

THE MUSTARD SEED



Happy New Year!!!

No, I haven't decided to try to beat the post-Christmas rush. I'm not early, but right on time. In our shared church life, the arrival of December means a new year has arrived. Beginning December 1st, we will enter a new liturgical and Church year with the First Sunday of Advent. Advent, among other things, is a season that can bring change to our lives. The arrival of Advent brings with it an opportunity to do something new. Rather than wait till January, Advent can be a time for us to take on the practice of resolutions and transformation for our lives. Advent with its penitential roots that lends itself easily to the discipline of starting anew and/or taking a different path in our lives. The season of Advent pushes us to be attentive to God's call and it encourages us to say "yes" to the ways that new or renewed call enfolds in our lives.

Our exemplar in this work is none other than Mary, the mother of Jesus, who willingly took on the calling and mission of bringing the incarnate God into the world. We might imagine how radically her world was turned upside down when she said "yes" to God. Mary, an unwed and young woman at the time, embraced the reversal, transformation, and change in the world to come. Luke chapter 1 records Mary's Song, the Magnificat, which speaks of the world changing and turning when God enters into it. Even though she sensed the monumental change to come, even though her acceptance brought personal difficulty, Mary still said, "Yes, God, I am willing to bear your son into the world."

Where might we say yes to God in our lives? What new thing will we resolve to embrace? I encourage us to pray about and seek out what in our lives we are called to and what we are able to say to God "Yes, God I am willing."

Once again in this season, the world is changing, and God is calling. May we be willing to listen for and answer the Holy One; may we boldly embrace God's coming kingdom and the transformation it brings.

Peace,

Pastor Matt



Candlelight Christmas Eve Service will be held on Tuesday, December 24 at 7 p.m. here at Salem UCC. Join our faith community for this holy evening of sacred scriptures, carols and celebration of the birth of Jesus in our world. Please plan to stay to continue the celebration after the service for a special fellowship time in the choir room, as we share our plates of Christmas treats and cheer. You are welcome to bring a container of goodies to share. **PLEASE LABEL YOUR CONTAINER SO WE MAY RETURN IT TO YOU.**



Advent Devotional Available: A group of over a dozen PA UCC pastors including Pastor Matt and his wife, Pastor Becky have come together to create a daily Advent Devotional. The devotional is available online (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BGHnrlrhA9oHIJMi1iiB-oq6SpwHV_w-Y/view?usp=sharing). Print copies of the devotional will also be available in the back of the Sanctuary starting this Sunday November 24th.



Christmas Caroling for Salem Shut-Ins

We will be sharing our Salem Advent Spirit through the gift of caroling for local shut-in members on two dates:

Sunday December 8 at 2pm:

Traditions of Hershey – Jo Bucher

Kindred Place – Florence Umberger, Shirley Burkholder

Lebanon Valley Home – Mary Risser, Ruth Anna Bashore

Monday December 9 at 2pm:

Palmyra – Shirley Dupert, Gloria & Earl Garrett

Lebanon – Fran & Wally Shepler

Hershey – Barb Gainer (Country Meadows), Carolyn Albright



As you are preparing your holiday gift or grocery list, keep in mind that Giant Foods gift cards are available for purchase. Gift cards are available in any denomination. Salem UCC earns 5% on each gift card sale. The cards are easy to use at self checkout, traditional checkout and online. Consider buying some as gifts for those on your holiday list. Contact Beth Gingrich at 717

-838-5539 or bethavon@verizon.net for purchase.

Gift Wrapping at Bethany Children's Home: Four Church Elves are needed on Tuesday, December 17th from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM to wrap gifts at the Bethany Children's Home. We will meet in the East church parking lot at 8:45 AM to carpool. We will be stopping for lunch on the way back to Salem. The Sign Up Sheet is posted in the East Narthex.



Christmas Gifts for the Youth of Bethany will be collected through Sunday, December 15th for delivery and wrapping on December 17th. . A complete list of **new and unwrapped** general requested items suitable for children and youth **ages 10-21** can be found on the designated table also. All gifts should be returned by **December 15**. Thank you for your loving generosity and support as we help to bring the joy of the season to the children and youth at Bethany.

