



**COMMUNITY CHURCH OF WALKER
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

P.O. Box 267, Walker, MN 56484 (218) 547-1093
www.uccwalker.com commchurchucc@gmail.com



"No matter who you are, or where you are, you are welcome here!" "No matter who you are, or where you are, you are welcome here!"

**CCOWUCC Update and News
By Michael Small**

For The Week of: December 10, 2024

**Women's Fellowship
Christmas Party**

POSTPONED TO FRIDAY

12/13 At 12 Noon

Sue Grage's Home - Park Rapids - Carpooling from Walker

RSVP to Gay Jacobson 865.898.9818 or gbyacobson@yahoo.com

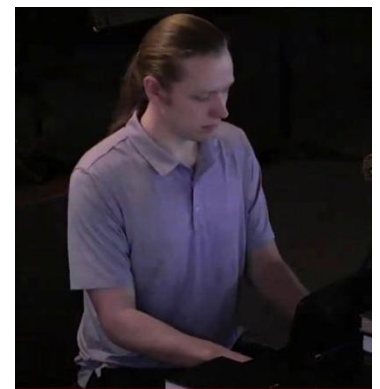
By 12 noon on Thursday 12/12



**Christmas Concert at
Union UCC Hackensack
Features**

Sabbastian Wilson Webb

Friday, December 13, 2024, 7:00 p.m.



Christmas Eve Service

**Community Church of Walker
- UCC**

12/24 at 4:00 p.m.

**All Are Welcome to this most
Holy Night to a worship service filled with**

music, carols, and words shaped by LOVE!

All Donations go to the UCC Christmas Fund Offering





1300 East 9th St., Suite 1100
Cleveland, OH 44114
866.822.8224 ucc.org

A Pastoral Letter to the United Church of Christ On Unity and Justice

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid (John 14:27).

Dear beloved United Church of Christ community,

During this blessed Advent season, we enter a time of hopeful anticipation. We wait patiently for what God will newly reveal to us, and trust that God is indeed birthing bold possibilities amid our uncertainty and fears, as well as our hopes and joys.

It is appropriate in this season for us to reflect on how God might be calling us in fresh ways to be the “united and uniting” church we profess as our identity in the United Church of Christ. We offer this letter as our invitation to prayerfully consider how we can most faithfully be Christ’s church in this moment, with the joyful confidence that God is indeed doing a new thing among us.

The above letter is an important statement signed by the Officers of the United Church of Christ and all of the Conference Ministers. We are a covenant people, in relationship to all the settings of the UCC - both churches, conferences, and the national setting. As a covenant people we respond to one another. This letter is addressed to you and me as the I think it is important for all to read, ponder, discuss, and ultimately act out of our faith with joy and hope!

The “Pastoral Letter to the United Church of Christ on Unity and Justice” may be read in full by downloading a copy at <https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/A-Pastoral-Letter-to-the-United-Church-of-Christ-November-2024.pdf> or at the end of this update.

God of hope and love, you are ever-present with us. We wait patiently for you, knowing that you hear our prayers. The call to do justice is on-going. As governments come and go, we are called to bring healing and care to those in need. This is such a moment. A time when there will be the hungry to feed, the homeless to house, and the widows and orphans who will need our care. This is a time when we will continue to honor the inherent dignity and worth of each of your children. This is a time when the church will be prophetic, calling for truth and for change. Provide your church and all who lead and minister within it hope and healing for the living of these days. Amen.

From the Officers of the United Church of Christ and the Council of Conference Minister’s



December 10, 2024

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem: do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready! – Song of Songs 2:7 (NRSV)

The Song of Songs is decidedly *not* a love song to Jesus. But it *is* a magnificent ode to love itself. Much of what builds the dramatic tension of its poetry is this ripe, sensual sense of anticipation. Waiting. Yearning. Longing. The yearning is carnal, fierce, palpitating, fiery. Adjectives that make the Sanctified blush, while also manifesting a sacred truth we explore in Advent: our bodies hold a waiting tension.

Perhaps some saints blanch at the Bible's prurience in Song of Songs. But here's the thing: whether or not we admit it, the feelings it evokes are feelings saints know quite well. I've been the lover pining. I've been the lonely seeking. I've been the beloved basking in afterglow.

Church can—and should—describe the experience of God's love in the ways we tend to, particularly the tenderness of waiting on more of that love. But in many ways, this language can freeze in our heads. The Song of Songs reminds us that our spirits don't just flow through our minds, but throughout our entire bodies. Our flesh needs God, too.

