



# The Link

December  
2015

*St. Paul United Church of Christ*

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## Words of encouragement from Rev. Becky Sunday



Do you remember what it was like to be a child at Christmas? As I was growing up, Christmas brought with it a wonderful combination of the known and the unknown. There were things I knew would happen. Each year I knew I could look forward to sharing a ham dinner with my family, the candlelight service at church on Christmas Eve, and carols sung around the piano. These were things I could count on. They never changed. There was never even a question.

But in the midst of all the things I knew to expect, there were some things that remained a surprise. Who would win the euchre tournament? How many presents would be under the tree, and what would be inside those beautiful boxes? Would there be snow? This juxtaposition of tradition and mystery was the perfect recipe for heightened anticipation.

It is the same for us in the church. Each year we have things we know we can expect. We light the Advent candles in order. We sing our favorite carols. We read some of the most familiar and beloved passages of scripture. We know what is coming. And yet, there is still enough mystery and wonder to keep us coming back. There is a word for this mystery: "miracle!" The miracle of Christmas is that God is doing something new in the world—that somehow the God who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow can still break into our lives in wonderfully unexpected ways.

In the United Church of Christ, we recognize and celebrate that God is still speaking. And we are called to listen for where God might be moving in new

ways in our lives, in the church, and in the world. The season of Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation. It is a season made for listening—listening for God's voice and recognizing that, in the midst of the familiar rhythm of the liturgical year, God is doing something fundamentally new.

God, in Jesus the Christ, is preparing to take up residence in the world. We watch. We wait. We hold our breath in anticipation. As we spend the next few weeks repeating the sacred rituals of these holy days, let us also be awakened anew to the mystery and miracle of the season. Open your hearts, and get ready for God to move in new ways.

Peace and blessings,

*Pastor Becky*

### CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE INVITATION

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13**

You are **all** invited to a Christmas open house at the home of Revs. Adrian and Becky Sunday (211 N. Main St., Buckland, OH) on **Sunday, December 13**. Drop in anytime between **3:00PM** and **8:00PM**. Everything is provided—just bring your good cheer and your appetites!



# "BLUE CHRISTMAS"

The last several weeks for me have been nothing but a whirlwind of activity for me. Most of it has been very positive. But any transition is a mixed blessing. Serving a parish of five separate congregations meant that I had to preach five separate good-bye sermons. And I hate good-byes deeply, they are so full of emotion. Looking out into the faces that had become so familiar to me, made me ponder their individual stories, so full of a mixture of joy and pain. The very next Sunday I started here. And I looked out at a whole new set of faces. Since it was All Saints' Sunday and the names of those who had passed away over the last year were being lifted up, I was very aware looking at these new faces that for some of you there is very recent pain.

In response to this awareness I am planning a new service here at St. Paul UCC. On December 20 at 7pm we will have a "Blue Christmas" Service. This service is designed for those who for whatever the reason find that Christmas instead of bringing its normal joy and excitement is bringing them down. A person might feel frustrated, because finances are tight and gift buying at best will be sparse. Another might feel sad because this will be the first Christmas without a loved one gathered around the tree. Yet others might be feeling angry even, because of the end of a relationship. Still more may be anxious by the diagnosis of a life altering illness. The Blue Christmas service is for those who are hurting due to the loss of a family member or friend, even a pet. It is for those who have lost a job, or simply have too many bills to pay. For those whose lives are simply feeling off kilter. The goal of the service is to acknowledge that there is pain during a time of joy and for it to be a safe place to share this grief and through the grace of God make a step towards healing and hope.

May the Prince of Peace reign in our hearts this Advent and Christmas.

*Rev. Janice*



I am very excited by the FEAST program at St. Paul UCC. The gifts and skills that I have seen shared by those who have helped with the FEAST over the last few weeks have been marvelous. And I want to offer my heartiest thank you for the many folks who have taught the classes, fixed the meals and led the Cherubs, Middle School and High School programs.

We are busily gearing up for the next semester that will begin January 13. We have several ideas floating around of activities the youth might like: Container gardening, drama, photopgraphy, lego construction, minute to win it, a continuation of the card board village, but we would love to build on the gifts and talents that exist within the congregation. If folks do not step forward in the next week to offer their time and talents do not be surprised to hear from me soon requesting that you help anyway. I am quite aware that sometimes folks just need a gentle nudge. But do know that the youth of this church are a valuable asset that we need to nurture and guide into being the Christians we truly want them to grow up to be. As the saying goes it takes a village to raise a child. We at St. Paul are the village for the children God has placed in our lives, and we all have a role to play.

May each of us pray about how God is calling us to serve with and for the youth of this congregation.

