DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

2 Fritz Foster
7 Nancy Gallena
9 Betty Lake
10 Matt Purinton
11 Nora Palugod
17 Tim Stangle
22 Frances Luthke
25 Peg Smith
26 Virginia Dudas
27 Don Hamer
28 Phil Ingraham
29 Andrea Hawn
30 Al Hedelt
31 Phil Scardilli

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

3 Tyler Stangle
5 Kathy Doerr
5 Beverly Haines
11 Kristen Williams
13 Betsy Griffiths
13 Leni Savell
14 Vicky Helsabeck
15 Charlotte Jensen
19 Shelly O’Leary
28 Phil Willows

If you, or someone you know, is missing from this list, please let the church office know.

Sunday Wedding

All Sundays are an occasion to be surprised by the unending grace of God. Every Sunday presents an opportunity to experience God’s presence in a profound way. One Sunday in particular last month was one we will not forget for many years to come. Somewhere between the singing of hymns and the reading of scripture we made our way to the Lord’s Table to celebrate the gift of marriage with two of our sisters in Christ. On Sunday, November 16 after eighteen years of a loving and committed relationship, Shelly O’Leary and Diane Pierce were united in marriage. The joy was overwhelming. It was right and good that Diane and Shelly could honor their love and commitment in their church home.

Part of the wedding liturgy described the gift of home:

What is home but that place where your name becomes precious … You find power when you are at home because it is there that you are loved, cherished, and accepted just as you are, with all your frailty, fears and flaws.

May the joy we felt on the Sunday Shelly and Diane married be a prayer for the many other same-gender couples who long to celebrate their love and commitment in the place they call home.

December Schedule of Events

December 6—Greening of the Sanctuary—10 am
December 7—Alternative Gift Fair/Equal Exchange Sale—11 am
December 14—Cookie Walk—11 am
December 21—A Day for Dancing Cantata—10 am
December 24—Christmas Eve—6:30 pm Music/7 pm Worship
December 28—Worship and Carol Sing—10 am
For Blake’s Of Sake

A prayer: I wonder as I wander. Oh dear Lord, I’ve done some wandering in my lifetime. From here to there and back again, you’ve made me into an itinerant carrying in my heart the names and stories of people I have encountered. Over the years as I’ve wandered away from what was once home, you taught me how to be at home where I am the way I am. Oh dear One who made us, we spend so much of our time noticing differences like acccents and such. But really the differences among us are far less pervasive than those things we hold in common. Breathe your story into us with new vigor. Jump-start our sensibilities. Spark our intrigue. Ignite within us epiphany. Amen.

A story: Recently Ed Purinton stopped in my office while dropping off Kaliah for Children’s Ministry and said he had been doing some pondering about life. He told me that as he sat out back of his house he began to think about the common things we share in life. Ed talked about the “constants” in life, those aspects of living that happen no matter where we are or what we are doing such as: cycles/seasons, life and death, change, opposites and individual experience.

It really doesn’t matter what our age or who we are, our stories have many of the same components. Somewhere along the way we all know what it is like to feel lonely, pushed away, or disregarded. Thankfully we also have moments when we are connected and feel part of life. These constants are what help us to understand each other, and have compassion for each other especially when we don’t feel we understand each other.

A reflection: More than any other time of the year, the holidays (in particular Thanksgiving, Christmas and the coming of the New Year) is a season of emotional over abundance. On one side of our story folks are wound tight with expectation on one side of our story folks are wound tight with expectation filled with visions of joy and peace and coming home. On the other side of the story there are those who can’t be at home, have lost their home, or have no one to come home to, leaving some without a sense of expectation. How all these emotions and expectations intermingle is a story we are left to unpack every year.

Another prayer: O, good and gracious Lord, we wander in and out of expectation. We hear the story of birth and God’s love, all the while preparing to live into a new year. As much time as we spend remembering, help us to look just beyond tomorrow. You hold all the pieces and parts of our living together with your constant it is we pray, may hope and peace overflow on this day and in the coming days of the new year.

Session Notes

• Approved 2015 Proposed Budget. Cuts with potential increase in pledges gets us closer to eliminating dependence on rental income to balance the budget. As of Sunday 23, 31 of expected 51 pledges have been received.
• Congregational meeting - Sunday, January 25 after worship for the purpose of receiving the 2015 Budget and approving the Pastor’s Salary.
• Approved Baptism of Daniel Cortopassi son of Erin and Andrew Cortopassi, grandson of Peg Smith.
• Decided the 2016 proposed budget will be presented in narrative form prior to Stewardship Sunday.

