



the Good News

AUGUST 2026 • ISSUE NO. IV

August 7, 6:30-9:00 PM

Women of HI: Mahjong Night

August 9, 10:15 AM-12:30 PM

Back to School Bash

August 10, 6:00 PM

Reading Connections

August 29, 12:00-4:00 PM

HIYA: Pool Party

August 12, 5:30-7:00 PM

**Women of HI: Corks, Colas
& Conversation**

August 21, 7:30 AM

**Men of HI:
Third Friday Breakfast**

August 30, 9:00-10:00 AM

**Coffee for Parents of
Young Children**

September 13, 1:35 PM

Men of HI: Braves Game

September 27, 11:15 AM

**Church of the Common Ground
Sandwich Build**

August 16, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM

Sr. Youth Group

August 16, 4:00-6:00 PM

Jr. Youth Group

September 8, 6:30 PM

Men's Dinner and a Book

September 9, 5:30-7:00 PM

GLOW



Next Steps in our Master Plan

The Rev. Dr. Bill Murray • Rector

Just over a year ago, our architect Hank Houser presented the Masterplan. It was the culmination of over a year of work led by Brian and Marie Thomas and the Masterplan Team. They spent an enormous amount of time interviewing and speaking with almost every person in the parish. Over 40 groups and committees in the church as well as multiple large group meetings.

Unfortunately, no one has won the lottery or offered us \$12 million to do it all! So, we have been working to choose which areas we want to focus on. The Vestry and the Building and Renovation Team agreed that we have three main areas that need our attention.

First, we want to renovate our kitchen and parish hall areas. These are literally our oldest buildings. The kitchen was used for the church and served our school as the cafeteria for 60 years! The parish hall served as our church for the first decade of its life. They have been wonderful spaces. Now they deserve to be repaired and renewed.

Second, the education wing is coming to the end of its service life. The roof and HVAC need to be replaced, the windows have settled and need to be repaired, the plumbing is shot, there is almost no insulation, and the bathrooms are gross. Plus, the rooms are just darker than the rest of our facilities. We want to improve these spaces and give them a new lease on life as our Children's Education Wing.

The third area is the church itself. While the Narthex and entry areas were all rebuilt in 2012, the nave has not had a full renovation since 1997! There are lots of needs that can be addressed. Since this is the area we all enjoy every week, we want it to be lovely and well cared for.

While we had many more needs, these are the spaces that have become our focus. This fall, we will work with Hank Houser and his team to dive into the details of redeveloping those three areas. We are hiring an acoustician to help with the sound needs in the church and a kitchen consultant to help us get the right equipment and layout.

We will also be coming back to the parish to discuss different ideas as we refine our vision. The masterplan was about making sure we had an idea of all our needs. Now, we will focus on meeting those hopes and dreams in a Phase One. It will be a fun conversation to find ways to help us grow as a church while staying within our budget and being good stewards of what we have been given.

Please pray for the Building and Renovation Committee and for our church as we start this process to grow this community and renew our spaces!

Who Do People Say That We Are?

The Rev. T. Stewart Lucas • Vicar

In his article, Bill writes about the exciting work ahead as we consider how best to renew spaces that have served us faithfully for decades. They have sheltered worship, learning, fellowship, grief, celebration, Advent-wreath making, and lots of potluck suppers.

So as we prepare to care for our buildings, I have been thinking: *How do we care for the people who fill them?*

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" He was going deeper than reputation: Who am I to you, and what difference does that make in the way you live?

Who do people say that we are—the people of Holy Innocents?

Some might say that we are the church with the big school. They might mention our beautiful worship and stunning music, our role in establishing the Community Assistance Center and Horizons Atlanta, or our children and youth programs, which continue to drive growth and vitality.

Others might describe us as a gathering place for Sandy Springs in times of joy and sorrow. Perhaps they notice our diversity and wide welcome of people wherever they are, whatever questions they carry, and whatever road brought here. Perhaps they see that women and men, young and old, are invited and encouraged to lead.

We are proud of all those answers.

But I also hope people say this about Holy Innocents:

This is a church where people take care of each other.

From the beginning of life to its end, in celebration and struggle, we want to be a community in which no one must go it alone. Pastoral care is not simply one program among many. It is part of our identity as the Body of Christ. When one rejoices, we all rejoice. When one suffers, we all share the burden.

This summer, I have been attending meetings here of Community of Hope International, which equips laypeople for pastoral caregiving through prayer, spiritual formation, compassionate listening, and faithful presence. These caregivers are not there to fix people or offer easy answers. They are trained to listen, remain present, and help others recognize that God is with them in whatever they are facing. I am deeply grateful for the members of Holy Innocents who have completed months of training for this ministry.

Community of Hope is one important expression of care, but it is far from the only one.

Every Monday, our intercessory prayer group gathers to pray for those who have requested it. Bible studies become small communities whose members notice when someone is missing, deliver meals, make calls, and sit together in hospital waiting rooms. Our choir supports its members as faithfully as it makes music.

The St. Joseph of Arimathea ministry offers hospitality to grieving families. Lay Eucharistic Visitors carry Communion to those unable to worship in person. The altar and flower

guilds make baptisms, weddings, funerals, and Sunday worship possible while sharing their own joys, concerns, and prayers.

Bill and I are always available and genuinely want to be with you. Please call us when you are in the hospital, when someone you love has died, or when you simply need someone to listen and pray.



But a church does not become a caring community through its clergy alone. It takes all of us.

This is not a chastisement. It is a reminder and an invitation. We care for one another when we notice, make the call, send the note, bring the casserole, attend the funeral, sit quietly with someone, or celebrate with genuine joy. We care for one another when we let the church know that help is needed and allow others to care.

This fall, consider joining one of these ministries of prayer, presence, hospitality, and care. You do not need perfect words. The greatest gift is simply showing up.

Our buildings matter. They hold our common life. And... the Church is made of people who show up for one another.

May that always be part of the answer when people ask, "Who do they say that we are?"

NEWCOMERS' DINNER

SEPTEMBER 29, 6:00 PM

Join the Holy Innocents' Church Clergy, Vestry, and Welcome Team for a Dinner Party in your honor! Enjoy delicious food, friendly faces, and good conversation as we gather in community and make new friends.

Hosted by
Meredith & Terrell Johnson
5600 Whitner Dr
Atlanta, GA 30327

We can't wait to welcome you! RSVP online.

Memorial Gifts

RECEIVED MAY 8-JULY 8
IN MEMORY OF

Dot Williams

Caroline and Gene DuRant

IN MEMORY OF

Kim Ellis

Mary Vaughan

IN MEMORY OF

Susan Smith

Jean and Jack Reeves

Upcoming Events

WOHI: Corks, Colas & Conversation

AUGUST 12, 5:30-7:00 PM

Slow down and spend an evening catching up with friends and meeting new ones. Enjoy light refreshments, meaningful conversation, and the chance to connect with women from across the parish in a relaxed, welcoming setting. All women are invited!

Contact: Jenny Cantrell
(jennypcan@aol.com)

Acolyte Training Party

AUGUST 16, 9:00-10:00 AM

Join us for breakfast and acolyte training! Students in grades 6-12 are invited to learn, or refresh, the basics of serving as an acolyte at HIEC. Whether you're new to serving or have years of experience, this is a great opportunity to connect with other acolytes and prepare for the year ahead. RSVP on Realm.

Contact: Megan Atkinson
(matkinson@holynnocents.org)

HIYA: Pool Party

AUGUST 29, 12:00-4:00 PM

Young adults in their 20s and 30s are invited to kick off college football season at a pool party at Jenny Cantrell's home! Bring your towel, sunscreen, and a friend!

Contact: Megan Atkinson
(matkinson@holynnocents.org)

Parents of Young Children Coffee

AUGUST 30, 9:00-10:00 AM • PARLOR

Parents and caregivers of children aged 4 and under are invited to a cozy coffee hour to connect and get to know one another. This gathering is open to members, newcomers, and families baptized within the last three years. No agenda, just coffee, hot breakfast, conversation, and community.

Contact: Renee Stephens
(rstephens@holynnocents.org)

Men's Dinner & a Book

SEPTEMBER 8, 6:30 PM

The next book is *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention—and How to Think Deeply Again* by Johann Hari. Rolf Meinhold is hosting. We will be meeting at the church. If you would like to attend, please contact Jeremy Webber for details. All men are included and invited.

Contact: Jeremy Webber
(jhwebber@gmail.com)

GLOW

SEPTEMBER 9 DINNER AT 5:30 PM

PROGRAM 6:00 - 7:00 PM

Come and GLOW with us as we kick off a new year with a focus on spiritual renewal and grounding. Children will explore four core spiritual disciplines that we'll build on all year long and they'll get to take home a fun, hands-on reminder they create themselves! For kids in PreK-5th grade. Come hungry for food, fun, and faith!

Men of HI: Braves Game

SEPTEMBER 13, 1:35 PM

Cheer on the Atlanta Braves with the Men of HI! Tickets are \$33 each, and space is limited to 30 participants. Payments may be made online or by cash/check in the office. **Contact:** Pat Chesser
(patrickchesser@outlook.com)

CCG: Sandwich Build

SEPTEMBER 27, 11:15 AM

Please help us make sandwiches for our unhoused siblings at the Church of the Common. If you would like to help deliver the lunches and worship with our friends, we will leave at 12:15 PM and will return to HIEC after the service. **Contact:** Robin Hickey
(hickeyss5040@gmail.com)



More Than a Church, a Family

Genevieve D'Amore • *Parishioner*

Singing in the church choir and serving as an acolyte have been among the greatest blessings of my life. What started as a way to help during Sunday worship has grown into something much deeper. It has strengthened my faith, brought me wonderful friendships, and given me a place where I feel I truly belong.

The choir has shown me the unique joy that music brings to worship. There is something special about lifting our voices together in worship and sharing music with the congregation. What some may not realize is that the choir is a close-knit group that could not be more welcoming to new members. Being the youngest member initially felt intimidating, but the choir helped make me feel like I belonged from the very beginning. Serving as an acolyte has been just as meaningful. It has taught me that even simple acts, like lighting the candles or carrying the cross, are beautiful expressions of devotion. Serving alongside the other acolytes has led to friendships that mean so much to me. These experiences inspired me to write a middle-grade illustrated book about being an acolyte titled *The Sunday Squad: Torches, Trouble, and Teamwork*. When it's published, I hope it will help children and their families discover the joy of serving the church and encourage them to get more involved.

The HIEC community is what makes these experiences so incredibly meaningful. From our wonderful clergy and dedicated ministry directors to our supportive parishioners, everyone has encouraged me to grow in faith and service. Through their kindness, I have seen God's love in action. I am grateful for every opportunity I have had to serve, sing, and strengthen my relationship with God. This church has given me far more than a place to worship; it has given me a family.



Brenda Letzler Receives the Mitzi O'Connell Care and Compassion Award

Lori Agin • *Community Assistance Center*

About every Wednesday you can find Brenda Letzler volunteering at the Community Assistance Center's (CAC) Financial Assistance Office. From rent and utility assistance to referrals and community resources, Brenda helps families find support and take steps toward financial stability.

A former environmental engineer who also volunteered in the public school system as her children grew, Brenda and her husband have been active members of the Sandy Springs community for nearly 30 years while raising their three children.

Today, Brenda serves on CAC's Financial Assistance Intake Team, meeting one-on-one with clients to understand their financial situation and challenges so she can determine which CAC services and programs and those of our community partners can best help them address immediate needs and move the closer to regaining financial stability. Additionally, she works with clients on required documentation and forms needed to secure assistance, schedules appointments and makes referrals to other resources when those seeking assistance live outside of CAC's service areas.

Her compassion, empathy, and commitment to preserving client dignity recently earned her the 2026 Mitzi O'Connell Care and Compassion Award at this year's CAC Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.

Meet Brenda

What inspired you to begin volunteering with CAC, and what keeps you coming back after 14 years?

I first learned about CAC through my church, Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church, where I met CAC's founder and first CEO Tamara Carerra. My family volunteered with CAC's holiday program and later my daughter volunteered regularly during a free class period in high school. It was then that I learned more about CAC's impact on local families and decided to get more involved when my youngest went to college.

Over the years, I've stayed involved because I believe in CAC's mission and the way the organization serves people. I really like how CAC is structured, how well they document client information, capture each family's situation, and try to help them. Staff are always open to ideas on how to change or improve processes.

The most meaningful part of volunteering is being part of the organization's ability to help people move through a difficult or emergency situation.



Is there anything you have learned about CAC clients or their emergencies that surprise you?

Many people seeking help are already working one or even two jobs. Often, it only takes just one unexpected emergency such as a medical issue, job loss, or car repair for a family to fall behind and reach out for assistance. Another reality is how quickly people's housing situations can change. Many apartment companies move quickly toward eviction when rent payments are missed.

How have you seen CAC evolve over the years?

CAC has grown in many important ways. The organization has developed stronger systems and criteria for providing assistance and has also increased the amount of support to help families whose housing costs have increased.

What stands out most to me is CAC's focus on treating every client with dignity and respect. It's not just about providing services, but it is giving people the opportunity to use these services with dignity. For example, families shop at one of our mini-markets instead of receiving pre-packaged food bags.

What does receiving the Mitzi O'Connell Care and Compassion Award mean to you?

I was very surprised and humbled to receive this award. It inspires me to do an even better job in the work I do here to serve our clients.

There are many ways to get involved with CAC and use your time and talent. We invite you to learn more and sign up at ourcac.org/volunteer.



A New Season Together

Dock Anderson • *Director of Music*

As I begin my ministry at Holy Innocents, I want to thank you for the warm welcome you have extended to Barry and I. These first few weeks have already confirmed what drew us here: a congregation that loves worship, values music, and genuinely cares for one another. It is a privilege to join you.

It was a joy to see so many of you at Patriotic Concert and luncheon. The wonderful attendance and enthusiastic response made it a memorable afternoon, and I was especially grateful to share the program with my friend, Cantor Beth Schafer of Temple Sinai. It was a beautiful reminder that music has a unique way of bringing people together.

Now our attention turns to the beginning of a new choir season. The **Chancel Choir** resumes rehearsals in August, meeting on **Thursdays from 7:00–8:30 PM through September 10**, before returning to our regular **Wednesday evening schedule on September 16**.

If you've ever thought about singing in the choir, I hope you'll consider joining us. We have openings in every section, and there is always room for another voice. Whether you're an experienced choral singer or returning after some time away, you will be warmly welcomed.

I'm especially looking forward to our **Choir Retreat on Saturday, August 15, from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM**. Lunch will be provided, and we are delighted to welcome **Dr. Dawn Neely**, Professor of Voice and Director of the Opera Workshop at the University of West Georgia, as our guest clinician. It will be a wonderful day of learning, singing, fellowship, and preparing for the season ahead.

Our **Handbell Choir** will also resume rehearsals on Sundays, and we are looking for a few new ringers. While confident music readers often enjoy handbells, you don't have to be an expert to participate successfully. If you've ever been curious, we'd love to have you give it a try.

I'm also excited to share that plans for our **Friends of Music Concert Series** are nearly complete, with the full season to be announced in the coming weeks. One date you can already place on your calendar is **December 13**, when we welcome the **Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus** back to HIEC for an encore performance following their outstanding concert last season.

Finally, if we haven't yet had the opportunity to meet, I hope you'll introduce yourself. I'd love to hear about your favorite hymns, the music that has shaped your faith, and your hopes for the future of music at Holy Innocents. Together, I believe we can continue building a music ministry that enriches our worship, welcomes new people, and brings glory to God.





The seeds planted in
this *community* kept
growing even when I
wasn't tending to them.

Coming Home

Ansel Best • Youth Ministry Intern

I still remember being dropped off at Holy Innocents every Sunday as a kid. My parents did their best to involve me in church, but for a long time I didn't truly understand what it meant to open my heart to Christ. HIEC was simply a place I went on Sundays, sang in the former youth choir, and occasionally a youth event or two. That changed the summer before I left for college, when I volunteered at Vacation Bible School as a counselor for the fourth and fifth grade groups. What happened that week is honestly hard to put into words. Somewhere between the games, the lessons, and watching kids encounter God's love for the first time, I had my own encounter. I saw what it looked like to truly serve God's people, and something in me was never the same after that.

College brought its own set of challenges. I attended a military college where I faced some of the darkest seasons of my faith, and there were moments where I questioned everything. But the foundation that was quietly being built here at Holy Innocents never left, and the seeds planted in this community kept growing even when I wasn't tending to them. Coming back this summer as an intern feels less like a new chapter and more like coming home. Getting to sit across from our youth and young adults, hearing their stories, and watching them wrestle with their faith reminds me constantly of who I was sitting in those same seats not too long ago. I am so excited for the opportunity to serve the youth and young adults program, and I cannot wait to see where God takes us this year!



A Place to Belong: Introducing Senior Youth Group

Megan Atkinson • Director of Youth, Young Adults, and Family Ministries

As another school year begins, we're excited to introduce a new opportunity designed especially for our high school students. In a season of life filled with demanding schedules, extracurricular activities, jobs, college preparation, and countless responsibilities, it can be difficult for teens to find time to slow down and stay connected to their church community. Our hope is that this new Senior Youth Group gathering will provide a place where they can do just that.

These new, special gatherings will take place after worship on select Sundays from 11:30 AM–1:00 PM. With free food, meaningful conversation, and time to simply be together, these gatherings are designed to help our high school students build lasting friendships, deepen their faith, and experience a true sense of belonging within our church family.

Our prayer is that this group becomes a safe, judgment-free space where students can ask honest questions, encourage one another, share their faith, and talk through the challenges they face as they navigate high school. Along with these lunches, we'll also offer special events throughout the school year

that continue to strengthen community and create opportunities for fun, service, and spiritual growth.

This year's youth theme comes from 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline." As our students encounter new experiences and face the pressures of growing up, we want to remind them that they never have to do it alone and they can live unashamed lives for God. God has equipped them with courage, surrounded them with a loving community, and calls them to live boldly in their faith. Our prayer is that every student who walks through our doors will leave knowing they are deeply loved by God, supported by their church family, and empowered to live unashamed for Christ.

Our first Senior Youth Group Lunch will be Sunday, August 16, from 11:30 AM–1:00 PM. All high school students and their friends are invited! Please RSVP through our church website or the Youth Newsletter, which returns on Tuesdays beginning in August. We can't wait to see what God has in store next for our youth ministry!

Summer Grace, New Beginnings

Renee Stephens • *Director of Membership and Children's Ministries*

Summer has a way of reminding us of God's goodness. The longer days invite us to slow down, to spend time with family and friends, to enjoy creation, and to find moments of rest. In the midst of vacations, backyard gatherings, and evenings that seem to stretch a little longer, we are reminded that God calls us not only to work but also to Sabbath, to be renewed in body, mind, and spirit.

Yet summer is also a season of preparation. Even as we enjoy these days of refreshment, we begin to look ahead with anticipation. A new school year brings fresh opportunities, new friendships, and the chance to grow in wisdom and faith. Just as God makes all things new, each school year is an invitation to begin again with hope, courage, and confidence that Christ walks beside us every step of the way.

Our kids have already experienced so much joy this summer. **Vacation Bible School** was truly a celebration of God's love in action. With 91 children registered, more than 50 youth volunteers, and 20 dedicated adults serving together, our campus was filled with laughter, music, learning, and the unmistakable presence of the Holy Spirit. It was inspiring to watch multiple generations come together, sharing their gifts and creating a week that was both joyful and spiritually transformative. We give thanks for every child, volunteer, leader, and family who made VBS such a remarkable success.

That spirit of generosity has continued beyond VBS. Together, we collected 591 school supplies to support Solidarity Pantry's efforts to ensure children in our community begin the school year with the

tools they need to learn and thrive. Every notebook, pencil, backpack, and box of crayons is more than a supply. It is a tangible reminder that God's love is shared through caring hands and generous hearts.

As we continue our journey through these summer months, we have lots of fun still in store. On July 29th, we celebrated **Christmas in July** with dinner, a snow machine, and plenty of festive Christmas fun for all ages. The joyful evening reminded us that the hope and wonder of Christ's birth are worth celebrating in every season.

Then, as the school year begins, we invite everyone to join us on Sunday, August 9th, for our **Back to School Celebration**. We'll gather to bless backpacks and all those beginning a new academic year, including students, teachers, administrators, and school staff, entrusting them to God's care and guidance. After worship, we'll continue the celebration with a church wide picnic and a foam party, offering a joyful opportunity for fellowship as we launch into a new season together.

As summer gently gives way to fall, may we carry with us the rest we have received, the joy we have shared, and the hope that God continues to make all things new. Whether you're returning to the classroom, cheering on a student, serving in our community, or simply embracing the rhythms of a new season, may you remember that the God who refreshes us in times of rest also equips us for every new beginning. May this season be filled with renewed hearts, joyful service, and the confidence that wherever we go, God is with us.





Holy Innocents'
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

805 MT. VERNON HWY NW
ATLANTA, GA, 30327

Back to School Bash

August 9, 10:15-12:30 PM

