



December 2020 Newsletter

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I Believe...



...Even When

November 29 – Advent 1

*I Believe in the Sun: Hope for Tomorrow
Hanging of the Greens
Isaiah 64:1-9*

December 6 – Advent 2

*I Believe in Love: Daring Right Relationship
Isaiah 40:1-11*

December 13 – Advent 3

*I Believe in God: Ode to Joy
Isaiah 61:1-11, Luke 1:47-55*

December 20 – Advent 4

*I Believe in the Light: Illuminating Peace
Luke 1:26-38*

December 24 – Christmas Eve

*We Believe, Even Now
Luke 2:1-20*

December 27 – Christmas 1

*What Comes After Silent Night
Worship pieces provided by Regional Staff*

Sunday Worship Online

Worship services will continue to be live streamed on

Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. You can either use the Facebook Link or the YouTube Link to see the live feed, or even worship a little later if you need to. Use the buttons below to choose which link fits your needs best.

[Facebook Link](#)

[YouTube Link](#)

[December 2020 Calendar Link](#)

[Google Calendar](#)

Blue



Christmas Service on Zoom

The past few years Pastors Alison and Owen have hosted a Blue Christmas service at the church. While many meet this time of year with joy and excitement, the cries of "Merry Christmas" contrast with the feelings of some at this time of year.

For those suffering from the recent or impending death of loved ones, dealing with recent separation or divorce, struggling to find employment, or facing depression or family crisis, sadness surrounding lives lost to COVID, or even just the pressures that often come with the season, this can be a very isolated and dreary time. We recognize that a lot of Christmas celebrations do not meet everyone's needs.

This service will honor where on the feeling spectrum people find themselves. We will make space for healing

and hope and together we will bear each others' burdens. We will be, with them, light in the darkness. The difference this year is that it will be on Zoom on Monday, December 21 at 7 p.m. Watch the weekly news for the link!



Christmas Eve

On December 24 we will be having two live streams of our Christmas Eve service, one at 7 p.m. and one at 11 p.m. They will both be on Facebook and YouTube live.

However, at 8:30 p.m. that night we will also gather in the parking lot at ACC to hear the Christmas story from Luke, light our candles, and sing "Silent Night" together.

More instructions will follow as to how to participate that evening as we gather safely to tell and live the story!

Pastor Owen's Note

While growing up one of my favorite traditions for getting ready for Christmas was our Advent Calendar. It was this large, golden-yellow felt banner with 24 pockets and there was a green Christmas tree in the center with 24 golden buttons on it.

I even remember the year that my mom made it, though I couldn't tell you exactly what year that was. What I remember is that I thought it odd that mom was painting wooden Christmas ornaments in the summer. When I asked her about it, she would respond dismissively, something about "you'll see", or "well, doing it at Christmas would be a little late, wouldn't it?"

Each day in December, my sister Sonya and I would be up eagerly ready to reach into the pocket for the day – numbered 24-1 to count down the days until Christmas. It was a real treat on the days it was my turn, because I got to read the activity for the day and place the ornament on the tree (though we couldn't put it on top of the tree, that space was reserved for the angel ornament that we knew after a couple years of practice was in the last one – Christmas Eve when the angel would announce the birth of Jesus). Each day brought a verse of

scripture and some activity that we would do that day to prepare our house for Christmas: one day it was read the Christmas story from the Bible, one day was putting up the tree, one day was setting up the manger scene, one day was making cookies, and so on.

In our house, on that calendar, and even in our eagerness, there was a growing sense that something was coming. There was something for which we were preparing. The excitement and anticipation were palpable.

This Sunday, November 29, we will be doing a Hanging of the Greens service. Of course, because of our limitations this year, it will be quite a bit different. Since it is a virtual decorating, it won't be happening with the decorations in the sanctuary. Rather, people will be sharing their favorite decorations.

There are going to be lots of things different this year, which makes our home connections to the story all the more important. Most of these decorations have significance within the story that we as followers of Jesus tell this time of year, from the greens we use for the wreaths, to the lights on houses and in windows, to the Christmas tree, to Santa Clause, to, of course, the nativities that many of us have at home. Many of our home decorations and traditions connect with us on personal levels. There is a real sense in which our traditions intersect with the traditions of the church, and our stories intersect with God's story.

The fact that things are different this year doesn't mean that we can't continue to connect with the stories of prophets and Mary, of John the Baptist and Joseph, of shepherds and Magi, and of baby Jesus, who brings light to the world, song to the angels, and peace to all the earth. We still believe, even when things are...well, discombobulated!

