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We are a community of faith striving to love God fully and our neighbors as ourselves.

Dear members and friends of Christ Church,

As we approach Christmas, I want to offer you an invitation and an explanation. First, by way of invitation, I encourage you to look through this newsletter at all the different ways you might share love with our church community and neighbors this month. In addition to our usual Sunday and Wednesday services, we are hosting an ecumenical Blue Christmas service (an occasion to name our seasonal grief before God), our Christmas Eve worship includes an opportunity for children to join Will Zimmer in singing, and Lessons & Carols offers a chance to not only sing more of our favorites but read the Christmas story in more depth. Even though Loaves & Fishes is taking December off (as the last Wednesday is Christmas Day), we can still love our neighbors by purchasing presents for the Angel Tree and/or giving to Bishop Bourlakas' St. Nicholas Appeal, which will ease the food insecurity of folks living in towns devastated by Hurricane Helene.

By way of explanation, in our discernment conversations the Vestry noted that many of you shared fond memories of late-night Christmas Eve services, suggesting that there is at least some desire to bring back such a service. However, the Vestry also noted the costs of offering a late-night service: for the two Christmases that I've been here, the church has been full but not uncomfortably so for an early evening service, but if we offered two services, it seemed likely that neither would feel much fuller than a normal Sunday service, and if we were only to offer one, early evening is a much more welcoming time for those of any age who are unused to late nights. Consequently, and with some regret, we concluded that it was best to again offer only one Christmas service, at 5:00 pm, but we hope to see all of you there.

Wishing all of you a blessed Advent,
Fr. John

Angel Tree – The Angel tree is up and loaded with angels

Thank you to everyone who removed an angel card from the tree this past Sunday. A total of 36 of the 74 angels on the tree are now in the hands of generous sponsors. The tree will be up until December 1 and December 8th. Hopefully most if not all of the remaining angels will find sponsors this Sunday.

Christ Church is partnering with the Boys & Girls Club to provide Christmas gifts for local children in need. If you wish to participate, please take one (or more) angel cards from the tree in the Narthex and record that you have done so using the form on the podium next to the tree. **ALL gifts, with the angel card attached, are due to either the Church office OR the Narthex no later than Friday, December 13.** Instructions are listed below, but feel free to pick up a copy when you sign out an angel card from the tree. The Church office is not accepting money for this ministry this year. *Thank you in advance for your support of this partnership ministry between CEC and BGC.*

Christmas Poinsettia Memorials

If you wish to give Christmas flowers for the decoration of the Church as a memorial or in thanksgiving, please complete the **attached form or the red form in the racks in the Narthex** and mail it to the church office, put it through the Church office mail slot or place it in the collection plate along with your check.

Checks should be made payable to Christ Episcopal Church, clearly noted “Christmas Flowers,” and the cost is

\$13.00 for EACH person or couple honored or memorialized.

ALL orders are due in the Church office no later than Monday, December 16th.

End of the Year - 2024 Pledge Payments or Donations

Please have all pledge payments or donations into the Church office **no later than Monday, December 30th.**

All stock transfers for 2024 or 2025 need to be made by **Monday, December 16th.** **NOTE:** Charles Schwab is our broker. Contact the Church office for trading information. Please email the office with all information for stock transfers at office@christchurchmvl.org.

Giving to the Church - by Mail

You can mail a check or money order to the Church office at:
Christ Episcopal Church
311 East Church Street
Martinsville, Virginia 24112

Give with PayPal, Debit or Credit Card

You may give online, safely and securely, through your PayPal account or with any major credit card.

Christ Episcopal Church - Martinsville, Virginia (christchurchmvl.org) on our homepage

https://www.paypal.com/donate?hosted_button_id=Z52WJPBKZN96L on PayPal

Let Deborah or Fr. John know if anyone needs to be added or removed from the list.

