

The

APOSTLE



Advent/Christmas 2019

“As you navigate through the rest of your life, be open to collaboration. Other people and other people’s ideas are often better than your own. Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you, spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life.” —Amy Poehler

I look forward to being at St. Thomas every Sunday. The community that gathers here is filled with interesting people who are living inspired lives and doing so much in the city where we live. Teachers, lawyers, technicians, plumbers, doctors, homemakers, politicians, musicians, school administrators, social workers and students (and many more) can be found interacting with each other, learning together and worshipping. We bring together all types of people around a central altar for the purpose of prayer, study and ministry together in the foundations found in the teachings of Jesus.

This last week, we hosted a book signing by **Gordon Docking**. His book, *“Blake and Me: Life lessons I’ve learned from the best teacher I ever had.”* If you haven’t had a chance to read the book, I encourage you to do so. It is filled with good stories of how one person can change a community. One chapter is about Gordon’s faith journey to St. Thomas through Blake. This is just an example of what we can do as a community of interesting people who care for each other because of our love for Jesus.

Over the next few weeks, we will participate in a diocesan-wide time of study around some of the core teachings of Jesus. Particularly, we will focus on the teachings of our Presiding Bishop around the precepts of *The Way of Love* that is his focus during his time of leading the Episcopal Church. As found in the material, “we are called by Jesus to follow the Way of Love. With God’s help, we can turn from the powers of sin, hatred, fear, injustice, and oppression toward the way of truth, love, hope, justice, and freedom. In turn, we reorient our lives to Jesus Christ, falling in love again, again, and again.”

What happens when this group of faithful followers of Jesus refocuses our energy and passions around the teachings that draw us together? It is hard to say what might happen, but I know it can be extraordinary. I hope you will take time this Advent and into the Christmas season to participate in the classes and opportunities offered. As Amy says above, it might just change your life.

Blessings,
GARL

FOOTNOTES

Happy New “Year A”

Did you know that the new church Year A begins on December 1, 2019—not January 1? Our church year begins with Advent, a season of preparation before Christmas Day. Are we totally out of line with the rest of society? Are we in the church ahead of the game? Yes and no. Just as Advent is the season of preparation for Christ—some stores have announced that Black Friday will be celebrated with sales for the entire month of November in preparation for Christmas celebrations. Likewise, the people of St. Thomas are engaged in a month of preparation: planning worship services, practicing music and drama, and waiting to celebrate the birth of Christ.

Our Advent season of preparation is a celebration in itself. The annual process is fun. Musicians are reviewing familiar carols and harmonies and also learning new pieces. Another gift: we uncover delightful talents in children that had previously been hidden. The teachers draw the kids into the drama of the Nativity and the magic unfolds.

However, here is the point of departure: Our Christmas celebration gets into full swing and continues as many people in society are putting away decorations and returning gifts. Our momentum continues as the Kings follow the star into the next season of Epiphany. Our energy drives into the new calendar year, and I look forward to seeing and hearing the gifts that we share with our community in the name of Christ.

There is joy in preparing for the holidays. The **children** are preparing for the annual Christmas pageant on Christmas Eve. The retelling with traditional carols and costumes is a favorite, and the season must include this narrative. Our **praise band** members will accompany the children. The **youth group** is growing, and their talents are developing. They will play instruments in small ensembles at 7 pm on Christmas Eve with more musical settings of familiar carols. This service will feature piano, organ, and choral works performed by the youth.

The **traditional choir** will be joined by **college** students and older youth at the 9 pm service. The service will feature a longer prelude as a means of presenting a variety of Christmas music. The wonderful sounds of the new hybrid digital/pipe organ will help lead the congregation in the singing of favorite carols. Finally, Christmas will culminate the next morning with a service at 10 am.

Children rehearse on Sunday mornings at Children’s Chapel. Traditional choir rehearses at 7:30 on Wednesday evenings. Youth rehearse at 5:30 on Sunday evenings in December. Please “pitch in” to the holiday spirit. Lift every voice and sing!



Dr. Beth L.
Elswick,
Director of
Music
Ministries

The Bible Challenge 2

What’s on Your Bucket List?

Many of us have a bucket list, things we would like to do before we die. Is your list more wishes and dreams or is it a list of goals? The difference is that wishes and dreams are more “wouldn’t it be nice” thinking. Goals require a plan, a way to achieve what you want.

