



**PORTAGE
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UNITED
CHURCH**

PLUC

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

Consistory Highlights

submitted by Beth Smock

Building and Grounds Committee

Report: The new LED lights around the outside doors are a big help. Between these lights and the new parking lot light, it is much brighter around the church at night.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Peter is looking at ways to best reach out to people who we do not see during multiple weekly Worship either in person or online. He recently completed his refresher course on Boundaries Training which must be updated every three years. He is also working on Advent/Christmas Worship services.

Angel Mission: Elder B. Brookhouse reported that in the first four days of the Angel Mission annual coat give away, 139 coats were given out. In those same four days, 14 families, with 28 children, signed up for the annual Christmas Angel Tree. Elder Brookhouse also asked what information Consistory needs from Angel Mission now that the Board is fully functional. Consistory believes that they do not need all the "informational" stuff, like money issues, etc. but does want to be kept updated on what Angel Mission is doing to

help the community. Elder J. Northey, who is a member of the Angel Mission board informed Consistory that they have deferred acquisition of a new building until 2022. They are no longer pursuing the Rose and Thorne building or other buildings they have looked at. Also, Lynn Layton is now a member of the board and is taking over management of Angel Mission.

Old Business/Follow-up Items: The current Covid-19 status in Houghton County and PLUC precautionary measures were discussed and current protocols of wearing masks and social distancing will continue.

Building and Grounds has been working to find a person or persons to shovel the sidewalks during the snow season. The committee recommends paying the snow shoveler hourly. Consistory approves.

Pastor Peter has been calling roofers about the leaking roof but is receiving no response. Consistory decided to table the discussion of the Capital Campaign until more information is known about what is needed to fix the roof and what it will cost.

Making a donation to Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly for their Holiday baskets was

re-visited. Consistory approved a donation of \$50.00 to help fund these baskets.

New Business: The return to a coffee hour option was discussed. There is strong congregation support for this as was evident from discussions during the congregational meeting. Elder M. Jarvie-Eggart suggested lighting a fire in the fireplace and have people gather around the fire in the lounge to talk and visit in lieu of an official coffee time. This will begin Sunday, November 21st. (**Note:** After checking the chimney, it was decided to not light a fire until after the chimney has been cleaned.)

Christmas decisions: The “Greening of the Church” will take place after worship on December 5th.

We will take our annual Christmas Joy/Fund offering on December 19th.

Christmas Eve service will either be the traditional Carols and Readings or some sort of service around the fireplace. This will depend on the number of people who anticipate attending Christmas Eve service. An email will be sent to the congregation to try to determine what attendance will be that evening.

Consistory approved Ed Lowther, Terry Monson, and Bobbie Dalquist to serve as official signatories on our financial records. Finance Committee co-chair T. Monson will be out of the area for several months this winter, so co-chair B. Dalquist will be conducting most of the business. Due to this, she needs to step down from her position as an auditor for PLUC financial records. Lou Ellyn Helman has also stepped down from the Audit Committee so Consistory is looking for two new members of this committee.

Nar-Anon, one of the Recovery Groups, using our facilities is collecting items to be given to Recovery Houses for

Christmas. They have asked if they can store some bags in the “cry room” of the nursery. Approved by Consistory.

Highlights of the November 7, 2021 Congregation/Corporation Meeting

Submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager

Pastor Report: Pastor Peter reported that PLUC did a good job of staying connected during the pandemic. The biggest challenge the last year has been not being together, with many of our regular ministries, such as after worship coffee time, not happening. The transition to in person worship has gone as well as could be expected. An overview of the upgrades to church technology was presented. Pastor Peter reported that we now have a lot of opportunities of how to “do church” due to what we have learned during the pandemic.

Sharing Covid-19 Experiences: Pastor Peter asked the congregation to break up in groups (4 small groups) to share their covid-19 experiences. When the congregation came back together experiences shared included: being more intentional to be with others as it was easy to fall into isolationism, it being difficult not being able to travel, lack of trust when not knowing where people stand on issues regarding the pandemic, finding oneself becoming judgmental/angry when around others that don’t share their opinions about the pandemic, many members found the church useful in maintaining personal relationships.

