

# Congregational Clarion

AMERY CONGREGATIONAL UCC

From Pastor Dana

## Will Light the Candles This Christmas

From "The Mood of Christmas..."  
—by Howard Thurman



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**I will light Candles this Christmas,  
Candles of joy despite all the sadness,  
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,  
Candles of courage for fears ever present,  
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,  
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,  
Candles of love to inspire all my living,  
Candles that will burn all year long.**

So you may ask, "Dana, It's January, why are you sharing this poem now?" Well, I heard it in a meeting in December and when I heard it I thought. This would be a great reflection for entering and living out the new year. Because all these experiences happen throughout the year and the last line—"that the candles will burn all year long." That shows a hope that is well anchored and has the fortitude that might be needed to live out the new year. As you read the poem what comes to mind? In what ways are you moved? What line(s) resonate the most with you?. I know that I also shared it in the 12/29/2024 service but you may not have been there or this gives you time to revisit it again. I would love to hear your thoughts if you want to share. May your Joy, Hope, Courage, Peace, Grace, and love burn as brightly as a Candle all year long.

**Let our New Year's resolution be this: We will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, in the finest sense of the word.**

**Gorean Persson**

**Mark your Calendars! The Chinese Dinner will be February 1st.**

*(Continued on page 2)*

*(Continued from page 1)*

There will be two seatings: 1:30pm and 4:30pm. We are limiting seating to 64 each seating so you will need to make reservations. The Cost is \$25 per person, Children 10 and under \$15. We have flyers you can use as an invitation and full page flyers for you to post in local businesses. Please get the word out! For those who would like to help serve or help in the kitchen we will be having a training on Sunday, January 19th at 1:30 pm. There are sign up sheets for servers and cooks. We could use more Help setting up for the second seating.. Let's get the word out and make this a successful new event for us all.

### **Memorial Giving Pamphlet**

We have updated the memorial giving pamphlet. They are in the Pews please feel free to take a look or take them with you. We need your input on this year's wish list to help our trustees and the memorial giving committee help prioritize where and how we clear items off the list.

### **Advent/New Year Reflection**

Advent this year has been very different for me. I have been managing pain due to issues with my back and I have had to say goodbye to my dog, Bailey. Bailey has been such a wonderful companion. My heart aches over her loss. I know for many people Christmas can be a blue time of year just as much as the New Year can be difficult too. I was glad to participate in the Blue Christmas Service at Balsam Church on the 21 of December. There are simply hard times in life, they can surprise you and sometimes there is a long journey of building hardness. The reason I am writing about this is because a New Year can be a year of promise and hope AND a New Year can present new challenges and unwanted changes and sometimes BOTH at the same time. It is so important to have a group of people who support you, encourage you, and care about you. Everyone needs to be part of a welcoming community. We are called to be that community. We have had a number of regular visitors within the pews and I wonder if you have introduced yourself to these folks while passing the peace- I hope so. We should be learning names and sharing names (and resharing and relearning) I wonder if you invite them to coffee hour? I wonder if you great them when either you find your seat or they come in just before the service. As we enter the new year we can renew our efforts to meet, great and include folks in all that we do!

### **Blue Christmas or New Year Prayer**

Holy Jesus, You are full of compassion, You understand our pain. Our Suffering changes our experience with You and the promise of Christmas and New Year. We are caught between remembering happier times. and grieving what might have been. In our loss we can feel cut off- disconnected, a drift, alone. Root us in your steadfast love and presence. Anchor us in your faithful promises. Hold us, and all who weep this holy season including new year, who live throughout the world. Those who mourn, those far from home, those looking for work, the lonely, the addicted, the abused, the poor, victims of conflict and war, the sick and the dying. Shelter and sustain us all with our healing and hope, Your peace and light. We love You, we need You, we trust You, we ask this in Your Holt Name. Amen.

