

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Neillsville, Wisconsin
Church 715-743-2147
Pastor Jacoba Koppert
Pastor's Office 715-743-2117
www.neillsvilleucc.org

January 2021

"Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch;" I Corinthians 5:7

"In Christ everything has become new!" II Corinthians 5:16

Jacoba's jottings... The New year we have awaited has begun. Many of us are wondering what this year will bring. We have some hope for a better year than 2020. Many of us are hoping for a return to normal – the normal of our recent past. My hunch is that will not happen. No matter the nature of our experiences, we cannot return to the past. Let me share three scenarios that forever change lives:

1. Winning the lottery, big time! YAY! However your life will never be the same. Quitting your job is suddenly an option, so is traveling or paying off your debt, generously giving to causes important to you and supporting your family. Good stuff! Still, even if you give all your winnings away, bank it all, or spend it all – your life will not return to the old normal.
2. A major heart-attack or the doctor says you have treatable cancer. Your life will change. You may choose to live differently. Likely you will always live wondering if you will have more heart issues or if the cancer will return. even with a full recovery, your life will not return to the old normal.
3. Graduating from high school. Yay! You are proud of your accomplishments- as you well ought to be. There are so many options before you – more schooling, enter the job market, take a year off to do mission work; join the service. And then you realize – it will never be the same. Your friends will scatter- and even if you come together on breaks – well, likely not everyone can come at the same time; and there are new relationships- and the pick-up ball game, just doesn't feel the same. It is all a mixed bag, isn't it? Your life will not return to the old normal.

For a few of us – the pandemic has been like the lottery – things mostly improved. For some of us the pandemic as been like a heart attack or cancer diagnosis. Hard! And others among us the pandemic has been the mixed bag of graduation – yay – and the realizations of our losses. With all three scenarios we know life will never be the same – we really can't go back to the old normal. I am in the third group. There have been some places where things have certainly improved – for me personally and in the church. I also grieve the losses the church and I have experienced and will experience.

It was so for Israel. After the Hebrews were freed from slavery and the Egyptian soldiers they rejoiced. However, in the wilderness, they longed for the meals the Egyptians provided for them as slaves and the old normal. Yet in the midst of the challenges, they learned God was among them, feeding them and leading them to a new life. My faith is God is also in our midst. No, we will not return to the old normal – Would God want that for us? I doubt it. God weeps about the losses and the hardships some have endured – *and* God has plans for the us, "plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." God always hopes we will repent and accept the new life Jesus laid out for his followers. Sure, we yearn for the past – yet in time – in the new life Jesus offers all things will work for good for those who love the Lord and lead a lives worthy of the calling to which they are called.

It is a new year. Let us give thanks for what was, realizing we can't return to the old normal. May we begin the new year with hope – watching for what God has in store for us – willing to live new lives.



Pastor's Second Page

THANK YOU!

Many people helped with our Advent and Christmas Season Special this year. Our Advent Candle lighters read their parts, lit their candles and filmed themselves too at home. We got to see some of our members – and a little bit of their homes! Thank you to

- † Linda Stalsberg and her parents, Dale and Betty Opelt.
- † Ellie and MacKenzie Keller
- † The Woods family



- † The Ziegler Family
- † Jenny and Luke Erickson

Luke and Ellie Moseid also helped with our candle lighting.

The Virtual Choir is always appreciated; Bonnie worked particularly hard to increase the size of our choir as they led us in singing “Silent Night.”

WCCN, Kevin Grap, Kaleb Grap, and Dale Erickson made it possible for our Christmas Eve service to be broadcast twice on Christmas Eve (at no cost to UCC). I know some of our members listened to the radio broadcast.

As listed in Jessi's list of “20 Good Things that Happened in 2020,” Our Sunday School Children did a great job tell us and acting out the Christmas story. It is not easy filming- often the scene or song has to be redone several times. So thank you patient parents and children.

