

December 7, 2020

Dear St. Paul Church Family and Friends,

Greetings to you on this third week of Advent!

We are aware that the weekly packets have not been arriving in your homes in a timely manner. Because of this, we are including the Christmas Eve bulletin in today's mailing.

The Community Blue Christmas worship service will be Monday, December 21 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Peter's Church. This service will be offered both in-person and online via St. Peter's Facebook page (search Church St. Peter). You can also find the service on YouTube by searching St. Peter's Church in New Bremen. If you would like your loved one's name read aloud during the service, please contact Pastor Becky.

The Christmas Eve Candlelight/Communion worship service will go "live" on the St. Paul Facebook page at noon on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020. If you need communion elements or Christmas Eve candles, please stop by the church office or give us a call and we'll arrange for the delivery.

Also on Christmas Eve, we are hosting a Christmas Eve Sanctuary Open House from 4:00-6:00 p.m. The sanctuary will be filled with music, candlelight and scripture. Communion will be available along with activities for families. We are hopeful this come-and-go event will give you space to celebrate and contemplate the birth of the Christ Child in a safe manner.

Sanctuary poinsettias will be available for pickup on Christmas Eve from 6:00-8:00 p.m. and Christmas Day from 10:00 a.m. to Noon. The east and south sanctuary doors will be unlocked during these times.

We have three Council positions that need filled: First Year Trustee, Junior Deacon and Treasurer. Please contact Jeff Quellhorst or Roland Dicke if you are interested in any of these positions.

We are seeking a volunteer with snow removal equipment who would be available for snow removal on weekdays on the west side of our property and on weekends for our parking lots. Please contact Jeff Quellhorst or Roland Dicke if you are interested.

As we wrap up 2020, we invite you to consider giving an extra financial gift to St. Paul. Your giving keeps ministries and missions going strong in the midst of the pandemic. If you have not picked up your 2021 offering envelopes, please stop by the church office during office hours. (Monday-Friday 9:00-Noon and Monday-Thursday 1:00-4:00 p.m.)

Grace and Peace,



Jeff Quellhorst    Roland Dicke    Becky Erb Strang    Dee Schroer  
Council President    Council VP    Senior Pastor    Associate Pastor

Financial Information as of December 14, 2020

**Operating Fund**

**Beg. Balance (\$2,974.14)**

Giving Income \$3,910.00(weekly)

Endowment Transfers \$35,842.92(ytd)

Income \$287,459.36 (YTD)

Expenses \$292,586.62 (YTD)

Balance **(\$8,101.40)**

**Building Maint & Property Care**

Beg. Balance \$83,428.04

Income \$14,889.00 (YTD)

Endowment Income \$4304.33 (YTD)

Expenses \$32,332.29(YTD)

Balance \$70,289.08

**Local Aid**

Beg. Balance \$9,934.05

Income \$18,508.00(YTD)

Expenses \$21,166.65(YTD)

Balance \$7,275.40

Bless Pantry Inc. \$17,706.16

Bless Pantry Ex. \$12,458.19

Balance \$5,247.97

**Our Church Wider Mission**

Pledge \$30,000.00

Income \$387.00(weekly)

Income \$23,712.00 (YTD)

**Project of the Year**

Income \$24.00(weekly)

Balance \$2,523.00

Please keep the family of Shirley May in your prayers. Shirley died December 11. Shirley is the wife of the Rev. Larry May who served St. Paul Church from 1977-1982.

DECEMBER 20, 2020  
FOURTH SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT



*God favors the peasant girl Mary.*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Luke 1:26-38	The birth of Jesus foretold
Monday	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16	The Lord's message to David
Tuesday	Romans 16:25-27	Paul's closing prayer
Wednesday	Luke 1:46b-55	Mary's song of praise
Thursday	Luke 2:1-20	The birth of Jesus
Friday	John 3:11-16	For God so loved the world
Saturday	Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26	God's promise to David
Sunday	Luke 2:22-40	Jesus presented in the temple

### SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

*The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus." Luke 1:30-31 (NRSV)*

### PRAYERS AND BLESSING

#### **A Prayer for the Week:**

Lord God, just as you favored your servant Mary, grant all of us faith and trust in your power to bring salvation to all through Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### **Mealtime Prayer:**

With this food we receive your steadfast love, O Lord; with our mouths we proclaim your faithfulness to all generations through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Psalm 89:1)

#### **A Blessing to Give:**

May the love of God bless you with the good news of Jesus' birth.



