



## The Sweetest Time

We are heading into the sweetest time of year. The holidays are here and the Deacons have planned a sweet event. A cookie exchange will be held **Sunday December 15<sup>th</sup>**. What is a cookie exchange you ask? Each member bakes or brings a batch of their favorite cookie to church. All members gather with a treat bag and collect cookies that are provided. What you end up with is a mixed bag of cookies to take home! How sweet is that? So, grab your favorite recipe(s) and bake a batch (or more) to share with the congregation!

## Last Minute Shop

Girl Scout troop 32455 will be hosting a Christmas craft show **Saturday December 21<sup>st</sup> from 9a-4p** in the fellowship hall. A variety of crafters will be on hand selling their wares for your last-minute Christmas gift giving! And the youth will be on hand representing the church selling soup. Help spread the word and make your friends and family aware of this last-minute shopping opportunity while supporting local businesses!

## Be an Angel to a Child in Need

One tradition we have here in the church is the Angel Tree tags that are placed on the Christmas tree each year. You will notice a tag for a needy child right here in our area. Please take a tag if you are able and make a child's Christmas a little brighter. **Please bring the gifts back to the church by Sunday December 15<sup>th</sup> unwrapped with the tag.** The Deacons will deliver your gifts to the Salvation Army. Thank you in advance for your continued support!

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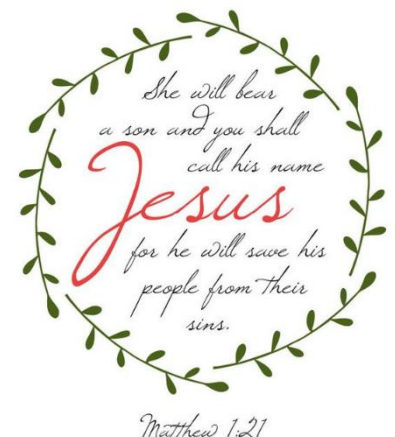
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## A Posting from the Pastor

2014 was a devastating year for the congregation of Trinity Reformed UCC and for me as their pastor. Fourteen active members of the church died during that year. The loss took from us regular worshippers, helpers in the kitchen, singers in the choir, Sunday School teachers, members of the Consistory, a mom in her mid-forties who helped her daughter pick out her wedding gown for a service her mom would not attend. You can imagine how it felt as news of one death was followed by another...and another.

I suggested we hold a 'Blue Christmas' service on a Sunday afternoon in mid-December. No, we didn't listen to Elvis singing about his 'blue' Christmas though his point was well-made: grief pays no attention to holidays or birthdays, anniversaries or celebrations. Indeed, for the first year after the death of a dear one, special times carry a poignancy as her or his chair sits empty and memories of past times come rushing in bringing sadness and longing into the room.

The service was intended for anyone in the church (or community) who was feeling a lack of holiday spirit, for whom depression had become a companion, who wanted a break from all the 'ho-ho-ho' activities and the constant blaring of holiday cheer. Obviously, I had in mind the families from Trinity who had been caught in the web of loss and loneliness but others came as well.

I believe about fifteen persons attended. One was a woman from Wilkes-Barre who happened to see our ad in the local paper. She came in the door almost an hour before the service started, weeping as she came up the steps. Her son had died that year and the wounds were fresh. Pappy had lost his wife, Glen his mother, Becca her mother. Sitting on the altar table were blue candles – one for each of the fourteen souls who wouldn't be part of the Christmas Eve candle-lighting that year. Additional candles were available for people like our guest – all given the opportunity to take their candle home.

We sang, we prayed, we read scripture, we sat in holy silence watching the flickering candles, and we shared stories that brought back laughter and smiles. God was so very present. After singing 'Silent Night', I read these lines of a blessing written by Jan Richardson:

*This blessing does not mean to take the night away but it knows  
its hidden roads, knows the resting spots along the path, knows what it means to travel in the  
company of a friend.*

*So when this blessing comes, take its hand. Get up.*

*Set out on the road you cannot see. This is the night when you can trust that any direction you  
go, you will be walking toward the dawn.*

Please be mindful in these weeks of your own sadness from whatever would steal your joy. Notice those around you for similar signs. Be a friend where you can. Send a thoughtful card. Pray for people everywhere whose journey to Bethlehem is complicated, even crushing. Give the gift that matters above all others: love.

