

The AP STLE

Advent/Christmas 2015

“Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.”- Fredrick Buechner

There is a small quirky statement, “you only live once,” that has been reduced in popular culture to this: YOLO. You can see it printed on hats, shirts and status updates, usually with a notion of living life freely and with abandon. On the one hand, it is a fairly harmless statement that encourages living life energetically; on the other, it is a statement that can lead one to loose sight of the understanding of the importance of the gift of one’s life.

We are about to enter the season of Advent. Advent in particular is a time set aside to contemplate eternity and prepare for Christmas. Not for shopping, by the way, but for spiritual preparation by being ready to receive Christ into our hearts, souls, and minds. What does that mean? The scripture points us to understand that to receive Christ into our hearts is to receive the love of God—or grace. AND when we do receive that grace, to know that we are loved and called to love others.

**YOU
ONLY
LIVE
ONCE**

Grace opens a new world to us of serving others and hearing a unique call from God. As Fredrick Buechner writes, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” In other words, our lives have meaning and purpose—they are to be used wisely and not thrown away carelessly.

Every moment we are alive we have the opportunity to love God and our neighbor. It is true that “you only live once.” However, living that life with the purpose of loving others in God’s name brings depth to each moment we are alive.

As you prepare for Christmas in the season of Advent, think about the purpose of your life, your one life. Know that God loves you and desires for you an abundance of grace. Then, with that knowledge, go into the world and love more deeply and live more purposefully.

The world is hungry for that kind of person—so be one.

GRL

REFLECTIONS

Recently, Ellen and I were watching a music award show on TV. Since the awards were for a genre of music I listen to most frequently, I found myself quite familiar with the artists and the songs nominated. There was, however, one performance by an artist I previously had not heard, Chris Stapleton, and whose music I have listened to a great deal since. In one of his songs, "Traveller", Chris sings, *"I couldn't tell you, honey, I don't know / where I'm going but I've got to go / 'Cause every turn reveals some other road..."*

As we approach the season of Advent, the twists and turns of our lives seem to appear more and more frequently. We feel the pressure of buying certain things or being in certain places. We fill our schedules with important and not-so-important gatherings, and we can even lose sight of what is coming at the end of this holy season. Sometimes it can feel like we are moving down this road of life without knowing where we are headed.

Advent is the time when the church begins another year of its liturgical life. It is a time of new beginning, a time to reflect on the year past, and a time to center ourselves in one of the holiest times of our faith life together.

It is a season to ground our faith life once again in a holy season of expectation. The world says to speed up and to be busier. Yet, in this season, we are offered a time to slow down and re-orient for the journey ahead.

In this season, as you face these many twists and turns of life, consider taking a slower road. Consider the road that offers a time to pause and slow down, to reflect and to pray, and to wait in hopeful expectation of the birth of our Savior. This is an event in the life of this world that has changed and will continue to change the world forever. It is a moment worth waiting for—one worth slowing down for, so that we do not miss it.

Our Savior's birth, and the story of those who would follow a star to see him, remind us that even as we face these many twists and turns, that we are invited always to seek God and God's call for our lives. God is our point of orientation and the one who gives us direction, much like the star that guided the Magi to Jesus.

May we all find this season of Advent and Christmas to be one in which we can orient our whole selves to the one who is coming into the world to save it this Christmas once again.

King's Corner



The Rev.
Steven King,
Assistant
Rector

Vestry Nominations

Do you know someone who would make an excellent addition to the St. Thomas Vestry? Maybe even yourself? We are opening up nominations for **five** Vestry members for next year.

Maybe you have a special skill/background that could help St. Thomas or would like to have input on our evolving congregation? Being part of the vestry is a rewarding experience. We help to plan the activities of our church and determine how we spend our resources.



The time commitment for a member of the Vestry is quite manageable over the three-year term. The Vestry meets around 10 times per year, attends a Friday/ Saturday retreat once a year, and the members rotate in opening and closing the church for worship.

