



Hopeful Connections

3324 41ST STREET

MOLINE, IL 61265

PHONE 762-1419 FAX 762-4119

HOPEUCCQC.ORG

OFFICE.HOPEUCCQC@GMAIL.COM

PASTOR.HOPEUCCQC@GMAIL.COM

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A Season for Waiting

Waiting. We are getting used to it, aren't we?

We are getting used to waiting to hear the daily count of positive cases in our county and nationally as they get reported on the news each evening. We are getting used to waiting to hear the daily number of new

Covid deaths each day. We are getting used to waiting for the vaccine – even with the positive news of approval of vaccines, we are getting used to waiting for when we will be able to receive it. We are getting used to waiting to find out when we will be able to regather in person, safely, for worship and fellowship. And now we are getting used to waiting to be able to see our families and friends and celebrate holidays with them. Waiting has taken on new meaning for us. Waiting to do something we used to be able to do may save our lives or someone else's. Waiting is different now even though, as people of faith, we enter into the season of waiting every year as we anticipate and keep watch for the birth and return of our savior, Jesus Christ. The Season of Advent is here – and we are keenly aware of the importance of this waiting and keeping watch because the hope for the world is coming. Advent- from the Latin *adventus* – means arrival. During this season we remember and celebrate what has been and what will be: God coming to us through the birth of Jesus and the return of Jesus. The promised reappearance of the Son of God was what the earliest followers of Christ waited for and it is what Advent was designed to highlight– we are waiting for the return of Christ into our lives and our world.

This year so many of the distractions that come with this time of year have been eliminated for us (thanks, Covid!) so it should mean that waiting and staying focused on our spiritual development and growth during Advent should be so much easier. Yes and no. Because we cannot do many of the things we normally do this time of year: worship in person together, have large parties and gatherings, have cookie exchanges, sing Advent and Christmas hymns together, and spend Christmas Eve together lighting our candles during Silent Night, we can easily focus on the negative and recoil in fear and see this special time of waiting through a lens of scarcity. But as people of faith, we remember that God remains with us throughout all the seasons of our lives: the easy seasons and the challenging seasons. What is happening today is no exception. So as a community of faith we will enter into this season of waiting, the Season of Advent, with hope, faith, and joy as we gather virtually each week and draw closer to the birth of the Word made flesh - Emmanuel, God with us.

Our Advent worship services will focus on celebrating the Good News and anticipating the birth and return of Jesus Christ in the midst of the sadness, loss, and stress of this pandemic. As worship designer and theologian Marcia McFee explains, "The history of humanity is fraught with pain—especially the pain that comes accompanied by fear and leads to oppression and violence of one people against another. This is the world into which Jesus was born and through which his teachings would challenge and call for transformation." So each Sunday we will celebrate with music and light.

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Each Sunday we will hear and sing verses from the hymn I Believe by Mark Miller, inspired by the words written on a wall of a room that was the hiding place of an anonymous Jewish poet during the Holocaust. This hymn reminds us of the power of music to bring transformation through hope, love, joy, and peace. We will still believe even when we are discouraged. Light will be a very important image throughout Advent as well. I hope you will use your Advent candles and luminaries that you received in your Advent-at-Home kits to light during the weekly worship service. You will see paper bag luminaries in the sanctuary at Hope, connecting us with the paper bag luminaries that decorate your home sanctuaries as well. The advent candles and luminaries serve as a reminder that this is the season when we proclaim that the light enters into the dimly lit places of our lives and hearts and illuminates within each of us a message of freedom, love, and comfort.

So wait a little longer. Stay hopeful a little longer. Let your heart be happy and trust in God's promises of God's presence with us. We enter into the Season of Advent with Mark's gospel inviting us to be prepare the way for the Lord and make ourselves ready to be transformed because now is the time! During Advent take this quiet time of waiting to think about this invitation and have hope that we will do what needs to be done to bring more light into the world.

