

People: **Yes. With the coming of Jesus the covenant with Israel was expanded and confirmed. By faith in him Gentiles were welcomed into the covenant. This throwing open of the gates confirmed the promise that through Israel, God's blessing would come to all peoples.**

Although for the most part Israel has not accepted Jesus as the Messiah, God has not rejected Israel. God still loves Israel, and God is their hope, "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29). The God who has reached out to unbelieving Gentiles will not fail to show mercy to Israel as the people of the everlasting covenant.

Leader: [Question 38.] Why was the title "Christ," which means "anointed one," applied to Jesus?

People: **Jesus Christ was the definitive prophet, priest and king. All of the Lord's anointed in Israel anticipated and led finally to him. In assuming these offices Jesus not only transformed them, but also realized the purpose of Israel's election for the sake of the world.**

*THE GREETINGS OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP

THE CHILDREN'S SERMON

Kindly pass your Prayer Requests to the center aisle so they may be collected and forwarded to the Prayer Cordon for special attention.

THE SHARING OF JOYS, CONCERNS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE CHORAL PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Creator of the Stars of Night

CONDITOR ALME SIDERUM

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 (*Pew Bible p. 588*)

Liturgist: This is the word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God!**

SPECIAL MUSIC

Lovely Comes the Falling Snow

Dale Peterson

Darla Peterson, Alto

THE EPISTLE LESSON Revelation 21: 1-7 (*Pew Bible p. 241*)

Liturgist: Here ends the reading of the Epistle.

All: **Praise be to you, O Lord.**

THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 2:41-52 (*Pew Bible p. 56*)

Pastor: The Gospel of our Lord.

All: **Glory to You, O Christ.**

*THE CONGREGATIONAL CANTICLE

(Hymn Tune #28)

**Good Christian friends, rejoice
With heart, and soul, and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He hath opened heaven's door,
And we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!**

THE SERMON

“*THE TIME OF OUR LIVES*”

Dr. Swanson

*THE PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER (using “debts” and “debtors”)

*THE THREE-FOLD AMEN

Danish

THE PRESENTATION OF TITHES, OFFERINGS, & GIFTS

THE OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Wise Men Journeyed Afar

Swiss Carol
arr. Walter Ehret

Jaime Lachesky and Emily Lawther, Flute Obligato

*THE CHRISTMAS DOXOLOGY 53 (verse 3, “What Child Is This?”)

**So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh
Come, one and all, to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The babe, the Son of Mary!**

*THE UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**Use us, O God of miracles, and the offerings we have brought, to
bring life and health and hope to your world. Make us generous
and faithful stewards of your mysteries, as we share the bounty
which you have granted unto us. Through Christ we pray. Amen.**

COMMUNION HYMN 37

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

W ŻŁOBIE LEŻY

THE INVITATION

*Friends, this is the joyful feast of the whole people of God! Believers will come
from east and west, and from north and south, to sit at table in the kingdom of
God. This is the Lord's table. Our Savior invites all those who trust Him to
share the feast which He has prepared.*

Pastor: Lift up your hearts!

People: **We lift them to the Lord!**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Pastor: It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you honor and praise, O God.
With thanksgiving, we offer our very selves to you, to be a living and
holy sacrifice, dedicated to your service.

People: **Around this table we gather: awed by the example of Christ, remembering His sacrifice, confessing our role in His continuing passion.**

Pastor: Around this table we gather: humbled by God's forgiveness, encouraged to carry the cross of Christ in our own time and culture.

People: **Around this table we gather: mindful of those who have no table; joined to those who suffer from hunger, persecution, and disease; mindful of those whose lives are filled with warfare and violence, loneliness, isolation, imprisonment or fear.**

All: **Around this table we gather as one body of Christ!**

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

THE CONSECRATION OF THE ELEMENTS

THE COMMUNION (all who are able, come forward)

*THE UNISON PRAYER FOLLOWING COMMUNION

O God, who called us from death to life: we give ourselves to You, and with the church through all ages, we praise You for Your saving love in Jesus Christ, who makes us new and strong, who brings us life eternal.

