

# ST. MATTHEW'S

# LIFE



NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE PARISH OF ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, HILLSBOROUGH, NC

DECEMBER 2020

*I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you  
Which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre,  
The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed  
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on darkness...*

*I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love  
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.  
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:  
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.*

[T.S. Eliot. *East Coker.*]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Advent is here, a church season for the three to four weeks before the Feast of Christmas.

**The basic idea of Advent is that it is a season of waiting for God.** To wait for God is to seat ourselves in the middle of our lives, to admit that God is not fully here, and to wait for the unknowable God to come anew. It's like going back before Christianity and starting over again.

I find it a humbling, quieting, and holy thing to admit the God is not here, at least as fully as God could be, that our lives are not fully converted to God. And of ourselves, we can't get an inch closer to God on our own.

One thing we can do in our waiting is however to make space for God to come anew into our lives. We do this so that when God comes, we have a chance of noticing the divine self-gift. My experience is that when Jesus comes, he comes in unsettling humility and quiet and a kind of inner poverty: think stable, not palace.

You might ask: "But how do I make space for God?" You might insist: "Rector, get practical! Operationalize this waiting for God!"

Fair enough. To make space for the God you know not, you have to make a space in your life where **you** are not. And, very practically, to make space where you are not, set aside a specific period of time when you rest from any effort to move your life forward at all. For this day, this hour, this half hour, you renounce improving your life at all, or moving it forward one bit. You renounce change or getting things done. Specifically,

this means no work, no shopping, no study for self-improvement. NOTHING! And it also means no entertainments. No screens.

As Americans we tend to think that the whole purpose of life, and any chance we have at feeling good, is to be moving ourselves forward, continually going towards something better, some goal. This is absurd. Goal setting and moving forward is certainly a critical part in the good stewardship of the lives God has given us. But the other, more important part is noticing what is actually here in life, and savoring, accepting, and celebrating it – giving thanks, doing Eucharist with God. The Hebrew sabbath made it mandatory on the whole community to emphasize this noticing, savoring, accepting, and giving-thanks part of life. It is where we become open to God for real.

For this Advent, I urge every single person in the parish to join me in setting aside specific times each week to wait for God. It could be an entire day (sabbath!), a half-day, even a half-hour.

Here are some suggestions for how to enjoy this time:

- **Go for a walk** and then write in a journal what you saw and felt. Notice how your body is, what it is saying to you.
- **Learn how to meditate.** As Christians, we meditate to make a silence where God's word can then speak in us. The app *Headspace* has a great program for learning meditation, and it is initially free.
- **Give thanks over food.** Order inexpensive take-out (don't cook!) and have a meal with a spouse or close friend. Get the candles out. Get a good bottle of wine, if you like wine, or fizzy water. Add some music. Celebrate! Enfold the meal in prayers from the prayer book – see the service for family devotions, BCP p. 136.
- **Morning quiet time.** Do nothing but drink tea for a half hour in the morning and look out the window. Or add in what I call an observation journal: what are the sounds, sights, smells, you note? Can you observe yourself with the same neutrality that you do a tree, not trying to move yourself forward or change yourself in any way – remember we are renouncing all forward movement during these Advent practices.

The key thing is to choose something, commit to it, and make it a practice for Advent. Stay with it even when it is boring (that's critical!). Find a friend to be your companion.

It is a huge relief as your rector to admit that God is not here (at least not fully!) and that we have this Sabbath-like Advent season to wait for God to come anew. It is a relief to start over as Christians, going back to before Jesus, as it were, and waiting. Who knows how God will come, or what God will say?

God bless you all,

*Robert Truick*

#### Resources for Advent Spirituality:

- T.S. Eliot. *The Four Quartets*.
- Walter Brueggemann. *Sabbath as Resistance*.
- Brother Lawrence. *The Practice of the Presence of God*



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### A Word from our Senior Warden

Dear Friends,

In this time of Covid uncertainty and national uncertainty and as we move into the holidays, this year shaped by Covid, I want to write to say how much I am impressed with the people of St. Matthew's. I thought about that word "impressed" and wanted to change it to "grateful" or something that sounded more holy—but—it has to stay "impressed"—because I am. With all of the uncertainty we are living in, St. Matthew's is taking care of its own and others in the community with great care and thoughtfulness. As Senior Warden, I get to see this level of care in the different ministries—for example, through feeding others, through the shawl ministry, through the beautiful services that so many put together, through the creative Christian formation programs, through having FeST in a new way, through small acts of care. And much more. I value these connections greatly because Covid can separate us from one another and so the connections become all the more precious. And I want to thank you for them—as I thank God for the grace, light, sorrow, and humor that binds us to one another.

