

Manor Minutes

Volume 11 Issue 50

December 4, 2020

Those with last names beginning with **A-E & F-O** worship in the Sanctuary this week at 10:15. The Worship Schedule can be found at: <https://fairhillmanorchurch.org/sanctuary-schedule>

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 on the screen at the front of the Sanctuary until the Children's Message and to others on Zoom 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 join Children Worship & Wonder. Materials for children to work with during Worship are emailed weekly with the Manor Minutes. To learn more and register your child(ren), <https://fairhillmanorchurch.org/children-worship-wonder>

Tween Team

Gather online via Zoom with 4th-7th Graders on Sunday evenings from 5-6 pm. During Advent, we will center our conversations around our Advent devotional for families, "Prince of Peace" by Sarah Reinhard. JC Leasure and Pastor Gena are co-leading this time."

Tween Team – December 6, 5 pm via Zoom

November Webinar Discussion - December 7, 7 pm via Zoom

Stewardship/Finance Ministry – December 8, 6 pm via Zoom

Women's Stories from the Old Testament – December 10, 5 pm via Zoom

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



BLESSING BOX DONATIONS

You can still contribute to the **Blessing Box Ministry**. Money can be given to Carol Davis or mail to her at 770 Duncan Ave, Washington.



Are available at the sign in table. If you would like to access the digital version of the Advent devotional, please contact the Church Office. Devotionals for families with children are also available.

OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Salvation Army RINGING OF THE BELLS - FMCC will NOT be participating, as a Church, in this year's Bell Ringing Campaign. However, if anyone would like to participate on an individual basis to ring bells please contact Capt. Jason at the Salvation Army, 724-225-5740, ext 113.

TREASURES FOR CHILDREN – All of the Treasures for Children tags have been claimed. Your **unwrapped** gifts will be collected in the front driveway on Saturday, December 12, from 10 am until noon. Your tag will be attached to your gift then. If you can't make it that day, please contact Amy Caldwell and she will be glad to pick up your gift.

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR COLLECTION – For anyone who has collected the food items listed on the Reverse Advent Calendar please know that there will be a drive-thru, drop-off of the items on Saturday, **December 19th from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.** at the front driveway of the Church. Other non-perishable items will also be accepted. These items will be delivered to the Community Circle Food Pantry on Tuesday, December 22nd. If you have any questions please contact Marsha Sams at either 859-421-7227 or msams822@gmail.com.

UPCOMING



Worship Schedule

Dec 13: Last names beginning with A-E & P-Z
Dec 20: Last names beginning with F-O & P-Z
Dec 27: Last names beginning with A-E & F-O

Fairhill Manor extends our heartfelt sympathy to the family of Rev. Marge Frank who passed away on Thanksgiving Day.

*With
Sympathy*



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!

Please remember for the safety of others, anytime you enter the Church (even if you are the only one around):

- **Wear a mask**
- **Sign in on the bulletin board inside the back door**
- **Use the hand sanitizer as you enter**

Thank you!!

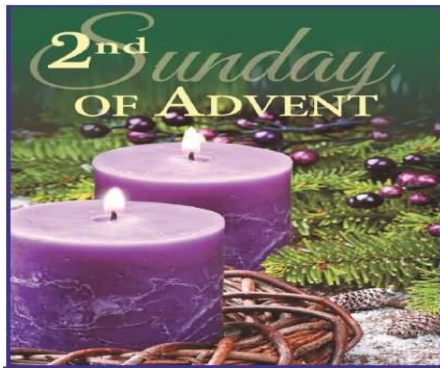
Board & Annual Reports

There will be a Board meeting on January 13, 2021.

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.

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



Fairhill Manor Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

351 Montgomery Ave.

724-225-8610

Rev. Chris Stillwell, Senior Pastor

Rev. Gena Sheller, Associate Pastor

December 6, 2020

Prelude

Audra Allen, organist

Welcome

Pastor Gena

Call to Worship*

J.C. Leasure

Lift up your voice. Lift it up, do not fear.
Feeding, gathering, carrying, leading: This is how God will come.
The old will pass away. A new world will dawn.
Love, faithfulness, righteousness, peace: These will mark God's new day.
Love needs a path. Peace needs a highway.
Even as we wait, let us make a way for God:
In our hearts and in our world.
Let us worship God.

Opening Hymn

"Come, O Long-Expected Jesus"

Audra Allen, organist

Come, O long-expected Jesus,
born to set your people free.
From our fears and sins release us;
Christ, in whom our rest shall be.
You, our strength and consolation,
come salvation to impart;
dear desire of many a nation,
joy of many a longing heart.

Born your people to deliver,
born a child, and yet a king,
born to reign in us forever,
born your gracious realm to bring.
By your own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by your all-sufficient merit
raise us to your glorious throne.

