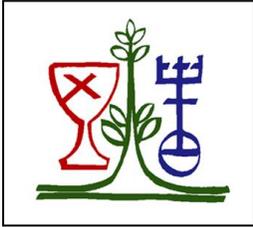


United Christian Church - December 2020

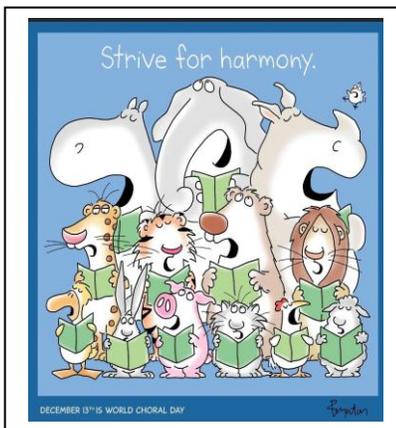
A merged congregation of
Highland Park United Church of Christ
and First Christian Church, Disciples of Christ,
Miles City, Montana



The Welcome!

**No matter who you are, or where you are
on life's journey, you are welcome here!**

CHOIR BRINGS JOY



On the third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday celebrating Joy, our choir presented a service of familiar Christmas carols, bringing joy to listeners and participants alike. Due to Covid safety guidelines, choir members had not sung together in months, and had practiced only once before this service. The choral presentation required a combination of creativity and technology, as this was a "socially distanced" choir, with members spaced far apart throughout the sanctuary, using a combination of microphones and an iPad to pick up the various voices. The music was presented over Facebook Live, and the efforts of many resulted in a program that was truly beautiful, and full of joy. A big "Thank You" to Marilyn Thaden and all who made this possible!

CHRISTMAS EVE PLANS - *by Rev. Amber*

As with so many things in 2020, Christmas Eve will look different than it has in past years. Out of an abundance of caution, we will not be gathering in person for Christmas Eve services. However, we **WILL** have a service that evening! Beginning at 6:00 pm on the 24th, Marilyn Thaden will be sharing a half hour of Christmas music before the actual service begins at 6:30.

I feel sad that we won't be gathering in person. I LOVE Christmas Eve services. My favorite part comes right at the end when the lights go down and we light our candles throughout the darkened sanctuary. Seeing the light shine on each face is magical. Alas, that will not happen in person this year.



However, we have two options for you to participate in this service. The first option is to join us on Facebook Live. Just as we do with Sunday services, we will broadcast our Christmas Eve music and service on Facebook Live. The second way is to join us via Zoom. The advantage to using Zoom is that we can see each other. (Not necessarily an advantage on a Sunday morning when you're in your pajamas!) You can join with Zoom video from your smart phone, tablet, or computer. Instructions for joining the Christmas Eve service via Zoom are listed on page 4 of this newsletter. If you have any questions about Facebook or Zoom, please contact Amber ahead of time.

Also, there will be CANDLES available outside the front door of the church for you to take home beforehand and light as we conclude our service. Please take one for each person of your family (that you trust with fire). Instead of spreading light throughout the sanctuary, we will be spreading light throughout our communities. (Candles will be available this week, beginning Sunday morning, 12/20. Let Amber know if you need some delivered.)

My Country, Cheers for Thee!

by Rev. Bob Thaden

Pity The Nation - by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

(After Khalil Gibran)

Pity the nation whose people are sheep
And whose shepherds mislead them
Pity the nation whose leaders are liars
Whose sages are silenced
And whose bigots haunt the airwaves
Pity the nation that raises not its voice
Except to praise conquerors
And acclaim the bully as hero
And aims to rule the world
By force and by torture
Pity the nation that knows
No other language but its own
And no other culture but its own
Pity the nation whose breath is money
And sleeps the sleep of the too well fed
Pity the nation oh pity the people
who allow their rights to erode
and their freedoms to be washed away
My country, tears of thee
Sweet land of liberty! --->

It would be easy to dismiss Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poem as some liberal rant written by an anti-Trumper during the election buildup in 2020. But this was written in 2007 when John McCain was running against Barack Obama, neither of whom could be considered conquerors or bullies or liars.

Ferlinghetti has been a social activist for a long time and has frequently commented on American Society. Born in 1919, and still living at age 101, he is a poet, painter and social activist. He spent his early years in France, then his family moved to the US and he received a BA from the University of N. Carolina, an MA from Columbia University and then back to France for his PhD. He started City Lights Bookstore with a friend way back in 1953 in San Francisco. He has written over 30 books of poetry.

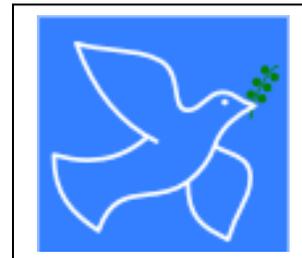
About his work, the critic Barbara Berman wrote, "Ferlinghetti is a tonic for a world thirsting for the loving outrage and energetic reverence that helped reignite and sustain the enterprise of bard-fueled citizenship." Ferlinghetti's poem was actually written in response to a poem of the same name by the famed Lebanese-American writer, Kahlil Gibran, way back in 1933. It's well worth the read. Among other things, Gibran wrote in his poem, "Pity the nation divided into fragments, each fragment deeming itself a nation."

