

Bismarck-Mandan Area

United Church of Christ

1200 E Highland Acres Rd ~ 701-223-2915 ~ office@uccbismarck.org ~ www.uccbismarck.org ~ Like us on Facebook

December 2022

A GLOBAL MINISTRY CHURCH

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

All Is Still

by Rev. Gretchen Deeg, Pastor

*Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright.*

Recently, I attend a Hebrew scholar led Bible Study on Psalm 46, "Be still and know that I am God..." The session was three hours long and we did not get past the first two words, "Be still." Instead, whenever we began to approach the Psalm, a pondering or question in the group would pull us away to stories of King David, Noah, or Creation. As we energetically circled around stillness, we discussed how one of the Hebrew words for "praise" means to be raw and honest before God, how the name "Saul" means "to ask and inquire" even though Saul hardly ever did any asking or inquiring of God or the people, and much more. Even though we were staring right at the words in Psalm 46, "Be still" and spending hours in study, stillness was elusive.

As I write this, all is still in the church building. The Thanksgiving Eve worship service ended, our wonderful volunteers cleaned the last plate from the pie social, and Narcotics Anonymous concluded their meeting. Two hours ago the church was in the middle of a feast of activity and now all is still. In my experience, Christmas is often like this. There is a plethora of activity and then at some point, stillness sets in and a sense of fulfillment warms the heart. And all is calm, and all is bright.

"Be still" sings the Psalmist, after singing about bows breaking, spears shattering, and shields burning. "Be still" echoes the words of the Psalmist, after a woman wails in labor pains and a baby's first cry pierces the night. "Be still, and know that I am God."

May all the activity of this season draw you towards a silent, holy night in which you can be still and warmed to your core by the wonders of Christ's birth.

P.S. The Hebrew word for "Be still" is harpoo and it means to sink/relax into.



Advent A'Fair on Dec. 4

Join in the fun as we celebrate this Advent season with cookie decorating and more. More details on page 6.



Christmas Worship Services

Celebrate the birth and light of Christ with your church family:

Christmas Eve – Dec. 24 at 5:30 PM

Christmas Day – Dec. 25 at 10:00 AM



Save the Date

We will be having our annual meeting on January 29, 2023. We hope to see you there!

Worship with us every Sunday at 10 AM in-person or at www.uccbismarck.org/worship

Vision Statement

Adopted January 2016

The Bismarck-Mandan UCC is a thriving church transforming our lives and community:

- Where all are unconditionally welcomed, affirmed, accepted and loved;
- Where the good in every person is recognized and their talents are encouraged to be shared;
- Where children, youth, and adults learn that God is love and all are welcome to freely explore spirituality in a safe and nurturing environment;
- Where we can bring our personal needs and struggles and count on support from our church family – which is the loving family we all deserve;
- Where powerful messages inspire and challenge us to be caring and compassionate to all – in our church, community, and world, seeking opportunities to put our faith into action with courage to go beyond what we think we can do;
- Where we embrace the still-speaking God and live in today's world.



LIVING OUR VISION HIGHLIGHT

"Where children, youth, and adults learn that God is love and all are welcome to freely explore spirituality in a safe and nurturing environment."

On November 13, Bismarck UCC celebrated its 68th birthday! It was a joy to gather with our church family near and far and rededicate ourselves to this community of faith and the faith home that we all create together. Thank you to all of you for your continued dedication, prayers, and love. Here are a few images from our birthday photo booth. Happy Birthday!



Council Corner

by Carly Retterath, Moderator

Greetings UCC Bismarck,

Merry Christmas! This winter is off to a cold and snowy start but that will not keep us from enjoying this wonderful season of Advent. Our family has done our best to embrace the snow and cold with family baking, movie nights, and snow forts! I hope you all are finding ways to appreciate this time of year.

At the last council meeting the council spent much of the time sharing what individual committees are working on, discussing end of the year reports, and planning for the annual meeting. There are many exciting activities planned to finish up this year. I am especially looking forward to the Advent skits in worship!

It was recently brought to my attention that some individuals in the church are unaware of who is a part of the church council. In an effort to make this information more accessible Pastor Gretchen and I are working to add the council information to our website, along with my contact information as moderator and the most recent council minutes. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have ideas or concerns that you would like council to know about. Our meetings are open to church members, if you would ever like to attend.