Lighting of the Second Advent Candle

Rev. Chris, Jessie, Owen and Charlotte Stillwell

Reader 1: We have heard the promise. God's chosen One will soon be among us. We must make ready.

Reader 2: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Reader 1: The wilderness places of our lives may threaten to overwhelm us.

Reader 2: We easily lose our way.

Reader 1: But a second candle adds its light, the candle of wisdom and preparation joins the candle of watchful waiting.

Lighting of the Hope and Peace Advent Candles

Unison Prayer: *Send your Spirit to the wild corners of our hearts. Grant us wisdom and understanding that we will prepare well for the coming of your promised counselor. Amen.*

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer*

Pastor Gena

Comforting God, come and speak tenderly to us your people this morning. Come and gather us like lambs and carry us for a while. We need your tender care, the warmth of your presence, the strength and security of your arms.

For we long for the time when paths are made straight, when we know where we are going and we can see the road clearly ahead of us – and that highway is safe and it is wide and it is good.

We long for the time when the valleys are lifted up and the hills are made low, when everyone has a fair chance in life, when the haves climb down and the have nots climb up and all of your children share life with each other.

We long for the time when life isn't so much of a rollercoaster, when the highs aren't quite so high and the lows aren't nearly so low, but all is well with all of us somewhere in a balanced middle ground.

We long for the time when there are no unexpected cliffs for us to fall from, no potholes to lose ourselves in; for the time when we can relax and enjoy life because the road is smooth and predictable.

We long for the time when you reign and everyone knows it – when the world is set up in the ways you would have it – ordered with justice and peace, well-being and joy, and, most of all, love.

God of peace, we celebrate that even though life is fleeting, even though there is so much over which we have no control, even though we often feel far from where we want to be, we can count on you. What you say happens in its time. You are faithful.

And so, we lift our voices from the highest peaks with no fear, "Praise be to you, our God!"

In this time of new beginnings, give us the courage to take the opportunity to turn toward you and start again. Where we have flourished and grown, we give you great thanks. Where we have erred, we ask for your forgiveness. Show us a better way, we pray. Empower us to be messengers of your good news, a leveling influence along the way, as we seek to join you in smoothing out the rough places we come across.

And now, O God of peace, we speak the concerns of our hearts to you, knowing that you comfort and restore and heal.

We pray for all leaders and people of the world that we may live as one human family in peace. Give us the wisdom to order our common life according to your ways of justice and love.

We pray for your church that we may be steadfast and true in following your Son until all are reconciled with you and each other.

We pray for those who are sick or in need, for those who are far from home and safety. Help us to comfort and care for each other. Give us compassion to love our neighbor. Give us patience to care for those in need.

We pray for your creation. Take away from us all laziness and greed that diminishes life and creativity. Teach us to care for your creation together.

We place in your comforting arms now those we have named aloud and those we hold in our hearts....

God of peace, in these dark days we are looking for signs of your coming. Make us ready to walk in the ways of your son Jesus, our Lord and our Savior, the Prince of Peace, who taught us to pray this way...

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.

Anthem

“He is Exalted,” by Twila Paris
Performed by Jody Mullis

Children’s Message*

Pastor Gena

I have a hard time remembering what it felt like to be carried. I just remember feeling sad when I got too big for my parents to carry me anymore. I do remember how I felt inside when I rode on top of my dad’s shoulders and held on to his forehead, or when I laid my head in my mom’s lap. That’s the best feeling, isn’t it? I felt so safe and loved and comfortable.

Near the end of our Scripture today, we read these words: “God will gather the lambs in God’s arms.” These words come from the book of Isaiah. At the beginning of this story, an army attacks the Israelites, defeats them in battle, and takes them away from their home in Jerusalem to live and work in a different place called Babylon. God tells the prophet, Isaiah, to comfort the Israelites because they are homesick and sad. The people are so unhappy that they even wonder whether God still loves them.

Isaiah promises the people that God does love them. In fact, God will take care of them just as a shepherd takes care of a lamb – by feeding it nourishing food and holding it close to keep it safe. Isaiah also comforts the people by reminding them that God’s promises last forever—far longer than the times when they are sad, afraid, or worried.

We read this scripture during the season of Advent because Advent is a time of waiting and preparing. Sometimes this season of waiting for Christmas feels joyful and exciting. Other times, especially if we have experienced a big change in our lives, such as a move or the loss of a loved one, this season can bring sadness and loneliness. It is so important to remember that it is okay to feel sad. God honors our sadness and comforts us when we need it. As we wait for Jesus to be born, we also remember that God’s promise to love and care for us lasts forever.

Dear God, thank you for taking care of us like shepherds take care of their sheep, like loving parents takes care of their children. When we feel afraid, sad, or worried, help us to feel your love and remember that your promises last forever. Teach us how to comfort each another. Amen.

