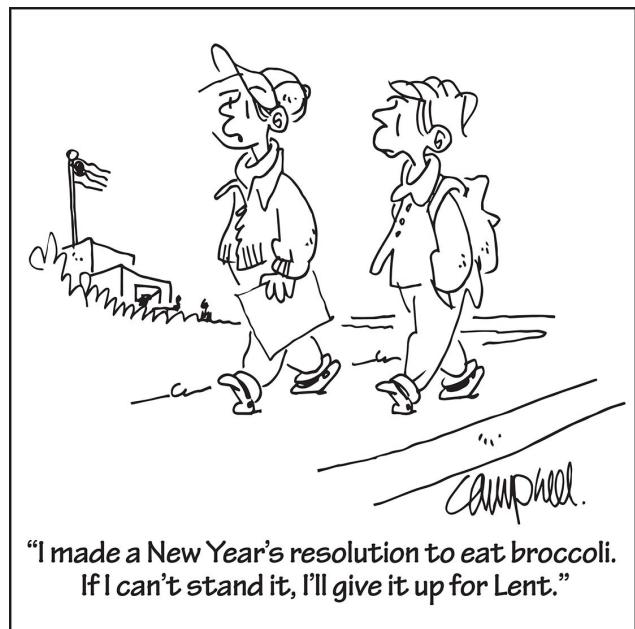




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First United Church of
Christ Newsletter



Recollecting 2020

Most people would consider 2020 to be a basket case, but I would like to look for the fruit in this basket. The same reason Christmas trees were put up and Christmas lights were hung a few weeks earlier this year, we need something positive to inspire us.

This year reminded us of what it truly means to be in fellowship with each other. This year taught us the value of relationships, and showed us how we forgot what it means to be human.

We were created to be in relationship not only with Christ, but also each other. We need community as much as we need Christ's fullness and grace.

No matter if we're sick or healthy, no matter our skin color, and no matter from which neighbor we come, we were all molded from the same Creator and, as such, are all equal and given the responsibility to take care of each other. We banded together during one of the hardest years and that is something of which to be proud.





Keep on the Sunny Side

"Hope in the New Year 2021"

By: Chaplain Donna Hale



"I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope He has given to those He called—His holy people who are His rich and glorious inheritance."

– Ephesians 1:18 NLT

During the Christmas Season, we often say to our friends, "I wish you a Merry Christmas." We don't say "I hope you a Merry Christmas."

When I use the word "wish" it may be "hopeful." I "wish" I would get that job. But, generally, I distinguish between "wish" and "hope." I know there is a lot of competition for the job. I "hope" I get it. For me, "wish" is magical—reminiscent of the fairy tales my mother read to me as a child. As a child when I wished upon a star, I did not say: "I hope upon a star." To me, "hope" is realistic and based on confidence. "Hope," for me, is within my abilities to achieve. To be successful, I "hope" (have the confidence) that my education and experience qualifies me to get the job. I would not "wish" for a job I did not have the necessary credentials to perform. "Wish" is more fantasy and happens outside of myself i.e., "a dream come true," or I "wished upon a star." Or, I found a lamp, shined it up, and a genie appeared offering to grant me three wishes. "Hope" to me, is having "faith" and by my belief, trust, and "confident hope" in God, I can do God's work here on earth.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians that their "hearts be flooded with light" to understand "the confident hope" God gives to those He calls. Paul assures them that God gave them "confident hope." Today Paul's words apply because God works through all of us to reach out to others who pray for relief from their sufferings-- poverty, incarceration, illness, grief, family struggles, and Covid-19. There is no end to the reasons why all of us pray to God.

As Community Chaplain, I listen to stories shared with me by individuals who just want someone to listen non-judgmentally. When I think about it, all of us want someone to just listen to our stories non-judgmentally. I work with agency personnel whose empathy, compassion, and assistance are provided to those who need it most. However, the agency representatives also need someone to just listen to them...non-judgmentally with empathy, compassion, and gratitude for the services they provide our communities.

I believe all of us can distinguish between "hope" and "wish." In this New Year 2021 may we all share "confident hope" by taking time to listen to others with empathy and compassion.

To the Glory of God, we serve.

Chaplain Donna



January Intentions for 2021..... with Rev. Rachel Schwab

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.'

