



Volume 58, Number 12

December, 2009

United Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

Sunday Schedule

Sunday School 9:15 AM
Youth S.S. (4th-8th) 9:15 AM
Worship 10:30 AM

Saturday Schedule

Worship 6:00 PM

Elder-on-Call December 2009

Mary-Ann Edens

Pastor

Rev. Natalie Chamberlain
Music Minister, Mona White

Ministry Council

Eddie Lou Kester, Chair
Gary Pigg, Vice-Chair
Mona White, Secretary
Tina McCallister-Boothe,
Christian Ed
Mary Ann Edens, Missions
Tina McCallister-Booth,
Missions
Mike Edens, Bldgs & Grounds
Gloria Hallier, Evangelism
Jan Moffett, Congregat'l Life
Pam Pigg, Worship
Jane Sumpter, Fin. Resources
Hugh Moffett, Elders

Elders

Natalie Hodgson, Chair
Mary Ann Edens
Mike Edens
Sharon Hughes
Hugh Moffett
Pam Pigg
Jane Sumpter

Elders Emeritus

Pat Bartholomew
Cleo Hastings
Randy Jordahl

Dear Church Family,

Grace and peace to you in this holy season of Advent.

Believe it or not, it is the advent season again. Each year it seems to come sooner than it did the year before. If you have young children in your life, you are reminded often of how long it is before Christmas. The excitement and expectation are almost more than the young children can bear. Now that we have so many children and youth in church, Advent becomes all the more exciting for us.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all be wide-eyed and expectant as we wait for Christmas. The grown-up world weighs heavily on many of us. The expectations of the children in our lives, the expectations of family and friends, and our own expectations of our role in the festivities make us crazy. We have to work to afford the celebration. There is shopping to do and gifts to wrap. Baking needs to be done and cards need to be written. If you happen to be the one in your household who is responsible for such things, the house needs to be cleaned, meals planned, party invitations sent and accepted. Life during Advent can be so busy we forget what it is all about.

Advent is meant to be a time of waiting and preparation. The Christ child is coming. If the name Christian means anything to us, then we should be awed by the possibilities of what that coming means in our lives. The things we do for Advent and Christmas are not bad, but we need to be sure that we do them with Christ in mind. A clean house isn't much good if it is too clean to welcome a child born in a manger. All the gifts in the world mean nothing if the love of Christ gets lost in the bustle of buying and wrapping.

This year, as you make plans for activities and events, make sure you have left room for the quiet moments. As it has always been, it continues to be; it is in the quiet moments that the still small voice of God breaks into our hectic lives and fills us with awe and wonder and expectation. Don't let doing be more important than being.

I am offering a Wednesday night study, during Advent (December 2, 9, 16, and 23), that may offer you some of that time for quiet reflection. The study will be held in the sanctuary from 6:00 to 7:00 pm, the hour before choir. We will be looking at "The Advent of God's Grace: Grace, Mercy and Forgiveness in Christ." We will use the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love to explore grace and Christ's place in it. We will open with a short time of worship. I hope you can come.

May the wonder and expectation of Christmas cause you childlike joy this season. May your joy be complete in Christ.

Pastor Natalie





A Note from the Pastor:

Special Services for Advent

Advent and Christmas are special and joyful times of the year. They can also be stressful times that remind us that all is not as it should be or as we hope it will be. This year, our regular and special worship services will focus on the hope that is ours in Christ.

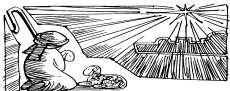
The sanctuary will be transformed into a space that takes us back to the times of Jesus' birth. Our sanctuary will be a place of peace and quiet for those seeking a quiet time with the Lord. We will be asking the congregation to do their visiting outside the sanctuary in order to facilitate this peaceful atmosphere.

The worship services will be organized differently during this season. There will be more participation from the youth and children. There will be more singing than usual. We will spend Advent focusing on the different people who are part of the coming of Christ.

We have two special services planned for Christmas. Our annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will feature special music and communion, as well as an outdoor candle lighting benediction. The service will be followed by what has become our traditional Christmas Eve soup supper. All are welcome to stay to enjoy fellowship after worship.

On Christmas morning, we will have a simple worship time to celebrate Christmas. We will sing and share communion. For many, Christmas is only Christmas when it includes worship.

