



**PORTAGE
LAKE
UNITED
CHURCH**

PLUC

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

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March 2024

Consistory Highlights

Pastor's Report: The Norland's will be welcoming a Rotary student from Thailand to their home soon. Pastor Peter said he is excited about the work he is doing with Pastor Sarah from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church for Lent. Those attending the weekly soup and bread and worship service will be exploring the "Fruits of the Spirit" together. Ann Campbell assisted with communion in February and will assist again in March.

Office Manager: Three more requests for Helping Hands assistance have been received since the Office Manager report was written three days before the meeting. This brings the total number of requests to 14 for the first 1 ½ months of 2024.

Angel Mission: Elder S. Middlemis-Brown reported that Angel Mission assisted 200 people with food in January (a shorter month as the Mission was closed for the holidays). Also 316 volunteer hours were recorded in January. Angel Mission received \$39,000 from Giving Tuesday. They also received \$2,500.00 from the Portage Health Auxiliary to be

used toward winter outerwear. The 2nd Annual Open Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 20, 2024.

Old Business

Clerk of Session and Denomination

Representatives: A description of the Clerk of Session duties provided by retiring Clerk Terry Monson was passed out. Office Manager Smock will put information about this position in the Weekly email and March newsletter as we look for someone to step forward for this important leadership position. The Middlemis-Browns will be serving as the Presbytery denominational representatives. We are still looking for someone to serve as the UCC representative.

Congregational Meeting: People liked the budget charts developed by Elder R. Middlemis-Brown and found them helpful in understanding the budget.

Leave Policy: The Leave Policy was refined and will be approved at the next Consistory meeting.

Building and Grounds: Building and Grounds would like to know how long each

group has been using our building and when was the last time they were approved.

New Business:

Special Music: Consistory approved using vonBatchelder funds to pay for special music. \$240.00 was approved for 2023 with \$300.00 approved for 2024 (musicians for 5 Sundays at \$60.00 each).

Congregation/Corporation Spring Meeting Highlights

Pastor's Report: Pastor Peter expressed his gratitude to the congregation for their support and prayers over the last year. He also thanked Susie Byykkonen for the music she provides each week plus those who have provided special music, Office Manager Beth Smock for keeping the office running, and Fellowship Guild (“the heart of the congregation”) for all that they did over 2023, plus the members of Consistory for their work. Pastor Peter spoke about some of the things that make PLUC a unique congregation including our welcoming of all people, our taking the Bible seriously if not always literally, and our heart for justice steeped in the teachings of Jesus. Pastor Peter will be spending the next 12 months working with the congregation to encourage our growth as individuals and as a church.

Denominational Representatives: Pastor Peter shared information about the role of our Denominational Representatives and asked that anyone who might be interested in filling these positions speak to Pastor Peter or a member of Consistory.

Election of Elders: The Nominating Committee chair Barb Brookhouse informed the congregation that the committee nominates Terry Monson and Al Eckhart as the Consistory class of 2026. There were no other nominations from the

Congregation. The Elder class of 2026 was approved.

Election of Financial Officers: The Nominating Committee put forward Edward Lowther as the Church Treasurer and Beth Smock as the Financial Secretary. There were no other nominations from the Congregation. Both were approved.

Pastor Terms of Call: The congregation approved the Terms of Call for Pastor Peter Norland.

2024 Budget: Rob Middlemis-Brown, Member of the Finance Committee, discussed the PLUC Budget presented for 2024. He presented a short slide presentation showing where our incomes from and where the monies are spent. Included in this presentation was a comparison between the income/expenses in 2023 and those expected in 2024. Due to the fact that pledges were down slightly for 2024 and expenses were slightly increased, PLUC will be operating with a deficit budget for 2024. He did inform the congregation that a Capital Improvement fund has been started using the monies received from the easement payment as the original investment in this fund. The 2024 budget was approved.

