



# 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.**

# January 2025

## Pastor's Report, January 2025

One of our Christmas morning traditions is we gather together as a family by the lighted Christmas tree and exchange gifts. I know, I know — no one else does this. Most families are more spiritual — they come together and one person will read the birth narrative of Jesus from Matthew or Luke and then everyone will sit quietly for twenty minutes in centering prayer. Then people go to their rooms and silently ponder the mysteries of “this special day.”

Yeah, right. Anyway, we do the gift thing. I used to love that, about sixty-five years ago. But now I'm obsessive about the mess. I'm the person at these gatherings who goes around with a big green trash bag and picks up every piece of paper and bow and empty box the second it's discarded. I'm anxious to keep everything tidy. Annie and Maria say, “Dad — would you please chill?” I smile and say of course and pour myself a fourth cup of coffee. Because this is Christmas.

But this year Janet had an idea for the gift I should give Annie and Maria and it was actually related to Jesus. Not at first — but it grew. First she asked me what my favorite book is. How does a person answer that? We've probably read a thousand or more books — how does one have a favorite. But I do have a few. I thought of “The Sun Also Rises.” One of my favorites — I've read it maybe thirty times, or more. The story, the characters, the dialogue — I love it. But there are others — *Les Misérables*, *Short Stories of Flannery O'Connor*, *Thomas Merton's autobiography*, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, *Zen in the Art of Archery*.... There's a lot. But then I realized — wait a minute — THE BIBLE!!!! I didn't think of that because it's really not a book — it's at least 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Some versions include seven more books in a section called the Apocrypha. But I told Janet of course the Bible is my favorite book. I thought she was just curious but she ordered two copies of the New Revised Standard Version — and then told me those would be my Christmas presents to Maria and Annie. But — I had to do something with them. Janet wanted me to go through and mark my favorite passage — and put a book-mark so each can find it.

This became an interesting exercise. If you did this — what passage would you mark as especially important? At first I knew — it was obvious. Deuteronomy 6:5 (love God), Leviticus 19:18 (love your neighbor as yourself), and Matthew 22:34-40 where a lawyer asked Jesus which commandment is the greatest and Jesus said “Love God and your neighbor as yourself.” So I took their Bibles and highlighted in bright yellow those passages, and put markers for those pages.

Then I kept saying to myself — “Oh — one more. They need to see this one...”. I did that about six more times — all passages I wanted them to know. Genesis tells us we’re made in God’s image, and that image is “very good.” Then, they had to see Micah 6:6-8 that tells us how God wants us to live — doing right, loving kindness, and learning humility. Then there was Jesus’ New Commandment” — “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” There was another they had to see with their own eyes, because there are so many false and sick ideas of God — they needed to see actually what the Bible says, so I highlighted just three words from the first letter of John: “God is love” (4:8). All these passages about love, so finally I had to include Paul’s short description of what love is (1Cor.13:1-8).

If these are the only passages they ever read in the Bible — those will take good, loving care of them for the rest of their lives. Put them all together, they can be read in about one minute. But they have power to transform a life — to bring the image of God, hidden in us, up to the surface like a bright, healing light. Good idea Janet.

With much love to you this Christmas and New Year, grateful for the light that shines so uniquely and brilliantly through each of you,

George

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***Contact Pastor George @***

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

***revonweb@sbcglobal.net***

# Time for Nominations!

Our church Annual Meeting will be Sunday January 19, 2025 (snow date January 26) to be held in Fellowship Hall at 11am. Please stay for the meeting. We need a Quorum of members to vote. At the meeting we will review and vote on the proposed Annual Budget, and elect members to church offices. This includes the Moderator and officers, Board and Committee members.

All members may volunteer to serve in any office or on any Board or Committee. (See our Open and Affirming Statement.)

You can volunteer or you may also receive a friendly tap on the shoulder to come join in the active life of the church. Ideas for special projects to serve needs in our community and for our wider church mission are always welcome. (See our denomination United Church of Christ website.)

Here are brief descriptions of several of the church offices and activity groups.

**Moderator/Vice Moderator** holds church Council meetings throughout the year to plan and coordinate church activities. Council members include Chairs of the Deacons, Trustees, Christian Ed, Women's Fellowship, other elected groups and 6 At Large Members.

**Board of Deacons** assist the Pastor with services and attend to the spiritual needs of the congregation. They participate in communion and baptism services and decorate the church for holidays. The Pastor and Chair of Deacons approve gifts to persons in need from the Deacons Fund.

**Board of Trustees** manage the church's finances and buildings and grounds maintenance, repairs and improvements. They approve all expenditures and monitor the endowment. They meet monthly to review and approve bills and plan projects. The Treasurer and all financial officers reports to the Trustees. May do the Trustees annual picnic.

