



# NEWS from the Corner



**First United Methodist Church—600 Wood Street, Clarion, PA 16214**

Online at: [fumc-clarion.org](http://fumc-clarion.org)

**December 2023/January 2024 Edition**

## **Worship Services**

**Sunday mornings  
8:30 and 11:00am**

## **Sunday School**

**9:45am  
Classes for all ages**

## **Live Stream**

**Both services streamed  
live on YouTube**



## **Pastor Jodie's Jottings . . .**

### **Advent Greetings!**

Advent is my favorite time of the year—decorating, shopping for gifts, Christmas carols . . . Those sacred hymns announcing the birth of Jesus that we sing only during this season of the year. My favorite carol is “Joy to the World”! One phrase in the first verse speaks to this time of Advent: “Let every heart prepare Him room”—that’s what Advent is all about. A time of preparing our hearts and spirits for the arrival of Jesus into our lives once again.

Unfortunately, we sometimes get so caught up in the busyness of December that we forget the real reason for the season (as that often-heard cliché reminds us), “Jesus is the reason for the season.” A cliché, but also a great truth; the foundational reason we celebrate Christmas is to commemorate the most poignant mark in history, when God became a human baby to enter this world with the purpose of freeing it from the curse of sin.

The little baby born in Bethlehem, Jesus the Christ, the Redeemer. And that is who we celebrate this season. We celebrate hope. We celebrate redemption. We celebrate that God doesn’t abandon His people, no matter how much they disobey.

As Isaac Watts describes it in “Joy to the World,” the hope of Jesus spreads as “far as the curse is found.” Sin has permeated all of existence, but through the work of Jesus, so has God’s love, mercy and endless forgiveness. God is good, immeasurably good, and it is the act, where the Word of God left the heavenly realm and came into our broken mess as the baby Jesus, that created the path back to restoration with God.

In Christmas, we have a light that points to the day where there will be no more death, no more pain, only JOY. And it is all because of Jesus Christ.

Yes, Jesus is the reason for the season . . . the Savior reigns, repeat the sounding joy! I look forward to worshipping and celebrating with you!

Jerry and I wish you all a blessed Advent, a very Merry Christmas, and a happy and healthy New Year!

Pastor Jodie

**CONSIDER GIVING TO  
THE MEMORIAL FUND**

When a loved one dies, keeping his or her memory alive is a way of honoring his or her life and finding comfort in your own life as a survivor. Consider contributing a gift to your church's Memorial Fund as a tribute to someone you loved or have known.

**Memorials October 17, 2023 - November 17, 2023**

**In memory of Patricia Austin**

Given by Marlene Steiner (Memorial Fund)

**In memory of Carol Bylaska**

Given by Marlene Steiner (Memorial Fund)

**In memory of Mary Lee Lehman**

Given by Marlene Steiner (Memorial Fund)

**In memory of Doug Rhoads**

Given by Tom and Becky Miller (Memorial Fund)

Our deepest sympathies go out to Glenn LaForme on the loss of his wife, **Lois LaForme**. Lois joined our congregation on October 13, 1996 and passed from this life on October 22.

Please call the church office for an address if you wish to send your prayers and cards.

Dear Jodie and friends from First UM Church,  
You are a special group of people! Thank you for the use of your church for the ISM sessions.  
We hope you have a blessed Thanksgiving season!  
Love, hugs and prayers,  
Your friends from Lay Servant Ministries

Kids2Kids thanks you for your generosity and support of their recent hoagie sale. Your contributions help fund their mission work as we grow "hearts for mission" in the children of our church.

## One Call Now

The church office is looking at ways we can better serve and communicate with all of the church family. In January 2024 we are going to be initiating a One Call system.

This system allows us to send voice messages and/or text messages from the church whenever there are special announcements, activities, emergency prayer requests, cancellations or other information.

This new communication tool will also enable the church office to contact members of specific committees to remind them of meetings or cancellations.

To be able to receive these calls or texts, your telephone number has to be included on the activation list. If you DO NOT want your number to be included, please inform Darren Mackenzie, Mary Jo Ford, or Pastor Nancy Zahn (coordinator of computer membership records) or call the church at 814-226-6660 **by December 12.**

We will enter your telephone number based on the first one listed in the church directory or the updated number given on your weekly registration card. Many have updated with cell phones, therefore, if we have both your landline and cell phone number, please let us know if you prefer the cell phone number to be used. If you were not in the directory, and wish to be on our list, please let the church office know.

All of the organizations and churches that utilize these types of calling services are very pleased with their effectiveness. Current users have acknowledged how beneficial automated calling is with regard to being able to communicate with everyone.

We are excited to begin utilizing the One Call system for the church.

As you all may have noticed over the past few years, the Chancel Choir's numbers have reduced for various reasons. We consider ourselves as a Christian Church Family. If you have the joy and ability to sing, we invite you to join our family. We practice on Thursday nights starting in September. If you are not quite sure about this commitment, come and try us out. We would love to have your voice in our group.

Your servant in Christ,  
Randy Bowser, Director of Music

### **Saturday Men's Breakfast**

We will be meeting again at Perkins on **Saturday, December 9** at 8:00am.

If you like to eat, talk, laugh or just get out of the house, you are welcome to join us. The more the merrier!

### **Some Upcoming Dates for Clarion's United Women in Faith**

#### **Women's Breakfast**

The United Women in Faith will be having our next meeting at Perkins on **Monday, January 22 at 8:30am.** We start with some short readings on fellowship, after which we will have a wonderful meal and great conversation. Come and enjoy the fun! **EVERYONE is welcome!**

Our monthly circle meetings are as follows:

**Naomi Circle** - Will meet on **Thursday, December 14** and **Thursday, January 11.**

**Ruth Circle** - Will not be meeting in December. Our next meeting will be on **Monday, January 15 at 6:30pm.**

The Northeastern Jurisdiction quadrennial meeting next spring:

**April 19-21, 2024** in Providence, Rhode Island

All women are invited to attend any and all of these meetings to learn more about the mission work of the United Women in Faith.

