



# Congregational Clarion

AMERY CONGREGATIONAL UCC



## CHRISTMAS PLANS, HOPES, AND PRAYERS

This year is almost over. Can I hear you say, Amen?! 2020 has been fraught with so many difficulties, they are hard to separate. And, rather than repeat them here, I 'd like to share some of our plans, hopes and prayers for 2021 and beyond.

But first, CHRISTMAS!! Let's always remember that we are a people of promise. God has promised to always be by our side as we make our choices in life... as individuals, families, churches, communities, nations, and as a world. So, as we begin Advent with hope, we will also promise to be awake and aware of God's presence in our world. Christ will be re-born in our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls.

NOW, for the PLANS... In addition to our worship, pastoral care, and outreach into our community we have some activities that will help us during my interim time with you:

### ZOOM COFFEE TIME

On Sunday, December 13, I'll be starting a Zoom Coffee Time for congregation members. It'll begin at 11:30 and go no longer than one hour. We'll check-in with one another to catch up and share stories of our lives. I'll be lightly moderating to keep the conversation going... so, brew a good cup of coffee or "cuppa" tea and get ready to spread the love!

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT FOCUS GROUPS IN JANUARY

Beginning Wednesday, January 6, I'll be leading 4 focus groups to help us discern who we are as a church today and what our hopes and dreams are for our future church. This process will be crucial in helping us create a church profile that truly reflects the values, hopes, and dreams of our congregation. We're still working on setting precise time... but, it will be early evening and again, on Zoom.

PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE IS ALREADY MEETING

The Pulpit Committee has formed the core of our pastoral search and is beginning to plan the timetable for finding our next settled pastor. It is the hope of the committee that they'll be able to have our first draft of the church's profile in May 2021; Give the congregation time to offer suggestions; Create a finalized church profile by late Summer; and begin reading potential minister profiles by the Fall, 2021. So, your input in our church focus groups will be very important in helping us hit the ground running.

### HOPES

- That you and your family will stay safe this Winter
- That our nation will calm down and focus on helping those in need.
- That our small businesses in Amery will survive this pandemic.
- That everyone that has lost a job, will quickly re-gain a bigger and better job in our nation's economic recovery.

### PRAYER

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

May God be with you this Advent-Christmas Season!!!

**Yours, Rev. Garth Schumacher**

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12/01 Stacy Wagner	12/11 Joshua O'Rourke	12/25 Kipp Harris
12/02 Bob Whitley	12/15 Matthew Johnson	12/26 Gwen Wiegrefe
12/02 Kennedy Miller	12/17 Emily Russo	
12/02 Larry Stelter	12/18 Zachary Frinack	
12/02 Beth Jackson	12/19 Charlotte Gillen	
12/02 Janet Brown	12/21 Ethan Wagner	
12/04 Zachary Silvis	12/21 Riley Pitchford	
12/06 Wendy Heiken	12/23 Elijah Newton	
12/06 Bob Holms	12/24 Alycia Anderson	
12/11 Katrina Sorenson	12/24 Declan Benner	



### Holly

The prickly leaves represent the crown of thorns that Jesus wore when he was crucified. The berries are the drops of blood that were shed by Jesus because of the thorns.

### Ivy

Ivy has to cling to something to support itself as it grows. This reminds us that we need to cling to God for support in our lives.

### Laurel

Laurel has been worn as a wreath on the head to symbolize success and victory for thousands of years. It symbolizes the victory of God over the Devil.

### Fir & Yew Trees

Fir and Yew trees are evergreen and so signify everlasting life with God.

