

December 2024

Rev. Jeff Bandy

937-372-7601 office@fcum.org www.fcum.org.

9:00am-Sunday School

10:00am-Hospitality Time-Narthex

10:30am-Worship-Sanctuary

We are a Stephen Ministry Congregation

Attendance

<u>Date</u>	<u>Worship</u>	<u>S.S.</u>
October 27	78	24
November 3	88	22
November 10	90	21
November 17	76	24

From the Pastor

I find it interesting how the retail industry keeps pushing the “holiday” season on us earlier and earlier. This reality creates different feelings in us. For some of us it is excitement, for others it is exhaustion, and for many of us it’s anticipation. Advent is a time of expectation, so as we are prompted by the commercials to be eager for the season, let’s focus on the coming of our savior and what He brings to the world. Isaiah prophesied, “*A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor; Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*” (Isaiah 9:6,CEB)

According to Isaiah we learn first, the Lord brings unity to the world through his reign. The Lord is the only one who can truly unite us all. Second, the Lord is our refuge where we find our strength and confidence to live unafraid. Third, the Lord is our source of wisdom to guide us in all of life. Fourth, the Lord gives us belonging within the family of God as brothers and sisters in Christ. And finally, we are given peace that transcends all understanding through the son, Jesus, who is born to us. May we all experience this love that encompasses all these things and more as we journey together throughout the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

Merry Christmas,
Pastor Jeff

Stephen Ministry

While Christmas is the best time of the year for some, for many it is an especially difficult one for any number of reasons—health concerns, family estrangement, death, uncertainty about the state of our world. How do we balance these extremes?

Your circumstances may be very different this holiday season than they were in previous years. If you are like me, sometimes I'll skim an article, appreciate it, but realize it doesn't particularly apply to me. Then, later, when changes in my life occur, I remember that I've read something that would have been helpful but have no idea how to find it. Consequently, the following suggestions are being shared again in the hope that they will be helpful as we navigate Advent and Christmas this year.

For those who are dreading this Christmas, consider viewing this season as an opportunity to think, feel, and act in ways that break free from the past. Plan ahead or maybe plan not to plan ahead. If you go into Christmas without a plan, you risk spending it alone or becoming depressed. On the other hand, if you decide not to plan and let things unfold, you'd be a little bit like Mary and Joseph. They went to Bethlehem because they had to, with no place to stay, and no one waiting for them. If you choose to spend the day in solitude, know that you are not alone; Christ is with you.

Be open to new ways of celebrating. If past Christmas celebrations took place at home, staying home may feel especially hard. Consider volunteering at a soup kitchen or hospital. Even think about traveling to some place you've always wanted to go.

As much as you can, try not to forget tradition. Attending Christmas Eve services, lighting candles, praying from the heart, reading the Christmas story and taking communion are all long-honored ways of remembering the reason for the season—Christ's birth.

Instead of withdrawing, make Christmas a time for growth. Buy gifts for those less fortunate. Bake Christmas cookies and share them with someone who isn't expecting them. Reaching out to others often leads to healing for both the giver and the receiver.

Put your feelings into writing. Keep a journal during Advent. Write a letter to those who have wronged you or to those you are missing. If forgiveness is in order, say a prayer of forgiveness, then destroy the letter. Reconciliation is a great gift to both the living and the dead. If there's a place that's empty at your Christmas table this year, recall memories as family and friends share how that loved one still continues to affect their lives.

While you may feel sad as you go through any of these activities, that's okay. Feelings are neither right nor wrong; they simply are. No one knows how you feel except you. Talk with God about your feelings. Share them with a trusted friend, relative, or Stephen Minister. Michael Guinan reminds us, "...we must not deny honest pain, nor skip too quickly from loss to acceptance...Christian faith does proclaim a message of hope, but death and grief are still real. (Franciscan Voices, Cincinnati, OH, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2011).

If Christmas is a difficult time for you, you are not alone. Be gentle with yourself. Do what feels comfortable, not what you need. Believe that healing, hope, and peace will be yours when the time is right.

