



# The Seneca Valley Voice

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

Earlier in November, members of UCCSV's Board of Trustees had the opportunity to meet Don Hill. Don is the team leader for the UCC's Financial Development Ministry, and is one of those who combines his gift of faith with a passion for providing the church with the fiscal resources it needs for its various ministries.

He led us in thinking about the importance of helping members approach stewardship of their resources at the time of death with the same care they have shown during their lifetimes. This care is known as planned giving—hardly a new concept for anyone who is an alum or former contributor to just about any institution or charitable organization. Conversation about planned giving in the context of our current economic meltdown feels like an important conversation to begin.

It is a conversation that takes place within a broader context, a context that includes current economic realities, our faith, our personal resources, and our most important relationships. It also may include financial planning in general, with its attendant issues of credit, debt, kids and money, love and money, education, retirement, disaster preparedness.

These conversations may challenge us to think again about the discipline inherent in being a disciple. Perhaps that is one of the gifts of our current economic situation...it may force us to be more disciplined.

Don's visit was also a gift, a gift that essentially came on the eve of Advent. To my mind, the two are related. The gifts of Advent include the gift of waiting in anticipation, as well as the gift of preparing as we wait.

This doesn't mean that Advent is devoid of anxiety—in fact, it is part of the reality of the season. Even in the two birth stories of Jesus, anxiety is a constant backdrop to the events that unfold. No self-respecting father-to-be would make a trip to Bethlehem with a nearly-full-term wife without anxiety. No self-respecting father-to-be would take angelic visitations and assurances about his fiancée's pregnancy by another with equanimity. Both Matthew and Luke present birth stories that are rife with troubled times.

It is in the face of the anxiety of a troubled present and a less-than-clear future that Mary and Joseph are called to live faithfully in relation to God and to one another. Surely their story gives perspective to our own, reminding us that the One to whom they are faithful is present with them—and with us—throughout even the most troubled times.

Even as their story reminds us of God's faithfulness, we also are reminded that the watchword of the season is "prepare." Long-time mentor Robert McAfee Brown was fond of saying that he was always humbled by how much more God was able to do through him when he [Bob] did his homework, when he was prepared.

Current economic realities remind us that preparation helps us live in the present with an eye to the future. May our preparations be a testament to our faith as we live into this sacred season.

Blessings,

*Carolyn*

## Social Concerns



### Holiday Food Baskets

Thanks to all who so generously gave to our Thanksgiving food baskets. The same three families will receive our Christmas baskets.

The Christmas list will be up on Sunday, December 7. You may bring your donations in anytime between December 7 and December 21. Items may be placed in the container under the bulletin board outside the church office.

### Emergency Assistance

Thanks to the generosity of UCCSV members and friends, the Emergency Assistance Ministry (EA) has given \$11,295.62 to 118 families. One result of this generosity is that UCCSV is getting well-known in the community among people needing help and local agencies that are trying to put together packages to pay outstanding bills. The help goes to people who have experienced problems like a loss of their job or a serious sickness in the family. We have been helping over 10 families per month.

As I write this, the EA budget has only \$808 remaining to help people experiencing financial hardships for the rest of the year. On Sunday, December 7, the EA donation church will be out and we hope that the program will receive many donations. Remember that many small donations add up and can help tide us over through December.

### Prince of Peace

The main source of funding for the Emergency Assistance ministry is given at the Christmas Eve worship services as the Prince of Peace Offering. Members and friends of UCCSV have been unbelievably generous in their support and we thank you in advance. All funds collected on Christmas Eve go to the Prince of Peace Offering.

### Thank You

UCCSV received a donation of \$500.00 from Heritage Gate Condominium as a thank you for letting them use our parking lot last August while repairs were done to their parking lot. The gift was given to Emergency Assistance with the approval of Council at its November meeting

### Notes From The Deacons

With the Advent Season upon us, the deacons would like to extend an invitation to members, friends and guests to take part in the various activities that hopefully will bring comfort and joy to your holidays.

