



# SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

306 N. Division Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104 • (734) 663-0518 • [www.standrewsaa.org](http://www.standrewsaa.org)

**Sunday, December 6, 2020**     *The Second Sunday of Advent*

Dear friends:

Advent and Lent often get grouped together in the seasons on the church year. This is reinforced by the use, in many places, of a deep violet color as the color of the two seasons. (Following an English tradition, we use blue in Advent at St. Andrew's). But beyond that the similarities begin to break down. Lent is a penitential season in which we are called to self-examination and repentance. Advent is an anticipatory time as we prepare and wait for the celebration of Christmas and, also, look toward and wait for the return of Christ in glory. While the themes of these two seasons are not mutually exclusive – indeed, taking stock of the state of our souls is necessary in order to prepare to meet our Lord – they are both so important that specific periods of time are set aside in the church year to explore both of them.

Advent, this year with the pandemic, is more loaded with 'waiting' than we have ever known. Over the next few weeks, I would like to share some thoughts on the spirituality of waiting from the writings of Henri Nouwen (1932-1996), a Catholic priest and theologian. This might not make the weight of waiting any lighter, but it might, I hope, make it less burdensome.

*"Waiting is active. Most of us think of waiting as something very passive, a hopeless state determined by events totally out of our hands. The bus is late? You cannot do anything about it, so you have to sit there and just wait. It is not difficult to understand the irritation people feel when somebody says, "Just wait." Words like that push us into passivity.*

*But there is none of this passivity in Scripture. Those who are waiting are waiting very actively. They know that what they are waiting for is growing from the ground on which they are standing. That's the secret. The secret of waiting is the faith that the seed has been planted, that something has already begun. Active waiting means to be fully present to the moment, in the conviction that something is happening where you are and that you want to be present to it. A waiting person is someone who is present to the moment, who believes that this moment is the moment."*

Henri Nouwen: "A Spirituality of Waiting: Being Alert to God's Presence in Our Lives," Weavings, January/February 1987.

God Bless, *Fr. Alan*

## Sunday, December 6

- ▶ [WATCH THE SERVICE](#) at 10:00 am
- ▶ [COFFEE HOUR](#) on Zoom at 10:45 am

## Navigating this Service

Use our [Morning Prayer text](#) or follow the Book of Common Prayer, pg. 75.

# Calendar

## Sunday, December 6

### Virtual Church School

8:45 am on Zoom

### Morning Prayer

10:00 am on YouTube

### Virtual Coffee Hour

10:45 am on Zoom

## Wednesday, December 9

### Virtual Youth Groups

7pm MS / 8pm HS on Zoom

## Thursday, December 10

### Bible Study

10:00 am on Zoom

## Sunday, December 13

### Virtual Church School

8:45 am on Zoom

### Morning Prayer

10:00 am on YouTube

### Virtual Coffee Hour

10:45 am on Zoom

# Stewardship Campaign Update

*Thank you to everyone who has pledged so far!*

**WE STILL NEED an additional \$209,730 in pledges to meet the \$900,000 necessary to balance our budget.**

As of December 6, we have received 197 pledge cards totaling just \$690,270 or 77% of our \$900,000 goal. *This is \$56,000 less than than we had at the same time last year, with 27 fewer people responding.*

**Over the next few weeks the Finance Committee and Vestry will finalize our 2021 budget.** If you have not yet returned your pledge card, or if you wish to increase the amount you have already pledged, please contact Kathy at [kmcperson@standrewsaa.org](mailto:kmcperson@standrewsaa.org) as soon as possible!

# Upcoming Events

## Family Service to tell the Christmas Story Watch on YouTube: Starting December 20 at 9:15 am

The Christmas Story will be told this year as part of a special virtual presentation of the Family Service! While Virtual Church School is on winter break you can join Fr. Alan and the Rev. Sally as they tell the Christmas Story beginning with the prophet Isaiah's message of the coming of the Messiah, through Christ's birth and the Epiphany.

This brief (~20 minutes) virtual service will be available December 20, December 27, and January 3 on YouTube starting at 9:15 am and can be watched at any time for your convenience.

