



THE EPISCOPAL MESSENGER

DECEMBER 2025

SAINT PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH



A short, but impactful tenure, for which we are grateful

(Mother Allison's sermon on November 16th is reprinted for those who missed it or would like a copy.)

In our Gospel lesson we are called to “testify.” This is not a term we often hear in the Episcopal Church. We think of testifying being a part of the more evangelical denominations. Over the past

month, you have heard the “witnessing” of fellow congregants as part of our stewardship season. Not long after my arrival in 2021 I shared a part of my story – yes, I testified to you.

This morning, I would like to remind you of that part of my story, but also the part of my story that celebrates the way you have all written a new chapter in the life of St. Paul's.

In 2005 I had routine surgery that was anything but routine. Instead of coming home in three days, I came home sixty-five days later living on IVs and feeding tubes for most of the next three years. I had sepsis multiple times and I was hospitalized sixteen times in three years.

In 2007 the doctors came in and told Russell and I that I was going to die. You cannot survive without a stomach and intestines and mine are no longer working. To make a long story short, it will not come as a surprise to any of you that Russell saved my life. He found a specialist in another state and flew me to him, and he was part of an FDA study and that medication saved me.

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The reason I wanted to begin with this reminder is that all during that three-year period God made his presence known to me so many times and in so many ways.

The first time I was hospitalized, I felt so lonely at night, and I began seeing a vision. It was these large, loving hands holding a bird. I came to realize that those were God's hands, and I was that bird.

Over these past months, I have once again seen that vision, reminding me that I am not alone and neither are you. When I first realized I could not stand up was during the evening service on Ash Wednesday, it was very scary, but once again when I closed my eyes, I saw that vision.

Back in March I could not have remotely considered the need for me to resign from my beloved ministry here. Over these months, there has been more than one occasion when we were discussing whether I would survive. I will never forget the day Deacon Jim sat with me while I cried and the very idea of leaving all of you. God called me to be your shepherd. How can I leave you?

Do you know the feeling and the realization that something you are doing has God's blessing? For me when I know it is one of those moments, everything becomes possible.

Ten months ago, I could not even see the possibility that I would step down. During these months, I have often felt

overwhelming sadness at even considering resigning. I arrived here full of ideas and excited about the prospect of being your priest. How do I leave you after just over four years?

When Russell and I arrived here, the congregation consisted primarily of those who are 50+. As we began to look at what we wanted to accomplish as a congregation. The strategic planning team helped to guide us beautifully into bringing families and children back into our church. A key part of this transition has been the children's corners with little tables and activities in four different areas of the church. Our families have expressed how wonderful those special children's areas are.

I feel like I speak so often of the unconditional love of God, I half expect your eyes to roll back into your heads at the mere mention of it!

What we are seeing with our children, visitors, and newcomers is that love on full display. When anyone comes into St. Paul's, they are greeted with love and kindness.

St Paul's has had a difficult history with transitions in the past. This transition is vastly different. You are a much different church than you were then. Deacon Jim has already scheduled priests through the end of February, so you can continue to receive the Eucharist on most Sundays.

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So, about that strange idea of “witnessing,” maybe it is not such a terrible thing to share a personal story about God making a difference in your life. Perhaps the person with whom you share your story, needs to feel God’s love surrounding him/her and you just opened the door for them to experience God’s love firsthand.

You are now a vibrant community who is changing the expectations of the diocesan leadership. We are one of the only churches outside the main metropolitan areas of Lancaster/York and Harrisburg who are growing! Not only are we growing, but our average age is also lowering. When fellow clergy were asking me what we are doing differently to bring in the families – my response has been that we live out the greatest commandment.

THAT IS WHO ST PAUL’S IS TODAY – A
HEALTHY COMMUNITY OFFERING
UNCONDITIONAL LOVE TO ALL WHO
ENTER OUR BEAUTIFUL RED DOORS.
Amen.



And there's always food!



