



St. Paul's

United Methodist Church



December 21, 2025

9:00 & 10:30 AM



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

9:00 AM & 10:30 AM

DECEMBER 21, 2025

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.

Gathering for Worship

(* - please stand in body or spirit)

Announcements

Rev. Sheridan Allmond

Prelude

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah (10:30 AM only)

Wayne Wold

*Call to Worship

Lay Reader

Leader: The night is long, but the dawn is near.

All: We wait with hope, even in our weariness.

Leader: Joseph dreamed, and the angel spoke: "Do not be afraid."

All: We gather, bringing our doubts, our faith, our grief, and our longing.

Leader: A child shall be born, and his name shall be Emmanuel – God with us.

All: In joy and sorrow, in silence and song, God is with us.

Leader: Come, let us worship the One who brings us into the light.

All: We come, trusting that Love is being born among us.

*Hymn #196

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Opening Prayer

Lay Reader

God of Hope, as we gather on this Fourth Sunday of Advent, we carry many stories – some filled with joy, others touched by loss, longing, or quiet pain. In this season of light, we do not ignore the shadows, but we bring them to You, trusting in Your promise to be Emmanuel – God with us. In this time of worship, birth something new in us: a deeper hope, a gentler peace, and a clearer glimpse of Your love. In our Savior's name we pray. Amen.

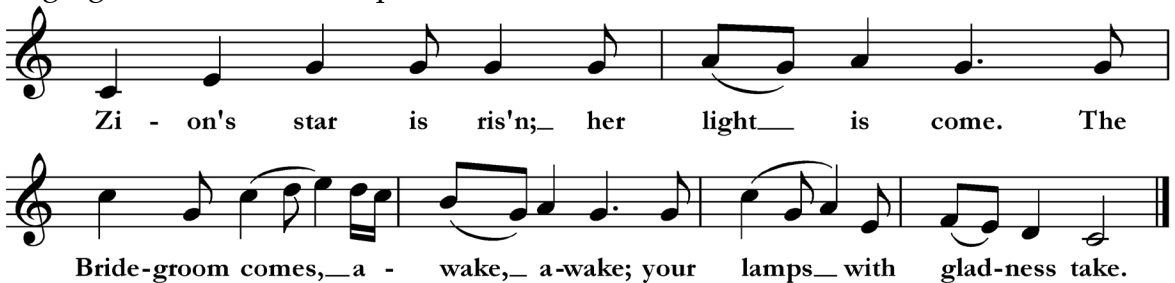
First Reader: Today, we come face to face with the scandal of Advent: Mary, the unmarried mother; God Incarnate growing in Mary's womb as a vulnerable baby; Joseph contemplating leaving Mary because of her pregnancy; God's love at work in ways that society and propriety could not understand; God calling Mary and Joseph to faithfulness despite the fear of disgrace.

All: With Mary and Joseph, we choose to wait, watch, and listen for the way of Love instead of responding in fear to the world's judgment.

Second Reader: We light this candle of love as a sign of our faithfulness as we seek, find, and follow Emmanuel, God with us.

Lighting the fourth candle of the Advent wreath.

Congregational Advent Response



Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Sheridan Allmond

The Lord's Prayer (10:30 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.

Anthem

Joy on That Morning, Alleluia
Children's Choir

David N. Davenport

There was joy on that morning, allelu, allelu. (repeat)
Jesus Christ, he was born on that blessed Christmas morn,

There was joy on that morning, allelu.

There was peace on that morning, allelu, allelu. (repeat)

There was peace o'er the earth as they praised the Savior's birth.

There was peace on that morning, allelu.

There was love in a manger, allelu allelu. (repeat)

There was joy, peace, and love from the Father up above.

There was joy, a baby boy; there was joy on that morning, allelu.

