

St. Paul's Episcopal Church



January Issue

January 3, 2024

Two days after Christmas we hopped into our car to go grocery shopping, turning on the radio to listen to more Christmas carols, only to find all of the radio stations had already changed their format. As we drove down the street some neighbors already had their Christmas Trees thrown into the street, stripped of Christmas finery. Walking into the store, Valentine decorations were already set up in the seasonal sections with no sign of Christmas remaining. Where was the rush? It seems Scrooge is alive in the world, sticking a knife into the hearts of figgy pudding everywhere.

The week before Christmas I came down with the respiratory flu going around, my evenings relegated to sleeping in the recliner, rather than bed, at night. Starting to recover on Saturday, but still coughing, I reminded my wonderful wife that Christmas is celebrated for 12 days, and questioning whether we should postpone our family get together for later in the week.

We saw no sense to risk sharing a flu bug with everyone, and the rest of the family agreed that the 6th Day of Christmas would work better for everyone, not just for health reasons, but also for traveling to the obligatory family visits on Day 1 of Christmas. On that evening of the 1st Day of Christmas Linda and I relaxed enjoying our annual tradition of watching a version of Dickens "A Christmas Carol" (this version was with Patrick Stewart, one of our favorites) and giving thanks, in between coughing fits, for everything God has given us in this life. Later that week we had a relaxed and lengthy

visit with our family, sharing dinner, presents, and presence with everyone—Truly, what a blessing!

I've since reflected on this contrast between celebrating the Advent and Christmas Seasons of love in the liturgical church calendar, and the mass-marketed consumption glut of materialism that masquerades as Christmas in our country. Stripped of love for each other, the real root of Christmas, society is left with nothing but greed, gluttony, and drunkenness resulting in a society devoid of hope or love.

When Advent and Christmas is celebrated as a season of preparation and celebration of the unending love of our Trinitarian God, the sharing of gifts and meals becomes merely a byproduct of the love and hope which followers of The Way hold in their hearts throughout the year.

I'm reminded of Jesus' prayer to God just before his death, "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world." [John 17:14] By choosing to keep Christmas in our Way, living in the liturgical year with our focus on the season of love and hope, we separate ourselves from the mass consumption trap of emptiness. We choose to live in the world of the Kingdom of God, and not the kingdom of greed. We are living in the world of Jesus, and not the world of Herod or Caesar. Some people might call this counter-cultural, but really it is extra-cultural. Jesus intended us to live in this world, but not be a part of this world.

At the beginning of this New Year, I continue to wish each of you Merry Christmas. Our decorations and celebrations don't end until Epiphany, but even then the Spirit of Christmas will continue to abide in our hearts for as long as we can keep it.

"May God bless us, everyone!" as Tiny Tim says.

Peace,

Deacon Greg



Our Source of Light

January 6 marks the day of Epiphany, when the wise men (who were Gentiles) came to worship Jesus and bring him gifts. During the church-year season of Epiphany, we remember that God's Son is the Light of the whole world.

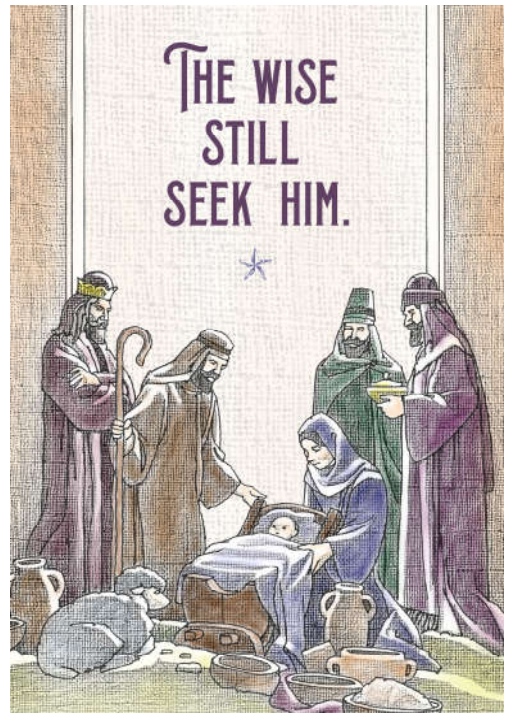
Ponder the gifts of Epiphany with these two reflections, written centuries apart:

Your light, dear God, surpasses all other light, because all light comes from you. Your fire surpasses all fire, because your fire alone burns without destroying. The flames of your fire reach into the soul, consuming the sin and selfishness that lie there. But far from damaging the soul, your fire sets it ablaze with love. What moved you to enlighten me with your truth? The fire of your love was the reason. You loved me so much that you could not bear to see me confused and perplexed. Can I ever repay the burning love which you have given me? No, because I have nothing of my own to give. Yet you assure me that the love which you put into my soul is repayment enough. You desire only the joy of seeing me receiving your gift. What more perfect Father could there be!

