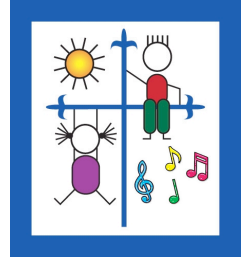




# CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BLOOMFIELD & GLEN RIDGE



*Growing in faith ~ Serving our neighbors ~ Creating community*

NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS 2023

## Reflections from The Rector

**The Rev. Diana L. Wilcox**



On this most Holy Night, we stop for a moment to listen once more to the story of the birth of Jesus. We hear of Mary & Joseph. Mary, who had the courage to say yes to God's call – even though frightening – even though it could cost her her life. And Joseph, who had dreams for himself and Mary, but thought they were all destroyed by this pregnancy. God helped him to envision a new dream – a new life.

We hear of the shepherds, of those who sit in darkness and live on the margins, whom God chooses as the first to hear the good news. We hear of the angels, who proclaim the good news that the Word has been made flesh and dwells among us – that Peace on Earth is possible.

And, of course, we hear of Jesus, born in a humble setting. God made manifest in a vulnerable baby – not to wield earthly power, but to share divine love.

This is the story we hear this night – in the words of the evangelist Luke. But it isn't the full story. Something, really someone, is missing.

You! You are part of this story too. Because God was born not just to those who lived so long ago – but to you. It doesn't matter how much money you have, who you love, where you live, what language you speak, how you vote, or any other way we humans try to divide ourselves from one another. Jesus is born to you! And that is the greatest gift anyone could ever receive – the knowledge that you are deeply and unconditionally loved – just as you are!

So, let us look aside from all that distracts us in our very busy lives – and turn instead to the light of that heavenly star shining on a stable so long ago. Because on this night, that light will shine in you – if you let it. That is the wondrous gift God is giving this night. A gift of love, light, and life – for all people – for you.

The story continues too, so I hope to see you in 2024 as we turn the page and continue to hear more about what this night really means for us, and for the world.

Merry Christmas!

*Mother Diana+*

## *“Blessings Abound”*

**Jacqueline McLeod, Seminarian**

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Greetings Christ Church Family,

As I reflect on my time at Christ Episcopal Church Bloomfield/Glen Ridge, I find myself feeling grateful for the many blessings I have received. At this special time of year, I would like to thank the Christ Church family for all of the wonderful support you have given to me and the projects I coordinated - you made the Food Drive for the Holy Spirit Food Pantry and the Toy Drive for the children of incarcerated families very successful. It could not have been done without you. Thank you.

Lastly, I must also thank you for the support and prayers over the past few months as I met with the Commission On Ministry and the Standing Committee during the diaconal process to become a Candidate for Ordination. Your words of encouragement, prayers and hugs gave me strength and so much peace. Thank you.

As I look around, I see a family at Christ Church that is loving, resilient and full of love and hope.

I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



# “Christmas Blessings”

**Michelle Ryndak, Warden**

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Dearest Christ Church Family,

The story of Christmas is one of a journey of uncertainties, birth and miracles. This is not unlike our own story. As I said at the Annual Meeting, we have come through difficult times...even times when our very existence was challenged.

But by the grace of God and the efforts of each of you, we remain a vibrant, welcoming, and growing community. We once prayed for a day when we could hear our choir in full assembly, offer each other Peace, share fellowship, and receive the Holy Eucharist. That day is today! Our prayers have been answered!

I pray for all of you as we continue this journey together, that we will be good stewards of this great Blessing bestowed upon us.

Merry Christmas, Peace, Good Health and Many Continued Blessings!



## Musical Notes

**Scott Ziegler, Director of Music**

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What a wonderful season of music! We welcomed two new section leaders to our choir this year: Ms. Kaelee Barbone, Bass, and Ms. Gabrielle Cintron, Alto. Our Christmas Lessons and Carols was last Sunday, December 17. It was a beautiful evening of sacred music, readings, hymns, and prayers. I'm especially thankful for those in attendance, Mother Diana, guest organist Barbara Percy, and our incredible and dedicated choir members. It was a joy to bring this service to our community. It is still available to view on our YouTube channel if you missed it.



# The Nursery School of Christ Church

## Aazhae Coleman, Assistant Director

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Happy Holidays, everyone! Can you believe it is Christmas already? Neither can I. The first half of the school year has flown by, and The Nursery School of Christ Church is geared up for a spectacular holiday season.



