

# **“THE MESSENGER”**

**PUBLISHED BY ST. PAUL'S UCC, MIDDLETOWN OHIO 45044**

**Rev. Rich Luh, Pastor 937-993-5464; Church – 513-422-4519**

**JANUARY 2023**

Ah, yes, another year has dawned! New Year's resolutions, making plans for vacations, and with a sigh of relief, and thankful that the past year is gone! So what now? What do we have to look forward to in 2023? Another year like last year? If really good things happened then, well – another year of joy and happiness would be great to have happen.

But what about those who have gone through some rough times in 2022? Certainly, they would hope that this new year will not be a repeat of last.

Well folks, guess what? Whether last year was bad or good or a mixture of both – knowing that God is with us – Emmanuel – can help to soothe our troubled spirits and hearts and realize that we were not alone in '22 nor will we be in '23! God is our comfort and strength in times of need and in times of joy. God never abandons us no matter what happens in our lives.

In this new year, God will help to open our eyes to see what positive possibilities lie out there for us to engage in. He will open our hearts to embrace his love for us and for others as we travel forth month by month to utilize the wonderful gifts God gives us on a daily basis.

So, let's not get bogged down with what happened last year so we can then be free to enjoy the life God gives us to live in this new year. What's done is done and nothing we can do or say will change that. But what can be is entirely up to you and I. We can make this 2023 what we want it to be for us and our friends and family. Let's not throw away that opportunity. Life is too short for that!

*Pastor Rich* – Wishing you and your families a **VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!**

## **“THE MESSAGE OF THE NEW YEAR”**

I ASKED THE New Year for some message sweet, Some rule of life with which to guide my feet. I asked, and paused: he answered soft and low, “God’s will to know.”

Will knowledge then suffice, New Year?” I cried. And, ‘ere the question into silence died, The answer came, “Nay, but remember, too, God’s will to do.”

Once more I asked, “Is there no more to tell?” And once again the answer sweetly fell, “Yes! This thing, all other things above; God’s will to love.”

## **BIBLE STUDY RESUMES**

After a short break, our bible Study group will resume meeting on January 4<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm in the Church Parlor. We are studying the Book of Luke. Please feel free to come and join with us for our sessions.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS, ACTIVITIES**

January 1<sup>st</sup> – Sacrament of Holy Communion

January 8<sup>th</sup> – Church Council meets after church service in Church Parlor

January 11, 18, 25 – Bible Study at 1 pm in Church Parlor

Clothes Closet – January 4, 11, 18, 25 – 10-1 pm

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

**1 – Calleigh Barraclough**

**8 – Linda Britton**

**15 – Carl Batliner**

**23 – Bryan Canter**

**27 – Rebecca LeMaster**

**29 – Mike Ratliff**

## **LITURGISTS**

**Marsha Minge**

**Abbey Breeding**

**Chuck Clark**

**Carl Batliner**

**Calleigh Barraclough**

**From "A Morning Wish" by W. R. Hunt**

The sun is just rising on the morning of another day, the first day of the new year. What can I wish that this day, this year, may bring to me? Nothing that shall make the world of others poorer, nothing at the expense of other people; but just those few things which in their coming do not stop with me, but touch me rather, as they pass and gather strength: A few friends who understand me, and yet remain my friends. A work to do which has real value without which the world would feel the poorer. A return for such work small enough not to tax unduly anyone who pays. A mind unafraid to travel, even though the trail be not blazed. An understanding heart. A sight of the eternal hills and unresting sea, and of something beautiful the hand of man has made. A sense of humor and the power to laugh. A little leisure with nothing to do. A few moments of quiet, silent meditation. The sense of the presence of God. And the patience to wait for the coming of these things, with the wisdom to know them when they come.

**Who Walks the World with Soul Awake** by Florence Earle Coates

Who walks the world with soul awake

Finds beauty everywhere;

Though labor be his portion,

Though sorrow be his share,

He looks beyond obscuring clouds,

Sure that the light is there!

And if, the ills of mortal life Grown heavier to bear,

Doubt come with its perplexities and whisper of despair,

He turns with love to suffering men –

And lo! God, too, is there.

## PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

2022 has been, to say the least, a very interesting and challenging year!

Interesting, in that we have worked together with three area congregations in different activities: (1) We resumed our joint worship experience with **Times of Refreshing** on July 17<sup>th</sup>. A good time was had by all as we celebrated Holy Communion and had a shared meal afterward. Many thanks to those who got the Coffee Hour set up. (2) We did a joint service and picnic with **First Christian Church** on August 7<sup>th</sup> at their church. Again, we had good fellowship as we shared worship and fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. (3) We reciprocated with First Christian Church by having them as our guests on **World-wide Communion Sunday October 2<sup>nd</sup>** where we shared the bread and cup and a delicious meal afterward in Friendship Hall. (4) We did a **Trunk and Treat Halloween** give-away with **First United Methodist Church** on October 30<sup>th</sup> at our church. Those who attended had a good time and have hopes we can do some similar events together in the future. The same is true for First Christian Church. We also reinstated our Angel Tree – which this year residents from Majestic Nursing Home benefitted from your generosity. Many thanks to those who donated presents for these residents. We shall do this next Christmas too.

Yes, working with our brothers and sisters in Christ can be a rewarding experience and often, we find that having more than just our own people participating, more can be had with other congregations chiming in. The fellowship alone is a wonderful opportunity for us to share our love and our desire for doing mission in Christ's name.

Hopefully we will continue to embrace opportunities to do this more and more as time goes on.

