



DECEMBER 2023 ISSUE

The Banner

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
ST. GEORGE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
AUSTIN, TX





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Sunday Schedule

10:30 am Holy Eucharist Rite II

11:45 am Coffee Hour

Sunday Bulletin

CHRISTMASTIDE SCHEDULE

Dec. 14: Christmas Caroling

6:30 p.m. - The Wright House

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve

10:30 a.m. - 4th Sunday of Advent Service

5:30 p.m. - Eucharist & Children's Pageant

Dec. 25: Christmas Day

10:30 a.m. - Eucharist: Rite I - Spoken Mass

Dec. 31: New Year's Eve

10:30 a.m. - Holy Eucharist with Lessons & Carols



December Events

St. George's Pub Club

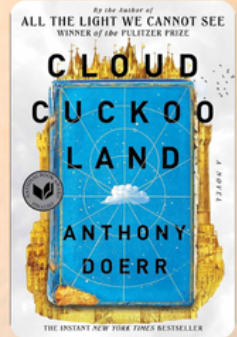
DEC. 4 , AT B.D. RILEY'S
6-8 P.M.

BRING A FRIEND!

Women's Book Group

3-5 p.m.

Sat. Dec. 16



Choir Practice

Every Tuesday
7-8:30 p.m.



St. George's Nursery

*For crawlers through fours
from 10 am - noon on Sundays.
Follow the signs on campus, and please
register children via the QR code!*



ST. GEORGE'S EVENTS PAGE





Feast Days

December 2023

- 1 - Nicholas Ferrar, Deacon, 1637
- 2 - Channing Moore Williams, Missionary Bishop in China & Japan, 1910
- 4 - John of Damascus, Priest, c. 760
- 5 - Clement of Alexandria, Priest, c.210
- 6 - Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c. 342
- 7 - Ambrose, Bishop of Milan 397
- 8 - Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 12 - Jane Frances de Chantal, 1641
- 13 - Lucy, Martyr in Sicily, 304
- 14 - John of the Cross
- 21 - St. Thomas the Apostle
- 25 - The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ: Christmas Day**
- 26 - St. Stephen, Deacon & Martyr
- 27 - St. John, Apostle & Evangelist
- 28 - The Holy Innocents
- 29 - Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1170
- 31 - Frances Joseph-Gaudet, Social Reformer, 1934



Letter from the Rector

REV. DR. MATT BOULTER

Advent, Good Friday, & Judgement

Advent is complicated.

Fifteen years into ordained ministry as an Episcopal priest, I admit that, over the past fifteen Advents, I've attempted (a little bit, anyway) to "skimp." I have given Advent "short shrift," lacking the time (so I felt) to really delve into it deeply, figuring out for myself what I think it all means.

This year, I have tried to repent. In fact I have re-preached my last two sermons (the last two of November), relying much on previous years' sermons, in order precisely to give myself more time to prepare for Advent.

And yet, I realize now more than ever: Advent—its theological meaning—is complicated!

Take, for example, this Sunday's Gospel lesson from Mark 13, commonly called the "Olivet Discourse." This little vignette is almost impossible to wrap our heads around. When Jesus speaks of "the Son of Man coming in the clouds" and of heaven and earth passing away, is he predicting the second coming that we confess regularly in the Creed? If so, why on earth would he say, "This generation will not pass away before these things take place."? (Mark 13:30) Was Jesus just confused?

I think not ... but more on that later!

Cntd. on the next page

For now, I want to recommend a book written by one of the first women ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church, Fleming Rutledge: *Advent: the Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ*. I encourage everyone to buy this book; you can watch an author summary of it [here](#).

One of the themes of the book is a topic that many of us would rather avoid: the theme of judgment.

This reminds me, at a deep instinctual level, of another time during the church year: Good Friday.

What I mean is this. I will never forget the feeling I had during my first Good Friday service. You see, for at least three decades now, I have been a “recovering fundamentalist.” In other words, I have been trying to shed those elements of my Christian upbringing that are destructive, or irrational, or based more in bizarre idiosyncrasies of twentieth-century American culture than they are in scripture, reason, and/or tradition.

