



THE  
**LION'S TALE**

*The Seasonal Magazine of St. Mark's, Mystic*



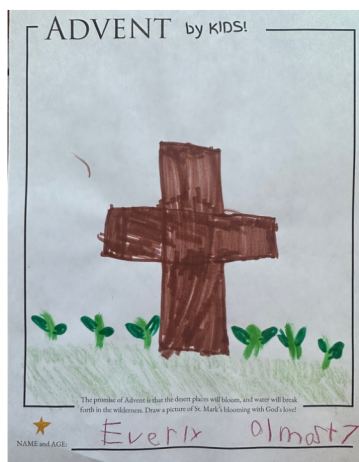
ADVENT/CHRISTMAS/EPIPHANY  
2023-24





# SIGNS OF THE SEASON

*Article by Pastor Adam and artwork by St. Mark's children*

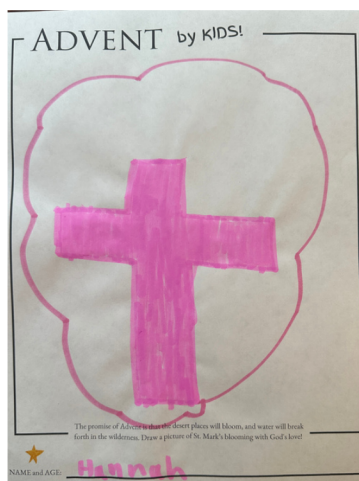


In the Gospel, Jesus mentions that we can tell when summer is coming by the budding of the fig tree. He recognizes that we're pretty good at figuring out what's ahead. Arthritic knees feel the storm before it strikes. "We've got to talk" means Friday's dinner date is off. Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning. If we humans are paying attention (even just a little bit), not much can slip by us.

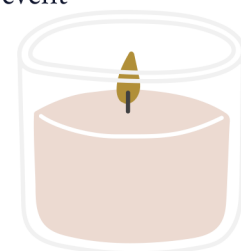
And so, I pay attention to the signs: every big box retailer is trying to sell you a gargantuan new 4K OLED Ultra High-Def TV, pop singers are taking it in turns to butcher "O Holy Night" over the speakers in the grocery store, and astronauts aboard the International Space Station can see your neighbor's decorations. So this is Christmas, I echo John Lennon's hopeful lament.



Now, I promise this article isn't going to degenerate into the generic, tired outrage about consumerism during the holiday season, so stick with me for a few minutes. I'm paying attention to the signs, and all I see are discounted air fryers and all I hear is another cover of "Frosty the Snowman." Ever since the commercial sector replaced black and orange with red and green, we have been living in a winter wonderland of perpetual Christmas Eve. Yesterday I saw a commercial where the couple in it were trying to "win Christmas," whatever that means.



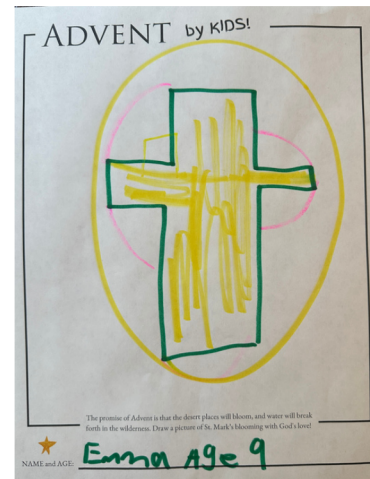
I'm paying attention, but the luster and volume of perpetual Christmas Eve flash brighter and shout louder than the subtle, increasingly subversive current that charges this holiday with meaning. This subtle event is, of course, the birth of an infant. Not so newsworthy, right? Indeed, the Bethlehem Gazette would have only covered the event because of the odd behavior of a bunch of shepherds.



You see, the people of Israel weren't looking for an infant born out in the barn. They were looking for a triumphant, well-muscled, military superhero to be their messiah, to be their exterminator of all things Roman. And so they missed the signs because they were paying attention to the wrong thing. They were so busy yearning for pomp and swagger that they missed love and humility. While we don't have to worry about the Roman Empire, we often fall in the same trap of misplaced attention. By observing some mutated version of Christmas for weeks ahead of time we fail to recognize a truly wonderful season of preparation for Christmas, which the Church has been celebrating for centuries.

The first day of Advent is Sunday, December 3rd this year, marking four weeks leading up to the celebration of the birth (or Nativity, if you want to be technical) of Jesus Christ. During the season of Advent, we pause, we notice our ragged breath, and we take time to catch it. We prepare a place in our hearts to receive once again the love of God in the presence of Jesus Christ and wonder how we let that place get so cluttered since last year. And as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we realize just how badly our society has missed the point.

