



St. Paul's United Church of Christ

We are a welcoming, Christ-centered community called to embody, nurture and share God's Loving Light both within St. Paul's and our wider community.

www.stpaulsbirdsboro.org

We're Glad You are Here!

Welcome: Inspired by Christ and his ministry of God's invitation, we proclaim, "No matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!"

Restrooms: These are located on the basement level of the church. Either go through the double doors in the front of the sanctuary and turn right to go downstairs, or use the stairwell in the back of the sanctuary and then walk through the fellowship hall.

Children: Children of all ages are welcome within our worship services, so that they may learn how to worship God. (We readily expect to hear their presence and recognize their occasional need for a "break" from the worship space.) Children's activity bags, for use during the service, are available by both entrances to the sanctuary. A nursery, located beyond the double doors in the front of the sanctuary, is also available for children up to 5 years old. Please see a greeter for assistance.

Pew pads: Found along the center aisle, these are a great way for us to get to know you, and to share our welcome and thanks for your presence. Please fill out the pew pad and pass it along to your neighbor, before returning it to the center aisle.

Hearing amplification devices: These personal devices are available for your use. Directly connected into our sound system, they make it possible to hear those leading worship without amplifying background noises. Please see our sound person for assistance.

Remember: As we enter into worship, turn off or silence your cell phone, pager, or watch chime. Your presence is a blessing to God and to us! Please feel free to share with us any ways in which we might be a blessing to you in this journey of faith and life.

Get Connected: To become involved in the ministries of St. Paul's, to grow in discipleship, or just to learn more, sign up online for the weekly E-news or monthly Cornerstone Newsletter, like us on Facebook, give us a call, or send an email. It is our joy to journey with you!

Today's Scripture Readings

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-9 + Psalm 126 + 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24 + John 1:6-8, 19-28

300 West First Street, Birdsboro PA 19508
610-582-8461 + office@stpaulsbirdsboro.org + www.stpaulsbirdsboro.org
Pastor's e-mail: pastormotz@stpaulsbirdsboro.org

Order of Worship



Welcome & Announcements

Prelude

(Prayer: Your Light shines within the world for all to see, O God. And yet at times I struggle to fully see. Stir now within my spirit, so that in you I may be.)

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-9 (p. #1157f)

After much struggle, joy is proclaimed for the Israelites. God promises to bring them freedom and life, comfort and peace, strength and glory.

(Please rise in body or in spirit)

Processional Hymn: “My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise”

(Bulletin Insert)

Call to Joy

Leader: Come, sisters and brothers, children and parents;

come one and come all to share in the revelation of God’s Joy.

People: Here we gather in worship of the One who brings true joy into this world.

Leader: Here we light the third candle of Advent,

kindling anew the Joy of God that is for all people and all nations.

People: In Christ, God will establish justice upon the earth.

In Christ, God will redeem and make whole all of creation.

Leader: The voice in the wilderness cries out, “Prepare the way of the Lord.”

People: God’s Joy will break the power of sin’s domain and evil’s bondage, restoring God’s goodness for all.

Leader: Thus as the world sorrows in the face of loss and fear,

we light a candle so that our eyes can see and our hearts be warmed by the joy of Christ, which surrounds us even now.

People: May the light of your Joy pierce our every darkness, O God, so that we, like Christ, can shine your joy within this world, bringing life and healing of your reign to all your people.

Through the Lord of Joy, we pray. Amen.

(The candle of Joy is lit)

Hymn: “We, Hail You God’s Anointed”

The wise shall bow be-fore you and gold and in-cense bring;

All nations shall a-dore you, and praise all peo-ples sing;

To you shall prayer un-ceas-ing dai-ly vows be said,

Your realm is still in-creas-ing, with you, O Christ, as head.

Word Alterations Copyright © 1993, The Pilgrim Press. All rights reserved. Reprinted under OneLicense.net #A-714498

Call to Confession

(Please be seated)

Corporate Confession

**All: Holy God, though we long for your joy,
we struggle to give ourselves to your way.
We want the blessings you have to offer,
without sacrificing the idols of this world.
We want the riches you promise,
without needing to risk the poverty of Christ.
We want everything to be as you have promised,
but only on our terms and according to our way.
We want so much, but what we need is you.
Forgive our every defection, our every sin.
Make us whole in our brokenness, courageous in our weakness,
and compassionate in our every love.
By your Spirit, turn us to you and the joy made known in the way of Christ,
our savior, our Lord, and our God. Amen.**

Silent Confession

(A time of personal prayer for God’s healing and redeeming peace.)

Leader: Lord save and redeem us.

People: Bring us to the day of your rejoicing.

Assurance of Grace

Leader: ...that we may forever know of the merciful and healing way of God.

People: Thanks be to God, who frees us, and all creation, to life!

(All who are able please rise in body or in spirit as the Gloria is sung two times:

1st – Pastor, 2nd – All)

Music: Jacques Berthier, 1982

Glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a, in ex - cel - sis De - o!
 Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry in the high - est!

Glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
 Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

1978, Les Presses de Taizé, All rights reserved. OneLicense.net License #A-714498

Passing of the Peace

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

(After passing Christ' Peace, please be seated. Children up to 9th grade are dismissed to participate in age specific Christian Ed classes for the rest of worship. Parents/guardians of first time students are asked to follow children to their classroom to complete registration information before returning to worship. Children, 3rd grade and younger, must be picked up from their classes.)

Psalm: Psalm 126 (p. #967)

Epistle Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24 (p. #1841)

Paul encourages the Thessalonians to remain steadfast, and filled with joy, in their communal work of ministry, till the day of the Lord's coming.

Hymn: "My Soul Gives Glory to My God"

1 My soul gives glo - ry to my God. My heart pours out its praise.

God lift - ed up my low - li - ness in man - y mar - vel - ous ways.

Words Copyright ©1978,1987, Medical Mission Sisters, All rights reserved. OneLicense.net License #A-714498
 Harmonization Copyright ©1940, The Church Pension Fund, All rights reserved. OneLicense.net License #A-714498

Gospel Lesson: John 1:6-8, 19-28 (p. #1646f)

John claims his role as a prophet of God to prepare the way for the Christ. Though speaking boldly of his calling, he knows the true glory that is to come in the Christ.

Hymn: “My Soul Gives Glory to My God”

From age to age, to all who fear, such mer-cy love im-parts,
dis-pens-ing jus-tice far and near, dis-miss-ing self-ish hearts.

Sermon

“Joy That Speaks In Darkness”

Prayers of the People

(Believing in God’s truth, we open ourselves as God’s servants through prayer.)

The Lord’s Prayer

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

Hymn: “With Joy Draw Water” (verses 1-4)

1 With joy draw wa - ter from the spring; sal - va - tion's liv - ing well.
2 A shoot has sprung from Jes - se's tree; of God the cho - sen One.
3 With love the poor will be re - ceived; the proud will turn a - side;
4 The wolf shall lie down with the lamb; the calf and li - on play.
5 With joy draw wa - ter from the spring; sal - va - tion's liv - ing well.

The Ho - ly One is in your midst; glad prais - es sing and tell!
 A branch of knowl - edge and of truth; a gift of love has come!
 And faith - ful - ness will be a path, and righ - teous - ness the guide!
 God's peace shall dwell with - in the land; a child shall show the way!
 The Ho - ly One is in your midst; glad prais - es sing and tell!

Words Copyright © 1986; rev 1993 Anne McKinstry. All rights reserved. Reprinted under OneLicense.net #A-714498

(Please rise in body or in spirit)

Statement of Faith

**All: In life and in death we belong to God.
 Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
 we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
 whom alone we worship and serve.
 We trust in Jesus Christ,
 fully human, fully God.
 Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
 preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives,
 teaching by word and deed and blessing the children,
 healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted,
 eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners,
 and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
 Blessing and honor be to God who proclaims life and joy for all. Amen.**

(Please be seated)

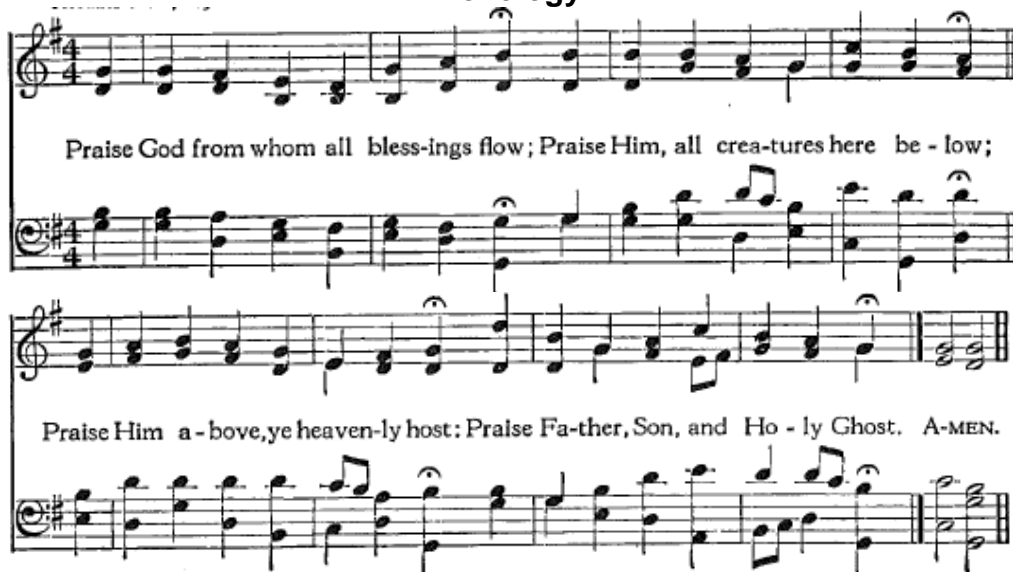
Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

(We give as an act of worship, tangibly offering ourselves to God's service.)

