

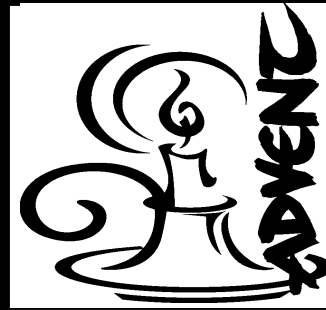
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ST MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, GASTONIA

december 2010

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Advent - The Season of Holy Waiting

One Sunday after church, a mother was talking to her young daughter. She told her that, according to the Bible, Jesus will return to earth some day. "When is he coming back?" the daughter asked. "I don't know," replied the mother. "Can't you look it up on the Internet?" the little girl asked.

In lives that have become so very busy, we are accustomed to receiving what we want, when we want it, without having to wait. We expect to instantly find what we are looking for on-line and to instantly communicate with friends and business associates with texting or messaging so that no moment of time is wasted. Today we don't even have to wait for shows or movies to come on TV. We can simply order them on demand. We tell ourselves that we are just trying to keep up with, not the Jones, but the whole world. The world moved on from Thanksgiving to Christmas before the leftovers were placed in the refrigerator. We say that we are doing it all for our job, our families, or our friends and in many cases, the more we try to do, the more we fall behind.

And yet in this most hectic time of the year, we are called spiritually to wait patiently, with expectation and hope for the second coming of our Lord. Our body and spirit are in tension with one another and so we surrender to the stress that robs us of God's gift to us during this season of Advent.

That gift is a peace that comes through relaxing. "Be still and know that I am God" *Psalms 46:10* This peace comes by emptying our minds of our daily business, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear." *Matthew 6:25* This peace comes to us in the same way that a moment of prayer before worship helps draw us into that holy place, centering us in the understanding that our purpose in life is to praise God for all of God's blessings.

By waiting for Christmas (rather than rushing it) we create a space in our lives for anticipation. Anticipation is important to helping us understand the story of salvation. When we allow ourselves to wait, anticipating Christ's coming, we begin to recognize our spiritual desires and "counting the days" to fulfillment. This waiting unites us with all the generations who waited with great anticipation for the arrival of the Messiah. They hoped each year, each day, that it would be time for the Messiah's advent. Waiting reminds us that God does keep His promises - but on His time-table, not ours.

Advent is a time to reclaim the spiritual practice of waiting that was intended by God to be for us a part of our daily life. It is about living with the understanding that God is not yet "done" with us, and with the joyful hope of what God will yet do. God is at work in the world and in our lives, re-creating us as individuals and in our many communities, in order to bring us into the fullness of love for which we were made. This kind of waiting takes a certain amount of trust in God - trust that God is indeed present in our lives, and loves us, and is actively working to bring us into the fullness of that love. Advent is a time to free ourselves from the obsession with the things around us (and with ourselves) being "done" and "perfect." Imagine how truly liberating that could be!

Relax into Advent. Relax into the wait.

Shawn +



weekly schedule

sundays

HE Rite I - 8:00 am
Prayer Shawl Ministry -
 8:30 am Balthis
Breakfast - 9:00 am PH
Nursery & Christian
 Formation for All Ages -
 9:30 am around the church
HE Rite II - 10:30 am, with
 Children's Chapel
EYC/Youth Events as
 announced
Daughters of the King - 1st
 Sun after church, Balthis
Parish Family Potluck &
 Newcomer Fellowship -
 1st Sundays 5:00 -6:30 pm
Brotherhood of St. Andrew
 2nd Sun 5:30pm w/dinner
Vestry - 3rd Sun after
 church, Vestry Room

mondays

AA Meeting 8:00 pm, PH
Covenant Circle 10:30 am
 1st Mon

wednesdays

Bible/Book Study - 4:30
 pm Balthis
HE II - 6:00 pm Sanctuary
Handbell Choir - 6:30 pm,
 Choir Room
Chancel Choir 7:00 pm
 Choir Room

thursdays

Order of St. Luke 1st, 3rd,
 & 5th Thurs 7:00 pm
PFLAG Meeting 3rd Thurs
 7:00 pm, Balthis

Advent Activities



**December 5
 2nd Sunday in
 Advent**
**First Sunday Worship
 with Children's Sermon
 & Special Treats**

Styrofoam wreaths, candles, and a devotion booklet are available in the Parish Hall for anyone who wishes to make an Advent Wreath for their home.