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DECEMBER 20, 2020

### HYMN OF THE WEEK

*Wait for the Lord*



### WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

### CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- When have you received special attention from friends or family?
- Think of someone you have valued as a friend. In what ways do you value them?
- The angel Gabriel describes Mary as favored. What does it mean to you that God has given the world our Savior and Lord Jesus through Mary, a young peasant girl?

### DEVOTIONS

*Read:* Luke 1:26-38.

In verses 28 and 30 the angel Gabriel says that Mary is favored, that is, Mary experiences the undeserved kindness of God. In Luke 2:40 and 52 the child Jesus is also described as favored. Divine attention comes to a young virgin to deliver Jesus, the Son of the Most High. The beginning of the Gospel of Luke tells of Elizabeth, a barren woman who gives birth, Mary, a peasant girl who gives birth to the future king in the lineage of David, and of shepherds in the field who will be the first evangelists of the good news of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:18). The message is clear: with God all things are possible, and as with Mary, our faithful response is, "let it be with me according to your word" (v. 38). Mary is the model of the life of faith that acknowledges that God has done great things for her. As we prepare to enter the season of Jesus' birth, we are met with God's favor and blessings for us as well. How has God come to you with divine favor?

*Pray:* **God of undeserved kindness, give us faith to trust that with you all things are possible through Christ Jesus our Lord, Son of the Most High God. Amen.**

### SERVICE

During this Advent season think of those who are not favored in our society. For example, the homeless are poor, hungry, and in need. In what ways can you show God's love to them through an act of kindness?

### RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

From your nativity set, hold each piece in silence for a moment. Then place the pieces back in the scene. Have Mary and Joseph arrive first, followed by the shepherds and then the wise men. Wait to place Jesus in the manger until Christmas Eve. On your Advent wreath, light the first candle of hope, the second one of peace, the third one of joy, and the fourth one of love. *Say this Bible verse:* **For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.** (John 3:16)

*Pray:* **Lord God, thank you for showing us love even when we are afraid like Mary, the mother of Jesus. Give us hope, peace, joy, and love as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: [www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)



Photo courtesy of Myra Hanenkraat



Photo courtesy of Becky Erb Strang

## **St. Paul United Church of Christ**

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Visit our website at <https://stpaulnb.org>

Like and follow our page St. Paul United Church of Christ – New

Bremen, Ohio on Facebook

Rev. Becky Senior Pastor

Pastor Dee Associate Pastor

Jeff Quellhorst-Council President

### **Welcome to St. Paul UCC, we are glad you are here!!**

Welcome! Your presence, increases our joy as we praise our loving Savior. May every blessing be yours.

**December 20, 2020**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent: Peace**

### **Worship Leaders**

Ministers

Rev. Becky Erb Strang

Pastor Dee Schroer

Cheyenne Olt

The Congregation

Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor

Accompanist/Vocalist

### **GATHERING MUSIC**

**GREETING AND LIGHTING OF CANDLES:** The history of humanity is fraught with pain—especially the pain that is accompanied by fear and leads to oppression and violence of one group of people against another. This is the world into which Jesus was born and through which his teachings would challenge and call for transformation. Our opening words come from an anonymous Jewish poet: *I believe in the sun, even when the sun is not shining*, were scrawled on a wall during the Holocaust. These words have become part of our theme song for our season—calling us to examine our tendencies to annihilate fear by annihilating each other.

The entire poem goes like this:

*“I believe in the sun  
even when it is not shining  
And I believe in love,  
even when there’s no one there.  
And I believe in God,  
even when he is silent.*

*I believe through any trial,  
there is always a way  
But sometimes in this suffering  
and hopeless despair  
My heart cries for shelter,  
to know someone’s there  
But a voice rises within me, saying hold on  
my child, I’ll give you strength,  
I’ll give you hope. Just stay a little while.*

*I believe in the sun  
even when it is not shining  
And I believe in love  
even when there’s no one there  
But I believe in God  
even when he is silent  
I believe through any trial  
there is always a way.*

*May there someday be sunshine  
May there someday be happiness  
May there someday be love  
May there someday be peace....*

The power of story and music will call us this season to a different response: transformation and reconciliation through hope, love, joy and peace. This Advent and Christmas, let us fill our days and our nights with music and light as we affirm and act upon the reasons we can still “believe, even when” we are discouraged. As we light the altar and Christ

candles, I invite those of you who are worshiping at home to light a candle or candles in preparation for today's worship.

