



December 1 Through December 7, 2024

Beloveds,

After a recent comment on social media, I began to reflect on what I've learned in my studies about Gehenna. This Greek word gets translated into the English word, "hell." The Gehenna Jesus talks about is an actual place - it is the valley of wailing, located on the southwest side of Jerusalem. In that valley, some of ancient Israel's kings sacrificed children to other gods as burnt offerings. The prophets confronted this evil, saying that God would send enemy nations to conquer Jerusalem, and Israel's leaders would be killed and their dead bodies thrown into the valley to be burned. The fires that those kings started to consume the innocent would one day turn and consume those kings who abused others in the name of power.*

When Jesus speaks of the fire and gehenna to define God's response to the horrible evils of this world, Jesus isn't saying that people who said a particular four letter word, or people who never heard of God, or people who forgot to pray before bed are going to experience fires like that of gehenna. Jesus also isn't saying that people who are in loving relationships with people we fickle humans might see as "wrong" will experience hell.

It is those who have abused others, those who have used their own freedom to take away the freedom and rights of others around them to live lives filled with love, joy, peace, kindness, and hope - those who abuse their positions of power to manipulate words and people to serve them rather than use their freedom from sin and death to help others in order to love God and neighbor well - they are the people who upon death will encounter fires and sorrow and separation from God outside of the walls of the New Jerusalem, separated from the Good God who created and loves each and every one of us.

We trust that God has already put our sins and deaths to rest in the person of Christ. When he died on the cross, it wasn't to satisfy God's wrath, but to remind each and every one of us that God's got this - God is in control. God is the supreme, ultimate, only God worthy of our time, talents, treasures, and obedience. And while we are forgiven, while we know God to be just and merciful, we must also turn our eye to him who sits upon the throne and there at the feet of Jesus, learning and listening and discerning along the way, we must acknowledge our failures. We do not get to declare ourselves outside of that circle of people who abuse their power - you have some, I promise, even if it feels like you don't. We don't get a free pass to do whatever we want and offer up a flippant "sorry" when we knowingly abuse another person or God's name.

Think of the sheep and the goats - both are confused when separated into the groups and told the succeeded or failed in welcoming God - they're surprised that they haven't or have followed God's will to love one another. This is why we turn to God regularly in prayer - so that we check ourselves - so that we might be transformed and grow into someone who brings about grace and peace and love in their day-to-day life. In our weekly unison prayer of confession, we ask forgiveness together because it is not only an individual "right with God" but it is a community necessity as well - We are created to be in community, and therefore watch out for one another, praying for forgiveness of sins, praying for our eyes to be opened to the ways we fail one another, and to the ways we help and heal one another as well.

God makes room at the table not only for the abused but also for the abusers - *if* they recognize their failings. Doubling down and declaring oneself smart enough to cheat the system (to cheat people out of their livelihoods, to cheat people out of a liveable wage) in order to make a profit and a name for yourself - without repentance and recognition of wrongdoing, is not of God. God's justice will prevail, and those who have failed to see and honor the image of God in each neighbor, whether immigrant, genderfluid, woman preacher, gun owning, red hat wearing, unhoused, or unwealthy - those who have refuse to see how they have failed to love God and neighbor - especially those who celebrate it - they will encounter a sorrow like that of Gehenna.

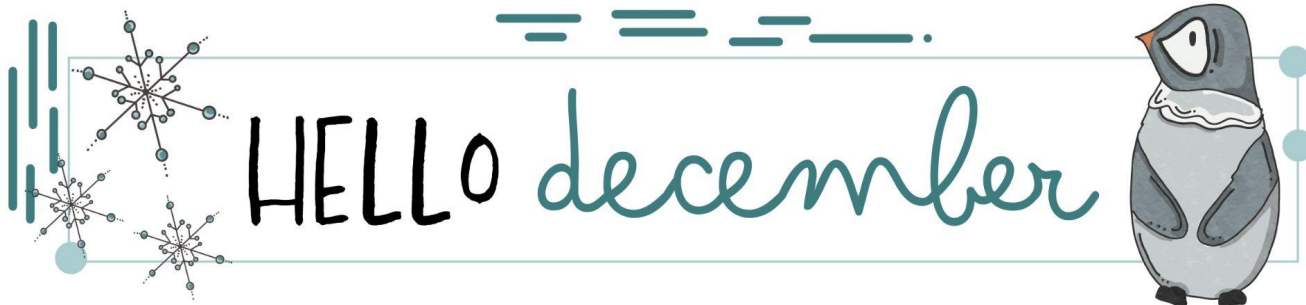
God holds open the door readily for those who truly repent of the ways they fall short in loving God and loving all that God has created and called good.

