

**NORTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
DECEMBER, 2021 NEWSLETTER**

“GO AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS”

- Mark 16:15



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From the Minister...

Our celebration of Advent, the four week season of preparation for Christ's long-awaited coming, is a time where we light candles, sharing the fire of the Holy Spirit, where we reflect on the many gifts we have received in the past year, and seeking God with all our hearts as we turn—or re-turn—into the light. In this time of hybrid worship, North Church is offering many adapted traditions and adding some new ones. Please join us on Facebook for Wednesday Inspiration (broadcast at 3:00 and available afterwards in recorded form) where we will see our shut-ins and our children lighting the Advent candles each week. If you cannot join us for the in-person Christmas Eve Candlelight service, we offer candles which you may pick up at church to light while you participate online via Facebook Live.

Here are some questions for you to reflect upon in this season of expectation:

- What do you hope for this year, as you prepare for Christmas?
- Where will you call upon God to be present?
- How will you search with all your heart for the God who has come among us in the person of Christ, and is always coming among us through the power of the Holy Spirit?
- In what way can your everyday, yearlong life reflect these priorities?

Wishing you many blessings this holy season and at all times,

Faithfully,

Rev. Mary E. Biedron

INTRODUCING OUR CONFIRMANDS

Our 2021 Confirmation class was held this fall in a combined program with First Congregational Church of Royal Oak. On **Sunday, November 21**, we were pleased to welcome three North Church youth into the covenant of our church.

Alycia Fernandes is a sophomore at Walled Lake Western High School. She is active in Student Leadership and the Diving Team. She is also a Diamond Team Member at American Allstars Gymnastics. She is the daughter of **Greg & Mindy Fernandes**.

Jack Fernandes is a freshman at Detroit Catholic Central High School. He belongs to the Robotics team, and is an active in Boy Scout. He is the son of **Greg & Mindy Fernandes**.

Lauren Jensen is a freshman at Royal Oak High School. She plays soccer on several teams through the Royal Oak Football Club (ROFC) on the Average Joes team, and also plays on the indoor soccer team the Dragons. Her other interests are reading, art, and spending time with friends and family. She is the daughter of **Matt Jensen**.

Moderator's Notes...



A happy Thanksgiving and Advent season to all.

Last weekend was confirmation Sunday. It was wonderful to see the confirmands and their families, as well as the children in Sunday School class. Kudos to the Education, Worship, and Fellowship Ministry Boards for their work in planning and executing the day's activities, as well as Sunday School teachers, Rev. Biedron, and everyone else who helped out.

We are still in the midst of our stewardship drive. This is an important event in the life of the Church – your pledges and donations help us plan our budgets and pay for North Church's operation. If you have not already done so please fill out your pledge card and bring it with you Sunday (or drop it off at the Church office).

Several exciting changes are coming to our Church. As noted previously, we will be upgrading the audio / visual system in the sanctuary. This will improve our ability to live stream worship (and other events) to reach more people. Most of the new equipment should be installed in December. We have contracted an audio/visual technician to run the Sunday live streaming – **Emily Eahrow** has already started to help **Rev. Biedron** during worship. In addition, we will be replacing our somewhat decrepit sign on Twelve Mile with a new electronic sign, which will allow us to post current messages for those driving by. As with many things this year the electronics are somewhat delayed, we should see the new sign installed in January.

Looking ahead, Pageant Sunday will be December 12. Appropriate precautions will be in place, but it will still be a delightful service with the children and youth of the Church. We will also have our traditional candlelight service Christmas Eve. Mark your calendars and join us!

I know we all look forward to returning to 'normal' Church activities, including the return of our Choir, coffee hour after worship, and other social events. Unfortunately, the pandemic numbers in Michigan continue to be bad. Executive Council reviews the status at each meeting, we will proceed with further reopening when it is safe to do so.

