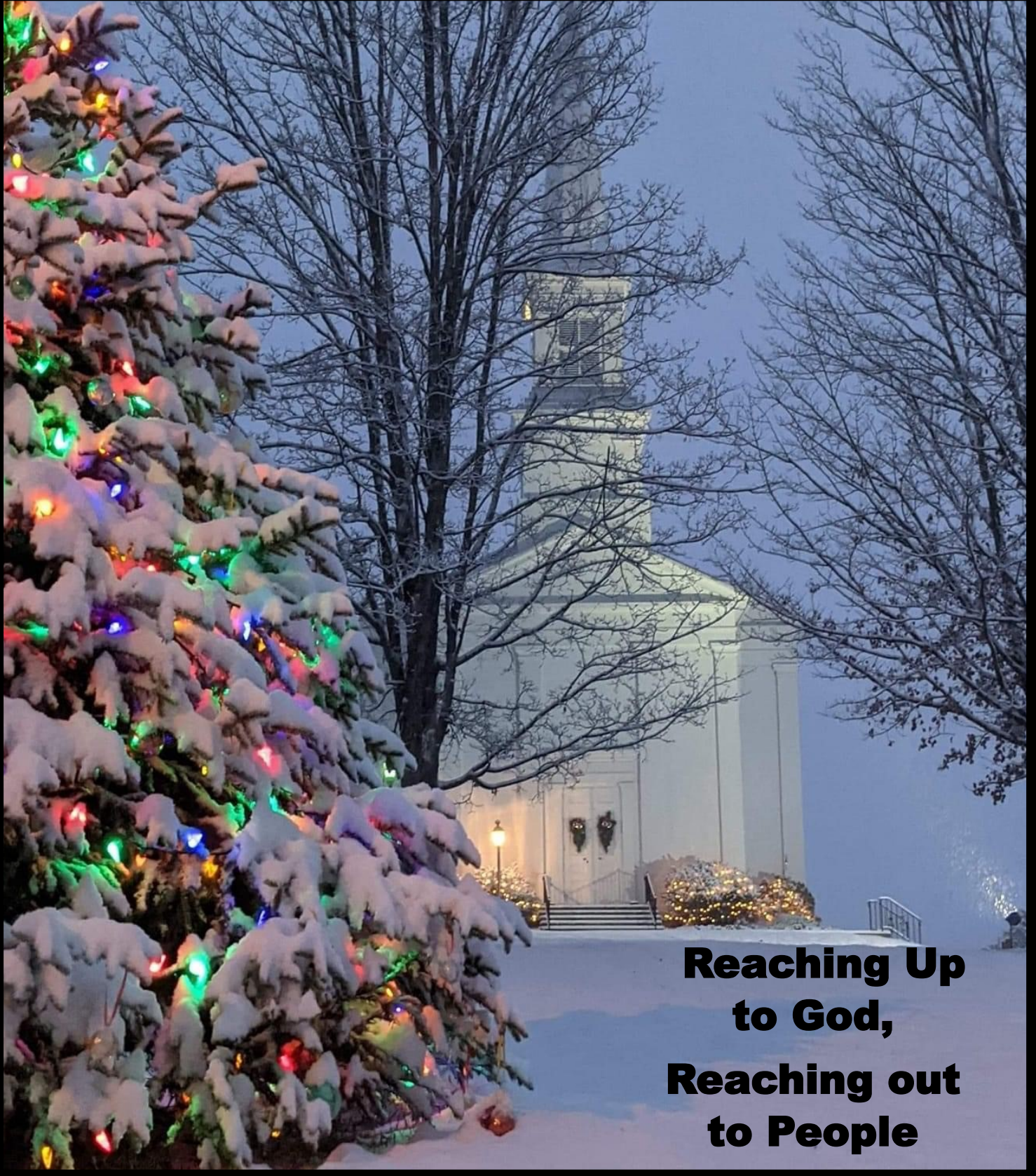


Our Spire

Volume 44 # 1

February 2024



**Reaching Up
to God,
Reaching out
to People**

Pastor's Page: ASH WEDNESDAY: a celebration of the greatest love



We look for fun. Upbeat events. Laughter. A party. We may not want to be swinging from a chandelier (but then again?) but before the night is over, we do like to smile. We do like to celebrate.

Having ashes marking our foreheads? Hmm. In contrast to what was just mentioned, Ash Wednesday might feel like a hard and heavy message. To name and claim that we are, after all, we are mortal, that we are dust, is something right up there with going to the dentist, having the tires rotated, or paying taxes.

There's so much more to Ash Wednesday, however. Yes, the tone in the service can be somber, but here's the affirming piece and peace: ashes deliver a message of hope because those ashes are drawn in the shape of a cross and the cross is love.

The church on Ash Wednesday (which falls on February 14th this year) reminds us we are far, far more than our mortality. We are a people who live with Christ's love abounding in and around us. There's more. As Christians, death is not the end for us. Jesus, who died on the cross, did so in order that we might rise from the dead to life everlasting.

On Ash Wednesday, we hear God say through the prophet Joel, "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning, rending your hearts and not your garments (Joel 2:12-13)." **From this honest place of not only acknowledging our sinful souls but also purging our sinful souls, we can *do* the greatest love. We can *show* the greatest love. How? We can return to the Lord.**

This Valentine's Day, we can return to the Lord because our God "... is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Exodus 34:6-7)." We get to do what God does to us, which is love us. This Valentine's Day, this Ash Wednesday, we have the gift of just not receiving God's beautiful, powerful, affirming and illuminating love. We will also give our love back to God. To do this, to show love back to God or to give love back to God, we will be real. We will be open. We will be honest.

In other words, we will repent. Repentance is a natural and necessary reaction to our sin.

Let's remind ourselves of what repentance means. In the Old Testament, two Hebrew words help us understand repentance. The first is the word *nacham*, which means to turn around or to change your mind. The second is the word *sub*. It is used over 600 times in the Old Testament and is translated by such words as "turn," "return," "seek," or "restore." We can see it in phrases like "to turn to the Lord with all your heart." It's also important to remember Lent is a forty-day journey focusing on the passion of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Forty days feels like a good amount of time, yet this is a small percentage of the year. By contrast, the story of Christ's passion makes up fully one-third of the Synoptic Gospel accounts, and one-half of John. To understand Jesus is to understand His passion. It is central to His message.

Speaking of scripture, the Bible is filled with stories of God working in the lives of his people. They are all helpful to know. Each encourages us to live by faith.

Knowing these stories is not the same as trusting them, however. Plenty of people know of Jesus' death and resurrection. They just don't believe it, or believe it enough.

So much more will come later this year, but as I shared from the pulpit on January 14th, trust is the central theme in our 2024 Stewardship campaign. How exciting it is to speak of this coming autumn's theme here in the season of winter.

Pastor's Page: ASH WEDNESDAY: a celebration of the greatest love—continued

Abraham trusted in God's promises. He heard the promise of God that he would have an heir someday. At Abraham's advanced age this promise would be difficult to believe. But Abraham had already stepped out in faith a few times before when he had heard God's Word, and God had always come through for Abraham. Abraham's faith was not perfect. There were times he failed. Nevertheless, he did what we can do when we fail: he continued in his relationship with God. In so doing, God blessed him again. As God promised, Abraham was given an heir, his son Isaac.

The story of Abraham is our story, too. Specifically, it is our story about the action of God in Christ for us. In trust, we understand God promised to save us, protect us, defend us, equip us and strengthen us.

Paul notes that Abraham "grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised (Romans 4:18-21)." As we give glory to God, we also grow in our trust of God through Jesus by way of the Holy Spirit.

Lent is the time to remember that the Gospel is a promise that points to the present and future. Lent is a promise that God is with us now. Lent is also the promise that on the last day, when Christ returns, we will pass through the Day of Judgment unscathed and enter the New Creation.

Start with Ash Wednesday this year. Celebrate the greatest love. The greatest love is the love God has for us, and the love we have for God.

Our worship service begins at 6 PM on the fourteenth. It doesn't stop there, of course.

Continue through Lent with our congregation in worship so that we can intentionally live in dependence on the promises of God through repentance that, like Abraham, leads us to trust and even more love.



**First Church
Cocoa Collection
for Interfaith!
160 Boxes
were donated!!**



As church attendance numbers fade across the nation and online services become very convenient it's important to remember why church attendance for you and your family matters so much.

You can't serve from your sofa. You can't have community of faith on your sofa. You can't experience the power of a room full of believers worshipping together on your sofa.

Christians aren't consumers. We are contributors. We don't watch. We engage. We give. We sacrifice. We encourage. We pray by laying hands on the hurting. We do life together.

The church needs you.

And you need the church. 🏠❤️🙏

Bake Sale & Baked Potato Sale

North Harford Willing Workers

February 18, 2024 at

Harford Vol Fire Dept. BBQ



Call Connie at 570-434-2913 for pre-orders!

Sign Up Sheet in the Gathering Room if you wish to help bake.

The Love of God



Valentine's Day can hold many expectations. As we come into the middle of the month of February, we may think of things like roses, chocolates, sweet messages on cards, or maybe a one-on-one dinner out. We've created this vision of an ideal celebration.

Hope doesn't always match reality though, does it? Maybe there are no flowers, candy, card, or a romantic meal. Instead, we think February 14 should come and go without notice. Or maybe the red heart day can (or should?) be ignored or avoided. It is true that some of us are missing or grieving the love of our life.

Should the day be nothing then?

Join me in saying no. As Christians, we should seize this day and celebrate because God created us to love. Built in God's image, we have the gift and the joy to express love to others and receive love from others.

I speak of love and Ash Wednesday in the pages ahead of this writing. Ash Wednesday, which happens to be on Valentine's Day this year, is a wonderful way to receive love from God and, by way of repentance, be in a place to share love with others. [If you haven't read those pages yet, please do so.]

Here is what we can remember on this Valentine's Day. God set the greatest example of love, giving up his only Son for us. Wow. As a parent, I can't imagine doing that. In Romans 5:8, we read that God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God loves us that much.

Scripture overflows with references to God's great, enduring and abounding love. 1 John 4, for example, details the depth of God's love and his commandment to love others. Valentine's Day gives us that opportunity to show love to family, friends, neighbors and more.

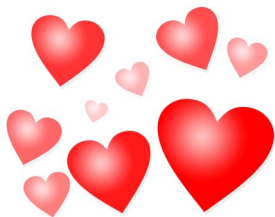
Here is a thought I read and want to share. It's called a heart attack. Wait! No! It's not what you're thinking!

To celebrate God's love this Valentine's Day, cut out a number of hearts. You can opt to do this on red or pink paper. Then, too, you can change this up in a way that speaks to you. Let the creativity flow! On the heart or hearts, write this message: you've been heart attacked! You can go for the element of surprise by placing the hearts in an unsuspecting place such as under a windshield wiper, or I like the direct approach. With your heart or hearts, share love face to face. Heart attack someone. Let your person or your people know God loves them. There's joy in sharing love for the giver and the recipient.

