

Church of the Advent

Celebrating 150 Years

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Separation and Embrace

For an author, in poetry or a novel, some of the most difficult moments are those of great emotion. It is loss or the first bloom of love. A child or lover is lost and then found again. It takes real skill to set these moments down on paper with words. The words can be too sweet or not sweet enough to capture the moment. This is hard stuff. The critics will assess a novel and ask whether an emotional depth has been achieved that touches the reader.

By contrast Hollywood always had the option of just doing it. Think of the movie scenes where two are united or parted. It is the final scene in *Casablanca*. It is the romance where the leads finally rediscover each other and are able to embrace. It's the magical moment: Lauren Bacal and Humphrey Bogart. No words are necessary. It is separation in *"Gone with the Wind."* The music gets louder. It is all in the embrace or letting go and anything more would be anticlimax. At least that is how I remember the movies. These days the blockbusters are measured by how many things are blown up. What passes for an "art film" tries to avoid the happy ending.

Don't get me wrong. I enjoy the craziness of today's movies. Science fiction on a far planet is a favorite with green or purple characters. I wonder, however, if our ability to create such distant and unusual images or to make us believe that a hundred cars are blown up in a chase or a starship destroyed doesn't lose something. We do resonate with the intense emotional moments.

I was thinking of all this, how we portray separation and embrace, because it is almost Christmas. What does movie mayhem or the lack thereof or *Casablanca* for that matter have to do with Christmas? Actually it is a lot. There are different ways to look at Christmas. Many of them involve distancing ourselves from the underlying reason for the feast.

Take Santa. There is a sweetness here, undeniably. But there is also a distance. Here is one with whom most of us never really engage. The North Pole, after all, is a long

way away. The darkest night is, well, the darkest night. There is Jesus. But he is safely away in a manger a long time ago and a place far, far away. Oops Star Wars crept in. We exchange gifts but the whole process seems rather frantic. Will your gift be enough? Is it wrapped with enough ribbon. What if no gift is coming in return? We could go on at length about the meaning of gifts and whether they are so freely given. Some are but only as well as we frail humans can make an offer.

Consider instead what it is we celebrate. It is the presence of God, Immanuel. It is the gift of God being with us in spite of who we are, in spite of the extent to which we mess up. Every year we are reminded of the gift. It is given without expectation of return. There is nothing we can give to the one who comes to us since everything we have comes from this one who comes to us. However broken, we are saved and healed by the freely offered love of God.

It is a feast, for all that we have forgotten, that acknowledges our separation and then takes joy in the embrace. To fully celebrate we probably need to acknowledge both. Of course there are challenges here. One is that if he comes to all of us and is one of us, then where does that leave us in our relationship to one another. Thinking of the problem this way the simple command to love one another becomes compelling.

I will continue getting ready for Christmas. I will wrap the gifts and anticipate everything that goes with the feast from music to food to a mood of joyfulness. At the same time I will try to remember that the point is both separation and embrace. Our distance, all of ours, is cured in that scene in Bethlehem. The Incarnation. Here is the point of the story which we claim. Glory to God in the highest and peace to all of good will.

--John+

CHRISTMAS LESSONS AND CAROLS

A Service of Lessons and Carols will be held at 4:00 PM on Sunday, December 10. The service will feature choral music by the choirs and bell choirs of the First Presbyterian Church of Cape May, the Episcopal Church of the Advent and friends, congregational singing of familiar carols, and the traditional reading of the biblical Christmas story. The service, modeled on the traditional Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols first held on Christmas Eve in 1918 at King's College Chapel in Cambridge, England, has been described as one that "presents the Christmas story in an ambience of mystery, splendor, hope and joy." As always, a gala reception will be held in the church parish hall following the service.

THIRD ANNUAL SINGLES AND DOUBLES

We will warm up the winter months of January, February and March again this year with our third annual Singles and Doubles events. They will take place on the fourth Saturday of January, February and March from 6:00 to 9:00 PM.

