

GOOD NEWS



The Sacred Confusion of Advent THE REV. DR. BILL MURRAY

Every family observes and maintains certain holiday traditions. My wife's family chooses to never label their presents. This tradition is not born from some deep egalitarian purpose where all the gifts are the same or a quirky desire to simplify the process with wrapping paper themes. The goal rests in thwarting inquisitive minds and impish hands. As the family story goes, Jessie, my bride, loved the build up to Christmas. However, she has never received the gift of patience. Many years ago, as Christmas day in Birmingham inched closer and filled a certain little girl with expectations, her fascination and day-dreams were overtaken by action. The myriad wrapped boxes under the tree were a target far too tempting to resist. One day she carefully opened all her presents, took inventory of the surprises, and then wrapped them all back up. She will openly confess that she ruined her own Christmas that year. I suspect that a combination of Jessie's bad acting and of gifts not quite perfectly re-wrapped led to the enduring tradition of never labeling Christmas presents. Their family tradition is meant to preserve expectation, surprise, and hope.

Advent rests comfortably at the opening of the Church calendar, filled with longing. The season is meant to be more than a way to help us count down the days to Christmas. The reality of Advent dwells closer to opening presents and hoping desperately for more. The four-week season exists as a liturgical pun. We are indeed preparing ourselves for the coming of Christmas, to revel in the wonder and majesty of God in a manger, to recall the gift of incarnation to the world. In the same breath, we are preparing for the return of Jesus in glory, for Christ's second coming, for a future moment technically named the eschaton. In Romans, Paul theologically connects this time of both the presence of Christ and the future return of Christ to pregnancy. The missionary from Tarsus sees the whole of creation groaning in expectation even as we groan in the hope of a better world as children of God. Even the Spirit of God groans with us in prayer as we recall the gift of the Incarnation and inexorably yearn for Christ's return to set all things to right.

As Christmas creeps closer and fills us with expectations, we are placed in a wonderful tension. We will celebrate again the joy of the nativity with family and friends gathered. We must also wait, hope, and pray, with sighs and groaning too deep for words, for a second gift that will come one day soon that has no label but will surprise and redeem us all.

Bill+



Come In From The Noise



ADVENT AT HOLY INNOCENTS

Come in from the Noise

A SEASON OF QUIET, CANDLELIGHT, BEAUTY, AND HOPE.

In a world overwhelmed by conflict, chaos, and constant noise, Advent invites us to pause: to breathe, to listen, and to wait with expectation. At Holy Innocents, we enter this holy season with vintage warmth, Episcopal beauty, and a gentle hospitality that welcomes newcomers and longtime members alike. Join us as we step out of the hurry and step into the quiet where God meets us.

Sundays in Advent

ADVENT I • NOVEMBER 30

INTO THE QUIET: WATCH AND BE READY

In a world humming with chaos, we start Advent by slowing down—listening for the hope that comes softly, gently, unexpectedly. This Sunday invites us to breathe, to pray, and to begin again. Enjoy breakfast by the Men of HI and the Advent Wreath-making fundraiser for our Youth Group. Ruth preaches, offering a grounding word to steady our hearts as we step into this holy season together.

ADVENT II • DECEMBER 7

REJOICING WITH MARY: OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

We celebrate with a joyful Bilingual Eucharist at 10:15 AM. Our Rector Bill preaches with a beautiful reminder that God's tenderness breaks through every barrier, and that belonging is at the heart of the Incarnation. Bring a favorite dish to share for our festive lunch. Kids wear your pajamas and leave your shoes out for a treat from St. Nicholas!

ADVENT III • DECEMBER 14

JOY IN THE WILDERNESS

Advent whispers that new life is already stirring beneath the surface. Isaiah promises "A branch shall grow out of his roots..." John the Baptist urges us to prepare the way, even as God quietly brings joy and peace from unexpected places. The Children's Choir sings at 10:15 AM, then delight fills our afternoon with a Women's Cookie Swap, Kid's Christmas Party and the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus returns to Holy Innocents at 4:30 PM. Their music brings light, sparkle, and deep comfort to the heart of Advent. This is a free concert, open to all, and a gift to our community.

ADVENT IV • DECEMBER 21

LISTEN TO THE ANGELS SING

As we move toward Christmas, our Festival of Lessons & Carols at the 10:15 AM service fills the Nave with soaring music from our choir and the timeless words that have steadied generations. Angels sing. Mary says yes. Hope takes on flesh. And just before the dawn breaks, the light we've been waiting for grows warm and bright among us.



The Weary World Rejoices!

CHRISTMAS AT HOLY INNOCENTS

The Weary World Rejoices

This Christmas we celebrate the astonishing news that God comes to us in tenderness and glory, meets us in our weariness, and fills our world with unquenchable light. Joy and light break into every shadow.

10:00 AM • DECEMBER 24 • CHAPEL

QUIET CHRISTMAS EUCHARIST

Begin Christmas Eve in peace before the busyness begins. A simple, beautiful service in Christ Chapel with communion, prayer, and organ.

3:00 PM • DECEMBER 24 • NAVE

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Our beloved, family-friendly pageant. Children may come 30 minutes early to dress as angels, shepherds, or animals and participate in the telling of the Christmas story. Communion included.

6:00 PM • DECEMBER 24 • NAVE

FESTIVAL EUCHARIST WITH CHOIR & STRINGS

A joyful and elegant Christmas celebration with full choir, organ, strings, carols, and communion. A favorite for families no longer in the pageant years.

9:00 PM • DECEMBER 24 • NAVE

CANDLELIGHT & INCENSE FESTIVAL EUCHARIST

A stunning, traditional Christmas liturgy with choir, strings, incense, carols, communion, and the beauty of candlelit worship.

10:00 AM • DECEMBER 25 • CHAPEL

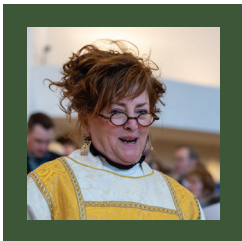
CHRISTMAS DAY EUCHARIST

A peaceful, reflective Christmas morning service in Christ Chapel with communion and the story of Christ's birth.

You Belong Here

Whether this is your first Christmas with us or your fiftieth, Holy Innocents opens its doors with warmth, beauty, and deep joy. Bring your family, your neighbors, and your longing for peace. There is room for you here.

Come in from the noise. The weary world rejoices.



Preparing the Way in Advent THE REV. RUTH PATTISON

We know it. We sing it. His rule is “peace and freedom, and justice, truth, and love.” (1982 Hymnal P. 65) And so we know that in his kingdom there are no children without pleasures, no hungry without a feast, no poor without plenty, no lonely without company. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, mountains made low, valleys filled, crooked and rough made straight and smooth. A picture of justice and equity. We feed the hungry, and give to the poor, because in Advent

we are trying to bring in the kingdom. We give to the homeless and the needy because we have become activists for the kingdom of God, and we do justice, where we live, in our schools, and households, and in our neighborhoods, for a domestic kind of spirituality, because Advent is about darkness, and light, and birthing God at the very heart of human existence.

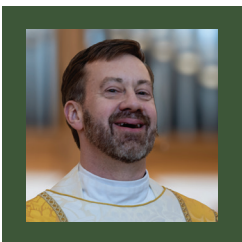
We busy ourselves with outreach and social ministries in Advent. We think we do this because Christmas is a sentimental and joyful season, but really, we busy ourselves with outreach and social ministries because our King is coming, and we need to hurry up! Because sometimes “coming in from the noise,” means going out into the noise to see what the ruckus is. We’re feeling our way in the dark, and imagining the earth filled with his glory, and it compels us to assuage the cries, comfort the pain, and sooth the sorrows that create the very noise that deafens and disturbs us.

We need to tidy our house. We know just enough about this king to know that our house is nothing like his kingdom, and we scramble. We have heard that he champions the widow and orphan, he lifts up the lowly, and crushes the oppressor. He defends the cause of the poor and gives deliverance to the needy.

This is a kingdom we want. We want to usher it in, and we ourselves want to be part of it. This is where we want to live, and we become activists to dispel the darkness. All our holy work, for peace on earth and the kingdom come.

Ruth+

Including excerpts from my book: “Celtic Ways to Pray”



Vicar's View: It's Not Easy Being Green THE REV. STEWART LUCAS

Red used to be my favorite color. But somewhere along the way, green quietly took over. We painted our kitchen green. I have green pants and a green sweater I love. Maybe it tracks: I was a horticulture major. But it's more than aesthetic; there's something about greenery that speaks to me now in this Advent season.

The glossy magnolia leaf. The scent of pine boughs drifting in when you open the door. Holiday greens are as powerful to me as the fragrant blossoms of Easter. They whisper life—not showy, blooming-life, but deep, rooted, oxygen-giving, quietly-sustaining life. Chlorophyll doing its holy work so the rest of us can breathe.

Advent feels like that kind of green. The cycle of leaves falling into grief, trees resting in winter hibernation, roots strengthening underground. Less blossom, more depth. Less frenzy, more preparation.

I'm loving Advent more the older I get. It's not just about sprinting toward the high holy days of Christmas and Easter. It's learning to savor the in-between—the waiting, the watching, the quiet joy and quiet sorrow that make real life real.

Maybe that's why I am craving Christian community more than ever. And maybe that's why so many newcomers are showing up these past few weeks—families, parents, people hungry for grounding, for hope, for a way to live faithfully in these crazy days.

So come be green with us. Come breathe. Come deepen your roots. Come wait with hope for the light that is already on its way.

Stewart+



From Bethlehem..to Bedlam.. to Bethlehem! RANDY ROMIG

Going back to the 17th century, colloquial English gave us the word “bedlam,” arising from London’s “Hospital of Saint Mary of Bethlehem;” which was a care facility provided by the Church for those challenged by emotional and mental illness. Because clamor frequently resounded within the walls of the hospital, many Londoners referred to the hospital as Bedlam, rather than Bethlehem.

Seems that’s just where so many of us find ourselves today as we once again prepare for the birth of our Savior. So much to do! So many conflicting sounds! So much chaos of schedules and priorities! How ironic that our Advent and Christmas preparations so often lead us into a state of Bedlam.

It is the fond desire of the Music Ministry here at HIEC that we will help lead all of you in the parish and the broader community to transition from Bedlam back to Bethlehem as we provide both contemplative and celebratory music of the season. From joyful voices to tuneful flute to festive handbells to sonorous strings to dynamic pipe organ... we offer all to you as you return on bended knee to the stable of Bethlehem.

Wonderful Peace to You!

S A V E T H E D A T E

NOVEMBER 30

Advent Wreath Fundraiser

DECEMBER 2

Bucket List Book Club, 1:00 PM

Prayer Shaw, 7:00-8:30 PM

DECEMBER 3

GLOW, 5:30-7:00 PM

DECEMBER 4

Piano Duet and Lunch, 11:00 AM-1:30 PM

DECEMBER 7

Feast of OLG & St. Nicholas Sunday

Lunch with OLG, 11:30 AM

Youth Group, 4:00-6:00 PM

Lessons and Carols, 6:00 PM

DECEMBER 8

Reading Connections, 6:00-8:00 PM

DECEMBER 11

Ventulett Gallery Opening, 6:00-7:30 PM

DECEMBER 14

Children’s Choir, 10:15 AM

Youth Group: Botanical Gardens, 11:15 AM

Kid’s Christmas Party, 11:30 AM

WOHI: Cookie Swap, 11:30 AM

Atlanta Gay Men’s Choir, 4:30-5:30 PM

DECEMBER 19

Men of HI: Third Friday

DECEMBER 21

Club 45: Christmas Party, 9:00 AM

Acolyte Christmas Eve Training, 11:30 AM

Youth Group: Christmas Party, 4:00-6:00 PM

DECEMBER 24

Services at 10:00, 3:00, 6:00, 9:00 PM

DECEMBER 25

Service at 10:00 AM

OFFICE HOLIDAY CLOSURES

December 24 (at noon)-26,

December 31 (at noon)-January 2



From Waiting to Wonder

MEGAN ATKINSON

Anyone who knows me at all knows I'm obsessed with Christmas. I'm talking listening-to-Christmas-music-in-April kind of obsessed. There's something about the lights,

the music, and the anticipation of celebrating Jesus' birth that just fills my heart with joy.

But for me, Christmas has come to mean even more than tinsel and carols. It reminds me of waiting, and of God's perfect timing. After years of IVF and what felt like endless waiting and hoping, God gave me the most perfect Christmas gift: my son, Liam, born on Christmas Day. That moment was a beautiful reminder that God's timing is never off, even when we think we can't wait another second.

The Bible is full of people who knew what it meant to wait. Think of Moses and the Israelites, wandering in the desert for forty years before entering the Promised Land. Or Joseph, who waited in prison for years before God elevated him to save nations. Even David,

anointed as king as a young man, had to wait through rejection, danger, and years of uncertainty before he finally sat on the throne. Each of these stories reminds us that waiting isn't wasted, it's part of God's preparation and plan.

Advent is a season that calls us to live in that waiting, expectant, hopeful, and trusting. It's a time to remember that God is at work even when we can't see it, and that His timing is always perfect. Just like I waited for Liam, we are called to wait for the fulfillment of God's promises in our lives, big and small.

So this Advent, whether you are waiting for something in your heart, your family, your faith, or even just a quiet moment of peace, remember: God is faithful. He is working behind the scenes, weaving everything together for our good, even when it feels like the waiting will never end. And when the moment finally comes, like it did for me on Christmas morning, it will be more perfect than anything we could have imagined.



A Potato for Advent

RENEE STEPHENS

I took my kids trick-or-treating on Halloween night this year. They're 7 and 11, and we had just enjoyed an amazing time at the church fall festival the weekend before. They also

had class parties during the week, and we did some festive things at home, too. So, by the time the actual holiday rolled around, they didn't have a lot of excitement left for celebrating. We started walking around the neighborhood collecting candy, and things were going fine—but no one was overjoyed until we came across a house with over-the-top decorations and a guy sitting at a table at the end of the driveway.

Everything was normal for a split second, and my kids were eyeing the table covered in candy—good candy too—when the man looked my oldest in the eye and said, "Okay, you can pick three pieces of candy or a potato" and pulled out a real potato from under the table. Without hesitation, Zechariah said "I want a potato." The guy handed over the potato

and Zechariah looked at it and then yelled "A potato!! I got a potato!!" and then ran around in circles waving his potato in the air and repeating his excitement. My youngest also chose the potato and was equally excited.

They both got more joy out of those two potatoes than they did of anything else that night. It was something extraordinary in the midst of the mundane. Something "different" called us out of the lull of complacency and reminded us that there is real joy in front of us and we just have to pause and notice it.

Advent calls us to that same awakening. In the midst of our full calendars, God invites us to notice what we've overlooked and to find joy not in excess but in presence. True joy doesn't wait for perfect circumstances but grows from gratitude, wonder and the awareness that God is already with us. So this Advent season, you are invited to join us for potatoes, those unexpected moments that you experience the joy and presence of God with us.

EVENTS FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

Advent Wreath Fundraiser Nov. 30

Join us from 9:00-10:00 AM as we celebrate the season and prepare our hearts for the birth of Christ. Our youth will cook a delicious breakfast for \$5. Enjoy live music while creating Advent wreaths and/or participate in candle making (\$10 each). All proceeds go directly to the youth group. Please register by Nov. 24.

GLOW Dec. 3, 5:30-7:00 PM

Let's GLOW for Advent! Wear your favorite Christmas shirt, get ready for some fun games, and go home with a very special Advent activity to use at home. Adults and kids (PreK-5th grade) are invited to gather for dinner at 5:30 PM, and then the kids will leave for the GLOW program from 6-7:00 PM. Parents are invited to stick around for wine and conversation while the kids are at GLOW.

St. Nicholas Sunday Dec. 7, 10:15 AM

Join the celebration of the Feast of St. Nicholas and wear your favorite Christmas pajamas! We will have a special children's chapel and leave our shoes out for a treat from St. Nicholas, and we might even have a visit from the Saint himself! After worship, we will celebrate together with a parish-wide lunch and activities for children.

Children's Choir Dec. 14, 10:15 AM

Our Children's Choir will sing on Sunday, December 14th. Rehearsals are ongoing in Sunday School and Children's Chapel, and kids can join in any time. We are so excited to give children this opportunity to share their joy.

Botanical Gardens Dec. 14, 11:15-2:30 PM

After church we will head to the Botanical Gardens to explore their magical Christmas display and sip on some delicious hot chocolate. Don't miss out on the fun, friends, and festive vibes. RSVP online.

Magical Christmas Party Dec. 14, 11:15 AM

All kids PreK-5th grade are invited to stay for a Christmas party straight from the North Pole! We'll enjoy a lunch, decorate cookies, and have a snowy playtime under the snow machine. There might even be a few surprises from Santa's workshop along the way. So grab your Christmas cheer and come celebrate with your friends! Register by Dec. 10.

Club 45: Christmas Party Dec. 21

4th & 5th graders, join us for a festive Christmas Party full of holiday cheer and tons of fun! Join us for an hour packed with games, treats, music, and surprises as we celebrate the most wonderful time of the year together. Come ready for laughter, friendship, and a little Christmas magic!

Christmas Party Dec. 21, 4:00-6:00 PM

Come join us for our Youth Group Christmas Party on December 21! Expect fun surprises, gifts, and lots of tasty food. It's the perfect way to celebrate the season with friends.

Christmas Eve Pageant Dec. 24, 3:00 PM

Join us as the children retell the Nativity story! Children are rehearsing in Sunday school and Children's Chapel, and we invite friends and guests to join in the fun anytime—no prior rehearsal is necessary!





HOLY INNOCENTS'
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

805 Mt. Vernon Hwy NW
Atlanta, GA 30327

The Weary World Rejoices!



Christmas at
Holy Innocents