

SAINT PAUL'S EPISTLE



ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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MINISTRY LEADERSHIP & STAFF SUPPORT

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Melissa Cheyney

SUPERINTENDENT OF SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL

Cathy Evans

PREPARING FOR THE REAL CHRISTMAS

Christmas is coming. We all know that. But for *which* Christmas are we preparing? That's the central question of Advent. There's the secularized and commercialized one that almost screams at us from television ads, "Buy me! Buy me!" This is the "Christmas" that our culture has created, that at its best suggests that doing nice things for needy strangers might make us feel better about ourselves, and at its worst cloaks itself in the sacred in order to peddle the profane. It's a Christmas that is as familiar to our materialistic culture today as it would be unrecognizable and offensive to Jesus' earliest followers.

The sad irony of it all is that we seem to prefer the imposter to the real. We seem more captivated by the marvels of the latest smart phone than we are by the miracle of the Incarnation—God becoming human in Jesus' birth. Perhaps our cultural familiarity with the Nativity story has caused us to become desensitized to its utter strangeness, immune to its power. To the extent that it doesn't constantly surprise, amaze, even shock and challenge us, we simply don't "get" it—not fully. The American writer and theologian Frederick Buechner called the Incarnation "a kind of vast joke whereby the creator of the ends of the earth comes among us in diapers." He concludes, "Until we too have taken the idea of the God-man seriously enough to be scandalized by it, we have not taken it as seriously as it demands to be taken."

So how does one prepare for the truly "scandalous" Christmas—the one that says "No!" to the cheap commercialization and "Yes!" to Jesus? By the disciplines of faith that call us to spend time in prayer and in the Word of God (going inward), and then by sharing the true gift of this season through loving action (moving outward). Advent is a time to anticipate and yearn for the coming of the Lord. The truth of the season, of Christian faith, is that we see Christ most clearly in the faces of the people around us. That's how He comes to us—in the other. And, like the Magi bearing their gifts, we pay homage to the Christ Child when we share the love of Christ through acts of mercy, justice and love. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, "As long as there

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are people, Christ will walk the earth as your neighbor, as the one through whom God calls you, speaks to you, makes demands on you."

For which Christmas do *you* want to prepare? The authentic one that is all about Jesus and new life? Or the counterfeit one that, like sweet Christmas candy, gives us a temporary sugar rush, only to leave us afterwards even more hungry than before?

Pastor Hugh Haffenreffer



ANGEL TREE

The Salvation Army's Angel Tree program provides new clothing and/or toys for children of needy families. Each Angel Tree is decorated with numbered paper angel tags with the first name, age, and gender of a child who is in need of a gift. Contributors remove one or more tags from the tree and purchase appropriate gifts for the child or children described on the

tags. The suggested value of each gift is between \$15 and \$35.

Our Angel Tree was put up on Saturday, November 30 and we are asking that all gifts be returned (unwrapped and with tag attached), by Thursday, December 12.

Through this important program you have the opportunity to ensure that a less fortunate child receives a gift for Christmas. We have always had a great response in the past. We pray for an even better response this year!

For more information, talk to Bernice Noeker.

It is Advent, and Christmas is fast approaching. What should you get for those friends and family members who are on your gift list? **SCRIP gift cards** (hint, hint) will be available for order on December 1, on the 8th for order and pick up, on the 15th for order and pick up, and for pick up on the 22nd. That is just in time for Christmas!

Our regular schedule will resume on 12/29 with ordering. Thanks.

ORDER YOUR POINSETTIAS

The poinsettia orders for the "Christmas Memorial Garden" can be dropped off at the church office on or before December 15th. It is important that you let us know ahead of time whether you will be taking a plant. All remaining plants will be delivered to our shut-ins. The poinsettias will be ordered from Kim's Florist in Wethersfield. The cost will be \$15 per plant.

2013 Christmas Memorial Garden - Poinsettia Order Form

Given in memory of: _____

Please print name(s) exactly as you want it (them) to appear

Given by: _____

Please print name(s) exactly as you want it (them) to appear

Amount \$ _____ (Note: cost per plant is \$15)

Checks should be made to the order of **St. Paul's Lutheran Church**

Memo: "2013 Christmas Memorial Garden"



NEWS & NOTES

HUDSON VIEW COMMONS

Christmas Gift Program

Hudson View Commons is located on Hudson Street in Hartford, Connecticut. This project offers housing to people in transition from homelessness to independent living. They receive shelter *plus* care—care being anything from help with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, etc.



