

Calendar of Events

DECEMBER

Visit with Santa Coffee Hour - December 03

Christmas Pageant & Santa - December 10

Special Congregational Meeting after Worship in BH - December 10

MOPS Christmas Store - December 9, 16

The Gospel of Mark Storytelling Event - December 17

Longest Night @ CUMC - December 21

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship - December 24

JANUARY 2024

Pastor Jason Sabbatical Return - January 2

Epiphany Sunday - January 7

Sabbatical Celebration Worship & Meal - January 7

Church Council Installation - January 14

3rd Sunday: Pastor Jason's Sabbatical Presentation - January 21

2023 Annual Reports due - January 22

2024 Lenten Devotional Items due - January 29

FEBRUARY 2024

Turkish Cooking Class February 11

Ash Wednesday Worship at Christ UMC February 14

Annual Meeting February 18

Lenten Study on Wednesdays, February 21 & February 28

MARCH 2024

Lenten Study on Wednesdays, March 6 - March 27

Lenten Cantata - March 17

Maundy Thursday - March 28

Good Friday - March 29

Easter Vigil @ Christ UMC - March 30

Easter Sunday - March 31



The Good News

Quarterly Newsletter of West Park United Church of Christ

Winter
2023-24



**WEST PARK UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

An Open and Affirming Congregation

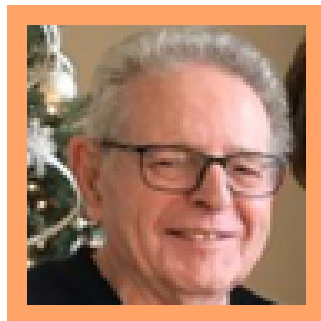
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Cleveland, Ohio 44111

www.westparkucc.org

Following Christ, Caring for All, Growing Together





Thoughts on Advent from Pastor Jim

Dear Friends,

The most wonderful time of the year is upon us. The season of Advent. Advent, the season of preparation, penitence, and, expectancy. I love the Advent season because as we move through the four Sundays of Advent, the excitement grows as we light the candles on the Advent wreath preparing us for our Savior's birth.. The candles (three purple and one pink) symbolize Jesus as the light of the world.. They send us the message of Advent: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Advent is a time of new beginnings. It marks the beginning a of a new liturgical year.as we sing songs of our Lord's upcoming birth. Advent is a time to quiet our minds and open our hearts to receive Jesus. It is a time of peace to reflect on what the season is really all about.

Here are five simple ways to make this Advent season a more meaningful one:

PRAY EACH DAY - Make a commitment to daily prayer. Ask God to forgive you of your sins and bring your concerns to Him placing them in his care.

READ A SPIRITUAL BOOK - In order to keep your mind on Christ read a spiritual book. There are many to choose from. Select one that speaks to you. Perhaps an Advent daily devotional would be meaningful to you this season.

PRACTICE PATIENCE - What better way to practice patience than during the time of Advent? After all, the Advent season is known as a time of waiting. And we all know that waiting involves patience.

BE THE LIGHT OF CHRIST TO OTHERS - With so much darkness in this world, remember that Jesus is the light.In fact, the Advent candles symbolize the light of Christ in our world. Remember the reason for the season. Surround yourself with reminders of the real reason for the season. Whether it's an Advent wreath in your home, a nativity scene, or a Bible displayed on your table.

These are simple reminders.Let them fill your heart and home this season as we celebrate Christ's coming.

Pastor Jim



Annual Meeting 2024

Mark your calendars and join us on February 18, after worship for the Annual Meeting! If you are a 2023 Council Officer, Board or Committee Chair, or a Delegate, please have your Annual Report for 2023 turned into the church office by January 22.

Called to Care Team

For pastoral care emergencies, we will have a new system in place beginning in September. You may call 216.210.5936 and one of the members of our Called to Care Team will be on hand to assist you.

Questions about sabbatical?

WestParkUCC.org/sabbatical

Special Mission Offerings: Pink Envelope

Each month, our church supports a special offering to benefit other organization's missions to serve God and neighbor.

December 2024: The Christmas Fund is an annual UCC offering that provides financial assistance to UCC clergy and lay employees.

January 2024: CUE (Chicago, United and Eden Seminaries of the UCC) are dedicated to strengthening churches by educating leaders who will serve congregations and communities around the world with compassion and justice.

February 2024: Laura's Home is a transitional shelter for women and their families as they get back on their feet. The goal of the programs of Laura's Home is to help women feel safe, help them find work that will support them and their families, and help them find a new home in which they can thrive.



