



PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

MARK 1:3

TRINITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
2340 State Street, East Petersburg, PA 17520
717-569-1632

Website: www.trinityeastpete.org E-Mail: secretary@trinityeastpete.org

The Rev. Dr. Christopher M. Rankin, Pastor

The Rev. Harry G. Royer, Pastor Emeritus

The Rev. Dr. Carolyne Call, Covenanted Minister of Mission

Mr. Michael Slechta, Director of Music/ Sounds of Trinity Choir Director

Mr. James Landis, Interim Organist

Mrs. Carmen Richards, Pianist

Mrs. Carol Kratz, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Sean McKelvey, Preschool Director

Celebrating 175 Years: Honoring Our Heritage, Moving Forward in Faith!

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

7:45 A.M. SERVICE

Today's Theme: John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it without lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

The Advent Wreath: One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting amid growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of Greens is an image of everlasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes the family gathers for prayers around the wreath.

Welcome all visitors! We welcome all who worship with us. May the joy of Christ's presence and the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with peace and hope! We are honored by your presence and trust that you will join us in the praise and worship of God. Please sign our guest book in the narthex. If you are interested in church membership, please give your name and telephone number to Pastor Rankin.

Welcome to the Eucharist! All who seek to follow Jesus and who seek the gifts Jesus offers us are invited to share in this sacrament of Holy Communion. *Children are invited to receive communion at the discretion of their parents/guardians. If a child wants to receive a blessing, they are asked to fold their hands.*

Prayer: *Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

MISSION MOMENT:U.C.C. CHRISTMAS FUND--Rev. Jack Esbenshade

(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)

CALL TO WORSHIP

AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM AND INVITATION TO THE TABLE

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

We come to prepare for the One who is to come.

Let us make straight the pathways of our lives.

Let us smooth the roughest places in our lives.

Let us boldly speak words of comfort and peace and justice.

In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together. Come take your place at the table.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE/TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

We gather around the Advent wreath today knowing that we are not perfect—that we all make mistakes and do bad things.

Only Jesus obeyed God fully. Jesus helps us to live as God wants us to live. Jesus gives us peace.

We light this candle to proclaim the coming of the light of God into the world.

With the coming of this light there is peace, for Christ is called the “Prince of Peace.” Christ’s name is also Emmanuel, “God with us.” The presence of Christ with us gives peace day by day.

Let us pray together.

Praise to you, O God, who gives us courage to start again. You fasten righteousness around your waist and baptize with the Holy Spirit’s fire. Bless us as we mirror your mighty fire in these simple flames, and teach us to mirror your justice in the paths we prepare. We ask that peace abound, until none hurt or destroy over all the earth. Amen.

CONFESSION OF SINS

CALL TO CONFESSION

John the Baptist calls us to repent, to prepare for the coming of God’s reign.

Let us heed John’s call and confess our sins in silent prayer.

(SEATED OR KNEELING)

SILENT CONFESSION OF SINS

CONFESSION OF SIN

God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance. Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.

Everlasting God, you love justice and you hate wrongdoing. We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness that make us reluctant to work against oppression. We are complicit in system of exploitation. We choose comfort over courage. We are careless with creation’s bounty. Look upon us with mercy. Turn our hearts again to you . Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways for the sake of our waiting world; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

ACT OF PRAISE

O God, open my lips.

And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Praise to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God:

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.

COLLECT FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Let us pray the collect together.

Prepare us, O God, to hear your Word, which is forever, as we welcome the Christ child. Ready us to receive salvation and to rejoice in the freedom to give ourselves in service. Equip us for the new heaven and new earth in which we dwell in holiness and godliness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

(PLEASE BE SEATED)

THE WORD OF GOD

THE FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 40:1-11

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

THE PSALTER

Psalms 85:1-2,8-13

Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. *Selah*

For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David.

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
That his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before him and will make a path for his steps.

THE SECOND LESSON

2 Peter 3:8-15a

This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)

THE HOLY GOSPEL

St. Mark 1:1-8

The gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.

