



The Herald

St. Raphael the Archangel Episcopal Church
Vol. 58 No. 6 Advent & Christmas 2023

From Our Rector

Worship

Sundays

Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8:30 a.m.

Holy Eucharist Rite II with music, 11:00 a.m.

Advent and Christmas

Dec. 13 Blue Christmas, noon and 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 24, 11:00 a.m. Advent IV service with Pageant

Dec. 24, 5:30 Christmas Eve Family Service

Dec. 24, 9:00 p.m., Christmas Eve Service – Choir and Carols

Dec. 25, 10:00 a.m., Christmas Day Service

Dec. 31, 11 a.m., New Year's Eve Service

I love this time of year! I love what happens during this season: all the planning about gifts, food, decorating and carol-singing. It has always been about our family getting together, coming home for a few days, sharing meals and surprise gifts. As a child, I know the hoped-for gifts, the school pageant, the visit to Santa in the Department Store, and the parties were the best part, especially being a December baby!



Rev. Canon Dr.
Helen Van Koevering

I've read that originally, Advent had very little to do with Christmas. "Advent" derives from the Latin word 'adventus', or "coming," which in Greek is 'parousia'. In the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for baptisms at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God's incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1), his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (John 1:29), and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1). Advent offered 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting to prepare for Epiphany. By the 6th century, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the second coming of Christ. I don't know why, but it wasn't until the Middle Ages that Advent became linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas.

The lectionary reflects the history of the meaning of Advent. Look at the Sunday readings, and you'll see a concern for the church's present situation in these "last days" of God's people waiting for the return of Christ in glory to consummate his eternal kingdom. The church is in a similar

situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: in exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah. Israel looked back to God's past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus, and on this basis, they called for God once again to act for them. In the same way, the church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ's coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ's kingdom when he returns for his people. Advent candles are lit to focus us on this season of hope, peace, joy and faith as we are made honest about the troubles in the world. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian of the second World War, wrote, "the celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come."

In this light, the Advent hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" perfectly represents the church's cry during the Advent season, liturgically remembering the first coming of Christ alongside anticipation of his second coming in the future, bringing light into our shadows, a sense of exile bringing an Exodus, and the Holy Spirit's work to renew us in the image of Christ, Emmanuel, God with us:

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Even as we get so busy with the preparations for Christmas that Advent has become, join us each week in Advent as we move towards the carol-singing celebration of Emmanuel, God with us, on Christmas Eve. May our reflections on hope, faith, joy and love set the pace for us all this year.

With love and prayers,

Rev. Helen

Senior Warden's Corner

Happy New (Church) Year! How nice that our church year begins with Advent, the season of preparation and waiting for Christ to be born. The days grow shorter, the dark of night comes earlier. The lights of the Advent wreath mark the weeks until Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, when the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes starts His earthly journey to walk with us.



Amy Smereck

This season includes some of our most beloved services and traditions. Don't miss them! Help with the Greening of the Church at 10 am on December 2nd. Adorn

the sanctuary and nave, and decorate the Chrismon tree. Chrismons are ornaments bearing symbols of Christ. Do you know their stories? This is an intergenerational activity, and everyone is bound to learn something.

Continue to lunch at Sedona Taphouse near Palomar at 1 pm (or meet us there). We will have our traditional ornament exchange. If you'd like to participate, bring a Christmas ornament to swap. (Yes, there is stealing, all for fun.) This counts as our Sages & Friends lunch for the month.

Advent services are Sundays at 8:30 and 11 am. Clif has some great music planned for us at 11 am. There are two Blue Christmas services: Wednesday, December 13 at Noon and 6:30 pm. If the world's always-on, "happy happy jolly jolly" message is too jangling and insensitive for your mental state, these services will be a respite. They offer peace and comfort during what can be a challenging time of year. Amadeus Lex will perform a concert entitled "We Wi-Schumann 'erry Christmas" on Thursday, December 21 at 7 pm, reception following.

This year the fourth Sunday of Advent falls on Christmas Eve. December 24 will be a full day! Please participate as you are able. There is no 8:30 service that day. At 11 am is the Advent IV eucharist with Christmas Pageant. If you know children or grandchildren who would like to participate, please contact Clif Cason at clif.cason@gmail.com.

