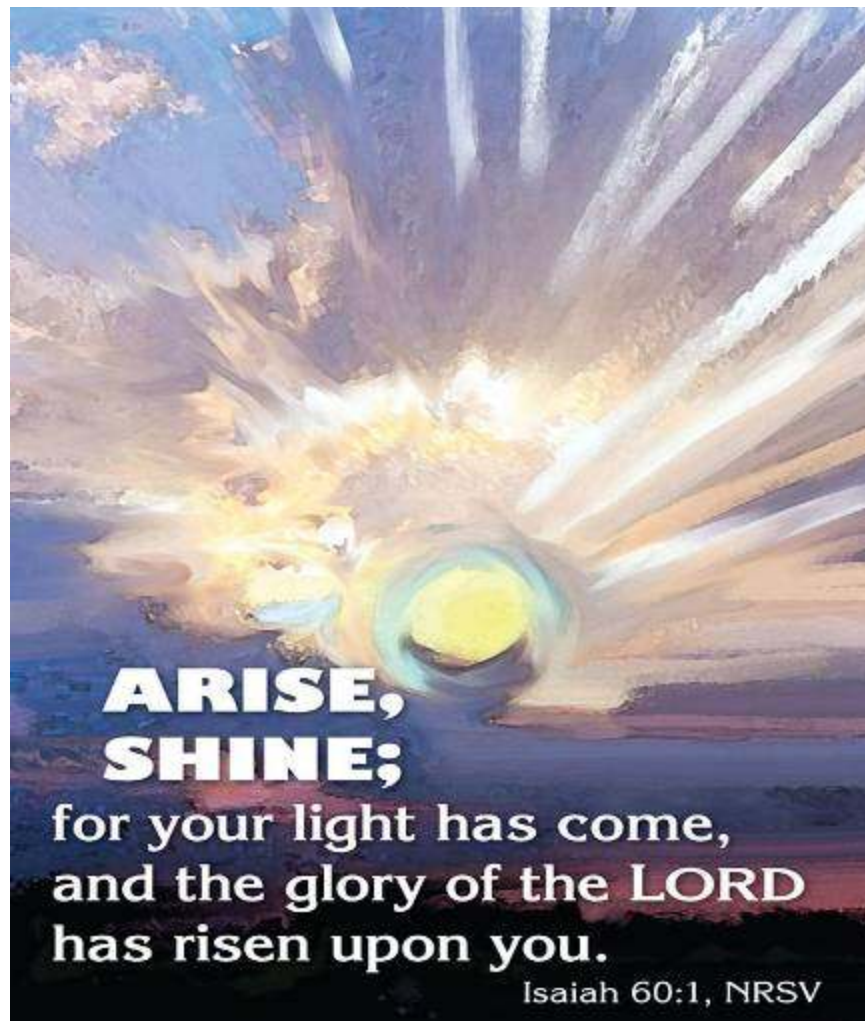


The Good-Newsletter
January 2012



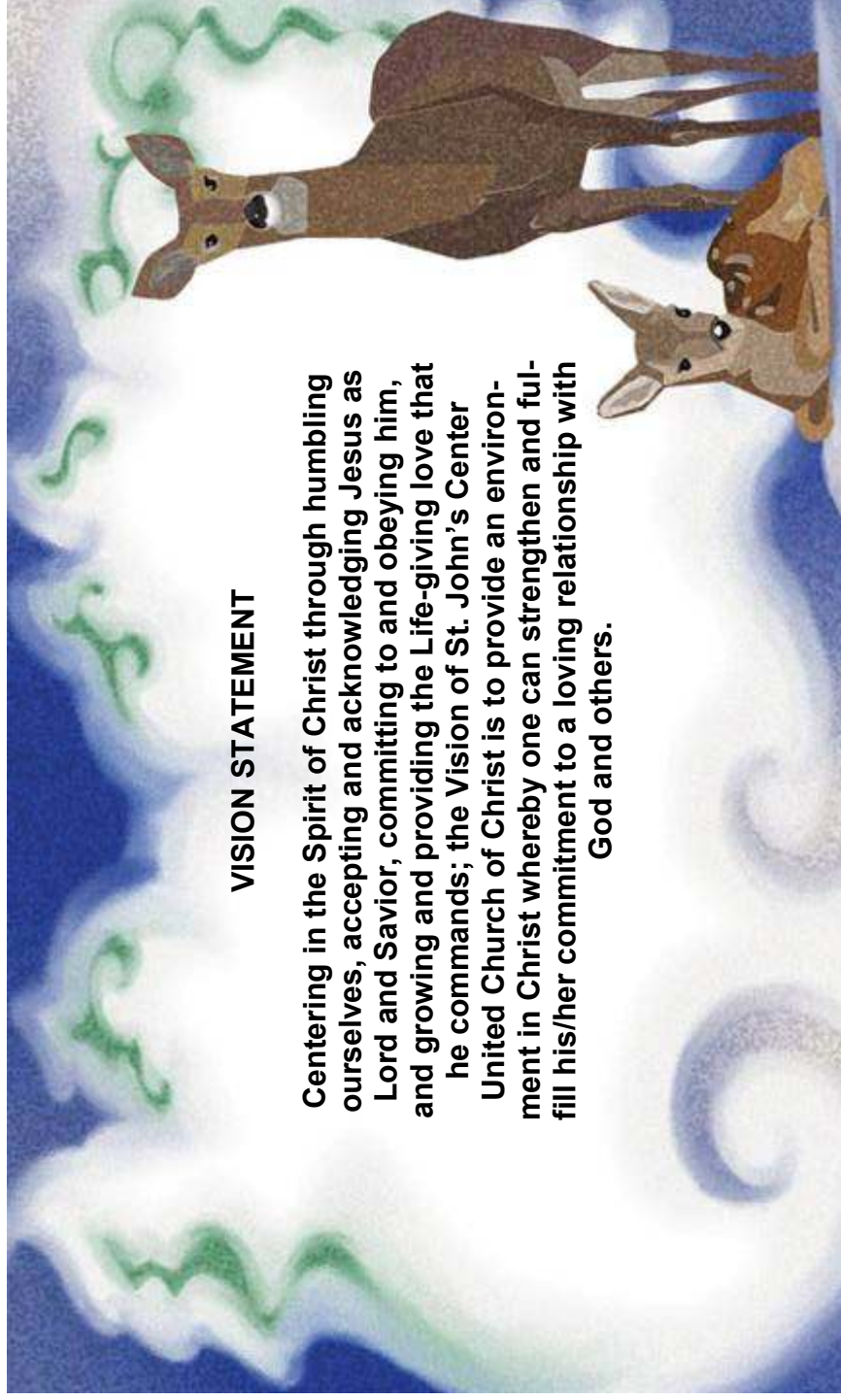
**ARISE,
SHINE;**
for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD
has risen upon you.

