



~Hope, Peace, Joy and Love~

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,  
which is Christ the Lord.”

~Luke 2:11

Dear Members and Friends,

What are some Christmas traditions you recall, going back as far as you can remember? At the time of this writing, it's still four days till Thanksgiving, so I must admit that I'm not yet smitten by the Christmas spirit. I like to savor the last lingering days of autumn, which is my all-time favorite season.

And yet, Christmas inspires comfort and gratitude for any time of year. My earliest Christmas memories go back to the 1970s, when the Snyders had an artificial Christmas tree made entirely of silver tinsel. We always waited till Christmas Eve to put it up. (Pennsylvania German tradition or simple procrastination? You tell me. In our defense, the day after Thanksgiving was not yet called “Black Friday,” nor was it the start of the Christmas season—as it is for most people today.) You couldn't use Christmas lights on a tinsel tree because they'd melt it and cause a housefire. Nor did we put tinsel on the tree because...that's all the thing was. There were red bulbs, green ones, and gold ones. They wouldn't break if you dropped them because they were made of plastic and thread. A smug-looking angel sat up top. In December, my maternal grandmother would take us to visit Santa Claus at the Five & Dime. I saw his cottonball beard and knew he was an imposter, but a kid knows when to play along. In the churches I grew up in, there was no Advent Wreath and no services on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. You sang your carols on the Sunday prior. Do you recall how hard it was for Santa-believers to fall asleep on 12/24? When the big day came, my sister would waken the whole house well before dawn, to see what our night visitor had left us. (Santa's generosity was less extravagant back then, never more than 3 gifts: 1 big and 2 small.) After opening presents, we went to an early dinner at the home of our grandparents in New Bethlehem, who got GI Joe action figures for my brothers and me, followed by a shorter visit to our grandparents in Oil City, who got us clip-on neckties. The rest of Christmas Day always went like this, without exception: On the night drive home, all five of us kids would be crammed into the backseat. (Seatbelts were not even a consideration.) My siblings would be sleeping, but I stayed awake because I knew that by the time we reached Barkeyville, my parents would start singing. “Oh, tell me why the ivy twines...” They sounded so happy when they sang on Christmas night. It was something I wish I'd heard more often.

Now, my Advent and Christmas celebrations are more complicated but just as predictable. In late November, I adorn our worship space with rich blue paraments for Advent, and the Wreath, and those glorious banners: Hope, Peace, Joy, Love. My kids and I decorate the house on the first Sunday in Advent; the tree is always fragrant and fresh. Christmas Eve is the best service of the year. On Christmas Day, we spend too much time in the car, driving between grandparents. My favorite Christmas of all time was during the pandemic, when the four of us just stayed home and celebrated together.

What are your favorite memories and traditions of the season? Christmas means that God is not far, but near. God is not majestic and remote, but vulnerable and present, here in our flesh, here in our lives. Happy Advent & Merry Christmas to you and yours.

Hope, Peace, Joy & Love,

~Brian



### Worship Plans

December 7

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

No Communion

Kids' Pageant

December 14

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

Communion

Fred Leasure Preaching

December 21

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-16

Matthew 1:18-25

December 24

Christmas Eve

Family Service at 11:00 a.m.

Candelight service at 7:00 p.m.

Music at 6:30 p.m.

December 28

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Christmas

Readings and Carol Sing

Family Christmas Eve Service & Pageant

11:00 a.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

7:00 p.m. (Music starts at 6:30 p.m.)



The Church office will be closed  
Christmas Eve & Christmas Day.

### Christmas Remembrance Dedications

Remember your loved ones this Christmas season through a special donation in honor or in memory of them. All names will be featured in the Christmas Eve service program. Donations will benefit SHIM.



Please [click here](#) for a form or pick one up in the Narthex after worship. Please turn in the form and payment (payable to BHCC) to the church office or drop it in the offering tray.

Deadline to submit forms is Thursday, December 18.

