

# GREGORIAN CHANT

St. Gregory the Great Episcopal Church | Athens, GA

## Happy New Year! So Now What?

Yay!! It's Advent, the beginning of the church's liturgical year. Each year we cycle through Christ's birth, death, and resurrection in our corporate worship, discernible in everything from the music we sing, and the scripture we hear, to the colors on the altar and the floral arrangements around the church. This part of the year is the four weeks up until the observance of Christ's birth...his advent, his arrival, get it? Huh? Huh? (And I can just hear Frosty the Snowman saying 'Happy Birthday!') Which means, yes, I'm telling my age, and I'm mixing my secular and religious Christmas stories. Oh well...I'm a failed saint, as well as someone who is extremely easily amused.)

Anyhoo, Advent originally started out as a penitential season...which makes sense if you're thinking 'getting ready for the second coming,' while commemorating the first one. That penitential bent explains the use of the color purple back in the day (the same color traditionally used for Lent), but it's not hard to imagine the church maybe wanted to ease off the 'only bread and water and sackcloth and ashes' thing associated with Lent to hit up a kinder, gentler penitence in Advent. Hence, other colors for the season, like blue. Why blue, you ask? Because...wait for it--reasons. Yeah, reasons. Seriously, there's no official liturgical or theological reason for the blue. And that's ok. It's pretty and it's been associated with Advent long enough that it's just what goes together with this season of waiting for Christ in our common life. If you wanted something deeper than the church supply place shouting 'hallelujah, more stuff for us to sell!', join the rest of us in making something up. I tell myself it's Mary's color and I'm happy as a clam.

Now...onto 'doing' or keeping Advent. Keeping up with Advent calendars, making and wreaths, and reading the meditation books. There's also starting new spiritual disciplines all while NOT decorating, NOT shopping, and NOT listening to Christmas music. And you know what? All that works if you're a hermit in the desert without relatives, a phone or a tv. But if you've got friends, kids, a life...odds are 'doing' or keeping a strict Advent will be nigh impossible. Yes, I said 'nigh.' (Sometimes I'm old, old school.) So this year, perhaps those of us (myself included) who are fallen AND faithful, can try this: We can pick one thing to do/keep as far as a discipline, and jumping-the-Christmas-gun thing from which to abstain. I can, for example, say family prayers at the wreath 3 days per week and choose not to listen to (voluntarily- I've got a kid and I'll be in grocery and drug stores- there WILL be involuntary hearing of Jingle Bells) Christmas music until the 4th Sunday in Lent. Then, come Christmas, there's neither drowning in regret nor trying to pretend 'I meant to do whatever I did or didn't do, all along.' The point of Advent isn't checking off a list for God as 'naughty list Santa' but getting closer to God, Who is the lover of our souls. I love how Jana Ries refers to this in her book *Flunking Sainthood: A Year of Breaking the Sabbath, Forgetting to Pray, and Still Loving My Neighbor*.

All through this project, I've been hard on myself because of the practices I couldn't do at all (Centering Prayer), the ones I did successfully or pridefully for the wrong reasons (fasting), and the ones I didn't quite see the point of (Brother Lawrence's mindfulness)...I may have spent a year flunking sainthood, but along the way I've had unexpected epiphanies and wild glimpses of the holy I would never have experienced without these crazy practices. A failed saint is still a saint.

Blessings to you this Advent,  
Mo. Nikki+

# ADVENT@STGREGORYS

## The Band of Believers

Anybody who plays an instrument can join The Band of Believers to play for the Children's Pageant on Christmas Eve. Practices will be on:

Dec. 2 - 9:30 Children's Chapel

Dec. 9th - 9:30 Children's Chapel

Dec. 16th - 9:30 Children's Chapel

Dec. 23rd - 9:15 in the Sanctuary.

No experience necessary. You only need a willing spirit! *Vicky and Mark Tavernier*

## Advent Wreath Making



Make an Advent wreath after church on December 2! Lunch will be provided for everyone, and will consist of various sandwich makings, soup, and fruit. Wreath forms, candles, and greens are provided at a cost of \$20 per wreath. This is a fun event for all ages, and you'll take home a wreath to help you mark a holy Advent.

