

Connections

December 2020

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It's Almost Christmas!



Soon you and I will hear a story alleging the Creator and Ruler of the Universe decided to come to earth to become human—a lofty, controversial, and near-preposterous claim, for sure.

Nonetheless, we will notice that God does not do so via the first century equivalents of satellite television, a United Nations news conference, or by rolling out a “Faith and Freedom” cross-country bus tour. The birthplace is not Rome, New York, Washington, D.C., Paris, or Moscow. The parents are not emperors, presidents, or anywhere near The One Percent.

This story must have pained early Christians, desperate for social acceptability, who were stuck with the tale of an impoverished single mom in a conquered hamlet of some backwater corner of a vast empire, putting her newborn into an animal trough where the fledgling birth announcement was

entrusted to village idiots whose only other marketable skills were watching sheep.

Yet, as many scholars note, the sheer embarrassment of this narrative speaks to its verity. So does its theme: the miracle is not that God could become man, but that God could love us so deeply.

This is a God who didn't come here to impress. This is a God who doesn't care about where you live, who your friends are, who your parents are, how much money's in the bank account, how the house is decorated, or how clean the crib is.

This is a God who doesn't care what you do, how you dress, or who you know.

This is a God who shows little concern for proving anything other than a desperate love for us—period.

This is Christmas.

So celebrate, we will. Bask in His love, we will. And emulate Him—we will try. For this is the Christmas challenge: can we take that love and share it? Can we follow God's example and give of ourselves so that others might benefit? Can we too pay less attention to the earthly trappings of the day and focus our eyes on heaven, from where our true love descends?

†Fr. Chris



Christmas at St. David's

Advent IV

Sunday, December 20, 10am

Via Zoom | Facebook

Christmas Eve

Thursday, December 24, 5pm

Children's Pageant with First Eucharist of Christmas

Via Zoom | Facebook

Christmas Eve

Thursday, December 24, 9:30pm

Christmas Musical Celebration

Christmas Eve

Thursday, December 24, 10pm

Choral Celebration of the Feast of the Nativity

Via Zoom | Facebook

Christmas 1

Sunday, December 27, 10am

Via Zoom | Facebook



My Unexpected Sabbatical *by Pat Tilley*

At the beginning of this year I envisioned a personal retreat—a short sabbatical—to pray, study God's written word, reflect and ingest what God had for me to know and how to live out His plan for me.

In Jeremiah 29:11-12, God made it very clear that He who created man in His image had also created a plan for living out life to glorify Him.

Well, the year had other dimensions—totally unexpected.

My desire for a short sabbatical became a long time sabbatical and I must admit, my nature loved this hidden and unexpected “quiet time”.

Tears. . . yes, for those who were hurt by shutdowns, by the lengthy sickness of loved ones, the deaths that mounted.

Yet, I knew none of us was walking this Covid-19 path alone for we have a Savior who never leaves us nor does He

forsake us. We only have to look up, take His offered hand and recognize that path of hope and peace He so graciously offers.

Jesus never promised life without trouble, pain or disease, but did promise us His strength, courage and that love would never end.

God the Father promised us His everlasting presence in our lives—(Deuteronomy 31:8) and Jesus promised that He would never leave us (Matthew 28:20a).

God in the Trinity does not make rash promises but always affirms and confirms His Word. For it is His Holy Spirit that continually speaks to us—giving us hope and peace and joy.

Be still. . . know God. . . know peace that goes beyond understanding. . . for God so loved us that He sent His only begotten Son.

St. David's helping to feed the hungry *by Donna Censoni*

With the closure of our church, few of us have been able to see the busyness and excitement around our building when the St. David's Food Pantry is open. The following article is written by one of our most faithful volunteers, Donna Censoni, who has put in countless hours helping us feed the hungry. Fr. Chris

I saw a film some years ago about a single mother who was struggling to take care of her child. There is a dinner scene where the mother and her little girl are sitting with two plates of white rice and tomato sauce, slowly lifting forks of the rice to their mouths. Soon after that, the daughter ends up in the hospital for a reason that I have forgotten. Her mother comes to visit her there and she is greeted by a smiling delighted little girl. The daughter is incredibly happy to have good food to eat and toys to play with. She is smiling from ear to ear. The mother is heartbroken because she knows she can never give her daughter all the things she wants her to have. She meets with a social worker and tells her she thinks the daughter would be better off with another family. One of the things she said continues to stick with me: "We eat food nobody wants." She loves her daughter so much, she decides to give her up... and of course the next scenes are heartbreaking.

