

From Pastor Moira's Desk... It's Advent again, the time of waiting and preparing our hearts, minds, spirits, homes, and communities for the miracle, the wonder of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The sanctuaries are decorated and last week we lit the first of our candles, the one for hope, as we began our journey towards Bethlehem. I said, in worship, that sometimes I'm tempted to do new and exciting things for Advent, and then every year I remember that perhaps the point of this season is to not do new things, but to simply tell the old story, the one that has been told over and over again throughout the centuries, in every place where people gather in the name of Jesus. We hear about Elizabeth and Zechariah and their long waited for baby who would grow to be John the Baptist, preparing the world for the good news of God's love that Jesus would come to preach. We think about Mary, young and poor, visited by the angel Gabriel with the news that God was inviting her to participate in changing the world. And we think about Joseph, the faith he must have had to raise Jesus as his own child knowing who he truly was.

And this year, maybe more than ever, we need to listen to the old story. Our parish has been shaken by recent deaths ~ Noel Marcks, Ralph & Helen Sassman, and Doris & Wayne Schmidt ~ since the beginning of November. It's not just these deaths either because many of us are grieving while the world around us talks about being "merry and bright". Plus the world we're living in seems particularly challenging this year with war, violence, climate change, political bitterness, protests, rising prices, corporate greed, inflation, gun violence, job losses and uncertainty, and the accumulation of all the stress of the past several years of living with covid and our beginning to understand how it has changed us (in good and not so good ways). In the midst of that we have Advent, candles of hope, peace, joy, and love to remind us that these aren't just fleeting things that can be provided by getting the newest best present under the tree, but the deepest part of our faith, the surest promises of our God, who is with us in all that life brings, the highs and the lows and all the things in between. Advent is the reminder that God came into the world, to live like us, not as a fully grown person taking a position of power, but as a tiny baby in need of human love. God came not to a palace, but in the dirt and straw of the manger. God came to the shepherds, stinky from the fields, and the strangers, the foreigners who followed the promise of a star.

Even if the sanctuaries weren't all decorated, and even if the presents don't get wrapped (or there aren't as many as we'd hoped or any at all), and even if the dinner table has a missing chair or two, and even if we drop the turkey taking it out of the oven, and even if we or someone we love has to work and we don't get to celebrate on the 25th, and even if we don't feel like celebrating, and even if ... you get the idea, God still comes into our lives, breaks into our hearts and minds and spirits to remind us of a love so great we will probably never be able to understand it, a hope and peace and joy the world cannot give and cannot take away, a promise, born in a manger in Bethlehem, to know what it's like to be human, and to lead us that we might be a part of God's rebuilding and restoring of the world. For that, through tears and laughter, for the promise of Emmanuel, God truly with us, I will give thanks this particular year, and always.

In peace and grace, Pastor Moira

Readers & Greeters Schedule

If you are unable to make your date, please talk with Pastor Moira & Connie Wheeler.

On communion Sunday, greeters help serve communion.

Sunday December 4 ~ Communion

Reader Randy Miller
Greeters Mike & Sally Dickinson
Ryan & Stephanie Julius

Sunday December 11, 2022

Reader Jan Rohloff
Greeters Jan Rohloff
Trevor Rohloff

Sunday December 18, 2022

Christmas Program

Reader Connie Wheeler
Greeters Connie Wheeler
Hollie Wheeler

Saturday December 24, 2022

Christmas Eve with Communion, 7pm

Reader Bob Menning
Greeters Bob & Carla Menning
Connie Wheeler
Cailey Wheeler

Sunday January 1, 2023 ~ Communion

Reader Bob Menning
Greeters Bob & Carla Menning
Mike & Sally Dickenson

Sunday January 8, 2023

Reader Vi Brown-Luebke
Greeters Vi Brown-Luebke
Darwin Ethington

Would you consider joining our readers & greeters rotation?

Pastor Moira provides the readings in advance so you have lots of time to practice. There are usually two readings each week and Pastor Moira also provides some help with pronouncing all those special words & names in the scriptures.

Greeters welcome folks to church, make sure they know where bulletins & other information are located and help serve communion on the first Sunday of the month & special days.

Talk with Pastor Moira or Connie Wheeler to join us, or for more information.

The Council did not have a formal meeting in November.

