

# STONE CHURCH NEWS

DECEMBER 2016



## Advent Morning Meditation

*Every week day morning of the Advent season*

*8:45am — beginning Monday, November 28*

Each weekday morning of the advent season, beginning at 8:45 am Monday, November 28, a 15 minute quiet time of reflection will be held in the Stone Church sanctuary. Music, a scripture reading and reflection, prayer and time of silence will be held each morning, which concludes promptly at 9 am. Anyone is invited to silently enter the sanctuary one, or several or each day during this advent season. This morning time of “pause” will be held each day (Monday through Friday), November 28 until December 23. (We will be using the 2016 Church of the Brethren Advent Devotional, “Witnesses to Jesus,” written by Pastor Christy Waltersdorff, to guide this meditation time. Copies are available for anyone at the back of the sanctuary.)

## Christmas Cookies needed for The Huntingdon Community Soup Kitchen

Please bring Christmas cookies to the church by Wednesday, December 21<sup>st</sup>. We will share and distribute the cookies at the **soup kitchen** on Thurs. evening. (You can drop off the cookies in the church kitchen from Sunday, Dec. 18 thru Wednesday, Dec. 21.)



## CHRISTMAS at the HUNTINGDON COMMUNITY SOUP KITCHEN

**December 22<sup>nd</sup>**



Stone Church's next turn at the soup kitchen is coming up! We're serving the meal on Thursday, Dec 22 at the Presbyterian Church. We're cooking at Stone Church the day before (see Longest Night announcement) and we'll still need to prepare salads, fruit, serve dinner, and clean up on Thursday. Please contact the church office if you can take a 2 hour shift between 3:30 and 7:30 pm on Dec 22. This will be a great way to share

holiday spirit with your church family – we have fun in the kitchen, and get to share our beloved faith tradition of service with the wider Huntingdon community. Others from Stone Church help by sharing some Christmas cookies for the dessert that evening. You may bring your cookies to the church kitchen by noon on December 21<sup>st</sup>.



## **The Longest Night--Wednesday, December 21<sup>st</sup>!**

On **Wednesday, Dec 21**, as we dwell in the longest darkness of 2016, Stone Church has a bunch of ways to light up your evening and help you share your brightness with others!

*Come for one part or for the whole evening!!*

### ► **4:00 pm -CHRISTMAS CAROLING for ALL ages!**

It's a yearly tradition at Stone Church to sing Christmas Carols for some of our Stone Church folks and others at Huntingdon Hills and Westminster Woods. ALL ages are encouraged to meet at the church at 4 pm!



### ► **5:30 pm -SOUP SUPPER and Hot Chocolate**

Hosted by Hospitality Team



### ► **6:00 pm -WORKING TOGETHER**

And, we'll then work together to prepare the meal for Dec 22's Huntingdon Community Soup Kitchen (which takes place at the Presbyterian Church every Thursday at 6pm). We especially encourage those home for the holidays to come with their families for this Wednesday evening of holiday cheer and service. (Tasks for ALL ages – including cookie making!)



## **CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE**

**Saturday, December 24, 7 pm**

A worship service in candlelight—hear the story. Sing the carols.  
Celebrate once again the love of God known through Jesus!  
Invite your family and friends to join you in this sacred time.

## **ADVENT BOXES .... Everyone can participate!**



**THIS YEAR .... Countdown to Christmas by putting an item (or a gift of money) each day of the Advent season in a box or basket you place in your home. Plan to bring it to Stone Church on Christmas Sunday (or the first two Sundays of January). These items/financial gifts will be shared with persons of the Huntingdon Food Pantry and Huntingdon House in the new year. And, you can pray for those persons who might be receiving some of these items in your advent prayer time.**

**Items which could be very helpful include:**

- Spaghetti & Sauce
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Soups
- Paper Towels
- Tissues
- Diapers
- Light Bulbs (Compact Fluorescent Lights) which help our environment!
- Money to purchase these items
- Gift cards (Walmart, Sheetz, Visa etc.)
- Cleaning Supplies (cleaning products, mops, buckets, sponges, magic erasers)
- Paper Product (paper towels, toilet paper, tissues)
- Toiletries (full & traveled sized shampoo/conditioner/body wash/lotion/loofahs)
- Feminine Hygiene products
- Hair Products (African American hair products, hairspray, mousse, hair ties, etc.)
- Baby supplies (diapers, wipes, powder, shampoo, bottles, pacifiers, etc.)
- Laundry supplies (detergent, dryer sheets, fabric softener)
- Bath towels and wash cloths
- Dishwasher detergent
- Trash Bags
- Storage baskets
- Dish soap
- Bleach
- Batteries

## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DURING ADVENT**



As in Advent's past, we will be graced by a pageant written and directed by Brooke Meadows on Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup>. Children, youth and adults will be invited to participate in the many roles and we hope many of you will join us for this tradition! Preparation and practice for the pageant will be held during the 9:30-10:30 Sunday School hour, December 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. On December 18<sup>th</sup>, plan on a 9am beginning time.