Community Cupboard



December Volunteer Opportunities

Wednesday, December 6: 12:30pm - Truck Day
Friday, December 8: 3:30pm - Prep Day
Saturday, December 9: 9:00am - Pantry Day
Friday, December 15: 3:30pm - Prep Day
Saturday, December 16: 9:00am - Pantry Day

January Volunteer Opportunities

Wednesday, January 10: 12:30pm - Truck Day
Friday, January 12: 3:30pm - Prep Day
Saturday, January 13: 9:00am - Pantry Day
Friday, January 19: 3:30pm - Prep Day
Saturday, January 20: 9:00am - Pantry Day

February Volunteer Opportunities

Wednesday, February 7: 12:30pm - Truck Day
Friday, February 9: 3:30pm - Prep Day
Saturday, February 10: 9:00am - Pantry Day
Friday, February 16: 3:30pm - Prep Day
Saturday, February 17: 9:00am - Pantry Day

Special Mission Offerings: Pink Envelope

Each month, our church supports a special offering to benefit other organizations' missions to serve God and neighbor.

September 2023: MEMBERS IN NEED. When our members need financial assistance during a crisis, we invite them to turn to the church for help. We all need someone to lean on from time to time, and we do our best to help. All of the monies collected are used to assist church members.

October 2023: NEIGHBORS IN NEED (NIN), one of the five special offerings of the UCC. These funds support ministries of justice and compassion in the United States. In 2023, the Neighbors in Need "BEHOLD!" offering focuses on environmental justice.

November 2023: RISE AGAINST HUNGER is an international hunger relief non-profit organization that coordinates the packaging and distribution of food and other aid to people in developing nations. They are working to eradicate hunger through the implementation of community development projects and meal packing events.



2023 Advent Study

Our joint four-week study with Christ United Methodist Church will take place on each Wednesday night during Advent (November 29, December 6, 13, 20). Each evening will begin with a soup supper from 6-6:30pm followed by our book study from 6:30-7:30pm. This year's study guide will be *An Unlikely Advent: Extraordinary People of the Christmas Story*, by Rachel Billups. Materials will be available for purchase at a discounted price in mid-November from Robin Jessen or the church office. This study will take place at Christ UMC (3625 West 138th Street).

Poinsettia Orders, Memorial Gifts

Once again, the Season of Advent is upon us. How we wait with anticipation for the birth of our Savior! CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS add color and beauty to our sanctuary on Christmas Eve. Please consider honoring a friend or loved one at this time. The price remains unchanged at \$10.00. Also, there is a memorial form, if you would like to remember or honor someone in your life to the church. Forms are included with this newsletter. Return the forms with cash or checks in the offering plate, or mail in to the church office by December 17. Thank you!

Celebration Worship and Dinner Jan. 7

Mark your calendars for Pastor Jason's return from Sabbatical! Join us for a celebratory worship service at 10:00 a.m., followed by a dinner in Barter Hall. More information to follow.





**THE
GOSPEL
STORYTELLING
OF MARK**

PERFORMED BY
Special Guest
REV. DR. TRACY RADOSEVIC

DEC 17

10AM WORSHIP
2-4:30PM PRESENTATION

CHILDCARE NOT PROVIDED



This unique and mesmerizing performance features United Methodist Pastor and Dean of the Academy for Biblical Storytelling: The Rev. Dr. Tracy Radosevic. She will transport us through time and space, delving deep into the compelling narratives of the Gospel of Mark. With her masterful storytelling prowess, she brings to life the ancient scriptural passages, painting vivid pictures of the life, teachings, and miracles of Jesus Christ.

With a special brand of humor, insight, and unwavering faith, she will infuse every moment with a sense of wonder and enlightenment. This experience is bound to resonate with audiences of all ages and denominations, fostering a shared sense of spiritual connection and understanding.

10am Worship | 2-4:30pm Storytelling Event

Livestream available at westparkucc.org/livestream



Lenten Supper Study

Race and the Church

5:30 to 7:00 pm in Bartter Hall

5:30 - Potluck - bring food to share, plates, and cutlery. Drinks will be provided.

6:00 - 7:00 pm study following the potluck.

Our 2024 Lenten study will take place each Wednesday night from February 21 - March 27 from 5:30-7:00 in Bartter Hall. The six-week study will focus on racial bias in the Christian church and ways we might help heal the wounds of the past while preparing for a more equitable future. We will be on zoom as well. **ALL ARE WELCOME.**

Alongside the program, Pastor Jason will conduct research to facilitate the completion of his Doctor of Ministry degree. This is the final part of a five year research project and he is requesting that all who sign up to be part of this groundbreaking study. If you are interested in participating in the research study as well as the program, advance sign up is required. You can sign up by calling the church office after January 1. Pastor Jason will provide additional details when he returns from sabbatical next year!

Lenten Devotional

We will continue our tradition of our annual Lenten Devotional for our Lenten season 2024.

The theme of next year's devotional is "Seeing God." Biblical references for this include Moses' encounter at the burning bush, Exodus 3:2-6, and Thomas' encounter with the Living Christ in John 20:27-29. Submissions for the devotional can include personal writings, poetry, artwork, etc. If you submit something written by someone else, please include proper attribution for that piece. Send your submissions to the church office or to Debbie Miller or Robin Jessen. We will take submissions after the first of the year, and the final due date is Monday, January 29th.

