



# THE Cornerstone

## December 2022

Newsletter of St. Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church

107 State Street, Albany, New York

### The Reverend Christina Hunter

Thanksgiving Eve, 2022

Beloved of God,

As I was putting my son to bed last night, he said, "Mommy, I can't wait until Christmas!"

Maybe that's how you feel, even if you're not hoping for a monster truck and a 3D puzzle of St. Basil's Cathedral. You might be a "Christmas person." I can't think of any other time of year that is such a distinctive mix of music, decorations, gift giving, traditional foods, philanthropy, special worship, and seasonal productions that range from Handel's Messiah to the Charlie Brown Christmas Special.

Many of you have told me that Christmas preparations can get so busy, it's easy to miss the joy and wonder of Christmas itself. I can relate, and I want to share with you another way of thinking about this time of year that may be helpful.

As Christians, we have the blessing of Advent. These four weeks help us to do what is so difficult for us as a society and as human beings: Wait. Advent is a church season of waiting that's both joyful and dangerous (in contrast to Lent, which emphasizes repentance, self-examination, and amazing grace). To use a fitting analogy, Advent is like anticipating a baby.

Getting ready for a new baby has its joys. As in Advent, we plan and prepare. We rearrange our houses. We decide where to put the bassinet, and we buy mountains of diapers. And, we imagine how beautiful the baby's face will be, how perfect his tiny hands, how bright the light in her eyes.

But getting ready for a baby is also uncomfortable, with an element of danger. For those of you who have experienced childbirth, there can be anxiety and fear as we approach the pain of labor. There is the physical discomfort of late pregnancy. And when the baby comes, it is impossible to anticipate how much your life will change.

I was recently talking to a friend who is a new mom, and I was remembering how radical the shift to parenthood is — a change that is just unimaginable until it happens. The baby comes, and suddenly your life is no longer your own. Your priorities — right down to your waking and sleeping — are all re-written based around what your child needs.

Beloved, is this not what we anticipate in Advent? Joy in the coming birth, as we re-arrange our houses? But also, a danger — a knowing that this infant is also our king, our savior, and our God. He will demand no less than a complete re-writing of our lives. He will demand our deaths to our own wills and ways because he wants to give us something better — a new life guided each day by his grace and care.

This is the Great Story which we anticipate and proclaim each year. A tale of love. The story of a God who loved his people so much that he came to live among them. May we prepare for his coming, with its joys and dangers. And may he be born — once again — in your heart and in your homes this year.

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus,

Mtr. Christina+



### Saint Nicholas

The story of Santa Claus (also known as St. Nicholas, Father Christmas and Kris Kringle), was a mid-European fable which was popular in the Netherlands and later in the Nieuw Nederlandt (New Netherlands of New York). This traditional Dutch Santa had a big belly and was dressed all in fur and wore high boots, and he smoked a long stemmed Dutch pipe.

As the patron saint of the Dutch children, he brought presents to put in the shoes and stockings of good little children. Dutch families decorated evergreen trees with lighted candles to imitate the stars in the sky and placed fruits, nuts and decorated cookies on the trees. The feast of St. Nicholas celebration was on December 6<sup>th</sup> (The name day of Saint Nicholas, a real saint and bishop who lived in Myra in the 300's).

While the Dutch celebrated Christmas, the nearby English communities outlawed all such festivities which must have been hard on English children.

Clement Clarke Moore first published his poem "A visit from St. Nicholas" (*Twas the night before Christmas*), in the Troy Sentinel on December 23, 1823. Moore popularized the notion that Santa flew from house to house in a sleigh pulled by eight tiny reindeer. In the 1830's merchants advertising cards became the first Christmas cards. In 1846 when the family of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were sketched, gathering around their Christmas tree caused Christmas trees to become popular.

In 1881 Thomas Nast published cartoons of Santa in Harpers Weekly as an elf-size character. Then by 1931 the Coca-Cola Company introduced a life size figure of Santa, the character we know today.



