



# THE PARISH CIRCLE

## ADVENT NEWSLETTER



### SUNDAYS

#### Family Church

9 a.m., Parish Hall  
December 15

#### Sunday Schedule

#### Children's Formation

Holy Moly, PreK-Grade 2

9:10 a.m., Church Circle

Connect, Grades 3-5

9:10 a.m., Rm 102, Parish Hall

Youth Group, Grades 6-12

9 a.m., Library, Parish Hall

#### Adult Forum

A Journey into Advent

7 p.m., Zoom  
December 4  
December 11  
December 18

11:30 a.m., Parish Hall  
December 8  
December 15  
December 22

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### CLERGY EPISTLE, ADVENT TIDE

**BY THE REV. DR. MANOJ MATHEW ZACHARIA,  
RECTOR**

The ancient church marked times of celebration with deep preparation. One popular example is the Lenten "fast" before the feast. A less-known "abstention" that the ancient church observed was a fast from the celebration of Christ the King Sunday through the Feast of the Nativity (Christmas.) A fast can take many forms. Growing up in homes influenced by the St. Thomas Christian tradition in India, we generally abstained from meat and food that were considered indulgent and would break our fast on Christmas. Fasting can take many forms. Its fundamental intent is to center ourselves on our dependence on Christ's mercy, which is a means to identify with those who are suffering. Such a practice entails a deep re-orientation and self-examination of life.



One form of fasting that I will be engaging in is focusing less on being glued to my phone and intentionally marking time.

In the introduction to the Advent Booklet last year, I wrote about the "tic-tock" of the clock in the Rector's Study. The sound of the moving second-hand signals to me the need to slow down and focus.

A profound practice that has been helpful to me is to mark time during Advent. Such a marking for me is about matching my breath to its rhythm and basking in the quiet. In this midst of your busy lives, during Advent, I invite you to intentionally mark time.

Human life consists of repeating cycles of joy, despair, triumph, and profound tragedy. These emotions cycle through our collective and personal lives and enable us to mark time in different ways. All of these emotions make a mark on our lives in real-time. Processing these spiritual experiences is a way to ground ourselves and mark time intentionally.

Advent, the season of anticipation, is a journey towards the ultimate mark on human history – the birth of Christ our Lord. So, as you listen to the tick-tock of your internal or external clock, I invite you to breathe and participate in the ancient tradition of the church to mark our time through prayer as we reflect upon the mystery of The Word made flesh. I invite you to "go deep." Delve into the season's mystery by taking time to open yourselves to wonder and beauty in celebrating a loving Creator who desires to bridge the alienation between creation and the Creator.

The relationship between Creator and creation has been restored through the bridge, whom we know to be Emmanuel – the Lord with Us. So, mark time, make time, breathe into time, and receive the beauty of a centered life this Advent.

Peace,

Manoj+

## ON PRAYER

**BY THE REV. M. DION THOMPSON  
SENIOR ASSOCIATE**

I recently spent a week at Holy Cross Monastery, across the Hudson River from Poughkeepsie, New York. It was a silent retreat. No talking, except for praying. Matins; noonday Eucharist; Vespers; Compline, which I prayed alone in the chapel. For six days I was immersed in silence and prayer.

I let go of time and the urgent need to do something. I lived "off the clock." The monastery has clocks, but they can be ignored. The bells toll the essentials: Time to eat; Time to pray.

