

# Faith Talk

Faith United Church of Christ

December 2023

Tripoli, IA

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We pray for the healing and well-being of these beloved children of God...

Sandy Martin	Nadine Schnurstein
Larry Kammeyer	Juanita Mohlis
Joan Matthias	Beverly Shinstine
Dan Gloede	Edna Shinstine

We pray for members and friends of the church serving in the military...

Brandon Burrows	Keenan Gienau
Matthew Coulthard	Colton Henry
Kristian Heidemann	Alyssa Jones
Austin Kingsbury	Kaitlyn Kime
Chazten Wells	

We hold in prayer our members in home...

Darlene Bahlmann	Velda Lynch
Jean Bentley	Orlyn Milius
Verlyn & Phyllis Buls	

With Marlys Biermann and Marian Meyer we mourn the passing of their sister, Marlene Homeister. We give thanks to God for Marlene's life on earth and her eternal life in God's heavenly realm.

We continue to pray for the families and communities where lives and sense of safety have been shattered.

*Come, O long expected Jesus,  
born to set all people free  
From our fears and sins release us,  
grant us your true liberty.*  
-- "Come, O Long-Expected Jesus"

The above hymn lyrics were written in 1744 by Charles Wesley. Obviously the times in which Wesley lived were much different than these days of 2023. However, what we can understand from his lyrics is that the goal of the Christian is the same 279 years later – we seek Jesus and we seek the freedom that he offers to our lives.

What do these words mean in your 21<sup>st</sup> Century world? As you prepare to journey through Advent, what is your objective? Is it to arrive at your family's gift-unwrapping time? Is it to discover whether the presents you receive are any you can actually use? Is it finding out if the gifts you gave seem to please the one for whom they were purchased? Does your Advent journey culminate in the traditional Christmas Eve service at church where eyes are bright in anticipation of those familiar hymns and candle lighting?

Or, as you begin your journey through Advent is your goal not only to celebrate God's greatest gift to the universe but also awaking on Christmas morning to the rays of endless possibilities radiating from the light of the Son? Are you willing to open your heart to all that you are called to be and to do as a follower of Jesus?

I hope that as you begin this Advent journey, you spend some time preparing your heart for all that God offers you through the birth of the Son. We are awaiting the One who was born to set us free. We are awaiting the One who releases us from our fears...and from our sins. We are awaiting the One who can grant us liberty...liberation... emancipation...freedom to live fully into who we are called to be. But if we call upon Jesus to bring us all that we proclaim in this hymn, we must be faithful children of God and receive the gift with a clear heart. Not a hardened heart. Not a heart that fails to offer God's grace to all. Not a heart that doesn't want to be freed and receive liberty.

*Come, O long expected Jesus,  
born to set all people free  
From our fears and sins release us,  
grant us your true liberty.*

I invite you to pray these words daily as you move further into your Advent journey. Let them guide you to where God is calling you. Let them free you to live fully into who you are as a child of God. Let them open your heart and fill it with all of the truth and goodness offered to you by the One who is and who was and who will come again.

May you have a blessed Christmas,  
*Pastor Marilyn*

Faith United Church of Christ  
Council Meeting Minutes  
November 6th, 2023

Members in Attendance: Beth Goudschaal, Jerry Lahmann, Kathy Westendorf, Brenda Shinstine, Bonnie Travers, Vicki Oleson, and Dave Kirchhoff

Members in Attendance via Zoom: Traci Bahrenfuse

Also in Attendance: Barb Hill, Marlys Biermann, Phyllis Schnurstein, Jean Raynard, and Marlene Snelling.

Absent Members: Dean Shinstine, Pastor Marilyn, Eli Bahrenfuse, Conrad Marsh and Kara Marsh

Meeting called to order by Jerry Lahmann

Approval of the October 2nd Minutes: Motion to approve by Beth Goudschaal. Seconded by Brenda Shinstine.

Treasurer Report: Motion to approve by Bonnie Travers. Seconded by Vicki Oleson.

The fridge has been fixed by Wilson Supply out of Cedar Falls, final bill is \$452.02. Will pull from the improvement fund. Wilson Supply did mention that the fridge we currently have is outdated and parts will not be manufactured for much longer.

