

Manor Minutes
Volume 17 Issue 2
January 9, 2026

- 2026 Officer Installation – January 11, during worship
- Dartball – January 13, 7pm @ Home
- Elders Meeting – January 14, 5:30pm
- Board Meeting – January 14, 7pm
- Choir Practice – January 15, 6:30pm

Stay up to date at www.fairhillmanorchurch.org/calendar



January 18 – Congregational Meeting
following worship to review the
2025 Annual Report



Thank you to the **BYKOTA** Sunday School class for purchasing a new Christmas tree for the sanctuary for next year.



A sign-up sheet is available in the Narthex for women of the church to join the **Disciple Women's Ministries** meetings. There will be both a daytime and an evening meeting option, held once a month from September through May.

**SouperBowl Lunch & 2-Person
Team Cornhole Tournament**

Sunday, February 8, 2026
Large Fellowship Hall
following worship

Sign up in the Narthex to bring a soup for lunch and to enter your team in the tournament. Donations of canned soup or cash will be accepted and donated to the Community Circle Food Pantry.

Since 1990 this event has been held on the same Sunday as the football Super Bowl to raise awareness about hunger in our community.

You do not have to bring soup OR enter the cornhole tournament to attend. Just come for the fellowship!



Over \$300 was raised at FMCC's **Red Robin** night November 17. Thank you to Karla Glover for organizing a great way to raise money for the church.



Fairhill Manor Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
351 Montgomery Ave.
724-225-8610

Rev. Chris Stillwell, Senior Minister
Rev. Gena Sheller, Associate Pastor
Elders: Jackie Nelson, Bread
Sheila Marris, Cup

January 11, 2026 – 10:15am

Prelude

Sam Johnson, organist

Welcome

Pastor Gena

Call to Worship

Chuck Riggle

Leader: Come to the river of life.

People: Listen for the words of love.

Leader: Come to the waters of grace.

People: Receive the gift of acceptance.

Leader: Come to the river of love,

People: For all are welcome here.

Opening Hymn

“Awesome God”

Jody Mullis, pianist

Our God is an awesome God. He reigns from Heaven above;
with wisdom, power, and love, our God is an awesome God.

Installation and Consecration of Church Officers

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

Pastor Gena

We worship you in your glory and splendor and strength, Holy God. Your voice is powerful and majestic; we hear it even over the sound of mighty, rushing water. Your voice is stronger than even the giant sequoias. Your voice gives us energy to even skip like a deer and run like a young calf, kicking up our heels. Your voice shakes us awake, twirls us around, strips from us all that is not needed, and we cry “Glory!”

You are the King above all kings, the King with a reign that outlasts every other king. We praise your rule of love and justice, of mercy and peace. We give you the first and best place in our hearts and in our lives, praying that you will give us strength and bless us with shalom, for we long for a deep peace that flows through our whole selves and into every part of our lives.

We give you thanks that in the coming of Jesus, you brought more good news in person – a picture of how things work in your kingdom. In you, we can always turn back toward the path of love and be washed clean of all that clings to us. We confess our sins to you now. We ask for your forgiveness for the things we have done that have hurt ourselves or others. We ask for your forgiveness for the things we have failed to do that would have helped someone feel loved, that would have brought well-being and peace. We ask for your forgiveness for all the ways we don’t know what we are doing, the ways we are

hurting or withholding help and don't even know it. Cleanse us, we pray. Open our eyes to the realities inside us and around us. Fill us with the Holy Spirit that we may bring good news in person to others.

We pray for those who need to hear again that they are your beloved. Please comfort those who are grieving. Give strength to those who are suffering. Bring patience and hope to those who are waiting. Offer clarity and wisdom to those who are deciding. Send grace and love to those who are ashamed. Encourage all who are striving for peace and justice in your beloved world. Please help these who we have named aloud in your presence and these who we name now in our hearts...

