



# St. Paul's

United Methodist Church

*Third  
Sunday  
of Advent*



December 14, 2025

9:00 & 10:30 AM



**St. Paul's**  
United Methodist Church  
*Journeying Together Since 1885*

## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

9:00 AM & 10:30 AM

DECEMBER 14, 2025

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### **Thank you for worshipping with us today.**

*Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, we welcome you to St. Paul's, a Reconciling congregation of the United Methodist Church. All are celebrated here and all are safe. This bulletin will guide our service today. More helpful information can be found following the order of worship.*

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### **Gathering for Worship**

(\* - please stand in body or spirit)

Announcements

Rev. Sheridan Allmond

Prelude

*Prelude on Bereden väg för Herran (10:30 AM only)*  
*Prepare the Royal Highway*

Paul Manz

\*Call to Worship

Lay Reader

Leader: Friends, the Beloved is coming.

**All: We are longing. We are looking.**

Leader: The prophet says: "Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees."

**All: We are hoping. We are praying.**

Leader: Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God. God will come and save you.'"

**All: We trust in your promise. We worship with joy.**

\*Hymn #209

*Blessed Be the God of Israel*

## Opening Prayer

Lay Reader

**God of hope, Gracious God, the prophets promised your coming, and the deserts blossomed in confidence. Mary heard your promise and awaited your coming with joy. As we hear of your coming, may our hearts flower with hope. Shine the light of your dawn upon us, and awaken us to the deep joy of your coming. Amen.**

## Lighting the Advent Wreath

The Stephens Family (10:30 AM)

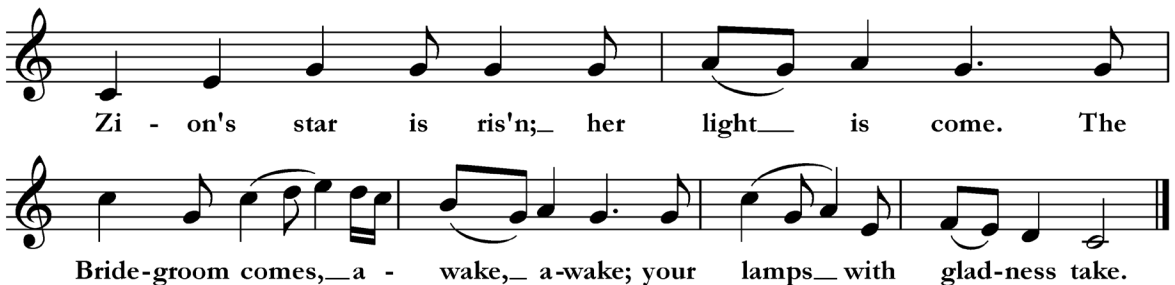
First Reader: Advent reminds us that we are people who share a story, the story of Jesus, who enacts peace by judging in favor of the poor and deciding with equity for the meek of the earth. We long for the day when “the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6)

**All: Today, we choose to live the story of peace, believing that true peace comes when we seek the flourishing of all God’s creation.**

Second Reader: We light this candle of peace as a sign of our commitment to bring Light to the places the world seeks to hide until that day when all creation lives together in harmony and abundance.

*Lighting the third candle of the Advent wreath.*

## Congregational Advent Response



Zi - on's star is ris'n; her light is come. The  
Bride-groom comes, a - wake, a-wake; your lamps with glad-ness take.

## Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Sheridan Allmond

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

## Proclamation of the Word

Isaiah 35:1-10 (NRSVUE)

Lay Reader

*Pew Bible: Old Testament p. 663*

<sup>1</sup>The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;

the desert shall rejoice and blossom;

like the crocus <sup>2</sup>it shall blossom abundantly

and rejoice with joy and shouting.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,

the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the LORD,

the majesty of our God.

<sup>3</sup>Strengthen the weak hands

and make firm the feeble knees.

<sup>4</sup>Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

"Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,

with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you."

<sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;

<sup>6</sup>then the lame shall leap like a deer,

and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness

and streams in the desert;

<sup>7</sup>the burning sand shall become a pool  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

<sup>8</sup>A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not travel on it,  
but it shall be for God's people;  
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

<sup>9</sup>No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.

