

DRIVE-THROUGH CHRISTMAS

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With the Christmas season quickly approaching now, I'd like to share with you a short essay by theologian Stanley Grenz that I believe will help make this Christmas a most memorable and meaningful one for us. This article appeared in Christianity Today and is entitled, "Drive-Through Christmas."

"On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me." Tony Bennett's voice wove its subtle magic throughout the shopping mall. How appropriate, I thought, as I watched the shoppers scurry from store to store. The advertisements promised "just the right gifts at just the right price," allowing us to "give like Santa and save like Scrooge."

As I listened, I was struck with how we have turned Christmas around—not so much by commercializing the season, but through something deeper. Our McWorld of drive-through expectations has replaced patient waiting, followed by heartfelt joyous celebration, with the idolatry of instant gratification. This is poignantly evident in the fusillade of

renditions of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" to which we are subjected this time of year.

The ancient Western church devised a rhythmic cycle for the celebration of Christ's incarnation. At the center was Advent, the 20-plus days beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day. (This year December 3rd.) By fasting and abstaining from public festivities, Christians were to prepare for the holy day by being drawn into the sense of longing for Messiah's coming felt by generations of God's faithful people.

This heightened sense of anticipation would, in turn, give way to overwhelming joy and festive celebration when Christmas Day finally came. Only then followed the 12 days of Christmas, climaxing on January 6 with Epiphany, the commemoration of the visit of the Magi.

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As members of the fast-food generation, we have become so eager to get to Christmas that we bypass Advent. Whereas our forebears enjoined fasting and reflection, we try to enjoy days filled with more Christmas festivities than we can endure. Christmas has displaced Advent on our calendars.

But our bypassing of Advent runs deeper—altering our attitude to the story of Christ's birth. We know how the story ends. Knowing the end of the story so well, we want to rush through the long and tortuous details of how God prepared a people—of how "God sent his Son...when the time had fully come" (Galatians 4:4). Rather than entering into the sense of expectation lying at the foundation of the narrative of Christ's entrance into the human plotline, we read only the story's glorious climax. Rather than savoring the plaintive mood of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," we immediately want to hear a robust version of "Joy to the World, the Lord Is Come." In short, we have our Christmas early and create a drive-through Christmas.

The irony of our situation is that in our rush toward Christmas, we end up truncating the celebration. Once December 25 is past, so is the holiday. Stretching the 12 days of Christmas until January 6 seems entirely out of place. In fact, we have eliminated the need to do so by moving the adoration of the Magi to our early Christmas: we efficiently (and ahistorically) place the wise men at the manger next to the shepherds. We cannot even stretch Christmas to December 26, for Boxing Day (a tradition in the UK and Canada) entices us to take our unwanted, reboxed gifts back to the stores or to buy boxes of the sale goods that draw us out in droves for one of the biggest shopping days of the year.

So we have our 12-plus days of Christmas, just like the song says. But in our impatience born from the lure of instant gratification, we have transposed them. Christmas now precedes December 25. This may allow us to avoid the stressful waiting, the longing expectation and the forlorn cry of our forebears. But it also precludes us from sharing the exuberant joy of that first Christmas, for we cannot truly sing "Joy to the World" unless we have thoroughly rehearsed "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Let me encourage you to join us as we prepare to welcome our Savior, Jesus Christ, into our world. Advent begins **Sunday, December 3rd**. Throughout the month of December, we will have a **single combined service at 10:30 a.m.** On Christmas Eve we will have two identical services, one at 5:00 p.m., the other at 7:00 p.m. (We will have Sunday School throughout December, as always at 9:35 a.m.) Our normal pattern for worship will resume on January 7th.

ONE ADDITIONAL NOTE: The Sunday before Thanksgiving we had our Consecration Sunday Service. We had a wonderful guest speaker, Rev. Jim Lillibridge and a delicious potluck luncheon afterwards. It was, I believe, the most memorable and fun stewardship emphases I've ever participated in. At the end of the service, every member and regular attender was encouraged to complete an Estimate of Giving Card for 2024.

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If you have yet to complete your card or were unable to attend on November 19th, we'll be sending out one of these cards via the mail shortly. (Please disregard this mailing if you've already turned in your card.) On the other hand, let me encourage you to prayerfully consider how you will support God's work at Bellpoint and turn in your card as soon as possible, if you have not already done so. This will help our Stewardship Team better plan for 2024. Thank you.



