

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Gaylord

December, 2022

Embracing people at every age and every stage of life, helping them to become the most loving version of themselves possible.

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
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Pastor's Column – December 2022

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"Time Flies"

At the ecumenical Thanksgiving service last Sunday, First Presbyterian Church pastor Ian MacInnes-Green reminded us that it had been six months to the day since the tornado hit Gaylord. I knew the date. I knew what had happened. But I was struck by the fact that it had been six months already.

That got me to thinking about what else has happened this year. Some great things have happened: the community response to the tornado, successful salad luncheons, beginning Leadership Otsego County, meeting new people, my daughter qualifying for the Boston Marathon, a great summer of hiking, friends, family, and a whole lot of other good things.

Some terrible things happened, too, and they keep happening: the war in Ukraine, mass shootings across the country involving everyone, including, children, the LGBTQ community, teenagers, adults, and everyone in between, record inflation, and all the time hearing the word "unprecedented". A lot of

things happened that were extreme, and they weren't good.

We also had a contentious mid-term election and now await the happenings in Washington, Lansing, and locally to see if the people that were chosen to move the nation and our communities forward, or if there will be more infighting and lack of progress. It's been an eventful year.

At the same time, I also am pausing to think about what God has been up to this year, and what God might be saying to us right here, and right now. The God of history has seen more than we could ever imagine. God knows humanity can often turn on itself and cause us immense pain. And yet, God has also seen the resilience of humanity. What hope, drive, passion, mercy, grace and especially love can do. God has seen humanity survive some of the worst that evil can inflict. God has also seen us at our best, securing a hope that in the midst of the pain seems impossible.

And in the midst of it all, on a cold, dark night in a faraway land, a child was born. He was born into a hurtful world that many thought was "unprecedented" in its violence. Into the world, Jesus cried out "peace", "hope", "love", "joy", and showed the world that sadness, hurt, violence and anger never have the final word.

So as we look back to a year that was a mixed bag, may we see the bright light of a loving God that shines through. And most of all, may we hear the words of love and grace from a Savior, who was born to us. A Savior, who is Christ, the Lord.

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Greg

December



| Sun. | Mon. | Tue. | Wed. | Thu. | Fri. | Sat. |
|--|---|------|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| | | | | 1 11 AM Bible Study | 2 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Community Meal | 3 |
| 4 10 AM Worship | 5 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 12 PM Reaching In 6 PM Compassionate Friends | 6 | 7 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA Trustees 11 AM | 8 11 AM Bible Study Women's Fellowship 12:15 PM | 9 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Community Meal | 10 3 PM Hall in use |
| 11 10 AM Worship HOLIDAY Potluck AFTER SERVICE | 12 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA | 13 | 14 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA AAUW mtg. 5:30pm | 15 Newsletter submissions due, please 11 AM Bible Study | 16 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 4 PM Community Meal | 17 |
| 18 10 AM Worship | 19 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 7 PM Reaching Out (Zoom) | 20 | 21 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA 1PM Church Book Club | 22 11 AM Bible Study | 23 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA NO Community Meal | 24 Christmas Eve 5 PM Worship |
| 25 Merry Christmas Virtual Worship | 26 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA NEWSLETTER FINALIZED & POSTED | 27 | 28 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA | 29 11 AM Bible Study | 30 6 AM Gaylord Gratitude AA NO Community Meal | 31 |
| New Years Day January 1, 2023 Virtual Worship | | | | | | |

Christmas Fund

Matthew 2:10 Overwhelmed with joy

During the month of Dec, we will be collecting for the Christmas Fund (AKA The Veterans of the Cross). Checks are sent to retired UCC clergy and lay employees.

