The newsletter of the Ewing-Covenant Presbyterian Church December 2020

ONNECTIONS

Connecting Thoughts

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,

make straight in the dessert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low.

the uneven ground shall become a level, And the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together.

Isaiah 40:3-5a

These familiar words from the prophet Isaiah help us to understand what the period of Advent is all about. Advent is a season of preparation; yes preparation for the celebration of the birth of the Christ child, but even more, of preparation for the return of Christ and the full realization of the kin-dom of God and Christ's rule of love. During this season, the Spirit works on us to spread the fruits of its presence, kindness, love, mercy, patience and all the others.

Yet Advent is often difficult. It can seem like our hopes and expectation for the coming of the Beloved Community that Advent portends, leaves us all the more aware of how far we actually are from what God desires for us. That is even more true this year in the tri-pandemics of covid-19, prejudice, and politics. That roadway in the desert seems more circuitous, the valleys are like gorges, and the mountains and hills higher than ever. We have a lot of roadwork to do if we are to "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

But then at the end of Advent comes Christmas, and with the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child comes the realization that God has sent God's own son to clear the way through the wilderness of our life, our lives. Christ is the Way, the Truth and Life. The way has already been cleared, the way made straight, and we are free to walk this road of faith.

What would it mean to walk this way of life? You tell me. For you have been touched by Christ and shown the way. And as you walk that highway others begin to see in you what the way of the Lord is. Prepare the way of the Lord by walking in the light of the Lord, and show others the way.

May your Thanksgiving be blessed, and your Advent joyous,

Pastor Paul

Otherwise, 2020

Written in appreciation of poet Jane Kenyon

Sometimes, it is good to remember that things could be otherwise....

Despite Covid19 and social distancing, I worship on Sunday mornings with my community of faith. It could be otherwise! I can't believe I am saying this... but ...thank you Lord for Zoom.

Despite campus closures and being apart from roommates and friends, my kids are continuing with their studies, learning about the world and becoming adults. It could be otherwise! I can't believe I am saying this but thank God for Zoom, and bringing the kids back home.

Despite my lack of home office space, having my husband's office in our bedroom and the fact that my fingers don't type very well these days, I am able to work remotely. It could be otherwise! I can't believe I am saying this, but thank you Lord for Zoom, my having a full house again, and ethernet cable.

Despite it being Advent already, and faithful attendance at reopening committee meetings, I continue to wait for the church to gather in-person again. Lord, it sure could be otherwise. There could be worship together in our church worship space, watching as families light the Advent candles, lifting our voices together to sing favorite carols, hearing the Word proclaimed and sharing communion while sitting shoulder to shoulder with Sisters and Brothers in Christ. (cont'd)

But it is not otherwise. It is now! It is world pandemic, face masks, hand-sanitizer and 6 feet apart distancing.

I can't believe I am praying this? Thank you Lord for Zoom (even zoom updates), for kids, for neverending laundry to do, for dishes left in the sink 24/7, for the constant raiding of the fridge and pantry, for ethernet cable everywhere—even up the staircase. Lord, thank You for the little bit of patience I feel from reminding myself: it could have been otherwise. But most of all, Lord, thank you for your peace: the peace I feel when I accept (maybe even enjoy?) that it is what it is...



All Blessings and Peace to you during this Advent season,

Pastor Ann

December Worship

Through this Advent and Christmas Season we will continue to gather online for worship. The Zoom link and phone number for our worship services will continue to be:

https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/910100569

Or by telephone dial 1-929-205-6099, if asked, enter the Webinar ID: 910 100 569

Sunday, December 6, - 2nd Sunday of Advent 10:00 Worship Service - Communion (we share the sacrament as you break bread and share the cup from your home).

