

The Rainbow



December 2021

CEC to lose beloved rector but cheers his move up

by Mimi Merritt

At the Nov. 14 Sunday morning service, Father Chad told the congregation that his season at Christ Church would soon be coming to an end.

As typical of his meticulous attention to detail, an announcement followed that night on Facebook, and a letter arrived in our mailboxes to ensure that everyone in Father Chad's reach – which far exceeds our Christ Church family – knew. Many I've talked with have expressed this same reaction: extreme sadness that he and his family are leaving, yet happiness for him that his next adventure – accepting an invitation to serve as Canon to the Ordinary for the Diocese of West Virginia – is an honor he so richly deserves and one that is God's plan for him.



No doubt everyone at Christ Church has a personal story to share about Father Chad, stories that would fill volumes. Given time limitations, I reached out to a few who have known Father Chad well during his eight and a half years here. Themes that resonate include his attention to detail in music, in the beauty of our building, and in ceremony; his excellent sermons; his service to community; his pastoral care; his insistent message of love; his going the extra mile -- and his very much appreciated sense of humor. All these qualities have revitalized our church.

“Father Chad had not been with Christ Church for very long when my mother passed away in September of 2013,” said Linda Ammar, a vestry member, lay reader and head of the Altar Guild and Parish Life. “This was my first encounter with him, and he did not disappoint me. Although he had not known my mother for a very long time, he took the time to get acquainted with her interests and background by talking to those who had known her for a while, and as a result delivered a very adequate portrayal of her life at her funeral service.”

Father Chad has presided over funerals of our loved ones, officiated at weddings of our children, baptized our babies, confirmed new members, and counseled those of us in need, but he also has extended his ministry beyond our doors to our greater community, as many noted. His presence at community events, whether school-related and involving his children or civic-minded activities promoting our community, was something Linda said she noticed early on.

“Chad's passion for the ministry and desire to make Christ Church the best it could be filled a void we as a church had felt for a long time,” she said. “Once I became a member of the vestry it was then that I realized that Chad had a vision for our church. Through his guidance we have

become a pillar in the community and outreach is no longer a word we throw around...it is what we do as a congregation.”

Teresa Paine, a lay reader, chalice bearer, and altar guild member, also saw Chad as what the church had needed for so long. “When Fr. Chad arrived at Christ Church, I feel that we were like a traumatized family,” she said. “We had been losing members and many of us were demoralized because of our experiences over the previous several years. Fr. Chad arrived with his young family, his youthful energy, a great sense of humor and spiritual wisdom way beyond his years, and we began to heal. Our life as a church became more vibrant and joyful.”

David Kersey, who grew up in Christ Church and has held many leadership roles, including his current term as senior warden, spoke about the way in which Chad came to be in Bluefield. “We had been without a full-time rector for about two years,” David said, “when Bishop Klusmeyer called me and offered to place a recent seminary graduate as ‘priest in charge’ at Christ Church-Bluefield. ‘Desperate’ as we felt at the time, we were wary of the unusual proposal and taking on a brand-new priest. In retrospect, I think it was God’s plan that Chad came to us, with his beautiful family. He has renewed the spirit of our church and encouraged us every Sunday to be better Christians, with thought, word, and deed.”

As David reminded us at a recent church service, the entire Slater family has been invaluable in filling key worship roles during the pandemic, and their absence will create a void demanding more volunteers. “He, Jennifer, Ben, and Emma all will be sorely missed, but they will leave us a strong foundation for building the next chapter in our church life,” said David. “Our loss is the Diocese’s gain and, as members of the Diocese, we will still be blessed with Chad’s service. I wish them the best for their future.”

Organist and choirmaster Terry Whittington and choir member David Hardin also spoke of the gift of the entire Slater family: “We at Christ Church were blessed beyond any expectation the day Father Chad Slater and his family arrived in Bluefield,” they said. “Chad, Jennifer, Ben, and Emma have been such an important part of our spiritual and daily lives. Seeing the Slater children grow and mature has been exciting and we appreciate their participation in the life of Christ Church. Jennifer has been a close friend to all of us and in the community. She has assisted Chad in every way possible in his ministry here in Bluefield.”

