

Cluster Chronicle

"A community of Episcopal congregations sharing the love and power of the Risen Christ in our communities through worship, evangelization and apostolic service."

Keep calm and slow down

Advent, the four-week season prior to Christmas, helps us prepare our hearts and minds for the annual celebration of Christ's birth. The tone of this holy season is characterized by hopeful anticipation as we join Mary, John the Baptist and the prophets in waiting and watching for the Prince of Peace.

Although we have to practically prepare for family celebrations, gift giving and seasonal activities, we need Advent to help us slow down, remove the clutter in our lives, and focus on how God can enter the manger of our hearts. We need Advent to help us decrease stress.

In my sermon November 14, I invited all to consider developing an I.A.P. (Individual Advent Plan) similar to how school systems develop an I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan) to meet students' needs. I noted that an I.A.P. was to encourage more intentional time with God, our source of life between Sundays. To help each person develop an I.A.P., please consider incorporating some of the following activities and resources:

Participate in the Advent Evenings (Dec. 1, 8 and 15 and explore Handel's Messiah) we are co-sponsoring with Messiah Lutheran Church

Participate in the St. Nicholas event for all ages (Dec. 11) at Our Saviour

Read and reflect on a Psalm or two each day

Read and reflect on the scripture appointed for each day and/or pray the Daily Office (check out <https://www.missionstclare.com/english/>)

Use a contemplative prayer form such as Centering Prayer or Lectio Divina (check out contemplativeoutreach.org for resources)

Check out the Advent resources compiled by the Diocese of Southern Ohio (https://issuu.com/diosohio/docs/advent_zine_2021_8.5_x_11_in_)

Read or listen to Advent meditations offered by the Brothers of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, an Episcopal monastic community (<https://www.ssje.org/tag/advent/>)

Please know I welcome the opportunity to assist you in developing your I.A.P. Please email at derrick@nmvec.org or call me at 937-653-3497. My hope and prayer for you is that you will be awed by the mystery and grace of God this Advent and beyond.

Rev. R. Derrick Fetz, Missioner

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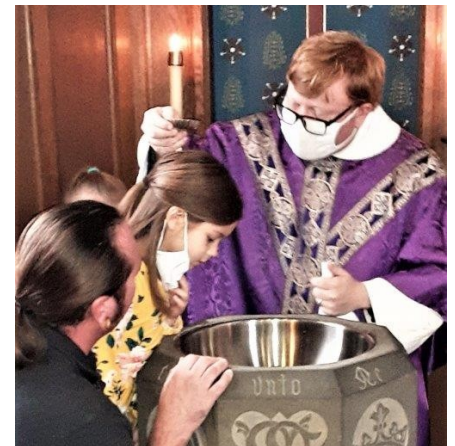
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Baptismal party: l to r: Kali's parents, Kelsi Moore, Levi Murphy; Kali Murphy, Mari Fetz, Rev. Derrick Fetz; Isaac Waddell, Godparents, Dustin Bray, Debbie Earick and daughter.

Marked as Christ's own forever

Kalissa Kathleen Murray received the sacrament of Holy Baptism Sunday, November 28, during 11 o'clock worship services at the Church of the Epiphany led by Celebrant Rev. Derrick Fetz. Three generations of family witnessed the impressive ceremony: parents Levi Murphy and Kelsi Moore, grandparents Bill and Jennifer Murray and great-grandparents Chuck and Mary Neal Miller. All are residents of the West Liberty area. Godparents Dustin Bray and Debbie Earick from Bellefontaine also attended and, with extended family, friends and Epiphany congregants, welcomed Kali into the household of God. Six-year-old Kali attends kindergarten at West Liberty Salem Elementary School.



Silent Night, Holy Night

Carols and communion by candlelight for all ages

All are invited to celebrate the Nativity of Christ at 5 p.m. at the Church of Our Saviour in Mechanicsburg and at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of the Epiphany in Urbana. A musical prelude will begin thirty minutes prior to each service. We will worship the Child of Bethlehem by singing cherished carols, reflecting on the first Christmas as the children build a crèche scene while the story of that holy night is told, and celebrating Holy Communion (open to all) while being enveloped by candlelight. Young and old alike will find meaning in this sacred experience. Children will receive an activity bag to help them learn more about the first Christmas. Following Communion, we will sing "Silent Night" by candlelight.

