



FROM THE VESTRY

Over the last month or so, I've had meetings with Bishop Audrey Scanlan, Fr. Kevin Barron, and members of Vestry. During these meeting we've discussed St. John's, our discernment for a new priest, and the process that we will take moving forward.

I am pleased to report that the church is beginning the next phase of the process of calling a new priest. With the help of the whole Vestry, I would like to announce the following as members of the search committee:

Vestry members: Alex Germano. Peggy Jackson.

Congregation members: Erin Trouba, Melanie Allen, Tom Bathgate, Mitch Holland, Rebecca Clayton, Christine Holt, and Julia Kasdorf.

This committee will have its first meeting on Nov. 30. I hope to make more announcements on our progress very soon.

~Larry Roberson, Senior Warden

Do you have any concerns or suggestions for change, either for worship or other activities? Now is a great time to express your wishes to the vestry. Email us at office@stjohnsepiscopalbellefonte.org; or contact any vestry member (see list at the end of this newsletter).

THE DEACON'S PERCH



Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And

when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

~Matthew 25: 37-40

The Christmas season is upon us, and we start our new church calendar year with Advent. This means the earthly celebration of the birth of Jesus, but also a preparation and anticipation for the second coming of Christ. We rarely think about his second coming; rather we more often celebrate his birth. As I keep reading the scripture verse above, I begin to see the idea about a second coming. Jesus has given us a guide map to the kingdom almost as easy as to follow the yellow brick road. Think about these words: Clothing, Visiting, Feeding, Thirst, Strangers, the Sick, the Lonely, the Imprisoned. I'm not sure that Jesus will judge us on each category, but as in the gospel of the talents, each to his or her own ability. How are we living up to the scriptures? From my view, your kind support has enabled me to do almost all of

this with your help throughout the year. Here are some of the ways that you have supported the community: The Food Bank, Out of the Cold, Centre Youth Services (CYS), Faith Center, Trauma Unit at Mount Nittany, PAWS, YMCA, Red Cross, Episcopal Relief and Development, Farmland Trust, Red Cross, and Habitat for Humanity. In addition, we have supported a substantial number of people who call for help. In many ways, you as a church family contribute to God's creation. More can always be done on an individual basis.

Please feel free to talk to me to discover where your talents can be used and of benefit to others. *"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."*

We have had a busy three months at St. John's. Our prayers still go out to Fr. Carlos and his new ministry. We are thankful that he left us in good condition as far as music and supply clergy. Having Fr. Kevin and Kevin Lowe with us is a real blessing in keeping our services running smoothly. Our Vestry continues to work very hard to make our transition go smoothly, so many thanks to each member. Scott Mauger takes care of all our services with heating and supplies. Altar Guild, under Peggy Jackson's direction, prepares the mass with linens and necessary vessels and cleans up after each service. Barbara Roberson, our treasurer, keeps our bills and payments up to date, and Trish Weidemann, our coordinator, manages all the events and happenings around our church. Thanks to Deb Cree, who serves as our supply organist, newsletter editor, photo directory coordinator, social media and

website manager, promotional manager, and St. John's Scribe. We also appreciate Ellen Dyakiw, who works with our youth and Christian Ed and is now helping with CYS crafts at the center. We thank all those who prepare meals at CYS; Bobbie Salvaterra and Josh Tuttle, who are worship leaders for evening prayer on Tuesday and Thursday evenings; and Fr. Kevin for presiding at the mass. Last, but not least, is Larry Roberson, our senior warden, who, along with Jeff Wilson, for many years has kept our church physically maintained. In addition, Larry handles all our media and sound systems for streaming our services as well as running the church and keeping us together.

We have had many events these past few months, and each was a gift. Some of the photos at the end of this newsletter show our gifts to the food bank, turkeys provided to OOTC, our church picnics on Curtin Street, Erin Trouba's demo on rain barrels, our children's community garden managed by David King, Our Polish Dinner completely prepared by Charlotte Zmyslo, and our men's spiritual group, which will be entering our 25th year in 2024.

We had a wonderful time in November with a brunch at the Nature Inn at Bald Eagle, which was attended by 28 people. The fellowship and food were great, and a good time was had by all.

I am chaplain to the nursing program at Central PA Institute (CPI), which has another graduation coming up on Dec. 4. Best wishes to all for their hard work; I pray that they find fruitful employment.

