

# Bismarck-Mandan Area United Church of Christ

1200 E Highland Acres Rd ~ 701-223-2915 ~ bisucc@midconetwork.com ~ www.uccbismarck.org ~ Like us on Facebook

## December 2020

A GLOBAL MINISTRY CHURCH

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

## Something Entirely Different

by Rev. Gretchen Deeg, Pastor

'Something different' is the ever present promise of Christmas. When the prophet Isaiah cried out in the wilderness he said to prepare the way of the Lord for "every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low" (Isaiah 40:4). When the prophet cried out to God he said the scripture which we read on the first Sunday of Advent, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence" (Isaiah 64:1). The most common imagery of Christmas, a light shining in the darkness, is also referenced by the prophet Isaiah, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined" (Isaiah 9:2). In not a single one of the prophecies or scriptures about the birth of Christ does it say or even make a nod towards the sentiment, "and all will be the same." At its very core, Christmas is about something entirely different disrupting our lives.

'Something different' may feel like a curse this year. COVID is not a blessing or a gift from God. It is not a tiny child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. It is a natural force which has flattened our social interactions, laid low our plans, and brought darkness instead of light. Yet, it most certainly is 'something different' and even in the midst of the darkness of a pandemic, God still offers us light and the opportunity to experience an entirely disrupted social order.

The scriptures tell us again and again that the Kingdom of God does not look like our kingdoms or nations. God does not rule like the kings, queens, presidents, dictators, prime ministers, or chancellors of our world. The Kingdom of God doesn't even look like our social order with various hierarchies of power and wealth. The Kingdom of God is something entirely different. Often we have trouble imagining that our world could function in different ways – that we could reject power structures of oppression, that we could live as members of God's *loving* family, that everything we know could be turned upside down. But this year, we don't have to imagine it. Our lives have already been turned upside down. Social structures have shifted before our very eyes. I know that many want to "go back" to how things were before, but that isn't the call of Christmas. Christmas calls us forward into God's love. Christmas calls us into something entirely different.



### December 24 & 27 ONLINE

Please note that Christmas Eve and Sunday, Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> services will be online only due to the increased risk of COVID-19 spread around holiday gatherings.

### Christmas Pageant

We invite everyone in our church family along with family and friends to join us for our 2020 version of the Christmas Pageant *online* during the Wednesday Mid-Week Worship services at 6 pm.

*December 2<sup>nd</sup> ~ Story 1*

*December 9<sup>th</sup> ~ Story 2*

*December 15<sup>th</sup> ~ Story 3*

*December 22<sup>nd</sup> ~ Story 4*



**Worship with us every Sunday at 10:00 AM | Bible Study: Friday @ 8:30 AM**

# Vision Statement

Adopted January 2016

**The Bismarck-Mandan UCC  
is a thriving church transforming our  
lives and community:**

- Where all are unconditionally welcomed, affirmed, accepted and loved;
- Where the good in every person is recognized and their talents are encouraged to be shared;
- Where children, youth, and adults learn that God is love and all are welcome to freely explore spirituality in a safe and nurturing environment;
- Where we can bring our personal needs and struggles and count on support from our church family – which is the loving family we all deserve;
- Where powerful messages inspire and challenge us to be caring and compassionate to all – in our church, community, and world, seeking opportunities to put our faith into action with courage to go beyond what we think we can do;
- Where we embrace the still-speaking God and live in today's world.



## Council Corner

by Mike Stein, Moderator

Hello Everyone,

As our holiday season draws near, we reflect on this past unprecedented year. This pandemic has affected each one of us. It has changed our educational learning, our working environment, our social system, and our spiritual health. Today's environment

presents us with opportunities to evaluate where we are with our personal and spiritual life. It forces us to evaluate what is important. The things we have taken for granted throughout our lives are more important to us now. These things such as the love for our families and friends, a walk with our dogs, the smell of freshly baked bread in the morning, and a drive in the country. These are just a few of the positive effects we will take from this experience.

