

Newsletter

United Church of Christ East Goshen

January/February 2021

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A Christmas Reflection as the new year begins...

It was many years ago now, but I remember the day like it was yesterday. My husband Al and I, along with two good friends, travelled to New York City in December. What a trip! The train to Grand Central Station – a huge gorgeous building with stone gargoyles on top of monstrous walls, ceilings decorated with some constellations, a four-faced brass clock, and a floor made of something which looked like marble. And the echo! Hundreds of human voices and noises from shoes on the floor, the sound of “All Aboard” reverberating up the steps from where the platform and tracks housed the trains pulling in or out.

I remember seeing the 12 wire sculptured Angels of Lights with their trumpets, leading the way to Rockefeller Plaza. A tree almost 100 feet tall. And then there was the absolute awe at how many people were packed into streets and stores, taxis, horse-drawn carriages, and so many restaurants – all full – many with lines of people waiting.

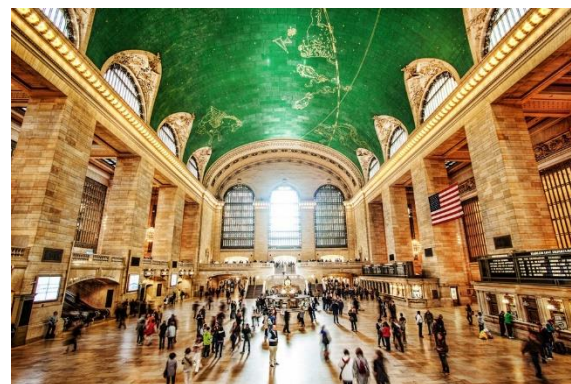
*How is it that one person, with dreams, fears, anticipation and personal hopes, matters in the huge space of New York City? I think of the line from Humphrey Bogart in Casablanca when he tells the love of his life Elsa, “The problems of two little people don’t amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world.” But my internal voice tells me I DO matter. In this enormous span of universe, in a city which seems to have lost its goodwill, in a place where no one would hear my voice if I screamed, **I matter!***

This is the season of “One.” One Mother Mary, one donkey, one night, one star, one inn, one angel’s voice, one crèche, one destination, one baby boy, one Jesus, one love, one Emmanuel, one God on a visit to Earth.

We know Jesus’ birth was God’s gift for all of humanity, but he was also an extravagant gift to each one of us. In a world with millions of people, in thousands of cities filled to the brim, Jesus is born for the ONE in each one of us. May we hold onto this promise as we live into 2021, as we live 6 or more feet apart, as we feel lonely and alone, as we wait impatiently for the hustle and bustle of Life after covid to return, as we sometimes imagine how can we matter, we are just One person....

May you feel chosen in love by one God and one begotten son this new year!

*~ Pastor Angelee
(she/her/hers)*



Please Mark Your Calendars

Jan 10 –
Epiphany

Jan 18 – Council
Meeting 7 PM

Jan 31 – Annual
Congregational
Meeting
11:30 AM

Feb 4 – Children
& Youth Zoom
4:30 PM

Feb 15 – Council
Meeting 7 PM

Feb 17 – Ash
Wednesday

Altar Flowers

You can sponsor altar flowers for \$15 for one vase or \$25 for two vases. If you are interested in sponsoring a Sunday, please contact [Jen Troutman](#). Arrangements can be made to pick up the flowers after worship, if you desire.



Café Script!

Our Café Script Bible study meets using Zoom at **11 AM on Wednesdays**. All are welcome!

[Click here to join the Café Script Zoom meeting.](#)



Prayer Requests

If you have a prayer request, please [email it to the church office](#) and we will be sure to add it to the prayer list!



Worship Help

If you would like to help with the Sunday service, there are sign up availabilities. Let Pastor Angelee or Michael know or write the church office at

office@ucceastgoshen.org indicating how you would like to contribute: providing a children's chat, reading the scripture or offering some special music. You may share in person (with less than 10 in the sanctuary) or you may record yourself in advance.



