Welcome to Advent
by Leslie Klingensmith

For many reasons, the world too often feels like a bleak and hopeless place these days. But Advent comes to remind us that God has promised to set things right. Things do not always work out as we want them to, but as has been said by the late songwriter and musician John Lennon "Everything will be okay in the end, if it's not okay it's not the end."

Advent is the season God has given to us to remind us of that truth. In the midst of wars, tear gas, wildfires, and so much unnecessary suffering, Christ will be born. If he is truly born within our hearts, we will recommit ourselves to his message of peace. We will be the ones who share that message with those who are hurting.

I love Ann Weems' classic book of Christmas poetry Kneeling in Bethlehem for Advent devotion and contemplation. I’d like to share one of her poems from that book that I thought might enrich your Advent and Christmas seasons. Its title is "Christmas Comes."

Christmas comes every time we see God in other persons. The human and the holy meet in Bethlehem or in Times Square, For Christmas comes like a golden storm on its way to Jerusalem - determinedly, inevitably...
Even now it comes in the face of hatred and warring - no atrocity too terrible to stop it, no Herod strong enough, no hurt deep enough, no curse shocking enough, no disaster shattering enough.
For someone on earth will see the star, someone will hear
the angel voices,
Someone will run to Bethlehem,
Someone will know peace and goodwill;
The Christ will be born!

May Christ be born in your heart, in whatever way you need Him to be.

Blessings and hope,
Leslie

CONGREGATION NOTES

We Need to Hear From You!
What vital piece do you want to be?

by Paul Neal

Many thanks if you have already turned in your pledge card. If you have not had a chance respond to our pledge campaign, please try to let us know as soon as possible your intentions for 2019.

As of November 29 we are 75% of the way to our goal. We have received 72 pledges totaling $242,000 and have yet to hear from about 33% of last year's pledges. The key to reaching our goal is the 8% increase combined with new pledges.

Every pledge no matter how large or small is important. Should we not hear from you we must count that pledge as $0 for 2019 when creating our budget. Just as you plan your household budget, your pledge helps us plan our path doing God's work.

Feel free to fill out a pledge card and drop it in the collection plate (there are pledge cards in the pews), turn it in the Narthex, or fill out a pledge card on line which goes directly to our Financial Secretary.

Link for St Matthew ONLINE PLEDGE CARD

Thank you for your consideration,
The Stewardship Committee

Sunday, December 2:
FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT
10:00 am: Worship (with child care) and Church School. First week to participate in Advent Opportunities for Sharing

11:30 am: Hanging of the Greens: Today after church we will be decorating the sanctuary for Christmas. Please stay as long as you would like. There will be a light lunch available. Direct questions to Ida Leong or Julia McBee.

Thursday, December 6:
12 noon Adult Advent Book Study- Agnes Wilson Room. You are welcome to bring a bag lunch
This discussion is based on the book titled Not a Silent Night: Mary Looks Back to Bethlehem, by Adam Hamilton.

Special Advent Opportunities for Sharing: Sundays, December 2, 9 and 16
We invite you to REMEMBER those you love, by CARING about the world and SHARING to help improve the lives of others. Please share the Christmas spirit by helping our brothers and sisters both nationally and locally.

Support Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) Disaster Assistance (PDA) in the USA.
From the East Coast to the West Coast so many of our fellow Americans are suffering from the devastating affects of flooding, hurricanes, and wildfires. PDA puts people on the ground immediately with National Response Teams, and also works on a long-standing basis with local Presbyteries and community organization to address continuing challenges to the re-building of lives. Out of Chaos, Hope.

Support Extra-Ordinary Birthdays
Birthday parties are given for homeless children to bring magical moments into their lives, and to let them know that they are loved and celebrated. St. Matthew’s school-age children have helped prepare for these birthday parties in the past, and have been touched and rewarded by their experiences. Celebrating life...a blessing for today. Hope for tomorrow.

A member of the Mission Commission will be in the narthex each Sunday of Advent to collect donations. Please make checks out to St. Matthew Presbyterian Church, using the memo line to indicate the charity of your choice. Recommended donation: $10 (or more) per name. If you wish, you can make donations in honor or in memory of a loved one. Their names will be listed in forthcoming worship service bulletins.

