

February 2021

The Cornerstone

Christ Church United Methodist
700 S. Marshall Road, Middletown OH 45044
513-422-7364 (telephone) • 513-422-2161 (fax) • www.christum.com

“Impacting the
Community for CHRIST”



Staff

Wynston Dixon, Pastor
Debbie Alexander, Director of Music
Worship
Betsy Balger, Accompanist
Julie Coleman, Office Manager

10:30 am - Sunday Worship

9:00 am - Group Study

Sunday Adult Classes

Room 118: *Searchers Class*
Room 115: *ReachOut*

NEWS Net

The e-Newsletter of The West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Dear Brother and Sisters in Christ:

I want to point your attention to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which is January 18-25. This ecumenical Effort started in 1908 and has grown in scope and scale across more than a century. Christians all over the world observe. By the way, in the Southern Hemisphere it is observed between Ascension Day and Pentecost.

The theme this year is ***Abiding in Christ***. John 15 provides a wonderful background for this theme. I am inviting you to join me, other West Ohioans and Christians next door and around the world during these eight days in seeking and earnestly praying for it in deep humility and in the power of the Spirit.

To resource you each day starting on Monday, January 18, via the conference website, Twitter and Facebook you will be provided:

- A daily theme
- Two short scripture passages to read
- A meditation
- A prayer

I hope as you engage these resources you will do so knowing that you are doing it with other Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus. Picking up on the theme of ***Abiding in Christ***, I want you to remember that the outcome of such faithful abiding brings forth fruit and that apart from Jesus Christ we can do nothing. May I add apart from him we ought to do nothing. Everything we want for ourselves, our nation and the world must start in prayer and in ***Abiding in Christ***.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer

Letter from the Pastor



My beloved parishioners and friends,

As we celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this quote speaks directly to what we are facing today as a nation, church and world.

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single

garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Many times I have wondered why God allows painful things to happen to us. Sometimes those things are merely frustrations, like a car that won't start, or running out of laundry detergent and clean clothes on the same day. Other times an illness, death, financial difficulty, homelessness, addiction, being a caregiver for a love one, divorce or separation become the "pain" in our lives.

One could argue, as people have for thousands of years, that God is not fully in control. We could conclude that God's "providence," or the amount of control He has over our daily lives and situations, is limited. In that case, the presumption that our own freewill and "chance" have a degree of control over our daily situations would explain the "pain" that we sometimes suffer. I simply do not have enough evidence to support or deny that argument. What I have seen and personally witnessed in my life is all I can offer to the debate of whether or not God is fully in control...or is not.

I believe that God is much more in control of our daily lives than any of us would believe. In John 1:29-42, John witnessed a dove coming down and resting on Jesus. As a result, he claimed that Jesus was the promised Savior of the nation of Israel. Would we have come to the same conclusion? John, however, seeing things from God's perspective, was able to point others to Christ — their Savior. Had he not believed the event was of God, he might have concluded it was merely coincidence.

This "roller coaster ride" I call my life can be scary sometimes when all I see is what's coming and I am afraid to turn around to see what I've just come from. Trusting that God knows what He is doing, I let go of the past and the future, and try to gain insight as to what He is seeing right now, from "far above the tracks." At times, I laugh to myself at how frightening my life can be, but thankfully God grants me a joy and peace about it.

The nation, the church, and the world are all in pain. The people are crying out, "Is there a Word from the Lord?" The church is silent which I am not surprised by since the world has more influence in the church than the church has in the world. We have rearranged the church of God to become the church of man. The church has gone out of its way to please humankind rather than to please God.

I love the fact that God does not give up on us. Instead of being discouraged, go through the day saying, "Father, thank you that You will finish what You started in my life." If we get back in agreement with God, He will bring His promises to pass. Just as He raised Jesus Christ from the dead, just as He put back together the dry bones in the valley, God will breathe new life into His Church, new life into the nation, new life into your finances, your relationships, your health and your career. We must learn to trust God's timing.

God is looking for people who have a made-up mind and will trust His timing. God is a God of restoration. He took us from the junk yard, restored us and put us in His showroom. Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Remember God's promise. He still has everything under control. Keep the faith, be blessed and safe, and know that God loves you.

Prayerfully,

Pastor Dixon

A Special Thank You to all who paused at 12:00 pm on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during the week of January 11 to join with other members of Christ Church online for a time of corporate prayer. After a brief meditation and words of encouragement from Pastor Dixon, those online were led in prayer by Alice Bradshaw (Monday), Patty Streiff (Wednesday), and Denny Greider (Friday). We give the Almighty God all the praise and glory for His manifestation in our midst. There is indeed power in prayer.