I also want to thank all of you who have contacted us about the Ruffin House name. And for those who are praying and thinking on their own, too. I am grateful for each one of you: we have heard from many of you in different ways. There are really strong feelings on both sides of the issue, strong opinions, strong commitments; the Vestry is holding these and sifting them. By the time you get this, we hope to have made a decision and entered a new phase of this process. If we have not yet quite gotten all that material to you by the time you get the newsletter, then we plan to do that soon. We invite further conversation and will be active in seeking it, too.

I have seen in this process that we are the Body of Christ—learning to talk to each other in new ways. That is sometimes difficult, but I am seeing the joy in it, too. My hope is that this process will deepen our connection to one another—and I know that will take continued work. And that we will need rest and renewal for a time, too. Looking forward to resting, waiting in Advent—in this strange Covid holiday season—and celebrating renewal with you at Christmas.

With joy and gratitude,

*Jehanne Gheith, Senior Warden*

### DISCERNMENT and DECISION

([click here](#) for a link to the final document from Robert and the Vestry)

The Vestry has taken all the conversations and all the written communications, seriously: we have heard a mix of responses with people very committed on both sides of the Ruffin House renaming. We sifted those and considered them deeply and prayerfully. After this process of listening deeply and broadly to the congregation—of trying to understand and honor all points of view, the Vestry has unanimously decided to change the Ruffin House name to the "The Parish House" for a period of at least twelve months. We will be working toward a name in that time—or settling into naming the building after the function rather than a person. Time and future conversation will tell, and we will consider how best to go about renaming in time. But for now, we rest and live together, in what we hope and believe will be a creative and loving place.

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### FeST is Here!

The day of arrival is just around the corner: Saturday, December 5, from noon to 2:00 p.m. Stations will be set up for drive-by pick up. If you will enter through the Orange County Board of Education parking lot, we'll have marked, in a singular route, the three different pick up areas.....all you need to do is drive up, give your name and your check, if you haven't paid already, and we'll bring your order out to you.

We look forward to seeing everyone! —*Lisa Frost-Phillips*

## The Christmas Pageant

*Follow the star as we journey with the shepherds, the animals, The Holy Family, and the Magi  
in our annual Christmas Pageant!*

This year we are going virtual! There are six scenes and eight songs that make up our Christmas pageant. We are inviting families to sign up for **one scene or one song** to record for our pageant. Record the scene or song **in landscape mode**, and submit it to our Pageant Google Folder. *Kelly Peterson* will be collecting all the recordings and compiling them into a pageant video which we will play for the congregation on December 24th at our 4pm Christmas Eve service.

To sign up, email Kim and she will send you a copy of the script sign up form! You can have a look at the script and decide what you might like to do and at the top of the page, you can put your name next to the scene or song you selected. In addition, if singing or acting isn't your thing - you can sign up to make a piece of art like a drawing, painting, or other medium that is inspired by one of the eight songs! You can be as low key or dramatic as you like, we will have costumes set out at the church for you to explore and find what works for your scene.

Questions? Contact *Chris Peterson* at [fishercjs@gmail.com](mailto:fishercjs@gmail.com) or Kim at [kim@stmatthewshillsborough.org](mailto:kim@stmatthewshillsborough.org)

## Children's Formation

Join us at 10:15am on the Zoom Formation Channel for Formation Hour. See below for December's Program Offerings:

- December 6: St. Nicholas' Feast Day: All Children
- December 13: Virtual Growing in Christ led by *Angela Jones* and *Mitch Moehring*
- December 20: Virtual Godly Play led by *Aurora Toennisson*
- December 27: No Sunday School for the Holidays

[Register now](#) to receive a kit of Faith at Home materials for January: Epiphany at Home! The deadline for registration is December 18th. You will receive a kit with prayer tools, some activities, and a devotional that helps you live into the spirit of the Epiphany season at home. [Subscribe to our children's formation newsletter](#) for more up to date information throughout the month!

Questions? Email Kim at [kim@stmatthewshillsborough.org](mailto:kim@stmatthewshillsborough.org)

## Youth Formation

Join us 4:00pm-5:00pm on the Zoom Formation Channel for Youth Group and Confirmation Class.

December 6: Confirmation Class

December 13: Final Confirmation Class

December 20: Youth Christmas Party

December 27: No Youth Programs for the Holidays

[Subscribe to our youth formation updates](#) for more up to date information throughout the month!