Come to as many services as you can, and invite friends and family to celebrate with you.



Advent Devotionals

Daily devotional materials for the Advent season (beginning November 29) are available on the table in the back of the sanctuary.

Invitations Available

There are invitations to Advent and Christmas events. These are on the back table, along with envelopes. Use them to invite friends and family to these special events.

December Bible Study:

The Advent of God's Grace

This study will be both devotional and study, intended to help prepare our hearts for the coming of the Christ Child. We will explore the ideas of grace, mercy and forgiveness as found in the Old and New Testaments and how these ideas find fulfillment in Jesus.

Pastor Natalie will lead the study. We will meet on four consecutive Wednesdays, starting December 2. We will meet in the sanctuary at 6:00 pm, and be done in time for choir practice to start.

There is a sign-up sheet on the turnaround in the sanctuary, or you can call the office and let us know you plan to attend. It is important to have an idea of attendance so that materials can be provided.

New Bible Study in January 2010:

Faith and Society

The idea for this study came out of the surveys many of the congregation completed in May/June of this year. We will explore some of the practical implications of Christian faith; how do we live what we say we believe?

Pastor Natalie will be offering this class on four consecutive Thursday nights, starting January 7. We will meet from 6-7 pm at the church.

The class will meet only if there are 5 or more people signed up and who attend the first class.

Please call Pastor Natalie if you are interested. There will be a sign-up sheet on the turnaround in December.

Save the Dates!

Taize Prayer Weekend

January 29-30, 2010
at University Presbyterian Church

ACTS Winter Course

January 22-24, 2010
at PSR

Interfaith Scholar Weekend

February 19-21, 2010

MLK Regional Celebration

January 10, 2010

South San Joaquin Area Geographical Meeting

Sunday, February 21, 2010
at Hanford

Christian Education

Women's Winter Retreat

Heartbeat of God: Making Whole Body and Soul

The Women's Winter Retreat, held jointly with UCC sisters, is coming up! January 29-31 women will gather at the Mercy Center in Burlingame.

Rooms at Mercy Center are limited, so get your registration in as early as possible. ALL registrations are due by December 21.

See Natalie Hodgson for details.



CWF/ Women's Ministries

The Women's Christmas Luncheon and Party will be held December 5 at noon at the church as a finger food potluck. There will be an inexpensive gift exchange. This year's secret sisters will be revealed, and next year's selected. All women are encouraged to come and share in the fun and fellowship.

The CWF group's Christmas meeting will be Tuesday, December 8, at 1:30 pm, at the home of Dorothy Shuck, 3835 E. Ferrin. All women Welcome.

Natalie Hodgson & Pat Bartholomew, CWF

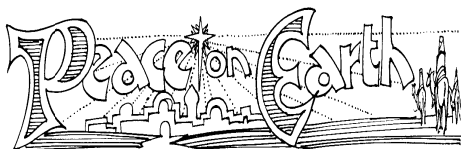


Men's Fellowship & Prayer Breakfast

Come to the Men's Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, December 5, for breakfast and fellowship, followed by helping with some small chores around the church. This invitation is for the young, as well the other than young men of the church. Breakfast is served at 8:00 am.

All men and boys are invited to attend. If you need a ride, please contact Gary at 438-7040, or garypigg@yahoo.com, or one of the other men from the fellowship group.

Gary Pigg, Men's Fellowship



Children's Church

What a Blessing! We have an active program called Children's Church. It is for the children that are now old enough to transition out of the nursery (5-7 years).

We are asking parents/guardians to bring this age child into the worship service. They will be dismissed for Children's Church after children's time. At that time they will be going to the Sunday School room, where they will be getting an age-appropriate lesson. They will then be coming back to the Sanctuary before offering time to complete the day's service. On the Last Sunday of the month they will be joining us for the full service.

The children in this group are now old enough to be a part of the learning and worship life of the church. We look forward to seeing them grow in faith as they learn more about the Jesus they already love.

If you have questions or concerns, contact Tina McCallister-Boothe or Pastor Natalie Chamberlain. We will work with you to be sure this program nurtures the spiritual life of your child.

Youth News



Youth Sunday School

(Grades 4 - 12) continues, every Sunday, at 9:15 a.m. We have been studying Bible basics. During Advent we will study the stories of the birth of Jesus.