## Poinsettia Dedications

If you wish to give a poinsettia in honor or memory of a loved one, the deadline for ordering will be **Monday, Dec. 17**. The suggested donation is **\$12** per dedication. Please place your completed form and your check in the offering plate on Sundays, Kendall's office door, or mail it to the parish office. You may also contact the office by phone, 706-546-7553 or email, [office@stgregoryathens.org](mailto:office@stgregoryathens.org). Forms can be found in the narthex and in your bulletin on Sundays.



## Pocket Prayer Shawls

The St. Gregory's Threads of Prayer group has knitted and/or crocheted about 50 pocket prayer shawls for use in prayer during the season of Advent. These are small and can easily fit in your pocket as a reminder. They will be brought up at Offertory during the November 25 services and then will be available in a basket in the narthex for your use. You can use one during church or a visit and return it to the basket or take it home with you. We wish you a blessed Advent.



## Community Christmas

St. Gregory's has been a valued supporter of Community Christmas of Oglethorpe County, Inc. for over 20 years.

This year Gregorians have an opportunity to sponsor an individual for Christmas. Wish lists are included on the Christmas tree located in the Christian Education building. Please let Catherine Drewry at [cbdrewry@gmail.com](mailto:cbdrewry@gmail.com) know which person you will sponsor. You may either purchase items yourself or provide a monetary donation. Please leave gifts/monetary donations at church by noon on December 9th.



## Advent Lessons & Carols & St. Nicholas

On Sunday, December 9 at the 10:30am service, we will have an Advent Lessons and Carols w/ Holy Eucharist service. Join us for this beautiful service of readings interspersed with Advent hymns and music.

**St. Nicholas** will visit St. Gregory's at the 10:30AM service on Sunday, December 9!

## Meridian Women's Chorus

Come join the Meridian Women's Chorus for their Winter Tapestry concert on Saturday, December 1 at 4PM in St. Gregory's sanctuary! A true tapestry of sounds and genres, this concert features a variety of musical colors-- traditional Christmas carols to modern holiday favorites. Featuring guest appearances by The Athens Recorder Ensemble, The Oconee High School A Cappella Choir, and the McCollums, this concert is all about Bells, Holiday Cheer, and Sugar Plum fairies! It will be an afternoon of festive, whimsical winter music. Following the concert will be a reception as well as a bake sale in Parish Hall.

## Athens Master Chorale

The Athens Master Chorale, under the direction of Joseph Napoli, presents its Christmas Concert *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* at 4PM Sunday, December 16 in the Classic Center Atrium.

## Decorating Children's Chapel

Sunday, December 2 is 1st Advent, and all children and Sunday School teachers are asked to help decorate the Children's Chapel for Advent at 9:15 am. Everyone is needed to help, and we'll have fun making our space extra special.

## Pageant Costume Help

Some of our pageant costumes need updating and replacing. We especially need child-sized costumes for the Magi and Mary. Please let Catherine Drewry know if you can help with this!  
[cbdrewry@gmail.com](mailto:cbdrewry@gmail.com)  
706-201-7241

## Christmas Eve/Day Services

**Monday, December 24:**  
5PM Children's Pageant & Holy Eucharist followed by a reception

9:30PM Choral Prelude  
10PM Festival Eucharist & Choir

**Tuesday, December 25:**  
10AM Holy Eucharist & Carols

**Sunday, December 30:**  
8AM Holy Eucharist  
10:30AM Holy Eucharist

**Sunday, January 6:**  
8AM Holy Eucharist & Feast of the Epiphany  
10:30AM Holy Eucharist & Feast of the Epiphany  
12:00PM Festive Coffee Hour with wassail, king cake, and crowning of 3 kings!

## Children's Christmas Pageant

All children are invited to participate in our annual Christmas pageant on Dec. 24th. The pageant will be held at 5 pm. Practices are in the sanctuary from 12- 1 on Dec. 9th and 16th, and will include lunch. We will also practice from 9:15-10:15 on the 23rd. The children will be learning the songs during Sunday School from 9:15-10:15 each Sunday in December, as well as learning about Advent and Christmas traditions from around the world. Participants will feel more prepared if they can attend all practices, but this is an easy pageant, with no lines to learn, so it's fine if they can't come to every practice. We will dress for the pageant and have one final run-through at 4 pm on Dec. 24th, in the Christian Education building.

