

First Congregational Messenger
 First Congregational United Church of Christ
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Serving God with love and faith



December 2023

Volume 5, Issue 110

Flowers, like everything else, have increased in price in the last few years. When you sign up for altar flowers this next year, the price will be \$30 for every Sunday.



All-Church Potluck

Two potluck dinners in December. The first is Dec. 10 following the Christmas program. For Dec. 31's potluck, please bring something you might eat for New Year's Eve: dips, cheese & crackers, leftover Christmas cookies, etc. And at noon, 12 o'clock, we'll wish each other "Happy New Year!" If you're in town, hope to see you there.



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PASTOR'S HOURS

Monday-Thursday 10-4
 Other times by appointment
 May be out of the office for meetings or visits

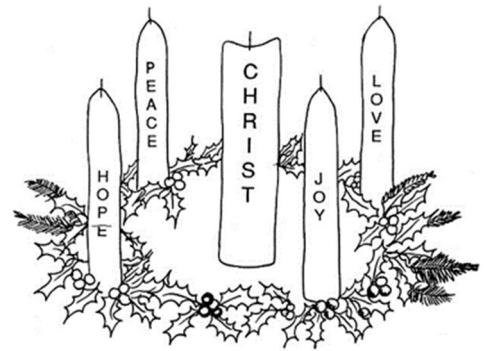


Office Hours
 Monday-Friday
 8-12

Advent Season

*Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem.
May we let ourselves be drawn by the
light of God made human. -Pope Francis*

Advent is the four weeks before Christmas. The Latin word means “*coming*”. During Advent, we prepare for the coming of Christ. Advent is a time of preparation for Christ’s coming to us.



Advent has been celebrated by Christians as early as the 4th century. The art and mood of the Western church in the Middle Ages (5th century through the 15th century) emphasized the crucifixion rather than the resurrection, so the season had mostly a penitential feel. Purple symbolizes penitence.

Many in Christianity believed the second coming of Jesus was to be accompanied by God’s final judgment of all people, when some would be given approval, and some would be punished. Showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong (being in a state of penitence) was a way to prepare oneself for Jesus second coming.

As late as the 12th century, however, the somber mood of Advent began to blur with a joyous season of looking forward to the birth of Christ.* For churches that don’t emphasize the negative, more judgmental aspect of the second coming, a penitential tone in Advent makes little sense. The modern blue color helps to distinguish Advent from Lent (a time of reflection and repentance). Blue is also the color of royalty, a color representing Jesus’ mother, Mary, and the night sky that is the backdrop for the star of Bethlehem.

During Advent, we acknowledge the darkness of the world, not only as the days grow shorter, but the darkness of all that separates us from God, others, and ourselves. The darkness of war is not far from our minds these days as we receive daily reports from the Holy Land, fewer reports from Ukraine, and zero reports from the war in Sudan. Daily horrors all.

During Advent, we begin the season with hope in the darkness. As we near the time of Jesus’ birth, the light grows ever brighter. Candle light reminds us of the One who brings light into the darkness—for four weeks, represented by the four candles around the Advent wreath.

Peace, Pastor Jackie

*H. Rice and J. Huffstutler, *Reformed Worship*, Geneva Press, 2001. Page 144-145

MEMORIES OF CHRISTMAS



Christmas Program and Dinner – December 10

Christmastime brings back old memories more than any other time of the year. However young or old you may be, or where you were that Christmas, there's often a fond memory of giving and sharing with others. It's a time of mystery, music and carrying forward customs from long ago. Even corny decorations, questionable food choices, and extreme commercialization can't get in the way of enjoying the spirit of the season.

We asked the congregation to share their memories, perhaps:
a memory of Christmas that sticks with you;
a Christmas tradition that you practiced in your home; or
a memory of being away from home at Christmas time.

We will weave these stories into the Christmas story for a joyful time of celebration and anticipation. Invite friends and family to join us December 10th for worship and potluck dinner after. The Williams family will provide the turkey and you are invited to bring a dish to share. *As always, everyone is welcome and we always have plenty of food for all!*

Worship Events this Season

December 3	Advent 1 - Hope, Communion Sunday
December 10	Advent 2 – Peace Christmas Program Memories of Christmas and Pot Luck (turkeys will be provided by The Williams')
December 17	Advent 3 - Joy! The Christmas Fund dedication
<u>December 24</u>	<u>5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service</u> No regular morning worship service (evening only).
December 31	Worship: Readings & Carols (potluck to follow)
January 7	Packing up of the Greens (9:00 a.m. an hour <i>before</i> worship).

Time Away – Pastor Jackie will be on vacation Friday, December 28 through January 4. After her day off on the 5th, she will return to the office January 6. Her voicemail will have phone # for emergency pastoral care.

The Christmas Fund Dedication December 17



“Grace upon Grace.” John 1:16

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” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!



Youth Reach Out to the Rescue Mission

Thanks to all who baked cookie bars for the Norfolk Rescue Mission, Sunday, November 12th – Darlene, Reese, Skylar, Kayliee, Grace, Micah, Barb, Michelle, and Pastor Jackie. The Youth also made cards and delivered cookies to several members of our community.

The youth giving tree this year will go to Bright Horizons. They have compiled a list of things that would be helpful and asked that we NOT donate used clothes and shoes. The tree is located in Fellowship Hall.



The Joy of Giving

Bright Horizons Donations Wish List

- Paper goods (Kleenex, toilet paper, paper towels)
- Cleaning Supplies (dish soap, multi-purpose cleaners, toilet cleaner)
- Laundry Soap
- Tall Kitchen Trash Bags
- Personal Hygiene Supplies (deodorant, soap, shampoo, conditioner)
- Baby Supplies (diapers, wipes)
- Dry and Canned Food
- Bedding and Towels
- Kitchenware (pots, pans, dishes, silverware)



Book Club will meet December 13 at 10 AM. *The Hello, Goodbye Window* by Norton Juster. The book can be found in Fellowship Hall or you can contact Jane Uzzell.

Thank you for the colorful Happy Harvest card and the tasty bars.
Sincerely, Terry Hamilton

Dear First Congregational United Church of Christ,

Please accept my deepest gratitude for the wonderful instruments to be used in my classroom! They have been making joyous music nearly every day. The students have enjoyed being very creative with the instruments. We all appreciate your kindness and generosity. Bless you all, Dawn Rugg



Do you go grocery shopping? At Lou's? At HyVee? **We have an easy way to bump up your donation to the church budget**--use a Lou's or HyVee gift card when you go shopping or get gas. You can buy them **Sundays** in Fellowship Hall. We currently get \$25, \$50 and \$100 gift cards.

See you at the table in Fellowship Hall! Please help out. The gift cards fit right in your billfold by your dollar bills, so it's even easy to remember to use them when you go to pay for your groceries. Questions? Leave a message for Jane Uzzell at (402)640-6623.

The youth group,
Thank you so much for the delicious plate of thanksgiving treats you brought Sunday. We enjoyed every bite! Your thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated. Lovingly, Glenn and Lois Williams

DECEMBER Birthdays & Anniversaries

1st Stacie Uzzell
7th Susan Hansen
18th Ben Uzzell
26th Karen Allyn
31st Virginia Barritt

Anniversary

23rd Jeff and Evonne Burkink





December 3 First Sunday of Advent

Communion: Tom McConnell and Verletta Olson

Ushers: Gene and Darlene Korthals

Greeters: Scott and Lori Williams

Reader: Brian Seier

Leader: Scott Williams

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 10 Program and Potluck

Ushers: Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

Greeters: Randy and Kay Neuharth

Reader: Scott Williams

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 17

Ushers: Ed Lindsay and Mike Synovec

Greeters: Bonnie Dewell and Barb Koenig

Reader: Kay Neuharth

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 24 5:30 PM Christmas Eve

Ushers: Sue Surber and Barb Koenig

Greeters: Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

Reader: Tom McConnell

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 31 Potluck following the service

Ushers: Evonne Burkink

Greeters: Gene and Darlene Korthals

Reader: Jane Uzzell

Flowers: Poinsettias



January 7

Communion: Sue Surber and Brian Seier

Ushers: Tom McConnell and Bonnie Dewell

Greeters: Ed Lindsay and Verletta Olson

Reader: Lori Williams

Leader: Susan Allyn

Flowers: Susan Allyn

January 14

Ushers: Ben and Grace Uzzell

Greeters: Rita Woodard and Jane Uzzell

Reader: Verletta Olson

Flowers:

January 21

Ushers:

Greeters: Grace and Reese Uzzell

Reader: Randy Neuharth

Flowers:

January 28

Ushers: Rita Woodard and Jane Uzzell

Greeters: Sue Surber

Reader: Reese Uzzell

Flowers:

Please notify the office if you are not able to attend a service.

November

From 11/1/23 through 11/30/23

Checking account information

Beginning balance	-\$ 2,356.41
Savings Transfer	\$ 8,925.00
Food Pantry	\$ 25.00
Poinsettias	\$ 16.75
Scholarship	\$ 250.00
<u>Weekly deposits</u>	<u>\$ 10,379.00</u>
Subtotal	\$ 17,240.72
Salary	--\$ 6,639.84
Church Maintenance	—\$ 6950.50
Office Expenses	—\$ 851.16
Faith Development	—\$ 16.63
Worship	—\$ 41.00
Scholarship	—\$ 250.00
Food Pantry	—\$ 25.00
Insurance	—\$ 1,042.20
Continuing Education	—\$ 70.00
Conference	—\$ 1,234.00
<u>Renner's</u>	<u>—\$ 500.00</u>
Final Balance	—\$ 379.61



The Church Maintenance total includes \$5,875 for repair of the windows.

▶ December 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship in Sanctuary	6:30 PM Girl Scouts	6:15 PM Girl Scouts				
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship Program and Potluck	6 PM Girl Scouts	5:30 PM Girl Scouts	10 Book club			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship	6:30 PM Girl Scouts	6:15 PM Girl Scouts		6 PM FH Questers	OFFICE CLOSED	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
5:30 PM Worship (No morning worship)	OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED Pastor vacation	Pastor vacation
31						
10:15 Worship Potluck for New Year's Pastor vacation						

▶ January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 OFFICE CLOSED Pastor vaca- tion	2 6:15 PM Girl Scouts Pastor vaca- tion	3 Pastor vaca- tion	4 Pastor vaca- tion	5 Pastor day off	6
7 9 Sunday School Undecorate the church 10:15 Worship	8 6 PM Girl Scouts	9 5:30 PM Girl Scouts	10 10 Book club	11	12 12:30 FH Delphians	13
14 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship	15 6:30 PM Girl Scouts	16 6:15 PM Girl Scouts	17	18	19	20
21 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship	22 6 PM Girl Scouts	23 5:30 PM Girl Scouts	24 2 PM FH Evonne	25	26	27
28 9 Sunday School 10:15 Worship	29	30	31			