

A monthly publication of United Church of Christ, First Congregational Norwich, NY

www.uccnorwichny.org







CONTACT US

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CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Temporarily by appointment only.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sundays, 10:00 a.m. in the Nave Click here for live stream.
Click here for Covid Safety protocols.

Ministers: All the People

Pastor and Teacher: Rev. Jason Boyd

Moderator: Pete Williams

Director of Music Ministries: Mary Williams

Organist: David Burch

Director of Children/Youth Ministries: Ericka Tyler

Parish Coordinator: Cheri Oakley Financial Assistant: Jennifer Mallozzi

Sexton: Eric Burgher

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From the Pastor

Rev. Jason Boyd

A friend of mind shared a seasonal meme from social media with me the other day, and here's roughly what it said:

"Based on my Chocolate Advent Calendar, Christmas is just 2 days away."

OK, so clearly that isn't true. But it absolutely reflects my love of chocolate and why I need to not have it in my house.

Christmas remains more than 2 days away, Chocolate Advent Calendar or not. But we can also look to that little amusing bit and see reflected our own eagerness for Christmas and our sometimes willingness to bypass Advent and jump right into Christmas. To be fair, we might also say our challenges in waiting for Christmas have some similarities with our challenges in not devouring chocolate (or other treats)! ©

But Advent is the season of watching and waiting, and it is just about upon us. Sister Joan Chittister, some of whose work I shared in a recent sermon, offered this on our Advent experience:

"Advent is one of the most difficult periods of the church's liturgical cycle with all of the life questions the Scriptures bring. Why? Because Advent is all about waiting. And waiting is not easy."

Sister Joan also reminds us of the importance of the waiting we do in this season which is nearly upon us:

"Clearly, then, learning to wait is an essential dimension of spiritual development. It has its own values, bringing its own character to the process of becoming spiritually mature.

Waiting hones our insights. It gives us the time and space, the perspective and patience that enable us to discriminate between the good, the better, and the best.

It is waiting that attunes us to the invisible in a highly material world. In contemporary society, what counts is what we can get and what we have. Instead of listening for the voice of God in the winds of change around us, we can come to hear only our own.

It is while waiting for the coming of the reign of God, Advent after Advent, that we come to realize that its coming depends on us. What we do will either hasten or slow, sharpen or dim our own commitment to do our part to bring it."

So it <u>is</u> a bit like having copious amounts of chocolate nearby – the waiting is good for us. The patience, openness to the perspective time gives us and the ability to be more open to the Holy Spirit when we are patient, is good for us. Let us be open in our waiting, in full knowledge that again this Advent, God's promise will be kept.

As a side note, this Advent also has the unusual occurrence of the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve falling on the same day. We will celebrate our 4th Sunday of Advent worship at 10am on December 24, and then we will welcome the light that is the newborn Jesus at 5pm on December 24. Our Christmas Eve worship will be a little different this year, more participatory with more congregational singing of the Christmas hymns which add to the joy we find as we greet Jesus in the manger. We will go forth in joy!

Blessings,





Children and Family Ministries

Ericka Tyler

During most of the month of November, our Sunday School class spent time learning about apologies and forgiveness. Apologies can be both hard to give and sometimes hard to receive. When you're the one who has hurt someone else, saying you're sorry (and actually meaning it) takes work and practice. But when you're the one who's been hurt by someone else, things get even more complicated. What if you don't want to forgive them? What if they don't seem sorry? What if they won't even admit they're wrong? What if they've moved on, but you're still not over it? In our series entitled **No Problem**, we found out what it means to truly give (and receive) forgiveness. We discovered that when you need forgiveness, it's not enough to just apologize. And when you've been hurt and need to forgive, we explored the importance of shifting your perspective, remembering God forgave first, and remembering Jesus knows what it's like to be **hurt**. After wrapping up this four week series, we moved on to a new series surrounding the holiday season.

Can you believe Christmas is only a few weeks away? I hope you and your family are looking forward to a wonderful season! The Sunday School class is beginning to discuss the many aspects of the Christmas season. There are certain things that make Christmas really *feel* like Christmas; Christmas trees, holly, candy canes, nativity sets, and angels. If you pay attention, you'll find angels everywhere this Christmas season. They're on Christmas trees, ornaments, and greeting cards. They're in Christmas carols, movies, and nativity sets. And they're all over the pages of Scripture, too. That's because angels played an important role in that very first Christmas. In our current series entitled Halo, we've been paying close attention to the announcements the angels made surrounding Jesus' birth. Together, we've been exploring why the messages the angels shared back then still matter today — like the message that God's timing is always right, that Jesus is always good news, that we can always share God's story, and that God is always ready to rescue. This series will take us through until December 10th.

