**Weekday Words**

Thursday, December 19, 2024

**TONIGHT (Thursday)**

We gather in the sanctuary at 6:30 this evening for our Blue Christmas Service. If you yearn for respite from the frantic preparations for the holidays or if you are struggling to feel the joy of the season, come spend some quiet time with us. We will wrap ourselves in the beauty of the evening shadows. You may find it helpful to light a candle of remembrance – a kind of prayer for a loved one or for your own situation. The leadership of the service will include Pastor Jen and members of Grace and Holy Spirit Church in Cortland. Please do invite your friends and neighbors.

**This Sunday**

At 9:30, the Faith Formation Committee is throwing a Christmas Party for our kids. Meanwhile, our adults will continue their book discussion.

When we worship at 10:30, we will light the Advent candle of Love. Later, HCC’s choir presents their Christmas cantata “Bethlehem’s Child”. During the service we will also receive the final UCC special offering called *The Christmas Fund*. Our gifts support clergy and lay employees of the wider UCC. Nursery care will be provided by Sam Penoyer and Sheri Saddlemire. Following worship, coffee hour will be hosted by Acey and Claire Menard-Seiffert. If you cannot attend worship in person, find our worship service live stream on Facebook, YouTube or at [www.homercc.com](http://www.homercc.com)

**NOTE: This will be the final live-stream service of 2024.**

**Special Request for Family Cookies!**

We have a beautiful tradition of sharing favorite family cookies at a reception following the 7 PM service on Christmas Eve. If you are able, please donate a dozen of your family’s favorite. Mark your container of cookies with both your name and the type of cookie, then leave them in our kitchen sometime between Sunday worship and noon on Tuesday.

**Next Week**

Christmas Eve at 4 PM Birthday Party for Jesus

Designed with the family in mind, we will gather early on Christmas Eve to celebrate Jesus’ birth. As a family of faith we will sing carols, hear the Biblical story, eavesdrop on Michael the Mouse’s visit to the stable, and light our own birthday candles. Afterward, everyone is invited to take a cupcake to enjoy at home.

Christmas Eve at 7 PM Lessons, Carols, and Candlelight

Tonight we light the final candle of the Advent wreath – the Christ Candle. The scriptures will guide our worship as we hear the story of Jesus’ birth. Our choir and other musicians will offer the gift of music throughout the service. At the end, join our circle of candlelight as we proclaim JOY for our world.

Christmas Day MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Aware of the diversity within our community, at 4:30, some of us will gather at the Menorah on the green to light the first candle of Hannukah. For eight evenings, we’ll gather for about 15 minutes as we continue to light the candles on the Menorah.

**NOTE: Our office will be closed for Christmas, December 25 & 26.**

Next Sunday **Brunch Church** at 10:30 AM

People have been signing up to bring a dish-to-share for Brunch Church. We’ll be in the RFR for brunch, and then we’ll continue celebrating Christmas as we worship around the tables. We look forward to the baptism of Morgan Menard-Seiffert. Some of Morgan’s family have traveled from France to be with us!

**In Other News…**

CONGRATULATIONS to **Jacob Dentes**, graduating on December 22 from Cornell University. Jacob is making big decisions about where he is going to begin his next degree, but for now – we are so proud of you, Jacob. Enjoy your achievement!

Our **Trustees** met on Tuesday to receive these updates:

* The basement work is finished. There is new flooring, the walls have been painted, and the sink/cupboards are back in place.
* The boiler inspection is complete. Everything is in working order.
* A new boiler pump has been installed at the manse.
* All WiFi hotspots have been updated by Plan First. New password: AllAreWelcome!
* A working draft of our 2025 budget has been prepared.
* Holiday in Homer received a $3,5oo grant (an increase over last year) for advertisement.
* A laptop for Holiday in Homer has been purchased to assist our record-keeping.
* As we continue to address the needs of our buildings and grounds, a list of maintenance projects was compiled, beginning with our main restrooms.

Thanks to the Trustees for their work throughout the past year.

At HCC, our children have always been a priority as faith has been passed from generation to generation. That’s why we need your help. Our Director of Children’s Ministry, Sheri Saddlemire is making the schedule for **Faith Formation** classes beginning in January. We hope you will say YES when she approaches you. Additionally, we need volunteers to staff the nursery during worship. Think and pray about it and then let Sheri know how you can help.

We are making plans for the **Annual Meeting** on Sunday, January 26. Convened by our Moderator, Jim McKenna, the First Religious Society in the Town of Homer and the Homer Congregational United Church of Christ meet to celebrate our ministry in the past year and to make decisions for ministry in 2025. Report booklets will be published on Sunday, January 12. Committee chair people – keep reading… **Reports for our Annual Meeting** booklets are due by **Friday, January 3**. Please use font: Georgia size: 12. Send your report to the office on or before January 3. The booklets must be published two weeks prior to Annual Meeting.

When you pray, please include:

* Thanks for the joys, celebrations and blessings of the holiday season.
* Holy Presence when the holiday season is tinged with grief, loneliness, and pain.
* Hope for all the places where peace seems to be a distant dream.
* Thanksgiving for the birth of Emmanuel…God-with-us.