Questions? Email Kim at [kim@stmatthewshillsborough.org](mailto:kim@stmatthewshillsborough.org)



## Visio Divina: Tuesdays at 7pm

Here's an invitation to join our Duke Divinity School Intern, *Amy Peterson*, for Visio Divina: *This Advent, join me for Visio Divina! We'll meet once a week to share artwork and images related to the week's lectionary texts, and we'll reflect together on the Scripture and what the art shows us about it. If you're interested, email me, Amy Peterson, (coamyp@gmail.com) for more details.*

November 24: reflecting on Advent 1; December 1: reflecting on Advent 2; December 8: reflecting on Advent 3; December 15: reflecting on Advent 4; and December 22: reflecting on Christmas

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### A Simple Prayer for Morning Silence

*I pray that I might let go of need and want*

*And blend into the quiet of this time*

*Breathing only to breathe*

*And not to power some desire.*

*That time may pass without my want or care*

*And I may lose myself into unspoken prayer.*

*~Yvonne Petitmaire*

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### Turn of the Year

This time of year is an interesting one to select music for our liturgies. Even though the first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the New Year, themes of the coming of the Reign of God in Christ carry over into the first two Sundays of Advent. There's no countdown to midnight distinct threshold from one year to the next. Readings that focus on the Reign of God in Christ, infused with references to the End Times, and preparation for the coming Kingdom, are common both to the late November as well as early Advent Sundays.

As we heard Lisa mention in her sermon on November 15, Advent originally began in mid-November. No surprise therefore that various worship resources suggest hymns both for the end of the church year and again at the beginning of the next church year. The overlap inspires reflection on what the turning of the year means or implies.

As a church musician, my life is filled with expressions of praise and prayer set to music. It is easy for me to see giving glory to and turning everything over to God as chief objectives. But these late November – early Advent readings set a different goal: to live in expectation of the coming of Christ's reign. This is important enough to straddle not only two liturgical seasons but two yearly cycles. To a church musician for whom every hymn has a season, the thought that some of the great hymns of faith like "Sleepers, wake" or "Lo, he comes with clouds descending" are appropriate to both seasons is radical. After all, don't hymns help define our church seasons and articulate movement from one to the next?

As one who also suspects there's a method to our lectionary's grand design, I must allow that the thematic overlap is intentional. Except for Advent wreathes and a change in liturgical colors, the old year passes quietly into the new without much fanfare. This could not be more different from moving from Epiphany to Lent, or Holy Week to Easter. I believe the overlap is to remind me that an important aim in my life is to wait, watch, and prepare. Too often these words are crowded out by actions of praising and praying. Perhaps it is time to see the turn of the year a little differently from before and give some of these great hymns a double billing. Or I should try to see the change from liturgical season to another as a seamless progression, and not a sudden shift, like flipping the lights on or off all at once. Maybe my participation in a community "abiding in faith, active with hope, and anchored in love," might well morph to sharing in the expectation of meeting Christ at any moment.

–David Arcus, Director of Music & Organist



**People News**

**Thanks to:**

- Yvonne Petitmaire & Jim Charton, Charles & Martha McCamy, Pelham Jacobs, Edward Wright, Brian Chandler, Paul Enquist, Bob & Susan Shelton, Chris Ringwalt, Todd Holland, Leslie Carmichael, Sharon & Ken Billings, and Kim Powell for coming out on November 7 for the Parish Workday
- Charles Thomas for putting out Veterans' Day flags on the graves of those who served in the armed forces.
- those who have showed up and/or volunteered (but got rained out) to work on the Habitat House and to feed workers this fall: Tom Anderson, Jean Bartholomew, Ken Billings, Mary Parker, Carolyn Parsley, Jim Parsley, Rich Harris, Charles McCamy, Glenn Sumner, Edward Wright, and Phyllis Wright.
- all who ordered wreaths, roping, baked goods, and boxes to continue our beloved tradition of FeST and to support people in need in Orange County. And thank you to the wide array of people who've donated items and time to make it all possible, especially Bob & Susan Shelton (wreaths and roping); Lisa Frost-Phillips, Kim Powell, Phyllis Wright (surprise boxes); Karen Ireland, Carolyn Carlson (Baked Goods); and Suzanne Maupin, Kim Powell, and Mary Rocap (Admin and Tech Support).

