

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1342 PROSPECT ROAD
ASHTABULA OH 44004
www.trinityashtabula.org

DECEMBER 2024
NEWSLETTER



“As it is written in the book of the words of
Isaiah the prophet,
“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.”
Luke 3:4





Ashtabula Times



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

I sit in front of my computer, looking out my dining room window upon 60 inches of now blowing snow thanks to the Alberta Clipper coming through and wondering to myself, if I must shovel my driveway one more time, I might scream in frustration! My routine while stuck at home during the blizzard was to shovel two or three times a day and to try and keep a runway to the road. Each time I think to myself I have overcome the snow; the clouds drop six inches more. Even with over-the-counter pain medication, my arms and back could not handle having to shovel another few inches let alone the foot the forecast threatens me. I wonder what the use is in shoveling if more snow keeps dropping?

The strength in my arms has faded, now I know what Isaiah means when *the flowers fade*. My motivation for a clean driveway withers, just like Isaiah's *grass when the breath of God blows upon it*. *A voice says cry and Isaiah said cry what?* A voice says shovel and I say I am buying a snowblower. Isaiah is speaking to people in exile in Babylon and buried under snow and melancholy I find Isaiah still speaking to us in exile in Siberia. Commanded to speak and cry to the people and he didn't have it in him. Buried in an avalanche of snow and upheaval, we are commanded to prepare for the LORD's coming and we don't have it in us. We wither and fade in faith because it feels like we shovel or prepare in vain to no effect; we clear the driveways of our hearts and something new drops in. We clear a foot and creation drops two more.

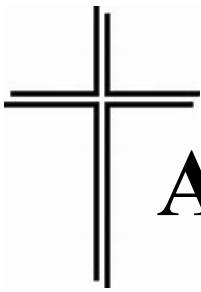
I can understand Isaiah's situation, but I can also appreciate the response of God. Isaiah was in exile, and we find ourselves also in Babylon. But the enormity of his and our surroundings, surrounded by idols and unfaithfulness, God reminds Isaiah and us, that while our strength and situations wither and fade, *the word of our God will stand forever*. Our existence is not an achievement which we can put on the mantel, but a divine gift given precisely into our withering and fading hearts. Spoken not into prosperity but into exile, which creates renewal. Spoken not into abundance but into scarcity, which creates rebirth. Spoken not into energy and imagination, but into tiredness and staleness, which resurrects. Since the Word of God stands forever, we don't need to achieve it, we can, as finite creatures, open ourselves to receive it, and come to life again.

This is why Isaiah found the strength to comfort the people of God, because the strength of God finds him in his exhaustion. And if God could find Isaiah and exodus him from his fatigue, God can do likewise with Israel from Babylon and God can do likewise with today's church from exile. Energy for our weariness. Hope for our despair. Peace for our polarized nation. Joy for our misery. Love for our maliciousness and nastiness. *Comfort ye my people*, because God has come to exodus, or bring out his people from their exiles.

This is how we find the strength to prepare the road out of Babylon, because it isn't ours, but the very power of our faithful God. This is how the valleys could be filled in and the mountains shaved off, the crooked curves made straight, and the rough patches of asphalt smoothed out; because it isn't really our work, it is really God's work in God's power, and it will never be in vain or empty. But for it to be God's work then something needs to change in us. Perhaps instead of building a Christian Empire, we need to do the hard and vulnerable work of building the Kingdom of God. Relationships and community instead of building and budgets. Gratitude instead of envy. Courage instead of fear. Security instead of anxiety. Love instead of hate. Forgiveness instead of guilt. That's building the road out of Babylon. Maybe that's the work this Advent which needs done.

Friends, I am tired of shoveling snow, but I also think we are tired of witnessing Gospel. Every time we make headway, we suffer setbacks and discouragements. But Advent reminds us that we never labor in vain, because we labor under the gracious and loving work of the Word of God, who stands forever, even while our energy and commitment wither and fade. So, find comfort in the faithfulness of God this Advent season, do a little road work in your hearts, but most importantly live as the new people that come into God's Kingdom, because God has already come to us. Advent means coming... maybe it is time for us to come back to God, again. Amen.

Rev. Mark



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2025 per capita is \$40.00

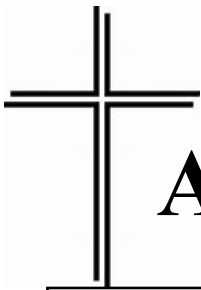
REPORT FROM TRINITY'S SESSION

Session met November 20th carrying out the normal business including:

