**Special Advent & Christmas Resources & Schedule:**

**2019 Advent Devotional: *There Is Room for All* — Available in the Crossroads**

A collection of daily readings, poems, and images that will help us prepare our hearts and minds to make room for all during the Advent and Christmas season. Suggested donation of $4 to cover the cost of printing.

**Advent Labyrinth Walks—December 4 & 18**

There will be 2 opportunities to walk the labyrinth in Friendship Hall during Advent—on Wednesdays December 4 and 18 from 5:30 -7:00. Each time there will be short service of readings in the Sanctuary at 5:30 as preparation. One need not attend the service to walk the labyrinth. Come and experience a quiet, prayerful time during Advent. Questions? Contact a member of the Labyrinth Mission Team: Betty Day, Mary Loving, Jeanne Moberly, Chris Thomas and Susan Watson.

**Holiday Post Office—December 8, 15, 22**

Share your holiday cards with church friends. Youth will set up the Holiday Post Office in Friendship Hall.

**Christmas Spirit Mini Recital—December 8**

Following worship on December 8, you are invited to stay in the sanctuary to get in the holiday spirit! Several of our youth have prepared special Christmas songs to play for you on the piano for your relaxation and enjoyment.

**December Holiday Bake Sale—December 15**

All kinds of deliciousness is available, including baked goods and chocolate treats. Come prepared to fill a plate with your favorites! $6/half-dozen and $10/dozen. All proceeds go to the Youth Mission Trip.

**Christmas Eve Worship—December 24**

4:00pm—Did you know that the Wise Men were early astrologers? See the night sky through the eyes of the children as they tell the story of the Wise Men traveling to Bethlehem through song, rhythm, and movement.

7:00pm—Candlelight service featuring ORUCC Choir, readings, and carols

**More inside...**

p. 9—9am Adult Education offerings for Advent

p. 12 Community Longest Night/Blue Christmas Services, and an Advent Retreat led by Rev. Holly Whitcomb

p. 13—Poinsettia order forms—please return to the office by December 15
Hope During the Holidays by Ken Pennings

My son Matthew is 32 years old, and is healthy as a horse! But when he was 5 years old, he was diagnosed with undifferentiated sarcoma, a rare cancer which presented as a large grapefruit–sized tumor in the plural cavity of his chest. He was given six months to live. After surgery, chemo and radiation treatments, he was severely neutropenic and vulnerable to infections. He contracted pneumonia and was hospitalized most of the month of December, over the Christmas holiday. The doctors were telling us to prepare ourselves for the worst, that he likely would not survive the pneumonia. We, his parents, were beside ourselves with pain, worry and fear.

Gratefully, Matthew pulled through the pneumonia, and when his Mom and I brought him home from the hospital, we were absolutely astonished to find the entry way of our house loaded with Christmas presents from the members of our church. We tearfully opened each gift feeling deeply the love, care and support of our church during the most challenging and difficult Christmas season of our lives.

Would you be willing to ponder for a while who in your network of family and friends may be experiencing one of the most challenging and difficult Christmas seasons of their lives? That person may be you! Then ask yourself, “How can I do something small but significant to demonstrate love, care and support for this person?” Praying for people is great, and sometimes tangible gestures bring those prayers to life.

- Bake and deliver a loaf of bread or dessert.
- Prepare and deliver a meal.
- Purchase or make a Christmas gift or tree ornament.
- Make a phone call or send a card.
- Take in laundry, shovel snow, run errands, put up and take down Christmas decorations, offer child care.
- Invite and accompany to a labyrinth walk or a “Longest Night Service.”
- Offer a gift card for a massage or a two-day get-away to someplace nice.
- Knit or crochet a scarf, mittens or hat.
- Make a recording of your favorite music that brings, comfort, serenity and hope.
- Write a poem.
- Listen deeply without giving advice.

This season, let us practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty! Extend to others the kind of love, care and support you would like to receive in your hour of need.

Volunteers

Sunday Coffee
Dec 1 Judy & Phil Winkel
Dec 8 Greg & Barb Louden
Dec 15 Rachael & Brian Lancer
Dec 22 Chris Thomas Chuck Kaspar
Dec 29 Greg & Barb Louden

Liturgists
Dec 1 Sage Walker & Jeanne Moberly
Dec 8 Meg Stevens
Dec 15 Alice Anderman
Dec 22 OPEN
Dec 29 OPEN

Financial Secretary
Dec 1 Gene Dyar
Dec 8 Marge Wennen
Dec 15 Nancy Wettersten
Dec 22 Meg Stevens
Dec 29 Peter Hoff

Ushers
Dec 1 Peter Fabian Dorothy Petersen Jarrett Gersten
Dec 8 Larry Goss Jerry Nelson Jon Blanchard
Dec 15 Judy & Phil Winkel James Treichel
Dec 22 Jerry Nelson Dorothy Peterson Joyce Binder

Welcomers
Dec 1 Joyce Dingman Dick & Carol Karls Kurt Jaehnig
Dec 8 Helen Horn Mary Loving Jack Schairer
Dec 15 Joyce Dingman Ruthanne Landsness Dick Rossmiller
Dec 22 Joyce Pohl Kurt Jaehnig Helen Horn
Dec 29 Dianne & Heather Stevens Carol & Dick Karls

AV Team
Dec 1 Charles Kaspar
Dec 8 Jarrett Gersten
Dec 15 Andrew Beckett
Dec 22 Paul Hedges
Dec 24 Charles Kaspar Ken Psyck
Dec 29 Andrew Beckett

Sign up ON-LINE!
Contact Ken Pennings, Tammy Martens or Laura Crow with any questions.
https://www.orucc.org/volunteer/
My Work with Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

by Tammy Martens

In 2013 I enrolled in Clergy Clinic in Family Emotional Process led by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. After my first year in the program I signed up to attend Advanced Clergy Clinic and continue to go to this day.

