

Manor Minutes
Volume 16 Issue 52
December 24, 2025

- No Dartball – December 30

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Sunday, December 28
10:15am



Board Reports due January 7

Annual Reports due January 7

Board Meeting
January 14



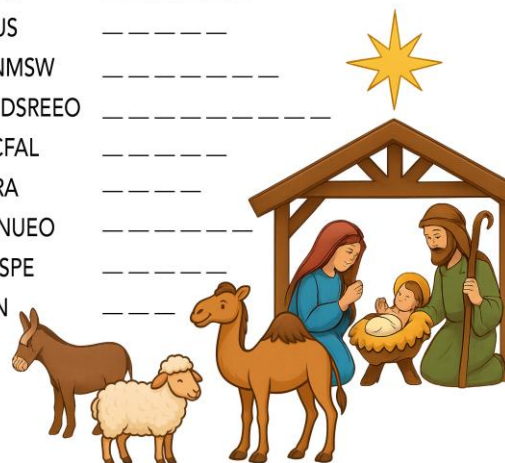
2026 Offering
Envelopes are
available in the
Narthex.

Puzzle!

The Christmas Story

Unscramble each set of letters to form a word from the Christmas story. One letter in each set doesn't belong. Write each extra letter below, on the line above the correct number. Then answer the question: What did we all receive at Christmas?

- (1) TGLBEHHEME _____
- (2) NEAGLO _____
- (3) NRMEDAG _____
- (4) ODEKSNY _____
- (5) AMGYZ _____
- (6) OHESJIP _____
- (7) EFJSUS _____
- (8) ITEENMSW _____
- (9) SPHDSREEO _____
- (10) EMCFAL _____
- (11) TLSRA _____
- (12) CSSNUEO _____
- (13) HEVSPE _____
- (14) ENIN _____



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9 10 11 12 13 14

Answers: Bethlehem (G), Angel (O), Manger (D), Donkey (S), Mary (G), Joseph (I), Jesus (F), Wise men (T), Shepherds (O), Camel (F), Star (L), Census (O), Sheep (V), Inn (E), God's gift of love



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

Rev. Chris Stillwell, Senior Minister
Rev. Gena Sheller, Associate Pastor
Elders: Linda Reese, Bread
Sheila Harris, Cup
December 24, 2025 – 7pm

Prelude

Sam Johnson, organist

Welcome

Rev. Stillwell

We joyfully greet our members and their loved ones and all our visitors on this Christmas Eve! We remember together, with awe and gratitude, how God shone holy light into our darkness on that first Christmas. We pray that we may be bearers of Christ's light to all who languish in the darkness of poverty, illness and fear.

Tonight, let us celebrate Christmas in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who came to us from the heart of God's own being taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness.
Let us celebrate God's entering into our lives in human form, to bring light to all the world.
Let us now here the call to worship

Call to Worship

Connie Sheller

Leader: Sing a new song to God, as we join with the songs of old.

People: Glory to God in the highest.

Leader: Sing with the shepherds whose story amazed all who heard it

People: Glory to God in the highest.

Leader: Sing with the heavenly angels, who rejoice with us on this holy night.

People: Glory to God in the highest heaven,

All: And on earth peace, goodwill to all!

Opening Hymn

"Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King; peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies; with the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Choir

Four weeks ago we began our journey toward Christmas and lit the first candle of Advent, the Hope candle, to remember that Christ is our hope.

(light a purple candle)

Three weeks ago we lit the second candle of advent, the Peace candle, to remember our need for a Savior to save us from our sins, and give us peace with God.

(light a purple candle)

Two weeks ago we lit the candle of Joy. May the joy that God brought to the world through the birth of Christ be yours tonight.

(light pink candle)

Last week we lit the Love candle, for love was born at Christmas, stars and angels gave the sign. Love shall be our token. Love be yours and love be mine.

(light a purple candle)

Tonight, as we light the Christ candle, celebrating the end of Advent and the arrival of Christmas, let us remember how our savior came once as a lowly baby, that the world through him might be saved, and how he will return one day in glory.

(light the Christ candle)

Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Amen. (Luke 2:8-11)

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

Pastor Gena

Holy God, we have been waiting a long time for this night—for the joy and the quiet of Christmas Eve, for the sound of the angel chorus, for the old familiar songs. We have carried weary hearts through the last four weeks of Advent, longing for the peace and hope of this night, and now we’re finally here. So as we bow our heads, we offer you our most earnest and honest prayers, trusting that once again, you meet us where we are.

