



**PORTAGE  
LAKE  
UNITED  
CHURCH**

***PLUC***

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

**1400 E. Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931-1208**

**906.482.5224 • [office@pluc.org](mailto:office@pluc.org) • [www.pluc.org](http://www.pluc.org)**

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December 2024

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### **Consistory Highlights**

*Submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager*

#### **Discussion of Consent Agenda items:**

##### **Office Manager**

1. After hearing nothing regarding the letter from Superior National Bank about a possible \$7,000.00 check, Office Manager Smock contacted the bank. They said they did not know what this letter had been about. It appears that this was not a legitimate letter. As no information about the church or our financial accounts was given out, it does not appear as if anything further needs to be done.
2. Office Manager Smock will be leaving the office a little early on December 2, 2024 as she is having a minor medical procedure. She also will take December 18, 2024 off as her scheduled day of December 24, 2024 is a busy day at the church.
3. Angel Mission received a check for \$1000,00 from the Presbytery Women's group as this group has disbanded and has distributed their remaining funds. The check has been deposited into the Angel Mission account.

##### **Pastor**

Elder A. Campbell assisted with communion on November 3, 2024. Elder D. Sprague will assist Pastor Peter on December 1, 2024.

##### **Old Business:**

**Review of November meeting of the Congregation/Corporation:** Pastor Peter thanked Elder R. Middlemis-Brown for presenting the overview of the proposed 2025 budget.

**Personnel:** Elder A. Campbell shared a copy of the form that was completed by members of the Congregation during the last review of Pastor Peter. Elder S. Middlemis-Brown suggested that this kind of review take place every other year. However, it is still necessary to conduct personnel reviews every year. Discussion followed on the best way to do personnel reviews. After discussion, the possibility of having the review process begin with each employee (Pastor, Office Manager, Church Musician, Custodian) developing a list of goals for the year. Further discussion regarding personnel reviews will continue in January.

**Nominating Committee:** Elder S. Middlemis-Brown has agreed to serve as a

liaison with the Nominating Committee. The Committee has been working on finding two new members for Consistory and a Clerk. Beth Smock has agreed to serve on Consistory.

**Worship Audio via Hearing Aids and Headphones:** Major improvements have been made to the sanctuary sound system, yet many folks still have a difficult time hearing every word. Consistory is investing in a device that will allow each person to stream the audio directly to smartphones. This will allow for use of personal headphones, earbuds, or even bluetooth enabled hearing aids. The cost of this project is about \$700. A church member will match gifts made toward this system. Members of the congregation will be asked to make donations toward this effort to help all more clearly hear the word.

**Suggestion box:** Elder A. Campbell read the suggestions that have been placed in the new suggestion box since it was made available after the last Consistory meeting. Several interesting suggestions were made, including building improvements, ideas to improve the worship projection—both hardware and presentation, ways to help us remember memorial gifts, like the stained glass windows, and questions about Bible translations used in our worship services.

**New Business:**

**Upcoming meetings:** Consistory will not meet in December but will meet again on January 21, 2025. The Meeting of the Congregation/Corporation will be held on February 9, 2025.

**Greening of the Church:** Due to travel schedules over Thanksgiving, the Greening

of the Church has been rescheduled for Sunday, December 8, 2024.

**Audit Committee:** Elder R. Middlemis-Brown will serve on the Audit Committee.

**Check signing:** Consistory approved Ed Lowther, Bobbie Dalquist, and Terry Monson continue as those approved to sign checks from Superior National Bank, Portage Lake United Church and Angel Mission accounts, Vanguard and Keweenaw Community Foundation.

**Estate Planning Presentation:** Roger Helman has declined the invitation to make a presentation regarding Estate Planning. He did recommend that Attorney Traci Ward, who has recently established an estate planning practice in Houghton, as someone who might be interested in providing this presentation. After discussion Consistory decided to contact Attorney Ward to explore her interest.

**Re-imaging PLUC Clerk and Consistory:** Pastor Peter led a discussion about the future of the Clerk position and the Consistory. A lively discussion followed. Possible scenarios included holding Consistory meetings twice a month for a maximum of 1 hour each and having the Clerk position rotate yearly among the members of Consistory. This discussion will continue in January. maximum of 1 hour each and having the Clerk position rotate yearly among the members of Consistory. This discussion will continue in January.

