

A misty winter landscape with a snow-covered forest and a frozen lake. The scene is serene and quiet, with snow falling gently from the sky. The trees are dark green and heavily laden with snow, and the lake is a pale, icy blue. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and contemplative.

ThirdPRESS

DECEMBER 2019

WAITING
FOR THE KING

A SERIES ON ADVENT



One of the few things that is nearly universal to the human experience is the need to wait. No matter your age, income, experience, level of success, or ethnicity, you will often have to wait.

Nobody likes to wait! Whether waiting for the weekend or for the birth of a child, waiting for a paycheck or for news of a diagnosis, few of us enjoy the experience of waiting.

Advent is about waiting. Each of the seasons of the Liturgical Calendar are designed to form us around a particular biblical theme or practice. Lent encourages us to confess and fast, and Easter calls us to celebrate and feast. Pentecost forms us to keep in step with the Spirit. Advent, however, trains us to wait.

What are we waiting for? In Advent, we're reminded that beneath and behind all the objects and events for which we wait, we wait ultimately for God. Specifically, we wait for God to come, save, heal and help. In Advent, we look back on the Old Testament saints who long awaited the first coming of the Messiah, and we look forward to his second coming, when he will renew all things. In this season, we remember that God has come, God is coming, and God will come again. It's the annual reminder that God is for us and for creation, and we wait for him.

But waiting is hard. History is full of people, even followers of Jesus, who got tired of waiting for God and took matters into their own hands. So Advent again re-trains us to be active, waiting people, looking and waiting for our Savior even as we persevere in hope. As Henri Nouwen wrote, "Active waiting is waiting that pays attention, is fully present to what is really going on, even when to all outward appearances, nothing is going on."

This Advent, we'll be exploring the theme of waiting through the stories of and about Jesus in the book of Matthew. For the first three weeks of Advent, we'll look at three "waiting stories" that Jesus tells about how to wait for his second coming. Then we'll shift to the beginning of the book of Matthew, as we remember what it was like to wait and receive the Messiah.

WAITING FOR THE KING

- DECEMBER 1** Waiting for the Harvest
Matthew 13:24-30
- DECEMBER 8** Waiting for the Kingdom
Matthew 13:31-33
- DECEMBER 15** Waiting for the Bridegroom
Matthew 25:1-12
- DECEMBER 22** Waiting for the Messiah
Matthew 1:1-17
- DECEMBER 24** Waiting for Immanuel
Matthew 1:18-25
- DECEMBER 29** Waiting for the True King
Matthew 2:1-12
- JANUARY 6** Waiting for the Suffering Servant
Matthew 2:13-23
- JANUARY 12** Waiting for Judge
Matthew 3:1-12
- JANUARY 19** Waiting for the Beloved
Matthew 3:13-17

Don't waste December being preoccupied with the wrong things! Advent is the season to train our souls in waiting. The Lord has come, is coming, and will come again.

PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Our mission partner, Frontier Fellowship, has created another Advent devotional that we're making available to the Third family. Pick up a copy of the devotional around the church, or sign up for the digital version to be delivered to your inbox each morning:

frontierfellowship.com/media/advent-devotional



CHRISTMAS EVE

This year, we're offering five services on Christmas Eve to worship the Newborn King together.

4:00 P.M. IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL

This service is particularly suitable for our littlest ones as this service will follow the same order as the others, but will be shorter in length. We are also inviting children to dress up as a character from the nativity during this service!

4:00, 6:00, 7:30, 9:00 P.M. IN THE SANCTUARY

These services will be festive and reverent, ushering in Christmas with our favorite carols, the Christmas story, and candlelight. Good for all ages!

Childcare is available during the 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. services for children ages 3 and younger, and all children are welcome to join their parents in any of the services. A comfortable wiggle room will be available across from the Sanctuary, with the service streamed, if parents need to step out with their children.

SCHEDULE CHANGE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2019

On Sunday morning, December 29, we will hold two worship services in the Sanctuary, and host an extended time for coffee and catching up with new and old friends in-between:

9:00 A.M. *Worship service in the Sanctuary*

10:00 – 11:00 A.M. *Coffee and snacks in the Fellowship Hall*

11:00 A.M. *Worship service in the Sanctuary*



DISCIPLESHIP REWORK

DEREK MONDEAU

Over the last couple of months, some of you have asked, “Hey Derek, why haven’t we seen any new Sunday School offerings recently?” This is a great question.

