



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
United Church of Christ  
December 2022



Friends in Christ—

The physicist and Anglican priest, the late John Polkinghorne, reminded us that: “Christian hope is open to the unexpected character of what lies ahead precisely because it is open to the faithfulness of a God who is always doing new things.” The “unexpected character of what lies ahead” has become our familiar reality.

Hope is the deep-seated human sense that all will be well, not because it is human nature to make all things well but because that is God’s desire and God’s intent for us and for all creation. Even in the worst of times, God is bringing about new possibilities.

Hope waxes and wanes in each of us. But this is the good news: when we cannot hope, others are here to hope for us. And this is the glory of being a part of a congregation such as ours: others hope for you when you cannot, others hope for you when you are weary, others hope for you when the waiting has been too long, the disappointment too great.

We do this all year long, but during these December days of Advent preparations and Christmas celebrations we tend to be a little more intentional about hoping together.

We are invited to look for and wait for and prepare for God’s new world. To do this, we look at the places of deepest despair, we listen to the greatest cries of anguish—and just in such place and such cries, we are best able to discover the God made known to us in Jesus Christ, the creator God who comes to creation as one of us.

Let us look again with wonder as God incarnate in Jesus recreates our lives and makes the world as it might be. In the coming year, let us allow God to work among us in surprising and unexpected ways.

Peace,

Bill

P.S.—Along with the rest of the staff here at Congregational UCC, I want to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Through all our challenges and difficulties and concerns, this church continues to be a wonderful place at which to work and do ministry. Each of you makes this congregation the special community that it is.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### News from Christian Education



**Sunday School** is presenting **The Jesse Tree** for the Christmas pageant on **Sunday, December 11th**. This will be an interesting walk-through Jesus' genealogy according to Scripture and the Bible stories we have been studying this year.

**Children's Choir (all ages)** Children's Choir will share on **Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>** at our Christmas Pageant. Come to rehearsals Sunday morning during worship!



**Christmas Pageant**



**Youth Group Gathering Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup>**. We will meet at the First Presbyterian Church on Rochester. We're planning on assembling Blessing Bags for distribution to our Homeless folks around town. If you have any Single use personal-hygiene items for the Blessing Bags: small toothpastes and toothbrushes (from the dentist), **hotel-size** hand lotions, shampoo/conditioners, small size deodorants, hand-sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes, nail clippers, hair elastics, lip balm, razors, combs, and brushes.

*Please only new, unopened, and unused items. No food items.* Place them in the brown basket in the Play Zone of Rockford Hall.

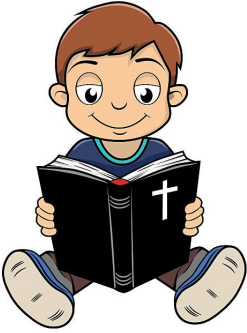
**Children's Offerings** Everyone, adults *and* children, please place your offering in an envelope and place it in the Offering Plate *during worship*.



**Childcare in the Church Nursery** is offered every Sunday 9:15-11:15 for folks to attend adult education, sing in the Choir, teach Sunday School, and attend worship. Come enjoy adult education classes, adult choir, and even teaching Sunday School!

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### News from Christian Education, *continued*



**Parents and Grandparents, are you looking for a Christmas gift idea?** We have pre-viewed a selection of Children’s Bibles from our church’s library shelves and put them on display in the Sanctuary. These picture Bibles range from “beginner reader” to “advance reader”. Enrich your “faith at home” experience by sharing these timeless stories with your children. *These books are available for purchase on Amazon.*

**Faith at Home.** Occasionally, I will share an email with our church school families titled **A Faith at Home Practice, weaving faith into our daily lives.** I share practices with parents that might be helpful in introducing faith elements into their families’ daily lives: bath-time, sickness, saying goodbye. Time is a very expensive commodity these days and sometimes we just have to squeeze in a little God-talk as we walk the walk. I recommend two books: **Faithful Families by Traci Smith** and **Practicing Our Faith by Dorothy C. Bass.** I use these books like cookbooks. I like to read through them and pick and choose what will work for me and my family.

You don’t have to have special training or a PHD or be ordained to benefit from these anointings, blessings and prayerful moments.



### **Thank you from the Christian Education Department**

Peter Bloesch, for generously sharing your keyboard with the Sunday School classes.  
Ginny Clemmons, for sharing your creative calligraphy vibe with us and inscribing the Bibles.