“We have also been blessed with Jennifer’s many contributions to our church,” said Teresa Paine. “How would we have ever made it through the pandemic without her faithful service?”

Chad’s appreciation of the beauty of the Christ Church building, and his interest in projects to improve its structure and appeal, endeared him to congregants. “From our first meeting Chad, it was evident he was dedicated to make a difference at our church and in the community,” Terry and David said. “He has succeeded. His knowledge of Christianity, love of music and improving the beauty of our church are evident to all the senses.”

Teresa also noted Chad’s appreciation of our historic church building. “He saw our church building with new eyes and inspired us to make our lovely building into an even more beautiful holy space,” she said. “Some of our members who had left have returned and we gained some wonderful new members who were attracted by Fr Chad’s ministry.”

Terry and David also spoke of Chad’s community outreach. “His ministry outside our church walls is very well known in our community, He is loved by us and many. We feel he will be

invaluable in his new position within the diocese. We certainly will miss him and his family, but we are confident that he and his family will always know how much we love and care for them.”

Junior warden Peter Richardson also grew up in Christ Church. He and his wife, Patty, have served in many leadership roles and they spoke about the vitality that Chad brought back to the church. “The arrival of Chad and his family brought a renewed spirit to Christ Church,” they said. “Chad fostered a positive atmosphere which led to increased active participation, better attendance and increased membership.” They also commented on one of Chad’s assets that many have appreciated: “His personality and humor were infectious and made our church more alive.”

Like many, the Richardsons noted the leadership he extended beyond our church walls. “He also became known throughout the community, which translated into a positive view toward our church,” they said. “He and his family will be greatly missed by all those who he came into contact with in this area.”

We have all heard Chad exhort us to get out of the church building, get out on the streets, and spread love to those who need it. Betty Nash, an altar guild member who volunteers regularly at Food Pantry and who serves as our parish nurse, had this to say about Chad’s spiritual leadership and message of love: “I am most grateful that Father Chad always challenges me to look for those hurting in our community, and that loving others, no matter how difficult, is how we show our love for Christ. Thank you, Father Chad, for reminding me that love is the answer.”

Like Betty, Teresa spoke of Chad’s persistent directive that we must all love everyone, especially those in need. “His sermons have encouraged me to be a more compassionate, loving and devoted Christian,” she said. Teresa, licensed in counseling and marriage and family therapy, said, “When asked to talk to my counseling clients who needed spiritual guidance, he has always gone the extra mile.”

Another example of Father Chad’s service to the greater community and embrace of all was noted by Rob Merritt, a former vestry member and senior warden and a longtime lay reader and chalice bearer. “Chad has meant a lot to me personally over the years, beyond his stewardship of Christ Episcopal Church,” Rob said. “We had fruitful collaborations in conjunction with the Appalachian Interfaith Alliance. Chad spoke at several meetings at the mosque in Princeton and other locations and was eager to embrace believers of other faith traditions. Also, I was excited about a Celtic evening prayer service we had planned for Lent in 2020 that was cancelled as Covid surfaced.”

Rob also spoke of a more personal connection, when Chad officiated at the wedding of son Charlie in Charlottesville, Va., on August 12, 2017, a day that would dominate news headlines for reasons antithetical to love and unity. The night before, Chad and Jennifer drove the Merritts back to the hotel from the rehearsal dinner, the route taking them by the Rotunda at the University of Virginia, where angry protesters marched with lit torches. The next day, the situation worsened.

“As violence erupted in the streets of Charlottesville, on a very hot afternoon, Chad calmly officiated a marriage on a mountaintop and spoke of love,” Rob said.

Well known for his annual blessing of the animals, Chad has also presided over funeral services for furry loved ones. “Mimi and I wanted to have some kind of ritual for the passing of our beloved beagle, Scout,” Rob said. “We had the ashes and an urn, and Chad came over with a printed program that included Scout’s picture. We had a meaningful funeral that was the kind of

closure we had been needing. Thank you, Chad, for your ministry; you make each congregant feel personally connected to you.”

