

Welcome to  
**St. Paul's United Church of Christ**

*An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ*

December 8, 2024



**GOD IS STILL SPEAKING**



*NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, OR WHERE YOU ARE ON  
LIFE'S JOURNEY YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!*

## **Worship Leadership**

Preacher: The Rev. John J. Ward-Diorio  
The Rev. Allyssa A. Boyer  
Lector: Anna Thompson

## **Ministry of Music**

Minister of Music: Eric R. Dundore  
Assistant Music Director: Mark A. Dundore  
Organist: Sarah A. Myers  
Assistant Organist: Patrice G. Miller

## **Ministry of Audio and Video**

Jeffrey A. Dundore

## **Ministry of Service**

Lead Greeter: Jeff Leister  
Greeters: Nancy Richey  
Acolyte: Elsa Riesmeyer  
Kids' Place:  
Flower Preparation: Dennis and Bonnie Plymette  
Flower Delivery: Susan White  
Counting Team:  
Candle Lighting: Erin, Ben, Caroline, and Alice Anderson

## **Pastor Emeritus**

The Rev. Dr. Thomas E. Herrold

## **Ministers**

The Entire Congregation

*Visit the church website, under the 'Sign Up' menu heading,  
to help as a Sunday volunteer or Worship Participant.  
We're grateful for your generosity.*

## **ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

626 Williams Grove Road  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
(717)766-7931

[saintpaulsucc-mech.org](http://saintpaulsucc-mech.org)

Office: [stpaulstaff@outlook.com](mailto:stpaulstaff@outlook.com)

Rev. John: [revjohnwd@outlook.com](mailto:revjohnwd@outlook.com)

Rev. Allyssa: [allyssaboyer@outlook.com](mailto:allyssaboyer@outlook.com)



ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
SERVICE OF WORSHIP

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 8, 2024

*The livestream starts with the Announcements. If you'd prefer not to be on camera, kindly choose a seat in the back three pews of the Sanctuary. Leave prayer requests in the bowl in the Common area or give them to the Lead Greeter.*

*\*Those who are comfortable doing so are invited to stand.*

THE RINGING OF THE CHIMES

THE WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE ORGAN PRELUDE "Two Lullabies for the Christ Child"

Franklin Ritter

CHORAL INTROIT

\*THE HYMN No. 110 "Now Bless the God of Israel"

THE LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE—PEACE (Responsive)

*LIGHT THE FIRST CANDLE*

One: We are still waiting. One candle in the darkness doesn't offer much light. And with a promise to act, comes responsibility to respond. Taking a risk in a threatening world goes against our need to run and hide.

**ALL: Do we do what society expects and distance ourselves from what might appear scandalous? Or as Joseph did, stick by the frail child facing pregnancy? What will Joseph's choice be? What will ours be?**

One: After prayer and a dream, Joseph responds: "Mary, I'm here. We'll go through this together." A second candle now flickers in the darkness.

*LIGHT THE SECOND CANDLE*

**ALL: Let us pray. It takes courage, O God, to stand with those who would do Your work. May we find the strength to offer our support to Your Good News. Amen.**

SUNG RESPONSE:

"The Candle of Hope" (sung to no. 305, "O Worship the King, All Glorious Above")

***The candle of peace shines bright with God's plan;***

***The wolf will lie down and dwell with the lamb.***

***Our guns and our weapons, our hatred and war,  
Will give way to gardens that heal and restore.***

\*PRAYER OF INVOCATION (unison)

**Gracious God, Your Spirit is always with us, but we need to prepare space within our hearts, minds and spirits to hear it, be guided by it. Remind us that Advent is a season of preparation, and we need to ready ourselves for how Jesus will come into our lives, into the world, this year. Amen.**

CALL TO CONFESSION

We have gotten used to things being done for us, questions answered quickly, our desires met the next day. We have become uncomfortable with waiting, with preparing and patiently doing our work, engaging in our part so God's Hopes might be realized, so God's Peace might be experienced by one and all. Let us join in the time of Silent Prayers of Confession.

SILENT PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE (Responsive):

One: God forgives us and continues to offer us the chance to engage in times of preparation.

