



## First Sunday of Advent

27 November 2022

**The Episcopal Church of the  
Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio**

Seeking to know and serve Christ in loving  
service to the campus, the community, and  
the world.

Today's printed [Order of Worship](#)

### **Advent Wreath - Lighting One Candle**

Today we light one candle on the Advent wreath, our timepiece for the season. This candle represents hope and prophets - the prophets preached God will keep God's promises and we still have that hope.

**Advent History- Advent is one of the oldest seasons** of the Church Year. From what records we have, Advent has been observed by the Church since at least the year 480. The way the Church observes the season has changed over its 1,542 years. At one time Advent had a much more penitential tone; people even fasted and abstained from eating meat.

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## Lessons

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### **Lessons for the First Sunday of Advent (Year A)**

Old Testament – Isaiah 2: 1-5

Psalm: 122 (SAID)

New Testament – Romans 13: 11-14

Gospel – Matthew 24: 36-44

<https://www.lectionarypage.net>

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## The Collect

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ALMIGHTY GOD, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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## The Gospel

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### Matthew 24:36-44

JESUS SAID TO THE DISCIPLES, “But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

#### Gospel Engagement Question:

How good are you at paying attention or watching for something you are waiting for?

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## The Sermon

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### Holy Reduction

Have you read the story of Gideon in the Old Testament book Judges? It's a good story that fits well with the readings and prayers we have as we begin both a new Church Year and the Season of Advent.

For those unfamiliar with it, the Book of Judges is a series of stories about how God's People repeatedly turn away from God to follow the ways of the predominant culture, then suffer for their choices, and call on God to help them. God always responds in the form of a hero figure called a Judge, whose actions are a form of God's judgment, they clean up whatever mess the people of God are in, then the people promise to follow God's ways again. Until they don't, and the people begin to suffer again, and they cry out for help again, God sends a Judge who sorts things out, the people repent and turn to God until they don't, and the cycle starts all over again. Most of the Judges are far from exemplary people; they have faults and flaws and reveal that God chooses what we might deem unworthy or overlooked to fulfill God's plans for the world.

Such is the case in the story of Gideon. You can read the entire story in Judges Chapters 6-8. I'm just going to give a brief summary. Gideon's story starts with God's people being seriously bullied by the Midianites, Amalekites, and people who lived in the East. The story goes, every time God's people planted their farms, they were raided by the Midianites, Amalekites and others who stole all the produce and livestock, leaving God's people poor and starving. So, the people of God cried out to God for help. God sent a prophet who reprimanded God's people for abandoning God's ways to follow the ways of the Amalekites, pointing out that doing so both alienated them from God and did not endear them to the Amalekites, it only made their lives worse. That's how it usually is with bullies usually. Now the people were going to have to stand up for themselves, and this is where God comes into the story.

God sent an angel to a young man named Gideon who was secretly growing barley in small batches, so the raiders might not notice and steal it. The angel greeted Gideon like the angel Gabriel greeted Mary by saying God had found favor with him. Gideon, however, is no Mary. Gideon struggled to trust God and his first response to the angel was sneering if God favors them, why did God let the Midianites bully them. Gideon asked why God didn't deliver them from the suffering like God delivered his ancestors from slavery under Egypt. One of the wonderful things about God and angels is they can handle our human resentment, anger, snark, and pushback really well. The angel told Gideon if he wanted deliverance from the Midianites then he should lead an army against them. Gideon laughed and said he couldn't do that because he was from the weakest, perhaps smallest tribe of Israel and the least in his family. These are not preferred traits of military generals. God responded to Gideon the way God always responds to us when we

claim we are not what the world wants or values, or when we are overwhelmed, or when we doubt. God said, "I will be with you."

That wasn't enough for Gideon, he asked for a test from the angel to prove itself. Once the angel passed the test, Gideon sent a message to anyone who wanted to join him in fighting the Midianites and about 32,000 men responded.

Then was God's turn to push back. God said that was too many people. Gideon needed to reduce the army otherwise they might claim the victory was won on their own instead of acknowledging God's involvement. So, Gideon reviewed the troops and anyone who seemed too afraid to fight was sent home, that turned out to be 22,000 men. That left 10,000 to fight. But God said that was still too many. God said God would decide who should go and who should stay through an unusual test. Gideon directed all 10,000 men to go to a large body of water to drink. God told Gideon anyone who knelt beside the water and scooped it up with their hands to drink were out. The ones who laid down and lapped the water like a dog or cat could stay. That got the army down to a mere 300 men, and God said, that was the perfect amount.

After receiving even more proof that everything was going to work out, Gideon and his 300 men finally defeated the Midianites. Not with direct combat, but with some cleverness, proving God's ways aren't always the way things have always been done.

