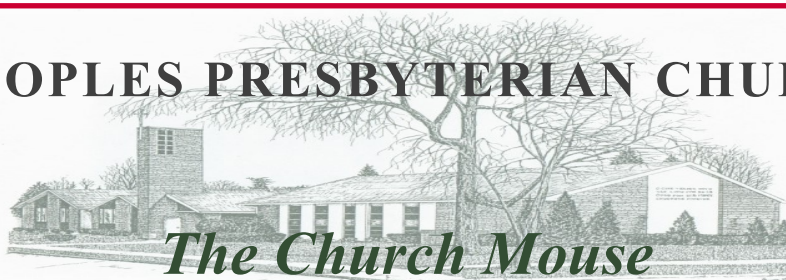


A PLACE TO
BELONG...

A PLACE TO
BECOME...

A PLACE TO
MAKE A
DIFFERENCE

PEOPLES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



The Church Mouse

Volume 12 || Issue 8

December 2018 / January 2019

Manse Cat Monthly: Musings from Pastor Leia / her cat

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The holiday season is upon us and with it comes a focus on food, gifts, and in many cases, a focus on giving food to non-profit organizations. I really love that the spirit of Christmas inspires people to look out for others, “adopt” families, drop money in red buckets, organize donation drives, and look for alternative gifts—I love to find charities that pertain to someone’s interests and give money in their honor. When I was growing up, my grandparents would donate to Heifer International in honor of my brothers and cousins and me, picking animals that we liked. They always picked rabbits for me. My school or church would inevitably have a food drive and we would usually pick some cans of soup at random to drop into the bin.

Years later, after I finished college, I moved to Washington, DC to spend a year as a long-term volunteer at a non-profit that works to end the cycle of homelessness. On Fridays, I worked in the food bank, shelving donations, checking expiration dates, and keeping everything in order. Sometimes, throughout the year, we got big boxes that had been personalized, declaring that the food collected in them was in honor of someone’s bar or bat mitzvah, or graduation, or birthday, or confirmation. That was pretty cool - I wish I’d thought of that!

But the vast majority of donations, about three-quarters of them, in fact, came in the months of November and December. We would get far more cans of cranberry sauce than we could ever give away. We would get SO MANY boxes of instant potatoes and croutons for stuffing and cans of pumpkin puree, like people imagined our organization feeding thousands of people Thanksgiving dinner (we did not, although every year, we do serve almost half a million meals in our dining hall and residential programs). One year after Passover, a grocery store donated an entire pallet of matzo crackers that hadn’t sold.

When clients came in and wished that there was more canned fruit or tuna or cereal or hearty soup, sometimes my mind would go to the shelves of cranberry sauce and matzo crackers that no one wanted.

I would stand on a ladder, pushing cans of tomato soup back further on the shelf and stacking them higher like an Andy Warhol painting to make room for more. My boss would read me the nutrition labels. “35% DV salt in one serving,” he might announce, horrified. I learned that Campbell’s tomato soup comes in orange and yellow made from heirloom tomatoes, too, and these cans almost gave variety to the dozen-deep, four-high, fifteen-wide shelf of tomato soup. One can, two can, red can, yellow can.

A formerly homeless woman who came to speak at my church said that she gained 30 pounds at shelters because of the cheap, starchy meals she was fed. Spaghetti is easy to make for a crowd and it can be made pretty darn cheaply. Food banks are often unable to store fresh produce, so people who rely on food banks as a staple of their diets might struggle to eat as many fruits and vegetables as they should.

Continued on page 2

Pastor Continued

I would look at the shelves and think to myself, how could I make a meal out of these things, if I didn't own many kitchen supplies or staple ingredients or cookbooks? To this day, I have never used dried beans except as weights to keep a pie shell from puffing up while baking. I'm sure I could do things with soups or pastas if I had the time, but many people who frequent food banks work long hours and don't have the energy to do that at the end of the day. I would have to be really creative to feed myself a nutritious meal from a food bank, and that isn't even considering the fact that I have food allergies.

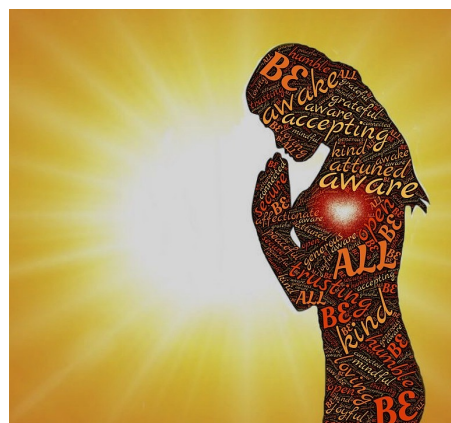
I could really get on a soapbox about how important it is to donate food in the summer, when kids aren't able to get free or reduced lunches from their schools, or why dry pasta is a bad idea, or how people shouldn't give their expired cans to food banks (you might think that this would be an obvious thing to avoid, but I assure you that it happens frequently).

I don't mean to disparage the donations that are made, because I really do think it's a wonderful thing that people have come to associate the holidays with a time to give to others, and I genuinely LOVE that this church has a tradition of sharing communion with the wider community by collecting food for Aid in Milan on the first Sundays of the month when we eat bread together in the sanctuary. It's a beautiful image of the feast of the table of God.

But just in case you didn't know (and I certainly never knew until my year at the non-profit)...food banks have wish lists! Food banks near my home town serve a lot of Latinx people, and so those food banks ask for masa and beans. Some food banks focus on women and children and need baby formula and kid-friendly foods. Some food banks have the capacity to store fresh produce, but might need volunteers to pick it up on short notice. Some food banks have programs that put together meal kits to put in kids' backpacks for the weekend, so they might have particular needs. A food bank that primarily serves street homeless clients has no need for microwavable popcorn, but clients at another food bank might really enjoy eating fresh popcorn.

I am deeply grateful to God (and the pastor nominating committee!) for letting me serve a congregation that is so generous with their time and talents and so interested in sharing the joy of the season with our whole community. May our bellies and our hearts be full as we prepare the way for the coming of the Lord!

P



Q. Why should I attend church in December? It's cold and I have cookies to bake and stuff to do.

A. Great question! In addition to the fact that you would be missed, you would also be missing out on the prayer stations that will be set up each week of Advent, tying into the themes of the service. You'd be missing out on singing some beautiful songs, hearing some very ...unique... prayers that Pastor Leia has written (trust me, you'll understand when you hear them), and of course, joining in communion and fellowship with people who love you. Come to church! It's a high holy season! Let's all celebrate together that God is about to put on flesh and come into the world!

Q. The holidays are a really difficult time for me since my sister died. She loved Christmas, and seeing all the decorations makes me want to cry. Is it okay if I skip it this year?

A. Big holidays can be really rough for people, especially when it's their first one without someone they love, or when they feel unable to provide for their families, or when they're struggling with depression, or when their lives are already hectic and stressful enough without the added responsibilities of the holidays. **This year, we will be having a Longest Night service at 7pm on Friday the 21st**, which is the winter solstice--the longest night of the year. Some churches offer Longest Night services as a lower-key alternative to the boisterous traditional Christmas/Eve services, recognizing that the holidays can be a painful time. We will read comforting psalms, light candles, sing a hymn about light overcoming darkness that Pastor Leia recently wrote, and pray together. Instead of sitting in the sanctuary like we usually do for worship, we will sit in a circle around the communion table and instead of grand organ music, Doris Ann has agreed to play the more intimate piano. Together, we will make new memories and remember that the light will always overcome the darkness. Pastor Leia is still working on putting the service together, but she hopes that it will be a positive and uplifting, if quiet, night of prayer and fellowship.



Q. I'm ready for Advent to be over. I want to sing ALL THE CHRISTMAS CAROLS. How soon can I do that?

A. You are more than welcome to sing Christmas carols any time you like, regardless of the season. The birth of Christ is a miracle to celebrate in April as much as it is in December. Belt them out! But if you're wanting to sing Christmas carols specifically in our sanctuary, with all your friends at Peoples, you should definitely mark your calendars for our Christmas Eve service, at 6pm on Monday, December 24. Those of you who were able to attend despite the snow last year might remember that Pastor Leia wrote an entire communion liturgy to the tune of some beloved Christmas carols, and she's pleased to announce that she will be presenting NEW settings this year, in addition to a fun prayer station and possibly a special homemade bread (tbd).



Q. I feel super gross. I think I've got the flu. Should I come to church even if I'm (achoo!) contagious?

A. STAY HOME. DON'T BE PATIENT ZERO. Also, drink lots of fluids, rest as much as you can, see a doctor if you need to, and feel better soon.





Poinsettias for the Church Sanctuary for Christmas Eve Service

As has been our tradition for many years, we will be taking orders for either red or white poinsettias to decorate the church sanctuary for Christmas Eve. The price is \$12 each.

Order forms are available in the pew pockets, and a sign-up sheet has been posted on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall.

If you wish to have your poinsettia donation in honor or in memory of someone, please note those names on the card or on the sign-up sheet. The **last day to order is December 16.**

Please pay for your poinsettia when you place your order and specify if you would like red or white. Make your check payable to Peoples Presbyterian Church and write "poinsettia" on the memo line. If you are paying with cash, please write your name and "poinsettia" on the envelope, so the office can track your payment.

If you have ordered a poinsettia, you may take it home following the Christmas Eve service. Any plants remaining will be used for the December 30 worship service.



Mission and Outreach—Thank You!

