



Advent, Christmas, Epiphany 2024-25 Lion's Roar E-Newsletter

Please note: if you cannot see all of this newsletter (to the end, where Amanda's contact information is) find a link at the bottom of your e-mail that will allow you to "view the entire message".

Pastor's Corner - *Pastor Joel Neubauer*

They celebrated (Hanukkah, the rededication of God's temple) for eight days with rejoicing, remembering how not long before they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals.

They decreed by public edict, ratified by vote, that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year.

—*from 2 Maccabees 10:6, 8*



Swaddled in so very few verses of such oft-ignored apocryphal books, the church of Christ holds the history of Hanukkah. Found nowhere in the Hebrew canon of torah, prophets and writings (*the Bible held as holy scripture by rabbinic Judaism today, mirrored in the most-widespread Protestant list of Old Testament books*) the ancient story of Hanukkah is known more from sacred traditions than from biblical witness. The Bible mentions no miraculous oil, burning beyond rational expectations. In the Bible there are no dreidels or latkes. Those details may be treasured as holy in faithful hearts, but—like the pious picture of a pregnant Mary “riding a donkey” to Bethlehem—they are never mentioned in scripture itself. The Bible's story of Hanukkah is simpler, is much closer to earth, is much more like a decommercialized, recentered, rededicated, faithfully-celebrated Christmas.

The first Hanukkah (*1 Maccabees 4*) looked a bit like the beloved barnyard of baby Jesus' manger: fieldstones littered God's backyard like a sheepfold's rocky paddock; shrubs and weeds were overgrown like thickets on a hilly pasture; there was nowhere for weary travelers to comfortably lay their heads, and so—like a woman in labor—they cried in the night in grief for relief. They cried until, like Gabriel blowing an archangelic trumpet overhead, it became clear that this old, cold, rocky world could also be rebuilt, unfurled with glory to God in the highest and with peace on earth for folks who desperately need it. Centuries

before the birth of Jesus—only a few miles away from that little town of Bethlehem—the first Hanukkah (*2 Maccabees 10*) remembered how terribly scary it had been to wander far from home, like sheep and goats, up hills and down cave-carved valleys, forced by time and circumstance to seek a new and safe address for life.

When Joseph brought his pregnant wife back to his childhood hometown, how much was it like that moment our ancestors in Israel's faith stepped back into their old city of David, climbed up the temple mount, and waited for Hanukkah to birth a story of redemption, of rededication? It is not the connection between candlelight on a hanukkiah and the bright star on Christmas night that most intimately links Hanukkah and Jesus' birth: it is the down-to-earth miracle of God's life being present with us where and when we need it most. God, joining the family of Israel after their faith had been suppressed, filling that Hanukkah temple. God, joining the family of Jesus—the family we are made in Jesus—filling that manger and dedicating that incarnate temple.

Throughout his life, Jesus kept the festival of Hanukkah (*St John 10*). With great faith and with spiritual devotion, Jesus visited the temple in Jerusalem—a temple that had been rebuilt and refurbished over a few hundred years since its rededication by the Maccabees. Jesus knew the stones so lovingly built up would one day fall again. Jesus knew that just as the temple had been raised and rubble and raised again, he would mirror its ministry in his own life: raised from the manger, razed by the cross, raised in resurrection. Jesus would dedicate God's life in his own life, death and resurrection to provide an icon of hope for all God's people when our temples, like Jesus' body, await this re-lifting up—this rededication—this Hanukkah.

This winter, the church of Christ will celebrate his nativity again on December 25. In a rare miracle of union between our Christian liturgical timetable and Judaism's lunar calendar, the evening of *December 25* will coincide with the sunset-start of the Hebrew day of *Chislev 25*. So, at sundown, as Christians celebrate the birth of Christ, Jewish families (like Mary and Joseph would be as our neighbors today) will light the first Hanukkah candles and dedicate their prayers to God's presence on earth among us all. Rather than divide us, for an exceptional moment our separate religions will draw closer—draw us together—build us up as one—dedicate us in Israel's faith for a shared moment as family with the God of Abraham, the God we trust to be with us, the God we praise as Emmanuel.

In such a shared hope and joy of that holy day to come,

Pastor Joel

News and Announcements



Dorcas Circle

Dorcas Circle

Dorcas Circle will meet:

- Tuesday, December 17th
- Tuesday, January 21st
- Tuesday, February 18th

at **10:00am** in the Library at St Mark.

