

Manor Minutes
Volume 11 Issue 54
December 31, 2020

ZOOM - LIVE

Zoom Worship this Week - Live from the Sanctuary at 10:15 am!

"Join a Meeting" on Zoom at 9:45 am using the meeting ID and password.

Meeting ID: 932 4557 4206 Password: 026316

Fellowship with other "Zoomers" from **9:45 – 10:15 am.**

Text your prayer concerns to Pastor Gena (724) 263-0033. She will share these during worship. At 10:15 am, mute yourself on Zoom (Not sure how to do that? Login at 9:45 am and someone will help). Those on Zoom are visible to each other for the entire worship service. If you would like to see but not be seen, click Stop Video on your Zoom screen.

Children Worship & Wonder

We invite children age 3 – Grade 5 to participate in Children Worship & Wonder. Join CW&W on Zoom around 10:30 am (contact Pastor Gena for the login information). To learn more and register your child(ren), <https://fairhillmanorchurch.org/children-worship-wonder>

No **Tween Team** on Sunday January 3.

Stewardship/Finance Ministry – January 6, 6 pm via Zoom

Board Meeting – January 13, 7 pm via Zoom

Women's Stories from the Old Testament – January 14, 5 pm via Zoom

Congregational meeting after Worship – January 17 via Zoom

Stay up to date, check www.fairhillmanorchurch.org/calendar



**Dates
to
Remember**

Board & Annual Reports

There will be a Board meeting on **January 13, 2021, 7 pm** via Zoom.

January Board reports are due on **January 5**. This is a report of your ministry from November & December.

Annual reports are also due on **January 5**. This is a summary from your ministry's 2020 Board reports.



**Happy
New Year!**
New Year, New Beginnings!



Fairhill Manor Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

351 Montgomery Ave.

724-225-8610

Rev. Chris Stillwell, Senior Pastor

Rev. Gena Sheller, Associate Pastor

January 3, 2021

Prelude

Josh Garrett, Steel Drum

Welcome

Pastor Gena

Call to Worship*

Donna Stenski

For everything there is a season.
We come to worship God with our whole lives.
We celebrate all the times of our lives:
times to laugh and dance, times to cry and mourn,
times of silence and times of speech,
times of war and times of peace.
Come let us worship the God of our times and seasons.

Opening Hymn

"We Three Kings"

Josh Garrett, Steel Drum

We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.
(refrain) O star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.

Glorious now behold him arise;
Christ and God and sacrifice:
alleluia, alleluia,
sounds through the earth and skies
(refrain)

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*

Pastor Gena

God of all people,

We come with the Magi to worship you, having seen signs of your glory from far away, drawing near to see the new thing you are doing.

We come with Anna and Simeon, rejoicing in the presence of your son, Jesus, the fulfillment of your promise to live among us and save us.

Gather us and all people to your light this morning as we worship you. Gather us whether we come with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, or whether our sacrifice is a pair of turtledoves. We bring our hearts and our lives, glorifying you for your love that draws all people to yourself.

We give thanks for each new life who has come to us and those who will be born this year. May all children grow and become strong, full of wisdom. We pray for parents and all who care for children, that you would surround them with the support they need, that they might have kind and patient people to reach out to for wisdom and guidance when that is needed. We pray for parents and caretakers, that

they might find joy in bringing their children to know you. Give us as the church the grace and wisdom to know how to support families as they grow in faith together.

Thank you for rituals and practices that keep us in rhythm with you and each other and help us to explore all aspects of our faith. Give us a daily practice of listening for you, so that we might know you when we see you, that we might know the sound of your voice when you speak to us. Help us to share our hearts with you – our joys, our worries, our pain. Give new meaning to old customs and traditions that they might truly lead us to you.

Loving God, in you we are fully known. All is exposed in your light - the parts of our lives of which we are proud and those we would rather no one knew about. Give us courage to look together with you at our lives with a loving gaze. Give us grace to see that which has been. Extend mercy to cover and mend those places where we have not lived in your ways. Redeem that which seems lost. Forgive us and walk with us, leading us into a new chapter in our lives. Thank you for knowing us fully and loving us fully.

