



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church of Christ
DECEMBER 2018



Friends in Christ—

What do you want?

That's a good question anytime, but especially during December. I'm convinced that the question "What do you want?" is a very religious question. Indeed, it was often the question Jesus asked of those he encountered.

Mariah Carey is once again telling us "All I Want for Christmas Is You"—which is presented as not asking too much, compared to all sorts of gifts around the tree, but, when you think about it, that's quite a request, isn't it?

Twenty years ago, the environmental activist, Bill McKibben, published a small book titled *Hundred Dollar Holiday: The Case for a More Joyful Christmas*. In it he says something that gets at the real issue: "Christmas should be something to enjoy rather than endure. Instead of an island of bustle, it should be an island of peace amid a busy life. We want so much more out of Christmas: more music, more companionship, more contemplation, more time outdoors, more love."

We want so much more.

We want so much more—not just out of Christmas, but out of life.

And that's something to accept, to embrace, to celebrate.

Recently in worship I asked the children of our church about the big things that they wanted. One girl said she wanted the earth to continue—a powerful answer, showing that even young people are aware the jeopardy in which we have put this planet.

The incarnational message of Christmas is that God loved this creation enough to come to us as one of us. That message calls us, even now, especially now to be stewards of creation. One of the traditional themes of Advent is the need to wake up and be alert. Recent UN and US reports of climate change come to us as a call to do the same—wake up and act while we still can.

During January and February, the Mission Board will offer a Sunday morning adult education series on climate change and our response—watch the Sunday bulletins and the January newsletter for more information.

Let us celebrate the joy and the hope of Christmas in every way possible—with more music, more companionship, more contemplation, more time outdoors, more love. And let us take the good news of God with us—Emmanuel—into the new year with new awareness and new action.

Peace,

Bill



ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

LOOK AHEAD TO ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Each year brings festivity and celebration as we move through Advent and the joy of Christmas and Epiphany. Mark your calendars so that you won't miss these special events:

- December 2:** First Sunday in Advent; Lighting of the Advent Candles begins; Communion Sunday; Alternate Gifting after worship in Rockwood Hall.
- December 9:** Second Sunday in Advent; Special Music Sunday (see below); Advent Lunch after worship in Rockwood Hall.
- December 16:** Third Sunday in Advent; Children's Christmas pageant presented during worship; Christmas caroling with the choir in the afternoon.
- December 23:** Fourth Sunday in Advent.
- December 24:** Christmas Eve candlelight worship service at 5:30 p.m.; Bring your family, your relatives, your friends, or come by yourself. A warm and joy-filled celebration of God's love shared with us in Jesus. Gala reception follows in Rockwood Hall after worship. Christmas Fund Offering;
- December 24:** **Church office closed**
- December 25:** Christmas Day; **Church office closed.**
- December 30:** Worship at 10:15 am
- January 6:** Epiphany and the Celebration of the Lord's Supper during worship. Epiphany Cake and the crowning of the king/queen in Rockwood Hall after worship.



THE SANCTUARY CHOIR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH PRESENTS.....



The Sanctuary Choir of The Congregational Church, under the direction of Kristin Ramseyer presents *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, BWV 140, by Johann Sebastian Bach during worship on **Sunday, December 9.**

Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 140, is a sacred chorale cantata in the dramatic dialogue style written by J.S. Bach during his time as Kantor in Leipzig. The work is one of Bach's most popular and widely performed sacred cantatas. It was composed for the 27th Sunday after Trinity and first performed on November 25, 1731. The cantata is based on the hymn in three stanzas "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme" (1599) by Philipp Nicolai which paraphrases Jesus's parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. The movements which are not based on Nicolai's hymn incorporate paraphrases of Solomon's Song of Songs including the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem, which encourages the wise and faithful to awake and prepare themselves for the coming of the bridegroom, and Solomon's courtship and marriage to the Shulamite maiden, which reinforces the idea of holy marriage between God and his chosen people, Christ and his church.

LET'S CELEBRATE THE SEASON TOGETHER!



Please join us for the Advent Potluck Lunch immediately after worship on December 9TH. Tableware, coffee, milk and water will be available. Bring a dish to share!. Questions? Contact Sharyn Reitz or Connie Parsons.



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

This is a service for people of all ages. This will include a special 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.



ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

Each December members of our church choir join with other members of the congregation in singing Christmas carols at various locations. This is a great way to share the joy of the Christmas season. This year we will sing together on **Saturday, December 15**. Many voices make this a festive event for people of all ages. And we go out to eat when we're finished! What could be better? Join us at any or all of the following locations:

- * 2:30 PM Briarwood Health Center, 605 Greenwood Drive, Iowa City
- * 3:30 PM Chatham Oaks, 4515 Melrose Ave, Iowa City
- * 4:30 PM Oaknoll Retirement Center, Healthcare Center, 1 Oaknoll Dr, Iowa City
- * 5:45 PM Dinner: Old Chicago, 75 2nd St, Coralville



THE CHRISTMAS FUND

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.

