



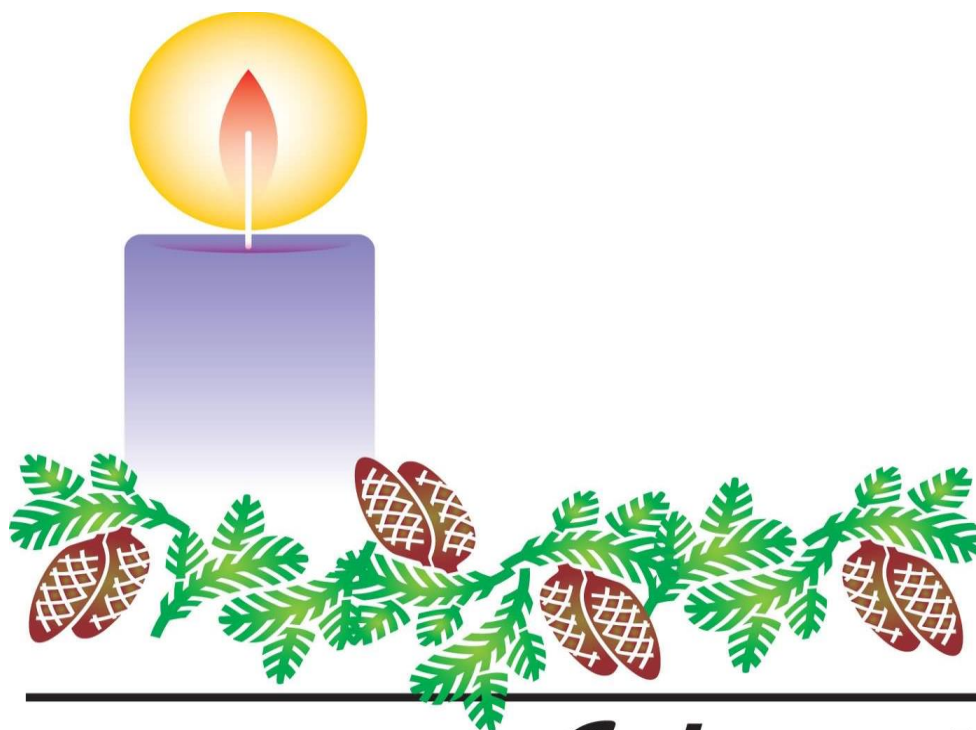
# CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BLUEFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA

## The First Sunday of Advent

A Welcoming of New Members  
with a Renewal of Baptismal Covenant  
Rt. Rev. Matthew D. Cowden, Celebrating

December 1, 2024



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FIRST SUNDAY OF *Advent*

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200 Duhring Street, Bluefield, WV 24701

(304) 327-6861

[www.cecbf.org](http://www.cecbf.org)

## Prelude

*The people stand*

### The Processional Hymn

*Lo! he comes, with clouds descending*

**H 58**

## Welcome!

*At this time, all children are invited to follow the cross and teachers to their classrooms.*

*Bishop* Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*People* And blessed be his Kingdom, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*The Bishop then continues*

*Bishop* There is one body and one Spirit;

*People* There is one hope in God's call to us;

*Bishop* One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

*People* One God and Father of all.

*The people remain standing.*

### Hymn of Praise

*Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes*

**H 72**

## The Collect for the Day

*Bishop* The Lord be with you.

*People* And also with you.

*Bishop* Let us pray.

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.*

Grant, Almighty God, that we, who have been redeemed from the old life of sin by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, may be renewed in your Holy Spirit, and live in righteousness and true holiness;

through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*The people sit.*

The First Lesson

*Jeremiah 33:14-16*

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

*Lector*                    The Word of the Lord.

*People*                    Thanks be to God!

