



Walton First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

Updates December 15, 2024

December Celebrations

Birthdays

- 1st: Rosemarie Tiesler**
- 1st: Warren Kelly**
- 2nd: Glen LePinnet**
- 3rd: Edie Morales**
- 6th: Loraine Davila**
- 9th: Haley Clark**
- 10th: Chris Clark**
- 20th: Todd Ogden**
- 25th: Beth Ogden**

January Celebrations

Birthdays

- 7th: Nancy Grotevant**
- 9th: Steve Sehen**
- 12th: Bruce Ellis**
- 15th: Lynn Allen**
- 20th: Josie Kelly**
- 22nd: Nadene Kopetz**
- 27th: Donna Thomson**

On the Calendar

Tuesday, December 17: Prudential Board meeting 3:30 pm

Sunday, December 22: Sanctuary Worship at 10:00 am; Fourth Sunday of Advent; Sunday School; **Loved ones' names for Christmas Eve bulletin are due to April; Christmas play & dinner 5:00 pm, snow date Monday, December 23rd**

Tuesday, December 24: Christmas Eve Candle Light Service. Our music service begins at 6:30 pm with our service of Celebration beginning at 7:00 pm

Sunday, December 29: Sanctuary Worship at 10:00 am; **No** Sunday School

Sunday, January 5: Sanctuary Worship and Communion at 10:00 am; Sunday School

Saturday, January 11: Gathering Table 11:30 am-1:00 pm Volunteers are always needed. Contact Loraine at 607-788-6984 or loraine.davila@yahoo.com

Elijah's Closet: Fridays and Saturdays 10 am-2 pm



Member Updates

If you have a loved one or loved ones that you would like remembered in the Christmas Eve bulletin, please contact April with their information by **12/22/24**.

Please place your non-perishable food and toiletry donations in the wagon located at the back of the sanctuary. Loraine Davila will be driving donations over to the food bank the last Tuesday of each month. A guide with donation ideas will be in the wagon

CELEBRATING ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS
AT
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC
Walton



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

With the new church year approaching, we are celebrating the liturgical season of Advent-Christmas. We invite everyone to experience the richness of this spiritual season of renewal. As we prepare to celebrate the coming of God among us in the birth and life of Christ, and as we eagerly await the second coming of our Lord, we gather together on these dates and times to rediscover our spiritual journey and commitment.

Please join us for any or all of these gatherings:

December 22 The fourth Sunday in Advent: 10:00 am Worship Service
Celebration of a Blue Christmas on the Longest Night

December 24 Christmas Eve Candle Light Service

We celebrate the birth of Christ with words, prayers and songs! Our music service begins at 6:30 pm and our service of Celebration begins at 7:00 pm.

LET US ALL JOIN TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE THE INCARNATION OF
GOD AMONG US



If you have anything that you would like included in our bi-monthly Updates, please contact April at 607-865-4066 or secretary@uccwalton.com

Board Updates



From Diane Meredith, Moderator

As 2024 comes to a close with the splendor, love, and hope of Christmas, I extend our church family's warm wishes to each of you for a beautiful celebration of peace.

While the holiday season is difficult for many facing health issues, difficult circumstances, or the loss of loved ones, our faith is renewed with the symbolic birth of our Savior!

The Prudential Board has worked diligently this year to address multiple facility issues, provide support to our community through programs of ministry, and continue a long tradition of Christ-based weekly worship and Sunday School. We could not maintain our commitment to our community without the passion and perseverance of many dedicated people. Thank you to:

Our Board:

Janet Brienza
Mary Carroll
Jenny Clark
Loraine Davila
Chrissy Evans
Marc Evans
Charlene Gregory
Ann LePinnet
Donna Thomson
Rosemarie Tiesler

Our Employees:

Rev. Dr. Janet Schwengber
Steven Sehen
April Epps
Sherry Schenk
Glen LePinnet
Chris Hitt
Jordan Wood
Aisle 8 Tech Support

Our Ministries and Volunteers:

Elijah's Closet
Medical Equipment Closet
The Gathering Table
Sunday School Teachers
Weekly Liturgists
Ministry Members of the Month
Coffee Hour Hosts

The Walton First Congregational Church/United Church of Christ welcomes you to join us on our journey of faith and service in 2025. Happy New Year! Stay up-to-date with us at

www.uccwalton.com

The annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 26th following worship.
Please send reports to April by 1/12/25.