A huge thank you to our congregation! We raised a total of \$1,065 for the Peacemaking Offering. A total of \$266.25 will go to support Safe House in Ann Arbor. The remaining monies will go to support the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program of the Presbytery and Synod.

Another thank you to all who donated toward the ten Thanksgiving dinners we provided to Aid in Milan!

We will also be sponsoring a family this Christmas through Aid in Milan! Please watch for updates in the church bulletin.



Community Adopted Families—Aid in Milan

This year, PPC has offered to “adopt” one or two families for Christmas through Aid in Milan. There are gift tags on the tree in the Fellowship Hall listing the items needed.

You may select a gift tag showing a gift to purchase. Please wrap your gift, *place the gift tag on the gift with all of the information still listed*, and return it to church by **Sunday, December 16.**

Checks may be made out to Peoples Presbyterian Church with “**Adopted Family**” listed on the memo line.

Cash or check donations are used to purchase gift cards for gifts not brought in, or to purchase extra gift cards from Kroger or Meijer for Aid in Milan.

All donated gifts are gratefully accepted. THANK YOU for your participation in this very important Mission Outreach. Feel free to contact Carol Vollink, Chad Lawver, Helen Barnes, or Sue Barney if you have any questions or wish to donate cash.



Peoples Christmas Party!!!

Friday, December 7 at 6:00 pm



You're invited to our annual Christmas party!!!
Bring friends, family, neighbors — the more the merrier!



We will have:



A spaghetti dinner at 6:00 pm



Decorate your own sugar cookie



Hot Chocolate Bar!



Candy Cane Hunt



6:45 pm movie – Disney's *Frozen*



Pastor Leia will be giving manicures to the kids



Card + table games for kids & adults



8:30 pm Christmas sing-a-long before going home



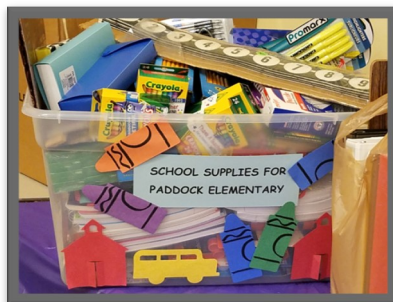
Christian Education

By Carole London
Christian Education Committee

"Canopy on the Corner"

The children came out in creative costumes on Halloween for the "Canopy on the Corner."

They also decorated the google-eyed pumpkin for the occasion.



The Congregation was asked to contribute school supplies to be given to Milan Schools. Again, this fabulous congregation exceeded our wishes as the school collection box was filled to overflowing. Sue Barney delivered the supplies to Paddock Elementary School and we received a nice thank you note from Principal Sean Desarbo.

Sock-tober was a huge success!

Everyone really jumped on the Sock-tober band wagon, and we collected enough socks of all sizes, shapes, and colors to overflow the laundry basket.

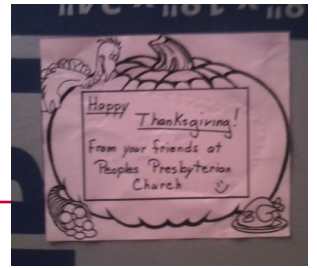
It was amazing and warmed our hearts to see such a response, and I am sure they will warm many people's feet as the cold weather sets in.

Thank you for your support. Just as we had hoped, we really "socked it to 'em" in Sock-tober!



The kids in CE were very busy one Sunday as they assembled and decorated ten boxes to be used with the Thanksgiving dinners that are being collected.

Each box had a special note wishing a Milan Family a Happy Thanksgiving from their friends at Peoples Presbyterian Church.



With Thanksgiving season upon us, the kids in CE introduced their **Thankful Turkey** to the congregation. They asked them to join in “dressing the turkey” for Thanksgiving. He is on the window of the Narthex and there are paper feathers available for people to write their many blessings on. The feathers then can be left in a basket and they will be attached to the turkey. If your mind goes blank, never fear, we have a list of “Gratitude Questions to help you count your blessings” right next to the turkey. The kids went wild in the number of blessings they came up with in a very short length of time. Our Thankful Turkey looked very impressive by the time we hosted the Community Thanksgiving Service November 18!

The kids’ **challenge to the congregation:** Before you fall asleep each night during Thanksgiving season, remember three blessings you experienced during the day, and thank God for them.



On Sunday, November 18, the kids participated in a special **Thanksgiving poem entitled: A Thanksgiving Garden**. The kids enjoyed the play on words such as planting *peas* which stood for *peace* in our hearts... and planting *lettuce* for *lettuce* be kind, as well as planting *thyme* for *thyme* for friends but most of all - *thyme* for family!