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### THRESHOLD SONG

### *I Believe* I Believe

Mark A. Miller

4  
I believe in the light, I be-  
10 lieve in the light, that has come, that has come, and is com-  
18 ing.

**CROSSING THE THRESHOLD:** The “great light” prophesied by Isaiah in today’s text is echoed in the first strains of John’s Gospel good news: the light that brings peace—that saves the people from all that would extinguish it—has been there from the beginning. The Word is made flesh and dwells among us. This reign is now...will we believe it? Will we continue to put flesh on it, embodying the peace meant for all humanity?

**Leader:** I believe in the light, I believe in the light that has come, has come, and is coming.

**Soloist:** *I believe in the light, I believe in the light that has come, that has come, and is coming.*

**Leader:** We see the star rising

**Soloist:** *We see the star rising*

**Leader:** We hear glad tidings

**Soloist:** *We hear glad tidings*

**Leader:** We know we are not alone

**Soloist:** *We know we are not alone.*

**Leader:** Let us pray. Holy One, we thank you for the glimpses we catch of your gift of the depths of peace. Even in the midst of fear, of challenge, of coronavirus, of struggle—even when we are not sure of your presence, ignite the flame of peace within us...

**People:** That we might glow with its brilliance from the inside out.

*Soloist:* I believe in the light, I believe in the light, that has come...that has come...and is coming.

SILENCE

**Leader:** Help us face the pain of life and embrace the assurance that light is already here, and always coming.

**People: Amen**

(You are invited to light the four Advent candles at this time.)

OPENING HYMN

*When God Is a Child*

165

When God Is a Child

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It begins with a 'Refrain' section marked with a 'C' time signature and a 'C' key signature. The melody is in 8/8 time. The piano accompaniment starts with a 'a tempo' marking. The lyrics are: 'When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be afraid. 1 Hope is a star that 2 Peace is a ribbon that 3 Joy is a song that 4 Love is a flame that'.

*to Refrain*

Am  $\frac{G7}{B}$  C C#dim7  $\frac{G}{D}$  Em Am *rit.* D7 G

shines in the night, lead - ing us on till the morn - ing is bright. When  
 cir - cles the earth, giv - ing a prom - ise of safe - ty and worth. When  
 wel - comes the dawn, tell - ing the world that the Sav - ior is born. When  
 burns in our heart, Je - sus has come and will nev - er de - part. When

INVOCATION (in unison) (adapted from presbyterianmission.org)

**Holy One, though the earth trembles and the stars shake like leaves, your word will stand forever. Leaven our hearts with peace as our Redeemer draws near. Wash over us with truth and righteousness and fan the flames of justice as we wait for the coming of Jesus Christ our Savior, living water and light of the world. Amen.**

\*RESPONSE

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (chorus)

Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

**CHILDREN'S MOMENT: THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE**

The song This Little Light of Mine, is nearly 100 years old this year. No one knows exactly who wrote it, but during the 1950's and 1960's our African American brothers and sisters sang this song as a song of resistance: as a reminder that no matter the oppressive circumstances,



no matter the darkness we experience, God's light within us shines through when we let it.

Each week during the Children's Moment we are going to add a verse to this song so that by the time Christmas comes, we will be ready to celebrate the birth of God's Light in our midst.

**This Little Light of Mine** 525  
*African-American spiritual* *Matt. 5:14-16*

The image shows a musical score for the song 'This Little Light of Mine'. It is an African-American spiritual in 4/4 time. The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: '1 This lit-tle light of mine, I'm gon-na let it shine, this lit-tle light of mine, I'm gon-na let it shine, This lit-tle light of mine, I'm gon-na let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. (let it shine.)' The score consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line.

2 Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine...  
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine.  
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine,  
Let it shine...let it shine...let it shine.

3 All through the night, I'm gonna let it shine...  
All through the night, I'm gonna let it shine.  
All through the night, I'm gonna let it shine,  
Let it shine...let it shine...let it shine.

