



December 2023: The Crossed Keys

Rector's Writing : Advent

Advent is the season of reflective preparation for Christ's Nativity at Christmas and Christ's expected return in the Second Coming.

"God of hope, I look to you with an open heart and yearning spirit. During this Advent season, I will keep alert and awake, listening for your word and keeping to your precepts. My hope is in you."
~ Matthew Kelly

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

The season of Advent lasts four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Each year, Advent begins on a Sunday between November 27th and December 3rd.

We know that the Advent season focuses on expectation and think it serves as an anticipation of Christ's birth in the season leading up to Christmas. This is part of the story, but there's more to Advent.

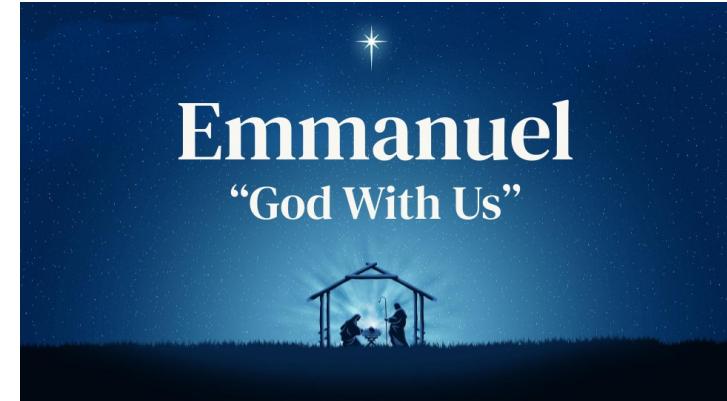
The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," which translates to the Greek word *parousia*. Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God's incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1), his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (John 1:29), and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1). During this season of preparation, Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting to prepare for this celebration; originally, there was little connection between Advent and Christmas.

By the 6th century Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the "coming" they had in mind was not Christ's first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but his second coming in the clouds as the judge of the world. The Advent season was not explicitly linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas until the Middle Ages.

Advent symbolizes the church's present situation in these "last days" (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2) as God's people wait for the return of Christ in glory to consummate his eternal kingdom. The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: in exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah. Israel looked back to God's past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus, and on this basis, they called for God once again to act for them. In the same way, the church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ's coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ's kingdom when he returns for his people.

In this light, the Advent hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" perfectly represents the church's cry during the Advent season:

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*



Advent (continued from page 1)

While Israel would have sung the song in expectation of Christ's first coming, the church now sings the song to commemorate the first coming and expects the second coming in the future.

To balance the two elements of remembrance and anticipation, the first two Sundays in Advent (through December 16th) look forward to Christ's second coming, and the last two Sundays (December 17th – 24th) look backward to remember Christ's first coming. Over the course of the four weeks, Scripture readings move from passages about Christ's return in judgment to Old Testament passages about the expectation of the coming Messiah to New Testament passages about the announcements of Christ's arrival by John the Baptist and the Angels.

While it is challenging to keep in mind with holiday celebrations, shopping, lights and decorations, and joyful carols, Advent is intended to be a season of fasting, much like Lent, and there are a variety of ways that this time of reflection works itself out in the season. The violence and evil in the world today causes us to cry out to God to make things right—to put death's dark shadows to flight. Our own sinfulness and need for grace lead us to pray for the Holy Spirit to renew his work in conforming us into the image of Christ.

The Roman Catholic catechism describes Advent spirituality beautifully: "When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, 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.'"

Blessings to you all during this glorious Advent season.

~Joel



Unknown Author. 2023. <https://www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/view-image.php?image=375905&picture=baby-jesus-nativity>.



Unknown Author. 2023. <https://lovinggracedigital.company.site/The-Second-Coming-Of-Jesus-Christ-Bundle-p43437853>.

