



Conyngham United Methodist Church
PO Box AB, 411 Main Street,
Conyngham, PA 18219
570-788-3960
conynghamumc@ptd.net
www.conynghamumc.org
December 2022

Pastor's Pen

When I was a kid, I used to get up early on Christmas morning. I think it was usually around 5am. I was just too excited to sleep. I lay there in my bed thinking more and more about the presents that were under the tree. Eventually, after two whole hours of waiting, it was 7am, and I was allowed to go into my parents' room and bug them to get up so we could open our presents. And sure enough, when I went out and saw the tree, I saw what I expected. There were many presents, softly lit by the warm glow of the multi-colored Christmas lights.

What do you expect on Christmas morning? That first Christmas, they expected something rather extraordinary: Luke 2:15-19 (NIV)- ¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." ¹⁶So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds expected to see a simple baby who was God with us. And that is exactly what they found. I'd wager that what you expect to find this Christmas, might just be what you will see. That's a real psychological principle. When we expect to see something, it becomes much easier to see it.

What do you expect to find this Christmas morning? Will it be a simple baby in a manger, or God with us? Both are beautiful. But a simple baby in a manger who is God with us, that is something truly special. God wrapped up in the ordinary, but sacred, things of life. How do you expect to see the light of God born into the world again this Christmas? Keep your eyes out for it. Like Mary did, treasure and ponder what God is doing.

Take time this month, and this Christmas day, to ask, where is the light of God being born again? How is that light being born inside you? How is it being born into our community? How are you, God's hands and feet, carrying that light to your neighbors or family so that it may be born inside them too?

Wishing you merry Christmas blessings of love and peace,

Pastor Graham

Lectionary

04—December

2nd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19 (UMH 795)

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12

24—December

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalms 96 (UMH 815)

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-20

11—December

3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 35:1-10

Luke 1:46b-55 (UMH 199)

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

25—December

Christmas Day

Isaiah 52:7-10

Psalms 98 or UMH 818

Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12)

John 1:1-14

18—December

4th Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19 (UMH 801)

Romans 1:1-17

Matthew 1:18-25

31—December

Watchnight/New Year's Eve

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Psalms 8 (UMH 743)

Revelation 21:1-6a

Matthew 25:31-46

Valley Interfaith Council Prayer List

Please pray for the following in your daily devotions.

Kayla Baucum, Irene and Robert Burger, Carol Chyko, Marie Colihan, Pastor Tom Cvammen, Arty Deis, Janette Eckrote, Collette Eskin, Mike Fellin, Jennifer Flores, Food Pantry Families, Barbara Gavel, Irene Healey, Connie Hofmann, Aggie Kisenweather, Rose Luethy, Mark and Theresa Marinock, Christine and David Matthey, Frank Tarselli, Marilyn Tedesco, Josh Wagner, Jacqueline Walker, Marie Waschko, Ron Eckrote, Kaylee Barbush, Gil Bittenbender, Glenn Kirschner, June Blamey, Carl Roberts, Amelia Berteron, Jill, Carol Seiwel, Lois Ann Earley, Nicole Bachert, Kasha in Ukraine, Joanne Mumie, Gerri Griffith, Clyde VanHorn, Tyler Wolfe, Carl Flaim, Joe Tomcheck, Pat Ferrari, all cancer patients, our military, anyone with COVID, People with opioid addiction, The People of Kentucky flooding, the Ukraine/Russia situation and families of addicts.

Please pray daily for your church, its leaders and staff, Pastor Graham Truscott, the Red Bird Mission Clinic, the Red Bird Mission School, the Salvation Army, United Children's Homes, Hazleton Enlarged Ministry and the Hazleton/Valley Mission Connection. Also, pray for the leaders of our country and military personnel.