Growing up mom had a Christmas book where she would record our past holiday experiences. This book is filled with many cherished memories. Even though this Holiday Season will be unique. It will be special! Let's fill this Holiday Season with safe activities and worship. Imagine writing this holiday experience in your Christmas book. I have a believe that this Holiday Season will stick in our hearts for many years.

At the Annual Meeting in January, I will be stepping down as Moderator. I thoroughly enjoyed working in this capacity for the past 3 years. The foundation of our church is our friendship with each other. This is the strong bond that ties us all together. We need to share this bond with other people. Once this bond is shared the church will grow.

Take care & God Bless!

## Alternative Gift Giving

Each year, around Christmas, our church offers **Christmas cards** for donations made to the East Timor Education Fund, in support of our sister school in East Timor.

If you are looking for other ways to reduce the amount of "stuff" exchanged in the spirit of Christmas, or ways for your gift giving to send love out to our community and world, then consider these donation ideas over shopping.

- **Sponsor a Sunday** in memory or honor of a loved one
- **Give the gift of a meal** through donations to Jack's Food Pantry
- **Be a beacon of light** with a note of blessing and a sponsorship of Christmas Eve candles for others
- **Support Mayflower Circle** by purchasing stocking stuffer cutlery through them (see weekly e-blast for link)

## FINANCIAL STATUS

January 1 to October 31, 2020

### Revenue

#### General Offerings

Actual = \$ 120,061

#### Other Income (Dedicated, Earned)

Actual = \$ 11,227

### Expenses

Actual = \$ 131,662

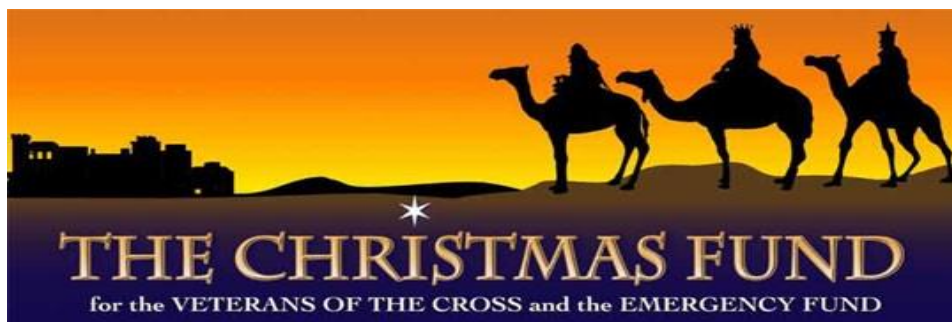
Total Revenue = 131,288

Total Expenses = \$ 131,667

**NET ACTIVITY = \$ -374**

## SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION PARTNERS IN 2020

East Timor Education Fund	\$ 1,112
Charles Hall Youth Services	\$ 3,164
Our Church's Wider Mission	\$ 7,830
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$ 315
Strengthen the Church	\$ 50
Neighbors in Need	\$ 245
The Christmas Fund	\$
<b>Total Shared Ministry</b>	<b>\$ 12,561</b>



In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, which administers the Christmas Fund, experienced a 400% increase in requests for emergency grants over the previous year. Thanks to the generosity of more than 275 donors to urgent appeals for gifts to the Christmas Fund, UCBMA was able to say "yes" to each of these requests.

Most of the donors who responded to these special emergency appeals were older persons and nearly half were first time contributors to the Christmas Fund. Many are also themselves recipients of Ministerial Assistance.

Here are just a few of the notes of thanks received from some of the Emergency Grant recipients:

*"I must tell you that before I opened the envelope with the check I prayed that whatever the contents, that somehow I would make the days to come work...and when I opened that envelope with a great amount of trepidation, I could not believe my eyes that you and your Committee granted me even more than I had requested! I am still in shock, and still feeling so very grateful as I sit down with that fear off my shoulders."*

*"Wow, what can I say but a very humble thank you. This is tremendously generous and I never, ever expected it. The best I had hoped for was to cover my recent medical bill. I am surprised and tearfully grateful."*

*"The emergency grant money arrived in last night's mail. THANK YOU to all who approved this emergency grant. I will be able to pay back loans that were made to make rent. We will also be able to supplement our rent money for quite some time until greater income starts coming in. We are joyful those days will come."*

