

Congregational Tidings

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



A weekly newsletter



December 18, 2019

**Fourth Sunday of
Advent**
December 22, 2019
10:30 am

**Pastor Scott Spence will
present the message:**

A Father's Song

Scripture Reading
Luke 1:5-13, 57-80

Worship Leader
John Mardis

Deacon-In-Charge
Cindy Thompson

Acolytes
Rocky and Mary Kay
Petersen

December Ushers
Craig Driver
Todd Ellison
Steve Peters

Christmas Eve Handbell Concert

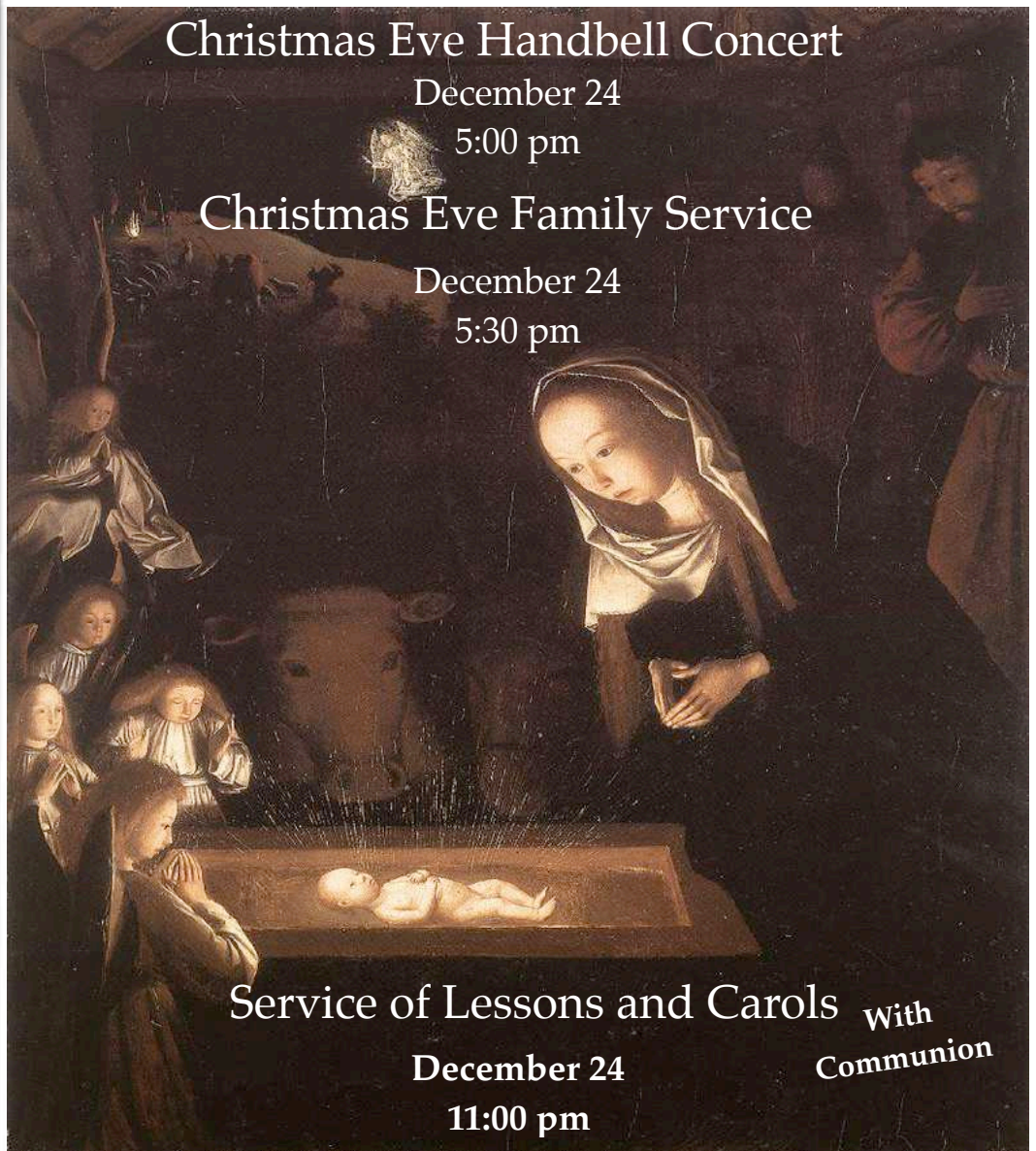
December 24

5:00 pm

Christmas Eve Family Service

December 24

5:30 pm



Service of Lessons and Carols

With
Communion

December 24

11:00 pm

*Scott
Hudson
Kyle*

Merry Christmas!
from your
First Congregational
United Church of Christ staff.
Cooper

*Katie
Michelle
Luke*

A Note from Pastor Scott

Jesus Christ promises to all who trust him forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, his presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in his kingdom which has no end.

The UCC Statement of Faith

One of my favorite books on the art of Christian ministry is entitled *This Odd and Wondrous Calling*. Written by two UCC ministers the title is a spot-on description of what it means to serve the church in any capacity. It's a mixture of anything and everything in the range of human experience.

As I write this note our hardworking FCUCC staff is getting ready for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, two Christmas Eve services, and all of the end of the year activities that go on at our church. This is in addition to everything else they do to prepare and celebrate this season with their friends and families.

I encourage you to take a moment and thank any members of our staff that you may encounter in the next week or so. I know that they would appreciate your affirmation and support. We have a great team here at church and I am honored to work with them!

If we look beyond our church community, we must admit that this season seems to be even odder and hopefully more wondrous than most. The news brings stories of division, partisan rancor, and the breakdown of civility on all levels. All indications are that 2020 will bring not only an election season but impeachment-something that has occurred only twice before in our nation's history. Many of us may secretly dread going home for the holidays for fear the table talk will turn to politics and the resulting arguments.

As your pastor I strive to be non-partisan in my preaching and my personal relationships. I wish I could provide a sure set of steps to avoid holiday tension. I find taking long walks can help sometimes for what it is worth.

What I can provide for this season and into 2020 is this-a reminder of who we serve and to whom we belong. A reminder of who we ultimately put our trust in as believers and why. I am sure our church family has a wide range of opinions on the subject of Caucus Night and impeachment. But God's call on us and our lives does not end there.

I invite you to read and reflect on the passage above from the UCC Statement of Faith.

It is a call to ignore politics? No. Are we to step back from helping the most vulnerable and trying to make our communities better? Of course not. Does the call to *do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God* end once we leave worship? Not at all.

But the passage does remind us that we should not place our ultimate hope in politics or politicians. Impeachment, acquittal, or any vote total from the caucuses will not ultimately save us- for our ultimate hope is in Jesus and his redemptive work for all creation. Everything else follows from there.

As always, I am available if you want to chat. May God bless you and your family this Christmas season!

Pastor Scott

Office Closed & Tidings/ Bulletin Deadlines

Michelle will be out of the office Tues., Dec. 24th through Wed., Jan. 1st for the Holidays. Any announcements you have are always welcome but please see the following special deadlines:

Christmas Eve Bulletins:

Thurs., 12/19 by 9am;

Sunday, 12/22 Bulletin:

Thurs., 12/19 by 1pm;

Wednesday, 12/25 Tidings and

Sunday, 12/29 Bulletin:

Mon., 12/23 by 9am;

****NO Tidings the week of New Years.**



Mitten Tree

We have put up a Mitten Tree again this year. New hats, scarves, boots, gloves and mittens are appreciated

to decorate the Crossroads area of the church. Thank you!

End of Year Information

Donations postmarked by December 31st are credited for the 2019 tax year.

Also, the 2020 budget is nearing completion and will be available for review the week before the annual meeting.

2020 Offering Envelopes

2020 Offering Envelopes have been ordered and will be placed in the Crossroads as soon as they are available.

We apologize for the delay!

Public Office Hours

Join Pastor Scott at Fat Cup (*Fletcher, W'loo*) today from 3-5pm for the last POH of 2019. We will resume on January 8th at Cup of Joe in Cedar Falls.

Christmas Eve Pageant

Any youth interested in participating in the Christmas Eve Pageant, please contact Katie (katie@firstcongucc.org). Practices will continue during the Sunday School hour on December 22nd.

Church Connections

Former choir section leader, *Kelly Hill*, will be performing in Cedar Rapids Opera Theater's "Madama Butterfly" on Friday, January 17 at 7:30 p.m. and on Sunday, January 20 at 2:00 p.m. For more information and tickets, contact www.cropera.org/madama-butterfly.

Also, Cedar Rapids Opera Theater has another church connection - - Their executive director is the daughter of Roger and Joanne Lane - - *Lori Lane!*

UCC Christmas Offering

This offering will be taken during our Worship Service this Sunday. Envelopes will be in the Sunday bulletin, or you can pick one up in the Library.

Prayer for the Week

Loving God,

Sometimes I can look at someone and see their pain. I can see their loneliness and feel their sadness. Sometimes I look in the mirror and see those things in me. Help me to not turn away or ignore what I or others are really feeling. Give me the patience to sit with my neighbors as they navigate their pain and welcome their accompaniment as I navigate my own. Through it all, help us all remember that we are not alone. You are with us always.

Amen.

-Anne Lamont

Sunday School December 22, 2019

This Sunday, all youth are to meet in the chapel and then will proceed to pageant practice.

The Adult class will meet in the Friendship Room

There will be **No** Sunday School December 29th. We will resume normal schedule on January 5th

Weekly Events

Wed., December 18

3-5pm - Public Office Hours
6:00 pm - Potluck
6:30 pm - Choir Practice
7:00 pm - Pastor's Class
Youth Group

Thurs., December 19

6:00 pm - Bells Practice

Sun., December 22

9:00 am - Sunday School
10:30 am - Worship

Tues., December 24

Christmas Eve Schedule:
5:00 - Handbell Choir
5:30 - Family Christmas Eve Service with pageant
11:00 - Lessons & Carols Service with communion

Church office Closed December 24th through 29th and January 1st

Grin and Grow Child Care Launches Fundraising Campaign With \$50,000 Match from the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa



December 12, 2019 – Grin and Grow Child Care in Waterloo has launched a matching gift campaign to raise funds to support the organization’s operations and to increase the quality of care for children they serve. The Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa will match Grin and Grow’s funds raised, dollar-for-dollar up to \$50,000.

“We want to help ensure this campaign is a game-changer for Grin and Grow,” said Kaye Englin, President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa. “Quality and accessible child care continues to be a barrier for many in Black Hawk County, throughout Iowa, and across the country. We have to begin addressing the child care crisis here locally and Grin and Grow is an organization that is ready to make bold changes to help do that.”

Grin and Grow Child Care is a private, nonprofit organization established in 1943 and currently serves 83 children, ages six weeks to five years old.

“One of the things we’re excited about is bolstering the curriculum and assessment of the kids,” said Ed Gruenwald, Director of Operations and Development at Grin and Grow. “We are helping kids that have economic barriers, kids that are new to the country and have other unique barriers. We’re helping them get ready for school so when they do begin public school, they won’t be starting behind. The best investment we can make in our community is giving kids a head start early in life.”

Financial gifts of any size to the Grin and Grow campaign are welcome. Checks should be made payable to Grin and Grow Child Care and can be mailed to the Center at 608 W 4th Street, Waterloo, IA 50702. Gifts can also be made on Grin and Grow’s website at www.grinandgrowchildcare.org. Donors can take advantage of normal federal deductions for charitable gifts.

For more information about Grin and Grow or their matching gift campaign, contact Ed Gruenwald, director of operations and development at Grin and Grow, at 319-529-3459 or egruewald@gmail.com.



Children play outside at Grin and Grow Child Care in Waterloo.



Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa staff present a \$50,000 check to Ed Gruenwald, director of operations and development, at Grin and Grow Child Care. Grin and Grow will use the \$50,000 for a matching gift campaign to raise funds to increase the quality of care for children they serve.