

The Courier

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
DEARBORN, MI

WINTER 2022



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Vestry

The Vestry begins each meeting by stating the Mission, Vision, and Vision Path (goals, how we will live into our mission and vision) for Christ Church at this time:



Mission - "Christ Episcopal Church welcomes, inspires, nurtures and replenishes through worship, fellowship and education. We seek to live a Christ-like life by embracing our broader, diverse community and serving others."

Vision - Feeding people in mind, body, and Spirit

Vision path -

1. Effective building usage that expands our mission, helps us grow our intercultural community center, and provides part of our ongoing revenue stream. A primary component of building usage includes the Partnership in Faith with Mother of the Savior.
2. Assessing and evaluating effective staffing to meet our missional needs which includes sustaining the Partnership in Faith with Mother of the Savior.
3. Creating an intercultural community center with an emphasis on education including growing awareness of cultural similarities and differences including food, music, art, worship, festivals. The Partnership in Faith is a prominent component of this goal.
4. Rebuilding a vibrant music ministry that includes worship and concerts.

Staff, Vestry, and Officers of the Church



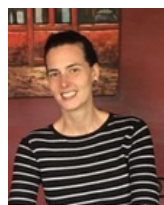
Rev. Terri Pilarski
Rector



Rev. Halim Shukair
Assistant Priest



Erin Biggs
Office Manager



Manuela Blankinship
Musician



John Jones
Sexton



Peter Kenney
Senior Warden



Selia Danes
Junior Warden



Chris Burkhalter



Daniel Pawa



Jill Poske



Dale Taylor



Kevin Green
Treasurer



Matt Sallman
Clerk

Rector's Perspective: The Rev. Terri C. Pilarski

The season of Advent is traditionally a season of waiting, of anticipation, reminiscent of a woman in the final days of her pregnancy. The scripture readings in Advent are annunciation readings that reveal God's action in stories of women preparing to give birth. The pregnancies are metaphors for the new life that comes about when God becomes active in the lives of human beings. And, as we hear, these stories are always about people going through a great ordeal as the love of God is being birthed into the world.

In our present age, we are trying to recover from a great ordeal that is very similar to the ordeals we hear about in scripture. Living through ordeals is nothing new to humankind. Every age has its ordeal to live through.

In the 157 years of Christ Church, people in this congregation have lived through the Civil War, World War 1, the Spanish Flu, The Great Depression, World War 2, The Vietnam War, Civil rights and race riots, the economic collapse in 2008, and now the pandemic. There will be more. These ordeals never end.

But we learn to live with them and through them.

And we do this because God remains active and present in our lives and in the world, giving birth to new life even as these great ordeals are snuffing out other ways of life. Anyone who has given birth knows that it requires labor and labor is painful. Likewise, the times we live in are difficult and painful and yet, also hopeful.

I've been reading a lot about the optimism and hope and the incredible resource each is. What is Optimism? Winston Churchill once said, "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." Research shows that, on average, human beings are hardwired to be more optimistic than not. To many psychologists, optimism reflects the belief that the outcomes of events or experiences will generally be positive. Others contend that optimism is more an explanatory style; it resides in the way people explain the causes of events. Optimists are likely to see the causes of failure or negative experiences as temporary rather than permanent, specific rather than global, and external rather than internal. Such a perspective enables optimists to more easily see the possibility of change.

Hope is the process of setting goals and following through on them, while optimism is a positive thought pattern. Hope is a strength in the midst of challenges. Hope is the belief that a person or an organization has the capacity to navigate challenges and thrive. Hope provides the stamina to face challenges head on, not denying the facts of the challenges and not subsuming to them either, but engaging them and overcoming them.



Hope is like the laboring woman giving birth to new life, and optimism is the midwife guiding the birth process toward vitality. We are like midwives of optimism, and hope points us in the direction of what it means to live in an ever changing world.

In his book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins a researcher who studies successful organizations, describes the qualities of companies that made the transition from being good companies to being great companies, and sustaining that greatness for 15 years or more.