In the name of the One who comes both in glory and majesty and in the quiet and ordinary, but always with good news, Jesus the Christ, we pray together saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer Response:

"Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying"

Lord, listen to your children praying, Lord, send your spirit in this place;

Lord, listen to your children praying, send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace.

First Scripture Lesson

Psalms 29

Rita Puskarich

Anthem

"Wade in the Water," arr. by Donald Moore

Choir

Children's Message

Rev. Stillwell

When we think about baptism, our first thought might be of water and the new start it brings, washing off the old and bringing something new. For me, though, it's always been about the words that God says to Jesus when he gets baptized himself in the Jordan River: 'You are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased.' For me an important part of baptism is about becoming part of God's family, about becoming part of the big picture and the amazing plans God has in store.

So that's where the jigsaw comes in! I don't know if anyone here is any good at jigsaws? Look at the partially obscured pictures. Can you guess what they show from only seeing part of the picture?

God has a big picture- God's Kingdom, where there is love and joy and peace and hope. We only see part of it now, but we pray in the Lord's prayer that the Kingdom will come on Earth and we will eventually see the whole picture. When we are baptized and we become part of God's family, we become part of God's plan to bring the big picture of God's Kingdom to earth. Only God knows what the full picture looks like but when we are baptized, it's as if we take up a piece and say to God, 'I want to be in your family and I want to be part of your big picture!'

As part of God's family, like the pieces in a jigsaw, we are also never alone. We are doing this together. Like the jigsaw pieces we are joined to many other people, many of whom are very different to us. If you look at the pieces of our jigsaw, hardly any of them are the same, yet they are all an important part of the picture and none of the pieces can make the picture by themselves. By joining in our new family, we get many new brothers and sisters who will support us, love us and help us to find where we fit.

I'd like to ask you to take one of the jigsaw pieces and to think of what it might mean to be part of God's family and to be part of the big picture for the world. Then I want you to look at the parts that reach outward. Pray for people who reach out and help and show love to others.

Look at the parts of your piece that have spaces waiting to be filled and pray for people who have lost something or someone or who feel that they have something missing in their lives. Finally Pray for people who find it hard to fit in, people who have moved to a new place, people who feel they have no friends, people who are being bullied. Pray that they will find peace, friends and happiness.

Second Scripture Reading

Mark 1:1-15

Rev. Stillwell

Sermon

At the Beginning of All Things

Rev. Chris Stillwell

My sister-in-law moved to Florida many years ago. It was the perfect time to go because the winter had set in, and the cold was terrible. Her going away party was almost canceled because of too much snow, so, by the time the moment came for her to leave, she was pretty glad to escape another Pittsburgh blizzard and embrace the warmth of the Florida sun.

She was happy there, and no more so than at this time of year but admitted that she misses having seasons. The fall there is not as beautiful as it is here. She does not appreciate the spring there as much as she did here, and even the lack of winter makes Christmas Spirit hard to come by. Those were all feelings I had when I lived in Texas, and that is why I could never live in a part of the country that does not have seasons.

I love the seasons and I try to keep in tune with them. One of the ways that I do this is to read books according to the seasons. My wife thinks I am crazy for so many reasons, but this one the most. There are so many times that she will catch me saying that I need to read a certain book and she will say, "What is stopping you?" and I respond, "I can't read that yet. It's winter. That's a summer book."

Let me explain. In spring I enjoy books of hope arising out of despair. It is the time for books of fantasy and discovery. summer is for books that are full of life and adventure. Funny books, books about the wonderfulness of life, books that make me glad. to be alive. fall is for books with a stoic beauty that hint at darkness to come. Scary books, gothic novels, Edgar Allan Poe and murder mysteries. In winter I read books that are dark. It is dark outside and I fill time reading books of science fiction that reflect the cold ugliness outside my window.