Bea Paine, a member for more than 60 years who has been involved in almost every aspect of the church, including lay reading, chalice bearing, and altar guild, vestry, and choir, remembers the day Chad was interviewed. “I thought, he is so young,” she recalled. “With his smile and friendly manner, he quickly won us over and God smiled.”

Bea believes that God sent Chad to us, when we really needed him, as so many do, and she called the job that he and his entire family did during the pandemic “super-duper.” As much as she hates to see him leave, she knows that God has greater plans for him.

Don and Mary Catherine Williams, longtime Christ Church members who together have served in almost every capacity – from vestry leadership to worship, from Choir to Parish Life – credited Father Chad with being very easy to talk to and for caring about everyone in his congregation. They also noted many of his accomplishments, including welcoming the congregation from St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Bluefield, Va., when it closed. “His time here at Christ Church included the completion of several large projects, including the renovation of the narthex, hallways on the main level, the coffee area, the St. Mary’s conference room, the nursery renovation, and the sacristy,” they said. “Plus, other projects included the more recent heating and air conditioning project and improvements to the chancel and sanctuary, and also additional projects. He has proven easy to work with on projects.”

They added, as have many, that Father Chad never hesitates to visit when someone needs pastoral help or has been sick or had surgery, and his Sunday morning services have always been a strong suit. “His services strictly follow the Episcopal Liturgy,” they said. “His sermons always have a good message. He loves to quiz the congregation. He is fun to be around. He is well-liked in the community.”

The Williamses said they would miss Father Chad and his family. “We would like for him to stay for another 8½ years,” they said. “He has been active on the Diocesan level, our community, and Christ Church, which has been a job in itself during the Covid-19 pandemic. His children have faithfully served as acolytes.”

Alyson Bowling, a vestry member, lay reader and chalice bearer, has found Father Chad to be invaluable in her spiritual journey. “You may have heard it said that people come into your life for a reason, a season, or a lifetime,” she said. “I know that Father Chad was in my life for all three. You may also have heard it said, if you are a person of faith, that God knows all things about your life – your past, present and future. Your creator has placed people in your life for all three. Father Chad has been this ‘person’ for me.”

Alyson came to Christ Church on the recommendation of Bishop Klusmeyer after seeking his counsel four years ago about discerning for the diaconate. He recommended she speak with Father Chad, who then supported her and worked with Alyson for two years as she pursued her interest in diaconate studies. His perspective and guidance to her gave her faith and hope. “Perhaps the one thing Father Chad said to me that made the greatest impression,” she said, “was ‘God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called.’”

Becky Steorts has been at Christ Episcopal Church since 1955, when her parents moved to Bluefield from Roanoke, Va. “For the past 10 years, Father Chadwick Slater and his family have brought something very, very special to Christ Episcopal,” she said. “Chad’s worship services have

dignity and quiet grace. In his sermons, he has a special way of making the truth of the Scriptures relate to our lives today. His column in the church newsletter always makes us feel the amazing love of Jesus Christ.

“My service as Food Pantry head for nine years allowed me to see Fr. Chad counsel many suffering neighbors who have needed financial help with utility, medical, or rent bills, or aid to an abandoned soul,” she said. “During the pandemic, Chad also gave us words of comfort as he emphasized that we are ‘moving toward faith in better and more abundant tomorrows.’”

“The Slater family will be missed at Christ Church, Bluefield, but we know that God has called this family to help our Bishop and to pass Christ’s love on to Episcopal churches and families all over West Virginia. Godspeed!”

Monthly Ministry Report - November 2021



Food Pantry

November 18, 2021

53 bags of groceries were distributed. 40 kerosene vouchers were handed out. Volunteers: Betty Nash, Delia Kersey, Patricia and Peter Taylor

Union Mission

Wednesday, November 10

Meals prepared – 121 (42 served on Wednesday; 79 served on Thursday).

Menu – BBQ on a bun, cole slaw, baked beans, brownie and drink.