For more information, contact Mary Brooks, Karen Vandermeer, or Mary Jo Ford.



# Christmas

## WORSHIP SCHEDULE



### Sunday, December 3 at 6:30pm

This annual tradition of singing carols together and enjoying some tasty treats has become a favorite event! See page 17 for full details.

### Sunday, December 10 at 7:00pm

The Clarion Community Choir presents "A Family Christmas," including an organ recital by Mary McKissick Brooks.

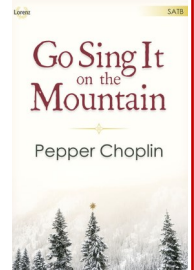


### Wednesday, December 13 at 12:30pm

A "Blue" Christmas Service is for those who may be troubled or grieving and who may prefer a more quiet and reflective worship in a less crowded setting. See page 17 for full details.

### Sunday, December 17 at 8:30 and 11:00am

Our Chancel Choir presents a Cantata worship service that will bring hope and light to your community of faith, decorated with beloved carols and engaging original anthems. The scripture-based narration affirms the Christmas message.



### Sunday, December 24

#### Christmas Eve Worship Services

**9:30am** One Celebration Sunday style worship service to acknowledge the fourth Sunday of Advent.

**7:00pm** A traditional candlelight service with the choir. Invite your relatives, friends and neighbors so together we can celebrate the coming of Christ.

### Sunday, December 31 New Year's Eve Worship Service

One service at **9:30am**

followed by some light snacks and fellowship time together in the Gathering Area.





**Sunday December 3, 2023****First Sunday of Advent**

9:45am Grades 6-12 - Cook & Eat Pancakes  
 11:00am Children's Chimes Practice  
 3:00pm Community Choir Rehearsal (Wesley Chapel)  
 6:30pm Carols Around the Table (Gathering Area)

**Monday December 4, 2023**

9:30am Disciple Bible Study - Fast Track (Room 102)  
 1:30pm Disciple Bible Study - Fast Track (Room 102)  
 5:30pm Kiwanis (Room 102)  
 6:30pm Stephen Ministry Class (Room 004)

**Tuesday December 5, 2023**

10:00am Second Harvest Delivery  
 11:15pm Senior Food Box Pickup  
 4:00pm Girl Scouts (Dining Room/Kitchen)  
 6:30pm Christian Education Meeting (Room 102)

**Wednesday December 6, 2023**

6:30pm Disciple Bible Study - Fast Track (Room 102)

**Friday December 8, 2023**

9:00am Ringing the Bell for The Salvation Army  
 6:00pm Mary Jo Ford's Retirement Reception (Gathering Area/Sanctuary)

**Saturday December 9, 2023**

8:00am Saturday Men's Breakfast (Perkins Restaurant)  
 10:00am Community Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary)

**Sunday December 10, 2023**

11:00am Kids2Kids Mission Group (K - 5th Grade)  
 12:00pm Pizza for Christmas Carolers (Gathering Area)  
 1:00pm Christmas Caroling  
 7:00pm Community Choir Concert (Sanctuary)

**Monday December 11, 2023**

6:30pm Stephen Ministry Class (Room 004)

**Tuesday December 12, 2023**

11:00am District Pastors' Gathering (Gathering Area/Sanctuary)

**Wednesday December 13, 2023**

12:00pm Blue Christmas Light Lunch  
 12:30pm Blue Christmas Service (Sanctuary)  
 6:30pm Disciple Bible Study - Fast Track (Room 102)

**Thursday December 14, 2023**

12:00pm United Women in Faith - Naomi Circle (Room 102)  
 2:00pm Clarion Civic Group (Room 102)

**Friday December 15, 2023**

5:30pm Trailblazers Christmas Party (Gathering Area)

**Saturday December 16, 2023**

10:00am Cantata Rehearsal (Sanctuary)

**Sunday December 17, 2023**

8:30am Christmas Cantata (Sanctuary, YouTube)  
 11:00am Christmas Cantata (Sanctuary, YouTube)  
 5:30pm Kiwanis (Room 102)

**Monday December 18, 2023**

6:30pm Stephen Ministry Class (Room 004)

**Tuesday December 19, 2023**

4:00pm Girl Scouts (Various Rooms)  
 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting (Room 102)

**Wednesday December 20, 2023**

4:00pm Love Cupboard Food Pantry

**Sunday December 24, 2023****Christmas Eve**

9:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary, YouTube)  
 7:00pm Christmas Eve Service (Sanctuary)

**Monday December 25, 2023****Christmas Day  
OFFICE CLOSED****Thursday December 28, 2023**

10:00am Second Harvest Delivery

**Saturday December 30, 2023**

1:00pm Lunch Preparation (Kitchen/Dining Room)

**Sunday December 31, 2023****New Year's Eve**

9:30am Celebration Sunday Worship (Sanctuary)

**Regular and Weekly Meetings****Sunday**

8:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary, YouTube)  
 9:45am Sunday School for All Ages  
 11:00am Contemporary Service (Sanctuary, YouTube)

**Monday**

5:30pm Adult Bell Choir Practice (Balcony)  
 6:30pm Boy Scouts Troop 51 (Various Rooms)

**Wednesday**

8:00am Journey for Men (Room 102)  
 12:30pm Worship Service (Wesley Chapel)  
 1:15pm Recovery 'n Motion (Dining Room)  
 6:30pm The Messengers Rehearsal (Sanctuary)

**Thursday**

6:30pm Chancel Choir Practice (Choir Room)  
 6:30pm Cub Scouts Pack 51 (Various Rooms)  
 6:45pm NA Setup (Room 102)  
 8:00pm NA Group (Room 102)

**Friday**

9:00am Sit 'n Stitch (Room 102)

**Saturday**

7:30pm Alcoholics Anonymous (Room 004)

