



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 64 Number 12

December 2020

Sunday School at 9:30 A.M. (when school is in session)
 Sunday Worship at 10:45 A.M. 700 Poyntz Avenue
 Second Helping Dinner at 6:00 P.M. Manhattan, Kansas 66502
 Thursday Evening Prayers at 7:00 P.M. telephone 785-537-7006
www.uccmanhattan.org

“Star of Wonder, Star of Night”

Inside this newsletter you’ll find an envelope with “star words” for you and your family. The use of star words, also called “star gifts,” is a prayer practice connected to Epiphany and the new year that has been growing in popularity in Protestant churches for nearly a decade now. The idea is that a list of intention words, or guiding words, are written or printed on paper stars. These paper stars are then distributed at random. Individuals are often encouraged to place their star word somewhere they will see it regularly throughout the year to allow consistent reflection on how God has moved through, around, or in connection to that word.

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Our friends at A Sanctified Art remind us there are several theological statements being made in this tradition:

1. The Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year—to move closer to Jesus.
2. We trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words are one such lens that might provide us a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight.
3. We trust that it is often easy to miss God in our daily midst. Having an intention word to consider both in present days, as well as to reflect on at the end of the year, allows for us to see God in ways we may not have seen God before. This is the greatest gift.
4. We know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God as opposed to silence or contemplation. We believe that star words invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.
5. By receiving a star word chosen at random, we practice the spiritual task of receiving. It is not we who are in control in this moment. Instead, we trust that God is present, and we let go of our desire to cultivate or control.

How can you use your star word this Advent?

You might display it in your home. Use a paperclip to add it to ribbon, a tassel, or tinsel—string this on your Christmas tree, into a wreath, or along your mantle. Or, bend open a paper clip, and use it to punch a hole in your star word to transform it into a simple Christmas tree ornament and add it to your tree. Get creative—seek beautiful ways to add your star words to spaces around your home so that you will continue to see them and think about them throughout the Advent season.

Prompts for using the star words for prayer:

A. Look up the definition of your word, even if it is a word you know well. You may even look into the etymology of the word and how its meaning has changed throughout history. If you drew a

non-English word, do as much research as you can into the meaning of the word in its original culture.

B. What does this word remind you of? Does it recall any memories or experiences? How might God be speaking to you through this word?

C. See if you can find your word—or a synonym—in the Bible. What scripture passages can you find? How is the word used in these passages? Are there other scripture passages that remind you of your word?

D. Write or speak aloud a prayer using your word. (This is a fun challenge for children using the star words.)

Source for text and star words images: A Sanctified Art

Finally, be sure to bring your star word to worship on January 3rd. We will gather via Zoom at 10:45 a.m. for worship (NOT on our regular Facebook Live platform). More details to come!

Pastor Caela

Connecting with Pastor Caela

Pastor Caela IS available to meet with you outdoors, masked, and socially distanced. She is also available on the phone or Zoom, of course. Caela keeps her own calendar, so if you'd like to talk the simplest thing is to e-mail, call, or text to set up a time. Mondays through Wednesdays are typically best for routine meetings, as Thursdays are used for sermon and worship preparation and Friday-Saturday are her days off. Caela tries to honor work-life balance by responding to non-urgent text and voicemail messages only during regular work hours. Please note that if you ever have an emergency between the hours of 10pm-7am you will need to CALL Pastor Caela, not rely on text messages, as she does not receive them overnight.



Sharing and Caring

Prayers and Concerns

- For more information, please contact the church office.

A Special Birthday!

Margery Bayer will be turning 96 on January 7th. We invite you to shower Margery with cards and notes in the mail.

Annual Reports due Friday, January 8

Please have your annual reports to the office as early as possible. You are encouraged to turn in your report by Dec. 31 if at all possible. All reports should be received by **Friday, January 8, 2021** in order to be included in the Annual Report Book.

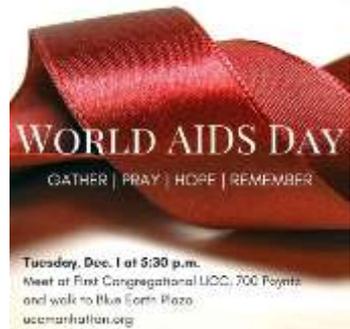
COVID-Related Updates on our Website

As our COVID Task Force and Cabinet approve policies related to the use of our building and gatherings, they are being shared on our website. Please visit uccmanhattan.org/covid at any time to view the policies we've approved. If you have questions, please reach out to any member of the COVID Task Force: Sue Gerth, Jeff Watson, or Kerri Keller.

