



**PORTAGE  
LAKE  
UNITED  
CHURCH**

***PLUC***

***United Church of Christ & Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)***  
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March 2021

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### **Consistory Highlights**

*submitted by Beth Smock*

**Clerk:** The UCC Annual Statistical Report has been completed. Results of a survey done by the Presbytery of Mackinaw regarding number of churches in the Presbytery meeting in person only, online only, or both for Sunday worship was shared. A few are meeting in person only but most are offering both in person and online worship.

**Finance Committee:** Committee member Dalquist is working with Pastor Norland to correct and pay past due insurance costs. T. Monson and D. Dalquist are working on balancing our Vanguard accounts. The committee has also discovered that our current ESG funds are better than those recommended by Vanguard. The Finance Committee is recommending that the \$690.00 returned from the UCC due to discontinuation of the program where these funds had been used in the past, be returned to the UCC Greater Mission Fund.

**Financial Secretary:** Financial Secretary Smock reminded the Consistory that our

percentage of giving is over 100% due to people giving their entire pledge at the beginning of each year. We will get closer to 100% as the year goes on, with the goal of being at or near 100% on December 31, 2021.

**Angel Mission:** After a brief respite from Angel Tree and Coat Giveaway duties, The Mission officially reopened for the year on January 6th, continuing operating hours as set forth due to the Pandemic. The food pantry hours remain the same as well, with service being offered on Wednesday and Saturday, with 26 families including 51 adults and 25 children helped in January. Donations included \$250 worth of ham, chicken, and frozen dinners, \$171.67 in cash, \$550 for general funds and \$300 for the building fund. For the month of January 72 coats, 18 snow pants, 15 pair of boots and 53 hats and gloves/mittens were given out. The family with the young son that has been helped in the past was again in need of medical travel expense funds. Funds were given for an additional trip to Iron Mountain as well as travel to Ann Arbor for surgery. \$1500.00 was spent on excavation at the Rose and the Thorn building in order for Jim Northey to continue in the quest to fulfill the obligations to the HCLBA. Elder J. Northey

reported that a letter of “Intent to Purchase” has been sent to the Houghton Land Bank. No response has been received. It is hoped that Angel Mission will be able to get the Rose and Thorn building for the cost of the in-kind work that has been done.

**Pastor:** Pastor Norland reported that for Ash Wednesday he and Pastor Bucky Beach will be offering “Ashes To Go.” He will also be placing a recorded meditation on the PLUC website in place of an in-person worship service due to continued Covid-19 restrictions. PLUC will be offering an online Wednesday Lenten Prayer Service with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. We will also be having weekly Lenten Walking meditations. Instead of our regular Sermon Under the Blanket, Pastor Norland will introduce a meditation for the week that members and friends can use during the following week. Pastor Norland requested vacation time for Sunday, March 14, 2021.

**Digital Ministry:** Twelve responses were received from the digital ministry survey. It was shared that younger people prefer to use Instagram. Older folks are more comfortable with Facebook. Women and young families also use Pinterest. The Digital Ministry team will be looking for “point” people to lead the effort on each of these options.

**New Business:** Consistory will ask Bobbie Dalquist and Lou Ellyn Helman to serve as the Audit Committee again this year.

Pastor Norland led a discussion on our goals as Covid-19 restrictions are slowly lifted. As had been previously discussed, the Digital Ministry team will continue to work on expanded use of social media opportunities. After the Lenten/Easter season, we will pursue the possibility of starting another book club. In the meantime, people will look for books to recommend. In the short term, PLUC will explore using outdoor activities

such as the weekly Lenten Walking Meditations. Consistory is also looking forward to our “re-birth” when we start to worship together in-person. It is hoped that by late March we will be able to start opening up in-person worship to those who have received both doses of the vaccination.

