



CHRIST CHURCH

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The Rev. Matthew Hoxsie Mead
Rector

The Rector's Chronicle

November 22, 2016

Dear friends in Christ,

This past Sunday we celebrated the Feast of Christ the King which is our Feast of Title (the Holy Day that most closely shares our parish name). Our worship space is dominated by an impressive *Christus Rex*, our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, robed in garments of a king and high priest. Christ the King marks the final Sunday of the Church calendar year. We begin anew on Advent Sunday and before you know it, we will be celebrating Christmas! In this Chronicle, I want to look ahead to our Advent and Christmas celebrations, and also offer some news about recent events around the parish. News, first... then Advent & Christmas!

STEWARDSHIP

We had another successful stewardship season at Christ Church. Our New Consecration Service & Brunch took place on All Saints' Sunday, and included a Baptism. Thus far, we have received eight new pledges and more than fifty increases of prior pledges! The Stewardship Committee will offer a full report in the 2016 Annual Meeting Report. In short, our pledge income increased again this year. I want to offer my sincerest thanks to our Stewardship Committee for planning and organizing this year's campaign, to Nora Smith our guest preacher, to everyone who was present and able to participate, and to everyone who submitted an Estimate of Giving Card. The Stewardship Committee mailed cards out to everyone who didn't submit one on All Saints' Sunday. If you haven't yet sent yours back, please consider doing so. It will help us prepare and budget for 2017. Again, thank you all, and God bless you for your financial support of our Parish.

PRAYERS FOR THE NATIONAL LIFE

Our Prayer Book includes a wide variety of prayers and thanksgivings for various occasions. There is a section devoted to prayers for national life, beginning on page 820 of the BCP. The first and most well known of these is a Prayer for the Country:

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save

us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This prayer has sometimes been attributed to George Washington, but it was actually written by the Rev. George Lyman Locke in 1882. Our nation is divided and is in need of prayers and healing. We prayed this prayer at both services on Sunday, November 13, and also at the start of our Vestry Meeting the next day. I ask you to keep our nation in your prayers. My sermon from that Sunday is available online here: <http://christchurchpelham.org/sermons/>

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

This autumn we began to rebuild our Youth Group. Thus far we've had two successful family gatherings and one official Youth Group meeting. As we move forward, we will offer Youth Group meetings after each Sunday, 5:00 p.m., monthly Come As You Are Eucharist. The meeting will always feature a dinner and will conclude around 6:30 p.m. We are planning a trip to NYC in early 2017. In the coming weeks we will convert the empty office in the Ranck Building into a Youth Group Room. If you have a new or gently used chair, couch, flat-screen TV, game system (X-Box, etc.), media stick or box (Apple TV, etc.) that you are willing to donate (or if you want to buy new furnishings for the room), please contact me or Marie Main. The Youth Group is open to Middle School and High School students. If you have younger children who want to participate, that is ok, but we request that you be present (or at least in the building somewhere) to chaperone your younger children.

THANKSGIVING, ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

Thanksgiving Day, Advent, and Christmas are nearly here! The coming weeks are among my favorite of the entire year. There are great events on our parish Calendar – make sure they are in yours!

Thanksgiving begins a week before Thanksgiving Day. On Thursday, November 17, the church celebrated our annual Thanksgiving Dinner & Silent Auction. Thanks to Jennifer Alleyne and Jackie Kraft for organizing the dinner, and thanks to Marie Dumas and Eileen Wolfe for organizing the Silent Auction. It was a fantastic evening! A few days later, on the Feast of Christ the King, we took part in the annual Pelham Interfaith Thanksgiving service. This year it was at Huguenot Memorial Church, and as usual it was a meaningful gathering of the members and clergy of all of the worship communities in Pelham. We have a great group of clergy in Pelham, we meet about once a month to discuss common concerns and for fellowship, and it is always an honor to worship with them. On Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 24, at 10:00 a.m., we will celebrate the Holy Eucharist. There are a number of excellent hymns allotted for Thanksgiving Day. Whether you are travelling locally or staying home, I invite you to stop in at Christ Church for a Spirit-filled forty-five minutes. Happy Thanksgiving!

Advent is the season when the church prepares for the arrival of Jesus Christ. As each week progresses the church reflects on the different aspects of that theme. We begin Advent hearing about the Second Coming of Jesus. The season then shifts gears, and we hear about John the Baptist who prepares the way for Jesus. Finally, as we move closer to Christmas, we hear about the Blessed Virgin Mary and her willingness to bear the Son of God.

The transition from Advent to Christmas is pretty smooth, and we try each year to mark that by using a single congregational setting of what is called the “Ordinary” throughout Advent and Christmas – the parts of the Ordinary that we sing are: “Lord have mercy upon us”, “Glory to God in the highest”, “Holy, holy, holy”, and “Jesus, Lamb of God”. Last year, we used Healy Willan's *Missa de Sancta Maria*, which had been a staple of Episcopal churches since the 1940 Hymnal, but is probably less well known these days than it was because it uses older Rite 1 English. This year, throughout Advent and Christmastide we will be using the widely known and very popular *Deutsche Messe* by Franz Peter Schubert and arranged for congregations by Richard Proulx. Our hymnal (hard copy and electronic) does not contain Proulx's version of “Glory to God in the highest”. This presents us with an opportunity to fill that musical void.

