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PILGRIM NEWS

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

Merry Christmas and happy New Year! God's blessings to you as we celebrate Christmas and enter 2017. Each year when I watch children present the Christmas story, I am reminded no matter how familiar that wonderful story is there is always a newness we can find if we are willing to look at it through different eyes. When we really look at the Christmas story and what it means, we not only see the excitement of the season, but we also can get a new perspective – a perspective of Christmas hope.

During Advent we have been considering what Christmas hope means and how it is revealed in the world. Christmas hope isn't just a nostalgic, wistful part of the season, but a powerful, new perspective God offers in Christ. If we look at Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men we can see important lessons about hope including:

- We find hope when we have faith in God. Having faith in God means being led by the hope God gives rather than the fear and anxiety the world builds.
- Having hope doesn't mean life is easy, but it does mean we know God is at work and offering new life amidst challenges.
- We can choose to have a hopeless or a hope-filled perspective. God doesn't force hope upon us.
- We find hope when we open ourselves to the new ways in which God wants us to serve God, and respond to God's call saying "Here I am, Lord."
- Hope is like an ANT – a little bit goes a long ways.
- ANT = be Available to God, open to New things that God is doing, and Trust in God.
- Finding hope sometimes requires us to step outside of our comfort zone, take risks for our faith, and be willing to see the world in a different way.
- In God there is always hope.

I pray that as the world continues to live out its typical turmoil, we as individuals and as a congregation embody the faith and hope that brings peace and life. Be mindful of what you are being led by as you live out your daily life. Renew in your heart the promise and hope of God as revealed in the birth of Christ, and let this be your guide as you journey in a jumpy world. Look at life and the world with a perspective of Christmas hope. Let's be excited about 2017, because we know God is with us and as we live in faith together God can and will do wonderful things through us. May we shine together radiating a Christmas light that dispels darkness.

In Christ, Pastor Karen

THANK YOU PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (UCC) MEMBERS, & FRIENDS!

As we look back at a dynamic year of Pilgrim Congregational Church (UCC)'s ministry, we need to acknowledge the role that everyone had in our success.

- *Thank you to everyone who met the commitment and challenge to lead a committee, board, or group.
- *Thank you to everyone who participated in the decision making work of our councils and committees.
- *Thank you to everyone who gave their time and effort to: take care of our building, provide faith formation opportunities, nurture positive worship experiences, make our mission outreach possible, and anything that helped our church to really shine.
- *Thank you to everyone who have made a financial commitment and given resources to support our church and ministries.

It is because of your commitment, care, and effort that Pilgrim is a growing, vital part of God's ministry. May God bless you in many ways as you express your faith and love for God at Pilgrim.

SHARE THE LIGHT OF PILGRIM CHURCH

It is getting dark earlier in the day now, but we are still shining bright at Pilgrim Congregational Church (UCC). We have a wonderful message to share and a great church family so let's get the word out! There will be worship invitations for everyone to take and hand out to family, neighbors, friends, coworkers – anyone looking for a church home. Let's open the doors of Pilgrim. Share the Spirit and invite others to join us!

FEBRUARY-2ND HOUR SERIES: BIBLE 101

Ever wondered why there are four different versions of what happened during the week before Easter? Or how Noah could be 500 years old when he started having children? Or why there are different Bible versions? Led by Pastor Karen and our Faith Formation Coordinator Jackie, this series will introduce you to different ways of understanding and studying the Bible, and provide a working knowledge of how we can study the Bible in meaningful ways. Just as important, we will try to answer questions you have about the Bible and its relevance in our world today.

CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

This Sunday, December 18, we will celebrate the youth of our congregation with the fabulous Christmas Pageant. We will also collecting contributions for the UCC's Christmas Fund. This fund provides financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas thank-you checks.

Please consider giving to the Christmas Fund this Sunday. As we celebrate our young people, we have the chance to be supportive of ministers who have long since participated as children in pageants. Your contributions will be greatly appreciated.



God's Love Colors Everything



SPREAD CHRISTMAS JOY INSTEAD OF SEASONAL STRESS!

Christmas time can be so stressful with all that we try to do. The high expectations we have for events and activities also add stress to a season that is supposed to be joy filled. Being in a life changing situation such as dealing with serious illness, the loss of a loved one, job change... can be stressful on its own, and adding all of the memories and expectations of the season can make it difficult for people to know the true peace and joy of Christmas. Below are some simple things we can do to help spread Christmas joy, instead of adding to seasonal stress!

