



Advent & Christmas

2021

Dear Friends,

Having just celebrated our 33rd wedding anniversary, I am nostalgically recalling how it all came to be: On one summer day in 1988, I had finally made the decision to ask for Gale's hand in marriage. I had imagined that I was very thorough and calculating, weighing the pros and cons, pretending to be in control of my destiny. I even consulted my two children for advice. Truth is, though, that decision came upon me like a tidal wave, and I was giddy with the thought of it. Enough waffling, I thought... go big or go home! So, I visited Gale that evening at her apartment, got down on one knee, and asked her if I could please become her husband. She looked at me with those beautiful smiling eyes and said..." I'll let you know."

True, we had only been good friends for 14 years (!), and I think we both already knew that the opportunity to walk the same path together would be a remarkable miracle, but Gale was right...were we spiritually ready to receive that miracle? Best to take some time to prepare. Best to cherish this blessing with appreciation and gratitude. Best to worship the source of all blessing. Best not to randomly jump off the nearest cliff just for the thrill of it! So, as the days went by, we reflected on the miraculous possibility, together and individually. We thought about what it could mean for our families. We dreamt together about what such a new life would be like. We even made some tentative plans. But mostly we prayed, and listened for guidance. We prayed for discernment, and the vision became clearer. We prayed for revelation, and it gave us joy. And, after a few days, when we both could better see the promise of the miracle beckoning us forward, Gale said "Yes, indeed!"

Advent and Christmas seem something like that to me. Even those of us who claim knowledge of the coming miracle (and, sadly, many who participate in the annual Christmas holiday do not, BTW), we, too, may never truly understand its implications or its impact on our lives. What we celebrate is the tangible presence of God's love in the world. And it is, indeed, a miracle. And it is, indeed, a cause of celebration. And it is certainly a miracle we wish to receive. For God's love, embodied by Christ Jesus, is a dream we can all share. These weeks of Advent, like the days Gale and I spent in prayer and reflection, help us prepare to fully receive such a miracle.

Together we can compare our expectations, hear the deep spirituality of the scriptures, and even assess our needs and our potential. What blessings will come from sharing God's dream? How could we commit to using those blessings as tools to fashion goodness among us and throughout the world? Where on earth would be a better place to experience the joy of that famous birth than in our own hearts? And, when would be a better time to walk hand-in-hand along the way, with the vision of that miracle lighting our path and leading us forward?

So, I invite you to a season of the church when we get to know the back-story of that timeless miracle. What do the story's characters represent? The surprised shepherds, the faithful Mary, the protective Joseph, the generous innkeeper, the inscrutable wisemen, the jealous Herod, the prophetic Zechariah, the faithfully eccentric John, the proclaiming angels...how do they somehow represent us? Are we meant to be part of the famous story? Come and see. These Advent weeks, we will pause to discern both our spiritual growth and our readiness to receive miracles. We meet together at 9:30 on Sunday mornings to gather ourselves and our thoughts. And on Christmas eve, we will celebrate the miraculous birth of God among us at 7 pm in the church and on Facebook Live. On Christmas Day, we continue our new tradition of the 'pajama service' at 10am, flushed with the joy of the miracle God has given us. The next day, Sunday the 27 th , we will celebrate the Feast Day of St. John, the patron saint of our parish, with readings and hymnary. And so it begins...the miracle beckons us forward. And at St. John's, we say "Yes, indeed!"

With love, Nick+





CARRYING CHRIST

By Karla Koon

We have been setting up for our Christmas Eve service. Our church has a series of stained-glass windows that we display for Advent....As I made my way around the Nave, one pane caught my attention. It is an image of Mary on a donkey being led by Joseph through the narrow streets of Bethlehem. In this image, Joseph had already turned a corner of the street with just his shoulder still visible, as you see Mary from the back, not having yet made the turn. Mary, carrying Christ, not knowing what comes next until she takes that turn. I gazed at the colorful glass image, wondering, how many times since her visit from the Angel Gabriel had Mary felt *unknowing*? What was around the corner of that narrow road? What was on the horizon? Were there more turns to be taken to get to their destination? Did they know where they were going? And yet they, they faithfully continued forward. In some ways, this single pane punctuated my (last two) years.

My organization was considered “essential” from the start of the pandemic.... I worked through the pandemic from my dining room table, with occasional single-day trips into the office.

There were times that I had no idea what I was doing....It felt chaotic, stressful, and overwhelming.

I paused in a moment of desperate frenzy and asked myself, “What has God placed before me and what is God calling me to do right now?”

I sat in silence and listened. God wanted me to work on a cost calculation for COVID related hazard pay. I am not sure God was that explicit, but the Holy Spirit drew me to this task as the next step, I could take. This became a common inquiry. It seemed that God’s call was quite diverse. Sometimes it included spreadsheet work, researching new CDC guidelines, and unraveling (insurance) claims among other newly required skills.

