

# PILGRIM'S Progress

December 2024

*"When the angel came to her, he said, 'Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you'." Luke 1:28*

## PASTOR

Rev. Courtney Jones

[pastor@pilgrimageucc.org](mailto:pastor@pilgrimageucc.org)



Dear Beloved,

Somehow, we have blown right past Halloween and Thanksgiving and are staring down yet another mad rush to Christmas. Outside our sanctuary, the world insists on putting on a happy face and making everything merry and bright. But for too many of us, that is not the world we live in—not now, maybe not ever. Year after year, I watch people I love get crushed by the high hopes of the holidays that get dashed by reality: illness, economic insecurity, family tensions, political fears.

So inside our congregation, as we worship this Advent, we are using a series from *A Sanctified Art*, a collective of clergy who approach the season with a hope grounded in reality rather than the wishful thinking of popular culture and consumerism. The theme is called "Words for the Beginning," and here is how the good people at *A Sanctified Art* describe it:

*Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving; and yet, the world as we know it spins madly on. In many ways, pregnant Mary was surrounded by endings—large and small, personal and political. But Mary proclaimed hope in a God who was and is making all things new. Christ's birth offered a beautiful new beginning for shepherds and Magi alike—all the while, King Herod tried to bring Christ's story to an end. When we ourselves navigate seasons filled*

*with endings and beginnings, we need reminders. We need words that can feel like steady ground, like a path for our feet to find as we step forward into the unknown.*

*We have crafted an Advent series filled with blessings, with the scriptures and reminders we need to hear again and again as we begin a new season. These reminders root us in the fundamental truths of our faith. Many of them are life lessons we teach to children—lessons that adults continue to learn and relearn. They may resemble the blessings we impart to loved ones during special ceremonies like weddings, graduations, or baptisms. And so, we invite you to move through this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead.*

We will root ourselves in ancient words, in rich art to draw us into the story, in traditions and practices that keep us close to God. On Dec. 19, we will have our Blue Christmas worship service at 7PM. On Christmas Eve, we will have our family service and children's pageant at 5 and our Lessons and Carols at 10. No matter how the season finds us, the light of Christ will dawn again in our midst. God continues to make all things new.

Have a blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas, dear ones.

God loves you, and so do I.

Courtney



*"You Are a Blessing", inspired by LUKE 1:26-38, by Lauren Wright Pittman,  
| A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)*



## PUCC Vision Statement

**"We are an open and affirming faith community living out Christ's love through acceptance, learning, service, and action."**

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*Pilgrimage*  
UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

## COUNCIL MODERATOR

Lee Fadeley

[pilgrimageuccpresident@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimageuccpresident@gmail.com)



## Advent(ure)

One of my favorite characters in the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* is Toula's father, Gus. Beside his quirky belief in Windex as an all purposeful healing treatment, he enjoyed sharing his belief that most words have their root in a Greek word. As we enter the season of Advent we reflect on the meaning of the Greek word for Advent as the "coming" or "arrival".

And to fully appreciate the "coming" it helps to be mindful of the context of what preceded the "arrival". One, we celebrated and gave thanks for our blessings during Thanksgiving and presumably put us on a path of continuing gratitude. Two, a journey or adventure (think of Joseph's and Mary's trip to Bethlehem) precedes the "arrival". Of course, scripture records many journeys and adventures of the faithful.

The Greek meaning of the word 'adventure' is to risk or dare. In this time for Pilgrimage, we have the opportunity to risk and dare for a greater, more loving ministry as we, the congregation, decide our path for the thoughtful use of the insurance funds.

During the November meeting, the Council arrived at a consensus plan for the allocation of these funds. "Champions" for each of the projects or categories have been set and the additional details are being developed so a clear path forward may be presented to the congregation for review and approval at our Annual Financial Meeting in January, tentatively for January 19, 2025.

Progress continues in other business before the Executive Committee and Council:

- Agreement to engage QuickBooks Accounting Services to provide third-party bookkeeping and reporting activities.
  - ◊ Lowest cost of three services.
  - ◊ Access to QuickBooks Online software by three Pilgrimage Officers.
  - ◊ Significant reduction in labor required by our Treasurers to allow more time for man-

agement/oversight of finances.

- ◊ Includes assignment of bookkeeping specialist and advice from QuickBooks.
- ◊ Will replace current accounting software and 3<sup>rd</sup> party payroll service – all integrated in one platform and electronic syncing of account data.
- Added agreement with our current fire extinguisher service provider to also cover the inspection & certification of our emergency lighting – compliance with fire regulations.
- Collecting budget requests from the committees and other sources to properly develop a draft for the 2025 Mission Spending plan for the Annual Financial Meeting in January.