The Psalm

Psalm 25:1-9

*Ad te, Domine, levavi*

*The Psalm will be read responsively by whole verse*

1. To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you; let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.
2. Let none who look to you be put to shame; let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.
3. Show me your ways, O LORD, and teach me your paths.
4. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.
5. Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting.
6. Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; remember me according to your love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.
7. Gracious and upright is the LORD; therefore he teaches sinners in his way.
8. He guides the humble in doing right and teaches his way to the lowly.
9. All the paths of the LORD are love and faithfulness to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

## The Second Lesson

*I Thessalonians 3:9-13*

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

*Lector*                The Word of the Lord.

*People*                Thanks be to God!

*The people standing.*

Hymn

*Watchman, tell us of the night*

**H 640**

## The Gospel Lesson

*Luke 21:25-36*

*Deacon or Priest*    The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

*People*                Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Jesus said, "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the

whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

*Priest* The Gospel of the Lord.

*People* Praise to you, Lord Christ.

### The Sermon

The Rt. Rev. Matthew D. Cowden

Let us join together by recommitting *ourselves* to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

### **The Baptismal Covenant**

*Bishop* Do you believe in God the Father?

*People* I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

*Bishop* Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

*People* I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

*Bishop* Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

*People* I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

*Bishop* Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

*People* I will, with God's help.

*Bishop* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

*People* I will, with God's help.

*Bishop* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

*People* I will, with God's help.

*Bishop* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

*People* I will, with God's help.

*Bishop* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

*People* I will, with God's help.

### **The Prayers of the People, Form III**

BCP 387

*The people may stand or kneel.*

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;

*That we all may be one.*

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;

*That your Name may be glorified by all people.*

We pray for Sean, our Presiding Bishop, Matthew, our Bishop, for Paul our Priest, and for all bishops, priests, and deacons;

*That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.*

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;

*That there may be justice and peace on the earth.*

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;

*That our works may find favor in your sight.*

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;

*That they may be delivered from their distress.*

Give to the departed eternal rest;

*Let light perpetual shine upon them.*

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;

*May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.*

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

In our Diocesan Cycle of prayer, we pray for St. Andrews, Oak Hill.

We pray for all who are on our parish prayer list, and for any others that we might now name, either silently or aloud

*Pause*

We pray for all who have died, especially our loved ones who have gone before us, and for any others that we might now name, either silently or aloud

*Pause*

We give thanks for all of the blessings of this life, for our family, friends and loved ones, and for any other thanksgivings we might now name, either silently or aloud.

*Pause*

*The Celebrant concludes the prayers*

O Lord our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*A period of silence follows.*

*Then the Bishop says*

Almighty God, we thank you that by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself, and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit you have bound us to your service. Renew in *us* your *servants* the covenant you have made with *us* at our Baptism. Send *us* forth in the power of that Spirit to perform the service you set before *us*; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*The Peace is then exchanged*

*Bishop* The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People* And also with you.

## **Welcoming New People To A Congregation**

*Bishop*

Dear Friends in Christ, in companionship with each other as we journey in faith, we welcome new members into this community of Christ Church. We welcome them to join us as we seek to love the Lord our God with heart and soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We welcome and cherish their unique gifts and experiences as together we follow the Holy Spirit in transforming this community for the work and mission of Jesus Christ.

*The new members of the community are presented.*

*Presenter*

I present Richard and Catherine Weaver, and Dee Puckett to be welcomed as members of this parish.

*Bishop*



Do you desire to continue your journey into Christ as a member of Christ Church?

*New Members* I do.

*Bishop* Will you commit yourself to seek and serve Christ in this community of faith and pledge to work, pray, and give to build up our common life?

*New Members* I will, with God's help.

*Bishop* Will you who witness these promises, do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?

*People* We will.

*Bishop* Let us pray.

*Bishop and People* Loving God, we give thanks that you have brought Richard, Catherine, and Dee to join us in ministry. Knit us together, one to another, so that in unity we may know you and serve you in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **The Peace**

*Bishop* The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People* And also with you.