### PASTORAL PONDERINGS

As we enter into December, there is always a rush to get everything done. Decorations are dusted off and put in place. Lists are made for gifts to be bought. Calendars are filled with parties and reminders. Yes, it is a very busy time.

STOP! Take a deep breath and think of the little city of Bethlehem nestled in the shadow of the Jerusalem hills. Allow yourself to be a part of journey to bring the Christ child into the world. Hear the rustle of the straw in the manger and the snorting of the animals in the stable. It is a magical time.

Remember not only the nostalgic thought of past Christmas celebrations, but also the reason for celebrating. As we give gifts to each other, remember to give the gifts that remind us of the Gospel mandate to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the lonely. These are the real gifts that celebrate the birth!

~ Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure, Parish Associate



## Sanctuary Flower Dedications

If you are interested in purchasing flowers or making a donation to the charity of your choice as a dedication in memory/honor of a loved one, please contact the church office to request a form or information.

## Lighting the Steeple



Requests should include: the date(s) you would like to sponsor, the reason you want to sponsor (in honor, in memory, etc.), the name of the person(s) or the event as you want it to appear in the bulletin, and your name. Email your request to: Amy Leasure at [amlea97@hotmail.com](mailto:amlea97@hotmail.com). MULTIPLE sponsors can share the SAME DATE.

December 6

In honor of Joan McAnulty on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, with love from her family.

December 24

In memory of Betty Mancini on Christmas Eve by her family.



## ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

Angels - Shepherds and the Mesiah



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Thursday, December 4, 11. & 18

7:00 p.m. At the Leasure Home

Register by texting or calling

412-952-2508



## From the Eco-Justice Team:

“The time is drawing near.” This traditional phrase, used in Advent hymns and readings, signals the approaching celebration of Christ’s birth. In the modern world, the preparations seem to start earlier every year. A season of celebration and joy can turn into one of excess, waste, and financial strain. While most families have cherished holiday traditions, applying even a few sustainable principles can help alleviate some of the stress.

Just as “quality over quantity” is a motto for many aspects of life, think about giving fewer gifts, but with more thought and meaning. Buy local, buy artisan, buy with meaning. Places such as “Ten Thousand Villages” in Squirrel Hill meet all the criteria. Try your hand at making gifts. Check local thrift shops for jewelry, scarves, or table linens. Make gifts of food, or buy them from local shops. If your gift list includes groups of adults, suggest going to a “secret Santa” system. It saves both time and money, and provides an opportunity to really put thought into it. You could even have a theme for it. We do it with used books, purchased from the Mt. Lebanon Book Cellar. It accommodates all tastes and interests. Give experiences instead of things. They can be as simple as a movie or quite extravagant (too late for Paul McCartney tickets, I’m afraid). Give a donation instead of a gift. Our congregation supports many worthy and urgent causes.

Do some of those things, and then you can sit back happily and, perhaps, ponder making a New Year’s Resolution to give monthly to the organization of your choice.

All of us on the EJ team wish you and yours a beautiful Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year!

## Faithful Conversations

“Faithful Conversations” are held most Sundays after worship beginning at 11:00 a.m. in the Friendship Room. We welcome everyone high school age and older to join us as we learn about and discuss issues of Faith. Our discussions thus far have been well attended and received a positive response. Here are our current plans for conversations in December:

December 7 - No class. BHCC hosts Cookies & Carols

December 14 - When Bad Things Happen to Good People - Introduction to Process Theology

December 21 - The Birth of Jesus - Different Stories

December 28 - Midwinter Festivals of Lights

### **New Intergenerational Mission & Service Opportunities**

There are new opportunities for adults and youth to work together to serve others. Please prayerfully consider participating in one of these events as a family, and/or encourage your youth to volunteer.