As we come to the close of another year, I want to thank everyone who supported me with donations and the many prayers that you continue to offer. You had a great retirement party for me in April, but when Fr. Carlos announced that he was leaving, I asked the bishop to let me stay on as Deacon until we have a new priest.

My prayers and best wishes to everyone and your families for a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year. May we all prosper next year with God's help and guidance.

~Deacon Alex

THE SEMINARIAN'S SPACE



Advent Reflections

One of the things that I love about Advent and Christmas is that so many of us have traditions and

customs for ways to bring these seasons into our homes—whether with an Advent wreath or star, or a Christmas tree, or special candles, or foods that we seem to eat only at this time of year. These tangible ways of marking the time remind us that everything we do is a chance to see God and to meet God—and when we bring things like trees, flowers, and beeswax inside our homes, they remind us, too, that God's creation is so very good.

Whereas our culture sometimes feels like it's all about instant gratification, Advent is a chance to slow down, take those tangible things in our hands, and lean into the waiting, just like Mary must have been waiting anxiously for the birth to finally arrive. But it doesn't just have to be about waiting for

Christmas. The church has generally taken the four weeks of Advent as opportunities to reflect on bigger themes in the Christian life. These days, the four most common themes for the Sundays are probably hope, peace, joy, and love—but they don't have a monopoly on the Advent wreath. In the medieval church, the four Sundays of Advent were generally devoted to the "Four Last Things:" death, judgment, hell, and heaven. Advent was for reflecting on what was to come in a more cosmic sense. Sometimes we need a little bit of that, too!

Making space for those "four last things" is also a way to recognize that this time of year is hard for a lot of people. We aren't always joyful or hopeful, when the calendar says we "ought" to be—and that's okay. Whatever you're feeling this time of year, God can meet you there. Because God has been through it all. Because God loved us so much that God wanted to become one of us and share in all the things that we experience—even the painful ones. And God never leaves us to face those things alone.

Wishing you all a blessed Advent!

~Deacon-Elect Kevin Lowe



FAMILY ADVENT WREATH-MAKING

Sunday, December 3, following 10:30 Mass



Prepare your home for Advent by joining us for wreath-making on **December 3**, the first Sunday of Advent. Oasis foam rings, fresh greens, candle holders, and seasonal candles will be provided. We will begin immediately after the 10:30 a.m. mass. You are also welcome to take materials from the Fellowship Hall to make your wreath at home.

ST. JOHN'S TO HOST COMMUNITY CONCERTS
December 9 | 3 and 4 p.m.



St. John's will be the host venue for two concerts during Bellefonte's Victorian Christmas activities:

3:00 to 3:45 pm	Stacy Glen Trio – Sing & Swing
4:00 to 5:00 pm	Elizabeth Webb with Mac Himes – Jazz duo

We will welcome concert goers with hot chocolate plus a handout about St. John's and a list of our services. The complete concert schedule can be found at <https://bellefontevictorianchristmas.com/new-concert-crawl/>.

SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE

Not just for Christmas: each day, it takes a community to raise a child. Our church continues art activities and the semimonthly dinners that provide meals to the Bellefonte Youth Center. Thank you to all who make this possible. If you wish to contribute a meal to the center, please see the sign-up sheet at the back of the church.



We have been exploring prayers and learning about Moses, The Ten Commandments, and The Beatitudes.

During Advent we will anticipate the coming of Christ with Bible stories, songs, and activities. There will be a family Advent wreath-making event after the 10:30 a.m. mass on **December 3**. Please join us.

The Christmas Eve family mass is at 4:30 this year. We begin with the children doing a Christmas proclamation.

ALTAR GUILD

We want the church to be especially festive and beautiful for the Victorian Christmas concerts that will be held here on **Saturday, December 9, at 3 and 4 p.m.** The Altar Guild needs volunteers to help cut and arrange greens on Saturday, 12/2, at 9 a.m. We would also appreciate help with cleaning and polishing the brass and hanging wreaths on that day, or on Sunday, 12/3, after the 10:30 mass.

Altar Guild Decorating and Cleaning Schedule:

Sat., 12/2, 9:00 a.m., and Sun., 12/3, after 10:30 mass (for Victorian Christmas concerts): Cut and arrange greens and berries for 6 windows and 2 vases; add pillar candles to windows. Hang 7 wreaths. Clean & polish all brass.

Thurs., 12/7, or Fri., 12/8:

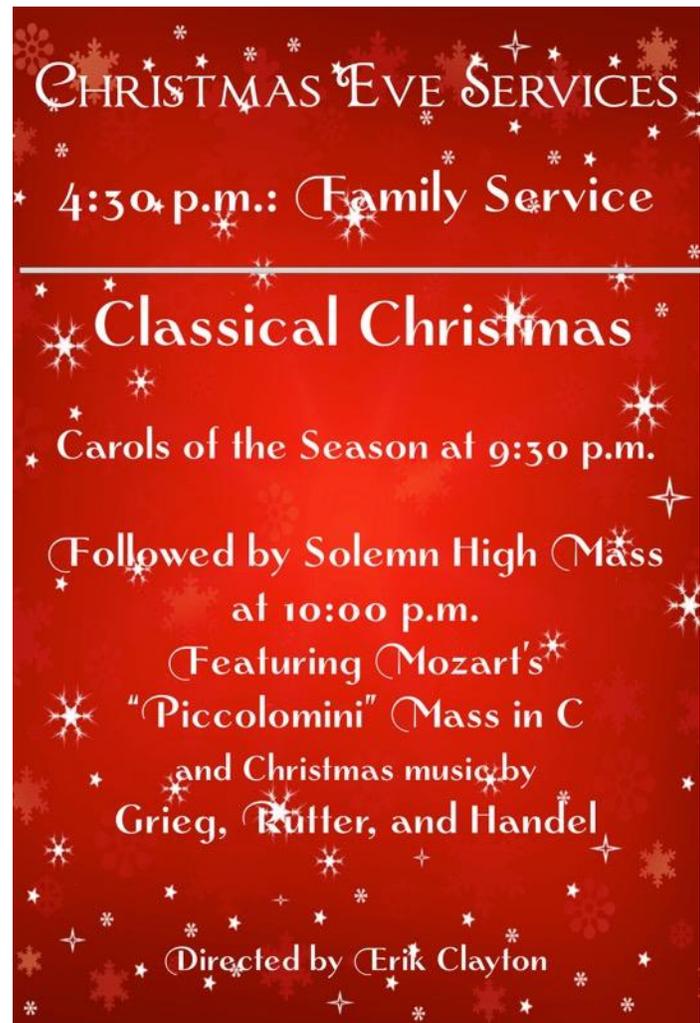
Larry, Scott, Jim, Peggy, and any other volunteers: hang garland on rood screen.

Sun., 12/17, after 10:30 Mass:

Install aisle candle holders, add candles, bows, and greens. Clean and polish silver.

A sign-up sheet for volunteers is in the back of the church. Speak to Peggy Jackson for further information.

Also included at the end of this newsletter is a sign-up form for contributions toward the cost of Christmas flowers and decorations.



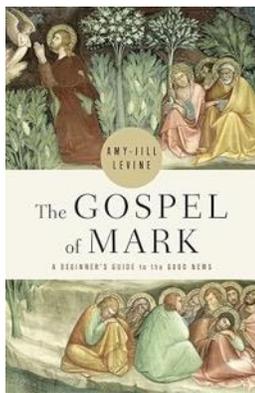
NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER FOOD BANK COLLECTION



For November and December, the Bellefonte Food Bank has asked us to collect boxed stuffing, boxed potato flakes, jarred gravy or powdered gravy mix, pancake mix, and maple syrup. You can drop off your

donations next to the baptismal font in the back of the church. Thank you for your generosity to our local community, and thank you, Charlotte and Scott, for looking after it!

EPIPHANY BOOK STUDY - JANUARY 2024 **Sundays after the 10:30 a.m. Mass**



We will begin a book study in January of *The Gospel of Mark: A Beginner's Guide to the Good News*, by Amy-Jill Levine. The book features an in-depth study of select passages and illuminates the Gospel in its historical

content and as a source for the other gospels. Please sign up on the sheet in the back of the church if you would like to participate or contact

office@stjohnsepiscopealbellefonte.com, since we need to order books soon.

