THIS WEEK'S NEWS

St. Paul's United Church of Christ Somerset, PA Sunday, November 29, 2026

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here!

Our Ministry Team

Rev. J. Matthew Deal: *Pastor*
Amanda Deal: *Director of Children & Youth Ministries*
Dave Neimiller: *Organist & Director of Music*
Marcy Shellenberger-Steinly: *Children's and Youth Choir Director*
Todd Wetzel: *Church Council President*
Melanie Downing: *Church Council Vice President*
Andra Snyder: *Secretary*
Jonathan Hillegas: *Treasurer*
Adam Shaffer & Diana Laue: *Trustees*

Church Office: 814-445-4534

Here are our worship opportunities for this weekend:

Sunday Worship in the Sanctuary and on Facebook and YouTube: 9:30am

The Order of Worship for Sunday, November 29, 2026—the First Sunday of Advent

Prelude

*Call To Worship *Illustrated Ministry*
Leader: From generation to generation, God has walked among us.
All: Come, young and old and in-between, to worship in God's presence.
L: From generation to generation, we have sung the songs of liberation.
All: Let us sing of our Redeemer who sets the people free.
L: From generation to generation, we have heard the stories of the God-made human.
All: Let us tell the living stories again and again!
L: Listen, generations of disciples, come together and praise God.
All: Let us call his name Emmanuel, God is with us. Come, let us worship!

*Opening Hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" **119**

*Greeting

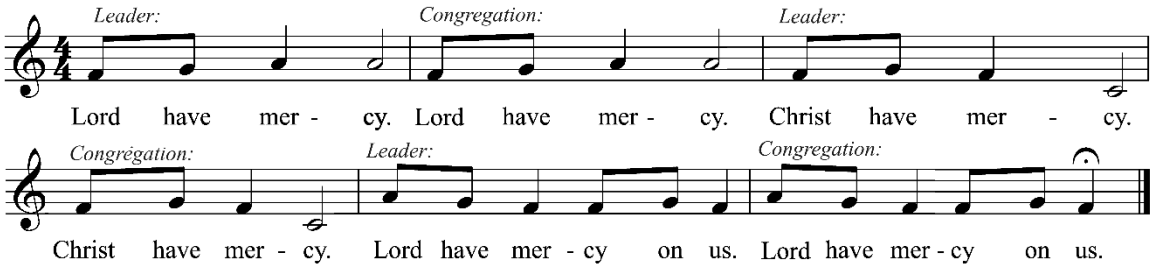
The Call to Confession *Rev. J.M. Deal*
L: Jesus' life reminds us that we are not alone. God came down and walked among us, sharing in our suffering and death.
All: Let us, in good confidence, confess to God our brokenness.

Prayer of Confession *Illustrated Ministry*
Emmanuel, God-with-us, and God of our ancestors, we know we are never alone because you are always with us. You were with us when we did not love ourselves, when we did not love our neighbors,

and when we did not love you. You know these imperfections, and we confess them with boldness because you never leave nor forsake us. Forgive us, God. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

a time for personal reflection and confession

Kyrie



Words of Assurance *Illustrated Ministry*

L: The abundant grace that fell upon our ancestors continues to be poured out over us. God is faithful to forgive us for the ways we stray from the path of love and justice, the path of Jesus. Be pardoned. Receive grace today and be free to love yourself, your neighbors, and our God.

All: Thanks be to God! Amen!

Passing of the Peace

L: May the Peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

Special Music

A Time for Children

Lighting the Advent Wreath—The Candle of Hope *Illustrated Ministry*

L: Into a hopeless world, Emmanuel will be born, God with us, hope for all. And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5)

All: Today, we light the candle of hope, because in God's presence, we find hope.

Light the first candle.

Prayer

Emmanuel, God-with-us, and God of our ancestors, we hope because you have never left us or forsaken us. When we were hateful, you convicted our hearts. When we were depressed, you comforted our souls. When we were bullied, you cried with us. When we were lost, you called us home. When we were angry, you inspired our actions. When we were joyous, you clapped your hands. And when we were grieving, you held us close. Because you have felt it all before and you know all we experience, we have hope you will never, ever leave us. Amen.

*Hymn of Praise "Come, O Long-expected Jesus" **125**

Today's Scripture Lesson **Isaiah 64:1-9**

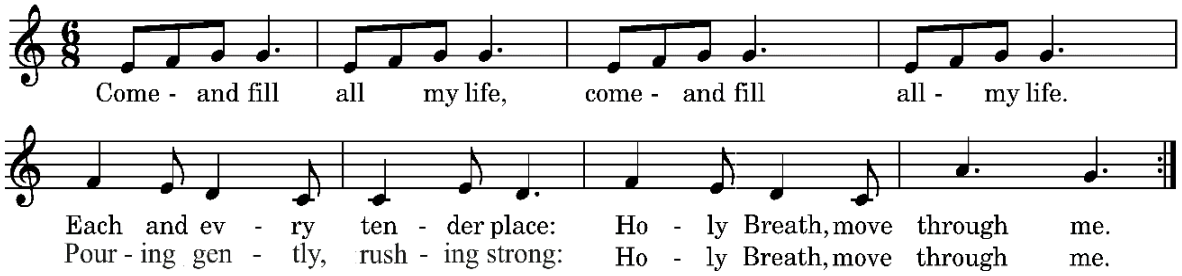
O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds

that we did not expect, you came down; the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name or attempts to take hold of you, for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Sermon "God's People"

Pastoral Prayer

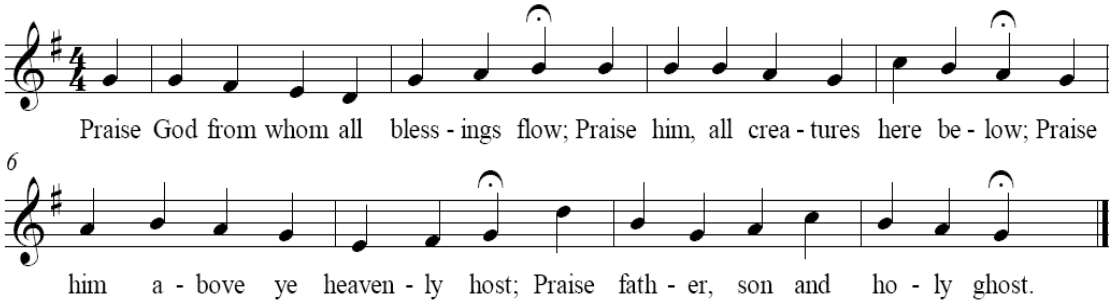
Prayer Response



Invitation to the Offering

Offertory

*The Doxology



*The Prayer of Dedication *Illustrated Ministry*

Emmanuel, God-with-us and God of our ancestors, as we part with our resources, returning an offering from the abundance of your provision, we are filled with hope. We know when we come together with our gifts, you are faithful to create something glorious. Take our offering as an investment into a new world of love and justice. Amen.

*Prayer of Our Savior

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, forever. Amen.

Closing Hymn "Rejoice, the Lord is King!" **699**

*Charge & Benediction

"Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit." And may the blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit remain with you forever. Amen.

*Organ Interlude and Extinguishing of the Candles

Postlude

Please note, we continue to accept offerings during our in-person services, USPS mailed in offerings and online with Tithe.ly. If you have any questions, please call the church at 814-445-4534.

Church Office Hours are Monday-Friday: 8:30am—3:00pm

If someone is not physically in the office when you stop by, Pastor Matt or Dave is likely somewhere else in the building.

Office Phone: 814-445-4534

Greeters and Ushers:

November 29	December 6 Communion	December 13	December 20
Melanie Downing*	Andra Snyder*	Ray Toy*	Adam Shaffer*
Wynne Sechler	Kurt Weaver	Henry Cook	Kate Shaffer
CJ Downing	Debi Weaver	Tina Beistel	Aiden Shaffer
Lisa Yeckley	Gary Cameron	Pete Hauger	Stephen Brick

* Chair

Nursery Volunteers:

November 29	Kate & Aiden Shaffer
December 6	Corey & Alice Whaley
December 13	Gretchen Pritts & Colton Dewitt
December 20	No Nursery Coverage



Weekly Bible Study: Please join us for Bible study every Tuesday at 10am in Salem Chapel.

November's Mission Offering Is the Community Thanksgiving Dinner.

This month's mission offering goes to support our Community Thanksgiving Meal. Your gifts will help to underwrite this year's effort to provide approximately 300 meals to our neighbors! The annual Thanksgiving Meal is offered free of charge to anyone who desires a traditional Thanksgiving meal with members of the wider community. We could not do the meal without your generous support!

Salvation Army Bell Ringing

We will be ringing the bell for the Somerset Service Center on Saturday, December 12 at the Walmart Grocery Entrance. Shifts start at 2pm and end at 7pm. Please put your name on the sign-up sheet in the back of the Sanctuary if you'd like to help. All proceeds go to help with emergency home heating assistance for Somerset County residents.



Angel Tree Program



As in years past, St. Paul's is pleased to partner with the Salvation Army to help make Christmas a little brighter for families in our community by participating in the Angel Tree Program. If you would like to take part, here's what to do: Select a tag (or tags) from the tree in the narthex. Sign your name and phone number on the sponsor sign-up sheet next to your selected tag. Shop for some clothes and gifts valued at approximately $50 (It is absolutely not necessary to buy everything on the list!) Please use a marker to cross out all barcodes on your purchased items. Return your purchases to the church with the name tag attached no later than Sunday, December 13th. Please do not wrap gifts. Talk to Amanda if you have any questions. Thank you for supporting this fun and meaningful ministry in our community!



Come on down to Connections Café!

Please join us every Sunday downstairs in the fellowship hall following worship to connect and catch up with others in our faith family and enjoy a snack & coffee. This has been a long-running, fun and meaningful ministry here, and we need your help to keep it going. Please consider hosting a Sunday, making baked goods/providing snacks, or giving a monetary donation (denote "Connections Café" on your envelope). **Hosts are still needed for the following Sundays: December 27, and January 3rd**. Supplies will be available in the church refrigerator and freezer, and assistance making the coffee is available. If you are willing to host an upcoming Sunday, please put your name on the scheduling display found in Fellowship Hall or speak with Andra Snyder (814-233-0642). Thank you!

Praying for Our Church Partners in Japan

St. Paul's has a long and historic partnership with the Japanese Church. We've renewed this partnership over the past decade following the Fukushima nuclear disaster thanks to the efforts of our UCC missionaries to Japan. Our children will be preparing Christmas cards to send to 3 churches in Japan. Here is an excerpt from a letter send by one of our missionaries, the Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek.

Japanese Christians are a small minority, and often feel judged and misunderstood by the majority culture. At the same time there is a lot of pressure to conform to society, so being different can cause considerable stress. In rural settings where the culture is quite conservative, it is particularly difficult to witness to the Christian faith. I have included prayer concerns for each church. In many of the prayer requests you will find a deep concern for the future survival of the church. Some churches have kindergartens and nurseries that provide the church a vital connection with the wider society. Otherwise, the Christian community can be quite insular. Though the challenges facing the church in Japan are great, I want to emphasize that connections through Christ can bring us together in a mutual relationship that enriches and strengthens the faithful. I have found that we in the US have just as much to learn from Japanese Christians as they do from us. What they need (and US churches as well) is not help but relationship. I hope that an annual relationship through prayer will be just as meaningful for churches in the US as it is for churches in Japan.

Please keep our partner churches in your prayers as we prepare to celebrate Advent and Christmas.