Please sign up for the pageant by contacting Catherine! ([cbdrewry@gmail.com](mailto:cbdrewry@gmail.com) or 706-201-7241)

## Christmas Eve Reception

A festive reception will be held after the 5PM Christmas Eve service! If you are coming to the Christmas Eve pageant, please bring a snack to share at our reception afterwards. Especially requested are foods like fruit, cheese and crackers, little sandwiches, etc. Please note that we are a peanut-free parish, so nothing that contains peanuts should ever be brought to church. Thanks! Please contact Catherine Drewry if you are willing to bring food for the reception. [cbdrewry@gmail.com](mailto:cbdrewry@gmail.com)

## Youth Shopping

All youth invited to help shop for Community Christmas, Dec. 2. Come make an Advent wreath, eat lunch (remember to sign up), then we will gather at Eastside Wal-Mart about 1:30. We should be finished by 3:30. Come join us, Call Maggie Reinberger with any questions, 706-338-1471. Bring friends!

## Art + Politics Exhibit

The Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, in collaboration with guest artist and curator Micaela Hobbs (daughter of St. G's own Allison Grant), presents a new art installation: **WE: American Thanksgiving Conflict and Communion** on display in the Russell Library Gallery from October 29-December 22. The exhibit installation examines the history of the US through the lens of Thanksgiving and asks visitors to imagine the possible conversations and arguments between and among these historical figures while sitting together around the dinner table.



# ST.GREGORYMINISTRIES

## Churchwide Retreat

At the meeting of the Spiritual Formation Committee on November 25 it was decided to develop a churchwide retreat sometime in 2019. Nikki and the Committee are therefore looking for a volunteer to plan and arrange such an event. Since there will need to be a special committee in addition to a chair person, even if you don't want to be the lead person to plan such an event, please let Nikki or Bill Alworth know if you would be willing to help plan such a retreat. The theme, the location, the leader, all these options are wide open.

## Parish Library

We should thank God frequently for the fine parish library.

The featured author of the month is Shirley Guthrie, Jr. (1927-2004). He, a minister, first in the (Southern) Presbyterian Church in the United States (until the merger of 1983), then in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), was Professor of Systematic Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, from 1958 to 1997. The two editions (1968 and 1994) of *Christian Doctrine* have become influential works in Reformed theology. The theology section of our library includes those two editions of *Christian Doctrine plus Diversity in Faith--Unity in Christ* (1986) and a volume of essays in Guthrie's honor.

## Do You Want to be an Acolyte?

Do you want to get more from your worship experience? Do you want to help others get more from theirs? Then you need to be an acolyte. Which would be great, because we need more acolytes at St. Gregory's. Are you tired of sitting next to the same people every Sunday? Tired of picking out cute clothes every Sunday? Ditto. Truly, though, we do need you. Every age, both you and your kids. The Rev. Nikki plans to bring back the Sunday evening Eucharist, complete with acolytes, which will be wonderful, so we really need you! Give it a try; you will find it to be a rewarding experience. Contact Brad Hankins [bradhankinsjr@hotmail.com](mailto:bradhankinsjr@hotmail.com)) or Kelly Black [kjblack@gmail.com](mailto:kjblack@gmail.com).

## Altar Guild

The Altar Guild needs 5 or 6 more members. Each person typically serves 3 months. New members receive training from the co-chairs and are assigned to serve with someone who has experience. Please contact Barbara Dean (706-354-4269; [bdean70020@gmail.com](mailto:bdean70020@gmail.com)) or Julia Marlowe (706-549-4942; [juliamarlowe46@gmail.com](mailto:juliamarlowe46@gmail.com)) if you would like more information or if you are interested in serving on the altar guild.

## Welcome, Rev. Christina Dondero!

There is wonderful news for the start of our liturgical year! Joining our clerical staff as Vocational Deacon at St. Gregory the Great will be the wonderful Rev. Christina Dondero! The Rev. Dondero has been a part of the congregation of St. Gregory the Great for some time now, but will soon be serving here in official capacity as ordained minister. Vocational Deacons in the Episcopal Church have a powerful ministry representing the church out in the world, serving those in need, and bringing back to the church the concerns of those she serves. Their ministry is that of selfless giving as they perform this ministry without stipend. And their vocation is so foundational that no one may be ordained a priest or consecrated as a bishop without first being ordained to the diaconate.

