

*Transforming  
Lives Through  
Jesus Christ*

# ***SWORD POINTS***

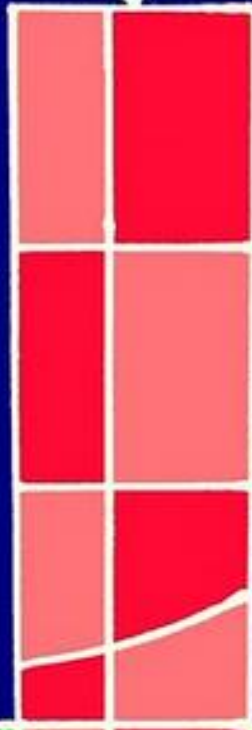
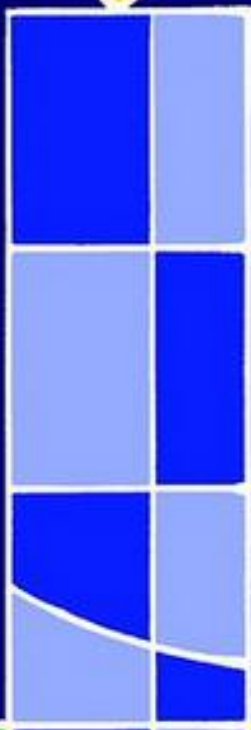
December 18, 2025

[www.SaintPaulsBrookfield.com](http://www.SaintPaulsBrookfield.com)

(203) 775-9587



## DREAMING OF THE COMING



## † Whose Birthday Is It Anyway?

The Season of Advent is nearly over once more, the 4th and final candle, signifying Love, is lighted. As the waiting time is going, the activity level in many households frenetically escalates in anticipation of the Coming. For young children, the anticipation of the coming is about Santa/Father Christmas, presents, colorful lights, sparkling decorations, and sugary delights. For many of us adults, the preparatory time is about the planning, the shopping, the baking, the cooking, and the celebration with friends and family, the post-Christmas cleanup, and exhaustion. Again, and again, we hear and we think we know, what Christmas is all about. And year after year we, who are so privileged, fall into the same traps of cultural, familial, and commercial expectations. We know of, and many of us contribute money, time, and gifts for, those far less privileged as we continue on with our "traditions" of celebration.

Perhaps surprisingly, the appointed readings from Isaiah and the Psalm are not happy or merry. God tells Ahaz of Judah, the signs are all there, all he has to do is ask God for them. But the ever-Kingly Ahaz says "Oh-No-I-don't-want-to-test-God" with the false humility of a leader who is really saying, "I can't be bothered." Isaiah's frustration is palpable when he says, in effect, "OH PUH-LEEZE! The Lord himself is telling you that there's a young woman with child from the House of David, and you'll be out of here before he's old enough to know good from evil." Isaiah foreshadows what later came to pass, the exile and scattering of the tribe of Judah.

The Psalmist's lament gives a clear plea to God *to give us life and Restore us...and we shall be saved*. Paul's opening in the Letter to the Romans is definitively setting up Christ's important Davidic lineage, and that both his and our call is to belong to Christ and spread the Gospel message.

But let's return to what is Christmas about - merely a birthday celebration?

Quite a few years ago, a small town playwright, wrote a Christmas musical play for a local parochial elementary school - sort of an *Our Town* (the classic prize-winning small-town-USA play by Thornton Wilder) meets the True Meaning of Christmas - and all of the several hundred students were in the play, with a few having key roles. For the moment we'll call the play *Emily's Birthday* (Emily is the central character in the original *Our Town*. Here's a very quick summary: [Our Town summary](#)). The premise in this version is that Emily's Birthday is a huge annual event. Emily, who has died, arrives not realizing that she has died, to participate in the celebration of the anniversary of her birth. She finds a grand occasion in the entire town, with



glittering decorations, large scale family meals, and many many gifts being exchanged, all because it's Emily's Birthday! As we see her in her own family home with each family member happily greeting each other and everyone with "Happy Emily's Birthday," Emily realizes that no one is thinking of her at all, there is no gift for her, nor is there even a place at the table for her. While this message was directed more to the adults, the kids - without any blatant or obvious statement in the script - GOT IT: What is this Birth Day Celebration really all about? It's time for all of us to "get it" again.

Joseph got quite a message in his dream in Matthew's Gospel about who was coming into his life. With but a few days left, let our primary thoughts be more about the

Coming. Emmanu-el, whose name means "God (El) is with us," who is our Christ - anointed one/Messiah - Jesus, will shine His light upon us and we shall be saved. Let us revel in the Hope, the Peace, the Joy, and the Love that these four Sundays of Advent represent. And then let us truly celebrate by preparing ourselves for and remembering the significance, especially in these times, of the Birth of Jesus, the only true GIFT, God's Love Incarnate for our salvation. CHRISTmas is Coming! We are to be going about His business in this life we have been given to live.



## Christmas Calendar

- Sat, Dec. 24 - **Christmas Eve**  
 10:00 am - Holy Baptism  
 5:00 pm - Family Service  
 9:00 pm - Traditional Service
- Sun, Dec. 25 - **Christmas Day**  
 9:00 am - Holy Communion Service



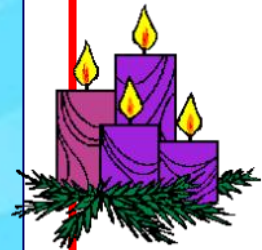
**Year End Donations** - Donors must deliver checks on or by Wednesday, December 31st in order to claim a charitable contribution deduction for 2025. Checks that are placed in the church offering on the first or subsequent Sundays in 2026 will not qualify for a charitable contribution for 2025, even if the check is predated to 2025 or actually written in 2025.



## † *This Week at St. Paul's*

- Thu, Dec 18 - 9:30 am - Iron Sharpens Iron Discussion Group, Guild Room  
 7:30 pm - Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- Fri, Dec 19 - 10:00 am - Friday Walking Group, Richter Park, Danbury
- Sat, Dec 20 - 7:30 am - John 21:12 Group, Theo's Downtown Diner, New Milford  
 8:00 am - Men's Prayer Breakfast, Guild Room  
 10:00 am - PraiseMoves, Crocker Hall
- Sun, Dec 21 - **The 4th Sunday of Advent**  
 - 8:00 am - **Traditional Holy Communion** (*YouTube Live*)  
 9:30 am - Adult Class, Guild Room  
 10:30 am - **Christmas Pageant & Contemporary Holy Communion** (*YouTube Live*)
- Mon, Dec 22 - **St. Thomas the Apostle**  
 - 7:00 pm - Men's Bible Study, Crocker Hall (*YouTube Live*)
- Tues, Dec 23 - 9:30 am - Ladies Tuesday AM Bible Study, Guild Room  
 7:00 pm - Scout Troop #5, Crocker Hall
- Wed, Dec 24 - **Christmas Eve**  
 - 10:00 am - **Holy Baptism & Holy Communion & Healing** (*YouTube Live*)  
 - 5:00 pm - **Family Christmas Eve Service** (*YouTube Live*)  
 - 8:00 am - **Traditional Christmas Eve Service** (*YouTube Live*)
- Thu, Dec 25 - **The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ**  
 - 9:00 am - **Family Christmas Day Service** (*YouTube Live*)
- Fri, Dec 26 - 10:00 am - Friday Walking Group, Fairfield Hills, Newtown
- Sat, Dec 27 - 7:30 am - John 21:12 Group, Theo's Downtown Diner, New Milford  
 8:00 am - Men's Prayer Breakfast, Guild Room  
 10:00 am - PraiseMoves, Crocker Hall
- Sun, Dec 28 - **The First Sunday after Christmas Day**  
 - 8:00 am - **Traditional Holy Communion** (*YouTube Live*)  
 10:30 am - **Contemporary Holy Communion** (*YouTube Live*)

*Check our website daily for schedule updates.*





## The Priest-in-Charge **WEEKLY**

Fr. Nate, our Priest-in-Charge is distributing a weekly e-mail to communicate things directly from his desk to yours. **Connection, communication, and care** are among the highest priorities of his new ministry, and he wants to make sure there are regular touch points between us. If you would like to receive *"The Priest-in-Charge Weekly"* and **already receive weekly e-mails from St. Paul's**, you don't have to do anything - you're already included on the list! If you would like to receive *"The Priest-in-Charge Weekly"* and **DO NOT receive weekly e-mails from St. Paul's**, or if you want to opt out, write Fr. Nate at [priest@saintpaulsbrookfield.com](mailto:priest@saintpaulsbrookfield.com) and let him know.

