

From Our Pastor:



Out with the old and in with the new. Some have been known to offer up these words as they celebrate each new year. But there is something about the saying that doesn't sit well with me. While I am decidedly a curious sort and readily welcome change and innovation, I also think it important to be reflective, considering what has brought me to the present day and my situation in life. Maybe it's just remembering a cautionary saying about babies and bathwater. So where exactly does that find us this new year? Surely there are things about the old year we'd like to see out the door.

We've had too much already of Covid, of pandemic sickness on top of everyday life and its challenges. But the experts tell us Covid isn't likely to go away soon. And that leads me to ask, "What have I learned from this experience and what does that suggest for the future?"

I have begun to live more simply, happy with my own company, my own cooking and ability to trust my gifts and those of others as guides to lead me moment by moment. I have heard the voice of Jesus and his oft repeated words of comfort to his disciples, "Be not afraid." So, I have learned to welcome the solitude. I see it as an invitation to use the time to open my heart to the world around me. And I have allowed the rush of water over stone, the calm of a gentle breeze, the intensity of color in sunrise and sunset, the lilting melody of birdsong to soothe my worried mind. I am learning the healing power of breathing deeply and letting go in those moments to make way for new possibilities. I am learning that as I listen to and care for my body, I am more able to recognize sources of anxiety.

I have learned that worrying about the future can inhibit experiencing joy in the present, that expectation of difficulty can be a cause for escalating anxiety and even grief. Bereavement specialists call it anticipatory grief - that dread of what we fully expect lies before us. There are times when we experience a difficult diagnosis or serious illness when such grief is realistic and understandable. But there are times that our worry tricks us into thinking it is realistic when it is not. Instead, if we allowed ourselves to relax and let the future unfold day by day, if we allow ourselves to trust Jesus' reassurance, we might instead find relief for our aching hearts.

This brings me around to thinking about this congregation and conversations about its future. The observations of trends in attendance, giving, and members' availability for leadership has led to important conversation and study among leaders and the elders. It led to the church's participation in a study with other Allentown churches who are experiencing similar challenges. In a few weeks, we will hear results of the study from Rev. Dr. David DeRemer at our annual meeting. He will have some suggestions about possible options open to the congregation, but it will be up to the members to consider what he has to say. The data and observations of the members tell us what has brought the church to where it is today. It will be up to the members to take a look at how the resources can best be put to use in the future.

I wonder how much of a role fear has played in inhibiting this conversation. I imagine there are many questions that weigh heavily on the minds and hearts of members. They are questions that deserve to be heard and discussed. There can be a tendency to withdraw, to imagine that if the concerns are not named, they will go away. Until they are named, nebulous questions take on an outsized influence, creating more fear than perhaps they are warranted. I see among members of this church strong and vital connections through which you have been present with one another through good times and in the midst of challenges. You have laughed and cried together, provided support at transitions and comfort in sorrow. Having faced the problems of the past with deep faith, we can trust God's promise to be present in what lies ahead. "Be not afraid."

Pastor Judy

Live In-Person Sunday Worship continues ... 10:30 A.M.



- Arrive between 10:15-10:30 am.
- Wear a mask at all times.
- Do not gather in the narthex before or after worship.



In addition to live in-person Sunday worship, we continue worship via Zoom from your computer or telephone. Instructions are included each week with the distribution of the worship bulletin.

Sermon by Phone

Sermon by Phone is an option if Zoom is not working for you or you cannot attend on Sunday.

Try it! It's so easy! Three steps to follow from any phone, any day, any time.

1. Pick up your telephone
2. Dial the number: **610-258-2927**
3. The recorded service begins immediately

Were you away on Sunday? Did you get interrupted during the service? Give it a try any time day or night before the following Sunday service. The number is local with no long-distance charges.

PLAY & PRAY WITH PASTOR JUDY - CANCELLED for the month of January

DRIVE-THRU COMMUNION - Sunday, January 16, 2022 at 3:00 p.m.



Commune and listen to the bells. Communion elements, bread, wine and juice will be provided. Each person should bring a container to receive the juice or wine. Someone will direct those driving cars to line up. Please remain in your car. The pastor and elders will receive each carload in turn, offering a blessing and the elements. **The wearing of masks is required.**



Leo & Sonia Fernandez on the recent passing of Leo's brother.

