

FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN. UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

December 2 marks the beginning of Advent: a time of waiting and preparation, anticipation and hope in a world that seems very chaotic, especially if you turn on the news. Journalists have abided by the motto, "if it bleeds, it leads" so begin the news story with gory stuff. The sensational sells. We Christians also have a sensational message: God became a human being! Such a pronouncement was considered blasphemy to Jewish and Muslim believers. God is greater than any human they proclaim. But we Christians know that "nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1.37)

Our Jewish ancestors waited for the coming messiah, the one anointed by God, to lead the small nation from Roman captivity. They hoped to have another king as great as David. They hoped for a child born to be called Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father and Prince of Peace who would reign on David's throne to establish justice and righteousness forever." (Isaiah 9:6+ paraphrased.) No one was expecting the messiah to be born in a barn to a homeless couple. But then no one expected the youngest son of Jesse to be anointed by Samuel as king. God continues to surprise us in unexpected ways. The good news is that God's surprises are more than we wish for. God's blessings are what we need not what we hope for.

The early Christians did not celebrate Christmas. Holy week and Easter were the great festivals followed by the day of Epiphany. It wasn't until sometime in the 300's that Christmas began to emerge as a feast day. The earliest Christmas hymn I am familiar with is "Of the Father's Love Begotten." It reflects the first chapter of John and the familiar Christmas story of Luke. "In the beginning was the Word..." "He is alpha and omega." "The babe, the world's redeemer." "The Word became flesh and lived among us."

This year we will prepare for the coming savior with the four Sundays of Advent, followed by Christmas Eve worship and a service of Lessons and Carols. This is also a year when Epiphany occurs on a Sunday, so we will have an Epiphany service! We will have many opportunities to reflect on who we are, whose we are, and the sensational, unexpected gift of hope—a baby born to fulfill what Isaiah predicted. Jesus is our wonderful counselor, God in the flesh, the one who established and continues to establish God's justice in a world lacking in mercy. God, Emmanuel, is with us today and every day.

Come and prepare for an amazing birth and worship the new born king!

May God the Creator who delights in you,
Jesus the Savior who is born for you
And the lifegiving Spirit who shines on you
Bless you and keep you in hope and peace.

Shalom, *Pastor Best*

Dear Members of St. Paul:

I would first like to thank both Barb Bulger and Cathy Loeffler for offering to run for our open position on council this year. It is always difficult to get individuals to decide to run for a council position. All we really ask is for 1 to 2 hours per month to attend our monthly meeting. This however seems to be too much to ask of individuals. I know we all have busy lives with small children, various outside activities and work schedules, but we really need people to step up and volunteer. It is important to get different opinions and suggestions for things we need to do for our church and congregation. The same individuals always seem to volunteer. You can't complain if you aren't willing to serve. We will have two open position for next year, so please consider saying "yes" when asked to run for a council position.

Hopefully many of you were able to attend the Fantastix Dinner that was changed to Sunday, November 18, due to the bad weather the previous Thursday. The dinner raised \$747.00 for our church. It was a great dinner and always wonderful entertainment by the kids. Thanks for a delightful evening of food and songs!

It will be a busy month for us along with our normal holiday church worship schedule. Hopefully we will see many of you either attending or volunteering at some of these activities. Christmas is always my favorite time of the year, but please don't forget the real reason we celebrate. Looking forward to seeing you in church during the holiday season.

Linda

The following St. Paul events that will be happening in December:



Below is a schedule on days we will be decorating the church for the Historical Society Christmas House Tour:

Wednesday, November 28, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Thursday, November 29, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Friday, November 30, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM (if needed)

Friday, November 30, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM (if needed)



SALVATION ARMY – DECEMBER 8

BI-LO'S NORTHGATE PLAZA

We still need volunteers from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm to ring the bell for one hour. A sign up sheet is in the narthex or call the church office if you would like to volunteer.



