



*An Open and Affirming Congregation
of the United Church of Christ*

**Christ Church UCC
Vision Statement**

*Seeking to walk in the way of Jesus,
We believe that all people are made in the im-
age of God and that all are
welcome at Christ's table.
We aspire to be an open-minded
community of faith, engaged in
meaningful worship, and committed to social
justice, community service, and
personal spiritual growth.*

**Christ Church,
United Church of Christ**

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Dear Friends of Christ Church,

All of life is about the cycles of darkness and light. Right now, our mornings are dark and our evenings are darker. We are reminded of the shortness of our time to accomplish all that we would do. Our church calendar begins anew in the darkest days of the year. It is Advent, a time of watchfulness and expectation; a time of yearning for some light and understanding; a time of seeking the presence of the Most Holy here among us.

Christ Church is a reflection of the Light that Was, Is, and Will Be. We have many special events this month-opportunities for you to share love with your congregation and with your neighbors. I look forward to sharing this special season with you as we wait for God's plan for us to unfold.



Becky

Special Holiday Services & Holiday Happenings

Traditional Services – 9:00 am • Contemporary (Informal) Services – 10:30 am

December 4 – Second Sunday in Advent: Preparation

Congregational Budget Meeting Between Services

Cookie Sale & Hanging of the Greens Starts at 10:30

December 11 – Third Sunday in Advent: Choral Cantata

“Let Us Adore Him” (1st service)

December 18 – Fourth Sunday in Advent: Exaltation

Trip to the Manger

Santa Dinner – 4:30 to 7:00 pm

December 22 – Longest Night Service

7:00 pm

December 24 – Christmas Eve

5:30 pm Family Service

11:00 pm Midnight Service

December 25 – Christmas Day: Illumination

One service at 10 am

January 1 – New Year's Day

One service at 10 am

The Search is Over... and Just Beginning

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving connecting with friends and family and giving thanks to God for all we have been blessed to experience and receive. This is a season to reflect on and celebrate the joy in our lives and to help spread that joy to others by giving physical gifts, gifts of our time, and gifts of sharing.

Often, of course, it is hard to give thanks for all we experience. There have been tough times this year in some respects for all of us, economically, in our relationships, or in losing a dear friend. The life of Christ Church has been no exception, we have had joyful times and we have had painful times too. The last few years have been an unsettling time for our church family. Many of us are longing for a church home that feels settled, stable, and able to focus on serving the needs of our members and our community.

The search is over. That settled, thriving church we've been longing for is right here under our noses! Though it may seem like we have a long way to go to being "settled", we've already been through the hard part and this congregation has "settled on" and committed to investing in our future. All the rough times we've been through have not divided us like they might have, but have brought us together as a family willing to work to cultivate what we already have. Want some proof?

In the last couple of months the church leadership has been asking the congregation to participate in the next phase of our transition between pastors. For a congregation of ~100 people, we have had a huge amount of interest in taking part in the process of finding a new pastor. The Council was looking for seven people interested in serving and we found not just seven, but nine! Drumroll please.....

Here is your Pastoral Search Committee (members of the last search committee indicated by *):

*Cara Crocker	*Julie Sutfin	*Ron Gaus
Bonnie Paulsmeyer	Vicky Hardy	Tom Raber
Janet O'Neal	Jennifer Elam	Robyn Keough

Please support these folks as they begin the search process by telling them what you want in a pastor, what you want for the future of the congregation, and continuing to ask questions about the process.

As we begin this new phase in Christ Church to find our next pastor here on the doorstep of our celebrations of Christ's birth at Christmas, please remember: We are already the church we want to be—the search for that is over (and we found what we're looking for!).

Jennifer Elam
Council President

Thank You!