World AIDS Day, Dec. 1 at 5:30 p.m.

We are honored to host Manhattan's service for World AIDS Day again this year. This is a great opportunity to slow down, remember those we love and light a candle in the darkness for HOPE.

We will meet outside First Congregational UCC at 700 Poyntz and walk to Blue Earth Plaza. We will share in a candle-lighting ceremony together and enjoy conversation and a reflection by Kevin Stilley.



COVID Precautions:

- Participants must wear masks and maintain more than six feet distance from those they do not live with
- The entire event will take place outdoors
- Do not attend if you or anyone you live with have any symptoms of COVID, have been exposed to COVID, are awaiting test results, or are otherwise being quarantined by local health officials.

First Congregational on YouTube

We are now posting our weekly worship videos to our YouTube channel to make them easier for people to find. We would like to get a "custom URL" for our YouTube page but need 100+ subscribers to be eligible. Would you pop by our YouTube channel and subscribe to help us out? Thanks! Visit uccmanhattan.org/youtube to find the link to our channel and subscribe.

Communion Options for Dec. 6th

Because of the rise in COVID cases, there will be no Communion on the Lawn; however, there are still two options for Communion on December 6th:

1. **Communion at Home:** we will offer Communion during our Sunday morning online worship service and you can bring your own elements to eat and drink.
2. **Drive Through Communion from Noon-1:00 p.m.:** drive through the alley behind the church building to receive prepackaged Communion elements (no sign up needed)

We invite you to Fill the Breadbasket by dropping off donations for the Second Helping when you arrive for Drive Through Communion.

Save the Date
Annual Congregational Meeting
January 24th at 11:45 a.m. via Zoom

Virtual Offering Plate

While we may not be together on Sunday, the work and mission of First Congregational UCC continues. Please continue to financially support the church as we offer sanctuary and support to each other and the wider community.

Options for giving:

- 1) Mail your contribution to 700 Poyntz Ave., Manhattan, KS 66502.
- 2) Donate online via PayPal (no login required). Go to uccmanhattan.org and scroll down to the DONATE button.
- 3) Setting up a recurring online gift is a convenient way to provide consistent financial support to the church. Your bank may be able to do this for you OR you may contact the church office for a copy of our authorization form and we can set it up for you.

Thank you for your continued support and please contact the office if you have questions.

The Gift of a Warm Meal

Looking for something special to give a loved one for Christmas? A gift to Second Helping in the name of your loved one will provide hot meals for members of the Manhattan community who may be experiencing hardship and hunger. Our meals cost about \$2.50 per person per night; and that includes a hot meal (to go, at this time), a bottle of water, and a lunch sack that also contains breakfast items.

You will receive a special card recognizing the gift that you can send to your loved one. A gift of \$25 will provide meals for 10 people for one day (3 meals). Fifty dollars will feed 20 people for one day. And you can feed 40 people for a day with a \$100 donation.

For more information, check out the church website or email office@uccmanhattan.org.

P.S. You could also tell others this is a gift you would like, if you happen to be asked.

Your Christmas Photos Needed

Dear Church Family, We know that soon you'll be putting up your Christmas decorations for the coming season. For some of us, we're a little afraid that we are putting up the tree and hanging the stockings but no one will see them. We want to fix that. Send pictures of your tree, stockings, holiday décor and nativity scenes to be used in our worship services and on social media.

Please upload them at uccmanhattan.org/upload-portal by December 4 (sooner if you can).



uccmanhattan.org/upload-portal

Special Worship Services for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany

Sunday, Dec. 13 - Christmas Pageant at 10:45 a.m. on Facebook Live

Sunday, Dec. 20 - Lessons & Carols at 10:45 a.m. on Facebook Live

Thursday, Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve Worship at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom
(Meeting ID #820 6285 2466, passcode 66502)

Sunday, Jan. 3 - Epiphany Worship at 10:45 a.m. on Zoom (Meeting ID #899 1685 3476, passcode 66502)

***To access the Zoom worship services by telephone, please dial 1-669-900-6833 then enter the meeting ID and passcode when prompted. Please note that long-distance charges may apply



Poinsettia Donations

The Advent season brings the opportunity for you to provide poinsettias in honor of someone important to you as the church is decorated for Advent and Christmas. The cost to donate poinsettias is \$10.00 per plant and we will share the dedications in worship on December 13 and 20.

The Deacons will be providing a date for you to pick up your poinsettias before Christmas so you can enjoy a bit of First Congregational in your own home this year. Or perhaps you'll want to pick up your poinsettias and share them in a porch drop with a friend!

Order your poinsettia now by calling the church at (785) 537-7006 or visiting uccmanhattan.org/christmas to place your order.

Interactive Prayer Station at 700 Poyntz

We have a tradition on Christmas Eve of writing down our prayers on small slips of paper and placing them in the manger in our Sanctuary. This year we've moved the nativity scene outdoors and are inviting anyone in the community to join us throughout December. Please stop by the church lawn anytime before Christmas to leave your prayer. You can come as many times as you'd like! There is a plastic box with slips of paper, writing utensils, and a small stapler. After you write your prayer, link it to the other prayers and staple it to create a prayer chain. Together, our prayers will decorate the creche as we await Christ's arrival. A big thank you to Bert Allen for creating our gorgeous prayer station!



Advent Devotionals Available Now

Free Advent Devotionals are available for you. These gorgeous, interactive devotionals from A Sanctified Art are guaranteed to enhance your Advent season. Pick one up any time in the plastic box located just outside the double doors into our office area near the bike rack at 700

Poyntz or call the church office if you need one mailed to you.

Congratulations 2020 December Graduate



Amanda Tross, Masters in Business Administration. from Kansas State University.

Did we miss your graduate? Please contact the church office to announce the information in the next newsletter.

Weekly Connection Points

Practice Physical Distancing....not Social or Spiritual Distancing. Join us online! If you have trouble accessing any of these resources, please contact the church office so we can assist.

Sundays: Adult Sunday School via Zoom at 9:30 a.m. | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link.

Worship at 10:45 a.m. via Facebook Live or call 1-669-900-6833 (toll call) and dial meeting ID 921-954-012# at the prompt for audio only. Meeting password is 66502. To find us on Facebook: go to our Facebook Page at 10:45 a.m. and scroll down until you see the most recent post. Look for the red box that says "Live" or "Premiere." The worship service is also posted to the church's YouTube account each Sunday morning. Visit uccmanhattan.org/youtube for the link.

Fellowship Hour immediately following worship via Zoom | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link

Mondays: "Monday School" for kids aged 3 through 6th grade at 6:00 p.m. Contact Brandy@uccmanhattan.org for the link.

Tuesdays: Tuesday Book Group from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. via Zoom | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link

Thursdays: Prayers & Fellowship at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom | visit uccmanhattan.org/online for the Zoom link

Kids are also meeting (but not weekly). Contact Brandy@uccmanhattan.org (age 3 through 6th grade) or Brittani@uccmanhattan.org (6th-12th grades) for more info.

WEEKLY
CONNECTION
POINTS

Sundays: Adult Sunday School,
Worship & Fellowship Hour

Mondays: "Monday School" for Kids via Zoom

Tuesdays: Bible Book Club via Zoom

Thursdays: Prayers & Fellowship via Zoom

UCCMANHATTAN.ORG / ONLINE

Christian Education

Please contact Brandy McDonald (brandy@uccmanhattan.org) or Brittani Frost-Shank (brittani@uccmanhattan.org) for more information about options for children and youth.

Advent Adult Sunday School Class

9:30 a.m. via Zoom (link available at uccmanhattan.org/online)

Nov. 29 - Dec. 20: Advent Class on *Low: An Honest Advent Devotional* by John Pavlovitz via Zoom
Led by Sue Zschoche

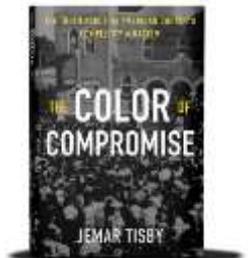
Beginning on November 29, Adult Sunday School will discuss John Pavlovitz's book of daily Advent devotions: *Low: An Honest Advent Devotional*. *Low* is a wonderful reminder that Jesus was not born into the bright lights and sentimental glitz of modern Christmas seasons. Rather, Jesus began his life in the "low" place of the stable, and spent his life reaching out to those in low places, whether that low place was poverty, sickness, or despair. Pavlovitz reminds us that the message of Jesus is that God can be counted upon to be with us in our own low places, places where we are afraid, depressed, uncertain. Surely, Advent 2020 counts as one of those low places, but spoiler alert!: those low places are also where we can find the Kingdom of God.

Led by Pastor Sue, we will meet on the Sundays of Advent to discuss the brief devotionals that we have read that week. *Low* is available at Amazon in paperback or Kindle form for about \$6. If you would like the church to order a book for you, please **contact Pastor Sue**. She will arrange book deliveries so please also send her your address.

Midweek Bible Book Study

Tuesdays from 11:30am-1pm via Zoom
The Color of Compromise by Jemar Tisby
Led by Sue Zschoche

On September 22 we began reading *The Color of Compromise* by Jemar Tisby. From the publisher: "The Color of Compromise takes readers on a historical



journey: from America's early colonial days through slavery and the Civil War, covering the tragedy of Jim Crow laws and the victories of the Civil Rights era, to today's Black Lives Matter movement. Author Jemar Tisby reveals the obvious—and the far more subtle—ways the American church has compromised what the Bible teaches about human dignity and equality."

Contact Pastor Sue with any questions at sue@uccmanhattan.org.

Sacred Music on Demand

Looking for some sacred music to get you through your day? We have a page on our website that features a selection of offerings from recent worship services. It also has a link to our YouTube channel where you'll find more music: www.uccmanhattan.org/music.html



Mission Statement

The Mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ is

- To love and accept others unconditionally as God loves and accepts us, and by example, to encourage others to do the same.
- To challenge ourselves to grow spiritually through worship, education, nurture, reflection, discussion, fellowship, and outreach.
- To minister to others locally, nationally, and globally with the same fervor as we minister to ourselves, through the sharing of our talents, gifts, and resources.

We hold ourselves accountable before God for this mission.

Cobb Corner — Going Green

“If God can work through me, he can work th

“Diseases can be our spiritual flat tires – disruptions in our lives that seem to be disasters at the time but end by redirecting our lives in a meaningful way.” – Bernie Siegal, *Winning Words*, compiled by Allen Klein, 2002

Clearly this will be a difficult holiday season, but to the extent we can be a blessing to others in this crisis we will be living closer to the spirit of Christmas than usual. We must remember that Christmas is a celebration of Jesus’ birthday not ours. It is an important time to help out food banks, to fill the blessing box and to contribute what we can to well-run charities at home and abroad. No need to shop, wrap, or ship packages.

We can make IOU cards good for shoveling snow, grocery shopping, pet care, etc. As for celebrating nature, we can leave our yards a little messy for insects and small animals as the *Kansas City Star* suggested November 15th. Don’t you love advice like this!

If we are getting groceries we can pick up birdseed and suet. LED bulbs make thrifty stocking stuffers, thereby helping the planet as well! Also brightening the holidays are plants and flowers which can be ordered for local delivery or across the country. Splendid poinsettias can also be ordered from our church to beautify the sanctuary and then our homes for months to come.

This dangerous year also offers a timely opportunity to reduce our “stuff” by finding new homes for toys, craft supplies, puzzles, games, bikes, umbrellas, cooking gadgets, etc. New gifts are not as important as those that are useful and safe. Books, old or new, are always great gifts. For children there are several excellent “green” selections: *The 2021 National Geographic Kids Infopedia* (ages 5-9). *Touch the Earth*, by Julian Lennon (ages 3-6) and Rachel Carson, and *Her Book that Changed the World*, by Laurie Lawlor (ages 7-10).

Adopting or fostering a pet or two is also a wonderful way to share love in the time of Covid and beyond. The Riley County Humane Society has issued a special appeal for fosters! It will pay for all food and any medical expenses. You also have the option of doing this for as long or short a period as you wish. You may also decide to be a “foster fail” and adopt your new buddies.

Finally, the emphasis this season is too much on what we can’t do. We can get out in nature. The zoo is open. Music and church are available by Zoom. Discover the joy of a different but still holy season!

Merry Christmas ! – *Linda Richter*

Share ideas for future Cobb columns with Linda Richter

Building Updates

Our staff members continue to work from home, but the office phone is being rerouted during office hours so please use the church phone number for questions (785-537-7006). U.S. Mail is being picked up several times a week, so you can send correspondence to 700 Poyntz Avenue, Manhattan KS 66502. Please ensure that you write a return name and address on any correspondence you send. We do not open mail that is missing a return address and we want to make sure your letter reaches its intended recipient.

The only things happening in the building right now are Second Helping preparations and the 12-step recovery groups that meet in our building are meeting again in person with safety precautions. We also have two church leaders who walk through the building each week to make sure everything is in order. As the COVID task force continues to make decisions about reopening our building we will keep everyone informed using the church e-mail list.

RIP Medical Debt

Wonderful news! You may remember that, earlier this year, our congregation partnered with the KO Conference to raise about \$40,000 to help end medical debt for our neighbors. We recently learned that our funds were able to abolish OVER FIVE MILLION DOLLARS of debt for hundreds of people living in Kansas and Oklahoma. Grateful to work with RIP Medical Debt and the wider UCC to #BeTheChurch!

Community News

9th Annual Manhattan Community Christmas Dinner

A Christmas gift for you, the tradition continues!

Christmas Day, December 25, 2020 11 a.m.- 2 p.m.

Drive through to pick up your FREE holiday meal
at St. Thomas More Church

2900 Kimball Avenue

All are Welcome!



The Second Helping

Our Second Helping ministry continues to be a wonderful way in which our church extends its mission to the community of Manhattan. We regularly serve 60-70 people each week. Many of you have helped with this mission in a variety of ways, and that is much appreciated!



New Volunteers Needed

I am seeking to find volunteers for the Sunday evening 2nd Helping dinners. Traditionally, many of our volunteers are more mature congregants or college students from K-State. Given the state of the University and the high-risk factors associated with the Coronavirus, we are finding ourselves short on volunteers, therefore I am reaching out to ask each of you to consider your willingness to volunteer at 2nd Helping.

Currently, the meals are prepared in the church, but are distributed outside of the church in to-go containers to help minimize the risk to our outside volunteers and neighbors. There are also a number of other protocols being put into place for the purpose of safeguarding all involved with 2nd Helping.

Further, while we value anyone who is willing to volunteer, for the safety of all we ask you not to volunteer if you are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID meet any of the quarantine criteria below. We also strongly recommend that those in the high-risk category not volunteer as well.

If you are unable to volunteer at Second Helping, we still welcome your support. Monetary donations can be made via PayPal on the website or mailed to the church (First Congregational UCC, 700 Poyntz Ave., Manhattan, KS 66502). Thank you for your support of this important ministry,

Di Hinrichs-Toburen, Ph.D.
Second Helping Volunteer Coordinator
diane.hinrichs@pawnee.org

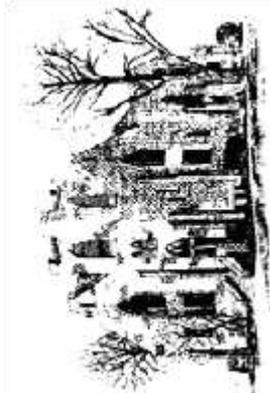
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Manhattan, KS 66502
(785) 537-7006
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>December</h1>		1 11:30 Book Study 5:30 World AIDS Day Service 	2 5:15 Deacons 7:00 AA Meeting	3 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship	4	5
6 Advent 2 9:30 Adult Sunday School 10:45 Worship and Communion online & on the grass 6:00 Second Helping	7 6:00 Children's "Monday" School 7:30 NA mtg	8 11:30 Book Study	9 5:30 Mission, CE 6:30 Justice & Witness 7:00 Facilities 7:00 AA Meeting	10 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship	11	12
13 Advent 3 9:30 Adult Sunday School 10:45 Worship online <i>Christmas Pageant</i> 6:00 Second Helping	14 6:00 Children's "Monday" School 7:30 NA mtg	15 11:30 Book Study	16 7:00 Cabinet mtg 7:00 AA Meeting	17 7:00 Prayers & Fellowship	18	19
20 Advent 4 9:30 Adult Sunday School 10:45 Worship online <i>Lessons & Carols</i> 6:00 Second Helping	21 6:00 Children's "Monday" School 7:30 NA mtg	22 11:30 Book Study	23 7:00 AA Meeting	24 Christmas Eve 7:00 Online worship	25 Christmas Day	26 5:00 Newsletter Deadline
27 10:45 Worship online 6:00 Second Helping	28 7:30 NA mtg	29	30 7:00 AA Meeting	31		