

THE CLEAR VOICE

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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DECEMBER 2018

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

One of my favorite parts of the season of Advent and Christmas is the singing of carols. For a few years now we've taken the December Friday Fun Night on the road so that we can sing carols to a couple of local retirement homes. We're not exactly the King's Singers, but we have a good time. And not only us. Every time, and this is something that never fails to amaze and delight me, our singing becomes something more than a performance. Not only because our audience often sings along with us, but because something *special* happens as the music flows. Something deep down in the heart. The presence of Christ – his peace, his joy, is palpable. And I know that he abides in those homes, and in those hearts, long after we have left.

It is a precious thing to be a part of such a wonder. It is a miracle, really. We don't make it happen. It doesn't even come from us. Even if there was a Pavarotti or a Callas among us, it still wouldn't come from us. We are instruments of the divine. Wind instruments, if you will, created so that we might be filled with the breath of God. All that we do is consent to be part of God's beautiful revelation in this world. All that we do is summon the boldness and bravery to say to God, "Here I am . . . use me!" And God will use us. God will create sublime symphonies with the unlikeliest instruments, violins with broken bows and clarinets with sticky keys. God will make us sing.

I know that this happens. It happens with music, it happens with words. I know because I have preached some shabby sermons in my day, sermons that feel like a total strikeout, the kind that leaves the batter lying in the dirt. But often those are the very sermons that people tell me about, saying, "This was just what I needed to hear," and "Your words really moved me today." Every day – have you imagined? – the Holy Spirit waits to move through us to bring the joy of Christ to others.

This Christmas, when so many are anxiously trying to figure out the perfect gift to put under the tree, remember that *you yourself* have been created to share the most precious gift, that gift without price. Remember that you are an instrument of God's grace, and then . . . give them Christ.

Yours,

Jonathan

CHRISTMAS NOTES

Advent Workshop / Hanging of the Greens Service

Sunday, December 2

Join us downstairs in the social hall at 9:00 am as we prepare some Christmas crafts, decorate indoors and outdoors, then we will all take part at 10:30 for our annual Hanging of the Greens service as our church family prepares our hearts and the sanctuary to welcome the Christ Child.

9:00 am Advent Workshop

10:30 am Hanging of the Greens Service with Communion



Christmas Eve – Monday, December 24

Monday, December 24 at 5:00 & 7:00 p.m.

Join us one and all as we celebrate the birth of Christ! Both worship services will include the reading of the Christmas scriptures, the singing of carols, and candlelight. The 7:00 service will also include the Sacrament of Holy Communion. O come, let us adore him!

"And the Word Became Flesh"

A Daily Devotional for Advent

Be sure to get a copy of the new daily devotional for the Advent season. This year's edition reflects on four different words that take on 'flesh' in the promises of Advent and Christmas, invested with special meaning by the sacred stories of our faith: Night, Guide, Birth, and Home. Hard copies are available at church, or visit the church website to download a PDF version (www.saintpaulsucc.net)

*Glory
to
God
in the
Highest*

GIVE THE FOLLOWING GIFTS:

*To your enemy . . . forgiveness.
To your opponent . . . tolerance.
To a friend . . . your heart.
To a customer . . . service.
To all men . . . charity.
To every child . . . a good example
To yourself . . . respect*

-Author Unknown

Music for Christmas

Dec 2 - Choir

Dec 9 - Choir

Dec 16 - Bell Choir

Dec 23 - Choir

Christmas Eve

5:00 - Quartet

7:00 - Choir

DECEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

SUNDAY DECEMBER 2

Advent Workshop at 9:00 AM

Hanging of the Greens Service at 10:30 AM

Greeter: Louis Franconi
Readers: The People of St. Pauls
Coffee Hour: Allen Family
Flowers: given by the Shoop family in honor and memory of Mary and Dan's anniversary
Scriptures: Jeremiah 33:14-16 • Psalm 25:1-10 • 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 • Luke 21:25-36

SUNDAY DECEMBER 9

Worship at 9:00 and 10:30 AM

Choir Performs

Greeter: Mark and Mary Banfield
Readers: Mark Banfield
Flowers: Open
Scriptures: Baruch 5:1-9 or Malachi 3:1-4 • Luke 1:68-79 • Philippians 1:3-11 • Luke 3:1-6