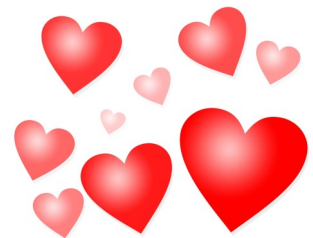
Show love in your authentic way. A compassionate phone call, a door held, or a smile show love. Offering an ear and heart to listen is also a way to communicate love.

If the sentiment of Valentine's Day is too sappy for you, if it seems too commercialized or trite, then make love all the more real and important. Invite your person or people to the 6 PM Ash Wednesday service at the church. Sit with them in a pew. Share what it means to be loved by God, the One who sent us His Son from love.

However you honor love this Valentine's Day, I invite you to let your words and actions flow from your Christ-filled heart. Express God's love for you and your love for others.



Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. (1 John 4:7).



Very Tentative Lenten Schedule

All Services are at 6:00pm

February 14th, Ash Wednesday

Meet in our congregations

February 21st

The Gibson Methodist Church hosts
Pastor Laura Kincaid preaches
Special Music



February 28th

First Universalist Church of Brooklyn hosts
Pastor James Kincaid preaches
Special Music—First Church Harford Congregational—UCC

March 6th

St. Mark's Episcopal Church hosts
Pastor William Hagenbuch preaches
Special Music—South Gibson?

March 13th

First Church Harford Congregational-UCC hosts
Pastor Annette Zrowka preaches
Special Music—?

March 20th

New Milford Methodist Church hosts
Pastor Lou Divis preaches
Special music —?

**Because of the tentative nature of this schedule... please check on the location prior to leaving for the service

Income and Expenses for 2022 and 2023

December	2022	December	2023
Income:	\$21,743.58	Income:	\$10,795.20
Expense:	\$20,850.78	Expense:	\$20,361.81
Total:	\$ 892.80	Total:	-\$ 9,566.61

Year to Date –General Fund:

Income:	\$172,989.60
Expense:	\$147,202.36
Total:	\$25,787.24

Christian Education 1-21-24

Sunday School: We have planned lessons, scripture, videos and crafts through the end of our Sunday School season in May. The crafts have been fun and the lessons inspirational.

Our students completing the third grade will receive their Bibles on May 5, 2024.

VBS: We have selected “SCUBA” from Group Publishing for this year’s Multi-church VBS. Most of our team leaders are returning this year but we will be in need of a Snack Rotation Team Leader and additional volunteers.

We have added Earl Cottrell as our Music coordinator and he will lead the older students in learning and performing using our new ChoirChimes purchased with Memorial Fund money! We are very excited to start this program and hope to continue the ChoirChimes into the Fall as part of a Youth Program between our partner churches.

Camp: We plan to send our 8 and up year olds to Rock Mountain Bible Camp again this year. If you know of children 8 and up that may be interested in going to camp. Please let Holli Chichester at 301-643-1775 know so we can plan accordingly. The children may invite a friend to go with them and we will pay for the friend also. We plan to use some of our Golf Tournament money along with our Fair Dinner money to Fund this endeavor.

Our Staff: Kandy Wellman is teaching us ASL motions for our songs during our opening every Sunday. Thank you, Kandy. Ellen Holdredge and Abby Toolan teach our Pre-K through 1st graders, Nancy Burris, Ashley Parsons and Holli Chichester teach our 2-5th graders and Pastor Will teaches our Middle and Senior High Students. Peg Empet, Karen Jones, Paige Feduchak and Kay Gow substitute as needed. Thank you all!

Deacons 12-17-23

Attending: Nancy Burris, Dee Archer, Kay Gow, Holli Chichester, Will Hagenbuch, Wendy Phillips, Sharon Frantz

Opened in Prayer: Holli Chichester

Christmas Eve day: Communion scheduled for December 24, 2023 at the 10:00am service. Poinsettia tree will be up. Congregation will be asked to leave the poinsettias until after the Christmas Eve service.

The pulpit will remain off center on the riser.

Deacons light the advent wreath. Dee and Sharon will light the 4 candles.

Christmas Eve Service: 6:00pm Kay and Margie will usher by the organ door and the choir door. Holli and Michael and Bill and Sereena will usher the front doors. Candles and battery-operated candles will be handed out as the congregation enters. (battery-operated to children under 12).

Choir will light four advent wreath candles and Will lights the Christ candle.

Ushers will light bigger candles from the Christ candle. Bill and Holli will start from the back, Kay and Margie from the front. The first person in each row will have their candle lit from the usher and share the flame down the pew while singing Silent Night.

Christmas Eve collection will go to fund the Pastor's Discretionary fund. Will plans to explain the fund.

New Year's Eve Day Service: December 31, 2023. Regular service.

Bible Study: We are studying Ephesians: Wholeness for a Broken World: We meet every first Sunday after church 11:15-12:00 in the lecture hall. Bible study will be encouraged during the announcement time. January 7, 2024

Facilitators: January: Holli Chichester, February: Kay Gow

Christmas Eve Day: No Sunday School

New Year's Eve Day: No Sunday School

Annual Meeting: January 28, 2024 after church

Next Meeting: January 21, 2024



Craiger visits Vivian Rutherford!



Deacon - 01-21-24

Attending: Margie Tator, Kay Gow, Holli Chichester, Wendy Phillips, Alice Archer, Sharon Frantz

Opened with Prayer: Kay Gow

Lyrics: Discussed having the lyrics in the bulletin. The lyrics need to be in the original bulletin for the overhead screens. The choir and the readers use the lyrics as the screens are not within sight. Also, the lyrics need to be the bulletin for the shut-ins that receive the bulletin via mail.

Speaker System: Deacons were questioned about an additional speaker in the choir loft. There are many reasons that this would be a problem but the main reason is feedback.

