

December Happenings

St. James Episcopal Church, Amesbury



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Dear St. James Family,

When I crossed the Amesbury town line on my way from the airport this past Saturday, I had this wonderful feeling of being home. While I had a tremendous, exciting, glorious trip to the Land of the Holy One, a trip I look forward to sharing with you over the coming months, it was good to not only be home, but to feel I was home. I began to reflect on this feeling and the ways God has touched my life over the past 12 months beginning on December 21, 2014 when I celebrated my first Sunday services at St. James. All of the myriad emotions and feelings alive within me on Saturday became a great way for me to begin the Advent season.

It was a tremendous gift for me to take some time on Saturday and reflect on the past year and where I saw God in my life. It also made me realize how important it is to spend time in quiet with God, which is what Advent urges us to do. As busy as life is, taking time out here and there, whether during the day, at night before falling asleep, or simply an hour each Sunday, it is so important to enter into that sacred space of relationship with God. And whether we are in good spirits or the present is difficult, it is this time that can refresh us because it gives us time in conversation with God.

I would like to invite us all during this Advent season to take some time and just be, be with God, even if the only time we can find is sitting at a red light. It is this time that can bring us some refreshment as we face the business of life. We can use this time to reflect on the blessings in our life or spend time questioning God and asking why God doesn't seem to be filling our lives with blessings, a place I found myself in not that long ago. We can also enter into conversation about those frightening aspects of life as we remember the terrible mass shootings of this past year and the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Beirut and other places in our world. What this season prepares us for, reminds us of, is that God in Christ Jesus entered not only our world but into each of our lives and is ready to accept our prayers and praises our complaints and anger, our happiness and sadness but we have to be willing to enter the conversation. My friends, enter that conversation this Advent and carry that conversation on throughout the weeks and months ahead reflecting on where God is working in each of our lives, questioning where God is working in our lives and the world and finding for ourselves within the conversation,

refreshment and solace which Christ promises to all that come to Him.

May you all have a Blessed Advent Season.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. John

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Christmastide Services



Christmas Eve Thursday, December 24th

4:00pm

Godly Play Pageant and Holy Eucharist, Rite II with Christmas hymns.
This is a family friendly service.

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8:00pm

Festal Choral Eucharist, Rite II

Christmas Day Friday, December 25th

One service at 10:00am.

Holy Eucharist, Rite II with Christmas Carols

The First Sunday after Christmas Day Sunday, December 27th

One Service at 10:00am.

Christmas Lessons and Carols and Holy Eucharist, Rite II

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ADVENT

LESSONS AND CAROLS

On Sunday December 13th at the 10 AM liturgy we will celebrate a service of Advent Lessons and Carols. Through Biblical readings, anthems and hymns, hear how God promised the people that a Saviour would be born unto us. This liturgy serves as the Liturgy of the Word for the day and will be followed by Holy Communion.

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Many light their Advent Candles and give to them these names:

Hope, Faith, Joy and Love

Advent is a time of expectation and preparation and the colors violet or purple are used in vestments and decorations. Purple is a color that was reserved for use by royalty, and so it is used in Advent to symbolize the coming of Christ our King, as celebrated at Christmas and as we prepare for the coming of God's Kingdom.

The symbol for Advent is the Advent Wreath

Since circles have no beginning and no end, the circular shape of the wreath is used to symbolize God the Father and eternal life. It represents a custom that Christians have followed for centuries. The circle of the wreath recalls all the years the people waited for the Messiah.



The Feast of Saint Nicholas

On December 6th we will be celebrating the Feast of Saint Nicholas. Saint Nicholas will be making a special appearance during the Family Service. He will also be collecting a new unwrapped toy for Toys4Tots. Photos with Saint Nicholas and story time will be available during coffee hour in the Parish Hall. The nursery will be available but there will be no Christian Education classes. Join us for a Jolly Good Time!



