

Waiting

The Rev. Dr. Bill Murray • *Rector*

We are fast approaching the season of Advent- a time of waiting. Officially, we are reminded to wait for the arrival of Jesus in the nativity scenes of Christmas. We are also called to wait for the triumphal return of Christ. In a day and age where we want instant, free shipping, return texts in seconds, movies on demand, and meals delivered to our front door, we do not have much patience for waiting. We are far more likely to say something like, "I refresh our text chat more than I refresh my life choices."

We all can also share in a feeling of un-ease, of heightened worries, of anxiety. Whether we are talking about money, politics, the world, or our lives, lots of things happening with few good answers. In the middle of that, God calls us to silence and waiting. It was likely written 3,000 years ago, but Psalm 46 feels incredibly immediate. "*Be still and know that I am God.*" In the chaos, we are called to stop what we are doing.

I don't know about you, but I have a tendency to open up the phone and burn time in every waiting room, in any space where I am delayed, in absolutely every instance where I have to wait. A friend sent me a message the other day talking about the benefits of silence- of quiet- of having nothing. Countless studies have shown that humans NEED quiet time. We need time to literally let our minds wander or go blank. A 2006 study showed that as little as 2 minutes of silence can lower heart rates and blood pressure, decrease cortisol (the stress hormone), and reduce muscle tension. I have no idea how much they spent on the study, but God told us to try it first. Be still.

We always talk about what to give up for Lent. Maybe this Advent we should try to give up the noise. We should put down the phone and just be quiet. We should live into God's invitation to be still. In the quiet, we might find that God is near and, even more importantly, God is in charge. Silence and quiet might well be great for our health. It is even better for our soul. Lean into the waiting and the let it be an invitation to quiet. May we all find God there, together.

Advent

A season of quiet, beauty, and hope.



In a world that can feel full of hurry, Advent gives us room to breathe, to listen, and to make ready for Christ's birth. At Holy Innocents, we keep these four Sundays with the prayers and music of our Episcopal tradition and the joy of being together. Whether you know the hymns by heart or are walking through our doors for the first time, come spend a Sunday with us.

Keep Watch and Be Ready

November 29 • The First Sunday of Advent

We begin Advent with Jesus' call to "keep awake." Stewart will preach on what it means to remain open to God's coming, even when we least expect it. At 9:00 AM, we gather for our annual Advent breakfast and wreath-making fundraiser benefiting the youth group.

Preparing the Way

December 6 • The Second Sunday of Advent

Come welcome our new Associate Rector, the Rev. Jenna Strizak, as she begins her ministry with us and preaches at all three services. The Men of Holy Innocents will serve breakfast, and the Women of Holy Innocents will gather for lunch and a cookie swap after the services. Children are invited to wear their pajamas and meet St. Nicholas during Children's Chapel. Fun continues after church for children and youth!

Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration

December 13 • The Third Sunday of Advent

Gather at 10:15 AM for a joyful bilingual Eucharist, featuring music from our Children's Choir. Bill, our Rector, will preach on how God's tenderness reaches across barriers and makes room for us all. Following worship, we'll continue the celebration with a festive potluck lunch featuring dishes from different cultures and traditions. Bring a favorite dish to share!

Come back at 4:30 PM for the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus, returning for the third year with music that brings both sparkle and comfort to the season. The concert is free and open to all. Bring a friend!

Join the Angels' Song

December 20 • The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Pull up a chair at breakfast and get to know the Rev. Jenna Strizak. We'll hear about her journey from Judaism to Christianity. What's her favorite Gospel? What does she do for fun? What ice cream would she order? Bring a question of your own.

At 10:15 AM, join us for Lessons and Carols in the Nave, our main worship space. Scripture readings and music from our choir carry us into the wonder of Christmas. Mary says yes. Angels sing. Hope takes on flesh.

Christmas

The weary world rejoices!

At Christmas we celebrate the astonishing news that God comes to dwell among us. In the birth of Jesus, God meets us in our weariness and fills the world with a light no darkness can overcome.

Christmas Eve • Thursday, December 24

Quiet Christmas Eucharist

10:00 AM • *Christ Chapel*

Begin your celebrations in peace with a simple service of prayer, Holy Communion, and organ music.

