

November 22, 2021

Dear St. Paul Church Family and Friends,

Grace and Peace to you in the name of Christ Jesus who is born among us as Immanuel: God With Us!

This coming Sunday, November 28, we will honor the ministry of Associate Pastor Dee Schroer. While she has resigned as our pastor, Dee will still worship amongst us as her health allows. The Rev. Daniel Busch, Northwest Ohio Association Minister, will preach that Sunday. The Church Council will host a reception for Dee following worship.

Advent begins Sunday November 28. Sarah Kramer has worked diligently to coordinate the planning, packing, and distribution of Advent Bags. This year's bags will **not** include Advent candles. We encourage you to find candles at home to light throughout the Advent season. We thank Sarah for all her hard work to make this project a success.

Anna Louise Hoelscher, our Lay Minister of Visitation, is retiring effective January 1, 2022. Anne's passion for reaching out to our homebound folk and her ministry among them is unmatched. We will honor Anne's ministry among us during worship on Sunday, January 16.

This Advent/Christmas seasons St. Paul will not be sponsoring specific families in the community for Christmas gifts. However, if you would like to provide local families with assistance, you can drop gift cards at the church office. We recommend WalMart, Dollar General, Dollar Tree, Aldi and Kroger. We will distribute these cards to families no later than mid-December. Thank you for your generosity and your understanding.

We end with a reminder about Covid19 transmissions. Incidences of positive cases are going up in our congregation and community. **If you have been in contact with someone who either tests positive for Covid19 or have been in contact with someone who soon after tests positive, you need to quarantine yourself from St. Paul Church, its building, and its staff.**

It is our goal to keep one another (and our neighbors) as healthy as possible. What's more, if essential staff become infected, we will be forced to shut down worship, weekly mailers and all programs for two weeks. We thank you for your attention and care. We know it is difficult to stay home. Isolation is hard. And yet, it is our Christian calling to care for one another in the best way possible.

We thank you for your faithfulness. We thank you for your generosity. We thank you for your love for God and neighbor.

Blessings,



Roland Dicke  
Council President



Myra Hanenkraat  
Council VP



Rev. Becky Erb Strang  
Senior Pastor

#### Financial Information as of November 22, 2021

##### Operating Fund

Beg. Balance \$0.00  
Giving Income \$7,938.94 (weekly)  
Endowment Transfers \$23,641.00(ytd)  
Income \$277,912.53 (ytd)  
Expenses \$269,309.35 (ytd)  
Balance \$8,603.18 (ytd)  
**Building Maint & Property Care**  
Beg. Balance \$73,644.37  
Income \$45,748.50(ytd)  
Endowment Income \$4,276.50(ytd)  
Expenses \$49,616.75(ytd)  
Balance \$74,052.62(ytd)

##### Local Aid

Beg. Balance \$6,250.20  
Income \$21,139.43 (ytd)  
Expenses \$18,292.50(ytd)  
Balance \$9,097.13 (ytd)  
BP Beg Balance \$7,881.15  
Bless Pantry Inc. \$25,326.00(ytd)  
Bless Pantry Ex. \$14,533.77(ytd)  
BP Balance \$18,673.38

##### Our Church Wider Mission

Pledge \$25,000.00  
Income \$445.00(weekly)  
Income \$23,523.50 (ytd)

##### Project of the Year

Income \$25.00(weekly)  
Balance \$4,609.00(ytd)

**Jim Moeller** will be celebrating his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday on November 27. If you would like to send a card, please contact the church office for his address.



Jeremiah's Letter to Exiles (Advent 1)

November 28, 2021

Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions.



**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**God of restoration, when the Israelites were exiled, you invited them to accept a new normal. Show us how to move forward when it seems all is lost. Amen.**



**Read:** Read the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*<sup>11</sup>For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

*<sup>12</sup>Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. (Jeremiah 29:11-12)*



**Reflect:** Reflect on the scripture summary.

**Israel was exiled, and it looked like it was going to be for a long time. God's invitation to the people came with a promise: build a new life for themselves, and when they searched for God, God would be found.**



**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household.

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**Tell of a time your faith was shaken. What happened? Where is your faith now?**

**Has God ever gone back on a promise?**

**For the littles: What's the first thing you do when you return home from being out?**



**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God grant you unshakable faith. Amen.**



**Do:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Write a letter on behalf of people exiled in the world today. Go to Amnesty International, Oxfam, Human Rights Watch, or other organization dedicated to working for justice. Learn what you can do to effect change.**



**Go Deeper:** Go to [clergystuff.com/daily-devotions](http://clergystuff.com/daily-devotions) for devotions on the daily readings.

