



# Under the Dome

**Dunbar United Church of Christ  
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***An Open & Affirming Congregation***

## **Weekly Services**

**Sunday Mornings @ 10:00 A.M.**

**Saturday Evenings @ 5:00 P.M.**

# **December 2024**

## Pastor's Report, December 2024

This morning I met with the electrician that may be doing the work in front of the church. In August, I think, we ordered six lights to be spaced evenly apart going from the street to the front of the church. There was a delay in the delivery and they arrived around the beginning of November. Installing them will be a bit involved — each light will need it's own concrete base and two trenches will need to be dug to carry the wiring underground. Three electricians have come to give their ideas of the best way to install these. One said it was outside his area of competence — he didn't want to do all the sub-contracting involved in getting someone to do the concrete and someone else to do the digging. I was hoping these would be installed in time for our Christmas Eve service. But this may not happen. It depends a lot on the excavator who will dig the trenches and how busy he is — because it's just a few weeks till Christmas.

Anyway — I could tell you more about this, and some of the complexity involved in securing the right electrician, the right lights — and the delays involved. The lights we ordered were held up in France for a while. When we ordered them we thought they'd be like ordering something through Amazon, and they'd get here next day — or at the longest a week. But three months!? I'm saying all this because I believe things are usually not what they appear to be. If you read the Bible you see that often things are not what they seem — there's more going on than what appears, on the surface, to be happening. So — what's the message here for us? What might the message be for us this Christmas of the difficulty and delay of ordering six simple lights and having them installed in front of our church?

But wait — there's more to this story. These lights were requested by members who attend the Saturday evening service ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO!! FOUR YEARS!!!! Because for half the year, that service begins and ends in the dark and it's not an outrageous request to want to be able to see when walking from the street to the church. Sometimes, on cold nights, there's ice that can't be seen — on the asphalt. At first it didn't seem so urgent. A couple of years ago we even ordered two flashlights with the idea that I'd walk people from the church to their cars, holding a flashlight.

So now — WE ARE WAITING FOR LIGHT. For the light. We're waiting for the light. That's the message for Advent, isn't it? We wait for the Christ child, like Mary waited, to be born in us. And it takes time — it takes more

than nine months. More than four years. The light comes to us in God's time, which is different for each of us, but no matter who we are IT TAKES A LONG TIME. IT TAKES OUR WHOLE LIVES. Last week Janet and Maria and Annie and I drove to Falls Church, Virginia, for my mother's funeral. I did her funeral from Murphy's Funeral Home on Broad Street, only about a mile from mom's house. It was there when I was growing up. I was grateful to be able to do that service. One of the last things I said about mom was to share with people a dream she had in March, 1979. She said that dream was the greatest, most powerful experience she has ever had — in a hundred years, that dream was the greatest experience she had and she would call me up, every year on the anniversary of that dream to remind me of it. She couldn't describe the feeling she had in the dream — ECSTASY is the word in the English language that might describe it — but mom said her feeling was much more than that.

In the dream, mom was walking down a dirt road with the Virgin Mary. They were talking. At some point Jesus appeared and he took my mother's hand. Mom said it was like electricity went through her and her body lifted off the ground — Jesus kept holding her hand. Mom said she was going crazy with joy and happiness. She screamed: "There's joy in his hand!" And then, as suddenly as he appeared, Jesus was gone and mom was back on the ground, standing with Mary on the dirt road. Mom asked Mary, "Where's Jesus?" Mary looked around and said, "Where did he go? I don't know — he was just here."

And that was it. That's the dream that happened 26 years before mom died, and she thought about it every day of those 26 years. Mom loved Jesus more than anything or anyone. She talked to him every day, all the time. Once when Janet and I were visiting, mom drove us to lunch. She missed her turn into the parking lot of the restaurant and had positioned her car in the lane of the on coming traffic — and a bus was coming right at us. The bus was about to crash into us. And without missing a second, mom turned the steering wheel and said, "Be with me Jesus!!!!" — and stomped on the accelerator and the car took off, slamming into the sidewalk and then over it and somehow her car landed in the parking lot of the restaurant where we planned to have lunch. Mom avoided the bus, banged and jolted the car over the sidewalk and finally came to a stop in the restaurant parking lot and turned off the engine and looked at us like nothing was unusual — like avoiding an oncoming bus and driving over sidewalks was routine. Janet and I were still in shock. But that's how mom talked to Jesus. Sometimes she'd say "Thank you Jesus," and sometimes

“Help me Jesus,” or sometimes, just seconds from a head-on collision with a bus, “Be with me Jesus!” And if anyone doubts the existence of God, they have never been a passenger in my mother’s car — and survived — because mom drove like that for over fifty years and never had an accident. That is no less a miracle than walking on water or feeding thousands of people with two loaves of bread.

As I said, mom loved Jesus. And I believe we become what we most love. Over the years, mom was becoming Jesus. You could see this as the circle of her love grew wider and wider, including more people and animals and trees — everything. She complained less and was more thankful. Mom was becoming Jesus — it took a hundred years and she was still a work in progress. As are we. We are also somewhere on the way to becoming Jesus, each of us a peculiar, one-off expression of God’s love. Which brings us back to the lights in front of the church — they are a work in progress. It’s taken years, but we have faith that one day they will come. Like the light of Jesus, filling our lives, changing us. The Gospel of John says it best:

“The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world... And to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.”