Attention Musicians:
St. Matthew Christmas Orchestra
by Phil Tarnoff

Next Sunday, December 9,
the famous St. Matthew Christmas Orchestra will gather to rehearse for its annual Christmas concert. Musicians of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to participate.

If you've ever played an instrument and would enjoy performing for our congregation, plan to attend the rehearsal and the December 16 performance. Both the rehearsal and the performance will take place following morning worship services. This announcement is being posted early to give you time to practice. Music is available from Phil Tarnoff.

Sunday, December 9:
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT
10:00 am: Worship (with child care) and Church School. Be sure to create a Star of Hope for the tree on the narthex landing!

Wednesday, December 12:
10:30 am: Mary Martha Women’s Circle- Meeting at the home of Julia McBee (see details in newsletter.)

Thursday, December 13:
12 noon: Adult Advent Book Study - Agnes Wilson Room. You are welcome to bring a bag lunch. This discussion is based on the book Not a Silent Night: Mary Looks Back to Bethlehem, by Adam Hamilton.

Saturday, December 15:
10:00 am - 12 noon: Community Christmas Party in The Commons. Featuring crafts, games, and light refreshment.

Sunday, December 16:
Mary Martha Circle
Christmas Meeting and Luncheon, Wednesday, December 12
by Julia McBee

The Mary Martha Circle's Christmas luncheon is Wednesday, December 12. This is an open invitation to all the women of St. Matthew to enjoy our fellowship at this festive time of the year.

The luncheon will be hosted by Julia McBee at her home. Join us there at 5307 Crestedge Lane, Rockville. There will be a brief lesson before hand and the luncheon follows at 11:30 am. (Julia's home is just off of Bauer Drive near Earl Wood Jr. High. Please RSVP to Ruth Sasscer (301-598-2288) or Julia McBee (301-603-0450).

Shepherd's Table
by Linda Rhoad

A small and faithful team from St. Matthew prepares and serves dinner at Shepherd’s Table every fourth Tuesday of the month, from 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Shepherd's Table is located at 8016 Georgia Avenue in downtown Silver Spring with a mission to help the homeless and those suffering from poverty. It has been ongoing for the past 35 years, and the food service program has been at its heart since the inception. If you are interested in joining fellow congregants in this valuable work, contact Joanie Morris at <Joanie118@hotmail.com> or Leigh Leslie at <llefo0@hotmail.com>

Scheduling note: Since Christmas falls on the fourth Tuesday of December, our next Shepherd's Table date will be in January. Many thanks to the Jewish congregation serving this Christmas.

Greetings and Thanks from Tyler Holm in Malawi
by Donna Chirwa

A short Advent note from Tyler Holm, mission co-worker at University of Livingstonia in Malawi.

Greetings to partners in ministry from Malawi.

It is very good to be able to write to you from home in Mzuzu, Malawi, after a very busy time of traveling in the United States. For more than five months I was able to connect with sending congregations and individuals, while continuing to work on my doctorate in Los Angeles.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
10:00 am: Worship—with special music by the Adult Choir. Final week to participate in Advent Opportunities for Sharing.

11:30 am: Christmas Orchestra concert
If you play, or ever have played an instrument and would like to participate, call the office 301- 598-4400

4:00 to 6:30 pm: Caroling and Pizza Come meet us for pizza before we go Caroling. OR, if you prefer, skip the pizza and meet at 4:30 pm to go sing. We’ll gather in The Commons.

Wednesday, December 19:
7:30 pm: The Longest Night Service (The Agnes Wilson Room). This service is designed for those for whom the Advent/Christmas seasons may be a difficult time—people who have suffered a loss, who don’t enjoy all the preparation or who feel isolated in the midst of all the festivities. It is also ideal for people who just want to slow down and experience a worship service focused on prayer and contemplation. Come enjoy a quiet evening with friends, reflecting on the hope we find in the coming birth of Christ.

Thursday, December 20:
12 noon: Adult Advent Book Study- Agnes Wilson Room.
These visits of World Mission co-workers serve multiple reasons. One critical purpose is to be able to meet with congregations and individuals that have been supporting myself, the University of Livingstonia, and the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) As congregations and individuals in the USA support the University of Livingstonia Faculty of Theology, it is often clear how we are serving the world through their commitment and support of our brothers and sisters in the CCAP and across Malawi.

