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Oak Hill News

No. 12 DECEMBER 2023 Volume 73

With Jesus as our guide and community as our goal, we worship, love, serve and grow.

Pastor's Corner

Are you ready for Christmas? If you are like me, your answer is "not even close!" I have friends who have their Christmas tree up and their whole house decorated before Thanksgiving, or shortly thereafter. Some of them even have all of their shopping done and most of the presents wrapped. Not me. Over the next few weeks, I will try to get the boxes and bins unloaded and the decorations up in time for Matthew's arrival home from college. For now, I want to focus my attention on the Season of Advent.

For most Christians, we trudge into late November and early December holding the tension of fast-paced Christmas preparations and the liturgical invitation to "wait." Though the root of the word "Advent" is about a coming, our themes and songs shift us to a slow and labored-holding pattern. We wait for our lives to get easier. We wait for wars to end and violence to cease. We wait for God to make all things right…

What if I paused this Advent? Pausing includes making space for intentional and deliberate times for reflection and contemplation.

What if we awaited this Advent? Awaiting is an active form of waiting—holding anticipation and expectation. Instead of stagnant delaying, this involves moving toward what one is hoping for or needs. Awaiting extends its open hands toward the places where we trust God to meet us.

During the Season of Advent we will be examining the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. We will also be exploring the texts, images, symbols, and stories that this sacred season offers to us—approaching them as doorways into the mystery of the God who comes to dwell among us.

May the words and images that emerge in this season offer entryways into the story of the One who came into the midst of darkness to be with us as we cross the threshold into Advent. I invite you to ask yourself these questions: What do you need to carry with you? What do you need to let go of—so that you can receive what lies ahead?

I strongly encourage you to be a part of all our Advent celebrations so that you can prepare your minds and hearts for the coming of the Christ Child. Every week after worship we have wonderful events planned which will help us to connect with one another sharing food, fun, and festivities together.

I look forward to seeing you at our traditional Candlelight Service at 6:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. I hope that you will invite your family, friends, and neighbors to be a part of this celebration of light and love. Everyone is also invited to join us downstairs for a marvelous Christmas Eve appetizer potluck.

May you experience the fullness of God's love during this special season and always.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Wanda

FELLOWSHIP LUNCHEON

December 3, E&M Hosts the December Luncheon!

This will be a **true pot-luck**. Please bring your favorite dish to share! And come whether or not you have a dish—we want you to share in the food, fun, and fellowship! We'll also be sharing in the heart-warming tradition of assembling a sweet personal gift to deliver to those unable to attend with us in church services. Along with the gift, everyone is invited to sign and personalize a Christmas card to accompany the gift. Then, most heart-warming of all—we can take a gift and deliver it to a very dear Oak Hiller! Words cannot describe how much mutual joy is born out of sharing a gift and conversation with someone you have not seen in a while!

WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

By Matt Hanify

- ***Advent devotionals**: This year's devotional,* "Less is More," *comes from SALT. An Emmy award-winning company, SALT is dedicated to the craft of visual storytelling. The goal of "Less is More" is to move away from the "more" of the season – presents, events, stress – and to dial back to get to the heart of Christmas. Devotionals are available in the sanctuary or for download.*

- ***December 3 – first Sunday of Advent**: In addition to Communion, this service will feature the* Hanging of the Greens, *when we decorate the sanctuary, along with its Christmas tree (a real tree – give it a sniff). We then hold a potluck in the basement. Feel free to bring a dish to share or not. All are welcome here as well.*

- ***December 10 – Chancel Choir's Christmas cantata**: This year's cantata is drawn from* "The Other Wise Man," *a short story from 1896 by Henry Van Dyke. With music by Emily Crocker, this cantata is a touching and beautiful account of the story of the fourth Magi and his search for the Christ Child and lessons learned along the way.*

- ***December 17 – Children's Christmas pageant**: This year's presentation is* "The Shepherd's Story," *a retelling of the traditional Christmas story as seen by shepherds caring for their flocks. Experience the excitement of those shepherds and the beauty of time-honored carols as they await the birth of the Christ Child. Afterwards, Presbyterian Women's Circle 3 will hold its annual cookie and craft sale in the Large Assembly Room.*

- ***December 24 – Christmas Eve**: Since the fourth Sunday of Advent is also Christmas Eve, this day will feature two services: one at regular time (10:30 a.m.) and a separate service at 6:00 p.m. The evening service is a candlelight service, after which we retire to the Large Assembly Room downstairs for an appetizer potluck. As always, everyone is welcome, i.e., you do not have to bring a dish to share in order to join us.*

