

From Pastor Moira's Desk...

Y'all know by now that I'm a little strange. I have now acquired my beloved high-top shoes in all seven colors of the rainbow (plus all black for formal occasions) and I sometimes take knitting projects to the movie theatre. I carve magic wands and am fairly certain that my youngest kitten, Minerva, is an alien and not really a cat at all. I talk to the plants in my office (all of whom have names) and I'm genuinely sad that you can't tour the Tootsie Roll factory outside Chicago.

Among my other, maybe less strange traits is that I adore goofy religious gifts. I have a dancing Jesus and a solar powered bobble Jesus. I have stuffed nativity that sings "Away In A Manger" (though sadly, baby Jesus just sits there while his parents sway back and forth). I have a rubber ducky nativity (yes, the baby Jesus is a little tiny duck) which has a very confusing pig-duck who shouldn't have been at the manger at all, and just today at Menard's I acquired a Christmas tree ornament of the Holy Family who are all marshmallows! Now why, you wonder, would I tell you all this? Aren't I supposed to be a grown-up and mature pastor type person who takes our faith and following Jesus in this world seriously?

I tell you all this because there is a tremendous healing power in laughter. Scientists say that laughing is actually physically good for us, releasing all kinds of hormones that help heal our hearts, and minds. And laughter is good for our souls as well. When things are overwhelming, laughing can help us regain some perspective, can help us remember that even in the depths of our struggles and sorrows there is reason to be joyful. I share this now, as we enter into the seasons of Advent and Christmas, because this has been a long, difficult year for many people. There have been struggles, losses, pains, injuries, and a lot of insecurities in our lives, our communities, and around the world. There's a lot of fear-mongering, the media doing their best to have us focus on the bad, the divisions, the heart-break, the worst of what humanity can do to itself, and to the planet.

And we do need to see, and know about those things, to use our faith and hearts to address the great injustices in the world, to call out racism, sexism, classism, and all the other things that are used to hate, and discriminate against God's children and God's creation. BUT at the same time, I believe we are called to be a people of hope. This isn't some kind of blind optimism that just paints everything with pretty colors and ignores what's going on behind the curtain, but a deeply rooted hope in the power of God to work in the world, to work in our lives, to work with us to transform the pain and injustice of the world into God's vision, into the kingdom of heaven.

And what better time to think about that than the fabulously mysterious season of Advent? In a rush to get to Christmas we can often skip the preparation of Advent, digging deep into what's really happening in those stories about Mary and the angel, and Joseph and his dream, and their courage together to bring a baby into their hurting, broken, hopeful world. Advent is the story of God choosing to come into the world, to be born just the same way we are, to live our lives, to feel our pain first hand ~ to be hungry, and angry, and scared, and sad, and joyful, and hopeful. This is

God **choosing** to love and be loved the way we are, to walk the earth and feel it under his feet, to watch the birds in the skies, and the fish in the sea, to appreciate first hand the miracle of creation. The fancy church word for this is incarnation (use it to impress your friends) ~ God **choosing** to be human. In a broken world, God chose to come not in royalty and majesty, but to a pretty ordinarily extraordinary couple of folks who had nothing to give him but their hearts and lives. The great good news of this season is that God still chooses to come into our broken world, into the midst of our pain, and grief, and uncertainty about what the future holds. The promise of Emmanuel is that God is always with us, in the struggle and the celebration.

My prayer this Advent season is that we might get that idea from our heads to our hearts, that we might allow ourselves to feel the miracle of Emmanuel, the miracle of the tiny baby Jesus being completely human and completely divine, of God coming not with pageantry and glory, but in the womb of a courageous woman who agreed to participate in God's plan, led on the back of a donkey to a manger in a tiny town in the backwater of the empire, by a man of incredible faith in the promises of God he couldn't see, and couldn't even begin to imagine.

My other prayer is that we might allow ourselves to laugh this season. Laugh at the neighbor's display of inflatable lawn ornaments that look rather sad and melted when they aren't inflated. Laugh, with the laughter of children, at a marshmallow nativity, or with a little one wearing hot pink snow boots with her angel costume. Laugh at misheard carol lyrics, or the chipmunks version of the "12 Days of Christmas", or at the dogs having their pictures taken with Santa (cats generally don't go in for that kind of thing). Laugh when the Advent candles won't light, or when I forget which verses we're singing of a particular carol. Laugh when the snow comes, and get out there if you can and throw a few snow balls or make some snow angels or build a snow family. Laugh at how incredibly illogical it is that God should become human, should leave the glories of heaven to live in the mud and muck with us here down on earth, and laugh at just how fabulous and incredible it is that God did just that.