4 This joy I have, the world didn't give to me...  
This joy I have, the world didn't give to me...  
This joy I have, the world didn't give to me...  
No, the world didn't give it, the world can't take it away.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Isaiah 9:2-7

(NRSV)

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup> For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

<sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup> His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

(youtube search: *Bethlehemian Rhapsody* (with lyrics))

*Is this the real birth?  
Is it nativity?  
Caught in a census  
in the town of his ancestry.*

*Open your eyes, look up to the skies and see.  
He's just a poor boy foretold by prophecy.  
Because the wise men come, wise men go, angels high, shepherds  
low.  
This is how God's love shows.  
It's a wondrous story to me, to me.*

*Mary just got the word.  
The angel did appear but he told her not to fear.  
Mary now it's just begun; your son is gonna wash our sins away.  
Mary ooo (this is how God's love shows) the God who reigns on  
high has sent his son to you to die for all.*

*I see a little silhouette-o of a sheep.  
Shepherds watch, shepherds watch over there like the night time.  
Angels shine like lightning very, very frightening me!*

*Glory to God, Peace on Earth, Glory to God, Peace on Earth!  
Unto you is born this day, the only way!*

*I'm just a shepherd nobody loves me.  
He's just a shepherd from a poor family.  
Angels said go to the stable and see.*

*Wise men come, wise men go, will Herod let him live?  
Hey Herod – No! he will not him live – better go!  
Hey Herod – he will not him live – better go!  
Hey Herod – he will not him live!*

*Better go, will not let him live, better go, will not let him live!  
Better go – oh – oh – oh  
Go, go, go, go, go!*

*Oh, Mary Joseph, Mary Joseph!  
Mary Joseph better go...to Egypt now  
gotta save your son who came  
for me, for me, for me!*

*[music interlude]*

*So you think that it's just a tale now days long by?  
But this child who was born went to Calvary to die!  
Oh, Jesus!  
It's the story of Jesus!  
Wash our sins out!  
Wash our sins right out of here!*

*[music interlude]*

*Oooo, Jesus, Jesus  
It's a wondrous story, anyone can see.  
Lets give God the glory!  
It's a wondrous story to me.*

*This is how God's love shows!*

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: John 1:1-18 (NRSV)

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

*<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*

*<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.*

*<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.*

## RESPONSE

Leader: The word of God for the people of God!

**People: God is still speaking! Thanks be to God!**

## SERMON

Rev. Becky Erb Strang

Throughout Advent our Old Testament scriptures have been from the prophet Isaiah—from the time period of the Babylonian exile. Our New Testament lessons have been the beginning of each of the four gospels—the genesis, if you will, of each life-story of Jesus. Mark's gospel begins with Jesus fully grown and being baptized by his cousin, John. Matthew's gospel begins with Jesus' genealogy and the birth story from Joseph's point of view. Luke's gospel begins with the birth story from Mary's point of view. And as you just heard, John's gospel begins with poetry of sorts—speaking of Jesus as the Word Incarnate. If we would have read today's New Testament lesson from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, we would have heard that the Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. How is that for cool imagery?

Because today's scripture comes in the form of poetry, our sermon will also. I will read to you poet Ann Weems' piece called *The Word of God* taken from her book *From Advent's Alleluia to Easter's Morning Light*. Listen carefully. Listen deeply. Listen with the heart of Jesus.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made through the Word, and without the Word was not anything made that was made.*

*In a wave of wonder,  
in an extravaganza of imagination,  
in a roar of deafening waters,  
in a drum roll of thunder,  
God said let there be Light!  
and the dazzling sun of Day  
made her entrance,  
singing her song of Life.  
Then in a stunning display of fireworks,  
lightning leaping in bolts,  
stars hurling through ink black sky,  
moon floating above,  
the Light of Night took her bow.  
The stage was set.  
Right from the beginning  
the Word was there,  
with God.  
The Word was God.  
And without the Word not anything  
was made that was made.  
Day and Night,  
darkness and light,  
waters and land,  
trees and living plants,  
animals and birds,  
and people,  
all created by God.  
Right from the beginning  
the Word of God  
was spoken in miracles.  
Right from the beginning,*

*in the light of God's love,  
the people of God  
were created for  
covenant keeping.  
I will be your God  
and you will be my people.  
Right from the beginning  
the Word was Love  
and the Word was Light  
and the Word was Life.  
Right from the beginning  
God's people were invited  
to walk in the way of the Word.  
God saw that it was good.  
It was very good.*