Happy Advent and Merry Christmas,

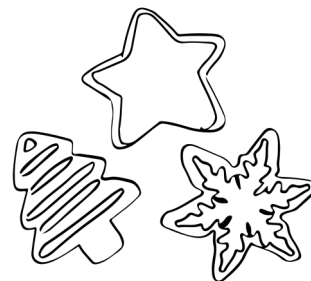
Pastor Paul

Short-Term Sunday School Class

Please join us for a short-term Sunday School class being offered on Sunday mornings through the end of the year. We will be viewing highlights from our first Annual Conference for the GMC, Allegheny West. There was incredible preaching and teaching. Every message is very powerful and will help cast a vision for every congregation in the GMC. We begin at 9:35 a.m. in the children's room toward the parking lot. Youth are welcome to attend.

Sisters in Faith Cookie & Ornament Exchange

The Sisters in Faith will be holding their annual Cookie & Ornament Exchange on **Wednesday, December 6th at 6:30 p.m.** at the church. All women are welcome, so please join us and invite your friends! Come for an evening of fun, fellowship, and a great selection of yummy treats for the holiday season. Appetizers and punch will be provided. Bring a wrapped ornament and 2 dozen cookies for the exchange as well as a container to take cookies home with you.



Staff Love Gift

Hello Church Family,

We are collecting a LOVE gift for the special group of individuals that we refer to as our church staff for Christmas. This special group works tirelessly for us. Please show your appreciation. Make your check payable to Bellpoint Church and write "LOVE GIFT" on it. Put it in one of the collection boxes at the church, mail it to the church, or give it to me. You can also give a gift [online](#), just click "Give Now" and choose the "Staff Love Gift" designation from the dropdown menu.

Thanks,

Bob Himes

Contact Us

740.369.5956

office@bellpointchurch.com

bellpointchurch.com

Pastor Paul McCullough

pastor@bellpointchurch.com

Connect with us on Facebook!

facebook.com/bellpoint

Church Office Hours:

Monday - Friday

8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Upcoming Events

December 6

Sisters in Faith Cookie &
Ornament Exchange
6:30 p.m.

December 8

Worship & Prayer Night
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

December 20

Children's Council Meeting
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

December 24

Christmas Eve Services
5:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.

Worship Services

Traditional Service - 8:30 a.m. - **resuming in 2024**

Sunday School - 9:35 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Contemporary Service - 10:30 a.m.

K-4th graders, come join us in Bible Adventures during second service, 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Please note there will only be one service at 10:30 a.m. for the remainder of 2023.

Bellpoint Community Church Groups

(all groups meet at church unless otherwise stated)

- **Adult and Youth Sunday School:** Sunday Mornings, 9:35 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
- **Men's Bible Study:** Every other Monday, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Current Study: Ten Men of The Bible by Max Lucado. Contact Pastor Paul for additional information.
- **Men's Book Study Group:** Every other Thursday. Current Book: "A Passion for God" by Greg Laurie.
- **Women's Bible Study:** Mondays, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Current Study: The Book of John.
- **Women's Bible Study:** Every other Sunday, 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Current Study: Stepping Up: A Journey Through the Psalms of Ascent. Contact Lori McCullough for additional information.
- **Teen Disciples** (6th - 12th grades): Sundays from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. (see page 5 for details)
- **Emerging Adults** (high school seniors through early 30s): Second Friday of the month, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. at the Solli home. Contact Kelly Solli at 740-816-9383 for additional information.
- **Young Family:** Biweekly at the Kraick home. Contact Holly Kraick at 317-670-5725 for additional information.
- **The Founders' Speech to a Nation in Crisis by Steven Rabb:** Sunday mornings. Contact Larry Hopper at 614-551-3832 for additional information.

December Birthdays

Dec 3	Sandra Davis
Dec 7	Bonnie Freshwater Jason Haney
Dec 11	Bryce Kuhn Jackson Clark
Dec 12	Sue Spessard
Dec 17	Christine Webb
Dec 19	Andy Drake
Dec 20	Avah Wirz Pete Finley Mike Ritchie
Dec 22	Nancy Burtch
Dec 24	Terry Williams
Dec 31	William Emlich

Happy Anniversary

December 8

Dorsey & Linda Gilliam
64 years

December 16

Dominic & Kelly Solli
6 years

December 19

Paul & Lori McCullough
36 years

December 20

Todd & Becky Miller
26 years



Teen Disciples

6th - 12th grades - Meets Sundays at Church from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

December 2: Rock Candy 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

December 10: Teen Disciples 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

December 17: Christmas Party 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

December 24: No Meeting - *Christmas Eve*

December 31: No Meeting - *New Year's Eve*

Children's Council

- ◆ Bible Adventures is off to a great start. Kiddos in K-4, after the opening worship music during second service we head down to our room. Anyone interested in helping in any capacity can see Susan Ritchie for more details. It is not your average Children's Church, it's an Adventure!
- ◆ **Nursery Volunteers** - Thanks to all who have stepped up to play with and minister to our littlest ones! If you are not yet on the list and would like to be, please see Susan to sign up.