SUNDAY DECEMBER 16

Worship at 9:00 and 10:30 AM

Bell Choir Performs

Greeter: Kendra Schramm
Readers: Annie Hauze
Flowers: given by The Shoop Family In Memory of Amanda
Scriptures: Zephaniah 3:14-20 • Isaiah 12:2-6 • Philippians 4:4-7 • Luke 3:7-18

SUNDAY DECEMBER 23

Worship at 9:00 and 10:30 AM

Choir Performs

Greeter: Open
Readers: Liza Hauze
Flowers: given by the Banfields in honor of Mark's birthday
Scriptures: Micah 5:2-5a • Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 80:1-7 • Hebrews 10:5-10 • Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)

SUNDAY DECEMBER 30

Worship at 10:30 AM

Greeter: Louis Franconi
Readers: Louis Franconi
Flowers: Given by Diane Olcese in honor of the New Year
Scriptures: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26 • Psalm 148 • Colossians 3:12-17 • Luke 2:41-52

UPCOMING FELLOWSHIP EVENTS

Friday Fun Night — *Friday, December 14*

Join us on a Friday of each month, from 6-8 PM, for great food, fellowship, and fun. Sign up in the social hall. This month we'll car pool from church and go caroling at area nursing homes and then return to church for fun and refreshments.

January's First Friday will be - Friday, January 11 (Note the Date) when we will enjoy pizza while we dismantle the Christmas decorations at our post-Epiphany gathering.

Lunch Bunch — *Tuesday, December 11 at 11:30 am Buno Cafe*

The lunch bunch will dine at Buno Cafe (320 Lincoln Highway, Exton) on Tuesday December 11. See the bulletin board in the social hall to sign up. Everyone is welcome!

Men's Breakfast — *Thursday, December 13, December 27*

The men of St. Pauls meet at Famous Toastery – Main Street Exton at 7:30 AM on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. No sign-up. Just come start your day with some food and fellowship.

INTERFAITH AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY EVENTS

Interfaith Action Community Events

December 13 – Sacred Text Discussion at the Islamic Society of Chester County

The IAC invites everyone to the Islamic Society on Thursday, December 13, to learn about the Quran and Hadith sacred text traditions of Islam. The event begins at 7:00 and is located at 1001 Pottstown Pike, West Chester, PA 19380. To RSVP please visit <http://isccsacredtext.rsvpify.com>

January 18 – Unity Shabbat at Beth Israel Congregation

The third annual interfaith Unity Shabbat will be hosted by Beth Israel on Friday January 18, from 7:30-9:00. Refreshments will follow. Stay tuned for RSVP information.



Christian Unity Service - January 27 at 7:00 p.m.

The Exon-Lionville Ministerium invites you to attend the annual service celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Sunday, January 27, 7:00 p.m. at Exton United Methodist Church on Sharp Lane. Pastor Jonathan is slated to preach this year. He will be speaking on a theme from Deuteronomy 16:20, "Justice, Only Justice You Shall Pursue." Light refreshments and social time will follow the service. A freewill offering will be received for the Ministerium Emergency Relief Fund.

STEWARDSHIP & MISSION

Deacons encourage you to enroll in St. Paul's electronic giving plan. It's safe, easy, and eliminates weekly counting errors. Download the form from the resources section of the church website and e-mail to the church. Or see any consistory member. <http://www.saintpaulsucc.net/index.php/resources>

Giant gift cards in denominations of \$100, \$50, and \$25 are on sale in the social hall each Sunday at 10:00 AM. Buy the card at face value and use it at any Giant to buy groceries. Giant sells the cards to us at a discount so the church receives 5.00 for every \$100 we sell.

Remember to use Amazon Smile for your online purchases. St. Paul's earns 0.5% when you use Amazon Smile and it doesn't cost you anything additional. To start using Amazon Smile ...

Log onto <https://smile.amazon.com> and sign in using your account credentials enter "st. paul's united church of christ exton pa" as your charitable organization

St. Pauls serves dinner on the first and second Monday of each month at Atkinson Men's Shelter in Coatesville. Volunteers to join a cooking/serving group or to contribute funds to defray the costs of food are always welcome. Contact Diane Battilana (diane@sbaplus.com) for more information.

When you do your weekly grocery shopping, make sure to pick up an item for our food bank; distribution basket is in the social hall. St. Pauls helps stock the Lord's Pantry in Downingtown.

Monthly Worship at Exton Senior Living - Wednesday Dec. 12 at 2:00 p.m.

Join Pastor Jonathan as he leads worship on the second Wednesday of each month for residents at Exton Senior Living. Each service includes music, prayer, a brief sermon, and communion. Come be a part of this ministry! The address is 600 Pottstown Pike, just before the light at Ship Road.

