



December 2020

A Monthly Update in the Life of our Church

Contact

Will a low-key Christmas be like olden days?

More prayer, discernment and Bible time can transform the holidays into golden days

Do you recall all your past complaints about how crass commercialism, too much food and gifting pressures were taking the 'Christ' out of Christmas?

Or perhaps you were stressed by the extra responsibilities of life with its food-drives, gift cards, decorating, baking and musical rehearsals?

Or maybe losses, struggles or general uncertainty had turned the wonder of a "White Christmas" into the sadness of a "Blue Christmas?"

Well, here's your chance to add more faith, spirituality and richness to the Christmas season that begins Nov. 29. Translate: More joy and less stress!

First, let's be honest about how the season will unfold at Church of the Redeemer and many other Christian houses of faith. It will feel strange!

Christmas will be radically different! We will see fewer folks at live worship – if the Covid Pandemic allows us to continue worship in the sanctuary. No general singing aloud; some folks believe even humming is risky.

Decorations will be pared down. The liturgy will be modified to minimize the number of folks involved. And masks must be worn at all times.

It's unlikely we can use real candles for 'Silent Night' because of concerns over social distancing. (How do you pass the flame to another candle without getting within six feet of that person?)

You'll see less poinsettias at the altar because fewer were ordered. And taking extra poinsettias to shut-ins or stay-aways will be harder to navigate.

We will have more blended music. We will see fewer extended family visitors on Christmas Eve.

Don't expect to eat Christmas cookies, baked goods or even donuts at church. Who knows when Fellowship Hour will return or when we can have a reception or shared meal at church?

We will forgo Communion on the first Sunday in December in lieu of offering it Dec. 24 and on Epiphany Sunday.

Sorry to say, the elements will be wrapped in plastic and foil. Only the pastor's elements are traditional.

Exchanged hugs, kisses and extended face-to-face chats are verboten.

Other than the bell choir, don't expect any group performances. Way too risky, say scientists! (Remember them?) And we'll be spreading more hand sanitizer than frosting or whipped cream!

So, what are my suggestions for making this a rewarding and meaningful faith-filled holiday season when everything is different?



Well, let's start by putting the 'Christ' back into Christmas ourselves! If our secular world removed it, it's our job to restore it.

Set aside a regular time for prayer, reflection and conversations with the Holy – particularly focusing on Jesus. Our Savior and Redeemer.

This web address takes you to a site with a prayer for each Advent day!

<https://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Advent/Daily-prayers.html>

Find a comfortable place free of distractions and interruptions; let others around know that you need some private time undisturbed.

Try to stimulate all your senses, not just the eyes and ears, by reading or listening to spiritual or religious messages. Think touch, smell and taste. Hold onto some objects, enjoy the aroma of Christmas scents and think peppermint, cranberry and cinnamon!

Blessings, Pastor Tom

Leadership Team Update

By Kim Merkert, Chair

The Leadership Team met on November 12, 2020 for its regular monthly meeting. After our opening activities, we reviewed and approved the 2021 budget, which will be presented at the annual meeting.

The majority of the meeting was spent planning the agenda for the annual meeting, which will be held on Sunday, December 6 after worship. We will be asking folks in the congregation to consider serving on the Leadership Team in 2021, if they feel so led. At a prior Leadership Team meeting, we decided to keep the current Leadership Team in place through the time that we call a settled pastor, for consistency. We would like to add one or two new people each year so that when current Leadership Team members begin rotating off, we will have some experienced members remaining. The agenda for the meeting will encompass a 2020 year in review (completed projects), the presentation and congregational vote of the 2021 budget, call for new Leadership Team members, reports from the Interim Pastor and the Music Director, a Building Use/Maintenance report, and the Leadership Team's plans for 2021.

Pastor Tom gave a brief update on Advent worship planning. We are planning to limit sanctuary decorations during Advent and Christmas due to Covid and wanting to keep items in the sanctuary at a minimum. The Leadership Team has planned to decorate the altar and put up the tree. We will not put up the pew/windowsill candles or wreaths. We plan to collect hats and mittens as we usually do, but they will be collected in a box in the narthex rather than on a tree.