Thursday, December 11, 4:00 pm – Christmas Tea  
For those who have lost loved ones this year

Sunday, December 14, 5:00 pm  
Christmas Pageant and potluck dinner

Friday, December 19, 8:00 pm  
Choir Christmas Concert

Wednesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve:  
7:00 pm – Family Service  
9:00 pm – Traditional Candlelight Service

During this season of sharing, please consider a poem that was written some years ago for our congregation by Shane Bellingham. He attended UCCSV with his mother for a short period of time; he was 10 years old.

***I hold in my hand a world that is peaceful and calm.***

***I hold in my hand a world that is safe from harm.***

***With hands held together to be safe and free***

***That is what I wish the world could be.***

***People come together from all different places,***

***In a world where we see smiling faces.***

***I see a world where people are friendly and***

***All get along.***

***Where we all get together and sing a lovely song.***

***I hold in my hand a world that we all love.***

***A poem by Shane***

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO YOU AND YOURS,

The Deacons,

Andy, Beth, Dick, Tom, John, Jen, Christie, Terri, Pam

## Property Operations

The BPO is considering either:

- a. continuing to use our Konica-Minolta copier, or
- b. leasing a similar Samsung copier.

Sales people are speaking very favorably of the Samsung, but we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that they are merely that - sales people. Therefore, we are looking for church members with "first-hand" experience with any Samsung copier to help develop our rationale for taking either of the above options. Samsung copiers are relatively new to the US market - thus our need to validate comments from the vendor. We'll accept "second-hand" testimonials from anyone you can trust. Kindly leave a handwritten note in the BPO cubbie. Thanks.

## Sacred Season

~ from ucc.org Resources

### Advent – Waiting with hope.

Advent (from Latin, *adventus*, meaning “coming towards”) is our four-week season of preparation for Christmas. The First Sunday of Advent (November 30) marks the beginning of the church’s year. Advent and Christmas focus both on the *past*—the coming of Jesus as an infant born into poverty in Bethlehem, and the *future*—the coming of Christ in glory to fulfill God’s loving purposes for humanity. This past and future orientation is reflected in the readings appointed in the church for each Sunday of Advent.

Advent this year comes at a time of anxiety and hope. Many of us are struggling and are afraid for our future. It's not easy to hope when times are bad. Mary, as she waited for the birth of her child into an uncertain world, knew how to live with hope—to believe the promises of God. So Advent is a time when we wait, with Mary, for the birth of new life into a world living in shadows.

During this holy season, we invite you to prepare for Christmas with our growing online community here at i.UCC. Download our free Advent Guide and Christmas Kit. Both will help you experience the ancient traditions of Advent and Christmas in new ways. Subscribe to our Stillspeaking Daily Devotional,

which will help you live thoughtfully through the season. And know that you're always welcome at our daily online service of evening prayer in our real-time Prayer Chapel. To access these resources, sign on to [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org) and click on Advent resources.

## Second Potomac Association UCC

### "Sacred Conversation on Race/Racism"

Carolyn and I attended this Potomac Association gathering at National City Christian Church in Washington, D.C., on November 1. I was especially interested, because most of my recent Citizenship students have been Hispanic, and the topic was "Anti-Immigrant Sentiment, Patriotism or Exclusion?" particularly about Hispanics. I was particularly impressed by the speaker from Humane Borders, including information about members of UCC churches in Arizona carrying water to emergency stations in the desert for undocumented immigrants. Over 1000 desperate people have died on that desert crossing, and even some counties are providing water, because it is cheaper than burials for unknowns! (Paraphrasing a recent Scripture: When did I see you thirsty and gave you no drink? When you gave not to the least of these-).

A statistic to give you pause: 38 State and Federal laws were waived by Homeland Security (allowed by Congress) to build The Wall at the Mexican/U. S. border!

Another speaker suggested that the Comprehensive Immigration Bill that failed in the last Congress will be coming up again, and advocated that it include: a path to citizenship; family reunification; and a Temporary Worker program. Another proposed bill would make provision for children of illegal immigrants who have lived here for a long time to enter college or the military, and after 6 years be eligible to apply for citizenship.

There is much to think about. I have the extensive bibliography if you want to do further reading.

~Helen Hanes

### ***No More Flying Shingles!***

Thanks to John and Wayne the long process of finding a roofer to tackle our very steep roof and re-shingle it properly has come to a successful conclusion.

