

St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church

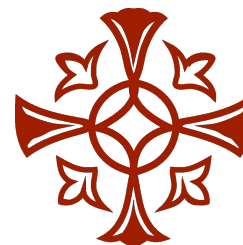
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Dear People of God at St. Michael & All Angels,

The Advent Wreath symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent. The wreath is circular, representing God's infinite love, and is generally made of evergreen boughs, which are to remind us of the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. If you've been paying attention as we've begun our journey through Advent, you'll know that symbolism is also given to the individual candles which represent the Christian concepts of hope, peace, joy, and love.

In the first week of Advent, we were invited by the prophet Isaiah to **hope**: "O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand" (Is 64:8). Perhaps the most fascinating thing about hope is when we need it in our lives. Hope may not be necessary when we are faced with an easy task. It comes when we are faced with something that feels impossible. Hope requires belief.

In the second week of Advent, Isaiah invited us to live in **peace**: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together" (Is 40:3-5). Peace in your heart is a yearning for wholeness, connection, and calm. But being at peace does not mean you will feel it all the time. Peace is not the absence of pain; peace is the presence of God.

The third week of Advent brings Isaiah reminding us to **rejoice**: "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God" (Is 61:10). While happiness is shaped by external circumstances, joy is found deep within. Unless we intentionally discover the gift of joy in ordinary things, it will not happen. Joy doesn't just happen; it's up to us to choose it daily.

Next week, just before we head to the manger for the Savior's birth, the author of 2 Samuel will tell us of the great **love** of the Lord of hosts saying that the LORD said: "I have been with you wherever you went" (2 Sm 7:9). Love is one of the most powerful forces in the world. It can be uplifting, life-changing, and sometimes even devastating. It can be what we feel for our families, our friends, or our significant others. It can be the feeling we have for ourselves. Loving others brings us closer to our spirituality. Understanding love better helps us understand God because love is not something attributed to God. It **is** God. Whatever God is, love is.

I invite you to join as we celebrate the season in varied ways with our partner churches – from the "Longest Night" service on December 21 at 6:00 pm, where we acknowledge that God's light in Jesus can help us to get past those times of loneliness and sorrow; to the joy of the birth of our Savior on December 24; to the familiar carols and stories of God's coming among us at our service of Lessons & Carols. **We will not have a service on Christmas Day**

this year. If you aren't able to make it to worship in person, know that you can find all of our services livestreamed (and retained) on both YouTube and Facebook. Head to our website to find more details.

May the hope instilled by God, the peace of God, and the great love that is God help you to rejoice in this season of celebration,



Rev. Jason Miller

Priest-in-Charge

frjasonmiller@gmail.com

Upcoming Schedule

Thursday, December 21 – “Longest Night” Worship Service

In person at St. Michael & All Angels and streamed at 6 pm

Saturday, December 23 – Fourth Sunday of Advent Worship Service

In person at St. Michael & All Angels and streamed at 4 pm

Sunday, December 24 – Christmas Eve Worship Service

In person at St. Michael & All Angels and streamed at 4 pm

In person at **St. Paul's** and streamed at 6 pm (4275 Harris Hill Rd, Williamsville, 14221)

In person at **St. Paul's** and streamed at 8:30 pm (4275 Harris Hill Rd, Williamsville, 14221)

Monday, December 25 – Wishing you a Blessed Christmas (NO SERVICE)

Saturday, December 30 – Lessons & Carols

In person at St. Michael & All Angels and streamed at 4 pm

Saturday, January 6 – Epiphany Worship Service

In person at St. Michael & All Angels and streamed at 4 pm

Saturday, January 13 – Baptism of Our Lord Worship Service

In person at St. Michael & All Angels and streamed at 4 pm

Annual Meeting in person to follow