

The Good News

Dear Sharon Faithful,

Blessed Advent! It is the time of year when we announce to the world Christ's coming rule and we invite the whole world to claim Jesus as its righteousness. We sing: *Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King," Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!* And as Christians, we pledge our allegiance to a new kind of king, one who changes us from within and gives us a new name: redeemed.

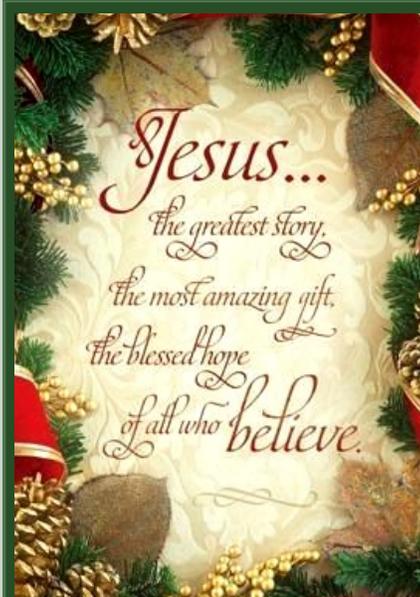
I'm sure we can all readily think of a thing or two we'd like to change about ourselves. I, personally, would like to shed a few pounds as well as increase my bandwidth in patience. We are not perfect people and it's easy to critique ourselves, finding something we can improve. Yet, self-improvement is not the kind of redemption God had in mind when Christ Jesus came into the world.

In the simplest terms, we are redeemed because we accept, in faith, that we're not in this world alone, we are Christ's own. We view our lives as a gift of God who imagined us before time, filled us with a Holy Spirit, and gave us a selfless, compassionate savior in Jesus who has shown us the way to the Father now and for all eternity.

Recently, I was contemplating how many of us really feel like we reside in God's careful hands and how many of us are hoping that God still knows our name and address? It has been a long and arduous couple of years. We've had to adjust to so many changes in how we live and relate to the world around us. At times, this has provoked a number of theological questions for us: where is God? What is community? How do we worship faithfully? How do we grow in our faith and continue to be God's church in these unprecedented times?



In Advent, we dedicate a time of preparation for the coming of Christ once again at Christmas which affords us four weeks to consider the difficulties and hard feelings that we have been carrying alongside of God's patient reassurance of our



In This Issue...

Christmas Eve Service...2

Advent Calendar...3

Worship in Advent
Advent Cantata...4

Worship News:
Coming in 2022...5

Children and Family
Ministry...6-7

Fraud Alert
2022 Envelopes
Per Capita for 2022...8

Mission Committee
News...9

Prayer Requests
An Advent Prayer...10

Deacons' Christmas
Message
Living with Covid-19...11

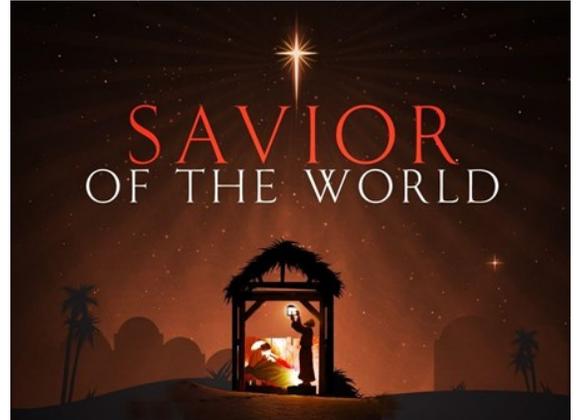
Save the Date!
Cookie Outreach...Back
Cover

redemption in Christ. Each week, in Advent, we are given a promise of God born in Christ to remind us of God's relentless pursuit of our wellness and wholeness. With Advent hope, peace, joy and love as our promises and gifts, we are welcomed into the heart of God.

Enclosed in this *Good News* is a special Advent calendar created to center our minds, bodies and spirits in God's hope, peace, joy and love these next four weeks. The calendar rotates through three Christian faith practices—prayer, service and spiritual practices that engage the fruits of the Spirit. These faith practices are not designed to be challenging, but edifying and nurturing. They are gentle and powerful practices designed to draw us nearer to God and the way of Jesus.

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary the coming of the Christ child, he said of Jesus, "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

Beloved, you are a part of Christ's new kingdom led by the king of all mercy and grace, Jesus. The end of our calendar year marks the beginning of a new Christian new year, Advent—a time for us to take stock for what has been and look forward to what will be with the eyes and mind of God in Christ. May God draw you near, as Christ's redeemed, this Christmas.



