

Episcopal Church of Our Saviour Newsletter
December 21, 2020

Thank you for a Perfect Christmas Blessing

This has been a painful and difficult year for all of us and for millions of Americans across our nation. Our world has been turned upside down by the many and varied upheavals from the rapid spread of the deadly coronavirus. We have all longed to be able to worship together in our church sanctuary and to receive the Holy Eucharist of bread and wine. We have longed to be able to visit with one another, our family members, and our friends. Perhaps the greatest blessing I have received this year is that everyone has remained united and cooperative, as we have all worked together to carry on the vital ministries of our church and to transition to virtual worship, prayer services, and church meetings. I will be forever grateful to each one of you for being supportive of what we have chosen to do to provide for the safety and well-being of our members in the midst of this dangerous pandemic. I thank each and every one of you for this support.

God is in the midst of all of this. God is present in the skilled and loving care provided to COVID patients by doctors, nurses, and emergency-response personnel. God is present with the staff of nursing homes, who are dedicated in providing comfort and safety for all of their residents. God is present with teachers and college professors, who have learned new technology in order to continue to teach their students in new virtual learning formats. God is present with all the staff and volunteers who work tirelessly in food banks to provide for the growing number of people, who are hungry. God is present with people of all faith traditions, who have provided compassionate care to persons who have lost their jobs or have been evicted from their homes. God is present with all the social workers and counsellors, who have provided wise counsel to persons suffering from anxiety and depression. And most importantly, God has been present with those who have died and provided the gift of eternal life and comforted families in their grieving.

The pandemic has revealed fundamental structural problems in our nation: inequality in education, wages, and access to technology; widespread and often hidden poverty in both urban and rural communities; systemic racism and racial injustice; and hate crimes motivated by anti-Semitism, white national supremacy, and xenophobia. I believe that these problems were always there; but we were often blindly unaware of their presence. When we emerge from this pandemic, we will not be the same. As individuals and as a nation, we will have been changed as a result of what we have witnessed and experienced.

What will never change is the presence of God and the Holy Spirit working in our lives and in our world. The teachings of Jesus will continue to guide us and other Christians in discerning how we can best respond to build God's kingdom on earth and created the Beloved Community that God desires for all of us. I am confident that God will provide all the resources that we need to do this.

Great things await all of us in the New Year and beyond as we work together and with others in our community to carry on our mission and ministry. Each one of us brings unique skills and talents that will be essential in our ministry. This Christmas may we seek him, find him, adore him, and welcome Him anew into our world. With Christmas Light and Love to all of you, **Mother Carol+**



Christmas 1942

This comes from a newsletter my parents wrote many years ago. While this item by my mother may not be theologically sound, I think it speaks to us in 2020 as in 1942. (submitted by Jane Rainey)

A Letter to Santa Claus

Dear Santa:

It has been a long time since I last wrote you a letter. Do you remember the last one...Oh! Many years ago...in which I asked you to bring me a china doll with red hair and freckles? I got the doll, Santa, and the note you pinned to her dress saying you couldn't give me one with freckles for the sun at the North Pole wouldn't manufacture freckles! Do you remember?

I realize now that was a difficult order to fill. And what I'm asking this Christmas may be even harder. But I'm growing up and what I'm asking for now includes all humanity. You understand, Santa, it is not a selfish desire, like the doll. If you could bring my wish you'd be worshipped by grown-ups, as well as children, the world over.

I'm asking, Santa, that you bring better relations between men—relations that last not a day but for years without end. Is this asking too much? Even when I tell you that I've never doubted your existence, and that I believe in you more devoutly than ever before?

In this year, 1942, we're in a pretty bad way. We wonder how we can awaken each morning with renewed faith and belief in the goodness of life. We have grown old and tired in this year. We approach the daily newspapers and radio with dread. We tear our days into thousands of little meaningless fragments which sleep despairs of welding together. We feel a broken emptiness within ourselves. We doubt and distrust. We hardly dare to sing: "On earth peace, goodwill toward men," lest it sound like hollow mockery.