## Saint Paul's Children's Christmas Pageant

This Sunday, Dec. 21st, 10:30



**RESCHEDULED**



## ✠ This Date on the Church Calendar

*Monday, December 22nd*

**St. Thomas, Apostle**

The Apostle Thomas (Hebrew or Aramaic for "twin") was also called "Didymus" (Greek for "twin"). He was absent when the Risen Lord appeared to the other apostles on the evening of Easter Day, and refused to believe that Christ had indeed risen until he had seen him for himself, but when he had seen Him, he said to Him, "My Lord and My God." (John 20:19-29)

Because of this episode, he has been known ever since as "Doubting Thomas." But we ought also to

remember his earlier words, when Jesus announced His intention of going to the Jerusalem area, brushing aside the protests of His disciples that His life was in danger there, at which Thomas said to the others: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:7,8,16) If Thomas was pessimistic, he was also sturdily loyal.

At the Last Supper, Jesus said: "I go to prepare a place for you.... And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas replied: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" To this Jesus answered: "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:1-6)

Thomas is mentioned again (John 21) as one of the seven disciples who were fishing on the Sea of Galilee (Sea of Tiberias) when the Risen Lord appeared to them. Aside from this he appears in the New Testament only as a name on lists of the Apostles. A couple of centuries later a story was circulating in the Mediterranean world that he had gone to preach in India; and there is a Christian community in India (the Kerala district) that claims descent from Christians converted by the preaching of Thomas. The tradition among Christians in India is that Thomas was speared to death near Madras, and accordingly he is often pictured holding a spear. Paintings of martyrs often show them holding or accompanied by the instruments with which they were put to death. A recently discovered work called the Gospel of Thomas is a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus. I know of no scholarly support for the notion that it is the work of the Apostle Thomas, but some scholars think that some of the sayings in it may be authentic sayings of Jesus.

These things did Thomas hold for real:  
the warmth of blood, the chill of steel,  
the grain of wood, the heft of stone,  
the last frail twitch of blood and bone.  
His brittle certainties denied  
that one could live when one had died,  
until his fingers read like Braille  
the markings of the spear and nail.  
May we, O God, by grace believe  
and, in believing, still receive  
the Christ who held His raw palms out  
and beckoned Thomas from his doubt.

(Thomas Troeger, 1984, Psalter/Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church)

*by James Kiefer*



## † Jesus Is the Gospel

[Isaiah 7:10-16](#) - [Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18](#) - [Romans 1:1-7](#) - [Matthew 1:18-25](#)

Ahaz does not want a sign, but he's given one anyway. He has already been told that his fears are unfounded and is challenged to stand firm in his faith in God. It is in that context that Isaiah offers him the opportunity to have the prophecy verified by a sign from God. Ahaz, however, has already made up his mind and desires no sign that might contradict his decision. He has chosen the way of judgment.

When Isaiah announces the sign, standing next to him is his son, whose name is *Shear-Jashub*. The literal translation of his name is "a remnant shall repent." To Ahaz, and through him to the leadership of Judah, the question is whether they will heed the sign, repent, and be delivered, or if they will reject the sign and experience the judgment. Eight centuries later, Herod and the Jewish leadership faced the same choice. Tragically, they made the same decision as Ahaz.

The birth of Jesus was a strange and dangerous affair in first-century Judah: his mother was an unmarried young woman, claiming to be pregnant with a child by God rather than by her intended husband. By all measures this could be interpreted as adultery, as well as blasphemy, and be punishable by death. Yet God had given her to a righteous and merciful man, Joseph, who hoped to extract himself from an embarrassing situation, but was not willing to have the young woman stoned. Being a righteous man, he was open to God.

Having been visited by an angel, Joseph was convinced of the truth of Mary's claim and his God-given role to be the human protector and provider of both mother and child. In

addition, he was given the identity of the child through the names drawn from the Old Testament prophecies. This child was Immanuel ("God with us") and Jesus ("Yahweh is salvation"). In this child, the divine promises would be fulfilled - that God would dwell with his people ([Ex. 29:45](#)) and redeem a people to himself ([Ps. 130:8](#)).

The good news about God is that he has fulfilled his promise and it can be received by those who believe. This child born of Mary in Bethlehem and raised under the protection of Joseph is the Messiah, the Promised One. In him is the salvation of the world, and through him God's kingdom has broken into the world

so that we might know God and experience his Spirit in our lives.

Jesus is the gospel. He is the sign and the fulfilment of the sign that was offered to Ahaz, revealed to Joseph, brought into the world through Mary, targeted by Herod, sacrificed for sinners, appeared to St. Paul, rose from the dead for all to see, and ascended into heaven. The gospel is not essentially an announcement, proclamation, or a program. The gospel is a person - the Word Incarnate.

We are faced with the same choice faced by all the people in Sunday's readings. There is no eternally good news without faith in Jesus, because he is the gospel. St. Paul's hope (and God's will) is that we come to see the surpassing greatness of the gospel and throw off everything that restrains us from fully repenting and turning to Christ in faith. Jesus is the news that makes all other good news only relative - a shadow. He is the Way by which reconciliation with God, our *Summum bonum*, is accessed. The remnant shall repent and live by God's goodness through Jesus Christ.

**Look It Up:** Matthew 21:42-44

**Think About It:** To reject the Truth is to live a lie and forfeit eternal life.

- by The Rev. Dr. Chuck Alley, *The Living Church*, 2025



*St. Joseph Asleep |  
Fr. Lawrence Lew,  
O.P./Flickr*



## † Transforming Saints of God

*Friday, December 19th*

### **Lillian Hunt Trasher**

*Missionary in Egypt, 1961*

Lillian Hunt Trasher (September 27, 1887-December 17, 1961) was a Christian missionary to Assiout, Egypt, as well as the founder of the first orphanage in Egypt, famed as the "Nile Mother" of Egypt.

Trasher was born in Florida, and grew up in Georgia. She followed Roman Catholicism as a young girl. In her teens, through Bible reading and Bible studies at a friend's house, she chose to make a personal commitment of her life to Jesus Christ.

While still in her late teens, Trasher attended Bible college for one term, and then worked at an orphanage in North Carolina. She received the infilling of the Holy Spirit at a second Bible school in South Carolina, and pastored a Pentecostal church. For a brief period, she traveled with an evangelist, but later returned to work again at the orphanage.

Trasher was only ten days away from her wedding date when she broke her engagement to Tom Jordan. She felt called to Africa, he didn't, and in that same year of 1910 she defied her family's wishes and sailed to Africa with less than 100 dollars in her pocket. Her sister Jennie accompanied her, and was a valuable companion through decades of work overseas.

Arriving in Egypt, Trasher had little idea what exactly she should do. That was decided for her when a dying Egyptian mother gave her baby to Trasher to care for. Trasher rented a home in the predominantly Christian city of Assiout (some 230 miles south of Cairo), and,

after a period of a few months, a man came to her with his infant daughter whose mother was dying. The man asked her to take care of the girl for him, and this was the beginning of the Lillian Trasher Orphanage, accepting that her previous experience in that work was a sign of God's leading.

In 1912, the Church of God of Cleveland, Tennessee ordained Trasher, and by 1916 her orphanage family had grown to fifty children. When she returned to the States in 1919 and saw the financial and prayer support to be found in the Assemblies of God, Trasher joined the very missions-minded new organization.