Ruby and Doris Miller for setting up the advent wreath &
Becky Turner for her continued support of Christ Church

December Celebrations

Birthdays

Myrna Winston	12-04
Teagan Moore	12-05
Aimee Moore	12-06
Kevin Gaus	12-14
Myles Keough	12-18
Tony Rosa	12-18
Kody Gaus	12-19
Dylan Pitts	12-21
Jan Pryibil	12-31

Anniversaries

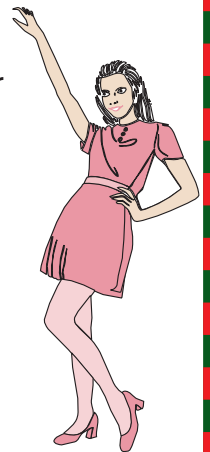
Charles & Linda	
Barbaglia	12-23

Getting Ready for the Girly Girl Sale!

The SOCC members wish you a blessed holiday season. We are starting the gathering of items for the 4th Annual Girly Girl Sale.

Please place your items on the stage. We are looking for your unwanted items, such as purses, frames, vases, lamps, anything other than electronics, clothes and Tupperware. Your help will make this sale a highlight in the dead of winter.

Thank you from the SOCC's team!



Open Studio at The Community Crafts Studio!

Please join us **Saturday, December 17 from 9 am to noon** for the next Open Studio. Bring your favorite 8.5" x 11" paper because we'll learn how to make your own gift bows! Pretty holiday papers ... paper colored by the kids ... the options are limitless! We'll also have one other paper craft for you, so bring **TWICE** as much paper! Don't forget: even if you're not doing the day's guided craft, bring those Christmas and Holiday items you're working on and hang out with us! Knitters, crocheters, stitchers, scrapbookers -- whatever you do -- **ALL are welcome!** Stay for an hour, stay for the morning.

Cara Crocker and Amy Chapleau
<http://strungoutdesigns.blogspot.com>

December Food Pantry Collection

Laundry Detergent and Tissue - Please leave in the Fellowship Hall

Christ Church Monthly Lunch!

Our lunch this month will be on
Thursday, December 8th.
We are gathering at 11:30 at

Applebee's

2301 Maplewood Commons Drive
Please RSVP to Debbie at the church office
314-644-3033

Make plans on joining us!

Senior Club Christmas Party

Bring a side dish and join us on
Thursday December 15th at 5:00 p.m.
in the Fellowship Hall at Christ Church.

Bring a friend! Everybody Welcome!

Next SOCC's Meeting

**Thursday December 29th
at 1:00 pm**

The Orange

Jake lived in an orphanage with nine other young boys. In the wintertime it seemed that any extra money went for coal to heat the old building. At Christmas time the building always seemed a little warmer and the food, a little more plentiful, but more than just this...Christmas meant an orange. It was the only time of year, such a rare treat was provided and it was coveted by each boy like no other thing they possessed.

Each boy would save his orange for several days admiring it, loving it, and contemplating the moment he would eat it. Some boys would even save the orange until New Year's Day or later. Like many of us relish saving our Christmas tree decorations until New Year's just to remind us of the joy of Christmas.

On this particular day Jake had broken the orphanage rules by starting a fight. The orphanage mother took Jake's orange away as punishment for breaking the rules. Jake spent Christmas Day empty and alone. Night came and Jake couldn't sleep. Silently he sobbed because this year he would not have his orange with the other boys.

In the still of the night a soft hand placed on Jake's shoulder startled him and an object was quickly shoved into his hands. The boy then disappeared into the dark, leaving Jake alone to discover a strange looking orange. An orange made from segments of nine other oranges... nine prized oranges that the boys would have had to break open that Christmas night instead of saved, admired and cherished until a later date.

At this Christmas time may this orange remind us all of the unselfish love of nine orphan boys' unselfish love taught by our Savior, whose birth we celebrate.

~ Submitted by Ginny Sanders

Church Copier Makes it's Last Copy

We made the most out of our old copy machine. It's been with us so long that parts are no longer available and the repair company could no longer cover it under a maintenance contract! Though we put it off as long as we could, it was necessary to replace it in November with a newer model that should carry us another 10 years into the future. Unfortunately, there is a cost to progress. The price was relatively reasonable. The new machine cost \$1900. If there are any angels out there that would like to help us out on the cost of this new machine, let us know. Though we hated to have to spend the money, the lowered maintenance costs for this new machine should result in an annual savings from the old machine.

