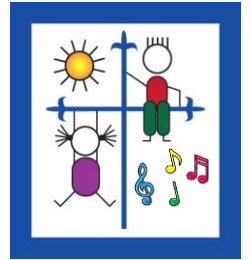




CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BLOOMFIELD & GLEN RIDGE



Growing in faith ~ Serving our neighbors ~ Creating community

NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS 2022

Reflections from The Rector

The Rev. Diana Wilcox



The mystery of Christmas, as we heard in the epistle of Titus, is that the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all. And the greatest gift of this mystery is that God became incarnate in a baby born not in a palace, but on the margins, not in the light of day, but in the deepest of nights, that we might truly understand that we are loved just as we are – the imperfect and vulnerable children of God.

For you see, God enters into our world – not because it is perfect, but because it is not. And God is born to us as a small and vulnerable child – not because we are invincible, but precisely because of our frailty, our fear. And God's light, while always present, is most visible, most needed, not in the light of day, but when the world around us is most dark.

Perhaps that is why you come here tonight. It isn't that you don't know the story, but maybe, like in that classic, a Charlie Brown Christmas, you too need Linus to remind you of what Christmas is really all about. We all sometimes need someone to say "lights please" to cut through the darkness. Because amidst the stresses of the season, this message of the angels, this mystery, this gift of God, can disappear from our hearts – perhaps when we need it the most. The problems we face now – those of the world, or of our lives – can weigh heavily on our hearts and minds, particularly at this time of year. We can feel lost, lonely, hopeless, and afraid.

And having grown up in the church, you remember that it is here, amidst the candlelight dancing brightly in the dark, that you come to know once more, in the deep recesses of your heart, the meaning of this night – the promise of God to all people, to you, throughout the ages. For tonight we hear the message of the prophet that a great light will shine upon us. Tonight we who dwell in darkness hear the message of the angels to not be afraid. Tonight we come to know again what Christmas is all about – the Word, our God, became flesh and dwelt among us, that we might truly know how deeply and unconditionally we are loved. And that, my friends, is the greatest gift humanity has ever received!

Merry Christmas!

Mother Diana+

“The Approach of Christmas”

Michelle Ryndak, Warden

During Advent and the approach of Christmas, I often think about the anticipation and uncertainty and faith experienced by the Holy Family – Joseph’s willingness to embrace this family that could have drawn judgement from others, the long journey during young Mary’s pregnancy, the not knowing where they were going to stay. Indeed, they knocked on closed doors! By necessity, they took refuge in a room for animals. The first to learn of Jesus’ birth were shepherds in the fields watching their flocks at night. When the angel of the Lord appeared to them, they were terrified! 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!”*

We have seen uncertainty, yes, but we are also in a time of great anticipation, and we are a family of faith!

Merry Christmas to my Christ Church Family!

Many Blessings await.



Musical Notes

Scott Ziegler, Director of Music



What a wonderful evening of Lessons and Carols we had on December 11. We were thrilled to be able to offer this beautiful evening of sacred music, readings, hymns, and prayers, in person again. 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



The Nursery School has been very busy. The month of November started with a visit from a dental hygienist on November 1st to talk about the importance of brushing and taking care of your teeth. The day after Halloween was perfect for educating the children on what happens when we eat too many sweets, with a friendly reminder that too much good stuff is bad stuff. We also had a school picture day, Thanksgiving Feast, and a Fire safety visit. During this time, our soccer classes with Kiddie soccer also ended, but will return in the spring.

Our annual Thanksgiving feast was a big success. The children enjoyed the food prepared by the staff. Rotisserie chicken, mac and cheese, cornbread, mashed potatoes, broccoli, and they had some very yummy Jell-O for dessert. Now, this may be something other than your traditional Thanksgiving meal. However, all the kids were thrilled to eat alongside the entire school.

We ended the month of November with a fire safety visit to enter the official holiday season. This fire safety lesson instructed the kids to remind their families to water their trees, unplug their lights, and blow out their candles. (If you forgot these essential fire safety tips, this is an important reminder).

December is one of the busiest times of the year for the Nursery School. However, it is one of the most enjoyable. Everyone spends a lot of time singing, dancing, and decorating for the holiday season.



