



Spirit News

December 2, 2020

United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley
An Open and Affirming Congregation
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Prayer Requests

- Thank God for the generosity of SOMEONE who give me a cream for my knee (Luz Granada).
- Pray for my daughter, Bethany, who continues to search for a very needed job (John Bartkowiak).
- Prayers for my sister, Jennifer, who is battling colon cancer (Diane Teigiser).
- Please pray for my friend who will undergo a double mastectomy this week and my friend recovering from hip surgery. Please pray for Nancy Crowley in her speedy recovery from hip surgery (Asher Beckwitt).
- Thank God for our beautiful newborn granddaughter, Maya Rose Elsie! (Sabine Cox).
- Thankful for all the hard-working members of UCCSV choir! (Stefan Petrov).
- 30 apartments at Leisure World in Silver Spring went up in flames this week (Ruthanne).
- Please pray for those suffering despair from being separated from family (Heidi Harmon).
- Prayers for Bryan's dad, they found a mass on his neck and kidney (Camila Young).

Advent at UCCSV - I Believe Even When..

This year our Advent theme is "I Believe Even When..." 2020 has been a year of challenge and grief and sometimes even rediscovery. Can we proclaim that during this season, as the days grow shorter and the news sometimes frightens us, as illness spreads and financial struggles multiply, that we still believe in and affirm the goodness of God, the hope for a better day, and the good news of the Gospel that we are loved, always? The history of humanity is fraught with

pain—especially the pain that comes accompanied by fear and leads to oppression and violence of one people against another. This is the world into which Jesus was born and through which his teachings would challenge and call for transformation. The opening words of an anonymous Jewish poet, "I believe in the sun, even when the sun is not shining," were scrawled on a wall during the Holocaust. This theme song for our season calls us to examine our penchant for annihilating fear by annihilating each other. The power of narrative and music will call us to a different response—transformation and reconciliation through hope, love, joy, and peace. This Advent and Christmas, let us fill the night with music and light and affirm and act on the reasons why we can still "believe, even when" we are discouraged.

This Sunday at UCCSV

As we come to the second Sunday in Advent our focus word is love. But we're not talking here about the kind of love that's easy or neat or even warms your heart. Instead, the love we're focused on is the kind of love that often requires sacrifices and that is sometimes hard to find. In our scriptures for this week both the Gospel of Matthew and Isaiah, a messenger appears as a sign from God, heralding a new era. A new way of being, of relating and loving takes courage—eschewing the present order of things so that a new and better day can be born. The scriptures also challenge us on what it means to be in right relationship, what it means to be a family, and encourages us to look for "signs." What signs of love do you see in the world today? What signs are you showing to others? Let's worship together with music and prayer and wonder and

see what God has to offer us in this special season.

As you sit down to worship bring your Advent Wreath if you have one. If you don't have an Advent Wreath then bring two candles which will stand in as the first and second candle of the season (next week we'll add candle #3). As always the Zoom room opens at 9:30am and worship begins at 10am and will also be livestreamed to our facebook page and recorded for later posting to our website.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84470757726?pwd=VUhkWDZacGZBUFBwYWISU3QxN3dlUT09>

Meeting ID: 844 7075 7726

Passcode: 20874

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

Meeting ID: 844 7075 7726

Passcode: 20874

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcm87sP9zS>

Stewardship Update

There's good news and there's hard news.

The good news: A week and a half out from the end of our Stewardship Campaign and we have now received \$166,300 in financial pledges for our church's 2021 budget including 3 new pledges and 19 pledges that increased their giving for the coming year. Thank you so much for all who braved the various ways we had to pledge this year to make this happen. (For comparison purposes last year we had a total of \$167,600 pledged.) If you had planned to pledge your financial support for the coming year and have not gotten a chance to do so yet, please mail in your pledge card (or a letter of any kind denoting your financial pledge) to PO Box 803,

Germantown, MD 20875 or fill out the online form at <https://forms.gle/CzGFztqyKF4nPxCn9>

The hard news: As wonderful as that pledged total is given the financial strain of so many this past year, our budget situation as a church going into 2021 is going to be difficult. Due to financial struggles and a lack of building use in general we'll likely miss out on approximately \$15,000-\$20,000 of rental income. Last year's budget did not include staff raises and was already a \$3,000 deficit budget. We will not end this year with a deficit only because of money from the CARES act which allowed us to continue paying our staff at their current rates. It's likely that when the Council meets later this month to work out a final budget for 2021 they will need to make some hard choices. Please pray for our church leadership as they continue to steer us through these difficult times and help us all listen to God's still speaking voice as we seek to be the church together.



