

# December 2016 Outlook

## Unity Hill United Church of Christ

*“Where God’s Love Grows a Family”*



364 White Plains Road, Trumbull, CT 06611

Web site: [www.unityhillucc.org](http://www.unityhillucc.org)

E-mail: [unityhillucc@gmail.com](mailto:unityhillucc@gmail.com)

Phone: 203-374-8822 Fax: 203-374-1120

### The Reverend M. Todd Shipley, Pastor

The Reverend Harold C. Smith D.D., Pastor Emeritus

Dorothy W. Pickens, Soloist

Louise Evans, R.N., Parish Nurse

Lucille Bayer, Moderator

Diane Henderson, Vice-Moderator

Lorie Ann Boveroux, Christian Education Director

Shari Herman, Interim Bookkeeper

Dawn Brezina, Financial Secretary

David Brezina, Church Clerk

Joanne Wickson, Office Administrator

Calap Brown, Sexton



Office Hours: Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.



**OUTLOOK DEADLINE** ~ We welcome contributions to our monthly newsletter and invite you to share information, or even something more creative! The **JANUARY 2017 Outlook** will be published at the end of December. All submissions, special announcements, articles or events **provided on, or before, the DEADLINE of Wednesday, December 14** will be included.

**PASTORAL CARE** If you, or someone you know, is hospitalized, please call the church office (203-374-8822) to let us know. Hospitals **do not** notify us when a parishioner is hospitalized.



**Please remember our homebound in your prayers or with a note:**

Barbara Bailey, Hazel Berger, Dolores Colaiacomo, Elsie Rapposch, John Ray, Katie Schneider, Rev. Harold C. Smith, Mitch Wein and Nellie Wirth.

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## **A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE ~ By: Pastor Todd Shipley**

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**LIVING BY THE WORD** Nov 11, 2016 by Katie Hines-Shah

**December 11, Third Sunday of Advent ~ Isaiah 35:1-10; Matthew 11:2-11**

December is so dark. There is a reason we light candles, sing songs, and gather together this time of year. In the Northern Hemisphere we do these things not just for the sheer joy of the season but to stave off the darkness crowding the doorway and nipping at our heels.

It's worth mentioning this because everything in our culture this time of year tells us we are supposed to be happy: glossy magazines, manipulative TV specials, mass-produced Christmas cards, grocery store circulars. Inevitably we end up disappointed. The turkey is dry, the airport crowded; the shiny boxes that might have contained Lego sets and American Girl dolls hold school clothes and underpants instead. Even the church fails to deliver. The baby angels will be off pitch, the sermon inadequately uplifting, the crowd at the midnight mass a little thinner than last year.

And these are just the minor disappointments. Therapists and pastors know to save room on their calendars in December. Loss is magnified in a season of light. Empty places at the dining room table can't be ignored. Job loss and debt are revealed in the paucity of the feast or the scarcity of presents. When there is no comfort and joy, faith falters.

The story goes that John the Baptist was born on the summer solstice. Six months older than Jesus, quick enough at the Visitation to leap in his mother's womb, John is a figure of dynamism, judgment, and light. John's brightness lays sin bare; his prophecy calls down fire.

Yet as this week's Gospel passage opens, John finds himself alone in a dark prison cell. Suddenly, he who recognized Jesus as the Messiah seems to harbor doubts. "Are you the one who is to come," John asks Jesus through his disciples, "or are we to wait for another?"

In ancient prisons, prisoners were cared for by friends and family, their needs provided not by the state but by supporters. News passed freely. So John must know something of Jesus' ministry. In the preceding chapters of Matthew, Jesus has cleansed a leper, caused the lame to walk, restored sight to the blind, and raised the dead. John surely knows all these stories.

He may also know that this litany of miracles follows a pattern set by Isaiah. In today's first reading familiar themes emerge: the eyes of the blind are opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped; the lame leap like a deer. Jesus' reply to John references not just this passage from Isaiah but others as well. One wonders if John is waiting for Jesus to fulfill Isaiah 61:1, "liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." Perhaps this most personal of dashed hopes causes his doubts to rise.

Some cast aspersions on John for this supposed lapse. Some see it as evidence that John never reaches heaven, taking literally Jesus' final words in this passage ("the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"). But it seems churlish to hold a condemned man's fears against him. Jesus' ministry, after all, is not much like John's. The complaints of John's disciples throughout Matthew's Gospel serve to highlight the fact—Jesus is not what John expected. There's more feasting, less fasting; less condemnation, more grace. At this moment it seems there is more darkness, less light.

Jesus seems especially generous with John in pointing out his blind spot. John, though the greatest among women born, is also not entirely what the people expected. He is unlike the official leaders of the Hebrew people. He is no "reed shaken" by the winds of Rome. John wears camel's hair in the place of soft royal robes. He surpasses the great men of his day and those before. This is good news—especially to the downtrodden and the poor. John is "more than a prophet." He is the one who ushers in the new age of the Messiah, even though he won't live to see its fruition.

And therein lies the crux of the story. It is always darkest before the dawn. The cross comes before the empty tomb, death before resurrection's light. For Jesus' followers this is an offense, a "scandal" in the Greek. John will not be the last to doubt or even desert. Jesus' family will question his ministry. The

disciples will flee and hide. Judas will betray him; Peter will deny him. And yet this will not stop the coming of the kingdom. We can't blame them for their wavering. Like John the Baptist, these first followers of Jesus don't know the end of Jesus' story.

But we do. Our waiting is different from John's. We know how this story ends: in hope and promise and light. And those of us who suffer and sorrow this season remember that the Messiah comes to his glory through the cross.

Jesus comes to be fully one of us—to know our joy and sorrow, our goodness and sin, our life and death. Jesus will know what it is to be poor, to lose someone you love, to be friendless, to suffer. Jesus will, like John, face an imprisonment that ends in death. If we had any question before, Jesus' ministry makes it plain: there is no place we can go where the Messiah will not be present. Not even our doubts and fears. Jesus comes into these places and redeems them.

In these dark days before the solstice—before hope dawns—we are not alone. The Messiah is not in the glittering fantasy of advertising, the false promise of materialism, even the idol of a perfect family. When we seek him in those places we are bound to be disappointed. Jesus meets us instead in our Christmas disappointments and doubts, our loneliness and our longing. Those who wait in darkness will see a great light.

<http://christiancentury.org/article/2016-11/december-11-third-sunday-advent>

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## CHURCH UPDATES

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### ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL BUDGET MEETING

Sunday, December 11, 2016 following worship service  
All members please plan on attending to vote  
on the church budget for 2017.

### CHRISTMAS CARD FROM UNITY HILL UCC MEMBERS

Instead of sending out individual Christmas cards you can choose to sign the "Blanket Fund of Church World Service" card, and send your Christmas Blessings to everyone. Your \$10 will be donated to CWS Blanket Fund, which helps people in times of disaster. Sign the card on the Missions bulletin board in December, or call the church office to add your name and you can mail a donation.



**New Address for Hazel Berger** ... Hazel, a long-time member has moved to Bethel Health Care Center, Room 129W, 13 Parklawn Dr, Bethel, CT, 06801. Please send her a card and keep her in your prayers.



**IN CASE OF BAD WEATHER** ~ Listen on the Radio to WICC (600 AM) or WEBE-108 (107.9 FM) or watch WTNH-TV Ch. 8 for church cancellation notices or go to [www.ctweather.com](http://www.ctweather.com) to sign up to be notified instantly of any cancellations. If Trumbull schools are closed or dismissed early, our office will be closed also. Here's how you can sign up to get free e-notifications via text and/or email when we post a cancellation on [www.ctweather.com](http://www.ctweather.com) (Ct Weather Inc. – local, tri-state & national weather)

Go to [www.ctweather.com](http://www.ctweather.com); Hover over E-notifications (top choice in 3rd group at top of home page) Pick the group you want notifications from and click on it ... Unity Hill UCC is in "public organization" Fill out the bottom of the form to sign up. Any questions, call Joanne in the office at 203-374-8822.

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### DIACONATE ~ By: Patricia Bowman, Chair

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The next meeting for the Diaconate is Tuesday, December 6 at 1:30 p.m.

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## GEORGE'S HILL

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Next get together is Thursday, December 8 from 11:30 am until 1:00 pm. George's Hill is a social engagement group for persons with memory problems or early dementia and their caregivers, where they can meet with other people with similar problems, for a fun program and lunch, which is provided. To register, please call the church office at 203-374-8822 or sign up on our web site. Our motto is: **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

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### **CHURCH COUNCIL ~ By: Moderator, Lucille Baver**

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**CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING** on Monday, December 14 at 7:00 pm

**COMMITTEE REPORTS TO COUNCIL** are due in church office by **Monday, December 7.**

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### **MISSIONS COMMITTEE ~ By: Brenda Finizio, Chair**

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#### **THE CHRISTMAS FUND: Remembering Our Veterans of the Cross ~ Those Who Serve Our Church**

~ Provides financial aid to retired and active ministers and their surviving spouses and children who face overwhelming financial demands, a ministry carried out by the Pension Boards. We collect the envelopes for this mission during the month of December ending on Christmas Eve.



#### **CHRISTMAS CARD FROM UNITY HILL UCC MEMBERS**

~ Instead of sending out individual Christmas cards you can choose to sign the "Blanket Fund of Church World Service" card, and send your Christmas Blessings to everyone. Your \$10 will be donated to the Blanket Fund of Church World Service, which helps people in times of disaster. Sign the card on the bulletin board in December, or call the church office to add your name and you can mail a donation.



Thank you for all your donations to the Thanksgiving Food Baskets for needy families. Your help is greatly appreciated.

*The members of the Missions Committee wish you all a very "Blessed Christmas" and thank you for your generous support throughout the year.*

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### **BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE ~ By: Sharon Brezina, Chair**

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Welcome to Winter... well almost. Buildings and Grounds and the contractor are working diligently to get our new bathrooms up and running within the next few weeks. Right now the tapers are finishing up - the paint and tile have been selected and the fixtures have been ordered. B&G is very excited for the unveiling sometime early December!

We still have little jobs to be done around the church. The list is posted on the B&G board ... if you can help us out it would be greatly appreciated. I will be picking up the wreaths and some poinsettias for decorations - may need help displaying throughout the inside and outside of church.

B&G will be hosting the Christmas pot luck luncheon for the holidays on Sunday, December 18th. A signup sheet will be posted soon - so keep an eye open for it!

We would like to Wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Safe and Healthy New Year....

May God bless you all, Sharon, Steve and Trevor

#### **SIMPLE WAYS TO WINTERIZE YOUR HOME AND STOP THROWING AWAY MONEY**

**Dodge the draft**

**Problem:** Cold air is rushing in from underneath your door, and warm air is rushing out.

**Solution:** The draft snake, adopted during the Great Depression era, is one of the easiest ways to cut back on energy waste. A draft snake can be easily made by rolling up a towel or filling up a pouch of fabric with kitty litter or sand, advises [The Daily Green](#). Or you can buy one pre-made.

**Money/Energy Saved:** According to the [U.S. Department of Energy](#), drafts can waste 5 to 30% of energy use per year.

### **Bubble wrap your windows**

**Problem:** You suspect your windows are as old as your grandparents and cold air is leaking through the cracks.

**Solution:** Tape bubblewrap on your windows to trap the pockets of air that cool down your home. Although it may look funny, the bubblewrap will still allow light to come through and you'll be saving some major dough, advises [Life Hacker](#).

**Money/Energy Saved:** Taping up bubblewrap can avoid drafts which waste 5 to 30% of energy usage per year, according to the [U.S. Department of Energy](#).

### **Change the direction of your ceiling fans**

**Problem:** The air in your home feels hot and trapped, but turning on a fan only produces cool air.

**Solution:** If you have any ceiling fans inside your home, know the rules: Counter-clockwise rotation produces cooling breezes and clockwise rotation produces warmer air.

**Money/Energy Saved:** This method will cut your heating costs by 10%, according to [The Daily Green](#).

### **Control your thermostat**

**Problem:** You want your home warm so you keep the thermostat high, but your wallet is suffering from the high energy bill.

**Solution:** Set your thermostat to 50 or 55 degrees when you go to bed and work. You won't enjoy the warmer temperature while you're asleep or away from the house, anyway. You can also purchase a programmable thermostat.

**Money/Energy Saved:** Turning down your thermostat 10 to 15 degrees for eight hours a day can save 10% per year on your energy bill, according to [Brighter Planet](#).

### **Turn off your A/C water valve**

**Problem:** You have an A/C with a water valve that you suspect has been leaking, which can clog up your water pipes.

**Solution:** Shut off the A/C water valve to prevent excess water from collecting in the equipment. Drain all air conditioning pipes, says [The Green Daily](#).

**Money/Energy Saved:** Doing this during the winter will save you from having to buy a new A/C unit next summer.

### **Lower your water heater's temperature**

**Problem:** You've unknowingly kept your water heater on the default setting.

**Solution:** Conventional water heaters are typically set at 140 degrees Fahrenheit, but most households only need a setting of 120 degrees to be comfortable. Check your water heaters and lower them to 120 degrees.

