

# The Word

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EPIPHANY OF THE LORD



*May all kings  
fall down  
before him,  
all nations  
serve him!*

**PSALM 72:11, ESV**

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## Ministers Musings

*When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home,  
when the shepherds are back with their flock,  
the work of Christmas begins:*

*to find the lost,  
to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry,  
to release the prisoner,  
to rebuild the nations,  
to bring peace among all people,  
to make music from the heart.*

- *The Work of Christmas*, by Howard Thurman

Sometime in January, the trappings of Christmas at our house will be put away. The 'Joy to the World' sign on the doll cabinet and the "Peace on Earth" angel at the front door have been designated year-round décor, but the rest of the stuff will be packed away for the year. The outside lights will be the last to go, but eventually even they will be set aside, not to be turned on again for many months. The celebration of Christmas will be over. Life will go back to normal, whatever that may mean. We are those for whom Jesus matters even after he's a beautiful baby, so we will carry on what Howard Thurman calls 'the work of Christmas.' Jesus the baby reminds us of beauty and hope in the world. Jesus the teacher speaks to us of love for enemies and friends alike, forgiveness for those who hurt us, food for the hungry, and welcome for the stranger. Jesus the savior, God with us, even in mid-January, declares God's love for us and for all the world, and calls us to find life, eternal life and normal life, in living that love in all that we do. In the midst of the fear and anger and pain of the world around us, we will respond with love, healing, and forgiveness. In our lives, Christmas will continue, not with red and green decorations on the mantle, but because we will keep Jesus as the foundation of our normal life, throughout the coming year. We will feed the hungry and work to bring peace, and we will make music from the heart.

On February 4, at the Annual Meeting, we will reflect together as the church on our work for Jesus in the year that has passed and plan for the rest of 2024. In 2023, we shared grief and memories of people we loved; we shared times of celebration and joy; we spent time together in worship and in meetings and a good amount of time with coffee and cookies. It's a good life we live together as the church of Jesus Christ. Our sorrows are easier because they are shared. Our joy is intensified because we are not alone. I expect in those ways, the year ahead of us will be similar. God will guide us in providing food for our hungry neighbors and in providing care and education for children. I hope that we'll find new ways to manifest the love and grace of Jesus through the work that we do together. Because we don't do the work of Christmas, the work of God, all by ourselves; we do it as the body of Christ in this place. Your participation, your thoughts, your input and effort are an essential part of the ministry that happens here at the United Ministry. Please be in prayer about how you can share in what God is doing through us.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Cathy

### Prayer Concerns

Pray for peace. In Gaza, in Ukraine, and wherever there is conflict.

Pray for our nation as we engage in campaigns and primaries and elections.

Pray for travelers.

Pray for those for whom winter is challenging, for whom snow is an impediment to getting out in the world. And pray with joy for those who love the snow!

Pray for workers who serve the community – snowplow drivers, police officers, workers in county and municipal offices.

## Highlights of December Parish Council

The December meeting of the Parish Council opened with a humorous Christmas poem, written from a child's perspective and shared by Pastor Cathy.

This month's Topic of the Month began with Carol reporting that she has been exploring new potential pastoral partnerships to address the long-term fiscal challenges facing our congregation. She reached out to the Presbytery through Deb Fleming, Clerk of the Session. The discussion centered around approaching our nearby Central Delaware Trinity Covenant Churches (Hamden, Delancey, West Delhi) to assess their interest in a pastoral partnership. The next step will be to reach out to the Committee on Ministry which is the governing board for the Presbytery.

Eloise reported that Playschool was going well and that the program had received several generous donations. There have been several special guests and holiday activities and much excitement about the upcoming Christmas party.

Laura presented the Treasurer's Report. At the end of November, we should be at 92% of the budget year. Currently income is at 78% and expenses are at 83%.

At their last meeting Trustees decided to earmark the Barney Foundation \$2500 donation for the installation of railings by the stairs on altar. Peg Baldwin met with Floyd Eighmey, a local mason, regarding the work that will be required to repair the exterior stone stairways. He provided a rough estimate of about \$20,000. Gideon plans to speak with the Village Code Enforcement regarding possible boundary issues before proceeding with any further plans.

Trustees approved the withdrawal of up to \$15,000 from Investments. If more funds are ultimately needed to close out the budget year, the remaining funds will rollover in 2024. Trustees also recommended the removal of one phone line/fax for a savings of \$600 a year and the removal of a \$34 charge a month for a local DTC phonebook listing which will amount to an annual savings of \$1008. The motion was made and approved by the council. Trustees are all set for snow removal and have restocked ice melt. Several small projects are in process at the parsonage with a focus on health and safety items.