How many times have you been in a situation when you wanted to help someone going through a difficult time but didn't know when to start? One of the greatest gifts you can give not only during the Christmas season but any time of the year is the gift of presence. Reach out to those who are struggling for whatever reason. Spend time with them, especially during Advent and Christmas. Invite them to come to our service on the first Sunday in Advent, December 1st. Stephen Ministers will be leading the service emphasizing the theme of Hope. Even offer to accompany them. Pick up Care Notes that deal with specific challenges—for example, *Feeling Depressed at Christmas*, *Pathways through Your Christmas Grief*, *Celebrating Your Last Christmas with a Loved One*, *Coping with Holiday Stress*, *Rediscovering the Many Gifts of Christmas*.

We are called to reach out to others. As a Christmas card I picked up today indicates, "In the promise of Christmas, may healing begin. May this be a season of peace, if not joy—a season of healing and love, knowing others remember and care. May we be the hands and feet of Christ for those who are hurting, offering grace that we receive in abundance.

For additional information about Stephen Ministry for yourself or another, contact Becky Cultice, 937-376-5747.

Introducing Lynn Everett

Lynn is the mother-in-law of our Pastor Jeff Bandy and the mother of Suzanne Bandy. She was raised on a farm in Pickaway County and went on to graduate with a degree in Home Economics from the Ohio State University, where she met her future husband Phil. They were married after graduation and moved to several different locations in Ohio during their first few years of marriage. Phil was

a mathematics teacher and high school administrator for a few different schools. He spent the majority of his career teaching math at Circleville High School where he retired in 1989. After retirement, he taught at several colleges and finished his career with a number of years at his alma mater, the Ohio State University. He passed away in July 2021.

Lynn shared the story of the day her father passed away. He was a well-known undertaker as well as farmer. She said she often helped out at home and with the funeral business when needed. On the day he died she was a student at OSU and happened to turn on the radio when an announcement was made that her father had been killed in an accident. She called Phil, who came to her rescue and took her to her parents' home where the news was confirmed. The family had planned to contact her before the news was public, but since her father was so well-known, the news became a public matter almost immediately. This sad event occurred just a few weeks before the couple's planned wedding date, which went forward as planned, knowing that her father would have approved.

During the early years of their marriage, she was a homemaker. Her skills as a seamstress were apparent when she designed her own wedding gown. Later, she designed and made her two daughters' wedding gowns along with the bridesmaids' dresses.

Lynn was active in 4-H growing up and as an adult. She was an advisor especially instructing sewing. She has also worked for several clothing stores in retail and helping out as an interior designer for a local furniture store in Circleville.

In addition to her other sewing skills, she has recently taken up knitting again, meeting with the Thursday prayer shawl group on a fairly regular basis and is active in the Tuesday Bible Study group as well.

Though Lynn has only lived in Xenia for a relatively short time, she is no stranger to the city, because she often visited her sister here. Many of you would know Lynn's sister, Barbara Meade, who was a kindergarten teacher at Tecumseh Elementary School for many years.

Lynn is proud of her two daughters, Meg Brumfield of Troy, Ohio, and her daughter, Suzanne. She is especially proud to tell you about her five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Last fall, the family made a trip "out west" to visit Oregon and Washington. This was a highlight for Lynn since this trip completed her desire to visit all of the forty-eight consecutive states.

She is a delightful lady and an asset to Faith Community UMC.
By Joan Baxter

The Community Christmas Concert Band under the direction of Glen Shaw will present its annual concert on Sunday, December 8 at 3pm in the Sanctuary, featuring both sacred and secular music. There is no charge but donations for the purchase of new music will be accepted. Please join us in this celebration of our Savior's birth.



A Voice for Environmental Stewardship

St. Francis of Assisi

If I have a favorite Saint in the Christian Church, it is Saint Francis of Assisi. In our United Methodist Hymnal, on page 62 is his most well-known hymn, "All Creatures of Our God and King". He wrote it as a poem in about 1225. It was translated from Italian or Latin in 1925 by William H. Draper and set to the music that we have in our hymnal by Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1906.

