

The Messenger



A Newsletter of the
Genesee 1st Congregational, United Church of Christ, Inc.

December, 2020 - Special Edition

Volume 15, Number 4.5

From the Pastor



Christmas is coming! We face challenges unlike any we have seen before, and yet, Christmas is still coming! We count on this season to establish the familiar in an otherwise changing world. Every year we rely upon Thanksgiving, Christmas and the weeks between them to deliver a sense of constancy to help us cope with everything else. We take special care to prepare the same meals and favorite dishes. We decorate the tree with the same ornaments and hold annual gatherings the same as we have every year. 'Tis the season to sing the same songs and carols. Well and good, but this year has thrown us a terrible "screwball," and we are floundering. This year is quite different. What can we do now to stabilize our lives?

The stability of Christmas sameness, we must note, misses a core message of Christmas, which is, that this season was made for celebration in the midst of upheaval. The very first words of the Christmas story are not about Mary and Joseph and Jesus soon to be born. Instead it begins with a description of the political landscape and a new decree that would send the Holy Family reeling. It would send them from their home in Nazareth to Bethlehem almost 100 miles away by road (156 km according to Google). This was not for a vacation at a timeshare, but to pay taxes! How fun was that for a family about to bring a new life into the world!? And yet, Christmas still came. Christ was born regardless of the political winds that blew them across the country and away from home.

Christmas and Advent will be different this year. We won't gather in the same way; we won't sing together. Some celebrations will be described with melancholy evaluations like, "It just wasn't the same!" but celebrate we must. We must make do. Set aside the bemoaning and recognize that only the setting has changed, but the promise of "God with us" includes even these times of disruption, especially times like these!

The church has resources for just such a time. Call, and we will provide for you resources that will help you recognize the coming of Christ into this world and into this place and time. The Christmas message is not just about what happened over 2,000 years ago. Christmas celebrates Christ arriving at our door, ready to join us in meeting the troubles of our time. This will take work to make Christmas be our stability and assurance of God's abiding presence, but maybe, just maybe, we will bring us to a deeper understanding of what Christmas means. Call the church. Come to worship by phone or computer. It may feel strange and odd, but no stranger than giving birth in a cattle stall!

Pastor Peter

e-mail: stmartpb@msn.com

(c) 262-720-6939; (h) 262-201-4033

Another "From the Pastor" for Stewardship

Janet was a member of the first church I served in a northeast Iowa small town (Another whose name was "First Congregational UCC"!) I used to visit her at the town's care center as she had been stricken with MS for a good portion of her life. This woman in her 50's was easily the youngest resident of the facility, but to stay within visiting distance of her mother and her aunt both in their 90's, this was a good location to assure she got the care that she needed. When her mother died, I remember at the memorial service that the Funeral Director labored intensely to heft Janet in her wheelchair, step by step, up the stairs to enter the sanctuary. It was the only way in. Seeing that effort compelled me to joined other in the congregation to work toward installing a wheelchair lift so that Janet and others like her could be regular attendees in worship.

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Welcome to the December, 2020 Special Edition of the Messenger. Restrictions, due to Covid-19, are still not allowing us to have in-person services inside our church building. In lieu of “normal” Sunday morning worship an online “Zoom” gathering has been set up.

SUNDAY, 9:30 AM (VIRTUAL SERVICE) Join us as early as 9 AM.

To Join the group via Computer or tablet or smartphone, click on the following link or copy into your browser.
<https://zoom.us/j/396301165> Password = 365422

You may also join by going to <https://zoom.us> and click on the “JOIN A MEETING”

heading at the top of the webpage.

When prompted, enter:

- Meeting ID: 396 301 165
- Password: 365422

To join meeting by phone (Audio only)

- Call 1-312-626-6799
- and enter when prompted:
 - o Meeting ID: 396 301 165
 - o Password: 365422

Communion on the 1st Sunday of the month

As our Lord told the disciples on the *first* Last Supper, “Do this in remembrance of me,” we have returned to the regular observance of the Sacrament of Communion on the first Sunday of the Month during the 9:30 AM “zoom” service. Yes, it is quite a different experience, as we cannot share the elements. We encourage you to do what you need to do to make the experience meaningful to you. You may want to have elements (grape juice or wine / bread) with you to partake along with Pastor Peter as he breaks the bread, pours the cup and partakes on behalf of us all.

