

The Good News

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

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A loving congregational family that celebrates God's presence among us



Wisemen and Wenceslas



We have already moved out of Advent (the first season in the church year), into Christmas (our celebration of Jesus' birth, the presence of God in a way never before imagined: Emmanuel, God with us as one of us), and then into Epiphany (the revelation of God in Jesus to all humanity, represented by the magi, the wisemen, in Matthew's gospel.) The scriptures in Epiphany continue that theme, and will take us up through the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday, February 17th this year.

Our tradition of gift-giving at Christmas has its earliest roots in the story of the magi, who Matthew tells brought gifts to the infant Jesus. The gifts were more symbolic than practical: gold, befitting a king; frankincense, incense identifying his role as a priest, who, in the tradition, represented or stood for the people before God; and myrrh, used in embalming, anticipating the significance of his death. But it is St. Wenceslas, with a song that is recognizable if not familiar, whose gifts seem to me to fulfill the gospel Jesus preached.

Wenceslas lived from 907-935 in Bohemia (now western Czechoslovakia.) When he was 18, Wenceslas, along with his brother, inherited the title of Duke. The story is Wenceslas was educated, which was unusual for the time in that area, even for families of means, and as a duke, he established a good education system for the people, as well as a fair and just legal process for all.

He was unselfish with his family fortune, making generous gifts to widows, orphans and children. His brother, jealous of his popularity, and either angry over his generosity or eager to be in sole power himself, had Wenceslas assassinated. He did so as Wenceslas was on his way to mass on the Feast of St. Stephen, remembering the first Christian martyr, celebrated the day after Christmas. This day is known also as Boxing Day, when leftovers from Christmas feasts of the wealthy are packaged and given to the servants along with monetary gifts.



It has recently been determined that "Good King Wenceslas" was named a king only after his death, an honor given because of his righteous and compassionate treatment of the citizens for which he cared so deeply and the reforms he established.

It is not our gifts to the rich, or even to our families, that mark our love and good will. Our faith calls us to give not to those who can return in kind, but in service to those most in need, whom Jesus and the prophets name as the hungry, the poor, the homeless, to widows, orphans, and refugees. And not just at Christmas, but year 'round.

Pastor Glen

Sunday Morning Adult Education and Tuesday Bible Study, both at 10 am,
are now meeting on Zoom.

If you would like to participate in either, weekly or just when you are able, let Pastor Glen know (pastor.cannonfallsucc@gmail.com) and he will send you the Zoom meeting and the readings.

Annual Meeting

Plans for this year's Congregational Meeting will be announced in a separate mailing, but reports from Board Chairs and Ministry Team leads are due in the church office by January 10th.

Pastoral Care Needs

Call Pastor Glen in the event of a pastoral care need. Either call his home 651-641-1832 or cell 651-757-0314.

Prayer Chain

Morning - Bonnie Hvistendahl 263-4120

Evening - Mavis Johnson 263-2857

When you are in need of prayer for yourself or others, your request will be passed along to the above prayer chains.

Prayer Partners

Each week, we pick staff and members or families at random for us to lift in prayer that week, for no reason other than praying for one another is a good thing to do.

Our *Prayer Partners* this week Linda & Grant Hindal, Jeff & Sue LaPan, and Jackie & Steve Sullivan

From the Mission Committee

There is no special mission for the month of January. Thank you again for your support of our December missions.

Thought for the month: **What the new year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the New Year."**

Treasurers Note

Thank you for your ongoing generosity. Please keep the sanctuary roof in mind and fund as possible

Outreach Ministry Team

The Outreach Ministry Team worked hard to record and post Advent and Christmas services for the church. Each service added special music and a postlude, along with the Advent Wreath Lighting readings and hymn. The Christmas Eve Service was nearly an hour long, and included a number of special

songs and performances by Karen Nowariak, Emily Peterson, Elaine Ohnstad, Maddy Woodman and Mary Pat Kleven & Charlie Knuth.

We want to thank everyone that worked so hard to produce these sermons. First, Dawn Husmann spent much of October and November figuring out the hymns and service music for the season, practicing them, then recording all the tracks for us. Ella Coyle took time from her studies to edit our Christmas introduction, offering, Doxology, and then recruited her siblings to help with the Advent Wreath Lighting readings, which she edited with the hymn provided by Dawn. Working remotely, Noah Woodman artfully edited many of the additional hymns in the Advent and Christmas services.