As part of Chrysalis, each participant is expected to give back through some kind of service. Their motto is “*Getting help . . . Getting better . . . Giving back.*” Hudson View Commons has been in service since 1996 and now has a total of 28 low-income units, which is slightly less than other low-income housing projects. At the present time they have 26 residents (8 women and 18 men).

Because most of the residents don’t have a supportive network of family and friends, Christmas time can be a very lonely time. St. Paul’s has been asked to help put together some Christmas gift bags including any of the following:

- Slippers (sizes medium thru extra large)
- Socks
- Gloves
- Scarves
- Personal hygiene items
- Laundry detergent

Jim Newmark will be coordinating the collection of all items. Please look for the Hudson View Commons Christmas Tree, located on the large table in the Fellowship Hall. Similar to our Angel Tree program, this tree will have gift tags with a needed item on it. All gifts should be returned to the designated gray tub in the coat rack area no later than Dec. 22. In lieu of purchasing a gift, Jim would welcome any cash donations as well.

For more information, contact Jim at 860-268-5070.

Star of Love

Christmas Pageant

Sun. Dec. 15 • 10:30 AM

Preparations have begun for our Sunday School Christmas program.

The children have been assigned parts and are practicing during Sunday School.



Dress rehearsal will be held on Saturday, December 14th from 10 a.m. - Noon (snacks will be provided).

In addition, the children will need to be at church on Sunday, December 15th at 9 a.m. for rehearsal before the performance during the 10:30 a.m. service.

More volunteers are needed for the preparations day of dress rehearsal and performance. We also need cookies for coffee hour on December 15th. Sign up sheet in Fellowship Hall!

For more information please contact our coordinators, Heather Christensen (860-841-6657) or Aileen Casey (860-896-1288).

Offerings[†] received through October 2013

Actual	Budget	Over/Under Budget	Annual Budget
105,089	128,916	-23,827.62	154,700

[†] Offerings include Weekly offerings, special offerings, loose plate, and Sunday School

CHURCH



CHAPTERS

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, January 14th at 6:30 at Sue Agne’s house. The book is *The Light Between Oceans* by M. L. Stedman. Copies will be available at the Wethersfield library for pick up soon.

etcetera...

CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR FUEL

As we all know, the economy has been bad for some time. Agencies that help the poor have become increasingly busy. One of these agencies that impacts our town is the Wethersfield Fuel Bank, which is entirely funded by donations. Help is provided to people who have been living on or have exhausted their unemployment benefits. It also assists those whose current jobs pay far less than their prior careers. Some have had personal financial crises that have caused them to seek a helping hand. Our annual Christmas card tree has been a means to help this beneficial town program. Instead of buying several cards to send to other members of St. Paul's, place one card on our Christmas card tree in Fellowship Hall and donate the money you'd have spent on several cards to the Fuel Bank. Many weather "experts" are predicting a cold, stormy winter in the Northeast (look what we've gotten so far) and heating fuel has to be a top priority for everyone.

— *The Outreach Committee*

CHRISTMAS CAROLING & PIZZA

Sunday, Dec. 15th, 2013 at 2:30 pm

It is that glorious time of the year again when we get to share our faith by doing something out of love for others. It is a chance for us to share our Lord's message of love for all through song. On Sunday, December 15th, we will go Christmas Caroling together to our shut-ins in Cromwell, Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield.

Whether or not you can sing - join us. Afterwards, our celebration will continue with pizza at a location to be determined. We will gather in the PE building at 2:30 PM to organize our caravan. We will head out to both convalescent

centers and friends' homes for the caroling. That's right - friends' homes, too! If you have someone that you would like us to sing to, please let us know. We will leave the church by 3:00 PM, and return back for pizza by 6:00 PM. We hope you can join us and share our message of Christ's love!

For more info, contact Pr. Hugh.

THE LENGTH OF OUR SUNDAY PRAYERS

Over the course of time, the list of those for whom we pray during worship has grown significantly. It is good that the people of God pray, especially that they pray for those facing life challenges. Prayer, after all, is central to what it means to be followers of Jesus. Our prayer list has lengthened because more and more people have asked that their family members, loved ones or friends be included in our prayers.

The challenge is to find the appropriate balance when it comes to including the names of people in our public prayers.