Lectionary Bible Study

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 This is your opportunity to learn about the Bible scripture for the upcoming Sunday. It is held every Thursday, at 10 AM. Like our “zoom” services, it is a “virtual” event. To Join the group via Computer or tablet or smartphone, click on the following link or copy into your browser. <https://zoom.us/j/324446460>

You may also join by going to <https://zoom.us> and click on the “JOIN A MEETING” heading at the top of the webpage.

When prompted, enter:

- Meeting ID: 324 446 460
- Password: 789656

To join meeting by phone (Audio only)

- Call 1-312-626-6799
 - and enter when prompted:
 - o Meeting ID: 324 446 460
 - o Password: 789656
-

MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS in a “VIRTUAL” world

We can’t pass the collection plate like in a normal church service. But you can still take advantage of your great, God given, opportunity to make an offering. Make checks out to “Genesee 1st Congregational, United Church of Christ” OR, if you prefer, just “Genesee Church.” Send them to the church office – GENESSEE CHURCH / W306 S5075 Church St. / Mukwonago, WI 53149-9732. Our treasurer, Angela, picks them up on a weekly basis. OR You can mail your check direct to Angela: Angela Williams / W956 Miramar Rd. / East Troy, WI. 53120.

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Events Calendar

DECEMBER - JANUARY events

Listed here are the dates of meetings, holidays and events in December and January. All dates are correct at the time of publication. All events are at the Ed. Center, unless otherwise noted. Virtual “Zoom” worship Services are 9:30 AM each Sunday morning. Lectionary Bible study (via “Zoom”) is each Thursday, 10 AM. For “zoom” LINKS see Page 2. (January meeting dates have not been decided yet.)

NOVEMBER

SU 29 1ST SUNDAY IN ADVENT - HOPE
 The Christmas Fund – offering
 (continues throughout December)

DECEMBER

SU 6 2nd SUNDAY IN ADVENT - PEACE
 9:30 AM – Communion during “Zoom” service

MO 7 PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE DAY

TU 8 Executive Board – 5 PM (virtual)

SU 13 3rd SUNDAY IN ADVENT - JOY

SU 20 4th SUNDAY IN ADVENT - LOVE
 Newsletter Copy due (for Jan. – Feb. issue)

MO 21 Winter solstice (Winter begins 10:19 PM CST)

TH 24 CHRISTMAS EVE
 5:30 PM – Outdoor Drive-up Service
 (at church)
 7 PM – Zoom service (see page 5 for details)

FR 25 MERRY CHRISTMAS!

SU 27 Your 2021 Pledge Card is due.

TH 31 NEW YEAR’S EVE

JANUARY

FR 1 HAPPY NEW YEAR!

SU 3 9:30 AM – Communion during “Zoom” service

WE 6 EPIPHANY

MO 18 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

"Stewardship" – From Page 1

I will spare you from most of this long and glorious success story that culminated in making that old building accessible to the less able. There were many who wondered whether this small church would suffer a loss in contributions, logically thinking that the money members would give to this project would drain the budget of revenue, because people would simply divert what they pledged the operating budget to support the chair lift fund. The trustees were going to recommend against this capital campaign. As it turned out, we didn't lose support for the budget. The wheelchair lift was funded and giving to the general budget actually increased!

What can we learn from this story? People want to make a difference. People want to look back at their lives and point, not to the fact that they maintained a building, but that they accomplished something remarkable. The wheelchair lift in that Iowa church was something that brought much personal satisfaction to all donors. After having clear evidence of the sacrifice made, the congregation was able to see the value of the less visible, less glamorous needs of the church. They supported the whole institution with a greater portion of their resources.

From my vantage point as a pastor the wheelchair lift, as important and exciting as it was, ushered in a more profound level of Christian stewardship and discipleship. It requires a higher level of faith "maturity" to be willing to give for the sake of giving without having anything to show for the giving in tangible form. Making a commitment that returns nothing back to you, not even something to point at to verify for all that you did something good, is the purest form of devotion.

A church needs money to keep the electricity on and any number of "invisible" needs that give the giver nothing to "crow" about. I would hardly think anyone would note with any pride that their money went to unclog the toilet in the women's room or paid for the pastor's insurance, but all of these expenses, mundane as they may be, are necessary and require a devotion to the organization that doesn't demand personal recognition or tangible result.

