



**News of the  
Clinton United  
Presbyterian  
Church**

**The CUP**

**The Rev. Laura  
E. Strauss  
Minister**

## FROM THE PASTOR



*But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid,  
Mary, you have found favor with God."*

– Luke 1:30

"Whose birthday is on Christmas?" I asked my son some months ago. Without missing a beat, four-year-old Fritz responded, "Andy Warhol!" In case you didn't know, Warhol does not share a birthday with our Savior. Warhol's birthday is in August.

This is why we need to teach the Christmas story to our children again, and again, and again! Our kids, including my own, are surrounded with competing stories vying for their hearts attention. Our goal as a church is to till the soil of our children's hearts so that the story of Jesus becomes the story which defines their lives. We want them to know about the true story of Christmas, and to live that story into their elderly years.

How do we do that? We begin with prayer. Only the Holy Spirit can stir someone's heart toward a love of Jesus. From prayer, we take seriously the vows we make on baptismal days. We fulfill those vows with opportunities to know Jesus through Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and by taking a particular interest in each of the youth/children who come through our doors. Finally, an opportunity being offered this Christmas is the opportunity of supporting our kids through attending the children's Christmas play on December 9 at 5:00 p.m.

It is one thing to hear the story of Jesus. Through our children's Christmas play, the little ones of this church will experience the story of Jesus. They will witness Gabriel calling out to Mary from our choir loft, laugh as the shepherds shriek upon receiving the divine message in the dead of night, and make mayhem as all of the children in our church crowd together around the newborn, plastic, baby doll whom we will use as a stand-in for Jesus.

I ask you, personally, to support this children's event. Even if you do not have children, even if you do not have grandchildren, you have taken a vow to encourage these little ones in their faith journey. Supporting them in this chaotic endeavor to tell Jesus's birth story is a simple way to fulfill that vow this Christmas season.

(And, if the vows you took upon the baptism of these children is not enough to entice you....the potluck dinner before the show should be plenty motivation! The spread promises to be both epic AND delicious!)

With Tidings of Comfort and Joy,  
Pastor Laura



### Special Dates

- First Sunday of Advent, December 2, 2018
- Second Sunday of Advent, December 9, 2018
- Third Sunday of Advent, December 16, 2018
- First day of winter, December 21, 2018
- Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 23, 2018
- Christmas Eve, December 24, 2018
- Christmas Day, December 25, 2018
- New Year's Eve/Watch Night, December 31, 2018



### **December 2, 2018**

*The First Sunday of Advent*

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:1-25  
Responsive Psalm: Psalm 25:1-10

### **December 9, 2018**

*The Second Sunday of Advent*  
Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26-38

### **December 16, 2018**

*The Third Sunday of Advent*  
Gospel Reading: Luke 1:39-56

### **December 23, 2018**

*The Fourth Sunday of Advent*  
Gospel Reading: Matthew 1:18-25  
The Sacrament of Communion

### **December 24, 2018**

*Christmas Eve*  
Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1-20

### **December 30, 2018**

*The First Sunday after Christmas Day*  
A Festival of Lessons and Carols

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**New! Book Club in 2019!** The Rev. Gavin Walton and Rev. Laura Strauss are forming a book club that will begin meeting monthly on January 25, 2019. The book club will take turns meeting at Clinton U.P. Church and Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church. January's book selection is *More Than Equals* by Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice. You're invited!

**God's Messy Family:** All adults are invited to join us for **Sunday School Sunday mornings** beginning at **9:45 a.m.** We are studying "God's Messy Family," based on the book by Rev. Jacob Armstrong. This study looks at the way God blesses and redeems the messiest of families!

**Down the Bowling Alley:** We gather at Center Lanes in Hopewell, on **Wednesday evenings** at **6:30**. Come and join us for this friendly fellowship evening.

**Youth Group Overnight:** There will be a youth group overnight on **Saturday, December 1** at **6:30 p.m.** until Sunday, December 2 at 9:45 a.m. Youth are invited to join us as we decorate the church for Advent, enjoy Christmas prayer stations, and a holiday movie together.

**Youth Group:** Save the Date of **December 23** for our Annual Christmas Party at the Hamil Home!

**Hanging of the Greens:** The Hanging of the Greens, which is when we decorate the church for the Advent/Christmas season, will take place on **Saturday, December 1** at **6:30 p.m.**

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**The Sacrament of Communion:** will be celebrated next on **Sunday, December 2**, the First Sunday of Advent. Please prepare your hearts for this sacrament by forgiving one another as Jesus Christ has forgiven you.