CHRISTMAS MUSIC FESTIVAL

DECEMBER 2 – 6:30 PM

For the first time in many years, St. Paul's will be hosting a Christmas music festival! It will be held on December 2nd at 6:30. A band from Hope Lutheran will be playing! A group of youth from Oak Grove and surrounding churches are going to sing, and a Girls Chorus from Seneca Valley plans to attend!

Our very own St. Paul Choir will sing and lead us in carols, and our own youth will perform!!

If you or anyone you know would be a great addition to the music, please contact Bobi-Jean Alexander. We welcome more of your friends to perform!

Please join us for an uplifting evening filled with the Christmas spirit!



DECEMBER 9 FROM 10:30 TO 1:30

Sydney McMurray will be holding this as a fundraiser for our church. Please help by making your favorite cookie or come and purchase cookies to enjoy over the holidays. Please see Sydney or Jen McMurray if you would like to volunteer to make cookies.



**Christmas Eve
CANDLELIGHT
SERVICE**

**JOIN US FOR OUR CHRISTMAS EVE
CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP WITH HOLY
COMMUNION AT 7:00 PM.**



Only new prayer requests will be in the weekly bulletins.

CONTINUED PRAYER REQUESTS: Shonna Ash, Brad Bartley, Ann Boben, Landon Brewer, Tom Brosenitsch, Carol Bulger, Nancy Bulger, Samantha Bulger, Nellie Chmara, Kim Christy, Cynthia sister of Bev Brosenitsch, Rick Dickerson, Don, Emma [child suffering from viral meningitis], David English, Mark Fox, Bernie Fedorka, Barbara Frantz, Charlotte Glaspey, Brett Greenhill, Adrienne Haegg, Judy Hart, William Loveridge, Bobbie Marchlenski, Martin Matscherz, Nolan Nachriener, Newborn Conrad, Don Nielsen, Terry Oakes, Verna Patscko, Sherry Pengidore family on death of her son, Lois Peeples, Mike Pollack, Jax Ramirez, Erin Roman, Bud Senn, Dawn Swidorsky, Louise Spithaler, John Wherry, Lilly Wolfe, and Ron Zinkham.

Please keep the church updated on your prayer request. All updates and request may be emailed to splcofzelie@gmail.com Also if you would like to be notified of any needed prayers, please email the church office, with your email address.

A Merry Balance

In Luke 10:38-42, Martha gets a bad rap. After all, we need Marthas to get things done and to show hospitality. (Note that Martha is the one who opens up her home to Jesus in the first place!)

Marthas are needed in December, but holiday preparations shouldn't shift our focus from the reason for the season. When we become "worried and distracted" as Martha did (v. 41, NRSV), we're tempted to trade God's "one thing" (v. 42) for the world's many worthless things. Yet if we're only like Mary, we may forget to let the world know who we're celebrating!

So this Christmas, keep a proper balance between your inner Mary and your inner Martha. Take time to "be Mary," kneeling at the manger, so that all the merry things you do as Martha have meaning and serve the newborn king.



Somehow, not only for
Christmas,
But all the long year
through,

The joy that you give to others,
Is the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend in blessing
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more of your heart's possessing
Returns to you glad.

—John Greenleaf Whittier



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

It is that time already to purchase a poinsettia for our Christmas Eve Candlelight worship service. Cost for a 6 1/2" potted flower is \$8.00. Help us fill the Altar area with a beautiful poinsettia. Forms are in the bulletins or mail in your order to the office. December 3 is the last day to order. Flowers may be taken home after the service. Checks are to be made out to Marty Goetz.

Mary and Elizabeth supported each other during the uncertainty and joy of pregnancy. May we who worship together also support one another through life's ups and downs.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sunday school continues under the leadership of Elizabeth Muthler. Parents of children age 3 and up are encouraged to have their child/children stay after worship for 10:00 am Sunday school where the children's focus will be on following Jesus. If you have any questions or would like to help in any way, please see Elizabeth.

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP ON DECEMBER 16 AS THE YOUTH LEAD US IN WORSHIP!

Evening Bible study led by Pastor Ralph Kusserow continues to meet the first and third Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM. The next Bible study will be December 5.

