Tension Followed by Comfort
By the Rev. Peter W. Mayer, Rector

Advent is the season where we anticipate a birth that is marked at all turns by death, and find hope in it all. A typically paradoxical Christian season, right? We do ourselves a disservice if we separate the images of tension and peril from the story of the birth of Jesus. From the gentle submission of Joseph to make Mary his wife, to Mary’s bold proclamation that her soul magnifies the Lord, to the wise men avoiding Herod on their way home, it is a story where the newness of life mingles with the terrifying reality of life.

Certainly in our existence there is a current tension in the air; a bruising election season behind us, a long winter in front of us, a lingering and dangerous pandemic among us. Is Advent a time for comfort? Isaiah cries in chapter 40, ‘comfort, comfort my people.’ Is it a time for challenge? Jesus calls us all to ‘keep awake’. Is it a time for preparation? Mark hears Isaiah’s voice in the wilderness, ‘make a way’!

Besides our Monday evening Zoom study led by David Allen, I’d like to invite you into two ways to experience this season. First, St. Margaret’s will offer for the first time ADVENT WORD on our Instagram (stmargaretsannapolis). Each day in Advent, a word for the season is given. You may choose to post an image with that word, or a poem, or a question, or even a haiku! All you have to do is tag it with #AdventWord and @stmargaretsannapolis. Add other hashtags if you’d like. Engage with other Episcopalians and Christians from all over the world!

Also, on Wednesday evenings, we will be offering discussions between Andy Engstrom and myself on the themes of Advent as found in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). Andy is a high school senior and avid MCU fan, and I’m eager to share our thoughts with you. Questions will be offered for discussion with your family and friends. Be on the lookout for more details.

Of course, Advent at St. Margaret’s wouldn’t be right without our Lessons and Carols. Due to the pandemic, we’ve had to reimagine a bit like the other liturgies, but I’m still looking forward to it. I also look forward to a reimagined Christmas Eve and welcoming a newer, safer, healthier year with you all.
A Message from the Rev. Patti

Blessings in the Time of Covid
By the Rev. Patti Sachs, Assoc. Rector

Have you been able to find blessing in each day in some small thing? No? Look harder. You’re missing out! Each day brings some small blessing. In fact, I’d say that each day offers many, many blessings if we would only pay attention! I have been paying attention…paying attention to all the wonderful things you all are doing in the community and doing for each other! I am also grateful to you for keeping our “community assistance fund” funded.

I have disbursed funds to many local groups as well as helping individuals with utility and rent assistance. Just to give you an idea – maybe one that you can connect with, here are a few of the groups your contributions have helped:

The Club at Collington Square – an after-school and summer program in inner-city Baltimore. Find out more here: https://www.strongcitybaltimore.org/initiatives/the-club-at-collington-square/


Arundel House of Hope – the organizers of Winter Relief, providing emergency, transitional, and permanent affordable housing for the poor and those experiencing homelessness in Anne Arundel County. http://www.arundelhoh.org/

Seeds 4 Success – An Eastport girls and boys club, providing mentoring, positive role-models, and academic coaching. https://seeds4success.org/

AIJN – Annapolis Immigration Justice Network - an all volunteer organization dedicated to connecting asylum seekers and other vulnerable immigrants to quality legal counsel and direct case management support. https://www.aijnetwork.org/

Oxford House Maryland – There are several Oxford houses in our area. They are transitional housing for those in recovery. https://www.transitionalhousing.org/li/md_21060_oxford-house-arete

Centro de Ayuda – The Center of Help in Annapolis serves our Latino population. A number of our parishioners teach citizenship classes there. There are many ways to get involved! https://centerofhelp.org/

The Light House – We all know about the Light House. In these times, it is important to keep up our support! https://annapolislighthouse.org/

These are just a few ways that your treasure has been helping the community. Please check them out yourselves and get involved! Many of us have found blessings in the time we have been able to spend with our families – a different kind of time, different schedules, different routines. Have you taken time to make some of it special? Have you started a new routine or two? It is in the home that your child’s real faith formation happens. Do you say grace together at mealtime? That could be a new habit. Have you watched a Godly Play video before bed and taken time to wonder about the story? Maybe you have started a “share time” during dinner, when each one shares a thoughtful moment from their day. This is an ideal time to start some new routines. Winston Churchill (apparently) said, “Never waste a good crisis.” Sounds like good advice for us in Covid time! Let’s work on strengthening our faith through our home life. Then we can move with assurance and hope into our community and heal this hurting world. Thanks be to God!
Thanksgiving/Christmas Meal Drives

Again this season, members of the parish will have an opportunity to provide holiday meals for neighbors in need. We will receive the names of those requesting help in purchasing their holiday dinner from the A.A. County Dept. of Social Services. Our list includes both seniors and families with children. As in prior years, the Mission Commission will provide the turkeys: you and your family will provide for the rest of the meal. You or another parishioner will deliver the food basket to the recipient a few days BEFORE Thanksgiving /Christmas Day. NO COOKING INVOLVED.

