



ST. JAMES UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

135 Myrtle Avenue, Havertown, PA 19083

610-446-3036

www.stjamesucc.org

Hillstop Views

DECEMBER 2021/JANUARY 2022

THE PASTOR'S POST

Holiday Tidings St. James Family!

Hebrews 10:32-39 encourages us to remember Jesus as our "First Love." It suggests that no matter what is going on in life, we should continue to believe that the God who first loved us, continues to love us--always has, and always will. This is the true story of Advent, Christmas and the motivation for a brand-New Year.

This year, the holiday season will again be an adjustment for many, if not most of us. There will be deeper times of reflection, more things to ponder, things to question, and questions to ask. There will be times to be Thankful and grateful. Times to mourn,



and possibly be uncomfortable with. Though we may not associate Advent, Christmas and the New Year with anything but thoughts of being happy, merry, and new, all of the forementioned *things* are reality.

Thankfully, what else we know to be true is that in the midst of these realities, we can be grateful for, and look forward to reliving once again our first true love experience with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are once again given the opportunity to start love anew and with this new, revised, and/or rekindled vision of love, we are reminded of what it means to be light and love in this world, just as Jesus was. We should also be reminded of what it means to *receive* light and love from this world, even more than Jesus did.

Whatever this holiday season looks like for you and yours, embrace it, move within it, outside of it, and around it, however it works best for your needs. Just know that God is already there with and for you. God is there to walk with you in the great, the good, the not-so-good, and the downright hurtful and unbearable. Invite God to your holiday heart and re-invite the Holy Spirit to come stay awhile.

Remember, Advent and Christmas is a time to once again rekindle that first-love experience with our Creator God. Jesus not only came to give life; Jesus also came to *be* life. Never forget to remember how to live the life Jesus modeled for all of us...A Life of Love, in the Name Of Jesus! The New Year is a time to reset your passions, revamp your desires and remember your goals. Resetting and revamping them wisely, in other words, tune into *your* reality. This helps us be more successful along our spiritual journey.

As we move forward in this Advent and Christmas season, St. James is seeking to reconnect with the community in which we stand. One way we will be doing this will be by hosting "Selfies With Santa." This will be an event held on the front lawn/porch of the church. We will have Santa and possibly Mrs. Clause who will be available for socially-distanced selfie photos with families and neighbors from the community and the church. (Masks required.)

Due to COVID-19 concerns, the Selfies With Santa event will take the place of Breakfast With Santa this year.

Also, our Hanging of the Greens gathering will be held the first Saturday of December this year. We will have a new interior tree and an exterior tree to decorate this season. As we move our youth back into being a larger part of our weekly worship services, we are hopeful that the youth will be excited to add their creative touches to both trees, and throughout the church. Please consider volunteering to help with this event as you are able. Please be advised that social distancing will be a bit more difficult as we decorate and work together during HOTG, therefore masks are required for this gathering.



*Saturday, Dec. 4
11:30 am - 1:30 pm*

The youth will also put on a Christmas pageant this year. Our Christmas Eve Service themed “T’was The Day Before Christmas” will also be a welcome return for our congregation this year. We are looking forward to this joyous evening of celebration.

Furthermore, there will be a live Advent Calendar happening this Advent Season. Each day of Advent, I will post a reading of the Advent devotional, sharing my thoughts on what each day is speaking to us. Please plan to check these readings out each day.

Lastly, please remember to keep our church in prayer as we navigate this Christmas season amidst this continued COVID season. I pray each of you will be blessed in each of the ways your hearts and souls need and desire this Christ-Mass season, as you recall and rekindle your First Love which is Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas and the Most Prosperous of New Years to You!
Love, Peace and Joy!

~Pastor D



PASTOR D WILL BE AWAY ON VACATION
Saturday, December 25 through Sunday, January 2.



CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT FAMILY SERVICE

Friday evening, 5:00 p.m.
(Christmas music begins at 4:30 p.m.)

Bethany Children’s Home offering

BOOK CLUB

The Holiday season is quickly approaching. With this busy time there is often little extra time for pleasure reading. However, our beloved book club keeps on reading. In December we will discuss the historical novel The Exiles by Christina Baker Kline.

