



St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Odessa  
*Reaching Up Reaching In Reaching Out*  
Pastor Linda Ray, 406 Main Street, Odessa, DE 302-378-2420  
[www.stpaulsodessa.org](http://www.stpaulsodessa.org) , CCLI 11305346 and Streaming Lic. 21184487

## Epiphany Sunday

January 5, 2025, 11:00 AM Service  
WE ENTER GOD'S GATES WITH PRAISE  
WELCOME WITH MUSIC AND IMAGES  
Mark Holden & June Stemmle, Photographer & Curator

### GREETING

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE: Susan Haberstroh and Garrett Ray

One: We give thanks for the light of hope—unrelenting and inexplicable.

**Many: Our hope in Christ shines on.**

One: We give thanks for the light of peace—strong and unafraid.

**Many: The peace of Christ lights our way.**

One: We give thanks for the light of joy—persistent and unpredictable.

**Many: The joy of Christ brightens our lives.**

One: We give thanks for the light of love—hot and holy.

**Many: The love of Christ comforts and challenges.**

One: We give you thanks for the light of Christ that shines in the darkness

**Many: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.**

**All Singing: O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him Christ the Lord.**

### PRAISE AND WORSHIP

\*OPENING HYMN: *We Three Kings* Red Hymnal 254

\*OPENING PRAYER (all praying): **Gracious God, we come into your presence with joy and praise, grateful for the gift of Christ Jesus in our lives. We yearn to accept your love so fully that our hearts might overflow with love for your world. Gift us not just with your mercy and grace, but with an openness and confidence to receive your gifts. Shine through our hearts, our lives, and our actions, that others may find in us generous friends of grace and love. May our prayers and our actions bring your light and love to the world. Amen**

WORDS FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS: *Peace For The Children* vs. 1 Green Hymnal 3125

*Peace for the children, peace, peace. Peace for the children we pray. Following the path of one of peace, we work for healing, we work for peace. Peace for the children we pray.*

Susie Cate shares a blessing with our children!

FIRST LESSON: *Isaiah 60: 1-6* (CEB)

Arise! Shine! Your light has come;  
the Lord's glory has shone upon you.

<sup>2</sup> Though darkness covers the earth  
and gloom the nations,  
the Lord will shine upon you;  
God's glory will appear over you.

<sup>3</sup>Nations will come to your light  
and kings to your dawning radiance.

<sup>4</sup>Lift up your eyes and look all around:  
they are all gathered; they have come to you.

Your sons will come from far away,  
and your daughters on caregivers' hips.

<sup>5</sup>Then you will see and be radiant;  
your heart will tremble and open wide,  
because the sea's abundance will be turned over to you;  
the nations' wealth will come to you.

<sup>6</sup>Countless camels will cover your land,  
young camels from Midian and Ephah.

They will all come from Sheba,  
carrying gold and incense,  
proclaiming the Lord's praises.

HYMN OF PREPARATION:

*The First Noel* vs. 1,3,5

Red Hymnal 245

\*GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew 2: 1-12* (CEB)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. <sup>4</sup> He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

<sup>6</sup> *You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,  
by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,  
because from you will come one who governs,  
who will shepherd my people Israel.*"

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." <sup>9</sup> When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. <sup>11</sup> They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

One: May this story inspire us all. **ALL: To walk in the way that leads to life.**

THE MESSAGE:

"Double Messages"

Pastor Linda Ray

### WE GIVE THANKS

OFFERTORY PRAYER: Generous God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Thank you for the gifts of Christmas. Thank you for inviting us to bring gifts to your world. Bless the gifts we bring, that they may become vessels of Christ's light and love in the world. Amen

THE OFFERTORY: Today's **Yellow Hat** mission offering supports **Friends of Zoar (Steve Johnson)**.

