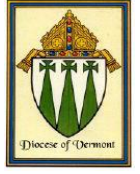


St. Paul's Epistle



DECEMBER 2020

Dear Ones,

How's this for a great title! *The Year of Blur. How isolation, monotony and chronic stress are destroying our sense of time.* That is the title of an October 31 *New York Times* article that I found quite instructive. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/31/style/the-year-of-blur.html> "The usual time markers are gone, everything is bleeding together into one amorphous blob of days...Without the usual work mixers, festive holiday celebrations, far-flung vacations or casual dinners that typically mark and divide the calendar, the brain has a harder time processing and cataloging memories, psychologists say, and the stress of the year itself can shift how our brains experience time."

Perhaps the season of Advent can be an antidote to the blob of blur. Within the blurriness, it seems as if we have been waiting for it all to end: the fear, grief, uncertainty, separation, isolation, illness, death, job loss, food insecurity, injustices, [fill in the blank]. We've been waiting...and waiting... and waiting.

Perhaps it's time to wait for something different... to wait, differently. "The practice of Advent has always been about helping us grasp the mystery of a new beginning out of what looks like death", writes Gayle Boss in her fabulous book of meditations *"All Creation Waits, The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings"*. <http://gayleboss.com/all-creation-waits> How might we wait for this *adventus*: this *coming*?

Let us mark this holy time within a rhythm of prayer, blessings, candles, and calendars. What better way to de-blur our days than with lighting Advent candles with special prayers, readings, or song? What better way to take a moment each day to wait in sacred stillness or silliness to experience a surprise behind each door of an Advent Calendar? It doesn't have to be fancy. My Advent wreath consists of a plate filled with evergreen and found bits of nature encircled by four candles (not always the traditional colors of three blue or purple and one rose). For Christmas, I add a white candle to the side. Sometimes it takes me until the second Sunday of Advent to actually create it. This year, I'll pull out the same Advent calendar I've had for years. Nothing remarkable about it really. But each day, it's an invitation to stop, breathe and mark the sacredness of each moment.

Be sure to join us each Sunday for services that will include blessing of our Advent calendar, wreaths and everything that slides. Join us for our Advent II Agape Meal. Join us for a Celebration of Light on Monday, Dec. 21. These are all ways to remember that this darkness is not the end but a doorway. Wait for it! Be in it!

May we mark sacred time (for all time is sacred) with prayer, blessings, candles and calendars, to tell the story of the “the One who is the source of all life, One who comes to be with us and in us, even especially, in darkness and death. One who brings a new beginning.”

In Christ’s Love,

Sherry+

Advent/Christmas Resources & Ideas for All Ages

https://www.churchpublishing.org/freeresources?utm_campaign=test&utm_source=ExactTarget&utm_medium=email&utm_content=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.churchpublishing.org%2Ffreeresources&utm_term=Free+Resources+for+Advent+2020

<https://www.nhepiscopal.org/advent-resources>

<https://episcopalchurch.org/advent-and-christmas-resources>

Advent Wreath:

The basic premise of an Advent wreath is to mark the four Sundays of Advent in an intentional way. The first Sunday you light one candle, the second Sunday two candles, the third Sunday three candles, the Fourth Sunday four candles. If you’d like to mark Christmas Eve, you light a candle in the center as the light of the coming Christ child.

Check out these websites for some creative ideas. Use whatever you have on hand!

<https://www.smilemercantile.com/blogs/tutorials/92604935-diy-advent-wreath-with-painted-rocks>

<https://mariebostwick.com/diy-advent-wreath/>

<http://www.freefunchristmas.com/handmade-christmas-gifts/paper-plate-advent-wreath-2/>

2020 Virtual Advent & Christmas Service Schedule

Join by telephone or computer. Visit <https://www.saintpaulsvergennes.org> for updates.

Look for future notices with further details.

Nov 29 / 9:30 am / Advent I	Morning Prayer w/ blessing of Advent Wreaths & Calendars
Dec 6 / 9:30 am / Advent II	Blessing of Everything That Slides & Agape Meal
Dec 13 / 9:30 am / Advent III	Morning Prayer
Dec 20 / 9:30 am / Advent IV	Morning Prayer
Dec 21 / 7:00 pm	A Celebration of Light
Dec 24 / 4:00 pm	Christmas Eve
Dec 25 / 9:30 am	Prayers for Christmas Morn
Dec 27 / 9:30 am	Morning Prayer

Vestry Mutual Ministry Review with The Rev. Angie Emerson

On October 20, the vestry of St. Paul's met with The Rev. Angie Emerson via Zoom for a mutual ministry review. This is a time for the vestry to reflect on "How we are doing". We discussed what we can celebrate at St. Paul's and also what our challenges are. There are certainly quite a few challenges right now! But we also have much to celebrate as a faith community.

