



THE CHIMES

IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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“Revlections”

December 2018

The Season of Advent has begun and Christmas is quickly approaching. We know deep down that Jesus isn't really born every year, but in our hearts full of memories, it feels like it. We put up our Christmas trees and search high and low for the ornaments that we've cherished for generations. Our neighbors who never take down their lights have already been beaming for days!

We decorate, go into overdrive making Christmas cookies, shop till our fingers cramp online, support our local vendors, eat fun stuff and plan fitness plans to compensate in 2019. We shop until everybody on our lists get checked off. There's so much to do and so many expectations to fulfill! The Hallmark Movie Channel has been cranking out Christmas movies since Halloween (jeepers!!) and Christmas music is everywhere.

Thanks to stalwart volunteers, the church has been decorated and the Putz has been constructed. The *New Wave Singers*, Baltimore's premier LGBTQ choir, filled the sanctuary with beautiful music and the pews were full of visitors who came from as far as Montgomery County! For those of you who attended the concert and welcomed everybody, thank you!

We made and sent 111 Christmas cards to our two churches in Japan, and I had fun with postal employees as I shared our story. The Alternative Christmas Market is providing funding for Earl's Place, Church World Services and the Heifer Project, and Church World Ministries special projects. Thanks to our *Provide A Ride Volunteers* and the *Elf Delivery Team*, Joyce continues to have great help during her chemotherapy treatments and goodies from each Sunday's fellowship times.

The bulletins are full of Christmas carols and the choir is making the season bright. Everything is in motion and we'll be more than ready for the Christmas Eve Service! Are we forgetting anything? I hope not! Is everything going to be in its right place at the right time? I hope so! So, as we keep increasing our activities, what exactly are we waiting and hoping for this Christmas?

In a year that's been more than full of chaos, overwhelming national and international disasters, and profoundly heartbreaking mass shootings, what message

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can our faith use to fill our stockings as 2018 comes to a close? God is always present in the midst of whatever we face. It's easy to know in the good stuff and sometimes impossible to comprehend when our worlds come apart.

We celebrate more than a just a pretty story that makes us feel warm and fuzzy. We remember God's presence in human form. The baby Jesus was born into a world of poverty, political oppression, weather events and natural disasters, and he grew into and shared a life of love, compassion, healing, grace and hope. He was and still is, Emmanuel, "God-With-Us." Hallmark can't duplicate it and Amazon can't sell it. Only we can share that love, hope, joy, and peace with the people we love and those we don't know yet.

Take a few minutes and thank God for all of the blessings you have in your life. Even when times have been hard with health challenges, tighter wallets and stresses of all kinds, God didn't kick you to the curb and look for somebody better and more reliable than you. God's love and support never stopped; we just keep forgetting how to recognize and receive God's presence without fancy gift wrapping and big miracles attached.

My prayer for you is simple. May the Living Christ sneak up on you and surprise you with moments of unexpected wonder, light, inner healing and much needed peace. In the quiet of a chilly night sky, with or without snow, may the ancient story become real to you once more. And may an invisible angel sing within your heart: "Glory to God in the highest and on Earth...peace..."

Merry Christmas!

Rev Bev

The Putz

The building of the Putz, a depiction of the story of Jesus' birth, is a Moravian custom. A putz can be a simple manger scene, or in its most elaborate form, the putz can fill a room. The word putz comes from the German word putzen which means to decorate or clean. The manger is always the center of any putz.

The essence of the putz tradition is found in the way in which each putz is built to tell the Good News of the coming of the Christ Child. It is more than a nativity scene with adoring shepherds. It is the Gospel in miniature from Isaiah's prophecy and Mary's annunciation to the visit of the wise men and the flight into Egypt. The joy comes in creating the story of the wonder of Christ's birth so that the Son of God can be welcomed into the hearts of the home at the Christmas.

Rev Bev brought the tradition of building the putz with her when she became our pastor. She learned the history and construction methods at Bethesda United Church of Christ back in the 1990's. Her teacher, the late, great scientist, Bob Knouss, grew up as a Moravian.