**Money/Energy Saved:** Lowering it by 20 degrees will save about 6 to 10% on your bills, says [Energy Savers](#).

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**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ~ By: Lorie Bouveroux, Christian Ed Coordinator**

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The month of November (and the end of October) have been very busy in our little classroom space.

We have adjusted nicely to a new routine in our classes. First we visit the crafting area and do a faith based, lesson appropriate craft. At this spot, we talk informally about our week and the lesson or theme for the week is approached. I can test what they know in an informal setting... and the best thing is the project is usually dry and ready to go home with them!

As the project is finished we gather in another space and celebrate Christ and his love around our altar. The children made the altar frontal using banners and craft markers to represent themselves. We read and visit the Gospel reading that is being used upstairs in the big church and then talk about our church school theme. We learn what the readings and messages mean to us and how they can work for us in our daily lives. Our overarching theme this year is adapted from a curriculum I have used in the past called Godly Play. Every Sunday we focus on where we are within the church year and what "color" season it is. This is why Samantha was able to tell everyone on Sunday that next week will be a purple week and that it is Advent. The four overarching themes for this year are, Religion, Christianity, the Church and the UCC church.

Since my last report, we have made candles, discussed the saints in our lives and the saints in our lives that passed, looked at symbols of faith and have studied scripture pertaining to giving thanks for all good things. Please enjoy the photos of the children and remember, you are always welcome in the classroom space to visit and to help. I am blessed and privileged to work with an amazing group of children and teens every week.

Lorie Bouveroux



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## FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

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### **WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP ~ By: Carole J. Fanslow, President**

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~ Our Annual Christmas Tea will be on Thursday, December 1 at 1:00 pm. Devotions will be offered by Wally Yeager. If anyone can make finger sandwiches or desserts, it would be most appreciated. The entertainment this year will be the Festive Ringers Handbell Choir. Area church women are invited. Monetary donations will be accepted for the Center for Family Justice which serves victims of domestic violence and their families in the greater Bridgeport area. Start the season off right by joining us for Christmas music.



~ No Meetings in January or February except for the Executive Board on Thursday, January 5 at 12 noon.

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### **FELLOWSHIP OF UNITY HILL ~ By: Dot Pickens, President 2016**

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~ FUH's annual Christmas Party will be on Sunday, December 11 at 5:00 pm at the Blue Goose Restaurant in Stratford. Cost is \$30 including tax and gratuity, plus bring a grab bag gift. Dinner choices are: roast sirloin of beef; chicken parmigiana; stuffed filet of sole; golden fried bay scallops. You don't have to belong to FUH – just come to enjoy an evening out with friends. Sign up on the bulletin board with your choice of entrees or call Dot Pickens at 203-508-2406 for reservations.

~ Our next turn to provide the meal at **Golden Hill Community Suppers** will be on Wednesday, December 28; We will cook at Golden Hill UMC starting at 2:00 pm and serve at 5:00 pm. Help is always needed and appreciated. Please contact Dot Pickens for more information. Many thanks to our volunteers that served on October 26 at Golden Hill United Methodist Church: Ed & Wally Yeager, Ron Finizio, Marsha Piper, Renate Krakovich, Marie Seavey, Carole & Allen Fanslow. More than 100 people enjoyed our entrée. Cost of the meal was \$200+. Also, thank you to those that stayed or supported our Hunger Luncheon on Sunday, November 6. Proceeds from this event will help towards another meal.

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## COMMUNITY GROUPS AND HAPPENINGS

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### **TRUMBULL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

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**ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS FAIR ~ December 3, 2016 from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm**

TRUMBULL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, 3115 Reservoir Avenue. 203-268-2433

As the holiday season is fast approaching our friends at Trumbull Congregational invite you to reclaim the meaning of the season and the joy of giving global gifts that make a difference!

Select from over a dozen international causes, including:

- > Safe Motherhood Kits for women in the Congo
- > Protection of the Orangutan's home in Indonesia
- > Aid for Syrian refugee women & children
- > Books for school libraries in Ethiopia
- > Education & vocational training for children in India
- > Create family farms in Haiti

Also available will be handmade, fair-trade gifts from Mama Jane's Global Boutique (Southport) and BeadforLife.

A children's craft table and baked goods (for purchase) will be available to keep your little ones busy while you shop.

