



The Dove

Church of the Holy Spirit - 3 Haytown Road - Lebanon, NJ - churchholyspirit.org

OUR MISSION: *to become like Christ as we serve others, proclaim God's love, and grow in the Spirit*



Photos by Linda Davis Scharck

JANUARY 2025

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Second Sunday in Advent: December 8, 2024

There's a particular person in my life I sometimes just don't want to be with. It's often uncomfortable and sometimes scary to be together. There are times when I intentionally avoid this person. Sometimes I don't like what I see in this person. Other times I am disappointed in or angry with this person. Sometimes I don't listen to this person. Sometimes we argue. A lot has happened between us. Judgments have been made, criticisms have been exchanged, and wounds have been inflicted. I often don't understand this person or our relationship.

Some days I love this person, and other days not so much.

Our relationship is often rough or crooked. Sometimes when I am with this person I descend into a deep valley and make less of myself than I really am. Other times I climb a high mountain and make more of myself than I really am.

You know what I'm talking about, right? I suspect you know those feelings I described. I think we all have someone like that in our lives. But it might not be who you think it is.

In my case, the person I am talking about is me. I'm talking about the relationship I have with myself.

I think that's what John the Baptist is getting at in today's gospel when he says:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth."

He's talking about the relationship we have with ourselves. He's talking about the landscape of our lives. He's asking us to risk confronting ourselves.

What if that confrontation with ourselves is what it means to "prepare the way of the Lord?" And what if it's less about whether we're wrong, bad, or sinful and more about our healing and wholeness?

The valleys, mountains and hills, crooked paths, and rough ways of which John speaks are descriptive of our interior landscape. They are conditions and states of being within us. They are ways we relate to ourselves and one another.

What are the valleys in our lives today?

Think about the low places. What gets us there and what keeps us there? Maybe it's the judgments or criticisms we make of ourselves. Maybe it's self-doubt, second guessing, lack of confidence or self-esteem. Sometimes we live in the valley of grief and loss. Guilt, shame, or embarrassment often take us to the valley. It might be regrets, disappointment, fear, failures. When have we betrayed or alienated ourselves? When have we settled or given up? When have we lived less than who we wanted to be or less than who we knew we could truly be?



What are the mountains and hills in our lives today?

Think about the times and ways we've gotten too big for our britches. Think about the ways in which we try to control or coerce our life or another's life. When have we been selfish, judgmental of others, or intellectually rigid? In what ways are we motivated by power, wealth, success, reputation, the need for approval or to be right?

It's the hope that you and I will one day live on level ground and walk a smooth straight path together. That's what we all want, don't we? That's what we want for our nation, the world, and ourselves.

When we *prepare* our hearts, our minds, our hands, our lives – God will transform us.

Our paths will be made straight, our highs and lows will be filled, the rough will be made smooth.

Not because we won't experience crooked paths, the highs, the lows, or rough places – but because through our *preparation* we will *know* that God is with us no matter what.

Let us prepare the way of the Lord – in this season of Advent and throughout the year.

That's what John is offering each one of us. To “see the salvation of God” begins with looking at the landscape of our lives.

What do you see when you look at the landscape of your life today?

Deacon Dot Hospador

Prayer in a Time of Transition

God of all ages and keeper of our days, we lay before you this season in which we find ourselves. What has been has ended and we know not what lies ahead. Be with us in this time and give us the courage and patience to live these days of losing and finding mindful, as Jesus taught his friends, that the grain of wheat must be planted in the earth and die in order to bear much fruit. Amen.

Prayer For The Parish

God of all ages, our times are in your hands. Keep us engaged and hopeful — ever mindful of our mission: to become like Christ by serving others, proclaim God's love, and grow in the spirit.

Now is the acceptable time for us to get engaged, to show up, to step up, and to forge strong bonds with you and with each other. Stand beside us, Lord, cheer us on, rededicate us to building up the Kingdom of God. Amen.