The Greening of Our Church

The Greening of our Church will be held on Sunday, December 20th immediately following the 10am service. All are invited to bring cut greens if you have some available to decorate the outside window sills. Following the Greening, we will have a pot-luck lunch and at 2pm we will be Christmas Caroling at the Senior Housing. Additional information will be communicated in our weekly Parish Announcements (which is also posted on our website: www.stjamesamesbury.org).



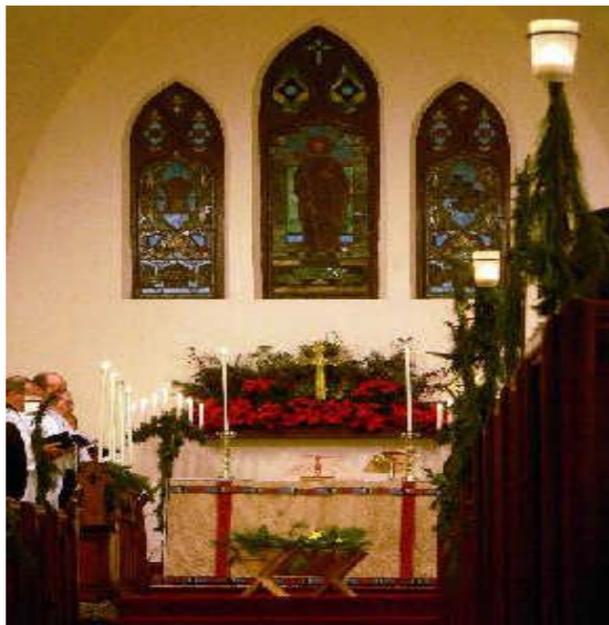
Blue Christmas Service

While for many the Advent and Christmas seasons are a joyous time, for some they can be a very difficult and sad time. On Monday December 21st at 7:00pm, we invite you to attend what is known as a Blue Christmas Service.

It is a Christmas service where, while remembering those events that may have occurred in our life that can make it hard to rejoice at this time of year, we also remember how a Saviour was given, born unto us all and the hope and peace this wonderful gift of God can give.

The service will feature a Blue Christmas sermon, ribbon tying ceremony on our Christmas tree where we give to God those painful events, traditional Christmas hymns and Holy Communion.

Christmas Memorial & Thanksgiving Flowers



If you would like to contribute toward our Christmas Flowers, we are accepting donations as memorials for "Thanksgiving for" or "In Memory of." Envelopes and forms are in the back of the church. Please make check payable to "St. James Church." Cash is acceptable also. If you wish to have your Memorial listed in the Christmas Service Bulletin, please be sure we receive the completed form by Sunday, December 20th.



November Highlights

Father John and the DYC members attended the Cathedral dedication and official seating of Bishop Alan Gates on November 13th. It was an honor to be selected to serve at the altar with Bishop Gates and assist with Eucharist. A special moment they will not forget.

St. James had three students attend the annual BCH Middle school retreat weekend in Greenfield, NH, along with all the DYC members who were eager to staff and run the programs. Thanks to the success of the craft fair, we were able to offer three scholarships. Feel free to ask them about their quest and quote for the retreat!

Upcoming

The Amesbury Annual Christmas parade and tree lighting ceremony will be on Saturday, December 5th. We are looking for youth members to help give out hot cocoa and cookies on the church steps during the parade. Also, we will need a few youth to join other youth from the Amesbury Church Council to hold the banner in the parade. Please help in this annual fellowship tradition. Community hours will be given for highschoolers. If interested please contact Jenn Collins at stjames.christianed@verizon.net

December 24th at 4pm will be our annual Godly Play Christmas Pageant. All students who want to participate will have a part. Participants will need to arrive no later than 3pm in order to get in costume and line up. Please contact Jenn Collins at stjames.christianed@verizon.net if your children wishes to participate!

Due to the holiday break, only the nursery will be available on December 27th.

Vestry Meeting



The December Vestry Meeting will be held on Wednesday the 16th at 7pm in Fr. John's Office at St. James. All church members are invited to attend and observe our vestry meetings.



Men's Group at St. James

The Men's Group at St. James meets on Sunday mornings immediately following the 8am worship service. Meetings will be held in the Parish Hall to read aloud and discuss appointed selections in the Holy Bible and related resources. They learn about the circumstances of biblical events, their significance and the people involved. We encourage men of St. James and their friends to join the group.

Come to all meetings, a few meetings or drop in as you wish. All are welcome.



The St. James Visual Arts Gallery

Mort Gilbert encourages parishioners to take photos, make paintings or do drawings for display in the St. James Visual Arts Gallery. The Gallery Art Committee, consisting of Fr. John, Ron Jones and Mort will find ways to get parishioners represented whether or not their works are matted, glassed, framed or wired. Alleluia!

For example, photos can be emailed to mortgilbert@comcast.net. He'll edit them into a collage that includes the photographers' names, then have collage prints made. The modest cost for each collage is to be shared by those whose work is contained thereon. Or camera memory cards can be submitted to Mort and collages made selectively of images contained on them.

Lightweight art, whether drawings, paintings or photos can be supported/clipped to a gallery-situated wire or bulletin board instead of the usual grid panels.

Thankfulness is the basic theme for displayed artwork. And if art representing thankfulness can be tied to events that have taken place in the calendar months November to March, so much the better,

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We will be collecting non-perishable items that will be used for Holidays Dinners during the month of December. Canned vegetables, canned fruits, instant potatoes, rice, dried fruits, nuts, etc.

And, as always, ONT is in need of canned hearty soups and stews, pasta and pasta sauce during the winter months, as well as shampoo, soap, deodorant, powder, razors, toothpaste, and toothbrushes.

If you are able to donate, please bring in your item(s) and leave in the basket in the back of the church.

Click [here](#) to view ONT's website.

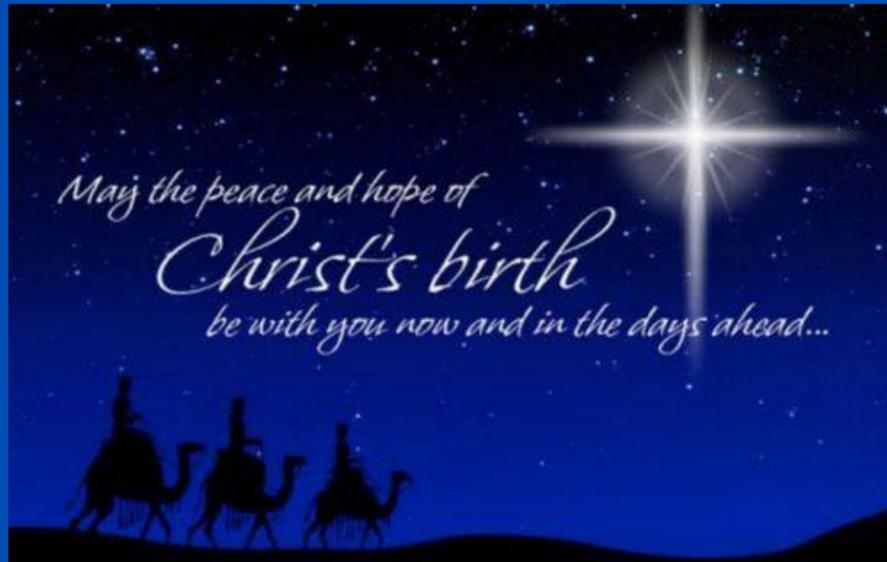
Let us give thanks for God's many blessings to us.

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Thought for the Month

It isn't enough to talk about peace.
One must believe in it.
And it isn't enough to believe in it.
One must work at it.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT



**We wish you all a
blessed and peaceful Christmas season.**

QUICK LINKS

[St. James Website!](#)

[Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts](#)

[Send us an E-mail](#)

Blessings and Peace to All!

The Rev. John Satula