December Birthdays

| | |
|--------|--------------------------|
| 03 Dec | <i>Fran Phillips</i> |
| 05 Dec | <i>Marlee Cundro</i> |
| 05 Dec | <i>Ian Racho</i> |
| 06 Dec | <i>Cindy Howe</i> |
| 07 Dec | <i>Caleb Skuba</i> |
| 09 Dec | <i>Conner Wetzel</i> |
| 10 Dec | <i>Myles Bicking</i> |
| 11 Dec | <i>Jennifer Flores</i> |
| 13 Dec | <i>Gavin Huey</i> |
| 16 Dec | <i>Chris Gogola</i> |
| 17 Dec | <i>Melissa Gebhart</i> |
| 18 Dec | <i>Alma Casner</i> |
| 19 Dec | <i>Carol Seiwell</i> |
| 19 Dec | <i>Alma Joan Dretzel</i> |
| 20 Dec | <i>Sidra Gogola</i> |
| 29-Dec | <i>Miwa Dretzel</i> |



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|--------|----------------|
| 02-Jan | Ivy Huey |
| 07-Jan | Emily Flaim |
| 07-Jan | Joey Dretzel |
| 08-Jan | Kirk Wetzel |
| 08-Jan | Jennifer Quinn |
| 10-Jan | Jenson Huey |
| 12-Jan | Denise Earley |
| 12-Jan | Araceli Gogola |
| 15-Jan | Hallie Cara |
| 19-Jan | Jeremy Rossi |
| 21-Jan | Loisann Earley |
| 25-Jan | James Bannon |

January Anniversaries

| | |
|--------|----------------------|
| 14 Jan | Scott and Jean Luchi |
| 30 Jan | Gary & Millini Skuba |

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

Toys for Tots:

December 18th will be the last day for collecting Toys for Tots. Please place an unwrapped toy in the box; all toys are distributed locally. The Marine Corp. league will be at the church at 10:10 AM, on that Sunday for pick-up. Any child wishing to be in the picture for the newspaper, is welcome.



Thank you for participating.



When sending out your Christmas Cards this year please consider sending one to Logan Wetzel. **Cards and Letters Only Please**

His address is as follows:
SR Wetzel, Logan H.
Ship 4
Division 011
3600 Ohio Street
Great Lakes, IL 60088

MISSION REPORT

Due to the recent fire at the United Charities Boys Home in West Hazleton, the kitchen and numerous rooms had extensive damage. The kitchen is unusable and will take 3-4 months to repair.

A "Meal Train Calendar" has been organized so that the community can supply an evening meal for that period of time; lunch for the boys is provided at school.

November was an exciting month. Our church was able to deliver a delicious hot meal of meatloaf, mac & cheese, beans, corn and a cake. We had financial funds from the Book Sale so that was used and we approached Gould's to see if they would prepare that first meal.

On December 18th, we will be supplying another meal and hopefully we can select a few more days to help them out. If you are interested in helping out in any way, please contact the Selby's.

