THE SPIRIT OF ST. PAUL'S

Written by Pastor Rebecca West-Estell

When my children were younger, we began preparing for the Christmas season as early as possible. We would try to notice what our children focused on in the paper advertisements, what they really liked in the commercials, or what they needed (like shoes, clothes, etc.). We would then shop a little at a time, putting things in lay-away. I know some can identify with this although, clearly my age is showing. We then spent the next several weeks or months making payments on the items sitting in lay-away so that by the time Christmas arrived we would be prepared for the day. We knew Christmas was coming and our children would expect gifts under the Christmas tree so we needed to be prepared or else our children would be disappointed. It's easy to get caught up in the commercial aspect of Christmas. It's a season of giving and receiving gifts. We give gifts because the greatest gift in the existence of humankind was given to us. So, we are reminded that Christ is truly the reason for the season. It's a season of loving others and being thankful for the people in your life. We focus on the quiet of the stable, the intimacy of the holy family, and profound miracle of God coming to dwell among us in secret.

Epiphany takes place 12 days after Christmas on January 6 and is the time in which the church prepares for the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The word "Epiphany" comes from the Greek term that means "manifestation" or "revelation". It celebrates the moment the young Jesus, the Messiah, was first made known to the wider world, traditionally represented by the arrival of the Magi and the impetus of the "12 Days of Christmas" song. It was around this time Jesus was presented at the temple. This was when Simeon, a righteous and devout follower of God, who Scripture tells us that had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. When Jesus' parents brought him to Simeon as was the custom of the Law, Simeon took Jesus into his arms and praised God with what we now know as the Nunc Dimitis: "Now, let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people, Israel." Then Anna, a prophetess who lived in the temple since her husband died after only being married for seven years; she was 84 years old. Anna was close by and, upon hearing Simeon's declaration, she praised God and declared to everyone that Jesus was the Messiah, the one Israel had been looking for and the redemption of Jerusalem. Just like we look forward to Christmas with joy and expectation, we also look forward to Epiphany with joy and expectation.

The difference between the two, besides the actual dates, is the scale of them. Christmas is described as an intimate, local, Jewish holiday. Jesus is born Mary and Joseph and, according to Luke's Gospel, was announced only to local shepherds tending to their sheep in the field. Jesus' birth is humble; he is born in a stable and placed in a trough designed for animal feed. In contrast, Epiphany is a universal, global, Gentile holiday. Epiphany is driven by a cosmic sign in the sky noticed by foreign travelers which guides them to Jesus. Jesus is taken to the temple and presented in accordance with the law of the time. It is declared publicly by both Simeon and Anna the Messiah has arrived. Christmas focuses on the intimate birth of Jesus Christ while Epiphany celebrates Christ's revelation, manifestation, and His light being extended to the broader world. Christmas is the celebration of the arrival of the Light coming into the world and Epiphany is about the revelation of the Light to the World. We await the opportunity to celebrate both.



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- Community Heart Cafe
- Advent Worship Services
- Nativity Festival
- Events & Updates
- Sunday Readings
- Celebrate With Us (Anniversaries, Birthdays & Memorials)

COMMUNITY HEART UPDATE

Written by Meg Senecal, Director of Community Engagement

Happy Autumn! We are continuing to plug away at our Social Room re-design. If you stop in and take a peek you will hopefully be able to recognize those changes. We have also been changing processes in the café to ensure safety, comfortability, and ensure dignity for all guests and staff.

If you would like to volunteer, please reach out or just show up! We are here on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and would love to see your faces. We have also been fortunate enough to have a full house for Kate's events which also funnels donations back to our café patrons- we can't thank you enough!!



Community Heart Cafe's recent upgrades provide a more welcoming, comfortable space for our guests.

Community Heart Cafe's new welcome center. This allows each guest to be welcomed, answer any questions and collect prayer requests which are prayed over during St. Paul's Sunday worship services.



As we work to broaden our reach into the community there are a few new things in the works - one of which is our laundry project- and Kate has done an immense amount of footwork to get us rolling in the right direction. My hope is at the beginning of springtime in 2027 we will have that program ready to go!

Finally, we are awaiting a determination by the Toledo Rotary on a submitted proposal to install storage for our unhoused neighbors. The project will allow for short term storage of a limited amount of items to assist as folks try to get back on their feet.