Mike's Insight

"And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two..." Mark 6:7 ESV

If you're like me, you haven't spent much time over the years thinking about the leadership of the Episcopal Church. I think frequently about my home church of St. Peter's, and the family of believers with whom I worship, but I have usually kept my thinking local, and have not spent much time pondering what is happening at the Diocesan Office in Casper or in the Presiding Bishop Curry's Office in New York City. Each year the Bishop of the Diocese of Wyoming visits St. Peter's; we have a wonderful Sunday service with confirmations, and then return to our routines with little thought of the Diocesan Office until the next visit. Good or bad - I'm not sure, but when things are running smoothly at St. Peter's, our contact with the folks in Casper is typically infrequent. That all changed recently with the Title IV complaint against Bishop Chandler. Bishop Chandler is now on administrative leave while the complaint is being processed. Though our bishop is on administrative leave, it doesn't mean our diocese is without leadership. Far from it. When the bishop is indisposed, leadership in the Diocese turns to the Standing Committee as the ecclesiastical authority. Our standing committee president is Rev. Megan Nickels. In Bishop Chandler's absence, Meg has been hard at work as the administrative authority in the diocese. Serving on the Standing committee with Rev. Nickels are: Rev. Pamela Bright, Rev. Camie Dewey, Linda McElwain, Vernon Miller and our own Mary Beth Evers.

The second arm of leadership in the diocese is the Diocesan Council, which is akin to a board of directors. I have been on the Diocesan Council for the last year, serving with Kim McAtee, Shirley Wildman, Taimi Kuiva, Rev. Walt Seeley, Rev. Amy Mayes, several other ex-officio members and representatives from each of the six regions. While Bishop Chandler is on leave, the Standing Committee, the Diocesan Council, and the Diocesan staff, are working to manage the affairs of the Diocese, and provide leadership in this time of flux.

A goal of the Standing Committee and the Diocesan staff is to visit every church in our diocese in the next three months. Members of the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, and Staff will head out in pairs, one clergy, one lay, to visit each church in a spirit of friendship and connection. Mary Beth and I will be one of the teams; our first visit will be on December 31, to St. Luke's in Buffalo. In January we will visit Christ Church in Newcastle and St. Francis on the Prairie in Wright. In February, we will be at All Soul's in Kaycee. Additionally, I will be teamed with a Diocesan staff member for a visit to the Church of the Good Shepherd in Sundance on December 10th.

The idea behind these visits is to strengthen the bonds between our churches and the diocesan leadership and staff and to have an opportunity for conversation and questions. Our visits will be more about listening than talking, and will be made with the goal of connecting our churches with the folks that are leading the diocese. As we wait for the outcome of Bishop Chandler's Title IV investigation, please know that in this time of waiting the Diocese is not stuck in neutral; the leadership team and staff are working together to carry on the vision for the diocese, and to gather information from all of the Episcopal churches across the state. We will emerge from our difficulties united and more familiar with our fellow pilgrims on this journey. When we emerge from the Bishop's absence, we will be stronger and closer and more ready to face challenges as they are presented in God's strong and unshakable kingdom.

As we walk together this journey before us, we thank You, God, for setting us to tasks which demand our best efforts. We thank You, God, for disappointments that remind us to turn first to You - our Source of strength and guidance. Amen.

~Mike



Bowen, Margaret. 2023. Voice Concert Performers (left) Bazaar Auction Table (right). Author's Personal Collection.

