



# The Seneca Valley Voice

**The United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley**  
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## Carolyn's Column

Late in the afternoon earlier this week, I was still in the office when one of our members called. She was in the parking lot and didn't want to alarm me, but did need someone to open the door. The next thing I knew she was joined by others from the congregation, and soon there was an industrious group un-decorating the church. The adage applies—many hands do indeed make light work. THANKS to Beth, Laura, Len, Debbie, Laura and Hunter, Andy and Luzma.

THANKS too to the even larger group that helped with the decorating, to those who took poinsettias to shut-ins, or made meals for incapacitated members. THANKS to those who served on the strategic planning committee, and to those who took the time to respond to the outcomes posted in the Gathering Room.

THANKS to the Fellowship Board and friends who extended such extraordinary hospitality during Advent and Christmas following worship and special events. THANKS to our instrumental and vocal musicians and their friends who created such extraordinary music during worship and our special events. THANKS to the office hands who folded and stapled countless bulletins and came in for additional duty during Marilyn's vacation.

THANKS to the dedicated and gifted teachers who shared the good news of the incarnation with our children during church school, and who helped these same children share their insights and understandings with us during worship.

THANKS to the liturgists and the Advent wreath lighters, the Deacons and Greeters and Hospitality Hosts, to the weeders and sidewalk sweepers and Shaw Ministry party-givers and gift-givers. THANKS to the food basket stuffers and the Boy Scout deliverers, to soup kitchen servers, to Giant coupon sellers and coffee, chocolate, and Guatemalan handicraft sellers. THANKS to the pray-ers and note-writers, to Adopt-A-Road coordinators and trash picker-uppers.

THANKS to the moderator and the board chairs, to the church officers and board members, to caregivers, task force members, and newsletter editors. To church staff, to each person who gathers in worship or takes part in a service program or an educational offering, thank you. Together we are the body of Christ. Together we bring into being this beloved community.

May the generosity of spirit that marks the holiday season be even more pronounced in the seasons to come; may others find that spirit so contagious that they not only are warmed by its glow, but also inspired to seek its source in the Christ to whom we bear witness.

Blessings,

*Carolyn*

## Notes from the Moderator

Thanks to everyone who worked to make this a memorable Christmas season, from the Hanging of the Greens to the wonderful music, to the inspirational worship services, to the presents and baskets for needy families and children and to the feelings of hospitality and fellowship. Thanks to all the volunteers and thanks to our staff, Marilyn, Tom, Beth and Carolyn for all they do. Best wishes to everyone for the New Year.

Thanks also to Dave and Cleo for their service to the church. They will be moving back to Pennsylvania to be closer to family and old friends as Dave assumes a new job there. Heidi Harmon has volunteered to take over as chair of Stewardship. Thanks Heidi. Thanks also to Al and Bonnie Speich for the work they have done over the years. They are leaving the congregation which means we will need someone to serve as treasurer. Al has graciously offered to complete his term, but it is important for us to find someone as soon as we can. Let Carolyn or me know if you are interested.

Please plan to attend the congregational meeting on Sunday, January 28, beginning around noon with a pot luck lunch. This is not only a time to learn about the operations of the church but also to enjoy some food and fellowship. We will be voting on the budget and the strategic plan as developed during the past several months. Once the council meets in January, these materials will be available for review.

The following is excerpted from an e-mail sent to the congregation. As part of the strategic planning process, Ed White has recommended and we have agreed to obtain some additional data using the Natural Church Development questionnaire from ChurchSmart resources. This questionnaire was developed through surveying over 1,000 churches in 32 countries and evaluating the factors that indicated vibrant, growing congregations. More than 4.2 million responses from active and involved lay people were analyzed. Since then, more than 20,000 churches from over 60 different denominations in the United States have used this material.

We will receive a one page graph indicating where we fall on the 8 factors that are evaluated and a guide for using the information. This will not be an evaluation of

the pastor or any particular program. Its purpose is to show how our church ranks in relation to the characteristics of healthy, growing congregations. They are: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships.

The questionnaire is designed to be completed by the lay leadership of the church, since that is the population base of the original data. (Carolyn has a separate questionnaire that is also included in the data.) The program uses responses from only 30 people to generate the report. Ed has strongly recommended that we identify those 30 people and not use a random distribution because of the methodology of the original study. It was decided that the current council and others involved in the church's ministry will complete the questionnaire. Because the council wants to make sure that anyone who wants to participate can, a limited number of questionnaires will also be completed by other members who would like to participate.