Memorial Committee: The committee revised their bylaws, last reviewed/updated in 2015. They were looking for approval from the council. The council asked for a few days to review and will respond to the approval before the next council meeting. Communion was also discussed. It was brought to the council's attention that a lot of wine and bread is going to waste. The council suggested only filling 40 total wine cups unless a special occasion when we expect more people.

Trustee Report: In need of snow removal and quotes to help secure the budget. Will send out for bids.

Small business solutions – updating lights and some fixtures in church, ed wing and outside. The quote was received at \$6,021.00. After the portion (70%) that Alliant is covering, the final bill will be \$1,816.00 that is installation as well. There is a 5-year warranty on the lights. The savings for updating to high efficiency LED lights was listed at \$2,100.92 for the first year, \$5,350.24 for the second year and \$8,599.57 for the third year. Still looking into solar options and reviewing costs and savings associated with the project.

Elder Report:

There is a new director at the Tripoli Nursing Home, we are reaching out to confirm if they are more willing to allow Pastor Marilyn to perform a church service onsite, maybe once a month.

The first Sunday of Advent, hanging of the greens is 12/3. The large Christmas tree will be put up on 12/2, if anyone would like to help/join. There will be a potluck/craft after the service 12/3.

We are looking for a family to sponsor for Christmas.

We will be doing a Christmas tree in the narthex on the board, we are asking that you share your favorite Christmas memory and pin to the board. This will help create/share memories with each other.

Liaison Report: None

Pastor's Report: Absent.

Old Business: Continue reviewing by-laws to get them updated and current.

New Business: Nothing.

Motion to adjourn by Beth Goudschaal. Seconded by Kathy Westendorf.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer. Respectfully submitted: Traci Bahrenfuse

These minutes are not yet approved by the Council

**“Joy in the Journey”**

*Suggested scripture readings for each of the first 24 days of December.*

December 1 ~ John 1:1-5

December 2 ~ Isaiah 9:2-7

December 3 ~ Isaiah 11:1-10

December 4 ~ Jeremiah 33:14-16

December 5 ~ Luke 1:5-10

December 6 ~ Luke 1:11-17

December 7 ~ Luke 1:18-25

December 8 ~ Luke 1:26-38

December 9 ~ Matthew 1:18-21

December 10 ~ Matthew 1:22-26

December 11 ~ Luke 1:39-45

December 12 ~ Luke 1:46-56

December 13 ~ Luke 2:1-5

December 14 ~ Luke 2:6-7

December 15 ~ Luke 2:8-12

December 16 ~ Luke 2:13-14

December 17 ~ Luke 2:15-18

December 18 ~ Luke 2:19-20

December 19 ~ Micah 5:2-5

December 20 ~ Matthew 2:1-2

December 21 ~ Matthew 2:3-6

December 22 ~ Matthew 2:7-8

December 23 ~ Matthew 2:9-12

December 24 ~ John 1:1-14

Thank you to Lisa Chapin for finding and sharing this “Joy in the Journey” list of scriptures.



Thank you to all who helped prepare the church campus for the Advent/Christmas season — Mike & Kathy Westendorf, Dean & Brenda Shinstine, Dave Kirchhoff, Rich & Karen Milius, Brian Milius, Kayla Milius, Eli Bahrenfuse, Everett Bahrenfuse, Marlene Snelling, Conrad Marsh, Caleb Marsh, Taylar Marsh, Beth Goudschaal, and Bonnie Travers. To all who

attended the “Hanging of the Greens” service in person or online, we appreciate you beginning your Advent journey with us. And, as always, thank you Lisa for preparing the space for us and restoring it after we were done! (If anyone as been omitted from the list, we apologize!)

\* \* \* \* \*

Thank you to Pastor Marilyn for the visits, phone calls, and words of encouragement during my illness. Thank you to all my church family for the cards, phone calls, and visits. Also thanks to the people who drove me to and from church. It was all appreciated very much.

~ Sandy Martin

## Advent/Christmas

### Women of Faith

On Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am the Women of Faith will hold their annual Christmas Party. Breakfast will be served, along with games and a \$15.00 gift exchange that is optional to participate in. An offering for a local mission will be taken. All women of the church are invited.

Come join for fun and fellowship!

#### ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FAITH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**Sunday, December 3** – On the first Sunday of Advent we will gather in the sanctuary for worship, communion, and our annual Hanging of the Greens! We hope you will join us as we explore the meaning behind many of our Christmas traditions including the colors of the season, the Christmas tree, and wreaths. Following worship we will gather in Fellowship Hall for a scrumptious potluck and then participate in an intergenerational craft project for each person to take home. It is a delightful way to begin this beautiful season!