—Catherine of Siena (c. 1347-1380)

Epiphany beckons us to come to the light of Jesus Christ. Epiphany calls us to stare into that light until our inner darkness is fully expunged. Epiphany then sends us out into a dark and weary world as women and men with shining faces, until we say with the apostle Paul, "It is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" [see 2 Corinthians 4:6].

—Jason Gaboury, campus minister in New York City



January Ministry Schedule

	Jan 7	Jan 14	Jan 21	Jan 28
Clergy Homily	Rev. Dondi Rev. Dondi	Rev. Lyn Rev. Lyn	Rev. Lyn Dcn. Greg	Rev. Kathie Rev. Kathie
Acolytes	Nancy S Judy T	Nancy S Judy T	Jim P Annamary	Nancy S Judy T
Lectors	Barbara V Steph G	Steph HW Ann M	Nancy S Judy T	Ann M Christine J
Intercessor	Judy T	Linda L	Sarah H	Nancy S
Greeters	Christine J Phil M	Ishmael H Claudine R	Sarah H Christine J	William S Phil M
Ushers	David L		David L	
Vestry Rep	Judy T	Linda L	Sarah H	Nancy S

New Vestry Nominees for 2024-2026

Thanks to all who considered serving on the Vestry, and thanks to the four who have agreed to be part of the leadership team of the church. They are: Lora Burnett, Ismael Huggins, Luis Martinez-Iller, and Ann Mootz. Information about them will be part of the Annual Report to be distributed to members, Sunday, January 14th. The Report will be part of the Annual Meeting that will happen after the worship service. Mark your calendars to attend and be part of the ongoing ministry of St. Paul's.





Salvation Army Shelter Dinner

The Salvation Army Dinner Team is preparing for another year of supplying dinner to the guests and staff at the Salvation Army Shelter. Our preferred dates occur in January, March, May, July, September, and November. The dates will be announced in the coming weeks. We have an amazing team! And we are always happy to have help as we provide blessings to folks that need to understand our love and commitment to them.

Please contact Linda Lowe, 209-496-3937 or lwlowe@outlook.com for more information.

Prayer support, cooking, serving and donation assistance are always greatly appreciated.

First, Contact

In *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality and Mortality*, Richard Beck writes powerfully about Jesus healing a leper in Matthew 8:1-3.

“What is intriguing about this story

is the sequence. Jesus touches the leper first. Then the command ‘Be clean!’ is offered. That is, Jesus’ first move is into ritual defilement. By first touching the leper, Jesus ... [is] standing in solidarity with the unclean.” Beck finds this “striking” because typically we expect purification before contact. But Jesus’ actions reverse the pattern: “Contact occurs first.”

How fortunate for us, too, that God didn’t wait to reach out to us until he had cleansed us of sin. God didn’t save us from afar and only then come to live among us. Rather, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, ESV). And continuously, Jesus loves us, comes to us and touches our hearts, even when we are at our worst — straying from God, trapped in sin, unworthy, unclean, unrighteous. For it’s not our righteousness or purity that heals and saves us, but Christ’s.



Jesus

A Year That Whispers Jesus

For author Nancy Tichy, a small holiday gift once sparked big-picture thoughts about Christian living. One December she received a kitchen towel with the message “I want a Christmas that whispers JESUS.” That prompted thoughts of what it’s like to have an entire year that whispers Jesus.

For starters, that involves daily quiet time, devotion and prayer. “Sometimes I wake with the thought of a person on my mind,” writes Tichy. “I’m quiet with this impression, interceding for the family member or friend until it has lifted. Could this be a whisper from our Savior?”

Many other daily occurrences are “worthy of [Jesus’] whispered response of love,” Tichy points out. That’s true whether we’re distracted by tasks and troubling thoughts or buoyed by encounters with contentment and joy. “For me,” she writes, “whispering is part of intimacy, and that is what I want to make a hallmark of the coming year. I want closeness with our Savior that enables me to hear from him, even when he whispers.”



The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin

News about Diocesan events and weekly spiritual encouragement are available at the Diocese of San Joaquin website, <https://www.diosanjoaquin.org>. The “Friday Reflection” is available through the “News and Resources” link. To receive the Friday Reflection directly to your in-box, sign up via the link at the top of the Home page.



BINGO 2024!

Now that the end of year festivities are over, it is time to have some fun with a purpose. ***Friday, January 26th, 7 pm***, join your friends for another evening of prizes and munchies while raising funds to buy unique “Tutu Desks”. The desks were designed and created by former Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his foundation to assist children in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Admission will be a free-will offering that will be combined with donations from other congregations in the Diocese to purchase the unique desks. As seen in the attached video, the desks are inexpensive and portable, assisting children at home and in school.

[Canon Anna - Tutu Desk Campaign.mp4 - Google Drive \(outlook.com\)](#)

For more information, or to help with munchies or other plans, contact Linda Lowe, 209-496-3937 (cell), 209-529-5467 (home), or lwlowe@outlook.com. See you there!

ADVENT CALENDAR



Prayer

For the Poor and Neglected in the Book of Common Prayer:

Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Dear ST. PAUL'S FAMILY

As we get ready for Christmas, let's build a bag or box of items that will be donated to the newly established St. Paul's Pantry. Start December 1st and add items each day. Bring it to church by January 7th to help stock the shelves. Help bring blessings to our neighbors. Happy Advent!



DAY 4

Food Insecurity:
Lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle.

DAY 14

In Stanislaus County, approximately 64,300 persons were "food insecure" in 2022.

DAY 20

Nationwide, 44 million persons, including 20% of children, are "food insecure".

Hunger Facts



• FOR YOUR INFORMATION •

- ◆ Sunday School has started and is held in the room at the back of the church during the Homily.
- ◆ If you are interested in joining the Altar Guild please contact Elaine Paradis or Toni Clark.
- ◆ Choir is still on a break.
- ◆ Tai Chi meets in the Parish Hall every Tues. and Thurs. from 9-10.
- ◆ If you are interested in playing hand

bells, contact Judy Teter.

- ◆ Food Distribution continues in the Parish Hall the 1st Wednesday of every month from 10 to 11. If you are interested in helping, please contact Judy Teter. If you have grocery bags to donate, please bring on Sunday.
- ◆ The first Sunday of the month there is a donation box on the altar rail for Interfaith Ministries (Now called The Stanislaus Food Initiative).
- ◆ There will be a clothing donation box for MoPride in the narthex. We will be collecting clothing year around. They are also in need of feminine hygiene products.
- ◆ If you are interested in helping with Salvation Army dinners, please contact Linda Lowe.
- ◆ If you are interested in joining Knit One, Pray Two, please contact Gayle Ivy. They will be meeting the 3rd Monday of the month at 1 pm in the youth room of the Parish Hall. This years charity is the Seaman's Institute. They are making scarfs, hats, socks etc.
- ◆ There are still free Covid 19 tests available in the Narthex or in the church office.
- ◆ If you are interested in joining a Wednesday Morning Prayer service or our Book Club contact Judy Thorkelson jthork2404@aol.com
- ◆ There will be a basket in the narthex for the Shower Shuttle, they always need underwear and socks! We will also be putting together hygiene kits and need two-blade razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste, travel Kleenex, combs and q-tips. Clothes, soap and dryer sheets are also a big need.



Prayer and Praise

as of 1-1-2023

☞ Please pray for healing and comfort for the following people:

Annamary Peck

Jim Peck

Bob Jensen

Theresa Grieshaber

Craig Persons

Pam & Mike Cox

Suzy Cano

Elaine Paradis

Carol Collier

Susan Sell

Linda's Aunt Mudge

Deacon George

Robin Magenot

Sarah Manfredoni

Ann Mootz's sister-in-law

Bonnie Palmer

Michael Thorington

Barbara Weeden

Leslie Littlefield

Sharon Andrew's daughter-in-law

Danielle (Jeni's friend)

- ◆ The family of Darla Davisson at her passing.
- ◆ Susan Sell's son Bryce for strength.
- ◆ Please pray for those in war torn areas everywhere; Ukraine, Holy Land, Gaza, Palestine and Afghanistan.
- ◆ Please pray for the people of Hawaii, especially the victims of the wild-fires on Maui.
- ◆ Pray for the leaders of all nations for wisdom.
- ◆ Please pray for the American people to listen to God's will on their hearts and do unto others as they would want done to them and their families.
- ◆ Please pray for all travelers as journey to and from their destinations.

Please see Jeni's weekly email for the entire list.

If you have any prayers, praises or updates you would like added, please contact Jeni using the church phone number 209-522-3267.

St. Paul's Cookie Walk Goes to the Shower Shuttle

On Tuesday, Dec. 12th, I was privileged to deliver and hand out many boxes of delicious cookies and yummy cinnamon rolls to the participants at the Shower Shuttle. As the unsheltered received them, they smiled as they looked at the box tied with festive green or red ribbon, or at the Merry Christmas art on the boxes of cinnamon rolls. One man said that the cookies reminded him of Christmas and the ones his mother used to bake. One lady held her box tightly to her chest, then gradually untied the ribbon, looked into the box, smiled, closed the box and retied the ribbon. It may have been a very long time since she had received a gift tied with a ribbon.



So thank you to all who participated - the chairpersons, bakers, servers, packers, ribbon tiers, label attachers, ticket collectors, Advent Wreath makers, set up and put away volunteers and to those who purchased so that the event could be a success.

St. Paul's was on the street just as Jesus has asked us to do. A visible presence of a loving community brightening the lives of others.

Blessings,

Judy Thorkelson

The Heart of Our Faith

Christianity affirms that at the heart of reality is a Heart, a loving Father who works through history for the salvation of his children. Man cannot save himself, for man is not the measure of all things and humanity is not God. Bound by the chains of his own sin and finiteness, man needs a Savior. —Martin Luther King Jr.

Altar Flowers for 2024

The 2024 Altar Flower donation list is now posted in the Narthex. You may sign up on the list or send a request to

carolynlist@sbcglobal.net or to
at jstatzer@stpaulsmodesto.org. The donation amount remains \$35. When you donate, your name and the memory, celebration, or honor or your person or event is printed in the weekly Service Bulletin so the congregation can observe with you.



Have You Pledged?

Thank you to everyone who has pledged so far. If you haven't turned in your pledge card yet, there are still some in the church entry.

Cookie Walk 2023

They say "It takes a village to raise a child". But, it also takes a parish to run a Cookie Walk fund raiser. It requires all of you to be bakers, walkers, workers, promoters, and to set up and take down. Look around you and thank each other. Cookie Walk raised \$4,069 for our parish this year. THANK YOU, EVERYONE!!



I would like to update the Armed Forces name list, so if you have a name on the list, please check it out and let me know if they are no longer in the armed forces. If you have a family member that has joined the armed forces and their name isn't on the list, please send me the information so I can add them.

Kid's Page



HAPPY NEW YOU!

Changing the calendar each January is a reminder that God makes all things new.

Directions: Use the clues and the calendar code to complete 2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV.

JANUARY 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
	God	night	word	in	love	Jesus
7	glory	therefore	speak	give	light	Christ
14	saw	beginning	anyone	waters	help	is
21	he	again	through	earth	made	while
28	new	if	and	creation		

- The second Monday _ _ _ _ _
- The last Monday _ _
- The 16th _ _ _ _ _
- One day before the 20th _ _
- The day before the first Friday _ _
- The last weekday of the second week _ _ _ _ _
- The day after the 20th _ _
- The day after 18th _ _
- The first day of the second weekend _ _
- The last Sunday _ _ _
- The last day of the month _ _ _ _ _

Answers: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.



Geodes look plain on the outside but contain beautiful crystals. Create these "rocks" to show how God makes us new on the inside.

What you need:

- Clean cardboard egg carton
- Scissors (and adult help)
- Epsom salt
- Plastic zippered bags (one per color of dye)
- Food coloring
- Glue
- Paintbrush



What you do:

1. Cut out the tops and bottoms of all the egg compartments so you can make 6 ball shapes.
2. In each bag, put 3 tablespoons of Epsom salt and a drop or two of food coloring. Seal and shake to mix.
3. With the paintbrush, spread glue inside two egg-carton halves. Sprinkle a spoonful of Epsom salt into those halves. Then close and shake.
4. Open your homemade geode and shake out excess salt.
5. Optional: Preserve the crystals with a coat of clear-drying glue.