<sup>10</sup>And the ransomed of the LORD shall return  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## Response to the Word

\*Hymn #706

*Soon and Very Soon*

Sermon

Rev. Joey Heath-Mason

Invitation to Discipleship and Giving

Rev. Joey Heath-Mason

*Offerings by check may be made out to St. Paul's UMC. Scan the QR code here to see one-time and recurring online giving options at [stpaulsk.org](http://stpaulsk.org). Thank you for supporting all of St. Paul's efforts to engage in meaningful worship and vibrant ministry in our community.*



Offertory (10:30 AM only)    *"A Voice Cries Out, Prepare the Way of the Lord"*    Lloyd Larson  
Sanctuary Choir  
Noah Beye, baritone

A voice cries out, "Prepare the way of the Lord,  
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain made low." (repeat)

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed;  
All people shall see it together.  
The mouth of the Lord has spoken it. (repeat)

Comfort, comfort my people; proclaim the promise of the Lord:  
His name shall be called Emmanuel!  
The glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

\*Doxology #95

OLD 100TH

\*Prayer of Dedication

Rev. Sheridan Allmond

*The Great Thanksgiving and Communion (9:00 AM only)*

*The Invitation, Confession & Pardon (9:00 AM only)*

UM Hymnal p. 12

***Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.***

*Passing the Peace (9:00 AM only)*

*The Great Thanksgiving (9:00 AM only)*

UM Hymnal p. 13-14

***Leader:     The Lord be with you.***

***People:    And also with you.***

***Leader:    Lift up your hearts.***

***People:    We lift them up to the Lord.***

***Leader:    Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.***

***People:    It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

*The pastor gives thanks, remembering God's acts of salvation and concludes:*

*L: And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:*

***P: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of  
your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the  
name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.***

*The pastor continues the thanksgiving and concludes:*

*L: And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves  
in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's  
offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.*

***P: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.***

*The pastor continues and concludes:*

*L: All honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever.*

***P: Amen.***

*The Lord's Prayer (9:00 AM only)*

*UM Hymnal, #895*

***Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy  
will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And  
forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead  
us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and  
the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.***

*Breaking the Bread and Giving the Bread & Cup (9:00 AM only)*

*All communion bread is gluten-free.*

*Prayer of Thanksgiving (9:00 AM only)*

***Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given  
yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit,  
to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***

## **Sending Forth**

\*Benediction and Dismissal

Rev. Joey Heath-Mason

Postlude (10:30 AM only)

*Carillon*  
*On a Ukrainian Bell Carol*

Gerald Near



#### SIPPING MINISTRY

Please enjoy coffee, treats, and fellowship in the Octagon following the 10:30 AM worship service. Sipping Ministry today is hosted by the Smith family.



#### SANCTUARY FLOWERS

Flowers are given today by **Larry & Mari-Jo Solomon**  
in celebration of their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.



#### SUNDAY WORSHIP NEXT WEEK

**December 21, 2024**

Fourth Sunday of Advent

9:00 AM – Worship with Communion

10:30 AM –Worship with Children’s Choir and Joyful Ringers Bell Ensemble



#### UPCOMING ADVENT & CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- **December 17, 2025 (Still Wednesday)**
  - 7:00-8:00 PM – Blue Christmas hour of music, reflection, and silent prayer in the Octagon
- **December 21, 2025**
  - 9:00 AM – Worship with Communion
  - 10:30 AM– Worship with Joyful Ringers and Children’s Choir
- **December 24, 2025 (Wednesday, Christmas Eve)**
  - 7:30 PM – Christmas Eve Organ Prelude
  - 8:00 PM – Christmas Eve Worship with Sanctuary Choir, Communion, and candlelight.



- **December 28, 2025**
  - 9:00 AM – Worship with Communion
  - 10:30 AM– Worship
- **Weekday Office Hours:** Staff will be available by appointment on December 22 & 23. St. Paul's offices will be closed to the public starting December 24. Individual work hours during the winter holiday break will vary. Staff will return to regular office hours on Monday, January 5, 2026. (Worship services will be held on Sundays as usual.)
- **Winter Break Schedules:** Many groups take a winter break between Christmas and New Year's. Please contact a group leader for details about any schedule changes.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Weekly News** – Visit [stpaulsk.org/community/epistle-weekly-news](http://stpaulsk.org/community/epistle-weekly-news) or scan the QR code to find all the announcements, links, and event details shared in our Weekly News. For questions about announcements, please contact Erin Steele in the church office ([stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org](mailto:stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org)).



**Welcome!** – **Restrooms** including a family restroom with changing table can be found past the church office, near the water fountain. **Large-print Bibles and Hymnals** are available from our ushers. **T-coil hearing aids** work in our Sanctuary. **Sign in!** Members, friends, and visitors alike are encouraged to use the attendance pads in the pews to share your name and note your attendance today. Please read more about worship at [stpaulsk.org/worship](http://stpaulsk.org/worship).

