

From Pastor Moira's Desk...

It's cold today. Minus one when I got up for the feels like temperature. February weather that has come early to Wisconsin. The snow we got Sunday won't be going away, and more is on the radar for next weekend. Tomorrow I'll work with some folks to organize costumes for the Christmas program (kids & youth from Trinity & Black Creek are getting together to record on December 10th so everyone can see the play). The trees are coming out, along with ornaments, and candles, and so much more to beautify our sanctuaries. In the office next to mine at Black Creek, there's a steady hum of the copier printing bulletins for Christmas Eve. And most excitedly, for me, I've just eaten a clementine. It will take a little while before they're at their sweetest, but I will enjoy them even if they're still a little tart.

There's a tender and tentative peace holding in Palestine, but we're dealing world-wide with a rise in anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim sentiment, including recently the shooting of three young Palestinian men in Vermont. We're welcoming new babies, new friendships, new opportunities at the same time we're grieving the loss of those we love. The sun is shining, but no clouds means cold temperatures. I'm working on a Christmas Eve sermon while thinking about Lent & Easter (it's really early next year ~ Ash Wednesday is February 14th and Easter is March 31st).

Life is like that, a balance of holding many different things at the same time. In any given day (minute?) we can be filled with joy and struggle, hope and weariness, grief and excitement. The ups and downs can leave us feeling like we're riding a roller coaster, unsure if the next phone call (or doctor's visit, or knock on the door, or ... even next breath) will bring good news, or challenging things.

And yet, in the midst of it all we are working our way towards Bethlehem, to the miracle of God breaking into the world, coming not as a conquering hero leading an army, but as a tiny baby, in need of human love and care, to know our lives, to really understand what it means to be human, and to show us again the path of love, and hope, and courage that leads to the fullness of God's kingdom. In the ups and downs, in all the challenges of our lives, the promise of Emmanuel is with us, a God who truly knows what it's like to be us, to live in this world, to remind us that nothing (absolutely nothing) can ever separate us from God's incredible love.

I pray that we might find peace, hope, joy, and love in all that we experience in these days (ups, downs, and in-betweens), and in all our lives, trusting in the great good news, the improbable promise of a baby who came to reunite us with God, with one another, and with ourselves.

In peace and grace, Pastor Moira

Parish Celebrations

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

December Birthdays

1st ... Julie Hein
Brandy Burrows
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 ... Michael Felton
Justin Kruse
20th ... Mark Schmidt
Scott Sassman
Hollie Wheeler
22nd... Samantha Shepard
23rd ... Terry Rihm
Keira Neff
24th ... Mike Rohloff
25th ... Mary Tesch
30th ... Montgomery Bohn

December Anniversaries

December 8th
Wes & Angela Biese

January Birthdays

2nd ... Laurene Ferge
Tiffany Biese
3rd ... Vicki Helser
Steven Pingel
Rylen Wernet
4th ... Greg Volkman
7th ... Nikki Berndt
10th ... Karsyn Berndt
10th ... Ali Holz
11th ... Kelcie Hooyman
12th ... Duane Pingel
14th ... Aron Rasmussen
16th ... Helen Hanson
24th ... Arabella Marcks
28th ... Samantha Holz

Church Christmas Decorating Party November 21st

Thank you to everyone who came out to help decorate, frost cookies, eat, and enjoy each other's company. We had 25 folks and a great time was had by all. Plan on joining us next year!



Sabbatical Corner...

The second part of Pastor Moira's sabbatical begins this month. She will be away from Friday December 29th through Tuesday January 23rd. She'll be back in the office on Wednesday January 24th and back with us in worship on Sunday January 28th.

Worship Information

- ♥ Student Pastor Mark Schmitt will lead worship for these four Sundays at the usual times at Trinity (8:45am) & Black Creek (10:15am);
- ♥ There will be communion on Sunday January 7th with elements that Pastor Moira consecrates (blesses) before she goes as this is not something Student Pastor Mark can do just yet
- ♥ NO in person worship at Cecil
- ♥ Video ministry continues as usual (Pastor Moira will coordinate these before she goes)

Pastoral Care Information

- ♥ Student Pastor Mark will also provide pastoral care for the routine things that might come up while Pastor Moira is away; You can reach Student Pastor Mark at 262-366-4153 or you can talk with any of the members of our parish leadership (Cecil Executive Committee, Trinity Council & Black Creek Council)
- ♥ **What about funerals? We'll work with our funeral directors and families to decide** what the best thing to do is in terms of scheduling or waiting, just like we do if Pastor Moira is on more usual vacation time

Bulletins, Newsletters, The Mail & All That?

- ♥ Just like in June & July, the bulletins and PowerPoint will all be coordinated before Pastor Moira leaves.
- ♥ **This is a combined December & January newsletter so you'll have all the information** you need for the time Pastor Moira is gone and for the time when she comes back

What is Pastor doing during this time again?

