



The Song of Saint Francis



Saint Francis by the Sea Episcopal Church, Salter Path, NC December 2025

Parish Office Hours:

Tues-Thurs: 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Weekly Activities



Prayer Shawl-Wed, 10 a.m.

Celtic Eucharist Service-Wed, noon

"Be Still and Know" Prayer Group-

Tues, 10 a.m.

Other Activities

*Tues, Dec 2, 16, 30, 11 a.m.-Meals on
Wheels Prep

*Thurs, Dec 4, 10 a.m.-Blood Drive

*Fri, Dec 5, 5:30-7 p.m.-Art Opening

*Sun, Dec 14, 5:30 p.m.-Angel Tree Gifts,
Christmas Potluck

*Sat, Dec 20, 9 a.m.-MOSF Holiday
Breakfast

*Sun, Dec 21, 10 a.m.-Bishop Skirving

*Sun, Dec 21, 5:30 p.m.-Blue Christmas

*Wed, Dec 24, 5:30 p.m.-Christmas Eve
Service

*Thurs, Dec 25, 10 a.m.-Christmas Day
Service/Holiday Potluck



Song of St. Francis

Blessed Advent Waiting

As I write the week before Thanksgiving, the world around us seems already in a frenzy of activity preparing for Christmas. We may already be making lists, shopping, baking, and decorating. The season is full, bright and consuming in every sense of the word.

Paradoxically, in the Episcopal tradition, we are entering the season of Advent. As the days shorten and the darkness encroaches, the holy season of Advent is an invitation for us to slow down, look inward, and wait. The Christ is coming.

Most of us don't like waiting. Waiting seems unproductive, or a waste of time. We want to be in control. We want things to happen on our time line. And that clock is ticking away the days until Christmas. We have things to do.

Stop. Advent invites us to slow down and take a breath. This invitation offers us a time to take stock of what has been occupying us, filling our days. We ponder the need in our souls, and the world beyond ourselves. We wonder at the mystery of a God who comes to be with us in human form. We recognize our need for a Savior, for hope and redemption.

It's a countercultural act, to settle into quiet Advent waiting. We take time to ground ourselves, to intentionally enter the darkness to see where new life might be forming. In the waiting, we make room for the Christ to come. He will come in the most surprising, unexpected forms. We will see him, not in grand and beautiful gifts, but in small gestures of kindness. He comes, not draped in power but tiny and vulnerable. He brings us light and love.

This Advent, I invite you into a sacred threshold time of waiting. Take time to be still. Look for signs of light in the darkness. Ponder how Christ's coming has changed the world, and how, if we are awake, Christ's coming can change us.

Blessed Advent,
Mary Kay+

Horizon

It is not possible to keep it from coming, because it will. That's just how Advent works. What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes past you. And you begin to grasp what it was you missed, like Moses in the cleft of the rock, watching God's hindquarters fade in the distance.

So stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder.

There will be time enough for running. For rushing. For worrying. For pushing.

For now, stay. Wait.

Something is on the horizon.

—Jan Richardson

“Horizon” image & words © Jan Richardson
from Night Visions: Searching the Shadows of Advent and Christmas
janrichardson.com/books





VESTRY VIEW

I don't know about you, but to me the Christmas season seemed to get here very quickly! I'd like to think that most of us have certain traditions we like to experience in the days leading up to December 25th. For Katherine and me, one of our favorite things to do is read the book, "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" by Barbara Robinson. We read it every year, and it never gets old! It makes us laugh out loud and we also shed tears, but we love it. Published over 50 years ago, its message of the true meaning of Christmas is one that will continue to touch lives, from young to old, we hope well into the future. If you haven't read it, a brief description is that all six children from the Herdman family were unlikely volunteers for the church's annual Christmas pageant but were not at all familiar with the Christmas story because they had never been told about the birth of Jesus. Due to their bad behavior, well known throughout their town, these kids would never have been chosen to participate. What led them to church in the first place was they had been told they would be given food there. Hungry children strikes a chord with us, here at St. Francis By the Sea. The Herdmans volunteered and no other kid was going to challenge them for a main role in the Christmas pageant for fear of inflicted physical pain. The pageant director discussed the roles of the pageant which basically set up a live nativity scene depicting the birth of Jesus but with no speaking parts. The Herdman children were in shock at things they were hearing for the very first time. I'll share just one example - the fact that Mary gave birth in a stable. The Herdman children were appalled at the thought of this.



For those of us that grew up in the church, we have been told about Jesus' birth our whole lives. Maybe we all need to spend time giving more thought about the details surrounding the miracle of Jesus' birth. How the virgin Mary must have felt facing the predicament of carrying a child who would be the savior of the world, placed there by God. This brought on more issues than just the physical aspect. Imagine how Mary and Joseph's lives changed as they were considered outcasts socially. How difficult that must have been in that time. They took on their roles and followed God's orders even though it made their lives difficult. A lesson for us all to pray and let God lead our lives even when we're led to do things that challenge us.





