

BETHANY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018

Hours: Mon, Tues and Thurs. 9:00-1:00

Church Office: 610-868-4441

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Pastor Todd Fennell

Matt Miller, Consistory President

Susan Wright, Director of Music



First Sunday in Advent

December 3, 2023

First Sunday in Advent

“Moving Forward United in Faith”

“Committed to Christ, United by Love. We are about God, Christ, the Word, and the Future. No matter who you are or where you are on Life’s journey, you are welcome here. We are Bethany United Church of Christ.”

BETHANY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

December 3, 2023

10:45 AM

If you are looking for a church home, we invite you to become part of the community of faith and mission here at Bethany.

(*) PLEASE STAND AS YOU ARE ABLE
(**Bold Text is said or sung by everyone**)

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE: "Watchman, Tell Us of the Night" from Great Sacred Melodies vol.2 ...Perry/Dengler

Watchman, tell us of the night, What its signs of promise are, Trav'ler o'er yon mountain's height, See that glory beaming star. Watchman, does its beauteous ray Aught of joy or hope foretell? Trav'ler, yes; it brings the day; Promised day of Israel.

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Now is the time of watching and waiting.

P: The time of pregnant expectation of new life.

L: The dark winter season when hope is waiting to be born.

P: Let us come before God with receptive and willing spirits.

*HYMN: #154 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

*CALL TO CONFESSION

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

As followers of Christ, we are always on a journey. On our pilgrimage there is no time when we can afford to

stop growing in love, in strength, and in knowledge of God. So it is that when we gather to worship, we must confess those places in which we need to grow. In preparation of the coming of the Christ, let us confess our need for growth, in silence before God: (silent prayer of confession)

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Pastor: The peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also, with you.

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (unison): #176 Lift Up Your Heads O Mighty Gates vs.1**

Lift up your heads, O mighty gates behold, the King of glory waits! The King of Kings is drawing near, the Savior of the world is here.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: Something New: "Is Anything Really New?" Bev & Bill Rumble

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: #175 Vs. 1&2

We light the Advent candles against the winter night, to welcome our Lord Jesus who is the world's True Light, to welcome our Lord Jesus who is the world's True Light.

The first one will remind us that Christ will soon return. We light it in the darkness and watch it gleam and burn, We light it in the darkness and watch it gleam and burn.

READING OF SCRIPTURES

I Corinthians 1:3-9

*** Mark 13: 24-37**

Leader: This is the Good News

People: Thanks be to God

MEDITATION: "Wait and Watch"

OFFERING INVITATION

OFFERING OF OUR TITHES and GIFTS

OFFERTORY: "Prepare the Way of the Lord"

...Mozart/Hopson

Chancel Choir

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE: #196 In the Bleak Midwinter
vs.4

**What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb; if I were a wiseman, I would do my
part; yet what I can I give him: give my heart.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**God of Justice and Love, transform these offerings, that
they may be gifts of justice and love for a world in need
of hope and help. Let love flow through these offerings,
that they may become gifts of love for the world. Amen**

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CALL TO PRAYER – PASTORAL 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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For
thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION pg. 7

(Today we will receive communion by Intinction)

*HYMN: # 152 Prepare the Way, O Zion

*BENEDICTION

*CHORAL BENEDICTION: #178 Emmanuel, Emmanuel
**Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel.
God with us, revealed in us, his name is called
Emmanuel.**

POSTLUDE

Our worship ends, our service begins!



FLOWERS and BULLETINS: are dedicated to the honor and
Glory of God by Len and Rebecca Kesselring.