We also had a **Rite of Confirmation** bestowed upon **Calleigh Barraclough** on October 16<sup>th</sup>, with her sister, Sabrina participating. It was a pleasant day as we welcomed into our midst, our youngest member. Again, many thanks to Barb and others who made the reception special for Calleigh's accomplishment.

**We saluted our volunteers** on October 23<sup>rd</sup> with a special portion of the service dedicated to them and a pizza coffee hour after. We are proud of all the work our volunteers do during the year to help with mission and outreach and with maintaining the premises. Without your help, St. Paul's would be sorely behind in doing what they have been doing all these years in mission and in helping to make our facilities a clean, safe, and beautiful atmosphere for gatherings and for worship.

Joyfully, we have welcomed two new members onto the Church Council – **Rick Glatfelter and Abbey Breeding**. These two have added much enthusiasm to the leadership of the church in their various roles and we hope they continue to share that enthusiasm for a long time to come. Speaking of leadership – our Church Council has demonstrated love, compassion, and hard work in all their efforts this year. We should be thanking them for all they have and continue to do for the life of this congregation.

During the course of this year, we have lost several prominent members, who gave many years of faithful service to the life of our congregation: **Barbara Ligett and Virginia Elam**. We also lost several relatives of members – **Linvell Adams, Dee Ratliff and Cameron Broadbent**. May the inspiration they were, continue to shine in the

hearts of their family, church family and friends; inspiring them to carry on the work they started.

This has been a challenging year, particularly for our **Church Council**, with all that has transpired; and they have done a marvelous job in getting the church back on track. They hired a new Secretary, **Sue Luh, and she and Judy Green**, with help from **Bryan Canter, Jennifer and Carl Batliner** have been working diligently in straightening out the books and records of the church. And hats off to them for all the hours they have put in on this project and especially to Sue, for hours spent getting acquainted with her position and the extra work brought her way. She has done a great job! (No prejudice there!)

Our **Clothes Closet** has been busy serving the needy people in Middletown. Our special thanks to those who have contributed to the work of this mission; and, to our own **Jim Rockwell**, for all his time and effort put forth on behalf of not only the Closet, but St. Paul's in general.

As a matter of fact, all of you who have supported not only the Clothes Closet, but countless other special missions of the church, a **HUGE THANK YOU GOES OUT TO YOU** for all your support! We may be a small congregation, but not small at all in spirit and love, as shown by how much time, money, and effort you all put into whatever is needed to be done!

We cannot be remiss in forgetting the contributions our musicians have made in our worship experiences – **Marsha Minge** and her beautiful voice; **Barb Flory**, for her keyboard expertise and selecting hymns and other music for the bulletins and countless other things she does around the life of the church; and our special performers, who have

added so much to our worship experiences – **Mike Ratliff and Sabrina Barraclough**. We also thank our Acolytes who have done a great job throughout the year – **Kaitlynn and Austin Schultz and CJ Barraclough, and Calleigh Barraclough, who also has done Lay Reading with Austin and CJ.** We thank so much those who have served as Ushers, Greeters, Communion Servers, and Lay Readers week in and week out. No worship could function properly without their assistance and dedication. My sincere thanks to Ginger, Larry and Darlene for taking care of decorating for special events and of course Larry and Darlene for their leadership in the Christmas decorating. A special thanks to Larry Adams and Rick Lyons for all they do with property and general repair at the church.

I thank our faithful Bible Study participants: Barb Flory, Corrine Lowman, Linda and Roger Britton, Judy and Bob Curtis. I enjoy being with you every Tuesday for our discussions.

As we enter upon another year, I thank you for allowing me to be your Pastor. It has been an awesome experience for me and a privilege and honor to work with you in all our endeavors for Christ's mission here in Middletown. Thank you for all your support and encouragement throughout the year.

But is our work done? Are we satisfied to sit back and merely reminisce about how things used to be or are we going to strive to create an enthusiastic challenge for each of us as to how we can continue to look for ways that things can be; that we can be of service - not only for the members of this congregation – but for those people out in the community who are in need of some hope and inspiration in their lives? With a determination to work together, and with God's embrace of His

love around and within us, we can do whatever we set our sights on doing.

I truly look forward to working with you again in 2023 as we look for different ways to serve Christ, by serving our neighbors and enjoying the opportunities for us to dwell in harmony and Christian love.

### **SPECIAL OFFERING THIS MONTH**

In January, our special mission offering goes to our “Needy Fund”. This fund was set up to help people out who need some assistance with utility bills, occasional bus passes and prescriptions.

### **OUR CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY**

Is extended to Mike Ratliff and his family, on the death of his mother, Dee, last month. Funeral service was held at Dalton Funeral Home on December 14<sup>th</sup>. May God’s presence continue to remind them that they are not alone in their grief; that He is there to comfort and uphold them with his love.

### **MANY THANKS**

To Mike Ratliff and Sabrina Barraclough for providing special music for us on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. It really added much to the service. A special thanks also goes out to Marsha Minge and Barb Flory for their musical talents shared every week and on special occasions such as Christmas.

We really are blessed to have people like this who are willing to share their talents, which add so much to our worship experiences.

### **KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS**

Delores Johansen (Roger Britton’s sister); Frances Stoutenborough, Charlene Hale, Sandy Clift, Ruby McQuade, Rudolph Tackett. We pray that God, in His infinite love, will bring solace to the families and embrace these, his servants, in His love and care. Remember those who are alone in this holiday season and have no family or friends to call upon them.