

December 2025

ECHO

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Newsletter of the Washington Church of the New Jerusalem

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From the Pastor

Washington New Church Echo, December 2025

I write this from my home “office,” with Henry the Dog keeping me company, and my four adult children somewhere in my house, and my beautiful wife doing something in the kitchen. (Well, by “keeping me company” I suppose what I really mean is that Henry

is trying to talk me into going out into the cold and kicking a ball again. But it's his way.)

Yesterday was Thanksgiving. Starting this Sunday, we will be officially into the “Christmas season” at the church, as I will be delivering the first of a three-part Christmas sermon series. And this is one of my favorite parts of every year.

Which is funny since I hate being cold. I react to cold weather like it's some sort of intentional misdeed and personal affront. (Not that one ever encounters impersonal affronts, as far as I know.) But being around family is always good, and it becomes much better, in my mind, when the days are short and the temperatures fall. I like the sensation that I am a successful provider and protector, with a well-insulated house and a full pantry, and that all of my people are gathered behind the walls of my castle, safe from the predations that await us out there.

Yeah, I'm being a little silly. And yet, there's something to this. Contrasts are interesting.

The Christmas story itself is full of contrasts. The Messiah—the Holy One, the Prince of Peace Himself—is born in humble circumstances. Luke opens the story by telling us about Roman emperors and governors, and then quickly pivots to the story of an infant whose birth makes all such things comparatively irrelevant.

The story is filled with light appearing in darkness, hope being born in the middle of the night, lowly people and outsiders getting a remarkable insider's view of the most important event in human history.



As I look forward to the holiday season unfolding, I'm thinking about how

gratitude leads to humility, and humility opens the door for innocence. And only when we are innocent can we experience true peace. So, in the spirit of such gratitude, I'm thinking this year

about all the things that could be, but aren't, which I am glad are not. Maybe it's weird, but sometimes instead of counting blessings, I count the absence of curses. The list of things I could be suffering is infinite! And yet the vast majority of such things are not happening to me right now.

Theologians sometimes ask, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Philosophers might even simply wonder, "Why do bad things happen to anyone?" But perhaps a more profound question is: why don't they happen more often? And why do good things happen?

My wife and children are healthy, and they are here around me. My home is warm and safe and well-stocked. And Henry is feeling quite optimistic. Life is good. May you find the goodness in your own life as well, and may you have a wonderful and blessed Christmas season.



Rev. Glenn "Mac" Frazier, Pastor
Washington New Church, 2025.11.28

From the Assistant Pastor/Principal

Among the hardest parts of leaving a job and a community is saying goodbye. I've never liked it much, but for anyone who missed the email, here's the recap:

Janine and I decided that I would accept a position at Kempton New Church focused on high-school teaching and assisting the pastor. We start July 1, 2026, which will mark exactly eleven years for us in the Washington New Church. We genuinely look forward to the move—the new work, the chance to live near my family again. However, this doesn't do much to dampen the sadness at leaving the WNC community which has been such a big part of our

lives. In fact, it has been the entirety of life for the younger children.

Our goals here are primarily two.

First, we want to make time for conversations with the people we love. Formal goodbyes are hard and confusing to me, but we love connections and conversations with people – even about unpleasant subjects like moving.

Second, I'm sharpening my focus on the work ahead this year. My biggest task is helping Mac, the bishops, and the boards find and hire an outstanding new principal and a 3rd/4th-grade homeroom teacher. I hope it goes smoothly—sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. If we land the right people quickly, we can shift energy to a clean, thoughtful handoff. I've watched many teachers navigate this process; now it's my turn to do it. We want the newcomers to inherit clear systems, organized resources, and helpful guidance—while still leaving room for them to make the roles their own. It's a delicate dance: give enough without burying them in my specific idiosyncratic approaches.

As we become clear on next year's team, we will also tweak a few assignments. We do that every year, but in a leadership-transition year we'll think harder about how church and school operations actually run—especially with several retirements we can already see coming in the next five years. That foresight forces useful conversations about who does what and why.

We're fortunate: we have experienced, deeply committed staff and volunteers who know WNCS inside and out. Institutional memory lives in their heads (even if I still roll my eyes whenever someone says “because we've always done it that way”).