Sunday, Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14, Jeremiah's Letter to Exiles

Monday, Jeremiah 1:4-19, Jeremiah's Call

Tuesday, Jeremiah 2:1-8, God Pleads with Israel to Repent

Wednesday, Jeremiah 3:1-5, Unfaithful Israel

Thursday, Jeremiah 30:1-9, Restoration Promised for Israel and Judah

Friday, Jeremiah 31:1-6, The Joyful Return of the Exiles

Saturday, Jeremiah 31:31-37, A New Covenant





## **St. Paul United Church of Christ**

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Visit our website at <https://stpaulnb.org>

Like and follow our page St. Paul United Church of Christ – New Bremen, Ohio on Facebook

Rev. Becky Strang-Senior Pastor

Pastor Dee Schroer-Associate Pastor

Roland Dicke-Council President

### **Welcome to St. Paul UCC, we are glad you are here!!**

Whether you are worshipping online or in person, blessing and greetings to one and all. In the name of Christ, you are welcome today and every day.

**November 28, 2021**

**Reign of Christ Sunday**

### **Worship Leaders**

Ministers

Rev. Becky Erb Strang

Rev. Daniel Busch

Caleb Felver

Cheyenne Olt

Becky Quellhorst

Tim Olt

Jim Strang

The Congregation

Senior Pastor

Northwest Association Minister

Liturgist

Accompanist

Organist

Chancel Choir Director

Music Director

**PRELUDE**

**LIGHTING OF CANDLES:** You are invited to light a candle or candles at home in preparation for worship.

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## AFFIRMATION OF PASTOR DEE'S MINISTRY AMONG US

**GREETING:** Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives. Individuals move into our community and church life. Others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we share the time of farewell with Pastor Dee Schroer who is leaving her position as Associate Pastor.

### REMEMBRANCE AND RECOGNITION

I met Dee Schroer soon after I arrived at St. Paul Church. I had two of her daughters in confirmation and Dee was a steady presence at our weekly Bible study. Dee is a self-taught theologian—she has read the Bible cover-to-cover multiple times and has anchored her faith in God's Word and God's Love.

Soon, Dee joined the Mission Team. She became a Deacon and later an Elder. She began to teach Confirmation. She was elected to be our congregation's vice-president. Dee is a woman of faith who wants everyone to experience God's grace the way she has.

When Katie Jackson left St. Paul to go to seminary, Dee filled in as a volunteer for the Sunday School and youth programs while we did a nationwide search for an Associate Pastor. Dee's organizational skills and her deep faith continued to grow. I clearly remember a May Council meeting: Dee was present as vice president and several people began to question the search process—wondering if we needed to look at viable alternatives. Sweet Dee Schroer had no idea that they were talking about her!

After that council meeting, I met with Dee in my office letting her know that I believed she was called to be our Associate Pastor. Dee listened with disbelief—becoming a pastor had not occurred to her. But Dee Schroer is a pastor through and through. Her first question to me was, "By what authority can I be a pastor?" My answer? God's authority.

The rest is history. Dee applied for the position, interviewed with the search committee and gave her candidating sermon in July of that same year. You, the people of St. Paul Church, overwhelmingly voted to call her as your Associate Pastor.

Working side by side with Dee was a joy. She is a team player, has incredible pastoral care skills and a vision for faith formation for all ages. When Dee's health became more and more compromised, I kept holding out hope that she would be able to continue as our pastor. And this is what I have said to Dee and I say to you now: my prayers for Dee are prayers for healing. My deepest hope is that she finds answers and relief. I am overjoyed that Dee will stay at St. Paul Church, participating as she is able.

Dee: I love you. This congregation loves you. God loves you. Thank you for sharing yourself so fully with us! Rev. Becky Erb Strang

GIFT OF APPRECIATION

Roland Dicke

RECOGNITION OF THE END

Leader: On July 16, 2017, this local church called Pastor Deana Schroer to serve as Associate Pastor of Faith Formation, Youth and family Life Ministries.

*Pastor Dee: I thank St. Paul United Church of Christ, its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown me these last four years. I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have made. I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.*

**People: We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and accept that you now leave to focus on your health. We express our gratitude for your time among us. We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.**

*Pastor Dee: I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.*

VOWS OF RELEASE

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for her ministry as it unfolds in new ways?

**People: We do with the help of God.**

Leader: Do you, Pastor Deana Schroer, release this local church from turning to you and depending on you?

*Pastor Dee: I do, with the help of God*

Leader: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here and on the relationship with another who will come to serve?

*Pastor Dee: I do, with the help of God.*

## WITNESS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Rev. Daniel Busch: On behalf of the Northwest Ohio Association, Heartland Conference and the United Church of Christ, I witness to words spoken: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. The member churches of our Association and Conference hold each of you in prayer. We pledge our support in the transitions signified in this service.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## PRAYER

Leader: Let us pray.