Children's Christmas Pageant

3:00 PM • *Nave*

Come hear the Christmas story told by our children in this beloved service with Holy Communion. Children who would like to take part can arrive at 2:00 pm to dress as angels, shepherds, or animals.

Festival Choral Eucharist

6:00 PM • *Nave*

Celebrate Christ's birth with Holy Communion and festive music for full choir, organ, brass, and timpani.

Festival Choral Eucharist by Candlelight

9:00 PM • *Nave*

Gather for traditional Christmas worship by candlelight, with incense, Holy Communion, and music for full choir, organ, brass, and timpani.

Christmas Day • Friday, December 25

Christmas Day Eucharist

10:00 PM • *Christ Chapel*

Gather on Christmas morning for a quiet, reflective service with Holy Communion and the story of Christ's birth.

Whether this is your first Christmas at Holy Innocents or your fiftieth, there is room for you here. Come on your own or bring a friend, a neighbor, or the whole family. We look forward to celebrating with you.



Upcoming Adult Formation

An Introduction to the Gospel of Mark
NOVEMBER 22, DECEMBER 6 & 13

The church calendar starts with Advent each year. On November 29, we begin Year B which follows the Gospel of Mark. While we tend to hit frappe on the blender between the four gospels, the reality is that each of the four books have very distinct ideas, lessons, and views of religion, Jesus, and the world. Come and hear Bill, Stewart, and our seminarian Angela teach about the distinct stories and themes that Mark will teach us throughout the year.

Come and Meet Jenna • DECEMBER 20

Come and get to know our new Associate Rector, the Rev. Jenna Strizak. How did she come from Judaism to Christianity? What is her favorite Gospel? What does she do for fun? What is her favorite ice cream? What else do you want to know? Be sure to be present to ask your questions and get to know our wonderful, skilled new priest!

Holy Living, Holy Dying • JANUARY 10, 17, 24

Jeremy Taylor wrote two books about what matters the most in life. He was convinced that the best life was one that considered death and the best death was one that celebrated life. Come and join us for conversations about life and death and all the ways that they teach us to celebrate the gifts we have today!

Parish Retreat

The Rev. T. Stewart Lucas • *Vicar*

At Unicoi you can follow the trail around lake, head to nearby Anna Ruby Falls, or explore the shops and cafés in Helen, Georgia's Alpine-style village, just two miles from the park.

We'll start Friday evening with dinner, fellowship, and a program. Saturday includes programming in the morning, free time, happy hour, dinner, and a fun evening activity. We worship together Sunday morning and head home before lunch. If you'd like a little more mountain time, you can reserve an extra night and stay through Monday.



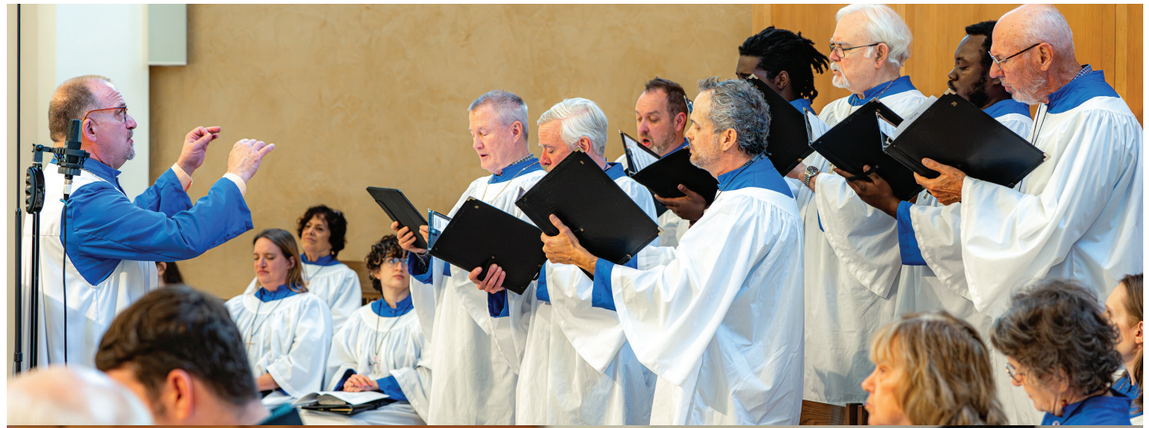
Our retreat leader is Dr. Elizabeth "Ebby" Arnold, whom many of us got to know when she taught our recent Adult Forum course on Corinthians. Ebby is the Scholar-in-Residence for The Candler Foundry and holds a PhD in New Testament from Emory University. Her research areas include the literary interpretation of scripture, humor and emotion in the Bible. Registration opens soon. Stay tuned!