We pray for those who are lost and scattered, wandering without direction or hope. Gather them up into your people, put a new song of praise on their lips. May we welcome them with open arms when they come to our doors. May we be the light that guides them to you.

We pray for those who are hungry and thirsty, suffering because of what they lack. Satisfy their needs through your abundant love. Help us to see you in those who suffer in our world. May we lead them to springs of water that never fail. May we work for justice so that all have what they need. May we connect those in need into your community of love.

We pray for those who are sick and suffering, held in the grip of illness and pain. Set them free, heal them, renew their strength. Show us how to love.

We pray for those who are sad and grieving, unable to laugh, to dance, to sing. Give us the grace and courage to be present, sitting in companionship, offering neither judgment nor false hope. Give the gift of your peace that can never die, the gift of your joy that can never be taken away.

We name now in our hearts those who need your special care... Blanket these with your loving presence. Show us how to love, we pray.

Reveal your plans to us when the time is right through the faithful guidance of your Holy Spirit. Give us patience to wait for what you promise. Help us to see you when you arrive among us. Guide us with your Spirit to the just-right places and times in our lives that we might give and receive your love when it is needed.

It is in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, that we pray as he taught us...

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.

Special Music

Josh Garrett, Steel Drum

Children's Message*

Pastor Gena

Can you think of a time when you were doing something new and you followed someone who already knew how to do it so that you could learn? Can you think of a time when you were going to a new place and followed someone else or used something so that you could find your way? I wonder what might happen if you didn't have anyone or anything to follow?

Let's think about where we are in the calendar of the church year. Today is the 10th day of Christmas. So we have two more days of Christmas. And then on Wednesday, January 6th, we celebrate the Epiphany. Since the Epiphany comes on a Wednesday this year, we celebrate it while we are together in worship today and we call today Epiphany Sunday. One thing we celebrate today is the wonder of how Jesus is a light for the whole world, how God is known to the whole world. We think about the stories of so many different people who were looking for Jesus and found him and knew that he was something special for all people.

Some people we think about today are the Magi who came to see Jesus after he was born. They were from a place very far away from Bethlehem. How did they even know about Jesus? That's right, they saw something in the sky that got their attention and told them that a king was born. How did the Magi find Jesus? Did they follow someone else who already knew the way? The star, a star God made, showed the Magi where to go so they could bring their gifts to Jesus and worship him. So we could say that God showed the Magi the way to Jesus.

I wonder what it would have been like to travel with the Magi to find Jesus. I wonder how bright the star was, if it was easy to follow – or if it was like those blazes on trees that you and I try to follow when we are hiking. I wonder what the camels smelled like. I wonder if our feet would have been dusty or sandy as we walked through the desert to get to Jesus.

So I said today is Epiphany Sunday. Do you know what an “epiphany” is? It is an “Aha!” moment when some different things come together for you and you have a new realization that you never had before. It's an “Oh, I get it!” moment. Have you ever had one of those moments?

The “Aha” moment for today is that if God sent a star so that some Magi from very far away, from a whole different group of people, could come and worship Jesus, then that must mean that Jesus came for the whole world, for everyone. God must love the whole world! God is God of the whole world and wants everyone to know God! That was a real “aha” moment.

Dear God, thank you for the star that led the Magi to Jesus. Thank you for loving all the people of the world. Help us to follow too and get to know you. Thank you for giving us Jesus to go with us and show us the way to live and how to love. Amen.

Scripture Reading***Luke 2:22-40**

Donna Stenski

Sermon***“Christmas Light Easter Shadow”**

Rev. Stillwell

One time, many years ago, I had the privilege of playing Super Minister at a local Rite Aid. I had stopped in to buy some Christmas lights and, while waiting in line to pay for them, the song the 12 Days of Christmas began playing over the store speakers. When I heard the woman behind the counter speaking to a customer, and I overheard the woman say, “What are the twelve days of Christmas exactly?” Her customer said, “I'm not sure,” and she responded, “I wish someone could just tell me.”

