

From Pastor Moira's Desk...

It feels like January has been about a hundred years long. It's often like that with the cold of winter and the let down after the holidays, but this year it seems even longer, like we're packing more and more into every day and a lot of folks (myself included) are wondering just how much we can absorb before it's time to pull the blankets up over our heads and stay in bed forever. 2025 got off to a rocky start with the horrible violence in New Orleans and there has been SO MUCH since then, both in our lives and in the life of the world.

You're not alone. If you're weary, angry, tired, confused, frustrated, grumpy, impatient, and thinking of throwing your television out the window, you're in good company. Just about everyone I know is feeling the strain of these days, and at least for me there is some comfort in the solidarity that the struggle isn't mine alone. In the ups, and downs, and in-betweens of life we are IN THIS TOGETHER. None of us can do this life on our own, and we shouldn't even try. We need each other. We were created to be dependent on God and on one another through all that life brings, the present moment included.

Think about what you can do to *take care of yourself* during the intensity of this season in our lives. As I've said often, please know it's ok if you turn off the news. You are not responsible for monitoring every situation every minute of the day. Think about easing into your day with cartoons or re-runs of something like "The Wild Wild West" instead of the morning commentary. Watch the news for the weather after dinner, but then switch over to reading a book, or calling a friend, or watching an old favorite movie. A constant diet of the news will eat away at your heart and your ability to see any goodness or hope in the world.

Remember what our faith calls us to do, in these days, and in all our days. The work of Jesus' disciples doesn't depend on who holds which office. While it might be easier or harder depending on administrations and their policies (at all levels of government), the work of caring for the vulnerable, creating community, and sharing love doesn't change. The greatest commandment lays out our life's work ~ love God, love our neighbor, and love ourselves. The story of the Good Samaritan makes it clear that everyone, absolutely everyone, is our neighbor for whom we are called to care as if they were our most beloved friends and family. Our job is to reach out to those in need ~ the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned, the lonely, the grieving, the foreigner, the stranger, the weary, the broken-hearted, the outcast ~ and to share with them the good news of God's love in word and deed, with the tangible resources of this life like food and shelter and clothing, and with the less tangible things like nurture, community, support, and a place to belong, where they can truly be all of who God created them to be without judgement or fear.

And we have to be about the work of *finding and being the good in the world*. We are people whose faith and lives are rooted in an utterly improbable story: a baby born in a barn to the least likely of people so God could come into the world; that baby who grew into a man who called not the rich and powerful but the humble and the hurting; and a man who spoke of love, grace, mercy, and hope even with his dying breath; a man who died, but whom death could not hold because life and love had the final word with a stone rolled away and an empty tomb. That is who we are, and at moments like this we need to dig deep into that story, the story of our faith, and help it give us the courage to live in this world, looking for good, for stories of hope and courage and sharing and compassion, and being those things for this world.

There are hundreds of thousands of ways we can all reach out and be the love and hope in the world today, that we can be the miracle someone might just be waiting for. We offer kindness, we celebrate goodness, we share our resources, we offer a listening ear, we interrupt the cycles of violence and bigotry, we take care of folks near and far, we laugh and cry together, we challenge oppression, we hold the door open for someone, we bake cookies, we pray with and for each other, we You get the idea ~ we live our lives, deeply rooted in the faith and love that Jesus showed us, trying our best to follow in his footsteps. We leave the judgement to God, and we open ourselves to love, and love, and more love. And we confess and share together our successes and our failures, and we try again, over and over again until the fullness of God's kingdom comes, not for some, but truly for ALL people everywhere, and for all creation.

PLEASE be in touch and let's talk in these days. Don't try to do any of this on your own. Know that this is why I'm here, to help us all as we navigate life in this world as people of deep faith, trusting in the goodness of God's incredible mercy and amazing grace. I'll put the kettle on, or meet you at the coffee shop or the supper club, and we can think it all through. I'll get out my pom-poms (you know I have a bucket full of them!) and cheer for you, and for all of us together. I'll lace up my sneakers and walk with you as we work TOGETHER in this life.

I pray that we might all live into these words from the hymn, "Praise To The Living God" (#8 in our hymnal), that our lives, in thought and word and deed, might be a testimony to Jesus, the Way, the source and hope of all our lives.

In these tumultuous days, so full of hope and strife,
may we bear witness to the Way, O Source and Goal of life.

In hope, peace, and grace, Pastor Moira

News from the Congregational Annual Meeting

We had a wonderful group (52 members + friends) gather after worship on Sunday January 26th to do the business of our life together. Reports were reviewed and the budget for 2025 was approved. Even though she didn't have her pom-poms with her, Pastor Moira reminded us that we are AMAZING and our three churches do an incredible job working together.