Jane Murphy for letting Ann paw through your art supplies and being so generous with feathers, paint, glitter, and all things arty.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS at CONGREGATIONAL UCC

Like everything else, our Advent preparations and Christmas celebrations are expected to be different this year. We are still in the process of creating inspiring and joy-filled events. Here are some dates to keep in mind.

December 4—Second Sunday in Advent; Communion  
December 11— Third Sunday in Advent; Children’s Christmas Pageant  
December 18—Fourth Sunday in Advent; Special Music Sunday  
December 20—Service of Solace—at 7:00 p.m.  
Christmas Eve is Saturday, December 24—Worship at 5:30 p.m.  
Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25—Worship at 10:15 a.m.



On **Sunday, December 18**, during 10:15 a.m. worship, the Sanctuary Choir will be presenting Daniel Pinkham's *Christmas Cantata*!

Daniel Pinkham (1923-2006) had a long and distinguished career as a performer, composer and teacher. His 1957 Christmas Cantata remains one of his most popular works and is one in which his synthesis of early music and contemporary styles is clearly evident. The Latin texts are taken from the traditional responses from the Christmas masses and are set for three equal ensembles: chorus, brass choir and organ. The first movement opens with a rather declamatory statement (“Shepherds, what have you seen? Tell us!”) before moving into a dance-like section of ever shifting meters and syncopated rhythms. The second movement features an arched melody which is passed antiphonally between the two instrumental choirs, over which is spun a long, dreamy choral line set mostly for women’s voices. The final movement is an extended crescendo of continually shifting tonalities, with verses taken from Psalm 100 alternating with the chorus the angels sang to the shepherds, “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will.”

The *Christmas Cantata* will feature Bill Crouch on organ, area professionals playing in the brass quartet, and the voices of the UCCIC Choir under the direction of Dr. Christopher Nakielski.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

**WINTER SOLACE SERVICE:** The days before Christmas can be difficult, especially for those who are dealing with loss, illness, and other challenges. On Tuesday, December 20, Bill Lovin will be leading a Winter Solace Service in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. This year the worship service will be in person and live streamed. We are trying to bring out as much joy as possible in this season, but as we do so, we can also acknowledge our sorrow, our losses, our concerns and our fears. This will be a time of prayer and scripture reading and music.



**Join us for worship on Christmas Eve, Saturday, December 24, at 5:30 p.m.**

This is a service for people of all ages. Our worship includes a time for children, special music, Christmas carols, a reading of the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, and lighting of candles. If you would like to be an usher for this worship service, please sign up in Rockwood Hall or call the church office.

Everyone is invited to the gala reception in Rockwood Hall after worship. This is a warm and wonderful time of fellowship and a

chance to catch up with students and friends who are home for the holidays. The reception will be even better if you volunteer to bring some cookies or other goodies to share. Sign up in Rockwood Hall or call the church office to let us know what you're bringing.

Members and friends may provide poinsettias for the sanctuary for our Christmas Eve worship service. If you would like to remember or honor someone with a poinsettia, please let the church office know that you will bring a poinsettia and the name of the person by Monday, December 18.



### THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING—CHRISTMAS EVE

Each year, the United Church of Christ's Christmas Fund Offering allows the UCC to assist retired pastors living on limited incomes as well as to supplement small retirement annuities and health premiums and to provide emergency grants to active and retired clergy and lay employees. The mission of the Christmas Fund is to provide assistance dollars in situations of critical need, while preserving the dignity of those who receive the aid.

We will receive the Christmas Fund Offering during our worship on Christmas Eve. Please remember that your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many people.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

Please note: The Church Office will be closed on the following days: Monday and Tuesday, December 26 and 27, and Monday, January 2.



### MEN'S BREAKFAST—DECEMBER 17

The December Men's Breakfast will be held at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 17, at the Waterfront Hy-Vee. All Congregational UCC men who eat breakfast are invited. This is a great way to catch up with old friends and meet new friends. Join us!

**THE WOMEN'S LUNCH WILL BE HELD** on Thursday, December 15th at Maggie's Pizza on Melrose Ave, at 11:45AM.  
Call or text Martha Ann Crawford—319-855-8340—to reserve a seat.



### GIVING AT THE END OF THE YEAR

The end of the year is a good time to remember the commitments we made during the year. Sometimes we forget about a gift we wanted to make: a gift to the food pantry; extra support for a particular program; a memorial gift for someone special; or even a commitment to the general work of Congregational UCC.

Now is the time to make that gift! The calendar year is rapidly coming to a close. If you want to include that gift in your charitable deduction for tax purposes this year, now is the time! Everything that happens here happens because we give. And thanks again for your generosity throughout 2022.



**SEE SOMETHING—SAY SOMETHING:** If you notice something in the building that needs attention—a leaky faucet, a loose railing, etc.—please let the church office or Trustee Chairperson, Kevin Richards, know right away. You can reach Kevin at (608) 807-7195 or at [kd Richards1958@gmail.com](mailto:kd Richards1958@gmail.com). Thanks.



**See something.  
Say something.**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

**THANKS!** We received \$1384 for our annual Neighbors in Need offering in November, surpassing last year's record giving of \$1348! Neighbors in Need is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the [Council for American Indian Ministry](#) (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice.



### ALTERNATIVE GIVING

In anticipation of Christmas, the Mission Board has organized Alternative Giving opportunities. Tree tags for the Salvation Army Angel Tree will be available. Gifts for kids will need to be returned to the church by December 18. The Mitten Tree will be available to be decorated with your donations of hats, gloves, scarves, etc. These items will be taken to the Iowa City School District for use in the schools, in honor of Joan Buxton who was a school nurse for many years.

Project Holiday tree tags/envelopes are also available. This is the CommUnity annual holiday meal distribution. Donations will be mailed by the donor, and must be received at CommUnity by December 17. Mission Board members will take orders for Heifer Project gifts after worship on December 4. Payments by check will be received, and Ginny Clemmons will personalize gift cards that can be mailed by the purchaser. The catalog can be viewed here: <https://www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/index.html> Members of the church have offered to sell some of their art items for Alternative Giving, so be sure to stop by their tables to find a gift to purchase!

# ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

## FROM THE MISSION BOARD

### Gifts to the Community in 2020-2022—A Financial Summary

In 2020-22, Congregational UCC through our Mission Board provided almost \$100,000 in aid to the Johnson County community. Much of this money was spent to assist individuals and organizations struggling due to the pandemic.

In 2020 we sent \$7,000 to the Consultation of Religious Congregations (CRC) Common Fund to assist individuals struggling with **housing and utilities**. \$2350 went to the Domestic Violence Intervention Program to assist with clients with housing and other emergency needs. \$1000 went to the First Nations Development Institute since native populations were particularly hard hit by COVID.

In 2020-22 we provided \$2,500 to purchase **coats and winter wear** for the CRC Winter Wear distribution.

In 2020-2023 we donated \$18,750 to CommUnity, primarily to address **food insecurity**. \$8,500 was used to purchase fans in the summer of 2021. Some support was given to the CommUnity Call Center. An additional \$8,177 went to Table to Table, the Free Lunch Program and the Agape Café. \$10,000 was given to assist in the building of the new Coralville Food Pantry.

Support for our local **immigrant** population was a concern. We sent \$15,200 to Open Heartland. Of that \$12,000 went to rental assistance, and diapers and backpacks were purchased. \$850 was given to Iowans for Immigrant Freedom and to the Eastern Iowa Bond Fund to assist individuals in detention.

We sent \$7,650 to the Center for **Worker Justice** for their My Home to Yours Program, a mobile home fire relief fund and general support.

Over 2020-22 we gave the Johnson County Interfaith Coalition \$5,700. \$2,700 went toward a Voter Engagement Video Project that paid for translators to convert the English scripts into French, Arabic, and Spanish. \$3,000 went toward the JCIC Fundraiser which funded attendance of low-income individuals and for general support of the organization. \$250 funded honorariums for 5 sessions of a **Racial Justice** Adult Education Program.

Supporting Johnson County **youth** in crisis was a priority. We gave United Action for Youth \$3,275 which included general support and \$1500 for a youth camping program. We sent \$500 to the Iowa City Community School District to provide lunches to teachers and staff of color during an all-day recognition program. \$1,000 went to Dream City for their 2022 summer programming. \$1,450 will be going to the Little Creations Academy; this funding is the first of 5 over 5 years to fund enhanced education of the pre-school and day care teachers.

We gave \$9,000 to **Shelter House** to assist with expanded expenses during the pandemic. We donated \$1,650 to **Inside Out** Reentry Community to assist their clients through the pandemic.

The Free **Medical** Clinic received \$550 and the Iowa Harm Reduction Coalition got \$150. We donated \$900 to Church World Service for disaster relief related to hurricanes and Afghanistan refugee relief. We sent \$1,000 to Iowa City Pride.

