

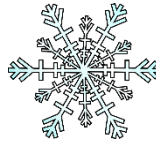


Congo Comments

DECEMBER 2024

The Congregational United Church of Christ,
Detroit Lakes, Minnesota

First snow



Dear Congo UCC community,

Welcome to Advent! This is the liturgical season when we prepare for Christmas by lifting up God's greatest gifts to us: Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and the people who represent these things in our lives. As is tradition, I will be looking for folks from the congregation to light the Advent candles. You may light a candle as an individual, as a family, as a committee, or however feels right to you.

Our worship life together this month will include considering one of the Prophet Isaiah's most influential sayings, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares." For millennia this phrase has invited even the non-religious to consider all that humanity could accomplish if the resources that we devote to war could be used for peaceful purposes. And we will explore together the annunciation story, in which Mary is visited by an angel and accepts her prophetic call. The Christmas Eve carols and candlelight service is a highlight of every church year. I hope that it will fit into many of your holiday schedules to join us on Dec 24th at 5pm.

Making our Advent services even more special, there is also a baptism and a new member joining in the works. And it sounds like Congregational Life and Christian Ed are working on some fun events as well.

Thank you for being with us as we journey to Bethlehem together once more. May the way be Spirit-filled and leave you feeling blessed. May the magic of the season be upon each of you this Advent.

Blessings, Pastor Michael



December Birthdays

12/1 Kyriese Branstad
12/5 Charlee Lokken
12/10 Lori Nustad
12/14 Julie Sanders
12/16 Erika Gilsdorf
12/17 Anne Anderson



12/18 Gary Kleingartner
12/19 Nathaniel Plotz
12/21 Isabel Pederson
12/22 Brandon Dahring
12/23 Carmen Plotz
12/26 Ruth Solie

New Address – Please update your Directory.

Dave Perlmutter has moved from South Dakota to Tennessee.

Same phone number:



Advent Candles

Many thanks to each person who will light the candles this Advent Season. As a community we all benefit from your generous contribution to Sunday Worship.

Advent Altar Arrangements

Thank you to everyone who contributed poinsettias for the upcoming Advent Sundays.

If anyone would like to bring a seasonal décor item to share, you are welcome to do so.

Place it on the altar, then take it home after the service.

Thank you!



Office Hours: Tue & Thurs: 9 - 11 a.m.;
Wed 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Phone: 218-847-4609

Church office: dlcongo@msn.com

Pastor Michael Fritz: pastordlcongo@outlook.com

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David Moen, Moderator

Andy Nustad, Vice Moderator

Jonathan Rogstad, Clerk

Gini Kleingartner, Financial Administrator

Gary Kleingartner, Custodian

Bonnie Guyer Graham, Office Administrator

Pastor Michael Fritz



DECEMBER GREETERS and USHERS

1 – Steve and Cheryl Hedlund
8 – Vicki and Bruce Riedinger
15 – Nancy Hayle
22 – Julia Held & Pete Johnson
29 – Davis family

DECEMBER ALTAR ARRANGEMENT

1 – Advent poinsettias
8 – Advent poinsettias
15 – Advent poinsettias
22 – Advent poinsettias
29 –

FRIENDSHIP TIME for December Courtesy Group 4 – Group leaders: Sharon and Jim Sinclair & Gini and Gary Kleingartner

1 – Maxine Nelson
8 – Alicia Lokken
15 – Davis family
22 – Sinclair family
29 – David Moen

SUNDAY MORNINGS

10:00 a.m. – Worship in Sanctuary
10:20 a.m. – Christian Education
11:00 a.m. – Friendship Time in
Fellowship Hall

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Saturday, December 7 at 5 p.m.
RSVP to Sue Geihl
by Tuesday, Dec. 3rd. Email or phone

DIACONATE

Wednesday, December 11 at 10:30 a.m.

CHURCH COUNCIL

Wednesday, December 18 at 4:30 p.m.

GREEN TEAM MEETING

Thursday, December 19 at 10:30 a.m.

CANDIDATING WEEKEND

December 21 & 22

CHRISTMAS FUND SPECIAL OFFERING

Sunday, December 22

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, December 22 following the service

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Tuesday, December 24, 5 p.m.

OFFICE CLOSED

Wednesday, December 25 & 26 for
Christmas

MSUM PLANETARIUM field trip

Saturday, January 4 at 11:30 a.m.