The **Bible Challenge 2** is a plan to help you read the Bible in a year, in only **15 minutes** per day! We will use the **One Year Bible**. It has the 4 scripture readings printed for each day of the year. The smaller bites make it achievable. And if 15 minutes is impractical, the day’s 4 scripture readings can be done individually.

If you want to participate, sign up. Tell us if you need a **One Year Bible**. We will order the Bibles in mid-November and distribute in mid-December. We are requesting a voluntary \$12 donation (check to St. Thomas) when you pick up your Bible. We plan to send you encouraging notes, commentary and reply to questions through a closed Face Book group or through email, your choice. We expect there will be lots of questions and comments for our priests to address. We will begin January 1, 2020.

FAQS

*Can you start after January 1? **Yes.**

*I didn’t order a Bible, but now I want one. **If there are no One Year Bibles left, they are available through Amazon, or Mardel or Barnes & Noble.**

*My friend is interested, but doesn’t attend St. Thomas. Can they participate? **Yes.**

*Do I have to use the One Year Bible? **No, you may use any Bible you prefer. You may use an e-book or even listen to CDs.**

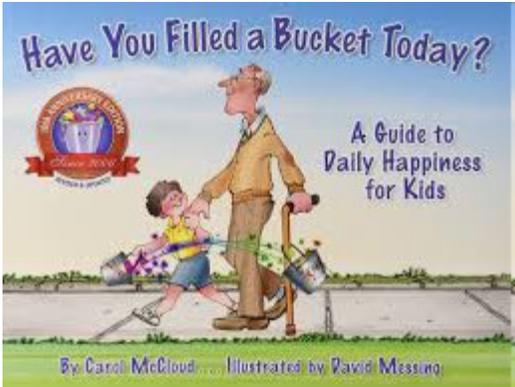
—Sheryl Roller, facilitator

—Beth

REFLECTIONS

There is a beautiful little children's book by Carol McCloud called *Have You Filled Your Bucket Today?* It says that everyone in the world carries around an invisible bucket

Sometimes our bucket is more full than at other times.



*The Rev. Kelly Demo,
Assistant Rector*



When the bucket is full we feel happy and good about ourselves.

But when the bucket is empty we feel sad, lonely, and we don't feel good about ourselves. The fun thing is that the best way to fill your own bucket is to fill someone else's bucket! When

you give a compliment, a smile, a high five, you put a little goodness in that person's bucket.

This is a simple children's book, but it is a great image for how we view ourselves and others. I often worry about our young people and see a lot of buckets running on low! That is why we work very hard to make the children and youth community at St. Thomas a celebratory one.

For instance, in the Tower Talk I do my best to include achievements that our youth have done. I started this with some hesitation. I did not want it to be perceived as a competition or one-upmanship. However, if we can't celebrate our young people's achievement in a loving community, where can we?

We also try to take time at the end of each youth group meeting to talk about celebrations. Whether it is getting a good grade on a test, doing well in a race or whatever, we all cheer. This serves several purposes. It helps bond the group as we encourage each other on, but it also teaches youth that it is ok to talk about their accomplishment(s). When it is done in a way that builds them up and glorifies God, that is a good thing! There is a difference between that and bragging.

So, when you see a young person who was included in the Tower Talk, give them a high five or "good job!" It will fill their bucket...and yours!

Mather Kelly

WARDEN'S WORDS

The holidays are rapidly approaching and while it is hard to fathom that 2019 is nearly over, it is a good time to reflect on what St. Thomas has accomplished this past year.

*Bruce Henricks,
Senior Warden*



We have had another successful summer of youth programs with record participation across our numerous offerings. Our various outreach initiatives and adult small group participation continue our tradition of serving our own, and those in need.

Our parish growth has continued. We now are **number one** in the Diocese of Kansas in both attendance and membership. Our sustained growth comes from the strong clerical leadership Gar and Kelly provide, coupled with the welcoming atmosphere all of you contribute to, and your lasting financial generosity in supporting St. Thomas.

We have just completed our 2020 Stewardship program with record attendance at our recent pledge commitment weekend. Early tabulation of our pledge commitments is encouraging, and we are very hopeful that the final total will allow us to do even more in 2020. All our programs, youth activities, various forms of outreach, and meeting our Diocesan apportionment responsibility depend upon having the money to properly fund them.

We have so very much to be proud of at St. Thomas! Our role as a Diocesan leader continues as does the responsibility to sustain our status and the reputation we have developed. None of this could have happened, nor will it continue, without all of you.

