

Hope

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United Church of Christ

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Gifts of the Heart

It all began with a segment on the Today Show. The reporter was at the Panama Canal covering how the climate crisis is impacting commerce. Because of the

drought in that region, there was not enough water in the Panama Canal for the ships to get through. As a result, there was a backlog of these huge cargo ships carrying thousands of containers waiting to get through. As the harbormaster described it to the reporter, "These containers are all filled with Christmas presents that should be on the shelves in a few months."

This segment made me question how much 'stuff' do we need? That mad dash to consume all the stuff on those ships seems to take over during the Christmas season. That constant message to 'buy, buy, buy' causes us to lose perspective on what the real gifts of this season are: peace, hope, love, and joy shared with us as we recognize and embrace the presence of Emmanuel - God with us. Peace, hope, love, and joy: these are the gifts that money cannot buy, that cannot be detained on a stranded cargo ship. These are gifts of the heart, offered to us by God and then passed forward through us into the world. So this became our Advent worship series here at Hope UCC: Gifts of the Heart: Peace, Hope, Love, and Joy. During our worship services, instead of the usual sermon from me, I will 'interview' a member of our community who shares their gifts of their heart in different ways. I know you will give a warm welcome to these wonderful folks:

December 3: The Gift of Hope: Rev. Laura Evans Mahn, founder of NEST Café

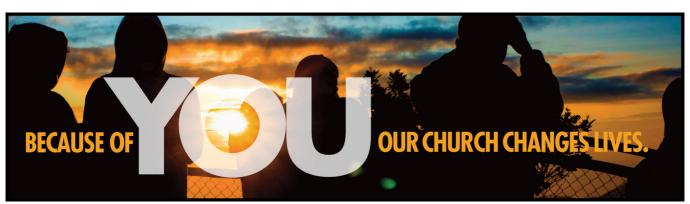
December 10: The Gift of Love: Heather McCarty, Nurse at Rock Island Academy

December 17: The Gift of Joy: Sara Ellet, Behavioral Health Program Manager at The Arc (Sara also attends Hope UCC regularly)

I pray that our focus on Gifts of the Heart helps to shape where and how we look for God this Advent season and how we share God's love and light through our own Gifts of the

With peace, hope, love, and joy, Pastor Santina





Stewardship 2024: Because of YOU Our Church Changes Lives

We hope that YOU see yourself in this statement and in the mission and life of Hope UCC. We certainly do! Hope UCC would not be the same without you and our mission is not possible without you. Your sharing your faith and spiritual journeys here as well as your time, talents, and gifts create and help to grow the mission and ministry of Hope UCC. We hope you will prayerfully discern how you feel God's Spirit calling you into creating and renewing our mission on this shared faith journey as together at Hope UCC our church changes lives.

Thank you for your continued support of Hope UCC and our mission and ministries. With your support and faithful participation, we will conclude our campaign by December 3rd. If you have not done so already, we invite you to bring your pledge cards to church that Sunday.

If you have any questions about Hope UCC's 2024 stewardship campaign or questions about sharing your gifts with Hope UCC, please contact the church office or our Treasurer, Bob Tallitsch. We thank you again for the many ways you support Hope UCC!

Quad Cities Flutes Unlimited Holiday Concert December 4 at 7:00 P.M.

Plan to attend the free Holiday Concert from Quad Cities Flutes Unlimited right in our sanctuary at Hope UCC. This gifted group of musicians offers truly beautiful music that puts everyone on the holiday spirit.

ADVENTATHORE UCC Gifts of the Heart

December 3: HOPE An interview with Rev. Laura

Evans Mahn Founder of NEST Cafe

<u>December 4:</u> Quad Cities Flutes Unlimited Christmas

Concert 7 P.M.

December 10: LOVE An interview with Heather

McCarty Nurse at Rock Island Academy

December 17: JOY An interview with Sara Ellet

Behavioral Health Program Manager at The Arc

December 21: Gift of Books Extravaganza at Spring

Valley Community Room 1-3 P.M.

December 21: Longest Night Service at 4 P.M.

Throughout Advent: The Advent Angel Tree has gift

tags available supporting the Micro Pantry and

Clothes Closet at RI Academy

December 24: Christmas Eve Worship and Lessons

and Carols Service at 10 A.M.

December 31: New Years Eve Brunch Church Worship at 10 A.M.