- ***December 31 – New Year's Eve**: This is not officially in Advent, but I needed to put this somewhere. The service on December 31 will be at regular time, but it will be a breakfast potluck (you do not have to bring anything but yourselves, if you prefer). It will also be downstairs. And it's sufficiently casual that if you happened to show up in your pajamas, nobody would think twice about it.*

WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE (cont'd)

If you wish to purchase a red poinsettia plant to be placed in the sanctuary on Christmas Eve, December 24 (for both the 10:30 a.m. Service and the 6:00 p.m. Candlelight Service), forms are available in the back of the sanctuary. Please fill out the form and place it in the offering plate or turn it in to the church office by 12 Noon on Wednesday, December 6. Each poinsettia is $20.00. (Poinsettias may be taken home following worship on December 24.)

Worship

Welcome to Oak Hill Presbyterian Church. We're glad you found your way here, especially during this very special Advent season, a time when we consider the world before Christ and the importance of His coming into our world. We also decorate things. Fun fact: The first Advent calendar with chocolate was introduced in 1958. More information on this year's Advent events is located below (maybe not directly below, but somewhere else in this newsletter). Thank you for joining us during this time. *The entire Oak Hill family is also here to support you however we can.*

Sunday worship, 10:30 a.m., in person or on Zoom (meeting ID 768 992 383)

Volunteering

We are in regular need of people to help out around here. he church needs greeters and liturgists. The choir always welcomes new voices. And not one of these roles requires church membership. Believe me, we're happy you're here and reading this and have decided to spend time with us. And you're perfectly welcome to come here and just be. But should you feel the pull of wanting to do more, we welcome that as well. On the church website (oakhillpcusa.org) is an orange box that contains a link to our Sign-Up Genius page, where you can self-assign roles for yourself as you see fit. Or feel free to speak to anyone around here, and we will be happy to point you in the right direction.

Communion

Communion will be offered on Sunday, December 3, which is also the first Sunday of Advent. By the way, this is the first December where we've served Communion in a couple years. Fun fact: Advent was formerly a period of fasting similar to Lent. We offer individualized portions of bread and juice, and everyone is welcome. For those looking for a safer option, we also offer small, individual cups of juice with a portion of communion bread in the lid (this also doubles as the gluten-free option). And you are welcome to bring your own Communion materials from home, if you prefer.

In-home Communion is offered for our extended members. Please reach out to Pastor Wanda or someone on our committee, and we can schedule a time.

Sunday School – Adult and Youth

For youth Sunday school, the children, from preschool through eighth grade, meet upstairs in the education annex. Miss Lisa and Miss Sarah are working with the children through *Feasting on the Word*. Currently, the children are also getting ready for their Christmas pageant (more information below in the *Advent* section).

Adult Sunday School meets at 9:30 a.m. in the Theleos Room, which is downstairs in our main building. Pastor Alan and Donna Cook lead the group in deep explorations and discussions of lectionary-based material. I don't think Adult Sunday School has a Christmas pageant. Maybe next year.

Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. (no Zoom option for Sunday School this year)

Childcare

We have shifted our approach to care for the younger members of our church family during worship. Downstairs in the Large Assembly Room (the room directly beneath the sanctuary), we have established a bookcase space. Feel free to head downstairs if your child needs a break (or if you need a break, for that matter). We have books and games and toys, and we're happy to send one of our older students downstairs with you to show you around and keep you company.

WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday Bible Study

The Wednesday Bible Study has completed its exploration of Amy-Jill Levine's *The Gospel of Mark: A Beginner's Guide to the Good News*. During Advent, the group will be reading about and discussing Christmas-related works. Please reach out to *Parish Associate Rev. Dr. Alan Meyers for more information.*

Everyone is invited and welcome to come to Bible study (even if you haven't done the reading). Please pass along the invitation to anyone you know who might be interested.

Wednesday Bible Study, 11:00 a.m. on Zoom, meeting ID 259 777 226, password Disciple

EVANGELISM AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

By Valery Welch

There's a new evergreen growing in the Large Assembly Room! Please bring your Christmas Cards and help trim the tree with greetings for your Oak Hill friends. We are also asking everyone to help decorate the tree with new gloves, mittens, scarves, and hats, to donate to those in need of warm clothes this winter.

