

Winter 2022

SPIRITUS ♦ GLADIUS

SAINT PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND SCHOOL MAGAZINE



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On the Front Cover

Parishioners enter the church on a Sunday morning. Photo taken by Savannah Gray.



Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

THE REV. SAMANTHA R.E. SMITH
RECTOR

“Come thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art: dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart. Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring. By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone; by thine all sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.”

Hymn 66, Hymnal 1940



This song is one of my favorite Advent hymns. It reminds me that Advent is a season of rest, of longing, and of hopeful expectation. When the holidays can be all consuming, when the calendar is full of Christmas parties, travel, last minute work expectations, and the buzz of collective cheerfulness, it can be easy to relax into the chaotic world of the ‘holiday season’ and think we just need a nap or two to see us through. We can be subdued into believing the holidays are always crazy, or chaos, or cacophony.

But Advent pulls us back from that lived experience to invite us into a different embrace of time. Yes, for in Advent we are reminded that at the center of our very beings is the reality that there is One more wonderful and powerful than we can imagine waiting to break into our awareness. And it is that One which every piece of us rests in, longs for, hopes expectantly to know and cherish. Advent reminds us that the world has already known the Christ-child, but that there is a time when Christ will come again, and that we are always to find room for the stillness and quietness of the long, enduring wait.

I love Advent because it has space enough for all. Those cheerful and those grieving, those festive and those not, those who forge ahead with endless energy and those who need a break from everything.

Advent pushes and pulls against the world to make space for each of us to hold fast to the promise that Christ is always finding ways to draw near to us no matter where we find ourselves.

Though eggnog and pine spruce scent the air, though we might find joy and fulfillment in gathering with friends and family in our greens and reds, and though we might gird our loins for the relentlessness of the season, there is a stillness and depth to Advent that reminds us that we are still resting and waiting on something new to spring forth in our lives. And for us Christians, and for us at Saint Paul’s, that ‘something new’ is the advent of Christ. The rest we need we find in Jesus. The longing we have in our hearts is for the Savior’s arrival. The hopeful expectation we harbor is for Christ’s all sufficient merit to not just raise us to heaven’s throne, but to bring heaven’s kingdom near to us here on earth.

Wherever this Advent finds you, may it find you well. May you find the rest, longing, and hopeful expectation of Christ’s presence near. May you know the peace of the Prince of Peace. And may you be blessed in the waiting.

Sam



Advent

THE REV. BRANDON S. MCGINNIS
ASSISTANT RECTOR

Advent is my favorite liturgical season in the Church calendar. It is a period of liminality. Advent comes on the heels of two feasts of transcendence – St. Michael and All Angels as well as All Saints’ – in which the Church remembers the work of Christ in the unseen realm. And at the same time, Advent is at the precipice of two feasts of imminence – Christmas and Epiphany – in which the Church remembers the work of Christ accomplished in his drawing near to humankind and his dwelling in the material realm.



Advent is the bridge between the glorious and otherworldly feasts at the end of one liturgical year and the humble and this-worldly nativity cycle of the next. As such, Advent is a strange juxtaposition of darkness and light. The days grow darker and colder while the church progressively lights rings of candles, making the church a little brighter and warmer with each passing Sunday.

More than mere preparation for Christmas, Advent is the anticipation of Christ’s second coming and his manifestation at the end of the Age. The clash of darkness and light described in the book of Revelation and the Bible’s other apocalyptic literature finds its visual expression in the season of Advent. There’s nothing else quite like in the Church’s keeping of sacred time.

But, as I have written about before, the forces of secular consumer culture have all but abolished the season of Advent. This is most clearly visible in the seasonal sections of retail stores in the first days of November when the orange and black of Halloween clearance items sit opposed to the red and green of newly arrived Christmas goods. An ugly clash of color symptomatic of an even uglier anachronism.

I was personally reminded of this unapologetic disfigurement of sacred time when on the evening of November 1st, I saw witnessed one of my neighbors decorating their Christmas tree through their living room window! They didn’t even have the decency to lower the blinds or close the curtains.