Advent Word – Peace, **Jesse Tree Symbol** - the Tablets

Rev. Paul Rhebergen preaching

Lectionary: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2-8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Sunday, December 13, - 3rd Sunday of Avent 10:00 Worship Service

Advent Word - Joy, **Jesse Tree Symbol** - the Grain

Rev. Paul Rhebergen preaching

Lectionary: Isaiah 6:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Sunday, December 20, - 4th Sunday of Advent

10:00 Worship Service

Advent Word – Love, **Jesse Tree Symbol** – the Lamp

Rev. Paul Rhebergen preaching

Lectionary: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55;

Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Wednesday, December 23, - Service of Solace and Hope 7:00 PM

This is a service for all who know that the joy of Christmas is always tempered by our experience of loss. Join with us for this online service for lamenting the losses and disappointment of this past year and of this season. Come use this time of prayer and reflection to prepare the way within your heart and soul for the birth of the Christ Child, who is the source of our hope and joy.

Thursday, December 24, - Christmas Eve

8:00 PM - Christmas Eve Service

Rev. Paul Rhebergen preaching

Be sure to have your candle ready to light as you sing **Silent Night**

Jesse Tree Symbol - the Star

Sunday, December 27, 1st Sunday of Christmas 10:00 Worship Service

Rev. Ann Schoonover preaching

Lectionary: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Gala-

tians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

Sunday Morning Bible Study - 9:00 AM

Led by Sam Bonner

https://zoom.us/j/564813133?

pwd=WXV3dk5zYlkvUGJDUUEwZEc2R3REdzo9 By phone, dial 1-646-558-8656 and enter when asked the meeting ID 564-813-133 enter passcode: 651735

Tuesday and Thursday Chat's

with Pastor Ann

Tuesdays at 10:00AM to 11:00AM.

Meeting ID: 810 1046 7123 Password: 271785 By phone +1- 929- 436-2866 enter password: 271785

Thursdays at 7 PM to 8 PM.

https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/960150849? pwd=bTdYTVV3S1MoR2xmenZSWlc5MnhMUTo 9_Meeting ID: 960 150 849 Password: 079496 By phone dial 1-929 -436- 2866 Password: 079496

Wednesday Evening Faith Conversations with Pastor Paul 12/9 & 12/16 6:30PM -7:30PM Check in with other folk, then view or listen to a short video and explore how our times have affected how we understand God, and Christ's command

to love one another. Join by Zoom Link or phone: https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/86079729283 By phone dial 1-929-205-6099 or 1-301-715-8592 enter Meeting ID: 251-970-464

Please remember that our **Worshiping Com**munity will continue to need your financial support during this unprecedented time. Your gifts, your tithes, your offering envelopes will continue to support us through this challenge. Your contributions can be mailed to the church office or dropped through the mail slot in the door of the church office. You can also contribute to the Ewing Church online through the congregation's website, ewingchurch.org, or use the more efficient route of arranging for your bank to make a direct deposit to the church. This would allow you to make regular contributions from your account to the church's. If you are interested in this, please contact the church office and we will provide more information.

Note: Kindly make all checks out to: Ewing-Covenant Presbyterian Church. This is important so that we can close out the old CPC bank account.

Advent Devotionals

As we come to the season of Advent, we will be offering you two different Advent Devotional opportunities, both of them developed by the faculty and staff of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. We will be emailing both devotional guides to your homes.

The first is called **The Jesse Tree: Study and Activities, Advent 2020.** It uses the great tradition of the Jesse Tree to guide us on the journey through Advent this year. The Jesse Tree is Jesus' Family Tree that is outlined in Matthew 1. It will include links to and introductory video, and instructions on how to create your own Jesse Tree. Over the next four weeks you are welcome to participate daily through the written curriculum or one time per week via video and the written curriculum.

Weekly Devotion

If you are doing this as a weekly activity, we recommend that you start with day four of the first week. The story of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18 has an accompanying video that explores the story in greater depth. You will find the weekly videos throughout the curriculum. If you are looking for all the videos in one easy location, they are on the last page of the study.

Daily Devotion

If you are doing daily devotions, the study provides daily readings and activities. Before doing the devotions, we recommend that you create a Jesse Tree as outlined in the introduction video. If you do not have a printer let us know and we will send you the pages that have the Jesse Tree ornaments. We will be adding the ornaments each Sunday to our own Jesse Tree in our Worship Space.

The second is called **Advent Devotional 2020.** It is a more traditional devotional guide, providing a scripture passage, a written devotional, and a prayer for your daily use.