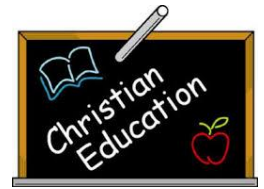
Children & Youth

Pastor Angelee invites the children and youth to a special Zoom session with her on Thursday, February 4 4:30 PM – 5 PM. Keep an eye on your email for the Zoom link.



Christian Education

Since March approximately six packets of Sunday School lessons, coloring pages, and crafts have been mailed or delivered to families with school-age children. If you have NOT been receiving these but would like to please contact Carol Swingle at cswingle@aol.com. By the same token please let her know if you no longer wish to receive these. Also, if you are able to print the pages you want at home please let her know your email address and some of the materials can be emailed to you. This is particularly helpful for those families with several children who may be interested in multiple copies of some materials but not interested in some of the others. Please also share with your children how much we miss seeing them in person at church!!



Adult Christian Education

Please [contact Carol Swingle](#) if you might be interested in online Adult Christian Education, either as a participant or a leader. This could be in the form of a book club-like offering, discussion group, watching videos,

etc. Please also suggest topics you might be interested in attending or leading on Zoom. And indicate if you know how to set up a Zoom meeting and/or how to "do screen sharing." If there is interest in learning more about these technologies that could be an important Adult Education offering as well (but we might have to recruit one of our teenagers to teach it, it certainly wouldn't be by me!!)



Christmas in July!

Advent brought the Sundays of Love, Hope, Joy and Peace. Christmas morning brought the birth of a baby, Jesus the Christ. Epiphany will bring the Wise Ones bearing mysterious gifts for the Baby Jesus. The pandemic didn't change these fundamentals. But it didn't feel like the usual celebration of the Christmas season. So— let's plan to celebrate Christmas in July! The dates and specifics will not be determined for some time but know that by the end of July we expect to be able to plan a week of safe activities. Contact Carol Swingle at cswingle@aol.com if you are interested in helping to plan this event.



Missions & Outreach

As winter continues with short days and cold temperatures, we are reminded of the many individuals who are struggling to find adequate resources, including food, warm clothing, and shelter. As you may be aware, under the leadership of Cathy Yost, our church collects items for those in need over the holidays via the giving tree. Cathy has tallied and delivered our church's generous 2020 donations to the men's shelter at Old First UCC in Philadelphia, including:

45 blankets
 28 pairs of warm winter socks
 35 pairs of gloves
 30 tooth brushes
 144 small tubes of toothpaste
 96 mini deodorants
 10 pairs of boxer shorts

Your generosity is truly appreciated. It is wonderful to imagine how these gifts will help needy local persons to tolerate the weather during the cold weeks ahead. Sincere thanks to Cathy for her leadership on this important project and to all who donated.



UCC East Goshen – a Beacon of Hope and Light

As 2020 draws to a close and we welcome the arrival of 2021, it seems fitting to share a few words about this transition. Due to the deadly coronavirus, 2020 has truly been a year of challenges to every aspect of our beings. Although we humans are social creatures who depend on contact with each other for love, efficiency, and personal sustenance, we have been unable to physically congregate for fear of unintentionally sharing the virus. One of the tremendous assets of our church is that it is truly a family, and the necessary separation from one another it has been extraordinarily difficult for many of us. We have been fortunate and comforted by watching the weekly services that have continued uninterrupted online. Sincere thanks to Pastor Angelee and the worship team for making this possible and offering this lifeline until we can safely resume regular live services. Thanks to each of you for staying connected with our church and each other.

Our hope and expectation is that the vaccines that are under development to combat the virus will soon be available. Vaccinations will enable recipients to once again resume more regular lives in a safer manner, while continuing to follow State and County Health Department advice and requirements.

If you are feeling isolated and would like to chat with another member of our faith community, please just pick up the phone and call someone listed in our recently updated church directory. Chances are that whoever you decide to call will undoubtedly be glad to hear your voice, know that you are thinking of them, and to learn how you are doing.

Thank you for keeping the church, our Pastor, and our UCCEG faith community in your prayers. As we move into 2021, may our church continue to be a beacon of light.

