

Dear St. Paul's family,

Happy New Year! Happy CHURCH New Year, that is. For on Sunday, November 27, the church year starts over with the season of Advent, a season of mystery, depth, darkness, and hope.

I've always loved the season of Advent. As a child, I was drawn to Baby Jesus in the manger, his mother and father gazing at him with love and wonder, and, of course, all the animals, shepherds, and wise men. Growing up, my parents had a nativity set that my sister and I used to play with for hours. We would march Mary and Joseph, the wise men, shepherds, and animals all around our house (from the kitchen to our bedrooms to the bathroom – they went on quite a journey!). But when we were done playing, we knew exactly where to put them back; even back then, we knew that, at the end of the day, they all belonged back in the little stable, back around Jesus.

As an adult, I realize that my sister and I understood something about the nature of Advent, even before we had the words to articulate it: Advent is all about movement. Advent is all about motion. Advent is all about God coming into this world – *breaking* into this world, really – as a small, helpless baby named Jesus.

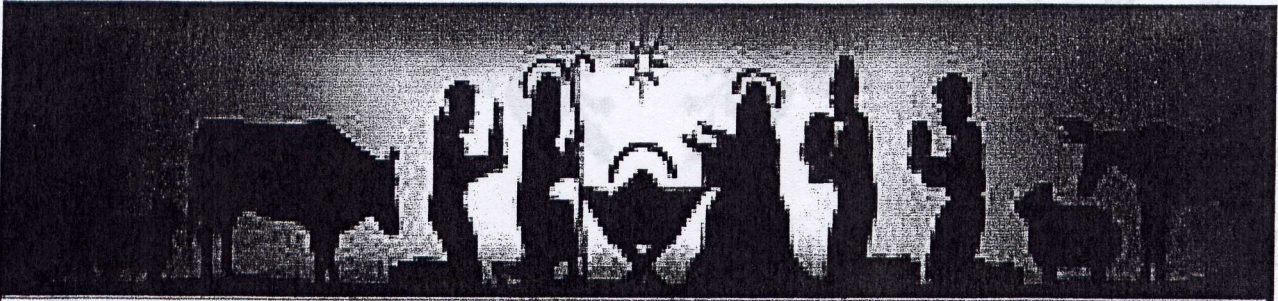
During Advent, like those wise men, shepherds, and even animals, we are invited to go on a journey too. Like them, we, too, are invited to *move* – to move into a deeper, more mysterious union with God. During Advent, we are invited to move past shallowness, materialism, and complacency, into the joy and wonder of worshipping our God-made-flesh, who comes to us in the Christ child.

Towards that end of moving into the mysteries of the season, I am offering an Advent worship experience during my Pastor's Forum on the Wednesdays of Advent (December 7, 14, and 21) from 6:00-7:00PM. During this time together, we will engage in prayer, scripture, song, silence, and reflection (not necessarily in that order!) as we draw closer and closer to the Christ child, our God-made-flesh. All are welcome.

During this season of Advent, may God bless us as we move, and deepen, and wonder, and grow.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Mary Beth



Sweet little Jesus boy,
help us to remember who you really are.
**“This is how God showed his love
for us:
God sent his one and only son into
the world to give us life.”**
1 John 4:9

December 11

9:00 am Adult/Youth/Children's Sunday School
10:30am Sunday School Christmas Program
11:30am Reception in Fellowship Room
4:00pm Caroling Party with soup supper
No Board Meeting

December 18

9:00am Adult/Children's Sunday School
10:30am Worship Service
11:30am Coffee Time
11:45am Worship Committee Meeting

December 24

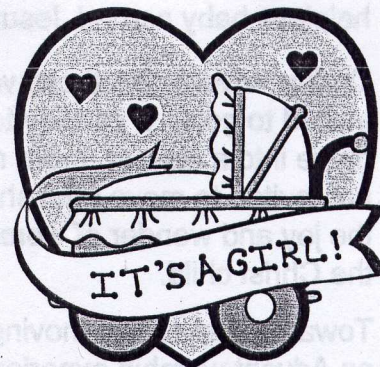
9:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 25

10:30am Christmas Day Worship Service

January 1

10:30am New Year's Day Worship Service



Congratulations to
Aaron and Emily McCarty
on the birth of their daughter
Claire Charlotte
who was born
Tuesday, Nov. 22nd

Welcome Claire!!!



Please Join Us

during worship service on Sunday,
December 11 at 10:30 a.m.

As St. Paul's Sunday
School Classes



Lead us in celebrating
the Christmas Story!



Get in the Christmas Spirit

Refreshments afterwards



HOLIDAY POINSETTIAS

If you would like to provide one or more poinsettias to help decorate our church, you are invited to bring them to the church beginning Monday, Dec. 19th. We will keep them in Pastor Mary Beth's office (where it remains nice and warm!) until Christmas Eve, at which time we will adorn the altar, sanctuary, and entry with the poinsettias.

If you are providing a poinsettia in memory or in honor of someone, please provide that information in a note when you deliver the poinsettia. To have the names included in the Christmas Eve bulletin, we will need that information no later than Thurs, Dec. 22.



CAROLING, CAROLING, NOW WE GO!



Join in the fun as St. Paul's
goes caroling!!!