Anthem

Joy to the World
Joyful Ringers

Sandra Eithun

Proclamation of the Word

Matthew 1:18-25 (NRSVUE)

Lay Reader

Pew Bible: New Testament p. 1

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Response to the Word

Anthem

O Holy Christ, in Love Come Down
Children's Choir and Joyful Ringers
Charla Lillis, flute

Joel Raney

O holy Christ, in love come down to where we dwell in shadows dim,
And shine your light of grace around for we are lost and bound by sin.
O holy Christ, come down.

O holy Christ, in joy come down for hope is spent and gladness gone.
Return to us the radiant sound of thankful voice and cheerful song.
O holy Christ, come down.

O holy Christ, in peace come down for hatred rules the whole of earth.
Make calm the tempest all around by your quiet humble birth.
O holy Christ, come down, come down!

*Hymn #204

Emmanuel, Emmanuel
(sing 3 times)

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. 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)

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Mark Hayes

*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

*Hymn #218

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

*Benediction and Dismissal

Rev. Joey Heath-Mason

Postlude (10:30 AM only)

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Jason Payne



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 McGarry family.



SANCTUARY FLOWERS

Poinsettias are given by members and friends of St. Paul's in honor and memory of loved ones. Individual dedications will be shared in a special Poinsettia bulletin available on Christmas Eve.



UPCOMING WORSHIP

Wednesday, December 24, 2025

Christmas Eve

7:30 PM – Organ Prelude

8:00 PM – Worship with Sanctuary Choir, communion, and candlelight

Sunday, December 28, 2025

First Sunday in Christmastide

10:30 AM –Worship

There will be no 9:00 service this day.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Weekly News – Visit 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).



Hours – *Please note! Staff and clergy will be available by appointment only 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. There will be a single worship service on **Sunday, December 28 at 10:30 AM**; there will not be a 9:00 service this day, and no Nursery caregivers.* On regular Sundays, worship at 9:00 AM includes Communion each week while worship at 10:30 AM includes music from the Sanctuary Choir weekly and Communion on the first Sunday of the month. Regular office drop-in and phone hours are Monday-Thursday, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. 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.

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.

Today's Sunday School News – *Sunday, Dec. 21.* All children will be in worship with their families today and Sunday School will not be held. The Nursery is available for children pre-K and younger. Busy Bags with quiet children's activities can be found at the Welcome desk. *Please note: we will not have Nursery caregivers available next Sunday, December 28.*

Events and Information

- **Winter Break Schedules** – Most groups have special activities or take a break from meeting between Christmas and New Year's. Please contact group leaders to confirm your meeting schedule!
- **Today: Last Day for Scattered for Service** – *Sunday, 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. Find the full catalog in the Narthex or online at stpaulsk.org/service/scattered-for-service.
- **Advent Devotionals** – Journey meaningfully through the last days of the Advent season using one of the free Advent devotional booklets available in the Narthex.

- **Today: SPY Schedule** – St. Paul’s Youth is for friends in grades 6-12.
 - **SPYs in the Garden – Rescheduled!** – *Dec. 21.* Please note the new date, rescheduled to accommodate last week’s wintry weather! All SPYs who RSVP’d should meet directly at Brookside Gardens at 7:00 PM to enjoy the spectacular displays in the Winter Garden of Lights.
 - **Christmas Break** – St. Paul’s Youth will not meet on Dec. 21, Dec. 28, or Jan. 4.
 - **IGNITE Conference**—*March 2026!* We’re excited for the BWC’s Ignite conference, March 20-22, a mix of worship, concerts, and youth-focused activities in Ocean City MD. Interested? Contact Megan Montgomery megan.w.montgomery@gmail.com for info. Financial assistance available.
- **Today: Holiday Giving Donations** – This Christmas, the Holiday Giving Project provided a \$25 Target gift card for each child or household in our Hunger Ministry plus about 40 households referred by our partners at the Montgomery County DHHS Holiday Giving program. To contribute, donate at stpaulsk.org/service/holiday-giving or by check made out to St. Paul’s with “Giving Tree” in the memo.
- **Stewardship News** – Knowing what to expect from our faithful contributors directly affects how we budget for the worship, mission, ministry, and operational needs of the church. If you haven’t yet pledged for 2026, please show your support today. Blank forms are available in the Narthex and online at stpaulsk.org/giving. Thank you!
- **Do One Small Thing** – Pastor Joey invites everyone to join the “Do One Small Thing” Campaign. Each day, do one quiet, hope-filled act — Secret-Santa style — to share Christ’s light in the world. Let’s join God’s work of renewal, one small thing at a time!
- **Kensington Town News** – The Town of Kensington hosts many holiday activities including Christmas Caroling around the fountain at Flinn Park (Dec. 22). Visit stpaulsk.org/community/calendar-events and click the link for the town calendar.
- **Grocery Donations** – Every month, year-round, St. Paul’s provides grocery resources for hungry neighbors. Grocery items may be placed in the bins in the Narthex. Financial donations marked “Hunger Ministry” help us provide grocery store gift cards enabling recipients to buy fresh or frozen foods or hygiene products. Volunteer opportunities can be found at stpaulsk.org/service/hunger-ministry.
- **Regular Activities** – *Please note! Many groups take a break during 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. Contact Tom Pedersen (tpedersen@stpaulsk.org).
 - **Children’s Choir** – *Most Sundays, 11:45-12:30.* Children in grades K-6 will meet in the MPR to prepare music to share in worship. Email Ms. Christina Griffin, director, at childrenschoir@stpaulsk.org.

