



The Rolling Stone

ADVENT 2023

Welcoming Advent–

Opening Your Heart to Receive Jesus This Christmas

I am not sure what it is for you that gets you in that Advent and Christmas spirit. Perhaps it is when Starbucks gets out those red cups, or maybe its the neighborhood light up night. My brother-in-law's family has set up their own holiday to mark the start of the Christmas season. It is the day in November on which it is now permissible to stream Christmas music.

For me, it is taking my nativities out of their boxes. Unwrapping all the usual suspect characters. Mary and Joseph. Baby Jesus – well, he goes in the drawer for awhile until Christmas Eve. The shepherds and the wisemen. The ox and the sheep and the donkey. These nativities represent so much to me. Gifts from loved ones. The first one Andy and I bought. It was from Big Lots because that's all we could afford that first Christmas. They each tell a bit about the time in our family's life when they came into our home: Seminary. Our first church. The move back home to Pittsburgh. Some of them are a bit worn. A few characters are a bit broken. Evidence of real life – moving, toddlers ,and the dog's tail.

This Advent we will draw close to the nativity season but in an unlikely way. Usually, like when unboxing our porcelain ones, we seek the point of view of the main characters. We dwell a bit on Joseph and his moral quandary regarding what to do about Mary. We draw near to Mary and God's invitation to birth God's love into the world. We hear the angel announcements and encouragements to the holy parents, setting them up to participate in humanity's redemption.

But what about the lesser characters? What about the folks in the Christmas story who don't even get a cameo in our home's nativity? Perhaps, this Advent, we can give them our due.

Using Rachel Billups' book, *An Unlikely Advent*, we will experience the Christmas story through the lenses of the more peripheral characters and even one who is downright antagonistic. We'll spend time with Zechariah and Elizabeth the first Sunday in Advent. A bit off our normal departure when we usually cozy up the riverbanks to hear their son, John's, voice crying out in the wilderness. The next week, we will slink our way into the halls of power and see things from Herod's point of view. The following week our All Church Pageant will explore the curious visitors from the East. Indeed, unlikely guests that behold Jesus' birth. The final week, we will take to the hills and catch the shepherd's witness of all that has taken place in the city below.

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The hope is that we might just see the Christmas story a bit differently. We may also see ourselves in the stories of these lesser-known characters. Perhaps, finding that we, too, are invited into the nativity scene. That we also have a place near the manger bed.

So, how can you get started on your Unlikely Advent journey? Each Sunday we will **hear these characters' stories in worship.** You can also opt into receiving our online devotional that will come to your email each morning with a little bit of scripture and some selections from the book, *An Unlikely Advent*. If you would like the full experience, pick up the book to read along, with your family or with the Wednesday morning Bible Study group.

May we all have an Unlikely Advent!

Pastor Jessica

Sunday, November 26th Advent Workshop



Prepare your hearts, homes, and church for the season!

After worship, join your church family in the fellowship hall for a light lunch of soup and sandwiches. Then, we will green the church, make an Advent keeper for our homes, work on a mission project for local students, and plant tulips for a special project.

World Communion Sunday

This beautiful display was made possible by Bob Levkus, who made an amazing variety of bread from around the world, as well as countless members who contributed special items from Guatemala, Sweden, Israel, Malawi and more ! THANK YOU!



Staff Retreat

During the staff retreat, Pastor Jessica, Jo, and Amber worked together at Emmy Pots to create beautiful new pieces to share with the congregation at the Communion Table.

Thank you to Dan of Emmy Pots for all his guidance! These pieces made their debut in November.



An Advent and Christmas Sermon Series

Advent One: December 3rd

What If I Missed It?