Isaiah 60:1, NRSV

St. John's Center United Church of Christ
A Faithful and Welcoming Church
432 Reading Road, East Earl, Pa 17519
Bradley J. Haws, Pastor
Phone (717) 445-5622 or www.stjohnscenterucc.org

VISION STATEMENT

Centering in the Spirit of Christ through humbling ourselves, accepting and acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Savior, committing to and obeying him, and growing and providing the Life-giving love that he commands; the Vision of St. John's Center United Church of Christ is to provide an environment in Christ whereby one can strengthen and fulfill his/her commitment to a loving relationship with God and others.



2011 CONSISTORY

(The Consistory serves as the executive body of this church, conducting the administrative business of the church, particularly in regards to fiscal and facility oversight.)

ELDERS

(Assist and support the pastor in the spiritual affairs of the church serving as advisors and counselors of the pastor in his office.)

Doug Beaver ('12) - Moderator (presides over and sets agenda for Consistory meeting), **Bob Kovall ('11)** - Vice Moderator

DEACONS

(Assist and support the pastor in those ministrations which pertain to the more outward needs of the congregation, aiding in securing necessary funds for the support of the church's work and laboring among the people in making known to them the needs of the church.)

Song Beck ('11) - Head Deacon, **Gail Ertzgard ('11)**, **Randy Reigel ('11)**, **Jim Franck ('12)**, **Gail Lorah ('12)**, **Alvin Martin ('12)**, **Caleb Haws ('13)**, **Lisa Showalter ('13)**

TRUSTEES

(Have the care and custody of the property of the church, overseeing it's accessibility, maintenance and security.)

Carl Hilt ('11) - Head Trustee, **Sam Wissinger ('11)**, **John Eberly ('12)**, **Shawn Mohler ('12)**, **Harold Bair ('13)**

Please be sure to contact any of these individuals should you have needs and/or concerns regarding the ministry and life of St. John's Center UCC.



2011 CONTACT PEOPLE

Moderator: Doug Beaver
Vice Moderator: Bob Kovall
Church Secretary: Sherri Mohler-sherrimohler.stjohnsctr@frontiernet.net
Newsletter Editor: Abby Eberly
Facility Rental (Sanctuary, Social Hall, Pavilion): Sherri Mohler
sherrimohler.stjohnsctr@frontiernet.net

Finances:

Church Treasurer: Arlene Zimmerman
Financial Secretary: Arlene Zimmerman
Head Deacon: Song Beck

Facility Upkeep & Maintenance:

Head Trustee: Carl Hilt
Church Custodian: Shirley Gehman
Kitchen Supervisor: Dory Homan
Church Key Contact: Carl Hilt
Church Cemetery Information: Dave Shrom

Worship Ministries:

Worship Team: Dave Shrom
Sr. Choir: Debbie Ball
Drama Team: Debbie & Richard Ball
Praise Band: Robin Rohrer
Altar Guild: Sherri Mohler
Worship Nursery: Sherri Mohler
Acolytes: Pastor Haws – bradhaws.stjohnsctr@frontiernet.net
Technology Team: Jim Ertzgard
Sound System: Frank Majeske
John Styer
Greeters: Sharon Good

