



December 2020 Herald

CHRISTMAS BELLS ARE ON THE TREE

It's up to you to take them off!

The North Cedar Christmas Bells are on the tree in the Main Entrance. Please consider helping make Christmas a little brighter for a child in our community. **Gifts need to be wrapped (no bows, please) and returned to the church no later than Dec. 11.** Each child has two bells on the tree -- one for necessities and one for fun. A \$25 limit is suggested per gift. Cash donations will also be accepted to purchase food for food baskets and can be dropped off or mailed to the church. Checks should be made out to "North Cedar Clergy." The church will be open Sunday, Nov. 29 from 10:30 am to Noon and then during regular office hours (Tuesday through Thursday from 8:30 am to Noon) if you would like to stop by and pick up a bell or two. If you would like to participate and would rather not come into the church, please contact the office and Linda will help select a bell. [Julie Hoffmeier](#) has again volunteered to be your personal bell shopper. Please contact her at (563) 941-5245 if you would like someone to do your bell shopping for you. Your support is needed this year as Zion has 38 bells to help 19 children in our area. May the Christmas Bells ring the "Good News" throughout the North Cedar community.



Preparing for Christ to Come

Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for Christ's coming —whether we're together online or in person:

Sun., Nov. 29 First Sunday of Advent - HOPE

9:30 am Online Worship only

Sun., Dec. 6 Second Sunday of Advent - PEACE

9:30 am – Online Worship w/Holy Communion
 - Blessing the Socks for Feast of St. Nicholas

Sun., Dec. 13 Third Sunday of Advent - JOY

9:30 am Worship*
 Budget meeting follows worship

Sun., Dec. 20 Fourth Sunday of Advent – LOVE

9:30 am Worship*

5 – 6 pm Outdoor Living Nativity

Thurs., Dec. 24 Nativity of Jesus Christ

6:30 pm Christmas Eve worship* for all ages

Sun., Dec. 27 Youth-led worship*

9:30 am Christmas Story in Word & Song

***At Dec. 9th meeting, Council will decide whether or not to continue online-only worship.**

LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL ON COVID-19 CLOSURES AND DECISIONS

November 19, 2020

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

As Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to impact many in our local community and around the world, the church council has been monitoring the increase in cases and hospitalizations in Iowa as well as reviewing guidance from Tri-Conference Ministry leaders, the Centers for Disease Control and other governmental advice and proclamations. **While it was a difficult decision, the church council has agreed to suspend all IN-PERSON worship services, Christian Education classes and organization/committee meetings through Dec. 10.** The Council will continue to be in conversation, and we will communicate further decisions regarding worship and activities for the remainder of December.

We acknowledge that we are approaching a very important and meaningful time in our church year when we celebrate Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas. The decision to suspend worship and activities was not made lightly and was made with utmost concern for the health and wellbeing of our congregation and community.

For the next three Sundays and on Thanksgiving Eve, we will continue to livestream our worship on Facebook. These services will also be available later in the day on our YouTube channel and later in the week on local cable access channels. Our worship leaders will safely be onsite for these livestream services to provide you a full worship experience from the comfort of your home. We are also encouraging our Christian Education department, organizations and committees to continue their important ministries by meeting during this time using virtual technologies such as Zoom or conference calls.

Pastor Susan and Secretary Linda Behrens will continue to maintain regular office hours. However, we ask that if you have business to do with the office that you do it over the phone or via e-mail. Pastoral care will not be interrupted, and Pastor Susan will do everything possible to meet your

pastoral needs. If you need pastoral care or just need someone to talk with, please contact Pastor Susan at the church during office hours, or on her cell phone at (715) 307-1054.

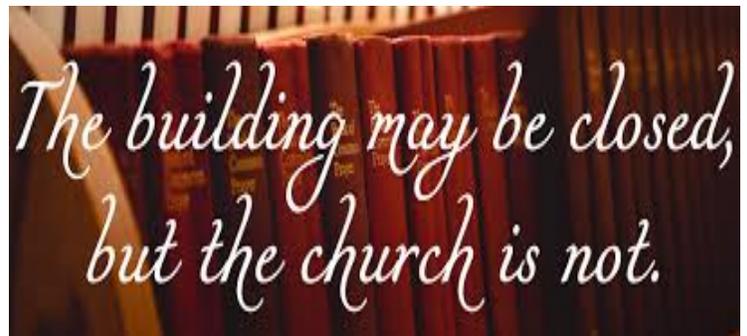
Our food pantry will continue to operate during this time, and we ask that you contact the church office to setup an appointment.