Our month started strong with the Nursery School's annual Holiday Show, returning for the first time since the pandemic. Both our Toddler and Preschool classes get up and perform in front of the entire school, relatives, and friends. We also had a special visit from Santa Clause. He made his way through the crowd, ringing bells and HO HO HO'ing onto the stage to hand out gifts to each of the children. All their little faces were so excited as they giggled with joy and waited for their turn to see Santa.

In December, our dance class with Ms. Melissa's Dance Academy will continue through the first two weeks of December and officially end on December 16th with a dance recital. We can look forward to kiddie soccer, dance, and yoga classes returning in the spring.

Also, this month, we take the time to show our staff how much we truly appreciate their hard work through a holiday dinner at a local restaurant. Everyone gets to relax and enjoy the evening.

Children, Youth, and Families

Candice Whitaker, Director of Family Ministries



“When you choose joy, you feel good, and when you feel good, you do good. And when you do good, it reminds others what joy feels like... and it just might inspire them to do the same.”

A good friend shared that quote the other day (source unknown). She is one of the most joyful people I know and such a good example of this. She is a light that always inspires me to see the best in others, to CHOOSE joy.

The Christmas season is particularly joyful with children. They help us see that there is such beauty in simplicity. It is a time that I especially cherish with my own little ones. I still have two that are simply delighted by all the boxes and wrapping paper, rather than the gift itself, and another who loves

“playing santa” and choosing gifts for others. It is a season of making such precious memories and spending time together.

Our Christmas pageant was last Sunday. All were invited to choose their role and come forward to participate. It was a beautiful and meaningful way to tell and see the story we all know so well. The simplicity of it also serves as a reminder that Christmas doesn’t have to be fancy or elaborate to feel special.

Let us feel peace in knowing that during this “busy” season, we don’t have to have an overfilled calendar of activities to experience joy. In the midst of creating special moments with your kids, bring them to church. I know how difficult it can be to get out the door with small children, but I promise, they have a 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. Their presence reminds us all to find joy and magic and memories in the simple things.

I often find that when we are proactively seeking the good, goodness abounds. In this season, what are some of the simple moments in which you have found joy?



Outreach Ministries



Epiphany Project

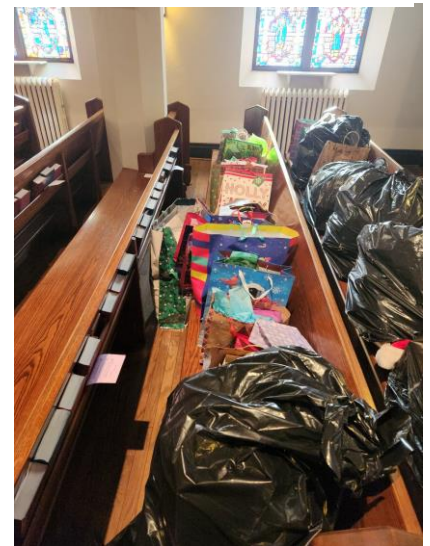
Christ Church has been a very busy place! We continue to welcome many new and returning groups into our space to use our facilities throughout the week. An outreach project we have done the past few years is the Epiphany Project. When our parishioners make their pledge by December 31 of that year, they 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, we collected gifts for our Diocesan Prison Ministry, giving to children whose parents are incarcerated. Thank you to so many of you that contributed! We were able to drop off more than 30 gifts.

Feeding the Hungry + PAWS Montclair

Over the past several years, we have developed a strong partnership with the Presbyterian Church on the Green in their ministry to feed the hungry. We collect food year-round to be collected by the food pantry. Our largest collection takes place in November, where we work with the Nursery School to gather bags of groceries. The food items are collected, blessed at the altar, and then donated. 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.



PFLAG NJ

We are also home to PFLAG NJ. The PFLAG NJ group meets at Christ Church on the second Thursday of the month. Founded in 1972 with the simple act of a mother publicly supporting her gay son, PFLAG is the nation's largest family and ally organization. Made up of parents, families, friends, and allies united with people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT), PFLAG is committed to advancing equality and full societal affirmation of LGBT people through its threefold mission of support, education, and advocacy. PFLAG has over 350 chapters and 200,000 members and supporters crossing multiple generations of American families in major urban centers, small cities, and rural areas in all 50 states.

