



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Neillsville, Wisconsin

Church 715-743-2147

Pastor Jacoba Koppert

Pastor's Office 715-743-2117

www.neillsvilleucc.org

December 2020

"But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us." Isaiah 9

Jacoba's jottings... We already know the darkness as we enter the seasons of Advent and Christmas this year. We are already aware of some of what we will miss: we will miss some seasonal rituals – singing surrounded by the congregation, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," and "O Come All Ye Faithful"; we will miss the quiet light spreading across the sanctuary as we sing "Silent Night"; we already miss sitting with family and friends in the sanctuary and across the dining room tables. Many of us will miss seeing family members and friends we usually only see during the Holidays. Thanksgiving felt lonely and sad for many of us; it is dawning on us that Christmas may be more of the same. We are holding onto the hope of vaccines that will curb the spread and power of the virus so we might again soon celebrate with family and in the sanctuary our familiar rituals. But there is a stronger promise already made than any vaccine.. those who walked in the darkness will see a great light. A light shines in the darkness.

This year the birth of Jesus, our love for God and each other may touch our hearts with greater intensity than usual. The Thanksgiving and Christmas after my Dad died were hard; yet that year my family experienced greater faith in God and a closer relationship with each other. Confronted by the hardships of life, knowing grief, fear, isolation, can encourage us to create space for Christ to enter into our hearts.

Alone or in our smaller gatherings during the holidays, let's plan now how we will celebrate that God has come to be among us. The One born in Bethlehem comes into the world to save us, encouraging us with hope, offering us peace, enabling us to rejoice, embracing us with love. Let us receive the gifts Christ offers to us: salvation, hope, peace, joy and love.

I want to assure you we will celebrate Advent and Christmas in the church this year. Already families are lighting Advent candles, the virtual choir is singing, the sanctuary is decorated at UCC. Communion will be served. Children will present their program. God will be worshiped. Our virtual worship service means you will be able to worship together with families who live far away or who cannot join you in person this year. It means while enjoying your family gathering, you can together also take 30-40 minutes to celebrate that Jesus is born. Worship will be different, yet faithful and joyful. My hope is in some way what takes place for us at home will lift our spirits and touch us in ways we never imagined. Yes, Jesus will be in the very rooms where you join the shepherds in worshiping him.



Even this year, our celebration of Christ's birth can be as festive and faithful as we choose. Join us for worship each Sunday and on Christmas Eve - there are more details on page 2 of the Newsletter. Light the Advent log at home. Create a home worship center. Light candles with us on Christmas Eve. Gather in your circle – sing the carols together. Go caroling with your family singing at doorsteps and windows. Watch for the God moments. God's light will shine in the darkness.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICES

Worship Services will premiere

Sundays at 10am. on

Neillsvilleucc.org

UCC-Neillsville – YouTube

Neillsville United Church of Christ – Facebook

Neillsville UCC Member Closed Group Facebook

Sundays at 11am

WCCN 98.5 FM and 1370 AM

We are now taping the service live on Sunday mornings which means it is no longer available before 10am. The service can be watched as we tape on Sundays and any time after that during the week as fits in your schedule. When the congregation returns to the sanctuary, those on the internet and those in building can all worship together in real time.

What you can do –

- † share our website, Youtube channel and public Facebook page so your family and friends can worship with you.
- † subscribe to our Youtube site – this will make it easier for others to find it.
- † On our website, if you do not immediately see the Sunday Service you want to watch, look under the heading “sermons”
- † If you are a member of the church or a close friend on Facebook, please ask me or another member to invite you to join our member only Facebook page.

Because our services are public, I will from time to time share prayer concerns and announcements on our Member Closed Group Facebook page.

