

St. Paul's Letter 2021-2022



From Pastor Beckie . . .

As a young adult, I longed to have a child. I felt God had created me to be a mother. But as pregnancies ended in miscarriage, and as relationships became strained, I wondered why my concept of personal fulfillment was not coming to fruition. It was only after what seemed like an eternity of waiting for the alignment or relationships and medical advances that I was able to carry a pregnancy to term, and I was able to give birth to my first child, Paul. The blessing of this child and the opportunity to be a mother seemed so much more precious to me because I had yearned for it for so long.

The prophets of old told the people of Israel that God had promised to send a Messiah. This Messiah would be the one to deliver the people of God from their misery and despair. With this promise, the faithful ones waited, for generation after generation, for century after century. So many lived and died without seeing this promise fulfilled, that hope became thin as the misery of life seemed to grow more intense.

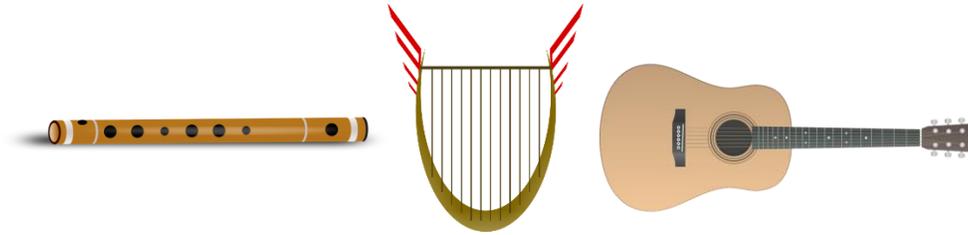
Imagine, just imagine, those who held onto faith in God's promise being confronted by God's messenger ~ an angel, or a whole host of angels! "Do not be afraid," the message would begin. For there was much to fear. But these angels were announcing that the time had come for the fulfillment of God's promise. A child would be born who would be the light to the nations, called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! The angels continued to confront humanity's fears and announce that God had sent a Savior to the world.

Now, I know how amazingly awesome it felt to welcome a child after a decade of waiting. Imagine the people of Israel hearing of the birth of the Christ Child after waiting for more than six hundred years! What joy!! What elation!!!

As we prepare to again celebrate the birth of Christ, may our fears be replaced with promises fulfilled, and our divisions healed by the One who came to give us the peace that passes our understanding. We are certainly in need of the life-transformation that only the Messiah of God can bring to the world! Merry Christmas!

~ Rev. Beckie Sweet

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Calling All St. Paul's Musicians!!

Are you interested in sharing your musical gifts in the form of special music this Advent season? We are looking for musicians of any instrument or voice in any genre, from folk to rock, from gospel to classical, to provide special music for services this December. In addition to Sunday services, we need musical guests for our 7pm Christmas Eve service. If you are interested, please contact Emily Preston at epreston@stpaulsithaca.org.

We are also always looking for more singers for our wonderful Chancel Choir! The choir rehearses Thursday evenings from 7:15 to 8:15, and Sunday mornings at 9:30. We rehearse safely distanced in the sanctuary with masks on. Contact Emily Preston for more info.



Ring Out the Bells

St. Paul's Festival Chimes is looking for more ringers! If you can read music, we can teach you the techniques. We follow St. Paul's safety protocols regarding COVID-19 and offer fun-filled weekly rehearsals and monthly performances in worship. Please share this with your friends and family! Contact Dorothy Preston at 607-539-6293 or dorothypreston721@gmail.com if you are interested or would like more information.



Feather-Making Workshops



Join us to cut, paint, and decorate feathers for our large angel wings that will be mounted in the narthex for holiday photo opportunities! We'd love to have up to six people sign up per workshop. And if you have skill cutting foam board with an X-Acto knife, Cynthia would welcome your help after the workshops: contact her at (520) 603-8958 for times TBD on Monday-Wednesday, Dec. 6-8. Watch for more details and a link to sign up in the Friday email.

What did the stamp say to the Christmas card?

Stick with me and we'll go places.

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The Giving Tree



The Giving Tree provides opportunities for St. Paulians to help bring Christmas cheer to others in our community. This year there are two options to give: in-person or online.

In-person: Simply take a gift request “ornament” from the tree, purchase the item, and bring it back (unwrapped) to place under the tree. The Giving Tree will be in the main hallway, near the Aurora Street entrance, from Sunday, November 28 through Sunday,

December 12.

This year's tree will provide gifts to individuals from local agencies:

-Racker (toys and gifts for children with special needs)

-Finger Lakes Residential Center (iTunes cards, gifts, and personal care items for adolescent males who have been placed with the Office of Children and Family Services by Family Court)

-Longview (small gifts for residents in Assisted and Enhanced Assisted Living wings)

-St. John's Community Services (\$25 gift cards for people experiencing homelessness in Ithaca)

Online: Visit our online Giving Tree for links to donate to the following organizations (Racker, St. John's Community Services, Ithaca Sanctuary Alliance, and Agua Viva Serves)

Add to your joy of the holidays by bringing joy to these beloved Children of God!



Advent~Christmas Worship Series

Angels Among Us: “Do Not Be Afraid”

The angels that appear in the story of Jesus' birth would have been very comfortable in our world of social media tweets and hashtags.