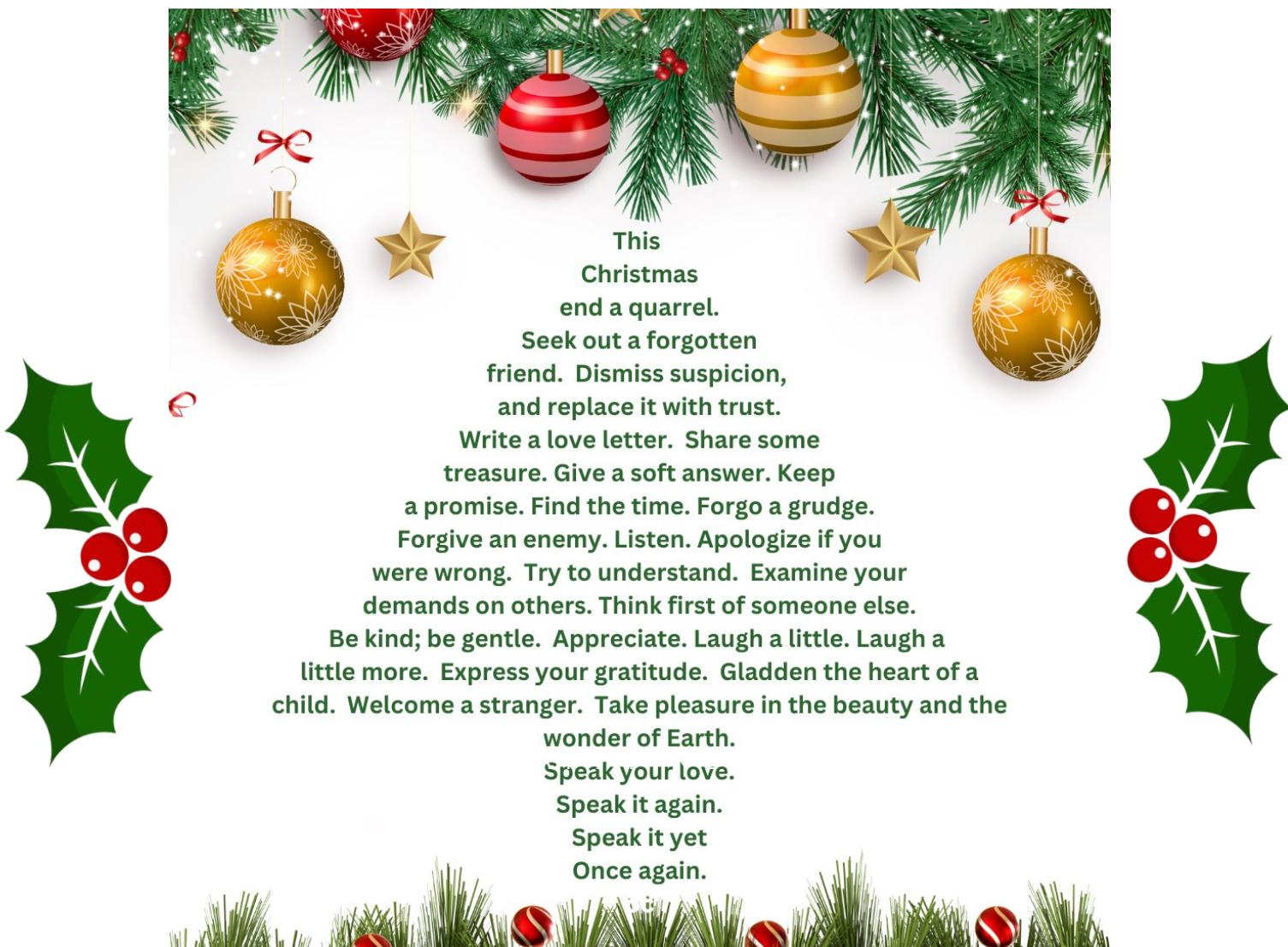
Juanita's Word

The Gift of Advent: True Hope

'Tis the season of overwhelming demands: full calendars, shopping for the perfect gifts, baking sweet treats, children's performances, parties, and the house strewn with wrapping paper and bows. The 'To Due' List is endless! Then there is Advent. In the midst of all the Christmas Craziness, we are invited to a place and time filled with 'True Hope'. In Advent, we are invited to ponder and celebrate all the gifts that Christ's incarnation brings: true hope of freedom, peace, joy, and love. These are the gifts Jesus offers to each one of us. Advent is a perfect time to step away from the Christmas Crazies for just a bit and unwrap our gifts from Christ. What would it look like to set aside five minutes a day just to ponder the hope of true freedom? the hope of true peace? or the hope of true joy? What if every single one of us took a couple of minutes to explore Christ's gift of sacrificial Love? This is the gift of Advent. We all need the hope; the hope of a perfect baby who was born to bring eternal Love.

Romans 15:12-14 New Living Translation

- 12 And in another place Isaiah said, "The heir to David's throne will come, and he will rule over the Gentiles. They will place their hope on him."
- 13 I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 14 I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them.



