GLAD TIDINGS!

December 2025

Gathered by the lake,
we are
Embraced by God
to **grow**
Empowered by Christ
to **care,**
Enriched by the Holy Spirit
to **celebrate**



Congregational United Church of Christ Neenah / Menasha

Hello Church!

As we celebrate this joyous season, we give thanks for the gift of Christ among us and the blessings of our faith community. Advent is here, and we look forward to meaningful holiday services that remind us of hope, peace, joy, and love.

As we turn the page to a new year, we are excited for all the new ways we will imagine being the church together– living out our faith, serving our community, and dreaming boldly about the future God is calling us to.

Vision Process Update – Let's Dream Together! Looking Back: November 15 Vision Session

On November 15, our congregation gathered with facilitator Bonnie Andrews for the latest step in our visioning journey. Together, we explored what makes our church life-giving and strong. These insights will guide us as planning begins:

Life-Giving Themes

- Service to our community – "the little church that could"
- Energy and commitment
- Deep faith
- Focus on youth
- Welcoming and diverse – a place that feels like family
- Vibrant worship and music
- Love and joy at the heart of all we do

Our Positive Core Values:

Openness • Kindness • Generosity • Faith • Deep relationships
Tangible Assets: Our people, our building, and financial resources
Intangible Assets: Committed leadership, future focus, and strong community connections

Dreams Shared on November 15

• Grow our resources and membership to strengthen youth programs, nurture vibrant worship, and create life-changing experiences for all ages–while inspiring members to serve on Council and committees.
• Provide people, resources, support, and leadership to meet one another's needs and faith journeys with diversity, inclusion, grace, and love.
• Be an inclusive, sustainable church that actively serves the community, invests in youth, and leads by example in caring for people and the planet.
• Increase children's involvement in worship by keeping kids in the service and inviting them to

Continued on next page

participate on the first Sunday of each month.

Your Invitation to Dream
As we move forward, we invite you to dream boldly about the future of our church. What could God be calling us to do and be? Imagine possibilities that reach beyond our walls—dreams that impact our neighborhood, our city, and even the wider world.

Take time over the holidays to reflect and pray about these dreams. Then, join us in worship during **the last three Sundays in January** as we share our hopes and visions together, leading up to **our next vision meeting on Saturday, January 31.**

Guiding Questions for Reflection
- What does a vibrant future for our church look like to you?
- How can we serve our community in new and meaningful ways?
- What steps can we take to be more inclusive and welcoming?
- How might we nurture faith and spiritual growth for all ages?
- What dreams do you have that reach beyond our walls?

Every idea matters. Together, we can shape a vision that reflects our values and our hope for the future.
Merry Christmas from the church by the lake!

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As we turn the page to a new year, we are excited for all the new ways we will imagine being the church together– living out our faith, serving our community, and dreaming boldly about the future God is calling us to.

Amen and alleluia,



Pastor Rob



12/02 Bruce Brahe
12/03 Judy Grist
12/04 Dar Schuff
12/10 John Tschudy
12/11 Sophie R.
12/13 Jenn Abing
Lena H.
12/15 Leslie Cooper
12/15 John La Prairie
12/16 Anna B.
12/19 Jennipher Janness
12/20 Garrett M-L.
12/20 Gay Dickson
12/21 Liza H.
12/26 Quinn S.
12/28 Mary Zurbuchen

Wedding Anniversaries
December 5th
Ellen and Tim Montour
December 21st
Bruce and Judy Brahe
December 24th
Ayanda & John Crispin

We would like to wish all a happy birthday or anniversary. If your birthday or anniversary was omitted , or you would rather not have it published, please contact church office.



Please keep the following in your thoughts and prayers:

Ongoing Prayers:

Dave Zernicke, Larry Olson, Crystal Lingenhag, Ann Luebke, Shirl Alix, Tiffany Williams, Dar Schuff

Homebound:

Jerry Hupe, Judy Doornbos in California, and Carol Wilcox.



LIVE NAVITY DEC 12TH

There are many spots to be filled. This event, which takes place on the same night as the Menasha Hayrides, is very popular.

We have heard it is the official start to the holiday season for many people. You can help by coming to church that night, getting into costume and portraying one of the characters in the Christmas story. You may also be in charge of a miniature horse, donkey, or llama! Friends are encouraged to come.

Sign up on the church bulletin board or email malojann@yahoo.com.

Dinner is provided to all who participate.