While it is true that the lack of space in our current facility has impacted new class offerings, the real answer is deeper than that. This summer we began a process to redefine and realign all of our discipleship efforts at Third. We call it the Discipleship Rework.

What is the Discipleship Rework?

The Discipleship Rework is an opportunity to crystallize our vision for discipleship at Third and establish the values, people, and resources needed to make that vision a reality. We believe that everyone at Third should be invited into a community where they can learn to trust and follow Jesus alongside others.

This is vital work for our church. Over the last few years, we have grown substantially. We are a large, multi-generational church. What a gift! And each season of life presents unique challenges to knowing and following Jesus. Whether you are a child, a teenager, a college student, a young professional, newly married, married with kids, empty nesters or deep into retirement, there should be a people and a place to welcome you and the questions you have for God.

There are some communities doing this well at Third. Where that is true, we will strengthen and support those ministries so they flourish. But where there is nothing, we must empower and invest in new communities to rise up and meet those needs.

We understand this is a massive undertaking. No one person or program can meet this kind of need. That is why we have developed a multi-stage approach that brings together a diversity of voices to shape and test the vision. We have also gathered a group of thirty leaders of staff and laity to serve as a Core Team and Key Stakeholders. We will be conducting surveys and interviews of crucial demographics across the church. We want no stone unturned and no story untold. So if you have a story to tell (and you do!) then you too will have a hand in shaping the future of discipleship at Third.

What does this have to do with Sunday school?

We made a decision to put a hold on new initiatives, ideas, and classes during the Rework. We recognize that before you build a new road you have to know the destination. If you do not, then that road will lead to nowhere. We believe discipleship is too important to build a road to nowhere. So we have made the decision to prayerfully take our time. We are committed to the process because we want to know exactly where God is calling us before we begin laying the asphalt.

When will the Rework be finished?

Phase 1 of the Rework, which focuses on the core vision, is winding down. Phase 2, which focuses on the outcomes and alignment should finish by the Summer of 2020.

So what can I do now?

Jesus is always ready to teach us to be his disciples. He is our good shepherd. We are his wandering sheep. Here are a few suggestions to consider if you want to take the initiative to find a community where you can trust and follow Jesus:

INVEST IN A SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS THIS SPRING. In terms of new classes, we hope to offer a Marriage class and two short term classes on Evangelism and Missions during Spring Term 2020. Or consider one of our established classes: Good News, Metamorphosis, Delta (Young Adult Community) and Financial Peace University. Any of these could be a great place for you to grow in your Christian life. Learn more at thirdrva.org/sunday-discipleship

JOIN A PARISH GROUP. Parish Life is the primary way to connect to the life of the church outside of Sunday morning. Parish Groups are communities following Jesus into mission — right where you live. thirdrva.org/parish-life

CONNECT WITH MEN’S AND WOMEN’S MINISTRY. There are some older men and women waiting to walk alongside you. There are bible studies that meet weekly throughout the city. There are women’s circles that meet to study and pray. We would love to connect you to a group that would serve you. thirdrva.org/men; thirdrva.org/womens-groups

REFLECTIONS FROM THAILAND

Last month a team of Third members and one of our mission partners, Stephanie Black, traveled to Thailand to provide lectures for pastors working in closed countries.

These pastors rarely have an opportunity to fellowship with other pastors and try desperately to seek teaching to keep them true to the Gospel. Here is the story of one pastor, I'll call him Lu. Lu's ministry was built on the word, preaching and prayer. Soon there was healing from sickness and demon possession. The church grew including wonderful worship music. The believers were generous in their tithing and the church continued to grow in numbers. A pastor from a foreign country was often invited in to preach new insights into the scriptures. But then, police would come and shut down the meeting every time the visiting pastor would come. They prayed and fasted in 24-hour vigils. One time for 42 days sharing time slots. People were arrested. Children under 18 were forbidden from going to church. Believers (in church) were fined each time they were caught! Church membership dropped 70%.