Worship and Prayer Night

Come join us for our final Worship & Prayer Night of 2023 on **Friday, December 8th** from **7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.** for a guided time of prayer and worship. Participate to the degree you are comfortable with in a cozy space in the presence of the Lord. This worship and prayer night is open to church members and anyone in the community. December's focus is **Prepare Him Room.**

Prayer Requests

- * **Erin Art** – COVID-19, also praise that she's expecting
- * **Mason** – in the hospital with alcohol poisoning (Kidd)
- * **Michelle Shelly** – receiving treatment for thyroid cancer
- * **Georgeanna Mills** – in the hospital
- * **Ken May** – recovering from a UTI
- * **Eric** – his son died by suicide (Kraick)
- * **Carol Barker's Mom** – oral cancer
- * **Buzz** – experiencing health issues and lost his job (Spellman)
- * **Greg Jaudzems' Dad** – having seizures
- * **Trisha** – kidney issues
- * **Will** – post-surgical infection
- * **Darlene** – recovering from intestine surgery
- * **Mark VanGundy** – hurt shoulder
- * **Jackie** – struggling with seizures
- * **Corinne** – she and her husband are experiencing health issues (Webb)
- * **Karin** – Parkinson's
- * **Karin's Husband** – Alzheimer's
- * **Julie** – cancer relapse (VanGundy)
- * **Stephanie** – diagnosed with leukemia (Jaudzems)
- * **Jerry** – in dialysis and has kidney failure, waiting on a transplant
- * **Janet Artz** – ovarian cancer (Kidd)
- * **Avah's Aunt** – colon cancer
- * **Ron** – recurrence of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- * **Vicki** – battling lung cancer
- * **Lanie** – undergoing radiation
- * **Russ Ulmer** – cancer treatments



Prayer Chain

Are you looking for a way to serve Bellpoint Community Church and our community? Prayer is a powerful way to make an important difference in someone's life. The Prayer Chain is always looking for new members for this vital ministry, so please call the church office if you are interested.

If you hear of a concern or praise there are multiple ways to share the information with our Prayer Chain:

- ◆ Complete a paper prayer request located on the back of each chair and drop in an offering plate or one of the clear boxes in the entrances to the fellowship hall and sanctuary.
- ◆ Contact Brooke Williams, the church office manager, by phone at 740-369-5956 or by email at office@bellpointchurch.com.
- ◆ Post to the online prayer wall at bellpointchurch.com/prayer-wall.

Poinsettias for Christmas

It's that time of year again! Help celebrate the Birth of Christ and enliven the look of Bellpoint Community Church. Order poinsettias in honor or memory of someone special to you. If you would like to purchase a poinsettia and place it in the Sanctuary for use in decorating the church through Christmas Eve, please fill out this form and place it, with your check, in the offering plate. You can also order online at <https://www.bellpointchurch.com/flower-order-form/>. The deadline for placing your order is **December 17th**. The cost is \$10 each.



I would like to order _____ (enter number of poinsettias).

These flowers are **In Honor of**, or **In Memory of** (*please circle*). Please feel free to add a sentiment if you would like.

Friendship Table

The Friendship Table is back! Please join us during the Sunday School hour on the **second** and **fourth** Sundays of every month to catch up with friends and get to know folks you're not as familiar with. We look forward to this wonderful time of fellowship together!



Thank You!

Dear Church,

A big "Thank You" to everyone who contributed side dishes for the Consecration Sunday potluck.

A special thanks to Brooke Williams, our church manager, for keeping us informed of the event. To Jody Miller for cleaning our church so well. To Travis Miller for smoking/preparing the delicious pulled pork. To Dianne May for baking the beautiful cake. And to all who helped with setup and cleanup.



Bellpoint GMC is truly blessed by your presence and service.

Consecration Sunday team member,
Avah Wirz

Barn Dance

Thank you to Carol & Gary Davis for hosting our annual Barn Dance! Here are a few pictures from the evening.



Receiving The Peal

If you do not have access to the internet or email, or simply prefer to have a hard copy mailed to you each month, please contact Brooke Williams, the church office manager at 740-369-5956 or by email at office@bellpointchurch.com.

Just a Reminder...

Please email all articles, pictures, and content for the January Peal to Rachel Kapraly at peal@bellpointchurch.com by Tuesday, December 26.

Thank you in advance for your assistance!