**Save the Date for a Christmas Pageant!** The children of Clinton U.P. Church will be presenting a Christmas Pageant following the Church Family Christmas Dinner on **Sunday, December 9**. Rehearsals will take place on Saturday, December 1 and December 8. We hope you'll join us as the kids present the story of Jesus Christ's birth.

**Womens Group:** Christmas is coming and the goose is getting fat.....and it just so happens that the Ladies' Group has cook books on sale for \$10 each. These would make wonderful Christmas, birthday, anniversary, Mother's day, Valentine's Day, Halloween, thanksgiving, Easter gifts. See them on sale on the table in the Narthex.

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**Church Family Christmas Dinner and Children's Play:** The annual potluck Christmas dinner will take place at the church on Sunday, December 9 at 5:00 p.m. Ham will be provided. The children will put on a Christmas play following the meal.

**Children's Christmas Play Rehearsals:** Rehearsals for the children's Christmas play will take place on Saturday, December 1 at 4:00 p.m., Saturday, December 9 at 9:00 a.m., and Sunday, December 9 at 9:00 a.m. The play will take place following the Christmas dinner on Sunday, December 9.

**Youth Group Christmas Party!** The annual Youth Group Christmas Party will take place on Sunday, December 23 at the Hamil home. More details are to follow. Plan to bring a wrapped, gender-neutral white elephant gift for our gift exchange.

**The Sacrament of Communion:** The Lord's Supper will be observed on Sunday, December 2 and Sunday, December 23. Please prepare your hearts for the sacrament by forgiving one another as Jesus Christ has forgiven you.

**Christmas Eve Worship:** Christmas Eve candlelight worship will take place on Monday, December 24 at 7:00 p.m.

**Kid's Group is Returning!** All kids in grades 2 - 5 are invited to start the New Year at Kid's Group on Sunday, January 13. More details to come soon!

**Festival of Lessons and Carols:** This annual worship service, which includes many of our favorite Christmas hymns, will take place on Sunday, December 30 at 11:00 a.m. See Pastor Laura if you would like to be a Scripture reader for that service.

**Mandatory Officer Training:** There is mandatory officer training for all elders and deacons serving in 2019. Training will take place all day on Saturday, January 19 at the Pittsburgh Presbytery center on Allegheny Avenue in Pittsburgh. Ordination and installation of officers will take place on Sunday, January 20.



## *A spiritual pilgrimage* *Experiencing the Holy Land with* *Palestinian Arab Christians*



*The Rev. Dr. Victor Makari (left), the Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb (center) and the Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac greet visitors and parishioners after Sunday service at the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem.*

Douglas Dicks

For Christians worldwide, a trip to the Holy Land has often been regarded as “the trip of a lifetime” — and it usually is. All too often, however, visitors and pilgrims end up running in the land where Jesus walked!

The Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, cannot understand why so many Christian visitors rush through the land where Jesus walked. “Jesus also took time to sit with, visit and be amongst the people,” he said.

A journey to Israel and to the Palestinian territories can deepen our faith and teach us to read the Bible differently, after having experienced the places we read about in Scripture.

My work with World Mission involves helping make connections between Presbyterians and Palestinian Arab Christians. As visitors join in worship, share a meal together and hear about the hopes,

dreams and struggles of Palestinian Christians, it creates a more authentic experience with the people and the land.

While religious or spiritual pilgrimage should be a significant part of any trip to the Holy Land, the political realities in which Palestinian Christians live, breathe and witness to the risen Christ cannot be ignored. All too often, the Arab-Israeli conflict is perceived as too complex to understand. Yet it is not difficult to understand at all. It does, however, require listening to competing narratives and revisiting historical accounts of the conflict, Often times through the eyes of those who witnessed these events firsthand.

Over the years, closer relationships have been forged between Middle East churches and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations. Repeat visitors have sometimes become group leaders and have recruited new pilgrims from their own communities. I personally get great satisfaction working with first-time visitors and watching their transformation as they experience the culture, the cuisine and the hospitality of the Palestinian people.

It is equally important that U.S. Presbyterians see firsthand how their financial support has been invested over the years, and continues to be invested in efforts to promote justice and peace in this region. We Presbyterians are encouraged by our partnerships and long-standing relationships created in Israel and Palestine.

The PC(USA) also has invested time and money to have mission personnel, including me, strategically placed to be present with the people of the Holy Land. As such, I can offer current and relevant advice and experience in helping Presbyterians plan and implement a meaningful program that

will enable them to make the most of their journey. I especially hope that my presence here helps the Palestinian Arab Christian community overcome their growing sense of isolation. My life bears witness daily to the ongoing struggle for dignity, recognition, justice and peace that is so longed for, yet so elusive, in this land we call holy.



