

January 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.



Beginnings

Pastor Allan's Message

As the new year is about to begin, I'm thinking about beginnings. The way the four gospels choose to begin to tell us the story of Jesus tells us a lot about how the story is going to unfold in the rest of that gospel.

Mark jumps right into the story: "The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God." Mark doesn't wait to tell us: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and it's good news for us. There's no hemming and hawing with genealogies or birth stories, just straight to the point: Boom! Jesus is the Messiah! Mark starts fast and continues at breakneck speed. He loves the words, "immediately," "at once," "as soon as." Everything is in a hurry for Mark. Jesus barely has time to catch his breath. The only thing that's slow in Mark's gospel is the disciples' understanding of who Jesus is. We know from the start that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, but the disciples are regularly clueless about it until the very end.

Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy – of Joseph! He's very concerned to show that Jesus is in the family of David, and that he fulfills Hebrew prophecy. He wants us to know that what Jesus is doing in the present is connected to what God has said and done in the past, just as a genealogy connects past and present. In Matthew, the reassuring angel appears to Joseph, and not to

Mary. Matthew is more traditional in the way he views society and social hierarchy. Jesus' story is slower in Matthew because Matthew takes time to establish Jesus as the great teacher, a rabbi in the Jewish tradition. Matthew has five main discourses of Jesus, just like the five books of Moses that make up the Hebrew Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy). Everything present is connected to the past.

Luke is the historian, interested in getting the details right: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us from the first eyewitnesses...I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning." And Luke is interested in the little people – a childless old priest and his wife, Zechariah and Elizabeth, and how they became the parents of John the Baptist and a young girl who would become the mother of the Messiah. In Luke, the reassuring angel appears to Mary, not to Joseph, and the action follows Mary as she visits her cousin, the aforementioned Elizabeth. Centering the story on two women, one old and one young, and not on their husbands, shows that Luke is interested in the people others ignore.

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The parables that are unique to Luke, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan and the parable of the Prodigal Son, show people on the boundaries (like the hated Samaritans) and people with no hope (like the morally lost and starving prodigal) doing the right thing and finding unexpected mercy. It is no surprise that Luke alone tells us of the penitent thief finding salvation in Jesus with almost his last breath.

John's gospel is more philosophical and abstract, although he echoes the first lines of Genesis with his own first line: "In the beginning ... was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ...In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind." John characterizes Jesus with seven "words", statements Jesus makes that say who he is: Jesus says, "I am the Bread of life," "I am the Light of the world," "I am the Gate," "I am the Good Shepherd," "I am the Resurrection and the Life," "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," "I am the Vine." These *words* are related to Jesus being the *Word* and show how he is light and life to us.

Each gospel shows us Jesus in a different light, bringing out different aspects of his personality and his work so that we can understand the wholeness of Jesus' person. Each gospel telegraphs its intention with its beginning and guides us into faith in Jesus in its own way. †

Church Envelopes

Due to a scheduling problem, it could be possible that we will not have our church giving envelopes until the first of January. If that is the case, you may use any of your 2018 envelopes until your new ones are received or you can just use a plain envelope. If you use a plain envelope, please put your name on the envelope.

The Per Capita for 2019 is \$32.41. †

Fifth Sunday Offering:

Lotts Creek

Our Fifth Sunday Offering in December is for Lotts Creek Community School. Their mission is to bring hope to a region where it is sorely needed. They fund field trips for teenagers, provide books and materials, after school programs, summer school programs, tuition assistance, food for the hungry, and Christmas gifts. In this region of Kentucky, the crippling economic and social impacts of the loss of coal mining jobs have strained local economy to hardship. These are our neighbors. Please give generously. †

2019 Flower Chart

The chart for dedicating flowers for Sunday worship will be posted on the Friendship Board outside of the kitchen entrance across from the church office sometime after January 6. (January 2019 is currently posted.) If you wish to sponsor flowers on any given Sunday, please fill out the information next to that date completely. Please include your name, the dedication and whether you are bringing the flowers or the office is ordering them for you (there is a \$30 fee for that service). You will be contacted by e-mail or phone early in the week prior to the Sunday you have chosen for confirmation of the details.



What a great way to honor or remember someone special or to celebrate something special in life! †



Keyboardist Search

Upon the resignation of our CUC organist James Alfieri, your personnel and worship committees began prayerful consideration about how best to move ahead.

Anytime a church experiences a resignation, it is important to take time to consider what our needs, hopes and plans are for the future and how they may be similar or different from responsibilities and skills of the previous position description. At the direction of the Personnel Committee, the Worship Committee spent time in meeting and prayer considering how this opportunity to re-define the position might better align with the committee's vision for the future of worship at CUC. While very similar to the previous position's description, it was updated with a slight reordering of priorities that relates directly to our future plans for worship. From there, a position description was created. Both the new job description and position posting were shared with and approved by the Governing Board in October. Recruitment via a wide variety of platforms began in earnest.

In collaboration with the Personnel Committee, the Worship Committee determined the desired make-up of the Keyboardist Search Committee focused on the skills and experiences we were seeking in the new keyboardist candidates to include: a representative from the Personnel Committee – Don Berkey, a representative from the Worship Committee – Carmen DiPalma, a representative from the congregation – Karla Zilch and the Music Director – Bryan Bowser; Pastor Allan also served as an ex-officio member of the committee. We were blessed to have committed and prayerful participation from these folks.

While the pool of candidates was not large, it was rich with talent and dedication to music ministry. Two finalists participated in interviews/auditions at the end of November and we are very excited to share that **Nichole Fehrman** will be joining us as our keyboardist in January. Be sure to read the article introducing Nichole that follows. Thanks to all who prayed for this process and to the search committee who shared their time, experiences, expertise and prayerful discernment in support of the process and positive outcome! ✚

Introducing Our New Keyboardist: Nichole Fehrman

Please join us in welcoming Nichole Fehrman as the new Keyboardist at CUC; her first service with us will be **Sunday, January 13**.

Nichole Fehrman is an active accompanist, flutist, educator, and arts administrator. Most recently, she served as organist and choir/praise band accompanist at Trinity United Church of Christ in Wooster, OH. She also teaches private piano and flute to local students and works as the Marketing Coordinator for the Wayne Center for the Arts in Wooster, OH. At Trinity, she enjoyed the opportunity to accompany local musicians as well as members of the Ohio Light Opera every summer. Nichole also led vocal music classes through the Children's Arts at Trinity (CAT) Program. Nichole has performed over the last few years with the Elegance Trio, WCA Arts Quartet, Canton Concert Band, Orrville Community Theater, Lakeland Civic Band, Lakeland Flute Choir, Celebrations Flute Choir, Hillcrest Concert Band, Donaueschwäbische Blaskapelle, and many local schools as a choral, musical theater, and solo accompanist.

Nichole is originally from St. Mary's, PA., and began studying organ at the age of nine. She currently lives in Wooster, OH with her husband and two cats, although she is in the process of relocating to Cleveland.

Nichole is a member of the Ohio Music Teachers Association, the Ohio Music Educators Association, Brahms Allegro Music Club, and the National Association for Music Education, and holds her Orff Level I certification from Baldwin Wallace University. Her undergraduate degree is from the University of Dayton, where she enjoyed a range of performing opportunities, from serving as principal flutist of the Symphonic Wind Ensemble to singing with a gospel choir. Before entering the world of full-time private teaching and performing, Nichole taught elementary and middle school music for Clear Fork Valley Local Schools in Bellville, OH, and St. Mary Elementary in Chardon, OH. ✚

Dates to Remember

- January 6 – Epiphany Sunday
- January 13 – New Keyboardist’s first worship
- January 20 – MLK Service at Heritage
- February 10 – Agape Meal and Service
- March 23 – Rise Against Hunger
- March 25 – Hosting PWR

Happy Birthday

January

- 1 John Zemon
- 4 Alec Suehrstedt
- 11 George Haag
- 15 Jeremie Hilberg
- 15 Nancy Wares
- 18 Carol Gardner
- 18 Dennis Stocker
- 18 Zackary Van Zante
- 20 Georgia Wilson
- 25 Jennifer Malusky
- 27 Joan Dangelo
- 27 Sara Porter
- 28 Leah T. Allen



We Get Letters

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I just wanted to take a moment during this Thanksgiving week, to express my personal thanks for Christ United’s generous giving through the Society of St. Andrew, to share healthy food with hungry neighbors. You are sharing more than 27,160 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables through your \$815.00 gift. That’s a lot of great nutrition---and real hope for a better tomorrow, for so many families struggling to get by!!

We are so grateful that you’ve made the Society of St. Andrew one of Christ United’s partners in mission this year. Thank you, as well, for all of the other mission outreach ministries of your congregation, that make a difference for people in Olmsted Falls and all around the world. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ!!

With you in faithful service,
Lynette Johnson, Executive Director ☩

Martha Circle

Thank you to all who contributed Christmas cookies for the homebound and staff. Thank you for the many hands to fill the tins. And thank you to Marsha Lundgren for the beautiful hand-made Christmas cards. You all are amazing.

It was suggested that we continue the pattern of eating out one month and doing a service project the following month.

Our next meeting, **January 9**, will be lunch out. Watch the Sunday bulletin for details.

February we will meet a week early, **February 6**, to again access our creative side to make Valentines for the homebound and others who are not able to be with us. (The February date is one week early so we can mail the valentines in time to arrive by February 14.)

All CUC members are welcome! ☩

Dollars and Cents

	November actual	Y-T-D actual	Y-T-D budgeted
Congregational Giving	\$ 23,042	\$ 268,249	\$ 270,144
Building Use/Misc.	\$ 433	\$ 11,763	\$ 11,069
Total Income	\$ 23,475	\$ 280,025	\$ 281,213
Total Expenses	\$ 21,281	\$ 264,741	\$ 286,196

As you can see, our Congregational giving is down 2.5% but total giving is almost 100% at 99.6%. That is great! Thank you.

Also, expenses are still down through November. The main reasons for lower expenses are a steady decline in Building and Grounds costs from the high winter costs and reduced budgeted committee expenses. ☩

Upcoming Worship Opportunities

Our **Sunday, January 6 10 am** worship service will take place in **Friendship Hall** as we celebrate Epiphany and will include receiving **Epiphany Stars** during the service.



Worship on **Sunday, January 13** will include communion and is new Keyboardist Nichole Fehrman's first Sunday with us!

In celebration of the legacy of **Martin Luther King Jr.**, Christ United and Heritage Congregational Churches will combine for a special worship service on **Sunday, January 20, 10:30 am** (note the slightly later service start time) at **Heritage Congregational Church** (across the street from CUC).



During our Sunday morning worship service on **January 27**, we will enjoy worship with a focus on **Contemporary Worship** experiences and contemporary music.

We will celebrate an **Agape Meal and Service**, including shared communion, on **Sunday, February 10 at 10 am** in **Friendship Hall**. The Agape breakfast allows for shared worship, fun, fellowship, food for the body and food for the soul. Donations of breakfast strata casseroles, fresh fruit and muffins are requested. There will be a sign up on the bulletin board in January. Drinks and paper goods will be supplied. Having an Agape Meal & Service is a long-standing tradition; John Wesley is attributed as having started the tradition of an Agape Meal or Love Feast based on an old Moravian custom. From the United Methodist Book of Worship, "The Love Feast, or Agape 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." †



Meet Our New Member Trish Demko

Our featured new member this month is Patricia "Trish" Demko. Trish came to St. Andrew's when her mother, Janet Winzenburger, joined the church staff as the Music Director in 1983. She has been involved off and on in many church programs – Bell and Praise Choirs, decorating Bulletin Boards and SAFE (St. Andrew's Family Evening). She is mother to Samantha, Amanda and Courtney and grandmother to Amanda's 3-year-old son, Blake.



Trish is an STNA and provides homecare for many patients for the past 25 years including 5 years with Glenn Mitchell, Judy's father. When not working, Trish enjoys creating cards and spending time outdoors as a gardener and photographer plus anything musical, a gift she learned from her musical parents. Make sure you reach out and give her a handshake or hug the next time you see her at church. †

In Search of...

Our Pastor Search and Nominating Committee continued to work through December, reading pastor profiles and conducting first interviews via ZOOM (an online meeting platform).



Even as we select those to interview and those to set aside, we will continue to consider new applicants for our pastor 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:

Interfaith Aid to Displaced Syrians

by Don Michaelsen

The war in Syria is in its eighth year. UN data: the death toll is more than 500,000 Syrians killed; more than half the 5.6 million registered refugees fleeing Syria are women and children under 12 years of age; 10 - 20% live in camps; 13.5 million people inside Syria need humanitarian assistance; the outside majority are urban refugees living temporarily in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt.

In 2013, philanthropist, sociologist and author, Georgette Bennett, Ph.D., now 72, founded the Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees (MFA) with 13 Jewish organizations in New York City. Today, there are 100 partner organizations [Buddhist, Christian {Church World Service; Catholic Relief Services}, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh] which is our nation's leading interfaith response to the Syrian refugee crisis. So far, MFA continues to coordinate delivery of more than \$120 million of relief (food, clothing, blankets, medical equipment and supplies, and water filtration systems) to displaced persons in difficult-to-access villages in the southwestern region, where 1.5 million people live, and refugee camps along the Syrian border.

Within five months in later 2017, MFA Partners had built a new bakery in southern Syria. It opened in February 2018 with new machinery equipment and 80 tons of flour. The bakery began production of 15,000 pilas, serving over 40,000 people. This on-going bread supply promotes food security in the area, reduces need for external food shipments and provides much-needed jobs. Due to this success, MFA Partners now seek funding to build a second bakery.

In 2017, MFA assisted in building a maternity hospital in a suburb of Quneitra. They also furnished it with beds, x-ray and ultrasound machines and medical supplies. In 2018, MFA continues building an extension to a southern Syrian hospital. It will house a new CT scan center, the only one in the region, which helps to rebuild the health care infrastructure severely damaged during this internal conflict.

Since April 2016, the actor F. Murray Abraham, 79, (Antonio Salieri in 1984 movie *Amadeus*; the voice of Grimmel in upcoming movie *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*) has been the MFA spokesperson. In the 1920's, his father's parents, Orthodox Christians, came to the US to escape a Syrian famine. †

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