

Congregational Clarion

AMERY CONGREGATIONAL UCC



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 PEACE ON EARTH
 WILL COME TO STAY
 WHEN WE LIVE
CHRISTMAS
 EVERY DAY.


 HELEN STEINER RICE

Hello Everyone,

Recovery from my injury continues. It is steady but slow progress. I will be able to participate in all the services in Advent as we all reflect upon what the coming of Christ as a little babe means to us as well as Christ's promise of coming again in victory. As we do so I hope we will all try to simplify Christmas this year. I hope you each can consider the elements of this season that stress you out and find ways to celebrate in different ways that are less stressful.

A number of years ago I made decisions to simplify my celebration of Christmas. I changed how I spent my time, my money and my energy. I found the more I focused on the relationships that were important to me and spent time with those people the richer the season became. I reconnected by phone with those at a distance and arranged for coffee or a meal with those more local, allowing for meaningful relaxed conversations and check-ins. My season of Advent became more life giving and seemed to honor the coming of Christ as it focused on loving God and loving each other. I spent less on presents and focused more on my presence with and for others. I also contributed more to those in need.

It was not an easy transition as the pressure to get caught up in the commercialization of Christmas was/is everywhere. Even in subtle conversations about "what did you get for Christmas?" and how to answer that question without coming across

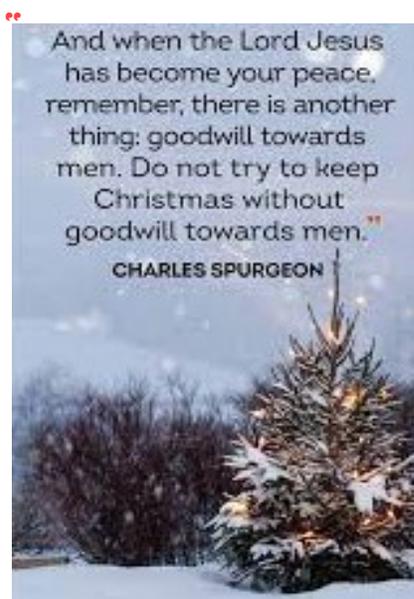
"Holier than thou."

But now I am comfortable in my traditions. My hope for you this year is that you think about the activities of Christmas that feed your soul and decide to make a change if there is an activity that does not.

If I have not met you yet, I hope to see you in person sometime this season of Christ's coming! Love, Peace and Joy in Christ!
Dana

Ps: Don't forget the blue glass vessel on the Narthex table for the collection of prayer requests.

Pss: Also, I want to collect questions you may have -for an Ask the Pastor Sunday- you can send them into Rae who will collect them. They can be questions about what I believe, my journey of faith, questions you have always wanted to ask a pastor but haven't...etc etc.





12/01 Stacy Wagner

12/02 Janet Brown

12/02 Bob Whitley

12/02 Larry Stelter

12/02 Beth Jackson

12/04 Zachary Silvis

12/06 Wendy Heiken

12/06 Bob Holm



12/17 Emily Russo

12/19 Charlotte Gillen

12/21 Riley Pitchford

12/24 Alycia Anderson

12/24 Declan Benner

12/25 Kipp Harris



FAMILY

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

—Luke 2.4

We grew up on stories of Jesus born in a stable, homeless and rejected. But that's not what Luke describes. Theirs was a family-centered culture. Joseph's kin would have welcomed him in to their home. The "inn" is a poor translation of what really was the upstairs guest room (crowded with all the kinfolk!).

The manger was not out in a stable but in the lower room of the house, where the animals were fed at night.

Luke isn't portraying a baby born in the outskirts, but born among family—crowded, noisy, and probably festive.

As an adult Jesus spent lots of time among the outcasts, the un-familied. But his roots are in family.



So. Finding family among the marginalized isn't hereditary.

It's a choice.

Much like God's choice to come be with us, to dwell with us, to choose us as family. Maybe Christmas is about choosing family among whoever needs it.

God, thank you for choosing us as your family. Help me to choose as wisely, and as widely, as you.



Steve Garnaas-Holmes
Unfolding Light
www.unfoldinglight.net

**From
Abby Betzold
YOUTH MINISTER**



**Youth Director Contact Information:
Abby Betzold
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Youth.ameryucc@gmail.com**

December Youth Activities!

Happy Advent Season to All! Although I'm not a full blown crazy Christmas lady, I surely do enjoy this joyous time of the year. December brings many exciting opportunities for our youth to enjoy the season as well. We will be doing a variety of activities from bell ringing, to caroling, and of course our annual Youth Christmas Party! A great time to bring a friend or maybe jump in as an adult volunteer!

