

*The Network... a Publication of
University Presbyterian Church
December 2023*

Annual Reports for Committees

As 2023 is winding down, it's time to start thinking about the annual reports for each committee to be submitted for the Congregational Meeting in February 2024. Peg will need them by the beginning of January 2024. Thank you.





Alternative Christmas Gift Giving

Comfort. Coziness. Homey. Playful space. Safety. We have an opportunity to provide these gifts for asylum seekers in WNY. VIVE, founded in 1984 by a local group of Catholic sisters, was originally created to support the many people from Central and South America who were arriving in Buffalo, en route to making a refugee claim at the Canadian border. In 2015, Vive became part of Jericho Road Community Health Center. Vive provides safety, shelter, food, medical care, and legal aid, and supportive programming to help asylum seekers get on their feet in a new country.

Now, having outgrown its home in an old school building with dormitory style living, Vive is moving to 1500 Main St., into the former Bristol Home. The Help Pave a Path to Hope campaign is raising money to renovate this building to provide a comfortable and dignified space for asylum seekers from around the world. This new building looks more like a home with large windows and a solarium providing lots of light. There will be an outside recreation area, indoor play space for children, and living areas for families.

Beginning Sunday December 3 and throughout Advent you may make your gift for VIVE's new home. With your donation you will receive a card to give to your loved one or friend letting them know you have honored them this holiday with this Alternative Christmas gift of hope. Cards will be available following the service or you may print a card online. Please make checks payable to *University Presbyterian Church*, memo: *Alternative Gift* We invite you to learn more at www.jrchc.org

Trunk or Treat 2023

I would like to thank all of the members and friends of UPC for helping in making Trunk or Treat an even bigger success than last year. Recognition to Pat and Nick Casseri, Val Macer, Lee Ann Grace and Howard Henry, Talita Pollyanna, Jude Hammer, Molly and Bill Rugg, Alvin from our student manse, and Anita Weir (Pat Casseri's friend). Their enthusiasm wasn't dampened by the snowy weather and cold temps, and the 245 participants were very appreciative of their efforts. We would also like to thank all the people who donated candy to the event. It seemed in the beginning that we had too much, and about midway through we were getting nervous we wouldn't have enough!!! But it slowed down during the last hour so it worked out fine. The Buffalo Fire Dept showed up which was a thrill for the youth and adults. Who doesn't get excited about seeing fire trucks! The kids love getting up close and exploring the inside of the truck.

It's so satisfying seeing neighbors young and old enjoying the festivities of Halloween in a safe and friendly gathering. Maybe more members will join us next year and make it even bigger.

Thank you, Amy Erickson

Thanksgiving Outreach, November 13-18, 2023

A combined ministry with Calvary Baptist Church and Temple Beth Zion resulted in 12 UPC members and friends donating countless hours to provide 1200 Thanksgiving meals to community recipients, including a number of UPC members. The congregation raised a free will offering of \$650 for this effort. The volunteers were: Grace Agbemenu, Joanne Bartlett, Marietta Bratton, Elena Delgado, Lee Ann Grace, Kathy Hallborg, Jude Hammer, Howard Henry, Val Macer, Sandy Robertson, Matt Smith, Sarah Smith. More members wanted to participate but were unable. Next year!

Worship Column

Sunday, December 3

1st Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19;
1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Sunday, December 10

2nd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13;
2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Sunday, December 17

3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126 OR Luke 1:46b-55;
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Sunday, December 24

4th Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55 OR Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26;
Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

Monday December 25

Nativity of the Lord/Christmas Day

(Christmas Dawn) Isaiah 62:6-12 Psalm 97 Titus 3:4-7 Luke 2:[1-7] 8-20

(Christmas Day) Isaiah 52:7-10 Psalm 98 Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12] John 1:1-14

Sunday, December 31

1st Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Psalm 148 Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:22-40

For Pastoral Care

If you are in need of pastoral care While UPC is searching for an Interim Pastor please contact Elena Delgado at 716-860-2881 or edelgado47@gmail.com. Thank you.



Session Highlights:

These are the highlights of the November Session meeting:

~UPC has ordered an AED unit which will be placed in the narthex.

~The tower repairs have been discontinued for the winter months and will resume in the Spring; Sanctuary doors can be used until then.

~Upgrade work to the elevator is scheduled in January/February; we will use the lift at that time.



Update from the Interim Pastor Search Committee:

The Interim Pastor Search Committee has completed and submitted the Ministry Discernment Profile Form which describes who we are and criteria we need for an interim pastor. It has been approved by the Presbytery Committee on Ministry (COM) and the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) which is a national database for churches seeking pastors as well as for pastors seeking churches. We have received three names from the database thus far and have received names of two local pastors that are interested. As we receive names of pastors that are interested, the committee will reach out, check references, and interview those who seem to be a good fit for UPC.

Meanwhile, pastors from the Presbytery's Pulpit Supply list will continue to lead us in service. As usual, the UPC Nominating Committee is beginning to ask members to step up to fill the positions on Deacons, Session, and the 2024 Nominating Committee. Once the Presbytery Codetermines that our church is ready, the UPC Nominating Committee will select names of congregation members to be nominated to serve on the Pastor Nominating Committee to search for our installed (permanent) Pastor. The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) will be elected by the congregation when the time comes.

Birthday Wishes Go Out to.....

DECEMBER

- 6 Jim Moran
- 9 Bob Dewitz
- 9 Dannish Patel
- 12 Eric Moodie
- 15 Bonnie Dahl
- 19 Elizabeth Ball
- 19 John Maddock
- 25 Nikki Malkowski
- 26 Arjun Singh
- 28 Ajay Singh
- 30 Abigail Wadkins-Daub
- 31 Tiffany Whitefield



**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY!**

What's Happening in December

<i>Sunday December 3</i>	<i>9:30 am Choir 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship</i>
<i>Tuesday December 5</i>	<i>12:00 pm Food Pantry</i>
<i>Wednesday December 6</i>	<i>7:00 pm Duffield Board Meeting</i>
<i>Thursday December 7</i>	<i>12:00 pm Food Pantry 7:30 pm Choir</i>
<i>Friday December 8</i>	<i>5:30 pm Vespers</i>
<i>Sunday December 10</i>	<i>9:30 am Choir 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship</i>
<i>Tuesday December 12</i>	<i>12:00 pm Food Pantry</i>
<i>Thursday December 14</i>	<i>12:00 pm Food Pantry 7:30 pm Choir</i>
<i>Sunday December 17</i>	<i>9:30 am Choir 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship</i>
<i>Tuesday December 19</i>	<i>12:00 pm Food Pantry</i>
<i>Wednesday December 20</i>	<i>7:00 pm Session</i>
<i>Thursday December 21</i>	<i>12:00 pm Food Pantry 7:30 pm Choir</i>
<i>Sunday December 24</i>	<i>Christmas Eve 10:30 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Service</i>
<i>Monday December 25</i>	<i>Christmas Day Church office Closed</i>
<i>Thursday December 28</i>	<i>12:00 pm Food Pantry</i>
<i>Sunday December 31</i>	<i>New Year's Eve 10:30 am Worship</i>

ADVENT TAIZE SERVICE

On Friday afternoon, December 8 from 5:30-6:00 pm, in the UPC sanctuary, University Presbyterian Church will offer a contemplative Taize service with songs and readings that center around the season of Advent. The service will include simple chants, rich silence, abundant candles, and time for quiet and shared prayers of the heart. Please join us as we offer this service to prepare our hearts and minds for the celebration of Advent.

Annual University Presbyterian Church Family Christmas Dinner will be held on Sunday, December 17th following the morning service. Tickets will cost \$15 for adults, \$10 for Youth (4-15), and children under 4 are free. R.S.V.P, either through the church office (716-836-7660) or Pat Cookfair-Casseri.

Saturday Fellowship~ Join us at the Family Tree (4346 Bailey Ave. near Eggert Rd.) on the first Saturday of each month at 10:00 for a relaxing breakfast. The next breakfast is December 2nd. We ask that you contact Nick Casseri (716-361-5080) so we reserve enough seats. All are welcome!

Martin Luther King Day of Service

Keep your calendars open on Monday, January 15, 2024 for a morning of food, faith and community service with Calvary Baptist Church. Details to follow. Ministry to Community Committee.

The Legend of the Candy Cane

Many years ago, a candy maker wanted to make a candy at Christmas time that would serve as a witness to his Christian faith.

He wanted to incorporate several symbols for the birth, ministry and death of Jesus. He began with a stick of pure white hard candy; white to symbolize the Virgin Birth and the sinless nature of Jesus; hard to symbolize the solid rock, the foundation of the Church; firmness to represent the promise of God.

The candymaker made the candy in the form of a "J" to represent the name of Jesus, who came to earth as our Savior. He thought it could also represent the staff of the Good Shepherd, with which he reached down into the ditches of the world to lift out the fallen lambs who, like all sheep, have gone astray.

Thinking that the candy was somewhat plain, the candymaker stained it with red stripes. He used three small stripes to show the stripes of the scourging Jesus received, by which we are healed. The large red stripe was for the blood shed by Christ on the cross so that we could have the promise of eternal life. Unfortunately, the candy became known as a candy cane - a meaningless decoration seen at Christmas time.

But the true meaning is still there for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.



THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

"My True Love"

"My true love" refers to God Himself, the giver of all good gifts.

The First Day of Christmas – A Partridge in a Pear Tree

The partridge in a pear tree refers to Jesus. A mother partridge, when in the presence of a predator, is willing to risk injury and death to save her chicks. This image points to Christ's death on the cross to save his people and echoes Jesus' lament over Jerusalem: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings..." (Luke 13:34).

The Second Day of Christmas – Two Turtle Doves

The two turtle doves represent the Old and New Testaments, which together give the full story of God's creation, his love for his people, how his people broke their relationship with God, his plan to redeem them, and what is to come as they are reunited to God and how they will worship him forever.

The Third Day of Christmas – Three French Hens

There are two versions of what the three French hens stand for. Some say they are the three Biblical virtues the author Paul espoused in 1 Corinthians 13:13: Faith, Hope, and Love.

Others claim the three French hens represent the three precious gifts the Wise Men brought: gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and inspire us to bring our best to Christ.

The Fourth Day of Christmas – Four Calling Birds

The four calling birds stand for the four gospels that *call* all people to Christ.

The Fifth Day of Christmas – Five Golden Rings

The five golden rings represent the Torah, which Christians call the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. These books give a rich history of God's people and point to God's grace in spite of their unfaithfulness.

The Sixth Day of Christmas – Six Geese A-Laying

The six geese represent the six days of creation.

The Seventh Day of Christmas - Seven Swans A Swimming

The seven swans tell of the seven gifts the Holy Spirit gives, described in Romans 12:6-8: prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading and compassion.

The Eighth Day of Christmas – Eight Maids A-Milking

The eight maids are the eight Beatitudes Jesus preached in Matthew 5:3-10:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The Ninth Day of Christmas – Nine Ladies Dancing

The nine ladies are the nine Fruit of the Spirit that distinguishes the character of a follower of Christ: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22)

“Dancing” is an appropriate description for this day, I think, for when our lives are marked by these characteristics, our spirits can't help but want to dance!

The Tenth Day of Christmas – Ten Lords A-Leaping

The ten lords are the Ten Commandments God gives his people to show them how to live.

The Eleventh Day of Christmas – Eleven Pipers Piping

The eleven pipers are the eleven apostles who remained faithful to Jesus: Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. The number of apostles is eleven, not twelve, because the twelfth, Judas Iscariot, betrayed Jesus.

The Twelfth Day of Christmas – Twelve Drummers Drumming

The Apostles' Creed, one of the most widely accepted creeds across Christendom, includes twelve points of doctrine that outline what Christians believe:

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
2. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
3. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
4. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
5. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.
6. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
7. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
9. the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
10. the forgiveness of sins,
11. the resurrection of the body,
12. and life everlasting.

Amen.