We have been busy with many classroom projects, showcases, and extracurricular activities. We wrapped up the month of November with a visit from Ferguson Dental Association. They make it so fun for the kids while sharing the importance of caring for your teeth. Our students also finished their season of dance with a lovely recital on December 8. The holiday cheer continued to spread with the Holiday Show held on December 15th (plus a surprise visit from Santa) and, for the first time, a Cookies with Santa event held on December 16th. Two Santa visits in one week! Santa has checked his list twice and we know who

made the nice list. We are grateful for all the teachers and helpers who plan and prepare to ensure all these holiday festivities go smoothly. However, the fun doesn't stop there as this year we continue to add to our list of traditions with a second annual schoolwide holiday pajama day; even the staff joins in on the fun. We all take pride in the holiday spirit and having a visit from Santa seals the deal.

Here at the Nursery School of Christ Church we are finding new ways to involve the students and their families. Community engagement and family time is always the most memorable time spent. We look forward to the year ahead with the opportunity to finish the school year off strong with events such as 100 days of school, Ash Wednesday Church Visit, Read Across America Month, Easter, and Graduation. But let us not get ahead of ourselves; one season at a time!



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

# Children, Youth, and Families

## Candice Whitaker, Director of Family Ministries



Our Christmas pageant was last Sunday. All were invited to choose their role and come forward to participate. It's a beautiful and meaningful way to tell and see the story we all know so well. We had a great group; it was a lot of fun!



are present in worship even if they are not yet sure how to participate. There are rocking chairs and space for little ones to move around. Your children and all their joyful noise are welcome in our church. We are also working on being able to offer childcare every Sunday again for those that may want it. We will resume Sunday School for our older children once a month. If you have any interest in helping with childcare or Sunday School, please let me know. I'm very excited for this new year. We have a lot of wonderful things planned and I look forward to creating more special memories with our church family!

What a gift this season is, and a blessing children are to our church. I love Advent and Christmas and I'm so glad we get to experience so many wonderful events together again.

We had our first Cookies with Santa event with our church and nursery school children on December 16. It was so much fun! Our parishioners, Betty and Ann, made the most wonderful Santa and elf. It was a delightful afternoon of cookie decorating, hot cocoa, and crafts. We will certainly do it again next year.



For the parents and care-givers, I especially want to thank you for bringing your child/ren to church. I know how difficult it can be to get out the door with small children, but they have such a special place here. We have "Kid Kits" filled with books, crayons, activities, and quiet toys that allow children to be present in worship even if they are not yet sure how to participate. There are rocking chairs and space for little ones to move around. Your children and all their joyful noise are welcome in our church. We are also working on being able to offer childcare every Sunday again for those that may want it. We will resume Sunday School for our older children once a month. If you have any interest in helping with childcare or Sunday School, please let me know. I'm very excited for this new year. We have a lot of wonderful things planned and I look forward to creating more special memories with our church family!

# Outreach Ministries



## Epiphany Project

Christ Church has been a very busy place! We continue to welcome many new and returning groups into our space to use our facilities throughout the week. An outreach project we have done the past few years is the Epiphany Project. When our parishioners make their pledge by December 31 of that year, they receive a check from our outreach funds to then make a donation to a nonprofit of their choice. The season of Epiphany is a time of God's revealing Christ to the world, and we in turn will reveal Christ to our community through these gifts. Each pledger is able to write that check over to the non-profit of their choice. It has been so inspiring to see how our parishioners have spread Christ's light out into the world through this project!

## Diocese of Newark Prison Ministry

In November & December, we collected gifts for our Diocesan Prison Ministry, giving to children whose parents are incarcerated. Thank you to so many of you that contributed! Such a blessing to those families.



## Feeding the Hungry + PAWS Montclair

We had a very successful food drive for the pantry of Holy Spirit, Verona in November. We are so grateful to our seminarian, Jackie, for coordinating everything, and to everyone who generously donated. We were able to collect over 4 car-loads! The food items were collected, blessed at the altar, and then delivered.



We like to help feed our furry friends, too, and we work with PAWS Montclair, the local animal shelter, to provide needed food and supplies throughout the year. We also do a big collection for PAWS at our Blessing of the Animals in October, as pictured left.