-Revelations 21:1-6 NRSV

As 2020 came to a close, I took some time to reflect on the joys (yes, the joys!) and my own newness and spiritual growth. I discovered that I spent a lot of time creating art – painting, crafts, jewelry – with items I had at home. Our son and I got creative in the kitchen and did a lot more cooking and baking from scratch and creating new traditions and favorite dishes. I developed a more positive habit of regular meditation and exercise. I savored being able to work from home more – and the joy of calling church members and getting to talk to them for a longer time than perhaps in person on a Sunday morning might allow. I became a savvy ZOOM user, and found new connections through video conferencing. I reconnected with friends on Facebook with video chats.

These are the positive outcomes of a year like no other. However, when I stop and think about the bigger picture – a lifetime – every year has its ups and downs. The challenge was, that we all shared in the struggles of the pandemic together.

The good news, however, is that we can still find joy in the midst of the suffering, pain, heartache, and distance from one another. This passage from the Book of Revelation, describes a new way , with the help of God, to understand the chaos that seems to surround us. It is a reminder to stop, breathe, and know that "God himself will be with them". It is reassuring to know that we can create a new world with God's help. Take time this month to consider your positive intentions for this year, not resolutions. God has blessed us with a new day – every day – so how will we live?

Please know that I will continue to share a "Word for Wednesdays" on Facebook Live 8:00 AM, Wednesdays. This has been another "new", joyful experience that has come out of this year. Please join me if you can.

Much love and peace and joy this 2021. May our spirit continue to lead our church into new directions and new ways of ministering to all of God's people.



Advent Readings

Thank you to all who participated!

Noah Schwab...

One Christmas time that was memorable for me was actually the one last year. I had a pretty great time. The things that are special to me about Christmas are spending time with family, snow, and Christmas decorations. My favorite Christmas songs are "Carol of the Bells" and "Let It Snow". My favorite foods or desserts are mainly Christmas cookies, roast, and Yorkshire pudding. My favorite traditions are making Christmas cookies, decorating, going to events, etc.



Sydney Rohrer...

One memory I have is when the youth group used to put on the Christmas play. I was always the star. Every year the others would be the animals, the wise men, Mary or Joseph. But, I always wanted to be the star.

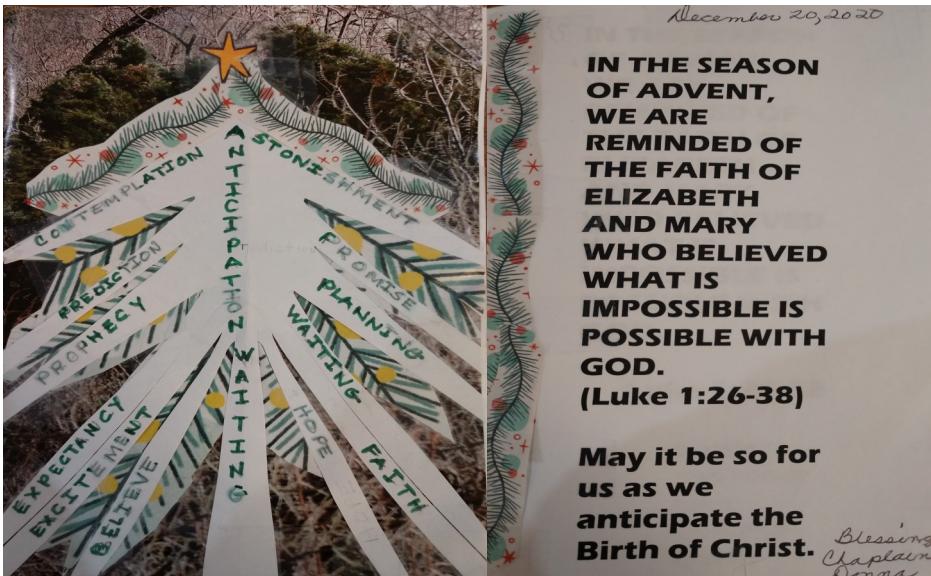
What is special to me is how people come together. Not just family, but everyone. People coming together creates this wonderful magical time of the year.

My favorite Christmas song is "Carol of the Bells".

My favorite Christmas desserts are cookies, peanut butter pie, and chocolate.

My favorite Christmas tradition is Barb Pope's collection of ornaments.

Chaplain Donna...





Harold and Edna Shepler...

