

# JOY



*Rejoice and exult  
with all your heart*

**TRINITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
2340 State Street, East Petersburg, PA 17520  
717-569-1632

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The Rev. Dr. Christopher M. Rankin, Pastor

The Rev. Harry G. Royer, Pastor Emeritus

The Rev. Dr. Carolynne Call, Covenanted Minister of Mission

Mr. Michael Slechta, Director of Music/ Sounds of Trinity Choir Director

Mrs. Christine Oetama, Organist

Mrs. Carmen Richards, Pianist

Mrs. Carol Kratz, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Sean McKelvey, Preschool Director

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**THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT**  
**8:00 A.M. SERVICE**

**Today's Theme:** Christ's presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good news – and cause for exultation – for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.

**Prayer:** *Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)*

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM AND INVITATION TO THE TABLE**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Rejoice, give thanks; call on God's name; the Holy one is in our midst.

**How good it is to come home to God's house!**

**How good it is to gather in Christ's presence!**

Come to Christ's banquet. Feast on God's gift of grace.

# CONFESSIOIN OF SINS

## CALL TO CONFESSION

John the Baptist calls us to repent, to prepare for the coming of God's reign.

Let us heed John's call and confess our sins in silent prayer.

*(SEATED OR KNEELING)*

## SILENT CONFESSION OF SINS

### CONFESSIOIN OF SIN

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the tender mercy of our God.

God for whom we wait, in the presence of one another, we confess our sin before you. We fail in believing that your good news is for us. We falter in our call to tend to your creation. We find our sense of self in material wealth. We fear those different from ourselves. We forget that we are your children and turn away from your love. Forgive us, Blessed One, and assure us again of your saving grace. Amen.

### KYRIE

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

## ASSURANCE OF PARDON

### ACT OF PRAISE

O God, open my lips.

And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Praise to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God:

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen.

*(PLEASE BE SEATED)*

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Soon we will celebrate the birth of Jesus. We worship God with joy in our hearts as we are reminded of the words the angels said on that first Christmas Day:

**“Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to the people.”**

We light this candle to proclaim the coming of the light of God into the world. With the coming of this light there is joy, joy that is ours not only at Christmas but always.

Let us pray together.

**We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ’s advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord’s coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. Amen.**

## THE WORD OF GOD

**THE FIRST LESSON**     *The prophet Zephaniah’s message is mostly one of judgment for sin. This reading, however, which comes from the conclusion of the book, prophesies joy for Judah and Jerusalem. Judgment has led to repentance, and God’s salvation is at hand.*

**The Word of the Lord.   Thanks be to God!**

**THE PSALTER**     A Hymn of Thanksgiving from the Prophet Isaiah (12: 2-6)

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; **he has become my salvation.**

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. **And you will say on that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.**

Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. **Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.**



## THE SECOND LESSON

Philippians 4:4-7

*Despite being in prison, Paul is remarkably upbeat as he writes this letter. Here, he urges his friends in Philippi to trust God with all their worries and concerns, with the hope they will experience God's joy and peace.*

**The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!**

*(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)*

## THE HOLY GOSPEL

St. Luke 3:7-18

*John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity, and vocational integrity.*

***Glory be to You, O Lord.***

## THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD

***Praise be to You, O Christ.***

*(PLEASE BE SEATED)*

## SERMON

**"Can We Rejoice?"**

**Pastor Rankin**

*(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)*

## NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, and has spoken through the prophets.**

**(CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE)**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## **PEOPLE'S OFFERING**

### **OFFERING DEDICATION**

We rejoice, O God of peace, in the privilege of giving without fear. You come to us daily with blessings too numerous to count. You are the Holy One whose presence relieves our anxieties, feeds our hungers, and stirs our compassion. Through our offerings, we express our gratitude. As we give of ourselves, we respond to your call to bear fruit and to make your name known among the nations. Thank you for accepting all we offer this day. In Christ's name. Amen.

### **THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER**

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord!**

Let us give thanks to God Most High.