God Bless you and yours—Pam Onyx for the Reopening Committee

Goodbye 2020 Here's To New Beginnings

It certainly has been quite a challenging year! Our church, however, has met the unexpected huge COVID challenge with creativity, faith and persistence. Your council has met via zoom since March when the pandemic became publicized. My great thanks to council committee chairs for continuing to find ways to continue our missions in a new way. Special acknowledgement to our worship team; especially Pastor Angelee and Al for starting us off on our online services immediately, without missing a beat. At that point, our new hire, Michael Hatala, assumed our Music Director position creatively arranging for music with varieties of our own volunteering to sing, play instruments and read scripture. Hats off to our tech team, Al, Bart, Cole and David for making it possible for folks near and far to participate in our Sunday Services. Our new worship leader for our Saturday service offering, Roots and Roofs, Maxwell Staley also joined our online Saturday service with a very smooth transition.

One of our greatest challenges has been to keep the financial health of the church viable. Thanks to our financial committee, especially its leader, Beth Sayler, for meeting this challenge with a clarity of communication to the council on our financial status. After procuring a PPP loan, we were able to offset some of the losses of income due to not being able to rent out our space. Coming up with a new adventure in an online auction experience, helped to offset our inability to have a Fall Festival this year. Monies have been tight all year. Thanks to you, the congregation and friends for your generous contributions which have helped keep us afloat.

The council held a special meeting on Wednesday Dec. 30, to continue to work on a proposed 2021 budget which, again, without rentals, will present a tremendous challenge. It is our intention to form a "fundraising committee" solely charged with meeting the challenge of raising funds. We need folks, other than council members only, to contribute their ideas and participation in this important venture.

We plan to invite you who are interested to join us in our planned zoom meeting during the week of January 11th to offer you ideas for meeting our budget needs.

We will inform you on this meeting opportunity next week.

We will gather these ideas and also have our committee chairs share their reports with you at our **Congregational Meeting to be held Sunday, January 31st at 11:30 AM on zoom!** I will be sending out directions for attending the meeting which should be easy for all to follow.

As always, it is essential to have a quorum at this all important church annual meeting.

We will, as usual, vote on our proposed 2021 budget at the time and vote to confirm our nominations for new council positions at that time.

On a personal note, it has been my honor to have served as you Council President for the last 3 years. I am proud that we have hired Michael Hatala, our Music Director, Maxwell Staley, our R&R worship leader and Jen Troutman, our angel in the office!

They each offer UCCEG a fresh look at our church life. We have learned that good leadership is only part of the equation to a healthy, functioning church. You, the congregant and friend of the church must feel and act in equal partnership with church leaders for the success and deep meaning of church life. So volunteer in little and bigger ways! I am confident that with the new eyes of church leaders, the participation of the congregation and a Pastor who continues to reinvent her ministry to us with courage and adaptability, we will continue to grow in God's love together.

Bless you all. We march into a new year with renewed faith in God's promise of love and hope for us.

Happy New Year!!

Linda Ardao

UCCEG
Council President



From the Conference Minister:

Tony Robinson reminded me several years ago that the name of the approaching month, "January," comes from the ancient Roman deity, Janus – a lesser god but one who has always made sense to seekers after the heart of the Divine. Janus was the god of gates and doorways. He had two faces, one looking forward, another looking backward. So there is only a little surprise and much gratitude that in Psalm 121 God keeps a particular vigilant watch at our times of "going out and coming in," our times of ending and beginning, and all that is between the two.

I cannot remember a time between the two, in this case Christmas and the New Year, when I have been more ready to abandon the year that was and embrace the hope of what will be. The possibilities that lay beyond COVID-19, the shenanigans of the outgoing presidential administration, and the year that was 2020 stir my imagination.

Still, transitions – whether of the calendar or in the seasons of our lives – are crazy-making times. They can be confusing and exhilarating; chaotic and creative. That certainly has been true for our conference staff that recently completed the task of reducing our Conference office space by half and who work remotely. That's true of our congregational lives where COVID-19 has pushed many of us into "the church that will be" much sooner than anticipated. And it's true of our personal lives where change, those we make happen and those that happen to us, is the only constant.

