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# ***PLUC***

***United Church of Christ & Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)***  
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December 2020

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### **Consistory Highlights**

*submitted by Beth Smock*

**Consent Agenda:** Written reports from the Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Office Manager, Angel Mission, and Pastor were approved. Further discussion of reports included:

**Budget:** The Budget Committee is looking at ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) electronically traded funds as possible alternatives to our VanGuard funds. The documentation to change the PPP loan to a grant has been approved by the bank and is being submitted to the Federal Government for final approval.

**Financial Secretary and Treasurer:** Some discrepancies of around \$1,800.00 between the Financial Secretary offering records and the Treasurer bank deposit records have been found. These discrepancies all seem to come from earlier in the year when we first began using online giving. The Financial Secretary will be going through her records to find the discrepancies so they can be justified with the Treasure records. The funds are there, we just had some communication issues when we first started using the online method of giving.

**Pastor:** Pastor Peter has been working on the PLUC Facebook page.

**Angel Mission:** No written report from Angel Mission was received. However, they have (one volunteer in particular) been working very hard on getting the Angel Mission building ready for shoppers. It has been open for about a month. They are now to the place where they can accept donations of clothing again. People must wear a mask when inside the building. They will be using the building next door for both the coat drive (held for one week in November) and preparing for the Angel Tree Christmas gift drive. Jim. Northey will be meeting with Tom Tikkanen from the Houghton County Land Bank to discuss the use of the Rose & Thorn building. He will also attend the next Houghton County Land Bank meeting.

**Budget:** Terry Monson, co-chair of the Finance Committee, shared some of what the committee will be presenting to the Congregation at the meeting on Sunday, November 15. The committee is working in the direction of a balanced budget. The deficit in 2021 will be smaller than the 2020 deficit. Some expenses have been cut for the 20201 budget including the continued

suspension of the Youth Ministry, no salary increases (with a voluntary 5% reduction in the salary for the Office Manager/Financial Secretary), and other smaller cuts. In addition, the Pastor fringe benefits are now “caught up” so that additional cost is no longer present. The proposed deficit for 2021 will be between \$4,000.00 - \$5,000.00. The committee understands that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, people’s financial situations are unstable. Therefore, they will be requesting that people give what they can but are not asking for a specific increase in giving for 2021. Consistory approved the proposed budget.

Further discussion regarding the budget included the decision made by the Finance Committee that putting out a ½ year budget as discussed at the October Consistory meeting was not feasible as it would require an additional Congregational meeting in July and it is hard to estimate some of the costs at a ½ year rate.

A discussion was also held on informing the congregation about the expected shortfall in pledged totals for 2020 and how to gently ask that people give more if they can but being aware that some folks might not be able to give as much because of income changes due to the pandemic.

**Congregational Meeting:** A discussion was held about ways that people can become more involved while we are apart. Ideas will be shared with the congregation and congregational input will be sought.

**Membership List:** The finalization of the membership list has been tabled until the December meeting. A suggestion has been made to add a “friends” section to the list. Consistory members shared names of friends who should be added to this list. These are people who attend regularly and are involved in the life of the church but are not official members.

**Building and Grounds:** Pastor Peter has sent the Building and Grounds Committee the following quotes for snow removal of the parking lot:

C&N Snow Removal: \$400/month or \$25 for every time they plow

Monticello Plowing: Dec.-May - \$550/month, Nov.-\$225, or \$65/hr

Consistory voted to accept whatever the Building and Grounds Committee decides.

**Sharing our Worship Space:** No new information at this time.

**New Business:** The Christmas Joy/Fund Offering will be taken on the third Sunday of December, 12/20/2020.

At this time there has been no interest expressed in doing a ZOOM luncheon after worship. Fellowship Guild might take on this project in the spring.

**Holiday Hours:** Office Manager Smock is in the office on Thursday mornings. This year Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and New Year’s Eve all fall on Thursday. The office will be closed on those days.

Pastor Peter requested November 22nd off as he wishes to take his son to visit a college and then pick his daughter up from college. Both the UCC and PC(USA) have put together virtual services for that date. The links to these services will be made available to the congregation. Consistory approved this request for time off and service option for that Sunday.

## Highlights of the November 15, 2020 Congregation/Corporation Meeting

*Submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager*

### Meeting of the Congregation

**Pastor Report:** Pastor Norland shared information about the challenges and opportunities facing the church during this pandemic. He informed the congregation that the Consistory is focusing on our “digital ministry presence.” They are looking at how much of our “normal” activities we can move online plus looking for new activities we can pursue. They are concentrating on 3 things as we move toward the future:

1. How to use the building itself to put on a “TV” show each week. We want to make our digital presence more user friendly by possibly using new hardware and putting a window in the wall between the sanctuary and the Treasurer’s office in order to make an audio/visual booth. We will be continuing our virtual presence even after we return to our in-person work.
2. How to maximize our web presence. Ideas include updating our website, using it more, using Facebook and other social media sites, and reaching out to other churches to make more connections. Some concern was expressed by congregation members about the use of Facebook and social media. It was acknowledged that not everyone is comfortable using these options. Efforts will be made to get information to members and friends using various options to meet everyone’s needs.
3. Consistory is also looking at the educational aspect of a virtual ministry. We will need to teach people how to access some of the new things we are doing, like a prayer train. We will be providing learning opportunities for people to learn to use some of our new technologies and work to make them more useful.