CHORAL  
ANTHEM

\*THE DOXOLOGY:

Red Hymnal 95

## GATHERING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION:** Gracious God, we would like to be among those who saw the coming of the Christ Child, those who dropped all that they were doing and traveled to worship the coming of God's love into this world. We would like to be those who cared for God in infant vulnerability; who tickled and cuddled and comforted the growing child, that he might know love and safety. And yet, merciful God, we must recognize all the times we are more like Herod. Whenever we, in our actions or in our inactions, find our own need for control more compelling than the needs of others for health and safety. Whenever we cling to the security of our privilege, rather than standing up for the rights of the oppressed. Whenever we are complicit in the harming of innocents for the sake of profit, or power, or because we fear to know, and to change, the injustices of this world. Loving God, we confess our sins against you and one another and pray that you will fill us with your light, that we may live our lives as true disciples in your name, without counting the cost. In the name of Christ, the one who showed us the way, we pray. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION:

Pastor Linda Ray  
Officiant Server- Dawn Buckworth

Reader 1: The Lord be with you.

**ALL: And also with you.**

Reader 1: Lift up your hearts.

**ALL: We lift them up to the Lord.**

Reader 1: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**ALL: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Reader 1: It is right and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. Before the mountains were brought forth, or you had formed the earth, from everlasting to everlasting, you alone are God. You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in our image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, our love remained steadfast, You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**ALL: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Reader 2: You sent Jesus to us, the light of the world. Jesus promised that those who followed him would never walk in darkness, but would have the light of life. The light of his life shone on all people, revealing the truth of your love. Jesus fed the hungry, cured the sick, ate with sinners, and proclaimed your truth.

(Lifting the bread) Before Jesus was betrayed, he gathered with his friends for a meal. Taking the bread, Jesus gave thanks to you and broke it. He gave it to his friends, saying, "Take and eat. I am with you now and forever. Let this meal feed you. Remember me as you eat."

Reader 1: (Lifting the cup) When the supper was over, Jesus took the cup, blessed it, and shared it with his followers, saying, "This is the cup of the new covenant, given for the forgiveness of sins. It is a gift for you and for all people. It is my love offered for you. Drink of this and remember me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**ALL: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!**

Reader 2: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup that they may be for us the living presence of Jesus Christ, light of the world, our hope for all creation. Make us one with Jesus, and one with each other, as we walk in the light, singing your praises. Through Jesus Christ, light of the world,

and through the Holy Spirit, radiance divine, all praise is yours, eternal God, now and forever, world without end.

**ALL: AMEN. AMEN. AMEN.**

Reader 2: Let us join our hearts and voices in the prayer that God continues to teach us:

**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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory Forever. AMEN.**

*(The congregation will come forward to partake of the bread and cup.)*

PRAYER AFTER RECEIVING

**WE GO IN THE SPIRIT!**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY AND SERVICE

SENDING HYMN: *Angels From The Realms of Glory*

Red Hymnal 220

POSTLUDE

**SERVING IN WORSHIP TODAY**

Liturgist: Jeanne Buckworth

Audio/Video: Charlii Miller & John Littell & John Cate & Carlotta Cline, Garrett Ray

Communion Officiant/Server: Dawn Buckworth

Ushers: John & Patti Harmer, June Stemmler, John Harmon, Denis Shaffer, Laura Widger

Director of Music – Dr. Kathleen Shannon & Organist/Accompanist: Jin Kyung Seo

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Rev. Linda Driver Ray, Pastor	<a href="mailto:lindaray@vaumc.org">lindaray@vaumc.org</a>	(540) 207-1787
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Duane Dillard, Minister of Music	<a href="mailto:duanedillard@gmail.com">duanedillard@gmail.com</a>	(443) 593-2470
Jin Kyung Seo, Organist/Accompanist	<a href="mailto:jinksblue@gmail.com">jinksblue@gmail.com</a>	

**ANNOUNCEMENTS - THIS WEEK AT ST. PAUL'S:**

<b>Sunday 01/05</b>	<b>Worship Services 8:30AM ASL &amp; Livestreaming and 11AM, Adult &amp; Children's Bible Study 9:45AM, Pak-A-Sak Sunday</b>
<b>Monday 01/06</b>	<b>Weekday Bible Study 9AM, Trustee Meeting 6:30PM</b>
<b>Tuesday 01/07</b>	<b>ODB, Cub Scouts 6PM</b>
<b>Wednesday 01/08</b>	<b>TOPS Mtg 5:45PM, Bell 6PM &amp; Choir 7PM Rehearsals</b>
<b>Thursday 01/09</b>	<b>10AM Prayer and Praise Group</b>
<b>Friday 01/10</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Saturday 01/11</b>	<b>Coffee 'N Chat 11AM-1PM, AA Mtg 7PM</b>

