



## HIRAM CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ)

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*Hiram Christian Church is a spiritual and social center for the Hiram community*

## *FEBRUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER*

Editor's note: You did not miss out - there was no January 2021 Newsletter due to time considerations and lack of information to report. Please remember, everyone is always welcome to submit newsletter items to [secretary@HiramChristianChurch.org](mailto:secretary@HiramChristianChurch.org)

### ***Lent is Coming: Losing and Finding***

For some of us, it may seem redundant. It was during Lent last year when everything began to shift, close, and conclude or transform. It was a fitting season that has cast its purpose into the year, far exceeding the traditional duration of six weeks. Since then, we have been immersed in loss that is both acute and ambiguous: our rituals, our community, our work, our school, our trajectories, our hopes, our beloved, etc, etc, etc... you name it, it has likely been touched and shaped by some quality of loss.

What are we to do with all of this loss?

Within any particular experience of loss, there is the very real reaction and temptation to deny and evade. We know this when the degree of loss is overwhelming by quality and/or quantity. We know this when the loss comes by imposition or invitation. Denial and evasion are one route of response. And, Christ shows us that surrender, engagement, and honoring loss are another form of response.

As we prepare for this season of Lent, we are set to encounter a series of scriptures from the [Narrative Lectionary](#) that will all touch on some dimension of loss:

- February 14: Transfiguration - Achieving by Leaving
- February 21: Guest Preacher: [Dr. Miguel De La Torre](#)
- February 28: Luke 13.1-9;31-35 - Losing the Story of our Greatness
- March 7: Luke 15.1-32 - Losing our Beloved
- March 14: Luke 16.19-31 - Losing our Ladder
- March 21: Luke 18.31-19.10 - Losing our Religion

And, what we remember and learn (again and again) from Christ is that although the gospel invites us to lose so much and so often, that where much is lost, much is found. We see this in the lectionary texts of Holy Week:

- March 28: Palm Sunday - Luke 19.29-44 - Nothing More to Lose
- April 1: Maundy Thursday - Luke 22.1-27 - Finding Greatness
- April 2: Good Friday - Luke 23.32-47 - Finding Faithfulness
- April 4: Easter Sunday - Luke 24.1-12 - Finding Resurrection

Losing and Finding. This, I hope, will be a meaningful thematic framework for entering into Lent this year. Our culture is one of ascension - there is always more to earn, acquire, accumulate, and gain - even within a pandemic. And yet, Christ and Christianity hold the way of descent - loss, humility, generosity, sacrifice, and costly grace. Christ can show us the way into graciously moving through loss, revealing a deeper humanity with focused and faithful vision of what matters most. It is my hope that this season will be another blessing and edifying to you, our congregation, and community.

Peace be with you,

Rev. Chris McCreight

## Stewardship:



### OUR 2021 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

Thank you to all of you who have already made a commitment to the work of Hiram Christian Church for 2021.

**YOU** are the church. **YOU** make possible the mission of our church in the community and in the world.

Right now, our anticipated 2021 income of \$116,360 does not match our costs to do ministry--\$134,595.

**YOU** can help make up the difference through pledges, designated special gifts, or a one-time gift over and above your normal faith giving.

Copies of our projected budget are available by contacting our Financial Secretary Ann Patella.

[Ann.Patella@gmail.com](mailto:Ann.Patella@gmail.com)

### **Stewards report from David Dade:**

Electrician Tom Kristoff properly set the timer for our parking lot lights and installed an electric outlet by the existing gas water heater in the south furnace room of the church. He borrowed a lift in an attempt to change the lamp of the parking lot light closest to the southwest corner of the church, but uneven ground prevented the lift from working.

The installation of a powered vent gas water heater can occur now that the electric outlet is installed. We have a quote from November, 2020 from Silver Creek Plumbing and a recent quote from Harner Plumbing Corporation to provide and install a power vent gas water heater as a replacement for the existing gas water heater. This is a prerequisite for capping the chimney.

### **Spiritual Formation:**

We continue to meet on zoom, Sunday mornings at 10:15. Thanks to Margaret Stehno, our faithful teacher, who is leading us through the narrative lectionary as we learn about the travels of Jesus.

We are going to be "sprucing up" the Sunday school room with new bulletin boards and banners. Kids (and adults) are hopefully saving their wonderful home art creations to display. Kate Hankinson and Nancy Schauer will be working on bulletin boards in the Education building also, so we need a lot of colorful artwork, posters, etc.

Individual supply boxes are ready for return to gathering. Efforts to keep from sharing germs are in process.

### **Prophetic Witness:**

#### **Syrup news:**

Nathan Goodell, acting as our agent, has sold our 2020 drum of syrup to Richards Maple Products, in Chardon. Since this is at bulk rate, the return is not as great as it would have been had we been able to bottle it, but there will be money to be sent on to Growing Hope Globally, and we are now freed up to begin again when the sap runs. When Nathan receives the revenue from Richards, we will pass on to you the amount.

**XPLOR:**

## HIRAM-MANTUA XPLOR ANNUAL REPORT TO MCCC BOARD JANUARY 17, 2021

Mantua Center Christian Church, Hilltop Christian Church, and Hiram Christian Church joined together to become a site for the National Benevolent Association's (NBA) initial year of their new Xplor program in 2014. Our last group of Xplor residents returned home in May, 2020, with the program deciding not to place any residents the 2020-2021 year due to the COVID pandemic. Instead, the national NBA/Xplor staff decided to use the year to evaluate the program and reimagine Xplor's future.

Prior to the COVID pandemic and Xplor's decision not to place residents this year, it was mutually decided between the national and local Xplor teams, that Hiram-Mantua would participate in the Xplor program for one remaining year. The national team had already closed a couple of Xplor houses to make room for other sites to develop and experience Xplor in their areas. Prior to Christmas, however, Bonnie Osei-Frimpong, Director of NBA Xplor, called both Rev. Chad and me to inform us that it had been decided by the national Xplor team not to continue the Hiram-Mantua site for that one last year. In fact, only two Xplor houses are planned for next year with several closing. There are several other exciting possibilities Xplor is also "exploring," however, with no definite decisions as yet. So, the decision as to whether or not Hiram-Mantua will do one last Xplor year has been gently made. The Hiram-Mantua Xplor house is closed.

Some historical perspective might be helpful and fun. Hiram-Mantua was a site for the Xplor program for six years from 2014 to 2020. In that time 20 residents completed their 10-month placement, one left shortly after Christmas to begin her medical training, and two were requested to leave the program. Our residents came from California and Oregon in the West to Virginia and North Carolina in the East and many states in between. The first year (2014-15) Rev. Jeff Jackson wore multiple hats to get the program off the ground, including Xplor Team Leader, Work Site Coordinator and Spiritual Companion. The following year Rev. Chad Delaney took over the Work Site Coordinator responsibilities and later became the Team Leader until the end of the program. Rev. Chris McCreight then took on the Work Site Coordinator role. Linda Idoine became the Spiritual Companion in the second year and continued along with Chad and Chris until our last resident left in May, 2020.

There were two additional components in the Hiram-Mantua team that contributed to our success. The first was the availability of housing in the center of Hiram village through Pam and Dave Auble. This apartment provided reasonable and very adequate housing with laundry provisions for the last five years of the program and was so very much appreciated. The second strength to be mentioned was the composite team of individuals who came from Hiram, Hilltop and Mantua Center to oversee and manage Hiram-Mantua Xplor. This was a group of very dedicated individuals, who really "greased" the program with their efforts of everything from finding furniture, cleaning the apartment, ensuring food was in place upon move-in, providing transportation, coordinating the final farewell service in the Spring, and being a mentor and companion, among others.

Each resident was assisted in finding their own special place to shine, grow, and understand more about themselves and their place in God's world. Most became heavily involved in their church placements, assisting with all parts of the worship service, Sunday School, Life Study, Bible Study, youth group, dinners of all types and varieties along with related activities such as Derthick's corn maze and maple syrup collecting. The various work sites gave them individual experience with college students, special needs populations, preschoolers, community coordinating, after school programs, feeding those without enough to eat, and social justice here and in Central America. Meeting weekly for two hours with a spiritual companion helped them to explore their own sense of faith and spirituality by looking at social justice, what is community, gratitude, prayer, simple living, discernment, God's will for their lives and cultural diversity issues among others. The discussion was most usually insightful, self-disclosing and often deep. In addition, we were fortunate enough to take various groups to New York City twice, the Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington D.C. three different times, and an overnight retreat at Punderson State Park and Amish country among others.

Our Disciple community was really the glue that made the magic of Xplor happen, though. So, whether you helped the residents learn how to make soup and bread, took them to Playhouse Square, invited them over for dinner, took them a plate of cookies, enjoyed a walk together, accompanied them to a park or county fair, or played a game together, each resident benefited from the generosity of spirit that is such a part of this community. But maybe you shared quietly what it is to be a person of faith with a welcoming smile, by sitting next to a resident in church, affirming them as a person or for something special they did that you noticed, by sharing your own faith journey or what your understanding of what being a Christian is. It all mattered and made a difference.

And so, Hiram-Mantua ends our time with the Xplor program of the Disciples NBA. There are still a few loose ends to clean up, such as what to do with any remaining monies and whether to have a final time of celebration once it is safe to do so again. But the gains have already been made for both the residents AND our church communities. We are all better for them having been here.