***All dates are subject to change.  
Please check the website for current schedule.***

## 2024 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT and NOMINATIONS SLATE

### CHURCH COUNCIL

#### Administrative Officers

Chairperson: Church Council  
Senior Pastor/Administrative Officer  
Lay Leader  
Lay Member to Annual Conference  
Recording Secretary  
Church Treasurer  
Financial Secretary  
Membership Secretary

#### Administrative Ministry Teams

Chairperson: Board of Trustees  
Chairperson: Finance Ministry Team  
Chairperson: Leadership Development and Nominations  
Chairperson: Memorial Committee  
Chairperson: Staff/Parish Relations Committee  
Chairperson: Trusts and Endowments Committee

#### Programming Ministry Teams

Chairperson: Education and Discipleship Ministry Team  
Chairperson: Fellowship Ministry Team  
Chairperson: Local and Global Missions & Outreach  
Chairperson: Worship Ministry Team

#### Church Staff and Other Representatives

At-Large Member  
At-Large Member  
At-Large Member  
Church Historian  
Operations and Technical Administrator  
Director of Music Ministries  
Director of Youth Ministry  
President: United Women in Faith  
Representative: Stephen Ministers  
Representative: United Methodist Men  
Representative: Youth

### NAME

Howard Rhoades  
Rev. Jodie Smith  
Bart Matson  
Cindy Beck  
Roberta Laird  
Karen Vandermeer  
David Hauser  
Rev. Nancy Zahn

TBE  
Tom Miller  
Rev. Jodie Smith  
Marlene Steiner  
Bill Bailey  
Howard Rhoades

Joe Wolf  
Roberta Laird  
Lillian Pfaff  
Cindy Beck

Dawn Williams  
Kim Girts  
Stu Estes  
Roberta Laird  
Darren Mackenzie  
Randy Bowser  
Shelly Rhoades  
Mary Brooks  
Cindy Beck  
Jim Bolinger  
Lauren Brinkley

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

#### Class of 2024

Ray Ewing  
Jean Mills  
Diann Straitiff

#### Class of 2025

Dale Fiscus

#### Class of 2026

Dawn Williams, Secretary  
Matt Long  
Eric Funk

## **News from the Corner - December 2023/January 2024**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Chairperson:** Joe Wolf (2024)

Bonita Bailey (2025)

Kayla Wayland (2026)

**Sunday School Secretary & Nursery:** Carrah Campbell

**Kids2Kids Coordinator:** Michele Howard

**Teachers:** Mary Brooks, Bart Matson, Tom Miller, Melissa McNutt, Gwen Rhoades, Peggy Jo Staab, Jonna Matson, Brenda Smathers, Tracy Myers, Julie McCormick, Pastor Jodie Smith

### **FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY TEAM**

#### **Class of 2024**

Melinda Montoya

Roberta Laird (Chair)

#### **Class of 2025**

Valerie Stitt

Carrah Campbell

Ruthie Niederriter

#### **Class of 2026**

Kim Girts

Jim Bolinger

### **FINANCE AND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

#### **Class of 2024**

Jody Weaver

Ted Howard

#### **Class of 2025**

Tom Miller (Chair)

Ben Krupnik

**Trustees Representative:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson/Church Council:** Howard Rhoades

**Chairperson/Staff-Parish Relations:** Bill Bailey

**Church Treasurer:** Karen Vandermeer

**Financial Secretary:** David Hauser

**Lay Leader:** Bart Matson

**Lay Member to Annual Conference:** Cindy Beck

**Stewardship Committee:** Ted Howard, Howard Rhoades

### **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

**Chairperson (Pastor):** Rev. Jodie Smith

#### **Class of 2024**

Sarah Matson

Shelly Rhoades

#### **Class of 2025**

Judy Curl

Donna Woodman

#### **Class of 2026**

Mary Jo Ford

### **LOCAL AND GLOBAL MISSIONS & OUTREACH**

#### **Class of 2024**

Cheryl Douthit

Mary Brooks

Lillian Pfaff (Chair)

#### **Class of 2025**

Kim Girts

Thao Krupnik

Jonna Matson

#### **Class of 2026**

Bonnie Stehle

Jill Johns

Randy Reitz

**Coordinator of the Love Cupboard:** Howard Rhoades

### **MEMORIAL COMMITTEE**

#### **Class of 2024**

Barb Krupnik

Bea Snyder

#### **Class of 2025**

Richard Wilson

Marlene Steiner (Chair)

#### **Class of 2026**

Judy Fiscus

Carol Kiser

## **News from the Corner - December 2023/January 2024**

### **STAFF/PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

#### **Class of 2024**

Bill Bailey (Chair)

#### **Class of 2025**

Kim Girts  
Brenda Smathers

#### **Class of 2026**

Mary Wilson  
Randy Cathcart  
Julie McCormick

**Lay Leader:** Bart Matson

**Church Council Chairperson:** Howard Rhoades

**Lay Delegate to Annual Conference:** Cindy Beck

**Pastor:** Rev. Jodie Smith

### **TRUSTS AND ENDOWMENTS COMMITTEE**

#### **Class of 2024**

Ted Howard  
Suzan Hahnfeldt

#### **Class of 2025**

Ben Krupnik

#### **Class of 2026**

Howard Rhoades

### **WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM**

#### **Class of 2024**

Crystal Jewell

#### **Class of 2025**

Cindy Beck (Chair)  
Marlene Steiner

#### **Class of 2026**

Janelle Chambers-Sloan  
Bret Sloan  
Sue Ann Boyles

**Acolyte Coordinator:** Jonna Matson

**Altar Guild:** Diann Straitiff

**Communion Steward:** Diann Straitiff, Cheryl Hilyer, Reese Boyles

**Director of Children's Choir:** Sarah Matson, Jordonna Bowser

**Operations and Technical Administrator:** Darren Mackenzie

**Director of the Messengers:** Zachary Covington

**Director of Music Ministries:** Randy Bowser

**Director of Bell Choir:** Jordonna Bowser

**Head Usher:** Richard Wilson

**Organist/Accompanist:** Mary Brooks

**Singing Angels:** Peggy Jo Staab

**Bells & Chimes:** Peggy Jo Staab

### **OTHER COMMITTEES/WORK AREAS OF THE CHURCH**

#### **Building Committee**

**Chairperson:** Howard Rhoades

**Members:** Jim Fagley, Dale Fiscus, Tracy Myers, Randy Reitz, Peggy Jo Staab, Marlene Steiner, Karen Vandermeer, Richard Wilson