These both will be emailed to our church households in time for you to begin using them on November 26th, 28 days before Christmas. (yes, that is Thanksgiving Day.) If you do not have email, contact the church office, and request the devotionals. We regret that the cost of mailing them will not allow us to mail them to everyone.

Reopening the Church

The Reopening the Church Committee has been hard at work the last 3 months developing the policies and procedures that will guide the decisions that will open our facilities for use again. The Session has approved the Policies and Procedures the committee has developed. And, while the Pandemic still rages, and the confirmed cases and hospitalizations are increasing in our area, we now know how we will proceed.

We are a long way from being able to gather for worship, but we do have in place the plans for how we will do so. As we come to that time, we will share that plan more fully with you.

For now, the Session has decided that we should be at Step Two of a 5 Step reopening plan, with Step One being a total closing of our facilities and grounds, and Step 5 being open with no restrictions.

Step 2 allows the staff to be present and meet with individuals on a scheduled basis. It also allows small groups of 10 and less to meet in rooms that allow for appropriate social distancing, if they are meeting for a purpose of function that cannot be accomplished on Zoom. Such meeting must be scheduled through the church office, and all must wear masks, carry out sanitizing of all furniture -

and contact points, and be socially distanced. Currently the only group that is meeting is the Bell Choir. The 12-step recovery groups that have used our facility in the past are allowed to begin meeting again at this step. At any point, the pastoral staff or the Session decide we must return to Step On, we will close our facilities again.

The Return to Church Committee will recommend to the Session any further reopening of the facilities when it is thinks that is appropriate. Watch the Connections Newsletter, the Pastor's Log and the Church web site for further information.

Visioning

The next two gatherings in our Visioning Process will be on Wednesdays, December 9^{th,} and 16th. Join Pastor Paul in conversations looking at who this congregation now is, and what it is to become. The link for our conversation is: https://

us02web.zoom.us/j/86079729283

By phone dial 1 929 205 6099 - Meeting ID: 860 7972 9283

Deacon's Doin's

December is here with all the preparations for the holidays, a time to reach out to those in need and celebrate family and friends this year in very distanced, safe, and still joyous ways.

The deacons have purchased gift cards for a number of our Head Start families and these were distributed right before Thanksgiving. Thank you to all who donated to this effort. In the spirit of the season, here are some ways you can safely share with those in need this year.

We will again be donating gift cards in lieu of food baskets to Head Start families. Donations are welcome and can be sent to the church office, designated as deacons Christmas gifts. As always, non-perishable food is welcome and distributed to either Head Start families or the Eastern Service Workers. Many of you have asked about a way to donate a turkey, a bag of potatoes, vegetables as a second blue and start families.

bles or something else perishable. This can be done by contacting the church office to arrange a time to put the items in the church refrigerator. Those distributing the food

will then be notified that items are available.



Our Giving Tree this year is a Giving Box located in the Scout Hut. It is waiting for your donations of hats, scarves, mittens, gloves and socks which will be distributed to the children of Head Start with any thing

extra going to families from Homefront and the Eastern Service Workers. If you wish to make a monetary donation, send it to the church office, marked Deacon's Giving Tree.

A holiday tradition that many cherish is making a gift in memory or in honor of a loved one. You may do this again this year by sending your contribution to the church office with your name and the

names of those you wish to honor or remember clearly designated. These names will be printed in the January Connections. The donations will be used to buy a small number of poinsettias and decorations for the worship space with the remainder going towards the continuing ministry of the Deacons.

There are 43 children in the Head Start program who would be delighted to receive a book from us for the holidays. There is a box in the Scout Hut for your donations with a list of suggested books attached. or a check can be made out to the church and designated Deacon's Children's Book Donation. Also the

list is included below. Other books will also be gladly accepted (age range 1-5). You can also contribute school supplies for primary age children which will be

given to several classes in Trenton. There is a separate box for those.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar - Eric Carle Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See? - Bill Martin Jr., Eric Carle

Llama Llama Red Pajama – Anna Dewdney

The Snowy Day – Ezra Jack Keats

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie – Laura Joffe Numeroff Good Night Moon – Margaret Wise Brown

The Snowman – Raymond Briggs

Bear is Awake – Hannah E. Harrison

The Way I Feel – Janan Cain

The Serious Goose – Jimmy Kimmel

The Wonderful Things You Will Be – Emily Winfield Martin

The Pajama Zoo Parade: The Funniest Bedtime ABC Book – Agnes Green

A Giraffe and a Half – Shel Silverstein

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom – Bill Martin, Jr.