I try to come here once a year. It is a time for renewal and for resetting my spiritual rhythm. I always come away with new insights. This time around I encountered what the monastic Fathers called – *Passio Libidinis Mundialis* – The Passion of Worldly Desire. Thomas Merton, the great Trappist monk and teacher, described it this way in his book, *Cassian and the Fathers*:

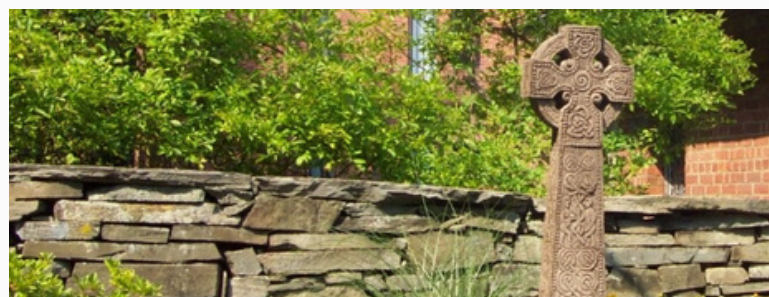
"The greatest danger to the monk's life of prayer is the possibility of becoming too attached to his work. ... In other words, it is a burning and compulsive need for work that keeps him from his prayer; he is running away from himself and from God."

Now, I am not a monk, but I read those words and thought: Father Thompson, you are so busted!

Merton echoes our Collect for Proper 22: "Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray."

We get busy. We have things to do, important things. Busyness becomes a compulsion, an addiction, a noble excuse. Merton writes: "... generosity in the contemplative life and the zeal for prayer demands that we mortify the instinctive urge to get into activities which tempt us here and now and appear to be useful and necessary."

Even monks struggle with distractions.







# MUSIC DURING ADVENT

BY LARRY MOLINARO, ORGANIST

## Advent Lessons & Carols

On December 1 we will celebrate and observe the first Sunday in Advent with an evening service of Lessons and Carols. Modeled after the famed Kings College Christmas Lessons and Carols services this particular service focuses on the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah into the world.

Along with congregational hymns for the season, music for the service includes

- Matin responsory – Palestrina/arr. Cleobury
- Adam lay ybounden – Boris Ord
- I sing of a maiden – Hadley (sung by Cantori)
- The Lamb – Tavener
- E'en So, Lord Jesus Quickly Come – Manz

The service begins at 5:30 PM and will last about an hour. What a perfect way to start your season of preparation for Christmas!

## Extended Organ Voluntaries for Advent

Many of you enjoy the organ music that is part of our Sunday worship – we are truly blessed to have such an outstanding and colorful instrument, one that supports a wide range of musical traditions. During Advent, we will offer extended closing voluntaries of around 10-15 minutes in length following the 10:00 AM service on the first three Sundays of Advent (December 1st, 8th, and 15th). Works by Jehan Alain, Maurice Duruflé, and César Franck will be featured. So be sure to stay those extra few minutes after the service to listen as part of your Advent preparation.

## Those who sing pray twice

This season we will celebrate two of the great sung prayers used in the Anglican liturgy: Magnificat (Song of Mary), the first canticle of the service of Evensong, and Nunc dimittis (Song of Simeon), the second canticle of Evensong. Associated, respectively, with the liturgical seasons of Advent and Epiphany, St. Anne's choir will present BWV 10, the "German" Magnificat (one of J.S. Bach's setting of the Magnificat) written 300 years ago this year, and Cantata 82, Ich habe genug ("It is enough"), Bach's setting of the Song of Simeon. BWV 10 will be woven throughout the 10AM service on Sunday, December 22nd, and BWV 82 will be presented as part of a Choral Evensong on Sunday, February 2nd, 2025.

The brothers at Holy Cross are Episcopalians. They follow the tradition of St. Benedict, whose Rule has influenced Western Christianity since the sixth century. Their motto – Ora et Labora; Prayer and Work – is painted on a large stone near the front door of the guesthouse.

Their prayer life is rooted in the psalms. Chanted softly during worship, these ancient songs invite us into life's joys, sorrows, celebrations and awe: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork." (Psalm 19:1) The monks pray all 150 psalms in a two-week cycle without end.

Here, they find Jesus Christ. They see him gladly joining the procession into his father's house, hear him boldly proclaiming his faith – "In the LORD have I taken refuge; how can you say to me, 'Fly away like a bird to the hilltop.'" (Psalm 11:1) – and they hear him crying out from the cross.

