

Old Steeple Community Church

United Church of Christ

JANUARY 2025



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THE Steeple View NEWSLETTER

From our Pastor ...

*By gracious powers so faithfully protected,
So quietly, so wonderfully near,
We live, each day, in hope, with you beside us,
And go with you through every coming year.**

These words were written 80 years ago in late December 1944 by German Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer.** At that time, Bonhoeffer had been incarcerated for almost two years. He was a leader in the so-called 'Confessing Church', a group of Protestant clergy opposing the madness of the Nazi regime; this group, in fact, was part of the political resistance. The vast majority of Protestant clergy at that time were part of the 'German Christians', who actively supported the Nazi regime.

Bonhoeffer knew that he most likely would not survive the imprisonment. In fact, he was hanged a few months after he wrote the words above, mere days before WWII ended and the Nazi regime collapsed, as papers were found that linked him directly to one of the plots to assassinate Hitler. But he refused to let darkness and despair overcome him. And so he wrote a poem which he sent to his loved ones as a greeting for the New Year, emphasizing that God's gracious powers, indeed, surround us in all circumstances.

We don't know what awaits us in the year 2025. Wars are raging all over the world, most notably in the Middle East and in Ukraine. There are many who are concerned about the next 4 years in this country and its implications for global politics. On a personal level, we may deal with illness, anxiety, and grief. We don't know what's ahead. But Bonhoeffer reminds us that Jesus calls us to be the light of the world, even and especially in times of deep darkness:

*May candlelight, so bright and warm, now guide us,
As we face our anxieties and fright.
If it's your will, protect and reunite us;
We're confident: your light shines through the night.*

In all uncertainty, we, like Bonhoeffer, can trust in God's mercy and care, no matter, what befalls us. In the last stanza of his poem, he writes:



POB 154 | 656 Main Road • Aquebogue, NY 11931 • office hours: Tu, W, Th 9-2
Rev. Kerstin Weidmann, Pastor • Keith Young, Moderator
Anyi Cai, Music Director • Gail Evans, Office Administrator

*By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered,
And confidently waiting come what may,
We know that God is with us night and morning,
And never fails to greet us each new day.
May it be so. Have a blessed New Year!*

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

*English translation: first and last stanza quoted here by Fred Pratt Green; middle stanza by Kerstin Weidmann.

**There currently is a movie about Bonhoeffer in the theaters, called, 'Bonhoeffer: Pastor. Spy. Assassin.' This movie is quite loose with the historical timeline and facts (more 'based on a true story' than an accurate account of his life), and, according to Bonhoeffer's family and many scholars, misrepresents him, his faith, and his motives.



Outreach



Our January outreach project gives us the opportunity to provide additional support to our local food banks during the cold winter weather. We will once again be participating in the Souperbowl, collecting cans or packages of soup to be distributed to the St. John's Food Pantry and the Cutchogue Library's Friends Food Pantry. Beginning in January through February 9th (Superbowl Sunday), please bring your soup donations to the church for delivery. If you prefer to donate by cash or check, place your donation in one of the Souperbowl envelopes provided in the pews. We can make a difference!



Council Minutes



December 11, 2024

Keith called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Pastor Kerstin offered a prayer. Members present were Keith Young, Amy Cosgrove, Rev. Kerstin Weidmann, Edgar Goodale, Rick Reeve, Kathy Stapon, Barbara Crowley, and Ann Priapi. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as published in the December newsletter, with a motion by Edgar and second by Rick.

Pastor's Report - Pastor Kerstin Weidmann

The council members had already received and read Pastor's written report. She stated that it has been a very busy month. We talked about the chairs for kids, in the back of the sanctuary, and decided to remove them. There will still be quiet activities available on the back bench for them to take. Ideally, we want them to sit with their families until the Children's Message, early in the service.

Treasurer's Report - Edgar Goodale

Edgar went over his report. We have exceeded the amount we expected to take in for cash donations and money in support of Maureen's Haven. As of the end of November, we had received 88% of pledges for the year. We are behind on our commitment to Our Church's Wider Mission. Unexpectedly, the church got a final disbursement from Cedric Luce's estate. We agreed to put this money toward upgrading building accessibility in 2025.

MINISTRY REPORTS

Buildings and Grounds - Rick Reeve

The parsonage sprinkler system has been winterized and a grab bar has been installed in the upstairs restroom.

Outreach

Amy suggested that we do our traditional Souper Bowl collection for cans of soup in January. She will ask Gail to update information used in last year's newsletter and publish it in the January 2025 issue. Nancy Goodale will deliver the Angel Tree donations to St. John's food pantry tomorrow. The December / Christmas Eve collection is for The Christmas Fund which provides emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums and Christmas 'thank you' gift checks for low income retirees of the United Church of Christ.

