

Time Together

While We are Apart

Trinity and St. Mary's Whitechapel Episcopal Churches

Wednesday,
December 9, 2020

Good day dear church communities,

“O Come O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel...”

As I write this opening article, I have this iconic Advent hymn singing in my head, repeating since our Zoom worship on Sunday when we heard those beautiful, poignant words echoing through our worship together. This Advent is so very different from any other, poignant on its own, and yet still full of the beauty and longing we hear in the Advent hymns we enjoy on Sundays, the longing of God's people for the arrival of the Messiah. And our hymns remind us that the Messiah will come, but not as we expect and picture like a king, but as a tiny baby, the Christ child born to Mary and Joseph in a frightening and chaotic time for them and for the world. So, maybe things are not so unusual this Advent season.....just closer to the first.

Please join us for any of these upcoming worship services, and feel free to share the Zoom link and bulletin that are sent before each service to all on our mailing lists. Family and friends are always welcome.

Sunday, December 13th:

Service at 10am on Zoom and
Unsung Hero Sunday

Sunday, December 20th:

Service at 10am on Zoom and
Christmas Pageant

Thursday, December 24th:

Christmas Eve Service
on Zoom at 5pm

Sunday, December 27th:

Sunday service of Lessons and Carols
presented by the Diocese of Virginia,
featuring choirs of the Diocese

Advent blessings, Megan



Prayer Notes:

We will include our prayer lists in each Wednesday Newsletter and in our worship services. Please continue to let us know of folks you would like to have on our prayer lists.

Please keep Sally and Allen Cornwell (Trinity) and all their family in your prayers. Sally's mother, Patricia Conlon Stericker died in late November at the age of 96. Mrs. Stericker lived in Oxford, England.

O God, whose mercies cannot be numbered: Accept our prayers on behalf of your servant Patricia, and grant her an entrance into the land of light and joy, in the fellowship of your saints; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Please keep Lella Lee Edwards (Trinity) in your prayers. Lella Lee fell at home before Thanksgiving and has been coping with a head injury from that fall.

Please keep Malcolm Jett (Trinity) and his wife Lorraine, in your prayers. Malcolm will have heart surgery on Monday, December 14th.

Trinity: Lella Lee Edwards, Malcolm Jett, Katie Valanotti, Sherri Carter, Terri, R.W. Courtney, Frances Bush, Delford Walthall, Glenn Courtney, Steve, Rick Bateman, Earline Tomlin Kelley, Ed Borer, Dean Haine, Mary and Karen Jackson, Berkeley Kellum, Preston Bryant, Michael, Mel and Frances Ercelino, Hilda Courtney, Robert, Karen Woodruff, Joey Coker, Michael Dunaway, Brad Quillen, Ian Larmore, Brandon Dunaway.

Armed Forces: Giovanni Elhordoy, Ward Gavin, Paul Price and Michael Stout.

St. Mary's Whitechapel: (St. Mary's Whitechapel:) Agnes Robbie, Don DeFilippo, George Clowser, Jori Keckman, Alexa Frisbee, R.W. Courtney, Tammy, Dorsey Ficklin, Glenn Courtney, Terry Thompson, Wendy Burnett, Lin Greene, Jake Cobb, Dave Petersen, Dan Ficklin, Marie Beringer, Mimi Chace, Donna Brayton, Hilda Courtney, Robert, Howard Hanchey, Jennifer Cassell Cole, Karen Woodruff, Roger Fortin, Gina Adams, Brad Quillen, Jessica, Joanne and Michael.

Nursing Home Resident: Lancashire - Mary Sue Courtney

Armed Forces: Jacob Sensenig, Joshua Green, Aimee Budzinski, Kathryn McCormack Akacem, Mehdi Akacem, Thomas Mackie, Pia Mackie, Tate Young, Spencer Fortin.

