Longswamp United Church of Christ

# The Beacon

**December 2026**

**Teaching, Sharing, and Acting on what we believe**




## Worship: Sundays @ 10:15 am

**200 Clay Road,**
**Mertztown, PA 19539**

**www.longswampucc.org**

**January Newsletter Deadline: Tuesday, December 22**

*Wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!*

## Contact Us

Church Office: 610-682-6230
Monday-Friday
9:30am - 2:30pm
secretary@longswampucc.org

# From the Pastor

Rev. Kimberly Berenotto

A few years ago, my family started a new tradition we call “Appetizer Christmas”. When we all gathered to celebrate Christmas…none of us really wanted to sit down to a big meal. There were two main motivating factors:

(1) No one wanted to spend that much time in the kitchen preparing, cooking and then cleaning. We’d rather spend that time together.

(2) We liked the appetizer foods best! It made us able to try a bunch of different things and enjoy our favorites (plus save room for dessert too).

Appetizer Christmas has been wildly successful. No one is chained to the stove. We all bring a variety of savory and sweet dishes. We aren’t afraid to attempt a new recipe because it’s just a small part of the celebratory spread. The first year we tried this new tradition my mom even put goldfish crackers in her grandmother’s crystal bowl, so Alex had a festive dish too. Appetizer Christmas makes room for even a toddler’s dietary preferences.

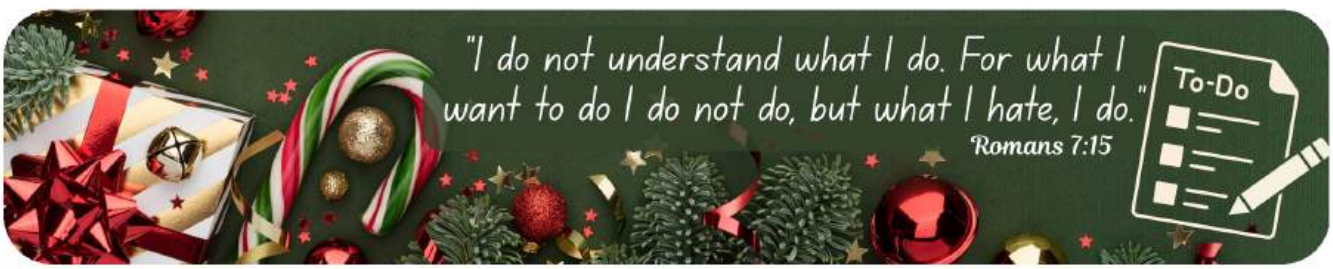
There’s something about this low-pressure approach to Christmas food that has created space for just being together. Without the demands of a large sit-down meal, we’ve had time to play games, extend opening gifts, and more.

I share the story of Appetizer Christmas with you NOT because I want to convince you to stop hosting, cooking, or eating a big Christmas dinner, BUT because it’s worthwhile to reflect on what is life-giving to us as individuals and to our families during the holiday season.

There’s a benefit in assessing our Christmas traditions and even making adjustments so that our holiday reflects our values. Do we need to blindly check off the same to do list each year? Take the perfect holiday photo. Get the holiday deals on Amazon. Run to every gathering and party. Make the food that feels required of you. Send cards to everyone you’ve ever met. Decorate floor to ceiling, inside and out. End the season exhausted and ready for it to be over. It’s not just you, even Paul found himself confounded by what he spent his time on, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do.” (Romans 7:15).

Instead, perhaps, we can ensure that what we spend our time, our energy, and our money on this Christmas aligns with the hope, peace, joy, and love we talk about in church all Advent long. Maybe, we can come to the end of this holiday season reflecting the light Christ brings into the world knowing we’ve grown in understanding and faith; not squashed down by the pressure and fatigue of what the world tells us Christmas should be. There’s room for all of us to make, even minor, changes that would lead to a more meaningful season.

So, I’d like to wish you a Merry Appetizer Christmas…whatever that might look like for you.



## Sharing Our Faith

## December 2026 Worship Schedule

### Services Sundays at 10:15 am

On-site and live stream worship service ("Longswamp UCC" Facebook page). Afterward, service is uploaded to our "Longswamp United Church of Christ" YouTube Channel.