There is a lot more to the story of Gideon, who always struggled to trust God, but was quick to give God credit for the victories. One of the main points of Gideon's story also appears in many other stories and events in the Bible: God most often chooses, calls, delights in, values, and prefers the small and seemingly insignificant. God is not impressed with big numbers, economic status, birth order, education, or wealth, and in some cases will take it upon God's self to reduce that which we humans have built up. Perhaps, because God yearns for us to learn to appreciate the beauty and value of the small and insignificant.

That brings us to our Gospel today where Jesus is calling his followers to pay attention because no one knows when he will come again. We have a reading like this because Advent is a time when we remember Jesus was born in fulfillment of the promise that God would send God's Messiah and is also a season when we are reminded Jesus promised to return after his resurrection and ascension to fulfill the promise Mary sang about in the Magnificat, the promise that began in the Incarnation and Resurrection, to restore the world to God's original intention.

In the Gospel, Jesus was addressing concerns around the

unknown as his followers wanted to know precisely when Jesus would return. Even Jesus does not know. But knowing when it is not the point. The point is how we wait, even if that waiting continues for generations and thousands of years. One of the things Jesus mentioned as something to pay attention to as we wait is reduction by the examples of two being reduced to one. Unfortunately, this passage has been used to support the rapture, a concept that is not actually found in scripture but is proof of how someone can make what they want out of the Bible. This can distract from what the author of Matthew's Gospel intended when Jesus talked about two being reduced to one. One of the oppressive practices of the Romans was to abduct people while they worked, and those they abducted were usually forced into slave labor or worse, so it was not necessarily good to be taken. Far better to be left behind.

The point the Gospel writer may have been making is to pay attention when there are fewer people, not because we need to panic and do whatever is necessary to get more, but to step back and look for God, who still promises to be with us, and is most likely up to something.

In his pastoral address to the diocese last Saturday, Bishop Smith talked about this very thing. He said he sees decline not only in the Episcopal Church but in all Christian churches. He also finds hope observing the resiliency in clergy and laypeople who step up, adapt to changes, and persist in doing what they can. He interprets this to mean what is dying is not the church, but our grandiosity and our connection to the empire, a word he used to refer to whatever and whoever holds all the power in our nation. In so many Biblical accounts, like Gideon, like a young teenager living in a small unimportant village who became the bearer of God, like the shepherd David who defeated Goliath and who God made king, God utilizes smallness to turn the world around.

Advent is the reminder God has turned the world around before and God will do so again. Both in small ways right now and in the future God will reorient this world to what God intended, the world where swords become plows because war isn't needed.

This year as Advent begins, we see reduction around us too. In our parish, in our community, and we are not alone. Perhaps the bishop is on to something, perhaps God is trying to get our attention to recognize reduction doesn't mean the end, it means God is at work and calling us turn away from those false comforts of consumerism, hate, blaming, admiration of the super wealthy and turn to God. Advent is a good time for this. The theme of the free advent devotional we are offering this year is simplicity, a form of reducing that isn't about getting rid of stuff, it is about paying attention, about focusing on where God is with us. Using is devotional might be a good way to pay attention this Advent, certainly there are others. One practice might be to read other accounts in the

Bible of the small to pay attention to where God intentionally embraces with joy the small, or seemingly unimportant. Perhaps this season of Advent God is calling us to the *adventure* of loving the small, to learn or relearn small is not a punishment, it is an invitation to persist, and to wait for everything even waiting in line like we are waiting for Jesus with patience and kindness, and participate which might be why God loves the small, because it invites us to work with God who promises to be with us in all seasons.

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A sermon by The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, the First Sunday of Advent, 27 November 2022, at The Church of the Good Shepherd, Athens, Ohio.

### **Sermon Engagement Questions:**

How do you feel about waiting? Consider the line about waiting for everything like you would wait for Jesus. How might it change your attitude about waiting if you thought of everything you were waiting for as if you were waiting for Jesus? Would it make you more patient? More polite? Kinder?

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## **Please include in your prayers**

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IN OUR WORLD, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and environmental disasters. We pray for the people who are suffering from war, especially the people of Ukraine, and we pray for all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President, Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress.

IN OUR DIOCESE, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops.

IN OUR PARISH, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community.

**THOSE WHOM OUR PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED:** Bud and Carol, Chris L., Gloria R., Jean R., Miriam, Scott, Sharon, T.C., Baby William James, Dana Carlson, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Richard DeNune, Roy DePue, Lindsey and Regina Golden, Debbie Hunsberger, Bob and Nancy Jackson, Peter Kachenko and family, Ann Lloyd, Jeff Maiden, Julie Nehls, Betty Oltorf, Donald Oney, Sandy Oney, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Virginia Richards, Flo and Jack Roach, Michael Vaughn, Mary-Anna Welch, Emily Woolsey and we pray for all who care for them. \*\*

**ANNIVERSARY:** Curt and Terrie Sherman (11/29)

**BIRTHDAY:** Paul Clever (11/30)

**FOR THE DECEASED:** Flora Sherman, Curry Wilson

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\*\* Full names are normally not published online. However for the Sunday 10:30 service we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or [grahammowery@aol.com](mailto:grahammowery@aol.com).