*Until, that is, somebody  
left the door open in paradise,  
and Death walked on stage  
and turned off the light.  
Somebody or somebodies thought  
they didn't have to listen to God,  
thought they didn't need  
to keep covenant.  
Call them by whatever  
names you like:  
Adam, Eve, the neighborhood snake;  
it's all the same.  
God's people had been entrusted  
with earth and stars  
and all living things,  
and yet it wasn't enough.  
Something gnawed away  
at the souls of God's people  
and they broke covenant...  
right there in the beginning...*

*and again...  
and again...  
and again.*

*Somebody or somebodies  
wanted to be in charge.  
Somebody or somebodies  
wanted to be God's favorite.  
Somebody or somebodies  
wanted to be God.  
Somebody or somebodies  
didn't like the diversity.  
They wanted everybody  
to be like they were.*

*Killing was born  
and hatred  
and greed  
and deception  
and suspicion  
and hard-heartedness  
and mean-spiritedness  
and distrust  
and power grabbing  
and jealousy  
and prejudice.  
The people of God  
had chosen Death  
instead of Life.  
God was grieved  
to the heart.*

*Return to me, God said.  
Over and over and over again  
Return to me.  
God sent prophets*



*to tell the people  
to return to God,  
but just as Cain hated Abel,  
the people of the world  
hated each other  
and wars began  
and God's people  
still would not return,  
return to covenant living  
return to the way of life  
that God had offered.  
God asked for justice  
and mercy and  
humbleness,  
but the people of the world  
wanted justice for themselves  
and mercy for themselves  
and anything but humbleness.  
God had promised not  
to send another flood.  
Besides God loved the people still  
even though they walked in darkness,  
so God sent a great Light,  
the Word of God Incarnate.*

*We know the story.  
Even though God kept covenant  
on behalf of the people,  
even though Jesus walked on this earth,  
even though he is the Way, the Truth,  
and the life,  
the world knew him not.  
We know the story.  
The people didn't want  
to share their bread and their wine.  
The people didn't want*

*to love one another.  
And so they crucified  
the only One who was Love.  
The angels wept.*

*But still God loved the people.  
And forgave them.  
Jesus was resurrected.  
And the Holy Spirit was sent  
to guide the church of Jesus Christ.*

*Why then is the world today  
in such darkness?  
Why do we open our newspapers  
and read stories and see photos  
of the manifestations of hatred?  
Why does blood cover our TVs?  
Why are the sick not healed?  
Why are the poor not fed?  
not housed?  
Why are children abused?  
Why are the weak exploited?  
On and on and on...  
Terror and violence...  
Where is the Church of Jesus Christ?  
It's about Jesus...  
It's always been about Jesus.  
In the beginning was the Word  
and the Word was with God  
and the Word was God  
But the world has a way  
of creating God in its own image.  
When we don't like  
the Word of God,  
we dilute the gospel  
into something insignificant.*

*We begin making more rules.  
We write lists of what  
we are going to do  
in the future.*

*The Word of God  
is far more dangerous  
than that.*

*The Word of God  
changed our lives.*

*It changes our lives now.*

*Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart  
and with all your soul  
and with all your mind.*

*Love your neighbor  
as yourself.*

*Follow me.*

*Go into all the world  
and preach the gospel.*

*Preach the good news to the poor.*

*Feed my sheep.*

*Preach Love.*

*Preach Peace.*

*Something is gnawing at  
the souls of the people of God.*

*Somewhere along the way  
we thought we didn't have  
to listen to the Word of God,  
thought we didn't have to  
walk in covenant.*

*Instead of keeping covenant,  
we've turned off the light and  
are spending our time quarreling.*

*How must the heart of God grieve!  
How must the Good Shepherd weep!*

*when there are  
so many of his sheep to be fed,  
so many sheep lost,  
so many sheep waiting  
for the Church of Jesus Christ  
to find them,  
so many sick longing to be healed,  
so many tortured waiting to be freed,  
so many war plagued...  
bleeding, homeless, hungry...*

*Death has taken center stage,  
Hatred takes curtain call after curtain call.  
Violence bows to the applause of the crowd,  
waiting waiting waiting  
for the Church of Jesus Christ  
to climb into its pulpit  
and preach the Word of God.  
The Word of God is not War.  
The Word of God is Peace.  
The Word of God is not Torture.  
The Word of God is Compassion.  
The Word of God is not Hate.  
The Word of God is Love.  
Is it fear of losing more members,  
more money,  
that we do not stand in solidarity  
with the Prince of Peace?  
Our darkness begins  
where our covenant ends.  
If the love of God is not  
written on our hearts,  
there is not covenant light,  
and flailing in the dark  
gets us nowhere.  
The miracle is,*

