

Grace United Church of Christ

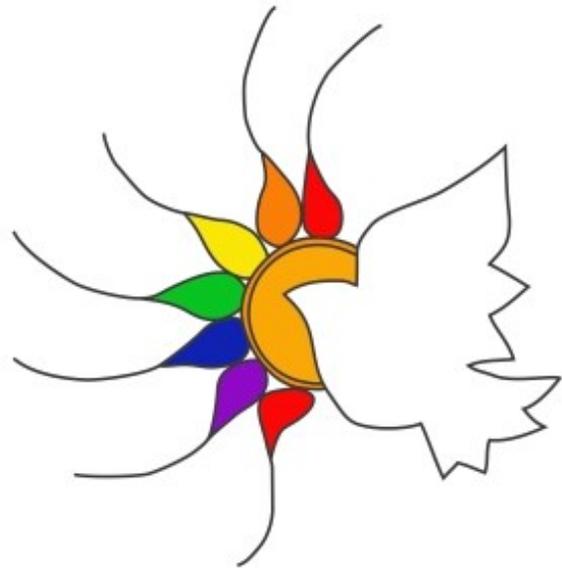
Shalom

December 2015

Rev. Katie Cort, Pastor

Lynn K. Miller, editor

Thank you to story contributors and proofreaders.



Holy Days in Holidays

Welcome to the hustle and bustle of the “Holiday Season.” Since Christmas decorations have been up in stores since before Halloween, it’s hard to not feel pushed into the new year. It’s also hard to find times where you can slow down and find some solace, some quiet, and maybe even a reminder of “the reason for the season.”

In the coming month, Grace offers several opportunities to take a pause in this rushed season. Our regular 10:30am Sunday services will take us on the path of Advent, a season that asks us to remain in the anticipation of waiting to see what will happen next.

On the first three Wednesdays of Advent, (December 2, December 9, and December 16) we will be offering meditative Advent services at 7pm in Grace’s prayer room. On these evenings we will offer an opportunity to sit for a little while and let go of the stress that society piles on us.

If the holiday season doesn’t feel quite as bright to you as the world seems to suggest it ought to, please join us for our Blue Christmas service on December 20 at 7pm. On that Sunday evening we will admit the holidays don’t always present themselves as the television specials would suggest.



Then, on Christmas Eve, we offer two services: a service of celebration at 7pm and a quieter service at 10pm. It is my hope that some of these options for worship will be able to offer you some festivity and some comfort in this season bringing us to the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ.

Blessings on the holidays for all of us here at Grace United Church of Christ!

~ Pastor Katie

Making Music with Grace

What a busy, busy time of year! Grace will be presenting its puppet Christmas play on December 20 at the 10:30am worship service. Entitled *Finding Jesus*, this play will star some of Grace's most unlikely actors. Not that they are untalented, mind you, just unexpected to find them in these roles (welcome, too)! Rehearsals are every Sunday after church for about 45 minutes. Choice roles are still available, so come one, come all — especially our young people.

After the show, we hope to have a young magician from Manheim Township High School dazzle us with his prestidigitation (magic tricks) in Fellowship Hall.

Choir will be performing throughout Advent and for the Christmas Eve service. It's not too late to come and join us in song. Rehearsals are Tuesday evenings in the church from 7 to 8:30pm.

Memorial Bells will not be performing during the Christmas season because of extremely busy schedules, but we will continue to rehearse Monday evenings in the church from 7 to 8pm in preparation for our January participation in worship service. We are always looking for new members!

~ Suzanne Delahunt, Director of Music



*Grace upon Grace
for a second century*

Wrapping up the Capital Campaign: Gifts are Needed

We hope this month will mark the end of our three-year capital campaign. We are very close to covering the balance for all projects undertaken: benevolences totaling 5% of the campaign goal, re-roofing the Christian education wing and Fellowship Hall, creating a Memorial Garden, installing a handicapped-accessible sidewalk to all church entrances, and repairing and upgrading the organ. But, we had an unexpected extra cost in October as the organ repair was being completed. When the organ was being put back together, we learned that the electrical wiring for the organ was not up to code. An electrician promptly made the necessary upgrades which cost an additional \$1,000.

As reported in last month's *Shalom*, we needed about \$2,500 to finish paying for the final capital campaign bills. With the organ electrical upgrade, that gap is now about \$3,500. If we receive capital campaign contributions in that amount this month, we will not have to borrow from our line of credit at the United Church of Christ Cornerstone Fund and we can wrap up the "Grace upon Grace Centennial Capital Campaign" at year-end. Please give generously, making tax-deductible year-end contributions in these final days of the campaign and look for upcoming announcements about celebrating the end of our centennial capital campaign.

~ Centennial Capital Campaign Committee



Giving Tree Suggestions Wanted

Do you know a family who is in need of holiday cheer? Do they need food, clothing or toys? Our Giving Tree in the narthex is going to help a family or families in need. Email or talk to Peggy Allen, Robin Cain or Cathy Hainley by Sunday, December 6 if you know of a family in need. Thank you.

~ Wider World Taskforce



You're Invited to the Christmas Party



Congo Life will be hosting a Christmas Party at Amy Southall and Heather Eshbach's house on Friday, December 4 from 6-9pm. All are welcome to come and enjoy food, fun and fellowship during this holiday season.

A sign-up sheet with the address and house phone number is in the narthex for those who wish to attend. Please indicate how many people will be coming and if you're bringing children. We will have presents under the tree for the kids. Questions — please contact Heather, Amy S. or Jen Swank.



~ Congregational Life Taskforce



Questions? Concerns? Suggestions?

Talk with a Council member:

President: Herb McCollom
Vice President: Karen Wentz
Secretary: Ve Wolfe
Member At-Large: Nick Santaniello
Finance Team Leader: Denise Pfeiffer
Treasurer (ex-officio): Holly Keller
Property Team Leader: TBD
Spiritual Life Team Leader: Amy Fishburn
Congregational Life Taskforce Leader: Heather Eshbach
Wider World Taskforce Leader: Cathy Hainley
Pastor: Rev. Katie Cort



Christmas Cookie Bazaar Bakers & Buyers Wanted

Attention cookie bakers and buyers: bring several batches of your favorite (home made or store bought) cookies to Grace Sunday, December 13 for a Cookie Sale to benefit Grace's general fund. And cookie munchers and Christmas party hosts: as you stroll around the cookie room you'll have the opportunity to buy cookies.

Bakers, please sign up on the sheet in the narthex. We would like you to note the number of dozens being baked and the type of cookies being made so we can be assured we have enough cookies and a nice variety for those hungry buyers.

~ Finance Team

2016 Cape May Getaway is April 29 to May 2

It may seem early to think about a spring getaway but a taskforce has already begun planning the 2016 Cape May Getaway! Whether you have attended before or this is your first venture to Cape May with Grace Church members and friends, you won't want to miss this getaway! We rent a "Big House" near the beach and have kept the cost low at only \$100 per person for the weekend, with some meals included and carpooling available.

This is also a low-key weekend with times for worship, spiritual reflection and discussion, group social activities, and free time. Relax to the rhythmic sound of ocean waves. Stroll along the beach. Explore shops, the lighthouse, and Victorian homes. Read a good book on the front porch. Bring board games (most popular in case of bad weather.) We have also watched and discussed a movie Saturday night at the Big House.

There's a "get acquainted" time Friday, April 29 after dinner on your own. Continental breakfasts are provided Saturday and Sunday. We all enjoy a group dinner Saturday evening in the Big House. Lunches are on your own. People may choose to depart after Sunday morning worship in the Big House, later that day, or on Monday morning.

Save this date and join the fun! If you have questions, please feel free to talk with a member of the task force or someone that has attended in the past: Jeff and Jessie Dombach, Holly Keller, Suzy Luber, Jim and Karen Wentz, Jeff and Ve Wolfe, or Pastor Katie.

December 2015 Worship Participants

Please remember it is your responsibility to find a substitute or swap dates with another participant as needed, and then notify the church office of any changes. A complete list of worship volunteers -- to help you know who else has volunteered for each role -- is posted in the narthex and also available from the church office.

December 6, 2015

Greeters (10am) — Denise Pfeiffer, Ve Wolfe
 Ushers —
 *Jeff Wolfe, Jim & Karen Wentz
 Lector — Amy Fishburn
 Liturgist — Rick Chamberlin
 Pew Communion Set-up/Clean-up —
 Robin Cain, Denise Pfeiffer
 Acolyte — Brian Eshbach
 Prayer Candle Lighter — Jeff Dombach
 Fellowship Host — Kellie Wilson
 Bulletin Volunteer 12/4 — Jessie Dombach

December 27, 2015

Greeters (10am) —
 Christen Chew, Herb McCollom
 Ushers —
 *Verna Labrador, Laura Carey, Emily Carey
 Lector — Kellie Wilson
 Acolyte — Brian Eshbach
 Prayer Candle Lighter — Verna Labrador
 Fellowship Hosts —
 Jeff & Jessie Dombach
 Bulletin Volunteer 12/24 — Doug Frank
 Shalom Volunteer 12/24 — Ve Wolfe

December 13, 2015

Greeters (10am) —
 Verna Labrador, Carol Welsh
 Ushers — *Cathy Hainley & Beth Bowers,
 John Markley
 Lector — Holly Keller
 Acolyte — Elene Keares
 Prayer Candle Lighter — Kay Charles
 Fellowship Hosts —
 Heather Eshbach & Amy Southall
 Bulletin Volunteer 12/11 — Verna Labrador

January 3, 2016

Greeters (10am) —
 Jessie Dombach, Cathy Hainley
 Ushers —
 *Suzy Luber, Amy Southall, Nick Santaniello
 Lector — Holly Keller
 Liturgist — Jen Swank
 Chancel Communion Set-up/Clean-up —
 Robin Cain, Christen Chew
 Acolyte — Elene Keares
 Prayer Candle Lighter — Herb McCollom
 Fellowship Hosts —
 Robin Cain & Jeffrey Hamilton
 Bulletin Volunteer 12/31 — Doug Frank

December 20, 2015

Greeters (10am) —
 Robin Cain & Jeffrey Hamilton
 Ushers — *Jessie Dombach,
 Tom & Marilynn Miller
 Lector — Tim Whitney
 Acolyte — Sevi Keares
 Prayer Candle Lighter — Jen Swank
 Fellowship Hosts —
 Beth Bowers & Cathy Hainley
 Bulletin Volunteer 12/18 — Suzy Luber

*** Indicates head usher**



Hope Shines Through



“Mini Nativity” by *Kate Cosgrove*

What does it mean to hope? It means to put your whole trust in God, believing God’s promises of blessing will be fulfilled. For those who devote their talents, skills and time to our churches in the United Church of Christ, both ministers and lay leaders, hope is a muscle providing strength for action. During this Advent season we receive a special mission offering for the UCC Christmas Fund, and we do this to show our gratitude for all our leaders. The Christmas Fund offering helps both active and retired clergy with health care, retirement income and relief from financial emergency. It provides emergency assistance in times of financial strife.

The Christmas Fund offering is our chance to strengthen our own muscles of hope and help support those who have served us. The offering will be received the fourth Sunday of Advent, December 20. Look for offering envelopes in the bulletins.

Remember to Give Some “*Oomph*” When Exiting

When leaving through the front doors, it sometimes takes extra effort or “*oomph*” to ensure the doors close and latch completely. If you are leaving the church building through the front doors, please take a moment to stop and make sure the doors close and latch completely. Pause to give it some extra “*oomph*.” Thank you from the Property Committee.

Christmas Poinsettia Garden

Grace Church is asking your help in preparing the sanctuary for the Advent/Christmas season by purchasing red, white, marble or pink poinsettias. Each plant comes in a 4-inch container and costs \$4.50. Orders are due Sunday, Dec. 6 and payment is due when the order is placed. Look for order forms in the Sunday bulletins. Make checks payable to Grace UCC.

Please tell us whether you'd like the flower dedicated to someone: in honor of, in memory of, or as a gift for someone special. You may take your plant(s) after the 10pm Christmas Eve service. Thank you.

~ Worship Team

New Book for Book Group

The Fruitville Pike Starbucks group will be meeting next on Thursday, December 10 at 10:30 am. We will be starting a new book titled *Wearing God: Clothing, Laughter, Fire and Other Overlooked Ways of Meeting God* by Lauren F. Winner. Everybody is welcome to attend.

Grace is Open and Affirming

As an open and affirming congregation, Grace UCC welcomes gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons into the full life and ministry of the church.

We invite all people to share their gifts as we journey together in faith and covenant to be responsible to God and to one another.



Holiday Office Hours and Shalom Deadline

The office will be open Thursday, December 24, and closed Christmas Day, Friday, December 25. The office will be open Thursday, December 31, and closed New Year's Day, Friday, January 1.

Shalom articles for January are due Sunday, December 13.

26 ▶ 100

26% of UCC churches
are **Open and Affirming**.

Help us push that all
the way to **100%**.

Contribute **\$26 to \$100**
online to the
**UCC Open and
Affirming Coalition** on
#GivingTuesday,
December 1, 2015.



DECEMBER 1

Grace United Church of Christ

Welcoming All

Sharing Love

Proclaiming God's Grace

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