Glory be to You, O Lord.

THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD

Praise be to You, O Christ.

(PLEASE BE SEATED)

SERMON

Pastor Rankin

"Preparing and Proclaiming the Way of the Lord!"

(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, and has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PEOPLE'S OFFERING

OFFERING DEDICATION

While we are waiting and preparing for Christ to appear, we are seeking, O God, to act as faithful followers. May our offerings extend the promise of salvation to people whose lives are broken by neglect, abuse, bad choices, and sinful ways. May these gifts offer hope to all whose suffering and loss seem too heavy to bear. May our church be a listening, caring presence for all its members, and through us for all those we meet in our work and leisure; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord!

Let us give thanks to God Most High.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

It is very right and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, Holy God, our loving Creator, close to us as breathing and distant as the farthest star. We thank you for your constant love and for all you have made. We thank you for all that sustains life, for all people of faith in every generation who have given themselves to your will and especially for Jesus Christ, whom you have sent from your own being as our Savior. Born of your servant Mary, Jesus shared the joys and sorrows of life as we know it. As we now await the birth of the Christ child, we offer you our hymn of praise.

Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God, Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

(PLEASE BE SEATED)

WORDS OF INSTITUTION AND PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

THE PRAYER OF OUR LORD

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

COMMUNICATION

As this grain was once scattered in the fields, and has come together in one bread, so we, with different needs and hopes, come together as one, for we share one bread.

The Bread of Life, broken for us.

The cup which we share is the cup of the New Covenant written in our hearts and witnessed by Jesus.

The Cup of Blessing, poured out for us and for the many.

AGNUS DEI

Jesus, Lamb of God: have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins: have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world: give us your peace. Amen.

(Those who wish to come forward will be invited by the pastor. The pastor will serve you the host, saying, "The Body of Christ." You reply, "Amen!" The assistant will present you with the cup, saying, "The Blood of Christ." You reply, "Amen!" Grape juice is in the chalice with the cross and wine is in the other chalice. If you need the pastor and assistant to come to you, please indicate that to someone near you or the pastor. If you do not wish to come forward, you are invited to use the packaged elements in the narthex and commune in your pew. The pastor will offer a blessing everyone has communed. Children are invited to receive communion at the discretion of their parents/guardians. If a child wants to receive a blessing, they are asked to fold their hands.)

(PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE)

POST COMMUNION PRAYERS

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

Send forth your faithful people with words of promise and forgiveness. Teach your church to be bold in revealing your good news in word and in deed. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Reveal your majesty in mountain peaks, flowing rivers, and blossoming wilderness roads. Heal the earth where it longs for renewal. Bring wholeness to the earth and all its creatures. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Turn the hearts of the nations toward righteousness and peace. Increase cooperation for justice between countries, commonwealths, political parties, and diplomatic leaders. In times of prosperity, direct leaders to be generous for the sake of all. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Grant holy presence to all who are waiting this season. Give hope to those seeking employment. Bring reassurance to people awaiting new diagnoses or treatments. Protect expectant parents. Watch with those who keep bedside vigil. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Comfort your people with tender words of love and healing. Surround all who are grieving, all who know depression or anxiety, or all who feel lonely or forgotten. Be a steadfast presence when all else feels uncertain. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

SILENT PRAYER

Let us prayer together.

Generous God, in bread and cup you have revealed your glory for all people to see together. Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim your good news of liberation and release, brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

CLOSE OF WORSHIP

BENEDICTION

★ CATCH THE VISION & SHARE THE JOY ★

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chancel Flowers are given by **Joan Cash** in memory of Mrs. Ella M. Fountain.

The Worship Aids are given by **Rev. Sandy Morris** in loving memory of my father, Bob Morris, who lived a life dedicated to public service.