We have been successful in putting the worship videos onto DVD for folks who are unable to access the videos online. It looks like we will only need to distribute two DVDs, and no one needs access to a DVD player. At this time, we will no longer be collecting donations of DVD players, and we plan to return the donations we have already received if the donors would like to have them back.

Mike Wojdylak updated the Leadership Team that the organ repairs have been completed. Pastor Tom presented his pastor's report. We again discussed the possibility of hiring a conflict resolution consultant to work with the congregation. The Leadership Team's official position on this subject continues to be that we do not wish to begin this work during the interim process. We have identified this as a project that can be undertaken after we have called a settled pastor. We reviewed Jorja Barton's office report. The topic of how to handle requests from community members who need financial assistance was discussed. If a request is made Monday through Friday during business hours, we can refer the person to Love, Inc. Outside of those hours, we can reach out to Derry Township police, who has access to resources for this purpose.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer. Our next Leadership Team meeting will be held on Thursday, December 10 at 7pm. As always, please reach out to the Leadership Team if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kim Merkert
Leadership Team Chair*



Happy Holidays!





PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



To Members of the Conference:

Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

There is no doubt that we have all been praying continually during these difficult times of uncertainty. With the rise in virus' numbers, the unclear future of our country and the various other things in our lives, that may cause us to experience anxiety, stress and grief, the only thing left to do is pray and pray continually? But what about the part of the verse that talks about rejoicing? Rejoice always and give thanks in every situation? How? How can we be expected to give thanks and rejoice in times like these? Sometimes we may feel like screaming, how Lord, how? How can we think about rejoicing when our world has been turned upside down?

If you have asked yourself any of these questions, you are not alone. However, when Paul stated to rejoice always, I don't believe Paul meant that we should walk around in the most unbearable situations with a big smile on our faces. Nor do I believe that he meant that we should deny our feelings when we are at the end of our ropes and feel deep sadness and dismay. What Paul meant was that we have two choices when we are faced with difficult situations. We could focus on the trials that we are going through and possibly fall into a place of deep despair. Or we can set our minds on the things from God that brings us light in the darkness. Rejoicing may bring us an attitude of hope, contentment and joy that can only come, when we focus entirely on Jesus Christ as we receive the eternal gifts that only Christ can give.

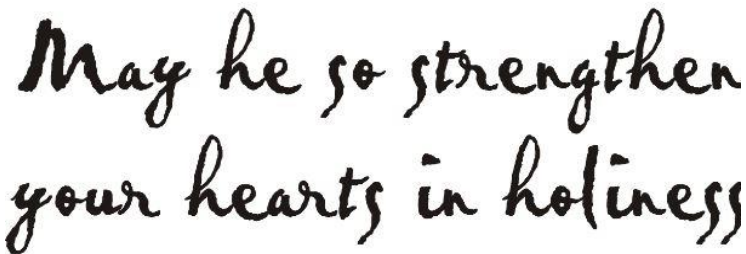
Next, we are to give thanks in every situation. This can be very difficult especially as we are right in the middle of the muddy waters of 2020. Paul in the book of Ephesians says to ***"give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** Giving thanks does not mean that we have to accept what is happening without praying for something to change.

I like to keep this scripture verse on my desk in full view as a reminder that when I just cannot take one more thing and I feel as though nothing seems good, that there is always something that I can rejoice about if I look at the situation from all perspectives. It also reminds me to pray continually no matter what circumstances I find myself in. My prayer can be as simple as, giving thanks for the beautiful creation that is visible right outside of my window as I have a Zoom meeting. Or giving thanks for the warm house that I live in. Thanking God for the food that I eat every day. And giving thanks for the people that I love and who love me right back.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving. It may not be the typical Thanksgiving festivities that we are all used to, but even in this crazy unpredictable time, remember to rejoice, and pray and give thanks, because this is the way God wants you, who belongs to Christ Jesus to live out our lives. ***Happy Thanksgiving to each and every one of you.***

Your friend in Christ,
Ronnette Comfort-Butler
Facilitator of Care to Clergy and Clergy Families

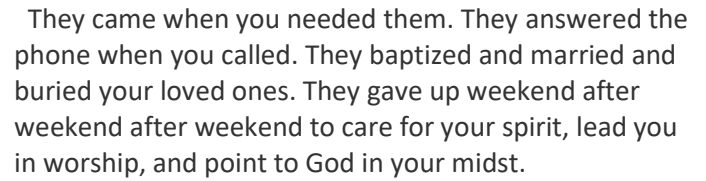




Thank you from Love, INC.