Blessed and Holy Christmas,

Becky

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS



**Come and celebrate the birth of our Savior on Christmas Eve,
Friday December 24th at 7:00 PM in the sanctuary.**

Our worship will be joyful and music will be resplendent! We will share the light of Christ and hear the trumpets pronounce a newborn king. Come and rejoice people of God!

SCPC will continue to provide a safe worship environment by requiring masks in the sanctuary and appropriately distancing all seating.

Advent Faith Practices



Instead of focusing on material things this Advent, focus on faith! This advent faith practices calendar rotates through three types of practices: prayer [P] service [S] and spiritual practice [SP] Make this calendar work for you and your family by adapting it to suit your needs. If you are unable to complete one of the practices on a specific day, just skip over it and pick it up on the next day.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
5. [S] Write a note of appreciation to someone in a helping or serving profession to tell them how much you value their work.	6. [P] Hope, continued. Today, light one candle for hope.	7. [SP] Imagination. Look at the clouds or the grass or snow outside. What do you see there?	8. [S] Donate food or other needed items to an organization that serves those in need.	9. [P] Peace. What gives you peace? Thank God for peaceful things.	10. [SP] Gratitude Practice gratitude today by listing the things for which you are thankful.	11. [S] Make a special effort to offer a smile or kind gesture (such as opening the door) for a stranger today.
12. [P] Peace, continued. Light two candles today. One for hope and one for peace.	13. [SP] Play! Play a game together as a family. Did you know play can be a spiritual practice? It can!	14. [S] Pick up trash around your neighborhood or other public place.	15. [P] Pray for others today. Who do you know who needs an extra word of prayer to God? Write their name down.	16. [SP] Beauty. Take a walk outside and notice three beautiful things.	17. [S] Do something kind for a neighbor. Shovel their walk, leave a plant, or write a kind note.	18. [P] Today's prayer word is joy. What brings you joy? Draw a picture of it or say a prayer.
19. [SP] Listening. It is a spiritual discipline to listen well. Ask someone in your family three questions. Listen closely to their answer.	20. [S] Compliment a stranger today.	21. [P] Joy, continued. Light three candles. One for hope, one for peace, and one for joy.	22. [SP] Hospitality. Invite someone to come to your house today.	23. [S] Give a gift to someone who really needs it today.	24. [P] Love. Today's prayer word is love. Draw a picture of someone you love.	25. [P] Love, continued. Light four candles today. One for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love.
1. [SP] Waiting. Practice waiting today by taking a few extra moments to rest between activities today.	2. [S] Who in your community is in special need of a note, call, or visit? <u>Make an effort</u> to check up on that person.	3. [P] Today's prayer word is HOPE. What does it mean to have hope? Draw a picture of something hopeful or pray for a hope you have.	4. [SP] Silence. How long can you sit in silence? Try one minute, two minutes or even five minutes!	17. [S] Today's prayer word is HOPE. What does it mean to have hope? Draw a picture of something hopeful or pray for a hope you have.	18. [P] Today's prayer word is joy. What brings you joy? Draw a picture of it or say a prayer.	19. [SP] Listening. It is a spiritual discipline to listen well. Ask someone in your family three questions. Listen closely to their answer.

This calendar brought to you by Traci Smith, author of *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home*.

Worship With Us this Advent



Your WMA Team was hard at work decorating the Sanctuary on November 22nd. We invite you to join us for Worship during the season of Advent!

ADVENT CANTATA DECEMBER 12TH IN WORSHIP: HANDEL'S *MESSIAH*

One of the greatest expressions of worship and adoration was written by George Handel in 1741. He called his oratorio *Messiah* and it invites the listener to take a long look at Jesus as our Redeemer, Savior and King. Like operas, oratorios are dramatic stories set entirely to music for soloists, choirs or chorus, and orchestra. Unlike opera, oratorios do not include acting, costumes or stage scenery. Oratorios usually tell sacred stories drawn from the Bible or the lives of Christian Saints.

The Old Testament writers promised that the coming of the Messiah would bring light into the darkness of a world shrouded by death and despair. Handel embraces the drama and prophecy of the Old Testament in his telling of the Incarnation of

Christ. The great mystery of the virgin birth is then announced with little fanfare—God is with us. Wonder and miracles, joy and peace follow.