More opportunities to enjoy wonderful Holiday Music:

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH – HOLIDAY CONCERT

Zion Lutheran Church is sponsoring a holiday concert featuring the Ellwood City Civic Chorale. The concert will be held on Sunday, December 9th, beginning at 3:00. Following the concert, there will be a social time with cookies, coffee and punch.

ONE VOICE FOR CHRIST

Sylvia Brackbill will be singing with the **One Voice for Christ** ensemble this Advent Season. One Voice Christian Vocal Ensemble was founded in September, 1991 by David F. Pressau, Minister of Music for Grace Anglican Church in the Mount Washington neighborhood of Pittsburgh. Through his work at the church and as a music and theatre educator, David had the opportunity to meet a number of Christian vocalists who were seeking new ways of using their talents to glorify the Lord. From those beginnings, David was led to pursue the formation of a permanent multi-denominational ensemble tasked with spreading the word of God's love through a ministry of music. Thus, One Voice was created. Each performance is 1 hour and 15 minutes in length: Schedule of performances are:

Sunday – December 2 – 2:00 PM, The Presbyterian Church of Coraopolis

Sunday – December 2 – 7:00 PM, St. Peter's Church – Brentwood

Sunday – December 9 – 2:00 PM, Claysville United Presbyterian Church

Sunday – December 9 – 7:00 PM, Christ Church, Anglican – New Brighton

Sunday – December 16 – 2:00 PM, Grace Anglican Church – Mt. Washington

Sunday – December 16 – 7:00 PM, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Sewickley

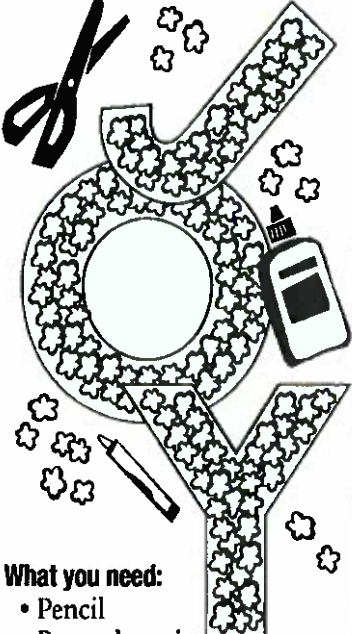
For more information about One Voice for Christ go to their website at

<http://onevoiceforchrist.com/about.html>

CHRISTMAS

joy

Make this fun decoration as a reminder of the joy Jesus brings.



What you need:

- Pencil
- Poster board
- Scissors
- Craft pompoms (red, white, green, silver, gold)
- Glue

What you do:

1. Trace large capital block letters J, O and Y on the poster board.
2. Cut out the letters.
3. Glue pompoms on one side of each letter, completely covering it.
4. Share JOY by displaying the letters in your home.

2018

DECEMBER



ASSISTING MINISTER: Linda Flora
 LECTOR: John Bulger
 GREETERS: John and Barbara Bulger
 USHERS:
 BELLINGER: John Bulger
 Office Hours: Mon., Wed., Fri. from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

SUNDAY

First Church, U.S.A.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
01						
02			7:00 Bible Study			08  Ring bell for Salvation Army from 10:00 to 6:00 at B-I-L-I's
09	6:00 Council Dinner and Meeting at Passavant Retirement Center Bistro					15
16	8:30 Choir 9:00 Worship with Holy Communion - Youth Sunday 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Confirmation		7:00 Bible Study			22
23	8:30 Choir 9:00 Worship with Holy Communion 10:00 Sunday School					29
30	8:30 Choir 9:00 Service of Lessons and Carols NO SUNDAY SCHOOL					

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:
 December 2 - 6:30 PM Christmas Music Festival
 December 8 - 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM Ring Bell for Salvation Army
 December 9 - 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM Cookie Walk
 December 16 - Youth Sunday
 December 24 - 7:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion
 December 30 - 9:00 AM Service of Lessons and Carols

For where as a child is born, unto as a man is grown and the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

MERRY CHRISTMAS