

# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## DECEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

I hope and pray everyone had a safe and healthy Thanksgiving with family and friends. Let's remember and be thankful for the time we had with our loved ones.

As we look into December, we can be thankful for, no snow on the ground (as of this writing anyway). We think of December and we think as the before mentioned snow and the celebration of Christmas with your family and friends. For those of you with kids, there is usually at least one gift that you will need to assemble. How many of us don't look at the instructions, Ok, mostly guys. Well last year sometime (not Christmas). We bought a little shelving unit that needed to be put together. Ericka usually put's all these types of projects on her own. There was one diagram with an "X" on it. Then there was another set of instruction, that said it was the correct way to put it together. There was one big difference, a second person was suggested to help. Knowing that she could probably do it by herself, but she waited for me to get home. The process wasn't meant to be done alone.

"In Romans 12, Paul urges new believers not try to do life in Jesus alone. Instead of seeing themselves as self-sufficient and thinking of themselves (vs. 3), they needed to see themselves as part of an interdependent body, where ever members need each other's help (vs. 4-8)."

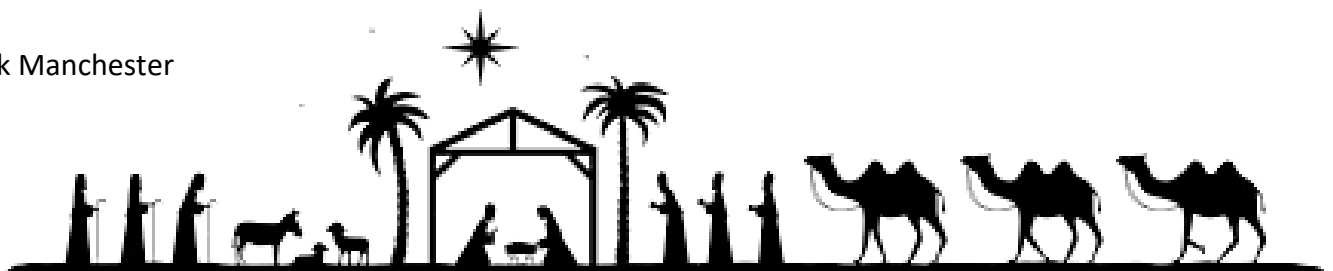
As Jesus helps us learn how to "be devoted to one another in love" (vs. 10), we can experience life in harmony with each other, where one another's needs of grief and joy (vs. 13, 15) are never carried alone. Oh, and by the way we had a great time putting the shelving unit together with smiles and laughter. We did it together.

So, this holiday season when you are "together" with family and friends, enjoy the smiles and laughter with each other. But, do not forget the real reason for the season, the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the real reason for the season.

Let us Pray;

Dear God, please help me to rely daily on your spirit to unite and guide me in how to share life together.  
AMEN.

Kirk Manchester



## Poinsettia Memorial Tree

We have a beautiful tree that will be used to display poinsettia flowers in memory/ in honor of loved ones. Instead of purchasing a live poinsettia, (which most people don't want after Christmas Eve) your donation will be used to "purchase" a poinsettia flower to be displayed in the Poinsettia Memorial Tree in memory/in honor of your loved ones. Each week, we will see the list on the screens before the worship service and see poinsettias added each Sunday.

**Please have forms  
and donations into  
the office by Mon-  
day, December  
22nd to be includ-  
ed in the Christ-  
mas Eve bulletin  
insert.**



## PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

Lois Jacobs  
c/o Marcia Wenberg  
1315 S. Royce St.  
Sioux City, IA 51106

Jeanetta Knief  
c/o Gracewell  
114 S 20th Street  
Denison, IA 51442

Delores Nemitz  
c/o Gracewell  
114 S 20th Street  
Denison, IA 51442

Chris Adkins  
c/o Gracewell  
114 S 20th Street  
Denison, IA 51442

Naomi Friedrichsen  
c/o Gracewell  
114 S 20th Street  
Denison, IA 51442



## **POINSETTIA MEMORIAL TREE Fund**

IN HONOR OF or IN MEMORY OF: \_\_\_\_\_

GIVEN BY: \_\_\_\_\_

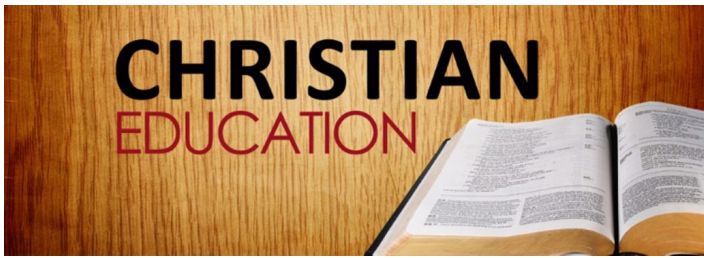
SPECIAL WORDING: \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF DONATION: \$ \_\_\_\_\_



PLEASE RETURN FORM and DONATION TO CHURCH OFFICE or OUTDOOR LOCKING DROP-BOX **BY DECEMBER 22nd** TO BE INCLUDED IN THE CHRISTMAS EVE BULLETIN INSERT.



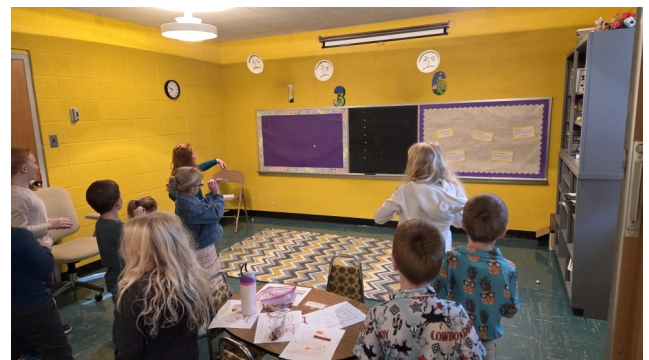


The Sunday School children have studied our Church, dived into stories of David and Daniel, listened to Psalm 104 about our Earth, and did a lesson on being thankful. We held our Thanksgiving themed Mystery Supper. Some examples of items are scotcheroos as

Plymouth Rock, meat balls as cannon balls, forks as hay stackers, and fruit punch as sailor's ale. The kids and their friends really enjoyed it. Thank you to Jill for leading this, along with Susie and Linda for their donations. We have been practicing for our Christmas Program that is coming up December 14th. I appreciate all the volunteers in the classroom and those helping with music! We will have an additional practice December 10th at 5:30pm. Supper and cookie decorating will be included.

As this year starts to come to a close, it has me already excited for next year. We have a lot of Christian Ed and youth activities planned, including a "Church Lock In" on January 10th. More details coming next month. I have included an opportunity to voice opinions in an effort to build on our Church's foundation below. I

pray you and your families get to enjoy the true meaning of Christmas all month!







Churches have been struggling. Struggling with attendance, youth participation, and so many other things. Our Church is no different. I understand we can not please everyone, but I (Jessica) would like to hear your input! It will stay anonymous, but I will make a report of the feedback available prior to our Annual Meeting. Please leave positive and constructive criticism below. Let's grow our Church and make the next ten years even better!

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\*Please leave in the Church offering or in the Church drop box at the front of our Church by December 29th.

### DECEMBER GREETERS

December 7- Steve & Roberta Jepsen

December 14- Barry Nemitz & Scott Nemitz

December 21- Pam Gronau & Janet Lafrentz

December 24 (Christmas Eve Service)

-Jeremy & Amy Paulsen

December 28- Charlie & Kelli Anders

### DECEMBER ACOLYTES

December 7- Jersey Bral & Jayton Bral

December 14- Hayden Fineran & Cale Paulsen

December 21- Taryn Johannsen & Ella Anders

December 24 (Christmas Eve Service)