This Advent, drag your eyes and ears away from all that clamors for your notice, all that sound and fury. Pay attention to the true signs of the subtle, subversive event of the presence of Christ in our midst. Your neighbor's decorations may sparkle and glitter, but they do not shine like the Light of the World. That pop singer's quivering ornamentations might adorn "O Holy Night," but they do nothing for a world that still lays long in sin and error pining. And that GPS system you bought on Black Friday for \$49.95 might give good directions, but it won't show you the way. The way, the truth, the life comes. Pay attention and see the signs of Christ's presence in our midst. And don't just notice those signs. Be one.



A handwritten signature in blue ink.





*2023*

# CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH**

10:00am – Christmas Pageant (during service)

## **CHRISTMAS EVE**

8:00am - Holy Eucharist

10:00am - Holy Eucharist

4:30pm – Family Service

(Musical Prelude at 4:00pm)

9:00pm – Festive Service

(Musical Prelude at 8:30pm)

## **CHRISTMAS DAY**

9:00am – Christmas Day Service

## **DECEMBER 25TH – DECEMBER 29TH**

Office Closed

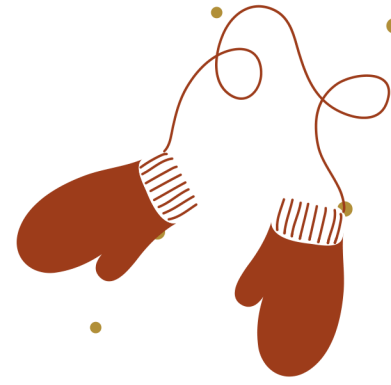
## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31ST**

8:00am and 10:00am – Morning Prayer

(no education this Sunday)



# THANKSGIVING MEAL REPORT



Dear St. Mark's Parishioners,

Thank you to all who donated and volunteered for the St. Mark's Thanksgiving Day Meal Deliveries! The event was a huge success. With the help of the parish and community members we were able to provide about 180 meals to those in need. One of the major highlights was during potato peeling night, kids and adults together were able to team up to peel and cut 140 lbs of potatoes in approximately 30 minutes - incredible! We had more than enough food donated, and more volunteers than could be counted (at least 60 between Wednesday and Thursday). Thanks again to all of you who were able to make this happen.

Happy Holidays!

Bryan Sardo



# THANK YOU



Many thanks to the Densmore Oil Company for their generous donation of a new boiler for the rectory.



## MISSION SPOTLIGHT



# Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center



### Last Year the PNC provided...

- 1,920 people used the food pantry (581 were children, and 441 were seniors)
- The number of people using our food pantry increased by 9% from last year
- Thanksgiving and Christmas meals were provided to more than 1,000 people
- Each month, approximately 100 people attend our free, bi-monthly breakfasts

### The PNC Helped Children

- Babies received free diapers, wipes, baby formula and baby food each week
- 276 children received Christmas gifts
- 461 children enrolled in the Weekender Backpack Program to receive food each week
- The PNC purchased and distributed \$1,800 worth of school supplies

### The PNC Provided Financial Assistance

- The PNC distributed \$48,000 in direct financial assistance and provided heat for 157 families
- Our thrift store made 6,545 sales of affordable clothing, toys and housewares

### The PNC Helped Older Persons to Age Gracefully

- 262 people, age 55+ participated in senior active programs that included exercise, social, volunteer and nutritional activities
- 5,840 free rides were provided to 102 people through our Senior Transportation Program
- Meals on Wheels were delivered to 52 homebound seniors

Bring **diapers and baby food** to either the 4:30 or 9:00pm Christmas Eve service at St. Mark's and help the PNC continue to do good work in our community.



# THE LION'S TALE

St. Mark's Episcopal Church  
15 Pearl Street  
Mystic, CT 06355

*Return Service Requested*

First Class Mail

## **VESTRY**

Lynn Batcho  
Maura D'Agostino  
Mon Dickinson  
Sue Glass  
Arlene Johnson  
Lynne Lawrence  
Bill Merrill  
Katy Roberts  
Jackie Stoltz  
Dave Tura  
Fred Zielger

## **MINISTERS**

All members of the congregation  
The Rev. Adam Thomas, Rector  
David Tubbs, Music Director  
Faithe Emerich, Communications & Youth Ministry  
Mark Wydler, Sexton  
Ted Kietzman, Senior Warden  
Rob Christian, Junior Warden  
Greg Steel, Clerk  
Dave Cruthers, Treasurer



**SAINT MARK'S**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

15 Pearl Street • Mystic, CT 06355  
(860) 572-9549 • [www.stmarksmystic.org](http://www.stmarksmystic.org)