But why does this matter? Why shouldn’t we go along with the culture (or follow my neighbor’s example) and jump from one festival to another? **Because without Advent, we lose the meaning of the whole liturgical calendar.** As I said above, Advent is not only the beginning of the next liturgical year, it is also (and at the same time) the end of the present one. Liturgical time is circular, not linear, so it doesn’t simply “start over” with Advent. If we abolish Advent or reduce it to a mere pre-Christmas season, we break sacred time.



It is helpful here to reflect on the meaning of sacred time. Christmas celebrates Christ's first coming in his incarnation. Epiphany celebrates Christ's self-revelation to the Gentiles. Lent celebrates Christ's sinless life. Easter (and its conclusion, Pentecost) celebrates Christ's resurrection, his ultimate victory over sin and death, and the beginning of the new creation. But Advent is different. Advent celebrates Christ's second coming in glory at the end of the age. As such, it is the only season of the liturgical calendar that celebrates something that hasn't yet happened in human history! Advent is an anticipation of a future reality, not the remembrance of a past one. The future reality that the season of Advent anticipates is precisely the fruit of Christ's work celebrated in every other season in the liturgical calendar. In Advent we celebrate the hope we have in Christ because of what he accomplished in the mysteries of Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter-Pentecost. To abolish Advent is to forget our Christian hope – it is to forget our future in Christ Jesus. To jump directly from Halloween to Christmas is to induce a spiritual amnesia upon the Church that robs the Gospel of its power.

If we allow Advent to be what it is meant to be, then Christmas won't have to do the heavy lifting it is so often forced to do. In my experience, people try to employ "holiday cheer" as an existential anesthetic. When the state of the world is unpleasant (and it always is), Christmas functions as an emo-

tional coping mechanism. "It's the most wonderful time of the year!" "Everything is jolly and bright!" But as is the case for all too many, life's despair can prove too great even for Christmas. When this happens, we call it "the Christmas blues."

The remedy for the Christmas blues is not more Christmas, but rather more Advent. Because in the season of Advent, the Church proclaims that the world will not always be the way it is right now. When Christ returns at the end of the age, the unpleasantness of the world will be undone. Christ will set the world right. The new creation begun at Easter-Pentecost will be finished.

On that day we will have no need for strings of electric lights or star-shaped tree-toppers. Because Christ, the light of the world, who is the bright shining morning star, will be all the light there is and all the light we could ever need. All the things that our culture hopes for during the Christmas season will ultimately be fulfilled on the day that Advent anticipates. And we can rest assured that the wonder and brightness of that day will be unimaginably greater than any holiday nostalgia we try and fail to recapture year after year.

So, my friends, let us celebrate Advent well this year. Let us take time to remember our future in Christ Jesus. And let us keep sacred time together.





Outreach and Generosity

SARA ALLISON
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

This fall, Saint Paul's has reimagined what outreach and generosity has meant to our parishioners and we've been so fortunate to reconnect in this way. Our parish has enjoyed partnering with local organizations, learning about their mission from their leaders, and sharing a completed project with them.

In the past three months we've partnered with The Cove to help support their homeless students, the animal shelter to provide toys for their dogs, Kids Against Hunger to pack 20,000 meals for families, and Mission Waco to provide a Thanksgiving meal to our community. After quite a while without a parish-wide service project, this has been so fun to jump in to!

The Saint Paul's Youth have also been working in our community outside of these projects. They are mentors to elementary school kids, Sunday School teachers, acolytes, reading buddies, furniture haulers, Ironman helpers, and so much more. In a recent conversation with some of the kids about mandated service hours, they were laughing about how the minimum number of hours for some of their organizations can easily be met in a weekend for them! Their sweet servant hearts are always striving to do more than what is expected of them.

I feel really lucky to live in a community that teaches service to our kids and offers educational opportunities for our families to serve. Thank you for joining us as we partner with more organizations going forward!





Advent Traditions

LISA ST. ROMAIN
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Like many people, the Advent traditions that are most special to me are the ones that are rooted in practices that have been celebrated since childhood. And naturally, as a Children's Minister Advent is my favorite liturgical season! A time of joyful expectation when the church anticipates the coming of Christ and prepares to celebrate the story of his birth.