Ministering Today

Pastor/Celebrant	Rev. Dr. Christopher Rankin
Lector/Assistant	Rev. Jack Esbenshade
Money Counters	Bud & Kathy McCarty, Scott Owens, Jeff Hackenberger
Altar Guild	Nancy Enders, Hedwig Hunsicker, Karen Olley,
Building Trustee	Charlene Cristy
Koinonia	Rankin Family
Ministries	Card Advent Workshop Called to Care Nancy Enders Visitation Janice Jenkins

This Week at Trinity Church

(Church Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.-2 p.m.)

Monday	6:15 PM – Instruments/7:00 PM – Choir/8:15 PM Bells
Tuesday	6:30 PM – Executive Committee
Thursday	10:00 AM – Mercersburg Study Group 6:00 PM – Cub Scouts
Friday	7:00 PM - Pinochle
Saturday	10:30 AM – American Music Theater 7:00 PM – Alanon/8:00 PM - AA
Sunday	7:45 AM – Eucharist-Order of Healing 9:00 AM – Sunday School 10:00 AM - Koinonia 10:30 AM – Worship-Order of Healing

Happy Birthday

Tuesday – Megan Harley

Thursday – Charlene Cristy

Saturday – Debbie Wible

Attendance for Sun., December 3 7:45–22 10:30–73 **TOTAL – 95**
Christian Education 18

PRAYERS FOR GOD’S HEALING PRESENCE

MEMBERS

Ken & Phyllis Zimmerman	John Shelsky	Hedwig Hunsicker
Michael McDonough	Janice Jenkins	Scott & Jane Owens
Don & Pat Miller	Nancy Patton	Dr. Janet Harriger
The Lehman family	Joann Peck	Harry Himelwright
Donna Wolf & Family	Shelly Family	Mary Lou Shaab
Stan & Pat Seachrist	Donna Zirkel	Carmen & Jerry Richards
Rev. Dave & Mid Gockley	Sam Minder III	Lainie Christensen
Rev. Bob & Nancy Musser	Hank Fox	Charles & Betty Booraem
Betty Tyndall and family	Mary Witmer	Bob & Marlyn Wible
Rev. Bob & Judie Bistline	Erika Otthofer	Kathleen Sensenig Adams
Rev. Jere & Judy Chapman	Dave Trostle	Danielle Huggins Holbein
Joann & Dawn Garvin	Ron Becker	Dr. Blaine Connor

FAMILY & FRIENDS

The family of Todd Fischer (husband of Heidi Fischer)
The family of Dr. Phil Bartholomew (friend of Pastor Rankin)
Aaron Flickinger (nephew of Pat & Joan Sensenig)
Bill Zahm (brother of Phyllis Zimmerman)
Mary Mattern Smith (cousin of Anita Rohrer)
Deb Olley Heagy (daughter of Jack & Karen Olley)
Donna Esbenshade (wife of Rev. Jack Esbenshade)
The Haverstick Family (friends of Mike & Shelley Wagner)
Tom Riley (friend of Bud McCarty)
Rev. Loy Garber (former seminarian)
Roland Anderson and family (friends of John & Kayla Brennan)
Jaden Allen (nephew of Carol Kratz)
Cindy Commero Cook and family (friend of Sarah Paulukow)
Gina McCarty (daughter-in-law of Bud & Kathy McCarty)
The Bruno family (friends of Blaine Connor)
Jessica Brown (niece of Mike & Shelley Wagner)
Janice Zimmerman (sister of Ken Zimmerman)

Larry Gerlach (brother of Dolly Barr)
John Martin (brother-in-law of Dolly & John Barr)
Kelly Quick (friend of Rev. Dr. Rich & Lainie Christensen)
Marianne Gibble (friend of Trinity)
James Malone & family
Tom & Elaine Lichtenwalner (parents of Mike Lichtenwalner)
Janet Owens (sister-in-law of Scott & Jane Owens)
Chad Zirkel (son of Donna Zirkel)
Jordan Sensenig (grandson of Pat & Joan Sensenig),
Don Pfeifer (husband of Denise Pfeifer)
Jake & Jean Otthofer (parents of Dan Otthofer)
The Martin family
Robert Richards (brother of Jerry Richards)
Ronald Himelwright (grandson of Brenda & Harry Himelwright)
Barry Richards (son of Jerry & Carmen Richards)
Tyler Miller (grandson of Iris DeMaio)
Joan Kalbach (mother of Dr. Cathy Hoshauer)
Jim & Kathy Long (friends of Jerry & Carmen Richards)
John Siebern (Bob Siever's brother-in-law)
Jo Jo Richards & family (Carmen & Jerry's granddaughter-in-law)

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS & CALENDARS: There are devotionals available for adults & children and Advent calendars for children on the table across from the church office.