Happy Advent and happy waiting,
Pastor Santina

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU.....

02 Joanne Bowman
03 Kimberly Beug
06 Todd Herbst
11 Lewis Poor
11 Dakota Beug
14 Parker Lewis
20 David Birdsell
27 JoAnn Olson
29 Karla Hawotte



December Scripture

Dec. 6	Isaiah 7:1-14 Matthew 1:17-25
Dec. 13	Isaiah 57:14-19 Luke 1:1-4, 26-56
Dec. 20	Isaiah 9:2-7 John 1:1-18
Dec. 27	Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Luke 2:22-40

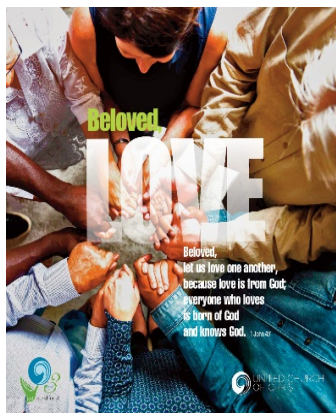


Angel Tree at Hope UCC

Once again Hope UCC has partnered with World Relief Quad Cities to bring Christmas joy to a local family. We will have the opportunity to fill the wishes of a family with 4 children this year. We will receive the list from World Relief soon – stay tuned and watch for the announcement in next week's 'Weekly Update.' Thank you for supporting this special outreach ministry.

Stewardship 2021

Thank you for your continued support of Hope UCC's mission! Thanks to the pledges we have received so far, we have reached 78% of our pledge goal. We are grateful! If you have not pledged yet, please consider sending in your best estimate of how you might support Hope's 2021 mission. If you have any questions about your pledge or Hope UCC's 2021 proposed budget, please contact Pam in the church office or our Treasurer, Bob Tallitsch. Thank you again for your continued support of Hope UCC's mission and ministry!



Della Update

Della is doing well and was discharged from her rehabilitation center Friday, November 20. She will continue her care in Wisconsin at her sons home.

Her new mailing address is:
15370 West Mayflower Dr.
New Berlin, WI 53151

Congregational Sympathy

Congregational sympathy is extended to Phyllis Dull on the death of her son Ken who died on November 25. Our love and prayers are lifted for Phyllis in this time of loss.

Advent Weekly Study: “Friday Night at the Zoom Movies” December 4, 11, and 18 at 7:00-9:00 P.M.

Each year we gather during Advent to engage in a weekly study and discussion. We are going to try something a little different this year and use different films as our basis for the study. Each of the films is a documentary that describes and tells the story of the power of music to uplift in the midst of incredibly hard times. We will meet via Zoom, watch the movie together, and discuss the different spiritual themes and the impact its message brings.

December 4: *Girls on the Wall*

A documentary about the teenage girls of Warrenville Prison who get a shot at redemption in a most unlikely form: a musical based on their lives.

December 11: *Defiant Requiem*

A memorial concert reawakens the story of an artistic uprising in the Nazi concentration camp, Terezin, where a chorus of 150 inmates confronts the Nazis face-to-face - and sings to them what they dare not say.

December 18: *Following the Ninth*

A documentary film about the global impact of Beethoven’s final symphony. Written in 1824, near the end of Beethoven’s life, the Ninth Symphony was composed by a man with little to be thankful for. Sick, alienated from almost everyone, and completely deaf, Beethoven had never managed to find love, nor create the family he’d always wanted. And yet, despite this, he managed to create an anthem of joy that embraces the transcendence of beauty over suffering. Celebrated to this day for its ability to heal, repair, and bring people together across great divides, the Ninth has become an anthem of liberation and hope that has inspired many around the world:

Log on to Zoom a little early for a time of fellowship and socialization before the movie begins at 7:00.

Questions? Please contact Pastor Santina in the church office.

The Zoom link and passcode for each of the meetings is the same and you can use it each week.