For those who are comfortable making direct contact (social distancing and masks observed) the procedure will be the same as prior years: we will pair our donors with the names of recipients. The donor/family will make contact. Volunteers shop for the dinner ingredients and arrange a convenient time to deliver to the recipient’s address. Turkeys will be available for pick-up in the Parish Hall on Sunday, Nov. 22 (Thanksgiving) or Sunday, Dec. 20 (Christmas) or by separate arrangement. Those who are uncomfortable making direct contact this year may arrange to leave your donated food at the church for another volunteer to pick up and deliver OR order food from a store and have it delivered directly to the recipient OR provide a gift card from one of the markets in the local area, i.e. Graul’s, Green Valley, Safeway.

All donor parishioners/families are asked to contact coordinator Barbara Marder. For questions, call Barbara Marder at 410-518-9978 or email scubaesc@aol.com.

Grants 2020

St. Margaret’s Grants Program Gearing Up
By Christine Feldmann, Grants Administrator

In 1995, after the death of parishioner Edwin Hall, attorney Charlie Grayson had some big news for then senior warden Jim Hall and rector Mary Glasspool. He told them that the Halls had been ‘very generous to St. Margaret’s’ in their wills. Sitting on small chairs in the only space available, a classroom in the Annex, the two couldn’t have begun to imagine the amount of that generosity and the lasting impact the gift would have on hundreds of organizations across the globe.

Thanks to the initial $2 million gift, and because of the wisdom of a discernment committee, St. Margaret’s Church is celebrating its 23rd year providing grants. Nearly 200 unique organizations have received over $2.3 million in life changing funding. The program has funded everything from water filtration systems in Africa to HIV testing kits in Honduras, to reading programs in Annapolis and a mobile dental clinic in Maryland and Pennsylvania. More than 300 grants have been made since the program’s inception.

Hundreds of parishioners, from all ages and stages of life, have served as grants committee members and liaisons over the years. Many felt blessed by the incredible impact of the experience. If you are interested in making a difference for these nonprofits that apply, contact me at missions@st-margarets.org.
Virtual Music Programs this Advent/Christmas
By Jim Douglas, Director of Music

I write this Spire note having just found out about the possibility of churches across our Diocese needing to suspend in-person worship for two weeks, and perhaps beyond into the Advent season, though that remains to be determined. Fingers crossed we’ll be back in person to start the Advent season and a new liturgical year.

Despite the COVID related limitations that have affected and continue to affect parish life in numerous ways, the music ministry remains rather busy, with Sunday morning cantor rehearsals (THANK YOU CANTORS!), liturgical planning, and various preparations for upcoming Advent/Christmas events which I will highlight below. For the first time in my life (well, 30 years or so!), the month of September came and went without some sort of participation in a choir rehearsal, whether as a chorister, choirmaster or accompanist. Thankfully, guidelines from the Diocese permitted limited outdoor gatherings so choir folks could meet masked and physically distanced, to do some singing and enjoy fellowship. In October, several adults and youth gathered on campus in the parking lot between the annex and parish hall to prepare some virtual music for our December services of Advent and Christmas Lessons and Carols, which will be offered virtually. Rehearsing this way proved to be a bit challenging but well worth it! The Third Sunday Band has continued to rehearse and provided music for our recent Wednesday outdoor services. They are now gearing up for a special holiday concert. Also in the works are two additional virtual offerings, a special evening Compline for Advent and a Thanksgiving-themed virtual hymn sing. See upcoming Dragon Tales for hymn sing information.

In my November/December Spire note last year, I mentioned that “much happens in the life of the church between Thanksgiving and Christmas.” Even amidst a pandemic, we remain busy and hope that our shift to virtual will keep our December traditions going strong while keeping our community connected during this special time of year.