### **Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center**

We continue to partner with Crossroads, the official camp and retreat center of our diocese. We have worked with them for several years to provide an awesome day camp in the summer for our kids and kids in the community. A few of our older youth have spent weeks on site for their summer programming. We like to contribute in helping to make camp accessible and as affordable as we can by participating in fundraisers and work days at Crossroads. Their annual Rally for Cross Roads was in October.

The last few years, they have been doing a 5k to raise funds for camp. All ages are invited to participate both near and far, on site or in your own neighborhood. It is their largest fundraising event and it is always so much fun to be a part of.



Another outreach opportunity is to contribute to Good News Gardens – a church-wide movement involved in a variety of food and creation care ministries – gardening, farming, beekeeping, composting, gleaning, feeding, and food justice advocacy. There are a variety of settings and locations, one of those being Crossroads. They are working to expand their Good News Garden and you can support them as volunteer builders, gardeners, harvesters, food bank delivery, or with donations.

### **The Charles Seller Foundation**



In 1950, a young man named Charles Seller was struck by a train losing one of his legs. His family and friends came together to put on a variety show named Talent Time to aid in his medical costs. This started a tradition in Bloomfield, NJ, that has continued on for the past almost 74 years. Each summer their members, who are in their mid-teens to early thirties come together to produce and perform a musical in which all profits go towards someone in the area with high medical bills. The Charles Seller Foundation have held their

rehearsals at our church for the last several years. We host them every summer with additional times as needed. Their performances typically take place at Bloomfield High School. You can learn more about their theater projects at [thecharlessellerfoundation.org](http://thecharlessellerfoundation.org).

**These are just a few highlights – we have so much going on in our community! If you would like to help and get involved with our Outreach Ministries, please contact Mother Diana.**

# Office and Communications

## Candice Whitaker, Director of Communications

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### ADVENT & CHRISTMAS CALENDAR



### Christmas Eve – 5pm & 11pm

Join us for Christmas Eve to celebrate the birth of our savior Jesus Christ. We will gather together at 5pm (Family Mass) and at 11pm (Midnight Mass). Bulletins for...

[Read more →](#)



### ONLINE PLEDGE CARD!



Our calendars may feel particularly full at this time of year, but that also means there are ample opportunities for connection. The vibrancy of our parish really shines in this season. I have loved being able to see so many beautiful and wonderful ways of celebrating this special season with the events we have loved for so long, as well as sharing new ones! We have so much to share, and have been doing so through many platforms – Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Threads, weekly emails, our Sunday Paper, and our website.

We work very hard to remain active members in our community and ensure that all the good things happening in and out of Christ Church are well-known in our surrounding neighborhoods. Press releases are always sent out to local media for our events, and our big events are submitted and posted on the Diocesan calendar and events page.

The best way to stay up-to-date on all the news and updates at Christ Church and in our Diocese is through our email communications. We send out weekly emails to help you stay better connected. If you're not subscribed, or if you have not been getting these emails, scan the QR code below to subscribe!

We all crave connection, and as part of our church family, there is always a place for you here and plenty of ways to stay connected.



Use your phone camera to scan the QR code to get on our email list





# General Seminary commissions film marking 200th anniversary of ‘A Visit From St. Nicholas’

Melodie Woerman

*This article was posted on Episcopal News Service on December 15. These are just a few snippets from the article; you can read the full article at:*

<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2023/12/15/general-seminary-commissions-film-marking-200th-anniversary-of-a-visit-from-st-nicholas/>

[ENS] The General Theological Seminary has commissioned a 15-minute film to mark the 200th anniversary of Clement Clarke Moore’s beloved Christmas poem “A Visit From St. Nicholas” – better known as “’Twas the Night Before Christmas.” **The film will be available for viewing online on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24.**



Moore, a lifelong Episcopalian, was serving as a professor of oriental and Greek literature, divinity and biblical learning at General Seminary in New York City when the poem first was published in 1823. The film, “Mr. Moore’s Gift,” tells the story of Moore’s writing of the poem through the eyes of a young girl, Maggie, and explores the past through dream sequences. It was produced by Six Half Dozen: Creative Studio and was filmed on the seminary campus during one week in September. It was written by Non Vaughan O’Hagan.