So, if the café doesn't interest you and you don't want to volunteer with Kate's fabulous events we would love to have a set of volunteers ready to go for those programs as well (I know there has to be at least one of you that enjoys doing laundry, right?!)

Again, I want to thank our staff and volunteers for the tireless and sometimes thankless work they do. It does not go unnoticed by myself, those impacted, and our community partners. Community Heart is also so grateful for the continued support of St. Paul's Lutheran Church as we continue to grow our services and supports.

COMMUNITY HEART CAFE

Written by Tommy Lytten, Community Heart Cafe Director

I have the privilege of serving as Director of the Community Heart Café, a ministry of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The mission of the Community Heart Café is simple but meaningful: to provide a warm, hearty meal to those experiencing homelessness, those facing difficult circumstances, and anyone in our community who could use a good meal and a welcoming place to gather.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

The cafe serves free community meals every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9:30AM - 11AM.

We are open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Each day, we strive to serve not only a satisfying meal but also to create a welcoming atmosphere where everyone is treated with kindness, compassion, and dignity.

A GROWING MINISTRY OF IMPACT

September - 1,097 guests served

October - 1,059 guests served

November - 762 guests served as of 11/16

2,918 guests served

Since January 2026, we have served an incredible 10,846 meals! This accomplishment would not be possible without the dedication and hard work of our small but committed team.

I am especially grateful for our head cook, Dottie; our prep helper, Leola; and our dishwasher, Chris. This ministry depends on the generosity and commitment of these staff and our volunteers. From preparing and cooking meals to washing dishes and keeping everything running smoothly, each person plays an essential role. Their willingness to give their time and energy is a true reflection of what community and Christian service are all about. They are the heart of this ministry, and I am thankful for each of them.

In addition to providing meals, we also offer donated clothing to individuals and families in need. It is another way we hope to provide practical help and support to our neighbors.

As we welcome everyone through our doors, we kindly ask that guests respect our church setting, our volunteers, and one another. **Our Café is more than a place to receive a meal; it is a place where community, kindness, and mutual respect matter.**

We are grateful to St. Paul's Lutheran Church and everyone who supports this ministry.

Every meal served represents an opportunity to make a difference in someone's day. Together, we are putting our faith into action, one meal at a time.



PICTURED: (from left to right clockwise)
Leola, our kitchen assistant, Danielle, one of our dedicated St. Paul's volunteers, Chris, our dishwasher and Dottie, our cook.

Please make donations payable to Community Heart of Toledo and include "Cafe donation", "HeART Gallery donation" or "MakerSpace donation" in the memo line. For more information or to volunteer, contact community@stpaulstoledo.org

ADVENT WORSHIP SERVICES

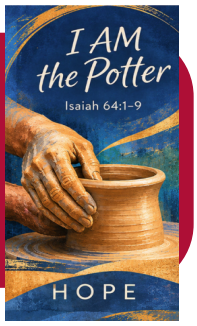
ADVENT 2026: Four Promises, One Story

Hope • Peace • Joy • Love

Join us for Advent worship on Sundays, November 29–December 20, at 10:15 a.m.

Throughout Advent, we hear again the promises of a faithful God who shapes us, guides us, restores us, and comes to dwell among us. This year, our Advent theme, Four Promises, One Story, invites us to discover the many ways God continues to work in our lives and in our world.

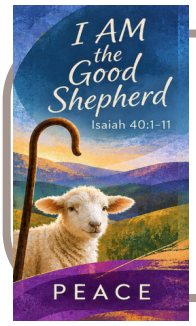
Each Sunday, a different biblical image and an "I AM" statement will guide our worship, candle lighting, prayers, and music as we journey toward the celebration of Christ's birth.



November 29 — HOPE: "I AM the Potter" (Isaiah 64:1–9)

Like clay in the hands of the potter, we are continually being shaped by God's grace. Advent begins with the promise that God is not finished with us. Even in times of uncertainty, we place our hope in the One who makes us new.

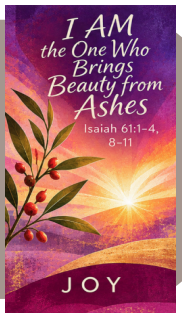
Special Music: Eliana Peron, trumpet, and Matthew Ross, trombone.