We want to have conversations—about the transition, either the professional or personal side of it, and anything else. Janine and I simply want to enjoy the people and the time we have here.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Janine".

From the Board of Trustees:

The Board held its regular monthly meeting on November 11. Regular business discussions included finances, Pastor's, and School reports. Rev. Frazier reported on his plans in preparation for the holiday season and noted that he has recently been focused on Rev. Brian Smith's announcement that he will be leaving next summer for a new job. The Treasurer reported that contributions continue to be strong, but that we are still estimating a deficit budget year. Rev. Smith reported that there is ongoing interest in the school, and that we may be gaining students mid-year. He discussed needs for the school that could be proposed for a grant request. Tuition rates were discussed in preparation for the December joint meeting with the School Board. There was a discussion on the uses and documented purposes of our various restricted funds, and on the strategic priority for the coming year of marketing and growth for the school. The next meeting, with the School Board, will be held on December 2.

~Sharon Cooper, Secretary, WNCJ Inc.

CHRISTMAS CENTERPIECES



Once again, Christmas Centerpieces, with fresh greens, candles, ribbon bow, and other decorations, will be available after Dec 1, for your decorating or gift giving. To order, please fill out an order form, and place it in the basket, in the church lobby, or call Mary Cooper, on 301 390 6292.

Small arrangements (6"-8" diameter) are still \$15; large (10"-12") \$25; large with a glass chimney, \$30.

This annual fundraiser benefits, 100%, the Washington New Church operating fund. We appreciate your participation. Thank you, and Happy Holidays!

Celebrating Christmas at Washington New Church



Sunday, November 30 — We start the season with Sunday **Worship** and the first of three Christmas-themed sermons, at 11:00 a.m.



Sunday, December 7 — Part 2 of our Christmas Sermon series – 11:00am. Also... “Souper” Sunday!



Monday, December 8 — Our Christmas on-line reading group will meet to read the Christmas Story. Join us at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. Here is the Link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84425963157?pwd=Mj6NArCb8YfVMd7d8MosFI7gsusbRn.1>—if you wish to be on our mailing list, see the pastor.



Sunday, December 14—Part 3 of our Christmas Sermon series - 11:00am.



Monday, Dec 15 — The Christmas reading group meets again – 7:30pm



Thursday, December 18 — WNCS Christmas Program – 7:00pm



Friday, December 19 —WNCS Closes for the holidays.



Sunday, December 21— Instead of Sunday morning worship service, we will have our annual **Christmas Tableaux** service in the evening, starting at 5:30 p.m., followed by holiday refreshments and a social gathering in the multipurpose room.



Monday, December 22 — We meet one more time online to finish reading through the **Christmas Story** together, starting at 7:00 p.m.



Wednesday, Dec 24 — Celebrate the Lord's birth at our **Candlelight Christmas Eve** worship gathering, starting at 7:00 p.m.



Thursday, Dec 25 — Come and worship the Lord and celebrate His advent into the world at our **Christmas Morning** service, starting at 11:00 a.m.

That's All, Folks

Do you even remember those ambitious resolutions you made last January? They were those promises you made to yourself to do useful stuff. Fortunately, you didn't tell anyone about them, just in case you lagged a bit in that pesky accomplishment thing. But now you only have a very few weeks left in the year and the piper needs to be paid, or else next year's list will be really daunting.

New Year's resolutions are regeneration lite – a bit of practice for the real thing – and December is a good time to catch up on those promises too.

Events last month:

We enjoyed having **Leilah Glenn** visiting the school from Bryn Athyn College as an intern for a week.

It was great that our Executive Bishop **Peter Buss, Jr.**, and his wife **Theresa** were able to spend a weekend in our Society. His talk on Friday evening and sermon on Sunday were inspiring. It has been 37 years since he spent time here as an assistant pastor. A few things have changed since then.

Bishop Buss' visit coincided (almost) with the not-so-great announcement that our Assistant Pastor and School Principal **Brian Smith** will be leaving us for a new assignment in the

Kempton, PA society. Brian, his wife **Janine**, and **their entire family** will be greatly missed by all of us. Brian will teach at the Kempton New Church high school, among other things.