Which begs the question: are we ready for all God has prepared for us? Are we ready for love to stir and awaken within us in new ways? When we ask God, "O come," do we really and truly mean it?

This preparatory season isn't just about adjusting how we *think* about God. It's also about how we *feel*—from the tips of our heads to soles of our feet. With our therapists, our prayer partners, our journals, our conversations with God, we can be intentional about helping our bodies prepare for the connection—the healing, the love, the very succulence of closer union with the God who comes anew in tenderness, mercy and love.

Prayer

O come, O God. O face me anew. O make me ready for the warmth of your gracious love. Amen.



By Kail Douša who is is the Senior Pastor of The Park Avenue Christian Church, a congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ, in New York City.



[Second Sunday of Advent – December 8th –](#)

During Advent we wait, watch, anticipate . . .

“Praying With Joy” was the theme of the Sunday worship and our prayers were answered after Sabbastian called in sick. (Prayers for Sabbastian as he continues to recover from a cold!) Tim and Sheli Johnson filled in with playing the music for worship and also doing Special Music. Thanks so much for Tim and Sheli sharing the wonder and beauty of song and music in worship! The worship



service may be viewed on the church website www.walkerucc.com or by clicking on the QR Code.

❖ [December 15th Worship Information – Third Sunday of Advent](#)

- **Theme: “Again . . . Rejoice!”**
- **Revised Common Lectionary for 12/15/2024**
 - Zephaniah 3:14-20 • Isaiah 12:2-6 • Philippians 4:4-7 • Luke 3:7-18
- **Focus Prayer:** Joyful God, help us find glimmers of joy and our path toward liberation. Amen.
- **Focus Reading: Philippians 4:4-7 in conversation with Luke 3:7-18**

Philippians 4:4-7 *Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible* (pp. 2477). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Rejoice in the Savior always! I say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see your forbearing spirit. Our Savior is near. ⁶ Dismiss all anxiety from your minds; instead, present your needs to God through prayer and petition, giving thanks for all circumstances. ⁷ Then God’s own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.



Luke 3:7-18 *Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible* (pp. 2225-2226). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁷ John said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, “You pack of snakes! Who warned you to escape the wrath to come?” ⁸ Produce good fruit as a sign of your repentance. And don’t presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Sarah and Abraham as our mother and father,’ for I tell you that God can raise children for Sarah and Abraham from these very stones. ⁹ The ax is already laid at the root of the tree; every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be cut down and tossed into the fire.”

¹⁰ When the people asked him, “What should we do?” ¹¹ John replied, “Let the one with two coats share with the one who has none. Let those who have food do the same.”

¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to John, “Teacher, what are we to do?”

¹³ John answered them, “Exact nothing over and above your fixed amount.”



¹⁴ Soldiers likewise asked, “What about us?” John told them, “Don’t bully anyone. Don’t accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay.”

¹⁵ The people were full of anticipation, wondering in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all by saying, “I am baptizing you in water, but someone is coming who is mightier than I, whose sandals I

am not fit to untie! This One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire. ¹⁷ A winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear the threshing floor and gather the wheat into the granary, but the chaff will be burnt in unquenchable fire.” ¹⁸ Using exhortations like this, John proclaimed the Good News to the people.

- **Focus Questions:**

- When have you experienced moments of joy and hope during times of trial?
- What times in your life has joy felt distant from you?
- How has your experience or views of joy changed over the course of your life?
- During this season, how can you find the glimmers of God through moments of joy and hope?

- **Special Music: Hand Bell Choir – Liturgist: Chris Kolp**

Offering for the UCC Christmas Fund received on December 24th Christmas Eve Service 4:00 p.m



“...the Glory of God
shone around them...
Luke 2:9”

Giving Back

Among the many letters and notes the Pension Boards receives from recipients of gifts made possible by contributions to the Christmas Fund were these words:

*It means so much to us....
that the wider Church remembered us....*



- Reverend Cathy Barker
Retired UCC Minister. Helena. MT



Thanks to your generosity, last year the Christmas Fund provided over \$1.9 million in pension and health benefits, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired church servants and their families.

Every gift came from people like you. This year, please give what you can to continue supporting those who’ve devoted their lives to serving others.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund makes Christmas feel special for countless families like Cathy’s.

Visit christmasfund.org to learn more and donate online.



Donate Online Here!

Holy Humor Sunday
Lessons and Laughter
First Sunday of Christmas
December 30th at 10:00 a.m.