New mailing address for
Mother Allison and Russell

195 Chandeaur Drive
Morrisville NC 28117

Same email address and
telephone numbers

Advent Adult Education: **'A Child Is Born'** by Amy-Jill Levine

This Advent, our Adult Education series will feature *A Child Is Born* by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine. Together we'll explore several miraculous birth stories in the Old Testament—those of Ishmael and Isaac, Samson, and Samuel. In the fourth session, we'll consider Jesus' birth narrative through the lens of these earlier stories. Dr. Levine, a Jewish scholar of the New Testament, offers rich insight into how Jewish tradition informs Christian understanding.

Each session includes a reading of the relevant Scripture passages, a 10-minute video from Dr. Levine, and time for response and discussion. There is no book to purchase and no advance preparation required.

This four-week series begins **December 7/8**, continues for three weeks, and concludes **January 4/5**.

Please note: On **December 21**, the **Sunday class is canceled** for St. Paul's "Lessons and Carols" service, but participants are welcome to attend the **Monday class**, either in person or on Zoom.

Class Schedule

- **Sundays at 6:00 p.m.** on Zoom
- **Mondays at 10:30 a.m.** at St. Paul's and on Zoom

Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85116265345>

Outreach Report

UTO Ingathering

Thank you for participating in the United Thank Offering mission. We raised \$215.40. We will continue to have UTO boxes available year-round.

Operation Christmas Child

Twenty boxes filled with toys, school supplies, hygiene items, and prayers were delivered to Bloomsburg Christian School on Monday, November 17th. Thank you!



The Rev. Canon Veronica Donohue Chappell blessed the shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Shoeboxes are filled with small toys, school supplies, and hygiene items and sent to children around the world through Samaritan's Purse. From left: Jaxon Jones, Deacon Jim Jenkins, Canon Chappell, Harvey Chaido, and Sylvie Chaido.

OOM Christmas Social

The Christmas Social for Our Orangeville Manor will be held on Sunday, December 14th after the 10:30 service. We're looking for attendees to celebrate with OOM and volunteers to lend a hand! Sign-up sheets are in the back of the church.

Also, if you did not get a card for a resident, but would still like to participate, you can donate extra Walmart gift cards to be distributed to the residents with the greatest need. Extra Walmart cards should be placed in the manilla envelope on the Giving Table by December 14th.

OOM Dessert Mission

Sign-up sheets for desserts for the Christmas social, to be held on December 14th, are in the back of the church. Items do not have to be homemade, but we would like a variety to offer our guests. The 2026 schedule will begin in February, with sign-up sheets available mid-January. To sign up, or if you have questions, contact Elaine Pongratz @ mdmep@ptd.net

Supporting the BU Women's Basketball Team

Saturday December 6th at 1 p.m.

(California University of PA)

Saturday December 20th at 1 p.m.

(Indiana University of PA)

Sunday December 21st at 1 p.m.

(Seton Hall University)

Home games are played in the Nelson Field House on the upper campus.

Panther Packs Challenge XII

January 4 - February 15th

Our goal for the 12th annual Panther Packs challenge is 60 actual or virtual bags of kid-friendly food for Bloomsburg Food Cupboard. Every year we pray that the food needs in our community will decrease, or at least level off, but that hasn't happened. It has been another very rough year for the Bloomsburg Food Cupboard. Since we do not want shortages to cut into Panther Packs, a project that is so important to the well-being of the children in our community, here are ways St. Paul's can help:

1. Fill-a-Bag with kid-friendly food or add items to "shared bags".
2. Use donation envelopes to make a monetary donation. A \$10 donation equals one virtual bag of food.
3. Bring in coupons for the requested items.

According to St. Paul's Panther Pack volunteers, the food items that will best support the 2026 program include:

- macaroni & cheese (boxes/cups)
- 16 oz cans ravioli with meat & Spaghetti O's with meatballs
- 16 oz. jars of peanut butter
- cold cereal: 8 oz – 12 oz boxes or individual servings
- hot cereal: individual cups/boxes of individual packets
- Chicken noodle or tomato soup; ramen noodles
- Cracker packs/granola/breakfast bars/microwave popcorn

- Canned tuna, fruit/applesauce cups, Jello/pudding cups, , hot chocolate pouches

For monetary donations, checks should be written to St. Paul's with **Panther Packs** on the memo line. Donation envelopes are on the "example" table in the foyer.