Scripture Reading*

Isaiah 40:1-11

J.C. Leasure

Sermon*

“In Search of the Perfect Christmas”

Rev. Stillwell

Today is the second week of advent and things are starting to get serious. Lights are up, presents are being purchased and delivered. Plans for Christmas Eve have begun and baking ingredients have been procured. We are not there yet, not even halfway through advent but now it is starting to feel real, which means that if you want a perfect Christmas you need to get in gear.

After all, there are almost three weeks until Christmas, but, if you wait until the last minute the perfect gift will be hard to buy, the perfect dinner will be hard to prepare, the perfect moment will pass with all

of the busyness we commit ourselves to at this time of year. We are continuously in search of the perfect Christmas, and I think that is why so much of the decorating and shopping begins in November. Every year I add more shows to watch and more music to listen to, and I sometimes find myself getting stressed out thinking when am I going to find the time to watch the Leprechauns Christmas Gold and listen to the Chieftains Christmas album? Sometimes it seems silly to me that we put such a premium on the decorations and the atmosphere, the things that are background dressing to that which is the star that takes center stage every December.

It does seem silly, but then again, I remember that people have been searching for the perfect Christmas ever since even before there was a Christmas. More than 500 years before Christ's birth the people of Israel longed for a Christmas. They longed for a Christ, a messiah, a savior. And what is it that they hoped he would do?

Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

The first words of Isaiah's proclamation are words of comfort. Literally, they are words of comfort. The Israelites wanted to be forgiven their sins and be reconciled to God. They wanted to be free of their exile and return to the comforts of home that they had been missing for 50 or so years. So again, Isaiah says:

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. ¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

These words are so comforting that it is no wonder the people took comfort in them, and they waited for the messiah to come, and it took five hundred years, and, when he did, it wasn't what they expected at all. If anything, Jesus made a lot more people uncomfortable than comfortable.

So, two thousand years later, when advent comes around, and we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, we also yearn for the comfort of God with us. And we hear these verses and think of the angels' announcement to the shepherds upon Christ's birth of peace on earth and goodwill to all. Our desire for comfort is also borne out by watching the same movies and shows and hearing the same songs that we find so comforting, and in the hangings of our lights and decorations, many of which we have used for years and hang because of their familiarity. My daughter recently found a string of plastic Christmas candy decorations that we used in my home when I was her age, and it is definitely not my taste today, but I took it home and hung it up, and when I sent a picture of it to my brother he said, "You found Christmas." So, the perfect Christmas is one that is comforting with everything in its right place, but like the bride and groom longing for the perfect wedding it is an illusion.

That's why I keep a melted, deformed Christmas candle on my desk. It is one of the first Christmas decorations I ever owned and I put it up in every apartment I have ever lived back when it was straight. Then I bought my house and had an attic for the first time which I used to keep my decorations including my candles. The next year when I went to retrieve them, I realized what a mistake I had made as all my candles were melted and ruined. I threw them all away, except for one; a tall twisted candle that says Noel, which I put on my desk every advent.

I like it because it reminds me of two things. First, it reminds me to never put candles in the attic. Second, it reminds me of what Christmas is really about. Christmas doesn't come to us when we're perfect and we have things all figured out. It comes to us when we're bent by the stress of life and the

weight of the world. It comes to us when we are broken by loss and grief. It comes to us when our hearts have melted and our wills seem soft.

Nothing in this world is perfect. If it were it would not have been in need of a savior to come and redeem it. Jesus Christ came into a broken and hurting world to show us the way to becoming whole and healed. So many of our Christmas decorations are just perfect; perfect ribbons on perfect trees that stand straight and are perfectly lit, which we know is not reality. I keep this candle because it reminds me that life isn't perfect and that's okay, because Jesus Christ is perfect, we don't have to be.

So, I give to you the advice that I give to couples on their wedding day. Just as there is no perfect wedding, there is no perfect Christmas, not even the first one, especially not the first one. With a pregnant teenager riding across the desert on a donkey giving birth in a stable, with King Herod full of murderous rage such that they had to flee to Egypt. It should be clear to us that God went to uncomfortable lengths to comfort the world, and most people missed it or didn't understand it.

Ever since that first Christmas we have been trying to get it right, but part of the problem is that we want too much comfort. The book of Isaiah begins before the destruction of the temple and proclaims what will happen if the people do not remember and return to God, but chapter 40 represents a break in which Isaiah is no longer threatening that the destruction of the temple and the exile will come, now he is speaking as if they have come and Isaiah's tone changes dramatically. What began as chastising a comfortable people turns into comforting an afflicted people.

In a nutshell this is what prophets do. They comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. They prod us to do what is right and warn us what will happen if we don't, and sit with us when things go wrong, so that when Christmas comes around, we don't just think of what we will get but what we can give. We don't just bemoan the state of the world and pray for God to fix it, we ask Christ into our hearts knowing that he will challenge us to do something about it, and we give thanks that God did not wait for us to be perfect to come to us, but came to be with us because of our faults and sins to redeem this imperfect world.