Christmas Flowers & Music

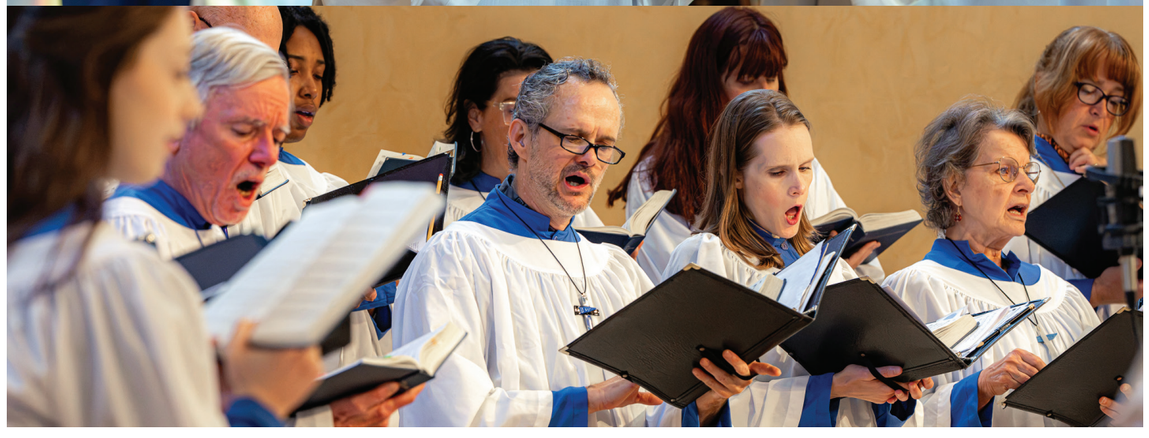
Help us prepare a beautiful and festive celebration for Christmas! We invite you to make a donation to support the Christmas flowers and music for Christmas Eve worship. You may dedicate your gift In Memory of or In Thanksgiving for a loved one. These dedications will be included in our Christmas Eve service bulletin as a meaningful way to honor or remember those who hold a special place in your heart.

To contribute, please scan the QR code or use an envelope in the pew. Please use the memo line to indicate how you would like your donation to read in the bulletin. The deadline to be printed in the Christmas Eve bulletins is December 13. Thank you for your generosity in helping make our church beautiful and our music inspiring this Christmas season! For more information, please **contact** Renee Stephens (*rstephens@holyinnocents.org*).









A Season of Hope, Joy, and Music

Dock Anderson ✦ *Director of Music*

As we approach Advent and Christmas, I am delighted to share some of the seasonal musical experiences awaiting us. These weeks offer opportunities to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, celebrate the richness of our community, and experience the extraordinary power of music to bring us together.

Our Friends of Music concert series continues with two outstanding ensembles in December. On Sunday, December 13, at 4:30 PM, we welcome back the **Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus** for a festive afternoon of holiday music. This beloved ensemble has become a favorite at Holy Innocents, and we are thrilled to welcome them for their third appearance with us. Admission is free, but advance registration is requested.

On Saturday, December 19, at 2:00 and 7:00 PM, the **Atlanta Women's Chorus** presents *Peace and Joy*, a beautiful holiday program celebrating hope, togetherness, and the spirit of the season. Tickets are $25–$50, and children under 10 attend free. Registration for the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus and tickets for the Atlanta Women's Chorus are available at *holyinnocents.org/fom*.

December 13 will be an especially meaningful Sunday as we also celebrate **Our Lady of Guadalupe** with a combined worship service bringing together our English-speaking and Hispanic congregations. This joyful occasion offers an opportunity to share our musical and cultural traditions as one community, celebrating the faith that unites us.

