

January News to Share

from the Homer Congregational UCC

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

Dear family and friends of Homer Congregational United Church of Christ,

At the start of the new year, grace and peace to you! Please allow this abbreviated newsletter to fill you in on the happenings at church.

The month of December was filled with celebrations as we watched the light from the Advent Wreath increase.

Advent I – Joel & Tasker, Lee & Terre Dennis lit the candle of hope.

Advent II – Jack, “Bert” & Janet Bertram lit the candle of peace.

Advent III – Reid, Jenna, Lanie, Kellie & Ken McDonnell lit the candle of joy.

Advent IV – Abby Elkins and her grandmother, Anne Barnes lit the candle of love.

Christmas Eve – The Dentes (7 PM) & the Smiths (11 PM) lit the Christ candle.

Our children marked the progress through December by adding figures to the crèches that surrounded the sanctuary. We heard the song “Some Children See Him” and we saw nativity sets from Africa, South America, Central America and, of course, the United States (both classic and folk art). We are grateful for the chance to use the family nativity sets from Kathy Alvord, Vicki Burtson, Jan Jeffers, Bri Meyka and Ellen Paterson. In addition, Gail Brennan’s stunning quilted nativity adorned a wall of the sanctuary.

For four Sundays before Christmas, during the Faith Formation hour, our adults enjoyed conversation about Quinn Caldwell’s book *All I Really Want*. The conversations were led by the author himself, and Quinn further blessed our lives by preaching on the first Sunday in December. If you were there, I suspect you will never listen to “This Little Light of Mine” in the same way again. Thanks to our Deacons for investing in adult faith formation which touched the lives of at least 25 people.

Our Children’s Pageant was extraordinary! 25 children and 12 adults provided a memorable Sunday as Nativity characters brought their gifts to help make a Christmas Cake. Pictures say 1,000 words:



Our thanks to Alex Faulkenbury, Carol Costell Corbin, Pastor Gary and all the adults who helped. We thank Henry “Baby Jesus” Cornwell and all of our children and youth who were each “stars of the pageant”.

Christmas Eve saw services at 7 PM and 11 PM. At 7 PM our church was filled for the service of Lessons, Carols and Candlelight. The choir reprised pieces from their cantata and Jack Carr brought us to tears singing "O Holy Night". Five trombonists played for the services: Jacob Dentes, Phil Rumsey, Evan Ulrich, Jim Ulrich and Pastor Vicki. At 11 PM, the Ulrich family (along with "Grandma Jan") offered hand bell anthems. We are so grateful for Joe Ford's direction and Jim Shultes' music from the organ.



We threw a Christmas Party at the beginning of December. Delicious dishes-to-pass provided the energy to decorate our "house" and share our festive socks. We thank the Memorial Committee for providing funds to replace an aged Moravian star. Following the service on Sunday, December 23, Paula & Gary Harrington and Kathleen Dentes worked magic to create a stunning visual for Christmas Eve that we will never forget. Behold!



Other “happenings” during December:

- Senior Fellowship enjoyed a Christmas celebration led by our pastors. We remembered Christmas traditions and our best childhood memories of Christmas. We closed the program by singing our favorite carols and eating festive snacks.
- During the holidays, some people are hurting because of grief or loneliness, Pastor Vicki & Mary Barhite led a *Blue Christmas Service*. Participants took home a blue Christmas ornament to remember the birth of Emmanuel: God with us.
- Our combined HCC/Preble Youth Group went Christmas caroling and delivered poinsettias to some of the home-bound folks in both communities.
- Eight people gathered most Tuesdays for 20 minutes of Centering Prayer. In the midst of the busy season, this time of quiet became balm for all who participated.
- After the Christmas holiday, our young adults who attend college shared breakfast with Pastor Vicki and Pastor Gary. We caught up with each other, then planned the worship service for December 30. Preacher Evan Ulrich reminded us that life and faith are a journey. We have a spiritual home, but we also need to let God lead us to new places and new experiences. Evan was joined in leadership of the service by Marleah Dentes, Olivia Harrington, Matt Pelowski and Molly Ulrich.

We are excited to let you know that we are *LIVE* on Facebook! Thanks to Brian Cornwell, our technology has been expanded. We are recording our worship service and running it live to FB. The services are then saved on YouTube for later viewing. Want to check it out? Like us on Facebook (Homer Congregational Church) and you will find the links. Thanks, Brian, for taking on this initiative. Ask Jean Cadwallader about catching us all the way from Minnesota!