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## **At-Home Worship**

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Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched anytime later.

<https://cincinnati.cathedral.com/ccj/ccc/join-online/>

Washington D C -- there's much to explore at the the National Cathedral's online portal. <https://cathedral.org/worship/>

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## **Coming up on the Calendar**

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**Wednesday, November 30, 7:00 p.m. - - Choir Rehearsal**

**Sunday, December 4, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal**

**Sunday, December 4, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist \*\***

**Sunday, December 11, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal**

**Sunday, December 11, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist**

**Thursday, November 15, 7:00 p.m. - - Vestry Meeting**

**Sunday, December 18, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal**

**Sunday, December 18, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist (Discretionary Sunday)**

\*\* After a long pandemic-caused hiatus, our service of Advent lessons and carols returns. We will celebrate a modified form of the liturgy as part of the Liturgy of the Word, and Eucharist on Sunday, Dec. 4 at 10:30

## **-- Events Looking Forward --**

**Dec. 24 (Saturday) Christmas Eve 7pm**

**Dec. 25 (Sunday) Christmas Day 10:30 am**

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## **Notes & Announcements (additional items in the Friday Bulletin)**

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## **Christmas Poinsettias**

Once again, the Altar Guild will place large poinsettias only on the altar for the Christmas season. If you would like to contribute to that fund, checks can be made out to Good Shepherd with "Christmas poinsettias" on the memo line. If you wish to honor someone with either a memorial or a thanksgiving, please get those names to Barbara Martin ([barbara@chogs.org](mailto:barbara@chogs.org)) before December 20. Thanks from the Altar Guild.

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## **Some Music Notes**





Our alto Choral Scholar, Kearsten Miller will present her senior voice recital on Thursday, Dec. 1 at 5:00 p.m. in Glidden Recital Hall.

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After a long pandemic-caused hiatus, our service of Advent lessons and carols returns. We will celebrate a modified form of the liturgy as part of the Liturgy of the Word, and Eucharist on Sunday, Dec. 4 at 10:30.

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Extra singers are needed for December services - especially Dec. 19 and Christmas Eve (service at 7:00) Rehearsals are Sunday morning at 9:15. There will be an extra rehearsal between Dec. 19 and Dec. 24. Contact Marsha Reilly at [mareilly1@columbus.rr.com](mailto:mareilly1@columbus.rr.com) or [mareilly57@gmail.com](mailto:mareilly57@gmail.com) or 740-818-6475.

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## 'Tis the Season....For Ordering Coffee for Christmas!

A perfect gift for the coffee lover on your list, purchasing coffee from Church of the Good Shepherd's CrossRoads Café helps small, independent coffee farmers and their communities. We proudly partner with Deeper Roots Coffee out of Cincinnati who in turn partner with coffee growers around the world who practice environmentally sustainable farming practices and

who employ local people. When you give Deeper Roots Coffee from CrossRoads Café, you aren't just giving a gift, you are making a positive difference in the lives of others.

This year we have special prices for Christmas: \$12 a pound and \$8 a half pound. Check out the order form link church website, or pick one up in the church office.

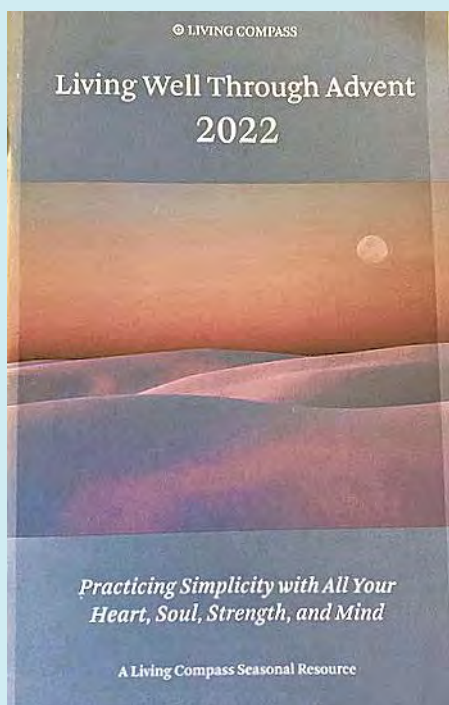
[Order Form pdf for printing.](#) [Order Form Word for download.](#)

Orders are due Sunday, December 11, pick up Sunday, December 18.

Thank you for your support. And a special Thank You to Michael Luellhoff for volunteering to help with the Christmas Coffee ministry this year.

