

The Announcer

DECEMBER 2020

Upcoming Events

Virtual Worship Services –
Sundays 10:15 AM on
Youtube

Village Inn Food
Fundraiser – Dec 10th

Soft Goods Drive-
through January

Baby Items drop off-
Dec 19th & 21st

Christmas Eve Worship-
December 24th

St. Peter' United Church of Christ
8013 Laramie Ave.; Skokie, IL 60077

From the Minister's Desk

By Reverend Richard Lanford

The beginning of the good news is knowing we need the good news, and then acting heart and soul out of that, trusting God.

The beginning of the good news at our end is acknowledging our desperation. One person once referred to having been given “the gift of desperation,” because that moved that person to genuinely seek healing and a change of life at last. He ended up in A.A. The beginning of the good news is our desperation.

Desperation knows that no one else can or will meet our need. We stop believing that we ourselves, in all our independent strength and confidence, can help us. Desperation is the point at which we know we need help. Our desperation is God's opportunity.

Such desperation is personal, needing and wanting forgiveness, per John the Baptist's preparation-preaching. Such desperation is also corporate, as “people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him.” Loads of people went out en masse. Such desperation is not something that can be pegged to urban or rural areas, or as some commentators might put it, it is not limited to blue or red areas, or purple areas -- note that people came from the city of Jerusalem, and the whole countryside of Judea. It does not matter where you live, how you make your living, what your politics or ethnicity or accent are. As Isaiah said centuries before, the desire of God is the highway by which “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together . . .”

Another desperation for some is the need to believe in a God who loves the Creation, deeply and provocatively. There are so many other kinds of desperation going on that one could say that if we have not a God of love, what hope have we for the power and motivation to be powerfully loving in our own lives? In our own efforts to bring peace, understanding, justice and mercy to our violent world? The desperation for many is not just for forgiveness, but for a radically loving God as well.

The late great English theologian John R. W. Stott wrote, “I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross . . . In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?” I'm with him. If I did not believe in Jesus, God in Christ incarnate, crucified and resurrected, I would probably be an agnostic if not an atheist myself.

Desperation. For forgiveness and a re-booted, freshly God-centered life. Desperation, also, for news that God is good, is agape love, and is for us. Not only for us but for all of us.

Now if someone does not stop in reaction to the message of John or others of God's messengers, or if they roll through the “stop sign” of the preaching of Advent, thinking only of their own agenda, their own selves and sufficiency, they'll miss out. Not recognizing their desperation, not coming to grips with the God-shaped hole which Blaise Pascal wrote of in the 1600s, and not being in a position to see the good news coming. For it is good news that is coming. That's the Christmas end of the “stop-sign” set up by John, human nature, and Advent.

The more we are desperate, the more fulfilled we shall be at the coming of Jesus. The deeper the desperation, the greater is the peace, joy and hope in the good news of Emmanuel. The more you and I, and others, understand our condition, including our need for a loving God, the more meaningful Jesus coming to us means. Keep and share the faith! Rev. Richard Lanford

The above Minister's Desk should come accompanied by “This Minister's Desk reflection is borrowed from a sermon of mine preached at St. Peter's on Dec. 10th, 2017.” In the interests of full disclosure.

