



Pastor's Passage

Happy New Year!

Are You There Yet?

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NRSV)



Have you been able to catch your breath? The Christmas season is over and life can get back to normal. But the real question is what is normal? Life is always hectic, even more so during Christmastime, so it sometimes seems that being "hectic" is the norm. How can we change that?

I am in my office at church as I write this and I am looking at Jesus sitting in the chair opposite my desk. No, your pastor has not lost his marbles nor am I hallucinating. And no, I have not been sipping any "Christmas cheer," as it has been more than twenty years since I have done any of that. Praise God! But Jesus is sitting in a chair looking

at me just as intently as I am looking at him.

I can sense His presence as I am concentrating on the chair. While the chair might look empty to the naked eye, I know He is there. He is everywhere.

How often do we look for Jesus and are unable to see him? In our hectic lives that we call "normal," Jesus is sometimes very hard to see. But seeing Jesus is all about our journey. Just as we walk the road to Golgotha during Lent to be at the foot of the cross during Christ's crucifixion, we are also called to walk to Bethlehem each Advent. We are to walk with the shepherds and the Magi seeking the One who "will be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32).

Most of us consciously walk these roads during the appropriate seasons. Walking this road during the rest of the year is much harder. The road to God was once perfectly paved, no potholes to contend with or detours to follow. But people have a tendency to make the road harder to travel. We begin to think we know the correct route to God and invariably we get lost. Often times we don't stop and ask for directions; we just continue on our journey.

When we choose a life that is not in communion with God our road suddenly has small bumps in it that can rapidly turn into immense potholes before we know it. The road is no longer straight but

becomes full of twists and turns, high mountains to climb and deep valleys to traverse.

We must use these holy seasons, Advent and Lent, to help us get back on the right road. No matter how hard our road has become we need to continue to look to the manger and the cross. We must continue to remember that Jesus is always looking for us, just like Jesus is sitting in my chair right at this very moment across the room from me.

I hope your journey to Bethlehem was joyous this year. I pray that each of us have a sense that we may be a little closer to Christ. But our journey will continue. As a child, my number one question when my family went on a road trip was, "Are we there yet?" As we journey through life seeking Jesus, we might ask ourselves the same question. But as I just said, this journey will be a continuous one.

Don't become discouraged as you travel the road. With all the uncertainty surrounding us during these times, it will become easier to lose our view and our direction. Remember that Jesus is still seeking us. Continue to trust God's Spirit. Slow down a bit and listen for God's voice. We must continue to strive to get there, both as individuals and as a congregation.

Blessings,
Rick

Music Notes



Happy New Year! Blessings on the year to come!

This past month has been non-stop with excitement as we have shared with others through the arts the joy of Christmas! My thanks to our dedicated music ministry for their time, talent, and perseverance; you each are an amazing gift to the church, our community, and to me personally. Thank you.

Thursday, 12/15, the Chancel Choir had an outreach program at Beachpark Tower here in Avon Lake. We shared in caroling and a special surprise--we brought our hand chimes and taught the residents, who then got to accompany us playing the hand chimes! Fun!! A highlight was Ed Homer leading us in some Bing Crosby Christmas favorites! My thanks to Doug Day for accompanying and investing in a new portable sound system and keyboard allowing for such events to take place with ease and professionalism.

Saturday, 12/17. was the TrueNorth Christmas Concert in which David Brunner, Doug Day, Sherry Spenser, Susan Richardson, and Joan Wojcicki Fortney joined me in concert at Bay Presbyterian

Church for a glorious evening of music and worship. The next morning, 12/18, was All-Music Sunday here at Avon Lake Presbyterian where the Chancel Choir, Handbell Choir, and soloists led us in a beautiful Journey of Promises with narrators Carol Nussle and Sherry Spenser. The busy weekend concluded with caroling to

many of our loved ones here at Avon Lake Presbyterian. We sang at The Knickerbocker and Independence Village where we shared in the Christmas spirit singing carols and fun holiday songs where all the residents got out their key-chains to shake during Jingle Bells! In addition, eleven homes were visited. It was a joy seeing people's homes and all their decorations. Many have not been able to visit ALPC in person and it was a special treat to be able to be with each of you between our two caroling groups! Following, the deacons had hot chocolate and cookies awaiting us as we shared what took place. Wonderful time by all!