## Advent and Christmas at St. Peter's

**Advent Wreaths, Calendars, and Candles**  
are available to the congregation in the  
Pumpelly Room.

**Messiah Sing-Along**  
Sunday, December 11th  
3:00pm

**Sunday School Pageant  
Rehearsal**  
Sunday, December 4th  
10:30am Service

**Sunday School Pageant**  
Sunday, December 11th  
10:30am Service



**Hanging of the Greens**  
Sunday, December 18th  
12:00pm

**Lessons and Carols**  
Sunday, December 18th  
10:30am Service

**Christmas Eve Services**  
Saturday, December 24th  
4:30pm Family Service w/ Crèche  
9:30pm Choral Prelude  
10:00pm Choral Service with Holy  
Communion

**Christmas Day Service**  
Sunday, December 25th  
9:00am Holy Communion

### Blessing Bags

The Daughters of the King will meet on Sunday, December 4th to assemble Blessing Bags for the women at the St. Francis Mission. Daughters and other members of the parish are welcomed to join them in the meeting room on the second floor, following the 10:30am service.

### Christmas Pageant

On Sunday, December 4th, all children that want to participate in our Annual Christmas Pageant should report to the Sunday School rooms to get your parts, try on costumes and do a little rehearsing. The pageant will be performed during the 10:30AM service on Sunday, December 11th.

### Vestry Meeting

The December Vestry meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 13th at 5:15pm in the second floor meeting room

### Coffee Hour – an easy way to make a Big Impact!

It is wonderful to have so many of our parishioners attending St. Peter's again, and our coffee hour time after the 10:30 service has been attended and enjoyed by so many. But honestly, we could use a bit of help to keep this important stewardship and fellowship activity a true group activity. While we have a dedicated small group of volunteers, we could use more help to get us through until spring 2023. It's pretty easy and training is FREE! Please contact Michele Vennard at [mlvennard@gmail.com](mailto:mlvennard@gmail.com) or 518-858-0525 (cell) or 518-274-4989. Glad to talk it over and hope you can join us to serve or bake or both! (the freezer is generally well stocked)

### Hanging of the Greens

The annual Hanging of the Greens in which we decorate the church for Christmas with pine and balsam will take place immediately following the 10:30am service on Sunday, December 18th. The traditional ham luncheon will be served at 1pm. We ask you to please dress comfortably and bring a dish to share. We need servers, set-up and clean-up help. We hope that you will join us for this long-time festive tradition.

### Christmas Poinsettia & Hanging of the Greens Donation



Your special gifts for poinsettias and greens to honor, show thanks, and to remember loved ones are crucial to this beautiful display and annual parish event. If you would like to be part of this floral tribute, please complete the enclosed Christmas Flower form and send it to the church office with your donation. The deadline is Sunday, December 18th. We urge you to be as generous as you can. Thank you for your support.

### Christmas Giving Tree

This year, St. Peter's Church will be providing Christmas gifts (board games and card games) for the children at the St. Francis Soup Kitchen and the South End Children's Café. A Christmas Giving Tree is located in the Pumpelly Room and is decorated with paper ornaments indicating the age group you are to buy a game for (no electronics, please). We hope you will consider taking one or more of the ornaments. The game should be returned to St. Peter's, wrapped (with gift tag attached), no later than Sunday, December 18th. As always, we thank you for your continued support and your generosity! Questions? Please call Laura Saffares at (518)368-4284.

## Sunday School & Outreach



Blessings of the Pumkin Bread



### St. Francis Mission Soup Kitchen Saturday, December 17th ~ 11:00am to 1:00pm

On the 3rd Saturday of every month, Laura our Director of Christian Education and new Chairperson of Outreach, along with other volunteers, all get together to help serve the families of our community in the South End of Albany. You are welcome to come and witness this amazing outreach program anytime you can, we are there from 9am-1pm. Thank You to all that come to volunteer. For information or to let Laura know you are coming please call her at (518) 368-4284.



