Christ Church
November Newsletter

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Christ Church in the In-Between, Liminal Space: A Sacred Pause



Christ Church has long been a beacon of faith, community, and hope in New Brunswick. The recent departure of Rev. Joanna is a significant moment in the life of the community. It is a moment that can leave you feeling uncertain and vulnerable. And yet, this liminal space between what was and what will be is not empty. It is not a void. It is holy.

Throughout our shared story in Scripture, God meets people in liminal, transitional spaces: the wilderness, the desert, on the road. These are not times of emptiness or abandonment but of deep learning and formation. For Christ Church today, this sacred pause is an invitation to listen, to reflect, and to dream. It is a time to honor the ministry that has shaped you and to open your hearts and listen to what God is preparing for you next.

The prophet Jeremiah reminds us:

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

In our Episcopal tradition, this in-between, liminal time is a time of pilgrimage. It a time to rediscover your identity as a parish, to strengthen the bonds between you and to discern how Christ is calling you into the future. The Spirit is working among you in your prayers, your conversations, and in

the quiet moments of hope.

I invite you to lean into this sacred pause. We will continue to gather for worship, share our stories of grace, and pray for wisdom and courage remembering that Christ walks with you every step you take on this pilgrimage.

As we journey together, our worship will continue with one service at 9:30 am and take the following shape to respect those who attended the 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM services. Again, this is for this in-between time, not forever.

Rite I: A quiet contemplative service on the first Sunday of the month with 2 hymns, processional, and recessional, where all the verses are sung.

Rite II: A sung service with choir on the remaining Sundays. All the verses of the hymns are sung. The service music, such as the Gloria, Sanctus, are sung. Soft instrumental music may underscore periods during our worship.

Prelude and Postlude: Christ Church is the proud owner of a world-renowned pipe organ. When most Episcopal churches are replacing their pipe organs with digital organs due to upkeep and cost, Christ Church invested in a magnificent instrument. To honor this, the Postlude music will vary. On alternating Sundays, the Postlude will vary in length between shorter and longer to highlight this beautiful instrument.

In His Christ's Name,

The Vestry: Christ Episcopal Church, New Brunswick, and The Rev. Canon Stephen J. Connor



From the Organ Loft

Reflections on Bach's "Komm, Heiliger Geist" (BWV 651)

This morning, I'd like to share something special about the music you're about to hear—the first of Bach's Great Eighteen Chorale Preludes, composed during the same decade our church was founded.

Between 1739 and 1742, as Johann Sebastian Bach was perfecting these monumental works in Leipzig, our own Christ Church was just beginning its life. When I sit at this organ and play music Bach wrote nearly three centuries ago, I feel a profound connection to that history—to the faith that built this place and to the hands that first wrote these notes.

The piece you'll hear today, "Komm, Heiliger Geist" (Come, Holy Spirit), is Bach's musical portrait of Pentecost. Though this is not Pentecost Sunday, we are nearing the end of the Pentecost season—a fitting time to reflect on the Holy Spirit's continued presence among us. The text is a prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit, Lord God, fill with your grace the hearts, spirits, and minds of your believers, kindle in them your ardent love! O Lord, through the brilliance of your light, you have gathered the people of all the world's tongues to the faith, that they may sing praises to you, Lord!*

What makes this prelude extraordinary is how Bach captures the very essence of that first Pentecost morning. Listen for the rushing sixteenth notes that sweep continuously from the first measure to the last—they never stop, never rest. This is Bach's way of painting the "rushing mighty wind" of Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples.

Above this torrent of sound, the pedals carry what's called a *cantus firmus*—literally, a "fixed song." This is the original chorale melody itself, presented in long, steady notes that anchor the entire piece. It's an ancient compositional technique where the familiar hymn tune serves as the foundation while everything else swirls around it—like the unchanging truth of God's word amid the dynamic movement of the Spirit.

