



Blue Christmas Service
Sunday, 19 December at 3 pm
in the Church

Christmas Eve
5:30 pm - Christmas Music
6 pm - The Holy Eucharist

Christmas Day
9 am - Holy Eucharist (Chapel)

Christmas 1
Sunday, 26 December
St. Stephen,
Deacon & Martyr
9 am

THE FRANCISCAN STAFF

The Newsletter of the people of
Saint Francis in the Valley Episcopal Church
600 South La Cañada Drive
Green Valley AZ 85614

Vol. 58, No. 10

December 2021

Our mission is to live as Christ's heart and hands in the world.

Words From Warren . . .

Dear Friends,

What a difference a year makes.

I was reminded of this a few days ago by a friend who pointed out that last year at this time I was on my own for Thanksgiving and Christmas, separated by 2300 miles from Annette and my boys. This year Annette is here, and my oldest son Jamieson was with me for Thanksgiving. Later this month my youngest son Cameron will be with us at Christmas!

The Advent and Christmas seasons of 2020 were very different for many people. The pandemic was beginning its winter surge and a vaccine was still being developed. Families would forego holiday gatherings. Songs like *I'll be Home for Christmas* took on a whole new meaning for people longing to see loved ones.

Yet in that lonely and dark time of 2020, Advent and Christmas represented a Hope and Expectation that we could hold onto during that very real time of anxiousness and separation from friends and family. Sunday readings through Advent and Christmas provided words of encouragement that promised light in darkness and the birth of a Savior who offered hope to a world in despair.

Advent 2021 is much different than last year. We worship in the church, enjoy social times together, the Snowbirds are returning, attendance is increasing, and the campus is getting busier.

With the busyness that is returning, I invite you to take a step back and reflect on the past year. How has the last year made a difference in your life? Many have told me that the quiet times helped them rediscover hobbies and more time to spend out in nature. It also helped some look at what was important in their lives and reset their priorities. What did you learn about yourself?

The pandemic may have knocked us off our feet, but the love of Christ and the grace of God has helped us get back up and continue moving forward. Yet we still have a way to go. Enjoy the holiday parties and gatherings you missed last year. Savor the foods, but also

continued next page

Words From Warren, continued

cherish the times with those you love.

May the Blessings of the Christ Child fill your homes with Joy and Peace. May the coming year bring healing and hope to our world. And may God bless St. Francis in the Valley as we continue to be the Heart and Hands of Jesus in our community.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your family!

Fr. Warren

Words from Fr. Nelson ...

BLUE CHRISTMAS

It was December 2019 and I had just finished writing for my midterm exams while I was in seminary. At this time in my academic career, I had developed a tradition of completing my essays and tasks before the rest of the campus. This was because many of my seminarian compatriots became rampaging balls of anxiety and scholarly dread so my goal of completing my tests before them was something that brought me comfort.

This particular year, I was especially excited because as a treat for myself I had purchased tickets to Disney World and would spend the week at the most magical place on Earth. So, while my classmates were worrying, procrastinating, and writing their hearts out, I was already finished and enjoying a magical holiday with Mickey.

Fast forward a few months later and we would all begin hearing whisperings of a virus that was making its rounds. In fact, I traveled a few more times in February and March before the “new reality” of the pandemic began causing shutdowns and closures.

Do you ever think back to times when you were blissfully unaware of an event that was about to happen? For me it was that time romping around the Magic Kingdom or watching the Lion King in Animal Kingdom. Admittedly, it was those memories that got me through some of the darkest parts of the pandemic.

In thinking about last year, December 2020, it was a stark contrast to the December and holiday season I experienced the year prior. Admittedly, as a young clergy person with no family or friends in the area, the time here during a global pandemic has been incredibly challenging. While the community here is extraordinary and overflowing with love it is still hard to be far from loved ones, especially during the holidays.

Being apart from loved ones is just one form of grief dur-

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THE REV. DR. WARREN LEIBOVITCH

Rector

The Rev. Nelson Mendoza

Curate

The Rev. Becky Williamson

Deacon

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*The mission of
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Green Valley,
is to live as Christ's heart and hands
in the world.*

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ing the holidays. In December 2021, we have other unique challenges. How do we celebrate the “most wonderful time of the year” when the past 20+ months have not been a walk in a theme park? Despite decking the halls, baking all the goodies, and blasting Christmas music it might still feel impossible to tune out the heartbreaks of the past year or beyond.