We hope to complete these on January 7 and share the information with the congregation later in the month. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sandra

## The Season after Epiphany

For many within the Protestant branches of the Christian Church, the festival of Epiphany is perhaps the least observed celebration of the church year. Immediately following Advent and Christmas, it is often lost in the post-holiday preoccupations of restoring some semblance of routine, paying bills, and returning to a full work schedule. For those within the Orthodox traditions of the Christian Church, however, the celebration of Epiphany is equivalent to our celebration of Christmas. In both traditions, Epiphany—always 6 January—is honored as the day on which Matthew's magi arrived at Jesus' home. Twelfth night, then, is always 5 January, the twelfth and final day of Christmas. Epiphany marks the beginning of a new season.

“Epiphany” means “manifestation”. It may also mean “a new understanding.” Matthew seems to be making the theological statement that when the magi approached the infant Jesus, they were witnesses to new understandings of the role of the messiah: the Christ is messiah for the entire world.

The season after Epiphany always begins with the baptism of Jesus (with a chronological jump from the infant to adult Jesus in as little as 24 hours, as we see in this year’s calendar.) The weeks after Epiphany are called “Ordinary Time” and continue until Ash Wednesday, which signals the beginning of the six weeks of Lent. Ordinary time is interrupted by the cycles of Lent, Holy Week, Easter and Eastertide, and Pentecost. It resumes after Pentecost, and continues until the new church year begins with the first Sunday of Advent.

## Social Concerns

### Food Pantry

We had several requests for food during the months of November and December so our pantry is now quite low. We would welcome any contributions of food items during the month of January. Cereal, hearty soups, cans of meat, tuna, pasta and sauce are items more needed. As always, we thank you for your generosity.

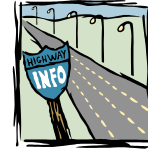


### ***An Inconvenient Truth***

The Board of Social Concerns invites all to the showing of Al Gore’s movie, *An Inconvenient Truth* on **Saturday, February 17, at 7:00 pm.** Popcorn and child care will be provided.

### Recycling Used Inkjet Cartridges

Keep your used inkjet cartridges coming in! Just put them in baggies and place in the recycling box in the Narthex. (No Epson, please – the recycling company will not take them.) All money we receive goes into our Emergency Assistance Fund to help others in our community.



### Adopt-A-Road

Our next Saturday Adopt-A-Road clean-up will be January 20 at 9:00 am. We meet at Seneca Valley High School’s parking lot at the Middlebrook Road entrance. Dress warmly (though in this area it could be 60 degrees!), including your own winter gloves. We will provide pick-up gloves, bags, and other equipment as needed, and something hot to drink and warm us up when we’ve finished. In case of snow, check the answering machine at church.

Many thanks to everyone who participates; Middlebrook Road has never looked better!



### Equal Exchange Sales

Many thanks to all who supported the Equal Exchange sales before Christmas! We had our two biggest sale days ever in November and December. LOTS of coffee has been ordered for the second Sunday in January, with hopes that we won’t run out again. See you there.

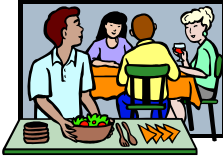
### Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast

The United Black Christians Region III of the United Church of Christ will hold its 20th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, January 13, at People’s Congregational UCC, 4704 13th Street NW, Washington. The program will run from 9:30 am to noon, with seating starting at 9 am. Featured speaker will be Rev. Adora Iris Lee, who has served for the past three years as an HIV/AIDS adviser with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. She is currently completing her term as a Global Ministries missionary. Slides and commentary will also be provided by Aaron Deckenback, who served as an intern last summer with Rev. Lee. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$12 for children. A ticket order form is available for downloading at [www.potomacucc.org](http://www.potomacucc.org), or contact Onra Dillard at 202-543-3918.

## Important UCCSV Events

Two important events are coming up at UCCSV:

- **Sunday, January 28**, immediately following the 11:00 worship service there will be a **Congregational Meeting and Pot luck**. Child care will be provided. All are encouraged to attend.
- **Saturday, February 10**, beginning at **7:00 pm**, UCCSV will celebrate the Burning of Our Mortgage. All members and friends, young and old are invited to this event and party!!!



