

First Congregational United Church of Christ
December 2019 / January 2020
Branches Newsletter



**“She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus—
because he will save his people from their sins.”**

Matthew 1:21

Carols of Christmas

*Join Us as We Sing Through This
Season of Advent and Christmas!*

All Are Welcome!

Hanging of the Greens:	December 1
Second Sunday of Advent:	December 8
Third Sunday of Advent:	December 15, 8 a.m.
Children's Christmas Pageant:	December 15, 10 a.m.
Fourth Sunday of Advent:	December 22

Christmas Eve Worship

Tuesday, December 24

4 p.m. - Family Candlelight Worship

7 p.m. - Candlelight Worship

11 p.m. - Traditional Candlelight Worship
with Sacrament of Holy Communion

New Year's Worship

Sunday, December 29

There will be a single service at 9 a.m. with brunch provided.

From the Pastor's Desk

Step by Step through the New Testament

The 27 books of the New Testament present the life of Christ and Jesus' continuing work through the church. You are invited to join us for an exciting journey that will illuminate the life of Christ, as well as the lives of significant people, events, places, themes, and messages of the New Testament.

Starting Sunday, January 5th, a new study will be offered between the 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. services of worship. Our class will begin at 9:15 and conclude sharply at 9:45. (I will need some time to prepare for the 10:00 service of worship.) We will meet in the music room.

"Step by Step through the New Testament" will help you:

- Build a framework for understanding and interpreting the New Testament;
- Gain an understanding of the biblical background needed for a lifetime of meaningful Bible study;
- Respond to God as God speaks to you through the Scriptures.



Please join us. This will be a wonderful opportunity to have fellowship with the people that you do not normally see on Sunday morning because they attend the other service. In addition, this will also be a wonderful opportunity to deepen your understanding of the New Testament. I look forward to seeing you on Sunday, January 5th.

Annual Reports

All annual reports are due to the church office by December 20. This includes ministries, committees, project groups, etc.

Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting will be on Sunday January 26, 2020 after a single service at 9:00 am.

Join us for "The Hanging of the Greens" Sunday, December 1

The Hanging of the Greens occurs annually at the start of Advent and is a multisensory worship service designed for the entire church family. Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas and preparing ourselves for a new year living in the presence of God through our relationship with Christ. As we prepare ourselves for the beginning of the Advent Season, we gather and place the decorations that tell the story of Christ's birth in their unique way. We will hear the timeless traditions behind these decorations and sing the beloved, favorite carols, and listen anew to the stories of Christ's birth as recorded in the gospels. Join us for the Hanging of the Greens at both the 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. services on December 1.

A Message from Stewardship Ministry

LET YOUR LIGHT



BEFORE OTHERS...
MATTHEW 5:16

A big thank you to church members (104) who have made their pledge commitment to date following our Stewardship Sunday on November 10. Also, thank you to Pastor Dave and the Praise Band for coordinating very meaningful services, and the IG Handbells for sharing their musical talent. The message "Let Your Light Shine Before Others" from Matthew 5:16 was shared through music, prayers, message and with special candles. It was delightful to have Addy Mulder, who designed the logo, be part of the day as well.

It is important that members and youth continue to send their Time and Talent sheets and Treasures pledges to the church office. If other plans need to be made, please let the office know your intention. Here is the [link](#) if you want to send your Time and Talent information electronically.

The Stewardship Ministry will be meeting on December 5 to review the status of our 2020 Stewardship Message. It is our hope that we will not need to send email or phone reminders. Thank you for continuing to share your light so the world can be made brighter.

Meet Our New Members

Katie and Tony Pantzlaff

Kate, Tony and family live in Genesee. Tony owns Pantzlaff Electric and Katie is a VP of Human Resources for Advocate Aurora Health Care. They have 3 children, Eli (14), Becca (9) and Henry who's 2. Tony and Eli especially like hunting and the whole family loves the Brewers! Their favorite travel destinations are Eagle River and Disneyworld. Be sure to say hello to them!



Jeff Bona

Jeff and Rachel (Pastor Dave's daughter) were married at our church last March! He is currently working at Froedtert Hospital as an Assistant Nurse Manager. He loves sports but especially the Packers, and they even have a dog named Lambeau! Welcome to our church family.



Church News

Food Pantry Sundays - First Sunday of Every Month



FEED THE
HUNGRY

On the first Sunday of every month, you are invited to bring items for the Food Pantry and put them in the baskets at the entrance to the sanctuary. The baskets are then brought to the altar during the offering. These donations are delivered to the Oconomowoc Food Pantry during the week. Items that the Food Pantry accepts are: Non-perishable food items; Baby items - diapers, wipes, baby food, formula; Personal hygiene items - soap, shampoo, tampons, sanitary pads, deodorant, toothpaste, laundry detergent, toilet paper.