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

It is very right and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, Holy God, our loving Creator, close to us as breathing and distant as the farthest star. We thank you for your constant love and for all you have made. We thank you for all that sustains life, for all people of faith in every generation who have given themselves to your will and especially for Jesus Christ, whom you have sent from your own being as our Savior. Born of your servant Mary, Jesus shared the joys and sorrows of life as we know it. As we now await the birth of the Christ child, we offer you our hymn of praise.

**Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God, Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!**

*(PLEASE BE SEATED)*

### **WORDS OF INSTITUTION AND PRAYER OF CONSECRATION**

## THE PRAYER OF OUR LORD

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

## COMMUNICATION

As this grain was once scattered in the fields, and has come together in one bread, so we, with different needs and hopes, come together as one, for we share one bread.

**The Bread of Life, broken for us.**

The cup which we share is the cup of the New Covenant written in our hearts and witnessed by Jesus.

**The Cup of Blessing, poured out for us and for the many.**

*(Those who wish to come forward will be invited by the pastor. We will commune by each section. The pastor will give you the wafer and you will dip it in the chalice held by the assistant. Grape juice is in the chalice with the cross and wine is in the other chalice. If you need the pastor and assistant to come to you, please indicate that to someone near you or the pastor. If you do not wish to come forward, you are invited to use the packaged elements in the narthex and commune in your pew. The pastor will offer a blessing after all have communed.)*

*(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)*

## POST COMMUNION PRAYERS

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

In this season of watching and waiting, let us pray for all peoples and places that yearn for God's presence.

Holy God renew your church and raise up leaders who announce your good news. Grant peace to congregations and seminarians in the midst of transition. Guide the work of search committees and committees on ministry. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, your Spirit brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Breathe life into us, that we are inspired to live in harmony with one another and the planet. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Shepherding God, you lead your people in paths of righteousness. Raise up prophets in our own day who warn against captivity to greed and point us to the freedom found in generosity. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Nurturing God, you come near in times of worry and need. Cradle us in your arms, that we trust you and are not afraid. Attend to any who are hungry, imprisoned, or ill this day. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Rejoicing God, you exult over us in singing. Enliven the song of this assembly and bless the ministry of church musicians. With instruments and dance, join our voices to the song of all creation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Let us pray together.

**Most High God, you have come among us at this table. By the Spirit's power, form us to be bearers of your word, sharing gifts of mercy and grace with all, through Christ Jesus, our host and guest. Amen.**

## **CLOSE OF WORSHIP**

### **BENEDICTION**



### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**The Chancel Flowers** are given by **Joan Cash** in memory of Mrs. C.L. Fountain.

**The Worship Aids** are given by **Charles & Elizabeth Hamrick-Stowe** to the glory of God and the Joy of Jesus Christ.

**Money Counters:** Nevin Cooley, John Bailey, Pat Sensenig, Charlene Cristy

**Building Trustee:** Pat Sensenig

**Lector:** Rev. Jack Esbenshade

**Attendance for Sun., Dec. 5**  
**Sunday School**

**8:00–24    10:30–69    TOTAL – 93**  
**14**



## **Happy Birthday!**

Today – Megan Hartley

Tuesday – Charlene Cristy

Thursday – Debbie Wible

Friday – Lainie Christensen

Saturday – Dottie Schadt, Thomas Goodhart

## **This Week at Trinity Church**

**(Church Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.-2 p.m.)**

Thursday 7:00 PM – Consistory/Bds.

Friday Preschool Program

Saturday 7:00 PM – Alanon

8:00 PM - AA

Sunday 8:00 AM – Eucharist

9:00 AM – Sunday School

10:30 AM – Eucharist

2:00 PM – Carol Sing in parking lot

**THE DECEMBER PARISH POST** is available on both floors of the church building.

**ADVENT DEVOTIONALS & CALENDARS:** There are devotionals available for adults & children and Advent calendars for children on the table across from the church office.

**CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTMAS CARD:** Don't forget to sign the congregational Christmas card on the table across from the church office. There is a box for you to put a monetary donation for the Hempfield Power Packs Project.