The last week of October, I visited my Aunt Elizabeth in Houston. Aunt Liz is my Godmother and she was celebrating her 89th birthday! It was quite an event as my family joined us from Baton Rouge and cousins gathered from across the country for the "Gigi Celebration!" In one of our conversations, I spoke of my nativity and thanked her as I do every year.



She and Uncle Doug were stationed in England in the 50s when I was born and they brought me my first nativity Christmas 1959. I don't keep it with the other decorations but in the hall closet so that I can set it up on the first Sunday of Advent. This special remembrance of my family and Jesus' family is always displayed in a prominent location (without the baby who arrives on Christmas Eve.) The mother, Mary, and the father, Joseph, are found in the stable with the cow and the donkey surrounded

by the shepherds who were the first to arrive. I don't include the magi until the twelfth day of Christmas.

Over the years, I have been given other nativities and each is very special because I think of the person who remembered me. One such treasure is the manger carved into an alabaster egg. My most recent nativity is a gift from Sara Allison, a colorful felt ornament collection of the Holy Family, shepherds, and snowflakes that I place on a small tree just right for grandchildren and visiting neighborhood children to admire and play with.



A Thanksgiving not too long ago, my mother and my daughters gathered around the table while the turkey was in the oven. Each created a different nativity figure out of filmo clay. They are all very unique in size and style. Caroline's donkey looks a lot like the donkey in Shrek.

There are many wonderful ways to prepare our hearts and homes for the coming of Christ and I use them all! I will create an Advent calendar with a name or word each day to remember to pray. The Jesse Tree will be displayed in the church hallway to help those who pass reflect on the history of God's great family. I will make an Advent wreath at the Advent Workshop on November 27 and if you are

able to be there you better believe that I will have a nativity craft for you to make for your home.

When the pilgrims from Saint Paul's Waco traveled to the Holy Land, I purchased an olive wood nativity from the Christians in Bethlehem. I gave it to my granddaughter for her first Christmas. It is my hope that she too will use her gift each Advent to prepare for the celebration of Christmas.



Saint Paul's Celebration of Saint Lucy

LISA ST. ROMAIN
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Children learn from experiences. The celebration of St. Lucy, which is borrowed from the people of Sweden, is a feast for all of the senses! During Sunday school on December 18, we will explore some of these rich traditions and the children will hold their own St. Lucy procession during the 10 AM worship service.

Lucia of Syracuse (283-304) was a Christian martyr who died during the Diocletianic Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. Saint Lucia, the patron saint of light, was said to be a beautiful maiden who wore a crown of candles to light her way when she carried food to persecuted Christians who were hiding in caves. In Sweden, Saint Lucia Day is celebrated by having the oldest daughter be the first to rise and wear a crown of candles as she brings saffron buns to all who are sleeping in the household.





Seasons of Wonder

M'LISSA HOWEN
HEAD OF SCHOOL

Technically, the “Advent Season” and the “Christmas Season” should be two different things. “Advent” means the coming of a notable person, thing, or event; in Christianity, the advent season defines our time of expectation awaiting Christ’s arrival. Christmas is the coming of Christ. If we lived by the dictionary, the Christmas season would be an extended period after Christmas day during which we celebrate the Lord’s appearance among us.

But we do not live by the dictionary; in our day and time, the demands of commerce assume priority. For many, the Christmas season starts the day after Thanksgiving with the oddly but aptly named Black Friday. For a solid month, we try in vain to manage our gluttony: overeat, overdrink, overspend. It is no surprise that we do not spend the month after December 25th celebrating Jesus. The energy just is not there after a marathon of parties, sweets, and managing credit card limits.

Perhaps the craziest thing about this set-up is that we focus (or rationalize) our illogic around the children. We so desperately want to make the little ones happy we say over and over “it’s all for them!” Maybe my job as the Head of School gives me an inside track on this, but daily the one thing I notice is that the children *already are happy*. It turns out that whether they receive this year’s must-have toy is more of an existential crisis for us than it is for them. I gained this insight through hard-won experience, as a veteran of the legendary Cabbage Patch Kids and Tickle Me Elmo campaigns.