## Meeting of the Congregation/ Corporation

*Submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager*

### Congregation Meeting

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor Peter thanked the congregation for providing a home for himself and his family, and a community that has a church to attend that is open to all followers of Jesus. Pastor Peter recognized the concerns of the people of the congregation but also the financial needs of the church.

**Nominating Committee:** Michelle Jarvie Eggart, Beth Smock, and Lou Ellyn Helman volunteered to serve on the nominating committee. These volunteers were gladly accepted. The Committee also work toward finding a Clerk for PLUC.

**Budget:** Rob Middlemis-Brown, a member of the Finance Committee, presented the proposed 2025 budget to the congregation. This proposal has been approved by the Consistory. The final budget will be presented for approval at the February Meeting of the Congregation after the completion of the stewardship drive. Rob shared the projected 2025 income (from all sources) of \$95,250.00 and the 2025 projected expenses of \$106,512.00 which showed a deficit of approximately \$11,000.00) The proposed 2025 budget does not reflect an increase in salaries. A question from the congregation about using COLA for raises was expressed.

### Corporation Meeting

The Corporation Meeting Convened  
Following the Meeting of the Congregation.

The congregation approved the business of  
the Congregation meeting:

## Financial Report

### Received in November

Pledge	\$4,022.50
Unpledged	\$ 1,371.92
Loose Plate	\$00.00

## Christmas Eve Service



December 24, 2024  
5:30 pm

## Christmas Eve Fellowship

Following our Christmas Eve Service, we will have a short fellowship time. It will be short as we know people need to get home or on to other Christmas events.

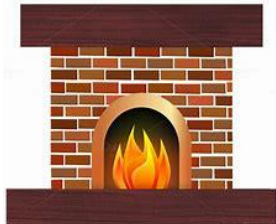
Punch will be provided, but we ask that those attending bring ½ dozen of your favorite Christmas cookies or bars. Any left over goodies will be used for the coffee time after Christmas Morning services.

Come and join us as we await the birth of our Savior.

Thanks to Bobbie Dalquist for hosting this fellowship time.

### **Advent By The Fireside**

We will again share soup and bread and an evening prayer with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church during Advent. Soup and Bread will begin at 5:30 pm with the Evening Prayer at 6:00 pm



Good Shepherd	December 4 <sup>th</sup>
PLUC	December 11 <sup>th</sup>
PLUC	December 18 <sup>th</sup>

### ***In Other News***

#### **Mark Your Calendar**

**“Greening” of the Church  
Sunday, December 8, 2024  
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 15th and indicate a special wish or dedication that will be printed in the bulletin. The cost is \$24.00. 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 22<sup>nd</sup> and Christmas Eve and can be taken home (or donated to a member or friend who is unable to attend service) after the Christmas Eve service or the following Sunday.

#### **Christmas Joy/Fund**

*submitted by Beth Smock, Office Manager*

PLUC will be taking our “official” Christmas Joy/Fund offering on December 15<sup>th</sup> but gifts may be given at any time during December.

The following is information taken from the UCC website.

***“And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them...” —Luke 2:9***

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!

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

## 2025 Stewardship Drive

The 2025 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 \$14,314.00 short of the amount that the Finance Committee budgeted for 2025. 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 2025 to finalize the 2025 budget which will be presented to the congregation at the February Congregational Meeting.

### **To All Fellowship Guild Members**

*Lou Ellyn Helman*

You are invited to a Fellowship Guild potluck lunch at my home on December 7th at 12:00

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

## Giving Tuesday

#GivingTuesday with Cooper Shores CHF is still open through December 3rd. This is a wonderful opportunity to donate to Copper Country Angel Mission and have it amplified with a match by Cooper Shores. Just go to [or find a link on the Angel Mission website, , and donate to Angel Mission and other charities.](#)

## Worship Audio via Hearing Aids and Headphones

We are still improving the sound reinforcement in the church. We've made major improvements. Yet, many folks still have a difficult time hearing every word. Consistory is investing in a device that will allow each person to stream the audio directly to your smartphone. This will allow you to use your own headphones, earbuds, or even bluetooth enabled hearing aids to aid your hearing. The cost of this project is about \$700. We have a donor who will match gifts made toward this system. Consider giving to help all of us more clearly hear the word! Stay tuned for more information.