GREETERS: Gail Correll

USHERS: Consistory

LAY READER: Debbie Brown

Scriptures

I Corinthians 1: 3 - 9 NRSV

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ. ⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you
because of the grace of God that has been given you in
Christ Jesus, ⁵ for in every way you have been enriched in
him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— ⁶ just as the
testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— ⁷ so
that you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the
revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ He will also strengthen
you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of
our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were
called into the partnership of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mark 13: 24 - 37 NRSV

²⁴ “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ “Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷ Then he will send out the angels and gather the elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. ²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly I tell you; this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵ Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Oldies Dance

Christmas Oldies dance Friday night Dec 8th in the Church basement. It will include a lite hot buffet and desserts along with coffee & treats. Food starts at 5:30 with music at 6:30 provided by DJ Dick Roberts. Music will be traditional 50's & 60's hits, a little dance music, mixed with some sounds of the season. Admission will be personal donation with all proceeds after expenses going to the church

An Order for Communion

Invitation:

M: Beloved in Christ, the Gospel tells us that on the first day of the week Jesus Christ was raised from death, appeared to Mary Magdalene, on that same day sat at the table with two disciples, and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

C: This is the joyful feast of the people of God. Men and women, youth, and children, come from the east and the west, from the north, and the south, and gather about Christ's table.

Call to Prayer:

M: God be with you.

C: And also, with you.

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to God.

M: Let us give thanks to God Most High.

C: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Prayer of Consecration

Words of Institution

Congregational Response: Be present with us as we share this meal, and throughout all our lives, that we may know You as the Holy One, who with Christ and the Holy Spirit, lives forever. Amen

The Distribution of the Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving(unison)

We thank You, God, for inviting us to this table where we have known the presence of Christ and have received all Christ's gifts. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and let us show forth Your praise in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

THIS WEEK AT BETHANY

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3 First Sunday of Advent

10:45 Worship in the Sanctuary with Communion
Conversations about recent church visits

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4

9:00AM 1:00PM Office Hours
7PM Darts @ Star of Bethlehem

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5

9:00AM 1:00PM Office Hours

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6

5:30PM Handbell Rehearsal
7PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

9:00AM 1:00PM Office Hours

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

5:30PM Christmas Oldies Dance FH

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

1:45pm Live Nativity @ Bethlehem Rose Gardens

NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10 Second Sunday in Advent

10:45 Worship in the Sanctuary
1:45pm Live Nativity @ Bethlehem Rose Gardens



154 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Unison

1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
 2 O come, thou Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by thine
 3 O come, thou Wis - dom from on high, and or - der all things,
 4 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind all peo - ples in one

Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here, un -
 ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night, and
 far and nigh; to us the path of knowl - edge show, and
 heart and mind; bid en - vy, strife and quar - rels cease; fill

Refrain (Harmony)

til the Son of God ap - pear.
 death's dark shad - ows put to flight. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
 cause us in her ways to go.
 the whole world with heav - en's peace.

man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

Prepare the Way, O Zion

1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw - ing near!
 2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.
 3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sav - ior's rule em - brace.

Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.
 His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.
 His tid - ings of sal - va - tion pro - claim in ev - ery place.

Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.
 Lift high your praise re - sound - ing, for grace and joy a - bound - ing.
 All lands will bow be - fore him, their voic - es will a - dore him.

Refrain

Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most ho - ly name.

Bethlehem Live Nativity

Join us as we celebrate Christ's birth in the Rose Garden December 9 &10. Anyone is welcome to join the Chancel Choir when we sing at the Live Nativity on Saturday Dec. 9 and Sunday Dec. 10.

Pastor Todd is directing a 50+ voice choir presenting Handel's Messiah (The Christmas Portion) at Nazareth Moravian Church (4 S. Main St.) this coming Wed. Dec. 6 @ 7:30pm. There is a freewill offering and a social will follow. There are four outstanding soloists. Aim for 7 as parking is premium near the church. The concert will be livestreamed as well the password is N@zM0r@v1@n

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem presents their Christmas Concerts @ First Presbyterian, Allentown on Sat. Dec. 9 and First Presbyterian, Bethlehem on Sun. Dec. 10 both @ 4pm. Tickets @ Bach.org or at the door.

End of the Year Sale

While cleaning out the office I came across the ends of items that were sold in the past here @ Bethany. They are on a table in the Narthex and may be purchased by placing a donation in the jar. We have Anniversary Plates, Christmas ornaments, Cookbooks, and notecards. Think stocking stuffers or mementos.

The Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross is an annual UCC offering that expresses our thanks to retired and active UCC pastors and lay church workers and their families that are facing financial need and other emergency needs. An envelope will be coming soon for you to donate.

Thank you!

POINSETTIA PLANTS



Anyone wishing to place a poinsettia plant in our Sanctuary to help decorate and beautify our church for the Christmas holidays, is asked to fill in the necessary information below and return it to the church office accompanied by your payment. Checks are payable to "Bethany

UCC" marked Poinsettia in your memo area. **The deadline for all orders is Sunday, December 17.**

RETURN WITH PAYMENT TO CHURCH OFFICE

_____ Red Poinsettias @ \$10.00 a plant

IN MEMORY OF _____ or _____ IN HONOR OF
(circle one)

Please place in bulletin as follows:

Given by:

_____ DONATION ONLY (Money is given directly to the Church)

_____ I want the poinsettia plant(s)

TOTAL _____

What Happens to the assets when a congregation closes

What happens to a congregation's assets—its building, bank accounts, invested funds, other property—What happens to that when a congregation closes? Folks from Bethany recently had a conversation with Attorney Keith Strohl to receive guidance about these and other issues. Atty Strohl has assisted other congregations in Penn Northeast Conference as they have come to a close.

Some people think that everything would go to Penn Northeast Conference. That is not true UNLESS Bethany would abandon its assets. There was a congregation in the northern part of the Conference that shrank to the last two members. Those folks literally locked up the building and walked away. In that case the property was transferred to the Conference, through a legal process. Neither Bethany nor the Conference want that to occur.

Atty Strohl indicated there are two different paths a congregation can take to closing its ministry. First, Bethany can merge with another congregation. Here a significant number of members would choose to unite with a second existing congregation. That congregation becomes the "successor" body to Bethany. Any *remaining* money, existing bequests, and future estate gifts flow to that second congregation. This is what Church of the Manager has recently done by merging into St. Thomas. It is what the Congregational Futuring Project is hoping to achieve. In this the congregation, or a significant part, remains together and its stewardship lives on.

Notice in the above paragraph the word "remaining." Prior to the merger, the congregation can make benevolence contributions to organizations, particularly ones that it has supported in the past. So, the Bethany congregation has the say in what happens to its money.

Bethany could also choose dissolution rather than merger. This would occur if a merger cannot be agreed to. Atty Strohl explained that dissolution is a longer and more legally complicated process that involves the need for official public notices to be advertised. The PA Department of Revenue must certify there are no taxes owed (which is rarely the case with a church). And finally, the PA Attorney General's office must approve how and to whom the assets of the congregation are distributed.

Merger takes about six months for the legal process to complete. Dissolution can typically take 18 months for all the pieces to be completed. Know however, that while the legal process is unfolding, often the congregation has ceased its worship and ministry.

Obviously, the congregation's most visible asset is its property. A congregation can sell its building and other valuable assets at market value to any entity, including a for-profit entity. This is what Church of the Manger is in the process of doing.

A congregation can gift its building and other valuable assets to another congregation. This is what Zion's Reformed UCC and Emmanuel UCC did.

However, a congregation cannot gift or sell at below market value to any entity other than another religious organization. As Atty Strohl explained, over the years, the Bethany members have given their money to support a church—a religious organization. The current congregation cannot now decide to give away those assets for a different purpose.

Notice, finally, that it is the congregation, not the Consistory or the Conference, which makes the various decisions in this process.

