



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

December 2021



Friends in Christ—

Later this month, our choir will present John Rutter's *Gloria*, a magnificent work that will thrill our hearts as we move toward Christmas. The *New York Times* once called Rutter "the composer who owns Christmas," although Rutter himself says that he is not an especially religious person. Still, he senses that the music of Christmas is filled with possibility: "With music," he says, "your Christmas can always be perfect. With real-life Christmas, there's always something that's going to go a bit wrong. You're hoping it's going to snow on Christmas day, but it doesn't. Or your turkey smells absolutely gorgeous, but it turns out that it's a bit burned when you come to eat it. But the music of Christmas is always perfect."

Maybe. Maybe.

There's that tension, though, isn't there, between "real-life" Christmas and the Christmas of our memories and our songs. There are times when it is hard for us to hear the sound of the angel voices, times when the star seems dim. We have been living through such times for nearly two years. And these December days are filled with new uncertainty even as we try to regain something of our lives in the before times.

This is where music might help. The music of Christmas sounds heavenly. We listen to it, however, out of our earthly reality.

Rutter's life knows that tension as well.

Several year ago *60 Minutes* presented a portrait of Rutter. In the midst of presenting his music, the show also talked about his life, about Clare Chapel at Cambridge University where he worked. "For several years after college, Rutter was the choir director. He got married there, and his oldest son, Christopher, was baptized there as well. "Christopher followed in his father's footsteps and sang in the choir. But in 2001, right after choir practice, Christopher was struck by a car and killed - it happened just outside Clare Chapel. His funeral was held a week later, in Clare Chapel."

John Rutter knows the glory of music. He also knows a parent's unique kind of deep grief. Reflecting on it he says: "The sadness, of course, never goes. Anyone who's been bereaved knows you never really get over it. I think anybody who's experienced what our family has knows that."

Samuel Miller, once the dean at Harvard Divinity School asked for all of us: "How shall the heart, bearing its burden of loneliness and shame and grief, sing the songs of Christmas gladness? The truth is, we need Christmas. We need it so deeply, so desperately, that we will celebrate it though our hearts wear sackcloth and ashes. We will celebrate 'something' in it that the world and all its fury cannot dim or obliterate. We will keep it as a 'sign,' a sign that we believe in a world of 'peace on earth, good will to [all],' though all appearances are against it and earth itself seems to have been turned into something more like hell. Fundamentally and ultimately, we believe that God will not forsake us, even at our worst. We have a hope—a star over the new born child."

Because we live in this real and flawed world, we need Christmas so desperately.

Which brings me back to John Rutter. He reveals a religious longing for something beyond what is. Rutter says: "I love Christmas. It's the child in me. Maybe I've never quite grown up. I still feel just for those few magic days a year, that we have the world as it might be."

Christmas offers us the world as it might be. It is beyond magical thinking. It is not for children alone but for the often weary and jaded adults we have become. All of us living through this pandemic hear the good news that God is still at work in the world, so that the world that *is* more and more becomes the world as it *might be*. (cont'd)

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

So let us in the days ahead, once more tune our voices to sing of joy and faith.

Let us open our ears to hear the message joy in the carols around us.

Let us train our lives to show love and mercy.

Let us shape our world into a place of justice and peace.

Let us look again with wonder as God incarnate in Jesus recreates our lives and makes the world as it might be.

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.

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.

November 28—First Sunday in Advent; Lighting of the Advent Candles begins.

December 5—Second Sunday in Advent; Children's Pageant

December 12—Third Sunday in Advent; Special Music Sunday

December 16—Winter Solace Service 7:00 p.m.

December 19—Fourth Sunday in Advent.

Christmas Eve is Friday, December 24. There will be two worship services—
at 5:00 and 7:00 p.m.



WINTER SOLACE SERVICE: The days before Christmas can be difficult, especially as the pandemic continues. On Thursday, December 16, Bill Lovin will be leading a Winter Solace Service in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. We will hear scripture, listen to music, pray, and seek strength together in these days of diminishing light and early evenings. This service will be live-streamed.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

In Sunday school this month we are learning Jesus' birth story by *telling* and *acting out* the story. We will re-enact the Christmas Story in our **Christmas Pageant during worship on Sunday, December 5th** with a shadow puppet play **In Light and Darkness**.

In January we like to prepare a special **Epiphany Gift**. The Magi brought gifts to the Christ child...we like to give gifts, too! Our Epiphany Gift each year is called a **Blessing Bag**. It is a gift of comfort and hospitality that will hopefully bring relief to those who wander our streets in search of shelter and a meal this cold winter.

Please give a gift to the church earmarked: **Epiphany Gift** so we can purchase the items we need for the Blessing Bags. We also put a \$20 bill in the bag as well.

We did this two years ago (before the pandemic) and gave out 10 Blessing Bags!!