So, I encourage you: keep as many traditions as you can, but also be ready to tell the story in new ways. I know that at our house we plan to pick back up some traditions we have let slide as our two oldest boys have gotten older. Together we will wait, eagerly anticipate, and tell the story of Jesus!

Shalom,
Pastor Owen

Pastor Alison's Youth News



Virtual Children's Christmas Program: ABCs of Christmas!

This year our Children's Christmas Program looks a bit different! We are going to try something a bit new and stream our play!

Our children and youth will be walking through the ABCs of Christmas by showing us a different letter and what it represents for this wonderful holiday season as we prepare for the birth of the Christ Child!

There will also be Christmas songs and hymns played by our talented youth and children, as well as the Christmas story spoken throughout the play.

We will be airing the ABCs of Christmas on Wednesday, December 16th at 7:00 p.m.! The play will be on Facebook and YouTube for your viewing pleasure. The recording will also be available on those platforms after, in case you can't watch while it's being premiered.

We hope you can join on Wednesday, December 16th as the children and youth of our congregation have fun with our Christmas story! You won't want to miss it!

Children and Youth: Still want to sign up? There's still time! Click the button below!

[Sign up Here](#)

Sunday School News

Due to the uptick in coronavirus cases, we have switched to online worship which, as discussed by the Covid Task Force,

means that Sunday School is cancelled. We will resume Sunday School as soon as we are back to worshipping in-person.

Thanks for your patience. Keep your eye on your email for up to date information!

CHAOS Ensues in December!

Our 6th – 12th grade youth group or CHAOS (Christ Honoring and Others Serving) will be doing many great things within the month of December. We'll either be meeting on the lawn or via Zoom. Once a decision is made, it'll be sent out through the Weekly CHAOS email list and GroupMe.

December 6th - 3G Night: This will be a normal Game, Gather, God night! We'll spend some time together for an hour either on the lawn or via Zoom.

December 13th - Christmas Games: Come one, come all for our annual CHAOS tradition! We'll either be playing fun games online or in-person.

Youth and parents - Keep your eye out for a sign up for a CHAOS Secret Santa. We'll be doing something like this to keep the holiday cheer alive! More to come early in the month!

After those two weeks, we'll take a break from the CHAOS until January 10th to celebrate the holidays.

We hope you can participate in these fun times in weird times! Keep your eye on Weekly CHAOS for more info. If you're interested in being placed on our weekly newsletter mailing list, please email me at alisonaccdoc@gmail.com

Mid-Week Mayhem in December

This year provides us a unique opportunity to meet for MWM in December! Hooray! As per usual, we'll be meeting from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. either on Zoom or in-person if we have a bout of good weather. That decision will be communicated through email, weekly! Here's what we'll be doing:

December 2 - What is Advent? This week we'll be answering some questions about what Advent is, and playing some Christmas-themed games! It should be so much fun!

December 9 - Christmas Ornaments! This week we'll be

putting our craftiness together and making some ornaments with whatever we have lying around our houses! Parents, the only things you need for this is however your child wants to make an ornament. It can be as simple as construction paper, a hole punch, and string, or as elaborate as a glass ball ornament filled with paint and glitter - you choose!

December 16th - ABCs of Christmas Online Premier! Curl up with your family, maybe some soup to make it more like the in-person tradition, and watch the production that YOU are in!

After these three weeks we'll be taking a bit of a break. MidWeek Mayhem will resume on Wednesday, January 6th.

There will be more in-depth information in Monday Mayhem, sent out weekly on Mondays! If you're interested in being placed on that mailing list, please email me at alisonacdoc@gmail.com

Ankeny Christian Church Covid-19 update November 20, 2020

The Covid-19 committee continues to meet on a weekly basis. Our purpose is to make recommendations to the Church Executive Council on pandemic related matters specifically impacting the church. The Church Executive Council ultimately makes the decision on next steps.

The committee made a recommendation to Executive Council on November 5 to discontinue in-building worship beginning on November 8 and subsequent Sunday's. This decision was not an easy action to take; however, we believe that it was the best course of action given the disproportionate spike in Covid-19 cases throughout Ankeny, Polk county, the State of Iowa and the United States.

The committee made their decision based on a number of metrics which we followed closely.

As we continue to consider future in-building worship activities, we will look to these and other resources.

- Polk County overall positivity rate shall be 15% or less and stable or decreasing over a two-week period.
- Zip code data for 50021, 50023, 50026, 50073 shall be stable or decreasing over a two-week period.
- Metro hospitalizations shall be steady and or decreasing for

a two-week period.

