

Christ Episcopal Church

Sparta, NC

A Home to All

Sharing God's Unconditional Love



Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 23, 2017

The Rt. Rev José McLoughlin
Bishop of Western North Carolina

The Rev. Stephanie E. Parker
Rector

Welcome to Christ Episcopal Church

We are delighted God has brought you to this special place. Our tradition is to invite newcomers to introduce themselves during the announcements, if they would like. Following the service, the ushers have guest cards which we hope you will fill out, so we can personally welcome you to the church community. Everyone is invited for refreshments and fellowship in the parish hall afterwards.

What do you need to know about worship? Everything you need for your worship today is in the booklet you are holding. Our service is based on the Book of Common Prayer, using music from sources including the Hymnal 1982 and Taizé.

Are you worshipping with us for the first time? We would love to get to know you! Please fill out one of the pew cards tucked into the pew in front of you. Let us know if we can call you, answer questions, or pray for you. And know that wherever you are on your journey of faith, there is a place for you at Christ Church.

Home communion visits: Do you know someone who isn't able to get to church, but would like a home communion visit? Please call the church office at 336.372.7983 to arrange a visit.

Please wear a name tag. No permanent one? Please use the blank name tags found in the church entryway. We're happy to make you a new nametag, a replacement, or simply a spare. For permanent name tags, email the church office at ccepiscopal@skybest.com.

Newsletter: Sign up today to receive our electronic newsletter, the weekly Good News & Notes. Email the church office at ccepiscopal@skybest.com.

Sermons Available: Recent sermons available at www.christchurchallegany.com.

Adult Formation at Christ Church includes an Adult Forum series Sunday mornings at 9:00 am in the fellowship hall downstairs.

We extend special thanks today to:

Betty Upchurch, for serving as musician and for being so generous with her talents,

The Altar Guild, for providing the flowers for the altar, and

Marybeth Lentz and the Food & Fellowship members, for providing the refreshments and for coordinating the decoration of the church following this morning's service.

The Gathering

Prelude

O come, O come, Emmanuel

Betty Upchurch

All stand, as able.

Processional Hymn #657

Love divine, all loves excelling

Advent Wreath Prayers

Remain standing, as able.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Leader: An ancient promise is coming true

People: **God's love lasts for ever.**

A secret mystery is being revealed

God's love lasts for ever.

A little child will soon be born

God's love lasts for ever.

God of promise

God of wisdom

We will wait with you.

God of justice

God of integrity

We will walk with you.

God of mystery

God of glory

We will laugh with you.

Leader: We have heard the words of prophets.

People: **May we recognize God's truth.**

We have heard the words of angels.

May we recognize God's joy.

We have heard the words of promise.

May we recognize God's love.

All: **And so may God bless us, Mystery of creation, Child in the manger, Holy Spirit of glory, and may we welcome and walk in the promises of God. AMEN.**

We light the pink and three blue candles.

Opening Acclamation

Presider Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

People **And blessed be God's kingdom now and for ever. Amen.**

Wait for the Lord (*sung by all*)

Taizé Songbook #12

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!

Wait for the Lord, His day is near.

Wait for the Lord. Be strong, take heart! (Repeat)

Remain standing, as able.

The Collect of the Day

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Let us pray.

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

All are seated.

Liturgy of the Word

The First Lesson

Micah 5:2-5a

You, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,

from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,

whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;

then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;

and he shall be the one of peace.

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People **Thanks be to God.**

The Response

Psalm 80:1-7

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.

Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

O Lord God of hosts, *
how long will you be angered
despite the prayers of your people?

You have fed them with the bread of tears; *
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

You have made us the derision of our neighbors, *
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

The Second Lesson **Hebrews 10:5-10**

When Christ came into the world, he said,

"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;

in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God'
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me)."

When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Please stand as able.

Gospel Hymn #56, vss 1-3

O come, O come, Emmanuel

Presider The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Luke.
People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

The Gospel **Luke 1:39-55**

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Presider The Gospel of the Lord.
People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

Sermon

The Rev. Stephanie E. Parker

A time of silence following the sermon.

Please stand, as able, for the Creed on the following page.

1. I be - lieve in God al - might - y, Au - thor of all things that
 2. I be - lieve that Je - sus suf - fered, scourged and scorned and cru - ci -
 3. I be - lieve in God's own Spir - it, bond - ing all the saints with-

be, Mak - er of the earth and heav - ens, Keep - er of the sky and
 fied; tak - en from the cross, was bur - ied— True Life there had tru - ly
 in One church, cath - o - lic and ho - ly, where for - give - ness frees from

sea. I be - lieve in God's Son, Je - sus, now for
 died. I be - lieve that on the third day Christ was
 sin; in the bod - y's res - ur - rec - tion, for the

us both Lord and Christ, of the Spir - it and of
 raised up from the grave, then as - cend - ed to God
 break - ing of death's chain gives the life that's ev - er -

Mar - y born to bring a - bun - dant life.
 right hand. He will come to judge and save.
 last - ing. This the faith that I have claimed.

Prayers of the People

Intercessor God calls us to love one another; as a sign of that love, we lift our prayers to God for the needs of all people throughout the world.

We pray for the peace of the world, that our instruments of war may be transformed into instruments of peace, and that nations shall cease to learn war any more.

Silence

We pray for the church, that we may become more and more a means of grace and peace in the world.

Silence

We pray for all people of good will who seek to cast off the works of darkness, for human rights activists, peace workers, environmentalists, and for the myriads of ordinary people who in their day to day work and lives risk sharing the beauty of your truth and love with a world that does not always want to listen.

Silence

We give thanks for all of our blessings, especially...
With you, what we already have, is enough and more.

Silence

We pray for all who are in need, especially...
that we may be alert to the presence of Christ in them and ready to reach out in love.

Silence

We pray for all who have died, especially... and those you would name. And we pray for those who grieve, that they may faithfully wait upon God with confidence in that love which sustains us in every moment of our lives, even those where we sit in darkness and loss.

Silence

We pray for all assembled here today, that we may know and extend the grace and joy of being in a faith community; that we may hear the Good News of Jesus Christ and then go forth and be as Jesus to this world.

Silence

Presider We praise you, Lord our God, that you have called us to be instruments of your presence in the world. Grant us grace to discern your will and the strength and courage to do it, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Presider Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

A period of silence is observed.

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Presider Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

The Peace

Presider The peace of Christ be always with you.
People And also with you.

Please greet one another in a way that is comfortable as a sign of our participation in Christ's reconciling work in the world.

Offertory *Awake, Awake, for Night is Flying* Betty Upchurch

Doxology
*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heav'nly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

Presider All things come of thee, O Lord.
People And of thine own have we given thee.

The Great Thanksgiving

Standing, as able.

Eucharistic Prayer 2, Enriching our Worship 1, pg. 60

Presider The Lord be with you.

All **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Because you love us, you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life and that when he shall come again in power and great love to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

We praise you and we bless you, holy and gracious God,
source of life abundant.

From before time you made ready the creation.

Your Spirit moved over the deep
and brought all things into being:

sun, moon, and stars;
earth, winds, and waters;
and every living thing.

You made us in your image,
and taught us to walk in your ways.

But we rebelled against you, and wandered far away;
and yet, as a good mother cares for her children,
you would not forget us.

Time and again you called us
to live in the fullness of your love.

And so this day we join with Saints and Angels
in the chorus of praise that rings through eternity,
lifting our voices to magnify you as we sing:

Sanctus: S128 (*sung by all*)

*Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Stand or kneel, as able, for Prayer of Consecration.

Glory and honor and praise to you, holy and living God.
To deliver us from the power of sin and death
and to reveal the riches of your grace,
you looked with favor upon Mary, your willing servant,
that she might conceive and bear a son,
Jesus the holy child of God.

Living among us, Jesus loved us.
He broke bread with outcasts and sinners,
healed the sick, and proclaimed good news to the poor.
He yearned to draw all the world to himself
yet we were heedless of his call to walk in love.
Then, the time came for him to complete upon the cross
the sacrifice of his life, and to be glorified by you.

On the night before he died for us,
Jesus was at table with his friends.
He took bread, gave thanks to you,
broke it, and gave it to them, and said:
“Take, eat:
This is my Body, which is given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.”

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine.
Again, he gave thanks to you,
gave it to them, and said:
“Drink this, all of you:
This is my Blood of the new Covenant,
which is poured out for you and for all
for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
do this for the remembrance of me.”

Now gathered at your table, O God of all creation,
and remembering Christ, crucified and risen,
who was and is and is to come,
we offer to you our gifts of bread and wine,
and ourselves, a living sacrifice.
Pour out your Spirit upon these gifts
that they may be the Body and Blood of Christ.

Breathe your Spirit over the whole earth
and make us your new creation,

the Body of Christ given for the world you have made.
In the fullness of time bring us,
with all your saints,
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
to feast at the banquet prepared
from the foundation of the world.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Fraction Anthem: S154 (*sung by all*)

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
therefore let us keep the feast.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

The Invitation to Communion

Presider: The gifts of God for the People of God; God's holy food, for God's holy people.

All who seek God and are drawn to Christ are welcome at the Lord's Table.

If you are gluten allergic, please ask for a rice wafer at the distribution.

Communion Music

Betty Upchurch

Surely the Presence of the Lord

*Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place,
I can feel God's mighty power and God's grace,
I can hear the brush of angels' wings,
I see glory on each face.
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.*

Stand or sit, as able.

Post Communion Prayer

BCP 365

Presider

Let us pray,

**Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Blessing

May God who conquered darkness with light,
give peace to you.

May God who conquered death with life,
give peace to you.

May God who conquered loneliness with love,
give peace to you.

And the Blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

Stand, as able.

Recessional Hymn #537

Christ for the world we sing!

The Dismissal

Presider

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.

People

Thanks be to God, Alleluia, alleluia.

Postlude

Coming Lessons

Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3

Psalm 147

Galatians 3:23-25, 4:4-7

John 1:1-18

Prayer List

Intercessions: Ben D., Chuck B., Jann B., Jim D., Jon, Julie O., Laura D., Linda W., Stella D., and Ted Y.

Departed:

Birthdays: Jonathan Halsey (Dec 29)

Wedding Anniversaries: Joe & Judy Ritchie (Dec 25)

The Following People are Assisting with the Services

Role	This Sunday, December 23rd	Christmas Eve service, Dec 24th
Altar Guild	Louise Law	Marybeth Lentz
Chalicer I	Frances Buckle	Jann Boggs
Chalicer II	Bruce Smith	Bruce Smith
Crucifer	Bruce Smith	Bruce Smith
Lector I	Louise Law	Cynthia Grant
Lector II	Cynthia Grant	Jann Boggs
Prayers of the People	Louise Law	Cynthia Grant
Oblations Bearers	Louise Law	Marybeth Lentz
Greeters/Ushers	Cynthia Grant & Jann Boggs	Cynthia Grant
Book Bearer	Frances Buckle	Jann Boggs
Sanctus Bell	Bruce Smith	Bruce Smith

Schedule

Sunday, December 23 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

No Adult Forum this morning

10:30 am – Holy Eucharist

Christmas Decoration and lunch following the service

Monday, December 24

9:00 pm – Christmas Eve service

Tuesday, December 25 and Wednesday, December 26 – The church office will be closed.

Wednesday, December 26

No morning service today

Sunday, December 30 – First Sunday of Christmas

9:00 am – Adult Forum

10:30 am – Holy Eucharist

Soup Sunday following the service

6:00 pm – Mountain Soul presents For His Glory

Tuesday, January 1 – The church office will be closed.

Wednesday, January 2

10:00 am – Holy Eucharist

Sunday, January 6 – Epiphany

9:00 am – Adult Forum

10:30 am – Holy Eucharist

Tuesday, January 8

1:00 pm – Finance Team meeting

Wednesday, January 9

10:00 am – Holy Eucharist

Sunday, January 13 – First Sunday after the Epiphany: Baptism of Our Lord

9:00 am – Adult Forum

10:30 am – Holy Eucharist

Tuesday, January 15

12:30 pm – Vestry meeting

Wednesday, January 16

10:00 am – Holy Eucharist

Sunday, January 20 – Second Sunday after the Epiphany

9:00 am – Adult Forum

10:30 am – Holy Eucharist followed by our Annual Meeting

Announcements

Upcoming opportunities to enjoy some Food & Fellowship:

December 23rd - We will be decorating the sanctuary for Christmas immediately following the morning service **TODAY**. The members of the Food & Fellowship team will bring sandwiches, drinks and cookies into the sanctuary to enjoy while we work together to transform Christ Church into the Spirit of Christmas. Please join us for this annual fellowship opportunity!

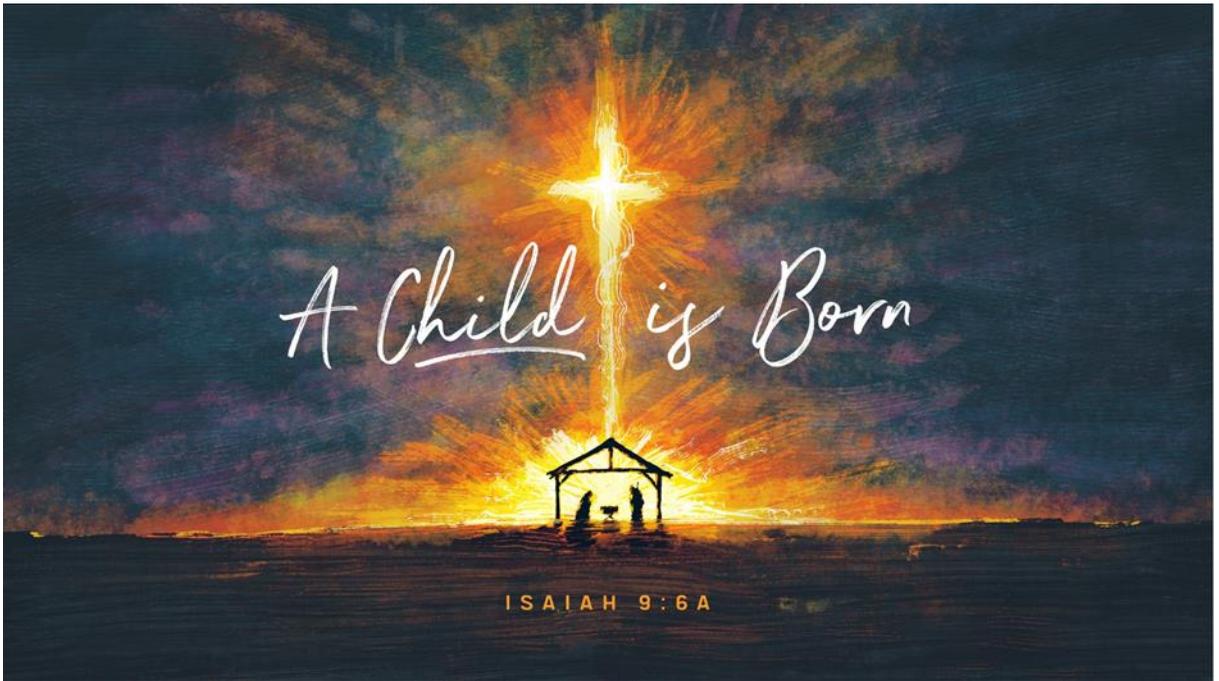
December 30th - We will end 2018 with another soup luncheon while breaking bread together. Many thanks to Deb Donaldson for making this lunch possible.

REMINDER: All Ministry Team Leaders need to email their 2018 reports to the church office *no later than* Monday, January 7th.

Food & Fellowship Person of the Month for December is: Marybeth Lentz. She can be reached by telephone at 336.657.7088 or by email at mlentz@skybest.com.

Vestry Person of the Month for December is: Sheila Pfaender. She can be reached by telephone at 336.200.1164 or by email at sspfaender@gmail.com.

For any building or property issues, please contact: Phil Donaldson with your concerns. He can be reached at 336.372.7573.



Our Christmas Eve service
will be tomorrow:
December 24th at 9:00 pm

Christ Episcopal Church

2543 US Highway 21 South, PO Box 1866

Sparta, North Carolina 28675

Office: 336-372-7983; Rector cellphone: 336-363-4141

Email: ccepiscopal@skybest.com

Website: christchurchallegghany.org

Office hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-1:30 pm

Music used by permission CCLI License #11138616.

Prayers of the People adapted from Intercession for God's People. Gail Runshaw.

Art by He Qi - "The Magi"

Today's bulletins are printed in color due to an anonymous donation.