By the nourishment we have received at this table, help us to have courage; to hold on to what is good; to return no one evil for evil; to strengthen the fainthearted and support the weak; to aid the suffering; to honor all persons; and to love and serve You only, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*THE RECESSIONAL HYMN 31 *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* MENDELSSOHN

*THE BENEDICTION

*THE CHORAL RESPONSE *A Christmas Benediction* Henry Barraclough

*THE TIME OF SILENCE

*THE CHARGE AND DISMISSAL

Pastor: Now go in the authority of the Prince of Peace:
Live God's "Yes" to the world.
Feed the hungry, visit the sick, bind up the brokenhearted.
Forgive one another.
Resist evil and embrace the truth.
Proclaim our hope in Jesus Christ.

People: **We go as ambassadors of God's good news.**

Pastor: Then depart in peace! Serve the Lord!

People: **Thanks be to God!**

*THE POSTLUDE *Noël XI* Jean-Jacques Beauvarlet-Charpentier

* THOSE WHO ARE ABLE, PLEASE STAND.

YOU WERE GREETED TODAY by Bill (Rev. J.) & Jennie Jamieson.

Grace and Peace to All

We want to get to know you, especially if you are a visitor!

Please introduce yourself to others sitting nearby during the passing of the peace. Fellowship Hour will be in the Assembly Room downstairs. (exit at the rear of the sanctuary, go down to the lower level, past the Library to the room near the Sallman painting of Christ knocking at the door.)

In The Life of Our Church

Prayer Concerns:

John Towns Now in Rehab following a stroke on Dec 24
Mary Salisbury (Joe's mother) in Butler Memorial
Hospital, Transitional Care
Mary Elizabeth Goehring . . Hospice Care at Concordia

For Continued Prayer:

Julie & Bud Bruno; Marion Campbell; Marian Curran; Joan Moore;
Eleanor Ritts; Gladys Strobel; Bill Wilson

Anniversaries This Week: January 10 – Frank ("Bud") & Julie Bruno

FURNACE FUND UPDATE

Two weeks ago elder Larry Morrison informed the congregation of the urgent need to replace a dangerously malfunctioning furnace on the third floor of Sarver Hall. To date \$ 2,158.00 has been received in donations to the Furnace Fund. We now have the 50% minimum for down payment so that Cunningham-Shanor can begin installation. If you wish to contribute to this project, please make your check payable to "Covenant Presbyterian Church" and mail it to the church office or place it in the offering plate, designated clearly for "Furnace Fund."

Thank you to all who have contributed to date!
Your prompt and generous response to this emergency appeal
is most appreciated.

LOST... BUT NOT FOUND !

On Christmas Eve, someone mistakenly took Bill Prichards' Blue Hooded coat (Size Large, *Pacific Trail* label) from the rack in the front hall near the Men's Room. The gentleman's coat left behind is size X-Large, also hooded, dark blue/black (*St. John's Bay* label) with winter gloves in the pockets. A "swap" will be appreciated so that the rightful owners can reclaim their attire. *Thank you!*





Your Stewardship Committee, Session and Pastor are very grateful for the outstanding return of pledges for 2009...

**37 giving units have pledged
a total of \$ 97,943**

Thanks be to God (and to you)!



THE OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR 2009

Offering envelopes are now available in the narthex—arranged alphabetically. Please pick up your envelopes before or after this morning’s worship service. If you do not see your name or wish to begin using envelopes, please call the church office.

A NOTE TO THOSE WHO WILL BE GIVING FLOWERS in 2009



Flowers placed in the sanctuary for Sunday worship are now being arranged and delivered by Bortmas Florist in Butler. Due to the additional cost of delivery, the Session asks you to be informed that the cost (for the pair) per Sunday is now **\$27.50** (instead of \$25). Checks may be made payable to “Bortmas Florist” or to “Covenant Presbyterian Church” as desired.