## MEMBERS AND FRIENDS



### Golden Age Manor

220 Scholl Street  
Amery, WI 54001  
(715) 268-7107  
Dave Waterman

### Evergreen Village

611 Harriman Avenue  
(715) 268-6640  
Marian Peterson  
Gussie Fennern

### Christian Community

Home  
2650 65th Ave  
Osceola, WI 54020  
Evelyn Halverson Rm. 217

### Memory Care

215 Birch St. W  
Amery, WI 54001  
Jeanne Murphy  
Sylvia Utter  
Bob Holms

### Baldwin Care Center

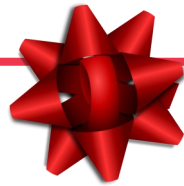
650 Birch St.  
Baldwin, WI 54002  
Mary Monson Apt. 27

### Riverbend

475 Golfview Lane  
715.268.9949  
Beth Sorensen  
Shirley Johnson

from your

# YOUTH MINISTER



## Youth Activities

Due to COVID-19, youth group will be meeting virtually each Wednesday at 6pm through Google classroom. Please contact Charlotte Gillen for the password.

**December 20th** will be the virtual Congo Christmas program called Mary, you're on mute!

## christmas memories from the congo youth

**Gabby Moody:** My favorite Christmas memory is when we used to go to Edgewater in Duluth and spend a couple nights there. We also did a craft night that they had there. It was really fun. Then we always went to Bentleyville to see all the pretty lights.

**Maren Dodge:** My favorite Christmas tradition is when my family and I all go to LaCrosse to see my Aunt and stay at a hotel where my cousins and I get to have our own room and be kids. I really enjoy gathering around the Christmas tree as well.

**Maxx Harris:** Each year we used to go to my grandpa and grandma's house and my aunt and uncles.

**Gavin Harris:** My family usually role dice and see who ever gets both of the same dice and who ever does gets to grab a Christmas gift from in the circle. Once I got some really cool gifts.

**Bella Moody:** We would always go to Bentleyville and get to see all the lights with my family. And after we would stay at Edgewater for a couple nights.

**Kaitlyn Peterson:** I like doing holiday baking with my family and friends. I also like looking at Christmas lights with my family.

**Morgan Leonard:** My favorite tradition is that every year my aunt gets my cousin, brother and me Christmas pajamas.

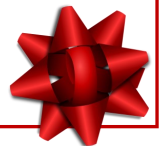
Christmas time is just around the corner! Anyone who knows me knows the love I have for this special holiday season. One of my favorite holiday traditions is watching the classic Peanuts story A Charlie Brown Christmas. Let us be reminded of what Christmas is all about just as Linus shared with Charlie Brown in this fun holiday film.

**Luke 2:1-20**

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

And that's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.

Merry Christmas from Charlotte Gillen



## Youth Director Contact Information:

**Charlotte Gillen**

715.268.7390; ext. 12

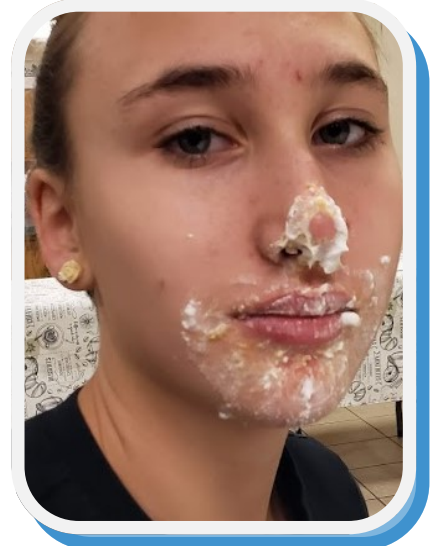
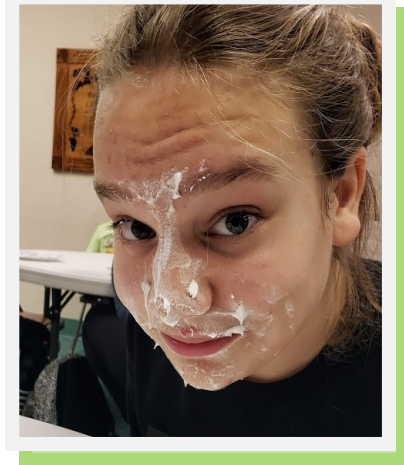
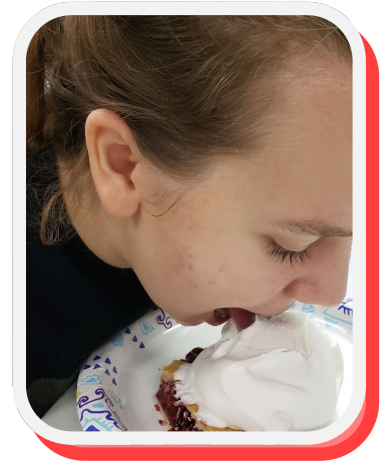
715.338.6929 (cell)