**December 12
 3rd Sunday in Advent**
Advent Lessons and Carols at the 10:30 service - A joyous celebration of prophecy and song.



**Annual Parish Christmas
 Dinner - 6:00 pm**
 Everyone is invited for this traditional parish family gathering. Kevin Knight is cooking turkey and fixings. Please bring dessert to share. The Choirs will provide music.

**December 19
 4th Sunday in
 Advent**



Following the 10:30 service everyone is invited for a simple lunch of soup and dessert, followed by Christmas Caroling with our neighbors and shut-ins of the parish. A fun family activity!

Christmas Services & Events

**December 24
 Christmas Eve**

- 5:00 pm Family Service with Traditional St. Mark's Pageant
- 11:00 pm Festival Eucharist with Special Music beginning at 10:45



**December 25
 Christmas Day
 12:00 noon
 Holy Eucharist with
 no music**

**December 26
 1st Sunday of Christmas
 8:00 & 10:30 services**
**Epiphany 2011
 House Blessing
 Kits available to
 take home**



**January 2
 2nd Sunday of Christmas**
Christmas Lessons & Carols with Children's Pageant as Liturgy of the Word and Sermon at 10:30 Family Service.

Several years ago, Jim and I had the wonderful opportunity to go to Israel. As part of our rector's sabbatical, he planned a trip that included 12 of us from the parish. It was a life-changing experience and memories of it often come to mind when I am reading scripture or listening to a sermon. This week as I worked on the script for the upcoming Children's Pageant, I was reminded of our visit to Bethlehem. Bethlehem is on the other side of the wall that separates Israelis from Palestinians. Going through the checkpoint invokes strong feelings as you think about Joseph and Mary heading into this same town for the Roman census. Then you learn that there are two "nativity" sites. One is in a large Byzantine-era church with divided segments for the Orthodox and the Catholics. You climb down a narrow stone stairway to a basement-level stone crypt that is said to be built on the site of that first nativity. They point you to a stone-lined recess that is "the exact spot where Jesus was born" and you see icons and candles and much glitter and gold and smell the incense in the air. When you come back up to the main sanctuary you then are taken to a small house and farm area just outside the bustling town where animals are standing around in pens and a stone barn has been decorated to resemble what it would have looked like many centuries ago. This is "thought to be the site of the inn and its manger" and you are again pointed to a spot "where Jesus was born". Both places are interesting and full of tourist-focused images. They can give you a sense of the past and what might have been. But "the exact spot" is a little more allusive.



I prefer the image of the crèche we see in our own sanctuary (and similar ones in our homes and other places) with animals quietly sitting around a manger box and a young woman marveling at the child she has just delivered, probably mostly by herself. Of shepherds and magi and angels singing praises. And I remember the birth of my own sons and how wonderful they looked all wrapped in swaddling and sleeping in my arms. That is the Jesus of the Nativity for me and the exact spot is in my heart and stays there for me to love and cherish and remember each year at this time. He is also the Jesus who later preaches and heals and dies for all, the Jesus that will come again when I least expect it. So I wait and I watch this Advent to be ready. Amen.

Sunday, January 9, 2011

**St. Mark's Annual Meeting
and Vestry Elections**



**9:00 am Joint
Holy Eucharist Service
with Baptism**

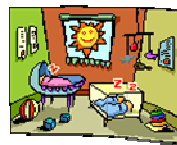
**Guest Preacher & Celebrant:
The Rev. Thomas Murphy**

**followed by Annual Parish Meeting
in the Parish Hall**

**Continental Breakfast will be available
between the service and the meeting.**

**Nursery will be available &
Sunday School classes will be held
during the meeting for children
in 7th grade and below.**

NURSERY NEWS



If you have been down the hall past the kitchen lately, you may have noticed the crowd at the nursery door. We are experiencing our own "baby boom" at St. Mark's. To help with our youngest members, Julie Christy and other parents have organized a clean-up day on Sunday, December 5 following the 10:30 service. They will get rid of old and broken toys and make lists for new items that are needed, give everything a good disinfecting before the heart of flu season arrives, and help to make our Nursery look a little more inviting and clean. We know we will need new toys and several more high-chairs for meals. If you would like to donate something or help with the clean-up, call Julie at 704-214-2788 to volunteer. And a huge "Thank You" to all those who help take care of children in the Nursery each Sunday morning.