As we know, prayer and worship are embedded in our Book of Common Prayer. The Catechism offers explanations. The Daily Office takes its cue from the monastic tradition. So, in a way, going to Holy Cross is akin to visiting our spiritual home. But a retreat is not an escape.

Esther de Waal, a Benedictine scholar, offers these words from Merton: "We have to remember that we look for solitude in order to grow there in love for God and in love for others."

Fr. Dion



## ADVENT WREATH MAKING

**BY TEMPEST STRUNGE, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Advent is coming but... WAIT!

We will once again have the Advent Wreath Making Event on December 1st at 11:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall for our entire parish family to create their wreaths for the season and not just to have fun, fellowship, and creative times in making a wreath but also, use this tool to pray for the coming of the Lord. Writer, Jerusalem Greer says it in this beautiful way:

“The Advent Wreath is a visual symbol marking the Advent season’s progress. This practice originated as a domestic devotion opportunity for household prayer. The wreath, candles, and weekly prayers function as a simple but meaningful countdown timer for the passage of Advent”.

Some “domestic devotions” that can be used will be available at the event. It is truly awesome that this Advent season starts on the 1st. It will provide for us all a perfect countdown to the season of Advent, as a daily devotion. If this seems like too much then do a weekly prayer as a family around the dinner table or in the car on the way to work/school, or at night for bedtime. Setting the ritual of prayer is honestly the benefit that can carry forward through the whole year.

In closing this is the prayer that we will use to bless those beautiful Advent wreaths that you create for yourselves. May your season of Advent be a true blessing as we wait for the coming of the Lord!

Loving God, we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples; He is the wisdom that teaches and guides us; he is the Savior of all.

Creator God, let your blessing come upon this wreath. May its branches, pinecones, berries, rocks, moss, and all the elements we have gathered remind us of the varied ways your Spirit is active and present through all creation during all seasons of life.

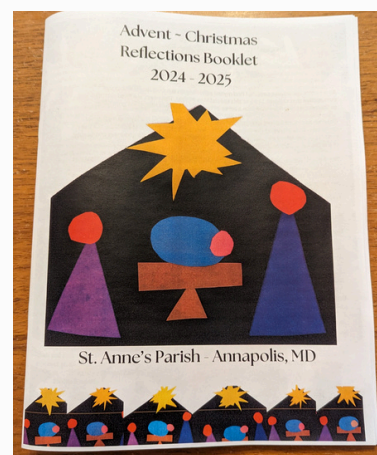
Almighty God, let your blessing come upon the candles we light this, Advent. May they shine as guides, leading us to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with you as we wait for the coming of Christ.

We ask this through the name of Jesus the Christ, our hope and savior. **Amen**

## PRAYER & THE ADVENT/CHRISTMAS REFLECTION BOOKLET

**BY ADELA ROSE**

In 2008, before Social Media existed and before everyone had computers, Sally Garrett and I went to an event the Diocese of Maryland sponsored where many different workshops were available. During one workshop we heard about a church in our Diocese that put together a Lenten pamphlet with reflections their Clergy had written, similar to the Forward – Day by Day. The idea of St. Anne’s community doing something similar caught my attention and after a great deal of prayer the idea of an Advent Reflections Booklet written by members of St. Anne’s emerged. We approached the Clergy with our idea and they agreed – this would be a Parish-wide project.







### BUT HOW - PRAYER

We prayed about who how to include the entire Parish.

We prayed about how to choose the Scriptures.

We prayed about a time-line.

We prayed what Scripture to give whom.

We prayed about how to actually put the Booklet together.

We prayed about how to put the Booklet in the hands of the public.

Almost all of our prayer was done in community with the core people involved. As we imagined in our own prayer the steps to take, a plan emerged.