Virtual Christmas Story Time and Cookies **Sunday, December 13, 3:00 – 4:00pm**

Settle in with your favorite Christmas cookies or treat to show, tell about and eat. Then listen to fellow UCCSV friends read fun Christmas stories aloud.

Zoom link will be provided closer to the date of the event.

If you would be interested in reading a favorite Christmas story or have any questions, please contact:

Deb Anderson

debralanderson57@gmail.com

or Madelyn Anderson

madelyn.andersonfraley@gmail.com

Santas Wanted!

Germantown HELP is looking for teams of drivers to deliver holiday gifts to Germantown residents, most likely between Dec. 19 and 21. Donations would be welcome, too. If you are interested, please contact Noel at noellin50@gmail.com.

Christmas Photos Needed

In order to enhance our online Advent and Christmas worship we need your Christmas photos. Right now we are looking for pictures of Advent Wreaths, Nativity sets, Christmas Trees and similar decorations. These can be of your personal decorations, of church decorations from previous years, or commercial decorations you have taken pictures of. Later in the month I will be asking you to send pictures of people you will miss or not see this Christmas Season. Please hold those until later so I can sort everything out. Send pictures to HollyRJackson@gmail.com. Thank you!!

Luminaria for Advent - A Church Wide Art Project

While we can't be together in person this Christmas and Advent we can still create together. We're asking people to make a luminaria as part of their Christmas preparations and take pictures of them and send them to HollyRJackson@gmail.com. Then they will be used in worship. Directions for how to make a luminaria are attached to this Spirit News. If you need bags or candles for the bags please email HollyRJackson@gmail.com and we will get them out to you.

Drive-by Christmas Lights

The Advent Planning Committee is pleased to announce the UCCSV Drive-by Christmas Lights

activity. Please join us on Saturday, December 19th at 5 p.m. as we meet in the UCCSV parking lot before departing on a drive-through light show of participating households from the congregation.

The Drive-by Christmas Lights will kick-off with socially distanced merriment including hot apple cider and a photo opportunity in front of the church's new Christmas banner before departing on the drive-through light show at 5:30 p.m.

Those interested in adding their homes to the Drive-by Christmas Lights route should contact Camila Young at cespinapr@gmail.com and/or (240) 801-0412 by Monday, December 14th. Also, those with decorations in need of a helping hand in setting them up may contact Camila about that too, since Bryan is more than happy to help set up outdoor decorative displays.

The final Drive-by Christmas Lights route will be ready by December 15th for those who wish to see the lights, but cannot join us on the day of the drive-through. We hope to see you there!

Congregational Check In/Happy Hour - Fridays at 7 PM

Connecting nowadays can be difficult. Do you sometimes just want to see your fellow UCCSV members and friends for a quick chat? Your wish is granted! There will be a Congregational Check In/Happy Hour every Friday at 7 PM. It will only run for 45 minutes and is a good way to say "hi" and catch up with others. Different Deacons will be hosting each Friday and it is open to all. It will be very casual with no obligations... stop by when you feel the need and stay as long or short as you want. Take care and we will see you when we see you.

-John (Chair of Deacons)

UCC Seneca Valley is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.
Topic: Congregational Check In/Happy Hour

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89655025431?pwd=V1k0bEQ4VTBGODJ3L2U1WHBFbzBnZz09>

Meeting ID: 896 5502 5431
Passcode: peeps

Dial by your location
+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)
Meeting ID: 896 5502 5431
Passcode: 565927
Find your local number:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89655025431?pwd=V1k0bEQ4VTBGODJ3L2U1WHBFbzBnZz09>

Pastor Holly's Stories to Live By Podcast

Pastor Holly is creating a series of short podcasts where she reads biblical stories and other stories of love and justice for you to listen to on your own time and at your own pace. New stories will come out each week.
You can find these new podcasts here:
<https://anchor.fm/holly-jackson5/>

These stories are primarily created with children and youth in mind as a way to try to make more Christian Education opportunities available for our families that didn't involve a screen. However, the stories might be particularly interesting to people of all ages who maybe just need 10 minutes of listening to a great story. I also have reflection questions at the end of each story to consider and discuss.

Christmas Cards



This Christmas why not reach out to other members by including them in your Christmas card list.

Let's let others know that you're thinking of them during this special time. Consider sending to not just those you know well but also others on UCCSV's mailing list...

We suggest you send to at least 3 people and brighten someone's day and share the joy of the season! - Susan Percy



December

Luzmarina Granada	12/10
Claro Yu	12/13
Clarisse Lin	12/21
Miranda Lin	12/21
Noel Lin	12/26
Jen Fuss	12/29