I AM A CHILD OF GOD

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. Our faith in Jesus Christ confirms our identity as a CHILD OF GOD. Gal. 3:26

As we begin Advent and prepare our hearts and lives to welcome the Greatest Gift ever given – God's only son, Jesus, the St. Peter's Kids will be creating a display in the Parish Hall entitled **I AM A CHILD OF GOD!** As we explore this amazing truth, we will be adding our photographs to the display. As you know, this wonderful truth knows no age boundaries, so each of you is invited to add your photo to the board. To make this as easy as possible, we will have a CHILD OF GOD photo 'booth' during Coffee Hour the first 3 Sundays in December so everyone can proclaim their membership in the family of God! (This invitation extends to any and all in your family of God. Please feel free to bring in photos of other children of God that are dear to you.)

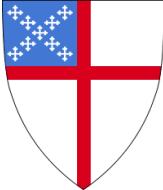
How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

~1 John 3:1



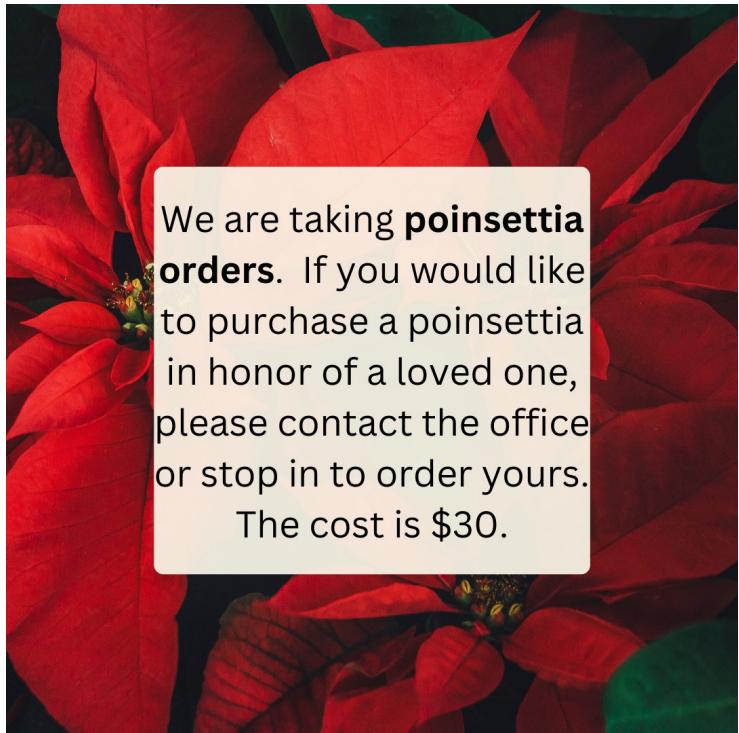
Bowen, Margaret. 2023. Children's Choir. Author's Personal Collection.

