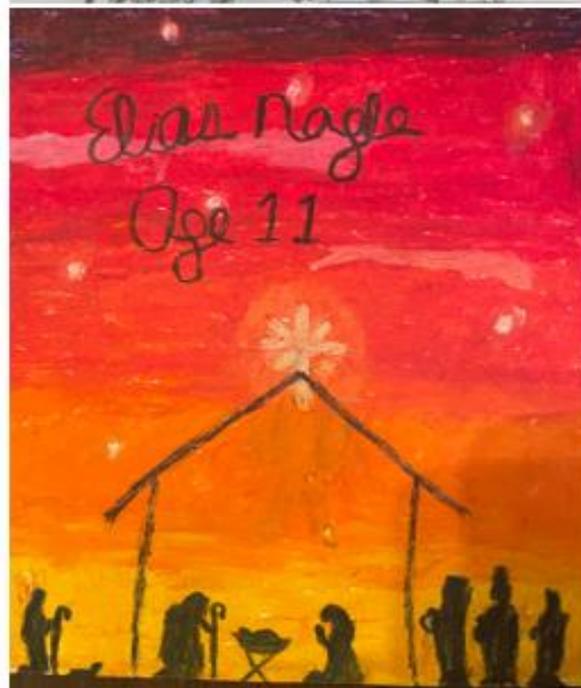


ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Sunday, December 31, 2023



1235 Summer Hill Road, Auburn, PA 17922
Pastor: Rev. Ken McDowell, cell phone: 610-207-4783
Church Office Phone: 570-754-7225
Office Hours: Monday – Thursday 9am–2pm; Closed Friday
Church Email: summerhillucc@gmail.com
Website: www.summerhillucc.com
Livestream: www.facebook.com/summerhillucc

First Sunday after Christmas/ New Year’s Eve

Rev. Ken McDowell, Pastor

Music Director- Rae Ann Borger
Organist- Jacob Challenger

CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

This morning we remember in prayer, from our Schuylkill Association Prayer Calendar, **the Epiphany of Jesus Christ.**

Please read the announcements that are in this downloadable bulletin, as well as those we post on our Facebook site, our emails, and our phone calls, and then help spread the word to those who do not have access to any of those messages.

INVOCATION

GATHERING FOR THE WORD

PRELUDE

The congregation may stand.

SOLEMN DECLARATION.....Sung “Amen”

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: With mighty mountains and crashing seas,

People: Praise the name of the Lord.

Pastor: With rolling valleys and lush forests,

People: Praise the name of our God.

Pastor: With tiny ants and majestic eagles,

People: Praise the name of the Holy One.

Pastor: With innocent children and wise elders,

People: Praise the name of Love. Amen!

OPENING HYMN NO. 188.....“Angels We Have Heard on High”

*Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o’er the plains
and the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains.*

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

*Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say, what may the tidings be which inspire your heavenly song?*

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

*Come to Bethlehem, and see him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the new-born King.*

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

CALL TO CONFESSION

CONFESSION OF SIN (Unison)

Generous God, we heard the story of the birth of Jesus and tie it together with our warm Christmas celebration. It feels comfortable to us. In our comfort, we often neglect to see those who still are seeking to know you. We often turn from those who are calling out for help. Break those bonds of comfort and help us to realize the risk of witness and discipleship for those who follow your light. Shine brightly in us and through us. Forgive the blindness we so often offer to you. Give us vision of what you would have us be and do in the Light of Your Love. Amen.

MOMENT OF PERSONAL CONFESSION

KYRIE

Pastor: Lord, have mercy upon us.

People: Lord, have mercy upon us.

Pastor: Christ, have mercy upon us.

People: Christ, have mercy upon us.

Pastor: Lord, have mercy upon us.

People: Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: Sisters and brothers, Christ has clothed us with the garments of salvation.

People: Christ has covered us with the robes of righteousness and the garb of holy love.

Pastor: As children of the living God, adopted into Christ’s family of faith, let us rejoice in our glorious inheritance. Amen!

THE GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

The congregation may be seated.

ENGAGING THE WORD

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

READING OF THE WORD.....Lector, Nancy Dewald

Old Testament: Isaiah 61:10-62:3 (Page 641)

Psalm: Psalm 148 **(Read responsively)**

Lector: Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

People: Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Lector: Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

People Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Lector: Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.

People He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Lector: Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,

People fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Lector: Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

People Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

Lector: Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

People Young men and women alike, old and young together!

Lector: Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.

People He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the Lord!

Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7 (Page 1014)

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40 (Page 889)

Lector: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE.....“Let Thy word abide in us, O Lord.”

SENIOR CHOIR ANTHEM.....“We Bring Glad Tidings” by Hal Wright

SERMON.....“Just When You Least Expect It”

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

The congregation may remain seated.