Church Clean-Up Day – Saturday, December 1 starting at 9:00

Help keep St. Pauls looking beautiful! We'll be raking, cleaning up the flower beds, and tackling some other jobs the trustees have identified. The more people helping, the less work for everyone.

The United Church of Christ Pension Fund Fourth Quarter Mission of the U.C.C.

This fund helps provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retired church workers, emergency assistance to clergy families in need, and Christmas checks to hundreds of annuitants, as administered by the pension board. Please give generously to help those clergy who have given generously of themselves.

St. Pauls Cemetery

If you currently have any flowers/decorations on the graves that you would like to keep, please remove them as we prepare our cemetery for the Christmas season. Please consider giving to our cemetery perpetual care fund.

DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

December Birthdays

- 6 Sheri Brierley
- 9 Barry Chester
- 12 Grace Allen
- 17 Anne Hauze
- 24 Sharon Smoot
- 25 Mark Banfield
- 27 Clare Schramm

December Anniversaries

- 28 Marilyn and Dennis Ayotte

THANKS

Thank you to all who helped make the Holiday Fair a great success this year. This year's fair brought in well over \$4,600. Thanks to our vendors, to those who helped on the days leading up to the fair, those who presided over the bake table, ran the kitchen, supervised the crafts, took care of Attic Treasurers, Santa & his elves, the hospitality table, put together auction baskets, set up / dismantled. Thanks for all contributions from money to auction baskets to attic treasures to baked goods. Thanks to those who advertised to their friends, and came to enjoy. It takes a large number of people to run the Holiday Fair. Thanks to all.

Joan Trimble, Melissa Harrop

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sunday School News

Sunday School meets during the 9:00 worship hour with one multi-age class using the Shine curriculum. Volunteer teachers and helpers are always welcome. If you are interested in teaching one of the classes, please sign up in the social hall or see Lisa Allen if you have any questions. Child clearance documents can be found at <http://www.saintpaulsucc.net/index.php/resources>

Bible Study – *Wednesday Mornings at 10:00*

Adult Bible Study, led by Jonathan, takes place every Wednesday morning at 10:00. Come for coffee, light breakfast, and some great discussion about this week's lectionary. No homework required.

“For it is in giving that we receive” – St. Francis of Assis

Remembering Our Veterans:

Wreaths Across America Ceremony – *Saturday, December 15 at 11:00 a.m.*

St. Paul's has partnered with "Wreaths Across America" to remember and honor all veterans. The goal for 65 wreaths for the Veterans interred in our cemetery has been met thanks to the generosity of the people of St. Paul's and the gift of \$500 from VFW Post 845 Downingtown. At this year's dedication service VFW Post 845 will be fielding a color guard and will address the congregation along with Senator Andy Dinniman. The wreaths will be placed in our cemetery after the service.

As an additional remembrance to veterans and others interred in our cemetery, please consider giving to our cemetery perpetual care fund which is stretched continually taking care of Veterans graves as well as others.

CHURCH CALENDAR

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2

Advent Workshop at 9:00 am
Hanging of the Greens Service at
10:30 am with Communion
No Church School
Choir Practice at 11:45

MONDAY, DECEMBER 3

6:30 PM Atkinson Center Dinner

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4

7:00 PM Bell Choir

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5

6:00 PM Just for Today

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6

7:30 AM Men's Breakfast
(Bistro 24 – Exton)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9

Worship at 9:00 and 10:30 am
Church School at 9:00
Choir Practice at 11:45

MONDAY, DECEMBER 10

6:30 PM Atkinson Center Dinner

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11

11:30 AM Lunch Bunch meets
at Buno Cafe, Exton
7:00 PM Bell Choir

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12

3:00 PM Monthly Worship
at Exton Senior Living
6:00 PM Just for Today

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14

Christmas Caroling (time TBD)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16

Worship at 9:00 and 10:30 am
Church School at 9:00
Choir Practice at 11:45

MONDAY, DECEMBER 17

9 AM -12 Lionville Mom's Club
NO Consistory This Month

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19

6:00 PM Just for Today

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20

7:30 AM Men's Breakfast
(Bistro 24 – Exton)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23

Worship at 10:30 am

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23

Candlelight Worship at 5:00
Candlelight Worship/Communion
at 7:00 pm

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26

6:00 PM Just for Today

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30

Worship at 10:30 am

