December 2021

St. Thomas
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Tidings

Trunk or Treat Photos pp. 6,7

Wrapped In The Ordinary

The Rev. Canon Robert Goolsby, Rector

I came across a meaningful poem for Advent and Christmas written by Margaret Silf:

We wrap our gifts in glittering paper and adorn them with ribbons, hoping to make what is really very ordinary look like something special.

Your gift to us, your incarnate Word, comes barely wrapped at all.

You give us that which is utterly special, but you wrap it in ordinariness,

so that we won't be afraid to receive it.

The wonder of the incarnation we celebrate at Christmas, and prepare for throughout Advent, is that God becomes human in an extraordinary, yet ordinary way. God becomes a human through childbirth, as we all do. This human, as the Gospel of John regards, is the Word, that is, God's creative power in human form.

We spend much time and energy each Advent season preparing for Christmas don't we? We want our homes to look and even smell just right. Personally, we like to have aromas of cinnamon and pine in our home as we get ourselves in the "holiday spirit." We decorate our tree and wrap the presents neatly as part of our festive commemoration of our Savior's birth. This is all well and good as we prepare for joy with our loved ones. For many this is truly the most wonderful time of the year. However, for others it is a challenging time. Regardless, one thing stands firm — God enters humanity out of love! This we can celebrate, and cling to. God is wrapped in the ordinariness of humanity. As are we. We are thus called to do extraordinary things in the ordinary. The extraordinary things of Advent are the gifts of hope, joy, love, and peace. These are the themes of Advent.

Come, let us adore the One for whom we await. Let us prepare through meditation, prayer, worship, and kindness. When the ordinariness of the Christ child arrives, we can then with boldness rejoice to receive the gifts of hope, joy, love, and peace that only Jesus can truly offer.

Advent blessings of peace,

Bob+

Inside this issue

Confirmation Photos 2
Facebook Worship Times 2
Student & Family Ministry 3
Senior Warden's Message 4
Festival of Trees 4
Meet Father Andy 5
Milestones 5
Trunk or Treat Photos 6, 7
Future With Hope Update 8

Dates to note

- Episcopal Church Women Christmas Celebration Dec 9
- Fr Andy's Reception Dec 19
- Christmas Pageant Dec 24
- One Service Only Dec 26

November 14, 2021 - Confirmation with the Right Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard, Bishop of Florida

Photo Credit:
Ken May

Congratulations Confirmands: Joshua Ball, Cole Cabrera, Richard Cabrera, Syndi Gulli, Addison Lake, Cynthia Mitchell. Congratulations Ruth Cabrera and Katie West who Reaffirmed their faith, and Mary Ann Edwards, who was Received.

Student And Family Ministry News

Julie Carter

We are in Advent waiting for Jesus to arrive. It's a little like Lent. It is a time of expectant waiting, hopeful anticipation, and joyful preparation. The difference is that Lent is like a spring cleaning for our hearts and Advent is preparing for a party with the greatest VIP we could ever host. The Lord is coming. He will be here soon!

Spending time considering my gratitude for Jesus and preparing for His auspicious arrival really makes the Christmas Season so much more joyful for me. I'm not just spending that time a nervous wreck about all the trimmings and gift excellence. Take time each day of this season to remember that we need a savior. When The Savior arrives, He will create something brand new! So, we will clean up, get everything beautiful in our souls, and when the day finally comes, we will be ready. Here are a few ways your family can celebrate and observe Advent:

1. **Come to church during Advent!** The Sundays of Advent are 11/28, 12/5, 12/12 and 12/19. Just four. The readings, prayers, and messages in Advent are focused for it. You will have lots to talk about when you're in the car together. The best way to prepare for Christ's coming is to celebrate how he comes to us now—in church, through word and Sacrament.
2. **Add sacred music to your life.** The stores will be pumping all the Christmas music into our ears. There are wonderful Advent focused songs that you won't be tired of by the time we get to Christmas Eve. Listen to "Glorious" by For King and Country. https://youtu.be/TU2g0Sv_Hdw. YouTube will gladly feed you suggestions for other Advent songs. Build a playlist of just Advent songs. Christmas songs can come with Christmas day.
3. **Read an Advent series together.** See a few books and ideas to the right. Yes, that's a **Lego Advent calendar!** Found it on Amazon for $27. The books are on Amazon and everywhere you get books.
4. **Download the YouVersion Bible App** on your phone or tablet. There are at least **15 Advent devotionals** for families. Some are even video devotions with little or no reading required. Here is a link to a video that gives you Advent in two minutes from Broken Halo: https://youtu.be/eC0FGQLBp7w. This will get your conversations started.
5. **Remember your neighbors.** Advent is also a season of giving to the poor, the lonely, and the stranger. Is there a neighbor who needs connection? Can you invite them to your preparations and celebrations? Is there a group singing carols at nursing homes? Can you join them? Is your family big enough to be your own choir? As you clean up to prepare your home for the biggest VIP in history, fill boxes with those things that don't inspire you anymore and let them be an inspiration

