



# THE BT TIMES

We are Better Together  
December 2019

## Choose Relationships

### Upcoming Events

December 13

7:30 pm

Ensemble

Galilei

Christmas

Solstice Concert

December 22

9:15 am

Potluck Brunch

10:30 am

Advent IV Service

11:45 am

Children's Play

12:30 pm

Ascension Homes

Luncheon

December 24

4:30 pm

Prelude

5:00 pm

Christmas Eve

Service

December 25

10:00 am

Christmas Day

Service

sen·ior·i·tis

/,sēnyə' rīdəs/

*Noun.* HUMOROUS•US. a supposed affliction of students in their final year of high school or college, characterized by a decline in motivation or performance.

Someone close to me said they thought I had a bad case of senioritis, or more like sabbaticalitis. Indeed, the time is drawing near. Christmas Day will be my last service with you until March 29, the Sunday before Palm Sunday. I am so excited about this time away that it is sometimes hard to focus on the tasks at hand. Please don't take it personally! I love you all dearly and will miss you terribly, but I can use some time for rest and renewal.

At the same time, there is a very long to-do list that I have created. I would love to have a clean desk. I have things I need to hand off to other people. There are things I think that only I can handle. There are projects almost finished. There are still services to plan and hymns to choose and volunteers to find!

Someone else close to me who is also very wise said, "Stewart, do you really think anyone ever finishes their to do list? Do you really think you're indispensable?" Well, I guess not... There will always be more to accomplish, more work to do, more people to help, more services to plan. The challenge of this earthly life is to make choices and then to live with the consequences. That's hard work; sometimes joyful, sometimes sad. Consequences are sometimes great, sometimes painful.

Isn't this the work of Advent as well? December 25 will come and go. Some of us are like children, tugging on our parents' pajamas eager to open presents. Some of us are dreading Christmas, knowing all that must be accomplished to make it happen. As we head toward the coming of God into our very chaotic world, I have some advice. Choose relationships.

As I look at my to-do list, the only things that have to be done are already done. The rest can wait, or be left undone. Yes, life might be easier or more beautiful or organized if the boxes are checked. But the world will not come to an end if they are not! But if I leave relationships unattended, pain is inevitable. There will be consequences I'd rather not experience. When the items on the list mean forgoing relationships with those we love, when those things unravel our connection with God, something is out of balance. As you make your preparations for Christmas, always choose relationships, my friends. Choose each other. Choose God. Choose love.

I will miss you all dearly, but know you will be in my prayers, and I seek yours as well.

Stewart+



# Bishop Gohl's Christmas Message

2 0 1 9

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. – Romans 12:21*

On Election Day 2019, I was on my way to a regional retreat with our pastors and deacons serving in the first three years of their ordained ministries. As I came through downtown Taneytown headed towards the retreat center in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, by way of Emmitsburg, I lost my radio station and began to pick up two others. As the radio cut in and out, I was bombarded by live election coverage on one station and serenaded by an all Christmas music station on the other (really, all Christmas music on November 5!). The juxtaposition was not lost on me in those moments. In Jesus Christ, God gives us the power to overcome evil with good. Christmas marks the birth of such a promise, such a hope.

In what promises to be one of the most bruising election cycles in modernity, in a time when households and families are set against each other, in this world where the divide between justice and mercy seems most fragile, in a church that feels like we teeter between death and resurrection, we celebrate the birth of Jesus and cling to the hope such a gift brings. Again. For this world God still so loves.

How that power manifests is a rich tapestry. Loving genuinely. Telling the truth – sometimes hard truths – out of love for God and neighbor. Persevering in prayer. Showing up. Being intentional. Seeing someone whom others don't see. Clothing the cold. Listening to someone who goes unheard. Passing the proverbial microphone and amplifying the voices of others. Feeding the hungry. Supporting those who mourn. Visiting the sick and imprisoned. Encouraging one another. Being Christ for one another.

At Christmas, God's love in Jesus Christ gives us power anew, overcoming evil with good.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Gohl".