The method of prayer we use to pair which Scripture with a volunteer is a form of the Imaginative Prayer - reading each Scripture and asking God to show us who might relate the most. Then we send it out, asking the volunteer to reflect on the Scripture in a personal, prayerful way.

During the first few years - the booklets were ½ the current size - did not contain graphics and were mailed to each parishioner. Now, the earlier editions seem almost primitive but each year St. Anne's relished in the process and final product.

Now, when we receive the reflections, we take each one and hold it in prayer until a picture emerges that speaks to what was written and guides our selection of photos. Our prayers in creating each page of the booklet, and the prayers of the contributors have grown to include the Christmas Season giving us the Advent/Christmas Reflections Booklet.

Clearly, our prayers as a community have provided others with life-giving experiences as indicated by these two comments:

- This scripture already speaks to me since I am a teacher who uses hands-on learning, just like Jesus! My husband will add his insights too.
- Wow!!! This is a favorite of mine... Thanks

Please enjoy your Advent/Christmas Reflections Booklet knowing it is the result of many deep, thoughtful prayers.

## A JOURNEY INTO ADVENT

BY THE REV. M. DION THOMPSON  
SENIOR ASSOCIATE

God's people have been praying the great Canticles of the Incarnation - the Cantic of Zechariah, the Cantic of Mary, and the Cantic of Simeon for nearly 2000 years. These memorable songs are the entryway into the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas. They are love poems to God, on the part of these three saints in anticipation of the Incarnation, God with us.

Brother James Dowd, a Benedictine monk in the Episcopal Church from Incarnation Monastery, will lead us through an exploration of these beloved Canticles as way to deepen our journey through Advent in anticipation of the Christmas season.

Please join us on the first three Wednesdays of Advent: December 4th, 11th, and 18th on Zoom at 7:00 PM, for an exploration of this love poetry.

As a complement to Brother James' presentations, our Adult Forum will focus on the awe, fear and joy of the Incarnation as expressed in the gospels of John, Matthew and Luke. We will be using brief film clips to help fuel our conversations.

Join us on Dec. 8th, 15th and 22nd in the Parish Hall at 11:30 a.m. For more information and to sign-up for the Zoom link, see Fr. Dion, Jo Tetlow or Katy Jensen.



Reni, Guido, 1575-1642. St. Matthew, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. [retrieved November 22, 2024]. Original source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guido\\_Reni\\_043.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guido_Reni_043.jpg).



## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

**BY ADELA ROSE,  
ADELAROSE41@AOL.COM**

Just What Is Spiritual Direction ~ Simply put – The act of seeking wholeness and balance in one’s life by spending time with someone trained to listen for your unique spirituality, your own connection with God.

The process is to meet with a Spiritual Director for about an hour each month – discovering together aspects of your life that are probably already there – just not recognized.

A Spiritual Director may be identified by many different names: Mentor, Director, Companion, Elder, Guide, Spiritual Friend, and/or Anam Cara.

A Spiritual Director does NOT proselytize, or seek to influence or convince, but instead walk alongside you as you make your individual and unique spiritual journeys, honoring the free will and discernment of each human being, especially in spiritual matters.

A Spiritual Director DOES encourage your personal spiritual story to unfurl. Through this relationship, you are empowered to explore a deeper experience of God; and help you find and follow your own grounded spiritual path; help you connect with your authentic self; help you become aware of what is deep within you; help you create a stronger relationship with yourself, with others and with God.

Spiritual directors or companions support the unique spiritual journey of every individual. They are welcoming and present with those they companion, listening and responding without being judgmental. They are contemplative and honor silence as a spiritual practice.

They are prayerful, intuitive spiritual friends – accountable and compassionate, hospitable and open, loving yet independent, distinguishing between psychology and spirituality and recognizing the limits of personal knowledge and experience which might indicate the need to refer to another professional. They are trained and hold themselves accountable to a supervisor and community. They follow universal ethical principles, with the most important one being to “do no harm.” and they honor confidentiality of directees, all in accordance with the Guidelines for Ethical Conduct published by Spiritual Directors International.