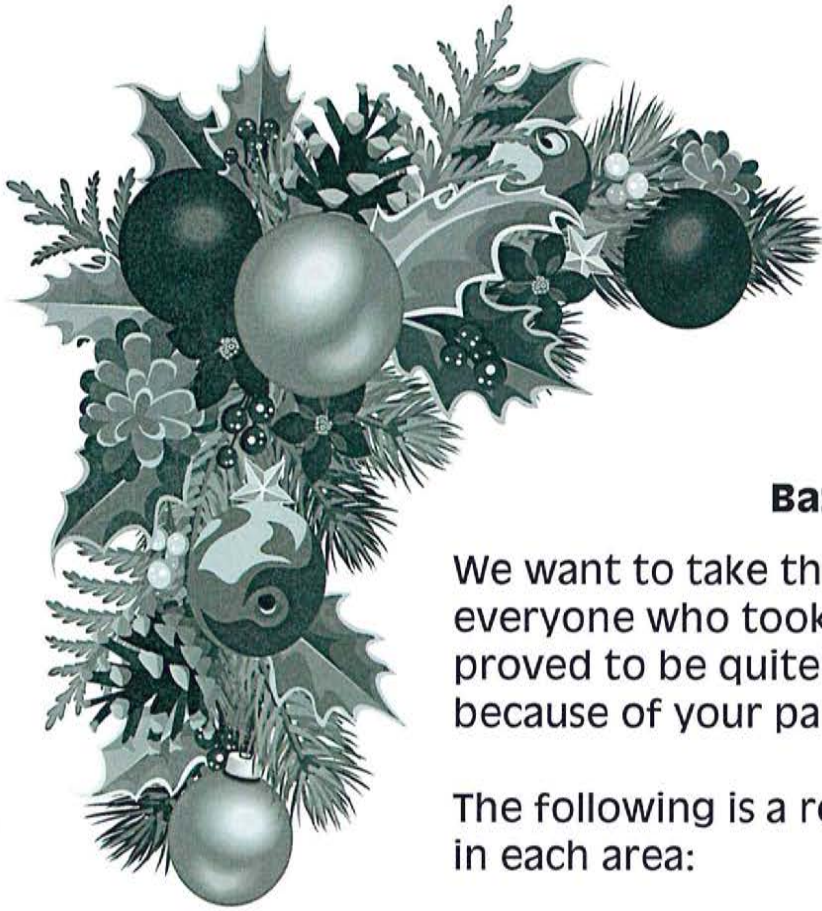
MEMORIAL FUND

The Memorial Fund has purchased new window blinds for the Pastor's office and the youth room. The new blinds are a match to those previously purchased for the social hall and the secretary's office. Check them out.



Secret Sister Box

A "Secret Sister Box" is in the social hall. If you are participating in this group, drop your Christmas Gift in the box and it will be given to your "Secret Sister" before the holidays.



Bazaar Report

We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who took any part in the Bazaar. It proved to be quite successful and that is only because of your participation in it.

The following is a report on the monies made in each area:

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Kitchen | \$1,218.00 |
| Auction | \$1,130.01 |
| Bake Sale | \$ 316.20 |
| Jewelry | \$ 191.95 |
| Attic Treasurers | \$ 414.00 |
| Crafts | \$ 221.51 |
| Vendors | \$ 50.00 |
| Total | \$3,541.67 |

Thank you once again for your assistance.

Mary Lou and Sharon

Advent and Christmas Worship

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas! Here's what's going on in our church this Christmas and Advent.

Our theme for Advent this year is, "What Are We Waiting For?" Advent is all about waiting and anticipating the blessing of Jesus, God with us, on Christmas morning. It's also about waiting for the blessing of Jesus coming again. So, this Advent we are going to be talking about what kinds of blessing we are waiting for in Jesus, God with us: hope, peace, love, and joy.

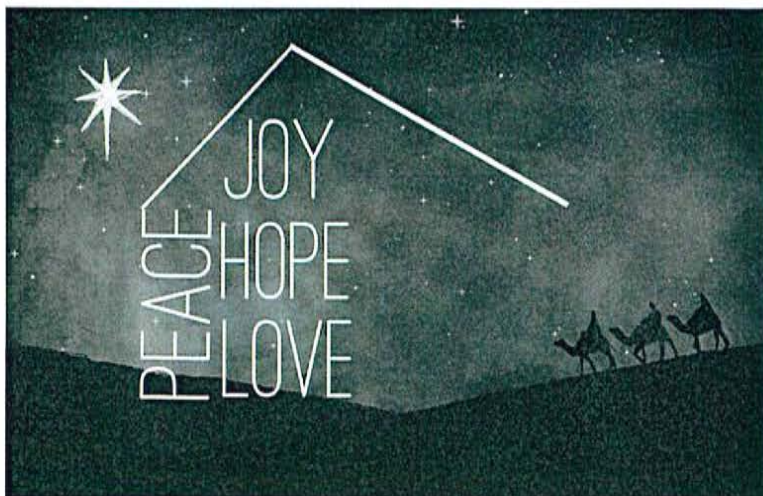
We'll also talk about how those blessings are beginning to come true.