- Allow a parent and young child to go ahead of you in a shopping line.
- Smile! Even when you feel harried and tired, remember the joy of knowing Christ and share it by simply smiling.
- Be sure to put quiet "God time" in your week.
- Offer to help carry bag(s) for someone.
- Pray for people you know are struggling with the season. Call or send a note letting them know you are praying for them. Rather than focusing on the holiday season in your communication, focus on God's love in Christ for them. "Christmas Season" brings with it a lot of memories and expectations, but God's love in Christ goes beyond and opens the door to new hope and new life.
- Help someone struggling with the holidays by doing a simple holiday event with them. Activities like a Christmas Coffee outing or a Card signing get-together can become a meaningful part of the season.
- Talk to people you know who are struggling. Don't be afraid to approach them because you are concerned you might say the wrong thing. Silence and avoidance say a lot more than we think. There isn't always a need to talk about difficult issues, but interest shown in someone's life says volumes about how we care.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Advent Worship Series: Shine on Christmas Lights!

The world has certainly seemed to be full of chaos, despair, and disregard for other people these past several months, but there is a light in the darkness! That light came to the world in the form of a baby who we know as the Christ child. This Advent during worship we are going to look at Scripture readings and stories that focus on the hope that was promised in the Christ child. Not only will we be able to really get ready for Christmas, but we will also be able to see the light shining in the dark. Go ahead and put up the Christmas lights, but come to worship to really light up!

December 18

10:00 am Worship and Children's Christmas Pageant

December 24

Worship service at 5:00 and 10:00 pm

December 25

10:00 am Worship and Carols

January 1

10:00 am Worship

January 8

Worship led by Jackie Falk and Sunday School 2nd Hour New Member Class

January 15

10:00 am Worship and Sunday School 2nd Hour-New Member Class

January 22

10:00 am Worship followed immediately by a Congregational Meeting

**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
JANUARY 22**

There will be a meeting of the congregation immediately following worship service on Sunday, January 22, 2017. The purpose of the meeting is to approve the budget for 2017 and to appoint delegates for the annual Minnesota Conference. Copies of the budget will be available prior to and on the day of the meeting.

Charlotte Taylor, Moderator

CHRISTMAS PRAYERS

A Christmas Prayer

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father, help us to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world.

Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be your children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Prayer for Opening Gifts

Holy God, we give you thanks for the gifts we are about to open, and we especially give you thanks for the people and their love who have blessed us with these gifts. Through giving and receiving gifts, help us to know the breath of your Spirit in our world and the embrace of your love in the Christ child. Amen.

Prayer After Opening Gifts

Holy God, we pray for the people who have given us these gifts. Bless them and help them to know the great gift of your love in Jesus Christ. Help us to learn from the giving of others, and inspire us to give not as the world gives, but as you would have us give. In Christ's powerful name we pray, Amen.

NEW BEGINNINGS

In 2017 we will begin working on a new phase of the New Beginnings process to refine our sense of purpose and have strategies for our future journey as Pilgrims bringing God's church into the world. In the meantime, I ask that each one of us do two things:

- 1) Pray for our congregation, our future journey, and God's presence in what we do
- 2) Consider our commitment and how we can serve God through Pilgrim Congregational Church (UCC). I am thankful for each person's presence at Pilgrim Church and look forward to praising God together through traditional and new ways of living out our faith.

PILGRIM INTERGENERATIONAL WINTER CAMP

Join in at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center Friday evening through Sunday mid-morning, February 10-12, 2017. Mark your calendar! Call the church office now to sign-up for Winter Camp at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center! Cost is \$135.00 per person for the whole weekend. Children 4 years of age and younger are free. Scholarships available on a sliding fee scale. Call or e-mail the Pilgrim office now to reserve you and/or your family's place. Payments will be due in the Pilgrim office on Monday, February 6.

The CE planning team knows playing together is an awesome way to grow in faith and Winter Camp is a great place to do it. So for the first time we are off: We will be sharing Wolf Ridge with our sister UCC congregation, Peace—an opportunity to connect with old friends or make new ones! The Wolf Ridge guides will lead the outdoor programming - Cross country skiing, rock wall climbing, birding, orienteering, ropes course, snowshoeing – activities we will share with Peace - so double the fun. Indoors we'll offer crafts and games and good conversation. In the evenings, Karen and I will lead evening devotions just for Pilgrims. Sunday morning both congregations will join to worship before going home.

At winter camp, no matter what our age, we have the chance to sink deep roots into a church family who gives God praise, serves in the way of Jesus and finds the Divine in God's world and one another—roots of faith that grows and sustains.

Join us for time together of life-changing memory making at Pilgrim Intergenerational Winter Camp. Contact Jackie with questions or suggestions.



FINANCIAL INFORMATION

November 2016	Income	Expense
	24,430	<u>37,368</u>
		(12,938)
Year to Date	327,346	<u>350,044</u>
		(22,698)

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT PREPARATION!

Dear families, We have a few upcoming important rehearsals for the December 18th Christmas Pageant during the worship service!

~Saturday, December 17th:

9:00-9:30 am: Youth Orchestra

9:30-10:00am: Youth Choir

10:00-11:30 am Everyone!

11:00-11:30 am Toddlers and babies with parents (Stable animals!)

Christmas Pageant Dress Rehearsal with costumes and Bellissimo.

*Muffins and Juice snack time provided

~Sunday, December 18th: Christmas Pageant Performance

9:00 am: Everyone! Christmas Pageant Rehearsal with Costumes

*Snack provided before worship service.

DECEMBER 26 AT DAMIANOS

We are looking for a few volunteers to help prepare and serve lunch on Monday, Dec. 26 at the Damiano Center. The shift begins at 8:30 am and ends at 1:00 pm. This opportunity provides a wonderful way to help serve the community and get to know fellow Pilgrims. Volunteers must be 13 years and older. The center is located at 206 West Fourth Street. Please contact Jim in the Pilgrim office to make reserve your spot. Julie Johnson

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We have a large load of shiny paper that we are ready to drop off at the Versa Paper mill. We are looking for volunteers to help load the paper into a truck at Pilgrim and the carpool with us to the Versa Paper mill and dump the paper in the dumpster. Warm clothes and warm boots are a must! We use the funds raised from the shiny paper to fund the Christmas Pageant and music program at Pilgrim.

Please meet us at Pilgrim at the loading dock in the alley on Thursday, Dec 22nd at 3:00 pm. We will be done with the project between 4:30-5pm.

Please contact Rachael Kresha, with any questions. rachaelkresha@gmail.com

PRAYER ~ PICNIC ~ PARABLE ~ PROMISE



Personal and global understanding is growing in the knowledge of these things: Life is interwoven, reality is a web of interrelated influences, and that what we do to a part we do to the whole. In response, some of the world's mightiest political, commercial and even religious forces oppose recognition and demand denial of the forces of change on our climate, on our scientific understanding, on the movements of refugee peoples, and on making racial justice a reality among us. That opposition is given new voice and force in the political positions taken and administrative appointments made by leaders of the incoming administration.

These are big problems; with others, I ask myself big questions.

"How, as Christians, can we give prophetic voice to this new consciousness in the face of these opposition forces instead of being passively unrelated to them, hide from them or drift into accepting them as the new normal?" In response, I hear, "Start small; begin close to your heart." The deep spiritual wisdom of Christianity begins in self-examination and a clear-eyed look at reality by posing discerning questions. These are among my favorites: What is true? What do I love? What do I want?

What is true? A widely-held, conventional view of Christianity is that Jesus is irrelevant to the very real human social and political problems and environmental pressures we now face. In that view the Gospel message is seen to be only about the soul, it's guilt before God, and its redemption through Jesus' Passion into the afterlife. All of it, sometimes referred to as atonement theology, is one layer of the Christian story that most often comes to mind when people see the Cross. It is a valuable layer of Jesus' story, but not the only story we tell.

What do I love? I love the Christian story centered on Jesus whose teachings show that compassion, empathy and connection are central; that matter matters and the earth requires our surrender to its needs; that salvation comes only with one another, not in separation from one another no matter the forces dividing us, and that Jesus reveals God's self-giving, vulnerable love is at the heart of everything.

What do I want? I want new ways to symbolize the complex layers of the Gospel story and especially that God's self-giving, vulnerable love is at the heart of everything. That self-giving, vulnerable love that always, always propelled Jesus, in whose name we live, to the margins to care for those in need and into the middle, into the fray of political and religious disputes, to challenge the status quo of power and privilege and ask the parable question, "What if....?"

Two or three years ago I purchased the necklace pictured above from Duluth artist, Gail Blum. I learned the power of new symbols to evoke a fresh telling of the story of living in the way of Jesus. When wearing my necklace it invited and provoked heart-felt conversations. The welcoming heart is brassy, bold, open, imbalanced, imperfect, daring and ready to show-up, because it is secure. It is anchored in and rises through billion-year-old gray basalt from the shores of Lake Superior, a rock of ages, my Ebenezer—rock that helps, rock that stabilizes, that anchors, that is my point of safety and home, that will not be moved, unchanging. It is around my neck whenever I lead worship.

Right here, where we are, at Pilgrim, we are telling the story of how God's self-giving, vulnerable love is at the heart of everything. Here among our own Beloved community we can look for and we will find refreshed sacred symbols for our times, for ways to tell ancient stories of the patterns of Truth and Spirit which we have promised to give a living voice in time, a time of unique and demanding challenge. This time to which we are called to be the realm of God.

- Jackie Falk, Coordinator for Faith Formation, Children, Youth, & Families.

**CHUM CHRISTMAS EVE VIGIL
12 NOON TO 12:30 PM**

The CHUM Christmas Eve Vigil provides an opportunity to remember those in the CHUM Community who have died in the past year, both those whom we have known through CHUM Shelter, the Drop-In Center, Street Outreach, and those who have been their advocates. This is a sacred moment in time when we pray and remember. Join us on the Steps to City Hall at Noon.

WELCOME VISITORS!

Each time we have a visitor join us for worship or a special event we are given a blessing. Please be sure to take care of the blessing by showing our visitors they are welcome. Help visitors feel welcome no matter what pew they sit in. Greet them, find out a little about them, offer to sit by them, and give them a warm handshake. Don't leave this job to the "designated" & experienced greeters – it's everyone's job to be a welcoming Christian. This is a simple, but very important way to bring Christ's presence into the world!

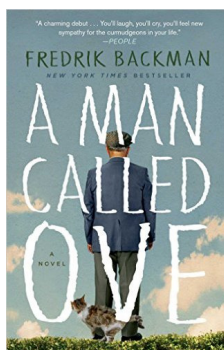
**WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER?**

We have a great curriculum that emphasizes story and behavior more than belief. We will focus on the Parables of Jesus in anticipation of the spring pageant, *Once upon a Parable*. We invite our children to learn the stories and in them to recognize their own inner wisdom and connection to the Spirit we all share.

Do you enjoy spending time with kids and want to help nurture them in their faith? You don't need to have a Master's in Theology or even have taught Sunday School before! We will hold a teacher prep time in January. Contact Jackie (jackief@pilgrimduluth.org or 218-310-3908) if you have questions. To sign-up email Jackie, sign up on the google doc that appear in Wednesday e-mails, or on the sign-up sheet by Sunday School registration forms in Salter Hall.

**WOMEN'S BOOK
GROUP**

We have changed the title for January! Monday, January 9 at 6:30 we will discuss A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman. Please make note of this change. If you can help out with leading the discussion, please contact Joan Setterlund.



**FROM YOUR
STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE:**

Greetings fellow Pilgrims! We are desirous of wrapping up the 2016 Stewardship Campaign before the end of this year. As of 12/13, with generous donations from many, we have pledges for \$242,000 in Operating Revenue and \$49,000 for Capital Expenditures. These numbers reflect the desire and faith of many to continue the good work of Pilgrim Congregational Church as we seek the financial power to find the true potential of our church. There is really no limit as to the good we can do as a church community, a church community challenged by God to help our sisters and brothers in their daily struggles to improve their lives. God challenges us to move forward in our efforts to help others have a better life! But, that effort needs finances to drive our work-- finances generated by our annual fund drive and other special appeals during the year. We just recently sent 47 reminder letters to individuals that we hope will pledge but from whom we have not heard from. If you are one of those 47 we would love to hear from you, would love to receive a pledge from you. Our mission would be greatly enhanced if all 47 responded with a pledge! Truly, we will be much closer to finding our potential to making people's lives better if we have sufficient funding. Thank you to all that have pledged, we greatly appreciate your commitment and generosity!

Bob Heller, Jon Welles

**SPECIAL PILGRIM BROADCAST ON
PACT TV**

Music from Pilgrim Church 2016

12/20 1:00 pm, 9:30 pm

12/21 5:00 am, 3:30 pm, 8:00 pm

12/22 7:00 am, 8:30 pm

12/23 11:00 am, 5:00 pm

Christmas Eve Service (Recorded 2015)

12/24 12 noon, 7:00 pm

12/25 11:00 am and 6:00 pm

Check the mix of excellent music that has blessed Pilgrim during the past year and masterfully edited by Harlan Stech.

PILGRIM CHURCH STAFF

- Rev. Dr. Karen Schuder, Pastor
- Mary Sopoci, Business Manager
- Jim Brower, Administrative Assistant
- Rachael Kresha, Director of Music
- Bret Amundson, Director of Choral Music
- Jackie Falk-Children and Family Ministries Coordinator
- Annika Nielsen, Childcare Assistant

DECEMBER 17-JANUARY 26

Sunday, December 18	9:00 am	Pageant Rehearsal
	10:00 am	Worship
	11:00 am	Coffee Hour
Tuesday, Dec. 20	5:00 pm	Building and Finance
	7:00 pm	BeFriends
Wed., Dec. 21	6:00 pm	Bellissimo Rehearsal
	7:15 pm	Pilgrim Choir Rehearsal
Saturday, Dec. 24	5:00 pm	Candlelit Worship
	10:00 pm	Candlelit Worship
Sunday, Dec. 25	10:00 am	Worship and Carols
	11:00 am	Coffee Hour
Monday, Dec. 26	8:30 am	Cooking at Damiano Center
Tuesday, Dec. 27	6:00 pm	Church Council
Wed., Dec. 28	1:00 pm	Bible Study
Thursday, Dec. 29	7:15 pm	Bible Study
Sunday, January 1	10:00 am	Worship with Holy Communion
	11:00 am	Coffee Hour
Tuesday, January 3	7:30 am	Men's Fellowship Breakfast
	5:00 pm	Leadership Team
Wed., January 4	7:00 pm	Youth Group
Sunday, January 8	9:00 am	Pilgrim Choir Rehearsal
	10:00 am	Worship and Sunday School
	11:00 am	Coffee Hour
	11:00 am	Joyful Noise
	11:15 am	2nd Hour New Members
Monday, January 9	6:30 pm	Women's Book Group
Tuesday, January 10		All Ministry Night
Wed., January 11	10:30 am	Women's Fellowship
	3:00 pm	Communications Ministry
	6:00 pm	Bellissimo Rehearsal
	7:15 pm	Pilgrim Choir Rehearsal
Sunday, January 15	9:00 am	Pilgrim Choir Rehearsal
	9:30 am	Youth Choir Rehearsal
	10:00 am	Worship and Sunday School
	11:00 am	Coffee Hour
	11:00 am	Joyful Noise
	11:15 am	2nd Hour New Members
Tuesday, January 17	7:00 pm	BeFriends
Wed., January 18	6:00 pm	Bellissimo Rehearsal
	7:15 pm	Pilgrim Choir Rehearsal
Saturday, January 21	4:30 pm	Parent's Night Out
Sunday, January 22	9:00 am	Pilgrim Choir Rehearsal
	9:30 am	Youth Choir Rehearsal
	10:00 am	Worship and Sunday School
	11:00 am	Congregational Meeting
	11:00 am	Joyful Noise
Monday, January 23		Newsletter Deadline
	8:30 am	Cooking at Damiano Center
Tuesday, January 24	6:00 pm	Church Council
Wed., January 25	6:00 pm	Bellissimo Rehearsal
	7:15 pm	Pilgrim Choir Rehearsal

Next Newsletter Deadline is January 23

SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS

Ushers, Greeters and Coffee Hosts, Readers and Counters assignments are in process and should be available soon. Dates will be sent out as soon as we can. Thank you to everyone who has assisted with Sunday worship throughout the 2016 year.

GIVING OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH BIBLES.

On Sunday, January 8, 2017, we will have Story Bibles for children in kindergarten, The Message Bible for children in 3rd grade and an NRSV Study Bible for our confirmands. Families, parents, confirmands, and mentors, please put that date on your calendar and more details will follow. If you have joined our community and missed receiving one of these Bibles, but would like one, please call or e-mail Jackie Falk (jackief@pilgrimduluth.org) or 218.310.3908.

PARENT'S NIGHT OUT

Saturday, January 21
4:30-9:00 pm

The Pilgrim youth would like to invite parents to take a night off, while they take care of the kids at Pilgrim. Take advantage of this Saturday night and the thoughtfulness of our youth!

"Great communication begins with connection.

What makes us different from one another is so much less important than what makes us alike – we all long for acceptance and significance."

- Oprah Winfrey

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pilgrim CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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Office hours are 9-4, Monday through Friday. You can reach us at:

office@pilgrimduluth.org 218-724-8503 or www.pilgrimduluth.org

Upcoming Events

- December 17 Pageant Rehearsal
- December 18 Worship and Children's Pageant
- December 20 BeFriends
- December 24 5:00 Candlelit Worship
10:00 pm Candlelit Worship
- December 25 Worship
- December 26 Cooking at Damiano's
- December 27 Church Council
- January 1 Worship
- January 8 Worship and Sunday School
New Member Class
- January 9 Women's Book Group
- January 10 All Ministry Night
- January 15 Worship and Sunday School
New Member Class
- January 21 Parent's Night Out
- January 22 Worship and Congregational Meeting



pilgrim CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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