



On April 6, 2014, the members of Homer Congregational Church voted to become an Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ. Open and Affirming (ONA) is the United Church of Christ's (UCC) designation for congregations, campus ministries, and other bodies in the UCC which make a public covenant of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Churches also commit to welcoming people of all descriptions.

#### **Board of Trustees**

Jim McKenna  
Paula Harrington  
Chuck Feiszli  
Andrea Herzog  
Eugene Wright  
David Barnes  
Russ Pedersen  
-Two vacancies-

#### **Board of Deacons**

Bonnie Haaland  
Kathy McKenna  
Tracy Bertram  
Belinda Burtson  
Joanne Cincotta  
Darci Gumaer  
Gary Harrington  
Doris Hoffmann  
Bill Masterson  
Anne Wingard  
Jim Ulrich  
Terry Pedersen

#### **Church Staff**

*Pastor:*

Rev. Vicki Burtson

*Sexton:*

Gary Harrington

*Financial Secretary:*

Bev Berry

*Treasurer:*

Andrea Herzog

*Church Administrator:*

Anne Wingard

## ***From your pastor's mind and heart...***



*From your pastor's mind and heart...*

Grace and peace to you, dear family and friends of Homer Congregational United Church of Christ. December is here! Let the celebrations begin!

Look through these pages to find our schedule of worship in December. We are going to enjoy wonderful music, giggling children, candle-lighting by grandparents with their grandchildren – all in the stunning beauty of our sanctuary decked out for the season.

Look through these pages to find reports from our Boards and Committee. We are in process of hiring an office administrator and an Associate Pastor for Faith Formation. Even as we near the completion of 2017, our hearts and minds have been focused on the future. We believe it is a vision that God has revealed and we look forward with hope.

Look through these pages to find the good news of projects achieved – from the lunch box campaign coordinated by Clay Benedict, to the Roast Pork Dinner coordinated by Don VanSlyke and Shirley Osterhoudt.

December is here. Our Worship and Music Committee and our Deacons have planned an opportunity to “deck our halls” and a Christmas Eve that will keep us focused on the real reason to celebrate. In the birth of a baby, our world was changed forever. For those of us who define ourselves as Christian, the holy child named Immanuel showed us how we ought to live. We will count down the weeks as we await his coming, and then we will join in the chorus of angels in singing *Joy to the World!*

Let the Celebrations Begin!

With Hope!

*Pastor Vicki*

*You are cordially invited to Open House at the Manse on Sunday, December 31 from 1 - 3 pm.*

We look forward to seeing you.

*Belinda & Vicki Burtson*



### SENIOR FELLOWSHIP NEWS

In December...

Senior Fellowship - Tuesday, December 12  
 Pastor Vicki will lead a Christmas program. You are invited to come and sing carols as we focus on the figures in the scenes of the nativity.



### STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

As of November 29, the following has been pledged for 2018:  
 \$72,130 – Operations  
 \$18,168 – Programs & Missions

This includes 48 different pledges, with 50% of the pledges showing an increase from their pledged amount from last year. It's not too late to send/mail in your pledge. Pledge cards are available from the church office and can be brought to any Sunday service or mailed to the church office.

As we continue our faith journey together, let's celebrate the generosity and abundance shown by our church family. We give thanks for all the pledges, and all the work done by our Trustees, Deacons, and other committee member that gives of their time and talent. Consider saying yes to our Nominating Committee, when they call upon us to serve in these various roles.

Blessings ~ The Stewardship Committee



### HOMER NURSERY SCHOOL UPDATE

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving. Our Coffeemia fundraiser has just ended. We are now collecting canned goods for the food pantry at the Methodist Church. Our collection boxes are under the Christmas trees in the classrooms. We are busy making decorations for our trees, Christmas gifts and cards. We are also practicing for our Christmas program, which is on Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. We wish everyone a Merry Christmas



-Lisa Clark, Director of HNS



### STEPHEN MINISTRY: WHAT IS A STEPHEN MINISTER

Stephen Ministers are members of the Homer Congregational Church who have participated in 50 hours of training to provide high-quality Christian care to individuals experiencing a crisis or challenge such as divorce, grief, loss of a job, hospitalization, relocation, or loneliness. Stephen Ministers are each assigned a care receiver and meet with that care receiver for about an hour each week. The caring relationship will last for as long as the care receiver needs it. If you would like more information on how to receive care from a Stephen Minister please talk with Pastor Vicki, or one of our Stephen Leaders:

- Belinda Burtson (607) 756-2454 or
- Bill Masterson (607) 345-4874



## Board of Trustees

## THE TRUSTEES CORNER

The Board of Trustees met for their monthly meeting on November 21<sup>st</sup> and continued to discuss strategies to rebuild and invigorate our church. Some generous increases in individual pledges have come in and will help us to meet our goals for 2018. The board had extensive discussion about the 2018 budget and is developing a clear strategy for our goals. A budget subcommittee was formed and will be meeting over the next few weeks to clarify some of those details. We have received a few applications for the Church Administrator position and the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation and the Personnel Committee will review them, with help from Pastor Vicki and a few others. Maintenance and repairs of the church continue and we are planning out a schedule for our future upgrades.

Having just enjoyed Thanksgiving, I would like to give thanks to God for supporting and guiding our church and to all of our church members, especially my friends on the Board of Trustees. Our work is always an exercise in reality supported by faith. As we look forward to hanging of the greens and Advent, we see a bright future for our church, where everyone has a role and uses their talents to joyfully serve God and engage our friends and community. Please see me or any Trustee, if you have questions or comments, or just want to chat about what's going on.

Peace be with you!

Jim McKenna, Chair



### Other Seasonal Opportunities:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Tuesday, Dec. 12  | Choral Union Concert – Alleluia!<br>Grace & Holy Spirit at 8 PM<br>Several singers are from HCC!                              |
| Thursday, Dec. 21 | Blue Christmas Service<br>Grace & Holy Spirit at 7 PM<br>A service that recognizes grief<br>in the midst of a “merry” season. |
| Sunday, Jan. 7    | Epiphany Choir Festival<br>Grace & Holy Spirit at 3 PM<br>Our choir will be participating.                                    |



## THE DEACON'S BENCH

Did you know that you can sign up to receive an email with a daily devotional from the UCC? Sometimes I need an early morning reminder of God's Grace; so I signed up to receive them several years ago. I recently was sorting through some old emails when I noticed a "Stillspeaking Devotional" from September 2012 that I had saved. This particular devotional really struck a chord in me regarding our need for a sense of community, and what it really means to be part of a church family. As I re-read it again the other day, it struck me that, in my opinion, we are "on the right track" as a church family. I would like to share it with you and hope that others feel the same way.

### Reflection by Lillian Daniel

The other day at the gym, I was leaving my yoga class, sweaty and dirty, when I bumped into a new parishioner, also in his gym clothes. The proud father had his brand new tiny baby in a carriage by the snack bar.

Right there I made the sign of the cross on the child's head and blessed him. I asked the dad to email the church with the details so we could be sure to mention the baby in our prayers the next Sunday. It had been a long time since he had had a church and he didn't know you were supposed to do that. He whipped out his iPhone to make a note.

That next Sunday, I was all cleaned up, robed in black and leading worship at church. And there in the back row, also all cleaned up, was this dad with the whole family. When our associate pastor mentioned the baby's name in the prayers, I couldn't help but open my eyes to look at him. The father's head sprung up at the sound of his child's name in church. He gave a smile of such delight, as his eyes caught mine. I knew that it had been a long time since he had had a pastor.

A year ago this family had no church. Now they have a place to come and hear their baby's name lifted up in prayer in front of a community that has promised to pray for them all.

The church is so much more than a building. Whether you're in your yoga clothes or in a long black robe, whether you are in the pews or at the gym, once you have a church, it has a way of finding you wherever you are. It's remarkably portable.

And as for the building, it's a place to return to and to sit beside others. It's good to hear your name in a prayer along with other names. Together, we are bigger than ourselves, bigger than the building but smaller than the One who finds us wherever we are.

### Prayer

Let us pray for all those who are seeking a church home and a place to hear the names of their beloved lifted up in prayer. Amen.

Peace,  
Bill Masterson for the Board of Deacons



**SPECIAL OFFERING – CHRISTMAS FUND – *SHEPARDING THE LIGHT***

December 17, we will participate in the UCC Christmas Fund. The Christmas Fund is one of the five Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ and provides us with a means to directly assist clergy and lay leaders who have faithfully and selflessly served and now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs. This fund enables the Ministerial Assistance program to provide, on behalf of the whole church, direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas thank-you checks. Envelopes may be returned until December 31.



**CHRISTMAS CHOIR**

It's that time again -- cooler days, darker evenings, and Christmas Music! Come and join the choir for the Advent and Christmas seasons. We will be practicing our Christmas music at 7:30 on Wednesday evenings beginning on November 1. We will be offering the Christmas Cantata on December 17. The choir will sing at the 7 pm Christmas Eve service. If you enjoy singing but cannot make a commitment to weekly services, this is the chance for you. Feel free to contact Joe at fordjosephd@gmail.com or (607) 227-1660 with any questions.



-Joe Ford



Dear Church Friends,

Please have your 2017 contributions to the church by December 31<sup>st</sup>. The books will need to be closed for 2017, so the statements can be completed for your tax information by the required date.

Thanks.

Bev Berry, Financial Secretary

## DECEMBER 2017 WORSHIP

### Worship in December

Bill Masterson is worship leader for December.

#### Sunday, December 3 **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent – HOPE**

Lectionary: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; I Cor. 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Sermon: Waiting is Really Hard

We begin Advent with candle lighting. Doris & Pete Hoffmann and their granddaughters will light the first candle – the candle of hope. Communion will be served in the pews by Tracy Bertram, Bonnie Haaland, Gary Harrington and Jim Ulrich.

#### Sunday, December 10 **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent – PEACE**

Within the vision set forth by the prophet Isaiah (11<sup>th</sup> chapter), we are told that *...a child shall lead them*. This Sunday is *Pageant Sunday* and our worship will be led by our children. The Advent candle will be lit by Joanne Cincotta and her grandchildren. They will light the candle of peace. Come and worship! Come and be led. Come and share the songs and the spirit of the season.

#### Sunday, December 17 **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent - JOY**

Bonnie Haaland and her four grandchildren will light the Advent candle of joy. Our choir is working hard to prepare special music for this day, so come along for a joyful opportunity to worship and experience church music at its best.

#### Sunday, December 24 **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent - LOVE \*and\* Christmas Eve**

10:30 AM Brunch & worship in the Russell Fellowship Room

We will gather around tables for food, caroling, scripture and lighting the candle for the fourth Sunday in Advent. Take a break from Christmas preparations at home and join us for a casual celebration with our family of faith.

7 PM A Service of Lessons & Carols

Join in the tradition of scripture, carols and candle-lighting in our beautiful sanctuary. Bring the kids, your neighbors and co-workers!

11 PM A Service of Lessons and Carols and Communion

We are bringing back the tradition of the late service on Christmas Eve. Hear the scripture, sing the carols, receive the holy meal and bask in the beauty of candle-light. Our church bell will ring in Christmas at midnight.

#### Sunday, December 31 **5<sup>th</sup> Sunday – Celebrating our College Students**

Back in August, when our college students gathered at the manse for dinner, we talked about this 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in December. It is almost here, and so while they are home, they will lead us in worship. Evan Ulrich has been “writing his sermon” since then. We look forward to seeing these young adults as they share the leadership of the service.



## Sunday WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Note: If you see "(open)" below, please contact the church office if you are available to volunteer!

[office@homercc.org](mailto:office@homercc.org) or (607) 749-2604

### Deacon Worship Leader

Bill Masterson

### Trustee Verifier

Dave Barnes

### December 3 - Advent I

Ushers & Greeters – Jim & Kathy McKenna,  
Darci & Carrie Gumaer

Flowers – The Burtsons

Nursery – Karen Dudgeon

Coffee Hour – Kathy McKenna

### December 10 - Advent II

Ushers & Greeters – Bev & Steve Berry

Flowers – The Masterson Family

Nursery – Anne Wingard

Coffee Hour – CEM

### December 17 - Advent III

Ushers & Greeters – Carl & Connie Applegate

Flowers – (open)

Nursery – Joanne Cincotta

Coffee Hour –

### December 24 – Advent IV

**10:30 am** Brunch – Food provided by our  
Deacons (see page 6 for details)

**7 pm** Ushers & Greeters – Deacons

**11 pm** Communion Servers – Deacons

### December 31 @ 10:30 am

Ushers & Greeters – HCC College Students

Flowers –

Nursery –

Open House at Manse 1 – 3 pm



## BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Dottie Kelley
- 5 Nicholas Cinquanti
- 7 Tasker Dennis
- 8 Rachel Rood
- 9 William Allen
- 10 Donald Root
- 14 Tina Helgren, Rachel Ditch
- 15 David Benedict, Alison Miller
- 18 Terry Pedersen
- 21 Nathan Krause
- 28 Cathy Renninger
- 29 Erin Leach
- 30 Laura Cinquanti
- 31 Elise Schmidt

### **From the Treasurer:**

- Operating Revenues at 11/28/17  
- \$188,383, 82.9% of budget;
- Operating Expenses at 11/28/17  
- \$199,478, 87.8.% of budget

### **Email Contacts:**

Office: [office@homercc.org](mailto:office@homercc.org)

Pastor: [pastor@homercc.org](mailto:pastor@homercc.org)

Financial Secretary: [finsect@homercc.org](mailto:finsect@homercc.org)

Treasurer: [treasurer@homercc.org](mailto:treasurer@homercc.org)

DCE: [christianed@homercc.org](mailto:christianed@homercc.org)

### **Find us online!**

HCC website - [homercc.com](http://homercc.com)

Digital calendar - [homercc.com/calendar](http://homercc.com/calendar)

Follow Homer Congregational Church on [Facebook!](#)

To receive our mid-week email, Weekday Words, please email the office: [office@homercc.org](mailto:office@homercc.org)