Outreach Ministries:

Outreach Team:
Compassion Team: Terry Showalter
Fellowship Team: Bill Gable
Benevolence Team: Menno Eby
Evangelism Team: Bob Kovall
Women's Ministry: Debbie Ball
Men's Breakfast: Bob Wenger

Instruction Ministries:

Adult Instruction Team: Larry Martin
Adult Sunday School Superintendent: Bob Wenger
Primary Instruction Team: Linda Burkhart
Teacher Support Team: Jen Boley
Beth Zueno
Music Team: Kim Franck & Heather Martin
Activities Team: Sharon Haas
Carolyn Walker
Children's Church: Sue Sanger
Sunday School Hour Nursery:
Library: Rhea Eshelman & Tammy Sebastian
Youth Instruction Team—Doug Beaver

CARING AND OUTREACH

John 15:16...”but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.” Join us as we embrace the opportunities God is providing, to show His love and care, in and through St. John’s Center.

Women’s Ministry – All lady members and friends of St. John’s Center. Our mission is to nurture loving, lasting, meaningful relationships with God and others. See Women’s Ministry page in this newsletter.

Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group – All 7th – 12th grade youth. Grow in your relationship with God and each other through fellowship, discipleship, ministry, worship and evangelism activities.

Campus Connection – Keeping our students updated with the activities of St. John’s Center to make them feel connected, even while away at college.

Outreach – The vision statement of St. John’s Center UCC Mission/Outreach Committee is to serve God and others through the following Mission Statement: (A) Provide food for the hungry, (B) Provide clothes for the naked, (C) To support and comfort the hurting, (D) To support and comfort the sick, (E) To do visitation and acquire relationships.

Men’s Ministry – All gentlemen members and friends of St. John’s Center. Offering opportunities for spiritual and relational growth through various fellowship and study groups.

Expectant Parent Support – Outreach designed for couples expecting a baby.

Cradle Roll – Outreach designed to support couples upon the birth of a baby.

Greeters – Individuals to greet and welcome all persons to our Sunday morning worship. Contact person is Sharon Good.

Visitation Ministers - A ministry designed to share the love of Christ with members of our St. John’s Center family.

Pen-Pal Ministry – A ministry meant to extend the hand of Christian fellowship to members of our church family who are not able to fellowship with us in person.

Prayer Shawl Ministry - Providing comfort, support and prayer for those who are hurting through shawls made by members of this ministry. Contact Person - Katie Majeske

Hospitality Team: Provide a welcoming and friendly face to anyone who may be visiting our worship. Contact persons – Bob and Kathy Wenger.

FROM A MINISTER TO THE MINISTERS

Here we are . . . St. John's Center UCC facing a new year, 2012.

Here we are . . . various persons, all of whom have been a part of this congregation for a period of time – some a lifetime (15, 25, 40, 80 years!); some a brief time (a few months, a year, a couple of years); some present for awhile then absence, then present again, then missing, back and forth for awhile (a decade, a time while your children were growing, a time of marital or life difficulties, a period of spiritual vitalization).

Regardless . . . here we are.

It's a new year and it's a perfect time to assess, to challenge, to venture, to try, to consider and re-consider.

While you have been a part of this church family – better yet, this *Body of Christ* – I'm certain you have experienced both life *and* life in this church from a number of angles and through countless circumstances. In this church, you have likely participated in some way or another and most of you continue that participation: from Sunday morning worship of some frequency or other to attendance at a fellowship activity to serving on a team or on Consistory, and anywhere on that line of spectrum.

What I've observed as pastor over the years is that participation and consistency come and go, ebb and flow, thrive and wane in our lives. Such participation and consistency are hit or miss in virtually every way in society, with the Church being one such recipient of that tendency.

Though I acknowledge this as being a human condition in many ways, my hope and my challenge for this new year is that we all might reconsider and recommit ourselves both to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the work of his Body, the Church, and the vision of this church family, St. John's Center UCC, that we've made ourselves a part of for however long it's been for you.

God has called us, I believe, to so much. And the encouraging additional thought to that is that I also believe God has equipped, furnished, resourced us to enjoy and enact and live out that "so much" to which He has called you and me and us. I spoke of this extensively through my sermon series prior to Advent. I challenged you with worksheets and a time of sharing with each other. All of that to ignite the thought of how each of us can better serve in the life of this church and for the glory of God, particularly in a society and with a human nature that wants to spread ourselves out there, not really wanting or able to commit ourselves to too much.

Our leadership, with admittedly much work and prayerful thought on my part as pastor, are looking at this coming year as a time to try something different – not for novelty sake, not just to "change it up a bit," but because reality is that we all struggle with time and the many other facets of life that beg for our attention. Because that's true, it's become a challenge indeed to staff our Consistory and other Teams/Committees, as well as, at times, to gather the necessary volunteers to serve in the ministries to which this leader-

ship senses God might be calling us.