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

What is a Blessing Bag?

A Blessing Bag is a care package or survival kit designed especially for a person on the street. We have very specific instructions about what goes into a Blessing Bag. Our Blessing Bags will be sturdy, clear-plastic zip-lock bags that contains supplies that may be needed by a homeless person such as Band-Aids, lip-balm, hand-wipes, gloves, socks, toothbrush & toothpaste, a food item and some cash. Each church school family will take one Blessing Bag with them to hand out this Epiphany Season to someone they meet in need in Iowa City.

No Sunday School on Sunday December 19th and Sunday, December 26th.

***GLORIA!*—SPECIAL MUSIC SUNDAY DECEMBER 12**



On **Sunday, December 12**, during 10:15 a.m. worship, the Sanctuary Choir will be presenting **John Rutter's *Gloria***, for **Special Music Sunday**.

John Rutter's *Gloria* is a musical setting of parts of the Latin Gloria. He composed it in 1974 on a commission from Mel Olson, and conducted the premiere in Omaha, Nebraska. He structured the text in three movements and scored it for choir, brass, percussion and organ, with an alternative version for choir and orchestra. It was published in 1976 by Oxford University Press.

The work has been recorded several times, including a first recording conducted by the composer, and has enjoyed success over the years. It has been performed by both professionals and lay ensembles. Described as "exalted, devotional and jubilant", it has been part of Christmas concerts.

The UCCIC's performance of this magnificent work will feature visiting instrumentalists from the University of Iowa graduate students and faculty, while being accompanied by Bill Crouch and conducted by Dr. Chris Nakielski. This work will also feature a solo trio of our very own Colette Nakielski, Marie von Behren and Loralyn Hogue and the wonderful musicianship of the UCCIC Choir. Please join us on December 12th for a memorable performance.

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.

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

Please note: The Church Office will be closed on the following days: Friday, December 24 & Monday, December 27 and Monday, January 3.



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 2021.

THANKS! We received \$1000 for our annual Neighbors in Need offering. 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.



ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

ALTERNATIVE GIVING

In anticipation of Christmas, the Mission Board has organized our annual Alternative Giving opportunities. Tree tags for the Salvation Army Angel Tree are available. Gifts for Kids will need to be returned to the church by December 12.

Project Holiday tree tags/envelopes are also available. This is the CommUnity annual holiday food distribution. Donations will be mailed by the donor, and need to be received at CommUnity by December 12.

Mission Board members will take orders for Heifer Project gifts after church on December 5 and December 12. Payments by check will be received, and Ginny

Clemmons will personalize gift cards that can be mailed by the purchaser. The catalog can be seen here: <https://www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/index.html>



FROM THE MISSION BOARD

To the members of the Congregational United Church of Christ, Iowa City:

During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mission Board helped to allocate contributions made by church members to local organizations on behalf of the congregation. As we approach the end of 2021, the board has been asked to issue an updated list of agencies with descriptions to inform charitable donations by members of the congregation. Many of our local agencies have had to forgo some of their usual fundraising events due to the pandemic. Also, it looks like heating bills will be higher than normal in the coming winter, and this will strain the resources of all of the agencies in a new way.

The Mission Board recommends you consider donations to:

Center for Worker Justice

CWJ has recently established a smart goal to raise \$200,000 for general operations by the end of 2022 to hire more staff.

Online donations: <https://cwjiowa.salsalabs.org/cwjsustainingalliesform/index.html>

Send checks to: Center for Worker Justice, 1556 S 1st Ave Suite C. Iowa City IA 52240

CommUnity Food Pantry

Residents of Johnson County, IA can receive grocery assistance once per week. Pre-made bags of food are available. Food delivery is now available to anyone living in Johnson County who needs food but cannot access other resources due to COVID-19.

Online donations: <https://builtbycommunity.org/donate/>

Send checks to: CommUnity; 1121 Gilbert Court; Iowa City IA 52240-4528

Consultation for Religious Communities' Common Fund

The Common Fund supports the Emergency Assistance Program, specifically for housing & utilities. Due to the pandemic and the supply chain disruption, price increases for heating are predicted to be high this year. Funds are not given directly in cash; vouchers or checks are directed to the need.

Send checks to: CRC Common Fund; c/o CommUnity; 1121 S. Gilbert Ct.; Iowa City, IA 52240; Memo line=Cong. UCC of IC

Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP)

DVIP has created multiple virtual offices for staff. Clients who seek housing assistance are given funds one time in a fiscal year due to their Federal and State grant stipulations. Providing additional temporary housing funds and keeping their shelter fully functional has put a large strain on their resources, which would have lasted until July 1st. I

Online donations: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/j-jJhk7OrRx9SpY8cckh2Q

Send checks to: Domestic Violence Intervention Program; 1105 S. Gilbert Court, Suite 300; Iowa City, IA 52240 (cont'd)

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS CONT.