Tonight, O God, we say thank you for the things in our lives that spark joy:

Thank you for the gift of family recipes and crowded tables.

Thank you for a slower schedule, as many approach vacation.

Thank you for infusing this season with practices of generosity.

Thank you for the bells, and the songs, and the candles in the windows.

Thank you for the children who squeal with joy, and the neighbors who drop off cookies.

Thank you for every ounce of beauty that marks this season; it has made it possible for us to join our voices with the angel chorus.

But even in the face of remarkable joy, O God, we still bring weary and worried hearts to you this night. Because we know that many have an empty seat at the table this year. We know that many will celebrate Christmas from a hospital room.

We know that many have crunched numbers over and over again to see if they could afford a gift. We know that for far too many, the holidays are a reminder that the world is still not as it should be.

In between our joy and our weariness, O God, we ask that you would make room. Pour yourself into the cracks of our hearts. Bind yourself to our good days and our bad days. Carve out space for your love in the center of our beings so that no matter where we go we might trust the angels' song when they say, “Be not afraid,” and, “Joy to the world!”

Until then, until the day when joy overpowers weariness, until the day when there is room for all at every table, until *your* promised day, we will continue to pray as your son taught us to pray, 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:

“Emmanuel, Emmanuel”

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel.

God with us, revealed in us, his name is called Emmanuel.

First Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 9:2-7

Chuck Riggle

A Children Worship & Wonder Story “Christmas – Meeting the Christ Child” Rita Puskarich
Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, colors varied dark and light, they are precious in His sight; Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Christmas Hymn

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o’er the plains, and the mountains
in reply echoing their joyous strains. Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Second Scripture Reading

Luke 2:1-7

Gary Ford

Anthem

“Silent Is the Night”

Choir

Third Scripture Lesson

Luke 2:8-20

Rev. Stillwell

Sermon

“The Sacredness of Silence”

Rev. Chris Stillwell

This is a past sermon by Rev. Chris.

Tonight, as we come to celebrate another Christmas Eve together, we take the time to celebrate a silent night. The shopping is done, (I hope) the decorations and preparations are finished, and we pause to worship together in muted expectation to celebrate the most incredible event that has ever occurred in the world, that took place in a quiet manger in the sleepy little town of Bethlehem.

Silence is the perfect attribute to attach to Christmas eve, because, like the birth of Christ, it stands in immediate opposition to the instincts of the world. Just as the world longed for a savior who would be a great warrior and king, but, instead, received a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger, so now during the celebration of Christmas the world fills our senses with every color, scent, noise, and enticement to celebrate that moment of God being revealed to the world in human flesh to which Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds only responded to with hushed whispers and silence.

And we come here tonight, again, expecting to finish our service by singing the time-honored sacred hymn, “Silent Night”, passing the flame to one another from candle to candle until the whole room is bright with the light that Christ brings, and we leave with our spirits more exuberant and cheered by a simple, quiet hymn than by any exciting, energetic Christmas celebration that we could ever know.

Tonight, however, as we remember that first silent night many centuries ago, I want to also talk about another silent night that also occurred many decades ago. This night was special not only because of the quiet, peaceful calm, that fell across the land, but because the silence that covered the land like a blanket took place amidst the most horrific noise the world had ever known at that time.

This particular silent night was December 24, 1914 when the peace of Christ entered the world and quieted even the guns of war. In August of 1914 the First World War broke out throughout all of Europe with Germany, Italy, and Austria on one side and England, France and Russia on the other. After months

of warfare across France and Belgium the armies came to a standstill when a final series of German assaults ended in mid-November because of rain and snow. The opposing armies literally sank into the ground, facing each other in a line of trenches, which began the deadly stalemate on the western front, that endured for three years.

Each side dug trenches into the battlefield where they camped. They would periodically lead forays over the top, but mostly they would stay in their trenches occasionally fire some half-hearted shots at the other side, or duck to avoid incoming mortar fire. They lived miserable lives in which they were either afraid or bored and never dared even to stand fully upright for fear that a sniper would get them. These practices lasted until the war ended in 1918. By that point 10 million people had died, and only a few inches of land were ever gained by either side.

The Great War, as it was called, may be remembered as the most futile of wars that have ever been fought, but in the midst of the terrible devastation it wrought throughout Europe, came a night that was so radical, so wonderful, that it may indeed be deemed sacred. For there, at a time of incredible darkness in a terrible place known as “No Man’s Land”, with no warning the Kingdom of God broke into the world, bringing with it peace on earth and good will to all.