Peace and grace, Pastor Moira

The Big Dream Board

You've probably seen the large white board that's been installed across from the gathering room. It's for our dreams about how St. John's can serve the community—in Black Creek, in the slightly wider area including Seymour, the state, the country, and the world. When we moved to part time ministry one of the things the congregation wanted to do was become better at helping the world in the name of Jesus. This board is a place for us to write down our dreams, hopes, and ideas about how to do that. **No idea is too strange, and there are no limits.**

Write down your dreams (sign your name if you want), and read other people's dreams. We'll see where they overlap and how many people might have the same idea about our service to the world. Then we'll see what we can do, little steps or giant leaps, to be Jesus' followers, to share his love, and to support and strengthen our community.

Church Council "Preliminary" Meeting Minutes

November 12, 2019

The meeting was called to order by President, Bob Menning with Pat Schomisch, Todd St. John, Gary VanderLinden, Lisa Waterstradt, Connie Wheeler and Pastor Moira Finley present.



The meeting was opened with a prayer from Pastor Moira Finley.

A motion was made, by Lisa Waterstradt and seconded by Gary VanderLinden, to accept the minutes from last month. Motion passed.

A motion was made, by Connie Wheeler and seconded by Todd St. John, to accept the Financial Secretary's and Treasurer's reports. Motion passed.

Pastors Report

- * Conducted 5 Worship Services
- * Conducted 3 Funerals - (Vannes, Schadrie, Shepard)
- * Made 6 home/hospital/hospice/counseling visits
- * Pastor requested permission to have Richard Bruxvoort Colligan provide music (at all three churches) on Sunday February 23, 2020. The total cost is \$600 to be divided ½ to Black Creek and ½ to Tri-Jo; motion to approve, by Lisa Waterstradt and second by Todd St. John; passed unanimously. Lisa will write the check now for our half as a deposit.

Committee Reports

Membership: *Nothing at this time.*

Christian Ed: Met on November 10th, after worship, and discussed Christmas program and what props are needed. Fleece blankets that are being made will go to Children's Hospital. Christmas Program will be Sunday, December 15th, during worship service at 10:15 a.m.

Worship: They will meet in February 2020.

Music: They will meet in February 2020.

House: Marcks Trucking will take care of the snow plowing and removal of the parking lot and roadway, by the church, including salting when needed.

Stewardship: The Year of Giving for November is the Turkey Fundraiser for the Salvation Army meals.

The Year of Giving for December will be UCC's Christmas Fund and the Adopt-a-Family gift tree.

Campital Campaign/Mission Projects - For the month of October, we collected \$400.00. We

have collected \$4,295.00 YTD.

Old Business:

- * The steeple repair is still being looked into.
- * The quote for the carpet in the basement to be professional cleaned will be around \$500 for 2,337 sq feet. This quote is from Greiner/Brown Carpet Cleaning from Freedom. We will ask the Women's Guild at their January meeting if they are willing to pay for this.
- * The bubbler has been fixed by John Wheeler, some parts were replaced. The trick is to not push too hard on the lever so the water doesn't spray over the edge.

New Business:

- * Christmas tree decorating will take place on Saturday, November 30 at 9:00 am.
- * The Annual Meeting will be Sunday, January 26th after worship service.

Prayers and Thanks:

- * Prayers for Kim, who is having surgery on November 29, Lisa St. John, Kim Leech (Pat's niece), Judy (Bob's mother), Taylor Olsen (Seymour HS student)
- * Thank You to Pastor Moira for taking the time to visit with Bob's father.

A motion was made, by Todd St. John and seconded by Lisa Waterstradt, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.