Blessings to you and your families, especially at this time of year. We appreciate your prayers and advocacy for our ministry and partners in Malawi.

Tyler

Contact Rochelle: rochelle@rochelleholm.com
Contact Tyler: tyler@tylerholm.com

To support us financially: http://www.presbyterianmission.org/donate/E200532/
To visit our weekly family blog: http://www.holminafrica.blogspot.com/

Sunday, December 23:
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
10:00 am: Worship service for all ages. Children’s Christmas Play: Follow the Star

6:30 pm: Young Adult Gathering Join us in the Agnes Wilson room for food, fun and fellowship. Bring your favorite snacks and games

Monday, December 24:
CHRISTMAS EVE
4:30 pm: Christmas Eve Service, designed to be meaningful and appropriate for children of all ages- but specifically geared for the youngest among us!

7:30 pm: Christmas Eve Service with candlelight and communion

Tuesday, December 25:
MERRY CHRISTMAS

Sunday, December 30:
SIXTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS
10:00 am Worship (with child care) Joint Church School Program

Tuesday, January 1, 2019
HAPPY NEW YEAR

Liturgists
by Jeanne Meyer

The Sunday Before Thanksgiving,
Sunday, November 18

On Sunday, November 18, the Ministry Commission sponsored a
The Harvest Table in the sanctuary pot-luck luncheon in The Commons to celebrate all our blessings. Everyone was asked to bring canned goods to help stock our St. Matthew food pantry. A paper chain of reasons to be thankful stretched across the open assembly space. 

Many thanks to all who made the luncheon possible.

YOUTH NOTES by Konni Brantner

St. Matthew's Tree of Hope

We are inviting each of you to put your hope for 2019 on a star, and hang it on the tree located on the narthex landing. The stars are on the landing, next to the tree. You’re welcome to decorate your star or leave it plain. Put down a personal hope or a cooperate hope, fill in one, two or more stars.

The hopes will be used as part of our Christmas liturgy and prayers. If we want to change the world for the better, what more appropriate way than to join our hearts in prayer. For we know that, in the words of Alfred Tennyson, "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of".

Let's voice our hope and join our hearts to help make 2019 a year when hope returns to our world.

Advent Adult Book Group

The congregational Advent book for this season is Not a Silent Night: Mary Looks Back to Bethlehem, by Adam Hamilton.

Those who wish to participate in conversation about the readings can meet at 12 noon in the Agnes Wilson Room on Thursday, December 6, December 13 and December 20.

Join us for contemplative discussion, Bible study and prayer to make your Advent Season more meaningful. See Leslie if you have any questions.

Annual Reports Are Due Now

Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters.

(Colossians 3:23)

It's that time of year folks! All Commission, Committee and Board Trustee Chairs are reminded that their 2018 report of activities is due in the church office by December 15. It would be extremely
Community Christmas Party, Saturday, December 15

Our annual community Christmas party will be on December 15. Children (accompanied by an adult) from our church, neighborhood, Harmony Hills, Bel Pre Day Care and the 7th Day Adventist congregation will gather in the Commons to create Christmas artwork, play some games, and enjoy some light refreshments.

Plan now to attend - invite your friends and neighbors and count on having a a great time! Of course, we need lots of help to make this happen - so please volunteer! Call Konni for more information.

Christmas Play, Sunday, December 23

Worship on Sunday morning. December 23 will include the children and youth of St. Matthew presenting an original play entitled Follow the Star.

Come support our talented young people as they help us discover what is really important during this wonderful season of the year.

Christmas Eve Pageant, Monday, December 24

We are still looking for angels, shepherds and kings...

We are recruiting children to be in the Christmas pageant. This pageant takes place on Christmas eve at the 4:30 service.

This requires two rehearsals. It is a very low pressure, casual type of service. Any child three years old or older is welcomed to participate. Please contact Konni if you are interested.

Important Links

Leslie A. Klingensmith, Pastor
301-598-4400

Konni Brantner, Director of Youth Education and Outreach
301-871-6275

Jeremy Young, Director of Music and Organist
301-681-8013

Al Conner, Church Office Administrative Assistant
301-598-4400

Janet Froom, Clerk of Session
301-871-7239

Bill and Julia McBee, Newsletter Editors
301-603-0450