



St. Paul Ministries

101 Huffman Avenue • Dayton, OH 45403

937-252-4467 • FAX: 937-254-5227

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St. Paul, a United Methodist Church, and so much more...



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2023



I love the anticipation and excitement of the Christmas season, but I notice that my feelings have evolved over the years. As a child it was the anticipation of receiving. As a young parent it was the excitement of finding and giving that special gift that lit up the face of my child as the present was opened. Now, nearly 80, I relish the opportunity to be surrounded by my children and grandchildren and witness the ritual of giving and receiving and, even more so, to share a banquet meal together in thanksgiving of the occasion. It gives me a chance to touch base with each one of them, and it means a lot to me.

For years my wife and I tried to surprise our children and grandchildren with just the right gift that would surprise and please them. Then came the period where the specific gifts were requested or suggested by the children. I mean, what's the surprise in that! I suppose it helps avoid the day-after-Christmas rush to fight the crowds to take back unwanted presents and then get what one really wants! So, by this process, our family, like many others, has evolved to a "plastic" Christmas. Yes, we give gift cards, and put each recipient in charge of buying the present that suits each fine. But I do not know about your family circles, but it seems like when it comes to our Christmas, we are "mailing it in!" And in our hearts, we must ask, whatever happened to seeking out the gift each loved one truly wants or least expects? And that last phrase – "a gift truly wanted and least expected" – is the very essence of what happened on that first Christmas long ago.

Now I happen to believe that from the very beginning, God the Father planned to send His Son, Christ Jesus, into our world. It was Plan A all along, not Plan B. How else were we truly to know what God was really like unless God became one of us, unless he suffered like us, unless he cried like us? How else could we really understand how deep, how compassionate, how unconditional God's love was unless we saw God healing, loving, and forgiving among us? And how would we know how to live in this world unless God personally showed us the Way? Unlike a silly gift card or the latest craze Christmas present, which will surely find its way to the trash bin, the gift God gave us on the first Christmas will last forever and ever. And if we are truly honest, that is what all of us *really want!*

And the manner Christ Jesus came was also "least expected." Not as a king, not as a high priest, but as a humble baby from a poor family. Only those who valued what to look for, recognized Jesus. We should remember this when we hear those sacred, mystical words, "God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but will have eternal life." Indeed, we got the perfect gift that first Christmas!

Now I want to thank you all from the bottom of my heart during this Christmas season; and from all of us at St. Paul, we wish you blessings and joy to you and your loved ones. We cannot have been the hands and feet of Christ in our urban neighborhood for all these years without your selfless support in money, food, and clothing donations, and in-person volunteering. No matter what your church, we consider all of you members of St. Paul. I have served as treasurer for the last 19 years, and I have seen miracle after miracle occur almost every year when things looked bleak. I am afraid to tell you that we are at another one of those crossroads. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to complete major restoration of the church's brickwork, and in August when our funds were exhausted, we again received help from some anonymous saints, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. But now we are faced with the rising costs of so many items we need. We have lost the donations we received from many churches which have left our denomination. This occurs when the traffic at our food pantry is increasing to new levels, at the same time, the cost of food and packaging we use for our meals-to-go has gone up 400%. All this just when our Hispanic ministry is starting to blossom and grow. I say this only that you please keep us in mind in this season of giving. St. Paul has been called "the little church with the big heart" by the folks in the neighborhood, and we at St. Paul want to continue to be that for as long as we can.

Have a blessed Christmas, and a prosperous New Year!

Dan Vanoli
Lay Speaker and Treasurer, St. Paul UMC

Come celebrate the Christmas Story of
 — Las Posadas —
 Sunday, December 17, 2023 at 7 pm
 St. Paul United Methodist Church
 101 Huffman Avenue, Dayton, Ohio 45403

After the service we will adjourn to the activity hall
 for a truly multicultural feast.
 *Please bring a side dish, salad or dessert to share,
 if possible*

(Practice sessions, for those who wish to participate
 in the pageant, are on Thursday, December 14 at 6:45 pm
 and Saturday, December 16 at 11 am)



Thank you

On November 19, 2023 we once again gathered with 70 members of our Hispanic-Latino community of faith at St. Paul UMC - Dayton for our annual Multicultural Thanksgiving Celebration.

A huge thank you to Crossroads church for the Thanksgiving food boxes and Kroger gift cards. Twenty thankful families were the recipients of those gifts, which enabled them to create their own Thanksgiving meal at home.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to Christ Church and Mosaic for providing winter coats for our St. Paul kids.

We also thank Rev. Ashton Dupler for bringing us the message as well as all of the awesome helpers who made this event possible.

We hope you enjoy the pictures we've posted, and understand how meaningful your thoughtfulness is for these families, many of whom struggle with problems we can't even begin to imagine.

We simply can't thank you enough!

Visit us on Facebook at:
St. Paul United Methodist Church of Dayton
 to enjoy photos of this event

Food Pantry Needs:

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Canned meats | Canned vegetables | Canned fruit |
| Canned beans | Boxed potatoes | Soups |
| Pasta | Pasta sauce | Jelly |
| Cereal | Crackers | Toilet paper |
| Paper towels | Shampoo | Deodorant |
| Dish soap | Laundry soap | Grocery bags |

Available 2024 Tuesday Lunch dates:

- January 30
- February 13
- April 9
- April 30
- June 11
- July 30
- August 13
- October 8
- October 29
- December 10

**Community
 Candlelight Christmas
 Eve service**



**Sunday, December 24
 5:00pm**

**ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
 101 HUFFMAN AVE
 DAYTON, OH 45403**

Note: No morning service