- **St. Paul's Youth** – Regular meetings are 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! Full schedule and contact info at stpaulsk.org/community/youth.
- **Prayerwaves** – *Wednesdays, 10:00-10:30 AM*. To pray together by phone, dial 425-436-6326 then enter access code 774042 followed by the # sign. To receive the prayer list by email, please contact Erin at stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org.
- **Sermon Safari** – *Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00 PM*. In this drop-in Zoom study, we watch a video of a sermon by a notable speaker, and then discuss it. Contact Dr. Meg Baker at megbaker@verizon.net for the Zoom link.
- **Joyful Ringers** – *Wednesdays, 7:00 PM*. A handbell choir for adults that promises fun and fellowship! Contact Tom Pedersen: 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. For 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. Contact Karen Codner for up-to-date meeting info: KDC811@gmail.com.
- **Bible & Brews** – *Saturday or Sunday once a month, 5:00-6:00 PM* All are welcome at this family-friendly gathering for interfaith conversations with members of Temple Emanuel. Meeting location varies! Contact joeyhm@stpaulsk.org.
- **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. Contact Susan Schwarz at 301-339-8242 or susan10748@aol.com.
- **Taste & Sing** – *Third Tuesday monthly, 12:00-1:30 PM*. With Tom Pedersen on piano and Erin Steele leading the singing, we enjoy a hymn sing in the Octagon – feel free to request your favorites! Stay for a tasty lunch (\$5 donation).
- **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 happens whenever a family, group, or individual wishes to sponsor it. To host a Sipping Ministry, sign up on the office bulletin board and take a “how to” sheet.



SOURCES AND LICENSING

Livestreaming each week at 10:30 AM at stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home.

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LEADING AND SERVING

Senior Pastor: Rev. Sheridan Allmond, sallmond@stpaulsk.org

Associate Pastor: Rev. Joey Heath-Mason, joeyhm@stpaulsk.org

Music Director: Mr. N. Thomas Pedersen, tpedersen@stpaulsk.org

Organist: Mr. Marvin Mills, mmills@stpaulsk.org

Bookkeeping & Facilities: Ms. Tracey Furman, tfurman@stpaulsk.org

Communications & Administration: Dr. Erin Bone Steele, stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org

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

Children's Choir Director: Ms. Christina Griffin

Lay Leader: Anne Dean

Usher Coordinator: Nathan Bazawada

Lay Reader: Deanna Hodgson (9:00 AM); Debbie Zechar (10:30 AM)

Advent Readers: Matthew & Joey Heath-Mason and family (10:30 AM)

Children's Choir Pianist: Dr. Meg Baker

Guest Organist: Dr. Michael Stefanek



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.