The host house will provide the entree and there will be a sign-up sheet in the back of the church for you to sign up to bring a salad, vegetable, or dessert (or feel free to call or email the host). The cost per person will be \$5.00 payable at the door. This money goes toward the purchase of beverages, paper products and incidentals. Deb and John Lukens will kick it off the first event on Saturday, January 27, 2018. Mattie and John Francis will be our hosts on February 24, 2018, and our hosts for March 24, 2018 will be Connie Campanella and Kevin Casey. If you would like to volunteer to Co-Host any month, let the hosts know that you are interested in helping them out.

The purpose of these events is simply to socialize, to bring our 8:00 and 10:30 Advent community together and to add warmth and light to our winter months. It should be noted that in the event of snow, an event will be cancelled.

SERVICES DURING ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

December 10

Second Sunday of Advent

Holy Eucharist 8:00 & 10:30 AM

Lessons & Carols 4:00 PM Reception follows in Parish Hall

December 17

Third Sunday of Advent

Holy Eucharist 8:00 & 10:30 AM

Children's Christmas Pageant during 10:30 service

December 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Holy Eucharist 8:00 & 10:30 AM

Christmas Eve 6:30 PM – Carols & Children's Crèche

7:00 PM – Festive Choral Eucharist

December 25

Christmas Day

Holy Eucharist 10:00 AM Only

Notes from the ECM

The next breakfast meeting of the ECM will be Tuesday, December 6. The meeting begins at 8:30 AM, with coffee ready by 8:00 AM. The cost is \$5.00 and all men of the parish are invited.

Notes from the ECW

The Episcopal Church Women will hold their next meeting on Thursday, January 18, 2018 at 10:30 AM in the Parish Hall. Remember, all women of the church are members of ECW and all are invited to participate.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Our Sunday school students will present their Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 17 at the 10:30 service. Please come out and support our student participants.

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

The ECW is sponsoring a Christmas Luncheon for all church members on Tuesday, December 12, at noon at The Washington Inn. Each person may also invite one guest. The cost is \$20.00 and entree choices are: Southern Style Pork Chop, Mahi Mahi or Vegetarian. For reservations contact Carol Obligado (898-9699) or cobligado@aol.com before December 5th.

2017 Pledge Payments A reminder – to qualify for a 2017 tax deduction, all pledge payments for 2017 must be received in the church office prior to December 31, 2017.

2018 PLEDGE CARDS

If you have returned your pledge cards, your 2018 envelope boxes are in the rear of the church. If you have not returned your pledge card for the financial support of the parish, please bring it or send it to the church office as soon as possible. Envelopes have been prepared for all who returned pledge cards. If you have not pledged but would like envelopes, please contact the office at 884-3065 or adventsecretary@comcast.net.

VESTRY MEETING DECEMBER 17 AT NOON IN THE UPPER ROOM

SEAFARERS WISH LIST

- Knitted Hat & Scarf
- Razor & Shaving Cream
- Toothbrush & Toothpaste
- Shampoo & Comb
- Work Socks & Work Gloves
- Deodorant
- Mini Sewing Kit
- Pen & Stationary

Please do not send mini sizes

Founded in 1843, the Seamen's Church Institute (SCI) serves the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of 35,000 visiting seafarers on 1,500+ ships docking at terminals along the Delaware River in PA and NJ on a yearly basis. Every December SCI's chaplains and ship visitors distribute around 2,200 Christmas Ditty Bags to the merchant mariners who will be at sea during the Christmas Holidays. Our Ditty Bags bring real joy to the brave men who spend 9-10 months at sea bringing us the things we need for our everyday lives. For some, this is the only Christmas gift they receive. Imagine your Christmas morning...far away from your family, friends and familiar surroundings. Now, imagine how happy it would make *you* to find a bag of necessities, packed by people sharing in God's love, on Christmas morning! We hope you will be able to help our seafarers.

Please place your donations in the box in the church vestibule by December 3.