*the stunning absurdity  
of the Gospel is,  
that the people of God  
fell into a pit of darkness  
because they didn't have the eyes  
to see the light of God...  
but our covenant God had compassion  
and hearing the cries of the people,  
had pity on them  
and forgave them.*

*The world was created in miracles.  
Surely there are miracles  
yet to come.  
If the people of God  
will open their hearts  
to the Word of God,  
they will have the eyes  
to see the Light of the World.*

Amen.

## PASTORAL JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE PEOPLE

**Joys:** Baptism of Louise Anna Dicke.

**Concerns:** We are continuing to pray for Ellen Topp (The James), Shirley May, Bob Eilerman, Drew Wray, Macie Barlage, Deb Lear, Jan Dammeyer, and Pastor Dee Schroer.

## PRAYERS IN THE STILLNESS

Leader: I invite you to get in a comfortable position of rest. I invite you to get as quiet and still as you can. I invite you to take a deep breath and a deep listening posture—perhaps close your eyes or focus on a candle—as we prepare for our time of prayer.

Soloist:

# In The Stillness In the Stillness

Mark Miller

The gen-tle pull of God is of-ten lost a-midst the  
rush of all the ob-li-ga-tions which lay a claim on us. Yet, just be-yond the fran-tic  
pace our rest-less feet have trod, lie deep still pools of qui-et-ness, the  
dwell-ing place of God. Meet me in the still-ness, Lord, be the air I  
breathe, meet me in the still-ness, Lord, free me to re-ceive. Meet me  
in the still-ness, Lord, be the air I breathe, meet me in the still-ness, Lord,  
free me to re-ceive. O take me to that se-cret place where lost in  
won-der and in awe, that mo-ment comes, and I re-joice to be, and be with  
God! Meet me in the still-ness, Lord, be the air I breathe, meet me  
in the still-ness, Lord, free me to re-ceive, to re-ceive.  
Meet me in the still-ness, Lord, free me to re-ceive, to re-ceive.

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## PASTORAL PRAYER AND SILENT PRAYER

O God, our peace, we rejoice that you became flesh and made your dwelling among us, even as we long for your return.

As we wait, our hearts overflow with gratitude:

For the beauty of creation...

For your work in the world...

For signs of peace and reconciliation...

For our community and its leaders...

For your work accomplished through your church...

For all these reasons and so much more we give you praise.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of your Son as a helpless child, we also yearn for his return, for the day in which there will be no more sorrow, pain, or death.

Today, we remember in prayer:

The nations of the world...

Those in positions of authority...

The needs of our community...

The cries of the poor, the hungry, the hurting...

St. Paul Church as we live into your call to see Jesus in others...

Hear us now as we lift up to you the prayers of our hearts.

SILENCE

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our source of hope. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (sung to the tune of *Away in a Manger*)

**Creator in heaven, all praise to your name!**

**Your kingdom among us, your will done the same.**

**By mortals and angels, come, Lord, reign alone!**

**O hear us and bless us from heaven's high throne.**

**The bread that we yearn for, provide it each day**

**As we forgive others, our sins take away.**

**In times of temptation, to lead us be near.**

**From evil deliver your children most dear.**

**For yours is the kingdom; o'er all things you reign;**

**And yours is the glory, all things you maintain**

**To you be the glory, resounding again**

**From all of creation, forever! Amen!**

OFFERING OUR GIFTS AND OUR HEARTS TO JESUS

Offertory Sentences: In this season of gift giving and gift receiving, let us offer our gifts, our lives, and our hearts to Jesus through the ministries of St. Paul Church

## DOXOLOGY/CAROL

*In the Bleak Midwinter*

F  $\frac{F}{A}$  F Dsus Dm  $\frac{Gm}{Bb}$   $\frac{Dm7}{A}$  Gm7 C7  
 What can I offer poor as I am?