Vestry Meeting Highlights from December

The Vestry met on Thursday, December 19, 2024; here are highlights from that meeting:

1. We reviewed recent successes:
 - ◆ Annual Stewardship Campaign. The results will be reported at the Annual Meeting on January 26.
 - ◆ Breakfast with Santa.
 - ◆ Children's bucket drumming.
2. Treasurer Sally Bird reviewed the year-to-date financials and the revised budget. She will make a report on the financials at the Annual Meeting.
3. Sally also reported on the annual audit conducted by Oscar Jones, CPA, who is a member of the Finance Committee.
4. The Vestry confirmed that the church's 2024 Marks of Mission contribution to the Diocese of New Jersey would remain at \$35,000. The Diocese requested \$39,249, but the Vestry, upon the recommendation of the Finance Committee, decided not to increase our original commitment due, in part, to a distortion in the three-year formula used by the Diocese that included as income the federal Covid-related Payroll Protection Program loan received by the church in 2021 for purposes of the Marks of Mission calculation.
5. Upon the recommendation of the Endowment Committee, the Vestry approved transfer of \$3,418.73 to the Diocesan Investment Trust ("DIT") for the church's Endowment Fund and \$35,800 to the DIT for the Fr. Philip Carr-Jones Fund for CHS Facility Restoration, a sub fund of the Endowment Fund. The \$35,800 is made up of \$7,400 from the Service Auction, \$10,500 designated donations and a matching gift of \$17,900.
6. Eva Lesniak reported on the upgrade of the fire alarm system.
7. Plans for the W3K [We Three Kings] Epiphany House Blessings were reviewed.
8. The Vestry discussed plans for the Parish's Annual Meeting, which will be held on Sunday, January 26, 2025.

Regular vestry meetings are open to all (except when personnel matters are discussed). They are generally held on the third Thursday of each month at the church or via ZOOM. The vestry page on the website has more information. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact John Andrews or Diane Hrozencik. Their contact information can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

House Blessings on Epiphany, January 6, 2025



Illustration by Roberta Maas-Wester

Sun, Jan 5th at 8:00am & 10:00am – Blessing of the Chalk & Holy Water; Distribution of House Blessing “Kits”. (If you are unable to attend in person let Eva Lesniak know and we can arrange to have a kit dropped off to you.) eva@churchholyspirit.net

Mon, Jan 6th in the Evening – Blessing of All CHS Homes. Please take a selfie at your front door and email as an attachment to the church office (admin@churchholyspirit.net).



A Christmas Story

Five years ago my family was gathered around the Thanksgiving table. I told the story of a woman in the maximum security section of Edna Mahan Correctional Facility who was sentenced to 60 years for killing a man who was abusing her.

Tom (our son-in-law), who has a law practice in Princeton, NJ, stood and said, "I will take her case, pro bono". Although Tom is not a criminal attorney he worked tirelessly and involved many others in trying to secure a reduction in her sentence.

There have been many, many setbacks along the way but on Wednesday December 18, thanks to Governor Murphy, my son-in-law, the ACLU and others too numerous to mention, my friend was finally released. "Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last."

Governor Murphy spoke with her personally via Zoom and commended her on all her educational efforts. He knew she had been a model prisoner for over 20 years, taking every opportunity to better herself. For the moment she is living with us as we work to get her life back on track. The probation service kindly allowed her to go to South Jersey for Christmas to be with her family. We are now preparing her to enjoy the next free chapter of her life, including feasts at McDonald's, which she dearly loves. While she is with us, we look forward to introducing her in church on Sundays.

Susan Kane

We Knew Him When!

Just **six** students in the choral department at Hunterdon Central High School were selected for the Central New Jersey Region Honors Choir! Congratulations to Abby Black, Analyse Guerrero, Brooklynn Hopkins, Adriana LoPiccolo, Carly Perrine, and **Luke Schnaudt!**

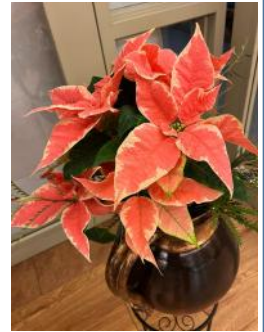
These students had to record and submit a very challenging audition and were selected from over **400** students who auditioned from all over Central NJ. The students will rehearse in January and perform a concert at Monroe Township High School on Sunday, January 26th.

Luke's High School Chorus Concert was recorded and can be viewed on the high school website (hcrhs.org), as can his solo performance with the CHS Choir during Lessons and Carols. [Jan Paxton photo]



Christmas 2024 in Photos

Pictures tell a wonderful story of the glorious season just ending . And blessings are due to all God's ministers who participated and made each and every part of that season so special. To Father Andy, Deacons Dot and Michelleleslie, furniture movers, Altar Guild members and other greens arrangers, musicians [singers, drummers, bell ringers, pianists and organists, flutists], bakers, coffee makers, kitchen cleaner-uppers, et al. And finally, to the photographers who captured the magic. Thank you all. Do check the website for all of their wonderful work. I could only include a few pictures here, alas.



