



Cross Talk

Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by loving, engaging, and serving our neighbors

Non-toxic Positivity

At a recent Sunday conversation circle, the group talked about how sometimes you just don't feel thankful at Thanksgiving. Some talked about how hard it was to feel gratitude the first holiday after losing a loved one. Others talked about times they or someone they loved happened to be in the hospital. We talked about the sorrow we feel for our neighbors in Tusky Valley, still grieving a terrible bus accident. Other members of the group pointed to our growing national divide as a cause of anxiety and grief. We talked about our sorrow for people in Ukraine and in the Middle East struggling to survive in the midst of war. Our concerns ranged from the personal, to the regional, to the national, to the international and they each made it more difficult to feel thankful. It reminded me of a passage in Ecclesiastes that reads, "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief." Sometimes, the more you experience, the easier it is to feel sorrow, and our churches are not always ready for it.

The holidays often bring pressure to emote a certain way. We are supposed to appear grateful at Thanksgiving. In our best years, we can feel frazzled as we try to coordinate travel, food, and family politics. In difficult years, it can be impossible. At Christmas, we are expected to feel warm and fuzzy. We want joy to the world, but often struggle with sadness in our hearts. We can be hemmed in by others' expectations creating a season of, "toxic positivity."

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America defines toxic positivity as statements or attitudes that "are expected to minimize or eliminate painful emotions, creating pressure to be unrealistically optimistic without considering the circumstances of the situation." This certainly happens in church. We say, "cheer up, it's Christmas." Or, "you should think about all you have! It's Thanksgiving." Instead of vain attempts at regulating others' emotions, it's important to give people space to share how they feel and offer support. As your pastor, I want to say that you do not have to feel a certain way to be part of this church. God knows and loves you no matter what you are going through. I think scriptures like Ecclesiastes are a reminder that all people – including Christians – feel this way sometimes.

Some Christians I know avoid Ecclesiastes as far too depressing. The opening chapter is often entitled, "Everything is Meaningless." The authors write, "What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted." They write about the futility of human efforts and the impermanence of human life. We are used to passages that teach about personal responsibility. The book of proverbs is all about how we can be intentional in holy living. We are used to passages about God's providence. How many times have you seen verses like, "with God, all things are possible," and "the Lord is in her midst, she cannot fall?" Those verses are inspirational, but when we reach for them too quickly, we can deny people space to voice and process their sorrow. Ecclesiastes offers balance. It validates our feelings. It gives hope.

A reddit user recently posted asking for help in understanding Ecclesiastes. Another user named TC Lewis explained, "[Ecclesiastes] makes for a wonderful balance to the Proverbs' optimism. The latter says 'do wise things, you will be blessed and fulfilled!' while the former cautions 'some things are outside your control, and this life still has emptiness.' Hopefully, you are heading into a wonderful holiday season. It is my prayer that you are filled with gratitude and joy. If, however, you are feeling empty or out of control, know there is no shame in seeking help from a mental health professional. Also, know that I'm here if you need someone to talk to. Know that your church is here for you, no matter what you are feeling. Above all, know that God is with you, and loves you just as you are. Amen.

Blessings, Pastor Harlen

... know that I'm here if you need someone to talk to. Know that your church is here for you, no matter what you are feeling. Above all, know that God is with you, and loves you just as you are.

CHURCH STAFF

PASTOR:

Reverend J. Harlen Rife

ADMINISTRATIVE ASST:

Pam Moore

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR:

Margo Holmes

ORGANIST/BELLS:

Betty Gross

WORSHIP LEADER:

Dustin Oliver

CHOIR DIRECTOR:

Brian Lawson

NURSERY DIRECTOR:

Diana Langenfeld

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY:

Amy Dvorak

LOVING HANDS DIRECTOR:

Shannon Miller

ADMIN COORDINATOR:

Brittney Hurley

MISSIONS SUMMARY 2023

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



- 1 Mitch Booth
- 2 Bill Lyle,
Todd Wendling
- 3 Janice Hackathorn,
Nicolas Keller
- 4 Mike Trinko
- 8 Mike Koprivier
- 10 Pastor Harlen Rife
- 11 Shirley Wander
- 14 Sue Newbrough,
Kaden Smesko
- 17 Grant Kuwatch
- 22 Dorothy Cormany
- 24 Charlotte Borland,
Roy Witsaman Jr.
- 25 Patty Scarbrough
- 27 Michael Witsaman

Our Mission: *Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by loving, engaging, and serving God and our neighbors.*

As part of our efforts to fulfill our mission, we participated in a variety of activities throughout the year. God has worked wonders through you! It has been an amazing journey. I hope each of you were able to find at least one mission that you were able to support, by your prayers, talents, and/or time.