*The people may greet one another with a sign of God's love.*

### **Announcements**

*The Bishop's Visitation loose offering will be designated to the Highland Educational Project.*

### **The Holy Communion**

Offertory Hymn

*Here, O my Lord, I see thee face to face*

**H 63**

After the Offertory piece has been played the People stand as the gifts are brought forward and sing the familiar tune of the "Old 100<sup>th</sup>"

Praise God, from whom all blessing flow;  
 Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
 Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:  
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

### The Eucharistic Prayer A

The people stand. The bishop faces them and sings.

*Celebrant* *People*

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

*Celebrant* *People*

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

*Celebrant*

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*People*

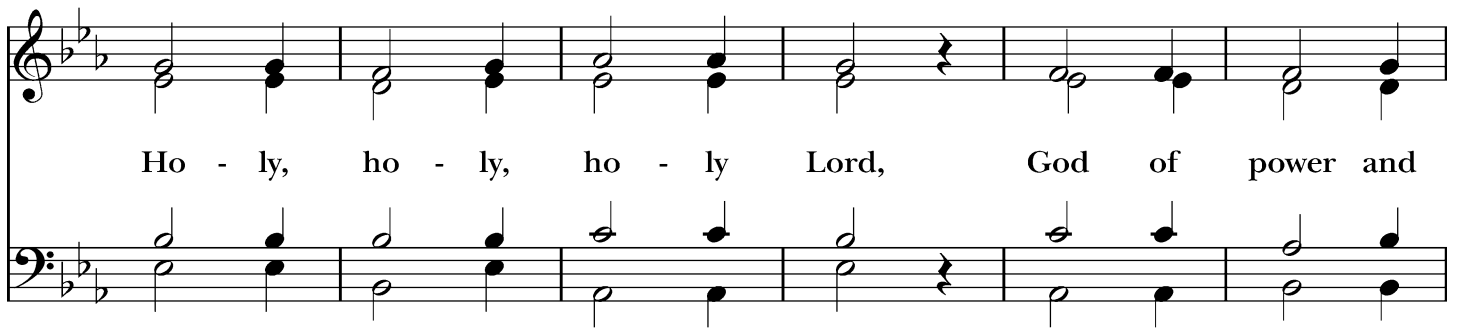
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Then, facing the Holy Table, the Bishop proceeds

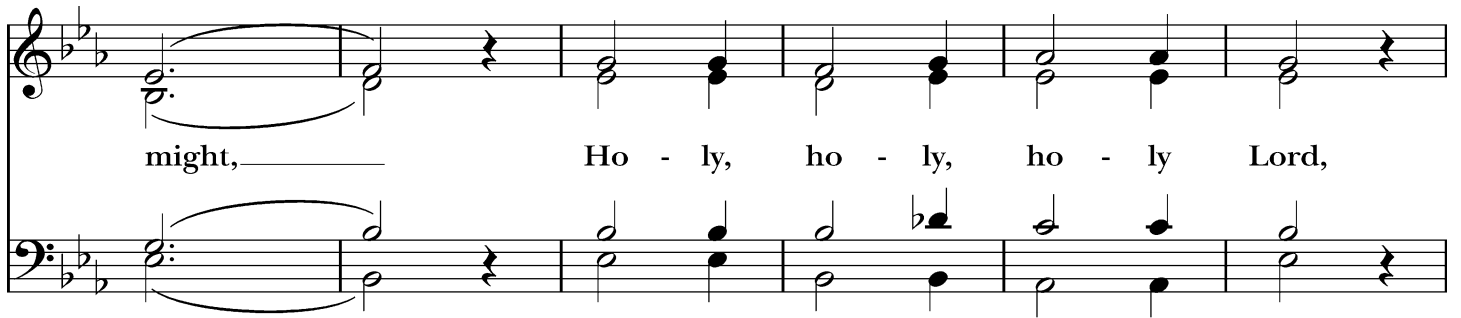
It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and every-where to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Because in Jesus Christ our Lord you have received us as your sons and daughters, made us citizens of your kingdom, and given us the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth.

Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

*The Hymnal 1982, Service Music, #130*



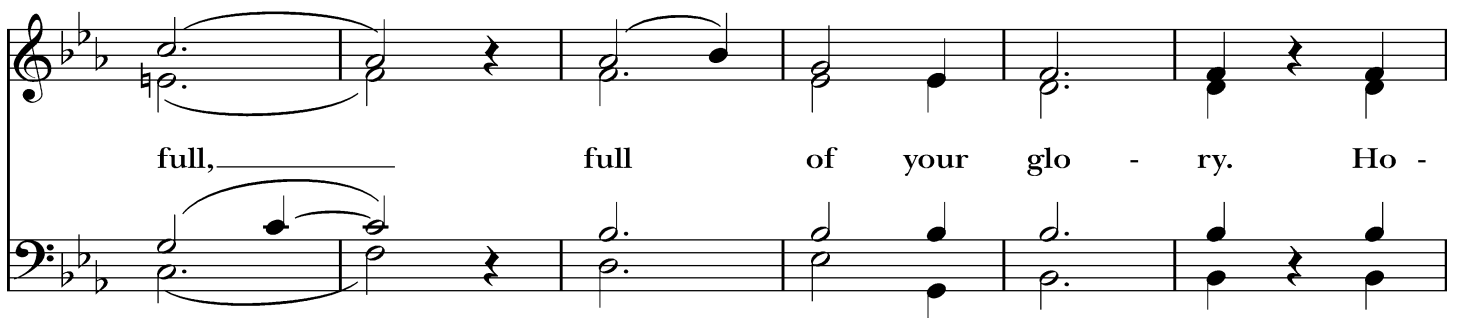
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of power and



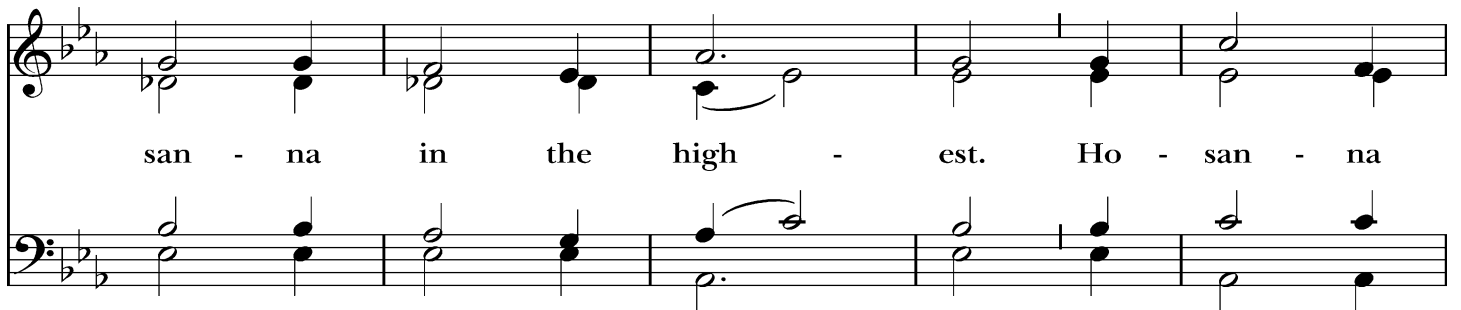
might, Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,



God of power and might, hea - ven and earth are



full, full of your glo - ry. Ho -



san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na

in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes

in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na

in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

*The people stand or kneel. Then the Bishop continues*

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself, and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

*Bishop and People*

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

*The Bishop continues*

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever.

