



## How is your Advent going? Do you know where you're going ?

I recently read an article that was published on October 24th titled, ***“Churches merge, close: We no longer live in Christendom. We really have to accept that it’s a thing of the past.”***

I was really struck by the title. Wow I thought to myself, What a startling beginning! My first thought was, “What is the author claiming to be a thing of the past? Is it our religion? Our Faith?”

Reading the article through, I found it to be fascinating in its thought and reflection. I set it down, but decided I would return to it again and explore it in more detail.

I came back to it this week. The article chronicles the closure and merger of many churches in the Baltimore / Washington area. The tinge of sadness I first felt at the realization of the closure of many churches was soon replaced with a sense of hopefulness, which I felt in reading some of those stories of their merging and coming together.

The merger of two or three churches of the same denomination, presbytery, or diocese is really not a great surprise. Although it does require a great deal of give-and-take on the part of all stakeholders ..... and, sometimes individuals are unwilling to engage generously in such a process. What a nice story about these two Presbyterian Churches that came together! Can you just try to imagine what a great labor of love that process must have been just to get to the agreement to merge? Here is the story:

**For a decade and more, Govans Presbyterian Church and Brown Memorial Woodbrook Presbyterian Church have labored in the manner of many mainline Protestant congregations: Working ever harder to provide spiritual resources for dwindling number of congregants.**

**Govans, on York Road in North Baltimore, has been hosting its Sunday night dinners for the poor and helping lead GEDCO, the social service organization it co-founded in 1984.**

**Brown Memorial Woodbrook, about two miles from Govans on North Charles Street, has been running its busy Sunday school and community garden and working on LGBT equality and other social justice issues.**

**But with attendance stagnating, maintenance costs rising and the population of Christians from which to draw shrinking, the two have decided to join forces. If the Baltimore Presbytery gives its approval next month, they’ll become one congregation before the end of the year, bringing more than 280 worshippers and 230 years of history together under one roof.**

**The merger would be the latest example of an increasingly common phenomenon: faith leaders closing or consolidating houses of worship as a way of adjusting to a culture that has grown less hospitable to their mission.**

I followed up to see if the merger had been approved, and yes, it was. They began services together last Sunday December 3rd, inviting all participants to a lunch following the service, and the installation of Co-Pastor’s. Now the real work of being Community in Christ begins. Let’s pray that the Holy Spirit guide and lead them, and that God will bless them abundantly.

***Can you imagine such a circumstance for us at St. Paul?***

***Who would you want to merge with? Why? What would be negotiable?***

***Would there be anything non-negotiable? What might that be?***

***What strengths, what drawbacks, would you anticipate in such a merger?***

**Join me next week when I reflect more deeply on some of these great questions regarding Merger / Closure / Expansion ..... and ..... *Why Go To Church Anyway?!***

**—Fr. Gerry**

# December 10, 2017      Second Sunday of Advent

## Mass Intentions — December 11th ~ 17th

Monday @ 7:30 am — Hugh & Roselyn Pickett, Jon Pickett(RIP)

Tuesday @ 7:30 am — People of the Parish (RIP)

Wednesday @ 6:00 pm — Mark Buechler (RIP)

Thursday @ 7:30 am — Charles Cahill (RIP)

Friday @ 7:30 am — Communion Service

Saturday @ 5:30 pm — Mary & Bernard Lawson (RIP)

Sunday @ 8:00 am — Cash Medders (RIP)

Sunday @ 10:30 am — Cindy Miller (RIP)

## New Prayer Requests

### **Special Intentions:**

Leslie & Edie Agosonelli,  
daughter & granddaughter  
of Linda & Joe Granger

Submit prayer requests to:

[office@saintpaulcatholicchurch.com](mailto:office@saintpaulcatholicchurch.com)

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**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** Monday — Friday, 8 am to 12 noon, in the Chapel

(No adoration when office is closed for the holidays)

**Sacrament of Reconciliation** Saturday, 4:30 pm to 5:00 pm in the room next to the Chapel, or by appointment

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See our website for announcements, full prayer list, contact information, and more!

website: [www.saintpaulcatholicchurch.com](http://www.saintpaulcatholicchurch.com)

office phone: 601-992-9547

**Dates**

**Important Dates**

**Dates**

## *Advent Reconciliation Service*

December 18 — 6:00 pm; We will have several priests hearing confessions.

## *Fourth Sunday of Advent Mass Schedule*

December 23 — 5:30 pm Vigil

December 24 — no 8:00 am Mass; 10:30 am Mass only (no Nursery; no Children's Liturgy)

## *Christmas Mass Schedule*

December 24 — 5:30 pm Vigil; Midnight Mass (choral presentation begins @ 11:30pm)

December 25 — no 8:00 am Mass; 10:30 am Mass only (no Nursery; no Children's Liturgy)

## *New Year's Day Mass Schedule*

January 1 — 9:00 am

## *Parish Office Holiday Schedule*

Closed for the holidays — December 20th @ 12 noon through January 3rd; Opens again January 4th @ 8 am

Should you have an urgent need to contact a staff member or Fr. Gerry, someone will check-in daily on the office phone (601-992-9547) & email ([office@saintpaulcatholicchurch.com](mailto:office@saintpaulcatholicchurch.com)).

NOTE: \*\*\*No Eucharistic Adoration December 21-Jan 3 since the office will be closed for the holidays

\*\*\*Daily Mass will be @ 9:00 am December 26, 28, 29, January 1, 2 (Wednesdays remain @ 6:00 pm)

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