Thanksgiving Hymn Sing
Date and time TBA (see upcoming Dragon Tales and weekly announcements)

Sunday, December 6 @ 5 p.m.
A Service of Advent Lessons and Carols
Video will premiere at 5 p.m. on our Facebook public page and then YouTube page
Music led by members of all choirs

Saturday, December 12 @ 7 p.m.
Christmas Concert featuring the Third Sunday Band
Live-streamed from the St Margaret’s campus on our Facebook public page and then (YouTube page)

Sunday, December 20 @ 8 p.m.
Compline for Advent
Video will premiere at 8 p.m. on our Facebook public page and then our YouTube page.
Music led by Sarah Balcom and Jim Douglas

Sunday, December 27 @ 5 p.m.
Video will premiere at 5 p.m. on our Facebook public page and then our YouTube page
Music led by members of all choirs
We have lots of important and exciting news to update you on since the Fall Spire e-newsletter. First and foremost, we wanted to extend a genuine “thank you” to all of those that have pledged thus far for the 2021 Stewardship campaign. With everything going on in our country and our world, your generosity is amazing. As of November 2nd, there have been 108 pledges totaling $625,000 which is around 68% of our dollar value goal.

We also have $41,000 left in the Matching Fund, so for those that have not pledged yet, please consider making a new pledge if you haven’t in the past, increasing last year’s pledge or converting your plate donations to a pledge. Every new or increased dollar will be matched. Let’s make sure we utilize all of the matching fund and finish the 2021 campaign strong so we can reach our goal of 230 pledges and $925,000.

As a fun way to celebrate our Stewardship progress, the Rev. Peter has agreed to complete “challenges” as we hit pledge milestones. I hope you enjoyed Peter’s saltine challenge video as a celebration of surpassing the 100-pledge mark in the campaign. If you missed the video in November 4th’s Dragon Tales, please check it out (also on our YouTube Channel). It is guaranteed to put a smile on your face. When we hit 150 pledges, the Rev. Peter will attempt his next challenge. We have also partnered with the 3rd Sunday Band for a surprise at the end of the campaign. More to come on that!

Please submit your pledge via mail or online (st-margarets.org under the “GIVING” tab in the upper right corner of the homepage) by the end of November to allow adequate time for the Vestry to plan the budget for next year. It’s not a contract, just a commitment – one that allows the Vestry to more accurately establish a 2021 budget.

If you have any questions about Stewardship, please contact our Stewardship chairs, Greg Smith (rxman55@hotmail.com; 301.821.0606); Zack Greene (zackgreene8@hotmail.com; 410.703.2839); Brad Callahan (brad@metacoastal.com; 443.326.3333), Doug Seybert (doug_seybert@yahoo.com; 703.599.8746), or Dan Tootle (dan.tootle@yahoo.com).

What is considered in the budget from pledges?

missions support
campus operations/maintenance
staff support
children’s programs
youth group support
music programs
office products and technology
communications programs
insurance
Diocesan contribution
emergency fund
and more!
This Advent our adult bible study will be entitled, “What are We Waiting For?” Led by parishioner David Allen, the program will provide an opportunity in this year’s Advent season to contemplate how our faith in God’s kingdom fires our hopes, eases our fears, and guides our interactions with one another.

The dates of the program are: Nov. 30, Dec. 7, 14, and 21 at 7:00 p.m. The program will be shared through Zoom. If you wish to participate, email Patti@st-margarets.org.

Join the Rev. Peter W. Mayer as he explores @AdventWord, a global Advent calendar, through the church’s new Instagram account at stmargaretsannapolis. The program is designed to share a photo and story for an assigned word every day in Advent. Daily written and visual meditations for the days of Advent will be shared.

St. Margaret’s Church is offering an Advent wreath kit for St. Margaret’s families in the narthex of the church sanctuary while supplies last. The Advent wreath is the traditional centerpiece of the Christmas season. A candle is lit on each of the four Sundays preceding Christmas. The first candle represents hope. The second candle peace. The pink candle, generally lit on the third Sunday of Advent, represents joy. The fourth candle signifies love. If you wish to provide a donation for it, send a payment with “Advent Wreath” in the memo line.

Also, on Wednesday evenings, we will be offering discussions between Andy Engstrom and myself on the themes of Advent as found in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). Andy is a high school senior and avid MCU fan, and I’m eager to share our thoughts with you. Questions will be offered for discussion with your family and friends. Be on the lookout for more details.
Parishioners are invited to make a donation to provide poinsettias or wreaths for the sanctuary this Christmas season in memory of a loved one or in honor of someone special. These donations will be notated in Christmas-related bulletins.