CHILDREN'S SERVICE "Starry Night"

Sunday, January 5

FOR JANUARY CONGO COMMENTS:

If you have something to share in the next *Congo Comments*, please mail it to the church, drop it off in the church office, or email it to dlcongo@msn.com by **Thur, January 2.**

December 1 & 8 Christmas Toy drive for Lakes Crisis and Resource Center

We will be collecting unwrapped toys for kids the next two Sundays. You can drop the toys off in the narthex.

I will deliver them for the kids at Lakes Crisis and Resource Center **December 9th**. This is all about joy. We receive joy from giving and the kids receive joy from the gifts.

Lakes Crisis & Resource Center is a nonprofit community advocacy program providing direct services to men & women who have experienced domestic violence, abused children and victims of sexual assault and general crimes. In addition, they operate a parenting time center, a mentoring program for youth, parenting groups, domestic violence support groups, mental health services, a shelter for women and children, and programs for foster children.

Stewart Thompson and the Church Foundation



Dec 7th – A Taste of the Caribbean Christmas Dinner

Everyone is invited to a Christmas dinner.

RSVP by Tues, December 3rd to Sue Geihl:

A Taste of the Caribbean

Saturday, December 7th at the church

Social hour 5pm Supper 5:30 pm

Cost is \$5

Guests are welcome also

Please sign up on the sheet in the narthex if you want to attend so we can make plans for the food.

Island attire is welcome!

Congo Life ~ Sue Geihl, Nancy Hayle, Vicki Johnson

Church Foundation: coffee, dark chocolate, and olive oil

The Church Foundation will be selling coffee, dark chocolate, and olive oil from Equal Exchange every Sunday at fellowship.

Equal Exchange's mission is to build long-term trade partnerships that are economically just and environmentally sound, to foster mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and consumers, and to demonstrate the contribution of worker co-operatives and Fair Trade to a more equitable, democratic, and sustainable world.

Dec 21-22: Candidating Weekend and Congregational Meeting

The Search and Call Committee commissioned by the congregation respectfully requests a special congregational meeting be held on December 22, 2024 immediately following the Service. The sole purpose of the meeting is to decide to extend a call to the candidate who has been unanimously proposed by the Search and Call Committee.

December 21 and 22 will be a Candidating Weekend. Our Candidating Weekend begins with an informal Meet and Greet on December 21st. On December 22nd, the Service of the Word will be conducted by the candidate and will be followed by the special congregational meeting. More information about the candidate and the Candidating Weekend will be given to the congregation the week of December 15.

Christmas Fund Special Offering: December 22, 2024

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!



Sunday, December 24th Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 5 p.m.

Join us in a music filled celebration of the Christmas season. Tradition, story and carols – including Silent Night as the Christ candle flame is passed.

Christian Education December Good News

Advent begins on Sunday Dec 1. Here is the link to the [Advent Starry Night devotion](#) we will do as a church.

<https://bit.ly/StarryNightsCongo>  [click on this link to read each week's advent readings and practices, activities and conversation starters.](#)

You can read the Advent Starry Nights Devotion on your computer or on your phone/tablet by clicking on the link above.

You may use the devotion digitally, or download it and print copies from your computer. To download the pdf document click on the three dots on the top left corner of the screen. Once you download it you may print off as many copies as you like. There will be a limited number of printed versions at the church for those without internet or printer access. These will be available on Dec. 1.

How you use the devotion is up to you. Some may choose one day to complete the week in one sitting. Others may divide the week into smaller portions. Some may choose to skip parts and others may wish to dive deeper into some sections. No matter how you choose to use Starry Night, we will do it together and, as Psalm 147:1 says:

*How good it is to sing praises to God;
for God is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.*

The Sunday School students will also be participating in [Starry Night devotion](#).