Please reserve parking nearest the Church for those with impaired mobility and for guests. Come, all ye faithful! And don't forget to invite your family, friends and neighbors! Consider inviting loved ones and those who may not have a church home to worship with us this Christmas! Invitations for you to give out will be ready for you to pick up beginning Dec. 5. The 5 o'clock service will be live-streamed on the Northern Miami Valley Episcopal Cluster's Facebook page.

In honor of our saints

In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, concentration camp survivor Viktor Frankl raises the question, "Can one continue to say yes to life in spite of everything?" Can life remain potentially meaningful under any circumstances? Can we truly make the best of any situation?

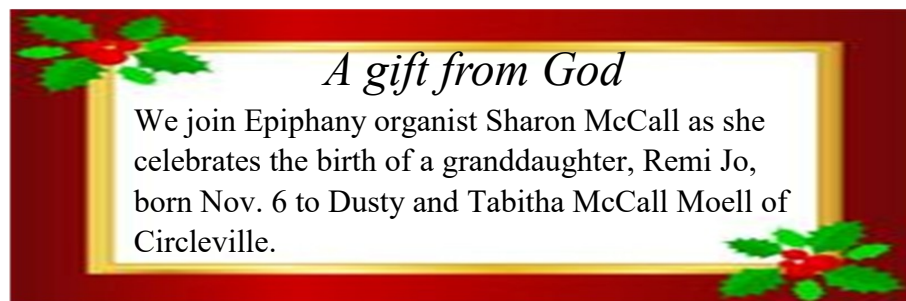
Best comes from the Latin optimum which gives the name optimist to one who can make the best of any situation, even the most miserable. But, optimism, or any other human position, can't be commanded. You can't force someone to be optimistic or hopeful or faithful or loving.

Frankl sees it as typically American to be told to be happy; how often we are told to have a good day. He believes that we need a reason to be happy and that is what we search for. Once a reason is found, and we bring to life the happiness dormant in that reason, we are happy without effort and life has meaning.

Frankl reminds that life is fleeting, and we need to make the best use of each moment. Life is irreversible and to have found meaning, a reason for happiness, means it is delivered safely into the past where it is stored and treasured. He says youth has no reason to pity the elderly---rather they should envy them.

"They have filled the granaries of the past with the harvests of their lives: deeds done, loves loved, meanings fulfilled, values realized and last, but not least, the sufferings they have gone through with courage and dignity.

Frankl concludes that life remains potentially meaningful under any conditions, even those which are most miserable, and that the value and dignity of each person is not contingent on usefulness. We are grateful for the long and meaningful lives of Rudolph and Helen Morris, Ruth Vance, Jim McDonald and Bob May and for the departed we do not know. And for deeds they have done, loves they have loved, values they have lived and the dignity and courage with which they "said yes to life in spite of everything".



December altar flower donors

OUR SAVIOUR

- Dec. 5 Rita Anderson, in memory of Jill Higgenbotham and Chad Cushman
- Dec. 12 Verne Gregg, in memory of Esther Gregg
- Dec. 19 Episcopal Church Women, in memory of Bessie Fox
- Dec. 25 The Wing Family, in memory of John C. and Marcia B. Wing

EPIPHANY

- Dec. 5 Mrs. Charles Sweeting, in memory of Charles Sweeting and David R. Woeste, Jr.
- Dec. 12 Sally and Julie Johnson, in loving memory of their father, James Brooks Johnson
- Dec. 19 Dorothy Headlee, in thanksgiving for her family
- Dec. 25 Memorial poinsettias from the congregation



Partnering with law enforcement

The Urbana Police Department joined forces with Epiphany's Community Meal committee to produce a succulent ham supper for more than 50 guests November 17. Urbana law enforcement is no stranger to the church's monthly meal program. Chief Matt Lingrell, officers and their families have not only supplied homemade spaghetti and all the trimmings but came to greet and serve guests many times since the project was established at Epiphany in September 2013.

The November supper menu featured baked ham. Community Meal regulars Sharon Applegate, Paddy Barr, Mary Neal Miller, Julia Robertson and Carol Wapplehorst cooked and sliced the meat, prepared potatoes and green beans and boxed the food (with a cookie for dessert). Boxes were bagged and made ready for pickup at the church's Kenton Street entrance between 5 and 6 o'clock. Fr. Derrick also lent a hand where needed and took these fine photos of a work in progress.