Through Sunday, December 7 – Used (or new) Toy Collection

As we enter the season of Advent, one important way we can engage children is in sharing. We are partnering with Play It Forward Pittsburgh to collect gently used toys. Play It Forward organizes the toys and hosts a free shopping event for families in need. This is a great time to recycle toys from your home or encourage a child in your life to select a toy (or two) to share with another child. Donations will be collected in bins located inside the portico entrance and outside of the nursery through Sunday, Dec. 7th. Visit their website for more info.

### **Holiday Season Giving Trees**

The Mission Committee has chosen three ways to help those in need this holiday season. We'll be putting up the trees after church on November 30, and you may choose to participate in a variety of ways. All are helpful.



**Greater Pittsburgh Community Foodbank** -- You'll find tags with various dollar amounts on them. We are all well aware of the food crisis many face, and even though federal funding is being restored, it will take time for people to get back to a fully stocked pantry. You may select a tag with a specific dollar amount, make your check payable to Bower Hill Community Church with Greater Pittsburgh Community Foodbank noted on the memo line, and return your contribution to the church office. Financial gifts to the foodbank allow the organization to purchase needed foodstuffs that are not otherwise supplied to them.

**Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh** -- In times of economic hardship, animal shelters experience an increase in pet surrenders due to financial difficulties, leading to overcrowding and strain on resources. We'll be collecting dog and cat food and treats, toys, leashes, and other items. In addition to your purchase of new and unopened gifts, we will also collect in-kind gifts -- things like newspaper (try finding some of that these days!), along with your old blankets and bath towels (no pulls or holes please). You will find a labeled bin for these items downstairs by the church office.

**Jared Boxes** – Bower Hill Youth are partnering with the Mission Committee to make shoebox-sized bins filled with small toys, games, cards and other items. All items must be new, and food items are not permitted. The boxes will be provided to children during their hospital stays at Allegheny Health Network- Canonsburg, and UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh South. To sponsor a box, select a tag from the tree (suggested items to buy are listed on the tags), and take an empty box under the tree to be sure items fit in the box. Return your filled boxes back under the tree by the end of December.

(2) Help to assemble the Jared Boxes. This will be done in early January (date to be determined).

Be sure to grab a tag or two at this holiday season to help make life a bit easier for others, humans and pets alike!

#### **Unity Food Pantry Collection December 14**

The Unity Food Pantry's greatest need is for boxed cold cereal, instant mashed potatoes, and diapers of any size. In preparation for the holidays, we also welcome donations of cornbread stuffing mix and dessert mixes that are complete in one box (don't require a separate can of frosting).

#### **Western PA Diaper Bank**

Remember to save coupons for disposable diapers and feminine hygiene products that you collect. You can drop them off at the church office during regular business hours or send them with your weekly offering.

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## **Update from the Director of Education Ministries – Amy Grella**

### **Upcoming Youth Meetups**

#### **Middle and High Schoolers (for Grades 6-12)**

Sunday, December 14 - Youth Group Holy Fire & White Elephant Christmas Party

Youth in grades six and up will meet on Sunday, December 14, from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. in room 110 – Bring a friend! Pastor Brian will be leading a Holy Fire service outside, weather permitting. Then we'll move inside for the annual White Elephant Gift exchange. Bring a wrapped gift not to exceed \$10.

Saturday, January 17 – Ice Skating at South Park outdoor rink. We'll meet at the church at 6:00 p.m. We'll skate from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. and return to the church by 9:00 p.m. [Click here to RSVP](#) so you can see who's going and to help arrange carpooling. Please bring \$5 for admission, \$2 for skate rental if needed, and money for snacks at the snack bar.

#### **Tweener Meetups (for Grades 3-6)**

Sunday, December 21 - Game Night (Fellowship Hall). Meet at the church for group games from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. The more the merrier, so be sure to invite your friend group. [Click here to RSVP](#) and see who's coming.

Tweener Retreat February 28 - March 1, 2026 – Save the date for this is a special one-night retreat designed to introduce youth in grades 3-6 to the retreat experience at Crestfield.

