



O Come Let Us Adore Him *Christ the Lord*

The angel came to Mary and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

Luke 1: 28-31

To the people of St. Thomas's Parish,

Greetings to you and your family as once again the year has come round to Advent and Christmas. Just as Mary was perplexed by what it might mean when the angel Gabriel visited her, we wonder, too. We wonder at God's love in sending us His only son, who entered the world just as all of us do, as a baby. It's beyond human understanding—so we wonder, and we celebrate and give thanks. We know that God has shown favor to us.

At St. Thomas's, 2017 has given us much to reflect upon and be thankful for. We celebrated 175 years of mission and ministry to Newark and the University of Delaware with worship, fellowship, and service, thanks to the leadership of the 175th Anniversary Committee. Our Episcopal Campus Ministry has continued, with strong support and commitment from the University of Delaware, to develop its Blue Hen Bounty program, which provides food to students in need. We also said farewell, with love and gratitude, to the Rev. Paul W. Gennett, Jr., who concluded nine years of mutual ministry with us at the end of October. God has indeed been with us for 175 years, and we trust that God's presence will continue.

In our diocese, we have just elected the Rt. Rev. Kevin Brown to be our next bishop. We're wondering what his ministry might mean for St. Thomas's, for all Episcopalians in Delaware, and for our church's role in the community. Again, we believe that God's favor will be with our new bishop and our diocese.

But as we wonder about all of these things, just as Mary wondered at the visit from the angel, we aren't always sure what they mean for us, for our church, for our world. And we're not always sure about God's favor—how can we experience it or know it? One way to find God's love is by participating in the regular and special services that will be offered at St. Thomas's during the Advent and Christmas seasons—a listing of those services is enclosed with this letter. Your presence, in wonder, celebration, and thanksgiving, will enrich our parish family's observance of this holy season.

We also give thanks for the wonderful generosity of the people of St. Thomas's, who unsparingly give their time, talents, and treasure to fulfill our mission and vision of a community "nourished at Christ's table and stepping forward in faith" as "instruments of God's love, serving our parish family, the University of Delaware, our community, and God's creation." Every contribution, whatever it may be, is a reflection of God's grace to us. We invite you to prayerfully consider making a special offering this season to support our continuing mission and ministry, using the envelope enclosed with this letter.

May god bless you and your family at Christmas and in the New Year. We look forward to your presence and participation at St. Thomas's in 2018.

In the peace and love of Christ,

Connie Cooper
Senior Warden

The Rev. Deacon Cecily Sawyer Harmon
Episcopal Campus Minister