Lastly, share the meaning and beauty of God's coming into this world however you can and may Christmas be filled with blessings, gratitude and joy. Join us if you can on Christmas Eve, as we light the candles of hope and hold them high. O come, o come, *Emmanuel!*

Pastor Steve



## Treefest Decorating

Our youth group participated in Treefest at the Caldwell Consistory in Bloomsburg (treefest.org) this year. The theme for their tree is Superhero's and was adorned with colored lights, red, blue, green and gold ornaments, super hero figures, star ornaments, super hero masks, and finished with a hand sewn Captain America shield for a tree skirt.

Each tree with the exception of the "show case" trees that are decorated by artisans and sponsored by corporations will be donated by a group led by a local social services organization that identifies families in need throughout the region and, following the show, these trees will be donated along with their lights and other decorations.

If you would like to see our tree and the many beautifully decorated trees in person the days and times are

**Sunday, December 1 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm,**

**Friday, December 6 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm.**

**Saturday, December 7 10:00 am - 6:00 pm**

**Sunday, December 8 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm**

Thank you to those who made donations. A box FULL of non-perishables has been left under the tree and the toys will be donated to our local Toys for Tots organization! Thank you also to Penny for her handiwork in sewing the tree skirt!



## Peace Rocks

As a continuation of our Peacemaking Offering the youth met last month for a study on Peace. They decorated "Peace Rocks" as a reminder to share Christ's peace with one another, to share that peace with those beyond our doors, beyond our communities and beyond our borders. These rocks may pop up at random locations within the church and in the youth room as a blessing "may the Lord of peace . . . give you peace at all times in all ways".

## Service Reports

It may not seem like it yet but we are heading into unpredictable cold weather. As a reminder if it is extremely cold, snowy or icy you can call the church 759-9461 or check the website [bwkpresby.org](http://bwkpresby.org) for service cancellations before heading out.

## Who's in the Pulpit?

We welcome back Judy Wadsworth as our guest speaker  
**December 29<sup>th</sup>**

## Fellowship

The Deacons will be hosting fellowship **following worship on December 29<sup>th</sup>**. Please join us for treats and fellowship!



### Communion Dates 2019

December 1

December 24



Christmas Mystery  
Dinner

**Saturday December 14<sup>th</sup>**

Craft Show soup sale  
**Saturday December 21<sup>st</sup>**  
**9-3**



### December Birthdays

MaryAnn Marshman 12/1

Carol Ross 12/12

**Happy Birthday!**

## *New Opportunities for Romanian Orphaned Children*

Dear Faithful Friends of NOROC,

I had the great joy this past June to return to Tulcea where I had been the PC(USA) Mission Co-Worker serving NOROC from 2001-2011. I was eager to see firsthand what was happening with NOROC's mission with the institutionalized young people in Tulcea County today.

We are still led by our beloved founder and President of NOROC, Professor Petru Solca. For most of these children, Petru is their only father figure. Mrs. Marilena Solca continues to oversee our educational programs as our NOROC team in Tulcea faces new challenges.

Immediately after we arrived, Petru Solca took us to NOROC's Thursday evening Bible Study. I felt at home again! There were many new young faces. One beaming young man grabbed me in a bear hug. "Ms. Mary, do you remember me?", he squealed. It was Mamut! Mamut was just a baby at the maternal center in Babadag in 2001 when I first arrived in Tulcea. His mother could not keep him, but our Big Hearted Grannies loved him as a baby, our Big Hearted Teachers helped him through school, our Big Hearted Friends provided social opportunities to prepare him for his future. Now, our spiritual programs are molding him into a beautiful, loving, young man.



*The Reunion: Mamut and I*



*Thursday Night Bible Study*

NOROC's Bible Study leader, Mr. Andrei, is wonderful. His day job is as a social worker in the crisis center. He was trained as a priest but felt God's call for him to work directly with at-risk youth. For me, our evening worship is the most important aspect of NOROC's mission. To know these kids are being fed spiritually by such a fine person means I can enjoy my retirement knowing there are many good shepherds looking after our "flock".