Youth Events

- Dec. 4: Practice for Christmas Program (all ages of youth!) during 10am service**
- Dec. 7: Youth Group 3:30-7pm (Bell Ringing from 4-5pm)**
- Dec. 11: All Ages Christmas Program During 10am Service**
- Dec. 14: Youth Group 3:30-7pm (Caroling at Memory Care)**
- Dec. 21: Youth Group 3:30-7pm (Christmas Party!)**
- Dec. 24 : Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 9pm**
- Dec. 25 : Christmas Day Service 10am**
- Dec. 28: No Youth Activities - Merry Christmas!**



**Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas!
Blessings,
Abby**



Dec. 21 - 3:30-7pm

Ladies Christmas Party & Cookie Exchange

Thursday, December 8th
from 6-8pm

Join us for festive fun! Food will be served at 6pm followed by games and activities and wrapping up with a Christmas cookie exchange.

If you plan to participate in the exchange please bring 3 dozen cookies!

Bring a friend and be ready for some fun!

Any Questions reach out to Abby Betzold or Ginny Ormsby



Have a
Blessed
Christmas



**PRAYER
VIGIL**

Saturday,
Dec. 31st

Watch for more information



9pm
December 24th

*Christmas
Eve*

Candlelight
Service

Peace
JOY Hope
Love

A Very Messy Christmas

By Roger Dawson SJ

Are you ready to have the perfect Christmas? No? Don't worry, you are in good company. The first Christmas was hardly perfect, so maybe the mess and muddle of an imperfect Christmas is the best situation in which to welcome Jesus. *Thinking Faith's* Editor, Roger Dawson SJ, wishes you a very messy Christmas.

About ten years ago I volunteered to work over Christmas for the homeless charity Crisis at Christmas and one of my duties was to work in the clothing store. I remember meeting one woman who was very polite – she always said 'Please', and when she was given a jumper she would say, 'Oh, that's lovely, thank you very much'. She was grateful for more or less anything that I offered her. She was followed by a man whom frankly I found difficult. He just stated – demanded, even – what he wanted: 'Trousers.' When asked what size: '32 to 34'. When I came back with a pair of trousers, size 32-34, he said, 'Nah!' and sent me back to find a different pair. Once I had satisfied him with the trousers, next came, 'Shoes, size 9'. Back I came with size 9 shoes and he rolled his eyes. Try again. Sometimes he would even tut, and by the time we got to 'Coat' I was fairly irritated and annoyed. I found this man rude and ungrateful; he was difficult and hard to like. But this man was on the edge. He was an outsider, excluded from many of the things that we take for granted at Christmas and also in daily life.

It was to people like him, not people like me, to whom the Nativity was announced – the excluded and the marginalised, rather than the clerics. It is tempting to have some sentimental, Christmas-card view of the shepherds living in some rural idyll, but the reality is that they were despised. Their work brought them into frequent contact with blood and mess, so they were ritually unclean and unfit to participate in the religious celebrations; they were excluded from participation in Jewish life. And yet it is to these people that the birth of Jesus is announced.

'The story of the first Christmas is the story of a series of completely unplanned, messy events – a surprise pregnancy, an unexpected journey that's got to be made, a complete muddle over the hotel accommodation when you get there...Not exactly a perfect holiday.' This was how Dr Rowan Williams, then Archbishop of Canterbury, described the first Christmas in a [Pause for Thought reflection](#) two years ago. He was making the point that each year most of us strive to have the Perfect Christmas: advertisers pile on the pressure, we get carried away with lists and budgets and plans; yet each year seems to bring the same panic and tensions.

But perhaps it does not have to be perfect. God does not say to us, 'Go and get yourself sorted out and then I'll come, then we will talk'. He comes to the world as it is – imperfect, frequently messy, often muddled. He chose disciples who were far from promising - slow on the uptake, unreliable and obtuse. Matthew gives us [Jesus's family tree](#) and it is one that most of us would keep quiet about: among the kings and prophets there are adulterers, prostitutes and murderers. This Jesus is someone who would have frequent contact with the blood and mess of human existence; indeed, his own life would end in blood and mess. This Jesus can handle chaos and confusion, and he seeks out those who are on the margins, excluded and despised.

So for those who feel like one of the outsiders, away from the mainstream and not part of the respectable crowd, there is a special place this Christmas. God shows us, 'Look, I am in the middle of this and if you would just relax I will help you. It does not have to be perfect. I came here to help you'. As soon as we recognise this, then we may enjoy Christmas a little more and we may find the love Jesus brings at work in our messy, muddled lives; or, even better, we might bring that love into someone else's mess and muddle.

If an imperfect Christmas was good enough for Jesus, surely it is good enough for all of us

Congregation Church Budget and Election Meeting November 13, 2022

Sheldon Betzold (Moderator) opened the meeting in prayer.

Quorum with 40 members present.

