



# EPISTLE

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Greenville, Ohio**

*Helping all people find a connection to God's community.*

**December 2020**

ADVENT

Here we go again. It's December, and we could see it coming as leaves turn brown and fall to the ground. The cold winds from the northwest arrive and blow all those leaves to Piqua, unless they get caught in our basement stairwell. Folks start talking about holidays, and try to decide whether or how to have them safely. Frenzied shoppers try to do too much in a short time, making it dangerous to walk to your vehicle in any parking lot.

In the church, December is mostly dedicated to the Advent season. Our consumer mentality has led many to work as if that means getting ready for Christmas. But the truth of the matter is that Advent only turns toward the first coming of Jesus during those final few days, with the fourth Sunday. The others try, often without effect, to orient us toward looking for how Jesus comes to us both now and in the future.

Advent is about looking for what we've known as the kingdom of God, or heaven. Here again, we've grown used to hearing about it only as something that is to come, not as a possibility now. As a result, our world has become more angry, more distrustful, and even hate-filled as we work overtime to deny God's possibilities in each moment of every day. In other words, our world is going to hell.

Evidence of this is, sadly, in abundance. Our national life is so divided into enemy camps that we don't seem to be able to agree that we are all Americans. The same holds true for the church. Different sects accuse others of being non-Christian, and deny that the other even recognizes and worships the same God. However, in some instances, that is actually true.

Some have sold out to the consumer mentality that treats worship as a convenient commodity, seen more as entertainment than sacrifice denying (or avoiding) its redemptive purpose. Others bow at the altar of civil religion, waving national flags and swearing allegiance to political factions. That, by the way, is our contemporary fulfillment of what scripture calls "the abomination of desolation." Then, it was the bust of the emperor on the altar of the temple. Now, it's flag waving and saluting as worship. Both are replacements for the God we still confess is to come. It seems we've grown tired of waiting and have created our own golden calves.

This call to repentance is a question that we must all answer. How to we prepare for the coming of Christ? Once we strip away the decorations we wear, what is it about our lives that reveal to the world around us that Christ is coming, or as Jesus told his disciples to announce, the kingdom has come near?

We are beginning to look at ways we can reorient our parish life so that we can do this more effectively in Greenville and Darke County. In this newsletter, you will find some thought-provoking statements that Vestry hopes you will take time to consider and offer your response. We want to build on those aspects of parish life that are nurturing and find ways to offer that abundance to the wider community. In other words, we want to explore the many ways God came to us in the past to help us recognize how God continues to come to us now and will hopefully continue to do in the future.

As you consider this, take time to give thanks for God's presence, and also to admit those times when you've neglected that presence, and pray for forgiveness. Be honest. Because, as we've all said when uncertainty comes our way, God knows.

-Wayne+

**A Statement of Mission**



As Episcopalians in the  
Diocese of Southern Ohio,  
we commit to:

† Know the common story

Deut. 11:18-21

† Proclaim our common  
faith

Matt. 28:19-20

† Pray our common prayer

1 Thess. 5:16-19

† Drink the common cup

Mark 10:38

† Serve the common good

Matt. 25:37-40

In the name of our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is our common  
ministry.

## PARISH SURVEY

Vestry is looking at ways to help our parish grow in ministry and numbers. We've pretty much decided that, although Sarah gave birth to Isaac at the age of ninety, that was pretty much the only time that happened. So, in order to build on the foundation laid before us, we're asking each of you to consider the following statements and offer a written response to each one. Please provide individual answers from each person. We hope to receive all responses by the time of our annual meeting, scheduled for January 24.

Tell us what brought you to St. Paul's Episcopal Church. If you grew up here, tell us what keeps you here. If you have curtailed or stopped regularly attending and participating in church worship and activities, tell us about that, too.

Tell us about your vision of St. Paul's future as a parish. Include those aspects of parish life that you wish to see continued, and tell us about changes you think are necessary in parish life, facilities, or its worship life that make your vision of the future more lively.

Without being humble, and without concern for restrictions due to finances, median age, or other dynamics, tell us when you feel most alive in your participation at St. Paul's, and what you can give and need to receive in order to increase the abundance of that life.