But as a recovering fundamentalist, it’s sometimes difficult to shed the suspicion of those “liberals” in those “mainline Protestant denominations.” After all, I was told (during my childhood), they don’t have any theological convictions. They don’t actually embrace the difficult dimensions of the Gospel. They are simply “blown and tossed by the wind” of the secular culture that surrounds us.

Cntd. on the next page

This bias (admittedly directed toward “typical Episcopalians”) was difficult for me to overcome. It seemed plausible to me. Until. Until I attended my first Good Friday service in an Episcopal Church. Never had I seen the embrace of such deep, dark suffering. Never had I experienced such penitent sorrow over sin. Never had I seen such openness to judgment, the judgment of God.

From then on, I realized the deep truth of our church: we don’t talk about judgment (“hell, fire, and brimstone”) all the time ... but we do focus on it at the appropriate time. (Similar wisdom applies to the topic of money and “tithing.”)

How wonderful. How wise. I wonder, though: starting this year, could we make Advent a little more like Good Friday?

This year, we will explore God’s judgment. I hope you will join us!

Faithfully,
Matt+



Parish Updates and Announcements

Office Closed

Our office will be closed Monday, Dec. 25- Monday, Jan. 1. We will reopen on Tuesday, Jan. 2. Have a wonderful holiday season!

Pink Candle Party

St. George's maintains the older tradition of a pink candle on the 3rd Sunday in Advent. Pink is for joy, for the nearness of Christmas. In honor of our tradition we will be hosting a Pink Candle Party for our church family and our bishop, right after service on **Dec. 17**, in Kleberg Hall! Stay for lunch and Christmas cookies, sing some favorite seasonal songs, and make decorations for Christmas. Contribute what you can to a collection benefitting a cause chosen by the youth of St. George's! If you would like to help with food, crafts, or music, please contact Suzette: cshpuckett@austin.rr.com

Christmas Eve Pageant

Calling all kids! Come help with the telling of the Christmas story. Come in costume from home, or come at **5 p.m.** to the Wright House, to borrow one from our costume collection. When you are ready, go sit with your family in the church until it's time for your character to come to the Manger. All are invited, young and old, in costume or in your everyday clothes, to join in the Pageant play. Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the Angels sing!

Dec. 24 - 5:30 p.m. Service (5 p.m. for costumes in the Wright House)

Poinsettia Donations

St. George's will be adorned with poinsettias for our celebrations of the Nativity of our Lord and throughout the Christmas season. We invite you to make an offering for poinsettias, perhaps in a loved one's memory, or in thanksgiving for a person or other blessing in your life. The deadline to have dedications listed in the Christmas bulletins is **Sunday, December 17th**.

A donation of \$20 per plant is suggested. Make your donation online at [St. George's online donation page](#) and be sure to fill in the donation cards on Sunday or via the [online form](#).

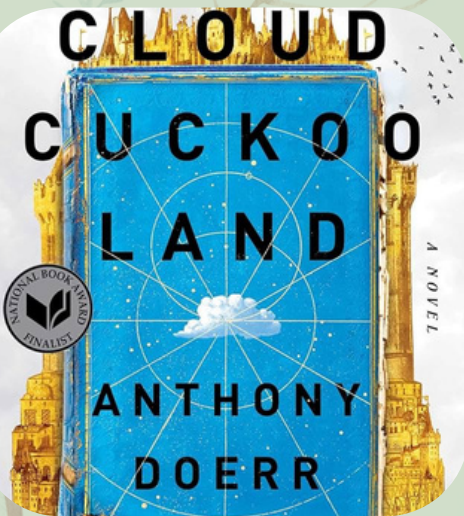
Christmas Party at St. George's Court

Join us **Tuesday, Dec. 12, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.** to provide and serve a special holiday meal for residents of St. George's Court (our affordable housing program for seniors). Stay to have lunch, sing Christmas carols, and visit with residents. Sign up in the church entryways or at Coffee Hour or email Andrea at andreagalsparks@gmail.com to bring prepared food items needed. St. George's Court is located at 1443 Coronado Hills Dr. Hope to see you (and your yummy dish) there!