Moore reportedly wrote and recited the poem in 1822 as a Christmas gift to his six children. It was published anonymously in the Troy (New York) Sentinel on Dec. 23, 1823, and in 1837 he was identified publicly as the author in “The New-York Book of Poetry.” Moore included the now-famous work in his own book of poems in 1844. Moore’s authorship of the poem was questioned when a daughter of Poughkeepsie farmer Henry Livingston said her father was the true author, believing him to have written the work in 1808. Livingston, who died in 1828, never claimed authorship for himself, and the daughter’s declaration took place years after the poem was first published. Debate over the authorship has continued into the 21st century.

## The poem’s ongoing impact

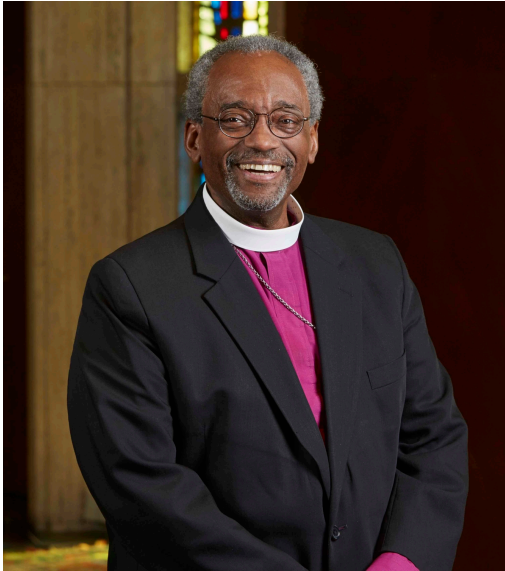
According to former General Seminary librarian Melissa Chim, Moore’s poem helped create the modern American version of Santa Claus, “‘dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,’ with twinkling eyes, rosy cheeks, a snow white beard and a round belly.” Chim noted that this Santa was “a jolly elf bringing joy with his reindeer-led sleigh to both children and adults.”

No original manuscript of the poem exists, but Moore later did produce some hand-written versions of it. One of these signed copies sold for \$280,000 in 2006. At that time, three known existing copies in Moore’s handwriting were in museum collections.

*–Melodie Woerman is a freelance writer and former director of communications for the Diocese of Kansas.*

# Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's Christmas Message 2023

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*[Episcopal News Service] Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has released his annual Christmas message, saying by video that he is grateful for all the prayers as he recovers from his latest surgery.*

*Curry underwent emergency surgery on Dec. 4 after doctors diagnosed a subdural hematoma, or brain bleed, that he suffered after falling during a visit to the Diocese of Central New York. He has since been released from the hospital in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he lives.*

*In his Christmas message, Curry said he was doing well and “ever more aware of the power of the messages of Advent to watch, to wait, and to listen to the pregnant voice of silence.”*

*The following is the full transcript of Curry's Christmas message, as released by the Office of Public Affairs on December 18, 2023.*

Hello to my family of faith in The Episcopal Church, and to all of our ecumenical and interfaith friends, and to all people of love and goodwill.

I want to first thank you all for your prayers and well wishes this year as I have weathered some health issues. Please know that I'm doing well, following the doctor's orders.

I'm also ever more aware of the power of the messages of Advent to watch, to wait, and to listen to the pregnant voice of silence, as one version of the Bible says. And out of that watching, waiting, and listening, following the way of Jesus of Nazareth and his way of love, the Spirit of God being our helper.

So please allow me to offer a reading from the Gospel according to Luke. You know it well. The deep truth embedded in it, simple story of the birth of a baby. That deep truth has long given me strength for these 70 years, strength that I often did not have on my own. For some, it may seem fanciful, but in its own way, it points to what the Bible calls hope beyond hope. It reads:

While Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to deliver her child. She gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the guest room. Now in that same region, there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: To you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: You will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

The message of the angel is as scandalous and striking now as it was then. For in it is embedded God's message in the death and resurrection of Jesus: to trust and believe in the invincibility of the good in spite of the titanic reality of evil, because God is good all the time. To trust and believe in the enduring power of love, of truth, of the good, and of justice when the reality of the opposite seems so prodigious.

