

**AN ADVENT POEM**

**The Fist**

*By Mary Oliver*

There are days  
when the sun goes down  
like a fist,  
though of course

if you see anything  
in the heavens  
in this way  
you had better get

your eyes checked  
or, better, still,  
your diminished spirit.  
The heavens

have no fist,  
or wouldn't they have been  
shaking it  
for a thousand years now,

and even  
longer than that,  
at the dull, brutish  
ways of mankind—

heaven's own  
creation?  
Instead: such patience!  
Such willingness

to let us continue!  
To hear,  
little by little,  
the voices—

only, so far, in  
pockets of the world—  
suggesting  
the possibilities

of peace?  
Keep looking.  
Behold, how the fist opens  
with invitation.

Imagery From sunset to sunrise,  
Moral direction  
From violence to peace  
Invitation-presence of hope

*On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious. -Isaiah 11:10*

Around a month before the birth of our first child, Tiffany and I were up to the same thing as any other young couple in a similar situation. We were doing the best we could to ready ourselves for what was coming; an absolute and forever disruption to our lives. We read what we could of the recommended baby books, and baby proofed the house. I even mapped out the fastest route to the hospital during rush hour. We packed a bag stuffed with a few bottles, books, a change of clothes and other assorted belongings necessary ready for the moment when everything changes.

We lived in Atlanta's Virginia-Highlands; sharing a townhouse with two other tenants in one of the most desirable neighborhoods in the city. There was no nursery in this small one-bedroom duplex and knew we needed more space, but this was where the baby would first come home. Baby clothes, toys, and books began to accumulate, much like the outpouring grace when St. Paul's gave us a shower for Wesley. When Alban was born, I brought home some blankets and hats so that our dog Fowler would know his scent when he came home. And we went to the hospital two or three times before it finally happened... after a long pack walk through the woods.

I imagine I wasn't the first dad to believe I had everything down at the hospital. The nurses taught me how to change and care for baby and momma. It wasn't until we brought Alban home in his little outfit with matching bowtie when everything became "real." I vividly remember pacing around during those long infinite nights where tiredness was a chronic state of being, trying to get my baby to stop crying; wailing is a more appropriate use of the word.

Our saving grace came from some neighbors who had put a rocking chair on the street. It was a family who had rocked four babies in this same chair. We brought this chair home and it was the one place I could sit and lay tiny Alban in my arms, with the background of the white noise machine, and rocked back and forth until his crying subsided. It was, and is, the greatest satisfaction to see the eyes of babies finally became heavy and they drift off sleep. This was just the beginning; a foretaste of parenthood.

Thus, I believe, is the Advent experience: preparing for the coming of God's kingdom by practicing its ways and doing so with such intention and purpose that something happens. We begin to catch glimpses of it here and now, as if the illusion of reality is already beginning to fade and a new and delightful light of the world is breaking through the darkness. In Advent, the people of Christ live the way of Christ together. We wait for the kingdom to come and manifest it here and now.

And Advent can be continual. Martin Luther believed the incarnation and cross was one event; the wood of the manger is the wood of the cross. Christ's coming and presence disrupts life and history where nothing will ever be the same. God came, and still comes to all people in their darkest hour to birth faith and increases it. We gather on Christmas Eve, at the most inconvenient hour, when we are all tired, as the Blessed Mary was, or any new parent. We share in the joyful hope of our deepest hopes and yearnings for God's immeasurable goodness.

I love the season of Advent for many reasons, but it always helps me consider how God incarnate changes everything about daily life. It is a time to consider the maternal nature of God; a presence who is gentle, tender, kind and nurturing. The kind of love and an advent that has no end. Amen.

*Austin*

Deadline to submit articles for "The Epistle" is the 15th of each month.

Alaska Pilgrimage Drawdown — Dec. 7, 6 p.m.

Outreach reading at Crestwood Elementary School — Dec. 12

Worship Committee Meeting — Dec. 12, 12 p.m.

Executive Committee Meeting — Dec. 12, 5:15 p.m.

Vestry Meeting — Dec. 17, 5:15 p.m.

Outreach serving at L.O.V.E.'s Kitchen — Dec. 19

Parish Office will close at noon, Dec. 24, for the Christmas Holidays and reopen Dec. 30; then will close for New Year's noon Dec. 31 and reopen Jan. 2, 2020.

Finish out 2019 Contributions – All 2019 contributions will be due in the office by noon, Dec. 31 to receive credit.

Wednesday Night suppers will resume Jan. 8, 2020.

Reports for Annual Meeting will be due in the Parish Office by Jan. 13.

