

MAGGIE'S CROSS



From Our Rector

People of Hope, not Despair

Many of my recent conversations have shared a common theme: the world feels increasingly chaotic and troubling, and many of us are struggling to know how best to navigate these uncertainties or maintain loving relationships in an ever more divided society. It is understandable. All one needs to do is watch or read the news on any given day, and the divisions in our politics, churches, and families quickly become evident. Sometimes those divisions even overlap. On a global scale, we continue to witness wars in the Middle East, Russia, Nigeria, and throughout the world. Nations stand against nations, churches are separated from other churches, and family members become estranged from one another. It is easy to lose hope.

What I find most troubling, as someone who seeks to walk in the way of Jesus and to lead others along that same path, is the despair that seems to have taken root in so many hearts during these tumultuous times.

While such despair is understandable, Scripture reminds us that it is not the way of a follower of Christ. St. Paul, writing to the church in Corinth during a strained period in his relationship with them, offers these words: *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed..."*

Paul's message to the Corinthians, as well as the consistent theme throughout his letters, is an encouragement to hope in Jesus even in the midst of hardship, for our victory has already been secured in Christ. Through His triumph on the cross, and through our baptism into His life, death, and resurrection, we live in hope, confident that no temporary struggle can withstand the promise of eternal life given to us through Jesus Christ. In the midst of chaos, Jesus still reigns. When suffering abounds, the healing balm of Christ continues to restore. Where strife multiplies, Jesus is still at work, recreating all things and fulfilling His purposes. Our call is not to despair but to say Yes as we are invited into God's divine activity. So, we do not

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lose hope, and we do not despair. We are not forsaken, and we will not be destroyed, for we share in the victory of the Cross of our Savior. What a sight it would be if the Church of Jesus truly claimed, and lived, this life of victory.

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP pg 235)

Your priest,

Fr. Todd

dill@saintmargarets.net



new! in 2026

an invitation from Father Todd:

Sponsor the Sanctuary Lamp

In lieu of weekly flower orders that are placed in the nave for worship, we are trying something new in 2026. The Sanctuary Lamp can now be sponsored for a minimum of \$25, with all additional proceeds going towards the Sacristy in support of the divine liturgies of the church.

The Sanctuary Lamp burns for approximately one week, and the lamp signifies the Real Presence of Christ in the aumbry and serves as a constant and visible reminder of the Blessed Sacrament's presence in the church.

Your dedication will be printed in the weekly bulletin and included in the Prayers of the People. Please note that lamp does not burn following the Maundy Thursday liturgy until Easter Day. The sacredness of the of the Sanctuary Lamp was written about eloquently by Brother Pius Henry, O.P. in the Dominican House of Studies:

Of all of the signs in a church there is one in particular that I propose is the most neglected, yet which is strikingly universal and irreplaceable in its significance. Next to each tabernacle reserving the Blessed Sacrament, there burns a steady flame, sometimes white, sometimes red, but always communicating the same thing: Jesus Christ—body, blood, soul, and divinity—dwells here. This is the only permanent sign in the church that, in a sense, could be considered alive. The flickering flame represents the burning love which gave us such a sacrament, such a presence among us, fulfilling Jesus' promise that he will indeed be with us always. (Mt 28:20)

The task of the sanctuary candle is remarkably simple, yet by its very presence it conveys a mystery beyond understanding. Such a simple thing, it is profoundly evangelical. It proclaims Christ's consoling presence among us, it communicates the efficacy of the Blessed Sacrament, and it designates the holiness of the sacred space.

...there burns a steady flame, sometimes white, sometimes red, but always communicating the same thing: Jesus Christ—body, blood, soul, and divinity—dwells here.

As Christians we are always striving to conform our life to Christ's and, in a way, we can also strive to be like this sanctuary candle. With a simple, faithful flame it proclaims Christ to those who look for his presence, whether during a weekly visit for Sunday Mass, or when in desperate need of the consolation of Christ's presence in a time of crisis. The simple candle has not the eloquence of the chalice, the altar, the reredos, or even the tabernacle whose presence it communicates. We too may find ourselves with a simple task, living a simple life, and perhaps wishing we had a greater task with more responsibility and attention. May we too let Christ shine in us so that we become as living flames signifying his presence to the world.

