

JANUARY

THE CUP

NEWS OF THE CLINTON UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Rev. Laura E. Strauss

In today's world, it is easy for us to fall into the vicious trap of believing that our worth is found in what we do. This is the reason that so many folks have difficulty with saying, 'no.' Will people still like us if we don't volunteer for that school party? What will our spouse think if we don't change the oil in the car? How can people still love me if I can't do all those things that I've signed up for before? We find our identity and our worth in our ability to say, 'yes!'

Jesus teaches us a different way. As Jesus descends into the Jordan's waters, he has not yet begun his earthly ministry. Jesus has not done a single thing worthy of note to Mark's gospel. But, what does the Father say as Jesus comes up from his baptism? The Father gives Jesus both an identity and a sense of worth: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Jesus hasn't even done anything, yet! But, he is claimed and valued already.

This is how God loves and claims us before we have done anything. Before we might earn God's love, God claims us as God's children. Before we respond by doing things of value, God gives us value and is well pleased. Our identity and worth doesn't come from what we do. Our identity and worth comes from whose we are: we are God's, and God loves us no matter what.

As we move into a season all too rich with illnesses, fall risks, and the possibility of being snowed in, know that we are beloved whether we make it outside or not. If our situation leaves us at the end of the day regretting that we didn't even make it to the grocery store let alone prepare anything,

PASTOR'S CORNER

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

— Mark 1:10-11

Thank you for your kindness in respecting my need for maternity leave, and for your wonderful welcome back to the pulpit! My time away with Friedrich was a blessed time as I had the opportunity to heal, and as my little boy and I had the opportunity to bond with one another. I cannot thank you enough

for respecting such a sacred season in a world that often isn't so respectful. Thank you.

While away, though I didn't learn what the Italians call, "the art of doing nothing," I did perfect the art of, "not getting much done." Each night, I'd create a mental to-do list for myself the next day. Visions of fresh-baked pastries, scrubbed floors and an immaculately dressed child danced through my head. What generally transpired, however, was nothing of the sort. I'd often put the baby down at 8:00 p.m. with dishes in the sink, laundry on the floor and spit-up in my unwashed hair.

So, what did maternity leave teach me? I'm not a human doing. I'm a human being.

know that you still have value in the eyes of the God of the universe.

We are not human doings. We are human beings. And God loves us just the way we are.

In Christ's Service,
Pastor Laura



Special Dates this Month

- New Year's Day, *January 1, 2015*
- Epiphany, *January 6, 2015*
- Baptism of the Lord, *January 11, 2015*
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, *January 18-25, 2015*
- Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Observance, *January 19, 2015*



2015 Officers, Save the Date:

All deacons and elders serving in 2015 are asked to please save the date of February 15th, beginning with lunch at 1:00 pm, for officer training. More details to come.

Ash Wednesday Service

Mark your calendars now, and join us for Ash Wednesday service as we begin the season of Lent on **Wed., February 18th** at 6:30 p.m.

For surely
I KNOW THE
plans
I have for
YOU,
says the
Lord...
TO GIVE YOU A
future
WITH
Hope.
Jeremiah 29:11, NRSV

A New Year Wish

May the New Year bring us:
Enough happiness to keep us sweet;
Enough trials to keep us strong;
Enough hope to keep us lively;
Enough sorrows to keep us dependent upon God;
Enough failure to keep us humble;
Enough success to keep us eager;
Enough friends to give us comfort;
Enough wealth to meet our needs;
Enough enthusiasm to keep us looking forward;
Enough faith to overcome despair;
And enough determination to use every day and situation somehow for good.



MUSIC NOTES

CHOIR NOTES

As the year comes to a close we can reflect back on how busy our singing year has been already, but we are not done. January brings another year of learning God's words through our Bible and hearing God's words through Pastor Laura's sermons and singing God's words through our music. I thank all my choir members for all your constant dedication to our chancel choir and praise you for your hard work. Now we will look forward, continuing through the new year and on into Easter time. Once again, if anyone has a special request for a favorite hymn or just can't remember the song in your heart, but may remember some of the words, we will try our best to find that song and sing it for you. And there is always room in our loft for more singers. Please consider coming and joining us, even if you just want to sing for a month or so, we welcome you all.

I extend a special thanks to all the members of our chancel choir for the music for Christmas Eve. Amanda Collins sang a wonderful version of "O Holy Night"—thank you Amanda. And Dan Heck sang "The Jesus Gift"—thanks Dan. I know you were nervous, but it was beautiful.

