



Unexpected Gifts

One of the suggestions on this year's "Slow Down. Be Quiet. It's Advent" calendar is to make (or buy) a gift for someone who would never expect it. (The calendars will be available on the first Sunday of Advent, November 29th). The reason to make a gift for someone who would never expect it? It's an experiment in the spiritual practice of unconditional love.

In this season in which expectations can get out of proportion in lots of ways, one way to hold on to some meaning is to imitate what God does at Christmas: Give God's self to us in a form that we can begin to understand. As John 1:18 puts it: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made God known." It is a gift we could never expect, an act of unconditional love, the exact opposite of all the Santa Claus "naughty or nice" stuff. Christmas is love without condition or merit, love given because it's what God does.

To make a gift for someone who would never expect it is a self-offering, an exercise in simplicity, and an opportunity to pray for the person to whom you are giving the gift. Knitting a scarf? Pray with the stitches. Making food? Pray as you cook. It can be as simple as sending a card with a hand-written few words, perhaps to someone with whom you've had a disagreement or estrangement; maybe to someone you don't even know - someone in prison; someone who is working retail with little appreciation.

If you don't have a reading or praying discipline, one way to start is by praying the collects for Advent (you can find them on pages 211 and 212 of the Book of Common Prayer). One of the ones that I love and am a little wary of is that for the third Sunday of Advent:

Stir up your power, O God, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

I love it because of its reminder of God's bountiful grace and mercy, calling me to keep my eyes open for both of these. T

hat's another way to think about a gift for someone who doesn't expect it – as an expression of God's bountiful grace and mercy, and a reminder that we are God's bountiful grace and mercy for others.

I am wary because when God is astir in our hearts and lives, things get turned upside down (or perhaps, as our new Presiding Bishop preached at his installation, God is turning things right side up). It is also a reminder that this is a penitential season, one in which we look at the ways in which our hearts and minds are hindered – held back – by our sins of selfishness and self-centeredness which God surely intends to push away from the center, as happens when something is stirred up. Sometimes we don't like what's dredged from the bottom; but this is a season in which all can be made new.

I pray a blessed Advent for all of us, one in which our hearts are stirred, our sins forgiven – by us and by others – and in which we glimpse that unconditional love in perhaps the most unexpected ways.



**Happy Birthday
to those celebrating birthdays in December:**

Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace.

Mary Lou McGurk	12/11
Mary Stewart	12/21
Mae Mantey	12/22
Jeremy Pifer	12/28



**Happy Anniversary to all those who celebrate
anniversaries in December:**

*Give them grace to live in love and fidelity,
with care for one another.*

Jim & Linda Bersche	12/16
Malcolm & Joyce Pearce	12/23

Community Meal



More mashed potatoes!

A big Thank You to all who worked at the Community Meal in October. We served 100 people which is the largest number since we started the meals. The next Community Meal is scheduled for Thursday, December 17th. If you are planning on helping at the meal, please include your name on the sign-up sheet on the counter in Benedict Hall.

ST. NICHOLAS CELEBRATION



After our morning service on Sunday, December 6th, we will host our St. Nicholas celebration. Instead of our usual coffee hour, there will be a lasagna dinner. The rest of the menu includes salad, bread, dessert, coffee, punch, and wine.

There is a sign-up sheet in Benedict Hall if you are able to provide food & drinks.

All are welcome!!

PLEDGE INGATHERING

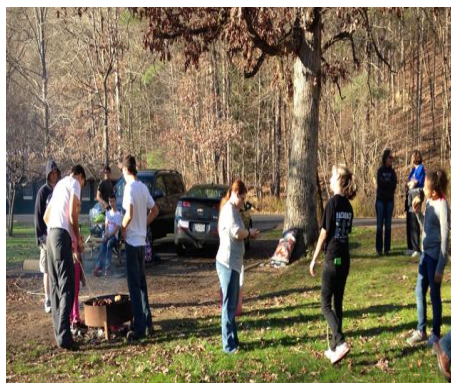
It seems more than appropriate to bless our financial pledge commitments on St. Nicholas Day. As the letter that went out with pledge forms said, St. Nicholas is the patron saint of ships and sailor (among other causes). One of the ancient symbols for the church is as the ship of Christ, bringing good news near and far. We give thanks for all the ways God has helped us to do that in the past, and look forward with hope to the ways we will journey together to new places and ports in the future.

