



The Beacon

*In thy light shall we see light.
Psalm 36:9*

December 2023

Slow Down, It's Advent

by the Rev. Abigail Crozier Nestlehatt

Breathe. Relax your shoulders. Set your feet on the ground. Breathe. Now do it again, this time with your eyes closed.

Advent, the season of holy waiting and preparation comes upon us just when we have lengthy “to do” lists and precious little time to spare. The message of the manger gets lost in the glitz of holiday trappings and the rush to make everything perfect. Who has time to ponder the mystery of the word made flesh when there are Christmas cookies that need to be made? Well, the answer is, you do. You have time to slow down. It is as easy as taking an intentional breath. And as important as breathing.

The purpose of Advent is to “locate us within the coming of the divine reign” as a seminary classmate noted in a recent NPR piece, a reign characterized by justice and peace. The message of the manger is about the breadth and depth of God’s love, for all people. Our invitation is to be a part of building God’s kingdom even now.

The language of expectation we hear throughout Advent is full of emotion. “O come, O come, Emmanuel,” we sing longingly. “Come, Lord Jesus,” we pray pleadingly. Living as people who believe in the first coming of Christ and await Christ’s coming again, we know he has come and we know he will come. Let us not be too rushed to notice. Let us not be too rushed to do our part to make it so.

As you attend to all that you need to do to get ready for Christmas, look for God’s hand at work in your life, right now. While you are searching for just the right presents, be mindful of the perfect gift of love that has already been given. If you are feeling lonely or discouraged, take a moment to find the people who are community builders and peace makers.

At St. Peter’s this Advent, we will encourage you to slow down, both through the pace of the liturgy and the nature of our programming. In the pages that follow you will find various ways to observe this holy season. The outreach commission offers opportunities to help people in need. Midweek evening programs provide space and time for reflection or simply for silence that is kept in community. The lively fun of pageant rehearsals and carol singing fosters a sense of belonging. All this begins with a beautiful service of Lessons and Carols which sets the tone and put us in mind of God’s work in the world throughout history. An intentional observation of Advent ensures that we arrive at the manger prepared to engage with the mystery of the incarnation and to bear its message of justice, peace and love into the world.

*O Christ, hear our prayers; and come among us soon; for we
are waiting for you, and none other. Come Lord Jesus. Amen.*

Advent Lessons and Carols



Advent Lessons and Carols is always a beloved service that sets the anticipatory tone for the season. Through seven readings and beautiful music at 4 p.m. on **December 3**, we will recount the prophecies and history that precede the birth of Christ. This year, the service will include choral works by Sergei Rachmaninoff and George Friedrich Handel.

While Rachmaninoff, who was born in Russia 150 years ago, is known particularly for his piano concerti, his much-revered *All Night Vigil* offers an hour of music for a Russian Orthodox liturgy that includes psalms, litanies and canticles. Our choirs will perform a well-known excerpt from this work, “*Bogoroditse Devo*,” the Orthodox version of “Hail Mary, the Lord is with thee.” In it, Mary is referred to not only as the mother of Jesus, but as the mother of God, the God-bearer. Rachmaninoff’s music mirrors the reverence of the Angel Gabriel’s greeting as well as a thunderous joy at Mary’s bringing forth the salvation of the world. The choirs will sing this in the original church Slavonic language at Lessons and Carols and again later in Advent.

One of the most famous of all musical works, Handel’s *Messiah* contains many memorable solos and choruses. At Lessons and Carols, the choir will sing “And the Glory”—a text that uses only three phrases from Isaiah but that Handel spun out into three minutes of thrilling music. It is mind-boggling to recall that he composed hundreds of pages of some of the world’s greatest music in just over three weeks in the summer of 1741. *Messiah* premiered in 1742 in Dublin, Ireland —coincidentally the site of the choir’s residency in August!

All are invited to prepare for the birth of Christ by attending Advent Lessons and Carols on **December 3** and are encouraged to bring friends and neighbors with them. Light refreshments follow the service.

