



Church of the Advent

Advent Advisor

January 2021

Our Christmas Story

The Gospel of Luke's account of the birth of Jesus is probably the most-loved story among Christians throughout the ages. You know it well. The action begins with a young woman named Mary and Joseph, the man Mary will marry, setting out on a journey from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea. It's not a trip they want to make, but the Roman Emperor has decreed that all people in the Roman Empire, including those in occupied territories, must be registered in their patriarchal family's hometowns for the census. The count will determine the tax each adult must pay into Roman coffers. Joseph is a descendent of Bethlehem's family of David so that is where he and Mary must go. The trip would be a grind under any circumstances, but is particularly difficult for Mary who is due to give birth at any moment. In Bethlehem the weary couple is provided the only shelter available: a stable that they will have to share with animals.

The baby's arrival is greeted by a wonderful cast of characters no doubt including the livestock housed in the stable. Shepherds guarding their flocks learn about the birth from angels' triumphant announcement identifying the infant as a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. As the shepherds go to pay homage, they probably haul along sheep they dare not leave unprotected in the field. Then awed by their visit and unable to contain their jubilation, the shepherds run about broadcasting the exciting news.

In Matthew's birth narrative, the baby is visited by three magi, wise men from Persia, who having interpreted signs that the king of the Jews is born, follow a star that they believe will lead them to the baby. While passing through Jerusalem they inquire about the whereabouts of the child. Herod, getting wind of this, asks the magi to report where they find the newborn king so that he also might go and pay homage. The wise men suspect that Herod is up to no good, intending to eliminate any potential rival. After visiting the little family and presenting their gifts, the magi avoid going through Jerusa-

lem on their return home

This is the story of the first Christmas commemorated on cards; in carols, popular music, crèches, the arts and crafts; dramatized in pageants and all types of storytelling. The legends of St. Nicholas and its spin-off of Santa Claus grew out of the real life story of a Fourth Century bishop. Nicholas, motivated by his belief that the generosity of God was to be emulated and that his wealth was for that purpose, secretly provided monetary and other gifts that improved people's prospects and sometimes even thwarted tragic situations. We continue St. Nick's and Santa's generosity by gifts of presence with family and friends, gift-giving, including charity that have become hallmarks of the wondrous Christmas season.

God's great gift, the Incarnation, is the real purpose of celebration. Incarnation is mystery that cannot be fully grasped, but light illumines the essence of its meaning: Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God.

God's self-revelation in the life and ministry of Jesus are manifestations of God's love, with us, for us. So we light up Christmas in celebration and thanksgiving for the love of God in Christ, the one true light born into the world.

The light shines on. The Feast of the Epiphany and its season highlight God's boundless love by manifestations, i.e., epiphanies, revealing God Incarnate in Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, early Christians and potential

(Continued on page 2)



*Thanks be unto God
for his unspeakable gift.*

2 Corinthians 9:15, KJV

(Continued from page 1)

converts who were not Jews. The visit of the Magi, Gentiles from the East, is one such epiphany among many recorded in the Bible and vivid in ongoing events in the lives of God's people. In a sermon by biblical scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann, the point is made that early Christians did not observe any customs associated with the birth of Jesus. In fact, they probably did not know the birth narratives related in the gospels. Paul in his epistles, which were written before the gospels, has no reference to the treasured stories upon which our traditions are based. What was celebrated by Paul and the earliest followers of the Way were the life-giving, transforming interactions Jesus had with people, usually one person at a time. He embraced a leper, healed illness and affliction, forgave sinners, accepted outcasts, comforted the sorrowful, redeemed the lost, gave hope to the disheartened, restored life, acted to dismantle unjust oppressive systems. His radically counter-cultural actions threatened the status quo for the sake of a movement that the establishment did not recognize as God's own initiative to create a new world order founded on love and in which love would reign. Jesus' unfathomable capacity for compassion and care fascinated curious onlookers and impressed dedicated followers as more than divinely-inspired. It signified God's acting in the ministry of the man from Nazareth whose disciples they became.

Incarnational theology is characteristically Anglican, but certainly not exclusive to Anglicanism. We share with all Christians an Easter vision of new life. We believe that God redeems by transformation that delivers all God's beloved from condemnation. Faith is dynamic, not energized by doctrine but by giving oneself over to God by trusting that all love is of God and committing to the work of love. As we build upon that work already reflected in the life and ministries of the Church of the Advent, envision our faith deepened and life together enlivened by Christmas spirit and Epiphany witness all year long.

Connie+



Thank you to **Johnny Miller**, for his leadership during a difficult time. In his capacity as Senior Warden during 2020, Johnny made many decisions to ensure that we could safely worship during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as guide us through

the process of securing clergy for Church of the Advent.

