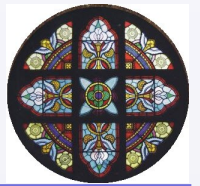


PROVIDENCE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BUSTLETON



Providence Presbyterian Bustling's

Sunday, December 19, 2021 Issue No. 87

Greetings! Today is Sunday, December 19, 2021

The Third Sunday of Advent

After the angel came to Mary and told her that she would conceive the child in her womb and would call him Jesus, Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." (Luke 1:38, NRSV.)



[A 'Silent Night' That Brought Healing](#)

Steve Banko - Buffalo, NY - December 23, 2007

I've been moved by the magic of Christmas music since the nuns in grammar school etched the words of the carols into my brain. That magic persists despite the memory



of our pre-pubescent male voices that sounded more like a pond of bullfrogs than the Vienna Boys Choir. The music rose above us. Even our childhood rivalries and petty

differences were no match for the spell of that music. I believe that Christmas music can touch the spirit. Those nuns taught me the music and the lyrics, but I would learn of the real magic about 10 years later. On Christmas Eve, 1968, I was a patient in a military hospital in Yokota, Japan. My leg had been shattered by a couple of machine gun bullets in a five-hour battle in Vietnam. My body was full of shrapnel and my hands had been badly burned. For three weeks, army doctors in Vietnam struggled to save my leg. They sent me to Japan on that Christmas Eve to give a new team of surgeons a chance to work their magic. And I was in desperate need of magic. Somewhere it was Christmas, but it didn't feel like it to me — at least not until I heard the music piped through the PA system. A chorus sang of "peace on earth and mercy mild" and promised "God and sinners reconciled." Another voice called to "let us all with one accord sing praises to our heavenly Lord" and another, to "sleep in heavenly peace"

My misery was interrupted by a low moan coming from the next bed. All I could see was a white cast shaped like a body; cutouts for his eyes, nose, and mouth were the only breaks in the cast. Even as the music inched me toward comfort, the reality of pain anchored me in the present. But looking at my neighbor enclosed in God-knows-what-kind-of-pain, mine didn't seem nearly as important.

The soft strains of "Silent Night" were filling the air of the ward when the nurses made final rounds with our medications. When my nurse approached, I asked her to push my bed closer to the man in the cast. I reached out and took my new friend's hand as the carol told us "all is calm, all is bright."



We spoke no words to each other. None were needed. The carol revived the message of hope and the triumph of love for me. I felt a slight tightening on my hand and for the first time that Christmas I felt I would survive my ordeal, and for the first time in a long time, I wanted to. I believe there is magic in Christmas and the music that celebrates it, because it brings us closer together and closer to our own hearts.

Steve Banko did two combat tours in Vietnam, earning the Silver Star and four Purple Hearts. In 1996 he received the Terry Anderson Courage to Comeback Award for his struggles with alcoholism and depression. Banko is a 30-year civil servant in Buffalo.



...SLEEP IN
heavenly peace



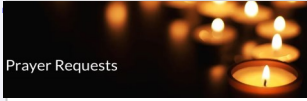
Providence Presbyterian Church

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Prayer Requests

Prayer Requests will be added each week by your requests, and will run for two weeks unless a request to continue is received.



God's healing presence:

- For continued prayers for **Wendy Kasper, Barney Barnes, & Eleanor Hathaway**
- For **Fritz Wainwright, Polly Grobelny, & Jean Miller**
- For **Jack Harkin & Dave Hammell**
- For **Polly's brother, Fred & his wife, Caroline**
- For **Wendy Varga's nephew Shawn**
- For **Jim Chambers granddaughter Jackie and her mom Hope**

God's comfort:

- For those who serve as caregivers
- For the **Jensen & Glass families** in their time of grief
- For the friends & family of those killed/injured in the Kentucky tornadoes

For God's guidance & understanding:

- For family members in need of God's presence and fellowship
- For **Heidi's son Winston** moving out on his own

In Thanks and Praise to God:

- For good shepherds in our pulpit
- For safe & secure travel and for those who work to provide it
- For **Michael**, a new great grandson for the Wainwrights
- For **Alyson Keegan's nephew Shawn's marriage**

For continued prayers for the PNC as they carry on their mission.