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**MIDDLEBROOK FARMS WORSHIP SERVICE**

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Monthly worship services at Middlebrook Farms Health Care Center will usually be on the first Thursday of the month under the leadership of Deacons Wally Yeager and Carole Fanslow. Once in awhile that changes. *Next worship service is Friday, December 9 at 2:00 pm.*

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**TRUMBULL INTERFAITH COUNCIL**

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Monthly meeting is on Wednesday, December 12 at 7:30 pm at Congregation B'nai Torah, Trumbull.

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**COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF GREATER BRIDGEPORT**

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Delegates Meeting will be on Thursday, January 12 ~ Place and time to be announced.

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**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS 2016**

Choice of White or Red potted poinsettias at \$12.00 each.  
Payment and order **MUST** be submitted to the Church Office  
by **Monday, December 5, 2016**



**IMPORTANT:** Please do not include any other  
payments or pledges in the same check.

**Please check off one of these options ...** If you **do not** check off a choice, your plant(s) will be donated.  
( ) I will pick up my plant(s). ( ) I will help deliver the plants. ( ) I wish to donate the plant(s) to a shut-in.

**Please do not take your plant until you check with Louise Evans or one of her helpers.**

You can give the form to Louise Evans or submit form to church office or

Mail to: Unity Hill United Church of Christ, 364 White Plains Road, Trumbull, CT 06611

**Attention: Christmas Poinsettias**

QUANTITY	PLANT	COST EACH	TOTAL
	Red Poinsettia	\$12	\$
	White Poinsettia	\$12	\$
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>			\$

Cash ( ) Check ( ) Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Please Print.

From \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

In Celebration of \_\_\_\_\_

## December 2016

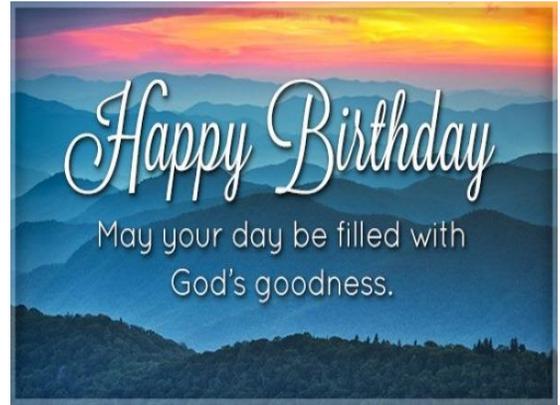
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 <b>1:00pm</b> Women's Fellowship Christmas Tea	2 <b>8am-12pm</b> PCCT	3
4 <b>9:00am</b> Bible Study	5 Committee Reports to Council due by today	6 <b>1:30pm</b> Diaconate Meeting	7 <b>12:00pm</b> Bible Study	8 <b>11:30-1:00</b> George's Hill <b>3-9pm</b> PCCT	9 <b>8am-12pm</b> PCCT <b>2pm</b> Middlebrook Farms Worship	10
11 <b>9:00am</b> Bible Study <b>11:30am</b> Congregational Budget Meeting <b>5:00pm</b> FUH Christmas Party	12 <b>7:00pm</b> Church Council Meeting	13	14 <b>OUTLOOK DEADLINE</b> <b>11:30-2:30</b> Kennedy Center <b>12:00 pm</b> Bible Study	15 <b>3-9pm</b> PCCT	16 <b>8am-12pm</b> PCCT	17
18 <b>9:00am</b> Bible Study	19	20 <b>7-8:30pm</b> Overeaters' Anonymous Intergroup	21 <b>12:00pm</b> Bible Study	22	23 <b>8am-12pm</b> PCCT	24
25 <b>MERRY CHRISTMAS</b> 	26	27	28 Golden Hill Community Suppers <b>2:00pm</b> Cook <b>5:00pm</b> Serve	29 <b>3-9pm</b> PCCT	30 <b>8am-12pm</b> PCCT	31 <b>NEW YEAR'S EVE</b>



**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY IN DECEMBER**  
12/17 Gail and Donald Gorlo

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY IN DECEMBER !**

2 Sandra Osten	10 Lorie Boveroux
5 Gail Gorlo	17 Andrew Pickens
5 Kim Hayward	18 David George Brezina
9 Brenda Finizio	24 Elisabeth Boveroux
10 Lucille Baver	26 Wally Yeager
10 Al Paolozzi	30 Elsie Rapposch



***"No matter who you are  
or where you are  
on life's journey,  
you are welcome here!"***

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