**atTAcK ADDICTION PRESENTATION:** Mark your calendars for January 19<sup>th</sup> at 3PM at St. Paul's for a presentation about addictions brought to you through the Health Ministries Committee and the atTAcK Addictions organization. You will receive addiction education in recognizing signs, talking about this with young children to help to prevent misuse of drugs and how to give a dose of Narcan to reverse an overdose. You must attend in person to receive a Narcan dose. Overdose deaths are still happening and rising in our community. Administering Narcan can save a life! Everyone is welcome to attend, and this is open to the public.

**COFFEE 'N CHAT:** will be held January 11<sup>th</sup>, Saturday, at St. Paul's Fellowship Hall from 11AM-1PM. This invitation is extended to all the ladies of St. Paul's to come and share ideas for a Women's Retreat and the Women's Ministries.

**FINANCE CHAIR NEWS:** Finances through November 30, 2024, Melissa Brooks, Finance Chair

	Actual YTD	Budget
Revenue	\$320,831	\$268,524
Expenses	\$299,902	\$290,333

**FINANCE/TREASURER-ALICE MULLINS NEWS:** Stewardship pledge totals through December 3, 2024, for the 2025 Budget:

**61 Pledges, Total Pledge Amount: \$213,685. Thank you to all who have so generously pledged so far!**

**BIRTHDAYS:** January 5 – Bill Hutchison; January 6 – Hap Bonham; January 11 – Jennifer Reed; January 12 – Andrew Widger

**ANNIVERSARIES:** January 9 – Mike & Ally Kennedy

**PRAYER REQUEST BOX** is available in the Narthex along with the prayer request cards. Just complete the form, fold, and drop in the box on the corner shelf located at the second set of doors into Fellowship Hall. You can also email Bonnie Valeski in the Church Office with your request at [bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org](mailto:bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org).

**Please be sure to let Bonnie know you want to remove your request. Thank you**

**PRAYERS FOR:** David & Dorothy Dudgeon, Carolyn Akin, Jonathan Brooks, John Guy, Levi Schrum and family, Marilyn Hendershot, Dennis Downes, Jeffrey & Cheryl Martin, Nancy- sister of Alice Rizzo, Ethan Porter, George, Dylan Green, Kevin Quiveors – Al Calbazana’s brother-in-law, John Littell, and Brenda Shaffer’s nephew, Scott, Mindie, and Bo Pleasanton, Norman Parks, David Sheats, Amanda Bralund, who is going through cancer treatment, Terry Sweeney, Michael Whitehead who is doing better but still grateful for prayers, Barbara Apigian, Dan & Bev Moore and family, Angela Christian’s mother, Kathy Golden, Sue Austin, the passing of Frank Hartenstein - Beth O’Grady’s father, Georgiana Fennemore, Phil Elliott, Phil’s parents, Faye Taylor’s nephew Matthew Smith, Bob, Ken, Wells, nephew of Steve Johnson - Matthew, Henry Spencer, June Stemmler, Blain Shoun, Sue Holden, Justin Marusa – cousin to Cindra Holland, having surgery for lung cancer in January, Karen Ellis’ friend Ellen who is having severe eye problems, also Karen Ellis’ friend Cindy who needs prayers for healing and pain management after surgery, Skip Bason, Kenzel Messick’s brother Lem – for recovery to go well, family of a teaching colleague of Pastor Patti’s, the passing of the niece of Janet & Charli Miller, Rev. Cindy & David Koski recovering from recent falls, passing of Stephen Faulkner, Dawn Buckworth’s brother in his travels to support friends Andy & Jo Ellen Counterman on the sudden loss of their son Caleb, Ellie Leuliette & Dick Leuliette, Nikolai Gregors. Karen Kolf – sister to Alice Mullins.