Thank you to outgoing vestry members **Johnny Miller**, **Kit Reddick**, and **Lori Taylor** for their three

years of service.

Thank you to **Lucia Peel** and **Lowell Taylor** for their willingness to serve on the vestry for three year terms.

Thank you to **Joe Jernigan** and **Lucia Peel**, who will represent us at the Diocesan Convention. **Rev. Connie Connelly** will serve as our clergy representative. Our delegates will participate from home through computer access.

Thank you to **Lucia Peel**, who thoughtfully acknowledges so many individuals in her weekly Comings and Goings for their leadership and service around the Church of the Advent.

Dear Church of the Advent Family,

Already I feel at home among you and am so glad that it seemed to be God's call in my discernment of your invitation to consider serving as your priest in charge. You have welcomed me with many gifts and acts of hospitality for which I am deeply grateful. You are acquainting me with your customs and bringing me on board with a good mix of gentleness and resoluteness. I enjoy being with and having fun with you.

I realize the tangible ways that Johnny, Kit and Lori have benefitted the parish in their tenures on the vestry. We count on their continuing leadership and service as they remain committed to various ministries or take on something new. On behalf of us all, I thank them for their dedication, commend them for the enthusiasm and talent they brought to the vestry and salute them with, "Well done, good and faithful servants." God bless you one and all.

Connie

Outreach for January

The cold days of winter call for hot soups.

During January we will be collecting cans of soups, boxes of crackers, and jars of peanut butter to stock the food pantry of the Martin County Department of Social Services.

Requests are posted in the narthex of the church. Offerings may be left anytime in the Love on Wheels wagon during January.

Please contact Kit Reddick if you have need of a personal shopper especially during this time of Covid-19.

She will also be glad to pick up donations left on porches.



Presiding Bishop Curry's Christmas Message 2020

Joy to the world! The Lord is come: let earth receive her King; let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing.

Perhaps like me, you've sung this hymn for years – in church, at home with your family, gathered with friends and neighbors. Perhaps you've sung it to yourself – in your car, on a walk, or quietly in the dark of night. *Joy to the world!*

While we may not feel joyful this year – as the pandemic of disease continues to bring sickness and death, when fear and mistrust – a darkness – threatens to overcome the light – we, as followers of Jesus Christ must bear joy to this aching world. We must shine light into the darkness. *Joy to the world!*

Like much in our lives, proclaiming joy is difficult work – also *good* and *essential* work – especially now. Though we mourn that which is lost in our lives, our families, and our communities – *Joy to the world!*

While we strive to pull up the twisted and thorny vines of hatred and bigotry and anger – *Joy to the world!*

Through streaming tears and gritted teeth – *Joy to the world!* – because God is breaking into our lives and into this world anew.

While this is a strange year, the ministry He gives us remains the same. We will prepare him room in our hearts by taking on the ministry Jesus demands of us: feed those who are hungry; welcome the stranger; clothe those who are naked; heal those who are sick; visit the prisoner. Love God. Love your neighbor. Sing joy into this old world. Prepare him room.

St. Luke writes of the first Christmas, “[Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” There, in the simplest bed, in the cool of the night, in a trough, in bands of cloth, lies the One for whom no room was made. And yet strangely, there lies the One whom not even the universe can contain.

Joy to the world! The Lord is come. In your hearts, in your homes, in your lives, prepare him room.

God love you; God bless you; and may God hold us all in those almighty hands of love.

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church



Bishop Skirving's Christmas Message 2020

Dear Friends,

One of my greatest joys, in these days before Christmas, has been the pictures, videos and stories of our grandchildren learning and then sharing with others the story of the birth of Jesus. In one picture, we have seen our grandson introducing his little sister to the characters of the Playmobile nativity set that we gave him a few years ago. In a video, we listened to him sing a verse of “Silent Night” as a contribution to the online Christmas pageant that his church is producing. We’ll be able to “watch” the pageant even though we won’t be able to be with them in person. As our daughter tells us the stories of how their family will celebrate Christmas in this very strange and strained year, I am filled with joy. She and her husband are passing on to their children traditions that I learned from my parents and which Sandy and I shared with her and her brother when they were young. And they’re doing so within the limitations of this time of pandemic while, with their church, using technologies available now that we did not have when I was a child.

There is darkness all around us this year. I don’t think that I need to detail that darkness for you in this letter. All of us have experienced at least a little, some of us have experienced far too much. Yet even this year, the eternal truth of John 1:5 rings true: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

Every year, and especially this year, we are called to be like the shepherds in Luke’s telling of the Christmas story. (Luke 2:8-20) Terrified by the sudden appearance of an angel, they listened to God’s messenger proclaim, “Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.” Moving beyond their terror they went to see the thing that had taken place in Bethlehem, they made known to Mary and Joseph what the angel had told them about their child, and then they returned to their work in the fields, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen.

In the midst of the illness, grief, suffering and anxiety that is all around us, yet still we can see signs of “good news of great joy” in the eyes of our youngest and in the generous acts of compassion and selfless sacrifices made by so many for the common good. Cut off from familiar seasonal activities and traditions, yet still we can make known to others all of the joy that we see



(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

and, in so doing, bear witness to God’s light in the darkness. Unable to worship as many of us would prefer, and in the ways that we remember, yet still we can glorify and praise God in our own time, with all of the means available to us. May each of us know God’s good news of great joy, in the midst of whatever lies ahead.

May we make that good news known to others. And may we glorify and praise God in whatever new and creative ways that we can. May each of us know God’s good news of great joy, in the midst of whatever lies ahead. May we make that good news known to others. And may we glorify and praise God in whatever new and creative ways that we can. May God’s blessing be with you and those whom you love this Christmas season and all year round.

Yours in Christ,
Rob



Epiphany commemorates visit of Wise Men

Counting from the first day after Christmas, the twelfth day of Christmas falls on January 6th or Epiphany.

The word “epiphany” is Greek in origin and means manifestation, or the act of revealing.



Epiphany commemorates the visitation of the Christ Child by the Wise Men or Magi as recorded in the gospel of Matthew.

This visit is the first of three instances in the Bible in which the divinity of Jesus is revealed.

The second instance is at the baptism at the River Jordan when the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove.

The third instance is at the wedding feast at Cana where Jesus performs his first miracle by changing water into wine.

Supposedly, all three manifestations occurred on the same day of the year.

Epiphany marks the beginning of the Carnival Season, which will continue until Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday.

In the United States, this period is celebrated in New Orleans as Mardi Gras.

Epiphany is sometimes celebrated as Old Christmas or Twelfth Night.

The liturgical color for Epiphany is green.



January 13th
6 p. m.
Evening Prayer
with Reflection
Led by Brandon Woody



The Prayer List is found in the notebook marked "Prayer Lists" on the usher's table in the narthex of the church. Names may be added at any time by writing them in the notebook or calling the church office after requesting permission of those for whom prayer is requested. The Prayer List is read aloud weekly at Sunday services. Contact the church office if you wish to have a name added, re-listed, or taken off the list.

Prayer List

Janice
 Frankie Jim
 Bridgette & Lanita
 Dennis Jody
 Mary Charles
 Bill & Nita
 Amber Kismet
 Lucia

Birthdays

6 ~ Lowell
 12 ~ Adison
 13 ~ Will
 15 ~ Joey
 18 ~ Maria
 19 ~ Carrie
 19 ~ Laura
 22 ~ Don
 22 ~ Mary Anne
 25 ~ Sara



Church of the Advent

Founded 1850

The Rev. Connie Connelly, Priest-in-Charge
 Sunday-Tuesday, 9:30 a. m.-3:30 p. m.

Joe Jernigan, Parish Administrator
 Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon

Brandon Woody, Organist/Choir Master

Johnny Miller, Senior Warden
Don Beach, Junior Warden

124 West Church Street
 P. O. Box 463

Williamston, NC 27892

Telephone: 252.792.2244

Email: advent1850@gmail.com

www.williamstonepiscopalchurch.com



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- January 3 Morning Prayer 11:00 am
- January 10 Holy Eucharist 11:00 am
- January 11 Vestry Meeting 5:30 pm
- January 13 Evening Prayer 6:00 pm
- January 17 Holy Eucharist 11:00 am
- January 24 Holy Eucharist 11:00 am
- January 31 Morning Prayer 11:00 am
- February 7 Morning Prayer 11:00 am
- February 14 Holy Eucharist 11:00 am
- February 17 Ash Wednesday 6:00 pm
- February 21 Holy Eucharist 11:00 am
- February 28 Holy Eucharist 11:00 am

The Church of the Advent is a nurturing, vibrant, and inclusive community inviting spiritual growth through liturgical worship, outreach, and fellowship.

January 2021

Church of the Advent

Lay Schedule

	3 <i>MP II</i> 11:00 A.M.	10 <i>HE II</i> 11:00 A.M.	17 <i>HE II</i> 11:00 A.M.	24 <i>HE II</i> 11:00 A.M.	31 <i>MP II</i> 11:00 A.M.
MP Leader	Kit Reddick				Bill Webb
Acolytes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lessons	Jane Jernigan	John Price	Michael Biondi	Chuck Cohen	Ginny Webb
Intercessor	N/A	Bill Webb	Lucia Peel	Catherine Cohen	N/A
Eucharistic Minister	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Altar Guild	Angi Godard Brandon Woody				
Ushers	Don Beach Joe Jernigan				