



LISTEN to *The ChurchMouse*

New Scotland Presbyterian Church

December 2023

"Original Landlord Still Offering Sanctuary"



How to Have a Happy Christmas

by the Rev. Holly Cameron

In church we talk about the season of Advent being the time to prepare for Christmas. We do that with candles, and hymns, and scripture readings reminding us of when Jesus first came to Earth, and the reminder that he will come again. But everything outside of church tells me that, to prepare for Christmas, I should be shopping, shopping, shopping. In addition to the usual parade of commercials, every show I watch seems to include a segment of stuff I should be buying. I read in "Climate Courage" by Andreas Karelak that the average American spends over 11 hours a day listening to, watching, or interacting with media, in which they see up to 5,000 advertisements. The promise is that if I buy the right thing, for myself or for my loved ones, then I will be happy – or at least happier than I am now.

Yet we are plagued with increasing diseases of despair and suicide, and ongoing epidemics of obesity and opioid addiction. Our whole culture is built on the idea that more is better, that having more – more money, more stuff – leads to happiness. Yet one study shows that despite having the highest gross domestic product in the world, the US has the highest number of people taking antidepressants, and is only 18th on the list of happiest countries. Money, it seems, makes us happy up to point of providing for our basic needs. Once we feel safe, having and spending and money no longer contributes to our general happiness.

What does make us happy is strengthening our relationships. I was in a conversation recently where everyone was asked to name

their favorite Christmas gift. Interestingly, it was almost never a thing. It was the Christmas when they got engaged, or found out a new baby was on the way, or adopted a pet, or were surprised by a family member who able to come home. Daniel Goleman says, "intangibles like warm connections with people we love and meaningful activities make people far happier than shopping or work. Consumption... can never replace community."

This is why the church is so needed in our culture. At church we seek to build community, which gives us connection and support. We seek meaning and purpose for our lives, without commercials. We are encouraged to practice gratitude in the midst of difficulty, and to discover that happiness is often found in helping to benefit others.

Jesus tells us our happiness can be found in serving others. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote:

"If you want to be important—wonderful. If you want to be recognized—wonderful. If you want to be great—wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That's a new definition of greatness.... It means that everyone can be great, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You don't have to know Plato and Aristotle to serve.... You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."

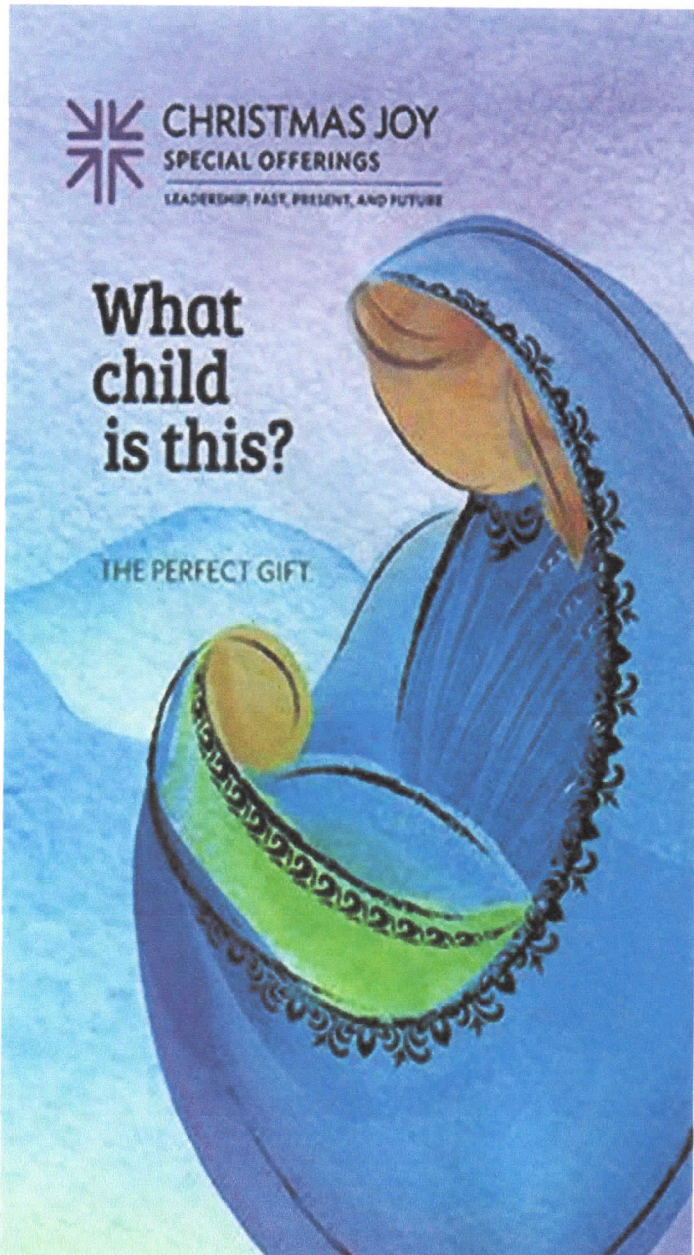
I wish you a happy and meaningful Christmas. May you be filled with grace, peace, and love.