Moving Forward: Some ideas for moving forward as the pandemic eases included: starting to have coffee time after worship again, decorating the church for the season, and looking for ways to involve students in the life of PLUC. Pastor Peter also informed the congregation that Consistory is asking members to think about

the needs of the church as we look at possibly beginning a Capital Campaign to address these issues.

2022 Budget: Bobbie Dalquist, Co-Chair of the Finance Committee discussed the preliminary PLUC budget for 2022. She first informed the congregation that the Budget Committee approved using up to \$3,000.00 from the Memorial Fund toward the cost of the technology upgrades. So far PLUC has received around \$2,700.00 in donations toward the \$4,000.00 cost of the upgrades. Therefore, only around \$1,500.00 may be needed from the Memorial Fund.

Bobbie first shared the good and bad news about the 2021 budget. The Bad News – it appears that pledges will not be met in their entirety. The Good News - VanGuard assets seem to be doing very well and should remain stable.

Regarding the 2022 budget, the Finance Committee is projecting a \$5,000.00 deficit. The amount of pledges is unknown until after the pledge drive is over. Pledge requests letters will go out the week of November 7, 2021. There will be no raises provided again this year but other income will stay the same.

Meeting of the Corporation

The congregation approved the business of the Congregation meeting.

Announcement Bloopers

Thursday night- potluck supper. Prayer and medication to follow.

Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery upstairs.

Sorry, these are bad. It's been a long day.

Financial Report

Information received from Financial Secretary

Received In November

Pledge	\$10,3290.92
Unpledged	1,732.00
Loose Plate	10.00

Thank you to all those who “caught up” with their 2021 pledges. While we still probably will not meet our budgeted amount for the year, we are now much closer than we were a month ago.

December Volunteer Schedule

Date	Greet	Reader	Prayer
12/5	Ann & Greg	Jim	Barb
12/12	Lois	Greg	Carl
12/19	Beth	Nancy	Terry
12/26	Jon & Brian	Beth	Jim

In Other News

Stewardship Drive

Submitted by Beth Smock, Financial Secretary

PLUC is well into the 2022 Stewardship Drive. Please see the articles regarding the Congregational meeting for more detailed information.

The Budget Committee has worked very hard toward a balanced budget. The goal continues to be to have a balanced budget within the next 2 to 3 years. As you know, this has been complicated by the financial impact of Covid-19, but the committee has tried to design a budget that recognizes both a loss of income and a decrease in expenses due to Covid. We thank the committee for their work.

The next step is to receive the 2022 pledge cards so Beth can give the Finance Committee a more complete picture of

anticipated income for next year. Pledge cards are due to Beth by Sunday, December 12th. The Committee will then complete their final budget for review by the Consistory and approval by the Congregational at the February meeting of the Congregation.

Thank you to everyone who continues the important work of PLUC. We could not do it without you.

Mark Your Calendar

**“Greening” of the Church
Sunday, December 5, 2021
Immediately following worship**

**Please join us for good fun while we
decorate the church for the season.**



Christmas Poinsettias

We will again decorate the sanctuary with poinsettias on Christmas Eve. Please sign up by Sunday, December 5th and indicate a special wish or dedication that will be printed in the Christmas Eve bulletin. The cost is \$19. Please indicate what the check or cash (in an envelope) is for and drop it in the offering basket or put it on Beth's desk. Your poinsettia may be taken home after the Christmas Eve service.

Fireside Christmas Eve Service



**December 24, 2021
7:00 PM**

Christmas Joy/Fund

submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager

PLUC will be taking our “official” Christmas Joy/Fund offering on December 19th but gifts may be given at any time during December.

The following is taken from proposed Lighting of the Advent Candle on the First Sunday of Advent (UCC).