**ADVENT ENVELOPES:** The Board of Deacons decided to give all contributions from the Advent Envelope to the U.C.C. Christmas Fund. We will learn more about the Christmas Fund next week. Last year we sent \$2,467 to the Christmas Fund. We were the third highest congregation in Penn Central Conference.

**DEVOTIONALS:** The October-December edition of *These Days* can be found on both floors of the church building.



**PRAYER CONCERNS:** The family of Sam Minder, Jr., the family of Jerry Thompson (friend of Janet Harriger), the family of Kevin Zimmeran (brother-in-law of Gretchen & Chuck Leinbach), Lee Bossert-Davis (son of Hillary Bossert Davis), Patrick & Mel (nephew of Marianne Gibble & his wife), the Martin family, Denny Eberly, Robert Richards (brother of Jerry Richards), Hillary Brennan (mother of John Brennan), Ann Wolf (neighbor of George & Sandy DeLong), the Brennan family, Rev. Dr. Carrie Call, David & Ann Potts (friends of Brenda & Harry Himelwright), Pete & Nora Petrosky (friends of Dr. Cathy Hoshauer), Lynn Dull, Jill Otthofer, Paul Zirkel (son of Donna Zirkel), Ronald Himelwright (grandson of Brenda & Harry Himelwright), Barry Richards (son of Jerry & Carmen Richards), Tyler Miller (grandson of Iris DeMaio), Joan Kalbach (mother of Dr. Cathy Hoshauer), Donna Denlinger, Cathy Hoshauer, Pat Miller, Nancy Patton, Gary Reynolds (friend of Mike & Shelley Wagner), Rev. Bob & Nancy Musser, Phyllis Zimmerman, Donna Zirkel, Jose Arroyo (husband of Sandy & George DeLong's niece), Chris Rice (nephew of Diane Rice & Karen Olley), Jaimie & Aurora Commero (friends of Sarah Paulukow), Mark Zody (friend of Denise Huggins), Jim & Kathy Long (friends of Jerry & Carmen Richards), John Siebern (Bob Siever's brother-in-law), Carl Roth (Gretchen Leinbach's brother), Scott Summers, Rev. Frank Lantz, Lainie Christensen, Sandra Englert (niece of Betty Tyndall), Charles & Betty Booraem, Betty Tyndall and family, Dorothy Fasnacht, Jo Jo Richards & family (Carmen & Jerry's granddaughter-in-law), Bob & Marlyn Wible, Lily Kilgore & family, Barry Moore (Donna & Ron Denlinger's brother-in-law), Jordan Sensenig (grandson of Pat & Joan Sensenig), Judy Wisniewski (sister of Chuck Husted), Elaine Sturgis (friend of Sue Husted), Rev. Jere & Judy Chapman, Doris Leaman, Kelsey (Minnich) and Tom Burgo, Judie Bistline, Hilma Slechts, and the Bonilla-Rodriguez family (friends of Trinity Church).

**WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS:** We are looking for worship volunteers at the in-person worship services:

**Greeters/Ushers:** To welcome worshippers at the door and to seat them in the sanctuary (10:30 a.m. service only)

**Lectors:** Assist with the worship service or to just read the scripture lessons at the 8:00 a.m. and/or 10:30 a.m. services.

Please contact Pastor Chris or Carol Kratz if you are willing to volunteer.

**We especially are in need of greeters/ushers and lectors for the Christmas Eve services.**

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CLASSES:** Christian Education classes will be held for all ages at 9:00 a.m. Here are the locations for the classes:

1. **Children's Class** will meet in the classroom on the first floor.
2. **Middle School/High School Class** will meet in the classroom on the second floor.
3. **The Combined Adult Class** will meet in Isenberg Hall.

There will be no Koinonia at this time!

**A Special Program for Christian Education on December 19:** Everyone will gather in Isenberg Hall at 9:00 for a combined Christian Education class. Participants are invited to talk about a memory of Christmas. You can bring an item to share about your memory!

