



THIRD PRESS

December 2017



LETTER FROM COREY

As we begin December, we begin the season of Advent and with it a new Christian year. Just as the holiday season speeds up with sales and parties and festivities, the church does something very odd: we slow down, take stock of our lives, and get in touch with the fact that we live in a profoundly broken world. But above all, we refocus our hope on the one who came and the one who comes to renew all things.

Advent literally means "coming," and the season calls us to meditate on the two comings of Jesus: one past, one future. What makes both of these comings similar is that both of them are about God coming to dwell among us on the earth. We remember the first coming of God when the second person of the Trinity was born to Mary in the manger. We anticipate the second coming of God when Jesus will come again to unite heaven and earth, and God will again dwell among us as he did in Eden (Revelation 21:3). God dwelling with us on the earth: that is the substance of the Christian hope.

This Advent and Christmas, we'll be focusing on one single verse about this dwelling God: John 1:14. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." This single verse speaks of our hope: that God came to dwell among us, and he will come to dwell again.

Let's go deep into this great truth together as we begin anew and refocus our hearts on the God who longs to dwell with us.

OUR STAFF

Rev. Corey Widmer

Lead Pastor

Rev. Ed Satterfield

Executive Pastor

Rev. Derek Mondeau

Pastor of Discipleship & Parish Ministry

Rev. Rick Hutton

Associate Pastor for Students (grades 6 – 12, College)

Laurie Jaworski

Mission Pastor

Andrea Woie

Student Ministry Associate

Alan Ware

Director of Finance & Administration

Tom Barila

Director of Adult Ministries

Tracie Meadows

Associate Dir. of Family Ministry

Kathy White

Associate Dir. of Family Ministry

Dr. John White

Director of Music

Kim Taulbee

Associate Music Director

Beth Nichols

Director of Connection Ministries

Becca Payne

Director of Communications

Alex Sawyer

Technical Director

Tim Latham

Director of Young Adult Ministries

Rev. Richard Haney

Parish Associate

Rev. Nan Clarke

Parish Associate Care Ministries

New Series

DWELL: AN ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SERIES

DEC 3: The Word Became Flesh

DEC 10: And Made His Dwelling Among Us

DEC 17: We Have Seen His Glory

DEC 24: (morning): The Glory of the One and Only

DEC 24: (evening): Who Came from the Father

DEC 31: Full of Grace and Truth

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATES: DECEMBER 2017

The last two years have been a very active time for the Session's Strategic Planning Committee. In response to recommendations provided by TAG Consulting in the Spring of 2015, five strategic working groups have been seeking to address the challenges that TAG identified for these last two years. Each of the Working Groups of Strategic Planning has done tremendous labor, and this December they are officially ending this phase of their projects. The fruit of their labor will most certainly continue however!

Below is a summary of what each of the working groups has accomplished and what you can expect to see as outcomes.

WORKING GROUP 1: COMMUNICATE OUR PURPOSE

WG1 was tasked with clarifying the mission and vision of Third and exploring implications for branding, signage, and communication.

- WG1 developed a new vision statement for our church: "Called together for the renewal of all things through Jesus Christ," as well as a concomitant mission statement that clarified how we will pursue this vision as individuals and as a whole church body.
- WG1 made recommendations to Session about a change of name for our church, given that our current name "Third Church" was a name chosen for us when we left our previous denomination. Session carefully and prayerfully considered their recommendations. While the Governing Elders are in agreement that a change in name for our church could help us both invite and clarify our identity and vision to secular and unchurched outsiders,

we do not want to do so at the expense of unity in our congregation. Given the amount of change that our congregation is going through at the moment with our shift to a Parish Model, Session decided that now is not the right time to change the name of the church. Session will continue to pray about a right time to explore the possibility of a name change with the congregation.

- WG1 also made recommendations about new branding, logos, visuals and design. Our communications team will continue to work to implement these recommendations.

WORKING GROUP 2: ALIGN STAFF & SESSION

WG2 was tasked with aligning Session and staff structures to emphasize shepherding and equipping by elders and tactical work by staff and ministry teams.

- WG2 differentiated Governing Elders from a newly created office of Shepherding Elders, clarified the role of Session to focus on governance and strategy, and re-designed the committee structure of Session.
- WG2 assessed each staff Job Description and re-wrote many of them to include new job objectives for each staff person.