THE DECEMBER PARISH POST is available in the information racks on both floors of the church building.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN THE NORTH WINDOW is given in memory of Leon L. & Ethel Gruber by son Greg, daughter Sharon Armstrong, and granddaughter Jessica.

THE CHRISMON TREE: The Chrismons on the small tree in the stairwell were made by the late Edythe Geib. Several people have asked about the Chrismon tree. The term "Chrismon" comes from the Latin "Christi monnogramma" which simply means "monogram of Christ". Therefore, a Chrismon is a Christian symbol that represents Christ. There is a descriptive list of the various Chrismons next to the tree.

THE ADVENT CANDLES AND CHRIST CANDLE are dedicated to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Grace M. Dodson (mother) and Dolores A. Dodson (aunt) of Donna Wolf, given by the family and friends. The candle stand and wreath are in memory of S. Leona Wolf, mother of the late John Wolf.

THE PEW CANDLE HOLDERS, made by John Barr, were given by John and Dolly Barr.

THE NATIVITY SCENE ON THE FRONT LAWN was made by Mike Wagner.

THE CRECHE ON THE LOWER LEVEL BY THE ELEVATOR was made by Mike Wagner.

CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTMAS CARD: Don't forget to sign the congregational Christmas card on the table across from the church office. There is a box for you to put a monetary donation for Off the Street Ministries.

DEVOTIONALS: The October-December edition of These Days are available on the table across from the church office or on the lower level by the portico entrance.

ORDER OF HEALING: We will include the order of healing at both worship services on December 17. Those who wish to be anointed with oil will be invited to come forward during the service. We use the order of healing as way to recognize that many are in need of God's healing presence during the holiday season.

ADVENT ENVELOPES: The Board of Deacons decided to give funds from the Advent offering envelope to the U.C.C. Christmas Fund for retired clergy, widows/widowers of U.C.C. clergy, and ministerial assistance. We will hear more about the U.C.C. Christmas Fund offering in December.

2024 OFFERING ENVELOPES are available on the table across from the church office. Please help us by delivering envelopes to some of our homebound members!

INSTRUMENTALISTS, YOU ARE INVITED to join Trinity Instrumentalists in playing some Christmas Carols as Preludes on Christmas Eve, before the 6:30 PM service. Please let Michael or Dina Slechta know of your interest and availability. **Rehearsals are scheduled on the following Monday evenings at 6:15 PM: Dec. 11, Dec. 18**

THE 2024 APPROVED BUDGET is available on the table across from the church office or in the information racks on both levels of the church building.

TRINITY T-SHIRTS: The Anniversary Committee is working with our own Mitch Gibson (from Elizabethtown Sporting Goods) to celebrate our 175th anniversary with Trinity t-shirts. We have already placed one order, but you can still order shirts on the form across from the church office.

175th ANNIVERSARY GIFTS: There are extra copies of the historical book, the prayer book and the anniversary pens and magnets on the table across from the church office.

GRIEF GROUPS: Prior to the pandemic, Pastor Chris was hoping to form some small groups to look at issues of grief. Please contact him or Carol Kratz if you are interested in participating in one of the groups!

KOINONIA/SUNDAYMORNING FELLOWSHIP: We have resumed koinonia (community fellowship) every Sunday at 10 a.m. in Isenberg Hall. Volunteers are asked to provide light refreshments and drinks/coffee. The sign-up sheet is on the kitchen coordinator. If you have any questions, contact Paula Dennes. **Coffee is always available between 7:45 service and Sunday School.**

TRINITY PRESCHOOL SUB COUPONS: We still have eight coupons for subs at S. Clyde Weaver. The cost is \$8. Contact the church office if you are interested.