And that’s where “Blue Christmas” comes in. For us, in particular, our Blue Christmas service is a safe space and time to remember, reflect, and cry during a season where everyone tells us we should be merry and bright. For me, it is a healing time to encounter things like grief, depression, job loss, role loss, divorce, and other things that we have lost. It’s a time of great dissonance and it is challenging to feel like we have to put on a happy face during the holidays. However, this service gives you permission to name your feelings, to think about them, and to grieve whatever it is you are missing.

The idea of Blue Christmas is to acknowledge the darkness, and let it be dark. Sometimes the service is referred to as the “Longest Night,” and I think it is important to remember that in our Christian tradition we are called to engage with our suffering just as Jesus encourages us to meet suffering where we encounter it. Sometimes we encounter suffering in others and sometimes we don’t need to look further than our own hearts and minds.

As this season approaches, consider reflecting on the things that you have lost in the past year or more. Are there ways you can encounter that suffering that might bring a different sense of curiosity in you and your relationship with God? Or perhaps, is simply acknowledging or sitting in silence with loss all you can muster?

No matter your response, know that your joys and suffering are meaningful to God and that you are allowed to be gentle with yourself.

Season’s Blessings,

Nelson+

Home Communion

St. Francis is again offering home communion to parishioners unable to attend church services. If you would like a Lay Eucharistic Volunteer to bring you the Sacrament, please contact Deacon Becky (480-204-0022) or via email (1beckyw@cox.net).

Looking for a good book to read?

In the midst of the hustle and bustle of the holidays when we might be too busy to even think about reading, Albert Holtz, O.S.B. offers us a way to connect the holidays to the quiet, patient, waiting holy days of Advent and the joy of Christmas in his book, *FROM HOLIDAYS TO HOLY DAYS: A Benedictine Walk Through Advent*. The book is a series of brief, daily meditations based on Brother Albert’s walks around his hometown of Newark, New Jersey, where he is a Benedictine monk at Newark Abbey. As he looks at familiar aspects of the holidays on his walks, such as putting up lights, Christmas presents, traffic jams, and holiday cooking, Brother Albert offers a reflection, a quotation from Sacred Scripture, and a passage from the Rule of Benedict or some other early monastic source. The reader is guided to connect the secular with the sacred, the ordinary with the divine. You can check out *FROM HOLIDAYS TO HOLY DAYS* at the Library Cart on Sunday during Coffee Hour after church.

Other books you can check out from the Library Cart for your Advent reading include: *PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS* by Richard Rohr, *MEDITATIONS FOR ADVENT & CHRISTMAS* by James G. Kirk, *EXPECTING JESUS* by Danielle Tumminio, *A TIME OF FULFILLMENT* by Anselm Grun, *NIGHT VISIONS: Searching the Shadows of Advent and Christmas*, by Jan L. Richardson, and *THE CHRISTMAS BOX* by Richard Paul Evans.

Review by Barbara Bundy

Prayer Chain

For Prayer Chain requests contact Jim Ratley at 253-365-5093 or, via email, at jnjrats@gmail.com.

Parish Choir

The St. Francis Parish Choir is back in session. Rehearsals are held at 2 PM on Thursdays in the Choir Loft. New members always welcome. Get in touch with the Choirmaster at gerald@stfrancisgvaz.org.

Forward Day by Day

FORWARD DAY BY DAY devotional booklets for November and December (2021) and January (2022) are available in the Parish Office during the week, and on Sunday mornings you can find them in the Parish Hall as well as the Office.

Senior Warden's Thoughts

Welcome to all our newest attendees and to our returning Winter Residents.

The Season of Advent has arrived, and we have begun preparing for the Birth of Jesus. "He is the King of Glory." As we prepare, let us continue to give thanks for all the blessings that have been given us throughout the year and remember in our hearts those who we have lost.

Another Christmas tradition is happening in December. True Concord will be presenting their beautiful and moving "From Anticipation to Joy: Lessons & Carols by Candlelight" on Friday, December 10, 2021 at 7 PM at St. Francis Church. Tickets are available online or contact Gerald Near. The performance is open to the public and tickets go quickly.

December finds the Vestry preparing for St. Francis' Annual Meeting in January. The Nominating Committee is seeking nominees for three positions which will open in January. If you feel God is leading you to serve or you would like to suggest someone, please contact Fr. Warren or me (jrepp@snet.net).