ADVENT LOGS

Byrl Buddenhagen prepared birch logs so members can light Advent candles at home. The church



bought candles for anyone who wants to use a set. I created a worship center for the season for me – others said they might use the



Advent log as a table decoration. Let us know if you would like a set – and we will make sure you can get one. Thank you, Byrl! And thank you to the

families who are filming as they light their candles this year at home so they can lead us in our worship service.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

December 6 – during worship

Please prepare to receive the Sacrament during our worship service. – Have some bread or a cracker and something to drink – so that you might be able to fully participate in the Sacrament.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM December 20

The Sunday School families are preparing for their Sunday School program. Each of the families are filming their children acting out a portion of the Christmas Story. Several of the children will also play an instrument or sing a song for us. Be sure to tune in – and remember to invite your extended family and friends to worship with us also.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES – Candlelight Service

Our Christmas Eve service will be broadcast on December 24 beginning at noon. We want everyone to be able to worship at a time that works best for their family. As you plan your Christmas celebrations, set aside a time when you will gather, not only in your own house – but maybe also with family members who are unable to be with you this year. One of the benefits of a virtual worship service is we can worship together no matter where we are.

I contacted Kevin Grap at WCCN to see if we could broadcast our Christmas Eve service on the radio. He said yes; I don't know the time yet, but I will let you know and I am sure WCCN will also announce the time. Please thank WCCN for their gift to the community.

We are giving our battery-operated candles to anyone who would like to join in letting the light shine as we sing “Silent Night” together during our Christmas Eve service. You are welcome to pick up what your family needs – let us know when it is convenient for you to stop by.

THANK YOU!



We owe a huge thank you to **Bonnie Weyer** for all her work on uniting the singers each week into a choir that sings the words at the same time.

☺ Bonnie has also been putting together the service – so that what we tape in the sanctuary, what others tape at home and the power point all come together to create our service. The new camera will be a tremendous time saver for her. However, it is of course taking additional time to learn all the possibilities the camera and our audio-visual system offers.

Cheryl Steinbach has been putting our power-point presentations together. She hope you like her artistic additions.

Karen and Pastor Mohr lead us in song each week, taping either from home or in the sanctuary. Karen has joined Bonnie and me in giving leadership twice each week when we worshipping both virtually and in-person.

Allen Hosely has been instrumental in getting our camera ordered and installed as he worked with Audio- Architects. He and Bonnie spent hours last week overseeing the installation and learning how to use the system we now have.

Barb Shoemaker gave me a Sunday off from preaching- thank you Barb for your inspiring message. Yes, she is right, I am not getting much time off; there is just much that needs to be done.

Carole Romens is helping to prepare our church mailings each week and take them to the post-office.

Jenny Romens-Erickson and Carol put up and decorated the Christmas Tree.

Carla Marty created our Advent Log for the sanctuary.

Larry and Kathy Marshall and Audrey Vradenburg count the offering two to three times a month.

Stephanie Heck and Linda Stalsberg for teaching Sunday School.

The Holiday Fair Crew that created the crafts for our Virtual and then ran the sale virtually.

The work of the church is continuing. Committees are meeting and making decisions – on Zoom now. **Our church ministry is not closed or cancelled even though we are being the church together in new ways.**

NEW CAMERA INSTALLED WIFI AVAILABLE

The Trustees and Church Council approved the purchase of a video camera to improve the livestream quality of our church services. This camera was always part of the church's long range technology plan however with worship services now on-line the immediate need became evident. It will improve our video quality and decreases the work and time to create the service. Along with the installation of the camera and as part of the installation, Wi-Fi was improved throughout the building. There is now a staff only password protected wi-fi and a guest option. All members are welcome to connect to the UCC guest wi-fi at church.



SAM AND MARIAN RAY GIFT

A portion of the very generous gift given by Marian and Sam Ray through their estate was used to purchase the camera. We thank Sam and Marian for trusting the church council to wisely spend their gift for "religious purposes."

A committee of the Council is now preparing a plan for the future use of the remainder of their gift. The Church Council met in October with the Rev. Andrew Warner, Director of Development of the Wisconsin Conference, for some guidance on how to put a plan into place for the use of these funds.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

The Sunday School recently completed a six-week session on the Lord's Prayer using material from Illustrated Ministry. Pastor Jacoba will teach Sunday School on December 6 and 13 as we read the stories of the Angels announcing the birth of Jesus and John the Baptist.