I started doing this when I was about thirteen when I read my first major work of fiction *The Lord of the Rings*. I found that this story, told over the course of three separate books, was made just for this sort of habit. The first book, entitled the *Fellowship of the Ring*, I began reading in the fall. It was beautiful as the characters spent much time traveling through woods whose beauty was like an eternal autumn. But throughout there was a hint of danger, a sense of darkness to come. I finished the book, and when I picked up the second book, *The Two Towers*, it was after Christmas. In this book the characters are deep in the middle of their troubles; a war has broken out in the land, and two of them must travel to the center of evil and the heart of darkness. By the time I had begun the final installment, *the Return of the King*, it was March. This book told the resolution of the tale where the heroes prevail, hope outlasts despair, and the shadow that had covered the land was dispelled by the light of the king who had returned.

In those pages I found a wonderful and difficult journey that ran from innocence to fear, to despair, then hope, and finally, "at the end of all things" as the hero describes the end of the quest, glorious joy. As the seasons changed along with each chapter, I felt a part of what was happening, and I shared the characters joy together "at the end of all things". When I closed the book on the last chapter spring had arrived and I have never appreciated a springtime more than that one, because I felt like I had come to the end of a long journey of my own.

I bet you all wish that we were there. There at the end of all things, on Easter Sunday celebrating the victory of the risen Lord, released from your Lenten vow, enjoying the colored eggs, candy, chocolate, and ham. More importantly we would be celebrating the return of spring and the coming of summer, the end of another school year, and the promise of vacations.

Well, we're not. We are here, in January, in the midst of terrible weather here at the beginning of all things. We are at the beginning as far as the weather goes. winter is here, Groundhog Day is still a month away, and it seems absurd to even think of spring yet. The year is still new. We are not even a month into the new year, and Lent has not yet begun. All of the seasons of the secular calendar and the church year are before us, and it seems like Easter will never get here.

It can be depressing, but even winter offers its own joys if we will just pay close enough attention to see them. As the snow falls and the roads are treacherous, we curtail much of our activity. Our busyness slows, our projects stop, and we do not go out as much. It may be frustrating because we are used to doing so much, and we see the winter as a curse, but the blessing in disguise is that winter offers the opportunity for hibernation and rest. winter is sort of a forced Sabbath.

Just as we are at the beginning of the year, we are also at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. So far in the gospel of Matthew, we have heard of Christ's birth and escape to Egypt. We have also heard of John the Baptist who began preparing people for the coming of the Messiah, and today in Mark we hear of how he baptized Christ.

At this point in the story John is the star. He is the one to whom the people are coming. He is the one who is attracting a following, and Jesus does not try to change this. He even goes so far as to allow John to baptize him even though John, himself, says it should be the other way around. Jesus knows that all things come in their season, and his time has not yet begun.

However, we read that today it has. For when Jesus is baptized God speaks from the Heavens saying, "this is my son with whom I am well pleased." No sooner is Christ revealed and God's son than John is arrested. Mark doesn't give us the details; he simply states that John was arrested.

What would you think would be Jesus' first action? Well, if he was the main character in an adventure novel, he might try to rescue John, but he does not. After hearing of John's arrest Jesus' first act is to withdraw to his home down by the sea of Galilee to prepare, for now he sees that his time has come. We may say that Christ was in the winter of his ministry. He was in that time in which all things must rest before they can burst forth upon the world.

When his time of withdrawal was over, he emerged ready to begin the ministry, which was his purpose. In order to show that he would continue and fulfill John's words, the very first words that he chose to begin his ministry were the ones that John used so often, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Even the very son of God needed Sabbath time to rest before he could begin His work. The idea of the Sabbath is one that is common throughout the Bible. In fact, the Sabbath is the first holy moment that is revealed to God's people. Throughout the book of Leviticus God commanded Sabbath time for the land as well as the people. God commanded that once every seven years the fields where crops had grown should be allowed to rest so that its fertility could be maintained. Sabbath, rest, hibernation, whatever we call it, it is necessary for the people and the land.

This is what winter is for. This is its blessing in disguise, its silver lining amidst all the gray clouds. Admittedly, it does not always seem like rest when we have to shovel our sidewalks or plow our driveways. These tasks may make us see winter as a curse, but I believe that this is God's way of telling us that we need to slow down. We have plenty of things to do, and there will be plenty of time to do them, but for now, rest.