Youth.ameryucc@gmail.com





# YOUTH GROUP PIE EATING CONTEST





**I got that sunshine in my pocket  
Got that good soul in my feet.....Feeling good, good, creeping  
up on you  
So just dance, dance, dance  
Come on"**

### **"Can't Stop the Feeling" by Justin Timberlake**

I just had to lead this with one of my favorite feel good songs. We could all use a little bit of feeling good about right now. Everybody knows what we are grappling with in American life right now...I

don't need to list the variety of things that 2020 has brought upon us. So many things have come to crush our spirits and make it hard some days to put one foot in front of the other. So when something comes along that can lift our spirits....I feel it is worthy of note. Something that can bring a word of encouragement, lifts you up, and then leaves you with a little sunshine in your pocket.

I felt compelled to write this blog because of an inspirational sermon by our Pastor today. Pastor Garth has a way of inspiring others and also encouraging us to think about things that perhaps we might not have thought about. Today was a perfect example of sometimes we have to be prodded to think about things that might otherwise be considered inconsequential.

Our Pastor today talked about our God given talents and how we can use them to not only improve our own lives, but the lives of the people we touch. Most people find it hard to identify their own talents. One has to look long and hard within and be honest with yourself in finding those talents. Garth explained that proclaiming your talents is not bragging, but rather it is holding yourself accountable for using the gifts that God has given you. An important verse highlighting this is from 1 Peter 4:10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

So today's sermon inspired me to look hard at my talents and see what I could do to help utilize them. As it has been said, the hardest thing of all is determining first what your talent is before you put it to work. So here I am at the keyboard, working away at what I perceive is one of my talents. I have yet to write the next "Great American novel", but I think sometimes I manage to put some thought provoking words on paper.

So when I was younger, I remember several relatives telling me Julie had the "gift of gab". Somehow that gift has transformed into a gift for storytelling and writing (with the modern day version of 2 blogs). I still find it hard to think of myself as a "talented" writer, but if I can use that gift or talent to inspire or encourage others than without a doubt...I will.

Another gift I have, I often try to interweave in my writing: Optimism. I have frequently been told that I have a gift, or talent, of looking at the bright side and looking for the proverbial silver lining. I think it is a good thing to be more positive, but one also needs to be practical and have a pragmatic approach sometimes. Looking through the world always through rose colored glasses can blind you to the dangers that inevitability exist in our world. Yet, looking for the positive can help to diminish those things in the world that can pull us down. I am not a Polly Anna, but a Realist. I try to use both my gifts of optimism and writing in a way as to hopefully help those that I can. And I believe the glass is always half full. Cheers!

By: Julie Etta Smith





## POINSETTA ORDERS DUE SUNDAY, December 6th

**W**hat is the meaning of poinsettias? Also known as the Christmas Star and Christmas Flower, it's said that poinsettias' association with Christmas comes from a Mexican legend. The story goes that a child, with no means for a grander gift, gathered humble weeds from the side of the road to place at the church altar on Christmas Eve. As the congregation witnessed a Christmas miracle, the weeds turned into brilliant red and green flowers.

Named after Joel Roberts Poinsett, first United States ambassador to Mexico and the amateur botanist who introduced the plant to the U.S. in 1825, the poinsettia is also known as Mexican Flame Leaf, Winter Rose, Noche Buena and, in Turkey, Atakurk's Flower, because it was the favorite flower of Atakurk, the founder of modern Turkey.

