

New Covenant Community Church

The Messenger

January 2019



Ecumenical in Outlook, Presbyterian in Heritage

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**When we begin to think
that we can predict the Advent of God
that we can box the Christ in a stable in Bethlehem,
that's just the time that God will be born
in a place we can't imagine and won't believe.**
– from *Ann Weems, Kneeling in Bethlehem,*
(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), page 85.

As we begin the new year after the celebration of Christmas, God invites us to reflect on the lessons that were communicated through the birth of the Christ Child. In anticipating the new beginnings that await us for the next twelve months, let us consider how the lessons of the Child in the manger inspire us to listen to new voices and make new discoveries that promote God's work.

Because God chose to become incarnate in a baby, let us listen for the voice of God, not from the powerful but through the vulnerable, not through those who are domineering but through those who are diminutive.

Because the magi, after encountering the Christ Child, departed by a new way, let us discover how we can support God's work, not by systematically taking the familiar and often less troublesome paths, but by embarking on previously untraveled ways that reveal new insights that could change our lives as well as the world.

Because the message of the angels told the shepherds that they would find the Child in a place they wouldn't have expected, let us awaken to the messages that would ordinarily surprise us, so that we may embrace God's wisdom, justice, and peace in unexpected circumstances.

Because this new year will provide us with new opportunities, let us listen for the voice of God speaking to us through the images and observations that open the door to a new reality for all humanity.

Let us trust God to lead us, as God always does, away from the familiar territory defined by the norms of our culture, the assumptions built into our ideologies, and the values shared by our groups, and to the new horizons where we can discover a wealth not dependent on possessions, a wisdom not based on books, a strength not fortified by might, and a God who is revealed in ways that we would not expect.

In 2019, let us continue to learn from the miraculous event that occurred at Christmas, and I pray that all of us would experience the awesome grace of God in new and life-changing ways.

Blessings,
Tom



The Governing Board at its December meeting elected the following officers for 2019: John Sezna, President; Nancy Williams, Vice-President; Lynne Wisard, Secretary, and thankfully Jackie Roth agreed to serve as Treasurer for another

year after a couple of tumultuous years keeping track of all the detailed restoration and kitchen remodeling expenses. We also welcome to the board Ruth Anderson and Tim Meyer as Cathy King and Jenni Bryson take a rest having served the board well over the past three years. I especially want to thank Cathy for the past year as Vice President who served as a sounding board and tactfully told me when some of my crazy ideas really would not work and often suggested a better solution.

Good news! The website is currently being reworked live online, so if you would like to observe the changes in process just tune into <http://www.covenantakron.org>. Don't worry if some of the pictures and materials do not seem to belong at this point. Several items are just placeholders now, and it will all come together before long. Fortunately, Cathy King is watching over the project, and her son-in-law Jamie is doing the programming. One of the goals is to make the website easy to update so that it can be kept current in the future.

We will soon see new furniture in the Fellowship Hall...new rectangular tables, as well as round tables. The new tables are lighter, much more maneuverable, and still quite durable. This very positive change was enabled by a special donation.

One important change which was made in 2018 was the creation of the New Covenant Community Restricted Endowment Fund. As mentioned earlier, this fund is meant to be a rainy day fund and bequests or donations to the fund could be quite important to the future of our church. The current market conditions may make certain types of donations less favorable right now, but it would be good to keep the fund in mind for the future. Speaking of our future, you may be interested to know that in the January 29, 2018 issue of The Presbyterian Outlook in an article entitled, "Revitalizing Church Leadership" the following comment was made: "a third of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations have less than 50 members, two thirds have less than 100 and 77 percent have less than 200."

With God's grace we are closing 2018 with a completely renovated facility, a balanced budget for 2019 and wonderful services led by Pastor Tom. It is a great time to go forth with our mission outreach and AAIC activities and to invite guests to join us in worship so that we may let our light so shine.

Hal



Our Thursday afternoon Bible Study on Matthew's gospel will resume on January 10.

Advent and Immigration

We wanted to focus this Advent season on the plight of immigrants living in our city, state, country, and world.

We asked immigrant members of our congregation to light our Advent candles to remind us of the immigrants in our midst.

We were so fortunate to have Alan Fortnoff from the Akron Area Interfaith Council share with us what he saw at our Mexico border. Luckily, we also have the Akron Interfaith Immigration Advocates right at our side who invited us to their Christmas party at Zion Apostolic Church where 80 people, 40 of them children, sang songs, ate pizza and salad, received warm hats and gloves (we helped to provide these), and dressed in nativity scene costumes.



See the little boy with the "No Vacancy" sign, reminding us that there was no room for Jesus at the inn that first night. Pastor Tom reminded us gently, persistently, and persuasively of our role in welcoming and loving everyone, and that there are no strangers. Even Jesus was an immigrant.



