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Oak Hill News



No. 12

DECEMBER 2018

Volume 68

With Jesus as our guide and community as our goal, we worship, love, serve and grow

Pastor's Corner

I still had Halloween candy in my purse.

It wasn't even Thanksgiving yet. There had been no mashed potatoes. The Christmas tree lots were not set up yet. I hadn't even begun thinking about which one of the boxes to bring up first, and where I shoved that last Christmas towel that came out of the laundry late last year and never did make it back into the holiday storage section of my basement.

But it was time.

Me, stickler for the liturgical calendar, pastor who purchased a plethora of purple to Advent-decorate the sanctuary, Little Miss No Christmas Carols Until Christmas Eve, was sitting in my office blasting the Christmas music. In NOVEMBER!

It all started because it was so cold. It was so cold so early this year. And then, of course, it snowed. And not a light, delicate dusting. It really snowed. I think more than we had all of last winter.

But then, it was also because it was on a Wednesday. And the cold and the snow on a Wednesday night meant that we were on for helping with Winter Outreach. The cold and snow on a Wednesday night

meant it was our turn in the rotation of neighbors and organizations who love and care for this city, who choose to pitch in and provide warmth and shelter, food and space, welcome and home to some of our unhoused neighbors on the most dangerous of nights. It was a cold, snowy Wednesday in November, and neighbors needed help. And we were able to be there. (And yes, we ate Halloween candy.)



And at one point in the night, I went outside to shovel snow and snapped a few pics of our beautiful old stone building. It was late and quiet and calm and lovely. The next morning, as I was giving some of

our new friends rides back downtown. Everything had canceled and closed, and the city is so gorgeous covered in a fresh blanket of snow. And it felt like a holiday movie. For a half second. Then I remembered that my new friend in the car wasn't going home to read by the fire while drinking hot cocoa. I remembered that the city doesn't have a good plan for how to help her or the other six neighbors who stayed with us that night. I remembered how they talked and planned the best place to go for the day, trying to figure out not only where they could be warm, but also allowed to keep their own stuff, and be safe, and just be, for hours until the next set of shelters opened up for the next night.

And I was filled with frustration and lament. For the broken system, for the challenging process, for the lack of compassion and care and resources and help. And the beautiful blanket of perfect fresh snow suddenly wasn't lovely; it was scary.

It broke my heart.

And as I drove back to church, I struggled with that feeling.

I still struggle with it. We need a better plan. We need to work together and demand answers and policies and funding. We need resources and we need space. And it is complicated and messy and, in the history of the world, none of us have figured out how to solve this problem. And that can feel overwhelming.

But when I got back to church that morning, struggling and overwhelmed, worried and frustrated, I came back to find that folks had cleaned up already. Someone was outside shoveling. I had a text message about the next night's plan. I had another text from another neighbor who was helping. And an email from someone else on how they could contribute. We had a plan for washing blankets. And there was even a little Halloween candy left over.

My heart was still broken, but was also filled with hope. For neighbors and strangers who were gathering together to try and help. For churches and organizations who are trying to plug a never-ending hole. For advocates who I know are working on policy solutions. For a God who sees this work and has something up her own sleeves, too. For a congregation willing to try and be a part of that effort.

So I went to my office and played the Christmas music. Not because it was time. Not even really because of the snow. But because of the spirit. Because the incarnation was among us. Because the kingdom of God was almost, and kinda, and still not yet. And that's what Advent does to me. Advent reminds me that while all this is still a mess, God is in it, and God is working, and things are coming, and things are happening, and it's still hard, and hold on, though, because, almost....

And that morning, in the lovely snow, in the quiet, calm city, in the mess of people having no place to go, in the struggle of the systems we've created that aren't doing enough to help, in the total beauty of neighbors helping neighbors and churches being church, in that moment, I was really hoping it would come. I really wanted God's kingdom to come Quick.

Friends, this Advent, this Christmas, this New Year, may God fill you with moments of the almost. May God find you and share with you with signs of what is coming, what is happening, what is almost.... May God show you how you can be a part of bringing a little bit of the hint of it all to others. May God bless us in the waiting, in the almost, in the already, and in the not yet.

Merry Christmas. Right now. And always.

With love and in hope,
Pastor Erin



FELLOWSHIP LUNCHEON

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Chili luncheon. The Mission Committee is hosting the December 2 luncheon. This month we will be serving chili (made by the wonderful chili maker—Brian), as the main dish! Bring your favorite chili topping or dessert to share. There will be a free will offering to help cover the costs and any extra will be used for Winter Outreach. There will also be a Pop Up Mission Project after lunch!

WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE



As we prepare the way for the coming of Christ this season, we have a number of special worship services planned.

Christmas Cantata – Sunday, December 16

What better way to lift your spirit than to share in the joy of the music of Christmas! The Chancel Choir of Oak Hill will present the cantata “*Holy Child*” by Marty Parks during our regular worship service. It is a combination of traditional and contemporary carols with narration recounting the birth of our Lord.

Blue Christmas – Thursday, December 20

The holiday season isn’t all merry and bright for everyone all the time. So we set aside a night, to lament, to mourn, to grieve, to be still, to remember, and to pray for healing and hope. All are invited to this beautiful, evening worship experience, in the sanctuary on Thursday, December 20, at 6:30 p.m.

Children’s Christmas Program – Sunday, Dec. 23

Our regular morning worship service on December 23 will be led by the youth and children

of Oak Hill. They will share with us the story of the sacred origins of many of our Christmas carols and customs. The text and music were revised and compiled by Darrell Yearwood. Come join in the spirit of the season as we share the joy of music!

Christmas Eve

Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 24. We will have a reception immediately following the service in our Large Assembly Room. We ask that everyone who is able bring



hors d’oeuvres or appetizers to share. Please contact Donna Cook at (314) 807-3949 or belladonna63123@hotmail.com. with any questions.



The Worship and Christian Education Committee is collecting gloves for adults this year. We will be giving these items to the Isaiah 58 Ministries and others ministry partners to distribute to individuals who need them. Because we’re looking to help folks stay WARM, please avoid those little “magic stretch” gloves. We’re looking for big, thick, warm gloves! Please bring your items to church through December 16 and place them on the **tree located in the Large Assembly Room.** You are also invited to place your Christmas cards on this tree.



As in past years, we will once again decorate the church with poinsettias on December 23 and 24 (Christmas Eve). Whether you choose to honor the memory of a loved one, honor a living loved one, or simply order one for your own personal enjoyment, this is truly a festive and lovely way to enjoy the season. Ordering forms for the poinsettias are located in the back of the sanctuary or you may call the church office and place your order. The poinsettias are \$18.00 each. Orders should be placed by Thursday, December 6. Plants may be taken home following worship on Christmas Eve.

STEWARDSHIP AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

2018 Christmas Joy Offering

In the lead up to Christmas, many of us spend time in search of the perfect gift—the gift that communicates to friends and family how much we know and love them. We search our memories for indications of what gift might cause the faces of our loved ones to light up. We scour the stores and shops, hoping to come across the thing that will communicate a depth of love that our words cannot.

Jesus came to live among us, bringing light into darkness, and reconciliation to God and to one another. A perfect gift from a gracious God. As important as gifts to loved ones are, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gives throughout the year through the Christmas Joy Offering, drawing us back to the manger and God's perfect gift to us.

During this Advent Season, we celebrate leadership; past, present and future through support of the Christmas Joy offering. We do so because church leaders greatly impact our lives of faith, walking with us down the path to be more like Jesus. We want future leaders for the church and world, like those educated at our Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color to reflect the wideness of God's intended diversity, and we want those church leaders and their families who find themselves grappling with a critical financial need to have the resources they need. For those supported through the Christmas Joy Offering, this help is truly a gift from above. May our gifts, and the leaders who receive them, point us always to the truth of the one who birth we celebrate, Jesus Christ—the truly perfect gift.

The Christmas Joy Offering will be received during worship on Sunday, December 23. Offering envelopes will be included in a Sunday bulletin and will be also be available in the back of the sanctuary. You may also place your offering in your regular envelope and mark your payment "Christmas Joy Offering." If you wish you may send a check to the church marked "Christmas Joy Offering."

Thank you for your support of this vital offering.

PER CAPITA APPORTIONMENT FOR 2019 – Per Capita is the donation we make to support Presbyterian ministry at the denominational, synod, and presbytery level. This contribution supports staff salaries, denominational programs, bible studies and curriculums, and so many important programs. Our congregation commits to supporting this ministry, and we encourage all members to make a special donation to help cover this commitment. A voluntary contribution of \$31.00 from each member will help cover the Per Capita commitment Oak Hill has made for 2019. If possible, payments should be made before the end of the year and identified "For Per Capita Apportionment." Envelopes designated "Per Capita 2019" were handed out at the congregational meeting and also can be found in the back of the sanctuary. They may be placed in the offering plate or mailed directly to the office.

MISSION COMMITTEE

FOOSBALL

Foosball is on Tuesday, December 4, at 6:30 p.m. It's a fun night of community with our neighborhood kids. And this month, we'll celebrate with special holiday snacks and prizes! Please join us for pizza, snacks and fun! Please contact Dena Roper with any questions.

