



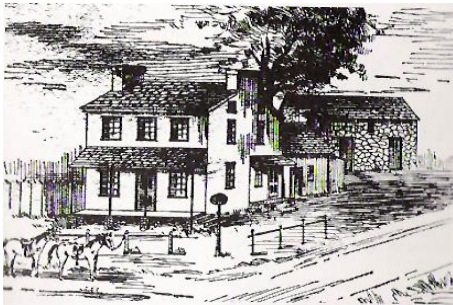
Church of the Advent
The History of Advent 1882 to 2021



A History of the Church of the Advent ~ Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

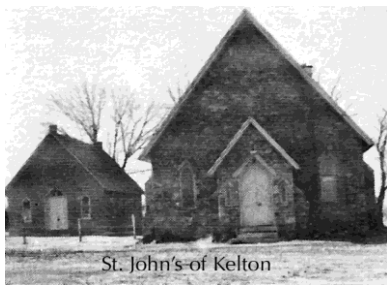
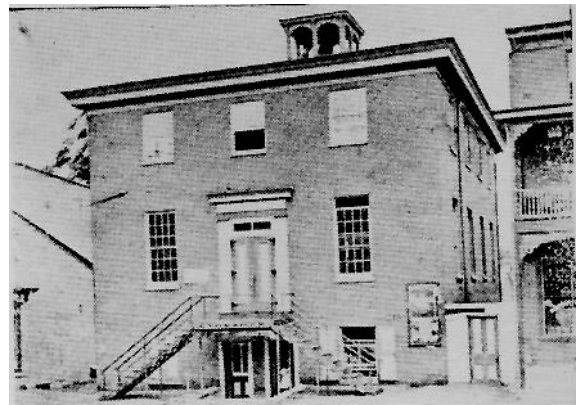
On May 1, 1882, a Pennsylvania judge put pen to paper and The Episcopal Church of the Advent in Kennett Square was born. With the signing of that charter, a small group of Episcopalians became a Church.

For the preceding dozen years its members had been meeting in various places in Kennett Square, including the Unicorn Tavern that stood on the northwest corner of State and Union Streets. The tavern, renowned in



Bayard Taylor's *The Story of Kennett Square*, stood here for many years but burned down not long after Advent was founded. Meetings of Episcopalians also took place in the old town hall that is also long gone and was located on the south side of State Street, between Union and Broad. The clock that told the time above the town hall now does the same from on top of the tower of the Genesis Building on the northeast corner of State and Union.

It's perhaps surprising that an Episcopal church in Kennett Square had not been formed earlier, for in those days of limited transportation it was important to have a church within easy distance. Two near-by churches were established before Advent. One was St. James, near the intersection of Newark Road and Street Road in West Marlborough Township. The year it was founded isn't known but it was destroyed in a storm in 1877, five years before Advent's founding. [In 2014 the site was revisited; the foundation ruins remain, hidden among a thicket of vines and trees.]



St. John's of Kelton was established in 1741 and closed in 1946. As of this date, its buildings are being used by another church faith. Following St. John's closing, for many years the historical marker on the site of the original St. John's Church and ancient burial ground, on State Road in New London Township, read, "information concerning new burials can be obtained through the Episcopal Church of the Advent, Kennett Square, PA."

St. Luke's of Chadds Ford was established at the same time as Advent – in 1884. It closed in 1932 but the building still stands, now used by the Chadds Ford municipality. The small white structure is located in the old village of Chadds Ford, one block south of Route 1 and one block away from the Brandywine Museum. Not that much farther away was St. John's of Concordville, founded in 1702 and still a very active church.



But many of the residents of Kennett Square felt we needed our own church. So, working with the Diocese of Pennsylvania, a petition to grant a charter was submitted. The names of the signers of this petition are on file. One was Theodore Hadley whose son, Charles, was to be the owner and publisher of the local newspaper. Later, Charles and his sister, Irene, established the Hadley Fund in memory of their parents, Theodore and Elizabeth. The Hadley Fund today still brings to us highly acclaimed programs for, as stated in its mission, "the civic betterment, social welfare, and education," of our local communities.