**Congratulations to:**

- Andrea Edith Moore at the release of her debut recoding of Daniel Thomas Davis' "Family Secrets: Kith & Kin;"
- Holden Richards at his portfolio "Riverwalk" being selected as a 2020 RFOTOFOLIO SELECTION; and
- Mary Rocap at the printing of her second volume of essays: "more Little Chicken Stories"

**Recent Deaths:**

- We extend our sympathy to Jeff & Blythe Thompson at the death of Blythe's father, Bob Morgan on November 9.

†Rest eternal grant to him, O Lord:  
And let light perpetual shine upon him.†

**Altar Guild Salutations**

Christmas at our house is going to look the same as always! The traditions and rituals are important and we will be honoring all of them. We were busy in preparations for FeSt and handmade projects for family members that celebrate Christmas 2020. The Advent candies have been purchased for our grandchildren's calendars. Shh! They are annual surprises!

Our Altar Guild activities are different this year. We'll be hanging wreaths outside on all of our buildings. We will forgo the decorating inside of the church; but there may be a nice surprise popping up for all of us!

So, celebrate your Christmas with the eyes of a child! I'll bet that instills some wonder and will inspire some flurry of activity for your family traditions in a virus friendly way. Cookies can travel through the mail! Fudge is still fudge even if you aren't all in the same room. I look forward to a wonderful holiday season and many prayers for all of you to savor the little things! We have many blessings in our parish!

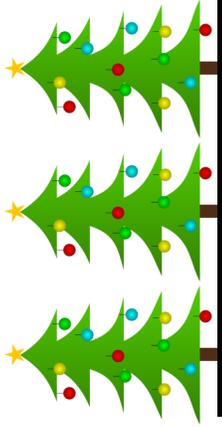
Merry Christmas and Happy Vaccine Year to all! Kathy von St Paul



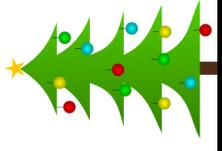
Parish Operating Budget Status as of the end of September 2020			
Budget Expenses:	2020 Budget	Total Spent	%
Work Outside the Parish	\$84,111	\$47,458	56%
Maint. & Improvements	\$72,356	\$51,269	71%
Clergy-related	\$151,523	\$108,164	71%
Administrative	\$89,342	\$64,588	72%
Christian Ed. Program	\$54,670	\$40,698	74%
Worship-related	\$47,839	\$31,880	67%
<b>Expenses Total:</b>	<b>\$499,841</b>	<b>\$344,057</b>	<b>69%</b>
Budget Income:	2020 Budget	Total Received	%
Plate/Gift Offerings Received	\$50,000	\$26,777	54%
Pledge Payments	\$443,331	\$339,985	77%
Other	\$23,100	\$21,300	92%
<b>Income Total:</b>	<b>\$516,431</b>	<b>\$388,062</b>	<b>75%</b>

**Awareness through Movement Lessons**

The December Lessons on December 11 & 18, at 9:30am (Meeting Zoom), will be taught in a sitting position. They will involve interesting movement patterns designed to improve resilient, efficient function, and rest. Everyone is welcome; contact Betty Wolfe at [bettywolfe@gmail.com](mailto:bettywolfe@gmail.com) with questions or concerns.