Highlights



During the 12/15 service, the Clark family shared the Advent message and Giancarlo Sidoli played music

The Mess in the Messiah Advent-Christmastide Devotional

A "mess-age" from the introduction, by Donna Schaper:

Many of us like to compete with history, arguing that we live in the messiest times ever.

It's an odd competition. Is it more restrictive for religious rules to prohibit picking grain on the savvath or to prohibit marriage equality? Is it weirder for shepherds to become kings or for modern democracy to be hanging by its claws like a cat on a broken tree branch? Is it more bizarre for wise men to search under the gleam of a large star, or for algorithms to provide the answers we seek?

Much has changed, and more promises to follow suit. In our comparison of historic messiness, we 2024 types might win the contest for upside down becoming inside out.

What would that get us?

It would get us a front row seat to that ongoing Broadway hit, "Advent: The Season of Messy Disonance." We go back to see the show over and over, year after year, asking to be taught patience but complaining about the noise. Longing for hope but distracted by busyness. Looking to get Christ back into Christmas and take the plastic out. We rush to sing our favorite carols and wonder why someone is texting us right now.

Silent night. Is their plane late?

Holy night. Why am I so tired again?

All is calm. Except me.

All is bright. Looks dark outside.

Advent is a paradigm shift. It is the child threatening to become God. It is a breakthrough. It is a rupture of the amniotic sac to stimulate birth. It is a mess, like democracy. It is as good as a new heart machine for the hospital that holds the hostage. You might even call Advent a "Mess Age." Or perhaps, a "mess-age" in a bottle. (Thanks, Quinn.)

When things are this hard, as they usually are and as they were long before us, something is trying to get born. These are labor pains.

It's like the best communion. The bottle of wine breaks on the white carpet. We clean up the mess. Still, there are stains. The bread breaks. We ally with the broken. We know we are broken open. Nothing is properly contained. Perhaps it is not supposed to be? Life is not made for Tupperware.

When it comes to the mess, it is a message.

Luke's Gospel, chapter 2, tells the whole mess:

And it came to pass. The first message was taxation. The second message was a place made for them after there was no place made for them. The birth was "accomplished." Shepherds woke up. Angels arrived. They carried good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Then a celestial choir joined them.

Was that a message or a mess? It was both. And this story wins the contest for weirdest, most wonderful message of all.

A Devotional from Pastor Janet

Dedicated by Liz Miller

[Solomon stood before the Lord's altar and prayed:] "Constantly watch over this temple, the place about which you said, 'My name will be there,' and listen to the prayer that your servant is praying toward this place." - 1 Kings 8:29 (CEB)

I am certain that once upon a time, when it was first constructed, the church I'm currently sitting in was prayerfully dedicated to God. I'm certain because there is a plaque near the entrance saying as much along with the date of the dedication. We've since lost the words they prayed over the then-new church building, but I hope they included a provision to reimagine the use of the space by each subsequent generation.

Every congregation I've belonged to has transformed our shared sacred space to meet the needs of the moment: offices reimaged as meeting rooms, rooms previously reserved for the Sunday morning congregation reimaged to serve the needs of the wider community all week long, closets containing a vintage vase collection reimaged as closets containing communion supplies.

The sacred spaces we gather in are as prone to change as the people they hold, often providing physical evidence of the same cycles of life, death, and resurrection that its inhabitants embody. Sometimes the change is so minor we don't notice it—a hallway mailbox formerly designated for a committee chairperson that becomes the holding place for the spare office key—and other times the changes are so significant that they involve months of discernment and discussion before an all-church vote.

Marking our buildings as sacred does not mean they are immune to the change we expect to experience in every other aspect of communal life, but if we dedicated them to God from the very start, we can be reassured that whatever comes, God's presence will never wane.

Prayer

May we trust that your vision for our sacred spaces, O God, is bigger than we can yet imagine.

Amen.

Lifted in Prayer

Dane

Bob Locherer

The family of Marie Card

The family of Jeffrey Roupp

The family of Sandra Obergfell

Gail Mack

Jennifer Robert's pastor

The family of Rev. Bill Robertson

The family of James Thomson