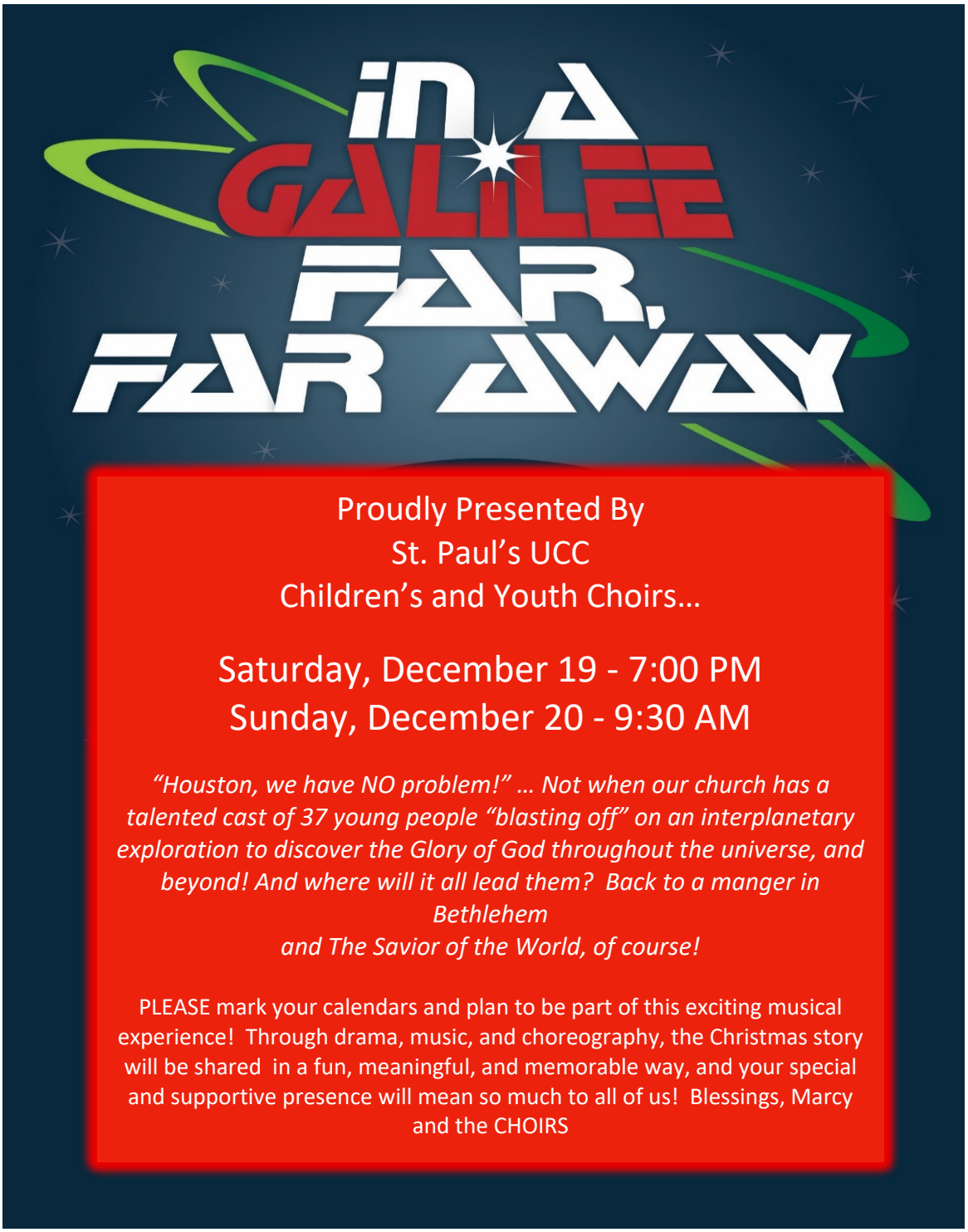
Partner Churches in Japan

Koriyama Church		
Pastor: Rev. Yo Komine	Membership: 60	Established: 1894
About the church: This church was started by the German Reformed Church USA. The city of Koriyama is located along the inland corridor in Fukushima that received high levels of radiation in the 2011 disaster. That was a very difficult time for the whole church community, and because different people reacted differently to the dangers of radiation, difference of opinions lead to divisions in the community. For this reason, the pastor is very much aware of the need to come together around God's word and to be reconciled. In 2022, Koriyama Church joined with another neighboring church. Church attendance increased. They are finding ways to bring the two church communities together as one.		

Prayer Concerns: ◆We pray that our congregation will mature into one body that worships God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ◆This is the fourth year since we rebuilt our church building. May our church community embrace the differences we have and pray and walk together.

Joban Church		(40 children in Nozomi Nursery)
Pastor: Rev. Arinobu Yamada	Membership: 13	Established: 1952
About the church: Iwaki city is 30 miles south of the Fukushima reactors. Though not as bad as the northern part of Fukushima, Iwaki also has had to face high levels of radiation. It is near the coast, and many have suffered from the destruction of the tsunami. The church was rebuilt after the earthquake. They have established a center for measuring radiation, called "Inori." The gamma-ray spectrometer enables them to offer the wider community a place to measure radiation levels in food items, soil and water. They also provide space for people who need a place to share their concerns of living in an area with high levels of radiation. This year they installed a new system of earphones for those who are hard of hearing. Many members are very grateful for this improvement.		
Prayer Concerns: ◆ We pray that God will bless each one of our church members in their daily lives. ◆We are praying for the children in the Nozomi Nursery and their parents. That God will keep an eye out for them and bless them.		

Iwanuma Church		(70 children in Iwanuma Kindergarten)
Interim Pastor: Rev. Shin Nomura	Membership: 17	Established 1885
<u>About the church:</u> The city of Iwanuma is 20 miles south of Sendai. This church was started by the German Reformed Church USA 140 years ago. The historic stone church building has just been registered with the government as a Historical Cultural Heritage Site. They are happy to report three things: 1) they had a baptism in May, 2) a new member transferred in from another church, and 3) Rev. Nomura came to minister to the church in October of 2025.		
<u>Prayer Concerns:</u> ◆ This is our 141st year. We are encouraged by the faithful people who went before us, and pray that we can forge a new path ahead. ◆ Please pray for all of our members, that we will be able to build a warm and loving church together.		



Proudly Presented By
St. Paul's UCC
Children's and Youth Choirs…

Saturday, December 19 - 7:00 PM
Sunday, December 20 - 9:30 AM

"Houston, we have NO problem!" … Not when our church has a talented cast of 37 young people "blasting off" on an interplanetary exploration to discover the Glory of God throughout the universe, and beyond! And where will it all lead them? Back to a manger in Bethlehem
and The Savior of the World, of course!

PLEASE mark your calendars and plan to be part of this exciting musical experience! Through drama, music, and choreography, the Christmas story will be shared in a fun, meaningful, and memorable way, and your special and supportive presence will mean so much to all of us! Blessings, Marcy and the CHOIRS