Pastor Jacoba will also teach the 7th Grade CDs on Wednesday evenings at 7:15pm.

VIRTUAL WORSHIP ONLY *(as shared in an email and in the weekly bulletin)*

One of the many things I appreciate about our congregation is its care and concern for all within and beyond the congregation. This Council decision expresses that care and concern.

Council Members on November 17, with a unanimous vote decided that our services will be only virtual at least through January 31. This is due to the increase of people having COVID-19 in Clark County, our community and in our congregation. Our decisions have always been based on the health and well-being of our members and the recommendations of the Clark County Health Department and the Wisconsin Conference, UCC. We are already planning special Advent and Christmas services. There will be more information in the Newsletter. *Thank you for understanding and for caring for each other.*

All church meetings are now meeting virtually as well.

Facts and Figures

In-Person Attendance

October 25th 20
November 1st 16
November 8th 13

Offerings

October 26

General offerings\$3933.90
Neighbors In Need 200.00
Christian Education10.00
Trink Memorial Landscaping..... 10.00
Christmas Family Help.....105.00

October 27

General offerings..... \$6338.85

November 9

General Offerings\$4104.00
Radio Fund 75.00
Christmas Family Help..... 75.00

November 13

General Offerings..... \$3000.00

November 23

General Offerings..... \$1988.00
Backpack (PEO) 2500.00
Holiday Fair..... 50.00

November Automatic Giving \$890.00

We thank everyone who continues to make the effort to send in their offerings. You make it possible for the church to maintain its ministries while we also do ministry in new ways!

OFFERING ENVELOPES

Offering envelopes for 2020 will be ready for pick-up or delivery in Mid -December. It is very helpful to the money counters when our faithful and generous givers use their envelopes.

ANNUAL REPORTS AND ANNUAL MEETING

The Council set **February 14** as the date of the Annual Congregational Meeting. While that gives us extra time to put the reports together, with Audrey's retirement, we will need your help to gather the information to prepare the report. It will take more time this year to create the report. **Please make an effort to turn in your reports to the church office by January 3.**

In recent years our reports have been incomplete as Church Committees and Organizations have not submitted reports. Of course, what has happened this year, is different than in years past – making it even more important to report what has taken place this year.

ADVENT OFFERING

Advent Offerings for local needs will again be received in December . Please mark your envelopes or checks "Advent Offering".

2020 UCC Virtual 56th Holiday Fair Summary

Due to the pandemic, we hosted our annual Holiday Fair online via our UCC Neillsville church's website (www.neillsvilleucc.org) for everyone's safety. We had 43 shoppers purchasing 111 items raising **\$2,240!** Not bad for only promoting on our church website and some of us posting the link and a preview of items on our Facebook pages. This was our first virtual fundraising event we hosted, and we appreciate everyone's patience with us during this learning experience.

Whether you donated your time, made or donated items to the holiday fair, and/or purchased items at the holiday fair, we thank you very much!

We had special angels that went above and beyond to present this virtual event:



- Lydia Schumacher and Corrine Armitage for distributing purchased items to the buyer's vehicles on pick up night
- Linda Stalsberg for volunteering to answer all the e-mail orders and process them for pick up
- Roberta Gaier for taking multiply pictures of all our items to post on the church's website
- Bonnie Weyer for compiling all our information together and developing a Holiday Fair webpage on our church's website
- Carla and Mickey Marty for opening their home for our workshop's nights, not to mention their living room to display our items

Our door prize was a beautiful lantern with three candles, donated and decorated by Carla Marty, which was won by Wendy Sigurdson. Congratulations!

If anyone has old barn boards, milk cans, galvanized pails, desk drawers, or scrap wood pieces that they would like to donate to the Holiday Fair, please let us know; they are our biggest selling items.