They say that when it rains, it pours. On December 27 it rained – *poured* – in the upstairs of Jones Hall! Due to a crack in a toilet tank, water ran across both upstairs rooms, to the Nursery School bathroom downstairs and all the way to a basement storage room. Thankfully, Anne Wingard heard the dripping. Very quickly, a squadron of wet-vacs were assembled, volunteers gathered and they made quick work of clean-up. Our profound thanks to all who helped, including:

Bev Berry	Matt Pelowski	Elijah Smith
Steve Berry	Pastor Gary	Anne Wingard
Gary Harrington	Pastor Vicki	Evan Ulrich
Jim McKenna	Logan Schmidt	Molly Ulrich
	Bonnie Smith	

Russ Pedersen met with an insurance representative. At this time, the impact of the water is thought to be minimal. Our Trustees will care for any remaining issues.

We offer a special word of thanks to Gary Harrington. The events described here could not have happened without his tireless contribution – moving furniture, setting tables up, taking tables down, vacuuming, even crawling into the catwalks of our sanctuary to raise and lower chandeliers. God has richly blessed us through Gary’s hard work and good natured humor. Thanks, Buzz!

There was good news for our Outreach Team’s efforts. In mid-December the Brockway Foundation told us that their support of our PREP Event in August would continue. Saying, “...*your "Sneaker" project is notably efficient and effective,*” they committed to another donation of \$3,000!

Thanks to our Deacons, who visited with several of our home-bound folks during December. In some cases, the visits included communion. During December, greetings,

carols and poinsettias were shared with Doris Brohard, Isabel Coon, Jane Ann Fisher, Dottie Green, Gordon Johnson, Betty MacNeill (now at the Brewster House) and Jake & Betsy Schuhle. We treasure these folks who are faithful members of our church family.

And so begins January. At the close of 2018, the Deacons and Trustees were hard at work finalizing plans for our ministry in 2019. The reports are being collated as people are praying and then saying “Yes” to God’s call offered by the nominations team. Based on your pledges that were received between Stewardship Sunday and now, we have been studying our income verses our expenses. You have been generous, yet despite the off-set from the Endowment Fund, our pledged income does not yet match our expenses. We will need to find additional sources of income in 2019. Your ideas and/or additional pledge commitments are appreciated.

BREAKING NEWS...

Annual Meeting has been moved to Sunday, January 27.

Please make this date a priority in your calendar.

We will review our ministries of 2018 ~ a marvelous reminder of what God has done. We will elect our leadership for 2019 ~ saying *yes* to all the folks who have said yes to God!

We will pass the 2019 ministry plans (a.k.a. budgets):
the Trustees (nuts & bolts – how we keep the heat & lights on, as well as have a staff) and
the Deacons (the meat of ministry – how we nurture within and reach out in God’s name.)

WE NEED YOUR INPUT AS WE ACCOMPLISH THIS IMPORTANT WORK

As you set up your 2019 calendars, be sure to include these opportunities:

- **Disciple I & Disciple II Bible Studies:** Pastor Vicki will lead Disciple I which explores the Old Testament and will meet Mondays from 4:45 – 6. If you have taken this first course, you may continue with Disciple II to focus on Genesis & Exodus, which Pastor Gary will lead on the same day from 5 – 6. Remember that the **lectionary-based Bible Study** continues from 11:30 – 1 on Thursdays.
- **Centering Prayer** is on Tuesday from 5 – 5:45 in the Upper Room.
- Wednesdays from 3:30 – 4:45, Pastor Gary is available for youth to drop by Three Lil’ Birds (PG’s office away from the office) for conversation. He will even spring for your hot chocolate or sweet treat. **PG + Yth = great chats!**
- The **Mystics** group will read and discuss Joyce Rupp’s *Boundless Compassion*. Now is the perfect time to join at Three Lil’ Birds from 5 – 6 every Wednesday.
- **ALL NEW MEN’S GROUP** begins on Saturday, January 12 from 8 – 9. Take time to fellowship with brothers while you eat breakfast at church. It’s just forming, so bring your ideas. FYI - this is NOT a work group; rather, we hope to encourage friendship as you talk about “guy stuff”.
- **Winter Fest** - we are hosting the following events on January 25 & 26:
 - *Sloppy Joe Fundraising Dinner* – Friday, January 25 from 5-7 PM
 - *Lights on the Ice* – Here’s your chance to ice skate under the lights on our green (weather/ice permitting) on Friday from 6 – 10 PM. When you get cold, we’ll have hot cocoa to warm you up so you can have more skating fun.
 - *Games for Younger Youth* – at church from 11 – 2. We’re planning all kinds of activities, so bring the younger youth who have “aged out” of the games at the school that day.

It is a wonderful time to be a part of Homer Congregational United Church of Christ.

God Bless us, everyone!

Pastor Vicki