## Congregation/Corporation Annual Meeting Highlights

**Pastor Norland** opened the meeting with prayer.

**PLUC Clerk Terry Monson** verified that a quorum was present

**2021 Annual Report** was accepted.

**Pastor State of the Church Report:** Pastor Norland stated that he is encouraged by the work done by Portage Lake United Church during the pandemic this past year and thanked all of our members and friends for the care they have shown to each other. Our online attendance has been higher at times than our regular in person attendance was prior to the pandemic. We plan on continuing an online presence even after we return to regular in person Worship. Through a PPP grant, decreased expenses, and continued giving by our members and friends, we have been able to meet our financial obligations. It has been difficult for Consistory as they are not able to meet in person, but work toward the future continues. Consistory is looking forward to meeting face to face as they plan for the future of Portage Lake United Church.

**Election of Elders:** Lois Jambekar, Member of the Nominating Committee, presented the Committee’s nominations of Barb Brookhouse and Greg Campbell for Consistory terms beginning July 2021. There were no other nominations from the Congregation. The nomination of Greg

Campbell and Barb Brookhouse for the Elder class of 2023 were accepted by the congregation. Lois Jambekar and Terry Monson were thanked for their service to PLUC the past three years as they will finish their terms in June. Pastor Peter led a prayer of thanksgiving for the service of Jambekar and Monson and the future with new Consistory members Brookhouse and Campbell.

**2020/2021 Budget:** Bobbie Dalquist, Co-Chair of the Finance Committee discussed actual 2020 Budget results and presented the 2021 Budget. During 2020 we received less in KFC Endowment Funds due to stocks being lower in March when the funds are made available to the church. We also received less in Building Use, Loose Plate offerings, and Pledged Giving. We received more than budgeted in Unpledged giving, due mostly to online giving making it possible for people to set up regular giving schedules. With the help of the PPP loan, our income for 2020 was actually higher than the amount budgeted, with the deficit for 2020 totaling \$1,621.31. Dalquist informed the congregation that the Finance Committee developed the 2021 Budget based on the assumption that the congregation will continue with remote Worship for the foreseeable future. Building and other expenses were based on what was spent in 2020. Expenses for the Clergy are lower than last year because we had budgeted for expenses that hadn't been paid in 2019. Personnel received no raises, but Office Manager Smock volunteered to take a 5% decrease in salary for 2021, which resulted in Personnel costs being lower for 2021. The 2021 budget deficit is expected to be \$5,552.00. The 2021 budget was accepted and approved. Dalquist informed the congregation that the Finance Committee will be sending out a quarterly report which will allow the congregation to

see how the church is doing financially during the year.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 12:48pm.

**The Corporation Meeting Convened  
Following the Meeting of the  
Congregation**

**Open the Meeting:** Pastor Norland, called the Meeting of the Corporation to order at 12:49 pm.

**Agenda:** Dianne Sprague moved (Will Lytle second) to approve the Agenda. Carried.

**Approve the business of the Congregation meeting:** Dianne Sprague moved (Jerry MacInnes second) to approve the business of the Congregation Meeting. Carried.

**Adjourn:** Dianne Sprague moved (Judy Albee second) to adjourn the Corporation meeting. Carried. Pastor Norland closed the meeting with prayer at 12.51 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Smock, Office Manager

**Financial Report**

*Information received from Financial Secretary*

**Received In Jan & Feb (thru 2/21)**

Pledge	\$1560.37
Unpledged	784.00
Loose Plate	00.00

**March Volunteer Schedule**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reader</u>	<u>Prayer</u>
03/07	Christina	Sherry
03/14	Lois	Jim
03/21	Greg	Barb
03/28	Nancy	Lois

## *In Other News*

### **Ash Wednesday – A Children’s Story**

Beth Smock, Office Manager

Michelle Jarvie-Eggart sent the office some pictures of her children’s first Ash Wednesday and a short story about their experience. I asked her if I could share some of this with all of you. I can only speak for myself, but I know that sometimes I do things just because they are what we do and we forget why at times. A child’s innocence can help us remember the real meaning behind what we do.