*"I'm speechless – Thank you all so very, very much! Keeping you all in my prayers. May the gift of your generous blessing spread wide and far."*

## In 2019, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 350 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,347,419)
- Health Premium supplementation for 144 clergy and lay employees (\$374,577)
- Emergency grants for 69 individuals and families (\$123,727)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 521 retired clergy and lay employees (\$260,500)



# Thank you for Sponsoring a Sunday!

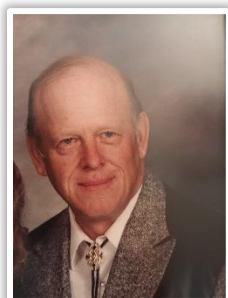


**November 15, 2020** – Happy 47<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Bill and Marcia Patrie!

Sponsored in celebration of their wedding anniversary and in honor of their family. Congratulations Bill and Marcia, we wish you all the best and many more years to come!

## Sponsored by Bill & Marcia Patrie

Bill and Marcia Patrie first found the United Church of Christ through the church's baseball team. Through the years they have served this community in various leadership capacities. Currently, Marcia serves as the chairperson of our Fellowship & Service Committee, a member of Mayflower Circle, and helps to organize our participation in the Banquet at Trinity. Bill is completing his second term on Trustees and occasionally serves as pulpit supply for our worship services.



**November 29, 2020** – In memory of Jim Cairns and Steven Stack

This Sunday is sponsored in memory of Darleen Cairn's husband, Jim Cairns, and her son, Steven Stack. Steven's birthday was on November 28<sup>th</sup>.

## Sponsored by Darleen Cairns

Darleen has been a member of Bismarck UCC for many years. You may know Darleen best by her upbeat spirit and her famous caramel rolls which have always filled the church with the delicious smell of freshly baked caramel rolls, especially during our church rummage sales.



## Ongoing Classes

### Friday Morning Bible Study

This dedicated group meets every Friday at 8:30 AM on Zoom for Bible study and fellowship. All are welcome.

### Sunday School

Faith-at-Home continues with packets sent home for Kindergarten through Junior High aged children. If you have not previously participated, but would like to; please contact the church office.

### Confirmation

Please hold in your prayers our three Confirmands as they engage in a year of faith practices and meet outside for our monthly classes.

### Interested in leading a class?

Contact Pastor Gretchen (223-2915) or Christian Ed



## Sponsor a Sunday

Sponsor a Sunday is an incredible way to honor a loved one and an alternative way to help our congregation provide extra funds to meet the current budget's needs. Please consider gifting a Sunday Sponsorship this holiday season to a loved one for the holidays, an upcoming special occasion such as a birthday or anniversary, or in memory of a special loved one. The following dates are still available this year:

December 6<sup>th</sup>  
December 13<sup>th</sup>

December 20<sup>th</sup>  
December 27<sup>th</sup>



## Ministry & Fellowship Groups

### UCC Choir

– Craig DeVos, Choir Director

Due to the ongoing virus we are looking for pianists, organists, and string instrument players for our services or musicians to record music. We will not have in-person singing at this time as the virus cases are still on the rise.

### Mayflower Circle

This women's fellowship group meets every second Thursday of the month (September – May) at noon. Mayflower Circle leads various ministries throughout the year including funeral luncheons, annual rummage sale, numerous fundraisers, and others. Join us this month on Thursday, **Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> at noon** via Zoom.

### Knitting Group & Threads of Love

Knit, purl, tell stories, and have a great time with this group of knitters. Bring your own project or knit a prayer shawl to be blessed and gifted to another. This group will meet on **December 8<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>** via Zoom.

### Primrose Worship Team

Have a passion for serving those in care centers? This team preaches and leads worship services at Primrose Retirement Community on College Dr at 2:00pm on various Wednesdays throughout the year. Talk with Darcy Avery with interest in joining this group of worship leaders.

