



The Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist

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The Rev. Thomas M. White, Rector

November 29, 2017

Dear Members and Friends of the St. John the Baptist Family,

As I write you, New Year's is only a few days away. "What?!" you might ask, "It's not even Christmas yet!" As you probably know, I refer to this coming Sunday, the First Sunday in Advent, which is the church's New Year's Day, beginning another year of grace! We associate New Year's Day with making noble resolutions for self-improvement. So maybe this First Sunday in Advent might be the ideal time to decide, if you've been away from us, that it's a great time to return to worship with your St. John's family—getting back to the habit of regularly nourishing your soul with the grace made manifest in God's Word proclaimed and the Supper received, and for sure, the encouragement and support that comes from being part of a faith community among sisters and brothers in Christ.

Speaking of resolutions, I mentioned in a recent sermon that a noble resolution for our congregation in the coming year might be to set as a goal that every member, each one of you, has a job to do at the Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist. Think about how exciting if, this time next year, we could shout from the rooftops that every member of this faith family is doing a ministry to the glory of God and for the building up of Christ's Church. This resolution can't be accomplished without you! To some laughter, I mentioned in that sermon that if you needed suggestions for what you might do, you could come to me. I have plenty!

Rob and I have experienced first-hand "the encouragement and support which comes from being part of a faith community," and, so, we say a heartfelt "Thank You!" for your countless "get well" prayers, texts, emails, cards, calls, visits, and oh yes, those soups and casseroles! Yum! Words can't begin to fully express how much your "encouragement and support" have enabled us to get through the challenging and difficult time before, during, and following Rob's surgery. Rob has made an excellent recovery, in large part because of your ministry of love for us and to us! You are numbered among the saints! With Rob's months of chemotherapy beginning on December 4, we need your ongoing prayers. In prayer there is divine power.

Seven **new Eucharistic Ministers** have been prepared for the sacred ministry of administering the chalice at Mass and were commissioned on Sunday, October 29. Special thanks to Celeste Babiarez, Jessica Clark, Scott Kresge, Michael McNamara, Anne Pratt, and John and Sheila Robinson for their willingness to serve in this way! Presently, I am preparing new acolytes for service at Mass.

The **Annual Parish Meeting** will be conducted immediately following Mass **this Sunday, December 3**.

The Organist Search Committee is about to recommend to the vestry a candidate who will be our **new Minister of Music**. There is a real possibility that the candidate might be **at the organ console officially by**

the end of December. I salute each member of this committee for the diligence and thoroughness with which they have approached the very important responsibility given them.

A **new Parish Directory** is being updated and finalized and will, very soon, be given to each member and friend of the congregation to facilitate communication within the parish. Kudos to Scott Kresge for completing this monumental task!

The **Landscape Committee**, the day after Thanksgiving, completed the **planting of 2,050 bulbs** in our gardens! Spring can't come fast enough as we await the spectacular burst of beauty!

Speaking of huge numbers, profound gratitude to Sharon Lamando and her sewing team for creating and filling Christmas stockings with toiletries and other gifts—for canines also—**259 of them, our Stockings for Soldiers!** This Christmas two hundred fifty-nine of our military men and women will receive the light and hope of Christ come to earth, thanks to this ministry. What a perfect way to make certain that those who guard our freedoms and peace know that they are in our thoughts and prayers, most especially during the holy days. Well done, good and faithful servants!

Once again this Christmas **we will become angels to six families in need** by adopting them and providing their Christmas gifts and dinner. You are asked to join one of six teams who will work together to meet each family's needs. The Christ Child smiles with love!

You are invited to the Ordination and Consecration of The Rev. Kevin S. Brown as the Eleventh Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware on **Saturday, December 9, at 11 a.m.** at Delaware State University, Dover, in the Education and Humanities Theater. A reception will follow. Tickets are limited, so please let Senior Warden Gary Lawrik or me know of your desire to attend and receive your ticket(s).

In closing, I invite you to celebrate New Year's with your family of faith as we begin Advent this Sunday. **A booklet of daily devotions for Advent and a leaflet of table prayers** for each day, written by professors and students at the seminary from which I graduated, will be given you.

Advent seeks to prepare us spiritually for the Savior's comings. Advent focuses us on the reason for the season. "**Advent**" means "**coming**," as during this holy season we mark the three-fold coming of the Savior: he came at Bethlehem, at the Last Day he will come again to fully establish the Kingdom of God, and, happily, he comes here and now to us in Word and Supper, to shine light into our every darkness. As the days keep growing shorter, we rejoice that he has made us people of the day, who look to him as the Everlasting Light, the Light no darkness can overcome!

The four Sundays of Advent will lead us to the celebration, with great solemnity and exultation, of the Birth of the unquenchable Light, the Savior, on Christmas Eve night:

Festival Christ Mass, 7 p.m.
Carol-Sing and Organ Prelude, 10:30 p.m.
Festival Christ Mass, 11 p.m.

Warm wishes to each one of you for a Blessed New Year and a Most Joyous Christmas!

In Christ's Love,
Fr. Tom