This hymn is very special to me because Saint Francis of Assisi is a man after my own heart. By that I mean that he loves Nature like I do, and he connects his love of Nature to his spiritual life and his Christian faith. Some of the verses speak loud and clear about how he sees Nature praising God. In the Refrain he uses the word Alleluia repeatedly. Alleluia as a noun is an expression of worship and praise. He is praising God for the natural world. Here are some of the verses presented as a poem:

All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voices and with us sing. O brother sun with golden beam, O sister moon with silver gleam, O praise ye Alleluia! (He is encouraging nature to join humans in praising their Creator.)

O brother wind, air, clouds and rain by which all creatures ye sustain, O praise ye Alleluia! Thou rising morn in praise rejoice, ye lights of evening, find a voice, O praise ye Alleluia!

O sister water flowing clear, make music for thy Lord to hear, O praise ye Alleluia. O brother fire who lights the night, providing warmth, enhancing sight, O praise ye Alleluia.

Dear Mother Earth, who day by day, unfoldest blessing on our way, Alleluia, Alleluia. The flowers and fruits that in thee grow, let them God's glory also show! O praise ye Alleluia.

The message that I get from this hymn is that we humans are the LEADERS in all creation in praising God, in partnership with all that God has created on the Earth. How vitally important is it then for us to PROTECT THIS BEAUTIFUL EARTH and all that is in it as an ACT OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE TO GOD!!

—Rev. Alan Barone, M.Div., Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist

United Methodist Women

Women United will meet on Monday, December 16 at 1:00 P.M in the Parlor. We will not meet during the months of January and February.

Dorcas Cicle will meet on Tuesday, November 19, 1:00 P.M. in room 15A-B.

United Methodist Men of Faith

The Garden Project was a great success with over one ton of vegetables donated to various charities. This project will continue in 2025 and the Men of Faith want to encourage members, especially families, to consider volunteering for an hour or two from time to time to till, weed, and harvest since we may be sowing a larger garden area. The garage sale will continue with selling large items on Facebook marketplace. If you have furniture or appliances to donate contact Bob Whipp (937) 668-3137.

The Men of Faith will meet on Monday, December 16, 6 pm in Room 16A,B Community Center. All men are invited to join us. Dinner and pop will be provided. We will have social time during the meal followed by a Christmas devotional. We will then install the new officers for 2025 as well as discuss 2025 projects.

Change

We are getting ready to change the calendars to 2025. For many of us January 1 will represent a new start. Thus we will make resolutions for how to improve and face the new year with hope for a better life. Jesus in his ministry embraced change and indeed that is

at the heart of Christianity. Two of many examples from Jesus involving change are:

John 3:1-3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” (NIV) Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” Matthew 4:19 (to Peter and Andrew.)

“Come follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” (NIV). Jesus emphasized that you must be ready for change. To Nicodemus, he must be ready for a new start—not just trying to be better (as a Pharisee he was already doing that by following the laws and scriptures given in the Old Testament) but a total restart/change by being born of the spirit.

To Peter and Andrew, Jesus invited them to change lives from being fishermen to become Apostles that would take the Christian religion to the world. Jesus saw something in Peter and Andrew that they could make a difference in the world provided they followed Jesus and made the career change.

So let us be ready for change in 2025. We will face change in our government, in our personal lives and as we grow in our spiritual lives. If we recognize that there will be change, we can be ready to face whatever happens. Nicodemus, Peter and Andrew faced an uncertain future by following Jesus but were able to change the world.

Likewise we can change our world and the people around us by following Jesus.

(Submitted by Luke M. Snell who shares devotionals at Legacy for assisted/memory care people.)

Mary & Martha

We would like to invite you to our next Mary & Martha gathering, December 9 from 6-8 pm in the Community Center for a relaxed Christmas celebration! If you have a festive holiday sweater/sweatshirt, please wear and come join us for a fun time of activities. Please bring a dish to share that gives you a memory of your holidays. If you need childcare, RSVP to 937-694-8114, and if you have questions, please contact Laurie Krakowiak at 937-6941, or Barbara Mills 937-414-4108.

Passings

Our sincere condolences and prayers go out to the families of:
Deloris Mays – August 28
Joe Mays – October 13;
Adelia Barone – October 26.