*Christian visitors and pilgrims from around the world join Palestinian Arab Christians in the annual Palm Sunday procession down the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.*



*Douglas Dicks leads the Rev. Judith March Hardie, pastor of Willow Creek Presbyterian Church of Argyle in Caledonia, Illinois, in the renewal of her baptismal vows in the Jordan River.*

*Douglas Dicks serves Israel and Palestine as Presbyterian World Mission's associate for ecumenical partnerships, working in conjunction with St. Andrew's Scots Memorial Church in Jerusalem and other partners in the region.*



The women's group will not be meeting in December but will meet again on January 3rd Thursday at 6:30. Carol Elek will have our study that evening about Contagious Calm/ Prayer not Despair, please mark your calendars and join us for this very interesting study. Our mission project for December was to provide gifts to some of the folks that live at the AVS (Allegheny Valley School) that may not receive gifts at Christmas. Thanks Judy Heck for providing us with this mission project. Look for our first Soup Sunday January 13 where we will have soup on sale after church.

Merry Christmas to all our church family and friends, enjoy this special season to celebrate our saviors birth. Despite their frequent advertising claim, the Bethlehem Motel Six did not leave a 'light' on for Mary and Joseph. Also, I discovered the following nursery rhyme to be true....Mary was Jesus, mommy, Jesus was the Lamb of God. So, yes, it is correct that Mary had a little lamb.

## Down the Bowling Alley.



We are mid-season with our bowling and still having lots of fun. This is a terrific winter sport that will fill a cold lonely winter night with fun and fellowship. It is not too late to join us for the wonderful evening with friends. Wednesday's at 6:30 at Center lanes. SEE YOU THERE!!!!!!

## Choir Notes.

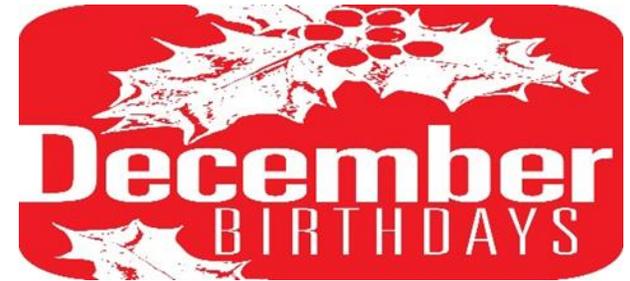


The choir has been working hard on all our holiday music. We really enjoy singing and bringing God's word through music. We are a small number but we come together every Tuesday evening at 7 to sing. As the year comes to a close and you are thinking about New Year's resolutions, you might want to add coming to choir practice on that list. Everyone have a blessed Christmas season and don't forget that Jesus is the reason for the season.

## Bell Tones.



The bell tones will once again ring on Christmas Eve. We have lost a few of our ringers and have gained some new ringers and everyone is working together to bring this beautiful sound to our church. Thank you bell toners for you dedication. Our final practices will be December 3, 11. And 18. See you than.



<i>Lynn Hamil</i> .....	5
<i>Betty Thomas</i> .....	7
<i>Mike Carr</i> .....	9
<i>Greg Reddicks</i> .....	10
<i>Heidi Hudak</i> .....	12
<i>Brenda Metz</i> .....	15
<i>Heather Campbell</i> .....	20
<i>Tori Erwin</i> .....	24
<i>Ty Watters</i> .....	24
<i>Marsha Beck</i> .....	25
<i>Ellen Yolton</i> .....	29
<i>Joseph Lapin</i> .....	29
<i>Mark Elek</i> .....	30



Honor a loved one by purchasing a Christmas Poinsettia! Sizes range from 6 ½ pot – 8 ½ pot with various colors. Poinsettia's come from Clinton's own, Janoski's Greenhouse. Orders are due by December 10th.

Checks are payable to Clinton UP Church. Call church office for more info (724) 695-7993.



**Youth Group Overnight** - There will be a youth group overnight on Saturday, **December 1 at 6:30 p.m. until Sunday, December 2 at 9:45 a.m.** Youth are invited to join us as we decorate the church for Advent, enjoy Christmas prayer stations, and a holiday movie together.

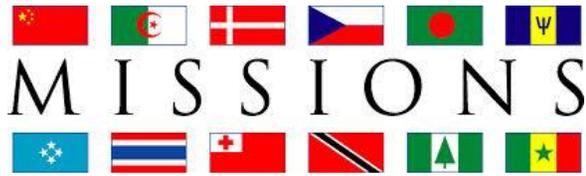


**Youth Group  
Save the Date of  
December 23 for our  
Annual Christmas Party  
at the Hamil Home!**



*The children of Clinton U.P. Church will be presenting a Christmas Pageant following the Church Family Christmas Dinner on Sunday, December 9. Rehearsals will take place on Saturday, December 1 and December 8.*

*We hope you'll join us as the kids present the story of Jesus Christ's birth.*



An Excerpt taken from the Ludwig's Blog  
"Out of the Dust & Us"  
Monday, November 26, 2018

## Singing Badly

This past Sunday we had a visitor at our church, who requested to sing a song during the opening period of worship when normally the fellowship groups each sing a song and other groups or individuals can also request a spot. After the opening two lines of the very familiar hymn he chose, it was quite apparent that this was going to be a painful 5 minutes. The man was off key and not very true to the melody, but he was enthusiastic.

I was amazed that I didn't see a lot of annoyed looks, snickering, or even impatience from the 200 church members gathered and enduring this song. In fact, a good number of people were taping their feet, swaying back and forth, or even singing along softly. This was even more surprising to me, as I knew the man, who often wanders around somewhat aimlessly, appears to have some mental health issues, but has always been involved in church and is always on the ball to submit a letter to request permission to attend the national church's general assembly. This strange mix of characteristics made me a little wary of him, but the church was very receptive and respectful of this middle-aged man getting up and singing badly in an honest effort to praise God.

But our church does still have high-standards! Here is Sunny being prayed-over as he becomes a member of the choir, a position you have to audition for in addition to this semi-ordination.

I was impressed with our sometimes slightly-snobbish local church, and felt like they were teaching me

something about honest, open-hearted worship, and acceptance of all types of people. I immediately felt like this type of thing would probably not happen in the churches I'm used to in the US. It made me think in the US we are too overly-planned, sensitive to what is social-norms, worried about other people being turned-off, or artistically snobby. To be fair, doing things "decently and in order" according to high standards also has its benefits for regulating pride, goodness, and balance in the body of Christ. Also, upon further reflection, I could see some close-knit US congregations where Uncle Bob the plumber (no offense to plumbers) could get up and sing a torturous solo in the middle of the service either because nobody wanted to wrangle with him or because the pool of interested folks to draw on was small enough the church felt they could accept anyone who wanted a chance. But rarely can I imagine a large membership church having the patience and respect for community members to go along with horrendous singing and even attempt to let that sub-par music lead them in worship when someone offers it as a gift.

There is something powerful about giving people the freedom to use the gifts that are in their hearts to share with the body of Christ, and not to stifle the movement of the Spirit because of the aesthetic expectations. I've seen it in my own life as I think about the way I benefited from my small church nurturing opportunities for worship leadership when I was a teen, even though I was inexperienced and awkward. But that openness and experience was a big factor in my getting involved in a college fellowship and being active in future ministry.

It doesn't have to be limited to music or speaking eloquence, but I hope that in the future I can be more receptive to the gifts that people offer for use in the community. More aware of keeping an open heart to what Jesus might be speaking to me in something that isn't done the way I might want to do it. Maybe it will better build up others as well.

-- El Padre

*E-mail sent from the Ludwig's -November 17, 2018*

Dear United Presbyterian Church Clinton,  
Looking forward to seeing some of you!  
We want to thank you for your continued gifts of time, energy, finances, prayer, and love for the people and work we are involved in here in Niger.

Thank you for your continued support,

Michael, Rachel, Adeline, Simeon, Zach and Isaac  
Ludwig (and Hassan too)

blog: <http://outofthedustandus.blogspot.com/>  
latest PCUSA mission newsletter: Spiritual Business



