

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The Rev. Mary Canavan, Interim Rector

The Rev. Lee Forshaw, Deacon

The Rev. James Wilson, Resident Priest

Dorothy Cameron, Organist/Choir Director

Marilyn Olbrys, Hand Bell Choir Director

Susan Hovan, Administrative Assistant

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

HOLY EUCHARIST, Rite One at Eight O'clock

Collect of the Day

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

The Epistle: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

The Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

Homily: The Rev. Mary Canavan

The Great Thanksgiving

December 4, 2011

BCP p. 323

p. 159

p. 707

p. 333

HOLY EUCHARIST, Rite II at Ten O'clock

Processional Hymn: No. 53 'Father of Creation'

Red Binder

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Opening Sentences and Collect for Purity

Confession and Absolution

Kyrie Eleison: No. 31 'Look around you, can you see?'

Collect for the Feast of St. Nicholas (*see insert*)

The Lesson: 1 John 4:7-14

Psalm 145:8-13 (*see insert*)

Sequence Hymn: Alleluia, he is coming. Alleluia, he is here.

Alleluia, he is coming. Alleluia, he is here.

p. 1

p. 1

The Gospel: Mark 10:13-16

The Visit of St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra

The Nicene Creed

Prayers of the People (Form IV)

The Peace

p. 2

p. 4

The Offertory

The Presentation of Offering and Oblations

Offertory Hymn: 'Prepare the Way O Zion'

Junior Hand Bell Choir

THE LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT

The Great Thanksgiving (Eucharistic Prayer B)

p. 8

Sanctus and Benedictus

The Lord's Prayer

The Breaking of the Bread

p. 6

p. 7

All Baptized Christians are welcome to receive communion at Christ Church at our Lord's table.

Communion Hymn: No. 46 "Take Our Bread"

Birthdays and Anniversaries

Adult Homily: The Rev. Mary Canavan

Post Communion Prayer

The Blessing

Recessional Hymn: Hymnal 65 "Prepare the way O Zion"

Dismissal

Bereden vag for Herran

BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE: To the Glory of God and in loving memory of CLINT BRELSFORD, on the anniversary of his second year with the Lord, given by his wife, Nellie, daughter and son-in-law, Fred and Sharon Callahan, granddaughters, Carrie Albert and Megan Callahan and great-grandsons, Matthew and Christopher Albert.

To the Glory of God and in loving memory of JOSEPH AND ETHEL CARTEN, on what would have been their 71st wedding anniversary, November 28, 2011. Given with love by their daughter and son-in-law, Nancy and Alan Knoche.

OUTREACH FUND: To the Glory of God and in loving memory of TONY SACCO, who passed away November 27th, given by Joan and Chick Bettini.

CHRISTMAS FANTASIA - Rian Grimmer, a young musician who has played for us in services for the last few years, has composed a postlude to be performed for our 1pm and 10pm Christmas Eve services. Rian is an incredibly gifted musician who is currently attending the Berkeley School of Music in Boston. Everyone is encouraged to stay and listen. 'Christmas Fantasia' a beautiful setting of traditional Christmas carols for keyboard, organ and bells. We are very proud to be the inspiration behind this work, composed especially for us, and we are also very proud of Rian and his accomplishments.

NATIVITY PAGEANT - our Sunday School children will be performing the annual pageant on Sunday, December 18th at the 10 am service. All children no matter how young are invited to participate, contact Tori Tallberg at 203-650-2578 if your child would like to participate.

NURSERY SCHOOL - The nursery is now open for babies and toddlers. Onica Johnson is our Nursery Staff person. Let us warmly welcome her.

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY - A Bible study of the stories of the foretelling, conception and pregnancy of Mary and Elizabeth, and the birth of Jesus will be held on **Mondays at 1:00 p.m. in Advent**, beginning on Monday, December 5th. We will meet in the Library (Meeting Room). Please let Pastor Mary or Sue Hovan know if you are able to come.

VISIT BY ST. NICHOLAS AND SANTA CLAUS – today at the 10:00 a.m. worship service, St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, will share with us how he has come to be called Santa Claus. It's our understanding that Santa will actually be visiting in worship that day, as well. Santa will also be available for photographs following worship.

STEWARDSHIP – We are approaching the end of the year. If you have a question about the status of 2011 pledge, please contact Marilyn Olbrys at 203-375-5713, Financial Secretary.

