

February 2019

The Good News

The monthly newsletter of Christ United Church

Christ United Church

A federated church
of the Presbyterian Church
(USA) and the
United Church of Christ

With Christ
as our heart
and God's love
as our fire,
we learn, we love,
we care for all
people.



The Love of God

Pastor Allan's Message

"Whoever does not love, does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent God's only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ... We love God because God first loved us." *1 John 4:8 – 9, 19*

February is the month for love. Each February 14th on St. Valentine's Day, we give each other tokens of love and affection to show how much the other person means to us, and how glad we are that we share a relationship with them. Love is at the heart of what it means to be human.

But it's more than that. As Christians, we know that love is not only at the heart of what it means to be human, but at the heart of what it means to be God as well. We believe that God created the universe, not because God needed anything it could provide, nor because God wanted worshippers or praise or adoration, but as a testament to love. Creation itself comes to us as a pure gift from God.

This is what love does: it creates, it overflows, it super-abounds, it spills out. And that's just what the love of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit did in creation. We exist because the Triune God wanted to do what love always wants to do, and that is to share a life together, to create a space in the Divine life for the other, for someone new: for us.

And so here we are, specks of dust on a speck of dust adrift in the cosmos, in so many respects trivial and unimportant, and yet ultimately of the utmost importance because we are connected by love to the Power which stands behind it all. God chose to share God's love with creatures of God's own devising.

Even beyond that, we know that God reaches out to creatures who rejected their Creator, who rejected God's love and God's offer of friendship, and in human form, in Christ, makes the grand gesture of self-sacrifice to win our hearts and our salvation. And so the Scripture comes true: we love God because God first loved us.

Our best response to God's love is to act in ways that spread that love: to show kindness to others; to offer mercy and forgiveness whenever possible; to welcome the stranger and the people some in our society reject; to refrain from hitting back, verbally or physically. This is what God does: the Gospel is full of this behavior from Jesus. This can be our goal, too.

May the love of God fill you to overflowing during this month of love! †



Adult Education

Opportunities

Grateful—The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks

This book, written by Diana Butler Bass, will be the subject of a Faith Formation adult class beginning **Wednesday, January 30 at 7:30 pm** and continuing for the next four Wednesday's in February. Books are available in the church office, Sunday Fellowship Time and at the class. A donation to cover costs is appreciated.

The Ridiculous Journey, Following a Nobody from Nowhere

During Lent/Easter this class will begin on **Wednesday, March 13** following a light supper at 6 pm. We will utilize video and reflection and will be led by Pastor Allan. The course, which has seven sessions, will skip the week between Palm Sunday and Easter and continue for the two Wednesdays following Easter. Check the church calendar at <http://www.christunited.church> by clicking on the calendar & news tab to verify all class dates. ☩

Faith and Film Friday

Please join us on **Friday, February 1 at 6:30 pm** for a screening of the 2012 Academy Award winning film *Silver Linings Playbook*, starring Bradley Cooper, Jennifer Lawrence, and Robert De Niro. This is a story of a man who is released from a psychiatric facility and tries to get his life together while moving back in with his parents. The plot includes a dance competition and the Philadelphia Eagles football team in a bizarre and memorable story.

We will enjoy pizza, popcorn, and desserts as we discuss the film and this year's Super Bowl. ☩

Rise Against Hunger

10,000 meals for hunger people in two hours? It is possible and you can be a part of making a change in the world. Save the date: **Saturday, March 23** to be a part of this fun and important event. ☩

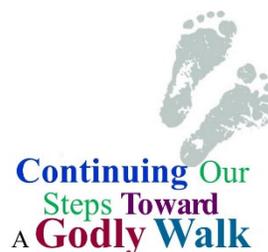
Fellowship and Discuss

For where two or three come together in my name there am I with them. Matthew 18:20

Join us on **Thursday, February 7 at 7 pm** at the Crall home in Brook Park. We will begin a study/discussion - *How do we cope with all the hate in this world?* What does the Bible say about hate? Why is there so much hate? How do we prevent our hatred of the haters? We welcome people new to the group. Our home is open to all.

Contact Bonnie by phone (440-234-2202) or email bcrall@ameritech.net to inform her of your attendance. Bring your Bible, and a light refreshment to share (optional). Beverages are provided.

The Crall's home is at 6459 East Vancey Dr., Brook Park (off Sheldon Rd, two streets west of Donte's Restaurant which is located on the corner of St. Rt. 237 and Sheldon Rd.) ☩



Happy Birthday

February

- | | |
|----|--------------------|
| 1 | Stan Barclay |
| 1 | John King |
| 6 | Karin Spinner |
| 6 | Barb Berkey |
| 9 | Austin Cole |
| 11 | Adam Lane |
| 11 | Sandy Taylor |
| 12 | Martha Gibbs |
| 12 | Judy Mitchell |
| 13 | Linda Ault |
| 13 | Helen Fannin |
| 14 | Henry Ault |
| 14 | Will Stocker |
| 17 | Karla Zilch |
| 20 | Terry Mercier |
| 22 | Shirley Duncan |
| 22 | Katie Fort-Fleming |
| 24 | Trish Demko |



Thank You for Your Generosity!

