

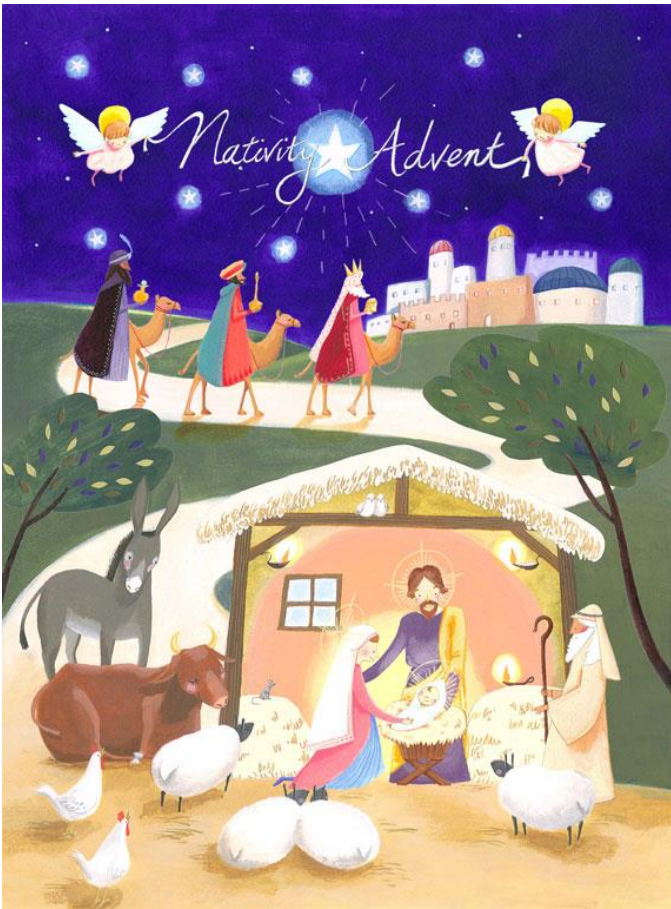


St. Peter's Press

December 2022

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Advent: A New Birth Is Coming! By Donna Elia



Advent, like Lent, is a time for deep reflection. Perhaps the days growing shorter invite us to look inward, even as we prepare festive celebrations and gather with family and friends. Advent means coming. We are preparing for the birth of the Savior, even as we wait with eager longing for the vision of the Prophet Isaiah — *swords will be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks*. It is hard to imagine a day when there will be no hurting or destroying on God's holy mountain,

the wolf and the lamb keeping peaceful company. It is a lofty vision!

As I write this, the Advent wreath continues to gather light, with the pink candle, the candle of joy, about to remind us that even in the midst of our reflection, preparation, and eager longing for peace and justice, we are called to rejoice! Rejoice, let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

This Advent feels infused with gratitude at St. Peter's Church. Over the last few months, members have been reflecting upon the theme, *What the Church Means to Me*. They remind us that Christ is born in us, that we and others beyond these walls carry the divine spark. In the midst of all the preparations, may we have moments of solidarity and grace.

I am reminded of the words of Collins O'Rourke, granddaughter of Wendy Diskin. Coming into church and seeing the communion table, she said, "You were right, Grandma, there's bread!" As we prepare for Christmas, may we be filled with **WONDER!**



*O star of wonder,
star of light,
star with royal
beauty bright,
westward
leading, still
proceeding, guide us to thy
perfect light.*

What the Church Means to Me

Presentations on *What the Church Means to Me* continued in November, with Kathy Geddie, Shirley Newsome, and Joel Dyslin sharing their thoughts and feelings. Their reflections are below.



From Kathy Geddie:

*Here's the Church,
here's the steeple, open
the door and see all the
people.*

Of course, it is largely the people that make St. Peter's so important and meaningful to me.

I first came to St. Peter's in 1990 with my 3-year-old daughter, Hannah. My dear friends, Nona and John Lange told me about it. They were going to be Mary and Joseph in the Christmas pageant, with adults playing the major roles. In the script there was a clever way of folding a beautiful blue cloth to represent the baby Jesus. Steve Phelps was the pastor. The first time I came here, I felt very welcome; it gave me all kinds of good feelings. I was 43 years old. I wanted Hannah to learn about God. I did not expect to learn so much myself.

