

The Voice of St. Stephen

Volume 11 Issue 12

December 2017

THE ESSENCE OF ADVENT PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD!

For many Christians unfamiliar with the liturgical year, there is a good bit of confusion surrounding the meaning of the season of Advent. Some know that the Advent season focuses on expectation and that it serves as an anticipation of Christ's birth in the season leading up to Christmas. This is certainly part of the story, but there's more - so much more.

While it is difficult to keep in mind in the midst of often premature holiday celebrations, Advent should be a season of fasting - much like Lent, and there are a variety of ways to walk this out. Reflection on the violence and evil in our world cause us to cry out to God to make things right. Our exile in the present culture of this world makes us look forward to our future. And our own sinfulness and need for grace leads us to pray for the Holy Spirit to renew his work in conforming us into the image of Christ.

One catechism puts the observance of the season this way, "When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'"

Advent is a time of celebration and anticipation, but it is more than that. It is only in the shadow of Advent that Christmas can be fully appreciated; and it is only in the light of Christmas that the Christian life makes any sense at all. It is between the fulfilled promise of the first coming and the yet-to-be-fulfilled promise of the second coming that Karl Barth wrote, "Unfulfilled and fulfilled promise are related to each other, as are dawn and sunrise. Both are promise and in fact the same promise. Faith knows for whom and for what it is waiting. It is fulfilled faith because it lays hold on the fulfilled promise." The promise for the church is Jesus Christ; he has come, and he will come again. This is the essence of Advent.

St Stephen Anglican Church
Anglican Church in North America

PASTOR'S CORNER

A FEW WORDS FROM FATHER JIM

For centuries, Advent - like Lent- was a season of spiritual preparation that began four Sundays before Christmas. Contrary to the practice of in many churches, it wasn't focused on the story of the birth of Jesus. That's for the Christmas season. Instead, Advent is a time of reflection, penitence, and preparation - not of celebration. Human nature being what it is, we don't like fasts. Churches and Christians dropped the preparation, penitence and reflection part and went straight for the feasts and celebrations.

Advent
*A Season of Hope
& Expectation*

If you look around, you'll quickly see that Advent devotionals are really more about Christmas - again skipping the themes of Advent from the Old Testament prophecies and the ministry of John the Baptist. These themes take us on a journey to a time before the coming of Jesus. They invite us to repent and to prepare the way of the Lord. Historic Advent devotion focuses on the story of the people of God leading up to the birth of Jesus. By the time Christmas arrives, we have the whole story in mind.

In a traditional observance of Advent, we don't sing Christmas carols until Christmas actually arrives after sunset on Christmas Eve. Instead, we sing Advent hymns and songs. Then Christmas arrives, and Christmas isn't just one day. In fact, it's twelve days. So many Christians sing Christmas songs for so long before Christmas, that they're tired of Christmas by the time it actually gets here! Most can't imagine eleven more days of celebration.

The real war is inside of our churches and homes. We have obliterated the season of preparation, then prematurely begun and over-extended the feasting. In so doing, we have forgotten our own heritage. No wonder there is so much depression and guilt associated with the day. Restoring Advent isn't just about keeping traditional rules, but rather about healing the guilt that so many people associate with the feasting of Christmas. It's about being a healing presence in our communities and in our culture. It's about celebrating the twelve days with gusto rather than with boredom.

Advent starts the first Sunday in December and runs until Christmas Eve this year. Let's try something different this season. Let's try to focus on the message of the Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist. Let's try to avoid Christmas music and celebration. Let's try to make Advent a quiet and reflective time in the midst of so much hustle and bustle. Maybe we'll find that the wisdom of the past can bring healing to our frantic lives.

COMMUNITY INTEREST

NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL PARISH MEETING SUNDAY, JANUARY 28 FOLLOWING HOLY EUCHARIST

Our Annual Parish Meeting will take place on Sunday, January 28, from 1:30 PM until approximately 3:30 PM. Several things will take place at this meeting. We will be electing one new Vestry member and one will be reaching the end of their three-year term.

Please plan on attending and fully taking part in this meeting. Reports from the various functions of the church will also be presented during the meeting, and addresses from our Pastoral Staff in regard to their assessment of the past year and their vision for the upcoming year.



We hope to inspire everyone to get excited about the possibilities for Saint Stephen Church. There has never been and will never be a better time to make your voice heard. Let's give our Church all that we have to give during the coming year.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY TO RETURN

After a few months of absence, our Sunday morning Adult Bible Study will return on Sunday, January 7, at 9:30 AM, under the leadership of Dr. Brian Shoemaker. Brian will provide more information about the subject and content of upcoming studies in advance of the first session. Please plan on taking advantage of the return of this wonderful resource as an avenue of learning.



THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION



Saint James wrote, "Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed." In addition to the healing grace that flows from God, spiritual and psychological healing comes from openly revealing our sins. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available at the church from 10:30 AM until Noon on Saturday, December 9, as well as at any time by appointment.