Poinsettias are $25 and wreaths are $45.

Complete this form and make checks out to “St. Margaret’s Church” notating “Christmas flowers” on the memo line. Place orders in an offertory plate or mail to the church office.

Purchases can also be made by credit card by going to onrealm.org/smcannapolis/Give or by phone texting 73256. Email laura@st-margarets.org to let her know of your order. **Deadline for dedications is Sunday, December 20.**

I’m giving $_________________________ for ______________ poinsettias and/or ______________ wreaths.

in loving memory of

_____________________________________________________________________________________

or in thanksgiving for

_____________________________________________________________________________________

By: _______________________
Virtual Youth Group Continues Strong
By Jeff Conover, Youth Ministries Leader

That is the email subject line our students see three times a week. Three times a week we have the chance to visit with our church friends, check in with each other and share how our lives are going. Three chances for an interesting discussion on current events or the Nicene Creed, or what our next project will be. Despite spending so much of the school day on Zoom, attendance at our three meetings has been equal to pre-pandemic numbers! We are very blessed. We hope you are as blessed.

Youth Group over Zoom is starting to feel like the new normal because, well, it is. We have had one fantastic in-person gathering for our Drive-Thru Halloween, and I actually found it a bit jarring, if wonderful. To actually see so many at once! It made me realize how quickly we have adapted to our situation and discovered alternative ways of community. We are all thirsting to return to more in-person gatherings, but we must keep a weather eye on the rising numbers of infection we are seeing everywhere. We want ALL of our friends to be with us when we do regather.

As the winter looms, we will once again be involved with the AACPS system in collecting things needed by our more vulnerable school-age neighbors. This year it will be an even more important act of service. Many of our neighbors have lost work, or seen hours and benefits cut. I can’t help but think the needs will be greater and more urgent this year. The Warm Tree will go up sooner this year in order to allow for the inconveniences of our daily lives. Look for the announcement on that soon.

Closer to home, one of the interesting things I am learning is how our students are fairing with mostly online classes. In general, we have a bright and motivated bunch, and while they don’t love online school, they are making it work. However, I have noticed that some of us have been struggling particularly in math. I get it. I am math-phobic to this day because I was so poorly taught. And, as several of our students have pointed out, math is really the one subject where missing a concept could wreck your entire semester. We have a ton of talented and skilled people in our church. I’d like to put together a roster of those of you who would be willing to help a struggling student, and not just in math. No guarantees that they will ever reach out, but I think we could be an incredible resource for our children. And I am sure, for several parents as well! If you are interested, let me know.

We have lots of things we are figuring out for the remainder of the year; but with our super-successful Drive Through Halloween under our belts, I’m confident we’ll come up with festive and inventive ways to mark the coming holidays! Stay tuned!
Day School

School Year During a Pandemic
By Tricia McVeigh, SMDS Director

I would like to provide a huge thank you to our staff, parents, and students for their flexibility with a changed routine for safety this year.

Students are participating in a hybrid model of learning, including online lessons and on-campus activities. Safety measures such as wearing masks and lab jackets, and cleaning on the spot have been successful. What we have learned is that young children are resilient and adapt quickly and that they remain happy and excited about learning.

To see the entire list of safety measures, go to the Day School website or to the church website's Day School page (scroll to the bottom).

Kindergarten registration is open for the 2021-22 school year. The class is currently on a wait list for all new students. Go to the school’s website at www.stmargaretsdayschool.org, to put in an application, but do not pay a fee at this time to be added to the wait list.

We will once again offer Winter Workshops days on Dec. 21 and 22 for Day School students and their siblings to participate in enjoyable activities after the school has officially closed the school for the holidays.

The school held their annual Scholastic Book Fair virtually in Nov. Thanks to all parishioners who participated. They are also holding their annual Lynchburg Farm sale, offering beautiful Christmas greens arrangements. To view these beautiful products, go to https://www.lynchcreekfundraising.com/teams/247519-st-margarets-day-school-holiday-fundraiser-2020

The school also held an E-Recycling Day, collecting old cell phones, cameras, tablets, and MP3 players to dispose of in an environmentally friendly way.

St. Margaret’s Day School was recently recertified as an MAEOE Green School! The Maryland Green School award represents a school-wide commitment to environmental literacy that includes staff, students, and the community.
Deadlines for contributions to be recorded for 2020 taxes are as follows:

Stock or bond sales need to be initiated by Monday, December 14. This is because it may take 2-3 weeks for the transaction to be processed and for our bank to receive the proceeds from the sale. Please remember to alert the church office of your gift in advance so you can be properly credited.

