

# THE CALL

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS  
ST. ANDREW'S  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

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WINTER 2019

## The Tension between Advent and Christmas



*The Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole*

**“WHY CAN’T WE SING Christmas carols at the Advent Lessons and Carols service?”** This is a question the St. Andrew’s music committee has been asked a number of times over the last few years, and it is a question we have wrestled with. Both parishioners and guests have told us they had come to the Advent Lessons and Carols Service, which we hold at the beginning of December, expecting to sing joyous popular traditional Christmas carols and to hear the traditional Christmas Bible readings. Instead, they found that we were singing less well-known Advent carols and hearing Bible readings about repentance and preparation.

In light of this feedback, the music committee has debated whether we should convert the Advent carol service into a Christmas carol service.

This debate within our music committee is just a small example of a much bigger spiritual tension between the seasons of Advent and

Christmas. This tension seems to reflect a broader cultural and societal shift that ignores the season of Advent and begins the celebration of Christmas as soon as Thanksgiving is over.

This tension is not a new phenomenon. In its teachings on the Advent season, the church has long noted the balance of the spirit of restraint that Advent shares with Lent as a time of preparation and penitence against the joyful expectations of the birth of the Christ child at Christmas. However, theologians and spiritual leaders are firm in pointing out that we risk impoverishing ourselves spiritually if we do not take seriously the penitential and preparatory qualities of Advent.

The thrust of spiritual teaching during Advent is that in order to welcome Christ afresh in our lives as we celebrate his birth at Christmas, we need to make space for him in our souls. This means confronting and weeding out attitudes and habits of selfishness, prejudice, and egotism within us, which crowd God out of our lives. In traditional theological language, this means confronting the sin that dwells within us, particularly the seven deadly sins of pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. Without undertaking a personal moral inventory of this kind there can be no real possibility of Christmas being a time in which Christ comes to dwell in us spiritually in any meaningful sense.

This spiritual work doesn’t mean we can’t still enjoy with open hearts

the Christmas parties and festivities that inevitably take place during Advent in the run-up to Christmas. I know I always look forward to these parties. But for Christmas to be more than just a few parties and opening presents, it means we do need to set aside some time for serious spiritual reflection.

My godfather, the clergyman who had such a profound spiritual impact on me, taught me that growing in our faith and our spiritual lives is not about grand gestures. It is not a sprint, but a marathon, as the saying goes. It is about a day-to-day process of saying “no” to the temptations that prevent us from following Christ and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

So, this Advent, take time to consider your life and focus on one temptation or sin that you feel is preventing you from deepening your relationship with God. Then, through prayer, ask for God’s grace to give you the power to sweep that habit or attitude out of your life, so that Christ has room to be born in your soul anew. There will be no greater gift that you give either to yourself or to Christ at this Christmas time. This is what it really means to “put the Christ back into Christmas.”

Yours in Christ,

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## Warden's Message

### The 125th Anniversary of Our Church



Michael Vanin, Warden

*When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.' —Luke 2:15-20*

**L**IKE THE SHEPHERDS WHO anticipated what they might find in Bethlehem, in Advent we, too, find ourselves waiting and preparing for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas. For over 2,000 years, people around the world have celebrated Christmas with traditions and practices that are both religious and secular; we at St. Andrew's know how to celebrate with the best of them. In 2019, we will have another type of anticipation and celebration—the 125th anniversary of the founding of our church.

In order to appreciate the present, it's always a good thing to link it to the past and then think about how to ensure our future.

#### Reflecting on the Past

- As early as 1875, a few residents of the town held services on Sunday afternoons, with rectors from surrounding communities officiating.
- In 1891, ten years after Wellesley became a town independent of Needham, three prominent residents of the community spear-

headed the formation of Christ's Mission.

- In 1892, Bishop Phillips Brooks officially approved St. Andrew's Church as a parish, impressed by the fact that 113 residents of Wellesley, joined by some 135 Episcopal students who attended Wellesley College and Dana Hall School, would be active members.
- The parish took the name of St. Andrew's at the urging of Senior Warden John A. Porter, a member of the original St. Andrew's in Plymouth, England, which dates back to 1087.
- By 1894, sufficient funds were raised to build a small chapel on the present site, capable of seating 225 persons. The chapel was dedicated later that year on November 30, 1894, which we now know as St. Andrew's Day.
- Since those early days, we have been blessed to be led by 15 wonderful rectors (*see list of rectors on facing page*).

