



**Arbor Covenant Church
Madison Wisconsin**

**December 2022
Newsletter**

There are several ways you can worship at Memorial UCC on Sundays at 9:30 AM.

YOU MAY ATTEND IN PERSON

5705 Lacy Road
Fitchburg



YOU MAY ATTEND on ZOOM

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/773905311?pwd=NDITTGk0NlpZaDNvZXpodWxvZFIQQT09 - success](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/773905311?pwd=NDITTGk0NlpZaDNvZXpodWxvZFIQQT09-success)

Meeting ID 773905311
Password 5705

Or call in 1 -312-626-6799
(depending on your phone carrier, long distance charges may apply)

(If you experience technical difficulties during worship on Zoom, consider shifting to YouTube to join the service.)

YOU MAY ATTEND ON YOUTUBE

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MemorialUCC>

Advent: Anticipation and (Lowered) Expectations

Pastor Peter Morris

We've entered a season of waiting and hope. Advent is a time when we retell the story surrounding Jesus' birth — a story that chronicles the arrival of God's promised presence to dwell among humanity and continue God's work to make all of creation new. It's a story comprised of unlikely people making way and creating space, caring for and welcoming that presence in the vulnerable shape of an infant child's life. As we rehearse and retell this story it's right that we do so with a great sense of anticipation. Christ's birth brought to fruition long-established hope and the hope of God's people continues to find fulfillment in the fresh arrival of Jesus that we celebrate each Christmas.

People of faith generally mark Advent with practices that co-mingle unrestrained joy with earnest self-reflection. We literally and figuratively light candles in the midst of seasonal darkness. We sing songs and bake cookies, we gather with friends and family for seasonal cheer while also spending time examining our hearts and preparing ourselves to welcome Christ's birth.

I hope you'll find ways to express the unrestrained joy — family traditions, favorite activities, connections to community for worship and fellowship. I also hope you'll find some time for self-reflection — and if you're looking for a resource I have one to recommend. It's a book called *Low Anthropology* by author David Zahl.

A friend and colleague told me about *Low Anthropology* a few weeks back. We didn't talk about it in the content of Advent. It's not a book written specifically for Advent. It's not about the nativity or the star that shone brightly over Bethlehem or the wise men's gifts to the newborn savior. The reason I find it appropriate is not because it's directly about any sort of Christmas miracle or liturgically seasonal activities. It's relevant because it's essentially about expectations, not the expectations we have about God's arrival or the presence of God's goodness, but expectations we have about ourselves and each other.

The author contends that too often we expect too much. We don't recognize human limitation and frailty. We expect ourselves and everyone else to have it all together, and when we inevitably don't we begin to resent each other and ourselves. What Zahl basically advocates for is humility and compassion that are honest about the messiness of life. The author equates this sort of honesty with having a low anthropology. Conversely the sort of unrealistic expectations that lead to perfectionism and resentment correspond with having a high anthropology.*

Zahl contends that having a low anthropology — that being honest about the messiness of life — frees us from bondage that comes with trying to prove our worth in a culture built on status and achievement. When we can accept our limitations and the limitations of others we end up finding connection and solidarity that we miss when we're living with the sort of high anthropology that generally seeks certainty, is constantly judging merit and habitually expects perfection. When we do this we begin to open ourselves up to the surprising possibilities of grace and to the otherwise apparent unlikelihood that we (and everyone else) are lovable despite our weaknesses, our faults and our contradictions. In this way it engenders a shared vulnerability that breaks down barriers and opens all of us up to receive God's presence in new ways.

Opening ourselves up, breaking down barriers, cultivating shared vulnerability, being honest about the messiness of life — what better way can we prepare for the arrival of Christ who showed up right here in that same messiness? So go ahead, spend these weeks with a heightened sense of anticipation. Wait hopefully for the story of Jesus' birth to unfold anew, but as you do feel free to lower your expectations.

*Anthropology is the study of what makes us human and can refer to our understandings of human experience.

SAVE the DATES!

