

The Pioneer

'preparing for others to follow'

Newsletter of the Preble Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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~ December, 2016 ~

...from the Pastor's Pen...

Dear Friends,

The campaign is behind us and we can now begin to heal from the toxins of the most contentious election contest in decades.

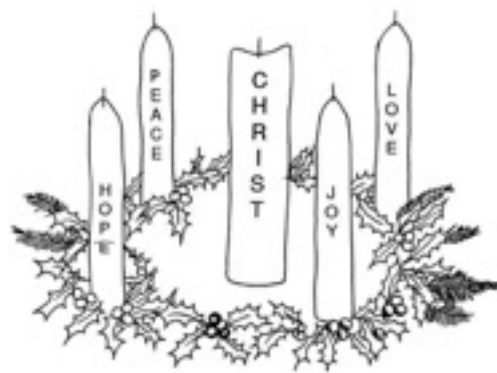
America is divided, but hopefully we will pay attention to why we got into this muddle and begin the process of healing. What's clear is that governmental and other actions taken over the past several decades have harmed people in ways that were unexpected or ~ more likely ~ ignored.

Millions of voters signaled that they are tired of the status quo. Now we must examine the results and take action to build bridges. Words like "shocked" and "stunned" and "sudden" pepper the airwaves.

We don't suffer for lack of analysis of what happened. Social media commentators and op-ed writers offer analysis *ad nauseam*, expressing both anger and satisfaction. But life goes on, and because of this election, we are bound to experience change in many of the pieces that make up America.

Change is difficult but overall is positive, necessary, and unavoidable. Events like those we have just experienced call our attention to the reality of change, even here in our own country church. Paul's words in Romans 13:11-14 remind us that our present moment is really all that we can affect, and what we do with that moment is vitally important.

He admonishes us to be alert to our behaviors and to be reflective as we go through our days so that the choices that we make and the actions we take bless not only ourselves but the people around us: family, friends, and strangers.



In this season of Advent, we take the opportunity to reflect on our lives. The UCC Daily Devotional writer, Vince Amlin, admits that “it’s uncomfortable to be off balance and at sea...” but that sometimes waiting and thinking are part of the process of redemption. Certainly reflecting on our own behavior is challenging, because, again, change is difficult, and especially our own. It’s always easier for us to identify how someone else needs to change!

Please read Rev. Amlin’s devotional elsewhere in the Pioneer. He reminds us that humor is part of the process, lest we take ourselves too seriously at times. After all, we humans laugh and cry, forgive and blame, accept and reject, praise and complain all through our lives. We as individuals are not “right” or “wrong” as we relate to other people.

Any final determination on those behaviors belongs to God, who, through Jesus Christ, gives us a simple way to relate to what’s important: *Love God with all of your heart and soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.*

Maybe we’ve heard those words so much that they’ve become white noise in the background of our lives, but that just means that we need to listen to them again and again, and to discover how we ourselves fit into their meaning....

God bless you all with lots of love during this holy season and for all of the days ahead.



In faith and love,
Pastor Becky



Christmas Cookie Exchange!



Adding to the various seasonal festivities in our church this year, we will enjoy a cookie exchange after worship on December 18th. If we are very lucky, Santa and Snowflake will be here, too, to see the kids.

To take cookies home, please bring two dozen for others to share, and if you want to bring more, so much the merrier. Extras will be eaten or wrapped and taken to our shut-ins and others who can’t be with us during the season.

Let’s enjoy our church and its great bakers!

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting is coming up sooner rather than later. It's the end of the year, already!

We will meet as a congregation on Sunday, January 22, 2017, following worship. As usual, everyone is encouraged and invited to attend. We bring a dish to pass and gather for lunch just before the meeting.

Our Moderator, Kadene Limmer, asks that the annual reports from the various boards and committees be submitted by Friday, January 13, so that she and Sue Swayze can assemble them and get them out to everyone to read ahead of time. The goal is to give them out by January 20.

This is a time of fellowship and Old/New business sprinkled with good food and friendship. Please set this date aside for the Annual Meeting.



Deacons' Speakin'

December plans were well underway after our November meeting. Many thanks to all the hands that help during this busy season. Our missions include:

- updating our Christmas card list
- sending cards to many Preble friends shut-ins, wherever they may be;
- finding a family for whom we can buy gifts to help with their Christmas celebration;
- updating the Church Directory for 2017;
- decorating the sanctuary, erecting the crèche, setting up the tree;




(con't next column)

- updating the Phone Tree for emergency phone calls;
- planning to host the CE meeting that took place on 11/20.

(Please read elsewhere in this issue of the Pioneer about the CE meeting.)

Trustee Report

The Board of Trustees is busy with year-end business and new year's business as well:

- The contract with the Preble Children's Center will be renewed;
- The repairs to the handicap bathroom will be complete by the time this Pioneer is mailed; 
- Sanctuary ceiling lamps will be replaced this month, and the chandelier replacement is still pending because of the illness of the artist who is doing the etching;
- The bid packages for renovating the front porch have been sent to five prospective contractors;
- Budget planning for 2017 is well underway and will be presented for the congregation's discussion and approval after worship on 12/18.

