

Worship Helpers for January

USHERS:

7: Dorothy Bos & Gloria Winters
 14: TBD
 21: TBD
 28: TBD



SOUND SYSTEM

Ken Bell

FELLOWSHIP TIME:

7: Don & Miriam Strohpaal
 14: Dewey & Gretchen
 21: Bring a Snack Sunday
 28: Nancy Carlson



CHOIR NOTES

There will be NO Wednesday Choir Practice in January.

If you would like to join the choir, see Barb Getz.

Worship Schedule

Jan. 7 Epiphany/The Baptism of Christ Sunday
 Communion
 Matthew 2:1-12 and Mark 1:4-11
 Defining Moments
Jan 14 - .Ask a Question Sunday
 Psalm 139:1-6; 13-18
Jan. 21 - Hymn Sing from Red Hymnal
 Mark 1:14-20
 Follow Me
Jan 28 - Hymn Sing from Black Hymnal
 Mark 1:21-28
 Power to Do

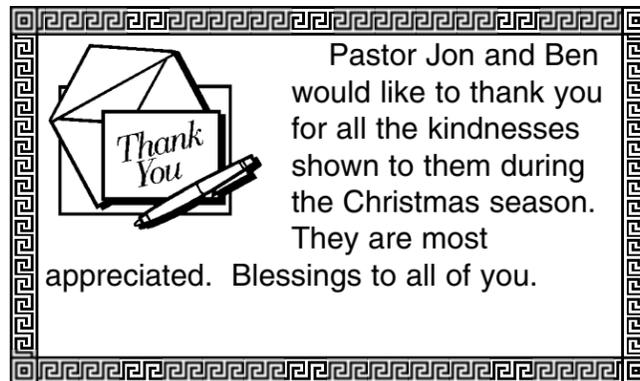


Birthdays in January

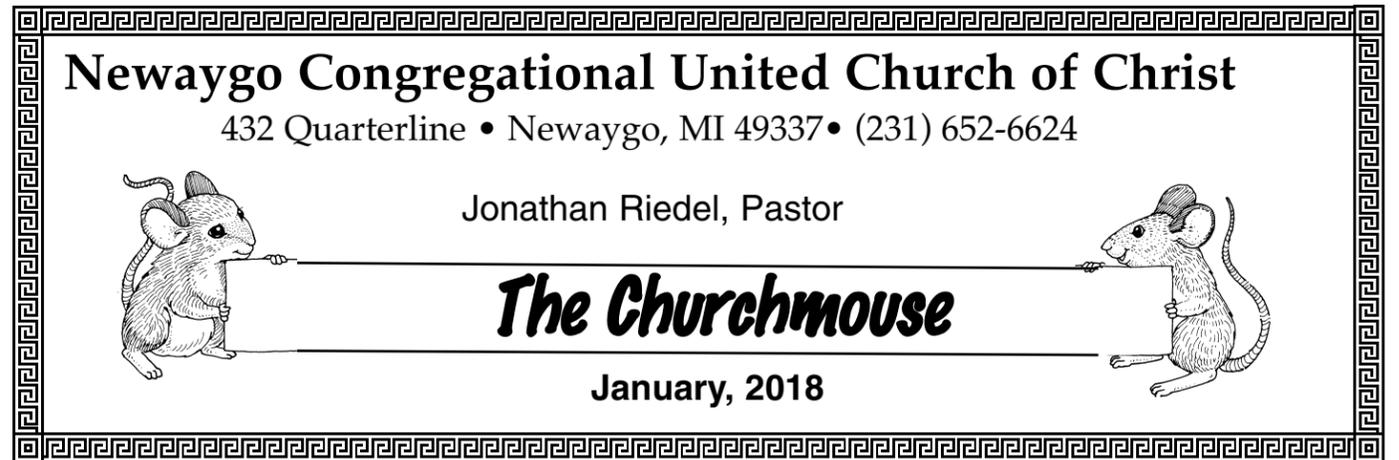
1 Dorothy Ranger
 2 Jacob Herbert
 2 David Twining
 4 Judy Cook
 4 Kathy Murphy-Voshel
 9 Joyce Mead
 12 Bud Spaulding
 15 Nancy Carlson
 15 George Passage
 23 Debi Walter
 26 Don Mead
 27 Klaus Walter

Anniversaries in January

27 Fred & Karen Veenstra



Pastor Jon and Ben would like to thank you for all the kindnesses shown to them during the Christmas season. They are most appreciated. Blessings to all of you.



