

**UNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1342 PROSPECT ROAD
ASHTABULA OH 44004
www.trinityashtabula.org**

**JANUARY 2026
NEWSLETTER**



“Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon
you. “

Isaiah 60:1





Ashtabula Times

JOINT COMMUNITY OUTREACH

COMMUNITY COUNCIL 2025 SUMMARY

Through the generosity of three churches joining and working together in 2025 the following was accomplished to help our community:

- Bibles for Prison Ministries – Large box of soft cover bibles
- Assist Stacy's House with monetary and food donations.
- Home Safe monetary donation and Gift Baskets for annual Raffle
- Soup Collection and Reverse Advent for Faith Lutheran Food Pantry
- Baby Shower hosting H.I.P. (Helping Independent Parents) for GO Ministries
- Blankets and Linens for Catholic Charities – too many to count!
- School Supply collection for local schools
- Blessing Box filled weekly.
- Brown Bag Lunches for children
- Annual PCUSA Offerings throughout the year
- St John's Care Closet to assist the Nurse with needs of children.
- Hat and Mitten Tree collecting over 125 items for adults and children.
- 52 shoeboxes for Samaritan's Purse filled by Becki Cleveland, postage supplied with congregation support.
- 800 Water Bottles to Bethlehem Experience
- Kids Only Fund (\$654 added 2025) supports children and families as needed.
- Children Services foster children adopted at Christmas – 12 children.
- Ashtabula City Clean up participation.
- Monetary Donation and workers volunteered for annual R.A.M Event
- Women's Nights out at Old Mill Winery and Steele Mansion
- Community Garden outside Trinity
- Concerts in the Park organized by Becki Cleveland
- Shoes collected and donated.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE FOR MAKING 2025 "A LOVING OUR COMMUNITY YEAR"

NEXT MEETING – January 18, 2026, FOLLOWING WORSHIP

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

RSVP (Retired Seniors Volunteer Program)

For information visit ashtabulagiveback.org or contact Stephanie Blessing – Americore – 440-670-9125 to volunteer

G.O. Ministries

Breakfast at First Baptist Church M-F – Feeding homeless 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Pam Bloom and Edie Makynen: co-chairpersons



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MEETING SCHEDULE

- ✦ Game Day—January 6th and 20th, 11:30am—1:30pm at Unity
- ✦ ROMEOs—Tuesday, January 13th, 9am at Deb’s Diner
- ✦ Tri-Church Lunch Packing—Thursday, January 8th, 10am at Unity
- ✦ Merging Committee —Thursday, January 8th, 1pm at Unity
- ✦ Worship and Music— Monday, January 12th, 6:30pm at Unity
- ✦ Deacons—Sunday, January 18th after worship at Unity
- ✦ Outreach - Sunday, January 18th after worship at Unity
- ✦ East Side Session—Monday, January 19th, 6:30pm at East Side
- ✦ Trinity Property/Finance—Wednesday, January 21st, 6pm at Unity
- ✦ Trinity Session—Wednesday, January 21st, 7pm at Unity



EASTSIDE’S BIRTHDAYS

- 1st John Gehring-Anders
- 17th Nora Giangola
- 18th Pam Headman
- 22nd Marty Burnham
- 23rd Ruth Best
- 25th Cathy Burnham
- 29th Richard Redline



EASTSIDE’S ANNIVERSARIES

None

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

- East Side will have its annual congregational meeting on Sunday, January 25, 2026 after worship in the Sanctuary of Unity Presbyterian.
- Trinity will have a congregational meeting on Sunday, February 8, 2026 after worship in the Sanctuary of Unity Presbyterian.



PRAYER LIST

Genny Wallace, Jim & Rose Booth, Jim Johnston, Randy Cotton, The Family of Dale Fassett, Beverly Cigani and Matt



Ashtabula Times

REPORT FROM TRINITY'S SESSION

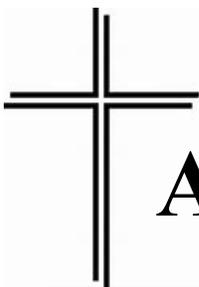
Session met December 17th and the normal business was carried out including:

- Approval of minutes from November session meeting, as well as the December e-mail vote to end the contract with Xerox on the copier.
- Approval of financial reports for November.
- The clerk's report included a thank you letter for our contributions to the school nurse at St. John's school.
- The Minister's report included:
 - ◊ A spreadsheet of his calls and visits.
 - ◊ Next Town Hall January 14th at 6:30 in Unity's sanctuary
- Committee reports
 - ◊ Worship and Music
 - ✦ Communion was celebrated at First Presbyterian on December 7th.
 - ✦ The committee will meet in January to begin looking at the differences in worship practices.
 - ◊ Community Outreach
 - ✦ Gifts for the children we adopted through Children Services and the bed linens for Catholic Charities were delivered.
 - ◊ Property and Finance
 - ✦ The replacement floor runners for the main hallways were installed.
 - ✦ The 2026 budget was presented and approved.
 - ◊ Nominating
 - ✦ Beth Dougherty was nominated to serve to fill a one year opening as Elder.
 - ◊ Merging
 - ✦ Drafting of 15 of 25 topics for the Manual of Operations has been completed.
 - ✦ March 22nd will be the final service at East Side. A funeral dinner for East Side will be served following worship.
 - ✦ April 12th service will be to close Trinity and to open Unity.
 - ✦ April 19th will be the first Congregational Meeting for Unity.
 - ✦ April 1st is the expected date for our CPA to have Ohio and Federal issues resolved.
 - ◊ Presbytery
 - ✦ The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery has contacted the national office to acquire our new PIN. We will officially be Unity when that PIN arrives.
 - ✦ The January meeting of the Presbytery in Jan. 26th via zoom.



Meeting
Minutes

Mary Belding, Clerk of Trinity



Ashtabula Times

MERGING COMMITTEE

The Committee continues to work on the Manual of Operations. This includes guidelines for all committees as well as all policies for operation of the church. As of December, 15 of 25 topics were covered.

The group is working together, studying, researching, and praying to build the foundation on which Unity will move forward as a new church. With God's help, this will assist us in being a church that will work together to share the love of God in our church, neighborhood and as far as we can reach.



GO MINISTRIES

For over ten years, approximately eight volunteers from East Side, First and Trinity Presbyterian Churches have gathered once a month at Trinity on the second Thursday to fill seventy brown bag lunches of sandwiches, chips, juice, fresh fruit and cookies for hungry children and adults that are taken to GO Ministries on Station Avenue where the bags are dispersed at dinner time.

A Special Thank You to all the volunteers who give of their time each month and especially to the Deacons who provide and package the cookies.

This project has brought us closer together as Presbyterians who have shared with each other in Christian love.

FROM REV. MARK

Thank you to the Sessions and Congregations for your generous and gracious gifts to me and my family around the holidays. We appreciate them and you greatly.



THANK YOU

Thank you to all those involved from all three churches that helped move, setup and play the bells during our Christmas Eve Worship. We appreciate your times in rehearsal and your musical talents shared in worship.





Ashtabula Times

REPORT FROM EAST SIDE'S SESSION

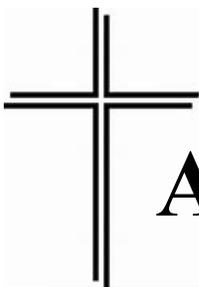
SESSION HIGHLIGHTS FROM EAST SIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

- The Minutes were reviewed and approved.
- The Treasurer's Report was reviewed and approved.
- Kaye Lind reported that the Deacons assisted with the Funeral Luncheons for Courtney Wetzel and Berniece Boggs. Their next meeting will be January 18, 2026.
- Pastor's Report:
 1. Bible Studies are resumed. Wednesday at 10:00 AM and Thursday at 7:00 PM at Trinity.
 2. Reviewed visits and calls with Mark.
 3. New caregiver support group is forming.
 4. The deadline for the newsletter is January 5, 2026.
 5. Mark continues to serve as Moderator of the Coordinating Cabinet and serves on the Moderator's Committee and Coordinating Cabinet.
 6. The next Presbytery Meeting will be held January 26, 2026. The meeting will be by Zoom only.
 7. Worship in 2026 will be at Unity Presbyterian Church 10:00 am. The choir will sing until Pentecost.
 8. Mark officiated at the funerals of Courtney Wetzel, December 1 and Berniece Boggs December 8.
 9. Installation of Officer will be Sunday, December 21, during worship.
 10. Christmas Eve Service will be December 24 at 6:00 p.m. Communion will be served and lighting of the candles.
- Mark will be on Study Leave from December 25th to January 2nd. Rev. Joe Fields will fill the pulpit on December 28th.
- Clerk's report: 2026 Boundary Training Schedule was emailed to the session members. Pulpit Supply has increased to \$200 plus mileage for one service and \$225 plus mileage for two services.
- Merging Committee is continuing to work on the Manual of Operations. The next meeting for the Merging Committee will be January 8, 2026, at 1:00 PM.
- Next Town Hall Meeting will be January 14, 2026.
- Buildings and Grounds: One light in the elevate has been fixed, there is still one that needs fixed.
- Outreach: The next meeting will be January 18, 2026.
- Personnel: The committee is collecting donations for staff bonuses in December.
- Worship and Music: The Bells will play for the Christmas Eve Service. The next meeting will be on January 12, 2026.



