

Grace United Church of Christ

# Shalom

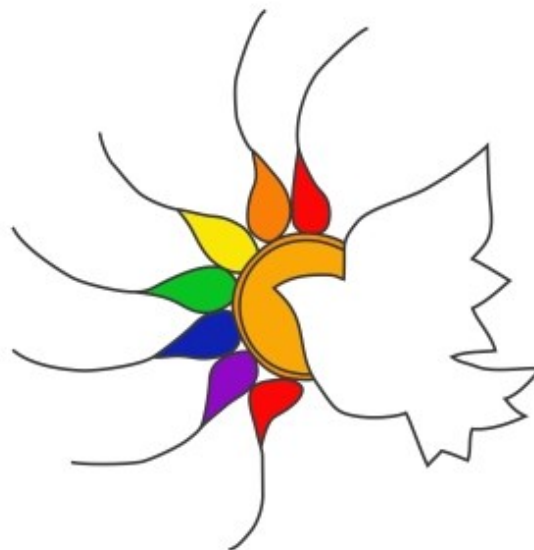
December 2014

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## Telling the Many Stories of Christmas

This month I celebrate five years of ordained ministry! I love being your pastor. Christmas is one of my absolute favorite times to be pastor. I am completely in love with the way the church keeps the holiday. It is also a time when I am given to rants about how commercialism tries to steal, co-opt, and manipulate the holiday.

My first Christmas as pastor I told a story of Mr. Mouse who was sick and tired of Christmas. Mr. Mouse traveled to the homes of the congregation, and each week he'd share about the faith and hope he saw there. He observed the congregation at the church preparing for the birth of Christ. With a thick country accent he proclaimed the hope the congregation had given him.

My second Christmas as pastor I told a story of Amanda, a pregnant teen who ran away from her grandparents' home to the big city. Grandma leaves home to search for her. After many struggles the two are reunited with the birth of Amanda's child, and yet in that moment so much more than a child was born.

The third year for my Christmas preaching I told the story of Daniel, a boy who runs away from home for good reasons. He lives in the mall, sleeping in the Santa Land Christmas Tree. But then he finds sanctuary in a church whose doors are about to close. Together, the pastor and Daniel remind everybody the promise of new life and birth is real and present.

The fourth year at Christmas I told the story of Snickers, a man who was homeless and angry, who was quite the humbug! He challenged us to be ready to take on the responsibility to care for and tend the light of the world. (Available online, along with the story of Daniel.)

This year, I'd like to introduce you to Laura, a 10-year-old who, despite her meek appearance, is perceptive beyond her years, inquisitive and creative. She has never set foot in a church and knows little about God and even less about Jesus; yet she will lead us to the birth of Christ.

*Come celebrate Christmas, Come let the story of Christ be your story.*

*Come to the manger and let Christ be born in your heart.*

*Come let the magic of the Christmas season melt your weariness.*

**Shalom**  
**Pastor Chris**

# Advent & Christmas Happenings



## Join a Small Group Advent Study

Sign up in the narthex to join a small group studying the devotional book *Tear Open the Heavens*. Copies of the book are in the narthex.

## Blue Christmas

Yes, Christmas can be a time of sadness, loneliness and depression. Join us Wednesday, December 17 at 7pm as we bear witness to the pain that can be held within the Holy Season. Music will be provided by Mountain Dulcimer Players of Lancaster.

## Advent Taizé Services

Join us Tuesdays at 6pm for Taizé services December 2, 9, 16 and 23. Taizé is a participatory prayer service designed to achieve a contemplative state through music, song and silence. Do you need some more sacredness in your Advent? Join us.

## Puppet Christmas Pageant

People of all ages are welcome to participate in Grace's Christmas pageant Sunday, December 14. The last rehearsal is Sunday, December 7 following worship and Bible Story Time. Talk with Pastor Chris or Director of Music Suzanne Delahaunt.

## Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 24, celebrate the coming of Emmanuel with your church family and friends with carols at 7:45pm, and the worship service at 8pm with candlelight and communion.

## President's Message

As we enter into Advent and prepare for Christmas I want to take a moment to wish all friends and family of Grace a very merry Christmas. I pray this holiday season is filled with the peace and joy of Christ.

With Christmas upon us, we also look forward to 2015! If I am honest, 2015 makes me nervous. Last year, we passed a budget that was greater than our income. We trusted that we could come together and make up the difference if each giving unit was to give an extra \$8.00 per week. Council is now preparing the 2015 budget that will be presented at the congregational meeting January 11. The bottom line – we need to make up the deficit.

