



The Episcopal Diocese of Georgia

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Advent Events Around the Diocese

Many congregations celebrate the Advent Season with a variety of community outreach ministries. At the beginning of advent we invited all parishes in the Diocese to share their Advent Ministries with our staff. This Bulletin features the stories we received.

St. Nicholas Party and More in Radium Springs

The St. Nicholas party at St. John and St. Mark's is an annual event held for the families in the Radium Springs neighborhood on the Saturday closest to St. Nicholas Day (December 6). Families are invited for cookies and hot chocolate. The Church provides an assortment of gifts and wrapping material, and the kids of the neighborhood families are invited to select gifts to wrap and give to their parents.

The congregation is also been partners with the Poor Clare Sisters at Neighbors in Need in Albany. They focused in Advent on a collection for the people they serve. Each Sunday of Advent was designated to a particular clothing item, particularly warm clothing items. They designated First Advent as sock Sunday, Second Advent as undies Sunday, Third Advent as hats, gloves, and scarves, and Fourth advent for jackets and blankets-taking seriously the words of John the Baptist, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none."

Critter Christmas in Martinez

Sixty persons attended the Critter Christmas which invited pets into the church for worship. Seventy percent of those attending did not have a church home. The event was sparked by church member Heather Schneller, who attended a parish in Fayetteville, Arkansas, that allowed pets each Sunday. At Holy Comforter, attendees were asked to bring dog toys that were donated to a local animal shelter. The event was attended by dozens of dog owners, including Georgie Blackburn and her three therapy dogs, Cheyanne, Reinee, and Sidney. Blackburn said, "It means the world to bring them places during the holiday season. It always amazes me how happy it makes people when they get to pet a dog - especially for individuals who don't have family around this time of year."

Reaching out with Music on Isle of Hope

On Isle of Hope in Savannah, St. Thomas' clergy and parishioners reached out through its music ministry, the Tour of Homes, its Angel Tree, and music ministry. The Isle of Hope Christmas Tour of Homes gives money back into the

Savannah Community to fund organizations helping women and children. The annual "Angel Tree" this year is dedicated to providing for some of the needs of the Community of St. Joseph, the Diocese of Georgia's new ministry for Homeless persons. The church's 8-member praise band, The Screaming Hamsters, visited several nursing homes to lead the residents in singing Christmas Carols. They play at the first Saturday service (a contemporary Holy Eucharist), the 10 am Sunday Eucharist, as well as for nursing homes, and by request at special events such as the Isle of Hope Baptist Church Revival, the IOH Christmas Tree Lighting, and the Community of St. Joseph Services. This December, the band made special visits to Riverview, Azalealand, and MarshHaven. Purses with Purpose for the battered women's shelter- "Safe Place" are a project of the Daughter's of the King. These are new or gently used ladies handbags filled with small personal hygiene/grooming products

Thinking Outside the Manger in Tifton

For the second year, parishioners in Tifton wrote an Advent email devotional, called Think Outside the Manger. Folks have been forwarding these creative words of comfort and wisdom far beyond the parish. Learn more at stannestifton.com/category/advent2015/

This year's Angel Tree is dedicated to collecting gifts of clothing for nursing home residents. Once the gifts were collected, they were brought to the residents with Christmas carols and love. The church also packed Suitcases for Kids collecting gifts and necessities for under-served youth in the area.

Christmas Surprises in Valdosta

Christmas cheer went out with a regular food program of Christ Church, Valdosta. The congregation provides a sack lunch two Saturdays a month to 120 low income children in the community. The children received a special surprise on December 5. Each child received a new wrapped toy, donated by Christ Church parishioners.

A "Yard Free" in Savannah

On December 15th, the congregation hosted a Yard Free (a very affordable yard sale). Items like clothing, small appliances, dishes, linens, and more were either free or no more than a quarter. The congregation served coffee and donuts. Many guests of the Yard Free are also returning guests of the St. Michael's Food Pantry "I AM." So far this year, the St. Michael's Food Pantry has distributed over 1,976 bags of food to 5,502 people, some of whom live in tents only steps from the church's front door. Everyone at St. Michael and All Angels is involved in the hospitality ministries of the church in some way, from bringing food, to volunteering as a greeter, preparing and bagging food, book keeping, and praying for the guests of the food pantry.