

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



Volume XXXX
Number XII
December 2024



Pastor's Pen

Dear Flock,

We are about to embark on a busy time of year. We celebrate Thanksgiving on November 27, and then Advent begins on Sunday, December 1, with Christmas only 24 days later. Christmas seems to hit us earlier and earlier each year. Black Friday sales bombard us starting in September. Christmas music, while wonderful, begins to creep into shopping malls and other public spaces well before Thanksgiving, and then churches are expected to sing Christmas Carols on the first Sunday of Advent. Advent?

Some years ago, I heard a seminary chaplain speak to a gathering of clergy and church music folk, and his topic was "Why Bother About Advent?" It made me ponder the true significance of the season of Advent and how it really does "prepare us to prepare." Personally, Advent has always been synonymous with a type of "homecoming."

The success of the holidays seems to be based on whether merchants and businesses meet their financial goals as much as possible. The church really has a challenging task to promote the season of Advent and the idea of spiritual preparation and awakening. It is hard to be in the spirit of Advent and live in the time of preparing ourselves to once again rediscover the journey. Yes, we use it as a time of preparation; however, it is not how we should prepare. We shop, bake, wrap, bake some more, decorate, write cards, shop some more, and still have a seemingly endless list of things to cover before the "main event" on December 24.

I can't think of much in life that doesn't take some sort of preparation to make it happen. If we are traveling for vacation or business, we prepare. Hosting a gathering for Thanksgiving takes preparation. Musicians practice regularly to hopefully make a final performance the best it can be. People in sports prepare by conditioning their bodies and minds to perform well. We certainly don't wait to prepare for our retirement, so why are we so lax about our spiritual planning?

I have a proposition for you this Advent season. Instead of running at a break-neck pace, I would like to ask you to think about Advent and Christmas this year in a different light. Think of it as a journey that begins with the prophets foretelling the future of an extraordinary presence for the world. Through word, worship, and special music we journey as people of hope with John the Baptizer, Mary, Elizabeth, the Shepherds, and Wise Men to experience a homecoming like no other.

Several things included in this mailing will help you on your journey. Of particular interest is a flyer, a map for the journey, that outlines a variety of offerings and a calendar of Advent readings to share as a family activity. There is something for everyone: Worship services, including an Oasis of Light for those who struggle with this time of year, and concerts, all going into mid-January.

If you've been away from Christ Church for a while or felt like something is missing from your life, come "home" for these beautiful seasons of music and the spoken word. Come, be reunited with your church family to celebrate God's gift of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love for a weary world.

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Oasis of
Light
Service

See page 2 for more details
Friday, 12/20 @ 7pm

Soli Deo Gloria
Pastor Greg

Nominating Committee Needs Your Help!

Nominating Committee is recruiting individuals to staff our church boards and committees. If you are interested in any position or if you would like more information, we would love to talk with you! Your Nominating Committee representatives are:

Laura Fontaine laura.s.fontaine@gmail.com
 Laura Verdi lkverdi@comcast.net
 Judy Zeck jaczeck@gmail.com

Cantata Reception

Desserts are needed for the Cantata on December 15. Please add your name and what you're providing on the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Please label donations with name, item, and if nuts or peanut butter. Donations can be left in the coffee hour area up to 6:30pm on December 15.

Altar Flowers for 2025

The 2025 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.

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."

White Gift Service

This year marks the 36th 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 15th**. 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.

Wreath-Making Workshop

The Parish Life Board is hosting a wreath-making workshop on December 8 from 1 to 3pm. The cost is \$5 and snacks and drinks will be served. Renee Brandenburg-Huffer will be the instructor. Bring gloves, pruning shears, and wire cutters if you have them. Bring a friend. Please add your name to the sign up sheet so we can be sure we have enough supplies.

Greenery Needed

Greenery donations are needed for the Wreath Workshop on December 8. Parish Life needs greenery (pine, blue spruce, holly, boxwood), pinecones, berries, acorns, etc. Please place donations on the back porch of the Parish House no later than the morning of December 8.

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 **Friday, 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.

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 2024 tax purposes must be received by December 31, 2024. If you have questions you can contact either of our financial secretaries, Paul Fink or Nancy vom Lehn at crucffinancialsecretary@gmail.com.

2025 Envelopes Available

2025 Offering Envelopes are available from Paul or Nancy. If you have not previously requested envelopes and would like to receive a pack, please contact our financial secretaries, Paul Fink and Nancy vom Lehn at crucffinancialsecretary@gmail.com.

IMAGINE
 A CHRISTMAS WORSHIP EXPERIENCE
DECEMBER 15, 2024
7:00 PM
Christ Reformed United Church of Christ
RECEPTION TO FOLLOW
Created by: REGI STONE & J. DANIEL SMITH

Dec. 12th
12pm-2pm
Coffee Hour Space

No Need to Sign Up
Just Show Up!

B I N G O

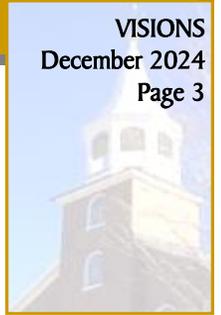
BUDS



December 15th @ 10AM
Coffee Hour Space

**Christmas
cookie
crunch**

Everyone is invited to bring their favorite
Christmas cookies or snacks to share.

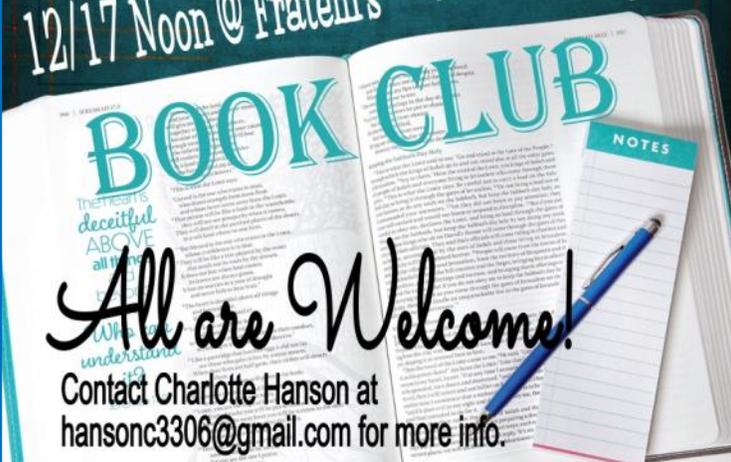
Book of the Month:
"Foster"

12/17 Noon @ Fratelli's by Claire Keegan

BOOK CLUB

All are Welcome!

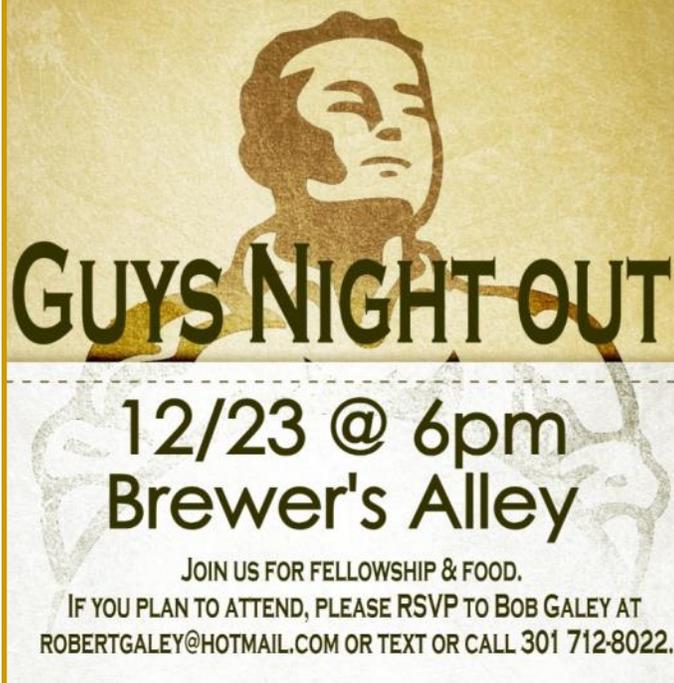
Contact Charlotte Hanson at
hansonc3306@gmail.com for more info.



GUYS NIGHT OUT

12/23 @ 6pm
Brewer's Alley

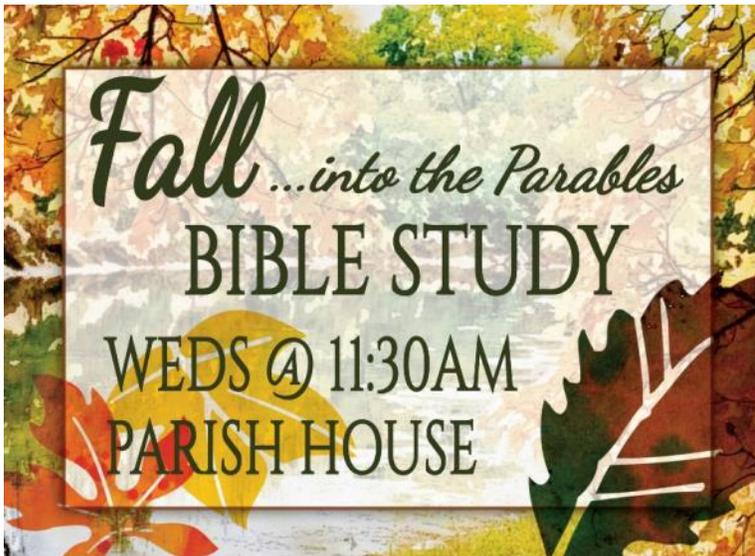
JOIN US FOR FELLOWSHIP & FOOD.
IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND, PLEASE RSVP TO BOB GALEY AT
ROBERTGALEY@HOTMAIL.COM OR TEXT OR CALL 301 712-8022.



Fall ...into the Parables

BIBLE STUDY

WEDS @ 11:30AM
PARISH HOUSE



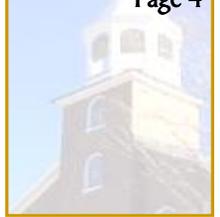
We gather
together

God on Tap

Tuesday 12/10 @ 6:30pm
Showroom

882 N East St, Frederick, MD
Please RSVP by 11/10 to
Christine at 97cfontaine@gmail.com.





**783 million people go to bed hungry every night.
Let's change that!!**

Heifer International is working to end world hunger in 19 countries across four continents, including the USA. How can you help? You can sponsor an animal or give a donation (one time or monthly). See information on the table in the back of the Chapel.



The Heifer project is sponsored by the Discipleship Board in memory of Cynthia and Carrollee Zecher.

HOLIDAY ASSISTANCE

Through Middletown Valley People Helping People our congregation is invited to help provide Holiday Assistance for local families who are facing hard times. Ways to help:

- ◆ The Discipleship Board has placed a small Christmas tree in the back of the Narthex. On the tree are ornaments representing gift cards in amounts of \$20, \$25, and \$50. You are invited to take an ornament, purchase a gift card through the church's gift card program (see Gail Johnson) or through a retail outlet, and place the card in the offering plate or return it to the church office.
- ◆ Donate Toiletry Items for teens
- ◆ Donate toys for children under age 12

All donations can be dropped off to the church office.
DEADLINE: DECEMBER 6TH



MIDDLETOWN FOOD BANK

FOOD ITEMS

- Beans (dry/canned)
- Canned Meat
- Instant Potatoes
- Pasta
- Pasta Sauce
- Baking Soda
- Pancake Mix



PERSONAL CARE ITEMS

- Toilet Paper
- Paper Towels
- Liquid Hand Soap
- Bars of Soap

Collection boxes are found in the hallway between the sanctuary and the chapel.

WEEKEND FOOD PROGRAM

Many children in the Middletown valley area are provided a free or reduced priced lunch on school days, but they face the prospect of hunger on the weekend. In partnership with area churches, the weekend food program helps to fill this gap by providing weekend bags full of food for children in these area schools: *Middletown Elementary, Primary, Middle and High School, Myersville, Valley and Wolfsville Elementary.*

How Can YOU Help These Children?

- ◆ SPONSOR a child for a year at a cost of \$300.00, in whole or in part – simply make out your check to CRUCC and indicate on the memo line that it is for the Weekend Food Program.
- ◆ PURCHASE the specific foods needed and put the items in the designated box located in the Narthex
- ◆ VOLUNTEER your time to pack the food.
- ◆ DELIVER the food to a school.

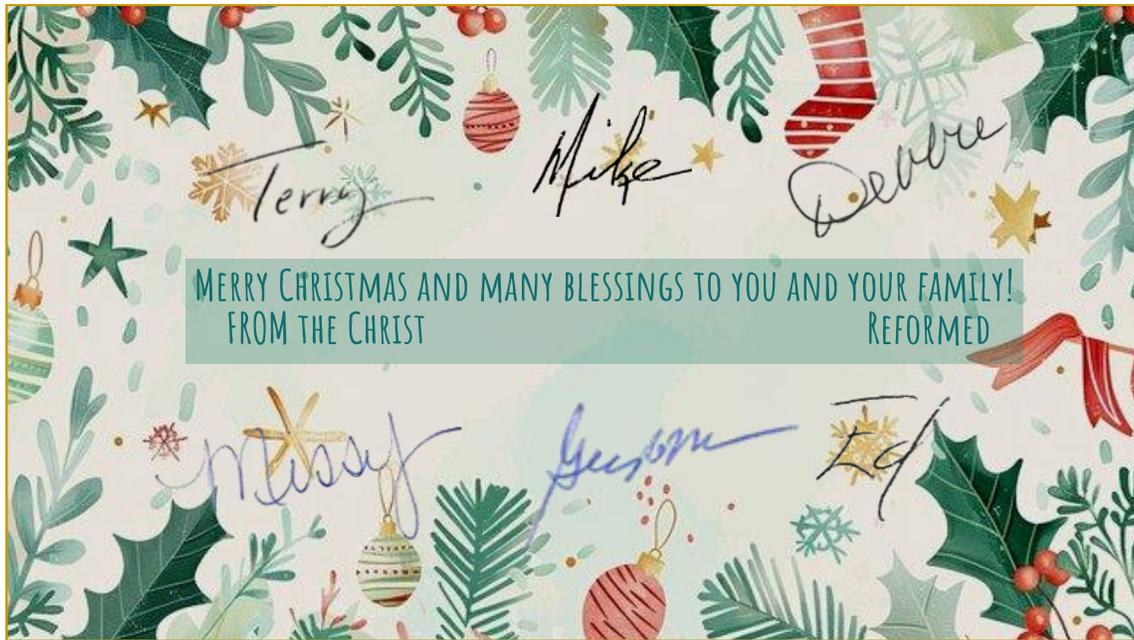
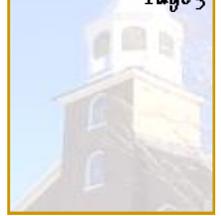
RAISERIGHT GIFT CARD FUNDRAISER



Did you know that you can donate to the church while you are grocery shopping or eating out? With every gift card you purchase from the church through the Raise Right program, a portion of the value of the gift card is donated right back to

Christ Reformed. For a partial list of the participating merchants, look for order forms in the Narthex or visit the Raise Right website (<http://www.raiseright.com>). We have a small inventory of gift cards that you can purchase from Gail Johnson on Sundays, submit the completed form (w/ payment) to the church office or order directly online. Questions? Call the church office or see Gail Johnson.

ENROLL ONLINE: <https://www.raiseright.com/enroll?enrollCode=3124C59B3388L>



Around the Congregation

Monthly Info Meeting
hosted by Consistory
DECEMBER MEETING CANCELLED

<u>ALTAR FLOWERS</u>		
December 1		TBD
December 8	Wayne & Margaret Brandenburg	
December 15		Mike Hill
December 22		TBD
December 29		Be' Hill
<u>COFFEE HOUR HOSTS</u>		
December 1		Wendy Campbell
December 8		Wendy Campbell
December 15		Cookie Crunch
December 22		TBD
December 29		Discipleship Board
<u>SOUND TECHS</u>		
December 1		Nick Fink
December 8		Tony Verdi
December 15		Pat Joy
December 22		Tony Verdi
December 24		Tony Verdi
December 29		Pat Joy

<u>LAYREADERS</u>	
December 1	Laura Fontaine
December 8	Paul Fink
December 15	Sue Wickless
December 22	Susan Thornton
December 29	Wendy Campbell
<u>USHERS</u>	
December 1	Pat Joy, Nancy vom Lehn
December 8	Debbie Locke, Mike Locke
December 15	Janet Stock, Nancy vom Lehn
December 22	Isaac Cummings, Laura Verdi
December 24 5pm	TBD
December 24 7pm	Linda DeLauder, Bill Falconer
	Be; Hill, Karen Koogle
December 29	Linda Nichols, Judy Zeck

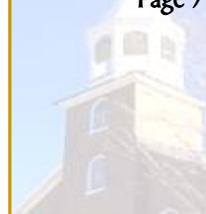
Church Attendance

October 2024		
	8:15 am	10:30 am
October 6 Outdoor Worship—66		
October 13	23	41
October 20	20	46
October 27	17	51

HALLOWEEN AT CCCC!



Operating Finances Year to Date Ending October 31, 2024



	Actual Oct 01, 2024 - Oct 31, 2024	Actual Year to Date	Annual Budget Remaining This Year
CRUCC			
REVENUE			
Operating Income	\$ 15,532.00	\$ 204,332.39	\$ 72,399.61
Investment Income	\$ 4,805.19	\$ 20,883.51	\$ 5,610.49
Other Income	\$ 4,001.25	\$ 39,888.14	\$ 19,751.86
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 24,338.44	\$ 265,104.04	\$ 97,761.96
EXPENSES			
Compensation Expenses	\$ 13,387.32	\$ 133,635.50	\$ 145,106.50
Operating Expenses			
Program Expenses	\$ -	\$ 200.00	\$ (200.00)
Worship-Related Expenses	\$ 139.75	\$ 3,573.94	\$ 6,726.06
Education-SS/CCCC	\$ (382.65)	\$ 302.17	\$ 2,697.83
Office & Supplies	\$ 1,937.98	\$ 19,027.95	\$ 6,994.05
Utilities	\$ 2,544.40	\$ 24,679.11	\$ 9,920.89
Building & Property	\$ 1,216.42	\$ 21,129.36	\$ 8,670.64
Equipment Maintenance	\$ -	\$ 581.00	\$ 1,419.00
Insurance Expenses	\$ 1,725.75	\$ 39,537.00	\$ (34,953.00)
<i>Total Operating Expenses</i>	\$ 7,181.65	\$ 109,030.53	\$ 1,275.47
Ministry Expenses			
Ministry - Outreach	\$ -	\$ 14,044.00	\$ 4,756.00
Ministry - Boards & Committees	\$ -	\$ 2,071.88	\$ 4,628.12
<i>Total Ministry Expenses</i>	\$ -	\$ 16,115.88	\$ 9,384.12
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 20,568.97	\$ 258,781.91	\$ 155,766.09
NET TOTAL	\$ 3,769.47	\$ 6,322.13	\$ (58,004.13)

	Actual Oct 01, 2024 - Oct 31, 2024	Actual Year to Date	Annual Budget Remaining This Year
CCCC			
REVENUE			
Operating Income	\$ 83,788.00	\$ 818,263.00	\$ 183,526.00
Investment Income	\$ 3.80	\$ 2,767.00	\$ 149.00
Other Income	\$ 72.00	\$ 5,155.27	\$ 1,771.73
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 83,863.80	\$ 826,185.27	\$ 185,446.73
EXPENSES			
Compensation Expenses	\$ 62,616.72	\$ 650,768.09	\$ 165,204.91
Operating Expenses			
Program Expenses	\$ 4,735.39	\$ 55,558.37	\$ 22,441.63
Education-SS/CCCC	\$ -	\$ 2,309.54	\$ 1,190.46
Office & Supplies	\$ 2,665.97	\$ 26,690.41	\$ 18,509.59
Utilities	\$ 445.88	\$ 2,704.60	\$ 960.40
Building & Property	\$ 3,984.52	\$ 46,853.58	\$ 15,646.42
Equipment Maintenance	\$ 1,036.30	\$ 2,724.12	\$ 1,275.88
<i>Total Operating Expenses</i>	\$ 12,868.06	\$ 136,840.62	\$ 60,024.38
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 75,484.78	\$ 787,608.71	\$ 225,229.29
NET TOTAL	\$ 8,379.02	\$ 38,576.56	\$ (39,782.56)

*Christ Reformed
United Church of Christ
Rev. Greg Shook*

In-Person Worship
8:15am Contemporary Worship

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

Office Hours
Mon-Fri 10am-2pm
301-371-6610
Fax: 301-371-6912

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

Non Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
PERMIT 2202
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.*

Christmas Eve Services

5pm Candlelight Service

7pm Concert

7:30pm Candlelight Service