## The Three Gifts

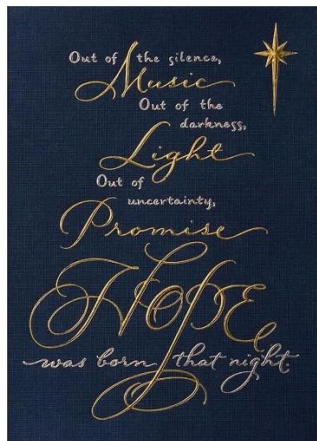
After the Christmas pageant, I asked my 6-year-old son if he remembered the gifts that the Magi brought to Jesus. He thought for a minute then said "gold, frankincense, and humor". We could all use that!

## Presbyterian Women of the Mackinac Presbytery Dissolves

*submitted by Bobbie Dalquist*

Sarah Juntune, Treasurer of the Presbyterian Women of the Mackinac Presbytery writes: "Sadly, PW at the Presbytery level is dissolving, but I hope your local group of women remains strong and active in service to our Lord. All the money you have sent in for the various purposes have been distributed as each group requested. We had money remaining in the account, intended to support Presbytery gatherings, but they have not happened in several years. The final Presbytery files were mailed to the Presbyterian Historical Society, which already had much of our historical materials, and once these expenses were handled, we had slightly under \$3000 remaining. Following the suggestions received since my August letter, it has been disbursed as follows:

\$1500 to Presbytery Point Camp  
\$1000 to Copper Country Angel Mission  
\$490.70 to PW in the Synod of the Covenant earmarked for scholarship for women in the Mackinac Presbytery to attend the next PW-Synod Gathering, June 27-28 in Battle Creek."



**Update on Funding the Roof**

*Submitted by Bobbie Dalquist on behalf of the Finance Committee*

<b>Pledged</b>	<b>Paid</b>	<b>Balance Due</b>
\$34,799.00	\$25,449.00	\$9,350
In addition		
To pledged	\$7,69.00	
Total Paid	\$32,618	
Cost of Roof	\$48,471.00	
Balance Due	\$9,350.00	
Total expected	\$41,968.00	
Unfunded	\$6,500.00	

We've made great progress repaying our savings for the roof project. We have one more year to collect the pledges still owed. There is a balance of \$6,503 that will not be repaid unless we receive extra donations. As cash flow allows, we move the money that has been paid back into our VanGuard fund, which in turn leads to greater dividend income for the church.

**Rummage Sales - Past and Future**

*submitted by Bobbie Dalquist on behalf of Fellowship Guild*

The Holiday Rummage sale is behind us. We had lots of merchandise, lots of shoppers, pleasant weather and a successful sale (\$1,281.50). Some of the merchandise came from donations to Angel Mission so we gave 20% of the proceeds back to them. Looking ahead, we plan to have the rummage sale that was cancelled in June on Winter Carnival weekend, Saturday, February 8. We are hoping that people want to get their rummage sale "fix" before the weather is warm enough for people to do rummage sales in their garages. Plus we may get some tourist traffic from Winter Carnival visitors. As you are making room to display your Christmas decorations, if there are items you really don't need any more, please put them aside for the church rummage sale. January is a good month for closet

cleaning too. We take small furniture, household items, and kitchen supplies.

### Children's Church

*submitted by Bobbie Dalquist on behalf of the Finance Committee*

We have had a very successful children's church with lessons provided by Olivia Byykonen and her friend. We pay her a small fee for each Sunday that she provides the lesson and activity out of a gift that was designated for Youth Activities. That fund will run out by the end of January 2025. If you would like to replenish the fund, mark your gift for Children's Church.

### Angel Mission

*Submitted by Sherri Middlemis-Brown*

If you haven't donated to CCAM yet, but want to be a supporter of our programs and services, you have until midnight on Dec 3 to have your gift amplified through Copper Shores #GivingTuesday event. This is an important fundraiser for us, where your gift has a proportional match from Copper Shores, giving your gift the greatest impact.

