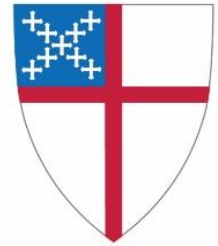




*St. Stephen's
Episcopal Church
Newsletter
December 2024*



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From our Rector

Joyous Advent and Merry Christmas!

I know we sometimes grouse about the stores rushing into the holiday season with Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas decorations and gift ideas showing up in August!!! And this year I have noticed that many of our neighbors are putting up their Christmas décor before we have even reached Thanksgiving. I think, because there seems to be high anxiety about the future, that many of us are eager for a season that promotes “Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward All”.

During Advent we celebrate two separate comings of the Messiah... The first in the birth of Jesus the Christ, the Promised One of God over 2000 years ago in Bethlehem and the second coming of Christ at some future time to usher in a new era... when Christ will return on the clouds in great glory. For now, we are in between those times. A time of hopeful expectation -- not unlike those of ancient Israel's past who had learned several prophecies about their foretold Messiah coming one day to save Israel... and realized for us who believe in Jesus as that Promised One in the birth of the baby in a manger.

The Messiah was also prophesied to be known as a “Wonderful Counselor”, “Prince of Peace”, and “Morning Star” – The One who would guide us, lead us, and show us the way of peace, love, and harmony. Each year we tell the story of Jesus' birth and remember the prophet, teacher, example, and sacrifice Jesus grew to be among us. And we embrace anew the call to follow in Christ's footsteps to imitate as close as we can his teaching and compassionate acts... as we wait for and desire Christ's coming again.

May the Spirit of Advent and Christmas fill your hearts this year with the wonder, mystery, and calm that is so deeply needed and desired in this world that is facing uncertainties in climate, economics, politics, and conflict resolutions.

And if you need to put up those holiday decorations early, sing those poignant and nostalgic carols with smiles of fondness for days gone by, and ponder once again the magic and miracle of God's Son entering your heart with promises that “all is calm and all is bright”, then you go right ahead and do so!

May the peace of Christ be with you,
Rev. Allison Cornell



The History of the Legend of St. Nicholas aka Santa Claus:

Accessed from <https://www.history.com/news/who-was-st-nicholas> on 11/20/24

Behind the jolly, red-suited Santa of today lies a real person—St. Nicholas of Myra, a Christian monk who lived in the third century A.D., in what is now Turkey. We know very few historical details about St. Nicholas’s life. Even the year of his death is uncertain, although both the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches have celebrated December 6—the date of his passing—for more than 1,000 years. Within a century of his death, the much-admired Nicholas had become the center of a series of folk legends.

By the Middle Ages, Nicholas’ fame had spread to much of Europe, thanks in large part to the dissemination of parts of his skeleton to churches in Italy, where they were venerated as relics. St. Nicholas’ popularity eventually spread to northern Europe, where stories of the monk mingled with Teutonic folktales of elves and sky-chariots. In the Netherlands, St. Nicholas took on the Dutch-friendly spelling Sinterklaas. He was depicted as a tall, white-bearded man in red clerical robes who arrived every December 6 on a boat to leave either gifts or coal-lumps at children’s homes.

Stories of Sinterklaas were likely brought to the New World by Dutch settlers in the Hudson River valley. In his satirical 1809 “History of New-York,” Washington Irving portrayed St. Nicholas as a portly Dutchman who flew the skies in a wagon, dropping gifts down chimneys. In 1823 another New Yorker, Clement Clarke Moore, penned the poem “A Visit from Saint Nicholas,” which traded the wagon for a sleigh drawn by “eight tiny reindeer.” Beginning during the Civil War, cartoonist Thomas Nast published the first of a series of popular depictions of a rotund and jolly St. Nicholas. In 1879 Nast was also the first to suggest that St. Nicholas lived not in Turkey, Spain or Holland but at the North Pole.



A History of Christmas Trees:

Accessed from <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas-trees> on 11/20/24

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition—as we now know it—by the 16th century when sources record devout Christians bringing decorated trees into their homes. Some built Christmas pyramids of wood and decorated them with evergreens and candles if wood was scarce.

It is a widely held belief that Martin Luther, the 16th-century Protestant reformer, first added lighted candles to a tree. According to a common version of the story, walking home one winter evening, Luther was awed by the stars twinkling amidst evergreens. To recapture the scene for his family, he erected a tree in the main room and wired its branches with lighted candles.