**Sunday, December 10** – On the second Sunday of Advent our worship will be gifted with musical offerings and readings from our children.

**Sunday, December 17** – On the third Sunday of Advent our Adult Choir will add to our holiday season through their gift of music. In the afternoon, all are invited to join the choir for their annual caroling to area members and friends. We will meet at the church at 1 pm to carpool.

**Thursday, December 21** – At 7:00 pm we will gather in the sanctuary for our Blue Christmas service. This service is for those who find the Christmas season to be a challenging time due to the death of a loved one...a broken relationship...the loss of a job...or any of the many life situations that can separate us from the joyful festivities of the season. This service offers reflective time to tenderly feel all of our emotions while we honor the birth of God's son.

**Sunday, December 24** – At our 10:00 service we will gather for our final Sunday of Advent. At 7 pm, we will gather in the sanctuary to celebrate God's son, the Prince of Peace, through scriptures, carols, and communion.



December Birthdays

Dec. 4 Kristi Foelske  
 Sandra Ladage  
 Dec. 7 Bob Kammeyer  
 Dec. 9 Breckyn Liddle  
 Dec. 10 Larry Piehl  
 Dec. 11 Laurie Buhrow  
 Dec. 12 Ryan Osborn  
 Dec. 16 Hayden Liddle  
 Dec. 17 Brittany Quigley  
 Trevor Bunce  
 Dec. 18 Kristi Bass  
 Dec. 20 Verdeen Ohlendorf  
 Dec. 24 Beth Goudschaal  
 Mary Moeller  
 Dec. 26 Jessica Raymond  
 Dec. 27 Scott Chapin  
 Dec. 28 LaVera Buchholz  
 Dec. 29 Ken Mohlis

December Anniversaries

Dec. 6 Gary & Sandra Snyder  
 Dec. 31 Scott & JoEllen Behn

Church Council

President Jerry Lahmann  
 Vice President Eli Bahrenfuse  
 Recorder Traci Bahrenfuse  
Elders  
 Beth Goudschaal (Head Elder)  
 Traci Bahrenfuse  
 Kara Marsh  
 Vicki Oleson  
 Bonnie Travers  
 Kathy Westendorf  
  
Trustees  
 Conrad Marsh (Head Trustee)  
 Eli Bahrenfuse  
 Dave Kirchhoff  
 Jerry Lahmann  
 Brenda Shinstine  
 Dean Shinstine

Faith United Church of Christ Finances

General Fund 2023

	<u>November</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Offerings	\$9,247.20		
Expenses	\$11,253.28	\$10,728.38	\$524.90

Year-to-date 2023

Offerings	\$124,101.09		
Expenses	\$136,563.86	\$144,421.67	(\$7,857.81)

Cemetery Operations Fund 2023

October

Portfolio Value	\$55,395.67		
Checking Account Balance		543.59	
Savings Account Balance		<u>1,047.27</u>	
TOTAL	\$56,986.53		

New Furnace Expense Update

Ryan Smith invoice for new furnaces	\$14,250.00
Current Furnace Fund	<u>- 11,250.00</u>
Balance	\$ 3,000.00

As you can see, thanks to your generosity we are close to paying off our new furnaces! On Dec 1, a \$3,000 one-year loan (8% interest) to cover the remaining expense was taken out with American Savings Bank. The monthly loan payment is \$261.16.

Next spring Ryan Smith will install the new air conditioning units at approximately the same cost (\$14,250), so your continued financial support will be appreciated!

Worship by the numbers...

November 2023

	<u>In-person Attendance</u>	<u>Online Viewing</u>	<u>General Offering</u>
Nov. 5	48	37	\$2,960.00
Nov. 12	63	30	\$1,505.00
Nov. 19	47	48	\$2,847.00
Nov. 26	37	26	\$1,550.00

Faith UCC Staff

Pastor	Rev. Marilyn Sargent
Admin. Assistant	Barb Rich
Financial Secretary	Roger Goudschaal
Treasurer	Barb Hill
Custodian	Lisa Chapin
Director of Music	Beth Goudschaal
Musicians	June Buhr
	Phoebe Drape
	Dawn Holm
	Mary Jo Rathe