Deacons also perform special functions in the liturgy. In particular, reading the gospel, preparing the altar for communion right after the offertory, and declaring the dismissal of the people at the end of our service of worship. Their ministry is performed in churches at the pleasure of the Bishop, as deacons answer ultimately to the Bishop and the diocesan Archdeacons.

We are incredibly blessed to receive one of our own as a deacon in our midst, so please help me welcome the Rev. Christina Dondero to the St. Gregory the Great clerical staff in Advent 2018!

Blessings and great joy,  
*Mo. Nikki+*

## 10:30AM Coffee Hosts

I would like to thank all of the parishioners who gave of their time, energy and delicious treats this past year. You have made coffee hour a time of welcome and fellowship. If you have never hosted coffee hour before please consider doing so. Peace and blessings,  
*Barbara Crowley*

## Athens Area Emergency Food Bank Volunteers

It is again time to sign up for volunteering at the Athens Emergency Food Bank. Two volunteers are needed on the first Tuesday of each month from 9am until about 1pm to make up food bags for clients. Some light lifting is required. Because 12 months is a long time for planning, we will begin with the first 4 months of 2019. A sign up sheet will be posted in the Narthex and in the Education Building. If you have any questions, please contact Karen Radde at 706-255-4780. Thank you to all volunteers who have helped out this year! Kim and staff really appreciate your donation of time and energy! Blessing to all!

## 2018 Diocese of Atlanta Annual Council Report

The Diocese of Atlanta held its 112th Annual Council meeting at Holy Innocents on November 9-10, 2018. Mason Somerville and Marge Massey attended as voting lay delegates and Dakota Hamlin was the youth representative for the Oconee Convocation, to which St. Gregory's belongs. Other Gregorians participating were the Rev. Nikki Mathis, clergy delegate, Catherine Drewry, Christian Formation exhibitor, our new deacon, the Rev. Christina Dondero and Janet Patterson, council coordinator.

The routine annual business conducted moved along expeditiously and included:

- 1) electing the following:
  - a) George Williamson, St. Martins in the Fields, to a 3-year term as Trustee for Sewanee,
  - b) John Ballard and Tim Lytle, both of Grace-Calvary, to 3-year terms on the Mikell Camp and Conference Center Board of Governors,
  - c) Mary Caroline Davies Craven, Cathedral of St. Philip, as a lay member on the Standing Committee, and
  - d) our rector, Nikki Mathis, to a 3-year term as a clergy member on the Standing Committee;
- 2) hearing the Treasurer's Report for 2018 to date and hearing an explanation and then approving the proposed 2019 annual diocesan budget; and
- 3) passing 1 Canon amendment and 2 Resolutions (explanations found on the website <https://www.episcopalatlanta.org/Communication/2018-annual-council/view-resolutions/>)
  - a) C18-1 Procedure for Securing Approval of encumbrances of Parish Property
  - b) R18-1 Resolution of dissolve the Commission on HIV/AIDS, as amended
  - c) R18-2 Resolution Concerning Prejudiced-Based Violence and Social Media, as amended.

### **Marge's reflections:**

Wow, with the theme "We challenge ourselves and the world to love like Jesus as we worship joyfully, serve compassionately and grow spiritually," the 112th Annual Council of the Episcopal Diocese was the BEST ever! As a third time delegate, the obvious reason for the "BEST" comment had to be the presence and participation of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, including his inspiring sermon (available on youtube.com, search for "Holy Eucharistic with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry"), his participation in the youth's Feed the Hungry 15,000 meal packaging project (an annual favorite for me), and his Saturday breakfast Q & A session. I am thankful to you, my church family, for giving me the opportunity to represent you as a voting lay delegate. I am renewed to have seen videos and heard annual reports about the good that is happening in our diocese; I am encouraged to have heard of the accomplishments of the 11 recipients of the Bishop's Cross; I am excited to have attended a workshop on congregational vitality (where I learned of resources and opportunities available to help St. Gregory's become a more "vibrant and thriving community of faith;" and my heart was warmed by participating in a youth-led worship service.

