

Congregational Clarion

AMERY CONGREGATIONAL UCC

PASTOR'S POINT

by Barry Schaefer

JANUARY

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"As the year comes to an end, don't look back on yesterday's disappointments. Look ahead to God's promises yet to unfold."

HAPPY NEW YEAR
2019

Here are a few verses that are designed for those who suffer, and who are having a hard time at this time of year. God never leaves us.

1 Peter 5:5-11 ESV Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (6) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, (7) casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (8) Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (9) Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (10) And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (11) To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Often at this time of year the holidays are flying by like a fast fleeting comet, the "Star in the East" is becoming cloudy, dust covered, and a bit shop worn, and the bright luster of the holiday glitz is now faded, and to confess a bit, we're a bit tired of the colors, red and green. We've had our fill of holiday treats and there still is that pervasive "down" feeling and things are "just not right". We even might feel a bit more distant from God than having been brought closer to

Him at his manger in that stable. These words bear repeating: (10) *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

God is firmly in control. There is not one bit of your suffering that goes unnoticed by God. We have been, are, and shall be covered by the hand of God, for our protection and for our safety. Though we will and often do suffer, not in a metaphorical way, but in reality God is right there with us. God does not prevent suffering, but aids and assists us when we go through it. Hear again these words of truth, (7) *casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

Our job is to "cast all your/(our) anxieties upon him, that is God in Jesus. In this process we lighten our load to bear, and we share with the Lord of the universe, our difficulties and pain.

God is not new to the pain and suffering business, as he did send his son into the world so "suffer" and to "die" for us. God feels all our pain, everything we go through. We cannot experience anything without God's knowledge, care, and concern. In these dark moments, remember this: (10) *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, ...will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. Amen!*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

01/02 Frosty Hermann	01/08 Essie Whitehead
01/03 Hillary Porter	01/08 Darlene Sattler
01/03 Henry Bowen	01/09 Sarah Anderson
01/05 Kory Hill	01/09 Debra Strodthoff
01/05 Aleksander Keller-Betzold	01/10 Zeke Eugene Warner
01/07 Nyla Roettger	01/12 Kathy Picotte
01/07 Lindy Olson	01/12 Thad Betzold
01/07 Rita Giudice	01/14 Ozzie Warner
01/07 Jacob Anderson	01/17 Rooney Adele Warner
	01/21 Donavan Maukstad
	01/24 Connor Satterlund
	01/26 Mitchell Larson
	01/26 Charlie Harris

1. January is named after the Roman god Janus, who was always shown as having two heads. He looked back to the last year and forward to the new one.
2. The Anglo-Saxons called January "Wulfmonath" as it was the month hungry wolves came scavenging at people's doors.
3. It's National Soup Month in the U.S.
4. The only Shakespeare plays that mention January are Much Ado About Nothing and Winter's Tale.
5. More couples separate or divorce in January than in any other month.
6. January 1st is both the furthest away and closest day to December 31st.

People born in January are born to be leaders. You are independent and analytical as well as clever and creative which is the perfect combination. You stand out from the crowd and with an obvious charisma people are always happy to follow you. It is normal for you to follow a more traditional life than others. January born are: serious, reserved, motivated, attentive, sociable and often stubborn. While you are usually quiet, you get excited or tense easily. You enjoy making the people around you happy and do not focus on other people's weaknesses or flaws. You are resistant to illnesses but prone to colds. You are cautious and good with money because you always think twice before spending.

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS



Golden Age Manor

220 Scholl Street
Amery, WI 54001
(715) 268-7107
Kathy Picotte
Ruth Ream

Willow Ridge

400 Deronda Street
Amery, WI 54001
(715) 268-8171

Riverbend

475 Golfview Lane
715.268.9949
Beth Sorensen
Nyla Roettger

Water's Edge

410 Harriman Ave.
Amery, WI 54001
Betty Jansen

Evergreen Village

611 Harriman Avenue
(715) 268-6640

Sylvia Utter
Marian Peterson
Gussie Fennern

Baldwin Care Center

650 Birch St.
Baldwin, WI 54002
Mary Monson Apt. 27

Memory Care

215 Birch St. W
Amery, WI 54001
Dorothy Mueller
Jeanne Murphy
Evelyn Monteith
Halverson
Ted Elmer
Ginny Nelson



from your YOUTH MINISTER

Wednesdays

January 2nd: Homework & Hangout, Family Dinner, WOW and Youth Group. Our evening will conclude at 7:30 pm

January 9th: Homework & Hangout, Family Dinner, popcorn & Movie Night. Our evening will conclude at 8:15 pm due to the length of the movie.