We will be having a Blue Christmas worship service open to the community on Saturday, December 17, at 6:30 pm. A Blue Christmas service is for folks who are feeling blue surrounding the holidays. These times are not happy for everybody. People have experienced pain and loss around this time of year, and all the joy and family fellowship may just remind them more of that loss. This solemn worship service is for people like that.

To celebrate the blessing of God with us, we will be having a special music filled worship service on Sunday December 18. This will include handbell and chime performances from our kids Sunday school class as part of the service. This will be a great Sunday of fun for the whole family!

Our Christmas Eve worship service will be at 6pm on Christmas Eve, December 24. Communion will be served during worship, and our time of worship It will be followed by silent communion from 7:30-9pm.

Christmas Day falls on a Sunday this year. We do, however, know that most of us will be spending the morning with our families. Instead of our normal, in person worship service, there will be a pre-recorded service prepared by our bishop for folks to watch online. Even if you are spending the whole day with your family, I encourage you to watch the video together and to worship together, inviting the newborn king into a new family tradition.



Valley Interfaith Council is now on Facebook! Please follow them to keep up with local events.

Then Jesus said,
"Come to me,
all of you who are
weary and carry
heavy burdens,
and I will
give you rest."

-Matthew 11:28



Advent and Christmas- Slow Down and See How God is With Us Now

One of the blessings we are waiting for from God is rest. We are all tired during this time of year, and we are all yearning for some rest. There are times it might feel like it we aren't busy, things will fall apart. Like things will come crashing down if we don't get it all done. But without room to take a breath, we will fall apart. That is why God instructs us to take Sabbath rest. This year, let's slow down to see how Jesus is God with us, here and now.

This Advent, to meet this need, our church wants to offer rest to our congregation and our community. The first way is with the "Breathing Room." We will set up our library next to the church offices as a room to take a breather in, open to the whole community. It will be open Tuesdays and Wednesday from 12pm-6pm, and Thursdays and Fridays from 10am-6pm. This will be open until Christmas Eve. The room will have soothing music, coloring books for grown-ups, snacks, an essential oil diffuser, some tea, and a booklet to write down prayers or frustrations. The idea is that as we go about our days, we all need a breather. Now, anybody passing by can come and take a breather at our church. They can pop into the breathing room whenever it is open, and simply find some room to breathe and slow down. Heidi and/or Pastor Graham will be here when the room is open. Other volunteers are appreciated. Although rather than volunteering, think of it as a way to take an extended breather, a time to slow down, for yourself. The Breathing Room starts Tuesday December 6, at noon. This will not prevent any group from using the library during their regularly scheduled times.

The other way our congregation is encouraging rest is by handing and emailing out a Restful Advent Calendar. This Advent calendar, like normal, has a different Bible verse for each day of Advent (in the month of December). But to go with those Bible verses are small and easy spiritual practices based around rest and slowing down. So, each day the calendar will offer you a spiritual practice to rest or slow down. **Then, to support and take care of one another, there will be a "Resting Together" group each Friday at 6pm, in person and on zoom. The whole point of the group is to slow down together, to talk about our weeks, and to support each other in our restful spiritual practices. It is not required. It is simply a way for us to journey in rest together.** We'll ask, how have you seen God this week? How has your rest gone? And how can we support you to slow down with God?

Update on the Future of our Denomination.

My friends and family of Conyngham UMC,

I have had several people ask me about what is going on with the politics in our denomination, the United Methodist Church, surrounding the issue of human sexuality. The issue of contention being where to, as a denomination, allow the marriage and ordination of "self-avowed and practicing homosexuals." This has been an issue in the denomination for a while and as some of you know, there are churches that are leaving our denomination because of it.