Parish Nurse Notes:

Stress Management for the Holidays

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you may find that you enjoy the holidays this year more than you thought you could. The following 10 tips on how to handle holiday stress came from a team at the Mayo Clinic.

1. Acknowledge your feelings. If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry and express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
2. Reach out. If you feel lonely, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
3. Be realistic. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children can't come to your house, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails, or videotapes.
4. Set aside differences. Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression too.
5. Stick to a budget. Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives: Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.
6. Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and make your shopping list. That will help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients.
7. Learn to say no. Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for lost time.
8. Don't abandon healthy habits. Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese, or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.
9. Take a breather. Make some time for yourself. Spending 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Take a walk. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.
10. Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for awhile, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Melting Ice Cream and Hearts at the Fair

By Ron Gaus

Our church had just made over \$1000 selling ice cream at the Taste of Maplewood event in late May. There was an Art Fair in Maplewood planned for early July called "Let Them Eat Art." Why not ride the smooth wave of creamy profits with a booth at the Art Fair? The idea seemed good. After contacting the organizer, we learned that this event wasn't supposed to be open to the service organizations of Maplewood like Christ Church. However, we were the only ones who asked to be a part! As a result, they let us have a spot at this year's Fair.

Unluckily for us, there was another ice cream vendor at the Fair. We were out matched in marketing, since theirs was called a "Fire Shooting Ice Cream Truck." Not sure exactly what that meant, but it didn't sound like we wanted to be on their bad side. The Fire Shooter was going to be in downtown Maplewood near Citizen's Bank. The fair organizer thought we'd be safe about 6 blocks away on Sutton, near the railroad tracks.

Though the Fair was supposed to encompass the entire city, apparently some areas were more traveled than others. Our spot was on the less traveled location. We were right in front of the Turner Center for the Arts. We talked to the proprietor about their crowds from last year so we could prepare for the onslaught. Keep in mind we had about 800 customers at the Taste of Maplewood and probably were exposed to over 1500 potential buyers. The Director, Nate Larson, smiled when I asked the question about last year... "Well, we may have had a couple dozen or so folks wander down here." Unless we could convince a similar size crowd this year to buy about 50 cones each, this didn't look good. Jan Pryibil and both Donna and Vic Ratkowski were there to assist, but we worried the ice cream might melt before our eyes in slow sales.

Though our expectations for great sales were dampened, we continued to talk with Nate and his father Barry about the Studio. That discussion and the hours that followed turned into the real reward of the evening.

The Turner Center for the Arts is an outgrowth of an organization in Maplewood called "Bridges Community Support Services, Inc." Initiated by Barry Larson (above). Though located in Maplewood, the programs of "Bridges" reach individuals in communities all around the state. Their programs include managed community living for individuals with disabilities in shared facilities and homes, part time community based support to assist individuals with becoming independent and productive, counseling services, training services for staff members around the state... and the Turner Center for the Arts.

There is something therapeutic in working in the Craft and Art area for any individuals. Our own Cara Crocker and Amy Chapleau have unselfishly provided an outlet for members and neighbors on certain Saturdays at our church for years. At first glance the Turner Center appears to be a regular Studio. It is far from that. They specialize in teaching folks with disabilities how to express themselves and develop pride with their artistic endeavors. On one of my visits to the Center, I saw Susie, one of our regular visitors to our first service. I tried to speak with her but she was far too focused on her current project to be interrupted by this tall, obviously non-artistic intruder. In addition to regular classes for adults with disabilities, they also hold regular classes for kids and teenagers. These early training techniques can draw out latent talents that may never have been exposed.

Occasionally, the Center will have an "Art Show" which may be a solo individual display, or have many individuals presenting their works. The pieces are priced so as to encourage sell outs of all products. An artist's earnings through these sales can be used to attend camps or other activities of personal growth.