Jabari Jumps – Gaia Cornwall

Hair Love – M. Cherry& V. Harrison

Go Dog Go – P.D.Eastman

Stella Luna - Janell Cannon Corduroy – Don Freeman

Where the Wild Things Are – Maurice Sendak

Crowne: An Ode to the Fresh Cut – P. Barnes & G.

Pete the Cat – Kimberly Dean, James Dean * any book in the series

Elephant and Piggie – Mo Willems * any book in the series

On the Night You Were Born – Nancy Tillman A Sick Day for Amos McGee – P. Snead Mouse Paint – E. Stoll Walsh

The last day for our book collection is Fri. Dec. 11th If you have any questions, please contact Suzie Wentworth at 609-462-5090.

May the comfort, joy and peace of this season be with all of you this year and always.

Remembering our Beloved Departed

May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.

John Hand Jr.—90 yrs. 7.27.1930 — 11.5.2020

Beth Hensler – 96 yrs. 11.20.1923 – 11.7.2020





Newly listed_

Jewell Hand and Family

Iris Martinez, requested by Nancy Orhun Floyd Roebuck, requested by Nancy Orhun Nan Stanford, requested by Nancy Orhun Joan Stocker, requested by Nancy Orhun Bob Markley, Sr., requested by Nancy Orhun Bob Markley, Jr., requested by Nancy Orhun Jessica Jusino, friend of the Harvey family Ken Hutchens, nephew of Dick Anthony Christal Ruehule and Gerhard Zilz, sister and brother of Ingrid Pope.

Corrine Cassidy and her husband David, sister and brother in law of Dick Anthony
Berens family: Harriet Berens, her daughters
Loren Ciccone, Dr. Mari Berens, and Kristen Berens-Smart; grandchildren Julie and
Joseph Ciccone; Harriet's sister Doris Wiles,
Diane Watson, niece of Harriet Berens
Robert Markley, Sr., father-in-law of Nancy

Orhun
Eleanor Everitt
Gary Miller
Edie Multop

John Breckenridge Helen Birchenough

Bonnie Brandt

Michael Brezak, son of Barbara Brezak

Louise Burroughs

Steve Carter, friend of Mari Berens

Janet Corbin

The DeWees Family

Maryann Eleuteri, friend of Judy Carapezza **Eleanor Everitt**, sister-in-law of Pam Miller

 ${\bf Rita\ Freilinghaus}, sister\ of\ Judy\ Carapezza$

Karen Fuchs, sister of Laura Wallin

Alice Haines

Kevin Hecky

Lydia Hill, cousin of Cathy Holland

Joan Hodak – Prayers for her continued healing after surgery.

Joe Hodak

Cathy Holland

Dan Hough

John Kelso, friend of Ginny Saiia

Nancy Kriegner

Charlie Magee, brother of Judy Carapezza

Paul Matvas

Maureen - Friend of Barbara Gigliello

Samuel Meservey, grandson of Lois Meservey

Aaron Morgan

Rachel Morgan

Carolyn Parham – daughter of Betty Newberry

Laura Ryan, niece of Sandra Gwin

Shirley Sandford

Michael Baily Schafer, grandnephew of Mary Hough

Brad Shropshire, Doug & Carol Taylor's brother -in-law

Dave Snedecker Gwen Thomas

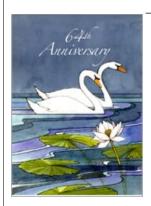
Travis Turner, nephew of Gay McGraw

Gloria Vernam

Kaitlynn Webster, granddaughter of Nancy Coleman

Sam & Peace Weigh

To keep the prayer list timely, listings will remain for two editions of the Newsletter (two months' time) and then be taken off. In the event you desire a listing to run longer, or for a shorter time, please contact Pastor Ann, or otherwise let your parish leaders know.



Congratulations
George & Donna
Amick who will be
celebrating their 64th
anniversary on Dec.
22nd.

