



December 2023

Sundays

8:00a.m. H.E. Rite I
9:15a.m. Adult Christian Education
10:30a.m. H.E. Rite II

Sunday, December 10

8:00a.m. H.E. Rite I
10:30a.m. Pageant

Sunday, December 17

8:00a.m. H.E. Rite I
10:30a.m. Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 24

4:30p.m. H.E. Rite II

Sunday, December 31

9:30a.m. Morning Prayer

Wednesdays

10:30a.m. Healing Service

The church office will be closed from
December 25, 2023-January 1, 2024.

What Fresh Hell is This?

Sam Portaro

"What fresh hell is this?" Surely Dorothy Parker's expression or something very much like it was Joseph's response to the decree mandating a trip to Bethlehem in the final days of Mary's pregnancy. Burden heaped upon burden. In years to come songs would sweeten that trek to the little town of Bethlehem, but just then Joseph could barely manage the weight of Caesar's decree and his wife's condition. From where he stood, Joseph's predicament was a study in hopelessness.

Many can feel Joseph's pain; these aren't easy times for a lot of people or for the church. Resources are tight; spirits flag. Few know this better than those who, like Joseph, bear the responsibilities of relationship. As Diana Butler Bass notes, "Hopelessness...has worked its way into the spiritual DNA of many churches and denominations. It is hard to hope for the future when your congregation is declining, the Sunday school is empty, people are arguing about the issue du jour, and there is little money to pay the pastor—and when programs to increase numbers and vitality have failed."

A rich, mature spirituality acknowledges and embraces difficulty. To the extent that we allow the frenetic frivolities of the holiday season to distract us and encourage us to denial, we waste the opportunity to engage the hard truths that gave the birth of Jesus its deepest meanings as the incarnation of hope. As Bass rightly acknowledges, "Hope and courage begin with honesty." Thus this is the season to embrace the difficult truths of our lives, to acknowledge the darker, depressing side of the holiday that is for far too many their experience of this season—to see these weeks from the perspective of the central characters in the biblical narrative. Beneath sweet, endearing reenactments of the tale and melodious carols to the same, there lies the crushing sadness of it all. We've no need to preach the shadow of the cross that falls upon the manger; the story supplies all the shade needed to convey the despair it embodies. Without this reality, hope lacks context.

Advent's characteristic waiting is not the anticipatory expectation of envisioned gift—like the child's wishful waiting for Santa, or even the pregnant mother's and expectant father's apprehensions of birth—but a more difficult waiting, a waiting with no tangible outcome accessible to us, exactly the kind of waiting demanded of us just now: waiting for that which we cannot yet see. Or even imagine. We've no idea what the future holds for us, for the church. We forget (to our peril) that neither Mary nor Joseph could've anticipated the fullness of their child's life, much less its enduring power in our own lives. Any and all suggestions to the contrary have been read backward into the story, many centuries after those at the heart of the story had lived and died. None of the apostles could ever have imagined the church as we experience it; none lived to see even an approximation of it. The human aspirations and apprehensions met in Bethlehem's manger were overlooked by all those present and many who followed for centuries after, for their hopes and fears were founded upon models of messiah and kingship Jesus steadfastly refused. None could've imagined what God was accomplishing—would accomplish—much less how and in whom.

This isn't say that we're to despair, but rather that true leadership in the community of the faithful is unafraid of truth and steadfast in trust. When we let go our own fantasies of a personal or congregational future conforming to our own desires and designs, we open a space ready to receive God's surprise, the life promised us. We've no idea what awaits us but in the darkness of that scary not knowing, the light of Advent shines. We take our places with Joseph and Mary at the center of that fresh hell—that wearying trip, compounded by advanced pregnancy, to comply with an onerous imperial order of census and taxation, to a city lacking adequate provision for them—to find ourselves at a stable, staring into the face of a baby whose future is as tenuous and as unknown as every child's.

