

**PORTAGE
LAKE
UNITED
CHURCH**

PLUC

United Church of Christ & Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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April 2020

What's Happening @ PLUC

Consistory Report

Submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager

Angel Mission Report: In January the store was closed for several weeks as they worked to finish up the clean up from Christmas. The food pantry was open and filled 37 orders, assisting 73 adults and 26 children. The Angel Mission was also closed in February but again filled 37 food orders, helping 72 adults and 30 children. It took a little longer than planned to finish cleaning out the basement, so they had to pay extra for the use of the building. Moving day finally arrived on February 22nd with the Finlandia football team, MTU Sig Tau fraternity, and several PLUC members helping with the move. In January Angel Mission helped two families with lodging and travel expenses while their children were treated for serious medical issues. In February they were able to help a family whose furnace was no longer working. The family was originally told the furnace would have to be replaced at a cost of \$4000.00 but the Mission was able to find someone who would repair the furnace for \$261.00. At the

moment, Angel Mission is open for “browsing,” people can come in, get what they need, and leave. Consistory is recommending that no new donations be taken and that the Mission close with the exception of providing for food needs until the Covid-19 crisis is over.

Financial Secretary: We are currently up to date with our pledged offering. However, unpledged and loose plate amounts are not keeping up with the budget. We have been using vonBatchelder funds to meet the Helping Hands needs. Beth has been informed that Consistory needs to approve the use of these funds. In anticipation of the number of people who will be losing their jobs during the current shutdown, she believes that our requests will increase, possibly substantially. Consistory voted to move \$1000.00 from the vonBatchelder fund to Helping Hands. Consistory also discussed how PLUC can help people affected financially by Covid-19. Beth volunteered to sit on a committee with other churches to pool funds to help in this effort.

Finance Committee: The Audit has been completed with a few concerns about the Angel Mission FICA amounts being taken from the wrong accounts. Consistory

corrected these concerns and the amounts will be taken from the correct account for 2020. Consistory discussed using online resources to conduct services and to allow offering be taken electronically, using the Presbytery Foundation. Pastor Norland and Jim Northey will work to bring our services online using Zoom. The Finance Committee will investigate using the Presbytery Foundation for offerings.

Clerk: Elders Brookhouse and Sprague assisted with March communion.

Consistory voted to suspend communion for April. A long discussion was held about Angel Mission which is now a non-profit organization known as the Copper Country Angel Mission. The Clerk will meet with the Clerk of the Big Bay Presbyterian Church to conduct the annual Presbytery Administrative Review on either April 21st or 22nd. The per diem this year will be \$48 split evenly between the PC(USA) and UCC. Consistory approved the Clerk's Annual Statistical Survey for the Presbytery.

New Business: Pastor Norland presented the Building Use Policy to be followed during the Covid-19 crisis. Recovery groups will continue to meet. Instructions and materials for disinfecting the area will be provided. All other groups are prohibited from using the building until the crisis has passed. Two PLUC members of the Angel Mission board have resigned. The Board's Chair has requested that one PLUC member be appointed to the board. One person was recommended by Consistory and Jim Northey will see if this person is interested. PLUC may appoint another member at a later date.

Financial Report

Information received from Financial Secretary

Received thru January-March 22nd

Pledge	\$19,683.00
Unpledged	830.00
Loose Plate	183.00

Update Due to Covid-19

As people are following safe "stay at home" practices, most things at PLUC are currently shut down.

We had our first online service and it went well, with over 36 people "attending." The office is currently closed but both Beth and Peter are working from home. Beth is coming into the office a couple of times a week to check the mail. She can also check the email from home and has set the voicemail so she can also access that from home as well.

If you or someone you know needs assistance with food, please call 370-9086. Beth will get the message and will come in and make sure the person is able to receive help. Also, if you need to talk to Peter, you can call 370-3558.

With the exception of some of our Recovery Groups, no groups are meeting at the church. We are staying as safe as we can and hope you do the same.

Plans for Easter

As stay at home guidelines will still be in effect on Easter Sunday we will be having our service online. By that time we will have done it several times so all the "bugs" will be worked out so we will joyfully celebrate the resurrection of our Lord (but just not too close).

Sorry, We Need a Good Laugh

Maria came home from Sunday School on Palm Sunday and told her mother that she had learned a new song about a cross-eyed bear named Gladly.

It took her mother a while before she realized that the hymn Maria had been singing was really: "Gladly The Cross I'd Bear."

Financial Needs

The Finance Committee is currently investigating options for online giving. Unfortunately, while we are unable to meet in person and take our weekly offering, our bills continue. Once we have finalized the plans for online giving, this information will be shared with our members and friends.

