



THE CALL

ST. ANDREW'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

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Great Expectations



The Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole

REMEMBER ONE YEAR asking my son, William, when he was still a relatively young boy, what he would like for Christmas. He quickly reeled off a list of some toys he would be excited to receive as Christmas gifts—he had obviously been thinking about this! But, then he hesitated and thought for a moment. And he said, “But Christmas is also about getting presents that are a surprise. So, I would rather have some surprises, even if it means I can’t have all the things I just asked for.” William’s

words have always stayed with me. Although spoken by a young boy about Christmas presents, for me, they capture the essence of the spiritual gifts that are offered to us by God at Christmas.

On the one hand, I have a “Christmas list” of expectations about the way I want the outward trappings of Christmas to be celebrated, such as opening our Christmas stockings with our now grown-up children; drinking big mugs of tea with Sarah before going off to take the Christmas morning service; and certain English Christmas traditions such as wearing paper crowns from our Christmas crackers and singing “Now bring us some figgy pudding” when the Christmas pudding, alight with burning brandy, is ceremoniously brought into the darkened dining room.

I realize this “list” of my expectations about how I like Christmas to be celebrated are quite sentimental. And yet they express a deeper spiritual yearning that lies in the hearts of so many of us. These yearnings have been made even more poignant by the

challenging times we have been living through over the last almost two years. This deeper spiritual yearning, expressed outwardly by a wish to be surrounded by those we love and by traditions that point to being part of something that lasts, is the longing we have to know that God is with us. We long to know that de-

spite the changes and chances of this life, that we are never alone and that God’s love surrounds us. This is one of the most important gifts we receive at Christmas, and it is referred to in one of Jesus’ Hebrew names, *Emmanuel*, which means “God is with us.”

But the reassurance of God’s presence which is shown to us in the nativity of Christ, at Christmas time, is not the only gift we receive. There is also the surprise gift that God has for us at Christmas. This is symbolized in the surprising circumstances of the birth of Jesus, God’s only begotten son, born in a manger to the young girl, Mary, and her carpenter husband, Joseph.

In Christ’s birth, God teaches us that new birth and new opportunities for our lives often come from the most unlikely circumstances. Just as people imagined that God’s Messiah would come as a mighty warrior, so too, we might have fixed ideas about how God comes to us. But God wishes to teach us that God meets us in the most unlikely of situations to reveal to us that there is more richness to our lives than we can imagine. That richness is often found in the most surprising of situations when our prejudices and preconceptions are challenged.

May each of you find joy in sharing your treasured traditions this Christmas and may you be surprised by God’s love breaking into your lives in unexpected and gifted ways.

Yours in Christ,



Peter B. Lull

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Warden's Message

Hitting the "Big Four"



Will Nystrom, warden

WE ARE HITTING the "Big Four" right now: Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, and New Year's. There's a whole lot of messaging going on about how we should think, feel, and pray during this incredibly special time. It can be hard to get centered, to separate the wheat from the chaff.

And this swirling feeling got me thinking about one of my favorite hymns, number 448: "O love, how deep, how broad, how high." It

has a beautiful melody for sure. And the verses arc the entire span of Jesus' life, from his birth to his resurrection.

But what really moves me about the hymn is the repeated invocation of the words, "for us." In verse three, "For us he prayed; for us he taught; for us his daily works he wrought." In fact, the hymn repeats 12 times the fact that every action Jesus took through his ministry was "for us."

Now that is a simple, straightforward message I can hold on to. The birth of Jesus was for us. The star of Bethlehem was for us. The celebration of Advent and Christmas is for us. A while back a part of the Gospel reading was "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." (Matthew 20:28)

There is no better time to remember that God put his Son on this earth for us, all of us. Hold on to that. Know that we are celebrating this holiday season because of what God gave for us.