Did you know that the Oconomowoc Food Pantry: Is a non-profit organization, Is run by volunteers with no paid staff, Receives no government subsidies, 100% of your donations go to servicing those in need. Here are the collection dates through the end of the year so you can mark your calendars: November 3, December 1. Please be sure all perishable donations are within use dates and have not expired.

Opportunities

Holiday Shopping with Scrip

The holidays are approaching quickly and that means shopping for friends and family. Scrip can help make your shopping a bit simpler. You can view a list of participating retailers at www.shopwithscrip.com, at the Scrip table on Sunday mornings, or in the church office during the week.

We have Scrip cards available for local businesses such as Kohl's, Target, Books and Company, and Marshalls. (Your Kohl's gift card can be used to pay your charge card bill!) When you're out shopping and the hunger pangs hit, you can use Scrip cards to eat at places like Cornerstone, Chili's, Applebee's, and Rosati's.

Scrip is available Sunday mornings in Fellowship Hall and can be purchased in the church office during the week. If you want to purchase Scrip that we don't routinely have available, or a larger amount than is available, it is possible to place a special order. All you need to do is complete the Special Order Form, then **prepay** with cash or a check made out to the church with Scrip in the memo.

Tuesday, December 10 will be the deadline for special orders for Christmas.

The Scrip program has raised over \$25,000 for our Youth programs, including camp scholarships and Mission trips. Thank you for continuing to support this worthwhile program.

Questions? Please contact Cheryl Hoff. I am usually in the church office on Monday and Friday mornings and I can be reached at cheryl7147@att.net.

Giving Tree

Mission Ministry is once again having a Giving Tree for the Christmas season. This year, there will be tags for:

- Gifts for 5 local families from the Christmas Clearing Council
- Some items for ERA's Senior Network
- \$10 Gifts for each of our Head Start children



The tree is in Fellowship Hall. Gifts need to be returned by Sunday, December 8. Any questions, please contact Rania Dempsey at 262-719-3037 or rania@wi.rr.com.

Family Promise

Our next host week is December 1-7. The sign-up for this host week can be found on the church website or <https://signup.com/go/WwdAamD>. If you would like to volunteer, but haven't been trained, contact Cindy Meckl, themeckls@gmail.com or 262-567-2558.



Habitat for Humanity

The following are Saturday work dates for Habitat for Humanity for Washington and Dodge Counties from 9 am - 3 pm: December 14, December 28, and January 18. Please follow this link to sign up <https://timecounts.org/hfhwadovolunteers/events/22415>.

Women's Connection

Women's Connection meets from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the church building (specific room TBD for each meeting) and is open to women of all ages. We offer women an opportunity to connect with God and each other through sharing fellowship, stories, and support. Each session centers around a different topic or project and is "stand alone," so drop in when you can! Mark your calendars for 2019-2020 dates: Jan. 12, Jan. 26, Feb. 9, Feb. 23, Mar. 15, Apr. 19, (April 26-off site brunch-no regular meeting), May 3, and May 17. Please contact Emily Steckbauer (emily.steck@gmail.com), Cindy Meckl (themeckls@gmail.com), Sarah Erickson-Bhatt (sarah.e.bhatt@gmail.com), or Rania Dempsey (rania@wi.rr.com) with any questions!

Rummage 2020 – April 25

Rummage 2020 date has been set for April 25th. Please consider working your travel around this date so you can join us. Set up will begin on Sunday, April 19th. Additionally, please be sure to bring us your used items throughout the year. The unfinished space is available for drop offs. Stop by anytime the church is open and grab a key from the office to enter the space. If you need to come after hours contact Jill Riemann at 262-719-3823 and she'll arrange to meet you at church. Thank you!

Calendar of Events

Singing Collection

Every time we worship, loose coins in the offering are donated to a Mission Partner. Because the coins in the metal plates make a "joyful noise," we call this our Singing Collection.

December's Singing Collection will be for the Oconomowoc Area Food Pantry.

January Singing Collection will be Jam for Jamaica. Jam for Jamaica, or Jam for Jam, is a local non-profit that provides a home building and repair mission for the people of inner island Jamaica. Every January, a team of volunteers travel to the heart of the island to provide shelter for those whose home is inadequate or non-existent. The volunteers pay their own way, so all of the money raised throughout the year goes directly to the mission. J4J has performed hundreds of builds and repairs over the last 16 years, with 7 new houses having been built in 2019 alone.