The ECW Covenant Circle meets at 10:30 the first Monday of the month at Covenant Village for Bible Study. The group is studying Mark. Contact is Mildred Manning (704-864-2974).



The ECW Christmas Party is Monday, December 13 at 6:30 pm at The Bottle Shop, 174 W. Main Avenue. Cost is \$5.00 to cover your favorite beverage. Come celebrate the season.

The Brotherhood of St. Andrew thanks everyone for their support of the Pork Butt Sale. Profits from this fundraiser allow us to provide *Forward Day By Day* to the parish, as well as support youth projects, breakfast for the homeless and other parish needs.



Salvation Army Team B served over 100 people chicken nuggets, potato, salad, green beans, and peaches on October 26. Mary Stamey & Ann Brown served the food and Jean King, Beth Elkins, Kenna Watts, Price Thrower, Judy Hobbs, Janet & Cookie Rudisill, Trish Anderson, Summer Fulghum, Michelle Jarbeau, and Marilyn & Tom Mecca supplied food.

Toiletry Items for "As One" Ministries continue to be collected by the



Daughters of the King. As you travel and shop this holiday season, pick up soap, shampoo, lotion, etc to give. Questions, contact Nancy Brewbaker.



Prayer Shawl Ministry meets at 8:30 am Sundays just before breakfast and Sunday School in the Balthis Room to make prayer shawls for those in need. Prayers are woven into each shawl to "wrap" the person in prayer. If you have someone who would benefit from having a prayer shawl, contact Nancy Brewbaker.

Coats for Kids is a program to provide coats for children in Gaston County Schools. New or gently used coats for children in pre-k through high school (including adult L, XL, and XXL sizes) are needed. The United Way's Nannery Building at the corner of Oakland and E. Franklin is the drop-off location. Coats can be dropped off there Mondays from 9-12 and are needed by December 13th. Check your closets and keep your eye out for bargains as you shop.



A New Kind of Giving and Gastonia Rotary needs volunteers for the Christmas Store Party at First Presbyterian, Saturday, December 11 from 10-2 and 2-4. Contact Annemarie Couture at 704-824-5712 to help or donate to this wonderful event.

The Blue Christmas Service for all those grieving the loss of loved ones during this holiday season will be Tuesday, December 14 at 12:15 at First United Methodist Church followed by a light lunch. Call 864-4371, ext 256 for information and lunch reservations.

Thomas Murphy will be ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests on Saturday, December 11 at 3 pm at the Cathedral of All Souls, Asheville followed by a reception. Thomas will be our guest preacher and celebrant at the 9:00 am Joint Service before the Annual Meeting January 9.



The Columbarium Committee is looking for volunteers. If you are interested in being part of this group, contact Jim Carriel at 704-866-7298, 704-866-4446, or Carriel@carolina.rr.com.



Did you somehow miss out on having your picture taken for the **new Parish Directory**? Contact Debbie Scarborough (debbie@debbiecarpenter.com) for how to be included.

Congratulations to Bill Seabrook whose work with the Gaston Faith Network was recognized in Episcopal Life in their online news. To read the entire article go to the web page address given here: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79425_125261_EN_G_HTML.htm.

Vestry will meet Monday, December 6 beginning at 5:30 PM.

Six members of St. Mark's (Fred and Bobbie Hadfield, Nancy Brewbaker, John Watts, Brenda Gilbert, and Eden Isbell) sing with the **Gaston County Choral Society** and will be part of the December 11th Christmas Concert. This group works very hard on their music and the results are terrific. Speak to one of them if you are interested in more information or in tickets.





Christmas Memorials/Honorariums

Your donations provide the beautiful flowers, wreaths, and greenery used to decorate God's house as we prepare for the coming of His blessed Son, Jesus Christ. Your generosity is appreciated. Place forms along with your donation in cash or check form in the alms basins on Sundays or mail them to the church office.