Instead, we gathered with the leaders from Trinity & Cecil to enjoy dinner and a time of fellowship & community.

The reports for November will be printed in the January newsletter.

If you have questions, please talk with any member of the Council or Pastor Moira.

Parish Celebrations

*If your special day is incorrect,
please let Pastor Moira know.*

December Birthdays

1st	...	Julie Hien
		Brandy Krull
		Portia Fenske
5th	...	Brian Holz
7th	...	Sheila Neff
9th	...	Kennen Peotter
10th	...	Pastor Moira
12th	...	Lisa Raaths
14th	...	Ila Mae Jens
18th	...	Brandon Rohloff
19th	...	Mike Felton
		Justin Kruse
20th	...	Mark Schmidt
		Scott Sassman
		Hollie Wheeler
22nd	...	Samantha Shepard
23rd	...	Terry Rihm
		Keira Neff
24th	...	Mike Rohloff
25th	...	Mary Tesch

December Anniversaries

December 8th
Wes & Angie Biese

Congregational Annual Meeting **Sunday January 22, 2023** **after worship**

If you have a report to submit for the Annual Meeting book, please get them to Pastor Moira as soon as possible after the end of the year.

If at all possible (given how bank statements work), reports are due by **Sunday January 8th.**

Youth Group Turkey Fundraiser

THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who donated & bid on items for our silent auction and to everyone who made contributions to our Turkey Fund. Thanks to you we surpassed our goal and were able to help the local Salvation Army provide turkeys for Thanksgiving dinner to many families in our area!

UCC Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund 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 with emergencies including medical expenses and disaster recovery. Look for the envelopes at both doors to the sanctuary, or send a check with "Christmas Fund" in the memo.

Sabbatical Corner...

What's a sabbatical? It is an extended time for renewal and continuing education. It's a time for Pastor Moira to reconnect with herself, as a person of faith, to nourish her soul, to restore and renew the light of God within her. It is an extended sabbath, a gift of time from God, so that Pastor Moira can prevent burn-out (which is very common in ministry and other caring professions). This time will allow her to continue enjoying her ministry with us for many years to come.

So it's vacation? No. It's more like extended continuing education time where Pastor Moira works on her faith, and her ministry skills (and probably takes a few more naps).

How long is Pastor Moira's sabbatical? Pastor Moira's call with us says she gets three months every five years.

Um? What? She'll be gone for three months? No. Don't panic. Pastor Moira is going to take her sabbatical in two blocks, one for six weeks (June 25 – July 31, 2023) and one for four weeks (December 31, 2023 – January 24, 2024).

Has she done this before? **Yes, twice in the time she's been with Trinity & Cecil she's had a sabbatical** (during 2008-2009 & 2015-2016). Trinity & Cecil have been through this twice so Black Creek is going to lean on the wisdom and experience of our partners in ministry **about this since they've never had a pastor take a sabbatical before.**

What will she do while she's away? Plans are still evolving, but during the first part she'll be traveling to Indianapolis, IN for the United Church of Christ's General Synod, doing advocacy for Break The Silence Sunday. There will also be a lot of reading, particularly about the changing face of rural ministry. In the second part she's going to take a train trip to Massachusetts.

What will we do while she's away? The combined parish leadership is working on the answer to that question. We will have folks provide worship leadership during these weeks. We'll also work with area pastors to provide care for emergencies while members of the parish do regular calls and visits. Generally speaking, we also don't schedule weddings or baptisms during the sabbatical and we'll work with the area funeral homes to cover those kinds of emergencies.

In the coming months, much more information will be provided about what Pastor Moira will be doing during her sabbatical, the sabbatical worship schedule, and how we **will take care of pastoral care. You'll probably have lots of questions, so please don't** hesitate to reach out to Pastor Moira or a member of the Trinity Council, Cecil Consistory or Black Creek Council!