Isaiah 64:1-9, Luke 1:5-25

Celebration of Communion

Advent Two: December 10th

Playing the Villain

Isaiah 40:1-11, Matthew 2:1-9, 13-18

Advent Three: December 17th

A Curious People

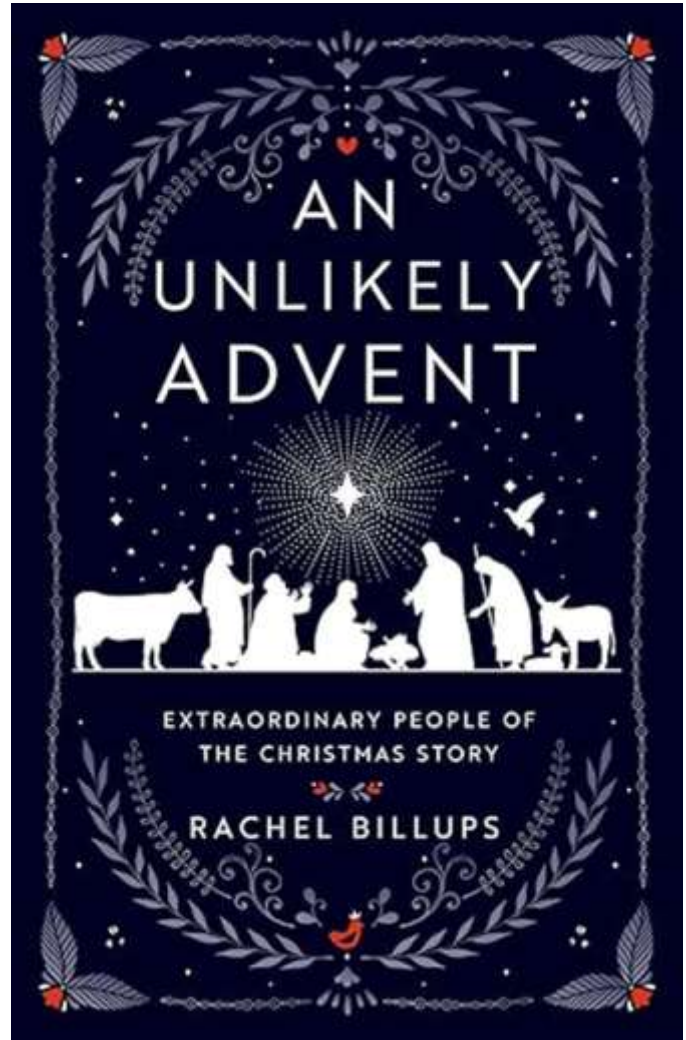
Luke 1:46b-55, Matthew 2:6-11

Intergenerational Christmas Pageant

Advent Four: December 24th

When God Shows Up

Luke 1:26-38, Luke 2:8-15



If you are interested in reading along with the book used for this sermon series, it is available for purchase on [Amazon at this link](#) in both paperback and Kindle formats. Or, Scan the QR code below to purchase.



Christmas Eve: December 24th @ 7 pm

An Unlikely Christmas

Matthew 1:18-23, 2:7-12, Luke 2:1-20

Christmas One: December 31st

The Quiet Welcome of Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Luke 2:22-40

Love & Serve Jesus Christ



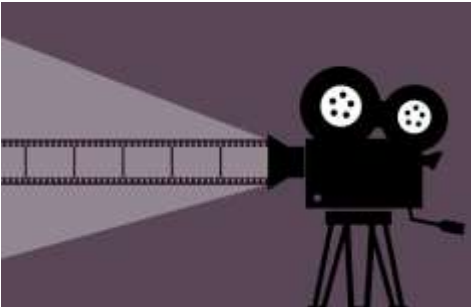
Music Ministry

Adult Choir and Bell Choir have both gained new members this season and are now preparing music for Advent and Christmas. Would you like to join either group in the new year? We would love to have you! Bell Choir meets on Thursdays at 6:00pm in the sanctuary and the Adult Choir meets on Thursdays at 7:00pm in the choir room.

For more information, contact Jo at jo@sampsonsmills.org

Liturgists Needed!

Strong voices are needed every Sunday to help lead worship. If you are not a singer, but would like to read liturgy and scripture, we have a place for you! [Contact Jo](#) to get on the liturgist schedule. New voices are ALWAYS welcome!



Tech Team Volunteers Needed!



Are you more of a “behind the scenes” person? Do you enjoy using technology? We are looking for more people to train on running sound, powerpoint and livestream. Anyone with an interest is welcome to join the tech team.

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



Children's Worship and Nursery Care are available every week except for communion weeks (1st Sunday of each month). Children ages 3 and under are invited for nursery care upstairs for the duration of the service. Children ages 4 through 4th grade are invited upstairs following Small Talk for a Bible lesson and activity. If you are interested in volunteering for either of these ministries, please [contact Jo](#).

Faith Formation News

Confirmation Information Meeting

Save the date! Confirmation Class begins in January! Confirmands AND parents should plan to attend Sunday, January 7th beginning at 9am in the Fellowship Hall. Any questions before then? Email pastorjessica@sampsonsmills.org.



Remember,
Wednesday,
December 13th is our
EPIC Family
Christmas Party!
Caroling through the
neighborhood
begins at 5:30pm
followed by dinner and
fun activities for ALL!



EPIC Wednesdays are in full swing and everyone's having a great time! We started our season with record numbers and we're still growing!

This intergenerational ministry is great for ALL AGES. For more information, visit sampsonsmills.org/epic.



December 17th, 10:30am

Intergenerational Christmas Pageant

Meet some stars, including DAVE,
who led the Magi to the Manger!

You won't want to miss this creative retelling
of the Christmas Story!



Cultivate Community



Vaccine Clinic

November 5th saw more than 30 vaccinations given during our annual Vaccine Clinic in partnership with Rite Aid Pharmacy as members and those from the community at large prepared for the winter onslaught of viruses!

Election Day Soup Sale

Our semi-annual soup sale was another success!

Thank you to all the soup makers, soup sellers and soup buyers! The deacons sold an amazing 102 quarts of soup! Look for us again at the spring primary!



This year, the Girl Scouts launched a new Cookie Booth initiative, coinciding with election day! Troop #52959 sold cookies here at Sampson's Mills, totaling 9 cases of cookies! We hope to welcome them back next election day!

