



Saint Paul's Possibilities

December 22, 2023

News & Ways to Plug In

Powered by Grace and Coffee

Pastor Timothy Hogan-Palazzo

Dear Family,

You think you know all about the Christmas story and then out comes Dorcas. We - our Wednesday evening Interactive Group - has just completed a wonderful Advent study called, "An Unlikely Advent." I know the author (or know of her, rather). She's a young pastor from Ohio. We were in the same Conference together before moving to Pennsylvania. In her books, we have found inspiration, which has sparked much conversation about Advent, as well as challenged Advent as we know it.

I believe the thing that attracted me the most to this study we just completed was a line we read in the first chapter, where author Rachel Billups wrote, "Real life! Real life is what I am after in this Advent journey." Yes, a real Advent, let's talk about it all, not just Mary and Joseph, the donkey, sheep, shepherds, and wise men. Let's talk about the real story we might be able to relate to in our lives today, messy, complicated, and not without its own fear and in trepidation.

Maybe we've never looked beyond the pretty manger scenes we set up. Maybe that has been enough. But I have to tell you, I'm not sure any of us can relate today without digging into the story a bit further. Think about it. There are beautiful stories and parables of Jesus in the Bible, but if we don't dig into them and unfold them a little, are we ever going to see how they relate to us now? Maybe that is why so many people in so many churches cling to the Hebrew Testament, because they can pick and choose from the rules as written, without having to unpack the story and understand how their story fits alongside of Jesus' story. We, many times, I am afraid, want what we deem the "easy way out" without being honest that life can be messy and filled with challenges. We cling to what a past or a societal idyllic idea, thinking we have to push all the other stuff down, and not deal with the real life that I believe Christ came to experience right alongside of us.

This all takes time and work and, as Rachel Billups pointed out, is the basis for an "Unlikely Advent" where we talk about what it really may have been

like. If we are going to experience Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, then let's talk about what it's like with God alongside of us through it all, not just the pretty parts of life. You see Rachel as a young kid so wanted to play the part of Mary in the Christmas pageant at her church and instead, well she was cast as Dorcas, someone she had never heard of much less someone she thought knew anything about the Christmas story (see Luke's second book, Acts 9:40-42 to learn more about Dorcas)

I must admit though, there is something magical and mystical about Christmas and the way it plays out in our lives. The beauty of it all. And when I think deeper about Advent and Christmas, I realize that the beauty of knowing God is with us so the messiness of life, while it matters, God's presence reminds us we aren't going to face it alone. God's light and love in our lives will overcome it all, but don't gloss over it, live into it with that understanding. Because God is in the midst of the messiness too!

Rachel reminded us that sometimes - well, most times - we get distracted by the things that tempt us, that make us think we control it all, that life needs to look a certain way. Yet, in reality, we need one another to help us to see the path of healing, hope, and humility that makes us all human and provides for us a uniting pathway in life. Mary and Joseph, the players in this story that we have typically pristinely placed in the manger scene, along with Jesus' birth, was human. It was messy and real, and we might need to remember that because the beauty of Advent and Christmas is understanding it comes to life in us every day. The mess, the miracle, the love, all mingled together.

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Please Join Us in Praying For ...

Debbie Basom

Linda Beaver

Charlotte Beshore

Jeanie Council

The Engle Family

Gail Ernest

Greyson Greenawalt

Ruth Henry

Katy Mahon

Paul Shaner

Kathleen Wallace

Thomas Ward, Jr.

Carolyn Wuerdeman

Wynn-Haven Family

Mental Health Needs

World Peace

Those with Life-Long Illnesses

Updates to our prayer list are made from our Saint Paul's Prayers and Love FB Group, phone calls to the church office, or fill out a prayer card located in our sanctuary.



The Farm Report

This Week @ The Farm!

Friday, December 22, our Word, Wine, and Wisdom will meet at 4 p.m. (instead of 4:30) and at Pastor Tim's home (instead of Union Cellars). You are welcome to come, bring your favorite snacks to share or enjoy some of ours. And immediately following Word, Wine, and Wisdom we will gather at the church to travel together and visit our shut-in friends for some Christmas caroling at 6 p.m. We'll return to the farm for hot chocolate and cookies by 8 p.m.

Sunday morning, December 24, you are invited to join us for our regular worship service filled with Carols and stories about Carols, then choose from one or attend both Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion services. The first service begins 4:30 p.m. with our Children's Choir, or join us at 11 p.m. (music begins at 10:30 p.m.) with our Chancel and Bell Choirs both helping to provide music.

Thursday, December 28, is our next Fresh Express Food Distribution, a great way to serve neighbors and have fun with family from 1 to 5 p.m.. Come and join us as we serve together.

All regular weekly church activities and gatherings will return the week of January 8, 2024.

Our church offices will be closed on Christmas Day. on Friday, December 29, and on New Year's Day.

Overflowing with Talent

We have had a record number of volunteers wanting to be involved in the helping here @ The Farm. WE have 60 volunteers for our worship leadership teams with many new faces showing up in direct relation to our Talent Survey (blue sheet) Surveys. If you have not filled one out, you may do so any time, just check in with Donna in the office to update or share your gifts and talents via our survey. As for Worship Leadership Teams, please check your email and don't hesitate to ask questions. You are the face of Saint Paul's to first time visitors, and we are excited so many people want to welcome, serve, and help others in this way!

The Little Red Wagon

Our Little Red Wagon helps supply our Emergency Pantry, which is coming in very handy for our neighbors, especially this time of year. While with your help we have been able to provide a balanced pantry offering shelf stable soups, veggies, and more, there are several items which would be helpful to have, and we are certain would be appreciated. Nothing fancy, however these are things the Assistance Programs do not pay for, and we can stock in our pantry:

- Pet foods (wet & dry, cat & dog)
- Cleaning supplies, paper products, and other household supplies.
- Hygiene items, toothpaste, soap, and deodorant

If you are so inclined this Holiday season, pick up a few extras from the list above. Bring them in, drop them in the wagon (just inside Fellowship Hall) and join us as we seek to help all our neighbors.

Looking Ahead to 2024

While we always want to stay in the present moment, it's also important to share, for planning purposes, some of the things we have scheduled and coming up. Here are a few things we ask you to add to your early winter calendar:

January 7 - Epiphany Celebration

January 11 & 25 - Fresh Express 1 to 5

January 14 - Children & Youth Lock-in

January 21 - "2023-in-Review Annual Meeting & Ministry Celebration" followed by our monthly all-church lunch and fellowship

January 22 - Harvest Meal @ St. Andrews 1 to 5

January 28 - Children, Youth, & Family Night 5 to 7:30

February 11 - Our Annual Talent Show and Spaghetti Dinner 5 p.m.

February 14 - Ash Wednesday Service @ 7 p.m.

Celebrations

Dec 22 - Happy Birthday Adam Taylor

Dec 23 - Happy Birthday Katy Mahon & Dane Santos

Dec 24 - Happy Birthday Carol Oberlin

Dec 25 - Happy Birthday Diane Bettleyon

Dec 25 - Happy Birthday Don Emory

Dec 26 - Happy Birthday Carol Snyder

Dec 27 - Happy Anniversary Pastor Tim & Chip

Dec 28 - Happy Anniversary Sharon & Kevin Styer

Dec 31 - Happy Birthday Dennis Heverly & Tom Ward





Celebrations of the season at Saint Paul's always includes our children's pageant. With grateful hearts we bring you a few snippets from Sunday night's performance. Christmas @ The Farm 2023!

Pastor Tim's Reflection continued...

At one point in the book, Rachel writes, "In the Advent season we have the most unlikely gifts in the baby Jesus, God with us in the form of a newborn baby, tender, vulnerable, and terribly human." In this terribly human, meaning real life, we have to live in, in all its messiness, in all its trials, tribulations, joys, hopes, dreams, and expectations, we celebrate now because this gift came in to the world for us all in the midst of a mess called real life. It's ok that we make it look beautiful and pristine I guess, but let's not forget our lives too can look beautiful and pristine on the outside, yet it's in the midst of the messiness of life that Jesus' arrival happened. And thus, in the midst of our mess Jesus comes.

I pray we can all remember it is highly unlikely the manger - wherever it was - in a barn, in a cave, in the guestroom, whatever the actual setting was - that Jesus came into a world that was really messy. God knew what we needed, and this gift came to show us how to live in the midst of the messiness of our lives, with love in our hearts and hope in our eyes, because all of it Christ faced that we may know we too can face life with hope.

Go ahead, take in the manger scenes, look closely, think about the story behind the characters you see and think about those others who may have been there too, for taking time, what Advent is about, and how unlikely is that in our lives today? But taking time to contemplate could actually change your perspective on how you move forward from this Christmas this year.

To unlikely people, in an unlikely place, God entered the world. Pause and think about it this season anew.

Rachel closed the book with a prayer. Sit quietly, if you can, and pray this prayer with me as I pray for us all let us pray together:

"God of the unlikely, you have come from heaven to earth to create the opportunity for us to encounter you every single day. There are signs all around us. In the middle of our hurried, anxious lives, give us real rest and fill us with your peace. Help us to receive your presence and to share it with everyone we encounter. Let us live into our unlikely purpose (we pray). Amen."

Merry Christmas, Pastor Tim



On the Weekly Journey

Monday Morning Reflections, 11:30 a.m. – returns Jan 8

This is a weekly gathering with Pastor Tim to explore further the sermon and texts from Sunday's service. No experience necessary. All are welcome!

Weekly Wednesday Lunch with the Pastor – returns Jan 10

A time to just sit, relax, and discuss random topics with Pastor Tim on the porch (or if the weather is not cooperating, in Fellowship Hall). Grab your lunch at the market and join us on the porch 11:30 to 1 p.m.

Bell Choir – returns January 3

Directed by Patty Wagner, rehearses 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. Wednesdays in the Sanctuary and performing twice a month for worship throughout the year. For more information see Patty.

Wednesday Evening Interactive

Meeting at 6:30 p.m. weekly. Currently is an Advent Book Study ... "An Unlikely Advent," this group will explore the often-overlooked characters of the Advent story from November 29 to December 20.

Fresh Express Thursdays

Come help us provide groceries for our neighbors every second and fourth Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., come for an hour, two hours, or the entire time. All volunteers are welcome. **Dec 28; Jan 11 & 25**

Sundays @ Saint Paul's

9 a.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal - Sunday mornings in the Sanctuary and helps lead worship weekly. Always open to new members. To learn more, please see Patty.

10 a.m. Children's Choir - children through 7th grade, directed by Sharon Styer, rehearses at 10 a.m. each Sunday morning in the Chapel, and sings on the fourth Sunday of every month. Parents, drop your kids off for choir and enjoy coffee or breakfast while they practice for 10 to 15 minutes each Sunday morning.

10:30 a.m. Sunday Morning Worship

3rd Sunday's Family Meal – We gather around the tables monthly for good eats and good times!

December 17 – "Christmas" Meal & Pageant 5 p.m.

Monday Harvest Meal

Join us 1 to 5 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month as we help prepare and serve meals in conjunction with Bucknell's Office of Civic Engagement to our neighbors in the Milton area. Shelly Sholley is our lead contact for this meal. **January 22**

Breakfast with Friends

Gather at the Silver Moon Restaurant on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. for a time to catch up and share stories in a small group setting. **January 17 (weather permitting)**

Fourth Friday Wine, Word, and Wisdom

From 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., come sit, relax, have a glass, and sink into the conversation about words that inspire our faith as we gather at Union Cellars, 4760 Furnace Road, Lewisburg. **December 22 at Pastor Tim's House 4:00**

Stewardship

Gifts & Offerings December 17, 2023

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:34) Giving thanks for the time, talents, and resources shared here.

Attendance on LIVE: 432 Virtual Reach: 11,016

Attendance In Person: 159 (8 Visitor)

Christian Ed: 61

Plate Giving \$ 4,008.00

Loose Plate \$ 296.00

Online Giving \$ 470.03

Operational Total \$ 4,774.03

General Restricted Giving \$ 777.00

Total Giving \$ 5,551.03

Year-End Giving – Should you be planning a tax-deductible gift to Saint Paul's, all tithes, gifts, and offerings must be received in the church office by Friday, December 29. Donations through online giving, Engage, may be made until midnight on Sunday, December 31.

Upcoming Worship

December 24, 2023 –Christmas Eve

10:30 a.m. "Lessons on Carols"

Worship Leader: Niki Weber

Acolyte: Kazibwe Family

Flowers: Sharon and Kevin Styer

Breakfast Sponsor: Available

4:30 p.m. Candlelight Communion

"In the Midst of the Mess"

Lector: Mallory Sample – Luke 2:1-7

Acolyte: The Gill Family

10:30 p.m. Candlelight Communion

"The Knock at the Door"

Isaiah 52:7-10; Revelation 3:19-22; Luke 2:8-20

Lector: Keegan Gill

Acolyte: The Barbella Family

Offering Counter: E. Fisher; D. Spear

December 31, 2023 –First Sunday of Christmas

"A New Day Dawning"

Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

Worship Leader: Niki Weber Lector: Cyndy Kister

Acolyte: Franciscus Family

Flowers: Hogan-Palazzo; J. Parrish

Breakfast Sponsor: Available

Offering Counter: S. Brown; D. Spear