**Upcoming Yellow Hat Schedule for January 2025**

- 1/05/25 Friends of Zoar (Steve Johnson)
- 1/12/25 Our Daily Bread (Sue Holden)
- 1/19/25 General Missions Fund
- 1/26/25 Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge (Cathy Blanco, Melanie Blanco)

**Please make sure ALL checks are made payable to St. Paul’s UMC, including checks for the Yellow Hat missions, writing the organization’s name on the memo line.**

**All donations are collected, recorded, entered in the system, and deposited into the Church’s operating account on a weekly basis. Also, on a weekly basis, a check is mailed to the specified yellow hat organization for the total amount collected.**

**It is very important that donations be placed in the offering plate, yellow hat or mailed to St. Paul’s UMC. You are also welcome to drop off donations in the black box on the wall just inside the side door to the Church, making sure it is secured in an envelope with your name on the front. This is to guarantee acknowledgement of your donations when the yearly contribution statement is sent for tax purposes.**

**Thank you all for your continued support for St. Paul’s as we are growing in our faith through generosity. Alice Mullins, Treasurer**



**ST. PAUL'S**  
United Methodist Church of Odessa  
*Reaching Up, Reaching In, Reaching Out*

## **St. Paul's Mission Statement**

### **Reaching Up to praise God in vibrant worship**

God calls us to live out our discipleship grounded in Christ's awakening us to the glory and majesty of God in all creation, and we respond together by worshiping God with our gratitude and praise. Standing or lifting our hands high are both ancient postures of worship, and so our dance of discipleship involves reaching up with our hearts, souls, and bodies, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.  
For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*

*Psalms 100:4-5 (NRSV)*

### **Reaching In to deepen our spiritual walk with Christ**

Christ accepts us as we are, and then calls us to follow him and learn from him, growing in our spiritual walk-through practices the church calls spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting, meditation, studying God's Word, individually and with others. As we grow in the knowledge of God, we discover more about the extraordinary plans God has for our lives.

*"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

*John 8:31-32 (NRSV)*

### **Reaching Out with acts of love and compassion**

Here's where it all comes together! Assured of God's eternal love, strengthened by the grace and knowledge of Christ, we are ready for the Holy Spirit to kindle a fire in our lives, gifting us for the labor of love God has prepared for us to accomplish. Having fallen in love with God, we love and serve our neighbors.

*"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."*

*Matthew 25:40 (NRSV)*

## **MISSIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **WEEKLY GATHERINGS – CHURCH BUILDING**

OFFICE HOURS Tuesday -Thursday, 9 AM-2 PM

- Boy Scouts –Mondays 7-8:30 PM
- Cub Scouts –Tuesdays 6-8 PM
- TOPS Meeting – Wednesdays 5:45 PM.
- St. Paul's Prayer and Praise Group Ministry – Thursdays 10 AM @Carole Harmon's Home
- St. Paul's Handbell Rehearsal – Wednesdays 6 PM
- St. Paul's Choir Rehearsal – Wednesdays 7 PM
- AA Meeting – Saturdays 7 PM

### **MONTHLY GATHERINGS**

- Finance Meeting – 2nd Monday 6:30 PM
- Trustees Meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> Monday 6:30 PM
- SPRC Meeting – 4th Thursday 6:30 PM
- Leadership Meeting – 3rd Tuesday 6:30 PM
- Reconciling Ministries – TBD

**Adult Sunday Bible Study 9:45AM**

**Children's Sunday School 9:45AM.**

**Adult Bible Series Mondays 9AM**

### **Flowers for Worship**

If you are interested in honoring a loved one with flowers at the altar on a particular Sunday, please call Bonnie or email the church office at [bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org](mailto:bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org) so we make sure the information is added in the bulletin and reserved for you. You can have a florist create a bouquet or you can create your own, and then bring it to the church on Saturday or before the 8:30 am service on Sunday morning.

### **Compassionate Card Ministry**

The Compassionate Card Ministry is made up of 20 dedicated members of our congregation who create hand-made cards and encouraging messages to those in our directory, within our congregation, those on our prayer lists and others who are brought to our attention. Our purpose is to spread kindness and love to others through uplifting and personalized sentiments on hand-made cards. If you are not in our directory and would like to be added to our list, or if you know someone who would benefit from the blessing of a card, please contact Nancee Bleistine, [nbleistine@yahoo.com](mailto:nbleistine@yahoo.com) or 609-217-1924.

### **Prayer and Praise Group Ministry**

Carole Harmon hosts a prayer circle, currently Thursday mornings at 10 AM - in person. Please contact Carole if you are interested in joining the group or have a special prayer request. You can also find prayer request cards and box on the corner shelf in the Narthex.