December 6 — PEACE: "I AM the Good Shepherd" (Isaiah 40:1–11)

God comes as a tender shepherd, gathering the lambs, carrying them close, and gently leading the flock. In a world often filled with anxiety and division, we discover peace in the assurance that we are held in God's loving care.

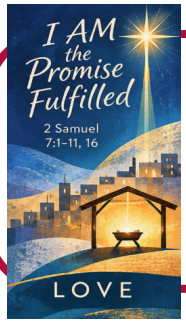
Special Music: Amanda Worthington, soloist.



December 13 — JOY: "I AM the One Who Brings Beauty from Ashes" (Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11)

God promises beauty in place of ashes, gladness instead of mourning, and new life where hope seems lost. Advent joy is more than happiness; it is the confidence that God's transforming love can bring healing, renewal, and unexpected blessings.

Special Music: Shannon Ford, woodwinds.



December 20 — LOVE: "I AM the Promise Fulfilled" (2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16)

The promises of generations find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, Emmanuel—God with us. On this final Sunday of Advent, we celebrate the extraordinary gift of a God whose love is so great that God chooses to dwell among us.

Special Music: Simply Shann, vocal group.

Come Experience the Promises of Advent

Our sanctuary will reflect these four themes through visual imagery, nativities from the Pattye and Bill Nicolls collection, and seasonal music, reminding us that the Christmas story is not simply an event long ago, but a living promise for today.

Four Sundays. Four Promises. One Story of God's Faithfulness.

NATIVITY FESTIVAL

Celebrating the Christmas Story Through Art, History, Music, and Community

Written by Kate Philabaum

The wonder of Christmas comes alive once again as we prepare to welcome visitors to our annual Nativity Festival, November 20–December 20, 2026. What began as a collection of treasured nativity scenes from Pattye and Bill Nicolls, has grown into an extraordinary celebration of faith, culture, creativity, and community.

This year's Festival features more than 900 nativities representing over 52 countries, displayed throughout nine rooms on four floors. Each nativity tells the familiar Christmas story through the unique artistic traditions and cultural expressions of people around the world. Together, they remind us that the message of Christ's birth transcends borders, languages, and generations.

In celebration of America's 250th anniversary, visitors will also discover Christmas traditions throughout American history. Special exhibits include a Colonial American Christmas, a Harry Potter Christmas feast, and nostalgic Christmas settings from the 1940s through the 1990s. Roundhouse Randy has built a spectacular model train display with vintage toys, while music, seasonal refreshments, children's activities, and special performances add to the festive atmosphere.

Friday evenings feature Carols & Cocktails at 5:30 p.m., and Sunday afternoons bring special Candlelight Christmas concerts at 4:00 p.m. Our Saturday Quiet Christmas hours, from 11:00 a.m. to noon, provide a calmer, sensory-friendly experience for visitors who appreciate a gentler environment.

The Festival is free and open to everyone. We invite members to bring family and friends, share invitations with neighbors, and help us welcome visitors who may be entering St. Paul's for the very first time. All donations benefit St. Paul's outreach ministries.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Quiet Christmas:
Saturdays 11:00 AM – Noon

Carols & Cocktails:
Fridays at 5:30 PM

Candlelight Concerts:
Sundays at 4:00 PM
(doors open at 3 PM)

Interested in volunteering? Email kate@stpaulstoledo.org for additional info on opportunities to serve!

NATIVITY FESTIVAL

With Grateful Hearts: Thank You Volunteers!

Behind every beautifully decorated tree, carefully arranged nativity, twinkling light, and welcoming smile is an extraordinary group of volunteers. Months before the doors open, volunteers are planning exhibits, constructing displays, unpacking hundreds of delicate nativities, decorating rooms, arranging collections, preparing refreshments, organizing publicity, and attending to countless details that make the Festival possible.

During the Festival, volunteers become the welcoming face of St. Paul's — greeting guests, guiding tours, sharing stories, serving refreshments, assisting families, and helping visitors discover the beauty and meaning of Christmas. And when the final visitor leaves, another enormous task begins: carefully packing and storing everything for another year!

