



CROSS CONNECTION

The Newsletter of Cottage Grove United Church of Christ
Published Semi-Monthly
December 15, 2008



150 Years and Going Strong



*No matter who you are
or where you are
on life's journey,
you'll find a home here!*

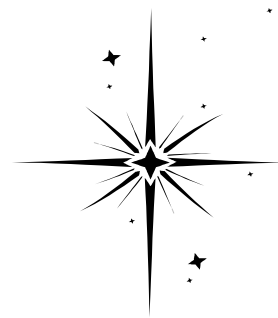
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Cottage Grove United Church of Christ

7008 Lamar Avenue South
Cottage Grove, MN. 55016-2397
Tel: 651-459-1501
Web: www.cgucc.org
Email: cgucc@usfamily.net

Christmas Worship Schedule



Sunday, December 14, Third Sunday in Advent

*9:00 a.m. Adult Advent Study
9:00 a.m. Sunday School
10:15 a.m. Worship*

Saturday, December 20

11:00 a.m. Practice for Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 21, Fourth Sunday in Advent

*9:00 a.m. Adult Advent Study
9:00 a.m. Sunday School
10:15 a.m. Worship with Sunday School Christmas Pageant
Christmas Fund Offering*

Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve

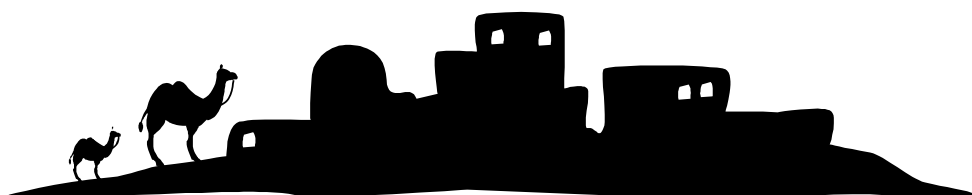
*4:30 p.m. Family Christmas Eve Service
10:00 p.m. Candlelight and Communion Christmas Eve Service*

Sunday, December 28, First Sunday after Christmas

*10:15 a.m. Worship
No Sunday School*

Sunday, January 4, Second Sunday after Christmas

*10:15 a.m. Worship with Christmas Cantata by Chancel Choir
No Sunday School*



Rev. Bryan Olson Transitional Pastor

Office Hours
Monday—Thursday
Beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Office Phone:
(651) 459-1501
Rev. Olson's e-mail:
olsonbw@hotmail.com



PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!

Daniel Bies; Bill and Isabel Board; Bill Bothun; Beth Davies; Bob Fox; Ron and Joyce Fries; Russ Gausman; Don Hanson; Delores Janke; JoAnn Nelson; Emily, Chris, and Joel Spicer; Carole Weitzel Biscoe; families facing unemployment issues; our students taking final exams; the Search Team, Rev. Bryan Olson, and our church during this time of transition.

Family of Tom Avenriep who died recently; Alma Buechler (former pastor's wife); Abi Christopherson (Elaine Mitchell's friend); Alex (Dorothy Crampton's grandson, who is also Deb Tilson's son); Dorothy Brown (Ashley & Luke Longmuir's great-aunt); Ken & Nora Krahn (missionaries); Denise Heschke Krech (Marilyn's Heschke's daughter); Steve and Eboné Koerselman family; Molly Livingston (Eboné Koerselman's grandmother); Margie Mattison (Farmers' Market vendor); Mary Schmidt (Karen Schmidt's mother-in-law); Agnes Thyren (Gary Thyren's mother); Beth Vinge (Bill & Arlene Kropelnick's daughter); Midge Youngquist's grandmother; our soldiers around the world.



As a child, Christmas was always my favorite time of year. The day after Thanksgiving my family would put up the tree and break out the decorations to transform our home into a little slice of holiday heaven. One of the most important decorative items for my sister and I was the Christmas countdown calendar that went on the wall in the living room. This quilted calendar had small pouches with embroidered numbers on them and each day from December 1st through December 24th my sister and I took turns placing a large candy cane in its numerically correct holster as we counted down the days and weeks until Christmas. Talk about being easily amused!

I think my sister and I looked forward to that small tradition every year because it marked the passage of time in a clear and tangible way. Since my childhood, I have often missed or overlooked the Advent season leading up to Christmas because it flew by in a whirlwind of cable specials, concerts, meetings, parties, shopping, and work. Taking the time to notice the candy cane calendar on the wall each day as a child somehow made me stop and think about where it was in the Advent season and how that made me feel. With each new day and each new candy cane that went in the calendar I would grow more anxious and excited about what I might awake to on Christmas morning. Unfortunately, I rarely get that feeling about Christmas anymore and more unfortunate than that is that I know I am not alone in that sentiment.

I was talking with a friend the other day and he told me that he "cannot wait until the holiday season is over so things can go back to normal." Go back to normal? What does that mean? My friend's comment made me realize that for many people today Christmas is just another "thing" to pack into an already overcrowded schedule. It has lost much of its meaning. Christmas has become more of an obligation than an inspiration. Instead of awaiting the return of the Messiah and the transformation of the world we are holding out hope for a profitable retail season and a quick transition back to apathy as usual once the tree comes down and the turkey is off the table.

Over the next few weeks as we hear the familiar Christmas story once again, I pray that we will find within it the true spirit of the season. I pray that each person who hears it will encounter Immanuel, the ever-living, ever-loving God, who comes to take root in our hearts and lead us to a better tomorrow. Let us become watchers of the night. Let us cast our gaze to the heavens, as the magi did so long ago, and look for signs of Christ's coming. And let us drop everything, as the shepherds did, to seek out Christ, the light of the world, for ourselves, and then go tell everyone about what we have seen and experienced.

So what does your calendar look like over the next few weeks? Is there a space in there to make room for Christ's arrival? Are you ready to receive the newborn King? If not, there are still a few candy canes that need to go in the calendar. Advent is still upon us, but Christmas is coming soon. Alleluia!

See in worship!
Merry Christmas,

Adult Advent Study

The Advent Bible Study continues each Sunday through December 21. The texts each week coincide with those that are preached on during the worship service that Sunday. Come and enjoy enlivening and enlightening discussion as we interpret together the meaning of the coming of the Christ child.



Annual Meeting Rescheduled

Due to the snow we had on Monday, Dec. 8, the CGUCC Annual Meeting has been rescheduled for this Sunday, December 14, immediately following the Worship Service. Please make every effort to be present for this important meeting in the life of our church.



Toys for Tots

All members and friends of Cottage Grove U.C.C. are invited to come and assist with the Toys-for-Tots collection on **Tuesday, December 23rd**, from **6-8 p.m.** We will be sorting toys at the warehouse in Mendota Heights that will be delivered to children on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. This is always a busy time of year, but please consider helping with this worthy mission project.

We will be carpooling down to the warehouse together, so please arrive at the church parking lot around 5:30 p.m. on December 23rd. If you have any questions, please contact Jerry Biscoe or Rev. Bryan.



About Contributions

The 2009 offering envelopes are available for pick up after worship on the long tables in the Gathering Room. Please pick up yours up to save the postage for mailing them. If you would like to receive envelopes and have not been getting them, please contact Becky in the office.



Please note that contributions for the 2008 fiscal year must be received by the church or postmarked by December 31, 2008 in order to be credited to your 2008 contributions. Thank you.

Christmas Cantata January 4, 2009

ALL ARE WELCOME to lift their voices to God in the annual Christmas Cantata! This year's Cantata will be on January 4th--we will celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ on Epiphany. Rehearsals will be as follows: Sunday, December 21st from 1-3 pm; Tuesday, December 23rd from 6:30-8:30pm; Sunday, December 28th from 1-3 pm and Saturday, January 3rd from 9:30am-12 noon. We are singing many wonderful arrangements, and would love to have YOU participate! Any questions? Call Emily at 651-353-3816.



The Sock and Mitten Tree

Please help those in need by donating mittens, socks, or hats. All will be most welcome. The tree will be up in the Gathering Room through the Christmas season so it is never too late to share.



Christmas Goodie Bake Sale

This Sunday, December 14, Women's Fellowship will hold a bake sale to support the Women's Shelter and the Capital Campaign. All baked goods or other treats are most welcome. Come and stock up on yummy Christmas goodies while you support two worthy causes.



Coming Up in Worship

Sunday, December 14 Third Sunday in Advent

9:00 a.m. WF Christmas Bake Sale
9:00 a.m. Adult Advent Study
9:00 a.m. Sunday School
10:10 a.m. Announcements
10:15 a.m. Worship
11:30 a.m. Coffee & Fellowship

Sunday, December 21 Fourth Sunday in Advent

9:00 a.m. Adult Advent Study
9:00 a.m. Sunday School
10:10 a.m. Announcements
10:15 a.m. Worship with Sunday School Christmas Pageant
11:30 a.m. Coffee & Fellowship

Wednesday, December 24 Christmas Eve

4:30 p.m. Family Christmas Eve Service
10:00 p.m. Candles & Communion Christmas Eve Service

Sunday, December 28 1st Sunday after Christmas

No Sunday School
10:10 a.m. Announcements
10:15 a.m. Worship
11:30 a.m. Coffee & Fellowship

Sunday, January 4, 2009 2nd Sunday after Christmas

No Sunday School
10:10 a.m. Announcements
10:15 a.m. Worship with Christmas Cantata
11:30 a.m. Coffee & Fellowship



Y.A.H.O.O.

(Youth Aspiring to Help Out Others)

Y.A.H.O.O.s is the Youth Ministry program of Cottage Grove United Church of Christ in Cottage Grove, MN.

As Y.A.H.O.O.s, we work to serve Christ by using our spiritual gifts for the benefit of our church, our community, and our world.

All youth grades 7 through 12 are invited to participate.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cquccyouth>

YOUTH Events Calendar

Saturday, Dec. 13, 9:00 a.m.
Confirmation

Thursday, Dec. 23, 6:00 p.m.
Toys for Tots

February 13-15, 2008
Winter CYE

Children's Christmas Pageant

Sunday, Dec. 14 - Pageant practice during Sunday School

Saturday Dec. 20 from 11 am - 2 pm - Pageant practice and Christmas luncheon. Practice our parts with costumes and props. Have lunch and receive a special treat!

Sunday, Dec. 21 - Dress rehearsal during Sunday school

"The Backward Christmas Pageant" during Worship Service

"This will change everything," people say when something new or dramatic happens in their lives, and often it does just that. How do we tell the story of how the birth of Christ changed things long ago and how it continues to change things? Tell the story backward! The birth of a baby two thousand years ago changed everything--God's grace is timeless. The pageant ends with, "This will change everything."

Come to worship on December 21 and support our children in their retelling of the old story that changed the world.

Confirmation

Because of a funeral last Saturday, the Confirmation class session scheduled on **Saturday, December 6**, has been rescheduled to **Saturday, December 13, from 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**



Winter CYE

Mark your calendars! The Winter Conference Youth Event will be held **February 13-15, 2008**, at United Theological Seminary in New Brighton, MN. Registration forms for this event will be available soon. Scholarships are available for this event! Please see Rev. Bryan for more details.

Youth Events

Call to the 27th General Synod

Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

The 27th General Synod of the United Church of Christ will convene Friday afternoon, June 26, 2009 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and will adjourn at the close of business on Tuesday evening, June 30. With the Grand River flowing beside the DeVos Convention Center, the theme for this year's Synod will be "Immerse Yourself!" We will be reminded of the waters of baptism that signify the grace of God and welcomed each of us into the community of Christ's people. We will consider the important significance of water for life on this planet, and our responsibility to care for and share the water that covers our earth in a time of accelerating climate change and environmental crisis. We will reflect on how our Church will immerse itself in the mission of God for justice and peace.

Guest registration opens in December and there will be instructions for registering on the website. Please join us in Grand Rapids for the 27th General Synod, and "immerse yourself!"

John H. Thomas, General Minister and President

The Story of the Birth of Christ Told with Humor, Mystery and Awe!

The Backward Christmas Pageant

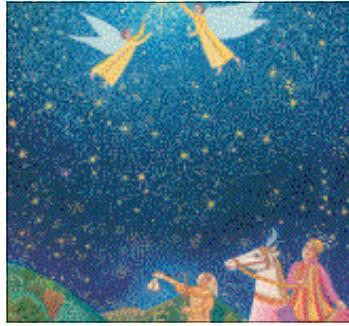
Dennis Hartin



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

UCC Christmas Fund

Our joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called to share widely, through our witness and gifts, both to loved ones and to distant neighbors.



The Christmas Fund Offering (formerly the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross), one of four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ (UCC), is an important way of sharing our joy at God's renewing and life-giving grace. The Offering, which is administered by the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance of the Pension Boards on behalf of the UCC, is an expression of joy and gratitude to, and for, those who serve the church.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay employees and Christmas Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants.

When the United Church of Christ celebrated 50 years of ministry in 2007, the Christmas Fund celebrated 105 years of continuous ministry.

Facts taken from a 1953 publication indicate that: "In 1902, a little money was collected and special Christmas gifts were sent to ten older ministers." The same article also reports that \$121,054 was received for the Christmas Fund in 1952.

A little more than 50 years later, in 2007 the Christmas Fund received \$1,571,050 and nearly 1,500 families were assisted. Our goal is to be able to provide at least \$1,650,000 in assistance from the 2008 appeal.

The theme for the 2008 Offering is: "Don't Be Afraid, Shout!" We are commissioned to boldly proclaim Good News, that the incarnation of God in the Christ Child was happened – Good News that a new day, God's day, was about to dawn. The church today is the incarnate presence of the Christ. We are called to be the presence of the Christ in the lives of those who have served the church so faithfully, as well as to usher in a new day for God's whole earth.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care. We will receive this offering in Worship on Sunday, Dec. 21, or mail it to the church any time.

Greeters Wanted

Each week we welcome members and visitors to worship with a smile and a friendly greeting. Please prayerfully consider helping with this ministry. Greeters are needed both before and after worship each Sunday. If you would like to volunteer to be a greeter, please sign up on the sheet in the Gathering Room. A few minutes of your time will make a world of difference in the life of our church! Volunteer to be a greeter today!



What's Happening in Sunday School?

Sunday, December 14

9:00 a.m. Adult Advent Study
9:00 a.m. Sunday School with Christmas Pageant Practice

Saturday, December 20

11:00 a.m. Pageant Practice and Christmas Luncheon

Sunday, December 21

9:00 a.m. Adult Advent Study
9:00 a.m. Sunday School with Dress Rehearsal for Pageant
10:15 a.m. Worship with Sunday School Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 28

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday, January 4, 2009

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday, January 11

9:00 a.m. Welcome Back to Sunday School

Sundays, January 18--March 1

9:00 a.m. Sunday School—
New Rotation: Control Yourself, Learning about the spiritual gift of self control



December

- 1 - Joyce Fries
- 2 - Lyle Kohls
Chris McCoy
Dave Utsch
- 3 - Yvonne Bonngard
Corry Vink
- 4 - Donna Bothun
- 5 - Kylie Hanson
- 6 - Bill Bothun
Bobbi Jo Janicek
- 7 - Dale Marty
- 8 - Brittany Marty
- 9 - Melissa Hanson
- 10 - Sandra Dahlke
Margaret
Eberspacher
- 11 - Daniel Schmidt
- 13 - Bradley Bender
- 14 - Andrew Bloomquist
- 15 - Allyson Youngquist
- 16 - Theresa
Fritze-Nelson
Kasandra
Westerberg
- 19 - Rob Howard
- 21 - Gary Eddy
- 22 - Christy Eddy
- 23 - Gordon Siedschlag
Emily Spicer
Chase Wilkinson
- 24 - Gloria Mathison
Kathy Weber
- 25 - Roxanne Burns
- 26 - Kate McCoy
Nina Kottke
- 27 - Kathryn Biscoe
Jessica Longtine
Jim Stoker
- 28 - Kyle Kropelnicki
- 29 - Bonnie Vink
- 30 - Red Spicer
Leah Sutter

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES

Deepening Knowledge, Deepening Faith

Academy for Vital Christianity

The Academy for Vital Christianity of United Theological Seminary, in partnership with the Minnesota Conferences of the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church, offers a wide variety of classes designed for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the Christian tradition. EARLY REGISTRATION DISCOUNT OF \$175 AVAILABLE. Visit www.unitedseminary.edu/ for more information, or contact Diane Davies at (651) 436-7234.

SPRING 2009 ACADEMY OFFERINGS

Reading the Prophets in the 21st Century with **Richard Weis** (5 sessions, starts February 19)

Essentials of Christian Education with **Barbara Anne Keely** (2 sessions, starts February 21)

Transforming Conflict: Dealing with Difficult People in Your Congregation with **Mark Sundby** (2 sessions, starts February 21)

Bible 101 with **Carolyn Pressler** (2 sessions, starts February 24)

Understanding the New Testament in Today's World with **Marilyn Salmon** (2 sessions, starts February 28)

Stewardship: Grateful and Graceful Living with **Joseph Bush** (2 sessions, starts April 4)

Remember When?

Recollections of Christmas Eve by Emily Lambrecht Biscoe

In the 1930's most people in our area were farmers, so at our house the cows had to be milked before we went to church. Our tree was up and Santa always came when we were in church.

As we arrived at church, it was all lit up and it would be packed with people. The Christmas tree was very big and reached all the way to the ceiling. It was trimmed with some simple ornaments and candles, some of which were lit. The Sunday School program was always on Christmas Eve. All the Sunday School classes would participate. I remember I always had a verse about 4 lines long to memorize. The Sunday School teachers would work hard to prepare the children for the program. There was always a manger, with Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, the wise men and shepherds. Christmas carols would be sung. The church was heated by a furnace that was in a hole in the ground under the church—no basement. The heat would come up into the church through a 48" square metal grate.

There would be bags of peanuts and candy under the tree that would be passed out when the program was over. Before Christmas a member of the church would visit each home to see how many bags a family wanted. The cost was 25 cents per bag. My dad would always pay 75 cents so me and my sisters would each get a bag of peanuts in the shell and candy. It was an exciting evening for us, and we had looked forward to it for days. When we left the church, we knew we had celebrated the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and that all through the year we would be going back to our church weekly to worship our Lord who is the basis for our faith, hope and love.

Then we would go home and see if Santa had come to our house. Sure enough, there would be three dolls or games, one gift for each of us under the tree. Our mother would make cocoa and joy would fill our hearts. It was Christmas.



Many Thanks

This fall there was a team of men who worked all day to trim trees to help prepare the church property for winter. Thanks to Rod Heuer, Derek Rasmussen, Jerry Perkins, and John Perkins for all their labors, and to Leona Perkins who provided lunch for the crew so they could keep working.



Thanks for Nativity Figurines

We thank Joyce Biscoe for her loving gift of the white porcelain nativity figurines we use to decorate for Advent and Christmas. The set grew this year with the addition of many new figures. Please take time to notice them on the altar and along the north side of the sanctuary in back, and thank Joyce for her beautiful gift.



Ornaments for Sale

To continue our church's 150th celebration, we are selling ornaments after church for the next several Sundays. The cost is \$5.00 each, and they are available in red, green, blue, or gold. The ornament has a picture of our church on it. What a great way to commemorate this special time in our church's heritage. Be sure to get one before they are all gone. Makes a terrific gift, too!



The 150th Celebration Committee

Gratitude Group at Work

Making and giving of prayer shawls is one of the many ministries of the Gratitude Group. This group meets on the first and third Mondays of each month in the Fellowship Room from 10:00 - 11:30. All are welcome!!!!



M&M's Help Feed Children

Remember to support Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) by purchasing a tube of mini M&M's for \$1, enjoy eating the candies, then fill the empty tube with quarters and bring them back to church. Filling the container with quarters 5 times feeds a child for a year. The display with tubes of mini M&M's is in the Gathering Room. Pick up a tube and leave a dollar if you would like to participate.



Carole's Cookies

Celebrating 12 years of Holiday Baking for your holiday entertaining or for a special gift. I offer cookies and candies by the dozen, also breads and fruitcake. I also do special trays of cookies and candies. If you would like to receive my holiday flyer, please call me at (651) 459-1518, or see me in church. Thank you, and a very happy blessed holiday season to all.

Carole Weitzel Biscoe



Cross Connection

A Periodical Newsletter of
**Cottage Grove United Church
of Christ**

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of every month
Edited by Becky Graff

**Back issues available on our
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www.cgucc.org**

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Submit articles via e-mail at
cgucc@usfamily.net or drop
them off at the office.

Becky Graff, Editor

Contact Us

Cottage Grove United Church of Christ

7008 Lamar Avenue South
Cottage Grove MN 55016
(651)459-1501 www.cgucc.org

Rev. Bryan Olson, Pastor
olsonbw@hotmail.com

Emily Olson, Director of Music

Becky Graff,
Administrative Assistant
cgucc@usfamily.net

**Deb Hanson, Brenda
Herrmann, BobbiJo Janicek**,
Sunday School Team

Sheri Wohlers, Custodian
sherileewohlers@msn.com

Diane Davies, Gifts Coordinator
dianedavies48@yahoo.com

Office Hours: Monday-Friday
9:00 a.m.—12:00 noon

Cottage Grove United Church of Christ
7008 Lamar Avenue South
Cottage Grove, MN. 55016-2397
Phone: 651-459-1501
Email: cgucc@usfamily.net

STOP!!
If you would rather not receive this news
letter, please call or send an e-mail, and we
will take you off our mailing list. Thanks!



May your Christmas be shared with those you love.
May it be filled with thankfulness for Christmases past,
joy and inner peace for today,
and hope for the future based upon God's promises in Jesus Christ.