

First UCC Focus

January 2020



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking.

9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship

JANUARY SCRIPTURE

January 5

Jeremiah 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:1-18

January 12

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 29
Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 3:13-17

January 19

Isaiah 49:1-7
Psalm 40:1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42

January 26

Isaiah 9:1-4
Psalm 27:1, 4-9
1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Matthew 4:12-23

JANUARY USHERS

John Wagoner, Captain
Greg Alcorn
Henry Alexander
Tom Loflin
Patty Shuping
Janette Yost

JANUARY GREETERS

January 5 & 12
Michele Smith
January 19 & 26
Donna Odrosky

JANUARY LAY READERS

January 5
Carolyn Cline
January 12
Patti Marion
January 19
Patti Marion
January 26
Phyllis Little



- 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY
- 5 9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship & Communion
After Worship "Undecorating"
- 6 EPIPHANY
- 7 11:30 Circle 4 Meeting
2:00 Circle 2 Meeting
6:00 SA Meeting
7:00 Circle 6 Meeting
- 8 11:30 Bible Study
6:00 Bible Study
7:30 Chancel Choir
- 9 11:00 Primetimers
5:00 Mission Committee Meeting
- 11 9:30-1:00 Church Women United
Retreat in Fellowship Hall
- 12 LITTLE RED WAGON SUNDAY
9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship
4:00 Property Committee Meeting
- 14 10:30 Meals on Wheels
6:00 SA Meeting
6:30 Families First
- 15 11:30 Bible Study
5:00 EC Board Meeting
6:00 Bible Study
7:30 Chancel Choir
- 16 7:00 Church Women Board Meeting
- 19 9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship
12:30 Church Council Meeting
5:00 Worship Committee Meeting
- 21 1:00 Bless These Stitches
6:00 SA Meeting
6:30 Families First
- 22 11:30 Bible Study
6:00 Bible Study
7:30 Chancel Choir
- 23 6:00 PFLAG Meeting
- 26 FIVE ALIVE SUNDAY
9:45 Sunday School
11:00 Worship
- 27 FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
- 28 10:30 Meals on Wheels
6:00 SA Meeting
6:30 Families First
- 29 11:30 Bible Study
6:00 Bible Study
7:30 Chancel Choir



Painting The Stars

"When I have a terrible need of --- dare I say, "religion"? --- then I go outside at night and paint the stars." --- Vincent Van Gogh

WOW Wednesday will begin on **January 8**. We will be celebrating the communion of science and faith, *Painting the Stars* explores the promise of evolutionary Christian spirituality. Featuring over a dozen leading evolutionary theologians and progressive thinkers like Rachel Held Evans, Matthew Fox, Megan McKenna, Bruce Sanguin and John Shelby Spong. Session titles for the group study will be:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Toward Healing the Rift | 5. Evolutionary Christianity |
| 2. A Renaissance of Wonder | 6. Imagining a Future |
| 3. Getting Genesis Wrong | 7. An Evolving Spirituality: |
| 4. An Evolving Faith | Mysticism |

Bible study will be offered at **11:30 a.m.** or come for supper at **6:00 p.m.** and we'll begin at **6:30 p.m.** Please let the Church Office or Bobbie Troutman know if you will be attending the 6:00 meal. Invite your friends!





CAROL'S CORNER



Dear Friends,

Isaiah the prophet said in chapter 9:2

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.

Our current world feels to me as if it has wandered back into the darkness. We are a people that prefer darkness to light. We prefer to turn from the light, we fear it, we fear where it might lead us, we fear what it might demand of us, and so we hide behind our prejudices, our own beliefs and we gather with our own tribes. We forget that we are connected, each one to the other, through the love of our Savior, the light, the true light that came down on Christmas.

Here's the part of the story we like. The little baby, in a manger. The shepherds and the sheep in the fields, the wise men from the East and that tiny little one, no crying he makes.

But the reality is that at Bethlehem, God tears open the heavens and comes down, entering the madness, craziness, messiness of life, of incarnation and flesh. This child scrambles the way things have always been. Challenges the kings and principalities, the darkness that feeds on fear. He turns things inside out and upside down.

