

Pastor's Report to Consistory
January 9, 2017

The primary focus of December was Christmas, and I would like to thank everyone who participated in any way throughout the Advent season, into Christmas and Epiphany. This includes those who decorated and undecorated our sanctuary, Elaine DiFranco who handled the poinsettia orders and Wade Anderson, who arranged them in the chancel. Dorothy Martin for handling contributions to the Help Fund, the confirmation class and their families as well as the college students who participated in the lighting of the Advent Wreath, all our soloists, the choir with Ira and Joni at the helm (and Rick Carson behind the scenes), Ira for her hard work and Rheba for all the extra work involved in putting out the bulletins and helping to print out the music for the choir, and of course the choir, as well as our many readers.

During Advent, I was able to visit all our shut-ins and those in care facilities, due to the time that I had available because I had because of very few hospital visits. We also had the Saturday morning Bible Study when the weather permitted.

I continue our work in our work of thinking about the future of Denmark Manor. I met with The Rev. Joseph Hedden, Pastor of Hill's Church and The Rev. John Titus, Pastor of First UCC in Harrison City. We felt that perhaps conversations could begin among our Cluster churches, also including Trinity UCC and First UCC of Apollo around our purpose as churches and as THE CHURCH. We have another meeting on January 18.

On January 8, we installed our new officers to the consistory: Allen Mattei (taking a second term as Trustee), Fred Hayes and Cathie Herrod (Deacons) and Brian Long (Elder). Dan Walk and Robin Brautigam continue as Elders, Dave Conner and Bonnie Malovitz continue as Deacons, and Mike DiFranco and Barry Kistler continue as Trustees. The following are brief Job Descriptions: *The Consistory is the body that acts ad-interim, or between congregational meetings. Elders are responsible for the leadership and spiritual nurture of the congregation; deacons are responsible for the financial well-being of the church; and trustees oversee the upkeep of our buildings and grounds.*

We have received thank you letters from the following organizations that we supported through our end of year benevolence giving:

1. Lancaster Theological Seminary whose mission is “to educate and nurture leaders to join God’s redemptive and liberating work so that all creation may flourish.”
2. The Blackburn Center that provides services “critical to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and other violent crimes in Westmoreland County.”
3. St. Paul’s Continuing Care Community that helps to “provide security to 55% of their skilled nursing care residents and 22% of their personal care residents who cannot afford the full cost of care.”
4. Western Westmoreland County Faith in Action that “enriches the lives of our senior neighbors by matching volunteers with recipients in need of supportive companionship and assistance, extending their ability to remain living independently. Volunteers provide a range of free services including telephone reassurance, appointment escorts, supportive errands, home visits, home safety checks and caregiver relief.” Faith in Action has now extended its services to in-home professional counseling as well, given that seniors are among the largest groups impacted by major depressive disorder.

The ministry that we accomplish among us is important as well as our ministry beyond our congregation, that surprisingly often impacts members of our congregation in a positive way.

I am grateful for the week of vacation that I was able to enjoy after Christmas. The Rev. Bobbie Hine line preached on January 1.

Our prayers are with the Spahn family at the passing of Jesse, who died on December 27 and whose funeral was held on January 21, with The Rev. Joseph Hedden, Pastor of Hill’s Church, officiating.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Meredith Ann Hutchison". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Meredith Hutchison