# The Good News

A Newsletter of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Louisville, Kentucky Wherever we are, this is how we love God and God's People



# From the Rector's Study

Fr. Andrew, Rector

# Beloved,

November 17th on Mark 13:1-8 to help prepare our hearts and minds to realign with the Advent Spirit of anticipation instead of filling my message with joyful noise and Christmas and ignoring the inevitable rest. As your pastor, I must not overlook the opportunity to keep our spirit of humility, gratitude, compassion, and love in check. Therefore,

please read it regardless. I always appreciate your feedback and discussion.

It's wonderful to be back after a week and a half of Covid madness. I do not know where and when I got it or who I got it from; it sure was nasty. The moment I thought I got better, the stubborn COVID symptoms came right back.

Mark 13:1 - 8 addresses issues I find quite timely in our lives in America today. The passage, also known as the Olivet discourse, shows the disciples

commenting to Jesus on the beautiful, impressive temple. Instead of agreeing with them, Jesus tells them that none of its beauty will last. His remark, of course, gets the disciples to start questioning when the destruction will happen. They want to know! At that moment, Jesus tells them to be aware of those who claim to know, using his name.

Now, why do I dare say this passage is timely today? I say this because we all are too certain about our righteous knowledge, myself included. Those who supported President-elect Trump seem to describe him as next to God, the man who could do no wrong. In addition to their support is the endless criticism of their opponent. In the same way, those who supported Vice President Harris were certain about what to make of the other, especially his supporters, amidst experiencing tremendous grief, anger, and defeat. 1.8 million people voted for different candidates. About 90 million folks, roughly 36 percent of eligible voters, chose to participate in the presidential election by NOT casting votes.

Whomever you have supported, regardless of winning or losing, we have one thing in common – our inflated self-righteousness that condones demonizing the folks on "the other side." Sadly, the

church can be the worst place to see this. In God's name, we boast love. Yet, we can be completely neglectful of our bitterness and hatred. In God's name, we espouse our inclusive nature without realizing that our so-called inclusiveness is a mere group of clicks with like-minded people. In God's name, we pride ourselves on serving others while ignoring our duty to love them. Instead, we are more proud of how much we've given than how much love we exchanged and learned by following Jesus. In God's name, we put a smile on our faces to smooth things out, pretending to be loving while hiding our true colors. Instead of examining our true colors, love, and compassion, we become too quick to point out the unloving nature of "the others." We justify our sins selfishly using God's name in vain by saying, "Lord knows why I feel this way."

When Jesus warns us to be aware of anyone leading us astray, he points out those who claim to be the "one." Has it ever occurred to us that we may be "the one" he warns us about? He is warning about our internal inflated self-righteousness, which is unexamined, proud, certain, arrogant, and unloving to the point of hating on people in God's name.

I am the first one to admit to holding this arrogance. Whenever I

encounter someone going against my moral standards, I have no problem going after the person and finding all kinds of reasons to justify my hypocrisy and biased mind. When Jesus warns us to be aware of those who come in his name, he first challenges such presumptuous righteousness. He often keeps me humble through you. You and I might not see things eye-to-eye. Who knows, we might be completely opposite of the political and cultural spectrum. Such diversity in our midst is through which God helps me examine my heart, realize my flaws, and repent it. I won't be able to do that when I only socialize with those who always agree with me. God frees us through such diversity - frees us from our bigotry so that I can love God's people in ways Jesus intends us to-in ways I never imagined possible.

We must not let our inflated self-righteousness lead us astray from our true purpose: love. We are the church that has pledged to leave our differences aside to make room for others for the past 500-plus years. Acknowledging our brokenness, we gather, study, pray, and break bread together to serve, share, and learn more about God's abundant love in this troubled world as Jesus intended; that's how we experience a foretaste of God's kingdom. We have so much work to do and no time

to waste on hatred. As we begin the Advent Season, let us live each day and moment, dedicating ourselves to cleansing our hearts, minds, and spirits so we may hold each other with truthful love free of bitterness, grudge, and hatred. That inflated, zealous voice sneaks up on us like Covid did me. That is why we must all be aware and extra diligent to make room for Jesus. The Longest Night service is December 21st. Don't you forget it!

With Love in Christ, Andrew



### From the Deacon

Pete Womack - Deacon

2024 has been a pivotal year for me. I have been changed by going through this pivot, and it is familiar because this is not the first time I have had this experience. There were four things that I experienced or witnessed this pivotal year that I am still unpacking. The first event was at the General Convention at the convention center downtown. For the first time, I was surrounded by more Episcopalians than ever, and what struck me was how diverse the church has become in languages and cultures. The core

of our faith, reflected in our liturgies, was expressed in those languages and included elements of those cultures, and I realized that my Church is alive and relevant to the world, and one I still feel comfortable in. It is a church where there is a place for a wide variety of people while still keeping its core Anglican understanding of our relationship with God and each other.

The second event was recently watching the installation of Presiding Bishop Rowe. Rather than being held at the Washington National Cathedral, it took place in the more intimate chapel at The Episcopal Church headquarters in New York City. It was a humble ceremony for an important moment in the life of the Church, and parts of the service were in several languages other than English. It reinforced the experience I had at the General Convention, and I saw humility in the leadership that was different than what I had seen before. It felt to me that the diversity of the Church was being uplifted and affirmed.

My third experience was in August in Carter County, Kentucky. A distant relative had painstakingly rebuilt the cabin of Tignal Womack, the first of my father's ancestors to move to Kentucky from Virginia. It was built around 1805 by Tignal's young son Archer and an

unnamed slave. I have mentioned before that my family owned slaves, but this was a sobering fact that I couldn't ignore, one that my family has never talked about. I'm sure that there are many black Americans who share my last name, and I know how that happened. I'm sure that my family's slaves were probably not treated well. I am working on how to reconcile my ancestor's justification for owning slaves with the abhorrence I have of slavery, and how to reconcile that with my vow to love my neighbor and seek justice for them. How do I live with these two things not as a contradiction that makes me morally compromised, but as a reason to strive for equity?

My fourth experience was at the Diocesan Convention in November, where we voted unanimously to repudiate and reject the writings of James Craik, the priest at Christ Church (later the diocesan Cathedral) in the later 1800s. He was an abolitionist but had some very ugly attitudes and beliefs about black Americans. He was a white supremacist by any definition of the word, yet a notable figure in the history of the Episcopal Church. It raises the question of how the Church should respond to its decidedly unchristian past, and how it can reconcile that past with what it is now. I am sure St. Paul's,

founded in 1834, has benefitted from slave labor in some form like the Cathedral and the Church of the Advent. It is a part of our parish's past that we need to acknowledge.

All of these experiences in a short period of time have left me humbled and very aware that I have benefits as a white man that are still denied people who don't look like me. I cannot claim responsibility for the social, political, and cultural structures that make those benefits automatic and expected, but I can commit to changing them so that all have the same benefits that I do. Something else that I have begun to realize is that despite the elevation of people very different from me, I am not diminished in the eyes of God. There is still a place for me in the kingdom alongside of, not above, the children of God that I meet. In the end, I am starting to think of others not like me when I remember my baptismal vows of "loving my neighbor as myself," and "seek justice and peace for all people."



# From the Vestry

George Busch - Buildings and Grounds

MG, what a crazy world we are living in. It can be frightening, depressing and a downright hopeless feeling if you let it. The recent election, the media, the crime reports, etc., etc. makes you just want to scream and say, "LET ME OFF" and wonder how I can change all this. Because of this I adopted my own way to cope, I live in "George's world" where it's warm and fuzzy most of the time.

I don't listen to the news, read the paper, or keep up with daily events. Some would say I'm copping out. When I tell people this, I think in their mind they are thinking this guy is a nut and just don't give a damn. That's not true, I've found I have a way to cope with all of this and I really think it works. I think the only way to make a change in this world given my meager position is by my actions. If perhaps I'm given the opportunity to perform a simple act of kindness and someone sees, it may give them the notion to maybe try that out. That may sound silly but in my mind that's the best shot I have to bring about change. I

often wondered if it really works and a couple weeks ago, I was given hope that it truly does.

My sister and I like to go to odd little places for lunch once in a while, so I took her to a little soul food place on Clay St, Shirley Mae's Café. We got there only to find no indoor seating only a half door open to Clay St with the menu on the brick wall and 4 tables on the sidewalk. An older woman came to the window and greeted us, and we stood there for 20 minutes talking about all kind of things including crime downtown and growing up in Louisville. Finally, she said " I need to get cooking for you and off she went. We sat down at a table talking about how nice of a person she was and wondering how lunch would be.

Finally, she stuck her head out and said here you go, so I went to the window to pay her. It was \$30.00 bucks, so I gave her a \$50 and told her to keep the change for a tip, she was so nice and probably didn't make a lot of money. She smiled and said thank you, and I sat down. A little older lady from the neighborhood went up to the window and was ordering something and you could tell they knew each

other. She sat down next to us and started talking and said, "I wanted corn bread, but I didn't have a dollar". She went on talking to my sister, so I got up and went to the window and went to hand the woman 5 dollars and said give her some corn bread, please. She said no, you already bought her lunch, I can't keep that big tip you gave me, she doesn't have any money, so you paid the bill.

It brought a tear to my eye, and I told her God bless you, you just made my day. That proved my theory we can all change the world and ignore all the things that want to bring us down. Keep smiling and don't give up hope!!!.



# From the Choirmaster

David Paul Gibson - Choirmaster

n doing some research recently I discovered that there are nearly 10,000 songs about or for Christmas (9,274 songs to be exact). Since the average song runs approximately 3.5 minutes, it means you would have to sing Christmas songs 24/7 from December 1 to December 24 to sing them all. Bring a throat lozenge!

While we won't be singing nearly

that many during the holidays, we can look forward to singing many of our favorite carols and hymns of the season. Like so many traditions of the church, our music brings us closer to our memories of Christmases past and our hopes for Christmases to come. Most importantly, our carols and hymns immerse us in the true meaning of Christmas ... remembering and celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The devoted members of our music ministry have worked diligently to prepare the beautiful music we will share together at this joyous season. Please take a minute to stop and thank members of this important ministry for the joy they will bring to our holidays.

On a personal note, I wish each of you the blessings of Christmas and the hope a new year brings.

Most Sincerely, David Paul Gibson Organist-Choirmaster



# From the Preschool

Erin Dykes - Director

appy Holiday Season, St. Paul's Families,
November has been somewhat relaxing after the flurry of activity that was October. We enjoyed our two days of Halloween "All About the Boo!" celebrations. All of the children went home with a pumpkin from our pumpkin patch and a bag full of goodies from our trick-or-treat parade. We had an abundance of children's family members, along with some parish volunteers, who came to hand out treats and their presence was greatly appreciated.

Glenda Blair and Nancy Skidmore have been a bright spot on our Wednesdays as they have started joining our Three-Year-Old and Pre-K classes to read to them at snack time. It takes special people to interact with preschoolers and they are doing a fabulous job.

On November 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> part of the Preschool will be transformed into the Polar Express. Our students will attend in pajamas and watch a very condensed, age-appropriate version of the Polar Express movie. Our Music room will be decorated (inside and out) to look like a train, and a "moustached" Conductor will even make a

special appearance to punch the children's tickets. This event is a student and staff favorite every year!

Mrs. Pam and our students have been hard at work practicing songs for our annual Christmas Concerts. Believe it or not we've been singing Christmas songs since before Halloween! We are hosting our concerts on Thursday, December 12<sup>th</sup> and Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at approximately 9:20 AM. Families are invited to watch their children dress in adorable costumes and perform some holiday favorites. We are excited that Mr. David Paul Gibson and Mr. Frank Kirkhave agreed to join us and provide piano/organ music as our families wait for the show, as well as a processional for the

children. Following the concerts we'll be hosting receptions in the parish hall, complete with cookies, milk, and the opportunity to visit Santa and Mrs. Claus. We enjoy this festive sendoff to Christmas Break every year. The children and their families are always full of holiday cheer, and then we all have an opportunity to rest and recharge before we return in January. From all of us at the Preschool, we wish you a joyous Christmas season full of time spent with family and friends.





### Pray, Learn, Serve, and Rejoice at St. Paul's

All newsletter articles are due on the 15th of every month to be placed in the monthly newsletter. Bulletin announcements are due every Monday at noon. Please provide an event title, and a description of 75 words or less.

# We Pray

# Pray for All

During this challenging time, please be intentional about setting a time to pray. Pray for those on the prayer list. (pg. 12)



# We Learn

### Zoom Wednesday Bible Study

Bible Study is on a short break.

# Ecclesiastical Bits & Bytes Technology and Theology with Fr. Andrew

Are you feeling intimidated with your computer, tablet, and smartphones? Are you frustrated with virtual meetings? Greetings, favored one. Do not be afraid for the Lord is with us. Contact the office to set up an appointment.





### We Serve

### Calvary Episcopal Church Food Pantry

Please join us at St. Paul's Episcopal Church each Sunday from 9 am - 12 pm for the Sunday Service food collection.

All food is counted and delivered to Calvary on Thursday morning after collection. If you would like to volunteer to help with driving and delivery, contact Ray Brown or David Dawkins.

# Current Total: 146,241 items donated.

The upcoming holiday season puts an extra strain on local food ministries. Please be a part of this amazing ministry by bringing items to the Sunday "SERVICE" at St. Paul's or sending in your monetary donation!

St. Paul's parish has generously donated over \$13,334.00 to the Calvary Food pantry since June 2020. Make checks payable to St. Paul's.



# We Rejoice

### Website

Communication is the key to a successful ministry. Be sure to check out the website to keep up to date on church activities. <a href="www.stpaulslouisville.com">www.stpaulslouisville.com</a>



# Prayers and Thanksgivings

Please contact the office to include names on the prayer list by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. Names will be listed for 30 days (short term prayers) or if requested 3 months (long term prayers). Fr. Andrew and the weekday prayer group prays each person by name every day.

### Healing, Comfort, Relief, Protection, and Hope

Ron Jones (Brother of Rex Jones), Nancy Skidmore, Liz Babcock, Jacqui Lancaster (Sister in law of Betty Waddell), Bill & Diana Motsch, Betty Pringle (Friend of Ann Ford & Theresa Myers), Chuck B. & Sandra P. (Friends of Cheryl Young), John Jackson (Friend of Glenda Blair), Kathy Dawkins, (Wife of David Dawkins), Ethan & Marsha Reed (Friends of The Miner Family), Merle Gipe (Friend of Sue Benner), Larry Bates, Donald & Dee Ribble (Family of Sandi Pierie), Sue Brotherton, Minnie Naive, Maureen & Joe Solan (Parents of Jason Solan), Dena Rogers, Rebecca Rupp (Friends of Peggy Pryse), Wanda Wiegand, Emily (Daughter of Ruthe & Jim Holmberg), Jennifer Amaker (Friend of Kathy & Dave Dawkins)

### Serving in Military

2nd Lt. Kyle Sears (Grandson of Arlene Buckner), Christopher Neal (Son-in-law of Monica Bell), Anthony Polio (Grandson of John and Wanda Wiegand), John Phipps (Nephew of Ray Keller), Matt Hartmann, Luke Hartlage (Son of Linda Hartlage, preschool teacher), Jennifer & Joe Venghaus, Lt. Erin Jones (Niece of Rex Jones)

### Homebound

Betty Reed, Mary Ellen Pinto, Mary Langseth, Dennis Ingham, Jo Stuebe Lorna Larson, Jim & Donna Coliz, Jane Delgado-Shadid, James & Mae Fleming

### **Anniversaries**

Tony & Lillian Conklin (12/30)

### **Birthdays**

Grace Phillips (12/4), Becky Moulton (12/4), Erin Carter (12/9), Fr. Roger Walker (12/10), Ashley Berridge (12/1), Marsha Serdenis (12/16), Ruth Ellen Flint (12/17), Carol Schusterman (12/19)

### **General Announcements**

### **Adult Formation**

Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices

Sundays 9:00 – 10:15 A.M. (Conference Room)

### **Nametags**

A new order is being placed for nametags. If you desire to have one or need a replacement, please sign up on the sheet posted in the Narthex. Each tag is \$12.00. A few people have signed up and as soon as we reach the quota of 11 the order will be placed.

## **Staff Christmas Appreciation**

As we approach the Christmas season the Vestry is collecting funds to share with Father Andrew, Father Roger, Deacon Pete, Robyn Fischer, and David Paul Gibson for their faithful dedication as our essential staff of St. Paul's.

If you would like to say "thank you" for an exceptional year of dedication to St. Paul's, please send a donation to be divided among our parish staff as a Christmas gift. Checks can be mailed to St. Paul's and be sure to memo <u>Staff Christmas Gift</u>. You can also leave your donation at the church office in a sealed envelope marked with <u>Staff Christmas Gift</u>.

Thank you for your support throughout the year and may each of you have a blessed Christmas and a grateful and happy New Year.

# The "Longest Night Service" Should be an Important Advent Service for Each of Us – December 21, 6:00 PM

This year may pose a unique challenge: How are we supposed to celebrate "the most wonderful time of the year" when the year itself has failed to be encouraging on many levels. The halls may be decked, gifts



purchased, and Christmas music cranked up, but it feels impossible this year to fully tune out the crumbling world outside. For many of us, the season feels like nothing more than the welcome end to a sad and scary novella.

### The idea of Blue Christmas is to acknowledge the darkness, and let it be dark.

A Western Christian liturgy originally known as the "Blue Christmas" service took place on or near the longest night of the year, the Winter Solstice, usually December 21. Although origin stories trace the service back to British Columbia in the 1890's, then migrated, beginning in the 1990's, to churches with the aim of providing a safe, solemn, and reflective occasion to console grieving family members after the death of a loved one—especially those having difficulty finding joy and hope during the holiday season. Hospice is believed to be one of the first agencies to provide such services and later, funeral homes began to promote similar groups for surviving family members.

The Blue Christmas Service acquired a significant new meaning in 2016 in response to the on-duty death of a police officer. A South Carolina resident initiated a movement to recognize and honor the sacrifices made by police officers who work to keep us safe during the Christmas Season. The campaign aimed to support law enforcement and "honor the memories of those officers who have given their lives in the line of duty."

Both the traditional and the more modern versions of blue holidays are based on the idea that we all should be more aware of and compassionate toward those who are struggling to cope with the angst they experience. This usually involves being open to their sorrow and sadness. In addition to being sensitive to feelings, one of the best ways to support others is

spending time with someone who has lost a loved one. This is one of the better ways to lift spirits and lessen the aloneness they may feel. Expressing condolences and offering support to a friend who has lost a beloved pet or a job, or a friendship. You might let a law enforcement officer, or first responder know how much they are appreciated. Can you visit someone in a long-term care facility, hospital, or hospice? Attend and invite someone to come with you to the Longest Night Service on the Winter Solstice.

Because the Blue Christmas service is traditionally held on or around the Winter Solstice, the actual longest night of the year, there has been an interesting movement for this liturgy to be called the "Longest Night Service" and designating it to be a time of remembrance and reflection. It should also be noted that December 21 is the traditional feast day for Saint Thomas the Apostle. This sharing of the date invites making some connection between Saint Thomas's struggle to believe in Jesus' resurrection, the long nights just before Christmas, and the struggle with darkness and grief encountered by those living with the distress and memory of loss.

"Darkness is shorthand for anything that scares me" writes Barbara Brown Taylor. For generations, the Christian community has used the images of darkness and light, with darkness almost always referring to the unknown, oppression, danger and evil, and light almost always referring to the revealed, freedom, safety, and goodness. This is understandable, for in early human history when the dark did contain the unknown, it was potentially dangerous. While there is much that can be said about all that is revealed and learned in the darkness (see *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Barbara Brown Taylor), be reminded that God's light can only be seen because of the darkness, and that darkness itself can be a blessing or the vehicle for a blessing to be revealed. Even as we acknowledge the darkness, and what the unknowns may be, let us all remember that we are in the protective shelter of God's healing love. We are free to pour out our grief and sadness, to face our emptiness, to feel our hurt, and to know that through it all, God cares.

The Longest Night Service is observed by most main line protestant churches, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian. The Holy Eucharist is many times part of this liturgy, or it may be a simple opportunity for expression of grief, pain,

disappointment, and heartbreak as well as time to focus and reflect on the promises of hope found in Christ. It is important to know that today the service is meant for anyone who is experiencing loss from any source. Taylor Burton-Edwards, director of worship resources for the United Methodist Church, emphasized that church is not group therapy, but added that in its proper spirit, a Longest Night Service is an offering of solidarity, no matter the cause of the pain.

'I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name." Isaiah 45:3

# Presiding Bishop Sean W. Rowe Investiture

Episcopalians around the world and in various time zones gathered to welcome the Most Rev. Sean Rowe as the church's 28th presiding bishop in a first-of-its-kind virtual investiture service, livestreamed Nov. 2 from the Chapel of Christ the Lord at The Episcopal Church Center in New York City.



Rowe, formerly bishop of the

Episcopal Dioceses of Northwestern Pennsylvania and Western New York, was elected and confirmed as the next presiding bishop at the 81st General Convention on June 26.

Soon after his election, Bishop Rowe requested a simpler, scaled-down ceremony of Holy Eucharist and Investiture to encourage wider church engagement and reduce carbon footprint. A limited number of in-person attendees participated from inside the chapel.

The rich diversity within the multinational Episcopal Church was highlighted in several ways. A special "roll call" preceding the 11 a.m. ET ceremony featured video greetings from many of the church's 106 dioceses. Water gathered from various provinces of the church was combined in the baptismal font. The Litany for the Mission of the Church featured 15 intercessors who shared prayers in the following languages: Eastern Shoshone, Mandarin, Juba, German, Arabic, Hebrew, French, Anishinaabemowin, Spanish, English, French, and Xhosa.

The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, who served as the church's 27th presiding bishop from 2015-2024, presided over the first half of the service, which included a land acknowledgment from the Rt. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, who served as 26th presiding bishop; a welcome from diocesan and investiture committee representatives and House of Deputies President Julia Ayala Harris; the renewal of baptismal vows; and the presentation of the primatial staff.

Bishop Jefferts Schori joined youth presentative Maya Lattimer in offering prayers for the new presiding bishop, whom Bishop Curry presented along with Bishop Rowe's family.

Bishop Rowe presided over the service of Holy Eucharist and delivered a sermon based on the Gospel passage of John 11:32-44. "I believe that it is in our gathered communities across our church where we come closest to glimpsing the real power of the story of Lazarus," he said. "Every time we feed the hungry, care for the sick, and welcome the stranger, we are reaching for life in the face of death. As we baptize and bury God's people, as we make disciples and proclaim the gospel, as we soothe the suffering and shield the joyous, we are unbinding our congregations and setting our hurting world free." Find links to the recorded service; worship service booklet; Bishop Rowe's sermon; and more at *iam.ec/investiture*.







For Christ's sake, we

# Pray + Learn + Serve + Rejoice

to Love God, and the World.

# WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Every life that encountered St. Paul's faith community has incredible stories to share. Our church has witnessed countless journeys of faith through wars, civil rights movements, fire, storms, floods, and pandemics for the past 190 years since 1834. Our faith journey continues more powerfully in new ways with new possibilities to love God and the World. Visit our new website, stay connected, and be part of God's neverending love story!



# Leadership

Senior Class ('25)

Kitty Riney Senior Warden

Cindy Miner Outreach Fellowship

Middler Class ('26)

Kathy Dawkins Junior Warden

George Busch Buildings and Grounds

Jason Solan Formation

Junior Class ('27)

Suzie AebersoldSecretaryPam DickmannWorshipTom YurtStewardship

DMLO Firm Treasurer/Accountant

Robyn Fischer Parish Administrator David Paul Gibson Choir Master

Erin Dykes Director of Preschool

The Rev. Pete Womack
The Rev. Roger Walker
Priest Associate

The Rev. Andrew Shirota Rector

The Rt. Rev. Terry White Bishop of Kentucky

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