### **VANCO: Manage Your Giving Online**

Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions and view your complete online giving history from anywhere you have access to the Internet. Simply follow these easy steps:

- 1) Visit the church website at [www.stpaulsodessa.org](http://www.stpaulsodessa.org) and click on the VANCO Online Giving button to the left of the screen.
- 3) Click on the Link to Online Giving thru VANCO button, then
- 4) Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and to schedule your RECURRING CONTRIBUTIONS.

### **Love Thy Neighbor Fund**

Our "Love Thy Neighbor Fund" was created to help those in need in the MOT community. This fund may support a time in someone's life when he/she may need a little kindness and generosity to help endure and survive a challenging situation. If you can donate, please make checks payable to St. Paul's UMC and then write in the memo area it is for "Love Thy Neighbor Fund." Please note, this fund is SEPARATE from the Yellow Hat. Thank you, Love Thy Neighbor Committee

### **Deep Roots**

Nadine Johnson & Karen Ellis continue to work with the "Deep Roots" mission. This group works with families who are disconnected through homelessness and provides transitional shelter and other services to families in need. They need your help as they continue to contact members of the church to help with making meals once a month feeding approximately 50+ individuals. Here's hoping you will be able to help us with this very important and necessary mission. Thanks so much! Contact Karen Ellis at [iluvbrmuda@gmail.com](mailto:iluvbrmuda@gmail.com) and Nadine Johnson at [nadine.faye.johnson@gmail.com](mailto:nadine.faye.johnson@gmail.com)

### **Our Daily Bread Food Donations**

214 N Broad St, Middletown, DE 19709

Volunteers Needed – day and evening hours and different areas of need, filling bags, handing out meals, etc.

Volunteer Opportunities can be found at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10COE4FAEA82CA3F5CF8-volunteer>. Contact Sue Holden, Missions Co-Chair, at 802-324-6167, [susieq2951@aol.com](mailto:susieq2951@aol.com), with any

questions. Also, find information and volunteer sign-up forms on the website,

<https://www.ourdailybreadmot.com>. **On-line Training Coming Soon!**

ODB is most thankful to all who donate either monetarily or in kind. Your generosity helps ODB feed those in our community who are facing food insecurity. Listed below are the items needed to stuff our side bags and other items that are needed on a regular basis. Donations can be dropped off on Tuesday from 9:15 to 11:30AM

- Individual bottles of water
- Individual bags of salty snacks
- Individual packets of sweet snacks
- Individual fruit cups and/or applesauce
- Fresh fruit (apples, bananas, oranges)
- Boxes of breakfast cereal
- Boxes of mashed potatoes
- White bread
- Baked beans (large cans)
- Gallon size zip-loc bags
- Lg black garbage bags
- Cans of soup

Thank you for any and all kindness!

### **Neighborhood House**

Neighborhood House really appreciates St. Paul's ongoing support in so many ways. At this point, we are low on some items in the food pantry. These items are especially needed right now in our food pantry, though all donations are gladly accepted with the inventory being low now.

**Currently we are really low on personal hygiene products as well as some food items:**

- 1. Bottled water**
- 2. Toilet paper, Toothpaste, Soap, Shampoo & conditioner**
- 3. Peanut butter & jelly (medium size)**
- 4. Pasta sauce**
- 5. Tuna/Tuna Helper**
- 6. Hamburger Helper**

**These non-perishables are needed to keep our pantry stocked:**

Chef Boyardee, beef stew, Spam ,pancake mix/syrup, snacks - cookies, crackers etc.

**ADDITIONALLY, THERE IS ALWAYS A NEED FOR ADULT SIZED DISPOSABLE DIAPERS AS WELL AS FOR BABIES/CHILDREN IN SIZES 4, 5, AND 6, AND WIPES. WE HAVE NUMEROUS MOMS WITH BABIES AND TODDLERS WHO TAKE THEIR MONEY FOR FOOD AND BILLS TO BUY THEM.**

Donations can be left inside the Church. We look forward to another great year working together to feed the hungry. Thanks to all, Marilyn Hendershot, Family Services Specialist, Neighborhood House, Inc.