



THE CHURCH CANDLE

FEBRUARY 2024

A Newsletter of the Sayre Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

FOOD PANTRY SUNDAY – February 4th ...

“Food Pantry Sunday” is observed on the first Sunday of the month. Each family is asked to bring a non-perishable food item to be delivered to the Athens United Methodist Church on South Main Street. There were sixty-eight items of food collected in January, thank you to Oliver McKeithan for delivering the food. They responded: *“Thank you for your recent donation of food to our Feed My Sheep food pantry. We are blessed to start the new year with your continuing support! Thank you again.”* *“May the Lord repay you for what you have done.”* *May you be richly rewarded by the Lord. Ruth 2:12A*

DISCIPLES CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP DINNER MEETING — February 20th at 6:30 p.m. ...

There is a dinner meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 20th at 6:30 p.m. at the First Church of Christ (Disciples of Christ) in Williamsport, PA. Men and women are invited to this event and it is a great way to meet other disciples who worship in the East Central District in PA. The menu includes: Roast beef, mashed potatoes, green beans, dessert and beverages. The cost is \$12 plus offering. Rev. Thad Allen, Regional Minister of PA Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be the speaker. Please RSVP to Mark Allis, Oliver McKeithan or Pastor Paula by Sunday, February 18th. All those attending this dinner will carpool to Williamsport, leaving the Valley at 5:00 p.m.

Women of the church are encouraged to attend the Disciples Christian Fellowship Dinner. For those who are unable to travel to Williamsport, reservations have been made at Beeman’s for 6:00 p.m.

LENTEN DEVOTION ...

A Lenten Devotion, *Hope Springs Eternal*, will be provided by the Society of St. Andrew. This ministry serves to feed the hungry. With everything going on in the world today, we need reminders and reflections of God’s hope around us. The writers of the devotionals read and prayed about Lamentations 3:25. *“The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him.”* The devotional will be available on the table by the front door of the sanctuary. A jar is there to accept any donation you would like to give to the Society of St. Andrew for the booklet. The Society of St. Andrew will receive any collection of coins that are donated to the “Coins for a Cause” program during February, March and April.

OUTREACH OPPORTUNITY — DONATIONS FOR ATHENS HEALTHCARE AND REHAB CENTER ...

The Activities Department at the Athens Healthcare and Rehab Center provides opportunities for the resident to play Bingo, and they rely on donations so they have prizes. Donations needed are:

Men’s Body Spray; Men’s items — such as knickknacks, gifts, decorative items for their rooms; small bags of snacks (chips); shampoo; and body wash for men and women.

A white basket will be available by the table at the front door of the Sanctuary for your donations. Thank you! Wendy McKeithan, Outreach Coordinator



PAULA'S PAGE

Dear Church,

I wanted to share with you this message a friend of mine gave as her last sermon to a congregation in Virginia. Frances Stanley is a fellow graduate of Lexington Theological Seminary. She pulled some of this information from information on the disciples website.

The scripture she read is John 17:20-26

At Virginia Housing, also known as VHDA, where I work, we have an employee newsletter. Every week someone from Communications interviews one of the 450 employees in a segment called Meet. The article introduces the employee, what they do at Virginia Housing and then there is something personal, meaningful that the employee shares so that the rest of us know something about them. I was interviewed for the newsletter the week after my ordination... and because it is something very meaningful to me, that's what I talked about.

Something rare happened, the guy from communications that came to interview me was originally from Fort Worth, Texas and had lived near Brite Seminary so he had actually heard of the Disciples of Christ. This is rare. Most times when I tell people I am a member of a Disciples of Christ Church they look at me like I am from another planet. One time I was asked if it was like the Moonies, or like a cult. The Moonies...??? I kindly told them No, we are not a cult, we are actually a mainline Protestant church. Our Founders were Presbyterians. I often ask if they have heard of the United Church of Christ, many times there is a glimpse of recognition. I say we are like the UCCs but not exactly.