BLUE CHRISTMAS

A Service of Remembrance and Hope

December 21st
3:00pm

At Congregational United Church of Christ
Neenah/Menasha

This service provides time to acknowledge pain, grief, and difficult emotions, of variety of reason openly and without judgement. It is a chance to find hope, comfort & solidarity with other in a similar situations

IMPORTANT DATES IN DECEMBER



COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS DINNER
DECEMBER 13th

COMMUNITY TABLE
DECEMBER 16th



Thank you to everyone who has signed up to help at these events. We will be helping people in the community to celebrate the holiday season! The Community Christmas Dinner will be a special holiday meal with gift bags containing many need necessities and guests at the Community Table will enjoy a meal and there are always non perishable food items available for the guests to take. Thank you for your support!



Christmas Eve Services
December 24th:

4:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

11:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship



CHOIR PRACTICE

Choir practices are held on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm, This is a great time to join the choir. We have a lot of fun! Please reach out to Jill at jellenrosen@gmail.com if you have any questions.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



HANGING OF THE GREENS
November 30th,

Everyone is invited to stay after Church to help with Hanging of the Greens on **Sunday, November 30th.** The more people we have helping, the quicker we'll get done.



On **Saturday , November 29th at 1:00** we will be setting up the church Christmas Tree. We need a few strong people to help in setting up the tree. The more people we have the quicker it will go. Please contact the church office or Terri Flesburg if you are available to help. Thank you!

DONATION OF STOCKS TO CUCCNM



If you choose to give stocks to CUCCNM as a part of your donation please let the church office know of your donation. I can give you the information that you will need. Melanie Nault office@cuccnm.org



CHURCH BOOKS CLOSE DECEMBER 31ST

Church Books will close December 31st. Financial gifts to the church for the year 2025 must be received by the financial secretary by **Wednesday Dec 31st**. If you would like more information about your giving this year, please call the church office before December 21st

Thank you,
Melanie Nault Financial Secretary

There is still time to turn in your **TIME AND TALENT SHEETS** and **PLEDGE CARD.** There are pledge cards & time and talent sheets on the welcome table or you can fill one out on line . Click here . Question contact the church office. Thank you to those who have already turned them in.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO GIVE TO CUCCNM

1.Cash or check in the offering plate or by mailing it to the church.

2. Have your bank send an electronic check. (Bill Pay)

3. Use our QR Code that is linked to our website. Your giving will be taken through Pay Pal were you will use your credit card. *This option charges a fee to the church.*

If you have any questions, please contact Melanie in the church office. office@cuccnm.org or 920-725-4873

Church Information
1511 Nicolet Blvd.
Neenah Wi 54956
920-725-4873

Website: www.cuccnm.org

Pastor
pastor@cuccnm.org

Church Office
office@cuccnm.org

Christian Education Director
ce@cuccnm.org

Wider Church Contacts:

www.ucc.org
(United Church of Christ)

www.wcucc.org
Wisconsin Conference



FROM THE MODERATOR

As your moderator, I want to extend a sincere **thank you** to everyone who committed their time and energy to our second Appreciative Inquiry session this November. Your presence and commitment to working together to create a new vision for our church is truly inspiring.

During the session, our leader projected a statement that truly struck me: **"You can't receive a new vision unless you're willing to give up the one you currently hold."**

This isn't just about a church vision; it's a profound truth about life. We have a finite amount of space, time, and life energy. This realization forces a critical question: *What do we want to put our efforts and energy into?*

- **Fighting the old** and struggling to maintain what was?
- **Or, imagining and building the new** possibilities for what can be?

I confess, the thought of imagining a new church for all of us fills me with excitement and energy! It is, however, also a little scary. Clinging to the comfort of what we know is something humans are very good at. The unknown is, well, unknown.

But the beautiful work of the Appreciative Inquiry sessions is precisely about moving toward that hopeful, beautiful unknown *together*. It requires courage, faith, and a willingness to clear the mental and spiritual space.

So, I ask you all this month: **Are you willing to give up old ways of thinking and doing so we can create a beautiful unknown together?**
Let's continue to pray, dream, and build this next chapter with open hearts and minds.

With gratitude,
Signa



THE CHRISTMAS FUND & Why we support it

The Christmas Fund is our Special Offering for December. UCC congregations have been supporting the fund for well over 100 years. Gifts from the fund provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties. We may be post-pandemic, but we are all in a time of inflation of all sorts of products and services. Their needs are as great as ever.