STEWARDSHIP 2024 **Planning Our Future**



You should have received a letter from the vestry and a pledge card in the mail by now. While we are grateful for all gifts, it is imperative that we have an idea of what

our financial future looks like so that we can plan the many programs and activities that we enjoy throughout the year. We are all proud of our beautiful, historic church and properties, *BUT* they need to be maintained, just as our homes require repairs. We need to contract for major repairs to the rectory bathroom and kitchen before we call a new priest, and ongoing expenses (utilities, etc.)

continue to rise. We hope to significantly exceed last year's pledges of \$150,000. We request that you submit your pledge card by **December 10** so that our budget committee can get to work on next year's financial plan.

Up to 30% of the churches in our diocese face closure in the next several years. St. John's is fortunate and unique in the Central PA Diocese in that we are still financially stable, with a full-time rector and a professional music program. With your support, we hope to remain in this enviable position for many years to come.

BELLEFONTE YOUTH CENTER **Tuesday Dinner Program**



As part of our outreach efforts to the local community, we continue to provide dinner for the Bellefonte Youth Center twice a month on Tuesday afternoons. Dinners should be dropped off at the youth center, 114 N Spring St., by 4:45 p.m. If you are interested in providing a meal for local youth, we ask that you sign up by using the link in the weekly parish email, or on the signup sheet at the back of the church. Speak to Ellen Dyakiw if you have any questions.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Sunday, January 21, 2024



The annual parish meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 21**, following the 10:30 a.m. Mass, in the

church. The meeting will be live streamed for those who are not able to attend in person. We will present the 2024 budget and announce new vestry members. Contact Larry Roberson, Sr. Warden, if you have questions (roberson@accuweather.com), or speak to him in church.

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY (EfM)



I am very excited about starting a local EfM group here starting in Fall 2024. I've been looking for a curriculum to deepen my understanding of the Episcopal church and our Christian faith. The Episcopal Church offers just that through EfM, a formal learning process that uses authoritative materials from Sewanee University to guide a group learning experience over the course of several years. The goal is to enrich and inspire learners as they find ways to serve their congregations and to mature in their faith. With enough participants, we may be able to form our own local group at St. John's!

I want to thank all who attended the recent informational meeting with Mary Novello,

Coordinator of EfM programs for the diocese. We learned a lot about how to start a local group. An EfM group meets weekly on a typical academic calendar, with 36 sessions, lasting about 2 hours per session. The ideal group size is about 6-8 participants.

Thankfully, a couple of parishioners from St. John's have already volunteered to train as mentors for the upcoming group and will be certified to lead the sessions.

If anyone was unable to make the meeting and would like to learn more about the curriculum content and the purpose of EfM, visit the diocese website:

<https://diocesepa.org/education-for-ministry/>

Prayerfully consider this commitment, and if interested, please contact me (alexgermano1@gmail.com) or find me at church! The goal is to start by Fall 2024; ideally, we will have the roster established by June. ~Alex Germano

COFFEE HOUR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED Sundays after the 10:30 a.m. Mass



We are always seeking coffee hour hosts. Coffee is provided by the church; you are asked to provide cold drinks and *simple* snacks (cookies/crackers, etc.). No need to

prepare special foods. To sign up for a slot, please visit our sign-up link: <https://bit.ly/3um2fBp>; or use the sign-up sheet on the lectern in the back of the church. Coffee hour will be held only on those Sundays when someone signs up to host.

You can download the guidelines from <https://stjohnsepiscopalbellefonte.org/coffee-hour-instructions>.

If you need further help with the logistics, speak to Trish Weidemann. Many thanks to everyone who has helped with coffee hour; this is a vital ministry of fellowship and hospitality and a weekly opportunity to renew our church family friendships.

2024 SANCTUARY CANDLES & ALTAR FLOWERS



The parish's 2024 Sanctuary Candle and Altar Flower posters are now on the bulletin board in the vestibule. Your generous donations, which can be given in honor of or in memory of a loved one, help us adorn and uplift our church each week. Please consider signing up to sponsor one of these liturgical items throughout the year. Suggested prices are \$45 for altar flowers and \$4 for the altar candles. We are always grateful for these as well as votive candle and all altar donations.