This was the boy’s first Ash Wednesday.. Robert was disappointed they didn’t get to honk (Peter saw them before they could). He also thought he was going to get a lollipop as Michelle didn’t think about the fact that when she told them they were going by the drive thru they remembered that they get a lollipop when they drive through the bank. On the way home after receiving their ashes, Michael told Michelle he didn’t want to grow up and die. This allowed for a good conversation about death and how by the time you are really old, you are tired and excited to meet God. Big ideas sparked in someone so little by thinking about returning to dust. They had watched some videos about the meaning of Ash Wednesday before going to church, so he knew a little about what was going to happen. Yet it took a small child to remind us that receiving Ashes on Ash Wednesday is more than “Just what we do that day.”



## **Lent**

Below are excerpts from the Ash Wednesday meditation that Pastor Norland shared on our website as we were unable to hold our regular Ash Wednesday service due to Covid-19 restrictions.

We will be sharing Lenten services online with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church at 6:30 pm each Wednesday during the Lenten season.

Ash Wednesday is the day that begins the Christian observance of Lent—the forty day period (not including Sundays) before Easter Sunday. As a church season, Lent is ancient. In the year 604, Pope Gregory I described Lent as “the spiritual tithing of the year.” At this time of year, we are reminded of Christ’s forty day fast before his temptation in the desert, and the forty hours he spent in the tomb before rising Easter morning. We recall our own mortality and the death that Jesus suffered.

In more modern times, Lent is often thought of as a time of spiritual renewal. People are often challenged or invited to take up a Lenten practice. And in Lent, there are three spiritual practices that come to mind: prayer, fasting and the giving of alms.

At the spiritual core of alms giving is an intentional giving of one’s self to others. For some this means the increasing of their practices of generosity, that is, giving extra money to a church, charity or an organization helping the needy. However, you could also practice giving alms by giving more of your time in service, too.

Lent is a good time to experiment with a new prayer practice. Perhaps, you have wanted to cultivate a contemplative prayer practice, or pray the psalms daily. I will be encouraging Portage Lake United Church to this Lent to take up a walking prayer practice rooted in the ancient prayer

labyrinth (please see details in the article below.)

Finally, Lent is often characterized by fasting. From ancient times, people have denied themselves food (or types of foods) as a way to gain spiritual insight. As one hungers for food, one cultivates a hunger and dependence upon God. Perhaps you could fast one meal, or day a week this Lent. Rather than heading to the table or grabbing your lunch bag, you might find time for prayer or Bible reading.

I encourage you to take up one or more of these practices during these next forty days. But if you do, there just may be times when you don't follow through exactly as you may have hoped. A coworker may offer you something to eat, and before you know it, you've eaten on your fast-day. Or, you may forget to pray that new prayer sometimes. Be easy on yourself—you are only dust after all. Remember, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. The day in which we remember that we are made from dust and to the dust we will return. Our fragile mortality is a mystery—both awe inspiring and humbling. The truth is we are all in need of God's constant grace—the season of Lent gives us opportunity after opportunity to bring this to mind, and open our spirits to God. We may be beings destined for dust, but it is God's very Spirit that gives us life, both now and in what is to come. Thanks be to God!

### **Lenten Walking Meditations**

Pastor Peter Norland

Our English word "lent" originally meant spring; its etymology is suggestive of the lengthening days at this time of year. For we Christians living in northern latitudes, Lent may not coincide with spring flowers. Yet there is no denying that the warmth of the bright sun on a clear February day, sparks within us the hope and expectation of the new life which is on its way. Our

expectation for the greening of the earth in spring reverberates with our hope for new life in the Easter resurrection. The resonance between the changing of the climatic and liturgical seasons is just one more reason for Christians to take their spiritual practice outside into God's creation during Lent.

We can grow spiritually by using the interplay of our liturgical and seasonal changes when we immerse ourselves, embodied and prayerfully, in God's creation. One way to do this by cultivating a practice of walking prayer. Of course, here in the Keweenaw, walking may be substituted with cross country skiing and/or snowshoeing.

What do I mean by walking prayer? I simply mean combining the two activities into one intentional practice. The way of Jesus does lie in some sort of disembodied transcendence. In Jesus God took on a body of his own. Walking prayer can help grow spiritually as we engage with our Creator acknowledging ourselves as embodied members of God's ongoing work of creation.