Executive Council Notes

Executive Council met on November 22 and considered the following:

- **Assets & Resources and Treasurer:** Year to date through end October revenues are up \$11,400 over last year (though down from 2019), net expenses down. The Treasurer and A & R Board presented the draft budget for 2022 for Council's review. This draft reflects the input from all six Ministry Boards and includes investments in the Church's future (such as our new audio/visual system and enhanced live streaming). Executive Council discussed the budget and made a few recommendations. Council will approve the final budget at our December 20 meeting; it will then go to the full Congregation for approval at our February business meeting.
- **Diaconate:** The Diaconate Ministry Board is making plans for the Advent season. They are looking for **volunteers** to help with delivering poinsettias to shut-ins in December – you can sign up in the narthex after worship or contact **Sandy Greer**. The Diaconate has purchased Advent devotional booklets from the NACCC to distribute to our shut-ins; additional copies are available in the narthex, anyone is welcome to take one. Christmas card packets will be available on December 12.

- **Education:** Education is also planning for the Advent season, including our Christmas Pageant on December 12. Christmas crafts will again be take-home packets, available in Fellowship Hall. Sunday School was live last weekend, celebrating the 400th Thanksgiving (thanks to **Judy Campbell** and others for amazing decorations). Sunday School continues virtually, via Zoom, with Sunday in-person school and events roughly monthly. The Education Board plans an adult education Bible study series with our Senior Minister after the New Year (and looking for a **volunteer** to help **Rev. Biedron** with this).
- **Fellowship:** Fellowship is planning a Mascotts party for December 4, see the Church calendar and contact the Office or **Tim Sirovy** for details. The Board is also looking ahead to Advent, making plans for Christmas crafts and treats for Pageant Sunday.
- **Missions:** Missions made a donation to SOUL, who will use it to fill Thanksgiving food boxes. This Board has also made arrangements with Adopt-a-Family to assist two needy local households at Christmas. The Women's Fellowship giant donation stocking is now in the narthex, ready for donations of socks for children and adults.
- **Worship:** The Worship Board is also planning for Advent. They are coordinating with **Laurie Meeker** on music for our holiday worship. Christmas Eve will be a hybrid worship session (in person and live streamed), with the option of lighting candles at home. The Board has arranged a travelling Advent Wreath, with videoed lighting at the homes of some of our shut-ins and other members.
- Committees
 - Personnel submitted recommendations for staff compensation for the coming year (part of our budgeting process).
 - Communications mailed 1122 postcards to new neighbors, inviting them to join us this Advent season (extra postcards are in the narthex and link, please take and share with friends / neighbors who may wish to join us this Christmastide). Communications also updated our slide that shows at the Civic Theater with an Advent-themed version, to run through Christmas Day.
- New and Other Business:
 - Council approved a streaming service contract for next year. In addition to the new A/V equipment, our audio technician and hardware provider recommended this to provide smoother streaming with fewer pauses or drop-outs. The cost for 2022 is \$1428.
 - Council again discussed and agreed to a capital campaign to fund the necessary replacement of our building's roof next year.
 - As noted, Council reviewed the draft budget and recommendations from Personnel; the final budget will be voted upon at our next meeting December 20.
 - Given the pandemic numbers, council meetings will continue via Zoom for the time being.

The pandemic continues to test our patience and resolve; may we continue to live and endure with faith and hope, thankful for the gifts that are ours.

The year that is drawing towards its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war... the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States... to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to... fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union. (Abraham Lincoln, October 3, 1863)

Kevin Gromley

DECEMBER MEETINGS

Education Ministry Board – Monday, December 6, at 7 p.m.

Assets and Resources – Wednesday, December 8, at 7 p.m.

Missions Ministry Board – Wednesday, December 8, at 7 p.m.

Fellowship Ministry Board – Tuesday, December 14, at 7 p.m.

Diaconate Ministry Board – Tuesday, December 14, at 7:30 p.m.

Worship Ministry Board - Sunday, December 19, at 11:30 a.m. (in person with a Zoom option.)

Executive Council – Monday, December 20, at 7 p.m.



NORTH CHURCH ARTICLES AND ACTIVITIES



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Attention Knitters, Crocheters, Sew-ers and Shoppers!