## **LUNCH WITH THE PASTOR**

Pastor Rankin is inviting members to take a break during the holiday rush and have lunch in Isenberg Hall on **Monday, December 20 from noon-1 p.m.** You bring your own lunch and enjoy the fellowship with your fellow church members. We will end our time with a brief devotional service.

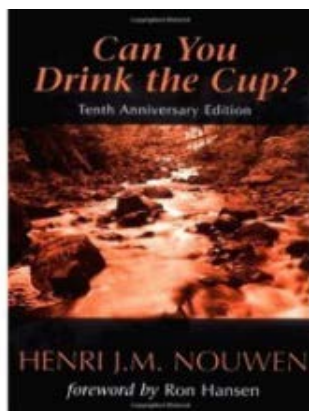
**HARVEST HOME UPDATE:** Thanks to the congregation for your very generous donations of 426 pounds of food for the Food Hub. Thanks also to Tobe Rohrer for supplying the bales of straw, buckets of corn, baskets of apples and potatoes for our Harvest Home display. Your contributions help to feed our neighbors in need in the community.

## 2022 CHANCEL FLOWERS AND WORSHIP AIDS SPONSORS

Contact Carol in the church office to sign-up for chancel flowers and worship aids for 2022. We recently changed florists and so the new price for flowers will be \$60. The price for worship aids will remain at \$26. Chancel Flowers dates available are: **January 9 & 16**. Worship Aids are available **January 2, 9 & 16**.

**If you have any flower cans from recent chancel flowers, please return them to the church!!!**

## JANUARY BOOK STUDY



Pastor Rankin will be leading a book study via Google Meet on January 17, 24, and 31 from 7-8 p.m. We will be reading Henri Nouwen's *Can You Drink the Cup?* *This question---one that Jesus asked his friends James and John---"has the power to crack open the hardened heart and lay bare the tendons of the spiritual life," explains world-renowned spiritual writer Henri Nouwen.*

*The cup, a powerful image in the human experience, a symbol used to celebrate a wide range of human endeavors, becomes for Nouwen a doorway opening on the spiritual horizon. "Drinking our cup to the bottom is seen as the expression of the full freedom of the sons and daughters of God," he writes. His goal is to make the question Jesus posed pierce our hearts so that a personal answer can emerge from it.*

Please sign-up by contacting Carol in the church office. **The deadline to order books through the church is December 27.**

**2022 BUDGETS** are available on both floors of the church building. This was approved at the November 14 congregational meeting.

**MONEY BOXES:** The children's Sunday School class has been learning about sharing God's gifts with others. They created boxes to collect coins to support a mission project or the work of our Christian Education ministry. Look for the boxes on the table across from the church office. Talk to Anne Rankin for more information.





For more information about upcoming events and to register,  
go to: <https://www.lutherancamping.org/upcoming-events/>



**ADVENT/CHRISTMAS  
IN A BARN**

**December 19**

**7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**At The Wittel Farm**

*Join us at the farm for our  
4th annual*

*Advent/Christmas night.  
Come gather around the  
outdoor fire and have  
cookies and cocoa in the  
barn.*

*Lights and decorations!*

For more information & to register, go to:  
<https://www.lutherancamping.org/event/christmas-in-the-barn-2021/>

# 2021 HOLIDAY SEASON @ ZION LUTHERAN (LANDISVILLE)

**Holiday Concert at Zion  
Sunday, December 19**



**3:00 p.m.**



*Featuring the Hempfield High School  
Chamber Singers*

**Connecting with others  
Connecting with God  
Connecting others with God**  
*All are welcome!*



**Hershey Handbell  
Ensemble**

*Christmas*  
**Concert**

**AT ZION**  
**Sunday, December 12**  
**at 3:00 p.m.**

*Come enjoy the sounds of the season!  
Music will feature 7 ½ octaves of handbells  
played by the 15 member ensemble!*

A free-will offering will be collected to help support the Zion Musik Concert Series.  
[info@hersheyhandbellensemble.org](mailto:info@hersheyhandbellensemble.org) - (717) 298-7071 - [hersheyhandbellensemble.org](http://hersheyhandbellensemble.org)

