



**PORTAGE  
LAKE  
UNITED  
CHURCH**

***PLUC***

***United Church of Christ & Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)***  
**1400 E. Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931-1208**  
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January 2024

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### **Consistory Highlights**

*Submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager*

#### **Discussion of Reports:**

**Financial Reports:** The General Fund carries over every year so it is possible to take in more than is spent and still have a negative General Fund account

**Angel Mission:** During November 273 requests for assistance with food were received. The Angel Tree provided Christmas gifts for 216 children, the most Angel Mission has sponsored. Angel Mission participated in the Giving Tuesday event at the Mall and on the radio. Results from Giving Tuesday are not yet known. They received a small grant to help with the updating of the Food Pantry. Elder S. Middlemis-Brown spoke with the representative from the Presbytery who was “flabbergasted” by how much Angel Mission is accomplishing. She will strongly recommend that the Presbytery continue funding of the Angel Mission. Elder Middlemis-Brown has been asked to attend the Presbytery meeting at Presbytery Point next year. Elder G. Campbell suggested making a video to share.

**Pastor:** Pastor Peter continues to work on Advent services. He has been meeting with

Office Manager Smock on Wednesday afternoons since he began the temporary job at Dollar Bay Schools. As this job will end at the first of the year, office and Pastor hours will return to the previous morning hours. Pastor Peter reported that he has spoken with Judy Albee about improving pastoral care at The Bluffs. He also reported that someone in the congregation suggested a study of Deitrich Bonhoefer next year.

#### **Old Business:**

**Membership List:** Lydia and Will Lytle have been removed as they no longer live in the area. We have welcomed Mary and Al Eckhart so our membership remains the same. Consistory approved the updated membership list. A suggestion was made to look at the friends list to see if anyone should be approached about becoming a member. Pastor Peter will explore offering a membership class.

**Easement:** The Finance Committee recommended that the monies from the Easement project be put in our Vanguard account for now. Possibly use some of these funds to offset any deficit we have at the end of the year.

**New Business:**

**Kitchen Sink Water Heater:** Estimates were received on the cost of getting the water heater under the kitchen sink so that the water would heat up at a reasonable rate. The proposed estimate was \$650.00. This decision was tabled. An estimate of \$300.00 was received to fix the kitchen sink faucet and lines. This repair has been approved by Consistory.

**Nominating Committee and Clerk:** Elder B. Brookhouse informed Consistory that Al Eckhart has agreed to serve on the Consistory for a three year term starting in 2024. Also, Terry Monson would like to step down as the Clerk but will serve on Consistory beginning in 2024. Efforts will be made to find a new Clerk.

**Consistory Meeting Time:** The Consistory meeting time was discussed and it was decided that Consistory will meet on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:00 pm. The January meeting will be on January 16th.

**ANNOUNCING**

Congregation/Corporation Meeting

Sunday, February 11, 2024  
Immediately following worship  
(this meeting will be held on both In-person  
and over ZOOM)



**Financial Report**

<u>Received in December (thru 12/24)</u>	
Pledge	\$3468.00
Unpledged	\$1396.92
Loose Plate	\$125.00
Building Use	\$220.00

**In Other News**

**Planning Ahead - Next Year's  
Holiday Decorations Rummage  
Sale**

*Submitted by Bobbie Dalquist*

As you pack up your Christmas decorations this year, please consider setting aside ornaments you no longer use in a box labeled *PLUC Holiday Decorations Rummage Sale* or something shorter like *PLUC Christmas - Donate*. In October we'll be asking for your donations.

This year's sale ended up netting \$845 with \$149 of that given to Angel Mission. As usual, it was a fun and relatively easy fundraiser. Thank you to everyone who helped with setting it up, or helped by purchasing decorations.

**Fellowship Guild Celebrates  
Without Snow**

*Submitted by Judy Albee*

There were no tire tracks to follow as we drove on the Half Moon Beach Road with our ultimate destination, Lou Ellyn Helman's home. Although this December 18th there was no sign of snow, upon entering her home there was no doubt that the Christmas season was here. The mild temperatures were also a comfort.

The 8 – 10 members who were able to attend brought salads or a dessert to go with the tomato basil soup our hostess prepared. After the delicious potluck luncheon, Biruta Lowther shared a timely message from a book written by Jane Goodall, The Book of Hope. She also read a church bulletin entry from past years attributed to Karen Hubbard's effort. We found the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Nun's Prayer amusing and were able to relate to its message, even today.

After the tasty repast, pleasant conversation and message to ponder, we were motivated to get to our task at hand. Fellowship Guild members had contributed assorted bakery, fruit and snacks. The attendees layered over a dozen holiday plates or baskets with the donations for our dedicated staff and shut-in friends. Cards were included in the cellophane wrapped treats before individual deliveries.

We weren't able to impact the weather this holiday season, but we trust that our efforts show the recipients we care about their spirits. We hope to plan more personal visits in the future.