And yet... I stubbornly remain the opposite of Ebenezer Scrooge. I love this time of year with my whole heart. The lights twinkle, the music soars, and the company brings us comfort. There are quiet moments interspersed in the craziness in which God, as a perfect and patient parent, reminds us again that it is not the celebration that brings us peace, but the event we are celebrating.

Each year God’s reminder to me comes in the form of the children’s *Lesson and Carols* program. With any luck, the performance falls on a clear and chilly

evening. The short days and an evening service means that the church’s beautiful lighting works to full effect, providing a cozy warmth inside. The children are washed and shined, which is not a prerequisite to beauty for them, but it adds a nice touch. Parents and grandparents mill about before the service strengthening friendships and emphasizing that we are at our best when we are a community.

Meanwhile, Nikita Disheroon and her helpers are herding cats. Most of us are aware of the Christmas stress I described above. Few of us have had to deal with getting scores of children in exactly the right place at exactly the right time to say exactly the right thing and sing something close to the right notes. As much as I love Nikita, I giggle at the kids’ antics for two reasons. First, it lets me know they are having fun—that we have not substituted technical prowess for joyful hearts. Second, I have faith in them. They will get to mostly the right place and those who do not are likely to entertain the assembled.

The program starts and Steve readies the Kleenex supply. Nothing grabs my soul with more gentle authority than a children’s choir. Sondheim said, “If I cannot fly, let me sing.” The pure innocence of children singing without a care affirms to me that God provides a world where purity and perfection is possible. It may be frustrating that the moment is fleeting, but his promise is there, right before us if we care to look and listen.

All the stress and the myriad worries large or small dissolve away. The words of the lessons explain why, but it is the music—or maybe more precisely, the musicians, who deliver the message. Christ is coming and that is enough. Our physical world will never be what we want it to be. There will be poverty, injustice, war, and challenges we might not be equipped to face. But that is okay if we do not have to face the night alone. The promise of the Advent Season and the joy of the Christmas season is that Jesus’ arrival means no one is alone.

Before they learn too much, our children under-

stand that idea. The clear, bright voices they send into the chilly night are all the conviction I need. God is with me and always will be. He sent his son for that purpose, and he has sent these children to tell the story. By the end of the performance, I am at peace.

In the late 1800's some called the American Congregationalist preacher Henry Ward Beecher the most famous man in America. While his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, might have the advantage of longer lasting fame, Henry's accessible teachings that focused on God's love and grace helped transform American Christianity into something based more on love than fear. He offered a quotation that perfectly

sums the *Lessons and Carols* tradition:

*Children are the hands
by which we take hold of
heaven.*

Join us in celebrating this Advent season with our *Lessons and Carols* program on December 15th at 6:30 PM. Tiny hands, angelic faces, and voices small but strong and assured will warm your heart.

Blessings,

M'Lissa Howen, M.Ed.

Head of School



Meet Our New Facilities Director

CRAIG FINLEY

Craig Finley is an accomplished facilities director with forty years' management experience in school districts and churches. He is from Tyler, Texas, graduated from Robert E. Lee High School and attained a bachelor's degree in Industrial Distribution from Texas A&M University. He worked for Johnson Controls in Houston before moving to Harlingen C. I. S. D to be the Energy Manager and Director of Custodial Services. From Harlingen, Craig moved to Longview, Texas, to be the maintenance Director at Longview I. S. D. In 2005, Craig moved to Waco to become the Facilities and Maintenance Director at Waco I. S. D. From health issues, Craig retired from Waco I. S. D. to work for First Woodway Baptist Church.