The requirements for eligibility include:

- being a confirmed member in good standing,
- attending worship regularly and
- being a contributor of record for the last calendar year.

As the Vestry plans and guides St. Thomas in partnership with the Rector, we would like to have diverse viewpoints that are representative of the congregation. Maybe that could include you?

Please contact **Father Gar** or any of the outgoing vestry members (**Don, Gerry Miller, Susan Elliott, Brian Geary, Miles Yakre**) if you have an interest or would like to know more information.

—**Don McArthur**, Senior Warden: phone 485-9389 or email at mcarthur.don@gmail.com .



January 27, 2016

Don't forget!!

WARDEN'S WORDS

Thanksgiving

As Thanksgiving approaches, I find myself reflecting on being thankful for St. Thomas. We have a lot of things to be grateful for in our community.



Don
McArthur,
Senior
Warden

There are the things we see each time we walk through the doors such as the wonderful building.

We probably even realize what a talented staff we have that make exceptional things happen on a recurring basis. I'm restricted on space, so I'll refrain from going into too much detail here, but it's hard to not mention individuals.

Speaking of individuals, there are a lot of people who step-up and make things happen every day. We have new groups forming, growing, and thriving that connect people to St. Thomas and improve their lives.

The energy can be felt as we walk through the doors and experience the fellowship with our friends.

After I spend time at our church, I always feel better when I leave and hope you do as well.

I don't have space to list all the people or programs that keep getting better at our congregation (plus, there is a good chance I'd miss something).

So I'll end it with the intent to express gratitude for all who make so much happen and to thank you for giving me and my family our Church home.

—Don

MUSIC MINISTRIES

The Twelve Days of Christmas Revisited

On the first day of Advent, my true love gave to me a list of some cookies to bake;

On the second day of Advent, my true love gave to me two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the third day of Advent, my true love gave to me three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the fourth day of Advent, my true love gave to me four cleaning chores, three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the fifth day of Advent, my true love showed to me five bathtub rings, four cleaning chores, three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the sixth day of Advent, my true love gave me six cards to send, five bathtub rings, four cleaning chores, three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the seventh day of Advent, my true love gave to me seven gifts to purchase, six cards to send, five bathtub rings, four cleaning chores, three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the eighth day of Advent, my true love gave to me eight bills to pay, seven gifts to purchase, six cards to send, five bathtub rings, four cleaning chores, three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the ninth day of Advent, my true love gave to me nine gifts to wrap, eight bills to pay, seven gifts to purchase, six cards to send, five bathtub rings, four cleaning chores, three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the tenth day of Advent, my true love gave to me ten feet of snow, nine gifts to wrap, eight bills to pay, seven gifts to purchase, six cards to send, five bathtub rings, four cleaning chores, three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the eleventh day of Advent, my true love gave to me eleven loads of laundry, ten feet of snow, nine gifts to wrap, eight bills to pay, seven gifts to purchase, six cards to send, five bathtub rings, four cleaning chores, three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake;

On the twelfth day of Advent, my true love gave to me twelve hours for shopping, eleven loads of laundry, ten feet of snow, nine gifts to wrap, eight bills to pay, seven gifts to purchase, six cards to send, five bathtub rings, four cleaning chores, three songs to learn, two strings of bulbs, and a list of some cookies to bake.

What's wrong with this picture? The baby Jesus never made the "to do" list. Does your Advent datebook sound like this song? If so, step back and think about the activities that really matter. During Advent at St. Thomas, the musicians, choir, and children will be preparing the songs, anthems, and the Christmas Pageant to share on Christmas Eve. Make time...Take time...and join us for the celebration of the Christ child at St. Thomas.