Microphones: The microphones were discussed. The microphones that we have are adequate if users put the microphones next to their mouth when speaking. Hand held microphones are directional. People will be reminded to use the microphones correctly.

Deacons will look into a third microphone for the balcony. It is difficult to hear anyone speaking up there. Kevin Radford will be contacted for assistance.

Sound System: There was a suggestion that maybe we could move the sound system to the back of the church and set up a sound board in the back. This would be extremely expensive and would also require one more person to man the sound board. It was recommended...not to do this at this time.

Lent: Lent begins with an Ash Wednesday Service, February 14, 2024 at 6:00 at Harford Church. There may be special music that night but no group singing. Possibly Will may discuss the rationale for an Ash Wednesday service since it is typically a Catholic observance. Kay and Margie will usher and bulletins will be available. The overhead screens will not be utilized. The other ministerium churches will be invited to attend.

Lenten Schedule: see page 5

Palm Sunday is March 24 (Holli get palms) communion since we aren't having a Maundy-Thursdays service

Good Friday is March 29

Easter is March 31. Each Deacon will help distribute the Easter lilies to our shut-ins this year.

Route 11 Ministerium: It was suggested that other churches be invited to join in the hopes that more will participate. Many of our local churches have new pastors.

Communion: January 28 prior to the annual meeting

Valentine's Day: February 11, 2024: Observe Valentines Day with Goodie Bags for the congregation to give to someone that needs a little love. Deacons are assembling February 3, Saturday at 9:00. 100 bags will be done (Sunday School needs 10 and HVA needs 22).

New Member Class: Several persons have inquired about the next class. The new members classes will begin April 7, 2024 and go four weeks after church. The new members will join May 5, 2024. The schedule will be altered to allow for four classes instead of five. Lunch will be provided each class. The classes will be announced from the pulpit and Pastor Will plans to speak to several persons.

Bible Study: The March Bible study will be changed to March 17, 2024 to accommodate the change in the Deacon Meeting in March.

Next Meeting: March 3, 2024

		Financial Summary as of		12/31/2023			
Liquid Assets							
	Total	General	Benovolenc	Capital Maintenance	Building Func	Comm Building	Other
Money Market	\$176,813.79	\$37,154.67	\$0.00	\$93,834.21	\$1,600.00	\$6.00	\$44,218.91
Memorial Fund	\$19,508.64						
Checking Account	\$14,225.75						
Julia Hudson Trust i	\$10,000.00	0.00 Interest					
Equitrust 2	\$80,727.63	Interest \$222.86					
Equitrust 1	\$49,095.58	Interest \$924.90					
M.M. Emerg Fund	\$23,413.18	For General					
Equitrust General	\$50,000.00	Interest 0.00					
Decationary Fund	\$2,017.41						
Web-site	\$0.40						
Total	\$425,802.38						
<u>Included n the Money Market Account are the following designated funds: Other and Benovence</u>							
Music	\$3,676.60			Summer Lunch Box	\$0.00		
Memorial Garden	\$1,986.14			Sign Project	\$845.50		
Maza Fund	\$894.84			Christian Ed	\$70.00		
Church Cupboard	\$2,534.70			Other	\$1,409.46		
Playground	\$50.00			Youth	\$6,011.68		
Classes	\$5.00			Refugees	\$0.00		
Spire	\$2,550.53			Office	\$530.00		
ARC	\$313.44			Golf	\$18,175.61		
				Technical Support	\$10.00		
Outreach	-\$97.53			VBS	-\$295.41		
Fair Dinner	\$4,448.35						
Bells	\$1,100.00						
				<u>Total all other accounts</u>		\$44,218.91	
<u>2022 Memorial Fund at Peoples</u>							
Bal 12/31/2022	\$12,748.83						
Contributions	\$8,221.00						
Interest	\$8.76						
Other Expense	-\$1,469.95	AED for Church					
Bal 12/31/2023	\$19,508.64						
	Total Website for 2023	\$9673.40					
	\$9673.00 moved to Money Market						

Missionary Minutes

12-19-23

Attending: Kay Gow, Priscilla Allen, Ellen Holdredge, Sharon Decker, Holli Chichester, Karen Jones, Peg Empet, Sharon Kinney

Opened with Prayer: Karen Jones

Minutes: Read and Approved

Treasurer: In: Postage, dues, Least coin \$ 54.29, Yard Sale \$1004.00

Out: Donation to MountainView Backpack Program \$100.00

Total: \$ 9,475.25

Correspondence: In: Thank you – CareNet, Trehab, Donna Schulze

Out: Christmas – 11 persons, Sympathy - 3

Projects: Missionary discussed expanding our ministry. Ideas were discussed.

Post Master Kingsley: Rebekah Burt and family suffered a house fire the day after Thanksgiving. Her family is currently living in a furnished rental. Missionary voted to give \$500 to help with expenses and offer assistance with furniture and such when a new home can be found. Rebekah was given Holli's cell phone for contact when they are ready to refurnish.

Pastor's Discretionary Fund: The Pastor's Discretionary Fund handles crisis financial requests from the community and congregation. This fund has been depleted. There are more requests for assistance. Missionary voted to donate \$300.00 to the fund.

Women's Resource Center: Missionary will donate funds during the North Harford WRC Shower in April.

Sandy Zupanovich: Sandy had a house explosion that caused much damage to her home. Missionary has contacted Sandy several times to extend assistance, The damage is being assessed and she will let us know her needs when she knows.

Interfaith Fuel Fund: Missionary voted to donate \$300.00 to this fund.

Summer LunchBox Program: This program is expanding to minister to seniors in our community. Missionary will assist when the new needs are identified.