At the present time we have no fixed rules as to how we determine the makeup of our prayer list. People generally have asked that we include a name and we do. The challenge is not with adding a person's name to the list; it's with knowing when it's appropriate to remove a name from the list.

It can take the "wisdom of Solomon" to know when to remove a name from our prayer list. But, this is where you can help. If you know anyone who no longer needs to be on the prayer list, please let me know. For now, until we have discerned some fair and compassionate guidelines, we will "err" on the side of inclusion. Frankly, I would rather someone complain that we pray too much than too little.



WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES DURING ADVENT

On **Sunday, December 1**, we will keep our children in worship as we celebrate the Advent season of preparation. On that Sunday the children come forward to witness the lighting of the first candle in our Advent Wreath and the raising of the large blue Advent Banners, signaling the start of Advent. In addition, each child will be given an Advent Calendar to take home, with the hope that each family will take time each day to open a new calendar window and explore the images and scripture verses found there. Advent is the season that helps us prepare for Christmas, and that means preparing our hearts and lives for Jesus—*not Santa, holiday elves, or winter snowmen*. Let's make a good start together!

On **Sunday, December 8**, our children will help us celebrate the Advent season of preparation by placing Christmas ornaments on the Christmas tree. Please bring an ornament from home (one that will be returned to you after the Christmas season, but one that is not irreplaceable in the event of a mishap). We will use these ornaments to decorate our Christmas tree as an act of preparing for the birth of Christ.

On **Sunday, December 15**, our Sunday school children and our older youths will present "Star of Love," a Christmas pageant for the whole congregation. This will involve the whole congregation as we, together, celebrate in story and song the birth of our Lord, Jesus. Please plan to invite your family, friends, and neighbors to this special Christmas treat! Remember: **There will be no 8AM service on the 15th.**

On **Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24**, St.

Paul's will celebrate Jesus' birth with a setting based on the St. James Christmas Service. This is the same setting that we have used for the past several years. The St. James Christmas Service has set the words of the traditional liturgy to familiar Christmas carols. Our **early service** is scheduled for **6 PM** and will be geared a bit more toward children and families including a special Christmas message with Marvin. The choir will present festive Christmas anthems to further set the tone. During our **late service**, at **9 PM** we will turn the lights down a bit lower to create a more reflective atmosphere. Both services will include Holy Communion.

On **Sunday, December 29** we will have only one service at 9:30 AM.

THURSDAY MORNING GROUP NEWS

Seafarers International Christmas-at-Sea Program

On Thursday, November 7, the Thursday Morning Group hosted Mrs. Ruth Setaro, Chaplain for Seafarers International House, for lunch. She gave us an informal talk about her duties and how Seafarers works in the Northeast. After lunch, we helped her pack her van with 15 bags of Christmas presents for the merchant seamen. Enough donations were received to also purchase 15 calling cards, which are treasured by the seamen.

Many thanks go out to everyone who knitted hats, scarves, purchased items, or gave cash donation. It is wonderful for us at St Paul's to experience the blessed act of giving. The Outreach committee started off the campaign with a \$200.00 gift.

Thanks again to all.

Sometimes Christmas comes early!

— Winnie Sawrun,
for the Thursday Morning Group

St. Paul's MEMBERS IN SERVICE for DECEMBER 2013

ACOLYTES:

Dec 1 - Collin Grottke
 8 - Jared Christensen
 15 - **Pageant**
 22 - Megan Creevy
 24 - **Celia Cheyney** 6:00 PM
 24 - **Bryce Gentino** 9:00 PM
 29 - Brayson Bernard 9:30 AM

ALTAR GUILD:

Debbie Howe, Coordinator, 860-529-8583

Dec 1 - Bob Bowman & Bill Fischer, Jr.
 8 - Patty Bengtson
 15 - **Pageant**
 22 - Jennie Dotts & MaryAnn Mead
 24 - **Mary Procyk** 6:00 PM
 24 **Debbie Howe** 9:00 PM
 29 - Winnie Sawrun & Ann French 9:30 AM

ASSISTING MINISTERS:

Dec 1 - Jim Newmark.....8:00 AM
 Mike Coyle10:30 AM
 8 - Jim Newmark8:00 AM
 Kathy Coyle10:30 AM
 15 - **Pageant**
 22 - Art Bruce8:00 AM
 Mary Procyk10:30 AM
 24 - **Patty Bengtson**6:00 PM
 24 **Jerry Vaillancourt**9:00 PM
 29 - Mike Coyle9:30 AM