Thank You

Heartfelt thanks to all my Hope UCC Family for your kindness, grace, and help during Parker's long struggle with Alzheimer's. My family and I are beyond grateful for all your presence, prayers, and support. Yours in Christ. Kathy Lewis and Family



December Birthdays

02 Joanne Bowman

11 Lewis Poor

17 Riley Hawotte

27 JoAnn Olson

29 Karla Hawotte

December Scriptures

December 3: Isaiah 40:1-11 &

Mark 1:1-8

December 10: Luke 1:26-38 **December 17**: Isaiah 61:1-4. 8-11 & John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 24: Lessons and

Carols

As always, if you note any 03 Kim Beug inaccuracies or missing birthdays of any friends or members, please do not 16 John Anderson hesitate to let the office know, and we will correct and update our information 20 David Birdsell in an expeditious, speedy, 20 Eric Leuth quick, prompt, swift, and efficient manner.

Hope UCC Book Club

The Book Club will meet again January 29 at Hope UCC at 6:00 P.M. The book selection will be The Wishing Game by Meg Shaffer. All are welcome to be part of Hope UCC's Book Club! A great New Year's resolution is to read more books - our book club will help you keep that resolution.

Please see Dorothy Burdick with any questions or for more information.



Blue Christmas on the Longest Night Service December 21 at 4:00 P.M. In the midst of this season where we see 'JOY' almost everywhere we look, what do we do with the grief and loss we carry? It can be challenging to face the joy and happy chaos of the Christmas season when we feel grief, sadness, anxiety, or pain. Our 'Blue Christmas' service at Hope UCC is a space to claim those feelings and find hope in the compassionate love of God. We will gather for this service on the day of the Winter Solstice - the longest night of the calendar year. All are invited to join the quiet service as we share and hear prayers, scripture, music, and rituals that acknowledge God's presence is here and very real for those who mourn, for those who struggle and that God's word comes to shine light into the darkness.

Weekly Centering Prayer at Hope UCC: Wednesdays, 2:00-2:45 P.M.

Join us every Wednesday for a time of Centering Prayer, a form of Contemplative Prayer. This method of prayer uses the practice of meditative silence to quiet our minds in order to more fully engage in prayer. Maybe you need a place of quiet and centering space in this busy season – join us and find that peace.

Join in person or on Zoom. We meet in the Small Chapel next to the rear doors. Zoom is available: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82885198751?pwd=N1ZER1FldjB4NlZWRHJUdXJZckhaZz09

Meeting ID: 828 8519 8751 Passcode: 541386



Gift of Books Christmas Extravaganza December 21 at 1:00 P.M. at Spring Valley Community Center

Everyone is welcome to join Ruth Circle for the great Gift of Books Christmas Extravaganza on December 21. During the Holiday Party at Spring Brook and Spring Valley Community Center, our Ruth Circle group provides a huge variety of books for readers of all ages. We could not do this without our wonderful donors of these books – thank you!. The children at the party can come and pick out books to give as gifts. They get wrapped up and the kids can then take them to the people on their gift list. Volunteers are needed to help kids pick out their books and also to get the books wrapped up in holiday paper the day of the event. Help is also appreciated on Tuesday, December 19 at 1:00 to set up the wrapping stations. On Thursday, please bring scissors, tape, pens, and grocery store plastic bags. Any donations of gift tags are welcome! All help is appreciated!! Please contact Barb Hawotte or Dorothy Burdick for more information and to sign up to help with this fun and meaningful event.



Advent Angel Tree

This year, in keeping with our congregation's focus on the needs of children and families of all configurations in our community, Hope UCC's Mission and Outreach Ministry has selected the new Micro Pantry and Clothes Closet in the Nurse's office at Rock Island Academy as the recipients of the Advent Angel Tree. You will have the opportunity to meet Heather McCarty, the school nurse organizing these programs, on Sunday, December 10 when she joins us for worship on the Sunday of Love to share more about her love for this community. Pull one of the Angel Tags off the tree in Fellowship Hall and return the unwrapped item(s) to Hope UCC by December 31. If you would like to support the Angel Tree but are not able to get to the store to purchase something, your donation is welcome and will be used to purchase item(s) from the tree. Please indicate 'Angel Tree' on your memo line or on the envelope. The list will be available on our website: www.hopeuccgc.org.



Christmas Eve at Hope UCC

This year we are doing something different on Christmas Eve. Instead of two separate services, we are combining the Christmas Eve Communion service with our traditional Lessons and Carols service. We will gather at 10:00 A.M. for this special Christmas Eve service. There will not be an evening service this year. Next year it all goes back to the way it has been, but this year, with Christmas Eve falling on Sunday, we thought we would try something a little different. We hope you will join us for this special service as we gather to celebrate the presence of God among us.

New Year's Eve Brunch Church December 31 at 10:00 A.M.

Join us for Brunch Church on December 31. Bring a dish to share and join the worship celebration in Fellowship Hall. We will fill our spirits and our stomachs as we share our worship and praise on this festive day. What a special way to end 2023 and begin 2024 together!