Well I had no phone booth to duck into to change from my jeans and leather jacket into my robe and stole, so I just stepped up and said, "I can tell you," and then I presumed to explain to her that the twelve days of Christmas refers to Christmas day and the eleven days following. December 26, is a saint's feast, St. Stephen's Day in the Western Church. In Britain and its former colonies, it is also the secular holiday of Boxing Day. New Year's Eve on December 31 is the feast of Saint Sylvester and is known also as Silvester.

New Year's Day on January 1 is an occasion for further secular festivities or for rest from the celebrations of the night before. Liturgically it is, for the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God celebrated on the eighth Day of Christmas. It has also been celebrated and still is in some denominations as the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ, since by Jewish tradition he must have been circumcised on the eighth day.

These days are ended on January 6 which is epiphany, which is a Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation of God the Son as a human being in Jesus Christ. In Western Christianity, the feast commemorates the visit of the Magi to the Christ child, and thus Jesus' physical manifestation to the Gentiles.

In many countries Epiphany is now celebrated on the first Sunday after the first of January, which can fall as early as January 2. That feast, then, together with customary observances associated with it, most often fall within the Twelve Day of Christmas.

After I finished solving this problem the woman was rather surprised to get all that information and stammered a stunned, "Oh thanks". I walked away feeling like my work there was finished, but I always think of that story at this time of year, because we are in the middle of the twelve days of Christmas, and when my children ask why we are still listening to Christmas music and watching Christmas shows on TV, I remind them what day of Christmas we are on. Today is the 10th day of Christmas so if you woke up to find 10 lords a leaping on your front lawn you will know why.

I am also reminded of the song when I read the passage that we have read today from the gospel of Luke in which Mary and Joseph take Jesus to be dedicated. This passage makes me think of this song for several reasons. The first is that it is the lectionary text for this Sunday which, as I have already noted, is in the middle of the 12 days of Christmas.

The second reason I am reminded of the song when I read it is that in this story we see that Mary offers two turtledoves for a purity offering. This was a requirement for the ritual of dedication. One had to be ritually pure, in order to dedicate a child to God and that involves sacrifice, so Mary sacrifices two turtledoves. This is significant because this sacrifice indicates a hardship.

The book of Leviticus spells out clearly that a sheep is required for the dedication, but it also makes allowances for people of different means. It reads:

⁸If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtle-doves or two pigeons, one for a burnt-offering and the other for a sin-offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.

So we see that the song references this passage directly.

The third reason I think of the 12 days of Christmas when I hear this passage is because of the words of Simeon who told Mary:

This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.’

These are Simeon’s final words. At first the things he says to Mary are quite good: for upon seeing the Christ child he says to God:

my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Simeon is the first person to recognize who Christ was outside of the nativity and suggests to Mary and Joseph that that day wasn’t just a dream, but the beginning of something great God is doing. However, things take a turn to say the least when Simeon utters his final words, “a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Here Simeon gives Mary, Joseph, and us a glimpse of the story that is to come. Here in the midst of the light of Christmas our scripture gives us the shadow of the cross.

It is telling because throughout the gospel, no matter how far away in time or place, Jesus is from Jerusalem, the cross is always present. It is present in the manger, it is present at the temple, it is present, throughout the Judean countryside as Jesus travels and teaches, heals and preaches, and this is important because we have shadows in our own life, and we need to know that Christ can overcome them. Perhaps we will not know the pain that Mary would know, and I hope that we do not, but it is important to know that if we do, Christ is with us.

But, you are probably asking, what does any of that have to do with three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree? The reason the words of Simeon remind me of the 12 days of Christmas is because there is a legend that the song was used as a catechism designed to help students learn about the Bible with each gift representing various aspects of the faith.

Four calling birds were the four gospels, six geese a-laying the six days of creation. The eleven pipers piping were the eleven faithful disciples and so on. The images of drummers and pipers helped the children remember important parts of Jesus’ story, and the song is fun and joyous just as Christmas is, but the song always comes back to the partridge in a pear tree, which, legend has it, represents Christ on the cross. In the song there are eleven gifts that bring joy and light, but one that is dark and sad.

In the song as in the story there is much light but one big shadow. That is the way of the world and always has been. If you can get 11 good days out of twelve count yourself fortunate. If you can get something that is 90% light and only 10% dark you are doing better than most. Because, you see, you can’t turn on a light without casting a few shadows. Even when making a dark room light there will still be pockets of darkness around and that is what is happening here at the beginning of Jesus’ story.