## Thank you from the Maukstads

We are incredibly grateful that Northstar Therapy Animals of Pet Partners was chosen to receive a very generous donation from the Amery Congregational Church. I would love to share with you a list and some pictures of the visits that donations like this helped make possible in the last Year:

- Amery Memory Care**
- Endeavors Adult Development Center**
- Red Cross Bell Ringing**
- Pine County Minn. Wellness Fair**
- Minnesota State Fair - Read to a breed**
- Frazier Event**
- National City Planners Convention**
- Tim Tiebow Event**
- Sandstone, Minnesota retirement home**
- Mall of America -Macys Giving Tree Event**



We were once again at MOA for Macy's Giving Tree Event sponsored by Catholic Charities last Saturday, Dec 21st. We were able to promote the event on channel 11. Our alpaca's have become television pros.

Thanks again for helping us to continue our therapy animal ministry  
Rick, Juli and Joseph





**Open to a New and Unique Experience?  
Celebrate the Chinese New Year with Us!**

**Authentic Chinese Food by  
Chef Peter Kwong**

Saturday, February 1,  
Two Seatings - 1pm and 4:30pm  
Seating is limited. Call to reserve your tickets now!  
(office Phone 715.268.7390)

Amery Congregational Church, 201 Harriman Ave N, Amery  
\$25 Adults - \$15 Kids 10 yrs and younger.

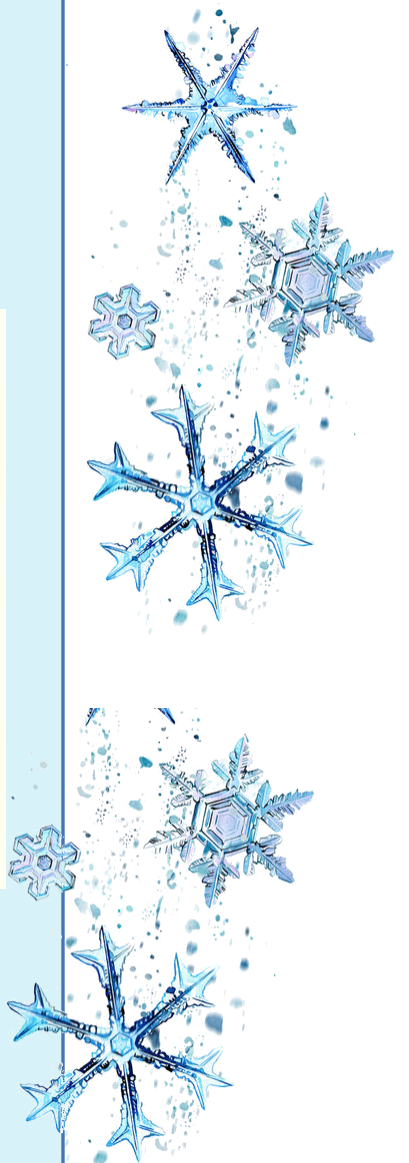
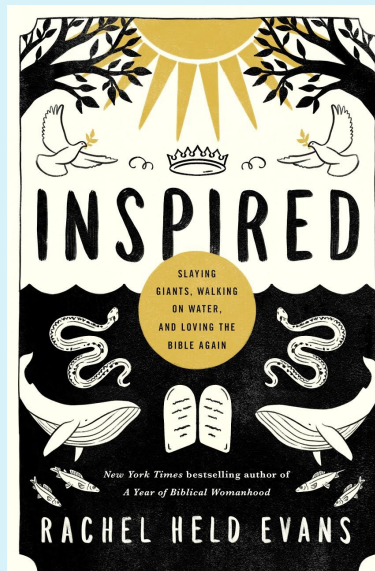
**ADULT STUDIES**

**On February 4th, we will begin an eight week study of the book, “Inspired”, by Rachel Held Evans. The studies will be held on Tuesdays, 10am in the church library.**

If the Bible isn't a science book, instruction manual, or position paper, then what is it? New York Times bestselling author Rachel Held Evans invites readers on a journey of rediscovery as she explores the magic of the Bible, engaging the old, familiar stories in new ways that honor the past and enlighten the present.