He describes three characteristics:

- Know what you are passionate about;
- Know what you can be the best at in your context;
- Know what drives your economic engine.
- And for congregations I'd add a fourth - know what is a real need in the neighborhood.

For congregations, the capacity to shift and adapt engages our strengths and passions with the needs of the community and asks the question, how can we create multiple revenue streams that will enable us to thrive?

There is no doubt in my mind that God is inspiring opportunities for Christ Church and Mother of the Savior that will enable us to thrive. Although we are coming out of a fallow time, it has also been a fertile time. Where new life has been taking root and preparing for birth.

Our readings in Advent tell us the story of the women who have birthed new life into the world. These are the women and the people from whom Jesus is descended. These stories are all pointing us to Christmas Eve, to the incarnation, to God's love being birthed into the world. They are stories of hope. They reveal an optimistic God who believes in humankind. And they are stories of people who have been transformed by God's love.

This is our story too.

Curate's Perspective:

The Rev. Halim Shukair

In this Advent Season at Christ Episcopal Church, we start The Holy Eucharist with this beautiful prayer, *"Holy and Gracious God, we wait expectantly for your Word to come among us as Jesus, the Holy Child. Mary risked her reputation and her life, to bring the incarnate God into human flesh. She became "Theotokos", the God-bearer. May we be inspired by this brave, risk-taking love. May we, following her example, become the bearers of God's love in the world."*

Mary, the Theotokos (God-bearer) something new and great happens to her, and it happens precisely without human intervention. God Himself is the one who interferes in history and in the life of this humble Nazarite girl, achieving something new by that: a new era, a new miracle, and a new salvation, represented by the presence, incarnation and life of God among us.

The Hebrew Bible tells the story of humanity searching and waiting for this interference of God in the world. The Hebrews build a temple and then wait and pray so that the Lord would initiate and dwell in it. However, God does more than that in the case of the Mary, God came to dwell in a temple that was not made by human hands. God also dwells in a temple made up of us human beings, that is, in our lives and our bodies. God did not come in a cloud as a sign of his presence among the people, but rather himself.

Mary has an important and effective role in this matter. We can say that she leaves us two signs: The first sign is the belief that nothing fails God, "For nothing will be impossible with God." (Luke 1:37). The belief is that the invisible hand of God is still working in this world as God's hand comes to create life in the womb of barren Elizabeth, "And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren." (Luke 1:36). The second sign that we learn from Mary is acceptance of entering into labor, a time of patience, silence, and waiting.

As humans we are rushed to accomplish our works in a short amount of time, but the work of God needs a longer time and gradually new things comes after a long waiting and labor.

We can say that the period of Mary's pregnancy was accompanied by patience, faith, silence, listening, prayer and walking. This enabled Mary to see the places and events around her where the hand of God did something new: in the life of her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1: 39-45), and in the life of her fiancé Joseph (Matthew 1: 18-25).



Through the partnership between Mother of the Savior Church and Christ Episcopal Church Dearborn we were able to grow together through all the challenges. We were encouraged that Jesus is in the midst of all these challenges walking with us and through the Holy Spirit new things started to emerge. These new things were the transformative power in knowing each other through our different cultures and languages. We were able to enter into a covenant with one another to worship and fellowship together and support each other, and witness to the church God's reconciling mission in a broken world that longs for peace, justice, and unity. In patience, we labored together to bring God's love to our community and the fruit of this labor gave birth to Intercultural Community Center Dearborn (ICCD). The importance of Intercultural communication, "Intercultural communication focuses on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and the development of deep relationships. In an intercultural society, no one is left unchanged because everyone learns from one another and grows together."

Learning and growing needs patience, listening to each other and respecting each other, through this process great things will come to our parish and our community. It means trusting that God sees more for and about us than we often see for ourselves. That's what Mary did even as she asked, "How can this be?" She trusted God more than her life's situation.