WORKING GROUP 3: CONNECT, TRAIN AND SEND GOD'S PEOPLE

WG3 was tasked with developing and implementing pathways for every person at Third to integrate into authentic community and to grow to be a mature and fruitful disciple.

- WG3 clarified our model and vision for discipleship around the Up/In/Out pattern.
- WG3 rewrote our vision of covenant partnership in our church and the accompanying joining questions.
- WG3 planned and began implementing the geographic-based Parish model of church to more effectively integrate every member at Third into community and mission.



WORKING GROUP 4: MODERNIZE OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

WG4 was tasked with providing a plan to update our physical footprint and technological capabilities to glorify God through enhanced worship, fellowship and educational space and connection with our surroundings.

- WG4 conducted a comprehensive assessment of our facility, use of space, and technology needs in light of our church values to guide our future actions.
- WG4 planned and executed a community Charrette to hear the concerns and hopes of our neighbors and neighboring institutions.
- WG4 is developing a new master area and technology plan encompassing facility, campus, and the surrounding area of impact, as well as a plan to fund the improvements. WG4 will bring a plan to Session in 2018 and will continue to keep the congregation informed.

WORKING GROUP 5: LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS

WG5 was tasked with adapting Third's people and programs to better reach out with the gospel to Third's increasingly diverse local community, particularly internationals and the non-churched. The hope is that Third would reflect the diverse community around us and can witness to the power of the gospel even more clearly.

- WG5 planned for ways the Third community can grow in our cultural intelligence of our changing community, such as the February Term session last year on cultural diversity and reconciliation.
- WG5 explored and is exploring ways we can more deeply partner with the Christian Arabic Church to foster a more mutual relationship with them and to learn from their outreach to international neighbors.

Parish Stories



AS A YOUNG FAMILY living in Westover Hills, my husband Mark and I were eager to join one of the trial Parish Groups in the Forest Hill neighborhood that began in 2016. Being the Type A

parent that I am, participating as an active member of a Parish Group was not easy for me. I worried about keeping my busy toddler quiet, ensuring he ate a decent dinner, and putting him to bed later than “bedtime.” All the while, I was also trying to build relationships and have meaningful (and sometimes awkward) conversations. As Sunday night would roll around, my stress level would increase and I would very often consider that skipping the night would be much easier. However, if you’ve ever met my better half, Mark, skipping is rarely an option. So, off we would walk—the five houses (!)—to Beth and Mark Sprinkle’s home. There, we would always be showered with hospitality and warm faces.

We were active participants in the Forest Hill Parish Group until we moved to the West End in early 2017. Following our move, we quickly noticed the hole that existed in our weekly rhythm. We longed for our Parish Group—a mixture of people whom we would never have put together in one house, if not for proximity. The Lord had blessed us with a new community. One that looked different from any other we had been a part of. Old and young, single and married, traditional church-goers and those on the margins, a group dedicated to doing life together and meeting consistently. This group had come to know our family, and love our child. James had older children to watch and adults to trust and run to. Mark and I were supported, loved and encouraged by those who had been there and done that.

Mark and I—along with James, and our newest addition, Charlie—are anxiously awaiting January and the start of a new Parish Group in our West End neighborhood. Now, with two kids in tow, I have no doubt my stress level will skyrocket and I will very often consider that staying home would be easier. However, having gone without a Parish Group for over a year, we know that the Lord will bless our new community and our dedication will be richly rewarded through the new families we will have the privilege of doing life with.

CHILDREN’S & STUDENT’S SUNDAY SCHOOL CHANGES: DEC. 24 & 31

There will not be regularly scheduled Sunday school for children and youth on December 24, and 31. We will have childcare for children ages five and younger during the 10 a.m. service on Christmas Eve. Childcare for ages three and younger is also available for the 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. services on Christmas Eve.

Childcare for ages kindergarten and younger will be available at all three services on December 31.

ADULT SUNDAY MORNING DISCIPLESHIP UPDATES

This year, we created a new calendar rhythm to help every person at Third join a learning community at different entry points throughout the year. These classes help form us as a community by cultivating our love for one another as a household of God and to equip us to make a difference in our neighborhood by engaging in God’s mission for the world.

