

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF THE ADVENT

Parish Meeting

JANUARY 23, 2022

The full audio of Canon Smalley's address, as well as sermons and classes, can be found on our audio website: Audio.AdventBirmingham.org.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILY

The Children, Youth, and Family ministry has made a great deal of progress in the previous year. The children's ministry continues to emphasize teaching our children biblical literacy and theological truth. We launched our own in-house curriculum where students learn stories from Genesis through Revelation with focus on the kingdom throughout the Bible. Tara Davis has worked to simplify our volunteer model to include more volunteers. We have received a great contribution from teenage volunteers as well.

The Youth Ministry has had great leadership from students during the current year. Our Sunday-night gatherings have been very life-giving. We have returned to full-on Sunday School. The Youth Ministry has engaged in several service projects during the year.

The Family Ministry continues to create resources to equip and encourage parents in spiritually investing in their kids. This year, we have created podcast micro-classes to educate parents on how to encourage their kids in the gospel. We released the New Testament edition of *Bible Benchmarks: A Reading Plan to Build Biblical Literacy* to help families read the Bible to their kids.

PARISH LIFE

Amidst the ups and downs of Covid, our parish life and activity has expanded in nearly every way, demonstrating the remarkable breadth and depth which typifies our life together.

In addition to any number of weekly Bible studies that meet at Cranmer House, in homes, and elsewhere, we have around 60 small groups which meet each week. The cumulative effect of what happens as we gather in small groups week-in and week-out for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship cannot be overstated. In addition to our weekly Bible studies and small groups, we also have several different discipleship and leadership groups meeting, where Adventers intentionally consider their response to the gifts we have been given in the gospel. Thanks be to God.

Our Women's Ministry continues faithfully with a continued vibrancy, as our Men's Ministry has enjoyed a renewed vigor this year. Likewise, we continue to focus specifically on our Young Adults and Seniors, as they gather regularly for Bible study and service opportunities, and to enjoy one another.

We have an army of faithful volunteers who serve in so many ways each week, and particularly on Sundays: acolytes, musicians, choir members, ushers, Altar Guild, welcome team, greeters, sound volunteers, Sunday School teachers, lectors, bookstore volunteers, and more. All of these together make a significant contribution to our parish life. In 2022, we hope to find ways to widen the base and deepen the experience of our Sunday volunteers even more.

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Another pandemic year meant another pivot for Mission and Outreach at the Advent. Although we long to visit our ministry partners at the Shyira Diocese in Rwanda and Global Teams in Malawi, it has been another year where our relationships have been sustained through emails, phone calls, and Zoom conferences. We are grateful for technology and the opportunity to think more creatively about how to love and serve our partners, but it will be an even greater joy to see these partners and those they serve in-person one day. Until then, we pray diligently that the Lord of the harvest will provide for their needs and continue to uphold them in their daily ministry.

Locally, we have continued to work through Bridge Ministries, Brother Bryan Mission, and Restoration Academy. The Advent is always incredibly generous in supporting these organizations through our annual food and clothing drives, and we are excited to grow more in-roads through youth and senior ministry with Restoration Academy. We have also continued to develop a relationship with our neighbors at Park Place, just down the road from the Advent. We look forward to furthering those friendships this year. We have also grown in our relationship with Sixth Avenue Baptist Church and will continue partnering more with this congregation through service opportunities and joint study groups.

It is a tremendous privilege to uphold our partners with finances, prayer, and encouragement. Please pray for our ministry partners, and for our church to be willing and able to respond to the needs we see in our community; and pray that the God who in his very nature is missional will inspire within us a desire to see the world transformed by his Good News. If you or your small group are interested in connecting more directly to one of our partners, please reach out to Bethany Rushing.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

If 2020 was a year of adaptation, brought about by significant circumstances surrounding the pandemic, 2021 can be appreciated as a year of gradual restoration. Certainly, we still find ourselves living in the midst of ebb and flow, though God continues to bless us through his grace and provision. Our clergy, staff, and volunteers worked prayerfully and closely, remaining committed to our mission of being “a gospel-centered church, with a living, daring confidence in God’s grace that finds the cross and resurrection of Jesus ever and only at its center.”

By the close of the year, our Sunday morning worship in the Nave returned to its pre-pandemic schedule: 7:30 a.m. Holy Communion with music led by the organ; and 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. services with music led by our Cathedral Choir, on a rotating schedule of Morning Prayer and Holy Communion. Excitedly, we saw the return of our 5:00 p.m. Sunday service in 2021 (began on September 19) as well as our morning Refectory service (began on November 28), formerly at 11:00 a.m. and now at 9:00 a.m. The music for both of these services is led by our band, which Wes Sharp ably assumed leadership of in August. The 5:00 p.m. service restarted with a renewed vigor and committed group of worshippers. This service continues to be a unique offering to the Advent with its relaxed, laid-back atmosphere, along with the simple format of our liturgy and worship.

