

# THE PIEDMONT EPISTLE

*PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS BY WORD AND DEED*

December 2018



Advent has been buried under a pile of twinkling lights, plastic Grinch. Though the season has been observed for centuries as a time to contemplate Christ's

today acknowledge it only with a blank look as they rush from activity to activity—shopping, decorating, wrapping. For the vast majority of us, December flies by in a flurry of activities, and what is called “the holiday season” turns out to be the most stressful time of the year.

under a pile of reindeer, and the season has been a time to birth, most people

It is also a time of contrasting emotions. We are eager, yet frazzled; sentimental, yet dispirited. One minute we glow at the thought of getting together with our family and friends; the next we feel utterly lonely. Our hope is mingled with dread, our anticipation with despair. We sense the deeper meanings of the season but we cannot seem to grasp them; and in the end, all the yuletide rush leaves us frustrated and drained.

**Advent has been buried under a pile of twinkling lights, plastic reindeer, and the Grinch.**

Even those of us who do not experience such tensions, who genuinely love Christmas, often miss the point. Content with candles, carols and confections, we bask in the warmth of familiar traditions, in reciprocal acts of kindness, and in feelings of general goodwill. How many of us remember the harsh realities of Christ's first coming: the forced journey, the closed doors, the dank stable? How many of us share the longing of the ancient prophets, who awaited the Messiah with such aching intensity that they foresaw his arrival hundreds of years before he was born? We are often so dulled by superficial distractions that the feeling we know as ‘Christmas cheer’ lacks any real connection to the vital spirit that radiated from the manger.

**We miss the essence of Christmas if we fail to recognize God's coming into our midst, “Immanuel,” God with us.**

We miss the essence of Christmas if we fail to recognize that it marks something momentous: God's coming into our midst, “Immanuel,” God with us. That coming is not just something that happened in the past, in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago. It is a recurring possibility

here and now. And thus Advent is not merely about commemorating an event or an anniversary, but is a yearly opportunity for us to consider the future, second Advent—the promised coming of God’s kingdom on earth.

The thing is, the love that descended to Bethlehem is not the easy sympathy of an avuncular God, but, as we discover in the Advent readings, a burning fire whose light chases away every shadow, floods every corner, and turns the middle of the night into noon. This love reveals sin and overcomes it.

It conquers darkness with such forcefulness and intensity that, as Mary sings, it scatters the proud, humbles the mighty, feeds the hungry, and sends the rich away empty-handed (Luke 1:51-53).

In order to prepare for the arrival of this love, the Church has given us the season of Advent. In contrast to the frenetic activity of the “holiday” season, Advent encourages us to wait, to expect, to ready ourselves for action: to watch for every opening, and to be willing to risk everything for freedom and a new beginning.

To help us to live into this season, I encourage you to make room, to carve out space in your day, for God, for prayer, for reflection, for pausing. The Anglican tradition provides a variety of resources for this. In the *Book of Common Prayer*, you’ll find services for Morning Prayer (p75), Evening Prayer (p115), and Compline (prayers before bed, p127), as well as shorter Devotions for Individuals and Families (p136). If you prefer to have access to the services electronically, you can find them at The Mission of St. Clare ([www.missionstclare.com/english](http://www.missionstclare.com/english)). Moreover, I will also be sharing with you some readings and devotions throughout this month that I hope will help deepen your appreciation and experience of Advent. Keep an eye out for “Observing Advent” emails each week.

May this season be a time of awe, joy, and hope—not in a generic sense, but in response to amazing, wondrous, humbling act of God’s coming among us at Christmas and even today. Thanks be to God!

All the best,

*W Terry Miller*

**The love that descended to Bethlehem is not the easy sympathy of an avuncular God, but a burning fire whose light chases away every shadow, floods every corner, and turns the middle of the night into noon.**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Angel Tree** – Piedmont Church is working with the Skyline Cap Head Start Program to provide young children with Christmas gifts and books. Gift requests can be selected from the Angel Tree in the Parish house. Please sign your name on the sheet once you have selected an angel so that we can check the gifts before delivery. Wrapped toys, with the angel tied to the package, should be returned to the Parish House by **December 9** in order for them to be delivered for the Christmas Party.

**Christmas Pageant** – Written and directed by Beverly Young, this year's pageant, a musical, will be presented on Sunday, **December 16**.

**Greening of the Church and Altar Guild Meeting**—Altar Guild members and anyone who enjoys decorating are invited to meet after church on **Sunday, December 23**, to prepare the sanctuary for the Christmas services. Please bring conditioned greens and garden clippers if you have them.

### **Loose Plate Offering**

The Loose Plate Offering (cash) that is collected on the fourth Sunday of December (**December 23**) will be given to the Madison Free Clinic to help provide medical care for needy families in Madison County.

### **MESA Food Donations**

Please bring a can, bag, bottle, or box of non-perishable food item to give to the MESA food pantry.