**MEETING
MINUTES**

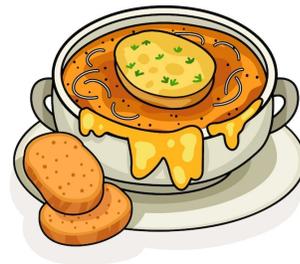
Cathy Burnham, Clerk of Session



Ashtabula Times

LENTEN SUPPERS

Our Lenten Suppers dinner and worship series will resume again this Lenten Season. We will be gathering at 6pm in Unity's Fellowship Hall on Thursday evenings in Lent for a time of food with a soup supper and then a time of worship immediately following. Please be on the look out for signup sheets for the many opportunities to contribute. We begin Lent with a worship service on February 18th at 7pm for Ash Wednesday and end Lent with supper and worship on April 2nd also at 6pm and 7pm respectively. We hope to see you there.



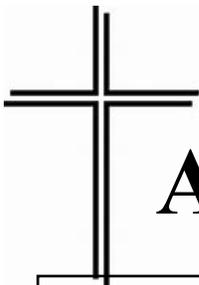
February 18th	Ash Wednesday	
February 26th	Lenten Supper	The Apostle's Creed, Part 1
March 5th	Lenten Supper	The Apostle's Creed, Part 2
March 12th	Lenten Supper	The Apostle's Creed, Part 3
March 19th	Lenten Supper	The Apostle's Creed, Part 4
March 26th	Lenten Supper	The Apostle's Creed, Part 5
April 2nd	Maundy Thursday	

EAST SIDE CLOSING WORSHIP

The Session of the East Side Presbyterian Church along with the Administrative Commission of the Presbytery of the Western Reserve have set a date for the final Sunday worship service for the congregation of the East Side Presbyterian Church. We will be gathering in East Side's Sanctuary on Sunday, March 22nd at 10am with members of the Presbytery to celebrate the life and closure of East Side. We will be celebrating communion with past Ministers and current members of the Presbytery.

Immediately after worship we will be having a final meal and a time to share memories and farewells from anyone so inclined. Please be on the look out for more information as well as opportunities to participate in the worship and meal.





Ashtabula Times



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the third grade, I spent some time as an exchange student with a family in Toronto, Canada. For about a week or so, I lived with a boy, who also was in third grade, and his family. I went to his school, I went to his sports practices, I went with his family to run errands, I ate with them, I played with them and I lived with them. Everything they did, I did. But, even though I was living with them, my home was still in Cleveland. Even though I was temporarily living with them, my home was still elsewhere. Even though I went to school, ate, played, and worked with them, my home was still somewhere else. I was a stranger, I was a temporary exile, and I was an alien in Toronto, because my home was in Cleveland.

Just as I was an alien in Toronto for a time, so too as Christians are we aliens in this world. *By his great mercy God has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* (1 Peter 1:3) God's grace has given us a new and second birth through the work of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which sets us apart from everyone else still living the first one. In a world of people living the material life of pleasures and possessions, God has created a new people living a new spiritual life of faith and obedience. Simply put anyone God has chosen to be born again is an alien living in a hostile and strange world.

No longer is a Christian living in a world that can be called home, because a Christian is not yet home in the Kingdom of Heaven. No longer is a Christian living in a world that can be called theirs, because a life led by the Spirit is so contrary to a life led by the passions. No longer is a Christian living in a world of old friends and family because a new birth demands a new family. No longer is a Christian living in a world which at best is temporary and unclean, because God has an inheritance stored up for us in heaven which is *imperishable, undefiled, and unfading*. The moment of a Christian's being set apart is the moment the Christian becomes an exile in this world, living with and alongside the world, but longing for their eternal home.

The great dilemma that the Christian must learn to face is the daily chore of living in the present world waiting for the future one. Every day we struggle with the temporariness of our existence waiting for the day we obtain our imperishable one. Friends and family are here today and gone tomorrow. In a blink of an eye, health is changed into illness, wealth is changed into poverty, and success becomes loss. But if God the Father promised through the Son and in the Spirit that we have an inheritance which is neither imperishable nor unfading, then we can have a living hope for a future which will not be here today and gone tomorrow, but a future which contains a future of futures.

Not only do we struggle daily with how temporary things are but we also struggle against a world which seems not to care for morality or a sense of right and wrong. Every year we as a society spend less time on finding the "right" things to do and instead spend more time on finding the profitable things to do. John Steinbeck was right in *The Grapes of Wrath* in calling the unquenchable thirst for profit an uncontrollable monster. The only thing that matters in our country is not right or wrong, moral or immoral, virtue or vice, sin or righteousness, the only thing that matters is profit or loss. This is what the Christian must face daily, living in an unclean world, waiting for the *undefiled* world kept in heaven.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, if it was God's great mercy which set us apart from the rest of the world by a new birth, then let us wait through our temporary exile in this world, until we come to inherit the fullness of the next. Let us endure the fleetness of life and the immoral society around us in the present because we know beyond doubt and beyond despair that if God promised a new and greater inheritance we will surely come to possess it sometime in the future. If God is faithful to his promises, then let us wait now; to enjoy forever then!

In Christ,
Rev. Mark