## Alternative Christmas Gifts Bazaar – Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>



This year find gifts that make a local and global impact at the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Alternative Christmas Gifts Bazaar, Saturday, Dec 3 from 9am to 2pm. From local crafts and local food to fair trade art from across the globe, you'll find many things to wrap for your loved ones. Local organizations will also be at the bazaar so you can share gifts of donations to Habitat for Humanity, Huntingdon

Community Library, and more! Enjoy complimentary drinks and a delicious soup and bread feast for a very low cost. Plus, three donkeys will grace our nativity.

## Festival of Song

The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival of Song is Saturday, Dec 3 at 7pm at the Huntingdon Presbyterian Church, sponsored by the Huntingdon Forum of Churches. Songs include: Music, Music, Music; Adam Bucynski; Anthony Bullet; George Dempsey; Belles and Beaus; the Abbey Trio and the Singing Doctors. The audience will sing along with Christmas carols, too! Donations benefit the Huntingdon Area Forum of Churches Emergency Fuel Fund.



## 2016 POINSETTIAS ORDERS

Red and White poinsettias will be ordered this year to adorn our sanctuary on Christmas Eve. Orders w/payment (\$10.00 each) are due in the church office no later than December 16, 2016.

Order forms are available at the church, or you may contact the church office with the following information:

- \* Quantity AND color you are ordering
- \* Name of person you are commemorating or honoring
- \* *Name of purchaser as you would like it listed in the bulletin:*

***Poinsettias may be picked up following  
Christmas Eve worship. Thank you!!!***





## Congregational Forum

*We shared significant conversation at the November 20 congregational forum, wrestled with challenging realities of a changing church in a changing culture, and prayed and sang together.*

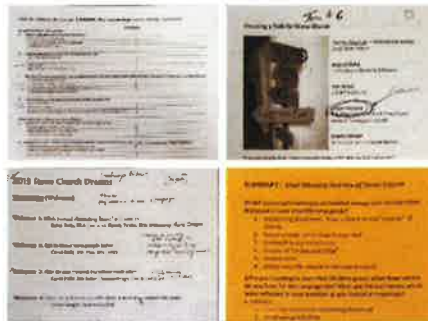
### Finance Team says thank you!

Pledges from the Congregation for 2017 increased by almost \$16,000 compared to the prior year. We have 6 new households pledging. Of the 78 pledges received, 44 represented increases over the prior year. 2017 pledged giving now totaled \$246,476. If you haven't yet pledged, but would like to, or if you have questions about the process, please let Finance Team know. Also, contact us if you have questions about your financial support of Stone Church or suggestions on how we can improve.

We continue developing 2017's budget, which we'll present to the congregation for review in January. The wonderful response to the request for pledges makes us optimistic about the ongoing mission which we share.

*Bob McMinn,  
Finance Team Chair*

Discovery Team presented discoveries from its hearty and heartfelt work: 12 meetings since June, plus at least 8 subcommittee meetings, plus 3 presentations to Leadership Team.



As Discovery Team considers congregational conversations (2013-2014 Vital Ministries Journey, 2015 20/20 Visioning, etc.) and works with current

ministry teams, Stone Church's identity and passions are consistent, across time and conversations, and Stone Church's strengths are consistently identified as:

- Worship and music
- Welcoming spirit
- Mutual support, sense of community
- Social justice and sharing of our space
- Christian Education/spiritual growth



We have this good news to celebrate! And we also have a gorilla in the room – the thing we know is there, but it's scary, and maybe it will go away if we ignore it...***In today's culture, and at***

***Stone Church, many people do not participate in the life of the church as fully as they did in the past.***

For example, though our average worship attendance has only decreased by about 25 people over the past 10 years, a *minority* of Stone Church participants/members attend worship more than twice a month (our families are more spread out, we travel more, we work weekends, etc.). This puts a greater burden on our pastors to be the center of relationships and information throughout a widely spread church body. And it means a lot of work to, for example, find Sunday school teachers. Did you know we have 24 people teaching four children and youth Sunday school classes this fall? Wonder why it takes so many people? Ask your Christian Ed team.

So church and culture are changing, we're spread thin and can't afford as many pastors as we would need to pick up all this slack. Plus, we're a community of faith, and our engagement with one another is an essential part of being the body of Christ. So, what's next?