**Election of officers:** The Congregation accepted Beth Smock as the Financial Secretary and Edward Lowther as the Church Treasurer for another year.

**Change in Church By-Laws:** Clerk Terry Monson shared with the congregation the need to change the church by-laws to address the need during this pandemic for the Consistory and Congregation to take church related actions over ZOOM or other virtual means. After some discussion, the following amendment to Section VII and Section XVI of the by-laws was proposed. **The Congregation will revisit meeting procedures at each congregational meeting.** The congregation voted to accept the changes to the By-Laws.

**Budget:** Bobbie Dalquist, co-chair of the Budget Committee, presented the proposed 2021 budget. This budget is based on the assumption that the pandemic, and our currently meeting and building use policies, will last well into 2021. Total income for 2021 is proposed to be \$94,000.00, \$4,000.00 less than 2020. Expenses are also expected to be lower as the building will not be used as much as usual. The budget for Clergy expenses is down as we had to make up for some unpaid benefit expenditures of 2019 during 2020. This will not be necessary in 2021. The Youth Program was suspended at the end of July and will not be funded for 2021 as it is not feasible to

continue this program during the pandemic. 2021 salaries will remain at 2020 levels with the exception of the Office Manager/Financial Secretary who has volunteered a 5% reduction in salary. The deficit for 2020 is expected to be around \$9,500.00 with the anticipated 2021 deficit decreasing to a little over 4,000.00. The Budget Committee understands that some people are currently unable to meet their 2020 pledge due to financial situations caused by the pandemic. The committee is not asking for a specific increase in pledges as financial hardship will continue. However, Bobbie did inform the congregation that we currently have 27 “giving units” and if each one were able to increase their giving by \$155.00 for the year, it will bring us much closer to a balanced budget.

Meeting of the Corporation

**Business:** The congregation approved the business conducted during the Congregational Meeting.

**Financial Report**

*Information received from Financial Secretary*

**Received In November**

Pledge	\$7,129.00
Unpledged	1,940 .00
Loose Plate	00.00

**December Volunteer Schedule**

Date	Reader	Sermon/Blanket	Prayer
12/06	Ann	Peter	Terry
12/13	Harold	Beth	Sherry
12/20	Jim	Eric	Carl
12/27	Dianne	Peter	Jim

**In Other News**

**Stewardship Drive**

*Submitted by Beth Smock, Financial Secretary*

PLUC is well into the 2021 Stewardship Drive. Please see the articles regarding the Consistory and Congregational meetings for more detailed information.

The Budget Committee has worked very hard toward a balanced budget. The goal is to have a balanced budget within the next 2 to 3 years. This is currently complicated by the financial impact of Covid-19, but efforts were made to design a budget that recognizes both a loss of income and a decrease in expenses due to Covid. We thank Terry, Bobbie, Michelle, and Harold for their hard work.

Beth is hoping to have most pledge cards returned by December 6<sup>th</sup>. This will allow her to give a report to the Budget Committee and Consistory that will be as accurate as possible at their December meetings.

**Advent/Christmas Plans**

As with many things during the last 9 months, the Advent/Christmas season will be somewhat different this year. That does not mean that folks are not busy making plans for how PLUC will be celebrating this special time of the year, even when we cannot be as close to one another as we would like.

Several people are working on decorating the church. They won't put up as many decorations up this year, but we will have a tree, things on the wall, and the Nativity. Also, a different Advent “Candle” arrangement will be placed on the Communion Table. As much as possible, decorations will be placed so that they will be able to be seen on camera.

We will only have one poinsettia this year, and we thank Rick vonBatchelder for his donation that brings us flowers during the year.

Our Christmas Eve service will be on ZOOM. At this time we don't know what limitations there will be on in person worship, but hopefully, some people will be able to worship at the church that evening.

Not all plans have been finalized, so please watch your email for information about other opportunities that will be available during December.

### **Want To Sing Christmas Carols Together?**

*Submitted by Beth Smock*

If you are like me, one of your favorite things about the Christmas season are Christmas carols and songs. In fact, as I write this I am listening to one of my grandmother's old Christmas albums. (I lost my Christmas albums in the 2018 flood and my sister sent me a bunch of Grandma's albums. Cool, huh!)

Anyway, caroling is probably going to be another thing that has to be done differently this year. While we might not be able to go up and knock on people's doors to sing, that doesn't mean we can't sing.

I would like to invite all of you to join me on Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM in the church parking lot where we can all stand (or sit if you want to bring a chair) 6 feet apart and sing Christmas carols. We will sing and serenade the traffic for awhile and then run inside real quick for some hot chocolate and cookies. Who says Yoopers can't adjust? See ya there.

### **Christmas Joy/Fund**

PLUC will be taking our "official" Christmas Joy/Fund offering on December 20<sup>th</sup> but gifts may be given at anytime during December.

