



Pastor's Corner by Pr Dave Heckler

Welcome to 2025! I pray that we'll find this new year blessed by God with all sorts of new adventures, discoveries, and opportunities to embody God's death-defying love for us and for others in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As we begin this new year, I'm tempted to invoke one of my favorite contemporary hymns, "This is a Day of New Beginnings". Here are the verses of that hymn:

*This is a day of new beginnings, time to remember and move on,
Time to believe what love is bringing, laying to rest the pain that's gone.*

*For by the life and death of Jesus, Love's mighty Spirit, now as then,
Can make for us a world of difference, as faith and hope are born again.*

*Then let us, with the Spirit's daring, step from the past and leave behind
Our disappointment, guilt, and grieving, seeking new paths, and sure to find.*

*Christ is alive and goes before us to show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings; our God is making all things new.*

I'm tempted to invoke it— but my heart says "Not so fast!" "Laying to rest the pain that's gone" and "leaving behind our... grieving" are far easier said than done; and the griefs we've shared together in 2024 aren't the sort of thing anyone can just kick to the curb and move on from. When we lose a loved one, our grief clouds our thinking, saps our energy for living, and haunts us with the deep disappointment of our hopes for them and us with them and our guilt over what we couldn't do for them— feelings of powerlessness that our grief only makes worse. In our feelings of powerlessness, we may be tempted to do something, anything, to stay active simply to prove that we can do something, only to find that the activity may divert our attention for a time, but only for a time...

The Church's seasons of Christmas and Epiphany usually resound with celebration and praise of Christ Jesus the Light of the World, and rightly; but we often in our liturgical giddiness forget why we can dare to celebrate in the first place: ***because the Light of the World shines in the darkness***— and the darkness is real, especially in the midst of grief. Christ the Light of the World shines in our darkness not by blinding us from the safety of the heavens, but by meeting us right here in our darkness, our vulnerability, our powerlessness ***as one of us***. Christ Jesus comes to us in the vulnerability and dependency of a baby (and before that, a fetus), and precisely as one of us fulfills the assurance He would later give the apostle Paul in Paul's own frustrated weakness and "disability": "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect (think "consummated") in [Your] weakness" [2 *Corinthians 12.9*]. God's grace to us in Christ Jesus takes shape in us not because we've done something to achieve it or win it, but precisely when we've owned up to our own powerlessness and still dare to trust that God is somehow making new life take shape in and through us...

But again, that's much easier said than done. Perhaps it's why I find the prayers of some of the classic saints of old (and today) to be both so unnerving and so compelling. Allow me to share just three of these prayers with you as we begin this new year together:

*"It is the last prayer of our Master, of our Beloved... May it be ours...
May it not only be the prayer of our last moment, but that of all our moments:*

*"Father, I abandon myself into Your hands, do with me what You will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you: I'm ready for all, I accept all.
Let only Your will be done in me and in all Your creatures. I wish no more than this, O Lord.*

*Into Your hands, I commend my soul; I offer it to You with all the love of my heart;
For I love You, Lord, and so need to give myself:
To surrender myself into Your hands without reserve and with boundless confidence. For You are my Father..."*

- Charles de Foucauld

*Take all my freedom, my liberty, my will;
All that I have, You've given to me, so I offer it up to You:
I surrender it all to Jesus; I surrender it all to God's will;
I surrender it all for the Kingdom of God. I surrender my life, my all...*

*Your grace and Your love are wealth enough for me;
Grant me these, Lord Jesus, and I'll ask for nothing more.
I surrender it all to Jesus; I surrender it all to God's will;
I surrender it all for the Kingdom of God. I surrender my life, my all...*

- John Michael Talbot

*Confident of Your love, we bring our whole selves into Your presence: our achievements and our failures,
our proud moments and our hidden shame, our undying dreams and our detached resolve. And in the
courage born of Your grace, we dare to pray in the tradition of John Wesley:*

*I'm no longer my own, but Yours.
Put me to what You will; place me with whom You will.
Put me to doing; put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for You or set aside for You,
praised for You or criticized for You.
Let me be full; let me be empty; let me have all things; let me have nothing.
I freely and fully surrender all things to Your glory and service.
And now, Wonderful and Holy God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Reconciling Spirit,
You're mine, and I'm Yours. So be it.
And this covenant I've made on earth, let it also be made in heaven.*

- John Wesley's Covenant Prayer (slightly modernized)

Yours in Christ Jesus our Lord, *Pr Dave*

"The whole point of what Jesus was up to was that He was doing close up, in the present, what He was promising long-term in the future. And what He was promising for that future and doing in the present was not saving souls for a disembodied eternity, but rescuing people from the corruption and decay of the way the world presently is so they could enjoy, already in the present, that renewal of creation which is God's ultimate purpose — and so they could thus become colleagues and partners in that large project [of new creation]."

- Bishop of Durham and Biblical scholar N. T. Wright

Thank You, Lord, that Your promises aren't for some distant future, but are to be claimed right now, today. Teach us what we must do and say in our local communities and in our larger world to participate in Your promise. Amen.

- From *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*



“Rise, Shine for Your Light Has Come!”

From January 5 through March 4, we'll be celebrating the season of **Epiphany**— a time when we consider the wonder of “God in flesh made manifest” in Christ Jesus, a wonder that truly turns the world upside down. Here at St Paul's, we're celebrating the season in some fun (and a little defiant) ways:

- During the Epiphany season, we'll be using the very familiar **Holy Communion Setting 5** from the blue *With One Voice* hymnal as our base liturgy. It's a musically upbeat setting of our traditional Lutheran liturgy, centered on a bold setting of the angels' Christmas song “Glory to God in the Highest!”
- ✦ **January 5:** Technically, Jan. 6 is the feast day of the Epiphany of Our Lord— but here at St Paul's, we'll be celebrating **the Epiphany of Our Lord on Jan. 5**. With the Magi of old, we bring our gifts and share in Holy Communion around Christ Jesus the Light of the World, the Light no darkness can overcome. We'll still have our Christmas decorations up too— so come and enjoy their beauty!
- ✦ On **January 12**, we'll celebrate **the Baptism of Our Lord**— and we'll be celebrating that day with festive Holy Communion, rejoicing in our own Baptism into union with Christ Jesus with a Thanksgiving for Baptism.
- ✦ Especially in Pennsylvania Dutch culture, **February 2** is recognized as “Groundhog Day”— but in the life of the Church, February 2 isn't about the presentation of a burrowing mammal, but about **the Presentation of Our Lord** in the Temple, in which old Simeon and Anna recognize and acclaim the infant Jesus as “the Light to reveal [God] to the nations and the glory of [God's] people Israel. In many Christian traditions, this feast is also known as **Candlemas**, a time to bless the candles in the church as they symbolize Christ the Light of the World. And for us at St Paul's, February 2 is when we'll be **commissioning our Congregation Council members** for 2025...
- ✦ On **March 2**, we'll be celebrating **the Transfiguration of Our Lord**, where the “brightest and best of the stars of the morning” unmistakably reveals God's glory on the mountaintop before His journey shifts decisively toward the cross for our salvation. It's both a last taste of Epiphany's light and a foretaste of Easter's victory and history's consummation all rolled into one— don't miss it!
- ✦ During the Epiphany season, Pr Dave's hoping to reintroduce our tradition of **“Moments of Faith”**— an opportunity for interested laypeople to share their testimony to how God brought them to the faith in which they now stand, what God has been doing in their life today, and where they've seen God at work with particular clarity. We're hoping to feature these “Moments of Faith” on the third Sunday of each month. If you're interested in sharing your own “Moment of Faith” testimony, please let Pr Dave know so we can schedule you.
- ✦ Remember that we're sharing in worship and fellowship together both **in person and online** and sharing together in **weekly Holy Communion**. And **we'll keep on “livestreaming” our worship services via Facebook Live** and streaming the audio of our services via our **Free Conference Call** line (857.232.0157, conference code 144261). And remember as well that for our worship, **we need a variety of ministry helpers**. . **Crucifers/Acolytes** carry the cross and light the candles. **Communion Assistants** help distribute Communion. **Ushers** direct people to their seats or to the altar, distribute bulletins, answer questions, and guide visitors. **Readers** read Scripture during the service. The **altar guild** prepares the altar before service on Sundays and cleans up the altar after worship. If one of these ministry opportunities interests you, please reach out to the church office for more information. Thank you!



Many Christmas Thanksgivings!

Many thanks to God and to all of you who helped fill our Christmas celebrations with the joy of the Good News even in these strange pandemic days! Special thanks to Aly Brown and Linda Hertzog for keeping our ministries coordinated from near and far; to Linda Hertzog for her hard work decorating our church and sanctuary both for autumn's harvest season and December's Christmas season; to Todd Silvius for his musical gifts and technological genius; to Tom Sutkins, Bill Shaeffer, and Gordon Bryan

for their hard work in making sure we're not only "wired for sound", but for video and livestreaming as well; and to Brett and Marie Shaw and our other altar guild volunteers for keeping our altar area well adorned; and to all of you who helped to decorate our sanctuary and grounds for the holy days. Many thanks as well from Pr Dave for all of your cards and gifts throughout this holiday season. You've made this festival season a powerful proclamation of the loving presence of God with us in Christ Jesus!

Great Work by St Paul's Social Ministry Team!

Our Social Ministry Team has been hard at work these past few months! This year's edition of "**Operation Christmas Child**" yielded 100 boxes of gifts and witness for needy children, more than ever. Many thanks to coordinator Cecelia Casey, with additional assistance from Sue, Aly, Pat, Sara and others.



"Heavenly Homemade" Sale Results: A huge thank you to our bakers, cooks, and buyers at our Social Ministry's "Heavenly Homemade" Sale December 8! Such a quantity and quality! We raised well over \$500, which will be donated to community needs.

Monday Morning Bible Study



Our formerly "Thursday Morning Bible Study" has moved to Mondays! Come join us each week for our **Monday Morning Bible Study** from **10:00 AM-12:00 NN** via Zoom or Free Conference Call! (See article below for instructions. For Zoom, use meeting ID number 370 014 7169 and passcode 119805.) We're "**Living with the Lectionary**", digging into the Scripture readings for the upcoming week to discover the treasures that await us come Sunday. You don't have to be a biblical "expert" to get a lot out of this study— so come on out in the broad daylight and invite your friends to join you! (Note: We won't be having Bible study on New Year's Day, Jan. 1...)

Sunday School is Back!

Kids, come join us for **Sunday School at St Paul's** from 10:15-11:15 AM on the **second and fourth Sundays of each month**. (In January, that's **Jan. 12 and Jan. 26**, even though we'll have our Congregational Meeting Jan. 26.) We have room for all students age 4 through fifth grade, with older kids being helpers/leaders— and we have a great group of students ready to welcome you. Spread the word and join us for Sunday School!





Interested in Communion Instruction?

If you're a baptized Christian (young or older) and you're not receiving the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, you're missing out on the birthright of your Baptism. Pr Dave would like to do some **Holy Communion Instruction** here at St Paul's for **all** baptized young (and older) people who express interest in receiving the sacrament. Right now, we're targeting three Saturday mornings in February (Feb. 1, 15, & 22, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM.) If you're interested in participating in these classes, please contact Pr Dave at prdaveheckler@gmail.com or 570.470.0716.

Join Us Online via Zoom or Free Conference Call!

If you'd like to participate in most of our activities taking place over **Zoom**, go to zoom.us, click "Join a Meeting" at the top right of the page, use meeting ID **370 014 7169**, and if it asks for a password, use **119805** and you should be in. If you're **using your phone**, these dial-in numbers will work to access Zoom: 929.205.6099 or 312.626.6799. After you dial, you'll be asked for the host's code, and you'll type in 370 014 7169, then 119805 and you're in. (What's more, with your smart phone or computer, you can engage video as well as audio, so we can see and hear you— something that's precious right now!) You can also use **Free Conference Call [FCC]**: Dial 857.232.0157, enter conference code 144261, and you're in.



Supporting Our Ministries

Thanks for continuing to support our ministries here at St Paul's! Your tithes and offerings are much needed during this time. As of November 30, our congregation's expenses for 2024 exceeded our income by around \$17,000. We know that right now, funds are tight for everyone; but we encourage you to prayerfully consider how you might be able to support our ministry together. If you'd like to give electronically (via Simply Giving, our church website, or some other electronic means) and would like some information on how to do that, please contact the church office.

You can financially support our ministries in several ways: [1] If you're already signed up for **Simply Giving**, you're already taken care of; [2] You can **mail your offerings** to the church; and now [3] You can go to our church website (www.stpaulsqtown.org) and make your contributions online, even using a credit or debit card. And remember, if you tithe using "Simply Giving" and you've increased your tithe amount on your pledge card, you need to fill out a new Simply Giving authorization form noting the change. Please contact the church office for a form.

Like Us on Facebook (and Otherwise Online)!

Did you know that St Paul's maintains an active church website, as well as several Facebook pages? Check out our online presence at the following sites:

- Our church website: www.stpaulsqtown.org



- Our email address: stpaulsqtown@gmail.com
- Our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown
- For daily Morning & Evening Prayer: <https://dailyoffice.wordpress.com/>

January’s Monthly Special: Upper Bucks

Code Blue

The **Upper Bucks Code Blue** sheltering ministry of **Advocates for the Homeless of Upper Bucks (AHUB)** provides emergency shelter for homeless people when nighttime temperatures and/or wind chills reach dangerous levels— in our case, 26 degrees or below— from **Nov. 15 through Apr. 15**. But this ministry requires volunteers sharing their time, organizational skills, relational skills, and of course, food and supplies to make this shelter available for folks in need. **We especially need women willing to serve in overnight shifts** (either 8:15 PM-2:00 AM or 2:00-7:00 AM). If you’re interested in helping with the ministry of AHUB, please see Pr Dave. (And **AHUB Code Blue is January’s “Monthly Special” giving recipient**— please give as you’re able!)



2025 Annual Meeting to be Held January 26



Our **2025 Annual Congregational Meeting** will be held on **January 26 @ 10:30 AM** in person and via Zoom (using meeting ID **370 014 7169** and passcode **119805**.) All voting members and friends of St Paul’s are encouraged to attend. We’ll be reviewing our life together from this past year, considering some upcoming ministry priorities, and electing several new and returning Council members. Copies of the 2024 Annual Report will be emailed or “snail-mailed” to you by January 21 for you to review. Mark your calendars and come join us!

Synod and Conference News

- ✦ **Bp Bryan Penman** was commissioned as our new Bishop in a grand celebration September 14 at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral. Bp Penman has already been working with our Quakertown Lutheran Cluster in our collaboration discussions and has said he’ll continue to be in close touch with us in our future work.
- ✦ Our next **Quakertown Lutheran Cluster Collaboration** meeting is coming up **January 23 @ 7:00 PM** at Trinity, Quakertown’s Annex Building. We’ve officially established a Collaboration Task Force comprised of three appointed representatives from each of our cluster congregations (plus an alternate or two); our reps are Pr Dave, Brett Shaw, and Gordon Bryan.
- ✦ Our annual **Upper Bucks Conference Assembly** will be held on **March 9** at St Peter’s Lutheran Church in Hilltown. More details are yet to come (including whether Bp Penman can be with us for this event)— but mark your calendars now!



ON-GOING BUSINESS

1. **Vanguard Account Balances.** November 30, 2024, \$120,754.40; October 31, 2024, \$116,557.96; September 30, 2024, \$118,070.37. Two older accounts were recently transferred into new brokerage accounts giving us more flexibility. Note new account numbers: #66237661; #86309173. We do not know why we have these two accounts, possibly created in 2015-2016 or whether they could be merged now. Karen, Patty and Tom are signatories on these accounts.