**All: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories but move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.**

## WELCOME SONG

### No Matter

*♩=120*

No mat-ter who, — no mat-ter what — no mat-ter where you are on the  
jour-ney of life; you're wel-come, wel-come in this place. — No mat-ter  
who, — no mat-ter what, — no mat-ter where you are on the  
jour-ney of life: ac-cept-ed, wel-comed by God's grace. grace.

To verses Last time, Fine

# CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Come into God's house with a hope and a promise:

**People: Despite the darkness, the light awaits us.**

Leader: Set down roots and find a new normal,

**People: And when sought, God will be found!**

## ADVENT CAROL *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

ADVENT

### 153 *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

F C F Gm C7 F C Dm C F A C7 F F A Gm Dm C F

1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;  
2 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a king,

F C F Gm C7 F C Dm C F A C7 F F A Gm Dm C F

from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.  
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.

Am Dm Gm7 C7 Dm7 C7 F F E Dm F A G# Gm Bbmaj7 Csus C

Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;  
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;

F A F6 Gm C7 F F Bm7(b5) C7 Bb C7 F F7 A Bb F A Bb F C C7 F

dear De - sire of ev - ery na - tion, Joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.  
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.



## SERVICE OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

Leader: We confess our sins before God and one another.

### SILENT CONFESSION OF SIN

Leader: Healing God,

**People: We come into this sacred space broken and lost. We bring our worries and our fears. We bring the weight of having acted out in ways that hurt others, you, and ourselves. We wonder if there will ever be a time when light will find us. Forgive what we have done and heal us, for the sake of the one whose love and forgiveness and grace lasts forever. Amen.**

Leader: God offers light and healing. God invites us into a new way of being. Despite our sin, God forgives. Receive and welcome God's forgiveness, for you are clean and made whole again in the name of Jesus. Thanks be to God!

## RESPONSE

### *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (chorus)

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

The image shows a musical score for the chorus of 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The melody is written in the treble staff, and the bass line is in the bass staff. The lyrics are written below the treble staff. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some longer notes held over. There are some decorative flourishes in the bass line, including a large 'C' shape under a group of notes.

## ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING: HOPE

Reader One: Just as Jeremiah spoke to a nation in despair, we see a world suffering, and struggle with our own challenges, wondering, "How long, O Lord?"

*Reader Two: But Jeremiah speaks a word of hope, proclaiming God's promise of restoration, even if we must wait patiently for it.*

Reader One (as first candle is lit): We light this candle as a sign of that expectant hope.

*Reader Two: A flame of anticipation that points to God's mighty deeds in a dark world desperate for God's radiant love.*

ADVENT

165

When God Is a Child

*Refrain*  
 ♩ C G7 C C Em7 Am G

When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be first and the

*a tempo*

C Am7 D7 G C E Am Dm7 G7

weak shall be strong, and none shall be a -

1-3 C 4 C Am E

fraid.

1 Hope is a star that  
 2 Peace is a rib - bon that  
 3 Joy is a song that  
 4 Love is a flame that

1-3 4

WORDS: Brian Wren (1936- )  
 MUSIC: John Carter (1930- )  
 Words © 1989 Hope Publishing Company  
 Music © 1998 Hope Publishing Company

GATES  
 Irregular

Am G7 C C#dim7 G Em Am D7 G *to Refrain*

shines in the night, lead - ing us on till the morn - ing is bright. When  
 cir - cles the earth, giv - ing a prom - ise of safe - ty and worth. When  
 wel - comes the dawn, tell - ing the world that the Sav - ior is born. When  
 burns in our heart, Je - sus has come and will nev - er de - part. When

*rit.*

## PASTORAL JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE PEOPLE

**Joys:** Pastor Dee's Ministry! **Birth Candle**-welcomes Noah Ryan Zirkle, born November 10, 2021 to Matt and Mary Zirkle. Noah is the brother of Luke and grandson of Steve and Angie Zirkle. Welcome Noah!

**Concerns:** We are continuing to pray for Carol Mohrman (St Rita's), Julia Paul, Susan (Topp) Wicker, Kohneita Lear, Greg Maurer, Bart Maurer, Jan Dammeyer, Scott Kuenning, Shannon Shupp, and Dee Schroer.

Please remember the family of Ed Dicke Jr. in your prayers. Ed passed away November 2, 2021. Service to celebrate his life will be Sunday, November 28, 2021, 3:00pm at St. Paul. Visitation will be one hour prior at St. Paul.

