

# “The Messenger”

St. Paul’s UCC (513-422-4519); Rev. Rich Luh, Pastor (937-993-5464)

**DECEMBER 2023**

**“Deck the Halls!”**

Yes, indeed, it is that time of year when we see homes and businesses and streets decorated for the holidays. We hear familiar Christmas music on radio stations and see specials on TV. We see crowded parking lots at the Malls with people scrambling to buy that special gift for their loved ones. We see parties galore at offices and homes, ringing in the yule tide joys. We see children writing out their Christmas list that Santa and the parents glean over. Schools prepare their students for various programs – although they don’t call them Christmas programs anymore – just holiday presentations.

Indeed, deck the halls – Christmas is coming fast. But I ask you and myself – what are we decking our hearts with this season? Are we too caught up in the frenzy of the holiday, shopping, and partying that we miss the real reason for the season? The last I checked, the season is to prepare ourselves for the arrival of the Christ Child. It is a time to stop in all our busyness to allow God to speak to us through prayer as to how we should be getting truly ready for this season.

You see, too often we get caught up in the excitement of thinking “what will I be getting for Christmas? What presents will be under the tree?” We also think about God’s gift to us as a number of people celebrate that at their Christmas Eve service. But, as meticulous as many are in finding the perfect gift for their loved ones, why do we

drag our feet so many times in being carefully and prayerfully determined to give ourselves – our talents – our abilities – our love and compassion back to God? He doesn't look under a tree to see these presents from us. He looks at what we do in our everyday life and how His gift of His son has helped to change our lives. He looks to our words and actions to see if what we offer is sincere.

Giving ourselves in service to God and counting as a supreme blessing His gift of the Christ Child to us will indeed make this season a season to remember – and to embrace in our hearts forever!

On behalf of my wife Sue, wishing you a most blessed and joyful Christmas and Happy, Healthy New Year!

*Pastor Rich*

### **CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE TIME CHANGE**

Do to the fact that Christmas Eve this year falls on a Sunday, and rather than expecting people to come out twice in one day, the Church Council has agreed to move this special service to our regular service time of 10:15 AM. We will have a special coffee hour following in Friendship Hall.

So please remember that our regular Christmas Eve service at 4:30 pm has been moved to 10:15 A.M.

**“Christmas Carol”** by Phillip Brooks

The earth has grown old with its burden of care,

But at Christmas it always is young.

The heart of the jewel burns lustrous and fair,

And its soul full of music breaks forth on the air,  
When the song of the angels is sung.  
It is coming, Old Earth, it is coming tonight!  
On the snowflakes which cover thy sod  
The feet of the Christ-Child fall gentle and white,  
And the voice of the Christ-Child tells out with delight,  
That mankind are the children of God.

### **Pastor on Vacation**

Pastor Rich will be on vacation from December 25<sup>th</sup> – January 1st. If there is an emergency, you can call me at 937-993-5464.

### **OUR DECEMBER CALENDAR**

- 2 – Hanging of the Greens – 9am-12 – Pizza served
  - 3 – Worship; Bell Choir rehearsal after church
  - 5 – Bible Study 1pm in Church Parlor
  - 10 – Worship; Church Council after church in Church Parlor
  - 12 – Bible Study 1pm in Church Parlor
  - 17 – Worship; Bell Choir rehearsal after church
  - 19 – Bible Study 1 PM in Church Parlor
  - 24 – Christmas Eve Service with Communion at 10:15 AM
  - 31 – Worship 10:15 AM
- Coffee Hour after church each Sunday in Friendship Hall.

## BELL CHOIR

Yes, this group is alive and well and will be performing for the first time in several years at the Christmas Eve service. If interested in joining us, please let Marsha or Barb know.

### **On the Funny Side: “Snowball” by Shel Silverstein**

I made myself a snowball, as perfect as could be.

I thought I’d keep it as a pet, and let it sleep with me.

I made it some pajamas, and a pillow for its head.

Then last night it ran away, but first it wet the bed!

### **Please join us for Worship**

**Dec. 3** – “Where Are You, God?” – Holy Communion

Dec. 10 – “Messengers of Hope”

Dec. 17 – “Shouts of Joy”

**Dec. 24** – “Birthing a Promise” – Holy Communion

Dec. 31 – Guest – Robert Walker

### **Greeters**

### **Ushers**

### **Lay Readers**

3 – Julie Radcliff

Darlene/Larry Adams

Marsha Minge

10 – Larry Adams

Jennifer/Carl Batliner

Judy Brewer

17 – Rick Lyons

Marcia/Tom Shibley

Corrine Lowman

24 – Chuck Clark

Dan Flory/Rick Lyons

Abbey Breeding

31 – Chuck Clark

Larry/Darlene Adams

Dan Flory

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!**

6 – Brandi Adam Spitler

14 – Ruby McQuade

27 – Brielle Adams

“Let Every Day Be Christmas” by Norman Wesley Brooks

Christmas is forever, not just one day,

For loving, sharing, giving, are not to be put away like bells, and  
lights, and tinsel, in some box upon a shelf.

The good you do for others is good you do yourself.

## **BE SAFE FOR THE HOLIDAYS!**

May you find joy in celebrating this holiday season. But most importantly, may you be safe in your travels and healthy that you may look forward to spending precious time with those you love and care for. We here at St. Paul's hope your holidays are cheerful and spiritually blessed and we look to having you back with us for another year of praising the Lord!

## **CHRISTMAS GIFT**

To your enemy – forgiveness, To your opponent – tolerance, to a friend – your heart, to your neighbors – known and unknown – service,

To all – charity, to every child – a good example,

To yourself – respect!

## **THIS CHRISTMAS**

Mend a quarrel. Seek out a forgotten friend. Share some treasure. Give a soft answer. Encourage youth. Keep a promise. Find the time. Forgive an enemy. Listen. Apologize if you were wrong. Think first of someone else. Be kind and gentle.

Laugh a little. Laugh a little more. Express your gratitude. Gladden the heart of a child. Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth. Speak your love. Speak it again. Speak it still once again!

## **CHRISTMAS ANGELS**

Again, this year we have angels on our Sanctuary tree with names of residents from Majestic Nursing Home who have no family to share Christmas with, much less receive any gifts. These angels will be on the tree starting on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, with names and their wish list. Last year we had a great response to this and hopefully, we can do this again to help bring some cheer into their lives. All gifts must be marked clearly with the person's name and returned to the church by December 17<sup>th</sup>, and I will then deliver them to the Home.

Thank you in advance for all you can do for this outreach.

**Pastor Rich**