December CALENDAR

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Front Porch Ministry @OHPC</td>
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<td>7:15pm</td>
<td>Choir</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Greening of the Sanctuary</td>
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<td>Communion Worship</td>
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<td>Front Porch Ministry @OHPC</td>
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<td>Sarah Lydia Circle</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>6:30pm</td>
<td>Christmas Eve Service</td>
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<td>CHRISTMAS DAY</td>
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January CALENDAR

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<td>NEW YEARS DAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Communion Worship/Rev. Patty Epprecht preaching</td>
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<td>ATOW @ Laurann Cacioppo’s home</td>
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Carols are sung each year to celebrate the festival of Christmas. This cantata presents eight carols that rehearse the story told in the Christmas lessons. The choir and the congregation will be seated “in the round” to recall, from Medieval times, a setting that may have been used for a banquet or when dancers might have occupied the center space. Flute, oboe, bassoon and percussion accompany the choral music. The instrumentalists will enhance the expression of the joy of Christmas.

Reach out to your friends and neighbors and invite them to join us for this festive occasion!

A Day For Dancing

Our choir will contribute its Christmas offering on December 21 as a part of the morning service. They will be singing Lloyd Pfautsch’s cantata, A Day for Dancing.
Hello to my Presbyterian Friends,

I am rarely at a loss for words but all I can think of is WOW! What an absolutely delightful evening we had listening to the music of Heera and Friends. I almost fell out of the Ficus tree when Heera and Alice played their Hungarian dance duets. With more than 100 guests in attendance, my family stayed safely out of the way as we savored every note played by Heera and her talented friends: Alice Groome, Roberta Beckler, Bob Helsabeck, and a guest drummer, Ray Nunzi. The worship space was alive with anticipation; with praise for the rendering of beautiful music; and with thankfulness for the wealth of talent you have in your congregation. If the walls could talk, they would express their delight that the Painter’s Union has moved on! It was a magical evening, and the food at intermission was delicious. For my family and me, we enjoyed every morsel that fell on the floor. I cast my vote to make this a yearly event.

Speaking of music and songs we never forget, I am still humming: “Goin’ to the chapel and Gonna get married” when I reminisce about the wedding of Diane Pierce and Shelley O’Leary. My family and I were thrilled and filled with emotion to be in attendance at their wedding ceremony. How moving it was that Diane and Shelley wanted to share their personal commitment to each other with their church family. I think the anthem that Sunday: “Ubi Caritas” expressed everyone’s feelings so well.

Where charity and love are, God is there.

The love of Christ has gathered us together.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it....

As I watched Diane and Shelley recite their vows to each other, I noticed the serene and peaceful painting behind them. It was a fitting background for a wedding. Thank you Vicky Helsabeck for your creativity in depicting Psalm 121.

“I will lift up my eyes to the hills”...

Even the new paraments by Kathy Doerr of hands clasped in unity within a large heart, are a visual representation of your commitment as a congregation to working together through our love for one another and for God. Kathy Whitmore enhanced the idea of the colors interwoven inside the hands as our corporate emphasis on mission. She elaborated on each area of mission by choosing a color. Various members attached a corresponding colorful ribbon to the wooden cross. We are blessed to have committed rodent friendly friends around us.

We will be thinking of you as we watch Diane Pierce and Shelley O’Leary get married in Lukaya, Uganda and Real Partners Uganda are very grateful for the contributions to the Christmas food drive. The $1060 OHPC donated along with the money contributed by additional area churches will make it possible to provide nutrition for 500 children and 70 staff members during their Christmas break.

Paula Allebaugh
in memory of Martha Allebaugh

Gary & Sharon Cresse
in honor of our grandchildren

The Doerr Family
in honor of Jeff, Chelsea, Mark & John

Patricia Ford
in honor of the Glory of God

Paul Gallena
in honor of Chris Groome, Sharon Groome, James Groome & Matt Vitello

Alice & Ken Groome
in honor of our grandchildren

The Christmas Joy Offering is received during our Christmas Eve Worship service.

Joy Offering

A cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930’s, the Christmas Joy Offering is one of four Special Offerings designated by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Advent and Christmas provide an opportunity for congregations to support those in need of help and hope.