### **Mason's reflections:**

Thank you for allowing me to represent you as a Lay Delegate. I participated in all activities except "Rise Against Hunger" supported by the Youth. There were many highlights that I found personally moving. Bishop Curry's sermon was truly moving and exceptional; the Youth morning prayer service on Saturday morning was also outstanding. Our Rector was elected to the standing committee of the Diocese; she was one of three nominees. Our future is in good hands. Finally, I have asked Kendall to keep a copy of my detailed report with handouts we received for your review and will be happy to try to answer any questions you may have. Again, thank for allowing me to represent you at the 112th Annual Council.

# CHRISTIANFORMATION

## Adult Sunday School

### Adult Discussion Group (Parish Hall)

**December 2:** David Stooksbury will discuss the history and meaning of Advent in the Parish Hall and explain why everyone else is putting up Christmas trees and singing Christmas carols, while Episcopalians are making advent wreaths and singing advent hymns.

**December 9, 16, and 23:** Ron Balthazor will lead a discussion of Advent and Christmas poetry during the adult discussion period in the Parish Hall.

**Adult Confirmation Class (Nikki's office)** Beginning Sunday, December 2.

### Parenting Spirituality (Office #1)

#### Ongoing

Building community through listening and sharing parenting experiences with one another; we share tools, tactics and encouragement while working towards less reactive and more intentional parenting.

**Lectionary (Library):** Bible study is an essential element of a parish. No matter how much one has studied the Bible, one can always learn much more about it. Mother Nikki does a fine job of preaching based on the Revised Common Lectionary. She makes wonderful points we all need to hear, but sermons and group studies are different genres. One is fine by itself, but the two, taken together, are better. The lectionary class meets in the library at 9:15am — *Kenneth Taylor*

## Youth

Beginning December 2, youth will be studying the confirmation curriculum, led by Will Drosos.

## Children's Sunday School/Preparation for Christmas Pageant

Sunday School for kids Pre-K – 5th grade starts at 9:15 in the Children's Chapel with Songtime! Please come on time so we can practice our Christmas songs for the pageant! We will have Pageant practice after the 10:30AM service on Sunday, December 9 & 16 (lunch will be provided). Then we will swap places with the choir on December 23 during the Sunday school hour and meet in the church Sanctuary that day.

## Rhythms of Grace



Your help is needed to get the word out about our Rhythms of Grace monthly service to those who might find it fits their worship needs. We have been hosting Rhythms of Grace, a family worship service where all forms of physical and vocal responses are embraced, since early in 2015. Rhythms of Grace is an adaptive church service for those for whom conventional worship may be difficult or uncomfortable, including those sensitive to loud music or crowds, those on the Autism Spectrum, people with Alzheimer's, ADHD,

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and wiggly children who just want to move! This service features scripture and storytelling that includes spoken and visual cues, therapeutic play for the response, and a simplified prayer for Holy Communion. Gathering and dismissal rituals help with transitioning. The Reverend Gordon Bienvenue, a retired Methodist minister, officiates at this inter-denominational service for the whole family that meets on 2nd Sundays at 3PM.

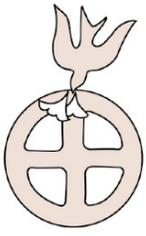
## Wednesday Transitions/Meditation Group

### Wednesdays at 4PM in the library

The meditation group meets in the church's library, to share our stories, coping strategies, meditation and prayer to work through many of life's transitions. Practicing advanced meditation techniques, we embrace a mindfulness practice that enhances a deep inner peace, growth and change.

## Happy Birthday!

December 1	Julia Sanford
December 3	Danny Bray Sienna Rollie
December 4	Madeline Wheeler Patrice Camoston
December 5	Jenifer Borg Rob McNiff
December 7	Leeanne Krause
December 9	Pete Nicholls Caroline Ferguson Les House
December 10	Janet Jarrett Adam Carabello
December 11	George Watson Lisa Hunt
December 12	Sam Preston Cynthia Hoover
December 13	Louisa Temple-Roberts
December 14	Henry Scott
December 16	Betty Littleton
December 17	George Braman
December 19	Karen Radde
December 20	Katie Bienvenue
December 21	Frankie Cook Mason Somerville
December 23	Jo Benton Karen Shetterley Janie Reynolds
December 25	Judith DeJoy
December 28	Susanne Burton Connor Green
December 31	Michele Lease



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>>Return Service Requested<<  
706-546-7553