St. Peter's Contacts

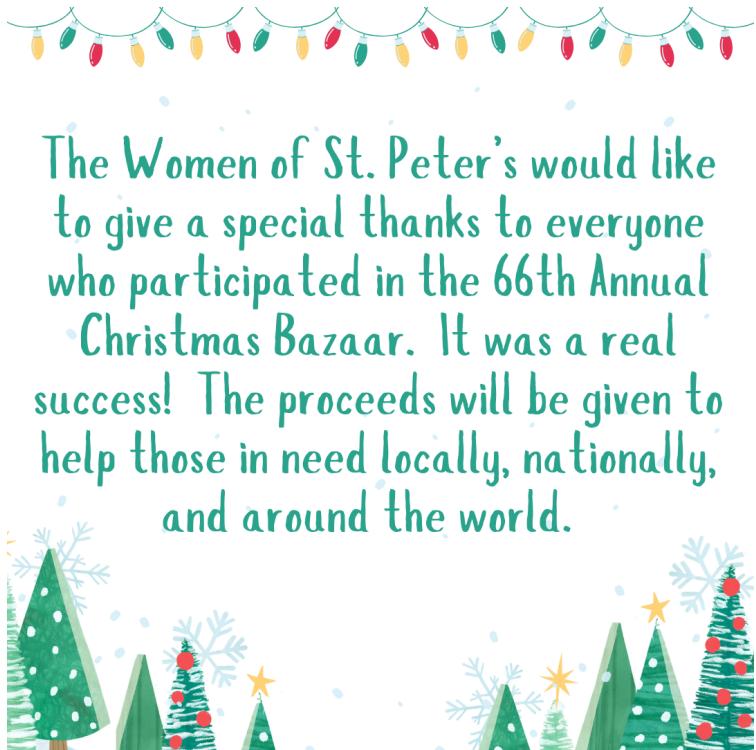
Rector	Vestry 2023	Contact Information
Rev. Joel Dingman joel@stpeterssheridan.com 307.670.0072	1 Michelena Bishop, Lacasa Sr. Warden 2 Farman, Dane Jr. Warden 3 Exon, Duffy 4 Sturtevant, Nathan 5 Thoney, Mark 6 Hills, Suzie	lacasamichelena@gmail.com danefaman@gmail.com <i>(note: there is intentionally no "r")</i> mudlark369@yahoo.com info@northernwyomingsurveys.com mark@thoney.net suzie.schatz@gmail.com
Deacon Rev. Juanita Smith-Eisenach rev.juanitadsmith@gmail.com 307.673.4928 307.751-6250	7 Nicolarsen, Karen 8 Rossa, Liz 9 St. John, Bobby 10 Mentock, Sarah 11 VanDyke, Jacee 12 Bilyeu, Brandi	nicokada@fiberpipe.net rossa@bresnan.net bhhsbsj@sheridan.k12.wy.us mentock@wyoming.com jacee.vandyke@gmail.com bbilyeu16@gmail.com
Priest Rev. Michael Evers mike@stpeterssheridan.com 307.763.0746		
Senior Warden Lacasa Bishop Michelena lacasamichelena@gmail.com		
Junior Warden Dane Farman danefaman@gmail.com		
Music Ministry Coordinator Suzie Hills suzie.schatz@gmail.com 307.763.0525		<p>We are taking poinsettia orders. If you would like to purchase a poinsettia in honor of a loved one, please contact the office or stop in to order yours. The cost is \$30.</p>

Church Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday, 9-3



Date	Event	Time	Location
Each Wednesday/ Sunday	Bible Study	1:30-3:00 p.m./ 9:00 -9:45 a.m.	Parish Hall/ Library
Every Tuesday	Healing Service EFM Class	12:10 p.m. 6:00-8:30 p.m.	Chapel Parish Hall & Upstairs
Every Sunday	Young Men's D- Group Children's Sunday School	9:00-9:45 a.m.	Upstairs Downstairs
Thursday, Dec. 7,14, & 21	RED DOOR is open	10 a.m.—2 p.m.	Downstairs
Wed, Dec. 6 & 20	Men's Breakfast	6:30 a.m.	Parish Hall
Saturday, Dec. 16	Mug and Muffin	3:00-5:00 p.m.	Juanita's House
Sunday, Dec. 10	Christmas Open House	2:00-5:00 p.m.	Dingman's House
Sunday , Dec. 17	Birney	3:00 p.m.	The Birney Church
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Outreach Committee Meeting	5:00 p.m.	Library
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Vestry Meeting	5:30 p.m.	Parish Hall
Sunday, Dec. 24	Christmas Eve Services	4:00 p.m./ 9:00 p.m.	Sanctuary
Monday, Dec. 25	Christmas Day Service	9:00 a.m.	Sanctuary
Dec. 25—Dec. 29, Jan. 1	Offices closed		



The Women of St. Peter's would like to give a special thanks to everyone who participated in the 66th Annual Christmas Bazaar. It was a real success! The proceeds will be given to help those in need locally, nationally, and around the world.



St. Peter's



I South Tschirgi Street, Sheridan
WY 82801

Phone: 307-674-7655

Email: stpeterssheridan@gmail.com