



FEBRUARY 2024

More Truth and Light

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

-Isaiah 43:20

In times of transition, these words from the prophet Isaiah bring hope and comfort. When we read the prophet's words, we can imagine God speaking, “... *I am about to do a new thing...do you not perceive it?*” As the gospel of John reflects, ‘*the Holy Spirit blows where it wills*’ and God is continuing to breathe new life and new direction in a people who live and rehearses the stories of God's continuing grace, God's cry for peace and justice, and God's inclusive love that seeks in whatever way possible, to live and dwell with us. Even still when the Holy Spirit breathes, change happens and change for most of us is uncomfortable. How comforting and beautiful it is when in the same breath where ‘**new things spring forth**’, the prophet reminds us that even so, ***God will make a way in the wilderness and God will spring forth rivers in the desert.*** Change is happening and the good news is that no matter the change, it will be alright because God knows our struggle in accepting the newness of change.

Pilgrim Faith has completed several important conversations and an important assessment about our life together and what ‘new thing’ is springing forth. For several years, our membership has been declining and we no longer reflect the demographics of Oak Lawn. The energy level of our membership is concerning, and although our facilities are in good shape, it is too big of a building for us to do the kind of ministry we are currently doing. Our giving, in comparison to the national average, is low. The national average monthly giving per giving unit is around \$2262.00 compared to our monthly giving which is around \$1100.00 per giving unit. The question that Thrive and the Church Council have been trying to answer is what is a

sustainable ministry for us today? Through conversations and analysis, Thrive and the Council have summarized four possible options for Pilgrim Faith United Church of Christ. They are a possible merger, shared/yoked ministry, sell the building and move to a smaller location, and to remain in the same space with an adjustment in mission, and pastoral leadership. The congregation will be invited to reflect upon the options, and at a future Congregational Meeting, we will decide what kind of ministry is reasonable and sustainable for our church today. At the annual meeting, you received a packet that included the four possible scenarios, the results of our quick assessment, and an analysis of each of the four options that articulate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of each of the four options.

In preparation for a congregational vote, there are three listening sessions that have been scheduled by the Council to provide a forum by which members and friends of Pilgrim Faith UCC can ask questions, seek clarifications, and continue to discern where the Holy Spirit is calling our Church in the future. The dates for the three listening sessions can be found in a separate article within this month's newsletter. Yes, God is calling us to make important changes and no matter the choice we make, God will see us through. ***“Behold, I am about to do a new thing! Do you not perceive it?”*** Yes, God will be there to show you through the wilderness and all will be well, it will be very well.

In anticipation,
Pastor Daniel Gather

Council Meeting January 24, 2024

Our Vision

Edited by Pastor Dan Sather for the Newsletter

Opening Prayer

Attendance:

Go Around: “What are your thoughts on the THRIVE reports?”

Faith Sharing Time

Approval of Council Minutes from December Meeting

Ken made a motion to approve the minutes as written from the December council meeting. Tom second. All in favor.

Financial Report –

End of year review of finances

The rentals that Ken brought in this year really helped cut our deficit.

There is still work to do with converting the finances to the bookkeeper. The current finance team will complete January’s reports.

Tom made a motion we consolidate the memorial funds (aside from Grace Pluhar and Mary Gates) to the undesignated memorial fund to be used as council and/or the congregation see fit . Ken second. All in favor. Motion passed.

The Pluhar family wished the memorial funds go to the Food Pantry. Ken suggested it be split between the pantry and the youth groups. This will show on the January report.

Right now, we are not changing the process of using the gold sheets. Keith (bookkeeper) will let us when/how things change by next week.

Review the 2024 budget

Thinking about moving forward, it will be important to prioritize what couple of things really matter to our church. Daune suggested maybe consolidating funds that are not utilized (cookie fund for example) to use in ways that are meaningful for our current goals/missions.

28 pledges totaled about \$70,000, \$81,00 was figured out by including those who do not pledge but

Revenue has been up to ~\$163,000 putting into account Acorn to Oak, parking passes, and the parsonage.

3% salary increase - \$123,750

The music budget was a little over budget last year so they have been given more money for 2024.

Tom is recommending the individual ministry teams keep their own budget to cross check.

Proposed deficit = ~\$80,000

Tom is recommending we keep ACS in place until March when we are confident in the system that is in place. (\$142/month includes ACS and Realm)

Continuing Business

1. Update on the transition to Church Training Center bookkeeping

a. We are expecting things to be up and running by February 1st.