Pastor Moira will continue to work on her writing about long-term parish ministry, and **how to find joy in work that is often intense and sometimes overwhelming.** She'll also take a trip to the Boston, Massachusetts area to see her friend Lella (who often comes to visit here). There will be some holy napping, and some home organization projects too.

Can I contact Pastor Moira during this time?

Yes, please send texts & emails with things you want her to know like joys, concerns & **general information, but you may not get a response as quickly as you're used to and if** you have an emergency, please contact the parish leadership or Student Pastor Mark

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 3, 2023 ~ Communion

Reader Nate Seefeldt
Greeters Mike & Sally Dickinson
Ryan & Stephanie Julius

Sunday December 10, 2023

Reader Jan Rohloff
Greeters Trevor & Sarah Rohloff

Sunday December 17, 2023

Program Sunday

Reader Connie Wheeler
Greeters Connie Wheeler
Hollie Wheeler

Sunday December 24 ~ Christmas Eve

Worship at 7pm with Communion

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

Sunday December 31 ~ Sabbatical

Reader Robin Schmidt
Greeters Lisa Raaths
Esther Meyer

Sunday January 7, 2024 ~ Sabbatical

Communion

Reader Jan Rohloff
Greeters Gary Vander Linden
Mark Hooyman
Jan Rohloff
Keith Kruse

Sunday January 14, 2024 ~ Sabbatical

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

Sunday January 21, 2024 ~ Sabbatical

Reader Sally Dickinson
Greeters Mike & Sally Dickinson

Sunday January 28, 2024

Congregational Meeting Sunday

Reader Audrey Blake
Greeters Gene & Audrey Blake

Sunday February 4, 2024 ~ Communion

Reader Connie Wheeler
Greeters Connie Wheeler
Cailey Wheeler
Trevor & Sarah Rohloff

Sunday February 11, 2024

Reader Nate Seefeldt
Greeters Steve & Lindsay Seefeldt

Sunday February 18, 2024

Reader Robin Schmidt
Greeters Robin Schmidt & Carol Schmidt

Sunday February 25, 2024

Reader Devin Schmidt
Greeters Brandon & Melissa Rohloff

St. John's United Church of Christ Black Creek Council

The Council did not meet in November, but gathered with the Council from Trinity & the Consistory from Cecil for the Three Church Leadership Dinner prepared by Pastor Moira. We had a delicious meal, and a wonderful time sharing in fellowship & community. Our next meeting will be Tuesday December 12th at 6:30pm.

In between this time, the Council was approached by Ralph's Hardwood Flooring about redoing the flooring in the fellowship hall (carpet & tile in front of the kitchen window). Several years ago, we had a quote for this project, but it was more than we could do. However, Ralph's is willing to extend to us a considerable discount, the entire project for just under \$5,000. The project will allow Ralph's to keep their workers busy during the winter season, and give us a new floor. The carpet & tile in the hall will be removed (not in the kitchen at all) and replaced with flooring that matches the hallway in the addition leading to the kitchen. Hopefully they will be able to start work around mid-December. If you have questions, please talk with members of the Council.

In addition, the Village of Black Creek is changing their garbage collection and the dumpster we have will no longer be serviced. Beginning in the new year we will have two garbage carts (95 gallons each) that we will put out for collection in just the same way residences do. We are still working on where the carts will be stored, and who will get them out for collection day. Again, if you have questions, please talk with the Council.

All Church Christmas Party Thursday December 7, 2023

Food, prayers, skits & more

POTLUCK begins at 6:30pm

Program to follow.

Questions?

Talk with any member
of the Women's Guild.

Garden of Eatin News

The garden is sleeping.
The benches are put away.
The beds are resting.
The bulbs are waiting in the
holy darkness.



And we are dreaming ...
of reorganizing the beds a bit;
of some perennials to attract more pollinators
& make the garden beautiful;
of a rock border along the east side;
of pole beans, bush beans, and cucumbers;
of fresh strawberries in the early spring;
of all the ways we can help feed God's people
in Black Creek & beyond.

Scripture Readings

Sunday December 3, 2023

First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 60.1-5, 17b-22

Luke 1.67-79

Sermon ~ The tender mercy of our God

Sunday December 10, 2023

Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40.1-5

Luke 1.46-55

Sermon ~ Turning the world
upside down

Sunday December 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

Christmas Program Sunday

Sunday December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve

A service of lessons (scriptures) & carols...

Isaiah 9.2-7

Luke 1.67-79

Luke 1.26-38

Luke 1.39-56

Matthew 1.18-25

Luke 2.1-20

Matthew 2.1-12

December 31st & January Scriptures

It's a surprise!

Student Pastor Mark is still working on
his liturgies for worship during the
second part of sabbatical!

Youth Group Turkey
Fundraiser ~ THANK YOU!

