

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,
the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!
2 Corinthians 5:17



The Herald

January 2026



From the Rector ...

Hello, Friend. I want to share some thoughts about the past four months and anticipate what I see for our church in 2026.

In This Issue

Rector's Letter	1-3
Outreach	4
Youth & Family	4
Birthdays & Anniversaries	4
Picture Nativity	5
Our Mission & Vision	6

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS

I loved our season of Advent. I sensed the Lord's presence in my life and the life of Nativity. Watching and waiting forced me to slow down and enjoy the moments of my first Christmas season with Nativity. I was also able to sort through the experiences of my first four months a bit and recognize that I need the Lord more than ever in my life and in my ministry.

The Christmas Eve services were a blast, even with the stresses of so many new liturgies, processes, and people. Your pastor has a bit of 'plug and play' about him, but I'm also a real human being having to learn, discern, and make decisions in the moment - as well as plan for, lead, and serve at three services in an 18-hour period.

I want to share four aspects of the Christmas Day service that touched me.

First, participation was nearly double that of last year. It was exciting to see so many show up, and humbling as well. If you participated in that service, thank you for making it a blessing with your presence. In terms of visitors, I think we had two families from the area and a third family visiting from out of town.

Second, one of the visitors in that service, a couple from PSL who attend another church, told me that our service was the only Christmas Day service in PSL. Afterward, I googled it and confirmed it. There may have been another service, but it wasn't clear, since it was after the fact. In any case, it told me that the Episcopal Church of the Nativity has a niche on the Treasure Coast. It's something we should take seriously and see how God might want to establish our niche in the future.

Third, and this is one of the sweetest moments of my first four months: I served a first communion to one of the visitors. It happened to be the granddaughter of our very own Bob and Kate. I don't think anyone planned it. It just kind of happened. Bob's son

Worship Schedule

Sunday Morning

8:00 a.m.

and

10:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Holy Eucharist & Healing

10:00 a.m.

Join us Online!

facebook.com/nativitypsl

or

youtube.com/nativitypsl

or

Instagram.com/Nativitypsl

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From the Rector continued ...

and daughter-in-law brought their daughter up. She's almost three. I inquired if I was to serve her, and we had a little discussion and all decided to serve her. What a blast to get on your knees, look a 3-year-old in the eyes, and say, "Jesus loves you and here is a little gift from him."

Fourth, praying for you during the sermon from John 1, and recognizing that God's light conquers the darkness, was a powerful moment in which I believe we will see transformation in the coming days. Do not forget that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it (John 1:5 NRSV). This is true in these key areas of our lives:

- Our health.
- Our future.
- Our peace in the world.
- Our context as a nation.
- Our environment and the storms of life.
- Our relationships.
- Our questions, confusions, and doubts.

MY FIRST FOUR MONTHS

My first four months as your pastor were filled with asking questions and being patient with answers. My priorities, as I told you it they would be, were:

- Meeting and getting to know you.
- Establishing the importance of pastoral care.
- Observing our church processes.
- Seeing what connectivity and availability looks like.

I've met many of you, including some who cannot attend Sunday services, and I hope to get to meet many more this year. And here's the challenge: getting to know you better, in real ways, that enable us to have richer fellowship and life together in Christ.

The increase in attendance across all three of our services has been encouraging. For example, the Wednesday Healing Service has tripled in size since we reformatted it, and I think the Lord is just beginning to move in our midst, so that you have a genuine experience of Christ.

The early pledge count is also encouraging. Both the number of pledges and the total dollar amount increased from last year.

I hope to give you specific numbers on attendance and pledges at the annual meeting on February 1st.

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From the Rector continued ...

LOOKING FORWARD

I see 2026 as a year of stability for the Church of the Nativity. We need to stabilize processes. We need to fill the gaps. We need to find places for people who are not yet serving, or who are not serving in their best place of service.

You may be serving in a role at church because no one else will. That's good! But maybe there is another role for you in which you would shine more. Let's find it. Or maybe you aren't sure how to serve or what your place is at Nativity. Let's find that place or create it. Or you may be contributing exactly how God wants - keep doing it!