Military Care Packages: Evan Clarkson's package has been sent but has not yet arrived. We are planning a Military care package for Ainsley Allen. Clara Allen is helping us with ideas.

Soup Ministry: Continue to encourage the congregation to take soup to the sick, shut-in or those that need a little extra love.

Council Rep: January 4 – Sherry Decker, January 22 – Karen Jones, February 26 – Peg Empet

Next Meeting: January 16, 2024 1:00

Pastor's December Report to Council

While prayer requests have been quiet on Sunday mornings in church in December, many in and around our congregation have had private prayer requests. I cannot share any info regarding these requests, of course, but I do want to share that I have been present to those in need at this time. As you read this, please send a prayer for those who come to me (or those I have heard about) in need of prayer.

As your pastor and as a parent, I want to give a thank you to the Christian Education team for the Christmas program they did in front of the congregation on December 10. The program adhered to the scripture only. The hymns were all traditional and familiar. The hymns selected teach the children the birth story through song, or they reinforce the birth story through song. It was a great worship experience.

This was the first Christmas Eve where I preached in the morning and in the evening. I used two different texts and had two different messages. In the morning, I preached from Isaiah. In the evening, I preached from Luke. It was a gift to be able to do both services.

At 10 AM, I spoke of rejoicing in the light, which came from inspiration from the anthem the choir sang the week before. We do rejoice in the light, especially when we have experienced darkness of any kind.

At 6 PM, I used the lyric line "all is calm, all in bright" in the familiar hymn, *Silent Night*. I wondered how we can be calm and bright in a world that, at times, is neither calm nor bright. The answer, of course, is knowing Jesus.

Backing up into Advent for a moment more, I created the Advent candle lighting liturgy. I was pleased the Willing Workers, the Ugly Quilters, the Missionaries, the Deacons and the choir each came forward to light the candles during worship throughout December. Our groups make us who we are. In the future (perhaps Lent?), we can see more groups in the church coming forward during worship time.

The January 25th ministerium service at the South Gibson Church at 5 PM should be exciting. We, the ministerium, are hosting a worship and workshop we plan will take an hour. We will be looking at how our congregations can meet the needs of our communities, and the wider community we share. We will consider what church in 2024 will look like. We will also consider how we can encourage our individual churches in growth and wellness. With the Holy Spirit as our guide, we will also plan how we can share individual resources together so that the love of Christ continues to be shown and known.

Speaking of the Holy Spirit, I am waiting to hear what the first sermon series will be this year!

Finally, I invite you to the monthly Bible studies in the LH on the first Sunday of every month. We share meaningful conversation and faith support. All are welcome.

Pastor's Report: 1-21-24

I mention the ministerium and how it needs our prayers because so many pastors truly have great professional and even personal challenges since Covid. Said simply, it's not easy for many pastors to be pastors these days. Low attendance in worship, high demands and over-worked schedules are daunting.

Beginning in the fall of 2008, when I became pastor here in Harford, four of the then eight churches in community have left the ministerium. Three walked away from ecumenical worship and one church closed.

We are rebuilding the ministerium with congregations that feel Christ urging them to participate in fellowship where both joy and resources can be shared. I report this because ongoing prayer is welcome.

A very tentative Lenten schedule has been made. I did the best I could to organize this. Prayers through Lent are welcome as well.

I do invite everyone to the 6 PM Ash Wednesday service and the 6 PM Wednesday night Lenten series as it should unfold in the weeks ahead. God is good. We will find our way toward Him through His Son, our Savior.

Our three-part "Old and New" sermon series in January has been exciting (and challenging!) to deliver. I find the alignment of two often diverse texts (the Old and the New Testament lectionary readings) to be such a wonderful way to hear how God gives messages to us.

Dear congregation, continue your outreach to one another. Also, continue to come to the fellowship of church on Sunday so that the joy of Spirit can be shared even more fully. I repeat what I shared earlier. Our God IS good. Let's share and enjoy this!

Other Council NEWS

Finance: Council voted to leave \$10,000 of the remaining 2023 funds to in the checking account to cover January expenses as January income is traditionally low. The remaining \$15787.24 will be moved to the church emergency fund.

Cradle Roll: I child was added to the roll and received a hand-made blanket and hat. Three children received the two-year old letter and book.

Pastoral Relations: Met in January and will meet Tuesday, February 6, 2024.

Missionary: Have moved meeting day in January to Tuesday, January 30, 2024 due to two consecutive snow days

Annual Report: Mailed

Spire: The US Postal Service is now requiring online paper work for all bulk mailing. An account was established linked to the church permit number. All is ready for Spire mailing.

Trustee Meeting Minutes: December 4th , 2023

Harry Gardner, Kandy Wellman, Jim Batzel, Irv Needham, Randy Decker, and Rick Masters were in attendance.

Old Business:

Several Trustees attended the Christmas Tree lighting on Nov. 26th.

Irv hung a fire extinguisher in Judy's office and added a new sign.

Church keys were distributed to the Harford and Clifford Fire Company in case of emergency. Trustees request that the doors in the basement be closed when the area is not in use. Please do not prop doors open. The doors serve as a fire-break preventing fire from spreading in case of emergency.

Trustees will keep new windows and pressure washing the Lecture Hall on our list for spring.

New Business:

Trustees is in need of someone to shovel this winter. Kandy will ask Brendan Herbert if he has anyone available.

There was a light out in the Lecture Hall basement. It was a bad switch and Harry fixed it.

Trustees addressed the motion light in the church stairwell staying on. The light was off when we arrived. Kandy will check it again tomorrow night to see if its on again.

Trustees will hold their next meeting on Monday, January 8th so as to not have our meeting on New Years Day.

