

Messages from the Diaconate

Our Minister in December: We are very pleased to announce that the Rev. Dr. Norman Kirsch, retired UCC pastor from Wyandotte, will be leading our congregation in worship during the entire month of December. It is truly a blessing to have Rev. Kirsch behind the pulpit this holiday season to deliver God's message of hope, peace, faith, and love while seamlessly relating it to our daily lives. We wish him a speedy recovery from a painful back injury, also!

Sign-Up for Christmas Poinsettias: It won't be long before Christmas is here! If you'd like to purchase a poinsettia (or two), please sign your name on the sheet at the back of the sanctuary or in the Mayflower Room. Cost is \$8.00 / plant. Payment can be placed in an offering envelope at Sunday service or given to John Peters, Diaconate chair. Poinsettias will be delivered before the Christmas Eve service. Please order by December 1.

"Hanging of the Greens" & Potluck Dinner: Friday, December 6th, is the date of our annual get-together to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. We'll be hanging ornaments on the tree, setting up the Nativity scene, and placing wreaths and greenery throughout the church. Prior to decorating, there will be a potluck dinner in the Mayflower Room at 6:00 PM. The Diaconate is providing sliced ham for the dinner. If you plan to attend, please put your name on a sign-up sheet in either the church sanctuary or Mayflower Room and indicate how many in your party are coming. You may also call the church or speak to a fellow member to ask to have your name added. We need an accurate head count to ensure we order enough ham. So bring a dish for all to share and join in on the festivities!

As a side note...for every decoration that is put up at Christmas, alas, there comes a time when it must come down. Please offer to help "take down the greens" on Sunday, January 5 after the regular worship service. Coffee hour will precede the un-decorating. Thank you!

"Christmas Fund" Special Mission Offering: In December, our congregation is taking up its annual "Christmas Fund" offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. The theme for 2013 is *We Have Come to Bear the Light of Christ*, a message that reflects the spirit of the fund, which is to share the light and love of Jesus Christ to those who have so faithfully and selflessly served, and who now find themselves facing unforeseen financial crises. We ask you to prayerfully consider a donation to the best of your ability. Donation envelopes can be found in the pews. The offering will continue for the 4 weeks in Advent, thru December 22. Thank you!

NEW MEMBER WELCOME

We wish to extend a warm welcome to the newest member of Dearborn Congregational Church... Ian Haas! Last summer, Ian completed an 8-week Confirmation class and fulfilled the requirements outlined in the new UCC Confirmation Series built around our Statement of Faith. Ian was confirmed and took the oath of membership in a lovely ceremony on Sunday, September 28 presided over by the Rev. Dr. Norman Kirsch. Congratulations Ian!

Christmas Eve Service

Our traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Service (with just a minor twist you're going to love) will begin at 7:00pm

After Christmas Service

On December 29th, please meet in the Mayflower Room for morning worship at 10:00am. We all enjoyed this last year and have been asked to repeat this casual end-of-season gathering.

Thank You

Thanks to Michelle Martin for picking up the tub of pop-tabs and delivering them to the Ronald McDonald House in Ann Arbor.

(Now we can get to work refilling the tub!)

Membership Growth Committee

We urge you to invite friends and family to one, or all, the events planned for this holiday season, but especially...

Christmas Is At His House This Year

The Membership Growth Committee has planned a special worship service for Sunday, December 15, at 10:00am, in celebration of Christmas.

We're calling it Christmas Is At His House This Year. It will be an hour of devotion, music and drama celebrating Jesus and His Birth. The committee wants you to use this opportunity to bring together your family and friends to worship with you during this special Christmas service.

If you have family members who haven't been to church in a while, invite them to come. If they attend another church, invite them to come. If you know someone who has never been to church (ours or anywhere else), invite him or her to come. If it's been a long time since YOU have been to church, come back and join us for this hour. We've missed you.

Remember that the future of our church is the responsibility of all of us. How is God using you to grow our church?