If we did not have the Sabbath of winter, we would run until we burned ourselves out. Although it may sound blasphemous to say this, winter, like all other seasons, is a gift from God, so enjoy it. Relax, get cozy indoors around a fire, curl up with a good book, and prepare yourself.

Prepare yourself by remembering your baptism. The *act of baptism* is only the beginning of the *practice of baptism*—baptismal life. For John, baptism was a sign of the coming reign of God and the advent of the Messiah. John called people out to the wilderness to be baptized as a sign of repentance, washing away their sin in preparation to welcome God's new realm of righteousness, justice, and peace.

The baptism of Jesus paints a picture of the triune God in action. The voice of God resounds from heaven; Jesus is claimed as God's Beloved Son; the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove. In this scene we can glimpse the dynamic sense of relationship that is at the heart of the doctrine of the Trinity—unity and diversity, revelation and mystery, gathering and sending, all bathed in love.

At the beginning of his ministry Jesus shared our baptism in order that we might share his baptism—just as he shared our life and death. Because Jesus has waded into these waters, all the spiritual blessings of his baptism now spill over into our lives. Therefore, when we are baptized into Christ's body, we receive the same anointing of the Holy Spirit. When we arise from the waters, we hear the same heavenly voice claiming us as beloved children of God.

Our baptism is also a sign of the reign of God, as John taught. Those who are baptized into Christ are stamped with the seal of God's grace, *postmarked* for a divine destination. We are children of a new creation, citizens of a heavenly realm. Although sorrow, suffering, and sin remain, we know that Jesus is with us, leading us through the waters to the land of God's promise, plenty, and peace. Illumined by the Spirit, we see glimpses of God's promise already transforming our present reality.

Let us begin the new year, therefore, by remembering our baptism. Doing that is about claiming the promise, not recalling the event, remembering that we *are* baptized. Remembering our baptism means honoring the name of the triune God, inscribed on our hearts, by demonstrating God's self-giving love in our words and actions. It means rejoicing in the new life we have received as beloved children of God and sharing that life and joy with others through the gifts of the Spirit.

In a few weeks, we will dig out from underneath this snow and all the jobs that we have been putting off we will begin. In a few weeks, school will be in full session, tests will be taken, papers will be due, deadlines will come. In a few weeks Lent will be here, and Jesus and John's words, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near," will ring in our ears and our hearts. We will examine ourselves; we will vow to resist temptation, we will follow Jesus along the journey towards the cross, we will prepare for the Last Supper, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

Like other books that we might read, in the pages of the Bible we find a wonderful and difficult journey that runs from innocence to fear, to despair, then hope, and finally, "at the end of all things" glorious joy. As we read along Christ invites us to take this journey with him again.

It will be a long journey and hard to get to the end. It will ask much of us this year as it does every year, but we will only be able to appreciate the rejuvenation and the resurrection of spring if we take advantage of the Sabbath of winter. Before we can pray and cry out for spring, let us take this moment to thank God for the gift of time and rest here at the beginning of all things.

Call to Offering

Connie Sheller

As God has gathered us together, let us join together to share our gifts with God's people, that all may know they are all beloved children of God.

The Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow! Praise God, all creatures here below! Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts! Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dedication of Offering Prayer

Rev. Stillwell

Because of your generosity to us, God of love, we have courage to be generous. Bless our gifts. May they bring acts of generous love to make it clear that your love extends beyond the doors of this house. The entire cosmos is your house of love. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

Rev. Stillwell

In baptism we are not just baptized into Christ's life, we are also baptized into his death. There are many times I have had feeling joy when I entered water, and there is time or two that I recall being scared to death when I entered the water. I went white water rafting at Ohiopyle a few times and there was one time I remember vividly. I had rafted halfway down the course when, like many others before me, I got thrown from my raft into the roaring waters of the Youghiogheny River.