Next Council Meeting will be Tuesday, December 10, 2019, at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Connie Wheeler, secretary

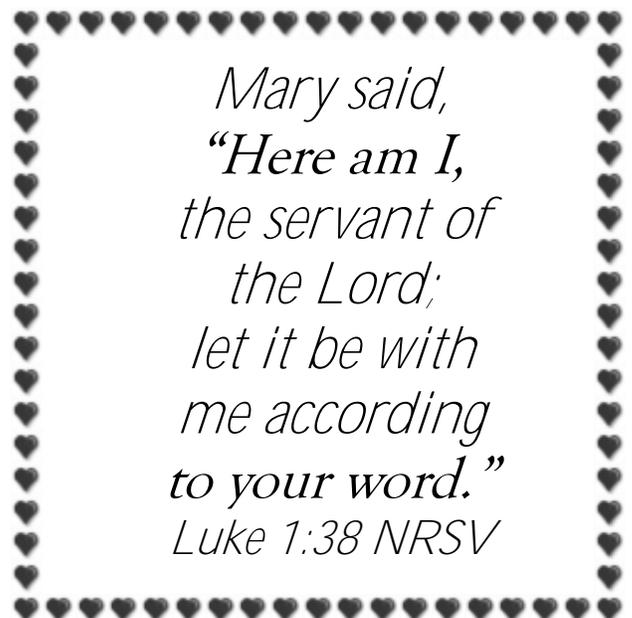
Blessings Of Hope

Bereavement Support Program

sponsored by Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home

Thursday December 21 at 6:30p.m.
New Life United Methodist Church
721 Pleasant Way, Seymour

*An evening of fellowship and prayer
to help families who have lost loved ones
understand how to cope
during this holiday season.*



Flowers for Christmas

We have a tradition of decorating with Christmas Flowers. Would you like to have one or more Christmas flowers placed in honor of a loved one or in memory of a loved one?

Communicate your preferences in one of the following methods:

- * Use a signup sheet in the east or west entrance of the church.
- * Write on a piece of paper: **your name, phone & whom the flowers are in memory/honor of and submit to office**
- * Email this information to the office, at StJcreek@gmail.com.
- * Call the church, at 920-984-3845.



Whichever communication method you use, **please list your best contact number in case we have a clarifying question to ask, as we prepare the list for the bulletins.**

Signup DEADLINE for inclusion in Christmas bulletins is Tuesday, December 17, 2019. You may take your plant(s) home after the Christmas Eve service. Have questions? Please speak with Connie Rohloff. Thank you!

Kailhofer Greenhouse Nursery and Flowers has poinsettias ranging in price and size. You may stop in the shop or call to place your order. Kailhofer Greenhouse Nursery and Flowers' telephone is (920) 833-2321. **Black Creek Garden and Gift** has poinsettias also. Black Creek Garden and Gifts' telephone is (920) 984-3494.



Annual Meeting Notice

St. John's UCC's annual meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, January 26, 2020**, following our worship service. Please plan to join us for the meeting and stay for our church-wide potluck lunch.

All the **reports** are **due** in the office, **Tuesday, January 7, 2020**. With Kim recovering from surgery, **please** help us by having your reports in on time. **Thank you** so much.

Turkey Fund Update & Thank You

Our goal was to raise \$1,500.00, for turkeys, and you donated \$1,724.00! The funds will be used through the local Salvation Army. Glory be to God and thanks go to you.



Directory Update Information Request

We are planning to publish an up-to-date church family directory in February 2020. Please inform the office of your correct contact information, including cell phones & email addresses (for office use, only). Households will be listed in one listing, so be all inclusive. Thank you.



St. John's United Church of Christ Financial Secretary's Report October 2019

	10/6/19	10/13/19	10/20/19	10/27/19		Direct Deposit	Total
Checking deposit	\$1,368.50	\$1,550.50	\$1,633.00	\$2,014.00		\$300.00	\$6,866.00
General Fund	\$1,288.50	\$1,269.50	\$963.00	\$1,882.00		\$100.00	\$5,503.00
Building Fund	\$35.00	\$31.00		\$112.00		\$100.00	\$278.00
Campital Campaign			\$300.00			\$100.00	\$400.00
OGHS*							0.00
NIN*	\$45.00	\$100.00	\$370.00	\$20.00			\$535.00
STC*							0.00
Christmas Fund							0.00
Fuel Fund							0.00
UCC Disaster Ministries		\$150.00					\$150.00
Total Member Contributions	\$1,368.50	\$1,550.50	\$1,633.00	\$2,014.00		\$300.00	
Other Income							
Total Other	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Total Checking Deposit	\$1,368.50	\$1,550.50	\$1,633.00	\$2,014.00		\$300.00	
*OGHS = One Great Hour of Sharing NIN = Neighbors In Need STC = Strengthen The Church							