Tom is recommending the individual ministry teams keep their own budget to cross check.

2. Update on leases

3. Update on Food Pantry

a. All totals for 2023 exceeded the totals for 2022.

b. Trivia Night is Saturday, Feb 3rd!

Update on Ad-hoc group to review our symbols, artwork, name of our halls (Colonial & Pilgrim) Kevin Holt will work with Daune after Christmas- will happen in by Feb. meeting

Council needs to address putting together policies for the church

New Business

1. Reports on THRIVE- listening sessions Sun. 2/11 (after worship), Thurs. 2/22 7PM in-person, Sun. 2/25 6:30PM on Zoom

a. Congregational meeting can be March

b. **Finalize the ballot for the Annual Meeting**

c. Any agenda items for the Annual Meeting

d. Changing our Vision logo?

e. 10 per cent rule for fundraisers? *Ken made a motion to recommend suspension of the 10% of fundraising proceeds with plans to readdress as we have more fundraisers. Chris second. This will be voted on at the annual meeting.*

f. **Food for the annual meeting**

Flower Sale

This would be a pre-order sale. Order forms are due to the company 4/1/24 and delivery will be the week before Mother’s Day.

Libby has a couple of fund designations in mind.

The council unanimously approved the flower sale. Ken will notify Libby.

Next Council Meeting: Next Regular Council Meeting February 28, @ 6:30 PM

PILGRIM FAITH UCC
RECEIPTS - DISBURSEMENTS - DECEMBER 2023

	Month of DECEMBER 2023		As of DECEMBER 31, 2023	
	MONTH Actual	MONTH Budget	YEAR-TO-DATE Actual	YEAR-TO-DATE Budget
Receipts				
Pledges & Non-Pledged Giving	\$ 7,402.00	\$ 4,445.09	\$ 86,260.47	\$ 64,700.00
Total Receipts (all sources)	\$ 14,478.04	\$ 7,991.03	\$ 153,581.75	\$ 102,000.00
Disbursements				
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 15,613.86	\$ 11,030.10	\$ 143,491.01	\$ 134,000.00
Expenses	\$ 9,790.42	\$ 5,918.94	\$ 94,702.26	\$ 86,100.00
Total Disbursements (all expense)	\$ 25,424.82	\$ 17,357.41	\$ 241,621.55	\$ 225,000.00
Net Total	\$(10,946.78)	\$(9,366.38)	\$(88,039.80)	\$(123,000.00)

If you want a list of all checks written for the month, send request to finances@pilgrimfaith.org.

Remember Our Homebound

Mary Brehm
 Bridgeview
 Healthcare Ctr.
 8100 S. Harlem Ave.
 Bridgeview, IL 60455

Donna Twichell
 10032 Harnew Rd.
 East
 Oak Lawn, IL 60453

Doris Seitz
 11237 S. Normandy
 Worth, IL 60482

Linda Aitken
 The Pointe at
 Kilpatrick
 14230 Kilpatrick
 Crestwood, IL. 60418

Barbara Dresdem
 5133 W. 79th St.
 Burbank, il 60459

Bob Salveson
 6146 S. Karlov Ave.
 Chicago, IL 60629



LISTENING SESSIONS PLANNED FOR THRIVE SUMMARY!

The work of the Thrive Task Force is completed, and the Council has scheduled three listening sessions where individuals are able to ask questions or seek clarification. The Thrive summaries and related material will be made available at the Annual meeting and after the annual meeting, the material can be accessed online at our website, www.pilgrimfaith.org

After the sessions, the Council will call a Congregational Meeting to determine the direction that the membership feels the Holy Spirit is calling them in this time. The following dates will be your opportunity to attend one of our listening sessions.

- February 11th, In Person, following worship.
- February 22ⁿ, weeknight in person gathering, 7 p.m.
- February 25th, Zoom gathering, 6:30 p.m. The link will be made available in a future Mail Chimp, the website and via Facebook.

GREAT TIME BOWLING WITH YOUTH AND FAMILIES FROM SALEM UCC!



On Sunday, January 14th thirty youth and families from Pilgrim Faith UCC and Salem UCC enjoyed an afternoon of bowling. It was such a great time, and we continue to look forward to youth opportunities where the two congregations can enjoy fun and fellowship! We enjoyed two games, good fellowship and some enjoyed drinks and pizza.