Those who participated in our on-line prayer time included: Marilyn Minor, Beverly Hill, Beth and Denny Greider, Jane Tipton, Tom and Patty Streiff, Becky Spencer, Barb Langworthy, Nancy Karnes, Sandy Luksic, Bobette Owen, Charlene Hale, Nancy Caudil, Dorothy Back, Greg Siewny, Sally and Walker Williamson, Janet Matusak, Bob and Mallory Hicks, Nancy Brown, George and Linda Knapp, Judy Crump, Nana Hill, Pat Anthony, David Sauter, and Eddie and Dee Sellers.

Financial Report

2020 Budget Review

In 2020 Christ Church made several cost reductions to help us move closer to our goal of a balanced budget. Pastor Dixon helped the cause by not spending any of his Accountable Reimbursement and Education monies resulting in a savings of \$3,209. The secretary reduced her hours which resulted in a savings of \$3,088. Additional savings included \$2,456 in worship supplies and membership care; \$1,230 in administrative costs such as copies and postage; \$3,171 in custodial costs; \$4,924 in gas and electric costs; and \$1,175 in water costs. We were also able to reduce building maintenance by \$9,932.

What does all this mean? First, the budget approved for 2020 showed a projected deficit of nearly \$39,000, expenses exceeding revenue. As a result, in 2020 we reduced operational expenses by \$27,207, or 11.2%. Congregational giving, which makes up the bulk of the revenue, was \$24,150 less than anticipated. With the reduction in expenses and giving, using reserves and receiving some one-time dollars totaling \$26,500, we ended 2020 with a \$9,343 shortfall rather than a shortfall of \$35,843.

The monies we received from the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) have been converted from a loan to a grant, resulting in \$30,800 being added to our budget for 2021. The Administrative Team is currently reviewing how best to allocate these dollars to offset the 2020 losses as well as add to the church's reserves.

2021 Budget Planning

The 2021 budgeted revenue has been reduced by approximately \$20,000 with an equivalent reduction in budgeted expenses. The challenge for the future will be to continue to lower our expenses. In addition to reviewing the operational budget of revenue and expenses, the Administrative Team will also be reviewing all other finances of the church including those "assets" which carry forward each month to determine which funds can be viewed as operating dollars and which funds should remain in dedicated accounts for savings and for contingencies.

Available Cash as of January 1, 2021

Ameriprise Investments:	\$123,339
Additional Assets (various accounts):	\$105,797
General Fund (checkbook as of 12/31/20):	\$ 2,063
Connectional Obligation (Conference/District):	\$ 93
Parsonage Escrow:	\$ 37,456
Total	\$268,748

We thank you for your support, and will continue to work toward making Christ Church more cost effective. Keep the faith!

*Dr. Dee Sellers, Financial Chair
Dave Sauter, Interim Treasurer*

Administrative Team Report . . .

The Administrative Team has been carefully working with Dave Sauter, Interim Treasurer, and Dee Sellers, Finance Chair, to review all our expenses and make reductions where possible (*please see **Financial Report** on page 3*).

The Administrative Team also knows there is a strong need for a plan for the future of Christ Church and that this master plan needs to be developed for implementation as soon as the pandemic is over. We cannot wait until then to start planning. We need to serve Christ and provide a way for others to come to Christ.

Following is an outline of the plan presented at the Administrative Team's January 12 meeting:

A First Step:

1. Appoint a Focus Group to begin studying and developing plans for:
 - a. Family Ministry
 - b. Youth Groups
 - c. Children's Programs
 - d. NorthStar Involvement

2. Charge Focus Group with the task of developing a job description and timeline for hiring a part-time person to implement programs identified by the Focus Group.
(*We have set aside the money from the sale of the van to help support this ministry.*)

We will be actively recruiting members from the congregation for this Focus Group as well as seeking volunteers.

Next Steps:

Continue to identify new focus groups to move us forward.

For those who wish to volunteer to serve on this initial Focus Group and/or provide input or suggestions to the Focus Group, please contact Sally Williamson, Administrative Team Chair, at (513) 465-7832 (Cell) or by email at wwilliamson@cinci.rr.com.

Building Maintenance Update

It takes a small 'skilled' army to maintain the church building as issues arise. And much has been done in the last few months of which you may not be aware thanks to the dedication and faithfulness of a few amongst us. While NorthStar was on Christmas break, Steve Johnson was busy patching, sealing and painting the walls in the basement where there had been leaks. Steve also replaced electrical outlets downstairs as well as worked on and replaced toilets and tiles in the bathrooms.

Additionally, Eddy Sellers has been replacing lights and faucets in the building and has installed a "long awaited" sink in the kitchenette area downstairs.

To Steve and Eddy, our heartfelt **THANKS** and appreciation for your hard work and jobs well done!

Matthew 25 Ministries

Update . . .

Christ Church has collected a total of **16,834** pill bottles for Matthew 25 through 2020. Of this total, **3,639** pill bottles were collected in the year 2020.

Also in 2020, Matthew 25 shipped more than 930 truckloads of aid which is the most they have ever shipped in a single year and helped over 23 million people - the most they have ever helped in a single year. Matthew 25 distributed more than 18.5 million pounds of desperately needed supplies including over 6 million pounds of COVID-19 relief supplies.

We can continue to help Matthew 25 with our collection of empty pill bottles (no glass please). Empty pill bottles can be left in the red container marked "pill bottles" on top of the file cabinet in the library.

THANK YOU CHRIST CHURCH!



While the Whiz Kids program has not been able to take place on site this school year at Christ Church, the children

have not been forgotten. In December, City Gospel Mission prepared "Blessing Boxes" for all Whiz Kids and invited Christ Church to participate in the distribution of boxes to our Creekview students. Each box included a family game, 2 books, snacks, fruit, candy, a warm hat and gloves and a personal note. The boxes were delivered on December 10 by Nancy Brown and one of the area directors from City Gospel Mission. Nancy shared that one of our students, Zoey Dotson, is now living in Dayton so they were unable to deliver a box to Zoey. Since Creekview students were on a hybrid schedule, it was anticipated that not all our students would be at home to receive their blessing boxes. However, they were able to speak with the mother of Abigail Ritchie and Aaliyah Allison was at home to receive her box. Both expressed thanks for their gifts.

LOVE PACKAGES

Christ Church has donated a total of 1,279.2 pounds of Christian materials for **Love Packages**, 174 pounds of this total having been donated in 2020.

Love Packages, a non-profit organization, shipped 1,746 tons of literature in 2020 surpassing last year's total of 1,702 tons which is a remarkable feat considering their volunteer base in 2020 was less than half of the number of volunteers in a normal year due to the pandemic. There was a time that **Love Packages** had 12 containers stuck in customs because of the Covid lockdowns in many countries.

A quote from **Love Packages** director, Steven Schmidt: *"In a year as strange and uncertain as 2020, God has again shown His might! To have been able to send out as much as we did is all due to the power and glory of God. Praise the Lord!"*

Please leave your donated Christian materials (new or slightly used) in the red container marked "**Love Packages**" located on the floor in the library.

Bishop Announces Dates for 2021 Annual Conference

The 52nd session of the West Ohio Conference will be held on Sunday, June 6, 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm and Monday, June 7, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm. Bishop Palmer and the Planning Committee unanimously decided to hold a virtual conference since the COVID pandemic is still a serious concern. The theme of Annual Conference is **"Run the Race with Perseverance"** based on Hebrews 12:1-3.



"A vaccination is here and brings great hope. However, it is unclear as to how many people will be vaccinated by June. So, we must forge on with our plans to care for the business of the annual conference," said Bishop Gregory V. Palmer. "I have great hope and anticipation that we will come together again in a foreseeable future."

Thank You

Dear Christ Church,

Thank you to all those who came to Jim's visitation and service, and to those who called, sent cards and prayed for our family. Thank you also for the food you provided. Your friendship and support has truly been a blessing.

Gertie Schweitzer and Family

Thank you Christ Church for your blessing this Christmas. Your staff gift was deeply appreciated.

Julie Coleman

Thank you for your donation to The Salvation Army Middletown Citadel for our Christmas Kettle Effort. Your generosity is deeply appreciated and will make a positive difference in the lives of the people that come to us for help . . . Many programs benefit from your donation such as The Food Pantry, Sam's Place Feeding Program and Kids Clubs. Through your thoughtful donation, you are helping us to help the community to be a better place. God bless you and yours.

*Majors Judson and Lori Laidlaw
Corps Commanding Officers, Middletown Citadel*

Tithe and Offering Envelopes

Giving envelopes for 2021 have now been distributed. If for any reason you did not receive offering envelopes for 2021 and would like a box, please contact Pam Cole at 422-2989. Thank you.



As 2021 begins, the Salvation Army food pantry would like to thank Christ Church for their support in 2020. Almost \$6,000 was donated last year to the pantry in either funds or groceries. And, of course, staffing the pantry takes many volunteers. Christ Church

volunteers accounted for almost 60% of the 3,200 volunteer hours logged in 2020.

COVID-19 is still very much impacting the needs in our community. It takes the community to support this increase in those facing food insecurity during this time. Thank you again Christ Church for your support of this vital ministry in the Middletown community.

Church Van Sold

In an effort to address our financial shortfall in 2020, the Financial Task Force considered many ideas, one of which was selling the church van. The van had been sitting idle since the pandemic began and while Tom Streiff was starting and driving the van periodically, there were concerns about leaving the van parked long-term. The Task Force, therefore, determined there was no need for the van currently nor for the foreseeable future.

The Administrative Team received a purchase offer of \$17,500 which was within the range of value in the Kelley Blue Book and it was announced to the congregation on December 27 during morning worship and via email that a purchase offer had been received. The Administrative Team reviewed the offer in a special meeting on December 28, 2020 and voted to sell the van. The church will also see an additional savings in insurance costs.

At the Administrative Team's meeting on January 12, 2021, members voted to have Dee Sellers, Finance Chair, arrange an investment for the sale proceeds with the goal that these funds will be used to support family, youth and children's ministries in the future.

February Birthdays

- 4 Don Hawkins
- 6 Gary Daugherty
- 10 Vicki Greider
Jack Myers
- 11 Jack Achberger
- 12 Emily Miller
- 13 Jeff Berns
- 14 Rachael Siewny
- 15 Vera Ward
- 16 Becky Leonard
- 17 Sue Hounshell
Rex Lawson
- 18 Pam Johnson
- 19 Jayne Achberger
- 20 Ray Peterson
- 21 Janet Layne
- 22 Shirley Cox
- 23 Betsy Balger
Jim Buckey
- 24 Pam Seibold
- 25 Mark Ward
- 26 Tonia Caudle
Walker Williamson

February Anniversaries

- 12 Jim and Debbie Alexander
- 14 Don and Sandy Smith
- 16 Scott and Becky Leonard

With Heartfelt Sympathy

Cindy Minter and family upon the death of Cindy's husband, Steve Dishun, on December 21.

Norman and Karen Gibbs and family upon the death of Norman's mother, Beulah Gibbs, on December 27.

Walker and Sally Williamson upon the death of Sally's cousin, Bruce Mater, on January 6.

Carl and Shirley Heismann upon the death of their sister-in-law, Sandra Heismann, on January 10.

Kay Ellison and the Davis family upon the death of Kay's niece, Denise Davis, on Tuesday, January 12.

Craig, Melanie and Addie Moon and family upon the death of Melanie's mother, Phyllis Costine, on January 17.

Lila Jade Perry

8 lbs. 13 oz.

was born

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Congratulations to:

Parents: Brandon and Heather Perry

Grandparents: David and Suzi DelGrosso

Great-Grandmother: Dorothy Back

Congratulations to Ja'Layah Hodges, granddaughter of Pastor Dixon, who is being recognized on Friday, January 22, as "The Distinguished Student for Quarter Two" at her school.

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Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) shouted out a prayer as she and other lawmakers took shelter while rioters broke through police barriers and entered the Capitol Building on January 6. In a video that has been circulating the internet, the sound of glass breaking and shouts of “Stay down” can be heard. Intermingled with these noises, Rochester can be heard pleading for God to heal America and asking for protection for those police officers who were trying to protect lawmakers, as well as for her fellow congressmen and women. Following is her prayer that was caught on camera from the floor of the House of Representatives:

“Father God, You are all-powerful. We know all things work together for the good. So we trust in You right now in the name of Jesus, that You have this under control. Right now in the name of Jesus! All things work together, all things! PEACE! Peace in the land . . . peace in this country . . . peace in this world. Lord we ask You for a healing. Right now. Right now in the name of Jesus. Lord protect (unknown). Protect those who are trying to protect us. Protect all of our brothers and sisters in this Congress who protect America, Lord. We just thank You. We praise You. We give You all honor and glory because You are powerful! Above all . . . We thank You right now. In this MOMENT!”

Thank God for this woman of faith, a follower of Jesus Christ, who was not ashamed to call out to God boldly and loudly.

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