On behalf of your vestry, may you have the blessings of good health, and the happiest of Holidays.

*Bruce Henricks,
Senior Warden*

OUTREACH

Invite/Welcome/Connect (IWC)

MINISTRY FAIR THANK YOUs

Thanks to all of the ministry leaders who took time to set up creative displays highlighting the ministries you lead. Also, we want to thank all of the parishioners attended the ministry fair and saw the many ways one can support St. Thomas and our community. In our raffle, four lucky winners won \$25 gift cards to local restaurants.

If you missed the ministry fair or need some information about joining a ministry, please contact **Jean Adam** on the IWC team, and she will be glad to 'Connect' you.



CHRISTMAS INVITES

Christmas is coming up, so we need to remember to invite family and friends to church. *Look for Christmas Invite cards on the welcome table so you can pass them out while extending an invitation.*

Invite/Welcome/Connect Team
913-530-9097 cell
Jean_adam2004@yahoo.com

SMALL GROUPS

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

The ladies of the **St. Thomas Prayer Shawl Ministry** have been busy again this year. So far we have had 46 prayer shawls blessed. We have given 33 prayer shawls to those in need of a caring, tangible hug, and the knowledge that someone cares during their time of need—whatever that need may be.

We continue to meet twice a month: the 1st Monday night at 7:30 to 9:00, and the 3rd Saturday morning from 10:00 to noon.

Anyone interested in joining us can just show up at a meeting. As our church members always say, “All are welcome”.

—*Suzie Bowden, facilitator*



SOLOS DINING OUT

Solos Dining Out is a wonderful group of single people who love to go out to eat together. Each year, we meet monthly from April through December. We do not meet January through March to avoid winter's very cold and freezing weather.

Each each month we meet at a Johnson County restaurant. This year we have gone to *Houlihan's*, *Miyabi's*, *Carrabas*, our spring potluck, *Bravo's*, and *Dos Reales*. In December, we will have our Christmas potluck and party.

If you would like to join us, we look forward to having you. Please contact facilitator **Susan Strom** at 913-244-6402, for more information.

The new people we have met have become very good friends. I look forward to each Solos Dining Out get-together; you will too.

—*Susan Strom, facilitator*

THE WAY OF LOVE

The long-running **Journeyman** small group will become “**The Way of Love**” small group beginning in January. Their group will be based on the teaching of Bishop Curry. More info to come!

THE FAITH CLUB

The Faith club is based on a book of the same name; each group is made up of about 6 to 8 people and have Christian, Muslim and Jewish members. At our church we have six Faith Clubs that have increased in size and now have up to 12 members each. BUT it is never too late to begin a new group.

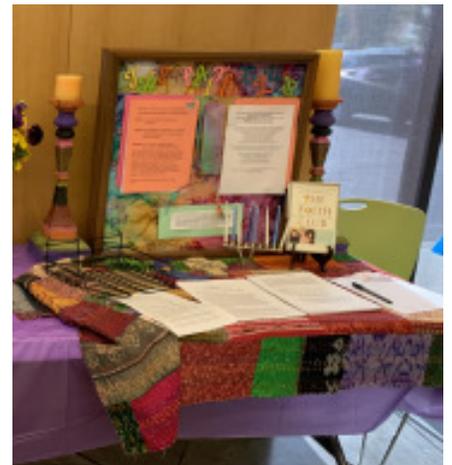
We have nearly 70 members that meet at different times and on different days of the week. Our six leaders are: **Lezlie Martin**, **Kay Childress**, **Diane Monteen** and **Charlotte Brotherson** (two groups) and **Eyyup Esen** from Turkey. If you are interested in forming bonds with friends who are Jewish, Muslim, as well as with St. Thomas parishioners, and share your faith stories while learning about others in the Abrahamic faith, contact Lezlie or Charlotte.

We also have periodic “field trips.” Our last outing was to see the “30 Americans” exhibit at the Nelson this summer; afterwards we enjoyed lunch on the Plaza.

Lezlie's group has scheduled an open house for those interested in seeing what this ministry is all about; and I'm sure other groups will follow suit. We have celebrated with our Muslim friends during Ramadan and attended “The Big Sonja” movie premier in our area and heard the story of an amazing Holocaust survivor.

Ninety-three Faith club members and their families at St. Thomas gathered for an amazing *Iftar* meal prepared by our Muslim friends; and on a separate occasion, we enjoyed a picnic at Electric Park prepared by yet another of our Muslim groups!

We have gathered for monthly meetings for two years now and have no desire to stop sharing and caring. In the spring, we will again support *Mindy Corporan's Faith Always Wins* activities. God has been good to support all of us and we are eternally grateful. Blessings abound. —*Charlotte Brotherson*



PROFILE IN COURAGE

An update on former member Margaret Chege

Margaret Chege, a former St. Thomas member, sends her greetings, “God Is Good. Tell my church ‘I love them.’”

For those who didn't know Margaret, she is from Kenya and came to Kansas in December, 2014. She was a victim of tribal conflict. She lost part of her hand, suffered a compound fracture of the other arm and was driven from her home and property. She and her family hid in the maize fields during the fighting. Margaret managed to keep her children together, but her husband disappeared and was never found.

When Margaret arrived in Overland Park, she stayed with her brother. She wanted to come to church, but they wouldn't bring her. One day they drove past St. Thomas and her brother told her she could walk if she wanted to come to church. That's exactly what she did! On her first day, she was greeted and welcomed, and someone gave her a ride back to her brother's apartment.

St. Thomas felt like home to Margaret; we sang and prayed; we read the Bible verses; and we shared bread and wine. Margaret said, “It is just like my church in Kenya.”

During those early months, Margaret experienced support in so many ways. With the help of St. Thomas, she attended JCCC ESL Life Skills classes. She was given warm clothes. She connected with our clergy and many members. Margaret helped in Sunday School class and took part in Eucharistic visits. She volunteered with Thom's Helpers and gave each Thom's Helper a hat she knitted because St. Thomas became “Her Church.”

During those early months we were fortunate to find a connection which led to an immigration attorney. After listening to her background and experience, he accepted her case *pro bono*. Legal documents seeking asylum were filed. After several months, Margaret received work papers.

In December, 2017, Margaret, along with her attorney and an interpreter, attended an immigration hearing. Margaret's status is still “pending.” Her attorney tells her, “Not to worry...it is a slow process.”

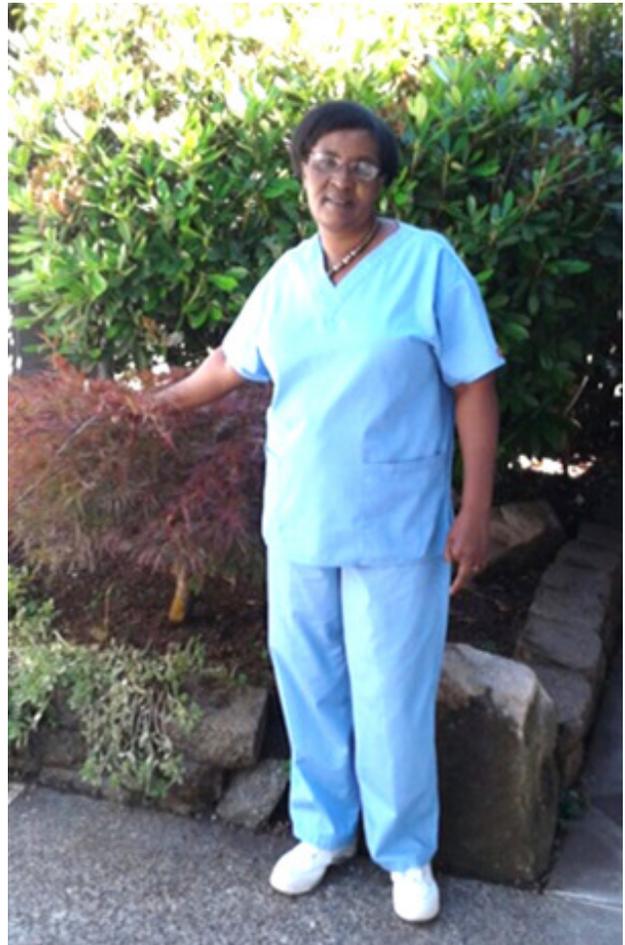
Margaret now lives in Seattle where she took classes and passed the exams to be a certified HCA. She rides three buses to work on Monday morning and spends the week caring for a 98-year old woman.

On Friday morning, the weekend caregiver comes to the house and Margaret rides the buses back to her apartment. She and 3 other women with whom she has become best friends, share a two bedroom apartment. Margaret sings in her church choir and loves her new faith community.