Handel's *Messiah* then takes us to the cross where Jesus is despised and rejected by humankind. His death is simply announced. Yet, suffering and death

would not have the final say. Christ the Messiah will rise to our Hallelujahs and overcome all darkness with his eternal light.

Please join us on Sunday, December 12th for worship as the SCPC Choir, soloists and string instrumentalists present Handel's *Messiah*. The Deacons will host a special Christmas fellowship following the service in Fellowship Hall.



Worship News: Coming in 2022

No Church on December 26th

We will not be having church on Sunday morning, December 26th to allow for our staff to spend time with their families for the holidays and to give the Worship Team a much-needed time of rest. Have a safe and relaxing week, and we will see everyone back at church on January 2, 2022 at 10 AM!

New Worship Time at 10:30 AM Begins January 9th

As we continue to follow God and discern our way forward as a church, we are moving our worship time to **10:30 a.m. beginning on Jan 9, 2022** to allow for fellowship time and other church programming *before* worship. It's hard to believe that 2022 is almost here!



Sharon Church has been blessed to have stayed safe during the Covid-19 pandemic thanks to everyone following safety precautions and uniting for the collective good of our members and the community!

WMA will continue to follow CDC safety guidelines for Covid-19 and provide a safe worship environment for our members while offering our thanks and praise to God with meaningful services of worship, music, and prayer each Sunday. We welcome anyone who has not yet returned to church to join us in 2022 at 10:30 a.m. for worship!



The SCPC Deacons will be reintroducing our rocking chair ministry at **Fellowship Rocks**

at **9:45 a.m. in Fellowship Hall prior to worship beginning on Jan. 9, 2022.** There will be coffee, tea, hot chocolate, donuts and, of course, God's love offered at Fellowship Rocks.

The Deacons have continued to nurture our connection with one another as a community of faith throughout the pandemic and moving our worship time to a later start time creates a consistent time and place for us to continue gathering in fellowship before worship each week.



Choir Rehearsals



Our worship music team will be hosting a **Pick-up Choir rehearsal from 9:55 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.**

beginning in mid-January 2022 where anyone who feels called to sing may rehearse the given music for that Sunday.

We will continue to maintain safe distancing and masking for all singers during choir rehearsals.



Children's Church will remain *during* the worship hour from 10:30—11:30 a.m. And our plan is to add Christian Formation events and classes in the coming weeks and months. If you have a particular interest in hosting a CF class or have a topic in mind you'd like to explore, please speak with Pastor Becky.

Children and Family Ministry



Celebrate Advent with your family as we count down the days to the birth of our savior, Jesus!

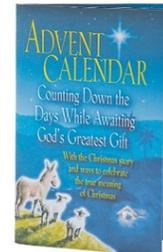
For Families:

Each **family** will receive a 2021 Advent calendar and a Countdown to Christmas Advent wreath.



For Children:

Each **child** will receive a coloring book and an Advent story book with flaps to open each day.



Thank you to everyone who participated in Operation Christmas Child this year. With your generous giving, online and in-person we were able to donate:

- ◆ **Online:** 20 Shoeboxes
- ◆ **In-person:** 34 Shoeboxes
- ◆ **Grand total:** 54 shoeboxes from Sharon Church!





Special Delivery Outreach Sunday, December 5th During Children's Church



The kids will be decorating bags and making cards during Children's Church for our at-home church members. *After church everyone is welcome to come down to Fellowship Hall to help fill the bags with cookies.*

Then grab a bag or two to take with you and brighten someone's day with a Special Delivery!

ANGELS FOR AMY



This year our special Christmas Project is *Angels for Amy*.

Amy Rucker did an amazing job teaching the children music during her time here at our church. We are going to thank her by creating handmade ornaments, angels, and cards. As a special treat the kids will perform the first verse of "Hark the Herald Angels Sing!"

We will record on Sunday, December 19th in the sanctuary after church. Please have your child wear a white, or light-colored shirt.

The video will be played during our Christmas Eve church service.



Children & Family Ministry will be hosting an after-Christmas Party!

Saturday, January 8th from 5-7pm

Paradise Island Bowl and Beach, Neville Island

Bowling, shoe rental, pizza, soft drinks, and a private room are included!

RSVP by January 3rd by contacting Sarah Painter (412) 680-4228, children@sharoncpc.com



In November, it was discovered that several 'scam' text messages were sent to parishioners asking for gift cards using Pastor Becky's name.

These messages ask people to purchase gift cards and provide codes as a form of payment.

- **DO NOT respond** if you get one of these messages. Your phone allows you to permanently BLOCK the sender. Look at the phone number/email address and you will see that it is NOT Pastor Becky's phone or email
- **Sharon Community Presbyterian Church would never ask you via text or email for an emergency loan, gift card etc.**

Know the best ways to avoid being scammed:

1. **Don't respond:** If you're not 100% certain of the source of the call, email or text, then hang up the phone, don't click on the link in the email and don't reply to the text message.
2. **Don't trust caller ID or answer phone calls from unknown numbers:** If you recognize the caller ID but the call seems suspicious, hang up the phone. Phone numbers can be easily spoofed to appear to be from a legitimate caller.
3. **Don't give out your information:** Never provide any personally identifiable information unless you're absolutely certain the person and reason are legitimate. Remember: Bank of America will never ask you to send us personal information such as an account number, Social Security number or Tax ID over text, email or online.
4. **Research and validate:** If the individual or organization seems suspicious, make sure the request being made is legitimate by calling the organization through an official number from their website or consulting with a trusted family member or friend.

2022 Envelopes are Available



2022 Giving envelopes are available for pick up on the Narthex. Please note that for 2022, you may see a change in the Offering

Envelope number that has been assigned to you.

As we continue to work to be good stewards of the gifts we receive, we have discovered that many folks are now opting to give on-line, or to send an auto-donation to the church. Therefore, we have decided to reduce the number of boxes of Giving Envelopes we order. In doing so, the church saves money and eliminates waste.

However, this also means we have reduced the range of giving numbers, so you may discover

that you have been assigned a new number when you pick up your 2022 envelopes.

Please contact the church office if you need someone to deliver your envelopes to you.

Email admin@sharoncpc.com or call the church office: 412-264-7400.

What is
Per
Capita?

The Per Capita for 2022 is \$34.79

Mission Committee News



Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we turn our eyes to Bethlehem and celebrate the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

As a result this is the time of year when we are looking for gifts that will bring a smile to our relatives and friends. Presbyterians have provided a way that you can bring a smile THIS YEAR to someone you don't know but who will really appreciate it.

The Christmas Joy Offering supports three different entities this year. They are two Presbyterian related schools, Menaul High School and Stillman College, and financial support and grants for current and retired Presbyterian church workers in their times of need.

You can donate to this Mission offering by using the envelope in this issue of the *Good News*, or send a check to the church office and designate that it is for the Christmas Joy



Welcome to 2022!

If you haven't returned to church yet, here is your invitation! We will be crafting the light of Christ together with our mission partners from Uncommon Grounds.



When: Saturday, January 22nd 11 AM – 1 PM

Where: Fellowship Hall

Cost: \$10/person due at the event
Please make checks payable to SCPC

RSVP: by Jan. 12th to Kilee Bomgardner
(717-580-4556 or kileebee@gmail.com)
or sign up in the Narthex



We look forward to seeing you at this fun event filled with fellowship, deepening relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ, crafting, and delicious Uncommon Grounds coffee. Light refreshments will be served.



Uncommon Grounds in Aliquippa is one of SCPC's long-standing mission partners. Their ministry is designed to bring people together, deepen relationships and strengthen community bonds. Their mission statement is "We reach the least, the last, and the lost with the gospel of Christ through listening and offering dignity."

AN ADVENT PRAYER

Eternal God who was, and is, and ever shall be, we praise you in this Advent season for coming to us once more. We praise you for being our God and claiming us as your people. We praise you for your living Word revealed in scripture, promised through prophecy, celebrated in song, made flesh in Jesus Christ.



Thank you for friends and family, for health and home, for community and church. Thank you for your saving grace when we wander in darkness and doubt, and for confidence in faith where we cannot see. Thank you for believing in us when we find it hard to believe in ourselves. Today, hear our silent prayers of praise and thanksgiving.

We pray for the homeless and hungry. We pray for the downtrodden and all who have lost hope and struggle to find a way forward. You are here for all of us! We pray for those who are angry and finding it hard to forgive. Forgive us that we may become forgivers.

O come, O come, Emmanuel, God be with us yet again. Ransom us from our captivity to false beliefs and unhealthy behaviors. Create in us new hearts and renewed commitments. Restore us with your Holy Spirit in the name and power of Jesus, the same Jesus who still teaches us to pray together... "Our Father who art in heaven..." *Amen.*



Our longest living member, Clyde Meanor, passed from this life to the next on Monday, November 1st and now resides in God's heavenly grace.