*Blessings, Rev. Janice*

## WHAT WILL YOU GIVE?

By Laura Kinstle

As the holiday season is soon approaching, one of the things we have on our minds is what gifts we will give our family and friends.

The idea of a gift came to light for me a couple of weeks ago. We were shopping at a local store and getting groceries. As I was trying to fit down an aisle with my power chair, a nice lady apologized for being in my way. I told her she was fine and that I could get through easily.

I didn't really think anything more about it until we were ready to check out our groceries. The nice lady put her cart in the lane to check out but she had walked away and was looking at a bargain table instead.

I waited patiently for her to return but in a few minutes the clerk came around and moved her cart. She was very apologetic to my husband and told him she had been rude. We didn't think she had been rude, but she insisted on helping my husband put the groceries up on the checkout counter. Then, after our groceries were run through the register, she said she was paying for them. We told her that it wasn't necessary for her to do this but she did it anyway.

Next we were in the parking lot and she came up to our car and told my husband she would take the cart back for him and he thanked her. With that, she was gone and we couldn't find her anywhere to get her name. It was like she came out of nowhere. Was this an earthly angel? I think so.

Well, this really had me thinking that at Christmas we are all so concerned to go shopping and buying just the right present for everyone. But, what if we gave a gift from the heart. What if we offered to lend a helping hand to someone in need? What if we put something in the kettle for the Salvation Army instead of briskly walking by?

Our church has food drives for God's Storehouse for Easter and Thanksgiving. What if we gave a gift at Christmas time? I'm sure they can always use a donation. Or, you choose a charity.

I guess what I'm saying here is that we can give gifts from a store but we can supplement with gifts from the heart. Make this Christmas one where our gift is like a "random act of kindness".

I know this month I have a gift that I can give. If you enjoy reading my monthly articles, I have published a book entitled "Looking Up to God". If you're interested in purchasing a book for \$5.00, please call the church office at 419-738-2215 or me at 419-738-7955. I will be giving a portion of the proceeds of the book to our church for the Thanksgiving and Easter food drives for God's Storehouse. Maybe the gift I give will help make someone's Christmas a little brighter.

What gifts will you give this holiday season?

## 2016 God's Creation Calendars

The 2016 God's Creation calendars are available to purchase in the Church Office or see Cheryl Short. The cost is \$7.00 each. "May the Glory of the Lord endure Forever." Psalm 104:31 A beautiful picture of a winter sunrise at Lawrence Brook, Royalton, MA. For the January picture. If writing a check, make it payable to St. Paul UCC, and in memo ~ calendar ~ Faith Formation.



The Christian Education/Faith Formation Team will be meeting on Monday, December 7th at 6PM.. We will be discussing the winter session of FEAST which starts Wednesday, January 13, 2016. All are welcome!

# Our Church Family

## With caring thoughts...



Our deepest sympathy and condolences to **Nancy Buettner and her family** on the passing of Nancy's mother, Dorothy Cummins, who passed away on Sunday, October 25, 2015.

Our deepest sympathy and condolences to the **family and friends of Betty Newland** who passed away on Sunday, November 15, 2015.

The **family of Betty Newland** would like to thank the St Paul UCC Congregation for their many thoughts and prayers in this time of sorrow.



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**  
to our  
**St. Paul Youth!**

**December**

|                    |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| ✓ Ezra Wellington  | ✓ 12/03/2005 |
| ✓ Lauren Miller    | ✓ 12/05/2006 |
| ✓ Nathan Schroer   | ✓ 12/12/1998 |
| ✓ Addison Smith    | ✓ 12/12/2007 |
| ✓ Mitchel Hicks    | ✓ 12/14/2003 |
| ✓ Harper Azbell    | ✓ 12/18/2014 |
| ✓ Landon Brandt    | ✓ 12/23/2004 |
| ✓ Caleb Schlenker  | ✓ 12/26/1999 |
| ✓ Kurt Schlenker   | ✓ 12/26/1999 |
| ✓ Olivia Allemeier | ✓ 12/27/2006 |
| ✓ Cole Zwiebel     | ✓ 12/29/1998 |
| ✓ Braden Fisher    | ✓ 12/29/2004 |

## Happy Anniversary!!

- |            |                           |
|------------|---------------------------|
| 12/03/1966 | Philip & Diane Schlenker  |
| 12/03/1988 | Steve & Tammy Nuesmeyer   |
| 12/12/1970 | James & Jennifer Everhart |
| 12/18/1965 | James & Carol Berg        |
| 12/18/1971 | John & Jean Nieter        |
| 12/22/2007 | Nathan & Erica Preston    |
| 12/26/1965 | Tom & Pat Shaw            |
| 12/28/2008 | Dick & Mary Jo Roth       |
| 12/29/1990 | Gary & Pam Halfhill       |
| 12/31/1995 | John & Deb Zwez           |



