



The Rolling Stone

ADVENT 2024

Members and Friends of Sampson's Mills Church,

After a year of retirement, I sensed God preparing me to begin an interim ministry position. I lived with the idea for a season and asked myself these essential questions: Do I have room in my heart for a congregation? Am I ready to serve with energy, intelligence, imagination and love (one of my ordination vows)? Am I ready to relinquish my fully retired schedule for a part-time ministry schedule? Am I prepared to address any significant issues that may emerge?

In my conversations with God, the answer to all those questions was an unqualified “yes”. As I considered several church positions, I learned that you would be looking for an interim pastor. I waited for your information to be posted on the Presbytery website. When I read your posting, I thought we were a good match.

First, I viewed your worship online for several weeks. I was impressed with Jessica's energy in her preaching, how she shared Scripture's practical implications for daily life, and how she clearly loves you all. A strong connection with your worship encouraged me.

Next was your congregation's ministry in your community. Events like welcoming children and their parents on Halloween, the community Vacation Bible School at the White Oak Park, and the Food Bank ministry reveal your heart for your neighbors and your faithfulness to Jesus' call “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” Also, your midweek EPIC program and children's messages in worship reveal your commitment to the children and youth of your congregation.

All those initial impressions were confirmed as I met with your Personnel Team, your Session members and your staff. I think that we will make a good team during this transitional period.

In addition to normal pastoral tasks Session has established two priorities for the coming months: planning for your 125th anniversary celebration in 2025 and living into your Matthew 25 commitment - a national Presbyterian Church U.S.A. program that focuses on congregational vitality, poverty and issues of race. I look forward to working with the elders and other church leaders on these important priorities.

I look forward to meeting each of you and to getting to know you. While my position is part-time, I will do my best to support you and your family. With the **Spirit's help, our time together will honor God, nurture your faith, and continue to bless your community.**

Yours in Christ,
Steve Wilson



A New Chapter Begins!

We Welcome the Rev. Dr. Steve Wilson as Our Interim Pastor

A little more about Steve...

Steve was born and raised in Alton, Illinois. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics and psychology from Blackburn College, Carlinville, Illinois (1979). He received a Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary (1982) and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (2000) where his **thesis was “John Calvin and the Making of the Pastoral Mind”.**



Steve began ministry serving the Mountaintop Larger Parish, 3 small churches in rural Clearfield County, Pennsylvania (1982-1988). Steve served 35 years in Oakmont, Pennsylvania. He served 4 years at the Riverside Presbyterian Church and became the organizing pastor three months after the Riverside and First United Presbyterian Churches in Oakmont merged.

Steve has been active in Pittsburgh Presbytery since coming into the presbytery in 1988. Formerly, he served on an executive presbytery search team. He chaired the Presbytery’s Evangelism and Congregational Development Unit and the Presbytery’s Personnel Committee. Steve currently serves on the Presbytery’s Commission on Ministry which supports congregations and pastors, and promotes peace and harmony in churches.

Steve and his wife, Diane, live in Natrona Heights, Pennsylvania. Diane is a music minister at St. Richard’s Church in Gibsonia. Their blended family consists of four sons, three daughters-in-law, four grandsons and two granddaughters. Steve enjoys riding bicycles with Diane, reading, writing poems and working occasionally at his son’s dog daycare in Verona.

Dear Saints,

Thank you for lovely send off service and luncheon on September 22nd. I am thankful for our fruitful years of ministry together. Your kind words, prayers, cards, gifts, and hugs carried me well into my new call as the new General Minister of our presbytery. I remember you often and fondly in my prayers. Trust also that I am rooting for you and your continued impact in our community and the lives of folks who call Sampson’s Mills home.

I would also like to invite you to join the Presbytery in celebrating my installation as General Minister at our upcoming presbytery meeting on Thursday, December 12th at 1 pm at the Northmont Presbyterian Church.

May your longing and expectation bring you to encounter Jesus this Advent and Christmas season!