Advent Wreath Workshop

December days get darker as the month goes on and as we anticipate the light of God that entered the world when Jesus was born. So it is meaningful that we light an additional candle on an Advent wreath weekly. Each candle has a particular meaning: hope, peace, joy and love.

In keeping with a St. Peter’s tradition, we are holding an intergenerational workshop to assemble Advent wreaths following the 10 a.m. service on **December 3**, the first Sunday in Advent. All are invited to participate and take their handcrafted wreath home afterwards. We will provide straw forms, fresh greens, and candles, but feel free to bring a favorite wreath form of your own. In addition, we will offer materials to help guide readings, reflections, and conversations for the lighting of each candle.



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The Beacon is produced monthly by St. Peter’s Church in the Great Valley
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Submit articles to beacon@stpetersgv.org or fax them to 610-644-7967

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Memorial Flowers for Christmas

Christmas memorials are a wonderful way to remember loved ones or to celebrate family milestones (weddings, births, anniversaries). Your gift “In thanksgiving for” or “In memory of” will appear in the Christmas service leaflets.



Order forms are available in the Sunday leaflets or from the parish office. The suggested minimum contribution is \$30. Please make checks payable to St.

Peter’s Church with Christmas Memorials in the memo and send them in or place them in the offering plate no later than **Thursday, December 13**. Please be sure to include the names of the people you wish to honor or remember. Thank you!

Christmas Eve Pageant

At the 4 p.m. family Eucharist on Christmas Eve, the children of St. Peter’s will tell the nativity story at the annual pageant, in which we encourage all children to participate. There are roles for all ages, abilities, and interest levels—from the angel who astonishes Mary with the news that she has found favor with God, to shepherds and sheep watching the baby in the manger in silent wonder.



The first two pageant rehearsals will take place after the 9 a.m. service on **December 10 and 17**; the final rehearsal, at which everyone is expected to be present, will take place at 5 pm on **December 21**. All rehearsals will be in the barn. To sign your child up for the pageant, please send an email to sundayschool@stpetersgv.org or use the link in Keynotes.

Advent Evenings in the Historic Church Building

Reading Mark Together: Wednesday, December 6, 7 to 8:30

Let’s begin our Advent journey by sharing the good news with one another as it was done in ancient times. Sitting in a circle and facing outwards for just under an hour and a half in the parish hall, we will listen to Mark’s gospel being read aloud by different voices. Anyone wishing to read a chapter should please contact Melissa Shaner (myshaner@verizon.net) by December 1; assignments and texts will be emailed shortly thereafter. Those who wish to listen only are more than welcome to join the circle. Feel free to bring needlework or other quiet handwork if it helps you to focus. Cider and cookies will be available.



Silent Night, Holy Night--An Advent Quiet Evening; Wednesday, December 13, 7 to 8:30

Finding the space to be still and contemplate the mystery of the Word made flesh in a bustling holiday season can be challenging. Sometimes we do not get such a break until the lights are dimmed on Christmas Eve and we join with the choir in singing “all is calm, all is bright.” This year’s quiet evening in the candlelit church offers us an opportunity to slow down, breathe, and prepare our heart. The evening will be framed by prayer at the beginning and Compline at the end, before we exit in silence. Prayer prompts will be available for anyone who chooses to use them during the evening. Experience the refreshment of collective, quiet prayer. For more information, please contact Abigail (610-644-2261 or abigail@stpetersgv.org). Please sign up using the link in Keynotes or the sign-up sheet in either gathering space.

Supper and Caroling around the Piano: Thursday, December 21, 6 to 7:30

Come to the parish hall at 6 p.m. and enjoy a warming dinner of chili, cornbread, salad, and cookies before our organist and choir director Steven Patchel takes to the piano to lead us in singing Christmas favorites. This evening is a perfect opportunity to bring a friend to St. Peter’s for holiday fun! To assist us with planning, please sign up using the link in Keynotes or a sign-up sheet in either gathering space.

Please note: this Advent Evening carol sing is being held on a ***Thursday***.