The Finance Committee and the Vestry are working on the 2022 Budget to be presented at the Annual Meeting. Your 2022 Pledge to St. Francis is very important to the health of our Parish. If you haven't yet completed your Estimate of Giving for 2022, please do so. You can complete the form and mail it or go online to www.StFrancisgvaz.org/donate-terardship and click on the blue "Online Giving." For questions on completing the form, contact Deborah Harby at 520-625-1370. If you have any other questions, contact Erik Ringjob, Treasurer.

Remember that we continue to have great need for additional ushers, greeters, acolytes and readers. Please consider offering your time and talents to assist with our worship services. Training will be provided. Contact the Parish Office to volunteer. 520-625 1370.

We look forward to celebrating our Holiday Season with you all. May it be a Blessed and Happy time. Please stay safe until we meet again.

Jullie Reppenhagen, Senior Warden

Junior Warden's Notes

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday! And, the Christmas season is fast approaching.

Meanwhile, work continues on the grounds and in and around the building and spaces.

GROUNDS

1. The extensive clean-up of our grounds by a local landscape company was completed on November 9 and 10. Removed were overgrown, dead, and dying agave, cacti, and shrubs as well as a palm that was encroaching into the blacktop of the back parking lot.

2. To supplement the year round work of the volunteer grounds team, spring and fall grounds cleanups by a select landscape/maintenance company are being addressed in the 2022 building and grounds budget proposal.

3. If you would like more information about tasks the grounds team do or offer your assistance even for an hour now and then, contact Craig Reid by text or email, careid01@hotmail.com or text 520-288-9393, or Kristi Menix, kmenix18@gmail.com or 406-600-9344.

4. Critter Control Company continues to come monthly to reset rat bait boxes around the outside of our buildings and on the grounds and also clean-up around them. A November 18 monthly report from them stated, "Arrived on site for bait station inspection and clean up. Today's activity was heaviest on the southwest corner with that station being completely empty. I did not see any increases in digging or anything in that area and I'm not sure why that one was heaviest but it was. Activity on the east side has improved vastly with the removal of those rat nests and cactus. Northside still had an average of about 40% of the bait missing. All bait was replaced throughout the property as needed. A few new holes were treated here and there, with the majority being in the center of the south side and also the northeast corner."

5. Kudos to volunteer parishioners and sextons, who rain or shine (mostly shine!), continue to work diligently and tirelessly on Church grounds. All of our regular and occasional ground volunteers are awe-inspiring and appreciated! Note a separate article about the recognition of grounds volunteers on November 14 followed by a lovely reception in the Memorial Garden. Photos—thank you, Tom Cadwalader—and a short narrative about this event are posted on the church website, stfrancisgvaz.org Thank you, Neal Hursh, for your web site work!

6. Lastly, several evacuated bird nests have been removed around the campus and no-roosting materials inserted.

BUILDINGS AND SPACES

1. Thank you to all for helping keep doors into our buildings closed unless otherwise designated, like before and after services and group gatherings in the Parish Hall.

2. The number of groups, small and large, requesting and using our spaces like the Parish Hall, classrooms, and Vulliamy Room, is increasing; thus, an increased percentage of our lead sexton and sexton's time is used for setting up tables and chairs, making coffee and lemonade, cleaning, sanitizing, and putting furniture away or back in place. Coordination of groups' requests also adds time.

3. The Library and Resource Room now has two, newly painted, light blue walls as part of its exciting renovation. Thank you, Deana, Lead Sexton.

4. The tool storage area and workshop are being reorganized. Tools and equipment are being secured. Watch for posted signage and a sign-out procedure for borrowing tools and equipment. Mostly, the grounds team members need to have certain items available to do the work they come to the Church to do. Thanks to Deana, Lead Sexton and Craig Reid, Main grounds volunteer, for their work on this project.

5. A fire marshal inspection recently pointed out the need to replace some malfunctioning exit and alarm signs. These are now being replaced for everyone's safety.

6. The timers for the bell tower lights and elsewhere have been inspected, replaced as needed, and reset. Check out the bell tower after dark. The light emitting through the stained glass is beautiful!

7. The roofing company tells us they are on track with the necessary materials to begin the tile roof replacements on January 3. We will be meeting with the site supervisor soon to work out the logistics and setup collaborative communication before, during, and after the project.

8. The commercial kitchen in the Parish Hall has been cleaned; our failing vacuum has been replaced!

9. At this time, no more bats are inside the Church; many roosting behind the Stations of the Cross in the Courtyard have apparently migrated per the noted reduction in droppings.

