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**John Omerod,
Pastor**

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English Congregational United Church of Christ

The Parish Visitor



DECEMBER 2023

A Letter from Pastor John

In the summer of 2022, I used Jan Richardson's poem as a benediction, the one that begins, "To all that is chaotic in you." I am not certain she intended for it to be used for that purpose. Nevertheless, this past November 18, it was offered again, this time as a benediction at Arlene Wold's funeral. It struck a nerve in the congregation of mourners for its simplicity and depth.

Benedictions represent promises, principles, and challenges to live by. Arguably, the most common benediction has been repeated so often over the decades, but surprisingly, few people object to its frequency: "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and give you peace." Peace is a challenge in any era.

Jan Richardson's poem is a poetic call for impossible peace to become possible. After the funeral, some of you requested a copy. Here it is on the next page in its entirety. Enjoy!



*To all that is chaotic in you,
let there come silence.*

*Let there be a calming
of the clamoring,
a stilling of the voices that
have laid their claim
on you,
that have made their home in you,*

*that go with you even to the holy places
but will not let you rest,
will not let you hear your life with wholeness
or feel the grace that fashioned you.*

*Let what distracts you cease.
Let what divides you cease.
Let there come an end
to what diminishes and demeans,
and let depart all that keeps you in its cage.*

*Let there be an opening
into the quiet that lies beneath the chaos,
where you find
the peace you did not think possible
and see what shimmers
within the storm.*

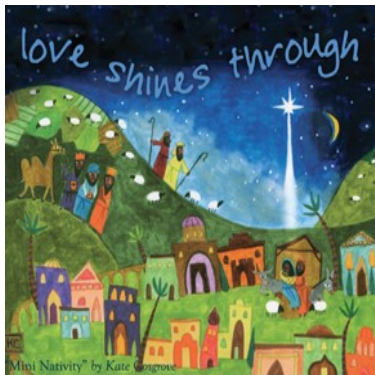
CROP HUNGER WALK

ENDING HUNGER ONE STEP AT A TIME



This year's Crop Hunger Walk was held in October. The efforts of the local community raised a total of \$16,802.12. Our church had 3 walkers that raised \$570.00! Thank you to those that donated or participated in this annual event in support of local food pantries.

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THE CHRISTMAS FUND

for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

This special offering will be taken during the morning and evening Worship Services on Christmas Eve, December 24th.



The 2024 Offering Envelopes Are Here

Please pick up your new offering envelopes in the Fellowship Hall beginning Sunday, December 10th.



Thank you to everyone that contributed to the "fill the trunk with food" challenge. This was the third year that we have put this challenge out to the congregation, and once again you rose to the occasion! The food collected not only filled the back of the vehicle, but the back seats as well! You can only imagine the impact that these donations and all donations during the year have for the families in need. Your continued support of the food pantry is greatly appreciated throughout the year. Your donations of food or financial support are always appreciated.

You can send a check to them at this address:

HAFP
PO Box 463
Hinckley, IL 60520

SIGN UP SHEETS FOR JANUARY thru MARCH 2024 ARE NOW POSTED.

Sign up now!

Please take a look at the new sheets that are posted on the counter in the Fellowship Hall. Volunteers are needed for January and beyond for Ushers and Coffee Hour.

This is a copy of the letter that was sent out regarding this year's Matching Gift offering.

MATCHED GIVING

November 20, 2023

Dear Friends,

Good news! It is time, once again, for our annual Matching Gift fundraiser. For the eleventh consecutive year, one of our families has pledged up to \$30,000 to our church's General Fund if the congregation will match it. The Matching Gift Offering has been a key offering toward the fiscal health of our church, English Congregational UCC. Because of these additional efforts, we are not only able to meet our daily fiscal needs, but we are also building financial security for the future.

We are asking for your help to continue this very successful program. Please contribute whatever you can to help our church maintain a level of financial stability. Whatever amount given will be most helpful, especially when you consider that the amount that the congregation gives, up to the \$30,000, will be **doubled!**

Every gift will be greatly appreciated. All that we ask is for you to consider giving in faith, and give back to God the best that you can.

Peace in Christ,
Pastor John Omerod and the
ECUCC Church Council

Stewardship
A WAY OF LIFE



VOLUNTEERS FOR DECEMBER

Marcia Lee, Liturgist

Sunday, December 3rd
Sunday School 9:00 am
Worship 10:15 am
First Sunday of Advent
Sacrament of Communion
Change-Up Sundae

Ushers: The Ashby and Peters Families

Coffee: Lavon and Alan Nehring

Lock-up: Teaching and Learning

Communion Servers: Vice Moderator Youth, Outreach

Sunday, December 10th
Sunday School 9:00 am
Worship 10:15 am
Second Sunday of Advent

Ushers: The Ashby and Peters Families

Coffee: Bob and Barb Raymond

Lock-up: Worship

Sunday, December 17th
Sunday School 9:00 am
Worship 10:15 am
Third Sunday of Advent
Children's Program

Ushers: The Ashby and Peters Families

Coffee: Sunday School Group

Lock-up: Youth

Sunday, December 24th
Sunday School 9:00 am
Worship 10:15 am
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Christmas Fund Collection

Ushers: The Ashby and Peters Families

Coffee: Volunteers are needed

Lock-up: Moderator

Sunday, December 24th
Christmas Eve
Evening Worship at 7pm
Christmas Fund Collection



Sunday, December 31st
Sunday School 9:00 am
Worship 10:15 am
Nick Ashby Memorial Collection for
Eden Seminary

Ushers: The Ashby and Peters Families

Coffee: Volunteers are needed

Lock-up: Vice Moderator

December 2023

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat



1 *Worship Ministry Meeting at 9:30am*
Pizza Night at Lifespring at 6pm



2

3

Sunday School-9am
Worship 10:15am
Communion
Change Up Sundaes

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Sunday School -9am
Worship 10:15am

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

Sunday School -9am
Worship 10:15am
Children's Program

18

Executive Council Meeting at 6:30

19

20

21

22

23

24

Sunday School - 9am
Worship 10:15am & Evening Worship at 7pm

25



26

27

28

29

30

31

Sunday School - 9am
Worship—10:15am
Nick Ashby Memorial Fund Collection for Eden Seminary



December 2nd—George Thompson

December 2nd—Mary Knobloch

December 7th—Lester Granart

December 9th—Alan Nehring

December 12th — Katie O'Donnell

December 13th—Becky Byington

December 17th—Carolynne Drawz

December 19th—Terry Sorensen



On Christmas Eve, there will be a morning Worship Service at 10:15am and an evening Worship Service beginning at 7:00 p.m.



**Merry Christmas To You and Your Family From the staff at
English Congregational United Church of Christ**