Your Membership Growth Committee

Tom Brown
Valerie Haas
John Peters
Pat Stacho

Cheryl Brown
Irene Moxon
Brian Sampson
Nancy Wolter



Book Club

The Book Club is reading *Still Alice*, by Lisa Genova. Copies are available for checkout in the blue bag in the office. The meeting will be December 16 at 7pm.

Still Alice is a compelling debut novel about a 50-year-old woman's sudden descent into early onset Alzheimer's disease, written by first-time author Lisa Genova, who holds a Ph. D in neuroscience from Harvard University. Alice Howland, happily married with three grown children and a house on the Cape, is a celebrated Harvard professor at the height of her career when she notices a forgetfulness creeping into her life. As confusion starts to cloud her thinking and her memory begins to fail her, she receives a devastating diagnosis: early onset Alzheimer's disease. Fiercely independent, Alice struggles to maintain her lifestyle and live in the moment, even as her sense of self is being stripped away. It turns heartbreaking, inspiring and terrifying...

Men's Club

The Men's Club Annual Christmas Tree Sale is up and going! Thanks to everyone who showed up on November 23rd for the breakfast and set-up. Everything went smoothly because of all who were there to help.

However...we are still in need of people to man (or woman) the lot in the coming weeks. If you can help out, even for just two hours on one day, it would be a great help. See Jim Haling or stop in the office to see the sign-up sheet.

Eve Circle

It's been awhile, but the Eve Circle will be meeting again! Roberta Adamson is hosting a potluck Eve Circle Christmas get together in her home for the ladies of the church on Monday, December 9th at 6pm. Check in your directory for the address.

OUR CHURCH AT WORK In December

Helpers for Sunday Services

Greeters:

- December 1 – Available
- December 8 – Sue Wilson
- December 15 – Available
- December 22 – Available
- December 29 – Available

Ushers:

- December 1 – Available
- December 8 – Sue Wilson
- December 15 – Available
- December 22 – Available
- December 29 – Available

Liturgists:

- December 1 – Marge Manspeaker
- December 8 – Sue Wilson
- December 15 – Valerie Haas
- December 22 – Available
- December 29 – Available

PRAYER LIST



Bernice Hartling	Medical Concerns
Shirley Fedraw	Medical Concerns
Bunny Hoganson	Medical Concerns
Geri Sampson	Medical Concerns
Suzanne Van Ranst	Medical Concerns
Brenda Walker	Medical Concerns
Gayle Bart	Medical Concerns
Ellis Mangrum	Medical Concerns
Sylvia Vukmirovich	Medical Concerns
Ray Riske	Medical Concerns



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Janice Chapman
- 5 Dave Sacho
- 13 Mary Ellen Matchynski
- 15 Shirley Fedraw
- 18 Brianne Schilbe
Elizabeth Bilton Rabinowitz
- 20 Kathryn Weyeneth
- 25 Baby Jesus
- 30 Bernice Hartling

Dedication of Flowers - December

- December 1 – Sue Wilson
- December 8 – Teresa Curless
- December 15 – Dick Bolton
- December 22 – Poinsettias
- December 29 – Dave & Elaine Stacho

Fellowship Hour - December

- December 1 – Dave & Elaine Stacho
- December 8 – Ruth Smith & Autumn
- December 15 – Roberta Adamson
- December 22 – Teresa Curless &
John Peters
- December 29 – Available

DATES TO REMEMBER...

December	11	Trustees Meeting	7pm
December	12	Diaconate Meeting	7pm
December	15	Special Christmas Service	10 am
December	24	Christmas Eve Service	7pm

I'm Just Asking...

With Pat Stacho

It is December...Time to buy your Valentine gifts!

Do not get caught without your gift for your sweetheart. WHAT??!!??