One example of "prayer-walking" came out of the evangelical "spiritual warfare" fad of 1980-90's evangelicalism. Christians, or prayer warriors, were encouraged to walk through their community praying for the inhabitants, binding the forces of evil, and invoking God's blessings and protection. All good ideas, to be sure. However, this sort of prayer walk tends to slip toward uncoupling one's walking and praying. When walking simply becomes a mode of transportation for our prayers--delivering prayers as one might deliver papers--the prayer is no longer integrated in our walk.

Within the great tradition of the church there are more ancient and integrated examples of prayerful walking. Two, in particular come to mind. Pilgrimage and the Prayer Labyrinth.

The idea of spiritual pilgrimage is an ancient one, it both precedes and extends beyond Christianity. Even in Christian tradition, pilgrimage is a wide ranging practice. One thinks of pilgrims wending their way from cathedral to cathedral, along the Way of St. James until they finally reach the great cathedral in Compostela--a journey which today remains on the walked routes in the world. Or, consider Martin Luther's fateful journey to Rome. Older traditions led pilgrims to the holy sites of Jesus' life. A pilgrimage is a real physical journey, but pilgrimage is never merely travel. Pilgrimage at its core is the embodiment of one's desire to seek after God. It is on the way, not despite the journey, that one encounters God. Often, pilgrimage is undertaken in hope (or desperation) as an outward sign of inner seeking of God; on pilgrimage one's heart is open to meet God in and through the places and peoples encountered along the way.

The Prayer Labyrinth. Labyrinths precede Christianity, but these walking pathways were incorporated into Christian practice at least as early as the 4th century, according to archeological evidence. A labyrinth is not a maze. It is a pathway that leads to the center and then back out again. In typical historical Christian use, the journey along the path corresponded to a prayerful intention of the hearts. Walking and praying the labyrinth had three movements, both physical and spiritual. The walking part is obvious: 1) you walk in, 2) you are in the center, and 3) you walk out. Spiritually, one adds specific intentions to each of these three movements. The fancy mystical sounding words for these stages are: Purgation( going in), Illumination (at the center) and Union (heading out). I find it helpful to think of "Releasing, Receiving, Integrating"; or "Release, Receive, and Return"; "Refresh, Rest, and Return"; or "Refresh, Reflect, and Refocus." The exact language is not the point. The

point is to embody the prayerful intention of the heart in our walking the path. Walking Prayer Labyrinth provides us a deep resource for engaging our embodied selves spiritually with God and with the world that God has created.

This season at Portage Lake United Church, we will be encouraging one another to take up a weekly practice of walking prayer. We will be using the ancient form of the labyrinth as inspiration, taking from it a three part intention. As for walking, whether one walks in a straight line down the road, cross country skis a loop, or snowshoes out the back door and back, you can use this prayer. A Labyrinth has three movements: going in, the center, and going out. For our purposes, "going in" and "going out" of the labyrinth will be heading out and coming back from your walk. The "center" would be that place about half-way through your loop, or the point at which you will turn around. And while these prayers are meant to be embodied, the three movements can work for meditation and prayer even if you are less able to physically move about. You could change rooms or chairs in your home, try it at the mall, simply adjust your posture. Modify things as you see fit and as works for you. Our goal is authentically embodying our spiritual intentions as we seek God--not doing things "the right way. When it comes to the prayer side of things, a new three-intention Lenten Walking Prayer will be introduced each week during Lent. And, we will post the information on our website, so you can view/print the guide during the week.

I look forward to walking and praying with you all these next forty days of Lent.

## **PLUC Re-Birth**

Beth Smock

What do we mean by “re-birth?” Well, this actually comes from a discussion at the last Consistory meeting. After a very long year, we are getting to the place where we might be seeing a light at the end of the tunnel. Consistory started discussing new ways to celebrate when we can come together again in person and someone suggested that it would be like a “re-birth.”

While we know that we are not yet there, we are starting to think about what this new PLUC might look like. Plans are to continue some of the things we have learned the last year of meeting online, but also slowly to begin adding more in person opportunities.

A couple of the ideas are being shared in this article. If you would like to be involved in these ideas, or you have ideas of your own, please let Beth, Pastor Peter, or a member of Consistory know.