Who Brought Christmas Trees to America?

Most 19th-century Americans found Christmas trees an oddity. The first records of Christmas trees being cut for display comes from the 1820s in Pennsylvania's German community, although trees may have been a tradition there even earlier. As early as 1747, Moravian Germans in Pennsylvania had a community tree in the form of a wooden pyramid decorated with candles. But, as late as the 1840s, Christmas trees were seen as pagan symbols and not accepted by most Americans...

In 1846, the popular royals, Queen Victoria and her German Prince, Albert, were sketched in the Illustrated London News standing with their children around a Christmas tree. Unlike the previous royal family, Victoria was very popular with her subjects, and what was done at court immediately became fashionable—not only in Britain, but with fashion-conscious East Coast American Society. The Christmas tree had arrived.

By the 1890s Christmas ornaments were arriving from Germany and Christmas tree popularity was on the rise around the U.S. It was noted that Europeans used small trees about four feet in height, while Americans liked their Christmas trees to extend from floor to ceiling.

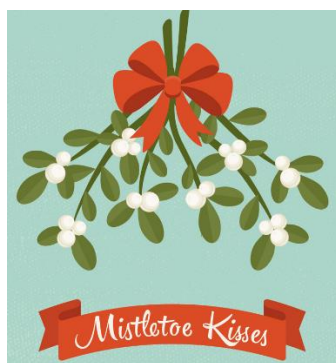
The early 20th century saw Americans decorating their trees mainly with homemade ornaments, while many German Americans continued to use apples, nuts and marzipan cookies. Stringed popcorn was added to trees' decoration after being dyed bright colors and interlaced with berries and nuts. Electricity brought about Christmas lights, making it possible for Christmas trees to glow for days on end. With this, Christmas trees began to appear in town squares across the country and having a Christmas tree in the home became an American tradition.

Why do we kiss under the mistletoe during Christmas?

Accessed from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-mistletoe-became-christmas-kissing-tradition-180985450/> on 11/20/24.

The first known reference to smooching under the plant dates to a 1784 English poem, in which three men “kiss beneath the mistletoe” the lips of a “girl not turn'd of twenty.” By then, any woman or girl who walked beneath this vegetal decor had to stop and wait to be kissed. One historian suggests the tradition was thought up by a “particularly lusty and inventive” British boy, whose trick spread around the country, then the world. As the American author Washington Irving wrote around 1820, each berry on a sprig of mistletoe had come to represent a kiss that a man was allowed to bestow upon a young woman standing underneath the plant, and “when the berries are all plucked the privilege ceases.” As for the girl on the receiving end, the era's (otherwise chaste) social customs dictated she never refuse a kiss under the mistletoe, lest she invite bad luck on the marriage market.

Today's typical mistletoe decor differs from its 19th-century precedent in a few ways. Its berries aren't poisonous—because the stuff's usually fake; those false berries are often mistakenly red, rather than white; and the sprigs are (one hopes) no longer being used to force kisses upon unwilling recipients. Still, at family gatherings and in cheesy movies, mistletoe remains the catalyst of many an awkward or playful holiday peck.



Coming Up in December:

- **December 6th – First Friday Film Night in the Parish Hall 5:30pm:** We are showing “The Polar Express” movie in celebration of the Christmas Spirit. Plot: On Christmas Eve, a young boy embarks on a magical adventure to the North Pole on the Polar Express, while learning about friendship, bravery, and the spirit of Christmas. Soup supper with Hot Chocolate. Bring a friend!
 - **Second Saturday Supper Dec14th – 6:30pm** Vinny’s NY Pizza, 1977 Frontage Rd, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635-4606. Menu Link: <https://www.menupix.com/menudirectory/menu.php?id=827586> . Join us for dinner out together and bring a friend.
 - **Third Wednesday Art and Meditation Hour – Dec18th 11am to noon.** Bring your art/craft project to work on while we have a quiet time of reflection and calm in the midst of our Xmas season. Let your mind be at peace and listen for God’s still small voice.
 - **Dec 24 Christmas Eve 5pm service and Dec 25 Christmas Day 10am service with light brunch following.**
 - **Church office will be closed between Christmas Day and New Year’s Day** as the staff take this time off during the holidays. Worship will still be held on Saturday December 28th 5pm and Sunday 29th at 10am.
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From our Deacon Dottie

DEACON’S DECEMBER RAMBLINGS

I for one am looking forward to the December 24 and 25 Worship Services. Hard to believe we are at the last month of 2024 already. Seems like this year has flown by!

