

A person is silhouetted while sitting on a dark hill. A tall, slender light pole stands next to them, its top glowing with a bright, warm light. The sky is a deep, dark blue, speckled with stars and a thin crescent moon. On the left side of the image, there is a vertical band of vibrant orange and red, textured to look like fire or a sunset. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Keep awake

MARK 13:37

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. Carolyn 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!

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

7:45 A.M. SERVICE

Today's Theme: Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we could share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

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 Advent 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 AS YOU ENTER: *Child of humankind, born of God, reveal to us once more the power and glory which claims us all. Let your Word make its impact within and among us that we may accept your mission for us and enlist all our efforts in watchful service. Come to reign among us and rule in ever heart. Amen.*

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.**

Christ draws near.

A new day is dawning.

God's kingdom is here.

A new day is dawning.

It's time to wake up.

A new day is dawning.

Christ draws near.

A new day is dawning.

In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together. Come take your place at the table.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Today is the beginning of Advent—the preparation time for celebrating Christ's birth.

We are here because God's promises to our ancestors came true when Jesus was born.

God's promise is kept each Sunday when we worship because Christ is in our midst.

God will keep the promise to come again in glory.

We light this candle to proclaim the coming of the light of God into the world.

With the coming of this light there is hope. Because of Christ we not only have hope, but we believe that good is stronger than evil. God wants us to work for good in this world.

Let us pray together.

Praise to you, O God, our salvation who is near. You hold us in our waiting and keep us awake to the world. You show up in our lives at unexpected times. Bless us as we light this candle to keep vigil for your arrival. We trust that even though we do not know the day or the hour, you hurry to gather all people in hope. 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.	Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.	Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.	Lord, have mercy.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

ADORATION AND PRAISE

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 FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Let us pray together.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, and enlighten our walk in the way of your salvation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(PLEASE BE SEATED)

THE WORD OF GOD

THE FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 64:1-9

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40-55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account-to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

THE PSALTER

Psalm 80:1-7,17-19

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your might, and come to save us!

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure.

You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself.

Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;

Let your face shine, that we may be saved.

THE SECOND LESSON

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)

THE HOLY GOSPEL

St. Mark 13:24-37

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

Glory be to You, O Lord.

THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD

Praise be to You, O Christ.

(PLEASE BE SEATED)

SERMON

“Hope is Found in Community”

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.

PEOPLE'S OFFERING

OFFERING DEDICATION

Gracious God, we give our best to you, not out of guilt or fear, but with gratitude and faith. You have been our support in times of need. Every breath we take is a gift from you. We would be awake and watchful for opportunities to make a difference, to help others be alert for your presence, to value life in all its fullness, and to learn to care. We dedicate these symbols of thankfulness and all the days of our lives to those purposes. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. 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.

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.

Call your church into holy fellowship as we await the restoration of all things. Reenergize your faithful people to live with hope and compassion, especially those who serve as missionaries near and far. Center us on your promise to come among us and make all things new. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

All creation signals your presence, O God: the vastness of the cosmos, the turn of the seasons, and living things that both rest and flourish. Rekindle our commitment to care for the earth. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Let the nations tremble at your holy presence, that justice and liberation prevail in all corners of the earth. Restore peace to nations in conflict, teach righteousness to corrupt leaders and systems, and bring stability to areas facing uncertain futures. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Be with those who keep awake at night: nurses working overnight shifts, caregivers of newborns and aging adults, stargazers, those who are anxious, or those who are traveling. Reveal to all that the dark can be a place of calm and comfort filled with your presence. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Enrich the spirits of all who feel hopeless, fearful, or despairing. Stay close to those who await healing or relief. Deliver all in any need. 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 **Nevin Cooley** in memory of Nevin V. Cooley father of Nevin Cooley.

The Worship Aids are given by **Charles Hambrick-Stowe** to the glory of God and in gratitude for Elizabeth Hambrick-Stowe on her birthday today.

Happy Birthday

Today – Claire Miller

Monday – Scott Wible

Tuesday – Theodore Slechta, Diane Summers, Gail Kogut

Friday – Rhonda Hartenstine

Ministering Today

Pastor Rev. Dr. Christopher Rankin

Lector/Assistant Jeff Hackenberger

Money Counters Nevin Cooley, John Bailey, Pat Sensenig, Cherie Cataldi

Altar Guild Nancy Enders, Hedwig Hunsicker, Karen Olley,

Building Trustee Nevin Cooley

Koinonia Rankin Family

Ministries **Card** Advent Workshop

Called to Care Nancy Enders **Visitation** TBA

Attendance for Sun., Nov. 26	7:45–18	10:30–75	TOTAL – 93
Christian Education	17		
Thanksgiving Eve	39		

This Week at Trinity Church

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

Today	6:00 PM – Christmas Concert followed by desserts
Monday	7:00 PM – Choir/8:15 PM Bells
Tuesday	7:00 AM – Peanut Fellowship 7:00 PM – Preschool Bd.
Thursday	6:00 PM – Cub Scouts
Saturday	7:00 PM – Alanon/8:00 PM - AA
Sunday	7:45 AM – Eucharist 9:00 AM – Sunday School 10:00 AM - Koinonia 10:30 AM – Worship/Sacrament of Baptism