Kandy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Randy.

Respectfully submitted, Rick Masters

Trustee Meeting Minutes: January 8th , 2023

Harry Gardner, Kandy Wellman, Jim Batzel, Randy Decker, and Rick Masters were in attendance.

Old Business:

The motion light in the stairwell is working fine. It may have been affected by the door having been propped open.

New Business:

Kandy will begin comparing rates from electricity providers.

There was no other new Business.

Kandy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jim.

Respectfully submitted,
Rick Masters

Stewardship Meeting—January 17, 2024

The Stewardship Committee met on January 17, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the Lecture Hall.

In attendance were Kay Gow, Ellen Holdredge, Joe Metzler, Judy Mitchell, Julia Gardner, Peg Empet, Wendy Phillips, Pastor Will Hagenbuch and Michelle Estabrook.

We went over the final figures for the 2023 budget and discussed what should be done with remaining funds.

Our 2024 campaign will be “Trust in the Lord”. We went over what verses should be used and what will be the theme each week of the campaign.

We are still short 3 members. We discussed some names of people to ask about being on our committee.

Our next meeting will be Thursday February 22, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the Lecture Hall. We are meeting a day later due to the Lenten services.

Respectfully submitted, Michelle Estabrook

Notice: Please send all material for February to be included in the Spire to:

Firstchurchspire@gmail.com

by the 15th of February 2024!

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Memorial Plaque Information

Are you interested in having a plaque attached to the memorial stone in the memorial garden? One may have a plaque ordered by doing the following:

Cost---\$25.00

Send check (made out to Harford First Congregational Church -UCC) along with name of person and the year of birth and the year they passed away to the office.

The office will then proceed to order the plaque and have it placed on the stone.

Thank you.



Spire Sponsors

We **need Sponsors** to help us cover the cost of printing and mailing the Spire. Please let us know if you can help. The sponsorship can be in Memory or in Honor of someone or just a donation. Mailing costs are approximately \$75/month. Although the sponsorship has been increased to \$75/month, this does not fully cover the increased cost. We often have more than one sponsor to help offset these increased costs. Please send to:

Harford First Congregational Church—UCC PO Box 217 Harford, PA 18823



**Kingsley
Willing Workers
Christmas Gathering**

**Men's
Breakfast**

**Every second
Tuesday at
7:30**

Bingham's



Hymn Dedication

Dedicate the Offertory Hymn of any Sunday Service in Honor or in Memory of someone. There is a sign up sheet in the Hallway next to the Flower sign-up sheet or place a card in the collection plate with the hymn and the name of the individual to whom you wish to honor.





Children's Program

December 10, 2023

The children re-enacted the birth story of Jesus Christ with scripture readings and Christmas carols.



Poinsettia Tree

The Poinsettia Tree had 43 Poinsettias on it and beautifully decorated the sanctuary for the morning Christmas eve worship and the evening Christmas Eve Service. Many persons elected to donate their poinsettias to shut-ins and persons that are ill. Seventeen poinsettias were delivered to shut-ins and the ill on December 25, 2023 by the Deacons and Pastor Will.

The Advent Wreath was lit during the four Advent Sundays and on Christmas Eve by the following groups: Willing Workers, Ugly Quilts, Deacons, Choir, Missionary Group



The Senior Food Box Program

The Senior Food Box Program is separate from the Weinberg food program but is also offered by Weinberg. Persons receiving the Senior Food Box Program boxes must be 60 or more years (I.D. check). An application form is required. Applicants are asked to provide their contact information and to self-declare their income. All applicants must reside in Susquehanna County. Those receiving the Senior boxes are also eligible for the regular Weinberg distributions.



The Senior Food Boxes will be delivered to the Harford Village Apartments in Harford, Kime Apartments in Great Bend, Emerson Southgate Apartments in Hallstead, Howard J. Emerson Apartments in Hallstead and the New Milford Creekside Apartments (day and time are yet to be determined). Individual pick up will be held at the Master's Building in Kingsley every 4th Friday from 3:30-4:30 and the Hop Bottom Emergency Food distribution every 2nd Friday at Hop Bottom Church of Light and Hope from 1:00-3:30.

Email form information to: seniorfoodboxsusq@gmail.com

For online application go to: www.firstchurchharford.com

Look for the Senior Food Box Banner and then click on "More Information".

To speak with someone please contact Holli Chichester 301-643-1775 or Paula Smith 973-903-7226.

Foods Included: Juice and Canned fruit, Canned vegetables, Canned soup, Cheese, Milk (Shelf –safe), Canned meat, Plant Based Protein/Peanut Butter, Cereal, Pasta/Rice. Others items will be added as available.

Attention! Attention!

The trustees are looking for someone to shovel church sidewalks.

Please contact Harry Gardner:

570-465-7058 home or 570-878-3808 cell or

Office -570-434-2260





Congratulations!!!

Rowan Phillip Nolan was born on
January 1, 2024 at 1:20pm.
He was 7 lbs. 4 oz and 21.5 inches
long.

Parents, Alyssa Clarkson Nolan and Cody
Nolan.

All are well!!

Congratulations!!! Blessings and prayers
for the new family!



Greetings from the Bell Choir.

As many of you know already or may not know, there was a presentation at the last Council Meeting requesting a set of 61 note Malmark Choirchimes. The discussion that followed was to have that reduced to mirror the current set of Handbells which is a 37 note set. The Memorial Fund Money will be used.

The reason for this is not to replace the existing handbells; however, it is to be able to offer the opportunity for children fourth grade on up to be able to join in music making. These are instruments that are designed with children in mind.