Topic: Advent Friday Night at the Zoom Movies

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83065914298?pwd=UzFJTjZjMXhZZEVraDFXSXBvc0FtUT09>

Meeting ID: 830 6591 4298

Passcode: 147755

Christmas Eve Services

Due to Covid restrictions, we will celebrate Christmas Eve in a new way this year. Pastor Santina will have drive-through Holy Communion available on December 24 in our church parking lot from 12:00-2:00 P.M.

You will stay in your car, safely masked and Pastor Santina will be masked as well.

Our Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols will be offered at 5:00 P.M. as a live video premiere on Facebook Live. We will watch the service together as we are joined virtually to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The video will also be uploaded to Hope UCC’s YouTube channel.

The UCC Christmas Fund Offering

The United Church of Christ’s Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. Over the past nine months, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergency financial needs of many who serve the church have increased dramatically. In such a time as this, the need for the Christmas Fund is more urgent than ever. United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Your donation can be made to Hope UCC, please indicate “Christmas Fund” on the memo of the check or on the envelope you use.

Advent Devotionals Available

Did you receive your copy of “I Still Believe – Hope UCC’s Advent Devotional”? It is a beautiful collection of daily scripture, reflections, and prayers for each day of Advent. The reflections are written by Hope UCC members and friends and are a wonderful and moving collection of memories, experiences, and stories. This devotional is a special Christmas gift by and for this faith community! Special thanks to Kathy Hobson for leading this special project and her great crew of editors. If you would like a copy of the devotional for yourself or to give to a friend, please let the church office know and we can send it out right away.

Essentials Reverse Advent Calendar

This year Hope UCC is collecting items for Christian Care QC. They offer assistance, housing, meals, and dignity and support for our neighbors in need in the Quad Cities. Please consider collecting any or all of these items throughout Advent beginning Sunday, November 29 through Christmas Day. Please bring your items to church after Christmas. We will deliver everything to Christian Care January 4. There is no order for these items and you do not have to collect them all. But, there are 27 days of Advent and 27 items to offer our neighbors, so be as creative as you are able to be. **Any** of these items are greatly appreciated and help so much! Thank you in advance for sharing love and joy this Christmas season.

Men's new socks
 Women's new socks
 Men's gloves
 Women's gloves
 Stocking caps
 Puzzle books (crosswords, word search, Sudoku)
 Coffee
 Creamer
 Laundry Detergent
 Hand Sanitizer
 Paper Towels
 Reusable kitchen gloves
 Bleach

Men's new underwear
 Women's new underwear
 Men's boots sizes 6-12 (new or gently used)
 Deodorant
 Toothpaste
 Bars of soap
 Body wash
 Toilet cleaner
 Shampoo
 Razors
 Toothbrushes
 Sweatshirt (pullover, hooded, zipper: any and all are welcome)
 Shaving cream
 Pasta

Dear Fellow Members and Friends,

The Church Council has set January 17th, 2021 as the day for our congregational annual meeting.

The format will be different this year. We are looking at having a zoom type meeting. There is the possibility, of having a FM broadcast to the parking lot and a small in person attendance in the sanctuary for this meeting. This will all depend on the what direction the Covid-19 pandemic leads us.

The annual report will be available prior to the meeting date in an email form or mailed. The final details will be in the January 2021 Newsletter.

Yours in Christ,
 Grady Birdsell,
 Church President, Hope UCC



November 12, 2020

Dear Hope United Church of Christ,

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for your support of our smoke detector battery collection to help provide for the families of Rock Island Academy. Your donation helped kick start our program. We distributed the batteries you provided to needy families who were extremely grateful. This would not have been as successful without your act of generosity.

As a school, we raised over \$500 to help keep this program going. We love working with the community and local churches to help support our families and we cannot do it without help.

Love,
 Rock Island Academy Families

Just a few of the many grateful students from RIA



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12-14-2012

I THINK YOUR LIGHTS MIGHT BE TOO
BRIGHT THIS YEAR