On the night Jesus was born, the angelic message to the shepherds “do not be afraid” is a central part of the Christmas story. As the scripture states, the birth of a savior brings “good news of great joy” offering hope that overcomes despair and fear. As we approach Christmas let us all keep in mind the true meaning. After we celebrate on December 25th, it’s about following Jesus’ example of love on a daily basis by finding the lost, healing the broken, and feeding the hungry...spreading the “good news” to those who may have never heard it before, like the Herdman children. God’s love should always be the focus of the Christmas season. I pray we can all spread that love not just during the holiday season but every day and not just inside the walls of our church but throughout our community.

Note: I have provided a copy of the paperback book “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever” in the Parish hall. It’s a short read, so we welcome those who’d like to read it to take it home and enjoy but please return it so it can be shared.

Terry Parrish



Towel and Basin

By Deacon Robin

The weather has finally become cooler, and you have responded by bringing many warm clothing items for those in need. These are delivered to Martha's Mission and given away to adults and their children. We took the first large batch of them just ahead of a stretch of cold days, and folks were so grateful to have warm things to wear. **Thank you for sharing warm clothing with our neighbors.**

On Thanksgiving Day, Hope Mission held a luncheon at First Baptist Church in Morehead City for community members who wanted to share a hearty meal. We prepared and served macaroni and cheese for 200 diners, including Meals on Wheels recipients. **Thank you for feeding the hungry.**

Our **Angel Tree** will be up for the first Sunday in Advent, November 30. Please select an angel or two, purchase gifts, wrap them, add the angel tag to the package, and return them to the parish hall by Sunday, December 14. The gifts, along with grocery store gift cards for the families, will be delivered to Carteret Preschool on December 15 for distribution. Come to the **holiday potluck** at 5:30 PM on Sunday evening, December 14, as we celebrate the privilege of giving to others. **Thank you for serving families in our community.**



Our dedicated Meals Ministry Team will cook three times in December. On December 2, we will prepare chicken broccoli casserole with carrots and dessert. On the 16th, the menu is baked pasta, green beans, and dessert. On December 30, we will make chili, corn muffins, and dessert. We will be sending 225 meals to Meals on Wheels recipients in December, as well as serving parishioners and offering Love Meals to anyone who would like a meal. Thank you for your ongoing support of this vital ministry. **Thank you for feeding hungry folks in our community.**

We are SO busy at Martha's Mission this month! There will be some good promotions at the grocery stores, and the need is great, so feel free to bring in food items any time, leave them on the Meals Ministry table in the parish hall, and I will take them to Martha's Mission. (We always need peanut butter, jelly, spaghetti sauce, and canned soup - no glass jars please). Please keep bringing in the plastic grocery bags; we are using hundreds of them each week to distribute food to our clients. Just place them under the Meals Ministry table, and I will deliver them. **Thank you for your generosity to our neighbors in need.**

As we enter Advent, I pray that each of us will seek to bring light to dark places.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. John 1:5



What Might Be?

When I was just a little girl, the anticipation for Christmas started right after Labor Day. And if I'm honest, that hasn't really changed for me even though I'm all grown up. I just love the hopefulness of this season.

I'll admit that I am often overwhelmed by the flurry that Christmas brings. And often, it's all over before I'm ready for it to be, which leaves me a bit disappointed and sad. But this year, I'm going to try something different with my hopeful anticipation.

Anticipation...

The opening lyrics to Carly Simon's hit, Anticipation, sum it up nicely:

*We can never know about the
days to come
But we think about them
anyway*



Oh my goodness, yes we do think about the days ahead anyway, don't we?

Sometimes with excitement. Sometimes with dread. Sometimes with hope and openness. Sometimes with a determined, even dogged sureness of what they will bring or at least ought to bring. That last one is a real bugaboo for me, because that kind of sureness means I'm not open to *what might be in the days ahead*.

What might be? Say those words slowly and out loud...*what might be?*

As we anticipate Christmas and the birth of our Savior, let's open our hearts and minds to how we can *fully and deeply and soulfully* experience the miracle of new life, a new birth and understanding of God's amazing and miraculous unconditional love for us.

What might be if that new life is born in us? To me, and I'm sure to you, that's certainly worth anticipating.

With love and great anticipation, Merry Christmas!

Marion Youngblood



To Every Thing There Is A Season.”

