



THE CHIMES

FEBRUARY 2024

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**Our Mission is to Make Disciples of Jesus Christ and to
Serve God by Sharing Compassion Hope and Love**

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THE CHIMES

February 2024



VISION STATEMENT

The people of Christ United Methodist Church will

- COURAGEOUSLY REACH OUT AND WELCOME
- PASSIONATELY WORSHIP AND PRAY
- INTENTIONALLY NURTURE AND ENCOURAGE
- LOVINGLY SHARE AND SERVE.

MISSION STATEMENT

OUR MISSION IS TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST (MATTHEW 28:19-20) AND TO SERVE GOD BY SHARING COMPASSION, HOPE, AND LOVE.

2023 Year in Review

Well, our annual “End of Year” reports have been completed and turned in to the East Ohio Annual Conference. So... how did we do? Overall, I am pleased and think that we did well. Of course, the numbers don't tell the whole story, but they do tell us things. So, let's review a few numbers and consider what they tell us.

We started 2023 with 289 members and we received 5 new members. Unfortunately, we removed 13 members that were lost to death. That is both sad and unfortunate and we grieve the loss of our friends. The good news is that we did gain five new members and, if we're honest, that's five more than many churches. The reality remains that our survival depends upon us inviting new people to worship, connecting them to small groups and other ministries of the church and, eventually, bringing them into membership.

Despite the loss of so many members, quite a few of whom were regular in worship, our average attendance increased from 65 to 70, which is an increase of 8 percent and our United Women in Faith saw a 25 percent increase in membership. At the same time, the average number of people who worship online increased by 50 percent from 24 to 36. We also saw an 83 percent increase in the number of children, growing from 6 to 11 in Sunday school and the addition of one more children's class to accommodate them. Not surprisingly, we did see a small decrease in adult Sunday school attendance, largely due to the loss of the older members previously mentioned. Overall, however, our average attendance in Sunday school increased by 5 percent. And, although I have said it before, as has Pastor Chris, the percentage of our congregation that attends Sunday school, compared to almost any other church in our connection, is strikingly high. In the average Protestant church, 44 percent of those in worship attend Sunday school. At Christ Church, that number is 63 percent.

We did see a 7 percent decrease in total giving and, with the departure of Men's Challenge, a small drop in building use fees, but we did see a 9 percent increase in pledged giving and an increase in “unidentified gifts” which is made up of things like our loose offering, Chuck Wagon offering, Pennies for Heaven, Sunday school offerings, and this year will include the Noisy Can offering.

Additionally, we continue to have a strong (for our size) online presence. The website where our sermons are posted currently has 221 subscribers which translates to about 70 views per week. Those same sermons are sent out to 296 subscribers by email, which is an increase of 89 from last year. Of those, about 60 subscribers open the email and read it. And our YouTube livestream increased by 17 subscribers during 2023 and now has 123 total subscribers with between 30 and 40 viewers of each week's message.

So, what does all that mean?

As I look at it, it means that there is still a need for, and an interest in what we are doing. It means that people are watching and reading online, but that some of them are also coming here in person. It means that the members and friends of Christ Church are inviting our friends and neighbors to worship with us and some of them have decided to stay and join our church family. It means that where only a few years ago it was common to have a Sunday without children, now it is rare that we do not have at least a few.

Yes, we have some challenges in front of us, but just as God has led us to navigate through those challenges in the past, we trust that he will continue to lead us into the future. Moreover, despite the losses that we have felt over the last year, the growth that we have seen gives us every reason to expect that growth to continue if we remain faithful in doing the work that God has given to us, continue being the hands and feet of Jesus, and never stop sharing what a great family that we have here at Christ Church.

In other words, there is every reason to have hope for, and even to expect a bright future.

Blessings,
Pastor John



LENTEN WEEKLY DEVOTIONS 2024

Again, this year Pastor Chris Martin will offer 30-minute Lenten devotions each Thursday evening during Lent, beginning on Thursday, February 15, and concluding on Thursday, March 21. The devotions will be accessible via ZOOM, beginning at 7 PM and concluding at 7:30 PM each week. The zoom link will be sent out weekly to all emails registered with the Christ United Methodist Church office. Participants are asked to access the link five to seven minutes before 7 PM so we can begin promptly at 7 PM. Each devotion will include a Call to Worship, an Opening Prayer, a Scripture Lesson, and a brief Meditation concerning one of the women that Jesus met as he traveled throughout Galilee with his disciples.