HELP YOUR FELLOW PARISHIONERS– If you would like to help some of our parishioners in need over the holidays, you can use the envelope enclosed in the bulletin today. Put your donation in the collection plate or drop it off at the office. Outreach Commission thanks you for your generosity.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES – There will be three services on Christmas Eve: 1:00pm – a Traditional Rite II service with carols; 4:00pm – Rite II Family Service; 10:00pm – Rite II Festive Holy Eucharist. On Christmas Day there will be a Rite II Holy Eucharist at 9:00am with the Rev. Robert Deming as celebrant. On New Year's Day there will be one service only at 9:00am.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS – Please get your Christmas memorials or thanksgivings into the office as soon as possible for inclusion in the Christmas bulletins. An envelope for that purpose was included in the December Golden Rooster newsletter. Thank you for your help. Sue Hovan

STERLING HOUSE FOOD PANTRY – Food is desperately needed for the food pantry, supplies are low. Items that are particularly requested are: canned beans, pasta sauces, macaroni and cheese, tuba, cereal soups, peanut butter, rice and dry milk. If you are able to supply any of these food items, please put them in the baskets in the narthex, or if you prefer you may drop them off at the Sterling House Community Center.

A FREE COMMUNITY SUPPER – is held at Christ Church on each Wednesday, from 5 – 6 p.m. All are welcome.

PEOPLE SERVING THE LORD TODAY:

8:00am – Trevor Jones 10:00am – Chuck Stebbins, Mark Flash

Acolytes: Mark Flash

Altar Guild: Jill Kuzmich, Julia Seeber, Esther Cartwright, Debbie Scholl

Ushers: Bill Ball, Jeff Scholl

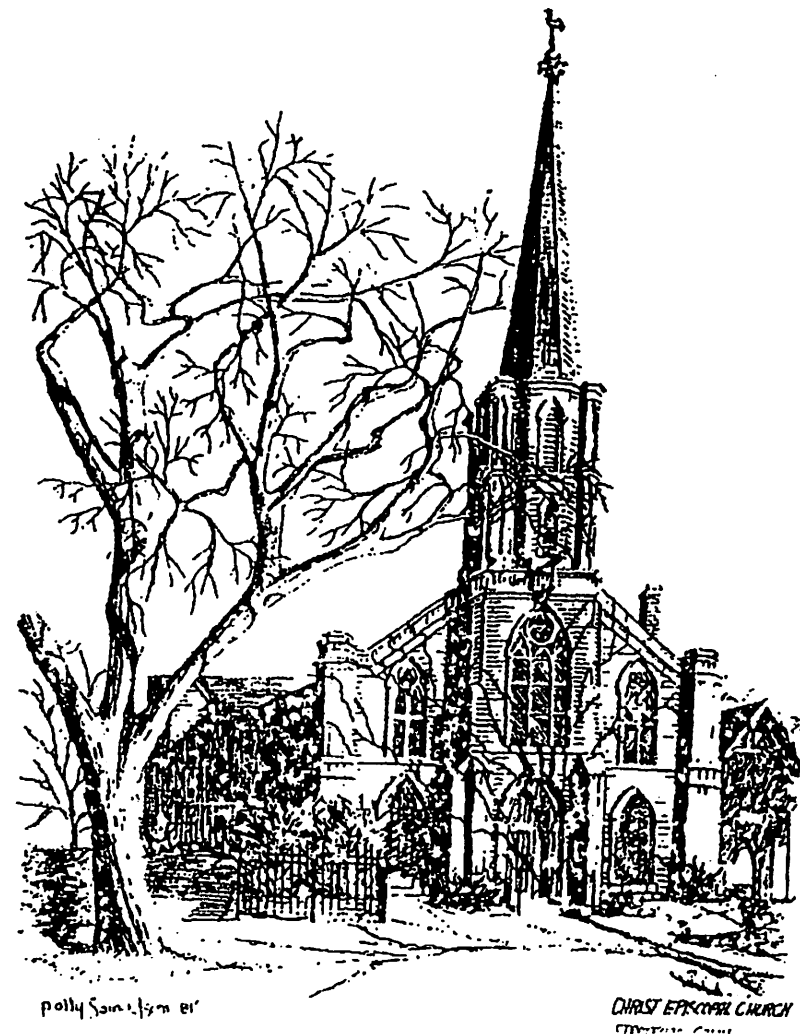
Greeters: 8:00am – Beth Brooks

10:00am – Debbie and Jeff Scholl

Counters: Jancee Marccone, Walter Baker, Lou DeCilio

Coffee Hour Hosts: Anne Minatti.