Oh! Can't wait!! ... **The Christmas Pageant** will be presented on December 16, right after the worship service. It is a brand new one. The title is “The BEST Thing About Christmas.” It is a children’s book that is very insightful and fun to perform. We will be singing many favorite Christmas carols and be humbled once again with the birth of the Christ Child. Mark your calendars - it is a performance you will not want to miss!



Christmas Eve will include another **Christmas ornament** made by the kids and adults in CE and presented to all who attend the special service. This year you will learn about the story of the Christmas Spider and even take a spider home with you!



Yes, Jesus will have his own special **Birthday Party** once again this year. It will be on Epiphany Sunday, January 6. It will be held in the Fellowship Hall right after worship.

We will have a special birthday cake for the occasion. A birthday Wish List will be compiled and printed in the bulletin in the near future. The children will delight in unwrapping all the practical gifts to benefit the Jesus' house and the people who dwell in it. Happy Birthday, Jesus!

In case you missed it...

Longest Night Service



This year, we will be having a **Longest Night service** at 7:00 pm on Friday, December 21, which is the winter solstice—the longest night of the year.

Some churches offer Longest Night services as a lower-key alternative to the boisterous traditional Christmas/Eve services, recognizing that the holidays can be a painful time. We will read comforting psalms, light candles, sing a hymn about light overcoming darkness that Pastor Leia recently wrote, and pray together. Instead of sitting in the sanctuary like we usually do for worship, we will sit in a circle around the communion table and instead of grand organ music, Doris Ann has agreed to play the more intimate piano.

Together, we will make new memories and remember that the light will always overcome the darkness. Pastor Leia is still working on putting the service together, but she hopes that it will be a positive and uplifting, if quiet, night of prayer and fellowship.



2018



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
						1
2 10 am Worship: 1st Sunday of Advent - Hope, Communion, Green Tape Sunday, CE <i>Minute for Mission in support of Peacemaking</i> Begin collection of Christmas gifts for	3 7:00 pm Handbells	4	5 9:00 am Bible Study - lounge "Faithful" 7 pm Bookworms - lounge	6	6:00 pm First Fridays —Movie <i>Frozen</i> , Potluck & PPC Christmas 	8
9 10 am Worship, 2nd Sunday of Advent - Peace, Communion, Handbells, CE Continue collection of Christmas gifts for adopted family.	10 7:00 pm Handbells	11 7:00 pm Worship & Music Meeting - Lounge	12 9:00 am Bible Study - lounge "Faithful"	13 1-3 pm Hats for Cancer - lounge	14	15 10:00 am - Noon CE Pageant Rehearsal - Sanctuary 1:00 pm Advent Tea
16 10 am Worship, 3rd Sunday of Advent - Joy, Communion, Handbells, CE Christmas Pageant & Family Potluck Final day for collection of Christmas gifts for adopted family.	17 7:00 pm Handbells	18 7:00 pm Worship & Music Meeting - lounge	19 9:00 am Bible Study - lounge "Faithful" 6:00 pm CE Meeting— YR 7:00 pm Session meeting - lounge	20	21	22 
23 10 am Worship: 4th Sunday of Advent - Love, Communion, Handbells, No CE	24 6:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship Service Communion	25 <i>Nativity of the Lord</i> <i>Christmas Day</i>	26 No Bible Study	27	28	29
30 10 am Worship: Lessons and Carols, No CE	31					



January

2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
		1 	2 No Bible Study 7:00 pm Bookworms	3 	4 7:00 pm First Friday Movie Night <i>The Princess Bride</i>	5
6 10 am Worship: Epiphany of the Lord, Communion, Green Tape Sunday, CE Birthday Party for Jesus during Fellowship Session Committee Monthly Reports due to Clerk	7 7:00 pm Handbells	8 7:00 pm Worship & Music Mtg- lounge	9 No Bible Study	10 	11 	12 
13 10 am Worship: Baptism of the Lord, CE Session Committee packets are ready for pick-up Session Committee <u>Annual Reports</u> due today in church office	14 7:00 pm Handbells	15 "What We  Talk About When We Talk About God" By Rob Bell	16 9:00 am Bible Study - Lounge ch 1, ch 2, (Hum) parts I & II (Open) 6:00 pm CE Mtg - Lounge 7:00 pm Session mtg - Lounge	17 1-3 pm Hats for Cancer - lounge	18	19
20 10 am Worship, CE Church Mouse Newsletter articles due for February/March issue Session Committee Annual Reports available on Narthex table.	21 3:00 pm Calendar Planning Mtg - Lounge 7:00 pm Handbells	22	23 9:00 am Bible Study - Lounge ch 2, parts III & IV (Open)	24 9:30 am Church Mouse Newsletter collating - Lounge	25	26
27 10 am Worship: Handbells, CE Annual Congregational Meeting and Potluck	28 7:00 pm Handbells	29	30 9:00 am Bible Study - lounge Chapter 3 (Both)	31		



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