Your generosity of time, talent, creativity, and energy transforms our church building into a place of wonder and hospitality. You make this ministry possible, and we are deeply grateful.

The Nativity Festival is much more than an exhibition. It is an expression of St. Paul's ministry—a way of opening our doors, sharing our resources, building relationships, and offering the joy and hope of Christmas to the wider community. As visitors explore the Festival, may they discover not only the beauty of the nativities but also the warmth of a congregation that believes in welcoming all people.



THANK YOU!

To every volunteer, donor, artist, musician, decorator, baker, builder, tour guide, and behind-the-scenes helper.



NATIVITY FESTIVAL

CHRISTMAS CONCERTS

Fri Dec 4
Tapestry
5:30pm

Tapestry features harpist Denise Grupp-Verbon and acoustic guitarist Michael Grupp-Verbon. Performing together for over 25 years, their distinctive sound includes original compositions, and holiday favorites.

Fri Dec 11
Chloe & Steel Strings
5:30pm

A cosmic Americana local band, Choe and Co have a unique sound, with original songs and mixed genres and styles.

Fri Dec 18
Ragtime Rick
5:30pm

A veteran ragtime and traditional jazz pianist, Rick is a local favorite, performing regularly at many venues in the greater Toledo area.

Sun Dec 6
Asteria Strings
4:00pm

A local string quartet, the all female group is composed of music educators from the Toledo area. They have performed frequently for weddings and special events over the past twelve years.

Sun Dec 13
Drowsy Lads Celtic
4:00pm

This group thundered onto the Irish music scene 20 years ago. Located in Columbus, OH, their fans span the tri-state area, packing festivals, theaters, pubs and halls.

Sun Dec 20
Academy Brass
4:00pm

With more than 25 years experience, this quintet of music educators has become the "sound of Christmas" with unique, crowd-pleasing arrangements and carol sing-a-long.

Free admission & parking • Donations appreciated
Doors open one hour prior to concert

EVENTS & UPDATES

Congratulations on 125 & 135 years!



Glenwood Lutheran Church (125 years) & St. Lucas Lutheran (135 years) commemorated their landmark anniversaries with special worship services.

It was an honor to celebrate with you in spirit and appreciate your dedication for serving our community and sharing God's love for over a century!





Hygiene items & sleeping bag donations needed

Our cafe guests are in need of hygiene items and sleeping bags (can be used but clean). Many guests are unhoused and unable to provide basic necessities. These items would help fill the gap.

If you would like to donate or have questions, reach out to our Outreach Director, Meg at community@stpaulstoledo.org.

UPDATES

PEW CARDS

While our pew cards are primarily intended to update church records, they also provide an opportunity for members and guests to explore areas where they may be interested in volunteering. Dates and project descriptions are then emailed to those who indicate interest.

Some examples are:

- Ongoing "spit and polish" small painting projects (M-F one day per week or month).
- Ongoing greet at the café, help in the kitchen, sort donations (MWF one day per week or month)
- Assemble mason jar "overnight" meals (one afternoon).
- Provide transportation for a homebound member to attend service.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Remember when volunteering to teach Sunday School meant a commitment of 20 years? Once started, the assumption was that Sunday School teachers also ran Vacation Bible School and all kids programming until their own children had graduated and even well beyond.

Times have changed and so have the roles of volunteers, shifting away from long-term weekly commitments toward seasonal participation, one-day service opportunities, and shorter, more flexible engagements. Many of our volunteers now contribute remotely from home by making phone calls or researching information. Most of our volunteers provide café donations, assist in the kitchen for café and/or work at gallery events. Office volunteers help with mailings and small organizational projects.

We thank all of you for your dedication and commitment!

ELEVATOR MODERNIZATION

The Sanctuary and Parish house elevator work is completed just in time for our holiday festivities!

SUPPORT OUR MINISTRIES

DONATE

- Scan the QR code on the back page of this newsletter to donate through PayPal.
- Mail a check payable to St. Paul's Lutheran Church or Community Heart Of Toledo, 428 N. Erie St, Toledo, OH 43604. Include the desired program (Offering, Memorials, Community HeART Café, HeART Gallery, Laundry, MakerSpace or Nativity Festival) in the memo line.