CHRIST CHURCH Stratford, Connecticut



**SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT
December 4, 2011**

CALENDAR FOR THE COMING WEEK

Today: SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

- 8:00am - Holy Eucharist, Rite I
- 10:00am - Holy Eucharist, Rite II
- 10:00am - Harry Rosen Study Group
- 11:15am - Photos with Santa
- 11:30am - Youth Bell Choir Rehearsal
- 4:00pm - AA Meeting

Monday:

- 7:00pm - Buildings and Grounds Meeting
- 7:00pm - Boy Scouts – Troop 76
- 8:00pm - Alanon Meeting
- 8:00pm - Alateen Meeting

Tuesday:

- 5:30pm - AA Meeting

Wednesday:

- 5:00pm - Community Supper – The Lord's Kitchen
- 5:30pm - Back to Basics Twelve Step Program
- 6:45pm - Senior Bell Choir Rehearsal

Thursday:

- 9:00am - Holy Eucharist, Rite II - Chapel
- 7:00pm - Senior Choir Rehearsal

Friday:

- 12:00pm - AA Meeting

Saturday:

- 10:00am - OA Meeting

Sunday: THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

- 8:00am - Holy Eucharist Rite I
- 10:00am - Holy Eucharist, Rite II – Feast of St. Nicholas
- 10:00am - Harry Rosen Study Group
- 11:30am - Junior Bell Choir Rehearsal
- 4:00pm - AA Meeting

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 4, 2011

The Collect for the Day

Almighty God, in your love you gave your servant Nicholas of Myra a perpetual name for deeds of kindness both on land and sea: Grant, we pray, that your Church may never cease to work for the happiness of children, the safety of sailors, the relief of the poor, and the help of those tossed by tempests of doubt or grief; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The First Reading

Lector: A Reading from the First Letter of John

1 John 4:7-14

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.

Psalm 145:8-13

. 8

The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.

9

The LORD is loving to everyone *
and his compassion is over all his works.

10

All your works praise you, O LORD, *
and your faithful servants bless you.

11

They make known the glory of your kingdom *
and speak of your power;

12

That the peoples may know of your power *
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

13

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; *
your dominion endures throughout all ages.

The Gospel: Mark 10:13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.



WHO IS SANTA CLAUS—REALLY?

Santa Claus, the jolly man in a red suit with a long white beard—was he real? Or did he first appear in Coca-Cola ads? At department stores? Illustrating the poem, "Twas the Night Before Christmas?"

The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born to a wealthy family during the third century in Asia Minor, now Turkey. His parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic. Obeying Jesus' words, Nicholas gave all that he had to the poor, the sick, and the suffering. Later when he was Bishop of Myra he became famous for these saintly deeds. He also suffered for his faith and was exiled and imprisoned under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who ruthlessly persecuted Christians. After his release, Bishop Nicholas attended the Council of Nicea in AD 325. The anniversary of his death, December 6th, became a feast day of celebration.

When a person lived as long ago as St. Nicholas, it is sometimes difficult to separate fact from legend. All the stories, however, tell us about his character and help us understand why he has always been so popular.

One is about a poor man with three daughters. In those days, for a young woman to marry, a father must give money to help set up the new household—a dowry. The larger the dowry, the better the chance for a young woman to find a husband. Without a dowry, a woman could not marry. These three sisters, without dowries, were destined to be sold into slavery. Mysteriously, on three different occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their

home—providing the needed dowries. The bags of gold, tossed through an open window, are said to have landed in stockings, or shoes, left before the fire to dry. So began the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas. Sometimes the story is told with gold balls instead of bags of gold. That is why three gold balls, or oranges, are a symbol for St. Nicholas.

St. Nicholas did many kind and generous acts. He did them in secret, expecting nothing in return. Stories tell of his rescuing sailors, relieving famine, sparing the lives of children, and protecting the innocent. Within a century of his death he was named a saint and came to be regarded as the special friend of children, bakers, sailors, merchants, and many others. He quickly became most beloved and is the patron saint of Greece, Russia, Sicily, and Lorraine, as well as many cities in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and the Netherlands, including Amsterdam. During the 12th–15th centuries more than 1,200 churches were named for Nicholas—twenty-three in the Netherlands and nearly four hundred in England.

St. Nicholas' December 6th feast day came to be celebrated in many European countries. This kept alive stories of St. Nicholas' goodness and generosity. In Germany and Poland boys dressed as bishops and begged alms for the poor—and sometimes for themselves! In mid-November St. Nicholas arrives in the Netherlands on a steamship from Spain to ride a white horse while making his rounds to check on children's behavior. During these weeks children put out their shoes, filled with carrots and hay for the horse, hoping to find small gifts and treats left by St. Nicholas.