#### **Children's Christmas Eve Worship 12/24 at 11:00 a.m.**

Join us for a special Family Worship Service on Wednesday, December 24. It will be geared toward children of all ages. There will be a light coffee hour after this service; extra boxes of treats or cookies to share are welcome!

Childcare will be provided in the nursery for the evening Christmas Eve Service only, with special music beginning at 6:30 p.m., and traditional worship at 7:00 p.m.

Children and Youth will enjoy our annual Sunday-after-Christmas Pajama Party. All kids will be together on Sunday, December 28. Please report directly to room 110 at the beginning of worship (9:30 a.m.), there will be no children's sermon. Kids should be picked up after worship. The nursery will be open that day. Wear your PJ's and bring a pillow and blanket. We will watch a fun holiday DVD. Donut holes, fruit, juice, and milk will be provided.



### Caroling, Cocoa, Cookies and Cheer!

Please join us for our annual caroling event which will be held this year on Sunday, December 7, following worship.

Anne Carper Smith and the Bower Hill Band will lead us in singing a mix of religious carols as well as other familiar holiday songs. Holiday themed games will be available for children.



We invite you to bring a dozen or two of your favorite cookies to share.

During this busy holiday season, we hope you can make time to celebrate with your church family!



# UPCOMING

## Fellowship Events

### Get Outdoors – Moon Park – Lunar Loop

**Saturday, December 6**

Located in Moon Township is Moon Park which encompasses 300 acres. The park is a typical township park with sports fields, pavilions and an amphitheater. We will hike the Lunar Loop Trail which goes around the park. The trail is 3.1 miles long, but we may add the Hollow Oak Trail which would add another 1.2 miles. Most of the trail appears to follow the ridges but there will be some hills to traverse. It looks like most of the trail will be in the woods.

We will meet at 9:00 a.m. in the main parking lot and carpool to the hike. The trailhead should be about a 30-minute drive. The hike should be about 2 hours. So, we will be home around 12:00 p.m. If it rains, we will reschedule. Please email me at [gstchild@yahoo.com](mailto:gstchild@yahoo.com) or call so we don't leave without you

### Hooks & Needles December 6 & 20

Hooks and Needles continues to meet on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month. We will meet at Phyllis Yohe's house from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

New Members and needle workers of all skills welcome! Hope to see you there!

### Koinonia Wednesdays 9:15 a.m. Room 110

All women are welcome to join Koinonia, BHCC's women's Bible study group, and to explore and share in faith and fellowship with other women. This group meets on Wednesdays, fully in-person in the lounge (Room 110). Contact Sarah Neusius ([sraahneusius@gmail.com](mailto:sraahneusius@gmail.com)) for more information or just come and join us.

### Senior Men's Breakfast December 2 8:00 a.m.

Join us at Denny's restaurant at 2180 Greentree Road, near Swallow Hill Road. No reservation is required, and conversation is spontaneous. The regular meeting date is on the first Tuesday of each month. All men are welcome. Any questions or comments, contact Glenn Child at [gstchild@yahoo.com](mailto:gstchild@yahoo.com).

### Bookworms January 26 1:30 p.m. via Zoom

This is an open invitation to anyone attending Bower Hill Community Church, friends and family members, to join Bookworms, the Church Book Club. Reading and discussing books since 2001, members have enjoyed the variety of perspectives readers bring: from 'loved it', to 'yuk', to everything in between.

The group reads fiction, non-fiction, memoirs, biographies, really anything the group suggests. The conversation is assisted by online reader guides. Different perspectives create great discussions. All opinions are welcome. A list of the books read by the group is available on the church website. (<https://www.bowerhillchurch.org/books-read>). Check out the variety!

The group currently meets by Zoom on the fourth Tuesday, January through November, at 1:30 p.m. We met in the evening at the church until Covid made meeting in-person impossible. Virtual contact is still comfortable for most attendees, although that could change in the future.

