

*The Network... a Publication of
University Presbyterian Church
December 2024*

**Happy New Christian Year!
Merry Christmas!!
Happy 2025!!!**

Dear Friends,

As we begin a new church year on December 1 with the start of Advent, we also begin a new series of Biblical lessons for Sunday mornings. The Gospel this year is Luke, the physician, the one who, because of his profession, was so aware of the struggles of the poor and outcast. It is these, the "least of these," whom Luke lifts up, as examples of Christian faith. How refreshing! How instructive! In fact, the Gospel lesson for the second Sunday of Advent is the introduction of John the Baptist in which Luke names all of the VIP'S first, starting with Emperor Tiberius and King Herod, then in descending order of importance the rest of the regional rulers and religious authorities. These are all names we will see again as they take part in either indicting, condemning and carrying out Jesus' death sentence or doing nothing to change the oppressive, unjust status quo of Temple and state. But John? Hardly a VIP. He was a strange man, lived in the wilderness, wore strange clothing, spoke in fire and brimstone language about changing one's life and being accountable to a God who would bring retribution for the sins of the age.

I look forward to journeying through Luke and this new Christian year with you. It will be, I trust, a year when the Holy Spirit will be at work with your Pastor Nominating Committee, this church's partnership in mission and worship with Calvary Baptist Church and all the ways God is preparing this congregation for a new season of ministry. One of the takeaways from Luke is that God is often likely to show up in unexpected places—just as he does, on the second week of the new Christian year, in a backwater preacher, in a remote region near the Dead Sea, among a religious sect by the name of the Essenes; and then, of course, as we will hear in week four of Advent in a teenage woman's pregnancy.

The time is right to be open to and on the lookout for signs of the holy where we least expect to find them. Paul says God works together for good in all things—that means that nothing is prohibitive of God's use to build community, to bring peace, to administer justice. So often it is our expectations that limit where and how we encounter God's presence. It could happen anywhere, anytime. Therefore, I am calling the sermons for Advent—Great Unexpectedness...a play on Dickens' novel Great Expectations, but suggesting that it is the ordinary, the hidden, even the darkness that God is doing a new thing, a great thing. As I think back on my own upbringing and family life and in my adult life it has been in and after the storms that God has appeared in a path to deeper self-awareness, healing, and purpose.

The text for this Sunday is the passage from Matthew in which Jesus says “consider the lilies” and points out to his listeners at the Sermon on the Mount that there is no need to worry. God is good. God will provide. Live in faith and hope and love. We are living in somewhat perilous times if for no other reason than that much of the nation is divided over the last election—let alone wars and rumors of wars. So the timing is perfect to seek God’s help where we least expect to find it even in times of division and strife.

We will gather to celebrate the birth of the Christ child for a candle light service on Christmas eve at 7 pm; then again on Sunday January 5 for the second Sunday of Christmastide to welcome the new year. I look forward to celebrating our shared faith and mission with you on these high holy days of the year. All good wishes for a blessed season of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year,

Tom, Interim Pastor

Worship Column

Sunday, December 1

1st Sunday of Advent

Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:2-20;
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

Sunday, December 8

2nd Sunday of Advent

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79
Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

Sunday, December 15

3rd Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6;
Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

Sunday December 22

4th Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55; Psalm 80:1-7;
Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)



Tuesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Wednesday, December 25

Nativity of the Lord/Christmas Day

Dawn: Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2: (1-7) 8-20

Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12); John 1:1-14

Sunday, December 29

1st Sunday of Christmas

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

What's Happening in ...

DECEMBER

| | | |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Sunday, December 1 | 9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am 11:30 am | Choir Worship Service Fellowship Adult Bible Study |
| Monday, December 2 | 7:30 pm | Zoom Deacons' Meeting |
| Tuesday, December 3 | 12:00 pm | Food Pantry <i>New times begin: Noon—3 pm</i> |
| Thursday, December 5 | 12:00 pm 6:00 pm 7:30 pm | Food Pantry Hand Bell Practice Choir |
| Friday, December 6 | 7:00 pm | Orchard Park Chorale Concert |
| Saturday, December 7 | 10:00 am | Breakfast with Friends |
| Sunday, December 8 | 9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am 11:30 am | Choir Worship Service Fellowship Adult Bible Study |
| Tuesday, December 10 | 12:00 pm | Food Pantry |
| Thursday, December 12 | 12:00 pm 6:30 pm 7:30 pm | Food Pantry Hand Bell Practice Choir |
| Sunday, December 15 | 9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am | Choir Worship Service Christmas Dinner |
| Tuesday, December 17 | 12:00 pm | Food Pantry |
| Wednesday, December 18 | 7:00 pm | Session |
| Thursday, December 19 | 12:00 pm 7:30 pm | Food Pantry Choir |
| Sunday, December 22 | 9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am | Choir Worship Service Fellowship Hand Bell Practice |



December Calendar Continued....

