

Trinity Episcopal "Old Swedes" Church

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November 20, 2019

A voice cries out:

*"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.*

*Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." Isaiah 40:3-5*

Dear Parish Family,

Sunday, December 1st marks the beginning of Advent Season. While much of the world has entered into full holiday shopping mode by that time, those of us in the church find ourselves in a different place.

Advent is the four-Sunday season when Christians remember the hopeful anticipation of a God who desires to live out a new relationship with humanity. It's a time to spiritually prepare ourselves for the unbelievable good news of the birth of Christ on December 25th. To do so, many of our readings focus around Old Testament prophecies which foretell the birth of Christ. We also use the liturgical color of blue to remind us that Advent has a slightly penitential nature of faithful preparation.

Because of that understanding, we don't celebrate Christmas in the church during the Advent Season, but instead wait until Christmas Eve. Christmas is also not just a single day for us in the church, but a liturgical season of 12 days, which begins with Christmas Day. This timeline is very different than the secular world, which sees Christmas as beginning around Thanksgiving and ending with unwrapped presents on Christmas morning.

One of the blessings of our liturgical tradition is that we get to truly enjoy the magnitude of the incarnation (of God in human form) by focusing on the journey of hope and anticipation, of which Advent reminds us. Often that faith practice takes very intentional work among the noise of the holiday season all around us.

This year, there are a number of offerings at Trinity "Old Swedes" to support your Advent spiritual preparation. One of the most exciting offerings is a new, online bible study: **"Exploring the Gospel of Matthew."** Beginning on December 4th (and occurring on most Wednesdays from 7-8PM), we'll read through the entire Gospel of Matthew. Matthew is the gospel which appears most prominently in our readings over the coming year. If you have never read the bible, this is

a great way to jump in and try something new. This offering will carry us through until shortly before Ash Wednesday in February. Please go to the website to sign up (www.trinityswedesboro.org).

We'll also continue other traditions. On December 8th, families of all ages will be invited to make Advent Wreaths at our Forming Faith education time after church. On December 15th (at 6PM) we'll host our annual Sankta Lucia Festival of Lights, followed by a concert with the choir from St. Clare of Assisi Church.

Also during Advent, please remember to take a paper with gift ideas for a local child in need mitten (off of the tree we'll have set up in church). These will be donated through *King's Things Thrift Shop*. Please also remember to sign up for a Christmas Poinsettia in the back of the church.

Our Christmas Eve Service will begin with a choral sing at 7:45 PM (12/24), followed by worship at 8PM.

I hope that you will join us for our many offerings. I wish you a blessed Advent season of preparation as God moves in new ways toward the incarnation.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Gregory M. Wilson

Priest-in-Charge