There's also a second melodic idea woven throughout the rushing notes—listen for the trills and ornaments that dance above the texture. These represent the "Hallelujahs" and praises mentioned at the hymn's culmination: *that they may sing praises to you, Lord!* The trills are like voices rejoicing.

As you listen, I invite you simply to stop and feel. Don't try to analyze or think—just let the music wash over you. Feel the warm wind moving around you, through you, uplifting you. Let Bach's rushing notes become that Pentecost wind, carrying you upward in the Spirit's embrace.

I hope you will feel joy—even if it's just for a few moments, or perhaps for the whole eight minutes! And please feel comfortable leaving when you wish—it might seem like a long baseball game but stay as long as the Spirit moves you.

The Spirit be with you!

Suzanne

NOVEMBER 9, 2025
TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST

taking faith home

In Christ we know our redeemer lives.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	**Luke 20:27-38**	**Jesus speaks of the resurrection**
Monday	**Job 19:23-27a**	**I know my redeemer lives**
Tuesday	**2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17**	**Be faithful**
Wednesday	**2 Corinthians 5:16-21**	**The temple of the living God**
Thursday	**1 Corinthians 7:17-24**	**Obeying the Lord**
Friday	**Romans 8:9-17**	**Life in the Spirit**
Saturday	**Psalm 17:1-9**	**Prayer of an innocent person**
Sunday	**Luke 21:5-19**	**Suffering for Jesus' sake**

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth. **Job 19:25 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:
Almighty God, we thank you for hearing our cry for help and giving us our Lord Jesus Christ who rescues us from the pain and suffering of this life. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:
Dear God, give us thankful hearts to receive this gift of food with gratitude and receive your mercy through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:
May God comfort your heart and strengthen you. (2 Thessalonians 1:17)

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NOVEMBER 9, 2025

taking faith home

HYMN OF THE WEEK

I Know That My Redeemer Lives!

WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- When is a time someone defended you when you were being treated unfairly?
- How can the God of justice and mercy help you during unfair experiences?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Job 19:23-27a.

This reading can be difficult to understand without some background information. The first two chapters of the book of Job describe Job as patient. For the rest of the book, Job enters a defiant stance claiming his innocence and wanting to argue his innocence before God. Job challenges the typical understandings of God that claim he must have done something wrong to suffer as he does. God acknowledges that Job is justified for challenging God, even if Job as a human being cannot grasp the ways of God. In the end he accepts this. The beauty of chapter 19 is Job's unwillingness to give up or give in to accusations of his guilt. Thank God for Job's willingness to challenge established wisdom about God. It is in that spirit that the church over the centuries has sung the words, *"I know that my Redeemer lives"* (v. 25). We see in Jesus the champion that Job longed for and the one who would take up Job's defense.

Discuss: When you experience suffering, what questions do you have about God?

Pray: **God of justice and mercy, thank you for accepting our questions and doubts and giving us the confidence of the resurrection through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Lord. Amen.**

SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings and theme for this week, how can you help someone who is suffering?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Jesus tells the Sadducees that life after death is different. Think or talk about this difference through the lens of a caterpillar when it changes into a butterfly. They are the same animal even though the stages of life are different. We do not know what life will be like after death. Jesus tells us it will be different, and we will be with God. Read this verse and then take a moment to think what the words mean to you: *"Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive"* (Luke 20:38).

MILESTONES MINISTRY

In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: **www.milestonesministry.org**

CHRIST CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK
a parish of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey
WORSHIPPING GOD, SERVING GOD'S PEOPLE

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PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

Historic Christ Church is a mutually supportive Christian community worshiping in the living Anglican tradition of beauty in liturgy and music. Christ Church bears witness to the love of Christ in prayer, service and fellowship.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE.

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The Reverend Daphne Roberts, *Deacon*
Suzanne McDonald, *Music Director and Organist*
Brittney Girault, *Parish Administrator*
Elaine Winkler, *Bookkeeper*
Carlos Garcia, *Sexton*