The Moravian Church, formally named the Unitas Fratrum, in German known as [Herrnhuter] Brüdergemeine, is one of the oldest Protestant denominations in the world, with its heritage dating back to the Bohemian Reformation in the 15th century and the Unity of the Brethren established in the Kingdom of Bohemia.

Rev Bev has spent 20 years collecting driftwood, stumps, and corn crates, and moss from the following states: Wisconsin (Lake Michigan), Iowa (Mississippi River and Lake Red Rock), Kentucky (Ohio River), Pennsylvania (UCC Camp), and Maryland (Eastern Shore).

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She and three of her church members in Wisconsin hand painted each figurine. Each piece came from a local ceramics shop that donated their labor to pour and fire the pieces. Rev Bev and her friends spent months preparing the ceramics and two of the walking camels reflect the colors of the Green Bay Packers. There are a lot of snow-covered memories embedded in the Putz you see today.

Each year the Putz presents a challenge to design, build without breaking anything, and make strong enough to stand up for over a month. Every year, new volunteers are recruited to learn the tradition and share the wonder of becoming artistic construction workers. The Moravians gave the world a visible way to celebrate an invisible, timeless story. Bringing the story alive again is our gift to all who visit and worship with us at Immanuel UCC each Christmas Season.



Catonsville Emergency Assistance: Donating Food for the Holidays

Help make the holidays extra special for someone in need!
CEA is collecting these items for Holiday Bags:

- Supermarket gift cards
- cream soups
- canned yams / sweet potatoes
- canned gravy / broth
- French onion soup
- canned pumpkin / pie filling / pudding mix
- cans of evaporated / condensed milk
- stuffing
- boxed mashed potatoes
- cranberry sauce
- cookies / candy / hot chocolate mix
- travel size toiletries



Catonsville Emergency Assistance relies on contributions of food—perishable, non-perishable, and frozen food—as well as dry goods/hygiene products such as toilet paper, toiletries, and paper towels. When possible, low-sodium food and lower sugar cereals are preferred. Food should not be more than a year old. Food can be dropped off at church for delivery to CEA. There is a basket in the sanctuary.

December Birthdays

11 – Rev Bev

19 – David Schatz

23 – Lisa Ianuzzi

26 – Sue DiPaula

30 – Cindy Garner

21 – Nancy Taylor



Upcoming Events

Christmas Eve Service – Monday, December 24 – 7:30.

New Year's Day Resolution Run to Benefit Earl's Place – Tuesday, January 1 from 2pm until 5pm at Patterson Park, 2638 East Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD, 21224 5K run and 1 mile walk.

Consistory – January 20



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Lectionary Readings

(Day-Date; First Reading; Psalm; Second Reading; Gospel)

First Sunday of Advent – December 2, 2018

Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

Second Sunday of Advent – December 9, 2018

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

Third Sunday of Advent – December 16, 2018

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 23, 2018

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:47-55; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

Christmas Eve / Day – December 24 / 25, 2018

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

First Sunday After Christmas Day – December 30, 2018

1 Samuel 2:18-20,26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

Prayer Concerns

PLEASE REMEMBER OUR HOME-BOUND MEMBERS:

PRAYER CONCERNS IN THE CHURCH FAMILY:

Joyce Stanton, continuing chemotherapy; Jill, Bell's Palsy.

PRAYER CONCERNS IN THE EXTENDED CHURCH FAMILY:

Bryan Holley's brother and extended family; Rev. Maeba Jonas' mother, Susan, cancer recurrence and chemotherapy; Sue and Steve DiPaula's extended family; Central Atlantic Conference; residents and staff of Earl's Place; Kim Turner, treatment for brain cancer.

PRAYER CONCERNS IN OUR REGION:

Tree of Life Synagogue; Baltimore gun violence; local flood victims; all undocumented residents; refugee families in Baltimore County; safety of law enforcement and first responders.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL PRAYER CONCERNS:

France; Britain; California wildfires; migrant caravan safety; Hurricane Michael and recovery; Reunification of immigrant and refugee kids with their families; Puerto Rico; teachers; all UCC disaster relief projects; prayers for our country; families fearful of deportation; all U.S. military deployed and stateside; refugees seeking safety and compassionate care; Ukraine and NATO; Yemen.