## Let the Light Shine



Instead of sponsoring poinsettias this Christmas, we are offering the option to sponsor Christmas candles which will be offered to all church members and friends the week of Christmas. These candles can then be used by families during the online Christmas Eve service or at other times during this year's modified family traditions. We welcome notes of gratitude, blessing, memory, or honor to be included with the sponsorships. We plan to share the notes in the January Newsletter to keep the light of Christmas shining and to remember or honor loved ones. Suggested donation of \$5 or more. Notes and checks can be sent to the church office with "Candles" in the memo. Donations will be used to purchase & distribute candles and continue connecting church members with each other during this time.

**Everyone is invited to pick up Christmas candles for every person in your family the week of Christmas.** Sponsorship is NOT required or expected to pick up candles. Our schedule for pick up is as follows:



- Sunday, Dec. 20 10 AM - 11 AM
- Monday, Dec. 21 9 AM - 5 PM
- Tuesday, Dec. 22 9 AM - 5 PM
- Wednesday, Dec. 23 9 AM - 5 PM
- Thursday, Dec. 24 9 AM - 1 PM

If these times will not work for your family, please call the church office to schedule another pick up time or a delivery.

## Primrose Ministries News

by Darcy Avery, Primrose Ministries Coordinator

Marcia Lerberg will lead the December 2<sup>nd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> services at Primrose. One of them will address the Advent/Christmas theme.

Marcia Lerberg's November 5<sup>th</sup> message discussed "We Can Live Today Without Fear". Virginia Luger led communion. Darcy led the music. Upper Room devotional books were offered to the 8 attendees. We left a couple of booklets at the nurse's station for interested readers. There is a beautiful family fellowship in this service. Members share their concerns to be offered in prayer before service. It feels so much like our own UCC fellowship in church. If you wish to volunteer to be part of this ministry; Dale Carmen, Ken Trana, Marcia Lerberg, Pastor Gretchen, or I would be happy to talk with you. No pressure, just information. We will probably have 16 services in 2021 (COVID-willing) which would include about 3 or 4 services per person for the year. However, if you only want to help for one or two services, that is okay, too. Think about volunteering. Primrose Ministries is a loving fellowship community.

# Youth News



## Faith at Home

We will continue with our Faith-at-Home format for the month of December as we are still seeing rising cases of COVID-19. Materials will be dropped off at your home, or you may pick up at the church office. Please contact us if you have not been participating, but would like to.



## Christmas Pageant Invitation

**Where:** Mid-Week Worship ~ Online  
**When:** December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup>  
**Time:** 6:00 pm

We invite all members to join us as our youth share this year's Christmas Pageant with us in 4 stories throughout Advent. This is a great opportunity to invite family and friends to join us online and share the warmth and joy of the season each week, while seeing your amazing kids in action.