- Metro ICU admissions shall be steady or decreasing for a two-week period.
- CDC, Polk County and Iowa Department of Public Health Guidance shall be reviewed regarding public assembly and safety.
- Ankeny Community Schools data shall be reviewed and evaluated.

We anticipate that once our guidelines are met, it will take approximately 10 days to initiate in-building services.

We will continue to utilize our worship covenant as a foundation for any and all contacts at ACC.

Highlights of the covenant:

- Wearing a face mask as a symbol of love and care for others
- Honor and respect the sacredness of each person and stay home if I am feeling unwell, have knowingly been exposed to the virus, or if I have been traveling, knowing that God is present with us wherever we go whether inside or outside of the church building
- Work together to follow proper sanitary guidelines as outlined by the CDC and our COVID Task Force to create and maintain a safe and healthy place for us to worship
- Follow the direction of our volunteers to find a place to sit in worship, and greet others in ways that are safe and physically distant, knowing that God works in the in-between spaces
- Have grace for others and their comfort level in regard to what they participate in, as we're all in this together for the first time!

We will continue to have on-line Sunday worship!

Arnie Porath, chair Covid-19 Task Force

Holiday Sharing Opportunities

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating the cancellation of in-person church services, the Missions Committee has chosen to revise the usual holiday giving options this year. Rather than requesting specific items be collected at the church, it is suggested that financial contributions be made to ACC to be used as needed to make purchases for the kitchen, office, ss classes and upkeep of the building. We will miss seeing the huge packages of toilet paper surrounded by kool-aid, window cleaner, books of stamps and other items encircling the Christmas tree! But better that vision than sharing a virus with each other when bringing items into the building. Donations to the homeless shelter will be scheduled at a safer future date.

Additionally, in these difficult times, donations to the Disciple Mission Fund of the Upper Midwest are being requested. These monies are only used in the region to provide assistance as needed and specific causes as determined by the region leaders.

Please indicate with your contribution your preference of where to direct your gift. Checks may be made to ACC for your convenience.

Thank you in advance for your generosity. Stay well and continue to be a blessing to God's people.

Mission Committee

October Council Meeting Kudos

- Recording participants during "It is Well" sermon series intro: Randy Wehofer, Elian Cayton, Lori Krase-Cayton, Lisa Duffy, Morgan Leach, Clay Dean, J.P. Channels, Erica Channels, Mary St. Clair, Nancy Squier, Emily Porath, Arnie Porath, John Harris, Kayla Harris, Peyton Harris, Laura Dolley, and Judy Krase
- Cathy Helmke for leading MidWeek Mayhem on Sept. 30 and Oct. 21
- Lori Krase-Cayton for leading NOW on Sept. 30 and Oct. 21
- Lori Krase-Cayton and Darin Leach for leading CHAOS on Oct. 18
- All who participated in the work day at Christian Conference Center on October 17 - Larry & Nancy Squire, Steve & Georgene Raver, Matt, Grace & Cameron Porath, Arnie Porath, Chuck Fausch, JP Channels, Clay Dean, Suzy Hart, Hannah Wehofer, Maya St. Clair
- Pat Fliger, Judy Johnson and Marlys Lampham for putting up the new decorations in the sanctuary for the stewardship desserts series
- Our lawn and landscaping crew for taking care of the outside grounds all summer
- All the work of the Covid-19 Task Force to continue to monitor our protocol
- All volunteers that allow for our in-person services to have started and continue
- Pastor Owen and Pastor Alison for continuing to go above and beyond in work to produce on-line services and engagement opportunities for our youth

Birthdays

2 Sandi Dean
3 Andrew Rawson
4 Chuck Fausch
Toviel Cayton
5 Pat Morton
David Rawson
6 Jan Marshall

Missy Stoa
7 John Sayre
8 Thomas Cox
14 Tabitha Brandenburg
15 Tim Kalvig
16 Ethan Hauschildt
17 Bev Lancaster
18 Grace Porath
Jerry Woods
Andrew Chatman
23 Gladys Sawyer
24 Felix Garcia
Peyton Harris
28 Madilyn Shreffler
30 Mary St. Clair
Elia Cayton

Anniversaries

22 Will & Barb Bates

The church continues to operate even in these difficult times. If you would like to continue (or begin) to contribute to the work of the church financially, you can mail in a check to 2506 SW 3 rd ST, Ankeny, IA 50023. Or, you can give online by clicking the button below.

There you can set up one-time or recurring donations.

[Online Giving](#)

Pastor Owen Cayton, Senior Minister
Pastor Alison Nicoll, Associate Minister
Melissa Webb, Office Manager

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