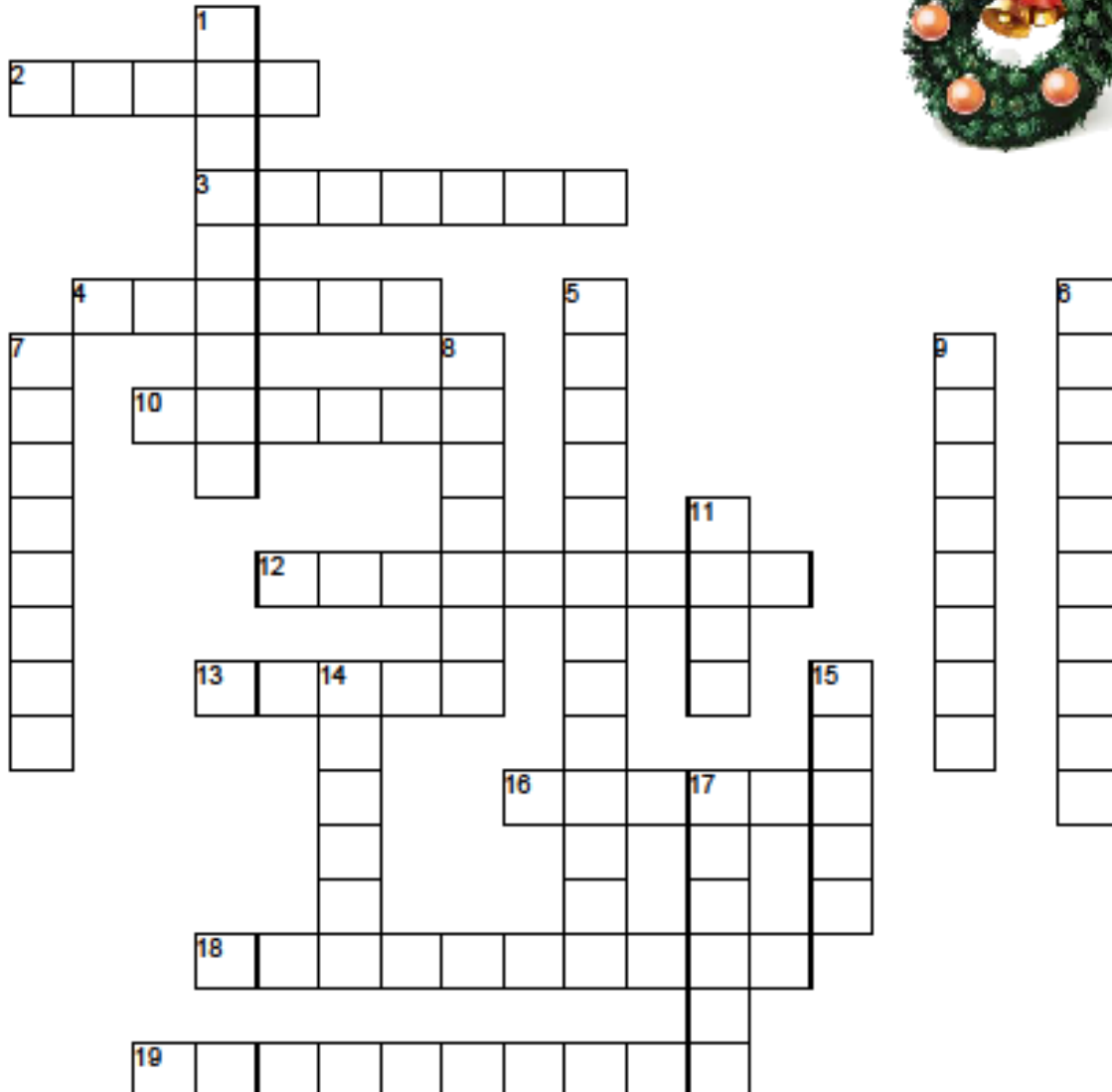


As a thank you for their years of service, retirees with limited financial resources receive a gift at Christmas, monthly payment for food, utilities, as well as medical expenses and help paying their UCC Medicare Supplement plan premiums. or They also receive grants to help with unforeseen costs in cases of emergency.