I have shared this before, but it is worth repeating again. The teachings of Family Systems’ Theory in Clergy Clinic have opened up a way for me to do the work in my family of origin which has helped me bridge significant cut-off and brought healing. The theory suggests that we all leave our family of origin with some degree of unresolved emotional attachment which affects our maturity and we carry this with us wherever we go and whatever we do. The best hope for changing is to go back to our family of origin, reconnect with members of that family, and work at defining ourselves better within the family. Note the goal is not to go back and try and change another family member. What we are called to do is notice and work at changing ourselves and the part we play in that relationship that has impeded the quality of that relationship.

One exercise we are required to do is draw out our family diagram or genogram. Then in small groups we look at our family diagram with a facilitator and begin to recognize patterns of behavior (both healthy and not so healthy) and see our own role in that pattern. It is tremendously helpful to look at multi-generational processes in our extended family because it breaks apart any notion that we are self-made people.

Two questions we were asked to consider in our sessions were: how did anxiety manifest itself in our family of origin and extended family and how did our family deal with that anxiety? For me, it was the sudden death of my mother in 1967 that created acute anxiety. And that acute anxiety turned into chronic anxiety because my family and extended family’s only way of coping with her death was to live by the “don’t ask, don’t tell” rule. No one talked about her—her story and memories were never shared with us, her children. Even though I believe everyone was doing what they thought best, it created more chronic anxiety in our system.

Studying the Family Systems’ Theory and working with a facilitator, I was able to go back into my family of origin and bridge distance I experienced with my dad and bridge cut-off with my mom’s side of the family. This has changed the quality of these relationships significantly.

In our workshops at Clergy Clinic we also apply the theory to church life. We are asked to pay attention to our own functioning as a leader and see our role in either ramping up anxiety or reducing anxiety. The theory suggests that if one can go back and change our functioning in our family of origin, we will be better able to handle anxiety as a leader in a church setting and hopefully be more of a non-anxious presence.

I continue to be engaged in understanding the Family Systems Theory. In the last two years I have had the privilege of being a facilitator of family of origin groups at the Clergy Clinic workshops. This has been such a joy for me and has helped me understand the theory a little better. It is very rewarding to watch someone take steps that will help them improve their relationships with their family and extended family.

It can be scary to do this kind of work and it continues to give me challenge. However, I continue to be encouraged by the following thought from Ronald Richardson who writes in his book Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Working on differentiation in our families “assumes a confidence in God’s invitation, given often and in many ways in the Bible to ‘Fear not, for I am with you.’ It allows us to take the lonely, courageous stands we occasionally need to take in life. It is an act of faith that says we can survive our vulnerability and not fear it.”

We are all given this promise that God is with us even in our most vulnerable times. And often those most vulnerable times are with our family. God bless our work as we continue to grow up in our families.
IN THE INTERIM by Laura Crow

“But no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God.” James 3:8-9

I don’t know about you, but somewhere amidst the food and festivities, the traditions, activities, and people I look forward to and relish, there are those moments and awkward conversations with people, sometimes relatives, that seem to take all of the joy and spirit out of the season. And if I am being completely honest, there are individuals, perhaps some relatives, who have likely thought the same about me.

For many years, the holidays became something to endure rather than embrace. And then along came the TV show Seinfeld which introduced millions to Festivus, a secular non-commercial holiday occurring on December 23. With humor and wisdom, the show’s writers lifted up the importance of finding ways to bring our difficult conversations out into the open in ways that can offer healing. In the now-famous episode, the traditional Festivus “Airing of Grievances” begins with Frank Costanza saying, “I got a lotta problems with you people, and now you are going to hear about it!”

I’m not saying that those are the best words to start off every conversation with difficult people in your lives, but I do encourage us all to take a few minutes as we enter this crowded season to think about and model the kinds of behaviors that contribute to healthy conversations and build trust. Here are some principles of learning to fight fairly that have been on my mind to get you started...

- Tell YOUR truth—have the courage to express your true feelings and experience using “I” statements. Avoid projecting motives or feelings onto someone else.
- Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—keeping to these three “truths” are essential for building trust. It is so easy to manipulate and deceive ourselves and others if we withold parts of the truth or embellish the truth with more than is required. Those are power games, not truth telling.
- If you have a question, ASK it—don’t assume you know the answer; have the courage to ask. This is especially important in groups when you feel uncomfortable with the direction the conversation is headed or a minority opinion is being silenced or ignored. Don’t be silent—be an ally.
- Speak directly with one another—triangles are stable building blocks for engineers, but they are toxic to relationships. Venting to a confidant has its place but avoid being drawn into someone else’s drama—and don’t ask others to hold information inappropriately or take responsibility for difficult conversation you are unwilling to have.
- Stay on topic—keep the conversation focused on the words and behaviors in front of you. Don’t chase after every excuse, but redirect as necessary when the conversation drifts to what someone else said/did, past history that has already been resolved, etc
- “I have a right to my opinion”—people have opinions on all kinds of stuff and it is rarely productive to try to change a person’s mind. Focus instead on behaviors and expectations of how we treat one another. A simple “I see things differently” can provide an honorable exit from a heated conversation.
- Be willing to step away—you don’t have to show up for every fight you are invited to. Learn to recognize when things escalate, and know and enforce your boundaries. Take a walk, check on the kids, the dog, the houseplants, or make eye contact with someone across the room who can come interrupt and de-escalate.
- Don’t forget to breathe—think about your words before you say them or before you respond to words someone else has said. Practice being more intentional and less reactive. Be curious and ask for help understanding the other person’s perspective rather than defending your own.