Outreach H-E-B Giftcards

Bring Christmas Cheer to St. George's Court (our affordable housing program for seniors) and Casa Marianella (transitional housing in Austin for refugees worldwide). We are collecting \$20 HEB gift cards for the individuals and families served by these programs. Donations can be made online at [St. George's online donation page](#) or by check with "Christmas" in the memo line. Or you can buy gift cards and place them in a stocking on the small Christmas tree in the south entryway of the church. Our goal is 110 cards! **Deadline is Dec. 10.**

Women's Book Group



The Women's Book Group will hold its annual high tea on Dec. 9 from 3 to 5 p.m. at Sarah Campbell's home. The December book is *Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Anthony Doerr. All women of the parish are invited to this festive event, even if you don't regularly attend!

For more information, contact Alice Nelson at mzlsnlsn@gmail.com or Sarah Campbell at cowmarket2@gmail.com

Hands4Hope

St. George's volunteers - Samantha, Susan E., Mary, Sergio, and Carolyn served at Hands for Hope on Saturday, Nov. 18 where 1,000 families received Thanksgiving meal kits. As of Nov. 13, \$1,875 had been raised by St. George's for the holiday meals and to address food insecurity all year.

Thanks to your generous support and prayers in loving and nourishing our neighbors. By the end of our Hands for Hope Campaign, more than 12,000 individuals will have gathered to cook, serve, and break bread together this holiday season. Hands for Hope will also have a "Las Posadas" extension to provide more than 500 families holiday meals and nourish more than 20,000 individuals year-round. If you would like to volunteer on Friday, Dec. 22, in the morning, please email Carolyn at moreaucarolyn@gmail.com.

Linked below is a special video from Bishop Ryan to the Episcopal Churches supporting Hands for Hope, and a wonderful video of the event with a message from El Buen's CEO, Dr. Rosamaria Murillo.

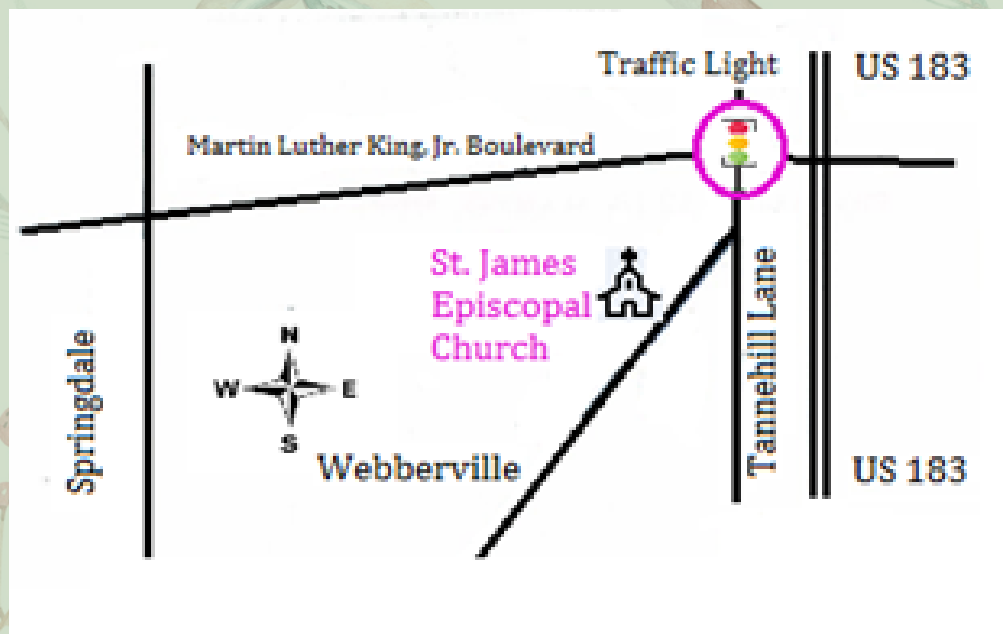
[Bishop Ryan's Video](#)