GOOD DEEDS—A HUGE Thank You!

My granddaughter Ember has completed the first phase of her Girl Scout Gold project which was collecting enough plastic bottle caps to exchange for something to put in her town's (Burlington City) public spaces. Thanks to all the people who brought me bags of caps and lids even after we were not meeting in the sanctuary. On November 5, 2020, she and her mother drove to Indiana with **425** pounds of caps and lids. They filled the entire six-foot bed of the pickup truck with bags of caps and lids. When they returned to Burlington on the 7th, they brought two six-foot park benches back with them and turned them over to the City of Burlington on the 12th. They will be installed at a later date. Many many thanks to all the kind people who helped her collect what she needed.

Janice Rockmore



Adult Education, Mission and Social Justice

Adult Education, Mission and Social Justice Committee would like to introduce you to the **CONTACT/REASSURANCE** program, a free Outreach program from CONTACT of Mercer County. A community volunteer calls you daily to check on your safety, security and wellbeing. The calls take no more then 5 minutes.

If you are interested call 609-737-2000 to sign up for REASSURANCE.

A staff member meets with you to explain the program and get key information, then you're paired with a trained volunteer who call you every day at an agreed upon prearranged time.

Volunteers do not visit clients; outreach is strictly by phone for everyone's privacy.

CONTACT/REASSURANCE OF MERCER COUNTY

A FREE SERVICE of a daily confidential Telephone call to You, during this pandemic and your quarantine. This helps with the loneliness, someone to talk to, to ensure that you are safe and well in your home.

You must be a Mercer County Resident living alone, age 60 years or older.

You are eligible to receive a **daily confidential phone call** from a friendly, caring volunteer who is calling you **to make sure you are well and safe in your home.** These calls are at a time that is convenient for you.

CALL ANY OF THESE NUMBERS; **MONDAY-FRIDAY 9AM-12PM**

609 737-2000 609 396-3783 609-462-7668

If no answer, leave your name and phone number and we will contact you to explain the program and take an application to help you secure these helpful caring services. Susan Soennecken and Eloise Campbell.

They are also *seeking compassionate volunteers*seniors welcome; to make the daily phone call to

check on the security and wellbeing of a local senior. You can call from your home, office, wherever is convenient. There is a two hour training session provided.

Nintle Massurance goes a long way..



Mission Doings:

We have decided on several worthy organizations and situations both here close to home and abroad to support at this time.

The Ewing/Covenant Presbyterian Church is donating \$200.00 to the Presbyterian Historical Society which holds the National Archives of the PC(USA). It is based in Philadelphia and where we have kept historical records of the church, both paper and physical objects. Churches from all over the world will use the archives. If you want to know more about it ask Helen Kull about her use of the Archives in the research for Ewing's 300 year history. They are in the process of digitizing all of the records, making it easier and safer to answer inquiries and send results.

We are giving The Jinishian Foundation Mission Fund \$500. Within the last few years we have had presenters from the Jinishian Foundation present several sessions on the Christian communities in Armenia and in particular Nagorno-Karabakh and have sent mission funds to them through Adult Education.

This current conflict and crisis in Nagrno-Karabakh in the Balkans seems to be a play by Turkey again to attain territory affecting Armenia and the tiny Christian Nagorno-Karabakh which is home to one of the oldest Christian communities—dating from the 4th Century. In 1992-94 there was war in which Armenia won separation from the Soviet Union and became democratic with a President and Parliament. But conflict over the borders particularly with Turkey and Azerbaijan have continued. Both the USA and Russia have been major players in trying to negotiating a cease fire.

At a recent webinar Emily Mkrtichian spoke from the crisis area. She is in Azerbaijan doing a documentary on the lives of four woman whom she has followed for the last ten years. At that moment they were all living in bunkers as the shelling is continuous. Large missiles are flattening apartments and churches. The three attempts at a cease fire have failed. 80,000 are displaced. As of last week Russia brokered another cease fire but I have not heard yet if it is holding. But the people have been driven from the capitol which is almost flattened.