### **Christmas Services**

#### **Christmas Eve Service**

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24 @ 7:30pm—Come all ye faithful and your families too! (*Note new time*)

#### **Christmas Day Service**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25 @ 8AM—Celebrate the birth of our Savior Christmas morn at this solemn, richly traditioned service.

#### **Christmas Lessons and Carols,**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30 @ 10am-- Join us as we proclaim Christmas in word and song through a series of readings from Holy Scripture, hymns, anthems and instrumental music.



## PRAYER JOYS & CONCERNS

We offer prayers of healing for friends and family:

Melvin Amos	Lisa Gardner	Susan Muston
Corey Barker	Cynthia Gerstner	Abigail Newman
Barbara Beach	Carrie Gilles	Carol Nowak
Emily Begovitch (Kathy Henken's niece)	The Gleason family	Amanda Paff
Fran Bowers	Griff & Vera Griffin	Sara Parmenter
Jean Brashears	Stanley Griffin (Vera & Griff's son)	The Puryear family
Max Brown (Sue Burnett's friend, 4-y.o.)	Reggie Hall (Barbara Straightiff's brother-in-law)	Maria Rosenberg
Jane Camerer	Susan Hansen	Lorraine Sandifer
Doris & Roland Chapman	Luke Harbert	Myia MacKenzie Shifflett
Sandra Clore (Waltine Robinson's niece)	Sue Lam	Jacqueline Smith
The Cox family	Ted and René Hinds	Barbara Straightiff
Harley Cronk	The Hitt family	Stephanie & Keith Stricker
David Cronk	Ren LeVally (Dink's son)	Bob Thomas
Janice Edwards	Richard Medeiros Jr.	Matt Tsun
The Filmore Family	Keira & Brendan Miller	Robert Ulrich
Patrick & Sean Fohner	Rosalie Mow (Doug's mother)	Bernie Valdez
James Gardiner	Susan Mowchan	Donna Whitman (friend of the Griffiths)
	Dorothy Mudd	Augusta Woodward
		Jeff Yowel

We pray for peace and the restoration of people's safety and dignity in Philippines, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Iran, Sudan, West Africa, and the Congo. We pray for the victims of violence in Beirut, Baghdad, Kenya, Paris, and San Bernardino.

We pray for the men and women in the armed services, especially Mike Butterworth, Patrick DaSilva, Graham Davidson, Sean Hegg, R.E. Hutton, Nathan Kinkey, Alex Gochenour, Jeffery Mainwaring, Todd Mainwaring, Anthony Mark, and Clay Puryear, and for our first responders. We pray for our presiding bishop, Michael Curry; our bishops, Shannon Johnston, Susan Goff, Bob Ihloff, the churches of the Diocese of Virginia, and for our 70 million brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion.

We pray for the families in Barbara's House; for the work of Madison Emergency Services Association, Madison Free Clinic, Literacy Council of Madison County, Boy's and Girl's Club of Madison, Senior Nutrition Site, Madison County Education Foundation, and Boy Scout Troop 116.

We pray for our youth in college: Nick Bader, Josh Good, Izzie Hansen, Ben Landolt, Sam Landolt, Paul Jackson, and Jacob Young,

We give thanks to God for all the families in this blessed Piedmont Church, and especially for the work God has done in the life of Peter Bank, in his recovery from surgery. Gracious Lord, guide, preserve and protect your servants as they create for your glory a holy family of love. May their love for each other be a sign of your tender care.

# Graves Chapel News

Our next service, at Graves Chapel, will be Sunday December 23, 2018--at  
4:00pm.

Actually, the evening will be filled with *Christmas carols*---singing to celebrate  
Christmas--this joyous time of the year!

Everyone is welcome! Bring your neighbors, and any additional friends and/or  
guests...

Graves Chapel is located at 104 Bluff Mountain Road Madison (Graves Mill),  
Virginia.

Should you have special prayer requests or needs, please feel free to contact our  
Lay Preacher Susan Bagby.

Additionally, Susan can offer you spiritual direction. She is a counselor and is  
certified as a spiritual director. There are no fees associated with her professional  
services however she does request a tax deductible donation be made directly to  
Graves Chapel.

Please feel free to contact Susan at:

Susanhbagby@gmail.com or,

Telephone---434.978.1627

**Facebook:** [https://www.facebook.com/GravesChapel/?hc\\_ref=ARS35IRupbk0N2a1ViffMdoxy-vWbkOW49UJhWOMVKXxj8e8UIm9EyHyiKz7tjs2xhI&fref=nf](https://www.facebook.com/GravesChapel/?hc_ref=ARS35IRupbk0N2a1ViffMdoxy-vWbkOW49UJhWOMVKXxj8e8UIm9EyHyiKz7tjs2xhI&fref=nf)

**Website:** <http://www.gravesmillchapel.com/>