January 16th: Homework & Hangout, Family Dinner, WOW and Youth Group. Our evening will conclude at 7:30 pm.

January 23rd: Homework & Hangout. FUEL (Faith Used in Everyday Life) will be at the Camp Wapo from 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Supper will be provided followed by Broomball and snow tubing. Dress warmly, we'll be outside. Transportation is provided. Please bring \$5 for supper, if you are able. Our evening will conclude at 8:15 pm.

January 30th: Homework & hangout, Family Dinner, Souper Bowl of Caring Kick-Off Football Game and Tailgating Party. Please bring a non-perishable food item to donate to the Amery Food Pantry. Our evening will conclude at 7:30 pm.

Service & Swim Day: All middle school and high school youth are invited to meet at Congo Church at 8 am on Saturday, January 12th to help serve at Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution. Following clean-up, we will eat and then head to The Centre in New Richmond for an afternoon of swimming from 1-3 pm. We will be back to Congo Church for pick-up around 3:30 pm. This is a FREE event but you MUST return Participation form to the church by Wednesday, January 9th.



Tuesday, January 15th: Camp Wapo registration begins. See Charlotte for more details.

Sunday, January 20:

Mentor-mentee lunch and bowling event following our 10 am worship.



Sunday, January 27:

Mission team lefse making at AMC. At 1:30 pm.

Lucy Van Pelt: "I never eat December snowflakes. I always wait until January."



Youth Director Contact Information:

Charlotte Gillen

715.268.7390; ext. 12

715.338.6929 (cell)

Youth.ameryucc@gmail.com



**"Just a Little Christmas"
Sunday School Program**

USHERS/GREETERS/COFFEE HOSTS 2019 SCHEDULE

January, Trustees
February, Diaconate
March, Mission Team
April, Missions & Social
 Concerns

May, Primetimers
June, Congregational Giving
July, Christian Education
August, To be Determined
September, Women of Faith

October, Youth
November, Mission Team
December, To Be Determined

FAMILY TABLE

Please join us at the Congo
 Family Table on Wednesday,
 January 16th at 11:30 am

Call Rae, the Church Lady,
 715-268-7390, by Monday,
 January 14 to make your
 reservations.

ALL ARE WELCOME

Free Will Donation

Bible Study:

A new Bible study is beginning on Tuesday,
 January 8th at 10 am in the Congo Conference
 Room.

In a 7 session DVD Bible study, Pastor Francis
 Chan offers a compelling invitation to
 understand, embrace, and follow the Holy
 Spirit's direction in our lives.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and ... the
 Holy Spirit. We pray in the name of all three, but
 how often do we live with an awareness of only
 the first two? As Jesus ascended into heaven,
 He promised to send the Holy Spirit—the
 Helper—so that we could be true and living
 witnesses for Christ. Unfortunately, today's
 church has admired the gift but neglected to
 open it.

Pastor Chan contends that we've ignored the
 Spirit for far too long, and we are reaping the
 disastrous results. Thorough scriptural support
 and compelling narrative form Chan's invitation
 to stop and remember the One we've forgotten,
 the Spirit of the living God.

January 13th Installation Sunday.

Our newly elected and re-
 elected committee members
 and officers will be installed
 during the Sunday worship
 service. Please plan to show
 your support by attending the
 installation service.

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS RETREAT AT CAMP DELTA

Male adult members of the
 Congo Church are invited to
 enjoy fellowship, ice fishing,
 snowmobiling, cross country
 skiing or good old relaxation on
January 24th-27th (Thursday–
 Sunday) at the Christian
 Brothers Retreat at Camp Delta.

The cost of \$65 includes all
 meals (other than the Friday fish
 & chicken dinner at the V.F.W),
 soft drinks, guided ice fishing
 and snowmobiling trips.

There will be a sign up sheet on
 the white board in the Narthex.

We ask that you make your
 reservation by January 18th, at
 the latest.

For more information, please call
 Mark Kopp at 268-7983,
 268-9442 or 715-491-5252.

