



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church of Christ
December 2024



Friends in Christ:

In late October and early November, I started seeing articles in print and reports on TV about this year's Advent calendars. What were once twenty-five doors that opened to reveal a Bible verse or perhaps a piece of chocolate are now elaborate productions offer 25 days of jam, Legos, fishing lures, liquor or just about anything else. Don't get me started.

We all carry our own Advent calendars in our heads these days. We each have lists of everything that needs to be purchased, mailed, memorized, sewn, baked, cleaned, finished, located, put up, decorated, in the next—what?—24, 25 days.

Advent calendars are fun—but they can also be deceptive. They give us the impression that all of life is moving toward December 25 and everything will be neatly wrapped up and finished on that day.

To prepare for Christmas we need to look *beyond* December 25.

To prepare for Christmas we need a *horizon*. An alert driver focuses her eyes far down the road to see what is coming. A horizon helps us to look beyond the immediate. It gives us a goal beyond the urgent.

What are you moving toward beyond Christmas?

What are the important things in life that will still be there on December 26 and in the middle of 2025?

This Advent, let your horizon be in the distance far beyond December 25. The days ahead carry us toward Christmas, but the good news of great joy for all people that we hear at Christmas carries us far beyond that day.

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. This church continues to be a wonderful place at which to work and do ministry and I am grateful. Each of you makes this congregation the special community that it is.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christian Ed News:

It's been a great month in the Christian education department! Advent season came early, as we started early in hopes of a renewed understanding of the "Reason for the Season." In Sunday school, we've been practicing and discussing our church tradition of the lighting of the Advent candles, looking at a variety of crèches and preparing for our Christmas Pageant. We are preparing our hearts with the promise of hope, peace, joy and love for the upcoming season and hope to share that with the congregation in the coming weeks!

December 1

No Sunday School; Christmas Pageant Rehearsal during Children's Church

December 8

9:15 Sunday School- Costumes & Set for Pageant

Children will stay in worship for Special music, potluck after church

Noon-1:30 Rehearsal

6pm Little Drummer Boy (strings) Rehearsal

COMING UP

December 14

9 AM Little Drummer Boy (strings) Rehearsal

10-11:30 All Pageant Rehearsal

December 15

9:15 Costume Call

10:15 Performance during worship

4-7 Dinner & Caroling

Wow! December Birthdays!



1st - Peter turns 14 & Art turns 4

12th - George turns 10

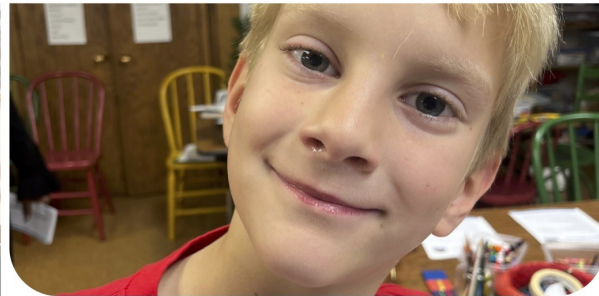
17th - Christina turns 6

18th - Kaoru turns 12

23rd - Amelia turns 13

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christian Ed News, cont'd:



Christian Ed News, cont'd:



YOU ARE INVITED

CHRISTMAS

Caroling



**15
DEC**

**SUPPER &
CAROLING
ALL AGES
DINNER 4-5
PRACTICE 5-5:30
CAROLING 5:30-7**

**4-7
PM**

**Congregational United Church of Christ
30 N. Clinton, Iowa City**

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS



“BETWEEN MEMORY AND HOPE: STANDING IN THE LIVING PRESENT” ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS at CONGREGATIONAL UCC

Our theme for Advent this year is “Between Memory and Hope: Standing in the Living Present.” Join us for worship on Sunday morning and for special events throughout the season.

December 1—First Sunday in Advent; Communion
December 8—Second Sunday in Advent; Special Music Sunday
December 15—Third Sunday in Advent; Children’s Christmas Pageant
December 18—Winter Solace Service at 7:00 p.m.
December 22—Fourth Sunday of Advent; Worship at 10:15 a.m.
Christmas Eve is Tuesday, December 24—Worship at 5:30 p.m.
December 31—Seventh Day of Christmas—Worship at 10:15 a.m.
January 7—Epiphany Sunday; Communion

Beginning on the first day of Advent, December 1, we will be sending out an email Advent Calendar with the theme **Between Memory and Hope: Standing in the Living Present**. Each day's entry will be provided by someone in the congregation.

MISSION BOARD ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS GIVING FAIR TWO SUNDAYS! DECEMBER 1 and 15

Please plan to visit Rockwood Hall after worship on December 1, and December 15 for our Alternative Christmas Giving Fair! There will be Heifer Project animal gift cards bearing Ginny Clemons’ graceful calligraphy and Church World Service “ornaments”. Proceeds from Christmas cards, jewelry, and gift baskets donated by artists and craftspeople in our congregation will go to local community agencies. The Mitten Tree is awaiting your new or gently used mittens, scarves, and hats for the Joan Buxton School project. And the Angel Tree will have toy request cards from the Salvation Army and envelopes for a holiday meal donation distributed by CommUnity. Photo and picture frame sales will benefit our Church Endowment Fund. Contact John Reitz at 319-333-9588, john-reitz@uiowa.edu for information.

Come have a cup of coffee and browse!

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS



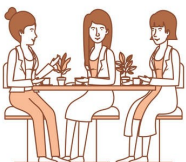
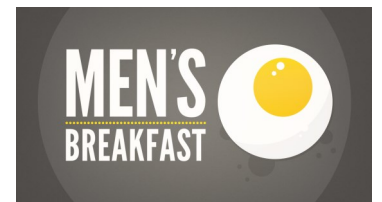
HODIE (THIS DAY): Ring Out! On Sunday December 8th, The UCC Choir and area guest instrumentalists will be performing Z. Randall Stroope's *Hodie! (This Day!)*, a three-movement work for choir, featuring brass, percussion and organ. The work contains fanfare, bold sonorities, moments of reflection, inclusion of a well-known work by Philip Nicolai, and an ecstatic ending full of sonic fireworks. Please join us for this momentous occasion!

THE ADVENT LUNCH ON DECEMBER 8!

Our always-joy-filled Advent Lunch will be better than ever if you are a part of it. Join us in Rockwood Hall after worship and Special Music on Sunday, December 8. There is a sign-up sheet in Rockwood Hall to help the Membership Board with their planning. The Membership Board is providing a main dish and the rest of the meal will be potluck. Plan to bring a salad, vegetable, bread, dessert, etc. to share.

MEN'S BREAKFAST—DECEMBER

The December Men's Breakfast will be held at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 21, 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 December 19th at Blackstone in IC.
Call or text Martha Ann Crawford—319-855-8340—to reserve a seat.

WINTER SOLACE SERVICE—DECEMBER 18

The days before Christmas can be difficult, especially for those who are dealing with loss, illness, and other challenges. On Wednesday, December 18, Bill Lovin will be leading our annual Winter Solace Service in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. We are trying to bring out as much joy as possible in this season, and 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. The worship service will be both in person and live streamed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS



Join us for worship on Christmas Eve, Tuesday, 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 holi-

days. 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.

A NOTE FROM THE DIACONATE: COOKIES GALORE AT CHRISTMAS EVE

Please join the traditional cookie brigade on December 24th. If you are able and willing to bring two dozen cookies, there will be plenty of mounded plates for filling the tables after our Christmas Eve Candle Light Worship Service. We'll have the cider and cocoa hot and ready.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

HELP WITH SLEEPING MATS STILL NEEDED: With our winter weather just around the corner, the need for more sleeping mats for the homeless is growing! By contributing your plastic bags from your purchases we can help the homeless! Bring your clean, unneeded, plastic grocery bags, or similar plastic bags from your purchases here, to Rockwood Hall. We will see to it that they are delivered.



HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

Please note: The Church Office will be closed on the following days: Wednesday and Thursday, December 25 and 26, and Wednesday, January 1.

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 2024!



THANKS! We received \$880 for our annual Neighbors in Need offering in November. 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.

HOPE LODGE: Thanks to all who contributed food and helped serve the meal on November 18: Diane Dahl-McCoy, Rebecca Weatherford, Michelle Birt-Leeds, Linda Muston, Darcie Hutzell and Fielding Woolums, Jane Kinney, Marsha Lowe, Sharyn Reitz, Sue and Chuck Dayton. Our next Hope Lodge dinner will be Monday, January 20. Consider being part of this ministry to serve dinner and have conversation with the cancer patients and their family members who are staying at Hope Lodge during their treatment at UIHC.

WINTER CLOTHING DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

Dear Consultation of Religious Congregations Members, Partners & Friends,
We had a highly successful Winter Clothing Distribution in October
Thank-you so much for your MANY clothing donations and superb volunteer workers!
But this is the basic result for this year:

Kids' coats: 1115

Adult coats: 664

Total coats distributed: 1779

Additionally, 30 new coats size 0 - 2 were donated to Open Heartland

So, I guess we could say that we gave away more than 1800 coats this year!

UPDATE

CHURCH CALENDAR

December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 No Christian Education - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service w/ communion - Chamber Singers rehearsal, 2pm	2	3 -CE Board, 7:00pm - Mission Board, 7:00pm	4	5	6	7 -Chamber Singers rehearsal, 2pm
8 - 9:15 Christian Education - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service—Special Music Sunday	9	10 - Church Council, 7pm	11	12	13	14
15 - 9:15 Christian Education - Children's Pageant - 10:15 Worship Service - Children's Pageant - Chamber Singers rehearsal, 2pm - All-Church caroling, 4-7pm	16	17 - Deacons meeting, 7pm - Trustees, 7pm - Stewardship, 7pm - Chamber Singers rehearsal, 7pm	18 - Winter Solace Service, 7pm	19 - Women's Lunch @ Blackstone in IC - Chamber Singers rehearsal, 7pm	20 - Chamber Singers, 7pm	21 - Men's Breakfast @ Waterfront HyVee, 8:00 am
22 - 9:00 Choir Rehearsal - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service	23	24 -Christmas Eve worship, 5:30pm	25 CHRISTMAS DAY—OFFICE CLOSED	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27	28
29 - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service	30	31				30

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

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

12/29 Sheilah McKenna

12/30 Mark Whittaker

12/31 Rick Ruppert



ARTICLES FOR THE JANUARY NEWSLETTER
are due to the office by Wednesday, December 18th.



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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DECEMBER 2024 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

Pastor:

Interim Director of CE

Music Director

Organist

Children's Choir Director

Office Manager

Financial Secretary

Custodians:

The Rev. William Lovin

Hope Spragg

Dr. Chris Nakielski

Bill Crouch

Rachel Burchett

Jenn Harden

Sharyn Huriaux Reitz

Douglas Herrera

Claudia Landaverde

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Contact the Office

For up to date announcements, check us out on Facebook.