Please keep Ruth and their family in your prayers.

Her address and phone number are:

125 Apple Blossom Way, Room 229
Moon Twp, PA 15108
412-375-8500

Some samples of Clyde's art work are below.



Anneliese Cratsley

Bill Crookshank

Pam Wieland

Miriam Wolf

Amy Rucker

Arla Gracey

Ruth Meanor

Ben Branch-Trevathan

Homebound members
of the church

Friends suffering from
effects of Covid-19

Distribution of the Covid-19 Vaccine

Email your prayer requests to:

sharonprayerchain@sharoncpc.com

or call 412-264-7400.

A Christmas Message from the Deacons

We have heard the news stating that "Christmas is at Risk" because of supply chain shortages, and that retailers are panicking. We understand from a business perspective that retailers feel stressed because they need their jobs, and ultimately need sales in order to keep their business operative. The supply shortage directly affects this because you cannot sell what you simply do not have.

However, I cannot fathom why that would be grouped into the blanket statement "Christmas is at risk." I mean... Whaaaattt??

It has become abundantly clear to me that people are losing sight of what Christmas means. Let's take a minute to comfort our hearts and reflect on the basic principles of our faith. We are celebrating our Lord and Savior, and we are so grateful for the birth of Jesus. Let our souls be reenergized with pure love for Jesus and let us also be reminded of all he has done for us not only in our lives, but throughout the world.

Let us feel peace by just knowing that Jesus has his arms wrapped around us all the time, and hugging us tight. We do not need tangible presents in order to show or receive love at Christmas. We just need our faith.

That is the meaning of Christmas, and in no way shape or form is Christmas at risk for any of us.

~ Megan Anderson, Co-Moderator of Deacons



Learning to Live with Covid-19

The current data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention shows that people who are unvaccinated are 6 times as likely to test positive from the Covid-19 virus and 12 times as likely to die from it. And while breakthrough cases of Covid-19 in vaccinated people have had similar, stable rates among all ages, the death rate varied by age—people 80 and older having drastically higher death rates. Covid-19 cases in Allegheny County remain “extremely high”: hospitalizations have risen and deaths have decreased.

The best science in our country and in the world continue to recommend vaccination for ages 5 years old and up as the best way of lowering your risk of contracting and spreading Covid-19. When an individual contracts the Covid-19 virus, the virus is able to mutate into a new form of the virus which may evade current vaccines and treatments, and, of course, spread. Vaccination *significantly* slows the contraction, mutation and spread of the virus. Our best defense as a society in reducing Covid-19 in our community is to participate in vaccination.

The CDC now also recommends a Covid-19 **booster shot** for *all adults* 6 months following their one or two does initial vaccine.

Please speak with **your physician** about which vaccine or treatment is the best medical path for you. Many in our country do not have access to regular medical care, so if you or someone you know does not have a regular doctor, **a local pharmacist** will be able to assist you with Covid-19 vaccination. Do not take your medical advice from cable news or social media or the guy next door (or even the church newsletter ☺). Please seek medical advice and care from credentialed medical practitioners.

Moving from the Covid-19 pandemic to the endemic phase means learning to live with the coronavirus in the same way humans live with other viruses. That could mean annual vaccinations against the virus. It could mean wearing masks in certain settings, or more commonplace testing, or screening for domestic or international travel. But it would also signal the end of outright travel bans, lockdowns, and burdensome requirements on businesses and schools. So, please do your part in caring for yourself and your community by getting vaccinated, masking in communal settings, and encouraging public safety.

We always wonder what God is doing in the world and this pandemic is a great argument for God teaching us to work through our differences and work together for the good of our communities and the health and wellness of the world. May you have a safe and healthy 2022!

The Good News

Sharon Community Presbyterian Church

522 Carnot Road

Moon Township, PA 15108-2317



Save the Date! **Christmas Cookie Outreach** **Sunday, December 5th**



The Mission Committee and Christian Formation Committee are joining forces to sponsor a Christmas Cookie Outreach event on Sunday, December 5th in Fellowship Hall.

At 11:00 AM, everyone is invited to help fill the cookie bags and take a bag of cookies to our homebound members, friends and neighbors in need of Christ’s love this Christmas.

Please sign up in the Narthex to donate cookies to this thoughtful Mission project. Last time we held this event, it was a huge success and very meaningful for everyone involved.

Refreshments will be available in Fellowship Hall during the event.