The Christmas Fund is under the Ministerial Assistance Pension Board.

Louanne will be doing the Mission Moment on Dec4. Please give to the Christmas Fund to help our past retired ministers for their faithful years of service

Advent Crossword Puzzle



Across

2. Who talked about a baby coming? Luke 1:26-27
3. If you believe in him and accept him, what happens to you? John 1:13
4. The man that comes will do what to metal? Malachi 3:2
10. Where did the prophet Anna live? Luke 2
12. Name for Jesus Isaiah 9:6
13. Where did Mary hide the words of the shepherds?
16. Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?
18. What city did Mary and Joseph travel to?
19. God loved the world so he gave it what?

Down

1. What were the shepherds when they saw the angels? Luke Chapter 2
5. Name for Jesus Isaiah 9:6
6. What will Jesus baptize us with? Mark 1:8
7. Why should the shepherds not be afraid?
8. What did the angel tell Mary? Luke 1:30
9. Means "God with us"
11. Who was a witness to the light coming? John 1:6
14. arrival of a notable person or event
15. Who are we waiting for?
17. The man from the temple who has seen salvation? Luke 2

Answers can be found on the last page of the Newsletter. If you would like a printed copy, contact Stephanie in the office.

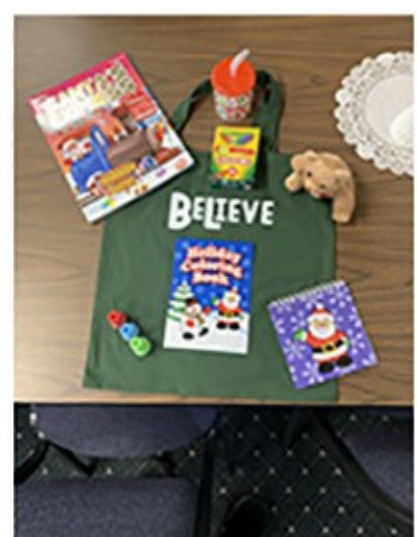
Christmas Potluck

After worship on Sunday, December 11, 2022 in Fellowship Hall bring a dish to pass and celebrate the Christmas season by enjoying fellowship with friends and family.



Kidz On A Mission Update

Although Kidz on a Mission could not go to help at One Stop Shop this year, they were able to send 72 bags filled with crayons, colored pencils, coloring books, construction paper, stamps, scratch offs, cups and bears to be distributed to the children. Also, the Brummels took a carload of clothes leftover from the rummage sale to be used at One Stop Shop and the church's Free Store. As of mid November , 260 people had already signed up for the event which takes place December 3rd. Much thanks to Jenna and Callie English for their help in filling the bags!





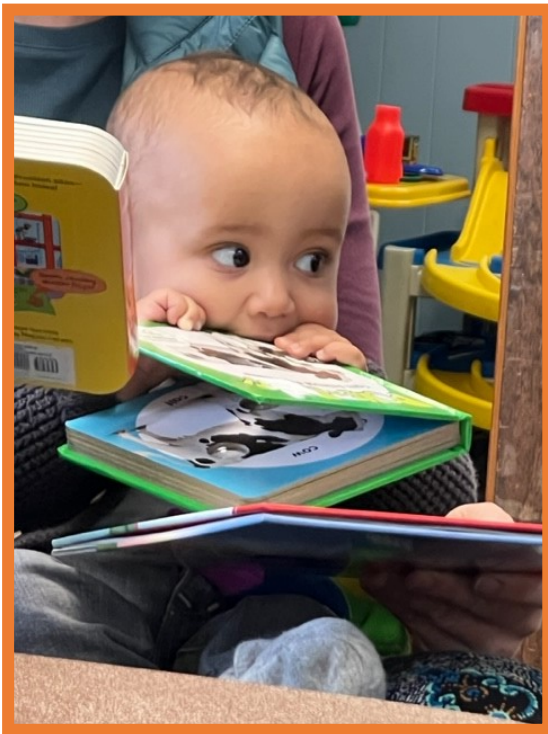
BIRTHDAYS:

- 1 Ryan Watling**
- 3 Terry House**
- 4 Travis House**
- 5 Cindy Goller**
- 5 Sandra Soderberg**
- 14 Mike Dockery**
- 16 Ian Hotelling**
- 19 Paul Kaczanowski**
- 25 Ilah Weaver**

ANNIVERSARIES:

- 21 Joel & Joanie Sietsema**
- 22 George & Carol Lienerth**

Celebrating Solomon



~ In Our Prayers ~

During the month of November

the UNA is holding the New Waves UCC church in prayer.

Joel and Joanie Sietsema – as Joel has been diagnosed with pancreatic and liver cancer. He will be in treatment for 3-5 weeks, followed by surgery.

John and Margaret Hellenberg – as John has entered Hospice care at Aspen Ridge.

Bill Dely – as Maxine has been moved from Medilodge to her daughter's in the Grand Rapids area for further recuperation,

Brenda Brummel – as she recovers from surgery.

The English Family – as they grieve the loss of Joe's mother and process Joe's recent diagnosis with progressive aphasia.

Laura Bantens and her partner, Chris – as Chris is experiencing health issues and they are both encountering major life changes.

Sandra Soderberg – as she addresses ongoing health concerns.

Gloria House's granddaughter, Madison Crawford – as

she suffers from cataplexy in narcolepsy along with other neurological struggles. She is at home and adjusting to new medication which seems to be helping but is still in need of prayers.

Brad Derenzy—as he has continuing health struggles.

Don Storing and family – as they grieve the loss of Mardee's daughter, Lori Lane.

Jennifer (Crandall) Finnegan and family- as Jen's husband and father-in-law are having health issues.

David Evans – as he is having a malignant lesion removed from his nose.

Ariah House – as she is finally home but still in need of prayers. She will be traveling to Grand Rapids for monthly infusions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Food Pantry – is in need of a few more volunteers. Please contact Don Storing if interested.

Bible Study – at 11 AM on Thursdays. Zoom link is provided: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84612895017>

December Upcoming Dates to Remember

- ◇ *Christmas Potluck: December 11, 2022*
- ◇ Stephanie out-of-office: December 12, 2022
- ◇ Christmas Eve Service, 5 PM
- ◇ Christmas Day, no in-person service (virtual)

Looking Ahead:

- ◇ New Years Day, no in-person service (virtual)
- ◇ May 21st, Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel, Michigan Conference minister, visits.





2022 Flower Schedule

January: Margaret Hafner and Dave Henson

February: Margaret Hellenberg

March: Jeannine Wambold

April: Cathy Otto

May: Bill and Maxine Dely

June: Joanie Sietsema

July: Helen Mate

August: Evelyn Pratt

September: Sallie Anderson

October: Vicky Rigney

November: Louanne Spearman

December: Christian Ed.





5 for 5

from your Reaching Out Team

OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission)

Basic support for the Michigan Conference and National Settings.

Collected on an ongoing basis

Received to date: \$329

One Great Hour of Sharing

Supports partners in countries with ministries that fund health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries and both international and domestic response.

Collected in March

Received to date: \$935

Strengthen the Church

Supports church growth, pastoral and lay leadership development, young and young adult ministers within conferences.

Collected around Pentecost

Received to date: \$84 (2022)

Neighbors in Need

One third supports Council for American Indian Ministry and two-thirds is administered to Justice and Witness Ministers to support a variety projects. Due to Covid-19 the elected UCC officers have deemed this to be a priority.

Collected in October

Received to date: \$149 (2021)

Christmas Fund

Provides direct financial assistance to retired UCC ministers and lay employees and spouses.