Lillian Trasher worked 25 years - from 1929 to 1954 - without a furlough.

By the time of her death in 1961, the Lillian Trasher Orphanage had grown to some 1,200 children. Today, the institution is entirely the responsibility of the Assemblies of God of Egypt, with some 85% of its daily needs being met by donations from the Presbyterian churches of Egypt, the Soul Salvation Society, and other Egyptian church bodies.



## † Socks & Toiletries for the Homeless

As we officially head into winter, remember homeless people are on their feet all day, and the only pair of socks they own are very likely to be threadbare. Once again, this year we are collecting socks and toiletries for the men's homeless shelter throughout the winter months. Place donations in the bins in the back of the church or Crocker Hall.

## † Emmanuel

During Advent we often sing "O Come, Emmanuel." So, who is Emmanuel? A better question would be, "What is Emmanuel?" It is a visible demonstration of invisible God. About 750 years before Jesus' birth, the country we call Iraq, wanted to conquer the Middle East. Israel and Syria had teamed up to fight against this incursion. Judah--the southern half of Israel--decided to make a disastrous alliance with enemy. Ahaz, king of Judah, had made up his mind to this--selling out his own country. Isaiah came to the king, pleading for him to "trust God and not give up." He even offered to work a miracle to give proof of God's dependability. Ahaz had weak faith and refused to ask for any signs or miracles.

Isaiah, frustrated, offered one anyway. He said that the king's young wife would give birth to a male child. No one would know that this could happen except God. The child was born, but Ahaz named him Hezekiah.



## † The Tide Is Turning?

**December 21st** is the winter solstice in the Northern Hemisphere, both the longest night and the shortest day of the year - and the official first day of winter. Solstice celebrations are some of the oldest holidays in human history, going back at least 30,000 years! Many ancient stone structures were built with the solstices in mind; Stonehenge, for example, is designed so it dramatically receives the first rays of solstice sun. Some of our ancient ancestors built bonfires on the winter solstice, in part, it is said, to lure the sun back after so many months of waning light - or, if not to lure it, to at least participate in its return. Various festivals of light followed from those bonfires, all the way down to the custom today of decorating houses and trees with Christmas lights. The solstice is the pivot point, the beginning of the Sun's reversal: the daylight on December 22 will last about a minute longer than the daylight on December 21. The tide has turned!



## † Salvation Army Kettles Are Here Again This Sunday

St. Paul's Parish has been an ardent participant with the Salvation Army for almost 30 years. Through our town wide efforts, every church, for one weekend, hosts a "Kettle & Bell" to collect donations for the Army, the Social Services Department in our Town, vets those who have "critical and urgent needs" that cannot be met through their regular funding. All funds administered are clearly identified as coming from the Christian Salvation Army.

St. Paul's can be proud of our contributions and mission to meet the worldwide and local needs of the Salvation Army.

### MISSION STATEMENT

"The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination."



## ✠ *Art in the Christian Tradition*

### **Saint Joseph's Dream,**

by Daniele Crespi (1598–1630),  
oil on canvas, painted between 1620 & 1630,  
© Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

In Sunday's gospel we meet Joseph at a moment of deep personal turmoil. He discovers that Mary, to whom he is betrothed, is expecting a child. From his perspective, the only reasonable conclusion is that she has been unfaithful. Wanting to uphold the law while still protecting Mary's dignity, he resolves to divorce her quietly, sparing her as much shame as possible. Joseph's intentions are noble and compassionate, yet they do not yet reflect God's greater plan. It is only when the angel appears to him in a dream that Joseph understands the truth: Mary's child is conceived by the Holy Spirit, and he must take her into his home and give the child the name Jesus. Joseph wakes, listens, and acts.

We often find ourselves in similar situations, unsure of what God is asking, torn between what seems sensible and what may, in fact, be the deeper call of the Spirit. Like Joseph, our first instinct is not always the right one. Sometimes we need to pause, to pray, to "sleep on it," and to seek the quiet guidance of the Holy Spirit and the wise counsel of those who love us. Emmanuel (God with us) walks with us in these moments of discernment. If we invite him into our uncertainties, he will enlighten our decisions just as he guided Joseph.

In our painting Daniele Crespi captures the moment when the angel visits Joseph in his sleep. The painting depicts one of the four dreams St Joseph has. Joseph lies curled and half-awakened on his chair, while the angel appears behind him gently tapping on his shoulder, whilst pointing towards Mary and baby Jesus in the crib. The painting in fact depicts another dream than the one described in our Gospel Sunday. The painting also depicts the angel warning Joseph to take Mary and the child Jesus and flee to Egypt, to escape Herod's murderous threat. Daniele Crespi (1598-1630) was among the most accomplished painters active in Milan in the 1620s; he moved away from the exaggerated elegance of late Lombard Mannerism towards a clearer, more emotionally direct early Baroque style. Joseph is surrounded by carpenter's tools and saw dust and shavings on the floor.





# Take note

by Kirsten Peterson, Organist & Choirmaster

Greetings!

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” is a hymn associated most closely with the season of Advent, as it captures the deep sense of longing, hope, and anticipation that defines the weeks leading up to Christmas. The text is old, the melody is haunting, and it is full of theological symbolism. The eight verses are a lot, but I like to divide it up and use it as both our opening and closing hymn, especially for Advent 4.



*If anyone had a side hustle or a gig, it was the Anglican priest and hymn writer, John Mason Neale.*

*Neale (1818-1866) not only founded a nursing order of Anglican nuns, helped social welfare organizations care for orphans and young women, and was a warden of Sackville college, but he translated early and medieval Greek and Latin hymns in his spare time - focusing on the ancient ones that were written around “the feasts and the fasts of the Christian year.”*

The text, translated by John Mason Neale, dates back to the Middle Ages and is based on the “O Antiphons,” a series of short chants used in the Roman Catholic liturgy during the final days of Advent, traditionally sung from December 17 to December 23. Each antiphon addresses the coming Messiah using a different biblical title, such as “O Wisdom,” “O Root of Jesse,” and “O Key of David.” These titles emphasize different aspects of Christ’s identity and role, drawing heavily from Old Testament prophecy. The poetic compilation of these antiphons most likely occurred around the 12th century, though the exact authorship remains unknown.

The melody most associated with the hymn comes from a 15th-century French processional chant. It is set in a minor mode which not only gives it its haunting, mournful quality, but also distinguishes it from the brighter, major-key carols often heard during Christmas. Rather than celebrating Christ’s birth outright, the music expresses yearning and expectation.

Lyrically, the hymn speaks from the perspective of a people in exile, longing for deliverance: “And



(Continued on page 11)



## Choir Notes

*(Continued from page 10)*

ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here.” This imagery resonates on multiple levels. Historically, it refers to the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people. Theologically, it reflects humanity’s separation from God and the hope for redemption. Each verse calls upon Emmanuel - meaning “God with us” - to come and fulfill divine promises. The repeated refrain, “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel,” balances sorrow with hope, reminding listeners that salvation is promised even if it has not yet arrived.

In a modern context, the hymn continues to resonate because its themes are universal. Feelings of longing, uncertainty, and hope for renewal are not confined to any single historical period. Especially in times of social or personal difficulty, the plea for light in darkness and peace amid turmoil feels deeply relevant. “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” does not rush to resolution; instead, it allows space for reflection and patience.

Here, you can enjoy five verses sung by the choir of King’s College, Cambridge as part of their 2016 Lessons and Carols service.

Peace and blessings,  
Kirsten





Watch It Again! Did you miss our Festival of Lessons and Carols from last Sunday? Click on the link above to watch it again.

