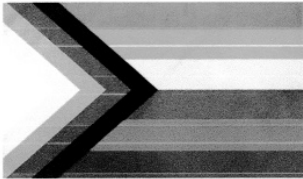


Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

432 Quarterline • Newaygo, MI 49337 • (231) 652-6624

Jonathan Riedel, Pastor

“An Open and Affirming Church”



*No matter who you are,
no matter where you are on life's journey,
you're welcome here!*



The Churchmouse



December, 2022



St. Nicholas Day

*Everybody should give whatever they have decided in their heart.
They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure. God
loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7 CEB*

“I wonder if my eyes glow green and my muscles begin to bulge ominously whenever I see the first spray of tinsel and Santa Claus posters appear soon after Halloween. Please do not misunderstand me - I treasure the waft of Christmas carols, people's honest attempts to think well of others when they throw their change into Salvation Army pots or purchase presents for Toys for Tots, and when they blazon the outlines of their houses with multi-colored lights. Winter is dark and lonely and this season provides at very least a necessary distraction.

I applaud human generosity and kindness. In our small ways, it reflect the hidden ways of God's Spirit at work. What triggers the Hulk in me is not the season, but our misconception of it. I wonder, in our materialistic ways, of we have made this time into a time of forced reciprocity. We are urged to give gifts so we can feel good about receiving them in return. I say this knowing that there is much in giving well-chosen gifts, but I also know that many expect to be given something as well. I remember well gift exchanges in school where poorer students dreaded the unwrapping of the presents they shared because they were not as nice or as new as the presents people much like myself had purchased. I suspect that some could barely afford to shop for them, but they felt compelled to do so. No one wanted to be left out of the exchange because someone was buying a present for them. While the intention to make sure everyone received a gift was good, the means to get to that result reeked of compulsion and, I suspect, of shame. Paul addresses this bluntly Gift-giving should be a free act, one that comes from the heart. It should be free from pressure. The person giving should not be shamed or regretful about his or her gift. As God has given so much to us out of the deep well

December, 2022, _____



of love, love too should be our prime motivator. Finally, this love should move to joy and nothing but joy. It should cheer us to share as it cheers the other to receive. To do otherwise misses the grace of the occasion. I have found no dearth of examples. December 5th is a day dedicated to one of the best examples of this: St Nicholas. Much of Nicholas' story is shrouded in hagiography. What became most noteworthy about him for Catholic historians is what made him appear the most saintly. We know that he lived in the 4th Century, was ordained by his uncle, and was appointed the Bishop of Myra simply because he was the first ordained priest to appear when the priests serving there made an appeal for a replacement.

He had simply shown up to pray in the town's cathedral and ended up installed as its head. He seems to have been a rather severe disciplinarian and insisted on those in the priesthood must model themselves after Jesus diligently. He once confronted a Roman court in the process of sentencing three innocent men to death. He stripped the executioner of his sword, freed the men, and condemned judge and jury for accepting bribes. He is rumored to have attend the Council of Nicaea, an important church gathering where many decisions about the doctrine of Trinity were made, but this cannot be substantiated. Even his burial place is disputed; so treasured were his bones by pilgrim they were exhumed and reburied several times. Though we know most St. Nicholas stories are colored by legend, one trait shines brightly through them: his generosity. The son of wealthy parents, he spent his inheritance to the poor within his district. One of the most famous stories of his generous nature was his payment of dowries for three ladies who faced the possibility of living life unmarried in a time where unmarried women were often shunned or thrust into prostitution in order to make ends meet. Recognizing the humiliation they faced for accepting charity, he gave his gift to them under the cover of the night. He threw bags of golden coins through open windows. Though his gift was discovered, Nicholas insisted on silence about the origins of the donation until his own death. This incident was repeated many times wherever Nicholas was bishop. After Nicholas was made a saint, stories passed from generation to generation about his kindness to the downtrodden. Because of the proximity of his holy day with the Nativity of Jesus, giving gifts to those in need, particularly to children, became a common practice. In Germany and the Low Countries, children were given gold coins (remember the story I just shared), oranges, and candy canes (which resembled a bishop's cane). These gifts were often left in stockings and shoes or discovered under pillows. In anticipation of these treasures, children would write letters to Nicholas and would set aside carrots or grass for the bishop's donkey or horse. Over the years, his story merged with the legend of Sinterklaas, who judged the behavior of children, rewarding the good and punishing the bad. The Dutch, in particular, brought these customs over to the United States, prompting the still popular cult of Santa Claus. I am sure that Nicholas would frown on some of the peculiar traditions that have emerged around him, but he would be pleased by the kind generosity shown. Maybe it is that cheerful generosity that I need to tap into when I celebrate this season. A gift not motivated by reciprocity or by compulsion, but simply out of desire to help someone smile in the murky depths that life often leaves us in. Maybe the act of doing something to brighten someone's life is the best reason to give, the best way to show gratitude for God's gift of Jesus. So in honor Nicholas and Jesus, I will purchase a gift for Toys for Tots and toss more than a pittance of coins into the Salvation Army bucket. To give simply for giving's sake. That is what truly brings me joy.