Currently, we are in hopes to have the Malmark Choirchimes be present for the opening of the Easter Sunday Service with the playing of the Prelude "Morning Has Broken". The handbells will be incorporated into the same service playing "He Lives" for offertory.

If you have any children on fourth grade and older who are wanting to become involved with music making on the new Choirchimes please let Earl Cottrell know at (701) 405-3417 via text or phone call or even email earl.e.cottrell.jr@gmail.com.

This is to enhance the old handbells with the new sounds. The two musical instruments are complements of each other. The bells provide a very bright brassy sound and the chimes will sound mellow and not bright.

If we outgrow the set we can expand either the bells or chimes to include more octaves to increase participation.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Earl E Cottrell, Jr.

PS. We hope to include the Choirchimes, for our older children, as a part of our Multi-church "SCUBA" VBS June 10, 11, 12, 13.



Beginning Hand Bell Choir

Our beginner hand bell choir has started. Practice will be held right after church every 2nd and 4th Sundays.



No prior experience is necessary and the ability to read music helps but is also not necessary.

Please text or call Earl Cottrell for question or to let him know that you are interested at 701-405-3417.



Laura (Moser) Rasmussen
6017 Black Oak Drive
Toledo
OH 43615

Laurie Thorn
715 Sibley Avenue
Old Forge
PA 18518

Correspondence

To the Sunday School leaders of the Children's Christmas Program.

Thank you! Thank You ! Thank You!

Everyone did a tremendous job and told the story of a miracle which is much needed today.

You leaders do a great job in Sunday School and it shows in the children!

Again, thank you, Jean Bonham

Spire Sponsor



**In Loving Memory of
Barbara Wescott Rydzewski
from her family**



Volunteer Delivering Meals on Wheels

Looking for volunteers to deliver meals for the Fairdale (Montrose) and Clifford locations, both are on Monday's.

I am not sure about Clifford but we deliver for Montrose and leave the house at 10:00 am and are back home by 1:00 pm. The three hours go by quite quickly. In addition, most consumers are very thankful and grateful. You also are reimbursed for your mileage during delivery route.

Please contact the Area on Aging for more information. Or if you have any questions ask me.

Area Aging Telephone number--570-278-3751

Thanks, Linda Lindsey

Spire Sponsor

The Winemiller Family

Valentine's Day



Home Bound

Lynola Carey
Joanne Connolly

Martha Jenkins
Dorothy Greene
John Zimmerman

Norma Carey
Vivian Rutherford
JoAnn Titus

Anita Millard



Prayer Concerns

- We pray for our nation to be blessed and that our nation seeks its blessings
- We pray for our national and local leaders
- All school districts—All staff and students
- for those with medical issues large and small
- Those with Alzheimer's and their families
- those experiencing financial pressures
- those fighting addiction or cancer
- all those in nursing homes and their families
- Will's kids
- Evan Clarkson, Andrew Kazmierczak, Robert Schulte , Ainsley Allen and all those serving in the military
- Sandy Zupanovich
- Gregg Symuleski and family
- Nancy Marr
- law enforcement officers & EMS
- hospital workers and fire personnel
- holiday travelers
- Truck drivers, farmers & Small businesses
- Patrick Simons
- Mark Ezdebski
- Earl Gow
- Ed Jones' family
- Lynn Hernandez
- Chris (Paula Smith's brother)
- Sherri (needs kidney)
- Breyden Peters
- Vivian Rutherford
- Family of Lois Miller Carlsen
- Friend of Barb Parraga
- George Weideman family on the loss of his son

- Lois Gibson
- Jim Batzel
- Gebo children
- Death of Dave Schulte's cousins Leanne and Vinny
- Diane Stewart (friend of Donna Schulze)
- Andy Granick
- Charleene Martens sister
- friend of Shirley in Israel
- Millie Tingley
- Phil (Schulte's son)
- Abby Toolan's dad (Ben Heckman)
- Norma and Lynola Carey
- Robert Lane
- Ron Phillips
- Wayne Wellman
- Donna's mom - Nancy
- Don Lindsey
- Steve Holtsmaster
- Family of June Goodrich
- Lynn—friend of George Lotter
- family of Beverly Herbert
- Cheryl Augustine
- Ben Owen
- Ed Lindsey
- Joe Cowan
- Skip Borrows
- Ruth Taugher
- Stella Jerauld
- Linda Lindsey
- Trudy Butcher
- Carol Robinson
- Rhonda (kidney transplant)
- John Zimmerman



February Birthdays and Anniversaries



February 4	Dana Empet	February 18	Charlie Grimes Justin Moser
February 7	Ben Heckman	February 23	Lynette Muller
February 8	Randy Decker	February 25	Jim and Gail Batzel
February 14	Charlie and Missy Heller	February 26	Charline Hudson
February 15	Kim Bridgeman Kathi Ferger	February 28	Kay Gow Jim Bernosky, Sr.

Problems or Issues regarding Harford First Congregational Church—UCC?

Pastoral Relations is the group that handles all concerns, issues and difficulties that can not be resolved directly. These meetings are confidential. Contact the office if you find that you need to meet with Pastoral Relations at **570-434-2260**.

Emails: It has come to our attention that some of you may not be receiving our email prayer lists. This is an oversight that we would like to correct. Please call or email Judy and let her know that you are not receiving the emails.