*There will be no Sunday School on 12/24 (Christmas Eve) and 12/31 (New Years Eve). We will return on 1/7/24 with a brand new Series entitled **Not Yet**, a series all about identity.

Our Saturday youth group, Free 2B Me, is going strong! We currently have an average attendance of about 6 youth! The students have enjoyed playing board and card games, pool, air hockey, listening to music, collecting and trading pride stickers, building a lego set, and even having the occasional pillow fight! We celebrated Halloween by having a pizza party! The group currently meets every Saturday from 4-6 pm in the Youth Room.

*There will be no Free 2B Me group on Saturday 12/30 due to the holiday break. We will resume on Saturday 1/6/24. If you are ever unsure about whether there is youth group or not due to extenuating weather circumstances, please do not hesitate to text me @ 607-373-0538.





Trustee Tidbits

Ed Tucker, Chair

Call to the Annual Budget Meeting to vote on the 2024 budget on Sunday, December 10 2023 in the Founders Room, following the worship service. Members of the church are encouraged to attend. The final draft is finally complete and copies will be available in the Nave starting December 3rd.

LET'S TALK RACE has been held in the Founder's Room on Tuesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. since November 7 and will end on December 12. United Church of Christ of Norwich has been asked to make a donation to the Center for Racial Justice for the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ. The donation is to be used to defray expenses for the continuation of this program throughout New York State and to help make United Church of Christ a leader in this endeavor. The Founding Director for Racial Justice and Racial Justice Consultant for the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ, Reverend Gary Smith, has been leading our training.

UCC Norwich was asked to donate \$50,000, and the Trustees have written into the 2024 budget a donation of \$15,000, and is to receive financial reports on the use of this money. If and when other organizations make donations, we may consider if it's time to help match funds up to the original sum of \$50,000.

LET'S TALK RACE is just the first step in helping Racial Justice become a non-problem. It is not established yet what our next step is or when it will be conducted.

Members of the Trustees are: Edwin Tucker, WadeAnthony Burke, Robert Oehme, Judy Smith, and Jennifer Mallozzi, in case you may want to speak to a Trustee before December 10, 2023.

We look forward to seeing you after the worship service on December 10.

Music Ministries

Mary Williams, Director

"Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!"

Mark your calendars for **Sunday, December 17** at 4:00 p.m. for the presentation of *Peace: A Christmas Celebration* by Joel Raney.

A choir made up of twenty-five individuals from area churches and the Norwich community has been preparing the cantata on Sunday afternoons throughout November and December. Churches represented include Broad Street United Methodist, Christ Evangelical Lutheran, Emmanuel Episcopal, First Baptist, Saint Bartholomew Catholic, Saint Paul's Catholic, and United Church of Christ.

The central theme of the cantata is the promise of peace delivered by the angels on the night of Jesus' birth. The well-known ballad "Let There Be Peace On Earth" is used as musical bookends. In between, the Christmas story is told through Bible verse narrations and familiar carols seasoned with jazz and gospel flavors.

This year's performance marks the seventh cantata presentation

2023 *Peace* by Joel Raney

2022 Seekers of the Light

by Lloyd Larson and Mark Hayes

2021 The Road to Bethlehem by Lloyd Larson

2020 Were You There on That Christmas Night

by Lloyd Larson (virtual choir)

2018 The Child by Tom Rasely and Joseph Connolly

2017 Darkness Into Light by Mary MacDonald

2016 Ceremony of Candles by Joseph Martin

Join us in the Nave or on our YouTube Channel for the livestream. A free will offering will be taken to benefit the Christmas Fund which supports retired clergy from the United Church of Christ.



Christmas Bells!

The Handbell Choir will be ringing during worship on December 3, 17 and at the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.



Poinsettias will be used in decorating the church for the Advent Season. You have the opportunity to provide one in memory or honor of someone. Please return this form to the church office by December 16th and indicate if you want to purchase one or if you will bring one in.

Address: .	
·	Ild like to dedicate a poinsettia) IN MEMORY or IN HONOR of:

Choose one:

Name:

- ☐ Please bill me \$15.00
- ☐ Payment enclosed
- ☐ I will bring in a poinsettia.

Choose one:

- ☐ The Deacons can give my plant to a homebound person.
 - ☐ I will pick up my plant after the Christmas Eve Service.



Bring in new mittens, hats and scarves of all sizes to decorate the Mitten Tree in the Founders' Room. After Christmas we donate the these items to Perry Browne School.



