



# Cross Talk

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

*"God loves us.*

*We don't have to earn that love. God is present with us. We don't have to be ready for it. God comes to us where we are and as we are. Christmas is about God's unconditional love."*

## **CHURCH STAFF**

### PASTOR:

Reverend J. Harlen Rife

### ADMINISTRATIVE ASST:

Pam Moore

### FINANCIAL ADMIN:

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

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

Before holiday break, my kids' schools celebrated "twelve days of Christmas." Each day had a special theme like pajama day, bring a stuffed toy day, wear green day, and so on. I was grumbling to Madeline that this is not the twelve days of Christmas and they are misusing my religious practices! She said, "You are just grumpy you have to remember all of this." She was mostly right. I'm not genuinely offended when schools celebrate the twelve days before break, or when the martial arts studio I used to attend has twelve daily deals leading up to Christmas, or when the local car dealership has twelve days of Christmas sales. There are many secular traditions around Christmas. I do think the original twelve days concept is due for a comeback.

The tradition of celebrating Christmas for twelve days began in the sixth century with a pronouncement by the Council of Tours that the season between Christmas and Epiphany should be sacred. They may have been thinking logistically as they sought to resolve differences between the Roman solar and Jewish lunar calendars. It's not generally difficult to convince people a party should go on longer and so the idea stuck. People throughout the Christian world celebrated feasts, saints' days, and gift-giving in that season between two holidays. The practice has steadily declined in the last century as we place more and more emphasis on the cultural and economic impacts of the weeks before Christmas than on the weeks that follow.

We find ourselves now in the wake of Christmas. I always feel a little burned out in this time of year. The Advent season brought a lot of pressures. Then, we had our marathon Christmas Eve services. There's a lot of stress pulling together the gift-giving and cooking for Christmas Day. There's pressure to see people on Christmas itself. Sometimes, I feel guilty baking Christmas cookies with the kids on December 27th because I was too busy to keep that tradition on December 23rd. When I look at the twelve days of Christmas now, it makes me realize that maybe this was meant to be treated as more of a marathon than a sprint!

If you feel overwhelmed getting ready for Christmas, maybe you are trying to do too much in too little time. If you, like me, feel a little burned out after the holiday, maybe it's because you are trying to fit two weeks' worth of joy into forty-eight hours. Perhaps we need to reclaim more of that space that was and is Christmas. What if we don't open all the presents on one day? What if we see our family in smaller bites? What if, instead of one gargantuan meal, we share our favorites over several evenings? We might rediscover the message of Christmas.

What is that message? God loves us. We don't have to earn that love. God is present with us. We don't have to be ready for it. God comes to us where we are and as we are. Christmas is about God's unconditional love. If you start to feel pressure to do everything just right, maybe it's time to reexamine your holiday traditions. In our increasingly busy lives, this should be a time where it's okay to just breathe. So, wherever you need to, feel free to reclaim the twelve days of Christmas as breathing space for you and your family.

Blessings,

Pastor Harlen Rife

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



- 3 Denny Hartong
- 15 Jeremiah Campbell  
Sally Fosnight
- 17 Jill Lehman
- 20 Greg Randles
- 22 Ken Selbee
- 24 Kelly Witsaman
- 25 Alexander Nibling  
Ashley Scolaro
- 26 Scott Waseman  
Shelly Keller  
Eron Moore
- 27 Faye Shahan
- 30 Donna Nicol  
Nick Celetti
- 31 Brady Lipscomb

JANUARY  
ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 Joe & Janice Conley
- 25 Mike & Hazel Trinko
- 31 Vince & Jill Lehman

## MISSIONS SUMMARY 2023

**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)**.

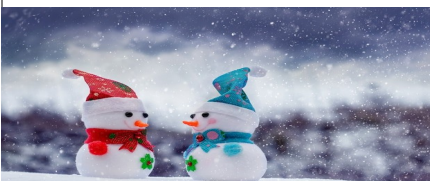
With the leadership of UWF we raised \$945 to **FLAT ROCK**, and \$125 to support **RICK & SUSAN NIVENS**.

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!!

Greensburg UMC Financials  
as of November 30, 2023

|                | NOVEMBER  | YTD        |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Income         | \$ 18,208 | \$ 250,911 |
| Expenses       | \$ 22,287 | \$ 260,506 |
| GAIN or (LOSS) | (4,079)   | \$ (9,595) |



## MINISTRY NEWS

### Children's Ministry—

#### G.U.M. Club and Level Up News-

We were in full motion during December! We continued our study of the Bible in 1 year but also talked about Advent, Christ's birth, and made Christmas gifts for the congregation. Our stories took us through the 10 Commandments, Caleb and the spy's, and Balaam and his donkey. The kids were very surprised that there is a talking donkey in the Bible!!

On December 17 we had our annual White Elephant gift exchange and Christmas party! It's so fun watching the gifts the kids bring in and they're always so kind when it comes to "stealing!" We also enjoyed hot chocolate and Christmas cookies (thanks Marilyn Cogansparger!)

On December 24 the kids put on a special performance during our 10 am service. Special shout out to Level Up who worked for weeks practicing their music and readings! I am so proud of them all!! G.U.M. Club kids also did an amazing job singing Go Tell It On The Mountain!

We will be back for more fun on January 7!

We hope you had a very blessed holiday season!

Miss Amy



## LOVE OFFERING—2023

### Love Offering, Thanks!

The Staff at Greensburg UMC want to extend a BIG "THANK YOU" for our Love Offering we each received. May God Bless you for your generosity!

*Your Staff at Greensburg—*

## FROM THE CHOIR DIRECTOR

### Choir Needs Singers~

I know I have posted this many times, but our choir needs people. Since covid our choir has been pretty small. We have lost members for various reasons. The problem is we have not been able to add any new members to our choir to replace the voices that we've lost. If we don't get new members our choir will go the way of many others and disappear in a few years. We already have not been able to ring our bells because we don't have the ringers, I don't want the same to happen to our choir, but without people to sing its inevitable. Please, if you use to be in the choir and had to leave for one reason or another, come join us again. If you have thought about maybe singing with us at one time, come join us, or if you just like to sing, come join us! We are especially in need of sopranos but we need all voices. So if you sing in the car, or sing in the shower, come sing for the Lord!

Brian Lawson

Choir Director

## Greensburg UMC

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North Canton, OH 44720

330.896.1936  
[www.greensburgumc.net](http://www.greensburgumc.net)

### **“2024 JANUARY 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



*Featured picture is from our Sunday 10am  
GUM Club & Level Up Programs  
JOIN US!*



#### **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**