Pilgrim Faith
United Church of Christ

Please let us know *if you would be interested in serving as an usher*, the usher team needs more participants.

Sunday Service Ushers

February 4 Libby Langevin and Maureen Hutton

February 11 Mike and Pam Cusack

February 18 Rick Wank

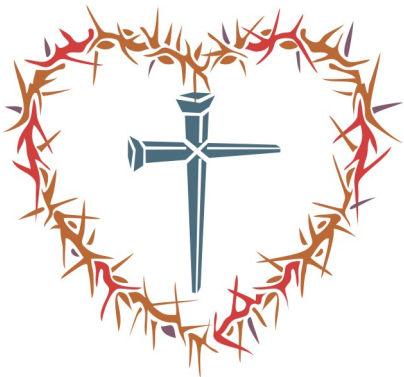
February 25 David Faulkner

Please contact Pam Cusack, Worship and Spiritual Life Team at pamcusack@gmail.com

ICE SKATING IS THE NEXT LIMITLESS YOUTH EVENT!



On Sunday March 10th, the youth of Salem and Pilgrim Faith will enjoy an afternoon of ice skating at the Oak Lawn Ice Arena. The cost will be \$15.00 per skater. This event is open to both youth and their families. The cost of the afternoon includes a room, ice skates, and three hours of fun. The room will be available to us by 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 10th, and we will have access to the room and the ice arena through 3 p.m. We will be placing an order for food to be delivered. Please dress appropriately for ice skating. Please RSVP to one of the youth advisors by Sunday, February 18th.



Please *let us know if you would be interested in offering a coffee hour.* We are looking for more participants.

Sunday Coffee Hour Hosts

February 4 Doreen Lopez and Carol Burke

February 11 Sue Arnold and Pam Cusack

February 18 Libby Langevin and Amanda Sullivan

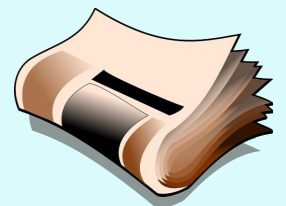
February 25 Mary Weierman and Deb Petkus



The Ministry of Christian Formation and Mission is collecting **hats, gloves, scarves, and mittens** during January and February for Advocate UCC. All collections will be put into a bin in the narthex. Feel free to reach out to Kevin Holt, or any member of the Ministry of Christian Formation team with any questions.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Do you have something to contribute to our monthly newsletter? **The deadline for the March edition is Monday, February, 26th.** Please submit any articles or announcements for our monthly newsletter by that date and we will be sure to include it.



Lenten Services and Opportunities:



COMBINED ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

will take place with Christ Memorial, Immanuel UCC, Evergreen Park, and Pilgrim Faith UCC on Wednesday, February 14th at 7 p.m. Immanuel UCC, Evergreen Park will host this years' service. Pastor Dan and the choir will be participating in this service. Members are encouraged to attend.

COMBINED GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE WILL

be shared with Christ Memorial, Salem UCC, and Pilgrim Faith UCC. Pilgrim Faith will be hosting our combined Good Friday Service. On this significant and powerful day, please join us as we remember this dark day in our Christian history. The service will begin at 7 p.m.



Pilgrim Faith
United Church of Christ

Sunday Nursery Helpers

January 7 Gail Siwek
January 14 Sue Arnold
January 21 Daune Sebastian
January 28 Amanda Sullivan

MISSION OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR COMMUNITY!

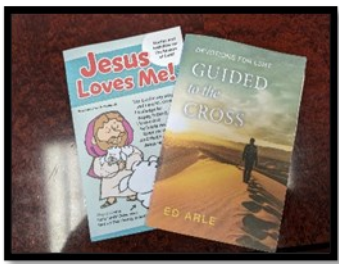
Once again, Limitless Youth Group



will be hosting a community **Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 23rd** for children ages infant to grade 3. The youth would like donations of individually wrapped Easter candy to put into plastic eggs. Please consider purchasing some individually wrapped Easter candy for children. **PLEASE, NO SUCKERS OR CANDY WITH STICKS.** The candy needs to be small enough to put into a plastic egg. In addition, we will be giving away age-appropriate toys and items as prizes. If you would like to donate items to give away, the youth would appreciate your contribution. There will be basket, marked, Easter candy, in Narthex and you can bring your donation to the church and drop it in the basket. Please make sure that your candy is at the church by Sunday, March 17th! Thank you so much for your kindness.