Footnotes



Dr. Beth L.
Elswick,
Director of
Music
Ministries

IHN MINISTRY



Spreading Christmas joy with IHN

You don't have to look very far for Christmas cheer. It is always present at the annual Johnson County Interfaith Hospitality Holiday Party hosted by St. Thomas. The 11th annual party will be held on **Saturday, December 12, 2015, from 11 am-1 pm.**

We will treat our graduate and current IHN homeless families (about 100+ guests) to a delicious lunch, kids activities/games, shopping in the Kids Store (at no charge) and a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus. In addition to all the fun, each family will receive gift cards and a holiday food basket.

Make sure you stop by the IHN Holiday Party table in the narthex to sign up. Here's how you can help:

- *Purchase \$20 gift cards to Target, Wal-Mart or QuikTrip,**
- *Provide small, new gifts (\$5-10 range) for the children's Christmas store,**
- *Supply luncheon food for the guests & volunteers,**
- *VOLUNTEER at the party and spread the joy of Christmas!**

(Volunteers: should be Adults to protect the confidentiality of the IHN children.)

Deadline for the gifts/food to be dropped at St. Thomas is Sunday, December 6th.

Questions? Contact IHN Holiday Party Coordinator **Jean Adam**, Jean_Adam2004@yahoo.com or at 530-9097.



Shopping Reminder!

Don't forget about the Community Shopping Event to benefit JoCo Interfaith Hospitality Network, an organization that serves homeless families and single women in Johnson County.

Thursday, December 17, 4-8 pm

at Ten Thousand Villages,

7947 Santa Fe Dr., Overland Park

Ten Thousand Villages will donate 15% of all net sales during this shopping event.

If you save this coupon below and present it while shopping **anytime from December 14th to 20th**, IHN will receive **15% of your net purchase.**

Shop Local, Give Global.
Support Johnson County Interfaith Hospitality Network!

Present this card between December 14-20, 2015 and Ten Thousand Villages Overland Park will donate 15% of the value of your purchase to Johnson County Interfaith Hospitality Network.



Ten Thousand Villages creates opportunities for artisans in developing countries to earn income by bringing their products and stories to our markets through long-term, fair trading relationships. From home accents to unique jewelry - you'll find the perfect meaningful gift.

Ten Thousand Villages in Overland Park
7947 Santa Fe Drive Overland Park, KS 913.642.8368
Mon-Wed, Fri 10-6, Thu 10-8, Sat 9-5, Sun 12-4

St. Thomas is a founding member of IHN. Our congregation provides supplies and volunteers during the week when IHN guests are sheltered at First Christian Church of Olathe. Learn more about JoCo Interfaith Hospitality Network at www.jocoihn.org.

Learn more about Ten Thousand Villages, a Fair Trade, not-for-profit retail store at overlandpark.tenthousandvillages.com or www.tenthousandvillages.com

Learn more about our congregation's ministry with IHN by contacting **Dola McNown** at 541-9226 or **Margaret Walkenshaw** at 897-4766.

Thom's Helpers Ministry

SMALL GROUPS

Growing and Moving On

It's with great pleasure that we announce that **Michael Findling**, one of our first Thom's Helpers, has become an employee of Hy-Vee. For those of you who know Michael, he is a wonderful, caring young man. For those of you who don't, Michael is the red-haired young man in all the Thom's Helpers pictures.



One of the many goals in beginning Thom's Helpers was to train young men and women with special needs to find employment in the private sector. Michael has accomplished that through a wonderful attitude and hard work. But he loves Thom's Helpers and you will still see him at St. Thomas on one of his days off - Wednesday - because he loves the church and his fellow Thom's Helpers so much.

If you see Michael when he is at St. Thomas, please congratulate him and tell him how much he means to our parish.

Thom's Helpers is a growing group. The most exciting new addition is **Shauna Magnam**. Shauna has replaced Michael as our red-haired Thom's Helper. She is a delight to be around and looks forward to working with Morgan, Sam and Sawyer on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

New volunteers have also joined Thom's Helpers recently. In addition to *Sue Elliott*, our Director, *Cathy McCormick*, *Tom Meyers*, *John & Dola McNown*, *Shirley Roberts*, *Don Fye*, Thom's Helpers ranks have swelled to include *Peggy Hendricks*, *Gerry Miller* and *Steve Rimmer*.