**December 6**- 2nd Sunday of Advent: [Christmas] Gifts of the Spirit, Choir Sings

**December 13-** 3rd Sunday of Advent, Family Christmas Musical: "In a Galilee Far, Far Away," followed by Fellowship Lunch in Fegely Hall

**December 20-** 4th Sunday of Advent, Moravian Love Feast featuring special music from The Williams Duo (harp & guitar)

**December 20 -** 7pm Longest Night Service

**December 24-** Christmas Eve- Services: 7pm Family Service and 11pm Contemplative Service, Communion and Candlelight at both

**December 27-** PJs & Donuts: Casual Christmas Service of stories, carols, and fun.

## December Ministry Partners

**Greeters**

**Dec 6-** Shirley Solt
**Dec 13-** Bob Friedly
**Dec 20-** Leo Desrosiers
**Dec 24 (7PM)-** Vern Shade
**Dec 24 (11PM)-** Will Miller
**Dec 27-** Isamoyer Family

**Head Ushers**

**Dec 6-** Shirley Solt
**Dec 13-** Bob Friedly
**Dec 20-** Leo Desrosiers
**Dec 24 (7pm)-** Vern Shade
**Dec 24 (11pm)-** Will Miller
**Dec 27-** Allison Isamoyer

**Readers**

**Dec 6-** Justin Smith
**Dec 13-none needed**
**Dec 20- none needed**
**Dec 24 (7pm)-** Amy Riovo
**Dec 24 (11pm)-** Charlene Rachor
**Dec 27-**Jim Gibson

## December Altar Flower Sponsors

**December 6th-** *In loving memory of Jeanette Walbert's birthday*

**December 20th-** *in honor of their 59th wedding anniversary, given by Al and Sue Lishman*

## Poinsettia Orders

Poinsettia orders are due back by Sunday, December 6th. We have red, white, and marbled plants to choose from and will be getting them delivered from Glick's again this year. If you'd like an order form or would like to place an order, please contact Maggie.



# IN A GALILEE FAR, FAR AWAY

A Family Christmas Musical

## Sunday December 13th
## 10:15 am

★★★★★ All are welcome! ★★★★★

**Longswamp United Church of Christ**
**200 Clay Rd**
**Mertztown, PA**





# Moravian Love Feast



## December 20th at 10:15 am

*Join us the 4th Sunday of Advent for a special service to celebrate the love that comes to us as Jesus born in a manger. We will share in the love feast of sweet rolls and coffee/hot chocolate and worship with music from the Williams Duo (harp & guitar).*



## Longest Night Service

### December 20th at 7pm

The beauty of the Christmas season is it often reminds us of what we've lost. Join us for a special worship, sometimes called a Blue Christmas service, that embraces the darkness we feel during the holidays. We will hold space for what seems broken in our hearts during a time when much arounds us is focused on holly and jolly. You are welcome however this Christmas season finds you.

## Christmas Eve Services



### December 24th

Services at 7:00pm & 11:00pm

All Christmas Eve services include Communion, your favorite carols, and Silent Night sung by candlelight (glow sticks are available for those uncomfortable holding a lit candle).

The 7pm service is family-oriented and includes a Children's Message and special music from our choir and Glenn Fisher on flute. The 11pm service is quiter and more contemplative.



## PJs & Donuts

### Dec. 27th at 10:15 am







Join us for a Family Christmas Service of stories, carols, and fun. Wear your Christmas pajamas - doughnuts will be provided!





# Save the Date for our Epiphany Celebration!



Close the holiday season with the arrival of the Wise Men at the manger on Sunday January 3rd!
We will have a special Sunday Service a 10:15 am surrounding the Magi, distribute star words for the New Year, and conclude worship with an open house of food and fellowship at Schubert Haus hosted by Pastor Kim and her family!



## Leadership Updates

# The View From The Bell Tower

### Guten Tag!!

2026 has been a good year. Longswamp UCC has many things to feel good about and has many reasons to be thankful. Instead of writing the normal article journaling the weekly happenings at the church, I am sharing the introductory comments provided at our Congregational meeting on 11/22/26.