A Spiritual Director always attends regular spiritual direction for self, receives supervision by peers and teachers and is responsible for her/his work through that direct supervision. ~

A Spiritual Director is ~ Inclusive ~ Genuine ~ Listening ~ Accepting ~ Contemplative ~ Wise

## EVENING PRAYER

**BY HOWARD BUSKIRK**

We started virtual Evening Prayer at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when the church was closed. Nearly five years later, while we have also returned to in-person prayer three nights a week, virtual prayer remains strong. Prayer seems to be one of the things that works well on Zoom.

We have a small group of prayer leaders who join most nights, while others drop in when they can. I used to attend all five nights, but now try to be on three nights each week as my life returns to pre-COVID busyness. In the early days, someone had to be available to let people into the meeting. That’s no longer the case and the process is more seamless.

As Christians we are called to pray, and not just on Sunday mornings. Virtual Evening Prayer has become an important part of my prayer life and faith journey. I look forward to the beautiful Anglican tradition of Evening Prayer and the sense of community we have built online. We are always looking to add others to virtual Evening Prayer. Please let me know if you would like to join us. You are always welcome.







## PRAYER DURING EUCHARIST

BY HEATHER STRANG

Our St. Anne's community has offered prayers for healing and hope during and/or after Sunday worship for decades. It is part of who we are and is one way we live out being a praying people. Over the years, this invitation has been called healing prayer, prayers for healing and hope, and prayer and anointing, among others. All are welcome to come up to the Holy Family chapel during Eucharist and ask for prayer with another, gathering with the Holy Spirit "where two or three are gathered." All prayers are honored and kept confidential.

Here are a few words from parishioners about both offering and receiving prayer:

"I look to God for strength in this time of trouble or sorrow or sickness and ask for God to wrap me in His arms of comfort; I gather to be by their side and to be a conduit for healing or guidance or support or celebration, all in His peace, in Jesus name; I love receiving anointing, and remembering that the Holy Spirit is with me even as I leave the church; I always pray before I go to the rail for healing asking the Holy Spirit to pray through me; the key for me is to kneel before one another humbly with an open heart knowing Jesus awaits as we have come to Him with an open longing and trust that He knows and loves us; as I pray for those who have come and kneel or stand before me, I sense Jesus' loving kindness and trust that He is present and a conduit of God's love; It's very humbling to pray with others; there is a heart connection I often sense between us, a divine energy perhaps. I like to think so. It is an honor and a holy time to hold others in prayer."

If you feel like coming to the Chapel but don't know why, or if you just want some personal time, come. We are a praying community, and we know that God hears our prayers.

Learn more about receiving prayer or becoming a prayer minister by contacting anyone on the prayer team:

Linda Adamson: lsadamson1@gmail.com;  
Hutchey Doley: hutchey@mac.com;  
Janice Jobson: je.jobson@gmail.com;  
Carol Leach: carollleach@gmail.com;  
Townsend McNitt: townsendmcnitt@gmail.com;  
Deede Rivers: jimdeede@aol.com;  
Adela Rose: adelarose41@aol.com; and,  
Heather Strang: keepthefeast@verizon.net.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Advent Lessons and Carols

Dec. 1, at 5:30 p.m., Church Circle

### Advent Wreath Making

Dec. 1, at 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., Parish Hall

### Handel's Messiah

Dec 13-14, at 7:30 p.m., Church Circle

Dec 15, at 3 p.m., Church Circle

Buy tickets at [liveartsmd.org](http://liveartsmd.org)

### Chairs & Christmas Cookies

Dec. 23, at 6:30 - 8 p.m., Church Circle

### Children's Christmas Pageant

Dec. 24, at 3 p.m., Church Circle

### Festal Candlelight Eucharist

Dec. 24, at 5:30 p.m. & 10 p.m., Church Circle

### Christmas Day

Dec. 24, at 10 a.m., Church Circle

### Christmas I

Dec. 29, at 8 a.m., 10 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.,  
Church Circle

### Christmas II

Jan 5 at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m., Church Circle

### Epiphany

Jan 5 at 5:30 p.m., Church Circle

### PASA Admissions & Tours

Monday, Jan 13, at 9:30 a.m., PASA



## WHAT IS CENTERING PRAYER

BY CAROL LEACH & LYNN THONNARD

What Is Centering Prayer?