“For over a year now, most of us have been figuring out how to emerge from the global pandemic that disrupted life as we knew it. Some have been isolated for months on end to protect their physical wellbeing. Others have been on the frontlines since the beginning and have yet to take a meaningful break to rest. Others still have been creatively learning new skills to continue serving those in their care. All of us are facing new realities of life and living. The Christmas Fund has been a lifeline for so many during this time, offering emergency financial support just when it's needed to United Church of Christ active and retired clergy and their families, meeting their needs in crucial moments. Through our giving, we can be messengers of the Good News, scattering hope to all the people.

As always, Christmas Joy/Fund gifts will be divided equally between the UCC and Presbyterian (USA) denominations. Thank you for your thoughtful gifts.

Holiday Decorations Rummage Sale

submitted by Bobbie Dalquist

It was so pleasant to be finally doing something together as a team again after months of isolation due to Covid 19. Our “inventory” was huge due to donations of Christmas items from half a dozen estate and moving sales include Liz and Harold Evensen’s moving sale and Judy Albee’s moving sale, plus the Alpha Delta Kappa teachers’ sorority rummage sale (thank you Judy Albee and Lois Jambekar) and the town of Gay’s rummage sale (thank you Sherry and Rob Middlemis-Brown), plus all of the individuals that downsized their decorations. Angel Mission contributed decorations and we were able to send some practical things back to them such as gift bags and Christmas blankets. Other surplus went to the Keweenaw Consignment Store in Ripley, St. Vinnie’s, and Goodwill. The left over Halloween and fall decorations went to the rummage sale in Gay along with a box of Christmas decorations.

If you didn’t downsize your Christmas decorations yet, this year when you are decorating, please put aside a box or two of decorations that you no longer use to donate to our Holiday Sale next year.

Proceeds were over \$700 and will be hit \$1000 when money is collected for evergreen arrangements to be delivered in early December. Henry, the pumpkin donated by Jan Medlyn, is going to Rhineland where a man said no one came to his house on Halloween this year. He is going to put out lighted pumpkins next year so the kids know to come to his house. I was delighted to downsize my stuffed snowman collection and happen to know all the people who adopted them. I also was able to sell all 4 of the wreaths I brought in and purchased a “new” one for the front of

my house. Even if you have way more decorations than you need, it’s always nice to change them up a bit, by donating your surplus and finding something new.

Copper Country Angel Mission

Submitted by Barb Brookhouse

On Wednesday, November 10th, the Angel Mission opened its doors to the annual coat give away and the signing up for Angel Tree gifts.

As of Friday, November 19, 240 coats had been given away as well as 80 snow pants, 104 boots, 141 hats + scarves, and 136 gloves + mittens. That is lots when you consider that all happened in 7 days. (The Angel Mission is open Wednesday-Saturday.) At this time men's boots are still needed. Also 57 children have been signed up to receive Christmas gifts from the Angel Tree project. I say “Amen” to the Copper Country Angel Mission! Also, a huge thank you to Nancy and Dianne who made numerous trips bringing Tech students up to the Angel Mission to get winter items.

News from the Building and Grounds Committee

Submitted by Greg Campbell

The lights are ON! Over the last several months, we have begun the process of updating our exterior lighting. As we now approach the darkest time of the year, we feel safer with updated LED lighting for our parking lot and building entrances. Driving by the church building at night, the cheery glow makes it easy to see that we are open and welcoming. As work progresses, we will be updating the lighting at the southeast end of the building and installing some outdoor outlets. We hope to have this work completed in the next couple of weeks.

Inside the church, plans are to add electrical outlets in the soffit area of the sanctuary to support our online ministry, as well as install updated networking equipment and finish installation of the last of the new microphones. We're also looking at replacing the halogen lights above the altar with LEDs, both for energy savings and reliability.

Finally, we dream of replacing the current projector with something brighter and easier to see.

If you would like to support these updates, please consider making a special donation to this effort. For 2021, we have received nearly \$3000 toward our technology upgrades. Thank you for your generosity!