But I realized that in explaining, I am not really telling who the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are but more like who we are not. If this person were to drive by a church someday that has a sign with Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on the front of it, what would they really know about the DOCs.

They would not know that as Disciples we find our identity and meaning in the open communion table each week; they would not know that we are a place where people can come with lots of different theologies and interpretations and political views, and all have a place. They would not know that we are an open, truly welcoming, and grace-filled church. Instead of knowing who we are, they would only know who we are not. We are not the Moonies.

So, what do YOU say when someone asks you where you go to church? What do you say when you're talking with a friend who has no idea who the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are? Too often we define ourselves not by who we are, but who we aren't. And yet, **We** are part of something important in our world today – we are a gathering of Christians who do our best to build bridges over the dividing lines, inviting everyone to the Lord's Table.

"We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's table as Christ has welcomed us." This is our identity statement, written in 2006 by the 21st Century Vision Team, as an effort to put our actions and faith practices into words. It's a short statement that describes us, so that when someone asks about our church, we have that so called elevator speech, we have something substantial to say.

We are a movement.

We seek unity and wholeness.

We share communion every week and
we welcome everyone to God's table.

That's who we are.

"We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. And yes, we live in a world defined by fragmentation, division, and difference. Those differences show up politically, racially, socially, and economically just to name a few. But we forget sometimes that we are part of something bigger than our individual selves. We are part of a story that began long before we were born and will continue long after we are gone – it is a story of creation, healing, and hope.

Differences of course are not new... Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth, who like many churches today were getting distracted by disagreements over who to follow, divided over different interpretations and variations of the story of Jesus Christ. So, Paul wrote this letter in which he basically says: stop arguing. Stop letting divisions distract you. In chapter 3:22-23 Paul says, "whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future — all belong to you, and you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God." In other words, we belong to each other, and we belong to Christ.

In John chapter 17:1-26, Jesus gives a farewell speech and prayer. Jesus looks up to heaven and says, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you." This farewell prayer has three parts: In the first part of Jesus' farewell, he prays for himself and his work. In the second part of the prayer, Jesus prays for the faith community and the future life of his followers, including us today. Then, in the final three verses, Jesus prays for a future of unity among God, the Son, and all believers. The thread that weaves throughout the entire prayer and connects it all, is his prayer for the unity of the faith community, "that they may all be one."

Through our unity with one another, our wholeness as a community, we experience a spark of the relationship between Jesus and the creator and catch a glimpse of God's holy vision for the Kingdom of God on earth. The purpose of the Disciples of



(continued from previous page)

Christ's movement was to call all Protestant Christians to unity. We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

That was the vision and dream of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and Barton Stone, pastors who combined their growing ministries on the edge of the American frontier. Thomas Campbell started his ministry in Scotland, and he was dismayed by the level of fracture and division he experienced in his native Presbyterian church. He ended up leaving the Presbyterian church because they were denying communion to people the elders deemed unfit to take it.

Thomas Campbell, joined by his son, Alexander, in Pennsylvania, started a movement called simply, "Christians," because there should be no divisions within the body of Christ. Meanwhile, down in Kentucky, another Presbyterian minister named Barton Stone was struggling with the same issue about the divisions in Christ's church. He too left the Presbyterian church and formed a group with the name "the Disciples," following Jesus was the only requirement for membership.

So, you have the Christians in Pennsylvania and the Disciples in Kentucky, and both groups shared similar beliefs about the importance of unity and decided they should join their movement together. And in 1832, on Main Street in Lexington, Ky., "Raccoon" John Smith of the Christians and Barton Stone of the Disciples shook hands and shared communion, uniting these two movements. Stone said that day, "let the unity of Christians be our polar star."