December 2022

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

Pastor's In The Office
Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays
Please call/text to make sure

Sunday Schedule: Trinity ~ 8:45am Worship
Black Creek ~ 9am Christian Ed for all ages & 10:15 am Worship
Cecil ~ 4pm (beginning September 11th)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Key to locations: BC = St. John's Black Creek T = Trinity C = St. John's Cecil ALC = Ascension Lutheran </div>				1 BC All Church Christmas Party	2	3
4 Communion SCRIP order day at all churches	5	6 9am ALC Pantry Board meeting	7 6:30pm BC Choir practice	8 5:30pm T Council	9	10
11 C Consistory after worship	12	13 6:340pm BC Council	14 4-6pm ALC Pantry distribution 6:30pm BC Choir practice	15 9am C Closet work day	16	17 9-11am ALC Pantry distribution
18 Christmas Program (all 3 churches) BC Flower dedication deadline	19	20 Noon-3pm C Closet	21 6:30pm BC Choir practice	22	23	24 Christmas Eve <i>Candles, carols & communion</i> 3pm Cecil 5pm Trinity 7pm Black Creek
25 <i>Merry Christmas</i> NO Worship at any parish churches	26	27	28	29	30	31 Have a safe & happy New Year's Eve Tomorrow... Communion & SCRIP

SCRIP CORNER

THANK YOU! You've been most generous as we started our SCRIP program, the easiest way you can support our church, buying gas, grocery, restaurant, and other gift cards and return a percentage of the full face value to the church.



Our order dates are:

December 4th (for pickup on December 11)

January 1st (for pickup on January 8th)

February 5th (for pickup on February 12th)

There is a SCRIP order station in the gathering room where you can find all kinds of information including the LONG list of participating retailers across the country and the percentage back that the church will receive for your purchases.

You'll also find order forms, and a basket where you can place your orders at any time (they'll be picked up & secured until the first Sunday of the month).

Questions? Talk with Brandi Schomisch or Pastor Moira

Women's Guild News

The Women's Guild gathered on Wednesday November 2nd to clean up the kitchen and fellowship hall. We laughed, we scrubbed, we talked, we sorted, and we had a lot of fun. We enjoyed a delicious chili lunch thanks to Sally Dickinson and Pastor Moira. And by the time you read this, we will have joined together for the All Church Christmas Party on December 1st with potluck dinner and program.

The Guild does not meet in January so our next regular meeting will be Tuesday February 1st. We are having a guest speaker, Joel Walters from Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home, who will help us think about how we can make plans and express our wishes as a gift for our loved ones. This will be open to the community & refreshments will be served. Stay tuned for more information.

After that we will gather on Wednesday March 1st at 1:30pm for a more traditional meeting.

Everyone is welcome to join us at all our gatherings & meetings.

Scripture Readings

Sunday December 4, 2022

Communion

Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 11.1-9

John 1.-1-18

Sermon ~ Joseph

Sunday December 11, 2022

Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 9.2-7

Luke 1.39-56

Sermon ~ Mary

Sunday December 18, 2022

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Christmas Program Sunday

Saturday December 24, 2022

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9.2-7

Luke 1.26-56

Matthew 1.18-25

Luke 2.1-20

Matthew 2.1-12

Sunday December 25, 2022

NO worship at any
of our parish churches

News From The Church Garden... The Garden of Eatin



The greenhouse was assembled and then ... then the winds came. The greenhouse got flipped over several times and has had a few bits of structural damage, but it can all be repaired. It is currently in what we believe is a more secure location (around the side where it's got church walls on two sides) and we'll be moving it into place and doing repairs in the spring. Our plan now is to put a small portable greenhouse in the classroom closest to Pastor Moira's office so that we can still start our seeds during the late winter and early spring.

And soon we'll be needing to gather in the fellowship hall to assemble the garden beds so that they can go into place in as soon as the snow is off the ground. Then we'll have a giant load of dirt delivered and start planning. We'll also find a fencing contractor to build for us and keep the critters out and hopefully by next summer we'll be giving away bushels of tomatoes & beans and enjoying some fresh strawberries!

Questions? Talk to Pastor Moira

December
2022

"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.stjucbc.com
Facebook: St. John's UCC Black Creek
YouTube: search for Moira Finley

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

Wisconsin Conference UCC
www.wiucc.org

United Church of Christ
www.ucc.org



Christmas Eve ~ Saturday December 24th

Join us for worship with candles, communion, scriptures & music as we welcome the newborn Jesus.

Cecil ~ 3pm, Trinity ~ 5pm & Black Creek ~ 7pm

A special edition of our print & video outreach will also be available, delivered, posted to Facebook, and emailed no later than the morning of Christmas Eve.

US Mass Shootings

618

January 1, 2022
to
December 1,
2022

*According to the
Gun Violence
Archive*