Maybe you have heard the saying, "Do not let the perfect be the enemy of the good". That is never truer than at Christmas. I guarantee you that your Christmas will not be perfect. You won't get everything you want and you'll likely get a few things you don't want, but with Christ in it, no matter what you get, this Christmas will be good.

Call to Offering*

J.C. Leasure

During the holiday season, amidst all the bustle and wonderful music, we find many charities asking for your help. We see ads on television for community food banks. We hear the ringing of Salvation Army bells by every door (or the welcoming twang of a banjo if you're at Shop N' Save). We feel warmth when we give a few dollars or write a check to our favorite ministries. And we smile when we see parents and grandparents giving children pocket change to drop in the red cans at the grocery store. This is truly the time for giving. However, we might not see what our money does with these charities unless we are directly involved with them. If you are not volunteering for a ministry or receiving aid from a ministry, you might not know what goes on.

One ministry that you do understand, or see things happening is right here at Fairhill Manor. In one way or another we've all volunteered for something here, and we've received blessings from God through our family. During these times, we've all had an elder call us to see how we are doing. We've maintained our food drives through the drive-thru drop off. We might not be having a Nativity this year, but we've all stood outside in the cold to show people the joy of the infant Messiah and raise

money to further God's love within our community (regardless of a rogue donkey or the worry of not standing still should Connie come around).

We all have blessed others through God's ministry here at Fairhill, and we all have been blessed by God through this church. While we are considering the great charities and ministries we cherish during Christmas, let us consider what we can do for God right here in our home.

Dedication of Offering Prayer*

Rev. Stillwell

Having given these gifts today, we pledge to continue our generosity as we share our time, talents, and love in daily life.

Invitation to Communion*

Rev. Stillwell

On a trip to Amish country I stumbled into a Christmas store that had the most startling surprise; an upside down Christmas tree. It was a strange sight but I immediately thought of the benefits. The tree looks different, it fits better into the corners of our rooms, and with the top of the tree at the bottom there is more room for presents.

I also like it because it is the proper message for Christ. When we think of Christ's birth, we like to sentimentalize it with ribbons and bows. We focus on the image of a cute child who "not a sound does he make", but the truth of the matter is that giving birth to a child turns your life upside down.

There are plenty here in this church who can attest to that. It changes everything, upsets the status quo, makes everything new, and this is what the Christ child did. On top of the disruption in the normal life a child is to any new first time parents, remember what his birth did to the lives of Mary and Joseph. Mary was scared and gave birth in a stable. Joseph was shamed and tried to break off the engagement. Their lives were certainly turned upside down.

Yet this is nothing compared to the ways in which the Christ man turned the world upside down. When others wanted vengeance, he called for reconciliation. When supporters demanded violence, he demanded non-violence. When the Pharisees wanted law, he wanted love, and when the people called judgement, he extended mercy.

Here at this table it is easy to remember the results of his birth. Here we remember the result that came of turning the world upside down. Sometimes in the midst of the commercialism and materialism of the season it is nice to be reminded of the radical, world changing meaning of Christmas. If you cannot turn your tree upside down, then make sure to come to this table.

Prayer for the Bread & Cup*

Gary Ford

Dear God

We are joyous because the advent season has begun and we are filled with hope. But in our joy, we also see hate, anger, sickness and a sense that things will never be quite the same again.

Lord, we come to Your table to take this bread and take this cup and pray that it may renew our strength and refresh our spirits so that we will use our voices to shout the good news that Christ is born.

Now let us show our family, our friends and indeed the world, that when we walk in your ways, no matter how bad things may become, we know that love always conquers hate. 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 proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again. (I Corinthians 11:23-26)

Closing Hymn

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

Jody Mullis, pianist

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold him, born the Kind of Angels;
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Benediction*

Rev. Stillwell

As you came in hopeful waiting, may you now go in expectant anticipation, that the Lord God may make all things perfect in God's everlasting kingdom.



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
Irma Davis
Jessica Duke
Libby Eberhard
Fred Engle
Jay Freudenberg
Joe Greene
Bonnie Gregg

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

Tom Quinn
Sadie Reese
Betty & Charles Riecks
Betty Jo Riggles
Chip Rogers and his parents
Jim and Barb Roupe
Theresa Shape
Colby Simkovic
Doug and Tracy Smith
Jaedan Shetler
Cathy Stewart
John Stewart
Beth Teagarden
Melissa Teagarden
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:
Karen works from home on Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 9-2. She is in the Church Office on Wednesday and Thursday from 9-2.

Pastor Gena is off on Friday.

Rev. Chris is off on Friday.

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.

