

# Congregational Clarion

AMERY CONGREGATIONAL UCC



## From pastor Dana

This poem was shared with me from my Community of Practice group, along with the information that Amy Filipsczak was dying of cancer when she wrote a series of Morning Poems that are identified by number. Her husband self published them after she died. Please read and reflect upon: :

### Morning Poem #23

I have decided  
To refill my salt shaker  
with joy  
and my pepper shaker  
with love

it is what we add  
to what we are given  
that matters  
We need to  
Develop our taste buds  
To discern when these  
Flavors are missing

and to make sure  
they are always on  
the table  
to be passed around  
come sit at  
my table  
I have set it  
with my best dishes  
and lit a candle  
in honor of you  
Here is joy  
here is love  
pass it around.

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I would be glad to have conversations with those who reflect upon this poem and find meaning within its words- let me know your thoughts. As I reflected upon the word I loved the use of such simple and daily metaphors she offers us.. How items each day can remind us to share Joy and Love which are readily available to us. " It is what we add to what is given" is a key verse for me- sometimes challenging but also containing what we control- our response and what we can add to any given situation. I hope to hear from you- face to face, via email, or text. Peace, Joy and Love Dana.

*(Continued on page 2)*



- |       |                |       |                  |
|-------|----------------|-------|------------------|
| 12/01 | Stacy Wagner   | 12/06 | Wendy Heiken     |
| 12/02 | Larry Stelter  | 12/17 | Emily Russo      |
| 12/02 | Beth Jackson   | 12/19 | Charlotte Gillen |
| 12/02 | Bob Whitley    | 12/24 | Alycia Anderson  |
| 12/02 | Janet Brown    | 12/25 | Kipp Harris      |
| 12/04 | Zachary Silvis |       |                  |

*(Continued from page 1)*

**SALVATION ARMY**

At the November Ministerial meeting Amy Clay from the Salvation Army spoke to us. The week before I had gotten a call to set aside a date for the bell ringing on behalf of the church. We had a hard time last year filling the four shifts I asked to check what resources I had before committing a day on our behalf.. Well, that all worked out as I checked with people from last year.-hopefully by this time the last hour from 10-11 has been covered.

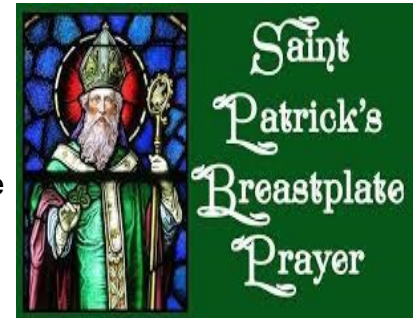
Additionally, at the Meeting Amy shared how they have been impacted by people not using or carrying cash anymore. So the traditional Bucket while still very important are not collecting as many donations as they used to. She shared that we can have our own bucket so from December 8th to December 22 we will have a bucket for our Narthex that y'all can contribute noisy change or quiet change to during this time. I am so appreciative for all the ways you as individuals and as a congregation show your generous spirit through your time, talents and financial resources.

Mark your Calendars for this fun and delicious event- the dinner celebrating the Chinese New Year! The Dinner will be February 1st and more details are coming. Speaking of those details. Please join us for the first planning meeting on December 4th following Church in the back of the Fellowship Hall. Also those interested in helping

to prepare the meal will be meeting to be trained by Peter on January 19th from 1pm-3pm, Thank you all in advance in your efforts to make this new event fun and successful.

**St Patrick's Breastplate Prayer**

Christ be with me  
 Christ within me  
 Christ behind me  
 Christ before me  
 Christ beside me  
 Christ to comfort  
 and restore me  
 Christ beneath me  
 Christ above me  
 Christ in quite  
 Christ in danger  
 Christ in Hearts  
 of all that love me  
 Christ in mouth  
 of friends and stranger



Amen or let it be so. We tend to read things straight through at our regular pace, I would suggest reading this poem again, taking a pause at the end of a stanza and asking yourself what that means to you? How does it strengthen, encourage, empower, or comfort you? There is nowhere you can go that Christ is not with you-surrounding you with Christ's presence. Peace to you all. Dana



# DECEMBER EVENTS



Cookie Exchange

Please join us  
Pm Wednesday  
December 4th  
6-8 pm



Bell Ringing at Dicks

Dec 7

9am-7pm



Join us for Sunday Service Dec. 8  
Featuring an intergenerational Christmas Program written and directed by Barry Tulkki and starring members of our Congo Family plus an Alpaca