Seriously, did we bypass the holidays? I cannot believe the Christmas commercials started before my turkey was thawed! Something is wrong, people, seriously wrong. I remember being thrilled with an orange, a few pieces of candy, and some small trinket in my stocking! (which by the way, was the same stocking, year after year) Now, the cost of the stocking is more than what an entire Christmas should be. Why is it acceptable to spend so much, on credit at that? I say, when a child has to think really hard to come up with what he wants, he doesn't need it.

I pity the poor Macy Santa Claus who has to listen to these kids. Some of those darling little ones have even threatened Santa. Trust me, they are turning into greedy little buggers!

My grandmother used to spend months making scarves, afghans, even crocheted dolls. And we all were thrilled to get them. If I were to make anything for my grandkids, it better be a handmade card, with a check in it! We spoil them rotten, then wonder what happened to those sweet babies we used to rock to sleep. WE are the ones who need to wake up! Stop this nonsense. Bring back the true spirit of Christmas. There is something wrong if we watch

the horrific suffering across the world, and right in our own back yard, on CNN, and can still justify jumping in the car, heading to the mall, and going on a buying frenzy!! (Whew...got that rant done in one breath.)

Last year, I sent money to the Children's Cancer Fund, in my grandson's name. That idea came to me when he had no idea what he wanted. (WHAT??) He also had lost a classmate that year to Leukemia. I did get him a few little things, but gave him the acknowledgment in his card. Actually, he thought that was pretty cool. Good thing, because this year he's getting the same thing! My grandchildren are all blessed. They have never gone to bed hungry, never had to wear clothes with holes in them, unless of course, that was their preference! All of my grandchildren have warm beds to sleep in, more electronic gadgets than they need, tennis shoes that are worth more than my entire childhood wardrobe.

I think it is safe to say, they will not be scarred for life, if they receive less than they think they want.

Christmas is Jesus' birthday...not theirs! Merry Christmas kids, Grandma has a surprise for you.

BAAhahaha!



Seeking Shelter from Christmas in Advent

by Anthony B. Robinson

You say that you have mixed feelings about the whole Christmas thing? The shopping, traffic and crowds, the office parties and trips to Santa, the background of little drummer boys and singing chipmunks?

Or maybe “mixed feeling” is hardly strong enough? Maybe you’re out-and-out disgusted? Not quite a grinch looking to stuff the whole thing back in a bag, but wondering about the meaning of it all. If you are experiencing any of this, where in heaven’s name might you go to find a different experience?

Here’s an idea that may not be obvious as a place to find respite from Christmas. Try church.

Not every church, but many, celebrate the four weeks prior to Christmas as another season of the spirit altogether, Advent. Christmas is reserved for its appointed twelve days, from Christmas Day on December 25 to January 5, the day before Epiphany.

Advent is as different from Christmas as the medieval plainsong hymn, “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” is from Charles Wesley’s “Joy to the World.” That is to say, Advent is more a minor key season. Its great hymns, “Watchman, Tell Us of the Night,” “Wake, Awake for Night Is Flying,” or “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” are more haunting than triumphant, more filled with longing than joy. They don’t so much invite full-on celebration — that comes later — as they invite reflection, meditation, waiting and wondering.

There’s spiritual wisdom to the idea that we don’t just flip the switch marked “celebration” or suddenly proclaim “peace and goodwill.” We prepare for it. We wait for it. We consider what we need to do, by way of making peace and extending forgiveness, so that “peace and goodwill” are more than empty sentiments when we proclaim them.

Moreover, Advent grants space for the interior life to which winter weather, as well as shorter days and longer nights, seems an invitation. In some earlier cultures, it was customary at this time of year to slow down, even cease usual activity, by pulling the wheels off the cart or wagon. A wheel was brought inside and converted to a wreath with a circle of candles and greens. The message of

this conversion of wheel into wreaths? Slow down. Reflect. Enter into the womb of winter dark. Anticipate a time of renewal and new beginning.

This is the origin of the Advent Wreath that you will see in many churches and homes. Our problem is that too often we miss the first step of plucking a wheel off the car to ensure that we slow down and pay attention to the interior life.