I had not been a true part of a church since I was maybe 14, the year we moved to a new part of town in Houston, Texas. I went to a Methodist-affiliated college for 2 years. It was a good liberal arts school in the little hill country town of Georgetown, ranked well by *U.S. News and World Report*. Two semesters of religious classes were required. From those classes at that vulnerable time of life, I got a sense that much of what I had been taught in Sunday School was a lie. (I'm sure the teaching today is better than it was then.)

St. Peter's and its people made me feel right at home. And it gave me emotional support, food aplenty for thought and reflection, and *fun*. It gave me a sense of belonging from the beginning, which I have never lost. I loved that it gave me a way to help others through its many outreaches to those who needed a helping hand.

I've had the pleasure of teaching Sunday School; being on a team of youth group leaders, a very active group; helping with a robust Vacation Bible School; assisting a confirmation class; volunteering to help with a myriad of activities; and now being a deacon.

St. Peter's was one of the beacons calling me back to NY after I retired from my job in VA, where we lived for 9 years. Once I returned, it was like I had never left. I told Barbara Conkling that I wanted to wait a year or so before serving as an officer of the church. Then Marion Ulmer walked up to me after I'd been back a couple of weeks and asked if I would be a deacon. How could I say no to *her*! And I'm so glad I did say yes because that too has been so rewarding for me. Of course, since I lost Don, my dear friends and the people of St. Peter's have helped me live with my ongoing grief.

I think of St. Peter's when I listen to the chorus of the song *Feels Like Home to Me* on the Trio II Album with Linda Ronstadt, Dolly Parton, and Emmylou Harris. It goes:

*It feels like home to me, feels like home to me
Feels like I'm all the way back where I belong
Feels like I'm all the way back where I belong*

At St. Peter's, I continue to grow as a person, to learn, to be joyful, to care, and to be cared for. It does "feel like home to me."



From Shirley Newsome: I've known about seed vaults for some years, but I still remember how jarring it was to realize that they, seeds, need to be preserved. Seed collections are found in the ancient pyramids, treasured to

ensure an ever-sustaining source. Columbia, South America, Kew Gardens in England, and

What St. Peter's Means to Me (Continued):

From Shirley Newsome (Continued):

Fort Collins, Colorado all have seed collections, emphasizing their local plants. Even I collect seeds and have given them as gifts. The gift shop at Monticello sells its own heirloom seeds. The Doomsday Vault, strategically located above the Arctic Circle, represents 13,000 years of agricultural history.

Churches watch over important ideas and ideals: seeds, if you will. Schools, churches, and families plant these seeds.

I think of St. Peter's as an extended family. We come here in a good mood, ready to catch up on our week past. We support each other in all the seasons of our lives and support a commitment to being examples of what is good, what works, and what empathy means. We share an understanding of the common good, offer resources, possess positive energy, and promote people who wish to be caring. Most of our time is spent at home, in our workplace, our social sphere: in the everyday world — repair shops, offices, athletic fields, ski slopes, where what we care about is apparent. The church literally moves from this location to be everywhere, doing good.

How much more inspiration do you need than a birthday card from our deacons! Well-worded hyperbole has boosted my self-image quite effectively.



From Joel Dyslin: We need to back up a few years for me to be able to answer the question of “what St. Peter's means to me.”

After serving in the U.S. Army, I returned to my hometown of Chicago to begin a career in the Building Trades, fabricating and installing machinery. I learned my trade quickly and

soon became a Field Erector and found myself traveling the Midwest installing equipment in many different areas. It was a nice job because the end result of my work was the creation of jobs for hundreds of people.

My concern was that I would spend 8 hours a day on the job and then 4 hours in traffic on the road. I made up my mind to change things so I could live in the country away from big cities. Within 3 years, I was offered a job with a company that manufactured the machinery I was installing. They were situated in Hudson, NY. After a visit to their facility and a tour of Columbia County, I realized that my dream was within reach. I accepted the job and moved East. Within a year, I sold my home in Illinois and purchased a farm-type house situated on 8 acres on the edge of a hamlet named Spencertown. It all seemed predestined. Fortunately, my wife had the attitude of “always willing to go where you go.”

It was the perfect outcome. The community welcomed us with open arms, brought us breads and cookies, and gave us their phone numbers and offers to help on the day the movers arrived. One of the first things we did was attend St. Peter's, where we soon became members. Sandra was born the following Spring. It was all beginning to come together.

Naturally, we fell in love with our new neighbors and the church community and became involved with the many activities surrounding country life.