#### **Grounds Committee**

**Convener:** Diann Straitiff

**Members:** Judy Fiscus, Matt Wayland, Rick Straitiff

#### **Technology Team**

**Operating and Technology Administrator:** Darren Mackenzie

**Members:** Crystal Jewell, Jason Brinkley, Mary Weyer, Sarah Siegel

## **News from the Corner - December 2023/January 2024**

### **Safety Team**

**Head Usher:** Richard Wilson

**Medical:** Randy Bowser, Tracy Myers, Will Craddock

### **Membership Care**

**Chairperson:** Rev. Jodie Smith

**Members:** Cindy Beck, Jim Bolinger, Cheryl Douthit, Suzan Hahnfeldt, Carol Kiser, Brenda Smathers, Marlene Steiner, Judy Fiscus, Jean Mills, Donna Woodman, Nancy Zahn, Melinda Montoya, Bea Snyder, Mary Jo Ford, Shelly Rhoades

### **Stephen Ministers**

**Leaders:** Sandra Foster, Suzan Hahnfeldt, Barb Krupnik, Cindy Beck, Kim Girts

**Ministers:** Bev Schmader, Brenda Smathers, Bea Snyder, Marlene Steiner, Christina Shrewsbury

### **Offering Tellers**

Connie Aaron, Sandra Foster, Roberta Laird, Donna Lewis, Peggy Jo Staab, Kathy Steele, Cheryl Douthit

### **Head Usher: Richard Wilson**

#### **Team 1 – 8:30**

**Ed Hale**

Wade Bearfield  
Randy Cathcart  
Dirk Vandermeer

#### **Team 2 – 8:30**

**Mary Weyer**

Sue Cathcart  
Carrah Campbell  
Marlene Steiner

#### **Team 3 – 8:30**

**Ray Ewing**

Janne Ewing  
Diann “Chip” Straitiff  
Rick Straitiff  
Dana Wolbert  
Amy Wolbert  
Kathy Gathers (alt.)

#### **Team 4 – 8:30**

#### **Team 1 – 11:00**

**Howard Rhoades**

Ted Howard  
Val Stitt

#### **Team 2 – 11:00**

**Richard Wilson**

Linda McMaster  
Penny Schaffer  
Mary Wilson

#### **Team 3 – 11:00**

Jonna Matson

#### **Team 4 – 11:00**

**David Hauser**

Jean Mills  
Deborah Whisner

If you are interested in being on a committee in 2024,  
please let Pastor Jodie know or call the church office at 814-226-6660.



CLARION  
COMMUNITY  
CHOIR

*presents*

**ANNUAL HOLIDAY CHORAL CONCERT**

**“A Family Christmas”**

**and**

**Organ Recital by Mary McKissick Brooks**

Sunday, December 10, 2023

Clarion First United Methodist Church

7:00 PM

Free-will offering.





The weeks of Advent remind us to set aside some of the hectic business of the holiday season, and to quietly reflect on the promise of the baby born in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago. The Bible readings listed below relate to the Advent themes of **waiting, preparation, light in the darkness, and the coming of the promised Messiah.**

**First Week of Advent**

**Sunday** - Romans 13:11-14  
**Monday** - 1 Corinthians 1:3-9  
**Tuesday** - Mark 13:33-37  
**Wednesday** - John 1:1-5  
**Thursday** - John 1:6-9  
**Friday** - Jeremiah 33:14-16  
**Saturday** - Isaiah 6

**Second Week of Advent**

**Sunday** - Romans 15:4-13  
**Monday** - Psalms 43:3-6  
**Tuesday** - Psalms 27:1-4  
**Wednesday** - Psalms 119:105-106  
**Thursday** - John 12:35-36  
**Friday** - Ephesians 5:6-14  
**Saturday** - 1 Peter 2:5-9

**Third Week of Advent**

**Sunday** - Isaiah 60:1-3  
**Monday** - 2 Corinthians 4:3-6  
**Tuesday** - 1 John 1:4-7  
**Wednesday** - John 3:16-21  
**Thursday** - Isaiah 40:1-11  
**Friday** - John 9:1-7  
**Saturday** - Luke 3:1-6

**Fourth Week of Advent**

**Sunday** - Isaiah 11:1-10  
**Monday** - Zephaniah 3:14-17  
**Tuesday** - Matthew 1:18-25  
**Wednesday** - Luke 2:8-20  
**Thursday** - Matthew 4:14-16  
**Friday** - Isaiah 2:1-5  
**Saturday** - Luke 2:25-33

**Hunger vs. FUMC Love Cupboard**

November 15 has come and gone in a very big way at FUMC of Clarion. Seventeen new friends and neighbors with nutritional needs visited and registered in our Love Cupboard food pantry program.

That in itself is quite significant, but when you include the additional 80 households, we reached a high volume of guests. We were well prepared with goods for all. As we have done for the last 2 years, each household received a special allotment of items that helped them prepare for a Thanksgiving meal. Each of the volunteers was exhausted from the heavy afternoon of work.

The breakdown of visitors is as follows:

**Total visitors - 97, Total household members - 230, Total children under 18 - 53, Adults up to 59 - 129, Seniors 60 and older - 45**

Our program only exists out of the goodness of people's hearts and funds. Thank you to each supporter of this valuable community supported mission. We would welcome your participation on the third Wednesday of each month—please let the church office know of your volunteer interest.

The donation item for the month of **December** is **DISH SOAP**.

Please place your donations in the wooden box located in the Gathering Area.