The first job of the new church was to erect a church building. This went fast and well. A committee of three members pledged themselves to gather the money necessary to construct a church building for the newly chartered parish. These three, were Theodore D. Hadley, S. Ashton Hand, and Henry C. White. The money flowed in and in just a few years' time, the cornerstone for the new building was laid in 1885 on a site on the



west side of South Broad Street, just below Union. In 1886 the first service was held in this new church that held the Kennett Square Episcopalians for the next seventy-plus years. After the congregation moved from South Broad Street in 1956, this first church was sold to the Lutherans of Kennett Square; and when they moved to a new location, the church building was bought in turn by the Presbyterians, whose church building was located across the street. The 1886 structure now serves as their Sunday school building.

The name "Church of the Advent" was chosen for the following reason. A member of the congregation had lived in Philadelphia where he had attended that city's Church of the Advent. Phillips Brooks, as a new priest, had been given this church as his first assignment. In 1885, when our cornerstone was being laid, Dr. Brooks had become the most famous preacher in the United States, rector of Trinity Church in Boston, and on his way to serving as the Bishop of Massachusetts. The suggestion to honor Dr. Brooks by naming our building after his former church in Philadelphia was accepted. Time passes and many of us now forget the name of Phillips Brooks, except when singing Christmas Carols and seeing his name listed as the author of "O Little Town of Bethlehem!"

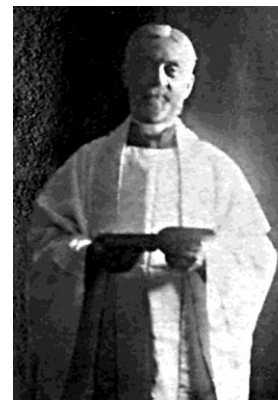


The story of the installation of the church's stained-glass windows is interesting. Kennett Square's most famous citizen, Bayard Taylor (author, poet, traveler, and diplomat), had just died in 1878. Those who knew him sought a suitable memorial. Since our church was just being constructed, it was a perfect site to honor Bayard Taylor by installing stained glass windows in his memory. His friends collected the donations that came from many persons, including the American poets James Russell Lowell and John Greenleaf Whittier, the author Samuel [Mark Twain] Clemens, the later Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and the Episcopal Bishop, Dr. Phillips Brooks, at that time rector of Trinity Church. The Bayard Taylor windows depict the Good Samaritan parable and the Prodigal Son.

A second set of stained-glass windows later installed is known as the Hadley windows. These were given by Charles Hadley in memory of his parents, Theodore and Elizabeth Hadley.

Another memorial to Theodore and Elizabeth was the bishop's chair, still utilized today by the church.

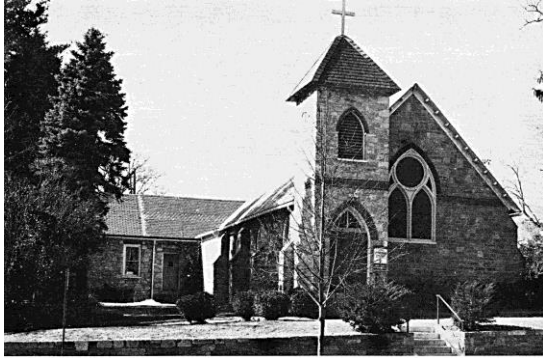
A rector was appointed to lead the new church: G. Livingston Bishop who served for three years, 1885 – 1888.



Following him, these men served as rector for the church's first decade: Thomas Burrows (1889 1893), Thomas Dickinson (1894 – 1895), Guy L. Wallis (1895 – 1896), William Wirt Mills (1896), and Stanley F. Symonds (1897 – 1898).

For two years, 1899 – 1900, Advent underwent a period of problems. We do not know the details, but for those two years there were no reports submitted to the diocese and there is no name of a rector in the archives. In addition, the records say that there were “almost two years of no services.” Whatever the problem was, in 1901, Thomas J. Taylor became rector and went on to serve the next sixteen years, setting a record until tied by W. Oliver Bellis (1928 – 1944) and then surpassed by Elbert St. Claire (1952 – 1979) and Richard Kirk (1979 – 1996).