On Sunday, December 20, the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we will offer a Service of **Lessons and Carols**. Through scripture readings, congregational hymns, and choral music, we will journey through the story of God's promise and the anticipation of Christ's birth. Lessons and Carols is one of the great traditions of Anglican worship, and I look forward to sharing this meaningful service with our parish.

Then comes **Christmas Eve**, when our celebration will be enriched by the glorious sounds of a brass quintet and timpani joining our choir and organ in festive music for the Nativity. We have some particularly beautiful choral offerings planned, ranging from traditional carols to contemporary settings. I am also especially excited that Mose Murray will make his debut as an organ accompanist, playing with the choir during the service. Mose began studying organ with me this summer, and his enthusiasm, dedication, and remarkable progress have been a joy to witness. What a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the gifts of one of our own young musicians!

As we journey through Advent toward Christmas, I hope you will join us for as many of these wonderful occasions as possible. Whether through the quiet anticipation of Advent, the joy of a Christmas concert, the beauty of worship shared across cultures, or the triumphant sounds of brass and organ on Christmas Eve, music has a remarkable way of drawing us closer to one another and to the divine. I look forward to sharing this extraordinary season with all of you!

Christmas Joy

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

Christmas is, at its heart, a story of giving. God's greatest gift to the world was his Son, Jesus Christ, and through that gift, we are reminded that love is meant to be shared. As we celebrate this season, I see that same spirit reflected in the youth and young adults of Holy Innocents, who are finding meaningful ways to grow in faith, serve others, and strengthen their relationships with one another.

Throughout the year, our middle school youth have been exploring what it means to live an UNASHAMED life. Through Scripture, conversation, and fellowship, they are learning to stand confidently in their faith and consider how their beliefs shape their everyday lives. Each gathering encourages them to ask questions, support one another, and discover what it means to carry the light of Christ into the world without fear or hesitation.

Meanwhile, our high school students are putting their faith into action by preparing Christmas care packages for children spending the holidays at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. While many families will celebrate together at home, these students are thinking of those facing a more difficult Christmas. Their thoughtfulness is a beautiful reminder that even small acts of kindness can bring comfort, hope, and joy to others. Through this project, they are discovering that the spirit of Christmas is found as much in giving as it is in receiving.

The young adult ministry continues to grow as well, creating opportunities for friendship and connection beyond Sunday mornings. In December, we'll gather for lunch and a White Elephant gift exchange, sharing laughter and enjoying time together during a busy season. These gatherings offer young adults a place to build lasting relationships, deepen their connection to Holy Innocents, and find a sense of belonging within the life of the parish.

These ministries may not always be the most visible parts of parish life, but their impact is meaningful. They nurture faith, encourage generosity, and create space for young people to discover their gifts and grow in their relationship with Christ. Most importantly, they remind us that our youth and young adults are not simply the future of Holy Innocents. They are an important part of our church today, bringing energy, compassion, and fresh perspectives to our shared ministry.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, may we give thanks for the ways our young people are already sharing his love. Whether through a thoughtful gift, a conversation about faith, or a simple gathering of friends, they remind us that the joy of Christmas is something we are called to carry into the world. What a gift it is to see their faith growing and to walk alongside them as they discover all that God is calling them to be.

Season of Gratitude

Renee Stephens
Director of Membership and Children's Ministry

There is something about the time change that always catches me off guard. One day we are enjoying the late afternoon sunshine and the next we're sitting in the dark every day when we get off work. The absence of light can feel heavy. And with the coming of November we realize that the holidays are close ahead. There are meals to plan, gifts to purchase, events to attend, and countless details to manage. Even the most wonderful things begin to feel like one more thing to fit into an already packed schedule. Perhaps this is why the shorter days offer us an invitation worth considering: an invitation to slow down.

In the midst of all that demands our attention, God reminds us that we were not created to be constantly busy. We need moments of stillness, opportunities to breathe, and time to remember what matters most. Jesus often withdrew from the crowds to pray and spend time with God. Psalm 46:10 offers these familiar words: "Be still, and know that I am God." Being still doesn't mean that everything on our to do list is finished or that life has suddenly become less complicated. It means making room, even for a few moments, to turn our attention toward God and remember that we are held in God's love.