Mon Yough Chorale Christmas Concert

The Mon Yough Chorale Christmas concert will be held on Sunday, December 10th at 3pm right here in our sanctuary.

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

You won't want to miss this fantastic concert!

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.](#)



Halloween Success!

The streets of White Oak were flooded with trick-or-treaters on Halloween! The Cultivate Community Team distributed chips, pretzels, and Turners Tea to nearly 1,000 community members. With the cold weather, a change of set-up to inside proved a huge success as our warming station gave families a chance for a respite with hot chocolate and restrooms! Thank you to all who donated snacks, money and time for this annual outreach.



Caroling, Caroling, Now We Go!

Wednesday, December 13th will be our EPIC Family Christmas Party and we will start with **Christmas Caroling** around our neighborhood at 5:30pm. Then, we'll return to the Fellowship Hall for dinner and activities. The **WHOLE CHURCH** is invited to join and we'd love to have as many of you as possible to carol around White Oak!

Empower our Neighbors

CUPBOARD STRETCHERS MINISTRY / WHITE OAK FOOD PANTRY

With all the turmoil enveloping our world around us, it's confusing to know how to unravel it all to know where we can have the greatest impact. A statement Pastor Jessica made not long ago in her sermon comes to mind:

"Grow where you are planted."

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, and volunteering time.

Now that we are nearing the year's end, we need that something extra so that everyone can experience the Joy.

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. The donation can be less or more than that.**

All gifts help our neighbors in need!

A second way to help is particularly gratifying, because you can see first-hand how our ministry works. Volunteering can be just an hour or two, or 8:30-1:30 on distribution day (3rd Friday every month). Some jobs require some lifting, but others do not.

We welcome all!

To volunteer, call the church office at 412 678-5355 or my cell, 724 396-0977.

Please help to make everyone's holiday a true Joy!

Blessings,
Jolene, co- coordinator

To volunteer, contact

Jolene Keefer

Call or text: 724-396-0977

Email: jpkeefer@comcast.net

**FEATURED NEED
OF THE MONTH:**

***\$25 Donations
to fund the
Holiday
Gift Card Program***



Next Distributions

Friday, December 15th

Friday, January 19th

Friday, February 16th

THANK YOU To the students of Francis McClure Elementary!

They donated 671 non-perishable items to the Cupboard Stretchers Ministry. The school-wide food drive, which doubled as a classroom competition, put Ms. Kerston's 3rd grade class on top with 121 items donated! Their prize? Loading all of the food up! In addition to being generous, cheerful givers, they were excellent helpers and loaded everything with lightning speed.



Back this year! Sponsor a Francis McClure Gift Bag

Purchase stocking stuffers for
local students in need!

Gift bags marked with age and interests
are available beginning at the
Advent Workshop on
Sunday, November 26th.

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

**Return to SMPC by
Sunday, December 10th.**

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





ORDER ONLINE! Scan the QR code!
OR, use the form below. Additional
forms also available in the narthex.



2023 Poinsettia Orders orders due by December 3rd



If you would like to purchase poinsettias for our display,
please complete the online form in the weekend resources email.
If unable to go online, please feel free to fill out the form below and
submit to the church office or place in the offering plate.

To pay for your plants, please be sure to mark your envelope
with "Poinsettias" or pay online by using the "Payment" option in
our online portal.

A list of honored/memorialized names will be on the Christmas Eve
slideshow and in the next newsletter.

Your name: _____

(as it will appear on the list)

Phone: _____

6 ½" – Jingle Bell (red/white) Quantity _____ x \$12 = _____

6 ½" – Red Quantity _____ x \$12 = _____

8 ½" – Red Quantity _____ x \$28 = _____

Total Cost \$ _____

In honor of: _____

In memory of: _____



Annual White Christmas Offering



This offering helps provide Christmas presents for children in need 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!



Next week 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 2023!

Giving Snapshot



	Envelopes	Online
September	\$7,172	\$3,721.07
October	\$9,163	\$3,285
November (thru 19th)	\$8,925	\$4,251.06

Having issues with the online giving portal? Contact the Presbyterian Foundation for help by calling 1-800-858-6127 or email clientservices@presbyterianfoundation.org

Regular church office hours are

9:30am-1:30pm, Monday-Friday

Pastor Jessica takes sabbath on Fridays & Saturdays.

Jo takes sabbath on Saturdays & Mondays.

Amber takes sabbath on Saturdays & Sundays.

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

Phone: 412-678-5355
Email: sampsonsmillspc@verizon.net
Website: sampsonsmills.org
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Sampsonsmillspresbyterianchurch>

Worship 10:30 am

Streaming Online

Rev. Jessica McClure Archer

Like Us on Facebook!



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

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR
You Tube
CHANNEL

<https://sampsonsmills.org/youtube>



**Wednesdays at
5:30pm**

Bible Study with Pastor Jessica
Wednesday at 11:00 am

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)

The Food Bank
third Friday of every month
Volunteers and donations always
welcome.