

A New Church Year Awaits

This coming Sunday, 3 December, is the first Sunday of Advent and the first day of the New Year for the Christian Community. As with all new years in most societies, this is a time of looking back over the past year and looking forward to the future new year.

Advent is a time of anticipation and readiness. It is a time of recalling the presence of God in our midst in the unexpected, which sets the tone of what to expect in the future. The Sunday lessons and Gospels remind us to look for God's presence in the most unusual places and people.

We are called to expect the unexpected at every turn of our life. From which turns flows the recognition of God in our lives and events of the past with an "Aha" at each revelation. God in our midst at all times. So welcome to the new year as we walk through Advent filled with expectation and surprise in the moments of our lives individually and as a community.

--Father Don Owens, Interim Rector

Advent is the season when we prepare for the Incarnation of our Savior Jesus Christ. Advent takes us to the time when a messiah was promised but had not yet arrived. Themes of darkness, of waiting and watching, then light – holy light! – infuse the readings and hymns prescribed for this season.

As a child, I loved Advent for its child-centered rituals – lighting the candles on our home Advent wreath, opening the windows on my Advent calendar, learning Christmas carols, watching "A Charlie Brown Christmas" and "Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol" on TV. As an older adult, I love Advent for the promise it offers of renewing my focus, inevitably grown hazy, on the Light. I cling to Isaiah 9:2, so brilliantly set to music in Handel's Messiah:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; [and] they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

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We humans seem to walk in darkness a lot, and it comforts and inspires me to know that Light, our Savior's abiding love, is available to dispel the darkness.

Advent is especially resonant for St. Anna's this year as we are in a period of transition. Under Fr. Don's pastoral leadership, we honor the past while preparing for the future. (See page 5 for an update from the Rector Search Committee.) We aren't standing still by any means, as evidenced by our starting a Sunday School and adult Christian Education program this Fall in response to needs identified in the parish survey and focus groups conducted in April.

We also are holding our annual parish meeting the same Sunday as 1 Advent. Among other parish business, we will be electing three new members of the vestry to succeed Diana Meyers, Rusty Downing, and Jim McMillan, who are completing their terms. We thank them for their generous and diligent service as we welcome those who will succeed them.

The time for renewal, for refocusing, is upon us.

– Bill Glew, Annagram Editor



Vestry Candidate Biographies

(in alphabetical order)



Carl Davis

I have been a member of St. Anna's since moving to New Orleans two years ago. Before that, I was a regular visitor and participated in the online community for Morning Prayer and Compline. I have served as a leader for online compline and am a member of the Rosary Guild as well as the Book Club, Stewardship Committee and serve as Chairperson of the Mission Fundraising Committee. I also served on the Dodwell House Committee when that committee was active.

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Prior to coming to St. Anna's I served on the vestry and was Senior Warden of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Garner, North Carolina while we underwent the process of clergy transition. Professionally, I am a Certified Fundraising Executive and work as a Senior Major Gifts Officer for The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International with responsibility for serving donors who live in the Deep South and parts of the Lower Midwest.

The longer I live, the more important it becomes to me to intentionally be in places where all people are truly welcome and are free and comfortable to be themselves. Saint Anna's is the best example of such a place I have found. If chosen to serve on our vestry I will use my skills and experience to help us build upon our strengths and improve upon our weaknesses.

Because St. Anna's does so many different things, it is hard for any one person to keep track of all of the opportunities that are offered. During this time of transition, it is especially important for the church to have good communications with all people who are part of St. Anna's. Making sure that everyone knows what is going on is part of making sure that all are welcomed and none are shunned. Through service on our vestry I would make a special effort to help ensure good communications with everyone.

Kirk Toups



I am Kirk Toups. I am running for one seat on St. Anna's Vestry. I have been a member in good standing for the last 9 years. I have served on the vestry in the past as Sr. Warden, Jr. Warden, Member and presently as Jr. Warden Emeritus (a non-voting position). I have served on several committee's Dodwell Restoration, Dodwell Extravaganza, and Finance. I also do Daily Office which includes Morning Prayer and Compline. Other positions include ushering and reciting the rosary before mass. I am a divorced man with two grown sons. My work background is in Chemical engineering working for Exxon-Mobil and now retired. The reason I would like to have a seat on the vestry is to lead St. Anna in these next years during the transition period. Knowing the past years at St. Anna's, I feel that I would be able to help the new rector and church move forward in the right direction. I hope you would consider me as your vestry member.



Tim Van Alstyne

I began attending St. Anna's about three years ago, shortly after moving to New Orleans from Chicago. My husband Todd immediately fell in love with the community here, and we both quickly came to consider this place our spiritual home. I have plenty of experience in church leadership, having served on the vestry including as clerk and warden in previous parishes, and as a member of the Search Committee here at St. Anna's.

I would bring to the vestry a deep commitment to putting our vision into practice in an efficient and transparent way. I'm excited to see where the Holy Spirit leads this community in the next chapter of our life together, and I hope to be able to help the community hear and implement what the Spirit is calling us to do in our community and city.

End-of-Semester Presentations

by Anna's Place Students

Saturday, December 9

10-11 am at Dodwell House

followed by punch and cookies

ALL ARE WELCOME!!

Rector Search Committee Update

Recent Developments -- The Parish Profile and an accompanying document, the Office of Transition Ministry (OTM) questionnaire, were posted on November 16. These documents describe St. Anna's and what we seek in our next rector. The Search Committee did its level best to base the Profile and OTM questionnaire responses on the extensive and generous feedback we received during April through the Parish survey and focus groups.

The posting of the Parish Profile and OTM questionnaire means that the Search Committee is now accepting applications from rector candidates. Any priest in The Episcopal Church is eligible to apply. The documents are available at www.stannanola.org under "Parish Transition: New Rector Search," "Updates," "Rector Position Officially Open." Copies are also available at the back of the nave.

Next steps -- Rector applications will be received through Friday, January 19, 2024. After preliminary screening by the Diocese, the Search Committee will conduct initial candidate interviews. Once that phase is complete, the Search Committee will pose written questions to a narrowed group of candidates, interview those candidates a second time, or both. Up to this point interviews will be by zoom, which is good stewardship of time and money.

In-person interviews for one or two finalists will follow. The Search Committee's role is to recommend a finalist to the Vestry, which in turn will elect the new Rector, subject to approval by our Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Shannon Duckworth. Throughout this process we will have the support and guidance of Canon Morgan MacIntire of the Diocese of Louisiana, who presented the results of the parish survey and spoke about the search process after Mass in June of this year.

Please keep in mind that information about individual applicants, including their identities, will be kept strictly confidential. This is to protect potential and actual rector candidates, most of whom are likely to be parish priests with congregations of their own. It's not hard to imagine how disruptive, even hurtful, it could be for a parish to learn that their priest had put their hat in the ring for another position elsewhere. Obviously the priest who ultimately is called to be St. Anna's next rector will have to say farewell to their current parish, but we don't want to risk complicating the pastorships of those who are not selected.

If you have any questions about the search process, please reach out to Search Committee chair Bill Glew, Karen Judge (co-chair), or members Lauren Anderson, Jim McMillan, Nicole Gottschalk, Tim Van Alstyne, Dr. Cavin Davis, Randy Lovejoy, or Diana Meyers. We will do our best to provide answers, subject to the confidentiality rule we are bound to follow.

-- Bill Glew, Search Committee Chair