LENTEN DEVOTIONALS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS are available in the Narthex. Using daily devotionals in this season is particularly meaningful and a wonderful way to prepare for the Easter miracle. *“Jesus Loves Me”* is a booklet for children of stories and activities and *“Guided in the Cross”* are inspiring devotions that will feed your spirit in this season. There are limited re-



sources and can be found in the Narthex.

LIMITLESS YOUTH COMMUNITY EASTER EGG HUNT will take place this year on Saturday, March 23rd for infants through grade 3. Once again, the youth will be asking for candy help and items to give away. This was such a success last year and many from the community enjoyed bringing their children to this safe and enjoyable event. Please help the youth by buying some Easter candy and dropping it in a basket in the Narthex. PLEASE, NO SUCKERS OR CANDY WITH STICKS. Candy must be individually wrapped and easily placed in a plastic egg. Thank you and watch for more details as we get closer to this big event!



BACK BAY DEEPER INTEREST MEETING! On Sunday, March 3rd following worship, the Ministry of Christian Formation and Mission will be hosting a ***‘deeper interest meeting’*** for youth

and adults who are interested in participating in our mission trip to Back Bay, July 7th through 13th. There are several things that need to happen before we are ready to depart for the trip and the meeting will address these items. It is the policy of Back Bay mission that all volunteers must agree to a background check, and we’ll need your permission to do this and so this form will be distributed to interested volunteers. Among other topics, we will discuss lodging, meals, and a typical work week. In addition, the ministry team will be asking for \$100.00 from each person planning to attend. The cost for the trip will be \$250.00 per adult. There is a fund already established that will subsidize the cost for youth attending the mission trip. If you are interested in participating, please plan to attend this important meeting. If you have further questions, please reach out to Pastor Dan or a member of the Ministry of Christian Formation and Mission.



Fundraiser for Lahaina, Hawaii

The devastating fires that occurred on August 8, 2023 on the island of Maui (particularly the heavy-hit Lahaina area) have left many people without shelter, food, or any of their belongings. But they feel blessed to have lived through this horrendous experience. It is with the help of the UCC Disaster Ministries that the Hawaiian people are beginning to find a way forward. The Disaster Ministries is there to offer long-term assistance where it is needed most. They partner with dozens of organizations, large and small, for holistic, community-based recovery. According to the Hawai'i Conference UCC, it is expected to be 1.5 - 2 years before rebuilding can begin, and with the damage in Lahaina, they anticipate it will be a 7 to 10 year rebuilding process. We offered the Pilgrim Faith family a chance to help through the **January Coffee Hour of Giving**. Each week there were Hawaiian-themed treats for Coffee Hour and some Hawaiian décor to get you in the spirit of giving!

We appreciate the Ministry team for bringing wonderful Hawaiian treats for the month of January. It was such an easy and FUN way to help. **Thanks for your donations! The total of Hawaiian relief money that we raised was \$423!**

The Ministry of Christian Formation & Mission

Book Club FEBURARY, 2024

THANK YOU FOR
supporting the



Here are three ways to support the pantry:

Donate goods or host a food drive

Donations may be dropped of M-F 9am-2pm

Volunteer your time

Please email pffoodpantry.com to volunteer in the pantry!

Make a monetary donation

Scan the QR code, write a check payable to "Pilgrim Faith Food Pantry," or deliver cash donation at the office.



To make an electronic donation:

- 1) Open your smart phone's camera
- 2) Scan the QR code
- 3) Click the link
- 4) Make a donation through PayPal.



The next Book Club meeting will be February 13th at 6:30 PM. The book we have chosen is "Cane River" by Lalita Tademy. The book follows three women in the author's family starting with the slave, Suzette. It's well written and telling a great story. While It is fiction I believe a lot is actual family history.

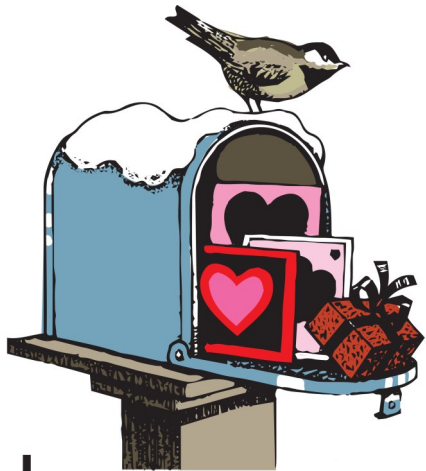
At this time, we are planning to meet in person at church. If the weather turns ugly, we can meet by Zoom.