Our church's "motto" is "We welcome everyone-no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey." This guiding principle plays a part in creating the good energy we experience every single Sunday morning during worship. Aside from being welcoming, our members and friends are truly concerned about each other and many form deep connections. The result has been an increase in weekly attendance numbers: an average of 57 in 2026 compared to 42 at this time last year. It has been over ten years since the average attendance was this high. We also added ten new members and five new children this year. Since 2022, 47 adult members have joined or reactivated their membership.

Another thing we can feel good about is the increased engagement of our families and children. Our Sunday School is growing from an almost non-existent program to an average of 6-7 kids each Sunday and our Confirmation program is vibrant too. A prayground has been created so that our children can get accustomed to worship. Plus, an engaging and Bible-based children's message is presented every Sunday. Additionally, our youth are fully involved with our Christmas Plays and this year they assume many of the lead roles. Our Longswamp Learning Center provides a valuable service to our community. More recently, The church has developed an increased connection with and a stronger commitment to the Learning Center and this vital mission.

Speaking about missions, I want to acknowledge the strong way in which our church supports missions. Every month we wholeheartedly help either a local, worldwide, and or internal mission. I wanted to highlight the groups we assisted in 2025 and 2026:

- OCWM with an offering total of $1917.00 for 2025
- Backpack Buddies Program at BH Elementary School
- LUCC Steeple Repairs
- LUCC's Community Easter Egg Hunt
- Blankets for the benefit of Church World Service
- The Brandywine Food Pantry
- LUCC Summer Fun for Kids (2025)
- Heifer International
- Healthy Snacks and school supplies/BHHS
- LUCC Barn Dance
- Friend Inc. Community Services
- Christmas presents for Friend Inc. & Phoebe Allentown
- LUCC Christmas Wish List



- LUCC Snow-mergency Mission
- Kids Kits for Church World Service
- LUCC - Summer Activities - Swampfest, Confirmation Retreats And our All Church Picnic
- LUCC - Learning Center - collection of Tissues and Paper Towels
- Christmas presents for Phoebe Allentown and for youth at Bethany Children's Home

Pastor Kim will be celebrating her fifth anniversary of ministry at Longswamp early next year and we are thankful that God sent her to us. Many of the accomplishments I spoke about are enhanced by Pastor Kim's constant drive, guidance, and determination. With all this momentum, Longswamp UCC has a promising future and we have to believe this revitalization will continue through 2027 and beyond! The Church Board and I want to thank each and every one of you for your help and support in making Longswamp UCC what it is today, tomorrow, and in the future! Thank You!! Until the next time, Frohe Weihnachten und ein glückliches neues Jahr!

THE GHOST OF THE BELL TOWER

## Acting on Jesus' Teachings



## LUCC's "Acting" Ministry Theme for 2026
**"Doing God's Work in Today's World."**

**1st Sunday of each month - Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) -** What is OCWM BASIC SUPPORT? - OCWM provides funding from congregations for Conferences and the national ministries of the United Church of Christ (Wider Church Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, General Ministries and Pension Boards.)
*(taken from the UCC's "Is Your Church 5 for 5?" flyer)*

## Ongoing Mission for the Brandywine Food Pantry

Let's help make the holidays a little brighter for the food-insecure residents of the Brandywine Heights Area School District. Please drop off your donations of non-perishable food items, personal care items, household items, paper products, cleaning supplies, etc. before or after our worship services on Sunday mornings, or during the week from 6:30 AM - 5:30 PM. Please put your donations in the wicker tote boxes in the bell room.

# December 2026 Internal Mission
# LUCC's Christmas Wish List

Longswamp UCC's Christmas List is back for another year! During the month of December, make sure to check the board in the narthex for our "wish list" items--everyday expenses that keep the church running. Examples of these items range from our monthly oil payment to monthly electric to our Children's Church curriculum. If you'd like to help us to offset some of these costs, please take a slip from the board and make sure to put it with your donation, marked "LUCC's Christmas List." We've had such a great outpouring of support these last few years and this December mission really helps us to meet our budget for the year. Thank you in advance for your support!

## THANK YOU

LUCC shared the joy of Christmas with others by providing Christmas presents for twenty residents through the Operation Santa Program at Phoebe (Home) in Allentown and twenty holiday gifts for four youth (5 gifts each) residing at Bethany Children's Home (BCH) in Womelsdorf. We were also able to provide other general Christmas presents (bed sheets, etc.) for some of the youth at BCH and some special gifts for a few of the cottages. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU to Pastor Kim for making all the arrangements for LUCC to provide Christmas presents for several youth (ages 11, 17, and 18) residing at BCH and being willing to deliver everything there. (Pastor Kim is vice chairperson of the Board of Directors at Bethany Children's Home.) A HUGE "THANK YOU" to our LUCC members and friends who helped brighten the Christmas holidays for twenty residents of Phoebe Allentown and several youth from Bethany Children's Home by providing holiday presents for them. LUCC's donations of Christmas presents will be delivered to the appropriate facility in early to mid-December.

*Aloha LUCC Family,*

My family and I have had an eventful year! Packing up and moving 5,000 miles from home has been an adventure to say the least. Island life suits us and it's beautiful out here, but we're all longing for a crisp northeastern fall day right about now. We really appreciate the care packages that you send, it's a nice reminder that home isn't as far away as it seems. Thank you for keeping us in your thoughts and prayers, we'll see you all soon!

*God Bless,*
*Alex Jenkins*



## Teaching What We Believe

# Children's CHURCH

*There is something for kids and families every Sunday at Longswamp UCC!*

Children's Church is the name of our Sunday School Program. See the schedule below to find out which Sundays kids will join the teachers in the Preschool Room during worship (after the Children's Message) for games, crafts, Bible Stories, and more. Sunday School is open to kids of all ages!

Your family is welcome any and every Sunday - and as always, our PrayGround will be open each week (with extra activities on the Sundays there is no Children's Church). The PrayGround is our area in the front left of the sanctuary set-up especially for kids and has fun ways for children to engage in worship.




**December 6: Children's Church/Sunday School - Joseph's Joy**
**December 13: Christmas Musical - In a Galilee Far Far Away**
**December 20th: Jesus' Birthday Party during Sunday School**
**December 27th: PJs & Donuts Family Sunday**

LONGSWAMP LEARNING CENTER

# LLC News

The holidays are just around the corner and for LLC, that means a lot of preparation! We have our annual Christmas Program for the families of LLC on Friday, December 11th. The children parade around and sing songs, families are welcomed to meet Santa and have cookies and treats, and students get to stuff their own gingerbread or moose stuffed animals. Miss Sharon always makes the holidays a fun production for the students.

In addition to our Christmas program, Preschool students also get to do a book exchange, where they can bring a book and then pick a wrapped one. We have a few themed days coming up, too, such as Pajama Day, Green Day, and Red Day! Typically around the holidays, we have movie days, too, where some of the students get to watch a Christmas movie!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Nothing Bundt Cake fundraiser! We were able to raise over $1,000, which will go toward field trips, transportation, and in-house events.

Also thank you to Dawn Strunk, who will be coming off the LLC Board this year. We are so appreciative of the time and effort you gave to LLC!

# CHRISTMAS CRAFT DAY



December 16th
Fegely Hall

10:30 am
or
6:30 pm

Join us for a time of fellowship and crafts for BOTH adults and kids.

## COUNT DOWN TO CHRISTMAS...

Advent Calendars for families are available in the Narthex!



Pastor Kim also contributed to an Advent devotional with UCC clergy across Eastern PA. It is available on our church's website or if you'd like a print copy, please contact the church office.

## "In A Galilee Far Far Away" Updates:

Dec. 6th - Rehearsal after church (11:15am)
Dec. 7th - Rehearsal at 6:30pm
Dec 11th - Sanctuary Set-Up/Decorate at 5pm
Dec 12th- Dress Rehearsal 9am (lunch provided)
Dec 13th - Show Time! Be at the church by 9:30am



Faithful Field Trips

Our Faithful Field Trips Women's Group is taking a holiday break. We will be back for our next adventure on January 6th - so mark your calendars! More info TBA!