COLUMBARIUM REMINDER

As you make your year-end financial arrangements, remember that the purchase price of a columbarium niche through December is **\$1525** and that it will be increased in 2024. This price (plus cremation)



is less than one-half of the cost of a traditional funeral and in-ground burial in a cemetery. Last winter we completed our columbarium expansion, and 24 niches were added. If you are interested in purchasing niches, please contact the church office and request the materials, including a brochure and

reservation form.



AROUND THE PARISH FAMILY TABLE



Congratulations to **Kevin Lowe**, who will be ordained as Deacon on Saturday, December 16, at 10 a.m. in St. Stephen's Cathedral, Harrisburg. We at St. John's are very proud of our faithful seminarian and our part in his journey toward ordination.



By the Grace of God,
The Right Reverend Audrey C. Scanlan
XI Bishop of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania

Will Ordain

Kevin Matthew Lowe,
Chloe Alexandra Selles
and
Lisa Amspacher Work

To The Sacred Order of Deacons
In Christ's One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church

On Saturday, December 16, 2023
At Ten o'clock in the morning

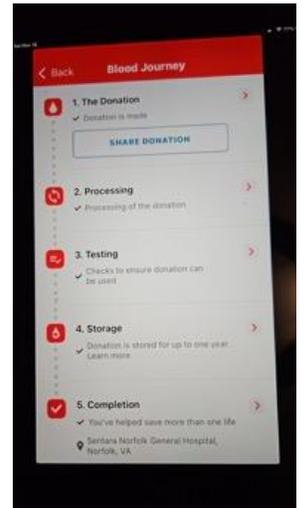
At
St. Stephen's Episcopal Cathedral
221 North Front Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101

Your prayers and presence are requested, and so appreciated.
Reception will follow.
Clergy are invited to vest and process (red stole).

If you are unable to attend, the service will be live-streamed
(<https://youtube.com/@st.stephensepiscopalcathed4738?si=XSCqFW9Xki00tsNl>).

Please RSVP at
<https://forms.gle/yy7C6YGS5rtmDyN8>

Scott Manger recently became an 8-gallon blood donor with the Red Cross. The Red Cross app that he uses tells him what hospital his blood has gone to and when it is used, which Scott thinks is "pretty darned cool." Indeed!



Jim Jackson's artwork will be featured in an upcoming issue of *Town & Gown*. Jim specializes in wood carvings. The picture



shown here is the largest and most complex of his works. Each piece of the triptych is 13"x26." Congratulations to our own St. John's "Artist in Residence!"

BIRTHDAYS

December 02	Lillian	North
December 06	Kathryn	Grossman
December 07	William	Donovan
December 09	Vivienne	Clayton
December 10	Thomas	Quigley
December 23	Stuart	Hough
December 27	Ellen	Dyakiw
January 02	Joyce	Banker
January 02	Rachel	Pifer
January 04	Paula	Hough
January 08	Christine	Holt
January 10	Trinity	King
January 27	George	Holt
January 29	Scott	Mauger
February 01	John	Fusco
February 13	Gabe	Holland
February 13	Trish	Weidemann
February 14	Andrew	Pifer
February 15	Matt	Perkins
February 16	John	Harwood
February 18	Debra	Cree
February 28	Isaac	Pifer