These are just a few highlights – we have so much going on in our community! It takes many hands to coordinate these events and stay involved. 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



This is a season of connection. This season is a busy one for everyone, but as the Director of Communications, what I love the most about the extra preparations it is how clearly the vibrancy of our parish shines through. I have loved being able to see so many beautiful and wonderful ways of celebrating this special season and getting back to the events we have known and loved for so long, with a bit more normalcy. We have so much to share, and have been doing so through many platforms – Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, 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.



Brighton Whitaker, one of the best little office helpers.

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



Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's Christmas Message 2022

'Love Always'



The following is a transcript of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's recorded Christmas message for 2022.

Hello. I'm inside St. James Church by-the-Sea, La Jolla, California. We thank the rector, the clergy, the staff, and the good people of this church for allowing us to bring this Christmas message to The Episcopal Church from this wonderful and beautiful congregation.

There is a Christmas carol not that well known here in the States, maybe better known in Great Britain, that says quite simply, "Love came down at Christmas. Love all lovely. Love divine. Love was born at Christmas. Star and angel gave the sign. Love came down at Christmas."

The older I get, the more I am convinced that God came into this world in the person of Jesus for one reason, and one reason alone: to show us the way to be reconciled and in right relationship with the God who is the creator of us all, and with each other as children of that one God who is the creator of us all, and of all things.

Jesus came to show us how to live, reconciled with God, and with each other, and He taught us that the way to do it is God's way of love. For God's way of love is God's way of life. It's our hope for our

families, our communities, our societies. Indeed, it is our hope for the whole world. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, and love came down at Christmas.

Now, look, I'm 69 years old. I've been around the block a little bit. I know that sounds nice, sounds like the kind of thing we say in church. It sounds nice, but naive, idealistic but unrealistic, and yet, consider the alternative. Need I just simply say the names? Uvalde, Vestavia Hills, Tree of Life Synagogue, Club Q in Colorado Springs, Ukraine.

Now, God's way of love is not naive, it is not unrealistic, it's the way. It's the way to life for us all. Dr. King once said, "Darkness cannot cast out darkness; only light can do that. And hatred cannot cast out hatred; only love can do that." Love came down at Christmas. And as some of us are beginning to say in this Episcopal church of ours, "Love always."

Earlier this year, I went to Mother Emanuel AME in Charleston to be part of the seventh commemoration of the murders of the martyrs of Charleston. You may remember that a number of years ago, while members of that church had gathered for Bible study, a man came in and they welcomed him in, and invited him to join them, and he turned on them, and he killed many.

It was the seventh commemoration to both honor and remember those who had died, to give God thanks for those who helped—first responders, medical persons—but it was also something else. It was a time to commit ourselves, not simply to throw up our hands in despair, but to reach out our hands to each other, to roll up our sleeves, to take God's hand and take each other's hand and do the hard and holy work of love, which brings healing, which brings hope, which binds us together, and lifts us up to be all that God dreams and intends for us all to be.

Love came down at Christmas. Love always, because love is the way. It is the way that Jesus taught us based on the ancient teachings of Moses, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself," for on these two hang, depend, all the law, all the prophets, everything that God intends because God is love.

Love came down at Christmas and so let this Christmas be a moment of rededication to the work of love in the world. As Howard Thurman wrote long ago, "When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star and the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are at home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, then the work of Christmas begins. To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among others, to make music in the heart."

For love came down at Christmas, and our work is to love always. God love you. God bless you, and 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. English and Spanish PDF's are also available.

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

“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>.

Christ Church Staff



THE REV. DIANA WILCOX
Rector



SCOTT ZIEGLER
Director of Music



CANDICE WHITAKER
Director of Communications
Director of Family Ministries



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DON GIBSON
Sexton

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND SERVICES

Jan

8

The Visit of the Magi

Jan

22

Religious Life Sunday

Feb

03

149th Annual Diocesan Convention

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!



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And the best way...come to church!

CHRIST CHURCH IN BLOOMFIELD AND GLEN RIDGE

74 Park Avenue. Glen Ridge, NJ 07028

973.743.5911

christchurchepiscopal.org