

# St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church

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 StMichaelsEpiscopalBuffalo



Dear People of God at St. Michael & All Angels,

If you are like me at all, there are times we look back over this past year in wonder and amazement. It often leaves me shaking my head a bit and even saying out loud from time to time, "I never saw that coming!" From the global pandemic at the beginning of the year continuing through even now, as well as racial and political tensions, can there be any doubt that we need God more now than ever before?

Once again, we find ourselves in the Season of Advent as we prepare for the Nativity of Our Lord at Christmas. Over the past few months, a great deal of uncertainty has surrounded the celebration of Christmas as we deal with these unprecedented times. We will still be wearing masks (maybe festive ones for the Season), still keeping six feet apart, and continuing to use hand sanitizer. Let us face the reality: the pandemic is still going on as people continue to test positive and very sadly, people are still dying from the virus. I know that you join with me in wanting to keep ourselves, our loved ones and our neighbors safe and healthy. And I pray that we all will do whatever it takes to make that so – even if it causes large and small inconveniences and sacrifices for each of us – all of us!

There is no doubt that many of us are lonely. We all grieve the life which has been so disrupted by the pandemic. I want you to know that these feelings are normal, and I will be offering an online service on the evening of December 21 at 7 pm that will help to name, acknowledge, and hopefully heal these feelings. This "Longest Night" service will last less than an hour and you can view it as it becomes live or anytime afterwards – look for the link on our website.

Over the years, Christmas – for many of us – has meant welcoming visitors into church and seeing friends who haven't been in our building in eight or twelve months. Regretfully, we will not be able to accommodate any people in our sanctuary this year.

But we can still worship together! We have been worshipping together on Facebook and YouTube for the past several weeks now, and our intent is to continue that in some fashion even when we do return to the sanctuary. While we **can** meet outside, you may have noticed that the snow is returning, and so that doesn't seem feasible for us. This year, we will be offering a 5:00 pm Christmas Eve service on YouTube. The service will include a traditional Christmas Eve Gospel.

To help you celebrate with your families, I will be consecrating Eucharist as I record the service for Christmas Eve. **I will be at St. Michael's distributing the consecrated Eucharist on Christmas Eve from 2:00 – 4:00 pm.** If you'd like to drop by and pick up a packet, please call the church office at 716.836.0220 or fill out the form on our website and let us know how many wafer/wine packets you will need for your holiday grouping. If you'd prefer not to take the packets with you and have a "curbside" communion, I'm also open to doing that for you as you drop by. We will say a few prayers and you can take communion while present outside the church.

And due to the ban on gatherings, we will be holding our Annual Meeting on January 10 at 10:30 am via Zoom. I am well aware that some of you cannot or do not want to use Zoom. I would encourage you to find a Zoom buddy with whom you can join the meeting, or we can definitely

let you dial in to the meeting! The information on the Annual Meeting is on the insert in this envelope; please do mark your calendar and plan to attend!

Whether you celebrate Christmas with us on YouTube in front of your computer or a TV, and whether you receive communion spiritually or through the miracle of curbside pickup, let us make the most of celebrating that Jesus Christ was born among us as a human. No place or building or time can contain the truly awesome miracle of Jesus' birth! We need to remember that Jesus was born among us – in an unpredictable time, in a manger, in a strange town, far from Mary and Joseph's home. It wasn't the ideal setting for God to become human, but in its own way, it was perfect.

For us this year, it may not be the ideal time, place, or setting for us to celebrate Jesus' birth, but wherever we are, with whomever we celebrate, and however we celebrate the birth, let us cherish the truth that Jesus is Emmanuel – "God with us." Jesus is with us. Jesus will always be with us! And one day, we will be with Jesus forever!

May God's peace and grace continue to enfold you and those whom you love, especially during this holy Christmastide,

**Rev. Jason Miller**

Priest-in-Charge  
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## Upcoming Schedule

**Sunday, December 20 – Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Worship Service on YouTube at 9:30 am

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**Monday, December 21**

"Longest Night" Worship Service on YouTube at 7 pm

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**Thursday, December 24 – Christmas Eve**

Pick Up Communion or Curbside Communion from 2 – 4 pm at the church  
Worship Service on YouTube at 5 pm

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**Friday, December 25 – Christmas**

Meditative Thoughts on YouTube at 9:30 am

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**Sunday, December 27 – First Sunday of Christmas**

Worship Service on YouTube at 9:30 am

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**Sunday, January 3 – Second Sunday of Christmas**

Worship Service on YouTube at 9:30 am

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**Sunday, January 10 – Baptism of Our Lord**

Worship Service on YouTube at 9:30 am  
Annual Meeting via Zoom at 10:30 am

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