During this season of giving, please consider giving to Grace! We have an awesome community, and must hold on to the promise of what you give freely will return to you with even greater fruits.

Peace be with you through this holiday season!

Amy Southall, council president



## Winter Fun Events at Grace

Welcome to Advent! If your calendars are anything like ours, we know they are jam packed with events. We hope, however, you will make some room for one more thing.... Christmas caroling Saturday, December 6. We'll meet at the church at 6pm for caroling through the neighborhood behind Grace. No real musical ability is needed, just a desire to spread the joy of the season. We'll be led by our Director of Music, Suzanne Delahunt, who will provide carol sheets and maybe even some handheld instruments. After entertaining the neighbors, plan to stop at Fellowship Hall for freshly baked cookies, hot chocolate and fellowship. No, really. There will be freshly baked cookies made by an elf who can't carry a tune but who can bake.

Congo Life is looking ahead to the winter and wants to know if anyone is interested in going snow tubing at Avalanche Xpress in York County. We are looking at organizing an outing in January or February. Pricing would be around \$15 for night tubing or \$32 for Saturday or Sunday tubing. If you are interested in going snow tubing, please talk to a member of Congo Life.

By the way, special thanks to Jessie Dombach and Dottie Book who handed out candy and church information to trick or treaters on Halloween and to all those who came to our Friday night campfires, and especially to those who helped "Deck the Halls" November 30.

Congo Life has more activities coming in 2015 so stay tuned to *Shalom*, the Sunday bulletins and Sunday announcements for details.

~ Congregational Life Committee



## Centennial Capital Campaign Update



The second year of our three-year capital campaign is drawing to a close. Our goal is to raise \$180,859 for three major projects and two benevolences:

- Re-roofing (partially completed)
- Creating a Memorial Garden (completed)
- Updating and repairing the organ (to be done in 2015)
- Helping to renovate First Reformed UCC's community meal facilities Grace uses to make and serve breakfast on the second Saturday monthly (donation made)
- Contributing to the UCC-affiliated Ephrata Manor nursing home (donation made)

*Grace upon Grace  
for a second century*

To be on track, contributions should be about \$120,450 by year-end. As of October 31, we have received \$112,427. Thank you for your contributions.

If you'd like to make a 2014 year-end gift to our "Grace upon Grace" capital campaign, you may use the green envelopes in the sanctuary pews and on the capital campaign bulletin board outside Fellowship Hall. If writing a check to Grace, please note "capital campaign."

As we have received grace upon grace in this community of faith, let us give back for our future ministry together.

~ Centennial Capital Campaign Committee

## Did You Know...

Erin Carey (and baby Matthew Fries) have moved to 325 Cobblestone Court, Lancaster. Her phone number is (717) 205-6132. Her email is [escarey18@gmail.com](mailto:escarey18@gmail.com).



## Chimes Wanted for Memorial Bells of Grace

The Memorial Bells of Grace UCC are looking to borrow a two- or three-octave set of hand chimes for their bell festival in March. Please reach out to your friends and family to see if their church has chimes they are not using and let me know so I can reach out to the organization to request the use of their unused chimes from January through April. Thank you.

~ Memorial Bells of Grace

## Thanks from the Hackenberger Family

We would like to thank the Grace UCC congregation for thoughts, prayers, cards and support during the final illness and passing of our mother and grandmother, Edna Hackenberger. Also many thanks to Pastor Chris and Suzanne for a beautiful service. Blessings to all.

Jeff Hackenberger  
Janine Wheeler  
Laura Hackenberger

Coming soon: Congregational meeting Sunday, January 11 after worship. Mark your calendars and plan to attend.



## Christmas Gift Suggestions for Ephrata Manor

99 Bethany Road, Ephrata; (717) 738-4940

Gift items are to be **unwrapped**. Please deliver to Maria Shedleski, Lifestyle Services Director, before Wednesday, December 10. Donations of money or gift certificates will be used to buy specific desired items.

Soft chocolates & creams (Brand names preferred i.e. Whitmans, Wilbur's)	Cologne ( <i>Old Spice, Mennon, Brute, Canoe</i> )
Individually wrapped soft candy	Postage stamps and stationery paper
Snack crackers	Large print word searches & crossword puzzles
Diabetic candy/cookies	25 to 100 piece jigsaw puzzles
Clear or light pink nail polish	Tea towels
Lipstick	Slipper socks
Jewelry (pins, bracelets, necklaces)	Socks
Flower hair pins	Thigh and/or knee high nylons
Handkerchiefs ( <i>no initials please</i> ) or tissues	Scarves
Pre-shave	Brushes
After shave ( <i>brand names preferred</i> ).	

