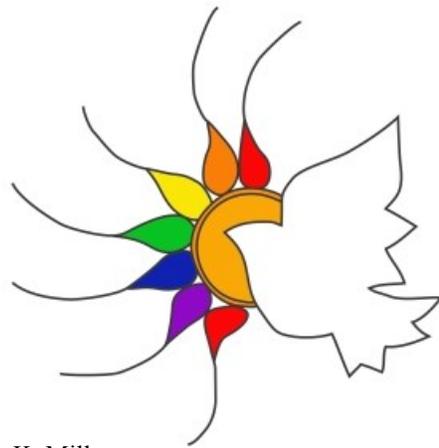


Shalom

December 2013

Newsletter of Grace United Church of Christ
1947 New Holland Pike, Lancaster PA 17601
www.gracechurchlancaster.org
Rev. Chris Hart, Intentional Interim Pastor
Office: 717-397-1012
Email: graceucc@comcast.net



Editor: Lynn K. Miller
Proofreaders: Dottie Book, Jane Evans, Doug Frank and
Mary Ann Kimmel
Mailing Coordinator: Mary Ann Kimmel
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Let the Sacred be Born

The Christmas season is upon us, with all its glory and passion. I am a huge fan of Christmas! I love the storytelling, the gathering of family, the decorations, the anticipation of the celebration of hope and transformation born anew into our lives. I love the cold weather and the hope of snow... It's a time when I celebrate and enjoy my faith; a time when I really cherish my faith.

At the same time living in a consumer-driven economy makes it a very complicated time to be a Christian. I constantly feel like something is being stolen from me rather than gifted to me. As I walk the mall I see a mad frenzy to sell and buy things: "ohh here, buy this, it's a great Christmas gift" and it may indeed be a good gift and while I will buy my family gifts, I have little hope that giving such things to them will be part of their own journey of faith.

Additionally I am really sick and tired of the debate and Facebook posts that pronounce "Christ is the reason for the season" or something about how we need to bring back saying "Merry Christmas" as opposed to "Happy Holidays" because after all it's all about Christ. These arguments have the same stench of the consumerism that already invades my life. As if buying something or saying the right words will be the prescription that cures my anti-xmas dysentery.

So how do we let the sacred be born? How do we live with pregnant possibility? I don't exactly know, I can't give you the "right" answer. No doubt I will be called on during the Christmas season to speak words about Christ and Christ's birth, (and I will speak with joy!); however my own spiritual practice will be one of action: giving, sharing, hugging, affirming, holding; you may not find me out shopping but I hope you will find me out in the world practicing what Christ teaches: loving the unlovable, expecting the unexpected, hoping beyond hope, relying on God's Grace, trusting God's Love, and believing in the miracle of light and hope being born into our lives again and again and again and again ...

**God be with You
Pastor Chris**

President's Message

December is here! The cold air has arrived and the journey through Advent begins. The promise of Christmastime is donned in every shopping mall in America. Christmas is a time of joy and excitement. Family and friends gather for feasts, and the excitement and hopes of Santa Claus is contagious. A time of celebration for the birth of the Christ child... or is it?

Perhaps you may find you are feeling less joy, but more like this:

I am on my own. No one looks out for me, or protects me. I experience a continual sense of need [...] I belong to no one but myself. My cup is never quite full enough. I am left empty. Disappointment follows me all the days of my life. Will I just be obliterated into nothingness? Will I be alone forever, homeless, free falling into void? Sartre said, "Hell is other people." I have to add, "Hell is also myself." It is a living death and then I die.

– Excerpt from "The Anti Psalm 23" by David Powlinson

Not quite the Christmastime poem you were expecting, huh! Many people live this poetry every day. Christmas can be a time when depression rears its ugly head, and for most of us, we turn a blind eye. Perhaps you or someone you love suffers deeply from depression. Share this poem and then read God's promise to David in Psalm 23. You are never alone! Love and acceptance and a listening ear, found at and through Grace!

Peace to you this Christmas season!

Amy Southall, Council President

Christmas Pageant Invitation

Come learn of the gift "Jesus Our Brother" gave when humbly born in a stable rude surrounded by friendly beasts glad to tell about him, our Emmanuel. "Jesus Our Brother," the timeless story of the Divine's birth that has unfolded over time will come to Grace UCC Sunday, December 8 during the 10:30am worship service. You will be sure to enjoy this carol-filled show featuring St. Francis of Assisi, Mary and Joseph, the Innkeeper, the Friendly Beasts, Angels, Shepherds, the "King," Wiseguys and the Star. Come remember again the mysterious omnipresence, "Jesus Our Brother."