As I write this, we just finished hosting the Cornerstone Preschool Christmas program, complete with a visit from Santa Claus! It amazes me how Santa finds the time to visit so many during this festive season. We are now in preparation for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day worship. How cool that both Christmas and New Year fall on a Sunday; I can't think of a better way to celebrate Christ's birth nor welcome in the New Year than to worship together, celebrating Christ's birth and praying in the

New Year!

My thanks to all of our soloists this season: Sherry Spenser, bassoon; Joan Wojcicki Fortney, cello; Gail Carter, hammered dulcimer and flute; Barb Graves, Ed Carter, Muriel Homer and Doug Day, piano/organ; Susan Richardson, flute and vocal; Ed Homer and Sarah Waggoner, vocal. Thank You!

Our Chancel Choir continues to grow! We welcome new Chancel Choir members: Jan Mackert and Marcia Lucietta, both new to our church; Cathy Graves, who has never sung in the choir but has graced us in the handbell choir; and Barb Graves, who retired from the Chancel Choir just before the pandemic but has returned and we are the better for it. Thanks!

This Advent/Christmas Season, if you heard higher and lower bells, it is because we purchased the start of the 5th octave of handbells. We purchased the complete set of high bells for the 5th octave, which Ed Carter and my wife, Joan, will be mastering, and a few of the lower bells which Gail Carter will be joining Doug Day in mastering. We still have 4 lower bells to purchase to make a complete 5th octave. We were able to purchase these handbells through the generosity of our handbell choir members who made generous donations to the ministry. Thank you!

Our AV Media Ministry Team has been developing nicely over this past year, growing to 10 members. The A/V Media Ministry Team serves behind the scenes to ensure that the worship service flows smoothly from the music and lyrics on the screen to the sermon and other *(Continued on Page 5)*

Worship & Spiritual Life

Happy New Year! God Bless 2023! Pastor Rick helped us to find deeper meaning in Advent through his teachings of “The Journey.” A beautiful series engaging us and inspiring us, giving us fresh glimpses of what life was like personally for Mary, Joseph and Elizabeth. Mary, pure in her willingness to serve God, risked being an outcast in her culture when she chose to trust God, putting His wishes before her own. Next, we took a closer look at Joseph who, filled with the mercy of God, chose to honor God’s wishes for him to accept Mary who was pregnant before they married which would not have been received well in his community. Then, we looked at Mary’s older cousin Elizabeth, miraculously, joyfully finally able to conceive a child who would grow up to be John the Baptist. She gave enthusiastic yet tender encouragement to Mary and for the sacred child Mary carried within her. As this is written, December 18 hasn’t come yet when Pastor Rick will teach on Perseverance with the Journey of Promises Cantata, a service to inspire reflection as the sounds of our choir will fill our sanctuary with awe for our Lord. Our Christmas Eve Candle-Light Service is titled, “The Light in the Stable” where we’ll end by singing “Silent Night” in the glow of our candles, taking in the glorious truth that *God is with us*, Emmanuel, *Jesus!*

Our Christmas Day Service asks, “What’s Under Our Tree?” and on January 1, Communion Sunday, Pastor Rick’s sermon asks, “What Gifts Do We Bring?” intriguing questions certain to get us pondering what true gifts are all about. All these services are sure to immerse us further into appreciating God’s power, trusting in His plans for us and filling us with His Love so that we can share his love generously with all we meet. Come be fed by God’s Holy Word! Begin the new year on a diet rich in His messages that will give us strength, encouragement and peace no matter what we face in the days ahead. We’ll begin examining “The Choices We Make” through sermons titled, “Water and Spirit”, “As God Sees Us”, “Look for the Light” and “Getting Right Side Up”. Remember, we’d like your ideas and thoughts on how we can make our services even more welcoming, more inclusive and more engaging. Join us! We meet on the first Monday of the month, though when it falls on or follows a holiday, check with the office for the revised day. Do join us!