At this church, we try to pay our pastors and employees as fairly as we can. We succeed to some degree, but we also try to help pastors and employees of small, poor churches which are often unable to put much aside for funding retirements. Like Social Security, pensions based on low salaries produce low benefits. Working for a poor church is a calling to serve - not a path to security.

If you are able this Christmas season to help those who have given greatly to our UCC churches, please contribute to the Christmas Fund offering that will be collected through the end of the year.
You can contribute in several ways. Gifts will receive a match from the Ministry of Service.



- Write a check to the church.
- Authorize an on-line check from your bank.
- Go to the church's website, hit the GIVE BUTTON and you'll find ways to donate, including credit card and PayPal. Church is charged a fee for this service

HOWEVER YOU GIVE, INDICATE "CHRISTMAS FUND."

And THANK YOU very much for considering a gift.



Sunday School during December

3k-8th grade attend Sunday School from 10:30am-11:15am, while 9th-12th grade will attend Sunday School from 11:30am-12:15pm. Youth in 3K-8th grade will start the morning off in church with their parents and will be excused to class with their teachers following The Way (the children's message). Youth ages 3K-5th grade need to be picked up in their classroom (room 4 & 6) by their guardian. Older youth will be excused to the lounge after class. To register for Sunday School, email Alanna at ce@cuccnm.org

The 1st Sunday of every month will be What's the Scoop? A one-room classroom for youth 3K-12th grade, in Fellowship Hall. Youth will return to worship for Communion.

Classrooms will be divided as follows:

3K-2nd grade- in room 4, taught by high school youth, during worship
3rd-5th grade- in room 6, taught by a rotation of adults, during worship
6th-8th grade- in room 7, taught by 2 adults, during worship
9th-12th grade- in room 7, taught by a rotation of adults, AFTER worship

1st Sunday- What's the Scoop? AGES 3K-12th Grade
2nd Sunday- No Sunday School- Christmas Program
3rd Sunday- 3K-8th Grade: during worship. 9th-12th Grade: Crosswalk, after worship.
4th Sunday- No Sunday School- Merry Christmas!

YOUTH GROUP



Join us on Friday, December 5th from 6:00-9:00pm, for another fun youth group! Grades **6th-8th** grade and **9th-12th** grade will meet in Fellowship Hall. You will be decorating Christmas Cookies in a "Christmas Cookie Challenge!". A light snack will be served. ALL ARE WELCOME- PLEASE BRING A FRIEND!! We know there are a lot of community activities on December 5th, please join us anytime between 6-9pm. If you want more information, email Alanna at ce@cuccnm.org

CULVER'S & HOLY PIZZA!

Thank you to all who joined us for dinner at Culver's in Neenah on October 29th. Our youth and adult volunteers worked very hard serving you and the community. Their hard work paid off, raising $1,136.11!!

Our homemade Holy Pizza fundraiser did very well too. Making $1,766.82! Thank you to all who purchased them and to all the fabulous people who helped make them, what a fun All-Church event! These fundraisers, along with other fundraisers, goes towards our wonderful Scholarship Program, sending youth and adults to camps, retreats, and youth mission trips.

PARENTS' NIGHT OUT



Saturday, December 20th from 6:00-9:00pm, our teenagers will be available to watch youth ages 3 years through 5th grade. Drop your youth off at church and finish your Christmas shopping or go out for a much-deserved night out. We will be accepting a free will donation for the evening, all proceeds go towards our Scholarship Program.



Youth Christmas Program

The Not-So-Silent Night

Sunday, December 14th at 10:15 am

There will be practice on Saturday December 6th & 13th 9:00-12:00& Sunday, December 14th from 9:00-10:00am in the Sanctuary.



SPECIAL MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS PROGRAM ON DECEMBER 14TH

If your youth would like to share their talent with the congregation, please let Alanna know. at ce@cuccnm.org Youth can play/sing solos or as a group. Music will be shared as the prelude to worship starting at



COOKIE WALK

Join us for our 2nd Annual Cookie Walk on Sunday, December 14th after worship. Grab a box and fill it up with all the cookie, candy and other baked goods you want for just $10/pound!



SANTA & MRS. CLAUS

Santa & Mrs. Claus will be making an appearance at our Cookie Walk, stop in and take a picture with them when you buy your Christmas goodies!

MISSION TRIP



June14-19, 2026 the high school youth (finishing 9th grade) will be heading to Colorado Springs, CO for a Youth Mission Trip! (with travel dates: June 13-21). If your youth is interested in joining us, please contact Alanna now. Registration for Colorado Springs, CO is happening now!