Gideon also reported on the 2024 Stewardship Campaign. 24 pledges were received with an expected 3-4 additional. 20 of the pledges increased and 2 new pledges were received. Current Status: Current Expenses- \$79,666, Benevolence- \$7884, Playschool- \$4500, Music Fund- \$1000.

Stephanie McCann was not present, but members of the Finance Committee reported on the previous meeting. A \$3000 grant was received from the locally based Helfgott-Renfroe Foundation in support of the church's commitment to providing space to local not for profit groups and organizations. Parish Council reviewed the 2024 proposed budget. There was a lengthy discussion as to how better to report donations received toward things such as fuel oil, kids club and music. Laura will work on a way to list these donations in a way that shows the positive impact on the current expense budget. Council members agreed on the need to reduce the investment withdrawals during the coming year.

There was a good financial news this last month with the receipt of some very generous donations and two grants. However future fiscal challenges still exist due to our over reliance on investment funds. Members agreed to continue focusing on these issues in the next months. Council approved the Proposed 2024 Budget, with income adjustments made by Laura to reflect and additional incoming pledges prior to being sent to congregation.

Barb Jones reported on two separate meetings of SPR on Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> and Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>. The Committee finalized recommendations to the Finance Committee for 2024. These included a recommendation for a 3% raise for the Pastor and staff. Pastor Cathy suggested we consider a creative approach for Deb, our church secretary in which Deb would reduce her days and hours in the office, if it could be possible for her salary to remain the same. SPR approved this option and Deb opted for this change. All these figures are reflected in the 2004 Budget.

SPR is looking to recognize staff in worship tentatively on Sunday, January 28 to be followed by coffee hour. SPR also worked on the documents that must be filed with the District Superintendent. Barb will continue working on these and they will be reviewed by SPR and approved in January.

As requested, Barb followed up with DS Karen Monk and she has offered to meet with our church leadership after the annual meeting.

Pastor Cathy reported that she has been working with Kids Club on the Christmas Pageant. She also assisted Ruth with the Women's Open Circle distribution of cookie bags and cards. She is also taking the staff to lunch on the 19<sup>th</sup> at the Shire Pub. The Blue Christmas Service will be held 12/21 in conjunction with the First Baptist Church and St. John's Episcopal Church. Pastor Cathy met with the Cooperative Parish recently and the group had positive discussions.

A motion was made and carried to increase Pastor Cathy's reimbursement to cover her end of year travel which included a visit to Cathy Johnson.

Pastor Cathy will be baptizing Madison and Olivia Vredenburg on January 14<sup>th</sup>.

Edie was not present, but it was reported that she and Sandy Russell will complete the grocery shopping for the two Adopt A Families. Thanks goes out to everyone who took names and shopped for gifts for our families or made cash donations. Charle Cash, Sandy Russell and Carol Greene made sure the packages and gifts were all ready to be picked up by Public Health on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Edie has also been busy with the Food Pantry December Christmas boxes.

Pastor Cathy also reported that she has made adjustments in regard to announcements being listed in program and on the screen so they don't need to be made before worship other than to extend an invitation to coffee hour.

Barb Jones also mentioned the possibility that the Friends of Bramley Mountain Fire Towner may file a request to use the building for fire tower steward training late this winter/spring.

Our meeting was closed in prayer.

Any questions about anything that goes on at our council meetings? Please feel free to contact me or any member of council.

Carol Greene

## Annual Meeting, Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup>

### Immediately Following Worship

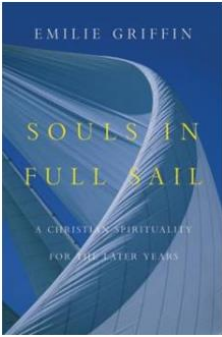
Mark your calendars now and plan to attend the Annual Meeting! We need you to help make this meeting a valuable and meaningful gathering for discussion, discernment and decision-making!