December 10, 2:30 – 4:00ish Neighborhood Caroling! Another fun annual tradition in which

OHPC sings its heart out and also supports the St. Louis Christmas Carols Association (SLCCA). Spreading musical cheer and good will throughout St. Louis neighborhoods since 1911, the SLCCA receives donations that go toward supporting local children's agencies. One coin or dollar at a time—to date, the SLCCA has raised over $3 million. Dress warm, bring a mug of your favorite hot beverage and help share musical carols and cheer throughout our neighborhood!

Banners Galore! Josh Smith is organizing "life of church" photos and is working with a sign company to create a new, large OHPC banner. The goal is also a new Advent and Holy Week banner to match and accompany the large banner. It's a big project so let's all cheer Josh on!!

The "Mug-a-Friend" Gift Mugs Are a Success! As a reminder, here's the way it works. Buy a mug for $25, and we'll reserve a second mug to give to a first-time church visitor! Let Josh Smith know that you are interested—bring Josh cash or a check or make an online gift for $25. The whole idea is to share a memorable gift with first-time visitors. If the mugs continue to be a popular idea, we may decide to order more in the Spring!

Keep Those Photos Coming for the OHPC Member Directory! This project promises to come to fruition during the quiet, cold days of winter.

To get your favorite photo to us, simply:

1. Identify the name of each person in the photo (going from left to right)
2. Update any of your contact information that has changed since the last member directory
3. Email your photo and information to: treasurer@oakhillpcusa.org

Save the date! **A** church bowling party is being planned for Sunday, January 21, at Epiphany Lanes, 3-5 PM. More details to follow in the January newsletter.

Join Us! Our next E&M Committee meeting is Monday, December 4, 6:30 p.m. Contact Josh Smith for an evite to our Zoom meeting!

Your Evangelism & Membership Committee:
Josh Smith, Chair
Millie Crittenden
Jeff Dahl
Valery Welch

MISSION AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

By Donna Cook

"During Advent, we have to sit in our own anxiety and funkiness long enough to know what a Promised Land would be like, or, to put it another way, what it means to be saved--which, if we are to believe Jesus or Gandhi, specifically means to see everyone on earth as family." — Anne Lamott, Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith

"JEANS For TEEN" There is still time to donate to support Jeans for Teens, a community outreach project of the University City Public Schools. Our own Christine Woodward helps to facilitate that project. It's a great opportunity to support a church friend in their "good works" out in the world! You can donate online or with a check made out to Oak Hill, put "Jeans for Teens" in the memo line.

New Roots Urban Farm: There are tentative plans in the works to help out at New Roots on **Saturday, December 16,** with a construction project. Josh Smith will be coordinating that effort. More details to follow! Thanks, Josh!

OAK HILL is officially a **Certified Hunger Action Congregation.** While Dena Roper accepted the award on behalf of our congregation, it belongs to all of us! Here's what we do and continue to do to alleviate hunger and address its root causes in our community and world.

1. Hunger Alleviation: We collect food items, serve in leadership roles and volunteer, and provide financial support for Isaiah 58 Ministries. Congregation members prepare meals and sandwiches for various outreach groups serving our unhoused neighbors through Tent Mission, Bounce Back, and Tent Mission STL. We prepare Go Bags with provisions (food, socks, water) for our members to share with unhoused neighbors they may meet in the community.

2. Development Assistance: We have built a partnership with New Roots Urban Farm and with them provide service and learning opportunities to our visiting mission teams at AMEN St. Louis. A portion of the fees collected by AMEN St. Louis provide annual financial support to New Roots to help them build capacity with other Black Farmers and the community served. During our time with New Roots we learn about systemic racism, redlining and Food Apartheid and the role they play in creating hunger and poverty.

3. Hunger Education: In our work with New Roots Urban Farm we learn about the current and historical context of race and privilege and learn about practicing sensitivity around power dynamics and these issues. We do this work as well with Metropolitan Congregations United. Members have participated in books studies with Isaiah 58 Ministries, Just Faith Ministries as well as in house-book discussions on current social justice issues.

4. Lifestyle Integrity: We avoid/limit the use of disposable items at luncheons and fellowship time. If disposable is needed we try to incorporate the use of compostable products. We use ECO Palms on Palm Sunday. We limit our use of bottled water and recycle.