While considered by the ancient Aztecs to be symbols of purity, in today's language of flowers, red, white or pink poinsettias, the December birth flower, symbolize good cheer and success and are said to bring wishes of mirth and celebration.

Because of the holiday season, the mail delivery has been a bit sketchy. If you have not mailed back your Poinsettia form and wish to order a poinsettia tribute, it would be best to call me at 715-554-3196. I will take your information and place your order. You may mail a check to the church. Be sure to put "Poinsettia Order" on the memo line.



Thank you,  
Rae Wooldridge, Your Church Lady

## The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

*"For Such a Time as This" Esther 4:14*

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Over the past nine months, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergency financial needs of many who serve the church have increased dramatically.

In such a time as this, the need for the Christmas Fund is more urgent than ever. United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. If you would like to donate, please send a check to the church, 201 Harriman Ave. North, Amery and mark your donation for the "Christmas Fund." Thank you.

"CHRISTMAS IS MOST TRULY CHRISTMAS  
WHEN WE CELEBRATE IT BY GIVING THE LIGHT  
OF LOVE TO THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST."

*Ruth Carter Stapleton*



## Council Meeting: November 10, 2020

**ATTENDANCE:** Pastor Garth Schumacher, Sheldon Betzold: Moderator, Virginia Ormsby: Treasurer, Sandy Morris: Clerk, Richard Wooldridge: Financial Secretary, Charlotte Gillen: Youth Director and Christian Education, Barry Tulkki: Diaconate, Chad Leonard: Trustees, Abby Betzold: Congregational Giving, Shanon Hayes: Mission and Social Concerns, Rae Wooldridge: Congregational Giving, Julie Smith: Recording Secretary

Pastor Garth opened the meeting with prayer at 6:05 pm.

The Minutes from the previous Council Meeting were discussed and approved.

**TREASURER:** Virginia presented the Treasurer's report. She expressed a concern that October's income was \$4,600 less than expenses to date. Chad explained that some donations are made every 6 months and that may cause discrepancies. Sandy moved to hold the financial reports for further review until next month.

**CLERK:** Sandy presented the Clerk's report. She stated that two members transferred their membership to Baldwin. The current membership role is at 168.

**YOUTH:** Char reported that the Wednesday Youth group has been averaging anywhere from 8 to 18 kids. Generally, in terms of scheduling for the Youth, we follow the Amery Public Schools. Since the schools have seen a marked increase in the cases of COVID-19, the schools will be closing and reverting to distance learning as of Monday, Nov. 16. It was discussed and decided that this Wednesday the Youth group will meet and then will reconvene after the schools open up again.

**TRUSTEES:** Chad reported on recent work of the Trustees. He said that the plans for work on the kitchen (fixing the grease trap system) had previously been postponed, but they hope to start work on this Monday (Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>).

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:** Char reported on the Christian Education program. A Christmas program has been selected and several families have agreed to participate.

**DIACONATE:** Barry Tulkki reported that the Diaconate had a Zoom meeting and his committee has organized some phone trees to make calls to church members. The calls to members hopefully will help to keep people informed and feel connected with each other.

Plans for the Annual Budget & Elections meeting were discussed. The date of December 6 was selected for such meeting. Several notifications of the meeting will be given to the congregation.

Chad made a motion for the purchase of a second camera to use with video sermons and similar needs. He also requested that the discussion of the October budget be included at the December 6 budget meeting. Abby seconded the motion and it passed.

**CONGREGATIONAL GIVING:** Abby said that the Congregational Giving Committee just sent out a letter to members today. It highlighted some of the things our church is doing and also includes Pledge cards and also encourages members to give of their time and talents.

**MISSION AND SOCIAL CONCERNS:** Shanon said that the committee had not met recently and she had no news to report. Several suggestions and ideas were discussed on how to make it easier for their committee members to get together and some ideas of projects for the committee.

**PASTOR REPORT:** Pastor Garth said that since he has started with us he has made several pastoral calls. He has also had some success with the Zoom classes for the Confirmation class, however he would like to revise the Confirmation schedule so the classes would be smaller. Working with a smaller group would make it more personal and hopefully more meaningful to the Confirmands.