The Rev. Jonathan D. Riedel-Pastor,
Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ



Bad Weather

In case of bad weather, please check Channel 8, your e-mail or Pastor's facebook page to see if service is cancelled and we are on line only.

Thank You
Ken



Year after year, the Christmas Fund makes a difference in the lives of our United Church of Christ retired pastors and their surviving spouses, easing the anxiety of constant financial worry. It helps with Small Pensions; Health Benefit Supplementation for retired clergy and lay employees; Emergency grants for individuals and families; and Christmas Thank You gift checks to retired persons and lay employees. Your Christmas Eve donations will be donated to this fund.

Christmas Card Mailboxes



If you wish to share your Christmas Wishes with your church family, you can place their Christmas Cards in their mailboxes. We feel with the flu & covid out, there they are safer.



Treasurer's Report

October 16, 2022 to
November 15, 2022

	Income	Total Exp.
October 16	\$ 424.00	
October 24	274.00	
October 31	1,104.00	
November 6	3,679.00	
November 13	\$1,003.00	
Total	\$6,496.00	\$6,856.50

Difference **(-\$360.50)**

Phillips Fund **\$156,728.14**

Family Fund **66,848,.07**

We are so very THANKFUL for all your contributions, your work, and your continued love for our church and its goals. We are very fortunate.

Dawn Anderson Treasurer

Deadline for the January Churchmouse

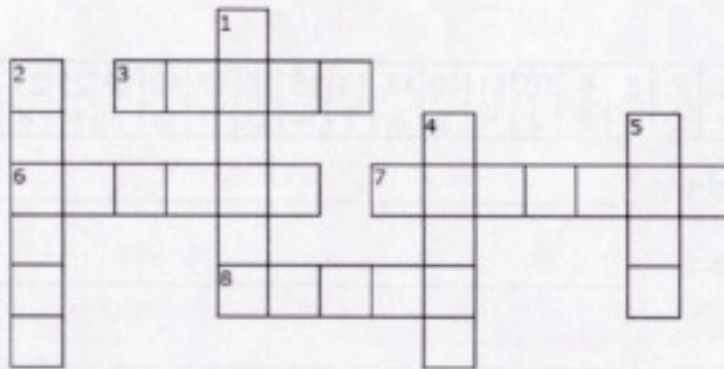
Please send any information or articles you would like included in the **January Churchmouse** to the office by **Wednesday, December 28.**

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

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Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

3. The earth or universe
6. To make an effort to hear something
7. An area or territory ruled by king or queen
8. A statement proven to be or accepted as accurate or factual

DOWN

1. To capture and hold under the authority of law
2. Where a king or queen lives
4. To battle, quarrel, or argue; a conflict between two or more people
5. Brought into life by birth

ARREST	LISTEN	FIGHT	BORN
WORLD	PALACE	KINGDOM	TRUTH



Members & Friends in need of Prayers:

Cynthia J., Katy L., Allen R., Marilyn S. Marcia S., Carolyn S., Fred V., Karen V., Gloria W., Donna, Nikki.



Pastor Jon will be on vacation between Christmas Day and New Year's Eve day.

For all pastoral concerns, please consult with Ken Bell and Dorothy Bos.

Prayer Room/Chapel

Anyone who wishes to have a small quiet place to pray or meditate is welcome to use the room across from the nursery to do so.

Note from your Editor:

In the past your Churchmouse has been sent by way of e-mail. Would you like to continue to receive your Churchmouse thru e-mail or would you prefer a hard copy, which would be put in your boxes each month?

The shut-ins will still receive theirs by way of mail. Please let me or Gloria know of your preference.