**Please Note: Perishable items are now available.** Distribution occurs on the **3rd Wednesday of each month from 4:00pm-5:30pm.**



**2023 State of Mission Barn Report from Katie Peterson**

Psalm 121:1-2 I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Grace and Peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Wow! Many things have changed since my last state of the Eastbrook Mission Barn report! We have purchased our new building and grounds, changed our name, and made our new home ours. This is all with the service and prayers of so many volunteers and groups like you. Thank you so much.

In the mix of us moving in and getting settled into our new place, we were able to assist our neighbors in East Palestine, Ohio with 300 cleaning buckets in the aftermath of the train derailment in their community. Please continue to keep them in your prayers. We have also been able to share hygiene kits and menstrual kits with many agencies around our conference—Ohio, New York, and West Virginia.

Our cleaning bucket supply is currently low. We are in need of filled cleaning buckets. We are also accepting hygiene and menstrual kits. Please visit [umcor.org](http://umcor.org) to get the recipe of what goes in the kits.

Our ramp season (which started with our own ramp in March) has been remarkably busy this year with some short ramps, some medium-sized ramps, and some larger ramps, as well as a few boardwalks to help our neighbors in need to get safely in and out of their homes. By the end of our ramp season this year we will have completed 40 ramps and reclaimed 11 ramps. This is a new high for us!

God has and continues to truly bless with donations of money, supplies, and kits, as well as prayers.

Whenever we run into a challenge, someone comes alongside us with the a solution to help us figure it out.

This has truly happened in many different ways through the process of us getting our building and also us making the building our own. Whether it is needing trailers moved around, gutters/drained cleared, skilled craftsman to do repairs, or someone to open and close our high windows for the seasons, God puts the right person in our path when we need it.

We are excited to share that we are now able to host volunteer teams of 2-20 people at any given time.

Elementary students through adults are welcome to come—we have tasks for all ages and abilities!

Please email Katie at [rmissionbarn@gmail.com](mailto:rmissionbarn@gmail.com) to schedule a tour or to provide a date for your team to come serve.

Shalom,

Katie Peterson, Director



The Youth Group of First United Methodist Church of Clarion is a ministry for all youth ages 12 (7th grade) - 18 (senior year). We welcome church members and their friends to join our ministry. If you are interested in joining our Youth Group, please contact the Youth Director at [youthdirector@fumc-clarion.org](mailto:youthdirector@fumc-clarion.org).



### **Youth Group Important Dates**

- Sunday, December 3:** Regular Meeting—6:30pm-8:00pm in Youth Room
- Sunday, December 10:** Regular Meeting—6:30pm-8:00pm in Youth Room
- Wednesday, December 13:** Breakfast at County Seat @ 6:45am
- Saturday, December 16:** Wreaths Across America at 11:30am—Dress Warm!
- Sunday, December 17:** Christmas Party at Clarion River Lodge  
(We will meet at the church at 4:30pm—see details below.)
- Sunday, December 24:** No Youth Group
- Sunday, December 31:** No Youth Group

**June 23 through June 27, 2024—Work Camp—Mark your calendar!**



The Youth Group will be going to **Clarion River Lodge** on **Sunday, December 17** for our annual **Christmas Party**. We will leave the church at 4:30pm and return at approximately 8:00pm. I am asking the youth to wear a bit more formal clothing such as khakis, polo shirts, dress pants, or skirts. We will have a gift exchange. Youth are to bring a gift (boy for a boy or girl for a girl) less than \$15.00. Please no gift certificates or bags of candy. If you are interested in attending, please contact the youth director at [youthdirector@fumc-clarion.org](mailto:youthdirector@fumc-clarion.org).



A big thank you to everyone who purchased a wreath for Wreaths Across America. The ceremony is on **Saturday, December 16** at **12:00pm**. Come out (warm clothes, of course) and help place wreaths on all of the veterans' graves at the Clarion Cemetery on Second Avenue. It is a meaningful way to honor those who fought for our freedoms. Donation amounts will be presented in the next newsletter.

**New Arrivals at the Church Library**

*The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom (second copy)

*For One More Day* by Mitch Albom

*The Bible—*from *The Smart Guide to the Bible Series*, Larry Richards, editor

*Psalms for the Heart*, Angela Kiesling, manuscript editor

On November 12, two military veterans were honored during the 11:00 worship service with the presentation of a patriotic themed quilt.

**Dave Hauser** served in the U.S. Coast Guard as an Aviation Electrician Third Class Petty Officer in Alaska from 1961 to 1965.

**Randy Stewart** served in the U.S. Navy aboard the USS Iwo Jima from 1974 to 1977. Both of these veterans served during the Vietnam era.

These quilts were reported as being presented to the **Quilts of Valor Foundation**. There have currently been over 360,000 quilts presented through this program.



**Traveling with The Missions Team**

On a beautiful fall day in late October, the Missions Team toured the Ruth M. Smith Center in Sheffield and stopped for lunch and a brief visit at the Olmsted Retreat Center in Ludlow. Both organizations are supported by the Missions Committee through financial contributions and donations of supplies.

On the day of the visit, festive Halloween decorations decked the dining and common rooms of the Smith Center. The team met with residents, toured the mansion and the two adjacent residences on the property, and visited the YMCA next door that provides exercise and creative arts and crafts programs for the residents.

The Victorian mansion was donated by the Smith family to the Methodist Women's Home Missionary Society in 1922 in memory of their daughter Ruth. At first it served as an orphanage. Today it provides a safe, warm home and personal care for adults with disabilities.

The private rooms are airy and comfortable, reflecting the personal tastes and interests of their occupants. At noon, lunch at Olmsted Manor overlooking the hills and autumn foliage of Northwest Pennsylvania capped the tour. Team members had an opportunity to walk the grounds and get up-to-date information on future events and retreats to be shared with this congregation. To be used as a retreat, this estate was given to the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church by the Olmsted family in 1969. Its mission is to provide a sacred space for renewal in an atmosphere of Christian hospitality.



Consider making a special gift to the Ruth M. Smith Center this Christmas. They are asking for our help. The 139-year-old mansion is in need of repairs and remodeling.