I also thank the members and who have encouraged, supported and guided me through the holiday season and 2020. It has been a year! My ministry among you changed overnight as did most

of our lives. I also thank you for your prayers, cards, gifts and goodies. I am blessed by God and by you. Thank you!

WITH SYMPATHY

Tom Wallace suffered a stroke on November 27 and died on December 1st. Tom was an active member of our church having served on various committees and always ready to assist and donate with the landscaping. He sang in the choir for many years. Tom was a man of faith and deep convictions. We express our deepest sympathy to Karlene and their family. A celebration of life is planned to take place near Tom's birthdate – July 4 – with fireworks of course.

Irene Nast, mother of Natalie Hogue and mother-in-law of Randy died of COVID 19 on December 16 in Thorp. Irene attended worship at UCC occasionally, however she regularly joined us for worship and communion at Neillsville Retirement Community. Irene helped Randy care for Natalie as long as she could- and then Randy took care of Irene and Natalie. Natalie remains a resident at the Clark County Living and Rehab Center.

The Apostle Paul writing about the resurrection compared it to seeds planted, says in I Corinthians 15:42-43, 57 “*What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.*”⁴³ *It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.*”⁴⁴ *It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.*” “*Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

ANNUAL REPORTS

What happened this year needs to be fully and accurately reported by the organizations and committees. You have done remarkable ministry. Our reports will give future generations an opportunity to see how we managed ministry in 2020 – what we accomplished, how we did what we did and what we had to let go at least for this year. **Jessi and I have never had to put together an Annual Report, so please turn in your reports as soon as possible.**

20 Good Things That Happened to The United Church of Christ in 2020

I want to first say that this list is not intended to make light of any of the sorrows that were endured by the world this prior year. The agony, fear, and frustration experienced are valid. 2020 gave us, our community at Neillsville UCC, plenty of challenges and hardships. Although we are still mourning the loss of 'what could have been' I would like to challenge you to remember the good that also came in the year 2020.

I've only worked here a few months, but I did my best to gather 20 stories from the Neillsville UCC community that were either, interesting, positive, advanced us, and celebrated life and our Lord. In no particular order...

1. The Angel tree project continued to help many people this year. The numbers are not in yet, but it is estimated that about 200-300 children were impacted. We would like to thank the Trustees as well as the Neillsville community for allowing this to happen.

2. Our dear secretary Audrey Vradenburg retired after working for the UCC for over 42 years. We are sad to see Audrey leave, but share happiness with her that she can enjoy retirement and that God has blessed us with her for 42 years.

3. The UCC bought a new fancy-dancy camera. This allows us to take better quality video to record our services.

4. Speaking of cameras, the UCC is more involved in the online world than ever. Our services can now be viewed by anyone at any time. This allows for many individuals, including homebound, and those curious about the UCC, to participate in our worship.

5. Online technology has enabled many people to stay in contact. Zoom, gave many people opportunities to connect with others than in the past.

6. Over the summer, several volunteers redid the landscaping in front of our building adding beauty.

7. The Neillsville United Church of Christ confirmed seven student this September: Brody Bergemann, Bryce Erickson, Kole Miller, Cali Moseid, Paige Voigt, Parker Voight, and Sydney Subke. This would not have been possible without the many helpers, assistants, family members, and mentors working together.

8. The winter months of 2020 were mild in Neillsville compared to some years. We had some cold days but no awful blizzards or black ice patches.

9. Last January and February the UCC participated in the Soup-Souperbowl challenge. We we won the Neillsville competition by collecting 580 cans– however the real winners were the Food Pantries of Clark County.

10. The Holiday Fair went virtual and was still a success. Many beautiful items were made, donated, and bought online. Over \$2,000 were made.

11. We celebrated Christmas. We were not physically together, but we worshiped together. Choirs still sang beautiful hymns, God still heard our prayers, we lit our candles and let Christ's light shine in the world. In our homes, it was a small, yet humble Christmas for many.