Hospice and Palliative Care of Chenango County's

Light Up a Life Memorial Tree Lighting

Thursday, December 7 5:30 p.m. at the

Chobani Community Center, 75 South Main St. New Berlin, NY

Join Hospice for a Memorial Service to honor the lives of loved ones that have passed.

(In the event of inclement weather, the even will be postponed until December 14, 2023.)





TO FULFILL WHAT THE LORD HAD SPOKEN BY THE PROPHET.

Matthew 1:22, ESU

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			The Chenango Mus Community meets of daily at 9:30pm & F 1:30pm	upstairs	1 10:00am Prayer Circle on Zoom	9:30am Decorate the Church 11:30am Norwich Theater Company, Mayflower Room 4:00pm Youth Group
3 - 1st Sunday of Advent 9:00am Nursery 10:00am Worship/ Communion Sunday School 11:00am Fellowship Hour 3:00pm Cantata Rehearsal	4 10:00am Knitting Group, kitchen 10:00am Prayer Circle on Zoom 3:00pm Tai Chi, Founders Rm. 6:30pm Garden Club, Founders Rm.	9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders 1:00pm Quilters Circle, Kitchen 5:00pm Soup Kitchen at St. Bart's 6:30pm Let's Talk Race, Founders Rm.	6 9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders Rm. 10:00am Prayer Circle, Zoom 11:30am Advent Book Study. See p. 9. 6:00pm D. Burch, Nave 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal, Nave	7 5:30pm Hospice Tree Lighting. See p. 5.	8 10:00am Prayer Circle on Zoom	9 4:00pm Youth Group
10 - 2nd Sunday of Advent 9:00am Nursery 10:00am Worship Sunday School 11:00am Fellowship Hour 3:00pm Cantata Rehearsal	9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders Rm. 10:00am Prayer Circle, Zoom 3:00pm Tai Chi, Founders Rm. 7:00pm Deacons Meeting, Zoom	12 1:00pm Quilters Circle, Kitchen 5:00pm Soup Kitchen at St. Bart's 6:30pm Let's Talk Race, Founders Rm.	13 9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders Rm. 10:00am Prayer Circle, Zoom 11:30am Advent Book Study. See p. 9. 6:00pm D. Burch, Nave 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal, Nave	14 1:00pm Piecemakers Monthly Mtg., Founders Rm., kitchen	15 10:00am Prayer Circle on Zoom 10:00am Cantata Dress Rehearsal, Nave	16 4:00pm Youth Group Peace earth
17- 3rd Sunday of Advent 9:00am Nursery 10:00am Worship Sunday School 11:00am Fellowship Hour 4:00pm Christmas Cantata - Peace - see back cover.	18 10:00am Knitting Group, kitchen 10:00am Prayer Circle on Zoom 3:00pm Tai Chi, Founders Rm.	19 9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders Rm. 1:00pm Quilters Circle, Kitchen 5:00pm Soup Kitchen at St. Bart's	9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders Rm. 10:00am Prayer Circle, Zoom 11:30am Advent Book Study. See p. 9. 4:00pm Laundry Love at Byrne Dairy 6:00pm D. Burch, Nave 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal, Nave	5:00pm Free dinner at Emmanuel Episcopal 6:00pm Helping Hands Give-away at the YMCA 7:00pm Blue Christmas Service, BSUMC. See p. 9.	22 10:00am Prayer Circle on Zoom	23 4:00pm Youth Group
24- 3rd Sunday of Advent & Christmas Eve 9:00am Nursery 10:00am Worship 11:00am Fellowship Hour 5:00pm Christmas Eve Service, Nave	25 - Christmas Day	26 9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders Rm. 1:00pm Quilters Circle, Kitchen 5:00pm Soup Kitchen at St. Bart's	27 9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders Rm. 10:00am Prayer Circle, Zoom	28	29 10:00am Prayer Circle on Zoom	30 9:00am Fourth Saturday Diaper Distribution at First Baptist Church
31 - New Year's Eve	1 - New Year's Day	2	3	4	5	6
9:00am Nursery 10:00am Worship 11:00am Fellowship Hour	Church Office Closed	9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders Rm. 1:00pm Quilters Circle, Kitchen 5:00pm Soup Kitchen at St. Bart's	9:00am AARP Tax Training, Founders Rm. 10:00am Prayer Circle, Zoom 6:00pm D. Burch, Nave 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal, Nave		10:00am Prayer Circle on Zoom	4:00pm Youth Group

Turkey Basket Surprise!