### Cooperative Parish Book Study

Bishop Bickerton of the NY Conference of the UMC has declared that we will be an Anti-Racism Conference. The Fields and Forests Cooperative Parish of the local United Methodist churches will offer a study group to talk about actively living as an anti-racist. We will gather on Mondays in Lent (and a few more weeks) at the Andes United Methodist Church at 2 pm. The discussion will be grounded in a book called *Anxious to Talk About It: Helping White People Talk Faithfully About Racism*. The book is available from many booksellers online, or our local bookstore would probably order it for you. We'll begin meeting on Monday, February 26, and participants are asked to read the introductory material and the first chapter by the first meeting. Pastor Cathy will be one of the leaders of the study group.

## Book Study



The Thursday morning Book Study will start a new book together on January 11: *Souls in Full Sail: A Christian Spirituality for the Later Years*. Anyone is welcome to join us. Pastor Cathy has copies of the book, and it is widely available on line.

The Book Study meets on Thursdays at 10:30 am in the Harder Room.

## Kids' Pages

### Bible Quiz

In the book of Judges, the warrior Barak would go to battle only if a certain female leader went with him. Who was she?

- A. Rebekah
- B. Jael
- C. Michal
- D. Deborah



Answer: D (See Judges 4:1-10.)



# New INSIDE



Geodes look plain on the outside but contain beautiful crystals. Create these "rocks" to show how God makes us new on the inside.

### What you need:

- Clean cardboard egg carton
- Scissors (and adult help)
- Epsom salt
- Plastic zippered bags (one per color of dye)
- Food coloring
- Glue
- Paintbrush











### What you do:

1. Cut out the tops and bottoms of all the egg compartments so you can make 6 ball shapes.
2. In each bag, put 3 tablespoons of Epsom salt and a drop or two of food coloring. Seal and shake to mix.
3. With the paintbrush, spread glue inside two egg-carton halves. Sprinkle a spoonful of Epsom salt into those halves. Then close and shake.
4. Open your homemade geode and shake out excess salt.
5. Optional: Preserve the crystals with a coat of clear-drying glue.

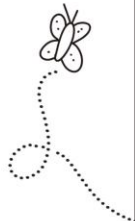
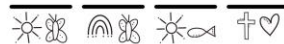


# Puzzle!

Use the grid to discover what James 5:13-18 advises when challenges loom.

	A	F	L	P	T
	C	H	N	R	W
	E	I	O	S	Y
					

P



Answers: Pray in faith. Pray for each other. Pray earnestly.

## Coffee Hour Hosts & Flowers for the Sanctuary



Have you signed up to host Coffee Hour yet? Coffee, tea, lemonade, and paper goods are supplied. Cookies are optional. Sign up on the sheet on the Bulletin Board or call the church office to pick your date.

### Coffee Hour

Jan 7 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jan 14 Katie Palm \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jan 21 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jan 28 Staff/Parish Relations Com

Would you like to commemorate a loved one or special event in your life? Garden and wild flowers are always welcome! If you are uncomfortable creating the arrangement, call the office and we can make the arrangement for you.



### Flowers

Jan 7 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jan 14 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jan 21 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jan 28 \_\_\_\_\_

Sign-up sheets are on the bulletin board outside the office.



Duane Buddle	1/4	Evan Kruppo	1/18
Don Haight	1/9	Noah Kruppo	1/18
Bryce Burrows	1/16	Olivia Kruppo	1/18
Ryan Burrows	1/16	Cyndee Pattison	1/20
Emily Briggs	1/17	Glenn Reynolds	1/24
Landa Palmer	1/18	Ed Chytalo	1/27

## Word and Worship

### January 2024

#### January 7

Epiphany Sunday

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14  
Ephesians 3:1-12; *Matthew 2:1-12*

#### January 14

Baptism of the Lord

Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29  
Acts 19:1-7; *Mark 1:4-11*

#### January 21

Third Sunday after Epiphany

*Jonah 3:1-5, 10*; Psalm 62:5-12  
1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

#### January 28

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

*1 Samuel 3:1-20*; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18  
1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28

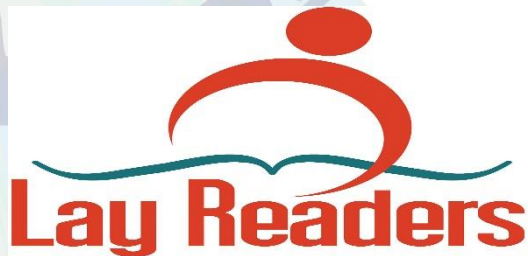
### Lectors

January 7 - John Gaffney

January 14 - Gideon Frisbee

January 21 - Barb Jones

January 28 - Ann Peet



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On a cold winter morning, Holy Spirit,  
enfold me in the warmth of your love.