We re-elected Trevor Rohloff to serve another 3 year term on the Council and learned that the Council will continue to work on filling the second position, thanking Lizzie Tesch for agreeing to continue to serve until that work is complete. The Council will organize itself at its February 11th meeting.

We elected Barry Zuleger to another term on the Endowment Committee.

We talked about the changes coming to the Wisconsin Conference including the proposal that the associations be disbanded and the work of the associations integrated across the conference. This included conversation about a zoom meeting to learn about these changes on March 13th and delegates to the Conference annual meeting June 6-9 (if you're interested in attending, please talk with Pastor Moira ~ registration, lodging & meals paid for!)

We talked about ongoing projects in the church including the bell tower plastering, looking for a musician, and the work to get the bell tower clock working properly again (a HUGE thanks to Mark Hooyman for taking the lead on that work).

We learned about the Wisconsin Conference's Leadership Forward campaign which the Council is recommending a goal of \$3,000 for us to contribute over 3 years to help with continuing education of clergy & laity in the conference, congregational grants, and the ministerial assistance fund (look for more information in coming newsletters).

We talked about the Good Shepherd Services Pastoral Care Committee, a change from the old annual meetings we used to send delegates to. If anyone is interested in attending these meetings (6 per year on a Wednesday morning), please be in touch with Pastor.

There was conversation about the furnishings in the sanctuary, and gathering the stories of the things in our church (the dreamcatcher outside the gathering room, the story of our stained glass windows, and such).

Please be in touch with the Council or Pastor if you have questions and THANK YOU for your support & commitment to our church and our parish!

St. John's UCC Black Creek Council Meeting Minutes ~ January 15, 2025

- * Present were Sally Dickinson, Trevor Rohloff, Lizzie Tesch, Lisa Waterstradt, Connie Rohloff, Brian Holz, and Pastor Moira Finley
- * The meeting was called to order by Sally and Pastor Moira gave a prayer
- * Minutes of the December 2024 meeting were reviewed; motion to approve by Trevor, second by Lizzie, motion passed.
- * The December 2024 financial secretary & treasurer's reports were reviewed; motion to approve by Brian, second by Trevor, motion passed;
- * Pastor Moira reviewed her report including the Christmas program and Christmas Eve worship, plus her trip to New Mexico and thanks for all the prayers for her dad during his health concern;
- * Membership: nothing to report
- * Christian Education: confirmation continues with some schedule adjustments; next meeting February 27 at 6pm
- * Worship & Music: discussed the plan for the Wednesday Lenten series to be held upstairs using the sanctuary screens for watching "The Chosen"
- * Building & Grounds
 - * Clock: Mark Hooyman continues to investigate;
 - * Discussed tree replanting after last year's removals and the relandscaping of the west parking lot – an April/May project;
- * Cemetery: discussed mowing and other needs going forward;
- * Endowment: nothing to report
- * Stewardship
 - * Moira and Lizzie will organize online giving through Breeze;
 - * Motion to change our offering envelopes to Cokesbury by Brian, second by Lizzie, motion passed; Moira and Lizzie will coordinate;
 - * reviewed a changed calendar of monthly giving to include the Wisconsin Conference Leadership Forward campaign goal
- * Guild: Let's Talk About Death has been rescheduled to February 12th to accommodate the choir schedule; chili supper on Fat Tuesday (March 4th)
- * Garden Project: nothing to report
- * SCRIP: need to work on publicizing;
- * Parish Relations: nothing to report
- * Memorial Projects List: the Council is keeping a list of projects & dreams;
- * Continuing Business: deposits are being made to the Credit Union, conversation was had about when to close the BMO accounts (probably March)
- * Continuing Business: Council members; discussion about the position Lizzie is leaving and a plan about finding someone to serve;
- * New Business: Annual Meeting; Moira shared some additions and changes to the first printed report and we reviewed the plan for the meeting
- * Prayers and thanks were shared;
- * Motion to adjourn the meeting by Lizzie, second by Trevor, motion passed
- * The meeting ended with the Lord's prayer.
- * Next meeting: Tuesday February 11th at 6:30pm
- * Respectfully submitted, Pastor Moira Finley

Note: No financial reports are included in the newsletter as they were in the 2024 Annual Report

SCRIP CORNER

SCRIP is a wonderful way to help you with your regular expenses like gas, groceries, dining out & entertainment. Plus you get to support the church with a percentage of the value of the cards you purchase (generally 2-10%).

We order on the first Sunday of the month and when we have enough other orders to offset shipping costs!

Look for the SCRIP station in the Gathering Room.

Questions? Talk with Brandi Schomisch or Pat Schomisch

Garden of Eatin News

The garden is sleeping, but we are dreaming.

We've already got some seed packets (cucumbers, beans, carrots & radishes).

And now we're trying to be patient and wait for the bulbs we planted along the church building to start sprouting (but maybe not too soon), for plants to be in the garden centers, and for the soil to be warm enough to turn over and get ready for another amazing year of growing produce for people in need.



