

The First Sunday of Advent marks a transition

A message from Bishop-Elect Susan Haynes

The first Sunday of Advent marks a transition – the ending of one church liturgical year and the beginning of another. Transitions can often be chaotic, full of twists and turns and bumps in the road. The Gospel themes in Advent speak of God coming unexpectedly, like a thief in the night and of the need to keep awake and alert. A strange man wearing even stranger clothing and eating strange food exhorts those who listen to repent and to make the way of the LORD straight. He screams angrily at others, calling them snakes and reminding them that he serves a LORD who can raise up children from the very stones. He presents menacingly with a winnowing fork and raging fire that quenches everything it encounters. And finally, we meet a betrothed man who is compelled to heed a dream's bidding to marry a pregnant virgin and become an earthly father to the Son of God.



It all sounds chaotic, doesn't it? Sometimes transitions bring nothing but upheaval. But order does emerge from the chaos: in the end, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have good news brought to them. From the energy stirred up by the chaos of transition, God brings healing and re-creation.

During the world's transition into the a state of expectation of the Messiah, John the Baptist exhorted those who listened to prepare the way of the LORD and to make His way straight. How can we make a straight pathway for the LORD? In those exciting moments following my election as your 11th bishop, I addressed the electing convention via Zoom and asked you to be about the disciplines of prayer and Scripture study. Spiritual disciplines prepare us – AND they prepare the way of the LORD. This year during Advent, I invite you to renew your effort and commitment to a spiritual discipline. Here are a few suggestions:

- Get up five minutes earlier each morning and enjoy some quiet time with God.
- Find a book of Advent meditations and read one each day.
- Read the Gospel of Luke (it has 24 chapters and if you start December 1 and read a chapter a day, by Christmas Eve you will have read the entire Gospel!)
- Find a basket and each day, put an item of food in it and donate it on Christmas Eve to a food pantry.
- Make a gratitude list and each day add something to it. On this day, I give thanks for the Diocese of Southern Virginia and for Bishops Hollerith and Magness who have guided it.

My husband Tom and I are so very excited to be joining you in Southern Virginia! While we do not yet have a moving date, we are in the process of purchasing a home in Williamsburg and putting our house on the market here in South Bend. I hope to be in the Diocesan office by January 1 and look forward to my consecration in February with great anticipation and excitement. May your Advent be holy and blessed; full of chaos from which God will bring great healing and restorative energy!

Blessings and Peace in Christ,
Susan+
Bishop-Elect