The Christian Education Committee continues to try to meet the needs of all age groups. In the fall, we will have Sunday School for Adults (every Sunday at 9:15), special activities for the youth, and Sunday School for the Pre-K through elementary children (below noted Sundays during the worship hour). We are going to try to institute a new dimension to the children's Sunday School time. We are going to be asking for help from the youth to assist the teacher during this time. So there will be a sign up sheet in the narthex for both teachers and youth assistants. We will only need one youth for each week. The following are the Sundays that we have chosen for Children's Sunday School: December 1st is the annual



Gingerbread House decorating during worship. The other dates for December are:

December 8 and 22

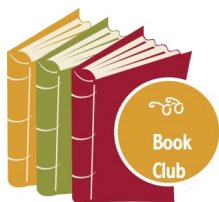
Pam McNamara is going to be doing various activities with the youth and families, and there will be more information regarding this as it becomes available.



Salem's traditional **GINGERBREAD HOUSE** making will be Sunday, December 1st during the regular children's Sunday School time for all children and youth. Since houses need to be constructed ahead, please RSVP by 11/24 to Pam McNamara, pammcnamara96@gmail.com or cell 7171-304-7394.



Come Decorate the Sanctuary at 9 a.m. December 1. The Youth will be hosting the Sip & Chat that Sunday so come early, enjoy some goodies and check out their crafts for sale by donation in the choir room. All money will be donated to a charity TBD!



The Book Club will meet Monday, December 16 at 7 pm to discuss "Hercule Poirot's Christmas" by Agatha Christies. If you have any questions, please contact Carin Kaag. Her e-mail is cas207@yahoo.com



Save the Dates for these Christmas Concerts

The Heritage Choral of Lancaster

Concerts are Dec. 1 at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 10 Delp Rd., Lancaster; Dec. 8 at Ascension Lutheran Church, 600 Penn Grant Rd., Willow Street; and Jan. 5 at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, 3131 Columbia Ave., Lancaster. All concerts are at 4:00 PM and free will offering will be taken. Louise Adams is a member of this group. See her with any questions. You are invited to join them at a reception after the concert at Ascension Lutheran.

The Lebanon County Choral Society Christmas concert is on December 15 at 3 pm at St Luke's Episcopal Church. Jane Long is a member of this group. See her with any questions.



Use the gift!

At Christmas, God sent his Son to live among us. But he doesn't want us to be passive recipients of that precious gift. Consider these challenges for the season — and for the new year ahead:

"He became what we are that we might become what he is."

—Athanasius (4th century)

* * *

"When Christ entered our world, he didn't come to brighten our Decembers but to transform our lives."

—Rich Miller

* * *

"Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches the heart of man. Why wait for a call when you have a command?"

—Robert Hughes



Sunday	Dec. 1	Decorating the Sanctuary 9 a.m. Sip & Chat 10 a.m./Youth Craft Sale Family Worship 10 :30 a.m. First Sunday in Advent with Communion, Choir sings Sunday School—Gingerbread House Decorating after Assurance of Pardon Campbelltown Tree Lighting 3-5 p.m. Campbelltown Community Park
Wednesday	Dec. 4	Chime Rehearsal 7 p.m.
Sunday	Dec. 8	Sip & Chat 10 a.m. Family Worship 10:30 a.m. Chimes Play Children’s Sunday School after Assurance of Pardon Christmas Caroling to Shut-ins 2 p.m.
Monday	Dec. 9	Christmas Caroling to Shut-ins 2 p.m. Council 7 p.m. Choir Room/Hybrid
Tuesday	Dec. 10	Christian Education Committee 1 p.m. Library
Wednesday	Dec. 11	Building & Grounds Committee 10 a.m. Choir Rehearsal 7:15 p.m.
Sunday	Dec. 15	Sip & Chat 10 a.m. Family Worship 10:30 a.m. Choir Sings Youth Sunday School after Choir Anthem
Monday	Dec. 16	Book Club 7 p.m. Library
Wednesday	Dec. 18	Choir Rehearsal 7:15 p.m.
Sunday	Dec. 22	Sip & Chat 10 a.m. Family Worship 10:30 a.m. Choir Sings Children's Sunday School after Assurance of Pardon
Tuesday	Dec. 24	Christmas Eve Family Candlelight Service 7 p.m.
Sunday	Dec. 29	Sip & Chat 10 a.m. Family Worship 10:30 a.m..

All Worship Services will also be livestreamed on YouTube.