January's book is The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell by Robert Dugoni.

Both books should provide lots of discussion.

We invite anyone who is interested to join us- Second Monday of each month at 7:00 pm. Since we are a Zoom meeting, contact me for sign on information.

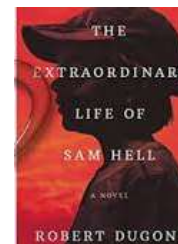
December 14

January 11

Have a wonderful holiday season!!

Joanne Morris

610-742-8509



CHURCH SCHOOL

December is upon us again and with it comes all of the special St. James happenings that help us to reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ.

But first - our COVID safety! Until further notice our protocols will remain the same downstairs in Sunday School. In our Nursery, School-Age and Youth rooms the following are in place

- Masking for all adults and children
- Open windows
- Spacing of 3+ feet except in Nursery

In the Sanctuary, we continue to ask family groups to sit 6+ feet apart and to leave the Family Pew at the front empty. You are always welcome to come there and get a bag of activity sheets and materials for your children to do during the Service. As the weather turns colder the windows and doors will no longer be wide open in the Sanctuary however there will still be some airflow.

Now for the new happenings! We miss the intergenerational interaction that used to happen at St. James. Beginning on December 5, a few changes will be happening to include our children more in our church activities.

- We will be providing childcare from 10 - 10:30 in Fellowship Hall. We invite children to come during this time to work on outreach projects with adults in our church community.
- We also wish to re-include the children in Time of Prayer during Worship. We will remain in worship until after the Time of Prayer is finished and we welcome your child to announce his/her prayers during this time. As before, if they do not feel comfortable announcing them they can always tell us their prayers and we will speak on their behalf.
- Our "Time With Children" will once again take place up in front of the Communion Table. We will have velcro spots on the floor so the children can be spaced apart as they sit and have their discussions with Pastor D. I hope this will make our



Time With Children more interactive and help the children feel like a bigger part of Worship.



As the season of Advent nears, please keep your eye out for Advent Activities to be in your mailbox. This year we will be using "The Giving Manger" as a basis for our Advent activities.

Also please keep your eye out for an email after Thanksgiving regarding our

Christmas Pageant!

Thanks St. James Families!

Best,
Allison



SELFIES WITH SANTA is

Saturday, December 11, noon 'til 2:00 p.m. Come for photos, refreshments, and fellowship. **Let Pastor D know if you can volunteer for this event.** 😊

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

At our fall Congregational Meeting on November 21, the 2022 budget was approved. Also approved were the new members of our 2022 Consistory. A warm welcome to Elders Nancy Benkert, Kirk Gosweiler, and Wendy DeCroteau, and Deacon Kimberly Porsch. And our heartfelt thanks to outgoing Consistory members who have served St. James so well: Jenn Hayden, Maureen McGurk, Kathy Pioggia, Matt Abbadusky, and Cheryl Haley.

CONSISTORY

The St. James Consistory will meet Wednesday, **December 15** and **January 19**, 6:30 p.m. via ZOOM.

FOOD PANTRY

Wednesdays: **Dec. 1 & 8** (9:00-11:00 AM), **Dec 22** (6:00-7:00 PM)
Wednesdays: **Jan. 5 & 19** (9:00-11:00 AM), **Jan 26** (6:00-7:00 PM)

We are currently in need of juices and shelf-stable milk. At this time we have plenty of breakfast foods and pastas. But the staples (canned veggies and fruit, spaghetti sauce, tuna, peanut butter, etc.) are always appreciated, as well as toiletries (toilet paper). 😊 We were able to purchase \$20 Giant gift cards to be given to each family during November as added Thanksgiving assistance. Folks were very appreciative. We have about a dozen cards left over, which will be give out during December as long as they last.

Want to learn more about the food pantry? Just give me a call or drop an email, 610-585-4955, kirk@bohemaassociates.com.

Kirk Gosweiler

SAM'S KITCHEN

Our meal at the Life Center of Eastern Delaware County, 63rd and Market Streets in Upper Darby, will be prepared and delivered on **Wednesday, January 12**.
Coordinator Ed Hart needs help with this meal.



Contact Ed Hart at 610-449-3728 or hart.edwardm@gmail.com if you can help with meal preparation.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

This year, amidst many unforeseen new realities, the Christmas Fund continues to respond with love to the emergency financial needs of many who serve the church. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks



each December to our lower-income retirees. This offering will be taken on **Sunday, December 19**.

Thank you for your support of the Christmas Fund!

BETHANY CHILDREN'S HOME CHRISTMAS OFFERING

A long tradition for St. James Church is the Bethany Children's Home offering each year at Christmas. At our **Christmas Eve service**, please bring in to St. James your monetary gifts for Bethany.



Christmas is the season when we think of God's supreme gift of the holy child Jesus to our world. How appropriate that during this Advent and Christmas season we offer our gifts to the children of Bethany in honor of Jesus.

A special offering envelope marked *Bethany Children's Home* is included in your boxed set. Or simply mark your check “Bethany”.



Would you like to present a **POINSETTIA** as a memorial or in honor of a loved one this Christmas season? Fill out the form below and attach your check made payable to St. James UCC. The cost is \$5.00 per plant. **Please submit your order by Tuesday, December 14.**

POINSETTIAS

_____ red _____ white

\$5.00 per plant. Please make payment at time of ordering.



Dedication: _____

YOUR NAME: _____

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

DECEMBER

6 – Matthew George
13 – Joan Hauck
14 – Amy Wenzel
18 – Jase Schlegel
27 – Naseer Christmas
29 – Jack McGovern
30 – Christa Farnon

JANUARY

5 – Keenan McGurk
8 – Mary Daily
10 – Cash Estes
22 – Lynne Penn



“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

A Christmas Adventure

I remember my first Christmas adventure with Grandma. I was just a kid. I remember tearing across town on my bike to visit her on the day my big sister dropped the bomb: “There is no Santa Claus,” she jeered. “Even dummies know that!”

My Grandma was not the gushy kind, never had been. I fled to her that day because I knew she would be straight with me. I knew Grandma always told the truth, and I knew that the truth always went down a whole lot easier when swallowed with one of her “world-famous” cinnamon buns. I knew they were world-famous, because Grandma said so. It had to be true.

Grandma was home, and the buns were still warm. Between bites, I told her everything. She was ready for me. “No Santa Claus?” She snorted....”Ridiculous! Don’t believe it. That rumor has been going around for years, and it makes me mad, plain mad!! Now, put on your coat, and let’s go.”

“Go? Go where, Grandma?” I asked. I hadn’t even finished my second world-famous cinnamon bun.

“Where” turned out to be Kerby’s General Store, the one store in town that had a little bit of just about everything. As we walked through its doors, Grandma handed me ten dollars.

That was a bundle in those days. “Take this money,” she said, “and buy something for someone who needs it. I’ll wait for you in the car.” Then she turned and walked out of Kerby’s.

I was only eight years old. I’d often gone shopping with my mother, but never had I shopped for anything all by myself.

The store seemed big and crowded, full of people scrambling to finish their Christmas shopping. For a few moments I just stood there, confused, clutching that ten-dollar bill, wondering what to buy, and who on earth to buy it for. I thought of everybody I knew: my family, my friends, my neighbors, the kids at school, and the people who went to my church.

I was just about thought out, when I suddenly thought of Bobby Decker. He was a kid with bad breath and messy hair, and he sat right behind me in Mrs. Pollock’s grade-two class.

Bobby Decker didn’t have a coat. I knew that because he never went out to recess during the winter. His mother always wrote a note, telling the teacher that he had a cough, but all we kids knew that Bobby Decker didn’t have a cough; he didn’t have a good coat. I fingered the ten-dollar bill with growing excitement. I would buy Bobby Decker a coat!

I settled on a red corduroy one that had a hood to it. It looked real warm, and he would like that.

“Is this a Christmas present for someone?” the lady behind the counter asked kindly, as I laid my ten dollars down.

“Yes, ma’am,” I replied shyly. “It’s for Bobby.”