As we approach Christmas, the birth of Immanuel, "God with us" let us always remember that the hand of God is still working in this world. In this time, let us remember that a new life emerged from Mary's womb as it emerged on the third day from the grave.

In this Christmas season let us gaze to see God's power and grace working in our lives and in the life of the people around us.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.



Office Manager's Perspective: Erin Biggs

As we entered into the season of Advent this year, I have been filled with a sense of joy and hope. Hope for our future and joy in seeing the renewal happening here at Christ Church, especially with the children. Children's Worship has continued to meet throughout the fall on Zoom. We are taking a break during Advent.

Rev. Terri met with 5 of the children from Christ Church in the beginning of December for Solemn Communion classes. That same day, she and the children met with Manuela and John to begin planning and practicing for Christmas Eve. Children will be singing, playing hand-bells, playing the piano and reading during the service this year. The 5 of them started off nervous, but by the time practice was done, they were smiling and seemed excited about what they had learned. I know my girls are looking forward to participating in the service.

It is my hope that this is just a start of getting the children back to being more active and growing their small group here at Christ Church.

After the new year Children's Worship will resume meeting on Zoom, continuing our Illustrated Earth curriculum, and then moving into something new for Lent.



Music Ministry Perspective: Manuela Blakinship

Fresh Starts

The pandemic years brought many firsts with them: We learned new skills or explored hobbies that got us through lock-downs and quarantines. Some of us started new jobs, most of us learned different ways of attending school, work, and worship.

You might have even revived half-forgotten skills like knitting or playing an instrument learned in childhood.

As we are moving towards the new calendar year, I would like to encourage you to continue your creative efforts and to share them with the congregation. Is there an instrument somewhere in your house that is collecting dust? Have you yearned for years to learn a new one? To sing? To speak in public?

Personally, I made a big leap of faith when I applied to become the new Head of Music Ministry at Christ Episcopal Church. So far, it has been a wonderful learning experience and an opportunity for personal and professional growth. One lesson that I (re)learned during these first few weeks was that it is not about perfection but about participation. It's about showing up and sharing in the joy of music.

I now encourage you to share your own talents with the music ministry and during worship this coming year. You could join the choir, volunteer to do a reading, ring bells for special occasions, or just sing a little louder during Sunday service. Beginners are always welcome, and I will be glad to brainstorm musical opportunities with you. Let's make a fresh start - together!

"Music is the divine way to tell beautiful, poetic things to the heart."

— Pablo Casals

Cooking Connections: An Inter-Generational Cooking and Fitness Series

This fall LAHC will be partnering with Christ Church to run Cooking Connections: an Intergenerational Cooking and Fitness series. This program will be run at Christ church one day a week for 10 weeks. Each class will offer nutrition education on a variety of topics such as shopping on a budget, healthy snacking, meal prep and reading food labels, as well as fun physical activity and hands on cooking and sampling. Cooking Connections will be open to seniors 60+ years old and youth ages 14-18. Please be on the lookout for our registration posted in October. For questions please contact LAHC Healthy Living Program Manager Kelly Citron at kcitron@lahc.org or (313) 254-2663.



The Intercultural Community Center

Gifts of the Intercultural Community

Jim Gettell, ICCD Task Force Vision Developer

Christ Church and Mother of the Savior are more broadly and deeply engaging Dearborn and surrounding communities through helping to create, support and develop Intercultural Community Center in Dearborn (ICCD). We have much to celebrate from our first year in this new adventure, including new relationships and working partnerships in Dearborn and receiving financial support from Trinity Wall Street Philanthropies to largely fund growth and development of ICCD during the next three years.