SILENT SERVANTS

"Who is the Congo Lefse Queen?" Sherry Monson, of course, This title of honor was passed down to Sherry from her mother, Shirley Monson. The Monson family recipe is still used for the lefse which the Mission Team sells to raise funds for their trips. While Sherry could do the whole Lefse

making process, She has graciously stepped back in order to train the new 'young uns' in the art of lefse rolling and cooking. Now days, Sherry makes the dough while instructing and directing the "Holy Rollers" who commandeer our kitchen after worship throughout the Thanksgiving and Christmas season.

Sherry, the Lefse Meister, is also Sherry, the Builder. For one week in June, Sherry trades her "Lefse Maker" apron for a leather tool apron. For over 19 years Sherry has gone with the Mission Team to do construction work for Habitat for Humanity. Sherry's first Mission trip was in 1999 with the First Lutheran church. She went to learn about the program so the Congo could develop its own Mission Team. Sherry, the Lefse Meister; Sherry, the Builder can also be called Sherry, the Mother of all Congo Mission trips.

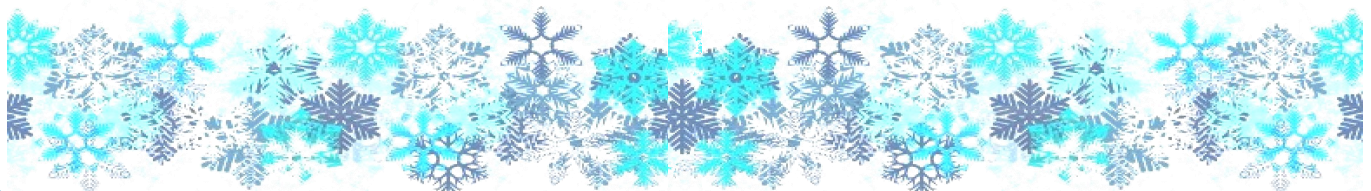


Pastor Barry describes Sherry as a "utility infielder." For all my fellow non-sports fans, I looked up the term. The definition is: a baseball player, usually one who does not have a regular starting role on the team and who is capable of playing more than one of the four defensive **infield** positions. In other words, Pastor is saying Sherry is a woman of many talents and is able to fill in where needed. In addition to her culinary and organizational skills, Sherry has shared her musical talents including, but not limited to, singing in choir, playing in the church bell choir, leading a youth bell choir, accompanying the youth in their musical presentations, and adding her voice to special music performances to enhance our worship services. As our own utility infielder, Sherry is always willing to pitch in where needed. Whenever the church asks for help for a fundraiser or special mission, Sherry can be counted on to be there and to be the first woman in to set up and the last out cleaning up. You, dear readers, can be thankful that I did not make up a title for each of Sherry's talents. The newsletter is not long enough.

Thank you, Sherry Monson, for being a blessing to us and a true servant to God.

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV



IS YOUR CUP LOOKING HALF EMPTY?

By Rae Wooldridge



Recently, Pastor Barry asked the congregation if we considered our cups half empty or half full. I am normally a cup half full type of person, but for the last couple of years, my cup has all too often felt like it has sprung a leak in which my joy, my faith, my sense of peace and my pride in my country is dripping slowly away.

I admit that I haven't always seen my cup as half full; there was a time I didn't know I had a cup. God was not part of my growing up or early marriage years. There were times when I felt life to be so heart wrenchingly painful, I fought back thoughts of suicide. If there was a cup, it wasn't half filled with anything worth drinking. It could have well been poisonous.

It wasn't until I married Dick and moved back to Minnetonka that life seemed more full of promise. I reconnected with my childhood friend, Bonnie, who was a devout Christian. She loved talking about Jesus - to anybody and everybody. She talked about God with such joy that she made me thirst to know him too. I started faithfully attending Bonnie's Bible studies. The more I learned, the more I felt God's presence. Not only was there a cup, but God was filling it with good things; peace, comfort, love, joy and, best of all, Faith.

I now realize God is always with us, both in times of joy and of sorrow; our tears, though painful, are temporary. God, if we open our hearts and minds, will give us a sign, a way to hear His voice to comfort and encourage us. A hymn may come unbidden to our minds, or we might read a daily devotional that speaks to our situation, or, perhaps a sermon will speak directly to us, or God might even send an old friend back into our lives. For me, God speaks through nature. I often take walks where I know I will be reminded of God's majesty, His power, His love.

