

ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ALL SAINTS' E-LETTER

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DECEMBER 2017



A LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

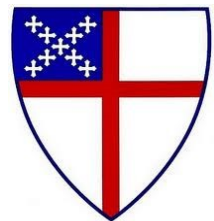
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

A couple of decades ago, I was the Rector of All Saints', Salt Lake City, and a very strange thing happened on Christmas Eve. It fell on a Sunday. The first time that occurred since I had been ordained, I was an assistant to the Bishop for the Diocese of Utah and that whole thing about having Christmas start on the Fourth Sunday of Advent just escaped me. I'm guessing I sat in a pew someplace. (As a matter of fact, one of those years, on Christmas Eve, Bishop Charles, who was now a seminary dean, and I were just sitting together, chatting with one another mid-service and the priest, my golfing buddy, stopped and glared at us, his eyes telling us to be quiet. I guess we were a little too relaxed.) So that Sunday, being Christmas Eve, was not a big deal. But then in 1995, when I was a Rector, it was huge. I can well remember the sheer panic as I was trying to get ready for Christmas. In seminary they don't tell you that there can be an occasion in which you will have five services in one day bridging two seasons of the Christian year. What were they thinking?

So here we are again this year, with exactly four hours, at best, separating us from the end of Advent and the beginning of Christmas. Just about the time we finish singing "O come, O come, Emanuel," spiffy up the place, and refill the candles with oil, the service featuring the youth of the parish in their pageant, and the first Eucharist of Christmas, will begin. It is hardly enough time to change thoughts. (Maybe we could park the vacuum near the pulpit and I can use it during the recessional after the 11:00 to save time.)

Getting ready for Christmas can be difficult. There is just a lot of stuff to do within the world in which we live. And if that is not enough stress, the church tosses on top of it all, "Be still. Enjoy quiet. Be calm and listen. Wait." And one wants to cry out, "You have got to be kidding! Have you not noticed the parking lots at Costco, Smith's and Walgreen's?!!!" Along those lines, it is always kind of fun to see people examining frozen turkeys on Christmas Eve, thinking, "This thing has got to be defrosted in seven hours...how is that going to work?" And to complicate it further, this year, for all of us, that time for preparation seems even more shortened. Anyway, that can be our world.

Christmas, on the other hand, having its Eve fall on a Sunday or Wednesday, all along, has said, "Ready or not, here I come." And while we hope to be



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A LETTER FROM THE RECTOR (Cont'd)

prepared, both in the physical world of presents, and lights on the trees, and even getting a box of treats for the dog next door, as well as in the spiritual world's preparation found in the season of Advent, Christmas is going to come our way, that Sunday, at 4:00 in the afternoon, with that first service at All Saints'. And the whole reason it is steaming into our lives, regardless of our state of readiness, is pure grace.

God's coming into the world, in the flesh and in our time, has never been about if we are sufficiently prepared or good enough. Instead it is all based on love. And further, 2000 years ago, it had, and still has, as its singular purpose, saving us from the human condition of deep down inside of us, our trying to make the grade. In short, it is good to remind ourselves that we don't cause Christmas. It comes, ready or not, for God has this thing about showering down upon us exuberant blessings too numerous to imagine.

It is always spiritually enriching, if we can prepare, take time, be quiet, and remain still, all hallmarks of Advent. If we go a bit slower, we can notice those around us with greater empathy, have time for another, and think of that holy birth which turned the world on its head, and as a result, we will have a better sense of that for which we are waiting. I hope that for all of us. And I commend Advent's wish that we stress less than we will undoubtedly do. But ready or not, the love of God always comes and there is no greater proof of that assertion than the celebration of the Incarnation.

May you have a very blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas.

Faithfully yours,

Bradley

CHRISTMAS SERVICES**DECEMBER 24**

4 pm: Holy Eucharist and Youth Christmas Pageant at All Saints'

6 pm: Holy Eucharist/Hymns at The Springs

7:45 pm: Festival Eucharist and Hymns at All Saints'

CHRISTMAS DAY

The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ

10 am: Holy Eucharist/Hymns at All Saints'



CHANGES IN CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE TIMES

This year on Christmas Eve, following the Christmas Pageant and Holy Communion at 4:00 and then the 6:00 evening service at The Springs, we will have only the 8:00 Festival Eucharist with Carols. We are doing this for a number of reasons which mainly center around the fact that the number who come to both services can fit in our church, making it full. (It seems that most of the congregation comes at 4:00.) As well, driving home on Montana highways, at 12:30 in the morning, simply can be dangerous. We never know what the weather is going to be like and we often are traveling against traffic in which many drivers have been celebrating a bit too much, sometimes way too much. And so, after thinking about this for a number of years, we are combining the two festival night services into one, at 8:00 in the evening, and then following that with a Christmas Day service (Holy Communion and Carols) at 10:00 Christmas morning.