The Mission Board has been at times overwhelmed by the generosity of members of the congregation, and determining how to distribute donations within the community has been an area of special study over the past few years. In addition to member contributions, the board has made use of some of the church endowment funds with the guidance of Sharon Reitz and the Church Council. We are grateful that so many have responded to the challenges of the past few years by giving to the work of the church.

Congregational United Church of Christ Mission Board

Laurie Stunz  
Kyle Flipppo  
Paula Forest

Chuck Dayton  
Donna Hirst

Hope Spragg  
Rachel Burchett

Bruce Reynolds  
Jane Kinney





## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.



**THE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS AT THE CENTER FOR WORKER ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE RETURN OF THEIR GIFT OF GIVING PROGRAM!** The Gift of Giving initiative aims to connect local families with a sponsor who is willing to provide each family member with a gift. This year 30 families in need will be selected for the project. CWJ is currently looking for at least 1 sponsor per family. Sponsors can choose the size of family they would like to sponsor. Additionally, sponsors will receive information on members of their family such as age, gender, shoe size, shirt size, pant size, color preferences, and what the family needs most this year. If you or someone you know would like to be a sponsor, please fill out this form <<https://default.salsalabs.org/Tb5e665b2-eed0-4103-a2c1-22dfc04815b4/30327e39-7511-423b-9906-e59cfda00b>>.

### WARM WINTER WEAR UPDATE

Thanks to everyone who helped make this year's event a success. They gave away a total of 1867 coats from Wednesday, 10/19, through Friday, 10/21. This consisted of 1325 coats for children (sizes 3 mo - size 18, boys and girls.) and 542 coats for adults (sizes S - XXXL, men and women). All scarves, boots and gloves were given away. They had a total of more than 300 families represented, and many of the individuals were shopping for a minimum of 8 people.



Unfortunately, they had to contact those who had hoped to shop on Saturday because they were all out of popular clothes. Most of the items were actually gone by Thursday afternoon. They were unable to meet the needs of at least 95 children from sizes 10 - 18, especially 14/16/18 (including both boys and girls). Adult coats were in demand, and they could have used many more coats of all sizes.

28 brand new coats for children, sizes 2 and 3 (and a couple size 4/5), and the few remaining hats were given to the Catholic Worker House, which supports many immigrant families.

***Thank you to the more than 80 volunteers who spent time sorting, organizing, and serving as shopper assistants. This help was invaluable. Many individuals signed up to assist, and some service organizations were represented among the volunteers.***

**Donations were received from a large number of faith communities and individuals. A more detailed report will be available later.**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.



**AS ALWAYS THE DEACONS ARE LOOKING FOR** volunteers for ushering, hospitality and greeting. Sign-up sheets are in Rockwood (Fellowship) Hall. Also we will have posted sign up sheets to help with our Christmas Eve service and the Cookies and Cider Hospitality hour to follow.

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE AS A LITURGIST ON SUNDAY MORNING?**

This is a great opportunity to welcome people and to lead them in worship. Bill Lovin provides the material. You provide the spirit. Contact Bill if you are interested or would like more information.



**WANT TO GIVE ONLINE? SCAN THE QR CODE FOR OUR GIVING APP.**  
Your giving makes a world of difference.



ONLINE DONATION



### **FRIENDLY REMINDER!**

The deadline to submit items for the January newsletter will be **Wednesday, December 21st.**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

### CELEBRATING DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

12/1 Richard Bloesch

12/4 Jane Murphy  
John Reitz

12/9 Chris Knapp  
Sue Dayton

12/13 Carroll Hanson  
Mary Shepherd

12/18 Jeffry Schabilion

12/20 Dwight Schumm

12/29 Sheilah McKenna

12/30 Mark Whittaker

12/31 Rick Ruppert



**THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
30 North Clinton Street  
Iowa City, Iowa 52245-1700**

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

DECEMBER 2022 NEWSLETTER



**CHURCH STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION**

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 am to 1 pm

Phone: 319-337-4301

Visit our Web Site: [www.uccic.org](http://www.uccic.org)

**Pastor:**

Dir of Church School

Music Director

Organist

Children's Music Director

Office Manager

Financial Secretary

Custodians:

**The Rev. William Lovin**

Rev. Ann Molsberry

Chris Nakielski

Bill Crouch

Majesty Constable

Jenn Harden

Sharyn Huriaux Reitz

Douglas Herrera

Claudia Landaverde

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