Michael B. Curry, our Presiding Bishop
David Rice, our Bishop & **Anna Carmichael**, our Canon

Armed Forces



- | | |
|---|---|
| Tom Allen , Wyoming Air National Guard | Jenavieve Johnston , U. S. Air Force |
| Melissa Allen , U. S. Air Force | Jorgito Fuentes , U. S. Navy |
| Brandon Alonzo , U. S. Air Force | Johnny Olmos , U. S. Coast Guard |
| Christopher Bradley , U. S. Navy | Cole Medeiros , U. S. Navy |
| T. J. Browning , U. S. Navy | Nate Wallace , U. S. Air Force R |
| Jay Colón , U. S. Air Force | Carson Repan , U. S. Air Force |
| Brandon Cox , Texas Air National Guard | |

If you have any updates or new names for the Armed Forces list, please let Cherie Sheaffer know.

Please pray for all of our sisters and brothers in Christ.
God of wisdom and love, help me and all others who are struggling with difficult circumstances find direction and strength to face our challenges. Give us the assurance that underneath us are your everlasting arms, which will sustain us through everything we face day and night. In Jesus' name. Amen.

January Birthdays

- Phil Machado - 10
- John Cox - 12
- Gabriela Maestas - 13
- Jeff Mountain - 19
- Darcee Maestas - 23
- Vickie Winchester - 30

January Anniversaries

- Charles & Bonnie Palmer - 16

If your birthday or anniversary is in January and you aren't listed here, please let Cherie Sheaffer know. We don't want to leave anyone out.



UPCOMING Events

January 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Church office hours
8:30-1:30 Mon-Thurs

- Jan 1 New Year's Day
- Jan 6 Epiphany
- Jan 7 Baptism of the Lord
- Jan 14 Annual Meeting (after service)
- Jan 15 Knit 1 Pray 2 meeting, 1pm
- Jan 15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Jan 26 BINGO Night 7pm

Gentle Reminder

Jeni Statzer, our Parish Administrator, keeps track of the calendar for ALL church events. If anyone wants to use any part of the facility, please contact Jeni at the church office, 209-522-3267. Jeni's hours are 8:30-1:30, Monday-Thursday, and she is always happy to talk with you.

This applies to events on weekdays as well as weekends. It is always wonderful to have our facility used..... coordination is essential.



St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Modesto, CA

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Pauls-Episcopal-Church-of-Modesto-CA-106952012668211/>

Then click on videos.



[www.https://www.saintpaulsmodesto.org/](https://www.saintpaulsmodesto.org/)





The Epistle

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Jan 3, 2024, Volume 15, Number 1 January

Church Office Phone: 209-522-3267
Office Hours: 8:30-1:30 Mon - Thurs

E-mail Addresses

Parish Admin. & Facilities Coordinator
Jeni Statzer, jstatzer@saintpaulsmodesto.org

Music Director, Organist & Choir
Chuck Sheaffer, cbshea@pacbell.net

Bell Choir Director
Judy Teter, jltpt@sbcglobal.net

St. Paul's Epistle & Bulletins
Cherie Sheaffer, cbshea@pacbell.net

St. Paul's Web Page & Social Media
Greg Maszta, gregmasz@gmail.com

St. Paul's Event Coordinator
Tracy Pugh, vinofileincal@gmail.com

Stewardship Campaign
Sarah Hartmann

Finance Committee
Judy Teter, jltpt@sbcglobal.net

Safeguarding God's Children/People
Jeni Statzer and Stephanie Gilmer

Vestry Members

Senior Warden - Linda Lowe, 209-496-3937
lwlowe@outlook.com

Jr. Warden - Carolyn List

Treasurer - Stephanie Gilmer (non vestry)
Roberta Bearden

Sarah Hartmann

Chuck Sheaffer

Nancy Silva

Judy Teter

Sunday Services

Holy Eucharist at 10 am in the church
and live streamed on Facebook. You can
find a link to the live stream on our
webpage

Sunday School during the Homily

www.saintpaulsmodesto.org

www.saintpaulsmodesto.org

Visit and like us on Facebook
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