



The

# Steeple News

From First United Church of Christ

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Instagram too!



## First United Church of Christ of Easton 2020 Advent & Christmas events

*We follow all covid safety rules. MASKS ARE REQUIRED, please.*



**Sun., Nov. 29th - 1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT** ~ we will light the Advent Candle of “HOPE” at 10 a.m. & safely share the Sacrament of Holy Communion together.

It's also **FOOD BANK SUN.** We are currently accepting only monetary donations to help support ProJeCt's Food Pantry.

**Sun., Dec. 6th - 2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT with “FREELY GIVEN”** ~ Please join us at 10 a.m. as we light the Advent Candle of “PEACE” & enjoy a musical journey through Advent with the Gospel group “Freely Given”. **POINSETTIA ORDER Deadline!**

**ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL BUDGET MEETING following Worship.**

ALL MEMBERS are strongly encouraged to ATTEND!

**Sun., Dec. 13th - 3rd SUNDAY OF** ~ Please join us at 10 a.m. as we light the Advent Candle of “LOVE” **ANGEL TREE GIFTS DUE! SUNSHINE FUND CHRISTMAS DONATIONS Deadline!**

**Sun., Dec. 20th - 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT** ~ Please join us at 10 a.m. as we light the Advent Candle of “JOY” & enjoy special Choral music from our Womens Chorus.

**★ SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EVE NOTE:** If you plan to attend Christmas Eve, we ask that you e-mail (firstucc2@verizon.net) or call the church at 610-258-3361 with your name & how many you expect to be in your party. This count will help us setup the seating for that evening's service. **MASKS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND.**

**Thurs., Dec. 24th - CHRISTMAS EVE - 7 p.m.** - join us for our **CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE PRELUDES beginning at 7 p.m.** Special musical preludes from our Organ, Clarinets & Handbell Quartets.

**OUR WORSHIP SERVICE begins at 7:30 p.m.** We will light the Christ Candle in the Advent Wreath. The service includes hymns & carols - with masks.

We will **NOT** hold our usual Christmas Eve Fellowship after the service.



**Fri., Dec. 25th - JESUS' BIRTHDAY** ~ Merry Christmas!

**Sun., Dec. 27th, 2020-** Please join us for our last **WORSHIP of the Year!** A relaxed service at 10 a.m. with carols & hymns.

**Thurs., Dec. 31st, 2018-** **New Year's Eve!** Please celebrate safely!

**Sun., January 3rd, 2020-** Please join us for our **FIRST WORSHIP of the New Year** as we celebrate **EPIPHANY**, safely share the **Sacrament of Holy Communion together** & support ProJet's Food Pantry with **FOOD BANK SUN.** funds at 10 a.m..



Joyous Christmas blessings to all!



## Advent Begins on Sun., Nov. 29th

We light a new candle in our Advent Wreath and have special readings each Sunday during Advent as we wind our way toward Christmas and the lighting of the Christ Candle on Christmas Eve. These are the folks who will be lighting our Advent candles and reading the Advent verses.



**Sun., Nov. 29th** we will celebrate the **First Sunday of Advent** as we will safely share the **Sacrament of Holy Communion** together at 10 a.m.



**Nov. 29th** – **Lynn Dickson and Wendy Wandersee** will begin this time of expectation with the lighting of the **HOPE** candle.

**Dec. 6th** – **Bob and Doreen Arnold** will light the second candle, signifying the **PEACE** God has given us through His Son, Jesus.

**Dec. 13th** – **The Skillinge Family** will light the third candle, which stands for the **LOVE** our Heavenly Father has for us.

**Dec. 20th** – **Linda Rush, David and Wendy Wandersee** will light the fourth, the **JOY** candle, as we anticipate the joyful event of Christ's birth.

**Dec. 24th - Christmas Eve** – **The Dowd Family** will celebrate the advent of the Promised One with the lighting of the **CHRIST** candle.

Please join us in person, or on-line as we worship our Savior through Advent & look forward to Christmas!

## Mark Your Calendars for Sun., Dec. 6th...

**Freely Given Will Lead Worship on the Second Sunday of Advent, December 6th!**

Please mark your calendars for the second Sunday of Advent, Dec. 6th & join us as the Gospel group "Freely Given" will be here to lead us in Advent Worship.