We are called to be boldly humble, and to dare and risk, in the anticipation of the "arrival" and pursuit of our ministry, to achieve great things in covenant.

Lee M Fadeley, Council Moderator



## PUCC Ornament Exchange

Our Annual Christmas Ornament Exchange is on Saturday, December 14th at 5 p.m. at the home of Dick and Rita Mehlan.

All you have to do is bring a wrapped ornament and a snack or dessert to share.

If you have any questions, please contact Rita at:

[rmehlan@bellsouth.net](mailto:rmehlan@bellsouth.net)

This is always a fun event, and all are welcome. We hope to see you all there!

## PARISH LIFE

Susan Volentine & Carol Hill, Co-Chairs  
[pilgrimageuccparishlife@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimageuccparishlife@gmail.com)



*Trunk or Treat, Oct 2024*

Can you believe it's December already?? It seems that 2024 has flown by.

As co-chairs of Parish Life, we'd like to express our thanks to everyone who participated; brought food and supplied snacks, chili, and baked goods for coffee hour and events; used your energy and enthusiasm in everything from setting up tables and chairs to vacuuming and washing the last dish; and generally showed up and helped out when needed.

We may sponsor and coordinate the events, but you all make them fun, enjoyable and successful!

We can't wait to bring everyone together for more fellowship times in 2025! We'll also have some new surprises to look forward to!

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, and a very Happy and Safe New Year!

Much love,

Susan and Carol



### **Choir & Handbells: Important Announcement**

**Sunday, December 1**

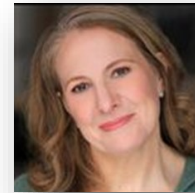
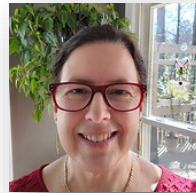
*(immediately following the 10AM service)*

Both the choir and handbell choir are required to attend a dress rehearsal for "Music Sunday" on Sunday, December 1 immediately following the 10:00 service.

[abradl47@aol.com](mailto:abradl47@aol.com)

## WORSHIP

Juliann Heilhecker & Vickie Zuffoletti, Co-Chairs  
[pilgrimageuccworship@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimageuccworship@gmail.com)



Advent is a time of anticipation, hope and rejoicing. What better way to share in rejoicing than experiencing a service full of music. Our annual Music Sunday will be on Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 and 10:00 AM. Our voice choir and bell choir cannot wait to share our joyful music with you.



For some of us, though, it might be hard to find hope or joy because of tragic events that have happened in our lives, or we suffer from anxiety or depression. The one thing that you can take some comfort, is that you are not alone. On Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM, PUCC will offer a Blue Christmas service. This is a service that will allow us to share in grief, sadness, feelings of hopelessness with others. The proverb "Shared sorrow is lessened" is true. Please join us in a service of peace, love, and connection.

Christmas Eve is one of the most joyful days on the church calendar. We will have a family Christmas celebration with the children at 5:00. Our children have been rehearsing and cannot wait to share the story of Jesus birth through word and song. Our candlelight service of lessons and carols will be at 10:00 PM.

However you will celebrate this Advent season, we hope you will join us and find peace, love, and hope.



## MISSIONS

Cindy Westlake, Chair  
[pilgrimageuccmissions@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimageuccmissions@gmail.com)

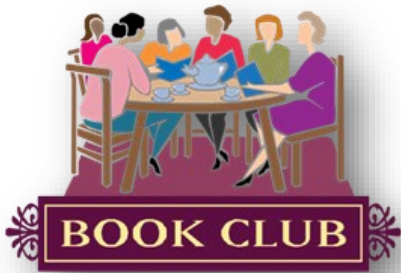


Our December missions project is the Angel Gift Tree.

Once again, we will be collecting toys for the clients of Simple Needs GA – a local organization assisting children, people experiencing homelessness, and others in need. The Angel Tree (located in the Narthex) is decorated with ornament tags denoting the wished-for item and its approximate cost.

Please return the gifts **unwrapped** with the ornament tag attached by December 22nd.

If you prefer to have us do the shopping for you, please see Cindy Westlake.



December Book Club

Tuesday, December 3 @ 7PM

At the church.