#### Being Mindful of the Present


As I took my walk down memory lane, I was amazed at the longevity of our collective dedication to improving our worship experience and parish life. I was reminded of our guideposts:

#### Mission *What we do*

We are an Episcopal church that celebrates and shares the transforming love of Christ.

#### Vision *Where we are going*

To grow our parish in breadth and depth by strengthening our worship, community and ministries. Our hope is to deepen the faith of existing members and attract new people to our parish so that they can experience Christ's love. We wish to help people recognize their God-given talents and use them to serve God and their neighbor.



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**Values** *What guides us*

- We are guided by Jesus' Great Commandment to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbors as ourselves.
- We strive to be an open and inclusive church in which all people are welcomed.
- We believe we are called to nurture future generations in the faith so that they may know Christ's love in their lives.
- We place a high value on the community life of our church.
- We believe in the importance of worship in meeting the spiritual needs of our parishioners by offering a range of worship services within the Episcopal tradition.
- We value the engagement of the intellect in our approach

to our faith and are guided by the 'three-legged stool' of the Episcopal Church: Scripture, tradition and reason.

- We value the importance of putting our faith into action by serving the wider community on a local, national and international level.

**Anticipating the Future**

Although we soon will celebrate our 125th anniversary, what will the warden's letter cite at the 250th celebration as the reasons that St. Andrew's continued to celebrate and share the transforming love of Christ? Will we look back and say that we grew our parish in breadth and depth? Did we deepen the faith of existing members and attract

new people to our parish so that they could experience Christ's love? Did we help people recognize their God-given talents and use them to serve God and their neighbor?

We are the future, which comes with immense responsibility. We must anticipate the needs of our physical campus, we must be mindful to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment, and we must nurture future generations in faith.

Let's do what we can so that we will leave the legacy for the next several generations. Let us say, like the shepherds said over 2000 years ago, "Let us go and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

**St. Andrew's Rectors**

1891–1892	Rev. Frederick Bailey	1923–1928	Rev. John J. Callan	1965–1973	Rev. William H. Clark
1892–1893	Rev. Andrew Gray	1929–1934	Rev. Norman Hutton	1974–1982	Rev. James R. MacColl
1894–1901	Rev. William Hayes	1935–1945	Rev. Philemon Sturges	1983–1989	Rev. Vincent W. Warner
1901–1913	Rev. George Nattress	1945–1951	Rev. Charles W. F. Smith	1990–2012	Rev. Addison C. Hall
1914–1922	Rev. Ellis B. Dean	1951–1964	Rev. Samuel S. Johnson	2013–	Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole

**A Wonder-filled Advent and Christmas**



*The Rev. Margaret Schwarzer*

**A**DVENT AND CHRISTMAS are seasons where we expect lots of joy, but they are also seasons where we can get distracted by the business and bustle of planning and executing

Christmas. Presents need to be bought, wrapped, and sometimes mailed. Trees need to be bought and decorated. The details of feasts, or travel plans, need to be nailed down. Some hustle and bustle is satisfying, but the work necessary to implement Christmas can also feel overwhelming. In the process of planning our holidays, we can misplace the chance to experience the joy that time is intended to hold.

Some vigorous planning is satisfying, but we also need to set aside some time for the wonder and mystery of Christmas. When we wonder about something, we engage curiosity gently. A dictionary definition tells us that "wonder" brings us to a place of "surprise mingled with admiration or awe."

When we recognize that we are in the presences of something "beautiful, unexpected, or inexplicable," we make room for wonder.\*

Wonder has its own gift and grace. Stephen Hawking found it in the night sky. He said "Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious." Albert Schweitzer said, "Never say there is nothing beautiful in the world anymore. There is always something to make you wonder in the shape of a tree, the trembling of a leaf." And we

\* "All who wander are not lost" and "all who wonder are not uncertain."  
—Internet Dictionary definition, *Brainy Quotations: Internet/Bible, Isaiah.*

*continued next page*

## A Wonder-filled Advent and Christmas *continued*

Christians call the one for whom we wait “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). He will be born as a tiny child, like each of us, but his one life will transform the world, redefining our understanding of divinity and humanity, and opening the way of unyielding love.