Therefore, each Sunday in Advent and Christmastide, in addition to two parts of *Deutsche Messe* sung by the congregation, our choir will sing one part of Jean Langlais' short and sweet *Mass in An Ancient Style*. On Advent Sunday, as has been the parish's custom for many years, our choir will sing the Matin Responsory for Advent; this year that will be in place of the Langlais portion of the Ordinary.

In addition to our normal Sunday and weekday services throughout Advent, we are offering several special events in Advent, and I will detail those below.

On December 4, the Second Sunday of Advent, at 4:00 p.m., we will gather together to *green* the church. We will take a brief break at 5:00 p.m. for an Advent version of Come As You Are, and then return to greening and conclude with a sumptuous potluck supper. Our Youth Group will meet that night at 6:00 p.m. – we will eat together and then finish greening the church.

On Tuesday, December 6, at 7:30 p.m., our Adult Christian Learning Committee is offering a presentation called *Building Peace from the Ground Up*. John Lent, our own parishioner, who is Deputy Director of the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, will share experiences gained as he traveled recently though parts of the Middle East. He will explain why it is so important that we help to stabilize the dwindling Christian presence in our Holy Land.

On December 11, the Third Sunday of Advent, at 5:00 p.m., we will offer our annual festival of Advent Lessons and Carols. (Note: this is not to be confused with Christmas Lessons and Carols). The evening will consist of seven lessons that look ahead (but do not reach) to Christmas, several carols sung by our choir that explore the themes of looking ahead to the Messiah's coming, and a handful of well known Advent chestnuts sung by the entire congregation. The service should be about 45 minutes, and it will be followed by a potluck appetizer reception. It will be a true example of the church celebrating the beauty of holiness, and I think that it will really deepen everyone's appreciation for Advent as an integral part of the church year.

Our Christmas Pageant will be on Sunday, December 18, at 4:00 p.m. The production will be offered on the stage in the Parish Hall, and it is awesome! Pageant rehearsals are on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m., for approximately one hour, followed by a pizza dinner. Please see Michael Fawcett or Carla Carroll to register and ask questions.

All of these wonderful events lead up to and prepare us for the big day, Christmas! On Christmas Eve our Family Eucharist will be celebrated at 4:00 p.m. That service will be preceded by 20 minutes of carols for choir and congregation, beginning at 3:40 p.m. Our Midnight Mass begins at 10:30 p.m., and is also preceded by 30 minutes of carols for choir and congregation, beginning at 10:00 p.m. Our two Christmas Eve services will be similar yet different. The Family Eucharist will be Rite 2 with *Deutsche Messe* as the Ordinary, while the Midnight Mass will be Rite 1 with *Mass in an ancient style* as the Ordinary. As always we do our best to make sure none of the “greatest hits of Christmas” get left out or sung at only one or the other of the services.

Christmas Day is a Sunday this year. We will offer one Eucharist that day, celebrated at 10:00 a.m. Because Christmas Day is a Sunday we have budgeted for our choir’s section leaders to sing at that service, so we will have a full Choral Eucharist with *Mass in an ancient style* as the Ordinary which will be splendid. After the service, as is our custom, we will have bagels, lox, cream cheese, champagne, and sparkling cider in the Library. Other food will be potluck, so please feel free to bring other dishes! The readings and some of the carols are different on Christmas Day, and the fellowship afterwards is always a lot of fun.

Christmas continues for Twelve Days. The Sunday after Christmas is New Year’s Day. We will offer our normal 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. services that day. There will be a potluck brunch after the 10:00 a.m. Eucharist that day.

Epiphany, January 6, closes Christmastide, and it is one of the Principal Feasts of the church year. We will celebrate Epiphany on Friday, January 6, at 7:30 p.m. with a Eucharist. Like Thanksgiving Day, there are gems of hymns that are appointed for Epiphany, and we will sing them that night. The service will be followed by a potluck chocolate, champagne, and sparkling cider reception.

One date that is linked to Christmas is February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (aka Candlemas). We will celebrate Candlemas on Thursday, February 2, beginning at 6:00 p.m. with a potluck of “slow-cooked” food, fireside dinner. That dinner will be followed by a Sung Eucharist at 7:30 p.m. The food at this event in 2016 was legendary – I recommend that you add Candlemas to your 2017 calendar now!

Advent and Christmas are very special, and I hope you can celebrate as much of these seasons as possible with your Christ Church family. May you have a Happy Thanksgiving, a blessed Advent, and a very Merry Christmas!

In Christ and with fondest affection,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Matthew Hoxsie Mead". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered below the text "In Christ and with fondest affection,".

The Reverend Matthew Hoxsie Mead, Rector