**85 E. Brandt Blvd.  
(Off Main St. in Landisville)**

**717-898-2911**



**[adminzelc@comcast.net](mailto:adminzelc@comcast.net)**



**Zion Lutheran Hempfield**



# Save The Date!

## The Twenty Third Annual MS Benefit Holiday Concert

### Friday, Dec. 17, 2021 at 7:30pm

First Reformed Church U.C.C.  
40 East Orange Street, Lancaster, (717) 397-5149

In Person  
(masks suggested)  
or Livestream at  
[www.QEBlive.com](http://www.QEBlive.com)

A free-will offering  
will be taken to benefit  
the National Multiple  
Sclerosis Society.



*Quint Essentially*  
**BRASS**

Doug Albert *trumpet*  
Gene Clark *trumpet*  
Kristen Albert *horn*  
Andy Walls *trombone*  
Geoff Davis *tuba*

**CARD SHOWER:** Marvin Lehman will be turning 60 on December 20.  
Marvin Lehman, Jr  
2239 Olde Meadow Court  
East Petersburg, PA 17520

**THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN THE NORTH WINDOW** is given in memory of Leon L. & Ethel Gruber by son Greg, daughter Sharon Armstrong, and granddaughter Jessica.

**THE CHRISMON TREE:** The Chrismons on the small tree in the stairwell were made by the late Edythe Geib. Several people have asked about the Chrismon tree. The term "Chrismon" comes from the Latin "Christi monnogramma" which simply means "monogram of Christ". Therefore, a Chrismon is a Christian symbol that represents Christ. There is a descriptive list of the various Chrismons next to the tree.



**THE ADVENT CANDLES AND CHRIST CANDLE** are dedicated to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Grace M. Dodson (mother) and Dolores A. Dodson (aunt) of Donna Wolf, given by the family and friends. The candle stand and wreath are in memory of S. Leona Wolf, mother of the late John Wolf.

**THE PEW CANDLE HOLDERS**, made by John Barr, were given by John and Dolly Barr.

**THE NATIVITY SCENE ON THE FRONT LAWN** was made by Mike Wagner.

**THE CRECHE ON THE LOWER LEVEL BY THE ELEVEATOR** was made by Mike Wagner.



We will have three in-person services this year:

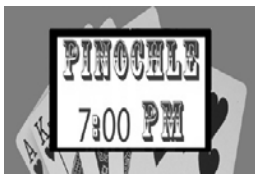
2:30 p.m.--Traditional Service with Holy Communion

6:30 p.m.---Family Service

10:30 p.m.--Traditional Service with Holy Communion

We will consider streaming one of the services on our Facebook page. Look for more information in the weekly bulletins and emails from the pastor.

**PINOCHLE FELLOWSHIP:** Mark your calendars now because the



Pinochle Fellowship will meet again on January 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. There is no December meeting. Look for more information in the December Parish Post. You can respond using the electronic version that Carol already sent via e-mail or on the website under Ministries! Speak with Karen Olley for more information!

## ***Come, Follow Me Retreat***



Mark your calendars for a church retreat to be held at Trinity Church February 18-20, 2022. The retreat will be led by Pastor Rankin and Rev. Dr. Dave Bushnell, Pastor Emeritus of Hamilton Park U.C.C. and author of the retreat.

Here is what Dr. Bushnell says about the retreat:

*The Come Follow Me retreat seeks to invite people to experience being the body of Christ in our own time and place. This corporate identity, this “we”, can open us up to others, even to all creation. It invites us to experience others as I/Thou relationships (to use the Jewish scholar Martin Buber’s language).*

*In order to experience being the body of Christ today, the Come Follow Me retreat uses worship as its basic paradigm. The retreat follows the essential elements of worship from being called, to confession, then moving on to a unique experience of Jesus Christ, exploring how Jesus’ spirituality can help shape our own. The retreat includes a time of sharing deeply with one another remembering the waters of baptism. Then, after seeing the church as a community of abundant Christian practices, we will work to envision what our incarnational ministry will be like. Finally, we are sent out into the world, into “the long emergency” with solid “next steps” to follow.*

Contact the church office to register for this retreat!!!