The book for discussion is

*"The Beekeeper of Aleppo"*

By Christy Lefteri

## STEWARDSHIP

Greg Kask, Carey Lee, Co-Chairs  
[pilgrimageuccstewardship@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimageuccstewardship@gmail.com)



The Stewardship Committee would like to thank all the members who gave testimonials during our 4 week "Imagine Together" Stewardship campaign.

We also would like those of you who have already turned in a 2025 pledge card.

Pledge cards were mailed out in October. If you did not get one, please pick one up at church; contact Lynne at [office@pilgrimageucc.org](mailto:office@pilgrimageucc.org); or, you may also click on the link below if you would like to submit your pledge online:

[Pilgrimage UCC Pledge Card 2025](#)

Thanks to those who have already submitted a pledge card!

We also would like to thank those of you who have already turned in a 2025 pledge card.

## Deacons Fund Offering

We will be receiving this offering on Sunday, December 29th.

*(While we emphasize the Deacons' Fund when we have 5 Sundays in a month, you are welcome to give any time.)*

The Deacons' Fund specifically helps those in temporary financial need within the Pilgrimage community. Donations can be made by way of placing your check in the Sunday offering plate, mailing a check to the church or use PayPal to submit your donations. Please write "Deacon Fund" in the memo section of your payment. You are welcome to address questions to our Deacon chairs at:

[pilgrimageuccdeacons@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimageuccdeacons@gmail.com)



## UCC Christmas Fund

**The Christmas Fund** has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Bring good news and great joy to those who have who have given so much to the UCC. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gifts to lower-income retirees. Show your gratitude for active and retired UCC clergy by giving generously to the Christmas Fund.

**We will receive this special offering on December 22, 2024.**

## December Celebrations

### BIRTHDAYS

12/02	Patrick Prah
12/02	Emory McDuffie
12/03	Chris Shiver
12/03	John Hallstrand
12/07	Amy Jones
12/15	John Roth
12/23	Noel Reitz
12/24	Bill McNulty
12/25	Rochelle Lofstrand
12/28	Hannah Alexander
12/28	Nancy Donahue
12/30	Stu Gillespie
12/31	Katie Bridges

### ANNIVERSARIES

12/05	Bill & Lois Dischinger
12/21	Fran & Bob Howard
12/21	Monty & Joyanna Wyne
12/26	Carol Hill & Eden White
12/30	Neil & Karen Clark
12/31	Courtney & Auggie Jones

If we missed someone,  
email Lynne at:  
[office@pilgrimageucc.org](mailto:office@pilgrimageucc.org)

## TREASURERS

*Rochelle Lofstrand, Treasurer*

*Stephen Noffke, Asst. Treasurer*

[pilgrimageucctreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimageucctreasurer@gmail.com)

Stephen and I look forward to continued transparency and communication regarding our financial standing.

Please email me if you have any questions!

## October (Month to Date) Operating Expenses

Pilgrimage United Church of Christ

### Statement of Activities

Date Range: Oct 1st 2024 - Oct 31st 2024 | Filtered by: Fund, Core Account

Accounts	Actual Oct 01, 2024 - Oct 31, 2024	Budget Oct 01, 2024 - Oct 31, 2024	Budget Over/Under Oct 01, 2024 - Oct 31, 2024
<b>Revenues</b>			
General Fund	17,253.89	19,846.98	( 2,593.09 )
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 17,253.89</b>	<b>\$ 19,846.98</b>	<b>( \$ 2,593.09 )</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Staff Compensation	10,516.66	11,393.07	876.41
Pastor Expenses	( 761.17 )	467.50	1,228.67
<b>Properties</b>			
General Properties Exp	2,159.45	2,713.33	553.88
Property Insurance	3,606.50	3,606.50	0.00
Utilities	859.61	1,216.68	357.07
Total Properties	6,625.56	7,536.51	910.95
Worship Expenses	48.76	1,021.68	972.92
Communications, Admin & Office	818.21	790.66	( 27.55 )
Christian Education	0.00	216.68	216.68
Other Expenses	6.76	333.34	326.58
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 17,254.78</b>	<b>\$ 21,759.44</b>	<b>\$ 4,504.66</b>
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>( \$ 0.89 )</b>	<b>( \$ 1,912.46 )</b>	<b>\$ 1,911.57</b>