RECTOR RETREAT

I'll be away on retreat from December 8 to the 13th, and then will spend a day with my parents before returning on December 15th - Margaret

Youth Group News

Our area youth group met with youth from Mansfield, Ashland and Shelby at Mohican State Park on a gorgeous fall day for a hike and some reflecting on creation, followed by, of course, hotdogs and s'mores!



They will return to University Circle on Martin Luther King Day, and then gather at Kalahari for the Winter Convocation in January.



Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" (*Henri Nouwen*)

2016 Winter Convocation



Mark your calendars

January 29-30, 2016 is the Winter Convocation at Kalahari Resort and Conference Center in Sandusky, Ohio. More information as well as online registration will be available at a later date.

Grace Church, Sandusky and Trinity Cathedral are Site Partners with Trinity Institute 2016: *Listen for a Change* Jan. 21-23, 2016



Racial justice is a matter of life or death; we can't afford to stay silent and tacitly accept the (mostly) invisible systems that support inequalities, create suffering, and deny human dignity. Rather, we need to have an open dialogue—a process that starts with listening.

TI2016 recognizes that many of us avoid conversations about race because they're difficult, uncomfortable, or could risk being perceived as prejudiced. The conversations in TI2016 will be learning opportunities: chances to talk skillfully about charged issues with people who might have differing perspectives. These life-giving conversations will teach us more about the racial issues of our time. Trinity Institute will be broadcast via the internet to Partner Sites around the country and the world, including Trinity Cathedral, Cleveland and Grace Church, Sandusky.

December 2015

- Episcopal Liturgical Calendar
- Benedict Chapel
- Rector
- Wider Church and Community
- Parish Events
- Canon for Mission

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 First Sunday of Advent 10:00 AM Holy Eucharist 11:15 AM Coffee hour	30 St Andrew the Apostle Diocesan Staff	1 10:00 AM Clergy Advent Day	2 9:00 AM Study group 10:30 AM Office til noon 12:00 PM Narcotics Anon	3 11:15 AM Spiritual Direction	4 8:30 AM Vestry	5 Diocesan Council Retreat
6 Second Sunday of Advent 10:00 AM Holy Eucharist 11:15 AM St. Nicholas Party	7 Diocesan Staff	8 Rector Retreat	9 12:00 PM Narcotics Anon	10	11	12
13 Rector Retreat Third Sunday of Advent 10:00 AM Holy Eucharist 11:15 AM Coffee hour	14	15	16 9:00 AM Study group 10:30 AM Office til noon 12:00 PM Narcotics Anon 3:00 PM Advent Quiet AF-ternoon	17 Diocesan Staff 5:00 PM Community Meal	18 10:00 AM Office til 11 11:15 AM Twilight Gardens	19
20 Fourth Sunday of Advent 10:00 AM Holy Eucharist 11:15 AM Greening of the Church	21 Diocesan Staff St Thomas the Apostle	22 Rector Sabbath	23 9:00 AM Study group 10:30 AM Office til noon 12:00 PM Narcotics Anon	24 Christmas Eve 7:00 PM Christmas Eve Worship	25 Office closed Christmas Day	26 St Stephen, ...con and Martyr
27 Office closed First Sunday in Christmas 10:00 AM Holy Eucharist 11:15 AM Coffee hour	28 St John, Apo...t (transferred)	29 The Holy Inn...(transferred)	30 12:00 PM Narcotics Anon	31 The Holy Name	1	2

Scripture Readings for December 2015

Second Sunday of Advent, Dec. 6:

Malachi 3:1-4; Canticle 4;
Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

Third Sunday of Advent, Dec. 13:

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Canticle 9;
Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 20:

Micah 5:2-5a; Canticle 3;
Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24:

Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97;
Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Day, Dec. 25:

Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98;
Hebrews 1:1-4; John 1:1-14

1st Sunday After Christmas Day, Dec. 27:

Exodus 33:18-23; Psalm 92
1 John 1:1-9; John 21:19-24

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