Thank you for continuing to support the church through your regular financial giving. Your generosity is so important for sustaining our ministry in Christ. You may make an online gift at www.zionucclowden.org, drop off your gift at the church, mail a personal check or schedule an online banking gift through your financial institution.

Of utmost concern during this time is the wellbeing of our members and friends. Please make a point to reach out by phone or e-mail to our fellow members and friends to check in and say hello. Thank you for keeping in touch with one another in these otherwise isolating times. If you feel you should stay home and need food or other essentials, please contact the church or Pastor Susan and we will do our best to get what you need.

This crisis can challenge our faith and our humanity. We are choosing to care for each other by making faithful decisions in Jesus Christ to stay apart. Please continue to lift up prayers of healing for our community as we face this challenge together. May God bring healing and hope to all the people of our world.

In Christ,
Pastor Susan Schneider-Adams
Aaron Horman, Council President





This Advent season feels just a peculiar as the rest of 2020 has. Although technology has allowed most of us to stay connected, it's just not the same as being with each other in person.

Christmas this year is not going to be “the way we’ve always done it before” at home or at church or anywhere else. And that is SO disappointing! So we can shrug or get angry and admit that Christmas this year will be less than ideal.

But maybe that’s the whole point.

Maybe this gives us the perfect opportunity to reconsider our standards for the “ideal Christmas.”

It helps to remember that Mary and Joseph had their world turned upside-down, too.

- They were newly engaged, and had been obediently following all the rules, when God comes in and announces Mary’s going to have a baby. Disgraced!
- Caesar announces a census, and they must travel 90 miles to Bethlehem on foot. 9 months pregnant. More than inconvenient. Dangerous.
- Mary is forced to travel far away from her mother and a midwife she knew, and with a man she barely knows. Isolated!
- By the time they get to Bethlehem, there is no place for them to stay, and Mary has to give birth in the cold, damp night air in a stable. Homeless!

The fact is, Christmas is NOT ruined this year. Because the birth of ANY baby will happen no matter if you’ve prepared perfectly, or if everything is a mess. And the birth of THIS baby, the birth of Jesus Christ, is the epitome of a mess! This season is all about God coming to us in-the flesh no matter what. This crazy year can end with us focusing on how awful it has been, and how everything is ruined. OR we can take the time to intentionally consider what it means for God to be with us in the midst of it all.

So, think for a minute or two: what does it really mean for you to have Christ in your life?

How is your life different because you believe in Jesus Christ?

How do others see Christ in you and through you as you move about your daily life?

Christmas is not just about a tiny vulnerable baby born in a stable. Christmas is also about living in a world that can be different because Christ is with us now, and Christ will come again.

What can this year’s Advent season look like – with all its limitations – when we focus on WHO we are as the church no matter WHERE we are? Yes absolutely, we need to stay connected as church – but we do not need the church building to do that. Yes, it will continue to take creativity and tenacity to figure out how to reach out to those who don’t have access to technology.

Let’s help each other remember that Christmas is more than one day on the calendar. How can our lives reveal God’s love and peace and hope and joy? How do our celebrations point toward the new life given to us in Christ’s life, death and resurrection?

Hey, if Mary & Joseph can change their plans and travel all the way to Bethlehem, then I guess we can work around a bit of inconvenience, too! We can go the extra mile, too, to help Christ be born in our lives! God is with us NO MATTER WHAT.

Life happens. Messes and Covid and derechos and wildfires and cancer happens. And the resurrection of Jesus Christ reminds us that God can take the worst possible event and bring New Life out of it.

We celebrate the Advent of Christ coming among us – as a vulnerable baby and as a vulnerable yet powerful Savior on the cross. That should ALWAYS knock the wind out of us just a bit, and cause us to re-examine and re-orient our lives.

God came to us for such a time as this. And because Christ draws us together through our baptism, we can lean on each other and help each other see in new ways, celebrate in new ways, and love in new ways. May you explore the advent of a new thing in your life! Let’s share the birth of God’s love with a hurting world - using words and actions and phone calls and cards and Zoom and Facebook!

