

THE UNITER

DECEMBER 2017

Maquoketa
United Church of Christ
God is still speaking



Already and Not Yet

My sister recently complained to me that she was already tired of Christmas. This was two weeks before Thanksgiving, mind you. I don't quite share her sense of fatigue. At least, not yet. Among other reasons, I celebrate Advent. And Advent is most certainly not Christmas.

Don't get me wrong—I like Christmas. It's just that the months of November and December have turned into “the holiday season,” which means Christmas is effectively over before it starts. According to the church calendar, the first day of Christmas is...Christmas Day. Then the second day is December 26, and on it goes, through the twelve days of pipers piping and ladies dancing. But Advent is something different. Like Lent, Advent is a preparatory season. And like Lent, once upon a time it was common for folks to fast during the four weeks leading up to Christmas. December fasting? That's really gone by the wayside, hasn't it?

But other Advent traditions remain. A week ago, I braved the aisles of a craft store to find a simple Advent wreath for my dining room table at home. And I found the right candles, too. Thin taper candles to represent hope, peace, love and joy, and a big stocky white candle to represent the Christ light. My plan is simple. Week by week, one by one, I will burn the taper candles, leading up to Christmas Eve when I will finally light the Christ candle in the middle of the wreath. It doesn't have to be more complicated than that. This is the first year I've had my own Advent wreath, although I can't tell you why I waited so long. This year, it just feels important to keep Advent, and keep it holy.

There's a paradox at the heart of Advent, which is perhaps why it hasn't become more commercialized. It's difficult to market paradox. In the classical formulation, Advent exposes the “already, but not yet” nature of God's reign on earth. “Already” in the sense that Christ's revelation has been with us for two thousand years, and the “not yet” because the fullest potential of creation—

(Continued on page 2)

including us—has not yet been reached. So we live in between the “already” and the “not yet,” and sometimes that’s an uncomfortable sandwich. But discomfort has its uses. When I keep Advent and keep it holy, the season puts me in touch with longing. Longings in me that I might not give enough attention to other parts of the year. Longings in our world, deep longings for hope, peace, love and joy, and the illuminating presence of Christ in all things. Already. And not yet.

If you’re like my sister, and not quite ready for Christmas, how about keeping some Advent? Start with a wreath, a few candles. Find a clear surface at home. And watch as the light increases, candle by candle, week by week.

Praying for a holy Advent for you and yours,
Pastor Stephanie

Do You Know What Chrismons Are?

The word Chrismon is a contraction of the two words—Christ and Monogram. A Chrismon Tree decorated with symbols from Christian history tells a story of the true meaning of Christmas.

In the 1980’s several women in our church cross-stitched Chrismon ornaments for our sanctuary tree. Please take a look at our Chrismon Tree to view these lovely ornaments.





Once again I have Apparent Project bracelets for sale! These make wonderful and unique gifts! Metal Art Ornaments should be here by December 1st. These can easily be made into magnets if you prefer. Both items are \$10. There are always a few bracelets on the table near Stephanie's office, or you can contact me at anytime.

These items continue to support the work of FIDA US.

Thank you,
Jane Bentrott



For 116 years the Christmas Fund has been an expression of God's love and light in the world. Funds are used to provide direct financial assistance to retired UCC clergy and lay employees. These funds may be used to supplement small pensions, reduce healthcare premiums, and provide Thank You gift checks for 503 retired clergy and lay workers. Emergency grants are also provided for active or retired UCC clergy and lay workers. This special offering will be received in our church during Advent. Envelopes are available at the back of the sanctuary. Prayerfully consider how you may support these special gifts.

December 20

Maquoketa United Church of Christ

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu

*Prayer Shawl Ministry meets at United Church of Christ this month.

<p>3 8:45 a Adult Bible Study 9:00 a Sunday School 10:00 a Worship 11:00 a Ed Board Meeting 11:45 a Qigong</p>	<p>4 6:00 p Karate Club</p>	<p>5 7:30 p Yoga</p>	<p>67:30 a Centering Prayer 5:15 p Meal Deal (potluck) 6:15 p Centering Prayer 7:00 p Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p Alcoholics Anonymous</p>	<p>78:00 a 1:00 p 6:00 p 7:30 p</p>
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<p>10 8:45 a Adult Bible Study 9:00 a Sunday School 10:00 a Worship 11:45 a Qigong</p>	<p>11 6:00 p Karate Club</p>	<p>12 9:00 a Ministerial Association 7:30 p Yoga</p>	<p>137:30 a Centering Prayer 9:30 a Women's Fellowship 1:00 p Worship Committee 5:15 p Meal Deal 6:15 p Centering Prayer 7:00 p Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p Alcoholics Anonymous</p>	<p>148:00 a 5:30 p 6:00 p 7:30 p</p>
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<p>178:45 a Bible Study 9:00 a Sunday School 10:00 a Worship 11:45 a Qigong</p>	<p>18 6:00 p Karate Club 7:00 p Prayer Shawl Ministry</p>	<p>19 7:30 p Yoga</p>	<p>207:30 a Centering Prayer 5:15 p Meal Deal 6:15 p Centering Prayer 7:00 p Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p Alcoholics Anonymous</p>	<p>218:00 a 6:00 p 7:30 p</p>
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24
No Sunday School
10:00 a Worship
11:45 a Qigong
7:00 p Candlelight Service



