

December 2025/January 2026

Welcome

Welcome to the Bryn Mawr newsletter. The idea behind the content is to deliver news and information to and from Bryn Mawr's parishioners and the good work we are doing in the community. We hope you enjoy!

A Letter from the Pastor

We live in a time of disruptive change. Personally, I don't know anyone who is happy with it.

The government is shut down while I'm writing this. Heels are dug in. No political party is budging. Compromise is not in the wind. By the time you read this, maybe the parties will have kissed and made up. One crisis ends, but another one will surely begin in DC.

Another disruption has been Hurricane Melissa, an incredible category 5 storm which did not leave any of Jamaica untouched by its destructive power. The Caribbean nations of Haiti and Cuba were impacted as well. The ignored predications of the consequences of climate change have come home to roost.

There's much more in the way of disruptions these days. But why go into that?

We'd like to find certainty, stability, and dependability. Where will we find it?

We'll find it in love. Of course, a pastor would say that. But love is above all, and through all, and in all. God is love. As long as we live with love in our hearts, we do not crumble, we are not defeated, we have hope, we do not despair.

As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Love is patient; love is

kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things,

endures all things. Love never ends... Faith, hope, and love will remain, but the greatest of these is love."

Love focuses us on the good, even when evil abounds. Love sees the glass half full, while those without love see it half empty. Love watches for the sun to rise and expects another good day. Others expect one more dark, cloudy, rainy, uneventful day.

What does love mean for you? We can write our own stories. God promises a happy ending.
- *Interim Pastor Steve*



Who's lurking at the Christmas bakery?
A mince spy!



Quotes from Cicero's De Amicitia

“Friendship is nothing more than an agreement on all things, human and divine, together with mutual goodwill and affection; with the possible exception of wisdom, I can hardly imagine a greater gift from the immortal gods to man. Some prefer wealth, others good health, others power, others political office, many also physical pleasures. ... But what is finer than to have one with whom you can venture to say all things as with yourself? ... Other objectives most accord to individual purposes: wealth for buying; power to cultivate; public office, for distinction; pleasure, to share; health, to be free from suffering and retain the capabilities of the body; but friendship, standing out wherever you turn, excluded from nowhere, never untimely, never tiresome, tends to many things. Indeed, not even water and fire, as they say, are used in more places than friendship.”



Marcus Tullius Cicero- a Roman statesman, orator, and author- wrote this dialogue about the nature of friendship in 44 BC. I read it in my high school Latin class in about 1965 AD. As an adolescent, I was struggling to find my way in

society and I was very moved by Cicero's observations which had been written so many years ago by a man who probably never imagined that someone like me would ever read them. His thoughts helped me find my way then. I have shared above some of my favorite quotes.

-Submitted by Debby Nonn

How do snowmen shop online?

They use the *winter-net*!



What Brings You Joy?

(Sourced from PCUSA 'Everyday God Talk' Blog, September 12, 2024)

For years, or maybe more than that, our life has been intense. So much has been happening—in our country, in the world, and in our own lives.

How are you managing it all?

When I was a child, I couldn't wait to grow up, but now I realize that being an adult means losing some of that pure joy and innocence. EVERY.DAY. we're exposed to so much tragedy. Maybe I'd be happier without the constant stream of news. Sometimes I think about throwing away my devices and retreating to a quiet place where I wouldn't be bombarded by all the sad events happening around the world.

Today, I want to focus on something that brings joy. What has brought you joy recently—this week or even this month?

I had a wonderful experience at Yo-Yo Ma's outdoor performance at his rehearsal before a concert. The rehearsal was a special treat because it gave me a glimpse of him in a more casual setting, interacting with people and performing with ease. During the Schumann cello concerto rehearsal, he played additional verses while practicing with the orchestra, telling the audience in a calm and inspiring way, "Think of this as a daydream. We are daydreaming together."

The power of daydreaming was therapeutic.

I first started admiring Yo-Yo Ma when he collaborated with composer Ennio Morricone on the soundtrack for the popular film *The Mission*. My appreciation for his music grew even deeper after I discovered that Mr. Rogers did an interview with Yo-Yo Ma. Many of us know that Mr. Rogers was a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the first pastor on television. I shout out to Mr. Roger's

prophetic evaluation of him as a very special musician. Yo-Yo Ma's son, Nicholas, later made a documentary about Mr. Rogers. It's incredible how enduring friendships form among people who leave such lasting legacies.

