience” among the Jewish people is to become the world’s ultimate “outside story” beyond Judea.

Recent scholarly speculation suggests that perhaps the wise men were not Persian or distant Asian astronomers and astrologers. Instead, they might have been priestly scholars from nearby Arabia, bringing aromatic gifts extracted from the indigenous flora where they lived. These learned men would have been familiar with Jewish scripture, and it is further suggested that they were descended from a priestly class that presided in the vicinity of Jerusalem in a time before King David. They traced their lineage back to Melchizedek (i.e., King of Righteousness), who was the priest-king of Salem (subsequently known as Jerusalem). He worshipped *El Elyon* (i.e., (the most high God)). Some even reason that the Levitical priesthood, initially set up by Moses by God’s command that eventually staffed the Jerusalem Temple, had displaced the Melchizedek priesthood into exile.

Genesis 14:18-20 tells us that Melchizedek rode out from Salem in hospitality to offer a stranger, Abram (i.e., Abraham), bread, wine, and El Elyon’s blessing. *Psalms 110* identifies another role for Melchizedek. It states, “The Lord (i.e., God) has sworn, and He will not change His mind, Thou (i.e., the future Messiah) art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek” (v.4). In the NT *Letter to the Hebrews*, the author underscores this theme even more precisely. Jesus Christ is identified as the “High priest forever—having offered himself as a final sacrifice to God— in the order of Melchizedek” (4:14-5:10; 7:1-28). Scholars suspect that *The Letter to the Hebrews* was addressing the concerns of a Jewish-Christian audience that was wavering in its new faith due to the loss of contact with Temple worship. Jesus’ failure to return to assuage that loss was an added factor of growing disenchantment.

Connecting all of these narrative dots of speculation and scripture, it is evident that the birth of Jesus was a matter of particular interest to these “wise men.” For me, their journey to Bethlehem represents a link from Melchizedek’s hospitality to the father of the Jewish nation to the sacrificial hospitality of Jesus, who offered himself to God on behalf of all Jews and Gentiles. It ushers in a deeper understanding of the **Epiphany**—the church season we now approach by providing a narrative arc that connects an ancient scriptural story foreshadowing God entering history in a divine act of radical hospitality. Paul calls this action *kenosis* (Gk.) or “self-emptying love.” According to the Apostle to the Gentiles, being born in a stable amidst animals and laid in a feeding trough is truly a kenotic act hidden in humbleness, ordinariness, and nondescript circumstance. Hence, the critical “revealing” role of the wise men who strike out on a journey of discovery, hope, and hospitality. Offering their gifts and paying their respects, they return home—avoiding the complications of an ever-hostile Jerusalem establishment—to spread the “good news.”

Perhaps this forthcoming year will offer opportunities for us to study, learn, and reflect on the good news—anew—through God's grace, love, and illuminating wisdom. Thereby, our hospitality would be quickened—each within one's means, talents, and time—towards anyone beyond the ready reach of the “inside story” of Christmas and the Incarnation.

-Sam Wilson

A New Year's Thank You to God

Thank you, God, for another year
Of visits from family and friends,
Here, in Tree City, USA,
And in restaurants in Cape May.

Thank you, God, for the gift
Of family and friends.
May our relationships
With them never end.

Thank you, God, your love gives us hope
For lifelong celebration; your faithful
Goodness surrounds me and others all
Forever: winter, spring, summer, and fall.
—Karla Kiefer

January Birthday Celebrations

January Anniversary Celebrations

2	Nancy Abrams Loper		
8	Patricia Bourgeau		
8	Anamaria Pastiu		
17	Pilo Pastiu		
18	Joel Rutenberg		
21	Michael Torpey		
22	Johanna Keltie		
26	Marrie Cassidy		
28	Carol Obligado		

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: Morning Prayer at 9:30 a.m.

Thursday: The Holy Eucharist at 12:00 Noon

Episcopal Church of the Advent/St. John's Chapel
PO Box 261, Cape May, New Jersey 08204

ANNUAL MEETING

January 22, 2023

BALLOT

SENIOR WARDEN – ONE YEAR TERM (vote for one)

☐ Barbara Smith ☐ _____

JUNIOR WARDEN – ONE YEAR TERM (vote for one)

☐ Lew Price ☐ _____

VESTRY – Three year terms (vote for three)

☐ Angela Gloria (Class of 2026) ☐ _____

☐ David Hammond (Class of 2026) ☐ _____

☐ Joel Rutenberg (Class of 2026) ☐ _____

DELEGATES TO ATLANTIC CONVOCATION – ONE YEAR TERM (vote for six delegates & 2 alternates)

☐ JoAnn Armstrong ☐ _____

☐ Diane Dilworth ☐ _____

☐ Frank Garcia ☐ _____

☐ Angela Gloria ☐ _____

☐ Pam Kelly ☐ _____

☐ Carol Obligado ☐ _____

DEPUTIES TO DIOCESAN CONVENTION – ONE YEAR TERM (vote for three)

☐ Corbin Cogswell ☐ _____

☐ Martha Torpey ☐ _____

☐ Alice Vasser ☐ _____

ALTERNATES TO DIOCESAN CONVENTION – ONE YEAR TERM (vote for three)

☐ Noel Smith Wong ☐ _____

☐ Sandi Eakin ☐ _____

Please note: nominations may be made from the floor at the Annual Meeting. However, those so nominated must give their consent to being nominated either verbally, if present, or in writing, if absent.