5. Corporate and Public Policy Witness: We actively collected signatures on an initiative petition to be on the ballot in Missouri in November 2024. If passed it will raise the minimum wage in Missouri to $15 and provide for cost-of-living increases moving forward. It also has provisions for earned paid sick leave. We regularly have an offering of letters concerning the Farm Bill and other national issues and various issues at the state and local level.

6. Worship: Sermons often address the issues of hunger, poverty, and injustice. Each week those impacted are lifted in prayer. We love the "*Canticle of the Turning"* and sing it loudly and often along with other amazing social justice hymns. Plus, there are "Minute for Mission" reports from various members of the congregation.

Well done, Friends!

As Disciples of a loving God who inspires us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God, we commit to faithful action to end hunger and address its root causes.

MISSION AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE (cont'd)

Your December and January Shopping List

December 2023
3rd - canned greens
10th - canned fruit
17th - canned meat - your favorite
24th - facial tissues - any size or shaped box.
31st - pancake mix or syrup

January 2024
7th - canned beef stew
14th - coffee or hot chocolate
21st - laundry detergent, small bottle (Image walking home with it.)
28th - canned or packaged beans

All of your donations are welcome, all year! Whatever you have to spare from your pantry or find on sale is perfect. Thank you for your continued support of the Isaiah 58 Ministries. Our 450+ gravy packages were a hit at the Thanksgiving Meal Distribution.

AMEN St. Louis is filling up fast for summer of 2024, we have a group for spring break, and we have been invited to have a table at the Mission Fair at the **Association of Partners in Christian Educators** being held in St. Louis in January 2024. We're planning on partnering with New Roots Urban Farm at that event. More information to follow.
https://apcenet.org/2024-annual-event/

STEWARDSHIP AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

By Brian Heuckroth

SPECIAL OFFERINGS
CHRISTMAS JOY

What child is this?
THE PERFECT GIFT

When Jesus was born among us, he came as a helpless baby destined to bring joy, peace, and salvation to his people. This child, God's word made flesh—fully human and fully God—became one of us. One with us. One among us. In all of our vulnerabilities, struggles, and triumphs, Jesus became one of us—leading us, knowing us, connecting us to himself and to each other, and offering us his gift of eternal love.

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we reflect God's perfect gift to us, with generous support of church leaders among us—past, present, and future—who have pointed us to God.

We honor and celebrate leaders like retired pastors, church workers and their families who have faithfully guided and led us but who now find themselves in critical financial needs. We honor and celebrate emerging leaders like students in schools and colleges equipping communities of color, who develop leadership skills as they pursue their education and prepare to bring their gifts in service to the world God loves so much.

Jesus' example as a child born to be among us and lead us to eternal life provides a pattern for us to follow as we celebrate those who have led us in the past and will lead us into the future. Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we come together to support past, present and future leaders, embodying God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ.

The Christmas Joy Offering will be received during worship on Sunday, December 24. Offerings may be made online. In addition, offering envelopes are available in the back of the sanctuary and you may place your envelope in the offering plate also in the back of the sanctuary. If you wish you may send a check to the church marked "Christmas Joy Offering." Thank you for your support of this vital offering.

STEWARDSHIP AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE (cont'd)

PER CAPITA APPORTIONMENT FOR 2024

Per Capita is the donation we make to support Presbyterian ministry at the denominational, synod, and presbytery level. This contribution supports staff salaries, denominational programs, Bible studies and curriculums, and so many important programs. Our congregation commits to supporting this ministry, and we encourage all members to make a special donation to help cover this commitment. A voluntary contribution of $36.00 from each member will help cover the Per Capita commitment Oak Hill has made for 2024. If possible, payments should be made before the end of the year and identified "For Per Capita." Donations made online, placed in a pew envelope, or a designated "Per Capita 2024" envelope which is located in the back of the sanctuary.

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

Scholarship Fund

Scholarship Application Packets for the spring semester of 2024 from the Oak Hill Scholarship Fund are available in the church office. The purpose of this fund is to assist members of the Oak Hill family in their pursuit of higher education. Individuals eligible are students pursuing an under-graduate college degree or a post-secondary degree at any state-licensed educational facility. Graduate students are not eligible for this scholarship. Applications must be submitted by **January 10, 2023** to be considered for scholarship. Those interested in applying for full-year scholarships should wait and apply to our March scholarship offering of grants.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The following actions were reported or approved by Session in their November 8, 2023, Stated Session Meeting.