Collected in December

Received to date: \$774 (2021)

In Addition, we gave \$521 for Blanket Sunday this year!

2022 Tornado Relief - \$646 (as of November)



Current Meeting Times

All are welcome to “attend” these meetings

Reaching In* will meet the first Monday of each month at noon:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84945686588>

Reaching Out will meet the third Monday of each month at 7 PM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83220896539>

Council will meet the after worship. Check monthly calendar for specific dates.:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85297662581>

Trustees will meet the third Wednesday of each month at 11:00 AM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85470391561>

Bible Study meets Thursdays at 11am

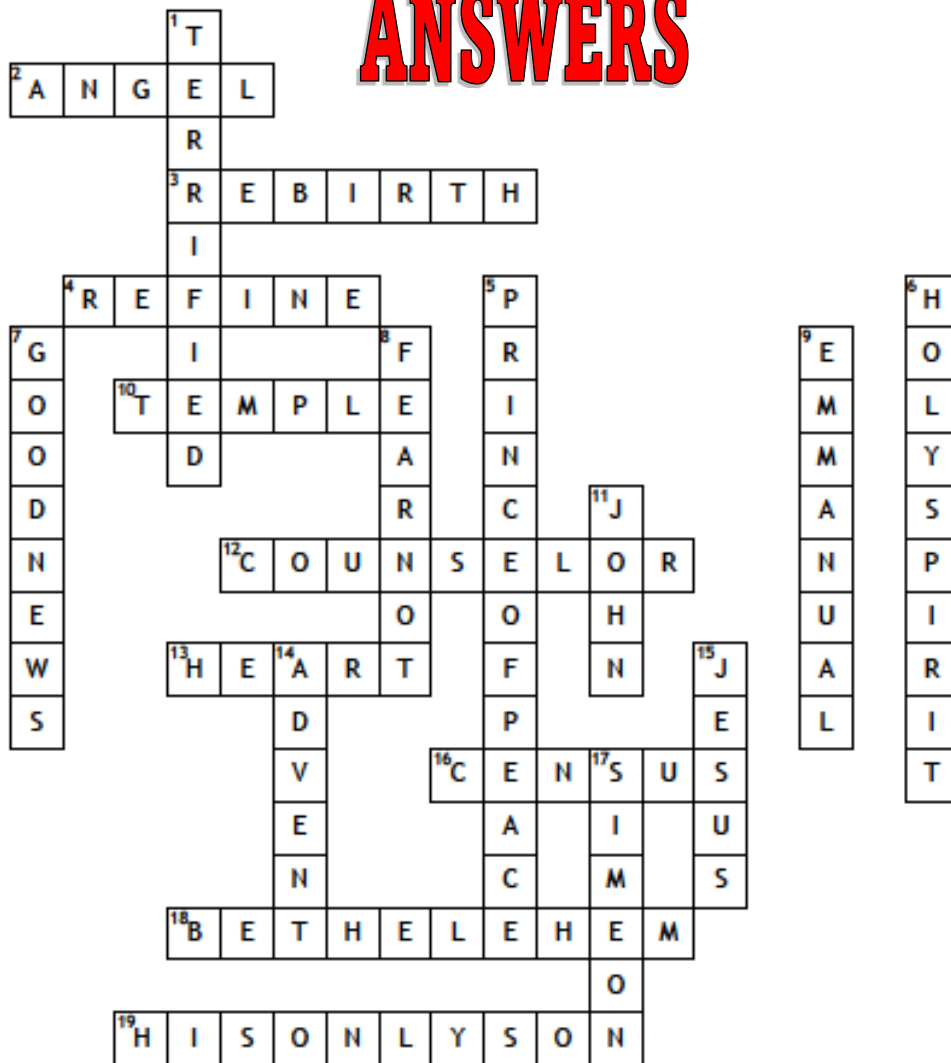
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84612895017>

*In October Reaching In will meet the 2nd Monday of the month.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Advent

ANSWERS



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