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.

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 2018.

MEMBER GATHERINGS

The Women's Lunch will be held on **December 20 at Monica's in Coralville beginning at 11:45 am**. The Men's Breakfast will be on **December 22 and will meet at the MidTown Restaurant at 200 Scott Blvd in Iowa City beginning at 8 am**.

THE GIFT OF FOOD AND SERVICE

It's our turn to host the Free Lunch on **December 31**. A sign-up sheet is posted in Rockwood Hall. You always respond generously to this effort and do so to provide well over one hundred tasty, healthy, meals to those in need. Whether you donate food or help serve or both, you are appreciated. Please consider signing up to bring food and/or to help serve.

REFLECTIONS FROM A PASTORAL COUNSELOR....



Nothing gets our attention like our mortality, which can be something we ignore and/or take for granted when things are going well. When our capability is interrupted--either temporarily due to perhaps post-surgical restrictions or permanently due to an irreversible disability--we are left with an adjustment of varying magnitude.

The ultimate manifestation of our mortality, of course, is death. The November 7, 2018 edition of THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY has as its cover article, "Don't forget, you're going to die."

Many of us are used to being self-sufficient and hold that as the standard to be maintained. A colleague who is from a farm community was told at an early age: "Love many, trust few, paddle your own canoe." But it can be hard to paddle with a broken arm or dislocated shoulder. Learning to accept assistance graciously can benefit the giver as well as the recipient. Both givers and receivers are necessary to keep the process moving. It is not a sign of inadequacy but an indication of being human when assistance is required. And being human is okay, which was confirmed with Christmas.

Best wishes for a meaningful Christmas and a fulfilling New Year.

Bruce

(The Rev. Bruce D. Williams is a pastoral counselor at the Community Pastoral Counseling Service (CPCS), which is comprised of six churches in the Iowa City area including this one. CPCS is at 30 N. Clinton St., Iowa City, IA, 52245, 319-337-2519.)

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN IRAQI KURDISTAN

Julie Brown, a member of the Christian Peacemaker Team in Iraqi Kurdistan will speak in Rockwood Hall on **Wednesday, December 5, at 7 p.m.** Julie is a peace activist and human rights defender, born in rural Iowa and now living in Iraqi Kurdistan. She will speak about human rights issues in Iraqi Kurdistan, with a large focus on the life of villagers caught in decades of cross-border bombings. She will touch on the political aftermath of the US occupation and its impact on daily life. She will challenge us to consider what solidarity from within the US could look like and the role what we as US citizens have. This event is sponsored by Congregational UCC and Veterans for Peace #161.



ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

CONSULTATION OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES WINTER CLOTHING DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

The CRC Winter Clothing Drive distributed over 1,400 winter coats, plus snow pants, sweaters, scarves, hats, mittens/gloves and boots. Our church donated both countless bags of winter wear and 13 members gave of their time during the distribution.



Our site is The Kingdom Center where approximately 500 winter coats were distributed to shoppers of all ages. In addition to a winter coat, each shopper could select 5 other clothing or footwear items, plus a hat, scarf, and gloves.

It is never too early to start finding winterwear for 2019. We always run out of boys and men's gloves, hats and scarves so please consider adding those items to your church shopping lists. Dates to the above activities have not been announced for 2019- stay tuned.

150 YEARS—STILL SPEAKING! STILL GIVING



This year we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of our church building. We prepared for this through our major renovations a few years ago. A new history of the past 50 years was published in late 2017. We marked our anniversary with a special worship service on Pentecost Sunday last spring. And the work on our new elevator will be completed soon!

This was all made possible through the faithful giving of a long line of members and friends—including you. We are grateful for your gifts.

But we are by no means finished. After 150 years on this corner in this community, we are still speaking and still giving. We are speaking the message of God's love for all people in worship, education and fellowship. We are speaking truth to power in challenging times through our support of organizations working for justice in and beyond Iowa City. We are giving to share God's comfort and hope with the homeless and hungry, with refugees and victims of natural disasters. We are giving to make sure that our congregation will be vital in the coming year as well as 150 years from now.

Our request this year is a simple one: Please give generously—even exceeding your expectations—to support the ministry and mission of Congregational UCC in 2019. Give so that we can continue, expand, and develop our worship of God, the Christian education of children, youth, and adults, the maintenance of our building, and our mission beyond our walls.

Pledge cards are available in Rockwood Hall or from the office. Filling it out and returning it helps our church leaders as they plan for the coming year. Please bring it or mail it to the church. You can also call Nan and she will fill one out for you!

Thanks again for your faithful stewardship.