Deadline: Sunday, December 12

Please print provide the following information:

Given in memory of:

Given in honor of:

Your Name:

Phone number:

Transitions In Our Parish Family

Baptisms: Jack Carsner, son of Richard & Anna
Connor Jordan, son of Jimmy & Anne
Kyle Rabourn, son of Shawn and Leilani

Transfers In: Leilani, Shawn Jr, & Georgia
Rabourn from St. Michael's Catholic
Church, Gastonia

Deaths: William Penley, Jr. friend of the parish
Gerry Adcock, long time member and
Ernie's wife

**PLEDGE
Sunday**

Pledge cards were due back by November 21. If you have not filled in and returned your card, please do so as soon as possible. The information is needed to finalize the 2011 budget figures and you must send in a marked card if you want envelopes ordered to use for your offering.



**Bishop's Visitation is
Scheduled for St. Mark's
Sunday, February 13, 2011**

**Confirmation/Inquirer's
Classes begin December 19
and continue January 9, 16,
23, 30, and February 6 for any-
one interested in learning more
about the Episcopal Church and
how to become a member.
Classes run from 5:00-7:00 each
Sunday night. If you would like
to be part of the Inquirer's
Classes, contact the Church Of-
fice or speak to Fr. Shawn.**

Children's Christmas Pageant



Plans are coming together nicely for the first St. Mark's Children's Pageant which will debut Sunday, January 2nd during the 10:30 service. The pageant is being built around the traditional Christmas Lessons and Carols service and has parts for many more readers and non-speaking "tableau" parts. Any child or young person who is interested in being part of the pageant should speak to Polly. Any adult willing to help should also do the same.

Education for Ministry (EfM)



EfM is a 4-year theological education study program designed by the University of the South in Sewanee for lay formation. “Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:18-20). This is an early admonition for Christian education, based in the tradition of the synagogue in which Jesus participated as both teacher and learner. The early Church was very concerned with providing education to its people and the *Didache* (“Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”, circa 100 CE) and other documents from the early Church give testimony to this. First in the monasteries and later, during the Middle Ages, in universities the Church demonstrated a concern with learning, scholarship, and education for adults. EfM began in that world of scholarship with the belief that truth is more important than ignorance, enlightenment more Christ-like than darkness, and education a vital part of the journey of God’s people.

St. Mark’s would like to form an Education for Ministry group to begin this in-depth study of scripture, Church history, and theology as a way for Christians to look at all they do as ministry within the Body of Christ. Each EfM group must have at least 6 people and we have several who are interested in beginning this study. Our hope is to have a fully committed group to begin in January. If you are interested in more information, contact either Fr. Shawn or Pete Brake at 704-862-0709.

Report from The Endowment Fund Board



Parish Surveys ~ The Endowment Fund Board has received your completed surveys and are currently reviewing them. Results, along with a cover letter, will be available to all parishioners in the near future. Thank you for your interest and participation.

Johnstone Memorial Fund ~ This fund was established by a gift with the intent that the interest be used to supplement the Rector’s Discretionary Fund. The original contribution of \$3,000.00 was received in 1977. The income shall be distributed to the Rector’s Discretionary Fund at least annually. There shall be no distribution of principal.

St. Mark’s Opportunity Trust ~ This fund was established by an anonymous contributor and the intent of the grantor is stated in a letter to St. Mark’s dated September 26, 1994 from Bill Palmer (who was the treasurer for St. Mark’s at that time). This fund is to be used for any purpose, as deemed appropriate at the discretion of the Vestry, except that no distributions shall be made for capital improvements or major repairs. It is anticipated that one-half of the income will be distributed on an annual basis and that the other one-half will be added to principal. No principal may be distributed. Each committee chair may request distributions from this fund for special events or items outside of that committee’s normal operating budget, but no distributions may be made without approval of the Vestry.

Edward North Thurston and Lillian Parker Thurston Memorial Fund ~ This fund was established under the will of Lillian Thurston. Mrs. Thurston died in 2001, and St. Mark’s received \$25,000.00 in December 2001. This fund is to be used for the construction of a new church building for St. Mark’s including the cost of land acquisition. The Vestry also has the right to use the fund for such other purposes as it deems best to meet the needs of the church and its mission to the community and the Diocese. If the fund is used for a new church building, an appropriate plaque honoring the donors is to be installed. It is anticipated that income will be accumulated each year and added to principal until such time that St. Mark’s builds a new church building or acquires land to do so. The Building and Grounds Committee shall make recommendations to the Vestry on the use of this fund.