*Isaac's early abacus learning*



*Kids summer painting from Vivaldi's 4 seasons in school*



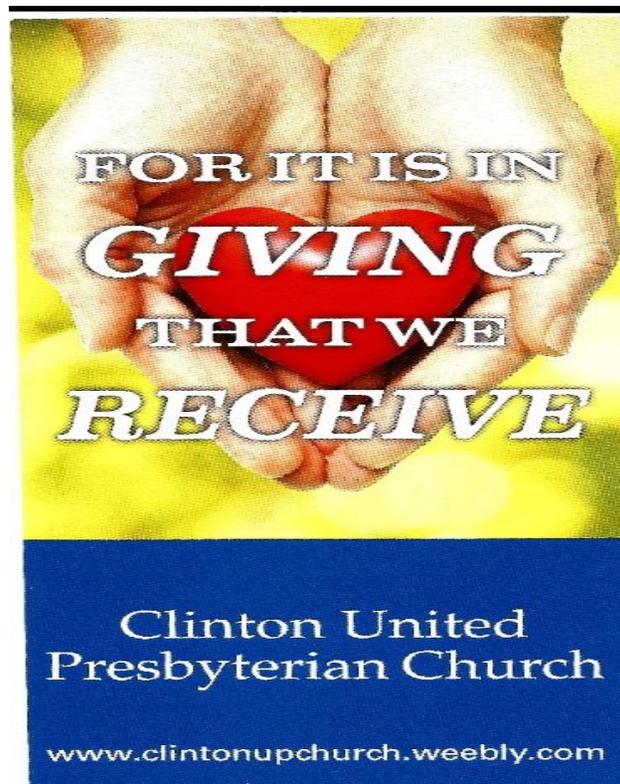
*Happy Halloween  
from Robin Hood,  
Batman, Wonder  
Woman and a  
pumpkin*

## Community Involvement

**The Deacon's Giving Campaign:** If you know someone that needs a visit or a meal taken to them, we can help with that, please contact Pastor Laura or Judy Heck. Our job is to serve our congregation and community in helpful ways.

**Faith In Action** We are still here for our seniors for Dr. appointments, etc... we are in need of drivers. If you have a few hours a month, please consider driving for this cause. Contact Judy Heck for more information (724) 899-3159.

**WAFP** Thank you for all the egg carton donations. As of now, they do not need any more.



The Finance Team at Clinton UP Church has initiated our Online Giving Program. If you would prefer to make payments online, rather than cash or check, please check out the Clinton UP Church website, or scan the QR code.

There are five categories to choose from when making an online donation;  
**General, Building, Mission, Per Capita, and Education Loan Fund** (for repayments on loans).

*You can also set up reoccurring payments, just follow the instructions on the webpage!*  
**Thank you for your financial support to Clinton UP Church!**

**WAYS TO SUPPORT**  
**Clinton United Presbyterian Church**

1. Place cash or check in the offering plate
2. Use your bank's online bill pay system
3. Use the electronic funds transfer from your savings or checking account or use a debit/credit card on our website or scan the QR code below.
4. Make a gift of stock or other appreciated securities. And, remember the church in your will and estate plans. Contact the church office for more information on these types of gifts.

Please feel free to place this card in the offering plate to signify your financial support of the mission of the church.



Electronic giving services powered by Presbyterian Foundation

[www.clintonupchurch.weebly.com](http://www.clintonupchurch.weebly.com)  
(724) 695-7993

## Church Directory

The Reverend Laura E. Strauss  
25 Wilson Road, Clinton, PA 15026  
Church Phone: 724-695-7993 Church Fax:  
724-695-7097

Church e-mail: [clintupch@gmail.com](mailto:clintupch@gmail.com)  
Facebook: Clinton U.P. Church  
Website: [clintonupchurch.weebly.com](http://clintonupchurch.weebly.com)  
Twitter: @ClintonCh1797

Financial Asst.—Sophie Guzma  
Administrative Asst. — Laura Burns  
Choir Director—Cindy Macek  
Organist—Erma Wilson, Treasurer— Elder Mark Elek  
Church Sexton—Leah Clydesdale

### Session

Mark McConnell, Clerk of Session  
Mark McConnell, Jennifer Rossman, Joe Miller---2018  
Amanda Wade, Christina Nicastro- 2019  
Mark Elek, Amanda Collins, Scott Hilpert--2020

### Deacons

Marsha Beck, Barb Cook---2018  
June Miller, Megan Kopko—2019  
Beverly Hilpert, Bill Marburger--2020

### Trustees

Dennis Macek---2018 Walter (Yum) Groom---2019  
Dale Huemmrich---2020 Rich McConnell – 2021  
Dan Heck --2022

### Auditors

Lorrie Leonard---2018 Dakota Lamb- 2019  
Heather Campbell 2020

### Sunday School

Superintendent—Carol Elek  
Asst. Superintendent—June Miller  
Secretary/Treasurer—Maxine Wilson,  
Cradle Roll—Amber Hilpert

### Cemetery Board

Lawrence Wilson, Jr.---2018 Devin Messner---2019  
Bill Marburger---2020 Dennis Macek-2021 Rick Lamb-  
-2022

### Nominating Team

Rachel Ayers, Judy Heck, Leah Clydesdale

### Finance Team

Ethan Strauss, Thomas McCullough,  
Lynne Hamil, Elder Mark Elek, Elder Scott