

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



December 2021

Volume 5, Issue 86

Pastor's pages	2-4
Announcements	5
Serving	6
Financial Page	7
Calendar	8-9

2021 GIVING TREE

Please help decorate this year's Giving Tree with the following items for Jefferson Elementary School. Youth sizes for Kindergarten through 4th grade (5 to 10 yrs).

Gloves (kids don't care for mittens)
Stocking caps
No scarves please
Socks
Undies for Kindergarten - 2nd grade

All donated items will be delivered to Jefferson Elementary after January 1.

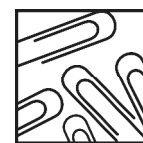


Pastor's
Office Hours

Monday-Thursday 10-4

Other times by appointment

May be out of the office for meetings or visits



Office
Hours

Office Hours

Mon- Fri

8-12

Dwelling



What are the odds of the church getting to present two new Christmas plays written by Northeast Nebraskans?

Pretty good! When church member, Mike Synovec, mentioned that he had written a Christmas play “The Little Drummer Boy” that had already been tried out in Pierce, I was delighted! Only last year, we had discovered the new play, “Runaway Joy!”, based on the Wizard of Oz by Rev. Katie Miller, a pastor in Omaha, who grew up near Elgin. Where Katie’s play is wacky, Mike’s play is humble. Both present the story in a fresh way that remind us of the deep meaning of Christ’s birth.

This year, we are also presenting a series from the *Worship Design Studio*. Dr. Marcia McFee has offered a theme, “The Inn: Housing the Holy”. Marcia has a background in dance and performance and invites churches to find ways to enhance our senses in worship.

Both Marcia and Mike invite us to focus on *the stable*, a most unlikely house for the holy. What does it mean that God chose to be with us as a vulnerable infant born in a stable not fit for human habitation, in a little unassuming town?

Our theme song this year is called “Make of My Heart a Stable” by Amanda Udis-Kessler. At the close of worship each week, we will sing a Christmas carol. In the past, I’ve tried to hold off on the carols until closer to Christmas in order to: 1) match the Scripture of the week; and, 2) to lift the Church tradition of Advent waiting. So much of our culture is about hurry, fast, and instant.

I still value waiting. Yet, ministry is also about action and reflection: you try something, then you think about how to do it better. It does seem a shame that we have such a narrow window of time in which to sing Christmas carols at church, while the culture starts blasting them by Thanksgiving.

May God’s door of welcome swing open in your heart and in your life.

May Christ’s humble first dwelling remind you of the plenty you already know.

And may the Spirit lead you into more possibility and hospitality than you can imagine, making room in The Inn for all.

Peace, *Pastor Jackie*

Advent 2021

The pandemic has presented health and economic challenges locally and globally. As we enter the Advent season, how can our churches become houses where the holy will be born anew — offering respite, sustenance, and care, opening the doors ever wider to those seeking shelter in this time of testing?



No church can do it all, but each can do something. As we hear from the prophets of the Bible, who call us to care for our neighbors and “make room in the inn,” our hearts are filled with the light of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Advent/Christmas Worship Schedule

- Nov 28** Advent 1 - ‘Hope’ Making Room, Hanging of the Greens
- Dec 5** Advent 2 - ‘Peace’ Room at the Table, Communion
- Dec 12** Advent 3 - ‘Joy’, Christmas Program THE LITTLE DUMMER BOY, The Clause’s visit
- Dec 19** Advent 4 - ‘Love’, Christmas Fund dedication
- Dec 24** **Christmas Eve Service @ 5:30 pm**
- Dec 26** First Sunday after Christmas
- Jan 9** De-hanging of the Greens

Time Away - Pastor Jackie will be on vacation Thursday, December 30 through Monday, January 10, returning to the office Tuesday the 11th. Pastoral emergency coverage and guest preachers TBA.



Thank you, Congregation, for helping me celebrate 15 years of ordained ministry! Your words and surprise gifts made my anniversary meaningful and memorable. –Pastor Jackie



December 12 at 10:15 am

The Little Drummer Boy

Our own Mike Synovec has written a play for children and youth to tell the story of Christ's birth from a humble point of view!

A little drummer boy discovers the gift in a manger through the eyes of the animals present in a stable.

Immediately after worship, Mr. & Mrs. Clause plan to share a story in the sanctuary. Due to covid, no Christmas dinner, but we plan to have regular Fellowship Hour after worship.

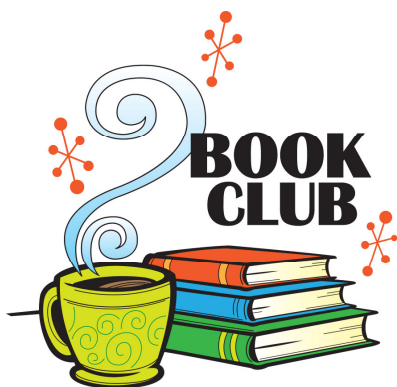
Children & Youth Schedule

Sunday, Dec. 5, 9-10 am program practice (no regular Sunday School)
Sunday, Dec. 12, 9-10 am program practice (no regular Sunday School)
Sunday, Dec. 19, 9-10 am regular Sunday School
Sunday, Dec. 26, no Sunday School
Sunday, Jan. 2, no Sunday School

Youth Outreach

On November 7th, Grace, Skylar, Kennedy, Reese, Darlene, and Pastor Jackie prepared the Sunday meal for our friends at Norfolk Rescue Mission. On the yummy menu: pasta & hamburger bake, garlic bread, & blonde brownies.





Book Club will continue on December 8 with *The Shortest Day* by S Cooper. Books are available in the office or leave a message for Jane Uzzell at (402)640-6623

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.



DECEMBER Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

- 1st Stacie Uzzell
- 7th Susan Hansen
- 8th Ben Uzzell
- 26th Karen Allyn
- 27th Ruth Brown
- 31st Virginia Barritt

Anniversary

- 23rd Jeff and Evonne Burkink

December



December 5

Communion: Evonne Burkink and Verletta Olson

Ushers: Ed Lindsay and Tom McConnell

Greeters: Jane and Reese Uzzell

Reader: Henry Gamerl

Leader: Ben Uzzell

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 12 Christmas Program

Ushers: Susan Surber and Rita Woodard

Greeters: Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

Reader: Reese Uzzell

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 19

Ushers: Randy and Kay Neuharth

Greeters: Barb Koenig and Evonne Burkink

Reader: Chuck Balsiger

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 24 5:30 PM Christmas Eve

Ushers: Gene and Darlene Korthals

Greeters: Gene and Bonnie Kroeger

Reader: Jane Uzzell

Flowers: Poinsettias

December 26

Ushers: Mike Synovec and Tom McConnell

Greeters: Bonnie Dewell and Suzan Podliska

Reader: Lori Williams

Flowers: Poinsettias



January 2

Communion: Susan Surber and Charlene Fosdick

Ushers: Jane Uzzell and Barb Koenig

Greeters: Rita Woodard and Chuck Balsiger

Reader: Randy Neuharth

Leader: Tom McConnell

Flowers: Jane Uzzell

January 9

Ushers: Ed Lindsay and Charlene Fosdick

Greeters: Ben and Stacie Uzzell

Reader: Tom McConnell

Flowers:

January 16

Ushers: Ben and Stacie Uzzell

Greeters: Ed Lindsay and Mike Synovec

Reader: Kay Neuharth

Flowers:

January 23

Ushers: Evonne Burkink and Suzan Podliska

Greeters: Scott and Lori Williams

Reader: Ben Uzzell

Flowers:

January 30

Ushers: Verletta Olson and Bonnie Dewell

Greeters: Kay and Randy Neuharth

Reader: Scott Williams

Flowers:

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

November

From 11/1/21 through 11/30/21

The deposit for 11/28 is not included.



Checking account information

Beginning balance	\$	346.53
Poinsettias	\$	52.00
<u>Weekly deposits</u>	\$	<u>11,123.00</u>
Subtotal	\$	11,522.46
Salary	--\$	7,036.70
Church Maintenance	—\$	1,286.32
Office Expenses	—\$	523.49
Worship Ministry	—\$	182.00
Refund use of FH	—\$	150.00
Pastor Continuing Education	—\$	70.00
OCWM, Neighbors in Need	—\$	827.00
<u>Renner's</u>	—\$	<u>755.00</u>
Final Balance	\$	691.95

▶ December 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
			10 Worship Ministry			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
9 AM Sunday School 10:15 Worship		GS 5:30	10 Book Club			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
9 AM Sunday School 10:15 Worship Christmas program	GS 5:30	GS 5:30			Sue vacation	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
9 AM Sunday School 10:15 Worship		GS 5:30			OFFICE CLOSED Christmas Eve service 5:30 PM	
26	27	28	29	30	31	
10:15 Worship	GS 5:30 Sue vacation	GS 5:30 Sue vacation	Sue vacation	Sue vacation Jackie vacation	OFFICE CLOSED Jackie vacation	

▶ January 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10:15 Worship 4:30-8 FH Renewed Hope Church Jackie vacation	Jackie vacation	GS 5:30 Jackie vacation	10 Worship Ministry Jackie vacation	Jackie vacation	Jackie vacation	Jackie vacation
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
9 AM Sunday School 10:15 Worship Jackie vacation	GS 5:30 Jackie vacation	GS 5:30				
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
9 AM Sunday School 10:15 Worship		GS 5:30				
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
9 AM Sunday School 10:15 Worship	GS 5:30	GS 5:30				
30	31					
9 AM Sunday School 10:15 Worship						