FELLOWSHIP HOUR IN THE ENGLISH TRADITION

Nancy Jo Moorhead is hosting today’s Fellowship Hour, an “Epiphany Tea,” which immediately follows our worship service directly downstairs in the Assembly Room. Everyone is cordially invited to attend. Serving special traditional “goodies” to church, family and friends is part of Christmastide in the English tradition—still practiced by Nancy’s relatives in England. Nancy is sharing this personal part of her childhood memories with her “cherished friends of the church”—her GIFT to the people of Covenant for all they have done for her.



CHURCH SEXTON - Nancy Jo Moorhead is filling in for Larry Morrison who is on vacation through Monday, January 5, 2009.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7th at 9:30 am the Fellowship Committee will meet to take down the Christmas decorations in the church and store them for next year. Others with willing hands and hearts are also welcomed to help. For more information, call Connie at 724-285-3872.

MEETINGS COMING UP...

- Tuesday, Jan. 6 6:00 pm Worship & Music (Connell Room)
- Monday, Jan. 12 7:00 pm Administration & Stewardship (Connell Room)
- Tuesday, Jan. 13 7:00 pm Session (Assembly Room)

SEEKERS' CLASS COMING UP

9:45 a.m. in the Assembly Room

January 11, 2009

“New Leadership”

Ezekiel 34: 23-31



**Part II of the four-part series taught by
Professor Steven Tuell, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary**

BACKGROUND ON THE TOPIC AND THE SPEAKER

By any standards, Ezekiel is a difficult book, depicting strange actions and stranger visions. What is a modern reader to make of Ezekiel the prophet, a bizarre figure who shaved his head with a sword (Ezekiel 5:1-4); refused to mourn the death of his wife (24: 15-18); and saw visions of wheels, fire and impossible four-faced creatures (1: 4-28)

Ezekiel is exactly the sort of book some Christians have in mind when they complain about how dark, violent and confusing the Old Testament is. Yet, on the other hand, Ezekiel is also a book of piercing beauty. Ezekiel speaks movingly of God's offer to give God's people a new heart and a new spirit (11:19).

Jesus' image of the Good Shepherd (Matthew 18: 12-14; Luke 15: 3-7; John 10: 118) and John's vision of the river of life and the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21: 9-22:2) have roots in this odd, ancient book (see Ezekiel 34: 11-31; 47: 1-12; 48: 30-35). Indeed, Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones (37: 1-14) and its promise of Israel's resurrection provides the root image for the Jewish and Christian concept of the resurrection of the dead. Difficult as this book doubtless is, God still has a word for God's people in its peculiar words.

The Rev. Dr. Steven Tuell received his Bachelor's degree from West Virginia Wesleyan College, his M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, and his doctorate in Hebrew Bible from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Before coming to Pittsburgh, he taught at Erskine College (South Carolina) from 1989-1992, and Randolph-Macon College (Virginia) from 1992-2005, serving at both schools as department chair, and receiving numerous awards for teaching excellence. An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, Dr. Tuell has served churches in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia and Virginia; however, the study and teaching of scripture is his calling and passion.

Professor Tuell's particular research interest is the biblical literature of the early Persian period. He was *written Ezekiel, New International Biblical Commentary 16* (Hendrickson, 2001), *1 and 2 Chronicles, Interpretation* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), and *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40-48*, Harvard Semitic Monographs Series 49 (Scholars, 1992), among many others. He is now writing a commentary on the Old Testament books of Nahum through Malachi.

Steven and his wife, Wendy, have three sons. Sean (a student at West Virginia Wesleyan College), Anthony, and Mark (both students at the Robert E. Cook Honors College, Indiana University of Pennsylvania).

January 4, 2009

As the old year passes
we look back, reflect:
times of joy or promise,
and times we'd best forget.
God of the ages, help us walk your way;
Help us greet your future,
seize tomorrow's day

As the old year passes,
sorrow wells within:
loved ones no more 'round us,
all that could have been.
God of compassion, heal each ailing heart.
Guide us to your future
where new life may start

Words by David MacGregor (2007)
from his hymn "As the Old Year Passes"

The Reverend Dr. James E. Swanson, Pastor

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