Dianne Sprague to recommend that the Budget and Building and Grounds Committees work together to get an estimate on the worth of the PLUC infrastructure (building, property, etc.)

2023 Annual Report: The 2023 Annual Report was approved

Adjournment: Dianne Sprague moved (Barb Brookhouse second) to adjourn the Meeting of the Congregation. Approved.

**The Corporation Meeting Convened
Following the Meeting of the
Congregation**

Open the Meeting: Clerk Pro Tem Ann Campbell opened the meeting of the PLUC Corporation

Approve the business of the Congregation meeting: The business of the Congregation Meeting was approved.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned with Pastor Peter closing with prayer.

Financial Report

Received in January and February

Pledge	\$12,352.50
Unpledged	\$1203.86
Loose Plate	\$00.00
Roof	\$60.00

A Fruitful Spirit

Join us these Lenten Wednesdays as we explore the theme of how the Spirit resources us for daily life in an embodied way. We will follow the liturgy of Unfailing Light, with the reading and hymn of the day changing each week. Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, there is a place for you in this Lenten community!

We will gather Wednesday evenings this Lent at Good Shepherd Lutheran and Portage Lake United Churches. 5:30 p.m. soup; 6 - 6:40 p.m. Worship.

Date & Location
2/28 GSLC
3/6 PLUC
3/13 PLUC
3/20 GSLC

PLUC folks are providing bread and soup when we gather here. There is a sign up sheet on the table in the lounge for anyone who would

like to provide soup and/or bread on 03/06 and/or 03/13.

The Meaning of Lent

Lent is the forty day period (we don't count Sundays—every Sunday is a little Easter!) beginning with Ash Wednesday and ending with the Saturday before Easter Sunday. Long ago, Pope Gregory I described Lent as “the spiritual tithing of the year.” This is a season in which we remember Christ's forty day fast, temptation in the desert, and the forty hours he spent in the tomb before rising Easter morning.

In the preceding liturgical season, from Epiphany to Transfiguration, we were invited to contemplate the identity of Jesus as the Christ and our call to follow. The focus of Lent is on the way in which Jesus chooses to embody this identity as Christ in the world, and so we also consider the shape of our lives as we seek to embody Christ's ways. In short, Lent is about spiritual renewal in the pattern of Christ. When we incorporate aspects of the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we cultivate our attentiveness to the work of God's Spirit in our lives. Such practices change us by changing our daily routines: the addition of prayer and giving or the subtraction of fasting provide real, embodied opportunities to (re)turn to God and re-center our lives in the way of Christ.

Each Lent we get a clean start to seek the Spirit and to change our minds and our ways. From the reminder of our frailty and mortality at the outset on Ash Wednesday, throughout the 40 days, we renew our hope and place our trust in the God to whom Jesus points. And we will not be disappointed, for when the forty days come to an end, we will once again sing *Alleluia!* to the God of overflowing grace who raised Jesus from the dead and promises to incorporate us in glorious resurrection life.

Easter Hyacinths

Easter hyacinths will be available again this year to help brighten our sanctuary for Easter Sunday. Flowers will be \$25.00 this year. Orders will be due by Sunday, March 10th.

Breakfast Together Easter Morning

We will once again enjoy a delicious Easter morning breakfast prior to our Easter service on March 31, 2024 at 9:30 am. We hope everyone can join us for great food and fellowship.

A sign-up sheet will be available on the table in the lounge on which you can indicate what you would like to bring to the breakfast.

Fellowship Guild Gathers for Purposeful Planning and Lunch

Submitted by Judy Albee

Some of the individuals who pride themselves in supporting PLUC and various needs such as social, financial and organizational activities, gathered last month. Eleven of us were able to meet face to face and address these areas on Monday, February 12th in the limited space, private dining room at The Bluffs.

We initially gathered at 11:30 to fill 8 Valentine bags with miscellaneous items for our members and friends we don't see on a regular basis. Unlike the holiday baskets they received in December, these were composed of personal items as well as snacks and sweets. Four residents joined us or stopped by. We enjoyed brief conversations, hugs and handshakes.