During the Christmas season, 41 members of our congregation made gifts totaling \$2,146 to the two denominational offerings. This is \$449 more than was received in 2017, a 12.6% increase! As planned, half of the total has been forwarded to each of the appropriate denominational offices.

Both offerings provide vital assistance to retired and active church workers and their families. The PCUSA offering also supports racial ethnic schools and colleges.

Here are eloquent words from one pastor who was a recipient: *"It wasn't easy picking up the telephone to share with you my present situation. In fact, it was one of the most humiliating experiences of my life although it reminded me that grace still happens. Sometimes we as clergy persons lose sight of God's grace when the negative stuff comes into our lives."*

"...thanks so much for sharing your time and ministry with me. Your most gracious gift is appreciated more than words can say as I continue to live in the 'meantime.'"

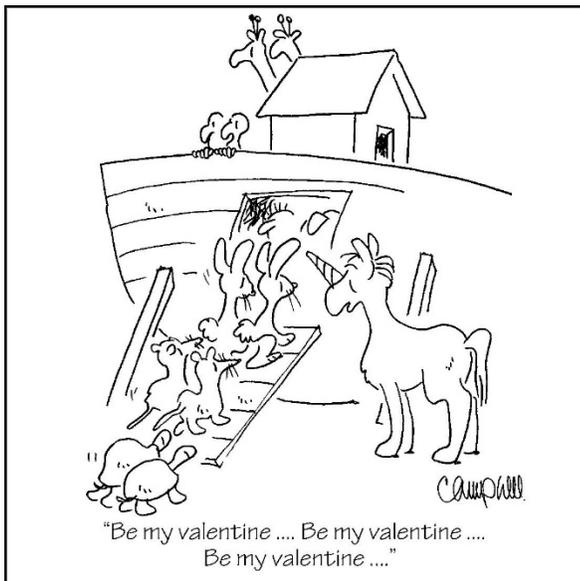
With appreciation to you as well,
Stewardship Committee †

Dates to Remember

March 6 – Ash Wednesday

March 23 – Rise Against Hunger

March 25 – Hosting PWR



News from Our Governing Board

In the tradition of New Year's resolutions, the Governing Board has decided to include a brief summary of actions taken after each meeting. The hope is communications will improve between the board and congregation. While this will only be a summary, the complete minutes of the governing board meetings are available in the office. If interested, please ask Betsy for a copy.

Each month, the meeting is opened with prayer and a devotion. The pastor and president give a report if applicable. This is followed by a focus topic. The financial report is reviewed and received. Then committee reports are received (if the committee met). The meeting is closed with prayer.

January Actions Taken:

- The proposed budget for 2019 was approved. The congregation will vote on the budget at the congregational meeting on January 27.
- Gifts were received from the Short and Williams' estates. The funds were allocated as follows: \$2500.00 was given to the Rise Against Hunger program sponsored by the Mission committee with the balance distributed equally between the memorial funds of the two former congregations.
- The Funds committee verified that funds from the interest on the endowment funds are available to support the following requests for local missions from the Stewardship and Mission committees: Church Street Ministries (\$10,000.00), Templed Hills (\$10,000.00), Bethany Church (\$10,000.00), AFDA (\$6,000.00) and Safe Passage (\$5,000.00). The congregation will be voting on these proposals at the January congregational meeting. More detailed information will be sent prior to the meeting.

If there are any questions regarding the work of the Governing Board, please feel free to ask any member of the board. They are Diana Craig, Bonnie Crall, Kathy Patterson, Dave Zilch, Andi Allen, Andee Whitsett, Jon Wiborg, Regina Wolfe, Phyllis Michaelsen, Dick Poyer, Lois Weller and Bobbi White. †

Upcoming Worship Opportunities

We will celebrate an **Agapé Meal & Service**, including shared communion, on **Sunday, February 10 at 10 am** in **Friendship Hall**. The Agapé breakfast allows for shared worship, fellowship, food for the body and food for the soul. Donations of breakfast strata casseroles, fresh fruit and breads are requested; please sign up on the fellowship bulletin board.

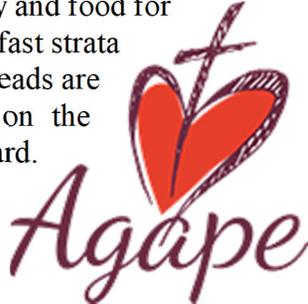
Drinks and paper goods will be supplied.