WORSHIP SCRIPTURES

December 1, 2024

First Sunday of Advent

Jerimiah 33:14-16

Psalms 25:1-10

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-36

December 8, 2024

Second Sunday of Advent

Malachi 3:1-4

Luke 1:68-79

Philemon 1:3-11

Luke 3:1-6

December 15, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Isaiah 12:2-6

Philemon 4:4-7

Luke 3:7-18

December 22, 2024

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5a

Luke 1:46b-55

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)

December 29, 2024

First Sunday after Christmas

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

Psalms 148

Colossians 3:12-17

Luke 2:41-52

January 5, 2025

Epiphany

Jerimiah 31:7-14

Psalms 147:12-20

Ephesians 1:3-14

John 1: (1-9), 10-18

January 12, 2025

First Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 43:1-7

Psalms 29

Acts 8:14-17

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 19, 2025

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalms 36:5-10

1 Corinthians 2:1-11

John 2:1-11

January 26, 2025

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

Psalms 119

1 Corinthians 12:13-31a

Luke 4:14-21



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DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Sydney Flory
 2 John Moyer
 2 Liz Brandt
 2 Garrett Bear
 7 Kathy Binkley
 11 Kelley Frew
 12 Earl Garrett
 16 Susan Mitchell
 18 Daryl Alger
 19 Roxann Albright
 19 Arlene Yantz
 21 Virginia Ream
 22 Dwight Hein
 23 Kimberly Kozelsky
 23 Jenna Van Hout
 26 Jarrett Smith



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Gordon Wirth
 2 Kelly Hein
 5 Brittany Devine
 5 Griffin Weidler
 7 Cynthia Steger
 7 Florence Umberger
 7 Wilson Frew
 8 Christy Umberger
 13 Robert Smith
 18 Jared Cooper
 19 Jeannie Wirth
 21 Brenda Davy
 21 Gretchen Monahan
 21 Kelsey Smith
 24 Scott Aungst
 25 Kevin Flory
 31 Lisa Smith

Look upon love



Let us then meditate upon the Nativity just as we see it happening in our own babies. I would not have you contemplate the deity of Christ, the majesty of Christ, but rather his flesh. Look upon the baby Jesus. Divinity may terrify people. Inexpressible majesty will crush them. That is why God took on our human flesh and blood, that God should not terrify us but rather that with love and favor God would console and comfort us.

—Martin Luther

SALEM COLLECTIONS -

The Caring Cupboard is a community food pantry, that has grown into a community necessity, that currently serves over 350 families living primarily in the Palmyra and Annville-Cleona School Districts. Products to be given to the Caring Cupboard may be placed on the designated shelves found at the end of the northwest hallway of Salem Church.

Pop Tab Collection Program (Matt Waller) Ronald McDonald House. The collection of aluminum beverage tabs began in 1996. The aluminum tabs are sold to a local recycling company and their proceeds help with daily operating expenses at the Ronald McDonald House. The generous amount from the tabs collected has been very beneficial to the House and the families they serve. They are averaging \$1,000 monthly just from these tiny tabs. You can help raise money by pulling tabs from any aluminum container. Pop Tabs may be placed in the designated box on the shelf above the coat rack in the bell tower entrance.

Redner's Cash Register Receipts (Cindy Steger) By using the Save-A-Tape card you picked up at Customer Service Desk each time you purchase merchandise at Redner's Warehouse Markets, your receipt will be designated as a Save-A-Tape customer receipt. When you come to Salem Church, place your **entire register/sales receipt (DO NOT CUT!)** in the designated box on the shelf above the coat rack in the bell tower entrance. Salem Church will receive a check for 1% of the total amount of tapes submitted, excluding items controlled by the government, such as tax, milk and tobacco products.

Clothing Recycling Old clothing and material that are too worn to use can be recycled. If possible, take to an H&M Store (they give you a coupon for each bag!), otherwise put it in the box in the west narthex and we'll take it for you. Thank you!

Writing Tool Recycling You can recycle old writing tools – crayons, markers, pens, and pencils. Staples Store will recycle these items as well as many other items (check their website!). Feel free to take to a Staples or place in the "Crayola marker" collection tube on the windowsill in the west narthex. Thank you!



The light of life

Most sand comes from coral and rocks that get ground into tiny grains. But in a few places, like some beaches of Japan, the bits of sand are shells or skeletons that once housed single-celled organisms. A magnifying glass reveals their star shape: a rounded middle and five or more spines, like a sea star.

These unique creatures live on undersea reefs and share their interior with algae called diatoms, which convert light into carbohydrates and oxygen through photosynthesis. The star points let light into the exoskeleton; in turn, diatoms produce energy to feed them both. When these organisms die, the star skeletons wash onto beaches, protecting the islands even after their own lives end. Our amazing God designed astounding creatures!

This same Creator made us able to take in light from Christ. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me ... will have the light of life" (John 8:12). When we receive his light, it becomes in us the "energy" we need to do good: to love others, care for people in need, appreciate nature — including star sand! — and give glory to the Artist of this entire incredible world.

—Heidi Hyland Mann