

# A JOYFUL NOISE!

December 2013

December. Another year draws to a close and we begin a month of preparations. We prepare for winter weather, set our shovels out, put away our windbreakers and get out our sweaters, coats, hats and gloves. We prepare for Christmas, getting out our decorations, making travel plans or figuring out where visiting family will stay with us, finishing (or starting) our Christmas shopping. And we prepare for a New Year, bidding farewell to the joys and sorrows of 2013 and starting to dream and wonder about what 2014 will bring.

A month of preparation, which is what the season of Advent is all about. Advent means the coming or arrival of something momentous. That certainly defines Christmas! But much more than the arrival for us is the preparation. We cannot just skip ahead to Christmas Day, much as our children and grandchildren may wish. Instead, it is something we need to work toward and prepare ourselves for. What does Christmas really mean? More than just the celebrated day of Christ's birth, when we sing, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" we are singing and longing for Christ's return, for the Spirit to "Emmanuel" (which means God with us). And when we sing this, and when we long for God to come and return things the way they need to be, are we really ready for that? Or do we need to get our lives back in order first?

And so we prepare. We get the outside things ready first (decorations), then move inside (tree and gifts), and finally get to what is on our hearts and minds. The questions and hopes of our deepest feelings. The hopes and fears of all the years. Until that special night, that silent night, when we gather in church on the Eve before the big day, when we gather together and sing familiar songs, light candles, and usher in a new season of hope, peace, love, and joy from our hearts to the circle of friends around us, to our neighborhoods, and to the world.

May this season of preparation and Christmas be a blessing to you and your family.

*Pastor Dan Furman*



## ***Giving Tree Tradition Continues***

Women's Fellowship is going to make Christmas a little merrier for some Benzie County families. LOVE INC will provide us with the Christmas wish lists of several families. On December 1, a giving tree will be in Fellowship Hall with gifts listed on tags for adults and children. Please choose a gift tag, purchase and wrap the gift attaching the giving tree tag, and return it under the tree by Sunday, December 15. If you have any questions, contact Chris Gehring, 231-882-4653. Thank you for being part of this long-standing tradition and for your spirit of giving.



## **Annual Advent Workshop**

Sunday, December 8  
at 9:00 a.m.

Christmas Crafts  
Gingerbread Houses  
Advent Wreaths  
Ornaments and Decorations  
Decorating Christmas Trees  
  
Fun for all ages -  
toddlers through  
great-grandparents.

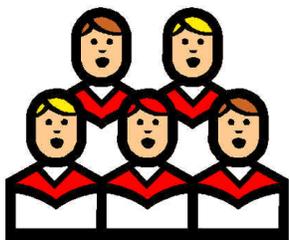
## **Annual Cookie Walk**

Sunday, December 15

Immediately Following  
the Worship Service

One-Stop Cookie Shopping!

The proceeds will be split  
between a local mission project  
and a church project.



### **Christmas Concert**

Once again, our church will be hosting the annual Christmas Concert presented by Benzie County Community Chorus on December 15 at 2:30. Women's Fellowship will provide refreshments following the program. This is a wonderful way to get into the spirit of the holidays.

### **Christmas Caroling**

Join us on Sunday, December 22, to go and sing Christmas carols in local nursing homes. We will travel to the Homesteader, the Maples, and Paul Oliver Long Term Care. We will meet after worship and travel together.



### **Christmas Eve Worship**

This year we will again have a 5:00 p.m. worship service on Christmas Eve geared for younger families and those who do not want to drive later at night, as well as our traditional 11:00 p.m. worship service.



### ***What's New in the Library***

***Knocking on Heaven's Door...a path to a better way of death.*** As our medical world continues to find ways to keep us from dying, it seems we as a society have forgotten how to die, how to allow people to die. In this memoir the author recounts the plight of her elderly father who went through one medical crisis after another, "saved" by medical science each time, until he finally died from pneumonia. ( Most chilling of all, to me, his pacemaker continues to function.) One hopes this book will encourage a conversation, so desperately needed, about better ways of death.

***Survival Lessons...***When confronted by cancer and the loss of a loved family member, Alice Hoffman "needed to know how people survived trauma" and needed to be reminded of "the beauty of life". The result is this little gem of a book in which she acknowledges the sorrows of life, while reminding us of its joys. Filled with love, insight, and lots of practical advice, a brownie recipe that sounds wonderful, the author presents us with lessons on living and reminds us that we have choices.

(These two books and authors were written up in the October issue of the AARP Bulletin.)

