

## St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church

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

During the Christmas Eve service, we read in Isaiah that the people in darkness have “seen a great light.” We may look back over the past year and a half and then listen to the news about new coronavirus variants and wonder what the “great light” is. We have not yet been able to return to our old “normal” ways, and if you’re anything like me, there are days that I just ignore the news completely to not get depressed from the myriad events – political, social, economic, and environmental – that just seem to be going in the wrong direction. We wonder where God is in the midst of our “pitch-dark land.”



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**The people walking in  
darkness have seen a great  
light. On those living in a pitch-  
dark land, light has dawned.**

Isaiah 9:2 (CEB)

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There is no doubt that the sense of isolation and loneliness around us has increased. This is particularly true for those who are removed from family, those who have lost loved ones, and those who can't get out without help from others or rely on others to help us through our days. Once again this year, we will be offering a **“Longest Night” service** on the longest night of the year (December 21) at 6:00 pm. The service will be offered in person and livestreamed online especially for those who are unable to get out, and will acknowledge the feelings of loneliness and loss that sometimes accompany the holidays.

Christmas has traditionally been a time where we welcome visitors to church and rekindle friendships with friends who we haven't seen in a year. Thankfully, this year we will be able to open the church doors and gather as a faith community to celebrate the presence of God among us (Emmanuel). Our traditional **Christmas Eve service** will be held in our sanctuary on Christmas Eve at 5:00 pm. The service will also be livestreamed for those who do not wish to attend in person.

You might be wondering what the “great light” is. Even though the church building has been closed for a good portion of the past year (since I wrote last year’s letter), the church has not stopped being a faithful community. We have completed projects around the church, including some cleaning, repairing the elevator, updating the kitchen, and (with an eye to our future) we have installed two cameras in our sanctuary to broadcast all of our services via YouTube. We are an active, vibrant faith community looking to our future as a neighborhood resource, and we are taking steps to connect with the community outside our doors in new and exciting ways.

Our **Annual Meeting** will be held on January 9, 2022, at 10:30 pm in the hall. We will be renewing our Baptismal vows during the service at 9:30, during which we'll also be celebrating The Epiphany. Please join us to hear some updates on our year.

The Season of Advent is a quiet season of hope and expectation – hope for the coming Savior and expectation of what is to come. We often theme the candles in the Advent wreath as peace, hope, joy, and love. We sing that love “came down at Christmas,” We’ve seen the joy expressed in giving at Christmas. Christmas has a way of bringing families and individuals to church. What a wonderful way to put aside past differences with peace and begin anew a prayerful relationship with Jesus and God. Together, as we gather, may we grow in strength and grace to know and to celebrate together God’s presence in our lives and over all things in this world with hope for the future.

My friends, the “great light” that we “have seen” is the love of God for every piece of creation. Whether rich or poor, white or colored, old or young, temporarily able-bodied or disabled, sick or well, hungry or overfed, every human being is a beloved child of God. Whether you celebrate Christmas with us on YouTube in front of your computer or a TV, or you celebrate in person, make no mistake that we celebrate that Jesus Christ was born among us as a human. God continues to appear in the most unexpected of places – just as God was made flesh in a manger over 2,000 years ago.

While we may still be hoping to go back to our old ways, God works through us at all times and in all places. Let us celebrate together that Jesus is Emmanuel – God with us. Jesus is with us and will be with us forever. And in the future, we will be with Jesus forever as well.

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 19 – Fourth Sunday of Advent Worship Service**

In person and on YouTube at 9:30 am

**Tuesday, December 21 – “Longest Night” Worship Service**

In person and on YouTube at 6 pm

**Friday, December 24 – Christmas Eve Worship Service**

In person and on YouTube at 5 pm

**Saturday, December 25 – Wishing you a Blessed Christmas**

**Sunday, December 26 – Lessons & Carols**

In person and on YouTube at 9:30 am

**Sunday, January 2 – Second Sunday of Christmas Worship Service**

In person and on YouTube at 9:30 am

**Sunday, January 9 – Epiphany (Transferred) Worship Service**

In person and on YouTube at 9:30 am      Annual Meeting in person at 10:30 am