10. An upholstery cleaning company will soon be on our campus to clean our stained and soiled upholstered and frequently used chairs in the Parish Hall and in the Vulliamy Room.

11. To improve the security of our buildings and spaces, knowing that our office closes mid-day but still multiple groups reserve meeting room spaces anywhere from 8 AM through 8:30 at night, we are adding code locks to the Vulliamy Room door and to one of the two doors allowing entrance to the meeting rooms in the office complex. Groups who reserve these spaces will access the rooms using codes we have assigned them rather than having off duty sextons return to the Church to unlock doors and relock after groups leave.

GENERAL

1. We are generating projected building and ground cost estimates for the Church's 2022 budget.

2. We plan to inquire at Pima County about an American Disability Act review for our campus.

Thank you for your support, and I wish you many blessings,

Kristi Menix, Junior Warden kmenix18@gmail.com

Saturday Worship

On November 20 we had our first monthly Saturday afternoon worship service. I had hoped for 15-20 people to attend but was pleasantly surprised and greatly encouraged when 45 people came to worship!

Brief history: The service is a response to parishioners who wanted an additional contemporary service to augment our Sunday worship. Back in the spring of 2019 while the Rector search was just beginning, the Day of Discovery asked parishioners what they would like in a new Rector and what they would like to see in the future at St. Francis. One hope was for a contemporary service desired by a significant number of those who attended the day.

The long wait for me to arrive and then the pandemic shutting down the church meant a delay in establishing a service. Now the wait is over! November 20 has shown us that the interest is still there for a shorter contemporary Eucharist.

Over the next few months we will continue to tweak and improve the service such as the visibility of the power point presentation. I am interested in hearing what songs/hymns you may like to hear. I am also interested in expanding our vocal and instrumental group. If you can sing or play an instrument, please let me know.

For now, the service will be once a month, but if
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DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Phillip Batwin
- 1 Judy Turberg
- 4 Beth McKibbin
- 4 Carol Sand
- 5 Justine Saavedra
- 6 Madeleine Glaser
- 6 Steve Smith
- 8 Christopher Nye
- 9 Neal Hursh
- 9 Carol Putnam
- 12 Ann Burton
- 15 Arnie Berglund
- 16 Bea Dow
- 18 Alicia Baucom
- 18 Maureen Matto
- 20 Ann Zublin
- 22 Orji Isiogu
- 22 Rae Turberg
- 23 Karina Barnes
- 24 Jeanne Jones
- 24 Sandy Russell
- 26 Brenda Quick
- 27 Mary Hale
- 27 Janice Hall
- 28 Doris Kuzmak
- 29 Doris Nason
- 29 Richard Sand
- 30 Jenny Ryan

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 1 Allen, Bob & Nancy
- 3 Burton, Steve & Ann
- 12 Levine, Victor & Mary
- 14 Johnstone, John & Marylou
- 16 Davis, John & Roberta
- 17 Barkley, Bill & Jane
- 17 Ratley, Jim & Julie
- 17 Staples, Michael & Mary
- 18 Wright, David & Jylene
- 20 Ryan, Bill & Jenny
- 22 Ward, Don & Diane
- 23 Dunn, David & Edna
- 27 La Barre, Gary & Barbara

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the response continues to grow, we can look at adding another Saturday a month. Down the road it may become a weekly service, but before that can happen we would need many more musicians and volunteers to spread the work load.

The next service is Saturday, December 11, at 4 PM. A light soup and salad supper is being planned for after the service.

Fr. Warren

The Annual Covenant Fund Christmas Card Party

The 25th annual Christmas Card Party will be celebrated in the St. Francis Parish Hall on Saturday, December 4, at 2 PM, and *you are invited*. We will require an RSVP as we are limited to no more than 100 guests. Call the Parish Office (520-625-1370) to reserve your place. Enjoy a lovely meal catered by Santa Cruz Caterers, and Christmas music by Harpist, Christine Vivona.

The Covenant Fund was established in 1993 by Dorothy Baldwin to provide temporary financial aid for needy St. Francis Parishioners. The fund is administered by the Rector.

Here's how it works: Instead of sending cards to all your friends at St. Francis, just buy ONE card and put the money you save on cards and postage in the envelope and bring it along to the party. Your card will be placed on the tree in the Parish Hall where all will be able to enjoy it and the money you have saved will be donated to the St. Francis Covenant Fund.