Waiting and hoping with you

Pastor Susan

Living Nativity

December 20, 5 - 6 pm

As we prepare for the Christmas season, we reflect on the year we have had and look forward to a new year filled with joy and good cheer. I would like to announce this year's Christmas program will be a new experience for us. I am happy to invite you and our community to a Living Nativity!

On Sunday, December 20 from 5-6pm, please join us by walking by or driving through and visiting our LIVE nativity! Jesus was born among the animals in a manger. We plan to revisit this moment in time with live animals and a beautiful recreation of the birth of Jesus.

Our Sunday School youth will participate in this festive event for all of us! Please share this good news with your family, your friends, and your neighbors. It will be located on the west side of church. Bundle up and come share in the joy of the Christmas season!



Christmas 2020

*Poinsettias that grace our sanctuary
are given by:*

From ~

Carol Boedeker
Dennis & Cheryl Boedeker
Brenda Esbaum
Marlene Fox
Ann Harms

Randy & Sandra Horman
Mike & Pam Jensen
Mike & Pam Jensen
Mike & Pam Jensen
Mike & Pam Jensen

Jon Mansfield
Marcine Miller
Sue Monson
Jamie & Kelly Nabb
Tanya Stewart
Janice Strackbein

In Memory of ~

Don Boedeker & Stan Boedeker
Our Parents
Loved Ones
Roland Fox
Lewis Terlisner Jr. &
Grandparents
Our Parents
Our Son ~ Dustin
Parents ~ Dale & Reba Meyer
Parent ~ Jerold Jensen
Brother & Sister-in-law ~
Jeff & Mary Jensen
Donald & Ann Mansfield
Elon & Service Men & Women
Mel Monson
Our Grandparents
Those Forever in Our Hearts
Kent Strackbein

Collecting Socks for St. Nicholas!

As the weather gets colder, our efforts to keep warm and dry increases. We go to our dressers for a

clean pair of socks, slip them on and we're set. The sad news is so many of our sisters and brothers are not so fortunate.

For those experiencing homelessness, a new pair of socks can provide a measure of comfort, be a source of dignity, and can bring a smile to their faces.

December 6 is the Feast of St. Nicholas. Remembering his love for stockings (!), we will be collecting new socks November 25 – December 6. (White athletic crew socks are preferred.)

Donations can be placed in the basket that will be on display. The collected socks will be distributed to the needy to help make their winter a bit warmer, dryer and safer. Your generosity and assistance are deeply appreciated.



NEWS from the Church Council

This year we begin the Advent season like no other – separated. The Church Council has suspended all in-person worship services, Christian Education classes and organization / committee meetings through Dec. 10. We are choosing to care for each other amid the Coronavirus pandemic by making faithful decisions in Jesus Christ to stay apart. Despite this physical distance, we can still connect virtually and come together to prepare for the birth of Jesus. Please join us for our livestream worship and other online opportunities. The Council will continue to be in conversation, and we will communicate further decisions regarding worship and activities for the remainder of December.

The Church Council is working diligently to advance our ministry with the following financial initiatives in preparation for the new year:

BANK ACCOUNT CONSOLIDATION

The council approved a process to consolidate several church bank accounts to be effective Jan. 1, 2021. Currently the church has 24 checking and savings accounts for a variety of funds and organizations. The consolidation process will result in nine accounts in the following categories: General Ministry (General Fund and Benevolence), Long-Term Ministry (Endowment Hi-Fi), Community Outreach (Deacon's Fund), Designated Ministry, Missions' Ministry, Women's Ministry (Evening Circle) and separate accounts for each of our three youth ministries (Christian Education, Zion Youth Club and Senior High Fellowship).

The new Designated Ministry bank account will combine the largest number of current accounts, including Organ, Church Decorating, Improvement, Parsonage, Memorial, Food Pantry, Spring Dinner and others. **Each designated balance will be maintained and accounted for separately so gifts to the various funds will continue to be earmarked for their intended purposes.**

In approving the consolidation, the council identified the following purposes of the consolidation process:

- Emphasize that as a congregation we are *one* in the body of Christ and in ministry *together*.
- Reduce the number of bank accounts to manage.
- Simplify and reduce confusion surrounding memorial gifts.
- Provide better consistency and clarity in recordkeeping and reporting.
- Avoid changing treasurers on many accounts each year.
- Provide transparency and accountability to church leaders.

