

CROSSWAYS

"Making Christ Visible in His Community."

The Reverend Michael P. Flanagan, Rector of Holy Cross Episcopal Church, Simpsonville, SC 864-967-7470

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ADVENT AND GAY MARRIAGE

It is interesting to me that South Carolina has begun issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples on the cusp of Advent season, the liturgical season of waiting and expectation. The significant biblical event we celebrate at Advent's conclusion is Christmas, the gift of the Incarnation. However, Advent is a season that is intended to be one in which we wait for the appearance of the savior. Thus, we hear apocalyptic literature (warnings and visions of the last days), John the Baptist's cry of "prepare the way of the Lord!", poetic literature from the prologue of John's gospel, as well as the biblical narrative of Mary's waiting with expectation for the birth of her first-born child.

This focus on expectation and waiting is supposed to teach us more than just the gospel story of the birth of Jesus. It is also designed to invite us to look inward with expectation. The hope of Advent is a hope of new birth of the savior within our hearts and souls. We prepare for the coming of the Christ child in us with hopeful expectation that we too will be able to celebrate new life in Christ when the last Advent candle is lit.

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It would be easy to stay with this personal, internal change of heart and soul, but current circumstances demand a wider vision. As the state of South Carolina begins issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, we participate in the conclusion of a long period of waiting and expectation for our LGBTQ brothers and sisters.

I suspect that Mary was like any other new mom when Jesus was born. There is great initial joy, and then the real work begins of raising the child day by day. This new birth in South Carolina will take the same kind of long-term care and nurture. I watched one of the online videos taken in the courthouse where applications for marriage licenses were being received. On more than one occasion during the interviews, I heard clapping and cheering, as if to say, "The new baby is here!"

Advent reminds us that the conclusion of one period of waiting and expectation leads us into another. "When will the baby sleep through the night? When will he/she eat solid food? When will we be able to get him/her out of diapers? School? College? Job? Grandchildren?" And on and on it goes.

Here at Holy Cross, we will begin a series in Lent that will be an intentional dialogue about the blessing of the union of same-sex couples. On Wednesday nights from Feb. 25 through Mar. 25, the series will explore the biblical, theological and pastoral implications of our decision as a national church to provide a rite for blessing these unions. The outcome of these discussions will inform us as to whether or not Holy Cross will apply to the bishop for permission to use the new rite. Thus, waiting and expectation continues even beyond our Christmas celebration. Advents are all around us — but so are new births, so are crucifixions, so are resurrections.

Living our lives in Christ means understanding that the life of Christ constantly informs our life circumstances. We live the story of Jesus in our own lives. So, if we find ourselves rejoicing today, we rejoice with Christ Jesus, and if we find ourselves anxious or confused, we suffer with Christ Jesus. Regardless of which part of the story we are living — regardless of whether we are filled with joy or apprehension, the good news is that God is with us in our waiting. May we wait together with hope and love. “Come, Lord Jesus!”

Mike+

rector@holycrossep.org



REFLECTIONS ON FAITH AND LIFE

THE REVEREND LINDA GOSNELL,
ASSISTANT RECTOR FOR PASTORAL CARE

PRACTICING THE FAITH — PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

Comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

2 Corinthians 1:4

Advent is a countercultural season. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, our church liturgy and devotions encourage us to slow down, to focus less on Christmas celebrations, gift exchanges, and decorations, and more on the coming of Christ. Rather than Christmas carols (for which we wait till the 12 days of Christmas), we sing hymns heard only at this time of year: “Sleepers, wake! A voice astounds us;” “Prepare the way, O Zion;” “Come, thou long expected Jesus.” The church hangings are blue, not red and green, and our only decoration is an Advent wreath in which one additional candle is lighted each week. The simplicity of these allows us to focus on preparing our hearts for a new birth of Christ in us.

The readings for the Sundays in Advent begin with the second coming of Christ rather than the birth of Jesus. On the second and third Sundays our focus turns to John the Baptist and his message of preparation. Only on the fourth and final Sunday of Advent do we hear of the impending birth in the story of the Annunciation.

The Old Testament and Gospel lessons appointed for the second Sunday of Advent each contain these words: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

These four weeks of preparation offer us an opportunity, in the midst of the commercial and social celebrations of Christmas, to reflect on God’s actions in history, to look around us for God’s action in our present, and to turn toward the future with hope and expectation. We wait for, eagerly anticipate, and prepare for God’s coming today, at Christmas, and at the final coming of our Lord.