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**Thank you** to the delegates and alternate delegates who attended Diocesan Convention last Saturday. We are grateful for your service and



## FREE Advent Devotional Books

Starting Sunday, we will be giving away FREE Advent devotionals from the Episcopal Ministry Living Compass.

This year's Advent devotional is titled: *Practicing Simplicity with All Your Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind*. The simplicity the devotional will explore is deeper than getting rid of the things we no longer use. In this devotional we are invited to "focus on developing an interior simplicity"....a spiritual practice delving deep into our faith. As Episcopal priest and Director of Living Compass Spirituality and Wellness Initiative, the Rev. Scott Stoner describes the devotional: "The culture puts many demands on

us this time of year, wanting us to complicate our lives by doing more, buying more, eating more, etc. Focusing on simplicity, especially a profoundly spiritual interior simplicity, is indeed counter-cultural. This makes it a perfect focus for Advent because Advent itself is counter cultural."

Mother Deborah worked with Living Compass for a few years when she was in the Diocese of Milwaukee. One of her projects was starting the Living Compass Advent and Lent devotionals. It is exciting to see them continue so many years later.

You can also download a FREE PDF of this year's Advent devotional at [livingcompass.org](http://livingcompass.org).

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## Icon of Matthew Shepherd

There was a nice surprise at church today: Kelly Latimore and his partner Evie showed up! They are on their way to the National Cathedral who commissioned him to do an icon of Matthew Shepherd. The icon will be unveiled at an online morning-prayer. This online service includes prayer, scripture and music commemorates the life of Matthew Shepard (December 1, 1976-October 12, 1998). Led by the Right Reverend V. Gene Robinson, IX Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire (retired). Get up early and follow the link below.

**[MORNING PRAYER: IN REMEMBRANCE OF MATTHEW SHEPARD](#)**

## **New Room and Phone Number for Julie Nehls**

Julie has moved to a new room at the Laurels where she can be around other residents who are there for similar reasons and can have easier access to social activities.

**Her new room number is 505 and new phone number is 740-592-3360.**

Address:

Julie Nehls

The Laurels – Room 505

10 Columbus Circle

Athens, OH 45701

The Laurels still requires visitors to wear masks and check in at visitor table at the front doors.

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## **For Bishop Transition News and Updates**

**[-- Follow this link --](#)**

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**If you want to help the folks who have been negatively impacted by climate disaster and war anywhere in the world please consider contributing to [Episcopal Relief and Development \(ERD\)](#) which is the official ministry of the Episcopal Church.**

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David Burton on his way to altar guild duties Saturday met this committee to supervise his setting things up. David notes that since all of these committee members were born and raised in the immediate vicinity of the church they feel they own the place.



## Contacts, Information

### Quick Links

[Parish website](#)

[Sermons](#)

[Parish calendar](#)

[Staff](#)

[Campus Interest](#)

[E-News Guidelines  
and Back Issues](#)

### Pandemic Notes:

[Link to the DSO guidelines  
for in-person worship](#)

In light of local conditions we request all persons wear masks inside the church building **regardless** of vaccination status.

**Office Hours:** 10:00 a.m.–  
2:00 p.m., Monday through  
Thursday. Masks are required.

[Diocese Southern Ohio](#)

[Bishop Transition](#)

[\[E\]Connections](#)

[Episcopal News Service](#)

[Episcopal Journal & Café](#)

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and gatherings but during office hours the thrift shop and chapel are available for individuals. Masks are required.

CrossRoads Café is temporarily closed.

## Contact Information

**For pastoral needs**, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com.

**To find out more about Good Shepherd** and other matters, please contact Alex Buckley, Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at macbuck@yahoo.com.

**For maintenance matters**, please leave a note at the office or contact Dana Carlson, Junior Warden, at 740-664-2022 or by e-mail at carlsondana@hotmail.com.

**For emergencies**, please call The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895.

**NON-emergency messages** can be left on the church's answering machine (740-593-6877).

**The parish office administrator** is Barbara Martin (740-593-6877) or

## [DONATE to Good Shepherd](#)

The above takes you to the Parish page where you can find instructions or donate on-line via PayPal, If you have a preference, please indicate on the the "Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

Check out the Church's [YouTube Channel](#).

LIKE us on Facebook [Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 45701](#)

barbara@chogs.org.

**The Episcopal Church of the  
Good Shepherd**, 64 University  
Terrace, Athens OH 45701

740-593-6877  
chogs@chogs.org  
[www.chogs.org](http://www.chogs.org)

## **Office Hours:**

Masks are required.

10:00 am - 2:00 pm  
Monday - Thursday  
740-593-6877  
chogs@chogs.org

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**Blessings !**

Church of the Good Shepherd | 64 University Terrace, Athens, OH 45701

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