



Volume XXXVIII
Number XII
December 2023



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Christ Reformed United Church of Christ Christ Church Children's Center

VISIONS

No matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. Because Jesus has taught us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves we declare Christ Reformed UCC to be an Open and Affirming church. We invite people of every race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, marital status, economic circumstance, and physical and mental ability into the worship, rites & sacraments, fellowship, and leadership of our church.

The Advent Adventure

Dear Friends in Christ,

December has to be my favorite month. How about you? All those Christmas songs on the radio - White Christmas, Jingle Bells, Away in a Manger, Silent Night. Love them all. All the TV specials - Charlie Brown, Frosty and Rudolph. Love them all. Christmas trees bright with heirloom ornaments, LED icicles hanging from the gutters, spot lit mangers. Love them all. Family gatherings, hot cider and chocolate, gift exchanges, cards from distant places, and of course Santa Claus. Love them all.

The Christian Church celebrates this exciting time with two seasons - ADVENT and CHRISTMAS which lead us into Epiphany on January 6th. Advent is a season of anticipation as we look forward to the birth and rebirth of Jesus into our mortal world. We remind ourselves of God's choice of Mary and Joseph, we travel with them to a humble stable for the birth of their son, stand with the shepherds and magi who were drawn to him by stars and angels, then in the Temple we meet Simeon and Anna who recognize baby Jesus as the promised Messiah. Oh how I love to hear these stories and sing all those wonderful carols.

If we wish our children to be an active part of our church life then this is an ideal time to involve them. A time to build bridges between all they experience at home and school with all they might experience in their life long spiritual journey. Two great opportunities would be the Children's Pageant on the 13th. or the family service on Christmas Eve.

For some this "Holly, Jolly" season may also precipitate a flood of memories of loved ones who once shared this special time with us. We will name them and remember their influence on our lives through prayer, music and reflection at our Longest Night service on the 20th.

Just as I am inviting you could you invite a friend, or better yet an enemy! To one of our many worship experiences and truly make this a season of

LOVE, JOY, HOPE, and PEACE.

~Pastor Ed

Pastoral Thoughts

"Anticipation" by Carly Simon (can't believe that I'm quoting a song from 50 years ago) begins with these words *"We can never know about the days to come, but we think about them anyway."* As the verses progress the singer retreats from the riskiness of looking too far into the future preferring to find comfort in her present; after all, she ends, *"These are the good old days."* Unfortunately the good old days, the now that we cherish so dearly, quickly becomes the past and we must move forward into a new now.

As December dawns we are indeed moving into the new now of the church year; ADVENT, a four week season of looking forward to new beginnings and of anticipating the birth of Jesus, the coming of Christ into our world. We have spent the last twenty-six weeks since Pentecost reminding ourselves of Jesus' teachings and attempting to apply them in our lives. Just as our spinning, orbital planet marks time with the passage of days and years so too does our liturgical year, cycling through Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost then back to Advent. This short season is a time to relax and enjoy, to appreciate and anticipate the miracle of Christmas.

It may seem strange that the secular world (of which we are all a part) precedes the Church in it's anticipation of Christmas with holiday carols and decorated trees wherever you go. Clearly Christmas is no longer contained or sandwiched between Dec 25th and Jan 6th the church's traditional "Twelve Days of Christmas." But what might Jesus think of these changes? Where on the spectrum of possible responses would **Your Jesus** lie? Does your Jesus expect us to conform to the practices of the past or to evolve into bearers of a new future?

The phrase "Your Jesus" might be new to you, but the term attempts to recognize that each of us has a unique, special relationship of heart, mind and soul with Christ. Sure there are common understandings and shared beliefs. Jesus is both Our Jesus and Your Jesus and Advent is that time when we can all look forward, with expectation and hope for what his rebirth might mean for us and for this conflicted world.

Cantata Reception

There will be a reception following the Cantata on December 17th. Donations of goodies are welcome and there is a sign up sheet on the bulletin board in the narthex if you would like to donate. Thanks for your help.