I want to emphasize our NOROC horse therapy camp. I met Daniel, a very lethargic 9-year-old, at the maternal center where a "Big Hearted Granny" watches babies while mothers learn job skills. His mother was temporarily living there after escaping a terrible life. Surrounded by babies, Daniel seemed depressed and bored, so I received permission for him to attend the NOROC horse camp the following week.



*Daniel - A Happy Horseman!*



*Daniel's Group*

Twenty-six children learned to groom, take care of, and ride horses. Daily horse and carriage rides, a cookout, and crafts made this a special week for everyone. After a week of fun outdoors, Daniel was transformed into a funny, energetic, and happy little boy! This was only *one* week of NOROC's extensive summer program of day camps, excursions, crafts, outside play, swimming, and so much more.



## *New Opportunities for Romanian Orphaned Children*

Now and in the next few years, NOROC will continue its mission despite new challenges. All institutions as we have known them are being closed by 2022, yet the high number of abandoned children in Romania remains the same 20 years later. Some children will be scattered throughout remote villages with little access to education past 4<sup>th</sup> grade. What does the future hold for these children without education? Will there be enough foster families? Where will the babies be sent?

One thing is guaranteed: NOROC will transform as needed to meet the needs of each abandoned, abused, or traumatized child, wherever they may be. This means a newer, bigger van to reach these children and continued financial support for our growing programs.

To say my visit was highly emotional is an understatement. I left Romania knowing full well that NOROC continues keeping on keeping on. Regardless of the challenges, NOROC follows the mandate of Jesus, "I am not willing for even one of these little ones to be lost." We need your prayers and support now more than ever

Faithfully yours, Rev. Mary Ferris

### **Your Gifts Make a Difference Today and Every day**

- \$1000 University Tuition for 1 year
- \$1000 Big Hearted Granny for 1 year
- \$500 Dental Exams for 25 Children
- \$500 High School Boarding for 6 months
- \$100 Trauma Counseling for 6 months
- \$100 Special-Needs Care for 1 month
- \$50 Pair of Eye Glasses
- \$50 Tutoring for 1 month
- \$20 School Supplies for 1 month
- \$20 Medication for 1 month



**"As a community of supporters, we must give sacrificially. Romanian orphanages are no longer in the news, so many previous supporters have found new challenges for their resources. Many people believe the problems in Romania have been solved. However, NOROC knows differently and we need to keep our commitments to the children living in government homes in Romania. This means supporting NOROC financially and most importantly spiritually."**

**Rev. Mary Ferris**

**Mission Coworker in Romania 2001-2011**



# December Assistants

## December 1

**Greeters:** Ernie & Joan Botto  
**Ushers:** Jim Ross, Dave Force  
**Assisting Elder:** Barb Huntington  
**Acolyte:** Giuliana Force

## December 8

**Greeters:** Janice Moskaluk  
**Ushers:** Joan Thomas, Eugeniu Grigorescu  
**Assisting Elder:** Joan Thomas  
**Acolyte:** Morgan West

## December 15

**Greeters:** Bill & Shirley Birt  
**Ushers:** Tom & Barb Huntington  
**Assisting Elder:** Penny Siesko  
**Acolyte:** Tyrone Birt

## December 22

**Greeters:** Walter & Alison Hause  
**Ushers:** Kevin White, Eugeniu Grigorescu  
**Assisting Elder:** Jim Ross  
**Acolyte:** Emma Botto

## December 24

**Greeters:** Doll Family  
**Acolyte:** Giuliana Force  
**Candle Ushers:** Bill D'Angelo and Robbie

## December 29

**Greeters:** Penny Siesko  
**Ushers:** Tom & Barb Huntington  
**Assisting Elder:** Eugeniu Grigorescu  
**Acolyte:** Morgan West

**Deacon Visitor for December:** Janice Moskaluk

**Have a wonderful month with family and friends!**

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

320 Market Street

Berwick, PA 18603

**Mail to: PO Box 325**

570-759-9461

[bwkpresby@pa.metrocast.net](mailto:bwkpresby@pa.metrocast.net)

[www.bwkpresby.org](http://www.bwkpresby.org)



**Worship service 10:15am**

**Sunday school for all ages during worship**

**Salt + Light Youth Group**

**Nursery available**