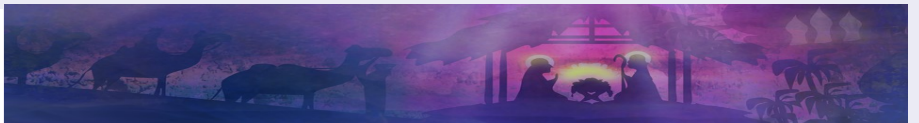


December 14

Phil Leifels

December 26

Eric Olsen



Date	Time	Event
Sunday, December 19, 2021	9:00 AM	4th Sunday of Advent
Friday, December 24, 2021	7:00 PM	Christmas Eve Service
Sunday, December 26, 2021	9:00 AM	Sunday Service
Sunday, January 2, 2022	9:00 AM	Sunday Service



Covid Caution

There has been discussion this week about our services and pre-cautionary measures for Covid with a new variant on the rise and increasing cases globally, nationally, and within the region. The graph at the bottom of this column show daily cases for our County with the latest peak this week back to 276 cases on 12/10. We are in a vastly different position from when the pandemic began in early 2020. We now have a body of knowledge that wasn't available at the time, and most people are vaccinated and human populations now have a lot of immune experience with COVID, either by vaccination or infection. Still the newness of the Omicron variant leaves many questions yet to be answered. The righthand column from Yale Medicine provides a brief overview about Omicron.

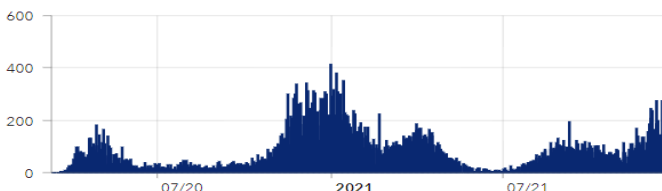
"Along with vaccines, masking has been one of the most solidaristic parts of the pandemic. If everyone masks up, then everyone's risk goes down dramatically." "That's true and it should continue to inform our actions. If you are wearing an n95 mask and do some relatively simple fitting your risk of being infected plummets down to something like theoretical level risk – something ranging from 95% to well over 99% protection. Add on the protection you probably have from being vaxed or boosted and you're really, really heavily protected. Not being an expert on these things I don't want to say you have close to invulnerability. But you have super high levels of protection." - [Josh Marshall TPM](#)

No official Church policy has been defined as yet, but please take this information to heart in your daily lives in and out of church. We will continue to monitor daily trends within our region, and make decisions within our Committee and Session accordingly. For the benefit of all the table below illustrates the symptoms for the two main Covid variants vs. colds and flu.

SYMPTOMS	DELTA	OMICRON	COLD	FLU
FEVER	COMMON	COMMON	RARE	COMMON
TIREDNESS	SOMETIMES	COMMON	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES
COUGH	COMMON	COMMON	MILD	COMMON
SNEEZING	NO	NO	COMMON	NO
ACHES/PAINS	SOMETIMES	COMMON	COMMON	COMMON
RUNNY NOSE	RARE	RARE	COMMON	SOMETIMES
SORE THROAT	SOMETIMES	COMMON	COMMON	SOMETIMES
DIARRHOEA	RARE	RARE	NO	SOMETIMES
HEADACHE	SOMETIMES	COMMON	RARE	COMMON

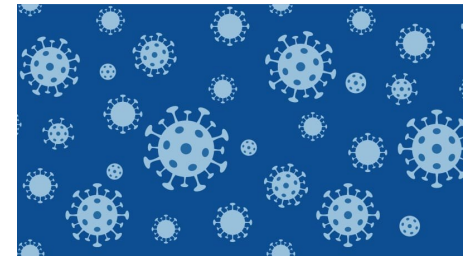
Table of Covid-19 omicron variant symptoms

New Confirmed* Cases Over Time Burlington County



* Established via PCR testing
Data are provisional and subject to revision with further investigation.