Drawing upon recent scholarship and literary analysis, Evans creatively retells our favorite Bible stories, explaining their contexts and possible interpretations, and then connects these ancient stories to our present-day ones. Using her well-honed literary instincts and experience in both evangelical and mainline Protestant traditions, Evans discovers a way of understanding that avoids noncommittal liberalism on one hand and strident literalism on the other.

Readers are invited to fall in love with Scripture all over again without checking their intellect--or their imaginations--at the door.



Maren Dodge 01/02

Alek Betzold 01/05

Lindy Olson 01/07

Heather Rushfeldt 01/07

Darlene Sattler 01/08

Debra Strodthoff 01/09

Maralyn Saleh 01/21

Donavan Maukstad 01/21

Connor Satterlund 01/24



### MESSAGE FROM CHRISTIAN LIVING

For many, New Year’s is just another holiday. For others, it’s a time of deep reflection, both on the past year and on the one ahead. For followers of Jesus, New Year’s has no unique significance.

There’s no central biblical narrative informing our celebrations.



But this doesn’t mean Christians shouldn’t pause and reflect on the turning of the calendar. Moses asked of the Lord, “Teach us to number our days, so we may get a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). Time—seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years—is a gift to us from a good God. To wisely follow him, then, is to redeem our time (Eph. 5:16).

New Year’s can also remind us of the new birth. In a sense, each day with Jesus is a chance to turn the page on an old way of life and embrace a new one. We are, after all, new creation people, and we serve a King who renews us daily by the Holy Spirit.

Setting goals for a new year are an important sign that we’re intentional about glorifying God in our callings—work and business, home and church, private and public witness. When we work and plan, even in seemingly insignificant endeavors, we’re fulfilling the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28). In this age, we’re blessed with an abundance of resources to help us to maximize our time: digital tools, productivity experts, and inspirational blogs.

But before we write out our goals, we should begin in the heart. The temptation for Christians is to make our plans and add a dollop of Jesus on top, rather than allowing him to form in us the desires and motivations to do his work.

Dear Friends,

As we welcome the dawn of a new year, I am looking forward to being able to focus my energy more on friends and family. Though I will not be your “Church Lady”, I will still be honored to be a member of the Congo UCC and am pleased that we will continue to grow together in our faith and our relationship to our creator as well as to each other. We are a congregation that uplifts each other and provides support and comfort when called for. You have been an integral part of my life and faith journey. Every kindness you show toward each other plus your dedication to the church and community strengthens my faith and my admiration for all of you. I am so thankful for your friendship. You all have made serving as your church lady an incredible privilege. Thank you for being my church family, and for showing me the true meaning of being a follower of Jesus.

I have met Catherine Olsen, your new “church lady” and absolutely am delighted with the committee’s choice. As I told my husband, I think Catherine is me - only a super better version. She will serve the church well. Already I have seen her kind and caring spirit. Please make a point of stopping in to introduce yourselves.

Now, as we welcome the dawn of a new year, I pray your homes be filled with peace, your hearts with gratitude, and your spirits with hope. Let every challenge you face become a stepping stone to greater faith, and may every blessing you receive remind you of God's unending grace.

Peace and Blessings,

Rae



“Designed by Freepik”

#### ANOTHER YEAR

Another year is dawning, Dear Master, let it be,  
 in working, or in waiting, another year with Thee.  
 Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace;  
 Another year of gladness in the shining of Thy face.  
 Another year of progress, another year of praise,  
 Another year of proving Thy presence all the days.  
 Another year of service, of witness of Thy love,  
 Another year of training for holy work above.  
 Another year is dawning; Dear Master, let it be  
 on earth, or else in heaven, another year with Thee.

- Author Unknown

## December 15 th , 2024, Council Meeting Minutes

**Attendance :** Pastor Dana Caldwell, Chad Leonard – Financial Secretary, Beth Leonard & Abby Betzold -Christian Education, Maralyn Saleh – Congregational Giving, Sandy Morris – Clerk  
There were not enough attendees for a quorum, so we reviewed the following information and approve reports in January.