Sunday, December 11
4:00 p.m.

We will gather in the fellowship room at 4:00,
leave promptly at 4:15, and return to
the church about 5:15 for a hot bowl of soup
and some holiday treats.

Singing is NOT a requirement - just a
joyous spirit and a willingness to spread
some holiday cheer!

If you want to join in the fellowship and
fun, but really don't want to sing, help
would be appreciated at the church keeping
an eye on the soup and getting ready for
the carolers' return!!



MILK JUGS NEEDED FOR LUMINARIES

Let's line the sidewalks and church entry
with luminaries for our Christmas Eve
service! In order to have a great showing of
luminaries, we would like to collect 60 one-
gallon plastic milk jugs. Between now and
Christmas Eve, please bring your clean
(rinsed out!) gallon milk jugs to the church,
and we will light up our corner of Madrid on
Christmas Eve.



Thank you, Worship Committee, for the
great lunch after worship service on Nov. 20th
and for organizing a great "Hanging of the
Green Party". Thank you, also, to Christian Ed
for organizing and helping the kid's make
decorations for the Sunday School tree.
St. Paul's looks even more amazing then usual.



Anna is studying Anthropology at Iowa State University and presently in Kédougou. I am sure she would love to hear from her St. Paul's UCC family. Her e-mail address is: Akolson@iastate.edu

Merry Christmas Anna, from your St. Paul's UCC family.

Thank you, thank you to all who worked so hard getting Harvest Home Supper prepared and served. Our profit was approximately \$1,000 with \$500 going into the General Fund, \$250 to the Red Kettle (Salvation Army Christmas Fund) And \$250 going into Lay Life and Work Designated Account. 250 pounds of Turkey was cooked along with 120 pounds of potatoes and 44 pies!

Thank you, also, to Mike Saxton and Jerry Wibe for getting the new kitchen ranges installed on short notice! Two Frigidaire gas ranges have been installed in the Kitchen at a cost of \$1,705.00 which includes two year extended warranties. The cost of these ranges was paid out of Lay Life and Work Designated Account. All-in-all It has been a very productive year for the Lay Life and Work Committee but we couldn't have done it without all of your help!

OUR GIFTS AND STRENGTHS

The following list was compiled for St. Paul's church profile from our Visioning Retreat

We are resilient. We have gone through difficulties in the past, but we're still here. This show us that God is still here with us.

We are warm, and enjoy being together. During worship, our passing of the peace is quite lively, as we exchange hugs and handshakes and smiles with one another. We love to make good food and share in table fellowship with one another. There is a sense of warmth, welcome, and family when you walk through our doors.

We are compassionate and caring with one another. This is probably most clearly demonstrated in times of crises, when we bring food to each other, and share in each other's burdens by being present with one another in trying times.

We have a remarkable ability to step up and do whatever task needs to get done. "Git 'er done" has become one of our mottos.

We love music. We have a small but mighty choir, and at least three members of our congregation who share their musical gifts by playing the organ or piano as part of our worship on Sundays.

Work of Christmas Begins

"When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with the flocks,
then the work of Christmas begins:

to find the lost,
to heal those broken in spirit,
to feed the hungry,
to release the oppressed,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among all peoples,
to make a little music with the heart...

And to radiate the Light of Christ,
every day, in every way, in all that we do and in all that we say.

Then the work of Christmas begins.

The message of the Feast of Epiphany announces to all people, everywhere:

Rise up in splendor...your light has come,

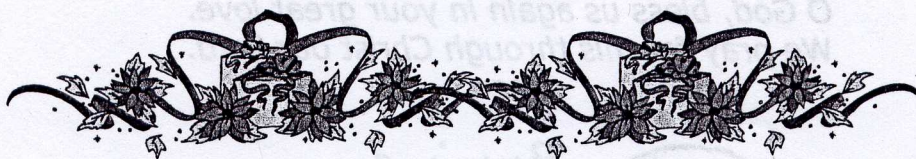
The Glory of the Lord shines upon you!

Let the work of Christmas begin, and let it begin with you."



the **HARK**
Herald Angels
Sing

Howard Thurman(adapted)



Christmas Thoughts

"It's sharing your gifts, not purchasing gifts;
It's not wrapping presents, its being present
and wrapping your arms around the ones you love;
It's not getting Christmas cards out on time,
It's sending any card, anytime, at the right time;
It's not having the biggest and best Christmas light display,
It's displaying the Christ light that comes from your heart;
It's not Santa coming down the chimney,
It's Jesus coming down from heaven,
and giving us the gift of eternal life."

In those days a decree was issued by the emperor Augustus for a census to be taken throughout the Roman world. This was the first Registration of its kind; it took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone made his way to his own town to be registered. Joseph went up to Judaea from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to register in the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house of David by descent; and with him went Mary, his betrothed, who was expecting her child.

While they were there, the time came for her to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

*O God,
whose mighty Son was born in Bethlehem
those days long ago,
lead us to that same poor place,
where Mary laid her tiny Child.
And as we look on in wonder and praise,
make us welcome him in all new life,
see him in the poor,
and care for his handiwork
the earth, the sky and the sea.
O God, bless us again in your great love.
We pray for this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