Pick up an Advent devotional in the narthex or find one on-line. Dedicate a few minutes each day in this brief season to preparing your heart for the advent of Christ.

Linda+



GENERAL NEWS

OUR MISSIONARIES, CAMERON AND ROBERTO VIVANCO

Cameron and Roberto Vivanco, our missionaries in Quito, Ecuador, will be at Holy Cross on Sunday, Dec. 7. They will be speaking at all services and during the 10:15 Formation hour. Make plans to welcome them and hear their good news of ministry and life in Ecuador.

BLUE CHRISTMAS

This season can be difficult for anyone experiencing the blues. Keeping that game face in place around others who are happy and excited about holiday events can be difficult when one has experienced a loss – a loved one, a job, a relationship, etc. Our “Blue Christmas” service at 3 p.m. on Dec. 21 provides attendees an opportunity to acknowledge feelings of loss, grief, and sadness, while also recognizing God’s presence in the midst of our sorrow and finding hope for the healing of our wounded souls in gathering for words of comfort and the assurance of Christ’s love and presence with us. Our service includes the lighting of candles, prayers, and music. There is no Eucharist, so non-Episcopalians will not feel uncomfortable attending. Invite any of your family and friends who might benefit from attending. Cider, cookies, and conversation are available following the service in the parish hall.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

CHRISTIAN FORMATION, ADULT, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH CHRISTIAN FORMATION – SUSAN LOUITT HARDAWAY

YOUTH@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRIES – SHELLEY ALLEN

ACADEMYDIRECTOR@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

COORDINATOR OF CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES – LESLIE DONAHUE

CHILDREN@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

PROGRAM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

ADULT – DRAYTON GAILLARD WHDGAILLARD@CHARTER.NET



DECEMBER YOUTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDNESDAY NIGHT YOUTH

Youth in grades 6-12 are invited to attend youth group each Wednesday night from 6-8 p.m. in the Parish Hall. For more information, contact Mother Susan by email susanhardaway@gmail.com or text [864 483-2250](tel:8644832250).

• **Dec 3:** Youth will meet in the Meeting Hall instead of the Parish Hall due to Advent Evensong. Youth will work on Christmas Pageant assignments, music, etc.

SUNDAY YOUTH FORMATION

Youth in grades 6-12 are invited to participate in Bible lessons/discussions during Youth Sunday School on Sunday mornings from 10:15-11 a.m. in the Meeting Hall. For more information, contact Bonnie Schmidt at 270-0341

or bonnie1870@gmail.com.

CHRISTMAS PARADE

The Simpsonville Christmas Parade is Sunday, Dec. 7 at 3 p.m. Holy Cross will decorate our float on Friday, Dec. 5 at 4 p.m. in the church parking lot. If you wish to ride on the float, please sign up as space is limited. We welcome walkers, too! We will meet at church at 2 p.m. promptly on the 7th.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

The Christmas Pageant is Sunday, Dec. 21 during the 11:15 service. If you are interested in participating, please sign up at the sign-up center. Speaking and non-speaking parts are available for children and youth. Singing, too! Rehearsals will be every Sunday at 11:15 a.m. Additional rehearsals will be communicated. Dress rehearsal is Saturday, Dec. 20 at 9 a.m. If you have any questions, please contact Leslie Donahue (children@holycrossep.org).



LORD'S RESOURCES

ADMINISTRATION, STEWARDSHIP, BUILDING & GROUNDS

SENIOR WARDEN – SHARON PUTMAN
SRWARDEN@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

JUNIOR WARDEN – MIKE NICHOLS
JRWARDEN@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

STEWARDSHIP – DAVE GEISLER
STEWARDSHIP@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

BUILDING AND GROUNDS – TOM JONES
JONE63194@GMAIL.COM

VOLUNTEERS MAKE CHRIST VISIBLE

~ Dan Donboch, Volunteer Coordinator

Just this week someone asked me what church I attend, and when I said “Holy Cross Episcopal,” the person asked me where it is located. I told him and added that we sponsor the pumpkin patch on Main Street. He had instant recognition. Our conversation went on about the pumpkin patch and all the good it does for our community. Visibility for Holy Cross is Visibility for Christ.