*Bishop Bill Gohl, Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA*



# CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY AND HOLY COMFORTER



*presents*



## *Ensemble Galilei's 29th Annual Winter Solstice/Christmas Concert*



*Friday, December 13 at 7:30pm*

419 Cedarcroft Road • Baltimore, MD 21212

Tickets \$25 General Admission, \$20 Students and Seniors  
For information call 410.849.2494 or visit [www.EGmusic.com](http://www.EGmusic.com)

*Photo by Joanna Tillman.*



## Notes from the Office

There's a lot to be said for longevity. Ensemble Galilei's Solstice/Christmas concert tradition started in 1990 in Annapolis in the Great Hall at St. John's College. All of the musicians who were onstage that night are gone, except for Sue Richards and me. They got married, settled down, moved on, started a different band, decided they didn't like to tour - you get the picture.



This week, we're thinking about repertoire and instrumentation, and maybe what we'll do next year for our 30th Anniversary concert. But we are also thinking about the great gifts that accompany a history like ours. You can't help it, really.

My daughter asked me this morning as we were driving to Baltimore from Annapolis, "Mom, who are your favorite people in Ensemble Galilei?"

It's a fascinating question. We've performed with over forty wonderful musicians in the last thirty-nine years, six incredible actors, two extraordinary journalists - it's almost an impossible task. But in truth, Liz Knowles started playing with us in her twenties. She arrived at a rehearsal, straight from New York City, with black fingernail polish and dark, dark, lipstick. It was the 1990's.

We knew immediately that she was an extraordinary fiddler, and a deeply gifted musician. She left us for bigger stages (she was the solo fiddler for *Riverdance* for two years), came back, we created incredible projects together and then she left again for Broadway, then France, China and Ireland, too. About a year ago, she came back and I almost started to cry the first time she put her bow in the string. She'll be here next week. You'll see what I mean.

Then there's Jackie Moran, who will proudly tell you that he plays the two most hated instruments in Irish music - the bodhran and the banjo. But he doesn't just play them, and it's not just Irish music. He is masterful, wickedly knowledgeable, brilliant, and knows more tunes than anyone I know. There are a lot of genius musicians out there, but there aren't many who have the heart and soul of Jackie Moran.

Sue Richards. What do you say about someone who has been with you through thick and thin? Someone whose sense of style and beauty is just like yours - because you grew up together musically, in recording studios and on stages all over this country. Sue has more to do with how I hear, what I play, and how I play than anyone else in the world. We don't have to talk about playing, ever. We just sit down and start.

I am the luckiest person in the world.

Carolyn Surrick

# Chair Yoga

*Mondays at 10:00 am in the Church*

This class will help you build strength and endurance, increase flexibility, and improve your posture and balance. Special attention will be paid to bone health and preventing/reversing bone loss related to osteoporosis. It is designed for adults who may benefit from a slower pace and a recognition of age-related functional changes.



We will do seated chair poses and standing poses. Beginners are welcome. Wear comfortable clothing that you can easily move in and bring some water to stay hydrated. Suggested donation for the class is \$5.00. Please come join us for Chair Yoga in the Church. If you have any questions, please contact Linda McGill at laharte12@gmail.com.

# Ascension Homes Christmas Party

*Sunday December 22 at 12:30 pm in Hart Hall*

Help us welcome our neighbors for whom this holiday luncheon is a bright light in their Christmas season. These small group homes house developmentally challenged adults. The ministry is organized and overseen by GEDCO, a partnership of faith-based and community organizations that provides affordable housing, supportive services, and emergency assistance. Nativity and Holy Comforter were founders of GEDCO. Every year we throw party, and this year we will buy presents for them in addition to a little something for staff. Sign up if you can help!