-Jett Paulsen & Cale Paulsen

December 28- Haxton Fineran

& Brayton Johannsen



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|----|------------------|
| 1  | Al Friedrichsen  |
| 2  | Brian Sieren     |
| 4  | Tracy Kastner    |
| 5  | Sarah Fineran    |
| 5  | Aidan Larson     |
| 7  | Adam Kragel      |
| 7  | Lucas Kragel     |
| 10 | Shari Thies      |
| 10 | Emma Strandburg  |
| 11 | Wendy Bumann     |
| 11 | Sara McDonald    |
| 11 | Cassandra Slater |
| 16 | Steven Jepsen    |
| 18 | Janelle Lewis    |
| 19 | Paul Outhouse    |
| 20 | James Lacey      |
| 21 | Phyllis Sedore   |
| 22 | Leisha Kragel    |
| 23 | Brittani Briggie |
| 24 | Jayden Denker    |
| 27 | Randy Kragel     |
| 28 | Arlis Bahnsen    |
| 29 | Tina Wellendorf  |
| 30 | Shelby Stender   |

Thank you to everyone who helped decorate the sanctuary following the worship service on November 23rd. Our hymnal decorations look awesome on the big tree. Our Chrismon found a new home on a tree in the Avenue of Trees. Thank you to the Property Committee for hanging the blue parameints, the large star, and settings up the outdoor Nativity. The weather was perfect!



**Please contact the office or a nominating member, if you are interested in serving on the Christian Service Fund Investment committee.**



The Outreach Committee teamed up with Christmas Crusade and adopted 6 kids this year. All of the ID tags were taken the first day they were displayed (November 23rd). How awesome is that?!

Please have all gifts wrapped with ID tag attached and back under the tree by noon on December 10th.



**All giving must be in by  
Sunday, December 28th to be  
included in 2025.**

**Christmas Eve worship service is at 6 PM on Wednesday, December 24, 2025.**

### **2025 Giving Statements**

If you would like a giving statement printed for 2025, please call or email the church office by January 9, 2025. **Statements will *only* be printed if you contact the office.** In a cost saving effort, statements will be placed in your church mailbox to be picked up, can be emailed (please provide email address when you call) or if you prefer, will be mailed. Thank you for working with us on this cost saving effort.

## **DECEMBER STEWARDSHIP**

We need to back up a month and celebrate our annual fundraiser chicken dinner. Once again, the weather was friendly. Many were in the fields needing to be fed their noon meal. That meant the numbers were good. Many people worked together like a well-oiled machine to plan, prepare, serve, and clean up after the effort. I saw people helping from age 5 to well into their 80's. I don't think our 90 plus congregants worked but I am pretty sure they bought a meal, donated cash or supplies, or baked. Every thing helps. The workers pitched in wherever they were needed with rare disagreement that was followed by apology rather than years long feuds! It was a great success. Much thanks to the organizing committee and all who contributed in some way.

This year we have attempted to educate you on the special offerings the UCC collects through the year to support missions of our general conference. December is the month for the Christmas Fund collection. This fund supports active and retired UCC clergy and lay employees with emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks. December is the month to consider the plight of low-income retirees with UCC's special mission offerings. Our local church has chosen December 7th as our collection date this year.

Although in recent years clergy and lay employee salaries and benefits have improved, those who served in years gone by were not as well reimbursed. These are the ones who need a bit of special help especially in the current times of inflation. Try to give a gift, small or large, to support this effort.



## Council Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2025

Through group text, John Fineran stated he talked with Chris Ullirch . Chris agreed to \$375 per acre like council suggested, but Chris wanted to sign a 3 year contract. A motion was made to give a 3 year contract at \$375 per acre to Chris. It was seconded. Motion carried.

October 15, 2025

Council members in attendance were Josie Krohnke, Seth Neubauer, John Dorfler and Leisha Kragel. Kirk Manchester, Jaden Schug and Candice Bral were also present. John Bahnsen, Roberta Jepsen and Jill Sedore were absent.

After a text discussion amongst Council, Jaden Schug, an Under the Son Childcare board member was invited to the Council meeting. She discussed the struggles the daycare has been facing because of the long wait for the grant to come through. They still have a loan, because of the interest that accumulated while waiting. They have also had several large and unexpected bills come in recently.

**Call to Order:** Council President, John Fineran opened the meeting.

**Opening Prayer:** Kirk opened the meeting with a prayer.

**Approval of Minutes:** A motion was made to approve the minutes from the September 17, 2025 meeting. It was seconded. Motion carried.

**Approval of Financial Report:** A motion was made to approve the financial report. It was seconded. Motion carried.

**Bills to be paid:** A motion was made to pay the October bills with the addition of \$263.22 to Schumacher Elevator for quarterly maintenance. It was seconded. Motion carried.

### **Committee Reports:**

**CE:** Sunday School and Light Lounge are going well. Jessica has planned a youth event at a Corn Maze near Hornick for the 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders on Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup>. Everyone will meet at the church at 2pm and come back to the church following the corn maze for supper. Trunk or Treat is planned for Sunday, October 26<sup>th</sup> from noon-2pm and Missions will be roasting hotdogs and marshmallows during the event. The Christmas program is being planned, no definite date yet.

**CSFD:** The committee decided via text to pay for Taylor to complete some continuing education.

**CSFI:** No meeting.

**Property:** The lawn has been watered and is looking really nice.

**Spiritual Life:** Met with the Missions Committee. Both committees agreed it would be beneficial to combine. Members from each committee will be on the new committee, the Outreach Committee.

**Missions & Outreach:** Met with the Spiritual Life committee. They will be serving hotdogs and smores for trunk or treat.

**Stewardship:** No report

**Endowment:** No report.

**Pastor's Report:** Council reviewed the report submitted, listing visiting elderly, giving communion. Kirk attended the Annual Conference in Des Moines and stated the biggest thing that came out of discussion was the amount to pay a sub.

## **Old Business:**

**John Wulf Money:** Discussion about giving money to the Under the Son Childcare to help them get through a tough situation continued. John Fineran stated that the daycare should also ask Immanuel. A motion was made to give Under the Son Childcare \$5,000 of John Wulf money. It was seconded. Motion carried.

**Farm Leases:** A new lease for Chris Ullrich needs to be written due to the vote that occurred via text messages. It was brought up that we should offer Mike Hargens a 3 year contract as well. Seth will talk to Mike.

**Technology:** Candice reported the balcony desktop computer is fixed, but on Sunday there was issues with the sound. (nothing to do with the computer) The sound cut out on the Facebook livestream as well as on the audio card.

## **New Business:**

**Propane tank:** The tank at the parsonage belongs to Johnson propane. The church has switched to AgState. It was decided that when the tank at the parsonage is empty, it will be put on the curb. A new tank from AgState is \$3,200 to own or \$100 per year to lease one. A motion was made to lease a tank from AgState at \$100/year. It was seconded. Motion carried. Seth will call AgState.

**By-Laws:** A proposal using Roberta's recommendations to change the bylaws concerning the 2 committees combining into the Outreach committee was presented. A motion was made and seconded. Motion carried. A proposal change to the nominating by laws was presented as well, changing the number of members from 6 members to a proposed 4 members. A motion was made and seconded. Motion carried.

**JAC Grant Thank you's:** Council passed around thank you cards received from recipients of JAC Grants

**Christmas Eve Service Planning:** Kirk stated the service will be held at 6 pm on Christmas Eve. When asked how the Christmas Eve Service will be different from our usual Sunday services, he stated he will have to look into it. More discussion at the next meeting.

**Planning for Lent:** Lent begins February 18<sup>th</sup>, Council will do the first meal. The cross was well received last year, so we will do that again. As far as plans for the services, more discussion is needed.

**Copier:** Visual Edge IT (copier) rep presented a proposal to office staff showing that by upgrading our copier, we will be saving \$23.90 per month on the copier bill. The new contract would be for 5 years, it does include maintenance and toner like the previous lease. A motion was made to sign the contract and seconded. Motion carried.

The next meeting will possibly be November 19, 2025 at 6:30.

With no further discussion, a motion was made to adjourn and was seconded. The Lord's Prayer was recited and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Candice Bral  
Office and Council Secretary



## ***Who will be our 2025 Avenue of Trees Champion?***

We will be having a friendly competition again this year. We would like the congregation to vote for their favorite tree during Advent (November 30-Christmas Eve) There are ballots and a ballot box on the table in the Narthex. Please only vote one time. We will announce our "2025 Avenue of Trees Champion" on December 28th during the worship service.



The Outreach Committee is hosting a soup supper at our church at 5 pm on Wednesday, December 17. There is a sign up sheet in the Narthex; this will give us an idea of how much soup to prepare. Come enjoy a meal and fellowship before we head to Faith Bible Church in Mapleton for their "Walk through Bethlehem."

Faith Bible Church in Mapleton is hosting a free "walk through Bethlehem" event on Wednesday, December 17th from 6pm-8pm at 305 Sioux Street. Experience the sights, sounds, and smells of Bethlehem. Upon arrival, guests will begin with a guided group tour of Bethlehem inside the church. After the tour, there is a hands-on marketplace to explore, with activities, samples, demonstrations, local Bethlehem residents selling their wares, and simple crafts to complete. To conclude the night, there will be a live petting zoo outside.



**Children's Christmas Program will be during the worship service on Sunday, December 14th.**



## HYMNS ON THE CHIMES

**December 7<sup>th</sup> 10:00 AM** "*Amazing Grace*" In memory of Melvin & Karen Miller from their family.

**December 9<sup>th</sup> 6:45 PM** "*On Eagle's Wings*" In memory of Eldo Paulsen from his family.

**December 24<sup>th</sup> 5:00 PM** "*O Little Town of Bethlehem*" In memory of Hans B. Carstensen

**December 24<sup>th</sup> 9:00 PM** "*Silent Night*" Given by the UCC Sunday School.

**December 24<sup>th</sup> 9:00 PM** "*O Holy Night*" In honor of Christmas Eve

**December 25<sup>th</sup> 9:00 AM** "*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*" From the UCC Church

**December 25<sup>th</sup> 9:00 AM** "*Go Tell it on the Mountain.*" From the UCC Church

**December 25<sup>th</sup> 9:00 AM** "*The First Noel*" From the UCC Church

**December 25<sup>th</sup> 9:00 AM** "*O Come All Ye Faithful*" From the UCC Church

**December 25<sup>th</sup> 9:00 AM** "*We Three Kings*" From the UCC Church

**December 26<sup>th</sup> 5:00 PM** "*Joy to the World*" In memory of Alice Johnson from her family

**December 31<sup>st</sup> 7:00 PM** "*Come Thou Almighty King*" From the UCC Church

**December 31<sup>st</sup> 8:00 PM** "*Auld Lang Syne*" From the UCC Church

## October Financials

Income:		
Weekly envelopes	\$	2740.00
Loose Offering	\$	263.25
Seasonal Offering	\$	7.00
Misc. Offerings	\$	0.00
Misc. Income	\$	277.03
Chicken Dinner Income/ Donations	\$	6588.00
Interest Income-Gen. Fund	\$	12.57
Investment Income	\$	0.00
Total Income:	\$	9887.85
Expenses:		
Association Dues	\$	0.00
Insurance & Taxes	\$	1293.69
Janitor Supplies	\$	73.60
Misc. Expenses	\$	180.00
Music	\$	247.40
Office Expense	\$	635.51
Pastor Expenses	\$	5436.26
Payroll Expenses	\$	0.00
Repairs and Maintenance	\$	11145.62
Supplies	\$	630.23
Support Staff Salaries	\$	3395.50
Utilities	\$	877.76
Total expense:	\$	23915.57
Net Ordinary Income	\$	(-14027.72)

## October Numbers for the Books

Date:	Attendance:	Contributions:
October 5	38	\$345.00
October 12	83	\$1338.00
October 18 (Sat)	19	\$457.00
October 26	61	\$225.25
Total:	201	\$ 2365.25
Average:	50	\$ 591.31

**Committee Reports for the Annual Report are due in the office by Friday, December 19th.**

**Santa Claus Day is Saturday, December 6th. The Outreach Committee is asking the congregation for donations of breakfast pastries and desserts to help with the meal. They can be brought to the community building Saturday morning, December 6th. There is a signup sheet in the Narthex. Thank you for your support!**