Beth's Buzz

Well it seems that another year has come and gone. We again all hung in there together and made it through another year of Covid. In person attendance has been remaining pretty consistent with an average of around 25 people each Sunday. We also usually have somewhere between 4-6 joining us each Sunday over ZOOM. I went back and looked at our attendance in 2017 (which was all in person) and found that our average attendance then was around 35. Therefore, it looks like we have stayed pretty consistent even with the challenges of the pandemic. Way to go.

I want to thank all those who helped while I was out of the office with my knee surgery. I also appreciate those who helped with my recovery, either through prayer, running errands for me, or taking me to my rehab before I could drive myself. This ended up much more challenging (and painful) than I anticipated but gets better every day. I can

do things I haven't done in years. I still have a ways to go but am looking forward to learning how to play pickle ball and sailing again next summer.

Again this year, thank you for all your support. I continue to find it an honor and privilege to be your church office manager.

God's Not Deaf

Two young boys were spending the night at their grandparents' house the week before Christmas. At bedtime, the two boys knelt beside their beds to say their prayers. The younger one began praying at the top of his lungs:

"I PRAY FOR A NEW BICYCLE..."
"I PRAY FOR A NEW NINTENDO..."

His older brother leaned over, nudged him and said, "Why are you shouting? God isn't deaf." to which the little brother replied, "No, but Grandma is!"

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

A Letter From Pastor Peter

A November gale blows under a hard, gray sky as I write to you. The days when fall turns to winter always seem among the richest and most expectant of the year. There are so many reasons for such richness and expectancy. Harvest and the fall yard work is behind us, but we are not yet in the throes of winter. Hunting season is here with lucky and unlucky days. And many have been busy preparing for upcoming holidays with Thanksgiving upon us, kicking-off the rest of the “the holiday season.”

For those of us whose rhythm of life is also shaped by the church year, these last weeks of fall and first weeks of winter are filled with so special days. Liturgically, this time of year is enriched by many celebrations. To put another way, in the Fall many of our Sundays have special names. Starting back with the last Sunday in October, we celebrated Reformation Sunday followed by All Saints Sunday. Then comes a time I like to call Kingdomtide which leads us to the last Sunday in the church year: Reign of Christ Sunday. On that day we celebrate the good news that in Jesus, the Reign of God has broken into our world, and we name our hope that Christ's Kingdom will come to final fruition when he gloriously returns. And now, we begin the new liturgical year with the season of Advent. The word Advent means 'coming'. In this ancient season of Advent, we anticipate Christ's second coming while at the same time preparing to remember Christ's first coming in Bethlehem long ago. Finally, our waiting turns to joyous celebration at Christmas, as we recall Jesus' birth.

This time of year, with its excitement, holidays, and extra time spent with family and friends, is joyful and bitter-sweet, and not only for a few. Even truly Joyful family gatherings can simultaneously be times of

grief as we remember loved ones who have passed away. While the pandemic may have tempered some of the stress and hectic pace of past holiday years, it comes with its own griefs and challenges too. “The Holidays” can be a whole jumble of strong emotions. The high expectations and strong emotions can leave any of us looking for a holiday break, or at least a way “to take the edge off.” Perhaps especially this time of year, self-medicating through over indulgence is a real temptation. The holidays provide countless opportunities for overeating, drinking too much, watching too much media, and spending beyond our limits--as presented as ways to deal with the season's stress and emotional particularities.

This Advent season, I invite you to consider adopting a special spiritual practice. Perhaps at bedtime, or when waking up, take a few moments each day to check in with yourself about the way in which you are inhabiting this season. Are you stressed or excited? Joyful? Sad? Thankful? Overwhelmed? Or, perhaps you were caught up in other things and forgotten all about this time of year. Whatever you find within yourself, simply take a moment to feel it as it is. Allow yourself to grieve for a moment; or allow yourself to exclaim in thanks. Then, remind yourself that this is the time when we are to be on the lookout, alert and expectant, for the appearance of God who comes to dwell with us. Advent means coming; it means the coming of God to be with us. So, this Advent, pay attention, and take some time to look for the coming of Christ in the world in new and fresh ways.

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