Please remember the family of Marge Felver in your prayers. Marge passed away November 17, 2021.

## PASTORAL PRAYER, SILENT PRAYER

Leader: Let us pray. Holy and Loving God, today we lift up to you in prayer this beloved Body of Christ, this community, our nation and the world. SILENCE

Leader: We do not always like what we are being asked to do, O God. Life is one way and we would like it to be another. We are not in the right place, doing the right thing at the time we would prefer. Show us, O God, that where we are now is exactly where you need us to be, and assure us of the blessings which you have promised. SILENCE. Comforting God,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: You give us a peace which the world cannot, Holy One. Discourage us from seeking after temporary assurance or flimsy hopes. Instill generosity within us during a season that can often become a frantic scramble to take care of our own concerns. Open us to the unfolding mystery of your presence among us. SILENCE. Comforting God,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We give you thanks for a time to pause in gratitude for all the blessings in our lives. We thank you for family, for food and shelter, for friends and neighbors and our church community. Bless all those who find themselves alone on holidays, whether by choice or otherwise, and make us one great human family. SILENCE. Comforting God,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: There is more suffering in the world than we can sometimes comprehend, and yet you hold us all in the palm of your hand. Pour out your healing spirit on all who cry to you. Shine your healing light on all who suffer. Offer comfort and peace to all who mourn. SILENCE. Comforting God,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Like the saints who waited on the fulfillment of your word, we find our peace in your faithfulness to all generations. Uphold us with your promises still, and assure us of our place at your heavenly banquet. SILENCE. Comforting God,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We have asked and you have heard, O God. We thank you for your steadying presence in this season and all seasons. We pray this in the name of the One who taught us to pray:

THE LORD'S PRAYER (sung to the tune of *Away in a Manger*)

***Creator in heaven, all praise to your name!***

***Your kingdom among us, your will done the same.***

***By mortals and angels, come, Lord, reign alone!***

***O hear us and bless us from heaven's high throne.***

***The bread that we yearn for, provide it each day***

***As we forgive others, our sins take away.***

***In times of temptation, to lead us be near.***

***From evil deliver your children most dear.***

***For yours is the kingdom; o'er all things you reign;***

***And yours is the glory, all things you maintain***

***To you be the glory, resounding again***

***From all of creation, forever! Amen!***

*Thank you, Lord, for loving us all,  
For your gifts both great and small,  
for the faith which keeps us strong,  
now we join in thankful song.*

*For the beauty all around,  
ev'ry sight and ev'ry sound,  
for the love and friendship we share,  
Lord, we bow in thankful prayer.*

*We gather together to share in God's blessings:  
the colors of autumn, the blossoms of spring,  
the gift of creation, the promise of salvation.  
For all His many wonders our thanks now we bring.*

*Together we join in our song of thanksgiving,  
with grateful rejoicing our voices we raise.  
All men and all nations unite in celebration,  
To God be all honor and glory and praise!  
Amen, Amen, Amen.*

#### ADVENT OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14

A Dramatic Reading of the Text. Readers: Narrator & God

Narrator: These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:

*God: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters into marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there and do not decrease. But seek the*



*welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*

Narrator: For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel:

*God: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them,*

Narrator: Says the Lord. For thus says the Lord:

*God: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill my promise and bring you back to this place. For surely I know the plans I have for you,*

Narrator: Says the Lord,

*God: Plans for your welfare and not harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me,*

Narrator: Says the Lord,

*God: And I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.*

RESPONSE

*Grace, Flow From Above*

verse 1

# Grace, Flow From Above

November 28 through December 19, 2021

Word and Music by  
J. L. Salt(er)

Grace, flow from a - bove. Show your ho - ly love.

Save us from the fire that burns, O Lord, whom we a - dore.

Bring life to our bones. Make us all your own.

*introduction*

Let us drink your grace and truth so we may thirst no more.

11/28 "My plans for you are not to cause you pain.  
12/5 Your ho - ly words could make the dead bones live!  
12/12 We seek you, Lord. Speak words to teach your ways.  
12/19 In - to the dark, there came a ho - ly light!

I'll hear your call. I'll bring you home a - gain!"  
 Your spir - it comes and Lord, new life you give.  
 Help us to walk with you for all our days.  
 Word be - came flesh in glo - ry and in might!

Grace, flow from a - bove. Show your ho - ly love.

SERMON                      *“Grasping or Claiming Hope”*                      Rev. Daniel Busch

Let us pray. Still-speaking God, help us always to wait for You, *HOPE* for You, Love You, and to watch for You for us, in us, and through us. We *HOPE* for our lives and the world to find peace, not a dream, but as the fruit of justice. Guide us to walk in Your ways as we hear Your words of love, forgiveness and *HOPE*. Help us hear You calling us into ministries of healing in a hurting world. Restore to us that sight that is beyond physical sight. May we respond with joy and dedication in sharing our blessings with generosity. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with us, as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be forever. Amen.