Thanks to everyone who helped
with donating & bidding on
auction items & with donations
in the Turkey Fund envelopes.

We surpassed
our goal and
collected \$1671
to help with
costs for this
year's area
Thanksgiving



Congregational Annual Meeting ***Sunday January 28, 2024*** ***after worship***

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

If at all possible (given how bank
statements work), reports are due
by **Sunday January 7th.**

Pastor Moira will prepare a template
and with the help of some wonderful
office elves (assistants), annual reports
will prayerfully be available by
Sunday January 14th.

Women's Guild News

The Guild met on Wednesday November 1st for a program by Jan Rohloff and a delicious dessert that she made as well. Our All-Church Christmas Party potluck is **Thursday December 7th at 6:30pm with all welcome!** In February we'll have another "Let's Talk About Death" gathering with representatives from Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home, and an area hospice program on Wednesday February 21st ... stay tuned for more information. Our next regular meeting will take place on Wednesday March 6th at 1:30pm with program and snacks provided by Roberta Lorenz.

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.

SCRIP CORNER

The holidays are just around the corner & SCRIP can help make your gift-giving easier!

Nephew in college who loves coffee?

Granddaughter working on their first hunting shack?

Have a friend who loves the movies?

Planning a get-away vacation & need gas money?

Family coming for Thanksgiving & need all the fixings?

Thinking about buying a boat, new carpet for your living room, or a new snowblower before the flakes start to fall?

Need a gift for the driver who delivers all your packages? Or your mail person?

Or your garbage collector? Or your hair dresser?

We can help you with ALL of these things.

SCRIP is the easiest way you can support our church ~ buy gift cards that you & your recipient get the full value of, and the church gets a percentage of the value (generally 2-10%).

We order on: Sunday December 3rd & Sunday January 7th

Look for the SCRIP station in the Gathering Room.

Questions? Talk with Brandi Schomisch or Pat Schomisch



December 2023

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 ~ Sunday School 9am & Worship 10:15am
Cecil ~ 4pm Worship

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 Advent One Confirmation class, 11:30am	4	5 9am ALC Pantry Board	6 6:30pm BC Choir	7 6:30pm BC All Church Christmas Party	8	9
10 Advent Two Christmas Program Recording 11:30am at BC	11	12 2pm T New Hope Circle 6:30pm BC Council	13 4-6pm ALC Pantry 6:30pm BC Choir	14 9am C Closet work day 5:30pm T Council	15	16 9-11am ALC Pantry
17 Advent Three Christmas Program Confirmation class, 11:30am	18	19 Noon—3pm C Closet	20 6:30pm BC Choir	21	22	23
24 NO morning worship Christmas Eve Candles, carols & communion 3pm Cecil 5pm Trinity 7pm Black Creek	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 Sabbatical NO Cecil Worship		<div data-bbox="516 1843 867 2032" data-label="Text"> <p>Key to locations: BC = St. John's Black Creek T = Trinity C = St. John's Cecil ALC = Ascension Lutheran</p> </div>		<div data-bbox="954 1661 1536 1766" data-label="Text"> <p>Pastor Moira's Sabbatical through January 24th</p> </div>		

January 2024

Sunday Schedule: Trinity ~ 8:45am Worship
 Black Creek ~ Sunday School 9am
 & Worship 10:15am
 Cecil ~ 4pm Worship

PASTOR IS ON SABBATICAL
 If you need pastoral assistance,
 please contact Student Pastor Mark
 Schmitt at 262-366-4153 or any
 member of the parish leadership

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Happy New Year	2	3 BC No Choir	4	5	6 Epiphany
Pastor Moira's Sabbatical through January 24th						
7 Communion SCRIP Sabbatical <i>No Cecil worship</i>	8	9 6:30pm BC Council	10 6:30pm BC Choir	11 5:30pm T Council	12	13
					Key to locations: BC = St. John's Black Creek T = Trinity C = St. John's Cecil ALC = Ascension Lutheran	
14 Sabbatical <i>No Cecil worship</i>	15 Rev Dr Martin Luther King, Jr Day	16	17 4-6pm ALC Pantry 6:30pm BC Choir	18 9am C Closet work day	19	20 9-11am ALC Pantry
21 Sabbatical <i>No Cecil worship</i>	22	23 Noon—3pm C Closet	24 Pastor Moira back in office 6:30pm BC Choir	25	26	27
28 BC Annual Meeting C Annual Meeting	29	30	31 6:30pm BC Choir	<i>February 1</i>	<i>February 2</i>	<i>February 3</i> <i>Tomorrow... T Annual Meeting</i> <i>Confirmation class</i>

December
2023 &
January 2024

"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
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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
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Wisconsin Conference UCC
www.wiucc.org

United Church of Christ
www.ucc.org



Christmas Eve Sunday 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

619

January 1, 2023
to
November 28,
2023

*According to the
Gun Violence
Archive*