November 2024 council meeting minutes appeared to be accurate, will approve in January.

**Financial Secretary:** Chad reported that there is currently about a \$6,000 gap between income and expense, we've been controlling expenses very well this year. \$15,000 went out as donations to local charities, these funds came from the sale of some high yielding stock this year. This report was previously approved by trustees.

**Clerk's Report:** Sandy reported that there were no changes this month and membership remains at 146

**Trustees:** The trustees are currently working on replacing lights and fans in the fellowship hall, hoping to have this project completed prior to the Chinese Dinner this winter. They are also have interviews scheduled for the administrative assistant position.

**Christian Education:** Abby reported that there was a wonderful intergenerational Christmas Program on Dec. 8th . Fire Starters continues to take place on the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays of each month when there is school. Community Youth Group meets once a month with four other churches, rotating who is hosting and events for the students. Amery Breakfast Club continues to take place on the 2nd & 4th Mondays.

**Diaconate:** Hanging of the Greens went very well on Saturday, November 30 th .  
Congregational Giving : Maralyn reported that she is excited for new members joining this board in 2025. The wish list brochure is done and will get distributed in the new year.

**Mission & Social Concerns:** Share the Share for Ruby's Pantry continues to be the main focus of this board, this has been very successful so far.

**Pastor's Report:** Dana shared that the Chinese Dinner planning is well underway, there will be a 5th Sunday potluck on Dec. 29th which we will also celebrate Rae and thank her for her many years of being our administrative assistant. The Wednesday Bible Study will be taking a break for the month of January and will return Tuesday, February 4th at 10am as the Adult Study. Reminder that the church leadership workshop in Saturday, January 4 th from 9am-12pm. Dana also asked about the Rummage Sale, we discussed and decided that it will be Saturday, May 31st this year.

**Calendar:** Remove Bible Study for month of January, and office hours may differ as we will have a gap without an administrative assistant.

**New Business:** The Walleye Dinner will be Friday, March 7th

Next Council Meeting will be held January 19th at 8am

Submitted by: Abby Betzold



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>29</b> Noisy Kettle Offering 8:30am - 9:30am Congregational Giving Mtg 10:00am Sunday Worship 11:00am <a href="#">Pot Luck</a>	<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> 9:00am - 12:00pm Leadership Mtg.
<b>5</b> 9:00am Diaconate Meeting 10:00am Communion 10:00am Sunday Worship 11:15am Christian Ed. Mtg	<b>6</b> 6:30pm Boy Scouts	<b>7</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>8</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm - 6:00pm Fire Starters 7:00pm Acapella Group 7:00pm Trustee Mtg.	<b>9</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>10</b> Office Closed	<b>11</b> 6:45am Ruby's Pantry Volunteers 7:30am - 9:00am Ruby's Pantry Distribution at SMC 10:00am Share a Share Volunteers
<b>12</b> 9:00am Mission Team Meeting 10:00am Sunday Worship	<b>13</b> 7:00am - 8:00am Breakfast Club at Our Saviors 6:30pm Boy Scouts	<b>14</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>15</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 7:00pm Acapella Group	<b>16</b> 9:00am Ministerium 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>17</b> Office Closed	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> 8:00am Council Mtg. 10:00am Sunday Worship 11:15am Missions & Social Concerns Mtg. 1:00pm - 3:00pm Chinese Cooking Training	<b>20</b> 6:30pm Boy Scouts	<b>21</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 5:00pm Gaither Video	<b>22</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 3:30pm - 6:00pm Fire Starters 7:00pm Acapella Group	<b>23</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>24</b> Office Closed	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 9:00am - 10:00am Congo Giving Mtg 10:00am Sunday Worship	<b>27</b> 7:00am Breakfast Club at Our Saviors 6:30pm Boy Scouts	<b>28</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>29</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open 7:00pm Acapella Group	<b>30</b> 10:00am - 2:00pm Office Open	<b>31</b> Office Closed	<b>1</b>