During the Rev. Thomas Taylor’s leadership, the church undertook a major expansion project. The year 1910 saw a new entrance vestibule constructed, a church steeple built, and a parish house erected. The Church of the Advent owned an especially attractive building.



Following Thomas Taylor’s rectorship came Walter C. Pugh (1917 – 1921), William E. Warren (1922 – 1923), Charles E. Spaulding (1923 – 1926), John C. Runkle (1927 – 1928), W. Oliver Bellis (1928 – 1944), J. Wesley Rennie (1944 – 1952), and Elbert K. St. Claire (1952 – 1979).

Under the leadership of Charles E. Spaulding, a rectory was purchased adjacent to the church building.

By the mid-1950s the congregation had increased to 211 families that, the record states, “placed a strain on the church facilities.” Under the leadership of Elbert St. Claire, who came to Advent in 1952 and was



commonly called “Saint,” plans were drawn up for a larger church building and new land was acquired from the Scarlett family at the upper end of town where North Union (Route 82) and Fairthorne meet, the site of a new and much larger building. The cornerstone was laid in 1956 and services were held in the new building in 1957. The new church contained the sanctuary, a sacristy, offices, Sunday school rooms, and downstairs, a large parish hall and kitchen. Adjacent to the sacristy was constructed a small chapel and in it were installed furnishings from the old church: several choir pews, the communion rail, the altar table, the cross, the candlesticks, the bishop’s chair, the clergy chair, the font, and the Hadley and Bayard Taylor stained-glass windows. Even the 1885 cornerstone was brought and placed in the exterior wall of the chapel. Advent’s chapel is a small replication of Advent’s first church. It is now used for small private services and is a destination for quiet meditation and prayer.

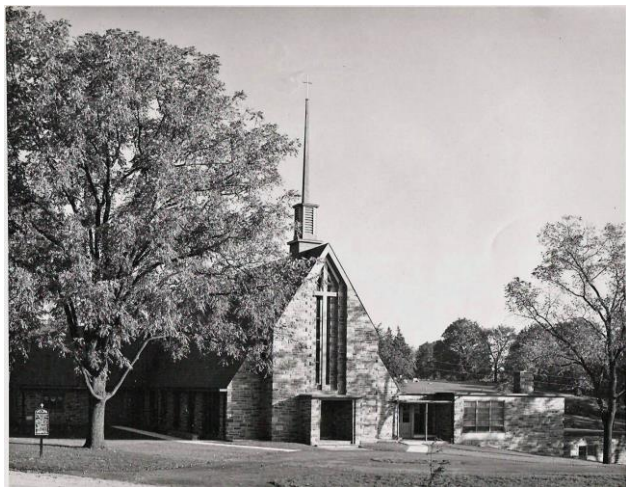
Advent purchased the home next to the church, 201 Crestline Drive, to have it serve as a rectory. Here Elbert St. Claire lived with his wife, as did the following rector, Richard Kirk, and his family.

Six stained-glass windows were also brought from the first church. They were kept in storage for some forty-five years until the Rev. Canon David Thomas had them taken out, refurbished, set in illuminated frames, and hung as follows: two mounted above the landing in the stairwell leading downstairs from the lobby, two placed on the front wall of the church flanking the altar, and four placed in the rear of the nave.

Many donations were made at this time and in subsequent years, the church received a welcome gift at this time – an organ and console donated by Pierre Samuel du Pont of Longwood.



In addition to that gift, others are listed in the archives including a sanctuary lamp (from Jackie Givens in memory of her son, David) and crucifix (donated by Sheila and Richard Sanford) – both in the chapel, brass altar candlesticks, missal stand, and altar service book (given by Knowles Bowen and his wife) in memory of their daughter, the silver cross that hangs above the center aisle's exit to the narthex (made by Harold Prout and given to the church by him and his wife, Olive, who, after her husband's death, remarried and became Olive Montaigne), and a baptismal font (donated by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Johnson and Dr. and Mrs. Spake) that is now located in the Memorial Garden outside of the chapel. The church spire was given in memory of George W. Fassett by his family and friends.