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. We are people with a purpose – to unite and welcome. We are people with vision – of one church where everyone sits down at the Lord's table together. As part of one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's table as God has welcomed us. Sharing communion as often as we gather is a practice passed down to us from our founders. For so long Protestant churches have been defining themselves by what makes us unique and different that we've nearly lost our ability to even see what ties us together: God's love through Jesus Christ.

That's why it's so important to gather at the communion table as often as possible. It's so important that we come to this place, to sing the songs and hear the scriptures, to share bread and cup with one another – to remember that we are not alone on this journey of faith. We are on the road together and we belong to God.

We grow, praise, serve, tell the story, heal, love and come to the Lord's Table. We do all of these things so that people might catch a glimpse of what God's Kingdom looks like: a world not divided but united, the sharing of table fellowship and the hospitality of welcome.

Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, among others, were united in their passion for Christian unity and their commitment to the Lord's Table as a place where this unity and God's grace is poured out. For them, the Lord's Supper was the glue that held God's people together despite our tendencies to divide and separate ourselves from one another. Campbell felt passionately that we should break one whole loaf every time we have communion, for in the breaking and sharing of one loaf we are saying to each other, "You my brother [or sister], once an alien, are now a citizen of heaven; once a stranger are now brought home to the family of God." Each time we do this We are being God's people and proclaiming good news.

At the Lord's Table, we are proclaiming that the story of Christ's life, death and resurrection still has power in our lives today; that Christ's sacrifice and promise made so long ago continues to be real and true for all and forever. We are proclaiming that through the one body broken and one cup shared, God pours out an abundance grace for every single person who might show up to share communion with us. We remember the story of the loaves and fishes, how when Christ is present, there is always enough. We are proclaiming that no human-made barrier can keep us from God's presence and Table. We remember that at God's Table, the barriers that we build around ourselves and between ourselves come tumbling down.

Here, there is no Hebrew or Greek, male or female, young or old, rich or poor, gay or straight, faithful or sinner or doubtful. Here, we are simply human; each and every one of us is a beloved child of God covered in abundant grace.

Here, at God's Table, we remember:

We remember the story and our part in it.

We remember the grace and the love that God offers us despite ourselves.

We remember God's joy in welcoming the least and the lost – God's persistent love for us.

And here, we commit ourselves to living the way Jesus lived, loving the way he loved serving the way he served. "We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us."

When we do this, we have truly remembered. Amen

Blessings, Pastor Paula

A LITTLE TRIVIA ...

"Finish this sentence ... As far as the east is from the west ..."

(See answer on a later page in the Newsletter)

**GIVING REPORT FOR
DECEMBER 2023:**

The following income for our church came from the weekly offering on Sunday and payments from the groups who use our building weekly:

December — 2023	
For Current Expenses	\$6,578.00
Designated	\$2,037.00
World Outreach	\$100.00
Local Outreach	\$225.00
Building Fund	\$1,540.00

ADDITION TO THE GIVING REPORT ...

For the Special Christmas Offering of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the amount received was \$231. One hundred per cent of this offering will be given to our own Pennsylvania Region.

Celebration Sunday will be held on February 25th following the Worship Service. Everyone who is observing a birthday or anniversary in February will be honored. Please bring a snack to pass and be shared with others.



A Note from Pastor Paula ...

I want to thank all of you for the cards and expressions of sympathy at my mother's passing [Shirley Rolls]. Even though she had been in a nursing home for almost eight years, her passing was a shock to me and my sisters. I know she would have been grateful for all the kind words. Thank you.

Trivia Question Answer ... (from Page 3) so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)



- 6 ~ Casey Rava
- 6 ~ Barry Ardrey
- 9 ~ Kelly Seeley
- 12 ~ Harold Ammerman
- 12 ~ Tyler Rava
- 19 ~ Monica Fiske
- 24 ~ Nancy Bradley
- 27 ~ Braxton Ray Fiske
- 28 ~ Francs Lincoln III
- 28 ~ Megan Bennett
- 28 ~ Mary Flottesch



14 ~ Tom and Shelia Donovan

LET US PRAY ...