“I PROMISE” FORMS are still being accepted! We hope that you will submit the forms to help us plan for our ministry in 2024. Extra forms are available on the table across from the church office!

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

Greeter /Ushers Needed



If you would like to volunteer as a Greeter/Usher for the 10:30 a.m. service please contact the church office. We recently had some vacancies as ushers, so we are in need of help!!! **We are looking for a greeter coordinator that will recruit new people to serve and create a schedule. Contact Pastor Chris or Carol Kratz.**



Assist with the worship service or to just read the scripture lessons at the 7:45 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services. Please contact Pastor Chris or Carol Kratz if you are willing to volunteer!

2023 CHANCEL FLOWERS AND WORSHIP AID SPONSORS:

Upcoming dates for worship aids are: December 17, & 31. 2024 Flower Chart is now up on the bulletin board in the Narthex. The price for flowers is \$60. The price for worship aids is \$26. Look for the charts on the bulletin board in the narthex or call Carol in the church office.



**The Lutheran Camping Corporation
of Central Pennsylvania**
Kirchenwald, Nawakwa, & The Wittel Farm

[Advent/Christmas in the Barn](#) at The Wittel Farm - December 17, 2023
[Winter Youth Retreat](#) at Kirchenwald - January 5 - 7, 2024

FIRST READING: Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

SECOND READING: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be dissolved.

¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ¹⁵and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Next Sunday's Readings: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28.

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Tracks 1 and 2
ELCA-R



THE CHRISTMAS FUND: "GRACE UPON GRACE"

"From Christ's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

John 1:16

Grace is truly at the center of everything for us humans. Grace shapes our faith, our family, our friendships, and our identity. Grace is not just being given the benefit of the doubt, or God bestowing favor on the less than worthy. Grace is also the root of gratitude and thankfulness. It is at the heart of our thanksgiving/eucharistic meal. "Grace upon grace" is a reminder of the great gifts of God to us, and an expression of our grateful response to that fullness.

Your gifts to the Christmas Fund allow the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance to provide grace, hope, and joy through financial relief to UCC pastors, lay church leaders, and their families. Thanks to you, no request goes unfulfilled. Your graceful response to the Christmas Fund appeal ensures the flow of loving support will not be interrupted.

In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

Give online at www.christmasfund.org.

CROP HUNGER WALK UPDATE: Thank you to everyone who has already supported the walkers from Trinity Church! As of December 5, we raised \$12,320!!! You can still support the CROP Hunger Walk by giving money to Mark & Chris Eyer or Pastor Rankin or donate online at <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2023/team/trinity-east-pete>

PASTOR'S CHRISTMAS GIFT: You will again find a pink envelope in your box of offering envelopes. This is a way for you to give a Christmas gift to Pastor Rankin. If you want the pastor to receive the full amount of your gift, then you should give it directly to him. This means that the money will not go through the church treasury and you will not receive a tax deduction for your gift. All checks should be made payable to the pastor if you choose to give it to him directly.

If you choose to make your check payable to Trinity UCC, you will receive credit on your 2023 contribution statement. A gift sent through the church treasury is considered taxable income for the pastor.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.
Scott Owens, Church Treasurer; Denise Pfeifer, Assistant Treasurer

SCHEDULE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE AND DECEMBER 31!

The Christmas Eve Schedule

6:30 p.m. Family Candlelight Service

10:30 p.m. Candlelight Service with Holy Communion

The Service of Lessons & Carols will be at the 10:30 service on December 31.

Sunday School Schedule for December 24 & 31: The Christian Education Committee is planning a special program and koinonia on December 24 from 9:30-10:15 a.m. We will sing Christmas carols, read a story, and have a birthday cake for Jesus. There will be no Sunday School on December 31!