2021 Budget & Election minutes read by Sheldon. A correction was made to the minutes regarding the example given on how the church could balance the budget. The correction was instead of each giving member gave \$61.00 per week, if they would give \$6.10 per week the budget could balance. A motion to accept the minutes as corrected was made by Margie Peterson and seconded by Dave Bowman. Motion passed.

Ginny Ormsby presented the following information regarding the 2022 budget and the new 2023 budget:

- 2022 budget to date – the church is spending less, and the income has been less.
- Having members clean the church has helped. More volunteers would be appreciated. If interested in helping with this effort, contact Dave Bowman or Chad Leonard.
- Cost of utilities has been okay.
- 2023 budget is up 4%. Utilities budget has been increased. Pastor's salary is down compared to the interim's salary. Overall, there is an 11% decrease in the budget from last year.

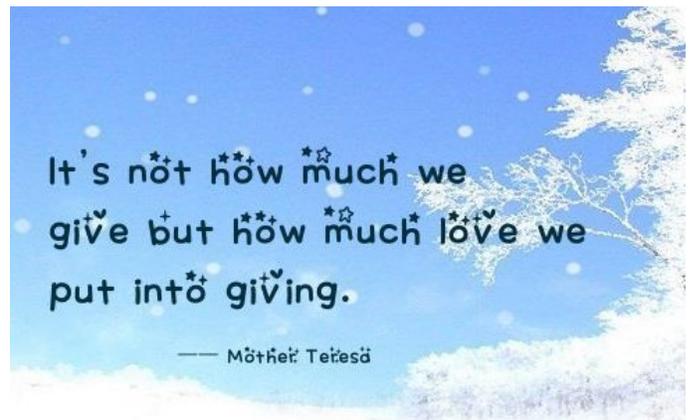
Motion was made by Darrell Niccum and seconded by Jon Springer to accept the 2023 budget. Passed.

Sheldon presented the slate of elected board members and officers. It was reviewed and discussed. There was one change to the Christian Education board to remove Margie Peterson name because she is on the Board of Trustee's. There are other openings on some of the committees. A motion to accept the ballot as written was made by Nancy Sigsworth and second by Jon Springer. Passed.

Meeting Adjourned.

Submitted by: Sherry Monson

We have an opportunity to offer hope to families in need this Christmas. For the past 15 years there have been anonymous donations made to two families that could use some help during Christmas. This donor has been with our church and now has been joined by someone outside the church. We have an opportunity to broaden the impact for families in the area. I would ask you to consider, maybe as family groups or groups of friends, to gather \$250 dollars to be given via the church to families in need in our community. We currently can serve 4 families but I would like to see if we could expand the program. We work with the school system and other organizations to choose the families. The \$250 is given broken down to \$50 toward a family meal, \$100 Christmas presents and the part I appreciate the most is \$100 to be given to another family that they know is struggling. This donation is not required to be paid back but if ever able to do so the Recipient is encouraged to pay it forward. We have had someone who has paid it forward that we know of. I hope you will give this bold prayerful consideration as it would be great to have you join in. If you have any questions you can ask me about it. You can also give designated donations to the "The Family Gift Project" to myself or Rea in the office. Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