# AdventWord

November 30 – December 25, 2025

30	Again	13	Unquenchable
1	Said	14	Honor
2	Tribes	15	Abundantly
3	Quietness	16	Recompense
4	Reveling	17	Highway
5	Gratify	18	Cleansed
6	Day	19	Robes
7	Heed	20	Truly
8	Counsel	21	Deep
9	Equity	22	Declared
10	Encouragement	23	Mother
11	Written	24	Angel
12	Brood	25	Endless

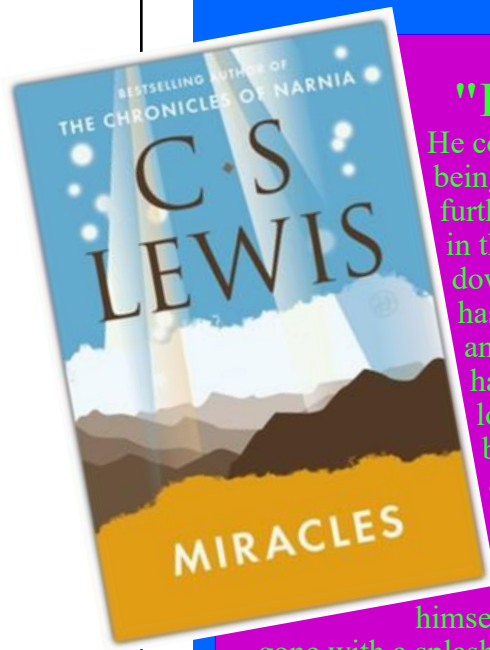
AdventWord.org





## † Thought for Reflection

- from Fr. John Morrison



"In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity; down further still, if embryologists are right, to recapitulate in the womb ancient and pre-human phases of life; down to the very roots and seabed of the Nature He has created. But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world with Him. One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself under some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to lift, he must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders. Or one may think of a diver, first reducing himself to nakedness, then glancing in mid-air, then gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure into the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay; then up again, back to color and light, his lungs almost bursting, till suddenly he breaks surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover. He and it are both colored now that they have come up into the light: down below, where it lay colorless in the dark, he lost his color too.

C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, pp 175-176

**Phishing Scams - Don't fall for them!** Please do not respond to any message from Fr. Nate or St. Paul's by email or any other method of communication that asks you to purchase something (often a gift card) or asks for a "favor." **Delete these messages, do not reply, do not click links in the messages, mark them as Spam or Junk.** If there is any doubt about the veracity of a text or email, contact Fr. Nate by e-mail at ([priest@saintpaulsbrookfield.com](mailto:priest@saintpaulsbrookfield.com)) or the office ([dszen@yahoo.com](mailto:dszen@yahoo.com)).





### † Helping Our Neighbors

Here is an update about St. Paul's ongoing food-related ministries serving our community:

**Drive Thru Food Collection** - occurs every other Wednesday from 11 am - noon. We have now held 148 food drives since April 22, 2020! Last time we delivered food to the Bethel Community Food Pantry and the Jericho Partnership in Danbury.

Our next food collection, will be Wednesday, December 24th and will support the Bethel Community Food Pantry, and the Jericho Food Pantry in Danbury.

Thank you all for your ongoing generosity and to the many volunteers who have helped to load the vehicles and deliver food to the pantries.

## Next Drive-Thru Food Collection Wednesday December 24th



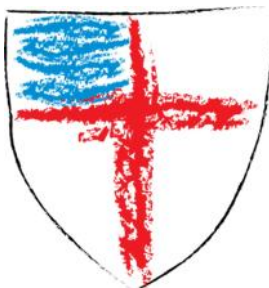
*Help us,  
Help others!*

**11 am to Noon**

If you would like to request Altar flowers for a particular Sunday in Memory of a friend or loved one, please fill out the flower chart or envelope located in the back of the church or send an email request to [dszen@yahoo.com](mailto:dszen@yahoo.com) or contact David Szen.







† Ih-pis-kuh-puh l / Dik-shuh-ner-ee

(Episcopal Dictionary)



† **Thirty-Nine Articles**

/ thur-tee-nahyn ahr-ti-kuhlz /

**Thirty-Nine Articles, or Articles of Religion** - The Thirty-Nine Articles were the result of a long process in which the Church of England attempted to provide a theological foundation for its existence during the doctrinal conflicts of the sixteenth century. The conflicts arose from the competing views between Protestants and Roman Catholics as well as controversy within the Church of England itself. The Articles are not a creed nor are they a confessional statement such as those produced by the churches of the Reformation. They seek only to provide a basic consensus on disputed points and to separate the Church of England from certain Roman Catholic doctrines which were regarded as medieval abuses or superstitions. At the same time, however, they affirmed other aspects of Christian belief which were held in the Roman Catholic Church.

The Articles have always been subjected to a variety of interpretations by those who emphasized their Reformation heritage and by those who interpreted the Articles in a more catholic manner. The most controversial interpretation of them was made by John Henry Newman in his Tract 90. He was at that time a leader of the Oxford Movement. Newman interpreted the Articles virtually in accordance with the teaching of the Council of Trent. Shortly after writing Tract 90, Newman joined the Roman Catholic Church.

The Church of England required the clergy to subscribe to the Articles until the last century. Subscription to the Articles is now required only in a general sense in the Church of England. The Episcopal Church has never required subscription to the Articles. They now appear in a section called "Historical Documents" in the back of the *Book of Common Prayer* (pp. 867-876). The status and authority of the Articles has often been a subject of debate among Anglicans. The Articles have also been a source of confusion for those non-Anglicans who want to know what may be the authoritative teaching of the Anglican Church.

## ARTICLES OF RELIGION.

### I. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.

**T**HERE is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

### II. Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man.

**T**HE Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, & of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole & perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

378

### III. Of the going down of Christ into Hell.

**A**S Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed, that he went down into Hell.

### IV. Of the Resurrection of Christ.

**C**HRISt did truly rise again from death, & took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of Man's nature; wherewith he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all Men at the last day.

### V. Of the Holy Ghost.

**T**HE Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

### VI. Of the Sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation.

**H**OLY Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man,





# Israel - Walking in Jesus' Footsteps



## ✠ Church of St Joseph ✨

**A** fond tradition asserts that the Church of St Joseph in Nazareth is built over the carpentry workshop of the husband of the Virgin Mary.

The church (also known as the Church of the Nutrition and the Church of Joseph's Workshop) is a solid and unpretentious building. It stands very much in the shadow of the soaring cupola of the Church of the Annunciation on its southern side - just as St Joseph himself lived in the shadow of Jesus and Mary.

In trying to put all of the pieces together, and drawing on numerous historical sources, we have laced together the story of Joseph like this. First of all, Mary was not a native of Nazareth. She lived in Jerusalem until she was twelve years old, at which time she became betrothed to Joseph. We learned this from the Protoevangelium of James, which was compiled sometime around 150 AD.

Joseph was a craftsman, and it is believed that this church stands in the place where his home in Nazareth was before Jesus was born. After Jesus came into the world, and when Mary and Joseph resettled in Nazareth, they probably didn't live there, but resided in another location that seems to be more authentic under the Convent of the Sisters of Nazareth, a block away.

What did Joseph do for a living? We know from the Gospels (Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3) that he was a builder, but we don't exactly know what he built. He could have been a

carpenter, but the Greek word, *tekton*, which means builder, could also mean that he was a stonemason. But there is no evidence that the cave over which the church is built was Joseph's workshop. Even if this is the site of the Holy Family's home, the cave is unlikely to have been a carpentry workshop in the modern sense.

Joseph's work may have taken him away from his home. A likely place of employment was the Roman city of Sepphoris or Tzipori, which was being



Church of St. Joseph



(Continued on page 17)



(Continued from page 16)

## Church of St. Joseph

rebuilt by Herod Antipas at the time the Holy Family arrived from Egypt. The building site was a 45-minute walk from Nazareth.

### Cave System Under Church

According to tradition, this is in this place where Joseph received a revelation from an angel (Matthew 1:20), where he was told to take Mary as his wife, after it was learned that she was pregnant.

This church was built over the remains of two other churches, the earliest one dating back to the sixth century, and a second church that was built during the Crusader years.

The Arabs conquered the Crusaders in the 13th century, and at that time the church was destroyed, and left in ruins for about 500 years. The reason that churches were left in ruins for so long after they were demolished was that the land was controlled by the religious group that destroyed the church, so reconstruction was not allowed.