Yours, becoming, with you, day by day and year by year, the light and love of Jesus,

George

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***Contact Pastor George @***

***Phone: (203) 287-8106 or***

***revonweb@sbcglobal.net***

## **Board of Missions and Concerns**

Hi Everyone,

Missions will continue to help organizations during the holiday season, including the Heifer Fund and the Midnight Run.

All of us on Missions are wishing everyone a happy, healthy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Take care,

Donna

## **Stewardship Committee**

Tis the season!

The Stewardship Pledge Drive for 2025 has begun. Thanks to everyone who has already submitted a pledge card or been in touch with your pledge amount.

For anyone new to the pledge drive, we ask that you pledge or commit to an amount that you plan to give to help support Dunbar Church for the next year. The total of all the pledges received, along with funds from our endowment, pay to run our church for the next year. This includes salaries, utilities, insurance, maintenance, and office supplies. The budget also includes our mission outreach efforts and capital improvements to our building and grounds.

Pledge cards are available in the narthex, in the bulletin, and online on the church website. You can return your pledge card at church in the offertory plate, return the pledge card in the mail, or give it to me or Joe Braen after service. Or just e-mail me with the amount of your pledge at [twparlapiano@aol.com](mailto:twparlapiano@aol.com). Please be as generous as you can.

Peace,  
Tom Parlapiano

## **Christian Education**

CE is happy to host Advent Workshop following cafe church on Sunday, December 15th. We will have crafts for all ages to enjoy including Jenni's famous cinnamon candles, Debbie's scarf making, Annie's snowman soap, and more.

Come join us for a fun, free, festive time together.

Janet Manukas

## **H.O.P.E.**

H.O.P.E. would like to thank those that have donated this past month:

Heather Sibley

George and Janet Braen

Kathy Straka

Rev. George and Janet Manukas

This month we will be donating to the Midnight Run Community. Midnight Run serves sandwiches and non perishable food/snacks to the homeless in many area locations. Many area churches are involved with the preparing and distribution, however the costs and demand have skyrocketed.

If you would like to make a donation to HOPE, please do so by visiting our website or sending a check to Dunbar UCC with HOPE in the memo.

Thank you,  
Debbie Laffin

## **CAFE CHURCH AT ADVENT WORKSHOP!**

Women's Fellowship will be hosting a Cafe Church on December 15th to go along with our Advent Workshop!

Breakfast foods with some other delicious creations will be available at 9:45.

Help is needed with set up on Saturday, early prep work and cooking. If you are available to help with any of these, please call me to coordinate.

Debbie Laffin  
203 281-3241

## COOKIE WALK

Calling all bakers, we will be having a cookie walk at Advent Workshop. We need all kinds of cookies to share.

Please consider making a batch of your favorite cookie or a new recipe that you would like to try out. The more the merrier!

Thank you,  
Debbie Laffin



## Deacons

Greetings from your UCC Deacons,

The Deacons are preparing our church for the Advent season, which begins on Sunday, December 1. Christmas falls on a Wednesday this year, and our choir has been practicing beautiful songs in celebration of the birth of Christ.

The Deacons are also continuing to support members of the congregation in need. Please don't hesitate to reach out; we are here to help.

Respectfully yours,  
Kitty Donohue  
203-887-9717

## **Trustees**

The Trustees continue to monitor income and expenditures. To date, both categories are within budget.

We are working to install pillar lights on the front pathway to make evening services more accessible and safe. Installation was delayed due to shipping time. The lights have now arrived and with the help of Rev. George, an electrician is slated to begin work soon (most likely right after Thanksgiving.)

The Trustees will also begin developing a draft budget for 2025 that will be presented at the annual meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
John Donohue

Sunday Service 10am every Sunday is also available online via Zoom

Meeting ID 658 791 9474

Password 503008

To join by telephone, dial 929-205-6099 and enter the meeting ID. If prompted for a password, enter 503008.

Saturday Service every Saturday at 5pm  
In person only

Bible Study every Wednesday via Zoom

Meeting ID 658 791 9474

Password 503008

To join by telephone, dial 929-205-6099 and enter the meeting ID. If prompted for a password, enter 503008.



## **Dunbar UCC Open & Affirming Statement**

We, the members of Dunbar United Church of Christ, want Jesus to be the center of our lives. Our mission is to practice the New Commandment that Jesus gave us: to love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34). We seek to follow God's will by loving our neighbors, friends and enemies alike. We seek justice for all.

We celebrate the image of God in every person. As an Open and Affirming Church, we welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of our church, and affirm that the grace of God, known especially through Jesus, is a gift meant for people of every race, color, age, ability, gender and sexual orientation. Worship, leadership, ministry, and employment are open to all.

We are on a journey of faith and invite all people to join us. No matter the church or community where your journey began, you are welcome here.

### **Mission Statement**

“We believe that Jesus calls us to love each other, serve our neighbor, and nurture God's spirit within us.”