



December 2023

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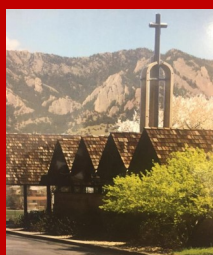
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From The Pastor's Desk...

This is my fifth Advent/Christmas with the saints of St. Paul's UMC in Boulder, and each year, we seem to enter the sacred season experiencing what it means to be a community of faith in a new or unexpected way. We have observed Advent and Christmas Eve online and in person. We have listened to an a cappella group and hand bells and sung "Silent Night" as a church family. There have been sermons and lessons & carols, and once, we even had a Christmas pageant-in-a-bag! There have been families worshipping together and those who have come by themselves. There have been white Christmases and years with nary a snowflake in sight. Through the years that we have been together, one thing has remained constant: Jesus.

How we understand this Jesus, the names we use, and the ways in which we live out our relationship with Him varies from person to person and even from year to year. We know about Him because of what others have told us—the names they use, the stories they tell, and the music they share. We experience the story of this Jesus in the traditions we have known in our homes and families and in the multitude of churches we have attended over the years. I mention these different ways we have experienced Advent and Christmas because of the theme of this year's seasonal devotional.

Think about the fable of the spider and the Holy Family as they fled from Bethlehem to Egypt: On their first night as refugees, they had gotten as far as they could from Bethlehem and found a cave in which to hide from Herod's soldiers. In the cave, a spider saw the child shivering and felt sorry for him. To give some protection, the spider wove a web at the cave's entrance. Herod's soldiers came to the cave opening. Joseph heard them and did his best to protect Mary and the child. When the soldiers came to the cave opening, they were ready to enter, but one of them said, "Look—a spider web. No one entered here recently." So they left. The next morning, the spider web glistened with drops of dew. In honor of the spider web, we place tinsel on our Christmas trees. It sparkles like dew on tiny threads. The tinsel reminds us that no good deed done for Jesus will be forgotten.

Some of the gifts we will give this month are expensive, while others are much humbler. Some gifts will come in beautiful packages, in the form of a smile, or in the web of a simple spider. Whatever form they take or however they might be shared, let us consider this phrase inspired by John Wesley's writings: "*Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.*"

Every blessing, *Pastor Charles*

Christmas Eve at St. Paul's UMC

We will join with Christians around the world on December 24 in the celebration that is Christmas Eve. Because the 24th is also the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we will have one service at our regular 10:15 a.m. worship time. Please join us, and bring a friend, relative, or neighbor to make the worship of Emmanuel, God with us, the reason for the season!

Hanging of the Greens

Join your St. Paul's church family on Saturday, December 2, at 9:00 a.m. as we celebrate the start of the season of Advent and deck our halls! This is truly a case of "many hands make light work," and we are hoping for a big turnout. Coffee, juice, and a light breakfast will be provided beginning at 9:00, and we hope to be done by noon. A huge "thank you" to Angela Baker for making arrangements for the boxes to be carried up from the basement for us.

The theme of this year's **Advent & Christmas Devotional** is taken from the many names and titles ascribed to Jesus. Starting on the first Sunday of Advent (December 3), a reflection, written by a member or friend of St. Paul's UMC, will be presented. Starting on Christmas Day, continuing through the Twelve Days of Christmas (December 25-January 5), and ending on the Day of Epiphany (January 6), Pastor Charles will continue the theme to remind us that God's presence amongst us doesn't end with the unwrapping of the last present on Christmas Day. Print devotionals will be available on the greeter's table, and entries will be posted daily online on our Facebook page, @boulderstpauls, and on our blog, www.bolderstpauls.blogspot.com.

Our annual Church Conference will be held IN PERSON on Saturday, December 9 at 10:00 a.m. All members of St. Paul's United Methodist Church are asked to attend our annual church conference. According to the Book of Discipline (§ 246.1), "Within the pastoral charge the basic unit in the connectional system of The United Methodist Church is the charge conference." At this gathering, we'll do the work that is required by the Discipline: "The primary responsibilities of the charge conference in the annual meeting shall be to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church (§§ 120-124), receive reports, and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of The United Methodist Church." Please make every effort to participate in this event.

No Fellowship Breakfast this month – We will not be holding our regular breakfast fellowship on Saturday, December 9. Instead, we will be sharing a brunch potluck in Franz Hall starting at 9:00 a.m., which will be followed by the Church Conference at 10:00 a.m. (See above.)

Ladies Lunch Bunch will meet on Thursday, December 7, at 11:45 a.m. at Parma Trattoria & Mozzarella Bar (Village Shops at Colony Square, 1132 W. Dillon Road, Louisville). **Please R.S.V.P. by December 5** to Belinda Alkula at Belinda.Alkula@gmail.com / 303-916-2349.

EFAA HOLIDAY GIFT ROOM

Help spread holiday cheer for families struggling to make ends meet. Last year the EFAA gift room made the holidays brighter for more than 800 children and teens. St. Paul's will continue our Christmas tradition by donating NEW, UNWRAPPED gifts to support these families. Gift ideas include Legos, stuffed animals, other toys, sports equipment (skateboards, scooters, soccer balls, etc.), and cosmetics and beauty supplies. You can find a more detailed list on the registration table at the back of the sanctuary. Gifts will be delivered to EFAA on December, 11.

O, Mitten Tree!

It is that time of year, the time when we share God's love with Boulder's homeless. This year the Boulder Homeless Shelter has specified that they are looking for donations (NEW and UNWRAPPED) of warm hats, heavy gloves/mittens, wool socks, handwarmers, and \$5 gift cards to places where their clients can buy lunch, a cup of coffee, or an essential item: Safeway, McDonalds, Starbucks, Target, etc. (Note that they do NOT want more generous gift cards, as they want to treat all clients equally at the holiday gathering). Please bring your items to church between Sunday, November 26, and Sunday, December 10, and leave them on or near the Mitten Tree in the back of the sanctuary. Thank you for supporting this ministry!

From the Financial Secretaries

Due to increased costs incurred by the church, we will be suspending (until we can find a more cost-effective method) the ability to use online giving to the church. Fees incurred and the delay in getting our funds transferred to the bank are necessitating this change. This feature will be turned off effective January 1, and no funds will be drawn from your bank beginning January 1. We will let you know when we find a new and more acceptable alternative. Until then, please go back to sending a check to the church office or placing your donation in the offering tray on the usher's table. We apologize for this (hopefully!) temporary inconvenience.

The third-quarter King Soopers Rewards netted a gift to St. Paul's of \$265.40. Thank you!

December Birthdays

12-5 Mary Ferree
12-5 Don Fritschel
12-10 Lance Bishop
12-15 Billy Cook
12-19 Patty Wright
12-22 Jan Browning
12-23 Ann Abbott
12-23 Myrle Myers
12-25 Rev. Dr. Charles Alkula
12-25 Peggy Fritschel
12-30 Ron Revier

December Anniversaries

Gary and Bren Smith
December 24, 1984

DECEMBER PREACHING SCHEDULE

December 3 / First Sunday of Advent / Communion

"The coming of the light"

1 Corinthians 1:3-9, Isaiah 64:1-9

December 10 / Second Sunday of Advent

"Something worth shouting"

Mark 1:1-8, Isaiah 40:1-11

December 17 / Third Sunday of Advent

"Is the Lord's Spirit enough?"

John 1:6-8, 19-28, Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Choral Cantata

December 24 / Fourth Sunday of Advent / Christmas Eve

Lessons and Carols

December 31 / First Sunday of Christmas

Claudia Mills, preaching

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