UPCOMING EVENTS & IMPORTANT DATES

- **December 6th is the cutoff for Poinsettia dedications.** There is no donation asked of you this year, just your IN HONOR/IN MEMORY dedication for the Christmas Eve Bulletin and January Announcer. The Women's Guild gladly purchased the plants to adorn our sanctuary for our Virtual services, thank you to them! So get those in if you haven't. You can print out the form in this newsletter and mail it in, or just call or email the office with your dedication. Thank you so much to everyone who's helped keep us going this most difficult year.
- **December 10th is our next Village Inn Food Fundraiser!** Since our ability to fundraise has been severely limited this year, this is a great way to help us make extra funds while you enjoy a meal you didn't have to cook for once as we're all doing a lot more home cooking these days. Special thanks to Annie Noorts who's coordinating these days. Its so easy to help, just order food
- **December 20th the Micah 6:8 Committee is having a Virtual Coffee Hour.** A Zoom link will be emailed out once we have it. We are told there will also be a showing of a new video from The Night Ministry. If you don't receive the Zoom link before that weekend, just let Laura in the office know and she'll email it to you.
- **Sunday School Baby Items for the Niles Food Pantry will be collected December 19th, 21st and January 4th.** We'll still be doing our collection, only safer this year. You are invited to drop off these items on this day either by leaving them at the door and ringing the bell as you leave; or if you have keys go ahead and just leave them right inside the Laramie Ave. door but we ask you not go any further into the church. On December 21st and January 4th you may leave the items between the hours of 9 AM to 2 PM; and on Saturday the 19th you'll have a window between 1:00 PM and 2:30 PM.
- **CHRISTMAS EVE** - Is on a Thursday this year. The recent uptick in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the fall put a postponer on the Council's hope to re-gather in person for worship on November 29th, and as for trying something in-worship for Christmas Eve, tentative plans were laid by the Worship and Music Committee and the Council in November, but they are also tentative and not shared until the Council meets again to review the current trends in a meeting after virtual worship on December 13th.
- **SOFT GOODS COLLECTING** – through January we'll be collecting your soft goods as we get paid by the pound. Call the office to schedule a dropoff. Items include clothing, linens, shoes, purses, belts, hats, bedding and stuffed toys.

CHURCH NEWS

NIGHT MINISTRY HATS, COOKIES, ETC. - At the end of last year, the Micah 6:8 Committee, taking on the coordination our Sloppy Joe meals for A Just Harvest in 2020, also undertook an evaluation (along with others in church leadership) of our non-Women's Guild Mission Projects. It was suggested then, and put on the future calendar, that to make December and Advent less of a drain on the resources of our members and friends, we would still hold the drive for cookies, winter hats, hot cocoa mix, gloves and scarves for the Night Ministry in the following January. This was kind of forgotten, and when the Virus hit, some of our almost year-old plans were not as top-of-mind as they would be normally. We did not communicate that we were doing the drive in January because it was no longer a sure thing in our collective minds, and no one was clearly speaking to it. Thankfully, Carol and Ralph Burmeister faithfully made their home-knit winter hats throughout the year and dropped off the boxes, totaling 187 hats, in late November. The Micah 6:8 Committee is having a Zoom meeting on Sunday, November 29th and will confirm (or move up) the plans for the drive this winter. We are very sorry for the lack of information and communication about this cherished, important mission project.

Church News Continues

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS - Another side victim of COVID-affected thinking and even more importantly church finances, there will not be an Advent devotional sent out this month. It was getting very expensive for St. Peter's to purchase 200+ devotionals and mail them via bulk mail, so years ago we went to putting most of them in hanging folders in the Narthex, for regular worshipers to pick up (saving us that postage money). Since we are not having in-person worship during Advent, we did not have that delivery system to help out. When Pastor and Laura investigated the e-book format for Advent devotionals, they were very few out there, and the cost presented itself to be open-ended and possibly no cheaper than a mass of paper copies. Alas, with the passage of time it is now too late to order and mass bulk mail out devotionals, and at a cost we would have trouble making in this year of reduced financial resources. We are sincerely sorry and look forward to tackling this next year in a more timely and cost-efficient way.