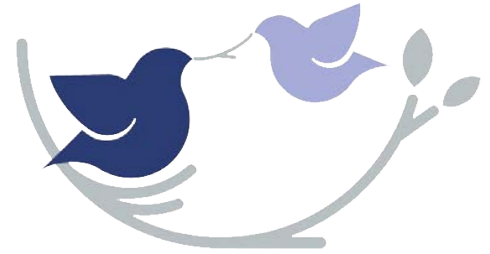
# Boxes and Stockings

We are a congregation of generosity. We've just stuffed Christmas stockings for the Salvation Army full of toys and socks and games. We've filled boxes for Seafarers – for people we have never met and most probably will never meet. Take a moment. It's beautiful.

We are also a congregation of abundance. Some of us give of our time, some give prayers, some give with pledges, some with music and hospitality. This is a time of joy *and* a time of grief. As we walk through our days and nights, let us not forget those whose minds turn to the people who are not with us in this season of joy. Share a cup of tea. Go for a walk with a friend. Make a Gingerbread Man (or woman) for the youngsters in our midst. It is what we can do for each other.

# About ShareBaby

SHAREBABY



ShareBaby was founded in November of 2014 by three local moms who wanted to meet the desire of mothers to share their new or gently used baby items with the families that need them most. ShareBaby began collecting from friends and family and storing donations in their basements and garages. By the summer of 2015, they had distributed more than 14,000 items to children in need. In August of 2015, ShareBaby started Baltimore's first diaper bank to meet this specific deficiency in public assistance to mothers and babies. <https://sharebaby.org>

The Nativity and Holy Comforter Sunday School is hosting a diaper drive for ShareBaby. We are accepting donations now through Dec. 20th. Here is a list of items, keeping in mind that packs of diapers can be new or opened:

- Diapers (sizes 1-6)
- Wipes
- Diaper Cream/ointment
- Baby Oil
- Baby Lotion
- Baby Wash
- Baby Shampoo
- Baby Powder
- Pull-ups (Sizes 2T-5T)

If you have any questions, please contact Amanda Eversley at [aeversley20@gmail.com](mailto:aeversley20@gmail.com)



## HOW WE HELP



# Advent Reflection

by LaVonne Neff

Advent is about looking directly *into* the darkness.

It's about living in Narnia under the white witch's domination, where it's "always winter but never Christmas." It's about the wars that will be fought again, the holy dove that will be caught again, bought and sold and bought again. It's about crying out with the souls under the altar, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Revelation 6:10).

It's about reality.

Strangely, **Advent is also about hope.** Not the hope provided by Santa and eggnog and presents under a tree, lovely as those things are. The hope they provide is a momentary distraction that goes out to the curb with the Christmas tree, leaving us with bleak January.

Advent hope, by contrast, plumbs the dark depths and yet still sees light breaking through—faint, perhaps sporadic, but persistent.

That too is reality.

*And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.  
-Gerard Manley Hopkins*

LaVonne Neff is an amateur theologian and cook; lover of language and travel; wife, mother, grandmother, godmother, dogmother; perpetual student, constant reader, and Christian contrarian. She blogs at <https://livelydust.blogspot.com> and reviews books for various magazines.

## Forum on Faith      Sundays at 9:15 am

Dec 8 – **Diocese of Jerusalem; Israel; Palestine.** Pastor Stewart and Neal Baroody share updates.

Dec 15 – **Christmas in other Countries.** Lee Taylor presents. Come find out how other folks share this world-changing Holiday.

Dec 22 – **Holiday Brunch** with special activities provided by Sam Dowding.

Dec 29 – **No Forum.** Come back for an interesting new season of classes in January!







The Church of the  
Nativity & Holy Comforter  
419 Cedarcroft Rd.  
Baltimore, MD 21212

## Poinsettia Donations

If you would like to place a poinsettia in the church in thanksgiving, honor, or memory of someone, please fill out the following form and place it in the offering plate or mail it to office. Make all checks payable to The Church of the Nativity, and mark it "Poinsettias" by December 15. The suggested donation is \$20.00.

Number of poinsettias: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory Of:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In Honor Of:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In Thanksgiving For:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Given By:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_