These Advent Events and Services will take place at Memorial UCC

The Christmas Stories, adult Advent series with John Dominic Crossan, Wed evenings (Nov. 30th, Dec. 7th and Dec. 14th.) @ 6:30-8:30 pm (see below)

Craft & Cookie Sale, Saturday, Dec 10 @ 9 am

Nifty Gifty Workshop, Sunday, Dec 18 @ 9:30 am

Interfaith Longest Night service, Dec 21 @ 7 pm

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 @ 5 pm – Family service

Christmas Eve, Dec 24 @ 7 pm – Candles, Communion, & Carols

Christmas Morning, Dec 25 @ 9:30 am – Hot Chocolate and Carols

ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT HYBRID CLASS

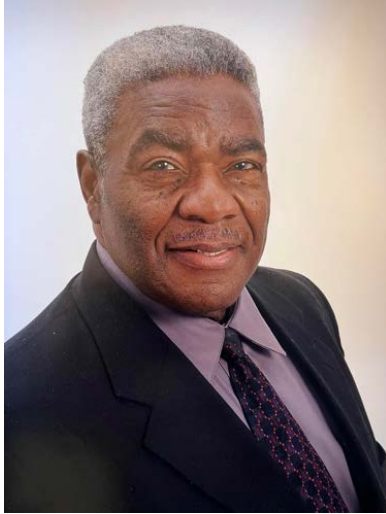
Wednesdays, starting November 30th from 6:30 to 8 pm we'll be watching and discussing videos from Homebrewed Christianity's latest class: The Christmas Stories with John Dominic Crossan. Each session will feature a visual lecture by Crossan from his book, The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Birth. Participants will have the option to watch the videos at home on their own Monday afternoons starting Nov. 28th. Monday classes will be online and will feature a live Q&A. Anyone wanting to have a discussion can come to MUCC Wednesday evening to watch and discuss the video. If you plan on participating on Wednesdays, please sign up and indicate if you'll be in-person or on Zoom.

ANNUAL CRAFT AND COOKIE EVENT

The Annual Craft and Cookie Event will be Saturday December 10, 9:00-12:00. This will be the 18th year of selling crafts and cookies to support a full-year scholarship to a student at Dar Al Kalima University of Arts and Culture, in Bethlehem. We sell hand-made crafts made by the congregation, and Christmas Cookies by the pound. It's a fun event of fellowship and purpose. Neighborhood friends even call the church making sure of the date because they don't want to miss it! We need makers, bakers and workers that day – and then of course customers too!! Watch for more information and sign-up sheets.

In Memory of Bishop Charles McNair

December 5, 1937 - November 11, 2022



Rev. Charles McNair died on November 11, 2022. He along with his wife, Sister Alberta McNair, founded and led Vessels of Praise, a congregation that began in partnership with Arbor, sharing our space and collaborating on ministry. Pastor McNair Alberta were a part of Arbor Covenant for many years.



Many of us will never forget their music – which filled our hearts with joy. Their oldest son, Colier, was also a part of our Worship Team. Below, you will find some memories of the McNairs, including a tribute from our former pastor, Dick Nystrom, who was close friends with the McNairs.

The Celebration of life will take place **THIS FRIDAY** at Blackhawk Church on Brader Way.

A Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Bishop Charles C. McNair, Sr.

Friday December 2, 2022

Lying in state: 10 am - 11:30 am

Service: 12 pm

Repast: 3:15 pm

Colier's McNair's Facebook Posting

On 11/11/1966, my dad, the Reverend Bishop Charles C. McNair, Sr., aka "The Gospel Champ" opened his mouth and called on the name of the LORD for the first time and was filled with God's Holy Spirit at Christ Temple Apostolic Faith Church in Muskegon, MI. On 11/11/2022, my dad opened his mouth and took his last breath. God knows what He's doing and when to do it! Happy spiritual and heavenly birthday dad!

I've been waiting since 11/11/1966, when I gave my life to the LORD,
for Jesus to come and take me on home. The wait is finally over!

Remembering The Reverend Charles McNair by Dick Nystrom

It doesn't seem so long ago when Arbor Covenant invited Vessels of Praise to share their facility and we became two churches under one roof. What a joy it would be in the years to follow to come to know Charles as a dear friend, a person whose life offered a compellingly joyful witness to his faith. Of course, to know Charles was also to know Alberta, a First Lady who also never tired of lifting up praise to Jesus.

Not surprisingly, some of my fondest memories of Charles have to do with music because of his amazing abilities on the piano. In fact, a smile will always come to mind when I recall how the two of us would take a break from our adjacent offices as he sat down at the piano in the sanctuary, and I stood alongside with my harmonica. How much fun that was. And then what a thrill when our neighborhood churches would gather for an Ash Wednesday service and Charles accompanied Alberta in the soulful singing of In the Blood.

Charles was such a delight to be around, always a warm greeting and encouraging words, and so often the sharing of stories over a cup of coffee as we talked about our families and life in our community. And so it was that we'd compare notes about raising kids and discover so many details were so very similar but some so painfully different. But always in the stories Charles told was the underlying story of faith.