**The challenge runs from
January 4– February 15
Let's keep our 11-year
winning streak going!**

'Noisy' Collections

In December, the Noisy Collection will go to AGAPE'S NETWORKS heating fund. If you do not have the opportunity to place your coins in the collection plate during Sunday services at the church, you may send a check and write "AGAPE" on the memo line.

December Baptismal Birthdays

Beverlee Hower Felker * Charles Heinly *
Ian Brandau * Nicholas Fritz * Kathy Lowe
* TJ Brandt * Tyler Fritz * Thomas Eyerly *
Caden Cheatham * Zachary Bolton *
Elizabeth Fields

THE EPISCOPAL MESSENGER

A newsletter for the parish family of

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Bloomsburg

Please send articles and other correspondence to

Doug Hippenstiel * Dch17846@gmail.com

December Lectionary

12/7 – Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 11:1-10

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

12/14 – Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 35:1-10

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

Psalm 146:4-9 /or Canticle 15 or 3

12/21 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-16

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18

12/22 – St. Thomas, Apostle

Habakkuk 2:1-4

Hebrews 10:34-11:1

John 20:24-29

Psalm 126

12/25 – Christmas Day

Isaiah 9:2-7

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-20

Psalm 96

12/26 – St. Stephen, Deacon & Martyr

Jeremiah 26:1-9, 12-15

Acts 6:8-7; 2a,51c-60

Matthew 23:34-39

Psalm 31

12/27 – St. John, Apostle & Evangelist

Exodus 33:18-23

1 John 1:1-9

John 21:19b-24

Psalm 92

12/28 – First Sunday after Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7

John 1:1-18

Psalm 147

12/29 – Holy Innocents

Jeremiah 31:15-17

Revelation 21:1-7

Matthew 2:13-18

Psalm 124



Scott Atherton lights the first Advent candle on November 30.

Kids' Sunday School

St. Paul's Children's Education program for school-aged children will meet on **December 14** and **December 28** during the Advent season. Our lessons will focus on the Christmas story, and the children will make ornaments—some to take home and others to share with the Veterans at Orangeville Manor.

Kids' Sunday School typically meets on the **second and fourth Sundays** of each month during the **10:30 a.m. worship service**. All school-aged children are welcome. We gather in the downstairs Parish Hall.

Christmas Cookies

\$8 by the pound

December 6, 9-12

Music for the Journey: A Reflection for Advent

As we move through the sacred season of Advent, I find myself reflecting on how deeply grateful I am to be sharing my second Christmas with you here at St. Paul's. In just a short time, I have come to appreciate not only the warmth of our choir and the dedication of its members, but also the gracious spirit of the entire congregation. There is something truly special about this community of faith. The welcome, the care, and the shared commitment to worship and wonder has truly been inspirational!

This year's Advent season offers a unique gift in the liturgical calendar. Typically, the Third Sunday of Advent, also known as *Gaudete* Sunday, focuses on Mary's "yes" to God, while the Fourth Sunday often shifts to themes of prophetic preparation. But in Year A, we are given the rare opportunity to encounter both Mary and Joseph in back-to-back Sundays, offering us a fuller portrait of the Holy Family's faith and courage.

In honor of this, the choir will offer two deeply meaningful anthems. On the Third Sunday of Advent, we will sing Jacques Arcadelt's "Ave Maria" – a reverent setting that honors Mary's grace, devotion and trust in God's call. Then, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we turn our focus to Joseph with Dan Forrest's "The Hands that First Held Mary's Child" – a beautiful and moving tribute to Joseph's quiet strength, protective love, and faithful obedience.

These pieces do more than mark liturgical themes. They invite us to enter the story of

Christmas with new eyes and open hearts. In a season often marked by haste, they call us to slow down, to listen more closely, and to notice the sacred in the ordinary: a song, a gesture, a whispered "yes."

As we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, may we also be reminded of the gifts that come through faithfulness, humility and trust. These gifts are embodied by Mary, Joseph and, indeed, by so many within our own church family.

Wishing you a season of preparation filled with light, stillness and song. – *Dr. Alan Hack, Music Director*

From the Senior Warden

Allison and Russell hosted our last Tuesday evening gathering on November 4th. Many of us have enjoyed these evenings and would like to continue to gather for food and fellowship. We will take a break during the busy month of December and begin the new year by meeting in the lower parish hall on a Tuesday evening in January.

Stay tuned to "Happenings" and the Sunday announcements for a specific start date and additional information. We look forward to continuing this fun activity and hope you will join us. – *Katherine Staller*

Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 21st, at 6 p.m.

The festival of spoken lessons and sung carols is a traditional Anglican service. A holiday reception will follow the service.

Biblical Stewardship – The Fundamental Principle is that God owns everything

Dear Friends, Below are thoughts of Bill Peel, a leader in finance and Christian theology. I have modified some of the words, but not his ideas. I recommend the longer article in the citation at the end. To be leaders in stewardship, we must understand 4 principles:

1. Ownership – “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” (24th Psalm). Stewardship is the commitment of one’s self and possessions to God’s service, recognizing that we do not have the right of control over our property or ourselves.

2. Responsibility – Nothing really belongs to us. God owns everything; we’re responsible for how we treat it and what we do with it. While we complain about our rights here on earth, the Bible constantly asks, What about your responsibilities? Owners have rights; stewards have responsibilities.... While God has graciously entrusted us with the care, development, and enjoyment of everything, God needs us as his stewards. We are responsible to manage his holdings well and according to his desires and purposes.

3. Accountability – We are all stewards of the resources, abilities and opportunities that God has entrusted to our care, and one day each one of us will be called to give an account for how we have managed what the Master has given us....Like the servants in the Parable of the Talents, we will be called to give an account of how we

have administered everything we have been given, including our *time, money, abilities, information, wisdom, relationships, and authority.*

4. Reward – “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (Colossians 3:23-24)....We all should long to hear the master say what he exclaims in Matthew 25:21: Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master’s happiness!’

Friends, whatever our unique life situation, we are called to be faithful stewards of all God has given us within the opportunities presented through his providence to glorify him, serve the common good and further his Kingdom. May you be blessed with peace and clarity during this time of discernment about your stewardship pledge for St. Paul’s.

Vestry requests your pledges to be submitted by Sunday, December 7th.

In Service, Linda Candlish, Stewardship Chair

<https://tifwe.org/four-principles-of-biblical-stewardship/> You may enjoy this article.

"Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already." – C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Highlights of November Vestry Meeting

Deacon's Report

Coverage of supply clergy is in good shape through February, 2026.

- Supply rate is \$175 for two services, paying for lodging (~\$200) and ~\$80 for mileage.)
- We are anticipating the need for supply priests and Morning Prayer for about a year as we seek a new priest.

Lessons and Carols is planned for 6 p.m. on December 21st

Senior Warden's Report

The Search Committee for a new Rector/Priest in Charge has been formed. It includes Rachel Bitler, Victoria Wilcox, Doug Hippenstiel, Karen Zekauskas and Katherine Staller.

Treasurer's Report

Balance sheet (for general fund) has positive balances still, but we are going into the tightest months of the year.

Budget report:

- Unpledged contributions are down, and pledges will be behind having lost some pledge units to death or moving. A member has offered to make up difference in Tom Evans' pledge.
- Rector's Discretionary Fund will be inactive, since Allison already put money into the Deacon's Discretionary Fund.
- Property has an outstanding expense of \$5,000 for roof repair. Dennis will look for the bill for the roof and check with Patty.

- Outreach will have more expenses in December.

Budget

- Pledges will be down by about \$10,000. Will need more money from the parking lot to balance the budget because of these changes.
- Positive from money standpoint, will have significant savings in payroll, may have a slight increase in carryover
- Will be an increase in Worship line costs (supply priests)

Discussed questions:

- Do we want to do Eucharist every Sunday, or several times a month do morning prayer?
- Robust morning prayer involves chanting canticles or psalms, more musical/lyrical. 8:00 will be regular, 10:30 involves more chanting.
- We will check with the congregation at 8 and 10:30 services about morning prayer preferences (frequency, MP vs. Eucharist)
- If a supply priest only comes for 10:30 service, may not need hotel room which would cut down on costs.

Old Business

- Sound system amplifier for choir and altar area was completed, and feedback from choir was that the sound improved. Cost \$1,925
- Upcoming Concerts: Brass Menagerie has been postponed until spring
- Safe Church Audit—in process, developing procedures
- Cell Tower Project was approved by HARB, and is in the hands of ATT for building permits.

- Rectory: Winterization of Rectory will be done by Fetterman; Water lines may not need to be drained if we keep the thermostat at 55 degrees.
- Nametags—Ian is pursuing getting them made.

New Business

- Discussed a gift of a photo of Saint Paul's for Allison. Jim has a jpg. file of the winter photo printed in the Diocese of the Susquehanna calendar, and will get it to Katherine or get it printed either on canvas or in a frame
- Jim is updating the listing of Clergy that hangs in the Upper Parish Hall and will make a copy for Allison.
- Another idea was to do a photo book of snapshots collected from the congregation, to be given to Allison before they leave.

Next Vestry Meeting will be on December 14, immediately following OOM reception (~1:30 pm). Finance Committee will meet week of Dec 7th to be ready to present an updated budget. – *Victoria Wilcox, Vestry Secretary*

Watch your email

for the Feedback Request!

To care for each person, Vestry wants to hear about your heart's longings and vision. Your honesty about what you hope might occur at St. Paul's will strengthen our ministry for parishioners and our community. The Feedback Request will arrive by email in the first week of December.

In Our Prayers

O God of all mercy, look with favor on your servants who are in sickness, danger, sorrow or any other kind of trouble, especially:

Aiden * Allison * Amber* Andrew * Ava *
 Betsy * Bill * Bryan * Bryon * Carol *
 Cathy * Christina * Chuck * Cindy *
 Devon * Elaine * Erin * Faisal * Frankie *
 Fred * Harrison * Helena * Jerry * Jesse *
 Jill * Jim * Joanne * Joe * John * Jon *
 Josh * Joyce * Julie * Kami * Kasey * Kay
 * Kelly * Kim *
 Krista * Laurie * Ling * Luann * Lynn *
 Maisey * Maria * Mariann * Marie * Mary
 * Michelle * Paul * Rick * Rose * Russ *
 Ruth * Stephani * Steve * Tasha * Tom *
 Victoria * Vinny *
 William * Willie * Zelda

Give them, we pray, courage and hope, and a happy issue from all their afflictions, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(The complete written prayer list will continue to be printed in the newsletter and in the weekly "Happenings." However, only those names requested on Sunday morning in-person or by Zoom will be read during the service. **PLEASE LET US KNOW WHEN SOMEONE'S NAME CAN BE REMOVED FROM THE LIST. Otherwise, the list can become unwieldy and less effective.**

Also, please be careful using variations of the same name: Jere and Jerry, Mike and Michael, Sandy and Sandra, etc. Otherwise, we don't know if it's one person or two different people. Thanks.



Four grandchildren of Nick Fritz -- Laila, Kaylyn, Wyatt and Mason Halye -- were baptized by Mother Allison on November 16th.



Please help with **Hanging of the Greens** on December 21st after the 10:30 service. Many hands make light work! If you would like to make donations for the garland and/or Christmas flowers, envelopes and/or forms will be available in the back of the church or in the programs. They should be given to Patty by December 18.

Parish Leadership

The Rev. Jim Jenkins, Deacon
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