Part of our stability as a church is you finding your place of service.

Focusing on stability doesn't mean standing still or not moving forward. Stability is an active process of determining what needs to be done and who needs to be doing it.

We have some important decisions on the horizon for Nativity. Here are a few at the top of my list:

Stewardship of resources: finding the best place for people and the best use of funding. Our budget process will help us to make key decisions.

Turnover of the Vestry: Most of our Vestry members are scheduled to complete their commitments this spring. Putting together the next Vestry will be key in enabling Nativity to be the church God wants her to be.

Partnership with Acton Academy: deciding on our future with Acton is a multi-phase process, and we are in the thick of it.

Celebrating Nativity's 30th Anniversary: this year will be a joy to you, a reminder to PSL that we exist, and a pointer in the right direction.

Discovering who we are: what God has for us to do is a priority for our future viability.

Providing quality worship experiences: important to me as we bow before the Lord of glory.

I am super encouraged by what God is doing in our midst, and from my view of the world, Nativity is just getting started. Thank you for being a part of Nativity. Enjoy the ride...and make it happen...empowered by God.

A PRAYER FOR THE PARISH (BCP:817)

Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Outreach Ministry

The Outreach Team packed Christmas food bags for 25 families in need and the 6 families we serve monthly. All were very grateful for the food and Aldi gift cards for fresh food items. We also packed gift bags with toiletries, notepads, pens, calendars, assorted greeting cards, and a Christmas decoration for each family.

This year we had 32 children on our Angel Tree. The social workers thanked everyone at Nativity and said we gave these families a joyful Christmas.

Thank you to the team that sorted and packed the food and gift bags—it was a labor of love—and to everyone who donated food, money, and gift cards.

As we begin the new year, it is now time to restock our Outreach Pantry. We are in need of canned proteins (tuna and chicken), canned fruit, jelly, peanut butter, bagged instant potatoes, soups (chicken noodle and tomato), cereal, and pasta sauce. We can no longer accept pasta, rice, or boxed instant potatoes as we are unable to store them. Monetary donations and Aldi gift cards are gratefully accepted.

Thank you for your continuing support of our Outreach Pantry. God bless you!



Youth & Families Ministry Corner

Upcoming Dates & Events:

Friday, February 6: Parents Night Out
(7:00 PM – 9:30 PM)

Friday, March 6: Parents Night Out
(7:00 PM – 9:30 PM)

Please contact Elaine Clem or the church office for additional information.



January Birthdays

- 3: Benjamin Scott
- 5: Robert Townsend
- 10: Juliet Seecharran
- 11: Ventoria Mowatt
- 13: Alvie Flournoy
- 14: Celia Szelwach
- 25: Richard Dowling
- 29: Kate Smith
- 30: Madilyn Roberts

January Anniversaries

- 26: Noel & Viola Gittens

Picture Nativity ...



OUR MISSION:
UNITED BY GOD'S GRACE
Loving and Serving ALL People in Christ's Name

OUR VISION:

As a Christ-centered oasis, the Church of the Nativity will be a place to experience acceptance and love. We will invite ALL people to come, be spiritually replenished, and leave eager to do the work God has called each of us to do. We will reflect God's love and limitless possibilities through our commitment to meaningful worship, spiritual formation, sweeping outreach, and robust growth.

Church Leadership

Jesus Christ, *Head of the Church*
The Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin S. Holcomb,
Bishop of Central Florida
The People of the Church of the Nativity,
Ministers
The Rev. Brian Stankich, *Rector*
Mrs. Hazel Graham, *Minister of Music*
Mrs. Melissa Lewis,
Bookkeeper & Communications

Vestry Members

Deborah Benway, *Sr. Warden*
Pete Szelwach, *Jr. Warden*
Wendy Chadbourne, *Treasurer*
Starr Coulter, *Secretary*

Audrey Coombs
Neville Lake
Darcy Miller
Mary Mosley
Adela Sanabria
Robert Smith
Bob Villa



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