PARISH MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Wednesday, 1 December
Holy Eucharist, 9 AM, Chapel
The Episcopal Way, 10 AM, PH

Thursday, 2 December
Vestry, 10 AM, CfR
Parish Choir, 2 PM, Loft

Saturday, 4 December
Christmas Card Party, 2 PM, PH

Monday, 6 December
Morning Prayer, 9 AM, Chapel

Tuesday, 7 December
Handbells, 9 AM, Loft
Men's Group, 9 AM, PH
Stephen Ministry, 12 PM, VR

Wednesday, 8 December
Holy Eucharist, 9 AM, Chapel
DOK, 9:30 AM, VR
Memorials Cmte, 10 AM, CR

Thursday, 9 December
Finance Committee, 9 AM, CfR
Parish Choir, 2 PM, Loft

Saturday, 11 December
Holy Eucharist, 4 PM, PH

Monday, 13 December
Morning Prayer, 9 AM, Chapel

Tuesday, 14 December
Handbells, 9 am, Loft
Social Activities, 11 AM, CfR
Vestry, 4 PM, CfR

Wednesday, 15 December
Holy Eucharist, 9 AM, Chapel

Thursday, 16 December
Outreach, 10 AM, PH
Parish Choir, 2 PM, Loft

Sunday, 19 December
Blue Christmas Service, 3 PM

Monday, 20 December
Morning Prayer, 9 AM, Chapel

Tuesday, 21 December
Handbells, 9 AM, Loft
Men's Group, 9 AM, PH

Wednesday, 22 December
Holy Eucharist, 9 AM, Chapel

Thursday, 23 December

Parish Choir, 2 PM, Loft

Monday, 27 December

Morning Prayer, 9 AM, Chapel

Wednesday, 29 December

Holy Eucharist, 9 AM, Chapel

CALENDAR LEGEND

PH - Parish Hall

VR - Vulliamy Room

CfR - Conference Room

CR - Classroom

2021 Parish Statistics

Transfers In

Rena Robbins

Laura Thomas

Joyce Davison

Frank & Nancy Davidson

Deaths

Max Mayes

Nancy Gardner

Kathy Helgeson

Vern Hughes

Janet Corton

Patrick Ongley

Virginia Golden

Ed Wanek

Virginia Biondi

Helen Symes

Marjorie Gardner

Christine Conley

Roberta Davis

Alan Swain

Linda Schnelle

Recycle

We are able to recycle used ink jet cartridges at \$2 each, realizing over \$600 a year toward office supplies. Recycle boxes are located in the Parish Office and just inside the southwest door of the Parish Hall.

Do we have...

your@e-mail.address?

Arizona Episcopalian Magazine

The AZ Episcopalian magazine is now available online. The current issue has a variety of articles showcasing all the great things going on around the Diocese. If you would rather receive it by mail—or to sign up to receive it online—contact Deborah (Finance Officer) through the Parish Office (520-625-1370 or deborah@stfranciscgvaz.org) to sign up. It's FREE!

Clergy Discretionary Funds

Donations to Clergy Discretionary Funds are always needed and always welcome; these funds make it possible for us to offer assistance to people in our community who are struggling. Because of your generosity, we've been able to help people with such things as food, gas, utilities, rent, school clothing, school supplies, unexpected medical bills and even burial expenses. As we see it, it's not the clergy being able to help people in need, it's all of us, together, touching the lives of people who feel like they've hit a dead end due to adverse circumstances in life. Thank you so much for your generosity.

THE
Episcopal
CHURCH



RESERVING MEETING TIME AND SPACE AT SAINT FRANCIS

Individuals wishing to reserve meeting space at St. Francis and/or discuss room set-ups should make those arrangements through Parish Administrator Gerald Near. It is **essential** your meeting be logged into the Master Calendar. If you need it, be sure to ask for 'set-up' and 'clean-up' time as part of your booking.

One week prior to your event please inventory the pantry next to the kitchen and let Gerald know if there are enough supplies to meet your needs. A parishioner usually shops for us twice a month. Thanks for your help and cooperation.

GETTING YOUR EVENT INTO

PARISH PUBLICATIONS

Sunday Bulletin notices should be given to the Parish Administrator by NOON the Tuesday prior to the Sunday you wish the notice to appear. Notices should be in written form and sent via email whenever possible.

Franciscan Staff material should be given to the Parish Administrator NO LATER THAN the 10th of the month preceding publication.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please let us know if your e-mail address, street address, zip code or telephone number changes. Get in touch with Deborah Harby in the Parish Financial Office to update your information for our records.

ST. FRANCIS-IN-THE-VALLEY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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