In 1754 AD this property was purchased by the Franciscans and they eventually built the church that we see now. The Church of Saint Joseph was completed in 1914 AD. It was built on the remains of a Crusader church and over a cave system. The first mention of the site occurs in the work of a 17th-century Italian writer and Orientalist, Franciscus Quaresmius, who described it as "the house and workshop of Joseph."

The apse of the church has three noteworthy paintings: The Holy Family, The Dream of Joseph, and The Death of Joseph in the Arms of Jesus and Mary.

A stairway in the church descends to a crypt where caverns can be seen through a grille in the floor. Seven further steps lead to a 6 and half foot square basin or pit with a black-and-white mosaic floor. This is believed

to have been a pre-Constantinian Christian baptistry, perhaps used as early as the 1st century.

Beside the basin, a flight of rough steps leads down to a narrow passage which, after turning 180 degrees, opens into an underground chamber 6 feet high.

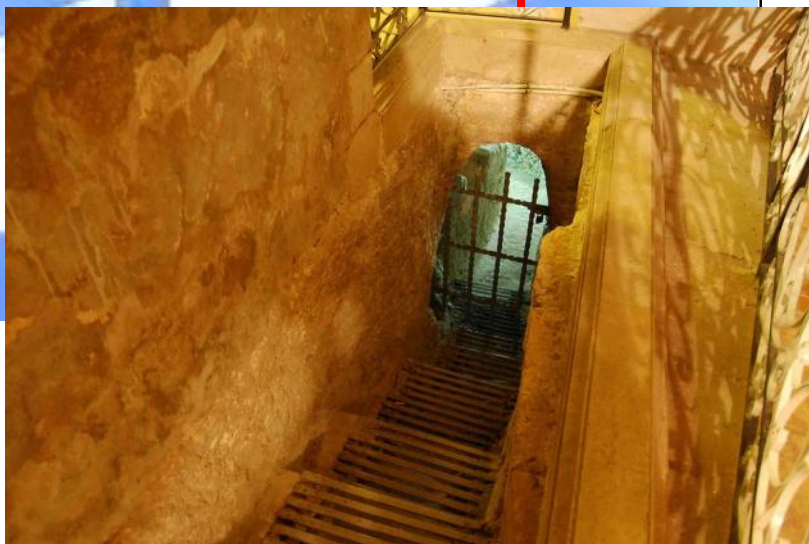
Off this are openings to grain silos and water cisterns, cut into the soft limestone rock by early dwellers. Such underground repositories were typical of ancient Nazareth.

One of the interesting things about Joseph is that he has no speaking lines in the Gospels, but he does have four dreams, and in these dreams he is always addressed by angels. Joseph's dreams were conveyed to Mary, and she told them to Christ's disciples, which is how these stories became part of the Bible. The fact that Joseph is entirely absent from the Gospels by the time that Jesus began his earthly ministry

suggests that he had passed away prior to Jesus turning 30 years old.

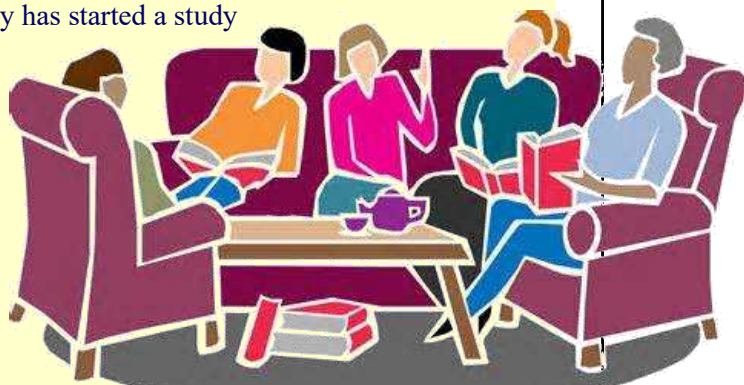
The earliest historical reference that we have of Joseph's death is in a late 6th or 7th-century book called The History of Joseph the Carpenter. If it is true that he was gone before Jesus was 30, it means that Joseph's primary role in the Gospels was to help protect and navigate Jesus to safety in His early life. Once Jesus became a man, and could do everything that life required for Himself, the absence of Joseph from the pages of the Bible suggests that he was no longer needed by God for this task, and that the Father retired him to eternity.

Joseph's  
dream,  
stained glass  
in Church of  
St. Joseph



## † Women's Wed Evening Bible Study

The Women's Evening Bible Study has started a study on Wednesdays, at 7:00 on Zoom. The topic is Courage: people in the Bible who showed courage in difficult circumstances. We will see how each person met their situation, what role God played, and what we can apply to ourselves now. All women are welcome. For more information contact Kathy Whipple at [kthyw49@gmail.com](mailto:kthyw49@gmail.com).



## † St. Paul's Walking Group!

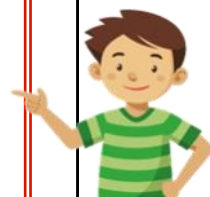
Our St. Paul's walking group is making a great strides! Their next walk will be at the Richter Park Golf Course, tomorrow, Friday, December 19 at 10:00 am. Plan to meet at the parking lot next to the clubhouse, 100 Aunt Hack Road, Danbury. I'll check the weather and send out an update e-mail if there are any changes before the meet up time. Ron Switzer ([rjswit@msn.com](mailto:rjswit@msn.com)).



## † Sunday School Info!

**ATTN: PARENTS OF ALL SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS:**

Sunday School classes have resumed. During Advent bring your students into church with you for the lighting of the Advent candles, then they will go directly to their classrooms. Children will be returned to the sanctuary in time for Communion.



## COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

Dec 21st	8 am - Bennett's	10:30 am - Emily Perry
Dec 28th	8 am - Open Table	10:30 am - Open Table
Jan 4th	8 am - Greeley's	10:30 am - Tilford's



**COFFEE HOUR  
HOSTS NEEDED**

Contact Mary Allen at  
203-775-6633 or  
[chamla@charter.net](mailto:chamla@charter.net).





## † Christmas Memorial Flowers

Anyone wishing to remember loved ones and friends with a beautiful poinsettia plant that will be decorating the church for the Christmas services, please use an envelope found on the back table for this purpose. All memorials are due Sunday, December 21 in order to be printed in the Christmas Eve bulletin. If you have any questions, please contact David Szen, 917-226-9136 or



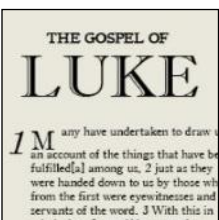
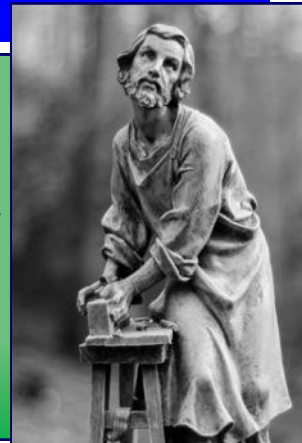
**Our Daily Bread** - The *Our Daily Bread* devotional pamphlet for December, January & February is now available at the back of the church. E-mail [dszen@yahoo.com](mailto:dszen@yahoo.com) to have a copy mailed to you. Our Daily Bread contains a scripture verse and meditation for each day.

## Transforming Stewardship

*"When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home."*

MATTHEW 1:24

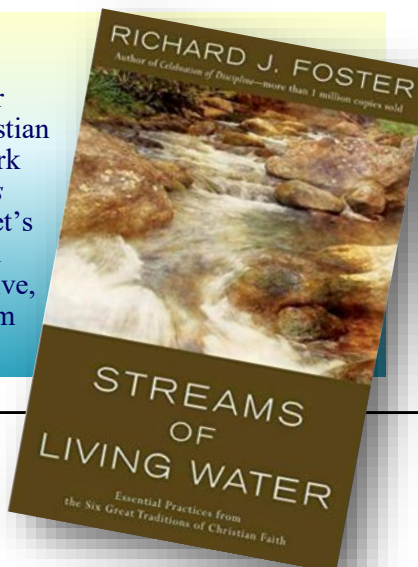
Putting our complete trust in the Lord without expecting anything in return. Striving to put God first in all things and follow Him wherever He may led us. As Christians we prepare for the birth of our Lord, pray for the strength and courage to be a model of discipleship, just as Joseph was.