YOUTH'S MUSICAL TALENTS

Does your youth have a musical talent that they would be willing to share with the congregation? We would love for them to share it, either as an individual or as a group. Please contact Alanna or Jill at jellenrosen@gmail.com or sign up here to set up a time to share their talent in worship.

Life of the Church Youth Opportunities

Acolyte Sign Up (3rd grade & up): https://signup.com/go/BmsHdox

Singing Bowl Sign Up (any age): https://signup.com/go/ouBnEQZ

Read in church (4th grade & up): https://signup.com/go/MerrYVS

Communion Shepard (any age): https://signup.com/go/bwYDRnu

Musical Talent (any age): https://signup.com/go/eNLSCBZ



Winter Soulstice Retreat

This is a retreat for high school youth and college-age young adults at Daycholah Center **January 16th-18,** 2026. This retreat provides the space for participants to explore who they are and where they are on their faith journey while focusing on the ways we show up in the world and live out our faith. It is an opportunity for them to experience faith in community with others, to rest from their hectic schedules, and to be inspired by the music of Andra Moran (andramoran.com). Register early…there is limited space!

FOOD ALLERGEN STATEMENT

Ministry of Faith Development, together with the Ministry Council, has created a Food Allergen Statement as part of our commitment to being a supportive, welcoming, and hospitable faith community. Our goal is to increase understanding and awareness of the needs of those who live with food allergies and to provide the opportunity for our shared meals to reflect our church's vision, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

Our Food Allergen Statement: As a church family, we want our shared meals and fellowship times to be welcoming. While we do not have a formal food allergen policy, we ask that you please consider intentionally avoiding nuts, nut products, and shellfish when preparing food for church events.

While not a rule or guarantee for people living with food allergies, the statement is an opportunity for our church to be welcoming, inclusive and thoughtful toward those in our church family who live with food allergies. Intentionally avoiding nuts, nut products, and shellfish when preparing food sends a message of love and tells those around us, "You matter and you are valued." Our Food Allergen Statement applies to all church meals such as potlucks, after-worship coffee hours, youth group, Lenten Dinners, and when requested. It does not apply to outside groups or fundraisers (such as Cookie Walk, craft fair, rummage sale weekend, pizza sales, weddings or funerals, etc.), unless otherwise communicated by the hosts or organizers.

Ministry of Faith Development will feature "speak-outs" – mission moment inspired times during worship – where individuals affected by food allergies will share how this statement and their allergies impact their lives and the lives of those they love. Our hope is that these stories will deepen our understanding and commitment to hospitality.

Thank you for helping us create a truly welcoming table!



Do you have Anniversary or birthday cards laying around?

Dar Schuff who sends out our monthly birthday and anniversary cards is in need of more greeting cards. Please bring them to church office. Thank you!



Merry Christmas from the staff

Pastor Rob Melanie Alanna Jill Alan

VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

Upon receiving the schedule, please review it to ensure you are available when scheduled. If you are unavailable, please use the contact information to find a replacement for yourself. Please notify the church office **office@cuccnm.org** with the schedule change. Thanks to all for your continued support and service as volunteers! **If you would like to be added to the schedule please contact the church office. We are always looking for substitutes !**

Task	12-7-2025	12-14-2025	12-21-2025	12-28-2025
Liturgist	Signa Meyers	Ginny Stutzman	John Tschudy	TBA
Head Usher	Connie Regazzi	Terri Flesburg	John LaPrairie	Sherri Jischke
Usher 4	Ginny Stutzman	Pat Mahoney	Mary Liesch	Gay Dickson
Usher 2	Mary Janness	Alan Gear	Sue Knuth	Connie Regazzi
Usher 3	Cindy Anderson	Wayne Dickson	Kerry Fox	Colin Stewart
Refreshments	Bonnie Pozolinski	Jack & Marcy Fry	Gay Dickson	Scott Olson
Acolyte	Sophie R.	Christopher S.	Cece L	Olin M.
Singing Bowl	Evie J.	Colin S.	Henry L.	Callie P.
Youth Reader	Chloe R.	N/A	TBA	Carl N.
Communion Shepherds	Evie, Sophie, Chole	N/A	N/A	N/A
Communion Prep	Connie Regazzi	N/A	N/A	N/A



<u>YOU</u> CAN HELP SERVE!