St. John's United Church of Christ Treasurer's Report

October 2019

Building Fund	Deposits	\$278.00
	Interest	\$8.36
	Disbursements	\$0.00
Memorial Fund	Deposits	\$0.00
	Disbursements	\$0.00
Organ Fund	Deposits	\$0.00
	Disbursements	\$0.00
General Fund	Deposits	\$6,588.00
	Disbursements	(\$9,628.00)
<i>Campital Campaign</i>	Deposits	\$400.00
	Total YTD	\$4,295.00



Totals	Beginning Balance	\$217,514.16
	Deposits	\$6,866.00
	Interest	\$8.36
	Disbursements	(\$9,628.00)
	Ending Balance	\$214,760.52

General Fund	\$12,973.23
Building Fund	\$12,773.82
Memorial Fund	\$21,059.47*
Organ Fund	\$4,997.00
TOTAL	<u>\$162,957.00</u>
	\$214,760.52
YTD Membership Giving	\$79,556.70
YTD Expenses	(\$92,232.59)
Net Amount	(\$12,675.89)

*of which \$15060 is designated for building projects

Women's Guild

The Women's Guild met on Wednesday, November 6, 2019, at 1:30p.m. with eleven members present.



WOMENS GUILD

Our devotional leader was Jan Boman. She shared many funny and believable jokes of which she shared copies with all. Our favorite one was "do you get up in the morning, look into the mirror and say—that can't be right?" Well, wake up, think, and the day will look brighter. She shared a poem about Thanksgiving. So many things we are all thankful for were health, healing, being alive, the color of each season, family, children, home, cats, dogs, laughter, and so much more, so make each day count. We also shared a game of Mad Libs, of nouns and adjectives. With all our answers, it produced a great story.

The business meeting was called to order by president Roberta Lorenz. The secretary's and treasurer's reports were read and approved. There is a balance of \$10,830.86 in the general fund and \$483.88 in the memorial fund.

The Fall Feast was discussed with several changes and suggestions for next year. It was a great success with a great turn out. Thanks everyone.

It was stated that we are still collecting labels from box tops for points for schools. The collection box is at the west entrance.

We keep Kim and Ron in our prayers for the surgeries to get scheduled and good recovery.

The All Church Christmas Party is to be held on Thursday, December 5, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. with a potluck dinner and great entertainment by many. Check the church book. Everyone is invited.

The Children's program is set to be presented on Sunday, December 15, 2019, at 10:15 a.m. Please mark your calendar and attend.

The meeting closed by singing the *Doxology*, and we were served a delicious spice pumpkin cake with cream on top, by Esther Meyer as hostess.

Our next meeting will be the All Church Christmas Party with program on December 5, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. There will not be a meeting in January, but we will come to order on February 5, 2020, with Sally Dickinson as devotions and hostess. Thank you.

Guild Secretary, Audrey Hooyman-Blake.

Reader & Greeter Schedule

The scripture passages for worship are listed in this newsletter. If you would like to have your readings emailed to you, please let Pastor Moira know. Otherwise, your readings are printed and in the hanging file, between the church's and Pastor's offices. If you cannot greet, usher, or read on your assigned date, please arrange a substitute and let the office and Pastor Moira know as soon as possible. If you cannot find a substitute, please let Pastor Moira know. If you have questions about the schedule, please speak with Connie Wheeler.

December 2019 Schedule

Sunday, December 1 ~ Communion

Reader	Robin Schmidt
Greeter/Usher	Steve & Pat Schomisch
Greeter/Usher	Aron Rasmussen & Terry Rihm

Sunday, December 8

Reader	Lisa St. John
Greeter/Usher	Todd & Lisa St. John
Greeter/Usher	Tanner & Noah St. John

Sunday, December 15

Reader	Jim Rucci
Greeter/Usher	Verla & Caitlyn Pingel
Greeter/Usher	Dallas & Lisa Waterstradt

Sunday, December 22, 2019

Reader	Connie Wheeler
Greeter/Usher	Connie & Cailey Wheeler
Greeter/Usher	Mark & Kelcie Hooyman

Tuesday, December 24, 2019 @ 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve

Reader	Bob Menning
Greeter/Usher	Bob & Carla Menning
Greeter/Usher	John & Connie Wheeler

Merry Christmas!

