

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

Office: Voice and Fax: 570-888-5715
Parish Administrator, Barbara Cameron Caum: 570-888-8981
Web Site: www.trinityathens.org - information@trinityathens.org

Advent - Christmas - December, 2025

Advent is sometimes described as a time of quiet preparation and expectation. Those expectations might include when we decorate for Christmas - it might be the day after Thanksgiving for some, or the 24th of December for others, for most folks, it's somewhere in between. It's part of the rhythm of our year.

At Trinity, we follow the schedule of the church year - hauling the heavy brass Advent wreath out of the closet the week before the first Sunday of Advent and wheedling the talented but reticent Marny Gerhart to decorate it once again (Thank you, Marn!).

But each year, it isn't exactly the same - there are small changes necessitated by time constraints, or weather, or a pandemic, or, a few years ago, a new church furnishing (to use the official word), the pump organ. The wreath had to stand in a different place than it's been for 15 years.

It's a small thing, but it is a bit unsettling. We like continuity, we expect things to be the same, dependable, comfortable, the way we've always done it.

We expect that Christmas Eve will be that almost magical time when we gather and sing "O Come all ye Faithful" sitting in our familiar spot in church, waiting to hear the age-old story of the birth of the Christ child. There is a sureness that it will be that way and we can move on to the next thing. But, probably not this year at Trinity.

AA has a saying about expectation - "my serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations." When we expect things to be a certain way, the way we've always done it, and then they're not, it can throw us for a loop.

We've spent our whole lives going to church on a Sunday morning, but not right now - now we arrive in the early afternoon.

There's a story that perfectly illustrates the old, reliable, and often misleading "we've always done it that way" reason for how some things become reliable, familiar traditions.

Each Sunday for decades as old Fr. Jones walked along the line of worshipers kneeling to receive communion, he paused and touched the organ before he began again. It was always that way. When the old priest retired and a new rector arrived, as the people waited at the rail, the new priest did not stop at the organ.

It was a small thing. But it was unsettling, after all, it was a tradition - they told the rector that she had missed an important part of the service. Suffice it to say she was puzzled.

When she had an opportunity to ask Fr. Jones about it, at first he couldn't figure out what she was talking about. Then the light dawned. "Oh," he said, "It's to release the static electricity that builds up when I cross the carpet so I don't shock the first person at the rail."

We've always done it that way. Tradition.

Change is hard. Greeting change with grace and acceptance and making the best of it can be a real challenge.

Right now, Trinity is meeting that challenge - meeting it with grace and much less stress than anyone expected. It's heartening, it really is. We go on, being God's Episcopal people in Athens, in community together and in service to others.

Advent blessings on us all.



Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Advent Outreach - *feed the hungry, clothe the naked*

The Carol Reed Memorial Mitten Tree is up and ready for warm hats and nourishing groceries. While we don't need gloves or mittens this year, we do know of those who need hats and scarves. We can drape those on the tree to decorate it and fill the area under the tree with food for everyday use as well as special items for the holiday. As we all know, this is a time of great need for many in our community. Donations over the past few months have been amazing as we try to help alleviate the loss of so many benefits to those who have the least.

Dandy Canes for the Bridge

The Valley Outreach organization - The Bridge of Penn-York Valley churches is happy to announce that two of the Dandy Minimarts in our area will be donating the proceeds from their yearly Dandy cane drive to the Bridge. Two of the minimarts, the one in downtown Sayre and the one on White Wagon Road (Willawana) have been chosen for The Bridge, so next time you stop in for a snack or gas, purchase a paper Dandy cane.

Christmas flowers

While we may not have a Christmas Eve service at Trinity, there are two Sundays in the 12 day festival of Christmas, December 28 and January 4. So, yes, we will be decorating with flowers. There is a sign-up sheet on the back table if you'd like to donate for fresh flowers for the altar.



The Greening of the Church

Sunday, December 21, is a busy day - it is also the shortest day of the year. After vestry at noon, then worship, we'll quickly grab a snack and coffee and then head back to the church building to spruce up and polish brass. We'll box up the food and hat donations and bring out the Christmas tree decorations for the tree. We'll also set up our beautiful crèche and put candles and greens in the windows. Everyone can help, so please plan on staying a bit longer than usual on that Sunday afternoon.