Christmas Flower Garden

Time to order flowers for Grace UCC's Christmas Flower Garden. This year, cyclamens in red, white or pink are offered instead of poinsettias due to allergies. The flowers will help beautify the church sanctuary Sunday, December 22, and for Christmas Eve services. Order forms are in the Sunday bulletins. Cost is \$7.25 each. Orders are due by Sunday, December 8. Flowers can be dedicated in memory of, or in honor of, or as gifts for loved ones.

Plants may be removed from the sanctuary after the 11pm Christmas Eve service or after worship Sunday, December 29. Thank you.

~ Worship Team

Ring In the New Year

The last practice and performance for Memorial Bells of Grace in 2013 is Sunday, December 15. A Memorial Bells of Grace holiday party is Tuesday, December 17 at 7pm at the director's house. Significant others welcomed. Hamburger barbeque and drinks will be provided; please bring a side dish.

Bell Choir practice will resume Tuesday, January 14, at 6:45pm. Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

~ Jeffrey Clouser



Centennial Capital Campaign Update

Thank you to everyone who is contributing to our centennial capital campaign. As of October 31 we have received \$64,305.44.

*Grace upon Grace
for a second century*

Due to delays in getting final approval from Manheim Township for the Memorial Garden, construction has been postponed until spring. Suzy Luber is happy to report the bid was awarded to B.R. Kreider as the contractor. Many thanks to Don Leayman and Tom Reese who refinished the Peace Pole. The Memorial Garden Planning Task Force, chaired by Suzy, continues to work on having a commemorative plaque and brochure created.

Anyone with questions about the centennial capital campaign, or who wants to make a pledge, please talk with campaign chair Jeff Bomboy or Witnessing Stewards Jeff and Jessie Dombach.

~ Centennial Capital Campaign Committee

Advent Group Invitation

An Advent small group will meet the four Sundays in Advent, starting December 1 at 9am, using the UCC "Behold!" devotional booklet. Everybody is welcome. See Amy Fishburn for details.

Youth Worship in December

December 1 — Family Sunday
December 8 — Christmas Pageant
December 15 — Advent lessons
December 22 — Advent lessons
December 29 — 1st Sunday
after Christmas
January 5 — Family Sunday &
Epiphany Party

New Chance to Volunteer

Due to the increase in nursery attendance, the church is adding a nursery backup volunteer.

The person who is backup will be in the nursery from 10 to 10:30am. The number of children will determine if the backup will stay to help or in the case of low attendance be free to go to church.

This new position will insure the safety of the children in nursery.

Anyone interested in being added to the nursery backup volunteer list, please notify Verna Labrador or the church office.

~ Verna Labrador,
Worship Volunteer Scheduler

There's A Song In the Air



As the Advent season arrives, you are warmly invited to sing with our choir. The season promises moving and joyous selections, all based on American folk tunes (many which have been forgotten). Rehearsals are Sundays at 9am. Join us anytime and share your gifts during this special season.

~ Christopher Barnard, Director of Music

Christmas Fund Special Offering

Like the Magi of old, we can honor the Christ Child by bringing gifts that will be used to support and honor those who have served and are serving the church. The mission of the Christmas Fund is to provide assistance dollars in situations of critical need to retired UCC clergy, while preserving the dignity of those who receive the aid. The offering will be collected Sunday, December 15.

Thanks from First Reformed for New Kitchen Aid

“Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Speaking for everyone at First Reformed, I want to thank you for your very generous contribution of \$5,000 toward the renovation of our kitchen and dining area.

“I know that other congregations who serve meals in our facilities, as well as those who partake of them, will thank you as well. We plan to prepare a plaque recognizing those churches that have helped fund this project.

“We are very excited that the construction is nearly complete and we will soon be in the renovated space sharing food and God’s love with the hungry of our community.

“Our blessings to Grace Church for your participation and contribution.

“Sincerely, Bill Worley, Pastor, & Dean Mason, co-chair, Capital Campaign Committee”

Construction is completed, and the December 14 community breakfast served by Grace UCC volunteers will be in the newly-renovated kitchen at First Reformed. Grace UCC’s contribution came from our Centennial Capital Campaign. Thank you.