Thank you for being a partner with Love, INC. of Greater Hershey. Your unity with other churches and organizations is a blessing to many. Together we are able to serve more individuals and families in need. Thank You for joining together as the hands and feet of Jesus. An in this spirit, simply and sincerely, THANK YOU and blessings for a safe and Happy Thanksgiving.

For His Glory,
Patty TenHuisen, Executive Director



For all the sacrifices that clergy and lay church workers have made in our congregations, over 100 years ago the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ created the **Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund**, to help support them in retirement and during times of emergent need.

The Christmas Fund offering is scheduled for Sunday, December 20. Thank you for your support.

Special December Birthday Wishes to Audrey Baker, George Kapp and Richard Conrad who have birthdays this month.



Redeemer Reminders & Thanks



Advent Book Study: Here is a chance to enrich your Advent journey by shifting the focus from the rush of commercialism to the true meaning of the season. Sessions will be held in the sanctuary on Nov. 30, Dec. 7, Dec. 14 and Jan. 4 from 7-8 pm. This year's book is ***Awaiting the Already*** by Margey R. deVega. Paperback copies of the book are available from Amazon for \$12.00. The Kindle version is \$9.95. Please contact Nancy Kapp or Jan Stong to sign up or for more information on how to order your book for independent study during this Advent season.

Warm Tree Gifts: As part of the Redeemer holiday tradition, we will accept socks, hats, and gloves for donation to a local mission program. Items will be collected in the sanctuary between December 6 and January 3. For more information, please contact or see Audrey Baker. ***Thank you for your gifts of warmth!***

UCC Homes Gift Cards/Contributions due by December 13: Help to bring holiday joy to the residents of UCC Homes by donating \$5 or \$10 gift cards from Dunkin Donuts, Walmart, Amazon, Giant, Target. Monetary donations are also accepted. Please make your check out to UCC Homes and write Christmas Gift on the memo line. All contributions are due to Audrey Baker or the office by Sunday, December 13. Thank you for your consideration of supporting this effort this Christmas.



Christmas Eve Service: Christmas Eve service will be held at 7 pm on Thursday, Dec. 24. Communion will be served. Please join us as we celebrate the birth of Christ.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

Redeemer Fill the Sills Food Drive Results: The tally is in! This year's Redeemer Food Drive totaled more than **390 pounds** of food which translates to more than **312 meals** for families in need. Thank you to Redeemers and individuals who attend support groups in our building for contributing to this year's effort. Items were donated to the Hershey Food Bank for their holiday distributions. ***Thanks for the will to fill the windowsills!***

Thank You to Redeemer from UCC Homes:

Dear Rev. Caruso,

The Penn Central Conference has recently notified us of your gift of \$500 from the people of Redeemer UCC – Hershey which was placed into our Benevolent Fund. Without congregations like yours, so many people would not be able to receive the assistance they need. UCC Homes' greatest area of need continues to be the securing of sufficient funding to meet the growing financial need of residents who are unable to pay for the cost of their care and who do not have access to governmental assistance programs. We are able to meet this need because of your commitment to our ministry to the elderly.

Please convey our thanks to the members of your congregation and consistory. Helping people, reaching out a helping hand to someone who needs our concern is what UCC Homes is all about. Because of your continued support in this effort, it is what you are about also.