Adult Forum in Advent and Early January

At the two adult forum sessions during Advent, on **December 10 and 17**, the Reverends Abigail and Mark Nestlehutt will present a two-part Advent series, “Jerusalem’s Living Stones: Christians in the Holy Land.” They will explore the history and legacy of Christians in the portion of the Holy Land defined by present-day Israel and the West Bank. They will begin by giving a fast-paced overview of the advent of “the people of the Way” (the name for early Christians), the rise of Christianity, the impact of Islam, the Crusades, and the Middle Ages, and will then discuss the place of Christians within the holy city of Jerusalem. The series will address how Christians in Jerusalem have fared during the Ottoman Empire and the Palestinian Mandate, and in the modern State of Israel. Mark assures those of us wondering how they plan to cover two thousand years of Jerusalem’s history in two sessions, “We’ll talk fast!”



When adult forum resumes after Epiphany, on **January 14**, Deacon Jeff and others will lead a discussion about living in community and about the value and blessings of the small group experience. God intended us to live in community, and as Christians we need to grow in our faith and mission through our church family. As we continue to explore how to experience and live out our faith, growing deeper and wider, one tool for strengthening and expanding church communities is through small groups . . . groups in which “everybody knows your name, and they’re always glad you came.” Within a small group environment, people can become close enough to know each other, to care and share, to challenge and support, to confide and confess, to forgive and be forgiven, to laugh and weep together, to be accountable to each other. The leaders will also outline the resources that St. Peter’s will use as guides to “birthing” small groups in the coming year.

Santa Kneeling at the Manger?

All the women of St. Peter’s are invited to come to the parish hall at 7 p.m. on Monday, **December 4**, when Women on the Hill addresses the concurrent Christian/American customs of Advent (anticipating the coming of Jesus), and Shopping Season (anticipating the coming of Santa Claus)!

Just how do we integrate the *holy* and the *holly*? How do we handle the tension between such perennial vocal favorites as “Silver Bells” and “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” or “Up on the Housetop” and “Away in a Manger”? Recognizing that our family Christmas traditions, including gift-giving and decorations, are precious and meaningful, we will discuss how we integrate the two themes. Come and share your thoughts!

Each attendee is invited to bring two items, one “holy” and one secular, that represent Christmas to her and that have stories that make them meaningful. Please join your distaff friends at St. Peter’s for yet another enjoyable, meaningful evening of community and friendship, accompanied by light refreshments.

Retreat Opportunity at the Society of St. John the Evangelist

An opportunity has arisen for us to take a parish group to a retreat at the Society of St. John the Evangelist from January 18 to 21. SSJE, an Episcopal monastic community in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is, in its own words, “rooted in the ancient monastic traditions of prayer and community life, and critically engaged with contemporary culture, [where we seek] to know and share an authentic experience of God’s love and mercy. We live a common life shaped by worship, prayer, and our Rule of Life.”

Participants may choose to arrive on Thursday, January 18, or on the following day; the retreat ends on Sunday, January 21. The \$155 per night cost includes meals, a single room with sink, and hall bathroom. Please contact Abigail (abigail@stpetersgv.org or 610-644-2261) for more information or to let her know that you wish to participate. For planning purposes, please let Abigail know about your interest in attending **no later than December 10**.

Christmastide Services at a Glance

December 24

Advent 4

Holy Eucharist, Rite 2
10 a.m. (church)

Christmas Eve

Pageant and Family Christmas Eucharist
4 p.m.(barn)

Prelude Music

9 p.m. (church)

Festival Christmas Eucharist, with string quartet
9:30 p.m. (church)

December 25

Christmas Day

Holy Eucharist, with carols
10 a.m. (church)

December 31

Holy Eucharist, rite 1
8 a.m. (church)

Holy Eucharist, rite 2
10 a.m. (church)

January 7

Epiphany

Holy Eucharist
10 a.m. (barn)

King Cake celebration follows
Lessons and Carols for Epiphany
4 p.m. (barn)



Epiphany 2024: Two Observances on January 7

The Feast of the Epiphany, which falls on January 6, signals the end of the Christmas season. Also known as “Christmastide” and as the “twelve days of Christmas,” Epiphany, the Greek word for “manifestation,” marks three “firsts” in Jesus’ life. The visit of the Magi, Jesus’ baptism in the River Jordan, and the miracle at Cana were said to have two remarkable features in common: all involved divine intercession and all occurred on the same day, though in different years.

This year, we will observe Epiphany at the single 10 a.m. service on **Sunday, January 7**, by our traditional festive King Cake celebration. Then, at 4 p.m., the choirs will offer a service of Lessons and Carols for Epiphany. (Watch for details about the service later this month in Keynotes and the Sunday leaflets.) Please mark your 2024 calendar now, and plan to join us at this “double-header” on **January 7**.



Christmas Outreach Opportunities

“Up, Up and Away” with CCC

Take a break this holiday season by attending a performance of the Chester Childrens Chorus winter concert! More than one hundred Chester children will sing familiar hits like “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” “I Feel the Earth Move,” and “Up, Up and Away.” The free concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, **December 15**, and Saturday, **December 16**, in the Lang Music Building on the Swarthmore College campus.

And reserve Saturday, **January 13**, on your 2024 calendar as well. The CCC will offer a concert honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at 4 p.m., also in the Lang Music Building. A special reception will follow the performance. For more information about either performance, visit ChesterChildrensChorus.org.

The Gift of Life

Since St. Peter’s first blood drive, 668 individuals have donated blood at St. Peter’s! (Do you remember the early days when the bloodmobile parked on the parish house driveway during Sunday services?) Recently, our indoor community drives have attracted many visitors and introduced them to the vibrant spirit of our faith at work in the community.



A recent Red Cross tally of all the churches in our diocese that participate in the drives placed St. Peter’s consistently among the leaders in this life-giving ministry. And the numbers from our Thanksgiving week drive reveal our leadership again: 43 registered donors, and 32 donated pints of blood. Thank you, blood donors, and thank you St. Peter’s!

On **January 3**, we will host a special drive in the parish hall from 1 to 6 p.m. This additional post-holiday collection is crucial because holiday highway accidents historically deplete the region’s blood supply to below the minimum acceptable levels. Details about this drive will be published in Keynotes and the Sunday leaflets later this month.

Sharing God’s Love This Month

SPECIAL NEEDLEWORK MINISTRY MINI-MARKET
The members of the needlework ministry will be on hand after the 10 a.m. service on **December 3**, offering special items they have created as Christmas gifts for both children and adults. They have dedicated all funds they raise at this sale to support St. Peter’s outreach activities.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS MARKET
Also on **December 3**, our Alternative Christmas market offers you the opportunity to purchase a gift of love “that keeps on giving.” By donating to an outreach activity of your choice to honor a friend or relative, you can share the true meaning of Christmas with that person and simultaneously help our outreach ministries to flourish.

GIFTING TREE
Our “gifting tree” tradition that brightens the holidays for many area children kicked off on November 19, but a few ornaments are still on the trees, waiting to be taken. Please note the specific date when your gift must be received, as the due date varies by agency: some are due on **December 7**, others on **December 10**.

SOCKS FOR COATESVILLE
Packages of socks (for any age, gender, or size) for our friends at CYWA are due by **December 17**.

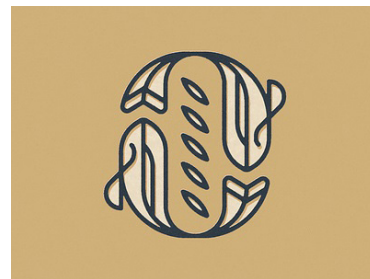
HOW TO GIFT THE ENVIRONMENT

- Shop locally to reduce emissions from numerous van deliveries.
- Offset the carbon impact of holiday travel by contributing to cooleffect.org.