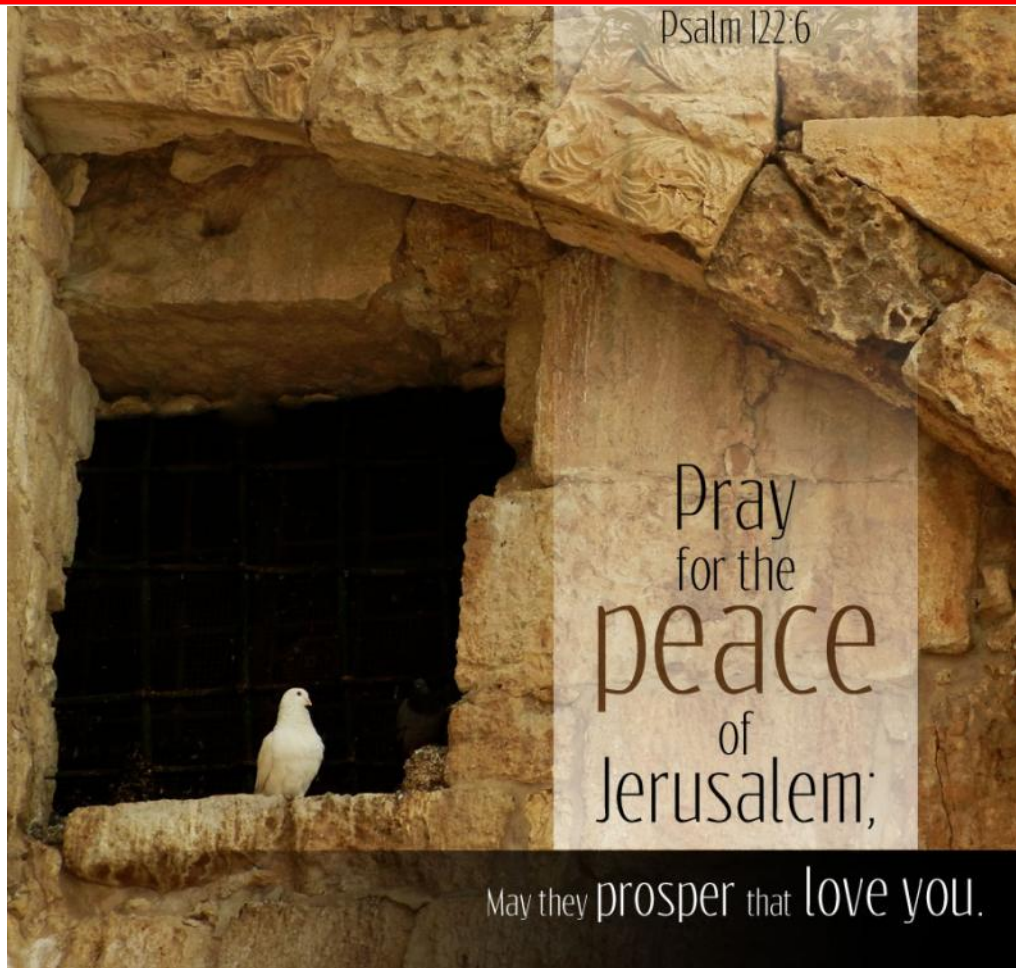


Our Men meet weekly to study on Monday nights. They are currently dissecting the Gospel of Luke. Join them each Monday night at 7 pm in Crocker Hall. All the studies are available live on YouTube.

## † Advent Adult Class

During Advent, we are looking at the six major streams of faith and practice that define Christian tradition. Based on Richard Foster's landmark book, *"Streams of Living Water: Essential Practices from the Six Great Traditions of Christian Faith,"* let's learn together how the great traditions of the Church can deepen our faith and shape us into people who live, love, and serve like Jesus. The class starts at 9:30 am each Sunday in the Guild Room.





## **Take a Hanger** **Fill a Hanger**





## † Wednesday Morning Healing Service

Our mid-week Wednesday morning 10 am Holy Eucharist with healing prayer, now has about 50 worshippers weekly.. With live music and a brief homily, this service is just what you need to sustain you through the week. Come join us and check it out or watch on YouTube Live.

### HOW DO PEOPLE START ATTENDING CHURCH?

- A Friend Invited Me - 86%
- Organized Visitation - 6%
- Invited by the Pastor - 6%
- Advertising - 2%

churchgrowth.org

## REJOICE!

In God's blessings in your life.

GIVE to your EPISCOPAL CHURCH

THE Episcopal CHURCH



# A THIRD OF US

## † Praying for the 1/3 of our world that are still unreached with the Gospel

### Yerwa Kanuri

Country: Nigeria | Population: 8,281,000 | Language: Yerwa Kanuri | Main Religion: Islam | Evangelical: 1.00%

**T**he majority of Kanuri live in northeastern Nigeria. They are descendants of the once-powerful Bornu Empire, which ruled until the British took control in 1914. Most Kanuri are farmers whose primary crop is millet, along with sorghum, corn, and peanuts. They also raise sheep, goats, and some horses, which are a symbol of prestige. City dwellers are involved in all sorts of occupations. Kanuri involved in politics and religion have the highest social status, while blacksmiths, butchers, and well-diggers have the lowest. Polygamy is a common practice, and 8 of 10 marriages end in divorce. The Kanuri became Muslims in the 11th century, but still practice some folk beliefs, including wearing amulets or charms for various reasons. Pray that God would call believers to go live among the Kanuri and share the love of Jesus with them. Pray for the missionaries and missions agencies seeking to reach the Kanuri. Pray that God would give favor and bring fruit from their efforts. Pray that God would raise up strong and vibrant churches among the Kanuri that would reflect His heart.



† **The building project is fully -funded! We can begin construction!**

Hey friends!

On October 16, we sent out a newsletter sharing the exciting news about the property we had found, and our desire to build a church on that land. Today, we are thrilled, shocked, and completely blown away that we are now fully-funded for this building! In less than 2 months, so many of you generously gave to the Building Project fund that we are now able to start construction as soon as we sign the building contract (hopefully as early as next week)!

I wish I could share all of the details of the various churches, families, and individuals who prayerfully and cheerfully gave to make this happen, because it has truly been such an encouragement to my faith.

We're still working out some details, but hope to sign off on the building plans sometime this week, and then construction begins!

We are overjoyed! At your generosity, at God's kindness in all of the details, and at the gift of living in Cambodia doing this work. Yesterday, we got to take the kids down to the property with balloons and confetti and explain to them that we were celebrating 1) this new chapter for our church and 2) the generosity of God's people.

Thank you so much, and we'll keep you updated as we get this church built!

If you had hoped to give towards this project, but missed the chance, we'd love to accept any donations towards these two ministries:



1. Young Life Cambodia (here is a [video](#) that explains their ministry). We know these people and trust them and the work they're doing here.



Please add "displaced people" to the memo on ABA

## Displaced People Relief Fund

All offerings to go towards supporting displaced Cambodian people at the border



## † A Larger Truth

Isaiah 7:10-16

**Ahaz** is weary of prophets getting in the way of his politics. And so even the offer of a sign as high as the heavens and as deep as Sheol can't get him to swallow his pride and ask the God of Israel for help. God wearied by Ahaz's feigned piety offers a sign anyway, a sign that Matthew will apply to Jesus, though Isaiah was most likely speaking of Hezekiah, neither of which are named Immanuel, by the way, but then that is the way of prophecies.