2021 BUDGET AND CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

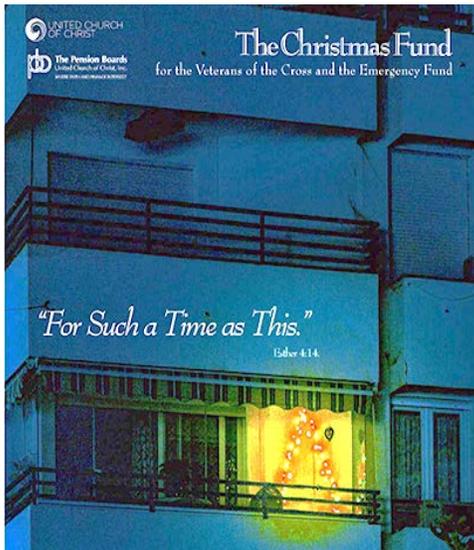
A Congregational Meeting will be held Sunday, Dec. 13 following worship, at approximately 10:45 am. The purpose of the meeting is to accept the 2021 general fund budget and approve new church council members and conference delegates.

The meeting will be held virtually (by Zoom and conference call). If the in-person suspension of activities is lifted by that time, the meeting will be offered in a hybrid mode to allow for both virtual and in-person attendance. More information will be communicated closer to the date.

If you would like to see a copy of the proposed budget in advance, please stop by the church office or e-mail zionucc@fbcom.net to request an electronic PDF copy.

Aaron Horman
Church Council President





United Church of Christ Christmas Fund

For over a hundred years, the Christmas Fund (formerly “Veterans of the Cross”) has been an expression of God’s love and light in the world. Funds are used to provide direct financial assistance to retired UCC clergy and lay employees. These funds may be used to supplement small pensions, reduce healthcare premiums, and provide Thank You gift checks for 503 retired clergy and lay workers. Emergency grants are also provided for active or retired UCC clergy and lay workers.

This special offering will be received in our church during the month of December. Envelopes are available at the back of the sanctuary. Prayerfully consider how you may support these special gifts.

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The Church Council met Nov. 18. Here are highlights of the meeting:

- The council reviewed the proposed 2021 church general fund.
- This will be shared with members soon and voted on at the Dec. 13 congregational meeting.
- The consolidation of several church bank accounts was approved to be effective Jan. 1.
- Pastor Susan's interim ministry contract was clarified to adopt a "Possible Candidacy Covenant." This identifies Pastor Susan as our Transitional Pastor and allows for possible consideration as our settled pastor.



After an in-depth discussion, the council agreed to suspend in-person worship and activities through Dec. 10 due to an increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations.

EVENING CIRCLE

Highlights from Evening Circle meeting
November 16, 2020



- Because of COVID 19 Circle will not have a Christmas party.
- There will be no meeting in January.
- Favors for the Clarence Nursing home were put together and the Thanksgiving Bell tree was assembled.
- It was decided to send cards to our members (and others) in the Clarence Nursing Home during the holiday season.
- Evening Circle will be taking orders for poinsettias until Nov. 22nd. Donations for other charities are also accepted.
- Officers were installed by Pastor Sue.



December 2020



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Church office hours: T-W-Th, 8:30-12 pm Pastor's office hours: T-W-Th, 10 – 2 pm </div>						
6 <u>Second Sunday of Advent</u> 9:30 am – Online Worship with Holy Communion – Blessing the “Socks for St. Nicholas”	7	8 3:30 - 4:30 pm HACAP FOOD Truck (Bennett Ambulance building)	9 6 pm - Council meeting – ZOOM	10	11	12
13 <u>Third Sunday of Advent</u> 9:30 am - Worship & Christian Education (Online only/in-person? TBA) 10:40 am Budget Meeting	14	15	16 9:00 am – Bells Food Boxes from Trinity Lutheran	17	18	19
20 <u>Fourth Sunday of Advent</u> 9:30 am - Worship/C.E. 10:40 am - Mission Committee meeting 5-6 pm – Outdoor Living Nativity	21 No Evening Circle meeting	22	23	24 6:30 pm Christmas Eve Worship	25 CHRIST IS BORN Merry Christmas!	26
27 9:30 am – Youth-Led Worship: <i>Christmas Story in Word & Song</i>	28 6:30 pm Music & Worship Ministry Team	29	30	31 New Year's Eve	January 1, 2021 Happy New Year!	