In closing, as we look to Christmas, I reminded of the great gift that Jesus's birth is. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." The color for Advent is purple which is a symbol of preparation and forgiveness. So during this often-busy season be mindful of what we are preparing for, the gift of life and forgiveness! Have a blessed Christmas season!



Cover the Paint

We need your help! Nope, not with painting the building – that’s already done! The \$9,800 cost to complete the necessary repainting of the church has diminished our Building Fund and we are currently running a deficit. We have received \$4,524 donations to cover the painting cost, but need your help raising the remaining \$5,276. To donate, write “Paint Project” on your check.

FINANCIAL STATUS

January 1 to October 31, 2022

Revenue

General Offerings

Actual = \$ 115,691

Other Income (Dedicated, Earned)

Actual = \$ 17,085

Expenses

Actual = \$ 150,111

Total Revenue = \$ 132,776

Total Expenses = \$ 150,111

NET ACTIVITY = \$ (17,335)

SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION PARTNERS IN 2022

East Timor Education Fund	\$ 190
Charles Hall Institute	\$ 140
Our Church’s Wider Mission	\$ 2,154
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$ 892
Strengthen the Church	\$ 210
Neighbors in Need	\$ 690
The Christmas Fund	\$ 0
Total Shared Ministry	\$ 4,276

Thank You for Sponsoring a Sunday!

October 30, 2022 – All Saints/Souls Day

Thank you to all who contributed monetarily and to those of you who submitted names and brought photos of loved ones.



November 20, 2022 – Happy 49th Anniversary Bill & Marcia Patrie!

Bill and Marcia are long time members of our congregation. There doesn’t seem to be a facet of the church where you don’t see their contributions. They bring joy and knowledge to so many of us and how lucky we are to call them part of our church family.

**It’s easy to Sponsor a Sunday by calling the church at 701-223-2915 or visiting www.uccbismarck.org/donate. Sponsorships are \$500. All Sundays in December are currently available for sponsorship. Reserve your dates for 2023!*

Threads of Love

by Camille Grothier

With the Holiday Season upon us, can the New Year be far behind? This seems like the perfect time to recognize a few things that were especially memorable.

Of course, for me and a few wonderfully upbeat people, a bright memory has to be Threads of Love. This has been a fruitful year for us. The group has joyfully engaged in making articles for all sorts of reasons. The knitters/crocheters have kept our Prayer Shawl and Baby Shawl bins full. The quilters have had the enriching experience of making quilts for the church (they are currently working on a few very special ones for our church family to enjoy) and quilts were donated to the Metigoshe Ministries to send children to camp who otherwise would not have had that opportunity. For 2023, we are hoping to exceed the number which were donated this year. We are currently involved in making lap quilts for wheelchair patients in nursing and rehab facilities.

How can you help? I am soooo happy you asked. We are making articles for donations to our Painting project. Others will be added periodically. You can help by donating to this fund and end up with very useful articles for yourself or gift giving. Currently, we offered pillowcases which were quite popular. More articles to follow. All articles come not only with practicality, but with a lot of love sewn or knitted into every stitch—that’s what makes this group so very special.

All of this work takes place in the spiritually enriched space of our Fellowship Hall with much sharing of expertise and a great deal of laughter. We invite you to come and fellowship with us. If you enjoy crafting or just shooting the breeze, come join us—we would love to have you. God Bless you and yours now and in the New Year to come!

The Christmas Fund

by Amber Augustadt, Stewardship



Though we may not bring gold, frankincense, or myrrh, we offer our own variety of gifts to put in action alongside God's activity in the world. We are blessed to have ministries like the *UCC Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross* and

the *Emergency Fund*, which makes an immediate difference in the lives of those who serve the church across the denomination.

The *Christmas Fund* offers a pension supplementation grant that provides additional funds to lower-income retired UCC clergy and lay employees. The peace that accompanies these monthly grants cannot be quantified. This and several other missions of the church are supported by the gifts we offer.

In 2021, gifts to the *Christmas Fund* enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 231 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,104,479)
- Health benefits supplementation for 87 retired clergy and lay employees (\$177,600)
- Emergency grants for 53 individuals and families (\$150,338)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 509 retired clergy and lay employees (\$254,000)

The assistance and connection provided by your gifts lets these servants of the church know that they are not forgotten. Here are excerpts from just a few notes of appreciation that have been received:

From a retired pastor who received assistance to purchase hearing aids...

Thank you for the gift from the church. I had no idea such help was available, especially to that extent. It gladdens my heart to know the church still cares. Sometimes, we don't always get that affirmation while in the midst of doing ministry. But, God is still speaking...to me. Thank you so much!

From a pastor's spouse in North Carolina...

My husband and I thank you so very much for the ministerial assistance that was provided for us. It was so helpful and took a lot of stress from us, so we could concentrate on my husband's medical care and treatments. We never thought we would need ministerial assistance, but believe me, we are thankful for our national church and all those who give.

May we joyfully give in this season, with our gifts being used for God's greater work in this world.

Ongoing Classes

Monday Evening Bible Study

Using video clips from *The Bible Project*, this class is for both entry-level and experienced Bible readers. Dive into the meanings behind the words of scripture and enhance your personal Bible study tools. Meets on Mondays at 6 pm.

Caffeine & Christianity

A group of middle & high school youth. Gathers on Wednesdays at 6 pm for conversation and fun. See page 6 for upcoming events.

Friday Morning Bible Study

A group for the lectionary lovers! This dedicated group meets every Friday at 8:30 am in the church library to study the weekly scripture reading and fellowship. All are welcome.

Sunday School

Classes for the youngest kids to middle school aged are held on Sundays at 10:20 am. See the youth page for details.

Confirmation

A program for our 7th – 12th grade spiritual explorers. Meets twice a month on Sundays from 2 - 3:30 pm. Already confirmed youth are welcome to continue attending. Contact Pastor Gretchen if you are interested in affirming your faith.

Have an idea for a class? Contact Pastor Gretchen (223-2915) or Christian Ed with your ideas.

Just For Fun

Thursday Game Nights

Dust off your board games of all ability levels and join others from the general public and our church for the UCC hosted game night. The games begin the first Thursday of every month at 7 pm. Bring board games and a snack to share, if you wish. Next game nights: **Dec. 1 & Jan. 5.**

Gather Us In

by Hannah Vanorny, NPC Delegate from Bismarck UCC

“Gather Us In” was the theme of the recent Northern Plains Conference annual meeting (Oct. 28-29) and, indeed, there was a gathering of friendship and community as participants discussed the current state of the United Church of Christ and mulled over ideas for the future.

I was happy to go to this conference as a delegate for Bismarck UCC because I saw it as an opportunity to learn more about this faith community that I have embraced for the last two years. The setting could not have been more perfect. Camp of the Cross (near Garrison, ND) supplied not only a great facility to conference in, but also some truly breathtaking sunrises and sunsets.

I learned that the Northern Plains Conference is made up of churches across North Dakota and two provinces in Canada: Manitoba and Alberta. During a “mingle, mingle” game on Friday night, I met numerous clergy and lay members from these churches. While many people at the conference have been friends for years, it was my first time meeting most everyone.

On Saturday, after praying together and sharing a land acknowledgment, we heard reports from conference visitors and committee chairs. Highlights for me included hearing from the Conference Ministers from the Minnesota and Montana/Northern Wyoming Conferences, learning more about the rural school in East Timor (sponsored by United Church of Christ Global Ministries), and hearing from our own Bill Patrie on the progress of CATCH, Communities Acting Together for Change & Hope. CATCH was founded to help settle refugees and immigrants in rural parts of North Dakota, where there are jobs and communities waiting to welcome them.

Rev. Deborah Blood’s State of the Conference Address gave us many worthwhile things to think about. She reminded us that just like nearly all churches in the country, our church members are getting older and our congregations are shrinking. However, instead of living in denial about these facts, we should look for new opportunities to collaborate and work together. Our future together as a united UCC community is wide open.

We ended the day with worship as Rev. Deborah was officially installed as the Designated Conference Minister for our Northern Plains Conference. As I watched the participating clergy lay their hands on Rev. Deborah, blessing her, I was struck by the mixed genders present in the mix. Having attended many ordinations of Roman Catholic priests and deacons during my life, I was used to seeing only males in the front of the church. This installation was a joyous sight for me to see!

After the final liturgy, some of us stayed on to enjoy a wonderful tea party at the Garrison UCC, complete with dainty sandwiches, tasty treats, and fun hats for all! Garrison is, after all, home to the annual Dickens Festival.

My main takeaway from the conference was joyous hope – we may be a small conference in a small denomination, but we collectively have a big heart.