When I hit the water it was so cold it took my breath away. I lay in the water, cold, too scared to move, without breath. For a split second it felt like death, but then I gathered myself, broke the surface, exhaled, and began to swim. The panic subsided as a guide in a kayak came to me and helped me to the shore and then back into my raft.

When I signed up for rafting I signed up for the fun part, not the scary, but the risk of danger is what made the fun parts so much fun. I knew there was risk, and if I didn't want it I would have stayed in the swimming pool.

As we gather around the communion table we are confronted with the joy and the pain of following Christ, and, while the pain can keep people away, for those who choose to follow, it makes the joy that much sweeter. So take, eat, drink, and follow Jesus Christ. If you get wet, don't worry, for you will soon be dry. If your breath is taken away, don't panic, it will soon come back. If you feel like you might die, don't fear, it's only temporary.

Communion Hymn

"I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry"

Sam Johnson, organist

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold. I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well; in a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell.

Prayer for the Bread & Cup

Jackie Nelson

Holy almighty God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit please hear our prayer. We thank you that You know each of us by name and that You have plans for us. We make plans, doctor's appointments, vacations, fun, meetings all kinds of plans for 2026. Planners and calendars remind us of what is coming up. People say we make plans and God laughs. Is that true? Scripture says "for I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Because of Jesus we know our eternal future, Your very best plan. With this bread and cup we surrender our plans for Your plans, come what may. What are your plans for us? How can we know? Holy Spirit we ask You to come to us now and every day as we make decisions. We seek Your wisdom and guidance always. We trust You. We ask In the holy name of Jesus. Amen.

Words of Institution

Rev. Stillwell

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
(1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Sharing Holy Communion

You will receive the bread and cup together. Please hold them; we will take each together as one body. Disciples of Christ believe in an Open Table. All who profess Christ and follow Him are welcome to share His meal. Gluten free wafers are available in the Narthex.

Call to Discipleship

Rev. Stillwell

This is the promise of the gospel: God already knows you. God already loves you. God has already gifted you. God has already called you. You are invited—to deepen this knowledge, to feast in this love, to cultivate these gifts, and to follow this calling. There is a place for you among the people of God in this community of faith.

If you have come to know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior and you would like to profess that you intend to begin a life of faith, learning to walk in his way of Love, you are welcome to contact one of the Pastors to take this step. If you would like to join this part of the Body of Christ at Fairhill Manor Christian Church, to covenant to journey together in this life of faith, please reach out to one of the Pastors to learn more. We all take these moments to rededicate our lives to following Jesus.

Closing hymn

"I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"

Sam Johnson, organist

I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus--no turning back, no turning back.

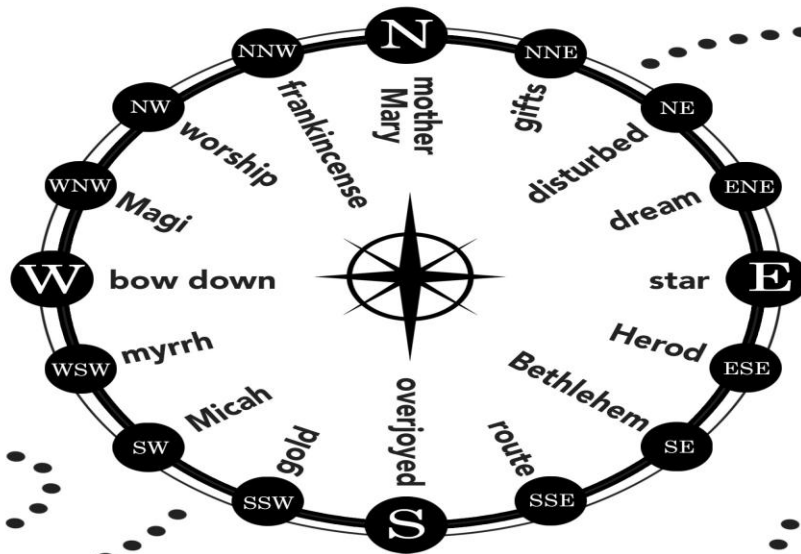
Benediction

Rev. Stillwell

Now the Son of God is rising, the Spirit of God is descending, and the voice of God is speaking: "You are my beloved people; with you I am well pleased." Alleluia!