As we head into this advent season, let us look at how we love one another, how we honor the quiet, helpless babe among us. Do we have room? Do not let your sinfulness be what compels you to run toward God, but let it be the love, the mercy, the compassion with which God greets you - a father making a fool of himself running with his robes up around his knees to welcome the prodigal son, a mother hen ushering you back under her wing to keep you warm after you've strayed too far - let God's open arms, God's willingness to become Emmanuel, God with us, in the most unexpected of ways - quiet, vulnerable, yet strong and mighty - draw you toward God and toward one another, honoring that each part of us that is love and kindness and compassion and justice-seeking in this world - this is who we are is who God has called each person to be - even if you don't understand one another fully. Go, trusting that God's got this, and that Gehenna isn't a threat when you're doing what you're supposed to do - repent, go, and discern obediently how God is calling you to love God and neighbor.

Grace & Peace, Kalyn

*Special thanks to <https://bibleproject.com> for providing this information succinctly.





Worship

- We gather for worship Sundays at 10am
- 110 in Worship on November 24
- Choir rehearsal is on Thursday, December 5 at 7pm
- Hand Bells next rehearsal is December 9 at 7pm for the December 15 performance of “ Away in a Manger”

Congregational Care

- The annual Women’s Dinner will be held at Vesuvio's Restaurant in Monaca on Tuesday, December 3 at 6:00.
- **STORY TIME ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27**
- **SAVE THE DATE–COOKIE BAZAAR IS ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 from 9am–11am.**
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BAKE OR HELP WITH THE BAZAAR CONTACT PATTI STOMINGER. ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO TOWARDS THE PARKING LOT REPLACEMENT PROJECT.
- Sign up your college student to receive a care package in December.

Missions

- We are spreading Christmas cheer at Beaver Rehabilitation Center (Elder Care) on Monday December 2 @6p
 We will be handing out presents (handmade blankets) and singing Christmas carols. It is a great evening for all ages. Any questions call Gina Arzberger at 724-809-3215.
- The Wish Tree is up in the front of the sanctuary. Please consider taking a tag to help local children have a blessed Christmas. Please return unwrapped gift with the tag attached by the due date. Any questions call or text Gina at 724-809-3215

Operations

- October YTD Expenses–\$175,114 & YTD Receipts–\$170,360
- Per capita Expenses YTD – \$6,630 & Per Capita Receipts YTD–\$2,410
- Property Meeting on Monday, December 2 at 6:30

The Ohio UP Church Christmas Card Mailbox is in the Narthex ready to be filled with your Christmas Greetings. If you wish to send cards to fellow church members who attend worship regularly, please feel free to bring your cards and put them in the slots that are in alphabetical order. While spreading good cheer, you will be saving money on postage stamps. Perhaps you might consider making an extra donation to the church for upcoming projects like repaving the parking lot. Remember to check your slot to see if you have any mail during the month of December.