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS:

Sue Agne, Coordinator, 860-563-0776

Dec 1 - Joan Kratzer
 8 - Mary Procyk
 15 - **Pageant**
 22 - Mike Coyle
 24 - **Volunteer Needed** 6:00 PM
 24 - **Volunteer Needed...** 9:00 PM
 29 - Sue Agne 9:30 AM

TAPING:

Jan Pergande, Coordinator, 644-2888

Dec - Walter Ruppard

FELLOWSHIP HOUR HOSTS:

Winnie Sawrun, Coordinator, 860-529-7588

Dec 1 - Pat Granger & Alan Niederfinger
 8 - Debbie & George Howe
 15 - Pageant
 22 - Amanda & Deb Viola
 29 - Mary Procyk & Pam Speno

FINANCE:

Mary Procyk, Coordinator, 860-257-4793

Dec 1 - Debbie Viola
 8 - Art Bruce
 15 - Mike Coyle
 22 - Bob Bowman
 29 - Lillian Doerschler

LECTORS:

Lillian Doerschler, Coordinator, 860-529-1939

Dec 1 - Lillian Doerschler
 8 - Dave Bayek
 15 - **Pageant**
 22 - Judy Gerken
 24 - **Bill Fischer Jr** 6:00 PM
 24 - **Jerry Vaillancourt** 9:00 PM
 29 - Sue Agne 9:30 AM

USHERS:

Brian Beckwith, Coordinator; 8:00AM, 860-563-4066

Dec - Brian Beckwith

Louise Lostocco, Coordinator, 10:30AM, 860-529-3079


Dec 1 - Dave Bayek & Bill Caughman
 8 - Dave Bayek & Bill Caughman
 15 - Dave Bayek & Bill Caughman
 22 - Dave Bayek & Bill Caughman
 24 - **Volunteer Needed** 6:00 PM
 24 - Max Gentino & _____ 9:00 PM
 29 - Dave Bayek & Bill Caughman 9:30 AM

Please note:

Christmas Eve services at 6 & 9 PM

First Sunday of Christmas, Dec 29: 1 service at 9:30 AM

DECEMBER 2013 | EVENT CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	
1 <i>1st Sunday of Advent</i> Holy Comm. 8 AM Holy Comm. 10:30 AM <i>Family Sunday</i>	2 CA 7:30 PM	3 Outreach mtg 7 PM OA 7:30 PM	4 AA 10 AM AA 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM	5 Recovery Bible Study 10 AM Thursday Group 10 AM AA 8 PM	6 AA 10 AM	7 Russian School of Math 11 AM AA 7:30 PM	
8 <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i> Holy Comm. 8 AM Holy Comm. 10:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM	9 Cub Scouts 6 PM CA 7:30 PM	10 OA 7:30	11 AA 10 AM AA 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM	12 Recovery Bible Study 10 AM Thursday Group 10 AM Russ. Sch. of Math 6 PM AA 8 PM	13 AA 10 AM	14 Pageant Rehearsal 10 AM Russian School of Math 11 AM AA 7:30 PM	
15 <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i> <i>"Star of Love" Sunday School Christmas Pageant 10:30</i> <i>(Children rehearse at 9:00 AM)</i> No 8:00 AM service today! Christmas Caroling 2:30 PM	16 CA 7:30 PM	17 Parish Admin 6:30 PM Ch. Council 7:30 PM OA 7:30 PM	18 AA 10 AM AA 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM	19 Men's Breakfast 7:30 AM Recovery Bible Study 10 AM Thursday Group 10 AM AA 8 PM	20 AA 10 AM	21 Russian School of Math 11 AM AA 7:30 PM	
22 <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i> Holy Comm. 8 AM Holy Comm. 10:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM	23 CA 7:30 PM	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> Christmas Eve Services 6 & 9 PM OA 7:30	25 <i>Christmas Day</i> AA 10 AM AA 7 PM	26 Thursday Group 10 AM AA 8 PM	27 AA 10 AM	28 Russian School of Math 11 AM AA 7:30 PM	
29 <i>1st Sun. of Christmas</i> Only 1 service today! Holy Communion 9:30 AM	30 CA 7:30 PM	31 <i>New Year's Eve</i> OA 7:30		"Star of Love" Christmas Pageant Dec. 15 at 10:30 AM No 8:00 AM service on the 15th!			Christmas Eve Services: 6 & 9 PM

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