Take some time, and ponder these statements so that we can begin our work with a clear understanding of your answers. You do not need to identify yourself, although you can if you want. If your answer causes the memory of an issue you would like to discuss privately, please let us know. We thank you for your participation in this survey.

## CHRISTMAS EVE

On Thursday, December 24, we plan to come together for our annual celebration of the Incarnation. The liturgy will begin at 7:30 PM, and will be a much scaled-down version of what has traditionally occurred. There will be fewer hymns sung, and much of the service will be spoken. Depending on the health advisory level in Darke County, we may need to make quick adjustments to our planning.

Bishop Breidenthal has urged all clergy to return to online-only worship as the coronavirus continues to spread rapidly and pervasively through the state and diocese. At this writing, much of the state is at level three (red), and this changes every Thursday.

After a lot of discussion, we have decided to continue with one service on Christmas Eve, but we are asking those who may be planning a larger than usual family presence (usual meaning Sunday mornings) to let us know ahead of time so that pews may be marked as reserved. If we are at level three, then we will be limiting capacity to no more than 50 persons, including worship leaders. If we are at level two (orange), then our limit will be 75. If conditions worsen to the point of Darke County reaching level four (purple), then in-person worship is suspended completely, including Christmas Eve and Sunday mornings. Also, at level three, singing will be discontinued, and only instrumental music will accompany our worship.

On a brighter note, if we as a county can get the spread of the coronavirus under control and we move to level one (yellow), then we can also return to unlimited capacity and distribution of the cup at communion. That is going to take a lot of effort from everyone, even those who are not Episcopalians. More information, especially regarding changes, will be forthcoming as the date draws near.

## CHRISTMAS SEASON

During "the twelve days of Christmas," our worship schedule will be as follows, advisories permitting:

Sunday, December 27, Holy Eucharist in-person and online

Sunday, January 3, Liturgy of the Word, online only

Epiphany is January 6, and we will gather together again on Sunday, January 13, to celebrate the Baptism of the Lord.

Date/Proper	Readings	Lector/Prayers	Flowers*	Offertory
December 6 Second Sunday of Advent (St. Nicholas)	Isaiah 40:1-11 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 2 Peter 3:8-15a Mark 1:1-8	Kim Bohler	Mary Alice & Eldon Wolter	
December 13 Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 Psalm 126 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 John 1:6-8, 19-28	Chris Nelson	Becky & Terry Hartnagle	
December 20 Fourth Sunday of Advent	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 Canticle 15 Romans 16:25-27 Luke 1:26-38	Jan Dunwoody	Jan Dunwoody	
December 24 Christmas I	Isaiah 9:2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-20	Peter Hemer	Poinsettias	
December 27 First Sunday after Christmas (St. John)	Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Psalm 147 Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7 John 1:1-18	Kim Bohler	Sharon Wintrow	

\*Please notify the office of flower dedication by noon on the Tuesday before the Sunday listed.

Other observances and commemorations in December include Lucy (12/13), Thomas (12/21), Stephen (12/26), Holy Innocents (12/29) and Thomas Becket (12/29). For more information about these and other commemorations, you can go to [www.satucket.com/lectionary/December20.html](http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/December20.html) and click on links there. Or, if you have a Book of the Saints or another hagiography handy, some information about historical persons can be found there. For winter reading, you can also turn to T. S.

### **Updates from St. Paul's Episcopal Outreach Commission**

This is the fourth year of our parish sponsored Christmas Dinner and Food festival week donations. And again, we will sponsor two Greenville area families this year.

We are grateful that the Vestry authorized the outreach expense to address these deserving needy families' Christmas dinner meals and bags full of groceries to tie them over between Christmas and the new year. But, it's also a sad day that due to the continuing pandemic, we cannot gather as a parish family and personally discuss over a warm cup of coffee and seasonal snacks in coffee hour sign-ups, for food items and carry in of food donations. But maybe we can find a way to allow our parishioners an opportunity to let your heartfelt generosity be shared with these deserving families. If you would like to consider contributing to this outreach effort (total budget amount for 2 families = \$300.), and help us offset this Vestry expense, please consider donating a check or cash to this deserving project. Please include a note on your check or cash donation stating to be used for "Family Christmas Dinners".

# December 2020

## Monthly Planner

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																								
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**TO CONTACT US**

**Office Hours**

**10 AM – 3 PM**

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday**

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