There are two ways you can give:

- Use the Christmas Joy Offering envelope provided to you via a special mailing or,
- Visit the following website: presbyterianmission.org/give/christmasjoy and make a donation online.

The Christmas Joy Offering is received specifically for two groups. Fifty percent of the collection is distributed to the Board of Pensions in order to provide assistance to retired and active church workers and their families experiencing a need. The other fifty percent supports Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges.

Students and staff of Mustard Seed Academy in Lukaya, Uganda and Real Partners Uganda are very grateful for the contributions to the Christmas food drive. The $1060 OHPC donated along with the money contributed by additional area churches will make it possible to provide nutrition for 500 children and 70 staff members during their Christmas break.

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Mike & Beverly Haines
in honor of our 5 grandchildren

Bob & Vicky Helsabeck

Mary & Philip Ingraham

Charlotte & Hank Jensen

Jim Laymon
in honor of Olivia Laymon

Paul & Sophie May

Grace Miley

Shelby O’Leary & Diane Pierce
In honor of Jesus

Betsy Phillips

Bonnie Warwick
in honor of Sean, Alesin, Emily & Nolan

Kathy Whitmore & Michael Everett
in honor of Brittany, Andrew, Rose & Lucky

Tanna & Dick Williams

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Caring Tree

The Caring Tree will again be a part of our local Christmas mission efforts. We will continue our focus on the Food Bank, by collecting baby items (including formula) and personal care items for all ages. (Nothing in glass, please.)

There will be gift tags and envelopes on the tree. If you take tags, please place your donations (unwrapped) under the tree. If you prefer to make a monetary donation, please put cash or check (made out to Community Food Bank of Southern NJ) in an envelope from the tree, and place it in the basket next to the tree.

The Caring Tree is almost an “institution” with this congregation, and we are deeply grateful for your continuing support and generosity.

Donations will be accepted until December 28.

Equal Exchange

We, as a congregation, have pledged to support the Red Cherry Challenge. By pledging to sell 300 lbs. of coffee between June 1, 2014 and May 31, 2015, we are supporting Equal Exchange’s effort to pay ten cents per pound of coffee to support farmers in combating leaf rust disease and the effects of climate change on the coffee bean!

The Red Cherry is actually the seed of the coffee plant and is referred to as the “coffee cherry”. Thus the bright red coffee cherry is picked from the plant, harvested, and roasted into the brown coffee bean.

This disease has had a ripple effect on these poor communities, particularly in Central America.

- Farmers are unable to afford the cost of fungicide sprays;
- hire fewer workers to pick the ripe (red) coffee cherries; go into debt and sell livestock and tools to compensate the lost income;
- remove their children from schools to work on the farm;
- sell less to local merchants and have less income.

In some areas, the plant choking fungus called leaf rust, or la roya, has been so prolific that it has reduced mountainside rows of coffee trees to gray twigs. It appears that the disease has spread from the effects of higher temperatures in the region. Heat encourages the growth of the fungus.

It would follow that the solution is complex too:

- Farmers are spraying a fungicide; replacing or cutting back old plants;
- planting new plants if they have the money;
- managing shade trees that filter the sunlight;
- switching to food crops where it is possible to grow them.

Most governments in Central America have declared states of emergency and have provided some fungicide, and small loans. However, it is often too late and too little. Researchers are experimenting with a new coffee seed which will be resistant to rust disease and heat stress. It may take 25 to 30 years to be viable for the farmers.

Farmers at the co-ops whom we help with our sales believe that only by educating and working together can they become resilient and strong. Equal Exchange is pledging $15,000 to help the future of coffee harvests and aid small farmers.

We thank you for your support of this mission project.

Grace Miley

Cookie Walk

December 14

Calling all bakers and also those who love to eat cookies! The annual cookie walk is coming! This is most definitely the sweetest tradition of Ocean Heights Presbyterian Church. It is really quite simple. Some of the best bakers in the church do what they do best, bake cookies; all kinds of cookies! On Sunday, December 14 tables will be set up at the back of the Sanctuary.

By the end of worship those tables will be filled with every kind of cookie imaginable. These cookies are for sale: a large container is $10 and a small container is $5. Worshippers may purchase a container and then wander around the tables and fill it to the brim with the cookies of your choice.

The even sweeter news is that all the proceeds are donated to local mission.

Grace Miley