The last few years have been rough. Sometimes, it feels that the cups of humanity are empty. I hear news of refugees, who are fleeing from wars, poverty and gang violence, only to be turned away from country after country to be left to suffer inconceivable hardships or death. Our children are being

mowed down in their schools, people of faith massacred in their places of worship, innocents being attacked because of their color, religion or place of origin. And, there have been so many in our own community who have suffered hardship and loss. For instance, one of our Congo members just lost her son. I can hear the sound of her heart shattering, feel the piercing shards. I wonder how her cup, or any of our cups, can be half full. I need my walks to feel God's reassurance; to renew my faith. I need to believe God is in control; that He is walking with us in times of our sorrow. I am reminded that God has a purpose and that the purpose is for our good. I doubt that I am alone in needing to be reminded that God is omnipotence, omnipresent and omniscient. We can be comforted knowing that He has promised that, while sorrow lasts the night, joy will come with the morning. God is, indeed, in control.

Last night, I went outside, as is my habit, looking and listening for God's calming voice. On this night, there were no fireworks of stars. There was no rain, snow or wind. The ice on the river was not groaning or complaining. The trees, a charcoal painting, were silhouetted black against grey. The night was unusually colorless and quiet. Yet, there was such beauty, comfort and strength in the stillness. God presence was unmistakable. I walked down the driveway to where four huge pines form a rough parallelogram beside my driveway. These stately trees have been watching over the flora and fauna for more years than any of us have been alive. I touched them to feel their solidness, strength and durability necessary for weathering nature's storms. The trees, to me, represent permanence and continuity; the assurance that life is, was and always will be; that God is, was and always will be. Once again, God showed me his love through the majesty of His creations. Once again, I look at my cup and see it is not half empty. Though, I don't consider it half full either. I look forward to the new year knowing my cup is continuously overflowing.

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE INCARNATION

Reprinted article by Micah Jackson

Associate Professor of Preaching and Director of Comprehensive Wellness Programs

In my work, I often encounter people who believe that they are special in only one way -- that their sufferings are so unique that no one else could possibly understand them. And I know what they are talking about. After all, I often feel the same way. But when I think of Christ and how he came to be like us, how he experienced hunger, and grief, and betrayal, and loneliness, and the fear of death, just as we all do, I know that I am not alone. And neither are those who tell me that they are.

By Christ's humanity, and his embrace of all our challenges, we need never fear that God does not understand our

experiences. Indeed, God forgives us from a place of empathy, from a place of

faithful friend who can enfold us in a hug and say "I know you did the best you could." By overcoming suffering in his own earthly life, Christ is able to help us in our own suffering. No one could ask for a more merciful and faithful act than to accompany another in suffering.

The Incarnation is absolutely one of the most puzzling acts that God takes in all of history. But when we consider how it makes possible Christ's most powerful actions as savior, we can see its necessity. Christ willingly accepts the challenges and sufferings of human life in order to release the rest of us from them forever.

MORNING PRAYER FOR OUR KIDS

As a man of sorrows and acquainted with
grief, help our kids turn to you,
Lord, in their sadness.
Isaiah 53:3



commonality. God's forgiveness comes to us less like that of a magnanimous judge, and more like that of a

DEAR LORD,
TEACH ME TO TRUST IN YOU SO THAT WHEN THE
UNEXPECTED STORMS OF LIFE COME,
I WILL EXPECT **PEACE** IN THE MIDST OF THOSE STORMS,
KNOWING THAT YOU ARE NEAR,
YOU HEAR MY CRIES,
AND YOU ARE **WITH ME AND FOR ME.**

Council Meeting: December 11, 2018

ATTENDANCE: Pastor Barry Schaefer, Sheldon Betzold: Moderator, Virginia Ormsby: Treasurer, Sandy Morris: Clerk, Chad Leonard: Financial Secretary, Charlotte Gillen: Youth Director, Duane Morris: Trustees, Abby Betzold: Congregational Giving, Shanon Hayes: Missions & Social Concerns, Julie Smith: Recording Secretary
Pastor Barry opened the meeting with prayer at 6:03 pm.

Duane reviewed the minutes from the November meeting and they were discussed and approved.

TREASURER: Virginia presented the Treasurer's Report. She confirmed that we are not bringing in enough income so once again we are using our reserves to pay our expenses. The Treasurer's report was voted on and approved.

CLERK: Sandy reported that there are no changes to report for the current membership role. Our current church enrollment of members is at 209.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Chad expressed his concern about the continuing process of using monies from savings funds to balance operating budgets. He stated that we are about \$30,000 below what we need to cover expenses. Discussions were held on e-giving (electronic/auto pay system) and how that is facilitated.