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|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Tuesday, December 24 | <i>Food Pantry Closed</i> | |
| | 5:30 pm | Hand Bell Practice |
| | 7:00 pm | Christmas Eve Worship |
| Sunday, December 29 | 9:30 am | Choir |
| | 10:30 am | Worship Service |
| | 11:30 am | Birthday Cake |
| Tuesday, December 31 | 12:00 pm | Food Pantry |



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



| | |
|----|----------------|
| 2 | Tom Yorty |
| 6 | Jim Moran |
| 9 | Bob Dewitz |
| 9 | Dannish Patel |
| 12 | Eric Moodie |
| 15 | Bonnie Dahl |
| 19 | Elizabeth Ball |
| 19 | John Maddock |
| 26 | Arjun Singh |
| 28 | Ajay Singh |

ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Join John McClester the first two Sundays of December, December 1st and 8th, at 11:30 am in Adult Bible Study. The topic is "The Baby Jesus Gets a Name" An Exploration of Matthew 1:18-25



ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS GIFT CAMPAIGN - PDA

Out of chaos, Hope. That is the motto of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), the program the Ministry to Community Committee is offering as our Alternative Christmas Gift Campaign this Advent season. PDA is the emergency and refugee program of the Presbyterian Church, USA. PDA

focuses on the long-term recovery of communities affected by disaster. It works collaboratively with church partners and members of the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) internationally, and nationally with other faith-based responders. It connects partners locally and internationally with key organizations such as the United Nations, World Food Program, Red Cross, and FEMA. PDA is called to stand with those suffering in the USA and with their overseas partners; and respond to their requests for assistance as they reach out to serve their neighbors. This is part of our enduring witness to Christ's love worldwide. Whether it is the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, the war in Ukraine, or the conflict and refugee crisis in South Sudan, their work is able to continue with your help. Each Sunday in Advent you will have the opportunity to make a donation to PDA and receive a card (or cards) to give to friends or loved ones telling them this gift has been made in their honor. Below are some PDA 2023 statistics.

QUICK FIGURES

- **\$6.1 million** granted in **27** states and **46** countries
- **131 National Response Team members** were deployed to **46** presbyteries
- **67 Presbyterian Women** trained in Disaster Preparedness
- **1,837 work team volunteers** served in AR, CA, FL, KY, LA, MS, NC, TX and Puerto Rico, donating **127,755 hours**, totaling more than **\$4 million in volunteer time**
- Provided more than **\$256,000 in Migration Accompaniment Ministry grants** in the U.S.
- *Flint: The Poisoning of an American City* reached the **15 Million Streaming Milestone** across streaming platforms since its wide release in 2020
- Presented Emotional & Spiritual care programs to more than **300 participants**
- In partnership with Church World Service, assisted in the collection and distribution of **116,273 Gift of the Heart Kits and blankets**

UPC's Little Library Box (located next to the ramp) is in need of books! If you have books that you'd like to pass on, drop them in the box for someone else's reading pleasure!

COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORTS

As 2024 is winding down, it's time to start thinking about the annual reports for each committee to be submitted for the Congregational Meeting in February 2025. Peg will need them by the beginning of January 2025. Why not get a head start and finish it before the holiday rush?

Trunk or Treat a Success!

Thanks to all who participated in the UPC Trunk or Treat! Whether you donated candy or wore a costume and handed out candy, everyone's help was greatly appreciated by the folks who attended. There were just over 300 children and parents that attended. The parking lots was hopping!! Great costumes! Lots of smiles!! A fun time for everyone! We had loads of candy donated by UPC members as well as Tops, Wegmans, and The Goodness Project.





Please join us...

Annual
University Presbyterian Church
Family

Christmas Dinner
Sunday, December 15th
(following worship)

Tickets cost:

Adults \$15

Youth (5-13) \$10

Children under 5 Free

Ask for Special family rate

RSVP: Church 836-7660

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**UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
WELCOMES**

**THE ORCHARD PARK CHORALE BACK TO
UPC FOR HOLIDAY CONCERT**

The Orchard Park Chorale will present "Classy Brassy Holiday" on Friday night, December 6, at 7:00 pm in the UPC Sanctuary. A double brass choir will accompany the Chorale in the presentation of "Christmas Cantata" by American composer Daniel Pinkham. Pinkham taught composition at the New England Conservatory of Music for many years, and "Christmas Cantata" is one of his most beloved compositions. The brass will also accompany two other selections as well, "Ding Dong, Merrily of High" and "Celebrate Music", which will open the concert. The Orchard Park Chorale welcomes singers from across the Greater Buffalo Area, with many singers from the Southtown's, but also from the Northtown's, and even Niagara County. Artistic Director, Allan Andrews is in his second season with the OPC. Our collaborative pianist, Heather Dietsch, will accompany the choir along with the brass. Tickets will be available at the door.



*Come, worship with us December 24th,
Christmas Eve, at 7:00 pm*

HANDEL'S MESSIAH



ADVENT CHORALE

OF WESTERN NEW YORK

Western New York Chamber Orchestra

Cristen Gregory, Soprano • Faith Baer, Mezzo-Soprano • Jeffrey Thompson, Tenor • Nicholas Kilkenny, Bass-Baritone

Gregory White, Conductor

Orchard Park Presbyterian Church

4369 South Buffalo Street, Orchard Park, New York

Friday, December 6, 2024

7:30 P.M. Concert

At the Door Donation: \$20 Admission (*per person*)