Please consider joining the group to discuss any book that interests you. Reading every book and attending all the discussions is not mandatory to be a member. Come try us out. We may 'worm our way' into your reading routine. To join the group for the next meeting, send your requests to Sally Child at [sa.child@yahoo.com](mailto:sa.child@yahoo.com).

January 26 - *All the Colors of the Dark* by Chris Whitaker



## **Building and Grounds News**

In the November Newsletter we shared with you that the Building and Grounds Committee is tasked with maintaining and managing the physical facilities for worship, study and fellowship and reported on the installation of the new windows in the Sanctuary.

As often as possible when work needs to be done to maintain the building, the Building and Grounds Committee does the work ourselves to save on costs.

This month, we'll share with you some additional projects that were done this year, not just by those who serve on Building and Grounds, but also by members of the congregation at large.

### **Main Narthex Doors and Trim and Moffett Street Side Doors and Trim**

The Narthex and Moffett Street side doors and trim were in bad shape. A member of the committee volunteered to scrape and paint the doors. This was especially challenging with the hot weather we had this summer. It looks so much better.

### **The Narthex Patio**

During late spring, if you accessed the Sanctuary via the patio outside the Narthex, you probably noticed an unsightly scene. There was 12" high grass and weeds growing in the cracks between the bricks.

This has happened in the past, but we've always gone for the "easy" fix of removing the grass and weeds without looking for a way to prevent the weeds from growing back. This time around Building and Grounds determined that a long-term solution needed to be found. This solution involved not only removing the grass and weeds but also removing the old grout and replacing it with new grout between the bricks.

Contractors could do this work for \$10,000-\$15,000. Instead, we chose to enlist the help of members of the congregation at large and do the work ourselves.

During early summer all the unsightly weeds and grass were pulled. On two Saturday mornings in late summer, a group of 8-10 people manually removed the old grout and new grout was spread on the patio. Then it was sprayed with water to harden. Lastly, a mixture of natural materials was applied to suppress new weeds from growing. In the future, the mixture will need to be applied as needed to prevent more weed growth.

We encourage you to look at the patio outside the Narthex the next time you attend worship and pay attention to the amount of grout between the bricks to appreciate the time spent and hard work that was performed to complete this project. One member commented, it now looks like a great place to hold an event (Strawberry Festival anyone?).

### **Miscellaneous**

This is just a sample of the other work that was done this year: Painted railings, cleared out roof drains, replaced lights, replaced emergency lighting batteries and sanded stuck doors. In addition, committee members meet with contractors to get bids and meet with contractors when work is being performed.



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Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

[www.BowerHillChurch.org](http://www.BowerHillChurch.org)



## PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR CARE LIST

Bower Hill Church Members  
 Matt Arner, Beverly Burke,  
 Nancy Green, Robert Olinger  
 Barb Oram



December 6: Steve Boisvert  
 Joan McNulty

December 15: Morgan Kohler

December 7: Richard Salvante

December 16: Cynthia Kelley  
 Benjamin Wetzel

December 8: Sophie Hicks

December 19: Richard Headley

December 10: Christine Henney  
 Kathy Philson  
 Estelle Smith

December 21: Abigail Boisvert

December 23: Kemp Carter

December 11: Jason Robosky

December 28: Catherine Ventura  
 Brian Vertz

December 14: Leo Geis  
 Tim May

December 31: Betsy Hohlfelder  
 Sarah Neusius

### **THE BIRTHDAY BLESSING:**

Please take a moment to read through the names, pray for them, and offer them your best wishes!

Have we missed YOUR birthday? If your name is not listed, it is because the church office does not have your information. Please call the office administrator at 412-561-4114 with updated information.