Topics such as updating forty year old by-laws and the Easter breakfast were also discussed. Since our treasurer was not in attendance, we will vote on the budget and

by-laws update at a later time. We had a preliminary meeting to review the by-laws in late February and the Easter breakfast is scheduled for 9:30 on Sunday, March 31st. More information will follow.

As Valentine's Day was just two days away, timely readings were shared by Lois Jambekar and Judy Albee. Although The Bluffs' residents took 'mid-winter cheer' bags with them, Biruta Lowther and Judy Albee delivered the remaining four to the facilities or homes of the others.

Although dates have yet to be announced for future events/projects, we anticipate doing some cleaning and refurbishing at PLUC this spring. 'Many hands make light work/and play'. We also look forward to gathering on the outside patio at The Bluffs, weather permitting, when more of our members and friends can attend.

Clerk of Session and Wisconsin UCC Representative

We currently have two important volunteer positions to fill. We have mentioned these in the past but have not really explained what they do. Below is more information for those who might have an interest in either of these positions.

Clerk of Session

1. Presides over the corporation meeting when the congregation meets in November and February,
2. Completes PCUSA and UCC statistical surveys in January or February.
3. Travels to Marquette usually once a year for a Presbytery review of church records (minutes of church meetings and updates to the church registry).
4. Prepares the paperwork that gives Peter the Terms of Call that are then sent to the Presbytery.

5. Periodically prepares the Clerk's Report for Consistory meetings.

Wisconsin UCC Representative

The Wisconsin UCC meets at least twice a year to discuss important information from the Conference. The PLUC representative can either travel down to Wisconsin (meeting locations differ each meeting time) or attend over ZOOM. Our representative will share what is happening at PLUC and bring back to us information from other churches.

We thank Terry Monson who has served as the PLUC Clerk of Session for several years. While he has stepped back from that role, he will remain active as he begins a three year term as an elder in June.

We also thank Sherry and Rob Middlemis-Brown who have accepted the position of Presbytery Representative for 2024. They have recently attended the Presbytery meeting in February and their report is below. This gives an idea for what kind of information is shared during these meetings.

<p>Key Points from the February 24, 2024 Presbytery Meeting</p>
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Submitted by Sherry Middlemis-Brown

Sixty-two commissioners, pastors, and presbytery officials participated in the meeting via Zoom. Several interesting items were discussed, including the budget, a grant to train lay pastors/CREs, a mission opportunity, committee vacancies, and Presbyterian Point Camp.

- Matt Aragon of the Synod of the Covenant spoke about a large grant received to assist with training lay preachers. Nominations for

applicants should be sent by April 5. The Presbytery should be able to guide those applicants to the proper office. The training will be at a conference in Alma, June 6-10. Cost is \$250 for the individual and \$1000 for the sponsoring church with the grant covering the rest of the cost.

- The mission budget is being balanced for 2024, as opposed to the deficit in 2023. Campus ministries in Bay De Noc and Northern were reduced, but they had not used all of their 2023 budget. Copper Country Angel Mission received its full amount, as did Presbyterian Point.
- The Missions Committee and Presbytery has begun the 366 Campaign to return mission spending to its previous levels. Also called, “The 2024 Leap Year Challenge” it asks that each parishioner give \$1 per day or \$366 to Presbytery directly for covering Presbytery mission. Our church does not make significant contributions to Presbytery mission, but our local mission benefits greatly from the Presbytery’s spending. You can write your check to Presbytery of Mackinac, memo line: 2024 Leap Year Challenge and submit it through the church. All of it will go to mission.
- There are vacancies on Presbytery Standing Committees. If you are interested in serving or know someone with a talent to share, the Presbytery invites you to step up.