Family Game Night:

Family Game Night meets on Friday, December 6, 6-8pm! Meet in the Friendship Hall for fun games, fellowship, and food.

FAQs:

Do I have to have kids to attend? No! Everyone is welcome.

What kind of games do you play? Strategy games, word games, cards, legos, party games. No experience necessary. We’ll teach each other our favorite games.

Is there food? Yes, usually everyone brings something simple to share. To sign up to bring a main dish, contact Rachael Lancor.

When do you meet? First Fridays of the month. Questions? Contact Rachael Lancor (rachael.anderman@gmail.com)

Senior Exercise Class:

Retirees are invited to join a low impact balance and strengthening exercise class at ORUCC at 10:00 am on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tuesday classes will be in the lower level and Thursday classes will be in Friendship Hall. They can be adapted to all levels.

There is no set fee for the class which will run 12-15 weeks, and a donation of $50-$60 to The Heart Room is requested. If you are interested please leave your name with Julie Wombacher, in the office or contact Joyce Pohl with questions (206-5697 or japoht@gmail.com)
A reminder that remaining balance on your 2019 pledge need to be received in the church office no later than December 30 (see note below)

IMPORTANT PLEASE NOTE: End of year Contributions to ORUCC: The general rule is that a contribution is effective when delivered. This means that checks that are placed in the church offering during the first worship service in 2020 will not qualify for a charitable contribution deduction in 2019, even if the check is predated to 2019 or was actually written in 2019.

However, checks that are written, mailed, and postmarked in 2019 will be deductible in 2019 even if it is not received until 2020.

Year-end contribution statements for 2019 will be emailed in January. If you do not have email a copy will be mailed to you.

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**How to Give More and Pay Less:**

The 2018 Tax Law Included changes that make it harder for many of us to get tax credits for Charitable Contributions to churches and other 501 (c)(3) organizations. However, if you are 70 ½ or older and have an IRA, you may be able to give your contributions entirely tax free by using part or all of the annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) – which otherwise is considered as taxable income.

For more information there are flyers on the table in the Crossroads

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**Abundant Joy, Overflowing Generosity:**

Thanks to YOU, we are off to a good start with our 2020 Stewardship Campaign, “Abundant Joy, Overflowing Generosity.”

We hope you have all had an opportunity to review the campaign materials and invitation you received in the mail. It has been a joy to see the pledges come in and we continue to gather pledges during worship and via mail.

As we begin to make concrete plans for 2020, it is important to have as much information as possible to create an accurate budget for the year ahead. The vast majority (85%) of the budget comes from members’ pledges. With the hiring of a new settled pastor, increase in health insurance costs, facility upkeep and improvements, and continuing support of our Ministries and Mission Teams, we expect to see the budget increase approximately 6% over 2019.

If you have not yet had an opportunity to make a financial pledge for 2020, we encourage you to do so soon! Even if you are not able to make a financial commitment for 2020, we encourage you to return your pledge card at this time.

Please contact the office (608-271-7212) or one of the members of the Stewardship Team if you have any questions. We are so grateful, for all you bring to our church and its mission!

The Stewardship Team: Jennifer Eggerling-Boeck, Anna Schryver, and John Day

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**TruFunction & TruGumption Concert**

Saturday, February 1
Tickets will be on sale in January

Make plans to join us for a spectacular concert featuring lots of new songs and many of your favorite oldies but goodies!

And, yes, there will be DANCING!

And an intermission with DELICIOUS snacks!

Shake off those winter doldrums and come to this concert—it will be great therapy and the BEST thing to do on February 1st!

This will be the BIG fundraiser for our 2020 Youth Mission Trip.
**Prayers of Joy**

- For Steve Sheets who drove to Casa Alitas in Tucson, Arizona, to deliver the clothes donated in our teens’ clothing drive.
- For the birth of Rachel Ruth, the grand-daughter of Marge and Brad Wennen.
- For Loretta McClure and Jen Walker who are recovering nicely from pneumonia.
- For Mary Connor’s recovery from a broken wrist, for all those who have supported her during this time.
- For Sara Roberts and Carolyn Carlson’s 40th anniversary.
- For the children in our neighborhood who will receive Christmas presents because of the efforts of our 4th & 5th graders.
- For all of those who donated money toward Thanksgiving Gift Vouchers for families in need.
- For last week’s Culvers fundraiser – $764 raised for next summer’s teen mission trip.
- For last month’s “Wayfinding for Seniors” Retreat attended by 30 folks from ORUCC.
- For the Fair Trade Sale on Sunday, Nov. 24.
- For Gretchen Forbes who is coordinating the assembling and delivery of Care Packages to our College Students on Dec. 1.
- For the five from our church and the Mennonite Community who attended the Trauma Informed Community Summit.
- For the commitment and dedication of our Pastoral Search Team.
- For our Labyrinth Mission Team which will be hosting two labyrinth walks in December.
- For the completion of our New Member Series with seven people in attendance
- For one of our Child Care Workers, Libby Bjornstad, who has completed her service among us.
- For the completion of four home groups and one online group which read and discussed Barbara Brown Taylor’s book *Holy Envy*. For the hosts and facilitators of these groups: Diep Nguyen, Sue Dixon, Tammy Martens, Nathan Bubenzer, Phil Haslanger, Kim & Chuck Kaspar.
- For the birth of Nancy Evan’s grandson, Isaac Kane Evans, on Nov 8th.
- For Rev. Valerie Showalter who was installed November 17th as pastor of the Madison Mennonite Church.

**Prayers of Concern**

- For Ken Psyck recovering from spinal surgery.
- For Ali Blanchard who has been admitted to a mental health facility.
- For Judy Schaffer who is at St. Mary’s Care Center recovering from a stroke.
- For Char Klossner in palliative care.
- For Mike Kehl whose father is in hospice.
- For Landis Bell who broke his arm.
- For Lisa Benitez grieving the death of her father.
- For Ellen Reuter and Phil Haslanger’s grandson Clark undergoing chemo and radiation for cancer.
- For Peter Fabian and Ree Hale grieving the death of Peter’s brother John.
- For Neil Gleason, the husband of Ken Pennings’ former spouse Suzanne, who is hospitalized following a bone marrow transplant.
- For Sara Hagen, who Aunt Nancy had back surgery last Monday, whose Uncle Norman is recovering from surgery, whose Aunt Judy is recovering from hip replacement surgery, who Mother Susan has been admitted to hospice service.
- For our Honduran family who will hopefully be transitioning soon to more permanent housing.
- For the people of Gaza following last week’s bombing by Israel.
- For the victims of the shooting in a southern California high school leaving two dead and multiple people injured.

**Holiday Gift Drive:**

ORUCC 4th and 5th graders are organizing a Holiday Gift Drive with Early Childhood Initiative. Information cards with the first name of a child, their age, and their gift ideas are available to pick up at church on November 24 and December 1.

Please purchase the gift, wrap it, and return it to church by December 8th. THANK YOU!
Dear Church,

In September, the Dane Sanctuary Coalition approached Orchard Ridge UCC with the opportunity to provide temporary emergency housing for an asylum-seeking Honduran family until they were able to connect with services and find independent housing. After the SMT met with the Leadership Team and received their vote of support, the family moved into the church on Saturday, September 28th. Since then, the family has been supported by over 80 community volunteers, many from ORUCC, and a team of social service providers across multiple agencies.

With these supports, the family has made significant progress toward stabilization and we are excited that some major changes in their housing situation are likely to come in the near future. **In support of the family’s goal to transition to independent housing, the search for a suitable apartment has kicked into high gear.** (If you have a lead on one let us know.)

At the November 8th meeting of the Dane Sanctuary Coalition Steering Team, the Coalition, with input from housing specialists, set November 30th as the target transition date for the family to move into housing. This date serves as a realistic benchmark for finding an apartment and holds the family, the housing specialists at The Road Home, and the many volunteers of the Coalition/ORUCC accountable for continued progress toward achieving the family’s housing goal. We all work better with deadlines and with so many moving parts to this process, it is important to remain focused on success.

One of the questions for ORUCC as a congregation has been what role, if any, should the church have with this family once they stop being housed by the Dane Sanctuary Coalition. This question was discussed at length at the November 19th Leadership Team meeting. The following motion was presented and passed unanimously:

> **Motion that ORUCC terminate any official and financial relationship with the family as of the date of their departure. This is consistent with decisions made by the Dane Sanctuary Coalition (DSC). Leadership affirms ORUCC’s membership in the DSC and the Sanctuary Mission Team’s continuing efforts in support of the DSC.**

Some important things to know about the transition:

- The family has been accepted into a Rapid Re-housing program through the YWCA that will provide the security deposit, first month’s rent, PLUS six months of continued case management support through The Road Home.
- All of the monetary donations that have been received by ORUCC and the Coalition in support of the family will go with the family in the form of a monthly rental subsidy, similar in concept to how ORUCC’s Heart Room is set up.
- The many furnishings, clothing, bedding, and kitchenware purchased for or donated to the family will go with the family to set up their new apartment.
- Once the family’s new address is known, the family will be connected to local services including schools, JFF (Joining Forces for Families) offices, food pantries, personal essentials pantries, Latino churches and other organizations to continue their integration into their new community. Existing support services including immigration assistance, medical clinics, and employment services will remain accessible to them.
- Friends and community support are important to all of us to help navigate life, and it has been lovely to learn that the family continues to find support from individuals who knew them from their first time in Madison earlier this year. Individual members of ORUCC or other DSC volunteers are welcome to continue to support the family after they leave the church in ways and for as long as they and the family find mutually beneficial.
- At some point after the family is settled, the DSC is making plans to host a celebration with the family, service agencies, ORUCC, and all Coalition volunteers to lift up all of the many blessings of our time together.

ORUCC and the DSC have been an important stop along this family’s journey. Their presence with us has blessed and challenged this community in both obvious and subtle ways. The Sanctuary Mission Team has already begun compiling lessons learned, personal observations, reflections and insights, and seeds of wonder and gratitude from our shared experiences. If you have a story to share, we would love to hear it!

The DSC has continually expressed their gratitude to ORUCC for our willingness to take this leap of faith together. It is always more complicated to do something for the first time. We frequently get messages like this one from Fabiola Hamdan (social worker for Dane County Dept. of Immigration), and want you to know just how much the church and our volunteers are appreciated. **“The work, support, and assistance you are all doing for this family is amazing! ... I can’t even imagine where the family would be right now if they did not find you.”**

Many of our lessons and experiences will be turned into additional avenues for advocacy and education as well as volunteer train-
December Compassion Offering: Clean Water for Gaza and UCC Christmas Fund

Clean Water for Gaza: Please help provide students in Rafah, a town and refugee camp in the Gaza Strip in Palestine, with clean, healthy water to drink.

Gaza is home to over a million children. At least 95% of the water there is unfit for human consumption without proper filtration, decontamination and desalination. Expensive, imported water is a severe burden on the poor of the population.

Madison Rafah Sister City Project is once again raising funds to provide one of MECA’s (Middle East Children’s Alliance) large water filtration units for the children of Rafah, this time at the UN Al-Shuka Preparatory School.

Due to lack of building materials, this school runs a double shift and serves only girls in one shift and co-ed in the second shift. A total of 2,000 students and their families will be able to access clean water from this unit.

Please help them.

UCC CHRISTMAS FUND: For many years, ORUCC has supported the national denomination’s Christmas Fund through our December offering. This Ministry of the UCC Pension Board provides direct financial assistance to retired and active UCC authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses who are in need. Funds can provide pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas Thank you checks.

Please write “compassion offering” on the memo line of your check so that we can acknowledge the contribution on your giving statement.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

2019 Monthly Compassion Offering Summary:

January—WI Council of Churches Statewide Youth Summit on Gun Violence: $1650.00
February—Madison Urban Ministries: $1927.22
March—One Great Hour of Sharing: $3478.00
April—The Crossing Campus Ministry: $1753.49
May—Thea’s Table: $2367.33
June—Dane County Immigration Assistance Collaborative: $2529.72
July—Habitat for Humanity: $1459
August—The Returning Citizens Resource Fund: $2793.12
September—Family Resource Centers at Orchard Ridge and Falk Elementary: TOTAL $2462 (split evenly between the two schools—$1232 each)
October—Haiti Vulnerable Children’s Fund: $3015.99
November—Literacy Link: TBD
December Compassion Offering: Clean Water for Gaza and UCC Christmas Fund

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

Get Connected!

Be the first to get updates and reminders of events happening at ORUCC!

EMAIL: To be added to or removed from any of these email lists, please contact office@orucc.org.
Weekly E-post shares the events of the upcoming week
Weekly Adult Ed E-post reminders and links to topics and readings

FACEBOOK:
Follow the church on Facebook at “Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ.” We also have a NEW private FB Group “Members & Friends of ORUCC”!
This is a great way to share prayer concerns & updates, events, photos, and announcements with our church family.

INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER
Follow us @OrchardRidgeUCC on Twitter and @orchardridgeucc on Instagram.
Women’s Book Group—December 5
On December 5, we will discuss two books; participants can decide which one to read. Choose from *Passing* by Nella Larsen or *The Training School for Negro Girls* by Camille Acker. Through our discussion, we will try to get a partial picture of what it meant to be a black girl/woman in the 20th century.
If you plan to attend the November meeting, please let Jan Christian know (jlchrist@wisc.edu or 827-0500).

Women’s (and Men's!) Breakfast—December 6
NEW LOCATION:
The Breakfast Groups will meet Friday, December 6th at 8:30. We will meet at the Denny’s Restaurant at 433 S. Gammon Road. There will be tables for women’s and men’s groups in Denny’s separate room in the back of the restaurant. We will decide if we will keep this new location at a later date. Please join us for casual conversation on many topics.

Men's Group—Dec 9 & 23:
The ORUCC Men’s Group meets on the 2nd and 4th Mondays, from 7:15pm-8:45pm in the Romero Room. Contact John Lemke at jlemke1@charter.net or 829-3692 if you are interested in joining this group.

Knitting & Crafts Group:
The group will meet on Monday, December 2, at 1:30 pm at the church. All are welcome to bring some handwork and join us! Questions please call Sandra Dyar at 271-2409.

Movie Group
The group will not meet in December but will meet January 10 7:00pm-9:00pm in the Dorothy Day Room. All are welcome to discuss movies of interest. Contact Steve Sheets for information.

Weekly Meditation Group:
Thursday mornings, from 8:30 to 9:30 am, for a shared time of silent meditation and reflections on our spiritual journeys. **There will not be meditation on December 26.**
Contact Dave Myers at 274-0381 or 47_5698@msn.com or Helene Nelson 259-2546 or helenemargret@gmail.com with questions.

9:00am Adult Ed Hour:
Several special events are on the schedule for the season of Advent. Be sure to mark your calendars for these dates:

Dec 1—To start off Advent, Phil Haslanger will lead a discussion of a video “One light, Many Candles” exploring a multi-faith world in words and song.

Dec 8—Continued discussion from Nov 17 that allows more questions, comments and information-sharing among the congregation about the story of Heart Room to date and its next steps going forward.

Dec 15—Java & Jesus discussion with a reading on welcoming the stranger led by Dan Rossmiller

Dec 22—Rabbi Bonnie Margulis from WI Faith Voices for Justice will share experiences and insights from a recent pilot program of Sacred Site visits and Interfaith Fellowship.

All are welcome. Dec 1, 8, and 15 will be offered in the Lemuel Haynes Music Room, Dec 22 will be in Friendship Hall. There will be NO 9:00am programming on Dec 29.

Over 55—Dec 10:
Join us for a superb luncheon and program at 11:30am on Tuesday, December 10. **Our speaker will be Stacie Reece, Madison’s Sustainability Program Coordinator.** Ms Reece occupies a relatively new position in the city engineering division. Come and learn and be surprised!

Sign up for Auto-Pay
No more checks to write, or worries if you paid each month, and no more relying on snail mail delivery. Here is a simplified option to pay your operating pledge on a monthly basis, by auto deduction through your bank. **Pink auto deduction forms are on the table in The Crossroads.**
Please contact Julie Wombacher in the church office 271-7212 for more information. Deductions are taken out the 15th of each month.

Coffee Fund
Many of us enjoy a good cup of Fair Trade coffee after worship on Sunday mornings. ALL donations to the coffee fund are greatly appreciated!
**Gift Idea—a Book!**

For somebody who loves to read, what a delightful prospect it is to receive a book for Christmas. You can envision settling down in your favorite chair after the busyness of the holidays and opening your new book and your mind to people and places outside of your own experience. Consider these four:

**American Wolf** by Nate Blakeslee (non-fiction). This book chronicles a number of years in the lives of two unforgettable personalities of Yellowstone National Park—a wolf and a man. The wolf is “0-Six” (born in 2006), who became the skilled and much admired leader of her pack. The man is Rick McIntyre, who challenged himself above all else to see and record over 1,000 consecutive days of sightings of Yellowstone wolves. In the telling, the book necessarily includes the competition between hunters, ranchers, and the wolves themselves to live their lives without interference from the others.

**A Gentleman in Moscow** by Amor Towles (fiction). When the author, a successful financial professional, leaves his career to write a novel, you have to believe he has a good story to tell. He does. Set in Moscow shortly after the Bolshevik revolution, “the Count” is sentenced to live within the confines of a Moscow hotel for having written a political poem upsetting to those in power. In his exceedingly diminished world, he adapts by entering the lives of people who work or live at the hotel and others who are frequent guests. While this tale of page-turning twists and turns unfolds, his perception of what is important in life is turned on its head.

**Becoming** by Michelle Obama (non-fiction). Although we all know some things about the life of this recent First Lady, a person who dips into this very readable book is likely to feel she has become a personal acquaintance. Starting with her childhood, she tells about her education, career development, and mentoring of the promising lawyer who later became her husband. Members of our group especially noted the importance of her parents’ commitment to a good education for their children; the challenges of succeeding as a black woman in a white man’s world; the difficulties of raising two children with a largely absent father; the isolation of being a First Family; and even the familiarity of some of the Chicago settings.

**Educated** by Tara Westover (memoir). You may have seen this author interviewed in the media after this book hit the best-seller list, because the tale is extraordinary. Westover is the seventh child in a very conservative, antiestablishment Mormon family that lives in the northwest. Her father had a scrap metal business on the family property and required his children to work there, telling the authorities that his children were being “home schooled.” In addition to being deprived of a credible education, psychological and physical abuse within the family were common. How amazing, then, that this young woman found a way to get a formal education through a PhD. A tale of incredible tenacity.

All of these books are available in hard copy, in electronic form, or as tape recordings.

These suggestions are brought to you by the ORUCC Women’s Book Group.

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**Mutual Support As We Work for Racial Equity & Justice:**

Are you actively engaged in working for racial justice in our community? Would you like to talk with others of us who are also committed to this work, to extend mutual support and encouragement? A small group of us will gather on December 2, 7:00pm-8:30pm at the home of Pam Oliver and John Lemke. If you think this conversation is fit for you, please contact Helene Nelson (258-2546 or helenemargaret@gmail.com), Pam Oliver (829-3692 or pamelaoliver@charter.net), John Lemke (829-3692 or jlemke1@charter.net), or Karen Jaehnig (441-9789 or karenj721@gmail.com) to learn more.

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**Greeting Cards Make GREAT Gifts:**

$4 each or 6 for $20 available in the crossroads

All proceeds go to help struggling families in our neighborhood with eviction prevention. Here’s an example: A woman whose son passed away needed rent assistance because of unexpected funeral costs.

Thank you to Cheryl Donkle and Tim Melin for help with card production.

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**Lectionary Bible Study:**

Come and explore the weekly scripture texts in a Lectionary Bible Study Group that meets on Mondays from 12:00pm-1:00pm.

Together, we read through all four assigned texts for a given Sunday, explore their historical contexts, consider what common themes are present, and search for applications of these passages in our daily lives.

All are welcome—feel free to bring your lunch—come as you are able! Contact Laura Crow at pastorlaura@orucc.org.
Special events

Care Packages for College Students:

If your son or daughter is in college and would enjoy receiving a care package from the church the week of December 1st, please email Ken Pennings (ken@orucc.org) with a current address and any food allergies.

If you are able to provide fresh baked goods for the care packages, please bring 18-20 individually wrapped and sealed baggies of baked goods to the church on the morning of December 1st.

THANK YOU to all who help extend a warm hello and an encouraging word to our college students!

All Church January Retreat:

January 17-19, 2019

FUN For All Ages!

Our church will hold its 11th Annual Winter Retreat at Pilgrim Center (Green Lake, WI) January 17-19, 2020. Wonderful lodging, food, outdoor fun, crafts, music, conversations/sharing around the fireplace, and so much more is being planned for this weekend with the hope that our friendships and faith will be deepened and encouraged. There will be guided activities for all age groups on Saturday morning. We begin the retreat on Friday evening and finish around 11:00 a.m. on Sunday morning.

Housing for the retreat: Pilgrim Center with a capacity of 90 people.

Cost to stay at Pilgrim Center—$115 (12 years and older), $90 (4 to 11 years), $20 (0 to 3 years). This includes two nights lodging and four meals. Enormous bargain!! Go to www.orucc.org to make payment.

Every attendee’s cost is subsidized $20 by the church.

Due to limited space, we will attempt to honor lodging preferences on a first come first serve basis based on paid registration. Thank you for your under-

Heart Room – Keeping Families with Young Children in Stable Housing:

Heart Room is off to a great start! This ORUCC initiative, which began in July 2018, helps families find and keep stable housing. ORUCC member Megan Piper, along with Heart Room partners, Helyn Luisi-Mills from The Road Home and Mike Bruce from Joining Forces for Families (JFF), recently presented a preliminary evaluation.

WHY support Heart Room? Megan reminded us of Gospel texts calling us to help the homeless and welcome children in the name of Christ. Responding to this call, Heart Room’s design reflects research that shows the importance of helping children in their early years and that stable housing is a platform for long-term success of children and their families.

WHAT is Heart Room? ORUCC partners with The Road Home, Early Childhood Initiative and JFF to:

Provide a generous rent subsidy on a declining basis over three years. Donations from ORUCC members to the Heart Room campaign go through The Road Home to landlords.

Actively support families in setting their own goals and budgeting to meet them.

The rental assistance takes the pressure off the need to pay bills beyond a family’s income -- and thereby allows attention to longer term priorities for their family’s well-being.

Provide a collaborative service array to meet each family’s own goals and needs, engaging all 3 partner agencies and ORUCC volunteers.

Heart Room has served 8 families -- 20 children and 10 adults. In addition to partner staff, 11 ORUCC volunteers assisted families, e.g. with transportation or tutoring.

“THIS IS WORKING.” Megan, Helyn, and Mike told us. Helyn pointed out the number of families who prioritized and began to address employment goals, mental and physical health needs, early childhood and parenting goals, education of both children and adults, and access to public benefits.

Helyn and Mike shared examples of how the program is making a difference: paying off debt, getting reliable transportation, and reducing family stress around finances. A few families addressed immigration issues, including one mom who spent the time learning English, then studying and passing the U.S. citizenship exam and interview. One family was able to move into an apartment with lower rent including utilities -- a large savings. Families were able to participate in parenting classes and actively support their children’s education and care needs. ORUCC’s rental assistance and the support of our partner agencies have made these family accomplishments possible!

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING? WHAT ARE NEXT STEPS? We’ll begin to discuss these questions at 9 a.m., December 8th at 9 a.m. at ORUCC.

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THANK YOU to all who help extend a warm hello and an encouraging word to our college students!
Care of Creation
Green Corner:

UCC Climate Care
Discussion Guide for Congregations:
The United Church of Christ has released a church-based discussion guide for No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference by Greta Thunberg, the 17-year-old Swedish climate activist.

Copies of the book and discussion guide are available on the table in the Crossroads. In the spirit of Green-consciousness, please Read, Reflect, and Return the books so others may use them too!

If you use the guide for a discussion with friends, family or church members, let the Conference know about it in a brief email to resourcecenter@wcucc.org. They would love to have your feedback!

Nations Climate Change Conference Newsletter:
Carol Phelps, a friend of Laura Crow’s, is very excited to be participating as an official “NGO observer” in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Madrid, Spain in December!

This conference is also known as COP 25 because it is the 25th annual Conference of the Parties (i.e. nations) who are part of the UN Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change. It was during COP 21 in Paris in 2015, that the famous “Paris Agreement” was created.

The group she is going with will be putting out a newsletter blog while they are in Madrid, which will have short stories, updates, and photos from the conference. If you’d like to hear about what is happening, go to: http://eepurl.com/gHb8hz to subscribe to the newsletter.

Stay informed and share this exciting international experience vicariously from the comfort of your own home.

Community Trainings & Events

Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort (WAVE) Meetings:
WAVE (Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort) meets 6:30pm-8:00pm on the third Tuesday of the month, until gun laws change. We will meet in Friendship Hall.

For more information on WAVE contact Joyce Pohl at 206-5697 or japohl@gmail.com.

Community Longest Night Events & Blue Christmas Services:
December 20—Longest Night Service at 7 pm at Memorial UCC, 5705 Lacy Rd., Fitchburg

December 21—Join MUM (Madison Urban Ministry), First Congregational UCC, and First United Methodist Church for the 11th annual Longest Night Homeless Persons Memorial Service beginning at 3:00pm outside at the Capital and ending with soup supper and a brief interfaith service at First United Methodist.

December 21—Winter Solstice Naam Yoga Celebration and MOM Fundraiser, 6:30pm-8:00pm at Middleton Community UCC, 645 Schewe Rd, Middleton. Come celebrate this YOU-nique and very special day while supporting an amazing local nonprofit - Middleton Outreach Ministries! Breathe for your mind, move for your body and chant for your soul! This heart opening Naam Yoga event is the perfect way to increase your light so you can shine beautiful and bright this holiday season! A festive food/drink reception directly follows with Raffles! $30 per person but BRING A FRIEND FOR FREE! Contact Laura Crow for information on how to register.

Kettlewood Retreat—Bread for the Advent Journey:
Rev. Holly Whitcomb who recently led ORUCC’s Wayfinding Retreat will lead an Advent-themed retreat on Friday, December 13, 9:30am-3:00pm at Cedar Valley, 5349 County Rd D, West Bend, WI (just 35 miles north of Milwaukee).

Jesus says, “I am the bread of life.” Poet Mary Oliver writes, Eat bread and understand comfort.” In this Advent retreat we will ask, “How is Jesus our bread? What does genuine nourishment look like? How do we give and receive comfort?”