We are collecting gently used coats for kids and the elderly of St Francis Mission. Donations can be dropped off in the green barrels in the back of the church, or upstairs in the Sunday school room, or you may call the church office to schedule a time for drop off. The cold weather is coming and many people at the soup kitchen are in need this year. So look through your closet and tell a friend or neighbor to see if they have anything to donate as well. We are in need of children's coats sizes 2t to 5; Women's medium to 2XX; and Men's large to 2XX. We are also collecting hats and gloves/mittens for children and adults. Laura will pick up any donation!

## Outreach

We will be collecting non perishable food for the South End Children’s Café cabinets until March of the new year. The box for the food is in the front of the church, along with a list of the most needed items. Please find it in your heart to pick up an extra box of pasta or a loaf of bread while doing your weekly grocery shopping. Laura will bring the donations down to the South End Children’s cafe each Sunday to fill the cabinets.



A Huge Thank You!  
to all that donated to the  
25 Thanksgiving bags for the families  
of the South End Children’s Café.  
So blessed to give these families a  
bountiful Thanksgiving


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### CHRISTMAS AT THE DAMIEN CENTER

On Sunday, December 25, the Outreach Committee and the parishioners of St. Peter’s will be hosting a turkey dinner at the Center. Service will start at 1:00. We welcome any assistance in serving the meal itself, or in preparing a side dish or dessert in advance. If you have a favorite side dish for turkey (maybe one you usually make for Thanksgiving?), or a favorite dessert, here’s your chance to showcase it for a new audience. Our guests will be some of the members of the Center for whom the Center is home. We are expecting 25-30 people. If you are interested, or have questions, please speak to Sharon DeBonis at church or contact me at (518) 237-1871 (home), (518) 669-5054 (cell/text) or [scdebonis@verizon.net](mailto:scdebonis@verizon.net).

# December 2022



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<p>4 <b>Second Sunday of Advent</b></p> <p>8:30am - Holy Communion 10:30am - Holy Communion 11:45am - Assemble Blessing Bags</p>	5	6	7  8:45am - Top
<p>11 <b>Third Sunday of Advent</b></p> <p>8:30am - Holy Communion 10:30am - Morning Prayer with Sunday School Pageant 3:00pm - Handel's Messiah Sing - Along</p>	12	13  5:15pm - Vestry Meeting	14  8:45am - Top
<p>18 <b>Fourth Sunday of Advent</b></p> <p>8:30am - Holy Communion 10:30am - Lessons and Carols 12:00pm - Hanging of the Greens with Luncheon at 1:00pm</p>	19	20	21 <b>Saint Thomas</b> <b>the Apostle</b>
<p>25 <b>The Nativity of our Lord</b> <b>Jesus Christ</b> <b>Christmas Day</b></p> <p>9:00am - Holy Communion</p> 	26 <b>Saint Stephen,</b> <b>Deacon &amp; Martyr</b>  Office Closed	27 <b>Saint John,</b> <b>Apostle &amp; Evangelist</b>	28 <b>The Holy</b>



Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 5:30pm - Full Choir Rehearsal	2	3
of the Hill	8 5:30pm - Full Choir Rehearsal	9	10 9:30am - Messiah Rehearsal with the Orchestra
of the Hill	15 5:30pm - Full Choir Rehearsal	16	17 11:00am - Angels in Training
<b>Thomas Apostle</b>	22 5:30pm - Full Choir Rehearsal	23	24 <b>Christmas Eve</b>  4:30pm - Holy Communion 9:30pm - Choral Prelude 10:00pm - Holy Communion
<b>y Innocents</b>	29  No Choir Rehearsal	30	31 <b>New Year's Eve</b>

# St. Peters Music

## CHOIR

Choir rehearsals are on the following schedule:  
Thursdays: 5:30pm - 7:00pm Full Choir  
Sundays: 9:30am rehearsal for the 10:30am service

We are eager to welcome boys and girls age 8 to grade 8 to join the Treble section of the choir.