Chris Raap

Flower Sale Resurrection

As you know, our annual flower sale had to be put on hold for a few years because of the pandemic. Last year we were ready to restart it, but our greenhouse supplier was unwilling to work with us. So this year we will be doing the fundraiser a little differently. We will get our baskets and planters from Roden's Elegant Gardens in Roscoe, IL. This will entail PREORDERS ONLY, and I will have the order forms at church by mid February. We will make \$8-\$10 per basket, the proceeds going to help the Back Bay Mission Trip happening in July. All orders will be due by April 1st and delivery and pick-up will be the first week of May. So start thinking about your garden's needs now and start thinking about who you could ask to support our fundraiser this Spring!

-Libby Langevin



February

Altar Renovation

Work has begun on the altar renovation project. The burgundy drapery will soon come down to reveal tongue and groove wood panels to replicate the sanctuary ceiling. The cross will get a good cleaning, fresh paint, and new backlighting. Many thanks to Ken Langevin, Ken Sebastian, Mike Cusack, and Brett Arnold for making this ministry team's vision a reality!

-Worship Ministry



Please let us know *if you would be interested in being a "Stand-by Liturgist"*.. Our upcoming liturgists are:

Sunday Liturgy Leaders

February 4 Keith Stevenson
February 11 Kevin Holt
February 18 Kevin Holt
February 25 Jimmy Werner

Please contact **Pam Cusack**, Worship and Spiritual Life Team at pamlcusack@gmail.com

Transitioning to a New Bookkeeping Service

Taking care of the business side of the church can, at times, seem like having full-time jobs for our faithful volunteers. Pilgrim Faith has been blessed with many people who have guided us with managing church funds over the years. Most recently, we have had Tom Aitken, Roger Dykstra, Pat Stancik, Amanda Sullivan, and Chris Raap, along with our counters Libby Langevin and Kay Gibson diligently working behind the scenes taking care of the day-to-day business of our finances. To these dedicated people, we give our heartfelt thanks! With the number of hours that were being spent on managing our church finances, it would likely be challenging to find volunteers who are willing/able to continue with doing all the work. The Council therefore voted to move to a bookkeeping service. We received two quotes from companies that work with churches. We opted to hire the Church Training Center to take care of our bookkeeping needs starting February 1, 2024. They are a company in California who have been working with The UCC Illinois Conference to help them organize their finances. Keith Clark-Hoyos founded this company to empower churches to thrive and make a meaningful impact within their communities. He does this through training and coaching church leaders. I was fortunate enough to participate in Church Governance Cohort with Keith last Fall and found him to be approachable, dedicated, and very knowledgeable. With the guidance of the Church Training Center, I believe that we can put our focus back on mission and what God is calling us to do. Keith has also offered an invitation to our Treasurer (free of charge) to participate in his Mastery Coaching Group for Church Treasurers. We look forward to working with the Church Training Center. to have our and make a meaningful impact within their communities.

Daune Sebastian

Keith Clark-Hoyos Church Training Center



Cultivating Effective Leadership



February 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 Food Pantry 10:00 AM- Noon
4  10:00 AM Worship Service	5 	6 Food Pantry 10:00 AM- Noon	7	8	9	10 Food Pantry 10:00 AM- Noon
11 10:00 AM Worship Service	12	13 Food Pantry 10:00 AM- Noon	14 Ash Wednesday 	15	16 	17 Food Pantry 10:00 AM- Noon
18 10:00 AM Worship Service	19	20 Food Pantry 10:00 AM- Noon	21	22	23	24 Food Pantry 10:00 AM- Noon
25 10:00 AM Worship Service	26	27 Food Pantry 10:00 AM- Noon	28 	29		



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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MONDAY

12:00pm AA 2nd Floor

TUESDAY

10:00am Food Pantry
10:00 am AA 2nd Floor

WEDNESDAY

1:00pm Al-Anon
6:00pm Boy Scouts
7:00pm AA 2nd floor

THURSDAY

10:00am AA 2nd Floor

FRIDAY

8:00pm AA 2nd Floor

SATURDAY

10:00am Food Pantry
10:00am AA 2nd Floor

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