**Board of Missions and Concerns** members raise money for charitable causes. They may do special collections for community needs such as supplies for Ukraine, cleaning supplies for flood victims, coat drives, and Blanket Sunday. HOPE (Helping Other People Eat) is a project of Missions.

**Board of Christian Education** selects curriculum for Sunday School and teaches lessons. Special events like the Easter Egg Hunt and Advent workshop as well as other events and children's activities may be planned.

**Women's Fellowship** All women who join the church are automatically members of WF. The women do events to raise money for church projects, charitable donations and scholarships for members who participate in church activities. We are an eating church and we do a lot of cooking including for the Apple Festival, Super Bowl Soup luncheon, St. Patrick's Day dinner, Café Church and once even a chili cookoff. Also the spring tag sale. Once in awhile the men even do a Mother's Day brunch. Just a hint folks.

Other activities to sign up for include Choir, Music Committee, Video Committee, Columbarium Committee and more.

To volunteer or if you have questions please call Kathy Straka Nominations Committee, 203-281-1034 or the church office at 203-288-2342, or email [office.dunbar@gmail.com](mailto:office.dunbar@gmail.com), before January 15.

## **Annual Meeting Cafe Church:**

**January 19 with snow date January 26.**

Women's Fellowship will be hosting a Cafe church in Fellowship Hall so all will be comfortable transitioning directly into the annual meeting. Starting with breakfast bites will change into hearty food to get you through this easy, short, but meaningful annual meeting.

We need a quorum, we're looking forward to seeing everyone! If anyone would like to make a sweet or savory item, it would be so welcome!

Please let me know if you can help with set up or cooking. Many hands make light work.

Thanks,  
Debbie

## **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

Barbara Gengarely in Thanksgiving for All the Blessings we have.

Ted and Noreen Endris

Paul Furgalack and Anne Tamborino

John and Lois Kasarauskas

Rev. George and Janet Manukas

This month we'll be donating to the local Meals on Wheels to help those that can't get out, can't cook healthy meals for themselves and need help. This is sometimes the only human social interaction a person in need gets during the cold winter months.

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

Please help us keep up Helping Other People Eat.

Thank you,  
Debbie Laffin

## **Trustees**

The Trustees are working closely with Pastor George to get the lights installed along the front path. The material is here, an electrician has been hired and he still hopes to have them in place by Christmas Eve. Fingers crossed.

Expenditures and expenses continue to be in line with budget projections. Steve Hurd and Joe Braen are working on a draft 2025 budget for submission at the annual meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
John Donohue

## **Christian Education**

Many thanks to the many hands that made the combination of Cafe Church, Advent Workshop and the Cookie Walk possible! There were many smiles and treasures were taken home.

Special thanks to our crafters: Charlotte, Annie, Lois, Ethan, Luke, Jenni, Linda, Debbie and Bella. And thanks to all of those who participated!

Janet Manukas

### **Women's Fellowship will be holding our annual tag sale Saturday, April 5, 9am-1pm**

When cleaning out your after Christmas items, please think of us. We can store them, please let me know if you are dropping items off so I know what is for tag sale.

## **Deacons**

Dear UCC Members,

It was truly gratifying to witness a strong turnout at our recent "Cafe Church" gathering. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Debbie Laffin for her dedication in organizing this event. Her culinary offerings not only nourish our bodies but also strengthen the bonds of our church community.

We are pleased to warmly welcome Karen and Bob Corona, as well as Kim Cassolino and her mother, Kathy Cassolino, as our newest members of the congregation. Their presence over the years has enriched our community in many ways.

This year, we have observed a positive increase in in-person attendance at our services, and we hope this trend will continue to grow in the upcoming year.

The Deacons remain committed to supporting our congregation members who are in need. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us; we are here to assist you in any way possible.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

Sincerely,  
Kitty Donohue

Women's Fellowship will be holding their "famous" Souperbowl Bruncheon" on Super Bowl Sunday, February 9! Church will be in our sanctuary with our Bruncheon to follow. Salads and breads will be out 10:45 with soups to be served at 11 a.m.

A donation of \$5 is suggested for all the soup, salad and bread you can eat! Usually we have at least eight different soups. Beverages and dessert provided as well! Proceeds will go to the Hamden Food Bank and the Hamden Senior Center.

If anyone would like to make a soup, salad or bread, please let me know so we can coordinate all.

We will be voting on proceeds from our Apple Festival at this time. If you have a charity you would like us to consider, please let me know.

The Souperbowl Bruncheon is open to EVERYONE, please invite your family, friends, neighbors and anybody else to join us! The more tummies we make warm, the better! Hope to see all your faces!

Much appreciated,  
Debbie Laffin

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.”