This year, a decision was made to offer Aldi Gift cards to families in place of our usual Turkey Baskets in the amount of \$50 or \$75 depending on the number of people in the household. This was done for a couple of reasons. First, the church received feedback from recipients that the gift cards are more helpful in meeting a family's specific needs when preparing a meal. Second, there are fewer folks at the church available to volunteer at this time and this format reduced the number of preparation hours.

Working with social service agencies, our Parish Coordinator Cheri Oakely, coordinated the program for our entire community. A list of 350 families was coordinated and divided up among the First Baptist Church, City Church, Catholic Churches of Norwich, the Emmanuel Episcopal Church and our church. Our church received referrals for about 100 families.

Since we were not planning on offering any baskets, we were surprised when local community organizations notified the church that they were delivering over 100 laundry baskets filled with canned goods, a gift card, and other items to the church for our program. This allowed the church to present a gift card *and* a basket to the larger families, and to offer baskets to every family on our waiting list. It might not be the miracle of the loaves and fishes, but many were fed on the generosity of our community.

A special thank you is offered to The Parker Walsh Team (Realtors), Norwich City Schools, Alvogen employees, the Norwich Jewish Center and several individuals for contributing goods and resources for this program and for the faithful volunteers who met folks at the church doors. And of course, Cheri deserves a medal for her efforts!





In case of inclement weather, please don't take any risks to get to church on a Sunday morning. You can tune in to the live stream at <www.uccnorwichny.org/worship> If we cancel church all together, we will post on Facebook and Instagram, and also with a message on the church phone (607-334-3434).

We've Got Mail



Dear Friends,

Thank you for your congregation's generous gift to the 2023-2024 Annual Fund for CRCDS at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. The Annual Fund for CRCDS provides essential funding to virtually every area of the school's operation. Your gift truly makes a difference as we strive to live into our vision.

Rev. Anela D. Sims, Ph.D., President Colgate Rochster Crozer Divinity School



Dear Friends at UCC Norwich,

Thank you so much for extending God's love and care to our beloved shelter animals! There's not much that beats the wagging tail of a happy dog or the gentle purring of a satisfied cat!

Thanks to you, the animals at the Chenango SPCA will have another day of safety, good health and happiness. Your recent donation does so much more than just keep our furry friends from homelessness. Your generous gift will make sure that each and every one of our shelter animals gets excellent veterinary care, a balanced diet carefully chosen for their age and health, daily playtime with people who love them. Your gift also makes sure that we can keep searching for the right adoptive home for every last one of them. So thank you!

Patrick McLaughlin, Executive Director Chenango SPCA



Dear UCC.

On behalf of Hospice & Palliative Care of Chenango County, I would like to thank you for your generous donation. With the support of people like you, our organization has been caring for our community since 1991. As the demand for our services continues to grow, your contribution enables us to provide quality care, comfort, support, and relief to terminally ill patients and their families in Chenango County, regardless of ability to pay. Your generosity does not go unnoticed and reflects the true "Neighbors caring for neighbors" spirit of Hospice Care.

Cassandra Pfoh Hospice & Palliative Care Dear Missions Committee,

Thank you for your generous donation to Chenango Family Food Cooperative. We are currently up to 250 members and have 19 local farms providing goods to sell in our store. We wil let our community know of your assistance with membership fees. We are blessed.

Deb Whitman, Treasurer Chenango Family Food Cooperative



Dear Friends,

We graciously thank you for your thoughtful donation to the Danielle House. We are blessed by the enduring kindness of our donors. Your generosity especially at this uncertain in our world is so appreciated. Because of you and others like yourself we continue to be able to offer a safe, secure shelter to individuals far from home during medical care or crisis. A recent guest noted: Danielle House is a wonderful place. I have needed them several times over the years and my experience there is always comforting, welcoming and sometimes even joy during very difficult times. Thank you for making us feel like we were home.

May you all be blessed as you have blessed others.

Diane Stento, Executive Director Danielle House



Dear UCC.

Thank you for the use of your kitchen during Colorscape weekend. We truly appreciate it. Melissa deCordova, Development Director Colorscape Chenango



Dear Friends.

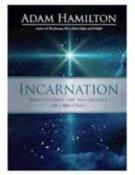
On behalf of the volunteers and clients that are a part of our Daily Bread Food Pantry, we want to thank you for your donation. The money you donated will be used for the purchase of food for the pantry. We certainly appreciate your continued support of the food pantry. In August, we provided food to 166 households, consisting of 475 people and in September to 187 families/547 people. We are happy that we can be there to assist families.

