

# THE TOWER

## DECEMBER 2024

DECORAH FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

302 W. BROADWAY, PO BOX 221, DECORAH, IOWA 52101

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### A Message from Rev. Cat



Welcome to December. Many of us think of December as the end of the year, however, in the church year it is actually the beginning of the year. I find it very accurate that we should celebrate the beginning of the year at what others think of as the end. The weather has turned cold, the ground is hardening from the freeze, plants are dead, dying, or going into a type of hibernation awaiting the spring warm up and life-giving rains. And yet, here we are amidst all the seeming barrenness preparing to celebrate new life. New life that is made available to us by God through Christ. New life that comes to us in the form of the most vulnerable, an infant. Even in the longest, darkest days, there is light, hope, love. May you feel the light shine upon you this season and know you are loved. Merry Christmas.

Rev. Cat Stokes



### Poinsettias in memory or honor of a loved one

Please have plants delivered to the church on or after December 5<sup>th</sup>. Let Ellie in the office know who you are donating it in memory or honor of so she can put it in the bulletin.



### Christmas Choir Special Music December 15<sup>th</sup>

The choir is busy preparing a special celebration of beautiful Christmas music to share with you. Please make plans to join us Sunday morning, December 15 for an inspirational service among all the beautiful Christmas decorations and lights!



## Decorah Community Food Pantry

### A Message from Director, Matt Tapscott:

Our Pantry, because of the generosity of our community & your volunteer efforts, is on pace this year for serving a record number of family members (22,293 as of this message, 23,482 last year) and distributing over the 331,779 pounds of food distributed last year to families facing food insecurity in NE Iowa, plus, a record number of new clients (including over 100 the past three months) this past three months.

It takes a village, and we have a great one!



## December Worship Leaders

### Liturgist

### Coffee Servers

December 1	Deb Tekippe	Deborah Bishop & Sharon Rossman
December 8	Kathy Johnson	John & Sondy Carver
December 15	Don Stromseth	Deb Tekippe & Lyn White
December 22	Dave Arp	Dave & Candace Arp
December 29	Nancy Ruen	Bob & Linda Watson

## Inclusive Ministries

### Iowa Immigrant Know Your Rights & Safety Planning Toolkit

To help respond and prepare our community, Catholic Charities has launched a virtual toolkit with videos and supporting materials to help educate immigrants and our general community. This toolkit is now live and can be found on our agency website, entitled "Know Your Rights (KYR) & Safety Planning" toolkit. The information is intended to educate or increase awareness of general principles in law and how the law protects your rights when interacting with police or immigration authorities. This toolkit is not meant to replace the need for seeking legal advice from an immigration attorney or DOJ accredited representative if people have specific legal immigration questions. Currently, this toolkit includes KYR informational videos from Catholic Charities' immigration attorneys in English and Spanish. We intend to include other commonly spoken languages as they become available (ie. French, Swahili, Haitian Creole, Burmese, Pashto and Dari). The toolkit has documents that can be downloaded and printed to allow parishes, social justice committees, and schools to help provide accurate information regarding immigrant rights and safety planning.

Thank you for your support!

## December Birthdays

\*\*3<sup>rd</sup> – Jane Eckblad

\*\*5<sup>th</sup> – Martin Dale

\*\*6<sup>th</sup> – Ken Amdahl

\*\*6<sup>th</sup> – Mark Nitschke

\*\*6<sup>th</sup> – Sweet Young-Johnson

\*\*10<sup>th</sup> – Kenneth Nordheim

\*\*14<sup>th</sup> – Chris Halweg

\*\*16<sup>th</sup> – Jay Thompson

\*\*18<sup>th</sup> – Edith Lerstrom

\*\*22<sup>nd</sup> – Steve Chambliss

\*\*22<sup>nd</sup> – Kendra Van Sloten

\*\*24<sup>th</sup> – Andy Hageman

\*\*25<sup>th</sup> – James White

\*\*28<sup>th</sup> – Cloyd Dolley

\*\*28<sup>th</sup> – Wayne Smith

\*\*31<sup>st</sup> – Bill Bergstrom

\*\*4<sup>th</sup> – Madonna Bildner

\*\*6<sup>th</sup> -- Keith Amdahl

\*\*6<sup>th</sup> – Jann Bowlus

\*\*6<sup>th</sup> – Emma Wold

\*\*8<sup>th</sup> – Holly Schmidt

\*\*12<sup>th</sup> – Jon Knight

\*\*14<sup>th</sup> – Samuel (Lee) Zook

\*\*16<sup>th</sup> – Peggy Willie

\*\*22<sup>nd</sup> – Ross Bosworh

\*\*22<sup>nd</sup> – Stacy Knight

\*\*23<sup>rd</sup> – Catherine Krieger

\*\*24<sup>th</sup> – Nancy Sacquitne

\*\*27<sup>th</sup> – Colby McClintock

\*\*28<sup>th</sup> – Shawn Martin

\*\*29<sup>th</sup> – Landan Folkedahl

**Please let the office know of any errors or additions**

## Capital Campaign Update

### Solid Walls | Open Doors Capital Campaign Update

### Great Work Everyone! But We Need to Finish Strong!

It is great to see the tuck-pointing project completed! We have paid bills to date, but the Building Restoration Corporation balance to finish is \$40,355.00. We urge you complete your final 2024 pledges as you are able. Feel free to contact Nancy Ruen, Drew Pellett, or Gary Mineart if you need a reminder of your remaining 2024 pledge balance. The committee members are truly grateful for your outstanding and generous support of this project! It is a true testament of the faith and connection of this congregation. If you have not yet made a gift or pledge, we are still accepting gifts as we have an outstanding loan that will need to be covered in the future. May God's Blessings continue to abound at 302 West Broadway for many years to come.





## **United Women of Faith Corner**

December 1- Tree and Sanctuary decorating after church

December 4- Christmas Luncheon at Mabe's at 11:00am

December 15- UWFaith bake sale

Poinsettias in honor or in memory of a loved. Delivery to church on or after December 5th

Mat Weavers will meet on Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> from 10:00AM to Noon

Quilting group meets on Tuesday Mornings from 9:00AM to Noon

Candace Arp 380-5996 or darpcarp@hotmail.com



## **Flowers for December**

Flowers for the altar this month are provided by Nancy Ruen & Syd Stephenson. If you would like to bring an arrangement to share in honor or memory of someone, please contact Nancy or Syd.



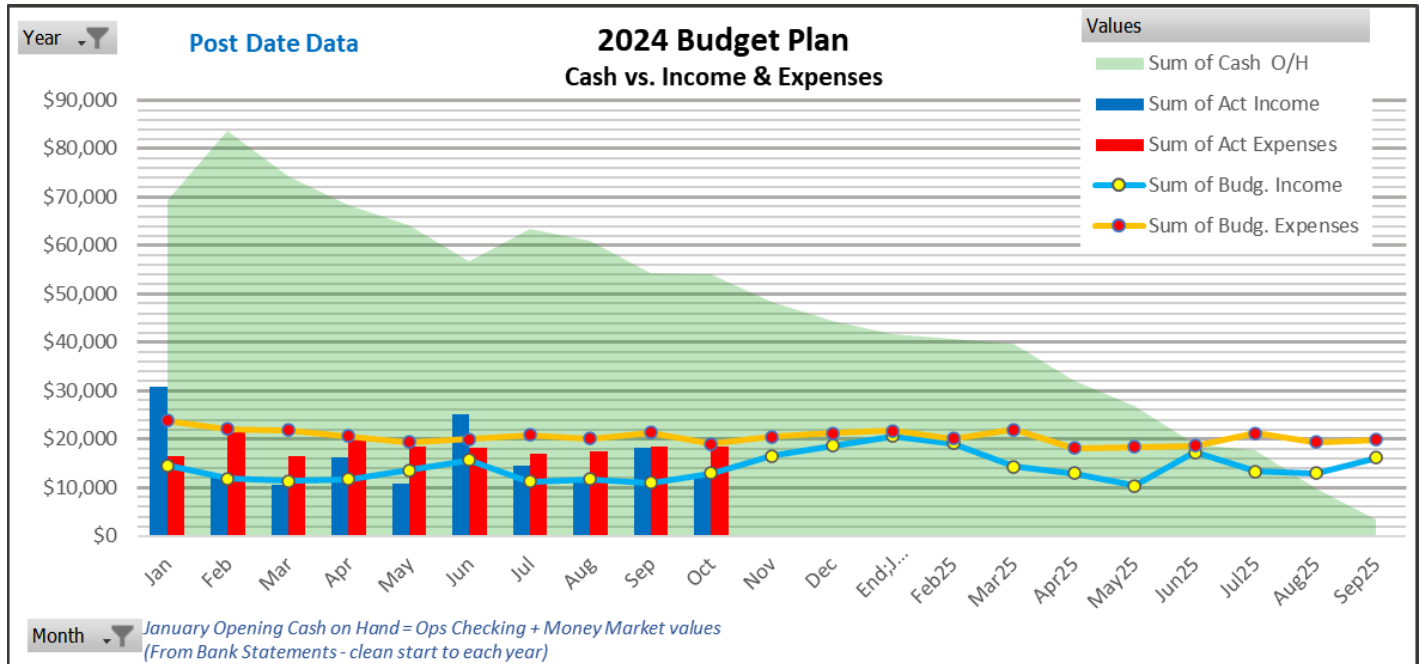
## **Book Club Information**

Those interested in the Book Group please contact Jane Hardy:

- ❖ Email: [jhardy3333@aol.com](mailto:jhardy3333@aol.com)
- ❖ Phone: 563-382-5316

# Treasurer's Report

## Our Current Picture (through October)



October ended up coming in on plan. Income and expenses both came very close to their forecasted numbers (the bars as compared to the forecast lines). However, as the cash position shows (the green “mountain” section), with higher expenses than income, we now have a more pronounced negative trend showing next year. The back half of next year is clearly going to be a challenge for us.

Just a reminder, I have now loaded in next year’s budgeted forecast. The Administrative Council has approved a deficit budget of **(\$-44,689)**. This is the third consecutive year of deficit budgets. While not as large as last year’s negative budget, the 2025 deficit plan shows us using up all our operational cash reserves toward the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. This will cause us to activate our “emergency coverage” plan (Trustees monies to be used for the benevolent sections of our apportionment obligations). This will cover roughly half of the deficit, so further actions will be planned for.

Our Cash-Forward-Coverage position has dropped to 2.89 which is just slightly below last month’s number. Recall, this means that we have enough cash on hand to cover 2.89 months of average expenses if no other money comes in (which won’t happen).

You’ll notice that we are planning for increased giving for the next several months (reference the blue line with yellow dots). It is critical that these income levels materialize.

The AC season is now over and while our electrical usage has dropped, we are still seeing significant savings (percentage wise) from the Solar Panel project.

- Our last billing showed a 51% savings relative to kWh delivered vs. what we supplied back.
  - 2400 kWh delivered (to us)
  - 1240 kWh outflow (from us back to the grid)

As always, please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Peace and Blessings,

Steve Rarick, Treasurer – Decorah 1<sup>st</sup> UMC  
(847) 830-9891

## Announcements & Prayer Concerns

- ❖ Please keep the family of Millie Jensen in our prayers following her passing on November 16th.
- ❖ **Hanging of the Greens December 1<sup>st</sup>.** Please join us following coffee fellowship to decorate the church! It's always so fun to see the beauty of the Advent Season come to life as we put up the decorations! Thanks so much to the Bappe family for donating another beautiful tree this year.
- ❖ Join us for **Breakfast at the All Vets Club for the 8th Grade Class Fund Raiser for their D.C. trip.** Serving pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage or ham, hash browns and toast with choice of juice, milk or coffee. This is a Free Will Donation. All proceeds go to the kids. **Serving 8 AM – Noon on 1 December 2024.** Public welcomed.
- ❖ **Wednesday, December 4, is our Christmas Luncheon at 11:00AM in Mabe's back room.** In the spirit of the season, we hope you consider bringing a small gift to share with either the Decorah Community Food Pantry or the Backpack Program. Suggestions include toothbrush, tooth paste or other toiletries for the Food Pantry or jars of peanut butter for the Backpack program. Sherry Schilling reports they fill about 110 backpacks each week. A special thank you to Sherry for all of her volunteer time to help with this effort. Thanks also to Nancy Ruen, Barb Dale, Sweet Young, and Connie Leuenberger who are Food Pantry volunteers.
- ❖ **DECORAH COMMUNITY MEAL: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5TH, 5:00 - 6:15** p.m., Please join your friends and neighbors for this free meal in **Decorah Lutheran's Fellowship Hall, 309 Winnebago Street.** All are welcome! This month, members of Westside Dental are providing volunteers, salads, and desserts. The main course is provided by Sodexo of Luther College. Gluten free options and carry outs are always available.
- ❖ **Sweet Christmas Program and annual Advent Brunch** will be held at **Burr Oak Lutheran Church on December 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am.**
- ❖ Nisse Preschool will be hosting its annual Pancake Breakfast with Santa **on Sunday, December 8th from 8:00-11:30 in the Danan Lansing Building on the Decorah Fairgrounds.** All you can eat! We will have great raffle prizes, balloon animals, and free pictures with Santa. Meal and raffle tickets are available at the door. The meal is a freewill donation at the door.
- ❖ The **Luren Singers present their annual Christmas concert in St. Lucas IA at St Luke Catholic Church on Sunday, December 15 at 3:00PM.** "Peace on Earth"
- ❖ **Trust Fund Applications due Wednesday, January 8<sup>th</sup>.** Copies can be found in office. Email office for electronic copy.
- ❖ **Every Saturday at 11:00 am** there will be a vigil at Water Street Park with prayers and thoughts going to the grievances in Gaza.