HYMN OF REFLECTION NO. 183.....“Once in Royal David's City”

*Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.*

*He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall:
with the poor and meek and lowly lived on earth, our Savior holy.*

*Jesus is our childhood's pattern, day by day like us he grew;
he was little, weak, and helpless, tears and smiles like us he knew:
and he feels for all our sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.*

*And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love;
for that child, so dear and gentle, is our Lord in heaven above:
and he leads his children on to the place where he has gone.*

The congregation may stand.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITHHeidelberg Catechism: Questions 1, 31, and 34

Pastor: What is your only comfort in life and death?

All: That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Pastor: Why is he called Christ, that is, the Anointed One?

All: Because he is ordained by God the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit to be our ultimate prophet and teacher, who fully reveals to us God's secret council and will concerning our redemption, and also to be our sole high priest, who has redeemed us by the one sacrifice of his body and ever intercedes for us with the Father, and also to be our eternal king, who governs us by his word and spirit, and defends and sustains us in the redemption he has gained for us.

Pastor: Why do you call Him our Lord?

All: Because, not with gold or silver but with his precious blood, he has redeemed and purchased us body and soul from sin and the power of the devil to be his own.

The congregation may be seated.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray.

SILENT PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. 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

Hear our prayer, O Lord; Hear our prayer, O Lord; Hear our prayer, O Lord, And grant us Thy peace. Amen.

CALL TO OFFERING

The congregation may stand.

OFFERING RESPONSE & DEDICATION.....DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

OFFERING PRAYER

GOING WITH THE WORD

COMMISSION

Pastor: Go in peace, for we have seen the salvation of our God.

People: We go with joy, for Christ has clothed us with love.

Pastor: Go in hope, for the Spirit shows us our glorious inheritance in the Lord.

People: We go with God.

BENEDICTION

THE THREEFOLD AMEN.....*Amen. Amen. Amen.*

CLOSING HYMN NO. 218.....“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

Refrain: *Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.*

*While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. [Refrain]*

*The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo! above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. [Refrain]*

*Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. [Refrain]*

SILENT MEDITATION

POSTLUDE

* * * * *

Portions of today's worship resources were reproduced or adapted from the UCC's Book of Worship, Worship Connection by Nancy C. Townley on MinistryMatters.com, Worship Elements by Catarina Paton from the 2023 Abingdon Worship Annuals edited by Mary J. Scifres and B. J. Beu.

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-The altar flowers are in Honor of Our Savior by the Guers Family.

-The bulletins are in memory of Edna, Mary, Willie, Butch, Elsie and Henry by Carol Ann.

-Offering on Sunday, December 24, 2023 (10:30am): \$4,514.00

-Weekly envelope & plate budget for 2023: \$3,153.82

-The December Communion Offering is designated to Samaritan's Purse (to the Israeli Aid/Relief). The January Communion Offering is designated to Women in Crisis.

-There will be a Board of Christian Education Meeting (SS) this Tuesday, January 2 at 7pm.

-Help will be needed to remove and store away all the Christmas decorations next Sunday, January 7 following worship. Please consider helping if you are able.

-The Prayer Shawl Ministry meets the second Tuesday of each month from 10am-12noon in the conference room. The next meeting will be **January 9**. If you are interested in crocheting and/or knitting, we can hook you up! If you know of someone who could use a prayer shawl, please contact the church office.

-The Council of Churches will host a Red Cross Blood Drive on Thursday, January 11 at Jerusalem Lutheran Church, Dock St., Schuylkill Haven. The donation time is 1-6:00pm. Please donate as the need is great!

-The Installation of our new Consistory Members and Delegates will take place on Sunday, January 14 during the 10:30am Worship Service.

-Fellowship Time (aka, coffee hour)-Join us for conversation, along with a cup of coffee and light refreshments following our 10:30am worship service on **Sunday, January 14**. We will gather in the rear of the Sanctuary the Second Sunday of each month. Catch up with old friends, make new ones, and stay up to date on everything happening at St. Paul's. And best of all, it's free of charge!!

-VBS Winter Wonderland: All kids are welcome to join our extended Vacation Bible School and discover how God makes each of us unique...just like snowflakes! **We will meet at the church on Sunday, January 14** from 3:00-5:00pm. An RSVP to the church office or to Laura Carll at (484)269-4405 by January 1st is appreciated but not mandatory. Can't wait to see everyone there!

-The **Schuylkill Haven Food Pantry** is in great need and accepts all non-perishable food items/ paper products. Items can be dropped off at the church during the week or placed in the shopping cart at the back of the sanctuary. **NO OUTDATED FOOD PLEASE.** We will also be helping on **Monday, January 15** at 8:30am and **Friday, January 19** at 1pm. Please speak to Verna Ebling or the church office if you would like to help or donate items.