Christmas Fund Clergy Offering

There are many retired clergy who served congregations at a time when compensation was small and pension provision very limited. Other clergy and lay employees serve at levels that leave them near poverty. Each year UCC churches take up a special offering called The Christmas Fund which provides a lifeline of hope to many lower-income active and retired clergy and lay employees. The money collected is used to supplement pension checks, help pay health insurance premiums, and to provide emergency grants to individuals and families in need. You are invited to make a contribution to the health and well-being of these servants of God. Checks can be made out to the church and noted "Christmas Fund."

Altar Flowers for 2024

The 2024 Altar Flower Chart has been posted on the bulletin board in the Narthex. If you would like to honor, remember, or celebrate a special person or occasion, or simply want to enhance our worship service with flowers on the sanctuary altar, please add your name next to that date. A member of the Altar Guild will contact you near that time with complete details. Our altar arrangements are designed by C.M. Bloomers and cost \$62.00. Special requests are available at an additional cost.

Year End Giving

As we close out the calendar year we also close out our fiscal year. The Consistory is grateful for your generous support of the church's ministries throughout these past 12 months. A reminder that contributions you plan to claim for 2023 tax purposes must be received by December 31, 2023. If you have questions you can contact either of our financial secretaries, Paul Fink or Nancy vom Lehn at crucfinancialsecretary@gmail.com.

White Gift Service

This year marks the 35th Christmas that "white gifts" will be collected for Community Living, an organization dedicated to serving persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Gifts will be received during both services on **Sunday, December 17th**. Suggested items include: gift cards to Wal-Mart, fast food restaurants, hair cutters, etc., and basics such as: toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo & conditioner, soap, body lotion, body powder, bubble baths, comb & brush. Gifts should be wrapped in plain white paper.

2024 Envelopes Available

2024 Offering Envelopes are available from Paul or Nancy. If you have not previously requested envelopes and would like to receive a pack, please contact Paul Fink (301-371-4658), Nancy vom Lehn (301-371-7457), or Debbie Bruns in the church office.

Stewardship Update

We began collecting the Estimate of Giving cards as part of our annual Stewardship Campaign. To date, we have received 51 pledges to the 2024 General Fund for a total of \$127,699 and 10 pledges for the 2024 Capital Fund for a total of \$5,556.

An Oasis of Light

The hum of busyness at this time of year can be exhausting. It can also be exhausting to try to cope with sad feelings that don't match the merriment we see all around. If it is the first Christmas after having lost a loved one or the holiday reminds us of an earlier loss we can feel a sense of dislocation. In mid-December we experience the longest night of the year in the northern hemisphere. If you are in need of an oasis of light in the midst of this dark season we invite you to a simple service of candlelight, communion and healing on **Wednesday, December 20th at 7:00pm** in the sanctuary. The scripture, music and reflections will provide you a chance to calm your heart and ease your breath.



Ladies Chill Night

Ladies Chill night is on hiatus until after the holidays. They will resume gathering in January.

Guys Night Out

12/18 @ 6pm
Brewer's Alley



Join us for fellowship & food.
If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Bob Galey at
robertgaley@hotmail.com or text or call 301 712-8022.

BINGO! Buds

LUNCH, BINGO & FELLOWSHIP

December 14
Noon to 2pm
Coffee Hour Area

No need to sign up—Just show up!

Oasis of Light Service

Wednesday, 12/20 @ 7pm

JOIN US
DECEMBER 17, 2023

O&A

Opening & Affirming
SUNDAY

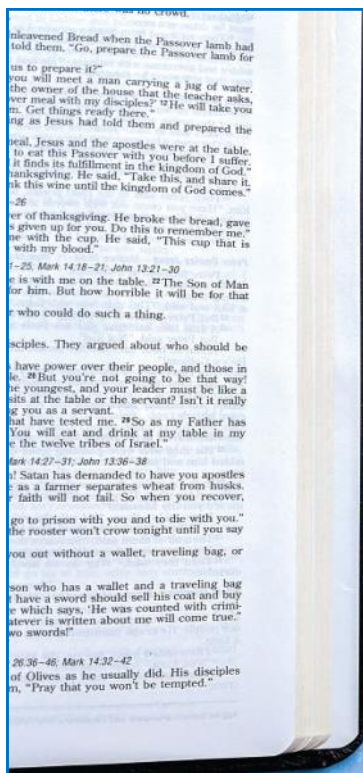
We will colorfully celebrate LGBTQ+ family & friends at both services.

 Christ Reformed United Church of Christ

BOOK CLUB

Book club will resume meeting in January.

Please contact Charlotte Hanson at
hansonc3306@gmail.com for more info.



SERMON PRIMERS

DEC 3 - MARK 13:24-37 "I'LL BE BACK"

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, AS THE EMOTIONLESS TERMINATOR, TELLS THE UNHELPFUL DESK SERGEANT "I'LL BE BACK." IS JESUS SAYING THE SAME THING TO HIS DISCIPLES AS THEY RELAX ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES?

DEC 10 - MARK 1:1-8 "PREPARING THE WAY"

BIG NAME PERFORMERS NEARLY ALWAYS HAVE A "WARM UP" ACT TO PREPARE THE CROWD FOR THEIR ENTRANCE. WAS THIS JOHN'S ROLE OR WAS THERE A MORE PROFOUND REASON?

DEC 17 - LUKE 1:46-55 "MARY'S SONG"

WHO WAS THIS YOUNG WOMAN TO BE SO JOY FILLED AND AWE INSPIRED BY THE NEW ROLE GOD HAD PLACED ON HER? WHAT MIGHT YOUR SONG BE IF YOU WERE TO WRITE IT?

DEC 24 - LUKE 1:26-38 "GABRIEL VISITS MARY"

WHY MIGHT MARY HAVE "FOUND FAVOR" WITH GOD? HOW MIGHT ONE EXPERIENCE SUCH A FAVOR TODAY?

DEC 31 - LUKE 2:22-40 "SIMEON AND ANNA"

IS THERE IRONY IN THE WAY JESUS AS AN INFANT AND JESUS AS A RENEGADE RABBI ARE GREETED AT THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM?

ONE GOD ONE VOICE
PRESENTS

THE GOOD, GOOD NEWS

Songs of Hope

DECEMBER 3RD
3:00PM

THE CHURCH OF THE TRANSFIGURATION
6909 Maryland Avenue • Braddock Heights, MD

FREE ADMISSION

Wednesday
12/13 @6:30pm
Main Cup

God on Tap is an opportunity for members and friends of CRUCC to gather to come to know each other and to wrestle with some of life's great (and small) questions.

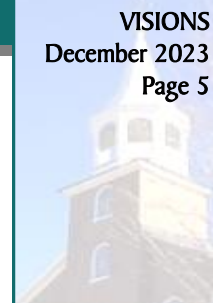
.....on Tap!

For more information, please contact Christine at 97cfontaine@gmail.com.

Thank You Note



Thank you so much for your donation to my Walk to End Alzheimer's® fundraising efforts! Your generosity contributed to my surpassing my goal and raising \$1,320!! These funds will help the Alzheimer's Association® provide care and support to all those facing Alzheimer's and all other dementia, and advance critical research. Thank you for making a difference in the fight against Alzheimer's! ~Beth Scott



MIDDLETOWN FOOD

FOOD ITEMS

- Fresh Produce
- Canned Tuna
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Tomato Products
- Soup
- Cereal
- Canned Veggies
- Condiments
- Pasta
- Oatmeal



PERSONAL CARE ITEMS

- Toilet Paper
- Liquid Hand Soap
- Bars of Soap
- Hand Lotion
- Facial Tissue
- Paper Towels



The mission of Heartly House is to end domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and child abuse, and to provide victims with safety, shelter, and supportive services.

- ♦ Gift cards Only: Walmart, Giant, Weis, Safeway, Food Lion, Target, Sheetz, Shell, Giant Eagle, CVS, Walgreens, TJ Maxx, Marshalls, Wawa, Exxon, etc

Collection boxes are found in the hallway between the sanctuary and the chapel.
Gift cards for Heartly House can be dropped off to the church office.

Around the Congregation

ALTAR FLOWERS

December 3	Mike Locke
December 10	Margaret Brandenburg
December 17	TBD
December 24	Wendy Campbell
December 31	Diana Cort

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

December 3	Griff & Mary Garwood
December 10	Connie & Gary Bell
December 17	TBD
December 24	N/A
December 31	Christian Ed Board

SOUND TECHS

December 3	Nick Fink
December 10	Pat Joy
December 17	Tony Verdi
December 24 AM	Nick Fink
December 24 PM	Tony Verdi
December 31	Pat Joy

LAYREADERS

December 3	Sue Wickless
December 10	Dick Burd
December 17	Laura Fontaine
December 24	N/A
December 31	Bunny Cramer

USHERS

December 3	Pat Joy, Nancy vom Lehn
December 10	Mike Locke, Debbie Locke
December 17	Laura Verdi, Nancy vom Lehn
December 24	Wendy Campbell, Isaac Cummings
December 24	Linda DeLauder, Bill Falconer
	Karen Koogle, Be' Hill
December 31	Linda Nichols, Judy Zeck

Church Attendance

OCTOBER 2023

	8:15 am	10:30 am
October 1	25	67
October 8	17	34
October 15	18	47
October 22	18	155
October 31 Combined Worship:	125	

Operating Finances Year to Date (Ending October 31, 2023)



CRUCC	Actual Oct 01, 2023 - Oct 31, 2023	Actual This Year to Date	Budget Remaining Year to Date
REVENUE			
Operating Income	\$ 22,537.50	\$ 223,454.06	\$ 172,890.51
Investment Income	\$ 4,804.87	\$ 19,089.18	\$ (19,089.18)
Other Income	\$ 4,037.94	\$ 40,341.73	\$ 20,653.27
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 31,380.31	\$ 282,884.97	\$ 174,454.60
EXPENSES			
Compensation Expenses	\$ 19,396.29	\$ 187,103.97	\$ 82,334.60
Operating Expenses			
Program Expenses	\$ -	\$ 107.20	\$ (107.20)
Worship-Related Expenses	\$ 387.75	\$ 5,099.51	\$ 4,400.49
Education-SS/CCCC	\$ -	\$ 523.91	\$ 3,976.09
Office & Supplies	\$ 1,310.59	\$ 16,958.19	\$ 7,992.81
Utilities	\$ 2,288.60	\$ 27,855.59	\$ 5,344.41
Building & Property	\$ 12,440.18	\$ 71,445.38	\$ 6,554.62
Equipment Maintenance	\$ -	\$ 957.00	\$ 1,543.00
<i>Total Operating Expenses</i>	<i>\$ 16,427.12</i>	<i>\$ 122,946.78</i>	<i>\$ 29,704.22</i>
Ministry Expenses			
Ministry - Outreach	\$ -	\$ 18,796.00	\$ 6,304.00
Ministry - Boards & Committees	\$ -	\$ 1,657.13	\$ 5,092.87
<i>Total Ministry Expenses</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ 20,453.13</i>	<i>\$ 11,396.87</i>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 35,823.41	\$ 330,503.88	\$ 123,435.69
Net Total	\$ (4,443.10)	\$ (47,618.91)	\$ 51,018.91

CCCC	Actual Oct 01, 2023 - Oct 31, 2023	Actual This Year to Date	Budget Remaining Year to Date
REVENUE			
Operating Income	\$ 96,485.00	\$ 764,009.50	\$ 198,945.26
Unrestricted Investment Income	\$ 6.27	\$ 1,014.73	\$ (1,014.73)
Other Income	\$ 48.00	\$ 6,231.56	\$ 2,968.44
Designated Income	\$ 3,137.50	\$ 3,162.48	\$ (3,162.48)
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 99,676.77	\$ 774,418.27	\$ 197,736.49
EXPENSES			
Compensation Expenses	\$ 86,345.31	\$ 609,552.71	\$ 175,202.05
Operating Expenses			
Program Expenses	\$ 3,407.82	\$ 53,872.43	\$ 18,127.57
Education-SS/CCCC	\$ 503.16	\$ 1,795.59	\$ 1,204.41
Office & Supplies	\$ 1,983.32	\$ 22,258.53	\$ 10,941.47
Utilities	\$ 662.28	\$ 3,332.56	\$ (332.56)
Building & Property	\$ 3,884.86	\$ 46,592.81	\$ 26,107.19
Equipment Maintenance	\$ 64.05	\$ 1,739.45	\$ 1,760.55
<i>Total Operating Expenses</i>	<i>\$ 10,505.49</i>	<i>\$ 129,591.37</i>	<i>\$ 57,808.63</i>
Total Designated Expenses	\$ 2,316.50	\$ 2,316.50	\$ (2,316.50)
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 99,167.30	\$ 741,460.58	\$ 230,694.18
Net Total	\$ 509.47	\$ 32,957.69	\$ (32,957.69)

CCCC held their Annual CCCC Family Thanksgiving Potluck on Nov. 16th at the Middletown Amvets. This was a record year with 8 turkeys cooked by: Missy Payne, Director, with help from Emma Ranneberger, and Kristin Staub, School Age teachers. We want to send a Special Thank you to Jeff Larson, parent of a Preschool child, who cooked his 'World Famous Deep Fried Turkey' to share with the families. There was plenty of food to share as everyone contributed to make this the largest family event yet, with 150 people in attendance!

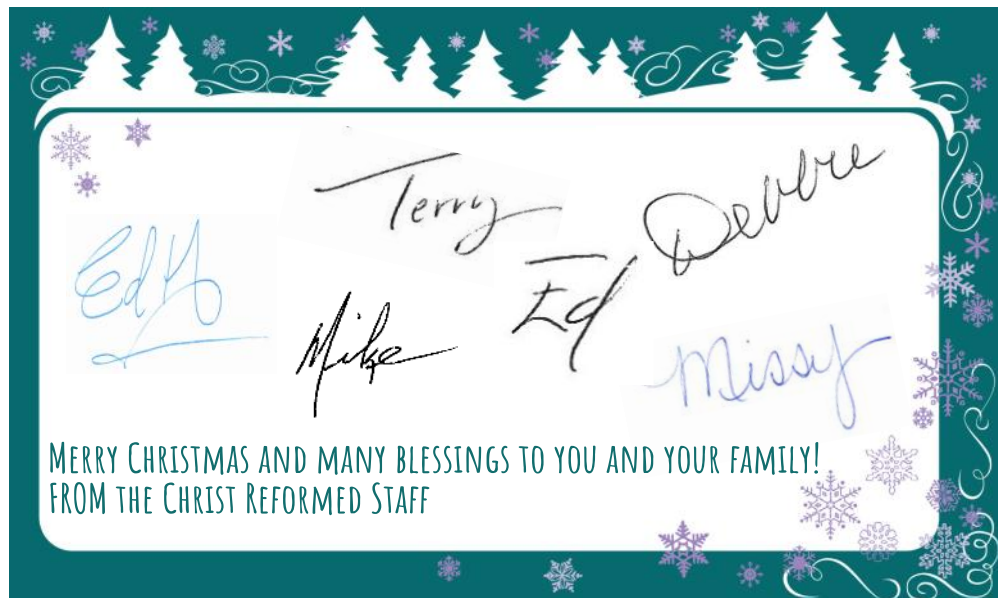
I want to send a very special Thank You to Patty Guyton, Pre-K Teacher and Emma Ranneberger, School Age teacher, who helped me make this event happen.



Annual CCCC Family Thanksgiving Potluck



Holiday Greetings



*Christ Reformed
United Church of Christ*

In-Person Worship
8:15am Contemporary Worship

In Person & On-Line Worship
Traditional Worship 10:30am
Coffee Hour 11:30am

Church Office Hours
Mon-Fri 10am-3pm
301-371-6610
Fax: 301-371-6912

12 South Church Street
P.O. Box 333
Middletown, Maryland 21769
christreformeducc@comcast.net
www.crucc.org

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Frederick, Maryland 21701

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Christ Church Children's Center

Mrs. Missy Payne, Director
6 Weeks—5th Grade
Mon-Fri 6:30am – 6:00pm
301-371-0360
www.christchurchchildrenscenter.net

*Reaching out to help people to know
God through Jesus Christ.
Equipping people to love God through
the community of faith.
Sending people to serve God
throughout the world.*



THE MIRACLE OF
Christmas
WORSHIP HIS MAJESTY

DECEMBER 17, 2023
7:00 PM

Christ Reformed United Church of Christ
12 South Church Street
Middletown, MD 21769

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

*Performed by: Christ Reformed United Church of Christ & Friends in the community
Created by: Phil Barfoot*