Worship – Kathy Stapon

The west entrance will be open on Christmas Eve morning from 9-11 for people to drop off flowers for the sanctuary. Worship will be at 7pm that night.

Clerk – Ann Priapi

The active membership list is being updated. At the annual meeting, we will vote to move some from active to inactive status. We received a letter requesting that Pastor Kerstin's membership be transferred from Church in the Gardens to Old Steeple. The council's vote on this request was unanimous.



Continuing and New Business

- Luce Hall rental - we approved two requests for afternoon use of Luce Hall on Sunday 1/5/25 and Sunday 2/9/25. Keith will ask Gail to let the parties involved know that they should plan to leave by 4:30 to give the La Misión group time to set up for their meeting.
- Annual Meeting - after worship on Sunday January 19, 2025 with a potluck lunch.
- Building accessibility improvement - Edgar consulted with Kevin Goodale about the ramp to the south entrance. A new ramp will need to be 28 feet long and 4 feet wide. To fit in the available space, there needs to be a landing and turn. Kevin can build it out of concrete and stone to match the foundation of the sanctuary. Everyone agreed this is a springtime project. The cost is projected to be about seventeen thousand dollars.
- Communication within the church - Keith will ask Gail to share the church's email distribution list with Pastor Kerstin so that she can send emails outside of the 15 weekly hours that the office is staffed.
- Insurance - our coverage with Insurance Board has been renewed.
- Piano - tuning of the sanctuary piano has been scheduled.

The next meeting will be January 8, 2025 at 5:30.

Respectfully submitted, Ann Priapi, Clerk

Book Discussion Group

January 2025 – we will be discussing the book by Erik Larson entitled *Dead Wake – the Last Crossing of the Lusitania*. We will be meeting on the second and fourth Fridays (1/10 and 1/24) at 10:45 for an hour in the upstairs coffee hour area. All are welcome to join.

Did you know?

As a result of the enthusiastic community patronage of our most recent Chicken Barbecue, we were able to increase funding of our community outreach!

- We boosted our weekly grocery budget for St. John's Food Pantry from \$100 to \$150.
- We purchased thirty new blankets for Maureen's Haven. An anonymous donor paid for 30 pillows.
- We contributed \$500 to the in-house food pantry supported by the staff of the Cutchogue Library.
- We purchased and donated forty \$25 Target & Walmart gift cards to the St. John's Food Pantry. These are distributed to clients so that they can purchase gifts for their children.



Epiphany

As the Christmas season ends on January 5th (which is the 12th day of Christmas), we enter the season of Epiphany with the commemoration of the visit of the Magi. 'Epiphany' means 'appearance', or better, 'glorious appearance' – we observe and celebrate the appearance of God's glory among us: from the appearance of an unusually bright star, to God's voice proclaiming Jesus to be God's Son in baptism, to the time when Jesus is transfigured in glory before his disciples' eyes. Yes, God became man – this is what we celebrate during the Christmas season - but Epiphany teaches us that this man is also and always God. This year, the Epiphany season will last through March 4th.





● JANUARY 2025 ●

Outreach for January is **Souper Bowl**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	1 La Mision Church hall rental 8 pm	2	3 AA 6 pm	4
5 10 am Worship, Communion Epiphany Sunday LaMision Church hall rental 6-8 pm	6 AA 7 pm	7 AA 6 pm NA 8 pm	8 Council mtg. 5:30 pm LaMision Church hall rental 8 pm	9	10 Choir rehearsal 9:30 am Book Club 10:45 am AA 6 pm	11 Hall rental ELIQ 10 - 4
12 10 am Worship and Sunday School Hall rental 1 - 3:30 LaMision Church hall rental 6-8 pm	13 AA 7 pm	14 AA 6 pm NA 8 pm	15 Old Steeple Stitchers 7 pm LaMision Church hall rental 8 pm	16	17 Choir rehearsal 9:30 am AA 6 pm	18
19 10 am Worship and Sunday School, followed by Annual mtg. & potluck luncheon LaMision Church hall rental 6-8 pm	20 AA 7 pm	21 AA 6 pm NA 8 pm	22 LaMision Church hall rental 8 pm	23 SV articles due	24 Choir rehearsal 9:30 am Book Club 10:45 am AA 6 pm	25
26 10 am Worship and Sunday School LaMision Church hall rental 6-8 pm	27 AA 7 pm	28 AA 6 pm NA 8 pm	29 LaMision Church hall rental 8 pm	30	31 Choir rehearsal 9:30 am AA 6 pm	1