The youth are being trained as acolytes and are lighting the candles before worship on Sunday mornings.

There are only six God's Creation Calendars left. They are being sold to support youth activities. Don't miss out. See Larry after Sunday services.



Joys & Concerns

Sally Salt: Health concerns.

John & Misty Newell: For their children.

Myrna Vogel: Health issues.

Breeanne Morris: Pray for healing.

Melba Jordahl: Pray for continued strength.

Yvonne Hix: Pray to regain strength.

Cleo Hastings: Continued prayers for good health.

Hazel Calderwood: Ongoing health issues.

Laurene Sandell: Ongoing health concerns.

Mona & Marshall White & Isaiah:

Adjustment to new living situation.



Financial Update
October 31, 2009

General Funds	\$291,219
Designated Other	3,526
Memorial & Honor Funds	6,117
Designated Outreach Funds	<u>2,350</u>
Total Checking & Savings	\$303,212

Monthly Offerings (includes 12% for Missions)

Total October 2009	\$ 6,264
Total October 2008	<u>6,323</u>
Below Prior Year	(\$ 59)

Year-to-Date Offerings (includes 12% for Missions)

To October 31, 2009	\$ 63,887
To October 31, 2008	<u>69,760</u>
Below Prior Year	(\$ 5,873)

Income & Expense Jan .1-Oct. 31, 2009

Receipts	\$ 73,301
Expenses 10/31/09	<u>112,807</u>
	(\$ 39,506)

Honored Member

Jerry Garcia was born on May 28, 1970, in Fresno, California. He has one sister and two brothers. He graduated from Roosevelt High School and is currently attending Fresno City College where he is studying Criminology. He is employed at Kentucky Fried Chicken.

His hobbies are reading the Bible, watching TV movies and enjoying people and music.

Jerry was raised in the Catholic faith and attended St. John's Cathedral. He has visited several churches and since he passes by here several times a week, he decided to visit. He likes our enthusiasm and friendliness. He joined our congregation and was baptized recently.

Please give a warm welcome to Jerry.

Submitted by Dorothy Shuck



Tuesday, November 10, 2009

The Ministry Council did not meet in November.

Eddie Lou Kester, Ministry Council Chair



**United Christian Church Christmas
Post Office Christmas Postage
Donation**

This worked well last year so we will try it again this year! If you would like to participate, we are going to have a Community Christmas Card Posting Board.

Instead of mailing a card to everyone in the congregation - bring one card signed by your family and post it on the turn-around. Then donate the money you save in postage and card supplies; we will give that money to the Love Inc. Food Bank. There will be a jar on the turn-around for you to put your donations into.

If you would still like to send out cards please do! Remember our shut-ins and singles. There will be bins on the turn around for you to use to deliver cards to members of the UCC congregation.

***Don't forget to
check for MAIL each week!!***

Have a Merry Christmas!
Pastor Natalie

Missions



Food Pantry

Bring food on Sunday,
December 6. Make checks to to
church, marked "for food pantry".

2009 Christmas Special Offering



This offering will be received in most congregations on December 13 and 20, 2009.

The Gospel of Luke tells of the night that the shepherds' tedious routine was interrupted by an angelic announcement. There they were doing their hard, often boring, difficult work not expecting anything new or different or exciting. Suddenly everything changed as they heard the wonderful news of God's gift to the world in a newborn child. In response, they hurried to Bethlehem to discover for themselves what God had done.

Sometimes the mission and ministry of our local congregations seems like the work of the shepherds-hard, boring, exhausting...and even sometimes hopeless. How exciting when God is revealed to us in new ways that take our breath away and the work we do for God suddenly has new hope and new vision.

Across the Regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) there are exciting stories of new congregations being established, existing congregations being renewed and transformed, and leaders equipped for ministry. Great things are taking place as we join God in God's mission for the sake of the world. In this holy season let us reach out to those broken lives that feel no joy. Let us be a beacon of light that will lead them to God's gift of new life.

With your Christmas Offering, you support your Region's ministry to enlist Disciples as members of a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

Star Tree 2009



We will be doing our Star Tree again this year but you will find snowflakes rather than stars on the tree. This is our way of providing Christmas gifts and food for the church family and neighbors who might otherwise go without this season. With the economic difficulties so many in our community are facing this year, we will have many needs to fill.