Your Stewardship Board: Cynthia Kemp, Deb Cobb, Chuck Connerly, Martha Ann Crawford, Sharon Garton, John Reitz, James Savage, Jerry Walker, Derek Willard



That Wonderful First Christmas

A Musical Drama of the Nativity

December 16, 2018

10:15 am

The Congregational United Church of Christ

Presented by the Children of Our Church

Ages 4-11



Our Adult Library

"Crossings, a Doctor-Soldier's Story"

By Jon Kerstetter

Published in 2017

Quoted from cover of the book:

"Crossings" is a memoir of an improbable, powerfully drawn life, one that began in poverty on the Oneida Reservation in Wisconsin but grew by force of will to encompass a remarkable medical practice.

Trained as an emergency physician, Kerstetter's thirst for intensity led him to volunteer in war-torn Rwanda, Kosovo, and Bosnia, and to join the Army National Guard. His three tours in the Iraq War marked the height of the American struggle there."

"But war was only the start of Kerstetter's struggle. The stroke he suffered upon returning from Iraq led to serious cognitive and physical disabilities. His years-long recovery, impeded by near-unbearable pain and complicated by PTSD, meant overcoming the perceived limits of his body and mind and re-imagining his own capacity for renewal and change."

"Crossings" is a searing, beautifully told memoir by a Native American doctor on the trials of being a doctor-soldier in the Iraq War, and then, after suffering a stroke that left his life irrevocably changed, his struggles to overcome the new limits of his body, mind, and identity."

Jon R. Kerstetter is a physician and retired U.S. Army Flight Surgeon. He is a graduate of the Mayo Medical School in Rochester, Minn. After joining the Iowa Army National Guard in 1994, he served as a medical officer until his retirement in 2009. Kerstetter also holds an MS in business and an MFA in creative nonfiction.

Kerstetter was director of John Hopkins teaching program in emergency medicine in Kosovo and provided humanitarian medical care in the conflicts in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Kerstetter received healthcare and stroke rehabilitation at Univ Hospitals and Clinics and St Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids. He resides in Iowa City with his wife. They have 4 children.

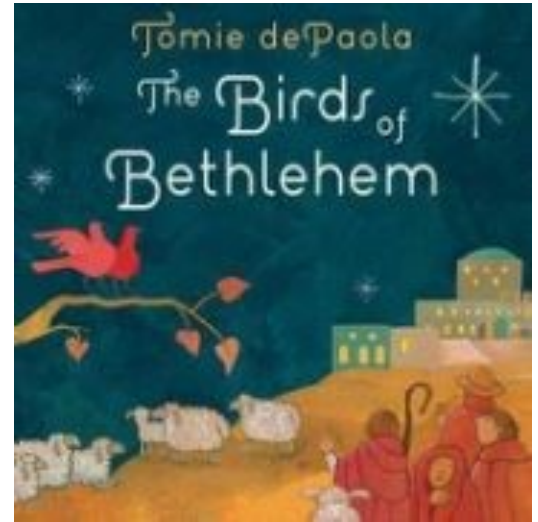
Judy Doorenbos, Library Committee



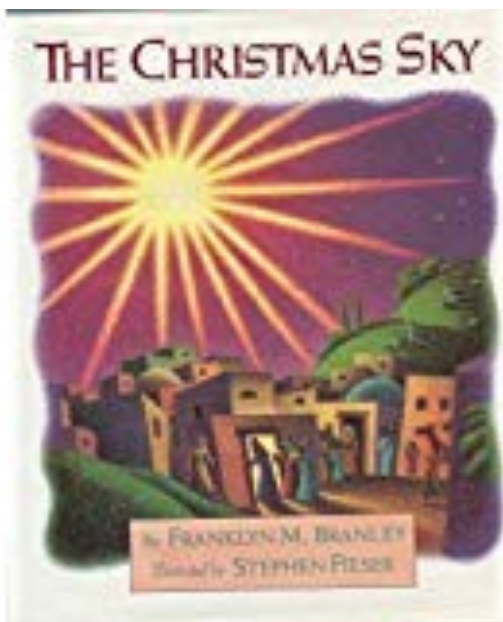
Our Children's Library

The Birds of Bethlehem by Tomie de Paola is a recent gift to our library. It was published in 2012 by Nancy Paulsen Books, a division of Penguin Young Readers Group. Preschool and kindergarten.

This beautiful book tells the story of the nativity from the viewpoint of birds near Bethlehem who observed some extraordinary sights. As the birds are eating breakfast in the field they talk to each other about some mysterious happenings. Two birds saw unusual numbers of people coming into town, others noticed that the inn had no more room, two more saw a couple having to sleep in a stable, and others saw a spectacular sight of angels appearing to shepherds in the field. Stories of animals visiting the baby Jesus are fairly common. This book is different because of its simple text and illustrations, its sense of mystery, and its reverent but straightforward view of the nativity. There are places in the book where preschoolers might participate verbally: noting the colors of the birds, and naming the baby in the manger.