## HANDEL'S MESSIAH SING ALONG

On Sunday, December 11th at 3PM the St. Peter's Choir, along with a chamber orchestra and soloists, will host a *Handel's Messiah Sing Along*. Dr. Tim Reno will be the guest conductor with Mary Bon on the organ. Come sing with the choir or come just to listen. Scores will be available or bring your own. Free admission with donations received.

## **FESTIVAL SERVICE of LESSONS & CAROLS**

Sunday, December 18th at 10:30 am



## *MESSIAH SING-ALONG*

A SACRED ORATORIO by George Frideric Handel

The Choir and Soloists of  
ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
with Chamber Orchestra and Organ

**Directed by Dr. Tim Reno**

Come to Sing or just to listen  
Scores available or bring your own

**Sunday, December 11th  
at 3:00PM**

St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
107 State Street, Albany, NY

Free Admission  
Donations Received

[www.stpeterschurhalbany.org](http://www.stpeterschurhalbany.org)  
(518)434-3502



## Pledge Cards

Pledge cards for 2023 have been mailed out to all parishioners. If you did not receive a pledge card please call the church office. It would be greatly appreciated if you could please take a minute to complete your card and return it to the church office or place it in the offering plate during the service. Pledges can also be made on the St. Peter's website at [www.stpeterschurhalbany.org](http://www.stpeterschurhalbany.org) by clicking on the "Get your pledge card" button. You may also call the church office and we would be more than happy to complete a card for you. Thank you to those that have promptly completed and returned their pledge card or pledged online.

## New COVID Update

St. Peter's has a new alert system in place for flu season this fall and winter. Our COVID Guidelines have been updated to include this item: "If a parishioner tests positive after attending worship or a church function, we ask that the church office be notified so that we can send out a weekly notice via Constant Contact letting other parishioners know there was a positive COVID case. This open and regular communication will give parishioners the information they need to decide how best to protect themselves. The names of the COVID-positive parishioners will be kept confidential."





Giving Hope... Transforming Lives.

## Capital City Rescue Mission and St. Peter's Episcopal Church Overnight Men's Shelter

Partnering together for Winter Emergency Shelter since 2009



Please consider volunteering with the Mission and the Church as this vital ministry is offered to needy men in Albany!

Volunteers will assist Mission and Church Staff with hospitality, ministry, and oversight of all guest needs. Specific duties include explaining shelter guidelines, serving snacks and drinks, and settling in guests for the night. Additional time may be spent exchanging stories and enjoying Christian movies. Volunteers may choose to volunteer a few hours a night, or volunteer for a full night, Overnight Volunteers have the option to sleep in reclining chairs provided by the Church.

Thank you for considering! The rewards of serving the homeless far outweigh the sacrifices!

### **For more information, please contact us today!**

To volunteer through the Mission, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator!

Hope Smith Office # 518-462-0459 ext. 237 [vcoordinator@albanymission.com](mailto:vcoordinator@albanymission.com)

To volunteer through St. Peter's, please call or email one of the following:

Ruth Manss, Office # 518-434-3502 x 5 or email [receptionist@stpeterschurchalbany.org](mailto:receptionist@stpeterschurchalbany.org)

Mtr. Christina Hunter, Office # 518-434-3502 x4 or email [priest@stpeterschurchalbany.org](mailto:priest@stpeterschurchalbany.org)

Or Jim Chenot, cell phone 518-669-3096

For St. Peter's Shelter and Mission Operations, please contact the Mission's Intake Coordinator

Lance Rowland, 518-462-0459 ext. 246 (office) or (cell) 518-320-5758

or email [Lrowland@albanymission.com](mailto:Lrowland@albanymission.com)

**Thank you for considering joining us this winter!**

**May Jesus Christ our Lord richly bless you as you work with us as His hands and feet to the needy people of Albany!**

**MINUTES FOR THE VESTRY MEETING  
ST. PETER'S PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**October 11, 2022**

**Present:** Mtr. Christina, J. Chenot, D. Spath, A. Closson, C. Gordon, F. Hershey, M. Holden, M. Lundberg, J. Russom, G. Scala

**Absent:** S. Debonis, M. Moran

Opening Prayer Led by Mtr. Christina.

**1. Approval of the Vestry Meeting Minutes, June 14, July 26, and September 13, 2022**

The June 14, 2022 Vestry Minutes were approved on a motion by J. Russom and seconded by M. Holden. The July 26, 2022 Vestry Minutes were approved on a motion by F. Hershey and seconded by D. Spath. The September 13, 2022 Vestry Minutes were approved on a motion by M. Lundberg and seconded by A. Closson. All vestry minutes were then unanimously approved by the vestry.

**2. Minister's Report** - Mother Christina

**Rector stuff:**

Two children are being prepared for First Holy Communion on All Saints' Sunday, with Dr. John Davis taking the lead on the teaching.

At least one teen is beginning preparation for Confirmation on Oct. 23. The visiting bishop will do confirmations at the Easter Vigil, 2023, at the Cathedral.

Did godparent preparation classes on Zoom leading up to the double baptism on Oct. 9.

Met with Jason Smith (from St. John's Troy) and Jim regarding livestreaming services. Jason believes he can set up livestreaming for us with a very modest investment, but we'd need to upgrade the church's sound and Internet capabilities first. He recommended a local company that could look at sound for us if we're interested.

Have begun recording and posting weekly sermons on youtube for the duration of the "St. Peter's Stories" preaching series from Sept. 18 through All Saints' Sunday.

Am in the process of trying to talk to Moses about whether he wants to continue as lead usher. Planning on working with the usher guild to draft a set of guidelines/training and to set a date for a meeting and refresher training.

Met with George to get an education on church finances. Am drafting a stewardship letter that should be ready to send out by the end of the week.

Our family joined the Greater Loudonville Association and the Friends of Pruyn House.

**Interim stuff:**

Review: My job as interim involves essentially two duties: My first duty is do "big picture" vision/mission work with the whole congregation that answers three questions: Who are we? Who is our neighbor? What is God calling us to do? The second duty is to review ministries, systems, policies, etc, and see if anything needs to be updated, cleaned out, done away with, or highlighted/celebrated.

Update on the "Who are we?" piece of my interim work:

We're partway through the heritage preaching series

Storytelling Sunday/Chili Cookoff is this Sunday, the 16<sup>th</sup>. Because attendance may be thin, I am putting together storytelling 'take home kits' to gather more stories from the church to help with this phase of work.

Work has begun on a St. Peter's timeline to be posted as soon as it's completed.

Heritage Series will conclude on All Saints' Sunday with first communions of some parishioners and the rediscovered altar story.

Systems and Policies: Will be asking Vestry for help in updating four areas of Finances, Property, Personnel, and Bylaws/governance. We'll split into four action committees and have an extra work session to do some needed updates in these areas. I'll provide more information on this work as we get closer to 2023.

**3. Sr. Warden's Report** -J. Chenot

We began the month of October continuing to enjoy Mtr. Christina's Sunday "Story Sermons". Unfortunately, this past Sunday we found ourselves with individuals in the parish and choir, including Mtr. Christina coming down with covid symptoms. We have been sanitizing the entire parish hall and church on a regular basis to help ease any anxieties at bay. Unfortunately, Mtr. Christina was unable to celebrate this past Sunday services due to covid. Though Mtr. Christina was unable to be with us, we were able to have the Reverend Ellen Neufeld, from Scotia, officiate both Sunday services, including two baptisms at the 10:30 service.

Our choir has been back in session rehearsing each Thursday evening. Mary Bon has been working tirelessly practicing on the organ getting up to speed. She has been doing a wonderful job working with our choir making beautiful music. For the near future, she will be continuing to work with us as our interim choir director. Mary has also secured an orchestra to perform the Messiah on December 11<sup>th</sup>. The venue will be a sing along for those who would like to sing along with our choir including our soloist from our choir. Mary, thank you so much for all your hard work and commitment to our choir and to St. Peter's.