Judy Hobbs, Board Member

December Schedule of Lay Servers

Vestry Person Responsible for December Lock-Up: John Watts

December 5, 2010 2nd Sunday in Advent

Layreaders: 8:00 Ed Hoerning, Pat Townsend; 10:30 Pete Brake, Ann Jordan, Chris Christy (C)
Ushers: Jeanna & Russ Tiller, Dan Gilbert
Acolytes: Stewart Butt, Jackson Cloninger, Sophia Varriale
Greeters: Jean Eaddy, Debbie Brake
Breakfast Coordinator: Don Miller
Nursery: Brenda and Brianna Gilbert
Coffee Hour: No Coffee Hour
Children's Chapel: Not held due to Family Service

December 12, 2010 3rd Sunday in Advent

Layreaders: 8:00 Liz Willett, Judy Maloney; 10:30 Alex Williamson, Cathy Young, David Burns (C)
Ushers: Celia Billings, Richard Martinez, Don Howe
Acolytes: Austin Biles, Clay Williamson, Ally Adams
Greeters: Duane & Sheila Pendleton
Breakfast Coordinator: John Anderson
Nursery: Price and Marcia Thrower
Coffee Hour: Marilyn Mecca and Carolyn Healy
Children's Chapel: Beth Sherrill, Terri Williamson, Anthony Varriale

December 19, 2010 4th Sunday in Advent

Layreaders: 8:00 Jeff Bozarth, Mary Stamey; 10:30 Ben Rudisill, Brenda Gilbert, Wendela Correia (C)
Ushers: Kevin & Peggy Knight, Vernon Vaughn
Acolytes: Elizabeth Vaughn, Reynolds Lyon, Mary Lyon

December 19 Continued:

Greeters: Lloyd & Jody While
Breakfast Coordinator: Jim Redd
Nursery: Chris & Julia Christy
Coffee Hour: Janet Rudisill, Sharon McElveen
Children's Chapel: Kristen & David John Major, Debbie Brake

December 24, 2010 Christmas Eve

Layreaders 10:30 pm Pete Brake, OT & NT Jeff Bozarth
Ushers 4:30 pm Alan Jolley, Will Thrower, Greg Adams, Greg Dills
10:30 pm Bill Seabrook, Steve Campbell

Acolytes 10:30 pm Coralie Watts, Austin Biles, Alex Campbell

December 26, 2010 1st Sunday of Christmas

Layreaders: 8:00 Mike Janik, Judy Malina; 10:30 Claude Hueitt, Joe Saunders, Fred Hadfield (C)
Ushers: Pat Miller and Tina Queen, Don Miller
Acolytes: Bess Cleveland, Duncan and Valerie Queen
Greeters: Tim and Candy Grooms
Breakfast Coordinator: No Breakfast
Nursery: Coralie and Kenna Watts
Coffee Hour: No Coffee Hour
Children's Chapel: No Children's Chapel



ALTAR FLOWERS for 2011

The Altar Flower sign-ups for 2011 are now out by the elevator. Anyone interested in a particular date to provide flowers for the altar should sign up there as soon as possible. Cost is \$43.00 per Sunday, unless you special order something from the florist.

We are St. Mark's –A Christ Centered Church

• Touching Lives • Transforming Hearts • Teaching God's Word

mark my words

ST MARKS EPISCOPAL CHURCH
258 WEST FRANKLIN BLVD.
GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA 28052
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The Diocese of W North Carolina

The Rt. Rev. G. Porter Taylor, Bishop

St. Mark's, Gastonia

The Rev. Shawn L. Griffith, Rector

The Rev. G. Patterson Cheshire, Deacon

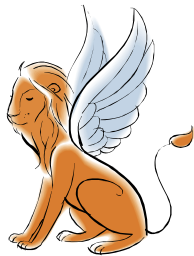
Mrs. Julia Bozarth, Director of Music

Mrs. Polly G. Redd, Director of Christian
Formation

Mrs. Trish Anderson, Business
Administrator

Mrs. Jean R. Eaddy, Church
Office Administrator

Mr. Lee Scott, Sexton



Vestry Leadership

Anne Carriel, Senior Warden

Ernie Adcock, Building & Grounds

John Anderson, Pastoral Care

Jay Barnes, Worship

David Burns, Christian Formation

Fred Hadfield, Stewardship

Mike Janik, Outreach

Kevin Knight, Junior Warden, Youth

Richard Martinez, Congregational Development

Debbie Scarborough, Communications

John Watts, Finance

Cathy Young, Parish Life

www.stmarksgastonia.org