Sincerely,

Victoria M. Velez, Director of Public Relations

Redeemer Annual Congregational Meeting Set for Dec. 6

The Annual Meeting will be held in the sanctuary on Sunday, December 6 following worship. Copies of the Agenda will be provided at the meeting. The Proposed 2021 Budget is provided at right. Please plan to attend this important meeting as we summarize the events and projects of 2020 and look toward planning for the New Year.



| Church of the Redeemer Proposed 2021 Budget | | | |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|--|
| Expenses | Budgeted 2020 | Proposed 2021 | |
| A. Benevolences | | | |
| 1. Our Church's Wider Mission | \$2,500.00 | \$2,500.00 | |
| 2. UCC Homes | \$500.00 | \$500.00 | |
| 3. Harrisburg Association | \$351.00 | \$351.00 | |
| 4. Love INC | \$250.00 | \$250.00 | |
| 5. Hartman Center | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | |
| 6. Pastor's Discretionary Fund | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | |
| Total | \$3,601.00 | \$3,601.00 | |
| B. Christian Education | | | |
| 1. Church School Curriculum | \$100.00 | \$100.00 | |
| Total | \$100.00 | \$100.00 | |
| C. Worship Expenses | | | |
| 1. Worship Supplies | \$300.00 | \$300.00 | |
| 2. Chancel Choir | \$850.00 | \$850.00 | |
| 3. Bell Choir | \$250.00 | \$250.00 | |
| 4. Supply Pastor | \$2,500.00 | \$2,500.00 | |
| 5. Supply Organist | \$150.00 | \$150.00 | |
| 6. Organ Maintenance | \$1,000.00 | \$1,030.00 | |
| 7. Piano Maintenance | \$300.00 | \$300.00 | |
| Total | \$5,350.00 | \$5,380.00 | |
| D. Stewardship Expenses | | | |
| 1. Stewardship Resources | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | |
| 2. Offering Envelopes | \$250.00 | \$250.00 | |
| Total | \$250.00 | \$250.00 | |
| E. Leadership Expenses | | | |
| 1. Leadership Resources | \$225.00 | \$225.00 | |
| 2. Delegates (annual meeting) | \$350.00 | \$350.00 | |
| Total | \$575.00 | \$575.00 | |
| F. Office Expenses | | | |
| 1. Computer Software/Payroll | \$800.00 | \$800.00 | |
| 2. Office Supplies & Expenses | \$2,500.00 | \$2,500.00 | |
| 3. Postage & Delivery | \$100.00 | \$100.00 | |
| 4. Telephone/Internet | \$2,100.00 | \$2,100.00 | |
| Total | \$5,500.00 | \$5,500.00 | |
| G. Maintenance | | | |
| 1. Custodial Services | \$5,500.00 | \$11,000.00 | |
| 2. Housekeeping Supplies | \$500.00 | \$500.00 | |
| 3. Pest Control | \$350.00 | \$350.00 | |
| 4. Snow Removal/Lawn Care | \$2,000.00 | \$3,500.00 | |
| Total | \$8,350.00 | \$15,350.00 | |
| H. Utilities | | | |
| 1. Electric | \$3,000.00 | \$3,000.00 | |
| 2. Gas | \$3,000.00 | \$3,000.00 | |
| 3. Sewer | \$300.00 | \$300.00 | |
| 4. Storm Water Fee | \$234.00 | \$234.00 | |
| 5. Trash Removal | \$1,200.00 | \$1,200.00 | |
| 6. Water | \$900.00 | \$900.00 | |
| Total | \$8,634.00 | \$8,634.00 | |
| I. Miscellaneous | | | |
| 1. Building Insurance/Liability | \$8,000.00 | \$8,166.00 | |
| 2. Pastor Continuing Education | \$200.00 | \$200.00 | |
| 3. Pastor Travel & Expenses | \$1,800.00 | \$1,800.00 | |
| 4. Property Taxes | \$3,000.00 | \$3,000.00 | |
| Total | \$13,000.00 | \$13,166.00 | |
| J. Employee Compensation | | | |
| 1. Pastor Cash Salary | \$18,087.14 | \$18,087.14 | |
| 2. Pastor Housing Allowance | \$6,225.00 | \$7,499.96 | |
| 3. Pastor Health Insurance | \$4,100.00 | \$4,100.00 | |
| 4. Pastor Pension | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | |
| 5. Minister of Music | \$8,148.00 | \$8,148.00 | |
| 6. Organist | \$6,060.00 | \$6,060.00 | |
| 7. Secretary | \$13,500.00 | \$13,500.00 | |
| 8. FICA | \$3,000.00 | \$3,000.00 | |
| 9. Worker's Comp. Insurance | \$940.00 | \$940.00 | |
| Total | \$60,060.14 | \$61,335.10 | |
| Total Budgeted Expenses | \$105,420.14 | \$113,891.10 | |