Our tremendous success at the patch would never happen without volunteers. The patch is just one great opportunity for our church members to give their time to promote our mission. We don't have to preach to people, hand out tracts or even pray in public to let people know that we are Christians from Holy Cross and we volunteer to help others in need. Actions speak louder than words.

Helping those in need costs lots of money, and donating time to raise money or collect food and clothing or participating in any way helps us be more visible. This year the patch success was so far greater than anyone imagined. We needed more volunteers than in past years. So we created partnerships with the charitable organizations that will receive our donations. Those partnerships paid off with numerous volunteers from outside Holy Cross. Maybe some of those volunteers will now attend our services out of curiosity, to see what kind of people attend Holy Cross. Those volunteers are now another group of people who know more about Holy Cross and our mission.

Now some of our members might think that we won't need their help at the patch in the future if we now attract outside volunteers. That is not true. We will never have too many volunteers. Only our church members can spread our message with their actions in the community. There are many other opportunities to volunteer at Holy Cross. Some give you contact with non-members, and some are needed within Holy Cross. Look at our website and get more information about any ministry that interests you.

Another goal of forming our Ministry Partners is to spread the word among our church members about each partner, their mission and their volunteer needs. There are too many to list here but over the next year we will be getting information out about each of our Ministry Partners at our adult forums, on the bulletin boards and in our newsletter. We urge everyone to look into the different organizations and consider volunteering some time for them, too. Again, these are opportunities to “make Christ visible in God's community.” Contact one of the following church members who have volunteered to be our liaison with each Ministry Partner if you have any specific questions about that group:

Habitat for Humanity – Tim Sullivan
FIKE – Cindy Smith
Holy Cross Academy – Austin Bishop
James Monroe Mission House – Mike Guarino
Kairos Outside – Gail Randall
Center for Community Services – Brown and Pam Garrett

Little Steps – Jackie Donboch
Safe Harbor – Dionne Sandiford
Santa Crus Mission – Fr. Fred Gonzalez
Synergy Garden – Dennis DeFrancesco
Upstate Warrior Solution – Dan Donboch



FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

Simply Wait: Cultivating Stillness in the Season of Advent

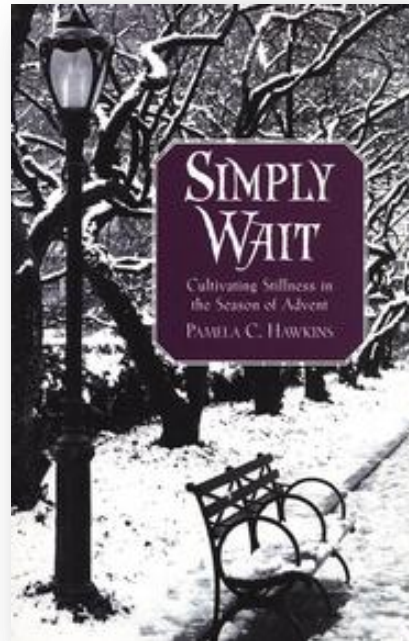
by Pamela C. Hawkins

How many times have you tried to reduce the stress and hurry of Christmas by making Advent a more spiritual time? What if you found a devotional practice that offered more rest, more quiet, more room in your heart for the Christ child to be born?

Simply Wait: Cultivating Stillness in the Season of Advent is a resource that individuals and small groups can use to help them focus, rest and renew spiritually. For the four weeks of Advent, readers will focus on a single word and a single, simple prayer practice that does not require extensive preparation or previous experience. Readings for each week offer creative reflections rooted in scripture and engaging questions that stimulate our anticipation for a meaningful Christmas season.

www.Christianbook.com

Send an email to kclconnor@gmail.com if you have a book, music, or movie that has been a special part of your spiritual journey.



HOLY CROSS CONTACT INFORMATION

Items for newsletter:	newsletter@holycrossep.org
Bulletin announcements:	secretary@holycrossep.org
Parish office	(864) 967-7470
Fax	(864) 967-0393
Mailing address	PO Box 187, Simpsonville, 29681
Holy Cross Academy	(864) 963-5986
Pastoral counseling	(888) 293-7585
Church website	www.holycrossep.org
Diocesan website	www.edusc.org
Office	secretary@holycrossep.org
Rector	rector@holycrossep.org
Assistant rector	assistantrector@holycrossep.org
Youth ministry	youth@holycrossep.org
Children's ministry	children@holycrossep.org
Senior warden	srwarden@holycrossep.org