Eucharistic Visitor Opportunity

Visiting your fellow parishioners to bring them communion and a bit of fellowship is one of the most important ministries we share. Who do we visit? It will be those who sit next to us on Sunday but for one reason or another find it difficult to get out either for a short or long time. Who can make the visits? Any of us. This really is important work and if you would like to participate speak to Deacon Dan or Father John.

May God grant you always...A sunbeam to warm you, a moonbeam to charm you, a sheltering Angel so nothing can harm you. Laughter to cheer you. Faithful friends near you. And whenever you pray, Heaven to hear you.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Envelopes for Christmas flower donations and dedications are on the table in the Parish Hall. You may also use the form below to indicate the dedication for your memorial/thank offering. Place the form with your donation in the collection plate or mail it to the parish office. The deadline for including the names of loved ones or thank offerings in the Christmas bulletin is Sunday, December 17, 2017.

Christmas Flowers

In Memory of:

In Thanksgiving for:

Enclosed is a check made payable to Church of the Advent Altar Guild for
\$_____.

Your Name(s):

HELPING TO MAKE CHRISTMAS WISHES COME TRUE

This Christmas season, the Church of the Advent will again be partnering with the Caring for Kids "family to family" community project assisting with Christmas gifts for needy families in Cape May County.

On Sunday, December 3, we will have ornaments available with the names and gift requests for the family members. At that time **please choose an ornament, take it home and by Sunday, December 17, bring the wrapped gift to church.** Some ornaments may have more than one item listed or may list a more expensive item. You may want to partner with someone to make the purchase. *Remember to attach the ornament to the gift. It is of the utmost importance that the number on the ornament and the name of the recipient are on the gift.*

Caring for Kids will pick up the gifts from the church on Monday, December 18. Thank you in advance for opening your hearts and supporting this project. If you have any questions, call Dot Mitchell. (H) 884-4696 or (C) [973-919-6131](tel:973-919-6131).



CHRISMON ORNAMENTS

We will decorate and light our Chrismon Tree on December 24 at the end of the 10:30 service. The ornaments we use are from parish members, including many made by the Sunday school. Examples are PX, chi rho signs, angels, crosses, etc. Please feel free to make your own ornament contribution.

Cookies, cookies, cookies:

We will need a few tons of cookies for our annual hosting of the MAC House Tours on Saturday, December 2. Please make an extra batch when you are doing your holiday baking and put it in the freezer for the tour. They can be brought to the church the week before, but label them so that they don't get mixed up with the baked goods for the bazaar. Thanks

ECW CHRISTMAS BAZAAR AND LUNCHEON

The Bazaar and Luncheon will be held on December 2 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM in the Parish Hall. We would love to see our whole parish family at the bazaar. Put the date on your calendar and please don't miss it. As always, we need you and here is how you can help.

Volunteers:

Thursday, Nov. 30: Set up and decorating begins at 10:00 AM. If you are not interested in doing this, please consider coming from 12:00 noon to 4:00 PM when we will begin putting things on tables and pricing.

Friday, Dec. 1, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM: Pricing and final chores to be ready for the sale.

Saturday, Dec. 2, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM: Sales (please be there no later than 8:30 AM for morning shift); clean-up

Saturday, Dec.2, 6:00 to 8:00 PM: MAC Sales

Saturday, Dec. 2, after 8:00 PM: Return Parish Hall to order for Sunday services and pack things away after church on Sunday.

Donations:

Bake Goods -- cookies, cakes, pies, your specialties

Chance Table -- Raffle Items, gift cards

Collectibles/Grandma's Attic -- your attic treasures

Handmade & Christmas Items -- crafts, ornaments, decorations...

Jewelry -- your unwanted gems and jewels

Party Central -- Hors D'oeuvre and recipe

Luncheon -- soup or chili

Green's -- you may pre-order your fresh greens arrangements by calling Glenda Unzelmann at 443-243-7615.

Please bring your donations to the Parish Hall beginning Sunday, November 26, or contact Carol Obligado (CObligado@AOL.COM or 898-9699).