As we gather together as a community of faith, I bring you greetings from your sisters and brothers of Northwest Ohio Association of the Heartland Conference, United Church of Christ and world community of faith. I give thanks to God for your continued support of missions and ministries in this church, community and around the world. God has called each one of you into ministry and you have responded with generosity of time, talents, and financial gifts that make a difference in people’s lives around the world.

Throughout your history many of your members and pastors have served on ministry teams and committees of NWOA, the Heartland Conference and denomination. Thank you, Dee Schroer, for your ministries among and for us. Thank you Becky for being pastor, teacher, shepherd, spiritual director, mission and ministry director here and around the world. Pastor Becky is also a NWOA Community of Practice facilitator for a group of authorized ministers in support of one another, has served on the Conference Board of Directors and NWOA Cabinet. John and Joyce Gilberg have been leaders with SARA, Back Bay Missions and leaders of NWOA's Partnership with El Salvador. Thank you, thank you, thank you St. Paul UCC for blessing us with your gifts and graces that make a difference in people's lives.

As we gather together, it is important to remember that we are part of the Body of Christ that is grounded in a faith that proclaims God is with us in all conditions of life. We unite as Christians, which means "*Christ Followers*" or "*Christ-Bearers.*" We proclaim a resurrection faith that declares that nothing and no thing can separate us from God through Christ Jesus our Savior.

Today we begin a new Christian year on this 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent. We are preparing for the birth, again, of Jesus, God's Son, our Savior, our brother and teacher of our faith. No matter what time of the year we are in, we declare always, not just at Easter time, *Christ Is Risen...INDEED!*" This is our firm belief, our hope, our foundation of faith that Christ is in our midst sharing that resurrection proclamation that has the power over evil and even death itself. The Psalmist writes in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, You, God, are with me, your rod and staff they comfort me.*" Our faith declares that we walk through the calamities and never will be overtaken by them. This is the *HOPE* we claim; it is our faith of being sons and daughters of God through Jesus Christ, and always empowered to experience life from a generous God who promises to be with us always.

Traditionally, the first Sunday of Advent emphasizes *HOPE*. Are we grasping *HOPE* or claiming *HOPE*? We often hear or say the word *HOPE* in general terms. We might say, "*HOPE you feel better.*" "*I HOPE the best for you.*" "*HOPE the weather changes soon.*" "*HOPE our business is profitable this year.*" It is such a contentious time that individuals or groups

harass, seek to do bodily harm or even kill those who think or do things differently than they do. In this context, *HOPE* is expressed in negative or revenge statements like *HOPE* you fail or *HOPE* you die.

We read about racism, privilege inconsistencies, sexism, and even Christians and other faith groups cause conflicts among Christians by their narrow interpretation of what it means to be a believer.

Family Holiday Gatherings usually are times of joyous celebrations for families getting together. After my grandmother died at a young age, it was my mother, just 17 years-old, who became the mother of four brothers and sisters, the youngest not quite two years old. My mother was the matriarch of her family and directed and planned family gatherings; she was in charge. It was a joyous occasion to get together with all the delicious food for our consumption; the best part of being together as a family, though, was all the chatter and laughter around the tables. As more people were added to the family, the adventure was always to meet and welcome someone new to the table with the *HOPE* we would like them and they would like to be with us. Years ago a friend of mine related what was happening at his family gatherings with three generations of clergy present. Two cousins became presidents of major denominations at the same time following a split that had happened in the past. They had divided on interpretations of scripture, theology, how to experience the Christian life, and denominationalism. It got to the point that they would not even say a prayer before the meal because they did not want to hear “heretical” prayers. They were “Grasping *HOPE*” and not “Claiming *HOPE*?” What kind of *HOPE* do we witness to others around us?

The scripture from Jeremiah this morning reminds us that people of faith experience every condition of life: joys and sorrows, sickness and health, plenty and hardship. Jeremiah’s people were captured by the Babylonians, and even their king was a prisoner in Babylon. The people experienced so much loss and discouragement that they lost all *HOPE* of having their own homeland again. Life for them was in shambles; they feared living and lived as dead. It is Jeremiah, God’s spokesperson, who sent word to the exiles that *HOPE* is not dead and they are not dead. Jeremiah writes: God has “...plans for your welfare and no harm, to give you a future with *HOPE*.” Jeremiah brings the word of God that they



should *“build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters into marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there and do not decrease.”* Jeremiah was proclaiming a message of *HOPE* that was not a dream but would be realized in God’s gift of abundant living.