Respectfully,  
Linda Idoine  
Spiritual Companion, Hiram-Mantua Xplor program

### **In the Life of the Congregation:**

#### **Prayers of comfort:**

Family and friends of Ray Fatig, who passed following recent surgery. Prayers especially for wife, Bev and daughter, Patrice, who is a friend of Margaret. \* Jamie's mom, Nancy Wilson, and Nancy's brothers and sisters at the loss of their Aunt Phyllis who passed away. \* Roseanne's friend Lilly Olson has lost her second adult child to cancer. Her son, John Olson died last week. \* Harriet Oros in the passing of her son last week. \* Family and friends of Sara Davis who passed away. Especially for husband Nick, daughter Eleanor, and siblings Kamal and Shan, friend David. \* Aaron Harner's sister-in-law, Rachel at the loss of her father. \* Missy's friend, Eric, passed away. Prayers of comfort for family and friends. \* Charlene and family as they mourn the loss of Dave. \* Those "heavy of heart" who have suffered loss of loved ones.

#### **Prayers of healing and strength:**

Dave Peters and Hazel. \* Emliss and Cathy's brother-in-law, Eldon and his brother. Karl has Covid. \* Continuing prayers for Ken and Damaris. \* Healing for Darnell Clark. \* Doug's brother Jim is still in the hospital. Prayers. \*

Lydia's grandparents are struggling with Covid. \* Gilda Mateo's mother who had surgery yesterday for a broken hip and her brother Raphael who has colon cancer. Both are in Dominican Republic and Gilda can't be with them. \* Sandy Coffman who is healing from a fall. \* Jimmy, a man who was recently diagnosed with Stage 4 Cancer of Bones, lymph nodes and esophagus. \* John Boyle's mom, Mary Ellon. She is back in assisted living in Bedford and is going downhill fast after suffering strokes. Family can't see her; and she has difficulty communicating. \* Kay Pike Easton, Ken's sister. Cancer treatments are uncomfortable. Prayers that the treatments will be effective and less disturbing. \*

Lucy asks for prayers for her sister, Joann, who has Covid. \* Sydney's Uncle Bill is on a respirator and it is not looking good. Many of the family members have Covid. \* Eli's friend, Pat, is fighting Covid. \* Eli's friend Amie is struggling with cancer. \* Robin's friend, Lynn, may need surgery and is afraid of the hospital because of Covid. \* Roz's friend, Mairén.

\* Kim Guy and those in her workplace, Stewart Homes School, during a Covid outbreak. \* Pam Shawgo's principal, Lauren, was in the hospital fighting Covid. \* Pam's friend's daughter, Alexis, also has Covid. \* Peg and John's daughter, Ziva is struggling with ongoing chronic respiratory issues. \* Continued prayers for our health care workers, public health workers. \* Prayers for Erin, Kristen's friend, who struggles with GI problems. \* Kristin's niece, Rachel, who started getting a new treatment for her Crohn's Disease, and so far it has been working very well, and hopefully will mean no surgery. \* Margaret's sister-in-law in CA, was hospitalized with virus issues and will now be going to Rehab to gain strength. She has kidney transplant so having the virus and getting worse after seeming to be better is a concern. \* Margaret's sister, Trish, in IN continues in need of prayers as try to find the right heart medications for her. Also, Margaret's brother, Larry. \* Prayers for Pam Auble as she regains strength following surgery. \* Prayers for Stephen and Madelyn Sifton, 8 & 10 years old, who tested positive for COVID, and for their single father, Scott, caring for them. \* Kristen's little brother Davey and his family, as he is in quarantine after a close coworker tested positive for Covid. \* Paula Huffman- young relative of the O'Bryants, as she recovers from a liver transplant. \* Tyson's mom, Jane Vines, who is dealing with kidney issues. \* Sheryl Coffman Dufey is recovering from outpatient surgery. \* Owen and Chase ask for prayers for Mary's father who was in the hospital with Covid.

#### **Prayers for our students, nation and churches:**

For food banks which are struggling. \* For children and all who teach them during this time of changes and adaptation of schooling. \* For our new administration. May they lead with wisdom and grace. \* For patience and strength for those struggling with COVID and with quarantine.

#### **Blessings and celebrations:**

Blessings of birthdays- Eli, Peri, Dawn, Missy, Damaris, Nancy Lacan. \* Kids prayers for Hygge, Peri, amazing family and friends, love, chickens, kindness, respect, love, peace, cartoons and donuts.

#### **Words of gratitude:**

Thanks to Pastor Chris, who made fellowship hall available for the Moss family during Dave's burial.

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