If you are interested in joining Dorcas Circle, or would like more information you may contact Stephenie Gregg. (sfmgregg@outlook.com)



Monday Morning Women of Faith Study

Mondays starting Jan 6th
Time: 9:30 -11:00 am
High School Room

Join us in this weekly study, *Hebrews: The Nearness of King Jesus*, written by Lisa Harper. To make this study more manageable, it will be divided into segments. The course includes a study guide, journaling, and short video segments. Together we will discuss each lesson to deepen our understanding of key themes. *Books are available for purchase online.

Questions? Deb Tronrud 720/635-2755

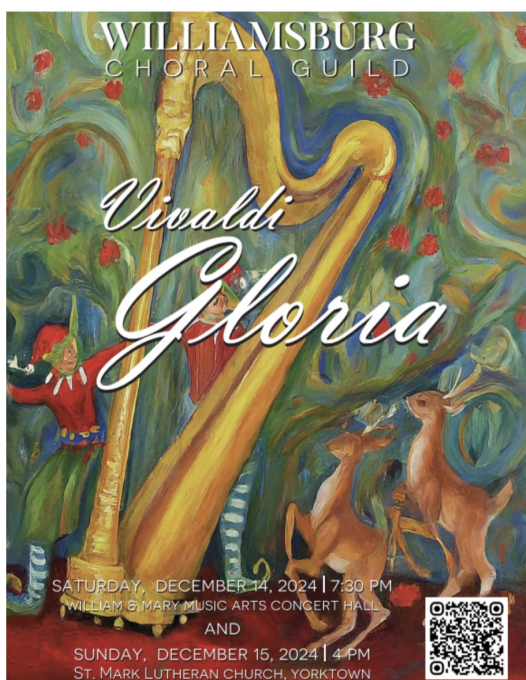


Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to everyone who participated! We filled **49 boxes** this year to help children around the world!



Red Cross Blood Drive



Celebrate the holidays with a festive concert by the *Williamsburg Choral Guild* featuring Antonio Vivaldi's *Gloria*. Hear this Baroque choral classic plus works by Holst, Mendelssohn, Wilberg, and others accompanied by strings and organ. **December 15, 2024, 4 PM at St Mark Lutheran Church, 118 Old York-Hampton Hwy, Yorktown, VA 23692. Tickets are \$20/person** – available at the door or online. For additional information contact the Guild at info@williamsburgchoralguild.org or call 804-363-4530.

Established in 1975, the Williamsburg Choral Guild is a mixed voice SATB all-volunteer chorus that presents three or more major concerts each season. The Guild enjoys the enthusiastic support of the community as it fulfills its mission to bring magnificent choral music to the Greater Williamsburg area. Now in his second season the Guild is directed by Dr. Daniel Parks.

Doors open at 3:00 pm. A pre-concert lecture begins at 3:30. Dr. Parks' pre-concert lecture is included in the ticket price.

[Purchase Tickets Online](#)

Adult Tickets - \$20

Our next blood drive will be on February 19th from 12pm to 5pm. You can make an appointment by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org) and enter StMark. Happy donating!



St. Mark and Troop 306 Collect Winter Wear for PORT's Homeless Neighbors

Winter's chill is here, and St Mark is partnering with Troop 306 to collect warm clothing for our homeless neighbors in need. This drive will benefit guests through People Offering Resources Together (PORT), an organization dedicated to providing essential services to those facing hardship in our community.

We urge you to dig deep into your closets and donate gently used coats, sweaters, hats, gloves, and scarves – anything to help someone stay warm. New socks and underwear are also crucial and always in high

How You Can Help:

Bring your gently used winter wear new socks and underwear (all sizes welcome!) to the drop off location in the St Mark narthex.

Let's show our compassion and generosity this winter season. Every donation brings warmth and comfort to someone in need.

Adult tickets are available for \$20 at the door.

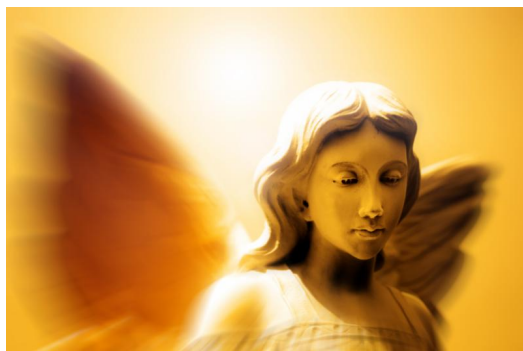
Student Tickets - (ages 12 to 18) are available for \$10 at the door.

Tickets for Children under 12 are Free



Poinsettias for Christmas

Poinsettias in honor or memory of our loved ones and friends will be placed in the sanctuary for our Christmas services. The cost is \$15 per plant. Order forms can be found on the tables outside of the sanctuary and [by clicking this link!](#) Return paper order forms with your offering or to the office. For check payment, please note in the memo "poinsettias". Deadline to order is December 20th.