You are invited to make time (even five minutes a day) for wonder to catch you in Advent and Christmastide. Step outside and look up into the starry night. Wonder about the universe, and your lucky chance to be in it. It might have been otherwise. Come to Family Cookies and Carols and appreciate the wonder around you as church children take in the beau-

ty of our “almost-Christmas” party. Join our choir for a soulful Advent Lessons and Carols. Their music can crack open your heart to the inexplicable grace in God’s gift to us. Come to our Advent Taizé-style service on December 2 and be surrounded by flickering candles, silence, and chanting—conduits to wonder.

## Answering God’s Call to Service



*The Rev. Catherine “Cat” Healy*

**T**HE BAPTISMAL COVENANT of the Episcopal Church asks, “Will you seek and

serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? . . . Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”

Every time we renew our vows of baptism, we answer, “I will, with God’s help.” As Christians, we are called to live out this answer in every domain of our lives, from our family choices to our professional paths. For this issue, I spoke with two parishioners who answered the call to serve in a formal way, by committing to programs of civilian service.

Elizabeth Svedlund was inspired to serve by her mother, a

social worker who reminded her children that “you don’t need to leave the United States to make a difference.” Elizabeth served with Teach for America in the U.S./ Mexico border town of McAllen, Texas, from 1994 to 1996. There, she taught first grade at a low-income school and partnered with families to help their children enjoy learning and build skills for future academic success. She says, “I received such joy seeing my students learn to read and write . . . and [learned] how much children can do if you have high expectations for them.”

Hannah Horobin currently serves as a maternal and child health volunteer with the Peace Corps in rural Rwanda. Her projects there are many: She conducts child malnutrition screenings at a village health center, runs boys’ and girls’ clubs and a women’s savings club, and works with community members to develop various means of supplemental nourishment, from providing extra milk for young children to helping village women raise rabbits for food. Hannah writes, “This experience is challenging and changing me, and I think Rwanda is far from finished molding me into who I will be after this experience.”

Both women cite faith as a motivating and sustaining force in their commitment to service. Elizabeth says, “It was hard to live



Photo: Hannah Horobin

*Hannah and a Rwandan health clinic worker measure a child to assess for adequate nutrition.*



*Hannah with women in her Rwandan village. Hannah helped initiate a program to provide households with rabbits to raise for food.*

and work in a community that was so hard-working, but still suffering from extreme poverty. During some of the tougher times in McAllen, I would go to church and feel reinvigorated. Being at church gave me the inspiration to continue teaching, even when it seemed impossible to make a difference in the students' lives, and that is exactly what the students needed—someone who would not give up on them or leave them."

Hannah find that her faith has taken shape in a new way during her time in Rwanda. She writes, "I've been remarkably blessed to feel loved, cared for, and protected throughout my life, but those feelings are magnified in Rwanda, and they are stronger than can be explained by my relationships alone . . . I often feel as if I'm moving through my two years here in some sort of large hand that's safely shepherding me to where I'm meant to go."

She adds that she has been overwhelmed by the generosity and warmth of her new community in Rwanda, despite the ever-present memory of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which nearly 1 million people were killed in just 100 days. "I've learned an immeasurable amount about all aspects of life, including faith, from Rwandans," she says. "My friends and colleagues here move through life with grace and compassion, and they embody the human capability for forgiveness to extents that I still sometimes struggle to fathom. Despite experiencing genocide only twenty-four years ago, my community has welcomed the strange foreigner into their homes, churches, and schools."

Through their terms of service, both Hannah and Elizabeth discovered a passion for teaching. Elizabeth writes of her time with Teach for America, "I learned that teachers have the opportunity to

really change lives . . . I am now an ardent believer in public education." Hannah thinks of herself as a teacher and student in equal measure: "Serving in the Peace Corps has solidified my interest in teaching . . . I'm so grateful to all my Rwandan teachers here for giving me space to ask questions, make mistakes and stumble towards the answers, which are inevitably only more questions. I'm excited to spend my next year here learning, and, just maybe, teaching a few things, too."