First, we hope to expand our digital ministry. We have a digital ministry team who has already sent out a survey to see what opportunities would interest people. Be on the lookout as the team begins to look for folks to help with these opportunities.

In January we started a Wednesday night discussion group over ZOOM. Those discussion are suspended for the moment, as we will be having our Lenten services at that time until Easter. However, we do hope to resume those discussions in April. If you have a topic you would like to lead, let Beth know and she will get you on the schedule.

In addition to these discussions, we are looking to start an online book group after the Lenten/Easter season. No day or time has been selected as of yet, as we will work with those interested to find the best time to meet. We also don't have a book to read yet. If you have an idea of a book to share, please let Beth know.

And finally, we are starting to think about IN PERSON church (while continuing to meet over ZOOM). We will be starting slowly, with the first step being to open up in person meeting to those who have received both shots. While doing this, we will continue Covid precaution like mask wearing and social distancing. If necessary, we can open up the Fellowship Hall to space chairs appropriately. At this time, we do not have a timeline for in person meetings as it will depend on vaccine availability.

While I (Beth) am not on Consistory, I do attend the meetings to take minutes. It is exciting to hear Consistory start to make plans for what won't be normal for quite some time yet, but is a “re-birth” of a brighter and better PLUC.

## **Angel Mission**

After a brief respite from Angel Tree and Coat Giveaway duties, The Mission officially reopened for the year on January 6th, continuing operating hours as set forth due to the Pandemic. The food pantry hours remain the same as well, with service being offered on Wednesday and Saturday. The Thrivent group from Bethany Lutheran in Mohawk was quite helpful to the food pantry for the month. They not only procured a grant from Thrivent Financial for \$250, used to purchase hams, chicken, and various frozen dinners, but also helped with picking up and delivering the Food Bank order. The monetary donations for the month were a pleasant surprise due to everyone generally being slightly tapped out after Christmas. The cash box donations for the month totaled \$171.67, with no cash expenditures deducted, in addition to a \$550.00 donation to the general fund and \$300.00 to the building fund. For the month of January 72 coats, 18 snow pants, 15 pair of boots and 53 hats and gloves/mittens were given out. The highlight was being

able to help a local man with brand new coat and bib snow pants. This man asks for very little. When he came with the request for snow gear he believed it to be a lot to ask being he is a big man and those sizes aren't available most often. Thanks to the generous donations from Harter's Party Store, this proud man is now styling in brand new gear to keep him warm as he tries to support his family by doing shoveling jobs around the area.

The family with the young son that has been helped in the past was again in need of medical travel expense funds. Funds were given for an additional trip to Iron Mountain as well as travel to Ann Arbor for surgery. \$1500.00 was spent on excavation at the Rose and Thorn building in order for Jim Northey to continue in the quest to fulfill the obligations to the HCLBA. This money was deducted from the building fund. Angel Mission helped 26 families with food, including 51 adults and 25 children. Jim Northey reported that a letter of "Intent to Purchase" has been sent to the Houghton Land Bank. No response has been received. It is hoped that Angel Mission will be able to get the Rose and Thorn building for the cost of the in-kind work that has been done.



Hopefully when he gets older he will learn that is not the kind of mouse he is supposed to catch.

## **Fish 'n' chips**

**Editor's Note:** Sorry, I just couldn't resist.

It is the third Friday of Lent, and the faithful parishioner stumbles through pouring rain past hamburger huts and steak houses into the monastery at Mount Angel and requests shelter. He's just in time for dinner and was treated to the best fish and chips he's ever had.

After dinner, he goes into the kitchen to thank the chefs. He's met by two brothers, "Hello, I'm Brother Michael, and this is Brother Francis."

"I'm very pleased to meet you. I just wanted to thank you for a wonderful dinner. The fish and chips were the best I've ever tasted. Out of curiosity, who cooked what?"

Brother Michael replies, "Well, I'm the fish friar."

The man turns to the other brother and says, "Then you must be . . ."

"Yes, I'm afraid I'm the chip monk."

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**Pastor Office Hours:**

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

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