They point to a truth larger than the literal one and the same word that finds



fulfillment in Hezekiah and Jesus finds fulfillment in our everyday. Immanuel, God with us is the point of the promise. God with us when we go our own way, choosing the evil and refusing the good. God with us when we feed ourselves with false promises and illusory hopes. God with us for the day when we tire of wearying God and turn again to the promise as high as the heavens and as deep as Sheol and recognize that the hope of God with us is that we would choose to be with God. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.



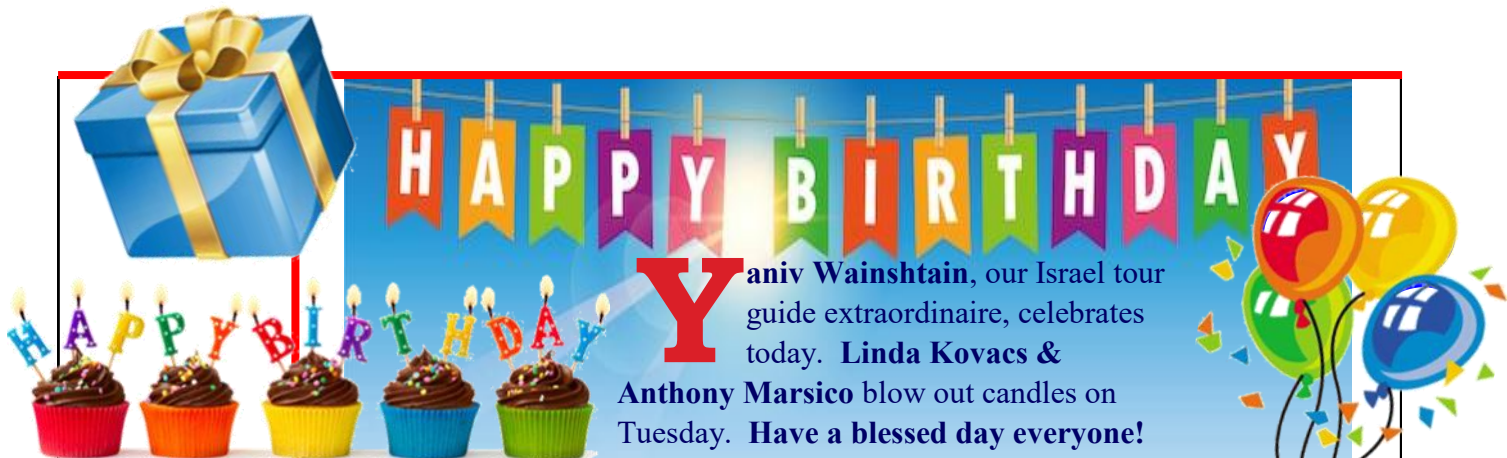
As part of our outreach, St. Paul's donates gift cards and non-perishable items to six area food pantries. The non-perishable items are provided by our generous congregation and are truly appreciated. Donations for the food pantry can be left in the basket at the back of the church. Delivery is made to one food pantry each month. Thank you.

## † Quilt Drawing

Tickets are being sold each Sunday during coffee hour for these beautiful Christmas quilts. The tickets will be available after each service and the drawing will be held on Sunday, December 21st between the services. Tickets are \$5 each or 5 for \$20.







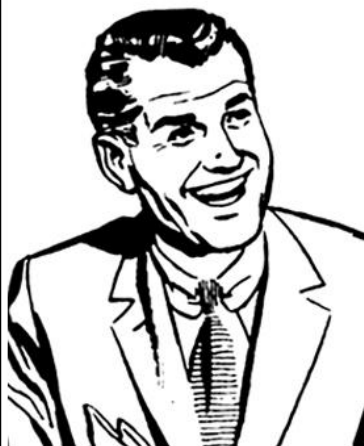
**Y**aniv Wainshtain, our Israel tour guide extraordinaire, celebrates today. **Linda Kovacs & Anthony Marsico** blow out candles on Tuesday. **Have a blessed day everyone!**

**RFB** 

*Presents*

## COFFEE WITH JESUS

**Crazy  
Wonderful**



It's a crazy time to  
be alive, Jesus.



Crazy, wonderful  
time, Carl.



I'm having a hard time with  
the "wonderful" part, Jesus.

Are we seeing the  
same thing?



You see the details in real time,  
Carl. I see the big picture from  
the end.

Trust me... wonderful.

©Radio Free Babylon® All rights reserved. Upheaval is everywhere. England, Hong Kong, Iran, France, USA. Doesn't it feel as though the world is a powderkeg? It kinda is, but if your allegiance is to The One True King, you have no fear of worldly kings. Do you say that you trust in Jesus? THEN TRUST IN JESUS. He's not blind to this mess of a world we're in. He's going to win no matter what. Things may look bad and bleak, but Jesus has this. He always has. His victory's never been in doubt.



## † Why We Need Joseph

Matthew 1:18-25

**Mary** doesn't need Joseph so why do we? It's a fair question for a virgin birth. Is it just to provide cover once the baby is born? She'd be in just as much trouble as a single mother as she is betrothed and pregnant and claiming God did the deed. So what gives? Well if nothing else it's for this dream sequence which asks Joseph to do just as much believing as Mary in Luke's version of the visitation. Joseph, a righteous man, could be as righteous as the law allows and point to Mary's swollen belly as proof of the pudding and pick up the first stone to cast it as would be his right as a betrayed spouse to be. Instead he wishes her no harm, which might mean in a culture of arranged marriages where "What's love got to do with it" is the signature song, Joseph sings "I'll have a blue Christmas without you." Even if it goes well beyond what text allows. What if he wants to let her go quietly because he loves her even though when she said, "I've got something to tell you..." it must have come as quite a shock. "You talked to an angel who said what!?" And so God who loves lovers comes to him in a dream and gives him courage to do what he wanted to do all along but couldn't, take Mary as his wife. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus or in other words, Merry Christmas, Joseph.



The LORD commanded Ahaz to ask him for a sign. How did Ahaz respond?

Isaiah 7:10-12 NIV

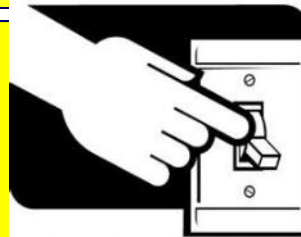


Who was the author of the book of Romans?

Romans 1:1 NIV

## † Good Stewardship Begins At Home: *Our Home*

**P**lease remind all who use our home to be good stewards by turning off lights, closing curtains, turning down thermostats, cleaning up after themselves and locking doors when they are leaving, especially as fuel prices continue to steadily increase.



## † This Sunday's Readings

(Click on the red links for the readings)

### Jesus the Messiah

#### Isaiah 7:10-16

In the first lesson we hear that the prophet Isaiah insists that King Ahaz of Judah will receive a sign of a young woman bearing a son to be called Emmanuel. Ahaz was more inclined to depend on political alliances than on the Lord. Isaiah prophesied that, by the time the infant began to make his own choices, the Lord would destroy Judah's immediate enemies. Christians have seen the ultimate fulfillment of the prophetic words in the birth of Jesus.

#### Psalms 80:1-7, 16-18

A lament and a plea to the Lord, the shepherd of Israel, that God will turn away divine anger and restore the people.