Likewise, in providing for those in need, we are inclined to give to those closer to home, where we can know better where "our" money goes, than to send it to refugee relief in Darfur, but God calls us to serve all in need not just the ones we can see.

I raise this point of "giving without seeing," because that condition applies to more of our giving in these times. When our buildings are idle and meeting in-person has nearly disappeared for the time being, how do we give without direct return of our giving? The need still exists. Some, but hardly all, of our building and

grounds expenses are lower, but there are so many costs that remain regardless of how much our physical plant is being used. If we don't keep providing the means to pay the bills, we won't have a place for reunion after this nightmare has run its course. The same goes for giving beyond our local church needs. The needs for others around the world have intensified. Our holding back on support will only make matters worse.

What we need is the deeper devotional attitude about our call to give as people of faith. In truth, we should be giving solely because God calls us to it. We should give whether or not we see any "return on investment." It is not "investment" it is letting go of resources for the sake of others. Even if we don't see a result, the assurance that we are acting out of our faith in God, that our giving will make the world better and more closely aligned to what God seeks in the fulfillment of Creation. This year, let us give faithfully and generously for God's sake.

Pastor Peter

e-mail: smartpb@msn.com

(c) 262-720-6939; (h) 262-201-4033

YOUR 2021 PLEDGE CARD

Complete and turn in by Sunday, December 27.

To those of you who are active members of Genesee Church, we ask you to remember the vow you made when you first became a member of the church. That vow was to support the church not only with your ongoing presence, but with your time, talent and treasures. All active members have received a stewardship letter and your 2021 Pledge Card. To those who have already turned in a Pledge Card, **THANK YOU!** To the rest of you, we are asking you to make a serious commitment to the ongoing work of Genesee Church. **Return your pledge card to us no later than Sunday, December 27.** Use the enclosed self-addressed envelope to mail them to our church office address (W306 S5075 Church St / Mukwonago, WI 53149-9732), or personally drop them off at the church office. If no one is there, drop them in the black mailbox near the Pastor's Office door. Thank you. Not an active member and wish to pledge? Call the office at **262-968-3849**. We will be happy to mail you a pledge card!

CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

A special **THANK YOU** to everyone who contributed to the Neighbors in Need (NIN) offering on World communion Sunday, October 4 – and throughout October. Our next special offering is "The Christmas Fund." This fund helps the pensions board of the U.C.C. to provide ministerial assistance to retired pastors in need. It is a way for them to bring hope to the "Veterans of the

Cross" who have faithfully and selflessly served. **Mark Sunday, November 29 on your calendar** and have your special offering ready for this great cause! Donations will be accepted throughout December.

Information on Rent and Utilities Assistance Agencies

Friends,

There was quite a little conversation generated from my sharing the encounter with someone calling the Hartland Church, looking for assistance with rent. I shared in the sermon that, recognizing neither Hartland nor Gene-see churches have such a fund, that I had to turn her away. Frankly, I don't think the solution is to have a "pot" of money set aside for such an emergency. The small number of requests that we receive couldn't justify putting any significant amount of money on hold. Nevertheless, that doesn't mean this is a problem we should ignore. My response to the heavy feeling of not being able to help, inspired me to do some research. My inquiries led me to discover "Community Advocates," an assistance agency that ministers to those in Milwaukee area. Further research based on leads from our Sunday conversation and subsequent communications with members shows that Waukesha County does have some resources for people in need of this kind of assistance. Both Waukesha Salvation Army and St. Vincent De Paul of Waukesha County are organizations whose work includes assistance for housing costs. Below find some particulars on how to give, whether you do so online or via the mail. I am in no position to know if one of these agencies does the work better than the other. I will say that their respective reputations give me adequate assurance that they do good work. Below find the information I have collected.

St Vincent de Paul Waukesha County

Phone: 262-544-1850

Email: info@svdpwaukesha.com

Gift Online: <https://form-usa.keela.co/st-vincent-de-paul-of-waukesha-county/default-donation-form-387>

Gift by Mail: Checks made payable to St. Vincent de Paul Waukesha County

Mail to:

St. Vincent de Paul Waukesha County
818 W. Sunset Drive
Waukesha, WI 53189

If you wish your donation be placed with a specific program, please make note in the memo field on your check. If there is not a specific program indicated, your donation will be placed in our Needy Family Fund. 100% of every donation dollar is used to help people in need.