As our church gets back into the swing of things for fall, the Ministry of Spiritual Life would like to continue to offer a time for fellowship and snacks after worship each Sunday, but needs your help. We are asking those with surnames starting with "K through "L" to bring in 1 dozen cookies, bars (need not be homemade) or a gallon of juice sometime during the month you are assigned. Label the item "Fellowship" and take to the kitchen freezer/or bring them to the lounge .Your contribution is much appreciated! Watch for your turn to share as your "letter" comes up! Questions contact Terri Flesburg .Here is the schedule:

January: M-N,

February: O-R, **March:** S, **April:** T-V, **May**: W-Z



DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	**2** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study	**3** **6:30pm** Adult Choir	**4** **6:30pm** Ministry Council	**5** **6:00pm- 9:00pm** **Youth Group**	**6** **9-12pm** Rehearsal for Youth Program **6:00pm** AA Meeting
7 **10:15 am** **Worship:** What's the Scoop	**8**	**9** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study	**10** **6:30pm** Adult Choir	**11**	**12** **4-8:30 pm** Live Nativity	**13** **9-12pm** Rehearsal for Youth Program **Community Christmas Dinner** **6:00pm** AA Meeting
14 **9:00 am** **Practice 10:15 am** Worship Youth Christmas Program **11:30 am** **Cookie Walk** **Congregation Conversation**	**15**	**16** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **10:30** **Community Table** **6:30 pm** Ministry Of Stewardship Mtg	**17** **6:30pm** Adult Choir	18 **12:00 pm** Bags to Benches	**19** **1:00 pm** Needlers	**20** **6-9 pm** **Parents Night** **6:00pm** AA Meeting
21 **10:15 am** Worship S.S. 3K- 8th **11:30am-12:15pm** **H.S. SS Crosswalk** **3:00 pm** **Blue Christmas**	**22**	**23** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study	**24** **4:00 pm** Christmas Eve Candlelight Service **11:00 pm** Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	**25**	**26**	**27** **6:00pm** AA Meeting
28 **10:15 am** Worship No Sunday School	**29**	**30** **8:30 am** Discussion Group **11:00 am** Bible Study	**31**			



DISCUSSION GROUP
Tuesdays at 8:30-9:30 am
We meet at Four Seasons Restaurant in Neenah for breakfast and lively discussion about current events and faith trends
1104 South Commercial Street, Neenah
Everyone is Welcome!



NEEDLERS

Share Fellowship and do Needlework
All who like to do (or learn to do) any type of needlework.

Needlers meet the 3rd Friday of the month.
December 19th at 1:00pm



Sunday Worship is in person.
Services will be broadcast **live on FB** every Sunday morning and later put on our website.

Click below to find our FB page
https://facebook.com/CongregationalUCCNeenahMenasha/
It will be posted on the church website later in the day.

Book Club

Clock Dance by Ann Tyler

Sunday, January 4

At Sweet Lair after church service

Copies will be available at church



BAGS FOR BENCHES

3rd Thursday of month
December 18th
12:00-2:00 PM



Want to be a part of our recycling program and have fun at the same time? Come and fellowship while we sort plastic bags for our next bench. Questions contact Alanna at ce@cuccnm.org





Ministry Council

Moderator:
Signa Meyers

Vice Moderator:
Sue Knuth

Secretary:
Chris Parson

Ministry of Faith Development
Becky Nichols

Ministry of Service:
Mary Janness

Ministry of Spiritual Life
Terri Flesburg

Ministry of Stewardship
Jeff Nichols

At Large:
Connie Regazzi
Sherri Jischke
Chuck Luebke

Church Historian:
Mowry Smith

Communication Coordinator
Marilyn Kostrzak

Time and Talent Coordinator:

Personnel Committee
Scott Olson
Marilyn Kostrzak

Pastoral Relations Committee
Kerry Fox, Patty Hoehne, Bob Nault

Rev. Rob Van Ess Pastor, pastor@cuccnm.org
Melanie Nault, Admin. Assistant, office@cuccnm.org
Alanna Smith, Christian Ed. Dir., ce@cuccnm.org

Congregational United Church of Christ
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December 12th : Live Nativity
December 13th: Community Christmas Dinner
December 14th : Youth Christmas Program
Cookie Walk with Mr. and Mrs. Claus
December 16th : Community Table
December 18th : 12:00pm Bags to Benches
December 20th : 6-9:00 pm Parent Night Out
December 21st: 3:00pm Blue Christmas Service

December 24th:
4:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
11:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

MORE INFORMATION INSIDE