FCUM

October 2024 Financials

Monthly Income	\$ 20,198		YTD Income	\$ 257,220	
Monthly Expenses	\$ 37,033		YTD Expenses	\$ 300,338	
Difference	\$(16,836)	-83.35%	Difference	\$(43,118)	-16.76%

Christmas Eve Candelight Service
Music 8:30 pm Service 9:00 pm

Deadline for January Faith Links Articles:
December 16

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

December 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 9-10am-Sunday School 10-10:30-Hospitality 10:30-11:30-Worship-Sanctuary	2 7-8:45pm-Stephen Ministry-Library 7-8pm-Cub Scouts-15 A-B 7-8:30pm-Boy Scouts-15-C	3 10-11:30am-Bible Study-Parlor 3:30-4:30pm-Mission Outreach Team-Parlor 4-5:30pm-W.Guard-FCC 6-8:30pm-Girl Scouts-15A,B,C & 16A-B 6-7:30pm-Magic Volleyball-Practice-FCC 6:30-8:30-Trustees-Par.	4 6:15-7:15pm-Bells Practice-Music Room 7:30-9pm-Choir Practice-Sanctuary/Chapel	5 11am-12pm-Prayer Shawl-Parlor 1:30-4pm-Womans Club of Xenia Christmas Tea-Parlor	6 9am-12pm-Christmas Band Set-up-Sanctuary 4-5:30pm-Winter Guard-FCC	7 12:30pm-Christmas Concert Band Practice-Sanctuary 6-8pm-Double I-15A
8 9-10am-Sunday School 10-10:30-Hospitality 10:30-11:30-Worship-Sanctuary Community Christmas Concert Band-3PM	9 6-8pm-Mary & Martha Gathering-FCC 7-8pm-Cub Scouts-15 A-B 7-8:30pm-Boy Scouts-15-C	10 10-11:30am-Bible Study-Parlor 4-5:30pm-Winter Guard-FCC 6-7:30pm-Volleyball Practice-FCC	11 6:15-7:15pm-Bells Practice-Music Room 7:30-9pm-Choir Practice-Sanctuary/Chapel	12 11am-12pm-Prayer Shawl-Parlor 7-8:30pm-Christian Ed Meeting-Room 8	13 4-5:30pm-Winter Guard-FCC 7pm-8am-Girl Scouts overnight-FCC	14 9am-1:30pm-Girl Scouts Overnight-FCC/Kitchen
15 9-10am-Sunday School 10-10:30-Hospitality 10:30-11:30-Worship-Sanctuary	16 1-3pm-Women United-Parlor 6-8:30pm-Men of Faith-16A,B 7-8:30pm-Boy Scouts-15C 7-8pm-Cub Scouts-15A-B	17 10-11:30am-Bible Study-Parlor 1-3pm-Dorcas-Room 15 A-B 3:30-4:30pm-Mission Outreach Team-Parlor 6-8:30pm-Girl Scouts-15A,B,C,16A-B 6-7:30pm-Volleyball-FCC 4-5:30-Winter Guard-FCC	18 6:15-7:15pm-Bells Practice-Music Room 7:30-9pm-Choir Practice-Sanctuary/Chapel	19 11am-12pm-Prayer Shawl-Parlor	20 4-5:30pm-Winter Guard Practice-FCC	21
22 9-10am-Sunday School 10-10:30-Hospitality 10:30-11:30-Worship-Sanctuary	23 2-6pm-Blood Drive-FCC 7-8:30-Boy Scouts-15C 7-8pm-Cub Scouts-15A-B 7-8:30pm-SPRC-Library	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 10-11:30am-Bible Study-Parlor 8:30-9pm-Music 9pm-10pm-Candlelight Service	25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26 11am-12pm-Prayer Shawl-Parlor	27	28
29 9-10am-Sunday School 10-10:30-Hospitality 10:30-11:30-Worship-Sanctuary	30 7-8pm-Cub Scouts-15A-B 7-8:30pm-Boy Scouts-15C	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE 10-11:30am-Bible Study-Parlor				