Inside Out Reentry

Inside Out Reentry Community is based in Iowa City and serves people returning to Johnson County after incarceration. They are having many more returning citizens right now due to early “outs” because of COVID-19. They need funds for health care packets, simple items like deodorant and toothpaste, etc., more than ever. Also, obviously jobs are in short supply for previously incarcerated persons.

Online donations: <https://www.insideoutreentry.com/donate/>

Send checks to: Inside Out; 500 N. Clinton St.; Iowa City, IA 52245

NAMI, Johnson County <https://namijc.org/>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), is the nation’s leading grassroots, self help, education, support and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness.

Online donations: https://namijc.org/donate_now/

Send checks to: NAMII; 702 S. Gilbert Ct., Suite 111; Iowa City, IA 52240

Table to Table

Table to Table recently relocated to Pepperwood Plaza, a location which is much larger where they are significantly expanding their regional operation. They need continuing and increased funding for basic operation.

Online donations: <https://table2table.org/donation/>

Send checks to: 840 S. Capitol Street, Iowa City, IA 52240

Free Medical Clinic

The Iowa City Free Medical and Dental Clinic (FMC) is a non-profit organization, established in 1971. We believe that access to affordable health care is a basic human necessity. We strive to provide the widest range of medical and dental services possible to people in the Iowa City and surrounding community who would not otherwise have access to care.

Online donations: <https://freemedicalclinic.org/give-money/>

Send checks to: 2440 Towncrest Dr., Iowa City, 52240.

Shelter House

Shelter House is currently in the process of building a new facility estimated to cost \$7.5 million. Both small and large donations will be needed over the coming years.

Online donations: <https://shelterhouseiowa.org/donate/>

Send checks to: Shelter House, 429 Southgate Ave, Iowa City, IA 52240

Coralville Food Pantry

The Coralville Food Pantry is undertaking a major capital campaign to build a new building and significantly increase services. They need to raise \$1.2 million.

Online donations: <https://www.coralvillefoodpantry.org/morethanapantry> (cont’d)

Send checks to: Coralville Community Food Pantry, PO Box 5523, Coralville, IA 52241, Building Campaign

United Action for Youth

UAY is a local nonprofit that has provided support for young people and their families in Johnson County and surrounding areas since 1970. Prevention and intervention programming is provided.

Online donations: <https://www.unitedactionforyouth.org/donate>.

Send checks to: UAY, PO Box 892, Iowa City, IA 52244.

These agencies are not an exhaustive list of worthy local agencies serving individuals in Johnson County during the pandemic. These agencies were selected based on significant research undertaken by the Mission Board, but congregational members should make decisions based on their broad experience of service agencies in the area.

(cont’d)

The Mission Board considered asking church members to funnel this money through the church (like we typically do with the Alternative Giving bazaar at Christmas). In order to get this money into the community as soon as possible we are hoping you will make donations directly to these agencies rather than sending the money to the church. We do consider this to be a whole church activity, and if you are able to send us a few sentences about your experience (signed or anonymous) we will compile these and send them to the congregation.

Thank you in advance for your generosity and compassion,

Congregational United Church of Christ Mission Board

Laurie Stunz
Kyle Flippo
Paula Forest

Chuck Dayton
Donna Hirst

Hope Spragg
Rachel Burchett

Bruce Reynolds
Jane Kinney

KRISTY NABHAN-WARREN PUBLISHES NEW BOOK

Congregational UCC member and University of Iowa V.O. and Elizabeth Kahl Figge Chair in Catholic Studies, Kristy Nabhan-Warren, has written a new book exploring the meatpacking industry and the immigrant experience. *Meatpacking in America: How Migration, Work, and Faith Divide the Heartland* was published in September by the University of North Carolina Press. Kristy spent years interviewing meatpacking plant workers and owners and weaving together the voices and stories of native-born white Iowans and migrants from Mexico, Latin America, Asia, and Africa who come here to work.

Kristy joins the following Congregational UCC authors who published books in 2020:

Chuck Connerly: *Green, Fair, and Prosperous: Paths to Sustainable Iowa*

Caroline Tolbert: *Accessible Elections: How the States Can Help Americans Vote*

Marilynne Robinson: *Jack*

FREE LUNCH PROGRAM NEWS

Providing Good Food and Hospitality since 1983

Our church prepared 96 lunches to go at the Free Lunch Program on Monday, November 29, 2021. The dining room continues to be closed due to COVID-19 and the variant precautions but tentatively will re-open December 2 with certain restrictions.