The 142nd Annual Convention of the Diocese of East Carolina was held on November 14-15 at the Maxwell Center in Goldsboro. There were approximately 275 registered attendees with right at 200 voting delegates. The clergy and lay delegates representing St. Francis by the Sea were Reverend Mary Kay Brown, Reverend Deacon Robin Loflin Smith, Pam Ball, Kathy Driver, and Terry Smith. We offer this summary of actions and reflections from our experience at this year’s convention. Our theme for this year’s Convention was “To Every Thing There Is A Season.” These words are drawn from the third chapter of the biblical book of Ecclesiastes (KJV) and were made more famous by The Byrds in their recording of the song “Turn! Turn! Turn!” With all that continues to go on around us in the world, and with the transition from our 8th to our 9th bishop, these words and the teaching that underlies them seem particularly appropriate. (Diocesan web page)

The Friday session was reserved for business matters which included election of diocesan committee members and officers, adoption of the 2026 diocesan budget and consideration of submitted resolutions. The entire convention was live streamed on the diocesan Youtube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/@episcopaldioceseofeastcaro5098/streams> Choose Day 1

The Saturday session was devoted exclusively to the election of the 9th Bishop for the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina. All voting this year was done via digital voting app. The process proved to be quick and easy. There were no glitches to the actual voting process on either day.

Hopefully by now you’ve heard that the Reverend Sarah Fisher was elected on the third ballot. You can read more about Sarah on our diocesan web page <https://www.diocese-eastcarolina.org/blog/the-rev-sarah-fisher-elected-ninth-bishop-of-east-carolina/> You can also watch the entire Saturday session on the diocesan Youtube channel listed above. Choose Day 2.



Our collective reflections:

There was a spirit of unity and purpose among the delegates. Real collegiality was evident.

Discipleship was evident, The delegates were serious in their discernment and duty to their respective parishes.

During the session on resolutions all discussion was conducted in a civil, respectful and loving way. The delegates demonstrated that civil discourse still exists in our society. During the Saturday election session a sense of excitement and anticipation was palpable.

Before each ballot vote we were led in prayer by Reverend John Pollock and Reverend Mary Ogus who had been serving as chaplains for the bishop search committee. The Holy Spirit surely was present.

When the live video link to our new bishop elect Reverend Sarah was secured, the participants collectively rejoiced.

Surely the presence of the Lord was in the Maxwell Center on November 14-15. Love won.





Saint Francis by the Sea Episcopal Church

920 Salter Path Road

Salter Path, North Carolina 28512

Advent and Christmas Services at St. Francis by the Sea

Please join the parish family of St. Francis by the Sea for upcoming **Advent and Christmas Services**. As always, everyone is always welcomed to attend services at any time since the Episcopal Church is an inclusive community, welcoming, all with no exceptions.

A special and meaningful **Blue Christmas Service** will be held on **Sunday, December 21st**, beginning at **5:30 pm**. This will be a time to remember your loved ones who have passed away and who are no longer with us. This is a special service opened to everyone, and most especially for those who may find this holiday season difficult. Please invite your friends and neighbors to this 2nd annual candlelight service as it will serve as an expression of love and community outreach on Bogue Banks for the parish. Hot cider and Moravian cookies will be served downstairs in the Parish Hall following the service.

On **December 24th**, a traditional **Christmas Eve Candle Lighting Service** will be held beginning at **5:30 pm**. This popular event will feature the traditional Christmas scripture readings, Holy Communion, with special music by instrumentalists and the *Choir of St. Francis*.

You are invited to join parish members once again on **December 25th**, for a special **Christmas Day Service** with Holy Eucharist, beginning at **10 am**. Following the service, everyone will be invited downstairs to the *Parish Hall* for a covered-dish Christmas Brunch. If you are alone this Christmas, you are most especially invited to join us for worship and also a time of Christian fellowship.

As always, the public is invited to join the parish of St. Francis by the Sea on **Sundays** for our weekly **Worship Services** beginning at **10 am**. These worship services are informal, casual, and "come as you are." St. Francis by the Sea is a church where God, music and art are all celebrated weekly. The church has been blessed by their new dynamic priest, Reverend Mary Kay Brown, so you are encouraged to come out to meet her. Be sure to visit our **Bradford Art Gallery** featuring changing visual art exhibitions monthly. Come and walk the church's beautiful **Labyrinth** nestled on the beautiful grounds of St. Francis.



Men of St. Francis

Men of St. Francis invite all women, children, youth, and men of St. Francis by the Sea to our Holiday Breakfast on Saturday, December 20th, beginning at 9 am. Please join us for good food, fellowship, holiday music favorites, and some surprises. Men of St. Francis look forward to seeing everyone on December 20th for breakfast.



Blood Drive – Thursday, December 4!

An American Red Cross blood drive at Saint Francis By the Sea is scheduled for **Thursday December 4 from 10AM to 3PM** in the Fellowship Hall.

Thanks to ALL our faithful donors and volunteers who have made these critical blood drives so successful.

The link below is active and ready for YOU to schedule your donation. Please share this information with your friends and encourage them to donate as well.