Shop. Ship. Save. Support Grace Church

Before you hit the malls for your Christmas shopping, don’t forget to check out Amazon.com. They offer some of the lowest prices around, plus free shipping for orders over \$25. The best part is for every purchase made (using the web link below), Grace Church will receive a commission back from Amazon to help support our ministry. Reminder, you MUST use this link for Grace to receive credit: www.tinyurl.com/amazon4grace.

~ Christopher Barnard, Director of Music

Grace Gift Cards Aid Philippines Typhoon Relief Thru OCWM

Here's how your grocery gift card purchases support Our Churches Wider Mission: as of October 31 card sales totaled \$28,975.00, of which Grace received 5 percent (\$1,448.75) for OCWM. As you know, the cards make great gifts as well.

The United Church of Christ receives 30 percent of OCWM funds. It pays for:

- the Office of General Ministries, including visioning and planning; ecumenical connections; communications; administrative services; planning General Synod; and the Executive Council that provides governance between General Synods.
- Local church ministries, such as Christian Education, stewardship, leadership and worship resources, national youth event; the nationwide search and call process; evangelism, church vitality and new church starts; and partnerships with colleges and seminaries.
- Wider Church Ministries, providing emergency relief and assistance for people in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan; supporting missionaries in 22 countries; child sponsorship program; refugee program; and national disaster response.
- Justice & Witness Ministries, including hunger and poverty issues; health care concerns; environmental justice; prison ministries; youth empowerment; human rights and peace ministries.

Penn Central Conference (including Lancaster County) of the United Church of Christ receives 70 percent of OCWM funds. Every \$10 contribution does the following:

\$2.52 supports two associate Conference ministers and a Conference minister who assist our churches with searching for a new pastor and doing church planning; who guide our Associations and Committees on Ministry; who listen to and work with congregations' concerns, and help us start new programs and new churches.

\$1.68 pays for a communications director, an administrative assistant, and a secretary/receptionist. They provide communications (such as PC Connection and PCC Quarterly) helping our churches exchange ideas and learn about support resources. They research and answer questions, and keep records of our churches' gifts and histories. This also funds our accounting service, supplies and postage.

\$1.12 supports programs such as Outdoor Ministries, Stewardship, Youth/Young Adult Ministries, UEK (Reformed Church partners in Germany), Namibia and Dakota Partnerships, Christian Education, Stewardship and Worship.

\$.84 supports congregational, community and leadership ministries, including grants to pastors in need; help with counseling and testing for pastors and students; grants to higher education; scholarships; continuing education for clergy; and other support for our congregations and clergy.

\$.84 supports our ecumenical, UCC and related ministries, such as Lancaster Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, the UCC Historical Council and other partnerships. It also helps send Penn Central delegates to General Synod every two years.



Parish and Community Health Resources

Ask Dr. Trudie: *"Mom Knew Best..."*

"Wash your hands!" If we heard it once, we heard it a million times. I can remember our elementary school ritual of lining up to wash our hands before filing off to the cafeteria. We were taught to wash our hands after using the bathroom and before handling food; in recent years the opportunity to "wash up" has expanded through the use of sanitizers in stores, schools, and the workplace. It seems such a simple thing, but hand washing is a major weapon in our defense against disease. In an effort to spread the word, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have designated the first week of every December as National Hand Washing Week.

We take it for granted, but personal hygiene was not always a priority. In the 1800's, it was common for medical students and doctors to go directly from examining cadavers in the morgue to the delivery room. Dr. Ignaz Philip Semmelweis deduced that women's deaths from fever after childbirth were caused by bacteria from corpses being spread by doctors. When doctors started cleaning their hands with chlorine, mortality rates dropped. In our times, hand washing can significantly decrease the spread of diarrhea and pneumonia, the leading causes of childhood mortality.

Disease can be spread by contact with saliva, feces, or other bodily fluids. In the hospital setting, our Infection Control committees educate all caregivers to wash up before touching patients. In the outpatient setting, we count on those early indoctrinations by parents and teachers. While the "yuck" factor prompts us to scrub up after changing a diaper, emptying the litter box, or cleaning up barf, sometimes the dangers

of disease are less obvious. Consider turtles and lizards. Many of us have them as pets, and although they don't feel slimy, reptiles are a source of salmonella, which causes abdominal pain and diarrhea. Puppies can be infected with campylobacter, another cause of gastrointestinal unpleasantness, via their saliva and feces. Cats, especially those that may eat the occasional bird or woodland creature, may also carry salmonella. Be sure to wash after contact with your furry or scaled/ shell-covered friends.