*Their messages were often short and to the point—
their favorite line being “Do Not Be Afraid!”*

As we look at the stories of these winged messengers sent to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, and their reactions to the angels, we will contemplate what messages we can offer that will counteract a culture of fear and despair to bring more hope, more peace, more joy, and more love to the world with the coming of Christ.

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Nov. 28 ~ First Sunday of Advent ~ More HOPE
Dec. 5 ~ Second Sunday of Advent ~ More PEACE
Dec. 12 ~ Third Sunday of Advent ~ More JOY
Dec. 19 ~ Fourth Sunday of Advent ~ More LOVE
Dec. 24 ~ Christmas Eve ~ "Do Not Be Afraid"



SPECIAL CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Monday, December 20, 2021 – Blue Christmas Service ~ 7:00 p.m.

Blue? Yes, blue as in the blues. As in “I am feeling blue.” Not everyone is up and cheery for the Christmas holidays. Dealing with the death of a loved one, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with an illness that puts a question mark over the future, and a number of other human situations make parties and joviality painful for many people in our community. This service creates sacred space for people living through dark times. The service is reflective, accepting of where we really are, and holds out healing and hope.

Friday, December 24, 2021 ~ Contemplative Christmas Eve Service ~ Noon

On this holy day, some enjoy a more prayerful approach to Christmas Eve and the birth of the Christ Child. This service will be quietly joyful as we welcome Christ into the world and into our lives.

Friday, December 24, 2021 ~ Traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service ~ 7:00 p.m.

Many of us are longing for tradition, especially in the sacred season of Christmas. Join us in worshipping the God who sent Jesus Christ as Love incarnate, the Word made flesh. We will enjoy special music, sing favorite Christmas hymns, hear the scriptural account of the birth of Jesus, enjoy a children’s message, hear the Word proclaimed, and share the light of God’s love as we light candles to pierce the darkness of the world. All are welcome to join in this time of worship.

This year, the Christmas Eve collections will support the Protestant Community of Cornell University and to help make repairs to keep our parsonage safe. Please make checks payable to St Paul’s UMC and write “Christmas Offering” in the memo.

Sunday, December 26, 2021 ~ Service of Lessons & Carols ~ 10:30 a.m.

Have you missed hearing the prophet’s news about the coming Messiah? Do you long to sing the Christmas Carols that just did not fit into our Advent worship this year? Please join us for a Service of Lessons and Carols on the day after Christmas. Your soul will be blessed!

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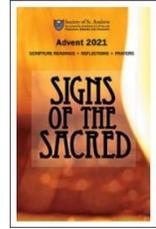
Advent Devotional Booklets Available *Signs of the Sacred*

from the Society of St. Andrew

Gleaning America's Fields ~ Feeding America's Hungry

These are available by the Sanctuary door.

Donations for this ministry are accepted but not required.



Loving Care Card Ministry by Jami Breedlove



For many years volunteers have participated in the Loving Care Card Ministry. The members send cards each month to people who are not able to attend church in person or need encouragement. To widen the circle of St. Paul's loving care I open the card ministry to anyone that feels led to participate.

You are not required to sign up or report to anyone. If you feel the Holy Spirit urging you to contact someone then follow that voice. As 1 Thessalonians 5:11 states, "therefore encourage one another and build one another up". You can choose any number of people and let them know that you are thinking of them.

Since I began in September as the Loving Care Ministry Coordinator, I have seen your cards in members' homes and have heard how much they mean to the recipients. I have been blessed by meeting and visiting with you all. I look forward to hearing how you will be blessed by participating in this community program of St. Paul's.

New Members

St Paul's received new members on Sunday, October 31. Please welcome:



Ann Bohman
akbohman@gmail.com



Sarah Murray
sarai82070@aol.com



Pam Carey
carey.roemer@gmail.com



Marilyn Sweet
msweetriver@hotmail.com



Jen Corrao
jc363636@gmail.com



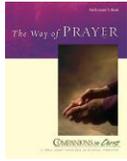
Joellyn Tuttle
jrwuttule@gmail.com



Harry Tuttle
htuttlebs@gmail.com

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Looking ahead to 2022. . .



Join Rev. Pam Carey in a book study "**Companions in Christ: The Way of Prayer**" by Stephen D. Bryant and Jane E. Vennard. We will meet in person for 10 weeks on Thursday mornings, 10:30-12, from Jan. 6th to Mar 10th.

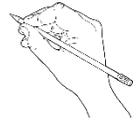
The Way of Prayer teaches us how to answer God's invitation into divine Presence. It also brings a deeper sense of spiritual vitality and encouragement, to seek out new ways to pray. Contact Anne Horst at ahorst@stpaulsithaca.org, to register. Books are \$10 and scholarships are available.



The UNY Conference Commission on Religion and Race is inviting St. Paulians to join a 7-week study called **Imagine No Racism 2.0**. Pastor Beckie will lead us as we examine the racism in our culture and in our individual lives. We will also learn how to be an ally to those who experience racism. The study will begin in January 2022, so watch the weekly emails for more information. If you are interested in participating, please let Pastor Beckie know.

Now Accepting Submission for our own Lenten Devotional Booklet

Our theme for Lent in 2022 is **Roll Down Justice**. As the prophet Amos reminds us, "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." God called us to worship, study, and then engage in action as Christ-followers to make this prophecy a reality.



If you would like to submit a message, story, poem, prayer, drawing, song, etc. it would be most welcome! Please send it to Pastor Beckie before February 11, 2022.

St. Paul's United Methodist Church
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Ithaca, NY 14850

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