## Happy Birthday to...



- |       |                    |       |                  |
|-------|--------------------|-------|------------------|
| 12/01 | Betty Brookhart    | 12/21 | Evelyn Roediger  |
| 12/01 | Bruce Baker        | 12/21 | Kala Knoch       |
| 12/05 | Mark Jarvis        | 12/23 | Brian Thiedt     |
| 12/06 | Jean Nieter        | 12/24 | Peggy Prater     |
| 12/06 | Sarah Smithy       | 12/24 | Karen Ruck       |
| 12/07 | Deb Wheeler        | 12/24 | Nancy Newland    |
| 12/07 | Sherrie Fisher     | 12/24 | Cynthia Preston  |
| 12/10 | Diane Method       | 12/26 | Chandler Kaeck   |
| 12/11 | Hannah Kohler      | 12/26 | Greg Schlenker   |
| 12/11 | Deb Zwez           | 12/26 | David Smith      |
| 12/13 | Kristina Hunter    | 12/27 | Grace Knatz      |
| 12/14 | Samantha Hoelscher | 12/27 | Elizabeth Thiedt |
| 12/15 | Nancy Freymuth     | 12/27 | Christina Byer   |
| 12/16 | Melissa Schneider  | 12/29 | Willis Keller    |
| 12/17 | Patricia Brown     | 12/29 | Pamela Lewis     |
| 12/19 | Ray Whetstone      | 12/30 | April Bowersock  |
| 12/19 | Kathy Haehn        | 12/30 | David Schlenker  |
| 12/20 | Michelle Foulkes   | 12/31 | Scott Hengstler  |
| 12/20 | Kerri Smith        | 12/31 | Audrey Fisher    |

# Meetings and Events

## STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Special thank you to our Stewardship Committee for all of their work on our recent Faith Promise campaign-The Light-The Promise: Harold Poppe, Dale Schmidt, Jennifer Frische, Vicki Smith, Alan Mikesell, Kay Wellington, and Carolyn Edwards. Thanks also to Bill Miller for the use of his photo from St. Paul UCC's 2014 Christmas Eve worship service for our Faith Promise logo. There is still time to turn in your 2016 Faith Promise pledges. Let your light shine!

## AUGLAIZE COUNTY CRISIS CENTER

Faith Formation is wanting to provide gifts for a family from the Crisis Center this holiday season. Look for information about the ages and any special details in the bulletin.

## ITEMS FOR SALE IN TIMMERMEISTER HALL

The Middle School Youth Group have Hot Chocolate Reindeer and Melted Snowman ornaments that they have made for gift giving (or for yourself). \*There are necklaces, bracelets, and earring sets that Jack Preston has made. Check them out for a gift with the proceeds going to our Wednesday night FEAST program.

## LAST DAY OF FEAST

The last day for our FEAST Fall Semester will be **Wednesday, December 9th**. Our next semester will begin **Wednesday, January 13th**.

## NUTS & CANDIES AVAILABLE

The Women's Guild will offer a variety of delicious nuts, candies and mixed varieties each Sunday in Timmermeister Hall between and after services. These make great hostess gifts, party snacks and stock-



## WOMEN'S GUILD

Women's Guild will begin meeting again on **Tuesday, December 8th** at **1:30PM**. ALL women of the church and their friends are encouraged to attend. Please join in for fellowship, faith, and fun.

## CIRCLE ONE

Our next scheduled meeting is **Thursday, December 3th** at 12:30 in the multipurpose room. We meet the 1st Thursday of every month September—May. Please plan to join us.

## CIRCLE THREE

Circle Three meets on the third Thursday of the month from September through May. The meeting of Circle Three will be on **Thursday, December 17, 2015** at 11:30 A.M. at the Coffey Cup

## CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The church office will be closed on Thursday and Friday, December 24 and 25th for Christmas and also on Thursday and Friday, December 31 and January 1, 2016 for New Years. **Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.**

## BELL CHOIR

The St Paul UCC Bell Choir will perform with the Lima Symphony Orchestra for their Bells, Brass, and Bows Concert on Saturday, December 12 at the Civic Center. This is a wonderful opportunity and a great honor! Tickets are on sale and seats are filling up fast. If you are interested in attending the concert, please call the Civic Center Box office at (419)-224-1552 to order your tickets.

## LOST AND FOUND

**LOST:** A lady silver watch has been missing for about two weeks. It is a Tiffot Brand. If any information on this watch please call Cindy in the church office at 419-738-2215.

THANK YOU

# General Fund

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| Approved General Fund Monthly Budget      | \$ 26,808.69        |
| Given to General Fund through November 22 | \$ 17,437.20        |
| Difference                                | <b>\$ 9,371.49</b>  |
| <br>                                      |                     |
| Given to Benevolences through November 22 | \$ 1,562.25         |
| <br>                                      |                     |
| Approved General Fund Budget Year to Date | \$214,469.52        |
| Given to General Fund so far this year    | \$198,483.76        |
| Difference                                | <b>\$ 15,985.76</b> |
| <br>                                      |                     |
| Given to Benevolences so far this year    | \$ 15,632.36        |



*Benevolence Giving for December ~ OCWM*

## COLLECTION ITEMS FOR THE SEASON

The Sunday School is sponsoring the tree in Timmermeister Hall for the congregation to donate items for the Humane Society. All during the month of December and until the Christmas tree is taken down in January, you may hang or place items from their wish list under the tree. The many cats and dogs thank you with wagging tails. If you would like to give a monetary donation, we will give it to the Humane Society or we will shop for you.



### ITEMS NEEDED FOR AUGLAIZE COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY

**Cleaning:**

- Bleach
- Dawn dish soap
- PineSol (Lemon)
- Paper towels
- Laundry soap
- Windex
- Toilet paper
- Comet/Ajax
- 39 gal trash bags (heavy duty contractor)

**Toys:**

- Tug ropes
- Tennis balls
- Kongs
- Cat toys
- Dog & Cat Collars (SM-XL)
- Dog & Cat Leashes

**Pets:**

- Cat litter
- Puppy Chow
- Kitten Chow
- Dog food
- Cat food
- Dog treats
- Cat treats
- Bones



# December 2015



| Sun   | Mon  | Tue  | Wed   | Thu  | Fri   | Sat  |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|
|   |  | <i>1</i><br>7—8:30PM<br>Suicide Survivors<br>Support Group | <i>2</i><br>3:00PM FEAST<br>6:30PM Bell Choir<br>7:30PM Chancel<br>Choir                              | <i>3</i><br>12:30PM Circle One   | <i>4</i>  | <i>5</i><br>Children's Home<br>Town Holiday                                  |
| <i>6</i><br>8:15AM Worship<br>9:00AM Sunday<br>School<br>10:15AM Worship<br>3:00-6:00PM Confir-<br>mation Class                                       | <i>7</i><br>6:00PM<br>Faith Formation<br>Meeting | <i>8</i><br>1:30PM<br>Women's Guild                        | <i>9</i><br>3:00PM FEAST<br>6:30PM Bell Choir<br>7:30PM Chancel<br>Choir<br><br>LAST DAY<br>FOR FEAST | <i>10</i><br>5:00PM Execu-<br>tive Committee<br>Meeting  | <i>11</i>   | <i>12</i><br>9AM—12PM<br>CRI Sorting<br><br>Bell Choir<br>at Civic<br>Center |
| <i>13</i><br>8:15AM Worship w/<br>Holy Communion<br>9:00AM Sunday School<br>10:15AM Worship<br><br>3-8:00PM Open House<br>at Pastor Sunday's<br>House | <i>14</i><br>6:00PM<br>Church<br>Council         | <i>15</i>  | <i>16</i>   | <i>17</i><br>11:30AM<br>Circle Three<br><br>1PM Stewardship<br>Committee   | <i>18</i>   | <i>19</i>  |
| <i>20</i><br>8:15AM Worship<br>9:00AM Sunday<br>School<br>10:15AM Worship<br><br>3:00-6:00PM Confir-<br>mation Class                                  | <i>21</i><br>7:30PM Irving<br>Club               | <i>22</i>  | <i>23</i>   | <i>24</i> <i>25</i><br><b>Church office closed</b><br>5PM Family Worship<br>AND<br>11PM Candlelight<br>Service<br> |   | <i>26</i>  |
| <i>27</i><br>8:15AM Worship<br>9:00AM Sunday<br>School<br>10:15AM Worship   | <i>28</i><br>Personnel<br>Meeting                | <i>29</i>  | <i>30</i>   | <i>31</i><br><b>Church office closed</b><br>11:30-4:00PM<br>Red<br>Cross<br>Blood<br>Mobile<br>                   |  |  |

**St. Paul United Church of Christ**

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Rev. Elaine Mikesell, Pastor Emerita

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**LET'S GET TOGETHER !**

**Regular Worship Times**

Sunday Mornings 8:15 & 10:15 AM

Sunday School 9AM

Children's Church during 10:15 worship

**Christmas Eve Services**

5PM ~ Family Service

11PM ~ Candlelight Service



**ST. PAUL**  
**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
Wapakoneta, Ohio

**Our MISSION**

*As a congregation of God's people, we welcome and encourage all to join in fellowship, joyful and inspirational worship and faithful stewardship. United in Christ, we support and nurture one another in personal development and spiritual growth. We strive to reflect Christ's Love and to spread God's Word throughout our community and the world.*