Barbara and Gary Tompkins, Our Daily Bread Food Pantry

A Seagon of Preparation



This Advent season in the face of uncertainty and conflict, Christians reclaim the Christ Child who brings us together, heals our hearts, and calls us to bring light into the darkness. Now more than ever, we are being invited to reflect upon the significance of the Christ-child for our lives and world today.



We are also invited to gather together with our kindred in Christ from Broad Street United Methodist Church and Christ Lutheran Church for a shared study of the names of Christ used by the Gospel writers. Our book will be In *Incarnation:* Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas, by biblical scholar Adam Hamilton as he examines the names of Christ used by the gospel writers.

Our gatherings will be on 4 consecutive Wednesdays (11/29, 12/6, 12/13, 12/20) at Broad Street United Methodist Church, 74 North Broad Street. Fellowship time with a soup lunch will be at 11:30am, with study to follow from 12-1pm. To get a book, contact Cheri in the church office.

Let us remember that the Christmas season can be a difficult time for many. Dealing with the death of a loved one, difficult life changes, or other challenging human situations can all create needs for folks who are blue at Christmas to have a particular type of sacred space. This year, we will again be part of a community ecumenical Blue Christmas/Longest Night service, which will take place at 7:00pm on Thursday, December 21 at Broad Street United Methodist Church, 74 North Broad Street.



The 4 Sundays of Advent are all in December; note that the 4th Sunday of Advent is Christmas Eve **morning** - not to be confused with the 5pm Christmas Eve service. This year, all will be invited to participate in the candle-lighting through a sung prayer response to the tune of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" each week.

continued on the next page



Sunday, December 3, 2023 10:00am

The Kolb/Danielyan family lights the Candle of Hope

O come and be the hope in all our lives
Though chaos and confusion still survive
We know the path of hate all too well
We need our God with us, Emmanuel!
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us
And all things shall be well

Sunday, December 10, 2023 10:00am

Jen Mallozzi and Bob Oehme light the Candle of Hope

O come and bring your peace upon the earth That even now still longs for its rebirth We seek to live and move in your ways Guide us to peace and justice all our days Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us And all things shall be well



Sunday, December 17, 2023 10:00am

Elspeth Hunter and Miranda Hunter light the Candle of Joy

O come to us like joy of heaven's dawn, From Mary's womb a faithful paragon Brought forth into this world by love's power Your Spirit through her labors in that hour Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us And all things shall be well

Sunday, December 24, 2023 10:00am

Ericka Tyler lights the Candle of Love

O come you source of Love unto us all Enlighten us and help us hear your call To bear your Love out into the wild And celebrate God's wondrous holy Child! Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us And all things shall be well





Grace shapes our faith, our family, our friendships, and our identity. Grace is not just being given the benefit of the doubt or God bestowing favor on the less than worthy. Grace is also the root of gratitude and thankfulness. "Grace upon grace" is a reminder of the great gifts of God to us, and an expression of our grateful response to that fullness.

Your gifts to the Christmas Fund allow the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance to provide grace, hope, and joy through financial relief to UCC pastors, lay church leaders, and their families. Thanks to you, no request goes unfulfilled.

In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

HOW TO DONATE: UCC Norwich will hold the collection at both services on Christmas Eve. Envelopes will be in the bulletin. Checks can be made out to our church with "CHRISTMAS FUND" in the memo. We will send along all donations to the UCCNYConference on behalf of our congregation.

Prayer Concerns

Let us keep in our prayers the following concerns:

- ◆ families, families that may be going through particularly difficult times, families seeking God's guidance;
- those who are moving because of their work, those looking for work, and those looking for meaning in their work.
- ♦ those who are ill, who are recovering from illness or surgery, or who anticipate going to the hospital.
- ◆ those who grieve over the death of someone they love.
- our church, that it might be faithful to its calling, our pastor, all staff members and committees.
- peace in the world.
- gay, lesbian and bisexual and transgendered persons, and all those who feel isolated and alone.
- ♦ all those affected by the worldwide Covid-19 Pandemic
- ♦ the people of Ukraine, Russia, Israel and Gaza

OUR PRAYERS AND SYMPATHY to the family and loved ones of **Vicki Gray**, who died on October 31, 2023.

※DECEMBER

Birthdays

- 3 Pete Williams
- 10 Bonnie Carpenter
- 11 Judy Smith
- 12 Jamie Maholchic
- 13 Donna Moren
- 14 Elizabeth Bronson
- 16 J. R. Hamilton
- 18 Margaret Burke
- 27 Mary Carson
- 30 Jason Boyd

Anniversaries

David and Rena Hall 12/01/07
Matt and Jamie Maholchic 12/18/05





ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

11 West Main Street Norwich, NY 13815-1612