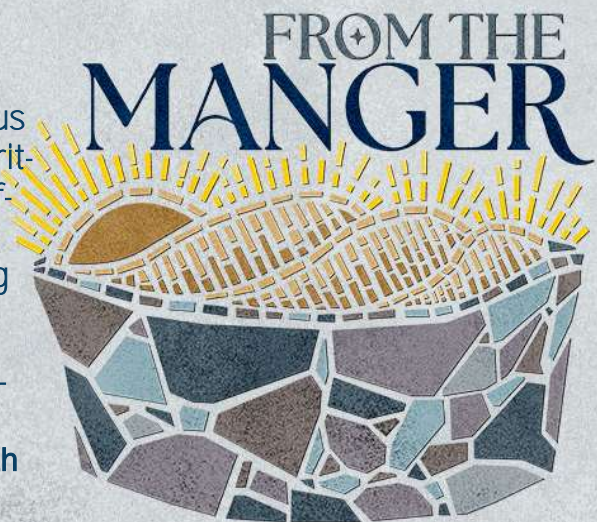
Pastor Jessica



JOIN US THIS ADVENT

Hunger is a universal human experience, reminding us of our need for nourishment—both physically and spiritually. Jesus, the one who came to feed the hungry, offers hope, peace, joy, and love that sustains us. His story begins, ends, and revolves around food, making it a powerful symbol for our journey through Advent.

In *From the Manger*, we reflect on the playful symbolism of Jesus being laid in a feeding trough in Bethlehem, the “House of Bread.” While starting Advent with Jesus’ birth may feel unconventional, we hope this liturgical dissonance invites deeper reflection on how Jesus’ life nourishes our souls and how he continues to feed a hungry world today.



Advent Devotional

This year, our devotional will be a weekly email on Mondays with a reminder email on Thursdays. If you would like to receive the email devotional and have not yet subscribed, please contact the church office, office@sampsonsmills.org

Advent Workshop

Our Advent Workshop was a wonderful afternoon of 4 ministry teams coming together. The Cultivate Community Team provided lunch. The Faith Formation Team led us in an Advent at Home project. The Worship Team helped us decorate our sanctuary and narthex. The Mission Team provided a local mission project bring Christmas joy to children in need.

Reverse Advent Calendar

With our Advent theme, we are happy to tie in with a ministry of SMPC that already helps so many. Look to page 9 of the newsletter for details on how you can help our Cupboard Stretches Ministry this Advent season!

December 1st, Advent 1

Hope Grows

Luke 2:7; Matthew 14:13-21

Celebration of Communion /Advent Workshop

December 8th, Advent 2

Peace Grows

Luke 2:14; Luke 10:1-6

December 15th, Advent 3

Joy Grows

Luke 2:20, Luke 19:1-10

Music Sunday

December 22nd, Advent 4

Love Grows

Luke 2:30-32, Matthew 9:35-37

Christmas Eve

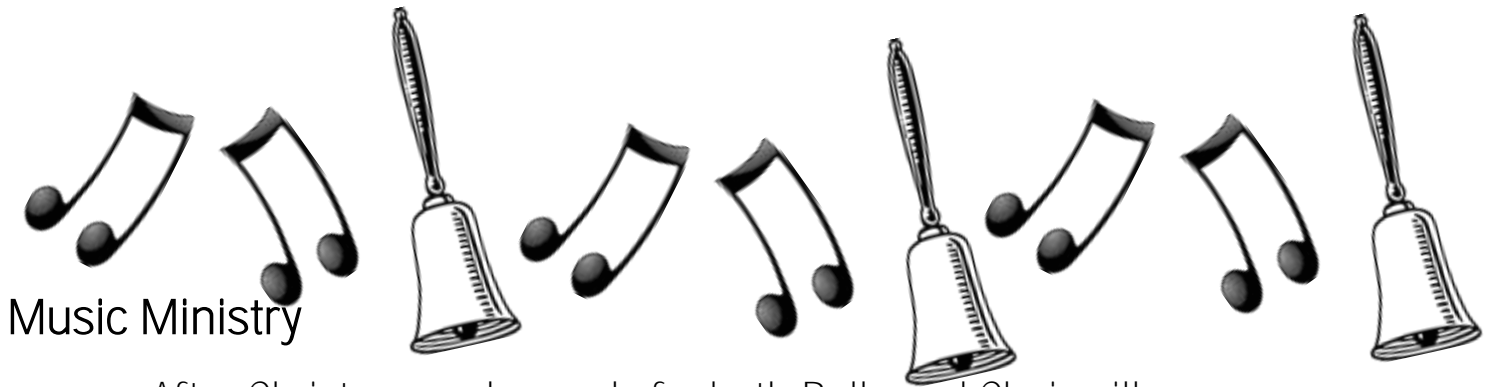
Good News Has Come

Luke 2:10-12; Luke 4:18-19

December 29th, First Sunday of Christmas

Origin of Christmas Carols

Love & Serve Jesus Christ



After Christmas, rehearsals for both Bells and Choir will resume on Thursday, January 9th.