CLICK HERE
to sponsor in 2026!



BLUE CHRISTMAS



Over and over again, in this holiday season, we will be told we are to feel happy. We are to feel joyful. We are to feel excited. We are to gather with family and friends, and all of this is suppose to make us feel really great.

For some, this is true. For so many others, this time of year is hard. The world in which we live is hard, and we dont feel happy and joy seems far away, and the magic of Christmas just isnt there. Our hearts are longing for relief of pain, fear, sorrow, grief, and so many other things.

All of us need to acknowledge these feelings and have a place to bring them. This Advent, St. Margaret's will offer a Blue Christmas Liturgy. This liturgy, also known as the "Longest Night," offers space for those who are grieving or struggling during this season.

If you or someone you know feels lost or is grieving or just needs a place to come and lay some weighty things on the altar, I invite you to come and invite others to come. Come as you are. Come as you feel. Come and be with others who feel some of the same things you feel in this moment. We will be together, we will pray together, we will offer our hearts together.

Come Sunday, December 21st 7pm



BY REV. FATHER MATT ADDINGTON
ASSISTANT TO THE RECTOR

Father Matt is in the office M-Th
and can be reached at:
addington@saintmargarets.net

UPDATE

A HEAVENLY PURPOSE TO GIVING.

SACRED SPACE SACRED LIVES

2026 Pledge Goal

\$1,021,000

2026 Stewardship Campaign Results

2026 Pledging units <i>(as of 12/1)</i>	211
Amount pledged to date	\$896,265
Amount needed to reach goal	\$124,735
% Remaining	11.4%
2026 Pledge goal	\$1,021,000

THE JOSEPH PROJECT CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

of 11/24/25	
96 promises made to total	\$468,000
+ Diocesan Grant received:	\$26,000
Total raised:	\$494,000
67% to goal of \$700,000	

CLICK HERE

to PLEDGE for 2026 TODAY!





Music

BY GAVIN D. CRAIG

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & ORGANIST

Merry Christmas: A Defense

"I'm done with 'Merry Christmas,'" he announced during staff meeting. "There's nothing merry about Christmas. The English have it right; I'm going to stick to saying 'Happy Christmas' from now on." Thus spake an Associate Rector I worked with at a previous church, an old priest with a long and distinguished career, who had a particular knack for provocative and eccentric declarations. I still don't know entirely what he was getting at. Was he trying to acknowledge the stresses of the season? Was he expressing his love of English culture? A few weeks into Advent, he walked around the office leaving lemons on our desks; maybe he just wanted us to think differently about the season?

The English custom of wishing a "Happy Christmas" does seem to make sense, jarring as it is to our American ears. We say, "Happy birthday," "Happy New Year," "Happy Mother's Day," in fact, every holiday seems to get a "happy" except Christmas. So why not?

I will argue for "Merry Christmas," and now just out of American stubbornness. Merriment isn't mere happiness. Its origins can be traced to proto-Germanic "murgijaz" meaning short-lasting, making time fly. In Shakespeare, the word "merry" is often associated with strength or boldness. **To me, "merry" is synonymous with carefree. It is an incautious happiness, a joy in which one forgets one's self.**

I've written before about the origin of Christmas carols. As an extremely brief summary, the genre came about not out of piety but from drama, dancing, and raucousness in folk celebrations, something base and irreligious. A few days before Christmas of 2018, I was walking my neighborhood. My quiet enjoyment of choral music in my headphones was disrupted by watching a crowd of about a dozen people walking from house to house. It turned out they were carolers! I commented to them how wonderful it is to see caroling, and they asked me to join them and afterwards brought me to someone's home for hot cider.

Not one person in that group had a voice of any merit; half of them were singing in different keys from the other half, and yet no one cared. If these people were happy, they may have decorated their homes beautifully. They may have held a well-appointed party with quiet music. But no, they took to the streets and bothered their neighbors with their singing because they were merry.