A quotation from theologian, educator, civil rights leader and author Howard Thurman describes gifts we share and receive through participating in an intercultural community:

[We] knew that all our accumulated experiences of the past had given us two crucial gifts for this undertaking: a profound conviction that meaningful and creative experiences between peoples can be more compelling than all the ideas, concepts, faiths, fears, ideologies, and prejudices that divide them; and absolute faith that if such experiences can be multiplied and sustained over a time interval of sufficient duration any barrier that separates one person from another can be undermined and eliminated. We were sure that the ground of such meaningful experiences could be provided by the widest possible associations around common interest and common concerns. . . . One basic discovery was constantly surfacing—meaningful experiences of unity among peoples were more compelling than all that divided and separated. The sense of Presence was being manifest which in time would bring one to his or her own altar stairs leading each in his [or her] own way like Jacob's ladder from earth to heaven.

-- Howard Thurman (1900–1981), *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 148.

“Our accumulated experiences of the past” prepare us for this work. Through the years, Christ Church has provided volunteers and financial support to local programs, participated in civil rights activities, collected donations and funds for projects, partnered with Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Monrovia, Liberia in a mission to build a much-needed school, and housed activities and organizations in its building as a community center. During the last three years, Mother of the Savior brought its own experiences in serving its diverse community of ethnic Arabs from throughout the Middle East and various Christian traditions to an intercultural Partnership in Faith with Christ Church. During the last year, other diverse agencies and individuals are joining Christ Church and Mother of the Savior in an even broader partnership, also bringing their own experiences of community, caring and service to ICCD. Our diverse context in Dearborn, our shared desire for community relationships, and our experiences in reaching out to help others are important parts of who we are and who we are becoming.

Our “basic discovery” and belief is that “meaningful and creative experiences” of “unity among peoples” can be more compelling than anything that divides and separates us, including “ideas, concepts, faiths, fears, ideologies, and prejudices.” With ICCD, we reach out to accept and engage ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, racial, and other cultural diversity among people in the Dearborn area and to build and strengthen community relationships and serve local needs. In and through our relationships and work, ICCD helps create intercultural awareness, appreciation, humility, respect, hospitality and compassion that is rare today.