\*\* The chimneys urgently require maintenance and structural repair costing approximately \$75,000. As can be seen from ground level, small tree saplings are growing in the nooks and crannies of the bricks and chimney tops.

\*\* A new kitchen is needed for food storage and preparation in a single location. Such a facility would eliminate storing and transporting food from the basement pantry, and it would reduce the heat produced in the current kitchen.

**Ways to Donate**

\*\* By church giving: Make the check payable to our church, include "Ruth M. Smith Center" on the memo line, and drop the gift in the offering plate.

\*\* Directly by mail to the Ruth M. Smith Center, 407 South Main Street, P.O. Box 576, Sheffield, PA 16347

\*\* By visiting [ruthmsmithcenter.org/support](http://ruthmsmithcenter.org/support)

Supplies donated to the Sheffield YMCA's gym and arts & crafts program serve Ruth M. Smith residents.

Requested items include new or "gently used":

\*\* art supplies such as watercolors, paper, paintbrushes, and a variety of craft materials such as ribbons, beads, and glue

\*\* gym equipment: basketballs, and Nerf balls

Send packages to Jennifer Goerlich, Warren County YMCA, 407 South Main Street, Sheffield, PA, 16347.



## **News from the Corner - December 2023/January 2024**

### **Monday January 1, 2024**

**New Year's Day**  
**OFFICE CLOSED**

### **Tuesday January 2, 2024**

4:00pm Girl Scouts (Dining Room/Kitchen)  
6:30pm Christian Education Meeting (Room 102)

### **Saturday January 6, 2024**

9:30am Stephen Ministry Class (Room 004)

### **Sunday January 7, 2024**

9:45am Grades 6-12 - Cook & Eat Breakfast Pizza Together  
11:00am Children's Chimes Practice

### **Tuesday January 9, 2024**

6:30pm Trustees Meeting (Room 102)

### **Thursday January 11, 2024**

12:00pm United Women in Faith Naomi Circle (Room 102)  
2:00pm Clarion Civic Group (Room 102)

### **Sunday January 14, 2024**

11:00am Kids2Kids Mission Group (K - 5th Grade)

### **Monday January 15, 2024**

#### **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

6:30pm Stephen Ministry Class (Room 004)  
6:30pm United Women in Faith - Ruth Circle (Conference Room - 2nd Floor)

### **Tuesday January 16, 2024**

2:00pm Fellowship Committee Meeting (Room 102)  
4:00pm Girl Scouts (Various Rooms)  
6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting (Room 102)

### **Wednesday January 17, 2024**

4:00pm Love Cupboard Food Pantry

### **Friday January 19, 2024**

5:30pm Pizza and Movie Night Dinner (Gathering Area)  
6:00pm Movie Night (Gathering Area)

### **Monday January 22, 2024**

8:30am Women's Fellowship Group (Perkins Restaurant)  
6:30pm Stephen Ministry Class (Room 004)

### **Thursday January 25, 2024**

10:00am Second Harvest Delivery

### **Sunday January 28, 2024**

11:00am Arts and Crafts (K - 5th Grade)

### **Monday January 29, 2024**

6:30pm Stephen Ministry Class (Room 004)

### **Regular and Weekly Meetings**

#### **Sunday**

8:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary, YouTube)  
9:45am Sunday School for All Ages  
11:00am Contemporary Service (Sanctuary, YouTube)

#### **Monday**

5:30pm Adult Bell Choir Practice (Balcony)  
6:30pm Boy Scouts Troop 51 (Various Rooms)

#### **Wednesday**

8:00am Journey for Men (Room 102)  
12:30pm Worship Service (Wesley Chapel)  
1:15pm Recovery 'n Motion (Dining Room)  
6:30pm The Messengers Rehearsal (Sanctuary)

#### **Thursday**

6:30pm Chancel Choir Practice (Choir Room)  
6:30pm Cub Scouts Pack 51 (Various Rooms)  
6:45pm NA Setup (Room 102)  
8:00pm NA Group (Room 102)

#### **Friday**

9:00am Sit 'n Stitch (Room 102)

#### **Saturday**

7:30pm Alcoholics Anonymous (Room 004)

**All dates are subject to change.**  
**Please check the website for current schedule.**



*Birthdays  
of the Month*

**December 1**

Reed Bell

**December 2**

Nancy Keen  
Bruce Kiser

**December 3**

Michael Foster  
Joy Lignelli  
Bailee Verdill

**December 4**

Liza Kopp

**December 5**

Wade Bearfield

**December 6**

Melinda Montoya

**December 7**

Emma Fiscus Sierko  
Rick Straitiff

**December 8**

Dianne Brosius  
Katie Kapp  
Beatrice Snyder  
Chip Straitiff

**December 9**

Zachary Uber

**December 10**

Tony Kopp  
Jameson McIlwain  
Stephen Wilshire

**December 11**

Finn Dehner

**December 12**

Makenna Burns

**December 13**

Asher Bell  
Robin McGinley  
Dan Uber

**December 14**

Ahmed Isar

**December 15**

Barbara Krupnik  
Jack Winger

**December 16**

Chloe Kiser  
Doris Seidle

**December 17**

Charlene Prody  
Asher Steele

**December 18**

Judy Fiscus  
Donna Woodman

**December 19**

Mary Jo Barger  
John Flower, Jr.

**December 20**

Allie Brooks  
Deryl Larsen  
Chris Vincent

**December 21**

Jonna Matson  
Greg Smathers

**December 22**

Cynthia Fox  
Eric Kiser  
Cole Stutzman

**December 24**

Gavin Brinkley  
Michael Robertson

**December 27**

Darren Mackenzie  
Marlene Platt  
Marlus Platt  
Evelyn Towse  
Craig Zamzow

**December 28**

John Heasley

**December 29**

Holly Gourley  
Tantruh Hilyer

**December 30**

Christine Texter  
Zackary Wolbert

**January 1**

Joshua Miller  
Keyauna Valimont

**January 2**

Bill LaVelle, Jr.  
John McElhattan

**January 3**

Jane Miller  
Zoe Robson  
Christian Simko  
Payton Simko  
Willie Wilson

**January 4**

Larry Anderson  
Richard Buskirk III  
Amber Stutzman

**January 5**

Dale Fiscus

**January 6**

Cami Womeldorf

**January 7**

Scott Kuehn  
Brecken McLaughlin

**January 8**

Justin Beck  
Raymond Ewing  
Lincoln Girt  
Mason Gourley  
Kyle Grabigel  
Brooklyn Kopp  
Aleisha Wilson

**January 9**

Patrick Johnson  
Nicole Kitchen  
Roberta Laird  
Melissa McNutt  
Karen Vandermeer

**January 10**

Carder Miller  
Lynn Smith

**January 11**

Susie Kapp  
Jeffrey Young, Sr.