Offertory

(Please rise in body or in spirit to sing glory to God)

Doxology

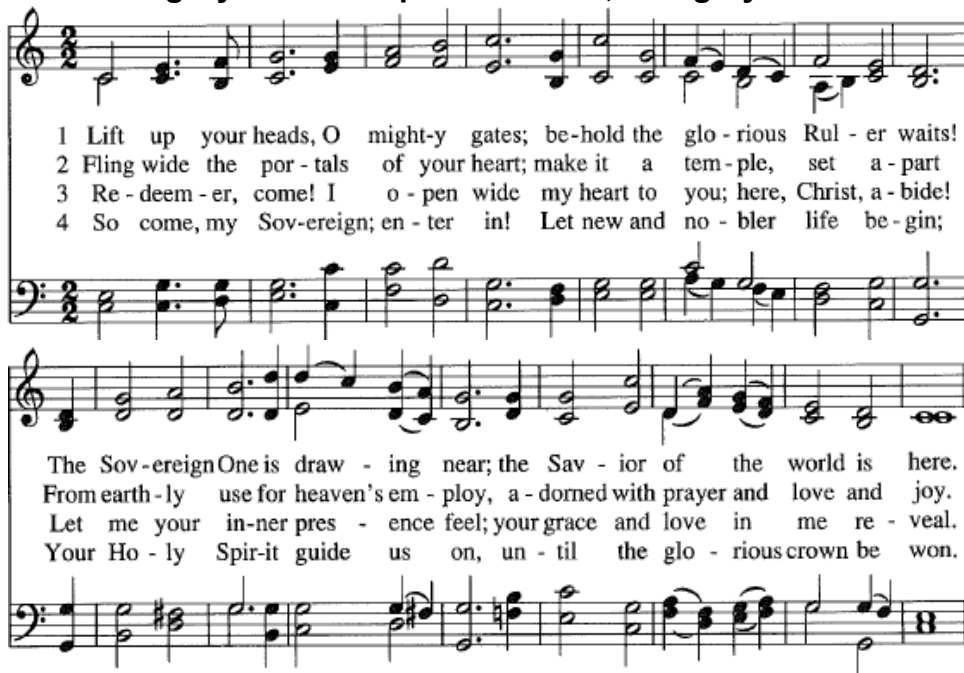


Praise God from whom all bless-ings flow; Praise Him, all crea-tures here be - low;

Praise Him a - bove, ye heav-en-ly host: Praise Fa-ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost. A-MEN.

Offertory Prayer

Sending Hymn: "Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates"



1 Lift up your heads, O might-y gates; be-hold the glo - rious Rul - er waits!
2 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a tem - ple, set a - part
3 Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to you; here, Christ, a - bid!
4 So come, my Sov-ereign; en - ter in! Let new and no - bler life be - gin;

The Sov-ereign One is draw - ing near; the Sav - ior of the world is here.
From earth - ly use for heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.
Let me your in - ner pres - ence feel; your grace and love in me re - veal.
Your Ho - ly Spir - it guide us on, un - til the glo - rious crown be won.

Rejoicing Spirits / Attention lay members and clergy - Would you like to be a part of a planning group for a “shush-free” worship service for individuals with disabilities in the local area? The Rejoicing Sprits Program is an innovative ministry which works with congregations to provide a meaningful, inclusive worship service in a loving and supportive community for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their friends and families. Team development and host site discussions will start in the Spring of 2018. Please contact Melissa Lichtenwalner at mmlichtenwalner@gmail.com if you are interested.

Congregational Meeting / January 21st - With a focus on building and strengthening relationships, we will also highlight some of our ministry transitions, the 2018 financial mission plan, an update to the coaching search process, and a pre-view of the April 21st 5K race. Thank you in advance for sharing in this work of being Christ’s church!

Confirmation Class / Beginning January - Are you in 8th grade, or older, and looking to explore more deeply what it means to be a disciple of Christ and a member of the church? If so, Confirmation may be right for you. In addition to exploring the core components of the Christian faith, our newly redesigned Confirmation class will have participants experientially learning how to be a leader within the church as they live out their discipleship. To learn more, contact Pastor Joe by December 17th, as the class schedule will be developed around participant needs.

Weather Cancellation Policy for Worship - Notice of cancellation, whenever possible, will be posted by Sunday morning at 7:30am on the website, Facebook page, church answering service message, 69news, and WFMZ.



Christmas Eve Worship Services

Sunday, December 24th



9:30am – 10:30am

4th Sunday of Advent worship filled with carols, stories, and Communion’s love this celebratory service is designed for all seeking to rejoice in Christ.

6:30pm – Family Service

Specifically designed for youth and young families. With familiar carols, a children’s message, blessings offered during communion, and a candlelight service, we joyously share the Christmas story.

11:00pm – Midnight Watch

Focusing on our hope filled anticipation of Christ’s advent into this world, we intentionally move from darkness to light. Through word and song, Communion and blessings, we watch and wait for the Light of the world to shine within and through us.