Every month, the loose coins in the offering plate are donated to a charity. We had a request to share the amounts of these collections.

Singing Collections for 2018 & 2019 (thru August):

2018:

January - Hearts & Hands Preschool	\$1,164.58	June - Tricia's Troops	578.01
February - Lake Area Club	572.12	July - Youth Mission Trip	844.45
March - Jam for Jamaica	935.80	August - Lake Area Free Clinic	833.81
April - Church World Service	780.41	September - Family Promise	1,199.20
May - Habitat for Humanity	580.27	October - Christmas Clearing Council	675.13



November - Lake Area Free Clinic	636.38	December - Ocon. Food Pantry	1,174.89
2019:			
January - Hearts & Hands Preschool	\$ 962.47	May - Habitat for Humanity	393.56
February - Tricia's Troops	421.94	June - Lake Area Club	789.06
March - Jam for Jamaica	729.63	July - Youth Mission Trip	616.93
April - Church World Service	281.28	August - Lake Area Free Clinic	523.71

Singing collections for 2020:

January - Jam for Jamaica	July - Christmas Fund
February - Lake Area Club	August - Youth Mission Trip
March - Hearts and Hands Preschool	September - Christmas Clearing Council
April - Church World Service	October - Habitat for Humanity
May - Family Promise	November - Fisher House
June - Lake Area Free Clinic	December - Oconomowoc Food Pantry

Women's Gathering Christmas Party

At the last gathering, we thought it would be fun to have a Christmas Party. The beautiful Rockwell Restaurant at Shorehaven will be happy to accommodate our group. The best date would be Thursday, Dec. 5th, at 5:30 p.m. It would be fun to have a small gift exchange, no more than \$5.00, homemade is great, or whatever works for you. If you could please RSVP to Carolyn Crom, 262-567-9093, or 262-227-1489 (cell) or ckcrom@yahoo.com, or Carolyn Frick at 414-699-9050, or carolynfrick@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from YOU.

UCC Annual Cookie Sale

Our Annual Christmas Cookie Sale is quickly approaching. This year it will be held on Saturday, December 14 from 9-11 a.m. and **Bakers are Needed!** Watch for the sign-up in fellowship hall.



Branches Newsletter Deadlines

Please send your articles to Liz Mueller at liz@oconomowocucc.org. The deadline is **Friday, January 17** for the February issue of *Branches*.

Confirmation



Our Confirmation class is going very well. In November, our confirmands dug into the topic of God. It was a very intense yet fun topic as they looked deeper at themselves. The youth participated in activities to help them understand how we can be tested and stretched at times, but we need to trust and believe. We will be meeting again December 1 for our discussion about Jesus, which is very fitting. We will also meet January 26 to talk more about the Holy Spirit and Trinity.

Youth News!



Youth Group News!

December Youth Group

All youth in 3rd-12th grade are invited to come together on **Sunday, December 8** from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to make Christmas cookies for the Annual Cookie Sale. Join us for a mid-day event making delicious cookies and share in some fellowship time enjoying lunch. Youth are always welcome to bring a friend or two! Just let Amy Drewa know by December 4.

Adults, if you want to get in the Christmas spirit and have some fun with the youth than please join us as a chaperone! This is always a fun event. If you are interested, please let Amy Drewa know.

Junior Youth Group (3rd-8th Grade)

In January, we will come together to do another activity to spread our kindness to the community and enjoy lunch together on **January 12** from 11:15 a.m.-1 p.m. Youth are always welcome to bring a friend 😊



High School Youth (9th-12th Grade)

Our High School Youth will be coming back together on **January 19** from 11:15 a.m.-1 p.m. to also do a different activity to share their kindness and enjoy a meal together.

Annual Christmas Pageant



It's that time of year for our Annual Christmas Pageant which will be held on **Sunday, December 15** during the 10 a.m. worship. There are over 45 children who will be participating in this year's pageant. They are very excited to share their talents to retell this story of awe and wonder of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. We look forward to you joining us to show your Christian love and support to these children and youth!

Just a reminder to those who are participating.... Rehearsals will take place **Sunday, December 8 from 11:30 - 3** (with lunch provided) for all lead/speaking roles as well as dancers, and on **Saturday, December 14 from 12:30-3** for everyone. If your child still would like to participate and you haven't signed up yet it's not too late, just contact Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org



Sunday School

It's that time of year where we see the magic and wonder in the eyes of the children along with laughter, joy and excitement. But in Sunday School we've seen that over the last few months! The children are so eager and excited to find out what room they are in each week, like it's a Christmas gift they are going to open. I believe December and January will be no different and maybe a little more excitement.



In December the children will explore the birth of Jesus through the typical story but also stories from the Wisemen's point of view, a Journey through Egypt and A Candy Cane Poem. Each of these stories will include a special activity to help the children retain what they heard. They will be creating stars, flying on a plane, searching for a stable and engaging in a science experiment with candy canes.

On December 22 the 3-year-old through 8th grade classes will join together for a large group class to celebrate the birth of Jesus. They will be playing some fun games and participate in different activities to celebrate the birth of Jesus!!!

As we go into the New Year we will be exploring the bible story of Jonah and the Whale. We will be looking at this story from both Jonah's and the Whale's point of view as well as engage in some fun activities.

On behalf of the Sunday School teachers, Education Ministry and myself we would like to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year!

Many Blessings, Amy

Important Dates:

December 15: Christmas Pageant (no Sunday School)

December 23: Christmas Party for 3 year olds-8th grade

December 24: Family Christmas Eve Worship at 4 p.m.

December 29: One Service at 9 (no Sunday School)



We would like to thank our November Sunday School Volunteers. We are truly blessed to all those who join us by teaching in some capacity! Thank

you to: Rochelle Behling, Deb Bursinger, Sara Decker, Abbey Kaszubowski, Emily and Jered Steckbauer, Sherry Huibregtse, Caty Schmitt, and Jenny Wallace.

Sunday School Leaders **NEEDED!**

As we begin a new year our new Sunday School Signup is available. Please take a moment to see how you can help serve our children and youth through our Sunday School program. There is **no teaching experience required!** With Rotation, it takes a village, and member-involvement makes a big difference! Please consider joining our fun by helping out and [click here](#) to sign up today! If you have any questions, please contact Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org.



Hearts & Hands Christian Preschool



Christmas Friday Fun & Fall 2020 Class Registration

Special Christmas Friday Fun

On Friday, December 6th, we will be holding a special Christmas Friday Fun from 9-1 pm. The kids will bring their lunch and have a morning of Christmas fun! We have a few spots available for kids ages 25 months - 4 years old. The cost of this special program is \$35.

Fall 2020 Class Registration

Believe it or not, it is time to start thinking about Fall 2020! Registration for our fall 2020 preschool classes will be as follows:

Current /Alumni families - Thursday, January 30th starting at 9 am

Church Members - Sunday, February 2nd starting after 10 am service

Open House/Public Registration - Tuesday, February 4th at 6:00 pm

We have classes for kids ages 25 months - 4 years old.

See our website (www.heartsandhandspreschool.org) for details

For more information check out

- our website (heartsandhandspreschool.org),
- our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/heartsandhandsconomowoc/>),
- our Instagram ([hearts_hands_preschool](https://www.instagram.com/hearts_hands_preschool/)),

or contact Cindy Meckl (themeckls@gmail.com) or 262-567-2558)

Wish List – iPad

Are you getting rid of an old iPad that needs a new home? We'd love to use it in the classroom for taking pictures and communicating with preschool parents!

Staying Connected ...

Pastor Dave Schnepf: pastor@oconomowocucc.org

Amy Drewa, Dir. of Ed. & Youth: amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org

Liz Mueller, Administrative Assistant: liz@oconomowocucc.org

Cindy Meckl, Hearts & Hands Preschool: themeckls@gmail.com

Like us on Facebook!!



Fall Worship Schedule

Traditional
8:00 a.m.

Connections
10 a.m.

Sunday School
3K - High School
Held during the
10 a.m. service

Upcoming Events:

- **Food Pantry Collection:** Sunday, December 1
- **The Hanging of the Greens:** Sunday, December 1, at both services
- **Family Promise Host Week:** Sunday, December 1 – Sunday, December 8
- **Women's Gathering Christmas Party:** Thursday, December 5, 5:30 p.m.
- **Communion Sunday:** Sunday, December 8
- **Annual Cookie Sale:** Saturday, December 14, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
- **Habitat for Humanity Workdays:** Saturdays, December 14 and 28
- **Christmas Pageant:** Sunday, December 15, during 10:00 a.m. worship service
- **Christmas Eve Worship Services:** Tuesday at 4:00, 7:00, & 11:00 p.m.
- **Sunday Brunch Worship Service:** December 29, 9:00 a.m.
- **Family Worship (no Sunday School):** Sunday, December 29
- **New Testament Study:** Starts Sunday, January 5, 9:15 – 9:45 a.m.
- **Women's Connection:** Sundays, January 12 and 26, 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.
- **Articles for February Branches Due:** Friday, January 17
- **Habitat for Humanity Workday:** Saturday, January 18
- **Annual Meeting:** Sunday, January 26 after 9:00 a.m. worship service