We will be looking to *organize* the church leadership this year in a way that:

Involves more of us in roles and ministries that we're hopefully each interested in, excited about, and equipped for (rather than people just filling a position or folks spread too thin);
Better involves all of us in communication and participation;
Helps each of us maintain commitment and involvement in the life of the congregation in ways that don't burn us out and snuff the spirit and Spirit in us.

The idea involves taking our "Operational Functions" – those things that basically have to happen as long as we have a staff, a building, and a budget – and placing the oversight of those "functions" into the care of four 4-5 person Teams:

Policy & Administration Team (dealing with By-Laws, insurance, inspections, background checks, certifications, staff reviews, policy upkeep)

Financial Team (dealing with budget development and oversight, banking issues, offering, auditing)

Trustee Team (dealing with facility maintenance, building issues, labor contracts, inspections, custodial oversight, work details)

Vision & Planning Team (dealing with vision oversight, long-range planning, ministry discernment and development, team staffing placement)

The reorganizing will also continue to maintain our "Being Church" teams – those ministries that are what we're at this church to do and be for Jesus Christ:

Fellowship

Worship

Instruction

Outreach

Care

With addition of a team of "Shepherds" who will help keep in touch with our membership as a source of support and encouragement.

Additionally, the idea will be to eventually have representatives from each of these teams meet to keep each other informed and in check in regards to scheduling, budgeting, and ideas. *And* there will be brief *monthly* congregational meetings to keep the congregation informed and on the same page and aware of opportunities for all of us to serve with the ministry these various teams are coordinating.

This sounds like a lot (and, I'm sure, on paper possibly confusing or at the very least head-scratching), but I believe ultimately it pro-

vides an ambitious but doable way to help us each and all better serve and commit ourselves to the ministry for which God has equipped you and me and us and to which possibly He has called you, me, and us. Though we're busy, we're pulled this way and that, and life challenges our ability to commit to anything too long, at the same time we are people who know and believe God is God, even of our overcommitted lives. We trust He has provided the church, this church at this time, to be for us not only a "hospital" for our sinful souls but also a place and people from where to live out the ministry and work for which He has gifted us.

I'm seeing 2012 and a revised way of "being church" for us here as an opportunity for us all to recommit to where God wants us to be.

There will be a more detailed explanation of this at our Year-End Congregational Meeting after worship on Sunday, January 29th. Any thoughts or questions, start asking me. I'd be glad to share the thoughts and vision.

Pastor Brad

RECENT DONATIONS TO THE LIBRARY

From The Heart Of A Child ~ Dawn Richerson
Stories From The Bible Old & New Testament
Thank You For This Food ~ Debbie Trafton O'Neal
More E-Mail From God For Teens ~ Claire & Curt Cloninger
Chicken Soup For The Gardener's Soul~ Canfield, Hansen, Brian, Buck, Owen, Stone, Sturgulewski
The Reckoning ~ Beverly Lewis
A Biblical Perspective Of Wealth ~ Robert L. Dickie
The Ultimate Priority On Worship ~ John MacArthur, Jr.
The Spirit-Filled Believer's Daily Devotional ~ Dick Mills
They Teach Us To Pray ~ Reginald E. O. White
Whatever Became Of Sin? ~ Karl Menninger, M.D.
How Would Jesus Vote? ~ D. James Kennedy, PhD & Jerry Newcombe
Revelation And The Bible
Return From Tomorrow—My Glimpse Of Eternity
~ George G. Ritchie, M.D.
90 Minutes In Heaven ~ Don Piper
The Politics Of Righteousness ~ James A. Aho
Myths, Lies, & Half Truths—How Misreading The Bible Neutralizes Christians ~ Gary Demar

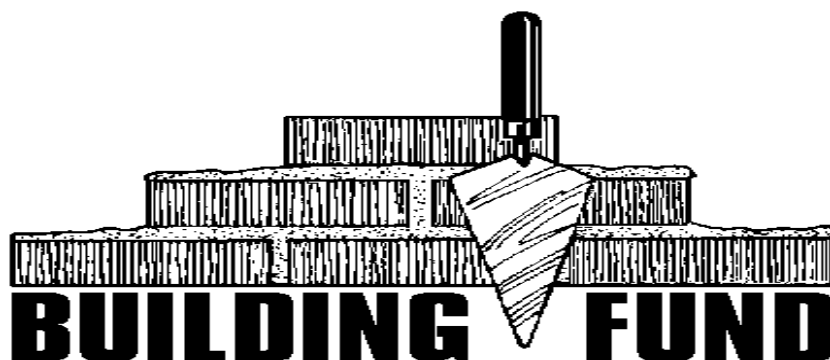
THANKS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!!