I have dignified Christmas traditions. I wear my finest attire to Christmas Day (hidden as it is under my vestments). I test the limits of my cooking skills with a grand meal and pray evening prayer. But I also decorate my tree with Hallmark Star Trek ornaments. I have a tacky laser light show on my house. I hang and fill a stocking for myself and pretend to be surprised by it in the morning, and then I watch A Charlie Brown Christmas. This, to me, is how I have not simply a happy Christmas but a merry one.

So I urge you find ways to have a merry Christmas. Wear the sweater that lights up. Don't count calories at dinner. Spend a little more on that present. And when you join us for our celebrations of Christ's birth, sing loudly, boldly, and merrily. Don't worry about whether the people near you enjoy your voice or whether you get all the words right. Just join in the fun of celebrating Christ's birth for twelve short days with us and save fretting for another day.

However you observe the birth of Our Lord, I hope you are filled with happiness. And, indeed, with merriment. And whether you join us on the 25th, on the eve, or for our Festival of Lessons or Carols, **I encourage you to sing merrily!**

Sunday, December 14 at 4:00pm

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Join us at 4:00pm on Sunday, December 14th, to celebrate the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. This beautiful service, developed at King's College in Cambridge, features the story and songs of Christmas, led by the Adult Choir and the Children's Choir. A light reception will follow.





Youth

BY ELIZABETH PFEIFER

ASSISTANT TO THE RECTOR FOR YOUTH MINISTRY



pfeifer@saintmargarets.net



The church season of Advent is my favorite liturgical season. Advent asks for me to joyfully prepare, to actively wait, and to have hopeful anticipation. Advent is such a counter-cultural time, and it encourages us, in a season of secular “omgoodness! I don’t have a moment to breathe,” to wait. To anticipate. To prepare. After the rush of fall EYC activities, I take the themes of Advent to heart. I consider John the Baptist’s call to repent and “prepare the way for the Lord.” I think of Mary’s proclamation that “the Mighty One has done great things for me- holy is His name.” I reflect on what an angel told Joseph, that his son will be called Immanuel, which means “God with us.” I wonder what is coming up next and how the Lord wants me to prepare for it. Each semester of youth ministry brings highs and lows, new faces, and ever-shifting group dynamica. Advent is the perfect time for me to wonder what God is preparing for us next semester.

Youth group is wrapping up our fall semester having (as usual!) played a lot of games, talked a lot about Jesus, and having eaten more than our fair share of candy. We enjoyed spectacular weather for most Sunday night meetings and we had our first ever Music Month in October. We looked at four different songs, in four different styles of music to challenge us to consider different ways to interact with God. Throughout the month we heard an assortment of music and had varied programs to match: a scavenger hunt, personal reflection time during Compline, small group discussions, and an art activity.

Our youth group continues to welcome one or two visitors or new faces most weeks and if your student has not had a chance to attend this semester, we would love to see them soon. We’ll be in the youth room joyfully preparing the way for Immanuel.

“The church season of Advent is my favorite liturgical season. Advent asks for me to joyfully prepare, to actively wait, and to have hopeful anticipation.”



15th

a note from Eliz:

The last time I marked an anniversary at St. Margaret's was my five-year anniversary in the newsletter for December 2015. I was deeply rooted in my 20s and wrote about some of the things that had happened over my five years at St. Margaret's. I wrote about moving quite a bit (I think I moved 3 more times after 2015), having been in 10+ weddings (I've attended at least 10 more weddings in the decade since then), of becoming a godmother (add 3 more godchildren to that total!), and other milestones like a second nephew (and now there are three) and learning about contributing to a 403b (yes, I still contribute to that).

And now, I'm here. Ten years from writing that newsletter article. Fifteen years from starting at St. Margaret's. Earlier this year, I was in the kitchen getting a head start on the pounds of bacon we needed to cook for the Pancake Supper. I was standing at the prep counter, listening to an old Gwen Stefani song a little too loudly and Father Todd walked in to check on how things were going. He laughed at my set up and joked, "when you sat with me all those years ago for your interview, would you have imagined..." And the answer was no, I did not imagine that 2025 would have me in this same place, prepping for my umpteenth Pancake Supper.

I am beyond grateful that my life looks nothing like how I imagined it might when I sat in Father Todd's office in the fall of 2010 and we discussed my being the youth minister at St. Margaret's for 3-5 years. That was all a person in their early 20s could envision. So much change could have been in store for me. But, that was not God's plan for me. God rooted me in Charlotte, close to my family and with friends I have had for years. Together, God and I worked hard to build a beautiful life bursting with joy, laughter, fantastic food, books, travel, and relationships that challenge me to be the Christ-filled person I am called to be.

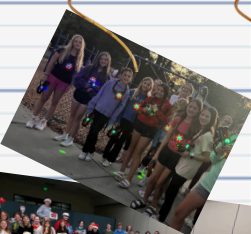
There are too many incredible moments, lessons learned, activities that failed, activities that went better than I could have imagined, memorable trips, mission trip highs and lows, and conversations over coffee to begin to pick out top tier moments. I have traveled with a truly incredible assortment of teens and adult chaperones, and I am so grateful for the experiences we have had together. Teenagers are fickle and they also have many demands on their time and energy. I am always thankful when they make St. Margaret's a priority and find time for learning about God, serving others, and building relationships.

In December 2015 I wrote: "God brought me to St. Margaret's at a time in my life when there was nothing else I wanted to do besides be a youth minister. And, after five years in youth ministry, that statement still rings true."

It still rings true, month to month, year to year. There is nothing else I want to be doing besides serving the youth and families at St. Margaret's and our Waxhaw community. Advent invites us to wait, to wonder what's coming next, and to anticipate. What a season to acknowledge 15 years of youth ministry at St. Margaret's and to wonder what God still has planned for us.

Thank you for welcoming me into your lives.

-Elizabeth





Children's Ministry

childrensministry@saintmargarets.net

BY JAMIE PETER

ASSISTANT TO THE RECTOR FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

As we enter this joyful Advent season, our Children's Ministry has so much to celebrate and give thanks for!

Over the past month, our Sunday School classes have been exploring the beauty of God's Word through powerful lessons. We reflected on Psalm 65, rejoicing in God's abundant goodness and the blessings of creation that surround us each day. The children shared ways they see God's handiwork in a collaborative piece of artwork (see below.) We also studied Luke 18:1-8, where Jesus teaches the importance of perseverance in prayer. Through stories, crafts, and discussion, our young children learned that God always listens and encourages us never to lose heart.

In November, we also celebrated the Feast Day of our patron saint, **Saint Margaret of Scotland**. The children enjoyed hearing about Saint Margaret's kindness, generosity, and deep faith. Her example of service to others continues to inspire our ministry and remind us how we can share God's love in everyday ways. That spirit of service came alive as our Sunday School joined with parishioners and Saint Margaret's Preschool to support **Common Heart's Great Turkey Countdown**. Together, we collected and donated 1,069 pounds of food to help our neighbors in need! We are so grateful to everyone who contributed and helped make a difference in our community.



I would also like to congratulate the following students and their families who completed the **Holy Communion** classes and received the Sacrament on November 2nd: Crafton Grace Ensley and Andrew Charles Trawick

And now we're looking forward to one of our most beloved traditions, the **Annual Saint Nicholas Festival!** Mark your calendars and RSVP to join us on Saturday, December 6th, from 9:30-11:30 a.m. for a morning of fellowship. There will be story time with Father Matt, crafts, a delicious breakfast, and a special appearance by Saint Nicholas himself!

It's a wonderful way to celebrate the joy of the season with family and friends.



As we look ahead to Christmas, we give thanks for the many ways our children are growing in faith, compassion, and joy. May this season be filled with peace, love, and hope for all our families.



SAINT MARGARET'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
invites you to our annual
**SAINT NICHOLAS
FESTIVAL**



**Saturday
December 6th
9:30am to 11:30am**

**Come celebrate the beauty and joy of
the Advent season together!**

Enjoy breakfast, creative holiday crafts, story time with Father Matt, a festive photo booth, a cozy hot cocoa bar, and a special visit from Saint Nicholas.