Coffee Hour

Speaking of coffee, we are continuing to meet after worship for food and fellowship. It may not be as

elaborate as we've done in the past, but that time to gather together is an important part of our parish life. There's a book in the kitchen where you can sign up to bring a snack. Coffee is already made before the service; as a host your task is to bring some sort of food and wash a few cups afterward. Don't miss it - some folks even call it an additional sacrament. Tongue in cheek, of course.

Stewardship

In the olden days they used to call the annual pledge drive the "Every Member Canvass." Folks from the church finance committee, vestry, and sometimes the clergy, would split up the parish list and visit each person at home to talk about the mission and ministry of the church and to ask them to support that by making a pledge. While many churches no longer do the in-person visit, each of us is asked to pledge our time, talent, and treasure to support the work of the church, beyond just keeping the lights on, the building maintained, and the staff supported. Our parish also pledges support to the diocese, which in turn supports the national church, which has programs that reach throughout the world. Trinity runs on a very small budget, but every dollar counts; please prayerfully consider how you can give - your dollars, your presence at worship, your time. You'll receive a letter from Senior Warden Laura Cama in the mail this week with a pledge form. Please place it in the alms basin on **December 14**, or mail it to our post office box in the enclosed envelope.

STEWARDSHIP

 Time ♦ Talent ♦ Treasure

Vestry









At the meeting in November, the vestry spent a lot of time discussing the future of Trinity. The gist of the discussion was that Trinity is not going anywhere; the parish is here and will continue, maybe at a different time and with different clergy each Sunday, but the work of the parish continues ... as the prayer of Thanksgiving says, "And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord."

We can do that, as those who came before us have done and we will continue to do.



Trinity Episcopal Church - December 2025

**Advent and
Christmas**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Trinity Cycle of Prayer 12/7 Martha Pierce; Carla Ross. 12/14 Doug, Rosemary, and Sarah Plank. 12/21 Jack Strange; Josie Thomas. 12/28 Kathy Patterson, Alexandra and Jonathan Ayres.				The Diocese of Bethlehem - 12/7 St. Barnabas Center, Kutztown. 12/14 Christ Church, Towanda, The Rev. Betsy Sentigar. 12/21 St. Anne's, Trexlertown, The Rev. Don Schaible, Deacon Bernice Reichard. Education For Ministry. 12/28 St. Paul's, Troy, The Rev. Hazel Hunt.		Anglicans around the World: 12/7 The Church of Bangladesh, Bishop Samuel Sunil Mankhin. 12/14 Episcopal/ Anglican Church of Brazil, Bishop Marinez Rosa Dos Santos Bassotto. 12/21 The Anglican Church of Burundi, Archbishop Sixbert Maumi. 12/28 The Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Shane Parker.
Fill the Carol Reed Memorial Mitten Tree with holiday food and winter hats 	1 St. Andrew the Apostle AA 7 and 8 pm	2	3 AA Intergroup, 5:30 AA 7:30 pm	4 <i>Marny Gerhart</i>	5	6
7 Advent II 1:30 - Holy Eucharist II 2:30 - Coffee Hour 	8 AA 7 and 8 pm	9 <i>Heather Hunsinger Mthr. Hazel Hunt Fr. Ben Lentz</i>	10 AA 7:30 pm	11 STEWARDSHIP Time ♦ Talent ♦ Treasure		12 13 7 - <i>The Beautiful Impossible</i> Christmas Cantata, Rome Presbyterian, and Sunday at 4 at Trinity.
14 Advent III 1:30 - Holy Eucharist II 2:30 - Coffee Hour Stewardship Sunday 4 - Cantata <i>Nate Schwartzberg</i> 	15 AA 7 and 8 pm	16 <i>David Bubniak</i>	17 AA 7:30 pm	18	19	20
21 Advent IV **Noon- Vestry Meets** 1:30 - Holy Eucharist II 2:30 - Coffee and The Greening of the Church 	22 St. Thomas the Apostle AA 7 and 8 pm	23	24 AA 7:30 pm Worship services are listed in the newsletter <i>Kay Horton Bennett</i>	25 Christmas Day  	26 St. Stephen, Deacon and Martyr The 2nd Day of Christmas	27 St. John, Apostle and Evangelist The 3rd Day of Christmas
28 Christmas I 1:30 - Holy Eucharist II 2:30 - Coffee Hour The 4th Day of Christmas	29 The Holy Innocents AA 7 and 8 pm The 5th Day of Christmas	30 The 6th Day of Christmas	31 The 7th Day of Christmas	The Diocese of Kajo Keji: 12/7 Emmanuel Kansuk. 12/14 St. Philip Dibe Parish. 12/21 Emmanuel Parish Sokare. 12/28 Mangalotor Parish and Sodogo-Trinity Easton Primary School.		 On January 1st we are THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF THE Susquehanna

December Highlights

Holy Eucharist Sundays at 1:30 p.m.