**Rethink WHY, WHAT, and HOW we do.** Discovery Team continues to work on:

- ☐ Vision Statement
- ☐ Mission Statement
- ☐ Ministry Priorities
- ☐ Staffing Model
- ☐ Congregational Responsibilities
- ☐ Joint meeting with Leadership Team
- ☐ Present more at the January Forum

For **you** to ponder

- ☐ What is yours to carry for the greatest health of this body?
- ☐ What are the things we should say *no* to in order to say *yes* to the things to God is calling us?

As we approach 2017, the Personnel Team will be reviewing contracts with all paid staff. Pastor Christy Dowdy is full-time, considered ~50 hours/week. Interim Pastor Anna Lisa Gross is half-time, considered ~25 hours/week. Anna Lisa's contract is for 12 months, which will finish in May 2017. Her contract could be extended for additional months if this will be most beneficial for Stone Church in this time of leadership transition.

Anna Lisa's contract includes 4 weeks of vacation per year. Her travels over the summer (getting married, a ministry and writing weeklong workshop, etc.) were not considered vacation because she was working full-time through the summer at half-time pay.

### **Slate Report**

*Leadership Team Vice Chair (2017-19)*

Dennis Plane

*Treasurer (2017-19)*

John Wright

*Finance Team Chair (2017-19)*

Bob McMinn

*Gifts Discernment Team Member*

Jamie White

*Annual Conference Delegates – 2017*

Mary Garvey

Sara White

*Annual Conference Alternates – 2017*

Daisy Decker

Betty Ann Cherry

## **Treasurer's Report - October 2016**

Closing Bank Balance: \$30,290.98

	<b>Oct. 2016</b>	<b>Year-To-Date</b>
<b>Income:</b>	\$31,488.06	\$219,211.13
<b>Expenses:</b>	\$28,542.61	\$227,411.49
<b>Net Income</b>	\$2,945.45	-\$8,200.36



At this happy season, I want to tell you about our Three Wise Cats: Paul, Martha and Lois. When we wed, my Angel Alberta was nice enough—one might say *insistent* enough—to bring with her these wise cats.

I hate being ignored by a cat. Paul, Martha and Lois love my wife but avoid me. When I am able to grab one of them to nuzzle and kiss them, they run away at first chance to lick any one hair that might be out of place. Every time Martha catches me looking at her, she meows nonstop until I feed her. This happens about six times a day. My wife just demanded, “What does this have to do with Christmas?”

'Twas the night before Christmas,

When all through the house

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.

Clement Clarke Moore wrote those immortal words for his children nearly 200 years ago as his family happily anticipated a visit by Saint Nicholas.

Some 2,000 years earlier an angel had appeared to shepherds watching their flocks one night and announced, “Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy...for unto you is born this day in the city of David a saviour, Christ the Lord.”

The joy of the coming of Christ cannot be compared with the joy of waiting for Santa Claus. But whether we are children of 5 or 65 years, we can remember the excitement of leaving oranges or cookies out on Christmas Eve for Santa—or the satisfaction Christian parents can have in explaining what Christmas is meant to be. Let us praise God!

And as we look forward with whatever hope and faith we can muster, may we remember these words of March 4, 1933: “First of all let me assert (the) firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasonless, unjustified terror...” and Proverbs 15:18: “A wrathful man stirreth up strife.”

In the articles that appear in *Messenger* you will find stories of hope for the future that will give us strength to live in the present. If you do not already have access to our denominational magazine, please see Debbie at the church office and start your own subscription.

----- Eugene R. Goshorn-----  
December 2016

# Older Adults Luncheon

“Big-Little things from the past week to be thankful for” – that’s what we shared about around the tables on November 15<sup>th</sup> as we gathered for our first Thanksgiving meal of the season. At my table, I heard about the joy of spending serendipitous time with a great grandson, the thankfulness for a visit to the dentist with no dental work needed, and the blessing of peace after deciding to stay in Huntingdon for awhile longer to be with family and to be part of our faith community at Stone. I didn’t share my “big-little” happening – I was just enjoying listening to everyone else (and eating!) – but here is the first thing that popped into my mind. I was thankful for the turkey being roasted, off the bones, and ready to eat by lunchtime! Rather critical for a successful lunch but not earth shattering!