- Ric and Kathy Rava
- Don and Donna Johnson
- Brett Lattimer
- Michael Spencer



To Pastor Paula and her family upon the loss of her mother, Shirley Rolls. Shirley passed away on Saturday, January 6th.

To Family and Friends of Marlene Enlow. Marlene passed away on Monday, January 8th.



ASH WEDNESDAY ...

Ash Wednesday begins on February 14th. Interesting to have Valentine's day and Ash Wednesday on the same day. For this church giving ashes is a symbolic gesture and is voluntary. Ashes remind us of God's promise meant for all creation. New life is springing up, and we are in good hands. The God who created us out of ash and dust will never let us go. The ash reminds us that we mourn while the oil that makes the ash stick reminds us that we are healed. It's fitting that we begin the season of Lent with reminders of both loss and light, of mourning and healing. I will be in my office on Ash Wednesday to administer ashes for anyone who wants.

LENTEN SEASON ...

Lent is a period of 40 days that is observed by many Christians around the world. Sundays are excluded from the count of 40 days because every Sunday is a celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Lent is a time of reflection, repentance, and preparation for the celebration of Easter. [Although Lent is often associated with the Roman Catholic Church, many Protestant traditions also celebrate it.](#)

The focus of Lent varies among different Protestant denominations. However, the common themes include prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. During this period, many Protestants choose to give up something that is important to them, such as a favorite food or activity, as a way of showing their devotion to God. [Others may choose to take on a new spiritual practice, such as daily Bible reading or volunteering at a local charity.](#)

This 40 day period symbolized the time Jesus was in the wilderness after his baptism and the temptations he experienced from Satan. Lent ends with Holy Week between Palm Sunday [March 24] and Easter [March 31]. This church recognizes Holy Week with a Maundy Thursday service that will be held March 28th at 7:00 p.m. and a time for meditation and quiet reflection in the sanctuary on Good Friday, March 29th. There will be an Easter Sunrise service on March 31st at 7:00 a.m. and the regular worship service at 10:00 a.m. that day.

WEEK OF COMPASSION ...

The special offering for the Week of Compassion of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be received February 18th thru February 25th. Inserts with information and envelopes for your gift will be available in the pews. Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee, and sustainable development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. In 2024, Week of Compassion marks 80 years of a single mission: working with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world, with a vision of a world where God's people transform suffering into hope. Then, and now, Disciples have been clear: When needs arise, we need to respond . . . we need to be faithful . . . *we need to be generous*. We need to take on the role of the generous widow.

[Jesus} looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them, for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."
Luke 21:1-4 NRSV

What you give, will be **GIFTS TO LIVE ON** . . . as they serve . . .

Women in South Sudan who receive life-saving healthcare

Communities in Kentucky and the Florida Gulf Coast flattened by tornadoes and hurricanes

Families who faced devastation in Maui and many more around the world.

Thank you for whatever gift you are able to give.



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FEBRUARY 2024

UPCOMING DATES FOR FEBRUARY ...

- 4 - Food Pantry Sunday
 - 7 - Bible Study at 10:00 a.m.
 - 11 - Boy Scout Sunday at 10:00 a.m. Worship
 - 13 - Board Meeting at 6:00 p.m.
 - 14 - Bible Study at 10:00 a.m.
 - 14 - Ash Wednesday
 - 14 - *Happy Valentine's Day*
 - 18 - First Sunday of Lent
 - 20 - Disciples Christian Fellowship Dinner -
6:30 p.m. in Williamsport, PA.
 - 21 - Bible Study at 10:00 a.m.
 - 25 - Second Sunday of Lent
 - 25 - Celebration Sunday - bring a snack to share
 - 25 - Worship Service at Athens Healthcare & Rehab
at 1:00 p.m.
 - 28 - NO Bible Study
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SAYRE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)
sayrechristianchurch.org