12. Our children with the help of their parents and Bonnie Weyer read and acted out the Christmas story for us in the Christmas Sunday School Program. The congregation was delighted to see our kids – and to hear them tell the story – sing and play an instrument.

13. The events of 2020 caused our daily lives to come to a near stop. For many, this allowed them to think, and reconnect with themselves, their family, and God. There have been many families that have grown closer because of the stillness. I'm willing to bet that there are people who grew closer to God too.

14. The Mission Committee gave away cheese and butter, beef sticks etc. to the congregation, who could enjoy them themselves or share them with others – and they gifted our health care workers at the Clinic and hospital in Neillsville.

15. The Neillsville community is lucky to have so many talented, intelligent, brave medical workers near by that are not only treating patients of Covid but are also continuing to treat and thus save and improve the lives, of many individuals.

16. The United Church of Christ this year has also been blessed with the work and volunteerism of several individuals. If I were to list everyone that is involved in keeping the UCC running functionally, there would be enough names to solely fill an entire newsletter on.

17. We got new carpet. It is pretty nifty. (See #16 for details)

18. Sunday School Classes took place virtually on Zoom. The children learned the Lord's Prayer and the stories of Jesus' birth.

19. We continued to have radio sermons, allowing more people to access us. We also mail and email out bulletins.

20. God was, and still is, with us.

- Jessi



REMINDER:

**The 2021 ANNUAL MEETING WILL OCCUR
ON FEBRUARY 14!**

Facts and Figures

November 30, 2020

General offerings\$2560.00
Christmas Angel Project50.00
Christmas Family Help50.00

December 14, 2020

General offerings\$2676.40
House of Mercy\$50.00
Christmas Angel Project\$200.00
Mission/Outreach\$100.00
Christmas- Family Help\$200.00

December 28, 2020

General Offerings\$11,555.00
Advent Offering \$45.00
Music Fund\$50.00
Mission/Outreach\$50.00
Christmas Fund\$75.00
Christmas- Family Help\$100.00

December 31, 2020

General Offerings\$1300.00
Memorials given\$90.00

December Automatic Giving \$890.00

THANK YOU

For your generous financial gifts in 2020. The ministry of UCC in Neillsville has never taken a break in these months of the pandemic. We worshiped God, we supported each other, taught the children, kept our building and property in good repair and welcoming, and we encouraged and gifted our community. The ministry of UCC never stopped. Of course to do what we did costs money, time and talent. We thank all who have offered what they could to support our ministry.

OFFERING ENVELOPES

Offering envelopes for 2021 are ready to be picked up at the church. It is very helpful to the money counters when our faithful and generous givers use their envelopes.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2020

The financial statements of 2020 will be ready a bit later this year than usual. Please be patient. We will get them out as soon as possible.

On-line Giving Option Coming to UCC

We are very excited to announce an online giving option that the Neillsville United Church of Christ will be utilizing in the near future. In December 2020 the UCC trustees and church council unanimously approved partnering with Vanco Faith group to serve as our online provider. Vanco currently works with 25,000 churches nationwide, including Neillsville Calvary Lutheran and St. Johns as well as nine churches in Marshfield.

Online giving will provide members a safe and secure method for making donations and offerings. It will allow for easier and faster ways to donate. In addition, Vanco is compatible with our current church financial software. Stay tuned in the coming weeks and months for more details on this exciting opportunity.



United Church of Christ received several beautiful thank you cards this month.

Silent Angels
Berdella Carl

would like to thank the UCC Silent Angels for the joy they brought her by bringing her a mini Christmas tree and goodies. Lois Kren, Jim Filitz and Lois Lonning also expressed their gratitude and we know others who received were also grateful.

MMC Thank Yous

Earlier this month UCC provided the workers at Marshfield Medical Center Neillsville treat bags and fish dinners to celebrate some Christmas cheer and to say "Thank you" for all of their hard work this year."