F  $\frac{F}{A}$  F Dsus Dm  $\frac{Gm7}{Bb}$  C7 F  
 If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

$\frac{Bb}{D}$  F  $\frac{Bb}{D}$   $\frac{F7}{C}$  Bb Dm  $\frac{F}{A}$  Am  $\frac{Gm}{Bb}$  Bbmaj7 C  
 if I were a wise man, I would do my part;

F  $\frac{F}{A}$  F Dsus Dm  $\frac{Gm7}{Bb}$  C7 F  
 yet what can I offer: all of my heart.

WORDS: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)  
 MUSIC: Gustav T. Holst (1874-1934)

CRANHAM  
 Irregular

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

**Accept these offerings, O God, for you are the giver of every good and perfect gift. Grant that these offerings may be symbols of our love and of ourselves now offered more fully to you. Amen**

## SONG OF JOY

*Go, Tell It on the Mountain*



# 218 Go, Tell It on the Mountain

## Refrain (Unison)

F B $\flat$  F Dm Gm  $\frac{B\mathbb{b}}{C}$  C F  $\frac{B\mathbb{b}}{C}$   
 Go, tell it on the moun - tain, o-ver the hills and ev - ery-where;

F B $\flat$  F Dm B $\mathbb{b}6$   $\frac{B\mathbb{b}}{C}$  C7 F  
 go, tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born.

## Parts

F  $\frac{C7}{G}$   $\frac{E}{A}$  F  $\frac{F}{A}$  Gm  $\frac{B\mathbb{b}}{C}$  C7 F  
 1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,  
 2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when, lo! a - bove the earth  
 3 Down in a low - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born,

F  $\frac{Am7}{E}$  Dm7 G G7 C  $\frac{C7}{E}$  *to Refrain*  
 be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.  
 rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.  
 and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless - ed Christ-mas morn.

**BENEDICTION:** We wait for justice, but we do not wait to work for change;  
We wait for restored health, but we do not wait to work toward healing;

We wait for wholeness, but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness;

We wait for peace, but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred, prejudice and violence.

And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news that the sun still shines even on cloudy days, fill the night left by sadness with messages of hope. Go into your week humming the tunes that keep hope alive in you and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.

Leader: Raise your voices and repeat after me: Do not be afraid!

**People: Do not be afraid! Amen!**

PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

POSTLUDE

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Altar Flowers** are given in loving memory of Paul and Viola Headapohl by Rob and Diane Paul and Family.

**Attendance**-Online-Daily Devotions Avg.-101, December 6-Sunday Worship-304, Sunday School-300, Splash-3, December 9-Confirmation-24, Youth Group-4

**Daily Devotions**-Please join Rev Becky or Pastor Dee Monday-Friday at 11:30am, online via Facebook Live. These will air on our Facebook page St. Paul United Church of Christ-New Bremen, OH.

**Sunday's in December-Sunday School** will be via Facebook Live beginning at 9:00am. **Worship**-we will be worshipping via Facebook Live at 10:15am.

**2021 Altar Flower Chart** has been posted in the Narthex. To sign up for the date(s) you would like. Please call the church office Monday-Friday to sign up. Thank you.

**Mailbox**-There is a mailbox outside of the East Educational Building door for any correspondence you may have for the church and would like to drop off. Please lift the flap and drop through the slot on the top. The box is locked and will be checked often. Thank you!

**Blessing Pantry**-is located in the North Hallway and accessible by the North door during these hours - **Tuesdays 5:30pm-7:30pm, Wednesdays and Thursdays 1:00pm-3:00pm**. The Pantry will be closed Mondays and Fridays. **All Donations Welcome – Blessing Pantry Needs**-Toilet Paper, Paper Towels, Kleenex, Napkins, Laundry Detergent, Dish Soap, Razors, Shaving Cream, Toothpaste, Deodorant, Diapers (size 1, 4, 5 & 6), Baby Wipes, Baby Shampoo, Hand & Body Lotion, Tampons & Panty Liners, Cleaning Supplies, Storage Bags, Garbage Bags and Pet Food. **Thank you!** There is a metal can outside the East Educational Building door for donations.

**Blue Christmas/Longest Night Christmas** On Monday night, December 21st at 7 pm will be a Longest Night, Blue Christmas Vigil and service. The service will be broadcast via Facebook (Church St Peter) and Youtube (St Peter's Church in New Bremen). During the service we will be reading names of those sent to us at [stpeterschurchnb@gmail.com](mailto:stpeterschurchnb@gmail.com) and lighting a candle for those names. You may include other information if you desire. You are invited to attend in person and light candles as we celebrate the lives of one's we miss during these holy days. This is a community event and all are invited to participate. Masks will be suggested for this community event. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Ed Rinehart at 419-204-9768.

We have **Advent Boxes** at church for anyone who would like Advent candles and Christmas Eve candles. These can be picked up during office hours.

Pastor Dee and the Sunday School Team have put together Advent/Christmas craft activity packs for children and youth. You can pick up these packets during office hours or contact the office if you need them delivered.

**Christmas Eve**, the Candlelight/Communion worship livestream will be available on the St. Paul Facebook page beginning at noon. If you need Christmas Eve candles for your at home worship, please contact the church office.

**On Christmas Eve** from 4:00-6:00 p.m. we will host a Sanctuary Open House. During these hours, families and individuals can come to St. Paul Church, listen to the music of the season from our talented musicians, hear the Christmas story read, receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Activities will also be provided for children. This is a come-and-go event open to all in the community.

**Poinsettia Pickup**-will be available from 6:00pm-8:00pm Christmas Eve and 10:00am-Noon Christmas Day. The main entrance to the sanctuary will be open.

**Bolly's Christmas Eve Community Meal** will be a bit different this year. The meal will be **Pre-order and Carry-out Only** (curbside pickup will be available for those who cannot come in). They will be serving from 5:00pm-8:00pm December 24<sup>th</sup>. To order, please call Bolly's 419-629-9644 by 8:00pm, December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Menu is Ham, Mashed Potatoes & Gravy, Vegetable and Roll. This meal is no charge; donations will be accepted. All donations will be given to those in need.

**Senior Food Boxes:** Coming to New Bremen is a new program for our area, Western Ohio Food Bank, offers a food box for those over 60 years of age, who meet Federal Guidelines. It is a monthly program which serves as a supplement to your monthly food supply. If you are over 60 and interested in this program, please contact Larry Kuhn.

**January/February Upper Rooms**-have arrived! They are available at the East entrance to the education building. Or please call the church office if you would like one and we will gladly mail one to you.

**E-Giving @ St. Paul**  
**3 Different Ways to Give**

**Online** – Make a donation on our website: [stpaulnb.org](http://stpaulnb.org)

**Give+ App** – Search “Give Plus Church” in your App store and find St. Paul to Get Started!

**Text** – Make a donation to our Number: 833-308-0048  
St. Paul New “Text to Give” #(# changed as of 10/9/19)

**How To Give by Text (Example - my amount for the example is \$25 (minimum amount is \$5.00))**

- For general fund giving: Send 25 space gl (hit send)
- For building & property fund giving: Send 25 space bp (hit send)
  - For Blessing Pantry: Send 25 space pantry (hit send)
- For project of the year giving: Send 25 space poy (hit send)

**Once a text amount is sent:**

**Registration Link-** Sent via text the first time a donation is made.

Thank you! Please visit (link) to register.

**Donation Confirm-** Sent via text each time a donation is made.

Thank you for donating \$ (amount)! Text repeat to make this recurring or refund to cancel this donation.



## “For Such a Time as This.”

*Esther 4:14*

**Rev. Cathy Barker**

“**M**y father, a UCC minister, died of cancer at age 54, just after Thanksgiving. I was fourteen; my brother and sister were grown and had to go back to their homes. Mom and I were lonely, confused about the future, and our financial picture was very shaky. Further, we faced a bleak Christmas . . . we didn’t even want to think about that.

“Then came a check from the Christmas Fund. We were both deeply touched that our national Church somehow knew that we were in need and gave us this gift. It didn’t solve all our troubles, but it made it possible for us to have Christmas. We felt the love behind the gift, and that was transformative.

“Throughout my mother’s long life, she gave faithfully and gratefully to the Christmas Fund, and I have done the same through the churches I have served as pastor. I’ve often told our story, because I want people to know how important it is to reach out in this way.

“When the pandemic caused such upheaval, and an appeal came from the Pension Boards telling about the increased need for emergency funds, I sat right down and wrote a check. My husband and I are glad we could help.”

### **In 2019, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:**

- Monthly pension supplementation for 350 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,347,419)
- Health premium supplementation for 144 retired clergy and lay employees (\$374,577)
- Emergency grants for 69 individuals and families (\$123,727)
- Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to 521 retired clergy and lay employees (\$260,500)

**THE CHRISTMAS FUND**

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund