

THE  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

# CHURCH LIFE



WINTER EDITION December 2023 – February 2024

## SUNDAY WORSHIP 10 AM

In-Person & Online

## SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:15 AM

Ages 4 - 10

## LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

THE CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH UCC-  
ROCHESTER, MN

## AT-A-GLANCE:

### Sunday, December 17

Christmas Play  
Advent Festival

### Wednesday, December 20

#### BULLETIN DEADLINE:

Content & announcements for  
Sunday, December 24 & 31

### Thursday, Dec. 21 at 6 PM

Blue Christmas

### Sunday, December 24

10 AM & 6 PM

#### Christmas Eve

Christmas Offering:  
Veterans of the Cross

### January 14

Peace Sunday

### January 14 & 21

after worship

Info on Proposed Bylaws

### Saturday, January 20

Sledding at Steeplechase

### January 28 after worship

Annual Meeting

### February 11

Mardi Gras Sunday

### February 14 at 6 PM

Ash Wednesday

### February 25

Soup & Salad Potluck



Among my favorite parts of the Advent season is getting to sing together the classic hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." This somewhat haunting hymn perfectly encapsulates the patient expectation of the Advent season: something is coming, someone is coming, good news is coming, "O, Come, O Come, Emmanuel!"

In the book of Isaiah, a prophecy is given that a child will be born whose name will be Emmanuel, meaning "God with us." This is the good news that we anticipate at Advent, God has chosen to be with us. With us and for us. The utterly transcendent, ineffable, creator of the universe, has lovingly chosen to be with us, each and every one of us, and to be for us. Whatever challenges we face, whatever setbacks we encounter, we can face them with hope and confidence, because in the birth of Jesus Christ the God of all creation chooses to be in this life with us.

As we go about our Christmas errands, shopping, and decorating, wrapping, and baking, and preparing, let's try to remember that they are small ways we respond to the good news of God's presence with us. The gift of God's grace and love are what we seek to emulate as we think of others, give each other gifts, and share love with one another. The God who is love has chosen to dwell with us and to live for us, may we each cherish that good news this season and do our best to share it with others. - Rev. Andrew Greenhaw



## Come enjoy each Sunday of Advent with MUSIC!

- December 3 Chancel Choir singing beautiful selections with violin
- December 10 Bell Choir with joyous carols ringing
- December 17 Chancel Choir, Bell Choir, violin and Children! What Joy!
- December 24 Morning Service at 10 AM with Chancel Choir and violin
- December 24 Evening Service at 6 PM with Chancel Choir and Bell Choir



**BLUE CHRISTMAS** - The Christmas season is often a time for joyful celebration with family and friends. As joyous as the season is, it can also be a time of deep grief and pain. We do not always feel happy at Christmas and it can be hard to find time to be honest about our struggles during this joyful season. Our Blue Christmas worship is a time for us to honor where we are and to give voice to our struggles. Our **Blue Christmas worship will be on Thursday, December 21 at 6:00 PM** in the sanctuary. The service will be livestreamed on Facebook and our website.



**10 AM** - Join us for an upbeat and spirited worship service as we sing carols and celebrate the gift of Jesus. Plan to stay after for fellowship time with coffee and treats.

**6 PM** - Join us on Sunday evening for a traditional service with music, carols, and hearing the story of the birth of Christ. The service will include an impromptu pageant, beautiful music, the preached Word and candlelight singing of Silent Night.





On Sunday, December 17, a Christmas play will be presented during the worship service.

Anyone – of any age – who wants to participate in this year’s reenactment of the birth of Jesus is welcome! All participants in the play are asked to come for **play practice** with Pastor Andrew on **Sundays, December 3 and December 10 at 9:15 AM.**



### ADVENT FESTIVAL FOR ALL AGES

Join us on Sunday, December 17 for worship full of Christmas cheer followed by our annual Advent celebration for all ages. Following worship we will **decorate Christmas cookies, make ornaments,** and celebrate the incredible gift of Immanuel - God with us.



### YOUTH GROUP

meet Wednesdays from 6:30-8 PM in the Chapel for 6th-12th graders. We share a meal and fellowship while learning how to live as Christians.

**Christmas Party** – Wed, Dec. 20

**NO Youth Group** – Dec. 27 & Jan. 3

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**NO Sunday School & Confirmation:**  
December 31 and January 7

### THE BELL CHOIR WILL RING

at “The Wonder of the Nativity” event on **Saturday, December 2 from 4:00-5:00 PM** at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints located at 2300 Viola Road NE. This is a wonderful event where you can view beautiful nativity sets, have delicious treats, hear the Bell Choir ring your Christmas favorites... and it’s all FREE!! Come and enjoy! For more information about the event, go to <https://friendsofrochesternstake.com/nativity/>



### WOMEN’S SHELTER COLLECTION THRU DECEMBER 10



This Advent season we will be collecting for the Women's Shelter and Support Center, who provides temporary shelter and services to abused women, individuals and families while transforming our communities through education and leadership for social change. As we remember and celebrate the birth of Christ, let us be a blessing to the people at the Women's Shelter. **Deadline is Sunday, December 10** so that donations can be distributed before Christmas – please find the collection box in the Narthex.

**Christmas Wish List** (new & unwrapped): Gifts for teenage boys; infant and toddler toys; multicultural Barbies, dolls & toys; trucks and matchbox cars; Legos/Duplo’s; Lincoln Logs; teen makeup kits; educational toys; jewelry making kits.

**Ongoing Needs & General Donations** (new & unwrapped): socks, women’s and children’s pajamas; baby wipes; diapers (size 5) and pull-ups (size 3-4T, 5-6T); bath and hand towels, wash cloths; twin size sheets and blankets; new pillows; Kleenex, toilet paper, napkins, paper towels; eco-friendly plates, bowls and cutlery; new pots, pans, kitchen utensils; full size bottles of shampoo and conditioner; adult color/activity books & colored pencils; school supplies; gift cards (Visa, Target, Walmart, Hy-Vee, Kwik Trip); kids activities gift cards (movie passes, bowling, bounce house, arcade, pizza, Dairy Queen, McDonalds).

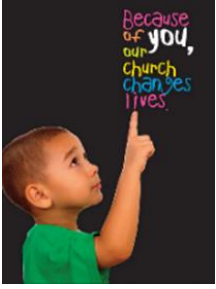


### A SPECIAL OFFERING TO THE CHRISTMAS FUND

for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund will be collected **Sunday, December 24.** This fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. **In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:**

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

Please give generously as you are able (be sure to write Christmas Fund in the memo of your check or your PayPal contribution).



## NOT TOO LATE TO RESPOND WITH YOUR 2024 ESTIMATE OF GIVING

The Stewardship and Benevolence Ministry Team wishes to express a heartfelt **THANK YOU** to all those who have submitted an estimate of giving for this year's stewardship campaign! We have received 66 responses with a total of **\$239,976 for our goal of \$325,898. We are still collecting Estimate of Giving cards for the year 2024.** Your generosity is what makes the Congregational Church UCC what it is for all of us. It allows us to continue and expand the ministry we are doing within our congregation and throughout the community. We ask that you prayerfully consider what you feel called to give in the coming year and fill out an Estimate of Giving Card to help us budget for another great year of ministry. Although our official stewardship campaign ended Sunday, November 26, we will continue to collect cards through the first of the year. Additional cards are available in the church office before or after worship each Sunday. You can also submit your Estimate of Giving by contacting Sarah in the church office, or by submit it online at <https://www.congoroch.org>.



**THANK YOU** – The Stewardship and Benevolence Ministry Team would like to thank everyone that joined us for the Thank Offering Dinner on November 12. It was nice to share a meal and celebrate our successful stewardship campaign.



### CONTRIBUTIONS DUE BY DECEMBER 31

Thank you to all who contributed to the support of our church in 2023 through estimates of giving and special offerings. If you would like your giving and gifts recorded for the year 2023, they must be received via Sunday offering, PayPal or mail delivery by **Sunday, December 31.**



### STAFF ON VACATION AFTER CHRISTMAS EVE

Sarah Struwe: December 25 - January 1  
Pastors Shannon and Andrew: December 25 - January 7

Early Bulletin Deadline: All content and announcements for Sunday, December 24 and Sunday, December 31 is **DUE Wednesday, December 20.**

**Guest ministers:** December 31-Sana Delcorozon and January 7-TBD.



### Ministry Teams & Committees:

Annual Reports are due to the office by **Wednesday, January 3, 2024**

**Thanks to all who decorated for Christmas... see pictures on the back page and Facebook!**



## ADULT EDUCATION

### MEN'S GROUP

1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday at 10 AM – Church  
3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday at 7:30 AM – Denny's N.

### WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Our ongoing Bible study, led by Co-pastors Andrew and Shannon, meets for one hour each **Tuesday from 2:00 – 3:00 PM via Zoom.** This winter we will continue reading of the book of **Acts.** We do a brief personal check-in, read a portion of scripture and follow-up with lively discussion. It's a great way to spend an hour if your calendar allows.

### MONTHLY BOOK GROUP

Meetings are on the **3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays at 10:30 AM** at church, plus a Zoom option for those who wish to join from home. All are welcome to join in these informal discussions of each book. All selections come in library book bags so there is no need to purchase any of them. Books are distributed at each meeting and also available in the church office, then returned immediately following each meeting. This winter's books are:

#### December 19

The Lost Apothecary by Penner

#### January 16

The Girl with the Louding Voice by Dare

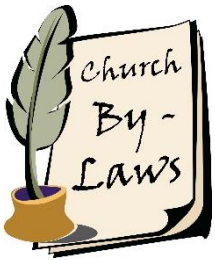
#### February 20

Our Woman in Moscow by Williams

### IMMIGRATION TEAM OF THE MINNESOTA CONFERENCE UCC

Mark your calendars on **Sunday, February 18** to join us for Adult Education hour with Diane Haines from the MN Conference who will address immigration issues: from border issues, humanitarian aid, legal aid and rights, detention facilities, indigenous rights on the borders, ecological impacts of the wall, and the current immigration environment. Hope to see you in the Parlor after worship!



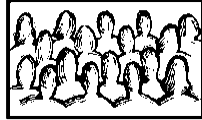


## PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED NEW BY-LAWS

New things are happening! In an effort to make our organization better reflect our current size and increase ease of participation, we are considering new By-Laws. Please plan to stay after worship on **Sunday, January 14 and 21** to learn more.

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**Sunday, January 28 at 11:00 AM**



The purpose of this Annual Meeting will be to consider and vote on a one-year trial of the proposed new governance structure, present updates from various church task forces and our 2024 stewardship campaign, approve our slate of officers, and approve our church budget for 2024.

Materials to review for this meeting, including the 2023 Annual Report and proposed 2024 budget, will be available by January 21 via eblast, link on our church website, or paper copy to pick up at church.



**IF SUNDAY WORSHIP IS CANCELLED** due to inclement weather, we will do our best to keep you informed by one or more of the following ways: an eblast, a post on the church website and Facebook page, and cancellation notifications broadcast on television channels 6 and 11 along with their corresponding websites.



## SNOW TUBING FOR ALL AGES!

**Saturday, January 20**

All ages are invited to have some winter fun. We will meet at the church at 9:25 AM and carpool to **Steeplechase** at 59468 423rd Ave., Mazeppa from 10:00 AM to Noon. No charge to participate. If you have any questions, contact Pastor Shannon.



## SERVICE OF PEACE - Sunday, January 14

### MARDI GRAS SUNDAY,

on **February 11** is a time to celebrate and rejoice before we enter the penitential season of Lent. This service will include a jazz combo and beautiful spirituals sung by the choir. Let us express our joy with great music and worship!



### ASH WEDNESDAY

**February 14 at 6 PM**



This service that begins the Lenten Season will include the imposition of ashes which acknowledges our mortality, along with the celebration of Holy Communion in which we share in the presence of the risen Christ, our hope for eternal life. The juxtaposition of light in the darkness, and life from death make for a beautiful service and a terrific start for our Lenten journey.



## SOUP & SALAD

### POTLUCK

**Sunday, February 25**

Following worship, we will be having a **soup and salad** potluck. Everyone is invited to bring a crock pot of their favorite soup or a salad to share. The church will provide drinks, bread, and cookies. If you know what you will be bringing, please use the sign-up on our church website event page: [www.congoroch.org/news-events](http://www.congoroch.org/news-events).



## CHANNEL ONE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Here are two ways you can participate in meaningful outreach ministry at Channel One Regional Food Bank and Food Shelf.

One option is to join our congregation's monthly group session in the Food Bank on the **second Friday of each month from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM**. We usually re-pack bulk foods into smaller packages for distribution throughout the Channel One network or pack food boxes for the CSFP or the high-rise delivery programs. Volunteers must be at least 13 years old. Upcoming dates are **December 8, January 12 and February 9**, all of which are available for signing up for now on our unique link at: [https://corfb.galaxydigital.com/need/detail/?need\\_id=823703](https://corfb.galaxydigital.com/need/detail/?need_id=823703)



Another option is to assist with an ongoing urgent need for individual volunteers in the Food Shelf. There are about 250 shoppers using the service each day; a lot of volunteer support is needed to keep the shelves stocked and to assist the shoppers. Volunteers must be at least 16 years old. Information and sign-up are available from this public link: <https://www.helpingfeedpeople.org/volunteer/>. Please note that this is a different link than the unique one for our group sessions.

Every volunteer needs to have a sign-in account, which can be created the first time you access either of the above links. During account creation, you will also electronically sign a waiver and view a 5-minute civil rights video. Once the account is created, you can complete the sign-up to attend your first volunteer opportunity. Signing up for subsequent opportunities requires only accessing the applicable volunteer web page via the above links, signing in to your account and then registering to attend. Please consider giving some of your time to either of these options!



## IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS!

Thanks to everyone who helped decorate the church, put up the Christmas tree, hang the greens, arrange the entrance planters, and hoist the wreath!