We have entered the digital age for child and sponsor registration for Angel Tree, Christmas gifts for children whose parents can't afford to provide their kids gifts. We are looking for sponsors to sign up on our website, ccangelmission.org. Currently, we have over 100 children signed up and only about a dozen paired with sponsors! Our church members sponsor five children as a group effort. Talk to Lois Jambekar if you would like to help sponsor the church's assigned family. If you prefer to sponsor a child on your own, just go to our website, select "Sponsor Registration Online" or "Sponsor Downloadable Form." You can turn your downloadable form in to Lois or to Sherry Middlemis-Brown.

Want to do a little Christmas shopping on a tight budget? Think of Angel Mission Free

Store as a consignment store, but instead of a price tag, you can put a little something in the donation box as payment. Your donation supports the Free Store, the Food Pantry, and our many programs. Come shop and help others in the process. This is also a great way to recycle!

With the holiday season upon us, I know that everyone at CCAM extends their best wishes for a very merry Christmas and happy New Year. We could not help the hundreds of people who seek our assistance every month without you, Portage Lake United Church, and the Presbytery of Mackinac.

### Helping Hands

*submitted by Beth Smock*

With a little over a month left in 2024, we are pretty much in line to give out the same number of vouchers in 2024 as we did in 2023, 52 last year and 52 so far this year.

We have received \$2,297.00 in donations and given out approximately \$2,600.00 in vouchers. The spending amount is probably less as not everyone spends the entire \$50.00 amount allowed with the voucher, especially now that gas is cheaper. So it looks like we will come out pretty even this year. Thank you to all who have donated to this very much needed ministry of Portage Lake United Church.

### Beth's Buzz

It's time for another "Beth's Buzz" year end overview. Good news: A lot less stuff about my health this year. I did have two more MRIs done on my back (one thoracic and another lumbar) early in the year. Unfortunately, they found some more breaks. However, about everything that can be done surgically has been done, so I wore a back brace for 2 months while those

breaks healed and then did several months on PT. I am now probably as good as I am going to get. Even when my back hurts, I remind myself that I am still mobile, I can live by myself and meet my needs, and still get to go to craft shows (I don't do crafts but love looking at other people's talent). There are many people in much worse shape than me. Thank you to all of those who have been praying for me.

As far as work is concerned, it has been another good year here at PLUC. We have several new folks joining us for worship. While we did have a say good-bye to some people we were able to gather and rejoice in the time they were here.

PLUC continues to be a welcoming location for outside groups including almost daily Recovery Group meetings; concerts including PLUC, MTU groups, and Susie's students; study groups; International Neighbors and other miscellaneous groups. Everyone really enjoys being here. I also get to enjoy listening to Susie's piano and flute students three days a week. Several of them are quite good. I especially enjoy the young man who plays Scott Joplin music.

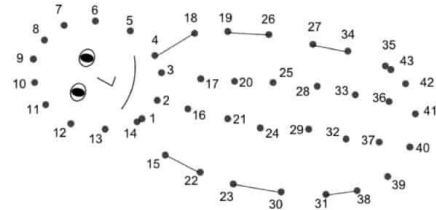
I wish everyone a wonderful and safe holiday season and look forward to another year of working with all of you in 2025.

## Children's Corner

### Jesus is Born

A Christmas activity worksheet from [ministry-to-children.com](http://ministry-to-children.com)

Connect the dots to see who was born in Bethlehem.



Finish the story with the words at the right.

M \_\_\_\_\_ and J \_\_\_\_\_ traveled to

B \_\_\_\_\_.

M \_\_\_\_\_ had a baby and named him

J \_\_\_\_\_. He was God's Son.

She placed J \_\_\_\_\_ in a m \_\_\_\_\_

which was a place for animals to eat.

He was wrapped in s \_\_\_\_\_

clothes, which were strips of cloth.



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 Church (USA)  
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 E-mail: [office@pluc.org](mailto:office@pluc.org)  
 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

**Portage Lake United Church**



**1400 E. Houghton Ave.  
Houghton, MI 49931**

**Return Service Requested**

<b>December Volunteer Schedule</b>				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Greeter</u>	<u>Reader</u>	<u>Prayer Writer</u>	<u>Coffee Fellowship</u>
12/01	Sze Wenn & Easter	Beth	Jim	Nancy & Dianne
12/08	Elizabeth	Nancy	Lois	Lois & Mary
12/15	Judy	Lois	Peter	TBD
12/22	Beth	Christina	Carl	TBD
12/29	Nancy & Dianne	Ann	Jim	