Well, since last Tuesday, I’ve had some time to reflect about “big-little” things to be thankful for and here’s the list for just that one day:

- Red, yellow, and orange paper leaves scattered around ceramic turkeys and a Thanksgiving Bear! which made the tables look beautiful and festive.
- Great helpers in the kitchen to the peel potatoes, bake the rolls, plate the cranberry jello salad, wash the lettuce, prepare the green bean casserole, and cut the pumpkin and lemon sponge pies.
- Table setters who take care of everything from salt and pepper shakers to full pitchers of water and silverware laid out with great care on bright orange and leafy fall napkins.
- The beautiful sunny warm weather that day for travel!
- The time for sharing and praying for our friends and family who are in need of support and love.
- The wonder that the dishes and pots all got cleaned up afterwards!
- The joy of being able to cook for a great group of people who never complain and always eat what we serve and give lots of compliments. (It’s what keeps me coming back for more!)

I know that I’ve forgotten some but what are the “big-little” things that you’re thankful for this week? Share them with a friend, talk to God about the goodness in your day or just ponder those “big-little” happenings for a moment – you are sure to find more joy, more peace... and more things to be thankful for in your life!



See you on December 20<sup>th</sup> for more blessings! Anita



# Stone Church Youth News

December 2016

## Youth activities



We had a holy and hilarious lock-in at the end of October, and were thankful for Dan Cook-Huffman's homemade pizza,

After exuberant, creative fun and caring relationship-building at our Oct lock-in, the youth have been meeting weekly for games and reflections. We've played hard and talked about hard things. We've celebrated youth and one another's gifts. Thanks to Anne Rice, Anita Soliday and Tinka Berger for supporting these activities along with Anna Lisa. Parents, remember, we always need at least two people over age 21 for youth activities – would you like to be part of our gatherings?

## Coming up:

Friday, Dec 9 and 16 we'll have activities and conversation at church from 6:30 – 10pm. Dec 21 we're celebrating the longest night of the year with caroling at 4pm, dinner at church, and working together to prepare dinner for the Huntingdon Community Soup Kitchen (see page 1).

Soon we'll transition to volleyball as our weekend activity, in preparation for the Middle PA Church of the Brethren district tournament in the spring. Starting in January, we'll meet (probably) on Saturdays from 6:30-8:30pm for volleyball practice, at the HAHS gym. *We need permission slips filled out and parent/adult support for volleyball.*

The Middle PA District Youth Winter Retreat is January 13-15 at Camp Blue Diamond. This year's theme is Hearing God and One Another. We celebrate Chloe Soliday and Eddie Rice who are on District Youth Cabinet and plan these events!

In the meantime, we've had a wide variety of conversation in Sunday school each week at 9:30am, from the US election and our faith to learning to read the Bible, to understanding God as warrior and/or peacemaker. Thanks to Brooke Meadows, Emily Elder, Dennis Plane, Maylin Musser, David Meadows and Anna Lisa Gross for supporting youth Sunday school.

## Calendar:

### DECEMBER

**Sundays 9:30 am** – Sunday school

**Sundays 10:45 am** – Worship

**Fridays 6:30 pm, Dec 9 & 16** – Activities at Stone Church

**Wednesday 4 pm, Dec. 21** – Caroling, Chili, and Christmas Cookies

### JANUARY

**Saturdays(?) 6:30 pm** – Volleyball rehearsal begin

# News From CAMP

## Summer Camp 2017

It's never too early to start dreaming about summer camp! The 2017 Camp Blue Diamond summer schedule has been published and brochures will soon be designed. In case you're looking to make vacation plans or decide in advance which camp will fit into your schedule best, take a look and think happy CBD thoughts. <>

Date	Camp	Grade ('16-'17 Schoolyear)
June 3 - 4	Kiddie Wknd	Age 5, 6 or 7 + Parent
June 3 - 4	CIT Camp	Grades 9-11
June 15 - 16	Kiddie Camp	Age 5 & 6 + Parent
June 15 - 16	Tenderfoot Camp	Grades 1-2
June 18 - 23	Junior 1	Grades 3-5
June 18 - 23	Jr. High 1	Grades 6-8
June 18 - 23	Sr. High Canoe	Grades 8-12
June 25 - 30	Creative Arts	Grades 5-8
June 25 - 30	Yough Adv.	Grades 7-9
June 25 - 30	Jr. Adventure	Grades 4-5
July 5 - 7	Caving Camp	Grades 5-7
July 5 - 7	Pioneer Camp	Grades 2-4
July 9 - 14	Bike & Raft Adventure	Grades 7-12, Adults
July 9 - 15	Youth Camp	Grades 8-12
July 16 - 21	Junior 2	Grades 3-5
July 16 - 21	Advanced OLS	Grades 8-10
July 23 - 28	Wild OLS	Grades 5-7
July 23 - 28	Jr. High 2	Grades 6-8
August 18 - 20	Family Camp	All Ages

## Upcoming Events in 2017

District Youth Retreat for Grades 9-12  
Jr. High Retreat for Grades 6-8  
Annual Dinners  
Quilt & Craft Camp  
Father/Son Retreat

January 13 – 15  
February 24 – 26  
March 24 & 25  
April 28 – 30  
May 5 – 6

## Have questions?

Contact your Camp Representative, David Meadows, at 814-599-6017 or [meadowd@juniata.edu](mailto:meadowd@juniata.edu). You can also visit the CBD website at [www.campbluediamond.org](http://www.campbluediamond.org).