## CHURCH COVENANT IN THE MIDST OF THE PANDEMIC

As an individual who attends Trinity United Church of Christ I covenant to work with my fellow church members, family and friends to keep our community safe and healthy.

I covenant to. . .

*Wear a face mask as a symbol of love and care for others.*

*Sit six feet apart from others, leaving room for God to work in the in-between spaces.*

*Clean up after myself in the spaces I use because germs are everywhere I go too!*

*Honor and respect the sacredness of each person in this space and to stay home if I don't feel well or have been around someone who is waiting the results of a COVID test, knowing God is with us wherever we are, whether inside or outside the walls of the church.*

*Work together with my church family in creating a safe and healthy space to gather for worship, fellowship, or church activities as one body, united in God's love.*

*Acknowledge the hard work ahead, and the commitment to care for one another.*

Together, we as the church, covenant to care and love one another in new and different ways as we:

- Share God's love with our community
- Serve God's children
- Bring healing and wholeness to those in need
- Share the Gospel in liturgy, music and study



## They Came When You Needed Them

**T**hey came when you needed them. They answered the phone when you called. They baptized and married and buried your loved ones. They gave up weekend after weekend after weekend to care for your spirit, lead you in worship, and point to God in your midst.

Some of them did it for less money than they could easily live on. Some of them did it for less than they would have been willing to do any other job for, because of what they believe about who God is, and what they believe about who you are.

For all the sacrifices that clergy and lay church workers have made in our congregations, over 100 years ago the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ created the **Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund**, to help support them in retirement and during times of emergent need.

The Christmas Fund provides supplementation of small pension payments for retired clergy who often served small congregations throughout their careers. It provides supplementation of health premium costs, to help ensure their wellness throughout their lives. And the Christmas Fund provides emergency grants Christmas "Thank You" gift checks for retirees and those facing unforeseen financial hardship.

*A gift to the Christmas Fund is your opportunity to join with others in the United Church of Christ to bring good news and great joy to those who have given so much to our church.*

### In 2020, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 276 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,180,187)
- Health benefits supplementation for 89 retired clergy and lay employees (\$274,008)
- Emergency grants for 96 individuals and families (\$214,649)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 504 retired clergy and lay employees (\$252,000)

## The Christmas Fund

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund





## **“A Wonderful Connection to the Church I Love”**

**S**ince March of last year, our lives have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and many have experienced great loss. These months have also had a profound impact on United Church of Christ clergy and congregations—physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially.

We have labored through this difficult time together, and because of gifts to the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross, our active and retired pastors who have been affected the most have known they are not alone.

Last year, donations to the Christmas Fund helped pay the rent for low-income retired ministers and bridged the gap for one active minister's family when her husband lost his restaurant due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Christmas Fund gifts took care of the unexpected expense of a major car repair, helped a retired minister attend his brother's funeral, and assisted in paying for daunting medical expenses, prescriptions, and groceries.

When money is tight and stress is high, your gift to the Christmas Fund brings relief and hope to the clergy and church employees who have dedicated their lives to serving our churches and each of us. You help the people who have helped us. You make a huge difference and bring great joy!

In the words of an emergency grant recipient . . .

*“Your letter has brought great joy and relief. The grant is enough to allow me a little breathing room at the end of each month. Thank you for that gift. But equally important to me personally is this grant symbolizes a wonderful connection to the church I love. I have been blessed in so many ways.”*

### **In 2020, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:**

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- **Emergency grants for 96 individuals and families (\$214,649)**
- **Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to 504 retired clergy and lay employees (\$252,000)**

## **The Christmas Fund**

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

**DECEMBER 12, 2021**

**(C)**

**THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

**FIRST LESSON. Zephaniah 3:14-20**

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the LORD.

**SECOND LESSON. Philippians 4:4-7**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**GOSPEL. Luke 3:7-18**

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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