Coughing into your elbow and washing your hands frequently while battling a cold will help keep your germs to yourself.

Avail yourself of the sanitizers supplied by stores to wipe your grocery cart handle, and don't worry about looking like a germophobe when you sanitize your keyboard and telephone handset.

The holidays mean lots of shopping, visiting, and food preparation, so please remember to wash up before you stuff that turkey or greet your guests. Lather up for 20 seconds and rinse thoroughly under running water. Temperature doesn't matter. How long does it take to do a thorough job? A good rule of thumb is to sing "Row, row, row, your boat" (silently or aloud) while cleaning up, and don't forget to clean under your fingernails. Hand sanitizers are fine, if your hands aren't visibly soiled.

Finally, if you find yourself in the doctor's office or hospital and your healthcare provider doesn't wash or glove up prior to examining you, don't hesitate to request that he or she do so. We won't be offended; it's not just common courtesy -- it's good medicine and standard of care.



Christmas Gift Suggestions for Ephrata Manor

The people of Ephrata Manor welcome your unwrapped donations of gifts. Gifts may be placed in the narthex by Sunday, December 8 for delivery by the Stewardship-Mission Committee volunteers.

Gift suggestions are:

Thigh and/or knee high nylons
Clear or light pink nail polish
Clear topcoat fingernail polish
Jewelry (pins, bracelets, necklaces)
Flower hair pins
Perfume/Cologne (*brand names preferred i.e. Coty, Prince Matchabelli, Old Spice, Mennon, Brute, Canoe*)
Soft chocolates & creams (*brand names preferred i.e. Whitmans, Russell Stover*)
Handkerchiefs (*no initials please*)
Men's socks (*navy, black, brown*)
Individually wrapped soft candy/snack crackers

Postage stamps
Peanut Butter Crackers
Facial tissues (*all sizes*)
Liquid hand soap
Large print crosswords

Diabetic candy/cookies
Lipstick (*pink, rose, mauve*)
Stationary paper
Socks, scarves, brushes
Pre-shave & after-shave
Large print word searches
Tea towels
Slipper socks
Jigsaw puzzles, 25 to 100 pieces

Donations of money or gift certificates will be used to purchase specific desired items.
Donations of gift bags, gift tags and tissue paper are requested also.



*Merry
Christmas*



Food & Clothing Bank Needs List

The Food Bank needs peanut butter; fresh or canned vegetables and fruits; canned tuna or chicken; brown rice; and dried or canned beans.

Please consider donating food to put in Christmas baskets: potatoes, fresh or instant; celery and onions; fresh or canned fruit; fresh or canned vegetables including pumpkin and pumpkin pie filling; cranberry sauce; turkeys; oven roasting bags; bread crumbs and stuffing.

The Clothing Bank needs coats and warm clothing in all sizes; shoes and socks; rain and snow boots for children; maternity clothes; thermal underwear and sleepwear.

Deck the Halls Party

Everybody is invited to deck the halls of Grace Church after worship Sunday, December 1, in celebration of Advent and Christmas.

Activities will begin with a potluck lunch and then we'll decorate. Please bring a dish to share (drinks will be provided).

~ Congregational Life Committee

Sweetheart Dance at Grace

Grace UCC will host a Sweetheart Dance from 6:30pm to 10:30 Saturday, February 15, in fellowship hall. The band Fierce will perform live. Admission is \$6 a person or \$10 a couple. If you would like to help with refreshments, decorating, or set up/clean up, please contact Jeff Clouser.

Come to the Christmas Luncheon

Members and friends of Grace Church are invited to a light lunch Tuesday, December 17 at noon. Please bring a snack to share. Beverages will be provided.

Bring a wrapped \$3 gift with your name inside so you can join in playing "Now You Have It, Now You Don't." If you have any questions, please call Dottie Book at 392-6628.



Epiphany Party

Please join us for an Epiphany party after worship Sunday, January 5. Lunch will be provided by the Congregational Life Committee. Watch for more details in your bulletins.

~ Congregational Life Committee