ADVENT OFFERINGS

December 3rd, the first Sunday of Advent: Stuffed animals

You are invited to bring teddy bears and other NEW stuffed animals, less than 12" tall, which will then be given to North Valley Hospital. Last year North Valley Hospital gave away thousands of stuffed animals to young pediatric patients who came to the emergency room. Often that can be a frightening experience and a soft stuffed toy can go a long way towards providing comfort.



December 10th, the second Sunday of Advent: Food for Food Banks

We collect non-perishable food to donate to food banks in Columbia Falls and the Canyon this Sunday. A concerted effort to help well stock these vital ministries in our valley is important when the need is so great. Peggy Sebrowsky, who works with many of the food banks, suggests one item that is always appreciated is "hearty" soup. All non-perishable food is welcome though!



December 17th, the third Sunday of Advent: Dog and Cat Food

On this third Sunday of Advent we will collect dog and cat food in an effort to provide food for the pets of people having difficulty making ends meet. The food you donate will be transported to the Flathead Valley Spay and Neuter Task Force for distribution to those who can use such help.



December 24th, the fourth Sunday of Advent: NEW warm clothing

It is estimated, by one study, that there are around 500 chronically homeless people in Kalispell with another 500 homeless at one time or another during the year. Many of them use the services of Samaritan House to help them through this crisis in their lives. On this Sunday, we will be collecting warm clothing, gloves, hats, mittens, and scarves to help those who need a break from the chill. Please warm your and their hearts by bringing this type of clothing to the crèche.



CHILDREN'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PAGE

By Cynthia Benkelman

This Year's Christmas Pageant is "*Christmas: FAQ*" by Patricia Cayley.

We have a new pageant this year and all of our youth are invited to join in the fun. We need shepherds, angels, stars, narrators, animals, singers and more. There is a part for everyone!

The schedule for rehearsals is: **Sunday, December 17 at 12:15 pm** and the dress rehearsal on **Saturday, December 23 at 1:00 pm**.

Please contact Cynthia Benkelman at 406-261-9636 or email her at cgraine@montanasky.us to let us know if your child will be participating. We realize that, during this busy season, some youth will not be able to make both rehearsals. We will do our best to work around this, but do let us know so we can plan.

If we get a quick response from everyone, we might go over some of the music and perhaps read the play on Sunday, December 10, so stay tuned for information on that.

We would like to know, when you call or write, what kind of part your child would like. Everyone will sing familiar Christmas carols and songs in this play. In addition, these types of parts are available:

Small speaking part

Larger speaking part

Solo singing part

Participation without any lines or one line only

Or a combination of two of the above (or more!)

We are so excited about working with everyone this year on this special production.

Thank you!

Your pageant co-directors,

Jeannine Wirth and Cynthia Benkelman



the
Best Christmas
Pageant Ever



DECEMBER 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6 Bible Study 9:15 am at The Springs 10 am service at The Springs	7 Noon service at AS Followed by book study	8	9
10 Services at 9 and 11 am	11	12	13 Bible Study 9:15 am at The Springs 10 am service at The Springs	14 Noon service at AS Followed by book study	15	16
17 Services at 9 and 11 am Vestry 12:30 Youth Pageant Rehearsal: 12:15	18	19	20 Bible Study 9:15 am at The Springs 10 am service at The Springs	21 Noon service at AS Followed by book study	22	23 Youth Pageant rehearsal 1:00 pm
24 See service schedule page 2	 Service at 10 am	26	27 Bible Study 9:15 am at The Springs 10 am service at The Springs	28 Noon service at AS Followed by book study	29	30
31 Services at 9 and 11 am						

PHOTOS FROM BISHOP BROOKHART'S VISIT and EMILY'S BAPTISM



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*Glory to God, whose power, working
in us, can do infinitely more than we
can ask or imagine: Glory to him
from generation to generation in the
church, and in Christ Jesus forever.*

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www.allsaintsmt.org](http://www.allsaintsmt.org)

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Junior Warden: Judi Williams
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