To register, write a check for $50 to Rev. Holly Whitcomb and send it to 2095 Elm Tree Ct., Elm Grove, WI 53122. Include your name, address, email and phone number(s). Upon registration, you will receive a map. For more information, call 262-784-5593

Music Rehearsal Schedule:
ORUCC Adult Choir: Rehearsals 7:00pm—8:30pm Wednesdays. Contact Bruce Gladstone or Vicki Nonn.

Handbell Choir: Rehearsals 7:00pm—8:15pm Mondays. Contact Bethany Schulz.

TruFunction Youth Band: Rehearsals 11:00am—1:00pm Sundays. Contact Rob Martens.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord! All are invited to join!
Nominations:
In October, ORUCC had a Ministry Fair and invited the congregation to learn about all of the amazing work being done by the five Ministries and Leadership Team—and the 60+ different Mission Teams and activities of the church. New brochures were created and “Ministry Map” has been up on the wall in the Crossroads as a guide to help find places for members and friends to connect that speak to their individual passion and sense of calling.

As we head toward the end of the year, it is time once again to begin thinking about nominations for church leadership. The Leadership Team is the executive body of the church. It is composed of the moderator, the moderator-elect, the immediate past moderator, the treasurer, the clerk, the pastor(s), and five at-large members of the church.

- Officers of the church (Moderator, Moderator-Elect, Clerk, Treasurer) are elected annually.
- Leadership Team At-Large members are elected for three-year terms on a staggered schedule. The at-large members serve as liaisons to one of the Ministries of the church. At-large members have a two-term limit.

There are five Ministries each with 5-7 members:
- Ministry members are elected for two-year terms on a staggered schedule. Ministries are commissioned to support, relate to and resource any church programs or activities that fall into its core areas. Ministries are to empower Mission Teams, both long term and ad hoc, to carry out the particular activities or ministries within this area. Ministries are also encouraged to strategize and envision new ministries for the church as well as celebrate the success and closure of Mission Teams which have completed their stated mission.

The Nominations Team, led by Moderator-Elect Kathy Borkowski and Pastor Ken Pennings is seeking people willing and able to serve in these roles beginning in 2020. Elections will be at the Annual Meeting on February 2, 2020. There is a Leadership Retreat for all Leadership Team members and Ministry Chairs February 7-8. It is very important that members are able to attend this retreat if accepting these roles.

The Nominations Team is also looking to fill positions on the 2020 Stewardship and Nominations Teams and find two Delegates to UCC SW Association (May 2, 2020 in Dodgeville, WI) and UCC Annual Meeting (typically June 5-7, Green Lake, WI, though meeting is not yet officially announced). Attendance for Delegates to these meetings is paid for by the congregation.

If you have questions or feel called to serve, please contact Kathy or Ken.

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Poinsettia Orders

Name__________________________________________

In Honor______________________________________________

In Memory______________________________________________

No. of plants__________at $15 each   Total Enclosed $__________

Please write Flowers in the memo line of your check.

Please collect your plant after the 7 p.m. service on December 24th.
OPEN OFFICE HOURS
Monday-Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Friday: CLOSED

Church Emails
Julie Wombacher  .......... office@orucc.org
Tammy Martens .......... tmartens@orucc.org
Ken Pennings .......... ken@orucc.org
Laura Crow .......... pastorlaura@orucc.org

UPCOMING NEWSLETTER:
January 1, 2020
Information to be included in the January Newsletter is due Monday, Dec 23 by 9:00am

WEEKLY BULLETIN & E-POST:
Information to be included in the Weekly Bulletin & E-Post is due on Wednesdays by 9:00am

CALENDAR OF EVENTS—DECEMBER 2019

Dec 1 9:00 am  Java & Jesus—Phil Haslanger
10:00 am  Worship
Dec 2 12:00 noon  Lectionary Scripture Study
1:30 pm  Knitting Group
Dec 4 5:30 pm  Labyrinth Walk
6:00 pm  Congregational Life
Dec 5 8:30 am  Meditation Group
1:30 pm  Women’s Book Group
Dec 6 8:30 am  Women’s (and Men’s) Breakfast
6:00 pm  Family Game Night
Dec 8 9:00 am  Heart Room Presentation
10:00 am  Worship
11:00 am  Children’s Music Concert
Dec 9 12:00 noon  Lectionary Scripture Study
7:15 pm  Men’s Group
Dec 10 11:30 am  OVER 55
6:30 pm  Care of Creation Meeting
Dec 11 6:00 pm  Adult Faith Formation Meeting
6:00 pm  Resource Meeting
Dec 12 8:30 am  Meditation Group
Dec 15 9:00 am  Holiday Bake Sale Youth
9:00 am  Java & Jesus—Dan Rossmiller
10:00 am  Worship
Dec 16 12:00 noon  Lectionary Scripture Study
Dec 17 7:00 pm  Leadership Team Meeting
Dec 18 5:30 pm  Labyrinth Walk
Dec 19 8:30 am  Meditation Group
7:00 pm  Christian Witness & Service Meeting
Dec 20 7:00 pm  Movie Group
Dec 22 9:00 am  Rabbi Bonnie Margolis, WFVJ
10:00  Worship
Dec 23 12:00 noon  NO Lectionary Scripture Study
7:15 pm  Men’s Group
Dec 24 4:00 pm  Candlelight with Children
7:00 pm  Candlelight Service
Dec 25 CHRISTMAS—OFFICE CLOSED
Dec 29 9:00 am  No Programming
10:00 am  Worship
Dec 30 12:00 pm  Lectionary Scripture Study