Christmas Eve services are the same day, Christmas Eve, at 5:30 pm and 9 pm. Christmas Day at 10 am. These are some of the most beautiful of the year, so please attend and invite friends and family. This is the season of giving, and what better gift than the gift of a church community to walk with you and Jesus on your faith journey?

December Crafter's Group

Saturday, December 16 at 10 am in the Parish Hall! Join us for crafting and fellowship. Bring your own project or if you like, follow along as Carol Summers makes a Kawandi stitched mug rug, a fun last-minute gift, no sewing machine required. Kawandi is a technique brought by African slaves to India. All by hand it is assembled from the outside in. The edges are turned under and stitched together, and batting is laid inside. Then quilting proceeds in a spiraling line, about a finger-width apart. New patches are laid on top as needed, with edges turned under. Materials provided, fun for ages ten to adults.



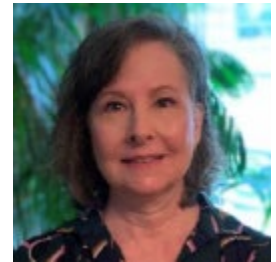
Property Committee

Many thanks to everyone who stayed and helped with church cleanup after the Annual Meeting lunch. Doing things together is actually rather fun and makes the cleanup go so much faster!

We've had an impactful 2023 with several major property improvements: new air-conditioning units, new roof, and new landscaping in the Columbarium. In early December, two pine trees at the rear of the parking lot will be removed (the ones that are leaning!). New trees will be planted in the Spring.

Next year we will install a new building security system together with new exterior lighting and doors with funds received under a federal grant.

If anyone is interested in helping maintain our gardens and landscaping around the building, please contact me. There's much to be done from March to November! "Many hands make light work."



Laurie Daugherty

Finance Committee

St. Raphael Budget for 2024

After coming off several successfully consecutive positive years of finances for St Raphael's, your vestry is currently grappling with the 2024 budget. When you run a small church, the loss of a few stewards can really make an impact. In 2023, we lost several parishioners due to migration to other cities and some have entered God's kingdom. We've also helped a great tenant-The Lexington Church- over the last few years gain their footing during COVID and they have successfully launched to another location so that they could worship on Sunday mornings. These losses of about \$20,000 have left a leak in our approximate \$220,000 a year ark of a church for 2024.

Inflation has been key to some of the issue at St. Raphael's. Unfortunately, our expenses have increased at rates of 6-8% per year over the last 2-3 years, and our revenue has remained somewhat neutral. We just were notified from Church Insurance that our premium for property and liability insurance for 2024 increase is 20%! So things look tight for 2024 and beyond.

On a positive note-with your help, we project to finish 2023 in a net positive position, that should help us mitigate some of the 2024 projected budget shortfall. It won't solve the



Dave Sevigny

problem for the future, but the vestry and finance committee are actively looking for ways to close the gap and are open to your suggestions.

A few small things you can do to help include-

1. Christmas giving-please consider contributing to a special offering for Christmas. Go online to give at <https://engage.suran.com/sreclex/s/give/gift/christmas>
2. Pledge-please consider pledging your support to St. Raphael's. Please go online to <https://sreclex.org/pledge2024/>

Hope your Christmas Season is full of joy!

Music-Alive and Live

Advent is here and Christmas is not too far away. The choirs will be leading us in worship on Sunday mornings as well as a special half-hour of music at the 9:00pm service on Christmas Eve.

At the 11:00am service on Christmas Eve the children and congregation will sing several hymns and carols in between passages from the Christmas story as written by Luke. Yes, it is the fourth Sunday in Advent but it's also Christmas Eve. Come join us as we sing some of the favorite hymns and carols of the season.



Clif Cason

Before all of that, make plans to attend the concert by Amadeus Lex on December 21, 7:00pm. It is going to be another way to celebrate the season.

We Wi-Schumann 'erry Christmas A Concert by Amadeus Lex



Thursday, December 21 at 7 pm

**St. Raphael Episcopal Church
1891 Parkers Mill Rd, Lexington**

Next-level Christmas carols with Renaissance-Rock fusion string quartets by Jeremy Crosmer, followed by Schumann's cheery piano quintet. All welcome! Reception following.

Chapel Ministry

Chapel is fun, interesting, challenging, and at times downright exhausting.

Each Sunday we have no idea who is going to show up. Planning for 2 children or 14 children keeps the chapel team on their toes. This Sunday we had a great group of kids. We discussed Jonah, the backwards prophet. The story in the bible has no ending. It just abruptly stops. We talked about all kinds of endings, some more gruesome than others. We give thanks for so many boys in our class!

Before starting our Godly Play story about Jonah, we discussed how we could participate in giving to others who are less fortunate than us. The children today chose 4 items they would like to contribute to the church's outreach program. They chose:

1. Packaged oatmeal (Jack's idea!)
2. Kroger Gift cards (Kate suggest this one)
3. Canned fruit (general consensus)
4. Shampoo/conditioner (Adrian's idea)

By the way, Kate thought that the minimum value of the gift card should be \$30. She was very clear on that amount.

As is our tradition, the children will bring gifts for newborns at The Nest. Our hope is that the children themselves will choose an item to gift. They will bring their selection to Chapel during December, and on the 4th Sunday in Advent we will wrap our gifts in white tissue paper. This is always a fun activity. The children do the wrapping themselves – with copious amounts of cellophane tape.

On Christmas Eve, the children will bring their gifts up the church aisle to the creche.

The Christmas pageant will be performed on Sunday, December 24 at the 11 am service. Please mark your calendars. All children regardless of age will be encouraged to participate. Parents will receive updates via email about particulars. The pageant is a great photo opportunity. Don't miss it.

We celebrate birthdays at Chapel. The three boys who have December birthdays will be celebrated on the third Sunday in December (12/17). We'd love to have all the boys at church.

Janis Rosebrook
Chapel Team

A View from the Pew

A Ghost Story

I won't say that St. Raphael's has a ghost, but it does have a ghost story, as told to me by a woman who said she saw a ghost in the church. The woman was not a person you would expect to be superstitious or inclined to hallucinate. It was Betsy Finkenstaedt.



FINKENSTAEDT, ELIZABETH

If you didn't know Betsy (she died in 2009), you need to know that she was highly educated, had a Ph.D. from Harvard, was a professor of Art History at the University of Kentucky, well known as an Egyptologist. She had inherited wealth. She was unmarried. It has been said that she enjoyed telling a certain priest that he was wrong about something.

Betsy was on Altar Guild and as such sometimes came in the church between services when no one else was there to set up or take down the altar. This is what she told me. She opened the door from the hall into the church and saw a ghost at the back of the church near the stained glass window.

I didn't know what to say. I asked, "Were you scared?" She said "Yes, I thought I was going to die." I asked, did it last long? She said no, just a brief time. I asked her if she recognized the ghost. She said yes, and if I knew who it was, I would know why she was scared. I wondered, some famous killer? A dangerous church member? She wouldn't tell me who it was, not then or later. But after that she would never again go in the church alone.

In late afternoon, the back of the church is shadowy. Did she imagine she saw someone when no one was there? I don't think Betsy was lying or that she made up the story just to amuse me. I have never seen a ghost and never expect to. I don't know what Betsy saw that she called a ghost. But I admit that since then, when I opened that door from the hall, if I was alone, I always looked first to the back to see if anything was there.

Sadly, in later years, Betsy suffered from a crippling neurological disease that made her a total invalid. I told this story at her funeral. She left the church a large legacy, part of which enabled the installation of an elevator. This is why the elevator bears her name.

Rose Canon



Celebrate Advent and Christmas with us!

Dec 3, 10, 17: Services at 8:30 and 11 am

Dec 13, Noon & 6:30 pm Blue Christmas Eucharist

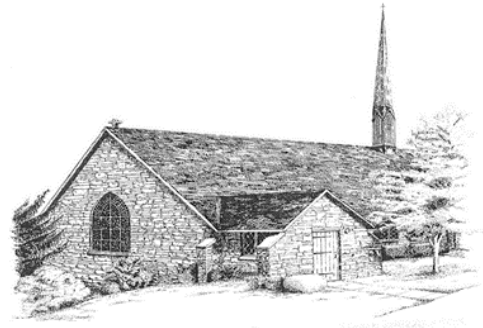
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