Should you seek shelter from Christmas by attending the Advent services of a church, you may notice another quite odd thing, the Scripture lessons or texts that are read and reflected on during these weeks.

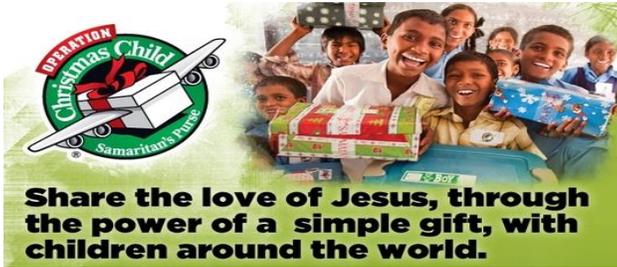
You might imagine that it would be all about Joseph and Mary, Bethlehem and manger, wise men and shepherds. That will come, but later. What you get instead is nearly shocking.

Last Sunday for instance the main reading featured Jesus telling his followers what to do when the whole world seems to be shaking and falling apart. His advice is counter-intuitive. When everything is shaking and you’re tempted to hunker down, “Stand up, raise your heads, your redemption is near.”

Much of this message fits our own time. Most of the old assumptions no longer seem to hold. Tried and true methods don’t work as well as they once did — in almost every area of life. And there is quite a lot of uncertainty about the future. A time of shaking.

There’s a sense in which, to quote a friend, we seem a kind of “twilight people,” imagining that we live at the end of the day, in a diminished time, a time of endings. Moreover, there’s a tendency, both religious and secular, to look back — to imagine, in religious language, that redemption occurred all in the past. But here’s Jesus on the first Sunday of Advent saying, “Stand up, raise your heads, your redemption is near.” It’s out there; it’s future.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



The Sunday School Children put together 9 boxes to be delivered to needy children overseas. Thanks to everyone who donated items or money to help with the mailing of the shoeboxes. Thanks also, to Judo and Diane Cliff for helping organize the packing, and to Ian Haas and Cole Haas for helping to choose gifts and pack boxes, and to Autumn Smith for helping pack and her overall positive attitude!

Stewardship Committee

“May God, who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts and unending help and confidence, put a fresh heart in you...” (Thessalonians 2:16-17)

The annual Stewardship Campaign is underway, and everyone should have gotten pledge cards in the mail. Please prayerfully consider your pledge to this church, its works and its maintenance.

Please either drop off your pledge card in the collection plate or send it via mail to the church.



Christmas from the Outside

The last few years I have come to loathe Christmas, to the point of even not bothering with a tree and the other trappings of the season. After some New Year reflection, I realized that my attitude was a result on my buying into the “orthodox” view of Christmas as being primarily a time for families to gather for feasting and fellowship in gaily decorated homes.

For several years now we have not been able to afford the trip back to Michigan to be with our families and so, rather than endure the mocking Norman Rockwell-esque image of the season, I chose to turn my back on Christmas and ignored it. I have come to see however that being an exile/outsider is really the true essence of Christmas. For proof, I offer up the very first Christmas, an event that found Mary & Joseph far away from their families. Although the people around them shared their religious and racial background, they were essentially outsiders in a land of strangers.

When you think about it, wasn't this the perfect setting for the dawning of the Kingdom of God among us? Who better to receive the season's message of hope than those who find themselves outsiders and alone? Being an outsider isn't limited to just being an exile in a foreign land either. Those who grieve the death of a loved one are exiles this time of year as well. Likewise, those struggling with serious medical issues, relationship issues, career issues, etc.

If you are able to celebrate Christmas in Hallmark greeting card style, by all means enjoy it and as you do, be sure and count your blessings. As hard as it is to believe, blessings are there for us outsiders as well: we can use the quiet time to reflect on and remember the first Christmas and earnestly seek out the peace of the season. Above all, exiles and outsiders must embrace the core truth that Jesus really does live, and the hope and peace that he embodies is available to all, no matter how we end up spending December 25th.

John Less