Sunday, December 29, 2019

Reader	Marian Zuleger
Greeter/Usher	Barry & Duane Zuleger
Greeter/Usher	Gary & Bonnie VanderLinden

January 2020 Schedule

Sunday, January 5, 2020 ~ Communion

Reader	Vi Brown-Luebke
Greeter/Usher	Vi Brown-Luebke Darwin Ethington
Greeter/Usher	Mike & Sally Dickenson

Sunday, January 12, 2020

Reader	Bob Menning
Greeter/Usher	Bob & Carla Menning
Greeter/Usher	Gary & Carla Lathrop

Sunday, January 19, 2020

Reader	Sue Biese
Greeter/Usher	Joe & Sue Biese
Greeter/Usher	Wes & Angie Biese

Sunday, January 26, 2020 ~

Annual Meeting Day

Reader	Trudy Koon
Greeter/Usher	Trudy Koon Marian Goodwin
Greeter/Usher	Duane & Carol Henke

Scripture Readings

Sunday, December 1st ~ First Sunday of Advent (Hope) & Communion

Isaiah 2.1-5 & Romans 13.11-14

Sunday, December 8th ~ Second Sunday of Advent (Peace)

Isaiah 11.1-10 & Matthew 3.1-12



Sunday, December 15th ~ Third Sunday of Advent (Joy)

Children's Christmas Program Day

If you'd like some scriptures to read at home this week, consider:

Isaiah 35.1-10 & James 5.7-8

Sunday, December 22nd ~ Fourth Sunday of Advent (Love)

Psalms 80 & Romans 1.1-7

Tuesday, December 24th ~ Christmas Eve (worship at 7:00 p.m.)

Isaiah 9.2-7; Luke 1.26-56; Matthew 1.18-25

Luke 2.1-20; Matthew 2.1-12

Sunday, December 29th ~ Hymn Sing in Our PJs

Psalms 148 & John 1.1-18

Merry Christmas Friends!

From our hearts and homes to yours,
we sincerely wish you a blessed
Advent season filled with expectant
hope in Jesus Christ, a holy and joyful
Christmas season, and a healthy,
happy, and Holy Spirit-filled,
Jesus-centered 2020!

Staff and Leadership Team of St. John's

Then the angel said to
them, *"Do not be afraid, for
behold, I bring you good
tidings of great joy which
will be to all people. For there is born to
you this day, in the city of David, a
Savior, Who is Christ the Lord"*

Luke 2:10-22 (NKJV)



Newsletter Information

If you have submissions, reports, announcements, articles, expressions of gratitude... , for our January 2020 Newsletter, please have it to the office by the morning of Wednesday, December 11, 2019. In addition, if you have a meeting or other event going on, for church, it is seriously important that you have it on the wall calendar, in the hallway by the main office (*please use pencil; write time and event in chronological order*). Please feel free to write meetings and events as far ahead as you'd can; 2020 calendar is behind the 2019 calendar. It is important that we be all on the same page. If you have questions, please feel free to speak with Pastor Moira. Thank you!

A Note About Kim...

Our secretary needs to have back surgery. This is a result of the injury she had last December, which was made worse by the car accident she and Ron were involved in earlier this year. As this goes to press, she is scheduled for the end of November. We have a plan for the time Kim will need to be away, during and after surgery, so that she can fully recover. Sally Dickinson and Lisa Raaths will be working with Pastor Moira to make sure newsletters and bulletins get prepared, as well as our 2020 Annual Report. We ask your prayers for Kim, who is understandably anxious about it all, for Ron as he also needs to have knee surgery and possibly shoulder surgery for both, as soon as possible (a consequence of the accident as well). Pastor Moira asks your patience if there's a typo or two in things in these coming months. You can find Kim & Ron's mailing address, in an envelope on the prayer board, outside the west door of the sanctuary, if you'd like to send them a card. Your love and prayers are MUCH appreciated and needed.

Advent Candle Lighters

The season of preparation for Jesus' birth will soon be upon us. Pastor Moira is looking for people who would be willing to light the Advent Candles at the beginning of worship each week, beginning Sunday, December 1st. It could be you and your children, or parents, or cousin, or best friend, or your pew buddies, or just you by yourself. There is a signup sheet on a clipboard, on the newsletter table, in the front corner of the sanctuary. Go ahead, and sign up now ~ you'll get a reminder!