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

Trinity Birthdays:

Catherine James, December 2nd; Stuart Dunaway, December 3rd; Malcolm Jett, December 6th; Aaron Rowland, December 8th; Susan Whitlow, December 10th; Dorothy Keyser, December 16th; Chase Christopher, December 17th; Elizabeth Berube, December 24th; Taryn Brice-Rowland, December 24th; Audrey Catherine Christopher, December 24th; Lella Lee Edwards, December 26th; Charlotte Self, December 26th; Michael Christopher, December 30th

Trinity Anniversaries: Chris and Peter Cammarata, December 18th

SMWC Birthdays: William Pennell III, December 4; Blanchette Jones, December 5; Paulette Payne, December 5; Pat Dennis, December 13; Mary Ann Olsen, December 13; Connie Horne, December 15; Torrence Harman, December 16; Jean Jones, December 19; Marsha Sitnik, December 23



Announcements:

Angels and Shepherds Needed! WE will have our first ever Zoom Pageant on Sunday December 20th at the 10am service. The roles of Mary, Joseph, Jesus, the Angel Gabriel, and the three Wise Men/Women are covered. But we still need angels and shepherds! If you would like to participate simply by putting on a halo and maybe even wings (Trinity has halos and wings and can supply to you) or finding a shawl or towel to put on as a shepherd's head covering, please contact Megan! Children and adults welcome! No lines or acting required; just show up at the Zoom service!

Lancaster Community Library Storymobile to visit SMWC weekly and provide internet! The SMWC Vestry agreed to allow the Library to bring their Storymobile to the SMWC parking lot each Monday from 3-5pm. The Library is working to find solutions to the problem of inadequate internet service in the county. The Storymobile cannot make its regular rounds to visit children because of COVID, but the Storymobile does have internet access, and thus folks will be able to come to the SMWC parking lot and access the internet. Also, if you would like a book from the library, but do not want to drive to Kilmarnock, the Storymobile can bring the book to the SMWC parking on Mondays for you to pick up. Questions? Contact Alice Cooper, Library Director at 804-435-1729.

You are invited to join in the fun of our "Recipe Roundtable"! Ann Kingsbury offered a grand crab recipe, an old family favorite, for our last Newsletter. Do you have a treasured recipe to share? Send the recipe and any story that goes with it to Megan by email or snail mail.

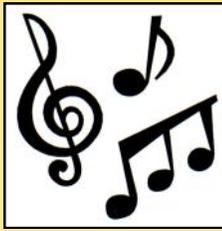
Do you need help getting trash to the dump or picking up prescriptions or an occasional grocery item? Please know that we have folks ready to help in our joint churches community. Contact Megan for connection to a volunteer.

Washington National Cathedral continues to offer beautiful and moving worship daily. They can be found at cathedral.org

You can continue to mail pledges and donations to Rector's Discretionary Fund to each church:

Trinity Church
PO Box 208
Lancaster, VA 22503

SMWC
5940 Whitechapel Rd
Lancaster, VA 22503



Thoughts from the Organ Bench

by Glenn Courtney, Organist

SMWC and Trinity

In the depths of a fearsome epidemic that ravaged his community, a small-town German pastor wrote a hymn to bring his congregation hope. More than 400 years later, Sleepers Wake! (Wachet Auf) still comforts and inspires us, perhaps now more than ever before. Sleepers Wake! is a well-known Advent hymn and #61 in the Episcopal Hymnal 1982.

Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608) was the pastor of a town called Unna, near the German city of Dortmund. He had just taken the job when the town was hit with a terrible plague. By the end, almost half of Unna had succumbed. For Nicolai, whose parsonage overlooked the cemetery and who had to perform countless funerals, it must have felt like the apocalypse. The author wrote in his preface, dated 10 August 1598:

"Day by day I wrote out my meditations, found myself, thank God, wonderfully well, comforted in heart, joyful in spirit, and truly content; gave to my manuscript the name and title of a Mirror of Joy... to leave behind me (if God should call me from this world) as a token of my peaceful, joyful, Christian departure, or (if God should spare me in health) to comfort other sufferers whom He should also visit with the pestilence."

Wachet Auf shows how deeply Nicolai was affected by what was happening to his town. In a touching tribute, he hid the initials of a former student who passed away in the plague in the first letter of each verse. The words of the hymn speak of a bright light coming in the middle of the night, and the first verse tells believers to wake up from their sleep and hold up their lamps. Rather than preparing for some new awful thing, the hymn is saying to be prepared for joy by sharing your light. Nicolai's lamp was his faith and his hope for a brighter future, and Wachet Auf was his way of shining that lamp for his congregation.