PAGE SIX: VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY RECOGNIZING JESUS WHEN HE COMES

A favorite Christmas story is about an old shoe cobbler who dreamed one Christmas Eve that Jesus would come to visit him the following day. The dream was so real that he was convinced it would come true. So, the next morning he got up and went out and cut greenery and decorated his little cobbler shop and got all ready for Jesus to come and visit. He was so sure that Jesus was going to come that he just sat down and waited for Him.

The hours passed and Jesus didn't come. But then an old man came. He came inside for a moment to get warm out of the winter cold. As the cobbler talked with him in front of the fire, he noticed the holes in the old man's shoes, so he reached up on the shelf and got him a new pair. He made sure they fit and that his socks were dry and sent him on his way.

And still he waited. And still Jesus didn't come. An old woman came - a woman who hadn't had a decent meal in several days. They sat and visited and talked for a while, and then he prepared some food for them to eat together. He gave her a nourishing meal and sent her on her way.

Then he sat down again to wait for Jesus. But Jesus still didn't come. Then he heard a little boy crying out in front of his shop. He went out to see what was going on and talked with the boy. He soon discovered that the boy had been separated from his parents and didn't know how to get home. So he put on his coat, took the boy by the hand and led him home.

When he came back to his little shoe shop it was almost dark and the streets were emptied of people. And then in a moment of despair he lifted his voice to heaven and said, "Oh Lord Jesus, why didn't you come?"

And then in a moment of silence he heard a voice saying, "Oh shoe cobbler, lift up your heart. I kept my word. Three times I knocked at your friendly door. Three times my shadow fell across your floor. I was the man with the bruised feet. I was the woman you gave to eat. I was the boy on the homeless street." Jesus had come.



LECTIONARY / READER / ACOLYTE SCHEDULE

12/03/17 **First Sunday of Advent**

First Reading	Isaiah 64:1-9	Mark Styles
Psalm 80	Acolyte:	Chris Fawbush
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 1:1-9	Mark Styles
Gospel Reading	Mark 13:24-37	

12/10/17 **Second Sunday of Advent**

First Reading	Micah 3:5-15	Michael Flatico
Psalm 43	Acolyte:	Mark Styles
Second Reading	1 Thessalonians 2:9-20	Michael Flatico
Gospel Reading	Matthew 23:1-12	

12/17/17 **Third Sunday of Advent**

First Reading	Amos 5:18-24	Vicki Luckett
Psalm 70	Acolyte:	Chris Fawbush
Second Reading	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Vicki Luckett
Gospel Reading	Matthew 25:1-13	

12/24/17 **Fourth Sunday of Advent (Christmas Eve)**

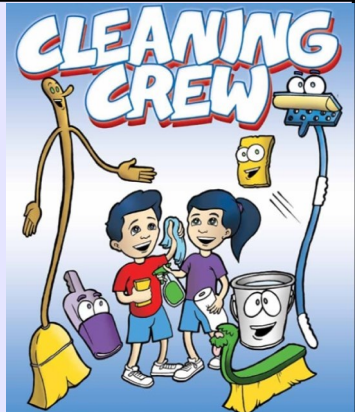
First Reading	Zephaniah 1:7,12-18	Joyce Curry
Psalm 90	Acolyte:	Mark Styles
Second Reading	1 Thessalonians 5:1-10	Joyce Curry
Gospel Reading	Matthew 25:14-15,19-29	

12/31/17 **First Sunday after Christmas**

First Reading	Ezekiel 34:11-17	Diana Flatico
Psalm 95	Acolyte:	Chris Fawbush
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 15:20-28	Diana Flatico
Gospel Reading	Matthew 25:31-46	

Church Cleaning Schedule

12/04 - 12/09	Rachelle Lo / Family
12/11 - 12/16	D Renfrow / D Flatico
12/18 - 12/23	V O'Banion / B Brown
12/25 - 12/30	J Curry / J Cook
01/01 - 01/06	Rachelle Lo / Family



St Stephen Anglican Church

Church Location: 8005 Vaughn Mill Rd.
Louisville, KY 40228

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 91485
Louisville, KY 40291

Church Office: 502-231-1326
Church E-Mail: ststephen@ststephenlouisville.org

Rector: Father Jim Curry
Cell Phone: 502-930-7018
E-Mail: fatherjim@ststephenlouisville.org

Associate Rector: Father Rickey Brown
Cell Phone: 502-827-8291
E-Mail: rickey@bardstowncable.net

Pastoral Associate: Deacon Clay Cook
Cell Phone: 502-269-8410
E-Mail: clay.cook125@gmail.com

Office Manager:	Position Open
Altar Guild Ministry:	Brenda Brown
Outreach Ministry:	Joyce Curry
Fellowship Ministry:	Jessica Cook
Facilities Manager:	John Lyons

Worship & Holy Eucharist 10:30 AM
Wednesday Study Sessions 7:00 PM

Our hope is that Saint Stephen Anglican Church is not just a place that you attend once a week, but a place where you can connect with people and be involved in life changing ministry. Faith should touch every part of our lives. Come on in. We've been expecting you.