Happy Birthday, Sawyer!



Father Gar, Father Steven, Thom's Helpers and Volunteers celebrate Sawyer Stern's 29th birthday at the Red Robin.

Explorers follow Benton to Hollywood

The St. Thomas Explorers continued their spiritual discussions using Rob Bell's *Nooma* DVD series in September and October. This unusual and thought-provoking series has given our group much spiritual geography to explore as we study scripture and how it applies to our everyday experiences.

In November, the Explorers will continue to use *Nooma* as a lead-in to our study of the Bible and what we are called to do as Christians. We will also tour Thomas Hart Benton's home and studio on the morning of November 21st, then spend the afternoon on a guided tour of the Nelson's Exhibit of "Thomas Hart Benton and Hollywood" to see how this great Kansas City artist depicted what he saw in "Tinseltown."

The St. Thomas Explorers meet the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month in Parish Hall 3 at 7 pm for "faith, fun, fellowship and food." The Explorers also schedule day trips to places and events of interest in the Kansas City and surrounding area. If you would be interested in knowing more about the Explorers, contact **John** or **Dola McNown** at 541-9226, or email us at: johnmcnown44@gmail.com.



Prayer Shawl Ministry to sell wares at annual Cookie sale

Once again the Prayer Shawl Ministry will be selling scarves, hats & other handmade goods at this year's **Annual Cookie Sale**. The sale is Saturday, December 5, 2015. Hours are 9 am to 4 pm in the Parish Hall. The money we make will help fund yarn for future Prayer Shawls, hats, etc.

We hope to see you all there.

Any questions can be answered (hopefully) by **Linda Manuel** 438-7407 or **Suzie Bowden** 599-6290.

EVENTS Celebrated

The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi



Photo/Barbara McCall

Children enjoyed wearing costumes and singing "If I were a butterfly" as we celebrated the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi in October.

We thanked Ann Clements and celebrated her long ministry with us as our Sunday School director.



Photo/Barbara McCall

Fall kicked off with our Annual Autumn Hayride! More than 100 attended this popular St. Thomas event.



Photo/Barbara McCall

Nothing tastes better than marshmallows roasted over a campfire! Ghost stories, any one?



Photo/Barbara McCall

SUNDAY SCHOOL

A Season of Thankfulness and Preparation for the Children of St. Thomas

Fall is such a beautiful time of year...full of so many blessings! Everywhere you go, you can see them. Here at St. Thomas our blessings can be seen in so many aspects of our experiences and activities, not only within the walls of our building, but out in the community and on the faces of each of our parishioners – most especially our youngest ones!

This fall has brought our Children's programming into full swing, and we have been so thankful for the support and involvement of our entire church family in each of our endeavors. Our children have enjoyed wearing costumes and supporting our worship with their songs "If I Were a Butterfly" for the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi in October, and "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God" on All Saints Day.

They were also thrilled to offer their gratitude in singing and presenting their mosaic cross to our beloved former Director of Children's Ministry, *Ann Clements*, in October. Currently, our children are working hard on a special outreach project by creating Fall and Thanksgiving-themed placemats that will be delivered to the residents of the Delmar Gardens retirement community in Overland Park. All of these activities have given the rest of us an amazing opportunity to see the talents that our children possess, and what a joy it is to see them using their talents in ministry to others!

Of course, among the most special blessings of the Fall season at St. Thomas, are the opportunities for fun and fellowship. Our children and their families enjoyed a wonderful evening at our Annual Hayride at Sharp's Farm with approximately 100 of our parishioners and friends in attendance! Many of our children enjoyed bringing their pets to the Blessing of the Animals, and of course, no October at St. Thomas would be complete for any of our families without the fun of the Youth Group's annual Boo Bash!