Comfort and heal *Sue (Rosser), Julia (Hall), Betty (Budde), Nathan, Linda (Isley), Betsy (Smith), Mary Ruth (Reynolds), Nancy, Mark (Gauldin), Morgan (Holland), Jennifer, Lucia, Peg, Dennis, Will (Zimmer), Pete (Budde), and Dennis (West)* all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Lord, in your mercy.

December Events

Kings Grant Eucharist

Fr. John celebrates Eucharist in the chapel at Kings Grant at 1:30 pm on the first Thursday of each month (typically). The next services will be on **December 5** and January 9 (moved to accommodate Fr. John's vacation).

Public Theology

Public Theology meets on **Wednesday, December 11**, at Mountain Valley Brewing (4220 Mountain Valley Rd, Axton). Our program will feature live Christmas music, including sharing the history behind some of our favorite carols. We begin with socializing (and a food truck will be available) around 6:00, with the discussion going from 7:00 to 8:00.

Blue Christmas – December 22

In a season often marked by joyous anticipation, Blue Christmas is a service recognizing that many of us experience grief around the holidays as we remember lost loved ones and mourn other differences between Christmases past and present reality. Fr. John will be joining Vicar Andy Taminger and Pastors Ryan Ware, Faith Weedling, and Steve Weedling in a Blue Christmas service at **4:00 pm on December 22** hosted at Christ Church, and all are welcome to attend.

Christmas

Our Christmas service will be at **5:00 pm on Tuesday, December 24**. During the service, Will Zimmer will lead an anthem during the offertory, and he invites any children who will be present to join him. If you have children or grandchildren who would like to sing, please let him know (wilzim61@yahoo.com) **by December 18**.

Christmas Lessons & Carols – December 29

Our 10:30 service on **Sunday, December 29**, will be the Festival of Christmas Lessons & Carols. This is an opportunity to hear the fullness of the Christmas story from Holy Scripture and to sing more Christmas carols than we can on Christmas Eve. If you expect to attend and are willing to read a lesson (even and especially if you are not part of the regular reading rotation), please contact Fr. John (johndavidadams85@gmail.com or 571-232-1294) **by December 19**.

Christmas and New Year Church Office Closures

The Church office will be closed from **Monday, December 23 through Friday, December 27**. We will reopen on Monday, December 30, and then be closed on **Wednesday, January 1** for New Year.

Father John's Vacation

Fr. John will be on vacation from **December 25 through January 3**; there will be no Wednesday Eucharist on December 25 or January 1.

Loaves & Fishes Hiatus

Loaves & Fishes is taking December off, as the last Wednesday is Christmas Day. We will resume our regular schedule on January 29.

History of the Early Church

Our next study in the History of the Early Church will take place on **January 8 at 10:30 in the Undercroft**, where we will discuss the Emperor Constantine.

Grace Network

Our Grace Network Assignments for **December: Jiffy cornbread mix**. For the month of **December: dish detergent, deodorant, laundry detergent, and hygiene items**. *Grace has been experiencing a large increase in clients needing food, household, and hygiene items*. As a Church family, we have committed to helping Grace Network with stocking their food pantry for those in need. Please remember to pick up our assigned item the next time you visit the grocery store. You can bring your items to the Church office OR put them in the little red wagon in the Narthex.

Oyster Roast 2024

From the Oyster Roast held on November 1, our net income was \$18,232.28 (compared to a budgeted net of \$13,000)! Many thanks to everyone who helped before, during, or after the event, and to everyone whose presence made it such an enjoyable and successful night!

2025 Vestry

At our Annual Meeting on November 10, we elected Susan Critz, Butch Hamlet, Michael Hodges, and Steve Keyser to three-year terms on the Vestry expiring at the end of 2027. They join continuing members Betty Budde, Natalie Coleman, Pat Russell, and Will Zimmer (2025) and Bob Bushnell, Rives Coleman, LaRue Powers, and Bob Weatherall (2026). Many thanks to Ben Beeler, Jay Dickens, Beverly Lyle, and Andy Williams, whose terms expire at the end of this year, for their three years of dedicated service on the Vestry.