Also, if there is a certain item that you would like to see sold at the Holiday Fair next year, please let us know and we will try our best to have it there; any ideas to keep this project a success is greatly appreciated.

Thank you again!

- Emile Miller



CHRISTMAS ANGEL PROJECT

In August, the Trustees approved the use of the church basement for the Christmas Angel Project. Stacy Schilling had plans in place to keep the Project as safe as possible. Only members of her year-round team will do the work (our Church

men set up the basement with the tables and boxes.) No packages will be wrapped or delivered. The Granton FFA will assist with organizing the food. Families will make appointments to pick up their gifts on our lower level. Families in need in our community will again be blessed!

The Christmas Fund

The theme for this year's upcoming Christmas Fund is "For Such a Time as This".

The Christmas Fund Project (Veterans of the Cross) has been helping the ministers of the United Church of Christ thrive in times of chaos for over a hundred years.

The Christmas Fund and Emergency fund have helped many former clergy and their families in time of financial need. The money raised helps ensure that a 'light of love and hope' will always shine upon those who faithfully gave to the church.

The donations gathered are used for: monthly pensions, health care needs, aid in recovery from home damage and natural disaster, and Christmas 'Thank you' gift checks for emergencies.

We will receive the Christmas Fund offering throughout the month of December, dedicating our gifts on December 20. The Stewardship Committee encourages to give what you can for our retired ministers and their families. Please consider donating by writing a check entitled: **'The Christmas Fund'** to our United Church of Christ mailing address:

**United Church of Christ
515 West 2nd Street
Neillsville, WI 54456**

Or dropping a gift off and putting it in our secured mailbox or at the church office.

Thank you to everyone who has helped support the Christmas Fund in 2020.

THANK YOU – SILENT ANGELS

Jim Filitz writes that he now understands why people cry when they receive unexpected gifts. He is grateful to the Silent Angels for their bag of goodies.



December Birthdays

1, Lydia Schumacher

6, Marla Raine

12, Logan Fox

14, Lynn Abel

Janet Meredith

Owen Sigurdson

17, Michelle Holub

20, Charlotte Hediger

22, Abby Averill

Angela Sadowska

24, Dayne Loberg

27, Calvin Heck

28, Sally Sadowska

29, Jenna Ziegler

Happy Birthday to all who have a December Birthday! Did we miss your Birthday or have the wrong date? Let us know if we did.



December Anniversaries:

8 Robert and Barbara Petkovsek

17th, Glenna and Marg Rhoades

18th, Donald and Joy Abel

26th DeWayne and Kathleen Seelow

Happy Anniversary! Did we miss your Anniversary or have the wrong date? Let us know if we did.

UPPER ROOM DEVOTIONALS

The next issue of the Upper Room has arrived; please let us know how we can get it to you. Call Jessi or Pastor Jacoba and we will find a way for you to receive them.

December 2020

All Sundays in December: Virtual Worship Services 10 am, Facebook, Youtube, and Neillsvilleucc.org 11 am radio.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 <u>1st Sunday of Advent</u> Virtual Service 10am Facebook, YouTube and Webpage 11 am radio	30	1 Online giving committee 9:00 am zoom Ray Fund Committee 10:30am	2 7 th Grade CDs 7:15pm	3	4	5
6 <u>2nd Sunday of Advent</u> Sunday School 9am Virtual Service 10am 11 am radio	7	8	9 7 th Grade CDs 7:15 pm	10	11	12
13 <u>3rd Sunday of Advent</u> 9am Sunday School Virtual Service 10am 11 am radio	14 Board of Christian Ed. 6pm zoom.	15 Trustees 5:30 Deacons 6:30 Church council 7:30 All Zoom meetings	16 7 th Grade CDs 7:15 pm.	17	18	19
20 <u>4th Sunday of Advent</u> Sunday School Program Virtual Service 10am 11 am radio	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve On-line Worship Radio Broadcast 7:30pm??	25 Merry Christmas	26
27 Virtual Service 10am 11 am radio	28	29	30 7	31	January 1, 2021 -New Year's Day	2