Advent Summons

*Come forth from the holy place,
Sweet Child,
Come from the quiet dark
Where virginal heartbeats
Tick your moments.*

*Come away from the red music
Of Mary's veins.
Come out of the Tower of David,
Sweet Child,
From the House of Gold.*

*Leave your lily-cloister,
Leave your holy mansion,
Quit your covenant ark,
O Child, be born!*

*Be born, sweet Child,
In our unholy hearts.*

*Come to our trembling,
Helpless Child.
Come to our littleness,
Little Child,
Be born unto us
Who have kept faltering vigil.
Be given, be born.
Be ours again.*

*Come forth from your holy
heaven,
Come away from your perfect
shrine,
Come to our wind-racked souls,
From the flawless tent,
Sweet Child.*

*Be born, little Child,
In our unholy hearts.
Sister Mary Frances, PCC*



Thank you to the O'Donnell Family for creating this graphic during their virtual PA/WV/IL Family Thanksgiving.

2021 Publication Sponsorships

The 2021 bulletin and newsletter sponsorship sign-up sheets are now available in the sanctuary. A bulletin sponsorship is \$40 for the full month. CONTACT sponsorship is \$25. Sponsors are acknowledged in each publication and may recognize a loved one or cause of their choice.

Dates are going fast, so sign up soon! Invoices for your sponsorship will be issued by the office just prior to the month you choose. Thank you for considering a sponsorship for 2021!

Prayers of Joy for Sharon Thomas who returned to church following a few months at home recovering from a fall



Prayers for Healing Touch for:

Pastor Tom's former landlady, **Donna Reeder** of Hummelstown, who faces tests for serious cardiac issues

Kemmy Himmelberger for continued strength as she convalesces at home

Linda Crocker, Margie's sister-in-law, awaiting a kidney transplant

Barry Mongold as he faces surgery in the New Year

Kathy Getz, friend of Margie Crocker, who is challenged with Lyme Disease and a brain tumor

Prayers for comfort for:

Jack Hovis, the brother of Pastor Tom's clinical pastoral education colleague **Sister Joy Hovis**, who died in NY from liver disease

Prayers for Strength for first responders, the medical community, and our nation as we continue to battle the Coronavirus, political strife, and social injustice, particularly that addressed by **Black Lives Matter** leaders and advocates.



Food collected for the Fill the Sills Food Drive was blessed on November 22 before being loaded up and taken to the Hershey Food Bank and Community Outreach. Total donations were just shy of 400 pounds! Congratulations Redeemers and thank you for your participation in the food drive this year!

Redeemer Worship Attendance

| | | Attend | Visitor | Total |
|-----------|----------|--------|---------|-------|
| September | 09/06/20 | 22 | | 22 |
| | 09/13/20 | 16 | | 16 |
| average | 09/20/20 | 19 | | 19 |
| 19 | 09/27/20 | 19 | | 19 |

| | | | | |
|---------|----------|----|--|----|
| October | 10/04/20 | 20 | | 20 |
| | 10/11/20 | 19 | | 19 |
| average | 10/18/20 | 19 | | 19 |
| 19 | 10/25/20 | 19 | | 19 |

| | | | | |
|----------|----------|----|--|----|
| November | 11/01/20 | 17 | | 17 |
| | 11/08/20 | 18 | | 18 |
| average | 11/15/20 | 21 | | 21 |
| 19 | 11/22/20 | 18 | | 18 |
| | 11/29/20 | 22 | | 22 |