### Angel Mission

*Submitted by Sheri Middlemis-Brown*

We distributed two gifts wanted and two gifts needed to each of 230 children registered for Angel Tree this Christmas. Nearly all children were sponsored by individuals like you, organizations, and businesses.

A big thank you to Lois and Barb for organizing and transporting items from church members. Our Angel Tree coordinators estimated that each child received an average of \$150 value in gifts. I estimated that the total value of what was distributed to the children was about \$34,500!

The food pantry was once again busy and was able to distribute hams donated through the church. Marti, our food pantry manager, was a blur of activity meeting the needs of the community. Marti tallied that in this shortened month, she put together 69 packages (households) that fed 209 people (125 adults and 84 children) with two emergency packs for families needing help outside of our usual criteria.

The store and food pantry remained closed from December 20-January 2. The volunteers took a much-deserved break to enjoy friends and family.

The board will prepare the Annual Meeting, planned for February 20 in Calumet. We would like to have a church representative to attend and return to the church with impressions of how we are doing.

**Very important addendum:** Copper Country Angel Mission distributed, with the help of many, many individuals, organizations, and businesses, the following retail values in 2023:

Backpack Program **\$13,526.08** of backpacks and school supplies.

Coat the Copper Country **\$95,299.89** of jackets/coats, snow pants, boots, hats, mitts/gloves, and scarves.

Angel Tree **\$35,550.00** of gifts to 237 children.

Food Pantry **\$116,379.90** of food to 1638 people.

The total value of the four programs is **\$260,535.87**. I did not include Utility/Eviction assistance or the value of the free store redistribution of clothing and household goods. That is an amazing value to the community! Thank you to all of our supporters.

## **Holiday Bucks Another Success**

*Submitted by Ann Campbell*

The members and friends of PLUC, along with members of the MTU Concert Choir and other community members donated \$155.00 in Holiday Bucks from Tadych's Market--along with a \$20.00 cash contribution.

Barb Brookhouse and Ann Campbell went shopping for the Angel Mission Food Pantry on Dec. 13 and were able to use those donations to purchase 10 hams of various sizes. The Tadych's staff was very helpful and seemed happy that the Holiday Bucks were being used for such a good purpose.

Barb took the hams to the Angel Mission immediately after purchase and we know that they will be appreciated by the families who receive them.

## **Angel Mission Treasures**

*Submitted by Bobbie Dalquist*

Over the years, as donations come into Angel Mission, the policy has been to use store floor space for clothes and necessary household items. Sometimes, particularly when the remains of estates have been donated, there are items that have a fair amount of value that don't fall in the "necessities" category. They have been stored in an upstairs room. I went through several bins last spring and brought many items to our church rummage sale to sell to support Angel Mission. I plan to continue to do that this winter, sorting into three categories: 1. Ebayable 2. Save for Rummage Sale 3. Give it away now. If anyone loves to dig through bins looking for potential treasures, let me know and we can find a couple hours that works for both of us to work on this project.

## **Helping Hands**

*Submitted by Beth Smock*

First, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the PLUC Helping Hands fund. Your donations helped us meet a tremendous need in Houghton County.

In 2023 we gave out 23 food vouchers (17 in 2022) and 29 gas vouchers (31 in 2022) for a total of 52 \$50.00 vouchers (\$2,600.00). This does not mean we spent this entire amount especially since the price of gas went down at the end of the year so people were not using the entire \$50.00 voucher.

Unfortunately, 52 vouchers did not meet all of the requests for assistance we received. We do limit vouchers to two per year per household, with 3 months between requests. Therefore, we had requests from people who were no longer eligible. (I may see a lot of them in January which is what happened at the beginning of 2023). We also had requests for help with things we are not able to cover. I do refer people to other agencies, such as Angel Mission and the Trinity Episcopal Church food pantry.

Helping Hands is a part of my job that gives me a lot of pleasure. Of course, I feel bad when I have to turn someone down, but then I get a lot of hugs from people I am able to help. One woman asked me to pray with her after receiving her voucher. We went into the lounge (there was a group in the Fellowship Hall with the curtain open) and held hands and prayed. The day before Thanksgiving a couple came in for a food voucher. As I gave it them, I wished the Happy Thanksgiving. Their response "It will be now." After they left the church they were going to another agency because their water had been shut off that morning.

While I pray that things will be better for people in 2024, I know that with your help we will be able to continue to help people such as these.

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**Houghton, MI 49931**

**Return Service Requested**

<b>January Volunteer Schedule</b>				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Greeter</u>	<u>Reader</u>	<u>Prayer Writer</u>	<u>Coffee Fellowship</u>
01/07	Jon & Brian	Beth	Carl	Biruta, Judy
01/14	Barb & Jon	Lois J.	TBD	Lois & Mary
01/21	Lois J.	Greg	Barb	Barb & Jon
01/28	Beth	Lou Ellyn	Lois J.	Ann

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Website: [www.pluc.org](http://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

