



**PORTAGE
LAKE
UNITED
CHURCH**

PLUC

United Church of Christ & Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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December 2023

Consistory Highlights

Submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager

Discussion of Reports:

Finance Committee: Consistory thanked Rob Middlemis-Brown for agreeing to serve as the Consistory representative to the Finance Committee.

Angel Mission: Elder S. Middlemis-Brown gave a verbal report to Consistory. Angel Mission continues to be very busy with winter wear. They are especially looking for snowpants and mittens. They are working with the schools to identify students needing winter wear. “Giving Tuesday” is underway. Elder Middlemis-Brown informed Consistory how to make a donation. She asked Office Manager Smock to make sure this gets in the announcements. Angel Tree is also beginning. Lois Jambekar will be bringing information to PLUC about children’s gift requests.

Building and Grounds: Elder G. Campbell has been working on the review of the use of the PLUC building for the last year. He asked Pastor Peter and Office Manager Smock to develop a list of groups/people

using the building and an estimate of how many people attend each use.

Pastor’s Report:

Pastor Peter reported that he continues to provide Congregational Care.

Pastor Peter reported that they have hired someone at Dollar Bay schools, who is moving into the area to serve as the maintenance person. It is expected that the person will begin his job in January so Pastor Peter should be returning to his regular hours after the holidays.

Old Business

Easement: Pastor Peter spoke with a representative from the company doing the easement and learned that the changes in the easement are being done to bring them into compliance. Also, even though we will receive a payment for allowing the company to use a herbicide, they, by company policy, do not use herbicides inside city limits. This is just a “boilerplate” part of their contracts. Consistory accepted the proposal, with the amendment that authorized Pastor Peter to deal with the paperwork.

Membership: Will and Lydia Lytle have been removed from membership as they have moved out of the area. Mary and Al Eckhart have been added to membership this year. Gavia Lytle is no longer listed as

a child of a member as her parents have left the area. Amos Norland has been moved from “Child of Members” to “Friend” as he is now 18 years old. Consistory approved the changes in the Membership List. Members remain at 41. Pastor Peter did ask Consistory to add anyone who has been attending church regularly who is not a member and is not listed as a friend.

Building Use Policy: Elder G Campbell has been working on the yearly review of church use. He has asked for help from Pastor Peter and Office Manager Smock in developing a list of groups who have used the church in the last year and how many people attend their group on average.

New Business

Advent/Christmas Eve Service: As the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve fall on the same day this year, a discussion was held regarding the best way to worship on that day. It was decided to not have a morning Advent service, but only have a Christmas Eve service in the early evening.

Poinsettias: Since we will not have service on the morning of December 24th, we will have poinsettias on December 17th. This will allow more people to be here and may lead to more poinsettias decorating the sanctuary.

Children’s Church: Olivia Byykkonen has been approached about leading Children’s Church. She has agreed to do so several times a month. Consistory approved an offer to Olivia Byykkonen to lead Children’s Church with a payment of \$20.00 per session.

Signature for Church Accounts:

Treasurer Ed Lowther, Bobbie Dalquist, and Terry Monson (members of the Finance Committee) will continue as those who are authorized signatories of the PLUC Vanguard Account, Angel Mission Account, and Bank Accounts.

Audit Committee: Pastor Peter will ask Jim Northey if he will conduct the audit of the 2023 PLUC accounts.

PLUC will again collect “Holiday Bucks” to provide ham and turkeys to Angel Mission.

Financial Report


Received in November

Pledge	\$2814.00
Unpledged	\$ 1,326.92
Loose Plate	\$65.00
Building Use	\$970.00

Christmas and Christmas Eve

This year the calendar presents a little bit of a challenge. The last Sunday of Advent falls on Christmas Eve. Consistory discussed services for Christmas Eve and a decision was made to not have a Sunday morning service. Members and friends will be encouraged to join other congregations who may be having service that morning. The PLUC Christmas Eve service will be at 5:30 pm. After the service Bobbie Dalquist will be hosting a short fellowship time of punch and cookies. Please bring ½ dozen cookies to share.

Christmas Eve Service



December 24, 2021
5:30 pm

In Other News

Mark Your Calendar

**“Greening” of the Church
Sunday, December 3, 2023
Immediately following worship**

**Please join us for good fun while we
decorate the church for the season.**



Christmas Poinsettias

We will again decorate the sanctuary with poinsettias for Christmas. Please sign up by Sunday, December 10th and indicate a special wish or dedication that will be printed in the bulletin. The cost is \$23.00. Please indicate what the check or cash (in an envelope) is for and drop it in the offering basket or put it on Beth's desk. Poinsettias will decorate the church on December 17th and can be taken home (or donated to a member or friend who is unable to attend service) after Worship. If you would like, you may leave your poinsettia at the church and take it home after the Christmas Eve service.