This Thanksgiving we gave out 130 gift certificates for restaurant meals along with the food boxes we always give people. What an exciting program! The restaurant owners were so grateful for a boost to their business and the people who visit us were delighted to receive something special. We had

a great time giving them out because we got to see the surprise and the smiles. I felt particularly uplifted because I could see people knew we really cared and because it was not food nobody else wanted.

As everyone knows, the restaurants are now closed for inside dining through December 20. This is typically their busiest time of the year. They are as much a part of our community as the people we serve at the Food Pantry. For that reason, we feel continuing the gift certificate program as part of the St David Food Pantry is essential. It lets us help our restaurants and also show love and care to the people hardest hit by the pandemic.



Notes of Appreciation

Thank you for the turkey and the other items to complete our holiday meal. I was so very surprised to see a turkey along with the boxes of other items and be able to make a truly wonderful Thanksgiving meal for my children any myself - turkey, macaroni and cheese, corn, green beans, cake mix, stuffing, and more. Just everything! I carried in amazement in all we were blessed with. With my deepest thanks!

Sincerely
D. Goddard

To the Pastor of St. David's Episcopal Church,

I received five turkey dinner tickets for a Thanksgiving dinner from Berkeley Country Oven. I took the meals to two 93-year-old ladies, a friend who was going to be alone for Thanksgiving, and two other ladies who were together for Thanksgiving. They all called to let me know how good the meals were. The two 93-year-old ladies shared one meal and then ate the other meal on Friday.

Thank you to your church for being so kind to provide these meals. They certainly were greatly appreciated.

Blessings to your congregation,
M. Kinning

To Whom it May Concern:

I just wanted to drop a note of thanks for the turkey and all the added extras to complete my holiday meal for my family. My husband and I are both out of work due to COVID currently and by receiving this generous "gift" my family was able to eat a good meal for many days. The weekly food boxes that appear so eagerly delivered brighten our days. Bless you!

Respectfully, S. Priest

Garden Update *by Ken Miller*

In October of this year, I was approached by local Boy Scout Avery Cole of Troop 1601, who also happens to be my Ward, looking at ideas for his Eagle Project. We had talked in the past about our building construction, and I had mentioned in passing that the City of Southfield, as part of the construction permit, was requiring the church to do something with the garden. It had been neglected in the past year and had become overgrown. A tree planted by David Veselenak, as part of his Eagle Project, had died and fallen into the garden. The City was requiring the site to be cleaned up before they would issue a Certificate of Occupancy when the building construction is completed.

Avery, his mother and I visited the church to look at the garden, and Avery came up with a plan. He would remove the garden, level the area, plant grass seed and purchase some new benches to replace some of the older ones that are in poor condition. We met with Father Chris to discuss the proposal at which time the plan was nailed down to include the following:

1. Remove the fencing around the garden
2. Remove the water lines and drip hoses
3. Level the ground
4. Plant new grass seed
5. Trim the pine trees
6. Furnish benches to replace the old ones that are in poor condition

Avery then wrote up the proposal, which was approved by Father Chris and Ellen Boyes, Senior Warden, and presented to the BSA local Council for approval.

On November 14, we officially began the Project. Avery recruited some of his Troop members, some members of CSB, counselors from the summer camp he attends, some local Scouts from another Troop and some St. David's church members. We were able to remove the fencing and posts, the scrub trees that had sprung up around the garden including those that had grown into and around the fencing. Remove all the water lines and cut down the overgrown vegetation. At the same time, Father Chris and a couple of Avery's volunteers cleaned out the northwest corner by the building and around the shed, taking the area down to dirt. We also removed 3 rose bushes that were planted in memory of the Johnson

family, which are to be replanted in the Memorial Garden.

On November 27, Avery had a tractor come to the site and scrape the garden to remove the weed fabric and level the ground. A local landscaping company, Andy's Lawn Care, has donated 5 yards of topsoil, and will be dropping it at the site when Avery is ready.

To complete the project, Avery will be spreading the topsoil and seeding the area, trimming up the lower branches of the pine trees, purchasing new seating and planting some bushes around the shed. We had hoped to have weather that would allow us to complete the project by winter, but the remaining work will probably be pushed back to early spring.