Mark Your Calendars!

Sun, Jan 3, 2021 9:30 am Celebration of Epiphany - Worship with Holy Communion

Sun, Jan 10, 9:30 am Worship/C.E. Classes –Baptism of Jesus

Tues, Jan 12, 3:30 -4:30 HACAP Truck (Bennett)

Wed, Jan 13 6:30 Building and Grounds meeting

Sun, Jan 17, 9:30 am Worship/C.E. Classes

Wed., Jan. 20, 6 pm – Council meeting

Sun, Jan 24 9:30 Worship/C.E. Classes

Mon, Jan 25 6:00 Music & Worship Ministry Team

Sun, Jan 24, 9:30 am – Youth-Led Worship/C.E. Classes
10:45 SHF meeting



December Wedding Anniversaries

December 9, 1967 Donavon & Linda Freese
 December 28, 1990 David & Tessa Holst

Liturgists (Lay Readers)

December 6 Terry Lasack
 December 13 Jody Yutesler
 December 20 Jamie Nabb
 December 24
 December 27 SHF

ACOLYTES

December 13 Tucker Coppess & David Nott
December 20 Owen Kahl & Cadence Horman
December 27 Youth (C.E.) & Church Council

December 1 Berniece Miner
December 2 Larry Havel
December 3 Sarah Ann Gottschalk
December 5 Jaynice Hamdorf,
Jane Drewelow, Linda Horman, Scott Fields
December 7 Scott Boedeker, Gary Klahn,
Riley Holst,
December 9 Megan Neill
December 11 Landon Luepker
December 12 Barry Hoffmeier
December 15 Jill Jacobs, Elle Esbaum,
Todd Fadale,
December 17 Wilbert Muhs
December 20 Bonnie Kintzel, Angie Peet
Tim Kahl, Marx Dittmer
December 21, Beth Fox, Pavin Esbaum
December 26 Sadie Holst
December 27 Trevor Hamdorf
December 28 Alex Dittmer, Jessie Horman
December 30 Cindy Wiedenhoff

VIDEOGRAPHERS

December 6 Julie Hoffmeier
 December 13 David Niermeyer
 December 20 Cheryl Boedeker
 December 24 Jody Yutesler (Christmas Eve)
 December 27



THIS MONTH USHERS

Dec. 6, 2020 Church Council
 Dec. 13, 2020 Church Council
 Dec. 20, 2020 Mary Huffman, Millie & Wilbert Muhs
 Dec. 24, 2020 Church Council
 Dec. 27, 2020 SHF / Youth

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING DEC. 13

A Congregational Meeting will be held Sunday, Dec. 13 following worship at approximately 10:45 am. The purpose of the meeting is to accept the 2021 general fund budget and approve new church council members and conference delegates. If you would like to see a copy of the proposed budget in advance, please stop by the church office or [e-mail](#) Linda to request an electronic PDF copy. The meeting will be held virtually (by Zoom and conference call). If the in-person suspension of activities is lifted by that time, the meeting will be offered in a hybrid mode to allow for both virtual and in-person attendance. More information will be communicated closer to the date.

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
402 Main Street
P.O. Box 339
Lowden, IA 52255-0339
Interim Pastor, Rev. Susan Schneider-Adams



2020

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Information Corner

Zion United Church of Christ

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Office: 563-941-7726 | Fax: 563-941-7529 | Website: www.zionucclowden.org

Secretary: Linda Behrens

Zion office e-mail zionucc@fbcom.net

Zion office hours: Tues–Wed –Thurs, 8:30 -12:00 pm

Interim Pastor: Rev. Susan Schneider-Adams

Pastor's email: zionpastor@fbcom.net

Pastor's office hours: Tues-Wed-Thurs, 10:00 - 2:00 pm **or** by appointment

Church Council: President: Aaron Horman, Vice President: David Niermeyer, Treasurer: Sandy Esbaum, Secretary: Janice Strackbein, Randy Horman, Duane Lasack, Jon Mansfield

Custodian: Bonnie Kintzel. Custodian

UPDATE:

If you have an e-mail and are getting your Herald by mail, please let the office know your e-mail address so you can get on the church's e-mailing list. This way you get all the happenings that are going on in our church. Just call the church to inform us of your e-mail address.