Thank You



Thank you to all those who have helped with the Circles Program since we first took this on as our Community Outreach six years ago. The many dedicated workers who helped prepare and serve the meals and to all those who donated money and food. We could not have been successful in this endeavor without all of your help. We are not sure what will become of this program as we enter a new year. This is still all in negotiation with the Fremont Area Community Foundation. We will keep you posted. Thanks again, you all were very much appreciated and played a big part in our fulfilling our commitment to the Circles Program.

Blessings
Gloria

Ways to Worship with Us

Here is a reminder of the different ways that our worship services are available to you. ♦ Everyone is welcome to attend our services in-person every Sunday at 10 am. ♦ You can also access a live audio/visual broadcast using ZOOM on your computer or smart phone by using the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84864699096>

Those without internet access can call the following phone number and Meeting ID:







1-312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 848 6469 9096.

♦

If you would like to access the services on your own schedule, they are added to our website www.newaygoucc.org and Facebook page following each service.

Links to Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve services are provided as needed.

December, 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	30	1 True North 6-8 pm	2	3
4 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & Zoom ZOOM	5	6 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	7	8 True North 6-8 pm	9	10
11 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & Zoom ZOOM	12 Worship & Pastoral Care Mtg. 10 am in pastor's office and on the phone	13 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	14	15 True North 6-8 pm	16	17
18 Worship Svc. 10 am by phone & ZOOM Christmas Program	19	21 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	21	22	23	24  3:00 pm
25 No Worship Service	26	27 Noon Class  Bible STUDY Join us!	28	29	30	31



THE WHITE STUFF

Q F H T R U D Q B O O T S D S
 L E H X F G R R S J T Q E V A
 W E U T R I P L A Y R H O J M
 W H V P P A R K A Z E K F B T
 O T I O F F I D M T Z L C A S
 L R K T H R M K A W U I O L I
 B O S L E S A L S R T W L L R
 E P R E D D U C R K F I D B H
 O S E M H M I I S F O N Q J C
 H F S P U C E L R C S T A U J
 S D L C J S N O S A B E D P C
 T L C A K I S I V D N R E N M
 O A E H K T T O B O G G A N U
 R J C D Y E C F Y F R E E Z E
 M B T M E H C N A L A V A L Y

WORD LIST

ACCUMULATE

ANGEL

AVALANCHE

BALL

BLIZZARD

BLOW

BOOTS

CHRISTMAS

COLD

DRIFT

FLAKE

FLURRIES

FREEZE

FROSTY

INCHES

MELT

PARKA

PLAY

SCARF

SHOE

SHOVEL

SKI

SLED

SLIDE

SOFT

SPORT

STORM

TOBOGGAN

WHITE

WINTER



Tuesday Noon Class

Pastor Jon's Tuesday noon class is in person. Will also be on ZOOM by request or due to bad weather.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84229731057>
or phone 1-312-626-6799 ID: 842 2973 1057

"Sabbatical Learnings"

We will conclude this conversation on what Pastor Jon learned on his sabbatical by gathering in the church entry room on Tuesdays. Our sharing starts at noon. We have covered some lively topics so far. Every voice is welcome. Here is the schedule:

December 06 — *Inclusivity*

December 13 — *Review and Summary*

Wednesday Night Prayer

Wednesday Night Prayer Time 7 pm. Call 978-990-5000 then 283560#



Birthdays in December

2 - Joyce T.
3 - Vicki P.
4 - Ella Mae M.
20 - Dorothy B.
28 - Marty L.
30 - Jeanne L.

Anniversaries in December

21 - Wayne & Jane P.

Affirmation

On Sunday, January 8th, 2023, during worship we will be celebrating our affirmation as an "Open and Affirming" church. A special service is being planned including Reverend Ruth Fitzgerald, the area conference minister, giving the sermon. The committee would like for everyone to bring a friend or family member to this special service to celebrate with us and to hear and see that God is still speaking and is still at work. We want to show that everyone is welcome to worship with us. After worship, lunch will be provided, please come and celebrate our exciting new status as an "Open and Affirming" congregation.

December Worship Schedule on ZOOM

Worship is in person and on ZOOM at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84864699096> or phone 1-312-626-6799 ID: 848 6469 9096

12/4 - Second Advent - Candle Lighting
Communion and special music
Isaiah 11:1-10

12/11 - Third Advent - Candle Lighting
Matthew 11:2-11
Songs for the season

12/18 - Fourth Advent - Candle Lighting
Matthew 1:18-25
Songs for the season

12/24 - Christmas Eve Service of Song,
Light and Story - 3 pm

12/25 - Christmas - Church Closed