Elbert St. Claire ordered an original, four-foot-tall mosaic cross from the studio of Gian Andrea in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The cross was designed to show both the risen as well as the crucified Christ. It hung above the fireplace in the library. After renovations took place in the 1990's, this cross was moved to a smaller library.

Under Elbert St. Claire's leadership, all bills for the construction of the new church were paid off within the following four years. Also, the church had grown enough in size that an assistant rector was being employed. The vestry purchased a house at 251 N. Broad Street in 1964 as a home for the assistant. The house was sold in 1974.

Elbert St. Claire retired as rector in 1979, after twenty-seven years leading Advent. In 1986 a patio and garden dedicated to his memory were designed and placed to the right of the church's entrance. Added later were two urns, given by the two church secretaries, Joan Bolton and Kathy Gebhart, in memory of Joyce Kirk who died in 1992, the wife of the Rector Richard Kirk.

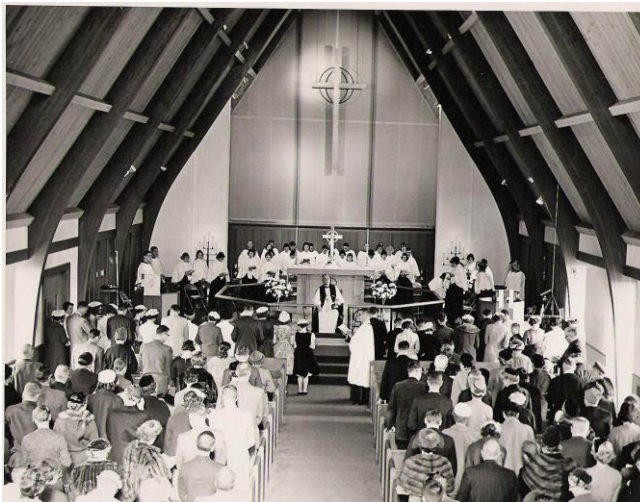


Richard Kirk succeeded Elbert St. Claire in 1979. He was to remain at Advent until 1996, a period of seventeen years. His tenure as rector saw Advent celebrate its 100th anniversary and in 1990 undergo another major renovation.

1982 marked the celebration of the Church's centennial. As part of the celebration, the congregation gathered on a Sunday in May at the entrance to the old church on South Broad Street. It then walked through town to its present

The kneeling cushions surrounding the altar were a result of a project of the churchwomen in the 1980's. In the mid-1970's a project headed by Marshall Newton and Bill Steltzer replaced the kneeling cushions of the congregation with attached kneelers. The money for this project came from the proceeds of the 1978 May Fair, an annual event at Advent.

A walnut table for the visitor's book and located in the narthex was designed by Ted Lawrence and given in memory of Joyce Kirk, the wife of the Rev. Richard Kirk.



site where it held its celebratory service. The parade was led by Bishop Lyman Ogilby, Rector Richard Kirk, Assistant Rector Barbara Kelley, and Parade-Master Bill Steltzer. There is an interesting anecdote about the parade. *We walked along State Street from Broad to Union and passed three teenaged boys standing in front of a store entrance. They stared at us and the tallest said, in a voice loud and clear, "Oh, my God." Without missing a step, the Bishop swept up his arm and pointed his staff at the boy and boomed out, "You got it right, son."*

In connection with the centennial celebrations, the church renovated its steeple. It planted a centennial oak on the lawn directly opposite the main entrance to the church. Twenty-five years later that small tree is now a mature oak. The bronze centennial plaque placed at the base of the tree has vanished.

To help celebrate, a model of the old church was built by Nathaniel Wyeth, a former vestry member. It was painted by Andrew Wyeth, his brother. The model is still housed in the church.



The 1990 renovations, thirty-plus years after the building was constructed, involved erecting a large Sunday school wing that paralleled the original office/Sunday school wing and created a U-shaped courtyard.