**Today's Sunday School News** – *Sunday, Dec. 14.* All students in grades K-5 are invited to attend Sunday School at 10:30 AM. Grades K-2 meet in Room 200. Grades 3-5 meet in the Parlor. The Nursery is available for children pre-K and younger. Parents and guardians should drop off at the classroom and pick up at the classroom immediately after worship. For children in worship, Busy Bags with quiet children's activities can be found at the Welcome desk.

**Hours** – *Please note!* Staff will be available by appointment on December 22 & 23. St. Paul's office is closed to the public starting on Wednesday December 24 and will re-open at 10:00 AM on Monday, January 5. (Worship will be held on Sundays on our regular schedule.) The office is typically open for drop-in visits and phone calls Monday-Thursday, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Worship on Sunday at 9:00 AM includes Communion each week. Worship at 10:30 AM includes music

from the Sanctuary Choir weekly and Communion on the first Sunday of the month. If you have a pastoral emergency when the office is closed, please dial the emergency line for Rev. Sheridan Allmond at 410-205-5568 and she will be notified of your call.

### Events and Information

- **Today: Last Day for Poinsettia Orders!** – *Sunday, Dec. 14.* Sponsor a poinsettia, in memory or in honor of someone special, for \$20 per plant. Dedications will appear in a special Poinsettia Bulletin at Christmas. Order poinsettias online by credit card, or visit Betsy Sanford in the Narthex immediately after worship. You may take your plant home following Christmas Eve worship on December 24!
- **Today: Bible & Brews** – *Sunday, Dec. 14, Special Time! 4:30-5:30 PM.* All are welcome at this family-friendly gathering for interfaith conversations with Pastor Joey, Rabbi Adam, and friends from Temple Emanuel. Meet today at Knowles Station Wine & Co. (10414 Detrick Ave, Kensington, MD) at 4:30 PM. Then, join our neighbors at 6:00 for the Town of Kensington's Menorah Lighting ceremony at Town Hall, immediately across from St. Paul's office doors. Contact [joeyhm@stpaulsk.org](mailto:joeyhm@stpaulsk.org) with questions!
- **Today: Sign a Card for Holiday Giving** – This Christmas, the Holiday Giving Project will provide a \$25 Target gift card for each child or household in our Hunger Ministry plus about 40 households referred to us by our partners at the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Holiday Giving program. This way our neighbors with fewer means can select meaningful and age-appropriate Christmas gifts for their loved ones. Special greeting cards will be available in the Octagon following the 10:30 worship service! Simply sign "From your friends at St. Paul's." We also welcome financial donations to cover the gift cards. You can contribute any amount online or by check made out to St. Paul's with "Giving Tree" in the memo.
- **Today: Scattered for Service** – *now- Dec. 21.* Why give "stuff" to your friends and loved ones this Christmas, when you can give gifts of peace, hope, and kindness in their honor instead? Donate through St. Paul's Scattered for Service, and we will take care of sending the funds to whichever charities you choose from our catalog. We also provide dedication cards that allow you to announce your gift. Have fun matching each loved one with a charity! Find the full catalog at the Scattered for Service table or online at [stpaulsk.org/service/scattered-for-service](http://stpaulsk.org/service/scattered-for-service).
- **Today: Advent Devotionals** – Journey meaningfully through the Advent season using one of the free Advent resources available in the Narthex. The Advent Calendar of Devotions includes a suggested Scripture, a short devotion, and a short prayer or practice for each day of Advent. The Advent Devotional from Sanctified Art this year explores the theme "What Do You Fear?: Insisting on Hope this Advent" and offers original artwork, poetry, and opportunities for creative reflection.