David Cahall photo



Six Drummers Drumming. Dave Dabour photo



Davison makes a wish. Dave Dabour photo



David Cahall photos Christmas Eve

And The Bell Choir
Jan Paxton photo



Where Were They In December?

Janet Matts went to Longwood Gardens with Jane Paradiso and a friend of hers.



Jan Paxton and John Rollins had two trips in December: also to Longwood Gardens at the beginning of the month, and then for a New Year's Eve celebration of Jan's birthday in St. Croix, USVI with family.

Pat Egan and Arden Olson took their annual end-of-year trip to Cape Cod.



Jordan Altom was off to Sydney, Australia. She will be taking classes at the University of New South Wales—and traveling as much as she can. 19 weeks and counting the days for Deanne and John.

Roberta Maas-Wester captured a familiar holiday scene on Clinton's Main Street.



And also in Clinton, your editor took a shot of The Towne Restaurant's terrific makeover — including a wonderful photo that has pride of place on the back wall.

Around the Area and Beyond

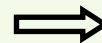
The **Union Township Recycling Center** at 140 Perryville Road is accepting old laptops and desktops on Saturdays from 8:00am - 12:00pm during January and February. These are being collected for Cycle for Survival, a non-profit arm of Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. Hard drives will be destroyed. The Morgan Family of the Township, who have a grand-daughter who is a cancer survivor, is spear-heading this collection.



The **Hunterdon County Library** now has a delivery service for seniors/ those who are homebound! Call or email (see below). You can place books on hold via the library's online portal, which is easy to do; a volunteer can also help you select books, or choose books for you. This good service is sponsored by The Friends of Hunterdon County Library. Call: 908-336-4229 or Email: fohcloutreach@gmail.com

Clinton Halstead Street Playground. You might have noticed that the playground near the North County Branch Library is in a state of dishevelment. Actually it's being totally overhauled, thanks in part to a generous grant from the state. So by the time spring comes again the kids will have a totally new playground to try out — including, I'm told, a zipline!

Seen on Facebook and worth sharing (at least your editor thinks so).



The Pennsylvania Amish community recently completed 12 tiny homes in Boone, NC, part of the area devastated by flooding last fall. The construction was finished in under 48 hours at a cost of more than \$300,000, all of which was donated by the Amish.

What to do with your Christmas Tree?? Goats like them as special treats, apparently. So if you know a local goat or two, ask the farmer if they would like your dried out tree (of course without ornaments, lights or tinsel....)

PULSE OF THE PARISH

BIRTHDAYS

January

Patrick	Taylor	1	3
Pattie	Bierwirth	1	5
John	Rollins	1	8
William	Schneider	1	10
Dale	Dabour	1	12
Sharon	Tripodi	1	12
Julie	Stine	1	12
Liz	Cannizzaro	1	18
Greg	Schroeder	1	18
Chris	Gnash	1	20
Jaime	Gora	1	21

February

Caroline	Iler	1	22
Bob	Kane	1	28
Patricia	Chester	1	29
Eli	Jones	1	31

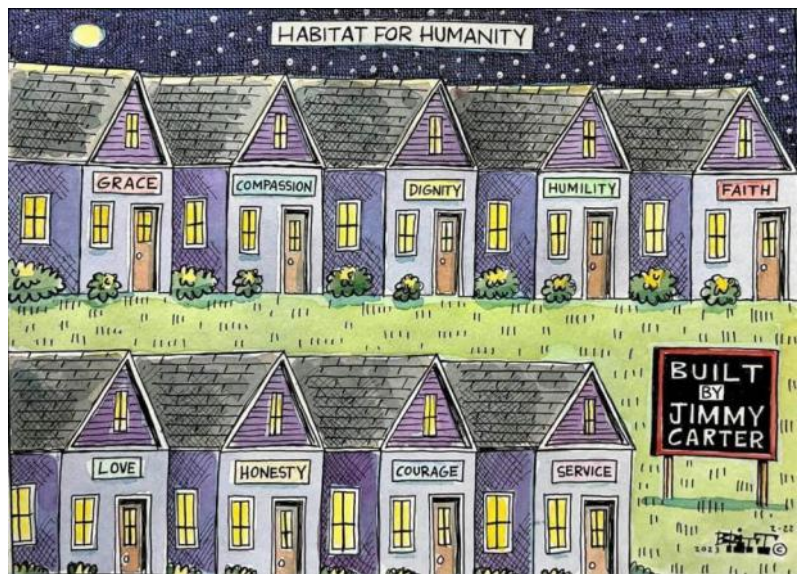
Floriene	Garrabrant	2	2
Richard	Emmitt	2	4
Ellie	Curtain	2	7
Jack	Daniels	2	9
David	Marlow	2	9
Elizabeth	Van Veldhuisen	2	15
Deanne	Altom	2	18
Blessing	Fofana	2	21
Erin	Rocchietti	2	24
Erik	Anderson	2	26
Ron	Schroeder	2	29