A Heartfelt Thanks to Our Scouting Friends!

The St Mark Church Council extends its deepest gratitude to Troop 306 and Pack 595 for their continued support and service to our community. Your dedication to helping others is truly inspiring.

During the month of November, these incredible young people stepped up in a big way. Pack 595 generously volunteered their time to assist with PORT, demonstrating their commitment to serving those in need. Meanwhile, Troop 306 lent their helping hands to tackle some much-needed church cleaning chores, ensuring our space remains welcoming and tidy. And as we prepared to enter the Advent season, the troop also played a vital role in "greening" the church, creating a beautiful and festive environment for worship and reflection.

Your willingness to serve is a blessing to St Mark. We are incredibly fortunate to have such dedicated and compassionate partners in our community. Thank you, Troop 306 and Pack 595, for all that you do!

**Our Singular Midweek Advent
Worship: Wednesday, Dec. 11th at
6:30pm. Don't miss it!**

A service of devotions and special music for our congregation. Come hear the music of our choir (even our youngest singers!), handbells, guest instrumentalists and sing along with the angel choruses; *"Sing! Choir of Angels!"*

See the video below for a Christmas message from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton!



Oktoberfest was a blast!



Flyers


**A SINGULAR MIDWEEK ADVENT WORSHIP
SERVICE FOR THE
CONGREGATION OF ST MARK**

"Sing! Choirs of Angels"



WEDNESDAY EVENING

DECEMBER 11, 6:30PM

 This mid-week Advent evening worship service will celebrate the angels and will remind us that we are all messengers of God's love. Special choir, handbell and instrumental music, and an Advent gift from the children will be offered for all the congregation.

SAVE THE DATE...COME AND WORSHIP!



WILLIAMSBURG
CHORAL GUILD

*Vivaldi
Gloria*

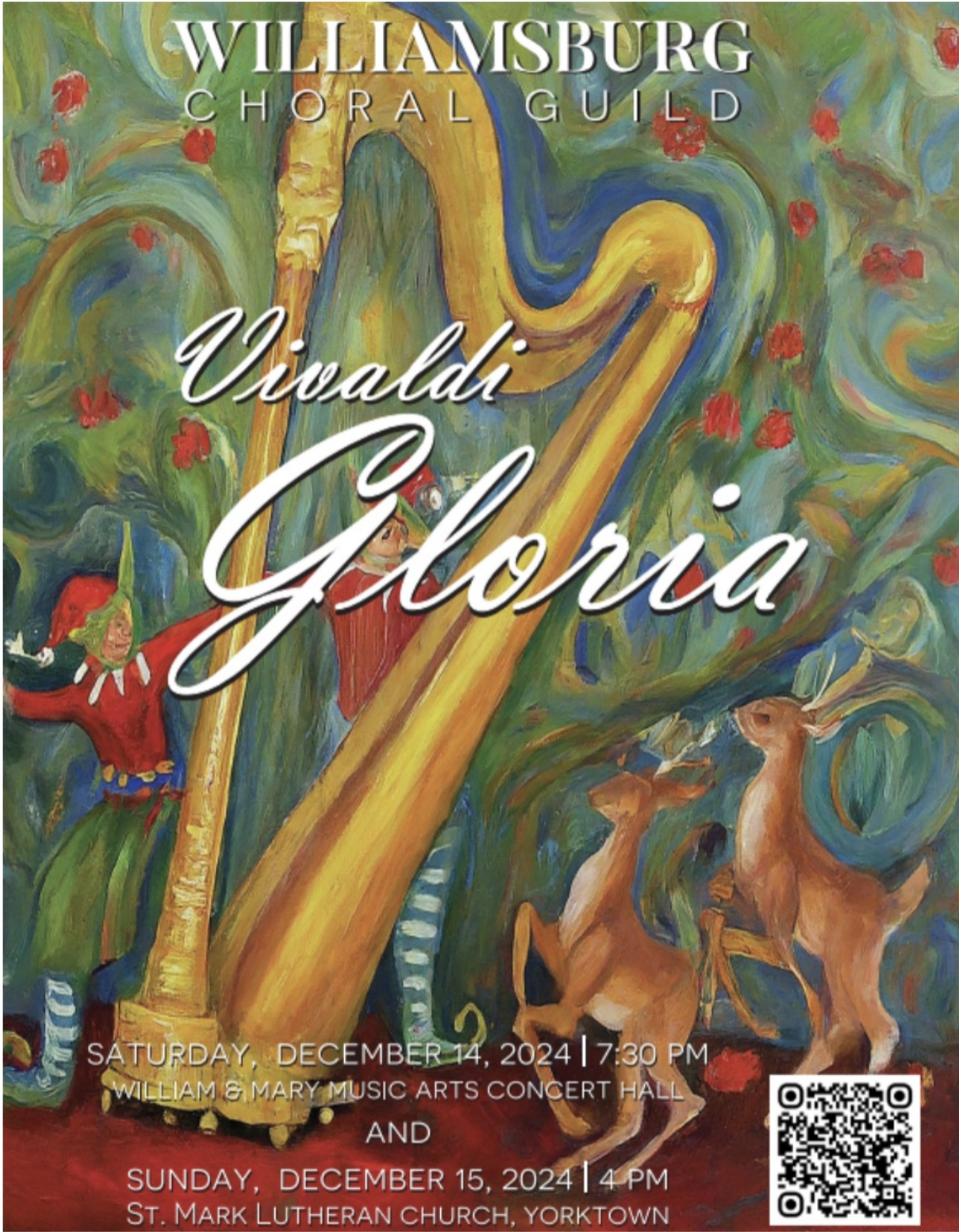
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2024 | 7:30 PM