(Pastor report...continued) He also suggested that he would like to add a Zoom coffee fellowship at 11:15 on Sunday mornings. This would help bring a sense of connection for our members.

Pastor Garth also said that he eventually would like to open the discussions about having our church receive the designation "*Open & Affirming*". This is a designation given by the leadership of the UCC church. It is a program that provides ways of welcoming the LGBTQ community.

**NEW BUSINESS:** An extensive discussion was held about how the pandemic is affecting our worship services and the church as a whole. Many opinions and ideas were discussed of whether or not we should continue with services at the church or go to virtual only. Chad made a motion that starting on November 22, the services will be on-line only. This was voted on and approved.

**Sheldon said the next Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 8 at 6:00pm**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm.

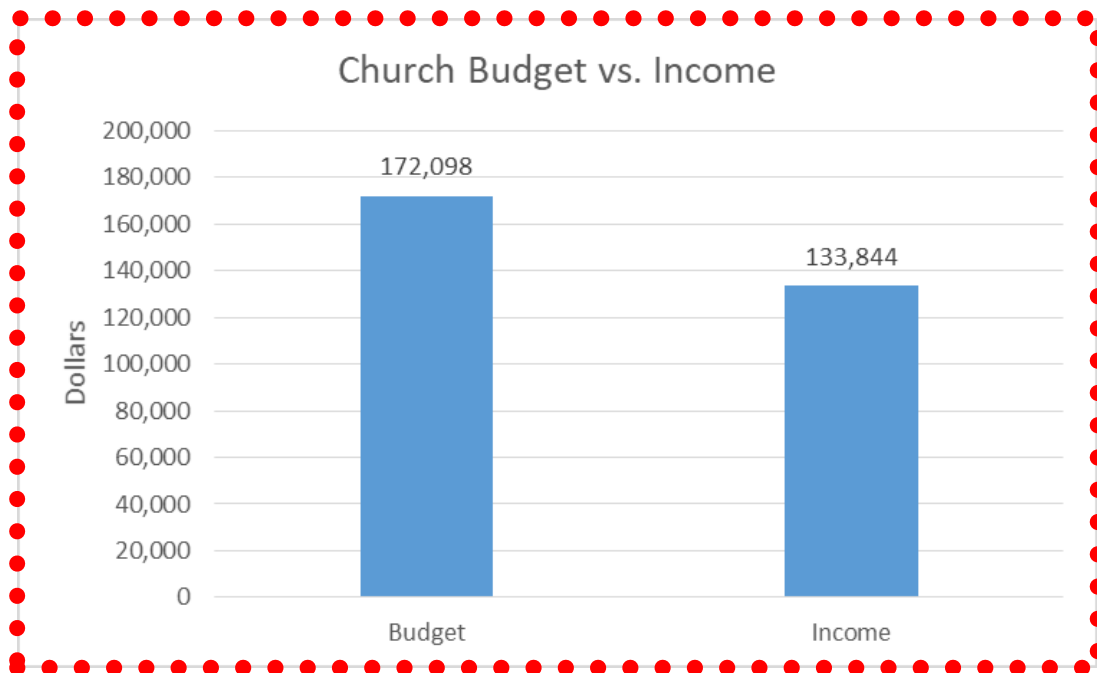
Respectfully submitted, Julie E. Smith, Recording Secretary



## An End of the Year Update

As we draw to the end of the year we want to keep our church family informed on how our budget looks, below you will see the large difference between our budget and our income. We have been so thankful for the many monetary gifts we have received this year, and we know every dollar matters. We hope that you will prayerfully consider helping us close this gap, weather you can give five dollars or five hundred. You can do so by automatic giving through your financial institution, eGiving (visit our church website), or simply mailing a check to the church. Most importantly we ask for continued prayers for our church through these ever-changing times.

All of our gratitude, The Congregational Giving Committee



*giving back  
to God*



*"for everything in heaven and earth is Yours."*

*-1 Ch 29:11*