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On the evening we were there, a gentleman named Dave Walter was putting on a solo Art Show which displayed a large number of his works. The most interesting part of Dave's show was a very long roll of paper, less than a foot tall, but over 100' long. It was a very long mural. In Dave's very first week in the Studio, he was asked to begin drawing on this blank roll. He was asked to just create a design of some type. On his next visit, part of his time was spent expanding on that first drawing. His next visit, another addition, and so on.

At the time of this show, Dave's daily creations became a connected mural of his growth as an artist. What started as basic designs eventually became more detailed and, in the end, an intricate array of fascinating colors and images. His learning was expressed through these printed and painted patterns and pouring of emotion... a daily journal cataloging his artistic growth. What a wonderful, wonderful gift that was to see! It melted the hearts of all who witnessed Dave's show.

Due to Dave's Show that night, the Center attracted far more people to this outlying area than had visited last year. As a result, we did make about \$100 on our sales. Dave sold 43 of his 58 displayed pieces of work and used the money for Sunny Hill Adventure Camp in August, in addition to returning some extra money back to the Studio.

In the retrospect of that evening there were lessons learned. On a night when we expected to make some money for the church in ice cream sales outside the Studio, we instead smiled in wonder at the beauty of what we were witnessing inside the Studio. Mr. Dave Walter has only been an artist in recent years. The pride that he must have felt that night is impossible for most of us to imagine. Dave is not the only one who experiences that pride and joy of artistic creation at the Center. Nate said to me, "The people here forever change the way you see things."

As we go through our lives, we should all strive to find those areas in which we excel, or wish to excel. God has provided each of us with unique talents that, as the Biblical "talent," should be invested most wisely in its use. Are we "people" persons? Find ways to use that God-given ability to enrich the lives of others. Are we musically favored? Show that talent through involvement. Do we have skills in organization? Ask to assist in ways your blessings can best be used. As Dave Walter experiences the pride of finding an area he may not have known was there, let each of us find God's gifts in us and use them to benefit others. May God guide us to find and use those areas of greatest value and potential joy that lie within each of us. Here is a link to the artwork from Turner Center for the Arts. Many of Dave's works are there and one of the shots on page 2 also shows our Susie! <http://www.flickr.com/photos/turnercenter>

Poinsettia Order Form - Please Return by December 11!

Name: _____

Qty. of Poinsettias to Order (\$7 per 6.5" plant) _____

Total Amount \$ _____ (Please indicate poinsettia fund on payment)

In Honor of / In Memory of: _____



December 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2 Maplewood Christmas Tree Walk 6 - 9 pm	3
4 Service Traditional 9 am Annual Budget Meeting 10 am Cookie Sale and Hanging of the Greens 11:30	5	6	7 Choir Practice 7:15 pm	8 Monthly Lun- cheon at Applebee's 11:30 am Council Meet- ing 7:00 pm	9	10
11 Services Traditional 9 am Contemporary 10:30 am	12	13	14 Choir Practice 7:15 pm	15 Senior Club Christmas Party and Pot Luck 5:00 pm	16	17 Open Studio Day 9 am - noon
18 Services Traditional 9 am Contemporary 10:30 am	19	20	21 Choir Practice 7:15 pm	22 The Longest Night Service 7 pm	23	24 Christmas Eve Services 5 pm - Family 11 pm - Midnight
25 Service One Service only 10 am Have a Safe And Very Merry Christmas!	26	27	28 Choir Practice 7:15 pm	29	30	31 Have a Safe and Very Happy New Years Eve!
January 1 Service One Service only 10 am						

Don't forget – if you're able to receive your Advance by email, please let the church office know. You can help save money and paper, and the electronic copy can always be saved on your computer. Let the church office know if you can help.

THE ADVANCE

NEWSLETTER OF CHRIST CHURCH UCC
MAPLEWOOD, MISSOURI

CHRIST CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
7126 Bruno Ave.
Maplewood, MO 63143

God
is still
speaking,