The story of Centering Prayer begins in the 1970's, when scores of young people started flocking to Buddhism. In one city where a Zen center happened to reside not far from a Catholic monastery, the youth would frequently stop at the monastery to ask for directions. A curious monk began engaging the young folks and discovered that virtually all had been raised Christian. Further inquiry revealed that they were attracted to Buddhism because "Christianity doesn't offer meditation." And so began an effort by three intrepid monks to recover and revive a Christian tradition of contemplative prayer, one that would be accessible to everyone. In the mid-1980's, Centering Prayer was born.

The Rev. Cynthia Bourgeault speaks to the power of contemplative prayer:

"...We need to talk more about contemplative prayer, or meditation, to use its generic name. [It is] a journey toward the center, toward the innermost ground of our being where we meet and are met by God...One of the great contemplative masters of our time claimed that there are three routes to the center. You can have a near-death experience. You can fall desperately in love. Or you can begin a practice of meditation. Of the three, he said with a mischievous smile, meditation is probably the most reliable starting point." \*\*

Centering Prayer is simply sitting quietly and consenting to God's presence and action. It is one response to Matthew 6:6 that advises, "Whenever you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret." It requires no special tools or knowledge, only a willingness to let go of the world for a short while. It invites us to rest in God's first language, which is silence. It trains us to listen rather than speak, and provides a method for releasing all that impedes our relationship with God and others. It brings peace and gratitude the longer it is practiced.

For more information on Centering Prayer please contact Carol Leach at [carolleach@gmail.com](mailto:carolleach@gmail.com).

\*\*From Mystical Hope, Trusting in the Mercy of God







## THROUGH THE EYES OF A PRESCHOOLER: THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS

BY KATRINA STEWART, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PASA

### Christmas Through a Child's Eyes

Christmas is a magical time of year, especially when seen through the eyes of a child. The world transforms into a wonderland of twinkling lights, festive decorations, and the promise of joy and surprises.

### The Anticipation

For children, the excitement begins weeks before Christmas Day. The countdown to December 25th is marked by advent calendars, each little door revealing a sweet treat or a tiny toy. The anticipation builds with every passing day, fueled by stories of Santa Claus and his reindeer, and the promise of gifts under the tree.

### The Decorations

The transformation of the home is a spectacle in itself. Children eagerly help to hang ornaments on the Christmas tree, each bauble and tinsel strand adding to the tree's splendor. The house is adorned with wreaths, stockings, and lights that twinkle like stars. Every corner of the home feels like a piece of the North Pole.

### The Sights and Sounds

The sights and sounds of Christmas are enchanting. Streets and shops are decorated with festive displays, and the air is filled with the sound of carols and laughter. Children marvel at the nativity scenes, the giant Christmas trees in town squares, and the elaborate light shows that illuminate the night.

### The Traditions

Christmas traditions are cherished moments for children. Baking cookies for Santa, writing heartfelt letters to him, and leaving out carrots for the reindeer are rituals filled with wonder. The joy of opening presents on Christmas morning, the thrill of discovering what Santa has left, and the warmth of family gatherings create memories that last a lifetime.

### The Celebration of Jesus' Birth

Amidst all the festivities, children also learn about the true meaning of Christmas—the celebration of Jesus' birth. Nativity plays, church services, and stories about the first Christmas night help children understand the significance of this special time. The story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, with the shepherds, wise men, and the star, adds a profound sense of wonder and reverence to the holiday.