Mark Your Calendars

Fat Tuesday Chili Dinner

Tuesday March 4th

Join us for chili, grilled cheese sandwiches & dessert for a free-will offering. Want to help? Talk with Pastor Moira

Ash Wednesday Worship

Wednesday March 5th

Trinity at 5pm & Black Creek at 7pm
Worship with communion & ashes as we begin our Lenten journey

Wednesday Night Lenten Series

Wednesdays March 12th—April 9th

Upstairs in the sanctuary we will watch portions of the series "The Chosen" together and talk about what it means for us today (food in gathering room).

Let's Talk About Death

Making plans for the end of life is a gift you can give your loved ones.

Join us for a conversation about options & how to express your wishes.

**Wednesday February 12th
at 6:30pm**

with representatives from

ThedaCare Hospice

Light refreshments

will be served

**St. John's U.C.C. Black Creek
(101 S. Clark St.)**

**Upstairs in the sanctuary
Our facility is accessible**

Readers & Greeters Schedule

Sunday February 2 ~ Communion

Reader Bob Menning
Greeters Bob & Carla Menning
Trevor & Sarah Rohloff

Sunday February 9

Reader Randy Miller
Greeters Ryan & Stephanie Julius

Sunday February 16

Reader Jan Rohloff
Greeters Jan Rohloff & Carol Schmidt

Sunday February 23

Reader Isaac Schmidt
Greeters Steve & Pat Schomisch

Sunday March 2 ~ Communion

Reader Robin Schmidt
Greeters Mike & Connie Rohloff
Robin Schmidt
Kelly Stevens

Sunday March 9

Reader Nate Seefeldt
Greeters Steve & Lindsay Seefeldt

Sunday March 16

Reader Ethan Bohn
Greeters Gary & Bonnie Vander Linden

Sunday March 23

Reader Connie Wheeler
Greeters Connie Wheeler
Lisa Waterstradt

Parish Celebrations

If your special day is incorrect let Pastor Moira know.

February Birthdays

1st ... Leo Halvorson
2nd ... Aubrey Stevens
3rd ... Lindsay Seefeldt
6th ... Hadley Seefeldt
Maggie Seefeldt
11th ... Chrissy Zuleger
13th ... Bradley Holz
Ryan Schomisch, Jr.
Trevor Rohloff
14th ... Adam Holz
15th ... Steven Felton
17th ... Stephany Boettcher
25th ... Sue Biese
26th ... Nate Seefeldt
27th ... Keegan Hooyman
Raphi Jochman
Steve Seefeldt

February Anniversaries

7th ... Duane & Carol Henke

We Can Make It Through The Winter...

Major League Baseball Spring Training

February 12th

Daytona 500

February 16th



NFL Draft (in Green Bay)

April 24-26

US Mass Shootings in 2025

1/1 - 1/29: 21

According to the Gun Violence Archive

February 2025

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 ~ Christian Education 9am & Worship 10:15am
Cecil ~ 4pm Worship

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 GS = Good Shepherd Seymour </div>						1
2 <i>Communion</i> <i>SCRIP</i> <i>T Annual Meeting</i> <i>BC Youth</i> <i>Bowling</i> <i>C Soup Sale</i>	3	4	5 6:30pm BC Choir	6	7	8
9 BC Choir Sings NO C worship (Super Bowl)	10	11 10am ALC Pantry board 2pm T Circle 6:30pm BC Council	12 Let's Talk About Death ~ Hospice Care 6pm at Black Creek	13 5:30pm T Council	14	15
16 BC Kids Sing 11:30am BC Confirmation	17 President's Day	18	19 8:30am GS Pastoral Care 4-6pm ALC Pantry 6:30pm BC Choir	20 9am C Closet work day	21	22 9-11am ALC Pantry
23	24	25 Noon—3pm C Closet distribution	26 6:30pm BC Choir	27 6pm BC Christian Education	28	March 1 <i>Tomorrow...</i> <i>SCRIP</i> <i>Communion</i> <i>Confirmation</i>

February
2025

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

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Wisconsin Conference UCC

www.wiucc.org

United Church of Christ

www.ucc.org



Support CERT

CERT (Community
Emergency
Response Team) of
Outagamie County



supports all our
amazing volunteer fire & rescue
workers, providing them with
things like shelter in the winter and
cooling in the summer, plus food,
drink, showers and more as they
respond to emergencies throughout



our county. Look
for the special
envelopes.

Stock The Pantry Shelves

"When I was hungry, you fed me."
Matthew 25.35

January Focus: Cereal



**We go through LOTS of cereal
so help us fill up the shelves with
any kind of cereal.**

**Remember, it never needs to be name
brand & you can always send a
monetary contribution
as well with "food pantry"
in the memo.**