



# Discerning Hearts: Newsletter of The Episcopal Community

*"We are marked as Christ's own for ever"*

Volume: 2022 Issue 12

## Advent Message

*The Right Reverend Phillip M. Duncan*



Dear Sisters in Christ,

When I was a child, we would spend a lot of time running races. One person would line us all up and then say, "On your mark! Get set! Go!" We needed to prepare for the race and move off the line with the other runners. Just to start

running was a breach of childhood game ethics. "No fair, you started too soon," someone would shout after anyone who left the line early.

Similarly, starting our celebration of Christmas without the preparation of Advent should lead us Christians to shout "No fair!" Advent is that important. Indeed, Advent and Christmas are actually one aspect of the same reality. Advent is a time of anticipation and preparation for the birth of Jesus. Christmas is a time for the celebration of His birth. As Christians, we need both! We need time to get ready and time to celebrate.

Our society also celebrates Christmas, but for the most, it is not a celebration of the birth of the Son of God. It is simply an opportunity to gather with friends and family, to party, to exchange gifts, and perhaps, to seek peace.

That is not so different from what we in the church do at Christmas, but there is one crucial difference. In the season of Advent, we Christians prepare for the celebration of His glorious birth. During Advent, we "take our marks" and "get ready" to encounter the presence of the living God in the person of Christ our Lord.

How can or should we as Christians properly prepare for His wondrous birth? How can or should we observe Advent?

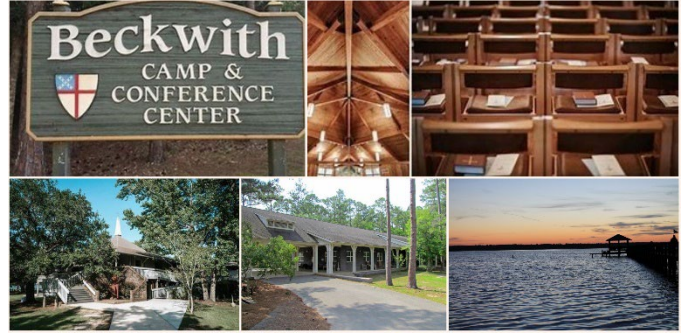
- ♥ Simply take a few minutes each day to be introspective about what God has done and is doing for you and your family.
- ♥ Between sometimes frenetic and hectic pre-Christmas shopping, entertaining and decorating activities, simply stop to reflect on the miracle of Jesus' birth and pray.
- ♥ As you pass the lights decorating neighborhoods, view them as shining symbols of the light of Christ shining in the darkness.
- ♥ Let your acts and deeds this Christmas season show others why Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without Advent. For Advent is the time we all prepare the stable of our soul for the arrival of the Christ child.

May Advent be Holy for us and may we be blessed in Christ Jesus,

✠ Bishop Duncan

## Camp Beckwith Gathering January 5-8

Fairhope Alabama



You are cordially invited to the Gathering of the Episcopal Community January 5-8, 2023 at Camp Beckwith in Fairhope Alabama. Options for single and double occupancy are available. We will be sharing, and planning for the future. It is a time to recharge after the holidays and have some girl time with your sisters in the community.

Single Occupancy Rates with Meals	\$128.35 plus tax
Total for 3 nights	\$385.05 plus tax
Deposit (non-refundable)	\$96.00

Double Occupancy Rates with Meals	\$105.35 plus tax
Total for 3 nights	\$316.05 plus tax
Deposit (non-refundable)	\$80.00

Please click on the link for more information and to register. [Gathering at Camp Beckwith](#)

## Teen Ministry through Toastmasters

*Carol Putnam*



Toastmasters International supports individual development through learning communication and leadership skills. It is a nonprofit organization that started almost 100 years ago as a series of speaking clubs organized by Ralph C. Smedley during his time working for the YMCA

(Young Men's Christian Association) in Bloomington, Illinois. Smedley eventually moved to Santa Ana, California and started Toastmasters independent of the YMCA. My life with Toastmasters began in 1985 when the organization was opened to women. My job required me to make presentations to the public. It was critical for me to be clear with my information. The feedback received at Toastmasters meetings helped me to hone my public speaking skills.

Toastmasters has many programs and the one that most interested me was "Youth Leadership," an eight-week program for teenagers. My first group of teenagers were young females in a halfway house. They lived in a locked house under strict control. These diamonds in the rough had had more challenges in their young life than I would ever know. The first week was full of distrust and resistance.

Each week as they learned that they had a voice and as their communication skills grew, so did the trust. They were encouraged to invite family members to attend the final meeting. Each of them gave a 5-minute speech that showed their creativity, inner strength and humor in a speech that had a clear opening, body and closing. One of the mothers thanked us for giving her daughter back to her. They were able to have real conversations again. One of the administrators said we were miracle workers because eight weeks ago these were “bad” girls with no future and now that has all changed. Several years later I saw one of the young women and she told me she had graduated from high school and was doing very well. The Youth Leadership had given her that first step to the possibility of a better life.

I’ve lost count of how many “Youth Leadership” programs I have experienced. Currently my club leads a class every fall in a local high school. My faith leads me as I go into each class knowing God will be there to help me with how to support these young people as they are so close to starting their adult life. Each class is unique because the teenagers are all unique. The connection is the change that happens when they understand they have a voice, understand how to listen and they can organize their thoughts. It is amazing what can be done in eight weeks with a deep focus on individual communication and leadership skills with some laughter and creativity added. Find out more about Toastmasters here:

[Toastmasters International -Home](#)

## *Reimagining the Holidays*

*Barbara Harris*



Coming into the avalanche of holidays this time of year can be a daunting task. I lost count trying to determine a total between this time and New Year’s Day, at least fourteen holidays in December alone! Certainly, they are not all Judeo-Christian holidays but with

an increasing number of multifaith, interracial families, it is important to remember that not everyone celebrates Christmas or Chanukah. Stores bombard us with music, lights, advertisements, and sales pushing the idea that holidays are about consumerism. Movies tell us it is about loving families, romance, and happy endings. Music describes snowy evenings, children playing and families gathering for sumptuous feasts. For some of us, however, the holidays can be lonely, and filled with unpleasant memories. All this consumerism can create feelings of inadequacies for those who are on limited income. Far-off families make getting together difficult and when we do, we may find that it is not all that pleasant.

There are warning signs that the holiday blues are real. Muscle aches, headaches, insomnia, fatigue, feelings of regret, isolation, inability to concentrate, depression, dwelling on the past or our failures. Sometimes we will feel that God has abandoned us, we have no meaning or purpose. All these are real responses to the holidays, and you are not alone. But perhaps it is time to reimagine our holidays. Create some new traditions, rediscover the origins of our

celebrations and give ourselves a break from the forced happiness we are told should exist. Michael DiPaolo, a clinical psychologist suggests several things to make the holidays “holy” days.

**Connect with your spirituality:** reconnect with scriptures, traditional stories and lore. Rediscover the true spiritual meaning of the holidays no matter what tradition. Alone or with a group, explore the gifts that the true holidays bring. Visit another faith tradition to see how they celebrate the holidays. Plan to attend faith services at least through the holidays. Faith communities are a wonderful source of support.

**Connect with your support system:** check out the gym, or join a walking group, join a community choir, reconnect with friends and family, whatever feeds you and refreshes you, that is what you need to focus on.

**Connect with new rituals:** sometimes having to do the traditional when it brings up painful memories is just too much. Try something new: volunteer to fill showboxes for children, help with prepping or serving at a food kitchen, spread some holiday cheer at a hospital or local homeless center. Donate in someone’s memory instead of buying gifts. Give the gift of your time instead of pricey material items. All these activities can feed us and give us new memories. Don’t forget to bring some of that cheer home. If you cannot be around the family tree, get a small one of your own. Bake a smaller batch of cookies or share a large one with your neighbors.

