

TRINITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

2340 State Street, East Petersburg, PA 17520 717-569-1632

Website: www.trinityeastpete.org E-Mail:secretary@trinityeastpete.org
The Rev. Dr. Christopher M. Rankin, Pastor
The Rev. Harry G. Royer, Pastor Emeritus
The Rev. Dr. Carolyne Call, Covenanted Minister of Mission
Mr. Michael Slechta, Director of Music/ Sounds of Trinity Choir Director
Mr. James Landis, Interim Organist
Mrs. Carmen Richards, Pianist
Mrs. Carol Kratz, Administrative Assistant
Mr. Sean McKelvey, Preschool Director

Celebrating 175 Years: Honoring Our Heritage, Moving Forward in Faith! THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 7:45 A.M. SERVICE

Today's Theme: "Rejoice always," begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. "All God's children got a robe," go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God's party.

The Advent Wreath: One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting amid growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of Greens is an image of everlasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Avent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes the family gathers for prayers around the wreath.

Welcome all visitors! We welcome all who worship with us. May the joy of Christ's presence and the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with peace and hope! We are honored by your presence and trust that you will join us in the praise and worship of God. Please sign our guest book in the narthex. If you are interested in church membership, please give your name and telephone number to Pastor Rankin.

Welcome to the Eucharist! All who seek to follow Jesus and who seek the gifts Jesus offers us are invited to share in this sacrament of Holy Communion. Children are invited to receive communion at the discretion of their parents/guardians. If a child wants to receive a blessing, they are asked to fold their hands.

Prayer: Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

PARISH 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.**

Sing aloud, sons and daughters! Shout with joyful praise!

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, we will say, "Rejoice!" The God of our salvation is near at hand. Our Redeemer is in our midst.

With shouts of hope, we sing to God. Again, we will say, "Rejoice!" Make known God's deeds. Proclaim Christ's love for all to hear.

With hearts of laughter, we love. Again, we will say, "Rejoice!" In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together. Come take your place at the table.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE/TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

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.

Praise to you, O God, who holds our joy and sorrow. You bring water to parched ground and life out of death. Bless us as this light grows, and send sorrow and sighing to flee away. Give us strength and patience, trusting that you are true to your promises. Transform the lives of all who suffer with your wonders near at hand. Amen.

CONFESSION 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

CONFESSION OF SIN

God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance. Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.

Everlasting God, you love justice and you hate wrongdoing. We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness that make us reluctant to work against oppression. We are complicit in system of exploitation. We choose comfort over courage. We are careless with creation's bounty. Look upon us with mercy. Turn our hearts again to you. Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways for the sake of our waiting world; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, 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.

COLLECT FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Let us pray the collect together.

Gracious God, who anointed and baptized One to be the Guide for all humanity, unbind us that we may respond to your word and be filled with your Spirit. Equip us to abstain from evil and hold fast to the good, that your will may be advanced through us; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(PLEASE BE SEATED)

THE WORD OF GOD

THE FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

THE PSALTER

Psalm 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

THE SECOND LESSON

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)

THE HOLY GOSPEL

St. John 1:6-8, 19-28

John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

Glory be to You, O Lord.

THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD

Praise be to You, O Christ.

(PLEASE BE SEATED)

SERMON

"Pointing to the Light!"

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.

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.

THE ORDER OF HEALING

Sentences of Scripture

Blessing of Oil

Act of Anointing (You are invited to come forward to be anointed with oil as a way of receiving God's healing during the holiday season. If you choose not to come forward, then remain seated in a time of prayer and reflection.)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING FOR HEALING

We give praise and thanks to you, O God! In Jesus Christ, you have given us life; brought ministry, forgiveness, healing, and peace; commanded the disciples to heal the sick; and continued the healing ministry among us to this day. Keep us mindful of your love and mercy that we may be faithful throughout all our days, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

PEOPLE'S OFFERING

MISSION MOMENT: Habitat for Humanity----Will Massey

(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)

OFFERING DEDICATION

In our unworthiness, O God, may we yet bring worthy gifts to honor the Messiah. May the brokenhearted be led to enriching new celebrations. May the lowly among us come to know their true worth as persons chosen by you to do great things. By your mercy, may the hungry be fed not only with bread but also with opportunities to feed others. We give ourselves as your servants, for no gift is complete without personal commitment. Thank you, God, for expecting great things of us. Our spirits rejoice in the coming of our Savior. 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 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.