Tel.570-434-2260 Email: firstchharford@gmail.com



Kingsley Willing Workers Winter Soup Sale - March 10, 2024

This is a pre-order soup sale. **Pre-order by March 3, 2024**. Each quart is \$8.00. The soup to be offered in the March soup sale will be:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Hot Sausage Tortellini | Taco |
| Broccoli cheese | Loaded Baked Potato |
| Chicken Noodle | Chicken Tortilla |



*Soup pick-up will be after church on the 10th. Please order through Judy Mitchell by March 3:

in person
 email: jmm@nep.net
 telephone: 570-434-2716
 570-396-8184
 or send order and check by mail:
 2121 Owego Turnpike Kingsley, PA 18826

Thank you very much for your orders and we hope you will enjoy your soup.



WREATHS *across* AMERICA

2023 Wreath Sponsorship Order Form

National Wreaths Across America Day December 16, 2023

Sponsored wreaths are placed on grave markers at state and national veterans' cemeteries, as well as at local and community cemeteries each December for National Wreaths Across America Day.



Worship every Sunday at 10:00am.

Hymnals and Bibles may be utilized but all text will be available via our monitors in the sanctuary. We would like to invite those who are not able to attend in person to watch our livestreaming worship at 10:00 am.



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmQ-Xr0IE5xwdZS0yVs7dtg>



Men's Breakfast

at 7:30am

at Bingham's Restaurant.
The second Tuesday of each month.



The Website

We have worked hard, but we realize that important things may not have been included. We are still adding and changing things so if you have suggestions, please email Holli Chichester at hollischichester@gmail.com or call 301-643-1775. Please check it out at

www.firstchurchharford.com



Weinberg Food Bank

Harford First Congregational Church
Please contact Tammy if you have registered but do not plan to pick up.



Next distributions: February 23, 2024
March 27, 2024

Any income can apply, complete the form online firstchurchharford.com or call Tammy @ 570-396-7081.

Day of Distribution please bring with you a photo ID and a current household bill with your current Susquehanna County address.



Women's Lunch

**3rd Monday of each month
12:00 at Bingham's
All Welcome!**



Bring a Friend

Greeters and Ushers

Feb 4 - Betty Lou Bennett
Ken Bennett

Feb 11 - Dee Archer
Judy Mitchell and Emma

Feb 18- Peggy Empet
Sharon Frantz

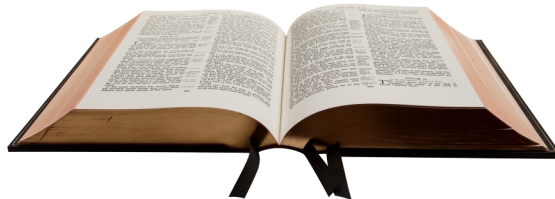
Feb 25- Sharon Decker
Karen Jones and Taven



**If you would like to greet,
usher or read during our
worship
services please contact the
office.**

Lay Readers In February

Feb 4th-Abby Toolan
Feb 11th-Chris Manley
Feb 18th-Kandy Wellman
Feb 25th-Nancy Burris



Celebrate the joys in life!

**Celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, weddings,
births, graduations and let us celebrate with you!**

Contact Tammy at 570-396-7081

for more information or to request your celebration sign.



Save the Date!!!!

Multi– Church Vacation Bible School



June 10-13 10:00 – 1:00

**At Harford First
Congregational Church**

**Harford First Congregational Church
Golf Tournament**

Save the Date



Saturday, June 8, 2024 9am



**Holli Chichester: hollischichester@gmail.com
301-643-1775**

To benefit First Congregational Church

February

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p>28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am Sunday School 9:30am ☪ Gathering 10am Services 	<p>29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am AM mtg 	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>Feb 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Day of Black History 10am Pastor in office 	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am Sunday School 9:30am ☪ Gathering 10am Services 11:15am Bible Study 7:30pm Fire Co Br 	<p>5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am AM mtg 7pm Trustees 7:30pm Fair Mtg 	<p>6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Ugly Quilts 1pm Qtrly WW-LH 6pm Choir 	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Pastor in office 	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture hall rented
<p>11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am Sunday School 9:30am ☪ Gathering 10am Services 11:15am Handbell 	<p>12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am AM mtg 3pm Girl Scouts 	<p>13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:30am Men's Bre 8:45am Pastoral R 9:30am Ugly Quilts 6pm Choir 	<p>14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASH WEDNESDAY Valentine's Day 	<p>15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Pastor in office 	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am Sunday School 9:30am ☪ Gathering 10am Services 11:15am Deacons 12pm Fire Co Chic 	<p>19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presidents' Day 9:30am AM mtg 12pm Ladies Lunc 	<p>20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Ugly Quilts 1pm Missionary 6pm Choir 	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Pastor in office 6pm Stewardship 	<p>23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:30am Weinberg 4:30pm Weinberg 	<p>24</p>
<p>25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am Sunday School 9:30am ☪ Gathering 10am Services 10am Handbell pr 	<p>26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am AM mtg 6pm Council-LH 	<p>27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Ugly Quilts 6pm Choir 	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Pastor in office 	<p>Mar 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Day of Women 	<p>2</p>

Harford First Congregational Church –UCC
5016 Creek Road
PO Box 217
Harford, PA 18823
Tel. 570-434-2260
Email: office@firstchurchharford.com
Spire email: firstchurchspire@gmail.com
Web URL: www.firstchurchharford.com
Live Worship: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmQ-Xr0IE5xwdZS0yVs7dtg>



Harford First Congregational Church—UCC

Rev. Dr. William Hagenbuch –Pastor
Home Phone: 570-434-7729
Email: Pastor.will@firstchurchharford.com
Home email: wrh@nep.net
Office Hours: Thurs. 10-12:00

Judy Mitchell –Sec

.....the people in darkness have seen a great light

Isaiah 9:2

Join Us Each Sunday!!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organization

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Permit—#20

Montrose, PA 18801

DATED MAIL

PLEASE DO NOT DELAY