The Women's Fellowship and Missions Board are once again happy to sponsor the **Knitting Tree** and the **Christmas Stocking**. So, get your needles, crochet hooks, and dollars ready to support this good cause.

The **Christmas Stocking** is hanging on the banister in the narthex. Your donation of new packaged socks for infants through adults can be placed in the large stocking or as needed in the box next to it. These will also be distributed to a needy charity in January. In years past we have delivered to Lighthouse, Farmington Public Schools, and Crossroads.

This year we are happy to have the **Knitting Tree** set up in the usual place in the entrance, next to the information table. Unlike last year's drive-through drop off area, you can now bring in your homemade or store-bought hats, gloves, mittens, and scarves and hang them on the tree and watch it fill up with the ornaments of clothing each **Sunday through December 26**.



Lots of shortages of supplies and goods are predicted, so start early!!!

ADOPT - A - FAMILY

(Sponsored by Women's Fellowship and Missions Ministry Board)

North Congregational Church has adopted two families through the Adopt-a-Family program of Neighborhood House to share the spirit of Christmas. If you would like to purchase an item to donate, click on the SignUp Genius link, go to the link on the church website, or click this link - <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44AEA823A4FD0-north> - to choose from the list of items desired by the family members. Time is short! The last Sunday to deliver the gifts to the church is December 12. Click on an available "slot" for an item and enter your name in the space provided. If you have problems with the site, contact **Jennifer Murray, Debbie** or **Janice** in the church office who can coordinate a gift selection with you. (Email addresses and phone numbers can be found in the church directory).

Please place your **unwrapped gift(s)** on one of the carts provided in the Link. **Gifts may also be brought in during the weeks before Sunday, December 12.** Please call the church first (248-848-1750) to make sure someone is in the office. If you will tape the gift receipt and recipient's name to the gift, a team of church members will wrap and label the gifts in a safe and socially distanced process. The gifts will be delivered to Neighborhood House that week, so that parents can pick up the gifts before the close of school on Monday, December 20th.



If you would like to donate money, please place the money in an envelope with *Adopt-a-Family* written on the face of it. The envelope may be placed in the offering basket or dropped off in the church office. Checks should be made payable to North Congregational Church. We'd like these families to have a wonderful Christmas; please join in this project with us! Thank You!

WORSHIP MINISTRY BOARD

COMMUNION

We will celebrate Communion on **Sunday, December 5th** during worship. In order to safely serve the elements, seating will be in every other pew for that Sunday only. Thank you

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTERS...for In-Person Worship Services for 2021

First Sunday of Advent - November 28: Karen and Robert Moore
Second Sunday of Advent - December 5: Sue and Mark Bowden
Third Sunday of Advent - December 12: Carolyn and Mark Payne
Fourth Sunday of Advent - December 19: Sandy and Gene Greer
Christmas Eve - Sara, Steve, Laurie Lange, and Andrew Hines

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Fragrant wreaths and beautiful poinsettias decorate our church each year during the holidays. This year, you may donate a poinsettia as a memorial, a tribute, or a celebration of the spirit of Christmas. The cost of a poinsettia is \$10.00. Order forms may be found on the table in the Narthex, attached to the Church Planner, and included in this newsletter. **All orders are needed by Monday, December 6th.**



TRAVELING ADVENT WREATH

One of our new traditions has become the Traveling Advent Wreath, which features our shut-ins and others recorded while lighting advent candles. These will be shown during the Wednesday Inspirations.

LAY READERS

Lay readers are needed January through March, 2022, and we'd love to have **you!** If you would like to read on any of these dates, please sign up at the table in the Narthex, or on Signup Genius. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0a4eaead2dabfd0-layreaders>. Thank you!

MISSIONS MINISTRY BOARD

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR ANNOUNCEMENT

One of the traditions many families observe during the holiday season is a count-down to December 25 via an Advent calendar. In this tradition, a small treat is revealed each day during the month to spread cheer and joy.



Since this is also the season of giving, a new reverse method of counting down the days until the 25th, a “reverse” calendar, is an alternative way to celebrate the blessings of the season. It is another option for sharing the bounties we enjoy with people whose pantries are bare.