AGNUS DEI

Jesus, Lamb of God: have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins: have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world: give us your peace. Amen.

(Those who wish to come forward will be invited by the pastor. The pastor will serve you the host, saying, "The Body of Christ." You reply, "Amen!" The assistant will present you with the cup, saying, "The Blood of Christ." You reply, "Amen!" 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 everyone has communed. Children are invited to receive communion at the discretion of their parents/guardians. If a child wants to receive a blessing, they are asked to fold their hands.)

(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.

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

Fill our mouths with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy as we bear witness to the great things you have done. Give your church a spirit of gladness as we gather and as we are sent. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Let the trees of the field sing your praise. Protect forests, orchards, rainforests, and all wooded areas form disease and deforestation. Keep us grateful for their gifts of oxygen, food, shade, and shelter. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

You love justice and promise your favor to those who are oppressed, brokenhearted, and incarcerated. Grant wisdom and compassion to those who work for public safety and all who work within prisons, jails, and courts, that mercy may increase and violence wither away. Merciful God, receive our prayer.

Give us strength to pray for our world without ceasing and provoke us toward love and good deed for all who are in need. Provide for all without adequate housing, food, employment, or access to health care. Empower us as helpers and advocates. Merciful God, **receive our prayer**.

Open our hearts to those who serve as truth-tellers in our church and in our society. Bless leaders in church and society in their task of proclamation. Amplify voices of peacemakers, advocates, and especially those whose voices are ignored or marginalized. Merciful God, **receive our prayer**.

SILENT PRAYER

Let us prayer together.

Generous God, in bread and cup you have revealed your glory for all people to see together. Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim your good news of liberation and release, brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

CLOSE OF WORSHIP

BENEDICTION



CATCH THE VISION & SHARE THE JOY



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chancel Flowers are given by The Hunsickers in memory of their parents Paul & Verda Hunsicker and Heinz & Madlene Stege.

The Worship Aids are given by Andrea Paulukow West in gratitude for all those who knit Prayer Shawls in God's Love. Thank you for the prayer shawl.

Attendance for Sun., December 10 7:45–16 10:30–87 TOTAL – 103

Happy Birthday

Today – Lainie Christensen

Monday - Dottie Schadt, Thomas Goodhart

Tuesday – Sarah Paulukow Wednesday – Marvin Lehman

Saturday – Hedwig Hunsicker, Jerry Richards

Ministering Today

Pastor Rev. Dr. Christopher Rankin

Lector/Assistant Rev. Jack Esbenshade

Money Counters Bud & Kathy McCarty, Scott Owens, Jeff

Hackenberger

Altar Guild Nancy Enders, Hedwig Hunsicker, Karen Olley

Building Trustee Nevin CooleyKoinonia Paula Dennes

Ministries Card Advent Workshop

Called to Care Nancy Enders

Visitation Janice Jenkins

This Week at Trinity Church

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

Monday 6:15 PM - Instrumentalists

7:00 PM - Choir/8:15 PM Bells

Tuesday 1:00 PM – Prayer Shawl

7:00 PM Consistory/Reorganization of Boards

Wednesday No Enrichment

Thursday 6:00 PM – Cub Scouts

Saturday 7:00 PM – Alanon/8:00 PM - AA

Sunday 7:45 AM – Eucharist

9:30 AM – Special Sunday School/Koinonia

10:30 AM – Worship

6:30 PM – Christmas Eve Family Candlelight Service

10:30 PM – Christmas Eve Service/Eucharist

PRAYERS FOR GOD'S HEALING PRESENCE

MEMBERS

Ken & Phyllis Zimmerman

John Shelsky

Hedwig Hunsicker

Michael McDonough

Janice Jenkins

Scott & Jane Owens

Nancy Patton

The Lehman family

Joann Peck

Harry Himelwright

Donna Wolf & Family
Stan & Pat Seachrist
Rev. Dave & Mid Gockley
Rev. Bob & Nancy Musser
Betty Tyndall and family
Rev. Bob & Judie Bistline
Rev. Jere & Judy Chapman
Joann & Dawn Garvin