Another Scout from Troop 1601, Sam Walker, has approached us with a follow-on Eagle Project, to be completed after Avery's Project. Sam's project, which is still in the planning stage, will be to take the area Avery has renovated, and design and build a Prayer Labyrinth with a seating area. The plan is to have this project completed by fall of 2021.





An Update on Haiti *by Janet Ernst*

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Haiti. Life in Haiti continues to be not only difficult but very dangerous as evidenced by the following story preventing our outreach mission travel to continue.

<https://globalvoices.org/2020/11/27/between-commemoration-and-rage-haitians-confront-a-growth-in-fatal-kidnappings/>

Haitians confront a growth in fatal kidnappings

In five months, Haiti's reported abductions have more than doubled.

On October 29, 22-year-old Evelyne Sincère was kidnapped after taking her end-of-year

exams. Her body was found in the Delmas 24 neighborhood of Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince on November 1. News of her death sent shockwaves across the country, raising fears about a rise in ransom kidnappings and highlighting fears that the government was not doing enough to stop them.

According to the United Nations, between January 1 and May 31, Haiti saw a 200 percent rise in the number of reported abductions. Among the cases reported to Haitian police were 57 males, including 11 minors, and 35 female kidnapping victims, including 8 minors.

However, according to Laënnec Hurbon, research director at the CNRS multidisciplinary research association and professor at the State University of Haiti, the official reported figures do not capture the full extent of the issue. In his opinion, Hurbon states that no fewer than 1,270 kidnapping cases were registered in Haiti between January and August, which adds up to approximately 160 abductions a month.

As a parish, we continue to support the work of the Haiti Outreach Mission and, if you would like to become involved please contact Jan Ernst at 248 981-8851 or at jernst1998@gmail.com.

Meet Rocco Romano *by John Hawkes*

As many parishioners are aware, the St. David's Physical Plant is undergoing extensive remodeling during the closure of the facilities due to Covid-19. Our own Rocco Romano who is currently a Project Manager for TMP Architecture in Bloomfield Hills, is actively involved in coordinating the revitalization design of our church.

Rocco has attended St. David's for approximately three years. He was a participant in the 2018 Confirmation class and was co-sponsored by Linda Taylor and Steve Ernst. He has participated in the South Oakland Shelter outreach as an overnight host and has served meals for the homeless at Crossroads.

When asked what he enjoys most about St. David's, Rocco cited our diversity, inclusiveness and that we are an open church. "I like that we're always reaching out and trying to help people. I also enjoy Sunday worship and Father Chris' sermons. Everybody I have met has been very friendly," Rocco said.

Rocco lives in a ranch home (that he is currently remodeling) only a couple of blocks from church with Lara Wasner, his "significant other," and her twelve-year old son Alex. Lara is a Foreign Language professor at the University of Detroit-Mercy and holds two master's degrees. She also has a daughter named Indira who is currently studying architecture at the University of San Francisco. Rocco, who is a licensed Architect and a graduate of Lawrence Technological University, has two children and six grandchildren.

Rocco was here to oversee the first phase of our building improvement and redesign...the main atrium upgrade that added skylights to allow for the addition of natural light, along with new carpeting and the relocation of coat racks.

An extensive redesign of the east wing and the fellowship hall including restrooms, classrooms and chapel is currently underway. Evangelista Corporation based in New Hudson is the contractor on the project.

All bathrooms are being completely renovated. There will be a family restroom that will include a toilet stall and a shower that our homeless guests can use during our South Oakland Shelter ministry. A ladies' room that will include four toilets, new sinks, fixtures and access to a resting area and bridal changing room. The men's room will have two toilets and two urinals along with new sinks and fixtures.



Rocco, Lara and Alex

All walls and floors will be ceramic tile. Of course, there will be all new copper plumbing installed.

The chapel will be relocated next to the Fellowship Hall. In between, are three classrooms that will have updated lighting. All of the ceilings and flooring in this corridor will be replaced. The women's restroom that was next to the kitchen entrance will be converted into a storage room.

Improvements to the Corner Fellowship Hall will include an opening up of the southeast entrance to the building; a new boiler and hot water heater in the mechanical room; two updated nursery rooms; newly painted walls, acoustical ceiling tile and flooring for the entire social hall. Rocco described this as luxury vinyl tile.