The following are notes on various Christmas songs and Hymn ---it is impossible to fit all of them here, so I chose these to share with you:

Angels We have Heard on High was derived from the French carol by an unknown author and paraphrased by James Chadwick in 1862. The French original version was “Les Anges Dans nos campagnes” is the story of Jesus’ birth (Luke 2: 8-15). The music as we know it was arranged by Edward S Barnes.

Jingle Bells is one of the most popular of songs heard during the season. It was written in 1850 by James Lord Pierpont in a tavern in Medford, Massachusetts. It was called “**The One-Horse Open Sleigh**” when published in 1857. Some say it was written to be sung as a drinking song or even by a Sunday School choir for Thanksgiving. Jingle Bells has no connection with Christmas, it became popular with winter and was featured as a Parlor song and college anthologies in the 1880’s.

Silent Night (German: Stille Nacht, Hellige Nacht) was first performed on Christmas Eve 1818 in the parish church of Oberndorf in present day Austria. The young Catholic priest, Father Joseph Mohr, wrote the poem “Stille Nacht” in 1816 in the hometown of his father in the Salzburg Langan region where he had served as an assistant priest. On Christmas Eve 1919, Mohr brought the poem to Franz X. Gruber who then composed the melody and guitar accompaniment for that night’s mass. A recent flood from the nearby river had damaged the church organ. The church was later destroyed by repeated flooding and replaced with the “Silent Night Chapel”. The original manuscript was lost and Mohr’s name was forgotten but Gruber was known to be the composer. However, in 1995 a manuscript was found and authenticated Mohr’s handwriting and dated by researchers as 1820. Silent Night was performed for the first time in the USA in New York City in 1839.

And Last but Not Least! **Santa Claus is Coming to Town.** J. Fred Coots and Haven Gillespie wrote it and first recorded by Harry Reser and his Orchestra in November 1934 and became an instant hit in the Variety charts of December 1934. The song was also recorded for Victor Records in September 1935 by Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra, vocals by Cliff Weston and Edythe Wright. It has become a traditional Christmas standard and has been

recorded by numerus artists like Bing Crosby, the Andrew Sisters, Neil Diamond, Frank Sinatra, Chris Isaak, The Carpenters, Michael Bubl , Bruce Springsteen and many more. The sheet music and records have been sold over a million on this one song alone.

I could go on for many pages on all the known popular hymns and Christmas songs BUT I must stop while I am ahead of our Newsletter Deadline.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!!!

Cheerfully submitted by Rev. Dottie g, Deacon



From our Treasurer

Thanks to all of you who are turning in your pledge cards. The numbers are looking very hopeful for a good 2025 budget for the church. The whole report will be given at the Annual Meeting in January. Have a blessed holiday season! Anne Roth

December 2024 Lay Ministry Teams Schedule

NOTE: If you are unable to serve at the appointed time and day, you are responsible for finding a replacement. Please notify Robin of substitutions

ALL SUNDAYS – DEACON - DOTTIE GUTWEIN

Saturday December 7th		
LEM – Tim Holsonback	Lector – Jeff Speer	Altar guild – Tim Holsonback
Saturday December 14th		
LEM - Jeff Speer	Lector – Sandra Calhoun	Alter Guild – Jeff Speer
Saturday December 21st		
LEM – Robin StClair	Lector – Sandra Calhoun	Altar Guild – Robin StClair
Tuesday December 24th 5pm CHRISTMAS EVE		
LEM – Tim Holsonback	Lector – Jeff Speer	Altar Guild – Tim Holsonback
Saturday December 28th		
LEM –Jeff Speer	Lector – Tim Holsonback	Altar Guild- Jeff Speer
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Sunday December 1st BIRTHDAY SUNDAY		
LEM – Robin StClair	Lector –Peggy Brown	Altar Guild – Robin StClair
Sunday December 8th		
LEM – Nancy Rea	Lector – Anne Roth	Altar Guild – Nancy Rea
Sunday December 15th		
LEM – MJ Mahland	Lector – Wilma Swartz	Altar Guild – Deb Ash
Sunday December 22nd		
LEM – Wilma Swartz	Lector – Ann Crandall	Altar Guild – Deb Ash
Wednesday December 25th 10am CHRISTMAS DAY		
LEM – Robin StClair	Lector – Nancy Rea	Alter Guild – Robin StClair
Sunday December 29th		
LEM – Nancy Rea	Lector – Anne Roth	Alter Guild – Nancy Rea