By Cris Till for the Worship and Spiritual Life Committee: Donna Bradley, Rick Fortney, Margre Lind Mills, Beth Shoemaker, Pastor Rick, Jeff Spenser, Marcy Uhl, Sarah Waggoner and JoAnn Wainscott.

Our Mission Statement

In awe, we Receive God’s Grace and Gospel.
In gratitude, we Respond with Worship and Servanthood.
In love, we Represent Jesus Christ as we minister to transform lives
in family, community, and the world.

Music Notes 2

**WSL
Mission Statement 3**

Financial Report 4

**Birthdays
Music Notes, cont. 5**

**Dates to Remember
Mission Matters 6**

**Session Highlights
Cornerstone News 7**

Circles and Groups 8

About ALPC 9

Fun & Games 10

Fun & Games 11

Financial Report

In November our expenses just slightly exceeded our income. We still have the month of December to go but overall, this year we have done very well financially. We still need to find and hire a Christian Education staff member and are planning for the possibility of a new full-time pastor by the beginning of the new program year in September.

You will now find a QR code printed in the bulletin and in the

Constant Contact email if you wish to use it to take you to SimpleGive as a convenient way to give regularly or for special offerings. The kiosk is also available in the foyer. Otherwise, please try to remember to put your offering in the basket in the foyer prior to the service or on your way out of the sanctuary.

If you have not pledged your support for next year, please fill out

a pledge card so the Session can formulate a realistic budget for next year.

Here is the link for online giving: <https://my.simplegive.com/app/giving/avon3234200>

Any questions about our finances may be addressed to Marcy Uhl, Treasurer, or myself at any time.

Cheryl Dean, Finance
Committee Chair

	Nov YTD Actual	YTD Budget
Income:		
Congregational Giving	\$242,240.23	\$261,228.91
Other Income	12,941.84	31,231.86
Total Income	<u>\$255,182.07</u>	<u>\$292,460.77</u>
Expense:		
Staff Expense	\$134,905.07	\$188,955.19
Worship & Spiritual Life	7,629.86	6,600.00
Christian Education	347.93	4,239.59
Stewardship & Mission	4,885.79	4,354.17
Property	46,112.94	48,302.84
General Expenses	18,814.63	21,541.66
Youth Mission Trip		6,000.00
Per Capita Expense	12,323.23	12,323.23
Total Expense	<u>\$225,019.45</u>	<u>\$292,316.68</u>
Net operating income	<u>\$30,162.62</u>	<u>\$144.09</u>



Using the camera app on your smart phone, aim your camera at this QR code. A link for SimpleGive will pop up; click the link and you will be taken directly to ALPC's online donation platform. You can scan the code from anywhere - paper bulletins, wall projections during worship, even right here as you read!

Happy Birthday!



Ken Mohr	January 1
Fran Asire	January 3
Mike Richardson	January 7
Sharon Call	January 9
Elizabeth Shoemaker	January 13
Madeline Waggoner	January 14
Jenn Call	January 15
Susan Richardson	January 18
Darlena Gallant	January 20
Tom Callahan	January 21
Bill Marshall	January 23
Deanna Domin	January 25
Michele Meehan	January 25
Jack Stryczny	January 25
Janet Parker	January 30

Music Notes, continued

(Continued from Page 2) If you've ever tried to adjust the EQ settings while listening to music or tried to get the colors just right on your TV, then we need you on the A/V Media Ministry Team! We can train you and get you serving right away. Please contact Rick F. if interested.

The Music Ministry reconvenes Wednesday, January 4th. Handbell Choir at 6:30 p.m. followed by Chancel Choir at 8:00 p.m. If you have ever sung in high school, college, or community choir, we would love to have you join us! Youth are encouraged! If you know

of people who do not go to our church but would love to participate in a thriving music ministry, invite them! Also, if you have interest and talent instrumentally, through dance, visual arts, theatre - the list can go on and on - let me know so we can use our arts in serving the community and in worship.