Below is a brief overview of what you accomplished.



Support of **BED BRIGADE** has been a major focus of missions. Over the course of five events, more than 120 volunteers built over 120 frames. We delivered over 100 beds and raised over \$10,500. The Rayl Foundation also donated a 52-foot trailer to store frames, mattresses, and other materials.



A dozen people gathered

for **AKRON CHILDREN'S NICU**. In addition, \$275 was in February to make blankets raised.

We raised \$283 to provide personal care items and gift cards for 19 students in the **LPN program at PLCC** and \$195 to support the **Blessings in a Backpack Green Hygiene**.



We supported our youth by **remodeling the GUM Club /Level Up room** (\$508) and sent four youth and a leader to **Youth Reach Out Camp** (\$1620).

With the leadership of UWF we raised \$945 to **FLAT ROCK**, and \$125 to support **RICK & SUSAN NIVENS**.

Finally, we supported both **OPEN-M** (Mountain of food and For the Love of Children) and **Green Good Neighbors**. Donations for these often go directly to the organizations, so I do not have accurate amounts available.

A reminder that the next Bed Brigade frame build will be January 9, 2024. Please reserve the date and plan to attend!!

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Matt & Erin Hartong

December 5th



Greensburg UMC Financials

as of October 31, 2023

	OCTOBER	YTD
Income	\$ 24,715	\$ 232,702
Expenses	\$ 24,404	\$ 238,219
GAIN or (LOSS)	311	\$ (5,517)

MINISTRY NEWS

Children's Ministry—

November has been busy for us as we learned all about Moses, we talked about World Kindness Day, we made special decorations for anyone at church who would like a little extra cheer this holiday season, and we started practicing some songs we will perform on Christmas Eve morning!

We hope you can join us as we celebrate

Jesus' birthday! Our Level Up kids have been working on special songs to share their talents with different instruments, and our G.U.M. Club will be singing a special song Christmas Eve Morning!

G.U.M. Club and Level Up will not be meeting (besides our performance at the service) on Dec 24 and Dec 31.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!

Blessings,

Amy Dvorak and GUM Club & Level Up Team



LOVE OFFERING—2023

We wouldn't have music, website, budget, kids ministry, office run smooth and so much more if it wasn't for Pam, Margo, Amy, Diana, Brian, Betty, Dustin, Pastor Harlen, Shannon and Brittany who all make this church the place we want to be for our spiritual journey.

Our love offering gifts that have been given will be presented to them during the services on Sunday, December 3rd or in the office Monday, December 4th. Thanks for all who gave! ~ Your SPR Committee



YOUTH COORDINATOR NEEDED!



Youth Coordinator Needed~

Our children's ministry is growing so much that we need to prepare for them as they grow older and fill a need for the special youth that are here now. We have a job opening for a Coordinator Youth Ministries (ages 7th – 12th graders). Please go to our website for the complete job description or use this link: <http://www.greensburgumc.net/content/PDF's/Youth%20Coordinator.pdf> Please forward to anyone you know that might be interested or just pray for some great candidates.

If you have any questions see SPR (Char Borland) or Pastor Harlen.

Greensburg UMC

2161 Greensburg Rd,
North Canton, OH 44720

330.896.1936
www.greensburgumc.net

"2023 DECEMBER EDITION"**Ongoing Fellowship Opportunities**

Saturdays - Walking Group meets at 9am by office entrance

2nd Tuesdays - Dementia Support Group meets from 6-7:30 in the library (directed by Chaplain Billy Kremer & Anita St John of Homestead Hospice)

Wednesdays - Choir meets at 7:30pm in sanctuary

3rd Thursdays - United Women in Faith meets at 3:30pm in the library

Check the church calendar at
www.greensburgumc.net

SPECIAL THANKS

Join us in THANKING the 2023 Lawn Care Team for their dedication to keep the church grounds the past 3 seasons. The Team consisted of: Mike Trinko, Dick Stratton, John Myers, Gary McLaughlin, Roger Herbst, Carol and Steve Mehal, and Cliff Stadler

**CHRISTMAS SERVICES**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

10AM CONTEMPORARY SERVICE

**ALONG WITH 2 EVENING CANDLELIGHT SERVICES
AT 7PM AND 11PM**

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY, WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY— 9AM TO 1PM / TUESDAY AND THURSDAY—9AM TO 3PM

IF YOU NEED TO STOP BY THE OFFICE, PLEASE CALL AHEAD!

330.896.1936