



St. Paul Ministries

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Christmas 2019

Amid the hustle and bustle of this Christmas season I'd like to offer you this reflection: have you ever held a newborn baby in your arms, perhaps your son or daughter or grandchild? Then you know you experienced a mystery. This baby is so tiny, so vulnerable, so helpless. The baby can't feed itself; it can't tell you what it wants; it can't even roll over. But if you offer the baby your little finger, prepare to have the baby wrap his or her little hand around it tightly, the way a king or queen would hold a scepter of power in times past. In that moment you know if you had to give your life to this baby, you'd do it gladly because you know a truth greater than yourself.

Now imagine yourself back in time to that stable in Bethlehem. You approach this manger and see this magnificent newborn child lying on a bed of straw, and you ask his mother next to him if you can hold him. She picks him up and places him in your arms, and you are beside yourself with joy.

And now that baby grabs your little finger and clasps it tightly. Here is a relational God, baring God's self in complete vulnerability, and inviting you into an intimate relationship. What would you be willing to do for that Love? That's what Christmas is really about! Oh, maybe in the back of your mind races thoughts of the sacrifices this frail baby will make in his future for not only you, but for all humankind, but all that takes a back seat in this singular moment. As you marvel at those tiny fingernails on that tiny hand that clasps so tightly to you, you are overwhelmed with emotions that you cannot ever put into words. What kind of God is this who humbles himself so for us?

Maybe this Christmas season is time for us to do something new – to adopt a new understanding of Christ and Christmas. We should vow to greet and experience others with the same vulnerability and love that the infant Jesus showed the world. Let's ask God to birth a new attitude in us that helps us see the Christ hidden in everyone we meet.

From all of us at St. Paul, God bless you and yours in this joyful holiday season,

Dan Vanoli



The staff and congregation here at St. Paul end this year of 2019 with profound thanksgiving for all that God has provided. Last year at this time we had no heat! We are now toasty warm and also had air conditioning this past summer. Work on the exterior of the building has begun and so far the weather is cooperating. We can't brag enough about all the fantastic volunteers who make everything run smoothly around here. There was wonderful support for 2 Steak Dinners and a Sub Sale. We received 50 boxes with complete Thanksgiving Dinners that we were able to distribute. As this newsletter goes to print, we are looking forward to Breakfast With Santa and the Santa Shop for the children to shop for their families. New this year is the Academy of Spiritual & Social Practice. Two events were planned by Beth Vanoli and were well attended. Watch the newsletter for exciting new events next year.

New Program for Girls

A new program began this fall for girls ages 9-15 with the goal of building strengths that build resilience, strong values, and effective coping and social skills required for doing life well. One of the first activities was to decide on a name for their group through discussion and negotiation. They decided on the name *Amazing Girls Forever* which turns out to be just perfect as they meet together weekly, care for each other, and form friendships. Activities include service projects, cooking, art, games, and spiritual formation. Pictured on the left are some of the girls making Hygiene Kits for UMCOR as part of a church project that St. Paul took part in with the West Ohio United Methodist Women who collected 533 kits from UMW units around the conference. The picture on the right are the girls showing off their Witch's Hat cookies.



January Lunch Dates

7	?
14	?
21	Centerville UMC
28	North Riverdale Lutheran

January Breakfast Dates

4	Belmont UMC
11	Englewood UMC
18	Normandy UMC
25	Community UMC

***St. Paul office and programs will be closed December 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, January 1, 2, 3. There will be lunch only on Tuesday, December 24 and Tuesday, December 31. There will be Saturday Breakfast as usual. The Food Pantry will be open on Monday, December 30 only during this Holiday time. In January, 2020, the church will be closed Monday, January 20 for Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.**