Please mark your calendars for our upcoming Good Friday Concert. This year we will be having a special Good Friday noontime worship and then a concert in the evening at 7:30 p.m. This concert

will feature Maurice Duruflé's *Requiem*, and will be performed by Avon Lake Presbyterian Church Music Ministry joined by the TrueNorth Chorale and Chamber Orchestra.

It is a privilege and joy serving here at Avon Lake Presbyterian. Blessings as we bring in the new year with all the hopes, vision and opportunities that await each of us personally and as a church. Happy New Year!

-Rick Fortney

Dates to Remember



January 7

Join the Worship & Spiritual Life Committee at 10:00am to take down and put away Advent and Christmas Decorations.



January 29

Prepare your pots and ladles! It's the return of the Deacon's Chili Cook-off!



February 22

Ash Wednesday and Lent come early in 2023. Start preparations for the Easter season in February.

Mission Matters

"Hope is patience with the lamp lit." Tertullian

Thank you for your donations to The Christmas Joy Offering and for the Christmas Eve offering.

We are fortunate to be able to help people in many walks of life. Children in shelters, teens looking toward a future of service and faith and elders in need. The mission committee hopes to continue to provide a variety of ways you can be a part of the Presbyterian Church Mission activities and our local missions like Lorain Cooperative Ministries and Neighborhood Alliance's Haven House shelter.

We will be delivering a New Year's dinner to the Haven House. If you would like to make a dessert

(in a disposable pan) it can be dropped off in the church office or kitchen before 11:00am on Friday 12/30/22.

Remember 2¢ a meal/Sensibility donations? We are updating it a bit. We will be collecting spare change and extra dollars in a "soup pot" in the Narthex January 8th through January 16th. That should help us think about what soup or chili we can make for the Deacons Cook-off on January 29th. The spare change will go to The Front Door Ministry in Lorain.

Speaking of the Front Door Ministry, we hope to have Moment for Mission in February to learn more about the Front Door Ministry and the meals and food pantries provided by Lorain

Cooperative Ministries. Since we are a supporting church for the missions of Lorain Cooperative Ministries, we know we will be interested in what is in the works for 2023.

Looking ahead, We hope to be providing twin and long twin bed sheets to Valor Home and Good Knights in February. Watch those January Linen sales for a good deal for the collection in February.

Lunch Bunch is discussed every time we meet. If anyone would like to be a part of the conversation please feel free to share your ideas with Beth Janis, Kathy Hamilton or Sue Mabe. The Mission Committee will be meeting January 5th at 4:15 at ALPC.

Submitted by Beth Janis



coffee house
· WORSHIP ·

Warm up with a cup of joe at our Coffee House! Sundays at 10am, worship services are live-streamed so you can watch from the comfort of the couch while enjoying a hot beverage, a donut, and of course, fellowship.

If you prefer worshipping in the sanctuary, coffee and tea are always available after the service.

Session Highlights

The Session met on December 19. Highlights of their meeting were:

- * The Deacons were very busy in December and are planning a youth group meeting, the chili/soup cookoff, bowling, and hiking in the new year.
- * A list of 33 constitutional amendments the PC(USA) needs ratified by the presbyteries was discussed. Elders from our Session will be voting on these at an upcoming Presbytery meeting.
- * Thanks for keeping up giving through November.
- * The Finance Committee is updating the encumbered funds in the budget for next year.
- * Pledges so far are slightly above last year's level in both number and amount pledged.
- * If you did not pledge, you may

have received a reminder letter.

- * Children's Sunday school has had attendees every week, and the adult classes have been well-received.
- * The Mission Committee finds that providing meals to Haven House is a way to give directly to those in need, so the Lunch Bunch program has been tabled.
- * Donations to Valor Home and Centsability (2¢ a Meal) and sheets and soup will be collected in the new year.
- * The ad for our Christmas events appeared in *Westlife*.
- * Upcoming music expenses will be for organ repairs and a new bell table with pad and cover.
- * Come help take down the Christmas decorations at 10am on Sat. Jan. 7.
- * A new fund for flower donations

was set up to which members can give.