So, the committee guiding all of this will be meeting January 7 at 7:00pm at church to evaluate our Advent message and to where we go next.

If you would like to join us, please come. If you have comments and ideas for us, contact Tim Meyer, Ken and Nancy Williams, Pastor Tom, or Nancy Clem. We welcome your input.



Fellowship Committee—Recap and a Brief Look Ahead

Once again, our committee had a fun, productive year in 2018.

We began with “Souper Sunday,” a Super Bowl soup lunch on February 4. A real winner, this event allowed us to taste a variety of delicious, homemade soups contributed by our members. We’ll do it again this year on February 3. Sign ups begin January 6.

April 1 featured our annual Easter Sunday Continental Breakfast and Easter egg hunt before the church service. We’ll do that again on April 21.

On May 6, our congregation participated in the AAIC Fairlawn Hunger Walk. A record turnout in terms of walkers and monetary donations was a pleasant surprise. Our church’s involvement included a light lunch for our members who either donated or planned to walk. Fellowship and Missions Committees assisted with food for the lunch a week before the Walk. Cathy King once again will be assisting me in our church’s efforts for 2019.

In late June about 15 of us attended the rollicking play, “Anything Goes” at the Porthouse Theater, preceded by a picnic on the grounds.

Our committee and others came together on August 25 for “Caribbean Nights,” at the Williams’ house, complete with island-inspired dishes and music provided by our own “Kenny & the Islanders,” with one of the “islanders” being former member Leo Storey, playing the bongo.

Fall wouldn’t be complete without Trunk or Treat featuring a record number of participants. We followed this up the next day with a soup lunch celebrating the completion of our kitchen renovation. While the Governing Board suggested this event, they and Fellowship worked out the details.

The final 2018 social—A Christmas Bingo Party—was a fun and different way to end 2018. Five-year-old Jackson Heischman was certainly kept busy passing out prizes to all the winners. *(See pictures below.)*

Thanks to everyone who contributed time, food, assistance, and attendance at these events designed to bring our congregation closer together. Remember that any one of you can suggest a social event, large or small, and bring it to the attention of the Fellowship Committee consisting of Nancy Williams, Heidi Heischman, Susie Stevenor, Jackie Horton, Mary Norval, or Mary Lindsay.



We are still holding Coffee Hour in the hallway both before and after the Sunday services. The signup sheet to bring goodies is located on the hall table. Heidi and Ken Williams make the coffee; all others do is bring goodies and assist with cleanup. The dates go through March 31.

Thank You to those who donated bottled water; plastic ware; plates, bowls, cups, etc., as well as free food items. It was much appreciated since the Fellowship Committee has held down expenses by purchasing many of these items over the past year and not charging the church.

Contributions are always welcome. If you care to donate anytime this year, things have changed slightly. You may donate small bottles of water (check with Nancy or Heidi first) and any sturdy, clear plastic forks. DO NOT donate plastic knives or spoons. We have plenty. If you care to donate anything else, speak with the committee co-chairs first.



AAIC News

The big, rescheduled event from the fall coming up on Saturday, February 16, is "We Are Charleston: Triumph & Tragedy at Mother Emanuel," from 2:00pm-5:00pm at the Downtown Akron Library. This was rescheduled because Dr. Bernard Powers is from Charleston, SC and could not get out because of the hurricane. We hope you will consider attending this timely presentation. I have the book, which is also available at any of the Akron libraries. *(See flyer below.)*

The AAIC committees will meet January 8 from 12:00pm-1:30pm at Unity Chapel of Light in Tallmadge. Discussions will focus on the rescheduled February 16 program plus the Spring Event and Award Ceremony, which will occur either in late March or late June.

The 10th anniversary of the AAIC-sponsored Hunger Walk, honoring founder Susan Davis, occurs on Sunday, May 5. You'll be hearing more about this at NCCC from Nancy and Cathy King, who are coordinating our church's involvement.

Details on Martin Luther King Day celebrations in the area, plus other events, will be posted on the hall bulletin board or in Sunday bulletins. *(See flyer below.)*

Nancy Williams



Join us for "Souper" Sunday!"
Sunday, February 3 after the worship service

The Fellowship Committee will provide beverages, a few soups, salad, bread, and desserts for all to enjoy. The committee is asking members to provide additional soups. A freewill offering will be collected for Fellowship Hall updates.

We hope you will sign up to attend!



Carol Davis has created a space in the NW corner of Fellowship Hall to be used by members or visitors with small children before, after, or during the worship service. It has already been tested by one young family. Some additional toys and other items may be needed.

The old tables in the hall are being offered for free to members of the congregation. Any tables not claimed by January 6 will be sold or given to charity.

New, light-weight, tables will be purchased in early January, and should be delivered by January 15. Watch for them.