To trust and believe in the enduring power of love, justice, kindness, and compassion, all because God is love and the author of all that is true, noble, and just. “Do not be afraid,” the Scripture says, “for see, I

am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: To you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: You will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

Lord, we pray, give us this sign anew. Give us the lowly, the tired, those of high estate and low, and those of no estate. Church folk, those who haven’t stepped through the red doors for years or ever, give us all a sign. Give us the working, the watching, the weeping. Give us that sign anew; as you did in the first century, so now in the 21st. Give us the expected, the faithful, the passionate, the undeserving; give us a sign.

“The angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: To you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.’”

On behalf of the entire Episcopal Church, we wish you and yours a Merry Christmas and a joyous new year.

God love you. God bless you. May God hold us all in those almighty hands of love. Merry Christmas.

**The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry**  
**Presiding Bishop and Primate**  
**The Episcopal Church**

You can watch the video message at [episcopalchurch.org](http://episcopalchurch.org).

*The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry is presiding bishop and primate of The Episcopal Church. He was elected in 2015 to a nine-year term in this role, and the animating vision and message of his ministry is Jesus of Nazareth and his model of radical, sacrificial love.*



## From Bishop Hughes

### The Diocese of Newark

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“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

*Luke 2:10-12*

The joys of Christmas celebrations are underscored by the effort we make to delight, surprise, and care for those we love. At the center of the shopping, wrapping, cooking, and traveling is love. A love that is expansive because of the birth of Jesus. This is good news of great joy for all people. We are loved truly, deeply, unconditionally by the one who came to us as an infant among the very least. His love of us makes our love of others grow.

You have my prayers for a Christmas overflowing with the unconditional love that Jesus has for all people. May our love expand beyond our family and friends and touch the lives of those needing to be loved.

*Merry Christmas,  
Bishop Hughes*



*The Voice* is the biweekly publication of the Diocese of Newark. It is currently published every other Wednesday. You can subscribe to it here: <https://dioceseofnewark.org/e-news>.



## Two events with Bishop Hughes in early 2024

### January: Study Group

**Tue, Jan 9 & 16 | 7-8:30 | via Zoom**  
**Tue, Jan 23 & 30 | 7-8:30 | in person at**  
**St. Peter's, Essex Fells**

*This is My Story: Learning to see, talk, and share stories of faith*

Many of us remain silent when given the opportunity to talk about faith. What are faithful people to say when faced with loss, pain, or fear?

This Study Group will focus on learning how to talk about faith and developing an ease with using language of faith both inside and outside of our faith communities.

**Find out more & register online  
by Jan. 8 at**  
**[dioceseofnewark.org/bishops-study-group-2024](https://dioceseofnewark.org/bishops-study-group-2024)**

### February: Lay Retreat

**Fri, Feb 2, 6 PM - Sun, Feb 4, 12 PM**  
**Cross Roads Camp & Retreat Center**

*(W)holy Work: Seeing Our Daily Work as Ministry*

How would our approach to work change if we thought of our work as a holy calling? What if our most precious offering to God is to see ourselves as serving God's people in the workplace?

Join us as spiritual guide Kathleen Henderson Staudt leads a retreat focused on exploring the way we see our work.

**Find out more & register online  
by Jan. 10 at**  
**[dioceseofnewark.org/event/lay-retreat-bishop-hughes](https://dioceseofnewark.org/event/lay-retreat-bishop-hughes)**

# Our Staff



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Warden



Bill Seeman



Leo Toledo



Ben Reynolds



Denise Massay-Williams



Carol Madden



## UPCOMING EVENTS AND SERVICES

January

8

The Visit of the Magi

January

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Religious Life Sunday

February

11

Last Sunday after the Epiphany

## Our Newsletter

We at Christ Church are excited by the new life and transformation in this place, and this newsletter is a part of the many ways we are stepping boldly forward in faith. This newsletter is published twice each year and covers the life of this congregation – worship, music, children & youth, spiritual formation and so much more. Let us know what you think!



## Stay connected with us:

[www.christchurchepiscopal.org](http://www.christchurchepiscopal.org)

Subscribe to our weekly E-Newsletter "Coming Up at Christ Church." You can scan the QR code on the Communications page, or email the parish office: [office@christchurchepiscopal.org](mailto:office@christchurchepiscopal.org)

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Read our Sunday Paper, an insert in our Sunday Bulletin, which is also located on our website for download to your e-reader, phone, or iPad.

And the best way...come to church!

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