We plant seedlings not for ourselves but for future generations. Seedlings can become forests which provide lumber and nourishment for future generations. We have this *HOPE* for a future. Every time a child is born into a family, there is *HOPE* for another generation, a future that is blessed by God. God entrusts all generations with the care of the world and families to become the light to nations with all gifts and graces to make a difference in people’s lives.

During these tumultuous times in the world, we *HOPE* for peace among all people, hunger eliminated, wars ending, respect for one another and healing of the nations. We *HOPE* for healthy minds, bodies and spirits. We *HOPE* for family harmony and harmony with creation. There is *HOPE* that unconditional love will be experienced and given between others and ourselves. It is God’s gifts and graces given to us and shared with one another. Three pillars hold us up: faith, *HOPE* and love, and without the solid pillar of love the other two are weak and tenuous. Church budgets should not be about money or financial security or about scarcity. Budgets are mission statements, the *HOPE* of generosity that will make a difference in the world that God’s Realm is real now. It is *HOPE* that God’s will is done now in love, treating one another with respect as brothers and sisters as God’s family in all conditions of life.

Christians have *HOPE* by understanding God’s love and forgiveness and discerning it for our living, loving and forgiving one another. *HOPE* is more than dreaming or the figment of our imagination, for we need to intentionally allow God’s Spirit to move in us, through us and among us. As God spoke through Jeremiah, God has *“plans for your welfare and not harm, to give you a future with hope.”* Again turning to the words of Paul in the Letter to the Romans for assurance of *HOPE*, *“there is nothing—no-thing—that can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus our Savior.”* Jeremiah’s people, even in exile, were given *HOPE* that God

would bring them back to their homeland and the promise was fulfilled, *HOPE* alive, *HOPE* realized, *HOPE* restored.

When we grasp for *HOPE*, it becomes an act of aimlessness, personal gain and self-gratification. Grasping *HOPE* is an act of defiance of being made in the image of God and wanting to be God ourselves. Claiming *HOPE*, on the other hand, is a gift from a generous and loving God. It is allowing God's Spirit to enhance everything we do. God's Spirit comes alive when we love God with our whole being and love our neighbors as ourselves. Spirit-filled people see life as a gift, not as a curse, and live life with gratitude and generosity. Living God's *HOPE* becomes the act of caring for one another and welcoming one another, all as brothers and sisters as God's family. We are called to be family together, without imposing limits on love.

This is our faith! This is our *HOPE*! This is our love! Thanks be to God! Blessings always. A M E N.

## WE RESPOND WITH OUR GIFTS

OFFERTORY SENTENCES: Today we present ourselves as an offering to God. If you are alienated from a family member, today is the day to build bridges: a phone call or perhaps an email or written notes to bring about reconciliation. At this moment, we offer our time, our abilities and our financial resources in thanksgiving for God's extravagant love for each of us.

## DOXOLOGY/CAROL

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a guitar accompaniment line. The lyrics are: "What can I offer poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a wise man, I would do my part; yet what can I offer; all of my heart." The guitar chords are indicated above the vocal line: F, E/A, F, Dsus, Dm, Gm/Bb, Dm/A, Gm7, C7, F, Bb/D, F, Bb/D, Eb/C, Bb, Dm, E/A, Am, Gm/Bb, Bb/maj7, C, F, E/A, F, Dsus, Dm, Gm/Bb, C7, F.

WORDS: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)  
MUSIC: Gustav T. Holst (1874-1934)

CRANHAM  
Irregular

# PRAYER OF DEDICATION (in unison)

Holy and Hope-filled God, even when we are lost or broken, we know that healing comes when we reach out, rather than isolate; give, rather than withhold. So, we bring our offerings to you in the hope that abundant blessings come not only for us, but for those who benefit from these gifts that we offer. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## ADVENT CAROL *Blessed Be the God of Israel*

ADVENT

### Blessed Be the God of Israel

158

*Unison* N.C. G G/B C D Em Cmaj7 Am7 D



1 Blessed be the God of Is - rael, who comes to set us free,  
2 Now from the house of Da - vid a child of grace has come,  
3 On all by death im - pris - oned the sun be - gins to rise,

who vis - its and re - deems us, and grants us lib - er - ty.  
a Sav - ior who will lead us to our e - ter - nal home.  
the dawn - ing of for - give - ness up - on the sin - ner's eyes,

The proph - ets spoke of mer - cy, of free - dom and re - lease;  
Be - fore him goes the her - ald, fore - run - ner in the way,  
to guide the feet of pil - grims a - long the paths of peace;

God shall ful - fill the prom - ise to bring our peo - ple peace.  
the proph - et of sal - va - tion, the har - bin - ger of day.  
O bless our God and Sav - ior with songs that nev - er cease!