The following is taken from a Children's Sermon written by Becky D'Angelo-Veitch, Certified Associate Christian Educator who serves as the Director of Faith Formation at Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York.

"This is a time of year when many people have just one thing on their mind: the perfect gift. Maybe they are trying to give the perfect gift — it can be a challenge to find something for that "hard to shop for" family member, or to get your hands on this year's "hot" item. Maybe, they are hoping to receive the perfect gift — perhaps they have even dropped one or two hints in the hope that just the right present will be under their tree this year.

It honestly feels strange to be talking about gift-giving in church — aren't we supposed to be focused on the more "church-y" parts of the season? Of course, not all gifts in this season come under a tree. The story of Jesus' birth is, in a way, the most perfect gift there is ... God's gift of Jesus — the gift of Emmanuel — God WITH US. And as we celebrate this wonderful story, this great gift of God with us, it is only right that we also share our joy with others, and so today, I want to talk especially about the Christmas Joy Offering that our congregation will be receiving. This offering is all about supporting leadership: past, present and future. This offering provides assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and helps develop our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges that are equipping communities of color.

For some of these leaders, these are the perfect gifts. Caring for church workers who

are in need and building leadership among people of color certainly seems to be a pretty great gift for a church to be giving at Christmas time! And truly, whether the perfect gift for you is the newest LEGO or a scooter to help you get around, the perfect gift that we all share is the great gift of God being with and living among us — Emmanuel.

Prayer: Dear God, in this season of joy, show us the joy of both receiving and giving. May we be thoughtful and generous givers, and grateful and joyful recipients, and may we always hold the gift of God with us as the most treasured gift in our hearts. Amen.”

### Angel Mission News

*Submitted by Sherry Middlemis-Brown*

Angel Mission opened for business this fall but in the front half of the store. We lost storage space in the basement and we increased food pantry size to meet current needs, which reduced shopping space. For this reason, Lynn and Donna worried over how they could safely hold the annual coat giveaway and Angel Tree in the time of Covid.

The answer came when the renter next door vacated that storefront in late November. Angel Mission hopes to take over the lease through December, creating space for a coat giveaway and for the Angel Tree program. The coat giveaway will be done at this location over several weeks, instead of a single day event at several venues. After the coat giveaway, Lynn and Donna will convert the space for organizing gift bags for Angel Tree. The extra space may also accommodate a small area for kid’s Christmas shopping days.

With space for two seasonal programs resolved, attention turned to the Rose and Thorn building. We store seasonal program

materials and housewares for families made temporarily homeless by fire or other circumstances. Jim Northey led the way in making the Rose and Thorn safe and secure for our stored items.

We still hope to find a permanent home for Angel Mission with plenty of onsite storage and we accept contributions through the church or Facebook that you can earmark towards that dream. Also, you can become a patron of the Angel Tree program, an opportunity to directly benefit a child in need of Christmas gifts, by requesting a child’s profile from Lois Jambekar or Barb Brookhouse.

Thank you for your continued support of Angel Mission and its many programs and projects.

### Declutter Wrap-up

*Submitted by Liz Evensen*

It was an industrious summer, thanks to Bobbie Dalquist, Susie Byykkonen, Lois Jambekar & Liz Evensen! While the church remained quiet, this small group decided it was a good time to declutter. They focused on the Fellowship Hall closets and the Choir room.

Once the Fellowship Hall closets were organized; it took several more get-togethers, but the ‘team’ finally got the music sheets filed and back in order. Next was to clear the choir room and let the painters go to work. Bobbie & Lois gave the room two coats of ‘Useful Grey’ paint. It turned out as hoped, refreshed with a new calming look.....perfect for the variety of meetings held there. Bobbie stained the window woodwork and Harold Evensen stuffed ‘gobs’ of caulking in the window frames. **Please note, the choir room windows should NOT be opened unless renovation is being done!** Finishing touches for the room: new window blinds, a wall clock, and a soon-to-be-hung piece of

art. Mission accomplished; we think you will like our finished project!

It's the week before Thanksgiving and the choir room piano has a new home! The choir room piano was a give-away rather than sold because of Consistory's concern with getting it hauled away. Finding someone who was able/willing to take it away did prove to be a challenge but, thanks to Susie's perseverance, a group of MTU students enthusiastically transported it away. It was amusing to see such happiness over the student's response to their 'find'! The church is down to two pianos now and each are getting the use they deserve.

A baby changing station was installed in the Nursery (thanks to Harold) and it is ready to be used!

We are looking next at converting the 'cry room' into usable storage space but that project will have to wait until next summer. For now, we are happy with our 2020 efforts! 'Tip of the Hat to the Declutter Team and Pastor Peter, Beth & Jim who stopped by and gave us words of encouragement as we prepared for PLUC's grand re-opening!

### Reindeer's Story at Christmas

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid-December.

Female reindeer retain their antlers till after they give birth in the spring. Therefore, according to EVERY historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, EVERY single

one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen, had to be a girl.

We should have known... ONLY women would be able to drag a fat man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost.



I think someone got a little confused about how this is supposed to work.

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9:30 AM - 12:00 Noon or by appointment

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MERRY CHRISTMAS