James & Donna McHugh on the passing of James' 99-year-old aunt, Tess Kruglik.



... to **Ruth Newhard**, whose name was inadvertently omitted from the list of cookie bakers who contributed to the delicious treats that accompanied the Advent Blessings bags.

... from **many members** who expressed appreciation for the Advent Blessings bags as well as the Member Pictorial Directory!



Mary Christman - Devon House
LaRue Eckroth – at home
Robert & Dorothy Foulds – at home
Eleanor Limpar – at home
Phyllis Meckes – Blue Mtn Nursing/Rehab

Mae Moyer – at home
Doris Nissen – at home
Doris Shaver – Phoebe Home
Naomi Thomas – at home
Geri Yarnall – at home

NURSERY SCHOOL

Our January fundraiser is a Blue Mountain Candle sale, which will be held January 10 thru January 20. Order forms will be available in the narthex beginning January 9.

The Nursery School is continuing with the Used Clothing Drive (clothing, shoes, linens, towels, etc.). The pick-up date will be determined later (sometime in spring).

REMINDER ... Do not enter the Nursery School area for any reason while the school is in operation (Monday-Thursday, 9:00 am-12:00 pm). During this time, should you be in the building for any reason and find yourself in need of bathroom facilities, please use the one in the narthex.

DISCOVERY PROJECT UPDATE

Rev. Dr. David DeRemer will be presenting the results of the feasibility study at our congregational meeting on Sunday, January 30, 2022 during the 10:30 AM worship service. There will be an opportunity to comment and ask questions. Please make every effort to attend this especially important meeting! Prior to our meeting on January 30, please read the following article written by Rev. Dr. DeRemer:

“Did you know that there are 10 UCC congregations in the Allentown area that are all generally experiencing the same challenges? All have part-time pastors. All have been averaging less than 60 people in worship and in our post-COVID world are struggling to get half that number. Many have financial reserves built up over decades that are being rapidly spent to pay operating costs.

“The challenge for all these congregations is not that they are small. Small congregations are great at caring for their members. Everyone knows everyone. They can make decisions and respond to needs quickly. Ninety (90%) percent of all Protestant congregations in the nation average less than 75 people in worship weekly. The problem is not smaller congregations. It is smaller congregations in big buildings.

“The 10 UCC congregations in the Allentown area have been averaging less than 60 people in worship in buildings with half a dozen church school classrooms and a sanctuary that often seats 300 people. Within the next 5 years it is likely that the majority of these 10 congregations will run out of people or run out of money or both.

“Five of the ten congregations have decided to participate in a feasibility study that seeks to restart the conversation about consolidating Allentown area UCC congregations. Zion’s Reformed, St. John’s (6th and Walnut), Grace, Emmanuel and Greenawalds are participating in the study. This article will provide an update about the progress of the project.

“The feasibility study involves five sources of information:

1. Membership and financial data from 2017, 2018 and 2019. Pre-COVID data is being used because it reflects a more stable time in the life of these congregations.
2. Interview responses from 5-7 households in the congregation to a series of 20 questions that are all focused on the effects of the congregation closing.
3. Addresses of all members used to create an electronic “pin map” showing the geographic distribution of the congregation. A second map is created using the addresses of the active members.
4. The pastor’s current employment agreement: hours worked, salary paid, benefits provided.
5. A building walk-through led by a knowledgeable property person of the congregation.

“For all five of the participating congregations, the above items have been completed except for one address list and one building walk-through. A written report has been provided to the Consistory of Zion’s Reformed UCC and to the Leadership Council of UCC Greenawalds. The other three reports are in the process of being completed.”

UCCG FINANCES

The **BILL TREE** has returned to the narthex. As you are able, please select an item from the tree (most range between \$50-100) and return the item and your check – either in the plate on Sunday morning, mailed to the church office or placed in the secure mailbox at the Christian Education entrance. If you have not physically returned to the church, please call the office if you would like to participate and you may select an available item from the tree.

If you currently give electronically and would like to increase your 2022 giving, please contact the church office.

Please give prayerful consideration to how God is calling you to be present to the church in this time of need.

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE



Our Leadership Circle continues to meet monthly via Zoom. Here are some highlights from our December 9, 2021 meeting:

- Devotions were offered by Janine Hensinger.
- We reviewed and accepted the minutes from our November 11, 2021 LC meeting.
- We reviewed and accepted the minutes from our November 21, 2021 Congregational Meeting.
- The Treasurer's Reports, including the new Reconciliation Report, were reviewed and accepted, with general discussion.
- Reports were submitted by the Property and Music & Worship Teams.
- The Pastor's Report was submitted and reviewed.
- The Annual Congregational Meeting is scheduled for January 30, 2022 during worship. Rev. DeRemer is expected to report on the results of his Feasibility Study.
- Our next Leadership Circle meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 13 at 4:00 pm via Zoom.



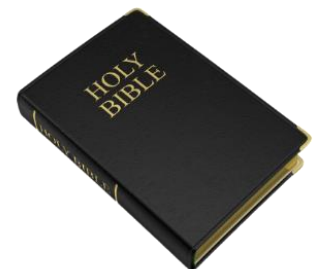
There are currently four families in the program. All four families are seeking housing and are ready to graduate!

UCC Greenawalds will be hosting the Family Promise families **March 6-12, 2022**. It will be determined at a later date whether we will host the families in our Fellowship Hall; it is more likely that they will remain in the hotel. Either way, we will be in need of members to prepare meals, and we will reach out to you in a few weeks. As always, your generosity to homeless children and their families is greatly appreciated.

Homecoming 4 is scheduled for Saturday, March 26, 2022 at the new Hyatt Place on Grange Road in Allentown. Details will be provided next month.

BIBLE STUDY resumes on Monday, January 10 at 7 pm via Zoom

If you ordered Book 2 of the series and have not yet picked it up, you may do so on Sunday mornings, or contact Pastor Judy or the church office to arrange a pick-up date/time.



SMALL DINING GROUPS

Do you want to get to know your fellow church members?

Do you like to socialize?

Do you like to eat?

We have the ideal opportunity for you...

The UCCG Small Dining Groups!



What is the purpose? To use a small group module to help us get to know each other a little better, support our fellow members beyond Sundays, and eventually have that small group influence others within and outside the UCCG community. Churches that have used this module have experienced a closer congregation, improved communication, and growth in discipleship, stewardship, and mission – not to mention, had some FUN and GOOD FOOD in the process!

We would like to get this fellowship opportunity restarted – hopefully in February 2022 – but fully understand that there may be members who had participated in the past who may be uncomfortable participating at this time.

Contact Karen Griffith, 610.703.6826 or kgriff5@ptd.net, **by January 15** if you are interested in participating. Karen will use the February 2020 dining groups as a starting point for group assignments, as most of the groups did not have the opportunity to meet.

Echoes, Bulletin or Clip-Art Flower Sponsorships for 2022

We are seeking sponsors for the weekly bulletins and flower clip art in our bulletins for the year 2022. The cost for sponsoring weekly bulletins is \$10 and the flower clip art is also \$10. The cost of sponsoring the monthly *Echoes* is \$20. Your sponsorship helps pay the cost of postage for mailing the bulletins and *Echoes* for those who don't have email or can't make it to worship in the sanctuary. Please contact Sue Borger 484-695-7954 to pick your date(s). The sign-up sheets will NOT be posted in the narthex this year.

Sue Borger, our church secretary, will be on vacation ...

Sue & Ray and their family will be on vacation beginning January 6 thru 16, 2022. Sue will **not** be available on her cell phone during her vacation. Someone will be checking messages on the church office telephone.

STAR WORDS



*“For last year’s words belong to last year’s language and
next year’s words await another voice.” T S Eliot*

Star Words are an Epiphany tradition that has been spreading over the last couple decades as a tool to guide the faith journeys of Christians in this country and beyond. It has been championed by RevGalBlogPal Marci Glass and many others.

This year, Star Words are included in this newsletter so that all will have access regardless of ability to be present in the sanctuary when we celebrate the festival of Epiphany. Choose/clip from among the words (Page 9) one that you wish to have as a guide for the coming year. Open your heart and mind to consider it along with the following questions:

This word, my word, one of many, is just a word. What does it mean?

If I reflect on it over the year, is there something in my life that will be made clearer to me?

Is this word meant as a gift for me, something to receive with gratitude?

*Is it something that I might find within myself to give away or
to inform my actions and relationships?*

Keep your chosen word in a place where you will see it often as a reminder to be on the lookout for how God is showing up in your life. May your journey through the new year with this word be a blessing.



Amazement



Attentiveness



Celebration



Encouragement



Fulfillment



Helpfulness



Interdependence



Resourcefulness



Sustenance



Stillness

**THIS PAGE WAS INTENTIONALLY
LEFT BLANK SO YOU MAY CUT OUT
YOUR STAR WORD(S) WITHOUT
MISSING ANY INFORMATION.**

January 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 HAPPY NEW YEAR
2 In-Person and Zoom Worship 10:30 am Worship (incl. communion)	3 7:00-8:30 pm Boy Scouts	4 7:00 pm – Cub Scouts Com. Mtg	5 Quilting Chicks 9:am – 3 pm	6	7	8 6-9 pm Cub Scouts Pack Mtg “Bake Off”
9 In-Person and Zoom Worship 10:30 am Worship	10 7:00-8:30 pm Bible Study on Zoom 7:00-8:30 pm Boy Scouts	11 6:30-8:00 pm Cub Scouts	12 Quilting Chicks 9 am- 3 pm	13 4:00 pm – Zoom Leadership Circle Meeting	14	15
16 In-Person and Zoom Worship 10:30 am Worship <u>3:00 pm</u> – Drive-thru Communion	17 7:00-8:30 pm Bible Study on Zoom 7:00-8:30 pm Boy Scouts	18 6:30-8:00 pm Cub Scouts	19 Quilting Chicks 9 am- 3 pm	20	21	22
23 In-Person and Zoom Worship 10:30 am Worship	24 7:00-8:30 pm Bible Study on Zoom 7:00-8:30 pm Boy Scouts	25 6:30-8:00 pm Cub Scouts	26 Quilting Chicks 9 am- 3 pm	27	28	29
30 In-Person and Zoom Worship 10:30 am Worship Annual Congregational Meeting during Worship service	31 7:00-8:30 pm Bible Study on Zoom 7:00-8:30 pm Boy Scouts					



Wishing you the gifts of happiness, health, hope, joy, love, and peace throughout the year.

OUR STAFF

Pastor Judy Brandon	484-705-5710 cell
pastorjudy.ucc@gmail.com	
Church Office/Main Phone	610-435-1763
Michael Huffman, Director of Music Ministry	610-794-6056 home
Susan Borger, Church Secretary	484-695-7954 cell
Robert "Sonny" Rinker, Custodian	484-524-2070
Nursery School	610-435-5467
churchoffice@uccgreenawalds.org	FAX 610-435-0988

Pastor Judy is currently working in her home office as well as part-time in her church Study.
She can be reached by phone anytime for emergencies or appointments.

**Church Secretary Office Hours are Tuesday, 11:00 am – 3:00 pm.
(Other hours, from home. Call as necessary.)**

Hospital Code #439

ECHOES is a monthly publication of United Church of Christ, Greenawalds. Members, committee chairpersons leading a group and anyone with pertinent information are encouraged to submit information and upcoming events. Submit news by email to the church office at churchoffice@uccgreenawalds.org or to Sandy Lakatosh at slakatosh@rcn.com.

The January 2022 edition of *Echoes* is sponsored by:

**The Borger, Diaz, LaAsmar and Lakatosh families
in honor of mother/grandmother, Eleanor Lakatosh,
celebrating her 90th birthday on January 20.
Happy Birthday!**

Communication to our members is an important part of our ministry. If you cannot attend church regularly, or do not use a computer, you can remain connected with the news, our mission and upcoming activities through this newsletter.

Sponsors for the *Echoes* help to support the ministry of UCC Greenawalds to all members. Call Sue Borger 484.695.7954 to sign up for a sponsorship and include your dedication information.

Cost is \$20.00 per sponsorship.