It took place on Christmas Eve and has come to be known as the World War I Christmas Eve truce, and it is the story of horror taking a holiday. Many people at the time had called for such a truce. Both the US congress and the Pope had called upon the warring nations to observe a Christmas truce hoping that in doing so cooler heads would prevail. Their encouragements were rebuffed, however, with one newspaper responding:

The stench of battle should rise above the churches where they preach good will to men. A few carols, a little incense and some tinsel will heal no wounds.

Both sides rejected any offers of a truce fearing that the other would gain a foothold if they did, so they ordered their troops to ignore such niceties and remember who the enemy was. Soldiers on both sides may have remembered who the enemy was, but as Christmas approached, they also remembered that Christ had said, “Love your enemy as your neighbor” and spontaneously, all along the Western Front enticements came from both sides to call a truce from Christmas Eve to Christmas night. Battalion after battalion laid down their weapons and walked across the couple hundred yard stretch of land between the two sides to trade rations with one another, to help one another bury their dead, to sing Christmas carols with one another, and to play games of football on Christmas day, before the evening fell and they returned to war as usual.

It was a beautiful moment, in which the best aspects of human nature: the ability to forgive one another, to see the good in one another, and the longing for peace on earth and good will to all, overcame the human desire for revenge and conquest. Of all the stories told about that night the most stirring to me is that it became a common practice for the German, English, Russian, Italian, and French soldiers to light candles and sing in their own languages the hymn, “Silent Night” as they found with one another a beautiful, quiet, sacred moment, in which all their differences were put aside, and they were nothing more and nothing less than children of a powerful and merciful God who loved them so much that he became incarnate in the form of a child to show them the way to peace.

This wartime truce, inspired by the birth of Christ, bares a number of striking similarities to the story of Christ’s birth as told in the gospel of Luke. On both of those silent nights the people involved were ordered to do things by earthly authorities. Joseph was ordered to return to his home of Bethlehem by the emperor of Rome, Caesar Augustus. The infantrymen were ordered by their government to come to “No Man’s Land”.

Both the actions of Mary and Joseph and the soldiers were inspired by a heavenly authority which challenged the earthly authority. Mary and Joseph raised the son of God who was to be God’s chosen

Messiah. He was to be the king of the Jews, which greatly displeased Herod who sought to kill the Christ child. Meanwhile, soldiers from both sides were threatened with court-martials and imprisonment for refusing to take up arms against their enemy for one silent night.

Both the birth of Christ and the 1914 celebration of Christ's birth took place on conquered land. Mary and Joseph were natives of Israel which had been conquered by Rome and the soldiers of WWI fought across the farms and fields of occupied France.

The ultimate similarity, however, is that both incidences involved lowly people experiencing the grace of God in terrible conditions. While Mary and Joseph were relatively unknown and poor they returned to their homeland where they were welcomed by no one. Homeless and alone they sought shelter in a cave where livestock were kept. Amidst the hard cold floor, crowded, unsanitary, unpleasant conditions of the manger the Son of God was born. Likewise, the soldiers were miles from their family and friends. They were placed at the front lines because they were the poorest and the least important. They lived in trenches that were homemade graves of mud, rain, and snow.

Despite the fear and discomfort Mary and Joseph or the soldiers felt, on each of those silent nights they were privileged to witness God entering into the world. For a moment, on two evenings separated by hundreds of years and thousands of miles the kingdom of God broke into the world, and God's reign drew closer.

The legacy of the Christmas Eve Truce, a truce rejected by nations and armies, a truce that was not forced on the soldiers but which forced itself upon them, begs the question what if? What if the spirit that reigned that holy, scared, silent night had not only lasted into the morning but on into the next and the next bringing to an end the largest war in Europe? Would the even more terrible devastation of the Second World War have happened? Would there have ever been a Holocaust? Would the Bolsheviks have taken over Russia leading it and eastern Europe to seventy years of communism? Would there indeed be peace on earth?

According to Luke's birth narrative it appears that Mary was also uncertain about what the first Christmas would mean to her world as well. After hearing the angels and the shepherds speak of the greatness of her son Luke says that, "Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart."

What a fitting posture for Christmas Eve: a quiet evening in which Mary is left to wonder at the implications of what Christ's coming will mean for the world. Imagine her staring into the eyes of her son whom she has been told is also her savior, and you can also imagine her saying "What if?." What if he really is the son of God? Will he restore our world? Will he beat swords into ploughshares? What if people gather every year to celebrate this night? Will it change anything?

