



# The Circuit

The Newsletter of  
St. Paul's United Church of Christ



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Phone: 540-459-3643

235 South Main Street, Woodstock, Virginia 22664

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**December 2020 January 2021**

*From the Corner of Spring and Main Streets*

Dear St. Paul's Family,

This is an Advent and Christmas season unlike any in more than a century. My grandparents were a young married couple just beginning their family, after the bloody horrors of WWI in which 116,516 American soldiers died in battle. And then came the Spanish Flu, something more insidious, and more deadly, claiming the lives of 675,000 Americans. Churches, schools, businesses were shut down, mask orders were in place, and things were very bleak. I wish that I could talk to them right now about how they coped, what their Advent and Christmas 1918 was like. I want to ask "How did you sing the Lord's song in such a strange and foreign time?" (Psalm 137 AFC paraphrase)

When the pandemic first hit, I imagined naively that we would be back in church in time for Easter, 2020. When scientists warned about a second, worse wave in the fall, I hoped that we could make it through Christmas. Denial runs deep! But wisdom runs deeper. Our Consistory made the difficult decision to put a pause on in-person indoor worship from November 22, to be re-evaluated at their next meeting on December 10, a decision I fully and tearfully endorse.

The usual Advent and Christmas activities and traditions that are such a big part of our community's life together will be drastically different, or paused at least for this season. Decorating the church, the Hanging of the Greens, the Singing Christmas Tree, the gifts for local families in need, the Christmas Eve Communion and Candlelight service, and all the food, hugs, and songs that accompany them are not going to happen in our usual ways, if at all.

But that doesn't mean that Advent and Christmas aren't going to happen. In the grasp of the Roman Empire, with a paranoid and murderous King Herod leading Israel, one poor but faithful couple traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem, gave birth to the very Son of God, and laid him in an animal's feeding trough. There were no decorations, no hanging of greens, no people on risers dressed in green robes singing "O Christmas Tree" as the electric lights go on. There was no electricity for that matter, no worship service with communion, but that didn't stop God from breaking into our world at just the right time.

We can look at this season with a sense of doom and gloom for what we don't have, or we can use this season as an opportunity to savor and ponder the essential truth and grace and reality of God-with-Us here and now. I believe that is an unsolicited but much needed gift in this season.

Sing, we must, the simple, sublime songs of the Lord, in the sanctuaries of our hearts this season!



*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in  
(Leonard Cohen: Anthem)*

Look for further details about our plans to provide opportunities to savor, and ponder, and serve this season in this newsletter.

Pastor Anne



## DECEMBER 2020 NOTES FROM PASTOR ANNE:

### **Advent Worship Opportunities:**

In spite of the circumstances, Jesus arrived in the fullness of time in a stable in Bethlehem. There was no worship service at a church house. Instead, shepherds joined Mary and Joseph, accompanied by the sounds of the animals on hand. Perhaps they heard faint echoes of the angels' song, and maybe if they looked hard enough an unusual star was visible in the night sky.

This is our year, due to COVID-19, to worship in the most unusual of circumstances. And worship we will. The consistory meets again on December 10, and after taking into consideration the recommendations by the United Church of Christ, the State of Virginia and the CDC, will make a decision about the final Sundays in December. Either way, our worship ministry has planned for worship that can be held virtually and/or in person. You can access the worship services at [www.woodstockucc.com](http://www.woodstockucc.com) on Sunday mornings after 8 am. An email is distributed on Sunday mornings as a reminder of how to access the worship service.

**Sunday, December 6, the Second Sunday in Advent**, our worship service will be a virtual Hanging of the Greens, including music, the liturgy, and photos of Hanging of the Greens from years past. It will be a great way to celebrate this 68<sup>th</sup> consecutive Hanging of the Greens.