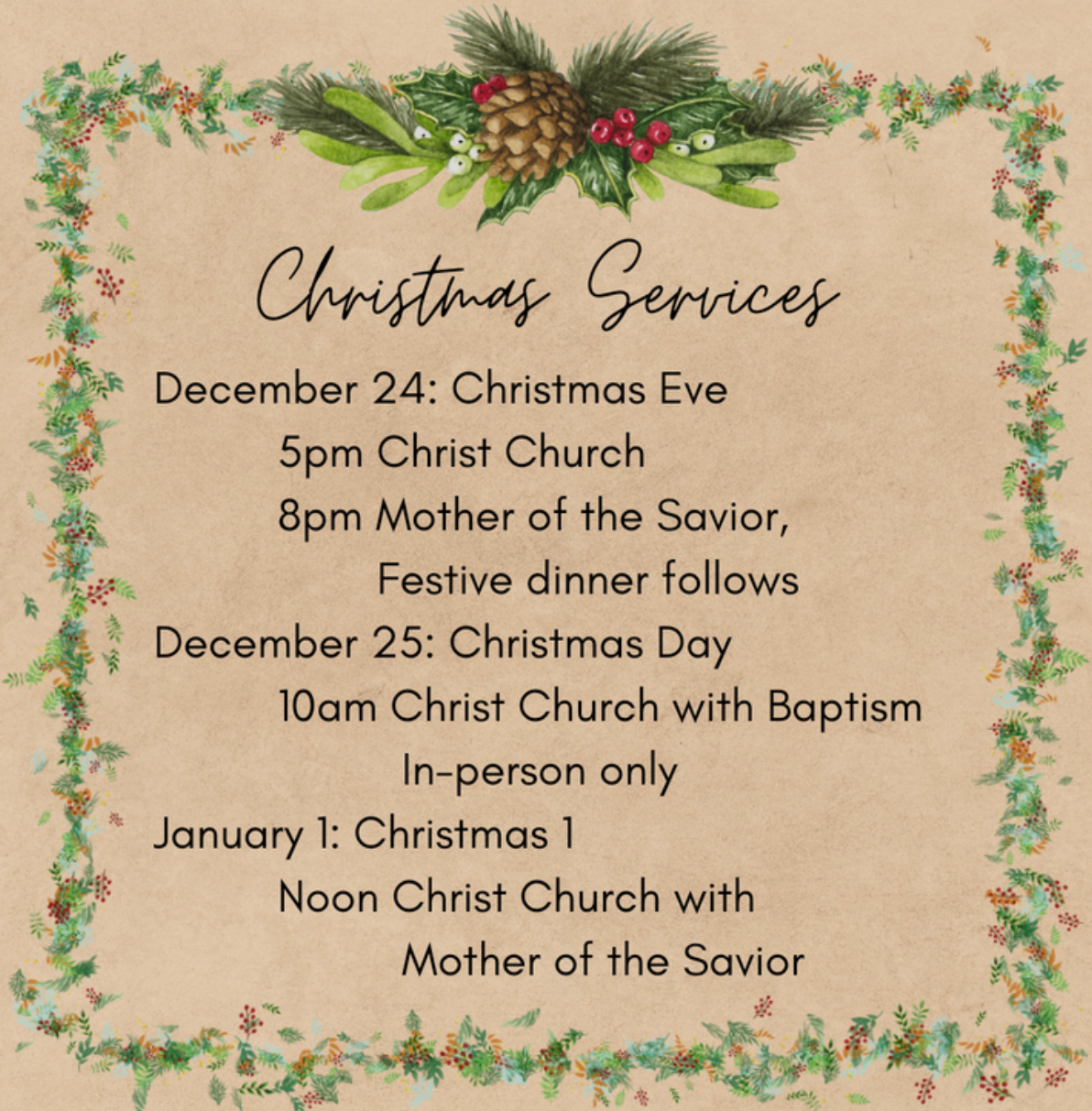
We are experiencing that “the ground of such meaningful experiences” is “provided by the widest possible associations around common interest and common concerns.” We create and support partnerships to serve others together in areas of community education and social justice, including environmental care and food security. In welcoming all, we find that each relationship is an opportunity to listen and learn more about diverse gifts, community needs, and ways to serve our community. Together we discover and share unexpected gifts and resources, including diversity, ideas, experiences, leaders, volunteers, facilities and funding, all well beyond those which any of us bring on our own.

Our trust, hope and love grow, and “if such experiences can be multiplied and sustained over” time, “any barrier that separates one person from another can be undermined and eliminated.” This is a powerful vision for living together in love. Our experiences become “like Jacob’s ladder,” leading each person in his or her own way from earth to heaven. As we believe in our religious tradition, “For if we love one another, God abides in us, and God’s love will be perfected in us” (1 John 4:11 from Canticle N, Enriching Our Worship I, pages 37-38).



Intercultural Community Center
in Dearborn
ICCD





Christmas Services

December 24: Christmas Eve

5pm Christ Church

8pm Mother of the Savior,

Festive dinner follows

December 25: Christmas Day

10am Christ Church with Baptism

In-person only

January 1: Christmas 1

Noon Christ Church with

Mother of the Savior

ANNUAL MEETING



The Annual Meeting at Christ Church will be Sunday, January 29 following the 10 a.m. service. We will gather in-person and via Zoom to review reports from the previous year, review our budget for 2023 and elect new Vestry members.



**Christ
Episcopal
Church**

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OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry, Bishop

The Rev. Terri Pilarski, Rector

Peter Kenney, Sr. Warden

Selia Danes, Jr. Warden

Kevin Green, Treasurer

Matthew Sallman, Clerk

STAFF

Erin Biggs, Office Manager

Manuela Blankinship, Head of Music Ministry

John Jones, Sexton

The Rev. Halim Shukair, Assistant Priest

John Vandevent, Music assistant

VESTRY

Chris Burkhalter

Selia Danes

Peter Kenney

Daniel Pawa

Jill Poske

Dale Taylor