Week of Christian Unity

“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said,
 ‘and I’ll show you how to fish for people.’”

Mark 1:17 CEB

After the grand festivals of Christmas and Epiphany, January, at least in our most northern climes, is a soggy span of emptiness. So the wise ones who put together the Christian calendar, at some point in time, declared January 18 through 25 the Week for Prayer for Christian Unity. I must admit that I have done little to recognize that call to prayer. I participated once or twice, while I was serving in Pennsylvania, in services on the Sundays of that week. We always met in the Catholic Church, sitting on folding chairs in front of an elaborate but empty altar and reading from a script of prayers dedicated to our community and the work we needed to do together. The four or five Protestant ministers gathered there would always would be the ones of their kind of Christian in the room. I suppose our congregation’s members had long ago given up any curiosity about the inside of a Catholic cathedral so they never bothered coming. After the second service I participated in we gave up on the service.

I think that I could draw some conclusions from that about the future of Christian unity from my experiences over the years. As a whole, Christians stink at unity. I suspect that, far too often and from the left as well as the right, we as followers of Jesus are more concerned about the correctness of our way of doing things (worship, service, mission, etc.) than we are about our commitment to love, kindness, and compassion. Churches seldom split over how loving they have been or how well they are pursuing justice; they fracture over praise songs vs. hymns, governing structure, alcohol, dancing, instrumental music, women in leadership, gays in the pews, and whether or not everyone in the narthex in the same color. We like to hang out with people who agree with us and don’t want to be with those with whom we disagree so we pack up our Bibles and move when tensions get high. Sometimes we even get up the nerve to throw those liturgical, moral, or musical bums out so we can have our church back.

In the back of all this bickering, I hear the one who welcomed into his discipleship a terrorist and a collaborator, fishermen and soldiers, and murderers and pacifists and the one who called us to be one weeping in the background and I am ashamed.

(continued from page 1)

On the other hand, I do appreciate the gifts that each denomination has given the church, gifts often neglected badly enough to need some secession to get them the attention they deserve.

Protestantism reminds us of the centrality of Scripture, Anglicanism helped us strike a balance between deep worship and private Bible study, Methodism reminded us that Christian faith begins with the changing of hearts, and Pentecostalism insists that we do not forget the work of the Holy Spirit, for example. Yet I wonder, despite the value of each of all these individual pieces, these refracted lights, these scattered colors, only reveal their true soul when they fall in together, as it is with the shattered hues bound together by the kaleidoscope. These gifts do such good work so I cannot help but wonder what they would do if we somehow found a way to make them jibe.

Perhaps the way to make them jibe is contained in what Jesus asked us to do. Be fishers of people. Reach out in love and compassion. Seek justice for those whose voices have been silenced. Heal the divisions and the angers that have cut off people, one from another. Be guided by prayer and by the Spirit to learn with whom we need to be. Sometimes the nearest stranger may turn out to be the one who may turn out to be God's greatest to us. Most of all, do this together, not for our own safety but to give others a safe place to be the people God is calling them to be.

I know that I will often fail at working together with my fellow Jesus folk. I will criticize their ways of doing things. I do not belong to many organizations that ask me to collaborate with people outside of my denomination. I know that my church struggles to create ministries with other churches; we tend to want our way and we go with our own pre-conceived plans. Yet I also know that challenge lies ahead of me, of all of us, and we need to hear its voice. Be fishers of people. Work together to share God's love with all. And it will be in my best interest to listen.