**ALL: Let us ease up on the rushing around so we lessen our risk of missing God's coming to us. Let us engage in times of preparation so that we can receive the gifts God is offering to us as they emerge, gifts of hope and peace. Amen.**

*If you are able, please rise and greet one another with signs of Peace.*

\*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

\*THE GLORIA PATRI (#759 is the tune, but not all the same words)

***Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.***

*Children are invited to the front at this time.  
Everyone who comes forward will be on camera.*

SING THE CHILDREN TO THE FRONT

Jesus Loves the Little Children

***Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world***

***Shy and Joyful, Bold and Bright***

***They are precious in his sight***

***Jesus loves the little children of the world.***

THE WORD FOR THE YOUNG

SING THE CHILDREN TO THEIR SEATS

Jesus Loves Me

***Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so  
Little ones to him belong. They are weak but He is strong.  
Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me  
Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so***

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING

Malachi 3:1-5

A GOSPEL READING

Luke 1:66-80

\*THE HYMN “Prepare the Way” (to the tune of no. 547, “Amazing Grace”)

***Prepare the way with quietness, a stillness in the storm,  
That will not speak the wounding words that cheapen or deform.***

***Prepare the way through holding back while others grasp and strain  
For unjust wealth and untamed power that add to human pain.***

***Prepare the way with fervent love that tears down walls of hate  
And reconstructs a kinder world that justice can create.***

***Prepare the way until we reach the dawn of that new day  
When all our paths converge in Christ, and we have found the way.***

Text: Copyright © 2018 by David Bjorlin. All rights reserved.

THE RESPONSE:

One: God is Still Speaking.

All: **Thanks be to God!**

THE GOSPEL READING & MESSAGE:

Luke 3:1-6

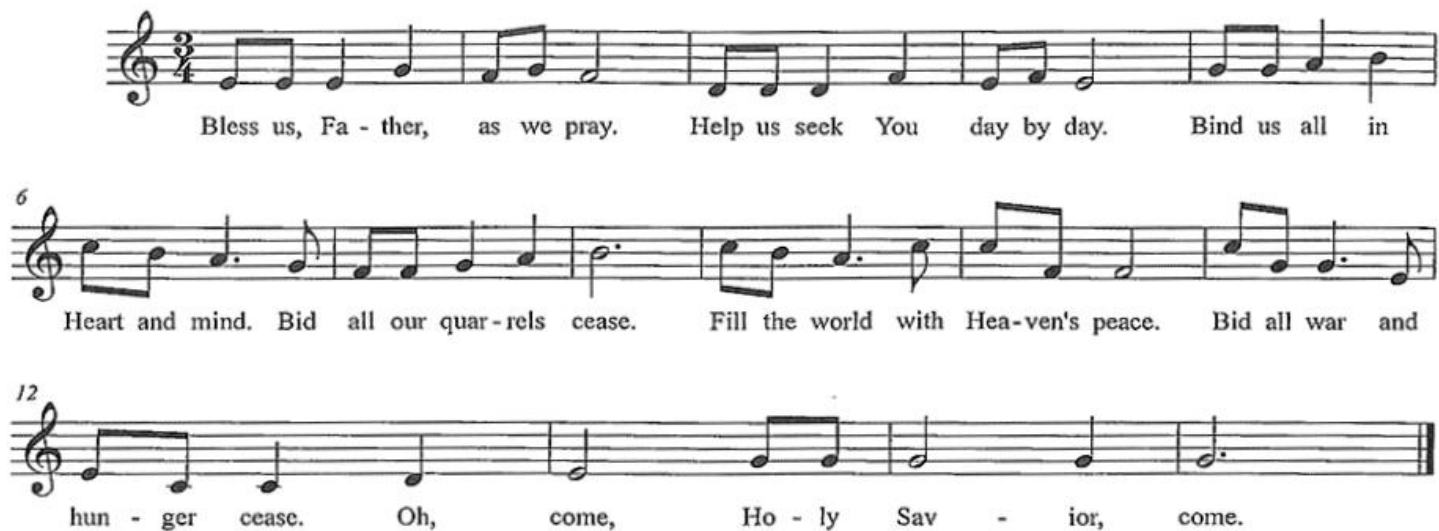
“Preparing is Necessary”

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

THE CHORAL RESPONSE (unison)

# Advent Blessing



Bless us, Fa - ther, as we pray. Help us seek You day by day. Bind us all in  
Heart and mind. Bid all our quar - rels cease. Fill the world with Hea - ven's peace. Bid all war and  
hun - ger cease. Oh, come, Ho - ly Sav - ior, come.

*Please place your pew pad sheets in the Offering Plate.*

THE OFFERTORY "Like a Child"

Damon

Youth Choir

\*DOXOLOGY

***From all who dwell beneath the skies,  
Let the Creator's praise arise!  
Let the Redeemer's name be sung.  
Through every land, by every tongue! Amen.***

\*THE PRAYER OF DEDICATION (Unison)

**How good You have been to us, gracious God! How meagerly we have responded. You have restored our fortunes when we felt all was lost. You have filled our mouths with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy. We give thanks, not only with a portion of our income, but also through renewed commitment to righteous living. By Your grace, we share in the work Christ came to accomplish among us. May love abound in and through us. Amen.**

\*THE HYMN "O God of Peace" (to the tune of no. 131, "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear")

***O God of peace, you sent us John who called, "Prepare the way!"  
He challenged all we counted on and promised your new day.  
He cried out in the wilderness and made the pathway straight.  
He filled the valleys, smoothed the roads, and taught us how to wait.***

***We wait for Christ and look around at all that is not good.  
We see the crooked places found in our own neighborhood.  
We see within this land we love the children cast aside.  
May we who long for peace be moved to answer when they cry.***

***We hear the words that John proclaimed as we await Christ's birth.  
We long for peace to come one day and fill this troubled earth.  
Could it be that we're called to be peacemakers in our day?  
By doing so, O God, may we again prepare the way.***

Text: Copyright © 2018 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.

\*THE BIDDING TO MISSION

\*THE WORLD PEACE PRAYER

One: Lead us, O God.

**All: Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth.  
Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust.  
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace.  
Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe. Amen.**

\*THE BENEDICTION

\* THE THREE-FOLD AMEN

*The livestream ends after the Postlude. You're welcome to converse in the Narthex after the Three-fold Amen.  
However, if you choose to stay for the Postlude, please remain silent until the conclusion.*

THE ORGAN POSTLUDE "An Acclamation of Joy"

David Paxton

References:

The Advent Candle Lighting liturgy, slightly adapted, was written by David Schmidt found on page 18 in *Before the Amen: Creative Resources for Worship*, edited by Maren C. Tirabassi and Maria I. Tirabassi; 2007; The Pilgrim Press.

The Prayer of Dedication is from "Gathered by Love" by Lavon Bayler, 1991, United Church Press.

The World Peace Prayer is a paraphrase of a verse from the Upanishads, the most ancient scriptures of Hinduism, also prayed daily by Roman Catholic Benedictine nuns.

Songs, music, and lyrics used by permission. CCLI License #11380019 CSPL128945

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Please plan to stay after the service for our Budget Meeting in the sanctuary.**

**COOKIE WALK TODAY**

How does having a plate of all different kinds of Christmas cookies sound when you've only baked one kind? Well, that's the beauty of the Cookie Walk! St. Paul's many talented bakers donated cookies packaged to sell for just \$1. You can load up your basket and create a beautiful assortment of cookies for your holidays. Cookies are still available for purchase after the budget meeting.

## **PRISM (People Rallying in Singles Ministry)**

Did you know we have an awesome group called PRISM at St. Paul's? On the fourth Sunday of the month, following 10:30AM worship, we meet at a local restaurant to enjoy each other's company and have fun conversation. Due to the holiday, this month we're meeting on December 15th. at Perkins on Erford Rd.

## **BLUE CHRISTMAS**

Christmas can be a painful time. Some people are mourning the death of a loved one. Some are far from home. Some are suffering from illness, addiction, or estrangement. Some are lonely, struggling financially, or in conflict with another. Some are hurting because of the great pain, need, and violence in our nation and around the world. The constant refrains on radio and television, in shopping malls and churches, about the happiness of the season, about getting together with family and friends, serves as a reminder to many of what we've lost and how alone we feel. Join us for our Blue Christmas worship service, Thursday, December 12, at 7:00 PM. This service is for every person who is looking for a safe place of rest, comfort, healing, and hope this holiday season.

## **CHRISTMAS CAROLING**

The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear! Everyone—children, youth, and adults—are all invited to go Christmas caroling! We will leave St. Paul's at 2:00 PM sharp on Saturday, December 21, and drive to the homes of some of our congregation's seniors to sing carols. Bring comfortable shoes, warm clothes, and a joyful spirit. We plan to return to the church building around 5:30 PM. People of all ages are invited to participate, but please sign up so that we can arrange transportation for everyone (sign up online or contact Rev. Allyssa). Children in 5th grade or younger must be accompanied by a parent/guardian. If you are willing to volunteer as a driver, please let us know when you sign up. If you have questions, please contact Rev. Allyssa.

## **CHRISTMAS CANTATA "JOY"**

Mark your calendars and come early to save a space for the Christmas Cantata "Joy." Our choirs and musicians have been preparing diligently for this year's presentation on Sunday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>. At 10:30AM. We hope you join us.

## **CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP**

This year, we will have two Christmas Eve Worship Services, 4PM and 11PM. We hope you will celebrate the special evening with us at St. Paul's.

## **THE CHRISTMAS FUND**

On Sunday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>. We will collect the Christmas Fund Offering. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Checks can be made to St. Paul's and placed in the giving plate.