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Claiming Hope for Christmas



The Rev. Margaret K. Schwarzer

CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT LOVE, faith, and hope coming down to earth on Christmas Day. In the face of a tiny holy child, we discover the one who will become our mighty savior. Whatever gifts we give or get, the best part of Christmas will be sharing our love for one another in the specific ways each particular family chooses to do that. One family I know religiously buys Chinese take-out for their Christmas Eve dinner, and they love their tradition as much as our family likes our tradition of clam chowder or pork loin for dinner on that special night. We all find ways which reveal our unique love for each other over the holidays.

This year, I invite each of us to also claim a robust hope as part of our Christmas experience. Christian hope, which is different from the secular world's understanding of hope, is something precious. In our modern world, hope has become an underestimated Christian virtue. Our secular world has

made the word "hope" a synonym for "wish." Often in casual conversations, we use it this way. We might say, "I hope I win a million dollars" or, "I hope the weather is nice tomorrow." When speaking with someone else, we usually use the word "hope" when we want something for someone else but have no direct control over the outcome. "I hope you feel better," we say to someone who is sick. "I hope you do well on your test," we say as our children go out the door.

But Holy Scripture and our Judeo-Christian tradition want us to know that hope is bolder, meatier, more potent than the secular world can imagine. It is not a mere wish for an outcome we desire. It has God as its foundation. Says the prophet Isaiah, "... those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31) Our hope doesn't rest in ourselves alone; our hope rests in God, the one for whom nothing is impossible.

When we face extremely difficult times, like a global pandemic, we can trust that God is at work in the world, abiding with us, in the midst of the struggles. God carried our ancestors through terrifying challenges—medieval plagues, the 1918 Spanish flu, World War I and World War II—and God will abide with us. As a friend of mine likes to say, "If we are worrying about it, God is working on it."

Spiritual hoping isn't about being optimistic; it is bigger, and

different from optimism. Christian hope trusts that God will see us through, even when we ourselves cannot see how the end will unfold, or, how what is wrong can be made right. In the 1980s, when Archbishop Desmond Tutu was asked about how apartheid could end in South Africa, he would say he wasn't optimistic about apartheid ending because of the terrible ongoing bloodshed, but he was hopeful for apartheid's end because he was a Christian, and he placed his hope in God.

Hope doesn't require that we feel good, or optimistic, or worthy; hope is about maintaining our belief in God's ability to bring about what we, ourselves, can contribute to, but can't resolve on our own. From the poem "Hope is the thing with feathers" Emily Dickinson famously said: "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all."

This Christmas we pray the pandemic is waning. Let us stand fast, placing our hope in God to help us bring about the end of the pandemic, and to help us stay resilient and determined as we rebuild our nation, establishing a new "normal."

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home. Under the shadow of thy throne thy saints have dwelt secure; sufficient is thine arm alone, and our defense is sure. (Hymn 680)



What Has Not Been Done



The Rev. Maria (Mia) Kano

■ WAS SPEAKING WITH A FRIEND who has stepped back from work recently to care for her aging parent. As I relayed to her something about what my husband and I had observed about our experiences of paternal leave, we had one of those “me too!” moments of connection. All three of us had found the never-ending nature of



Mia Kano

caregiving uniquely challenging. We missed the sense of completion and productivity that was so satisfying about our work lives.

“Probably we’re all a little too wired to get our serotonin from accomplishing tasks,” my friend reflected. Because “there’s no finishing this.” As soon as you finish feeding the baby, he’s hungry all over again. Get through this long night at the hospital and a whole other day of medical needs and issues begin anew. There’s so much to do and then, suddenly, there’s not. The infant, or the elder, simply needs you to sit there in the rocking chair and just be with them, giving nothing but presence and love.

In one sense, my motherhood has been comprised of a series of to-do lists. The ludicrously long catalogue of baby accessories that needed to accompany my child everywhere he goes; the index of forbidden foods and drinks for breastfeeding mothers; the inventory of symptoms that warrant a phone call to the pediatrician. But in a whole other sense, there is no definitive checklist for the larger, intangible tasks that make up caregiving. And there certainly is no final, satisfying moment where one can at last cross off the act of raising a child, tending to a sick relative, or being a companion to an elderly parent.

There are steps and milestones for sure—the first full night of real sleep, the first day home from the hospital, the first successful week in a new care facility, the last dia-

per. Some of these are amazingly satisfying and full of meaning—like that first real giggle! But the real work of love never quite ends. It stretches beyond sending a child off to college and even laying a parent to rest. It fills our lifetime.

The work of caregiving is never done.

On the first Sunday of Advent, we celebrate the beginning of a new church year. It’s a moment to recognize the cyclical nature of sacred time. Rather than moving in a line of accomplishments that are over and done, we move in a circle—with all the ebb, flow, and incompleteness that entails.

Advent is also the quintessential time to confront the parts of ourselves that have grown dependent on feeling accomplished, productive, and in control. Advent is a season for waiting. It pushes back against all the lists that make up the busy preparation of the holidays—lists of ingredients, gifts, and guests. Advent’s invitation to stillness and anticipation reminds us that the work of faith and love is never done. This season urges us to practice all those same spiritual disciplines that caregiving demands: patience, humility, and resilience. It’s a perfect time to pray that beautiful line from the Night Prayer in New Zealand’s Book of Common Prayer, “What has not been done has not been done; let it be.”

So here’s to leaving some things on that long list of yours unchecked. Consider it a spiritual practice. An act of faith.

A friendly reminder to make your year-end pledge payment soon.

If you still have payments to make on your pledge, please make sure to mail it by December 15 to account for possible holiday mail delays or pay online at <https://standrewswellesley.org/online-giving>. Online payments should be made by December 23 to allow time for bank and credit card processing. If you have any questions, please contact me. With my fervent thanks and best wishes for a joyful Christmas season.

—Joanne Butler, joanne@standrewswellesley.org

Parishioner Reflections

THIS ADVENT, OUR FELLOW PARISHIONERS offer reflections on a very seasonal idea, the idea of hope. The little flicker that hope brings in dark times

Betsy Millane



WHEN IT LOOKED AS THOUGH the pandemic was not going to go away soon, I took a rope of Christmas lights, gathered them in an empty pot, and draped them over the sides. I left the lights on, day and night. To convey to the neighbors the meaning

behind the lights, I set out a note on corkboard, writing that the lights were there as a symbol of hope and to remind all that one day COVID would be over.

A few dogs used the sign as a hydrant, and I soon threw the sign away, but the lights I left to burn on, a symbol of perseverance, of the light we all have within us, of hope for the end of COVID.

These lights, for me anyway, came to symbolize the hope manifesting itself in the every day service of health care workers. Hope came in trucks, via the drivers who refused to let the virus deprive the population of their cargo. Grocery store workers, ignoring their safety, staying at their posts, gave me hope for new days. The science and research achievements astounded me and gave me hope for a cure, for an end.

And there was more hope, given through my computer, in the form of emails from the church. Their subject matter in the inbox proclaimed: "We are here, we will be together again!"

As the numbers of COVID infections and deaths climbed, we had to claim a hope that, if we persevered, all would be well. We reclaimed hope when glimmers of our past lives broke through. Netflix gave us a reason to stay inside. I'd always hoped for a deeper relationship with my college friends: Zoom made it happen. As hope leapfrogged on hope, the light got brighter and brighter.

The lights still burn in a pot outside my door. They will stay on until the end. Why not let them burn on, in hopes of good things?

Ruth Ecker



I HAVE FELT SURROUNDED by love and good wishes during this past week. It is easy to be in high spirits in the week approaching solstice when this northern outpost called New England opens her arms in the widest embrace of the light she can muster in a day.

is truly an Advent theme. Without hope, this past year would have been tough to negotiate. With hope, the year ahead awaits with open arms. Enjoy.