BELL TONES

Thank you Bell Ringers for your talents in bringing songs of joy into our holiday celebrations. I know that everyone enjoys our bell music, and we really enjoy playing. Thanks to Amanda Collins for her talents in creating some of our pieces; she is such a gifted musician. We will be putting our bells away till Easter time, but look forward to ringing to God's glory again at that time. Thank you Bell Ringers for our Christmas Eve songs; they were beautiful.



There will be a chili cook-off on **Sunday, January 25** following the annual congregational meeting. In addition, we will have a non-chocolate bake-off to support our women's group's efforts to reduce our participation in the cocoa-related global slave trade. So, find your favorite chili and baking recipes for a delicious lunch, friendly competition and joyful fellowship!

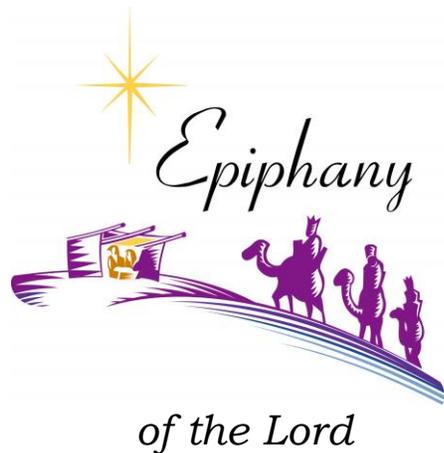
Trustee News

Just to let everyone know that our Carpet Fund is around \$5700, which is a little over one third of our goal of \$15,000. It has been over a year since our carpet was installed. We hope to replenish the funds used to purchase the carpet back into the Building Fund over the next year or so. Thank you to everyone who has donated and continues to give. If you would like to give above and beyond your regular giving, please make sure to mark your check or envelope with the word "Carpet Fund". THANKS!

The trustees had a used copier given to the church and it is located in the Christian Education Building Library. It is for church related use only, and is intended especially for Sunday School use.

If you have any questions or concerns dealing with our church home please feel free to contact one of the trustees. We are open to suggestions and help in maintaining God's House!

Thank You!



The word epiphany comes from the Greek word epiphaneia, which means appearance or manifestation. It is an important word for liturgical churches. Epiphany is observed annually on January 6. It refers to the wise men, who were the first Gentiles to see the manifestation of God's appearance in the baby Jesus.

In the early church, January 6 was a day for baptism. The central significance of Epiphany is that Christ came as the Light of the World, not just for the Jews but for Gentiles as well. Christ's light is for all.

In France, to celebrate Epiphany, children from Christian homes often put oats in their shoes on the evening before January 6. The oats are for the camels of the "Wise Men." When they awake the next morning, the children hope to find the oats gone and gifts left in their shoes.

Down the Bowling Alley

HEY YOU GUYS!!! What are you doing this winter??? Sitting around watching TV and being bored??? Well, we are still bowling and we are always looking for more bowlers. We gather on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 at Center Lanes. Come and join us!



When the new year comes around I find myself thinking about resolutions. I always try to pick one that I know I will be able to keep through the year but sometimes, as we all know, that doesn't work. With so much going on in our lives every day we need to just take time to remember what God has in store for our lives and not just what we have in store for our lives. Make a new year's resolution to add the women's group meeting into you life every month this year. Our first meeting will be **January 8th, Thursday evening at 6:30**. Erma Wilson will be talking to us about Pride. There are reminder books in the back of the Church for you to keep track of our meetings and some special events. Please feel free to take one on your way out. Mark your calendars NOW for February 22nd when we will have a soup and sandwich luncheon after church that Sunday, and also Feb. 7th for Chick Flick Night to see "Little Women."

Which March Sister Are You?

Find out at Chick Flick Night on **Saturday, Feb. 7** at 6:30 p.m.! We'll enjoy a popcorn bar, hot cocoa and a viewing of *Little Women* starring Winona Ryder and Kirsten Dunst. It's the perfect winter activity and, whether you're a Meg or a Jo, a Beth or an Amy, we hope to see you there!



CLINTON U.P. CHURCH CEMETERY SEEKING BIDS

Clinton U.P. Church Cemetery is seeking separate sealed bids for the mowing of both the old and new sections of the Clinton Cemetery. A sealed bid for trimming of the grass around the headstones of both the old and new sections of the Clinton Cemetery will be accepted. Clinton Cemetery will need a copy of a certificate of insurance. Bids must be received by April 15, 2015. Any questions, please contact a cemetery board member: Bill Marburger, Denny Macek, Mark McConnell, or Larry Wilson.

REFORMATION HERITAGE TOUR 2016

Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church of Ft. Myers, FL has invited our congregation on a heritage tour of the Reformation sites of Switzerland and Germany in late [June 2016](#). If interested, save your pennies and mark your calendars now! More information coming soon!

A Lasting Empire

One day as Napoleon came toward the end of his career, he looked back across the years — the great Napoleon that at a very early age had all but conquered the world. He was not stopped until he moved out to the battle of Leipzig and then to Waterloo. But that same Napoleon one day stood back and looked across the years, and said: Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I have built great empires. But upon what did they depend? They depended upon force. But long ago Jesus started an empire that depended on love, and even to this day millions will die for him.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

3M's Class News

Our class is starting January studying sections of the Bible dealing with learning to pray. We will be studying from Luke, John, Hebrews and James. In February we will tackle scripture from Daniel, Mathew, Luke and Ephesians that will help us have stewardship for life. Please join us as we look at God's Word and how it can lead us to a life more centered in doing His will!

We meet each Sunday morning at 9:45 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall! See you there!

Thank you to everyone who has given to our class in so many ways over the past year. We have been blessed to share with those around us. Without your continued support we would not be able to serve God in helping so many. We look forward to another busy year of serving, and we welcome you to be a part of that service! God Bless!



The youth group will meet on **Sunday, January 11th** and **Sunday, January 25th** from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Pastor Laura and Ethan are back with the newest youth group leader: Friedrich!

All youth in grades six through twelve are invited to join us for Bible Study, games and snacks (weather permitting).

Youth Group Day at the Aviary!

The youth group will meet at the church at 9:30 a.m. to go to the National Aviary on **Monday, January 19**. We will have lunch afterward at Chick-Fil-A. Cost is \$10. Chaperones needed.

Youth Group Serve-A-Thon

The youth group will have another serve-a-thon fundraiser for their summer mission trip on **Monday, February 16**. All youth are invited to mark their calendars!



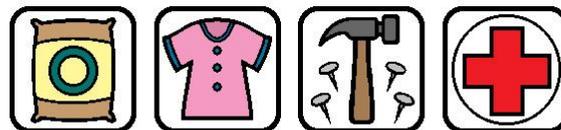
Youth Group Mission Trip News

All youth in grades six - twelve are invited to save the date of **June 28 - July 3** for our annual mission trip. We will be going to Steubenville, OH with YouthWorks. Cost is \$259 per person. If you would like to reserve a spot, or are interested in chaperoning, please inform Pastor Laura by *February 8*.

The small town of Steubenville, Ohio sits on the banks of the Ohio River. This town is known as the "City of Murals," as there are more than 20 murals throughout Steubenville which depict the town's history. This history includes huge growth when the steel industry was booming, and a dramatic decline as the industry began to disappear in the 1960's and 1970's. The current population of Steubenville is about half what it was in the 1940's. Many residents who remain struggle with poverty. However, Steubenville, and other

towns like it in the "Rust Belt," are beginning to see new signs of hope and revitalization.

During your week in Steubenville you may be planning and running a Kids Club with the spunky kids who look forward to YouthWorks return every year. You may connect with some incredible residents by painting or performing minor repairs on their homes. Or you may make a new friend through serving with one of our ministry partnerships including nursing homes, the Parks & Recreation Department, Urban Mission, Mama Nita's [Non Profit] Coffee Shop, and the Community Development Corporation. In the evenings your group has the opportunity to be transported back in time to 1700's Ohio Frontier at Historic Fort Steuben. With the help of a tour guide, you will explore a museum, blockhouses for enlisted men, officer's quarters, artificer's shops, the hospital and a commissary. In addition you will experience artistic Steubenville on a Mural Scavenger Hunt Tour. There are more than 25 murals around town and each mural represents a significant cultural or historical event in Steubenville (one mural even features the YouthWorks logo!). You will end the week celebrating new friendships at the community cookout.



We always thank
GOD for all of you
and continually
mention you in
our prayers.

I Thessalonians 1:2, NIV

THANK YOU'S TO CLINTON CHURCH...