Won't you, this Christmas, put into every man's heart the desire to try Christ's way? Show us that love would fill that broken emptiness? Love for the good, for the beautiful, for the lowly, and most important of all: love for each other.

Santa, you know His way has never been given a thorough trial by mankind. And I believe it would work if all men would fasten their thoughts to a star: the star that guided the shepherds and the wise men "even unto Bethlehem."

I forgave you long ago for the doll without freckles, Santa, and no matter what comes, I'll go on believing in you. Sincerely, Julia Gilliam Gurganus

And for those who complain about having to wear masks in 2020, I'll add a sentence from my father's column in the same newsletter in the midst of World War II: "And for her stocking she wants Santa Claus to bring 50 pounds of sugar, a dozen cans of coffee, some nice pork chops, and a couple of auto tires all wrapped up with income tax receipts for 1943."

Planting a Church: The Roots Take Hold

After Christ Church Richmond left its downtown building, **Fr. Richard Elberfeld** led the congregation at the Baptist Student Union Building and for some time after the move to St. Thomas Lutheran Church. Jane recalls that Fr. Elberfeld was an organist before he was a priest, and when she had to be away, he loved being both. People told her that he would run back and forth from the altar to the organ without missing a beat! Jane remembers him blessing olives and Feta cheese as part of the Easter Vigil service. When he announced he would be leaving, parishioners said goodbye to him at St. Thomas Church.



Since our congregation had no property of its own, we had become a mission church directly responsible to **Bishop Wimberly**. It would be three and a half years before we found a permanent home. Sometime in 1991, **Fr. John Burkhardt** began serving as regular supply priest. Jane recalls that he left an important legacy, for which he should be remembered. After we moved to our present location, he was the first to plow up what is now the Garden for the Hungry (he had a tractor) and invited parishioners to have garden plots there. He also grew a lot of produce to give away; in 1993 we often took free tomatoes, et cetera, home from church.

When Bishop Wimberly decided to redevelop the congregation as a new church plant, he told us we needed a new name. After all, it was confusing to have three churches in the diocese named “Christ Church”! (The cathedral in Lexington and the church in Harlan were the others.) In a congregational meeting at St. Thomas, parishioners considered suggested names and preferred “Our Saviour,” since it was closest to our original name.

In 1992 **Grace Sears** became Bishop’s Warden, just as hope for obtaining the Carrier property was rising. While the question was still pending, the leaders of St. Thomas proposed that the two congregations should merge. The feeling among the Episcopalians, however, was still to move on. That June, after exploring the pros and cons, the Diocese of Lexington took a 60-day option on the Carrier property. In July, the Bishop’s Committee set up four committees to prepare to occupy it. Their tasks included:

- Vacating the office space we had rented on George Street;
- Locating furniture, vestments, and altar equipment that had been stored in homes;
- Cleaning and painting the Carrier house and installing lighting around the main room;
- Setting up utilities and getting some electrical revisions done;
- Opening up the space by removing walls around one of the bedrooms;
- Retrieving the organ we had loaned to Resurrection church;
- Preparing parking space (Fr. John cleared the ground before we ordered gravel);
- Renewing a rental agreement with the couple that lived in a small house on the property;
- Recruiting volunteers for Moving Day;
- Planning for Bishop Wimberly’s visit to institute the new church and the service to christen the Cioleks’ grandchild.

- Working with the Bishop's office and Rev. Bill Duncan to solemnize a covenantal relationship with St Thomas. Leaders from both denominations would sign the covenant after a festive lunch.

Parishioners worked like beavers all summer. Bob Ciolek and Millard Gevedon, both Navy veterans, polished brass items that had been in storage. Ralph Ewers installed lighting troughs around the central room. A team of women organized the kitchen, while other members trimmed bushes and mowed the lawn. Early in August we learned a bequest of \$10,000 had been given to the church from Ms. Harriet McGaughey, long time organist of Christ Church; the processional cross she had given years earlier was used at the institution.