IN MEMORIAM - After the deadline, we are sad to report that June (Anderson) Peterson, 95, beloved long-time member of St. Peter's U.C.C., entered the Church Triumphant on Monday, November 23rd at the home of granddaughter Mandy Taheny McDonald. She was an active member of our Women's Guild which she loved, a faithful attendee until health-related, age-related challenges made it harder to be brought here, and later she was 'shut-in.' She leaves behind her grandchildren Stacey, Lana, Mike and Mandy, and 10 great-grandchildren. She was the matriarch of her family and a big part of our church for a long time. Her COVID-mitigated funeral was held Wednesday the 25th at Haben's Funeral Home and Crematorium, and she was buried next to her husband Roy at Ridgewood Cemetery

SPECIAL MUSIC FOR ADVENT VIRTUAL WORSHIP – If you haven't yet tuned in for Advent worship, we have some surprises for you! Our Choir director Ben has lined up some musical accompaniments and soloists to brighten our Advent worship. Stay tuned for more and check out our first Advent worship on YouTube now!

ANOTHER CHANGE - Unless the Council changes its mind on the 13th, it was decided to not record on the day after Christmas for a YouTube virtual service broadcast on Sunday, December 27th. Pastor Lanford is taking vacation for the rest of the year after Christmas Day, and it is currently very hard to find an available guest preacher for that Sunday due to COVID concerns. So, unless an upcoming Quarantine Weekly changes this, there will not be a new service waiting on the First Sunday after Christmas, but Pastor Richard might still record something and publish it on YouTube for anyone to see.

TIME OFF FOR OFFICE STAFF - As Pastor mentioned above, he'll be taking time off from December 26th through December 30th. Laura will also be taking some scattered days through December as both Pastor and Laura did not use their time up and will still have some left at the end of the year. We are hoping the Council will make some special exception and let us carry over the time left since this was an exceptional year. Laura will be out of the office Dec. 7-8; 14-15 and 28th and 29th.

UPDATED FINAL REGATHERING PLAN- Please find at the end of this newsletter our updated regathering plan. The Church Council met in November and decided to make a final decision on how best we'd handle this situation with the COVID numbers rising and falling constantly. Let the office or any council member know if you have questions!

Holiday Meals this Year

Though much of what we do has been put on hold, we were so excited and glad to be able to continue to assist in helping those in need receive Holiday Family Dinners at Thanksgiving and hopefully at Christmas. This year the need was even greater than before as I'm sure you all can imagine. As well, due to the nature of the Jewel at the Village Crossing Center in Niles collection there isn't much time to get funds together for Thanksgiving dinners and usually we aren't able to give as much as we'd like to our various charities. But people were so generous and quick to give we had a record 148 Dinners to distribute. We were able to give District 69 106 Dinners for their needy families; 25 went to UCAN, 7 went to Pastor Cranford's Ministries in Evanston and 10 were distributed to some of the folks who come to our doors for Aldi's cards, (which has also been temporarily suspended due to COVID). Laura would also like to specially thank Carol Iannotti who brought this program to St. Peter's many years ago and continues to help pick up and distribute them. Pictured on the right top is Phil, the manager at the Jewel, Carol, Laura, and Rebecca from UCAN. Below that picture are the folks from District 69 who picked up their share, then safely distributed them to the families in District 69. This has become such a blessing for them and we are so grateful we can help. Christmas Dinners will be coming soon, and they are still collecting donations so donate if you can.



Budget Blurb through October - 2020

(Snapshot of the Church's Finances)

<u>Total Income</u>	\$124,878.81
<u>Expenses</u>	\$132,215.82
Gains or Losses	(\$7,227.01)

Micah 6:8 Committee: Advent Giving Opportunities

Don't let COVID stop your joy! Make the Advent season meaningful by giving gifts that help our community partners deliver Christmas love. Consider these:

- **UCAN has created safe and caring spaces for children from its beginnings as a Civil War-era orphanage to the present day. In years past, we have collected gift cards for children and teens served by UCAN at our annual Advent Dinner. This year, UCAN has moved its holiday gift drive online. Toys, games, gift cards and more can be purchased at UCAN's Walmart gift registry. Donations are requested by Monday, December 7th.**
- **A Just Harvest Community Kitchen allows us to break bread with neighbors in need. Since the start of the pandemic, support from St. Peter's members has helped the Kitchen provide hundreds of meals to go. In 2021 we are supporting meals on January 30th, May 29th, July 31st, and October 30th. We will accept gifts directed to this ministry any time. Simply note your extra contribution to St. Peter's is for AJH Community Kitchen.**
- **Niles Township Food Pantry continues to fulfill its motto of "serving food with dignity." Each year the Thanksgiving service organized the by Niles Township Clergy Forum has been a traditional collection point for donations to the Pantry, but it was held virtually this year. You can safely donate to the Pantry online. See <http://nilestownshipgov.com/food-pantry-news/> for more information.**
- **The Night Ministry collection project is on! You can give online using their Amazon wish lists as your guide. This link, <https://a.co/3I64Djy>, takes you to list of books and games for the children of families who visit the Health Outreach Bus. This link, <https://a.co/d0oYnvV>, is for the teens and young adults in their youth shelters. The deadline for purchasing gifts on the lists is Friday, December 11th. Tip: go to "more" in the list description and click "print list" to see how many items are still needed. Contact Resource Coordinator Miranda Dean, miranda@thenightministry.org or 773-506-6022, to ensure your gift is properly accounted for and acknowledged.**
- **Alternatively, St. Peter's is delivering hats and scarves directly to The Night Ministry in early January to brighten the coldest days of winter. Thanks to Ralph and Carol Burmeister we already have already collected 100+ items, hand knitted with love. Other cold-weather gear in demand includes adult-size long underwear sets, thermal socks, and cloth face masks. If you are dropping off items for delivery to The Night Ministry—not making your gift online—please leave your items at the church by Friday, December 31st. Phone the office if you have any question about when and where to leave your items.**

The Micah 6:8 Committee is hosting a virtual Advent coffee hour on December 20th to celebrate our partnership with The Night Ministry and other community organizations. Watch for a Zoom meeting link later in December.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

12/2 – Sandy Guenther

12/4 – Louie Lopez

12/5 – Ken Burmeister

& Peggy McCoy

12/7 - Mary Ann Kuehn

12/10 – Erik Christianson

12/11 – Jon Mau Gemigani

12/16 – Judy Paige

12/20 – Calder Lundeen &

Cordelia Lundeen

12/24 – Payton McDonald

12/26 – Carol Iannotti

12/27 – Laura Olson

12/28 – Beverly Mau

12/30 – Maurice Lord

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1/1 – Jim Todd, John Karol

& Vivian Olson

1/6 – Alec Ryan

1/7 - Jennifer Mau Gemignani

1/9 – Usha Rajbhandari

1/10 – Jennifer Schneider

1/15 – Beth Brzozowski

1/16 – David Iannotti

1/18 – Andre Gloeckner; Karen

Christianson

1/21 – Alane (Schaller) Swiderski

1/24 – Richard Schaller

1/27 – Ethan Michael Caras

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

12/3 – Nancy & Phillip Lindroth

12/6 – Judy & Jim Williford

12/8 – Dianna & Larry Haun

PRAYER REQUESTS: Ingrid Anderson, Guy and Traudel Cline, Pat Mauer Erdman, Linda Haig, Ken Itter, Richard Lindroth, Helen Mauer, Jim Todd, Roy Svenson & Christy Lopez.

SPECIAL PRAYERS FOR OUR FRONTLINE WORKERS INCLUDING: Jennifer Castillo, Maribel Powers, Angela Washek Kuras and now also Barb and Jim Todd's granddaughter Kathryn Camardo, all of whom are serving in hospitals as nurses or anesthesiologists, including work with COVID patients, and their families. Cristy Lopez, Merle Tilos and Charlie Rasmason are also health care workers.

If you see your name listed and would like it removed, or, someone you know should be added, please contact the office.

