



PASTOR'S CORNER...Rev. John Bright

The First Sunday of Advent is upon us. It is the beginning of the Christian Year and the focus is always looking forward to the Return of Jesus Christ. So, we look to God's Word for what to expect.

The ominous prophecies of Matthew 24 begin with an innocent question: *"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?' And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."* (Matt. 24:3-8)

From 2011 – 2014, there was a very popular show on the National Geographic Channel - "Doomsday Preppers." It was described like this, "Doomsday Preppers explores the lives of otherwise ordinary Americans who are preparing for the end of the world as we know it. Unique in their beliefs, motivations, and strategies, Preppers will go to whatever lengths they can to make sure they are prepared for any of life's uncertainties. And with our expert's assessment, they will find out their chances of survival if their worst fears become a reality."

These were folks who had experienced the Y2K scare when the clock struck midnight on the year 2000. Many had prepared for "the end of life as we know it" and when it was all over you could buy second hand generators for next to nothing! These folks were aware of the threat to humanity from the end of the Mayan Calendar on 12/21/12. Since then, we have survived a global pandemic that shut down the whole world for months and months.

As I write this article in November of 2023 the nation of Israel is involved in ANOTHER invasion of Gaza after the massacre of her citizens on October 7. The war in Ukraine seems to go on and on. There are riots in the streets and rising food costs affect the "least of these" around the globe. Have you noticed all the reports of earthquakes?

Just a few verses after the prophetic words of Jesus we find words of instruction to all true converts - *"But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."* (Matt. 24:13-14) We WILL NOT cause the Return of Christ by our patient endurance and efforts to evangelize the lost, we are only being faithful until the next chapter in the Great Redemption Story - the Rapture of the Bride of Christ. That is the true hope we declare as our church calendar starts at Advent this year. I pray you are filled with that HOPE!

Serving the Great Shepherd – Pastor John



SERMON TITLE AND SCRIPTURE FOR DECEMBER

- 12/3/23 Mark 13:32-37 "Ready or Not, Here I Come"
First Sunday of Advent
- 12/10/23 Isaiah 40:1-11 "When You Care Enough to
Send the Very Best"
Second Sunday of Advent
- 12/17/23 Christmas Cantata
Third Sunday of Advent
- 12/24/23 Luke 1:26-38 "The Fine Art of the Double-Take"
Fourth Sunday of Advent
& 7:00 P.M. Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service
- 12/31/23 Rev. Ed Johnson is preaching.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY-December, 2023

Kathie Whitlow	December 1 st	Barry Deal	December 15 th
John Brockman	December 2 nd	Dot Gay	December 25 th
Drew Corley	December 14 th	Anne Corley	December 29 th

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY-December, 2023

Iva and Brenda Jennette	December 2 nd
Phil and Debra Deane	December 25 th
John and Linda Turner	December 28 th
Pastor Tom and Barbara Austin	December 30 th

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

For the Ladies...**The Advent Luncheon** will be held on Wednesday, December 6th at 11 A.M at Varina Episcopal Church, 2385 Mill Road. This is a wonderful time of fellowship for our community. You will enjoy yourself so much. There is devotion, music and delicious food.

WEEKDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

Our Weekday School program is staying busy with the holidays' activities. Thank all of you who donated food for the Thanksgiving boxes. With Church and School working together, we were able to make 10 boxes for needy families. That is truly a blessing! It would not have been possible without your assistance, so thanks again!

Our Christmas Play. Please don't forget our upcoming Christmas play on Sunday, December 10th at 3:00pm. You are cordially invited to come and share this wonderful celebration with us.

VOLUNTEERS! VOLUNTEERS! Help is always needed. If you have one hour, one day (or two) to spare, please consider volunteering here. Whatever time you have to offer, we could use. Thank you! On behalf of the staff and families of our Weekday School program, we wish you God's blessings during this holiday season and throughout the year.

Fondly, Margo Keeles, Director

THE LADIES OF LAUREL HILL... On Tuesday, December 12th we will meet at church at 10:30 A.M. to prepare poinsettias/plants for our shut-ins. Following this we will have lunch together at Longhorns Steak House.

THE SHEPHERD'S GATHERING will be at the parsonage on Saturday, December 16th at 4:00 P.M.

THE MISSIONS COMMITTEE... At their last meeting the Missions and Ministries committee voted to change their idea of service. Beginning in January 2024, The Missions and Ministries committee will choose one of their Missions each month and try to find ways that we can get more physically involved with those Missions. In January that mission is the Varina Food Pantry, February is the Blessing Warriors and March is Eastern Henrico FISH.

FISH NEWS:

We made \$7,100 on our Fall Yard Sale. We are very thankful for this great gift because we have lost some of our fundraising events. Calls for FISH assistance continue to be heavy. In October we gave direct financial assistance to 13 households (18 adults and 7 children). We also assisted 13 households (19 adults and 1 child) by giving out 74 bags of food and 259 clothing/household items. We are now collecting Christmas gifts for families who have asked for help. Thank you for supporting the Angel tree at C&F Bank. We thank Pastor John for visiting FISH during October. He got the grand tour.

Here are some ways you can help FISH.

1. Did you know that you can register FISH at Kroger's as your charity to support and FISH gets a little \$ when you make a purchase?
2. We need your empty ink cartridges and grocery bags (preferably with handles).
3. We always need volunteers. Just giving an hour by helping at a yard sale, pricing items for the sale, or being a phone volunteer are a few ways to support us.
4. Do you have a hand truck that you are not using? We lost ours at the fall yard sale and could really use one.
5. Ann Hechler had to give up her position on the FISH board. Pam is still on the board but we would like to continue having 2 people from the church on the board. If you would consider serving on the board please talk with Pam. We will collect toothbrushes for December and welcome any food items with a good "use by" date.

Thank you for your prayers.

December = toothbrushes

January = women's deodorant

CHANGE IN PLANS... We will not resume our first Sunday luncheons until January, 2024. Watch for details. Thanks.

MAKE NOTE: The quilts of Arie Brandon, all hand quilted, will be for sale on February 1, 2, 3 and 4. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday the hours will be 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. On Sunday the hours will be 2 P.M. to 5 P.M. The quilts will be on display at the former home of Dot Gay at 2207 Kingsland Road. There will be finished quilts, quilt tops, books, fabric and notions. You may pay with cash or check. Rain or shine, all inside. Also, there are some antique quilts for sale. Bring your friends and neighbors and enjoy yourself at this special event. Arie was especially gifted and her quilts are beautiful. If you would like to volunteer to help with this sale, please call Meade Welch.