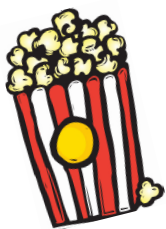
Help Multiply God's Love through a Pledge

This year, more than ever, we need to spread love, goodwill, and holiday cheer. Christmas is about Jesus' giving us love, hope, and joy. Our parish is committed to "Multiplying God's Love" this year both through our operating budget and through our "third place" barn kitchen undertaking. So as you do your holiday decorating, baking, and shopping, please share your blessings as you count them.



The stewardship commission heartily thanks all who have already decided on the treasure they will share with the parish in 2024. It also hopes that those who haven't yet committed their time, talent, and treasure to assisting St. Peter's efforts to multiply God's love will do so by pledging during this holiday season. There are three simple ways to submit a pledge: returning a completed pledge card by mail or in the Sunday offering plate, submitting a pledge through the Realm App, or pledging online at www.stpetersgv.org/giving. Pledge cards are available in both Sunday gathering spaces and the church office. Thank you all for your faithful support, and Merry Christmas!

Popcorn Theology



The final film of the fall "December of Life" series is *Still Mine* (2012, PG-13), starring James Cromwell, Geneviève Bujold, and Campbell Scott. This Canadian film is based on the true story of a Nova Scotian farmer who ran afoul of local building regulations when building a suitable home for his Alzheimer's-afflicted wife. Everyone is invited to join a Zoom discussion of the moral, ethical, spiritual, and cinematic values of the film on Monday, **December 11**, from 6 to 7 p.m. The only preparation needed is to view watch the film before then; it is available for streaming on Netflix, Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, and Google Play or on a DVD borrowed from a local library. The Zoom link is emailed to the parish the day before the meeting. All are welcome! For more information, contact Mark Nestlehutt (mark.nestlehutt@gmail.com) or Steve Ockenden (steveock@verizon.net).

Preschool Rummage Sale Coming in April

The always popular and rewarding preschool rummage sale returns in 2024! It will take place in the barn on April 13, with proceeds benefiting the preschool's scholarship fund. So as you clear outgrown treasures out of closets and drawers of this holiday season, please think about saving them just a tad longer and "recycling" them by donating them to the rummage sale.



More information will be coming in the new year. In the meantime, if you are interested in helping out or donating items during the week before the event, please contact Erinn White (preschool@stpetersgv.org or 610-644-2261).

The Barn Kitchen: One Step Closer to Fruition

On the day after Thanksgiving, we learned that the Diocese of Pennsylvania awarded us a \$30,000 grant for our barn kitchen project. We are grateful to Bishop Gutiérrez and the diocesan review board for endorsing the merits of our request. This grant, along with the \$50,000 Pew Charitable Trust grant we received earlier, is a giant step toward reaching our goal.

After Warfel Construction gave us their design plans and cost projections in late summer, we began serious work on how to raise the remaining \$250,000 to turn the idea into reality. So, as the annual stewardship campaign winds down, the kitchen team will ramp up its fundraising efforts to complete the kitchen.

The barn kitchen will take on an important new aspect in the near future, since Robert Ryan Catering's partnership with St. Peter's will gradually end. Events already booked for 2024 and 2025 will be held, but the company has decided not to renew its contract with us. With this change in the offing, the completion of the barn kitchen becomes even more important than ever: It will provide many possibilities for St. Peter's, both for our food ministry and fellowship but also for our becoming a community center, a place that will bring people together for events and conversation.

As Abigail reminded the vestry, this year's "Deep and Wide" theme "builds on last year's 'Called into Community' theme. It is not meant to encourage us to do more and more and more, but to keep us mindful of what we are about here—modeling, embracing, discussing, enjoying, and sharing the breadth and depth of God's saving love." Working together on and in the new kitchen will help us live our mission and feed God's sheep. So please watch for more exciting news about the project in the coming weeks and months.

Seen on Two Weekends at St. Peter's This Fall



The Evans family won the St. Peter's trunk-decorating perpetual trophy for the second year in a row.

Trunk or Treat, October 29



Too young to have a car trunk to decorate, the youth group improvised with a table!

St. James School 5K Run, November 4



The early arrivals hydrated and boosted their energy before taking off at 9:30 a.m.