We spend 12 days celebrating the fact that the light of the world has come, but even then there was darkness. Simeon warned that Mary’s soul would be pierced, and it was. Even believing that Jesus was the son of God it was soul wrenching to watch him be crucified. Even when we are at peace with

someone's death, even if they die in the most comfortable way possible, it pierces our soul to lose them. Likewise, Matthew tells us that soon Herod would hear of Jesus' birth, and they would have to flee to Egypt to save him. Although they survived many other children did not. There was Christmas light, but also Easter shadow.

We are in the season of light and even now there is darkness. The cross is always present and this is important because we have shadows in our own life, and we need to know that Christ can overcome them. Perhaps we will not know the pain that Mary would know, and I hope that we do not, but it is important to know that, if we do, Christ has been there and Christ will be there for us.

The twelve days of Christmas is a reminder that Christmas is not over on December 26. We are still in the middle of the Christmas season, but the shadow of the cross has already started moving in. As we sit at the beginning of the New Year there is much light in our life and our world. But there are shadows as well.

Some of us are sick and hoping to get better. Others are concerned about getting sick, all of us are sick of not being able to live as we used to live. On top of this there are shadows of addiction and depression which grow longer at this time of year. Bills are higher, needs are greater as weather grows colder. In many ways January is the hardest month and so we need to keep that Christmas, light as long as we can because in every circumstance of life there will be good and bad, light and dark. How your life proceeds will depend in large measure on whether or not you follow the light, seek the light, and respond to the light, or if you succumb to the shadows. We cannot have shadows without light, but without shadows it is also hard to know how bright the light truly is.

As winter grows and Lent approaches the shadows of the cross will grow and it is God's light in the form of God's Son, Jesus Christ, that will keep the shadows from overwhelming us. Each day from now until Easter will be brighter and lighter, but each day the shadows will grow also. For now Let us celebrate the light that was revealed in Jesus Christ and enjoy the light wherever we may find it knowing that though the shadows lurk always, they cannot overcome the light of God's Son.

Call to Offering*

Donna Stenski

Everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded. Let us remember these words of scripture as we give our offering to God.

Dedication of Offering Prayer*

Rev. Stillwell

We know that those who receive much are expected to give much, but we persist in the fiction that we have received little. Help us to realize that we are among the most fortunate people on earth and that therefore we have a great obligation to give back in your name.

Invitation to Communion*

Rev. Stillwell

There was a little bad weather on Christmas Eve, but, as I drove home I was glad that I didn't have to deal with what I had the previous year. That year was the worst fog I have probably ever experienced, and certainly the worst I have ever known in December. We had to drive home slowly so that an hour drive took more than an hour and a half and I remember there being times when all we had to go by was following the taillights of the car in front of us, and then there were times where no cars in front of us and all we could was follow our own light.

It was a harrowing experience, but one that was very biblical. For many Christmas' before that one, wise men traveled to Bethlehem from afar and they didn't have much to go on. All they saw was an extraordinary star, or perhaps just an odd juxtaposition of stars or planets like the one we had this year, but the men from the east were true seekers. Despite the uncertainties, they had a hunger in the heart that spurred them on. They knew that there was truth beyond the obvious; that signs in the natural world pointed to the supernatural one. They knew, before Jesus said it, that those who seek will find. They also knew that when all is dark, the only thing left to do is follow the light. It may take a while, and you may be uncertain of where you are heading, but if you follow the light eventually you will get to where you're going whether it is Bethlehem or home. At this table we celebrate the Light of Life given to us in Bethlehem, and we remember that whenever we feel lost or all seems dark in our life if we will simply continue to follow the light that was born in Bethlehem it will, in God's own time, led us home.