### Fellowship

#### Coffee Hour

Thank you to all who helped during this busy holiday season to make the coffee hour and the concert night fellowship tasty and beautiful! Nothing says Christmas quite like wassail, home-baked goodies, candles and evergreens.

The fellowship calendar has a few empty slots. If you would like to bake up a batch of cookies, make an interesting appetizer, or learn how to set up the big coffee maker, please sign up on the coffee hour calendar posted on the bulletin board outside the office. We'd love to have your help!

#### Tables For 8

The almanacs say that January and February will be very cold. Beat it back by joining **Tables for 8**. Gather with friends from church for good food and great conversation. We will be making up the Tables later this month. It is **not too late** to sign up. Call Anne Ellis at 301-762-0832 if you would like to participate.

#### Ladies' Night Out

Our next Ladies Night Out will be **Tuesday, January 30** at 7:00 pm – Café Mileto. Sign up on the bulletin board outside the church office.



### An Invitation for Super Bowl Sunday

All are invited to the home of Carolyn and John for a Super Bowl Party on Sunday, February 4. Bring something to share. Plan on arriving about an hour before kick-off and share in delicious food and fellowship!

### Central Atlantic Conference Annual Meeting

The Central Atlantic Conference annual meeting will be held **June 8-10** at the University of Delaware in Newark, DE. Registration materials will be distributed in the coming weeks, but mark your calendars now for this annual gathering, which will be tied thematically to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UCC.

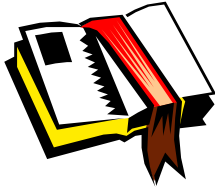


### United Church of Christ 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**June 22-26** will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Church of Christ. Celebrations following the theme *Let It Shine* will commemorate this event, set to take place at the 26<sup>th</sup> UCC General Synod in Hartford, Connecticut. UCC members are enthusiastically encouraged to join as guest visitors at this historic event. For more information, find the UCC website, [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org), and click on any of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary prompts.

### Open and Affirming

Mark your calendars and plan on attending the next informational meeting at UCCSV. Date: **Sunday, January 21, at 7:00 pm**. For more info please see Colby.



**January Lection**

**Sunday, January 7**

Isaiah 60:1-6  
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14  
Ephesians 3:1-12  
Matthew 2:1-12 (Epiphany readings)

**Sunday, January 14**

Isaiah 43:1-7  
Psalm 29  
Acts 8:14-17;  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22. (Baptism of Jesus readings)

**Sunday, January 21**

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10  
Psalm 19  
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a.

**Sunday January 28**

Jeremiah 1:4-10  
Psalm 71:1-6  
1 Corinthians 13:1-13  
Luke 4:21-30.

Congregational Meeting  
Sunday, January 28, at Noon  
Pot luck Lunch  
Child Care Provided

Please see next page for January Calendar.



### JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Church Office Closed	2 10a – Staff *	3 7p - Disciples	4 7:30p – Choir ^	5 +	6 ++
7 2-4p – Inquirer Class *	8 7p – Prop Ops 7:30p – Social Concerns	9 10a – Staff 7:30p – Mind, Body Spirit *	10 7p - Disciples +	11 7:30p – Choir ^	12 +	13 9a – Martin Luther King Breakfast – People’s UCC ++
14 2-4p – Inquirer Class *	15 7p - Trustees Martin Luther King Jr.	16 10a – Staff 7:30p - Council *	17 7p - Disciples +	18 7:30p – Choir ^	19 +	20 9A – Adopt A Road ++
21 2-4p – Inquirer Class 7p – ONA *	22 4p – Called to Care <b>Voice Deadline</b>	23 10a – Staff *	24 7p - Disciples +	25 7:30p – Choir ^	26 +	27 ++
28 Noon – <b>Congregational Mtg. &amp; Potluck</b> *	29	30 10a – Staff 7p – Ladies’ Night Out *	31 7p - Disciples +			

**Outside Groups Meeting Regularly at UCCSV:**

\*Sunday & Tuesday Nights – 8:30p – AA

+Wednesdays – 7:30p – Salem Church

^Thursday Nights – 7:30p – Boy Scouts

+Friday Nights – 6:30p - Salem Church

++Saturdays – 8:00a-2:00p & 6:00-8:00p – 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists

