

CHURCH OF THE ADVENT, EPISCOPAL

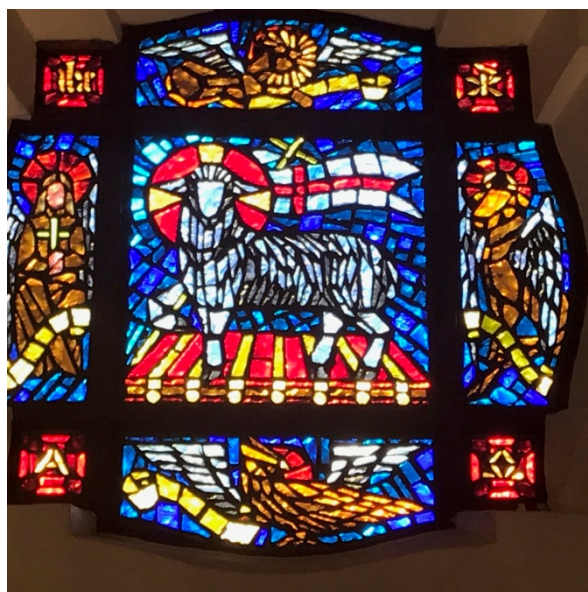
Brownsville, Texas



Our Mission

The ADVENT Community welcomes all, without exception, to grow responsibly in faith through Christ and the miracles of prayer and love:

- We gather together in faith
- We value our Episcopal traditions
- We build on our diversity and embrace inclusivity



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE FUTURE RECTOR OF ADVENT

Welcome to Church of the Advent, Episcopal, a church with an abundantly rich tradition and history – a church that is actively seeking pastoral leadership to carry us from a period of transition to a period of growth, renewal, and abounding love.

To quote Archdeacon Mike Besson of the Diocese of West Texas, “Advent is full of **JOY!**” Advent is also full of love, commitment, and belief, but the people of Advent are without a leader and are, therefore, seeking a rector to join their historic church.

We invite you to journey with us through the next pages to learn about Advent – her past, her present, her future. We invite you to immerse yourself in what exists now and imagine what can be as we join talents and work with active and strong lay leaders, hard-working volunteers, a united Vestry, and a devoted congregation.

Interestingly enough, the last bishop of the Diocese of West Texas grew up in Advent, and the two before him were Rectors at Advent! Imagine that!

OUR PAST

The Church of the Advent has existed in Brownsville since April of 1851 when a notice appeared in the Rio Grande Sentinel calling all persons interested in organizing a parish of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this newly-acquired territory of Texas to meet. These people met and elected the first Vestry, adopted articles of association, and named their church Advent.

Since day one, Advent has flourished, erecting its first building in 1854. This structure was destroyed by the hurricane of 1867. It was recreated in the same location and occupied until the present church on Elizabeth Street was completed in 1927. During these early years, the people of Advent were served by a succession of rectors, including some United States Army chaplains stationed at Ft. Brown.



As the church grew, the people of Advent were instrumental in the formation of two other institutions: the Episcopal Day School and St. Paul's Mission. The Day School was organized at the church site in 1948. The upper grades moved to their own campus on Coria Street in 1959, and, in 1985, the entire school moved to Coria.

BROWNSVILLE – On the Border, By the Sea...

Brownsville is the anchor city of one of the fastest growing regions in North America, the Rio Grande Valley. Here, a storied multicultural history of a restful border town meets the bustling present and future of an international trade hub and space port. The result is a community with no shortage of attractions and opportunities for newcomers, families, and adventurers alike.

Founded in 1848, Brownsville had previously served as a military post during the Mexican-American war with the surrounding area hotly contested between U.S. forces under future U.S president Zachary Taylor and the Army of Mexico. Following the war, Brownsville began its history as an international trade hub with a close social and economic connection to the neighboring Mexican city of Matamoros. Today, that special connection between border communities is celebrated through Charro Days, which are recognized across Brownsville as official holidays complete with street festivals, a parade, and the crowning of an annual Mr. Amigo, a Mexican citizen who has contributed much to the friendship between the United States and Mexico.

History also expresses itself in the historic downtown Brownsville that features mid-twentieth century architecture typical of booming main streets with structures and store fronts right out of a magazine. In recent years, this area has undergone a dramatic economic turnaround and now features a number of world- class restaurants, coffee shops, and a dynamic night life anchored around public parks and squares that host weekly and monthly events including a farmers' market, first Friday festivals, and numerous health and wellness initiatives from cycling meet-ups to community yoga. Complementing our resurgent downtown is the Mitte Cultural District which hosts the Gladys Porter Zoo, the Camille Playhouse, an art museum, and The Children's Museum. Each of these are legacy institutions directed by members of the local community and designed to serve Brownsville residents from all walks of life.

The city's dedication to public space also manifests itself through the hundreds of miles of hike-and-bike trails that spread across Brownsville and surrounding

communities. These trails and public spaces offer ample opportunities to sample one of the most unique natural ecologies in the world. Brownsville, and the greater Rio Grande Valley, is one of the top destinations in the world for birders and wildlife enthusiasts eager to experience an ecosystem like no other. Relatedly, another defining characteristic of the Brownsville terrain is an archipelago of wetlands that dot the city. These “resacas” are diversionary remnants of the Rio Grande River that have become part of the Brownsville identity popular to both live by as well as hike-and bike around through the trail network.

Lastly, nearby South Padre Island offers Brownsville residents a year-round opportunity to escape to the comforts of casual beach living. Gorgeous and highly- accessible beaches await on the other end of the causeway bridge connecting the island to the mainland. In addition, we are a manageable distance from the major metropolitan centers of San Antonio, Austin, and Houston (each providing a different flavor and experience to those looking to explore major urban centers).





SUNDAY WORSHIP

It is often said that we are **One Church** with three congregations. The blessing in disguise that has come out of this interim period is that the three congregations have come together even more and in a remarkable way. There have been five combined bilingual services since July during this interim period, and our Christmas Pageant was one of these, for the first time, bringing together the children from all the worship services!

7:30 AM: H.E. Rite I – This early-bird group enjoys this quiet, contemplative service and follows it with breakfast at a local Mexican food restaurant.

8:45 AM: H.E. Rite II in Spanish – This group has the most children, enjoys a mixture of organ and guitar music, and fully exhibits the Archdeacon's description of Advent as "joyous" as the congregation gathers in the Parish Hall post-worship to continue fellowship and to share their breakfast among themselves and those who arrive early for the 10:45 service. Lots of energy in the Parish Hall!

10:45 AM: H.E. Rite II – This is a traditional Rite II service, complete with a choir that is made up of parishioners and Choral Scholars.



Advent's **worship teams** have re-gained momentum since the church resumed in-person services post-COVID: 8 acolytes, 11 chalice bearers, 8 worship leaders qualified to lead Morning Prayer, and 16 lectors/intercessors.



Advent's **Altar Guild** of 19 members prepares the sanctuary for all three services on Sunday morning, other special services, and those held at the Episcopal Day School. Well-versed in Advent's traditions, they are flexible and accommodating and adapt to change as requested, always rising to the occasion. Altar flowers are delivered every Sunday to those unable to attend church, the bereaved, those celebrating a special occasion, and those whom we want to thank.

"Sing Unto the Lord a New Song!" **Music** is an integral part of worship at Church of the

Advent. The choir, which is open to any adult or teenager who likes to sing, participates each Sunday in the 10:45 AM service, singing a mixture of traditional and contemporary anthems. Our Choral Scholars program provides monetary stipends to a number of music majors from the local university and other young musicians in the community. This program, which has been supported largely through donations from parishioners, has enriched our worship while providing these young people with valuable performance experience. Music at the Spanish-language service is provided by our gifted church organist, as well as a professional guitarist, who leads singers in traditional praise music. Two other groups, the Grace Band and Junior



Choir, have, in the past, participated on a regular basis. The Grace Band's specialty was contemporary praise music, and that group sang several times a year at the 10:45 service. The Junior Choir gave children in the parish an opportunity to participate in leading worship and learning the joy of singing in a group. These last two organizations are not currently active, but the hope is to revive them as soon as possible. One of the Churches of the Advent's real treasures is our Acolian Skinner pipe organ. This valuable instrument is the only one of its kind in South Texas, and preserving it is a priority for our parish community.



Advent Membership and Average Sunday Attendance

<u>Year</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>ASA</u>
2019	280	152
2020	263	125
2021	260	71
2022	248	91
2023	260	102

ADVENT'S STAFF

Sexton – Brigido Jaime

Music Director – Lindsay Irwin

Organist – Colin Minkler

Spanish Music Coordinator – Moises Mata

Bookkeeper – Leslie Arnim

Virtual Church Secretary – Terry Foley

Treasurer – Mike Hale, Volunteer

ADVENT'S MINISTRIES

Advent's most vibrant ministries are the Food Bank, Daughters of the King, and, back by popular demand, Chuy's Friends!



Advent's **Food Pantry** is associated with the Rio Grande Valley Food Bank and truly shares God's love by handing out groceries to families in need. There is an ingrained approach of every volunteer to welcome every client with dignity and respect; and many relationships have been developed. The participants look forward to

coming each month, and we look forward to seeing and serving them. The 25 volunteers receive monthly shipments, stock shelves, bag groceries, greet, and help carry the groceries out to cars.

The Daughters of the King, the order for women who pledge themselves to a life-long program of prayer, service, and evangelism, is dedicated to the strengthening of the spiritual life of the parish. These 24 prayer warriors meet monthly to pray and update their prayer list that is used for daily prayers but communicate almost daily by email to relay an additional need or to celebrate a thanksgiving. The meetings and email communications are bilingual.

Chuy's Friends, just now starting up again in a big way since the pandemic, is an Open House gourmet hot meal (and we mean gourmet!) prepared for our church neighborhood on the first Sunday afternoon of every month. Many of our Food Bank clients look forward to it, and the word spreads to approximately 100 who fill our Parish Hall with laughter, great fellowship, and great food.



Community of Hope, our lay pastoral care group, has just re-started since COVID and has just completed training of the newest group of volunteers, now totaling 8! We are so grateful for this group who will make home visits, take communion, and develop relationships with those who may not be able to come to church.

Weekly **small groups** have increasingly become very important to a variety of parishioners. During COVID, Zoom became a part of our lives and, now, some of the groups have developed a hybrid format. The **Balanced Life Home Group** of 10 discusses the daily scripture readings and entries from the *Rule of Benedict* and closes with Evening Prayer. **Estudio Biblico** finished their study and now shares a meal and fellowship time during this interim period, awaiting leadership. Friday **Noon-Day Prayer** is offered in-person and via Zoom and usually is attended by about 10. The **Ladies Who Lunch Bunch** (women over 70) value their girl-time together and meet monthly at different local restaurants.



Adult **Christian Formation** has been beautifully led; however, Children's Christian Formation has not re-emerged since COVID. Through a generous donation, the Nursery and Godly Play room has been refurbished

with new flooring. We have a couple of trained Godly Play volunteers for pre-school children, a couple of willing volunteers for older children, and a recent interest in re-forming a youth group has emerged; but, once again, we are looking for strong leadership to develop the programs. We have at least 15 families with children, the majority from the Spanish-language congregation; however, all the children speak English. We are excited to have had 16 children in the Christmas pageant this year, the most since COVID!

Through another generous donation, Advent has refurbished and laid new flooring in the **Community Meeting Room**, which has an outside entrance. We have opened it up to community groups requesting meeting space. It is a nice large room that the church is utilizing in a variety of ways as well. Presently, four groups (2 of which are led by parishioners) have scheduled weekly meetings: Drug Addicts Anonymous, Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics, and Alcoholic Anonymous.

Office volunteers staff the Church Office officially from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Monday through Friday, although some volunteers are often doing what needs to be done well into the afternoon, always willing to work at peak times when needed. They work together with a virtual church secretary, who manages email-marketing and communications and produces the worship bulletins. All communications are bilingual.

The **Vestry** is comprised of nine members, including members from each worship service, who serve three-year terms, rotating three members every year.



Episcopal Day School

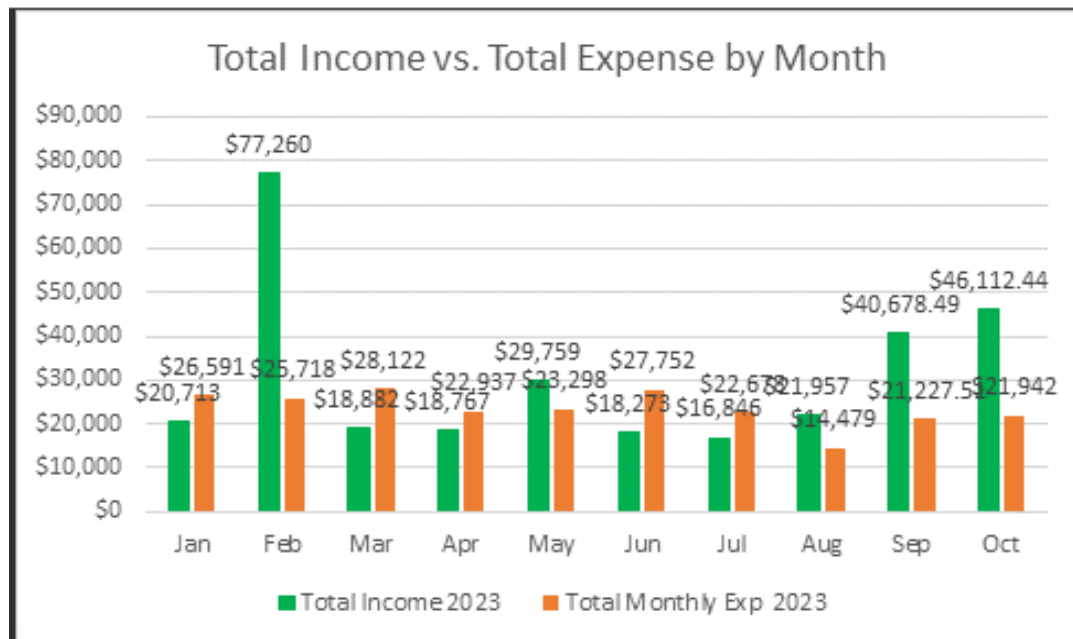
EDS is integral in the life of Advent. From its beginning in 1948, the school now serves 296 students, 18 months – 6th grade, and is fully accredited by the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES).