Though we may not all be called to uproot our lives and move across the country or across the world, every one of us is called to a life of service. Like Elizabeth and Hannah, as we embrace our call to "seek and serve Christ in all persons," we may find that our faith grows and changes to inspire and sustain us. How is God calling you to serve?

# Getting to Know Helen Ward Mannix



Dan Dent

IN THIS ARTICLE, The Call continues its series of conversations with St. Andrew's clergy and staff to give the parish an opportunity to learn a little more about our church leaders. In this fifth article, we meet St. Andrew's music minister, Helen Ward Mannix, also known as Wardie. An accomplished musician, Wardie has served as our church's organist and choir director since 2007.

## What started you in your career?

My family always enjoyed and played music, so I was exposed to it early in life. My mother, an ex-

cellent pianist, was my first piano teacher. My grandparents lived next door to us in Wilton, CT, and had a piano. When I was 11 years old, my grandfather bought a small organ with half a dozen or so foot pedals, and soon I was playing the organ, too. I remember they had a Protestant hymnal, which I made my way through, learning to play hymns like "Rock of Ages" and "Abide with Me." I still have the hymnal to this day.

## Where did you receive your formal education in music?

I went to Mount Holyoke College, where I earned a bachelor's degree, and then went to music school at the New England Conservatory of Music, where I earned a second bachelor's and a master's degree in organ music. I studied for four years in Europe, which for an organist is a natural place to go. I spent two years in Florence, Italy, playing at St. James Episcopal Church and continued on to the North German Organ Academy, in Bremen, Germany, with a final year at Sweelinck Conservatorium in Amsterdam, Holland.

## What brought you to St. Andrew's?

In December of 2006, I visited St. Andrew's and had an opportunity to try out the organ. At the time, Harry Kelton was the organist, knowing he was leaving soon. I was the organist at St. John's Episcopal Church in Hingham, a job I loved, and the timing worked out so that a move to St. Andrew's made sense. I was appointed the organist and choir director at St. Andrew's in 2007.

## Tell us about your duties at St. Andrew's.

In a job like mine, communication is important. Everyone needs to be on the same page—the clergy, the church administration, and the choir. We work hard to ensure we work as a group. During the week I am at St. Andrew's all day on Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday. On days when I'm not officially on duty, I stop by to practice, return calls, plan music, and prepare for weddings, funerals, or holidays. About once a season our music committee meets, and together we adjust the program as needed.



Photo: Peter Lull

**Tell us about your teaching duties outside of St. Andrew's.**

Aside from my main job here, I also teach music at the South Shore Charter Public School in Norwell, and have done so for 22 years. I am also the organ teacher at Wellesley College. I like to turn students into musicians and help them to appreciate music.

**What do you do when you aren't working?**

Oh, I would be traveling to new places, learning new languages, and spending time with friends and family. I'm very appreciative of my job at the church and the other work I do in music. I am currently working my way through a series of courses at Wellesley College in

Africana studies, covering literature, drama, biography, and history. I've finished five course and I love it.

**When you get to heaven, what do you want to say to God?**

Thank you, God.



## A Duty Recognized

### We Are Current Heirs of a Great Legacy

**F**ELLOW PARISHIONER Richard Bradley wrote the following stirring words of support in the midst of a long-ago capital campaign. While Richard is no longer with us, his message of commitment resonates now more than ever on the eve of our 125th anniversary year.

"If we were called upon today to rebuild St. Andrew's in its entire-

ty, it would be millions of dollars beyond our means. The evolution of St. Andrew's over one hundred years has depended upon a continuing commitment to improvement and renewal. We depend upon the generosity of the past (often unacknowledged) to enable us to continue the church's present work. We are the current heirs of a great legacy. We are now asked to

pay our dues to the past by looking after the needs of the future. Everything in this campaign is relevant to that duty. The upgrading of the facilities, the endorsement of the outreach programs and, perhaps above all, the strengthening of the endowment will be our benefaction to the people of St. Andrew's future."

—Richard Bradley, 2002

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