Would you like to try it out?

The new year is a great time for new members to join!
Contact Jo for information.

Bell Choir Meets on Thursdays at 6:00pm in the sanctuary.

Choir meets on Thursdays at 7:00pm in the choir room.

Contact Jo at jo@sampsonsmills.org to get involved!

Children's Worship and Nursery Care In the new year, Children's Worship will revisit the format of "Godly Play". Previously used at SMPC, the current generation of our little ones have not yet gotten to experience this curriculum of spiritual practice. *Godly Play practice teaches us to listen for God and to make authentic and creative responses to God's call in our lives.* Our volunteers will be undergoing a training session in early January to fully implement this creative approach— one that nurtures participants' beliefs and faith through wondering and play.

Children age 4 through 4th grade are invited upstairs following Small Talk and will come back down to the sanctuary at the end of the service. Children age 3 and under are welcome in the Nursery at any time on a Sunday morning. On Communion Sundays we invite all of God's children to remain in the sanctuary so we can all celebrate communion together.



Facility Rentals

Remember that the Fellowship Hall may be rented for private events such as birthday parties and showers. In addition, we are looking to partner with more local non-profit organizations whom we can offer rental discounts to. If you or someone you know is looking for a simple, efficient event space for a family gathering or group meeting, please have them contact the church office!

Call 412-678-5355 or

[fill out an inquiry form here.](#)



Cultivate Community

Thank you to all!

The Cultivate Community Team thanks all who volunteered their time and resources to all the busy fall activities. From Halloween to the Holiday Market and Advent Workshop – none could be successful without the support of the congregation!



Mon Yough Chorale

Sounds of the Season Concert

Sunday, December 15th

Our Building Partner will share their musical gifts with the community at 3pm right here in the SMPC sanctuary on Sunday, December 15th.

Many members and friends of SMPC sing with the chorale and we love to partner with this organization.

Come and get in the holiday spirit!





Session News

2024 Capital Improvement Progress

We are happy to report that great progress has been made on the 2024 Capital Improvement projects—both in visible labor and fundraising!

As of December 1st, \$22,000 has been raised via grants and gifts! **THANK YOU!** We hoped to fund 50% of this project with grants and gifts— but our aspirational goal would be to fund as much as possible, so as to touch the investment account as little as possible. We continue to invite members and friends to give to the project online or by check with a note indicating *Capital Project Accessibility*.

Any expenses not covered by grants and special donations will come from the Capital Improvement Money Market Account, the special investment account where the sale profits of both 1677 and 1659 Lincoln Way have been deposited and are accruing interest at about 4.5% monthly.



December 3rd is Giving Tuesday!

In this season of thankfulness, think about how the ministry of Sampson's Mills has touched your life and consider giving an additional gift to help our ministry continue to make a difference in our community. Or, think about an end of year gift to help us reach our contribution goals for 2024!



Giving Snapshot



Having issues with the online giving portal? Contact the Presbyterian Foundation for help by calling 1-800-858-6127

	Envelopes	Online
September	\$9,678	\$3,114
October	\$7,871	\$3,843
November	\$7,230	\$4,005

With God's help and your support, we look forward to welcoming our neighbors of all physical abilities through our doors safely and conveniently!

Faith Formation News



EPIC Wednesday will serve our White Christmas Mission project by wrapping the gifts on December 4th. Their Family Christmas party will be December 11th with caroling around the neighborhood, dinner, and cookie decorating. EPIC will take a break for Christmas and resume on January 15th.

Additional volunteers are needed for next semester. Would you like to be part of EPIC? There is a place for everyone! Contact jo@sampsonsmills.org with questions



What is EPIC? EPIC is our Intergenerational Midweek Ministry. This program is for everyone ages 5 through adulthood. We meet on **Wednesdays from 5:30 to 7:30**. Dinner is included! This program has four main components: *Bible Story*, *Recreation*, *Family Time*, and *Worship Arts*. In Bible Story, kids are separated into age groups for age-appropriate Bible Story activities. In Recreation, **everyone plays fun games at nobody's expense**. Family Time is dinner around big tables in groups of multiple ages. Worship Arts focuses on craft, music, and drama activities that can contribute to the worship service.

If you would like to *volunteer*, please contact Jo and plan on attending the EPIC Volunteer Meeting on Wednesday, January 8th at 6:00pm in the Narthex.