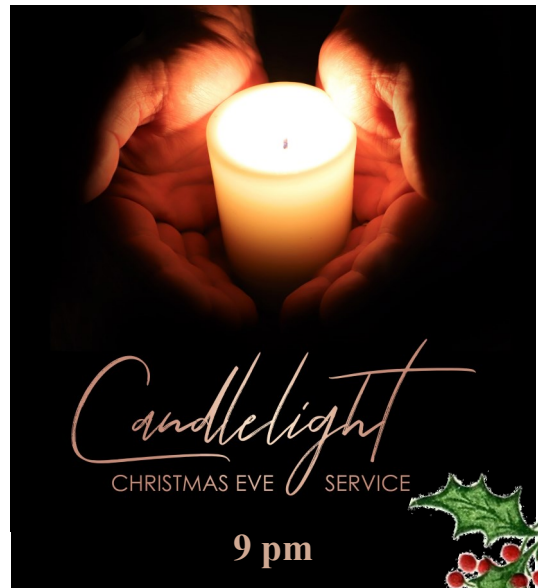


Remembering and honoring our loved ones

Orders are due  
Sunday, Dec. 15



Cooking Class by  
Peter Kwong



Candlelight  
CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

9 pm



**P  
O  
T  
O  
LUCK**  
December 29th following  
the worship service.

## What Is the Meaning Behind Each of the Four Advent Candles?

**Advent candles are lit in the weeks leading up to Christmas, but do you know what each candle represents? Each Advent candle has special religious significance.**

*"Advent" means the coming of Christ, or the second coming, so the period leading up to Christmas is known as Advent. It is the first season of the Christian church year. On each of the four Sundays preceding Christmas, an Advent candle is lit. The 4 candles of Advent names are hope, love, joy, and peace, representing the virtues Jesus brought us.*

### What Do the Four Candles of Advent Symbolize Together?

During Advent, we prepare ourselves spiritually for the anniversary of Christ's birth. But what do the Advent candles represent together?

The four Advent candles are arranged on a circular Advent wreath, with no beginning or end, reminding us of the eternity of God's love and the everlasting love we find in Jesus. Together the Advent candles are a reminder of God's promise to us of salvation through Christ. The wreath is placed in a prominent position in the home - at the front door or on a window sill so that all can see it, and can be a constant reminder of Advent.

### Why Advent Candles Are Purple, Pink, and White?

The Advent candles' meaning is reinforced by the color of the candles. The order of Advent candle colors takes us from repentance to the celebration of Christ's birth.

The first two Advent candles are usually purple, which is a liturgical color. This is the period at the beginning of Advent when we are in repentance and contemplation of our sins. Why is the third advent candle pink, you may wonder?

Well, the meaning of the pink Advent candle is joy and comes before the final white candle, which represents Christ's purity and love.

### The Four Advent Candles

**First Advent Candle - Hope**

The first candle symbolizes a shining light in anticipation of the coming of Christ. It is usually a purple candle and can be called the Prophecy Candle. It represents God's forgiveness of man's sins. Purple is traditionally the most important of the Advent candle colors. It is the color of liturgical garments used for vestments and is associated with prayer, contemplation, repentance, and hope.

**Second Advent Candle - Love**

The second candle, or Bethlehem Candle, is also usually purple or violet. It reminds us of the Holy Family's experience in Bethlehem. The color of the second Advent candle is associated with royalty and reminds us that Christ is the "King of Kings." We await the coming of a new king from Bethlehem.

**Third Advent Candle - Joy**

The third candle is the Shepherd's Candle, as we remember to rejoice in Christ's birth, like the shepherds on the first Christmas Eve. It is also called Gaudette Sunday from the Latin Philippians 4:4,5 "rejoice in the Lord always." The 3rd candle is usually pink or rose-colored. Pink is associated with joy, and it is on the third Sunday of Advent, that we turn from repentance towards the celebration of Christ's imminent birth.

**Fourth Advent Candle - Peace**

The final Advent candle marks the beginning of the final week before Christmas and is a time of prayer. It is also called the Angel's Candle and is a white candle representing purity, peace, and justice brought to the world by Christ. The white candle also reminds us that Christ is sinless and pure.



Dearest Friends,

December 31st will be my last day as your Church lady. As I prepare to retire, I am filled with mixed emotions; I will be happy to have more time with friends and family; yet I am also feeling sadness at not being the church office person you call on when you have a question, need a listening ear or, maybe, a hug. Serving as the administrative assistant has been a total blessings. The joy of working alongside three completely different, but equally devoted pastors and being part of this incredibly loving and supportive church family has brought immense joy and fulfillment these past years. You all have made my faith journey truly special. I am deeply grateful for your friendship. I want to especially thank the following people:

**Nancy Sigsworth** who was the one who called me about the Administrative Assistant job becoming available. I was retired and not particularly wanting to go back to work. However, Nancy kept encouraging (nagging) me until I agreed to turn in my resume. I really thought that the job would most likely go to someone younger. I was, therefore, surprised, and not terribly excited, when I was offered the position. At that time, I never realized how much I would fall in love with the job.

My volunteers, **Beth Mares, Janet Brown and Joyce Helland**, who have been faithful about coming to fold the bulletins you read on Sundays and to fold, stuff and stamp the printed devotionals we send to members without email addresses. But more than that, they have shown tremendous love and support. They are my palate cleansers at the end of a sometimes hectic week. I come in an hour early, so, after the work is done, we are able to take time to share coffee and conversation. I don't think they will ever comprehend how much this time together meant to me.

**Barry Schaefer** was the first Pastor I worked for. His humor, dedication and love of the Amery community made working with him a delightful, comfortable partnership. Barry insisted that I attend his Bible study as part of my job. Then, on one occasion, Barry said he would be unavailable and asked if I would lead the study. The one occasion became several. Since, I didn't have a Christian background, I couldn't just show up to lead a discussion - I had to do research - lots of it. I think that was Barry's plan all along. Instead of a chore, the study became a passion. And, thanks to Barry's enthusiasm for podcasts, I am now hooked on them. Only Barry and I would subscribe to a podcast called "Jewish History Nerds" or "The Economics of Everyday Things."

**Garth Shumacher** was the interim pastor after Barry retired. He came as covid had closed down just about everything. Garth had the charge of providing pastoral services while complying with Covid safety guidelines and requirements. Often an interim has to "shake and wake" to prepare a church for change. Therefore, in this role, Garth was not everyone's cup of tea. However, I found him to be dedicated, compassionate and respectful. Garth consistently recommended books to guide me in my Christian path. When I had questions, Garth always listened and took time for discussions about my thoughts or doubts. He often recommended books which awoke my interest in non-fiction, Christian literature. I am still working through books and articles by the theologians Garth recommended.

And last, but not least of the pastors I have served, is **Dana Caldwell**, our current pastor. Her energy, wisdom, faith and enthusiasm have been a source of inspiration. Dana's journey to be here has not been smooth or easy. However, Dana never lost sight of her calling and persevered though many formidable obstacles. Her dedication to the congregation and her ability to touch hearts and minds through her sermons has made many of us want to grow and search for a deeper relationship with God. I will miss our discussions and her wisdom. And I will miss her laugh which tickles me to the core whenever I hear it.

**To all the dear members of this church**, I thank you for your warm smiles, encouraging words, and the countless ways you have enriched my life. Your presence has been a constant reminder of God's love and the power of a united community. Though I won't be your Church Lady, I will always hold you dear in my heart and will look forward to seeing you on Sundays. May God's blessings be upon each and every one of you.

With heartfelt gratitude and warmest regards,  
Your ~~Church Lady~~ Sister in Christ,  
Rae





### **Merrill church at heart of effort to aid North Carolina farmers**

A member of St. Stephens UCC in Merrill is at the center of an effort to ship donated hay to farmers in a region of North Carolina that was devastated two weeks ago by Hurricane Helene.

Todd Frederick, owner of a manufacturing company in Merrill, got involved after learning from a friend who operates a dairy and cattle farm near Asheville, North Carolina, that Helene had destroyed crops in the area. The friend and his fellow farmers need hay to sustain their livestock.



St. Stephens posted a plea for donated hay to social media, and Todd went to work on the logistics, arranging for trucks to haul it to the affected farmers. The response? “It’s been wild,” said St. Stephens’ pastor, the Rev. Mike Southcombe.

Thousands of hay bales have been donated already, mostly from Wisconsin, though farmers from as far away as Texas, Kansas, Arkansas and New York have contributed. St. Stephens has raised around \$13,000 to pay to transport the hay, though trucking companies have also offered time and trucks to the effort. The congregation is planning a fundraising dinner later in October.

The Wisconsin Conference donated \$1,500 to the effort.

“The generosity of these farmers is something to be celebrated,” Mike said. “It does not surprise me, but it will always inspire and humble me.”

In a post on the Facebook page of his company, FreMarq Innovations, Todd said the company had received more than 130 voicemail messages containing offers of hay. “There have been so many people involved in this process,” he said, “We are so thankful for all of you who have supported in any way, from donating to sharing.”

St. Stephens and the wider Merrill community have been affected, too. “It’s a morale boost to see this devastation on TV and to know we’re part of some of the recovery,” Mike said. “We still have quite a few people in the congregation connected to dairy in some way. Just to be part of helping them down there – it’s a tremendous gift that we can be part of that.”

### **Social media and social good**

**The Merrill project is a testament to the power of social media to spread the word about a good cause. Pastor Mike Southcombe said that in the seven days after St. Stephens issued the appeal for donated hay, the original post received more than 579,000 views, and the St. Stephens Facebook page was visited 8,800 times. St. Stephens’ website received more than 1,600 visits.**

**Council Meeting November 16, 2024**

**Attendance:** Penny Carter, Rick Maukstad, Julie Maukstad, Dave Bowman, Sherry Monson, Dana Caldwell, Sandy Morris

Meeting opened in prayer by Pastor Dana

October Minutes Approval: Dave B made a motion to accept the October Minutes and seconded by Sandy M. Passed.