So, what is going on? In short, nothing. Nothing has changed for your average UMC church. We may simply continue loving God and neighbor as normal. While there seems to be a rumor that there is a required vote to stay United Methodist, or to join another denomination, that rumor is false. Churches only need to have a vote if they feel called by God to leave the UMC explicitly over the issue of human sexuality. In other words, the only churches that would vote to leave the denomination, are those who do not feel like they are able to remain in a denomination where people feel differently about human sexuality. So, unless a lot of our church feels strongly that we can't remain part of the UMC, where many United Methodists have diverse views on human sexuality and LGBTQ people, then there is no vote. We just remain part of the UMC like always. If our church would like a vote, then we need a signed petition by 10% of church members to the District Superintendent for a Church Conference (an all-church members vote) as well as written approval by church council. This would be a lengthy process, taking a lot of paperwork and some negotiations, that would also require a majority vote from all church members present at the church conference. So, even if we did want to, it would not be as simple as a vote, and it would take maybe a year or more to leave the denomination. I also want to be transparent and say I intend to remain a UMC pastor. If the church left the denomination, I would no longer be your pastor, which would sadden me greatly, as I love being pastor of our church.

With that all being said, I want to address some rumors and give you all a bit more information about this whole situation.

Some churches are disaffiliating with the UMC over this issue. They are mostly traditionalist/conservative churches associated with the Wesleyan Covenant Association, a group of "traditionalist/conservative" churches within the UMC. A total of around 6% of our 400 some churches in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference have voted to disaffiliate. Unfortunately, to encourage churches to leave the denomination, the Wesleyan Covenant Association has spread rumors about the UMC that I will address in a at the end of this letter.

I would also like to point out the UMC has not officially changed its stance on practicing Gay/Lesbian people being pastors or pastors performing Gay/Lesbian weddings. Practicing Gay/Lesbian people (those who intend to not practice celibacy with that sexuality) are still currently banned from being pastors in our denomination. And UMC pastors are still not allowed to perform such marriage ceremonies. Trials for pastors who have broken these rules have been suspended until after the 2024 general conference, in hopes of finishing a better resolution that simply punishing people trying their best to follow God. Please note that the UMC has no official position against its LGBTQ members being married in of itself, and has defended their civil rights to marriage. UMC pastors are simply barred from performing such ceremonies, and pastors are not allowed to be LGBTQ.

There is the possibility the UMC may change its official position on this issue. There is also the possibility it may not. Like a session of congress, where bills are proposed and voted on, we have a legislative body called the General Conference. This body meets every 4 years and is the only part of the UMC that is able to officially decide our doctrine and stances on issues. The General Conference was delayed several times due to Covid, and the next one is scheduled for 2024. Every 4 years there are proposals brought to the General Conference to change our stance on human sexuality. And each time they are voted on. So far, the official position remains unchanged. I do not know how much things will change with some traditionalist/conservative churches leaving the denomination. For all we know, things could stay very much the same, or things may change.

So how did all this start? The issue of human sexuality for our denomination has been as old as our denomination. We were founded in 1968 and in the early 1970's the phrase was added to the book of discipline (our basic source for our denominations official rules and doctrines) "Homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." That phrase has been controversial since it was added. In a special session of General Conference in 2019, there was a vote to keep everything the same or to let each local church decide where to allow "self-avowed practicing homosexual" pastors and wedding ceremonies in their church. 53% voted to keep everything the same and 47% voted to allow each church to decide. I have no doubt that there will be votes in the future on the same issue.

I would also like everybody to keep in mind that these votes and disagreements are not just about abstract theological issues. They are about people. One reason people keep on trying to change the book of discipline is because they have witnessed united Methodists turn LGBTQ people away from Jesus based on this theology. I personally know LGBTQ people who left the church because of how their churches treated or spoke to them. Because of this theology people have been harmed. And no matter our stance on the issue, or our theology, harming other people is something to repent of. Recently, the largest Mennonite denomination (Mennonite USA) has repented of the harm their church has caused LGBTQ folks. As have the Mormons. We are all called to make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world. Regardless of where we stand on the theology, God's love should be our guiding principle. So even if our theology does not change, the way our denomination treats LGBTQ people must if we are to live our mission as a church.

Now time to address some rumors:

Is the UMC Splitting at this time?

No. The term "split" applies when there is a negotiated agreement within the denomination to divide assets and resources. No such agreement has been made in The United Methodist Church. The earliest point at which such an agreement could be made would be at the next General Conference to be held in 2024.