<https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?dt=WB:PL:DR:PM&ed=12%2F04%2F2025&order=DATE&range=10&sd=12%2F04%2F2025&zipSponsor=28557>

Thanks for your donation on December 4 and for giving the “Gift of Life” at Saint Francis By the Sea as the Holiday Season approaches!!

See you there!



Lay Ministry Schedule

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	December 7	December 14	December 21 (Bishop Visit)	December 21 Blue Christmas 5:30 p.m.
Lector	Beth Beswick	Mary Kurek	Nora Webb	
Prayers	Carol Holland	Kay Brackins	Mollie Mossor	<i>Lay</i>
Altar Guild	Frances Jenkins	Gay Lea	Betsy Randall	<i>Ministers</i>
Chalice	Martha Edwards Dale Elks	Sarah Criddle Jami Turner	Libba Shelton Scott Shelton	<i>Selected</i>
Crucifer	Jami Turner	Tim Owens	Kelly Sheeks	<i>At</i>
Torchbearers	Kay Brackins Bill Blanchard	George Grigg Marian Goetzinger	Liam Mossor Terry Smith	<i>Service</i>
Audio	Stover Morris	Larry Castle	Stover Morris	TBD
Video	Skip Kemp	John Clarke	Skip Kemp	TBD
Coffee Hour	NONE-SFBTS Annual Meeting	Robin/Terry Smith	Kathy Driver	NONE
Vestry of the Day	Terry Smith	Dale Elks	Sharon Birmingham	Pam Ball



Lay Ministry Schedule

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	December 24 Christmas Eve 5:30 p.m.	December 25 Christmas Day 10:00 a.m.	December 28
Lector	Katherine Parrish		Dale Elks
Prayers	Libba Shelton	<i>Lay</i>	Betsy Randall
Altar Guild	Laura Leslie	<i>Ministers</i>	Jean Smith
Chalice	Elizabeth Sheeks Kelly Sheeks	<i>Selected</i>	Marion Morris Stover Morris
Crucifer	Scott Shelton	<i>At</i>	Marian Goetzinger
Torchbearers	Kay Brackins Sarah Criddle	<i>Service</i>	Kelly Sheeks Scott Shelton
Audio	Stover Morris	TBD	Larry Castle
Video	John Clarke	TBD	Skip Kemp
Coffee Hour	NONE	NONE	Layne and Ron Helwig
Vestry of the Day	Pam Ball	John Clarke	Kay Brackins



December Birthdays

14



Andy Culpepper-3
Wayne Perry-3
Linda Keeter-9
Jesse Randall-9
Marilyn Smetana-9
Dee Fearrington-10
Sadie Pruitt-12
Tracy Pruitt-15
Braylen Venable - 17
Ellen Marriott-18
Libba Shelton-18
Claudia Sulloway-18

Beth Atz - 21
Bill Blanchard-22
John Park - 24
Chris Walters-25
Gordon White - 26
Nancy Carpenter - 27
Debbie McLean-27
Matt Dressel - 28
Rick Van Benthuyssen-28
John Clarke - 30
Lu Snipes - 30
Andy Wheatcraft - 31

* If you don't see your name above and would like to be added to our birthday list, please email or call the church office.

Art and Music Ministries



Our choir rehearses each Wednesday, from 4:30-5:30 p.m., and again on Sundays, at 9:15 a.m. prior to the beginning of our 10 a.m. Worship Service. We are always looking for additional choir members. Please join us at any time with no musical audition. All are welcome!





St. Francis by the Sea Episcopal Church
920 Salter Path Road
Salter Path, NC 28512

First Class Mail

Worship Service begins at 10 a.m., casual dress welcome
Sunday school for ages 6-12 begins at 9:45 a.m.

If unable to attend, please visit <https://stfrancisbythesea.org/live> at 10 a.m. to view our worship service online or visit our website at www.stfrancisbythesea.org for additional information and viewing options.

St. Francis by the Sea Episcopal Church is a parish in the Diocese of East Carolina
The Right Reverend Robert Skirving, Bishop

Priest

The Rev. Mary Kay Brown

Priest in Residence

The Rev. Chris Carlin

Deacon

The Rev. Deacon Robin Smith

Parish Manager

Stover Morris

Financial Administrator

Peggy Quinn

Treasurer

Dave Phillips

Sexton

George Grigg

Vestry Class of 2025

Kay Brackins

Dale Elks

Lisa Park

Vestry Class of 2026

Pam Ball, Senior Warden

Sharon Birmingham

Terry Smith

Vestry Class of 2027

Terry Parrish, Junior Warden

John Clarke

Laura Leslie

Clerk of the Vestry

Korin Gagnon

Music Director

Craig Everett

Art Gallery Director

Tim Bradford

Vergers

Tim Bradford, Marion Morris

Communications

Penn Perry



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