Omicron



There's still a lot to learn about Omicron (B.1.1.529), which became a "variant of concern" after it was identified in Botswana and South Africa in late November 2021. Cases quickly began to surface in other countries including the U.S., and countries have established travel bans in efforts to stop the spread. Based on early data from South Africa, the United Kingdom, and Denmark, Omicron is expected to outcompete Delta. Experts report that Omicron carries an abundance of mutations (single changes in the virus's genetic code)—about 50 in all that have not been seen together before—but they don't yet know how those mutations might work together.

How contagious is it? More data is needed to definitively answer this question, but early data suggests that Omicron is more transmissible than Delta and it will likely become the predominant variant in most places. What is less known is exactly how much more transmissible it is than Delta, what makes it more transmissible, and how quickly it will rise to dominance.

One concern is that more than 30 of Omicron's mutations are on the virus's spike protein, the part that attaches to human cells, and several of those are believed to increase the probability of infection. So, part of its enhanced transmissibility may come from its ability to evade some immune responses, especially in individuals who were previously infected but not vaccinated.

Very early reports from South Africa showed cases rising rapidly from 300 a day to 3,000 a day over a two-week period.

Severity: Not yet clear. Early cases identified among people in South Africa were mild, but most of the diagnoses were in young people.

Can vaccination prevent it? It is not yet clear how effective the vaccines in the U.S. will be against Omicron. The first person in the U.S. to be diagnosed with the variant was fully vaccinated, and the second had also received a booster shot. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports there is early evidence that vaccinated people who are infected with Omicron will be able to spread it to others.

Some preliminary laboratory data shows that antibodies generated from vaccines are less effective at neutralizing Omicron, though booster shots help to restore some of that loss. It is expected that vaccine effectiveness against Omicron infections will decrease, though not completely, while effectiveness against severe disease will be better maintained. The companies that produce the three vaccines available in the U.S. are working on Omicron-specific ones to prepare in case they are needed.

Source: [Yale Medicine](#) Click link for more details



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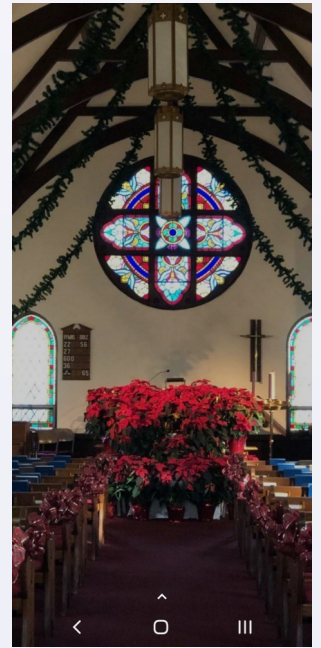


Poinsettias for Christmas

**If you wish to provide a Poinsettia for
Christmas Eve Service.**

**You may drop off poinsettias in the
Sanctuary Monday December 20 through
Wednesday December 22 from 10 AM to
4 PM and Thursday December 23 from
10 AM to Noon.**

**Please contact Barbara about flowers given in
memory of or in honor of...
(609) 499-2753 or ppch1@provpresch.org**



This year marks the 3rd annual "Coats for kids" collection.

So I am reaching out to those who may have the ability to provide a basic necessity to children in our community that aren't as fortunate as we are.

The Sisterhood ministry is in need of new or gently used winter coats for kids.

All sizes are welcomed, either for a boy or girl, as the demand is great.

They could also use gloves, scarves or hats.

Coats will be collected through the end of January. Drop off can be made either in church or I can pick them up. Just email me at: yorkie0401@gmail.com.

**Thank you.
Barbara York**



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