It is our fervent hope that before many more months, guests will once again be able to safely gather together for supper and socializing in the dining room. It's up to us. Vaccination can stop the spread of the virus and production of new variants and we urge every citizen to take responsibility for ending this plague.



Above, l to r, November Community Meal volunteers Mary Neal Miller, Sharon Applegate, Julia Robertson, Paddy Barr and Carol Wapplehorst.

Left, Sharon Applegate adds ham to a boxed meal.

Right, Julia Robertson delivers a meal order to a supper guest.



Christmas in the Village

“One of the heartwarming holiday traditions hereabouts is Mechanicsburg’s annual Christmas in the Village, set for Saturday, December 11. It’s the official opening of the holiday season there with businesses, churches, organizations, civic groups and schools participating in the downtown event.

Emily Rozmus is coordinating a St. Nicholas Program at Our Saviour from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Plans call for creative crafts, snacks and treats in a holiday atmosphere with an anticipated visit from St Nicholas, whose good works we

honor this season. Jodi Compton and her staff will also be at the church from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. to welcome the public to browse Our Saviour’s gently used winter outerwear collection, offered to all ages free of charge.

The Champaign County Preservation Alliance is sponsoring interludes of music at the historic First Baptist Church. You will hear fine high school and community bands from Mechanicsburg and Reynoldsburg and area piano students will perform selections from the varied repertoire of seasonal music.

Downtown streets will be lined with spectators for the festive two o’clock Christmas parade, composed of floats, vehicles of all kinds and folks on foot. It will also serve as an escort for the arrival of Santa Claus, that beloved Christmas icon who represents the joyful spirit of giving in Mechanicsburg and beyond.



Candlelight caroling

It was a delight to welcome a contingent from the Champaign County Youth Choir, formerly based at Epiphany, to the church Thanksgiving weekend.

They led the caroling during an evening designed to entertain and engender Christmas spirit in spectators gathered streetside to watch

the county’s annual Holiday Horse Parade. The choir was directed by Kristen Gleeson and accompanied by co-director/accompanist Ann Schertzer. Fr. Derrick reports that about 150 parade watchers were cheered by the music and warmed by hot chocolate. High praise for the carolers, the makers of chocolate and those who arranged every thoughtful detail.

A highlight of the event was a tribute to Youth Choir founder and trustee Ed Hardin and his wife, Rev. Nancy Hardin, who have recently moved from Urbana. They were recognized for years of devotion to the mission and work of the Church of the Epiphany and community outreach. Fr. Derrick presented the Hardin’s with the flower of the season, a red poinsettia, bearing the love and gratitude of the church, choir and community.



Members of the Champaign County Youth Choir led the carol singing. Fr. Derrick pays tribute to Ed and Rev. Nancy Hardin.



Sunday School resumes

Weekly Sunday school classes are now underway for pre-kindergarten through 6th grade youngsters at Our Saviour and Epiphany. Experienced teachers lead each session. Amy Boeck, Susie Westfall, Vicki Rammel, Michelle Rammel and Emily Rozmus instruct classes at Our Saviour. Angela Murray, longtime Sunday school director and teacher at Epiphany is joined by Jamie Fetz, Katie McCall and Paddy Barr as Epiphany volunteers.

The first Sunday school that we know about had quite a different goal. It was founded in England in 1751 to educate poor and working children who were mostly illiterate. There were no child labor laws and from an early age, every able child worked alongside his parents six days a week in factories, farms and mines. Sunday was the only day they could attend school. The American Sunday school system was similarly begun in 1790 by Samuel Slater for children working in his Pawtucket, Rhode Island textile mills.

Using the Bible as the only textbook, English Sunday schools taught reading, writing, cyphering (arithmetic) and knowledge of the Bible. In Wales, Sunday schools secretly taught the Welsh language, preserving it from the English monarchy's effort to



Fr. Derrick submitted this photo of Our Saviour Sunday School organizers: l to r, Amy Boeck, Vicki Rammel, Michelle Rammel, Emily Rozmus and Susie Westfall.

eliminate it and force everyone to learn and speak English.

By 1785, 250,000 English children were attending school on Sunday. Buildings were built and used for public lectures as well as classrooms for all ages, all denominations. The Methodists built their own building and the Anglicans set up a system of National Schools.

The passage of child labor laws and the Education Act of 1870 at last provided the universal elementary education triggered by the Sunday school movement. Christian denominations have continued Sunday schools to offer religious education, knowledge of the Bible and preparation for confirmation and church membership.