### The Spirit of Giving

Through a child's eyes, Christmas is also a time of giving. They learn the joy of sharing and the importance of kindness. Whether it's participating in a school toy drive, making handmade gifts for loved ones, or simply spreading cheer with a smile, children embrace the true spirit of Christmas.

### The Magic

Above all, Christmas through a child's eyes is pure magic. It's a time when anything seems possible, when dreams come true, and when the world is filled with hope and love. The innocence and wonder of children remind us of all of the beauty and joy of the holiday season.



## Admissions Morning & Tours

Join us for an Admissions Tour of PASA, Preschool for the Arts at St. Anne's, on **Monday, January 13, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.** We look forward to meeting you and your family and answering your questions. Please RSVP on the PASA website at [preschoolforthearts.org/admissions-1](https://preschoolforthearts.org/admissions-1)



## St. Anne's Episcopal Church

199 Duke of Gloucester St. , Annapolis, MD 21401

### Vestry

The Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Ph.D. Rector  
Kevin Hays, Senior Warden  
([srwarden@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:srwarden@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Townsend McNitt, Junior Warden  
([jrwarden@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:jrwarden@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Katy Creely, Registrar  
([registrar@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:registrar@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Glenn Mortoro, Treasurer  
([treasurer@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:treasurer@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Robert Biddle  
Katie Burke  
Howard Buskirk  
Kirsten Chapman  
Hutchey Doley  
Lauren Dana-Evans  
Phyllis Everette  
Jaclyn Houser  
Emily Langston  
John Poulton  
William Silva  
C. Edward Hartman III, Parish Chancellor  
(non-Vestry member)

### The Parish Circle

Next edition: Lent/Easter  
Email articles by Friday, February 7  
Submission requirements

- Length: 300 to 500 words
- Format in Microsoft Word or in email
- Submit a photo as a .jpg or .png file
- Email to [cmiller@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:cmiller@stannes-annapolis.org)

Questions? Contact Claire Miller,  
Communications Associate at  
[cmiller@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:cmiller@stannes-annapolis.org)

### Clergy & Staff

The Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Ph.D., Rector  
([mzacharia@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:mzacharia@stannes-annapolis.org))  
The Rev. M. Dion Thompson, Senior Associate  
([dthompson@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:dthompson@stannes-annapolis.org))  
The Rev. Alice Graham Grant, Assistant Rector  
([agrant@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:agrant@stannes-annapolis.org))  
The Rev. Kathy Shahinian, Deacon\*  
([kshahinian@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:kshahinian@stannes-annapolis.org))  
The Rev. John Smith, Pastoral Associate\*  
The Rev. Corby Zeren, Deacon, Retired\*  
J. Ernest Green, Director of Music  
([jegreen@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:jegreen@stannes-annapolis.org))\*\*  
Hugh Reese, Director of Advancement  
([hreese@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:hreese@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Tempest B. Strunge, Director of Children and Youth Ministry  
([strunge@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:strunge@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Katrina Stewart, Director, Preschool for the Arts at St. Anne's  
([kstewart@preschoolforthearts.org](mailto:kstewart@preschoolforthearts.org))  
Larry Molinaro, Associate Director of Music\*\*  
([lmolinaro@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:lmolinaro@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Nancy Pollack, Parish Administrator  
([npollack@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:npollack@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Claire Miller, Communications Associate\*\*  
([cmiller@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:cmiller@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Caleb Briggs, Communications Assistant\*\*  
([communications@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:communications@stannes-annapolis.org))  
Mark Strandquist, Facilities and Properties Manager  
([mstrandquist@stannes-annapolis.org](mailto:mstrandquist@stannes-annapolis.org))  
(\* Non-Stipendiary/ \*\* Part-Time)

[www.stannes-annapolis.org](http://www.stannes-annapolis.org)