Thinking of these two legacies—Yo-Yo Ma and Fred Rogers—reminds me of the value of seeing each other as neighbors and friends, even when we come from different backgrounds. That could bring us more joy in our everyday. Moreover, Fred Rogers saw a gift in his friend and he was right. Yo-Yo Ma's music, filled with pure joy, made me smile and brought tears to my eyes at the same time. His excellence and passion for music in performance were a gift to witness.

Amid the violence and turmoil we encounter daily, this experience was a much-needed escape from the chaos. I hope you can take some time for yourself this weekend, too.

Credit: Fred Rogers Company



Why do reindeer wear bells?
Because their horns don't work!



What is Advent?

When did Advent start? Why decorate with purple? When did the Advent wreath become popular? Katy Shevel answers all these questions and more.

by **KatyShevel**

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(From the Presbyterian Outlook)

What is Advent?

As the days shorten and the nights grow colder, Christians embrace God's promise of light in the form of Jesus Christ, God with us (John 8:12; Matthew 1:23). Heralding the beginning of the church calendar year, Advent begins on the Sunday between November 27 and December 3. Deriving from the Latin word *adventus*, the word means "coming," "approach," or "arrival." "Advent" is also a translation of the Greek *παρουσία* (*parousia*), a word historically used in the church to signify Christ's second coming. The church collectively waits with hope-filled anticipation for arrival, "Advent," of Christ in our world, the one born in the flesh and whose presence is with us both now and eternally.

What is the history of the Advent wreath?

Protestants, Roman Catholics, Orthodox and other Christian traditions around the world celebrate the season of Advent with a host of annual rituals: contemplative worship, prayer, Scripture study and daily devotionals to name a few. In *Journey into the Heart of God: Living the Liturgical Year*, Philip Pfatteicher names an enduring appeal of the Advent

season: the development of meaningful traditions and customs celebrated both in worship, as well as in the home with our families. Today, the Advent wreath is one of most common symbols associated with the season.

Invented by Johann Hinrich Wichern in 1839, the Advent wreath was intended as a physical sign to help bring the spirit and expectation of the season to young boys living in a settlement house that Wichern founded in Hamburg. Evergreens and fire, two of the main materials that make up the Advent wreath, are both deeply rooted in ancient, pre-Christian symbolism associated with everlasting life. Though traditions vary today, four candles typically form a circle around the outside with one white candle in the middle, known as the Christ Candle. The four outer candles customarily represent peace, hope, joy, and love. One candle is lit for each of the four Sundays of Advent, with the Christ Candle as the final one we light on Christmas Eve.

Why do churches decorate with purple during Advent?

Rich, deep colors are symbolic of the Advent season. As in the season of Lent, purple is one of the main liturgical hues associated with Advent. Philip Pfatteicher observes that the color purple holds different meanings for different church calendar seasons. Purple represents penitence during the Lenten season. Whereas during Advent, purple is often associated with royalty, signifying the anticipated arrival of Christ the king. Dark blue is also commonly recognized during Advent. In church history, a deep shade of blue is symbolic of hope and also of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Today, throughout the Advent season, clergy wear purple or dark blue vestments and churches are adorned in purple or dark blue paraments. In the Middle Ages, black was also a liturgical color associated with the observance of Advent.

What are the historical origins of Advent?

Much like the mystical spirit of the season, the precise historical origins of Advent are something of a mystery. Scholars have pieced together significant evidence for annual liturgical periods of fasting and preparation in the early Christian church. Notably, these early Advent seasons didn't culminate on December 25 but instead on January 6, the day of Epiphany. On Epiphany, the church commemorates the revelation of the Christ-child to the world, represented by the three magi who traveled a great distance to Bethlehem to pay him homage. The early church's observance of Epiphany included themes of the nativity, Jesus' baptism, the miracle of Jesus turning of the water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-11), and other revelations of Jesus' identity to the world. In the West, Epiphany was marked as a feast day for the baptism and joyful reception of new catechumens, or converts, into the life of the church. In *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts, and Seasons in Early Christianity*, Bradshaw and Johnson point out that the connection between Epiphany and Jesus' baptism is stronger in the Eastern church than in the West. In the Western Church, Jesus' baptism would later come to be celebrated on a Sunday after the Sunday of Epiphany, as it is today.