Thank you so much to all who volunteered by donating food for take-home lunches:

Dianne Atkins, Chuck & Sue Dayton, Bill Dickinson, Randee Fieselmann, Shelagh Hayreh, Betsy Henson, Alfrieta Monagan, Linda Muston, Edie Roberts and Rebecca Weatherford, Lee Wood

Special appreciation to **Betsy Henson, Joan Jehle, Alfrieta Monagan, Edie Roberts and Lee Wood** for their valuable onsite support. Our next scheduled serving date is **Monday, January 31, 2022**.

Vicki Thomae

CORNELL COLLEGE HOLIDAY CONCERT--SATURDAY DECEMBER 4: Cornell College presents it's Holiday Concert on Saturday, December 4th at 1 pm in Kimmel Theatre, 820 Commons Cir, Mt Vernon, IA. Admission is free and open to the public, masks are strongly encouraged.



UI FRIENDS OF CONGREGATIONAL UCC TO PRESENT VOCAL RECITALS

DMA III Lecture Recital: Colin Wilson, "Tenor Oratorio Arias"

Sunday, December 5, 2021 - 5:30pm. Voxman Music Building, 93 East Burlington Street, Iowa City, Recital Hall - 2301

Tenor Oratorio Arias

Colin Wilson, tenor

Hsin-Hui Liu, piano



This concert will be livestreamed here: <https://music.uiowa.edu/about/live-stream-concert-schedule> View the program here: <https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/islandora/object/ui%3A29562> (cont'd)

Senior Recital: Avery Nabholz, soprano

Sunday, December 12, 2021 - 7:30pm. Voxman Music Building, 93 East Burlington Street, Iowa City, Recital Hall - 2301

Avery Nabholz, soprano

Hsin Hui Liu, piano

WINTER OUTERWEAR DISTRIBUTION REPORT

The Consultation of Religious Communities' annual distribution of coats, outerwear, and warm clothing was held at the GuideLink Center, 340 Southgate Avenue, Iowa City, in October. This is a new location for the distribution, and it is used as the alternative winter shelter by Shelter House. Because of the lingering Covid-19 pandemic, certain regulations were put into place.



Team leaders for the distribution were John Barr, Paula Forest, Jim and Connie Olson, and Carolyn Otis.

Contributions of new and gently used items was at an all-time high! Despite the record number of donations, **the following items ran short**, and it is a goal to increase outerwear for children's sizes 0 - 3, gloves, scarves, boots and snow pants for all ages.

Final count for Coat Distribution 2021: (1413 coats)

Households served: 276

Iowa City: 242

Coralville: 26

North Liberty: 5 (North Liberty Community Pantry serves NL families)

Tiffin: 3

Although people were asked to reserve a shopping time through SignUpGenius, there were many people who saw the "COAT" sign outside and stopped in. We were able to accommodate them, as not every person who had registered would show up for their shopping appointment.

This year was beyond our expectations - wonderful donations and wonderful volunteers.

It was a pleasure to be a part of this year's event!

John, Carolyn, Paula, Jim and Connie

CommUnity Crisis Services and Food Bank Top Ten Needed Donations: please take donations to the food bank at 1045 Highway 6 East, Iowa City. Financial donations can be made via the website www.builtbycommunity.org, or mailed to the office at 1121 S. Gilbert Court Iowa City, IA 52245

1. Financial donations
2. Hygiene products
3. Toilet paper
4. Canned meat
5. Baby Diapers and Wipes
6. Baby formula
7. Rice and pasta
8. Hearty Soups and Stews
9. Peanut butter
10. Laundry detergent

CELEBRATING DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

12/1 Richard Bloesch

12/4 Jane Murphy
John Reitz

12/9 Chris Knapp

12/13 Carroll Hanson
Mary Shepherd

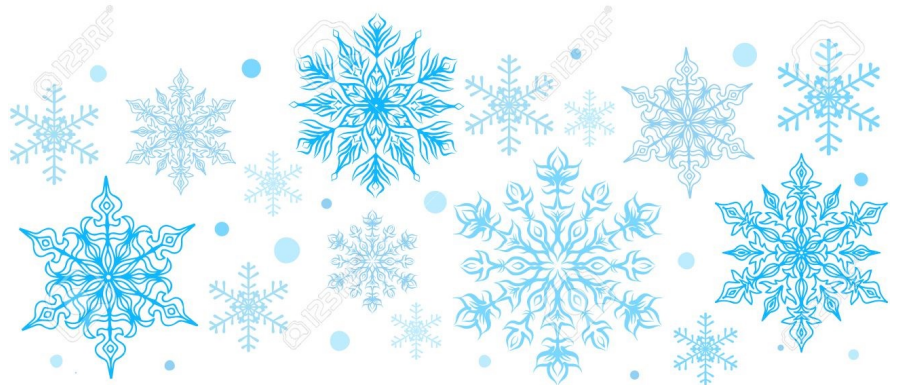
12/18 Jeffry Schabilion

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

NOVEMBER 2021 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:

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

Avery Nabholz

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