When the sanctuary is decorated for Advent on November 28, the snowflake tags will be placed on the sanctuary Christmas tree. Please, take a tag and sign for it on the list by the tree. This list is the pastor's way of being sure all the needs are filled.

Tags will have information about gifts that are needed/wanted. There will be tags for children with age and clothing sizes; there will be tags for adults with gift suggestions; there may be tags for children's toys (Pastor Natalie still isn't sure if she will have toys available through other sources). Gifts should be about \$20.

When you have purchased your gift, wrap it and put the tag on the gift. Pastor Natalie and her elves will put the final tag on the gift. Remember to mark the list so we will know the gift is back. Gifts are due back at the church no later than Sunday, December 20.

There may be a need for food contributions. The community resources and special gifts for food that the pastor received last year may not be available this year. The church will be kept informed of needs.

God bless you as you give your gift to Christ in this special way.

Questions? Ask Pastor Natalie, 227-2959.



Dear Church Family,

On behalf of the Missions Committee, I would like to thank everyone who pitched in and helped on the November 15 potluck. As always, many helping hands made this a successful event!

Missions Committee



December 2009 Calendar

1	6:30 pm	Elders' Meeting at Church
2	6:00 pm 7:00 pm	Bible Study in Sanctuary (#1) Choir practice
3		<i>Pastor's day off</i>
4		Council reports due <i>Pastor's day off</i>
5	8:00 am Noon 6:00 pm	Men's Prayer Breakfast Women's Lunch & Christmas Party Worship
6	9:15 am 10:30 am	2nd Sunday of Advent Sunday School Worship
7	7:15 pm	Bible Study at Hodgsons'
8	6:30 pm	Council Mtg. at church
9	6:00 pm 7:00 pm	Bible Study in Sanctuary (#2) Choir practice
10		<i>Pastor's day off</i>
11		<i>Pastor's day off</i>
12	6:00 pm	Worship
13	9:15 am 10:30 am	3rd Sunday of Advent Sunday School Worship & special offering
14	7:15 pm	Bible Study at Hodgsons'
15	6:00 to 9:00 pm	Open House at Halliers'
16	6:00 pm 7:00 pm	Bible Study in Sanctuary (#3) Choir practice
17		<i>Pastor's day off</i>
18		Newsletter articles due <i>Pastor's day off</i>
19	6:00 pm	Worship
20	9:15 am 10:30 am	Christmas Sunday Sunday School Christmas scripture & carols Worship & special offering
21	7:15 pm	Bible Study at Hodgsons'
22	6:30 pm	Worship Committee Mtg.
23	6:00 pm	Bible Study in Sanctuary (#4) NO Choir practice
24	6:00 pm	Christmas Eve Church Office closed <i>Pastor's day off</i> Christmas Eve Candlelight with Communion & Soup Supper
25	9:00 am	Christmas Day Worship Church Office closed <i>Pastor's day off</i>
26		NO Saturday Worship
27	9:15 am	Sunday School

	10:30 am	Worship
28		NO Bible Study
29	6:30 pm	Pastor Parish Mtg.
30		NO choir practice
31		<i>Pastor's day off</i>
Jan 1		Church Office closed Happy New Year!

*Pastor Natalie will be on vacation
December 28, 29, 30*



**December Birthdays
& Anniversaries**

- 1 Larry DeBenedetti
- 3 Laura Scrivner*
- 3 Marilyn Prowell* (ordination)
- 7 Tammy Michaud-Potter
- 8 Debbie Flores*
- 12 Greg Dowdy*
- 15 Lilly Murray
- 17 Isaac James
- 18 Javier Solis*
- 19 Sharon Evans*
- 23 Barrett & Eleanor Whiteley (A)
- 23 Jennifer & Victor Verduzco (A)
- 30 Brittany Moore
- 31 Allen* & Marilyn* Prowell (A)

Address/Phone Changes

Beckysue Duran
New business phone number: (209) 408-6951
New email: beckysueduran@yahoo.com

Robert Goodson
Children: Sandy and Shawn
1215 W. Fountain Way, Fresno, CA 93705
robertgoodson@yahoo.com

Welcome New Members:

**Jay Goodson
Robert Goodson**

Please extend a warm welcome to them!