Our Christmas Lights

Long ago in the early 1960's, those heavy Michigan snows in Grand Rapids would keep snuffing out our Christmas lights on our shrubs for long periods. Something had to be done using a better display. Constructing a five pointed Star of Bethlehem would be a new challenge if we had the materials.

So work began after finding scrap plywood in the garage one Saturday.

Three ft. strips were cut and bolted together to shape the star. Then seventy $\frac{1}{4}$ " holes were drilled to accommodate two strings of white mini lights. That's how our Star of Bethlehem was born.

It was hung high on the second story of our house between two front windows and wired down securely. That star weathered many storms each Christmas season until we transferred to Carlisle, Pennsylvania in 1976. Our star was displayed in Carlisle the same way until we moved into our retirement home in 2008. The star was then given to our daughter, Joyce Rolar who lived on the Ritner Highway West of Carlisle. Joel and Joyce have continued to display it until the present time.

Then it happened. Barely over two years ago, it was God's will that Edna and I were kindly invited to move into the Rolar home and be reunited with our Star of Bethlehem. The big star continues to send a Christmas message of Peace, Hope and Love to the hundreds that pass by.

Merry Christmas and Joy to the World

Susan Myers...

Wonder by Colleen Nixon and Jimmy Mitchell

O blessed Mary and dearest Joseph
Allow me to journey with you
To Bethlehem
I am a lowly pilgrim making my way
To the center of history
The birth of Christ the Lord
With unspeakable awe and expectant
wonder

I long to behold
I long to behold
I long to behold
The promised Messiah
Time will stand still forever
Divided by the entry
Of the Creator into his creation





Alice Womack...

There are new lessons for our hearts, for our wisdom and for our discernment every year during Advent. This year take the gift of time and consider what the coming of Christ means. Luke 17:20-21 KJV "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." This Advent season turn inward from the glare and commercialism of secular Christmas and marvel at the truth of Jesus. Pray for understanding of the miracle that is "the kingdom of God within you." Some of us love the Christmas party, Christmas shopping, Christmas music blaring, elf on the blessed shelf kind of Christmas season. There will be years like that again if that is your wish. This year turn inward and seek the promise realized for each of us by Jesus Christ 's earthly birth: the kingdom of God is within you. Pray about that beautiful mystery.

Barb Simonton...

LOVE

No matter what your year has been like or even these short weeks before Christmas, we always rejoice in God's great love we experience at Christmas.

His love moved him to send his only Son to save us from our sins.

Oh the wonder of His love

No greater love to gives ones own life for another .

Trough our work, whatever we do ,taking care of someone or providing a service for someone who needs help, love is our primary goal. Our love for God spills into our relationships with others.

God will not forget the love we have shown him as we have helped others.

HOPE

There is no worse feeling in the world than the feeling of lost hope. Since hope is the belief that good things will happen, lost hope reflects that nothing good is left. No matter what, only bad things will continue to come. A pretty sad way to exist...Have been there.

When we have God, we have hope. We have assurance that no matter how bad things get, good things are on the way. God loves us and He is always working to give us hope, peace, love and joy.

Because of this hope, we keep striving and pressing on.





Brian Bauer...

Courage and Fear

As human beings, we are naturally afraid, particularly of things we cannot understand or control. A child might be afraid of the dark. A teenager could be afraid of not being good enough to get into college. An adult woman might fear not being able to have a child when she is ready. Having certain fears seems natural. Living in fear is something different, and not natural.

During this year we've listened to a continuous theme of fear heaped upon us that uses words and phrases such as "dark times", "grim", "deadly", to name a few. But, as God gives us choices as to how to live our lives, he also gives us a choice to either be afraid, or be strong in the face of fear – to have courage.

I am personally given to fear just like anyone else. I've even lived in fear for a period of time of my life. It was the most miserable time I could ever remember. But, despite my upbringing in the Christian faith, I needed strong counsel and guidance to be reminded that God never promised me heaven on earth, but he did promise me he would walk with me through the darkness if I let him, and if I stood up with him. Now, when I feel anxious or afraid, I immediately remind myself I don't have to be. I have help. I know I am not done living, and therefore, challenges unknown to me still lie ahead. But those challenges are known to God, and he waits for me to call on him, while I continue my struggle to walk in faith. When I think of the man I was when I lived in fear, and the man I believe I am now, the choice to me is simple. I never want to know that fearful man again. I owe it to myself, my faith, and my family to find courage in the face of fear.

I recently saw a news feed of a man who was on a hike while using a body camera on his hat. He found a mountain lion standing in his path. I am sure he was immediately struck with fear. In fact, he admitted so. But he found courage in order to function and react to the danger. He survived by successfully scaring the animal off. If he allowed the fear to paralyze him, I doubt we would have learned of his fate directly from him. Fear is natural. Courage is a choice.

The circumstances of this year frustrate me just as they frustrate anyone else. But it is not out of inconvenience that I profess my frustrations. It is out of constant theme of fear, without an urging of courage to combat the fear that I believe will eventually be more regrettable.

At the time [of this Advent and Christmas, as well as in other times of difficulty] I urge us all to find courage, and to spread it as if our lives depend upon it.

The Bible offers us numerous examples of courage through faith. I offer Isaiah 41:10.

"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."





Stacy Rohrer...

A few of my favorite things of the Christmas season are:

1. When we turn out the lights and sing "Silent Night" by candlelight.
2. The unpredictability of the children's pageant. I love it when it has an air of "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" (one of my favorite stories at Christmas.)
3. We decorate our tree predominately with one-of-a-kind ornaments that have been given to us by friends, family members, co-workers, and former students. As I hang them on the tree I take a moment to remember each of those special people and/or places.

Ann Herr...

As we enter into the time of advent this year, the world seems a dark, forbidding place - without hope or joy or a spirit of peace and comfort.

When I feel despair and frustration, I go to my favorite psalm to refresh my faith and remind myself that the Almighty loves us. I find comfort in the following Song of Ascents : Psalm 121.

I lift up my eyes to the hills,
From whence does my help come ?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made Heaven and Earth.

He will not let your foot be moved,
he who keeps you will not slumber.

Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber or sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;
The Lord is your shade

upon your right hand.

The sun will not smite you by day,
nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep your going out and
your coming in
from this time forth and for evermore.

May the hope that was born on that silent holy night
be present with you in the coming days and may you
find the perfect peace in the perfect place.

Happy Holidays.





Karen Byers...

As I reflect back on this year-2020– I am filled with a mixed bag of emotions. This was a good year until mid-March when the pandemic hit like a ton of bricks and the love of my life was called home to be with God.

Great sadness, grief, and an emptiness I have never before experienced over the loss of my beloved husband. Despite all of this, I certainly have much to be thankful for— gratefulness for the many blessings I do have— my wonderful family, good friends, a safe home, food on my table, my church family, good health as well as the love of family and friends.

This has been an extremely difficult year for everyone; however, it is a time to be proactive by calling individuals who live alone (you may be the only person they have talked to in a very long time) or who have health issues. Just knowing others care and take the time to check on you is a good feeling!

I am grateful to be involved with our church...caring pastors who are providing love, spiritual counseling, and friendship to all; Office Administrator who care deeply about her new job with us— and sharing the need to help give two families in the community a merry Christmas; being part of a council that distributed snack items to ALL Carlisle Hospital employees, donated items for babies at the Domestic Violence Shelter, as well as donating funds to Project SHARE for Thanksgiving and Christmas turkeys. Despite this pandemic and the fact that we are not worshipping together in our beautiful church, there is light at the end of the tunnel— WE WILL be back together in a few months. The present is when we need to take this time to reflect on what we have, instead of what we do not have...a healthy attitude and a caring heart are wonderful things!

Despite my sadness this Christmas season, I am aware that life goes on (whether I choose to join or not)! I find that sharing my time, energy, and thoughts with friends, especially with others less fortunate, gives me hope for a brighter future!

Was 2020 a good year? Most would say, NO! However, maybe this is God's way of making us slow down and take time to smell the roses!



COVID-19 UPDATES

Summary of 1st UCC – Carlisle reopening progress (10/5/20)

First UCC has been working diligently to prepare for reopening and to follow CDC guidelines to do this safely during this pandemic. We have formed a subcommittee of church members to address this problem and have developed a protocol that will hopefully allow all of us to return to our Sanctuary and resume our previous activities by way of the “new norm” relatively soon. We wish to summarize our progress with these newly developed guidelines below:

1. Anyone with a cough or fever, or has been around someone with Covid19 or has returned from a recent visit to a State with a high Covid19 incidence(please see Governor Wolfe’s recommended guidelines concerning this), is asked to watch the service from home by streaming or other means as is available on the Church website. Worship is available virtually (livestreamed on Pastor Chris’ Facebook page and downloaded video on church website (www.1ucc.org), Youtube.com, and the Church’s Facebook page
2. All congregation members should come prepared to wear a mask during the service. Those without a mask will be given one at the door. People who arrive to enter the church and who don’t have a mask will be given one which they are expected to wear and it should cover their mouth and nose.
3. We ask that all Church attendees practice safely distancing during the service (at least 6 feet apart), except family members coming together. Every other pew will be closed, and our ushers will seat you conforming to these distancing guidelines.
4. All members will come into our Church by the parking lot door only and will be greeted there by ushers who will ask you about your recent health and travel history and take your name and contact info.
5. You will be shown into the Church and will be allowed entry by one door only. An usher in the Sanctuary will give you a bulletin and seat you. The balcony can be available for seating when there is overflow. People will be encouraged to sit in the main pew area of the sanctuary first.
6. We strongly discourage any greeting by handshake and suggest greeting by safe social distancing.
7. Pastor Chris will give the Service and read the scripture.
8. There will be no singing (possible spread of the virus) but there will be organ music by Sharon.
9. After the service there will be dismissal by row—starting at the back. Pastor Chris, out of a concern for safety for all, will not be greeting congregants afterwards.
10. Everyone will exit from a left rear door out onto the Plaza and then proceed to the parking lot. Those with some degree of disability will be dismissed afterwards and may return to the parking lot by the way they entered.
11. We discourage close social gathering afterwards in the Church or parking lot.
12. Cleaning and sanitizing related to both elevator use and bathroom use will be provided to you.
13. The Church will be cleaned and sanitized in the days before each Church service.
14. For those overflow congregants who do not have a seat in the Sanctuary or balcony—we hope to make Fellowship Hall available to listen to and/or view the Service.
15. Please note that for all building usage and visiting the church building beyond worship, social distancing and wearing masks will be required.



Church Update

Council Meetings

Consistory— 3rd Monday Every Month

Church & Ministry— 1st Tuesday Every Month

Advisory— Quarterly

Caring Fellowship— 2nd Monday Every Month

Christian Ed— 1st Sunday Every Month

Church & Community Connections— 2nd Tuesday Every Month

Property Management— 4th Wednesday Every Month

Stewardship— 2nd Wednesday Every Other Month

*Whether it's over Zoom or small, social-distanced meetings in person, 1st UCC is still working to move forward during COVID.

*You can find all council reports on the church website (www.1ucc.org). If you would like a copy, please email Lyndsey (Lyndsey@1stuccofcarlisle.org).

Project Share and Community Care Collections

Project Share (Spaghetti and Sauce) and Community Cares (Ramen noodles) collections begin this month!

- ♦ On the first Wednesday of every month from **10 am – noon**, there will be a table at the parking lot door of the church where **Project Share** donations can be dropped off (or handed to a volunteer). This is the day when we will receive packets of **Spaghetti and Spaghetti Sauce** for the organization.
- ♦ On the second Wednesday of every month from **10 am – noon**, there will be a table at the parking lot door of the church where **Community Cares** donations can be dropped off (or handed to a volunteer). This is the day when we will receive packets of **Ramen noodles** for the organization.



SPAGHETTI DINNER



Thank you for being a giving community. Let us continue to do just that in 2021.





Earth Stewards

January Tip of the Month

BE A NEWYEAR ENERGY-SAVER!

When you wake up on these cold winter mornings, get into the habit of putting on an extra layer of clothing at the beginning of the day. If you get too warm during the day, it takes just seconds to peel a layer off! Often, we get in the habit of turning up the heat, instead of taking the time to go find a sweater or an extra pair of sweatpants. This wastes energy and contributes to the Climate Crisis! Let's all try to keep our daytime thermostats at 67 degrees and at nighttime even lower by layering-up!

REMEMBER: WAKE UP - LAYER UP - HELP SAVE THE EARTH!

*If you would like to send in your "Earth Stewards Tip of the Month", please email (Lyndsey@1stuccofcarlisle.org) or mail (30 N Pitt Street, Carlisle, PA 17013) to Lyndsey, and it will be included in the next month's newsletter.





Church Activities Update



If there are any other groups currently meeting and would like to update the congregation, please send Lyndsey an email (Lyndsey@1stuccofcarlisle.org) with a summary and it will be included in the next newsletter.