This question helped focus me and quell the overwhelming nature of my work, but more importantly it grounded that work in God. It required me to say, “Here I am”, minute to minute, hour by hour and day after day. It opened the confounding chaos of perpetual change and uncertainty to the Holy Spirit. It became less frightening to race down the winding path of the pandemic, despite the blind corners. It reaffirmed something I already knew, but sometimes forgot in the smaller details of my day. I carried Christ Jesus in my heart around every bend in the road. I responded to whatever lay before me, not as a knowing professional with the right or correct answer, but as a disciple of Christ, humbly offering an option flowing from love and compassion. The challenges persisted, but I found peace in the turbulence of the pandemic storm.

I lingered at the stained-glass window being drawn further into Mary and Joseph’s story, into my story. I imagine that Mary and Joseph are turning the corner to the inn, and perhaps ultimately to the manger. I know that Mary will give birth to our Savior Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. I am reminded that I carry Christ within me, as I turn every corner into the unknown. And like Mary, I am called to bring Christ’s light into this world.

(Karla Koon is a Worship Leader and Eucharistic Minister at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, Seattle)

Submitted by Gloria Wilkins

FOOD BANK

Submitted by Ann Hodgins

So, I spoke to people getting food at a food bank and here are some things I learned from those in need:

1. Everyone donates Kraft Mac and Cheese in the box. They can rarely use it because it needs milk and butter which is hard to get from regular food banks.
2. Boxed milk is a treasure, as kids need it for cereal which they also get a lot of.
3. Everyone donates pasta sauce and spaghetti noodles.
4. They cannot eat all the awesome canned veggies and soup unless you put a can opener in too or buy pop tops.
5. Oil is a luxury but needed for Rice a-Roni which they also get a lot of.
6. Spices or salt and pepper would be a real Christmas gift.
7. Tea bags and coffee make them feel like you care.
8. Sugar and flour are treats.
9. They fawn over fresh produce donated by farmers and grocery stores.
10. Seeds are cool in Spring and Summer because growing can be easy for some.
11. They rarely get fresh meat.
12. Tuna and crackers make a good lunch.
13. Hamburger Helper goes nowhere without ground beef.
14. They get lots of peanut butter and jelly but usually not sandwich bread.
15. Butter or margarine is nice too.
16. Eggs are a real commodity.
17. Cake mix and frosting makes it possible to make a child's birthday cake.
18. Dishwashing detergent is very expensive and is always appreciated.
19. Feminine hygiene products are a luxury and women will cry over that.
20. Everyone loves Stove Top Stuffing.

In all the years I have donated food at the Holidays, I bought what I thought they wanted, but have never asked. I am glad I did. If you are helping a Family this Christmas, maybe this can help you tailor it more. It does for me!

Food Bank of CNY
7066 Interstate Island Rd
Syracuse, N.Y. 13209

FOOD PANTRY

Please continue to not bring items to the church but instead make a cash or food donation to these organizations below:

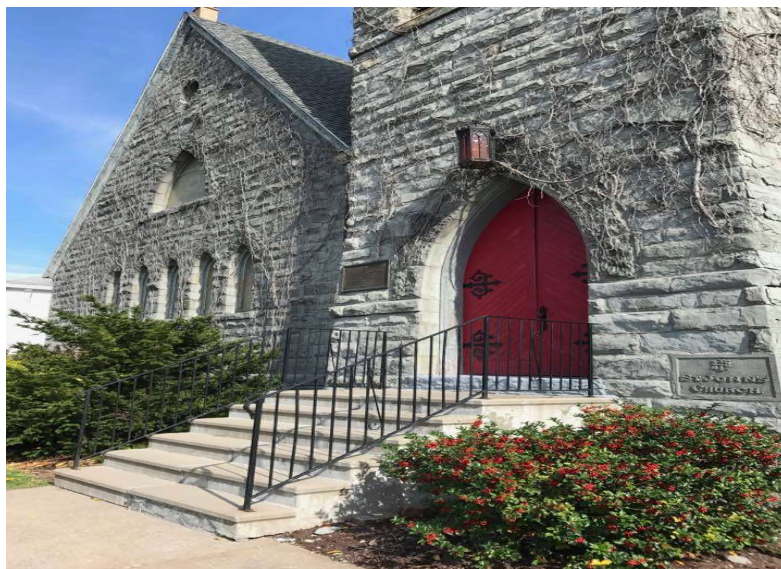
Karing Kitchen
116 W. Grove St.
Oneida, N.Y. 13421

Church on the Rock
164 Madison St.
Oneida, N.Y. 13421

And please don't forget the pets :

CNYSPCA
5878 East Molloy Rd
Syracuse, N.Y. 13211

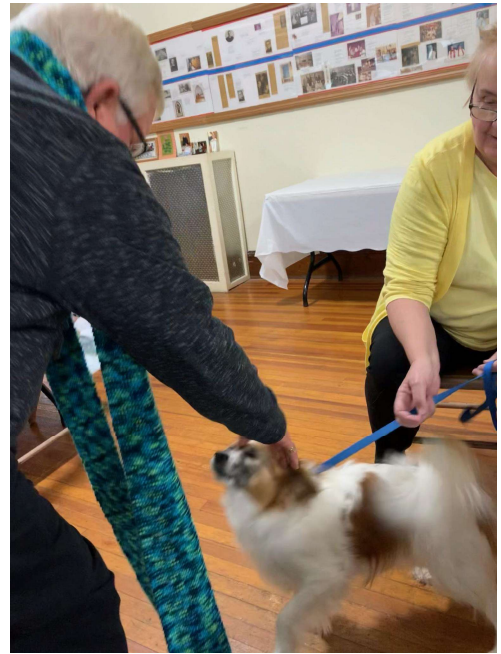
For upcoming coffee hours, Bible study and other events, please check the St. John's website @ www.stjohnsoneida.org



Blessing of the Animals
October 3, 2021



Jake Chryrywaty & Brody
Aylesworth with Father
Nick



Jake getting his blessing.