From the human perspective, traumas from the 1992-94 war have come back in spades, with echoes of the genocide and the fear that this will be a second time it happens. Landmines from the first conflict continue to be a problem. They want a cease fire that will hold. Because Nagorno-Karabakh is so small there is no recognition by the huge International Organizations that might be delivering humanitarian aid. What they need is funds for food and medical supplies.

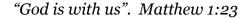
The Jinishian Memorial Program through which funds are funneled to all of the churches in the area provides medical support, social assistance, education, spiritual uplift, community, economic, and health development. Eliza Minasyan is the Emergency Relief Assistant to Armenia since September 2020, she listed medical items, food, warm clothing, particularly for woman and children displaced by full scale attack, as well as moral and psychological support to the war traumatized kids.



Offerings and ways to reach out to others:

Congregational Christmas Card. We donate the postage we would have spent on stamps for the card. This year we are asking people to send their donation by mail, electronically or delivering it to the Church Office. Please write on the memo line Christmas Card. The names will appear in the January newsletter. We will begin receiving this offering after November 29th. The committee is recommending to the Session that the money given this year goes to Presbyterian Disaster Relief for hurricane relief. An article will appear in the January newsletter.

The Christmas Joy Offering. You will be receiving in the mail a flyer and envelope for this offering (one of the 4 major offerings of PC(USA)).





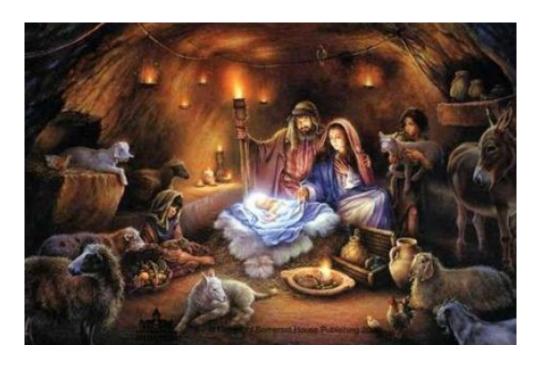
During these past months, many of us weren't able to be together in person. But we have always been together in spirit, and in faith. God has been with us. And through our gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering, we are together with those who need our love and support.

Because God is with us, we see the potential of students of color who will become our leaders and we seek to come alongside them, to encourage them, to be with them. 50% of your gifts make it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Because God is with us, we see church workers who have critical financial needs and we come along side them, to assist them—we are with them. 50% of your gifts provide for current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs.

When we all do a little, it adds up a lot.

The Christmas Offering will be taken with envelopes already in the congregational pledge boxes. These may be delivered to the office, sent in either by mail or electronically through your bank. This offering will be reported to Session at the January meeting of Session to decide where this financial offering might be best used at this time. The Offering is usually received during the Christmas Eve Service. Write Christmas Offering on the memo line.





December 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Pastor Ann's 10am Prayers/ Fellowship Zoom Webinar	2	3 Pastor Ann's Evening Conversation 7pm Zoom Webinar	4	5
6 Zoom Webinar Worship 10am Bible Study 9am 2 nd Sunday of Advent	7	8 Pastor Ann's 10am Prayers/ Fellowship- Zoom Webinar	9 Supper Conversation with Pastor Paul 6:30PM Zoom Webinar	10 Pastor Ann's Evening Conversation 7pm Zoom Webinar Day	11	12
13 Zoom Webinar Worship 10am Bible Study 9am 3rd Sunday of Advent	14	15 Pastor Ann's 10am Prayers/ Fellowship Zoom Webinar Deacons Meeting	16 Supper Conversation with Pastor Paul 6:30PM Zoom Webinar	17 Pastor Ann's Evening Conversation 7pm Zoom Webinar	18	19
Zoom Webinar Worship 10am Bible Study 9am Social Justice 5PM 4th Sunday of Advent	21	Pastor Ann's 10am Prayers/ Fellowship Zoom Webinar Session Meeting	23 Service of Solace 7pm	24 Christmas Eve	25 Nativity of the Lord Christmas Day	26
Zoom Webinars Worship 10am Bible Study 9am Social Justice 5pm 1st Sunday of Christmas	28	29	30	31		

Please refer to the Worshiping schedule portion of this Newsletter in the above pages for all zoom and phone in connections.