#### Romans 1:1-7

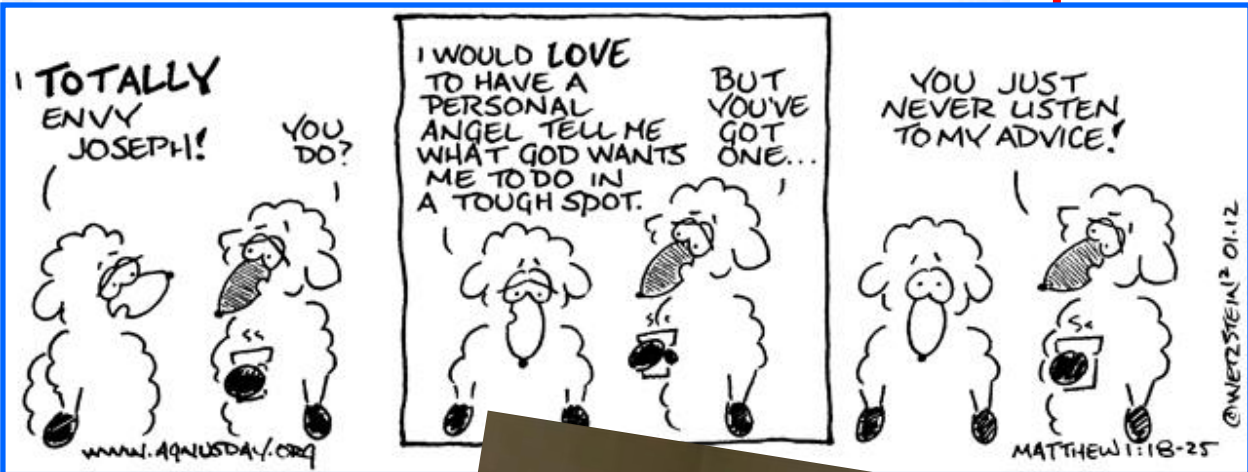
Paul greets the new disciples in Rome and summarizes the gospel message. The prophecies concerning one to be descended from King David in human terms, and declared Son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit by resurrection from the dead, have been fulfilled. The Lord Jesus Christ has giving grace and the commission of apostleship to bring peoples of all nations and obedience.

#### Matthew 1:18-25

The gospel tells the story of the birth of Jesus. While she was betrothed to Joseph, Mary finds that she is bearing a child. But an angel tells Joseph not to fear: this is the work of the Holy Spirit. The baby is to be named Jesus, which means "The Lord saves." The evangelist perceives this birth to be the fulfillment of ancient prophecy which told of a virgin who would bear a son. The narrative makes clear the divine origin of this child who will save the people from their sins.

#### Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph was indeed righteous. But more importantly, he was merciful, faithful, and courageous. He chose relationships instead of self-righteousness.



### † Sermon Shorts

"Are You the One?" To replay all our sermons, audio and videos follow this link for the [Sunday Sermons](#). Check out our [Sermon Archives](#) as well.





## † Your Prayers Are Requested For...

*It is such an intimate time when praying for the health and well being of others and such a privilege Mary, the mother of Christ, is a sign to the church of faithful obedience to the will of God. As we come to the commemoration of the birth of Jesus, let us pray that we, like Mary, hear God's word and respond in obedient faith to the coming of Christ, as we pray for...*

.....Ed Licence, Gail Winkley, Barbara Hock, and other parishioners convalescing in extended care facilities.

.....[Calvary, St. George's](#), Bridgeport; [St. Luke / St. Paul](#), Bridgeport; [St. John's](#), Bridgeport.

.....Revival at St. Paul's and the greater Danbury area.

.....The children of the world & all ECCT ministries for children at risk.

.....For the Peace of Jerusalem. - *Psalms 122:6*

.....Clayton Ferry, Barbara Hock, Jim Megura, Peter Scalzo, Sr., Peter Scalzo, Jr., Doris, Cathy Latimer, Karen, Beverly Hall, Roger, Cynthia, Valerie, Heidi Pinheiro, Dale Mitchell, Ruth, Blake, Cliff, Evelyn Kirner, Jane Sedor, Jim Beck, Larry Wanzer, Bob Finn, Paul Kovacs, Peter Ruscoe, Larry Coleman, John Crisalli, Erin LaBrake, Walter, Elana and Veronika continued healing.

.....the people of [Ukraine](#); the people of the [Republic of Equatorial Guinea](#); the people of [Spain](#); the bishop, clergy and laity of the [Diocese of Salisbury](#) - The Church of England; and our sister and brother members of the [Church in Wales](#).

.....For the Church: that we, like Joseph, may wholeheartedly live our faith traditions and yet remain open to the mystery of God's unconventional work in our lives and the world around us.

.....St. Thomas, Bethel and the [Bethel Community Food Pantry](#), which is the recipient of our food basket collections for the month of December.

.....Our missionaries, Will & Becky McLaughlin and their family, and their ministry in Cambodia; and for all missionaries: that God will inspire the message that they offer, help them to recognize how they can best serve their communities, and sustain them in times of loneliness.

.....For all who are busily preparing for Christmas: that the Holy Spirit will help us to stay aware of whose life we celebrate and to show Christ's love in all our interactions.

.....[St. Paul's Parish](#), Brookfield, a church partner of the Jericho Partnership.

.....[Joy in God's Creation](#).

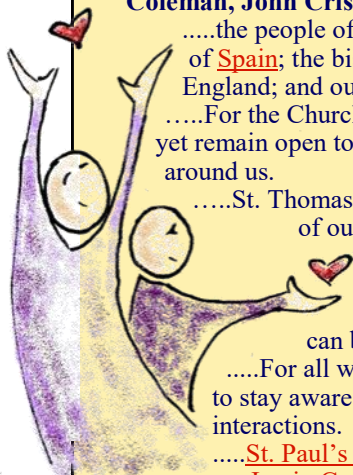
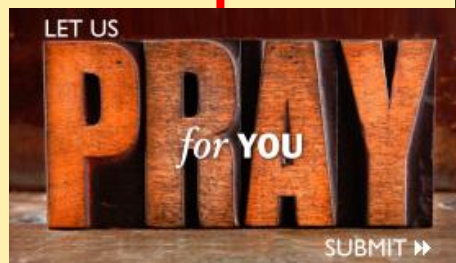
.....That we can put our complete trust in God and become a model of discipleship like Joseph.

.....For all who are caught by consumerism: that God will free their minds and hearts so that they may hear God's call and choose the greater good in their use of their time and resources.

.....For the members of the Jewish community: that as they celebrate Hanukkah, they may grow in their awareness of God's presence and saving action in their lives.

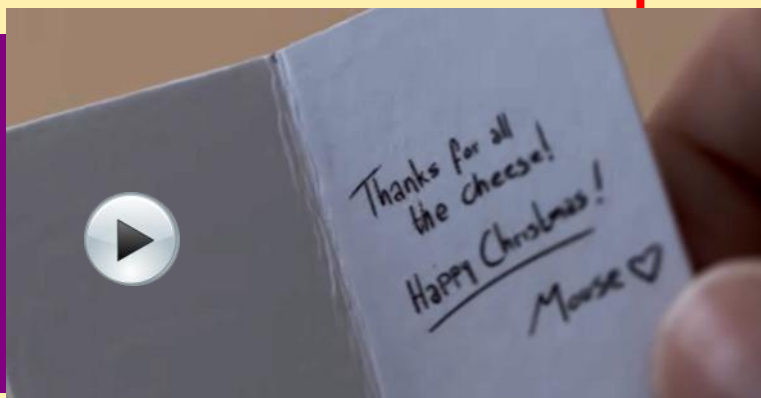
.....For all who will be traveling this week: that their journeys may be safe and their visits with friends and loved ones be renewing and refreshing.

.....[Peace Among the Nations](#).



### The Christ-Mouse || A Christmas Short Film

The Christ-Mouse tells the story of an elderly widow alone at Christmas. Hunting a pest but making a friend. Watch this short film to discover a heartwarming Christmas tale of loneliness, friendship and cheese.





# Just For the Joy of It!

(And Christian Fellowship)

†OMICS by Tom Gould

Holy Family  
Road to Bethlehem



## Random Fact of the Week!

Did you know .. that Nipper became famous because he appeared "puzzled ... to make out where the voice came from" when a phonograph was playing?



## Emily's Wednesday Joke of the Week

Emily had a bummer of a day. She ruined and stained her favorite jeans and when she picked them up from the cleaners, they were completely faded. When she looked at them, she said, "Guess I not the only one feeling a little blue."

Find us on  
**Facebook**

Follow us on  
**Twitter**

Find Us On  
**Instagram**



Watch us on  
**YouTube**



Ecclesiasticus 43:27 - We could say more but could never say enough; let the final word be: 'He is the all.' - 30 -