Jesus, who was, in a way, a citizen bard in his own day, could have written words just like these. His challenge in Matthew 25 "I was hungry and you did not feed me, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you turned me away, I was naked and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not take care of me" certainly echoes the words of both Gibran and Ferlinghetti. Here we are in Christmastide again— a time, especially in a pandemic, when we so need each other and need each other's support and love— but we as a nation are so divided into fragments, with some national politicians so determined to have their own way at any cost that they even suggest secession.

It is high time to pull together, to recognize our common humanity, to search each other for a spirit of shared dignity and compassion or we will remain a nation deeply fragmented and in disjuncture with the heart and soul of Christ's teaching: to welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, heal the sick, cherish the outcast, care for the widow and orphan.

If only Ferlinghetti could have written:

(see below)



“PRAISE THE NATION”

(After Gibran and Ferlinghetti)

Praise the nation whose people are kind,
And whose shepherds lead them
Praise the nation whose leaders speak truth
Where wise words are welcomed
And whose sages grace the airwaves
Praise the nation that raises its voice
To condemn conquerors
And deny bullies as heroes
And aims to serve the world
By grace and gentleness
Praise the nation that seeks
To understand other languages
And other cultures as well as its own
Praise the nation who shares its money
And sleeps the sleep of those who feed
others well
Praise the nation, oh praise the people
Who prevent rights from eroding
And whose tyranny is washed away
My country, cheers for thee
Sweet land of liberty!

© Robert Thaden, Christmastide 2020

MISSION ACTIVITIES

The past few months have provided the Mission Committee and helpers several opportunities to fundraise for organizations helping the hungry. The biggest event was an early October "socially distanced" Fair Trade & Bake Sale on the lawn of the church, benefitting the Custer County Food Bank. (The Food Bank had very recently moved to a new location and is in the process of buying the building.) United Christian Church offered to match the first \$1,000 in sales, and the community rose to the challenge of buying! We were absolutely *thrilled* to take in \$3,000 at the sale, resulting in a \$4,000 donation to the Food Bank!

Pies were the major focus of the bake sale - our pie assembly & baking team was lead by "Pie Queen Dixie."



The Queen waves to her fans!

The Marilyn's, Crust Experts!



Our Crew!!!!

This past week, we attempted something new; our first-ever Facebook fundraiser! A variety of Fair Trade & Montana-made items were photographed and posted on Facebook for sale. The made-in-Montana items were mainly purchased at MC businesses and then donated for this cause. We were delighted to bring in about \$550 from this sale! Proceeds are designated for the Montana Food Bank Network.



We also donated \$266 to CNADA (Custer Network Against Domestic Abuse). \$51 came from a donation jar at this sale and \$215 came from the sale over the summer of Marilyn's produce at the winery.



Barb presents check to Food Bank Director

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED US!!

PEOPLE WE KNOW

We extend our deepest sympathy to Gerald Van Campen & his wife, Wendy Wilson, of Laramie, WY, on the recent death of Gerald's father, Morris Van Campen, in Idaho Falls. Morris was an educator in Miles City for many years. Wendy & Gerald are the daughter and son-in-law of Joan Wilson. We look forward to seeing them again in safer times!

A Fair Trade **Chocolate Sale** was held on the church lawn Dec. 9, a sunny & amazingly warm afternoon. In a little over 2 hours, we sold **\$517 worth of chocolate!** The majority of the proceeds will go to the Montana Food Bank Network, while \$125 was donated to Miles City's Empty Stockings Program.

Instructions for Accessing Christmas Eve Service via Zoom:

Please copy the link below into your browser or go to Zoom.com. The Meeting ID is 823 9138 5068 and the password is UCC1006. Please note, if you use one of the phone numbers below to join via Zoom, I don't think you'll be able to see or participate via video.

Topic: UCC Miles City, MT Christmas Eve

Time: Dec 24, 2020 06:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

You'll see this message: Amber Richardson is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 823 9138 5068 Passcode:

One tap mobile

+13462487799,,82391385068#,,,,,0#,,4006395# US

+16699006833,,82391385068#,,,,,0#,,4006395# US

Dial by your location

+1 253 215 8782 US

Meeting ID: 823 9138 5068 Passcode:

Birthdays



12/10 - Tim Irion

12/16 - Kurt Reinhart

12/20 - Cord Berg

12/22 - Trista York

"Want to keep Christ in Christmas?

Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the unwanted, care for the ill, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have done unto you."

United Christian Church

1006 S. Strevell Avenue

Miles City, MT 59301

(406) 234-3467

Ministry Team:

Rev. Amber Richardson, Deacon

Rev. Bob Thaden, Retired

Mailing Label

Sunday Service at 10:00 am



Follow us on Facebook at **UCC Miles City**
and at **Share the Love Bookstore**

uccmiles@midrivers.com

Newsletter Editor: Barb Cole



Welcome 2021