Outreach Opportunity-**Optional*
Coats and Boots for Saint Nicholas!

The Diocese of Western NC is holding a Coat & Work Boot Drive for those in the western part of our state. Bring donations to the festival in support and love for our neighbors.

Here's what's needed:

- NEW winter coats of all sizes
- NEW women's work boots, sizes: 6,7,8
- NEW men's work boots, sizes: 8,9,10

Please no used items.

**Click here to RSVP for the
breakfast & festival**

★ QUESTIONS? ★

Contact Jamie at
childrensministry@saintmargarets.net



St M

Upcoming dates in Children's Ministry:

December 6th:

- Saint Nicholas Festival 9:30-11:30am

December 14th:

- Last Sunday School classes of 2025
- EYC Jr. 3:30-5pm in the Parish Hall
(3rd through 5th graders and friends welcome)

December 24th:

- Children's Pick-Up Christmas Pageant
during 3pm Christmas Eve Service

January 11th:

- Sunday School classes resumes

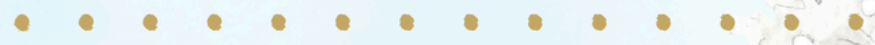


Saint Margaret's Children's Christmas Pageant

**Please join us at the 3pm Christmas Eve Service
for this special "Pick Up" Nativity Pageant!**

No rehearsals or speaking parts required.

*All you have to do is arrive by 2:45pm to pick up a costume in the Connector Hallway.
Participants will sit with their family during the service.*



**Join us in this lighthearted performance as an angel,
wiseman, shepherd, or even an adorable animal as we
share the story of Jesus' birth.**

The pageant is geared toward Preschool through Eighth Graders.

Questions?

Contact Jamie at

childrensministry@saintmargarets.net





Parish Connection

BY TRACI SCOTT

ASSISTANT TO THE RECTOR FOR OUTREACH & PARISH CONNECTION

connection@saintmargarets.net



Ladies of St. Margaret's, You're Invited to an Advent Social!



Tuesday, December 9th at 6:30pm in the Parish Hall

- Take a break from the busyness of the season and enjoy fellowship with your StM friends.
- Bring a wrapped Christmas ornament or decor item for a "white elephant" gift exchange (\$20 max). No gag gifts please.
- Cookies & punch will be served.

Please let us know if you plan to attend by [clicking here to RSVP.](#)

Questions, contact Traci at connection@saintmargarets.net

Join us for StM 101 Express

Are you new to St. Margaret's or never been able to attend 101? This "express" version of our newcomers class will take place **December 7 at 9:30am in the Connector Hall.**

We will discuss the Episcopal faith, our church's history, our various ministries and how to get engaged in the life of our parish. We'll even take a tour of the building.

If you are able to join us, please RSVP to Traci Scott at connection@saintmargarets.net

Welcome new members:

The Rounds Family

Angie Chagaris

Fr. George & Stella Moyser



Outreach

connection@saintmargarets.net



Thank you to our eleven volunteers from St. Margaret's that picked up Thanksgiving meals from Common Heart's Great Turkey Countdown and delivered them to 26 families in Waxhaw. This food served about 170 people for Thanksgiving!

A big thank you to Common Heart and all of its supporters for letting us help you deliver 1,500 meals again this year...always a fun event!



Angel Tree



Thank you to all who adopted an Angel from our tree this year! Our parishioners are helping to brighten the Christmas season for 80 children and seniors in Union County!

UNWRAPPED gifts are due back to St. Margaret's by Sunday, December 7th.

- You do not need to buy all of the items on their list, but no additional gifts will be added to what you purchase.
- If you buy a bike, it must be assembled.
- Please clearly LABEL each of your items with the child's name, Family ID and Gift ID (e.g. Dylan, Family ID 27417, Gift ID 43396.)

To see your angel's wish list, click here: <https://bit.ly/StMAngelTree25>

Blood Drive at St. Margaret's, Sunday December 14th



OneBlood will be on-site Sunday, 12/14 from 9am-1pm.

Please schedule your appointment to donate whole blood or platelets **[CLICK HERE](#)**

Questions, contact Jeremy Ervin at jereseeth@yahoo.com

Fields of Hope Products

On Nov 9th, we had a special presentation at Sunday School from *Fields of Hope* who helps survivors of sex trafficking. Although the subject is painful, there is hope that these women are on the road to recovery and learning to live a happy and fulfilling life. Part of that recovery is learning job skills by making and selling products. They sold out of everything they brought with them to StM, but you can order more by visiting their site by **[clicking here.](#)**

Pantry update

Christmas cheer is coming to our weekly pantry! On December 3, 10 & 17, we plan to offer a hot chocolate table, play holiday music and even have a visit from Santa himself! If you'd like to help with this, please contact Traci at connection@saintmargarets.net

We have seen record-setting numbers of families coming to get food at our pantry on Wednesday evenings and we are blessed to have enough volunteers each week to serve them. At the beginning of each month, Common Heart opens the volunteer slots for the following month so, grab your spots early!

Click here to volunteer: <https://bit.ly/stmpantry>





SAVE THE DATE

MAPPING OUT AN END-OF-LIFE JOURNEY

The Last Act of Living

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24
9:00 AM - 2:30 PM

[CLICK HERE TO RSVP](#)

QUESTIONS? CALL:
704.243.3523



*PLANNING AHEAD IS ACTUALLY LIBERATING AND DEEPLY
SATISFYING, KNOWING LOVED ONES ARE RELIEVED OF
MAKING TOUGH DECISIONS AT THE END.*

Lunch provided



Our church office is open M-Th from 9:00-4:00
& 9:00-12:00 noon on Friday.

Rector

The Reverend Fr. Todd R. Dill+
dill@saintmargarets.net

Assistant to the Rector

The Reverend Fr. Matt Addington+
addington@saintmargarets.net

Priest Associate

The Reverend Sarah Hollar+
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Deacon

The Rev. Ludwig Wallner

Organist & Director of Music

Gavin D. Craig
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Executive Assistant to the Rector

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Assistant to the Rector for Children's Ministry

Jamie Peters
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Assistant to the Rector for Outreach
& Parish Connection

Traci Scott
connection@saintmargarets.net

2025 Vestry

Emily Nelson, Senior Warden
Tom Washington, Junior Warden
Philip Huff
Bill MacMinn
Jenny Marlier
Amy Pharr
Josh Ward
Kathleen Culpeper
Karen Paar
David Feldser, Treasurer



December Calendar

12/1	Monthly Monday Prayer with Father Todd, 10:00 am
12/2	Vestry Budget Meeting
12/6	Saint Nicholas Festival, 9:30 am
12/7	Bishop's Visitation & Confirmation Day
12/7	Monthly Parish Breakfast
12/13	Advent Retreat Day, 10:00 am-2:00 pm
12/14	Blood Drive
12/14	EYC Jr, 3:30 pm
12/14	Lessons & Carols, 4:00 pm
12/16	Vestry Business Meeting
12/20	Community Kitchen Fellowship
12/20	Knots of Love monthly meeting, 10:00 am
12/21	Blue Christmas Liturgy, 7:00 pm
12/22-1/2	UCPS & CMS begin winter break
12/24	Christmas Eve services: 3:00 pm, 5:30 pm & 8:00 pm
12/25	Christmas Day service: 11:00 am
12/29-31	Church Office Closes at noon
1/1-2	Office Closed

*First Monday of the month: Prayer time in the nave with Father Todd, 10:00 am

*Wednesday Evenings: Food Pantry, 6:00 pm & Compline on FB live at 9:00 pm



[CLICK HERE for our YouTube channel](#) *SERMONS in library!*



REMINDER: Wednesday Evening Compline with Father Todd, 9 pm on Facebook



Join Us
this Christmas

Wednesday, 12/24 Christmas Eve:
3:00 pm, 5:30 pm & 8:30 pm

Thursday, 12/25 Christmas Day:
11:00 am