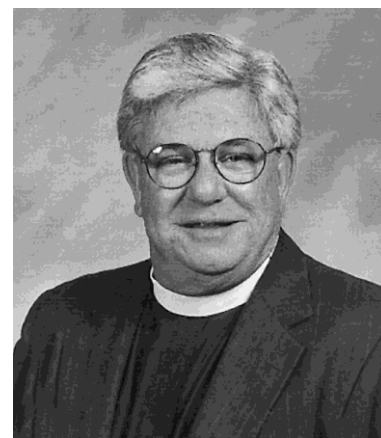
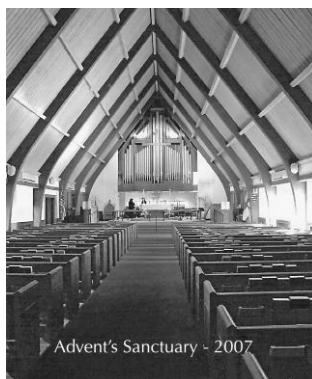


Advent also replaced its organ at that time. A new Möller organ was presented to the church by an anonymous donor. Its installation brought the organ pipes out into full view and they now form a wonderful focal point for the sanctuary.

The Rev. Richard Kirk retired in 1996. We were then led by an interim rector, the Rev. Dean Evans until, in 1997, the Rev. Canon David P. Thomas was named rector. He began his service in 1998.

David Thomas was the first rector at Advent not to live in the rectory. Because of an ever-increasing value in the housing market, it was felt that it was better for a rector to buy a home and then later reap the benefits of its increased value. In 2003 the rectory was converted into a Pastoral Care & Office Center and the staff moved its offices into it.

The year 2005 saw another major renovation. A water problem on the west side of the church caused rainwater to reach the inside of the downstairs parish hall. While the immediate project was to rebuild and waterproof the walls, the decision was made to redo the entire parish hall and add a few additional projects: air condition the sanctuary, install an elevator, again redo the steeple, and lower the main altar so that there was a better sight line to the choir behind the altar.





On the grounds, outside the chapel, the Memorial Garden was created, a personal project of Rev. David Thomas. He imagined it as a place for meditation and eternal rest. Trees and shrubs were planted, and a circular pool added. The growth and maintenance of the garden came under the leadership of Phyllis Wenner and her volunteer Lay Weeders.

On the grounds between the church and the parish office, a labyrinth was built in 2010. And in 2011, two “new” hymn panels were obtained by Deacon Nancy Hauser from the storehouse of the diocese. The panels had belonged to St. Augustine of the Covenant, an historic black church in north Philadelphia that had been closed. The panels were mounted on the walls of the church behind the altar facing the congregation.

David Thomas died while in office in 2009. For the next two years, Advent went through the search process for a new rector. During that time two priests successively served the parish, the Rev. Barbara Abbott and the Rev. Raymond Nelson. In the spring of 2012, the Rev. Michael Anderson Bullock accepted the call to become Advent’s seventeenth rector and left in 2014. Advent’s management was then carried on by its two assistant priests, Nancy Hauser and Linda Kapurch, until 2015 when Nancy Hauser was appointed Priest-in-Charge.



In early 2017, the vestry requested the diocese to consider appointing the Rev. Nancy Hauser as the rector of Church of the Advent. This was a bold request as traditionally a new rector in the Episcopal Church is brought in from another area, but with the vestry pointing out how well the church was running under Rev. Nancy Hauser’s leadership, Bishop Dan Daniels of the Diocese of Pennsylvania gave vestry permission for the Rev. Nancy Hauser to become rector of the Church of the Advent on May 13, 2017. In May of 2018 the Rev. Nancy Hauser became the Rev. Dr. Nancy Hauser with the award of her doctorate.

The offices of the Church of Advent were relocated into the main Advent campus in May 2018 and the old rectory that had housed the offices for many years was refurbished and rented out as a residential home until September 2020 when it reverted back to a rectory.

From early 2018 through 2019 the Church of the Advent developed an Emergency Preparedness Plan and equipped the church with lockdown capability. Advent worked closely with the Kennett Township Police Department in developing its procedures for dealing with emergency situations by installing reinforcing wrap on glass windows, safety bolts, and a security system inclusive of CCTV cameras and motion detectors.