December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10.00 am Choral Service with Holy Communion (Live Stream)	2	3 Bible Study (Proverbs) 5 pm Via Zoom	4 9.30 am Spoken Service With Holy Communion	5	6 Film Night The Polar Express 5.30pm in the Ed Bldg	7 5.00 pm Spoken Service with Holy Communion
8 10.00 am Choral Service with Holy Communion (Live Stream)	9	10 Bible Study (Proverbs) 5 pm Via Zoom	11 9.30 am Spoken Service With Holy Communion	12	13	14 5.00 pm Service followed by Supper at Vinny's NY Pizza 6.30 pm
15 10.00 am Choral Service with Holy Communion (Live Stream)	16	17 Bible Study (Proverbs) 5 pm Via Zoom	18 9.30 am Spoken Service With Holy Communion	19	20	21 5.00 pm Spoken Service with Holy Communion
22 10.00 am Choral Service with Holy Communion (Live Stream)	23 Newsletter Articles Due For January Issue	24 Bible Study (Proverbs) 5 pm Via Zoom	25 9.30 am Spoken Service With Holy Communion	26	27	28 5.00 pm Spoken Service with Holy Communion
29 10.00 am Choral Service with Holy Communion (Live Stream)	30	31 Bible Study (Proverbs) 5 pm Via Zoom				



Carol Dockter	December 21st
Linnaea Schmid	December 23rd
Barbara J. Sing	December 23rd
Rosemary Snapp	December 24th
Sherril O'Neil	December 25th
Elizabeth York	December 29th

Sunday December 1st will be “**BIRTHDAY SUNDAY**” celebrating everyone who has a birthday in the month of December. There will be cake for all to enjoy.

From the Kitchen Koordinator

Dear all, I am in need of a **kitchen assistant** who will help me set up the refreshments etc. before the service and also to help me clear away when everyone is finished.

On that note, our **Koffee Kitty** is feeling a little neglected. Please make a small donation if you are able

Potluck meals etc – **Hosts/hostesses/servers** and **help required during clear-up** required. Please consider volunteering.

NB. If you are bringing home made food for the Fellowship hour and/or for the Pot Luck meals, please either list the ingredients or inform me, so that members and guests who are gluten/lactose intolerant or have other food allergies will know in advance. Thank you, Wilma Swartz.

Dear Readers,

This heartwarming article was sent to me by Anne Roth (our treasurer). She had mentioned her ‘family in India’ occasionally in church, but I didn’t know the full story. I am so pleased to be sharing it with you at this time:

In 2013 I traveled to Pakistan for the first time. The young man who met my plane and guided me for the next two weeks became a dear friend. When I returned home, we tried to start an NGO together, then he tried to build a couple of schools with my help. We were sabotaged. In November of 2016 he took an early morning walk and found a newborn child in a dumpster, still warm, crying. He took her to the Edhi Foundation Orphanage because he knew he could not raise her alone. Two and a half years later - visiting every week - he adopted her. He named her Konain - which means “the Universe.” That same year, his former father-in-law brought his daughter to him from a broken marriage, and the two little girls bonded instantly.



Over the years he has sent pictures of them to “Grannie” and we have had some conversations. The first thing they learned in English to say to me was: “Hello. I love you.”



They are growing up fast now, loving school, learning all kinds of things, winning prizes. The older one, Aliana, won the Science prize in her class last year. Konain loves to sing and dance. My life - and that of “Billuncle” (as they call him) are so much richer with sharing.



Konain got her hair cut short “like Grannie”!



There are children born to people that are claimed, and there are children born that are discarded. Sometimes the “found” children are more of a family than most people realize. This is my “Little Family” 12,000 miles away, but dearly loved

Some more good news! I received this message from Deacon Dottie:

‘Sherry Siman has been approved by Bishop Reddall, along with others in her class, to be ordained Deacon on January 25, 2025. So very proud of her!’

Congratulations Sherry.

It has been a great pleasure to have been your editor for another year and I am hoping the new Rector will wish me to continue.

As always, I am inviting you to share your adventures, pictures, stories etc. with us. The date for which I would normally need to have received your articles by is the 25th of the preceding month. However, you may have noticed that I put it as December 23rd on this month’s calendar as the slot for the 25th was already filled!!

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas.

Diane (dianepyancey@gmail.com)