2. **Income Statements:** November 30, 2024, expenses over income (\$16,683.70); October 31, 2024, (\$15,346.68); September 30, (\$15,421.84).

a. Renewed CDs for 6 months APR 3.9%.

b. To move \$7,860.84 interest from previous CDs from Penn National to QNB or VANGUARD ACCOUNT #1.

c. To move the \$11,000+ recent donation to Vanguard? (Currently sitting in QNB savings account)

d. Pastor's transportation cost to date \$2473.64 vs budgeted amount \$1500. In 2025, he is capped at \$2000 and he will deal with any overage in his own taxes.

3. **Stewardship:**

a. \$1400 raised through hoagie sale by Social Ministry to be moved to St. Paul's accounts.

b. Heavenly Homemade bake sale raised \$559 to be used for community outreach.

c. Counting schedule: Sara Dec 15; Karen Dec 22; Sara Christmas; Bill Dec 29; Tom Jan 5; Patty Jan 12; Sara Jan 19.

4. **Cemetery:** As of November 30, 2024, \$94,510.23; October 31, 2024, \$91,727.25; September 30, 2024, \$92,025.33. New vanguard brokerage account #41363441. Karen, Tom and Gordon Bryan are signatories. Transfer should be completed by end of this week or beginning of next week.

Thank you to all the poinsettia sponsors for helping to make the chapel look so beautiful!

Please note that thru 2025 the Finance Team will be meeting the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm. Members agreed to maintain the current interim schedule thru 2025. We had been meeting on the 2nd Monday of each month until a temporary change was made this past September, that change has now been made permanent.

In a sermon to his theology students at Oxford, Austin Farrer articulated this question in a different way: "What are we to do about the yawning gulf which opens between this Christhood of ours and our actual performance... between what Christ has made us and what we make of ourselves?" His answer is simple: We do the very thing Jesus' disciples did. On the first day of the week, we gather to "reassemble the whole body of Christ here, not a member lacking, when the sun has risen; and have the resurrection over again." We remind ourselves, to borrow Paul's words, that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, that we're dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus— that if anyone is in Christ, they're a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (Rom 8:1, 6:11, 2 Cor 5:17)! In short, we confront the stunning truth that God gazes at us through the redemptive lens of the Son who became incarnate and dwelt among us.

Then, assured of that new identity, we go forth to revitalize God's world... Those who root their identity in Christ have a holy mission to advance His Reign. Christians minister to the poor and suffering not out of humanistic motives, but because the least of these also express the image of God. We insist on justice because God insists on it throughout Scripture. And we honor nature because it's God's work of art and the backdrop for Christ's incarnation. As Simone Weil put it, "The beauty of the world is Christ's tender smile for us coming through matter."

[Philip Yancey]

Happy Birthday, Friends!

1/1 Cole Sauerwald
 1/2 Allyson Mitchell
 1/5 Joyce Fly
 1/6 Rebecca Keeler
 1/7 David Noblit
 1/10 Joyce Kober
 1/15 Wendy Gullett



1/21 Brett Shaw, Eric Ziedonis, Gwen Pascoe
 1/22 Richard Baringer
 1/24 Todd Geiser
 1/25 Sara George
 1/26 Aaron Shimalla
 1/27 Nancy Bauer



And Happy Baptismal Birthday Too!

We rejoice to celebrate people's biological birthdays all the time, and rightly— but why shouldn't we celebrate the anniversary of our new birth in Christ even more gladly? So in January, we wish a *Happy Baptismal Birthday* to *Sarah Bryan and Cassandra Muir!*

"The Hand of God Shall Hold You..."

One of the great blessings of life in union with Christ is that the risen Christ binds us in holy and eternal communion with all His people who've *died*, enabling us to grieve in the freedom born of knowing that our loved ones are gone from our sight and for a time, but still joined with us in the body of Christ and alive in Him in far more than memory alone. In 2024, we've bade farewell (for now) to *Bob Shimalla, Germaine Brown, Pr Rich Knight, Hilda Carmer, Jim Blough, Dennis Silvius, Kelsey Shaak, and Kenny Fly*. Please keep their grieving families and friends in your prayers in these days ahead, that they may come through the dark night of their grief into the resurrection joy born of their Baptismal union with Christ Jesus our risen Lord.



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