As we enter this season of gratitude, anticipation, and celebration, may we resist the temptation to rush through it all. May we find God in the quiet of an early evening, in a shared meal, in the warmth of a familiar hymn, or in the simple joy of being together. May we make space for worship, prayer, friendship, and rest. And above all, may we remember that the greatest gift of this season isn't something we need to prepare, purchase, or accomplish. It is the gift of God's presence, always with us, offering light in the darkness and renewal for the journey ahead. You are in my prayers this season and I hope to connect with you at one of our upcoming gatherings.



Upcoming Events

Christmas Toy Drive
NOVEMBER 1-29

This Christmas, help brighten the holidays for local families through Solidarity Sandy Springs' Secret Santa program and the Community Assistance Center's Hope for the Holidays program! Wish lists are available in Bishop Commons. Simply choose a child or family, purchase the requested gifts, and return them to Holy Innocents by Sunday, November 29. Gifts will be delivered to both organizations during the first week of December.

New this year! Wish lists can also be requested electronically for those unable to pick one up in person. For more information or to request a wish list, **contact** Sunni Newton (*sunni.newton@gmail.com*)

Young Adults: Cake & Create
NOVEMBER 22, 11:30 AM

Join us for a little food, fellowship, and creativity! All young adults ages 21–39 are invited to gather immediately following the service in the Frost Youth Center. We'll enjoy lunch and beverages together while decorating delicious Trader Joe's cakes.
Contact: Megan Atkinson (*matkinson@holyinnocents.org*)

SAGES' Christmas Lunch & Concert
DECEMBER 3, 11:30 AM

Celebrate the Christmas season with the SAGES! Enjoy a festive lunch at 11:30 AM in Inglett Hall, followed by a special holiday piano duet concert featuring Randy Romig and Cathy Adams at 12:30 PM in the Nave. A $15 donation is suggested. To RSVP, **email** *rsvp@holyinnocents.org* or call 404-255-4023.

Women of HI: Cookie Swap & Soup Lunch
DECEMBER 6, 11:15 AM-1:30 PM

A cozy soup-and-salad lunch, holiday treats, and good company await after the 10:15 AM service! Bring three dozen of your favorite homemade or store-bought cookies or treats to share, and take home three dozen assorted goodies from fellow parishioners. Not a baker? No problem! Everyone is welcome to enjoy lunch and time together. We'll also celebrate Jenna's first Sunday at Holy Innocents and give her a warm welcome as our new Associate Rector. It's a sweet way to kick off the holiday season!
Contact: Renee Stephens (*rstephens@holyinnocents.org*)

Women of HI: Corks, Colas & Conversation
DECEMBER 9, 5:30-7:00 PM • BISHOP COMMONS

Spend an easygoing evening catching up with friends and meeting new faces at Corks, Colas & Conversation! The Women of HI gather for good conversation, refreshments, and a chance to unwind together. Whether you're a regular or coming for the first time, all women are welcome. Come as you are and enjoy the evening!
Contact: Jenny Cantrell (*jennypcan@aol.com*)

Coffee for Parents of Young Children
DECEMBER 13, 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. No agenda, just coffee, hot breakfast, conversation, and community.
Contact: Renee Stephens (*rstephens@holyinnocents.org*)

FOM: Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus
DECEMBER 13, 2026, 4:30-5:30 PM • NAVE

A Friends of Music favorite returns for the Christmas season! The Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus is back at Holy Innocents for its third year, bringing an afternoon of festive choral music to the Nave.

This concert is free and open to the public, with an offering collected during the performance. RSVPs are encouraged but not required. Doors open at 4:00 PM, and seating is first-come, first-served. For more information, visit *holyinnocents.org/fom*.
Contact: Dock Anderson (*music@holyinnocents.org*)

FOM: Atlanta Women's Chorus
DECEMBER 19, 2026, 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM • NAVE

Celebrate the holidays with the Atlanta Women's Chorus and *Peace and Joy*, a festive program of uplifting choral music. Amid the excitement and busyness of December, this concert offers a chance to slow down and enjoy an afternoon or evening of beautiful music and reflection. Through a rich and varied repertoire, the ensemble brings the power of women's voices to a performance filled with hope, warmth, and the spirit of the holidays.