Bethany UCC Weekly Member Envelope Actual vs Budgeted 11.26.23

Date	Attendance	Weekly Member Envelope	Budgeted Weekly Envelope	+/- Balance
01/01/2023	29	\$785.00	\$1,346.15	-\$561.15
01/08/2023	47	\$1,511.00	\$1,346.15	\$164.85
01/15/2023	38	\$842.00	\$1,346.15	-\$504.15
01/22/2023	40	\$1,256.00	\$1,346.15	-\$90.15
01/29/2023	40	\$951.00	\$1,346.15	-\$395.15
January		\$5,245.00	\$6,153.84	-\$908.84
02/05/2023	40	\$1,576.00	\$1,346.15	\$229.85
02/12/2023	41	\$1,144.00	\$1,346.15	-\$202.15
02/19/2023	29	\$1,317.00	\$1,346.15	-\$29.15
02/26/2023	39	\$1,289.00	\$1,346.15	-\$57.15
February		\$5,326.00	\$6,153.84	-\$827.84
03/05/2023	38	\$1,306.00	\$1,346.15	-\$40.15
03/12/2023	34	\$1,101.00	\$1,346.15	-\$245.15
03/19/2023	48	\$1,431.00	\$1,346.15	\$84.85
03/26/2023	52	\$886.00	\$1,346.15	-\$460.15
March		\$4,724.00	\$6,153.84	\$1,429.84
04/02/2023	60	\$1,242.00	\$1,346.15	-\$104.15
04/09/2023	68	\$1,417.00	\$1,346.15	\$70.85
04/16/2023	34	\$522.00	\$1,346.15	-\$824.15
04/23/2023	38	\$1,211.00	\$1,346.15	-\$135.15
04/30/2023	37	\$1,381.00	\$1,346.15	-\$34.85
April		\$5,773.00	\$6,153.84	-\$380.84
05/07/2023	38	\$1,024.00	\$1,346.15	-\$322.15
05/14/2023	40	\$1,235.00	\$1,346.15	-\$111.15
05/21/2023	37	\$911.00	\$1,346.15	-\$435.15
05/28/2023	39	\$1,381.00	\$1,346.15	-\$34.85
May		\$4,551.00	\$6,153.84	-\$1,602.84
06/04/2023	36	\$980.00	\$1,346.15	-\$366.15
06/11/2023	27	\$1,260.00	\$1,346.15	-\$86.15
06/18/2023	31	\$1,646.00	\$1,346.15	\$299.85
06/25/2023	51	\$1,213.00	\$1,346.15	-\$133.15
June		\$5,119.00	\$6,153.84	-\$1,034.84
07/02/2023	39	\$1,228.00	\$1,346.15	-\$118.15
07/09/2023	35	\$775.00	\$1,346.15	-\$571.15
07/16/2023	29	\$1,230.00	\$1,346.15	-\$116.15
07/23/2023	37	\$789.00	\$1,346.15	-\$557.15
07/30/2023	39	\$1,240.00	\$1,346.15	-\$106.15
July		\$5,262.00	\$6,153.84	-\$891.84
08/06/2023	43	\$1,882.25	\$1,346.15	\$536.10
08/13/2023	30	\$925.00	\$1,346.15	-\$421.15
08/20/2023	41	\$1,356.25	\$1,346.15	\$10.10
08/27/2023	46	\$685.00	\$1,346.15	-\$661.15
August		\$4,848.50	\$6,153.84	-\$1,305.34
09/03/2023	41	\$1,180.00	\$1,346.15	-\$166.15
09/10/2023	33	\$1,215.00	\$1,346.15	-\$131.15
09/17/2023	31	\$850.00	\$1,346.15	-\$496.15
09/24/2023	30	\$995.00	\$1,346.15	-\$351.15
September		\$4,240.00	\$6,153.84	-\$1,913.84
10/01/2023	23	\$950.00	\$1,346.15	-\$396.15
10/08/2023	34	\$1,295.00	\$1,346.15	-\$51.15
10/15/2023	87	\$1,905.00	\$1,346.15	\$558.85
10/22/2023	31	\$690.00	\$1,346.15	-\$656.15
10/29/2023	36	\$1,645.00	\$1,346.15	\$298.85
October		\$6,485.00	\$6,153.84	\$331.16
11/05/2023	50	\$1,582.00	\$1,346.15	\$235.85
11/13/2023	40	\$1,036.00	\$1,346.15	-\$310.15
11/19/2023	46	\$1,215.00	\$1,346.15	-\$131.15
11/26/2023	26	\$1,075.00	\$1,346.15	-\$271.15
November		\$4,908.00	\$6,153.84	-\$1,245.84
Total		\$56,481.50	\$67,692.24	-\$11,210.74