This service is designed with two truths in mind. First, the Christmas season is hallmarked by joy. The angels sing. The shepherds run. The star shines. Mary cherishes. Christ is born! In response to all this good news, we sing "Joy to the World!" with grateful celebration. Second, by the time the Sunday after Christmas rolls around, all of us are usually running on empty. Therefore, this service is intentionally designed to not only provide some much needed levity and support one another, but to also lean into the holy joy of this season.



❖ **DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

- 12/10 Nathan Kalli
- 12/12 Rev. Michael Small
- 12/12 Vern Bader
- 12/14 Larry Johnson
- 12/18 Tim Johnson
- 12/25 Earl Niedermann

❖ **DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES**

- 12/27 Steve and Chris Kolp
- 12/28 Jack and Kathy Hopen

- ❖ **A Reminder!!!** – current bulletins, Churchly Happenings, and **Good News, Good News** - our monthly newsletter, and the **Weekly Update** may be found on the church website – www.uccwalker.com
- ❖ **St. Mark's WELS meets at CCOWUCC** serving as a "Worship Station". They will continue to meet on the second and fourth Monday of each month between 6:30 – 8:30 pm.

A Pastoral Letter to the United Church of Christ On Unity and Justice

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The Great Divide

United in Spirit and inspired by God’s grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all. [\[1\]](#)

In the aftermath of the United States presidential election and the days of campaigning leading up to the election of the 47th president of the United States, the political divide in the country was evident. This political divide over critical social issues is not new; however, the polarization on the issues has created a chasm where there once was an aisle. More critically, this division is evident in the church, where diversity is broad and runs deep. This has always been so in the United Church of Christ, across the mainline churches and in the church at large. There is an inherent diversity in the church which includes political diversity.

The political divide poses a threat to the unity of the church. While there is value held in identifying that “unity does not mean uniformity,” the political narratives of the day are quite different from those seen in the recent past, particularly given the rise of white Christian nationalism, a religious ideology and political movement that uses Christianity as a foundation for a hate-filled xenophobic, misogynistic, homophobic, and racist rhetoric.

White Christian nationalism itself is not new and is based on white supremacy. “The Christian nationalist movement is largely white, reflecting the long entanglement of nationalism and racism that is our collective inheritance since the earliest days of America’s colonial settlement. In white nationalism this history is sanitized, removing the sins of genocide, slavery, Jim Crow laws, and all the many ways in which racism has saturated and sustained our society, thereby removing any felt need for repentance or repair.”[\[2\]](#) Addressing this religious ideology is a priority.

The ministry of Jesus was one that prioritized those on the margins of society. His ministry was bold and prophetic, speaking to and against the religious norms of his day, which perpetuated injustices and oppressed “the least of these.” Jesus brought a message of love. When asked by his disciples about the greatest commandment, Jesus responded: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37b-39). This is love which compels us to action.

The call to love our neighbor as ourselves begins in loving each other in the church. While not an easy task, the possibilities are yet before us to live beyond the many issues which are evident and to love each other in all the rich diversity of humanity and the church. The politics of our day ought not to divide us in ways that create harm, foster hate, and hinder the ability of others to love and serve God. The love of God has the power to transcend and transform the frailties and fragilities of our human existence.

The call to love our neighbor as ourselves extends beyond the walls of the church, into our communities, and into the world. Our action on behalf of those in our communities is based on love. Jesus called us to love across the great divide that is our differences. This call remains urgent today, as the church is called to be salt and light in the world. In loving ourselves and our neighbor, we must give voice to the truths of our day: 1. White nationalism is not Christian, nor is it patriotic; 2. God calls us to love all people; and 3. God is still God of the oppressed.

Christian Unity

To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. [\[3\]](#)

The ecumenical community recognizes that there are church-dividing issues – differences of doctrine that cannot be resolved over time. Even in those cases, churches have been able to reconcile differences. Then, there are the times when our doctrinal issues cause the breaches in relationship that split communities of Christians, causing pain, grief and loss in the body of Christ. Our political narratives should not be church-dividing.

In the days before his death, Jesus taught the disciples and prayed for them. The motto of the United Church of Christ, “that they may all be one” (John 17:21), is a part of a prayer Jesus offered for his disciples. He prayed: “I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word” (John 17:20). This earnest prayer was for the disciples who Jesus knew, and for those who would believe in him through the disciples. Jesus prayed for the unity of his followers.