~ THEN ~

Calling All Members to our  
**Congregational Budget Meeting!**  
Sun., Dec. 6th Following  
Worship



Following our Worship with  
"Freely Given" on Sunday, December 6th, we will hold our **Annual Budget Meeting**. Please plan to attend to hear how we are doing financially & how we can plan for the future, from our Stewardship chair, Bob Arnold. Feel free to ask any questions you may have about our budget. Copies will be available soon.

~ AND ~

## Don't Forget...

Sun., Dec. 6th is the Deadline for Poinsettias  
& Sun., Dec. 13th is the Deadline for  
Christmas Sunshine Fund Donations

On page 6 Of this newsletter is an order form for **Poinsettias**. They will decorate our altar at Christmas & then decorate your home!



On the same form is a place to dedicate a **donation to our Sunshine Fund**. Please list your dedication & include your payment.  
**Checks may be made out to First UCC.**



## Holiday Music Notes

Our Congregation includes many talented musicians & singers so we have been able to put together some individual & small groups to provide special musical for Advent & Christmas Eve.

So, if you are coming Christmas Eve, please come by 7:00 p.m. to enjoy our special musical Preludes!

## Handbell Quartet Practice

Our Handbell Quartet will practice on **Thurs., Mornings from 10-11 a.m.** With covid precautions - masks & social distancing - in place.



*Thank you all for volunteering to share your special musical gifts with us!*

Yours In Christ, *Sheila Cooke, Choir Director*



Our Angel Tree Gifts Will Bless  
 "Third Street Alliance"  
 & "ProJeCt of Easton" Families  
 ~ Due Sun., Dec. 13th ~

Our Angel Tree tags became available on Sun., Nov. 29th and we are reaching out to neighbors at both Third Street Alliance and ProJeCt of Easton.

We are 'adopting' a family at Third St. Alliance again this year. Those tags have RED STRING and are NOT TO BE WRAPPED.

Gift requests from ProJeCt of Easton have WHITE STRING and SHOULD BE WRAPPED.

**ALL GIFTS ARE DUE BACK at the Church by SUN., DEC. 13th.** Please contact Kim Kmetz (610-533-9588) if you have any questions.

After the 13th, our tree will remain up to **collect warm hats, scarves, gloves, etc.** Which will go to those in need at Christmas.



With Heartfelt Thanks...



HEARTFELT THANKS to our Church Family for your love, prayers, cards & condolences for our family at the passing of my sister, Shirley.

~ Mae Rapp & Family



Reaching Out...

Please remember some of our Church Family Members who are in care facilities. During this time of Covid "Lockdowns" residents have been isolated even more than usual. Isolated in their rooms, or on their floor with none of their normal group activities & no outside visitors allowed. Their need to hear from others is even greater than usual, especially with the holidays coming. If you would be able to drop a card or give a call to these ladies (or anyone else you may know who is in a similar situation), please do.

**Thursday, December 24th is  
 Christmas Eve ~ Join us as we  
 Worship our Savior...**

Please come and join us to welcome the Christ child at our

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

Begins at 7 p.m. with  
 Special Musical Preludes  
 Our Worship Service Begins  
 at 7:30 p.m.



Our very special **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will begin at 7 p.m.** with glorious Seasonal music preludes from our Organ, Clarinets, Handbell Quartets & Womens Chorus

**At 7:30 worship begins with the message of Peace that Christ brought to earth.** There will be carols in the service - with masks. Please share the magic & fellowship of Christmas with us!

We will NOT hold our usual Christmas Eve Fellowship time following the service so please enjoy Christmas Eve with your Family Group at home following the service.

## First Church Worship Reminder!

We continue to be 'open' & meet every Sun. at 10 a.m. For Sun. Morning worship. We are carefully following all covid safety protocols. As much as we want to hug & shake hands, we are not! We wave



from a distance, we wear masks, sanitize our hands & sit safely apart from each other's family groups.



As always, everyone is welcome & invited but we realize that not everyone feels comfortable in a crowd setting just yet. So, our On-Line worship will continue through the foreseeable future. Thanks to Sheila for our music, Kathleen for handling the recording and producing our service, Paul Ricciardi for setting up a private YouTube production for us, Margaret for posting on our webpage and Gabby and Cliff Ross at the Cliff Ross group for handling our Facebook posts. We are continuing to produce the At Home version while we iron out the bugs of live recording the 10 a.m. service.

Our On-Line presence has been very popular; we are reaching out to folks all over the country!

~ Rev. Mike

## Join Our Live Virtual "Zoom" Bible Study Every Wed. Evening at 7 p.m. Join on Zoom or on the Phone!

We have been having a great time during our weekly ZOOM on line Bible Study evenings. We meet at 7:00 p.m. every Wednesday evening, and our time together is usually 30 to 60 minutes. The group really controls the time. We have been focusing on the book of Psalms and occasionally discuss scriptures scheduled to be read the following Sunday.

We have been looking at the purpose for which the Psalm was written, and the application for our lives.

12-14 people have joined the group and attendance varies each week, folks participate as their schedule allows.



**Anyone can join in YOU DON'T NEED A COMPUTER!** You can join in on line or, you can CALL IN & be a part of the group on the phone!

If you'd like to try it out call the Church Office (610-258-3361) or email the office (firstucc2@verizon.net) or email me directly at mikedowd1948@gmail.com.

~ Rev. Mike

## Introducing New Men's Club Fundraiser ~ "Noto's Hoagies"

**Our Men's Club is selling Noto Deli Hoagie Coupons for \$7 each. We will take orders up to Sunday, Dec. 20th.** Your coupons will be ready then you can then call Noto's with your order and pick them up whenever you want, up til **March 1, 2021.**

You may have experienced these from last year's sale. They are excellent! So, please check with your family and friends and order as many as you want. **A sign up sheet is located in the narthex. Make checks payable to 'First UCC Men's Club'.** Great gifts for the Holidays!

## Prayer Request/ Prayer Needs

**Prayer is a powerful thing!** God invites us to pray with words of praise, thanksgiving & petitions for others & for ourselves. We gladly receive & share prayer concerns so that we may 'Bear one another's burdens' (Galatians 6:2) and 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.' (Romans 12:15).



**IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF EMERGENCY PASTORAL CARE, please call our church office at 610-258-3361 or call or text Rev. Dowd's cell phone 610-216-5471.**

## Hospitalized? Please Let Us Know!

**PLEASE NOTE: Hospitals no longer notify the church or the pastor unless you SPECIFICALLY REQUEST IT. So please, if you or a family member is hospitalized, let us know by calling the office or Rev. Mike directly at 610-216-5471!**







## December Bulletins

**6<sup>th</sup> - Ferne Turner** - Wishing everyone a blessed and beautiful Christmas season.

**13<sup>th</sup> - The Ashton family**

**20<sup>th</sup> - The Skillinge family** In memory of loved ones.

**24<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Eve - Sheila & Carl Cooke** In loving memory of their parents, Florence & Walter Bender and Mary & C. Stanton Cooke.

**27<sup>th</sup> - Don & Linda Rush** - in memory of loved ones.

If you would like to sponsor the bulletins for one of our Sunday services, **please call the Church Office at 610-258-3361.**

## January 2021 ~ Once Again! Fresh Flowers on our Altar!

I am glad to announce that we will be contacting January Altar Flower Sponsors by telephone in December. No one is to feel obligated or pressured to sponsor, but some have asked and we wish to give everyone the option.

God Bless & Merry Christmas,  
*Wendy Wandersee*



*[If you would like to sponsor altar flowers for one of our Sunday services, please contact **Wendy Wandersee.**]*

Looking for a special holiday gift?  
Check out...

**"55 (More) Journal Pages, Grace Upon Grace"**  
by Linda Wright  
Just \$13.33 Paperback OR \$5.99 eBook

Order directly from Amazon or e-mail Linda at  
[lw1lindalouw@gmail.com](mailto:lw1lindalouw@gmail.com)  
Or see Linda in person on Sunday!!

## Covid Cancellations?

Normally, Dec. is Extremely busy, here at First Church. But things are not normal... yet.

We want to share our thoughts, so you can plan accordingly.

Due to covid restrictions, many of our usual events & projects are canceled. Some others will go on but in an altered fashion. Some, we are trying to figure out how to do!