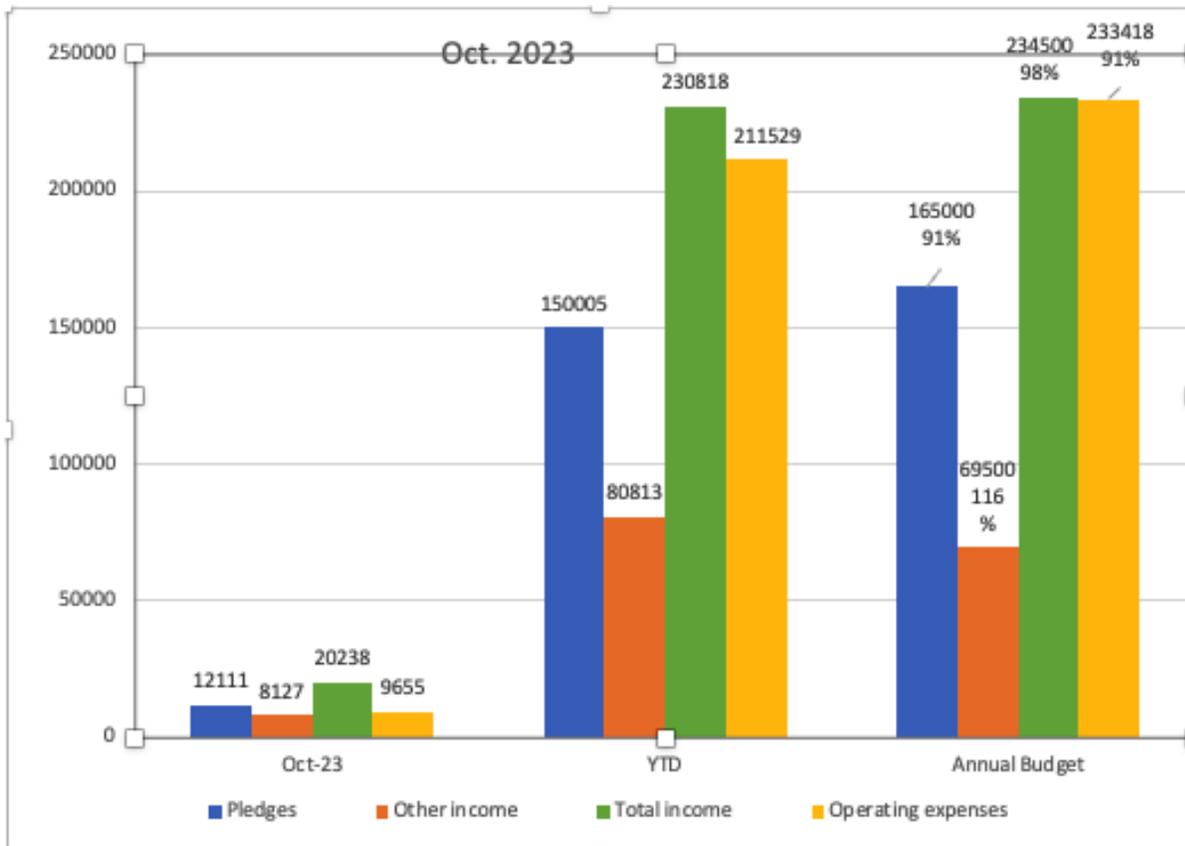


Photos from recent events



Financial:

	Oct-23	YTD	Annual Budget	YTD % of Budget
Pledges	12111	150005	165000	91%
Other income	8127	80813	69500	116%
Total income	20238	230818	234500	98%
Operating expenses	9655	211529	233418	91%
Net	10583	19289		



Numbers do not reflect investments or checking account balance.

Vestry Members: Larry Roberson (Sr. Warden), Scott Mauger (Jr. Warden), Liz Helms, Carol Fyfe, Debra Cree, Alex Germano, Peggy Jackson, Thomas Quigley, David King, Charlotte Zmyslo

2023 CHRISTMAS FLOWERS & DECORATIONS



Saint John's Altar Guild is receiving contributions to assist in decorating the church for Christmas. Please use this form for making your donation. All forms and donations should be returned to the parish office no later than **Sunday, December 17**. Checks should be made payable to **St. John's Episcopal Church** and should be clearly marked **Christmas Decorations** on the memo line. You can also donate online by visiting our [giving page](#) and selecting "Give to Altar Guild" from the drop-down menu. You may type your dedication in the message box, or you can email your dedication, which will appear in our Christmas Orders of Service, to the parish office.

YOUR NAME(S):

IN MEMORY OF:

IN HONOR OF:

IN THANKSGIVING FOR:

ADVENT CALENDAR 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>3 Worship</p> <p>Advent 1</p> <p>Read Luke 21:25-36. How do the symbols of the Advent season help you understand the story of Jesus? Where do you see them in your worship today?</p>	<p>4 Turn</p> <p>Read Isaiah 58. How does this reading challenge you to think about feasts and festivals differently? How might this lesson change the way you celebrate or recognize this holy season?</p>	<p>5 Learn</p> <p>Read Matthew 4:18-22. How do these verses from Matthew inspire you to read Scripture with new eyes? Try reading several different translations of this passage. See how the language might change your reading of it.</p>	<p>6 Pray</p> <p>Pray along with the Collect for Advent 1, found on page 211 of <i>The Book of Common Prayer</i>. Set a timer for three minutes to sit in silence and hear what God might be saying back to you.</p>	<p>7 Bless</p> <p>Call or write a letter to a family member with whom you would like to have a closer relationship. Make plans in the new year to chat on the phone or meet over Zoom or in person. Let them know how much you love them and look forward to knowing them better.</p>	<p>8 Go</p> <p>Read or watch your local news. Ask God to open your heart and eyes to ways you can promote reconciliation and healing in your community.</p>	<p>9 Rest</p> <p>Spend at least 45 minutes outside today, without doing yard work or fixing lights or redoing bows on the garland. Take some time to just sit outside and let the air wash over you, taking away the stress and worry of the moment. Read Psalm 100 before and after your outside time. See how this psalm may help you rest and recharge your spirit.</p>
<p>10 Worship</p> <p>Advent 2</p> <p>Read Luke 3:1-6. How does the story of John the Baptist fill your heart with hope?</p>	<p>11 Turn</p> <p>Turn away from the busyness of the world right now. Turn your heart and mind toward giving thanks for this time of reflection, refreshment, and renewal.</p>	<p>12 Learn</p> <p>Read Luke 1:45. Share your faith story with one new person this week. It can be someone you have known for a while who has not heard the faith part of your story.</p>	<p>13 Pray</p> <p>Pray along with the Collect for Advent 2, found on page 211 of <i>The Book of Common Prayer</i>. As you are out and about for the rest of this week, notice the people you pass. Ask God to bless them in their lives and work. See how this changes the way you go about your week.</p>	<p>14 Bless</p> <p>Spend a significant amount of time today discerning if there is a special blessing or gift you can share with your church, a local ministry, or with your community. Ask God to inspire and equip you with the fortitude and tools to make this gift something truly memorable and heartfelt.</p>	<p>15 Go</p> <p>Go out of your way to have a conversation with someone you might not normally visit with today. Ask God to open your heart to hear this person as God does.</p>	<p>16 Rest</p> <p>Put your phone on airplane mode and leave it in a dresser drawer for an hour or two. Whatever happens in that time, you can handle later. Give this time to yourself and Jesus, to rest and recharge for the week ahead.</p>
<p>17 Worship</p> <p>Advent 3</p> <p>Imagine the faces you'd like to see at church — an all-star list of folks you want to worship with. This could be people you know from summer camp when you were a kid, people who might have already died, people you work with — all your favorites. Commit to pray for those folks this week. And make a commitment to ask one of your all-stars to come to church with you in the next month.</p>	<p>18 Turn</p> <p>Do you have amends or apologies or adjustments you need to make? Ask God to open your heart and mind to those opportunities for reconciliation and growth. Thank God for the gifts of mercy and love, and the courage to make the changes necessary. And then do your best, with God's help, to make those changes.</p>	<p>19 Learn</p> <p>Read Luke 1:59-80. When Zechariah's speech returns, he praises God. If you lost the power to speak for nine months like Zechariah did, what would be your first word of praise? Share this with your family, friends, and on social media.</p>	<p>20 Pray</p> <p>Pray along with the Collect for Advent 3, found on page 212 in <i>The Book of Common Prayer</i>. How will prayer guide you through the rest of the week? Set aside special time today to focus your intentions on stirring up peace and spreading joy.</p>	<p>21 Bless</p> <p>We know that angels are God's special messengers to us, and that Gabriel spent intentional time with Mary, helping her to understand her part in God's story. Who has shared an important lesson or their presence with you this week? Thank them today with a call or note.</p>	<p>22 Go</p> <p>Go out into your neighborhood today. Where is God at work? Ask God to show you how you can celebrate that good work and name God's presence in your community.</p>	<p>23 Rest</p> <p>Set aside 30 minutes to spend in silence with your best friend today. Sure, it may feel a little weird to be silent on the phone or while sitting next to each other on the couch or across the table. Just give it a try. Make sure to set aside time after your silence to pray for each other and to say thanks for the time of rest.</p>
<p>24 Rest</p> <p>Advent 4</p> <p>The conventional wisdom is that new parents should rest when the baby is resting. Make sure you take some time out to rest with Baby Jesus — and marvel in the wonder of a fresh, new, clean, shiny, tiny, precious start. Take a nap and thank God for the gift of Jesus and for peace at Christmas.</p>						