

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

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

December 22, 2024



**GOD IS STILL SPEAKING**



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

### **Worship Leadership**

The Rev. John J. Ward-Diorio

The Rev. Allyssa A. Boyer

### **Ministry of Music**

Minister of Music: Eric R. Dundore

Assistant Music Director: Mark A. Dundore

Organist: Sarah A. Myers

Assistant Organist: Patrice G. Miller

### **Cantata Instrumentalists**

Sarah Myers, piano

Maddie Felix, synthesizer

Allen Roth, Bass

Jim Weaver, Drums

Alison and Andrew Williams, percussion

### **Ministry of Audio and Video**

Jeffrey A. Dundore

### **Ministry of Service**

Lead Greeter: Jeff Leister

Greeters: Patrice Miller, Jill Morell, Don Dupes

Acolyte: Elsa Riesmeyer

Kids' Place:

Flower Preparation: Susan Gabriel

Flower Delivery: Chris Grice

Counting Team:

Candle Lighting: Ivonne, John, Sophia and Natalia McFarland

### **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**

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

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 22, 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 "The Coventry Carol"

Robert J. Hughes

CHORAL INTROIT

\*THE HYMN No. 129 "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"

THE LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE – JOY (responsive)

LIGHT THE THREE PURPLE CANDLES

One: We often speak of shepherd and magi receiving the good news in this season, but they were not the first. Was it a cow or ox, donkey or sheep, who found its manger occupied with Love Incarnate? Were they the first to express their joy?

**All: The Good News comes not just for humankind, but all of creation. Those representatives were there not just to be cute, but to remind us that all of God's world groans awaiting the Good News. Are we as welcoming as these creatures who gave of their stable and manger?**

One: "Baby Jesus asleep on the hay." We know about birth and caring for our offspring. We know one needs a place of safety where one may curl and rest. Yet another light joins the fight against the night.

LIGHT THE PINK CANDLE

**All: Let us pray. The cattle are lowing; creatures are sharing their songs of parenting to welcome new birth. May we also welcome Love's birth with our own sounds of support and joy.**

SUNG RESPONSE

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

***The candle of joy reminds us to sing,***

***For God is at work to do a new thing.***

***The proud will be humbled; the lowly will rise.***

***God's kingdom is one of delight and surprise.***

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

## THE WORD FOR THE YOUNG

\*PRAYER OF INVOCATION (unison)

**God of Love, You come to us in Jesus as a new-born child. Children bring us such joy! Guide us in caring for all people, for we were all once children, and all continue to have that child in us, continue to have You within us all. Amen.**

## CALL TO CONFESSION

The joy of this season can remind us of the potential joy that surrounds us in each moment. Yet we are so caught up in what we do not have, what we think we need, and the real threats around us, that we miss that joy which is present. Let us join in a time of Silent Prayers of Confession.

## SILENT PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE (Responsive):

One: God forgives us and continues to provide joy and wonder, peace and love.

**ALL: Let us truly allow ourselves to be caught up in the joy that is present and share that with others. 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.**

## JOY!

A Gospel Christmas Celebration

Music composed and arranged by Joel Raney

David Payne, narrator

Deb Hall, soloist

#1 – Sing Joy!

“Joy to the World” and “Mary Had a Baby”

#2 – Waiting

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

#3 – A Song in the Air

“A Song in the Air” and “Away in a Manger”

#4 – Jesus, What a Wonderful Child

“Jesus, What a Wonderful Child” and “Amen”

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

\*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)

**Thank you, God, for Your mercy and protection, for feeding us physically and spiritually, for caring for us like a shepherd. We present our offerings as an act of gratitude. What we can never repay we pause to appreciate. In the name of generosity we cannot match, we seek to be generous toward others. May these offerings do far more than support our church. We dedicate ourselves and these gifts to honor Christ through ministry in the world. Amen.**

**JOY!**

(continued)

#5 – O Come, All Ye Faithful

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” and “Silent Night”

#6 – Tell It on the Mountain  
“Go, Tell It on the Mountain” and “Hymn of Joy”

#7 – Sing Joy!

\*THE HYMN No. 132 “Joy to the World”

\*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 “How Great Our Joy”

James Mansfield



Today’s Christmas Cantata is filled with Spiritual pieces we have loved for many decades. “Mary Had a Baby,” “Go, Tell It on the Mountain,” “Amen,” “Jesus, What a Wonderful Child,” and others have warmed our hearts and graced our Christmas celebrations without any cost to us.

If you enjoyed hearing these songs today, please consider contributing to the Spiritual Royalties Initiative using the envelopes in the pews. We continue to support two local arts organizations that serve the Black community – Sankofa Theater Group and Capitol Area Music Association (CAMA). Thanks for your support!

References:

The Prayer of Dedication is from “Gathered by Love” by Lavon Bayler, 1997, 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.

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### ALTAR FLOWERS

The Altar flowers are given to the Glory of God by  
Candy LaRue, “In honor of Corky’s birthday.”  
Tom and Tania Pineo, “In memory of Ross Pineo.”