### **CANCELED**

- Christmas Caroling
- Group Christmas Parties



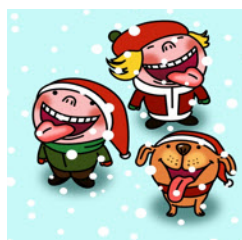
### **We WILL have...**

- "Angel Tree" gift collection.
- Christmas Eve Worship with socially distanced seating, MASKS, with battery powered candles.



We will continue to keep everyone informed of our plans & any changes that are made.

## Let it Snow, Let it Snow?



Well, we have to face it, we are getting to that time of year when weather becomes a consideration. Some people love the snow, some people hate it but it is a force of our PA weather, so we need to be prepared, like it or not!

Do you know where to look or listen when the snow and ice make travel tricky? There are lots of ways to find out if our Sunday service is still on. (power permitting) ...

Please **check your e-mail** - you should have received our "TEST 2020 WEATHER ALERT" (please make sure we have your current e-address), **check out our website** ([www.firststuceaston.org](http://www.firststuceaston.org)) or **our Facebook page**, **call the office** (610-258-3361) for a current message, **watch WLVT or channel 69** for news of any service cancellations.

Let's pray that the winter of 2020 will have some mercy on us!



## Stewardship Notes...

### Pledges...

If you plan to pledge your giving, please fill out & return your Pledge Card as soon as you are able.

### Our 2021 Budget...

Calling ALL MEMBERS to join us on Sunday, December 6th, to review and approve our 2021 Budget. Thank you in advance for supporting the financial needs of your church.

### Thank You...

Please continue to submit your contributions at the Sunday service, or mail in or use our online giving. Thank you for your continued support.

*Your Stewardship Committee*

## A Year-End Reminder From Your Stewardship Committee...

Thank you all for your financial commitment to **your** church throughout the year. As we come to an end of 2020 (thankfully!), & you have any year-end donations you wish to make, please make your contributions in a timely manner so all will be posted and included in your annual statement.

**The last Sun. of 2020 is Dec. 27th. 2020 Contributions MUST BE RECEIVED in the Church Office by December 31st to be credited for 2020.**



If you have any questions on your pledge fulfillment or any other contribution, please contact the church office.

*Bob Arnold - Stewardship Chair*



Please Cut Here

## Christmas Poinsettias

If you wish to sponsor a poinsettia plant for the sanctuary for Christmas, please complete the form below and return it to the church office with payment, or drop it in the collection plate. Flowers may be picked up following the Christmas Eve Service.



**DEADLINE: Sun., December 8th, 2019**  
(Sorry, NO LATE ORDERS Can be accepted)

Cost: \$8.50 per plant  
Payment Must Accompany Order!

Qty. White  Red  Pink

Your Offering Env. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amt. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory or Celebration of: \_\_\_\_\_

Christmas Contributions for our Needy are now given through our

## "Sunshine Fund".

The "Sunshine Fund" helps those in need within our Congregation Family throughout the year.



If you wish to make a donation to the fund which assists those in need within our congregation, **please use one of our special "Sunshine Fund" envelopes.** You may include a written dedication for your gift by filling out the form below and including it in your "Sunshine Fund" envelope.

Presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Offering Env. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amt. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory or Celebration of: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: to have your dedication included in our Christmas Eve program, it must be received by Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>.

Please make checks payable to:

First U.C.C., 229 Church St., Easton, PA 18042

## The Birth of Jesus

*We simply CANNOT publish a Christmas News-letter without including this most AMAZING story! Merry Christmas Blessings to you & your family!*

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the

people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

~ Luke 2:1-20



### A Christmas Prayer



Lord Jesus, as we leave this place and enter our homes, let our Christmas trees remind us that your love for us is evergreen. Your mercies are ever new. Your grace is ever present. Your gifts of love are ever sure. Help us this Christmas, around each tree, to remember that each gift we find beneath these branches is a thank-offering for the Greatest Gift of yourself that you shared with all the world on Christmas night, that we might be blessed with forgiveness, salvation and everlasting life.  
Amen.



We wish you all the blessings of Christmas.  
May the Peace of Christ fill your homes  
& surround you always.