Pastor Lu in tears admitted that breaking into small group bible studies is the only means left but he doesn't know how and is ill equipped. With utmost thanks, I smiled, knowing that God was answering prayers. Lu received from ICM a small group Bible Study program with electronic curriculum in his native language that includes the audio Bible. Enough material to study the scriptures for many years. Praise God for the timely answers to prayers.

GEOF STIFF

For me, this has been a unique privilege to work with those who are experiencing persecution such as imprisonment. Their sacrifice to follow Christ is awe-inspiring. The personal stories we've heard from some of the pastors are heart wrenching. I remember one pastor sharing how her husband has been targeted and watched as well as how he served in prison. They have three small children. The faces of these pastors are embedded in my memory. May I remember, may we all remember, to keep them in prayer as they put their lives on the line for the sake of the Gospel.

LJ JAWORSKI

The young leaders that ICM had gathered (between 20-40 years old, youngest group gathered so far) are deeply devoted, ready to give all for Jesus. They are wisely adjusting to the tactics of the persecution they face but it means they need more people trained to lead. It is beautiful to hear them read Scripture in unison, and actively engage in prayer with *Amen* following each sentence. The Lord is using them powerfully to bring others to know Jesus and expand his kingdom with a rich investment to train disciples and multiply the church. It has been a humbling honor to be with them and seek to contribute to their equipment for ministry in some small way.

ED SATTERFIELD

My overwhelming impression of our time with these pastors is how thrilled they are to be here. They chat, they laugh, they hug each other, they hug us, they sing together at full volume, and they inhale everything we give them in the teaching times. After hearing in the individual interviews how furtive they're forced to be as believers at home, I can begin to imagine how restoring being here must be and how much freedom it represents for them. What a privilege for us to help recharge such faithful and weary Kingdom servants.

STEPHANIE BLACK

What a privilege to be in Thailand with our mission partner ICM (International Cooperating Ministries)! This experience has been meaningful in many ways. It was inspiring to learn more about the organization and structure of ICM, its founder's vision, and how it helps evangelize the world. For this trip, ICM—through their partner organization—gathered 106 mostly young pastors from a closed country to attend biblical training. Over 60% of the pastors were women leaders. Each team member taught 2-5 sessions on different scripture passages. Sharing as a teacher, and also learning (from others on the ICM teaching team and from the attendees), was a uniquely beautiful way to grow my own faith. Finally, hearing stories of faithful service from the attendees, as well as scripture reading and worship in their language was a deeply spiritual experience.

GINA MAIO

HEAR FROM THE THAILAND TEAM

WHEN: Sunday, December 8 at 12:30 p.m.

WHERE: Room 101

Listen firsthand from the team that served in Thailand.
No RSVP needed.



FAMILY ADVENT CELEBRATION

WHEN: Sunday, December 1 at 10:00 a.m.

WHERE: Fellowship Hall

Join us during the Sunday school hour for our annual Advent Celebration. Each year children ages 4 – 4th grade and their parents/guardians are invited to gather in the Fellowship Hall for worship, a message on Advent, and time for families to create a craft together. This is a fun way to kick off the season of Advent and to prepare our hearts to celebrate Jesus' birth.

We will not have Sunday school for ages 4 – 4th grade so that they can attend this celebration with their families. No need to register!

For questions, contact Kathy White at kathyw@thirdrva.org.

WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS DINNER

WHEN: Tuesday, December 3, from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

WHERE: Fellowship Hall

Join the women of Third for this special evening of good food, fellowship, and a reflection.

The event is free, but we ask that you...

- ☑ Bring a dish to contribute to the potluck.
- ☑ Bring a small gift to donate to the Covenant Woods Stocking Stuffer drive. For a list of requested items, visit thirdrva.org/events.
- ☑ Let us know you're coming: thirdrva.org/events.



LESSONS & CAROLS

GATHERING TOGETHER TO SING THE ADVENT STORY

WHEN: Sunday, December 8
4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

WHERE: Sanctuary

Each year Third Church marks the beginning of Advent with our service of Lessons and Carols. This year, we'll have two opportunities for our church family to attend this special service, 4:00 and 7:00 p.m. on December 8 in the sanctuary.