John Wesley is attributed as having started the tradition of an Agapé Meal or Love Feast based on an old Moravian custom. From the United Methodist Book of Worship, "The Love Feast, or Agapé Meal, is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry and expressing the koinonia (community, sharing, fellowship) enjoyed by the family of Christ."

Save-the-Date: On **Wednesday, March 6, Ash Wednesday**, we will mark the beginning of our Lenten journey together. A special worship service is planned that evening beginning at **7 pm** including the imposition of ashes. †

Martha Circle

Please join the Martha Circle in making valentines on **Wednesday, February 6 from 10 am to noon**, at the church (Room 10.) All materials will be provided, and you can create to your heart's content. The valentines are sent to the church's shut-ins, our church staff, those who have suffered a loss in the past year, others the church would like to stay in contact with, and people who might appreciate being remembered by our church. Please note that this meeting is the first Wednesday of the month, in order to have time to mail the cards. For more information, contact Corky Wilson at (440)243-2667. †



Dollars and Cents

	December actual	Y-T-D actual	Y-T-D budgeted
Congregational Giving	\$ 22,726	\$ 290,975	\$ 294,613
Building Use/Misc.	\$ 1,016	\$ 12,792	\$ 12,075
Total Income	\$ 23,742	\$ 303,767	\$ 306,688
Total Expenses	\$ 22,877	\$ 287,618	\$ 311,626

As you can see, our Congregational giving is down 1.2%. Even though congregational giving was down, reduced Building and Grounds expenses from the high winter costs as well as reduced committee expenses helped us obtain a surplus of \$16,149.

Please remember to pay your Per Capita for 2019. The amount is \$32.41 per congregational member.

On **Monday, March 25**, Christ United Church will host the Presbytery meeting. Look for sign-up sheets for bakers, setup & clean up, servers and hosts at the start of March. Please mark your calendars.

†

In Search of...

Our Pastor Search and Nominating Committee continued to work through January, reading pastoral profiles and conducting first and second interviews via ZOOM (an online meeting platform) and in person. Even as we select those to interview and those to set aside, we will continue to consider new applicants for our pastoral position.



It will take some time to find the person who God is calling to serve with us. As always, we seek your prayers as we continue our journey. †

Wider Church News:

Marathon Worship Service to Protect Migrants

by Don Michaelsen

Since October 26, 2018, the Bethel Church in The Hague, Netherlands has conducted round-the-clock church service to shelter an Armenian family of five (who have lived in the Netherlands since 2010) from deportation. They left their home country when the father, Mr. Tamrazyan, received death threats due to his political activism.

These Protestants are taking advantage of an obscure Dutch law that, under most circumstances, prevents government authorities from conducting operations in a place where a religious service occurs. The continuous worship service has failed to change the government's mind while the pastors have promised to continue the service indefinitely.

In a six-year legal process, Dutch officials twice tried to deny the family asylum, and were twice defeated in court. On their third attempt, the government won a ruling that the family could be deported. After individual pastors unsuccessfully appealed to government officials to change course, a small group of clergy concluded church sanctuary and an ongoing service were necessary to provide protection and support.

Initially, the family took refuge in a church in Katwijk, the seaside town where they lived. Then the church ran out of resources to help them while also fearing a raid by immigration agents. After some deliberations, the Bethel Church agreed to invite the family to an apartment inside their red-brick church building. Occasionally, Tamrazyan family members as well as non-believers attend the service. Bethel church provides psychological help for family members and teaching the children (ages 21, 19, 15), since they cannot attend school or university classes.

Media coverage and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands newsletter captured the attention of people inside and outside the Netherlands. It then became easier to fill gaps in the church's worship schedule. When upwards of 550 different priests, pastors, deacons, elders have continued to conduct worship services in English, French and German, soon it became hard to fit all the volunteers into the schedule. Some preachers simply reuse services and sermons they gave at other churches while others have used the opportunity to introduce liturgical

experiments. † SOURCES: *New York Times*, November 30 and December 11, 2018.

Take Care

In Jimmy Fallon's first monologue as host of NBC's *The Tonight Show*, he expressed thanks to all past hosts. On an occasion when he might have said, "And now this stage is mine!" or "I'm delighted to be counted among such greats," instead he stated with deep humility, "I just want to do the best I can and take care of this show for a while."

Take care of. That's language not of ownership but of stewardship. That's the language of Genesis 2:15 (NIV) — "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and *take care of it.*"

What have we been called to "take care of for a little while?" The earth, surely. Perhaps a congregation, a business, a neighbor in need, a volunteer or an employee. A child, who may need less care — or different forms of it — as time goes on. We don't own these people and things. God invites us to be stewards of them, to care for them, to use wisely and value these precious gifts ... and someday, to pass them on to others. †

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