



The United Parish
ECHO



December 2005

Elkton United Parish Church 605-542-7102
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Growing Together in Christ



Pastor's Desktop

What does the word 'advent' mean? I was asked this question recently. It's worth knowing what it means in general, not just that it is the season before Christmas. The American Heritage® Dictionary defines 'advent' as “the coming or arrival, especially of something extremely important”.

So do we call the season before Christmas advent just because Christmas is coming? Not actually. The expected arrival of Christ is the advent we mean. The time before Christmas lets us look back to his first coming and forward to his next. In one regard, since we as Christians are supposed to be continually looking forward to Christ's return, our whole life should be Advent – a time of anticipating Christ's arrival.

Which brings up an urgent question. Are you ready for him to return? If Jesus showed up in the skies today, would that be good news or bad news? The door of the gospel is wide open to all who are willing to receive him, but so many do not recognize the need.

The Old Testament shows very clearly what it is like trying to live according to a strict code of law. It doesn't work. Our nature betrays us every time we think we are doing the right thing. The good news of the New Testament is that God has already taken care of that problem.

The whole message of God's love is found when you put Old and New together. The bottom line is that for Christ's reign to be completely established there will have to be complete perfection: perfect love, perfect justice, perfect mercy. There is no room for a weak human nature in that. Which is why Christ offers to send the Holy Spirit to live in us and be strong where we are weak. Sadly, far too many Christians still try to live in the strength (which is actually weakness) of their own flesh instead of by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Trying to live on your own power is the Old Testament approach. There were many occasions of God's perfect judgment coming to bear on such an approach. It is not pretty. All the marvelous examples of success in Godly living in both the Old and New Testament, as well as in early Christian writings point to reliance, by faith, in God's leading. When you trust that God's plan is the one that works, you will allow yourself to give up your own ideas of how things are supposed to be done, or what is supposed to happen, or even who is supposed to do it.

Instead, you open yourself to God's idea of how things are supposed to be done, God's idea of what is supposed to happen, and God's idea of your role in it.

Obviously, the only way to become ready for Christ's return is to start doing things God's way instead of our own way. The only way to actually learn God's way is to trust God enough to follow.

Jesus gave the parable of the 10 bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1-13) as a very clear warning of the importance of being ready for his second arrival. Are you? If you are not sure, come to church – we talk about such things there. If Sunday mornings find you at work or something else, talk to me directly – I do talk to people, nicely even. Like my Lord, I am ready to listen to anyone.

In Christ's service,
Pastor Daren

Parish Board Meeting

The United Parish Board met on Nov 9, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. in the church fellowship hall. Officers in attendance were Chairman Ed Timm, Financial Secretary Donna Magnus, Lay Leader Bev Buller, and Secretary LaRee Farnham. Also attending were Gert DeZeeuw, Pastor Darren, Carol Styf, and Virginia Fixsen, The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ed. Pastor Darren gave a prayer.

The minutes of the Oct. meeting were read and approved.

Treasurer Report: Treasurer, Dawn Boltjes was absent but Darren on her behalf had the monthly treasurer report and notes. A CD was needed to cover our monthly expenses. A dehumidifier was purchased at this year's price as Dawn was told prices are expected to go up next spring. Report approved.

9/30/05 Balance	\$< 466.91>
Oct. Income	3,906.34
Transfer	<u>1,502.79</u>
	\$4,942.22

Oct. Expenses <4,431.31>
Ending Balance \$ 510.91

Landscaping Account \$1,051.50

Financial Secretary Report: Donna presented the report. An undesignated CD was cashed in and transferred to the checking account to cover expenses. The Lloyd Smallfield CD is the only undesignated one left that can be cashed in to be used for monthly expenses. Darren had a couple of newsletters available for subscription regarding Stewardship. No action at this time. The Finance Committee will be meeting soon.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

PPR : Bev reported that the committee has a meeting set for Nov. 15 to go over job descriptions and making recommendations at the December meeting.

Trustees: Mentioned again the eve spout on the east side of the church.

Christian Ed: LaRee reported the committee is working on plans for the S.S. Christmas program which will be held Dec. 18 at 7:00 p.m.

Worship: Gert is working on the usher and acolyte list for 2006. On Monday, Nov 21st a community Thanksgiving service will be held at 7 pm at the Community Center.

Mission: Gert reported that Linda K. said they expect to receive information about the Angel Tree the end of Nov.

UPW: Election of officers is the same as last year. UPW will have a tree at the Festival of Trees at the Community Center; donations of mittens, scarfs, and caps will be appreciated. Decorating of the tree at church will be Sat. Dec3rd along with caroling and a potluck afterwards.

OLD BUSINESS: Ed reported that as far as building onto our church, Mrs. Peters place right next to the church is not available. Darren has drawn up a medical information and liability release form for van riders to Brookings.

NEW BUSINESS: Darren read a letter from the Yankton College Scholarship Committee announcing scholarships for qualified high school seniors; applications are due Feb. 10, 2006. Ed read a letter from the National UCC regarding OCWM giving – invitation of giving. Two officer positions (chairman & secretary) will need to be filled at the annual congregational meeting in January as Ed and LaRee's terms will be up.

Meeting adjourned. The next board meeting will be on Wed. Dec. 14h at 7:00 p.m.

Sec. LaRee Farnham

The Echo for December is sponsored by
GERT AND RUDY DEZEEUW
in memory of the Wedding Anniversaries of
Rudy's parents November 11th, and Gert's parents November 15th.

UPW

The UPW met November 2nd at 7:30 pm in the church dining room. The evening began with the program “Thank Offering – The Prayer Jesus taught us.” given by Bev Buller.

The meeting was called to order by Pres. Linda. For devotions Marsha read “Why bad things happen to good people” by Marlene Lang from the 2006 Devotional Guide (Marlene passed away 11-02-05).

The purpose was read. 17 members answered the roll call with “The nicest thing someone did for me.”

The secretaries report was read and approved. The treasurers report was read and approved. The balance at the end of Oct. was \$2,589.74. There were no additional bills.

Donna M. received a letter from Ruth Bekken which she shared with us. Linda received a letter from the committee for the Love Ribbon Grant – our application was denied. We also received another letter from Karen-Marie.

Linda brought cards for Ruth and Karen-Marie. We will be doing the cards for our servicemen and women in December.

We will again decorate a mitten tree for the Festival of Trees at the Community Center. Dawn, Linda, and Bev will be on the committee.

The UPW annual potluck Christmas Party will be held on December 7th at 6:30pm. We are asked to bring a gift to exchange (\$5-7) plus mittens, hats, or scarfs for the mitten tree.

Linda asked for 3 pans of bars for the Community Thanksgiving Service which will be at the Community Center. As yet, the date has not been set. Beth, Gert, and Bonnie volunteered.

Gert ordered more cuttlery and it should be here soon.

We will be having a Caroling/Tree decorating party on Saturday December 3rd. Linda and Bev will get this set up.

Linda pointed out the Release Time bulletin board.

Marsha told about the baptism they attended where the church gave a quilt to each child at the time of baptism. This was to represent wrapping the child in God's love. Maybe this is something we would like to do.

Bonnie brought the basket being donated to the Tour of Tables.

On Sunday there will be an open house for Tom Carpenter at the Baptist Church.

Dawn gave a report on Mission and suggested that at each UPW meeting in 2006 we bring a designated item for the food pantry in Flaudreau.

A get-well-card was sent to Chad Hart.

There were no funerals.

Nothing new at the Reading Program, just read.

Happy Birthday was sung to John Boltjes and other November Birthdays and the November anniversaries were read.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer and grace was sung.

Hostesses were Virginia, Bonnie, and Linda.

Secretary Beverly Buller

Grape Vine

The United Parish Women have cutlery for sale: they have paring knives, peelers, bread knives, knife sharpeners, chopper, beaters, and many other items. You can contact **Gert DeZeeuw**.

Items that are still in the church kitchen are: 1 large square Tupperware tub, plates, pie pans, etc. Please try and pick them up if they are yours. Thank you.

The Banquet in Sioux Falls has an ongoing project “Warm Up Sioux Falls”. Volunteers are needed to knit or crochet 7” x 9” rectangles. Any patterns or colors yarn are fine, but *size must be consistent*. This is not just a Christmas project, but keeps going after Christmas. Look for the box in the church to drop of your squares. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Kampmann.

The Community Thanksgiving Service was this year held on Monday, November 21st. United Parish, Our Lady of Good Council, First Baptist Church, and Enoch Farm Ministries (The Nelson Family) were the participating groups and we enjoyed a wonderful service filled with prayer of thanksgiving, Scripture readings and beautiful performances by the kids from the Henderson family and the Nelson family. There was so much food donated that three families in the local area benefited from your direct contributions. We also collected \$250 that night and more came in later. THANK YOU to all who participated and came out to thank the one God who provides everything for us.

ECHO

Sponsorship of the cost of mailing the Echo is going very well. The following have already pledged:

(November – Linda and Dennis Kampmann)

December - Rufus and Gertrude DeZeeuw

January - Don and Donna Magnus

February - Don and Norma Krogman in celebration of the 45th wedding anniversary on December 25, 2005

This is truly something to be thankful for.

If you would like to sponsor a mailing, contact Dawn Boltjes at 548-2051.

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

A minister was preaching on Sunday morning when a little child started hollering. The mother tried to calm him down, to no avail. At a certain point, she got up and took him out. The minister paused and looked at her. “You don't have to take him out for my sake”, he said, “he's not bothering me”.

“No”, the mom replied, “but you are bothering him”.