## MEN'S BREAKFAST

**MEN'S BREAKFAST**—The men's monthly breakfast gathering will take place on **Saturday, December 17**, at 8 am at Donna's Restaurant (in the back room). Everyone has the opportunity to order off the menu, have spirited conversation and then take time to reflect on a theme or scripture for the day. ***Men of all ages are invited to join this time of fellowship!***

And – in **JANUARY** --- The Men's Breakfast will be  
*Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup>*  
*at 8 am in the Fellowship Hall at Stone Church,*  
*with a special DVD showing.*

## Older Adult Lunch

The Older Adult Lunch gathering will meet Tuesday, **December 20, at 12 noon** in room 102. If you know someone within Stone Church or a neighbor or friend who might enjoy this time of gathering, be sure to invite them! Reservations are requested in the church office (643-3390 or [stonechurch@verizon.net](mailto:stonechurch@verizon.net)) by Monday, December 19<sup>th</sup>.



## BELL RINGERS NEEDED:

Friday, Dec. 9, at Peebles.

Please contact Jeannie Lashlee, 814-599-5457.

## Chill Chasers... During the month of October, The

Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary provided a collection box for warm winter clothing during the month of October. They were accepting donations of good washable jackets, sweaters, gloves, mittens, scarves, snow suits, and boots – all sizes. The box was not only overflowing but had additional boxes added! All were used to help keep Huntingdon County families warm.





## 2016 Buck Season Wrap-Up

The Farmers' Market Bucks program, launched in 2010, had another exciting year in 2016. A component of the Witness Team's "Daily Bread" initiative, the Market Bucks program is a collaboration among Stone Church, the Huntingdon Forum of Churches, the Farmers' Market and a number of area community-service agencies. It involves locally-issued "market bucks" purchased for one's personal use at the market, for gift-giving, or for donating on behalf of low-income members of our community. Its purposes include encouraging us all to eat more fresh, locally-grown food; supporting local, environmentally-responsible farmers and our region's economy; and increasing access to the market for folks who otherwise couldn't afford to shop there. Donated Market Bucks (or "Bonus Bucks") are distributed to recipients of SNAP benefits (formerly known as Food Stamps) when they shop at the market; they receive \$1 in Bonus Bucks for every \$2 of SNAP money they spend, extending their purchasing power.



### Noteworthy in 2016:

- 5% of the value of all Market Bucks sold was donated to PRIDE. PRIDE used these proceeds to purchase more than \$184-worth of Market Bucks for distribution to its elderly clients.
- 51 SNAP recipients patronized the market, 45 of whom were new SNAP customers.
- A vegetable encyclopedia with information on using 36 different kinds of produce, developed by the Leadership Huntingdon County Class of 2015, was distributed free-of-charge to SNAP customers at the market.
- The market hosted monthly cooking demonstrations by local chefs – with free samples!

**Market Bucks for the 2017 season will be available for purchase in the spring.** Details will follow in later newsletters. To all who participated in the Market Bucks / Bonus Bucks project this past season, many thanks on behalf of all of the partner organizations. Special thanks to Kim Roth, for being on call to help out with card-processing and Bonus Bucks distribution. We welcome your feedback and/or your offers of assistance as we plan for 2017 ([laura.jamie@gmail.com](mailto:laura.jamie@gmail.com); 251-4363).

	2016 season	2010-16
Market Bucks purchased	\$ 3,496.00	\$23,807.00
Market Bucks donated to PRIDE	\$ 184.00	\$ 857.00
Bonus Bucks donated	\$ 1,030.00	\$ 7,355.00
Bonus Bucks distributed	\$ 1,073.00	\$ 7,162.00
Bonus Bucks redeemed	\$ 962.00	\$ 6,115.00
# households using SNAP benefits	51 (45 new)	193
Value of SNAP benefits used	\$ 2,100.05	\$10,963.81

***Also... Many thanks to all who participated in the Green Friday Habitat Care event removing invasive species along the Lower Trail!***



## **From the Leadership Team.....**

### **Team Meeting 10/12/2016 – “Breathe on Me, Breath of God”**

Respectfully submitted by Vice Chair Rick Laabs

Chair Jeff Decker opened the meeting, by asking us to take a deep breath to clear our minds for the work ahead. We followed by singing “Breathe on Me, Breath of God”. Pastor Christy shared Psalm 46 emphasizing “Be still... Be still and know that I am God”. She then presented a letter composed by the “Supportive Communities Network” to Annual Conference Leadership in support of inclusion for lgbtq people. The SCN requested Stone Church to sign the open letter and support the guiding principles, which can be found online at <http://www.bmclgbt.org/open-letter>. The Leadership Team unanimously approved signing the letter.