**Sunday, December 13, in addition to the worship service for the Third Sunday in Advent**, Pastor Anne invites anyone who is interested to participate in a **Blue Christmas Gathering** at 4:00 PM on Zoom. This service is for anyone who has suffered a loss in the past year, the death of a loved one, the ending of a marriage, the loss of a job, serious illness, etc. It will be a time to acknowledge that the season of Advent and Christmas can be very difficult in the midst of loss. Arrive at your device with a warm cup of tea, and a candle. The link is:

<https://zoom.us/j/92934927602?pwd=SkFSY1FnaGZxcHNhV1RuVWJiMHdjQT09>

**Sunday, December 20, the Fourth Sunday in Advent**. Don't miss this final pause before the rush to Christmas to allow your spirit to catch up with your body.

**Thursday, December 24, Christmas Even Communion and Candlelight service**. We will be live on Zoom, (or in person if that is safely possible) at 7:00 pm. Arrive at your computer with a bit of bread, a sip of juice, and a candle to light. We will be together on this most important night of the year. The link is: <https://zoom.us/j/93970695025?pwd=WHMzYlYlcwZjc4eENabXIDV1lwUDRQUT09>

**Sunday, December 27** worship will be provided virtually by our very talented Central Atlantic Conference United Church of Christ staff. A link will be provided closer to the date.

**Longest Night Service:** The Woodstock Minsters Alliance is putting together a virtual Longest Night Service (December 21) for the larger community to use at their leisure. It will be wonderful to see some of the other pastors in the community and to remember that we are not alone. More information will be provided later this month.

**Opportunities to Gather On-Line:** If you are interested in any of the options below, please call or email Becky at the church office for more details about how to be involved.

### **Kola Class:**

Sundays, 9:30 – 10:30 am. Join in the discussion and fellowship about upcoming sermon texts and what God might be saying to us through Bible texts. Email Becky Lytton or Pastor Anne for the Zoom link.

**Sacred Season:** Every other week on Thursdays, 4 – 5 pm. Women of faith reflecting about God’s presence in their lives. Email Becky Lytton or Pastor Anne for the Zoom link.

**Porch/Garage Visits with Pastor Anne**

If you would like a visit from Pastor Anne, she would love to visit members and friends of the congregation, respecting social distance on your porch, patio, or garage. Please call the church office to schedule a visit.



**PEOPLE WHO NEED OUR PRAYERS**

Dr. Jerry Germroth Valorie Hockman Wes Irvin Jake Johnson	Daniel Rohne Kasten Michael Kavaras Marcie Lambert Nora Long	Courtney Markham Cheri Davidson May Gail Mayberry Spencer McIntosh	Jessie Payne Janet Sibert Craig Smith Pete Wright
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Editor – Jane Miller Contributors St. Paul’s – Ministry Chairpersons and others Production Coordinator - Becky Lytton
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	<b>Contents</b>
From the Pastor	Page 1 - 2
Newsletter Staff	Page 3
St. Paul’s News	Pages 4 - 7



**ST. PAUL’S NEWS**

**Consistory Happenings!**

The St. Paul’s Consistory met November 19<sup>th</sup> using Zoon



Highlights from the meeting include:

- Treasurer’s Report:
  - o The monthly reports were presented.
  - o The 2021 budget was presented. The committee will review the salary for the staff.
  - o Congregation will be informed when the Budget is ready to be presented.
- Worship and Music:
  - o The reactions for the in-person services were very positive. There was a positive recap of the All Saints Sunday and the Veterans Day Service.
  - o Rev. Anne’s installation service on Zoom was excellent with lots of compliments!
  - o There will be music for Christmas but we will not be singing.
- Christian Ed:
  - o Decorating the church will be tabled until reopening is determined.
  - o The Hanging of the Greens service will be changed. Children will not be participating this year.
  - o Rod Chamberlain has met with both Junior church and the Youth parents to create some youth activities and ways to meet.
- Stewardship & Missions:
  - o Families will be giving monetary gifts this year instead of individually wrapped gifts.
- Building & Maintenance:

- The committee will be looking for a professional cleaning service for the Sexton house. There was a discussion on what to do with the house after it is cleaned.
- Tom Snarr replaced the lights in one chandelier in the sanctuary with LED bulbs
- Hawk's Electric replaced a ballast in pastor's office, replaced the dusk-to-dawn light on Spring Street, and added another light unit in the boiler room.(\$474.02)
- Mountain Valley cleaned one boiler and will be back to clean the second one later.
- Jeff Nicely will strip and wax the floors in the fellowship hall, kitchen and men's restroom upstairs November 27.
- Pastoral Report:
  - The Pastoral Relations committee needs a person to fill a vacancy.
- Old Business:
  - Budget task force need to rename this group. It is more of an outreach committee to align the budget to the church missions.
- New Business:
  - St. Paul's will be closed for in-person worship until the next consistory meeting.
- Next Meeting: December 10 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

**NOTE:** The full copies of all consistory minutes can be found in the notebook on the desk outside the pastor's office.

### Bread of Life Food Pantry

1. We gave out 5860 pounds of food to 72 families consisting of 200 individuals which include 48 children.
2. Family size = one 24, two 14, three 11, four 9, five 7 six 6 and seven 2
3. Boy Scout Troop 88 and Boy Scout Troop 575 collected 1,913 pounds of food given by the Woodstock Community on Nov. 14. In addition, another two to three hundred pounds of food was delivered to the Food Pantry during the following two to three days.
4. We were able to provide turkeys and roasting chickens this month including all the trimmings for a Thanksgiving meal. Smaller families of one to three were given a roasting chicken and larger families were given a choice of either a turkey or 2 roasting chickens.
5. We have been able to operate each month in spite of the pandemic. This has been possible because of the excellent support we received from the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank in Winchester and the support received from the local churches which provided food, funds, volunteers and prayers. We also received support from local community and organizations to make it all possible.
6. May we all celebrate a virus free Happy Thanksgiving this year!

Blessings,  
Bell Decker and Kay Helsley  
Co-Directors



### STEWARDSHIP AND MISSIONS

Christmas Family Fund Program Underway!

Considering the uncertainty of the upcoming holiday season due to the continuing COVID crisis, the Stewardship and Missions ministry is embracing a monetary gifting Christmas Family Fund program.

Until December 15<sup>th</sup>, the St. Paul's Family will have the opportunity to donate to this Christmas Family Fund via the current methods of accepting donations – check, PayPal or Realm. Please designate that you would like to donate to the “Christmas Family Fund” on your check or when using either of these electronic forms of money transfer.

Our main local charity of choice will be Response, an organization that assists individuals and families in crisis situations. We are also hoping to have enough funds to make additional donations to the Bread of Life Food Pantry (Woodstock) and the White Chapel-Matthews Food Pantry (Fort Valley).

The love and generosity of the St. Paul's Family has risen to the occasion time and time again. We hope that once again you will give from the heart, knowing that no matter the size of your gift, it will make this very challenging Christmas 2020 much brighter for all of those we touch.

~ Joe Lehnen

## WORSHIP AND MUSIC

During this season of Hope, Rev. Anne reminds us that we will continue to share many favorite holiday traditions – music, laughter, love, “the coming of the one who enlightens us!” As the Advent season is here, we look forward to new and exciting ways of traveling through it together. Thank you Anne and Becky for safely leading us! Special thanks also to Mary and Craig O who will share Christmas tree music throughout the season! Thank you Worship and Music Committee for collectively opening your creative minds and once again, thinking outside the box! Buckle up.....here's what we have planned:

### **Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> – A Virtual Hanging of the Greens!**

Yes, we will celebrate our traditional “Hanging of the Greens” service with a virtual twist. What excitement to hear the beautiful service while we can observe the spiritual and physical growth of our young ones throughout the years. My how they've all grown!

### **Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> – A Sunday of JOY**

### **Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> – A Sunday of PEACE**

### **Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Eve with communion and lighting of candles – 7:00 p.m. (not sure at this time if it will be in-person)**

All of the above services will include more of the “greatest hits” from past Singing Christmas Trees! Look for some of Becky's wonderful pictures from Advent seasons past! The services have been planned as virtual services, but will be based on upcoming decisions from our Consistory.

### **Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> – A virtual service presented by the CAC (Central Atlantic Conference)**

As we prepare for the holidays may your hearts be filled with light and love! We leave you with this beautiful Christmas Tree Blessing:

*O God, who made this holy night shine with  
The brightness of new light,  
Bless this tree which we adorn with lights  
To honor Him who comes to enlighten us.  
Let us see in this tree your beautiful simplicity  
And humble strength.  
Let this tree remind us of our responsibility  
For the care of the earth.  
Then, shall all the trees of the forest exalt before the Lord—  
For He comes!  
Sing to the Lord a new song.  
Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice.  
Let the cities know peace and the countryside joy.  
Then shall of the trees of the forest exalt before the Lord— For He comes!*



~ Patty Snarr



WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE CHURCH AT THIS TIME?



Craig O and Mary at Bell Choir Practice



Tom Snarr working on the front door



Abbe Kennedy hanging the Wreathes



Gabi and Susan Fream lighting the 1<sup>st</sup> Advent Candle

### Birthdays for St. Paul's

December 1 – Karsen Neese  
10 – Tracy Grandy, Richard Sollenberger  
12 – Suzanne Loveland McIlwee  
13 – Corey Litten  
16 – Spencer McIntosh  
17 – Doc Lambert, Sarah Tait,  
Alberta Smith  
18 – Jonathan Sollenberger  
19 – Skyler Sharp  
20 – Francie Kennedy Martonik  
21 – Frank Painter, Carole Rucker,  
Trudy Knode  
22 – Dennis Dysart, Bill Sibert,  
Noel McIntosh  
25 – Randy Young  
30 – Emily Koon, Kelly McElroy  
January 1 – Rick Koontz, Allison Gregg  
3 – Philip Stoneburner  
5 – Taylor Robinson  
8 – Kelsey Kennedy  
9 – Patrick Snarr  
10 – Peter Dalke  
12 – Alyssa Partlow  
13 – Craig Smith  
14 – Tatum Timmerman  
15 – Alice Foltz  
20 – Kaitlin Litten Lawyer  
23 – Clara Young  
24 – Bobby Loveland, Randy Price  
29 – Barbara Rhodes  
30 – Dawn Funkhouser  
31 – Jan Lambert

### Anniversaries for St. Paul's

December 6 – Ricky and Roberta Dysart  
22 – Buck and Kim Shrum  
30 – Frank & Bonnie Painter  
January 5 – Robert and Marie Kennan  
13 – Brian and Cathy Boze  
15 – Tim and Cathy Dalke  
26 – Craig and Alberta Smith  
27 – Ed and Ellen Markel

### Scripture Readers

December 6 – Hanging of the Greens  
13 – Julie Ritenour  
20 – Jane Miller  
24 – Rod Chamberlain  
27 – Alberta Smith  
January 3 – Allen Brill  
10 – Melissa Andrews  
17 – Kaye Lehnen  
24 – Rod Chamberlain  
31 – Susan Brill

### Greeters

December – Tim and Cathy Dalke  
January –

Junior Church – Jennifer Dalke

Elementary Class – Marsha Cooper

Youth Class –

### Altar Flowers

December 6 – Hanging of the Greens  
13 – Holly  
20 – Holly  
27 – Holly  
January 3 – Cathy Dalke  
10 – Joe Sibert  
17 – Patty Dellinger  
24 – Shelly Eye  
31 – Linda Sheetz