He welcomes those rejected elsewhere. He forgives the unforgiveable. He encourages the lost and comforts the grieving. But the powers and principalities prefer to hold onto their status, their power, their prestige. They liked how things had been going. They preferred their positions of power, the adulation they received.

So, they killed him. They didn't want to lose what they had.

But the good news is this, the story does not end there. It continues to be told, and his words continue to be spoken and people continue in the attempt to live them out. It is not easy. It has never been easy.

To love one another but if we love God, if we open our ears at all to the Word we have no other option but begin to let go of the fear, to reach for the light and to trust that when we take those steps into the light we do not, will not falter, nor will we fall. And if for some reason we do falter and fall, God will pick us up, dust us off, and encourage us to try again.

Epiphany is the season of light. The work of Christmas begins in the light and challenges us to continue to grow in our own faith as the community of people, the family of God, in all our differences and in all our similarities. We are called to be One in the Spirit.

Hope this New Year brings joy to your life and your heart.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Carol



January Circle Group Meetings

Circle 2:

January 7, 2:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Circle 4:

January 7, 11:30 a.m. at Jeter's Deli

Circle 6:

January 7, 7:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Circle 7:

No January Meeting



Five Alive:

A Thank-Note From Rowan Helping Ministries

The following is a copy of a letter that was received recently from Rowan Helping Ministries thanking us for our continued support through our *Five- Alive Fund* and the *Little Red Wagon* Programs:

In the first three months of our fiscal year, our kind and caring donors, like you, made the things possible through your gifts:

- 936 individuals received \$82,939 in financial assistance for rent, utilities, medicine and other critical needs;
- 284 different guests were provided a safe place to spend the night in our shelter;
- 20,929 meals were served to the hungry in Jeannie's Kitchen; **(Our Mission Committee is helping with this program!)**
- 1,722 households visited our Food Pantry, where 198,493 pounds of groceries were distributed;
- 936 individuals received new or gently-used clothing from our Clothing Center;
- 6,146 *Food for Thought* food bags were given to Rowan County children each week, so they would have enough to eat on weekends.

Though your donation, you have allowed your heart to lead you in helping your neighbors in need. You are helping us feed the hungry, house the homeless and give hope to those working to build better lives.

Sincerely,
Karen Taylor
Resource Development Assistant



Thank you from the First UCC Church Staff for the gifts and cards, thoughts and prayers this holiday season...

- Pastor Carol,
- Susan Trivette
- Phillip Burgess
- Susan Legendre
- Patty & Mark Shuping

PRIMETIMERS

Primetimers will meet on January 9 at 11:00 in the Fellowship Hall. Jeff Bernhardt will present a program on his trip to Washington, D.C. Hosts will be Pat Beck and Larry Bolick.





Don't forget **Chancel Choir**. Choir meets each Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal resumes on **January 8**. New voices are welcome!

WOW Wednesdays begin on **January 8** at 11:30 and 6:00.

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.

Although the **Five Alive Advent Challenge** has concluded, remember that your gifts are always appreciated at any time of the year. Thank you for making this challenge successful this past season.

There is an altar flower signup book in the Narthex. There are many dates available in the upcoming months. It is a wonderful way of honoring or memorializing our members, friends and guests. Special thanks goes out to Rebecca Wrights for creating the beautiful arrangements.

Thank you for your generous gifts to **The Christmas Fund**. This is one of our five denominational offerings. We are glad to be a 5 for 5 giving church.

A big thank you for all who donated refreshments for the Christmas Eve reception. There was a wonderful variety and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship.

Thanks to all for your kind prayers, thoughts, food, flowers and visits. I sincerely appreciate it more than words can say. I am thankful to be able to be back home and hope to see everyone soon. — Joyce Trexler

There is a nice letter on the office bulletin board updating us about Gary and Linda Hauze. Please stop by and have a read.

Thank you for your generosity by contributing to the **Little Red Wagon**. 101 pounds were donated and delivered to Rowan Helping Ministries in December.

We have received an invitation from Barry Scott to join them in celebrating Don Scott's birthday. The celebration will be on Sunday, January 19, 2020, in Muncie, Indiana. Cards are always welcomed. His address is: Don Scott, 4816 E. Heritage Circle, Muncie, IN 47303.