The Christmas Sky by Franklyn Branley, illustrations by Stephen Fieser. NY: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1990. Grades 4-6.



Franklyn Branley (1915-2002) was a well-known and respected science writer and chairman of the Hayden Planetarium. This book is based on the annual lectures Branley delivered at the Planetarium during the Christmas season when he was chair of that institution. It is a revised edition of his 1966 book which was named a *School Library Journal* Best Book for that year. He examined several theories explaining what the Star of Christmas might have been. He discussed some of those theories and evidence that might discount some of them. He gave his theory of the year and season of Jesus' birth by looking at old tax records, noting the facts of Herod's rule and death, and the times when desert people grazed their sheep. Whether you agree with Branley's conclusions or not, this book will give older children some things to [ponder](#). Dr. Branley helped originate the series of over 100 *Let's Read and Find Out* science books for children.

Ruth Kuntz
Library Committee

DECEMBER 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 - Worship Service @ 10:15 - Communion - Choir 9:00 am - Sunday School 9:15 am - Confirmation Class 11:30 am - Choir Rehearsal 11:35 am	3	4 - Finance Committee 10 am - Diaconate 6:00 pm - CE Board 6:30 pm - Mission Board 7:00 pm	5 - Weekly Meditation Noon - Knitting Group 3:00 pm - Choir Rehearsal 7:00 pm - Human Rights Lecture 7pm Bible Study Group 7:30 pm	6 - FRC Luncheon Noon	7	8 - Choir Rehearsal 10:00 am
9 Worship Service @ 10:15 - Special Music Sunday - Choir 9:00 am - Sunday School 9:15 am - Advent Potluck Lunch in Rockwood Hall After Worship	10	11	12 - FRC Luncheon Noon - Weekly Meditation Noon - Bible Study Group 7:30 pm	13	14	15 - Men's Breakfast @ MidTown 8 am - Dress Rehearsal Children's Pageant 10 am - Caroling with Choir 2:30 pm
16 - Worship Service @ 10:15 - Children's Christmas Pageant - Sunday School 9:15 am - Fellowship in Rockwood Hall - Confirmation Class 11:30 am	17	18 - Trustees 7:00 pm - Stewardship 7:00 pm	19 - Weekly Meditation Noon - Knitting Group 3 pm - Bible Study 7:30 pm	20 - Women's Lunch @ Monica's. 11:45 am	21	22
23 - Worship Service 10:15 am - Choir 9:00 am - Sunday School 9:15 am - Fellowship in Rockwood Hall	24 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 5:30 pm Christmas Fund OFFICE CLOSED	25 CHRISTMAS DAY OFFICE CLOSED	26 - Weekly Meditation Noon - Bible Study 7:30 pm	27	28	29
30 Worship Service 10:15 am - Choir 9:00 am - Sunday School 9:15 am - Fellowship in Rockwood Hall	31 - UCC hosts Free Lunch Noon					

— Don't Forget —



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



12/1 Richard Bloesch
Peter Spragg

12/4 John Reitz
Jane Murphy

12/5 Diane Jetter

12/6 Katie Hoefer

12/9 Chris Knapp

12/12 Emily Buck

12/13 Carroll Hanson
Mary Shepherd

12/16 Rod Malcolm

12/17 Heather Leighton
- Dick
Christina Green Ervin

12/18 Jeff Schabillion

12/20 Dwight Schumm

12/23 Dee Fate
Amelia Green Ervin

12/26 Cyrus Ghabel-Lopez

12/27 Sue Wolken

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 2018 NEWSLETTER



PARKING INFORMATION

Parking is available evenings and all day Sunday at the IMU or North Hall Parking Ramps.

Ask your usher for a voucher (or get one from the church office).

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

10:15 a.m. Worship
11:15 a.m. Fellowship

Church Office is open Monday - Friday 9-3pm

OUR CHURCH STAFF

Pastor:	The Rev. William Lovin
Music Director:	Kristin Ramseyer
Organist:	Bill Crouch
Director of Church School:	The Rev. Patte Henderson
Office Manager:	Nan Martin
Financial Secretary:	Sharyn Huriaux Reitz
Communication Assistant:	Christina Patramanis
Custodians:	Douglas Herrera Claudia Landaverde

HOW TO CONTACT US

Monday - Friday 9 am to 3 pm
Phone: 319-337-4301

E-mail:

Minister.....uccicrev@uccic.org
Office Manager.....uccicsec@uccic.org
Financial Secretary.....sharynreitz@gmail.com
Music Director..... kristin-ramseyer@uiowa.edu
Dir of Church Schooluccicce@uccic.org
Communication Assist.... ..cpatramanis@yahoo.com

Visit our Web Site: www.uccic.org