Shelly Family
Donna Zirkel
Sam Minder III
Hank Fox
Mary Witmer
Erika Otthofer
Dave Trostle
Ron Becker

Mary Lou Shaab
Carmen & Jerry Richards
Lainie Christensen
Charles & Betty Booraem
Bob & Marlyn Wible
Kathleen Sensenig Adams
Danielle Huggins Holbein
Dr. Blaine Connor

FAMILY & FRIENDS

Paul Melton (requested by Michael & Dina Slechta)

Aaron Flickinger (nephew of Pat & Joan Sensenig)

Bill Zahm (brother of Phyllis Zimmerman)

Mary Mattern Smith (cousin of Anita Rohrer)

Deb Olley Heagy (daughter of Jack & Karen Olley)

Donna Esbenshade (wife of Rev. Jack Esbenshade)

The Haverstick Family (friends of Mike & Shelley Wagner)

Tom Riley (friend of Bud McCarty)

Rev. Loy Garber (former seminarian)

Roland Anderson and family (friends of John & Kayla Brennan)

Jaden Allen (nephew of Carol Kratz)

Cindy Commero Cook and family(friend of Sarah Paulukow)

Gina McCarty (daughter-in-law of Bud & Kathy McCarty)

The Bruno family (friends of Blaine Connor)

Jessica Brown (niece of Mike & Shelley Wagner)

Janice Zimmerman (sister of Ken Zimmerman)

Larry Gerlach (brother of Dolly Barr)

John Martin (brother-in-law of Dolly & John Barr)

Kelly Quick (friend of Rev. Dr. Rich & Lainie Christensen)

Marianne Gibble (friend of Trinity)

James Malone & family

Tom & Elaine Lichtenwalner (parents of Mike Lichtenwalner)

Janet Owens (sister-in-law of Scott & Jane Owens)

Chad Zirkel (son of Donna Zirkel)

Jordan Sensenig (grandson of Pat & Joan Sensenig),

Don Pfeifer (husband of Denise Pfeifer)

Jake & Jean Otthofer (parents of Dan Otthofer)

The Martin family

Robert Richards (brother of Jerry Richards)

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)
Jim & Kathy Long (friends of Jerry & Carmen Richards)
John Siebern (Bob Siever's brother-in-law)
Jo Jo Richards & family (Carmen & Jerry's granddaughter-in-law)

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

THE DECEMBER PARISH POST is available in the information racks on both floors of the church building. The deadline for the January Parish Post is tomorrow!

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 NATIVTY SCENE ON THE FRONT LAWN was made by Mike Wagner.

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

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 Off the Street Ministries.

DEVOTIONALS: The October-December edition of These Days are available on the table across from the church office or on the lower level by the portico entrance.

PRAYER SHAWL: Prayer Shawl will meet Tuesday, December 19 from 1:00-3:00 PM. They will continue to meet on the third Tuesday of each month! Come and bring a friend. Hope to see many of you there! Contact Betty Tyndall for more information.

2024 OFFERING ENVELOPES are available on the table across from the church office. Please help us by delivering envelopes to some of our homebound members!

THE 2024 APPROVED BUDGET is available on the table across from the church office or in the information racks on both levels of the church building.

TRINITY T-SHIRTS: The Anniversary Committee is working with our own Mitch Gibson (from Elizabethtown Sporting Goods) to celebrate our 175th anniversary with Trinity t-shirts. We have already placed one order, but you can still order shirts on the form across from the church office.

175th ANNIVERSARY GIFTS: There are extra copies of the historical book, the prayer book and the anniversary pens and magnets on the table across from the church office.

GRIEF GROUPS: Prior to the pandemic, Pastor Chris was hoping to form some small groups to look at issues of grief. Please contact him or Carol Kratz if you are interested in participating in one of the groups!

"I PROMISE" FORMS are still being accepted! We hope that you will submit the forms to help us plan for our ministry in 2024. Extra forms are available on the table across from the church office!