Rev. Jim Porter announced that camp registration is open for Presbyterian Point (see presbyterianpoint.org). They are also looking for staff and volunteers, volunteers being welcome for as little as a few days. Family Camp, intergenerational camp, is

June 14-18 and costs \$50/person. First Presbyterian Grand Haven offers camp scholarships from a donor who offers [youth scholarships](#) to attend faith formation camps. Contact Presbyterian Point or check online. No camper will be excluded because of financial need.

Copper Country Angel Mission

Submitted by Sherri Middlemis-Brown

On Tuesday evening, February 20, CCAM held its corporate annual meeting. We reported on how things went in 2023 and on our hope for 2024. We invited many of our stakeholders, various organizations, businesses, and individuals. The meeting was attended by several of our church members, representatives from the Keweenaw Community Foundation, and volunteers, as well as board members.

Sherry Middlemis-Brown reported on how CCAM leverages the monetary donations. In each program area, she researched the value of what CCAM has distributed.

Program	Value distributed	Program donation or grant used	Cost to CCAM Budget
Food Pantry	\$116,400	\$4,822	\$2,288
Backpack program	\$13,500	\$1,286	\$73
Coat the Copper Country	\$89,000	\$5,545	\$2,295
Angel Tree	\$35,500	\$2,066	\$1,095
Utility/rent/gas, etc.	\$2,325	\$2,325	\$0
Major Programs	\$252,705	\$15,769	\$5,751

Program specific donations, monetary and in-kind, cover the bulk of program costs. Thus, while contribution from our general fund is relatively small, the impact of each program is huge. This estimate does not even consider the free store, where several

30-gallon bags of clothing and household donations arrive daily, and the same amount goes out the door with new owners. Of course, the free store and all programs are in the building with Presbytery covering most of the building mortgage. That is a huge gift!

Bobbie Dalquist reported on our financial situation, which is solid. Lois Jambekar reviewed the School Backpack program. Barb Brookhouse offered a summary of her volunteer experiences in the free store. All the reports will be available in an end-of-year report available to all stakeholders.

We have a wonderful group of volunteers, many of whom are PLUC members. Our church has an amazing mission through CCAM, our church's Helping Hands program, and the many other organizations to which our members contribute.

Helping Hands

Submitted by Beth Smock

As Sherri mentioned in her article above, PLUC is blessed by those folks who contribute to our Helping Hands program. The beginning of 2024 has been difficult for many members of the Houghton/Keweenaw County communities. As of February 28th, we have given out 6 vouchers for food and 10 vouchers for gas. This compares to 4 food vouchers and 10 gas vouchers for the same time period last year, so we have gone up just a bit (we also have one more day in February this year).

The 16 \$50.00 vouchers total a potential of \$800.00 (this entire amount might not have actually been spent as people do not always use the entire \$50.00 from their voucher). We have received \$235.00 in donation for Helping Hands for the first two months of 2024. This does not mean that we are out of funds, as we have some carry over from 2023 and we do use some vonBatchelder funds to help cover these costs. But as you

can see, your donations to Helping Hands do help a lot. Thank you for your continued support of this mission.

It's Time to Share

In a world of disaster, hunger, and oppression

Millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity.

The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People - all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and hope.

PLUC will be taking our One Great Hour of Sharing on Sunday, March 10, 2024. As always, donations will be distributed equally to our two denominations, UCC and PC(USA)



Sunday, March 10th

Portage Lake United Church

United Church of Christ & Presbyterian 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

March Volunteer Schedule				
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<u>Date</u>	<u>Greeter</u>	<u>Reader</u>	<u>Prayer Writer</u>	<u>Coffee Fellowship</u>
03/03	Lou Ellyn	Beth	Lois	Biruta
03/10	Jon & Brian	Lois	Greg	Louisa & Judy
03/17	Barb & Jon	Lou Ellyn	Barb	Ann
03/24	Bobbie	Greg	Jim	TBD
03/31	Jan	Dianne	Terry	Easter

