

First UCC Focus

December, 2019



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking.

9:45 *Sunday School*
11:00 *Worship*

DECEMBER SCRIPTURE

December 1

Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm 122
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:36-44

December 8

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

December 15

Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10 or
Luke 1:46b-55
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

December 22

Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

December 24

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14, 15-20

December 25

Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1-4, 5-12
John 1:1-14

December 29

Isaiah 63:7-9
Psalm 148
Hebrews 2:10-18
Matthew 2:13-23

December 31

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Psalm 8
Revelation 21:1-6a
Matthew 25:31-46

DECEMBER USHERS

David Waller, Captain
Karen Alexander
John Isenberg
Susan Ward
Eric Webster

DECEMBER 29

Youth Ushers

DECEMBER GREETERS

December 1 & 8

John & Lucy Robinson

December 15 & 22

Phyllis Little & Millie Campbell

December 29

Rodney Callaway

DECEMBER LAY READERS

December 1

The Leichman Family

December 8

The Webster Family

December 15

The Bernhardt Family

December 22

Rebecca & Nate Wrights

December 24

Leslie Dent, Radell Lockhart
& Penelope

December 29

Carolyn Cline



Thank you for your generosity by contributing to the Little Red Wagon. Donations were delivered to Rowan Helping Ministries this month.



- 1 9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship & Communion
- 2 6:30 Lessons & Carols Concert at Catawba
- 3 11:30 Circle 4
6:00 SA Meeting
6:30 Circle 6
6:30 Lessons & Carols Concert at Catawaba (UCC Night)
- 4 7:30 Chancel Choir
- 5 6:30 Lessons & Carols Concert at Catawba
- 6 Gay Men's Chorus Concert at 1st UCC
- 8 **LESSONS & CAROLS SUNDAY**
LITTLE RED WAGON SUNDAY
9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship
12:30 Soup & Salad Lunch and Caroling
4:00 Property Committee Meeting
- 9 6:30 Circle 7
- 10 10:30 Meals on Wheels
6:00 SA Meeting
- 11 5:00 EC Board Meeting
7:30 Chancel Choir
- 12 11:00 Primetimers
5:00 Mission Committee Meeting
- 15 9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship
12:30 Church Council Meeting
2:00 Blue Christmas Service
6:00 Pageant
- 17 1:00 Bless These Stitches
6:00 SA Meeting
- 18 7:30 Chancel Choir
- 19 7:00 Church Women Board Meeting
- 22 **FIVE ALIVE SUNDAY**
9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship
- 23 **JANUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**
- 24 **CHRISTMAS EVE**
7:00 Christmas Eve Service and Reception
- 25 **CHRISTMAS DAY**
- 26 6:00 PFLAG Meeting
- 29 9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship
- 31 **NEW YEAR'S EVE**
10:30 Meals on Wheels



CAROL'S CORNER



Dear Friends,

I'm excited! It's Advent! Actually, to be honest, I'm overwhelmed like all of you are because it's Advent! I am excited though. I'm excited about the sermon series we're going to be doing through Advent. It's a series based on a hymn. It's a hymn that is based on Psalm 98 which invites us to sing a new song, to make a joyful noise, and to rejoice and give thanks. The composer is Isaac Watts who was a Congregationalist hymnwriter, theologian, and minister who during his lifetime wrote over 750 hymns.

This year one of those hymns, Joy to the World, turns 300 years old. For many people this has become a beloved hymn. And while it was not originally written as a Christmas carol but it is often heard this time of the year. This hymn is a powerful cosmic performance of all creation being renewed and freed.

In preparation for this series I have been reading The Book of Joy which is a story where Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama converse about joy. They had gathered together for this conversation in India where the Dalai Lama lives in exile.

As we approach the concept of joy, which is not another word for "happiness", I think we will discover that joy can be found even in the midst of suffering, in the work of justice, and in the presence of compassion. A lot of what we call joy is all about how we look at the world, how we interpret the world, and how we experience the world. Both Archbishop Tutu and the Dalai Lama have both experienced intense pain, suffering and conflict in their lives and yet they take delight in life. Their book reminds me that you can be filled with joy without necessarily being happy. They would tell you that because of their hardships they are two of the most joyful people in the world.