Tickets: $25–$50 • Children under 10 attend free. • As a gift to Holy Innocents for hosting the concerts, here is a discount code to use. When you go to purchase tickets, enter the code "HIEC" to receive a 15% discount on any ticket level.
Contact: Dock Anderson (*music@holyinnocents.org*)

Events for Children & Youth

Advent Wreath Fundraiser
NOVEMBER 29, 9:00 AM • PARISH HALL

Start the Advent season with a little creativity! Join us as we celebrate the season and prepare our hearts for the birth of Christ. Our youth will cook a delicious breakfast for $5 online and $10 at the door. You and your loved ones can create your own Advent wreaths for $15, with all proceeds going directly to the youth group.

GLOW
DECEMBER 2 • FAMILY DINNER AT 5:30 PM
GLOW 6:00-7:00 PM

Kids PreK–5th grade are invited to join us for a fun evening of Christmas cheer, games, and a special Advent activity. Wear your favorite Christmas shirt and get ready for a little holiday magic! Families are invited to gather for dinner at 5:30 PM, followed by GLOW from 6:00-7:00 PM. While the kids enjoy their evening, parents are invited to stick around for fellowship and conversation.

St. Nicholas Sunday
DECEMBER 6, 10:15 AM

Get ready for a little Christmas magic at church! Join us as we celebrate the Feast of St. Nicholas with a special Sunday full of Christmas fun. Wear your favorite Christmas pajamas, bring your shoes to leave out for a special treat, and join us for a festive children's chapel celebrating the real St. Nicholas and his spirit of generosity and giving. We'll have sweet surprises, Christmas cheer, and maybe even a special visit from St. Nicholas himself!

Kids Christmas Party
DECEMBER 6, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM

After church, all kids PreK–5TH grade are invited to join us for a jolly Christmas celebration filled with festive fun! We'll enjoy a yummy lunch, get creative with Christmas cookie decorating, and have a blast playing in a flurry of snow under our snow machine. With lots of laughter, Christmas cheer, and a few merry surprises along the way, it's sure to be a holly jolly good time!

All Youth Group: Service Day
DECEMBER 6, 11:30-2:30 PM

Join us for a special Service Day for all 6TH-12th grade students! We'll focus on being UNASHAMED to serve others as we decorate and write cards for nursing home residents, then go out together to deliver them.

Children's Choir
DECEMBER 13, 10:15 AM

Our Children's Choir will sing Dec. 13! Rehearsals are ongoing in Sunday School and Children Chapel and kids can join in any time. We are so excited to give children this opportunity to share their joy.

Senior Youth Group
DECEMBER 13, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM

Our 9TH-12TH graders are meeting after worship for lunch, community, and real conversation. We'll hang out, eat together, and talk about what it looks like to live out your faith in real life.

Junior Youth Group: Christmas Party
DECEMBER 13, 4:00-7:00 PM

6TH-8TH graders are invited to join us for a Christmas party! Enjoy a meal together, play White Elephant, and celebrate Christmas in style! Anyone who wishes to participate must bring a wrapped gift.

Club 45: Christmas Party
DECEMBER 20, 9:00 AM

4TH and 5TH graders are invited to a festive Club 45 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!

Kid's Christmas Eve Nativity
DECEMBER 24 • ARRIVE AT 2:00 PM
SERVICE AT 3:00 PM

Our Kids Christmas Eve Nativity will look a little different this year! We're excited to introduce a brand-new script and professional, custom-made costumes to bring the Christmas story to life. Some children will have speaking roles and participate in rehearsals, while others can simply join in on program day by choosing a costume and being part of the celebration. There will be lots of ways for kids to participate, and we can't wait to celebrate the joy of Christmas together!

Children's Ministry Contact:
Renee Stephens (*rstephens@holyinnocents.org*)

Youth Ministry Contact:
Megan Atkinson (*matkinson@holyinnocents.org*)

Holy Innocents'
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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