There are so many memories of time spent with Charles and Alberta but one experience in particular we all especially enjoyed retelling. It happened on a wintry weekend when we travelled to Lake Geneva to spend a couple of days together at the Bible camp. The lake was frozen solid, covered with smooth black ice but no snow. It was such a beautiful day against a blue sky when I suggested to the group that we drive our car out on the ice. Charles and Alberta were a bit skeptical but off we went until finally we stepped out of the car to stand together on the ice. Over all the years to follow we always so enjoyed remembering the thrill of that day. Pam and I will forever be grateful for our friendship with Charles and Alberta and so now join with the entire community to grieve Charles' passing and Alberta's loss. His was a life well lived as a faithful servant who never tired of sharing in `word and deed` the Good News of the Gospel. Peace to your memory Good Friend.

(Rev. Richard Nystrom was the minister of Arbor Covenant 1992-2003))

A Thought on Hope in Advent

Optimism and hope are radically different attitudes. Optimism is the expectation that things—the weather, human relationship, the economy, the political situation, and so on—will get better. Hope is trust that God will fulfill God's promises to us in a way that leads us to true freedom. The optimist speaks about concrete changes in the future. The person of hope lives in the moment with the knowledge and trust that all of life is in good hands.

– Henri Nouwen

A Personal Reflection on Advent

As I personally reflect on the Hope, Love, Joy and Peace represented by the four Advent candles, I find myself relating them to the long journey that we at Arbor Covenant have embarked on in the last few years. Many of us have faced many fears and a lack of peace and comfort as we tried to discern God's will for us as a congregation. We have grieved for many dear friends who have moved far away, those who have passed on into God's Kingdom and those who no longer find the spiritual fulfillment they need in the direction that Arbor has followed. We have also experienced the joy of building new relationships and thinking in new ways.

The way is not clear yet, but I think we are beginning to get glimpses of what may be the future for Arbor and its partners. I have been greatly encouraged by our combined efforts with Memorial UCC to find ways to collaborate for the benefit of both congregations. In sharing their weekly Sunday service at their site in Fitchburg, we have been blessed to be part of a wonderfully welcoming group of fellow churchgoers who go out of their way to share their resources and activities. This has included active participation on our part in the choir, bell choir, Sunday School, activities like the cookie sale which benefits a special college scholarship, social justice initiatives, potlucks and many other opportunities for the gradual blending of our two congregations. Pastor Peter has actively participated in leading some Sunday morning services and preaching on several occasions.

At our site on McDivitt Road, we are envisioning what a Mission House Concept developed by Arbor and its partners might look like. Organically, it is already functioning with many missions currently jointly using the site. Creek Day School, Good Neighbors Personal Essentials Pantry and Jewish Social Services including their wellness program for Swahili-speaking people and a Grant Project involving UW Hospitals social workers who are working with disadvantaged and homeless mothers of newborns regularly utilize the building and serve the neighborhood. In forging new relationships, the African American and Jewish Friendship group uses the building for dinners and programs. The Arbor Hills Neighborhood Association and local officials hold neighborhood meetings in Arbor's sanctuary. Pastor Peter has maintained and is forming connections with several Madison churches and community agencies who also may be interested in partnering to coordinate other mission initiatives. This is an evolving concept which seems to be an important part of what God may intend for the future vision of Arbor and its partners. The possibilities are endless — our site is sure to also present other surprising opportunities when an affordable housing project joins the mix in future years.

As I reflect on Advent and our Arbor journey over the last few years, to me, they share many similarities:

Advent Hope involves trust and faith in God's promises.

Advent Love is love in action - every time we care, anytime we give. God tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Advent Joy is a good feeling in **our** souls when we see the beauty of Jesus in His Word and in His works.

Advent Peace does not mean for us to just sit back and wait. He calls us to work along with the Spirit to restore God's peace here on Earth.

Blessings,
Jan Gietzel

Update on Affordable Housing with Common Wealth Development

Pastor Peter, Ken Lund, and I had a meeting at Arbor just before Thanksgiving. Our goal was to work out a few details on the Lease that would accompany the Offer to Purchase. When Arbor sells the property, we'll need to lease the property back (at \$1/month) to continue our Mission Activities.

The meeting was positive and hopeful all around. It also gave Marge at Creek an opportunity to meet some of Common Wealth's staff. We also learned that the soil testing results are done, but Common Wealth has to issue the check before the testing results are forwarded.

Once everything is lined up, it will be made available to the Congregation for review, discussion, and a decision on whether to proceed.

Mark Hanson

A Discovery on Arbor's Property: What was the Story?