Christmas Joy/Fund

submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager

PLUC will be taking our “official” Christmas Joy/Fund offering on December 17th but gifts may be given at any time during December.

The following is information taken from the PC(USA) website.

The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

*\$1.1 million in gifts from 2022
are being used to provide critical financial
support and grants for current and retired
Presbyterian church workers in their times
of need*

*272 individuals helped
assisted retired church workers and
surviving spouses*

*223 recipients
Could afford to stay in their homes, assisted
living, or long-term care*

*621 Emergency Assistant Grants
helped people facing economic hardship*

As always, Christmas Joy/Fund gifts will be divided equally between the UCC and Presbyterian (USA) denominations. Thank you for your thoughtful gifts.

2024 Stewardship Drive

The 2024 PLUC Stewardship Drive is almost over. Members and friends of PLUC have, as always, been generous in their support of the church and its mission. However, we are still about \$7,000.00 short of the amount that the Finance Committee budgeted for 2024. If you would still like to make a pledge, please contact Beth (who is also the Financial Secretary along with being the Office Manager). The Finance Committee will use the information regarding pledges for 2024 to finalize the 2024 budget which will be presented to the congregation at the February Congregational Meeting.

To All Fellowship Guild Members

submitted by Lou Ellyn Helman

You are invited to a Fellowship Guild meeting at my home on December 18 at 11:30. (Notice the meeting date has been changed from Dec. 11 to Dec. 18.) This is a salad potluck luncheon, so please bring your favorite salad to share.

In addition to sharing a good meal, we will be putting together Christmas baskets for our friends and members who are in various assisted living situations. Please bring cookies, fruit, candy, and nuts to be used to make these baskets.

My address is 41899 Half Moon Beach, Chassell. Drive through Chassell and after passing the school, take the first left. At the tee, take a right. My home is a brown log cabin back in the woods, about the 12th on the lakeside. There is a circular driveway, so enter at the first drive, leave passengers off at the door to the house, and continue on, parking as close to the right side of the drive as possible. The wooden walkway might be slippery, so please be careful.

Looking forward to seeing everyone!!!!

Lou

P. S. Please call me at 523-4871 if you have any questions.

Editor's note: There are two articles about Angel Mission this month, mainly because I missed Bobbie's article last month. But there is so much great information to share, I decided to put both articles in the newsletter this month.

All Full Up at Angel Mission -

submitted by Bobbie Dalquist

Last winter - February maybe - I was asked to audit the 2022 Angel Mission financial records. I had lots of questions and one thing led to another, which led to me becoming treasurer of Angel Mission. The treasurer is a board member and I had much to learn.

More exciting than the ins and outs of non-profit accounting, I am learning about the people that make things happen at Angel Mission. Sherry Middlemis-Brown is the president and was also handling the duties of the secretary. Jill Hodges was the treasurer, and when I took over, she graciously accepted the position of secretary. As treasurer, she had been writing thank you notes to donors. She took that part of the job with her.

Board members Jim Northey and Paul Touriniemi lend their expertise and time to maintenance projects at the storefront. The current project is getting work done on the pantry with the goal of making it a licensed pantry. That will allow access to more food sources.

Koni Turunen was on the board until recently. She was instrumental in applying for grants. Sherry Middlemis-Brown and Paul and Renee Touriniemi have stepped in to temporarily fill that role, but we are on

the lookout for a new board member to handle grant applications. Talk to Sherry if you can help out.

The store is staffed by volunteers Terry LaBonte, Sharon Grieger and Mike Quello who are all there almost every day. Lois Jambekar and Barb Brookhouse spend time there every week too. Barb says she loves working at the store. Lois took on the job of filling the backpacks that were distributed to area students at the end of August. She said she learned a lot and next year will know what tasks to hand off to other volunteers. Terry is in charge of a back room where clothes are sorted. She also retrieves the mail and does the bank deposit when I'm not able to drive up to the store. For all practical purposes, she is the store manager, but declined that job, so her title is volunteer coordinator. Sharon has a table in the store that she uses for sorting donations. Mike is everywhere. I had a bin of surplus hangers that I was carrying to my car. Terry asked Mike to carry it out for me. With a straight face, he replied, "I'm not here," and then took the bin from me. Marti Staresnick is in charge of the food pantry and is at the store on Wednesdays and Saturdays and during food deliveries. She's hoping to retire and find someone to train to take over the pantry. Again - talk to Sherry if you can help out. Gail Frank assists Marti in the pantry.