WNCS celebrated Veterans' Day by holding a special chapel service followed by a flag-raising ceremony. Several veterans were able to attend and to stay afterward to chat with the students.

A large part of the local Thanksgiving festivities was

the annual joint Cowley-Roscoe gathering which this year was too large for local homes and so was held in the multipurpose room at the Church. Fifty-three family members, both young and old and from near and far, enjoyed a great, if not quite raucous, dinner.

And of course, we had a great (we were grateful last month) Thanksgiving Day service, with lots of people, lots of food donations and lots of happy-type greetings for old and new friends. The welcoming season is upon us.

Recruitment:

Can you help? Or more to the point: you can help. The school is actively working to find more of those special students who would like to attend our school, but don't yet know it. You can assist by telling people about WNCS, and there is a committee working on this (and can use your donations to help with expenses – send your donation to Brent Hyatt). In early November, the school had a display, handed out brochures, and talked to parents at the Prince Georges County Education Fair. Every bit helps!

Scholars at Work:

WNCS traditionally takes the 2 days before the Thanksgiving holiday to have special project days. These usually are used to illustrate the year's theme, which this year comes from Revelation - **"In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its**

fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Rev 22:2

On Day 1 (Nov. 24) mixed age groups rotated through 4 different stations where they learned

about and then created items based on trees, wood, leaves and herbs. At the first station, **Miss Jordan** had the children make stuffed grape leaves and brew a large variety of herbal teas, which they tasted and also took small tea bags home.

At station 2 **Mrs. Cowley** talked to the students about the many "healing" herbs. She had them make poultices out of local weeds and herbs and helped them make lip balm from calendula infused oil - small tins of which all children took home.



At station 3, **Mrs. Sprinkle** gave each group several rounds of aromatic cedar that they could use to observe the life of a tree - counting the age rings, noting where branches or wounds appeared. The students

then created a story about their tree.

And at station 4 **Mrs. Ball** had the students use small wood rounds decoupage with leaves, flowers, grasses, etc. [many gathered and



pressed by the students] to make beautiful ornaments to take home for the holidays.

Finally, in the afternoon graded groups were treated to two woodland tours... a tour of Acton Park by our Invasive Species, expert **David Radcliffe**, and a Forest Garden tour by **Lincoln Smith**.



On Day 2 (Nov. 25), after morning chapel the students, teachers and chaperones went on a day trip to Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, MD. Somehow dodging the rain, they walked their feet off through a good part of this 50-acre botanical garden. They spent their lunch hour just around the corner at the Wheaton Regional park, which reportedly had the most amazing playground! (Where suddenly the children were no longer tired from their earlier walk!). Of course, many fell asleep in the car on the way home but woke up to an outdoor fire circle where they celebrated the day with roasted marshmallows, popcorn, and hot cocoa.

The Compass Program at ANC: Learning with Purpose

The Academy of the New Church has launched The Compass Program, a new learning pathway for high school students seeking an individualized, purpose-driven education. Students in the program combine project-based learning, internships, and dual-enrollment college courses with spiritual study through *Rise Above It*, a course on the Ten Commandments led by Ray and Star Silverman.

The Compass Program helps students connect their education with their calling and develop the skills and habits to live a life of meaningful use. Compass students also have access to all that ANC has to offer in the way of extracurriculars such as Instrumental Ensemble, sports, clubs, and the dramatic productions.

To learn more or visit, see our page on ANC's website www.ANCSS.org/educational-program/compass-program or contact Mary Williams at:

Mary Heinrichs Williams
Director, The Compass Program
Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools
Cell: 267-626-6236



December Anniversaries

“Conjugial love in its essence is nothing else but the wish of two that their lives become one life.” Emanuel Swedenborg, CL 215



Dec. 6th ~ George & Mary Cooper ~ 67 yrs.

Dec. 19th ~ Brad & Kathy Johns ~ 44 yrs.

Dec. 23rd ~ Avi & Aubrey Hernandez ~ 20 yrs.

Dec. 30th ~ (Joel) & Didi Trimble ~ 62 yrs.