# December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>30</b> Deck the Halls Joint Worship with First Baptist 10:00am Children's Worship 11:00am Pageant Rehearsal (Sanctuary)	<b>1</b> 6:00pm BH Phil Rehearsal(Sanctuary) 7:00pm A & P Comm. (Google Meet) 7:00pm Worship Committee (Rm 101)	<b>2</b> 8:00am Men's Breakfast Group - Denny's 10:00am Staff Meeting (Rm 101) 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	<b>3</b> 9:15am <del>Koinonia</del> (Rm 110) 6:00pm Bells Rehearsal (Choir Room) 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Mayfair on Moffett (110, 105)	<b>4</b> 5:00pm Events & Outreach Committee (Zoom) 6:30pm Cub Scout Pack 28 (FH) 7:00pm Advent Bible Study (Leasure's Home)	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Get Outdoors - See weekly E-Blast 1:00pm Hooks & Needles (Phyllis Yohe's residence) 3:00pm Cookies & Carols Rehearsal (FH)
<b>7</b> Christmas Pageant 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship (Coffee) 11:00am Cookies & Carols (FH) 11:00am First Baptist Worship	<b>8</b> 7:00pm B&G Meeting (Rm 101)	<b>9</b> 10:00am Staff Meeting (Rm 101) 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	<b>10</b> 9:15am <del>Koinonia</del> (Rm 110) 6:00pm Bells Rehearsal (Choir Room) 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Mayfair on Moffett (110, 105)	<b>11</b> Women's Christmas Party (Bridgit Wolf's residence) 5:00pm BNI Mt. Lebanon (Kitchen, FH) 7:00pm Advent Bible Study (Leasure's Home)	<b>12</b> 6:00pm Three Rivers Ringers (Sanctuary)	<b>13</b> 5:20pm Rufina Yefimova Music School Recital (Sanctuary)
<b>14</b> Communion Sunday Unity Food Pantry Collection 9:30am Children's Worship 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship (Coffee) 11:00am BH Phil Rehearsal(Sanctuary) 11:00am Faithful Conversations - When Bad Things Happen to Good People (FR) 11:00am First Baptist Worship 11:30am Compassionate Friends Candlelight Service (Sanctuary, Kitchen, FH) 6:30pm Combined Confirmation MS & HS Christmas Party (Room 110)	<b>15</b> Newsletter and Session Report Deadline 7:00pm Budget Summit Meeting	<b>16</b> 10:00am Staff Meeting (Rm 101) 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Finance Meeting (Virtual) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	<b>17</b> 9:15am <del>Koinonia</del> (Rm 110) 2:00pm Speaker Series Planning Meeting 6:00pm Bells Rehearsal (Choir Room) 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Mayfair on Moffett (110, 105)	<b>18</b> 6:30pm Cub Scout Pack 28 (FH) 7:00pm Advent Bible Study (Leasure's Home)	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> BH Phil Rehearsal(Sanctuary) 1:00pm Hooks & Needles (Phyllis Yohe's residence)
<b>21</b> BH Phil Performs in Worship 9:30am Children's Worship 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship (Coffee) 11:00am Faithful Conversations - The Birth of Jesus (FR) 11:00am First Baptist Worship 6:30pm Tween Game Night (FH)	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 10:00am Staff Meeting (Rm 101) 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	<b>24</b> Office Closed - Christmas Eve 11:00am Family Christmas Worship Service 5:00pm Rehearsal 6:30pm Christmas Eve Worship Service	<b>25</b> Office Closed-Christmas Day	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 9:30am Annual PJ Party 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship (Coffee) 11:00am Faithful Conversations - Midwinter Festivals of Lights (FR) 11:00am First Baptist Worship	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	<b>31</b> 9:15am <del>Koinonia</del> (Rm 110) 7:00pm Mayfair on Moffett (110, 105)	<b>1</b> Office Closed - New Year's Day 5:00pm Events & Outreach Committee (Zoom) 6:30pm Cub Scout Pack 28 (FH)	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Get Outdoors - See weekly E-Blast 1:00pm Hooks & Needles (Phyllis Yohe's residence)