A smaller, more energy efficient boiler was also recently installed in the mechanical room behind the choir changing area that will heat our sanctuary. Eventually, there will be new windows around the entire perimeter of the building (except for the stained glass ones).

On a recent Facebook video update of the construction, Father Chris said, "God bless you and keep you. Thank you for being so generous to your parish as we take this wonderful facility that has been given to us and take that out into the world for God's glory."

Rocco said that the target date for completion of this work is late January or early February.

Construction in Progress

Two views of the new **boiler** off the Fellowship Hall. It is fully operational and has 4 pumps to serve all the zones east of the Atrium.



Below: Looking west at the toilet and toilet partition wall in the **men's restroom** which will have 2 toilets in stalls and 2 urinals. The women's restroom (not pictured) will have 4 toilet stalls.



At left: From entry looking into the **family restroom**. At right will be toilet and toilet Partition, counterclockwise (left of toilet stall) to the shower stall (not yet installed). It will have ceramic tile and a barrier-free fold-down seat and grab bars. All walls and floor will be ceramic tile.



Love in the time of Covid *by Karen Robertson Henry*

In the poem below, *Stop Over*, the poet celebrates the “easy contentment of familiarity”.

The search for light (love) during this difficult time of Covid, without which light we would easily surrender to despair and darkness, leads us, or should lead us to this contentment of familiarity. We have had no choice because we have been so tightly thrust together within the confines of our households. We should now take the time to see the beauty of what is right under our noses, to explore one another more deeply; to see one another more clearly and to give God thanks for the gift of one another during this Christmas season.

As we enjoy our gifts of one another, we extend blessings and prayers and reach out to those without the easy companionship and love to sustain them during this time.

Stop Over

There's nothing like
the easy contentment of familiarity

the shared laughter
the assurance of being able to just drop in,
picking up where we stopped last
over distant phone waves.

There's nothing like
crawling into the warm bed— move over
to chat about those for whom we are now
responsible
and those from whom we still want to draw strength,
fading though they are
and to share worries
and to delight in gossip and nonsense,
jiggly bellies exposed
hairs ugly
not cute,
but happy
in our snatched moment
during this unexpected stop over.

~Ayo

St. David's Episcopal Church

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Gift Card Center

St. David's has gift cards available for purchase. If you are interested in any of the cards listed below, please contact Julie Wagner at (248) 982-9848 to check on availability and to place your order. When you call, you will be able to make arrangements to pick up your cards. Checks should be made payable to St. David's with the notation "**Gift Cards**" in the memo line. Thank you for supporting the parish with these purchases.

NAME OF CARD	VALUE	# OF CARDS	NAME OF CARD	VALUE	# OF CARDS
Meijer	\$25	4	Bath & Body Works	\$10	1
Meijer	\$50	3	Bed, Bath & Beyond	\$25	2
Applebee's	\$25	1	Best Buy	\$25	1
Arby's	\$10	1	Home Depot	\$25	2
Cracker Barrel	\$10	3	Home Depot	\$100	2
Dunkin Donuts	\$10	6	Jo-Ann Fabrics	\$25	4
Gordon Food Service	\$25	4	K-Mart Cash Card	\$25	1
Gordon Food Service	\$100	1			
Little Caesar's	\$20	3			
Logan's	\$25	1	Michaels	\$25	1
Outback Steak House	\$25	2	Staples	\$25	1
Panera Bread	\$25	4	Target	\$25	3
Papa John's	\$10	1	Walgreens	\$25	4
Pizza Hut	\$10	4	Walmart/Sam's Club	\$25	3
RD Lobster/Olive Garden	\$25	2	Walmart/Sam's Club	\$100	1
Red Robin	\$10	1	Amazon	\$10	12
Starbucks	\$10	6	Amazon	100	1
Starbucks	\$25	5			
Steak and Shake	\$10	2	BP Gas	\$50	1
			BP Gas	\$100	1
Tim Horton	\$10	1	Exxon/Mobil	\$50	2
Texas Roadhouse	\$25	4	Marathon	\$100	1
TGI Friday's	\$25	3	Shell	\$25	8
Wendy's	\$10	4	Speedway/Total	\$25	2
Ruby Tuesday	\$25	1	Sunoco	\$50	2
ACE	\$25	1	Shell	\$50	6
B. Dalton/Barnes & Noble	\$10	1	Casual Corner	\$25	1
B. Dalton/Barnes & Noble	\$25	1	Target	\$100	1