KOINONIA/SUNDAYMORNING FELLOWSHIP: We have resumed koinonia (community fellowship) every Sunday at 10 a.m. in Isenberg

Hall. Volunteers are asked to provide light refreshments and drinks/coffee. The sign-up sheet is on the kitchen coordinator. If you have any questions, contact Paula Dennes. Coffee is always available between 7:45 service and Sunday School.

TRINITY PRESCHOOL SUB COUPONS: We still have eight coupons for subs at S. Clyde Weaver. The cost is \$8. Contact the church office if you are interested.

CROP HUNGER WALK UPDATE: Thank you to everyone who has already supported the walkers from Trinity Church! As of December 5, we raised \$12,320!!! You can still support the CROP Hunger Walk by giving money to Mark & Chris Eyer or Pastor Rankin or donate online at https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2023/team/trinity-east-pete

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

Greeter /Ushers Needed

If you would like to volunteer as a Greeter/Usher for the 10:30 a.m. service please contact the church office. We recently had some vacancies as ushers, so we are in need of help!!!

We are looking for a greeter coordinator that will recruit new people to serve and create a schedule. Contact Pastor Chris or Carol Kratz.



Assist with the worship service or to just read the scripture lessons at the 7:45 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services. Please contact Pastor Chris or Carol Kratz if you are willing to volunteer!

2023 CHANCEL FLOWERS AND WORSHIP AID SPONSORS:

Upcoming dates for worship aids are: January 14 &21. Upcoming dates for Chancel Flowers are January 14 & 21. The price for flowers is \$60. The price for worship aids is \$26. Look for the charts on the bulletin board in the narthex or call Carol in the church office.



The Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania

Kirchenwald, Nawakwa, & The Wittel Farm

Advent/Christmas in the Barn at The Wittel Farm - December 17, 2023 Winter Youth Retreat at Kirchenwald - January 5 - 7, 2024

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;

2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning,

faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

the mantle of praise instead of a

They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

⁸ For I the LORD love justice,
 I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
 and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
 and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
 that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
 my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
 he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
 and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it

to spring up before all the nations.

to spring up,

Psalm 126 *or* Luke 1:46b-55

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,"

as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵ They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶ John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷ the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

PASTOR'S CHRISTMAS GIFT: You will again find a pink envelope in your box of offering envelopes. This is a way for you to give a Christmas gift to Pastor Rankin. If you want the pastor to receive the full amount of your gift, then you should give it directly to him. This means that the money will not go through the church treasury and you will not receive a tax deduction for your gift. All checks should be made payable to the pastor if you choose to give it to him directly.

If you choose to make your check payable to Trinity UCC, you will receive credit on your 2023 contribution statement. A gift sent through the church treasury is considered taxable income for the pastor.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Scott Owens, Church Treasurer; Denise Pfeifer, Assistant Treasurer

SCHEDULE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE AND DECEMBER 31!



ADVENT ENVELOPES: The Board of Deacons decided to give funds from the Advent offering envelope to the U.C.C. Christmas Fund for retired clergy, widows/widowers of U.C.C. clergy, and ministerial assistance.



"KNOWING THAT I HAVE NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN."

n this season when we magnify the Lord for the great things God has done through unlikely people and in unexpected ways, we give thanks that we, too, by God's Spirit, can do great things. We, too, can lift up those who are laid low. We, too, can fill the hungry with good things. We, too, through our open-hearted generosity, can proclaim that nothing will be impossible with God.

We can do all of that and more by contributing to the United Church of Christ's Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross. Our gifts help retired dergy, church staff, and their surviving spouses to pay bills, maintain their health insurance, and meet emergency needs. These servants of the church have spent lifetimes baptizing and blessing, teaching and preaching, marrying and burying, comforting and empowering God's people. Now, through the Christmas Fund, we have the opportunity to sustain and empower them.

Our contributions tell our former servants of the church that they are not forgotten, that they are loved, that they and their ministries are appreciated and remembered. In the words of one recipient, "The financial assistance is greatly appreciated, but just as valuable is knowing that I have not been forgotten by the church I love." For Love's sake, let's give generously.

In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund Give online at www.christmasfund.org.