The Eve of St. Nicholas Day, December 5th, is still celebrated in the Netherlands with the sharing of candies and pepernoten (thrown in the door by the unseen good saint or his helper), chocolate initial letters, and elaborately wrapped riddles. In many European countries December 6th is still the day for gift giving and merrymaking. Such celebration early in Advent helps keep the Christ Child the focus of Christmas Day.

Waves of European immigrants brought St. Nicholas and his beloved traditions to the New World. Colonial Germans in Pennsylvania, for example, celebrated the St. Nicholas Feast. Santa Claus is a natural phonetic alteration from the German *Sankt Nikolaus* and the Dutch *Sinterklaas*. Americans merged St. Nicholas with the English Father Christmas as part of Christmas celebrations on December 25th.

In 1809 Washington Irving created a jolly St. Nicholas character in his *Knickerbocker's History of New York*. This image of a jolly elf was

strengthened in 1823 by the highly popular "A Visit from St. Nicholas" poem now better known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas." Thomas Nast's *Harper's Magazine* Santa illustrations continued the shift of St. Nicholas from a bishop to a secular symbol of seasonal cheer. The 1930s completed the transformation into the Santa we know today through Coca-Cola and Pepsi advertisements by artists Haddon Sundblom and Norman Rockwell.

Along with the name change, St. Nicholas' image was also transformed. Originally dressed in bishops' robes with a tall miter and carrying a crozier (shepherd's staff), he came to be dressed in a red suit with white fur trim. As Santa he then began turning up in department stores and on street corners as a benign source of seasonal beneficence.

Such commercial success has led the North American Santa Claus back to Europe where he enjoys increasing popularity. In some areas of the Netherlands, however, Santa Claus is legally prohibited from appearing until after *Sinterklaasavond*, December 5th. In this way the Dutch hope to preserve their own unique national tradition.

It is a long journey from the fourth century Bishop of Myra, St. Nicholas, whose devotion to God led to extraordinary kindness and generosity, to today's jolly Santa Claus who is frequently thought to be encouraging consumption rather than compassion.

Who is Santa Claus? He is Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, whose caring surprises continue to model true giving. If we focus on Nicholas, rather than Santa, we will emphasize giving more than receiving—need more than greed. It was out of Christian love that Nicholas shared what he had with those who had less. We can do the same.

—Carol Peterkin Myers

Carol Myers is an elder at Hope Church (Reformed Church in America) in Holland, Michigan. She began collecting St. Nicholas information and items after moving to Holland and looking for ways to adopt a bit of "Dutchness" to enrich her family's understanding of Santa Claus. She is the founder of the St. Nicholas Center, www.stnicholascenter.org. Adapted from The Church Herald, December 1997.

Celebrate St. Nicholas' Day!

A simple St. Nicholas Day celebration adds a bit of welcome festivity in the early days of Advent. It provides an opportunity to tell St. Nicholas' story as a man of faith whose goodness and generosity grew out of his love for God. It enriches our understanding of Santa Claus by showing the real historical person who inspired the familiar legend and traditions.

Tell St. Nicholas' story. Have children fill their shoes with pieces of carrot or bits of hay for his white horse. Place shoes outside bedroom doors or on the hearth. See that a candy treat and simple gift appears by morning on December 6th.

Or have a party. Serve some Dutch specialties: *erwtensoep* (pea soup), *roode kool* (red cabbage), *saucijzebroodjes* (pigs in a blanket), *speculaas koekjes* (spice or windmill cookies), *banketstaven* (almond roll), or *oliebollen* (fritters). Give simple gifts in the Dutch way: accompany them with elaborate riddles and/or wrap in fantastically deceiving ways, such as a pen inside a hollowed out carrot, inside of multiple boxes and wrappings.

Living in Holland, Michigan, it was easy to have Dutch touches in our St. Nicholas observance. When our children were young, and not so young, they placed their wooden shoes, with pieces of carrots, by the fireplace on the evening of December 5th. In the morning the boys would find two matchbox cars and a gold mesh bag of Dutch chocolate coins. Our daughter might find a piece of jewelry or special barrettes. Over the years, Dutch chocolate initial letters found their way into the shoes and the cars and toys gave way to a tape, a book, or earrings. In such ways St. Nicholas Day helped us connect faith and giving and have a bit of fun early in the waiting weeks of Advent.