Many small changes will be necessary to make our building more useful and attractive. Suggestions are welcome.

Ken Williams, Building and Properties Committee

February Newsletter Deadline / Friday, January 25 / 1:30pm

Thank you for submitting your newsletter articles to Lynne
at both the church email and lwisard@yahoo.com



Dear Advocates for our Immigrant/Refugee/Migrant friends and neighbors.

This is your personal invitation to join the Dominican Sisters and Associates of Peace for a prayer service for **NATIONAL MIGRATION WEEK - January 6-12** at the Our Lady of the Elms - Akron Motherhouse Chapel - 1230 West Market Street, Akron OH

Our prayer service will be on **SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 2019 at 4:30**. Please join us as we offer our thoughts and prayers for our migrant brothers and sisters and children as 2019 begins.

Please share this invitation with other friends and family. There will be light refreshments following the service to meet and greet each other gathered in solidarity for migrants around the world.

If you have any questions, please respond to me at cdubick@kent.edu or contact me **330-864-0949**. Peace at this season of "welcoming God in person."

Conni Dubick

CHRISTMAS BINGO



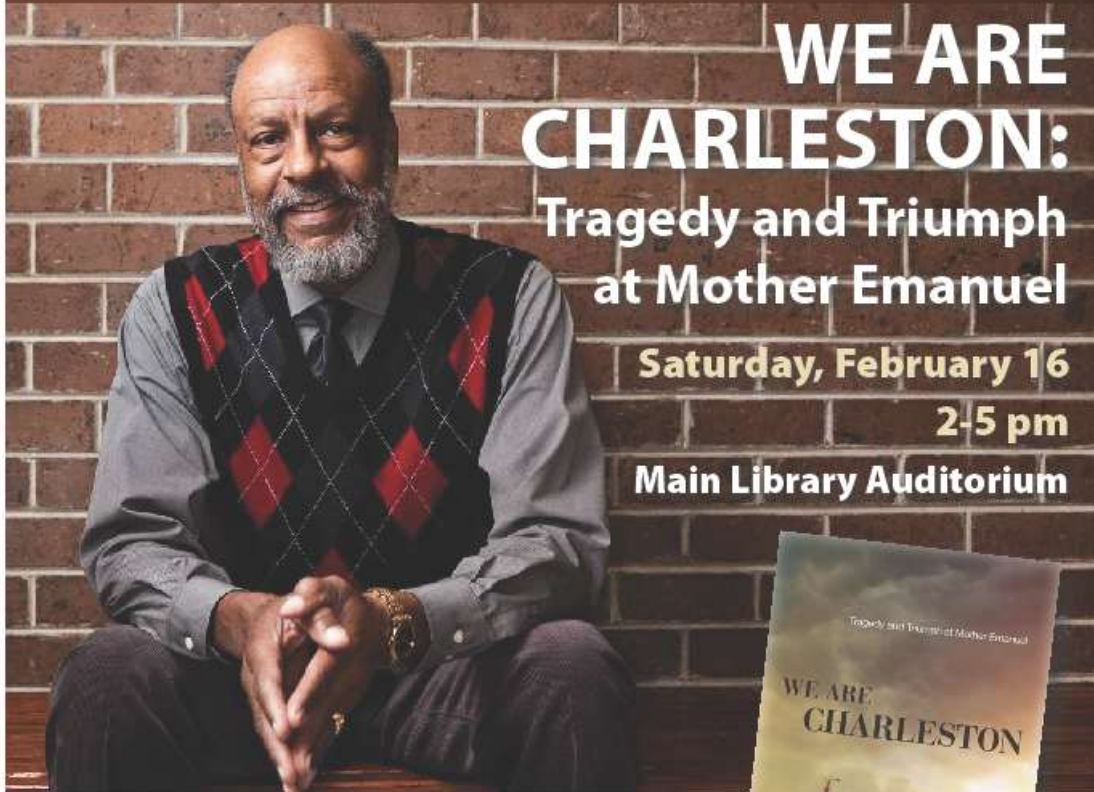


FEB.
16

AAIC FORUM

Free and Open to the Public

Author Talk



Join us for an interactive presentation and discussion of *We Are Charleston: Tragedy and Triumph at Mother Emanuel*.

Dr. Bernard E. Powers, Jr., Professor Emeritus of History at the College of Charleston in South Carolina, will discuss the June 2015 murder of nine members of Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and also the origins and nature of the AME denomination. Without this understanding, we cannot fully grasp the meaning of what happened and why "Mother Emanuel" was the killer's target. Presented in cooperation with the Akron Area Interfaith Council.

At the event, books will be available for purchase from the Friends of Main Library. There will be a book signing at this event.



**Akron-Summit County
Public Library**

Business & Government Division
68 S. High Street, Akron, OH 44326
www.akronlibrary.org



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