December 2

Needlework ministry
10 a.m.

December 3

Holy Eucharist
10 a.m. (barn)
Advent Lessons and Carols
4 p.m.(barn)

December 4

Women on the Hill
7 p.m.

December 6

Advent Evening: *Reading Mark*
7 to 8:30 p.m

December 10

Pageant rehearsal
10:20 a.m.

December 11

Popcorn theology
6 to 7 p.m. (Zoom)

December 13

Advent Quiet Evening
7 to 8:30 p.m.

December 17

Socks for Coatesville due
Pageant rehearsal
10:20 a.m.

December 21

Pageant rehearsal
5 p.m.
Advent Supper and Caroling
6 to 7:30 p.m.

December 24

Advent 4

Holy Eucharist
10 a.m. (church)

Christmas Eve

Christmas Pageant and Eucharist
4 p.m.
Prelude Music
9 p.m. (church)
Festal Eucharist, with string quartet
9:30 p.m. (church)

December 25

Christmas Day

Holy Eucharist, with carols
10 a.m. (church)

December 31

Holy Eucharist, church
8 a.m. (church)
Holy Eucharist
10 a.m. (church)



January 3

Red Cross blood drive
1 to 6 p.m.

January 5

Gathering of Men
8 a.m. (parish house)

January 6

Needlework ministry
10 a.m.

January 7

Epiphany Sunday

Holy Eucharist
Celebration with King Cake follows
10 a.m.
Lessons and Carols for Epiphany
4 p.m.(barn)

January 8

Women on the Hill
7 p.m.

October Financial Snapshot

	October	Year to Date	Year-end Forecast	Budget
Parish Contributions	\$ 41,253	\$436,674	\$538,818	\$530,504
Other Income*	22,543	144,515	195,534	208,637
Total Income	63,796	581,189	734,352	739,141
Total Expenses	50,495	529,721	674,208	739,141

**Interest, rentals, endowment distributions*

As of the end of October, total income projections are in line with the forecast. The total expenditure forecast for the year remains under budget, resulting in a projected year-end surplus of \$60,144. —*Dave Lockner for the finance commission*



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E-mail: parishoffice@stpetersgv.org Web site: www.stpetersgv.org

The Rev. Abigail Crozier Nestlehutt, Rector
 The Ven. Jeff Moretzsohn, Deacon
 Steven Patchel, Organist/Choirmaster
 Rachel Martin Swartz, Parish Administrator
 Erinn White, Preschool Director
 Gail Malcolm, Event Coordinator
 Mario Delano, Weekend Facilities Manager

*Our Mission:
 by the power of the Holy Spirit,
 to nurture people of all ages in the
 knowledge and love of God in Jesus Christ,
 and to make Him known
 in the wider community*

Deadlines:
 January mini-Beacon: **Jan. 6**
 February Beacon: **Jan. 18**

Weekly Offerings at St. Peter's

Sunday

8 A.M. Holy Eucharist, rite 1*
 9 A.M. Family Eucharist & Sunday School**
 10:15 A.M. Adult Formation**
 11:15 P.M. Holy Eucharist, rite 2*
First Sunday of the Month
 10 A.M. Holy Eucharist, rite 2**
 Sunday School & Adult Forum follow
 Fellowship after all services

Wednesday

10 A.M. Morning Prayer & Bible Study***

Thursday

10:30 A.M. Intercessory Prayer Group***
 12 NOON Noonday Prayer***

Friday

8 A.M. Gathering of Men***

- * Church
- ** Barn
- *** Virtual

Parish office hours: 9:30 to 4:30, Monday thru Thursday



**December 24
 Advent 4**

Holy Eucharist
 10 a.m. (church)

Christmas Eve

Pageant and Family Christmas Eucharist
 4 p.m.(barn)

Prelude Music
 9 p.m. (church)

Festival Christmas Eucharist with string quartet
 9:30 p.m. (church)

**December 25
 Christmas Day**

Holy Eucharist with carols
 10 a.m. (church)