A more accurate term, as suggested by the Rev. William Lawrence, retired dean of Perkins School of Theology and former member of the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church, is "splintering." What is happening is that some traditionalist leaders have decided to create their own denomination (the Global Methodist Church). Leaders of that denomination and other unofficial advocacy groups, such as the Wesleyan Covenant Association, which created it, are encouraging like-minded United Methodist congregations and clergy to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church and join their denomination instead.

Is the UMC asking traditionalists to leave the denomination?

No. The requests for disaffiliations are coming largely from traditionalists.

Is the UMC about to alter its doctrine to deny the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or salvation through Christ alone?

No. All of these positions are bedrock in the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church, more specifically in the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith. These cannot be altered without a two-thirds vote of the General Conference followed by a three-fourths aggregate approval of all annual conferences of The United Methodist Church worldwide. There is no basis to conclude such majorities can be achieved to alter the Articles and Confession for any reason.

Is the UMC intending to change the Bible?

No. The United Methodist Church has no official translation of the Bible and has never sought to alter the Bible at all. United Methodists have always had a variety of views about how to interpret specific passages of Scripture and likely always will.

Is the UMC immediately dropping all prohibitions related to human sexuality, now that the Global Methodist Church has been officially started?

No. The creation of the Global Methodist Church has no bearing on the existing policies of The United Methodist Church. The policies of The United Methodist Church are set by its General Conference. The General Conference is the only body that can change them. The General Conference is scheduled to meet next in 2024 at a time and venue to be announced.

Asking all local churches to vote on whether to remain in The United Methodist Church or join the Global Methodist Church?

No. No leaders in The United Methodist Church are asking or expecting any United Methodist congregation to take any vote on this question. Congregations may choose to do so. But nothing compels any United Methodist congregation to hold such a vote.

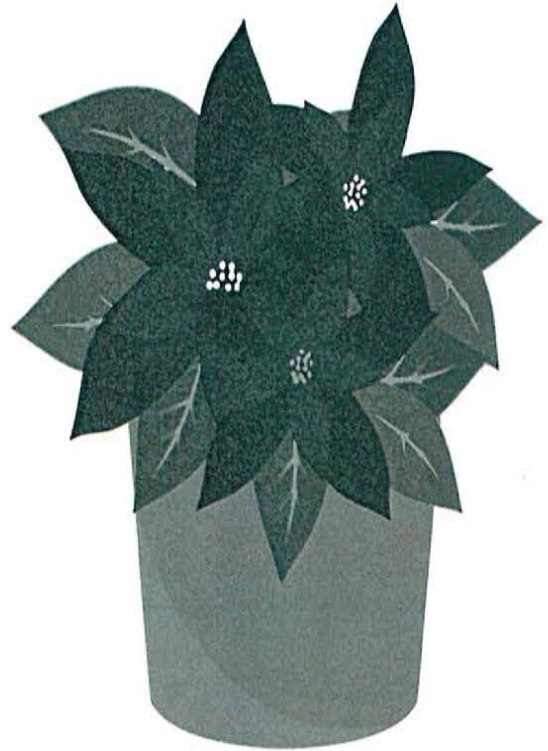
DECEMBER FLOWERS

December 04-Jeff and Heidi Klein will give a donation to the Building Fund in memory of their son, Cody John..

December 11-Mr. and Mrs. John Cara have given a donation to the General Fund.

December 18-OPEN

December 24-Poinsettia's



Christ UCC: will be selling **Crystals** for the holidays. **\$12.00 per box**, order by December 4th and pick up on December 17th from 10-noon. Call Rosemary @570-454-3018 or Barb @ 570-788-3246.

Living Nativity: Christ Lutheran Church invites everyone to join them **December 3rd** and **December 4th** from 5:00-7:00 pm. They will present a 12-scene living nativity with live animals.

Freeland Community Choir will present it's Christmas Concert entitles "Images of Adoration". Sunday December 4th @ 3:00 pm, Faith UCC in Hazle Township. Sunday, December 11th @ 3:00 pm, St. John's Reformed UCC in Freeland.