That's what we're called to, what we come to in this and every Advent. A new life is being born and though we'll not live to see it fully grown, we hold fast to the assurance of that "God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine." (Ephesians 3:20) And we rejoice to be here.

Sam Portaro is an Episcopal priest. He served at The College of William & Mary and Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, and retired in 2004 after twenty-two years as Episcopal Chaplain to The University of Chicago. He is on the faculty of CREDO Institute, conducts Quiet Days and retreats, has served as a consultant and preacher nationwide and in England, and is a Trustee of the Pullman Educational Foundation in Chicago. He is author of eight books.

H Y M N S T O R Y

I Wonder as I Wander

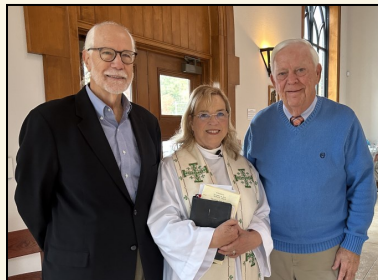
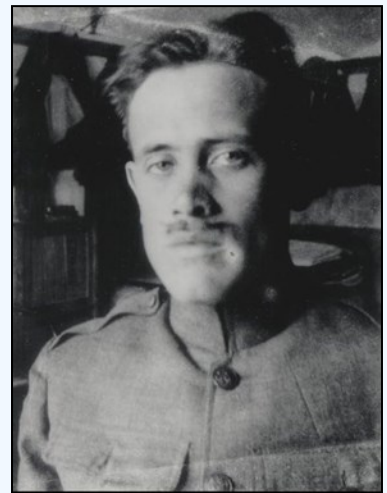
"I Wonder as I Wander" is a Christian folk hymn, typically performed as a Christmas carol, written by American folklorist and singer John Jacob Niles. The hymn has its origins in a song fragment collected by Niles on July 16, 1933.

While in the town of Murphy in Appalachian North Carolina, Niles attended a fundraising meeting held by evangelicals who had been ordered out of town by the police. In his unpublished autobiography, he wrote of hearing the song:

A girl had stepped out to the edge of the little platform attached to the automobile. She began to sing. Her clothes were unbelievably dirty and ragged, and she, too, was unwashed. Her ash-blond hair hung down in long skeins. ... But, best of all, she was beautiful, and in her untutored way, she could sing. She smiled as she sang, smiled rather sadly, and sang only a single line of a song.

The girl, named Annie Morgan, repeated the fragment seven times in exchange for a quarter per performance, and Niles left with "three lines of verse, a garbled fragment of melodic material—and a magnificent idea". (In various accounts of this story, Niles hears between one and three lines of the song. Based on this fragment, Niles composed the version of "I Wonder as I Wander"; that is known today, extending the melody to four lines and the lyrics to three stanzas. His composition was completed on October 4, 1933.

Niles first performed the song on December 19, 1933, at the John C. Campbell Folk school in Brasstown, North Carolina. It was originally published in Songs of the Hill Folk in 1934.



We received a nice Thank you note from My Sister's House to our congregation. Thank you for all you do in helping us with this mission.

Dear Andrews Episcopal Church / Att. Mrs. Lynn Arnow .

We at *My Sister's House, Inc.* are truly grateful for the impact our donors and sponsors are making within our organization and throughout Nash and Edgecombe counties. We acknowledge that without your support victims of domestic violence , sexual assault and human trafficking may not have the resources they need to flee from their situations. Your contributions allow each victim to receive the services they need free of charge.

We personally thank you, our "community heroes" for your enduring support. We are appreciative and feel fortunate to be able to share in a community that is committed to supporting those in need. Your compassion and investment are always amazing in impacting the healing of people you may not know!

Again, thank you so much for your kindness! Your generosity and care keep us moving forward toward justice and a world we look forward to living in.

May you stay safe and healthy!

Sincerely,

Shirley
Administrative Assistant
My Sister's House, Inc.

Thank you so much!!



The church as a whole were bagging up the Thanksgiving bags and tearing down boxes for recycling, Sunday, November 19th after church services.