**Many, many thanks to everyone who has served our church on the various boards, committees, missions, luncheons, and in every other way during 2016.
God bless you!**



Report from Christian
Education Pizza Party
and Meeting
November 20, 2016

Our church cherishes our children, always has. They are precious to us and we want to give them a significant grounding in their faith. The faithful work of the men and women who volunteer for CE and to work in any other way with our kids is deeply appreciated by everyone.

As our kids mature, they need Sunday school challenges that are appropriate for their ages and growth. We have been using material that challenges all ages, but it's clear that our older youth are ready for more opportunities to continue learning and developing their faith.



Parents, interested friends, youth, kids, Pastor Becky, and CE board members gathered in the dining room of the church after worship on this date to brainstorm and share ideas for programs for our kids – of all ages. Two easels were needed to record the possibilities contributed by folks around the tables, and then adults volunteered to facilitate many of the projects with the kids. Now, with all the ideas, we need robust follow up or they will simply remain wishes written on an easel page.

Two of the projects have been chosen for December: caroling and cookie platters, and the Annual Christmas pageant. The pageant will be given during worship on December 18th. Following worship that day we will share a cookie exchange (bring two dozen if you want to participate) and package extra cookies for our shut-ins. The date for caroling will be determined, and all are invited.



Here is the list of the suggestions on the easel pages. You are invited with gusto to join the fun! The kids are excited at the possibilities and so are the adults.



Thanks to everyone for your interest and enthusiasm. After the meeting, we managed to do away with all five large pizzas and fresh cookies!

1. Create a white board calendar to let everyone know the dates for projects.
2. Add the names of the kids and adults who want to participate in the project.
3. Identify some hands-on service ministries for kids to help with.
4. Invite the kids to play their instruments during worship.
5. Plan a Children's Service for a Sunday morning, which means the kids will lead us in worship.
6. Visit members and friends in hospitals, nursing homes, and elsewhere. Bring cookies and treats with us.
7. Sing.
8. Work together with other churches.
9. Invite friends and neighbors to church.
10. Consider other curriculums.
11. Use Bible drills and games more often.
12. Share a community meal.
13. Help with Food Pantry.
14. Help with Loaves and Fishes.
15. Involve both adults and kids in these projects.
16. Go caroling and bring treats for the homes where we sing.
17. Do a Christmas pageant which gives kids lines to say.

Actually, most of these ideas came right from the kids, so we know they are behind these possibilities. The adults picked up on their enthusiasm, and many have already have already volunteered to be involved.



Thanks to Matt and Laura Swayze, Pat Twentyman, Ellen Shirley, Rob Fox, Dick Martin, Steve Wilson, Kadene Limmer, Sue Swayze, and Becky West for their interest in moving these exciting ideas forward. YOU can be involved, too!



December Celebrations

- December 1: Eric Shirley
- 2: Jed Swayze
- 3: Ashlyn Swanka
John and Jean Hilts
Anniversary
- 4: Steve Burt
- 8: Carolyn Swanka
- 9: Julie Baldwin
- 12: Charlotte Delaney
- 17: Evan Knapp
- 18: Adam Fox
- 23: Jim Henderson
- 28: Evan Shirley
Blake Shirley
Amy Twentyman
- 31: Matthew Swayze

REASON FOR THE SEASON

by J. Nourse

The Holy season of love and joy...
 Kindness and giving too...
 Happy family traditions...
 And thinking of friends like you...
 It's time...
 To reflect on blessings that we have...
 And why we have this day...
 It's because our Lord and Savior...
 Was born on Christmas day...

It happened...
 When baby Jesus was born...
 All of those years ago...
 He came to us from heaven above...
 And set our hearts aglow...
 I pray...
 His love and richness of the season...
 Will fall around you today...
 And fill your heart with hope and love...
 Each and every day...
 And so...
 To all of my favorite people...
 This is my wish for you...
 May love and peace decorate your life...
 Not just today but all the year through...



Joy in the Morning

by Joy Niswender

One of my all-time Christmas favorites isn't in the same category as "Silent Night" or "The First Noel", etc... "Mary's Little Boy Child" has a calypso beat, a tempo which normally probably wouldn't conjure up thoughts of the nativity, but the words are the oft-told story of that very special baby born in a stable in Bethlehem.

The line from the song that grabs me and never fails to remind me of Christ's love for all is "...and man can live forevermore, because of Christmas Day!" Forevermore, think of it! That really gets to the heart of the Christmas message, whether in traditional soft tempo or a lively calypso style. He was born and, ultimately, died that eternal life could be ours. Incomprehensible? Yes! Awesome? Definitely! True? You can bet your life on it!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we are prone to analyze and probe and want answers based on human wisdom

Help us to realize that our faith must be a little child's.



**O, come
let us
adore him!**

*Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service
7 pm
and
Christmas Day Worship
12/25
10 am*

*Hi all,
Sorry, I didn't get Pioneer to Michelle until mid December for the website .
Wes*