So now . . . “what does St. Peter's mean to me?” The simplicity of the sanctuary has always captivated me. I can sit in a pew and focus on my relationship with Jesus without distractions. I have prayed here for 55 years and truly believe that each and every one of my prayers has been heard. And I sometimes wonder, can little old St. Peter's make a difference in the world, and, yes, I am convinced we can and are making a difference. It all starts here and then it spreads throughout the world. Change will not happen overnight but over time. Stop and think, however long a generation is, 20 or 30 years, and this church has been here for 10 generations or so. Lots of prayers and wholesome thoughts have emanated from this sanctuary.

**What St. Peter's Means to Me
(Continued):**

From Joel Dyslin (Continued) To me, the best part is Christmas Eve. We arrive with hopes of peace in our hearts, anxious to celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus. We listen to the old stories about the Wise Men, Mary and Joseph, and the cattle and sheep lowing. But the moment I become really emotional is when we get to the candle lighting and singing *Silent Night*. For those 3 minutes, I think about all the things I have done in my life, my countless blessings, and the sacrifices I have made to preserve this great Nation. I conclude it is all worthwhile. For those precious 3 minutes, as I sit there with tears of joy streaming down my cheeks, I am at complete peace with the World. Thanks be to God.

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**Clara Gott Fund**

The next **deadline for submitting applications** to the Clara Gott Fund is **December 15.**

*Applications for assistance from the Fund are available at all times on the church bulletin board in the narthex.*

*Church members are urged to call this to the attention of those who might want to apply.*

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I THINK YOUR LIGHTS MIGHT BE TOO BRIGHT THIS YEAR

Election Day Dinner – A Great Success!



Joel Dyslin and Sandy Fischer cooking and serving meals for the Election Day Dinner

A large crew of people, led by Joel Dyslin, worked on the November 8 Election Day dinner, cooking and serving a pot roast dinner with carrots, potatoes, cabbage, rolls, and, of course, wonderful desserts prepared by members of the congregation. Mary Anne Davis made a delicious lentil loaf for our vegetarian option. Thank you so much to Donna Staron who donated pounds of potatoes, carrots, and cabbage! Thanks to Joel and his granddaughter Bella Waldorf who did much of the cooking! Thanks to the vegetable peelers and choppers Barbara Smith, Larry Massimo, and Kathy Geddie. Thanks to Joel's daughters, Marcy, Sandy, and Wendy and their kids who cooked, served, cleaned, and provided much good cheer at the event, along with Jennifer Thompson, Sharon Wing, Barbara Smith, Barbara Conkling, and others. Thanks to Mitzi Lobdell for serving desserts. Thanks to Nona Lange and Randy Ezinga for help cleaning up. Thanks to Larry Massimo who cashiered and the counted the money. And there were so many others. This was certainly a church-and-community-wide effort!

This was the first time since the pandemic that we had tables set up inside, and it was wonderful! People sat together talking and laughing, making for a very convivial atmosphere. Check out photos in the Photo Album section of this newsletter.

In addition to providing a happy community event, the dinner raised \$2,809 for the general church fund!

**December Worship
Sundays at 10 AM**

(In-person and via Zoom))

4th: Rev. Donna Elia
Communion

11th: Rev. Donna Elia
Communion

18th: Rev. Donna Elia
Communion

24th: Rev. Donna Elia, **Saturday at 5:30**
PM Lessons and Carols

25th: Christmas Day, no service
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

**Note: There will be a service on Sunday,
January 1**

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*Your Food Pantry Donations
MAKE A DIFFERENCE in People's
lives. When you can, bring your
contributions to the church for
collection during Sunday Services.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Price Chopper Gift Cards



The deacons will be providing Price Chopper gift cards again this Christmas. We will purchase 10 gift cards at \$50 each.

This is a tradition started several years ago by our beloved Phillip Patterson. If you know of someone who could use some extra help over the holidays, tell them about the gift cards. The cards will be in the narthex on top of the mail slots.

December Lectionary Readings



4th: Isaiah 11:1-10, Psalm 72:1-7 and 18-19, Matthew 3:1-12

11th: Isaiah 35:1-10, Psalm 146:5-10, Matthew 11:2-11

18th: Isaiah 7:10-16, Psalm 80:1-7 and 17-19, Matthew

1:18-25

24th & 25th: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Luke 2:1-14, 15-20

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



*Lo! in the silent night a child to God is born,
And all is brought again that ere was lost or lorn.
Could but thy soul, O man, become a silent night,
God would be born in thee and set all things aright.*

By Angelus Silesius, a Polish Monk, in 1657

(Note: The hymn *Silent Night, Holy Night!* was written by Joseph Mohr in 1816.)