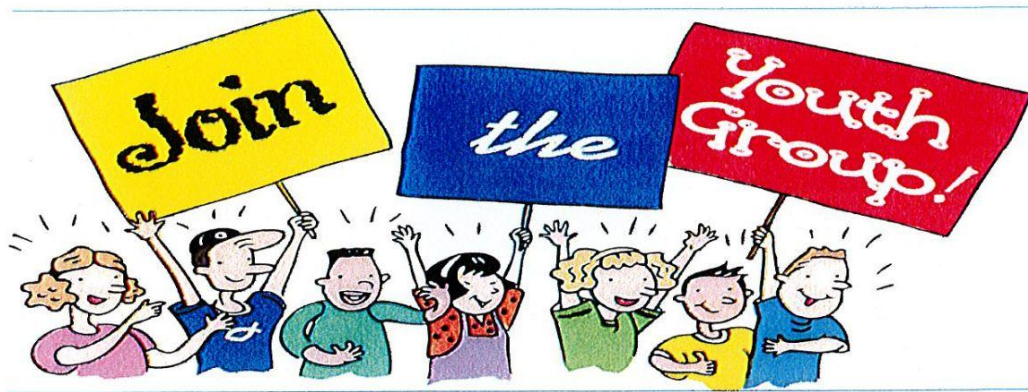


<u>Anniversaries</u>	<u>Birthdays</u>	<u>Birthdays</u>	<u>Birthdays</u>
Joe & Dana Gavita 12/4	MacKenzie Petrella 12/01	Sherri Murdoch 12/09	Richard Young 12/20
Holly & William Diccio 12/18	Whitney Shaffer 12/03	Dale Fouse 12/13	Kathy Fouse 12/21
Marsha & Mark Douglass 12/21	Shane McLinden 12/05	Joe Glatz 12/13	Kathy Lee Tolfa 12/25
Cherryl & Zbig Lachowicz 12/27	Lynn Smith 12/06	Betty Martin 12/17	Mark Douglass 12/27
Russell & Wendy Dameron 12/28	Chandler Dameron 12/07	Joel Mitchell 12/18	Daniel Palmer 12/29
Jason & Gina Arzberger 12/30	Russell Dameron 12/07	Mark Muslin 12/18	Andrew Arzberger 12/30
	Wendy Dameron 12/07	Kristine Dameron 12/20	
	Nancy Connell 12/09	Kenneth Strominger 12/20	

The Nominating Committee is looking to fill open positions on the Board of Session for the Class of 2027. If you have any questions or any interest, contact Chris Otto at 412-722-5325 or cco107@hotmail.com



HANGING OF THE
GREENS



November 18 – Youth Group 7:00 – 8:30

November 23 – Hopewell “Beauty and the Beast”
either 2:00 or 7:00

November 24 - 7:00 - 8:30 (**Sunday**)

December 2 – 5:30 – 7:30 We will be traveling to Elder
Care where we will pass out presents and sing carols. Church Van
leaves at 5:30. Families Welcome

December 9 – Youth Group 7:00 – 8:30

December 14 – Church Cookie Bazaar – Help
with setup, clean up, etc. 9:00

December 15 – Jacobs Angels – Help wrap gifts for
kids in need. Arrive 9:30 lunch incl.

December 16 – Youth Group 7:00 – 8:30

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Happy Holidays No YG Till January 6, 2025

Our Youth Group is having a Food Drive. All donations will go directly to our Free Pantry. You can help us make sure our community has sustainable food to feed their families by making a donation. The following items are needed: Cereal, Mac and Cheese, Canned Vegetables, Peanut Butter, Cake Mix, Instant Mashed Potatoes, boxed Pasta, Fruit Cups, Soup, Jelly, Frosting.

Bring your goods to the church on Sunday. Please contact the Youth Group Teen that gave you the bag(s). If you need a pick up call Peggy Franzese 724-622-5733.

Highlights from the November 12th Session Meeting

- The Beaver-Butler Presbytery office approved our request to host a presbytery meeting next year. The actual date is Tuesday, November 18th, 2025
- The pool table that was in the Youth Group room has been sold for \$500.
- The Hopewell Big Band Holiday Concert is scheduled for Thursday, December 12th. This time the \$500 fee is to be paid by the Musicians Union and not Ohio UPC. Choir practice/Cantata practice was rescheduled that week to Monday, December 9th
- Pastor Kalyn's Installation Service occurred on Saturday, November 16th.
- Reflecting on the 225th Anniversary Luncheon - Session was very well pleased with the attendance.
- For your information, the periodic segment at worship called "Minute for Mission" or "Moment for Mission" will now be called "Mission Focus".
- To resurface the parking lot a capital campaign will be forthcoming in 2025.
- At the time of this meeting three people are still needed to be elders to be on Session.

Action(s) by Session

- A proposal from Youth Coordinator, Peggy Fanzese for interested youth to attend an "Association of Partners Conference and Workshop". The proposal was approved and tabled for the year 2026 so that it can be included in the 2026 Budget.

Joe Glatz, Clerk of Session



- Marlene L.--Friend Gary has been waiting for a kidney for a long time. He received one on Saturday.
- Peggy Franzese--Saw Beauty and the Beast at Hopewell Junior High School. Many of our kids were involved (18). It was great!!!
- Pastor Kalyn--Thanks to the ladies who came to unpack the manse last Friday.
- Marlene L.--Prayers for a friend Karen who lost her son Danny this past Friday.
- Jen Davis--Safety for the hunters who will be out in the woods this next week.
- Christina Palmer--Safety for all who are traveling this week.
- Eleanor Pike--Prayers of thanksgiving for great nephew who is home from the hospital
- Eleanor Pike and Michael Kamenski--Prayers for brother4 Wayne. He was diagnosed with colon cancer. Treatment plan to be determined

ATTENTION

Church members may purchase gift cards for the McCowin family while baby Eva remains in the hospital for the next several weeks. Gas cards and restaurant cards will be greatly appreciated. They can be given to Bonnie, Rayna, or Alli to be delivered each week.