Waukesha Salvation Army

Gift online: <http://www.waukeshasalvationarmy.org>

Gift by Mail: (Make checks payable to "The Salvation Army" and **please write "Waukesha" in the memo field**)

Mail to:

The Salvation Army Waukesha
445 Madison Street
Waukesha, WI 53188

Annual "Adopt-a-Family" through the Christmas Clearing Council (CCC) of Waukesha County:

A special THANK YOU to everyone who contributed \$25 Walmart and Target gift cards. They will be distributed through the Christmas Clearing Council. Your generosity is making a big difference, this holiday season, in the lives of less fortunate people in the Waukesha area. If you still wish to contribute, the deadline is November 29. Questions? Call Sue Fleming at **262-470-6572**.

Lakeland University Offers Outstanding Scholarship Opportunity

Are you looking for ways to get involved in a religious studies community during your time at college? Do you have a passion to speak out for justice in our communities and world? Lakeland University offers a full-tuition scholarship competition opportunity to students with these interests; it's called our **Ulrich Scholars Scholarship Program**. The Ulrich Scholarship is named after the long-time and beloved Lakeland Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Reinhard Ulrich.

Each year nine Ulrich Scholars earn a **\$20,000** per year scholarship to attend Lakeland University. We also offer one student a **full-tuition** award. Students who receive these awards major or minor in Religion, participate in Ulrich Scholars events throughout the year (including lectures, retreats, community service, and visits to various religious communities), and lead a social justice initiative on or off campus in their junior or senior years.

If this sounds interesting, we would love to have you learn more about the Ulrich Scholars Program. You may apply for the opportunity at lakeland.edu/portal. The full-tuition competition is set to take place on **January 29, 2021**. Applicants must submit their materials by **January 22, 2021**.

Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about this opportunity! Contact Dr. Karl Kuhn at kuhnka@lakeland.edu or admissions@lakeland.edu.

CHRISTMAS EVE EVENTS

5:30 PM – Outdoor Drive-up Service

(at church)

- The service is weather permitting.
- Stay in your car.
- The service will be about 20 minutes.
- Bring some type of individual lighting: candle or even a flashlight.
- Pastor Peter will be on the front stoop of Genesee Church, with his guitar and an amplifier to project both voice and song.

7 PM – “Zoom” service

Here are the details to connect using your device, or by phone.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89716252992?pwd=TW1rd1dORzBHN2NTY0t5WnNHbFBXZz09>

(copy the part in “blue” into your browser)

Meeting ID: 897 1625 2992

Passcode: 983527

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,89716252992#,,,,,0#,,983527#
US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

Meeting ID: 897 1625 2992

Passcode: 983527

MESSENGER AVAILABLE VIA E-MAIL

If you are not receiving your newsletter via e-mail, and you have an e-mail address, send an e-mail to LTLBURD@aol.com and the secretary will get you on the e-mail list. Also, let us know if your e-mail address changes by sending an e-mail using your new e-mail address. Thank you for helping us save mailing costs.



A FINAL NOTE 🎵

The deadline for the January-February, 2021 edition is Sunday, December 20. To submit an article, event information, or to receive your newsletter via e-mail, send e-mail to: LTLBURD@aol.com. Articles submitted in person need to be typed or written legibly.

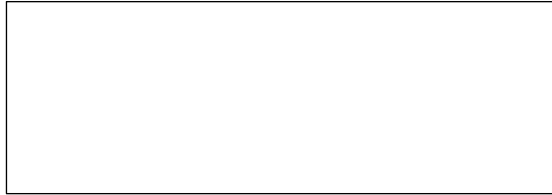
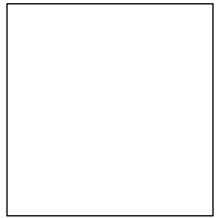
Scott W. Burdette



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MUKWONAGO (GENESEE), WI 53149-9732
262-968-3849 www.geneseechurch.org

NEWSLETTER DEC 2020

TIME VALUE MAIL
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



9:30 AM
Sunday
Virtual Worship (see Page 2 for LINK)
7 PM, December 24
Christmas Eve "Zoom"
Service (see Page 5 for LINK)

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