***The Chance...***another novel from the prolific Karen Kingsbury. It seems you either love her or you don't, that you consider each new book a 'rewrite' of the last one. But if you need an uplifting story in which goodness and love are sure to win, Kingsbury's novels are for you and this is no exception. So pour a cup of tea/coffee, snuggle up in a cozy afghan, and enjoy the read. Oh! If you're a romantic, don't forget the tissue!

### ***From the Trustees***

Thank you to all who have contributed to the Building Fund. The yard is safer now that several dead trees and branches have been removed. Work will continue on the prioritized list of projects and we will keep everyone updated. Any funds raised above current needs will be kept in the Building Fund for those upgrades and maintenance that we know will be needed in the near future. For example, five to ten years from now, we know that we will need a new roof.

According to Article VII of the By-Laws of First Congregational UCC Benzonia, Michigan: We the undersigned members of the First Congregational Church of Benzonia, UCC, wish to request a full congregational meeting, the first Sunday in December, December 1, 2013, to discuss and address the issues and events leading up to and including the resignation of our current pastor, and what plans and visions we have, for our church, as we move forward.

Kay Fischer  
Rosemary Miller  
Cath Kelder

Linda Joy  
Mary Ellen Wagner  
Phyllis Crowell-Van Hammen

Ann Nordbeck  
Ruth Catton  
Trevor Danford

### ***Memorial Garden***

On the north side of our church property is a beautiful memorial garden for members and friends of the church who would like their cremated ashes interred on our sacred grounds. For \$450, you may reserve a one-square foot plot. That price includes future opening and closing as well as a memorial plaque to be placed on the stone located along the walkway. Please speak with Pastor Dan for more information. Donations for perpetual care are also welcomed.

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Happy birthday to the following members of the church family!

- |    |                        |
|----|------------------------|
| 1  | Alan Vigland           |
| 5  | Courtney Sauer         |
| 6  | Anne Young             |
| 7  | Phoebe Vance           |
| 8  | Flora Wellman          |
| 8  | John Hanmer            |
| 8  | Roxane Miner           |
| 10 | Geri Thornell          |
| 13 | Hal Bruning            |
| 13 | Shirley Jones          |
| 14 | Margie Peacock         |
| 14 | Elisabeth Case         |
| 18 | Emmeline Wolowiec      |
| 18 | Michael Call           |
| 19 | Johnna Milks-Titsworth |
| 20 | Rosemary Abbett        |
| 20 | Mia Jones              |
| 22 | Marley Demers          |
| 28 | Brenda Case            |
| 29 | Kay Bos                |
| 30 | John Milks             |
| 31 | David Call             |
| 31 | Wayne Strom            |
| 31 | Edward Shigwadja       |

## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- |    |                            |
|----|----------------------------|
| 7  | Sonny and Esther Rodriguez |
| 21 | Alan and Joanne Appelfhof  |
| 21 | Mike and Carolina Jones    |
| 22 | Andrew and Christy Case    |
| 27 | Roger and Helen Dewey      |
| 29 | Bill and Kay Bos           |

## Church Family Update

You are invited to remember in your prayers some of our members who are home-bound, in assisted-living, or are facing health concerns. This month please remember:

**Homesteader:** Rosemary Miller, and Pink Rearick

**Paul Oliver Long Term Care:** Mary Hopkins

**The Pines:** Betty Heckman

**Traverse City:** Helen Pickard and Pat Forrester

**Home-bound or facing health concerns:** Marjorie Call, Buck Hall, Mona McElderry, Susan Lutes, Brenda Case, Ruth Blacklock, Gordon Nordbeck, and Laura Brian.

We extend our sympathy as June Trost passed from this life to the next.

## Flowers

There is a sign-up sheet outside the church office for altar flowers. If you are interested in supplying flowers, please sign up for a certain date or call the church office to make arrangements. You may then bring in your own flowers or donate \$25 to the church to make the arrangements with a local florist. If you would like the bulletin to reflect your donation, please let the church office know who the flowers honor or memorialize as well as identifying yourself as the



## UCC Sister Church of the Month

As part of our continuing efforts to work together as a community of faith, in worship we pray for UCC churches in our United Northern Association. You are invited in December to pray for the ongoing mission and ministries of First Congregational UCC, in Cadillac

**Living With Loss**

All of us carry and process the burden of grief from time to time in life. This group is now meeting monthly on the last Sunday of the month. If you or someone you know could benefit from being with others on this journey, please join us on the last Sunday of the month in the Library after worship.

***Bible Study***

On November 20, we began a Bible study on the theme of Advent. 15 people attended, the most we have had in six years. We have moved to the Fellowship Hall for more space. Feel free to join us next on Thursday, December 5 at 5pm. We start with a potluck dinner and then talk about the topic of the night. (We are meeting on a Thursday so we can attend the Christmas band concert at the high school on Wednesday evening at 7pm.)