With a break in the weather, the crew from Classic Remodeling, Inc. stripped the old shingles and tar paper and re-laid new materials in less than a week. The crew did an excellent job, but even the best of workers have a hard time keeping track of every nail. So after the work was finished, John and Wayne combed the parking lot and gardens for any stray nails. They found less than a handful. Now we have two reasons to celebrate—an intact roof, plus a nail-free parking lot. Thanks guys!

### ***Countryside Artisans' 2008 Holiday Studio Tour –***

**December 5, 6, 7 and 12, 13, 14-  
10:00am-5:00pm**

Meet and talk with the artisans as they open their studios to offer an array of handcrafted gifts for sale. Come out for our fresh, crisp air, and see where the artists live and work. Take home a renewed sense this holiday season and possibly a wonderful piece of art for you or a friend. Keep the tradition of American artists alive!

### ***Book Club***

The next meeting of the Pulp Pilgrims, UCCSV's very own book group, will be Sunday, December 7. Our book choice is Deepak Chopra's *Life After Death*. The discussion is sure to be lively, possibly new thoughts will surface, and we'll have a good old time. Pulp Pilgrims is open to all and we especially invite the men to join us. Any questions? Contact the church office.

### ***Mind, Body, Spirit***

This group meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 7:30-9:00 pm at the home of Dianne Kaseman. This group offers the opportunity to learn meditation as a means of improving health through relaxation and provides a path for drawing closer to God. For directions and to confirm that you will be attending, please call the office. The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 9.

### ***December Birthdays***



December 3	Amie
December 7	Len
December 10	Luz
December 20	Heather
December 23	Jim
December 29	Jen





**Scripture Readings – December**

**Sunday, December 7**

Theme – *Messengers of Hope*

**Isaiah 40.1-11**

Psalm 85.1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3.8-15a

Mark 1.1-8

**Sunday, December 14**

Theme – *Shouts of Joy*

Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-11

**Psalm 126**

**1 Thessalonians 5.16-24**

**John 1.6-8, 19-28**

**Sunday, December 21**

Theme – *Birthing a Promise*

2 Samuel 7.1-11; 16

Luke 1.47-55 or Psalm 89.1-4, 19-26

Romans 16.25-27

**Luke 1.26-38**

**Sunday, December 28**

Theme – *God's Sustaining Presence*

Isaiah 61.10-62.3

Psalm 148

Galatians 4.4-7

**Luke 2.22-40**

**Bold print denotes Scripture Reading**



**Please note the December Calendar of Events found on the next page.**



## DECEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Sunday, December 7

11:15a – Spreading the Hope meeting  
 11:15a – Choir Practice  
 11:15a - Romans

### Monday, December 8

7:30p – Social Concerns

### Tuesday, December 9

7:30p - Council  
 7:30p – Mind, Body, Spirit

### Wednesday, December 10

7:00p – Hope Task Force

### Thursday, December 11

4:00p – Christmas Tea\*

### Sunday, December 14

11:15a – Choir practice  
 11:15a - Romans  
 5:00p – Christmas pageant and potluck

### Wednesday, December 17

7:30p – Choir Practice

### Friday, December 19

8:00p – Choir Christmas concert

### Sunday, December 21

11:15a - Romans

### Wednesday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

7:00p – Family service  
 9:00p – Traditional Christmas service with carols and Communion

### December 25, 26

Church office closed

### Recurring Meetings at UCCSV

10:00a - Worship  
 8:30p – Sunday, AA  
 10:00a – Tuesday - Staff  
 7:30p– Second Tuesday of month - Mind, Body and Spirit (Kaseman home)  
 7:30p – Wednesday – One Anothering 7:30p–  
 Thursday – Choir and *Boy Scouts*  
 9:00a – Saturday - *7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists (all day)*

### Schedule Notes:

The Christmas Tea is offered for those within the congregation who have suffered the loss of a loved one during the course of the calendar year.

Carolyn and Marilyn will be on vacation from Monday, December 29 through Friday, January 2. Volunteers will be asked to staff the office till noon, December 29-31.

Please note: Choir will practice Thursdays as noted above. Dates listed are extra practices.