For more information, visit sampsonsmills.org/epic .



Volunteers AND
Participants
Register Here!



Looking for Another Way to Support E.P.I.C.?
E.P.I.C. Sponsorships

Support the mid-week ministry with a \$60 sponsorship! This gift will provide an individual's meals for both program semesters. Gifts can be made online <https://sampsonsmills.org/offering/> to the General Fund, just include the note of E.P.I.C. or drop an envelope in the offering plate with the same designation.

Empower our Neighbors

CUPBOARD STRETCHERS MINISTRY / WHITE OAK FOOD PANTRY



We give thanks for the students of Mary of Nazareth School.

Their student council food drive provided more than 15 boxes of non-perishable items for the Cupboard Stretchers Ministry!

It was quite a sight to see as their 8th graders walked this bounty across Lincoln Way from their facility to ours!



Thanks to the hard work of our concrete crew, the new sidewalk into the fellowship hall was ready just in time for our November 15th food bank distribution!

Our delivery driver from Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank, as well as all our clients, appreciated the now even and level access to the Fellowship Hall!



Through the Digital Transformation Initiative, a grant from the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank, we now have a new, dedicated website for our food bank ministry! Be sure to check out the new page, and like the [FaceBook](#) page, too!

Next Distributions

Friday, December 20th

Friday, January 17th

Friday, February 21st

To volunteer, contact

Jolene Keefer

Call or text: 724-396-0977

Email: jpkeefe@comcast.net

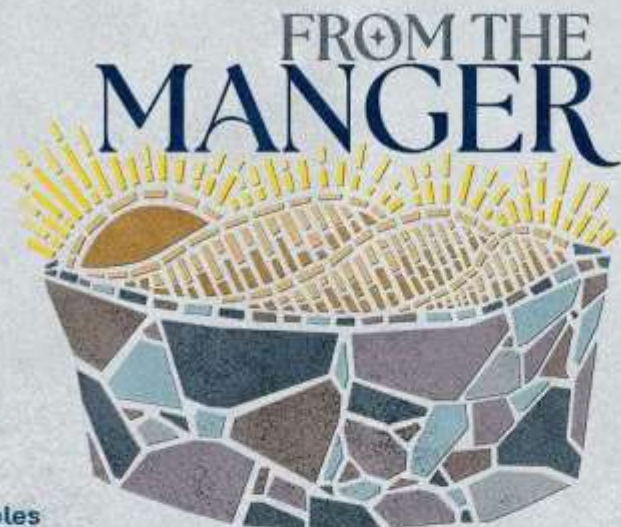


JOIN US THIS ADVENT

Participate in the Reverse Advent Calendar

Benefiting the Cupboard Stretchers White Oak Food Pantry, a Ministry of Simpson's Mills

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1- Cereal | 13- Canned Beans |
| 2- Peanut Butter | 14- Crackers |
| 3- Stuffing Mix | 15- Laundry Detergent |
| 4- Boxed Potatoes | 16- Oatmeal |
| 5- Granola Bars | 17- Pasta |
| 6- Canned Fruit | 18- Spaghetti Sauce |
| 7- Canned Tomatoes | 19- Chicken Noodle Soup |
| 8- Canned Tuna | 20- Tomato Soup |
| 9- Shampoo / Bodywash | 21- Canned Corn |
| 10- Applesauce | 22- Canned Mixed Vegetables |
| 11- Canned Sweet Potatoes | 23- Canned Carrots |
| 12- Cranberry Sauce | 24- Canned Green Beans |



**Drop off donations weekly,
or throughout the Advent Season,
in the hallway near the church office.**

**When making purchases,
be mindful that cans can be
difficult to open and many do not
have access to can openers.
Be on the look out for items with
tab tops and individual-sized
servings.**



**Cupboard Stretchers
White Oak Food Pantry**

www.cupboardstretchers.org

At our Cupboard Stretchers Ministry, we keep God's will in the forefront as we tend to our community through our effort to help those facing food insecurity. Especially at this time of year, when Thanksgiving and Joy are assumed to be the norm, many are on the outside looking in.

Our ministry cannot move forward with God's plan for us without your help, for which we are SO thankful. This year has been filled with donations through monetary means, food drives and individual gifts, as well as volunteering time.

Now that we are nearing the year's end, we need that something extra so that everyone can experience the Joy of the season. Monetary donations not only help us to fund our monthly distributions of meat, dairy and produce, but also help us to provide gift cards to supplement our families' holiday meals. **This allows each family to continue whatever holiday meal tradition they may have, be it ham, turkey or otherwise, and not be limited to the offerings of that month's shop thru.**

This year, with our Advent theme surrounding the different kinds of hunger we all can face, provides a perfect time to center our period of waiting around giving. Use the reverse advent calendar above to inspire yourself to take a moment and pray for others' hunger for nourishment and security. Donations can be dropped off throughout the Advent Season in our donation corner near the church office.

Blessings,

Jolene Keefer, co-coordinator

Festival of Trees, December 5th-9th

The McKeesport Festival of Trees features a tree decorated by the SMPC E.P.I.C. participants! This year, they made a variety of angel ornaments out of unusual materials. View their tree and many others from noon until 9pm, December 5th-9th at

Renzie Park's Jacob Woll Pavilion .



Back this year! Sponsor a Francis McClure Elementary Gift Bag

We are once again teaming up with our local elementary school for this special local mission project.

Gift bags marked with age, gender, and interests were prepared at the Advent Workshop.

Now they need filled with stocking stuffers!

Sign out your bag at the church office.

Please ONLY get items that fit comfortably in the provided bag.

Return to SMPC by

Sunday, December 15th.

Any questions, call the office at
412-678-5355.



Annual White Christmas Offering

This offering helps provide Christmas presents for families in need here in our community. We partner with the Salvation Army to help multiple families facing hardships this year.

“White Christmas” envelopes are available in the narthex, or gifts can be [designated online](#) through the regular giving portal.

This Christmas, help spread the Christmas Joy to those in our community who are without!

Help us reach our fundraising goal of \$1,200 for this important ministry.



December 15th

Music Sunday

Join us for the telling of the
Christmas Story through Song

Featuring the choir,
soloists, and small ensembles.

While our entire Advent season will be filled with special music, our musicians will all come together on the third Sunday of Advent to tell the Christmas Story through song.

Advent and Christmas Highlights

**Christmas Eve
Service 7:00pm**



**Celebrate Christmas Eve with our
traditional candlelight service featuring a
brass ensemble and communion**

This year, our traditional candlelight service will be at 7pm. The service will feature brass, the choir, and communion.

**First Sunday of Christmas
December 29th**



**Origin of Christmas Carols
A Musical Celebration of the Season
featuring a variety of ensembles and soloists**

We will celebrate the first Sunday of Christmas with lots of Christmas carols and learning the stories behind them. Be sure not to miss this unique service!

Looking Ahead: January 19th– A Lay Led Sunday

Our next Lay Led Sunday will have the theme “God at Work at SMPC”. We are looking for people to share their experiences of seeing God at work through our ministry teams and programs. If you would like to be part of this service, please contact Jo.

White Oak Senior Activities Group

Looking for opportunities to connect with others or just be more active and try new things? Check out some of the many White Oak Senior Activities!

With special speakers, yoga classes, coffee hours, and a variety of bus trips, there is something for everyone! Their monthly flyer is always available on our community bulletin board, or check out their [Facebook Group](#)



Life Line Screenings at

Sampson's Mills

Friday, February 14th

Sign up at lifelinescreening.com

and type in zip code 15131



Cupboard Stretchers White Oak Food Pantry

A ministry of Sampson's Mills

www.cupboardstretchers.org

For more information, to give or to volunteer

Distributions are the 3rd Friday of the month

For residents of White Oak, Coulter and Versailles Borough



Wednesdays

Winter Semester Begins

January 15th

Worship 10:30 am

Streaming Online

Rev. Dr. Stephen Wilson

Like Us on Facebook!



[Facebook.com/sampsonsmillspresbyterianchurch](https://www.facebook.com/sampsonsmillspresbyterianchurch)

The ladies meet for breakfast
first Monday of each month 9:00 am
Denny's in North Versailles.

The men meet for breakfast
first Tuesday of each month at 8:30 am
Denny's in North Versailles.

The Millers Daughter's Book Club
third Tuesday 6:30 pm
(for more details contact
Linda Lawrence)



Sampson's Mills Presbyterian Church
1665 Lincoln Way
White Oak, Pa 15131

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR
YouTube
CHANNEL

<https://sampsonsmills.org/youtube>

*Regular church office hours are
9:30am-1:30pm, Monday-Friday*

Phone: 412-678-5355

Email: office@sampsonsmills.org

Website: sampsonsmills.org