Our December Mission

This month's Mission Collection will be the Christmas Joy Offering. One half of the funds collected will go to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions of PCUSA, providing critical financial support to church workers, retired, present and future and their families. The other half will go to Presbyterian-related schools, equipping communities of color, offering students the means for a brighter future and enhanced opportunities to use their talents and skills to serve God, the church and the world for years to come.




Christmas Eve
*is on a Sunday this year,
 so we will have our regular Sunday
 worship at 10:00 am and our*
**Christmas Eve
 Candle Lighting Service**
*at 4:00 pm. Some of our kids
 will be telling the Christmas story,
 so we hope you will join us!*



The Friendship Singers of Delmar are Back!

The Friendship Singers of Delmar will perform here at our church on Tuesday, December 19 at 7:00 pm. The director of this popular local women's group is Marie Liddle; piano accompaniment Peg Dorgan. We're hoping to spread a little Christmas cheer with old favorites, and reconnect with friends. All are welcome to join the fun—this free concert is open to the public.



The Daily News & The Good News

by Larry Deyss, Pastor in the Pew

As we continue to move through these very tumultuous times, I am ever more aware of the importance of a free press for sustaining democracy. The Perspective section of the Times Union on November 19 is a case in point. The daily news often shows us the dark side of life. After reading it we may find ourselves asking, "Where can we find hope?"

While we can point to hopeful accounts in the newspaper, it is not the place where we are grounded in hope. It is when we turn to the Good News that we can be rooted and grounded in hope. In the Gospels and letters, as well as in the psalms and prophets, we find words that sustain us and give us hope. In those texts, we are reminded that God is not simply a concept, but a reality.

We live in a very real world and we need to keep our eyes, ears and minds open. Jesus said, "Be aware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:15)

St. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, lists the good fruits, saying "the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control." (Galatians 5:22) He then continues to say, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit."

How are we to live in these turbulent and uncertain times, which often leave us feeling drained and hopeless? I think the way forward consists in giving thanks for what we have, which we have done recently in our celebration of Thanksgiving and in our weekly worship and daily prayers. Thus, we live our lives rooted and grounded in the Word of God, and it is through the Word that our souls are fed. This is what we do as individuals and together as the Church. We are the people who live in the faith and way of Christ Jesus. As we move into the season of Advent we look for the coming of Christ anew. We are not alone, God is with us. Thanks be to God.