**December 2<sup>nd</sup> ~ Story 1**

**December 9<sup>th</sup> ~ Story 2**

**December 16<sup>th</sup> ~ Story 3**

**December 23<sup>rd</sup> ~ Story 4**



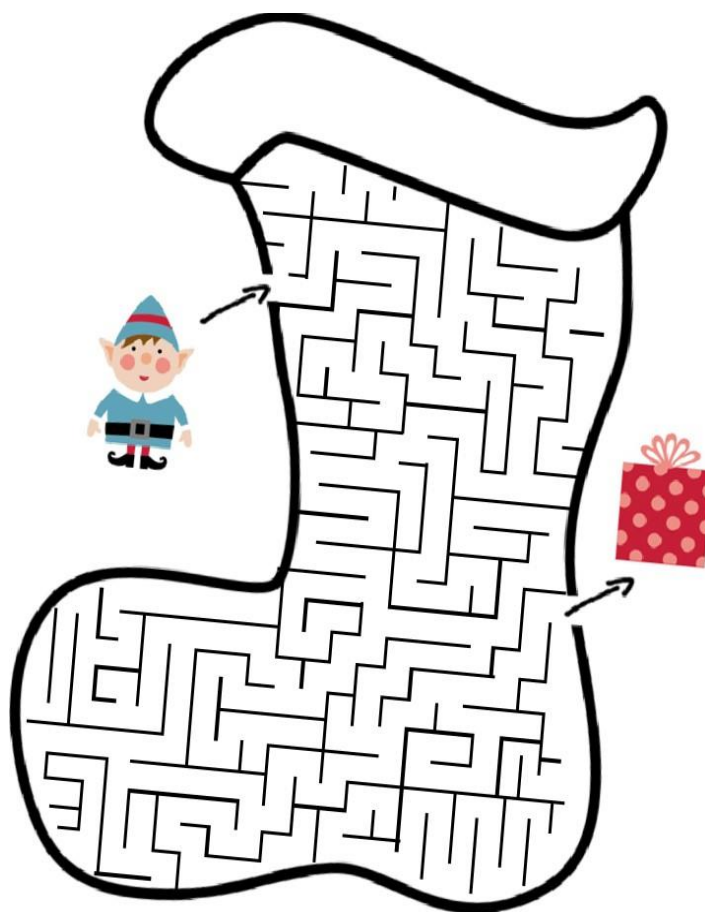
## Christmas Jokes

What do snowmen eat for breakfast?  
*Frosted Flakes!*

Why do mummies like Christmas so much?  
*Because of all the wrapping!*



What does an elf study in school?  
*The ELFabet!*



## Christmas Word Scramble

ATRS \_\_\_\_\_

GRAMEN \_\_\_\_\_

ALGEN \_\_\_\_\_

ESUJS \_\_\_\_\_

GOTSCINK \_\_\_\_\_

Answer Key: Star, Manger, Angel, Jesus, Stocking

## Share the Spirit of the Season!

Are you missing the seasonal get-togethers and camaraderie of friends this season? We invite you to share a "Christmas Greeting" video with your church family this advent season. Less expensive and more far reaching than just your average holiday card, a video of your family filled with Christmas greetings allows everyone to feel in touch and more connected. Please send your video to Pastor Gretchen and join in the holiday fun!



## Deacon's Greetings

by Harold Karch, Deacon's Chair

We hope this newsletter finds you all in good health and staying connected with your church family. Staying connected [in touch] with church family is not just good for ourselves, but a great help to others also. Helping others during this unusual time, by reaching out to help them, is a great way of carrying on the work set out for us, by Jesus, our Lord, in scripture. Please take advantage of the weekly connector calls to express any need or ideas you may have to help the church to fulfill its mission in the Bismarck/Mandan area.

Thank you for your continued, generous support, of Jacks food pantry. This is a very important part of our "outreach" to those in need.

The board of Deacons also wants to call your attention to the importance of taking great care, to keep us all safe and healthy during this time.

God's blessing to you all from your board of Deacons,

*Carol Baber, Sandra Domagala, Darlene Kinnischtzke, Loren Knoll, Murrae Kramer, James Mandigo and Harold Karch*

## December Worship Schedule

### Wednesday Worship Services Christmas Pageant

- Dec. 2 @ 6 pm (online)
- Dec. 9 @ 6 pm (online)
- Dec. 16 @ 6 pm (online)
- Dec. 23 @ 6 pm (online)

### Sunday Worship Services

- Dec. 6 @ 10 am (in-person & online)
- Dec. 13 @ 10 am (in-person & online)
- Dec. 20 @ 10 am (in-person & online)
- Dec. 27 @ 10 am (online only)

### Christmas Eve Worship

Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> @ 5:30 pm  
(online only)

Online Services can be found on our Facebook page, Bismarck United Church of Christ, and can also be found through our website at <https://www.uccbismarck.org/worship>.

*Happy Birthday to our beloved members and*

*May God's gift of life be a blessing to you and may your life be a blessing to others all year long.*



03 Louise Zuern  
04 Camille Grothier  
05 Erica Nitschke  
11 Wade Schemmel  
13 Howard Etson

14 Audrey Heinle  
15 Laaden Dobitz  
17 Aimee Devos  
17 Hadden Robinson  
21 J D Tollefson

21 Ben Patrie  
21 Marcia Patrie  
22 Stella Augustadt  
25 Penny Wilson  
27 Justin Weil

*\*Please contact the church office or sign up in the narthex if you would like your birthday listed in the newsletter*