Sunday, December 7 - Advent II, Holy Eucharist II, The Rev. Canon Melinda Artman, Celebrant and Preacher.



Sunday, December 14 - Advent III, Holy Eucharist II, The Rev. Trula Hollywood, Celebrant and Preacher. **Pledge Sunday**

4 p.m. The Beautiful Impossible - A Christmas Cantata, at Trinity. (also on 12/13 at Rome Presbyterian at 7 p.m.)



Sunday, December 21 - Advent IV, Holy Eucharist II, The Rev. Betsy Sentigar, Celebrant and Preacher.

Vestry meets at Noon

Greening of the Church follows worship.



Wednesday, December 24 - Eve of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Trinity may plan a carol sing, but that's to be determined - Christmas services of Holy Eucharist you may choose to attend are:

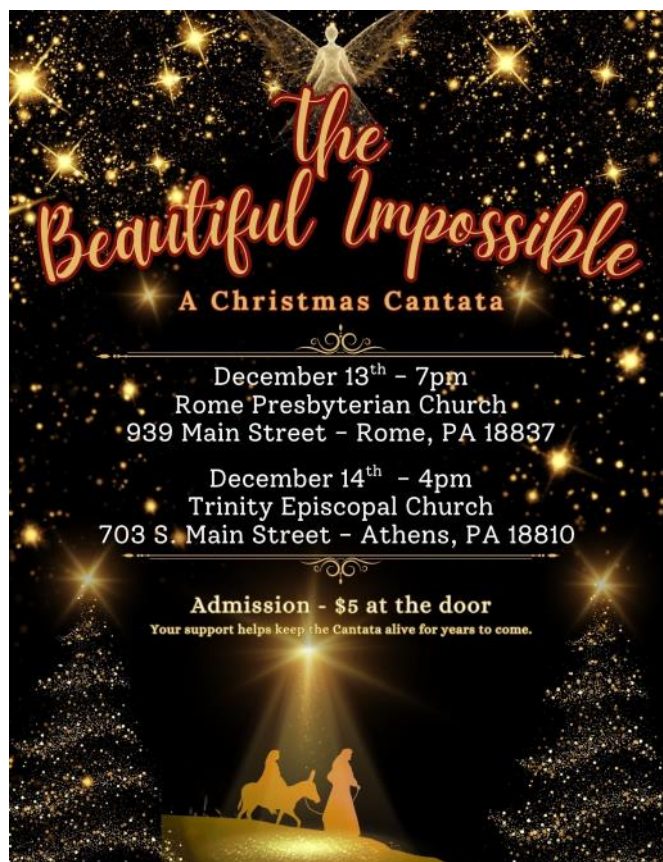
4 p.m. - St. John Lutheran, Sayre
5 p.m. - St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Owego
7:30 p.m. - Church of the Redeemer, Sayre
10 p.m. - Christ Church, Towanda
Christmas Day - 10 a.m. Simple spoken Holy Eucharist, St. Paul's, Owego.

Sunday, December 28 - The First Sunday of Christmas, Holy Eucharist II, with carols - The Rev. Canon Melinda Artman, Preacher and Celebrant

Blue Christmas Services - The joyous holiday season can be a time of profound sadness, grief, and loneliness for many. The contemplative Blue Christmas Service, also known as The Longest Night, reminds us that we are not alone, that Jesus, both fully human and divine, suffered with us and abides with us.

December 7, 2 p.m., Christ Church, Towanda

December 21, 4 p.m., St. Paul's Owego.



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Athens, PA 18810

December at Trinity
Advent - Christmas
Worship is now Sundays
at 1:30 p.m.

To seek and serve Christ in all people