**January 12**

Morgan Bailey  
Gracie Wayland

**January 13**

Daniel Patton  
Kade Phillips  
Kaegan Phillips

**January 14**

Carrie Robertson  
David Smith

**January 17**

Nancy DiStefano  
Corey Williams

**January 18**

Terrance Lawson  
Brycen Robson  
Steven Smathers

**January 19**

Nora Martin  
Rev. Arnie Rhodes

**January 20**

Sienna Greco

**January 21**

Damien Cherico

**January 22**

Linda McMaster

**January 23**

Beverly Pasqualette  
Haley Stutzman  
Sarah Wiant

**January 24**

Hudson Burns  
Lisa Heasley

**January 25**

Connie Aaron  
Annabelle Burns  
Jeffrey Courson  
Tracy Myers

**January 26**

Cassie Acey  
Nico Stefanos

**January 27**

Laura Grabigel  
Lois McFadden  
Andrew Stevenson  
Beau Verdill

**January 28**

Jeffrey McElhattan

**January 29**

Janice Hartle  
Myah Miller  
Lauren Grey

**January 30**

Alexa Kitchen

**January 31**

Crystal Jewell



**Carols Around the Table**

**Sunday, December 3  
6:30pm  
Gathering Area**

Join us on **Sunday, December 3**, to enjoy our annual **Carols Around the Table**. There will be gingerbread, angel food cake, and other refreshments. Special music will highlight the evening. Join in the fun of singing your favorite Christmas carols with your church family.

Our Membership Care committee has met and discussed ways that we can care for one another as the Body of Christ. With that in mind, we are planning to go **Christmas caroling** to some of our homebound members. If you would like to join us, we will be having a pizza lunch **at noon** on **Sunday, December 10** and then go caroling. Join us as we brighten someone's day with the songs of Christmas! Please sign up in the church office if you plan to attend.

While Advent is the season of joy and celebration, we must acknowledge that for some it is a very difficult time of the year due to the loss of a loved one, difficult family situations, isolation, and many other reasons. To commemorate the "blue" aspect of Christmas, we will be having a **Blue Christmas worship service at 12:30pm on Wednesday, December 13**. Prior to worship we will be sharing lunch with one another in the Gathering Area. Please join us and bring along a friend who may be struggling to find joy.

**Kids2Kids' Small Local Mission Makes a Big Impact!**

The "back-to-school care bags" that K2K packed and distributed to the children of our Love Cupboard participants were greatly needed and appreciated. The number of those we are able to serve is continuing to grow.

The kids would like to assemble "winter care bags" to distribute in January.

If you are able to help, we are looking for 70 of each item:

- ◆ Individual packets of hot chocolate
- ◆ ChapStick
- ◆ Mini flashlights with batteries (these are available on Amazon)
- ◆ Hand warmers
- ◆ Pencils
- ◆ Individually packaged snacks

This mission is a way we can have a direct and immediate impact on the children of our community. Thank you very much for supporting the children of our community and our children's mission work. Please place donations in the bin in the Gathering Area.

**Pizza and a Movie: *I Heard the Bells*  
Friday, January 19  
Gathering Area**

Pizza served at 5:30pm  
Movie at 6:00pm  
Reservations by Wednesday, January 17, please.



This film is the inspiring true story behind the beloved Christmas song, "I Heard the Bells." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow led an idyllic life until the day his world was shattered by tragedy. With a nation divided by Civil War, and his family torn apart, Henry put down his pen, silenced by grief. It was the sound heard on Christmas morning that reignited his lost voice as he discovered the resounding hope of rekindled faith.

This movie is Sight and Sound's first feature film.

## October 2023 Finance at a Glance

General Budget	Receipts	Expenditures
<i>Forecast</i>	\$35,591	\$31,928
<i>Actual</i>	\$19,094	\$32,375

Our church receipts were solid in the first three quarters. Our fourth quarter has started off sluggish, but we still have opportunity to finish 2023 in a healthy way. Our stewardship toward our general budget is what helps maintain all of our programs, staff salaries, and all expenses related to maintaining our building costs. Just like your home, we have utility expenses and insurance costs to cover. Be diligent toward ending your stewardship emphasis in a positive way as we prepare for and walk our way through the Advent Season. God is good all the time, all the time God is good.

### Church Mutual Insurance Company Visit

Recently we had an inspection by a gentleman representing Church Mutual Insurance Company, which is our insurance carrier of all our properties. He had been a youth director in a church before turning to the insurance business. The following is part of his observations while doing his review:

*Thank you for the opportunity to conduct a safety assessment on October 25, 2023. My visit was designed specifically for your organization to help identify ways to reduce the potential for accidents, injuries, and property damage.*

*I enjoyed meeting everyone and seeing your beautiful facility. It is clear that you give high value to your building, congregants, and surrounding community. I loved seeing the preschoolers being dropped off that morning and was impressed with the beauty of the building as well as improvements you have made over the years to preserve that beauty and upgrade the building to modern needs.*

*Otto Jensen,  
Risk Control Specialist*

Sometimes we take for granted the building we worship in, but it takes effort and care to maintain and improve our facilities as we walk daily our journey with our Lord. Thank you to each of you who contribute financially and with your heart to drive our congregation and community worship center that we are so proud to have. Blessings to each of you throughout this holiday season.