Membership as of October 31, 2023, is 95.

No financial reports were available.

Session approved to spend up to $6,000 for a new chairlift and $200 to remove the old chairlift that cannot be repaired.

Session approved Oak Hill joining with the TGS-TGH Block Captains in placing luminaries around the neighborhood on a night designed in December to celebrate all the holidays in December (Kwanza, Christmas, Jewish Festival of Light, and Diwali). Oak Hill will place them on the 4100 block of Connecticut.

BOOK CLUBS

Book club will meet at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 12, at the Barrow residence to pick our books for 2024. We also will discuss "The Diamond Eye" by Kate Quinn. Based on a true story, the novel tells of a quiet bookworm who becomes a sniper for Russia in World War II. The discussion was canceled last month as several members could not attend.
Please bring your dinner and join us.
Those who want to join on Zoom may join us at 7 p.m.: 259 777 226 (password Disciple: case sensitive).

Wednesday Touchy Topics Book Club

The Touchy Topics Book Club will meet on December 6 to discuss Lenny Duncan's *United States of Grace: A Memoir of Homelessness, Addiction, Incarceration, and Hope*. Duncan recounts personal experiences hitchhiking across the country, spending time in solitary confinement, battling addiction, and discovering a deep faith.
Touchy Topics Book Club, Wednesday, December 6, at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom (contact the church via Facebook for the link)

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Circle 3 will meet on Thursday, December 21, at 11 a.m. for our Christmas luncheon.

Love to make holiday goodies, but don't want to be tempted to eat them? Want holiday goodies or crafts but don't have the time to make them? Presbyterian Women Circle 3 has the solution to both problems - our annual Christmas Cookie and Craft sale on Sunday, December 17. You don't have to be active in Circle 3 to donate to the sale, and donations are always appreciated! If you make holiday breads or any other items other than cookies, please price them for us, and if nuts or peanut butter are ingredients, please note it for an allergy alert. Donations should be brought to church by 10:15 a.m. on the sale Sunday. Cookies will cost $10 a pound. Proceeds from the sale are used for Circle's support of its charitable causes.

You are invited to help make cookies for Circle 3's Cookie and Craft Sale on Tuesday, December 12, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the church kitchen. Recipes and ingredients will be provided.

CRAFT CLUB

Submitted by Dena Roper

Craft (Cookie Making) Night

Craft night is scheduled for Friday, December 15, at 6:30 p.m. in the church kitchen. The annual Presbyterian Women's Cookie Sale is the following Sunday, so I thought we could make some cookies for it. There will be some cookie making supplies available or you can bring your own (I have lots of extra baking powder and other stuff), plus we have cookie sheets and 3, count them, 3 ovens! If you don't want to make cookies, that's totally fine, bring a craft of your own or just come visit with us! Who knows, maybe there will be a puzzle to work on too. (If you have any questions about supplies let Dena know.) We look forward to seeing you there!

LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

1st Sunday of Advent, December 3	Isaiah 64:1-9 *and Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19;* 1 Cor. 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37
2nd Sunday of Adent, December 10	Isaiah 40:1-11 *and Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13;* 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8
3rd Sunday of Advent, December 17	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-*11 and Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55;* 1 Thess 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28
4th Sunday of Advent, December 24	2 Sam. 7:1-11, 16 *and Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26;* Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38
Sunday, December 24 Christmas Eve	Isaiah 9:2-7 *and Psalm 96;* Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)
Monday, December 25 Nativity of the Lord, Christmas Day	*Dawn:* Isaiah 62:6-12 *and Psalm 97;* Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2(1-7) 8-20; *Day:* Isaiah 52:7-10 *and Psalm 98;* Heb. 1:1-4 (5-12); John 1:1-14
1st Sunday of Christmas, December 31	Isaiah 61:10-62:3 and *Psalm 148;* Gal. 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

Oak Hill Presbyterian Church
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We are a welcoming congregation where visitors are always expected!

Christian Education - 9:30 a.m.

Service of Worship
(In Person and on Zoom)
10:30 a.m.

The ministers of Oak Hill Church are its members assisted by:

Rev. Wanda Lawry
Transitional Pastor

Rev. Dr. Alan Meyers
Parish Associate

Ms. Susan Brown
Minister of Music

Ms. Carole Adams
Secretary

Articles for publication
in the
Oak Hill News
need to be
submitted in writing
to the church office by the
3rd Monday of each month.