VOLUNTEER

- To volunteer in the Café, reach out to Meg Senecal, community@stpaulstoledo.org.
- To volunteer in the MakerSpace or HeART Gallery, reach out to Kate Philabaum, kate@stpaulstoledo.org.

SUNDAY READINGS

DECEMBER 6
Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

DECEMBER 13
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

DECEMBER 20
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Luke 1:46b-55
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

DECEMBER 27
Isaiah 61:10—62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

JANUARY 3
Jeremiah 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:[1-9] 10-18

JANUARY 10
Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

JANUARY 17
1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

JANUARY 17(CONT'D)
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

JANUARY 24
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

JANUARY 31
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28

FEBRUARY 7
2 Kings 2:1-12
Psalm 50:1-6
2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Mark 9:2-9

FEBRUARY 14
Genesis 9:8-17
Psalm 25:1-10
1 Peter 3:18-22
Mark 1:9-15

FEBRUARY 21
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
Psalm 22:23-31
Romans 4:13-25
Mark 8:31-38

FEBRUARY 28
Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 1:18-25
John 2:13-22

CELEBRATE WITH US

WELCOME

We are committed to you, the community, and the world around us. We believe God's love embraces all persons equally, no matter their age, ethnicity, race, abilities, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, citizen status, political leanings, religious expression, or any other boundaries the world uses to decide who is worthy and who is not. We are striving to be open and inclusive. We commit to loving YOU and caring for YOU by showing YOU the love of Jesus that we have received freely from God.

ANNIVERSARIES

DECEMBER
Jan & Larry Montrie
Amanda & Tyler Nye

JANUARY
Jack & Judi Dauer

FEBRUARY
Robert & Vicki Holmes,
Jill & Todd Nidek

Scan the QR code to view the article featuring our mural "Awakening" symbol meanings & additional photos.

BIRTHDAYS

DECEMBER
Mikenzie Dayton
Tovy Vick
Cookie Schult
Cheri Deal
Ron Vogelpohl
Donna Zbinden

JANUARY
Bob Druckemiller
Larry Montrie
Denniz Oehlers
Jack SoRelle
Jack Dauer
Cole Maxon
Jaden Tovar-Gilbert

FEBRUARY
Linda Krogman
Jill Nidek
Daine McCue
Don Ryman
Sandy Lazenby
Makayla Tovar
Rebecca West-Estell
Michelene SoRelle
Lee Slusher
Robert Holmes
Rodney West-Estell

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL TEDDY BEAR DONATIONS



Dan and Judy Kolhoff are collecting teddy bear donations ($10 to $20) for children in the hospital during the holidays. Help us give the kids God's love! If you would rather donate funds, 100% of your donation goes to the children.

Donations will be blessed during Worship service before being delivered to the children.

If you are unable to donate, keep the children, families and medical team in your prayers during this difficult season.

LUNCH BUNCH

Each month we meet at a different local resturant to enjoy food, fun and fellowship.

- **December -** Cancelled
- **January -** TBD
- **February -** TBD

All are welcome and reservations are needed to Cindy at 419-270-9137.

We hope to see you there!

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Send SPRING (MAR, APR, MAY) edition Spirit submissions to office@stpaulstoledo.org.

SUBMISSIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 2/5

If you would like to help with the mailing the end of February, please reach out!

DIRECTIONS & PARKING



DONATE TO ST. PAUL'S

PARKING DOWNTOWN

If visiting MON - FRI 7AM - 4PM request parking validation from the office to use the Kwik Park lot beside the church.
Paid on street parking is also available MON - FRI.

Wheelchair accessible entrances are available through the red main Sanctuary entrance off Erie (the far right door with small ramp) and from the parking lot entrance. If entering through the parking lot entrance, go

The church with a heart in the heart of Toledo.

CONTACT US

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
428 N. Erie St
Toledo, OH 43604
419-243-4214

office@stpaulstoledo.org
www.stpaulstoledo.org

OFFICE HOURS
Monday - Friday 9AM - 3PM

WORSHIP
Sundays 10:15AM led by
Pastor Rebecca West-Estell
Tim Philabaum

WATCH SERVICES
St. Paul's Facebook Page

FACEBOOK PAGES
St Paul's Lutheran Church
HeART Gallery & Studios