D G G/B C Dsus D C G/B Am7 D G

N.C. C/Bm Am Gmaj7 G Am G/B Am Dsus D

WORDS: Michael Perry (1942-1996)  
MUSIC: Hal H. Hopson (1933- )

MERLE'S TUNE  
7.6.7.6.D.

Words © 1973 Jubilate Hymns (Admin. Hope Publishing Company)  
Music © 1983 Hope Publishing Company

BENEDICTION: May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God look upon you with kindness and give you peace. Amen.

## ADVENT RESPONSE

CHRISTMAS

### 188 Angels We Have Heard on High

*Refrain*

F Dm Gm7 C Fmaj7 Bb  $\frac{C}{E}$  C

Glo - - - - - ri - a

$\frac{F}{A}$  C F Bb  $\frac{F}{C}$  C F Dm Gm7 C

in ex - cel - sis De - o! Glo - - - - -

Fmaj7 Bb  $\frac{C}{E}$  C  $\frac{F}{A}$  C F Bb  $\frac{F}{C}$  C7 F

- - - - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!

WORDS and MUSIC: French carol, 18th c.

GLORIA  
7.7.7.7.Ref.

## PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you!

**People: And also with you!**

## POSTLUDE

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Altar Flowers** are given in honor of our 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on November 23<sup>rd</sup> by Linda and Marvin Topp.

**Attendance**-Daily Devotions-48, November 14-Sunday Worship Online-317, In Person-63, Sunday School-In Person-21, Teachers-6, Splash & Jr/Sr High Youth Group-18, Confirmation-5, Leaders-12.

**Sundays in November and December-Worship** will be in person and via Facebook Live at 10:15am. **Sunday School** will be in person at 9:00am.

**Daily Devotions**-Please join us, Monday-Thursday at 11:30am, online via Facebook Live. These will air on our Facebook page: St. Paul United Church of Christ-New Bremen, OH.

**November Monthly Mission**-Washington UCC Children's Christmas Gifts: A Christmas tree can be found in the Narthex of the sanctuary that has tags on. We ask that if you wish, please take a tag or two and shop for a child. **Please return the unwrapped gifts and the tag and place them under the tree by Sunday, November 28th.** You may also make a financial donation by this date by marking monthly mission on your giving envelope or with "Washington UCC Gifts to the Manger" on the envelope. Thank you for your generous giving.

**Chancel Choir and Bell Choir Rehearsal**-Chancel Choir will be rehearsing(9:00am) and singing (10:15 service) on Sunday, November 28. Bell Choir will be rehearsing Wednesday, December 1(7:00pm) and Sunday, December 5(9:00am) and playing (10:15 service) Sunday, December 5. Please join them! All are welcome!

**Congregational Meeting-December 5, 2021.** The meeting will begin immediately after the Hymn of Sending. We will be approving the 2022 council members and the 2022 budget.



**2022 Altar Flower Chart** has been posted in the Narthex. Please sign up for the date(s) you would like. You may also call the church office Monday-Friday to sign up. Thank you. Price is \$30.00.

**Blessing Pantry**-is accessible during these hours - **Tuesdays 5:30pm-7:30pm, Wednesdays and Thursdays 1:00pm-3:00pm**. The Pantry will be closed Mondays and Fridays. **All Donations Welcome – Blessing Pantry Needs- Diapers (size 2, 4) Baby Wipes, Diaper Cream, Baby Lotion, Chap Stick, Toothpaste, Shampoo, Conditioner, Body Wash, Razors, Shaving Cream, Deodorant, Q-Tips, Kleenex, Paper Plates, Garbage Bags, Food Storage Bags, Toilet Paper, Paper Towels, and Napkins. Thank you!** There is a container outside the East and North Educational Building doors for donations.

**Bulletin Availability-weekly bulletins** are available for download on our website [stpaulnb.org](http://stpaulnb.org). Just click the yellow **BULLETINS** box in the upper right hand corner.

**November/December Upper Rooms**-are available at the East entrance to the education building and on the round tables in the sanctuary. Or please call the church office if you would like one and we will gladly mail one to you.

**Mailbox**-There is a mailbox outside of the East Educational Building door for any correspondence you may have for the church and would like to drop off. Please lift the flap and drop through the slot on the top. Thank you!

**2022 Council Postitions**-2022 will be here before we know it and we are looking to fill several council positions. Please prayerfully consider serving in one of the following: **Jr. Deacon**. Questions or willing to serve, please contact Roland Dicke or Myra Hanenkratt. Thank you!