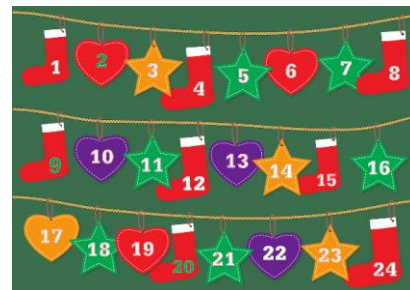
1. On Sunday Nov 24, the students will construct a variety of craft examples around the Star theme. These examples and the materials needed to construct them will be placed on tables in the Fellowship Hall. Members of all ages are invited to use the materials to make decorations for the Christmas tree in Fellowship Hall. The tree will be set up on Nov. 30. When your decoration is completed, please put it on the tree. If you know someone who would like to make a decoration but is unable to come to church, please make up a kit and take it to them. Feel free to take a kit for yourself too to work on during the week. OR if you would like to create your own star decoration, that would be terrific!
2. The congregation is invited to a trip to the Planetarium at Moorhead State University Moorhead to view *Star of Wonder*. The trip is tentatively planned for Saturday, January 4 at 11:30AM. Signup sheets will be available starting Dec 1. Please indicate if you need a ride or if you are willing to take extra passengers. The cost is \$5.00 per person and \$2 parking fee per car. More information will be given in December.

- Our **Starry Night** theme will conclude on Sunday, January 5 with the Children's Service at 10AM. January 5 is Epiphany Sunday, the Twelfth Night of Christmas, and the traditional Sunday where the story of the Magi's visit to Jesus is told.

Please join us as we celebrate this Season of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Sunday School Schedule

- Sunday Nov 24: Make examples. Sue Giehl, Carol Nustad, Stacy Davis
- Sunday, Dec 1: No Sunday School
- Sunday, Dec 8: Music with Greg Johnson
- Sunday, Dec 15: Practice for program; complete projects
- Sunday, Dec 22: TBA
- Sunday, Dec 29: No Sunday School
- Sunday, January 5: Children's Service. Please be at church by 9:30AM.



Carol Nustad

All Saints' Day on November 3rd

HUMILITY IS A CENTRAL CHRISTIAN VALUE!

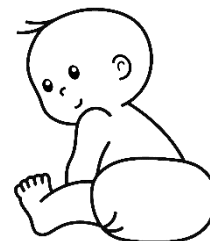
That was a key takeaway from today's service at Congregational UCC in Detroit Lakes. A special treat was meeting the young, Ukrainian family from Pelican Rapids we have supported. It is sobering to think what these three young boys and their parents would have faced if still in their dangerous homeland. Instead the boys enjoyed Pastor Michael's children's sermon.



Later in the ALL SAINTS DAY service, lives lost in the past year were remembered. Some were Congo members, others were friends or relatives of members.

Becker County Food Pantry

Throughout DECEMBER we encourage everyone to give **DIAPERS** to the *Becker County Food Pantry*. You can drop them off at the church.



In October we gave 66 bars of soap, 6 razors, and 10 egg cartons to the Food Pantry. In November we gave 2 dental kits and 25 egg cartons. Thank you for your generosity!

Church Council meeting notes

- We are now starting to discuss the 2025 proposed budget
- Karen Pifher, Creating Community Consulting, gave the board a thorough presentation on strategies to address homelessness in Becker County and how Family Resource Centers can be a part of that.
- Transgender Day of Remembrance was held in Park Rapids on November 20th, but will be back in DL next year.
- The Church Annual Meeting date is proposed to be 26 January 2024
- Terry McGillivray of the foundation board gave a presentation on the status and plans for next year.
- Children’s church service, Starry Night, will take place January 5.
- Planetarium trip is proposed for January 4.
- December 7th will be the evening of our Christmas Dinner, 5pm social followed by dinner. A Taste of the Caribbean.
- How do people feel about restarting the Men’s & Women’s breakfast clubs?
- December 1 will be a communion service.
- The pledge letters have gone out!

What’s the Financial Temperature?

Folks, October seemed to be a very light crop. Fortunately, previous months revenue provided sufficient revenue to pay necessary expenses. Whew!!

Budget planning for 2025 is in process as we journey into the final stretch of 2024. Let’s make the finals shine!!

Thank you to all who participated in the recent Stewardship program. There is still time to remit giving intentions. The Board for Stewardship and the Council appreciate your assistance.

	October 2024	Year to Date
General Offering	\$ 3,840.00	\$118,118.07
Loose Offering	178.50	2,274.72
We Care	79.88	295.21
MnKota Recycling	0.00	38.37
Disaster Relief	390.00	390.00
Salad Luncheon	.00	.22
Interest Income	.26	18.79
Total Revenue	\$4,188.00	\$121,135.38
Total Expenses	\$12,680.04	\$132,027.70

Along the way!!

“Because of YOU, Our Church Saves Lives!”

STEWARDSHIP 2024

Marv Enslin, Board for Stewardship