## MEN'S GROUP

LUCC's Men's Group is meeting again! If you'd like to join them, please call Justin: 610-529-3394

# Family & Community Updates

## December Birthdays

**December 1-** Dean Shoemaker, Sophie Wegner
**December 4-** Doris Epting
**December 6-** Luke Dirsa
**December 7-** Al Lishman, Roxanne Reimert
**December 12-** Emma Hummel
**December 13-** Diane Shoemaker
**December 17-** Zoe Rachor, Suzanne Daloisio
**December 19-** Hannah Wegner
**December 20-** Will Miller
**December 21-** Benjamin Jenkins
**December 27-** Linda Davis
**December 29-** Willow Hapenovich
**December 31-** Carolynne Eichler, Susan Sterner, Derek Strunk, William Weller

## December Anniversaries

**December 9, 1967-** Al & Sue Lishman
**December 11, 1982-** Jill & Vern Shade
**December 12, 2004-** Harry & Melody Herr-Bruen
**December 27, 1986-** Kim & Ren Jenkins

*Dear LUCC Secret Church Friends,*

Thank you so much for the thoughtful and generous gifts. The cakes were delicious. The handwarmers are going to good use and we really appreciated the Cabela's gift card. We used it towards new arrows for Emma. Thank you again. We will see you during the season's break,

*Sincerely,*
*Debbie and Emma*

*To the ladies of the prayer shawl ministry group-*

Thank you so much for the blanket that was made and prayed over for my son, Jackson. Receiving that gift was very touching and I greatly appreciate it. God bless all of you!

*In Christ,*
*Cindy Snyder-Kresky*

**Congratulations!**

Congratulations to Chance Levi Strunk, who was baptised into our Church Family on November 15th. Chance is the son of Zachary Strunk and Jazemine Boyer, and is the brother of Eren Strunk. We're so excited to welcome him into our family!

# Prayers Needed



**Church Family Prayer Needs:** George Unger, Ramona Romanik, Wilma Lease, Karen Friedly, Annabelle Weller, Doris Epting, Fern Fritz, Brenda Bower, Geraldine Stoudt
**Serving Our Country:** Zachary Rachor, Alexander Jenkins, Adam Hapenovich, Tyler Reed
**Church Friends Prayer Needs:** Karen McPherson, Madeline Geist, Ann Gannon, Micah and his Family

# Church Business

## October 2026 Financials

### Income and Expenses

| | |
|---|---|
| Member Giving: | $6,605.87 |
| Other Income: | $5,019.30 |
| Total Income | $11,625.17 |
| Expenses: | $12,387.09 |
| **Net Income (loss):** | **$761.92** |
| Building Fund Expenses: | $5,167.53 |
| Memorial Fund Income: | $0 |

### Account Balances as of 11/23/2026

| | |
|---|---|
| General Fund Checking: | $48,213.58 |
| Contingency Fund Checking: | $3,022.90 |
| Memorial Fund Checking: | $20,050.60 |
| Building Fund: | $56,169.10 |
| Building Fund Checking: | $8,111.64 |

### Message from the Treasurer

Included in member giving for missions are $260 for Our Church's Wider Mission and $806 for Friend, Inc. Included in Other income is $2,600 for the Learning Center facility use fee, $2,281.31 for the cell tower lease fee and $121 from the Food Sale. Included in Building Fund expenses are $500 toward the Education Building stucco project, $493 for cleaning, $600 for mowing, $406.53 for water testing and equipment maintenance, $957 for the heating oil budget payment and $2,151 for the annual HVAC maintenance contract.



Did your information change? If you have any changes to phone number, address, or email, please contact the church office to update this information. Staying up to date is the best way to stay active in the goings-on of LUCC!

## Church Staff

**Pastor -** Rev. Kimberly Berenotto .....pastorkim@longswampucc.org.....610-401-1847
**Office Administrator & Newsletter Editor** - Maggie Isamoyer...secretary@longswampucc.org
**LLC Director** - Sharon Wetzel .....sharon@longswamplearningcenter.com.....610-682-9750
**Church Board President** - Vern Shade.....vern.shade@longswampucc.org
**Maintenance Manager** - Ray Ziegler.....raymond.ziegler@yahoo.com

# Longswamp UCC

Planting seeds of faith by teaching, sharing and acting on what we believe.

## Our Newsletter

*The Beacon*

*December 2026*

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