JESUS
LOVES YOU—
and so do we!

Puzzle!



Use the compass guide (and read Matthew 2) to answer questions about special visitors to young Jesus.

- Who was king at the time of Jesus' birth? _____ (ESE)
- Who came from the East to worship the one born king of the Jews? _____ (WNW)
- How did King Herod feel about Jesus' birth? _____ (NE)
- Which prophet did the chief priests and teachers of the law quote when King Herod asked where the Christ would be born? _____ (SW)
- In what city would Christ be born? _____ (SE)
- King Herod lied to the wise men, telling them to search and report back so he, too, could do what to Christ? _____ (NW)
- What did the Magi see in the east and follow to find Jesus? _____ (E)
- When the star stopped, how did the Magi feel? _____ (S)
- Who else did the Magi see with Jesus? His _____ (N)
- Before they worshiped the child, what did the Magi do? _____ (W)
- Name the three treasures the Magi brought for Jesus.
_____ (SSW) _____ (NNW) _____ (WSW)
- These three treasures were all brought for Jesus as _____ (NNE)
- What warned the Magi not to return to Herod? A _____ (ENE)
- The Magi had to return to their country by another _____ (SSE)

Answers: 1. Herod; 2. Magi; 3. disturbed; 4. Micah; 5. Bethlehem; 6. worship; 7. star; 8. overjoyed; 9. mother Mary; 10. bow down; 11. gold, frankincense, myrrh; 12. gifts; 13. dream; 14. route



Homebound Members

Mrs. Mary Lou McDonough
949 Bruce Street
Washington PA 15301

Alice Cokeley
900 N Cass Lake Rd, Apt 324
Waterford MI 48328

Barb Bailey
Terry Bailey
Donna Bakaitis
Todd Barnhart
Vanessa & John Berezney
Jeff Caldwell
Bryan Carter
Maci Caster
Wanda Chicone
Angel Corbett
Ruth Cox
Carol Daniels
Dave Davis
Sue Donaldson
Craig Dotson
Benjamin Dube
Connie Faust
Kathy Moninger-Ford
Terry Gahagen
Barb Graff
Irma Harper
Sheila Harris
Aryn Hess
Danni Iams
Kari Johnson
Shelly Kubincanek
Marylee Lawrence

Southminster Residents

880 S Main St
Washington PA 15301

Bo & Patty Pryor, Apt 102
Chuck Wiseman, Apt 214

Southmont Resident

835 S Main Street
Washington PA 15301

Doris Sorice, Rm 554

Premier Resident

36 Old Hickory Ridge Rd
Washington PA 15301

Carol Brown, Rm 213

Transitions Healthcare Resident

90 Humbert Lane
Washington PA 15301

Doris Haniford, Rm 121

In the Military

Lance Dague	Andrew Gregg
Terrell McClain	Zachary Keene
Brandon Lipscomb	Sarah Lipscomb
Travis Ringer	Emily Chase
Dylan Demain	Noah Rudolph

The brave men and women who serve our country make incredible sacrifices every day. We are forever grateful for their service and dedication. Please remember the military members that are deployed and away from their family that they may return to their homes safely.

David Leonard
Charlie McConnell
Pam McCord
Norm McDonough
Dick Moninger
Joe Neckerman
Carmen Oliverio
Peggy Oliverio
Michelle Oneal
Sandy Petry
Dick Pilgun
Betty Riecks
Jeannie Riffle
Joan Riffle
Lori Riffle
Mike Ryan
John Samida
Valerie Shetler
Doug Smith
Darci Sprowls
Wayne Starnes
Cathy Stewart
Jan Stillwell
Beth Teagarden
Ginger Throckmorton
Cece Watson