All of the discipleship classes for adults meet at 10 a.m.

DECEMBER TERM: DECEMBER 3, 10, 17

- Advent Study: Book of Luke. Room 101
- The Coming of Our King: An Advent Study exploring the Gospel of Luke. Room 213
- Common Rule: Advent Edition. Room 217
- Guide, Guard, and Grow: A class aimed at equipping parents. Fellowship Hall

JANUARY TERM: JANUARY 7, 14, 21, 28

- **PARISH LAUNCH:** Join us in the Fellowship Hall on the 14th and 21st to help us kick off our new Parish Model! We'll be learning more about Parish life, and you'll have an opportunity to find out which groups will be meeting in your area.
- On January 7 and 28 we'll take a break from our classes. For these weeks, we'll set up coffee in Fellowship Hall so you can still have an opportunity for fellowship and catching up with old and new friends!

FEBRUARY TERM: FEBRUARY 4, 11, 18, 25

Each winter, we take a month to get on the same page by combining our adult Sunday discipleship classes. We study an issue that has bearing on how we live our lives as Christ-followers no matter what age or stage of life we find ourselves in.

The February Term will be kicked-off with preaching and teaching on Feb. 4 from pastor and author Jay Pathak, whose book, *The Art Of Neighboring*, is helping us frame the conversation about how we really love our neighbors as expressed in the Great Commandment. Save the date, and get excited for this awesome February Term!

“ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:1-5

COMMUNITY POSTINGS

SCHEDULE CHANGES FOR HEALING PRAYER ROOMS

For those who have appreciated receiving confidential, private prayer at the Healing Prayer Rooms, housed at Third Church, we want you to know that the Lord continues to show up for folks in wonderful ways! We are genuinely encouraged by what he has done in the hearts, minds, relationships and physical bodies of those seeking his touch.

The two remaining 2017 Friday night sessions, 6:30-8:00 p.m., are scheduled for Nov. 17 and Dec. 1. In 2018, we'll change our meeting days to the first and third Thursday evenings of each month, starting Thursday, Feb. 1, continuing to meet in the Student Ministry area, 6:30-8 p.m., weather permitting, of course. **For further questions or information, please feel free to call Dena Nelson at 740-5284.**

THE MUSEUM OF THE BIBLE

On Saturday Jan. 6, Ginny Bowie is organizing a group that will be travelling to the Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC. While touring the museum, the team will also attend the Broadway musical “Amazing Grace.” Price per ticket including ground transportation and musical is \$150. Please email Ginny (gcbowie@comcast.net) to learn more or to reserve one of the 36 available spots.

A NOTE TO THE THIRD FAMILY

Dear Third Church,

God has repeatedly blessed me through your friendship and care. The passing on to eternity of my mother showed me still more how God loves and cares through you. Thank you for the lovely plant in her memory. I will think of her love of gardening when I enjoy its beauty and God's artistry. May God bless Third's ministry and work in our community. I hold you up in my prayers for his anointing and powerful work.

In Christ, Mary Ann Easterling

EVENTS CALENDAR



Join us this Advent season as we mark and celebrate Christ's coming. For more info, please visit: thirdrva.org/events.



DEC. 3

LESSONS & CAROLS

7 p.m., Sanctuary

Join us for this special interactive service of worshiping and reading scripture together. It is a great opportunity to begin the Advent season reflecting on scripture and praying for God's coming son.



DEC. 5

WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS DINNER

6:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall

For this special evening, we'll share a meal, worship together, and hear stories of unique ways of loving neighbors shared by several women. Please join us and invite a friend! Registration is free, but we ask that you **1)** bring a dish to share, and **2)** bring a small gift to donate to Stocking Stuffer Initiative for the Covenant Woods Retirement Home Community. RSVP: thirdrva.org/events.



DEC. 24

CHRISTMAS EVE - MORNING SERVICE

10 a.m., Sanctuary

Special Sunday service on the morning of Christmas Eve, featuring a choral presentation of Vivaldi's Gloria, and a homily from Rick Hutton.

CHRISTMAS EVE

4, 6, 8, 10 p.m. Evening Services, Sanctuary

Join us as we anticipate the coming birth of the newborn King. All four services will be identical, except that communion will be served at the 10 p.m. service. Please plan to worship with us, and bring your families and friends.