December Birthdays

Albert Miller, Jr.....	12-1
Bruce Thornton	12-3
Tom DeLorenzo	12-3
Sean Gordon	12-8
David Miller.....	12-10
Adam Stefaniak.....	12-10
Alexandra Guiffre	12-12
Jeremy Gordon.....	12-13
Mariah Miller	12-16
Judy Riopelle	12-19
Ryan Dwyer	12-21
Robin Hull-Pease	12-24
Harry Thornton	12-26
Mackenzie Blake.....	12-28
Zachary Thornton.....	12-28
Carolyn Barrett.....	12-29
Deborah Blakely	12-30
Richard VonHaugg.....	12-31
Patti DeLorenzo	12-31

December Anniversary

Karen & Timothy Thornton, 12/20/1969



PRAYER LIST

Tim & Susan Albright
(Friends of our church)

Sherry Back
(Pat Klose Hammond's sister-in-law)

Marie Bailey
(Tamara Shaw's mother)

Laurel & Mark Beavers

Melanie Thornton Capraro
(Karen & Tim Thornton's daughter)

Danny Carroll
(Chris Gordon's brother)

Linda Caruso
(Tamara Shaw's friend)

Randy Craft
(Debbie Craft's husband)

Gina Domermuth
(Lexi Donovan's friend)

Phil Darcy
(John Relyea's friend)

Kathy Drake
(Corinne Weeks' friend)

Mark Elmendorf
(Carole Elmendorf's son)

Debbie Fuglein

Evelyn Fuglein

Barbara Huth



Jimmy Kelly
(Bill Kerr's nephew)

David Kinerson
(Larry Deyss' brother-in-law)

Steven Lampone
(Brian Nopper's nephew)

Family of Jason LaRue
(Dan Coons' brother-in-law)

Aidan Lawson
(Robin Shufelt's friend)

Stephanie Markus
(Robin Shufelt's friend)

Christine McNichols
(Tamara Shaw's friend)

Martha Oden

Family of Conor O'Shea
(Bonnie & Brendan O'Shea's son)

Debbie O'Shea
(Bonnie & Brendan O'Shea's sister-in-law)

Vickie Richeson
(Mary-Jean Riley & Gene Urgento's sister)

Denise Riedy

Manny Sanchez
(Sandy Warner's brother-in-law)

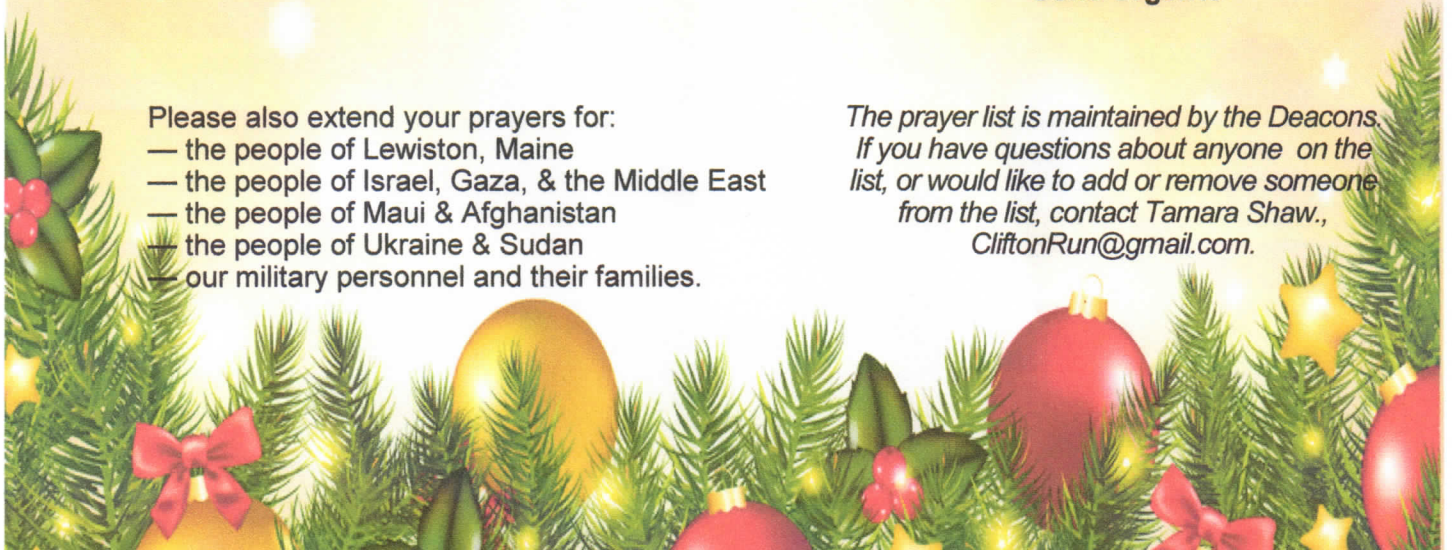
Brad Simon
(Tim & Christine Gordon's family member)