WILLIAM & MARY MUSIC ARTS CONCERT HALL

AND

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2024 | 4 PM

ST. MARK LUTHERAN CHURCH, YORKTOWN





Christmas Worship

Christmas Eve

5:00pm

7:00pm & 11:00pm

Christmas Morning

10:00am

Come join us!



PJ's Faith Fable

[Click here](#) or on the article itself to view in another window or tab.

PJ's Faith Fable: The Young Moose and the Wind



A wintry day was winding down that once had been, as are often, windy. But it was not windy now. All was calm. All was brightly lit by the orange sun now sitting on the horizon like a still, silent student at a school desk lost in studious thoughts. But the calm, bright orange light of this winter's starkly dark and peaceful night felt uncomfortable and troubling for the old and ancient and established and experienced animals of pines and hardwood stands and lakes and meadowlands beneath it. Without the wind, the earth was so quiet and so peaceful that the animals became nervous: there was no chaos in their community to blanket their small noises or to carry the scent of dangers coming their way.

That night, to a young moose lumbering loudly among the pines, an old gray squirrel chattered whisperingly: "God forbid, little moose, your steps would be louder! Go home to your nest and take rest like the rest of us; be quiet and hide, since the wind has now left us and we are exposed! The crunch of your toes will call dangerous foes, and who will survive this dead calm? I propose you listen to me and stay silently still. Pray the wind will return. Let's hope that it will!"

"Has the wind truly left us?" the moose asked. "Listen to the pines: there is no music in their needles! Look at the pines: there is no dance in their boughs!" worried the old gray squirrel, heaving little puffs of steam with its stream of worries.

"But has the wind truly left us?" asked the moose; the squirrel replied: "I have looked where I live. I have shown what I know. If you won't heed my wisdom, I'll ask you to go."

So the young moose walked away till the thick evergreen canopy opened into the cracked

window of leafless hardwood branches. And now to the moose—shuffling through piles of dry, fallen leaves—an old turkey gobblingly clucked: "God forbid your steps would be louder! Go home to your roost! Settle down, little moose! In a windless night your shuffling feet beg hunters to find us: "There's food here to eat!" Listen to me: the wind was our friend. Now that it's left us, we might face the end."

"Has the wind truly left us?" the little moose asked. "See the bare branch: its outline never moves! Hear the dry leaves: they pop beneath your hooves!" worried the turkey, heaving little puffs of steam with its stream of worries.

"But has the wind truly left us?" asked the moose, and the turkey replied: "I have looked where I live. I have shown what I know. If you won't heed my wisdom, I'll beg you to go!"

And it was the same from an old snow goose who worried that no clouds were moving past the moon and no ripples waved the lake; and a red fox in the meadow worried for the tracks its paws would make in snowbanks that no wind would scatter. But to the little moose, their worries seemed no matter. They looked where they lived and showed what they knew: they heard no wind rustle and thought no wind blew. But the moose asked the wind, "You've not truly left us, o wind, have you?"

When the squirrel or turkey or goose or fox worried, the moose saw the breath in their nostrils was hurried and watched as the steam in their heaving breaths flurried. The wind so unseen in the still, silent night was churning *within* them, *among* them, all right—even when wisdom was hidden from sight, like fog in advance of a day's safe delight.

As long as my breath is in me and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit. —Job 27:3-4

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Visit our website!



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