Yet they are aware that are many obstacles to joy from fear and stress, anger to grief, illness, and death...

Each week of Advent we will be exploring joy. Hopeful joy, loving joy, unabashed joy, peaceful joy, and of course, incarnate joy.

I hope you join us on this journey that leads us to Bethlehem once again. Hope to see you all in church!

Blessings and peace,

Pastor Carol



December Circle Group Meetings

Circle 2:

Date to be announced

Circle 4:

December 3, 11:30 a.m. at Oak Park
Mary Austin, Hostess

Circle 6:

December 3, 6:30 p.m., D.J.s Restaurant

Circle 7:

December 9, 6:30 p.m., Wellington Hills
Clubhouse, Brenda Bernhardt and Lynn
Bernhardt, Hostesses



LET EVERY DAY BE CHRISTMAS **By Norman W. Brooks**

Christmas is forever, not for just one day,
For loving, sharing, giving, are not to put away
like bells and lights and tinsel, in some box upon a shelf.
The good you do for others is good you do for
yourself.

Merry Christmas From The Five Alive Committee!

Joyce Trexler
Ted Cline
Jim Lyerly



PRIMETIMERS



Primetimers will meet **December 12 at 11:00** in the Fellowship Hall. The program will be The Phoenix Readers Christmas. Everyone is welcome! Hosts are Pat Beck, Larry Bolick and Ted and Carolyn Cline. Come enjoy the Christmas celebration including a delicious covered dish lunch.

Five Alive Advent Challenge



During this Advent Season, please consider participation in the Five Alive Advent Challenge. The Rhodes Family would like to honor the memory of their parents—Herb and Janet Rhodes. Herb was instrumental in establishing our Five Alive Fund. The family will match any money contributed to the Fund up to a maximum of \$1,500.00 during the Advent Season.

Again this year the yellow Five Alive cards which denote a contribution in honor of a friend, family member, etc. will be available. These cards may be included in a Christmas card or gift to notify your friend or family of this gift. If you would like to use these cards—they may be picked up in the narthex, church office or from any member of the Five Alive committee: Joyce Trexler, Ted Cline, or Jim Lyerly. Please feel free to make a contribution whether you choose to use the cards or not.

Thanks for your support. 100% of your contribution helps citizens of Rowan County or members of the Church family.





Mission Committee Reaches Out

The Mission Committee served a meal at Rowan Helping Ministries Night Shelter on Saturday, November 30 thanks to the help of volunteers and donations for food. The committee continues to promote the Little Red Wagon for Christmas and Holiday meal items that can be used for Rowan Helping Ministries Food Closet. Items that are appreciated are canned meals, vegetables, fruits, beans and rice. We have 17 stars with a name and possibly a child's wish/suggestion for One Church Once Child's Christmas Stars that will be received in un-wrapped gift bags and returned by Monday, December 9. The stars are available at the church office to pick up if you would like to sponsor a child for Christmas Stars for the Season.

The Annual Christmas Fund Offering will be received on Sunday, December 22. This Annual Offering is given to low income retired UCC ministers and their spouses to give an annual Christmas "Thank You" gift for their many years of ministry in the UCC. It also helps to supplement UCC pension annuitants with low monthly payments, supplement the UCC supplementary health insurance payments, and provides emergency grants for annuitants and their spouses. There are over 10,000 retired UCC annuitant members and their spouses who have served along side them in UCC settlements like the local church, church related institutions, and specialized ministries. The majority of them live a comfortable retirement due to the UCC pension fund annuities but some need assistance and receive it through The Christmas Fund.