- * More of our members are giving via Simple Give at the kiosk in the foyer or using the QR code in the bulletin.
- * The choir sang at Beachpark Tower and it was a very worshipful event.
- * The Nominating Committee still needs to find one deacon and one elder. Please let them know if you sense God's call to fill one of these roles.
- * Session voted to approve Cornerstone adding a full day pre-K classroom in Fall 2023, providing a detailed plan is approved by session in March.

Submitted by
Elizabeth Shoemaker,
Clerk of Session

Cornerstone News



Cornerstone Preschool celebrated the last day of school before Christmas break with a Pajama Day!

Circles & Groups

Circle of Hope

Bible Study, meets 3rd Wednesday of every month (Sept-May) 10am in Church Narthex

Baldwin, Nancy	Schweitzer, Barbara
Chase, Sharon	Scott, Sue
Gallant, Darlena	Smucker, Sharon
Harris, Joy	Swartz, Beth
Maloney, Sue	Swartz, Debbie
Mohr, Kathy	Till, Cris
Reichlin, Debbie	Bush, Eddie-Lou

Ruth Circle

Meets 2nd Tuesday of each month (Sept-May) 10:30am in Church Library

Albrecht, Nancy	Metzger, Joan
Lehmkuhl, Barbara	Nussle, Carol
Maloney, Sue	Parker, Janet
McCarbery, Ruth Ann	Smucker, Sharon
Morway, Lynn	Homer, Muriel

Serendipity Circle

Meets occasionally for dinner

Dansizen, Cindi
Dean, Cheryl
Gantz, Deb
Goming, Jean
Hoffmann, Pam
Horvath, Katie
Janis, Beth

Men's Lunch Group

Meets 4th Tuesday of every month at various restaurants

Beeler, Russ	Hamilton, Bill
Call, Fred	Homer, Ed
Carter, Ed	Hough, Jim
Day, Doug	Kurak, Tim
Dean, Mike	Lawson, George
Dusek, Clay	Madson, Larry
Earley, John	Maloney, Dan
Fortney, Rick	Mills, John
Francis, Dick	Navarro, Lanny
Haggerty, Paul	Palison, Bob

Circle of Smiles

Christian Book Discussion, meets 1st Thursday of every month (Sept-June) at members' homes

Chase, Cristine	Seib, Sandee
Cold, Michele	Uhl, Marcy
Helbig, Penny	Unger, Carol
Lind-Mills, Margre	Vine, Terry
Reighard, Susan	

Yarn Ministry: Blessings by Hand

Meets 3rd Tuesday of every month (Sept-May) 11am in Church Narthex

Bush, Eddie-Lou	Morway, Lynn
Chase, Sharon	Navarro, Kathy
Hall, Barb	Nussle, Carol
Lohr, Lee	Swartz, Beth
Mohr, Kathy	Till, Cris
	Unger, Carol

Prayer Group

Meets Tuesdays at 3pm on Zoom

Baldwin, Nancy
Cheriyen, Anita
Cold, Michele
Harris, Joy
Maloney, Sue
Swartz, Beth
Till, Cris

Walking Group

Meets Mon, Wed, Fri, year-round at 8:30am in the Church Parking Lot

Bondurant, Kay
Bondurant, Lynn
Cheriyen, Anita
Homer, Muriel
Lehmkuhl, Barbara
Maloney, Sue
Uhl, Gary
Uhl, Marcy

Join us for a walk any time!

Everyone is Welcome!

Sunday Worship – Our worship service begins at 10:00 am

Also on Facebook and YouTube at 10:00 am

Join us: www.facebook.com/avonlakepc

Our worship service is now on the Avon Lake public access television (Spectrum Channel 1024, Breezeline Channel 22). Sunday services will begin showing the following Wednesday, at 6:00 am and 6:00 pm and then show every day at those times throughout the week.