**Take time for you:** Don’t forget in all the hustle and bustle that you need to recharge. Set a regular sleep schedule. Turn off the television or the news. Avoid stress inducers like social media. Eat nourishing meals. We all overindulge at this time of year but don’t forget to balance all those cookies with veggies, clean protein, and plenty of water. Limit your caffeine and alcohol. Grab a friend and give each other a mani/pedi or how about facials!

One last thing, find a buddy. They do not have to be close by, but they should be willing to be contacted at any time. Make time to check in with each other which will keep you accountable. We are sisters in The Episcopal Community, reach out and grab hold of someone’s hand. We are marked as Christ’s Own For Ever.



## *What is your ministry?*

Do you have a talent, or gift you share with others? Do you feed or collect clothing for those in need? Do you knit for the merchant Marines or for children’s hospitals? Do you read to the elderly? What is it that helps you to fulfill your baptismal vows? We want to hear from you! Send a brief article with a picture or two to [communications@theepiscopalcommunity.org](mailto:communications@theepiscopalcommunity.org) and we will feature it in an upcoming issue. Don’t forget a picture of you or your group!



## *December Birthdays*

01-Dec - Julie Madden

07-Dec - Gayle Ahrens

21-Dec - Barbara Harris

24-Dec - Betty Wyman



## Event Calendar

### 2022

December 16 - Sewanee Circle Luncheon

### 2023

January 5-8 Gathering of the Community  
Camp Beckwith, Fairhope AL

### 2024

June 30-July 09 - GC 81, Louisville, KY



## Compline Schedule

December 04 - Barbara Willis

December 11 - Sylvia James

December 18 - Rebecca Taylor

Compline is the practice of evening prayer. The community offers compline over Zoom each Sunday Evening at 5PM CST. Please join us! If you would like to lead compline, please contact Please contact Becky Taylor at [bekatay@me.com](mailto:bekatay@me.com)



## Recipe of the Month



*Fun and festive easy Peppermint Ore Truffles require no baking and just 6 ingredients. Anyone can make these and they are an all-time family favorite!*

## Peppermint Ore Truffles

*Yield: 36 truffles*

*Prep Time: 25 Minutes*

*Chilling Time 1 Hour 20 Minutes*

*Total Time: 1 Hour 45 Minutes*

*Fun and festive easy Peppermint Ore Truffles require no baking and just 6 ingredients. Anyone can make these and they are an all-time family favorite!*

### Ingredients

39 (441 grams) regular Ore cookies, don't remove cream filling

8 ounces (227 grams) cream cheese, at room temperature

3/4 teaspoon peppermint extract

16 ounces (454 grams) semisweet chocolate, finely chopped

1 tablespoon coconut oil or vegetable oil

2 regular-size candy canes, finely crushed

### Directions

Place the Ore cookies in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until finely ground. Add the cream cheese and peppermint extract and pulse until the mixture is well combined and smooth.

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Scoop the mixture into balls about 1-inch in diameter. I like to use a spring loaded [cookie scoop](#).

Place the cookie balls in the freezer until well chilled, at least 1 hour or up to 1 day.

When cookie balls are chilled, combine the chopped chocolate and oil in a medium microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 30 second bursts, stirring between bursts, until just melted and smooth. Do not overheat.

Drop each cookie ball into melted chocolate, coating evenly. Remove with a fork, gently tapping off excess chocolate. Place back on cookie sheet and immediately sprinkle with the crushed candy canes. Repeat with the remaining cookie balls. Reheat the chocolate as needed so it remains pourable.

Refrigerate until set before serving. Store the truffles in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 15 days.

### Recipe Notes

While I prefer a smoother texture, you can add some crushed candy canes into the Ore cookie mixture for more peppermint taste and crunch.

## Your contributions make a difference

Click on any of the links below to get started.