The text is based on the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). Nicolai refers to other biblical ideas, such as from the Revelation the mentioning of marriage (Revelation 19:6-9) and the twelve gates, every one of pearl (Revelation 21:21), and from the First Letter to the Corinthians the phrase "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

The message of hope and joy, written in the middle of profound tragedy, made Wachet Auf a popular hymn among Lutherans. Over a century later, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) decided to use it in a cantata for his church. While most of the music in the cantata is his own, he based the chorales around the melody of Nicolai's hymn. The second chorale is the piece that we now know as Sleepers Awake, and features an original melody that Bach pairs with Nicolai's. Bach's cantata is very well known, particularly as an organ solo and is regarded as one of his most mature and popular sacred cantatas.

1. "Sleepers, wake!" a voice astounds us,
the shout of rampart guards surrounds us:
"Awake, Jerusalem, arise!"
Midnight's peace their cry has broken,
their urgent summons clearly spoken:
"The time has come, O maidens wise!
Rise up, and give us light;
the Bride-groom is in sight.
Alleluia! Your lamps prepare and hasten
there, that you the wedding feast may
share."

2. Zion hears the watchmen singing;
her heart with joyful hope is springing,
She wakes and hurries through the night.
Forth he comes, her Bride-groom glorious
in strength of grace, in truth victorious:
her star is risen, her light grows bright.
Now come, most worthy Lord,
God's son, Incarnate Word, Alleluia!
We follow all and heed your call
to come into the banquet hall.

3. Lamb of God, the heavens adore you;
let saints and angels sing before you,
as harps and cymbals swell the sound.
Twelve great pearls, the city's portals:
through them we stream to join the immortals
as we with joy your throne surround.
No eye has known the sight,
no ear heard such delight: Alleluia!
Therefore we sing to greet our King;
for ever let our praises ring.

Please enjoy these two selections; the first a choral rendition of the hymn, the second
Bach's cantata.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aZ2VLx6OZc>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIOH2sCW13U>

Sources:

<https://www.classicalwcrb.org/post/sleepers-awake-crisis-cantata#stream/o>
[Wikipedia.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleepers_Awake)

Our Reflection today comes from Bishop Susan Goff.

Reflection

Darkness Cannot Overcome

"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it." John 1:5

Yesterday afternoon, my husband Tom and I hung colored lights on our porch. It was a beautiful afternoon for the task, the air crisp and smelling like winter. The challenge was that I had to keep turning the ladder to ensure that my back was to the sun as I wound the lights around the pillars, otherwise I'd be blinded by the blazing light, low and strong in the afternoon sky. Light blinds as surely as it illumines. Light pierces as surely as it comforts.

In this holy season of Advent, as we look for the light of Christ to come blazing into our world, we experience the darkness of a continuing Coronavirus pandemic. What we know about increased infection rates pierces our hopes for Christmas. The news of a dramatically increasing death rate shatters our annual traditions and plans. We've known for a while that the late fall and winter could bring us to a crisis point, and that crisis for our health care system is upon us. Hope for effective vaccines is on the horizon as well, and fulfillment of that hope is drawing closer every day. Still, the dangers remain ever-present. As the days grow shorter and the darkness of night increases, the darkness of fear and frustration, anger and worry increases as well.

The light of Christ illumines our darkness more powerfully than a spotlight sun on a winter afternoon. The light of Christ pierces this winter of our discontent. It has the power to shatter our restlessness and scatter our dis-ease. The light of Christ shines in our darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

In this blazing, piercing, blinding light of Christ, we are called by God to make the sacrifices we must to protect those we love and to save the lives of the most vulnerable -- and we can do it. We can worship the newborn King in blazing joy without gathering physically in our church buildings for this one year. We can hang out with extended family and friends without being together in the same room. We can support and serve others without threatening their health. We can share treasured traditions in new ways, knowing that all of these sacrifices are for the sake of love and are only for a short time. In the light of Christ, we can love others in these and so many more concrete ways. That is, after all, why Christ was born on earth in the first place -- to teach us how to love fiercely in the midst of a dark and fearsome world, to show us by word and example how to sacrifice our own desires for the sake of others. We honor the incarnate, crucified and risen Christ by following his example in the ways this time

demands of us and in countless other ways, large and small, throughout our lives.

May the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path as you make sacrifices today, throughout this Advent season, and always.



"The Light Shines in the Darkness." Susan E. Goff 2019