Dave Mulholland found a neat pile of clothing, boots, and even some car repair parts hidden behind the spruce trees behind the church (if you went out the sanctuary doors, you'd see the pile) while mowing in September. The clothes seemed to be in good condition albeit somewhat wet from sitting out in the elements.

Dave and I made a guess that these items might belong to a person that might be homeless and living in their car. In case that was correct, we left the belongings there but cut down the brush that had grown up under the trees and was hiding the belongings. Our hope was that the person would return for their clothing, boots, etc. After about six weeks of waiting, we gave up and had to dispose of some now sopping clothes. The boots are drying in the garage and will end up at Madison Urban Ministries or equivalent.

This is an immediate reminder of homelessness in Dane County.

Mark Hanson

Nordic Christmas

Sunday, December 11
At 1:30 PM

Capitol Lakes Auditorium
(Open to the Public)



VASA'S Jubileum Lodge invites you to learn why Swedes celebrate an Italian martyr, St. Lucia, on December 13, and about other Scandinavian winter holidays.

Mimmi Fulmer, Professor of Voice and Opera and granddaughter of Finnish and Swedish immigrants, will perform a short medley of Christmas songs, including the traditional St. Lucia.



Thomas A. DuBois, Halls-Bascom Professor of Scandinavian Folklore, Folklore and Religious Studies in the Dept. of German, Nordic and Slavic will speak on Scandinavian Winter Holidays and explain how the Swedes adopted Lucia.

Following the program, Fika (coffee and cookies) will be provided by Jubileum Lodge, the local chapter of the Vasa Order of America, a Swedish-American fraternal order.

Good Neighbors Personal Essentials Pantry

Item of the Month

Kleenex - cube or flat box



Please bring donations to church during the hours we staff the Pantry.
(see calendar)

December Birthdays


December 6 James Woofter
December 10 Ian Mora
December 18 Harriet Anderson
December 18 Ann-Britt Keillor
December 25 Theo Morris
December 28 Annika Keillor

December Anniversaries

December 29 Peter Morris and Tamsin Ford
December 30 Harry and Sue Engstrom

ARBOR COVENANT CHURCH FINANCIAL OVERVIEW				
January 1, 2022 - October 31, 2022				
	Offerings & Cook Reimbursements Received	Actual Expenses	Net Income (Loss)	
	Year-to-Date	Year-to-Date	Year-to-Date	
General Offerings and CO Interest	\$ 39,771.87			
Creek Day School Reimbursement	\$ 21,775.00			
Laundry 14 Utilities	\$ 1,000.00			
TOTAL	\$ 62,546.87	\$ 58,146.92	\$	4,399.95
Special Funds (Non-Budgeted) Received YTD				
	TOTAL			
Discern	\$ 235.00			
Good Neighbors Pantry	\$ 14,483.97			
Levin Camp				
Memorial	\$ 1,050.00			
Women's Ministeries				
World Relief				
Youth Mission				
Other (bank interest)	\$ 0.01			

December 2022 Calendar

				1	2 10:00 Charles McNair visitation 12:00 noon Charles McNair service 10:00 AM-noon Good Neighbors Personal Essentials Pantry	3
4 <i>2nd Sunday in Advent</i> 9:30 AM Worship Memorial UCC	5	6	7 6:30-8:30 PM Mem. UCC Advent Series	8	9 10:00 AM-noon Good Neighbors Personal Essentials Pantry	10 9:00 AM Mem. UCC Craft &Cookie Sale
11 <i>3rd Sunday in Advent</i> 9:30 AM Worship Memorial UCC 1:30 Vasa Celebration (Jubileum Lodge) Capitol Lakes	12 6:45 PM Leadership Team	13	14 6:30-8:30 PM Mem. UCC Advent Series	15 5:30 PM- 7:00 PM Good Neighbors Personal Essentials Pantry	16 10:00 AM-noon Good Neighbors Personal Essentials Pantry	17
18 <i>4th Sunday in Advent</i> 9:30 AM Worship Memorial UCC 9:30 AM Nifty Gifty Workshop	19	20	21 7:00 PM Mem. UCC Interfaith Longest Night Service	22	23 10:00 AM-noon Good Neighbors Personal Essentials Pantry	24 Christmas Eve 5:00 PM Mem. UCC Family Service 7:00 PM Candles, Communion and Carols
25 Christmas Day 9:30 AM Memorial UCC Hot Chocolate & Carols	26	27	28	29	30 10:00 AM-noon Good Neighbors PersonalEssentials Pantry	31 New Year's Eve