As we move toward the Thanksgiving holiday and our preparation for the birth of our Savior during Advent, our children will continue their learning and celebration of God's Love in their Sunday School classrooms. Many of our rooms are including a special emphasis on prayer throughout this time, with our Pre-K/Kindergarten students working to fill a bulletin board with flowers to represent each of their prayers that are offered every Sunday. We will continue our efforts to share our ministry with all of you, and our surrounding community as we prepare for another **hat/mitten drive** for the children of Whittier Elementary. Our work for the annual Christmas Eve Pageant, to be presented at the 4:00 Family Christmas Eve service, will begin with our Parents' Meeting during the Sunday School hour on Sunday, November 22nd. This meeting will share all our families need to know about rehearsals (for speaking parts), dress rehearsal on Wednesday, December 23rd (for all children involved), and time schedules for the actual presentation on Christmas Eve.

Please also make plans to join your St. Thomas family for our special all-congregation events as a part of your celebration and faith journey this holiday season. These include:

1) the First Annual St. Thomas Talent Show (which will feature several of our children & youth performers) on the evening of Sunday, November 22nd,

2) our annual AdventURE Advent Wreath Making/Holiday Crafts and Breakfast which will take place in lieu of Sunday School on Sunday, November 29th, and

3) a special all-congregation caroling outing following the Blue Christmas service on the evening of Sunday, December 20th. We hope to see you and worship with you throughout this blessed time!

*Barbara McCall,
Director of
Children's
Formation*



Photo/Dola McNow

Pre-K and Kindergarten Sunday School students are Growing in God's Love through prayer. They learned about 4 different kinds of prayer and as they pray each week they also add a tissue paper flower to the bulletin board. Left to right: Voyteck Peters, Gavin Wandfluh, Emmaline Holoch, Sam Humphrey, William Shanks & Abigail Schiller.

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

This Advent season, the youth of St. Thomas will continue their study of the Beatitudes when they meet at youth group each week. In addition to the fun games and dinner together, we have spent or will spend a couple of weeks with each verse from this important piece of scripture, Matthew 5:3-11.

In November, we have talked about the verse, "Blessed are the meek." We set out to learn from a list of synonyms and antonyms and wrote some of our own definitions for themes about humility and modesty as well as haughtiness or being high-and-mighty. When might we have experienced or acted in either of these ways? How can our lives reflect the lessons we learned from this verse? As we ended our discussion, several students shared that the lesson we might take from this for our lives is to work to serve others and not just ourselves. We decided to try to help others so that everyone might be lifted up and not some people and learned that God blesses this work.



In Advent, we will spend time with the verse, "Blessed are the merciful." It is no coincidence that we will consider how we can act with mercy and love during this season as we contemplate the birth of the one who abounds in love and mercy. Then, we will seek to apply it to our lives each day. And, we hope to take our walk down to the fire station to deliver some cookies!

It has been a semester full of great fun with **Boo Bash** and many other great events. In all of this, we always hope to be learning and growing in our faith all while sharing in a lot of fun! We hope any 6th-12th graders will join us Sunday nights from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at St. Thomas.



Father
Steven King,
Director of
Youth
Ministries

Don't miss these YOUTH events!

November 22nd:

All Parish Talent Show,
in our Parish Hall from
5 to 7 pm.

December 5th:

PARENTS NIGHT OUT,
6 pm to 10:30 pm

December 6th:
Youth Group trip to see
the Plaza Lights

December 13th:

Taste of Youth Group
3rd to 5th graders join the
Youth Group for a night!



December 29th:

Winter Break Tuesday for 3rd to 5th graders.
Check your emails for info coming soon!

December 30th:

Winter Break Wednesday
for 6th to 8th graders.
Info coming soon! Check email.

January 3rd:

Meet at the Movies.
Join us for a movie
instead of Youth Group tonight.
Theater. movie. and time TBA.