Grace remembers Linda Milholen preparing the worship space before the first Sunday service we held on the Carrier property. Church members had been working all day, cleaning, moving chairs, placing the lectern, raising a small table to alter height in front of the fireplace, and so forth. Yet as Linda placed "fair linen" over that table, and set up a cross and candlesticks, with a service book on the lectern, it became a sacred space. Our first Sunday service was held on August 30, 1992, though we were not formally The Church of Our Saviour until Sept. 20.

Finally, the great day came. On a beautiful Sunday in September Bishop Wimberly announced "Let the door be opened" and blessed the threshold through which he entered our new church. The new banner **Martha Conaway** had designed and embroidered was set in its place. In the presence of many guests, the Bishop called on the former members of Christ Church to a renewed ministry as a new church: The Episcopal Church of Our Saviour in Madison County. He baptized Christina Iris Ciolek at the marble font we still use. At the end of the service members of the new church were invited to sign the charter, sealed by the bishop.

After a bountiful lunch with our distinguished guests, members of the congregation, their visitors, and leaders from St. Thomas met at an awning set up on the lawn in front of the building. Lutherans and Episcopalians recited a litany together, and pledged to support each other in specific ways. Duplicate copies of the fellowship document were signed by representatives of both congregations, and gifts were exchanged in honor of the occasion. We received a hand-crafted chalice and paten, and gave a wooden plaque reading, "I was a stranger and you took me in." The covenant document and the church charter are both displayed on opposite walls of our new building. They recall our joyful beginning. *Submitted by **Grace Sears**, with additional material provided by **Jane Rainey**.*

Thanks to all who have contributed to preserving our Church history. The next issue will include the planning of the new church building. If you have any information of remembrances that you would like to see included, please contact **Linda Myers** at rukasa05@aol.com or call at 513-368-6415.

Congratulations!

Sincerest congratulations to our church members **Tristan Grider** and **Zachary Grider**. Zachary now works at New Vista Long Term Care Facility for adults with intellectual disabilities and has been promoted to the position of Supervisor, which entails overseeing the staff of his unit, ensuring patient care. Having

come to know Zachary over time, which has felt much too short, none of us are the least bit surprised at his accomplishments, and we offer our heartiest good wishes on his promotions! Additionally, Tristan has been accepted into the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program at Galen College of Nursing in Louisville. His caring nature will definitely be an asset to his success and to his commitment to his career. We wish continued good fortune to both Zach and Tristan, and our prayers are with them.

So many Christmas Carols---So little time

Every year I get the question “Why don’t we sing Christmas carols before Christmas?” It’s interesting that no one ever asks why we don’t sing Easter hymns before Easter. I think the reason is that TV commercials and stores don’t play Easter hymns during Lent. While Advent and Lent are not the same, they are both times of waiting, preparation, anticipation, and reflection. Here are three short thoughtful articles that discuss this topic including some pros and cons:

<https://covenantcompanion.com/2016/11/29/why-not-christmas-carols-during-advent/>

<https://www.christandstlukes.org/why-dont-we-sing-christmas-carols-advent/>

<https://www.thecompassnews.org/2019/11/why-cant-we-sing-christmas-carols-in-church-during-advent/>

And while Christmas music in the commercial world generally stops on December 26, we will continue Christmas music through the twelve days of Christmas and the Feast of the Epiphany. So don’t let the secular world get you saturated with Christmas music during this time of waiting. Ponder and reflect on our Advent music with its message of longing and hope as we sing “O come O come Emmanuel.” Soon we can sing “Good Christian friends rejoice...Christ is born today, Christ is born today.” *(submitted by Jane Rainey)*

Ancient Christmas Jokes

Good King Wenceslas called his local pizzeria to place an order. The owner asked him what he would like. “I suppose that you want your usual? Deep pan, crisp and even?”

Shortly before Christmas, two young boys were spending the night at their Grandparents. At bedtime, the two boys knelt down beside their beds to say their prayers. When the youngest one began praying, he yelled at the top of his lungs: “I pray for a Lego set! I pray for some Hot Wheels! I pray for a new bicycle!” His older brother leaned over and nudged the younger brother and said “Why are you shouting your prayers? God’s not deaf!” To which the little brother replied, ‘No, but Grandma is!’