The employees at MMC appreciated their goodie bags and sent a card saying thank you.

Apology for Error in Bulletin

The UCC Bulletin of January 3, 2021 had an error in it. The radio sponsor was not included. Jessi, the editor of the Bulletin, would like to personally apologize for this mistake.

We would like to thank Rosie and Jim Repinski for sponsoring the radio for January 3rd in glory for winter, a time of reflection.

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

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.

Mission and Outreach Committee

UCC Gifts Health Care Workers

The Mission and Outreach committee acted on a great idea by one of our church members. This month 100 treat bags were made and given to essential clinic workers at Marshfield Medical Center-Neillsville. The following Friday fish meals were made by Schmitty's on Main and delivered to the essential workers at the hospital.

Funds for these missions come from money donated by church members via our Advent and Lenten folders. Donations designated to Mission and Outreach can be accepted anytime. If you missed giving during the Advent season you may do so now. When writing a check please mention in the memo that it should be designated to Mission and Outreach.

Souper-Bowl Challenge

Mission and Outreach has accepted the challenge from Calvary to do a "Superbowl Challenge". The food pantry is in need of all the food they can get. Covid has made things different but whatever we can contribute will help. Bring your soup cans to the church at your convenience and we will make sure they are counted and delivered to the Food Pantries.

Quart Jars Needed

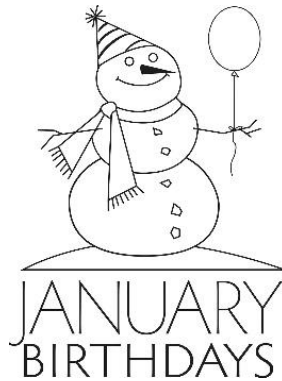
We are looking into having a drive by soup supper give-away. Donations will make this possible. We are looking for quart jars. Please drop them off at church. Just ring the doorbell and leave them by the door. We need about 100 jars. Donations of lids would also be helpful. We still have smaller containers left from other missions for smaller portions.

Thanks,
Mission and Outreach
Carol Harnisch
Carole Romens
Sue Gurney
Bonnie Weyer
Kathy Mathis
Deb Perkl



January Birthdays

3, Kathy Mathis
5, Michael Jr. Holub
6, Alan Hoesly
8, Donna Dekker
9, Wayne Voss
10, Tammy Loberg
11, Lexi Ann Woods,
Everett Raine
16, Dale Opelt
Michael Sr. Holub
Clinton Woods



18, Landon Bergemann
19, Keith Loberg
21, Emilia Mathis
22, Sidney Sadowska
23, Parker Voigt
Paige Voigt
Dorothy Steiger
25. Jim Vrandenburg
Haddie Mathis
28, David Steiger
29, Jill Williams
31, Lisa Hediger



January Anniversaries:

3, Gary and Lois Corey
26, Joseph and Marjorie Felser

Happy Anniversary!

Did we miss your Anniversary
or have the wrong date?

Let us know if we did.

January 2021

All Sundays in January: Virtual Sermon only 10 am, Facebook, Youtube, and Neillsvilleucc.org 11 am radio.

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|--|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | ** Souperbowl challenge: UCC collecting quart jars. Drop off at UCC. Challenge ends Superbowl day Feb. 7th | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 Virtual and radio service Holy Communion service | 4 | 5 Vanco Meeting 11 am | 6 7 th grade CDs 7:15 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 Virtual and radio services Sunday School 9 am | 11 | 12 | 13 7 th grade CDs 7:15 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 Virtual and radio service Sunday School 9 am | 18 | 19 Trustees 5:30 Deacons and Deaconesses 6:30 Council 7:30 | 20 7 th grade CDs 7:15 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 & 31 Virtual and radio service Sunday School 9 am *Holy Communion Service on the 31 st | 25 | 26 | 27 7 th grade CDs 7:15 8 | 28 | 29 | 30 |