This year Margaret took driving lessons. She passed her driving test and now says, “I am waiting for God to give me a car.” Then, Margaret laughs. BUT, anyone who truly knows Margaret knows she's laughing because it *sounds* funny. If you really know Margaret, you know she believes it will happen.

Margaret's faith is centered in God. Her faith can be summed up in her sincere mantra, “*God Is Good.*”

—Dola McNown



SUNDAY SCHOOL

It's that time again...

You can feel it in the air. You can see it on the homes as the lights start to appear. You can hear it in the elevator music carols played in certain hobby and craft stores. The Christmas Season is almost here!

Except...it isn't yet.

In our Sunday School classrooms and Children's Chapel, our children know that the color purple used for Advent in the liturgical calendar means a "waiting time," a time to make ready for something very special that is about to happen - a "feast" which is represented by white. Here at church during the season of Advent, our children will hear the stories of God's promise of a Savior; they will learn of the amazing and somewhat scary journey that lay ahead for Mary and Joseph. We will take time together as a congregation to pause, to listen, to reflect, and to reach out to others as we make this wonderful journey to meet the newborn savior.

On December 1st, the First Sunday in Advent, we will hold our annual **ADVENTure** during the Sunday School hour. On this special morning, we take time together in our own families and as a church family to celebrate and prepare for our Advent journey. We will enjoy a potluck continental breakfast while working together to learn about and create Advent Wreaths, and other crafts to ready our homes and our church to engage in prayerful preparation during this holy season. Later that evening and continuing every Sunday in Advent, join Barbara McCall at 7 pm on the St. Thomas Facebook Page for a moment of reflection and prayer focused on the Advent wreath.



Also, on this day, our preschool and elementary students will begin work on our annual Christmas Pageant to be shared at the 4 pm Family Christmas Eve Service. Each week we will learn more about the Nativity story and prepare our retelling of it to share with our church family.

Throughout the month of December, there will be other ways to engage in special activities, memory making and support of our church family. These events include: 1) our annual Scrumptious Cookie Sale on Saturday, December 7th that helps raise funds for our students (grades 3 through 12) to participate in our Summer Camps; 2) the return of our family-favorite PARENTS' NIGHT OUT youth fundraiser from 6-10 pm on Saturday, December 14th, and 3) a planned outing for children of all ages in the parish to see the live production of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" at the Coterie Theatre at Union Station.

There are so many meaningful ways to help make time to prepare during this special season we call Advent. I invite you to try at least one new one this year! As always, if you'd like to hear more about our Advent and Christmas events for children and families here at church or on ideas for keeping a holy Advent in your home, please don't hesitate to contact me, and I look forward to seeing you and your children throughout our Holy Advent and Christmas seasons!

Barbara McCall,
Director of
Children's
Ministry



Blessings,
Ms. Barbara

Fall is a season for time-honored traditions



Our popular
Blessing of
the animals

Photos/The Lowdens

Frances & Ernie Lowden brought their new schnauzer, Heidi, to be blessed. Heidi knew something important was happening and took the blessing very seriously.



Deacon Fran blesses parishioner's special pet.



The St. Thomas Hayride took place on November 3rd, a beautiful Fall evening, with about 75 members and friends in attendance.

Photo/Barbara McCall

“Serving Others Sunday”



Sunday School Students met for a special “Serving Others Sunday” service project opportunity on Stewardship Sunday where they began making placemats and decorative turkey decorations and silverware. Pictured clockwise from bottom left are *Chloe Honaker, Addison McMillan, Danielle Roever, Mrs. Amanda Honaker, Ben Roever, Andy Roever and Ms. Jillian Hardeman.*



Our Kindergarten and 1st grade Sunday School Class has been learning about prayer; they recently offered prayers for people who take care of us. Teachers of this class are Mrs. Dola McNown, Mrs. Donna Kopp and Mrs. Amanda Honaker. Pictured l to r are: *Nathan Clopton, Owen Honaker, Caleb Barnes, Colette Schields and Annalise Holoch.*



Working on placemats for the Thanksgiving meal are *Elliott and Simon Koppenhaver, Owen Honaker* and teacher *Mrs. Donna Kopp.*



Scrumptious Cookies Sale... Is almost here!