Beamer Dwyer waiting
his turn.



Beamer getting his
blessing.



Brody likes his
blessing.

Harvest Dinner

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Our first Take-Out Only Harvest dinner is in the books. We made just over \$2,000! Not too bad for our first take out only dinner. We sold approximately 130 dinners. We also sold some excess food.

Thank you to ALL who helped with our dinner, especially the following;

Peter Slaunwhite for his trips to Maines in Binghamton and answering my never ending questions

Carrot salad crew

Pre-dinner kitchen cleanup crew, Kim, Megan, Bailey Dwyer and Gisela Campanie

ALL the prep workers from Saturday

The kitchen and take out crew from Sunday

All the donations of food and money

We are truly blessed to be such a loving and generous family. I am humbled to be a part of this family. Thank you for your help, suggestions, and love.

Leslie Zebrowski



A BOOK STUDY FOR ADVENT led by Colette Coppola

All are invited to join us for conversations about the book [Dog in the Manger, finding God in Christmas chaos](#) by Tim Schenck.

Christmas card trauma. Over-the-top decorations. Post-Christmas blues. With laugh-out-loud humor anchored by spiritual truths, author Tim Schenck helps us maintain our spiritual sanity through the often frenetic chaos of Advent and Christmas. Illustrated by popular cartoonist Jay Sidebotham, *Dog in the Manger* also explores the major characters of the season in new ways, including John the Baptist, Mary, Joseph- and of course, Jesus.

Let's explore the "reason for the season" together, sharing insights, our own seasonal stressors, and a chuckle or two! Meetings will be in-person and/or via Zoom on December 2, 8, and 16, and if you'd like more time, a final session on Dec. 23rd. (please note: these dates are all Thursdays except Wednesday, Dec. 8th). The conversations will convene at 7 pm, but can be flexible by group decision. Plan on an hour or more for each. Prepare a snack for yourself, too...we'll have a fellowship break mid-way through the evening!

Please let the church office know if you need a copy of the book. Plan to have one available by Nov. 28, so you can read the first section before our first meeting. If you use a Kindle, you can also order it online:

www.forwardmovement.org/advancesearch/thedoginthemanger

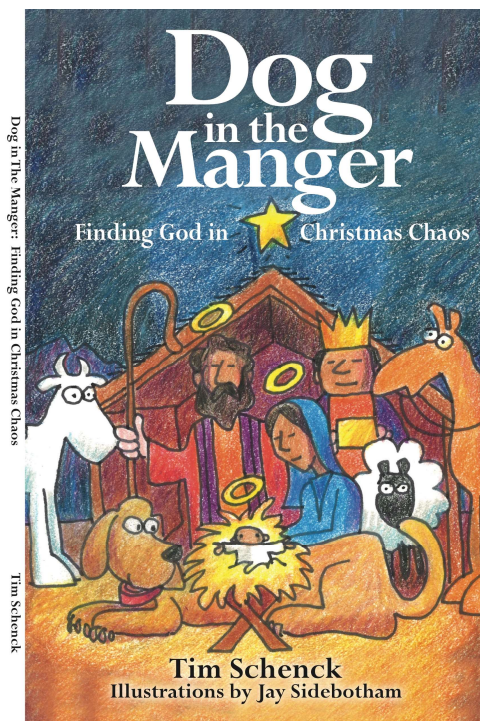
I hope you will join me for this special time together, as we remember why we celebrate Advent and the coming of the Lord. If you have any questions, please email me at colettecoppola61@gmail.com

God be with you all,
Colette

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Thoughtful questions following each section make *Dog in the Manger* ideal for personal reflection, seasonal book groups, or a last-minute Christmas gift.



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Bishop: The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan Probe

Rector: The Very Rev. Arthur W. Smith

Parish Administrator: Susan Slaunwhite

Treasurer: Jack MacMullen

Clerk of the Vestry: Valerie Hill

Senior Warden: Leslie Zebrowski

Junior Warden: Peter Slaunwhite

Vestry:

Sandra Aylesworth

Sheila Aylesworth

Suzanne Bauer

Cathy English

Valerie Hill

Garry Hirst

Ann Hodgins

Shelly Sears

Bob Wilkins

Loving God, by your grace you have gathered us from many walks of life to become a loving family at St. John's. Help us to sustain the miraculous love within this parish, and guide us in sharing this love with our neighbors. All this we ask through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Please submit Evangelist articles to Laura Weismore @ snowkittens7311@gmail.com