Red Bird Mission
70 Queendale Center
Beverly, KY 40913-9607

Conyngham United Methodist Church
411 Main Street
PO Box AB
Conyngham, PA 18219

Dear Conyngham UMC,

After the summer flooding, it seems as if we never got a pause here at Red Bird with the beginning of school, alumni homecoming, and now, the holidays pressing on us. Community Outreach staff and volunteers are preparing Christmas boxes for the distribution to hundreds in need.

Red Bird E-STREAM (STREAM activities for economic opportunities) at the school got a quick start with a student winning third place in a regional business pitch competition. A group of three students are pitching their business ideas for a website that tackles the issue of substance abuse, an issue that our entire nation is grappling with.

Thank you for your gift(s) of \$177.42 to Red Bird Clinic and \$177.42 to Red Bird School received here on 07/22/2022.

I apologize for being late with this receipt. We're working hard to get current again. Please contact me (tcrawford@rbmission.org), if you have any questions about your giving record, or need further information about Red Bird Mission and Red Bird Clinic.

Yours in Christ,
Tim Crawford
Department Director

Thank
you 

United Charities, Inc.
107 West Madison Avenue
West Hazleton, PA 18201

November 21, 2022

Conyngham United Methodist Church
411 S. Main Street
PO Box AB
Conyngham, PA 18219

Dear Pastor and Parishioners,

United Charities staff and residents would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation for the donation of meat-loaf, mac and cheese, corn, green beans, and cake to the United Charities Home located in West Hazleton. Our lives have turned upside down because of the fire, but we are getting back on track with your help and generosity. It is the wonderful actions of others in hard times like these, that keep us going. Your thoughtfulness and kindness will always be remembered.

Sincerely,
Jill Zapotocky, BS
Executive Director

December 2022

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| <p>4 9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service 2:00pm Latino Bible Study</p> | <p>5 6:00pm Zumba Class</p> | <p>6 10:00am Sisters 12:00pm Breathing Room Open 6:00pm Zumba Class 6:30pm Church Council Meeting</p> | <p>7 10:00am Religious Studies 12:00pm Breathing Room Open 6:30pm Christian Conversations</p> | <p>1 9:30am Prayer Shawl Ministry</p> | <p>2 10:00am Breathing Room 6:00pm Resting Together Meeting</p> | <p>3</p> |
| <p>11 9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service 2:00pm Latino Bible Study</p> | <p>12 6:00pm Zumba Class</p> | <p>13 10:00am Sisters 12:00pm Breathing Room Open 5:30pm Trustees Meeting 6:00pm Zumba Class</p> | <p>14 10:00am Religious Studies 12:00pm Breathing Room Open</p> | <p>15 9:30am Prayer Shawl Ministry 10:00am Breathing Room</p> | <p>16 10:00am Breathing Room 6:00pm Resting Together Meeting</p> | <p>17 6:30pm Blue Christmas Worship Service</p> |
| <p>18 9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service filled with music 2:00pm Latino Bible Study</p> | <p>19 6:00pm Zumba Class</p> | <p>20 10:00am Sisters 12:00pm Breathing Room Open 6:00pm Zumba Class</p> | <p>21 10:00am Religious Studies 12:00pm Breathing Room Open 6:30pm Christian Conversations</p> | <p>22 9:30am Plastic Mat Ministry 10:00am Breathing Room</p> | <p>23 10:00am Breathing Room 6:00pm Resting Together Meeting</p> | <p>24 Christmas Eve 6:00pm Christmas Eve Service 7:30pm Silent Communion</p> |
| <p>25 Christmas Day 10:30am Worship Service on line only 2:00pm Latino Bible Study</p> | <p>26 6:00pm Zumba Class</p> | <p>27 10:00am Sisters 6:00pm Zumba Class</p> | <p>28 10:00am Religious Studies</p> | <p>29</p> | <p>30</p> | <p>31 New Year's Eve</p> |