The atmosphere is light hearted and everyone is busy. I'm reminded of our recent trip to visit relatives in my grandmother's home town in Norway. I expected to meet four to six cousins and I met 23, while visiting an art gallery, five family farms and two churches. When we left my cousin's home, ready to move on to another town, I commented, "Now I can go home." She said, "You are all full up." I agreed. That's how I feel when I see all the work done by the volunteers at Angel

Mission. "All full up." And that's a very good thing.

Angel Mission

Submitted by Sherri Middlemis-Brown

Well, you would think that we could sigh in relief after #GivingTuesday, but alas, not yet! Thank you to all who participated in the Copper Shores CHF #GivingTuesday giving opportunity. We will not know how much was donated to Angel Mission until January.

Thanks to many generous individuals and businesses that make Coat the Copper Country, we have distributed about 800 coats and comparable numbers of snowpants, boots, etc. and continue to distribute more. The Houghton High School Student Council is holding a winter outerwear drive for Coat the Copper Country.

Angel Tree coordinators, Sharon King-Grieger and Renee Tuoriniemi, appreciate our church's effort to sponsor children for Christmas gifts. Thanks to Lois and Barb for their efforts in making this happen. We received a grant from Copper Shores Community Health Foundation for our food pantry. The food pantry feeds an average of 200 people a month. We expect to receive food through the TV6 Canathon also.

We assisted with an eviction, when the renter needed help to pay the final payment of what she owed. In nearly every assistance case, clients have paid back most of what was owed but need a little help to complete payment. These folks have pride and want to do for themselves, asking for assistance as a last resort.

Our volunteers gave about 500 hours over the last month. The store will close a week before Christmas, when the focus will be on Angel Tree.

Helping Hands

submitted by Beth Smock

Requests for Helping Hands vouchers significantly slowed down over the summer and early fall, with no requests in October.

However, during the week before Thanksgiving we did receive 8 requests for help with food and gas. The help we are able to provide through our Helping Hands program is greatly appreciated. Here are a couple of examples of my experience with the folks who come in looking for help.

A nice thing about no longer having to socially distance and wear a mask (though it probably is still a good idea), is that I get a lot of hugs.

One of the women who came in for assistance asked if she could pray with me. We went into the lounge (the sanctuary was being used at the time), and she shared a prayer with me. She then asked if I would like to pray, which I did. It was a comforting moment.

The day before Thanksgiving I received a call for a food voucher. When the people came in, I gave them the voucher to Jim's Foodmart and wished them a "Happy Thanksgiving." Their response was "It will be now." They then shared with me that they needed to go to another agency which they thought had helped them with their water bill. Evidently some lines got crossed because their water had been turned off that morning. Hopefully, they got it turned back on.

We have now given out more vouchers this year than last. I do not know if we will get another rush right before Christmas, but I hope sharing some of these stories help you see how much your gifts are appreciated.

Beth's Buzz

I can't believe it is time to write another yearly summary. Remember when your mom told you to wait 5 minutes and you thought that lasted forever. Those days are long gone.

This past year has been somewhat of a challenge, with my numerous health issues. I want to thank everyone who has been praying for me. I especially want to thank Consistory in working with me for the amount of time I needed to be away for medical tests and procedures.

Unfortunately, my medical issues continue but I am hoping that a referral to Marshfield Clinic, which has more advance medical testing equipment, will result in some answers and relief.

Actually, other than my health issues, this has been a pretty good year. A lot of positive things happening at PLUC, attendance is up, we have a Children's Church, we have more students attending worship. It continues to be an honor to serve as the Office Manager and Financial Secretary for PLUC. I am looking for even greater things in 2024.

Portage Lake United Church

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Church (USA)

1400 E. Houghton Ave., Houghton, MI
49931

Phone: (906) 482-5224

E-mail: office@pluc.org

Website: www.pluc.org

Pastor: Rev. Peter Norland

Office Manager: Beth Smock

General Office Hours:

8:30 AM – 11:00 AM – Mon.- Tues, Thurs-
Fri

Pastor Office Hours:

9:30 AM - 12:00 Noon or by appointment

**Portage Lake United Church
1400 E. Houghton Ave.
Houghton, MI 49931**

Return Service Requested

December Volunteer Schedule				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Greeter</u>	<u>Reader</u>	<u>Prayer Writer</u>	<u>Coffee Fellowship</u>
12/03	Jan	Christina	Lois	Louisa
12/10	Nancy & Dianne	Lou Ellyn	Greg	Biruta
12/17	Greg & Ann	Nancy	Barb	Lois J., Lois B., Mary
12/25	No morning service		Bobbie Dalquist will host	Christmas Eve reception
12/31	Judy	Dianne	Terry	Jon & Brian