A hymn story



A little more than a century ago, the personal creed of young Congregationalist clergyman Howard Walter became a Christian hymn and a memorial to Howard, who at age 35, was a victim of the 1918 flu pandemic. Early in his career, this native of New Britain, Connecticut, was sent as a missionary to India. He wrote, in verse form, a profession of his faith entitled, I Would Be True.

He sent it to his mother who was so moved that she submitted it to Harper's Bazaar. The editor was equally impressed and printed it. It was later set to a tune by composer Joseph Peek and immediately appeared in Christian hymnbooks of the period. It has since been judged old fashioned, more secular than sacred, and is seldom used in contemporary worship. But, if in this time of another pandemic, uncertainty and division you yearn for a simple declaration of purpose, Rev. Walter's unadorned creed might be a place to start.

I would be true, for there are those who trust me,
I would be pure, for there are those who care,
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer,
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

A time to heal

Isaiah foretold his coming: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

Worldwide hopes for the great joy, peace and good will heralded by the birth of Jesus still seem remote in 2021. Jesus grew to manhood in a culture afflicted by disease, poverty and political conflict and power struggles. His miraculous healing was dramatic, even in a country whose history and tradition are filled with the paranormal. There were no cures. Priests were also medical consultants.

Why did Jesus make healing part of his ministry, even raising the dead to life? To get attention? To develop a following? It surely did that. Scholars believe that the miracles were in large part responsible for the huge crowds Jesus attracted. But Jesus knew that relentless pain and suffering can block even good news. Did Jesus act out of compassion? He surely did that, confirming God’s mercy, the source and truth of Jesus’ message. Was Jesus fulfilling prophecy, so significant in this Jewish nation? He did that, bringing to life Isaiah’s words, “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”

But more amazing was Jesus’ grasp of a truth it has taken centuries to comprehend---that body, mind and spirit are a fully-integrated whole. The Greek words for health and salvation, *sozo* and *soteria*, come from the same root: to heal, to save, to redeem, to rescue. A hopeful attitude, faith in God’s promise of love and support, encourages physical, mental and emotional health. Likewise, disorder in any area will be felt in some way throughout.

Also, Jesus asked something of each person he healed---to wash in the Jordan, to get him a drink of water, to take up his bed and walk....each participated in his own healing. Each believed Jesus’ words, your faith has made you whole (not well, but whole), be at peace.

May our Advent prayer be for all Americans to have the courage to take part in their own healing. That our faith in God’s Truth and compassion for one another will contribute to the healing of the dis-ease that sickens and kills, restore the health of all creation, return to democratic ideals and make us a whole, peaceful and compassionate country again.

Slow me down, Lord

Slow me down, Lord!
Ease the pounding of my heart
By the quieting of my mind.
Steady my harried pace
With a vision of the eternal reach of time.
Give me,
Amidst the confusions of my day,
The calmness of the everlasting hills.
Break the tensions of my nerves
With the soothing music of the singing streams
That live in my memory.
Help me to know
The magical power of sleep.
Teach me the art
Of taking minute vacations of slowing down
To look at a flower;
To chat with an old friend or make a new one;

To pat a stray dog;
To watch a spider build a web;
To smile at a child;
Or to read a few lines from a good book.
Remind me each day
That the race is not always to the swift;
That there is more to life than increasing its speed.
Let me look upward
Into the branches of the towering oak
And know that it grew great and strong
Because it grew slowly and well.
Slow me down, Lord.
And inspire me to send my roots deep
Into the soil of life’s enduring values
That I may grow toward the stars
Of my greater destiny.

Wilfred A. Peterson

Advent Evenings

December 1, 8 and 15

6:15 p.m. Soup, salad, bread supper

7 – 8 p.m. Contemplative worship with
discussion on Handel's Messiah
Holy Communion

Messiah Lutheran Church 1013 East Lawn Avenue, Urbana

Co-sponsored by The Church of the Epiphany

Each program will be live-streamed on Messiah Lutheran Church's Facebook page and at MLC Urbana on Youtube. For more information, please contact Pastor Ray Branstiter (raybranstiter@gmail.com) or Fr. Derrick Fetz (derrick@nmvec.org).

THE CHRONICLE

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*Ring out, ye bells! All Nature swells
With gladness at the wondrous story, —
The world was lorn, But Christ is born
To change our sadness into glory.*

Paul Lawrence Dunbar