The Rev. Jonathan D. Riedel
Pastor, Newaygo Congregational UCC

Smile A While . . .

A Priest, A Minister, A Rabbi And A Bear

A priest, a minister, and a rabbi want to see who's best at his job. So each one goes into the woods, finds a bear, and attempts to convert it. Later, they all get together. The priest begins: When I found the bear, I read to him from the catechism and sprinkled him with holy water. Next week is his first Communion.

I found a bear by the stream, says the minister, and preached God's holy Word. The bear was so mesmerized that he let me baptize him.

They both look down at the rabbi, who is lying on a gurney in a body cast. Looking back, he says, maybe I shouldn't have started with the circumcision.

Nap Time is Serious Business

Police were called to a daycare center where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.

Blessed Are The Red-Necked

What's wrong, Bubba? asked the pastor.

I need you to pray for my hearing, said Bubba.

The pastor put his hands on Bubba's ears and prayed. When he was done, he asked, So how's your hearing?

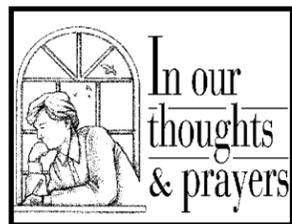
I don't know, said Bubba. It isn't until next Tuesday.

Trees on the Internet

How do trees get online? – They just log in.

Storytelling Cats

Why are cats bad storytellers? – Because they only have one tale.



Al, Carolyn, Conrad Jr.,
Fred & Lucas, Maxine, Carolyn S. and
Marcia S.



Sunday Morning Stroll
through the Bible

9:00 am

We are reading the Prophecy of Isaiah.
Bring your questions, we'll supply the Bibles.



**Canned Goods
for Food Pantry**
We are continuing
the collection of
Canned Goods for the food pantry. There
is a special need at this time of the year.
There will be a box under the coat racks in
which to put your donations.

Thank You

Deadline for the February Churchmouse

Please send any information or articles
you would like included in the **February
Churchmouse** to the office by **Tuesday,
January 30.**

You may e-mail information to:
churchmouse@newaygoucc.org
or leave a hard copy in the office.

Christmas Pageant



The Christmas Story was put into action by many of our church family. Children and adults. It was a special time for all to take part in this beautiful story.

Thanks to Jeanne Leaver and Jane Porter for organizing this production of the Story of Christmas, On the Way to Bethlehem The children and adults did a great job.



Congratulations on a job well done!



Christmas Families

Our Christmas families this year were women and their families from Women in Transition from Vera's House, as well as some children from our church. On Tuesday, December 19, Pastor Jon welcomed the women who came to receive the gifts. All the beautifully wrapped and bagged gifts were picked up, along with Christmas cards containing \$50 Walmart gift cards.

The fact that not one person's gift was missing speaks to the organization of Sue and Gloria and to the generosity of our congregation.

As landlines disappear and cell phones become the norm, so texting has replaced snail mail for many people's thank-you notes. The following texts were received from the some of the women:

"Tell the church thanks so much for all it did for my family it's truly a blessing in my life." B.

" I want to thank the church for helping my family with Christmas"- J.

"Please tell your church family thank you from me. For a mom to be included is rare. Thank u so much. What a blessing for our family." T.

Thank You. . .

I want to take this time to thank all of my special crew that so faithfully help with the Circles group meals. This great crew helps to plan, prepare the meals, and pack up and take the meals to the Fremont Methodist Church, and help with serving the meal.

A special Thank You also to all the people that help prepare our desserts needed for each meal.

Thank You also to all those who faithfully donate money and food for these meals. This is a special Community Project that our church has agreed to take on and our time and effort has been so greatly and thankfully accepted by the Circles Group, and especially by those that we feed at these meals once a month.

Blessings to you all!

--Gloria

What you do speaks so loud that
I cannot hear what you say.

The happiest people don't
necessarily have the best of
everything.

They just make the best of
everything.