The Pastors reported with pride participation in Lauren Seganos ordination interview, optimism regarding stewardship pledges, concern for the difficult challenge of impending change needed in certain ministry team activities, appreciative of the Youth Lock In generating momentum in youth ministries, as well as Marty Keeney’s hard work preparing the Thanksgiving Community Service choir and the sense of community in being a part of the Inner Faith Power and Light annual meeting. The Leadership Team would like to remind the congregation that our part-time Interim Pastor Anna Lisa was granted unpaid leave earlier in her term, after she worked several full time weeks. As such, her recent paid vacation is not excessive, but rather commensurate with her part-time position.

Moderator Brooke Meadows enthusiastically reported that she had a rousing educational opportunity called “Math With Bob (McMinn, Finance Team Chair) regarding staff salary and benefits. Brooke is targeting completion of staff contracts earlier than last year. She thanked the Hospitality Team for their efforts in hosting 80 people for Kim Witkovsky’s ordination ceremony.

Reports from Ministry Teams included: Hopes for higher participation in gifts and talents survey, A productive Christian Ed retreat, Brooke Meadows will direct another Christmas Pageant, Carpet cleaning plans, a snowblower trade and Tom Ness’ extraordinary effort on the Narthex entry doors, The role of Deacons in today’s age, The upcoming Christmas caroling and the Alternative Christmas Bazaar, and Belle Tuten’s Hymnal inventory efforts.

The Finance Team gratefully reported the following encouraging statistics from the Stewardship Campaign: 77 pledges totaling \$244,000, which included 6 new pledging family units and 43 family units increasing pledges over last year.

Chuck Yon presented progress from the Discovery Team. The Leadership Team and Discovery Team will hold a joint meeting in the near future. The Leadership Team directed the Discovery Team to present a progress report at the Forum on November 20<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting was closed by singing “Breathe on Me, Breath of God”.

## Updates to the 2016 Church Directory:

**Mitchell, Don & Becky**

2464 Moore Street.  
Huntingdon, PA 16652

**Laabs, Rick**

Work: 814-643-3000 x2203.

### ***December Birthdays***

2—Aron Christopher  
5—Mario Grugan  
6—Bill Martin  
7—Kendan Beck  
9—Zilla Wagner  
9—Dennis Plane  
11—Alex Gibboney  
13—Carol Grubb  
14—Rick Laabs  
15—Terry Murray

17—Jerriann Heiser Wenger  
17—Geoff Clarke  
18—Emily Elder  
18—Joanna White  
18—Max Hosler  
19—Martin Berger  
20—Josh Porcelli  
20—Meredith Widman  
21—Aislin Wright

22—Margaret Smith  
23—Elias Smolcic-Larson  
24—Brenda Quarry  
24—Sally Stewart  
26—Nora Roth  
28—Olivia Grugan  
30—Cora Dickey  
31—Garry Beck III

### ***December Anniversaries***

3—Barb & Max Moyer  
6—Betty & David Quarry \*35 yrs

31—Tinka & Henrik Berger



### **Food Pantry for December**

In December, we suggest you contribute to the Huntingdon Food Pantry through the Advent Box. (See article in THIS newsletter.) Donations may always be placed in the wagon outside the sanctuary doors by the organ.

IN NOVEMBER, the item was Hand Soap and 70 bars and bottles of soap, along with 2 boxes of pasta, 4 cans of soup, 1 can of vegetables, 2 jars of peanut butter, 1 cake mix, and \$128 in cash were donated to this local

ministry during the third Sunday monthly offering!! (IN OCTOBER, the item was Peanut Butter and the final count was 40 jars of PB, 6 toilet paper, 1 juice, 2 cans of beans, and 12 bags of rice!)



### **Grocery Gift Cards— Every card helps our church!**

*Is a grocery gift card a possible gift idea for someone on your list?*

Purchase a Stone Church Grocery Gift Card on Sundays at the back of the sanctuary or in the church office. Coordinators, Barb Purdy and Cheryl Ritchey, have challenged everyone to purchase a card one week out of every month for the next year.