- Approval of the minutes from Oct. session meeting and the Oct. 29th Congregational Meeting.
- Approval of Financial Reports for October.
- Request for use of the building from 8am-10pm Dec. 21st anniversary meeting of Sat. group.
- The Minister's report included
 - ◊ Bible studies continue Wed 10am at East Side, Thurs 7pm at Trinity
 - ◊ Town Hall meeting Dec. 4th at 6:30
 - ◊ First Presbyterian voted to continue meshing for all of 2025.
 - ◊ New officer installation for all three churches will be Dec. 8th during worship.
- Committee reports:
 - ◊ Community Outreach (East Side/Trinity)
 - There is an open invitation for assistance with the Outreach 2025 calendar.
 - The "Christmas Offering" envelopes in the pews are for gift cards for use at Kids Only.
 - The CO committee made a motion which was amended and carried that Trinity donate \$1000 from our Benevolent fund to the PCUSA Christmas Joy Offering.
 - ◊ Property and Finance
 - The final bid from HAVE for the HVAC project is \$37,375
 - Anyone interested in serving of the Audit in January is welcome. Talk to Beth Dougherty.
 - The 2025 budget will be presented to session in December.
 - ◊ Deacons
 - Pauline Headman reported that communion is being served to shut-ins.
 - There will be a joint meeting with East Side deacons.
 - ◊ Scrip- Will be available through mid-December.
 - ◊ Personnel
 - After much discussion, a motion and second were made to have a joint collection with East Side to be equally divided among employees of East Side as well as the employees and the Church Secretary and Financial Secretary of Trinity, including Rev. Mong. The motion carried.



Mary Belding, Clerk



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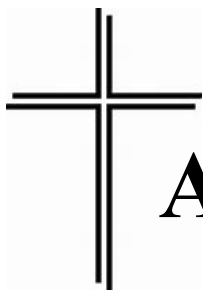
REPORT FROM EAST SIDE'S SESSION

The meeting opened with prayer.

- Keegan Sweet represented the Deacons at the meeting.
- The Minutes were reviewed and approved as amended.
- The Treasurer's Report was reviewed and approved. The tenant has moved out of the manse and the session discussed potential monthly rent. No action was taken.
- Pastor's Report:
 - 1, Bible Studies continue.
 - 2. Reviewed visitations.
 - 3' Town Hall Meeting is December 4, 2024, at East Side Presbyterian Church.
 - 4. Deadline for the Newsletter is December 2, 2024.
 - 5. Vacation is scheduled from December 25, 2024, to January 1, 2025. Joe Fields be in the pulpit on December 29, 2024.
 - 6. Officers from all three churches will be installed on December 8, 2024.
 - 7, Congregational Meeting will be held after worship on December 1, 2024, for East Side members.
- Ministerial Relations Committee: Edie Makynen talked about the Zoom Meeting on Good Future Acceleration regarding repurposing churches.
- Buildings and Grounds: The manse is ready to rent. Christmas decorating at the church will be Saturday, November 23, 2024, at 9:00 am.
- Nominating: Elders-Ellen Jacobs, Class of 2025 and Cathy Burnham, Class of 2027. Deacons -Sara Wetzel, Rosemary Peck and Kaye Lind, Class of 2027. Nominating Committee from the congregation for 2025- Flossie Hudson, Lynne Gollon and Becki Cleveland.
- Outreach: S.A.R.A. was given vitamins and \$50. Peacemaking Offering 25% went to Stacey's House. 12 children are being adopted for Christmas. Blankets and linens were delivered to Catholic Charities. Becki Cleveland prepared 52 Shoe Boxes. Hats, gloves and mittens will be collected in December. The Bibles collected will be shipped to the Prison Ministry. The Christmas Giving Collection will be used to purchase grocery gift cards to be donated to Kids Only for families in need.
- Personnel: Session approved a 3 1/2 % salary increase to employees in 2025.
- Worship and Music: Bells are being repaired. Advent Readers have been selected. Poinsettias are being purchased. Communion Servers for December are: Keith Brown, Edie Makynen, Beth Jepson and Phyllis Willis. The meeting was closed with prayer.



Cathy Burnham, Clerk



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EASTSIDE'S MEETING SCHEDULE

Session—Monday, December 16th, 2024 at 6:30pm
 Knitting Group—2nd and 4th Tuesday from 10am—Noon
 Yes You Can Crafting Group—Mondays, 9:30am-Noon
 Worship and Music—December 9th at 6:30pm



EASTSIDE'S BIRTHDAYS

2nd Elaine Robinson
 8th Rose Booth
 22nd Len Edgren
 23rd Billy Mong
 27th Jacquie Quine
 31st Betty Emery



EASTSIDE'S ANNIVERSARIES

31st Jacquie & Gary Quine

TOWN HALL

All three Ashtabula City Churches will be meeting on Wednesday, January 8th at 6:30pm in First's Fellowship Hall to continue the storytelling and discernment of our future life together. Members and friends of all congregations are invited to attend the meeting to share experiences and ideas about meshing together.



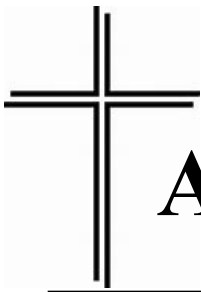
Genny Wallace, the Family of Joyce Shellhammer, Aaron, Jim, Mike Kenny, Berniece Boggs, Jim & Rose Booth, Jim Johnston, Courtney Wetzel, Jodi Westover, Jeff Albert, Randy Woodard, and Ruth Allen

PRAYER LIST

INSTALLATION SERVICE

We will be ordaining and installing officers from all 3 churches during worship on December 15, 2024 at 10am in East Side's Sanctuary. If you are being ordained or installed please plan on attending and participating. The Rev. Eric Dillenbeck will also be officiating the installation/ordination service. Thanks for your service to the Church in Ashtabula.