EYCers: Sydney, Madison and Liam Mericle, Lauren and Meghan Renck, and Landon Newcomb assisted with all of the Thanksgiving food bag work. Landon Newcomb is pictured doing some in-depth cleaning on our cabinetry, in the Commons. Sydney, Liam and Madison Mericle worked on this project too. Thank you so much for all you do!



St. Andrew's Thanksgiving Altar

| 2023 December | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| <div></div> | | | <div></div> | | | <div></div> |
| <div><div>3</div><div>8:00am HE Rite I 9:15am Adult CE 10:30am HE Rite II 10:30am Practice for Pageant 11:45am EYC Family Wreath Making Rev. Adele Hatfield</div></div> | <div><div>4</div><div>St. Elizabeth's Guild 12:00-1:00pm Tar River Adult Choir 7:00-9:00pm</div></div> | <div><div>5</div><div>Food Pantry 9-11am</div></div> | <div><div>6</div><div>Food Pantry 9-10:30am Healing Service 10:30am</div></div> | <div><div>7</div><div>Food Pantry 9-11am Tar River Children Chorus 5:00-7:30pm</div></div> | <div><div>8</div><div></div></div> | <div><div>9</div><div>Men's Club Breakfast 8:00am</div></div> |
| <div><div>10</div><div>8:00am HE Rite I 9:15am Adult CE 10:30am Christmas Pageant 11:45am EYC 5pm Vestry Meeting Rev. Daniel Pinell</div></div> | <div><div>11</div><div></div></div> | <div><div>12</div><div>Food Pantry 9-11am Book Club 10am Finance Committee 6pm</div></div> | <div><div>13</div><div>Food Pantry 9-10:30am Healing Service 10:30am</div></div> | <div><div>14</div><div>Food Pantry 9-11am Meals on Wheels 10am Tar River Children Chorus 5:00-7:30pm</div></div> | <div><div>15</div><div><div>Greening of the Church 10am</div><div>Townes Homeowners Meeting 10am-2pm</div></div></div> | <div><div>16</div><div><div>Greening of the Church 10am</div><div>Townes Homeowners Meeting 10am-2pm</div></div></div> |
| <div><div>17</div><div>8:00am HE Rite I 9:15am Adult CE 10:30am Lessons & Carols 11:45am EYC Angel Tree gifts returned wrapped and labelled Rev. Daniel Pinell</div></div> | <div><div>18</div><div>Angel Tree Gifts Delivered to Carriage Court</div></div> | <div><div>19</div><div>Food Pantry 9-11am Preschool Birthday Party for Jesus Townes Homeowners Meeting 4:30-6pm</div></div> | <div><div>20</div><div>Food Pantry 9-10:30am 10:30 a.m. Healing Service</div></div> | <div><div>21</div><div>Food Pantry 9-11am</div></div> | <div><div>22</div><div></div></div> | <div><div>23</div><div></div></div> |
| <div><div>24</div><div>4:30pm HE Rite II Rev. Phil Byrum</div></div> | <div><div>25</div><div><div>Office Closed</div></div></div> | <div><div>26</div><div>Office Closed</div></div> | <div><div>27</div><div>Office Closed</div></div> | <div><div>28</div><div>Office Closed</div></div> | <div><div>29</div><div>Office Closed</div></div> | <div><div>30</div><div>Office Closed</div></div> |
| <div><div>31</div><div>9:30am Morning Prayer 10:45am EYC</div></div> | | | | | | |



LAY/LEM READERS

December 3

8:00 George Earp
George Earp

10:30 Martha Lamm
Sandy Suggs

December 10

8:00 Albert Corinth
Ramona Orzell

10:30 Christmas Pageant

December 17

8:00 Tim Knapp
Tim Knapp

10:30 Lessons and Carols

December 24 (Christmas Eve)

4:30pm Terry Shackelford
Tim Knapp
Leslie Hall

December 31

9:30 Ramona Orzell
George Earp
Martha Lamm

Acolytes

Dec. 3 Walker Wells
Lauren Renck

Dec. 10 Pageant

Dec. 17 Lessons and Carols

Dec. 24 Landon Newcomb
The Merticle Family

Dec. 31 9:30am

Walker Wells



O God, who makest us glad with
the yearly remembrance of the
birth of thy only Son Jesus
Christ: Grant that as we joyfully
receive him for our Redeemer, so
we may with sure confidence
behold him when he shall come
to be our Judge; who liveth and
reigneth with thee and the Holy
Ghost, one God, world without
end. Amen.

GREETERS

Tommy Parker
Elizabeth Hunter



Pantry Distributors

Tuesday—Patty Kennedy
Wednesday—Tommy Parker
Thursday—Elizabeth Hunter

Pantry Volunteers

Terry Shackelford
Linda Hutcheson
Dotsy and Jim Royal

USHERS

December 3
Billy Suggs
Steve Thurkill

December 10
Linda Hutcheson
Jan Arnold

December 17
Dan Melnyk
Don Mucci

December 24
(Christmas Eve)
Billy Suggs
Steve Thurkill

December 31
Angela Reid
Jim Royal

Kitchen Clean Up

Tara Vester & Preschool



The
Savior is
born in
Bethlehem.
Hallelujah!

St. Elizabeth's Guild Luncheon

St. Elizabeth's Guild hosted our annual Thanksgiving Luncheon on November 6th for the Staff and Search Committee of St. Andrew's. We are so grateful for their commitment to St. Andrew's during this transitional time.



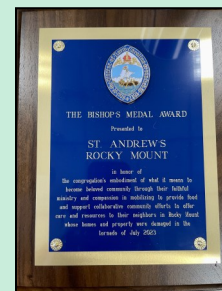
Our labyrinth is complete!



Thank you to our Convention Delegates: Leslie Hall, George Vargha, and Tim Knapp.



Thank you to all our volunteers who helped give out 76 Thanksgiving turkeys on Monday, November 20th.



At the 208th Annual Convention of the NC Episcopal Diocese, St. Andrews was given the Bishop's award. This award is given annually to an individual or organization who exemplifies the mission of "Becoming Beloved Community". St Andrews was given this award for our efforts in helping those impacted by the July tornado. Thank you to everyone for your support of our emergency response project! Congratulations on this prestigious award!



Our Parish Family





ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
301 Circle Drive • Rocky Mount, NC 27804

U.S. Postage
Paid
Non Profit
Organization
Permit #278
Rocky Mount, NC

Return Service Requested

Our Parish Family



Let Light Perpetual Shine

Jim Pittman

April 6, 1968 –October 6, 2023

Husband to Janie Mac Pittman

Angel Tree is starting up again soon! The children at Carriage Court Apartments are our special mission throughout the year. If you've helped in the past, thank you; for those who are busy, please consider choosing a child in this season celebrating the birth of our Lord. Angel Tree will be open starting Sunday, December 3rd and all gifts need to be returned by December 17th. We have 44 angels this year!



St. Elizabeth's Guild meets December 4, 2023 at noon. Please bring a bagged lunch. Dessert will be provided. Martha Lamm, our artist in residence, will present a Christmas tree painting class.



The Men's Club is meeting Saturday,
December 2nd at 8am.



Every Sunday after the 8am service, we will be packing food bags for the students at Winstead Elementary.

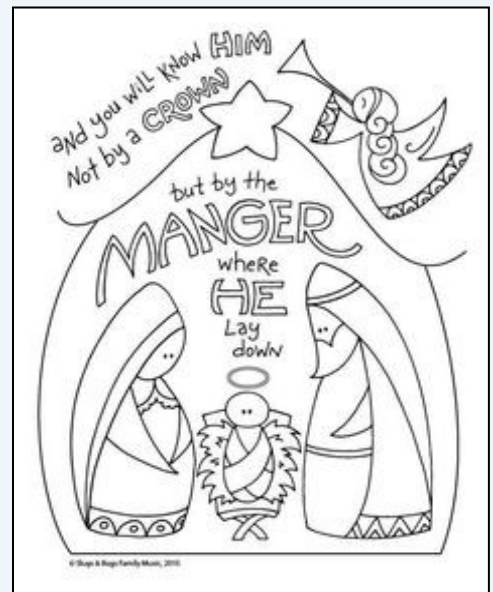
On December 10th, we will pack bags for the food pantry after the 10:30am service.

St Andrew's Book Club will meet on
Tuesday, December 12th at 10am.

We're reading Silver Alert by
Lee Smith. Everyone is welcome!

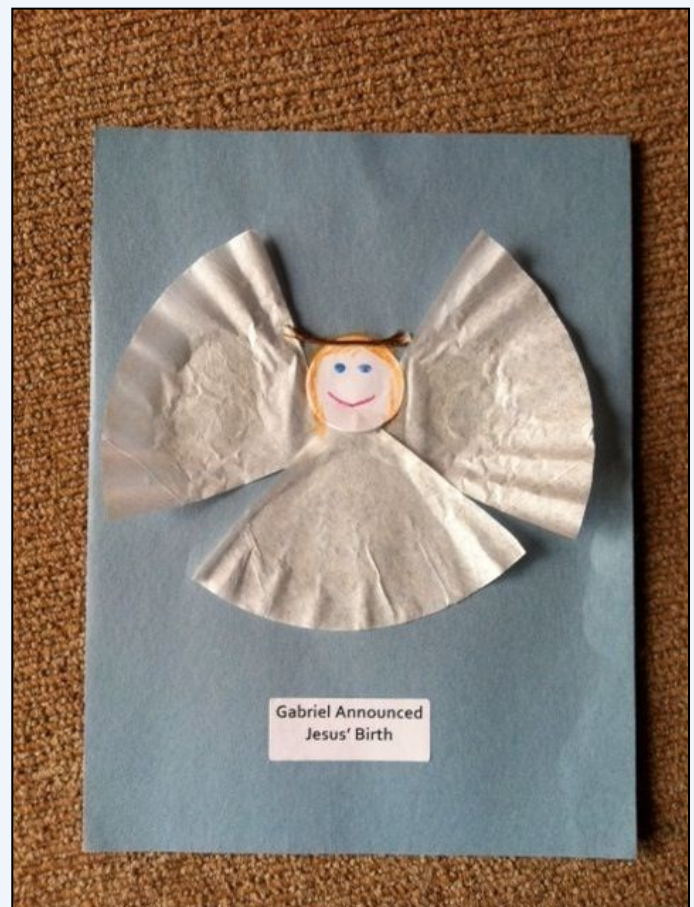
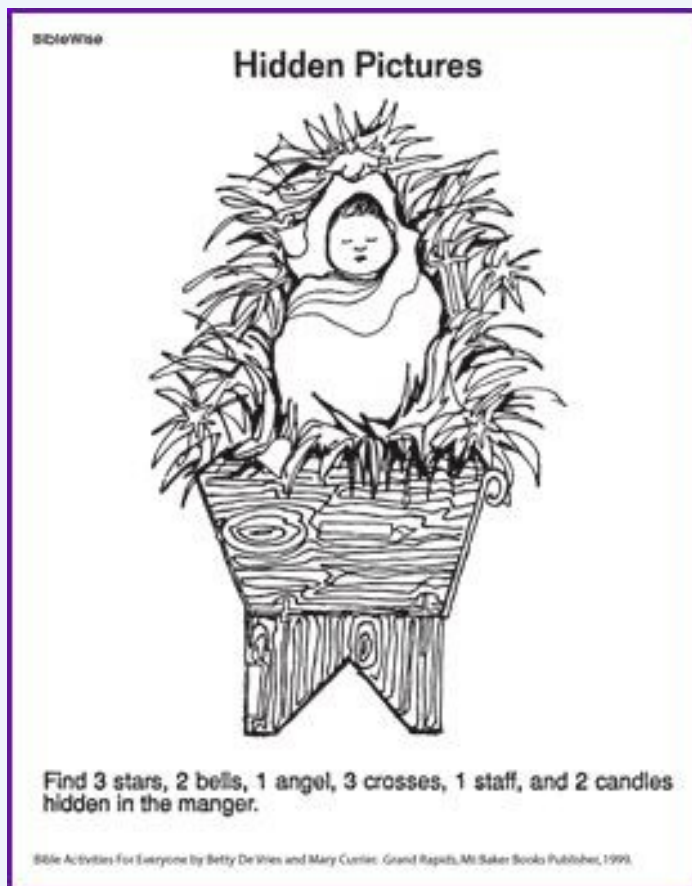