*We need cookies with nuts and & cookies without nuts,
special cookies, decorated cookies, sugar, chocolate chip,
spice cookies - baked goodies - pies
and lots and lots of cookies!*

*Bakers bake 4-6 dozen heavy cookies...
Sellers will sell, sell, sell cookies!
This will be our very best Cookies Sale Ever!*

Tasty, HEAVY, Scrumptious Cookies Sale
Saturday, December 7, 2019
9 am - 4 pm.

*Cookies Drop-off Time:
Friday, December 6th from 12 pm to 7 pm in Parish Hall 1,
OR
Saturday, December 7th by 9 am in Parish Hall 2
Please name your cookies,
and let us know if they contain nuts. Thank you!*

*Hope to see you all at this year's Scrumptious Cookies Sale!!
Our Best Ever!
Thank you,
Susan Strom*



GUILD OF THE CHRIST CHILD

Guild of the Christ Child had a pack-'n-play in the narthex from Mother's Day through Father's Day this past summer. This was to collect items to fill layette bags for under privileged mothers & their babies.

Thanks to donations from our parish members, **Guild of the Christ Child** has filled & taken 28 layette bags to *Advise & Aid Pregnancy Center* in Shawnee this year. The bags are to help moms with newborns by providing just a few of the items they might need.

Advise & Aid Pregnancy Center is always so very thankful for our donations and asked me to tell everyone at St. Thomas how very much this helps them to help the mothers who they serve.

—Suzie Bowden, facilitator



Caricatures—a big hit for kids and adults alike on Stewardship Sunday



Children and adults alike enjoyed a caricature artist at our Stewardship Sunday Meal (Pictured: **Cat Hageman**, as others look on).

Noelle Schields (left) and **Colette Schields** (right) loved their drawings.



Photos/Barbara McCall

PARISH NOTES

Marriages:

Congratulations to the following couples who were married on October 12, 2019:

Jason Snell and Michelle Pope
and
Edward Fruehwirth
and **Diana Diaz.**

Baptisms

Welcomed into the household of God on November 10, 2019 were

Simon & Elliot Koppenhaver.
Parents are Chris & Kristi.

Deaths

The sympathy of the St. Thomas family is extended to

Linda Bemis
on the death of her sister,
Margaret Hayes

~Heartfelt Thanks~

Dear Family of St. Thomas,

Many of you know that I was recently diagnosed with uterine cancer and had a hysterectomy on October 15th. I am one of the lucky ones as the doctors were able to get all the cancer with the surgery. Since no cancer was detected in the lymph nodes, I just have to go back every 3 months for a recheck and once a year for a lung scan.

I want to thank all of you who reached out to me, prayed for me/us, and brought meals to sustain us. Believe me, we have some great cooks at St. Thomas! Richard and I have felt lifted up by this amazing church family!

I have learned that we all have to be our own advocates for our health. I encourage you to make an appointment with your doctor if something doesn't seem right with your body. It is worth a trip to the doctor to catch a problem early.

Thank you all so very much,

Suzie Bowden (and Richard, too)



**Our
regular service hours
Saturdays**
5:30 Holy Communion

Sundays
8:45 Holy Communion
with praise music & band

10:45 Holy Communion
with traditional music

Christmas Week services

Christmas Eve services

4 pm—Family Service with pageant

7 pm—Christmas service
with small ensemble music

9 pm—Christmas service with choir
and organ

Christmas Day

10 am—Christmas Eucharist
Office closed



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• fax: 913-451-1966 •
www.stthomasop.org

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The next deadline for the
APOSTLE is
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Calendar highlights

December

- 1: First Sunday of Advent
Advent wreathmaking— 9:30 - 12:30 pm, PH 1, 2, 3
- 7 SCRUMPTIOUS COOKIE SALE— 9 am to 4 pm, PH 1,2
- 8: Second Sunday of Advent
- 14: Parents Night Out Fundraiser—6 to 10 pm
- 15: Third Sunday of Advent
- 22: Fourth Sunday of Advent
- 24,25 See Christmas service schedule on left

January

- 3: WINTER BREAK ROTC----->

Looking WAY AHEAD

February

- 26: Ash Wednesday, Lent begins

March: Lent

April

- 12: EASTER SUNDAY

From 8 am to 5 pm, our Junior ROTC will work mornings at Turnstyles in Merriam; our Senior ROTC will work at True Light Family Resource Center in KCMO. In the afternoon, we will have lunch and play games at Dave & Busters at the Legends in KCK. Junior ROTC is full, but get on the "wait list." Some spaces left for Senior ROTC program.