In early 2020, the world experienced the COVID-19 outbreak. Like other Christian faiths, the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania shut down services and the use of the Advent campus by outside groups. Using off the shelf equipment, Advent put together the capability to stream live services to its congregation. Services are recorded and archived so people are able to access them as desired. Subsequently, Advent upgraded its equipment to a more state of the art system allowing a top-quality video and sound stream to be achieved. This system is also used to stream weddings, funerals, educational discussions, and other information of interest to the congregation. This system will continue to be an integral part of the Advent religious program.

In the summer of 2020, Advent started offering outside services in the front lawn for the congregation to attend. This was a successful initiative and incorporated music with a soloist singer and modified Holy Eucharist without wine. As the weather became colder, the outside services reconfigured into car communion. While parked in their cars, the congregation was able to listen to the services on FM radio and watch Rev. Nancy Hauser celebrate from an outdoor platform. Ushers dressed warmly, handed out service leaflets, directed traffic, and dispensed communion.

In parallel with the outdoor and stream services, Advent prepared its campus to offer a safe environment when indoor services resumed. Two industrial size air exchangers, located at the rear of the property, had not been in service for some time. An inspection showed that they were still in good working condition so they were fitted with top class filters, ultraviolet light to kill bacteria, and the ability to operate constantly during use of the sanctuary and fellowship hall activities. A protocol was developed to clean common areas of the entire campus regularly, which includes the preschool area the north wing and the office section in the south wing. Portable HEPA filters have also been installed in the office areas.

As of August 2021, we are holding three services on Sunday with the 7:45 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. held in the sanctuary (subject to social distancing and wearing masks). The 9:00 a.m. service remains outdoors and is held on the front lawn.

This history has presented just the major peaks happening in Advent's story. But this is just one history among so many: long histories of prayer and worship, a history that tells of the support for one another in times of trouble, a history of listening to and answering the needs of our community, a history of joyous good fellowship and a history of a congregation just trying to lead good Christian lives.

Those who have served at Advent as Assistants, Associates, and Curates

The Rev. Richard W. Hess	The Rev. Barbara B. Rivers
The Rev. John Arthur Phillips	The Rev. Angus K. Davis
The Rev. Frederick S. Crysler, Jr.	The Rev. John C. Obenchain
The Rev. Thomas Lee McClellan	The Rev. M. Katherine Tate
The Rev. Herbert W. Stevens	The Rev. Scherry V. Fouke
The Rev. Barbara Ann Kelley	The Rev. Nancy T. Hauser
The Rev. Margaret O. Williams	The Rev. Anthony Vanucci
The Rev. Beverly S. Porteus	The Rev. Raymond A. Nelson
The Rev. George O. Master	The Rev. Linda M. Kapurch
The Rev. Amy Elizabeth Richter	The Rev. Gregory Wilson
The Rev. Sarah Lee Nelson	

Those who have served at Advent as Rector's Wardens

1969-71	Nathaniel Wyeth
1971-74	Ivar Lundgaard
1974-75	H. Latrobe Roosevelt
1976-77	Russ Becker
1978-79	Marshall Newton
1979-80	Howie Lonsdale
1980-81	Cece Stricklin
1981-82	Mary Sue Bryan
1982-83	Don Reynolds
1983-84	Paul Beach
1984-85	Suzanne Pusey
1985-86	Marshall Newton
1986-87	Don Neil
1987-89	Cece Stricklin
1989-90	Ronald Aldrich
1990-92	Marion Morton
1992-93	Carol Delaney
1993-95	Chuck Muhly
1995-96	Kevin McLean
1996-97	Peggy Newton
1997-99	Bruce Murray
1999-00	Richard Sanford
2000-01	Bryan Bente
2001-03	William Gillian
2003-05	Stephen Pye
2005-08	Suzi Shriner
2008-12	Pete Peterson
2012-14	Tom Curry
2014-19	George James
2019-present	Dave Scott

- A special thanks to Bill Steltzer and his late wife Alice who from 2000 through 2018 acted as the Archivist's for the Church of the Advent, thus allowing us to have this concise history of Advent. Bill and Alice wrote the original history of Advent through its first 100 years, with Bill updating it to include the history through 2018. Also, thanks to Kim Hoeschel who has taken over as the archivist at the end of 2018 and provided access to the latest information.