December 2020

| Sun. | Mon. | Tue. | Wed. | Thu. | Fri. | Sat. |
|--|--|--|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| | | 1 | 2 12 pm Nooner AA 6:30 pm KISS AA Wednesday Worship Video | 3 12 pm Nooner AA 12 pm Focused Prayer | 4 12 pm Nooner AA 6:30 pm KISS AA | 5 7am Sunrise AA 12 pm KISS AA |
| 6 2 nd Advent Sunday 9:15 am Worship 10:30 am Annual Congregational Meeting 3 pm KISS AA 6:30 pm IPA | 7 9:30 am FARA 12 pm Nooner AA 7 pm Advent Book Study 7:30 pm OA Mtg | 8 12:00 pm Hershey Ministerium Member Meal 12 pm Nooner AA | 9 12 pm Nooner AA 6:30 pm KISS AA Wednesday Worship Video | 10 12 pm Nooner AA 12 pm Focused Prayer 7 pm Leadership Team | 11 12 pm Nooner AA 6:30 pm KISS AA | 12 7am Sunrise AA 12 pm KISS AA |
| 13 3 rd Advent Sunday 9:15 am Worship 3pm KISS AA | 14 9:30 am FARA 12 pm Nooner AA 7 pm Advent Book Study 7:30 pm OA Mtg | 15 12 pm Nooner AA | 16 12 pm Nooner AA 6:30 pm KISS AA Wednesday Worship Video | 17 10:30 AM Interim Ministry Zoom 12 pm Nooner AA 12 pm Focused Prayer | 18 12 pm Nooner AA 6:30 PM KISS AA | 19 7am Sunrise AA 12 pm KISS AA |
| 20 4 th Advent Sunday 9:15 am Worship 3PM KISS AA | 21 9:30 am FARA 12 pm Nooner AA 7:30 pm OA Mtg JANUARY CONTACT CONTENT DUE! | 22 12 pm Nooner AA | 23 12 pm Nooner AA 6:30 pm KISS AA Wednesday Worship Video | 24 12 pm Nooner AA 12 pm Focused Prayer 7 pm Christmas Eve Service with Communion  | 25 Merry Christmas!  Office Closed Pastor Tom away through Jan 1 → | 26 7am Sunrise AA 12 pm KISS AA |
| 27 1 st Sunday after Christmas 9:15 am Worship 3PM KISS AA | 28 9:30 am FARA 12 pm Nooner AA 7:30 pm OA Mtg | 29 12 pm Nooner AA | 30 12 pm Nooner AA 6:30 pm KISS AA Wednesday Worship Video | 31 12 pm Nooner AA 12 pm Focused Prayer |  | |

Church of the Redeemer UCC
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info@redeemerchurchucc.org

The Penn Central Conference UCC is:

- A faith-based and mission organization driven by 184 congregations in covenant, consisting of about 37,000 members and 400 authorized ministers in 20 counties throughout Pennsylvania
- Located in urban, suburban, small town and rural – Central PA from NY to MD – with a Conference office in Harrisburg, PA
- Divided into 8 Associations
 - Central
 - Gettysburg
 - Harrisburg
 - Lancaster
 - Lebanon
 - Mercersburg
 - Northern
 - York
- One of 38 regional bodies of the United Church of Christ
- Governed by a Board of Directors consisting of 3 representatives of each of our 8 Associations
- Formed in January 1963 as a merger of the Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical and Reformed Church
- Staffed by 8 people who work to strengthen and connect our congregations by providing support and resources

A Short Course in the History of the United Church of Christ tells our story beginning with our origins in the small community who followed Jesus 20 centuries ago and continuing to the present. Learn about the Reformation—a protest movement against the abuse of authority by church leaders; the rediscovery by Luther and Calvin of the Bible's teaching that salvation is not earned, but is a gift; the epic journey of the Pilgrims from England to the shores of North America; the waves of emigration by German and Hungarian Protestants seeking spiritual and political freedom; the beginning of the first Christian anti-slavery movement in history; the 20th-century movement to reunite the divided branches of Christ's church, and, as a result of that movement, the union of several traditions of Protestant Christianity into the United Church of Christ in 1957.

We invite you to use the Short Course for your personal study or as a resource for confirmation and new-member classes in your congregation. On every page, you will find links to related resources on this website, links to other resources on the Internet, and ideas about books for further study.

<https://pccucc.org/fact-sheet/>



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Rev. Thomas W. Caruso, Interim Minister
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This issue of CONTACT is
sponsored by Nancy Kapp in
honor of her husband George's
birthday.