The Episcopal Day School educates children to become compassionate, courageous, and curious citizens so that they may learn to seek knowledge, love truth, and respect God and all creation. The campus includes a butterfly garden and a nature trail that gives students an opportunity to learn about the flora and fauna that is native to South Texas. In addition to a strong core curriculum, EDS offers extensive enrichment classes that include music, physical education, Spanish, computers, and Engineering Design. Daily Chapel is an integral part of life at the Day School. Students also participate in monthly service projects that are led by specific grade levels.



Financial Information

Balance Sheet October 31, 2023			
ASSETS		LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Current Assets		Liabilities	
Checking	54,969	Current Liabilities	
Other Current Assets (Investments, inventory)	406,592	Total Accounts Payable	1,000
Total Current Assets	461,561	Total Other Current Liabilities	145,237
Fixed Assets		Total Current Liabilities	146,237
Total 170 · Property & Equipment	383,912	Total Long Term Liabilities	14,305
Total 180 · Buildings & Land	982,143	Total Liabilities	160,542
Total Fixed Assets	1,366,055	Equity	
		304 · Designated Funds	62,199
		32000 · Unrestricted Net Assets	-61,639
		Total 401 · Restricted Funds	214,404
		Total 405 · Unrestricted Funds	15,688
		Total 476 · Fund Balance	399,241
		480 · Equity in Buildings & Property	982,143
		Net Income	55,038
		Total Equity	1,667,074
TOTAL ASSETS	1,827,616	TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	1,827,616



One of our assets is a generous gift of 22 acres in North Brownsville on Stillman Road. The long-range plan for this property as a new or second location of Advent was never realized; however, an outdoor chapel was constructed as well as two bathrooms, a storage shed, and a prayer garden built by one of our Eagle Scouts. It has been used for occasional services and by the Boy Scouts in the past. There is renewed interest in taking care of it; and the Vestry and the people of Advent are considering other ways it can be used in the future.

To You, Our Next Rector,
We begin with who we are:

On October 6, 2023, at our parish-wide meeting,
the people of Advent said they were:

- Followers of Christ;
- An Anglican church welcoming those new to a spiritual journey as well as those who have traveled far on that journey;
- A multi-cultural church, accepting all and proud of her diversity and resiliencia (resilience);
- A Christian community where people drop everything to help each other
- A people proud of the history and traditions of Advent and of their historic building;
- A congregation of hermandad (brotherhood).

With the foundation of who we are, Advent moves to opportunities for growth. The people spoke:

- To call and serve youth in greater numbers;
- To welcome a new Rector and family into the Advent community;
- To continue to build connections among the three services;
- Buscar caminos para crecer en poblacion (Look for roads to increase population.);
- Renew close connections with the Episcopal Day School.

So, with JOY, we look at who we are and how we want to grow, and we seek a priest with qualities to support us:

- To develop and support Christian Formation for youth;
- To possess bilingual/bicultural skills to lead worship in English and Spanish;
- To deliver strong, energetic preaching that relates the Gospel to our secular and spiritual lives;
- To lead our EDS students in chapel and daily life;
- To exhibit administrative leadership;
- To provide pastoral care, including visiting the sick, the bereaved, and the homebound;
- To drive stewardship
 - Through building relationships with parishioners
 - Through exhibiting financial acumen;
- To involve laity in planning and working in all church ministries;
- To be visible and involved in the total Brownsville community.