*Bishop*

*People*



And now, as our Savior  
Christ has taught us,  
we are bold to say,

*People and Bishop*

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

### **The Breaking of the Bread**

*The Bishop then breaks the Consecrated Bread and says*

*A period of silence is kept.*

Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;  
*People* Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

*The Bishop then presents the Sacrament to the People*

The Gifts of God, for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

### **The Distribution of the Holy Sacrament**

All baptized Christians, regardless of age or denomination, are invited and encouraged to receive the sacrament. Communion is distributed at the altar rail. It is the tradition of this parish that 12 to 14 people at a time receive communion at the altar rail, at which point all are dismissed together to return to their seats and another group may move forward to the rail. Gluten free wafers are available by asking the priest. If you do not wish to receive the sacrament but would like to receive a blessing, please join us at the rail and cross your arms over your chest. Depart through the doors at either side of the rail, returning to your pew through the door by the reader's lectern.

### **Communion Hymn**

*How bright appears the Morning Star*

**H 497**

## Our Prayer after Communion

BCP 365

*After Communion, the Bishop says*

Let us pray.

*Bishop and People*

Eternal God, heavenly Father,  
you have graciously accepted us as living members  
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,  
and you have fed us with spiritual food  
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.  
Send us now into the world in peace,  
and grant us strength and courage  
to love and serve you  
with gladness and singleness of heart;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Bishop Sings the Blessing*

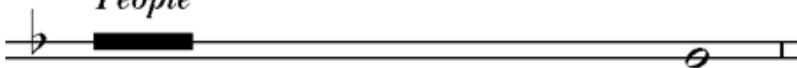
## The Blessing Over the People

*Bishop*



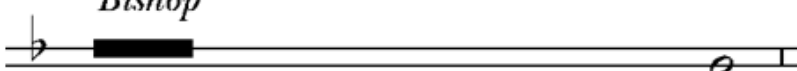
Our help is in the Name of the Lord;

*People*



The maker of heaven and earth.

*Bishop*



Blessed be the Name of the Lord;

*People*



From this time forth for ever-more.

**The Dismissal**

*Priest* Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

*People* Thanks be to God.

Postlude

*All are invited to a reception with the Bishop and his wife, Melissa, downstairs in Rowley Hall immediately following the service.*

**Please Keep the Following in Your Prayers:** Dorene Dimes, Bonnie Taylor, Joe Sanders, Bob Walk, Martha Linkous, Buck Sowers, Donna Fortune, Ed and Gladys Fortune, Jim and Chris Justice, Ivy and the Gaines Family, Fr. Russ and Debbie Hatfield, Mary Lou, Don Harris, John and Becky Beckett, Jim Paine, Julie Blevins, John and Sandy Moir, Mary Catherine and Don Williams, Sherry, Scot, Max, Brad, Sandi, Joan, Mike Boosier, Pam Spracher, Barry Dinger, Joel Hammond, Jim, Joan Gray, Doug Truter, Beth Kane, Debbie H., Kimberly Norriss, Mark Williams, Donna Thompson-Whitehead, Liz, Joan, Dave, Mopsy Shott Forbes, Everly Nowlin, Sandra, Felicia, Leo Maial, Parker Anderson, Riley Whitney, Harold Brewster, and Ellie Spencer.

The Altar Flowers are given by Phil and Valerie Mahood for the greater Glory of God and in memory of loved ones.

The chancel rail flowers are given in honor of Bishop Cowden and his visit to Christ Church by the Church.

**Attendance Last Sunday:**

**40**

**Birthdays this week:** Rebecca Broyles, Mary Beavers, Lise Tracey, John Allen, Brandon Brewster.



## **Participants in Today's Liturgy**

Celebrant

The Rt. Rev. Matthew D. Cowden

Assisting

The Rev. Paul Barker

Organist & Choirmaster

Terry E. Whittington, Jr.