**Financial/Treasure Report:** No report.

**Clerks Report:** Sandy M reported current membership at 146. There was a transfer of membership so we will be adding a new member soon.

**Board of Trustees:** Dave B reported the following items: the church is currently operating at a \$2,400.00 deficit in the budget; the investment committee met (Sandy M, Chad L, Dave B & Duane M) and we had a 50% gain; they have placed an add in the Free Press for the Office Manager position. No applications yet but they have had a few inquiries. Suggestions from some council members to place the add in the yellow paper and the local lake paper; the tree on the south side of the church has been trimmed; they are working on trying to find someone to vent the convection oven; the memorial fountain has returned; they are working on developing a new list of jobs to be done around the church. One of the jobs is to replace the fellowship hall with LED lights that can be dimmed; from the investment gains they are planning to distribute \$15,000.00 to non-profit organizations in the community. They are going to work with Missions & Social Concerns to help decide who will receive some of the money; the church workday was well attended, and a lot of work was accomplished.

**Board of Christian Education:** Julie M reported the following: Firestarter's continues to meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays; Breakfast Club has been well attended; Barry Tulkki is working on an intergenerational Christmas Program.

**Board of Deaconate:** Penny C reported the following: Barry T is working on a program for the Hanging of the Greens on November 30; the Christmas Program will be held during worship on December 8; Sunday, December 15 during worship will consist of primarily music.

**Board of Congregational Giving:** Pastor Dana reported that Beth Leonard and Mike Swank will be joining the committee in January; they are working on the wish list.

**Board of Mission and Social Concerns:** Pastor Dana reported they continue to do the monthly "Share the Share".

**Pastor Report:** Pastor Dana reported on the following: the 1<sup>st</sup> Chinese class has been completed and the 2<sup>nd</sup> is scheduled on December 10; there has been a letter of transfer received for membership; Potluck on Sunday, December 29 after worship; Christmas Eve Service will be on Tuesday, December 24 at 9:00 pm; the Chinese Dinner Fundraiser will be held on Saturday, February 1 with times to be determined; training for the Chinese Dinner Fundraiser will be held on January 19 at 1:30 pm; Looking ahead, Fall Festival 2025 will be help September 18-21; the Health and Happiness Walk and Block Party is scheduled on October 4, 2025; Rummage Sale ???; Pastor Dana will be on vacation 12/23/24 through 1/3/25 but will be doing worship on that Sunday; Leadership Retreat is scheduled for January, 4

Monthly Calendar Reviewed.

**Old Business:** none

**New Business:** none

Next Council Meeting: Sunday, December 15, 2024 at 8:00 am

Motion made by Julie M and seconded by Penny C to adjourn. Passed.

Submitted by: Sherry Monson, Recording Secretary

# December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> 9:00am Diaconate Meeting 10:00am Communion 10:00am Sunday Worship 11:15am Christian Ed. Mtg	<b>2</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	<b>3</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>4</b> 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:00pm - 8:00pm Cookie Exchange 7:00pm Acapella Group	<b>5</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>6</b> Office Closed	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> 9:00am Mission Team Meeting 10:00am Sunday Worship	<b>9</b> 7:00am - 8:00am Breakfast Club at Our Saviors 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	<b>10</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:00pm - 8:00pm Peter Kwong Cooking Class	<b>11</b> 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm - 6:00pm Fire Starters 7:00pm Acapella Group 7:00pm Trustee Mtg.	<b>12</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:00pm Prayer Service	<b>13</b> Office Closed	<b>14</b> 6:45am Ruby's Pantry Volunteers 7:30am - 9:00am Ruby's Pantry Distribution at SMC 10:00am Share a Share Volunteers
<b>15</b> 8:00am Council Mtg. 10:00am Sunday Worship 11:15am Missions & Social Concerns Mtg.	<b>16</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	<b>17</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 5:00pm Gaither Video	<b>18</b> 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 7:00pm Acapella Group	<b>19</b> 9:00am Ministerium 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>20</b> Office Closed	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 10:00am Sunday Worship	<b>23</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	<b>24</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 9:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	<b>25</b> Christmas Day - Office Closed	<b>26</b> Dana Vacation 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>27</b> Office Closed	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> Noisy Kettle Offering 8:30am - 9:30am Congregational Giving Mtg 10:00am Sunday Worship 11:00am Pot Luck	<b>30</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:30pm Boy Scouts	<b>31</b> Dana Vacation Rae's Last Day as Adm. Asst. 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>1</b> New Year's Day - Office Closed	<b>2</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>3</b> Office Closed	<b>4</b>



Praying you have a blessed Christmas and New Year