-A Cabinet Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 21, 2024 following Worship. It will be led by Mike Fessler to discuss direction for church activities in 2024. All leaders and any church member interested in providing suggestions and input on this topic are encouraged to attend. Your participation is appreciated.

-Please have all information for the 2023 Annual Report to the church office by no later than Sunday, January 21, 2024. The Annual Report will be available early in February prior to the Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 25, 2024. Please email your articles to the church office at summerhillucc@gmail.com, or put them in the secretary's mailbox. Please contact Kelly if you have questions.

-Boy Scout Sunday will be celebrated on Sunday, February 4, 2024. Members of the Cub Scout Pack 651 and Boy Scout Troop 651 will participate in Worship at 10:30am.

-“Souper” Bowl Sunday: On Sunday, February 11, 2024, we will join thousands of other churches and organizations tackle hunger by collecting canned food and/or cash donations. All donations stay right in Schuylkill county to help our neighbors in need through the Schuylkill Haven Food Pantry. Look for the specially marked donation boxes and donation pans when you come to church on “Souper Bowl Sunday”!

-On February 11, 2024, we will honor couples celebrating their 50th wedding anniversaries in 2024. If you are married 50 years, or you know of a couple in the church who is, please contact Kelly at the church office.

-The Bulletin and Altar Flower Sponsor List for 2024 is posted in the hallway next to the secretary’s office door. If you are already on the list, and would like to make any changes, please do at this time. There are openings for sponsorship throughout the year if you are interested. Please contact the church office if you have any questions about open dates, would like to make any changes, removals or additions. The sponsorship cost for fresh altar flowers is currently \$30, silk altar flowers are \$12 and bulletins \$10.

-Your help is needed!! Now that we have settled into our new sound and video equipment, we are looking for some additional people to help run it on a Sunday morning! Please let us know if you would be willing to help. We will then figure out a good mutual time to “train” those who are interested! Ideally, we will get a few people interested, and then sign up for Sundays either on a weekly or monthly basis, somewhat like the lectors.

-When you or a loved one is sick or in the hospital for an extended stay, please notify the church office. Please do not assume that the pastor will know you are there. We are served by many different area hospitals and do not know which one you may utilize. So please do not hesitate to let us know your condition so that Pastor Ken can provide you with spiritual care! You may call the church office at 570-754-7225 and leave a message 24/7 with your name, number, and what you are calling about. The staff will be notified remotely of your call and will get back to you as soon as possible. You can also email us at summerhillucc@gmail.com.

-Our church services are livestreamed on Facebook! We continue to reach many people who are unable to worship with us in person, giving them God’s message of hope and love. Call the church office if you or someone you know needs help getting online.

-Prayer is Powerful! Please continue to call the church office or email us your prayer concerns to be included on our prayer list. We believe in the power of prayer and want to pray for you. **We have a prayer concerns email group for anyone who would like to join.** Contact the church office and we will be happy to add you to the email distribution list. The Agape Committee continues to send cards to members on the prayer concerns list, so please continue sharing your concerns with us. Thank you!!

PRAYER CONCERNS: All those earnestly seeking God’s help in difficult times, Military personnel & National Leaders, *family and friends of Mitchell Cash, family and friends of Elizabeth Strohecker, family and friends of Fern Schaeffer, Bev Kerschner, Rosanna Borgatta, Ron Mengel, Joe & Tamara Nagle and unborn son Mathias Joesph*, Darlene Richard, Curtis Bender, Mary Ann Shuliga, Dick Clauser, Anna Mae Minchoff, Cassie Wolfe, Harold Berkheiser, Marion Bartolet, Mabel Edwards

CANCER PATIENTS: Boone, Marie Bleu, Alex DuVee, John Eckert, Glennis Eifert, Rebecca Henderson, Sherri Jo Jennar, Deb Kemmerling, Norma Koperma, Joan Krause, Carol Mallory, Carol Mengel, **Dr. Donald Moyer**, Tom Nagle, Judy Ohl, Pat Reading, Jim Thompson, Terri Willard

FOR THE WEEK OF SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

Sunday, December 31 *New Year's Eve

Monday, January 1, 2024 *New Year's Day
*Church offices closed

Tuesday, January 2

7:00 PM -Board of Christian Education Meeting

Wednesday, January 3

7:00 PM -Senior Choir Rehearsal

Saturday, January 6 *Epiphany

Sunday, January 7 *The Baptism of Christ

9:15 AM -Sunday School

10:30 AM -Worship with the Sacrament of Holy Communion

-Undecorate the church following worship

4:00 – 7:00 PM -Cub Scout training and meetings

***Lectionary Readings for next week:**

Genesis 1:1-5

Psalm 29

Acts 19:1-7

Mark 1:4-11