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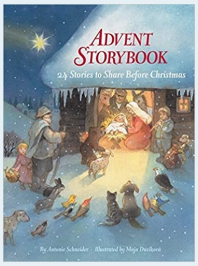
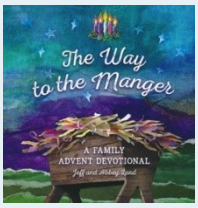
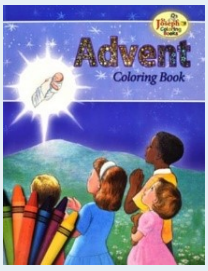
Family Advent Activities







Operation Christmas Child

Thank you, St Thomas family, for your generous contributions to our annual Operation Christmas Child project. This year we provided even more gifts than the year before. Join Oasis Ministries as we pray for the gift recipients; our world's neediest children.

From the family of Franklyn W Thompson

It really means a lot to us — the outpouring of support we received from everyone.

Please continue to pray for us as we heal and move forward.

Thank You.
The Thompson Family

Senior Warden's Message

Cindy Mitchell

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

—Hebrews 13:8

By the time you read this, the first Sunday of Advent will have already passed! It is a busy time, a time of reflection and preparation. The Advent message is to keep awake — to pay attention to see God at work in our lives, and the world.

To see all that and more, we need to have our spiritual cataracts taken care of — it's not as simple as laser surgery. Let's spend a little less time on devices and TV and look around. If we work on our spiritual cataracts, we might see our beautiful community; the church where we worship and see the faces of our friends. In this exciting age, Advent is still a perfect time to see the glory of God in the world and in one another.

What can we do to honor this tiny infant and understand what his presence means to the world? How can we be his hands in helping others? The Christmas Season is one of love. Thanks to so many of you for spreading the love of Jesus Christ in our community, by supporting families and groups.

The birth of Jesus is a beautiful reminder of the gift of salvation. Pray for wise choices and God's eternal light. Where do you go to find peace? No matter what we might be experiencing, God's peace is greater.

Since the pandemic began, many have not seen family members and friends, traveled, eaten at favorite restaurants, or received a hug or touch from someone not living with them. I hope that in the coming year, the comfort zone continues to expand for everyone!

Here at church, we're endeavoring to find our new normal. Please note the announcements each week, and share the information with a friend. Worship at St. Thomas is open to all!

May Christmas blessings bring you and yours good health and well-being. Wishing you much joy, and peace in the new year ahead.

"The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear." —Will Ferrell, *Elf*
"Seeing is believing, but sometimes the most real things in the world are the things we can't see."
—Conductor, *The Polar Express*

Pictured: Deanna Arthur, Carole MacDonald, Sally Morris, Sue Clark, Christina Wagner, and Pat Schwartz.

St. Thomas Is Back At The Festival Of Trees

The Flagler County Public Library and the Friends of the Library are hosting the 21th Annual "Festival of Trees" celebration.

'Elves' from St. Thomas created homemade ornaments to decorate our tree. Our elves who shared their talents include Anahid Savio, Pat Schwartz, Sue Clark, Debbie Knowlton, Joan Guiness, Barbara Bowles, Sheri Lagocki, Deanna Arthur, Sally Morris, Judy Fields, and Christina Wagner.

You may visit all the trees on display through December 31. The library is located at 2500 Palm Coast Parkway Northwest.

December Birthdays

1 - Tom Witherspoon
2 - Lenore Elder
2 - Betsy Thomas
3 - Jodie Bevel
7 - Karen Henry
7 - Sue Pryor
8 - Patricia Butler
9 - Esley Parchment
9 - Gerry Wright
10 - Dorothy Davies
11 - Alvin Downs
12 - Dennis Alter
12 - Kathleen Vacchelli
15 - Jeanette Carter
15 - Milton Williams
16 - Bob Knight
16 - Ben O'Kelley
19 - Beulah Morris-Murray
20 - William Gilliam
20 - Sharon Hurley
21 - Larry Szpara
21 - Francina Brooks
22 - Jacqueline Lewis
22 - Jada Abbas-Ortiz
22 - Jacqueline Lewis
25 - Darrel Lake
27 - Deanna Arthur
28 - Robin Alleyne
28 - Christopher Smith
31 - Jeff Lacko

December Anniversaries

7 - Arnold and Patricia Pratt
17 - Eddy and Barbara Rayford
20 - Dennis and Laurie Alter
20 - Jacques and Dolores LeBaron
23 - Ira and Alfreda Brown
30 - Roy and Pam Lorentz

"O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen his trust in your goodness all the days of his life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Meet Father Andy

Since Andy and Joyce Zeman moved to the area, you've seen Father Andy assisting or preaching off and on for several months, so we asked him to share a little background on this **50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.**

The Rev. Andrew H. Zeman was born into a Reform Jewish family in Connecticut. At the age of 14, he attended South Kent School, an Episcopal school, in South Kent, Connecticut. As a result of his participation in religious instruction and chapel worship at the school, he became convinced that Jesus is the Messiah. Therefore, Andy was baptized and confirmed in the Episcopal Church.

Later, he was inspired by the Rector where he attended college to enter the ministry. Andy graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio in

1968. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Berkeley Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut in 1971. Later in his ministry, Andy earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut in 2012.

Andy was ordained a Deacon on June 12, 1971, by Bishop Hutchens of Connecticut, and ordained to the

(Continued on page 8)

Several times a year, a parishioner with a green thumb quietly transforms our cross area into an lovely, seasonal garden. (The poinsettias just arrived.) It is a delight to see each new garden our friend plants for us to enjoy and appreciate!

The secret gardener is Joy Hudson. She asks for no reimbursement, and normally works when no one else is around. For this transformation, she even enlisted her husband to help with the mulch. **Thank you Joy!**

Trunk or Treat

October 31, 2021
Photo Credit: Julie Carter

Visit Our Facebook Page For Lots More Photos.

A Future With Hope Pledge Update

So far 108 households (out of 263) have pledged for a total of $266,531. Approx. 26% of pledges increased since 2021, 65% stayed the same, and the remaining 9% include new pledges, and decreased pledges since 2021.

We are off to a good start but have a long way to go. At least $420,000 is needed to maintain the bare minimum of operations and ministry. Please prayerfully consider your pledge in support of St. Thomas.

Meet Father Andy

(Continued from page 5)

Priesthood December 18, 1971 by Bishop Porteus of Connecticut. Since then, Father Andy has served churches in Connecticut and Virginia.

He met his wife, Joyce, while he was the Rector at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Oakville, Connecticut. Both Father Andy and Joyce were widowed, and they feel blessed to have been given their relationship. Their new family consists of Joyce's daughter (whom they followed to St. Augustine in 2020) and her son who lives in Maine. Father Andy's son works for the State Department and lives in Turkey. Joyce and Andy share three beautiful grandchildren.

Father Andy believes it is important for a Christian to engage in regular Sunday worship, prayer and study of the Scriptures. He has always had a passion for working to bring Christian denominations together in response to Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper that His church be one.

Joyce and Andy are very happy to be parishioners at St. Thomas where Father Andy enjoys the opportunity to continue to serve his ministry.

Congratulations, Father Andy on the 50 year Anniversary of your Ordination!

A reception in honor of this anniversary will be in the Parish Hall December 19 after the 11:15 a.m. service.

"Everything we have is given us by God. The question is, how much of God's gifts are you going to return to Him?" —Ralph Yearwood, Treasurer

Student and Family Ministry News

(Continued from page 3)

to someone else. There are many wonderful thrift stores in town. Shop a little when you drop off your items. Show your children that real treasures come from humble places.

6. **Go ahead and set up your Nativity** set but hide Jesus and the wise men until Christmas Day. Put Jesus in His place with Mary and Joseph only then. Put your wise men far away from the display and move them closer and closer each day until Epiphany!

No matter how your family observes and celebrates Advent, you will have a more joyful Christmas season if you intentionally pack gratitude into your daily lives for these four short weeks.

Important dates to remember:

- **Christmas Break** for Senior Crew (middle school and up) 12/12 through 1/2. We resume 1/9.
- **Christmas Pageant** 12/24 at 5pm

St. Thomas Episcopal Church
5400 Belle Terre Parkway, Palm Coast, Florida 32137
Phone: 386-446-2300 | E-mail: info@stechurch.org | www.stechurch.org
Office Hours: Mon-Thurs, 9-3