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

1/ 17– Pat and Roy Erdman

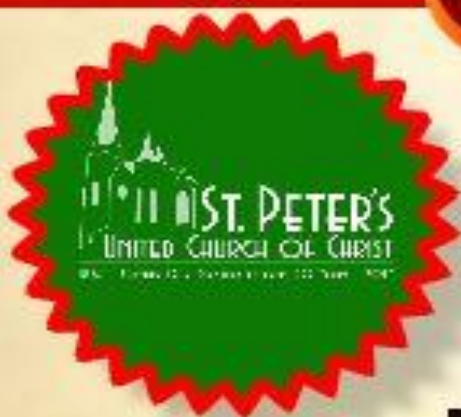
1/21 –Annie & Gerry Noorts

POINSETTIAS



If you didn't hear, we won't be doing our usual Poinsettia order this year. Due to COVID we can't be certain on how our Christmas service will play out yet. Instead, our Women's Guild will be generously providing poinsettias for our altar, in honor of all members and friends of St. Peter's. As a HUGE THANK YOU to everyone for all your extra care, support, thoughtfulness and concern for St. Peter's UCC during this unprecedented time, we'd like to offer you the chance to dedicate one of these poinsettias in honor and/or in memory of whomever you'd like. Just fill out the form below and return it to the office by December 6th! You can email your info, mail it or call it in to the office. We'll still be doing an In honor/In Memory insert for our Christmas worship and we'll also include it in the January Announcer!

Name:	Phone #:
In Honor Of:	In Memory Of:



Village Inn
PIZZERIA
SPORTS BAR & GRILL



Village Inn Food Fundraiser

December 10th 11am - 11pm

Village Inn Pizzeria

8050 Lincoln Ave.
Skokie, IL 60077

Mention St. Peter's UCC when ordering and we get 20% of your total

Now through January

WINTER SOFT GOODS FUNDRAISE



ST. PETER'S
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

LGBTQ+
CONGREGATION
IN SKOKIE, IL

**DROP OFF AT
THE GYM
8013
LARAME,
SKOKIE OR
CALL TO
SCHEDULE
(847)
673-8166**



**WE NEED
CLOTHING
LINENS
BEDDING
STUFFED
TOYS
ACCESSORIES
AND MORE**

COVID-19 Regather Plan FINAL – November 2020

ST. PETER'S UCC – SKOKIE has been following a "closed to the public" protocol since March of 2020. **Our intention in following guidelines** provided by the CDC, the Village of Skokie, the State of Illinois, and the United Church of Christ has been to:

- Provide worship opportunities while keeping our members and community safe from COVID infection and spread
- Keep the day-to-day business of the church running using alternative, "from home" means
- Adhere to guidelines provided by organizations of greater civic authority (aka, follow the rules)
- Maintain a connection with our friends and fellow church members and attendees
- Maintain a presence through virtual communication that we as a congregation value science and rules

As months have progressed through 2020, and we have learned more about the disease, how it spreads, and the tools available to us to stay home from worship, we have discussed plans to regather at every Council meeting. We have used this to "test the waters" of whether or not we can – or should – regather for worship.

At our October Council meeting, we came to the conclusion and voted on the suggestion that we should begin to **PLAN to regather for worship**, with the understanding that we may not be able to do that if:

- COVID cases continue to grow, and
- A significant number of our members are not comfortable venturing out to church for worship on Sundays.
 - A survey was conducted by the Board of Elders to determine interest and intention from as many members of the congregation as possible

As of November 15, we plan to regather:

- After the (expected) upcoming shut-down/shelter-in-place is over in IL
- After several weeks of declining positive tests in IL/Skokie

Council will meet to determine the date of regathering/reopening after the two of the above criteria are met.

We also acknowledge that the decisions we make about regathering also have an impact on the other groups that use our facility.

Below are the items that need to happen in order to make regathering happen.