32340 Electric Boulevard, Avon Lake, OH 44012
(440) 933-6240

Church email address: alpresby@avonlakepc.org

Church website: avonlakechurch.com

Preschool website: cornerstonepreschoolal.com

ALPC Staff

Rick Stein Transitional Pastor
Rick Fortney Director of Music & Arts Ministries
Marcy Uhl Treasurer
Kenzi Roberts Office Administrator
Julie Erker Director of Cornerstone Preschool
Ed Homer Lock-Up Custodian

Pastor's Hours

Monday 9:00am - 1:00pm
Tuesday 9:00am - 3:00pm
Wednesday 1:00pm - 4:00pm
Thursday 9:00am - 2:00pm

Church Office Hours

Monday 9:00am - 4:00pm
Tuesday 9:00am - 4:00pm
Wednesday 9:00am - 4:00pm
Thursday 9:00am - 4:00pm
Friday 9:00am - 12:00pm

Office may be briefly closed during these hours for lunch.

Please note:

February Issue *Saints Alive!* Articles are due to Kenzi at alpresby@avonlakepc.org by Sunday, January 22.

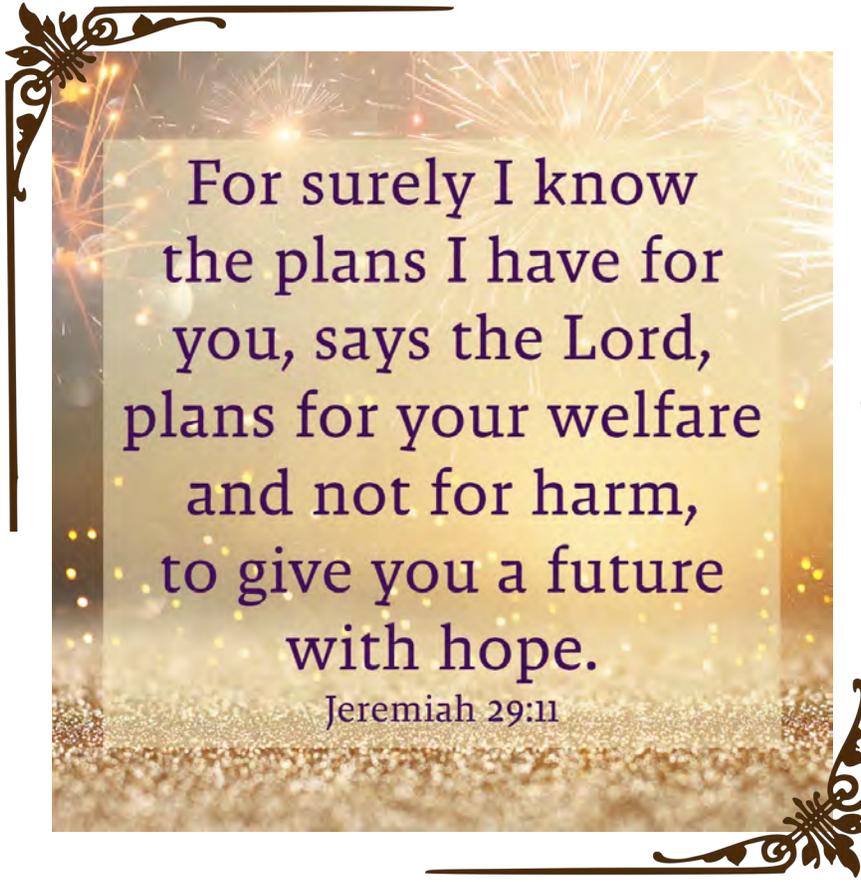
It's all Fun and Games...



Find the bolded words from the following passage.

The **people** which **sat** in **darkness** **saw** **great light**; and to them which sat in the **region** and **shadow** of **death** light is **sprung up**. From that **time** **Jesus** **began** to **preach**, and to **say**, **Repent**: for the **kingdom** of **heaven** is at **hand**.
(Matthew 4:16-17)





For surely I know
the plans I have for
you, says the Lord,
plans for your welfare
and not for harm,
to give you a future
with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11