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JOINT COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The committee met after fellowship November 17, 2024, at Trinity.

OCTOBER & NOVEMBER OUTREACH COLLECTIONS COMPLETED:

Children's Vitamins (10 bottles) and \$50.00 check mailed to S.A.R.A.

Leftover Thanksgiving Day Dinner food donated to Stacy's House

Blankets (26), Linens (16) and handmade Throws and Pillows (18) donated to Catholic Charities.

Becki Cleveland prepared 52 shoeboxes.

Kids Only Fund purchased coats, hats and gloves for 3 children.

Seventeen soft covered bibles to be mailed to the Prison Ministry.

Twenty-Five percent of the Peacemaking Offering will be donated to Stacy's House.



DECEMBER MISSION

Hat, glove, mitten tree in Narthex at East Side for month of December into January. Adult items will be donated to G.O. Ministries and the youth items to Kids Only.

Reverse Advent Calendar available for those that would like to participate. All items will be donated to the Faith Lutheran Food Pantry in January.

The Christmas giving offering will be used to purchase Giant Eagle grocery cards for Kids Only to be distributed "as needed."

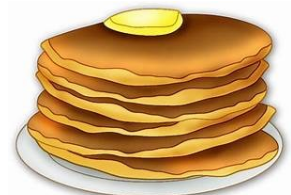
Trinity's Joy Offering will be taken from the Benevolent Fund for the Presbytery Collection.

UPCOMING ITEMS OF INTEREST:

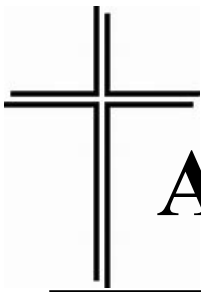
NEW IDEAS: We are looking for "new" ideas from the Congregation for Mission projects for the upcoming 2025 & 2026 year. There will be a subcommittee of Community Outreach to establish the projects the churches would like to participate in as we join our churches together. Please give us your ideas or volunteer to meet with this committee to plan our future mission projects.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITES:

- RSVP (Retired Seniors Volunteer Program)
For information visit ashtabulagiveback.org or contact
Stephanie Blessing—Americore (440) 670-9125 to volunteer
- G.O. Ministries
- Breakfast at First Baptist Church M-F Feeding homeless 8:30—
9:30am



Pam Bloom and Edie Makynen, Co-Chairs



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WINTER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Liturgical Day</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Anthem</u>
1/5/2025	Epiphany	First	Special Music
1/12/2025	Baptism of the Lord	First	Special Music
1/19/2025	2nd Sunday in O.T.	First	Special Music
1/26/2025	3rd Sunday in O.T.	First	Special Music
2/2/2025	4th Sunday in O.T.	East Side	3 Church Choir
2/9/2025	5th Sunday in O.T.	East Side	3 Church Choir
2/26/2025	6th Sunday in O.T.	East Side	3 Church Choir
2/23/2025	7th Sunday in O.T.	East Side	3 Church Choir
3/2/2025	Transfiguration Sunday	Trinity	TBD
3/5/2025	Ash Wednesday	Trinity	TBD
3/9/2024	1st Sunday of Lent	Trinity	TBD
3/16/2025	2nd Sunday of Lent	Trinity	TBD
3/23/2025	3rd Sunday of Lent	Trinity	TBD
3/30/2025	4th Sunday of Lent	Trinity	TBD



All Services are at
10am

THANKSGIVING DINNER

Thank you to everyone who worked, attended, provided food and assisted with cleanup for the Thanksgiving Dinner. Many hands made for light work and the joint efforts were deeply appreciated.

Eddie Makynen



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REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX. AFTER CHRISTMAS, BRING THE BOX TO CHURCH TO BE DONATED TO THE FOOD PANTRY IN JANUARY. THESE ARE ONLY SUGGESTIONS. YOU MAY SUBSTITUTE OR REPEAT ITEMS.

- December 1 – box of cereal
- December 2 – peanut butter
- December 3 – stuffing mix
- December 4 – boxed potatoes
- December 5 – macaroni and cheese
- December 6 – canned fruit
- December 7 – canned tomatoes
- December 8 – canned tuna
- December 9 – dessert mix
- December 10 – applesauce
- December 11 – canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 – cranberry sauce
- December 13 – canned beans
- December 14 – box of crackers
- December 15- package of rice
- December 16 – package of oatmeal
- December 17 – package of pasta
- December 18 – spaghetti sauce
- December 19 – chicken noodle soup
- December 20 – tomato soup
- December 21 – can of corn
- December 22 – can mixed vegetables
- December 23 – can carrots
- December 24 – can green beans