Rev. Donna Elia will be at St. Peter's December 13 from 2:30 to 5:30 PM. Feel free to come chat with her in person while she is here. You can also call her on her cell phone (518-495-6795) or on the church phone (518-392-3386).



**CHRISTMAS
Community Carol Sing!**

All are Welcome!

Join us on the Spencertown Green
for a family sing along around the tree!

Saturday December 17, 2022, 4:00 pm

Hot cider and chocolate!

In the event of bad weather, we will sing inside the church.
For updates check the St. Peter's Presbyterian Church Facebook page.



*Join us at St. Peter's for the traditional Christmas Eve lessons and carols service
on Saturday, December 24th at 5:30 PM (earlier this year than in the past).*

♪ **Happy Birthday to:** ♪



| | |
|--------------------|-------|
| Hester-Luna Culley | 12/2 |
| Emma Jensen | 12/10 |
| Richard Light | 12/10 |
| Shirley Newsome | 12/12 |
| Emma Tillotson | 12/20 |
| Lucy Tillotson | 12/20 |
| Isla Coalter | 12/22 |
| Brandon Davey | 12/23 |

*Did we forget your birthday?
If you would like to be added to our birthday list, please contact one of our Deacons.*

Photo Album

From the Election Day Dinner



From left going around the table: Jim Merrigan, Neal Warshaw, Eve Zatt, Michele Quigley, Patricia McKeon, and Madelyn (last name not known) enjoying dinner together.



Jennifer Thompson and Sharon Wing, your friendly servers. In the kitchen in the background are Charlotte Coalter, Bella Waldorf, and Conner Madsen, who were such a big help!



With cashier Larry Massimo, from left, Seraphina Coalter (a wonderful server), Eve Zatt, Sandy Fischer, Larry, and Mary Anne Davis



Dan Franck, front, and Randy Ezinga enjoying their meal and conversation



Three generations of the Culley Family, from left and going around the table, Hester-Luna, Connie, Frances, Ingrid, Ermengarde, Aleric, Derek, and Richard, brought a lot of good spirit to the gathering.



Left photo: Joel Dyslin's daughters, Marcy Coalter, Sandy Fischer, and Wendy Madsen. Right photo: Wendy's son Conner and Marcy's daughter Charlotte.



Left photo: Mitzi Lobdell (a real cutup!) served desserts with help from Conner Madsen and Barbara Smith. Right photo: Hard workers Wendy Madsen and her daughter Erin.



A special note. You might have seen little white square devices, pictured on the left, around the church — under the bathroom sinks and other places. Don't move them. They are moisture detectors required by our building's insurance company.

Wreath Makers

On November 26, many gathered to make wreaths, which are very popular in the community. Many were sold immediately, and we still had some left to sell at the Church Bazaar. Thanks so much to Katie Smith Cashen who obtained the base of the wreaths, to those who brought natural decorations for the wreaths, and to those who constructed the wreaths!



From front to back, Marcy Coalter, Jane Fischer, Mary Anne Davis, and Pat Meess (whose lovely face we wish we could see)

From left, Sandy Fischer and Mitzi Lobdell



DECEMBER

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|---|---|--|--------|---|
| All Sunday Services below begin at 10 AM | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 <i>Christmas Bazaar</i> 10-2 |
| 4 Reverend Elia Communion | 5 Advent Bible Study 7 PM on Zoom | 6 | 7 Choir Practice 7 PM Full Moon  | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 Reverend Elia Communion | 12 Advent Bible Study 7 PM on Zoom | 13 Rev. Elia in office 2:30 to 5:00 PM Choir Practice 7 PM Deacons' Meeting 5 PM at Jennifer Thompson's | 14 Council Meeting 7 PM via Zoom | 15 Deadline for submitting Clara Gott Application Holiday carols and readings at the Meeting House in Canaan 5 PM | 16 | 17 Christmas Carol Sing- Along on Spencertown Green, 4 PM |
| 18 Reverend Elia Communion Hanukkah begins tonight | 19 Advent Bible Study 7 PM on Zoom | 20 | 21 Choir Practice 7 PM  | 22 | 23 | 24 Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols Service, 5:30 PM  |
| 25 Merry Christmas!!! No church service today  | 26 Boxing Day | 27 | 28 No choir practice this week. | 29 Deadline for submission to the January Newsletter | 30 | 31 |