2024 LENTEN SERIES

"HOW JESUS CHANGED OR WAS CHANGED BY THE LIVES OF THE WOMEN HE MET"

February 15, 2024 – ***Mary and Martha – Sisters of Lazarus***

February 22, 2024 – ***Herodias – The Wife of Herod Antipas***

February 29, 2024 – ***The Unnamed Canaanite Woman***

March 7, 2024 – ***Salome – The Mother of James and John***

March 14, 2024 – ***Claudia – The Wife of Pontius Pilate***

March 21, 2024 – ***The Unnamed Widow at the Gates of the Temple***

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH UPDATE:



United
Women
in Faith

FEBRUARY 6 (7PM) – UNIT MEETING via ZOOM

****Program offered via Zoom only****

Installation of Officers will be held

Our meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend.

If you'd like to "Zoom in", contact Nancy Prueter at prueter@sbcglobal.net for an invitation.

Gifts to **A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial** will be collected at February Circle Meetings and will directly support United Women in Faith's programs for climate justice.

"All creation is God's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it ... God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect."

This year, our gifts support the **Just Energy for All** campaign, which mobilizes members to tackle the climate crisis by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting 100% clean, renewable energy, and a just energy transition. This entails seeking sustainable solutions, equitable investments, and participation from frontline communities in decision-making processes. The urgency of the climate crisis is calling us for unprecedented change and action. As bold women in faith, we strive constantly for self-renewal and the material and spiritual transformation of the world in Jesus' name. The specific activities include monthly events such as educational webinars, working groups, and other events with interfaith partners. There is also an annual Earth Day service and many multimedia resources for members and the wider public.

GOOD TO KNOW:

IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER WINTER SOUP SALE!

In **February** we will offer **15 Bean and Ham Soup** - \$7 quart – pickup on February 25
Pre-order is required / watch for our display in the lounge.

"HEAT AND EAT" MEATLOAF MEAL coming in **MARCH**, stay tuned for details!

MARCH UNIT MEETING - March 5th 7PM, Dussel Room

United Women in Faith always welcomes guests and new members.
Please call Jamie Greiner at (412) 601-4275 or any Executive Board Officer, if interested.

- The Unit meets on most 1st Tuesdays at 7pm in the Dussel Room
- ❖ **Peg Williams Circle** meets at 1:00pm on 3rd Mondays at Copeland Oaks, Williamsburg Lounge
 - ❖ **M & M Circle** meets at 7pm on 3rd Mondays in the Dussel Room
 - ❖ **May Smyth Circle** meets at 10:30am on 3rd Tuesdays in the Dussel Room
 - ❖ **Susie Buckel Circle** meets at 7pm on 3rd Tuesdays in the Dussel Room

UMF SOUP ORDER FORM

Date: _____

Please fill out this form to order your soup.

NAME _____ 15 Bean & Ham Soup \$7 per quart QTY ____

15 BEAN AND HAM SOUP: Place your order by February 19th. Pickup will be on February 26th. Soup will be frozen. You may pay for your soup when you pick it up. Thank you for your support!

**Blessing
Bags**

We will be assembling blessing bags for the Domestic Violence Shelter in February. We will need women's deodorant, women's socks, toothbrushes and combs. Thank you. Carolyn & Jean

Church Women of Alliance Area

Will meet Friday Feb. 2nd at New Zion Baptist Church at 1135 E. Jersey St. The meeting and program start at 1:00 p.m.



--Watch for details for our **Spring Basement Sale** which will be held in May. We have room to store your donated items on the fourth floor so think of us as you begin your Spring cleaning.



2024 Reading List

The new 2024 Women in Faith Reading List is now available online. Here are a few of the books that are included in this year's list. They are available through interlibrary loan (ILL) from Rodman Public Library. Start out the new year by making a commitment to read more and learn more about the world around us.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT *Beautiful Country: A Memoir*, by Qian Julie Wang. Seven-year-old Qian arrives in New York full of curiosity—and overwhelmed by fear and scarcity. While in Chinese, the word for America translates to “beautiful country,” her new life is anything but beautiful. Formerly professors, now Qian’s parents labor in sweatshops and fight constantly, desperate to survive in poverty in the richest country in the world. Shunned by her classmates for her limited English, Qian turns to books—and small joys that keep her going. This New York Times bestseller reveals a family fracturing under the weight of invisibility, and a girl coming of age in the shadows, who never stops seeking the light. Regular and large print available ILL.

NURTURING FOR COMMUNITY *Home Is Not a Country*, by Safia Elhillo. Longlisted for the National Book Award, this poetic novel-in-verse centers on one girl, Nima, struggling with identity, loneliness, and acceptance in a culture far from her ancestral land. Caught between cultures and longing for what could be, Nima grasps for a new identity—that of a girl like her, a girl named Yasmeen, the name her parents meant to give her at birth. From acclaimed Sudanese American poet, Safia Elhillo comes this reflection on family, home, and what it truly means to belong. Suitable for youth readers. Regular print available ILL.

SOCIAL ACTION *Beating Guns: Hope for People Who Are Weary of Violence*, by Shaine Claiborne and Michael Martin. Bestselling author and activist Shane Claiborne and Michael Martin show why Christians should be concerned about gun violence and how they can be part of the solution. The authors transcend state rhetoric about gun control to offer a creative and productive response. Full-color images show how guns are being turned into tools and musical instruments across the nation. Charts, tables, and facts convey the realities of gun violence in America, but as the authors make clear, there is a story behind every statistic. *Beating Guns* allows victims and perpetrators to tell their own compelling stories, offering hope for change. Regular print available ILL.



CHRISTIAN OUTREACH COMMITTEE

If you have an old 'Umbrella Stand' we would like to try it at the coat rack in the hall outside the lounge. (Thinking of an antique that might get as much conversation as use!)

Could use some volunteers to act as a 'guide' at events (funerals, weddings, community events...) when people not familiar with the Church layout might need directions to Fellowship Hall or to the elevator or restrooms. This would not be a regular assignment, but periodic as there is a need. (Sign up in the office. You will be contacted if the need arises.)

Looking for a Church Photographer. In preparing the Church Directory it was noticed that we do not have pictures of many events, special services luncheons, etc. If photography is "in your wheelhouse", will you volunteer to take pictures to create an archive?

Habitat for Humanity offices are moving to the Neighborhood Center. They have been in Christ UMC since 2014.

Members contributing online has grown steadily over the past decade. If you would consider this as an option for you, handle through your bank or review the process with Julie Greiner, Church Financial Secretary.

Congregation members are volunteering to periodically prepare a luncheon (main course, side and dessert) for University of Mount Union Chapel attendees (Tuesdays, 11:30 am to 12:30pm) when the University is in session. Estimate 15 to 20 students/faculty guests. Check with Sara Sherer about getting involved. This may be a process we can be involved with as we begin to coordinate through CCO (Coalition for Campus Outreach).

The Chuck Wagon collection is the third Sunday monthly. Non-perishable food and cash donations will help people in need through the Salvation Army.

Thanks to the Youth for their service. The UMYF Alumni made peanut brittle last fall. They donated their share of the proceeds to the Conference YSF (Youth Service Fund).



The January Chuckwagon collected 35 food items and \$90 which was given to the Alliance Salvation Army. Look for the chuckwagon and the noisy can collection on February 18th.

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS FOR FEBRUARY

USHERS - Team #2

Jim Greiner – Captain
John Christian Mike Greiner
Keith Noble Bill Sol
Gene Stroia

LITURGISTS

4 Susan Haddox
11 Jim Greiner
18 Jamie Greiner
25 Rhys Sampson

WELCOME CENTER GREETERS

4 Jean Webster
11 Kathy Stroia
18 Peg Rodefer
25 Denise Aeling

SANCTUARY GREETERS

4 Ellen Sol
11 Dick Diser
18 Patti Travis
25 Jill Greiner

FEBRUARY TELLERS

4 Pat Helsel/Marilyn Ruff
11 Mark Locke/Bruce Helsel
18 Donna Essick/Jill Greiner
25 Jim Greiner/Nancy Prueter

VISITATION MEMBERS

4 June Luca, Alliance
11 Mary Aufrance, Alliance
18
25 Dan Gard, Canton

BIRTHDAYS

FEBRUARY

5 Christopher Handy
7 Marilyn Ruff
7 Joyce Tolerton
12 Williams Rogers

BIRTHDAYS

14 Michael Shields
14 Bobbie Wright
21 Ellen Sol
21 Dolores Lawrence



FROM THE LIVING MEMORIAL SCHOLASHIP COMMITTEE

Application for a College Grant

All 2023-24 high school graduates who are church members and are advancing their education in any two- or four- year program are eligible (available ONE TIME ONLY) for a \$500 grant. They may send a letter to the Living Memorial Scholarship Committee, Christ United Methodist Church, 470 East Broadway Street, Alliance, OH 44601-2698 and indicate the level of participation in church (see below), the school they will be attending and the program of study. Also, all undergraduate members of the church now in college, full time, may also apply for this same grant by submitting a similar letter.

Application for a College Loan

The LIVING MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND which was established in 1960 and revised in 1986 is funded by gifts from the congregation. These funds are held by the Trustees and are granted as loans to persons wishing to further their education.

Criteria established at that time determined that the applicant be an active member of Christ United Methodist Church. Active also means participation in at least three of the following programs at Christ United Methodist Church. (During the pandemic, we know you haven't been able to participate in person. If you have participated in the prior 3-4 years, this will work.)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| A. Worship Services | E. Handbell Choir |
| B. Church School Classes | F. Boy Scouts |
| C. Youth Fellowship (U.M.Y.F.) | G. Other |
| D. Vocal Choir | |

Loans are now available for up to \$3,000.00 per year for up to 4 yrs. and are approved by the Living Memorial Scholarship Committee. Interest shall be charged at the rate of 1% per annum on the unpaid balance, and repayment will start six months after graduation or discontinuation of schooling. A parent or guardian shall be required to cosign any such loans if the student is a minor. A written letter to the Committee shall contain the name and address of the applicant, the date, the amount requested, the institution where applicant has been accepted, the class level of the applicant (freshmen, sophomore, etc.) and expected graduation or completion date of study.

The congregation is to be commended for their support in funding the furthering of higher education.





The Finance Committee will be sharing options and ideas for charitable giving. This is the first in our series.

**REMINDER TO IRA OWNERS AGE 70 ½ OR OVER:
QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS ARE GREAT OPTIONS
FOR MAKING TAX-FREE GIFTS TO THE CHURCH**

The IRS reminds IRA owners aged 70 ½ or over the option to transfer up to \$105,000 to charity tax-free each year.

These transfers, known as qualified charitable distributions or QCDs offer eligible older Americans a great way to easily give to charity each year. Moreover, for those who are at least 73, QCDs count toward the IRA owner's required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year.

Normally, distributions from a traditional IRA are taxable when received. With a QCD, however, these distributions become tax-free if they are paid directly from the IRA to an eligible charitable organization such as our church.

Contact your financial advisor or tax consultant for details.



FEBRUARY CHIMES

Dick Diser and I have taken a survey on the cost of printing and mailing of the Chimes each month. To meet the 200 minimum for bulk mailing, we have been sending approx. 30 copies back to the Church. With distributing the Chimes on the last Sunday of the month in the lounge and emailing copies, it is now more cost-effective to stop sending by bulk rate. If you are currently receiving your Chimes by email and don't want a paper copy, please email the church office. Also, the last several months, it has been taking 2-3 weeks to receive the Chimes by bulk mail.

2024

FEBRUARY



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 5th Sunday after Epiphany	5 6:30p Scouts	6 5:00p Comm Dinner 7:00p Zoom UWF Unit Meeting	7 5:30p Halleluia Bells 6:30p Chancel Bells 7:30p Chancel Vocal	8	9	10
11 6th Sunday after Epiphany Boy Scout Sunday	12 6:30p Scouts	13 5:00p Comm Dinner	14 5:30p Halleluia Bells 6:00p Chancel Bells 7:00p Ash Wednesday service	15 7:00p Lenten Devotional Zoom	16	17
18 1st Sunday in Lent	19 1p Peg Williams Circle- Williamsburg 6:30p Scouts 7:00p M&M Circle 	20 10:30a May Smyth Circle 5:00p Comm Dinner 7:00p Susie Buckel Circle	21 5:30p Halleluia Bells 6:30p Chancel Bells 7:30p Chancel Vocal	22 7:00p Lenten Devotional Zoom	23	24
25 2nd Sunday in Lent	26 6:30p Scouts 7:00p UWF Exec. Board	27 5:00p Comm Dinner 6:30p Trustees	28 5:30p Halleluia Bells 6:30p Chancel Bells 7:30p Chancel Vocal	29 7:00p Lenten Devotional Zoom 		