## October (Year to Date) Operating Expenses

Pilgrimage United Church of Christ

### Statement of Activities

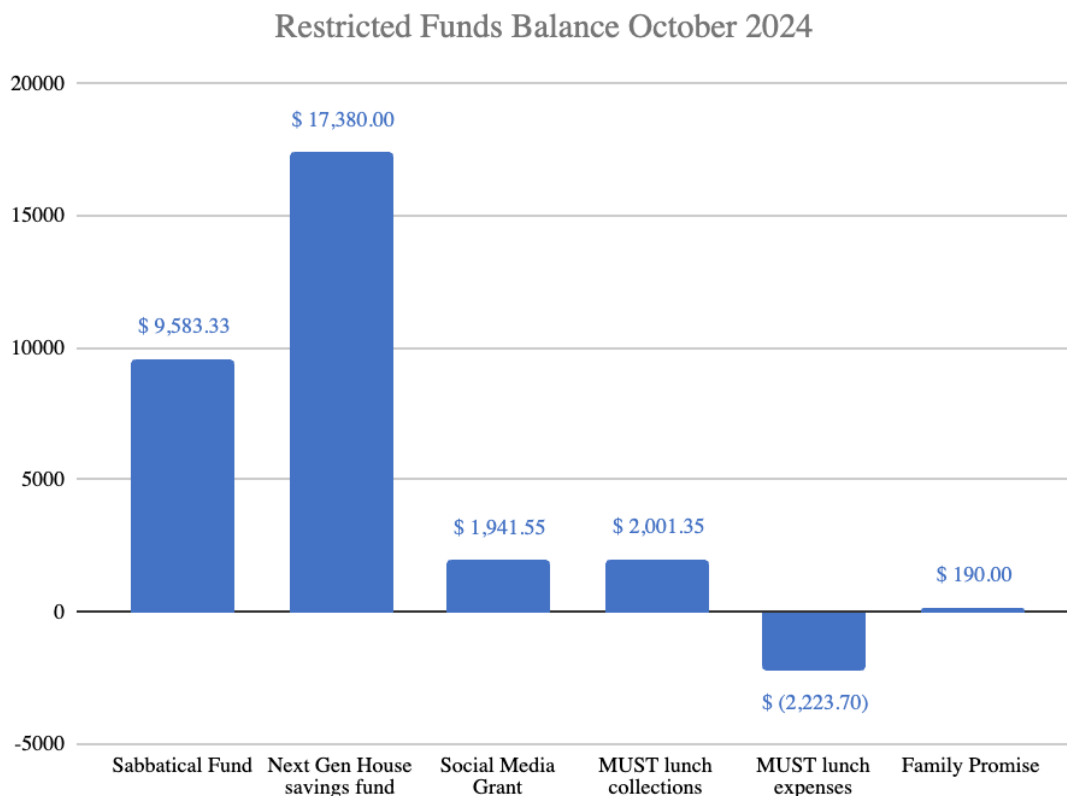
Date Range: Jan 1st 2024 - Oct 31st 2024 | Filtered by: Fund, Core Account

Accounts	Actual Jan 01, 2024 - Oct 31, 2024	Budget Jan 01, 2024 - Oct 31, 2024	Budget Over/Under Jan 01, 2024 - Oct 31, 2024
<b>Revenues</b>			
General Fund	191,761.21	198,469.89	( 6,708.68 )
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 191,761.21</b>	<b>\$ 198,469.89</b>	<b>( \$ 6,708.68 )</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Staff Compensation	111,627.51	112,476.37	848.86
Pastor Expenses	4,216.19	4,675.00	458.81
<b>Properties</b>			
General Properties Exp	21,324.69	26,313.34	4,988.65
Property Insurance	14,426.00	14,751.00	325.00
Utilities	12,040.94	12,642.89	601.95
Total Properties	47,791.63	53,707.23	5,915.60
Worship Expenses	1,906.32	10,216.64	8,310.32
Communications, Admin & Office	9,817.07	12,611.68	2,794.61
Missions	9,000.00	9,000.00	0.00
Christian Education	1,445.18	2,366.64	921.46
Other Expenses	4,253.56	663.32	( 3,590.24 )
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 190,057.46</b>	<b>\$ 205,716.88</b>	<b>\$ 15,659.42</b>
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,703.75</b>	<b>( \$ 7,246.99 )</b>	<b>\$ 8,950.74</b>

Based on the financial reports provided, here are some key trends for Pilgrimage United Church of Christ for October and Year-to-Date:

1. Overall Financial Position: The church is showing a positive year-to-date net total of \$1,703.75.
2. Pledged Giving Status: While October's pledged giving was under budget by \$1,372.61 (actual \$15,430.39 vs budgeted \$16,803.00), the year-to-date pledged giving is actually exceeding budget by \$2,894.39 (actual \$170,924.39 vs budgeted \$168,030.00), showing strong overall commitment from the congregation.
3. Cost Savings in Properties: Year-to-date property expenses are significantly under budget by \$5,915.60 (actual \$47,791.63 vs budgeted \$53,707.23), helping offset some revenue shortfalls in other areas.
4. Staff Compensation Efficiency: The total staff compensation is running very close to budget with a variance of only \$848.86 over the year-to-date budget (\$111,627.51 actual vs \$112,476.37 budgeted). This shows strong payroll management and accurate budgeting for personnel costs.