Take one hour to slow down, to listen to Scripture that speaks of God's power at work in the world, to sing the story of Jesus, to prepare your heart to welcome our Savior. We'll not only listen to the story, but participate in it as well.

Lessons and Carols tells God's beautiful story of creation, fall, redemption, and re-creation through the reading of Scripture and the singing of traditional and modern carols. We use a variety of instruments and musical styles to prepare our hearts to celebrate the first coming of Jesus and to anticipate that day when he will come again.

All are welcome. Childcare will be available for children ages kindergarten and younger for the 4:00 p.m. service only.

**Children are welcome to attend this service with their parents, but please keep in mind that while this service does have elements of group participation, there is also time for sitting and being still as we hear the scriptures read.*



NEW YEARS MEN'S DINNER

WHEN: Tuesday, January 14 at 6:00 p.m.

WHERE: Fellowship Hall

As men, we work hard and spend a lifetime trying to prove ourselves. Many of us grew up feeling like we are not enough and exert great energy trying to convince others — and ourselves — that we are. But God says, “You are mine and you have always been enough. Rest in that.”

At this dinner, our speaker Eddie Isler, elder at McLean Presbyterian Church in Northern VA and one of the top lawyers in employer/employee law with Ray and Isler will lead us in exploring the topic “Am I Enough?” Join us for great food and time to connect with other men at this quarterly dinner gathering. *Register at: thirdrva.org/events.*



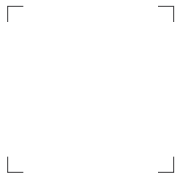
New men's ministry event a success!

On an ideal Saturday afternoon in October, dozens of Third men gathered out at a property in Powhatan, including many young fathers who brought their children, to enjoy God's creation and each other's company. The kids played games and explored the woods while the men shared conversation over BBQ. The evening concluded in a groove around a bonfire, enjoying s'mores and a talk by Justin Earley on “Liturgies of Fatherhood.” Men's Ministry looks forward to exploring similar events in the future!

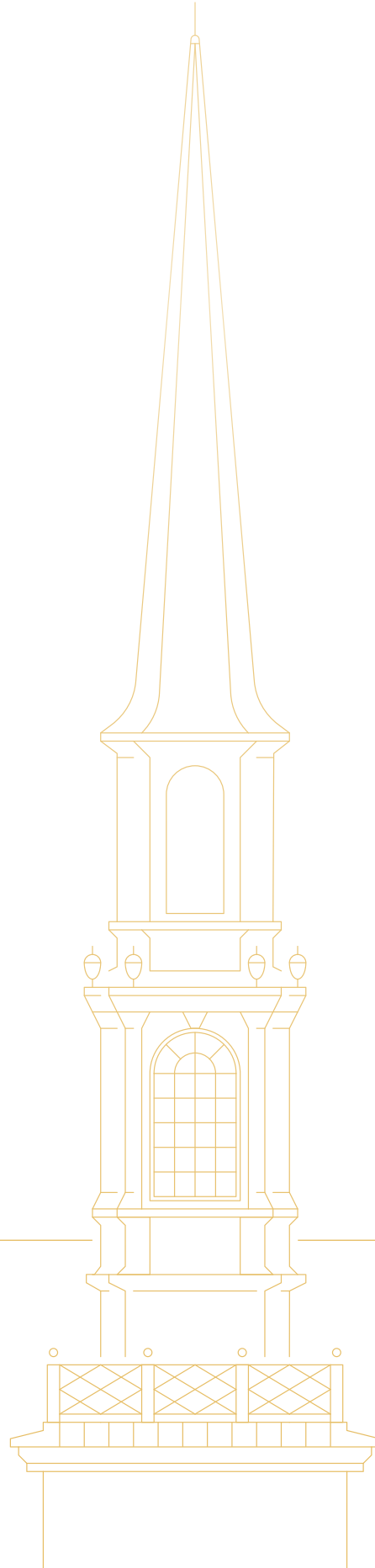
If interested in Men's Ministry, contact Ed Satterfield (eds@thirdrva.org) or visit thirdrva.org/men.

Third
CHURCH

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**Called together for
the renewal of all things
through Jesus Christ.**



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