The history of the United Church of Christ is based in unity. The forming of the denomination in 1957 was a sign of the visible unity of the church and pointed to the possibilities for the church, as the one body of Christ. The formation of the UCC brought together denominational streams which were willing to forego their own denominational identities to live into the unity of the church. The formation of the UCC brought together people with different ideas about the church. Those differences were theological and political. There were racial and ethnic differences, too. There were also language and economic differences. Yet, the desire to be the church together far outweighed the differences that were perceived.

The unity of the church continues to be a priority for Christians around the world. Here in the United States, we continue to hold before us Jesus' prayer. In the United Church of Christ, we name the diversity among us as an important part of who we are as Christians. This time of division and the presence of Christian nationalism revisits a painful history and past in the United States when the church was complicit in its silence, an issue which was addressed by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* which was written in April 1963. The letter was a prophetic call to the leadership of the church to be the church on the side of the oppressed.

Justice

United in Christ's love, a just world for all. [\[4\]](#)

The perpetuation of injustice is challenging to the well-being of all creation. The quest for a just world for all is yet before us. Martin Luther King, Jr., reminded us that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." The church is called to participate in seeking justice in the world. While there are times when the church has been silent, the church has also followed the teachings of Jesus and has been on the side of the oppressed, advocating for justice.

The UCC and its predecessor bodies have a history of being on the forefront of justice:

We remember that our ancestors' ministries during the 19th century included the abolition movement, the struggle for women's suffrage, and the creation of social justice organizations and churches that assisted immigrants new to our shores. In the early 20th century, the Social Gospel movement emboldened our forebears to denounce economic injustice and express their solidarity with immigrants who endured pain and hopelessness in urban tenement communities.

During the Second World War some of our forebears spoke out against the internment of Japanese citizens, and some congregations helped to sustain their Christian sisters and brothers during their forced relocation. In the 1950s we spoke up for Native Americans whose land was once again being stolen in order to build a dam that would devastate their communal life.

In the 1960s our church provided sustained support for civil rights organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and participated fully in the racial justice work of the National Council of Churches. In the 1970s we stood with migrant farm workers demanding just wages and dignified living conditions. We are, indeed, surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses whose faith and witness can embolden ours. [\[5\]](#)

Our history will always be with us, as will the witness of those who came before us. Ours is the task of attending to what lies ahead for the church and for the world. The journey requires that our unity and quest for justice be accompanied by civil discourse and the commitment to be engaged through hard conversations. This engagement is built on the call to love as we move forward together. The witness of the church of today will create the history that will be told in a future beyond these days. "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another" (Zechariah 7:9-10).

A Vision for the Future

...that they may all be one (John 17:21)

We are a “big tent” in the UCC. This big tent is identified by the multiplicity of ways members of the UCC reflect the categories of diversity present in the United States and in the world. We are ecumenical, coming from disparate places and experiences with roots well beyond the identified streams in the UCC’s history. We are representative of language, racial/ethnic, gender, theological, and political diversities, to name a few areas of our diverse landscape. We are reflective of the beloved community, one where love lives. Our commitment to live this diversity is a commitment to live into the radical love Jesus taught. We can love one another beyond the expectations and conditioning of this world in which we live where diversity is the source of division.

We will rise to the challenges of these unfolding days as we have in the past: speaking truth to power, attending to the call to do justice, ensuring the hungry are fed and the vulnerable are protected. We will rise to the challenge of hearing and learning from each other as we commit to being the church for today. We will rise to the challenge of loving beyond our human capacity, a possibility with the power of the Holy Spirit. Ours is the ministry of care and compassion, a call to attend to the moments of change life presents, and to attend to our communal needs.

The prophet Micah provided words of hope to a people in despair: “But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me” (Micah 7:7). We wait in hope, believing that God is ever-present with us and will keep us through this moment, providing peace and comfort. God will also be with us in the days that are ahead, granting us strength, courage, and wisdom. We wait in hope, believing that change is possible as we seek a just world for all.

As we wait:

- We pray.
- We care for those in need.
- We advocate for change.
- We speak truth to power.