Improving circumstances have made it possible for us to move to a mask-optional policy, eliminate registration for services, and return to receiving Communion in a more traditional manner.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC (CONT.)

Our Cathedral Choir was able to make a full return during the late summer months. Other Music Ministry highlights include:

- Monthly in-person services of Evensong resumed in September; our annual services of Advent Lessons and Carols and a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols resumed in December.
- The Midday Music series was first to return to in-person performances at the Advent. We are continuing to offer live-streaming for this series.
- The Cathedral Concert Series finished the 2020-2021 series with a limited in-person audience for a performance by Cathedral Choir member Zachary Banks and Director of Music Fred Teardo. The 2021-2022 series made a full return to being in-person, kicked off by a concert by our Cathedral Choir, members of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, and guest soloist Angela Yoon presenting works of Mozart.
- The Cathedral Ringers played for worship on Sunday, December 19, for the first time since before the pandemic.

The musicians in our band have gone through a transition this year with the addition of several new faces and talents. In the fall we were able to bring on intern Mallory Johnson, a Samford music major who has been learning under Wes Sharp and contributing musically to the preparation and leadership of our 9:00 a.m. Refectory and 5:00 p.m. services. Mallory will continue through May 2022.

The pandemic brought about a large turnover of volunteers in various worship ministries, including acolytes, chalice bearers, lectors, ushers, Altar Guild, and sound volunteers. We continue to pray for the Lord's provision of volunteers heading into 2022, and to speak into the hearts of those who feel called to these ministries.

PASTORAL CARE

One of the noted facets of the early Christian community, an area where it was markedly different from the world around it, was the way that they cared for one another — insiders and outsiders. This care was winsome, embodying the words of Paul to the Philippians, they shone “as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life...” (Philippians 2:15-16). People who had profoundly changed through the unmerited grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who knew the world was ultimately under a new order, were freed to care and give in a new way. Our pastoral care, in the end, is a ministry of the Word. As people held fast by Jesus, we hold out Jesus, the Word made flesh, in our ministry.

Last year we celebrated 30 baptisms, 14 weddings, and 30 funerals. We are sincere when we say celebrate in light of each of these occasions. We note the sadness that rightfully impacts us upon the death of a loved one, and we recognize that it continues, yet we gather as people of hope who know that the greater final word of resurrection has been spoken. In each of these moments — weddings, baptisms, and funerals — we have the opportunity to prayerfully reflect, pray, prepare, and gather together. Our active life continues within the body of Christ even in the midst of the ongoing challenges of Covid, and we are grateful that we are navigating it together.

We have an amazing staff and volunteers from our congregation that embody this ministry. The staff includes Robin Turner, our Pastoral Care Administrator; Stella Schreiber, our Pastoral Care Coordinator; and Kathy Logue, our Advent House Coordinator. The ministries of prayer, counsel, guidance, and care are areas of deep and abiding commitment. All of the clergy are active participants in this ministry and are always available to be contacted as well. For more information, please contact Stella Schreiber (Stella@CathedralAdvent.com, 205-443-8558), Robin Turner (Robin@CathedralAdvent.com, 205-226-3500), Kathy Logue (Kathy@CathedralAdvent.com, 205-410-4622), or Craig Smalley (Craig@CathedralAdvent.com, 205-443-8569).

STATISTICS

Transfers in or added by canon	20
Baptisms	30
Confirmed/received	34
Total	84

Transfers out	14
Deactivated/inactive	195
Deaths	22
Total	231

Weddings	14
Funerals	30

Total baptized membership (2021) 3298

Total baptized membership (2020) 3456

Average Sunday attendance

In-person	480
Livestream	620
Total	1100

Terms:

Deactivated — Individuals are marked deactivated or inactive in such instances as repeated returned mail with no way to contact for updates, by their own request, notification that they have joined another non-Episcopal church, or notification that they no longer attend the Advent but have not indicated their new church home.

Transfer out — Transfers out are members of the Advent who formally move their letters of membership to another Episcopal church.

Transfer in — Transfers in are members of other Episcopal churches who formally move their letters of membership to the Advent.

By canon — New members from non-Episcopal churches are added to our rolls by canon after attending an Inquirers' Class course or by request from our clergy. Often they are later confirmed during the next visit from the Bishop.