OPEN GYM NIGHT

Open gym night is coming up on Friday, December 21, at 6:30 p.m. This is for middle and high schoolers. Please consider volunteering. We have snacks and pizza and fun times playing sports, games and sometimes there's a mean game of Uno going on! Not to mention crafts, coloring and puzzles plus snacks! Please contact Dena with any questions.



Winter Outreach. As winter gets closer, the Mission Committee is gearing up for opening the Smylie Room as an emergency overnight shelter in connection with Winter Outreach. We will be open December 1-March 1 on Wednesday nights when it

MISSION COMMITTEE (cont'd)

is colder than 20 degrees or nights when it is 25 degrees and below with wet weather. Please contact Dena Roper with any questions or if you are interested in pitching in to help!

Mission Trip: Hands and Feet in Baltimore!

The Mission Committee has a summer mission trip scheduled! We will be going to Baltimore and will be working with The Center in Baltimore. The date is June 22-29, 2019. This is an inter-generational mission trip. Youth must be at least in seventh grade. That week we will be working with a church who is partnering with a local school to provide projects for the kids to participate in. Put on your thinking caps! What skills and knowledge can we share? In the past there was a group who worked with robotics and another who taught jazzercise. We will get more info on how all that works once we are committed. The cost is \$450 per person (which covers lodging and food but NOT travel expenses) and we will need a deposit of \$225 and commitments by January 13. If you want to go but the cost may be an issue, please speak with Dena or Erin. Once we know who is going we will look at travel options!

Jeans for Teens! It's time for our annual collection for the Jeans for Teens Fund. For the last 5 years we have collected funds to assist with the Holiday Outreach project in the University City Public Schools. Christine Woodward, a church member and social worker at the school, facilitates the project by purchasing gift cards and more for families in need in their community. Our goal is \$500 for this great project. You can place your donation in a pew envelope and label it "Jeans for Teens." Thank you for your support! Please contact Dena Roper for more information.

Isaiah 58 Ministries

It's December! There's still time to be a part of I58's, 25th Annual, "When Pigs Fly" Buy-A-Bird Campaign. Your generous donation of \$25 will buy

a good sized turkey or ham for someone in need and will help cover the cost of the entire meal. I58 is depending on all of us in the community to help make the holidays bountiful for families that are less fortunate. Director, Rev. Brenda Booth, and Hunger Programs Manger, Rev. Meredith Jackson, are planning on serving well over 200 pre-registered families at Christmas. Recipients of holiday baskets must pre-register and be approved in advance.

December

2nd - peanut butter
9th - vegetable oil
16th - hot chocolate mix
23rd - lip balm
30th - dish soap

January

6th - sardines
13th - peanut butter
20th - canned fruit
27th - chicken and dumplings

Sometimes our lists seem a little strange. Rest assured that all of these items are requested by Isaiah 58. And of course, if you can't remember what to bring on any given Sunday just grab a box or can from your pantry or a sale item at the grocery! Everything is needed and will be used by a family in need.

Other items that are welcome are: Socks (all sizes), personal hygiene items, razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers. And maybe a can opener or two!

As always, thanks to Wendy Barrow for your ongoing support.

AMEN ST. LOUIS

Our second annual Halloween Trivia Night was a MAJOR success! Brian Beckmann was our proud MC, and we filled the room with tons of supporters and friends. Because of everyone who bought a table, donated or bid on a silent auction item, and bought 50/50 raffle tickets, we were able to raise over \$2,700 to support the ministry of AMEN! A HUGE thanks to everyone who came out and played or helped volunteer. We could not have done it without you!

EVANGELISM AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE



Plan to join us in song as Oak Hill sings Christmas carols for our church neighbors on Sunday, December 16! We will meet at church at 2 p.m.

It's Photo Release Time!

Each year, we like to check in and make sure folks are comfortable with having their picture taken at church. We snap pics now and then to share the story of our community and ministry together. Many of these pictures are used in internet and social media posts. So, to be sure we have your consent, this month, please stop by the clip boards in the back of the sanctuary. One clip board has a photo release that says YES! Sign the form on that clipboard to let everyone know you are comfortable with your photo and photos of your children appearing on the internet to promote activities at Oak Hill Presbyterian Church. Even more important, if you do not want a photo of you or your child or children to appear on the internet in photos of activities at Oak Hill, please sign the sheet on the NO! clipboard. We want to be very clear with following each individual's and each family's preferences. Thank you!