## **E-Giving @ St. Paul**

**Online** – Make a donation on our website: [stpaulnb.org](http://stpaulnb.org)

**Text** – Make a donation to our Number: 833-308-0048

**How To Give by Text (Example - my amount for the example is \$25 (minimum amount is \$5.00))**

- For general fund giving: Send 25 space gl (hit send)
- For building & property fund giving: Send 25 space bp (hit send)
  - For Blessing Pantry: Send 25 space pantry (hit send)
- For project of the year giving: Send 25 space poy (hit send)

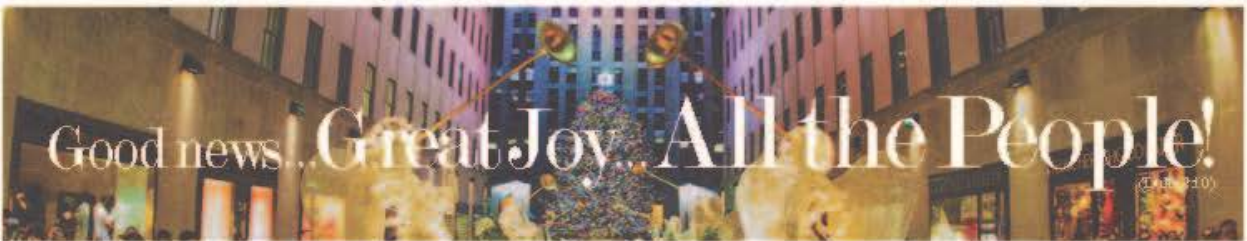
### **Once a text amount is sent:**

**Registration Link-** Sent via text the first time a donation is made.  
Thank you! Please visit (link) to register.

**Donation Confirm-** Sent via text each time a donation is made.

### **Calendar-Week of November 28, 2021**

Sunday	9:00am	Chancel Choir Rehearsal
	9:00am	Sunday School in person
	10:15am	Worship in person & via Facebook Live
	11:15am	Pastor Dee Celebration Reception
Monday	11:30am	Devotions via Facebook Live
	2:00pm-4:00pm	Coffee Shop-New Bremen
	6:30pm	Community Tree Lighting
Tuesday	11:30am	Devotions via Facebook Live
	5:30pm-7:30pm	Blessing Pantry Open
Wednesday	11:30am	Devotions via Facebook Live
	1:00pm-3:00pm	Blessing Pantry Open
	5:30pm-6:30pm	Splash (4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> grade)
	6:30pm	Youth Dinner
	7:00pm-8:30pm	Jr/Sr High Youth
	7:00pm-8:30pm	Confirmation
	7:00pm	Bell Choir Rehearsal
Thursday	11:30am	Devotions via Facebook Live
	1:00pm-3:00pm	Blessing Pantry Open
Friday	Afternoon	Office Closed
Saturday	8:00am	Men's Club-Speedway Lanes



## John and Anne McKinstry—“Veterans of the Cross”

In the United Church of Christ, through the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, we take care to express our love and gratitude for our retired ministers. One of the ways we do that is through the Annuitant Visitors' Program, which coordinates visits by often younger retired UCC clergy to older retired ministers (annuitants) across the country. The purpose of these visits is to check in, see how they're doing, find out if they have any needs that can be addressed, and thank them for their “years of service to a grateful church.”

One such visitor, now retired, is the Rev. Richard L. (Rick) Floyd, of Pittsfield, MA, who wrote of a visit to the Rev. John and Anne McKinstry of Great Barrington, MA, who are, in Rick's words: “indeed Veterans of the Cross, having served small country congregations throughout their ministry (and they really did share the ministry as ‘old school’ minister and spouse).”

John McKinstry's last pastorate ended with an unfortunate forced resignation from a church that was leaving the United Church of Christ. This left John and Anne—close to retirement age—with neither home nor equity, having lived in parsonages their entire adult lives.

That was over 20 years ago. Since then, the McKinstry's have been able to manage with generosity from friends and with supplements and gifts from the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance through the Christmas Fund. John teaches guitar and dulcimer; Anne writes hymns (two of her hymns are in *The New Century Hymnal*, which can be found in UCC pews across the country).

“I was proud that our church, through the Christmas Fund, could help these lovely people in retirement,” Rick says. “I think it meant a lot to them that I could hear their story. When I ‘thanked them for their years of service from a grateful church,’ I thought they were going to cry.”

### In 2020, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 276 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,180,187)
- Health benefits supplementation for 89 retired clergy and lay employees (\$274,008)
- Emergency grants for 96 individuals and families (\$214,649)
- Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to 504 retired clergy and lay employees (\$252,000)

## The Christmas Fund

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund