



## First Congregational Church

300 Adams Street, St. Clair, MI 48079

"No matter where you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here."

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

# The Channel

A monthly publication of First Congregational Church of St. Clair, UCC



*December*

*2022*

Some Thoughts from Pastor Alana  
December 2022

Sometimes it is difficult to focus on Advent, this time of waiting for the Christ child's birth. Perhaps this is because preparations for the gift giving and receiving part of the celebration can be stressful as they begin earlier each year. Lately, we comment about Christmas décor being placed in the staging area of some stores in the summer. By Halloween they are out on the floor in full view. Store managers work hard to get Christmas shoppers out as early as possible. They have lots of inventory that needs to be cleared out and this is one of the reasons good deals on larger items are available on Black Friday. Also, sales over Christmas help to put most retailers in the black by year's end.

Some of us benefit from that prodding to shop before stores become busy. These sales are certainly helpful to those of us who are gift shopping. Some of us shop year-round, so manage to purchase gifts at our leisure without the stress. There is much to do to be ready.

Our tendency is to forget that there are people who would just as soon forget that Christmas is coming at all. Those who have lost a loved one over the past year, who have a difficult time at the holidays because of a major life change, those who ache each Christmas for the one with whom they always spent holidays may not be so excited about Christmas as it approaches. Yet, all around them the excitement others feel is palpable. This is the reason the Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service was started in St. Clair. Some people need to have a chance to remember and even to mourn their loss as part of their holiday preparations.

I have loved that we provide an Ecumenical Blue Christmas worship service each year. The service is genuinely helpful to those who will have a difficult time over the holidays. This year, the Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service will be held at St. Peter's Lutheran Church on 7th Street in St. Clair on Sunday December 11th at 7:00 p.m. Holy Family, St. Peter's, and First Congregational UCC of St. Clair will all participate.

If you or someone you know has experienced a difficult life change, bring them to the Blue Christmas Service. If you feel called to support those who enter the holiday season with a heavy heart, plan to be part of this evening as a supportive friend.

Be sure to let me know if you'd like to participate in some way.

We all celebrate this season that Jesus Christ is born. While the story is for everyone, we each journey to Bethlehem in different ways. We spend the weeks of Advent waiting and preparing the way, then on Christmas Eve the real celebration begins as we remember a baby born in a stable bringing the promise of new life to everyone.

As this is my final Channel article, please know I have absolutely loved my time in St Clair and I will miss you all very much. But I know that God is with you and will see that good things come your way.

I hope you will be able to attend the Dec 18<sup>th</sup> 10 a.m. Service of Release when I am officially released from my call to this church. There will be a luncheon after with music from Maker's Trio!

I wish you a most blessed Christmas and New Year ahead.

Pastor Alana

"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room."

Matthew 2:1-7

# SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP SCHEDULE

December 2022

Sunday Steward

Sam Tricomo

Communion

Kathy Cilluffo

## Lay Readers

12/4 – Dave Scheel

12/11 – Elsa Pennewell

12/18 – Kathy Rood

12/24 – Pat O'Connor

12/25 – Deana Currie

## Power Point

12/4 – Sam Tricomo

12/11 – Pat O'Connor

12/18 – Kathy Cilluffo

12/24 – Jody Skonieczny

12/25 – Ash Currie

## Usher Teams

12/4 – Jim Light & Doug Johnson

12/11 – Pat O'Connor & Don O'Connor

12/18 – Bob Rood & Karen Galvin

12/21 – Dave Scheel & Tom Pennewell

12/25 – Don Rice & Tim Galvin

## Facebook – Livestream

12/4 – Kathy Cilluffo

12/11 – Don Rice

12/18 – David Kelley

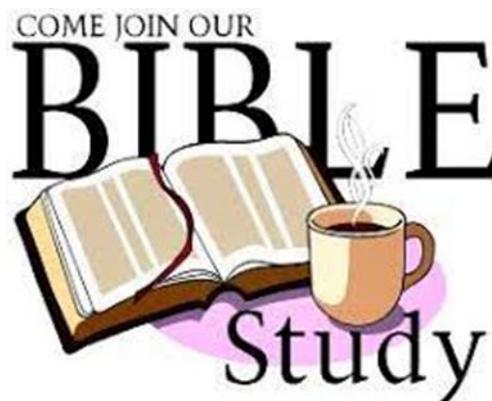
12/21 – Kathy Cilluffo

12/25 – Don Rice



December Happenings

Dec 4 - 10 a.m. Communion  
Dec 11- 7 p.m. Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service  
at St Peter's  
Dec 18 - 10 a.m. Liturgy of Release  
for Rev Alana Kelley with lunch after  
Dec 24 - 5 p.m. Candlelight  
Christmas Eve Worship  
Dec 25 - 10 a.m Christmas Day  
Worship Service  
Jan 1 - 10 a.m. Virtual Worship  
only on the church Facebook Page.



## BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study is held in the Lounge at 10:30 on Wednesday mornings. We meet to discuss our favorite passages; passages that we find perplexing, and we'll discuss what was going on in the world at the time those passages were written. Learn about this book we rely on so heavily!



St. Peter's Lutheran  
And  
First Congregational Church St. Clair

will hold an  
Ecumenical Service on  
12/11/22 at 7 p.m.,  
at St. Peter's Lutheran.



Michael & Melissa Malcolm



Cathy Mollon – 12/2  
Ryleigh O'Connor – 12/8  
Don Whittaker – 12/8  
Robert Rood – 12/9  
Robert Baden – 12/10  
Vicki Paret – 12/11  
Adelle Schwan – 12/15  
Nancy Kennedy – 12/17  
Jeremy Bishop – 12/19  
Brian Paret – 12/21



**Tracy Guinnane**  
**Kathleen & Dennis Wegner**  
**Melissa Williams**

**Jacilyn Sanders**  
**Nikki Perry**

ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT  
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

If you're interested in learning about becoming a church member, Pastor Alana will provide information about the United Church of Christ and this church specifically.



During this Advent Season, there are flower offering envelopes on the back table of the sanctuary to purchase Poinsettias for the church. You may also contact Bev Stewart at (810) 329-2147 or (810) 300-2664



THE LITTLE RED FOOD PANTRY

This small pantry is a community outreach program sponsored by The Mission Team of this church. It is stocked twice-weekly with non-perishable food. Donation requests may change but the need to feed does not. December is bright With the promise of hope.

We have the power  
To help others cope.

Pray or provide.  
Each has a place  
For us to share  
God's loving grace.

December Pantry Provisions:

Cereal  
Canned Pasta  
Potatoes  
(box or pouch)  
Hearty Soups

For Christmas:

Cake Mix  
Cookie Mix  
Frosting  
Candy

For Pets:

Canned Cat or Dog Food

Please leave your food donations in the elevator  
room on the shelves labeled  
**THE LITTLE RED FOOD PANTRY.**  
Any questions.....please call Nancy Kennedy at  
(810)-329-3790.



As we begin the fall season and grow closer to daylight savings time, many people start to feel down or experience the "seasonal blues". This pattern of sadness is a form of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder, also known as SAD. The change in weather, shorter days, and lack of sunlight can leave you feeling low energy and just not yourself. Some other symptoms include insomnia, weight gain, change in appetite, and social isolation.

Fortunately, there are some steps you can take to prevent SAD and keep your life on track this fall/winter season.

Have a regular exercise routine.

Incorporating at least 30 minutes of physical activity into your day can activate your neurotransmitters and increase your mood.

Expose yourself to sunlight  
as much as possible.

Getting natural sunlight is very important during the colder months. Try sitting outside for a bit during the day or even just opening the blinds in your home to absorb nature's vitamin D.

Try light therapy.

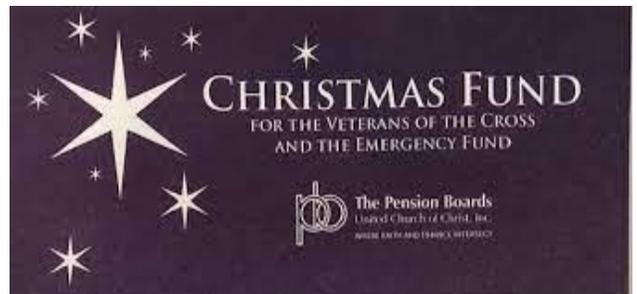
When it's a gloomy day or there isn't any natural sunlight available, light therapy is a great alternative. First thing in the morning, sit in front of a light therapy box for at least 20 minutes each day.

Connect with friends and loved ones.

The cold weather may make you feel like staying inside and isolating, but the best thing you can do is spend time with those who make you feel cared for. Having a positive support network can boost your mood and distract you from any negative feelings you may have.

Meditate.

Meditation can calm your mind and release any anxious thoughts. After meditating, many people feel more at peace and relaxed due to a rise in serotonin levels.



The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is one of the UCC's four special mission offerings. In 2012, the fund provided nearly \$1.5 million in assistance to 900 clergy facing overwhelming financial demands in the form of Christmas thank-you checks, monthly pension supplementation, quarterly health

premium supplementation, and emergency grants, which can be utilized by active clergy. A ministry carried out by the Pension Board for 111 years, the fund is received each year on the Sunday before Christmas.

For example: Vernis Brown is the widow of the Rev. Roy Brown, who was called to be a pastor at age 7 and served UCC congregations until he suffered a stroke in 1997 and passed away in 2022. Vernis said

her husband always kept his promise to God to serve small congregations, which meant that she and Roy were often the only staff in churches they served in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and South Dakota.

Vernis taught Sunday school, ran vacation Bible school, and worked with women's and youth groups. In addition to preaching, Roy also drove a school bus, and worked as a farmer, hunter, trapper and fisherman. While she would never trade her life as a preacher's wife for anything, Vernis recalls how she, Roy and their 10 children lived on very little because the small churches they served couldn't afford to pay much. But the annual Christmas thank-you check has been and continues to be a welcomed contribution to her family. Each year, Vernis donates one-tenth of her check back to the Christmas Fund and encourages other to give as well.

"It's been a blessing and helped us in so many ways," Vernis said of the fund. "I'm the first one to stand up and say, "I'm a recipient. Give generously to help other people".

To donate to the Christmas Fund, you will find envelopes on the back table of the sanctuary or you may donate by visiting the Pension Boards website: <https://www.pbucc.org/>



#### WEEKLY OFFERING ENVELOPES

If you need weekly offering envelopes, please contact the office and speak Wendy.



Thank you for giving to the Giving Tree! These gifts need to be returned to church (elevator room), please,

by Wednesday, December 14  
(wrapped, no bow),  
with the tag attached on the outside.

Thank you for your generous spirit;  
if you have questions, please call:  
Cathy Light 810-329-4875 or Karen Galvin,  
810-329-9465.

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY 2023