TRANSITIONS

We welcome into the household of God: Rory Connor Carr-Jones, son of Austin and Erin and grandson of Philip and Jan, born on December 4 2025.

Rest Eternal Grant to Them, O Lord:

Peter Herbert Wester, husband of Roberta Maas-Wester, Tuesday December 10th. Eva Lesniak Photo



Jimmy Carter, Jr., 39th President of the United States
December 29, 2024

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 5** Please attend church in person if you are able to receive your W3K kit for the house blessing on Epiphany (see page 5)
All contributions made by December 31, 2024 (and dated as such) must be received no later than Sunday January 5th via mail or deposited in the “black box” outside the office to be included in that year’s statement. Contact Treasurer Sally Bird (sallybird@churchholyspirit.net) if you have questions.
- 6** **EPIPHANY: HOUSE SELF-BLESSINGS SCHEDULED**
- 12 Breakfast between the Services
- 13 Sangha Meditation; 6:30pm in the Sanctuary
- 14 Theology on Tap (new date), 7:00pm
- 16 Vestry Meeting
- 26** **One Service at 9:00am followed by CHS Annual Meeting. If you are able, please join us to contribute your thoughts about our worship and ministries.**
- 27 Sangha Meditation; 6:30pm in the Sanctuary

FEBRUARY

- 2 Worship Committee Meeting, 11:30am
- 11 Sangha Meditation; 6:30pm in the Sanctuary
- 20 Vestry Meeting
- 22 “Winter Thaw” Potluck & Open-Mic Hobby Share
- 24 Sangha Meditation; 6:30pm in the Sanctuary

RECURRING MEETINGS

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Mondays | 1:00-3:00pm, Knit/Crochet and Chat at the church |
| First Mondays | Caregiver Support Group [Zoom] |
| Tuesdays | 7:00am, Bible Study at The Spinning Wheel Diner
7:00-8:30pm in Dove Hall or on ZOOM—Theology on Tap |
| Wednesdays | Fr. Andrew’s office hours, 11:00am-3:00pm |
| Thursdays | Theology on Tap [resumes January 14th] |
| Third Thursday | Vestry; 7:00-9:00pm [check website for special Zoom link]. |
| Sundays | 8:00 & 10:00am, Virtual or in-person services [Eucharist can be delivered at home if requested]
9:30 & 11:15am, Choir Rehearsal, St. Francis Room |

Who's Who at Holy Spirit [Area Code 908 unless otherwise noted]
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VESTRY			
Senior Warden	John Andrews	973-476-5389	andrewsjohnt@comcast.net
Junior Warden	Diane Hrozencik	973-775-2077	dhrozenc@outlook.com
Treasurer	Sally Bird	328-2925	sally.bird@churchholyspirit.org
Outreach	Jane Anderson	246-0479	janderson4244@gmail.com
Formation	Jeff Anderson	439-2532	janderson4244@gmail.com
Church Growth	Diane Bendahmane	301-793-5068	bendahmane.robinson@comcast.net
Fellowship	Dale Dabour	432-0697	daledabour@gmail.com
Social Services	Andy Follansbee	752-5633	andyfollansbee@gmail.com
Stewardship	Eva Lesniak	420-3613	eva@churchholyspirit.net
	Gary Scott	6258705	gary.scottnj@gmail.com
Property	Alex vanVeldhuisen	310-0454	Alexvv1969@gmail.com

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OR	Church Office	236-6301	admin@churchholyspirit.org
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	David Marlow	216-6943	davidbmarlow@gmail.com
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