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all who shared their love in song on a warm December evening. Those smiles and goodies were appreciated, too. May God continue to bless all of you real good in the year 2015.

—Joan & Richard McConnell

Dear Pastor Laura and All the Members at the Little Church with the Big Heart Clinton U.P.,

There are no words to express our gratitude for all the thoughts, prayers, cards and phone calls we have received through "2014." We thank you all so very much. God bless and love to all.

Sincerely, the Families of Judy Heck,
Candice Blair and Joshua Scaff

Thank you to everyone who helped to “cover the bases” as I was away for maternity leave. Particularly, thank you to Amanda Leonard and Mark McConnell for all of your work with the youth group. It was such a comfort to know that our teens were under your capable leadership. Thank you to Brenda Metz for leading the youth trip to see *Moses*, and to Brenda Lamb for leading the fundraising efforts. Thank you to the women's group for undertaking the Rahab's Rope party, particularly Linda Lewis. This project was important to me, and I had regretted not being here to see it through. Thank you for taking leadership and creating such a beautiful event.

Most especially, thank you to the congregation for affording me this extraordinarily special time to bond with Friedrich. Our nation isn't one that typically honors the importance of maternity leave, and I deeply appreciate this congregation's understanding of just how vital this time is for both parent and child. It's been a joy to return to the pulpit, and to see how this church has welcomed Fritz as their own. Thank you!

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Laura



The women's association would like to thank the congregation for their support for the women and girls in India who are enslaved or at risk of being enslaved. Through your generous support, the congregation was able to purchase two sewing machines and one nutrition

package. If anyone would like to purchase items from Rahab's Rope in the future, you can always go to their website: www.rahabsrope.com or see Linda Lewis for their catalog.

From Rahab's Rope:

Thank you for your purchase. We hope you enjoy it, and that it will be a constant reminder to pray for the women and children we work with in India. Your purchase goes directly towards supporting and maintaining our ministry. Merry Christmas!

In his service,
Jennifer at Rahab's Rope



Thank You on Behalf of the
Ludwig Family – Mission Giving

November 20, 2014

Dear Friends,

Generous people like you enable Presbyterian World Mission to bear witness to Christ's love in every region of the world. Thank you for your recent gift.

Presbyterian World Mission is committed to addressing the root causes of poverty, sharing



the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ, and working for reconciliation. Our ministry continues a tradition that began in 1837 when the General Assembly created the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., a predecessor of Presbyterian World Mission. Today our mission co-workers serve alongside global partners in almost 50 countries.

Your gift is a testament to your commitment to international mission. We depend on the generosity of congregations and individuals to help us meet critical needs around the world. Thanks again for your gift, and please pray for our mission personnel and our global partners.

Together in Mission,
B. Hunter Farrell, Director, World Mission
Presbyterian World Mission



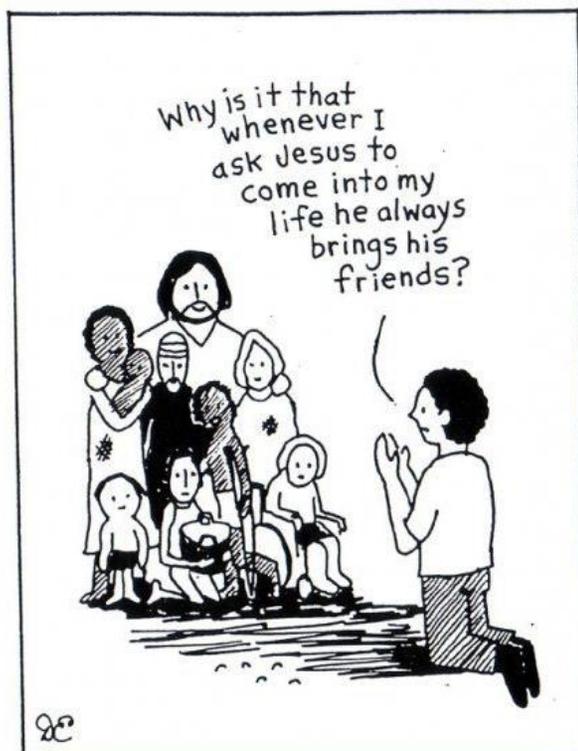
Dear Members of Clinton U.P. Church,

Thank you for your generous Christmas gift. We have been blessed by your kindness during the season of Christ's birth, and cannot tell you how much we appreciate your support for your pastor and pastor's family. We rejoice as we step into a new year of serving and loving the little church with a big heart. Thank you and may God bless you and yours with a healthy, joyful 2015!

*In Christ,
Pastor Laura and
Family*



THIS MONTH'S
birthdays



Brandon Karcz.....	3
Mark Thomas	6
Decklyn Campbell	7
Nathaniel Elek	7
Barbara Cook.....	7
Steven McCullough	9
Idilla Wilson	9
Erin Podolinsky	13
Rich Laniewski	20
Nino Nicastro	26
Lora Karcz	27
Verna Beck	30
Tomasina Nicastro	31
Lori Thomas	31

COUNTDOWN TO THE

New Year

Celebrate the blessings of the previous year and the hope of the New Year with this fun party idea and craft.

What you need:

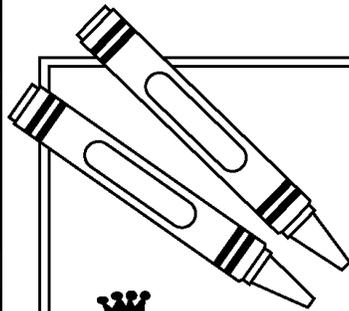
- Brown paper lunch bags or colorful bags
- Construction paper
- Markers
- Glue
- Scissors
- Stickers (optional)
- Inexpensive prizes or treats (see ideas below)

What you do:

1. Before New Year's Eve, assemble a bag for every hour before midnight that you plan to celebrate.
2. Use construction paper and markers to make a clock with a different time for each bag.
3. Glue a clock onto each bag.
4. Decorate the bags with stickers or other designs.
5. Fill the bags with inexpensive prizes or treats, each accompanied by a Bible verse. Here are a few suggestions:
 - Plastic party-favor watches ("The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore" Psalm 121:8, NIV.)
 - Bookmarks ("Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture" 1 Timothy 4:13, NIV.)
 - Small notepads and pencils ("Let love and faithfulness never leave you ... write them on the tablet of your heart" Proverbs 3:3, NIV.)
 - Sweet treats ("Taste and see that the LORD is good" Psalm 34:8, NIV.)
 - Party noisemaker, in a bag to be opened at midnight ("Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth" Psalm 98:4, NRSV.)
6. Open each bag at the time shown on its clock.



Kid's Corner

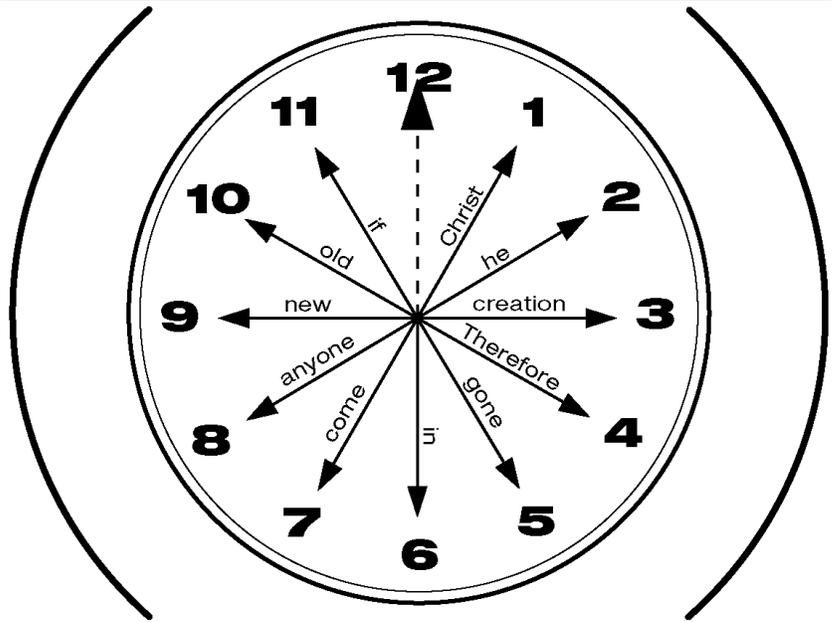


Just for **KIDS**

IN WITH THE NEW

It's "time" for New Year's resolutions! We should always want to improve ourselves for God, looking to Jesus as our example. God will work with us and through us when we come to him in prayer.

Using the clock's hour hand, copy each word to help you complete 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV.



" _____ , _____ is _____ , _____ is a _____
 _____ ; the _____ has _____ , the _____ has _____ !"

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17, NIV

Answer: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"