★
THE CHRISTMAS FUND
for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund



The Annual Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund Offering will be received on Sunday, December 22. The theme this year is "A Light Shines in the Darkness." A light shines in the darkness for UCC pension annuitants for retired clergy and/or their spouses who need a little extra and to express appreciation for their years of service by a "Thank you" gift at Christmas time. A light shines in the darkness for annuitants whose monthly payments are low due to serving small churches or part-time calls to supplement their monthly income. A light shines in the darkness for annuitant members who need assistance to supplement their monthly health care insurance payments for supplementary insurance to Medicare. A light shines in the darkness for annuitants who have an emergency need to pay for unforeseen expenses like home repairs, medical expenses or living expenses. The UCC pension fund provides a program for annuitant members who receive an annual visit, phone calls, and cards from their assigned UCC annuitant visitors. Over 6,000 UCC retired ministers and their spouses are visited annually on behalf of the Pension Board. Rev. Larry Bolick, a member of First UCC, serves as an annuitant visitor for over 50 retired annuitant members and their spouses who live between Concord and High Point, NC. Please be generous in your annual gift to The Christmas Fund on December 22.

YOUTH SPOTLIGHT

Submitted by Patty Shuping



NICK SNIPES

Nick is a Junior at South Rowan High School where he is a Crosby Scholar and a member of the JROTC. He recently earned his Eagle Scout rank with Troop 448 where he is serving as a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster and a member of the Troop 448 Venture Crew. He is a member of 1st UCC youth fellowship and plans to attend the 2020 National Youth Event. He has worked as a Lifeguard for the last three years for Swim Club Management Group where he served as Lifeguard for the Landis Pool, The Country Club of Salisbury, and The Irish Creek Country Club in Kannapolis. His future plans are to attend RCCC to become an EMT.

The *Little Red Wagon* items for December will concentrate on holiday meals for Christmas. The reverse advent calendar below is a great idea for the season. You could team up with others or fill a box on your own. It also provides suggestions for holiday meal items for the wagon if you choose to pick up a few from the list for the season.



REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans

PASSIONATEPENNYPINCHER.COM



Catawba College's Service of Lessons and Carols will be held on **December 2, 3 and 5**. Tuesday, December 3 is UCC night for the concert. A prelude of Christmas music begins at 6:30. Service begins at 7:00 with a dessert reception to follow. Tickets are not required but confirmation of attendance is requested to 704-637-4394 or development@catawba.edu.

Toys for Tots collection boxes are outside of the fellowship hall and in the narthex. The deadline for collection is Tuesday, **December 3**. Questions should be directed to Christian Shuping at 704-202-1476.

The *Gay Men's Choir Concert* is scheduled for **Friday, December 6** at 7:00 p.m. at First UCC.

One Church One Child's Christmas Stars are available at the Church Office if you would like to sponsor a child. Gifts are requested for children ages 1-12 and gift cards are suitable for children over the age of 10. Unwrapped gifts in gift bags must be turned into the Church before **Monday, December 9**.

Circle 7 will meet on **Monday, December 9** at 6:30 at Wellington Hills Clubhouse.

Primetimers will meet **December 12 at 11:00** in the Fellowship Hall. The program will be The Phoenix Readers Christmas. Everyone is welcome! Hosts are Pat Beck, Larry Bolick and Ted and Carolyn Cline. Come enjoy the Christmas celebration including a delicious covered dish lunch.

There will be a *Blue Christmas Service* on **December 15 at 2:00**. The Blue Christmas Service is designed for those who are having a difficult time with the holiday season.

The *Children's Christmas Pageant* will be held on **Sunday, December 15 at 6:00**.

The *Christmas Fund Offering* will be received **December 22** during worship.

Christmas Eve Service and Reception will on **December 24** at 7:00.

The *Little Red Wagon* items for December will concentrate on holiday meals for Christmas. Canned soups, fruits and vegetables, stuffing mixes, dessert mixes, boxed potatoes or pasta are some of the suggested items.

Don't forget *Chancel Choir*. Choir meets each Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. New voices are welcome!

Bless These Stitches meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 1:00 p.m. If you knit, crochet or craft, or would like to learn, you are invited to stop by for crafting, fellowship and conversation.

Pastor Carol will be on vacation from December 26 until January 1.