At the end of October, we had \$52,493.79 in our bank accounts. Our restricted funds account balance is \$27,995.61, leaving us with a balance of \$24,498.18 in our Operating Funds. Our Restricted Funds Balance details are shown below:



The insurance payments were deposited into interest-bearing accounts in March. Our initial deposit was \$542,460.98. Through October, we earned \$ 15,643.33 of interest, and our current balance is \$558,104.31. All treasurer-related requests should be sent to [pilgrimageucctreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimageucctreasurer@gmail.com). Both Stephen and I have access to that account, so we will each be able to respond. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out.  
 Rochelle Lofstrand, Treasurer

## STAFF

<b>Pastor</b>	<b>Rev. Courtney Jones</b>
<b>Music Director</b>	<b>Asa Bradley</b>
<b>Accompanist</b>	<b>Anna Mbiad</b>
<b>Administrative Assistant</b>	<b>Lynne Buell</b>

## Pilgrimage UCC's Emails

Pilgrimage UCC Website:	<b>www.pilgrimageucc.org</b>	Worship:	<b>pilgrimageuccworship@gmail.com</b>
Pastor-Rev. Courtney Jones	<b>pastor@pilgrimageucc.org</b>	Christian Education:	<b>pilgrimageuccce@gmail.com</b>
Office-Lynne Buell:	<b>office@pilgrimageucc.org</b>	VBS-Janet Derby:	<b>pilgrimageuccvbs@gmail.com</b>
Council:	<b>pilgrimageucccouncil@gmail.com</b>	Communications:	<b>pilgrimageucccommunications@gmail.com</b>
Council Moderator:	<b>pilgrimageuccpresident@gmail.com</b>	Missions:	<b>pilgrimageuccmissions@gmail.com</b>
Treasurer:	<b>pilgrimageucctreasurer@gmail.com</b>	Properties:	<b>pilgrimageuccproperties@gmail.com</b>
Council Fin. Secretary:	<b>pilgrimageuccfinsec@gmail.com</b>	Stewardship:	<b>pilgrimageuccstewardship@gmail.com</b>
Deacons	<b>pilgrimageuccdeacons@gmail.com</b>	Parish Life:	<b>pilgrimageuccparishlife@gmail.com</b>
Music-Asa Bradley:	<b>abradl47@aol.com</b>		

## Meeting Schedule for Committees & Small Groups

Book Club via Zoom (Lisa Toomey) .....	1st Tuesday of the month—7:00 p.m.
Pilgrimage Council (Lee Fadeley, Moderator).....	Second Thurs. of the month—7:00 p.m.
Sandwich Club Support (Trish Greeves) .....	Monthly—3:00 p.m. Saturday
Spiritual Seekers' Group (Laurie Spencer) .....	4th Tuesday of the month—7:00 p.m.
PFLAG .....	4th Sunday of the month—1:00 p.m. <a href="https://pflag.org/chapter/pflag-marietta">https://pflag.org/chapter/pflag-marietta</a>

*This listing includes the group name, followed by the coordinator or director in parenthesis then the meeting days and times. If your group should be added to this list, please e-mail [office@pilgrimageucc.org](mailto:office@pilgrimageucc.org).*

## The Month in Sundays

<b>Dec.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1st Sunday of Advent &amp; Hanging of the Green Worship-Communion Sunday (8:30 &amp; 10:00 a.m.) Music Dress Rehearsal (11:30 a.m.)</b>
<b>Dec.</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Music Sunday Worship (8:30 &amp; 10:00 a.m.) Missions Comm. Mtg (9:15 a.m.)</b>
<b>Dec.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Worship (8:30 &amp; 10:00 a.m.)</b>
<b>Dec.</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Worship (8:30 &amp; 10:00 a.m.) PFLAG (1:00 p.m.)</b>
<b>Dec.</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>Worship (8:30 &amp; 10:00 a.m.) Deacons Fund Offering</b>