MORE EVENTS HAPPENING AT THIRD CHURCH



DEC. 3

FORGOTTEN NO MORE LUNCHEON

12:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Forgotten No More seeks to captivate hearts and build community at Third around God's call to care for orphans and foster children, and their families. We will learn about this new ministry at Third, the needs of orphans in the Richmond community and share specific ways we can be a part of the solution. RSVP: thirdrva.org/events.

EVENTS CALENDAR



DEC. 15-16

HIGH SCHOOL LOCK-IN
8 p.m. – 8 a.m., 600 Forest Ave.

It's time for the annual Student Ministry Lock-In! Join us for games, food, an inflatable obstacle course & fun. Invite friends! More info, and to sign up (\$20), visit: thirdrva.org/events.

DEC. 31

NEW YEARS EVE SCHEDULE

All of our Sunday morning worship services will remain the same on Sunday, Dec. 31. No Sunday school classes will meet, for children or adults.

Childcare will be available for kindergarten and younger during all three services.



JAN. 2

MEN'S DINNER
6:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Men, join us for this next quarterly dinner. Tommy Thompson will be our guest teacher. Tommy has been our New Year's speaker the last few years and has offered very inspiring and practical insights to help to start off the year on a good trajectory. Registration (\$5) opens soon at thirdrva.org/events.

PRACTICING A COMMON RULE OF LIFE TOGETHER IN ADVENT

It's ironic, but Christmastime can be one of the toughest times of year to be spiritually healthy.

Many of the habits and "rituals" we engage in during this season can drain us of faith, hope and love, rather than renew us. It takes great intentionality during a time like December to adopt a new set of habits that help us foster love for God and neighbor.



One of our members, Justin Earley, has developed a set of spiritual practices for Advent that he calls "The Common Rule." It's a set of daily and seasonal habits for communities like ours to approach this season differently.

If you're looking for a new kind of December, we encourage you to try out using the Common Rule to adopt some new habits for Advent. You can access a PDF of the Common Rule for Advent [HERE](#).



FEB. 2-3

MEN'S CONFERENCE

Friday evening, 7 – 9 p.m.
Saturday, 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Join us for our annual conference! This year, we are pleased to welcome Jay Pathak as our keynote speaker, Lead Pastor of the Mile High Vineyard (Denver, CO.) and co-author of the book, *The Art of Neighboring*, with Dave Runyon. This unique and challenging book asks the question: "What is the most loving thing I can do for the people who live right next door?" Registrations will open soon!



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An Advent Reflection

By Becca Payne

A few nights ago, we found ourselves at the local Kidmed— a Patient First-type outpost for children— with my croup-infected baby girl. I watched her little body writhe, cough, and pull air into her lungs with great work. She's getting better now (thanks to good doctors and good medicine), but I can't help but ache over her vulnerability — vulnerability to sickness, to pain, to hurt without understanding or rationale. She needs everything right now— security, food, safety, care— and can provide none of it herself.

So, this—this tiny, vulnerable form— is the form God chose when he sent his son to earth? The form so penetrable to outside forces, snares, and sickness? So helpless and so small? I guess all the world's parents and caretakers understood this more than I until this year, perhaps until just a few nights ago at that KidMed.

So this Christmas I feel a sliver more of an understanding of the duality of the Christ child— both full of weakness and full of strength. Fully human, fully vulnerable, fully in need of security, food, safety, care. And yet— such a hopeful yet!— fully king, fully divine, fully God. In our limited human terms, he was a walking contradiction. In heavenly terms though, his divine presence in this earthly form is a sacred, albeit mysterious, gift. And this gift, tiny in stature and immense in power, is just another way that the Kingdom of God shows itself to upend our definitions of prestige and authority.

The contradictions of this upside-down Kingdom seem to be popping up everywhere I look, and they keep catching me off guard. It's as if God has set the world alight with the traces of his Kingdom, leaving gentle reminders that the way down is the way up, that the meek are blessed, the poor rich, and the vulnerable strong.

So yes, let us come and adore him, the all vulnerable, all King, son of God, Emmanuel. What a gift he is.

THIRD PRESS DEADLINE FOR JANUARY: Wed., Dec. 13. Submit to: beccap@thirdva.org