

Dear Friends:

The other day, someone asked me when the Cantata was going to be. When I explained that it would be a part of our regular worship service the third Sunday of Advent (this Sunday), I could see that wasn't the answer they were expecting. Trying to make the situation better I explained that the cantata was taking the place of the sermon. Despite my best efforts, I think I only added to the confusion.

And why shouldn't a sermon be sung? Aren't there some truths that can only be expressed through art, a thought that prose just can't express, but poetry can? Or, a feeling that words can't convey but a melody can? Why shouldn't the story—the gospel, really—of Christmas be sung by a choir and accompanied by beautiful music? I can't think of a single good reason why it shouldn't. And so, that's exactly what we're going to do.

This Sunday, we'll have the Good News of Christmas sung to us by our outstanding 31-member choir under the direction of Dr. Scott AuCoin and Pat Weitz and accompanied by Julie Caudle. We'll throw in a couple of other instruments for good measure and feature the gifted voices of three younger members of our community. And all of us will hear the full beauty of the gospel of Christmas, that in Jesus Christ, God has come to us in order to save us.

Grace and peace,  
Kyle

## Announcements

Here's what's happening in our congregation.

*Thank you to everyone who helped make last week's pageant such a wonderful reminder of the Christmas story!*

*We're sorry that last week's recorded service was posted to YouTube late. You can find last week's service [here](#).*

### Ask a Pastor Sunday—December 24

Have you ever had a question about Christmas, but you didn't know whom to ask? Now's your chance! Write your question about Christmas on the index card in your bulletin and place it in the offering plate today. Then, during the morning service on Sunday, December 24, Pastor Kyle will answer as many questions as possible during the worship service.

### Sunday School for Children—Sunday December 17

Sunday School for students in Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade will take place Sunday from 11:15-12:30 in Rooms 5 & 6. Come and join us for faith, fun, and friends!

### Youth Group Christmas Party—Sunday December 17 from 12:30—2:30 p.m.

The Youth Group's annual Christmas Party will be this afternoon in the Youth Room from 12:30 to 2:30. Come and join us for a great time celebrating the Christmas season with all your Youth Group friends!

### Names for the Messiah Advent Study

Isaiah 9:6 is commonly associated with Christmas, announcing that God will one day send a righteous king who will be known as "Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." This study by Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann and taught by Pastor Kyle will walk through each of these names and how they are fulfilled in Jesus. Join us in Room 201 for the final installment of this four-week study.

### Pledge Cards Are Still Available

Thank you to everyone who returned a pledge card. If you did not get a chance to return a pledge card yet, you can still

get a card by the entrances to the Sanctuary. Pledge cards can be mailed to the office or placed in the offering plate. To help the Session plan for next year, please return your pledge card as soon as possible.

### 2024 Offering Envelopes Are Here

We have redesigned our offering envelopes with our new logo and a reminder of our commitment to experience and share the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If you requested offering envelopes for 2024, they are on the table in the Church Office hallway, next to the large elevator. If you would like envelopes for next year, please contact the Financial Secretary, Jean Woodman, by email at [contributions@hamsquarechurch.org](mailto:contributions@hamsquarechurch.org), or check the box on your pledge card.

### Save the Date for the Ladies' Tea—February 3, 2024

Please mark your calendars for the Ladies' Tea which will be held on Saturday, February 3, from 2:00—4:00 p.m. Join us for an afternoon of tea, finger sandwiches, desserts, and fellowship. This is a great opportunity to invite your friends and neighbors. Tickets will be available starting in January. We are looking for a few volunteers to host a table. A hostess would be responsible for decorating a table, bringing a teapot and teacups and saucers for the table. Please see Krystal Doeblner ([krystal.keeley@gmail.com](mailto:krystal.keeley@gmail.com)) if you are interested in hosting a table at this year's event.

## Serve God by Serving Others

### Christmas Joy Offering

Each Advent, our congregation joins with others in the PC(USA) by contributing to the Christmas Joy Offering. As part of our Mission Budget, we are sending \$1,000 to this special offering, which provides assistance to current and retired church workers in their times of need and develops future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. If you would like to contribute to Christmas Joy, you can find specially marked envelopes on the back table, or you can go to <http://pcusa.org/give/ChristmasJoy>.

### Ginny's Pantry

The pantry needs 1 or 2 lb. bags of brown or white rice, regular sized boxes of breakfast cereal, spaghetti sauce (plastic jars or cans; no glass, please). Donation bins are located by the main entrance. Thank you for helping us serve our neighbors in need!

## Advent & Christmas Worship

Advent 4: Sunday, December 24 (10:00 a.m.)

*Ask a Pastor Sunday: Christmas*

*Healing Rite*

*Carol Sing*

## Christmas Eve Worship

Sunday, December 24

5:00 p.m.

*Family-Friendly Lessons & Carols worship,  
including children's time and singing "Silent Night" by candlelight*

9:00 p.m.

*A meditative service including a celebration of the Lord's Supper*