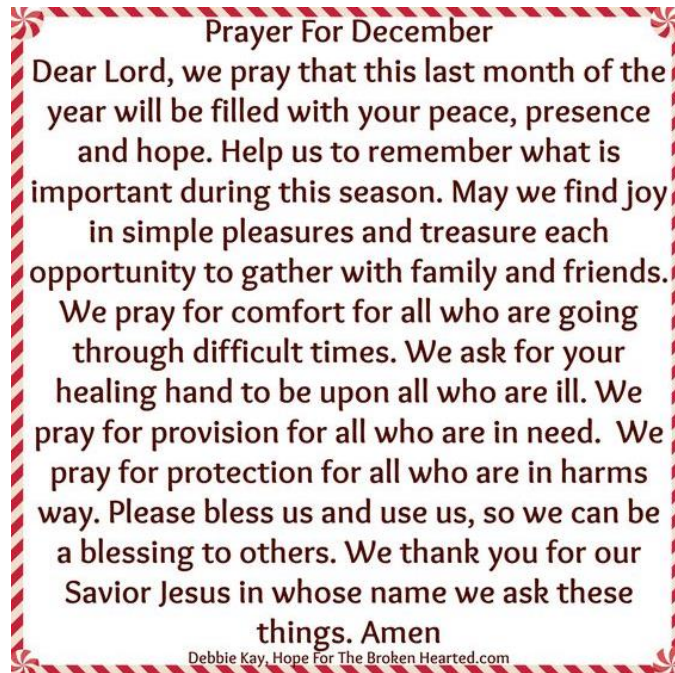


321 E. Church Street
Martinsville, VA 24112
276-632-2896
www.christchurchmvl.org

December 2023



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

Dear Members and Friends of Christ Church,

A couple of years ago, the Marvel show *WandaVision* reintroduced popular culture to the concept that ‘grief is love persevering.’ This idea names the truth that, just as God’s love for creation never ends (1 Corinthians 13:8), our love for our friends or our things does not end simply because our friend has died or the house has been sold, and we mourn for what we have lost and will not see again in this world. For many of us, this season surfaces our grief as our love for Christmases past encounters the reality of Christmas present. The love of grandparents and parents who were central in our earliest Christmas memories lingers even though they no longer physically join us at the table. We still love the unbridled joy our children (and we ourselves) felt around the tree, even if we do not gather with anyone currently experiencing such joy. We grieve that we celebrate in different places or with different customs than what we loved before. On December 17, I will be joining Ryan and Faith (the Methodist colleagues with whom I facilitate Public Theology) for a Blue Christmas service, at which we can acknowledge our losses and lay our griefs before God in whom all our love perseveres.

- Fr. John

Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany Booklet for Families

Pattie Ames, Canon for Christian Formation of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia, has prepared a booklet of information and activities for families with children ages 3-10. Copies are available in the Narthex.

Advent Meditations

The Diocese is offering Advent Meditations on Monday, Dec 4, 11, and 18 at 7:30 pm via Zoom. These meditations will include music, scripture, prayers, art, and a brief meditation from Rev. Sarah Lusk, Rev. Tray Light, and Rev. Tom DuMontier. Please register using this link and each week the meditation will be recorded and available online.

Read more: <https://conta.cc/3uggLPr>

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 \$11.50 each, for each person or couple honored or memorialized.

ALL orders are due in the Church office no later than Friday, December 15th.

Monday Night Study – The Sermon on the Mount

On Monday nights this Fall, we are studying the Sermon on the Mount, the extensive collection of Jesus' teachings found in Chapters 5 through 7 of the Gospel according to Matthew. We meet in the Parish House for an hour beginning at 7:00 pm; at our **December 4** session, we will conclude this series by discussing Jesus' thoughts about those who follow what he has taught compared with those who don't (Matthew 7:13-29). All are invited to attend; no homework is necessary, and each session will be accessible to both regular and occasional attendees.

Kings Grant Eucharist

Fr. John celebrates the Eucharist in the chapel at Kings Grant at 1:30 pm on the first Thursday of each month. The next services will be on December 7 and January 4.

Angel Tree

All the angels from the angel tree have been claimed. The Angel Tree Committee wants to thank every one who participated.

Please have the gifts wrapped, **with angels attached**, in the **office no later than Monday, December 11**. The members of the committee will be happy to shop and/or wrap if requested **before the due date**. Please contact one of the members or the Church office if you need any assistance.

Thank you! Angel Tree Committee
Natalie Coleman, Bob Bushnell, David Cole, Beverly Lyle

Public Theology

Public Theology meets on Wednesday, December 13, at Mountain Valley Brewing (4220 Mountain Valley Rd, Axton). This month, Martha Woody will be sharing with us the story and traditions of Hanukkah, the Jewish holiday juxtaposed with Christmas in our popular culture. This month our food will be a **Potluck** beginning at 6:00, with the discussion going from 7:00 to 8:00; **please bring a dish to share as we celebrate the holiday season together**.

Blue Christmas

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. Fr. John will be joining Pastors Ryan Ware and Faith Weedling in a Blue Christmas service at 4:00 pm on December 17 at Smith Memorial United Methodist Church (2703 Daniel's Creek Rd, Collinsville), and all are welcome to attend.

Bishop's Visit

Bishop Mark Bourlakas will be visiting Christ Church on Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024. If you are interested in being Confirmed or Received (which is to say, affirming the Baptismal Covenant and formally becoming a member of the Episcopal Church generally and Christ Church specifically), **please let Fr. John know by December 18.**

Christmas Services

On Sunday, December 24, we will be celebrating the Fourth Sunday of Advent at our usual 10:30 am service, with our festive Christmas Eucharist (including singing Silent Night by candlelight) at 5:30 pm. If you have children who would be interested in participating in a Christmas Pageant at that service or are an adult willing to help organize the Pageant, please let Fr. John know ([johndavidadams85@gmail.com](mailto: johndavidadams85@gmail.com) or 571-232-1294) **by December 7.** Note that, in addition to the Christmas Eve service, we would expect to do a rehearsal (either before the service that same day or some other time in the week before, depending on folks' availability).

Christmas Lessons & Carols – December 31

Our 10:30 service on Sunday, December 31, will be the Festival of Christmas Lessons & Carols. This is an opportunity to hear the fullness of the Christmas story from the 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](mailto: johndavidadams85@gmail.com) or 571-232-1294) **by December 18.**

End of the Year - 2023 Pledge Payments or Donations

Please have all pledge payments or donations into the Church office **no later than Thursday, December 28th.** All stock transfers for 2023 need to be made by **Tuesday, December 26th.** **Please email me with the information for all stock transfers at [office@christchurchmvl.org](mailto: office@christchurchmvl.org).**

Between Christmas and New Year's Day, the office **will be open Wednesday, December 27 through Friday, December 29 only.** Fr. John will be on vacation from December 25 through January 2; there will be no Wednesday Eucharist on December 27.

2024 Pledges

To this point, we have received 40 pledges totaling \$151,795 for 2024, compared to 58 totaling \$211,713 for 2023. If you've not yet done so, we ask that you take some time to pray about your giving to Christ Church next year and submit your pledge as soon as possible. Pledge cards are available in the Narthex and from the Church office.

2024 Vestry

At our Annual Meeting on November 12, we elected Bob Bushnell, Rives Coleman, LaRue Powers, and Bob Weatherall to three-year terms on the Vestry expiring at the end of 2026. They join continuing members, Ben Beeler, Jay Dickens, Beverly Lyle, and Andy Williams (2024) and Pat Bondurant Russell, Betty Budde, Natalie Coleman, and Will Zimmer (2025). Many thanks to Hank Long, Ruby Stultz, Rebin Titus, and Pat Walmsley, whose terms expire at the end of this month, for their (more than three) years of dedicated service on the Vestry.

Oyster Roast 2023

This past November's Oyster Roast was a rousing success. The food was fantastic and it was a beautiful evening for the event! We did well financially with our sales being \$18,405 and net income of \$12,399.

Many heartfelt thanks to the Oyster Roast Committee and all who helped it to be such a success. The Oyster Roast is an outstanding event both for our Parish and for the community we serve.

We all have much to be thankful for as we move into the Christmas season!

Grace Network

Our Grace Network Assignments for **December: flour or pancake mix**. For the month of **December: bath soap, 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.

Warming Center Volunteers

The Warming Center in Martinsville, housed at the Salvation Army, provides a warm place to sleep for those who would otherwise be stuck outside on cold winter nights. Christ Church's Mission Committee supports the Warming Center financially, and we have the opportunity to volunteer our time and presence by serving the evening meal or otherwise helping. The link to the sign-up is available on our website or in the weekly email, or you can talk to Beverly Lyle.

Archives

Christ Church has a long history dating back to 1841. Over the years, members of Christ Church have volunteered as archivists so that our collective memory is preserved. Susan Critz and Melinda Penn are seeking help from long-tenured members to identify people in pictures and sort through papers we have received recently. If you are willing to help, please contact Susan at susancritz@gmail.com or 276-732-3491.

Sacred Ground

Sacred Ground is an 11-part series built around a powerful online curriculum of documentary films and readings that focus on Indigenous, Black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific American histories as they intersect with European American histories. It is focused on the challenges that swirl around issues of race and racism, as well as the difficult but respectful and transformative dialogue we need to have with each other about them. The Roanoke Convocation is offering Sacred Ground small groups over Zoom and in-person beginning January 7; if you are interested in participating, or if you have questions, please contact Virginia Sweet (virginiasweet2010@gmail.com). **Registration deadline is December 31. Register on the following link: <https://cec1101franklin.wufoo.com/forms/m50arlq0rfwwcs/>.**

St. Nicholas Day Appeal 2023

Each year in Advent and Epiphany, the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia encourages us to share with others during this season of giving by answering a financial appeal inspired by St. Nicholas of Myra, who worked for "the welfare of children, the relief of the poor, and the help of those tossed by tempests of doubt or grief." This year's appeal is designated for the Princess Basma Centre (www.basma-centre.org), a mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. Located on the Mount of Olives, the Centre provides treatment and rehabilitation for children with disabilities, from infancy to age 15. Donations may be offered at www.dioswva.org or by check (payable to the Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia with "St. Nicholas Day Appeal" in the memo and mailed to PO Box 2279, Roanoke, VA 24009).