Craig met Jan Hammock at First Woodway Baptist Church, and they were married October 2, 2010. Craig and Jan enjoy day trips in Texas, shopping, and doting on 6 wonderful grandchildren. Craig has one daughter, the oldest in Longview with three sons, one son in Denver Colorado with a daughter, and the youngest son has two children in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Special Advent Offerings



Sunday, December 4

- ♦ 9 AM All Parish Breakfast
- ♦ 10 AM Lessons and Carols, Rite I*
- ♦ Last day to donate Angel Tree gifts

Sunday, December 11

- ♦ 10 AM Bishop's Visit and Confirmation*

Sunday, December 18

- ♦ 10 AM St. Lucy's Visit*
- ♦ 11 AM Greening of the Nave
- ♦ Last day to submit poinsettia orders for printed recognition

*indicates livestreamed service



Christmas Schedule



Saturday, December 24

- ♦ 3:30 PM Children's Pageant*
- ♦ 8 PM Service of Holy Eucharist, Rite II*
- ♦ 11 PM Rite I Vigil Mass

Sunday, December 25

- ♦ 10 AM Service of Holy Eucharist, Rite II

*indicates livestreamed service



Stewardship Update

Thank you to everyone who has pledged their time, money, and gifts to Saint Paul's. It is because of your generosity that we are able to grow our ministry and mission initiatives, maintain our campus, and staff our office.

It's not too late to join us in supporting Saint Paul's for 2023. If you have not yet, please prayerfully consider making a pledge to continue our efforts to live faithfully. Below you will find our current totals and our goals for 2023.



Scan the qr code above or visit
bit.ly/saintpauls-stewardship
to fill out an online pledge card

	Current	Goal
Number of Pledges	133	200
Total Amount Pledged	\$566,994	\$800,000

Live Faithfully.

End of Year Giving

As we approach the end of the year and enter a season of generosity and celebration, we offer our deep and abiding gratitude for each of you and the light of Christ you shine into the world.

As you make your end of year giving plans, we invite you to consider Saint Paul's in your list of contributions. Any and all gifts received go to supporting the ministry and mission of our beloved church, and each dollar represents real change in the life of this community and beyond.

There are many ways you can make a one-time contribution, including dropping a check or cash into the offering plate on Sunday mornings, going online to our website at saintpaulswaco.org/give, or mailing a contribution to the church office at 601 Columbus Ave, Waco, TX 76701. Please date year-end gifts no later than 12/31/22.

Thank you for your continued support of Saint Paul's and for your faithfulness in our ministry and mission efforts in and beyond Waco. Seasons blessings to you and yours as we await and celebrate the incarnation of Christ.

Scan the QR code to the right or visit
saintpaulswaco.org/give
to donate online.



Photo Gallery



Photo Gallery





SAINT • PAUL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

601 Columbus Ave
Waco, TX 76701
contactus@saintpaulswaco.org
saintpaulswaco.org

WORSHIP SCHEDULE



8 AM Service of Holy Eucharist, Rite I

10 AM Service of Holy Eucharist, Rite II*

*indicates Livestreamed services

You can find Sunday's order of worship at
saintpaulswaco.org/worship

You can find our livestreamed services by visting
facebook.com/saintpaulswaco

Saint Paul's Vestry

Suzanne Alexander, *Senior Warden*

Ford Taylor, *Junior Warden*

K. Paul Holt, *Treasurer*

Gina Ford, *Clerk*

Lisa Clevenger

Debbie Haddad

John Moon

Lorri Khoury

Suzy Nettles

Erika Jones

Linda Bostwick

Pam Crow

Mike Indergard

John Miller Mayfield

Saint Paul's Staff

The Rev. Samantha R.E. Smith, *Rector*

The Rev. Brandon S. McGinnis, *Assistant Rector*

The Rev. Al Melis, *Deacon*

The Rev. John Wells, *Retired Priest Associate*

Lisa St. Romain, *Director of Children & Family Minsitry*

Sara Allison, *Director of Youth Minsitry*

Dorothy Fisher, *Chief of Staff & Parish Administrator*

Brandi Goddard, *Missioner for Office Management*

Sarah Martin, *Missioner for Communications and Membership*

Craig Finley, *Facilities Director*

Paul Hicks, *Sexton*

Charles Watson, *Assisting Sexton*

Willie Sergent, *Retired Sexton Emeritus*

Dr. Jeffrey Peterson, *Organist and Interim Choir Director*

M'Lissa Howen, *Head of School*



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