This upcoming Sunday following the 10:30 service, we will have a story telling and chili cook-off event in our parish hall hosted by Mtr. Christina. We hope all can attend with their best chili and stories.

As we look ahead to November, we are already preparing for our annual Pre thanksgiving dinner for Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup> beginning at 5:30. Please plan to attend if you can.

Finally, I would like to thank Mtr. Christina for all her work looking into our history, how we have worshiped in the past, as well as working on connecting with our parishioners, past and present. All this work and information can only bring us closer as a parish family and we thank you for that.

4. **Sunday Attendance** – The Average Sunday Attendance is 68.1.

#### **5. Finance** – G. Scala - Treasurer's Report

Offerings for the month were \$10,526. Year-to-date we are at \$142,811 which compares to \$150,846 for the same period in 2021.

Endowment accounts had positive returns for the month. Merrill Lynch was at +5.53% and Key was at +3.64%. Year-to-date the returns are still negative, Merrill Lynch is at -19.16% and Key is at -23.12%.

Expenses are \$97,431 *under* budget for the year but our Net Loss is quite a bit worse than budgeted primarily due to the investment/endowment account returns.

Stewardship letters have gone out so hopefully we will be receiving them back soon.

**6. Property** – The new choir stalls are in the carving process and coming along nicely. The choir and vestry are very excited to see these new pieces of work to help complete the Restoration Project.

The stage that was made many years ago for church performances has not been used in quite a few years due to the laborous work to put it together. The vestry has decided to donate this stage to an organization who will make good use of it.

7. **Outreach** – The Outreach Committee has committed to donating 330 containers per week to the St. Francis Mission for 1 full year. Thank you to those who are helping to contribute and make this possible.

**8. Old Business** – The vestry has been working on acquiring a marketing intern to help with promoting our church and events as well as maintaining some of our social media accounts. This committee has been working with Siena College and we hope to have an intern for the Spring Semester.

Mother Christina has suggested some temporary signage for the Holidays for general direction to restrooms and Sunday School. The vestry is looking to purchase more permanent signage in the future.

**9. New Business** – The vestry was presented with a proposal for Mary Bon to step in as Interim Choir Director for the time until we complete a search and hire a new Director/Organist. The proposal was approved on a motion by G. Scala, seconded by M. Lundberg, then unanimously approved by the vestry.

Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, Mother Christina is going to put out a memo requesting parishioners to contact the church office if they test positive after attending church or a church event. We will post just the number of positive cases for the week, no personal information will be given.

#### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by C. Gordon and seconded by J. Russom, then was approved unanimously by the vestry.

Compline was led by Mtr. Christina.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christie J. Gordon

## *Clergy & Staff*

The Rev. Christina Hunter.....Priest-in-Charge  
Mary E. Bon, M. Mus., CAGO, ARCM.....Organist & Choir Director  
Laura Rulison.....Director of Christian Education  
Ruth Manss..... Office Manager  
James P. Shortall.....Sexton  
Wayne Hill.....Sexton  
Janice Chenot.....Office Volunteer  
E. Constance Powell.....Historian & Archivist

## *Vestry*

James Chenot ..... Senior Warden  
Deborah Spath.....Junior Warden  
George Scala.....Treasurer

Ashley Closson, Sharon DeBonis, Christie Gordon,  
Fred Hershey, Maria Holden, Mark Lundberg,  
Malcom Moran, Jeff Russom

## *How to Contact Us*

### **Office Hours:**

Monday -Friday

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Telephone: 518-434-3502

Fax: 518-462-4419

E-Mail:

[Receptionist@stpeterschurchalbany.org](mailto:Receptionist@stpeterschurchalbany.org)

Website:

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

## *Services*

### **Sunday**

Holy Communion 8:30 a.m.

Holy Communion 10:30 a.m.

(1st & 3rd Sundays)

Morning Prayer 10:30 a.m.

(2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays)

Sunday School 10:30 a.m.

ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

107 State St.

Albany, New York 12207