If you would like to continue giving by check, checks can be mailed to the church office. Beth will be checking the mail several times a week and will be depositing any gifts we receive.

Other News

One Great Hour of Sharing

We were originally scheduled to take our annual "One Great Hour of Sharing" offering on Easter Sunday. Gifts received during this offering are split evenly between PC(USA) and UCC.

As a reminder of why we take this offering I took the following from the UCC webpage:

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering of the United Church of Christ involves you in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development

ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery. Through OGHS you engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put you in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. You meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.

If you would like to make a donation this year for One Great Hour of Sharing, please send a check to the office at 1400 East Houghton Ave., Houghton, MI 49931. Make the check payable to PLUC but indicate in the memo section that it is for OGHS.

Caring for One Another

As we deal with Covid-19 it is important to care for one another. PLUC is looking to do this by putting together a list of those who would be available to check on others, run errands, or simply make a phone call for someone who is homebound. If you would like to be a part of this ministry, please either email the office (office@pluc.org) or call (482-5992) and leave your name and contact information,

Also, if you need some help or know of someone who does, please also give us that information.

We are all “social animals” and sometimes even a phone call can brighten someone’s day in this time when we are all practicing “social distancing.”

Ash Wednesday Ashes to Go

On Ash Wednesday this year Portage Lake United Church and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church took part in an informal nationwide movement that had clergy and lay people visiting transit stops, street corners, coffee shops, and college campuses to mark the foreheads of interested passers-by with ashes and invite them to consider their mortality and seek renewal.

Pastor Peter provided ashes for those passing by in the morning commute, while Pastor Bucky did the same for those on the afternoon commute.



The following is a statement from a PSA about this new ministry.

“‘Ashes to Go’ is about bringing the sacred actions of our faith tradition outside of the church walls and into the places we need them every day.” says the Rev. Peter Norland, of Portage Lake United Church; “While not a substitute for a worship service, ‘Ashes to Go’ does allow people who may not attend a service to encounter the holy through this reminder of our mortality, forgiveness, and a call to renewal.”

Later that evening members and friends from PLUC and Good Shepherd gathered together at PLUC to share a service of

prayer and reflection as we began the Lenten season.

Italian Food Enthusiasts Enjoy FG Luncheon

submitted by Lou Ellyn Helman

March 1 was the date for an ethnic lunch fund-raiser sponsored by Fellowship Guild. Prior to the luncheon Ann Campbell, accompanied by our fantastic pianist, Susie Byykkonen, entertained us with a couple of outstanding Italian songs. We are so fortunate to have such talented musicians! Ann has such a lovely voice, and Susie continually amazes us with her expertise! Thank you both for setting the mood for our “visit” to Italy.

Fellowship Guild members, guided by Judy Albee, provided an Italian meal. At their individual tables, diners were greeted by appetizers of tomato/pesto and antipasto skewers. The buffet offered a selection of Hunter's Chicken (with mushrooms and olives served over Polenta), Vegetarian Lasagna, Italian Eggplant, bread, and a tossed salad. Later waitresses served dessert, dishes of sherbert topped with a Pizzelle! Over 30 participated and enjoyed the delicious feast and the festive atmosphere. Italian colors - red, white, and green- set the theme for the napkins and red floral centerpieces, which also contained a small Italian flag. Souvenir towels featuring maps of Italy decorated the walls, adding to the colorful decor.

FG thanks all of you who participated so generously in the fund-raiser, and a huge thanks to the members who provided the delicious assortment of Italian dishes. We also want to express gratitude to Ann and Susie for their beautiful music, and to those who helped set-up, clean-up, and restore order to the hall. It was a beautiful, colorful, fun event, thanks to everyone!!!!!!

**Portage Lake United Church
1400 E. Houghton Ave.
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Return Service Requested

People Helping People

I looked for stories about people helping people during this time of crisis. While I did not find anything specifically about what is happening now, I did find these stories of people helping people. A reminder that there is a lot of good in the world, even when times are rough.

When a Texas boy heard that a local mosque had been vandalized in a hate crime Jack sprang into action. That very same afternoon he gave every penny of the \$20 he had accumulated over quite some to the mosque. While \$20 may not seem like much, it was everything to that little boy and truly a sign that kindness exists in generations to come. The future isn't as bleak as it may seem.

Mackenzie Moretter has Sotos syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that causes brain damage, leading to developmental delays and difficulty with socializing. Her mother made a plea on Facebook after every single person declined her invite. Said plea went viral, leading to 300 people showing up for a birthday extravaganza, catered by a local BBQ joint with "Frozen" themed cake for dessert. Mackenzie had the time of her life thanks to these 300 strangers.