26
7:30 p Yoga

<p>277:30 a Centering Prayer NO Meal Deal 6:15 p Centering Prayer 7:00 p Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p Alcoholics Anonymous</p>	<p>288:00 a 6:00 p 7:30 p</p>
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31
No Sunday School
10:00 a Worship
11:45 a Qigong

Service Committee

Jennie Stewart & Marta Romer

ist

	Fri	Sat
	1	2 6:00 p Narcotics Anonymous
o a Morning Prayer o Prayer Shawl Ministry o Karate Club o Centering Prayer	8	9 6:00 p Narcotics Anonymous
o a Morning Prayer p Council Meeting o Karate Club o Centering Prayer	15	16 6:00 p Narcotics Anonymous
8:00 a Morning Prayer	22	23 6:00 p Narcotics Anonymous
o Karate Club o Centering Prayer	29	30
a Morning Prayer o Karate Club o Centering Prayer	5:30 p Ed Board party: pizza, games and a movie	

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December 3

WC John Dague

GR Kathy Geronzin &
Jennie Stewart

WL Chris Tubbs

December 10

WC Steve Tubbs

GR

WL Caroline Bybee

December 17

WC Marta Romer

GR Noah Nabb & Jacob Nabb

WL Marilyn Deegan

December 24 AM

WC Bill Schwenker

GR Allison Bock & family

WL David Manning

December 24 Candlelight

WC Sam Sandberg

GR Jerry & Caroline Bybee

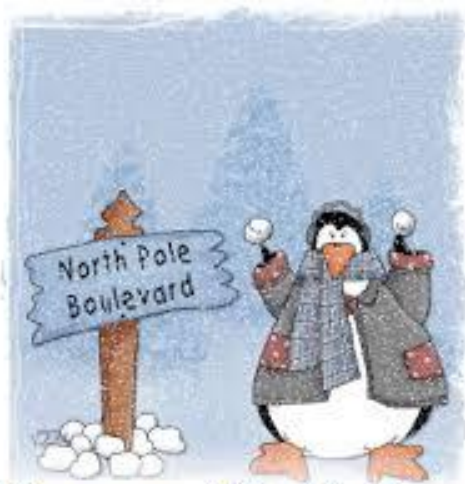
WL Karen McClintock

December 31

WC David Manning

GR Oswald family

WL Bonnie Schwenker



Happy Birthday

Chris Tubbs	Dec. 2
Sheri Sandberg	Dec. 5
Neal Lichter	Dec. 6
Noah Nabb	Dec. 6
Geraldine Behrend	Dec. 11
Anna Lichter	Dec. 18
Marilyn Dean	Dec. 20
Phyllis Nissen	Dec. 20
Gabe Weiler	Dec. 22
Daniel Weiler	Dec. 29

Dates to Remember:

12/7 Prayer Shawl Ministry
12/14 Council meeting
12/18 Prayer Shawl Ministry
12/24 Candlelight Worship

Meal Deal Dates:

12/6 Potluck
12/13
12/20
NO Meal 12/27

Council Minutes

The council minutes will be posted on the bulletin board outside Pastor Stephanie's office after they have been approved by the council.



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

If you want to help to lead a service, or be in a skit, this is one opportunity; come practice and prepare for an Advent service held on Dec. 17. Practices will be during Sunday School time (9-9:40 am) Dec. 3, 10, and 17, meeting in the sanctuary of the church. Bring or give any ideas about an advent service to Sarah Hobbs (563-652-3089 or bluestem@bernardtel.com). Come be worshipful, joyful, grateful, and have some fun, too.

Friday, Dec. 29 starting at 5:30pm the Education Board is inviting you, your family, your friends to pizza, church family feud, and a movie at the church.

Come join us for the fun!!!

Successful Treasure Sale!

We'd like to thank everyone for their donations for the three day treasure sale held in November. We raised about \$1000 during the sale, plus pre- and post-sale brings our total to almost \$1200. Thanks again to everyone who helped!

Remember, you can always bring items to the treasure sale room at any time, as we always have a sale table set up.

Thank you,

Geni Carr, Phyllis Nissen,

Karen McClintock and Dianne Barker



Maquoketa United Church of Christ

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