In-Person Worship Regathering Plan

CLEAN - BEFORE

While our custodian and Trustees have been working to do basic cleaning of the facilities during the down months, the following should be done before we invite people back into the building:

- Overall clean and sanitize of entire building prior to return. See *Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility* _ CDC in COVID-19 Response folder
(To be completed by Laura w/ additional help as requested)
-



- Vacuum of areas to be occupied.
 - Sanitize wipe all hand contact points
 - Clean bathrooms
- Memorial Room and Kitchen will NOT be used. Pass through Memorial Room to access Sanctuary ONLY.
- Hymnals and Songbooks, and envelopes will be removed from the pews
- Pews marked for social distancing (see **COVID-19 reopening Sketch** in COVID-19 Response folder)

CLEAN - DURING

St. Peter's will do the following:

- Provide hand soap and paper towels at all hand washing locations.
- Provide hand sanitizer in the sanctuary and at the entrance.
- Post the CDC COVID-19 Factsheet at key locations within the church.

CLEAN - AFTER

Following the worship service, **attendees** will be asked to help with the following:

- Wipe down the backs of the pews in front of them with a disinfecting wipe.
- Collect any tissues, gum wrappers or detritus from the pew and put in the trash
- There will be a large designated rubbish bin to dispose of anything used during service – wipes, bulletins, tissues, gum wrappers, etc.

The **Deacon** and one helper will:

- Take the garbage bag and dispose it in the dumpster after service.
- Wipe down all points of hand contact.
- Wipe down lectern and mic after use

IN-PERSON WORSHIP - PEOPLE

We recommend that people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should avoid large groups of people as much as possible, including attending church in person. People at **high risk** include anyone:

- Over 65 years of age, or
- with underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes, or
- with weakened immune systems.

We also recommend:

- Anyone who is sick to not attend.
- Anyone who has traveled to highly infected states or cities not attend until after the prescribed quarantine period has passed (generally 14 days).
- Those who are at high risk, described above, to not attend.
- Attendees to wash and/or sanitize hands frequently.

Those who are not able to attend in person:

- We will continue to offer video and audio versions of the worship service – these will be live streamed on YouTube at 10am, and a copy of the live stream will be available after the service on our YouTube channel



An Open & Affirming Congregation

8013 Laramie Ave. Skokie, IL 60077 | 847.673.8166 | www.stpeteruccskokie.org
Rev. Richard A. Lanford, Pastor

IN-PERSON WORSHIP - PROTOCOLS

Given the information we've studied and what we have learned about the spread of COVID, our worship services shall follow these protocols:

- Masks are to be worn at all times, INCLUDING those who are delivering worship service (Pastor, Ben, Lector, etc.)
- A maximum of 25 people in the building, including those involved in the worship service (e.g., Pastor, Ben, Deacon, Lector, etc.)
- Sit in pews marked out for 6-ft social distance spacing
 - Balcony will be closed
- Enter and Exit only through the Parking Lot doors
- No singing
- Use digital bulletins on phones instead of paper copies
 - Paper copies will be available in small quantities
- No direct contact (hand shaking, hugging, etc.)
- No gathering after worship – leave the sanctuary maintaining social distance
- Visiting with others can happen if attendees stay in place and follow distance guidelines – hollering over pews is permitted

The Deacons will be responsible for:

- Ensure the pews are blocked off to indicate "No Seating" pews
 - Details about how will be determined (tape? Paper? signs? 3M hooks?)
- Keeping a supply of masks and hand sanitizer available
- Keeping a count of people as they come in
- Taking temperatures as people come in
- Asking people to sign in (for contact tracing)
- Wearing gloves to be prepared in case they need to help someone
- Remind attendees to maintain socially distant seating as needed

Board of Elders and Communion

- We are going to purchase individually wrapped communion "snack packs" for a "no touch" communion experience.
- These will be available in the entrance for people to pick up as they come in to worship

Board of Christian Education – Sunday School options will be explored when we consider regathering