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Circle 3 will meet on Thursday, December 6, for its annual Christmas luncheon. Please plan to come at 11 a.m. If you have forgotten what you volunteered to bring, please check with Jan Stanford (638-0195). Bring your ideas for possible projects in 2019!



Love to make holiday cookies and goodies, but don't want to be tempted to eat them? Need holiday cookies, but don't have the time to make them? Presbyterian Women have the answer to both problems – our annual Christmas Cookie Sale on Sunday, December 16. Homemade cookies and other goodies will be \$6 a pound.

Donations are always appreciated! You don't have to be active in Presbyterian Women to donate something to the sale. If you make holiday breads, please price them for us. Donations should be brought to church by 10:15 a.m. on Sunday December 16, and delivered to the Presbyterian Women's table in the Large Assembly Room. The sale will begin after the worship service.

BOOK CLUB

The Touchy Topics Book and Discussion Group will be discussing "*I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*" by Austin Channing Brown on Wednesday, December 5, at 7:30 p.m. at Hartford Coffee. All are welcome to join the conversation!

The book club will meet at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 11, at the Barrow residence. We will be picking books for 2019. Please bring your dinner and join us. We are always looking for new members.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The following actions were reported or approved by Session in their November 14, 2018 Stated Scheduled Meeting:

Average Worship attendance in October was 55.

Membership November 9, 2018 is 108.

Financial Reports for October and
Year-to-Date 2018

	October	2018 Total
Income		
Budgeted	\$14,359.00	\$145,429.00
Actual	\$10,374.88	\$132,164.51*
Expenses		
Budgeted	\$15,075.02	\$153,515.00
Actual	\$14,205.98	\$154,205.38

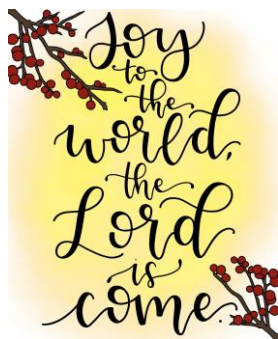
*Includes Wamsler Trust Fund earnings.

Session voted to receive Kristine and Michael Hale as active members of Oak Hill by Reaffirmation of Faith!!

ARTS AND CRAFT CLUB

Craft Night

Please join us for Craft Night on Friday, December 14, at 6:30 p.m. in the Theleos Classroom, for a fun evening of crafting! It will be a “bring your own project” evening. It's a good time to work on those Christmas cards and winter projects. Please bring a snack to share! Please let Dena Roper know if you have any questions



Under the Oak Tree



The sympathy and support of the congregation is extended to the family of Larry Link who passed away on November 3, 2018



Bible Readings for the Month

LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

Sunday, December 2	Jer. 33:14-16; <i>Psalm 25:1-10</i> ; 1 Thess. 3:9-13; Luke 21:35-36
Sunday, December 9	Mal. 3:1-4; <i>Luke 1:68-79</i> ; Phil. 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6
Sunday, December 16	Zeph. 3:14-20; <i>Isaiah 12:1-6</i> ; Phil. 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18
Sunday, December 23	Micah 5:22-5a; <i>Luke 1:47-55</i> or <i>Psalm 80:1-7</i> ; Heb. 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)
Sunday, December 24 Christmas Eve	<i>Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96</i> ; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)
Sunday, December 25 Nativity of Jesus Christ/ Christmas Day	<i>Dawn: Isaiah 62:6-12</i> ; <i>Psalm 97</i> ; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:(1-7) 8-20; <i>Day: Isaiah 52:7-10</i> ; <i>Psalm 98</i> ; Heb. 1:1-4(5-12); John 1:1-14
Sunday, December 30	1 Sam. 2:18-20, 26; <i>Psalm 148</i> ; Col. 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

Scenes from Oak Hill

AMEN St. Louis Director, Annie Girresch, preaching in worship.



Pastor Paula Cooper's visit to St. Louis from Zambia



Oak Hill News

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We are a welcoming congregation where visitors are always expected!

Choir Rehearsal – 9:00 a.m.

Christian Education – 9:30 a.m.

Service of Worship – 10:30 a.m.

Nursery Care – 10:30 a.m.

The ministers of Oak Hill Church are its members assisted by:

Rev. Erin Counihan
Pastor

Rev. Dr. Alan Meyers
Parish Associate

Ms. Susan Brown
Minister of Music

Ms. Annie Girresch
Director AMEN St. Louis

Ms. Carole Adams
Secretary

Articles for publication
in the
Oak Hill News
need to be
submitted in writing
to the church office by the
3rd Monday of each
month.