OTHER CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Parent's Day Out

Fall is a wonderful season as nature provides a palette to support our learning of colors as well as an opportunity to observe the many changes that occur this time of year. During September and October, we have been transitioning to our environments and making new friends. Learning to



communicate and express ourselves especially as it pertains to sharing and taking turns are important skills we practice daily. We have been learning and reinforcing our knowledge of letters, colors, and shapes.

The children enjoy creating seasonal crafts and crafts related to the book of the day. In November and December, we will be recognizing and discussing things for which we are thankful. We appreciate the opportunity to care for children and are thankful for the support we receive from the church and families in our program.

—Michelle Beeler, Director of PDO

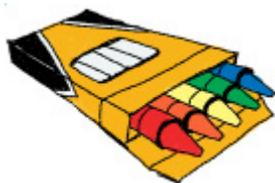
Nursery News



Photos/Kelly Lillis

The children in our Nursery program show their art work proudly.

Crayons and stickers are an important part of their creative expression.



It's SCRUMPTIOUS COOKIE SALE

time again!

We look forward to your cookies: chocolate chip with or without nuts, decorated cookies, special cookies, sugar and spice and everything - scrumptious!

Saturday, December 5, 2015

9 am to 4 pm



We sell by the pound, so "heavy" cookies are the best. Are you ready St. Thomas cookie bakers? Help us beat last year's sale record. All monies fund youth programs.

Please bring your cookies to church on Friday, December 4th

Confirmation Classes to start

Plans for our youth confirmation class for 2016 have begun. At St. Thomas, we invite all students around 8th grade age (and certainly older, if they have not been confirmed) to participate in confirmation classes. These take place over a 10-week period beginning Sunday, January 31st and ending on April 24th with Bishop Wolfe's annual visit to St. Thomas with confirmation during worship services that day. Classes will take place on Sunday mornings from 9:45 am until 10:35 am.

During the class, we will learn about Christianity in general (its history, beliefs and practices, and more) as well as the Episcopal Church (its history, worship/liturgy, structure, and more). We will do so in a fun and engaging way so that we can all learn and share about our faith. We hope that throughout this time together as a class that all will feel like our confirmands can learn about what it is they believe and be strengthened in their faith.

If you have or know a student in this age range who has not been confirmed, please send me an email or call the church. As we continue making plans, we will be sure to include you in our communications going forward. —Father Steven



Our Special Holiday Services

Christmas Eve:

4 pm: Children's Pageant & Eucharist

7 pm: Holy Eucharist

9 pm: Holy Eucharist with choral music

Christmas Day:

No Services

New Year's Day:

Noon: Renewal of wedding vows



St. Thomas the Apostle Church
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Overland Park, KS 66213
• phone: 913-451-0512 •
• fax: 913-451-1966 •

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The next Apostle deadline is
Sunday, JANUARY 31, 2016.

PARISH NOTES

Baptisms

Sydney Luella Weichel,
daughter of *Shannon & Kristie Weichel*, was welcomed into the household of God on October 24, 2015.

Deaths

The sympathy of the St. Thomas family is extended to **Jerry Snider** on the recent death of his mother *Kathryn*.
May her soul and the souls of the faithful departed, rest in peace.

CALENDAR IN BRIEF

November

- 22: **TALENT SHOW** for all ages, from 5 to 7 pm, Parish Hall
- 25: **Thanksgiving Service** at 7 pm, followed by Pumpkin Dessert Bar
- 26: **Thanksgiving Day -- Office Closed**
- 27: **Office Closed**
- 29: **First Sunday of Advent**
Wreath and Ornament making event, 9:45 am

December

- 5: **COOKIE SALE fundraiser**, 9 to 4 pm
Parents' Night Out, 6:30 to 10:30 pm
- 6: **Youth to see Plaza Lights**
- 12: **IHN Holiday Party** 11 am to 1 pm
- 13: **Taste of Youth Group**—younger kids visit
- 24: **CHRISTMAS EVE**, services at 4, 7 and 9 pm.
- 25: **CHRISTMAS DAY**—Office Closed
- 28: **Office Closed**
- 31: **Office Closed**