Change is difficult and even when our lives depend on it, we would rather not. Wearing masks and social distancing are this year's most obvious examples. More famously, in study after study of post-surgery heart attack patients, less than 3% of post heart surgery patients make the lifestyle changes necessary to prevent a future heart attack. Ninety-seven percent of people who were told, 'if you don't repent, if you don't change behaviors you will die,' choose not to make those changes.

Alan Deutschman, author of the book, *Change or Die: The Three Keys to Change at Work and in Life*, wrote about the 3% who did change. What he discovered was not revolutionary. In fact, the keys to change are in every sermon that the prophets and Jesus ever preached.

- **Relate** — form emotional relationships with people and a community that inspires the practices that lead to life.
- **Repeat** — no matter how awkward a new skill is, do it again and again while offering and receiving the encouragement of friends.
- **Reframe** — new relationships and abilities help you see the world differently and in ways that lead to life.

You are stronger with others. We are stronger together – in congregations, Communities of Practice and Conferences. Any person, President or Pastor who intends to make this New Year better than the last (God, please) would do well to spend some time with this simple formula — relate, repeat, reframe.

Whatever change may happen or needs to, God's abiding light and love remain constant. "I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me..."

This I know to be true. And it is my prayer for you and all our brothers, sisters and siblings in Christ that we move confidently into this New Year holding fast to that which has been good and ready to receive what is going to be even better.

God bless your New Year with the Light of this Epiphany Season,

Rev. Bill Worley
Conference Minister



Virtual Worship – Sundays @ 10 AM

The words to prayers and hymns will be displayed on the screen so everyone can join in while you watch worship. Invite your friends and family to join us online!

[Click here to join worship via FB Live.](#)

Join us for Zoom Fellowship each week after our virtual service – [click here to join Zoom Fellowship!](#)

ROOT AND ROOFS

Roots and Roofs is an interactive worship service that we have been able to continue via Zoom throughout the pandemic. This is a great opportunity to reflect, pray, listen, discuss, and share in our faith. We usually get to see a powerful video conversation starter. And always there are musical selections which enhance our emotional and spiritual connection to the theme.

We look forward to having you [join us, every Saturday at 5:30 pm!](#)



Follow us on

[Facebook.com/RootsandRoofs](https://www.facebook.com/RootsandRoofs)

OFFICE HOURS UPDATE!

- A Friendly Reminder: during this pandemic time when we are mostly working from home, we are attempting to keep up some semblance of normalcy just like everyone else. If you need something taken care of for church, [please email](#) our Office Administrator, Jen Troutman, Tuesday-Thursday between 9am and 1pm. *Requests received at other times may NOT be read or responded to until regular office hours.*
- Pastor Angelee can be reached by church phone or personal cell phone which is on the church machine. Most days, except Friday, she will return your call that same day. Emails are read and responded to as she receives them.

Updated 2021 UCCEG Church Directory Coming Soon

Please [contact the church office](#) if you have updates for your address, phone or email.

Newsletter Submissions

The UCCEG newsetter is published bi-monthly. Submissions are due by the 3rd Tuesday of the month prior to publication to office@ucceastgoshen.org.

Your Church Council

President - Linda Ardao
Vice President - Don Rising
Secretary - Leslie Siebert
Treasurer - Beth Saylor
Assistant Treasurer - open
Financial Secretary - Todd Speece
Building & Grounds - open
Christian Education - Dawn Lawhon
Church Growth - Al Benner-Smith
Congregational Life – Bonnie Jackson
Mission & Outreach - Lucy Barber
Worship & Music - Bunny Watts

United Church of Christ East Goshen

1201 NORTH CHESTER ROAD
WEST CHESTER, PA 19380

610-692-2951

www.UCCEastGoshen.org



[Rev. Angelee Benner-Smith](#), Pastor

[Maxwell Staley](#), Roots & Roofs Worship Leader

[Michael Hatala](#), Director of Music Ministry

[Jen Troutman](#), Office Administrator