Donations of gift bags, gift tags and tissue paper are also requested. Thank you!



## Gifts Needed for the Giving Tree

This holiday season, the Stewardship-Mission Committee is setting up Grace's Giving Tree to provide you an opportunity to support Milagro House.

If you recall, we supported Milagro House in July 2013 and at various other Christmas seasons. **Milagro House** serves women and children who are homeless by providing a temporary home in a caring environment, life skills programs and aftercare support leading to self-sufficiency. Every day Milagro House receives calls from women who find themselves homeless as a result of abusive relationships, addiction, loss of employment, or simply slipping through "the system." These women need a safe place for themselves and their children where they can turn their lives around. They need someone who understands and is willing to give them a hand.

We will be collecting items starting November 30 until December 21 for Milagro House. You can help us make our Giving Tree a success as we help others in need within our community. We ask that you put your donations under the tree in the narthex until we deliver items to Milagro House. The items needed include:

Gift cards (Wal-Mart, Giant, Office Max)

Diapers (size 3, 4, 5 and 6), baby wipes and feminine products

Clorox wipes, paper towels, toilet paper

Laundry detergent, dish soap, liquid floor cleaner; all purpose cleaner such as 409 spray  
Trash bags

Thank you from the Stewardship-Mission Committee.



### Coming in December: Christmas Fund Offering

Like the Magi of old, we can honor the Christ Child by bringing gifts that will be used to support and honor those who have served and are serving the church. The mission of the Christmas Fund is to provide assistance dollars in situations of critical need, while preserving the dignity of those who receive the aid.

The offering will be received in December — watch bulletin announcements for details.



### When the Weather Outside is Frightful...

Snowy weather? If the church needs to close, a message will be recorded on the church voice-mail, an email will be sent to those who have email, and a notice will be posted on the church Facebook page.

If worship is cancelled you can still join the community in worship via conference call. At 10:25am call (605) 562-0020 (long distance charges may apply) and enter meeting number 173-365-288.

~ Pastor Chris





## Parish and Community Health Resources

### Ask Dr. Trudie: “All I Want for Christmas”

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I love Christmas, and not just for all the right reasons. Yes, I know it’s really all about the birth of Jesus, but I have to admit that I love the cookies, candy, family gatherings, and PRESENTS!!! Yes, I confess, I LOVE getting presents. Okay, I also love giving them, but I am not ashamed to say I love receiving them. When my brother and I were kids, the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas was an eternity. Every night, we pored over the Penney and Sears catalogs, deciding what we wanted from Santa. Although my parents weren’t particularly well off, they made sure we kept our faith in Jolly Saint Nick.

Back then, there was a lot less concern for whether toys were actually safe for us to play with. Unless you live under a rock, you’ve seen “A Christmas Story” where Ralphie, lusting after a Daisy BB rifle, is repeatedly warned, “You’ll shoot your eye out.” One Christmas my brother got a space station with a satellite launcher you worked by turning a crank until they unexpectedly flew off into the air. There was also a spring loaded rocket ship that could definitely put out an eye, but miraculously, neither of us fell victim to this toy. Now, such toys would never make it to the market; those that do come with recommendations and warnings if there are potential choking hazards for small children.

Kids are being assaulted with ads promoting all the latest toys and games, so how do you decide which of their wishes to fulfill? First, use common sense. If a toy is painted, be sure the paint doesn’t contain lead. Stuffed toys should be made with flame retardant materials and should be washable. With small children, avoid things like marbles or toys

with small parts. You can purchase a “choke tube,” a small tube approximately the size of a child’s windpipe, to test toys. If the toy fits in the tube, it’s a potential choking hazard. Remember that button batteries and magnets can be especially dangerous if swallowed. Art supplies should be non-toxic; there’s an agency that tests them, so look for the ASTM (formerly known as the American Society for Testing and Materials) F963 on the package. Choose toys that are appropriate for the child’s age and abilities; if a toy or game is too complicated, it won’t be fun or appreciated. If you’re purchasing a bike, skateboard, scooter, or skates, consider including a helmet, shin guards, or other appropriate safety gear.

Dolls have come a long way from “Tiny Tears” and “Betsy Wetsy.” Even Barbie is pretty tame compared to some of the dolls out there today. Is the doll the little girl on your list wants too sexy? Would she or her family feel uncomfortable with a sexually accurate baby doll? And what about guns and bows and arrows? My brother had a veritable arsenal; he had cap guns, a Chuck Connors (“The Rifleman”) rifle, an Untouchables tommy gun, and a Johnny Reb cannon. For big jobs, he had a Navy pompom gun and a Bulldog tank. We regularly shot at each other with dart guns and suction cup-tipped arrows. Despite all this, neither of us became homicidal maniacs. We don’t even hunt.

However, many parents prefer their children not play with these sorts of toys. It has been recommended that if a child does play with toy guns, they should be brightly colored so that there’s no mistaking them for the real

*(Continued on page 7)*



## Adult Education Dialogue

Sunday, December 14 at 9am

Churches grow in spiritual depth and mission – and frequently in numbers – when the members are Biblically aware, and are able to understand faith and life. The essentials of faith are frequently an overlooked part of adult believers, as if the essentials were for kids and not for us.

Yet...the essentials are important for all of us.

To help us talk about this, all adults – young and old – are invited to a discussion about options for our Adult Christian Education Program. We'll be discussing ideas including style of class(es), and whether to begin a program supported by a prepared UCC adult curriculum. It will be time of goal setting, idea sharing – and plan making. (There'll be food, too). Any questions, contact Jeff Hamilton at 419-1152.

### **Ask Dr. Trudie** *(continued from page 6)*

thing. We've all heard the stories of police mistaking a toy for the real thing. My husband and I were once driving and saw two guys in the car next to us with what we thought was a gun. We called the police, and they pulled the car over. Turns out, it was a novelty lighter they'd just purchased. The guys got the scare of their lives, but given current events in Ferguson, it could have turned out worse. And while I'm on the subject of violence, be sure you know what's in those video games you're putting under the tree.

So finish up that last minute shopping and have a safe and Merry Christmas.

*(Dr. Trudie welcomes readers' comments and suggestions for future columns. She can be reached c/o [graceucc@comcast.net](mailto:graceucc@comcast.net)).*

### **Advent Support Group Meets**

Grace Church is offering a support group before and after Christmas. It will be an informal time of companionship, story sharing and support.

The group will be led by Jeffrey Hamilton – a member of Grace Church, a United Church of Christ minister, licensed clinical social worker and pastoral counselor. We will meet December 7 and 21, and January 4 at 4:30pm at Grace Church for about 90 minutes.

Please, if you feel the gathering would be helpful, join us...and pass the word to those you know who may be needing this support as well.

~ Jeff Hamilton

### **Join the Conversation on Mental Health**

If you or a loved one is impacted by mental health challenges, or want to support others, please join us 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month at 6:30pm for a time of conversation and support. Snacks will be provided. Everyone is welcome. If you have any questions, talk with Cathy Hainley or Marilyn Miller.

## New Year Brings Newsletter Changes

As announced last month, this issue of *Shalom* is the last bulk mailing for the newsletter of Grace United Church of Christ. Next month *Shalom* will be emailed to people who have provided email addresses. Church members and friends without email will continue to receive their paper newsletter by postal mail. Members and friends may receive *Shalom* by having a copy mailed by first class to their home; by email; picking up a paper copy in the church lobby; or reading it on the website, [www.gracechurchlancaster.org](http://www.gracechurchlancaster.org) (under the heading "Get Involved").

If you don't receive the January newsletter by postal mail or by email, and want to receive it, let us know. We want to hear from you.

## Time to Order Christmas Flowers



Help beautify the church sanctuary for Advent and Christmas by ordering cyclamen flowers in red, pink or white. Each 6-inch pot costs \$7.25. Order forms are inserted in the bulletins. Orders with payment are due by Sunday, December 7.

Orders may be given to an usher or placed in the church office mailbox. You may take your flowers home with you after the Christmas Eve or the December 28 worship services.

~ Worship Team

### Questions? Concerns? Suggestions?

Talk with a Council member:

President: Amy Southall

Secretary: Ve Wolfe

Congregational Life Committee: Jessie Dombach

Endowment Committee: Karen Wentz

Evangelism and Outreach Committee: Nick Santaniello

Property Committee: Rob MacGregor

Spiritual Life and Growth Committee: Carol Welsh

Stewardship–Mission Committee: Denise Pfeiffer

Member-at-Large: Suzy Luber

Intentional Interim Pastor: Rev. Chris Hart

*Grace* United Church of Christ

*Welcoming All  
Sharing Love  
Proclaiming God's Grace*

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