Gene Urgento

Please also extend your prayers for:

- the people of Lewiston, Maine
- the people of Israel, Gaza, & the Middle East
- the people of Maui & Afghanistan
- the people of Ukraine & Sudan
- our military personnel and their families.

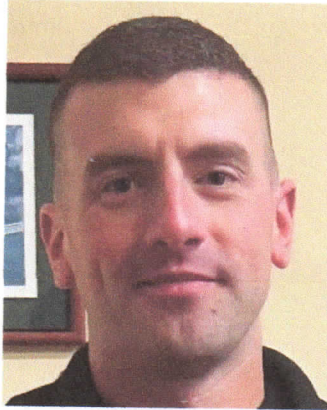
The prayer list is maintained by the Deacons.
If you have questions about anyone on the list, or would like to add or remove someone from the list, contact Tamara Shaw.,
CliftonRun@gmail.com.





In Loving Memory of Conor O'Shea

Conor O'Shea, 37, passed away on Wednesday, December 6, 2023. Conor was born on December 3, 1986, in Albany, the son of Bonnie (Morrison) O'Shea and Brendan O'Shea. He grew up in Slingerlands and attended Bethlehem Central schools. He was drawn to athletics, and especially loved ice hockey. He forged many lasting relationships with teammates and coaches in local youth hockey organizations. As a goalie, Conor stopped many a puck (and alas, saw a few get by him). He continued to play the game he loved until a series of injuries compelled him to hang up his skates and enjoy the sport on the big screens only.



Conor O'Shea

Conor attended Potsdam State University, and found employment in the field of law enforcement. He served as a Corrections Officer with the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision until he was fortunate enough to be accepted into the Albany Police Department, where he began his career in 2017, and was appointed Detective in 2020. Conor poured a great deal of

time and energy into his job and into the support of his colleagues on the force, to whom he was devoted, and who in turn, returned that devotion.

Besides his loving parents, Conor is survived by his older brother, Patrick (Jolene), of Ballston Spa, and by many cherished aunts, uncles and cousins. He also leaves behind his two furry friends, Molson and Finn, who will now spend quality time at the family home.

Bonnie and Brendan wish to acknowledge the kindness, professionalism and love shown by Conor's APD family, Chief Hawkins, and Mayor Sheehan. The residents of Albany are fortunate indeed to be protected by such considerate public servants.

A memorial service was held last Monday, December 11, 2023 at the Church of St. Vincent de Paul, in Albany.

Memorial donations in honor of Conor O'Shea may be made to New Scotland Presbyterian Church, 2010 New Scotland Road, Slingerlands, NY 12159.

Year-end Giving

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from God, the Creator of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. — James 1:17

In the last two years we have been blessed with a few bequests that have increased the balance of our endowment fund. However, our regular giving is not keeping pace with our operating expenses, meaning we must rely more heavily on our endowment to stay afloat.

Our church stands to offer the light of hope in all dark times. As 2023 comes to

a close, would you prayerfully consider all the good our church has done in your life, in your family's life, and in the life of our community, both our congregation and beyond our pews. We are grateful for all you do to help us shine the light of God to our world. If you believe that the good we do deserves to continue and grow, please consider making a year-end gift to support our ongoing ministry.