If you would like to observe a “reverse” advent calendar, print the calendar attached to the church bulletin, celebrate the days of December by collecting the items. **The advent food drive items can be delivered to church Sunday, January 2nd, at Door 4, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

ASSETS AND RESOURCES MINISTRY BOARD

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN FOR 2022



“Go and Proclaim the Good News”- Mark 16:15

As the Stewardship campaign continues, we would like to thank all North Church members and friends who have already submitted a pledge for 2022. As of November 28th, we have received 48 pledges totaling \$128,380. This represents 71% of our goal of \$182,000. These commitments help us plan our operating budget and ensure continued support for our ministries and programs.

If you have not yet submitted a confidential Estimate of Giving for 2022 but intend to do so, you may use one of the following methods.

- Complete an Estimate of Giving card and mail it back to the church or bring it to in-person worship.
- Complete the short form linked from the church’s website at **www.northcongregationalchurch.org**
- Contact the church Treasurer, **Nancy Scott**, at **ncc.churchtreasurer@gmail.com** or 248-474-2791.

North Congregational Church Stewardship Team – Mary E. Biedron (Senior Minister), Nancy Scott (Treasurer), Frank Murray, Steve Plummer, Jeff Rockwell

DIACONATE MINISTRY BOARD

CHRISTMAS CARDS

The Christmas holidays are quickly approaching, and the Diaconate needs your help for two of our projects.

Once again, we are planning to send **Christmas Cards** to every household listed in our directory. On **December 12**, there will be packets available at church. The packet includes 10 cards, stamps, addresses and a Christmas letter along with instructions. We need 16 people/families to address and mail the cards. If you would like to help but are unable to pick up a packet on the 12th, please call or email **Debbie** at **ncc.churchoffice@gmail.com** and we will deliver one to you.



We are also in need of assistance from approximately 10 people to **deliver poinsettias and a small gift** to our shut-ins. **Deliveries will need to be made between December 12 – 19**. This is a wonderful opportunity to do something special as a family during the holidays. Sign up at church or click on the link below. The Diaconate will let you know the details of your delivery. Thank you for your assistance! (**<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0A4EAEAD2DABFD0-christmas1>**).

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS

The Advent booklets have been sent to our shut-ins. There are a limited number of extras available on the tables in the Narthex. Feel free to take one for yourself or give one to someone who might appreciate having it for the season.

EDUCATION MINISTRY BOARD

LIVING CHRISTMAS CARD PHOTOS

On **Sunday, November 21**, all students Grades 8 and below dressed in costume and were photographed showing scenes from the Christmas story. These photos will be incorporated into a slide show and be put online. Be sure to check it out!

The scenes are “No Room at the Inn” (Luke 2:7),
“Angels Appear to the Shepherds” Luke 2:8-14),
“Herod and the Wise Men” (Matthew 2:1-8), and
“Behold the Christ Child” (Luke 2:15, Matthew 2:1-2)



CHRISTMAS CRAFT WORKSHOP - Sunday, December 12

Sunday school gathering in **Fellowship Hall** for class and celebration. Craft bags will be distributed for the children to do at home.

Christmas Pageant Live—Sunday, December 12, 2021

One of the special holiday traditions for North Church and our Sunday school children is the Christmas Pageant. Our pageant includes scripture readings by the older teens and a Nativity tableau by the Sunday school students. In order to maintain some of our traditions along with the safety of our church members, the North Church Youth will be performing a live version of the Christmas pageant on **Sunday December 12th** in the sanctuary during the church service. The children will wear masks along with their costumes.



- Children should come to church at **10:00** on **December 12th** to meet and dress in **Fellowship Hall**, and prepare for the performance.
- If your child would like to participate or you have any questions, please contact **Karen Sirovy**, Karensirovy@gmail.com or 248-505-8052.



FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY BOARD

MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB

A group of North Church Men meet every other Tuesday for breakfast at Moe's on Ten, at 9:00 a.m. They will be meeting on **Tuesday, December 14 and 28**. If you would like to join them, please contact **Steve Lange** at stephenlange@me.com.

BOOK GROUP FOR DECEMBER AND BEYOND:

Our December group meeting will take place on **December 15 at 1:00 p.m.**, in person at North Church, or by Zoom (we revised earlier plans due to Covid concerns). We'll have a fun conversation about our favorite cookbooks: what they are, why they are favorites, how to choose a good cookbook! Please email ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com to let **Rev. Mimi Biedron** know if you are attending in person or virtually, and you'll receive the zoom link.

Upcoming dates and books:

January 19, 1:00 PM – State of Terror by Louise Penny & Hillary Clinton

February 16, 1:00 PM – The Lincoln Highway: A Novel by Amor Towles

March 16, 1:00 PM – Cloud Cuckoo Land: A Novel by Anthony Doerr

April 20, 1:00 PM – This Tender Land: A Novel by William Kent Krueger



*May you have the gift of Faith
the blessing of Hope
and the peace of His Love
at Christmas and Always.*

Merry Christmas... from the North Church Staff

Mimi Biedron, Laurie Meeker, Patricia Butler, Janice Thornton, Debbie Skindell

Mascottt's Christmas Party!

When: Saturday December 4th 2021 at 7:00pm

Where: Sirovy's Backyard!

- To gather safely we are opting for some good old fashioned outdoor fun!
- Come and enjoy Christmas music, fire pits, hot chocolate & games
- (Dress for warmth not for fashion!)
- Please bring a dish to share.

Why: To share holiday cheer with good company!

RSVP: Please RSVP to Karensirovy@gmail.com by

December 1st with the names of the people who will be participating or sign up on the sheet in the Narthex.



Looking forward to seeing you then!



Reverse Advent Calendar

North Congregational Church

Purchase the following items and place them in a basket or box each day during advent to celebrate the season by sharing our blessings. On the last day, or a date thereafter, these may be dropped off at church and they will be delivered to Lighthouse of Oakland County.

- 1) Can of tuna or salmon
- 2) Can of chicken or ham
- 3) Canned soup: chicken noodle, tomato, mushroom, bean, split pea
- 4) Canned vegetables: green beans, tomatoes, corn, peas, carrots, beans
- 5) Canned fruit: pineapple, mandarin oranges, pear, peach, pie fillings
- 6) Canned meal items: beef stew, spaghetti sauce, ravioli
- 7) Boxed cereal, or oatmeal
- 8) Dried beans: navy, black, lentils, or chick peas
- 9) Bag of Rice
- 10) Box of Pasta, 1 lb.
- 11) Jar of Peanut butter, plastic bottles please
- 12) Powdered or Condensed Milk
- 13) Ground coffee or box of tea bags
- 14) Paper towels
- 15) Toilet paper or box of facial tissues
- 16) Laundry detergent
- 17) Shampoo, Suave, VO5
- 18) Bar soap
- 19) Can Opener
- 20) Toothbrush or Tooth paste
- 21) Baby Diapers size 5-6
- 22) Household cleaner or Disinfectant
- 23) Adult Incontinence products all sizes
- 24) Feminine hygiene product





CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Fragrant wreaths and beautiful poinsettias decorate our church each year during the holidays. This year, you may donate a poinsettia as a memorial, a tribute, or a celebration of the spirit of Christmas.

Wreaths will be on display **November 28th – December 26th**. Poinsettias will be present from **December 12th – December 26th**; they may be designated to be given to a shut-in or taken home following the Christmas Eve worship service.

The cost of a poinsettia is \$10.00. Please make your check payable to **North Congregational Church**. **The deadline for orders is Monday, December 6th**. Please fill out the form below and return it to the church office, or mail it to:

**North Congregational Church
36520 W. Twelve Mile Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48331**

I wish to place _____ poinsettia(s) for Christmas.

_____ I will take my plant on Christmas Eve _____ Please deliver to a shut in.

The message should read:

A gift from _____

a. Given in memory, in honor, or in celebration of: _____

b. Or, write your own message: _____

Signature _____

Phone _____