We are looking forward to greening the church a little earlier this year and we would love your help! Please join us on Saturday, December 16 at 10:00 am. We will meet in the Commons to hang wreaths, place poinsettias, add magnolia and get into the Christmas spirit! **Everyone is welcome to come join in the fun!**



Advent and Christmas

God sent his son, Jesus to live among us.



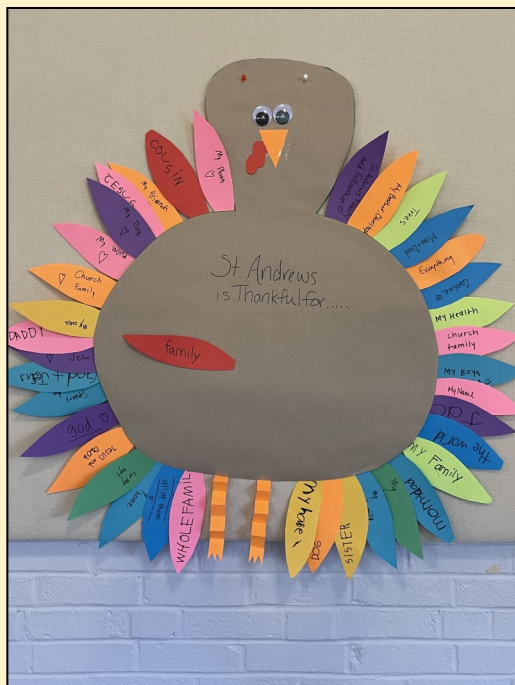
Search Committee Report

November 2023

The search committee continues its work “behind the scenes”. The Rector position has been posted on the Diocesan Website, the Episcopal News Service as a paid featured listing for 2 weeks, and several other national sites. There have been no specific applications sent to the Diocese but Catherine Massey did tell us that she had had one casual inquiry from one person considering applying. In addition; the Annual Diocesan Convention was held in November and there were 7 potential Seminary spring graduates who were introduced to the attendees. Contact was made with each of them individually and they were given our Parish Profile and contact information. One, in particular, seemed quite interested in us. We will wait for follow-up from them. The Search Committee will continue its efforts to communicate the position availability across the country. Parishioners can help by reaching out to your own individual Episcopal network and spread the word! We will repost the position on the paid sites in January. In the meantime, please support the work of our committee by using this prayer:

Heavenly Father,

We come before you with grateful hearts, seeking your guidance and wisdom as we continue our journey of selecting a new priest to lead our congregation. We are humbled by the responsibility entrusted to our search committee and ask for your divine presence to guide us every step of the way. We pray for the candidates who are considering this role that you may grant the clarity and assurance in their calling. Bless them with the skills, compassion, and understanding to serve our vibrant community. As we move forward in this process, help us to remember that it is ultimately your plan we seek to fulfill. We place our trust in you. Lord, knowing that you will guide us to the right person to shepherd our church and strengthen our faith. We offer this prayer in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen



Our St. Andrew's youth put together this wonderful Thanksgiving Turkey with the feathers saying what each is thankful for. The Parish was invited to add their own feathers to the turkey this Thanksgiving Season.