Ministry & Fellowship Groups

UCC Choir

Choir has begun singing in worship and what a beautiful addition to the worship experience. The choir would happily welcome anybody who is interested in joining. The choir meets for practice on **Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm**

Mayflower Circle

This women’s fellowship group will next be meeting on Thursday, December 8. Mayflower Circle leads various ministries throughout the year including funeral luncheons, annual rummage sale, numerous fundraisers, and others. Contact Jane Thomson to learn more.

Threads of Love

Knit, quilt, tell stories, and have a great time with this group of crafters. Bring your own project, knit a prayer shawl to be blessed and gifted to another, or focus on your quilting. All are welcome to come join us at our **Tuesday gatherings from 1 to 3 pm, or later**. Experience or participation sewing, quilting, knitting, crafting, crocheting, are NOT required—we LOVE to fellowship with any and all. Hope to see you soon!

Haycreek Team

Have a passion for serving those in care centers? This team preaches and leads worship services at Haycreek Lodge Retirement Community on College Dr on various Wednesdays throughout the year. Talk with Darcy Avery with interest in joining this group of worship leaders.

Youth & Young of Heart News



Get Your Ornament!

Our Sunday School students have been busy creating ornaments for each church family. We invite you to pick yours up on December 18th after Sunday worship.

A big "Thank You" to our students for spreading Christmas cheer!

Christmas Sing-Along

All are invited on Tuesday, December 13 at 6pm to head over to Haycreek Lodge and join up with a variety of community members to do a Christmas Sing-A-Long with the Haycreek residents. Meet at Haycreek Lodge.



Christmas Caroling

You're invited to join the choir and youth as we go Christmas Caroling at Edgewood Village on Sunday, December 18 at 2pm. We will be walking the hallways, bringing Christmas joy and carols to our members and friends who live at Edgewood. Instruments are welcome!

Advent A'Fair

Mark your calendars for Sunday, December 4th and join us for Advent A'Fair! Following the service, we will gather in the fellowship hall to enjoy food, fun, and fellowship as we honor this time of expectant waiting and preparation for the Christmas season. We'll share a meal, then make cards & decorate Christmas cookies for church members who can't be with us. Maybe we'll sing along to a carol or two, hear a story, and play some games.

We look forward to spending the afternoon together with you!

~Board of Christian Education

Advent Happenings!

Each Sunday throughout Advent we will be doing skits during Worship as opposed to our usual single Sunday pageant. These will be family stories from Mary and Joseph. The Sunday school kids and youth will be some of our key actors along with a variety of members from our congregation. If you are interested in having a part, please contact the Christian Ed department or the Church office.



We are happy to say that on December 4th during Worship we will be giving children and youth Bibles who haven't yet received theirs and celebrating afterwards during our Advent A'fair.



Thank you!

Thank you for being a major player in planning, leading, and sharing, in our Taize service on All Soul's Day. Personally, the meditative atmosphere of the prayers, repetitive songs' verses and the times for intention silence touch me. It's as though I'm truly in a "sacred and thin place." The fact that we read the necrology of our community was a perfect addition to the environment of the evening. We received \$54 in donations for new "Taize Books." Personally, I appreciate the ecumenical atmosphere of our two congregations and hope this will continue as a symbol of the commonality of the followers of Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace,
FR Hal+
The Rev'd Hal Weidman
Rector

Thank You!

Thank you for helping us keep women leaving prison warm & cared for. We appreciate your gifts to the Heart River Clothing Pantry.

Gail

Thank you!

Thank you, Thank you, from the bottom of my heart for helping me with my rent. It has helped me beyond belief. Your kindness and generosity is something I will never forget. I love my church and have been a member since I was born.



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

Happy Birthday to our beloved members and friends!

May God's gift of life be a blessing to you and may your life be a blessing to others all year long.



December

BIRTHDAYS

- 03 Louise Zuern
- 04 Camille Grothier
- 05 Erica Nitschke
- 11 Wade Schemmel
- 13 Howard Etson
- 14 Audrey Heinle
- 15 Laaden Dobitz
- 17 Anthony Devos

- 17 Hadden Robinson
- 21 JD Tollefson
- 21 Ben Patrie
- 21 Marcia Patrie
- 22 Stella Augustadt
- 25 Penny Wilson
- 27 Justin Weil
- 30 Wilhelm Eisenbraun

**Please contact the church office or sign up in the narthex if you would like your birthday listed in the newsletter.*