During this review we reflected on the question: "What is God calling us to do?" And then, "How can we best practice these ministries?" We were reminded that in order to sustain ourselves as a parish we must focus on what gives us joy, and we must work on creative ways to continue these ministries. In order to "be the church" we must free our minds and hearts of burdens and allow ourselves to be led by the spirit, so that our gatherings - in all the new ways we are figuring out how to gather - will continue to feed us and sustain us as we navigate forward.

Rebecca Chauvin, Sr. Warden

Advent Sunday Series

Shaping the Future of St. Paul's

Continuing the Conversation ...

First, if you have not completed your survey, please do so.

We will compile your responses on December 6.

Each week, beginning Sunday, Dec. 6, we will take a short time during the service to engage one or two of the priorities. In this way, we can put words to our survey responses, ask questions and revel in the unique ways the Spirit animates each of our lives.

Dec 6: CLERGY DISCERNMENT

Dec. 13: BEING A CHURCH IN AND BEYOND COVID-19 PANDEMIC &
CONNECTING TO OUR WIDER COMMUNITY

Dec. 20: THE CHURCH BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY

Won't be at the Sunday services? Be not afraid!

There will more ways to respond, explore, learn, and share.

In the meantime, do not hesitate to contact Rebecca, members of the vestry or Sherry.

“Speakin’ with the Deacon”

-Rev. Lucy Pellegrini

It's been over a decade since I left the parish that welcomed me as a newly ordained deacon. I watched families grow, and elders celebrate each new member as all embraced change. We were in ministry together.

Perhaps it is time, even in the midst of Corona-tide, for a few words about the deaconate. I am an ordained vocational or permanent deacon, not a transitional deacon on a journey to priesthood. Deacons have been called to a ministry of service, in the world and the church. At ordination, we promise to study, to seek and serve Christ in others, all under the direction of the bishop.

Deacons serve as a bridge with one foot in the world and the other in the church. All work in jobs or professions in the world that serve the marginalized, voiceless, and invisible members of society, and are not paid by the parish or diocese. Our presence in the service is meant to be a window, so that in seeing a deacon, the community is reminded that there are those who are not present being represented and being served. When I was the chaplain at Helen Porter Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center, I also worked with Hospice Volunteers. My ministry here ranged from pastoral care to Souper Suppers and included outreach with an ecumenical group supporting the wider community during the Great Recession.

Times have changed. After retirement, I had more time to volunteer, on Skype visits with Helen Porter residents, and phone calls to others. I have coached field hockey goalies at Mt. Abe. I still do hospice work, a year ago with Aggie Pudvah's sister. In the diocese, I have worked with the Liturgy Commission, as a member of the Deacon's Council to coordinate and connect, as Bishop Ely called us, the Diocesan 'Disturbance of Deacons' to the wider church, and with a group developing a program for those in the ordination process who need mentoring. Deacons specialize in getting in 'good trouble', whether it's proposing a resolution at Diocesan Convention advocating for water justice, demonstrating for human rights, or testifying for affordable housing. I hope that someday soon we will again accompany our Bishop when she resumes personal in parish visits.

A deacon's ministry as a bridge is reflected in our responsibilities in the liturgy. We speak as a voice of the people, bidding the confession and the Prayers of the People or the intercessions. We carry the good news out into the congregation to read the Gospel. We conclude the service and send all of us out into the world to be God's hand and heart visible and active beyond the walls of the church. At the Eucharist, we 'set' the table, and keep track of the needs of those administering and receiving communion. It is my choice not to perform the ablutions after communion is concluded. Ask me why.

Times change. There is a great need for deacons in our diocese. Talk to me about discernment and the process toward ordination. The church needs you!



We miss our young folks, and look forward to seeing them again when the time is right!

December Birthdays



1st	Jade Rhoads	13th	Ezra Jay Spencer
1st	Sadie Rhoads	14th	Mary Gordon
6th	Bill Davidson	17th	Gabriel Hale
6th	Catie Macauley	20th	Sarah Coburn
7th	Ezra Seymour	21st	Robert Laidman
9th	Nate Guilmette	21st	Amelia Coburn
10th	Robin Goquen	25th	Shaun Byrnes
12th	Sarah Stroup	30th	Victoria Ronish
12th	Sue Berkenbush		

“Epistle Team” notes-

A huge thank you to Judy Woods and Madelaine Calise for their willingness to help in producing and distributing our newsletter!

We’ve come to realize that a “static” deadline for submissions will help us all to do our part in a more manageable way. This date will be the 23rd of each month. Please send submissions as you’d like them to appear, either as a Word document, photograph or within the body of an e-mail to Diane Merrill, dnm@gmavt.net. Later entries will be included if possible or will be saved for the following month. As always, we welcome feedback and suggestions.

With the new year approaching, we’ll be updating the birthday list and would love to start an anniversary list as well for those who’d like to acknowledge this blessing here. Please send additions or changes to Diane. Thank you!

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Bishop: Rt. Rev. Dr. Shannon MacVean-Brown

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