*The Family Service will be held in place of Virtual Church School on the above dates only. Virtual lessons resume on Sunday, January 10 for Church School and Wednesday, January 6 for Youth Groups.*



# The Second Sunday of Advent

**Prelude:** *Chorale Prelude on "Freu dich sehr"* Michael Burkhardt (b. 1957)

**Opening Hymn:** *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People* Hymnal, no. 67



1 Com - fort, com - fort ye my peo - ple, speak ye peace, thus  
2 Hark, the voice of one that cri - eth in the des - ert  
3 Make ye straight what long was crook - ed, make the rough - er



saith our God; com - fort those who sit in dark - ness  
far and near, call - ing us to new re - pent - ance  
pla - ces plain; let your hearts be true and hum - ble,



mourn - ing 'neath their sor - rows' load. Speak ye to Je -  
since the king - dom now is here. Oh, that warn - ing  
as be - fits his ho - ly reign. For the glo - ry



ru - sa - lem of the peace that waits for them;  
cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way;  
of the Lord now o'er earth is shed a - broad;



tell her that her sins I cov - er,  
let the val - leys rise to meet him  
and all flesh shall see the to - ken

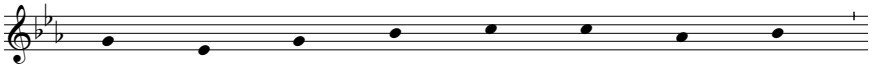


and her war - fare now is o - ver.  
and the hills bow down to greet him.  
that the word is nev - er bro - ken.



Hymn: *Creator of the Stars of Night*

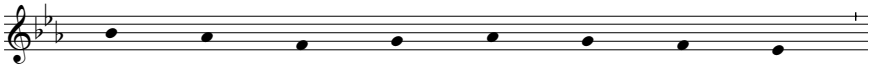
Hymnal, no. 60



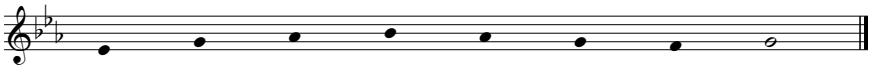
1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night,  
 2 In sor - row that the an - cient curse  
 3 When this old world drew on toward night,  
 4 At your great Name, O Je - sus, now  
 5 Come in your ho - ly might, we pray,  
 \* 6 To God the Fa - ther, God the Son,



1 your peo - ple's ev - er - last - ing light,  
 2 should doom to death a u - ni - verse,  
 3 you came; but not in splen - dor bright,  
 4 all knees must bend, all hearts must bow:  
 5 re - deem us for e - ter - nal day;  
 6 and God the Spi - rit, Three in One,



1 O Christ, Re - deem - er of us all,  
 2 you came, O Sa - vior, to set free  
 3 not as a mon - arch, but the child  
 4 all things on earth with one ac - cord,  
 5 de - fend us while we dwell be - low  
 6 praise, hon - or, might, and glo - ry be



1 we pray you hear us when we call.  
 2 your own in glo - rious li - ber - ty.  
 3 of Ma - ry, blame - less mo - ther mild.  
 4 like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.  
 5 from all as - saults of our dread foe.  
 6 from age to age e - ter - nal - ly.

**Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13**

- 1 You have been gracious to your land, O LORD, \*  
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.
- 2 You have forgiven the iniquity of your people \*  
and blotted out all their sins.
- 8 I will listen to what the LORD God is saying, \*  
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people  
and to those who turn their hearts to him.
- 9 Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him, \*  
that his glory may dwell in our land.

- 10 Mercy and truth have met together; \*  
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- 11 Truth shall spring up from the earth, \*  
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
- 12 The LORD will indeed grant prosperity, \*  
and our land will yield its increase.
- 13 Righteousness shall go before him, \*  
and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.  
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

A voice says, “Cry out!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.  
The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand for ever.  
Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;

lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
“Here is your God!”  
See, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.  
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.

**Canticle:** *The Third Song of Isaiah*

Hymnal, no. S-223  
Book of Common Prayer, pg. 87

**The Gospel:** Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.’”

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

One of the problems with the Bible are all those words. There are so many of them. What did they mean to the people who wrote and first heard them so long ago? This becomes an even more complex question when ancient words are translated into languages that didn't exist when the original texts were written. How are we to know what these words are supposed to mean now? What are we to make of all these words passed down through the centuries, translated and placed before us week after week as the Word of God? Literalism is certainly not the answer, anymore than an 'anything goes' approach to interpretation, is.

Look at one word that gets tossed about in today's readings: Wilderness. Wilderness? you might ask, 'What's so perplexing about Wilderness?' Everyone knows what that is. This morning we first hear of it in Isaiah, "A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" Then, in the Gospel, we meet John the Baptist who responds to this call. He actually went out to live and preach in the wilderness east of Jerusalem, about 600 years after Isaiah urged that the way of the Lord be prepared in such a place. It's all pretty straightforward. In this case the wilderness is like a desert, an unpopulated, untamed, usually avoided, region. We know all about it from National Geographic specials or from cross-country vacations driving west along the Interstate Highway System. (Vacations. Remember those?!)

Yet, in the Bible there's more to the concept of wilderness than it being a rugged, unwelcoming landscape. When the biblical writers spoke of Wilderness, it immediately conjured up images of the place where danger lived: ferocious animals who might attack, maim and kill you; bandits who might attack, rob and kill you; rough terrain where you might stumble, get hurt or get killed; a place with no water, where thirst and the elements would kill you.

Our wilderness experiences are generally not so severe. National Geographic specials give us commercial breaks so we can run to the kitchen for a snack. Highways have rest areas that allow us to stop and get something to drink. These wilderness experiences are not truly threatening. Yet there is a different type of wilderness experience. It is a very real one that we have all shared in this pandemic in varying degrees: A Wilderness of isolation.



Just like those in the Bible, it is something to which we should pay attention because of the dangers it presents, as well as the potential it offers.

In the Bible, in addition to being a place of physical challenges, the Wilderness is also a place that allows us to see who we truly are. The Wilderness is a place of testing and revelation, the results of which are often surprising. In our current Wilderness experience, some who thought of themselves as strong, have learned they are more vulnerable than they ever thought and have faced struggles they never imagined. It has been an extremely tough time, and some have truly suffered. Other individuals, who had never really been alone, have tapped into a previously unknown source of resilience as they found themselves inhabiting an unfamiliar landscape, even though it is their own home. As with all learning what really matters is what we do with it.

In responding to Isaiah's call, John the Baptist left what was familiar to him, went out to the Wilderness, where none of the usual conventions of society worked, and from there issued an invitation to anyone who sought more than what the world could offer, because he knew that there was more to be found when the true Self and God finally met. In the Wilderness, John served as a guidepost and companion, so that people could find their way. From there he issued his own call to anyone looking for a new beginning. It was an extraordinary opportunity for any who were willing to take it, and many did.

John listened to their disappointments in their world, in their lives, and in themselves. And he gave them hope that there was something beyond their disappointment and loneliness. He baptized them as a token of their efforts, and their desire to declare some degree of separation from the world they would return to when they left the Wilderness and went back to what was familiar. For as enlightening as the Wilderness may be, few can, or should even try to make a home in it. But for those who saw their own Wilderness, not as something to fear, but as something that by engaging it could make them whole, they were able to grow closer to God and closer to the person God made them to be by this experience of examining what is truly important, and letting everything else go.

Whether we wanted to or not, (and who really did?) the pandemic has presented all of us with our own personal Wilderness opportunity. So, here we are; the call of Isaiah, John the Baptist, and this season the pandemic thrust upon us, urge us to venture into that place where we can see God

and ourselves more clearly. It is not something to fear, nor is it something we face alone. A path has been prepared and made straight for us. Whether we choose to follow it or not, one thing is sure: we have an opportunity that otherwise we might never have taken. So, what will we do?

Words, just words, you might say. Yet the Wilderness is a very real place for each of us, and we ignore it at our own peril. While its form may vary over the generations, its power and potential for humanity has not changed over thousands of years. As difficult as all of this has been, and continues to be, there is much that we can gain from this experience. We can choose to ignore it, or we can trust God to meet us in it.

## **Apostles Creed**

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 96

## **The Prayers**

### **Collect of the Day**

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **Anthem: E'en so Lord Jesus Quickly Come**

Paul Manz (1919-2009)

The Saint Andrew's Adult Choir

*Peace be to you and grace from Him who freed us from our sins, who loved us all and shed His blood that we might saved be. Sing Holy, Holy to our Lord, the Lord, Almighty God, who was and is and is to come; sing Holy, Holy, Lord! Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell therein, rejoice on earth, ye saints below, for Christ is coming, is coming soon, for Christ is coming soon! E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come, and night shall be no more; they need no light nor lamp nor sun, for Christ will be their All!*

## **General Thanksgiving**

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 101

## **Prayer of St. Chrysostom**

## **Concluding Versicle**

Hymnal, no. S-54

Closing Hymn: *Prepare the Way, O Zion*

Hymnal, no. 65



- 1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw - ing near!
- 2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.
- 3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sa - vior's rule em - brace.



Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.  
His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.  
His tid - ings of sal - va - tion pro - claim in ev - ery place.



Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.  
Lift high your praise re - sound - ing, for grace and joy a - bound - ing.  
All lands will bow be - fore him, their voic - es will a - dore him.



Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most ho - ly name.

Postlude: *Varations on "Freu dich sehr"*

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

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Christmas

AT SAINT ANDREW'S

**Thursday, December 24**

Lessons and Carols • Christmas Pageant

*Available anytime after 9:00 am on YouTube*

**Morning Prayer** will be available on YouTube as scheduled on December 6 - 13 - 20 - 27

**A Family Service** will be available on YouTube starting at 9:15 am on December 20 - 27 - January 3