The nice lady smiled at me, as I told her about how Bobby really needed a good winter coat. I didn’t get any change, but she put the coat in a bag, smiled again, and wished me a Merry Christmas.

That evening, Grandma helped me wrap the coat (a little tag fell out of the coat, and Grandma tucked it in her Bible) in Christmas paper and ribbons and wrote, “To Bobby, From Santa Claus” on it. Grandma said that Santa always insisted on secrecy. Then she drove me over to Bobby Decker’s house, explaining as we went that I was now and forever officially, one of Santa’s helpers.

Grandma parked down the street from Bobby’s house, and she and I crept noiselessly and hid in the bushes by his front walk.

Then Grandma gave me a nudge. “All right, Santa Claus,” she whispered, “get going.”



I took a deep breath, dashed for his front door, threw the present down on his step, pounded his door and flew back to the safety of the bushes and Grandma.
Together we waited breathlessly in the darkness for the front door to open. Finally it did, and there stood Bobby.
Fifty years haven't dimmed the thrill of those moments spent shivering, beside my Grandma, in Bobby Decker's bushes.
That night, I realized that those awful rumors about Santa Claus were just what Grandma said they were – ridiculous. Santa was alive and well, and we were on his team. I still have the Bible, with the coat tag tucked inside it of \$19.95.

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Lord Jesus, the day of your nativity approaches, the day on which we commemorate your birth, your condescension, your humble incarnation. Please help me and mine to approach that day on tiptoe, with reverence and awe, mindful of your holiness and beauty, and grateful for the privilege of finding and approaching and kneeling at your manger. Amen.

Bob Hostetter

THE REV. DR. DIONNE BOYCE

PastorD@stjamesucc.org

816-716-9388.

Virtual and Physical Office hours:

Tuesday thru Friday 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Sunday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

John Callahan, Director of Music

Allison Fineberg, Director of Children's Ministries

Andrea Angiulo, Nursery

LeAundra Boyce, Youth

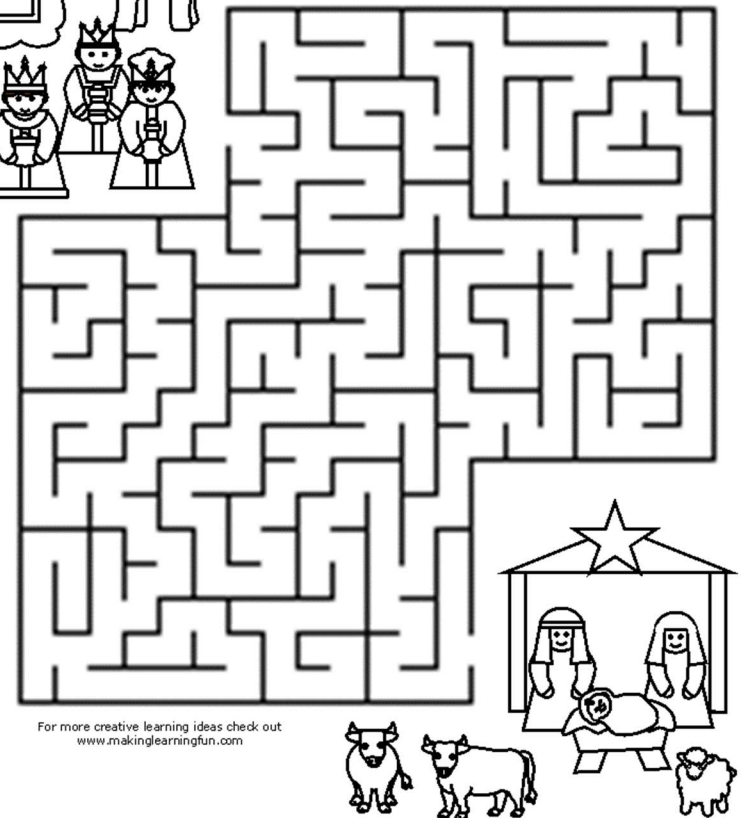
Church Office 610-446-3036

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For the children . . .



Help wisemen find
the stable.



For more creative learning ideas check out
www.makinglearningfun.com