Peace and wisdom,  
Howard Rhoades

### THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED

#### For Christmas:

The Church Office will be closed on Christmas Day. The Church Office will be closed on Tuesday, December 26, 2023 and will reopen on Wednesday, December 27, 2023.

#### For the New Year:

The Church Office will be closed on New Year's Day and will reopen on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

Please note that Sunday, December 31, 2023 will be the last day to deliver a 2023 donation to the church.

If you plan to bring an end-of-year offering to the church on Sunday, the last day of the year, it must be done at the 9:30am service.

### A NOTE ABOUT YEAR-END GIFTS TO THE CHURCH

The Internal Revenue Service says that charitable deductions must be claimed in the year in which they are delivered. The only exception to this ruling is a check that is dated and mailed AND postmarked prior to the end of the year. In this case the postmark constitutes the delivery date.

Two examples might help:

1. A check is dated December 31, 2023 and delivered in person to the church on Tuesday January 2, 2024 or later. The IRS will allow the deduction in 2024, not in 2023, since the check was delivered to the church in 2024.
2. A check is written, mailed, AND postmarked in December 2023. The church receives the check on Tuesday January 2, 2024 or later. This check is deductible in 2023, since the postmark represents the delivery date.

Putting an envelope with an end-of-year offering into a mailbox on December 31 will not guarantee a postmark of 2023.

David M. Hauser  
Financial Secretary

## **News from the Corner - December 2023/January 2024**

### **New Church Office Management and Hours**

Beginning in January 2024 the church will begin a new office management process to support the changing needs of the church and to facilitate the transition to new staffing of the office with the consolidated position of Operations and Technical Administrator\* to be filled by Darren Mackenzie. In advance, Pastor Jodie, Staff Parish Relations, and the Church Council want to ensure the congregation is aware of the changes that will be taking place.

The goal of the new office management process is to provide the congregation and community improved access to resources and care by increasing the use of communication technologies, which will also enable staff to complete project-based tasks that further our ministry. In order to meet this goal, a significant change will be a modification of church office hours as follows.

#### **Important Change:**

- ♦ **New hours for the church office beginning January 2024: Monday - Thursday, 8:30am - 2:30pm; the office will be closed on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.** Persons who have needs that require assistance outside of these hours are asked to contact the church office to make arrangements.

Note: Pastor Jodie and the church leadership are committed to monitoring the effectiveness of these changes during the following weeks and months. If you have questions, please contact the church office, Pastor Jodie, Howard Rhoades, or Bill Bailey.

*\* The Operations and Technical Administrator position is a consolidation of the previous Administrative Assistant and Director of Communications and Technology positions.*

Join us to celebrate Mary Jo Ford's (end-of-the-year) retirement on **Friday, December 8 at 6:00pm** in the Gathering Area. Mary Jo has faithfully served as our Administrative Assistant for eleven years. Her smiling face and welcoming and helpful demeanor will be greatly missed. Light refreshments will be provided. If you have questions, contact Bill Bailey, SPRC Chair or Pastor Jodie at [pastor@fumc-clarion.org](mailto:pastor@fumc-clarion.org) or 814-226-6660.

### **A part-time position open in our church—Director of Christian Education**

This part-time and paid position *averages* ten hours a week. This position was formerly held by Marlene Steiner. Initially retiring from teaching, Marlene found being director of education an ideal way to do something meaningful while serving her church. This opportunity is great for a person of faith who would enjoy sharing the gift of our faith with others, while also learning more themselves! Although you are welcome to help teach, teaching is not required. This position is primarily a coordinating and equipping position. You would work with and be assisted by the Education Committee of our church and our Church Council. You would assist and help lead the Education Committee and our teachers in setting up the programs of Sunday School, Adult Education, and Vacation Bible School.

One of the key areas would be helping to identify and select study topics and curriculums, and help our teaching staff understand the curriculum strengths. You do not need to be a member of our church in order to apply. Feel free to share this opportunity and refer quality people our way. If interested, inquire through the office or contact Mr. Bill Bailey, chair of Staff Parish Relations Committee (our committee for paid personnel).

### **Staff Opening—Lead Nursery Coordinator**

Our Staff Parish Relations Committee is now taking applications from those interested in the position. The nursery, for infants and children through the age of 4, is open on Sunday mornings and on some special occasions. Those interested are encouraged to ask for a Job Description. Clearances are required before starting this job. Staff Parish thanks Carrah Campbell for serving so capably as interim coordinator.



## FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

600 Wood Street · Clarion, PA 16214 · 814-226-6660

[www.fumc-clarion.org](http://www.fumc-clarion.org)

Email: [communications@fumc-clarion.org](mailto:communications@fumc-clarion.org)

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Newsletters and Pastor Jodie's sermons are now available online for you to view, listen to, and/or download. If you prefer to receive your newsletter by email instead of print, or if you have any questions, suggestions or information for our website, please email Darren Mackenzie at [communications@fumc-clarion.org](mailto:communications@fumc-clarion.org).

### PLEASE NOTE "MAILER" SCHEDULE

**Upcoming Mailers:** Items for the February newsletter need to be submitted by **Monday, January 15**.

Thank you!

**To submit information:** If you would like to submit information for the mailer, please contact the church office at 814-226-6660 or by email to [communications@fumc-clarion.org](mailto:communications@fumc-clarion.org).



Any items for the **Samaritan's Purse—Operation Christmas Child "Shoebbox"** ministry will be accepted at any time.

Also, monetary donations to help with shipping costs will be accepted at any time. Please clearly mark a monetary donation for shipping as "shoebboxes postage" and place it in the offering plate or drop it off at the church office.

**Thank you for your support.**

### Acolytes and Liturgists

If you would like to be an acolyte at our 8:30 or 11:00 worship service or a liturgist at our 8:30 service, notify the church office with a date and time.



**HOSPITALIZED?** If you or a family member is going to be placed in the hospital, or have upcoming surgery, please notify the church office so that the church and pastor may come and minister to you. You may call the church office at 226-6660.