Prayer for the Bread & Cup*

Linda Reese

Gracious God, at your table we come in thanksgiving for the gift of your Son Jesus, Emmanuel. This gift surpasses anything else we could ever receive. At this table we remember another gift you gave us -- eternal life. We eat the bread and drink from the cup in humble gratitude for the magnitude of these gifts, remembering the sacrifice Jesus made so that we might have these gifts. Let us commune in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Words of Institution*

Rev. Stillwell

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: That the Lord Jesus Christ, on the night that he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is broken for you; eat this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; that is poured out for you. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat of the bread and drink of the cup, you

Closing Hymn

"The First Noel"

Josh Garrett, Steel Drum

The first Noel, the angel did say,
was to certain poor shepherds
in fields as they lay;
in fields where they
lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night
that was so deep.

Then entered in those wise men three,
full reverently
upon their knee,
and offered there,
in his presence,
their gold and
myrrh and frankincense.

(refrain)

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
born is the King of Israel.

Benediction*

Rev. Stillwell

Go forth into the new year, trusting in God's promises. And may God, the alpha and the omega, be with you always.



Do you have a prayer request or need help? Please feel free to contact Rev. Chris (412-956-6590) **and** 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 Pastor Gena. We are One Body in Christ!

Prayer List:

Avery Allen
Donna Bakaitis
Bill Behrens
Bristol Allan Berry
Abby Blanchard
Mark & Susan Britko
Jordon Burk
Wanda Chicone
Joanne Coburn
Emily Cope Robinson
Rick & Dawn Couch
Ruth Cox
Irma Davis
Jessica Duke
Libby Eberhard
Fred Engle
Jay Freudenberg
Joe Greene
Bonnie Gregg

Sloan Amelia Hagy
Judy Hanning
Aryn Hess
James Hritz
Ed & Harriet Jackman
Dallas Jacobovitz
Bob Lanning
Cheryl Leach
Rick Lewis
Lee & Betsy Martin
Don Melvin
Ruth Mikuta
Dick Moninger
Jody Mullis
Georgette Murray
Elinor Newman
Carmen Oliverio
Peggy Oliverio
Deborah Patterson
Denny Paul

Sadie Reese
Betty & Charles Riecks
Betty Jo Riggle
Chip Rogers and his parents
Jim and Barb Roupe
Theresa Shape
Maria Sheller
Colby Simkovic
Doug and Tracy Smith
Matt Shetler
Tiffany Shetler
Troy, Tammy, Walker & Kolby Smith
Cathy Stewart
John Stewart
Beth Teagarden
Melissa Teagarden
Frannie Venan
Gary Weaver
Nikki Wells
Tom Williams
Chuck & Mary Wiseman
Preparing for Baptism – Nyka Rash

Southmont-Presbyterian Medical Center

Bill Behrens Rm 437
835 S Main Street
Washington PA 15301

Homebound Members:

Phyllis Cimino
317 Wellness Way
Strabane Trails #325
Washington PA 15301

Mrs. Mary McDonough
949 Bruce Street
Washington PA 15301

In the Military

Lance Dague
Terrell McClain
Brandon Lipscomb
Daniel Robinson
Shawn Dallatore
Andrew Gregg
Zachary Keene
Sarah Lipscomb
Travis Ringer
Emily Chase
Dylan Demain

Church Office hours:

The Church Office will be closed December 31 & January 1.

If you need anything at any time, please call the Church Office phone at 724-225-8610.



Fairhill Manor has entered a new era: the age of anytime, anywhere giving. We are now signed up with **Givelify**, the mobile giving app for places of worship and charities.

Givelify gives you a beautiful, easy giving experience using your smartphone. There are no frustrating web forms to fill out, and recurring gifts are easy to set up and modify. Even better, it's free to download and use. It's safe and secure and gives you access to your complete giving record.

Want to see how it works? [Watch the demonstration video](#) that shows you all about how to make and track donations.

Ready to get started? [Download](#) the Givelify app for Android or iPhone.



* You can listen to these pieces of worship at <https://fairhillmanorchurch.org/worship-audio-files>

You can help Fairhill Manor Christian Church all year through this program, not just at Christmas.

Choose Fairhill Manor as your charity on **Amazon Smile**. AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. Sign in to smile.amazon.com. Go to "Your Account," then select the option to "Change your Amazon Smile Charity." Type "Fairhill Manor Christian Church" into the Search box. Choose FMCC as your charity!