## Miguel Angel Asturias Academy | A Fair Start

During this season of Thanksgiving and Christmas preparations, I write to request that you make as generous a financial contribution as you can to our partners at the Asturias Academy to provide the gift of education to some very deserving children. Approximately 90% of the students come from poor families and without scholarship assistance would be unable to receive the transformative education offered at the school. Tuition payments cover less than 50% of its \$120,000 annual operating budget, which is to say, all of the operating expenses of a pre-K through grade 12 education for over 200 students. That is only about \$50 a month to pay all the educational expenses for every student at the school!

Recent newsletter updates have shared some of the wonderful experiences of last summer's educational and medical delegation members and what we accomplished working with the Asturias Academy staff. In his annual end-of-year report, school founder and principal Jorge Chojolán expressed his deep gratitude for our support and highlighted a number of other academic accomplishments and activities:

- a total of 205 students attended the Asturias Academy this year: 25 in pre-school, 120 in elementary, and 60 at the secondary level, with no dropouts and all but three of the students successfully passing on to the next grade or graduating, a 98.5% success rate
- creation of a dance ensemble that performed in two state-wide festivals and gave three performances at the school
- an educational field trip to Lake Atitlán, a recycling day and field trip to the nearby Copavic artisans recycled glass products cooperative, a Family Day celebration at Cerro El Baúl park (which the educational delegation attended following the volcanic ash eruption that covered Xela), and monthly culminating activities on the school's core themes such as discrimination, gender equality, multiculturalism, and sustainable development.

In order to assess the benefits of an Asturias Academy education and demonstrate its value when applying for grants, the school applied for and received funding from the Global Education Fund to commission a study on the educational and career outcomes for the 62 students who have graduated since the high school program was added in 2009. A social worker from the University of San Carlos was hired to conduct the study, and he interviewed all but five of the students, who had either migrated to the United States or couldn't be located. Ninety-five percent of these students were the first in their families to graduate from high school. Whereas nationwide only about 3% of high school graduates pursue university studies, he found that 77% had continued their studies at the university level, and 15% still plan to pursue a college degree. Eighty-nine percent of the students (of the 92% actually interviewed) are currently employed in what they consider to be a *trabajo digno* (decent or worthwhile job), 26% have started a business, and all of the students interviewed reported that their education at the Asturias Academy had a very positive impact on their world view and the life paths they have chosen.

The Global Education Fund also financed a feasibility study in Santiago Atitlán to determine the most urgent educational needs, which is currently underway and will be completed by February. The study will guide the development of a plan to open a new school in Santiago in January of 2018. The Global Education Fund has committed \$15,000 per year for the first three years of the new school, as well as \$5,000 this year for the study and startup costs. Although this is a key part of Jorge's dream to create an alternative educational model that would be replicated throughout Guatemala, it will be a challenge to find the additional resources needed to make the new school a reality.

The Asturias Academy also faces another financial challenge this year because the funding it has received to supplement teacher salaries over the past five years from the Global Fund for Children is ending. These funds have made it possible for the school to retain almost all of their teachers over the last five years, but unless alternative funds are secured, the school will have to reduce teachers' compensation and will doubtless lose some excellent teachers.

In order to continue empowering Guatemalan youth to break the cycle of poverty and to build a more just and inclusive society, the Asturias Academy needs our assistance. As you consider year-end charitable contributions, remember that your gift to the Asturias Academy will bear extraordinary fruits. How many organizations can say that virtually 100% of donations





## ***Words of Gratitude for Ordination Worship and Celebration***

***from Kim Witkovsky***



Words cannot begin to express my gratitude for the outpouring of love and support I experienced the day of my ordination, Sunday October 23, 2016. I was deeply moved by the number and variety of those present for the worship service itself. The music during the worship was a very special gift and my thanks and appreciation go out to Loren and Donna Rhodes for playing the pieces I requested with extra practice required in the midst of fall break and a trip to Nashville. Total Praise was a blessing I received from the choir, especially knowing the additional rehearsals and the time they gave up on a Sunday afternoon to share their music with all of us. And thanks so much to Marty Keeney for coordinating all the efforts of the musicians and leading us in 2 a Capella verses during our hymns – so beautiful! My gratitude extends to Pastor Christy Dowdy and all her assistance in organizing the elements of the day as well as her leadership during the worship service and to Debbie Barrette for all her expertise. Thanks to Zilla Wagner for serving as greeter too! Of course, my deep appreciation extends to Connie Maclay and Bob Neff for their words and presence, accentuating the day with challenge and blessing. And finally, my sincere thanks to all the folks, too numerous to name but you know who you are, and the coordinating efforts of Cheryl Ritchey, my awesome deacon, and her crew from the Hospitality Team and beyond who presented us with a beautiful setting and delicious treats for our reception following the service. I truly felt loved, special, cared for and celebrated in so many ways. You gave me the gift of a day I will never forget!