PRAYERS FOR GOD’S HEALING PRESENCE

MEMBERS

Ken & Phyllis Zimmerman	John Shelsky	Hedwig Hunsicker
Michael McDonough	Janice Jenkins	Scott Owens
Don & Pat Miller	Nancy Patton	Dr. Janet Harriger
The Lehman family	Joann Peck	Harry Himelwright
Donna Wolf & Family	Shelly Family	Mary Lou Shaab
Stan & Pat Seachrist	Donna Zirkel	Carmen & Jerry Richards
Rev. Dave & Mid Gockley	Sam Minder III	Lainie Christensen
Rev. Bob & Nancy Musser	Hank Fox	Charles & Betty Booraem
Betty Tyndall and family	Mary Witmer	Bob & Marlyn Wible
Rev. Bob & Judie Bistline	Erika Otthofer	Kathleen Sensenig Adams
Rev. Jere & Judy Chapman	Dave Trostle	Danielle Huggins Holbein
Joann & Dawn Garvin	Ron Becker	Dr. Blaine Connor

FAMILY & FRIENDS

The family of Todd Fischer (husband of Heidi Fischer)
The family of Dr. Phil Bartholomew (friend of Pastor Rankin)
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 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.

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.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING: The Parish Life Committee is planning to go Christmas caroling on December 10 to some of our members and around the East Petersburg community. We will enjoy a pizza lunch together after the 10:30 service in Isenberg Hall and then go caroling by car. Please sign-up on the table across from the church office so that we can order enough pizzas! This is open to all members and friends of Trinity Church!!!



Trinity UCC

2340 State St.
East Petersburg, PA
717-569-1632

www.trinityeastpete.org

Concert/Desserts

Featuring
Trinity Church Musicians

Sunday, December 3, 2023

Concert – 6:00 PM

Desserts Following The Concert

*Freewill Offering Benefits
Schreiber Center For Pediatric Development
and Trinity Music Ministry*



INSTRUMENTALISTS, YOU ARE INVITED to join Trinity Instrumentalists in playing some Christmas Carols as Preludes on Christmas Eve, before the 6:30 PM service. Please let Michael or Dina Slechta know of your interest and availability. **Rehearsals are scheduled on the following Monday evenings at 6:15 PM: Dec. 4, Dec. 11, Dec. 18**

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.

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!

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!

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.**



We will be doing Peanuts on December 5th. This will be our last day of doing peanuts. **We are dissolving Peanut Fellowship and will not be doing more after December 5th.** It was a very hard decision to come too! Thank you for your support.-----*Pat Seachrist, Sue Husted, and Mike & Shelley Wagner*



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.

“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!

2023 CHANCEL FLOWERS AND WORSHIP AID SPONSORS:

Upcoming dates for worship aids are: December 17, & 31. 2024 Flower Chart is now up on the bulletin board in the Narthex. 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 Day Apart](#) at The Wittel Farm - December 9, 2023

[Advent/Christmas in the Barn](#) at The Wittel Farm - December 17, 2023

[Winter Youth Retreat](#) at Kirchenwald - January 5 - 7, 2024

CROP HUNGER WALK UPDATE: Thank you to everyone who has already supported the walkers from Trinity Church! **As of November 2, we raised \$11,820!!** 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!

UPCOMING CONCERTS:

1. The Mennonite Children's Choir will be performing the following concerts:

-- December 3 at Neffsville Mennonite Church at 4 p.m.

Caleb Kreider is a member of the choir. No tickets are needed, but a freewill offering will be received.

2. The Lancaster Chamber Singers will be performing the following concerts:

--December 3 at St. Edward Episcopal at 3 p.m.

Rev. Jack Esbenshade is a member of the choir. Advance tickets are \$10 and tickets at the door are \$15. Children 18 and under are free.

3. The Lebanon Valley College Children's Choir will be singing at the annual Christmas at the Valley:

--December 3 at the Miller Chapel, Annville at 3 p.m.

Andrew Rankin is a member of the choir. No tickets are needed, but a freewill offering will be received.

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. We will hear more about the U.C.C. Christmas Fund offering in December.

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

ORDER OF HEALING: We will include the order of healing at both worship services on December 17. Those who wish to be anointed with oil will be invited to come forward during the service. We use the order of healing as way to recognize that many are in need of God's healing presence during the holiday season.

SCHEDULE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE AND DECEMBER 31!

The Christmas Eve Schedule

6:30 p.m. Family Candlelight Service

10:30 p.m. Candlelight Service with Holy Communion

The Service of Lessons & Carols will be at the 10:30 service on December 31.

Sunday School Schedule for December 24 & 31: The Christian Education Committee is planning a special program and koinonia on December 24 from 9:30-10:15 a.m. We will sing Christmas carols, read a story, and have a birthday cake for Jesus. There will be no Sunday School on December 31!



"YOU HAVE STOOD BY ME"

Among the many letters and notes the Pension Boards receives from recipients of gifts made possible by contributions to the Christmas Fund were these words from a retired clergywoman in Kentucky:

"Each year in the face of your unwavering faithfulness it becomes harder to know how to thank you! In such an unpredictable time with not only aging, but Covid and violent world events, faithfulness and something I can count on that brings concrete relief to ease the burden is a blessing.

"You have stood by me and given me financial help when I needed it. It has allowed me to live in a sustainable way where I, too, can show the faithfulness of God to my neighbor and the world. Thank you from the heart!"

Last year, because of your gifts, the Christmas Fund provided over \$1.3 million in pension and health benefits supplementation, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired servants of the church and their families. Every cent of that money came from the pockets of people like you. Please give as generously as you are able this year!

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.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 64:1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,

so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

²as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

⁴From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.

⁵You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways.

But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.

We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

⁷There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37

[Jesus said:] "In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,

²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Next Sunday's Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8.

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Tracks 1 and 2
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