**A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR DECEMBER VOLUNTEERS -**

	<b><u>COFFEE HOUR</u></b>	<b><u>NURSERY</u></b>	<b><u>GREETERS</u></b>
<b>12/1</b>	Deacons	Kristi Johnson	Jean Bowers
<b>12/8</b>	Workshop	Joanne Appelhof	Kay and Bill Bos
<b>12/15</b>	Cookie Walk	Jean Bowers	TBA
<b>12/22</b>	Helen Dewey	Bev Brouwer	TBA
<b>12/29</b>	Barbara Brian	Chris Stone	TBA
	<b><u>HEAD USHER</u></b>	Jim Sheets	

***Poinsettias***

We will once again order and arrange poinsettia plants in the sanctuary for the Christmas season. If you wish to donate a poinsettia plant, please submit your order no later than Sunday, December 15th. This form may be dropped off in the church office or put in the offering plate. You can also call the church office (882-4922) and place an order. The cost of a poinsettia plant is \$15.00.



I wish to provide a poinsettia plant in memory of:

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Or in honor of:

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(signed) \_\_\_\_\_

**(as you wish to have printed in the Christmas Eve bulletin)**

# ***DECEMBER 2013***

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT
<b>1</b> 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship	<b>2</b> 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 1-3 Craft Class - Barn 5:00 Love INC 7:00 AA - Barn	<b>3</b> 10:00 Bible Study 10:00 Yoga-Barn 7:00 WAA - Barn	<b>4</b> 12 Noon - AA 1:00 Women's Fellowship 2:00 MS Support Barn 6:00 Bible Study	<b>5</b> 10 Central Wellness Exercise / Barn 5:00 MRT 5:30 NA - Barn 6:30 - Kiwanis 7:30 Choir Practice	<b>6</b> 12 N - LOWV Library	<b>7</b> 8:30 Zonta Sewing - Barn
<b>8</b> <b>9:00 Advent Workshop</b> 10:30 Church School 10:30 Worship 11:30 Congregational Meeting	<b>9</b> 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 11:00 Commodities Distribution 1-3 Craft Class - Barn 5:00 Love INC 7:00 AA - Barn	<b>10</b> 10:00 Yoga-Barn 7:00 WAA - Barn	<b>11</b> 12 Noon - AA 3:30 Deacons 6:00 Bible Study	<b>12</b> 10 Central Wellness Exercise / Barn 5:00 MRT 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Practice	<b>13</b> 12 N - LOWV Library Chorus Set-up and Rehearsal	<b>14</b> 3:00 Benzie Chorus Concert <b>5:00 Live Nativity</b>
<b>15</b> 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship <b>Cookie Walk</b>	<b>16</b> 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 11:30 Bridge Club Luncheon 12-5 Bridge Club 1-3 Craft Class - Barn 5:00 Trustees 5:00 Love INC 7:00 AA - Barn	<b>17</b> 10:00 Yoga-Barn Love INC Christmas Store 7:00 WAA - Barn	<b>18</b> 12 Noon - AA 6:00 Bible Study	<b>19</b> 10 Central Wellness Exercise / Barn 5:00 MRT 5:30 NA - Barn 6:30 - Kiwanis 7:30 Choir Practice	<b>20</b> 12 N - LOWV Library	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship 5:00 Live Nativity	<b>23</b> 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 1-3 Craft Class - Barn 7:00 AA / Barn	<b>24</b> <b>Christmas Eve</b> 5:00 pm Worship 7:00 WAA - Barn 11:00 pm Worship	<b>25</b> <b>Christmas Day Church Office Closed</b> 12 Noon - AA	<b>26</b> 10 Central Wellness Exercise / Barn 5:00 MRT 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Practice	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship	<b>30</b> 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 1-3 Craft Class - Barn 7:00 AA - Barn	<b>31</b>				

First Congregational Church, UCC  
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## ***A Joyful Noise! December 2013***

### FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC BENZONIA, MICHIGAN

Daniel E. Furman .....	Minister
Chris Stone .....	Treasurer
Mary Rodriguez.. ..	Financial Secretary
James Sheets.....	Church Moderator
Jean Edwards.....	Newsletter Editor
Carolina Jones & Katrina Smith.....	Christian Ed Coordinators
Jessie Zeller .....	... Custodian
Nancy Eggleston .....	..Secretary

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For pastoral emergencies, call Pastor Dan at 231-930-7067