# DECEMBER 2019



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>Advent 2</b> 9:15a Morning Prayer (W) 10:15a Sunday Forum (W) 10:15a Children's Programming (F) 4p Youth Confirmation (F)	7 6:30p EFM (F) 8:30p Compline (W)	1 7:30a Morning Silence (W) 10a Staff Meeting (M) 7p Visio Divina (M) 7p RJR Book Discussion (F) 8:30p Compline (W)	2 8a Morning Prayer (W) Noon Eucharist (Memorial Garden) 5p Those Who Live Alone (M) 6p Finance Committee (F) 7p Choir (M) 8:30p Compline (W)	3 8:30a-4:30p Baked goods drop Off for Surprise Boxes 4p Care & Discernment (M) 7:30p Adult Bible Study (F) 8:30p Compline (W)	4 8a Morning Prayer (W) 9a-5p Baked Goods drop off for Pre-Order Sales 8:30p Compline (W)	5 <b>Fest Pick-up Noon-2p</b>
<b>Advent 3</b> 9:15a Morning Prayer (W) 10:15a Sunday Forum (W) 10:15a Children's Programming (F) 4p Youth Confirmation (F)	14 6:30p EFM (F) 8:30p Compline (W)	8 7:30a Morning Silence (W) 7p Visio Divina (M) 8:30p Compline (W)	9 8a Morning Prayer (W) Noon Eucharist (Memorial Garden) 5p Those Who Live Alone (M) 7p Choir (M) 8:30p Compline (W)	10 4p Care & Discernment (M) 7:30p Adult Bible Study (F) 8:30p Compline (W)	11 8a Morning Prayer (W) 9:30a Awareness Thru Movement Class (M) 8:30p Compline (W)	12
<b>Advent 4</b> 9:15a Morning Prayer (W) 10:15a Sunday Forum (W) 10:15a Children's Programming (F) 4p Youth Group Party (F)	21 <b>St Thomas the Apostle</b> 6:30p EFM (F) 8:30p Compline (W)	15 7:30a Morning Silence (W) 10a Staff Meeting (M) 5:30p Food for All (Hugh's Team) 7p Vestry (M) 7p Visio Divina (F) 8:30p Compline (W)	16 8a Morning Prayer (W) Noon Eucharist (Memorial Garden) 5p Those Who Live Alone (M) 7p Choir (M) 8:30p Compline (W)	17 8:30a Fellowship Breakfast (M) 4p Care & Discernment (M) 7:30p Adult Bible Study (F) 8:30p Compline (W)	18 8a Morning Prayer (W) 9:30a Awareness Thru Movement Class (M) 8:30p Compline (W)	19
<b>Christmas 1</b> 9:15a Morning Prayer (W) 10:15a Sunday Forum (W) 7p Women's "Singing" Circle & Compline (W)	28 <b>St John, Apostle and Evangelist</b> 5:30p Food for All Gordon Carlson's Team 6:30p EFM (F) 8:30p Compline (W)	22 7:30a Morning Silence (W) 7p Visio Divina (M) 8:30p Compline (W)	23 8a Morning Prayer (W) Noon Eucharist (Memorial Garden) 5p Those Who Live Alone (M) 7p Choir (M) 8:30p Compline (W)	24 <b>Christmas Eve</b> 4p Christmas Pageant (W) 8p Christmas Eve Service (W)	25 <b>Christmas Day</b> 8:30p Compline (W)	26 <b>St Stephen, Deacon And Martyr</b>
<b>Christmas 1</b> 9:15a Morning Prayer (W) 10:15a Sunday Forum (W) 7p Women's "Singing" Circle & Compline (W)	29 <b>The Holy Innocents</b>	29 <b>The Holy Innocents</b>	30 8a Morning Prayer (W) Noon Eucharist (Memorial Garden) 5p Those Who Live Alone (M) 7p Choir (M) 8:30p Compline (W)	31 8:30p Compline (W)		

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### Racial Justice and Reconciliation Committee News

The RJRC will be hosting a discussion of *To Free a Family: The Journey of Mary Walker* by Sydney Nathans on Tuesday, December 1, at 7:00 pm on the Formation Channel. *Margaret Brill* will lead the discussion. As you will see below, there is a connection to St. Matthew's in this true story.

Prior to the Civil War, thousands of African Americans escaped from slavery, but because few recorded their experiences, little is known about their efforts to forge new lives in freedom. Mary Walker, the focus of this study, was a light-skinned fugitive who escaped from a North Carolina planter (Duncan Cameron, owner of Stagville) when she accompanied them to Philadelphia in 1848. Her history, though unique in many ways, is illustrative of the hardships and challenges such migrants faced and the support they sometimes received from abolitionist networks. Her efforts to preserve her freedom, gain economic independence, and locate and purchase the freedom of her children still held as slaves is pieced together here by Nathans from the papers of Northern abolitionists and Southern slaveholders.

The paperback is available from Purple Crow Books.

In January, we will be discussing *Caste*, by Isabel Wilkerson, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *The Warmth of Other Suns*.

### Ladies Night Out Cookie Recipe Swap

Since we won't be doing your yearly cookie swap at the home of *Carolyn Carlson* this year, we still want to connect with each other over cookies and have decided to do an email cookie recipe swap. So, anytime between now and December 1<sup>st</sup>, which would be the day of the cookie swap this year, just send along a cookie recipe, the story that goes with it (if there is one), and a sentence or two to let everyone know how you are doing. Use the following email, created just for Ladies Night Out:

[stmatthews@stmatthewshillsborough.org](mailto:stmatthews@stmatthewshillsborough.org).

The replies will be compiled, and at the end of the day on December 1, everyone will get another email containing the recipes, stories, and updates. It sure won't be the same, but it's a way to connect with each other until we can be together again in person.

"God bless Us,  
Every One,"  
—Ladies Night Out