Acolyte

Becky Beckett

Becky Kersey

Lector

Don Williams

Altar Guild

Linda Ammar, Patty Richardson

## **Calendar of Events**

Sunday – December 1

Bishop's Visit

Bishop's Reception after Church 11am-12pm

Wednesday – December 4

Evening Prayer – Rite I 5:30-6:00pm

Wednesday – December 11

Union Mission 4:00pm

Evening Prayer – Rite I 5:30-6:00pm

Sunday – December 15

Canterbury Club at the Beckett's 6:00pm

Tuesday – December 17

DOK meeting 10:30-11:30am

Wednesday – December 18

Evening Prayer – Rite I 5:30-6:00pm

Men's Dinner 6:00pm

Vestry meeting 7:00pm

Thursday – December 19

Food Pantry 9:00 – 11:00am

Tuesday – December 24

Christmas Eve Service 5:30pm

Wednesday – December 25

Merry Christmas!

## **Announcements:**



Poinsettias: If you would like to help with decorating our Church for Christmas, you may purchase a poinsettia in either honor or memory of someone for a cost of \$20 each. A sign-up sheet is now available in the Narthex. Please let us know how many you would like no later than Sunday, December 15. Thank you!

Cookies for Shut-ins: Please sign up to make cookies for Shut-ins and bring your cookies to the church on Monday, December 16. Boxes will be packed at 2pm.

Food Pantry: The Food Pantry will be collecting the following seasonal items during the next few colder months:

**December:** Blankets

**January:** Socks for Men/Women

Thanks so much for your continued support of this outreach!

Ushers Needed: We are in need of volunteers to usher. David Kersey has had hip surgery and will need some help with this ministry. There will be a signup sheet for all interested. We can provide training. See Mary Catherine Williams if you are interested.

Coffee Hour: A Coffee Hour host will be needed for **December 22, 29**. Sign up on the white board located outside the library. Contact Mary Catherine Williams (276-326-2411) or [mkw@dlwco.com](mailto:mkw@dlwco.com) if you have any questions. Thank you for helping Christ Church in this important ministry.



### To Be Welcomed

Richard Weaver  
Catherine Weaver  
Dee Puckett

## A History of Christ Episcopal Church, Bluefield, West Virginia

In 1889 the Mercer County Mission was established—what today we would call a “cluster” or “cooperative ministry.” This mission was headed by the Rev. Charles Gauss and was comprised of three churches: Princeton, Bramwell, and Bluefield. Each parish meet in homes or businesses until they could manage buildings of their own. Although the parishes located in Princeton and Bramwell were older (having been meeting for Morning Prayer, periodic communion when a traveling minister could be found, and at least two visits by Bishop Peterkin since at the early 1880’s), Bluefield’s new congregation was the first to secure a lot for a building and the first to send a representative to Diocesan Convention. At convention in 1889, Christ Church was admitted as a mission church of the Diocese (meaning that the parish was free standing, but still relied on financial support from the Diocese). The following year, Christ Church (then known as the Church of the Incarnation) was admitted as a full parish, no longer needing Diocesan support. Bramwell and Princeton would be admitted as the same the following year, in 1891.

The Rev. William H. Burkhart was the first Rector at the church. He held his first service in Bluefield at 3:00 p.m., February 15, 1891. In June 1894, the Rev. Norman Fitzhugh Marshall took charge of Bluefield, Mr. Lightbourne had reported the name of the church as "Christ Church."

The present church was constructed 30 years after that day in 1891 when the first church was dedicated. A devastating fire on Christmas Day 1919 destroyed the original wooden church.