Volunteers: Sheila Brooks, Elizabeth Clement, Art Mead, and Shirley Ofsa of CEC

Charlie Helmandollar, Christ Episcopal Church of Pocahontas, VA

Fredia Helmandollar, Cumberland Heights Baptist Church.

Marjorie Justice and Betty Watson, Bluefield, VA

Preparation of meals at the Union Mission will resume on Wednesday, January 12, 2022.

Fellowship Home

Thanksgiving Dinner was delivered to the Fellowship Home on Tuesday, November 23rd. Food City of Bluefield prepared the dinner and the Episcopal Churchwomen paid for the meal. As always, the men were very appreciative.

Thanksgiving Service

A special Thanksgiving service for our youth and their friends was hosted at Christ Church on Sunday, November 21. A total of 8 children participated in the special service of Thanksgiving prayers and a delightful scavenger hunt around the church. Elizabeth Clement planned the festivities and was assisted by her husband, Cameron, in making the event go so well.



Letter from the Rector

The ☉ Antiphons: An Advent Exploration of the Names of Jesus



While I love Christmas carols, Advent is full of wonderful songs as well. One of the most beloved, especially here at Christ Church, is “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” This magnificent hymn dates back to the ninth century and was originally composed in Latin. It was written sometime before 800 AD, by an unknown writer. The many references to both the Old and New Testament suggest it was probably a monk or a priest.

When first written, the Latin text of this hymn contained seven different verses, each one representing a different biblical view of the Messiah. Together, these verses are called the *O Antiphons*. It was sung or chanted, one verse per day, during the last seven days before Christmas. The hymn was translated by John Mason Neale, an Anglican priest, in the early 19th century. That was the beginning of the world-wide spread of this hymn that has now been translated into scores of languages and is sung by Christians around the world.

While some of the references in the hymn can be confusing, they all spring directly from Scripture passages that would have resonated loud and clear with early Christians. The first verse of this hymn begins “O come, O come Emmanuel”, a term from Isaiah 7:14, which prophesied “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” With these words Israel was introduced to Emmanuel – God with us –the hope for the Christian world held captive in a broken world.

The second verse, beginning “O come, O Wisdom from on high” centers on the source of true wisdom that comes only from God through God’s Son. With the Messiah’s arrival, the wisdom can reach around the world and bring peace and understanding to all.

The third verse, “O come great God of might,” speaks to God’s presence with the people of Israel over the ages – particularly the story from Exodus 24 where, in a cloud that lingered over Mount Sinai for six days, God on the seventh day gave Moses the Ten Commandments.

“O come, thou rod of Jesse,” in some translations also called the “Branch of Jesse,” is taken from Isaiah 11:11 which says, “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” In this verse, the rod of Jesse represents Christ, Jesus being a descendant of the Biblical Jesse, the father of David.

And finally, the lyrics turn to “O come, thou key of David,” a reference to Isaiah 22:22. The words in this verse explain that the newborn King holds the key to the heavenly kingdom, and there is no way to get into the kingdom but through Him. It is based on the verse which reads, “I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open.”

Verses six and seven of this hymn speak to Christ’s arrival as a morning star (called a Dayspring), and as the Desire of Nations, having similar biblical groundings as the other verses.

For many of us the start of the month of December, or even the passing of Thanksgiving for that matter, means the start to the Christmas season. For the church, of course, such a rush is a bit premature. After all, how can we celebrate the Incarnation—the coming of Christ—without first contemplating why such an event is so momentous? The words to “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” remind us of the longing and hope present for centuries in the minds of God’s people.

I actually enjoy the season called Advent. It’s a time for us to pause our busy lives and remember the importance of Christ’s coming. While we may look forward to parties, presents, singing carols, and decorating our homes, our souls long for something more substantial. Advent reminds us that our celebrations for Christmas are a reflection of getting what we need and not just what we want.

This Advent season, before we lay the baby in the manger, before we even look to the brightest star in the sky, let’s spend some time waiting, and preparing, and holding on to the hope that God will indeed make true the promises that are written on our hearts and treasured in our beings. Let us sing songs like “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” with the hope and anticipation it was meant to inspire. Let’s spend some time with our families thinking about what we really are anticipating. Let us take time with our church family preparing ourselves for the miracle that is fast approaching. Let us find the time in reflection to marvel at how this promise of God is about to be fulfilled in the birth of a tiny child.

Chrismon Tree Decorated

Volunteers at our Chrismon tree decorating party has lots of fun adorning this year’s tree! Thank you to everyone who came to help!

What is a Chrismon Tree?

Chrismons, meaning "Christ monograms," traditionally are white and gold designs made from Christian symbols that signify Christ. During Advent we look for those signs that point toward Christ. For this reason, our tree is decorated with these symbols that represent our Savior.



Historic Former Episcopal Church Collapses

The historic Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Bramwell collapsed sometime during the night of November 18th. The building had been vacant for some time. Holy Trinity was founded by the same missionary who started the Episcopal parishes in Bluefield and Princeton and all three shared the same blueprint design at their original construction. Holy Trinity closed in the mid 1950’s and was later used by a Baptist congregation until being conveyed to the City of Bramwell. The building is being inspected to determine what can be salvaged.



Dorene Dimes, Bonnie Taylor, Joe Sanders, Bea Paine, Bob and Peggy Walk, John Kersey, Martha Linkous, Jay Kephart, Buck and Louisa Sowers, Donna Fortune, Ed and Gladys Fortune, Sarah Irwin, Janet Slager, Dean Farmer, Haddon Lazenby, Jack Burchette, Nick, JL, Randy Snider, Margarette Joplin, David, Martin, Harry, Ben Rose, Jack, Sheri, Dan, Kensley, John, Betty, Matt, Eric, Carol, Dave, Gail, Jean, Lane, Loraine, Sherry, all Healthcare Personnel and Frontline Workers, Ivy and the Gaines Family, John, the Rev. Brian Shoda, the Patterson Family, Velma Harmon, and Taylor Frazier, III, Brian, and Owen Kersey

Bluefield State Soccer Team *by Sheila Brooks*

In an effort to give a hardy welcome to sports teams new to our area schools, Sheila Brooks and Jim and Chris Justice provided an adventure for the Bluefield State College women's soccer team on September 16 at One Thin Dime Museum and Gary Bowling Art Studio on Ramsey Street in Bluefield.

The event included lunch bags filled with hamburgers and treats that were presented through Drake's Place.

Coach Scott Forster, a native of Newcastle, England, has a team consisting of players from eight countries and 10 states, including local member Taylor Papa, a 2021 Bluefield High School graduate.

Also, congratulations to Scott and his new American citizenship.

Go Big Blues!

Studies have shown that "unchurched" people are most receptive to an invitation to services at Christmas and Easter. This is because many view attending church services on these holidays as participating in the festivities—asking them to come to church is viewed like asking them to attend a play or a party. Attending a special event, like a Christmas Eve service, will make someone more comfortable and like to come back and attend other services. Be sure to invite someone with you this Christmas!



December 24, 2021



5:00 pm	Festival Holy Eucharist Early Family Service
11:00 pm	Festival Holy Eucharist Midnight Mass

Please note that our service for Sunday, December 26, 2021 will be prerecorded and available on YouTube or Facebook that morning. Thank you!

DECEMBER

December 2021						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5 Second Sunday of Advent 10:00 Holy Eucharist 5:00 Children's Evening Prayer (St. Nicholas)	6 St. Nicholas of Myra, Patron of Children	7	8 10:00 DOK Meeting	9	10 St. Thomas Merton, monastic and author	11
12 Third Sunday of Advent 10:00 Holy Eucharist	13 St. Lucy	14	15 7:00 Vestry	16 9:00 Food Pantry	17	18
19 Fourth Sunday of Advent 10:00 Holy Eucharist	20	21 Saint Thomas the Apostle	22	23	24 5:00 Christmas Eve Service 11:00 Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas Day The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
26 First Sunday after Christmas Day 10:00 Holy Eucharist Virtual Service-- No In-Person Service	27 Saint John Apostle and Evangelist	28 The Holy Innocents, martyrs	29 St. Thomas a Becket, martyr	30 St. Stephen, Deacon and First Martyr of the Church (transferred from Dec. 26)	31	

BIRTHDAYS

December 2 Rebecca Broyles
 December 4 Borden Thomas
 December 5 John Lee Allen
 December 5 Niko Parks
 December 8 Nelson Kersey

December 9 Scot Bennitt
 December 14 Valerie Mahood
 December 15 Chad Slater
 December 18 Susan Rutherford
 December 24 Michael Richardson

December 25 Carol Georgis
 December 26 William Smith
 Dec 29 Mary Catherine Williams
 December 31 Cindy Brannon



The following people have graciously donated flowers for the month of December:

December 5	Art Mead
December 12	Alyson Bowling
December 19	Delia and John Kersey
December 24	Barbara Sudduth
December 26	Barbara Sudduth



Altar Guild for December: Linda Ammar

From the Altar Guild Directress:

If you would like to serve on altar guild during the next year, or if you are interested in what this ministry does, please let me know. If there is a particular month (or months) you prefer please list those as well. Thanks to everyone for your help this past year!



Christmas Poinsettias

Purchase poinsettias in Memory of
or in Honor of someone special.

Poinsettias for Christmas

If you would like to purchase a poinsettia to decorate the church at Christmas this year the cost is \$15. A sign up sheet is located in the Narthex or you may call the Parish Office to order. Please have your requests in by Sunday, December 12, 2021.

Thank you!

The Advent Wreath

While the exact origin of the Advent wreath is uncertain, one thing is undeniable: the use of this symbol is a longstanding tradition in our Christian faith, dating back to at least the 17th century.

As we progressively light the candles throughout the Advent season, we acknowledge God's coming through reflection, prayer, and hope. We make our own private vigil while awaiting "The Light of the World."

The wreath itself is made of various evergreens, signifying continuous life. The laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering; pine, holly, and yew, immortality; and cedar, strength and healing. Holly also has a special Christian symbolism: The prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life found in Christ. Pine cones, used to decorate the wreath also symbolize life and resurrection.





2022 Budget Pledge Drive

Have you returned your Pledge Card for 2022?

Having Pledge Cards is the best way for us to create a budget for the coming year. We want to be faithful stewards of the gifts we are given. Your Pledge Card helps us craft a responsible budget. If you need a Pledge Card they can be found in the Narthex at the Church or you can call the Parish Office to be sent one. Thank you for your help!

A message from the Vestry

We are very sorry to see Father Chad, Jennifer, Ben and Emma leave for Charleston. While we say goodbye over the next few weeks, we need to work to fill the void they will leave behind. We are in discussions with a prospective supply priest for the beginning of the year. We will need parish members to fill the acolyte and videographer roles that will be left open when the Slaters leave. We will need to assemble a search committee to seek a new permanent rector. We have three Vestry terms which expire in January and will need to be filled at the annual meeting.

All of us will need to remain active in the church and intentional with our church life. It is very important for you to complete and return your annual pledge card. As we vet prospective rectors, they will be vetting us and it is important that we fully fund the "Rector Expenses" line items in our annual budget to demonstrate our wherewithal to pay a full time priest. If you need a pledge card, one may be obtained from the church office.

Please send an email to Emma Bennett in the Parish Office to let her know which of the roles noted above that you can take on. If we all pitch in and work together, we will find that the future for our church will be bright.

Are you interested in serving on the Rector Search Committee?

We are looking for a few individuals to help discern who our next Rector will be. If you would like to serve on this important committee please let the Parish Office know. For more information please see our Senior Warden, David Kersey. Thank you!



We need volunteers to help with some of the following tasks to ensure the dignity and beauty of our worship. Please prayerfully consider volunteering for these or other jobs around the church. For more information please contact Fr. Chad or Senior Warden David Kersey. Thank you!

Worship Videographer
Bulletin Review

Acolyte
Lector

YouTube Manager
Building Open & Close

Facebook Director
Worship Planning



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To our friends and family:



December 2021

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