- **Today: SPY Schedule** – St. Paul’s Youth is for friends in grades 6-12.
  - **SPYs in the Garden!** – *Dec. 14.* All SPYs who RSVP’d should meet directly at Brookside Gardens to enjoy the spectacular displays in the Winter Garden of Lights. Parents should drop off at 7:00 PM and pick up at 8:15 PM at the gardens. St. Paul’s is providing Garden of Lights tickets, warm drinks, and desserts. (Please eat dinner before you come.)
  - **SPY Christmas Break** – We will not meet on Dec. 21, Dec. 28, or Jan. 4.
  - **IGNITE Conference** – *March 2026!* The Baltimore-Washington Conference will welcome youth from around the region for the Ignite conference, March 20-22, 2026, an exciting mix of worship, concerts, and youth-focused activities in Ocean City MD. St. Paul’s will have a group of students and chaperones attending this year! Interested youth should contact Megan Montgomery [megan.w.montgomery@gmail.com](mailto:megan.w.montgomery@gmail.com) for more info. Scholarships are available.
- **Today: Lydia Circle Holiday Meeting** – *Sunday, Dec. 14.* The Lydia Circle Sisters will gather for our holiday luncheon at the home of Arceli Suley, after the 10:30 Sunday service. Please contact Susan Schwarz ([susan10748@aol.com](mailto:susan10748@aol.com), 301-339-8242) to be included in Lydia Circle updates.
- **This Week: Taste & Sing** – *Tuesday, Dec. 16, 12:00-1:30 PM.* The December gathering will feature a Christmas Carol hymn-sing! With Tom Pedersen at the piano and Erin Steele leading the singing, we’ll sing some favorites from the hymnal by request! Then we’ll have a short program to dive deeper into some of the stories behind our hymns. Stay for a time of fellowship and a tasty lunch prepared by Ginny Hagberg. (\$5 donation).
- **This Week: Still Wednesday’s Blue Christmas** – *Wednesday, Dec. 17, 7:00-8:00 PM in the Octagon.* The Christmas season can be challenging for those navigating an emotional season of life. We invite you to a “Blue Christmas” themed hour. We aim to create a holy safe place with the support of music, candles, prayer, and silent reflection.
- **Stewardship News** – Your stewardship team thanks all those who’ve shared a pledge of financial support for 2026. Knowing what we can expect from our faithful contributors significantly affects how we are able to budget for all the worship, mission, ministry, and operational needs of the church in the coming year. If you haven’t yet pledged, please consider making your pledge today. Blank pledge forms are available in the Narthex, or fill out a pledge form online at [stpaulsk.org/giving](http://stpaulsk.org/giving).
- **Do One Small Thing** – Pastor Joey invites everyone to join us this Advent for our “Do One Small Thing” Campaign. Each day, do one quiet, hope-filled act — Secret-Santa style — to share Christ’s light in the world. Small acts can soften hearts, lift spirits, and

help us prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth with meaning and joy. Let's join God's work of renewal together, one small thing at a time!

- **Kensington Town News** – The Town of Kensington will host many holiday activities throughout the month, including holiday markets, The British Players comedic pantomime show, Christmas Caroling around the fountain at Flinn Park (Dec. 22), and many other activities. Visit [stpaulsk.org/community/calendar-events](http://stpaulsk.org/community/calendar-events) and click the link for the town newsletter and town calendar. (Some events may impact traffic and parking.)
- **Grocery Donations** – Consider donating to St. Paul's year-round ministry to provide grocery resources for hungry neighbors. Requested items: Box of cereal, Instant oatmeal, Canned Chicken, Canned Tuna (or other fish), Peanut Butter, Soup, Rice, Beans, Pasta, Pasta Sauce in can/plastic jar, Canned Vegetable or Fruit in can/plastic jar, Mac & Cheese, Shelf-stable Milk, Ground coffee, Cooking oil (vegetable oil, canola oil, etc.). Please remember: *no items past their use-by/sell-by date, no dirty or damaged containers, and no glass.* (Glass breaks and creates a hazard.) Items may be placed in the bins in the Narthex. Financial donations marked "Hunger Ministry" help us provide recipients with grocery store gift cards enabling them to buy fresh or frozen foods or hygiene products. More details, including volunteer opportunities, can be found at [stpaulsk.org/service/hunger-ministry](http://stpaulsk.org/service/hunger-ministry).
- **Regular Activities** – Please note! Many groups take a break during the days between Christmas and the New Year. Please contact group leaders directly to confirm meeting times!
  - **Sanctuary Choir** – *Sundays at 9:30 AM.* Open to grade 7 and up and adult singers. We rehearse each week at 9:30 on Sundays in Room 211 and sing for the 10:30 service. Singers are welcome week-to-week or on a continuing basis! Contact Tom Pedersen ([tpedersen@stpaulsk.org](mailto:tpedersen@stpaulsk.org)).
  - **Children's Choir** – *Most Sundays, 11:45-12:30.* Children in grades K-6 will meet in the MPR to have fun and prepare music to share in worship. Email Ms. Christina Griffin, director, at [childrenschoir@stpaulsk.org](mailto:childrenschoir@stpaulsk.org).
  - **St. Paul's Youth** – Our regular meeting schedule is Sundays, 7:00-8:30 PM. All youth in grades 6-12 are invited to join SPY for faith, friendship, and fun in the Multi-Purpose Room! Find the full schedule and fill out the permission form at [stpaulsk.org/community/youth](http://stpaulsk.org/community/youth). Contact: Pastor Sheridan, [sallmond@stpaulsk.org](mailto:sallmond@stpaulsk.org).
  - **Prayerwaves** – *Wednesdays, 10:00-10:30 AM.* To pray together by phone, dial 425-436-6326 a few minutes before 10:00 AM, then enter access code 774042 followed by the # sign. To receive the prayer list by email, please contact Erin Steele in the church office at [stpaulsunitied@stpaulsk.org](mailto:stpaulsunitied@stpaulsk.org).
  - **Sermon Safari** – *Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00 PM.* In this drop-in Zoom study, we'll watch a video of a sermon and then discuss it. Recent sessions featured Senator