It has officially been a 10 year journey of discernment from my first day as a licensed minister but I believe God has been preparing me all of my life for this time and this place and this special ministry with older adults. God has brought each and every one of you into my life to guide, love, challenge and affirm me just when I needed you the most and I am grateful – for my family who nurtured and grew me in the way of Christ ever since I can remember, for my friends who listened to, encouraged me and walked with me through the ups and downs of ministry, for the powerful mentors and spiritual guides I have been blessed with in many work places and faith communities, many of you not even knowing the powerful influence and ways that you have touched my life in the name of Christ. God has brought me to this special ministry with older adults with a vision, mission and purpose and I consider the charge seriously and reverently. Especially I thank you, my Stone Church family, for stepping out in faith and standing up for me in my licensing period and for your ongoing financial support of my ministry training, moral and prayer support, for calling me to the role of Coordinator of OAM and for walking with me through the ordination process, encouraging and challenging me and affirming my gifts for ministry. I ask for your continued love, support and prayers as I follow God's call in my new position as chaplain at Cross Keys Village and in the future wherever God may lead me. Please remember that we are in this ministry together of sharing God's love with the world and that we serve others side by side as the Body of Christ. Blessings and love to all of you! Shalom!

## Faith and climate film series – coming January 29

We know that creation care is an essential part of our faith, we celebrate God's sacred world in worship, and deepen our spiritual roots in nature. Many at Stone find support and energy for living sustainability through this faith community. We want to share this good news with the wider community through a faith and climate film series. Mark your calendars, though more details are yet to come. On the last Sunday of the month, January, February and March, we'll gather for film and discussion at 3pm. Stone Church will host in January, and other churches may wish to host later dates. See you January 29, February 26 and March 26 at 3pm!



### I will light candles this Christmas.

Candles of joy, despite all sadness.  
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch.  
Candles of courage for fears ever present.  
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days.  
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens.  
Candles of love to inspire all my living.  
Candles that will burn all the year long.

- Howard Thurman



# December 2016

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

				<b>1</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  5:30p BBBS/S.M.A.R.T. 6p Kindermusik-Rm 203 7:16p Choir Rehearsal	<b>2</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  5p ACGB set-up 5p Christmas Tree Lighting-downtown Huntingdon	<b>3</b> 9a-2p Alternative Christmas Gift Bazaar-FH
<b>4</b> 10:45a Worship  4p Cub Scouts 5p Boy Scouts 7p Bell Rehearsal	<b>5</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  6p Kindermusik-Rm 203	<b>6</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  5:30p JC Pasta Dinner-FH/Kitchen 6p Kindermusik-Rm 203	<b>7</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  6p Christian Ed.	<b>8</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  5:30p BBBS/S.M.A.R.T. 6p Kindermusik-Rm 203 7:16p Choir Rehearsal	<b>9</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary Ring bells at Peebles  6:30p Youth Game Night	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b> 8a Youth Planning Meeting 10:45 Worship w/bells 12p Handbell practice 4p Cub Scouts 6p Boy Scouts	<b>12</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  6p Prayer Shawl-Rm 201 6p Kindermusik-Rm 203	<b>13</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary	<b>14</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  7p Leadership Team-Rm 201	<b>15</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  6p Kindermusik-Rm 203 7:16p Choir Rehearsal	<b>16</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  11a-1p JC Facilities Party-FH/Kitchen 6:30p Youth Game Night	<b>17</b> 8a Men's Breakfast-Donna's Restaurant
<b>18</b> 10:45a Worship/Christmas Program  4p Cub Scouts 6p Boy Scouts	<b>19</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  6p Kindermusik-Rm 203	<b>20</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  12p Older Adult Luncheon-Room 102	<b>21</b> LONGEST NIGHT 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  4p Caroling 5:30 Soup Supper 6:00 Working Together for Soup Kitchen Prep	<b>22</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary  6p Soup Kitchen 7:16p Choir Rehearsal	<b>23</b> 8:45a Advent Meditation-Sanctuary	<b>24</b>  7p Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
<b>25</b> CHRISTMAS 10:45a Worship	<b>26</b> OFFICE CLOSED	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>  7:16p NO CHOIR	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>

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# STONE CHURCH NEWS

DECEMBER 2016



## PREPARE AN ADVENT BOX

*2016 Countdown to Christmas*

Gather food, household items and money each day of this month, to be shared with Huntingdon Food Pantry and Huntingdon House clients in the new year!

...more information inside!