Session held their latest meeting on December 7, 2023.

The following items were discussed:

- The Annual Congregational Meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2024. One of the items the Elders would like to have discussed is the size of the Session. Currently each class has space for three Elders. The last two classes however have two Elders. Session would like to propose each class be made up of two Elders as opposed to three.
- Margaret Ewart attended the meeting of Albany Presbytery on November 16, with Pastor Holly that was held at Mayfield Church. Among the items discussed were three new pastors in the presbytery, and recognizing the end the Rev. Katy Stenta's pastorate at New Covenant in September, and the upcoming retirement of the Rev. Karen Pollan who will be leaving Delmar at the end of the year. Also approved a proposal from the Peacemaking Task Force to support a ban on weaponized drones. The next meeting is scheduled for December 12, via Zoom.
- A reminder that the Deacons are hosting a Nativi-tea on December 14, at 1pm. This is a chance for individuals to view nativities that are not only part of the church's collection but also those that belong to members of the congregation. Deacons plan to offer transportation to folks that are interested in attending but may not be able to drive.
- The Congregational Life committee recently held a celebration to commemorate members' anniversaries. On November 19, a Hymnal Angel workshop was hosted. On Sunday, December 10, New Scotland will welcome four new members. On Tuesday, December 12, at 6:00 p.m. a Blue Christmas Service will be held.
- Some discussion was had about moving the pews in the sanctuary back to the configuration with one center aisle. It was determined for the time being that the current configuration would be maintained.
- Pastor Holly attended the Earth Care event hosted at Delmar Presbyterian Church on November 4. The event was centered around an exercise in which participants broke up into

Session Notes

groups. Each group represented a certain interest, for example fossil fuel companies, clean energy entities, etc. Each action a company or entity might take had a score associated with it which in turn impacts global temperature. The goal was to reduce the temperature by 1.5 degrees. The event proved to be complicated, however when the groups worked together the goal was met.

- The Finance Committee and Session plan to discuss church finances in 2024. Currently the annual pledges do not support the overall operational expenses of the church. Session would like to brainstorm possible solutions

in the coming year.

- A Retainer Letter is to be signed by New Scotland Presbyterian Church for the services of an attorney Carolyn Lemmon to assist in a potential agreement with Archtop Fiber. Archtop Fiber contacted New Scotland about the potential of placing a structure on the property. A recommendation was made that New Scotland enlist an attorney to ensure the church's interests are protected.
- Archie Munro has donated a framed version of the Last Supper that was made by his mother. It will be hung in the Fellowship Hall. The next Session meeting will be held on January 11, 2024 at 5:30pm via Zoom.



Winter Roads a Problem?

We generally do not cancel worship unless the roads or parking lot are impassable. But, even if we are open for worship, if you do not feel comfortable on the roads, then please stay safely at home! We now post cancellations on the church website, on the outgoing phone message, and send an email to those who receive the weekly email.

Laity Sunday

The Congregational Life Committee and the entire congregation would like to thank all of the participants of Laity Sunday on November 26, especially to our youngest members who took on speaking roles in front of everyone! Thank you to the Sunday School students Jordyn and Mariah Miller, and Matthew Nopper-Shatraw, for leading us in the Exchange of Peace, the Call to Worship and the Benediction.

We would also like to thank Homer Warner for opening the morning with the Greetings and Welcome, Sandy Warner for Invitation to Confession, Prayer of Confession and the Assurance of Forgiveness, Peg Throop for the Prayer of Illumination and the Old Testament lesson, Bonnie O'Shea for reading the Epistle lesson and sharing the Children's Sermon with the children, John Griffin for reading the Gospel lesson, Kristen Miller for sharing a Minute for Mission, the Pastoral Prayer, and leading us in the Lord's Prayer, and Kevin Dwyer for leading us in the Invitation to Offering and the Prayer of Dedication.

And we have a special thank you to Sandy Warner, Dorothy Kohler, and Robin Hull-Pease for sharing personal reflections with our congregation. Each one was a special giving of thanks that touched our hearts.

It was a lovely service!



An Angel Wrote . . . (Anonymous)

Many people will walk in and out of your life,
but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.

To handle yourself, use your head, to handle others, use your heart.

Anger is only one letter short of danger.

If someone betrays you once, it's his fault. If he betrays you twice, it's your fault.

Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss people.

God gives every bird its food. But he does not throw it into the nest.

He who loses money, loses much; He who loses a friend loses more; He who loses faith loses all.

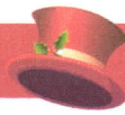
Beautiful young people are acts of nature, but beautiful old people are works of art!

Stewardship Letters Have Been Mailed

The Finance Committee mailed out the letter for 2024 Stewardship pledges on last month. We are asking Church Members and Friends to consider the question "Why is New Scotland Presbyterian Church important to YOU?" as a guide to your financial contribution to our Church. In the mailing we have included more detail on facts and figures than usual to explain the needs of our church. But, appreciating the value of the church in our lives is really a question for our hearts. Facts and figures don't solely move a person to give to the church. Contemplating the blessings of a church that nurtures our spiritual lives is the real spark.

Over four Sundays there will be very short comments by some members about what the New Scotland Presbyterian Church means to the speaker. Our hope is that these personal witnesses may speak to your own heart as you think about your 2024 financial pledge to our church.





Angel Hymnal Workshop

Yes, it was a lot of folding, but so much fun to make custom angel Christmas decorations! Brenda Dwyer shared her creative talents and ideas to coach a class of about 15 people on how to make these custom decorations. She supplied a variety of tiny ornaments to enhance the angels. A truly enjoyable time was had by all. Thank you, Brenda, for this fabulous class!



Left: Jordyn Miller puts the finishing touches on her angel.

Little Teagan Riedy stands proudly next to her completed angel.



McKinley Riedy, a lovely vision in silvery gray, was seemingly her own muse for the hymnal angel she created.



Left: Carol Fuglein's angel was just a little scary looking, making it perfect for next Halloween!



Congregational Life Update *by Bonnie O'Shea*

At the end of October, we partnered with the New Salem Firehouse to host "Trunk or Treat" and welcomed young and old trick or treaters to come in costume with their treat buckets and bags. We would like to thank Jim and Leah Nicholson, Catherine and Jason Russell, Diana Bremm, and Bonnie and Brendan O'Shea for decking their cars in Halloween finery and endless supplies of sweets for the visitors who participated.

The month of November was a busy one for celebrating milestone membership anniversaries. On November 5 we recognized Ryan Dwyer for 20+ years, Brenda and Kevin Dwyer for 35 years, Holly Stefaniak for 20 years, and Dan Coons for 20 years of being a part of this church family. On November 19, we had the pleasure of honoring Diane Bode for her 50 years of membership.

Also on November 19, we had the pleasure of working with Brenda Dwyer making angels out of old hymnals. We had multiple generations of families participate in this fantastic workshop!



While Dorothy Kohler and Holly & Adam Stefaniak work on folding more than 700 pages of their hymnals, Rev. Cameron contemplates her angel's face.



From left, members Dan Coons, Holly Stefaniak, Brenda and Kevin Dwyer, Ryan Dwyer and Diane Bode.



Well if it isn't Sandy Homer, posing next to her dog, Beauty, who was named Show Champion Gordon Setter way back when.

Merry Christmas



LISTEN to *The ChurchMouse*
 New Scotland Presbyterian Church
 December 2023



"Original Landlord Still Offering Sanctuary"

The Rev. Holly S. Cameron..... Pastor
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 Newsletter Managing Editor Dorothy Kohler



2010 New Scotland Road, Slingerlands, NY 12159

Holiday Hours

The church office will be closed Tuesday, December 26 through Tuesday, January 2.

First United Methodist Church of Voorheesville will hold a Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 17 at 7:00 pm. Everyone is invited!