Scholars believe that our modern-day Advent observance may have its origins in Spain and in Gaul. In the sixth century, the church in Rome observes a similar season of preparation for baptism. Bradshaw and Johnson note that these early church preparatory observances were of varying lengths, anywhere from three weeks to a six-week Advent in Rome. Pope Gregory I at the end of the sixth century eventually shortens the length of the Advent season to four weeks. Christmas Day, commemorated on December 25, began as a local Roman church observance. In Rome, the four Sundays of Advent leading up to Christmas were officially set by Pope Gregory I. Though the early church's celebration of Epiphany on January 6 was much older and celebrated more

broadly, as Christmas Day gained wider acceptance in the church, the celebration of Advent became oriented not toward preparation for Epiphany but for Christmas.

What is the theological significance of Advent?

As early church Advent celebrations were not centered upon December 25 at all, theologically Advent is oriented *beyond* the birthday of Jesus. Advent prepares us to celebrate Jesus Christ's arrival, born into our broken world as a real, enfleshed human being. However, the season of Advent also directs us toward the ultimate, eschatological hope of our eternal Savior's second coming and the subsequent reconciliation of all things. In other words, we spiritually "get ready" for Christ to come again.

In *Journey into the Heart of God: Living the Liturgical Year*, Philip Pfatteicher writes, "The spirit of the season is expressed in the impatient cry of a sometimes desperate people, 'O that you would tear open the heavens and come down' (Isaiah 64:1)." In contrast to the often-ostentatious ethos of the commercial Christmas season, the Church's Advent is a somber and soulful time of contemplation. Many of our Advent scriptures and hymns are of lament. A very familiar Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," has a haunting minor melody, in which the chorus cries out for God to save God's people, to "ransom captive Israel." In the final days of Advent, many churches hold "Longest Night" worship services in the evening, intentional spaces for communities to gather and lay bare the sadness and grief so often felt on these longest nights of the year.

The church's Advent journey does not abandon us at the threshold of despair and sorrow. Ultimately, this season orients us toward hope in a Savior who has the power to break through the anguish and sins of this world — and to ultimately redeem us all. The theme of the fourth and final Sunday in Advent is profoundly incarnational, pointing us toward the eternal hope of God's people in Jesus Christ and the

enduring promise that our prayers for salvation have at last been answered. The Catholic Church has recited morning prayers together for hundreds and hundreds of years. One line of praise from these morning prayers (*Lauds*) on the final days of Advent strikes a triumphant and optimistic tone, beautifully summing up our ultimate hope of the Advent season: "The Lord is here; go out to meet him, saying: Great is his birth, eternal his kingdom, strong God, Ruler of all, Prince of peace, alleluia!"

KatyShevel

Katy Shevel is the associate pastor for congregational life at Wayne Presbyterian Church, a vibrant congregation in Wayne, Pennsylvania. She also teaches as an adjunct for the Theology Department at Eastern University. In her spare time, Katy enjoys being a dog mom, writing, and stumbling upon a delightful conversation.



**Why didn't Santa have to pay for his sleigh?
It was on the house!**





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Turn your everyday expenses into earnings! Simply buy gift cards and shop online through Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church RaiseRight program, and brands automatically give up to 20% back to help pay for church expenses such as the boiler replacement.

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Visit RaiseRight.com/Enroll to sign up and get started. Use the 'Join an Existing Program' side and enter the Enrollment Code IMEUS67UK4LN for Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church.

Please speak to Patti Ryback in person or email bmpccomm@gmail.com with any questions.



December Birthdays

- 2 Preston Baker
- 4 Kathy Stapleton
- 6 Gillian Arnold
- 8 Kambria Kay Farwell
- 12 Anne McNabb
- 15 Corinthea Stapleton
- 17 Martha Showers
- 22 Louise Rhead
- 25 Gary Everingham
- 27 Karen Nemke
- 29 Dale Farwell
- 31 Karen Baker

January Birthdays

- 12 Maxwell Williams Sykes (Farwell)
- 27 Ray Tenebruso
- 30 Herb Evert



December Anniversaries

- 5 Gary & Dona Everingham
- 9 Preston & Karen Baker

January Anniversaries

- 3 Rick & Patti Ryback



2025 Session and Deacons:

Session Members/Committee Chairs:

- Dave Conklin – Finance
- Todd Fletcher – Worship/Personnel
- Debby Nonn- Communications
- Patti Ryback – Communications
- Jeff Stapleton – Buildings and Grounds
- Pastor Steve - (Moderator)
- Vicki Kraus – Clerk of Session
- Kathy Farwell- Membership

Deacons:

- Eileen Conklin
- Louise Rhead
- Cindy Skaar
- Tammy Tuten