The power of the incarnation lasted long beyond that one night and long beyond Jesus' entire life. It spread from that manger in Bethlehem like a fire to a candle and filled the whole world, and, although the light that has shone forth from Christ's birth has been darkened at times, it has shown time and time again when the world seems to be at its darkest. When the dearth of winter has taken hold, the light of the Christ child shines forth to warm our hearts, to illuminate our souls, and to light our paths to show us the way to heavenly peace.

The Scottish poet, Frederick Niven, inspired by the birth of Jesus Christ and by the WWI Christmas Eve truce, wrote these words:

O ye who read this truthful rime
From Flanders, kneel and say:
God speed the time when every day
Shall be as Christmas Day.

As you leave here on this silent night hear these word These are words that implore us to live all of the year like we do at Christmas time. These are words that beg us to call a truce with all who hurt and anger us, our neighbors, our enemies, even ourselves. Here these words that Luke wrote, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” and, like Mary huddled in the manger, treasure all these words and ponder them in your heart. Keep Christmas in your heart each day and each night. Keep these words and then may you sleep in heavenly peace.

Call to Offering

Kevin Puskarich

As the angels brought songs, may we bring our gifts and praise. As the shepherds brought reports of their visions, may we bring testimonies of God’s vision in our lives. As the sages brought gifts, may we bring our gifts to share at the manger of Christ.

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

Pastor Gena

As we present these gifts to you, O God, we pray that they might reach those in greatest need, that they might lift those in the deepest despair, and that they might bring peace and compassion to those who find themselves amid conflict. We pray this in the name of the Holy Child in the manger, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

Pastor Gena

Jesus was born into a world that told him right away, “There’s no room for you here.” Mary and Joseph were turned away from every door, so Jesus was born in a stable instead of a house. He was laid in a manger instead of a crib.

Friends, today you will not be turned away, because Jesus spent the rest of his life making room. He made room for tax collectors and children.

He made room for five thousand people to sit down and eat together. He made room for Samaritan women, Jews and Gentiles. He made room for the sick, for the outcast, for the unclean. Jesus was always pulling up a seat, saving space, making room for people, and he has made room for you.

So come to this Table. Come with your faith and your doubt.

Come with your questions and your hopes.

Come with your grief and your love.

Just come, because there is room for you here. This is Christ’s table. All are welcome.

Communion Hymn

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Sam Johnson, organist

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by. Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light: the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

Prayer for the Bread & Cup

Linda Reese

Words of Institution

Pastor Gena

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

All are invited to share in this meal. Please come forward down the center aisle, as you are able. Take a candle and form a circle around the Sanctuary. If you are unable to come forward, the meal will be brought to you. Gluten-free wafers & individual servings are available in the Narthex.

Call to Discipleship

Pastor Gena

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.

Invitation to the Service of Candle Lighting

Rev. Stillwell

On this night, more than any other, the candle becomes more than a simple form of light. It is a symbol of overwhelming joy even in the midst of despair. It is a beacon of hope for brighter and lighter days ahead. It is the power of God, the light of Christ, and the warmth of the Holy Spirit. Just as all of these things proceeded from the birth of Christ now they proceed from the Christ candle. Please pass the flame to your neighbor as you receive it and join me in signing “Silent Night”

Closing Hymn

“Silent Night, Holy Night”

Sam Johnson, organist

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright round yon virgin mother and child,
holy infant so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Benediction

Pastor Gena

Go now in wonder. Go to bring light to those in darkness, joy to those who can find no joy, awe and wonder to our world. Go with the songs of angels in your ears, and the love of God in your hearts. Go and spread the word—the babe of Bethlehem is born for all. Amen.



Do you have a prayer request or need help? Please feel free to contact Rev. Chris (412-956-6590) or Pastor Gena (724) 263-0033 directly and confidentially. Or scroll down on the opening page of our website (www.fairhillmanorchurch.org) to "Requests for Prayer or Help." There you can send an email which will go directly to Rev. Chris. We are One Body in Christ!

Homebound Members

Mrs. Mary Lou McDonough
949 Bruce Street
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Alice Cokeley
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Bo & Patty Pryor, Apt 102
Chuck Wiseman, Apt 214

Southmont Resident

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Washington PA 15301

Doris Sorice, Rm 554

Premier Resident

36 Old Hickory Ridge Rd
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Carol Brown, Rm 213

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Doris Haniford, Rm 121

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
Ed Jackman
Kari Johnson
Shelly Kubincanek
Marylee Lawrence

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

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.