St. Nicholas Appeal

A Message from Bishop Mark A Bourlakas: Our St. Nicholas Appeal will be directed toward the ongoing relief efforts following the devastation of Hurricane Helene. Specifically, the appeal will be directed toward relieving the food insecurity that is still affecting so many. A portion of our appeal will be distributed to Feeding Southwestern Virginia to feed people in the boundaries of our diocese. The epicenter of Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina centered around the Asheville area, with major devastation occurring in Chimney Rock and Lake Lure, NC. Directed by the Diocese of Western North Carolina, the largest part the appeal's collection will go to the relief efforts of St. Francis and St. Gabriel's Episcopal Churches, congregations less than two miles apart in Rutherfordton, NC. These churches, one white and the other African American have combined their people and resources to feed, clothe and respond to the needs of hard-hit communities nearby. Our gift is particularly important for this small town as resources have been pouring into the larger churches in western North Carolina. Please consider faithfully how you might support this effort, either by donating online at www.dioswva.org or by mailing a check payable to the Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia with "St. Nicholas Day Appeal" marked in the memo to PO Box 2279, Roanoke, VA 24009.

Christ Church is again partnering with the Boys and Girls Club of The Blue Ridge in the annual Angel Tree Ministry to provide Christmas gifts for children in need.

The children who will receive our gifts attend Sanville Elementary, Patrick Henry Elementary, Albert Harris Elementary, Meadow View Elementary, Campbell Court Elementary and Clearview Early Learning Center. Boys and Girls Club has discretely selected some of the neediest children from each school and sent us a list containing the child's first name, first letter of the last name, and - to facilitate selecting gifts - the age, gender, and specific desires as well as the clothing size of each child.

- **The Angel Tree will be in the Narthex from Sunday, November 24, through Thursday, December 12.**
- Each child, with the above-mentioned information, will be represented on one of the many angel cards that will adorn the tree.
- Please take one or more angel cards from the tree and put your name and contact information on the form located on the podium next to the tree. (For administrative convenience, each child has been assigned an ID number, so you can easily fill out the form.)
- To avoid significant disparities between gifts, a spending range between \$30.00 and \$50.00 on each child is suggested. It is certainly OK to go over the \$50 ceiling by a modest amount to get something special but if a child has requested a gift that would cost substantially more than \$50 - like a bicycle or Nike shoes - we ask that you get a less expensive gift or a gift card to an appropriate store. If the child has requested a gift that cannot be intelligently purchased - such as an item of clothing with no size - an alternative gift picked at random or a gift card to an appropriate store might be better than buying an item of clothing that does not fit.
- Gifts should be delivered to the church office or placed under the tree ***with the angel card attached by Friday, December 13***, so they can be sorted, gift-wrapped if necessary, and delivered to each school prior to the Winter Break that will commence the following week. (It is important that the angel card be

attached to each gift so it can be delivered to the proper school. It will be removed before the child receives the gift.)

- If you are able to wrap your gift, please put a to/from sticker or card on it with the child's name in the "to" section. In the "from" section, feel free to insert your name, or "Santa", or "an angel," or "Christ Church" or whatever you choose. Just make sure that the angel card is attached!
- If you are not able to wrap your gift, please deliver it (or them) with the angel card(s) attached so that it (or they) can be wrapped and delivered appropriately.
- If you are providing multiple gifts - wrapped or unwrapped - whether for one child or multiple children, it is important that they be marked and/or packaged so that it is clear which gift or set of gifts is for which child!
- A special and fun part of this ministry is shopping for the child or children you have chosen. Information on the child's desires is provided to help you select a gift that will evoke a smile when opened. You might not recognize some of the items requested, but a quick web search will identify it and, naturally, provide links to sites where you can purchase it. If you do not give the specific item requested, the child's desires will give you an idea of an appropriate alternative.
- The church and committee members will not be accepting cash for the Angel Tree this year.
- If you have any questions or would like to volunteer to help wrap and/or deliver the gifts to the various schools, please call the church office.
- We are blessed with this opportunity for our congregation to serve our community by brightening the holidays of needy children and their families.