**Don't Miss the Annual Christmas Pageant!**

St. Paul's annual Christmas pageant is Christmas Eve at 4:30 p.m. The service will feature our children and youth as well as lots of festive Christmas music! Parents: Please note we will be rehearsing on Wednesday, December 11, and Wednesday, December 18, at 5:30 p.m. Dinner will be served (at no cost) to all who attend rehearsal, as well as their families. We are holding rehearsals on multiple days to accommodate everyone's schedules. Please make every effort for your child or youth to attend rehearsals. If you would like your youth or child to participate, or you would like to assist with production, please contact Claire Hasselle know. Please encourage your kids to participate! Thank you!

**Save the Date!**

Come celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany with a short service and burning of the greens on Wednesday, January 8, 2020. The worship service will begin at 5:30 p.m., complete with devotional readings, prayers and music. We will enjoy chili and hotdogs after the service, prepared by our EYC families. Parishioners are asked to bring sides and desserts. Donations of \$6 per person or \$20 per family are kindly requested. All proceeds will go towards our youth programming.



**Christmas Eve**

Tuesday, Dec. 24, 2019

4:30 p.m. • Family friendly service  
Christmas Pageant  
with Holy Eucharist

10:30 p.m. • Midnight Mass  
Festive Choral Eucharist  
with Brass Ensemble

(Nursery 10:30 p.m. service only)

**Christmas Day**

Wednesday, December 25, 2019  
No Service

# Vestry Nominations Open

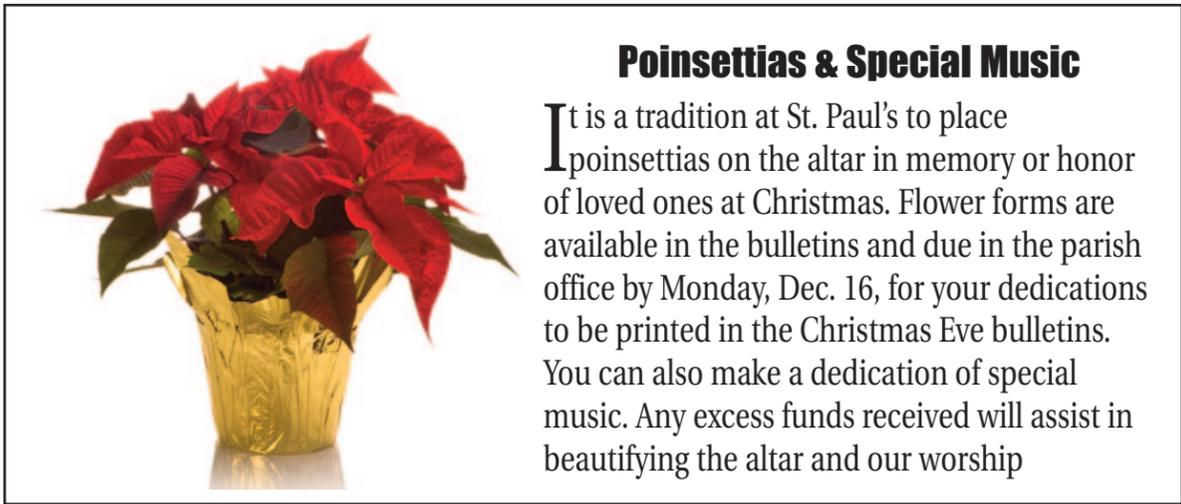
Nominations are open to elect three new members of the Vestry to serve three-year terms. Forms for nominations are available at the entrances to Nave and on bulletin board in the hallways and will be accepted until Jan. 13.

A potential vestry member must be a confirmed communicant, at least 21 years of age, must be canonically resident and actually residing the parish (letter of membership on file); must be entitled to suffrage at annual meeting at which elected; cannot have served on the Vestry in previous three years (though such person is immediately eligible to stand for nomination as Warden); and shall not serve more than six consecutive years in that or a combination of vestry member/ warden offices unless said individual has served a portion of a former term (i.e. filled an unexpired term). Prior to the Annual Parish Meeting, potential Vestry members will meet with the Rector; consent to the parish's Vestry Covenant; and commit to attend the annual Vestry retreat.

*We rejoice in the birth of twins Milo Joseph & Ivy Jane Sutton, born Dec. 1 in Nashville, TN. Parents are Levi Sutton & Scotland Sanders; grandparents are Albree & Scotty Florey.*

### EYC Events

12/1: EYC @ St. Paul's from 5 – 7 p.m. Come have some Advent fun with us!  
 12/4: EYC Gospel Study @ 6:30 p.m.  
 12/8: Jr. and Sr. EYC shopping for Care Lodge from 4 – 7 p.m. Meet at the Mediator to ride the bus together.  
 12/15: Jr. and Sr. EYC Christmas Caroling from 5 – 8 p.m. Meet at the Mediator to ride the bus together. Don't forget to wear your most exciting holiday gear for the occasion! (i.e.: tacky Christmas sweaters, antlers, silly hats, etc.). This is also the night of our EYC Christmas party. Everyone should bring a snack to share and a wrapped "naughty or nice" gift worth \$10 or less.  
 12/18: Kids and EYC will be rehearsing for the Christmas Pageant from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Meet in the Nave for rehearsal.  
 12/22: Kids and EYC will be rehearsing for the Christmas Pageant from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Meet in the Nave for rehearsal. Dinner for all that attend!  
 Heads Up! EYC will be on hiatus until Sunday, January 12, 2020, when EYC resumes. Stay tuned for 2020 plans! Y'all have a great holiday and New Year!



## Poinsettias & Special Music

It is a tradition at St. Paul's to place poinsettias on the altar in memory or honor of loved ones at Christmas. Flower forms are available in the bulletins and due in the parish office by Monday, Dec. 16, for your dedications to be printed in the Christmas Eve bulletins. You can also make a dedication of special music. Any excess funds received will assist in beautifying the altar and our worship

## Curate Coming to St. Paul's

Fr. Austin and the Vestry are excited to announce the reinstatement of our curacy program. Many wonderful clergy began their ordained ministry at St. Paul's and have made an immense impact on so many of you and your families. The curate will function in the work of a priest with a focus on children and youth ministries. We have also received a wonderfully generous gift to help start a fund for this position. Please share in our joyful anticipation for their arrival summer 2020.

## Spring Semester Youth Diocesan Events

Save the date and get your EYC'er registered! There is already a fun spring semester planned for the youth of the Diocese of MS. Go ahead mark your calendars and get registered. If you register your EYC'er for any diocesan events, please let Claire Hasselle know. Transportation can be arranged, or at least a carpool, in most situations. Diocesan events are such a wonderful way for your youth to meet kids from all over the state and grow their faith in a different way. Please encourage them to participate! All registration links can be found at [diomsyouth.org](http://diomsyouth.org).

Jr. High DOY: March 27 – 29 (Grades 6 – 8)  
 Happening #87: March 6 – 8 (Grades 10 – 12)  
 Sr. DOY: April 17 – 19 (Grades 9 – 12)

## Get Those Pledge Cards In

We have a few pledges still remaining to account for. Pledge cards are available in the front and rear entrances to Nave along with envelopes. You may drop you pledge envelope in the offering plate, return to Parish Office or call Joane with your verbal pledge. A huge thank you to Rick Barry and Wayne Wuestefeld, Chairman and the Stewardship Committee Chair, respectively, for all of their hard work. As of Nov. 30, we have confirmed pledges in the amount of \$528,348.

## 193rd Annual Council • Feb. 7-9, 2020 Bancorp South Arena • Tupelo, MS

Online registration is open by downloading forms at [dioms.org](http://dioms.org). St. Paul's has reserved a block of rooms for our delegates, alternates and other parishioners attending. If you would like to have a room reserved contact Anne Chalk at 601.604.6789 or [achalk@bellsouth.net](mailto:achalk@bellsouth.net). Opening service will begin at 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 7, followed by a 8 to 10:30 p.m. social with music, food and more, featuring local band "Two Drink Minimum." Saturday lunch will be included in your registration. The closing service with Eucharist will be held Sunday morning. Make your plans to attend and enjoy the fellowship as we conduct the business and elections for various leadership positions within the Diocese.

## We Remember in our Prayers

**Our Parish family:** Claire Calcote, Dixie Pigford, DJ Wells, Edgar Morrison, Jerry Greene, Jo Van Devender, Mary Scott, Norma Veach, Peggy Carrico, The Rev. Arnold Bush, The Rev. Don Chancellor, Terry Rush and William Godwin.  
**Those in our senior living communities:** Deannie Carmichael, Elise Leach, Joyce Welsh, Linda James, Lora Jones, and Nita Neville.  
**Extended family and friends:** Agnes Lewis, Alice Miller, Ally Gressett, Amanda Lockey, Anna Meyers, Art Matthews, Baston Geiger, Bill Selman, Bridget Mann, Brooke, Cathy Parker, Charmin Edwards, Chelsie Abston, Cheryl Drennan, Cory Gaylord, Diane Dunn, Delroy Ming, Edesser "Dess" Reid Ward, Rob & Aislinn Ward, Elise Higbe, Frank Baker, Frank Barrett, Freddie Bea Watson, Gary Dawkins, George Ferguson, Hannah McNichol, Helen Valentine, Jada Dooley, James, James Wooley, Jim Bateman, John, Justin Site, Ken Fisher, Kim Lovette, Kylie Temple, Leigh Ann Key, Lou Dubose, Marilyn Mohr, Martha Mazingo, Mary Hallwell, Mary Ann Howell, Mary Irby, Michelle Nelson, Mike Lundy, Mike Stanton, Nelson Hall, Noah White, Norman, Patty Fishburn, Pud Merrell, Rick, Sandra Nicholas, Sandy Carrier, Sallie Gercens, Hannah Thompson, Seth Thompson, Stephanie Turner, Theodore, Tom Schram, the Waller Family, Wanda Scott, Wilfe Manning, Zack Martin, Bob Hill and Josh Matthews.  
**We pray for those who have died especially;** Glenn Brown, former husband and father of Ducky McCormick's children; Tom Jones, cousin of Gary Jones; Evan Douglas Godwin Jr., brother of William Godwin; and Alana Hemmingway Wann, former wife and mother of Wayne Wuestefeld's children.  
**We pray for those serving in the Armed Forces,** for all who serve overseas and their families, especially Andrew Behm, Shum Benson, Connor Covert, Graham Ford, T. J. Melton, Nick Mullen and Zack Thomas.  
**We pray** for our Bishop Brian, our Rector Austin and his family and our Deacon Betty.

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

Dec. 1 .....Bob Covert, Lee Graham, Henry Hiatt	Dec. 13 .....Bob & Polly Covert
Dec. 2 .....John Breaux	Dec. 17 .....Chandler Hogan, Bryan & Rosilyn Holladay, Karli McGinnis
Dec. 3 .....Bob Deen, Michael Hasselle	Dec. 21 .....David Batchelor III, Tiffany Benson, Carlyle Breaux, Jerry & Marilyn Greene, Ralph & Martha Young
Dec. 4 .....Bonnie Allen, Sandra Hill	Dec. 24 .....Harriet Simmons
Dec. 6 .....Annie Martin	Dec. 27 .....Dotty Graham, Laura Holladay
Dec. 7 .....Paige Watson	Dec. 29 .....Hemi Gaddie
Dec. 8 .....Sharon Davis, Dawn McCormick, John Michael McDonald	Dec. 30 .....Melissa Calcote, Elliott Street
Dec. 11 .....Kelly & Paige Watson	
Dec. 12 .....Reid Perry, Jane Weems	

Services	DECEMBER 8	DECEMBER 15	DECEMBER 22	DECEMBER 29
VESTRY COUNTERS	Robby Dreyfus & Page Sikes; Lock: Wayne Wuestefeld			
8 A.M.				
CHALICE	Lynne Taleff	Lindy Deen	Bob Coffin	Gloria Chancellor
READER	Lindy Deen	Anne Chalk	John Carrier	Margaret Van Dyke
USHER	Bob Pigford	Bob Coffin	Linda Carrier	Bob Covert
10:30 A.M.				
READER 1	Katie Simmons	Rick Barry	Jerome Kittrell	Lloyd Gray
READER 2	Tiffany McGehee	Jamie Smith	Gary Jones	Melissa Calcote
PRAYERS	Candy Ward	Kay Reich	Helen Abraham	Bobbie Rea
USHERS	Cindy McGinnis	Rick Barry	Perrin Burchfield	Michelle Lewis
	Jim McGinnis	Cheri Barry	Chris Burchfield	Patrick Lewis
	Scott Hudson	Sara Mason	Edie Simmons	Lauretta Hamilton
	Rose Hudson	Melissa Love	Adrian Page	Gary Jones
ACOLYTES	Hardin Hiatt	Cate Simmons	Cameron Burchfield	
	Gibson Hasselle	Payton Hanschke	Sellers Breaux	
	Henry Hiatt	Tusker Dunn	Carlyle Breaux	
ALTAR GUILD	Connie Arline	BJ Ray	BJ Ray	Bev Pringle
	Martha Barnett	Kay Reich	Kay Reich	Lee Loeb
	Melissa Calcote	Stacey Harwell	Stacey Harwell	Joan Moore
CHALICE	Kay Reich	Bev Pringle	Mary Weems	Rick Entreklin



## How Can We Observe Advent at Home?

By Claire Hasselle

On December 1 the season of Advent began. Social media posts will overflow with beautiful, meaningful ways to celebrate the Christmas season (AKA Advent, the Christmas season, doesn't actually start until December 25th.) Sometimes, when I see photos or activities that other parents do with their kids, I feel less than adequate. Our days are messy, unpredictable and for the most part, way too short to get everything done.

Keeping Advent traditions like a daily Advent countdown chain, a Jesse Tree or an Advent devotion every night is mostly unrealistic. If I tried to do these things daily, it would probably bring a lot of stress to my family, rather than the positive spiritual formation I'm aiming for. Still, I strive and pray to make meaningful traditions in my family that help us all draw nearer to God through this very important season of Advent. This season is supposed to be spent in quiet wonder and expectation of what's to come, not stressing out over every single thing we don't get the chance to do, right?

Prepare the Way of the Lord  
Advent literally means "the coming." This season is about preparation, not performance or perfection. We are

preparing our hearts to welcome Christ in his coming — first through setting the ground to understand the story of the incarnation as he came to Bethlehem, then in grateful awareness of how he has come to us in our own salvation story and in holy anticipation as we look to Christ's second coming. As John the Baptist cried out, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" in anticipation of Christ's manifestation to the world, we can mark Advent in simple ways that remind us and others that we are preparing the way of the Lord. In Advent we prepare ourselves to meet Christ afresh as Savior and Lord.

So, with crazy unapparelled schedules, various ages around the dinner table and fresh emotions lingering from daily encounters, how can we walk through Advent, preparing the way of the Lord? Below are a few simple suggestions for living out this beautiful and peaceful season in real life.

### Advent Candles & Wreath

Create a space for a simple Advent wreath with candles this year. Each evening, or just once a week, turn off all the lights nearby and light the correct number of candles for the week. This can be coupled with a simple prayer or a simple song. This is a very simple way to mark Advent

that engages even the youngest child. There will be take home devotionals and resources for this available at the Advent Fair.

### A Simple Prayer

Pray the collect for each week of Advent. A collect is simply a prayer that can gather the thoughts of the congregation or family. A collect highlights the theme of a particular day or week. You can find Advent collects in the Book of Common Prayer on pages 211 and 212. You can repeat the prayer each night for the week or pray it Sunday night at dinner. Maybe breakfast is the only time you are all together around the table—pray it then! If you have time, you can re-write the collect in words that everyone in the family can relate to and understand. Even

before you start the car on the way to school, a deep breath and a prayer can be a tangible way to invite the Holy Spirit into your daily lives as a family.

### A Simple Song

My kids love to sing, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." When we light our Advent candles, we sing this each time (that may be only once or twice a week and that's okay!) The first week of Advent, we sing one verse. The second week, we sing verses one and two. By the end of Advent last year, my kids know all four verses by heart and love this simple way to mark time until the birth of Christ.

Purple Paper Napkins or Tablecloths

The liturgical color of Advent is purple (or blue), which signifies royalty (our King Jesus!) and penitence as we prepare our hearts for his coming. Buy purple or blue paper napkins to use during Advent, or if you have one, use a purple or blue tablecloth or runner. This can be a simple,

but important, reminder of the season of Advent.

### Prayer Cards

Pray together as a family during Advent. Before Advent begins, gather 24 index cards and write the names of 24 people, countries, unreached people groups, loved ones, friends or family members you know are in need. Each day when you gather with your family, choose one card and pray for the person or need on the card. For some families,



this rhythm of daily prayer might be overwhelming. Instead, choose four loved ones to pray for, one for each Sunday of Advent (or the evening you are all able to eat together). Beginning to pray together as a family can yield beautiful growth for each person and bring the family closer together.

### Nativity

If you have a nativity set, or creche, set it up in a common area. Set the Holy Family across the room. Each Sunday during Advent, or each time you remember, move the Holy Family closer to the manger as we travel closer to Jesus' birth. Hide baby Jesus until Christmas Eve and have the kids find him.

*These are just a few ideas to get your family started.* In the Hasselle household we do a little of each as we are able, each day holds new challenges. We do the best we can and we fall short many days. However, the focus is making sure our kiddos understand how

### Advent Prayer for Family

*God of Love,  
Your son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us.  
He is a sign of your love.  
Help us walk in that love  
during the weeks of Advent,  
As we wait and prepare for his coming.  
We pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior.  
Amen.*

important it is to be quiet, listen and prepare our hearts for the coming of the Christ child. My goal is for my children to understand, and feel, something special and life-changing is headed our way. It is our responsibility to prepare ourselves to receive Christ and do our best to follow the way.