Sandy Meglic made sure that the sanctuary had enough Christmas decorations so that CindyMae Nelson and Emery Kleven could meet with each performer at the church and record their presentations – with as many takes as they needed to get it just right. Roman Mercier spent time with Emery recording the lighting of the advent wreath – all five weeks in one session! We also took some pictures of the decorations and used them in the services to give everyone the feel of being at church.

To make our studio look more festive for the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, we borrowed decorative items from Carol Nelson. A delightful added touch was a lovely poinsettia donated by Al and Jacqui Broin. Emery and CindyMae recorded the weekly services in the studio, and CindyMae made sure that DVDs were made for the services and sent out to those who didn't have internet access.



And, every Friday, CindyMae, Ella, Noah and Mary Pat took turns editing the entire service together, then posting it to YouTube, Facebook and the church website.

We all look forward to Pastor Glen's informative and uplifting sermons, but we were aware that he was still recovering from COVID and didn't want him to overdo it. We are grateful to the Minnesota UCC Conference for providing video sermons from area pastors, and appreciated the video sermon from Rev. Emily Goldthwiate Fries from the Mayflower Congregational Church in Minneapolis for our December 13th service.

Apologies to anyone we have missed – thank you, thank you! And, if you haven't had a chance to see all the Advent and Christmas services, we highly recommend going to the church website at cannonfallsucc.org and clicking on any you have missed.

Lighting the Church

Once again, the Outreach Team lighted up the church for the community during Advent. For practical reasons, this year's lighting was done on weekend evenings in December. Thank you to Joe and Stacy Coyle, Emery and Mary Pat Kleven, Cindy Mae Nelson and Ki Swedenborg for helping with this effort. Sandy Meglic helped Mary Pat put the solar lights on the bushes that added to the effect, and CindyMae kept an eye on them (the sensors like to blow around!) to keep them working. Overall, the church looked lovely, indeed.



Another Road

(from back of January 3rd bulletin)

In a few days, Christians around the world will celebrate the feast of Epiphany. Like so many of our Christian observances, this one contains the seeming contradictions of human and divine. It is on the one hand an acknowledgement of the divine nature of Jesus, which was recognized by the Three Magi who came to visit the Christ Child. On the other hand, it is a celebration of Christ's appearance to all people, as The Magi are often thought to represent Christ's Gentile followers.

It is not uncommon to tell stories to try and make sense of our stories, especially the ones that hold contradictions like Epiphany. In Italy on this day, Italian Christians tell the legend of Befana. The story goes like this:



Befana was an old woman, who was renowned throughout the village for keeping the most meticulously clean house. All of her energy and time went into creating a beautiful home. When the three Magi followed the star through her village, they naturally stayed with her in her lovely abode. They told her about the Christ Child, whose star they followed. After a day's rest, the three began again to follow the star, and they urged Befana to come with them. Befana said no at once, for if she left the village, who would keep her house clean and neat? The more she thought about the Christ Child, the more Befana was compelled to see and know more about him. Quickly packing a bag of sweet treats and carrying a broom for the new mother, Befana hurried down the road. But the Magi had already gone on ahead. Although she hurried to catch up with the, Befana could not find the Magi and to this day she searches for the Christ Child. Although her search for the Child was not successful that night, on Epiphany Eve, Befana travels still, visiting each child in Italy. And for each child, she leaves a gift, because she now knows that the Christ Child can be found in each young person.

January, 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10:00 am Adult Study on Zoom		10:00 am Zoom Bible Study				
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
10:00 am Adult Study on Zoom		10:00 am Zoom Bible Study				
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
10:00 am Adult Study on Zoom		10:00 am Zoom Bible Study				
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
10:00 am Adult Study on Zoom		10:00 am Zoom Bible Study				
31	<p><i>Adult Study is meeting via Zoom at 10 am Sundays on the dates noted. We are reading short biographical sketches of persons who have lived out their faith in ways that have impacted the world. 2-3 short biographies are discussed each week. RSVP to Pastor Glen or Ki by Friday noon each week for a copy of the readings and a Zoom link to the weekly session.</i></p>					
10:00 am Adult Study on Zoom						



Our building is closed but the Church is always open when we are the Body of Christ in the World. Stay safe and healthy until we see you again

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