[Event video with message Dr. Rosamaria Murillo's Video](#)

Las Posadas

Saturday, Dec. 16, at 6 p.m. is the annual Posada hosted by St. James' Episcopal Church & Proyecto Santiago and St. John's Episcopal Church. Las Posadas is a traditional and cultural religious observance honoring Joseph and Mary's quest for shelter. Join us for music, food, drinks, and piñatas for the kids. Everyone is Welcome!

Where: St. James' Episcopal Church, Founders Hall



Support St. George's Episcopal School

Hi, St. George's Parishioners! Many have asked me how they can show support for the school, so I wanted to share this link to some fun SWAG. We'll be happy to leave your items in the Wright House for you to pick up on a Sunday. Just drop us an email (info@stgeorges-austin.com) after purchasing these fun items and we'll make that happen. Thank you in advance and enjoy the hats and t-shirts.

-Jerri

SAFE Bags

Here is the schedule of events for the next SAFE bag delivery:

- **Jan. 7:** Sew-in - During Coffee Hour in Kleberg Hall. Lunch will be served!
- **Jan. 14:** Bag filling - In Kleberg Hall after the worship service, followed by pot-luck lunch and the Annual Parish Meeting
- **Jan. 21:** Blessing of the bags and time with friends from SAFE

Visit to SAFE Campus

We are thrilled to share with you that our entire congregation has been invited to visit the SAFE campus after church on **Jan. 21, 2024**. This is an honor and a sign of trust to be invited to their gated community. We're hoping you plan now since this will take at least a couple of hours with travel and presentation. We will carpool over and have a light lunch while hearing a presentation and overview. Then, we will have a tour of the impressive campus. So mark those calendars now! Address and directions will be provided in a timely manner.

Annual Parish Meeting

Mark your calendars now for St. George's Annual Parish Meeting on **Sunday, Jan. 14!** After the morning worship service, we'll fill SAFE bags in Kleberg Hall, then enjoy a pot-luck lunch, followed by the annual meeting, where we'll elect Vestry members and Diocesan Council delegates, hear about the past year, and look ahead to the future at St. George's. All ministry leaders are encouraged to submit their reports to the church office by Jan. 8.

St. George's Episcopal School

As you all know, schools are a busy place with so much going on behind the scenes. With the responsibility of not just the health and safety of the children, but also providing a solid foundation for children's future academic success, along with the human resource component and financial responsibilities, it can be easy to feel a bit overwhelmed. Thankfully though, I inherited a great strategy when arriving here at St. George's - - A Strategic Plan. Each year I create action items in six areas of this plan, and then update the plan quarterly with the school board. At the recent school board meeting, it was suggested that I share the goals from the plan with others invested in the health of our school. The six strategic areas are as follows:

1) Strategic Area: Growth

- Goal: Promote and manage the growth of the school responsibly and in concert with church growth plans.

2) Strategic Area: Faculty and Staff

- Goal: Establish an academic staff that is highly qualified and appropriately compensated.

3) Strategic Area: Facilities

- Goal: Have a safe and attractive environment that fosters a love of learning.

4) Strategic Area: Program & Curricula

- Goal: Develop and implement an educational program that creates an environment fostering exploration and love of learning, which balances social and emotional development and recognizes the individual needs of each child.

5) Strategic Area: Governance and Leadership

- Goal: Support and enhance the governance and leadership of the school.

Cntd.

6) Strategic Area: Finance

- Goal: Stabilize and professionalize our school and its financial procedures.

Within this well-thought-out plan, my action items have four objectives 1) assign the tasks to responsible parties (school's administrative staff and school board members), 2) develop a metric for success, 3) schedule a due date, and 4) provide quarterly updates. I'm happy to report that the quarterly update to the school board was met with favoritism. We are on the right track for the continued success of our school.