So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn”

(Luke 2:6-7 NKJV).



December Focus For Giving

Christmas Fund & Adopt A Family

The Christmas Fund is a special offering of the United Church of Christ helping those who serve the church. The fund, administered through the UCC's Pension Boards, supplements the annuities (pension) and health insurance premiums of lower income retired clergy and lay employees of UCC churches, as well as providing emergency grants for clergy, including medical expenses and disaster recovery. In addition, the Christmas Fund provides Christmas gifts to some retired clergy who might otherwise be forgotten during the holiday season.

The Adopt A Family program helps us locally provide for a family in need, who might not otherwise be able to celebrate. With gifts for the children, and other things the family needs, we help them celebrate the warmth and joy of presents under the tree, and full stockings, and the love of the Christmas season. Please consider making a generous gift in addition to your regular tithes and offerings. Thank you.

All Church Christmas Party Invitation



Come one; come all to our annual Christmas party! Mark your calendar, and come to St. John's U.C.C. family Christmas party, Thursday, December 5, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. We will enjoy a potluck supper, fine fellowship, and fabulous fun. *Offerings from this evening will go to Good Shepherd Nursing Home.* If you have any questions, please speak with Sue Biese or one of the ladies from the Women's Guild. We are looking forward to seeing you!

Gift Bags For Our Kids

As we move through November, we look forward to the children and youth bringing us the Christmas Story on Sunday, December 15th, during worship! As part of that service, we will have gift bags with candy, juice, and other treats for our children and youth.

Please look for a signup sheet, on the newsletter table in the sanctuary for items we hope you will donate towards these gift bags.

If you have questions, please speak with Connie Wheeler.



December 2019

How to reach Pastor Moira: phone 715-851-3080
email pastormoira73@gmail.com

Pastor's Office Hours
All are welcome at Black Creek
Tuesdays 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Wednesdays noon - 7:30 p.m.
Please call/text to make sure of times!

Sunday Schedule: 8:45 a.m. Trinity Worship
9:00 a.m. Christian Education & 10:15 a.m. Black Creek Worship
7:00 p.m. Cecil Worship

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Communion BC SCRIP	2	3	4 6:30p.m. BC Choir practice	5 6:30 p.m. BC All Church Christmas Party	6	7 9:30 a.m. BC Program practice
8 11:30 a.m. BC Confirmation (with mentors) C Consistory after worship	9	10 9 a.m. ALC Food Pantry board 6:30 p.m. BC Council meeting	11 9a.m. T New Hope Circle potluck 6:30p.m. BC Choir practice	12 9a.m. C Closet work day 5:30p.m. T Council meeting	13	14 9:30 a.m. BC Program practice
15 T & BC Christmas Programs <i>during worship</i>	16	17 Noon—3 p.m. C Closet distribution	18 5-7 p.m. ALC Food Pantry distribution 6:30 p.m. BC Choir practice	19	20	21 9-11 a.m. ALC Food Pantry distribution
22 11:30 a.m. BC Confirmation	23	24 Christmas Eve <i>Candles, carols & communion</i> 3 p.m. Cecil 5 p.m. Trinity 7 p.m. Black Creek	25 Merry Christmas  <i>Christ the Son is Born</i>	26	27	28
29 After Christmas Hymn Sing in our PJs 1:30 p.m. Good Shepherd Worship	30	31	January 1 <i>Happy New Year</i>	January 2	January 3	January 4
<p>“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14 NRSV).</p>						

Key to locations:
BC = St. John’s U.C.C. Black Creek
T = Trinity U.C.C. outside Nichols
C = St. John’s U.C.C. Cecil
ALC = Ascension Lutheran Church Navarino

“The purpose of this congregation is to be a faith community promoting the kingdom of God through worship, teaching, and action ... get ready!”

St. John's United Church of Christ
101 South Clark Street (PO Box 264)
Black Creek, Wisconsin 54106

Church Phone 920-984-3845
Office email stjcreek@gmail.com
Website www.stjuccbc.com

Pastor Moira Finley
Phone 715-851-3080
Email pastormoira73@gmail.com

Wisconsin Conference UCC
www.wiucc.org

United Church of Christ
www.ucc.org



December 2019 Newsletter