Ellen Staelin



I HAVE COPEd WITH THE ISOLATION of the pandemic in the last two years with the blessing of having my daughter live with me while she worked remotely.

In 2021 I have been busy refurbishing and furnishing the house in which I grew up. I had rented the house for the 30 years since my mother died. My father designed and built the house in 1936 when he and my mother were engaged to be married. My father was then thirty-eight. I have been touched to realize the attention and care he devoted to the design, a sign of how excited he must have been to have found a woman he could love.

I had no expectation of the work this project would involve, from projects large and small. Thanks to competent help the house should be ready for my family to gather there for Thanksgiving.

This project has been an embodiment of hope—to provide a retreat for myself in the coming years and eventually a comfortable home surrounded by family for my daughter.

Do you have a story to share? We want to hear from you.

The Call welcomes contributions from our parishioners. We keep to a theme for each issue, so if you want to be considered, we can send you our contributor guidelines and theme for the next issue. Join us!

COVID-19 and Our Programming

A faith-based response to epidemics or large scale outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, remind us to maintain consistency in our spiritual lives, to be compassionate to those affected, and to work hard at diffusing general fears with truth and knowledge. There are many opportunities to serve and get involved. Please see our worship and outreach pages on the church's website.

Christmas, a Time to Remember

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS MAY HAVE CHANGED from year to year at St. Andrew's, but certain items have remained constant. A spirit of giving is one steady theme. Another is the ever-evolving holiday fundraiser, descriptions of which can take us back to an earlier era, like

looking at an old photograph. Before you rush headlong into the holiday, we hope that you will take a moment to enjoy these memories from our archives. You can see more timeless items like these in the pages of the 125th anniversary book. A copy is available in the church office.

1917

The Altar Guild donated the amount saved on Christmas decorations to the Red Cross, and Sunday school children went without Christmas candy to send Christmas fund money to the starving children of Europe.

1936

St. Andrew's Christmas Market featured an "Old Curiosity Shop." For this, Mrs. Harvey asks you to look through your attics and collect any bric-a-brac you are tired of.

1951

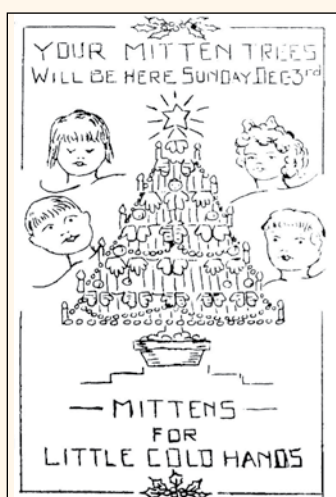
Project Mitten Tree began when Chaplain Lt. Col. William E. Austill provided a Christmas party for more than 11,000 Japanese orphans. Servicemen cleaned and repaired orphanages, providing warm clothing and toys. After moving to Boston in the late 1950s, he erected a Mitten Tree each year and the tradition has continued.

1959

The church organized a Mistletoe Mart, an annual Christmas sale that began with a high silver brunch in the Harvey Room.

1987

The church brought live animals to the property. The sheep, goats and a donkey were Christmas outreach gifts of living animals through Heifer Project International. The sheep went to needy neighbors in Maine and the goats to Haiti.





2001

A Legend of St. Nicholas, an opera written by Denny Bacon with libretto by Addison Hall, was performed.

Ongoing traditions

The season begins with Gathering of the Greens at the home of Luisa Hunnewell, coming back to the parish hall for hot chocolate and set-up. On Sunday, the parishioners take home greens for their own decorations.

Part of our season is the traditional Lessons and Carols concert on Sunday afternoon followed by a reception. Everyone looks forward to this wonderful evening of music sung by our choir.

Each year we have a Christmas Pageant presented on the third Sunday in Advent. All youth are welcomed to participate. During the narration of the Christmas story, the choir and congregation sing all our favorite carols.



Sandra Rigney

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