Celebrating a



Jeff Weinhold	1	Jacob Wise	16
Michael Orosz	3	Melanie (Kissinger) Eynon	17
Jenny Haws	4	Walker Cole Martin	17
Carolyn Walker	4	Kristy Hassler	18
Josiah Haws	5	Megan Cashwiler	18
Jonathan Haws	5	James Hagy	19
Arlene Zimmerman	6	Hannah Lefebre	19
Lisa Gehr	7	Tom Piersol	19
Sharon Gehr	7	Becky Wright	19
Lloyd Snyder	7	Joshua Regitz	23
Samuel Stoltzfus	7	Jonathan Gilbert	24
Shannon Rohrer	8	Autumn Sebastian	25
Wheeler Walker	8	Nicole Marks	25
Sandra Kovall	12	Terry Showalter	27
Benjamin Piersol	13	Tyler Weinhold	27
Andrew Showalter	14	Julie Sanger	28
Mary Stamm	15	Tammy Sebastian	28
Matthew Fennelly	15	Lindsey Snader	30
Amy Powers	15	Bert Zueno	30
Albert Stauffer	16		

JANUARY



Receipts: Jan—Nov. 2011

Offerings	\$ 2,660.00
Interest	251.80
Memorials	910.00
Organ	.00
Bequest	5,000.00

Total Receipts: \$ 8,821.80

Disbursements:

Transfer from memorial to checking	\$ 350.00
Ck. #257 From Memorial for Library	\$ 1,200.00

Balance 11/30/11 \$ 37,128.36

Balance Includes:

Building Maintenance	\$ 22,611.24
Organ Fund	\$ 1,539.58
Memorials	\$ 7,972.24
Bequest	\$ 5,005.30

SENIOR MOMENT



Hold my hand, Dear God, in times of fear and distress. Show me the root of my unhappiness and heal old wounds so that I may become whole in You. Amen

The quickest way for a grandparent to get a grandchild's attention is to sit down and look comfortable.



Church and Sunday School Offering

Jan.-Nov. 2011	\$203,973.24
Needed to meet Budget	\$193,391.04

Benevolence Receipts	
Jan.—Nov.	\$52,383.50
Needed to meet Budget	\$55,115.04

Other Offerings: (Non-Budget)	
FWC	\$ 2,329.00
UCC	\$ 1,113.00
Feeding the Homeless in Lanc. & Phila.	\$ 274.00
Souper Bowl (Feb.6)	\$ 221.50

Average Attendance:		
January—139	February—140	September—145
March—148	April—177	October—121
May—131	June—168	November—148
July—114	August—80	

LESS IS MORE

What if we took our lengthy lists of changes we want to make in the new year and narrowed them down — way down? Rather than making a half dozen or more commitments that we're unlikely to keep, how about zeroing in on a single word that captures the essence of what we want to achieve or become?

North Carolina pastor Mike Ashcraft encouraged church members to each find one word that described a characteristic or vision they wanted to achieve in the year ahead. The experiment turned into a movement, with ideas and testimonials available at myoneword.org.

What would your one-word resolution be?



NO-SEW FLEECE SCARF



Winter is a difficult time for people in need, so make this scarf to help someone stay warm.

What you need:

- Medium-weight polar fleece, 60" standard width (a 9" portion will make one scarf)
- Scissors
- An adult to help

What you do:

1. Cut a piece of medium-weight polar fleece to the size of 60" x 9". Cut the fabric across its width so the material is stretchy.
2. Trim off the edge binding. To add "fringe" along each end, make a 6"-long cut every half inch.
3. For curly fringe, pull each strand and then let go sharply. Another attractive option is to tie an over-hand knot at the top of each strip.
4. Donate your scarf to a local group that helps people in need. For greater impact, encourage your Sunday school classmates or other friends to make scarves, too.

CHILDREN



CORNER
CHILDREN'S

PEACEMAKERS AT PLAY

Romans 14:19

Melissa, Rachel, and Mary were playing together and having lots of fun. Soon Melissa and Rachel began to whisper secrets. They did not include Mary in the fun. Mary went home, sat down on her front steps, and began to pout. The next time they played together, Mary tried to get back at her friends by telling Melissa secrets and not allowing Rachel to hear. How could Mary have been a peacemaker?

God allows trouble in our lives so that we can learn how to be peacemakers. Here are three steps to follow that "make for peace":

1. Thank God for the problem.
2. Find out what caused it.
3. Ask the Lord what he wants you to learn from this problem.

Memorize these steps and use them when trouble comes. You can be a peacemaker, and others will see that you are a child of God!










PUZZLE







A caring disciple

In **Acts 9**, Peter tells of a woman who lived in Joppa. She performed good works and helped the poor. Solve the puzzle below to reveal this disciple's two names.

Instructions: Cross out the letters that spell each object and write the remaining letter on the blank.

___ adcltne			
___ rohmtae			
___ srgbape			
___ rbieda			
___ pehtshred			
___ rdhaenlca			
___ fadoo			

Her name in Greek

___ pdeesh		
___ dchilnero		
___ drove		
___ acehtr		
___ sarcos		
___ nusoatinm		

Answers: Tabitha, Dorcas



Time Out For Women

MAJOR PRAYERS FROM A MINOR PROPHET

Habakkuk 1:2, 3:17-19

Elisa Morgan

While the details of our days are different, all who've approached God in prayer relate to [Habakkuk's] feeling that God's ears are deaf.

Like us, Habakkuk wrestled with God in prayer. He questioned God's silence and doubted God's wisdom. When God withheld what Habakkuk wanted, he negotiated for a partial settlement. When God said no, Habakkuk satisfied himself with what God wanted to give—himself.

We only have three short chapters of Habakkuk's conversations with God, but they contain major principles of prayer.

- *Pray with a willingness to wait.* Similarly, we must wait on God with a willingness to pray. Waiting and praying go together.
- *Pray with honesty.* Contrary to our worst fears, God delights in our honesty in prayer. Habakkuk cried out, "How long?" (v. 2) stripping himself of his neat prophetic robes and laying bare his impatience and frustration. He didn't hide his human doubts but displayed them before the One who had the answers.
- *Pray with perseverance.* We are to continue praying for what we want over and over, keeping at it until we receive answers. As we bring our requests to God repetitiously, we partake of his presence repetitiously and give him more opportunities to change our hearts.
- *Pray with readiness.* We are to pray, ready to receive God's promised best, from whatever direction it comes, in whatever way he deems best. Ready or not, God's answers will come.
- *Pray with confidence.* When we can't see what God's doing, only faith believes he's at work. Habakkuk believed. He did-

n't know how or when God would accomplish his promise. But he didn't need to know.

The last of Habakkuk's three chapters sings of confidence in God. First, he exalts God's faithful actions. Habakkuk looks back in 3:1-15, tracing God's protection of his people from Egypt to Canaan. God's past acts of faithfulness in our lives motivate us to believe, even when there is no evidence of his present involvement. Second, Habakkuk extols God's faithful character. Looking beyond what God once did, he sees a God who is worthy to be trusted and believed, even when he appears inactive.

NEW MERCIES

Everyone seems to have at least one resolution that seems impossible to keep. And that can become very discouraging.

The prophet Jeremiah, who had his own reasons to feel down, wrote, "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23, NRSV).

God refuses to give up on us. When we lose hope, when we fail and fall short, his mercy never runs out. Tomorrow is full of promise and our Lord's unceasing love.

SPECIAL DATES

- New Year's Day, January 1, 2012
- Epiphany, January 6, 2012
- Baptism of the Lord, January 8, 2012
- Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday Observance, January 16, 2012
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18–25, 2012



A TIME TO PONDER

New Year's Eve is like every other night; there is no pause in the march of the universe, no breathless moment of silence among created things that the passage of another 12 months may be noted; and yet no man has quite the same thoughts this evening that come with the coming of darkness on other nights.

—Hamilton Wright Mabie



FEAR NOT, O LITTLE FLOCK

What can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or hardship? Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or sword? "We are being done to death for your sake all day long, "as scripture say; "we have been treated like sheep for slaughter" - and yet, throughout it all, overwhelming victory is our through him who loved us. Romans 8:35-37, REB

As Martin Luther's great hymn "A Mighty Fortress" was the battle cry of the Protestant Reformation, this hymn by Lutheran pastor Johann Altenberg became the battle cry of the Protestant cause during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). While the conflict began as a quarrel over the throne of Bohemia, it was primarily a religious battle. The Catholic emperor of the Holy Roman Empire sought to install Catholic leadership in Bohemia but was resisted by the Protestant princes in Germany and Scandinavia. The result was thirty years of suffering for millions of innocent people throughout Europe.

King Gustavus of Sweden, possibly the greatest of the Protestant military leaders, called his army of ten thousand strong to sing this hymn before fighting the Battle of Lutzen. The roused army of Gustavus was victorious, but their king died in the battle. Ever since, this hymn has been associated with this pious Swedish king.

Fear not, O little flock, the foe
Who madly seeks your overthrow;
Dread not his rage and pow'r:
What though your courage sometimes faints,
His seeming triumph o'er God's saints
Lasts but a little hour.

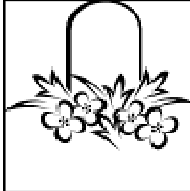
Be of good cheer; your cause belongs
To Him who can avenge your wrongs;
Leave it to Him, our Lord:
Though hidden yet from all our eyes,
He sees the Gideon who shall rise
To save us and His Word.

As true as God's own Word is true,
Nor earth nor hell with all their crew
Against us shall prevail.
A jest and byword are they grown;
God is with us, we are His own;
Our vict'ry cannot fail.

Amen, Lord Jesus, grant our pray'r;
Great Captain, no Thine arm make bare,
Fight for us once again;
So shall thy saints and martyrs raise
A mighty chorus to Thy praise,
World without end.

Johann Michael Altenberg (1590-1650)

CENTER UNION CEMETERY UPDATE



Lot prices per grave are \$300.00. One set of 4 corner posts are required at an additional cost of \$180.00; there is also an additional fee for the deed. Please contact our Cemetery Chairman, Dave Shrom at 717-445-5389 for further information.

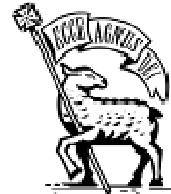
We ask that you obey the signs regarding the placement and removal of decorations. **Please Note: NO GLASS CONTAINERS PERMITTED.**

Our biggest expense this year will be the cost of mowing and trimming. Your donations are always appreciated.

+ Christian Symbols +

“Ecce Agnus Dei”

Latin for “Behold, the Lamb of God,” this is the phrase John the Baptist used twice to point out Jesus to others (John 1:29, 36). It marks Jesus’ Epiphany (manifestation, revelation) as the Anointed One (Christ, Messiah).



EPIPHANIES

The word epiphany means to show forth. Epiphanies, both large and small, tend to be private events — yet events with great significance for the public. Trying to share the details with another of an epiphany is fraught with complications. The words are never quite right, and even the most sympathetic listener cannot fully bridge the gap between description and what it was like being there. Most of us keep our personal experiences of the Holy to ourselves. Who would believe it? And who would really understand? The irony is that epiphanies are made for sharing, even as they are impossible to communicate fully.

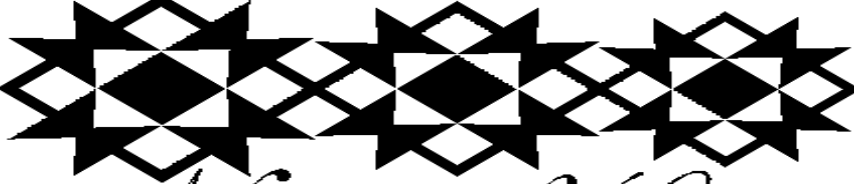
“I love all beginnings, despite their anxiousness and their uncertainty.”
—Rainer Maria Rilke

“Music is the shorthand of emotion.”
—Leo Tolstoy

OUR MISSIONARIES

**Alan, Carol, Dylan
Cerys, Brenin Wert**
Wales, United Kingdom

Dawn Crowther
Mercy Ships



Nursing Home
RESIDENTS

Rhea Eshelman Ephrata Manor	Nancy Good
Beatrice (Bea) Siegel	Mary Ludwig The Long Home
Dottie Leininger Landis Homes	Barbara Weinhold Denver Nursing Home
Clarence Hagy Denver Nursing Home	Charles & Pearl Shirk

WHAT NOT TO TAKE INTO THE NEW YEAR

- Self-help books — Trust in God first; don't turn to him as a last resort. (See Proverbs 3:5-6.)
 - Tape measure — Consider only God's standards; don't compare yourself to other people. (See Luke 18:9-14.)
 - Rearview mirror — Don't live in the past. You'll miss out on what God is doing in your life now. (See Philippians 3:12-14.)
 - Gavel — Instead of judging others, pray for them, help them and team with them. (See Luke 6:37-38.)
 - Life vest — Don't be overly cautious spiritually. Peter experienced Jesus in a real way because he dared to step out of the boat. (See Matthew 14:22-33.)
 - Garage-door opener — We think we're networked but often isolate ourselves from our neighbors. God intended for us to live in community with one another. (See Hebrews 10:23-25.)
 - Handcuffs — Don't offer excuses about why you can't help out. God can do amazing things through — and despite — us. Just follow him, with no excuses. (See Mark 6:35-44.)
- Gregg McCaslin

WITHOUT FAIL

I was once young and now I am old, but not once have I been witness to God's failure to supply my need when first I had given for the furtherance of his work. He has never failed in his promise, so I cannot fail in my service to him.

—William Carey

A NEW YEAR'S BLESSING

May God make your year a happy one!
Not by shielding you from all sorrow and pain,
But by strengthening you to bear it as it comes;
Not by making your path easy,
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from you,
But by taking fear from your heart;
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping your face bright, even in the shadows;
Not by making your life always pleasant,
But by showing you when people and their causes need
you most, and by making you anxious to be there to help.
God's love, peace, hope and joy to you for the year ahead.

—Author unknown

WAITING TO BLOSSOM

A song called "The Rose" (written by Amanda McBroom and made popular by Bette Midler) encourages listeners to keep the faith, even when the source of our hope isn't visible.

In the depths of winter, we especially need the reminder that beneath mounds of snow lie seeds already being prepared to burst forth "with the sun's love" into springtime flowers.

When you're in the cold depths of despair, grief, illness or other struggles, remember the deeply buried seed. Beyond your view, God's love is already tending that seed, readying it to blossom into healing, new friendship, joy and life.

- "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

—Frederick Buechner

There are two things I've learned: There is a God and I'm not Him.

Profiting from advice takes more wisdom than giving it.

Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something.

May your faith burn brightest in the darkest hours and never flicker in the winds of trial.

LIVING ABOVE THE WEATHER

Have you ever boarded an airplane in a snowstorm? The sky is gray with heavy clouds. Snow is coming down hard, with no sign of letting up. Plows clear the runway and unfamiliar machinery de-ices the wings. Passengers might consider it madness to fly in such weather.

But the pilot knows the storm is earthbound. Past the clouds is glorious sunshine. The plane can fly above the weather, if only it can get off the ground.

When troubles overtake us like a storm, we may wonder in the midst of the darkness if God still cares or if he is even there at all. But if we believe that God, like the sun, is unchanged in good weather and in bad, we can ride it out. For storms are earthbound, but we are not.

—Kari Myers

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

I spent five months as a college exchange student in Spain. The Sunday after I arrived, I walked to a nearby church, hoping worship would ease my homesickness. At first it didn't. The vast cathedral was a different denomination from my home church. No one welcomed me, and I couldn't comprehend all the Spanish.

As the priest began reading the gospel lesson, however, I recognized the account of Jesus' baptism. It struck me powerfully that, because our denominations shared the same lectionary (series of Scripture readings for worship), six hours later my pastor-father would be proclaiming this very passage at my home church. He would do so in a different language and to a different congregation, but it would be the same good news — indeed, the one gospel — proclaimed in my hearing.

I felt less homesick then, comforted that through Christ, the Scriptures and the church, I was connected with other Christians, even from far around the world.

—Heidi Mann

Jesus lives in the community—He only visits the church.

No matter how far you have gone on the wrong road, you can always turn back.

Kindness is the oil that reduces the friction of life.

Jesus never taught how to preach, only how to pray.

THE GUIDE

Picture a man stumbling along in a heavy fog, completely dis-oriented. Then, off in the distance, he sees the light of one small lamp. Its glow is sufficient neither to burn off the fog nor to illuminate the obstacles that might be on the ground between the man and that lamp. Still, it is a steadily burning lamp. Something within the man prompts him to believe that if he heads toward it, he will be going in the right direction. That “something” we can call “faith.”

While heading toward the lamp, he finds another lost man whose eyesight is so poor he can't see the lamp. The first man takes the second by the hand and helps him toward the lamp also. The act of reaching out to another we can call “love.”

And the lamp that draws him? It's called “hope.”
—The Wired Word (August 7, 2011)

BIBLE QUIZ

In the book of Judges, a cycle is repeated many times: The Israelites do “what is evil in the sight of the Lord,” God hands them over to an enemy nation, they cry out to the Lord and he appoints a judge, or political/military leader, for them. Under the judge's leadership, the Israelites conquer their adversary and prosper — until they start doing “what is evil in the sight of the Lord” all over again.

Who was not one of these judges?

- A. Deborah
- B. Ehud
- C. Esau
- D. Shamgar

Answer: C (See Judges 3–5.)

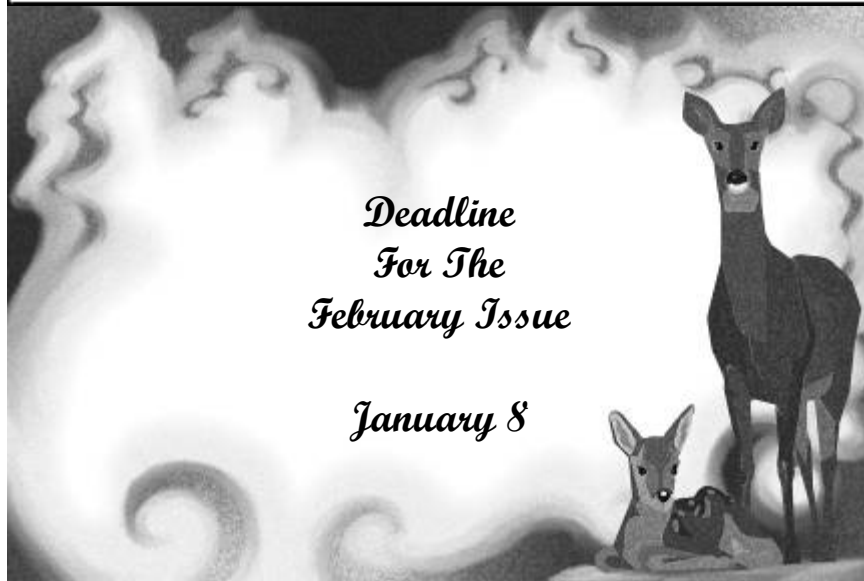
If your religion will not bring you to church, it will not take you to heaven.

He who kneels before God can stand before anyone.

If you find yourself with time on your hands, put 'em together and pray.

Christians keep the faith—but not from others.

God grades on the cross, not the curve.



*St. John's Center United Church of Christ
432 Reading Road
East Earl, PA 17519*