Rev. Raphael Warnock and Mariann Budde, Bishop of the National Cathedral.  
For the Zoom link, contact Dr. Meg Baker at megbaker@verizon.net.

- **Joyful Ringers** – *Wednesdays, 7:00 PM.* An exciting handbell choir for adults that promises fun and fellowship. We welcome new ringers! Contact Tom Pedersen for info: tpedersen@stpaulsk.org
- **Still Wednesday** – *Wednesdays, 7:00-8:00 PM. (Please note we will not meet on Christmas Eve, December 24, or New Year's Eve, December 31.)* Still Wednesday gathers in either the Sanctuary or the Octagon for a guided time of poetry, scripture, music, or art, with about 20 minutes of silent prayer. Come as you feel led. For schedule questions, text/call Marty Bartley at 301-873-6630.
- **Yarn Ministry** – *Mondays twice a month, 7:00-8:30 PM.* Bring your knitting, crochet, or other craft project and craft alongside friends in the church library. We will also plan the fall Craft Fair. Contact Karen Codner for up-to-date meeting info: KDC811@gmail.com.
- **Lydia Circle Sisters** – *Wednesdays once a month, 2:30-4:00 PM.* All ladies are welcome at Lydia Circle gatherings, usually on the first Wednesday of the month unless there is a special event. Contact Susan Schwarz at 301-339-8242 or susan10748@aol.com for the current schedule!
- **Stephen Ministers** – Please contact Martha Lipscomb (301-518-1642) to be connected to a Stephen Minister for confidential care and a listening ear.
- **Sanctuary Flower Sponsors** – The flower chart for 2026 is now available in the church office! Please add your name to the chart to reserve a date, then fill out a yellow form with dedication information. The cost is \$45.
- **Sipping Ministry** – This fellowship time with coffee and snacks after worship happens whenever a family, group, class, or individual wishes to sponsor it. To host a Sipping Ministry, sign up on the office bulletin board and take a “how to” instruction sheet.



## SOURCES AND LICENSING

Livestreaming each week at 10:30 AM at [stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home](http://stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home).

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Doxology: *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow (Old 100th)*. Words: Thomas Ken (1674). Music: attr. to Louis Bourgeois (1551). Public domain.

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Postlude: *Carillon on a Ukrainian Bell Carol* by Gerald Near, copyright 2006 Aureole Editions (MorningStar Music Publishers). All rights reserved.



## LEADING AND SERVING

**Senior Pastor:** Rev. Sheridan Allmond, [sallmond@stpaulsk.org](mailto:sallmond@stpaulsk.org)

**Associate Pastor:** Rev. Joey Heath-Mason, [joeyhm@stpaulsk.org](mailto:joeyhm@stpaulsk.org)

**Music Director:** Mr. N. Thomas Pedersen, [tpedersen@stpaulsk.org](mailto:tpedersen@stpaulsk.org)

**Organist:** Mr. Marvin Mills, [mmills@stpaulsk.org](mailto:mmills@stpaulsk.org)

**Bookkeeping & Facilities:** Ms. Tracey Furman, [tfurman@stpaulsk.org](mailto:tfurman@stpaulsk.org)

**Communications & Administration:** Dr. Erin Bone Steele, [stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org](mailto:stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org)

**A/V Team:** John & Biljana Regan; John Stephens

**Children's Choir Director:** Christina Griffin

**Lay Leader:** Anne Dean

**Usher Coordinator:** Nathan Bazawada

**Lay Reader:** Deanna Hodgson (9:00 AM); Cathy Knepper (10:30 AM)

**Advent Readers:** Kathleen & Bill Stephens and family (10:30 AM)



*We, the community of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Kensington, welcome you in love. Jesus Christ accepts all, excluding none. So we welcome and affirm you who are gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer. We welcome you without regard to your sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, culture, race, ethnicity, ability, education, or age. We welcome you no matter your immigration, marital, or economic status. Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, we welcome and affirm you as one of God's children into our community of God's unbounded love. All are celebrated here and all are safe.*





# St. Paul's

United Methodist Church

*Journeying Together Since 1885*