I hope everyone has a wonderful December and a Merry Christmas!

Jerri Thompson, M.Ed.
Head of School
St. George's Episcopal School
4301 N. IH 35
[Instagram](#) [Facebook](#)



Let's Celebrate

Birthdays

Brian Wolfe (Dec. 4)
Ryan Wagner (Dec. 4)
Katie McGhee (Dec. 6)
Lexie McGhee (Dec. 6)
Stephanie Andrews (Dec. 9)
Raul Carrera (Dec. 15)
Belinda McGhee (Dec. 18)
Jackson McGonigle (Dec. 20)
Patsy Chandler (Dec. 26)
Stella Rose Tavrides (Dec. 26)
Robert Erik Colón (Dec. 27)

Anniversaries

Divesh & Vanamala Manohar (Dec. 22)
Nancy & Raul Carrera (Dec. 27)

A Christmas Prayer

Once upon a Christmas time, long ago, a man who had a big heart, but little money, dreamt he could give his friends endless riches. When he awoke, the dream kept running through his mind, over and over. Finally, he asked himself: "If I could give my friends anything, what would I give?" And he began to think that perhaps real wealth could not be measured in riches. Perhaps there were gifts of greater value than the things money could buy. In the still of the night, he pondered these things and thought of Christmas and what it meant to him. Taking over his quill, he began to write on a parchment scroll:

On the first day of Christmas, I pray for you joy in abundance and laughter, for laughter cures our ills and joy makes our spirits soar.

On the second day of Christmas, I pray for you a sigh when you need one, for a sigh clears the heart as a cough clears the throat, and with a sigh comes acceptance of what we cannot change.

On the third day of Christmas, I pray for you tears when you need them, for tears clear the eyes to see the stars and cleanse the soul to let healing begin.

On the fourth day of Christmas, I pray for you serenity, for fights and wars start in individual breasts and that is where they must end.

On the fifth day of Christmas, I pray for you wisdom, for our priceless gift is the gift of choice—and we need to use it well every day in word and deed.

On the sixth day of Christmas, I pray for you patience, for most troubles pass if we wait them out, and success comes with persistence.

On the seventh day of Christmas, I pray for you courage, for there may be many pitfalls and dangers ahead and problems can only be solved when they are faced.

On the eighth day of Christmas, I pray for you compassion, for we cannot help others until we understand them and we cannot understand them until we walk in their shoes.

On the ninth day of Christmas, I pray for you a willingness to work, for work turns dreams into reality—whether the dreams are ours or belong to those we can help.

On the tenth day of Christmas, I pray for you unwavering faith, for faith shapes our morals and our destiny and draws us closer to God.

On the eleventh day of Christmas, I pray for you a mind full of hope, for hope determines our attitudes, sets our goals and creates our ideals.

On the twelfth day of Christmas, I pray for you a heart so full of love that every day you must give some away to those whose paths you cross.

And with each prayer, the man realized he was not giving a gift at all, but hoping that his friends would find the gifts they already had within them. Each time he wrote a prayer, a marvelous thing happened. It seemed to him that the prayer although offered for his friends remained in his heart and produced in him the very thing he prayed for them. The man copied his scroll and sent the Christmas prayer to special friends and that is where the legend of the Christmas Prayers is lost in the mists of time. The man was never heard of again but, over the years, the Christmas Prayer began to appear all over the world. People in obscure villages and big cities would receive at Christmas time a copy of the scroll from a friend. And so the wonder multiplied, until the story finally reached you.

~Anonymous

May you, too, feel the warmth and enjoy the riches of the Christmas Prayer.

Merry Christmas

BANNER DEADLINE

The deadline for news and article submissions for the January issue of *The Banner* is

Monday, Dec. 18

please email your submissions to admin@saintgeorges-austin.org

LINKS

St. George's Episcopal Church

St. George's Episcopal School

St. George's Court

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

The Episcopal Church, USA

The Lectionary

Camp Allen

Episcopal Relief and Development