Automatic drafts from your bank need to be scheduled by you no later than Wednesday, December 16. It can take six to seven business days to process and then mail the checks to our office.

Please mail your final 2020 contributions so that the office receives them by Wednesday, December 23.

Did you know the IRS requires those over age 70.5 to withdraw a certain amount from their IRAs each year? Talk to your financial planner about possibly giving to St. Margaret's. You might avoid paying income taxes on the distribution!

Women's Guild News

The Guild has been affected by Covid-19 but not as much as expected. The September-November meetings have been held via Zoom, and it is anticipated that will also be the same in December. One of the main goals of the Guild is to raise funds and make donations to worthy causes. The Guild’s annual bazaar had to be cancelled which severely impacted donations. However, the combinations of extra donations to the guild by its members and the successful mums sale last month has made it possible to continue the plan.

This past spring, a tree was planted between the church and St. Margaret’s Road. This will be dedicated on Dec. 6 at 10:00 a.m. The tree is to honor past, present and future members of the military. Each of the branches will be represented and a flag placed by the tree.

Our meetings are held at 1 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month through Zoom. To join the group and their meetings, e-mail Judy Hall at judyhall0404@gmail.com.
Communications more vital than ever
By Laura Tayman, Director of Communications

At the beginning of the year, we could have never imagined how much “church” would change in the times of Covid-19. It became no longer a choice to provide online worship, meetings and lessons. It was a must.

So we began to investigate how our online worship service could be improved. We began using a program called SlingStudio which allowed us to use multiple cameras through Facebook online, and then the entire service was able to be on our YouTube Channel and our website. The problem we have always experienced was wiring in our older sanctuary. Our Tech Team continues to work on the issue.

Each week, we were able to provide viewers a service. Our parishioners would be visited by the Rev. Patti’s regular posts and prayers on Friday nights. A new VBS based on Dr. Seuss stories was shared online. Our Tuesday Sessions for Seniors has continued, as has Monday night and Thursday morning book studies. When fall came around, children’s formation was shared both online and then in-person outside once a month. Youth Group fellowship and lessons for middle and high school students is done through Zoom and project activities.

With all of the changes this pandemic has made for us, I just wanted to review how parishioners can keep in touch with each other and the entire parish as we continue to socially distance this winter.

*Facebook public page - www.facebook.com/smcannapolis - This is our public page that will include all of our services and posts for the public throughout the week.

*Facebook members group - www.facebook.com/groups/smcannapolis - This is a members only group that allows all members (parishioners) to post items interest to the congregation.

*Instagram - stmargaretsannapolis - An online app that shares stories through photos. Led by the Rector Peter W. Mayer.

*SMC website - www.st-margarets.org - Yes, the website has information for potential newcomers but there is always a link for Sunday’s readings, Sunday’s announcements, Sunday’s bulletin, Dragon Tales, and more under the Quick Links section on the bottom of the page.

*YouTube Channel - https://youtube.com/c/SaintMargaret - The location where our videos of Sunday and special services, Sunday School lessons, and seasonal videos are provided.

*Realm - www.onrealm.org - Realm is our database that allows parishioners control of their contact and financial information. It also allows groups and the congregation to contact other members with news, resources, and links. Email info@st-margarets.org to join Realm.
1601 Pleasant Plains Road, Annapolis, Maryland  21409
Office (410) 974-0200             Pastoral Emergency  (443) 837-5463
www.st-margarets.org

Office Hours:
By appointment only

Services:
Sundays at 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:15 a.m.

The Rev. Peter W. Mayer, Rector - peter@st-margarets.org
The Rev. Patti Sachs, Assistant Rector - patti@st-margarets.org
Elizabeth Radley, Dir. of Operations - elizabeth@st-margarets.org
Jim Douglas, Director of Music - music@st-margarets.org
Jeff Conover, Youth Ministry Leader - jeff@st-margarets.org
Laura Tayman - Director of Communications - laura@st-margarets.org
Teresa McCorkle, Bookkeeper - office@st-margarets.org
Tricia McVeigh, Day School Director - tricia@st-margarets.org
Judy Hall, Churchyard Administrator - churchyard@st-margarets.org
Christine Feldmann, Grants Administrator - missions@st-margarets.org

Paul O’Donnell, Senior Warden
Steve Brennan, Junior Warden
Charlie Lang, Treasurer
Jim Barnett, Clerk