YOUTH: Char said that the month of December is a busy time for our Youth and includes many service projects. She presented her youth director's report and highlighted the youth activities for the month of November. Our FUEL event for November brought the youth door to door looking for food items for the Turkey Trot. All proceeds were donated to the Amery Food Pantry. The annual Light Up Parade to open the Christmas season was a fun event for the Youth. They participated with a float and handed out candy to the crowd along the route. Then it was exciting that our float took home the 2nd place Trophy!

TRUSTEE: Duane presented the Trustees report. He said that the water softener was previously not working, but seems to have been fixed. Two boilers were inspected by the state and we get certification of such inspection by early January.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: Char reported that they committee has not met this past month, but she did remind everyone that the Children's Christmas Program will be held Sunday December 16th.

DIACONATE: Sherry was unable to attend this Council Meeting, but gave a written report to Council detailing the work that has been done to update our membership roles. An extensive effort was made to contact inactive members and clarify their current status as a member. Discussion was held about still trying to reach other members on the list. Sheldon stated that a few people will be contacted and the final count needs to be completed by the end of the year. We need to report our total membership to the Conference of the UCC.

BOARD OF CONGREGATIONAL GIVING: Abby confirmed that the distribution of the magnets reminding our members to help the church with their: "*Prayers, Presence & Participation*", was a hit and we received good feedback on them. Further ideas were discussed about e-giving and the weekly offering.

MISSION AND SOCIAL CONCERNS: Shanon reported that a special collection will be taken for "Veterans of the Cross."

PASTOR REPORT: Pastor Barry presented his report for November. He emphasized that the Thanksgiving Eve service was wonderful and a terrific joining together of congregations. He also is very pleased with Lefse sales... they have been "through the roof"!

CALENDAR REVIEW: The January calendar was reviewed and discussed. A few revisions and corrections were made on the calendar and then approved.

NEW BUSINESS: Vonnice Niccum was voted to serve a 3-year term on the Deacon's Board.

Chad Leonard presented a flyer that will be sent to members to present our church's financial needs and detailing just how urgent those needs are. Discussions were held and a few revisions were suggested. Chad said he hopes to get the letter out soon to all members, definitely before the end of the year.

Duane presented a copy of the "*Amery Visitor's Guide*" and said they plan to format it a little differently next year. We can put an "ad" about our church in it which includes a brief description and location of the church on the map. The cost is \$50. This was voted on by the Council and approved.

The Next Council Meeting was scheduled for January 8 at 6 PM.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Julie E. Smith, Recording Secretary

Pastor's Report for NOVEMBER, 2018

I AREAS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

1. This year's Thanksgiving Eve Service was a moment in history. Without belaboring you all with the details, having an open communion call issued from St. Joseph's parish was truly blessed and remarkable. Our thanks to Father Gene Murphy and the entire St. Joseph's congregation for hosting the event. We truly worshiped in Christian unity this night. The attendance was one of the largest I've seen in recent years. If you were not in attendance, you truly missed a momentous event.
2. Money Management class, in its current form, has become the Wednesday morning class, with students attending because they work 2nd shift work locally. The Wednesday night class has lessened in numbers. This too will change.
3. A Ruby's Pantry update. We had sellouts for both of the October and November food distributions. We increased the on-line pre-sale to 95 shares, and they too sold out. For the walk up guests, Ruby's Pantry sends the next month's guest shares based on the previous month's shares, and those (204) shares sold out. (We're not sure if this is a new pattern but we'll just monitor it further and will report back to you.
4. Lefse sales have gone through the roof. I believe we have out-paced previous years sales. November 9th. Craft sale/lefse bake sale at St. Joseph's church. We sold out of our stock, we went back and raided the church's reserves, sold those out, and sold out all that we could make that day. The result was that we had to have an "emergency lefse" session on a Monday night so that we could make lefse for the Friday Bake sale at Bremer Bank (11/16/18) and there too we had a large sale of the lefse (as well as other baked goods). All in all our Mission Team has been working hard, doing a great job and are to be commended for their efforts. Great Job MT2019!

II Other Ministry Events

1. **FUNERAL:** Michelle "Micky Jo" McCarty 11/10/18 non member, at Williamsons

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing. He does not shovel in winter and his driveway is full of SNOW! **Pr 20:4**