God of hope and love, you are ever-present with us. We wait patiently for you, knowing that you hear our prayers. The call to do justice is on-going. As governments come and go, we are called to bring healing and care to those in need. This is such a moment. A time when there will be the hungry to feed, the homeless to house, and the widows and orphans who will need our care. This is a time when we will continue to honor the inherent dignity and worth of each of your children. This is a time when the church will be prophetic, calling for truth and for change. Provide your church and all who lead and minister within it hope and healing for the living of these days. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson
General Minister and President

Rev. Shari Prestemon
Acting Associate General Minister

Rev. Dr. Bentley DeBardelaben-Phillips
Transitional Executive Minister

Council of Conference Ministers

California, Nevada Northern
Rev. Davena Jones
California, Nevada Southern

Rev. Rachael Pryor

Calvin Synod Conference

Rt. Rev. Csaba Krasznai

Central Atlantic

Rev. Freeman Palmer

Central Pacific

Rev. John Tyler Connoley

Florida

Rev. Nayiri Karjian, Interim Conference

Minister

Hawaii

Rev. David Popham

Heartland

Rev. Dr. David Long-Higgins

Illinois

Rev. Dr. Terrill Murff, Interim Conference

Minister

Illinois South

Rev. Shana Johnson

Indiana-Kentucky

Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott

Iowa

Rev. Dr. Phil Hart, Intentional Interim Executive

Conference Minister

Kansas-Oklahoma

Rev. Lorraine Cenicerros

Maine

Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola

Michigan

Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel

Minnesota

Kelly Gallagher, Associate Conference Minister

Missouri Mid-South

Rev. Mary Nelson, Transitional Conference

Minister

Montana-Northern Wyoming

Rev. Tony Clark

Nebraska

Rev. Dr. Phil Hart, Intentional Interim Executive

Conference Minister

New Hampshire

Rev. Gordon Rankin

New York

Rev. Marsha Williams, Transitional Conference

Minister

Northern Plains

Rev. Deborah Blood, Transitional Conference

Minister

Pacific Northwest

Rev. Phil Hodson, Designated Conference

Minister

Penn Central

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Penn Northeast

Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates

Penn West

Rev. David Ackerman

Pennsylvania Southeast

Rev. William P. Worley

Rocky Mountain

Rev. Erin Gilmore, Acting Conference Minister

South Central

Rev. Molly Carlson, Interim Conference

Minister

South Dakota

Rev. Dr. Phil Hart, Intentional Interim Executive

Conference Minister

Southeast

Rev. Kim Wood

Southern

Rev. Dr. Edward S. Davis, Conference Minister

Southern New England

Rev. Darrell Goodwin, Executive Conference

Minister

Southwest

Rev. Dr. Toni Hawkins

Vermont

Rev. Lynn Bujnak

Wisconsin

Rev. Franz S. Rigert

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- [1] UCC Mission Statement, <https://www.ucc.org/mission/>
[2] <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness-ncc/the-dangers-of-christian-nationalism-in-the-united-states-a-policy-statement-of-the-national-council-of-churches/>
[3] UCC Purpose Statement, <https://www.ucc.org/mission/>
[4] UCC Vision Statement, <https://www.ucc.org/mission/>
[5] UCC Pastoral Letter on Racism (2008)

❖ Addresses – You are invited to be in touch.

Meryle O'Connor Waterford Estates 6288 Louisiana N. #111 Brooklyn Park, MN 55428	Betty Fisher 4222 Larch Street NE Bemidji MN 56601	Kevin Wedel 108 Third Street South Apartment 2 Hackensack MN 56452
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Alison Koch
1803 South Court Street
Fergus Falls MN 56537

- ❖ ***Democracy works best if we speak with one another. Whatever your opinion, I encourage each of you to be in contact with your representatives. Communicating is an on-going and two-way process of sharing gratitude and wisdom.***

Below is listed state and national elected leadership for the Walker Area.

If you do not reside in the Walker area, go to <https://www.gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/> to obtain information on the elected state leadership for your location.

Senator Steve Green (R) (Dis.02)
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., # 2319
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-297-8063

E-mail:
sen.steve.green@senate.mn
<https://www.house.mn.gov/members/profile/15458>

Office of Governor Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
<https://mn.gov/governor/connect/contact-us/contact-form.jsp>

Senator Amy Klobuchar (DFL) MN
425 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510
phone: 202-224-3244
fax: 202-228-2186

<https://www.klobuchar.senate.gov/public/>

Rep. Matt Bliss (R) District: 02B
311 State Office Building
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651-296-5516
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Rep. Pete Stauber (R) U.S. House # 8
145 Cannon HOB
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Phone: (202) 225-6211
<https://stauber.house.gov/>

Senator Tina Smith (DFL) U.S. MN
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-5641
<https://www.smith.senate.gov/>

Prayers and Blessings – Pastor Michael