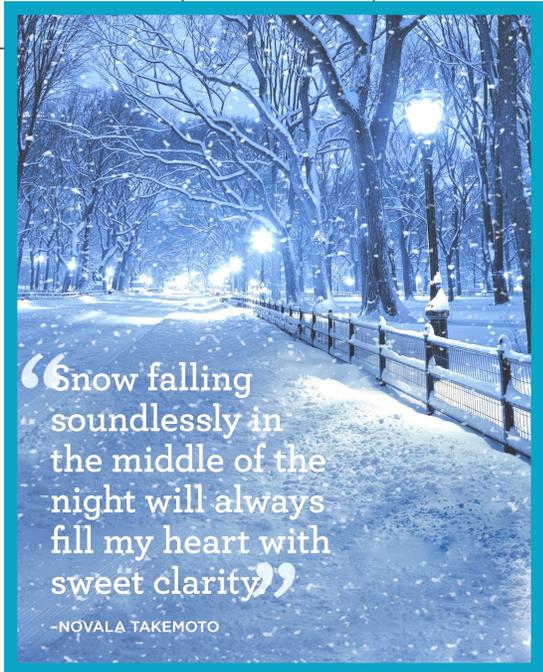




December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 Church Clean - Bowman/Anderson/Bevington 10:00am Sunday Worship/Hanging of the Greens	28 Office Closed 6:30pm Boy Scouts	29 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	30 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm - 7:30pm Youth Group	1 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	2 9:00am - 1:00pm Office Open	3
4 Church Clean - Emerson 10:00am Communion 10:00am Sunday Worship/Sunday School	5 Office Closed 6:30pm Boy Scouts	6 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 5:30pm Diaconate Meeting	7 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm - 7:30pm Youth Group 7:00pm Christian Education Mtg.	8 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:00pm - 8:00pm Women's Christmas Party	9 9:00am - 1:00pm Office Open	10 6:45am Ruby's Pantry Volunteers 7:30am - 9:00am Ruby's Pantry Distribution at SMC
11 Church Clean - Leonard 9:00am Mission Team Meeting 10:00am Sunday Worship/Youth Christmas Program	12 Office Closed 6:30pm Boy Scouts	13 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 6:00pm Council Meeting	14 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm - 7:30pm Youth Group - Caroling at AMC	15 8:15am Ministerium 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	16 9:00am - 1:00pm Office Open	17
18 Church Clean - Monson/Morris 8:30am Trustee Meeting 10:00am Sunday Worship/Sunday School/Christmas Fund Offering 11:15am Congregational Giving Mtg.	19 Office Closed 6:30pm Boy Scouts	20 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 5:00pm Gaither Video	21 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm - 7:30pm Youth Group Christmas Party	22 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	23 9:00am - 1:00pm Office Open	24 9:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
25 Christmas Day Church Clean - Dusek 10:00am Sunday Worship/Sunday School	26 Office Closed 6:30pm Boy Scouts	27 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	28 10:00am Bible Study 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm - 7:30pm Youth Group	29 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	30 9:00am - 1:00pm Office Open	31 Prayer Vigil

Church OfficeHours	
Monday	Closed
Tuesday	10am - 2 pm
Wednesday	10am - 2 pm
Thursday	10am - 2 pm
Friday	9am - 1 pm



“Snow falling soundlessly in the middle of the night will always fill my heart with sweet clarity”

-NOVALA TAKEMOTO

Council Meeting November 8, 2022

Attendance: Ginny Ormsby, Barry Tulkki, Sherry Monson, Heather Rushfeldt, Sheldon Betzold, Chad Leonard, Abby Betzold, Dana Caldwell (zoom)

Opened in prayer led by Pastor Dana Caldwell

October Council Minutes: Motion to approve by Barry T & 2nd by Ginny O. Passed.

Treasure and Financial Secretary Reports: Ginny O indicated the church is spending less but income is still down. Gas and electric have been below budget. Chicken and Biscuit Dinner income \$1,318 with expenses \$635.19. Barry T made a motion to accept the report with Sandy M second. Passed.

Clerks Report: Sandy M indicated there was 1 death, so membership is 162. Discussion about list of inactive members. Chad made motion to accept the list to have the members be removed. Second by Abby B. Passed.

Youth Director: Abby B reported they did have the campfire fellowship, assembled Northwest Homeless shelter newsletter, Youth Service. Youth attendance has increased to approximately 15-20 students on Wednesday night. They will begin having a worship service for youth at 5 pm on Wednesdays.

Trustee Report: Reported by Sheldon per Dave B report. They are planning to install a window in the pastor's office door. 87% reduction in cleaning service. 23% reduction in pastoral salary compared to the interim pastor salary. 11% reduction in 2023 budget. Audit training is progressing. There will be a change in financial flow by combining the Treasure and Financial Secretary positions.

Christian Education: Abby reported the Christmas Program will be more of a narrative play that will include some of the older children.

Board of Deacons Report: Barry T reported they have assembled a list of inactive members. Working on the Hanging of the Greens service. Discussion have been taking place with Dana about worship. They have been discussing the passing of the offering plate. Heather needs a letter of recommendation for discernment. Motion made by Abby B and second by Ginny O that the church supports Heather's journey in discernment by sending a letter. Passed.

Congregational Giving: Abby reported the Remembrance Book is back. Working on pledge letters. Dana recommended breaking down the budget in the letter.

Mission and Social Concern Committee: Heather reported that 1,345 diapers and other gifts were delivered. November Tote will be for the Amery Food Pantry. Grant proposal of \$250.00 was received for the assembly of 40 kits of hygiene supply's to be given to the Christian World Service Program. High School Girls will assemble.

Pastor Report: Pastor Dana reported she is recuperating from a fall in her home. Grateful for the Congregations support through this ordeal. Plans to lead worship this Sunday. She brought up the idea of doing a 6 hour prayer vigil.

Pulpit Committee: No report

Old Business: no report

New Business:

- Abby B – Christmas Eve Service. Recommendation one service at 9:00 being a Candlelight Service.
- Coffee Hour/Ushering Organizer: Abby volunteered.
- Need for more volunteers for cleaning. 8-10 groups would be good.
- Audio Visual update. \$3,000.00 to move the speakers. 85 inch big screen TV to replace the current screen up front \$485.00.

Meeting Adjourned. Motion by Abby B and seconded by Sandy M. Passed.
Submitted by Sherry Monson