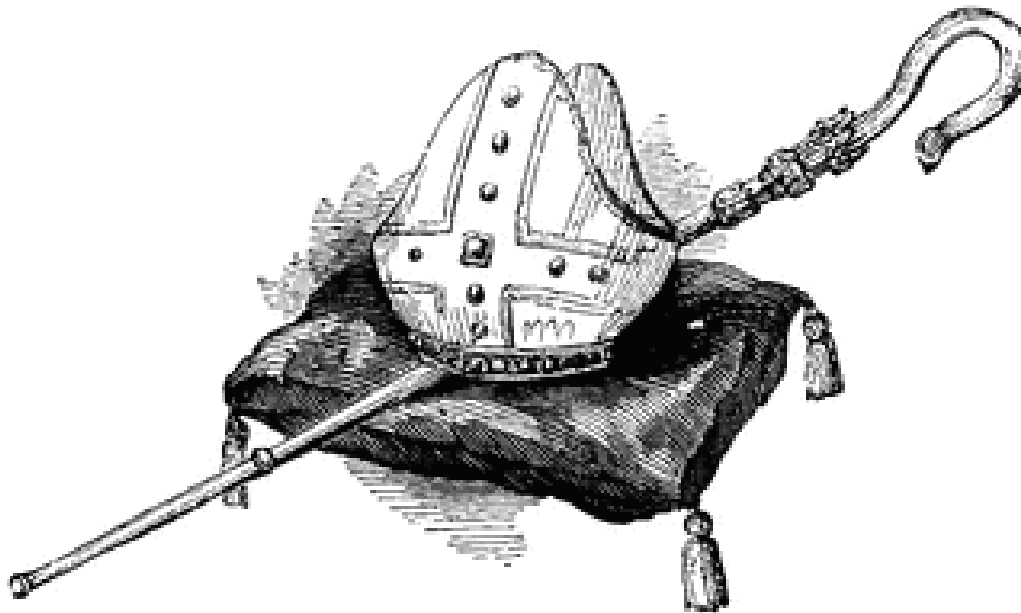
The cornerstone for the present building was laid on Sunday, December 26, 1920, and it was completed before the next Christmas. It was dedicated on October 23, 1921, by Episcopal Bishop W. L. Gravatt, with clergy E. W. Hughes of Graham (now Bluefield, VA) and Rector Jennings Wise Hobson assisting. The church debt was liquidated on schedule at the annual Congregational meeting in January 1944, according to the original 20-year plan, 1924-1944. The Rt. Rev. Robert E. L. Strider was bishop, and The Rev. Jennings W. Hobson was still rector. Bishop Strider visited on June 25, 1944 and consecrated the church.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Frank Rowley, the campaign for the new Parish House addition was launched in the mid-1950's. The addition, as was the 1921 church, was designed by Bluefield architect Alex B. Mahood, and was painstakingly planned to match the older church in architectural style. A beautiful new administrative wing, library, and educational addition were included in the new Parish Hall addition. The newest addition to Christ Church was completed on March 9, 1958, and was dedicated on March 30, 1958 by the Rt. Rev. Wilburn Campbell, the fourth Bishop of West Virginia. Extensive renovations of the church occurred in 2015 and 2018 which were meant to complete the vision of Alex Mahood.

In 2018 the congregation of St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Bluefield, Virginia, decided to close its doors. The members of St. Mary’s, along with many of the items of the old church, including their handsome altar cross (which now sits on the side altar in Christ Church), were enthusiastically received into the Christ Church fellowship. The St. Mary’s Conference Room holds many of the parish’s records, photos, and history.

Eight members of Christ Episcopal Church have gone on to ordained ministry—two have become bishops. Throughout its history, the people of Christ Church, ordained or not, have been major figures in the Bluefield community and beyond. Among the church's most prominent members has been John Forbes Nash, Jr., Nobel Laureate whose life was chronicled in the movie "A Beautiful Mind."

*Information for this short history was compiled from works by the Very Rev. Chad Slater, Mr. Don Williams, and the late Mr. Clifford B. Sykes.*



### **Clergy, Staff, and Wardens of this Parish**

The Rev. Paul Barker

Mr. Terry E. Whittington, Jr.

Ms. Emma Bennett

Mrs. Gina Vescio

Mrs. Becky Beckett

Mr. Peter Richardson

Rector

Organist & Choirmaster

Parish Administrator

Sexton

Senior Warden

Junior Warden